SUSPENDED IN TIME AND SPACE

The Concept of the Fragment in Contemporary Installation Art

RMA THESIS

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Abstract

For centuries, the term “the fragment” has been used to signify impartial and incomplete artistic objects. Ranging from antique sculptural fragments to the fragmented views of Cubism and contemporary destruction (fragmentation), the fragment has occupied an important space in readings and definitions of artworks of diverse historical periods and artistic mediums. However, there has not been a similar thorough interest in the history and meaning of the term in art history. The lack of a clear distinction or a complete history of the concept causes unintentional conflation of fragments with other smaller, impartial objects – symbols, icons, etc. – when writing on fragments in visual arts.

This thesis aims to define the specificities of the fragment in visual arts, specifically in contemporary installation art. By analysing theoretical writings on the fragment ranging from Romanticism to contemporary theory and comparing these theoretical models to practical artworks, the research highlights the specificities of the fragment as a distinct concept. The thesis does so by focusing on three stages of the fragment – the production of it, its being, and its reception by observers. This thesis aims to present the fragment as a specific aesthetic concept found in contemporary art with specificities that crucially affect its being in time and space and the creation of interpretations of it. It aims at questioning the narrow usage of the term solely for impartial material objects and suggests expanding it to understand specific modes of the fragment’s being that allow for diverse and open-ended models of reception. The thesis presents the fragment as an aesthetic concept whose meaning is never fixed, but always suspended and open for the observer to develop.

Following the threefold structure of my research (production/being/reception) and synthesizing theory with practice, the thesis will seek to answer the central question of the thesis: *How can a fragment be defined as a specific and distinct aesthetic category found in contemporary installation art?*

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Introduction

"Man himself eternally chained down to a little fragment of the whole, only forms a kind of fragment; having nothing in his ears but the monotonous sound of the perpetually revolving wheel, he never develops the harmony of his being […]"[1]

The German Romanticist thinker, Friedrich Schiller, writing of his philosophy of aesthetics in *Letters Upon the Aesthetic Education of Man* (*Über die Äesthetische Erziehung des Meschen in einer Reihe von Briefen,* 1794), contemplated the human condition by evoking a concept that has a centuries-long tradition – the fragment. This concept, which gained importance in Schiller's times, is one of many important ideas that permeate European thought in its diverse fields – sociology, literature, philosophy, etc. The conceptual framework of fragmentation and the emergence of fragments has also settled itself in art history, including in the discourse surrounding modern and contemporary art. Importantly, we may often read about fragments in relation to spatial artworks, especially installation art, which utilizes constellations and arrangements of "fragments" in space to produce aesthetic ambients and spaces. We may read literature concerning the fragmentation of the figure and its identity and observe the proliferation of exhibitions devoted to the fragment.[2] However, these manifestations fail to provide a clear and consistent meaning to the term "the fragment".

Significance of the Research and the Central Research Question

If one searches for the term "fragment" in the online version of Grove Dictionary of Art History, one finds several results which present concrete examples of fragments – a fragment of a male figure from the Sotoko culture, a tapestry fragment of the *Virgin Annunciate*, etc. The search bears fruit by providing concrete examples; however, faced with such diverse and heterogeneous artistic mediums and forms – from Ancient Greek fragments to contemporary artistic production – a common thread between them is difficult to discern. These artworks differ significantly on a level and material level; the only element that binds them together is the common categorization of them as "fragments". This raises the question of what exactly ties "fragments" together on the aforementioned material and conceptual levels. The lack of a solid and overarching definition of the fragment is problematic as it catalyses the constitution of a broad pool of heterogeneous artistic materials. Researching the fragment thus paradoxically leads from small components to an expansive collection of artworks, while

[1] Schiller, *Letters Upon the Aesthetic Education of Man*, I.VI.
[2] I.a. Amelia Jones' *Body Art/Performing the Subject and* Helaine Posner's *Separation Anxiety* and the exhibitions *Incomplete Beginnings* at the Tokyo Museum for Contemporary Art and *Zeit für Fragmente: Werke aus der Sammlung Marx* at the Nationalgalerie der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin.

always omitting the origins of the searched object. The question of the fragment in contemporary art bears even more confusion – often we may read of fragmentation, the use of fragments, whilst the application of this term never appears to be subject to questioning.

The concept of the fragment has pervaded Western thought for centuries, be it through practical manifestations – ancient plastic fragments, modern philosophical fragments (Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, etc.) – or theoretical considerations – German Romanticist poetry (Novalis, etc.), Soviet montage (Vertov, Eisenstein, etc.). Whilst initially diverse and manifold, the concept of the fragment initially signifies a symptomatic modern reaction to a temporal disjunction – a longing for the ancient past in the Renaissance – before becoming a produced category, signifying a shift from receiving a fragment to producing a fragment. In only structural terms, fragmentation thus illustrates complex movements in temporal and aesthetic workings. The fragment's varied manifestations have differed in materiality and history – ranging from antiquity to contemporaneity – and in medium – from poetry to videos. Western culture has thus faced a plethora of fragments and processes of fragmentation. These have yet to be systematically evaluated, analysed, and categorised – the history of the fragment does not yet exist.

This thesis will attempt to discern the specificities of the term "fragment". I will attempt to construct and argue for a theory of the fragment as a distinct aesthetic concept found in contemporary art; a category which differs from other applied aesthetic concepts (symbol, index, etc.) by virtue of its partial and open-ended nature. My goal is to offer a propositional structure which can further be tested and applied to works that are defined as fragmented or as composed of fragments.

The proposed research will attempt to provide an in-depth approach and reading of the visual fragment in contemporary artistic practice. In doing so, the research proves significant for two distinct reasons. On a broader scale, the research will bridge art history, art theory, and aesthetics, providing a synthetic reading of different texts, ranging from 17th-century art criticism to contemporary aesthetic discourse, whilst bridging gaps between artistic mediums, often understood as distinct and separated. The thesis will focus specifically on installation art, whilst attempting to provide frameworks for understanding the fragment on a larger scale. My focus on installation art stems from Juliane Rebentisch's assessment that installation art, as an intermedial artistic medium, stresses the constitutive coupling of theory and practice whilst stressing essential issues of art; this aspect of installation art will compliment my intertwining of theory and practice throughout the thesis. The thesis aims to establish a systematic theoretical framework that encompasses the production, being, and consumption of visual arts.

The issue of the fragment as an aesthetic concept is straightforward – its meaning and function often escape signification and divulge into readings of it as a symbol, a metaphor, or other discursive/iconographical models. In other words, the fragment is often defined, as other

categories mentioned, as something that refers to a larger (absent) whole; reading and observing fragments thus requires an acknowledgement of its relation to the (past, absent) whole. In order to work around this presumption, the thesis acknowledges the deconstructivist findings of the slippage of meaning and its denial of such essentialism. It thus proposes to research the basic axioms that define the aesthetic concept of the fragment in several phases and forms – in production, being, and consumption. Following these acknowledgements, the thesis proposes to answer the central research question: *How can a fragment be defined as a specific and distinct aesthetic category found in contemporary installation art?* To do so, I will construct this thesis in a threefold structure – the first chapter will focus on fragmentation (production), the second on the fragment (being) and the third on the fragmentedness of the installation and the reception of it (consumption).

Methodology and Structure

In accordance with the threefold structure mentioned above, the thesis will be divided into three large sections, each dealing with the aforementioned aspects of the fragment. In pursuing my research, I will combine diverse methodologies, whilst predominantly sticking to two methods of research: close readings of literature and artworks and a comparative reading between both. In analysing literature connected to fragmentation and the fragment, I will follow in the deconstructivist notion of closely reading and identifying internal complexities and paradoxes. By way of critically examining the theoretical postulates on which the contemporary usage of the term "the fragment" in contemporary art (theory) is used, I will attempt to build up a definition of the concept that can be utilized to both theoretically and practically "read" the fragment as a specific concept by itself. It is for this reason that close readings of artworks will also be conducted as theoretical concepts do not always seemingly translate into practice. The final, synthetical readings in each chapter, where I will compare my theoretical findings to the practical case studies, is the segment of the thesis which most concretely answers the proposed question and adjacent subquestions related to the fragment. Across the thesis, depending on the nature of the text and artwork, however, my methodological approach will adapt from more focused readings to more synthetical and comparative means.

I will begin in Chapter I. by examining the process of fragmentation as the starting point of the fragment. As fragmentation is often highlighted in art history and art criticism pertaining to artworks defined as "fragmented," it is relevant to probe the nature and definition of the process of fragmentation. To provide a practical definition of fragmentation-as-process, I will attempt to discern differences between contemporary fragmentation, i.e., fragmentation found in contemporary art, to past forms of fragmentation. By doing this, I will touch upon the aforementioned proliferation of diverse fragments. It is my aim in this chapter to highlight

fragmentation as a possible initial base for the differentiation of types of fragments. While analysing the process of fragmentation, I will take up diverse pieces of theory and juxtapose them with practical findings. With this, I will attempt to answer the general guiding question of *how the fragment is created* whilst discerning whether the process of fragmentation influences the fragment's function. Finally, following the thesis's focus on contemporary installation art, I will also focus on another relevant subquestion: *Is the contemporary process of fragmentation different from past fragmentations*?

In the second chapter, I will devote my focus to the fragment as a specific aesthetic category. To argue for its specificity, I will accentuate the partial and open-ended nature of the fragment, as proposed in literature and theory, by juxtaposing it with another important category in art and aesthetics – totality. This juxtaposition is crucial to reading the concept of the fragemtn as any understanding of the fragment implicitly relates to a relation between the fragment and a larger whole, a totality. By contrasting the fragment to its complete opposite in terms of partiality, I will attempt to deconstruct and discern the degree to which the fragment functions as a partial element of a whole. In tracing this outline, I will resort to a comparison between several theoretical models of totality to first outline a practical model, which I will then juxtapose with a theoretical model I will extract from my initial findings in Ch. I and some additional close readings of earlier (Romanticist) and contemporary (post-structural) theories of the fragment. I will finally test these theoretical findings with two concrete examples of artworks, which either accentuate or relativize the proposed fragment – Hito Steyerl's *Power Plants* and Cornelia Parker's *Cold Dark Mass: An Exploded View*. With these two works I will attempt to compare the theoretical propositions related to the materiality, temporality, and semiotics of the fragment to the actual and practical existence of them in the form of an installation composed of fragments. The tracing of the structure of the fragment will thus move from theory and comparison to practise, all the while highlighting the characteristic particular to the fragment. As I will focus on installation art, the function of the fragment in time and space will also be of vital importance for my research and will be taken up in both Ch. II and Ch. III. Finally, following the implications of a specific semantic nature of the fragment in Ch. I, Ch. II will also focus on the semantic relation the fragment has with knowledge-building.

This final point of research will lead me into a consideration of the reception of the fragment in Ch. III. The central concern of this chapter will not be the specificities of the state of being of the fragment – i.e. the temporal and spatial specificities of it; instead, the onus of the chapter will be on the *aesthetic experience*, a term used employed often in the thesis. I take up this term from Juliane Rebentisch's writings on installation art to discern a specific relation between the subject and (aesthetic) object in art and aesthetics. The aesthetic experience will serve as a catch-all term with which I will attempt to consolidate three distinct

elements of the interaction between the fragment and the observer: the temporal and spatial specifics of the fragment, the chain of signification and epistemological grasping, and the open-ended structure of both the fragment and the medium of installation art. To do so, I will attempt to synthesize two distinct yet equally essential actors – the object and the subject. Achieving this will require another series of close readings, synthetical deconstructions and testing my findings with case studies. To research this aspect of the fragment I will trace through theory to identify specific concepts and relations between objects and subjects that relate to the specifics of the fragment identified in Ch. II. An important case study taken up in this chapter is Mike Nelson's *The Coral Reef,* an installation piece which highlights the importance of spatiality and temporality on the subject's perception and reception of fragments, first analysed in Ch. II and presented more concretely in relation to the subject and its relation to the fragment. By inspecting the role of the subject in relation to Nelson's *The Coral Reef*, Sheela Gowda's *Behold*, and other artworks, I will investigate how the fragment contributes to the construction of potential interpretations of an artwork. I will be interested in the ways seeing a fragment influences this interpretation and whether a fragment can be perceived by itself, or whether it requires a sublation on a larger scale.

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When attempting to understand the theoretical basis of the reception of the fragment, I will turn to the literature of reception and reception aesthetics. This field of theory, established in the 1970s and 1980s in the Francophone world, has, per Janneke Wesseling, yet to accumulate a substantial and canonical opus of works on which a theoretical model may be based. Whilst theoreticians, most notably Wolfgang Kemp and Hans Belting, have written on this topic, Wesseling stresses that there is still a significant lacunae of theory in this area and argues that this aspect of reception aesthetics must be stated. Wesseling relates this lack of theory on reception to the championing of the ocularcentrism of Western society and art history.[3] The discourse surrounding phenomenological methodology in art history far exceeds the scope of the thesis and will thus not be divulged further. For transparency, it is vital to point to the objective reasonings for a more theoretically-centred approach.

An attempt at constructing a theoretical base may still be undertaken; following Rebentisch's proposition of an open-ended experience, the following chapter will juxtapose these findings with Benjamin's theory of constellation. This sketch of an idea, which Benjamin proposed in *The Origin of German Tragic Play*,[4] will be one basis for my latter close reading of Rebentisch's *Aesthetics of Installation Art*.[5] Benjamin's theory is productive for the following inquiry as it does not presuppose a naturalistic structure via which the

[3] Wesseling, *The Perfect Spectator*, pp. 14, 18, 50, 201–204
[4] Benjamin, Walter. *Origin of the German Trauerspiel.* Translated by Howard Eiland. Cambridge–London: Harvard University Press, 2019.
[5] Rebentisch, Juliane. *Aesthetics of Installation Art.* Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012.

artistic object obtains meaning; the production of meaning (as much as we are concerned with it) is procedurally structured, therefore, opposite to structures, which Jacques Derrida cautions off in "Structure, Sign, and Play."[6] A large section of the following writing is, because of its inclinations to Benjamin's and Rebentisch's writings, therefore abstract and theoretical. Whilst a phenomenological approach towards the subject would provide us with valuable knowledge and tools to address the reception of a fragment, I concede that the following is notably absent in this chapter. The main reason for this absence is the general lack of literature on this subject.

Case Studies

Before beginning this research, I must touch upon the objects that act as case studies in this thesis. As mentioned before and implied in the title, I will focus predominantly on installation art to inquire into the fragment. This causes some shortcomings in my theory as I will apply a specific aesthetic category to a specific art medium; I concede that the findings in this thesis may not be entirely translatable onto other mediums, such as painting, graphic art, photography. In choosing to opt for installation art, I am following Rebentisch's declaration that installation art "offers an experience of what art, correctly understood, really is"[7] and puts space centre-forward in its manifestation. I will sketch out my thesis with the conviction that space – in conjecture with temporality – accentuates the fragment's open-ended and fluctuating nature. In contrast to sculpture and painting, which are stable and offer themselves to (more or less) one view, installation art requires movement and advancement of the perception in the eyes of the subject; as such it is *always-in-becoming* as I will attempt to argue that the fragment is as well.

In choosing adequate case studies to present this issue, I touch upon artworks, which are composed of partial and minuscule elements, which could be defined as fragments. As such, it is the whole of the artwork which is fragmented, yet, because of the nature of the fragment, which I argue offers itself to be read either by itself or as a part of a whole, these artworks offer the chance to read them as a compendium of fragments and/or fragmented wholes. The latter distinction – either a compendium with no common thread connecting fragments or a tightly knit constellation of fragments – is not crucial in my argument; again, I will argue that both cases potentiate the possibility of reading the fragment as a whole and/or element of a whole. I attempted to include artworks which had been written on regarding their fragmented state, whilst also including some that I argue highlight some structural elements distinct from

[6] Derrida, Jacques. "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Human Sciences." 108–123. In *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader,* ed. by David Lodge with Nigel Wood. London–New York: Longman, 1988.
[7] Rebentisch, *Aesthetics of Installation Art*, p. 14. Further on, Rebentisch attributes this claim to a correct experience of art via installation works by asserting that installation as a medium offers transgression of boundaries that separate "the traditional, the organic work of art from the space that surrounds it[,]" reflecting "the constitutive role of the viewer" (Rebentisch, *Aesthetics of Installation Art*, p. 15).

the fragment. An important example in this thesis is the installation practice of Cornelia Parker, an artist who directly engages with fragmentation, writes on the fragment, and is often written on regarding her use of fragments. During the thesis research, her work emerged as the most explicit in addressing the fragment and its relation to her work. Because of this explicit handling and usage of the term "the fragment" in her work, I often take up several of her projects to test my theoretical findings with her practice; it is not my goal to provide an exhaustive reading of the fragment in the opus of Cornelia Parker, but to highlight her work as a productive example of a contemporary artist's engagement with the fragment and fragmentation.

I. Fragmentation

To begin analysing the fragment we ought to start with its pre-history, fragmentation. As with various aspects of the fragment (many of which will be expanded upon in the following chapters), the history of fragmentation(s) still needs to be created; nor is there a consensus theoretical model through which one may approach the fragmentation process. This, as much of the theory surrounding the fragment, arises symptomatically from the fragment's fragmented nature – the way it appeared in Antiquity is entirely different from how it appeared in the 20th century. As the fragmentation process has undergone a metamorphosis through the numerous centuries of Western civilisation, it is much more practical to approach fragmentation through a typological method rather than through a historically thorough manner.[8] The authors of the book *The Fragment: An Incomplete History* indirectly proposed such an approach.

The monograph, whose aim was to propose a partial framework for tackling the diverse manifestations of fragments, ranges from antique sculpture through classical texts to semantic considerations of fragments and an essay by Cornelia Parker on *Avoided Objects*. Despite variation, the monograph follows William Tronzo's clear distinction of two forms of fragments in Western culture: received and constructed. Per this typological binary, the

[8] In this text, I oppose the assumption that any exhaustive chronological narrative of fragmentation can be compiled and views the project as naively optimistic. The project would logically entail the conglomeration of diverse elements of culture, which differ in materiality, semantics, aesthetics, and history; an overarching category of "fragmentation" would entail an entirely essentialist reading of all Western culture within a framework, which assumes that this "Western culture" can be archaeologically retrieved. As history leads to the destitution and loss of cultural elements and artefacts, this project is *a priori* impossible; however, if it were, it would also be radically essentialist in nature and degrade objects to their production process rather than their specific being. Concerning the fragment with its incomplete and dispersed history, we can quote Blanchot once again: The fragmentary promises not instability /…/ so much as *disarray, confusion* [sic]" (Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, p. 7).

monograph is divided into two parts, examining and theorising the two typological groups. Although simple, this distinction can help us explore the specifics of fragmentation in different historical and aesthetic contexts. The next chapter will explore the binary opposition between received and constructed ideas. It will also analyse how fragmentation affects the semantic, aesthetic, and historical structures of the fragment.

I.I. The Conception of Fragments – Received/Constructed (Tronzo)

To understand why Tronzo opposes received and constructed fragments, we can read his argument in *The Fragment: An Incomplete History* by turning to his "Introduction." In it, Tronzo introduces the basic framework of the monograph, stating that the goal of the monograph is "to bring together scholars and artists from diverse points of view so that their works might play off against one another," as the various manifestations of fragments throughout history necessitate diverse and different methodological approaches.[9] Tronzo states that the primary goal of the monograph is to explore the cultural significance of fragments, which he defines as "parts of things in motion."[10] Referencing several theoreticians, Tronzo points to several binary archetypes, which interplay to define the fragment and fragmentation – oppression/liberation, past/future, and most importantly, received/created fragments.[11]

The "ambivalent" fragment, as Tronzo calls it, arises from "fragmentation"; this broad term is not defined, nor does the author provide any concrete examples to illustrate the diversity he evokes in his text. Instead, he compares the fragmentation process to the big bang in theoretical physics, where fragments can behave in unpredictable ways, leading to volatile trajectories. As atoms may be shattered into smaller pieces, all of which may be dispersed in various directions, so might fragments arise from acts of destruction and creation.[12] Tronzo's argument posits that an atom – illustrative for unity – is shattered into smaller units, which arise as novel parts of the unity – thus illustrating the production of fragments. This entails that a qualitative transformation of the parts of the whole happens once fragmentation occurs. Yet, following theoretical physics, which Tronzo is keen on employing, this leads us to

[9] Tronzo, "Introduction," p. 6.
[10] *Ibid.*
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 1.
[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 4. It is important to stress here that destruction and fragmentation are not the same acts. The act of destruction can be a specific, radically violent act that can lead to fragmentation. In discussing Badiou's theory on destruction, it will be presented as a specific form of reification of "aesthetic purity." In simple terms, importantly for the thesis, destruction can not consistently lead to fragmentation, nor can it always be intentional. As such, these terms are not synonymous – fragmentation is broader than destruction.

question this parallelism's usefulness. In theoretical and quantum physics, the atom is a particle of matter composed of smaller elements, which may be categorised into smaller sub-categories; there is no movement/transformations between these categories – an electron may not be transformed into a proton and vice versa. Once a particle is seceded or "shattered" from an atom, it continues to exist as that type of particle – as an electron, proton, quark, gluon, etc. The shattering of atoms leads only to a shattering of structures, not the production of necessarily novel elements, as Tronzo supposes. As will be seen, fragmentation is much more complex than the simple movement from a pre-existing unity to a singular being.

Tronzo briefly mentions how the intentionality of fragmentation creates a division between received and created fragments. On the one hand, we face fragments – parts of previous wholes – which have survived into the present times through history; the traces of its history are left in the fragmented nature of the artwork. Tronzo points to a fragment of Duccio di Buoninsegna's *Maesta* (fig. 1) as an example of such an artwork, whose dismantling and deconstruction in 1506 led to its fragmentary nature today.[13] There are many other examples of such exterior fragmentations/destructive processes endured by artworks; Dario Gamboni analysed such processes and the motivations behind them in *The Destruction of Art: Iconoclasm and Vandalism Since the French Revolution,* pointing to the political subversion of iconoclasm and vandalism from the 8th century onwards.[14] In contrast to these fragments, which arise from fragmentation, not intended by the artist, created fragments offer the opposite – artworks whose fragmented nature is intentional. These two categories broadly define the two distinct approaches to apprehending fragments as cultural products. Both categories are interspersed through history, as the monographs stress – the "Received" segment covers late antiquity, 18th-century appraisal of the *Laocoön* and Theodor Adorno's aesthetic theory,[15] whilst the "Created" segment touches on Palaeolithic material culture, neo-classicism, and horror cinema.[16] However, Tronzo stresses these categories are not void of limitations,[17] and the following chapter will revert to these limitations through different examples and theories. The primary limitation of Tronzo's theory, stated from the outset, is the convergence of reception and production. By emphasizing the process of cultural reception, which leads to the transformation of the fragment into an object of cultural

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 4.
[14] Gamboni, *The Destruction of Art: Iconoclasm and Vandalism Since the French Revolution*, pp. 17–20. Gamboni's analysis covers the period from the French Revolution onwards as the destruction of artworks from this historical moment onwards as it marks a paradigmatic point of convergence for iconoclasm and vandalism, two distinct forms of destruction of artworks. For more general historical overviews of the destruction of art, Gamboni points to Julius von Végh's 1915 work, *Bilderstürmer* (*Ibid.*, p. 17).
[15] These essays are, respectively, Paolo Liverani's "The Fragment in Late Antiquity: A Functional View," Brigitte Bourgeois's "Fragments of a Revolution: The *Laocöon* in Paris (1789–1814)," and Ian Balfour's " 'The whole is the untrue': On the Necessity of the Fragment (after Adorno)."
[16] These essays are, respectively, John Chapman's and Bisserka Gaydarska's "The Fragmentation Premise in Archeology: From the Paleolithic to More Recent Times," Thomas Crow's "Composition and Decomposition in Girodet's *Revolt of Cairo*," and Fernando Vidal's "Ectobrains in Movies."
[17] Tronzo, "Introduction," p. 6.

appreciation, the processes of fragmentation become obscured. Furthermore, such a classification privileges the transmission of fragments rather than the transmitted fragment; I concede that there are cases wherein the transmission was lost in the past, but this does not entail a complete deferral of the first in recognition of the last. For further clarification on fragmentation, I will stress the mechanisms of fragmentation in this chapter, re-reading Tronzo's binary opposition as an opposition of two distinct forms of fragmentation-in-themselves.

Received fragments are originally whole unities, but as history passes, their unity and totality are subdued to destruction, and thus, fragments arise. This loss of unity, for Tronzo, is irrevocable and leads to the perception of loss of totality, a concept which many other authors this thesis will analyse also touch on. In contrast, the created fragment has no loss or irrevocability; its production process grants it the potential to be apprehended as a cultural product. Thus, implicit linearity and pre-emptive nature are inscribed into fragmentation, contradicting Tronzo's claims of volatility and unpredictability. Tronzo's system discerns intentionality as a vital element of the process of fragmentation – received fragments are (usually) unintentionally fragmented, whilst created are necessarily intentional. Rather than distinguishing this binary opposition based on a singular distinction, I propose to ascertain better the complexities of received and created fragments – to show their contradistinctions and affinities – by discerning the semiotic and aesthetic bases of fragmentation and proposing further distinctions in the processes of fragmentation. First, I shall analyse received fragments by discerning two fragmentation models – insertion and inertion.

I.II. Received Fragments

At face value, received fragments offer a simple schema for fragmentation – destructive actions from external sources shatter a whole artwork or object, and its fragments survive. Therefore, we are provided with a simplistic interpretation of received fragments as holders of historical knowledge, particularly when we encounter antique fragments. Because of the seductive nature of historicism and positivism, several disciplines, such as philology, have attempted to discover the meaning of fragments as bridges to lost totalities; take, for example, the close readings of philosophical fragments of pre-Socratics, whose analysis symptomatically attempts to reconstruct the lost systems of thought in their broader structure.[18] However, rather than attempting to read received fragments as indexes of lost

[18] Most, "On Fragments," pp. 15–16. As a counterargument, Rancière proposes reading Auguste Rodin's *Gates of Hell* as a compendium of individual pieces whose potential is in their potentiality of wholeness; whilst they are individual and distinct pieces, they have the potential to signify a whole (Rancière, *Aisthesis*, p. 160). It

pasts and totalities, the following subchapter proposes an expanded reading of the semiotic movements of received fragments. Rather than reading them as static and solitary visual signs, the subchapter proposes two distinct models through which the fragment acts in relation to other actors and agents – either other artworks or readers/observers – to provide distinct meanings.[19] First, I shall focus on Roman spolia as an example of *insertion* and then shift to Roman marble statues as examples of *inertion*.

I.II.I. Insertion – Roman spolia and re-territorialization

The usage of spolia in antiquity and the Medieval ages raises several complexities and limitations concerning fragmentation, which leads to the production of latter-received fragments. The dislocation and translocation of fragments of previously materialised objects do not provide a straightforward transformation of the meaning of the visual signs, i.e., it does not replace the signifier of the original signified for a new one; instead, as Paolo Liverani emphasizes, the visual sign of the spolia can act as a double-sign, signifying both their original meaning and its previous meaning.[20] The translocation of spolia, thus, exemplifies a technique through which received fragments may manifest themselves, but not in the simple form of indexes of a lost past. Rather than being solely a retroactive agent, they may obtain the role of a synchronous visual sign; as Berk illustrates in his article on Constantine spolia, the latter are usually connected with the ideological intentions of the ruling class.[21] To sum up, spolia can act as a reminder of previous historical or aesthetic models but also gain new meaning and function in novel iconographic and ideological models of art; spolia, visually, are not fixed in meaning but become anchored in one via textual parergon.

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should be noted that Rodin's work does not tackle fragmentation but shows modern and contemporary strivings for totality.

[19] To further clarify the turn toward semiotic readings of received fragments and this form of fragmentation, I turn to the unpredictability and unintelligibility of fragmentation conducted in the historical past. As many artworks, fragmented at some point in the past, were subjected to processes of destruction, shattering, or fragmentation, which cannot be recovered, i.e., we may not obtain any knowledge of these actions; it is very positivistic to assume one may produce a cohesive and coherent survey of the history of fragmentation. In the case of received fragments, we usually operate only with the products of this fragmentation; it is thus suitable to analyse fragmentation, starting from the product of the researched process and by contrasting it with other distinct semiotic forms – e.g., the totality. The method risks conflating production with reception; however, this can act as an intentional fallacy based on the lacunae of knowledge on the historicity of fragmentation; the following chapter takes up this line of thought.

[20] Liverani, "The Fragment in Late Antiquity: A Functional View," p. 31. Liverani's argument is laid out based on his reading of the re-usage of a relief of a Trajanic battle victory to depict Constantine's victory over Maxentius; the relief was repurposed to be included in the Arch of Constantine.

[21] Brenk, "Spolia from Constantine to Charlemagne: Aesthetics versus Ideology," pp. 105–106. Brenk's analysis takes up the pre-established ideological readings of spolia, proposed by – among others – H.P. L'Orange, whilst, in contradistinction, Liverani's reading rests on semantic approaches to spolia, side-lining the importance of politics and ideology on the production and reception of spolia (Brenk, "Spolia from Constantine to Charlemagne: Aesthetics versus Ideology," p. 104; Liverani, "The Fragment in Late Antiquity: A Functional View," p. 31). The issue of spolia is thus still an unresolved scholarly matter.

The movement of received fragments can be read literally as a material act of de-territorialization and re-territorialization, movements proposed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Deleuze and Guattari proposed the concept of de-territorialization and re-territorialization to theorise the strategies actors and agents may conduct/be prone to when seceding from pre-existing structures of power and meaning. Through various methods and strategies, e.g., nomadism, agents and actors may secede from systems of production and consumption to de-territorialise;[22] this de-territorialization may be interpreted in several distinct ways, depending on the field and habitus of its application and the contextual tissue of the theory it proposes.[23] Applying this to spolia, extracting reliefs and architectural elements may be read as de-territorialisation, albeit not self-intentional, but forced. Once seceded from their previous visual and semantic tissue, the spolia is then translocated into a new totality, a new visual object, wherein the meaning of the spolia and their visual signs becomes re-territorialised in a newly constructed system of visual signs.[24] This theoretical model, proposed by Deleuze and Guattari to diagnose schizocapitalism, can serve as a literal framework for reading the distinct semantic and visual changes a received fragment may conduct/be subject to.

In proposing this method of reading the translocation of fragments, common in visual arts, until the modern acknowledgement of the merit of antique art in the 17th/18th century, I intend to expand on Tronzo's simple binary division between received and constructed fragments. Whilst received fragments are subject to historical changes, they are nonetheless active in their interaction with the systems of signs in which they may find themselves; it is thus not sufficient to conclude that their existence, i.e., their history, is enough to merit their value. Focusing on the sole quality of the survival of the visual object, the complexity of the broader framework of its fragmentation may be lost. This is of great relevance, once contrasted to contemporary artistic production, which handles and incorporates received fragments into its system of signs (Ch. I.II.III.). As an early finding, we may discern the importance of semiotic transformations for the process of fragmentation; further subchapters will point to its interplay with the materiality of fragments.

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[22] Deleuze – Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 10–11, 54; Adkins, *Deleuze and Guattari's A Thousand Plateaus: A Critical Introduction and Guide*, pp. 48–49.

[23] These applications range from theoretical considerations of the construction of rhizomatic structures in art history (O'Sullivan, *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari: Thought Beyond Representation*), critical readings of cultural globalization (Appadurai, *Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy*) to accelerationist philosophy (e.g., Nick Land's early writings), to name a select few. This diversity is not only symptomatic of re-readings of Deleuze and Guattari's work but also of Deleuze's writing. As Jean Khalfa noted, Deleuze's concepts "do not so much develop [in his work] in breadth or depth, as duplicate and multiply, forever reappearing in new guises, defining a whole variety of domains[.]" (Khalfa, "Introduction," p. 4).

[24] This notion of reading re-used spolia as parts of larger totalities is the basis of Liverani's reading of the Arco di Portogalo, which employs reliefs of other Roman antique artworks to construct a new totality (Liverani, "The Fragment in Late Antiquity: A Functional View," p. 23).

I.II.II. Inertia – marble statues and loose significations

In contradistinctions to the relatively minuscule reliefs and architectural spolia, which undergo a re-territorialization to be inserted into a new totality and a new system of signs, free-standing artworks, i.e., statues, illustrate a different model of fragmentation. Here fragmentation is once again a process of destruction, which has – for diverse reasons and intents – left the artwork and its totality shattered. This can be gradual – the loss of limbs or singular elements – or severe – botched artworks. In both cases, however, the former totality and image of the artworks are irrevocably lost; as such, meaning is sometimes also susceptible to a loss of fixation. If spolia were integrated and inserted into other co-existing visual systems of signs, therefore not independent, free-standing sculptures could keep their free-standing and singular being; they are not pressed into a symbiotic relationship with other totalities but can retain a botched totality. In short, notwithstanding its botched condition, the free-standing sculpture can keep its singular being, its cohesive and uniform meaning, and its aesthetic merit. These conditions and parameters, however, are not fixated but evince the capacity for the fragment's sliding signification.

As free-standing sculptures may be exhibited independently as evidence of fragmentation, they do not necessarily partake in the process of insertion, i.e., the process of re-territorialization on the material level; in contradistinction, they evince forms of inertion, the stillness of the signified. The fragmentation process thus touches on the material base of the visual sign, exempting the semantic surplus of the fragment. In the visual lacunae, i.e., the parts of the sculpture where the material was lost, the state of inertion may pave the way for a search for totality. Whilst fragmentation does fragment the object, its singular botched totality may not be exempt from glimmers of the previous totality. This elusiveness of fragments led many Classicist artists to construct "perfect" models for fragments, such as that of the *Belvedere Torso* (fig. 2).[25] What is thus parallel to material fragmentation is the loosening of the signifier/signified chain, wherein the lack of an original signifier may be compensated by projecting onto the material fragment new and novel signifiers. Fragmentation and the fragment's inertia as a sign leading to a sliding signification of the signified, receiving and illustrating diverse meanings and signifiers; the territory of the received fragment, which shifts, is not the material territory but the semantic territory.

As a concrete example, I wish to point to the *Belvedere Torso*, an important (fragmentary) Roman sculpture whose role in the theory and history of the fragment extends beyond fragmentation into the theory of the fragment and will be revisited in the following chapter. The *Torso*, a depiction of the god Ajax,[26] was subject to several artistic and

[25] Winckelmann, *The History of Ancient Art. Volume II*, X.III.16.9., X.III.17.14., Winckelmann, "Description of the Torso in the Belvedere in Rome," p. xiv.
[26] Treu, "Ajax," p. 52.

theoretical readings in the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries; in their search for the lost totality – the exact cause of the sculpture's fragmented state is not known – artists produced potential depictions of the past state of the fragment, [27] whilst theoreticians proposed hypothetical identifications of the depicted (demi)god. The semantic conundrum caused by the fragmented sculpture is evinced in the general idea that the sculpture depicted the demi-god Herakles, a theory most notably present in Johann Joachim Winckelmann's survey of ancient art, *The History of Ancient Art*,[28] to which I will return later.

What does this slippage of meaning and proliferation of identifications tell us about fragmentation, and why is it being noted in this context? If the Roman spolia were subject to a slippage of meaning, oscillating between the *two* meanings, new and past meaning – it retroactively signified its previous meaning whilst synchronously providing a new signification – sculptures, such as the *Belvedere Torso* are affected in their potential for signification due to the fragmentation they endured. As the cohesive totality is lost and fragmented, the stable link of the signifier to the signified is also loosened, provoking a proliferation of different readings as Ajax was not confidently identifiable – there was no parergon to assist reading – the fragmented object provoked new readings. The fragmented exited the process of fragmentation as a loose sign, provoking its extension in meaning.[29] Rather than being a double-sign, it becomes a loose signified, further evincing the complex roles fragments play after fragmentation. Both insertion and inertion provoke semiotic loosening and convolution; however, insertion loosens the fragment to replace one semiotic meaning with another, while inertion opens space for multiple ones.

If the previous subchapter noted how the translocation of fragments of artistic totalities into new systems provoked a semiotic and semantic shift of the fragment, the inertia of a self-sufficient sculpture also produces new readings, albeit in a consistent system of signs. The received fragment, usually an illusionary bearer of information from the past, may act as an index of lost totality. Yet, it also plays an active role in the new system and territory it inhabits. The process of fragmentation, in the case of received fragments, is thus not only one of destruction and historical damage but rather a process which extends the potential and meaning of historical objects. This may be asserted for objects with a long(er) history, but what of contemporary artistic objects? In a similar case of translocating historical objects,

[27] Winckelmann, *The History of Ancient Art. Volume II*, X.III.16.9., X.III.17.14., Winckelmann, "Description of the Torso in the Belvedere in Rome," p. xiv. Examples include Michelangelo's taking up of the fragment as the basis for the figure of Saint Bartholomew in *The Last Judgement* (1536–1541) and John Flaxman's repurposing of the *Torso* as the basis for *Hercules and Hebe* (1792).
[28] Winckelmann, *The History of Ancient Art. Volume II*, X.III.16.
[29] This form of signification, I argue, is different to Derrida's *différance*. Derrida's concept evokes a non-exhaustive chain of signification, which connects disparate meanings and signifiers into a chain of signification, which may or may not be communicable. On the other hand, the signification and loosening of semiotic ties in the case of inert fragments lead to new readings of the signified *inside* pre-existing conceptual fields (e.g., ancient mythology). The disparate readings are thus closer to a Wittgensteinian familiarity rather than a deconstructivist *différance* as they do not stray far away from conceptually compact zones.

Parker's *Avoided Objects* series can act as a productive case study; not only does it implement historical objects, but it also stimulated a theoretical consideration of de-territorialization, proposed by Ewa Lajer-Burchart in her reading of Parker's *Avoided Objects* (Ch. II). Thus, let us turn to these objects and identify the affinities they may have with the explicated semiotic shifts of received fragmentation.

I.II.III. Applying In(s)ertia – Contemporary art and Received Fragments, Affinities and Fallacies

First, it is vital to stress the fallacy of the following subchapter – following Iwona Blazwick's typology of Parker's work, *Avoided Objects* represent their specific typology, distinct from fragments;[30] I intend to develop the semiotic and aesthetic dimensions of these objects that share an affinity with received fragments, analysed thus far. Although not resulting from a process of fragmentation, these objects - which are neither installations nor sculptures - involve de-territorialization and slippage of meaning.

According to Parker, *Avoided Objects* involve "taking the most representative and often most clichéd things in our society – familiar objects that are common currency – and using them as a raw material to explore the inverse of the monument"; the "essence" of these objects is a transformation of identities.[31] These objects, such as silver-plated objects, pornographic videotapes, and wedding rings, to name but a few, inhabit specific topoi in a pre-existing system (S_1). These systems may range from ideas, such as domesticity, to religious contexts. In these systems of meaning, these objects may enact their roles and obtain their specific identity. Once Parker subjects these objects to transformation, their function and identity are lost and dislocated from their original system of meaning. By crushing silver-plated objects (fig. 3) or dissolving pornographic tapes, the functional and semantic connection between the object and its perpendicular system is lost, resulting in its deterritorialization. The immediate transformation of the object into an aesthetic object results in its re-territorialization into a new aesthetic system of signs and meanings. By interconnecting disparate objects, whose functions and identities were distinct in their original system, a new system of meaning can be created. To illustrate in more concrete terms – plates, utensils, and glasses each had a distinct function; however, once flattened, they only function as connected objects in a broader project conceived by Parker.

What is thus the central semiotic development of *Avoided Objects*? It is a similar form of translocation as evidenced with Roman spolia; objects are taken from one context and

[30] Blazwick, "The Found Object," pp. 32–35.
[31] Parker, "Avoided Object," p. 93.

translocated to another, metamorphosising their meaning. In speaking of metamorphosis in Parker's work, Lajer-Burchart poignantly asserts that this metamorphosis of objects is enacted solely in the framework of aesthetics, rather than the object becoming a symbol for mythologies or poetry.[32] I take up Lajer-Burchart's view that metamorphosis in late modernism and contemporaneity entails an exclusively aesthetic nature. The signified is once again a double sign as it may allude to the original system and the object's novel aesthetic role. What is different, however, is that the object is now originally a practical, non-artistic object. Encountering an influx of non-artistic elements (rocks, wooden sheds, etc.) in other contemporary practices highlights the relevance of this dimension.

The second affinity is related to the open-ended nature of the *Avoided Object*. As this transformation of identity leads to the production of an aesthetic object, this novel object does not possess a practical, functional meaning; instead, it provides the basis for an interaction an observer might have and can lead to an inexhaustible proliferation of meanings. The novel system is less compact than the original system, and neither is the semiotic link between the signifier and the signified. The *Avoided Object*, present to the observer, thus leads to several semiotic hypothetical readings similar to the inert fragment, e.g., *Belvedere Torso*. One may even be provoked to attempt to reconstruct the object to its original form. It is thus striving where the significant difference between these objects and fragments occurs.

In contrast to the *Belvedere Torso* and *Maesta*, which experienced external fragmentation leading to the shattering of their original totality, Parker's *Avoided Objects* did not. The *Belvedere Torso*, presents itself as a (seemingly) botched totality – whilst not "complete" it has a self-sufficient semiotic value – and the process of its fragmentation resulted in creating several distinct objects, which we cannot accumulate together into a reconstructed totality. This irreversible loss of the fragment's original state will be developed further in the next chapter; for now, we may assert more straightforwardly that *Avoided Objects* metamorphose objects rather than fragment them. Despite this, they display similar trends in de-territorialization and slippage of meaning.

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Despite reading affinities between *Avoided Objects* and the semiotics of received fragments, it can be argued that the model of received fragments and fragmentation is insufficient for contemporary artistic production. The typology's fallacy is twofold. First, it was indicated that received fragments often serve as indexes of lost pasts, totalities, and irreversible historical and temporal loss. When contemporary artistic production incorporates temporality and functionality within synchronous contemporaneity, it becomes problematic to engage with signs that reference loss and irreversibility on a grander scale, like the disappearance of

[32] Lajer-Burchart, "Metamorphoses," p. 87.

ancient civilizations. Whilst they may exhibit degrees of indexicality, it is difficult to assert the same degree as evinced in pre-modern fragments. Contemporary artists attempt to present fragments that had undergone a process of fragmentation in the past – they thus defer to an irrevocable past state – however, this is often supplemented with fiction, which makes the past more potent.

Examples of installations, which propose fictitious or personal histories to supplement the lack of historicity of the individual fragments, are vast. To name but a few, I may point to Ilya Kabakov's *The Man Who Flew Into Space From His Apartment* (fig. 4), an installation of a room in which objects and architecture are destroyed and fragmented. The room had retained a past state and meaning, which, once destruction had occurred, was de-territorialised and re-territorialised into an aesthetic environment. But, once again, the fictitious narrative of a man jumping from this room into space argues for the historicity of the installation but does not supplement the lack of a history of the object. Similarly, Haris Epaminonda's installation "encyclopaedias" of found objects, some of them deformed and fragmented, are semiotically tied to her personal interests and mythologies – they are chosen for their qualia rather than for their intrinsic value(s)[33] (such as in Parker's practice); the history of the individual elements is a surplus, which does not make the content and meaning of the artwork potent. *Vol. XXVII* (fig. 5), an installation the Cypriot artist created comprising contemporary renditions of antique columns, furniture pieces, sculptures, etc., functions as a cohesive installation due to the artists' intent in collecting these fragments from pre-existing systems and incorporating them into a new system – it is similar to spolia; however, the pre-existing system does not crucially invoke through the individual signs. Their history is lost in their translocation and re-territorialization, and their meaning is morphed.

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Finally, turning to Parker's work, *Cold Dark Mass: An Exploded View* (fig. 6), may act as another crucial example of the importance of narrativity and fiction. The work presents the viewer with a recollection of fragments of a shed, which the English military destroyed with explosives, under the directions of Parker; the shed is not reconstructed as an imitation of its former self but in the form of a constellation of charred and burned fragments, formed around a lightbulb in the centre. Parker stressed that the onus of the work lies in the visual and physical dimensions of the work, creating a dramatic scenery in which the viewer engages with the results of an explosion. The narrative of the explosion of the shed strings together a chain of events that precede the present fragment; these events act as evidence of the past for

[33] *May You Live in Interesting Times: Biennale Arte 2019, Short Guide*, p. 70. Whilst not inherently a product of destruction, Epaminonda's work and its partiality evoke the aesthetics of a fragmented object, thus finding a place in this inquiry; it is not a representative example but rather a supplementary one to stress certain structural principles in fragmentation. Whether Epaminonda's practice corresponds to other forms of (material), fragmentation is, however, the subject of another discussion, far exceeding the frame of this one.

which the fragment is an index. Here, it is not such a sign, but that will be developed in later chapters. But, again, it points to the relevance of supplemental narratives and (hi)stories that argue for the fragment's history. The second reason for the inadequacy of the received fragment in contemporary art thus resides in the implications of this fictionality. Unlike the free-standing marbles, contemporary installation art often relies on adjacent text to invite viewers into reading it. The substantive text, as Juliane Rebentisch emphasizes, plays an important, albeit not vital, role in the being of an installation. It can act as a reading of the installation and an argument for its alleged indexicality. The inability "to speek" received fragments have is compensated by using fiction to account for their past; contemporary art, which is created in synchronious presentness, on the other hand, manifests its own history via text, which explicates the artist's intent to fragment.

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Returning to Tronzo's binary division, I propose understanding received fragments as bearers of knowledge of complex semiotic shifts rather than bearers of historical knowledge; this latter idea, which leads to historical conjecture, seems to be reductionist to aesthetic objects. At the point of convergence with contemporary practice, though, the dimension of intentionality proposed by Tronzo becomes of great relevance. While I have discerned the manners in which fragmentation may affect fragments and their meaning, contemporary practice shows that these processes begin because of an artist's intent. It is thus significant to shift attention to the intent on the artists' end, which warrants the aesthetic value to both the production process and the final product. In the following subchapters, I will follow the lineage and theory of intentional fragmentation to pursue the realisation of contemporary artistic fragmentation.

I.III. Created Fragments

Continuing the inquiry into fragmentation, the following subchapters will take up "created fragments" as the starting point for analysing *intentional fragmentation*. Unlike the received fragments, whose existence as fragments was based on their historicity and (circumstantial) fragmented state, "created fragments" will be read as products of intentional artistic production. It is thus of central importance in the following subchapters to deduce the influence of the artist's intent in creating fragmented forms to discern the strategies through which fragmentation may occur. The following subchapters will begin with a historical overview of Jena Romanticist fragmentation before advancing to 20th-century fragmentation

via theoretical aesthetics and finally attempting to comprehend contemporary fragmentation in the face of discourses concerning fraying and destruction.

I.III.I. German Romanticism

When tracing the genealogy of the modern theory of the fragment and fragmentation, an essential point of departure lies in the period of Romanticism, [34] specifically Jena Romanticism. Jena Romanticists, poets and philosophers explicated their theoretical postulates on fragments as aesthetic models and fragmentation as a distinct model of artistic expression whilst circulating these ideas in Jena, the first significant centre of the Romanticist movement in Germany. [35] The fragment was the Early Romanticist poetic form *par excellence*.[36] Whilst closer readings of Jena Romanticist texts on the fragment reveal a high degree of affinity to poetry as the preferred field for the manifestation of the fragment, not visual arts, the paradigmatic nature of this theory requires an inquiry into the outlines of the fragment, as presented by writers, such as Friedrich Schlegel, Friedrich Schiller, Novalis, and others. In the next chapter, the fragments as a specific form of aesthetics, as theorised by Jena Romanticists, will be further developed; for now, I shall focus on fragmentation as present in the writings of the writers, as mentioned earlier.

Schiller's *Letters for the Aesthetic Education of Man*

Firstly, we may discern an understanding of fragmentation, which is analogous to forms of atomisation; by fracturing totalities, individual novel objects may be formed, which in themselves form a totality. This lineage of fragmentation is usually tied to social critique rather than aesthetics. The most distinct example of such a theory resides in Friedrich Schiller's *Letters for the Aesthetic Education of Man*. In this text, Schiller evokes the concept of the fragment and fragmentation; however, his theory does not touch specifically on the arts

[34] When referring to Romanticism in the following text, I explicitly refer to the aesthetic and artistic movement of the 19th century. The movement is aesthetically and historically delimited to European philosophical, literary and artistic achievements and actors who proclaimed their art as Romanticist or shared similar aesthetic, literary and/or philosophical traits. This definition of Romanticism is opposed to the alternative (ahistorical) reading of Romanticism, proposed by Jean-Luc Nancy and Phillipe Lacoue-Labarthe, who argue that Romanticism is a distinct form of aesthetics and thought, whose manifestations extends past the 19th century into contemporary times (Lacoue-Labarthe – Nancy, *L'absolu littéraire*). I argue that this ahistorical reading of Romanticism causes difficulties in attempting to discern the specifics of Romanticist thought and aesthetics as it proposes a larger pool of artworks and literary texts whose production, meaning, and function range widely. Therefore, when conducting close readings and historical surveys, I believe it is more practical to maintain the classical definition of Romanticism, present in the texts by authors such as Rudiger Safranski and Isaiah Berlin, whom I reference in this thesis.
[35] Safranski, *Romanticism: A German Affair,* pp. 31–33, 49–52; Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism,* pp. 131–132.
[36] Lacoue-Labarthe – Nancy, *L'absolu littéraire,* p. 58.

but Schiller's "sociological" critique of contemporaneity.[37] Schiller critiques the post-French Revolution reality and society by pointing toward the mechanisation and automatisation of society and industry – he writes of Man as "having nothing in his ears but the monotonous sound of the perpetually revolving wheel."[38] In Schiller's theory, societal and industrial progression led to the individual Man's alienation and the destruction of an idealised unity of society. Man becomes a part of a former whole, with the latter being lost in *negative fragmentation*.[39] This critical stance, which may be interpreted as proto-sociological,[40] was echoed in many subsequent works of humanities, such as Karl Marx's political philosophy,[41] the Frankfurt School critique of (late) capitalism, [42] Georg Simmel's theory of the fragmentation of society in the cosmopolis,[43] and, importantly for this research, in Linda Nochlin's theory on the fragment in (post-)Impressionism, which will be read in-depth later.

Schiller's sociologically charged text touches only tangentially on the visual arts; in the text, Schiller proposes art to have a paradigmatic potential to educate and cultivate the individual in the age of mechanisation and alienation. Herbert Marcuse and Rancière later picked up on this pedagogical and political dimension of aesthetics;[44] for this research, however, it is safe to proclaim Schiller's understanding of fragmentation as distinctly non-aesthetic in a contemporary sense. Its most rudimentary diagnosis presents fragmentation as the process unveiled as society progresses – its technological and mechanical progression goes hand in hand with the individualisation of its societal components, i.e., people. Fragments thus signify autonomous individuals, whilst fragmentation is the abstraction of society into these singular fragments. Schiller's work is still of relevance in numerous fields of humanities not only based on its echoes in (post-)Marxism but also because it conceptually complements other Romanticist ideas. In its attempt to diagnose the specificity of the post-Revolutionary era and its fragmentation, Schiller's theory portrays the fragmentation process as distinctly modern and "of its time". If we were to use contemporary terminology, we might

[37] This sociological reading of Schiller's work is the dominant reading, presented by Safranski, who reads the work contextually through Schiller's relationship with the French Revolution and its effects on German society (Safranski, *Romanticism: A German Affair,* pp. 21, 23)
[38] Schiller, *Letters for the Aesthetic Education of Man*, let. VI.
[39] *Ibid.* The term *negative fragmentation* is a neologism used to discern the two opposite poles presented in this reading of Jena Romanticist theory of the fragment; Schiller himself does not determine any qualitative value regarding the process of societal fragmentation. Tracing both Schlegel's and Schiller's attachment to the lost totality, we may provisionally illustrate a similar affinity towards the idea of a lost past, which also pervaded Romanticist literature; through this line of thought, there might be an implicit ambivalence towards the fragment, but, as exemplified through the references to authors, writing fragmentary texts, the form of the fragment was widely accepted as a novel form with literary and aesthetic merit.
[40] Safranski, *Romanticism: A German Affair*, pp. 23–24.
[41] E.g., Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844.* Schiller's critical assessment of the individual's self-recognition in labour and the subsequent loss of identity in the process of industrialisation may be seen as echoed in the classical Marxist theory of alienation (*Entfremdung*), albeit the Marxist theory presents Schiller's dissatisfaction in a more theoretically layered manner.
[42] E.g., Benjamin, *One Way Street*.
[43] E.g., Simmel, *On the Concept and Tragedy of Culture*.
[44] Marcuse, *Eros, and Civilization*; Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, pp. 23–24.

label this as Schiller's view of fragmentation as symptomatic of the ages. In Romanticist thought, it is very similar to Herder's claims that each specific concept and model is logically developed in its own time and that each epoch is self-sufficient in its being and meaning.[45]

With this symptomatic reading of fragmentation, however, a significant inadequacy of Schiller's negative fragmentation is revealed – the fragmentation of society is *unintentional*. Society as a compendium of individuals is subjected to fragmentation and fracturing, meaning its fragmented form is not (entirely) intentional, but circumstantial. However, when discussing contemporary aesthetic production, fragmentation is usually conducted intentionally, and its fragmented form is not circumstantial. This leads us from negative fragmentation to *positive fragmentation*.

Novalis's poetry and Schlegel's philosophy

Unlike Schiller, whose theory of post-Revolutionary German society emphasized fragmented life, contemporary writings of authors such as Novalis (Georg Friedrich Philipp von Hardenberg) and Friedrich Schlegel exemplify a synchronous development of a modality of fragmentation, which I propose to term *positive fragmentation*. By terming this modality "positive," I am referring to an overarching concern with the agency of the author/artist, who fragments forms, rather than the passivity of the fragmented object. The focus of this modality of fragmentation shifts from the fragmented object being the sole object of concern to acknowledging the agent of fragmentation – the author/artist finally comes centre-stage in the process of fragmenting. Negative fragmentation focuses on reading fragmentation, whereas positive fragmentation generates fragments. This essential distinction leads us to consider a few vital examples of how Jena Romanticists proposed to fragment forms, predominantly in poetry and philosophy.

The practice of fragmentation is evident in poetry and literature. In the German context, Novalis' poetry serves as a clear example of the practice of fragmentation. Novalis wrote his literature in fragmentary form, with publications occurring both during his life and in large parts posthumously. Instead of writing cohesive, narratively structured poetry, Novalis often opted for shorter poetic forms, whose content only implied larger narratives or tableaus, rather than narrativizing them and crafting histories.[46] Novalis, whose poetic fragments were published in the most influential journals of Jena Romanticism – *The Athenaeum,* edited by

[45] It is thus not surprising to read that other Jena Romanticists touch on social fragmentation, albeit in different manners. For example, Novalis, taking up a positive reading of the creation of society, proclaimed: "Before abstraction, everything is one, but one like chaos; after abstraction, everything is united again, but this union is a free binding of autonomous, self-determined beings. Out of a mob, a society has developed, chaos has been transformed into a manifold world." (Novalis, *Pollen*, fr. 95).
[46] Safranski, *Romanticism: A German Affair,* pp. 67, 71.

Friedrich and Wilhelm Schlegel - were often the subject of analysis for many other Jena Romanticists.[47] In his literature, fragments obtained a concrete form as poetry, which acted as a text whose meaning and reading are indeterminable – it is not fully developed in its concrete form but evinces potential for further readings. In Novalis's case, the implementation of fragments, i.e., the fragmentation of epic poetry into smaller components, was a conscious decision based on his intent to counter "the art of writing books," which he criticised as "not yet [being] invented;" opposed to this, Novalis advocates for fragments "[a] kind of literary seed[.]"[48] This agency in his fragmentation sets his fragments apart from contemporary British Romanticist fragmentation. While we may also identify poetic fragments in the opus of Lord Tennyson and William Wordsworth, as Anne Janowitz notes, their fragments result from being published in anthologies. Because of practical limitations – the publication form of an anthology – these poets opted to fragment their poems;[49] Novalis, on the other hand, started from a consideration of the fragment and coherently continued this practice both in poetry and in political theory. This form, which allowed Novalis brevity and quick explorations of diverse topics, enabled him to touch on topics of poetry, politics, and philosophy, notwithstanding their specificities.[50] What his practice was missing, however, was a *theory.*

A more abstract, somewhat theoretical approach to fragmentation may be found in Novalis's close collaborator, Friedrich Schlegel. Schlegel's position in the theory of the fragment is of essential importance. He is often considered in scholarly literature as both the leading proponent of German Romanticist fragmentation and broadly of modern fragmentation per se. In his writings, once again comprising fragments, Schlegel opted for a philosophical approach to diverse topics of interest. Ranging from politics, education, and arts to fragments as literary forms, Schlegel's fragments offer a vast depository of concepts and theories. Similarly to Novalis and other Romanticists, however, these are not systematised. In his writings on fragments, Schlegel proposed comprehending fragments as specific forms of communication and meaning, which may oppose the positivistic ideals of totality and wholeness. Countering this cohesion, Schlegel proposed fragments as partial bits of knowledge whose meaning, and substance transcend their brevity.[51]

More concretely, Schlegel proposed understanding fragments as pieces of knowledge whose larger meaning is connected to plans. Plans or ideas are abstract modals which cannot be fully translated into a limited form of language; they cannot be fully translated into

[47] *Ibid.*, p. 67.
[48] Novalis, *Pollen,* f. 114.
[49] Janowitz, "The Romantic Fragment," p. 483.
[50] This interest in diverse topics and divisions of life is commonplace among Jena Romanticists. Safranski notes that Schlegel and Novalis exemplified a particular interest in embracing "everything that promises to be interesting for their education (*Bildung*), as opposed to training in a discipline (*Ausbildung*)" (Safranski, *Romanticism: A German Affair*, p. 33).
[51] Otabe, "Friedrich Schlegel and the Idea of the Fragment," p. 62.

communication. Rather, in brief, forms, which Schlegel and Novalis produced, these plans may be alluded to whilst maintaining their transcendent nature.[52] Fragments are thus written intentionally, briefly, and non-exhaustively to propose multiple interpretations and readings. Once again, we are thus faced with fragments whose semiotic nature is non-exhaustive, plural, and whose signification is loose. Fragments may be read in multiple ways, as they are not tied to a broader system but only allude to systems of thought – they are signifieds for signifiers, whose locus must be located by the reader. To potentialise this loose nature, Romanticists employed tactics, such as irony and paradox, stemming from the fragmented nature of the form and the theory itself. Circularly, we may thus assert the following – by fragmenting thought and form, Jena Romanticists created a vast repository of multi-layered fragments, whose diverse readings and meanings contradict each other, further fragmenting the theory of fragmentation itself. A feedback loop occurs. The implications of this will be further developed once the fragment as such is analysed in the following chapter: for now, it will suffice to conclude that there is no one over-arching strategy Jena Romanticism proposes for fragmentation. Instead, it only exemplifies the potential of intentionally creating brief texts, understood as fragments.

Hovering over all these fragmentations, however, resides a common notion of a world and subject fragmented. In Romanticist fashion, the positivism and optimism of science were criticised as fragmenting the world and Nature into categories and divisions; modalities, such as the divine and sublime, were thus expelled from the epistemological negotiation with the world in place of bare empiricism. To undermine this fragmentation and categorisation of knowledge and the exterior, the Romantic subject approaches objects through their intuitive appearance to the subject.[53] The object does not present itself as epistemologically exhausted but as a conceptualisation of the subject and the universe.[54] An omnipresent transcendence resides in an object that cannot be exhausted and fragmented; similarly, a fragment transcends classical knowledge and may not be fully exhausted. Therefore, the Romantic project of fragmentation connects to more significant epistemological concepts, which, however, extend beyond the concerns of this chapter.

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[52] *Ibid.*, pp. 61–62.

[53] As Novalis had asserted: "By endowing the commonplace with a higher meaning, the ordinary with a mysterious respect, the known with the dignity of the unknown, the finite with the appearance of the infinite, I am making it Romantic." (Novalis, *Logological Fragments I,* f. 66)

[54] Novalis, *Pollen*, f. 90; Safranski, *Romanticism: A German Affair,* pp. 72–73, 80, 127. Notions of an I, whose parallel may be observed in the dynamic life-process of history and nature, can be found in Fichte's *Crystal-Clear Report to the Public at Large on the True Nature of Philosophy*, a treatise, which influenced Novalis's philosophy (Safranski, *Romanticism: A German Affair*, pp. 46–47, 70–71). There is thus a logical continuity of thought found among Jena Romanticists, however, covering this would far exceed the frame of this thesis.

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Jena Romanticist fragmentation theory is worth noting as it exemplifies a considerate system of fragmenting and producing fragments. Unlike previous aesthetic endeavours, which attached a specific aura to the fragment as an index, Romanticist fragmentation presents a complex fragmentation frame, encompassing many semiotic elements already analysed in the previous segment. As Romanticists utilised language units for communicating novel and ironic ideas, they re-territorialised these units, extracting them from the classical system of signification to novel systems of thought, often uncohesive and fragmented. These new fragmented systems were open to re-readings and thus became loose in signification. We are thus faced with a process of fragmentation, which intentionally loosens semiotic links between the fragment and its supposed signifier. Meaning evades the fragment and is anchored by the subject; the importance of Romanticism is thus not only this new approach to fragmentation but also the vital role of the subject.

Let us briefly consider the shortcomings and potential of fragmentation, as evidenced in Jena Romanticism, to examine contemporary installation art. The most obvious shortcoming is the medium in which fragmentation is conducted by Schlegel, Novalis, et al. – *poetry*. By "poetry," German Romanticists did not understand only personal lyric prose, but production in general – *Poesie* denoted the foundational production of language art, similar to the Greek understanding of poetry.[55] In creating literary texts, the means of production are entirely different from the means of production of visual arts. In contrast, the latter requires (usually) a manipulation of limited material forms, and literary fragmentation arises positively from abstract language units. Whereas visual arts require the handling of limited materials and are thus limited in their permutations,[56] language, in contrast, presents itself as highly plastic and flexible. Its mode of signification is also distinctly different, as it is not tied to a concrete visual sign, whereas the visual arts are necessarily intrinsically tied to visuality. The medium in which Jena Romanticism fragments and proposes fragmentation is thus entirely distinct from the medium in which installation art is conceived.

Returning shortly to Schiller's fragmentation, an even more significant disharmony may be observed between Schiller's proto-sociological fragmentation and contemporary visual fragmentation. Whereas Schiller writes of sociological and political shifts, visual arts are concerned with the production of forms. Whilst not insignificant – the social dimension of fragmentation returns in politically and socially charged installations, such as in Parker's

[55] Schlegel, *On The Study of Greek Poetry*, p. 109 (not. 1).
[56] This is not entirely the case anymore with modelling and rendering software development, which has been implemented into visual arts. With software programs like Blender and VR technology, an artwork's materials, forms, and location could be more extensive. Permutations of virtual models are multiple and diverse, thus distancing such art from the plastic arts, whose materiality and limitedness interested classical aesthetics, e.g., Lessing's text on *Laocöon*.

recent interpretation of *Cold Dark Mass: An Exploded View*, whose meaning now rests on the political context of the 1990s[57] – it would be radically reductionist to ascribe any form of fragmentation in arts to sociological shifts.

Finally, and relevance of Romanticism fragmentation must be noted. Romanticist fragmentation's essential novelty is the stress that Romanticists put on fragmenting thought and form. Rather than being a passive form of changing meaning and form, fragmentation was understood as a paradigmatic form of production. Rather than being indexes and "bridges" to historical pasts, Romanticist fragments were products whose production – fragmentation – was an active process with aesthetic, semiotic, and political implications. In transcending classical forms – epic poems, philosophical treatises, etc. – Jena Romanticists exemplified a willingness to produce new forms of expression, thus opening the possibility of manipulating pre-existing forms – fragmenting them and creating partial totalities from past totalities. Rather than reterritorializing pre-existing texts, Romanticists created new, distinct territories of expression. As exemplified in subsequent centuries, this territorial production becomes more visible. While Romanticists were occupied with fragmenting language and thought, their striving for agency in doing so enabled the subsequent development of producing new fragmented forms. To bridge the gap between Romanticism and the 20th century, I will explore Niklas Luhmann's theory on media and form.

I.III.II. Forms and Media – Fragmenting pre-existing objects and elements (Luhmann)

While proposing several productive concepts and modalities of fragmentation, German Romanticist theory cannot account for the material fragmentation in contemporary visual arts. Its proto-sociological and cosmological undertones aside, the focus on one unique mode of aesthetic expression – literature – complicates the translation of Romanticism theory into visual forms of expression. To bridge the gap between these modes of aesthetic expression and production, I propose focusing on the distinction between media and form, proposed by German sociologist Niklas Luhmann, to find a compromise between diverse media and models of aesthetic communication.

Luhmann's approach to art is based on his questioning the specificities of the medium of art. In his text, "The Medium of Art", Luhmann proposed to understand works of art as "not just traces left by human activity in the observable world[,]" but as objects that "serve, to take a minimal limiting criterion, [for] communication of meaning."[58] Because of his stress on

[57] Parker – Schlieker, "Matter and What it Means," pp. 18–19, 28–29; Blazwick, "Power Structure," pp. 191–192.
[58] Luhmann, "The Medium of Art," p. 101.

the meaning and semantics of the works of art, Luhmann's theory strives to identify and delimit the medium through which a work of art communicates with the observer.[59] This stress on communication and semantics, I believe, is productive, as it is vital in establishing the aesthetic dimension of fragmentation itself. The received fragments were (predominantly) a result of circumstantial destruction and fracture or were tied to more extensive political programs; in contrast, Romanticist fragments, created intentionally, result from fragmentation qua aesthetic production. The dimension of communication is already present in Jena Romanticist fragments, which attempted to communicate their plan via language; the medium was thus, *en face*, language. However, Luhmann's engagement with the medium and form may help us further develop this trend toward the aesthetics of fragmentation.

In differentiating "media" and "form," Luhmann opts for a distinction based on the degree of dissolubility and the receptive capacity for fixations of shape. In concrete terms, Luhmann understands "media" as loose couplings of multiple elements, which can be transformed into multiple combinations. Media thus show a high degree of dissolubility and receptivity for fixations of shape.[60] An illustrative example of media is usually sand, a loose coupling of sand particles that can become more tensely coupled into an imprint of, for example, a shoe print. By this logic, a "form" is "generated in a medium via a tight coupling of elements."[61] Luhmann, writing in *Art as a Social System,* argues that "the medium can be observed only via forms, never as such";[62] the "essence" of a medium is thus not graspable or visible, as that would entail the collapse of the distinction between medium and form[63] – an observer is only in contact with the concrete forms, which can only allude to the medium that transcends it. It is through the "concentration of relations of dependence between elements," e.g., by the tight coupling of characters into alphabetical order, that a form may be grasped.[64]

Staying in the field of forms, it is essential to note that Luhmann proposes media comprises various elements, whose grasping ought to be selective, whilst forms are much more distinct. This specificity and distinction of singular forms lead to an evolutionary development of forms. For example, linguistic forms, such as a letter, can evolve into a word, the coupling of these forms leads to a sentence, the coupling of sentences into text. A form can thus also develop – if it achieves the required degree of dissolubility and receptivity – into a medium through which media's evolution and complexity are manifested.[65] In these differences between medium and form, Luhmann situates the medium of art.

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[59] *Ibid.*
[60] Luhmann, *Art as Social System,* pp. 103–104; Luhmann, "The Medium of Art," p. 102.
[61] Luhmann, *Art as Social System*, pp. 104–105.
[62] *Ibid.*, p. 106.
[63] Rebentisch, *Aesthetics of Installation Art*, p. 82.
[64] Luhmann, "The Medium of Art," pp. 102–103.
[65] Luhmann, *Art as Social System*, pp. 106–107.

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Using music as an example, Luhmann illustrates how the acoustic units of sound are a medium whose coupling into form is circumstantial or meaningful. Meaningful couplings of acoustic sounds lead to compositions (based on selection and internal logic). The form of music decides the combination of sounds and the continuation of melodies. The particular arrangements which come to fruition are, as Luhmann indicates, a medium itself – a composition can be performed, wherein the performance is a form of the composition whose elements are either loosely or tightly coupled.[66] The minute details between performances point to the different degrees of concentration of sounds and composition. A similar notion is true of literary art, where a development – alphabet, words, sentence, text, thought, system – is evidenced. Finally, this discovery of form and media led to the development of communication and alternative models of communication. With Romanticist fragmentation, the development from the discovery of epistemic and scientific systems seems to have led to the fragmentation of thought. With the acknowledgement of the development of the literary arts, fragmentation acts as a deliberate detraction from systematisation into partiality.

Luhmann acknowledges the difference between literary and visual arts – the first can be read by (almost) anyone, whilst the latter's visual nature implies different viewings.[67] I wish to leave Luhmann's engagement with art as a social system aside and stick with the formalist notions of his theory. In writing on the differences as mentioned earlier, Luhmann notes: "Although perceptual media and artistic genres differ in terms of their concrete materialization, they share a common ground in the way they construct novel medium/form relations that are intended to be observed and are intelligible only when this is understood. The unity of art resides in that it creates for the sake of observation and observes for the sake of being observed, and the medium of art consists in the freedom to create medium/form relations."[68] Re-asserting the perceptive nature of art, Luhmann opens the possibility of reading visual arts as intentional productions of novel forms. With installation art, wherein novelty is commonplace and where repetition and insertion of pre-existing objects (columns, paintings, etc.) are also evident, we may observe consistent formations of medium/form distinctions. The movement from medium to form and vice-versa is the structure of de-territorialization and formation of constellations.

Jena Romanticists intentionally retracted their literary work from whole systems of thought back to the medium – thought itself. The literary fragment was constructed using this medium, which was transformed into a form. This fragment thus communicates differently

[66] Luhmann, "The Medium of Art," pp. 104–105.
[67] Luhmann, *Art as Social System*, pp. 115–116. Luhmann does, however, propose that the distinction between medium and form presents a structural similarity amongst all artistic genres; in *Art as Social Systems,* he illustrates this thought poetry as a case study (Luhmann, *Art as Social System*, pp. 123–126).
[68] Luhmann, *Art as Social System*, pp. 117.

than a system, which will be the focus of the next chapter. Cornelia Parker also enacts a similar backtrack for intentional production in visual arts. Using a garden shed, a distinct form, destroying it and repurposing it for an installation piece, the shed becomes the medium whose form is distinct. The intent here is the aesthetic production of a novel form. The retraction and production of this novel form are also communicated to the observer via textual and photographic means. To point to another example, the rocks from a cliff in Dover, used in *Neither from Nor towards* (fig. 7), also metamorphose from a natural form into a medium for producing a new aesthetic form. In Parker's practice, fragmentation, i.e., the destruction of pre-existing objects violently, leads to the dissolution of a tightly coupled form into a loosely coupled medium, whose repurposing results in a novel form. The fragmentation, read in this manner, is thus aesthetic and distinct from the passive inertia and translocation exemplified in Chapter I.II.II. It is contemporary and novel as it treads the line between distinct modalities to construe new aesthetic forms – be it as installations or as sculptures.

Visual arts and literary arts, taken up as models of media/form distinction, elucidate meta-movements in between the levels of units they implement into their production. If read in such a way, a bridging gap – meta-communication – is construed between the different means of aesthetic expression. However, this framework's structural logic and existence – whilst asserted – is not justified in Luhmann's text. As Luhmann's study covers predominantly art from the 19th century onwards, it fits into the same epochal framework in which Jacques Rancière and Alain Badiou present their claims for the existence of such meta-artistic tendencies.

I.III.III. 20th century Fragmentation - From constructing to (de)constructing forms and plots

I.III.III.I. Aestheticizing parts in the age of aesthetic regimes (Rancière)

Jacques Rancière has produced a notably varied opus of philosophical work, ranging from early Althusserian-inspired re-readings of Marxist theory to historic-philosophical readings of archives of French 19th-century workers to, in his latter phase, aesthetics. Rancière employs a distinct model of thought in his negotiation with aesthetics, which attempts to recognise art and aesthetics' intrinsic and structural ties with politics. As per Rancière, art – the sensible engagement with reality – is intrinsically tied to regimes of emotion and perception. These regimes, of which Rancière explores three distinct sets, reflect and identify the arts; they are a "mode of articulation between ways of doing and making, their corresponding forms of visibility, and possible ways of thinking about their relationships[.]"[69] Whilst layered and

[69] Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible,* p. 10.

complex, these regimes can be summed up for a quick introduction to Rancière's broader project.

Starting with the ethical regime, Rancière notes that the articulation of art in ethical manners is tied to the Platonic polemic against the simulacra of painting, poetics, and theatre; Rancière, analysing Plato, considers the teleology, i.e., the model of arts as practices with precise ends, as the model, which distinguishes the ethical regime.[70] As Rancière states, for the ethical regime, "it is a matter of knowing in what way images' mode of being affects the *ethos*, the mode of being of individuals and communities."[71] Ethical considerations of representational – what should be represented and in what manner – constitute the articulation of doing and making and all potential forms of visibility. In contradistinction, Rancière notes that the representative regime of the arts, which was materialised afterward the ethical regime, "is characterised by the separation between the idea of fiction and lies. This regime confers autonomy on the arts' various forms in relation to the economy of communal occupations and the counter-economy of simulacra specific to the ethical regime of images."[72] Seceding from Plato, the representative regime autonomised *mimesis*, according to Aristotle's writings – the arrangement of images and a poem's action was not tied to fabrication but became an intelligible structure.[73] The polemic of simulacra was side-lined as the ethics of representation loosened; a division between reality and fiction became sensible in art. "To pretend is not to put forth illusions but to elaborate intelligible structures," Rancière proclaims in *The Politics of Aesthetics.*[74]

In *The Politics of Aesthetics*, and more prevalently in *Aisthesis*, Rancière focuses his theory on the final regime of the arts – the aesthetic regime. This regime, according to Rancière, occurred around the 18th century and represented a distinct paradigm; in contradistinction to the representative regime, the aesthetic regime declared that the principle of the arts is not found in fiction (representative regime) or *mimesis* (ethical regime), but in certain arrangements of signs and images. Empirical succession and constructed necessity – some of the defining factors of Aristotle's *Poetics* – are revoked in the aesthetic regime of the arts and are replaced with visible traces of the visible and sensible.[75] "In the aesthetic regime of the arts, "the regime /…/ identifies art in the singular and frees it from any specific rule, from any hierarchy of the arts, subject matter, and genres."[76] Following this heterogeneity of art, Rancière proposes to analyse the metamorphoses of art in the aesthetic regime through

[70] *Ibid.*, pp. 20–21.
[71] *Ibid.*, p. 21.
[72] *Ibid.*, p. 35.
[73] *Ibid.*, pp. 35–36.
[74] *Ibid.*, p. 36.
[75] *Ibid.,* pp. 22–23, 32.
[76] *Ibid.,* p. 23.

distinct "scenes" in the history of the regime; these are collected and elaborated in *Aisthesis: Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art*.

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In *Aisthesis*, Rancière presents examples of art and art theory, ranging from the 18th century to the mid-20th century, illustrating the aesthetic regime's realisation. From Winckelmann's description of the *Belvedere Torso* to James Agee's and Walker Evans' book *Let us Now Praise Famous Men*, Rancière employs various case studies to illustrate the liberation of aesthetics from plot, narrative, and ethics. Via these "episodes," Rancière "show[s] the way in which a given artistic appearance requires changes in the paradigms of art[,]"[77] amongst which the liberation of parts is one strategy, which emerges in multiple episodes. In the book's prelude, Rancière implicitly points to fractures and fragmentation as symptomatic of the aesthetic regime, writing: "The aesthetic paradigm was constructed against the representative order, which defined discourse as a body with well-articulated parts, the poem as a plot and a plot as an order of actions. This order situated the poem – and the artistic productions for which it functioned as a norm – on a hierarchical model: a well-ordered body where the upper part commands the lower, the privilege of actions, that is to say, of the free man, capable of acting according to ends, over the repetitive lives of men without quality. The aesthetic revolution developed as an unending break with the hierarchical model of the body, the story, and action."[78] As mentioned with Novalis' poetry, literary arts may thus enact a process of fracture from grand narratives and plot, developing individual "seeds of thought". Similarly, visual arts may secede from the axioms of plot and causality, leaving space for the production and reception of parts/fragments rather than totalities.

The break from plots and hierarchical models prepares the ground for the partial artwork in the aesthetic regime. In this new space, rather than fragments needing to be re-territorialised (e.g., spolia) to function in a new totality, the idea of totality is absent.[79] Whilst processes of conjecture – especially evidenced in Winckelmann's text on the *Belvedere Torso* – and the Hegelian return to the Whole may illustrate the incessant need to return to totality, it is nevertheless paradigmatic that the aesthetic regime enables the production of artworks, whose diverse fragments and fractures make up an artwork. In the age of Aristotelian poetics, Russian avant-garde cinema would make no logical or aesthetic sense, as the fragmented nature of the images would not bear witness to a plot; instead, it bears witness to new aesthetics. It is in this new territory of aesthetics where novelty and revolution are enacted.

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[77] Rancière, *Aisthesis*, p. XV.
[78] *Ibid.*, p. XIV.
[79] There should be a reluctance to assess the idea of totality as entirely absent. Returning to Jena Romanticism, Schlegel's early writings on Greek Poetry assert that modern poetry is in itself fragmented. Yet, this fragmentedness still leads to an interconnected totality – poetry as a distinct artistic medium (Schlegel, *On The Study of Greek Poetry,* 225). Parts and fragments may thus still be seen as elements that lead to a totality.

Rancière's theory helps making sense of the disparate and diverse manifestations of fragmentation from Romanticism onwards; his focus on the paradigm shift after Wicnkelmann also adequately aligns with the timeframe set out in my research. However, his reasoning only the basis that permits fragmentation. The aesthetic regime gives ground to comprehend the prerequisites for the reception and production of fragments; in *Aisthesis* and *The Politics of Sensible*, however, there is no account or exposition of any one method of fragmentation and its specifics. Rancière's theory will be of vital importance in the following chapters; for now, I wish to highlight the absence of his account of fragmentation, which is an important element for this inquiry. For it, and the discernment of the specifics of contemporary fragmentation, especially one tied to destruction, it is worth illustrating the potential of destruction and fragmentation in contemporary art. To do so I wish to "compliment" Rancière's theory with Alain Badiou's propositions on destruction and negation to evolve a reading of destruction and the aesthetic regime as two elements of a symptomatic model of aesthetic production.

I.III.III.II. Destruction as a Symptom of the 20th century (Badiou)

Similarly to Rancière, French philosopher Alain Badiou also posits aesthetics and aesthetic production close to political and societal transformation; whilst Rancière's project traces the transformations that enable art to be defined as such, Badiou takes up a different aesthetic project, proposing art as negation, acting in resistance to general models of progression, ideology, and politics. Instead of focusing on the processual construction of regimes, Badious' philosophy suggests examining "events" in which art challenges pre-existing structures and creates new aesthetic and epistemic models. Badiou's theory, unlike Rancière's, is based on a claim to art's autonomy,[80] a claim which has a modernist tradition (via Adorno[81]) and has been criticised in other writings.[82] Rather than focusing on artistic autonomy, I wish to focus on the constructive nature of destruction proposed by Badiou, especially when reading about the art of the 20th century.

In "15 Theses on Contemporary Art," Badiou defines art as "the process of a truth, and this truth is always the truth of the sensible or sensual, the sensible qua sensual."[83] For Badiou, this definition of art means that art acts as the area of transformation of the sensible into "a happening of the Idea."[84] In actualizing this Idea, however, a process of negation and negotiation with art occurs. In *The Century* and an interview with Catherine David for the

[80] Roberts, "On The Limits of Negation in Badiou's Theory of Art," p. 278.
[81] Adorno, "Art and the Arts," pp. 375, 377.
[82] Rebentisch, *Aesthetics of Installation Art*, pp. 104–112.
[83] Badiou, "Fifteen Theses on Contemporary Art," th. 3.
[84] *Ibid.*

occasion of the re-opening of the Centre Georges Pompidou permanent exhibition, Badiou touched on the processes of destruction and negation in the art of the 20th century, noting that it is a symptomatic development of the century to negate forms and compositions. Noting prominent examples from the avant-garde tradition, especially Kazimir Malevich's Suprematism and De Stijl, whose practice revised forms through minimal negations, Badiou proposes that the 20th-century aesthetics were oriented towards negating certain pre-existing aesthetic forms, the Century was thus based on different formulations of negation.[85] This goes hand-in-hand with Badiou's other thesis on Contemporary art, in which he stated that "[t]he real of art is ideal [Éelle] impurity conceived through the immanent process of its purification. The raw material of art is determined by the contingent inception of a form. Art is the secondary formalisation of a hitherto formless form."[86]

Let us synthesize this into a logical consequence of events. For Badiou, art is an autonomous sphere wherein truth is exercised. In the initial stage, art is thus formless, and only through its attempt to materialise the sensible qua sensible does art obtain a form. In obtaining this form, however, it may negate pre-existing notions and maxims of form and meaning. Modern and contemporary art, following Badiou, must realise itself in a form which negates the pre-existing system, the Empire, as Badiou terms it.[87] Rather than the first, wholly ontological stage, the second stage – the negation of form – is of interest to this inquiry. In another text, "Destruction, Negation, Subtraction" Badiou expands on the notion of negation in art and politics. Moving from negation to destruction – the process which interests me – Badiou defines "destruction" as the "negative part of negation."[88] In simple terms, Badiou argues that "destruction," rather than solely negating pre-existing aesthetic and political systems, disintegrates the pre-existing system and replaces it with a noticeably distinct and novel; however, it is also only a refigured Real.[89] In short, destruction replaces an older system with a novel one, which articulates its difference. An example Badiou points to is Schoenberg's dodecaphonic musical system – it "destroyed" the previous musical system, replaced it, and was indifferent to the axioms that pervaded the previous system.[90] In visual arts, similarly, geometric abstraction negates pre-existing systems of representation and provides a new model wholly distinct because of its geometricity.

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Badiou's theory has noticeable shortcomings for this following inquiry into fragmentation, most of which stem from the modernist nature of the theory. Badiou's underlying affinity to

[85] Badiou, *The Century*, pp. 54–57; Grenier, "Destruction/Creation," p. 15; Roberts, "On The Limits of Negation in Badiou's Theory of Art," p. 272.
[86] Badiou, "Fifteen Theses on Contemporary Art," th. 8.
[87] *Ibid.*, th. 8, 9, 13–15.
[88] Badiou, "Destruction, Negation, Subtraction," p. 269.
[89] *Ibid.,* pp. 269–270.
[90] *Ibid.*, p. 269.

the modernist notion of aesthetic autonomy causes difficulties if implemented into a broader theory of fragmentation, whose goal was to describe fragmentation in contemporary art. The discourse surrounding contemporary – its production and reception – has noticeably moved from notions of aesthetic autonomy, especially in the wake of intermediality, as Juliane Rebentisch has illustrated in her text on installation art.[91] Furthermore, taking up the idea of aesthetic autonomy would also make readings of installation art, which touches upon extra-artistic discourses, challenging as the intersection of diverse discourse fields could not be accounted for. Not only that, but such an aesthetic programme, which argues for the ontological autonomy of art, would run counter to installation art, whose essential and distinct element is that it ought to be experienced, rather than observed/heard, an issue, once again, emphasized in another context by Rebentisch.[92] I thus propose to take up only elements of Badiou's analysis, which structurally apply to contemporary art, analysed in this thesis. Setting aside the obvious ontological, aesthetically autonomous, and idiosyncratically political dimensions of Badiou's project, I propose taking up the idea of "destruction" as a positive process and synthesize it with Rancière's aesthetic regime.

I.III.III.III. 20th-century fragmentation as Symptomatic (de)construction (Rancière, Badiou, Parker)

As previously explicated, Rancière's theory of the aesthetic regime provides us with a tangible framework of the aesthetic paradigm, which has led to the situation wherein fragmentation may arise. As the hierarchal models of plot and causality are side-lined, partial artworks and fragmented pieces may be produced in visual arts. The aesthetic regime is thus the baseline for the process of intentional fragmentation. In previous regimes, wherein the ideal human body or plot was the essential element of a piece, deemed an artwork, any intentional form of fragmentation could not exist – this can be tied to other pieces of evidence, such as the knowledge that ancient Greek and Roman writers did not understand fragments as fragments, but as totalities. In other semiotic terms, the aesthetic regime also opens the space for an intentional construction of systems of signification, which signify the produced object, rather than providing the object with exterior forms of signification (e.g., the inert fragment). Badiou's productive destruction may become practical in producing aesthetic/semiotic territories.

Therein lies a paradigmatic intent in the artistic production of intentionally fragmented, fractured, or incomplete pieces. Rancière points to several cases of intentionally "different" art, i.e., art which differentiates itself from previous artistic projects and is eager to utter its

[91] Rebentisch, *The Aesthetics of Installation Art*, pp. 75–77.
[92] *Ibid.*, p. 160.

subtraction from pre-existing aesthetics. The Idealist project of Walden and Whitman, the tableaux of Fuller, or, once again, Winckelmann's praise of the torso fragment are all intentionally "different" aesthetic utterances whose goal was the realization of a new system. In contemporaneity, this rhetoric is unnecessary as the axioms of the aesthetic regime may be observed as realised; rather, the notion of art as the composite of diverse and distinct elements may still be observed, especially in fragmented installations. As the previous chapter on Luhmann's theory mentioned, these fragmented artworks exemplify a complex interplay of different systems and objects that fluctuate from one state to another. They thus produce novel objects and experiences based on pre-existing objects, whilst entirely distinct from them. I believe this fluctuation and metamorphosis is a form of Badiou's destruction. I will illustrate the intertwining of these theories by closely reading Parker's *Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View*.

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Amongst the various installations in Parker's opus, *Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View* is taken up, once again, as an exemplary case study because the artist emphasizes the production process through its constituent elements. Parker accompanied the installation of fragments of the exploded garden shed with archival documentation of the process of destruction. Before the viewer enters the installation space, they encounter photographs detailing the stages of destruction, tracing the loss of the original garden shed and its metamorphosis into independent fragments of wood and other materials. This element is vital in creating a dual nature of the installation piece –not only the fragmented constellation of wooden shards that forms the artwork but also the *before* of the piece, the archive of destruction. Parker constructed a piece which presents in the present a *presentness* (the installation) and a *history* (the photographs), both tied to a single significant event – *destruction*. *Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View* is the most explicit artwork addressing destruction in Parker's catalogue. Thus, it requires a deeper review, considering the proposed idea of positive destruction in the aesthetic regime.

Starting with the event and process of fragmentation, before leading into the broader aesthetic framework, let us consider Parker's exploding of the garden shed as a positive transformation of forms. Beginning with the garden shed, Parker's interpretation of the shed provides a reading of the object as a codified form of several distinct discourses. By this, Parker interprets the garden shed (as many other objects) as objects through which ideas and concepts of "Britishness," "domesticity," etc., are materialised and dispersed; whilst not divulging deeper into the codification of objects and subjects it is worth noting that some of Parker's other works also deal with the notion of objects being codified indexes of past subjects, a notion which could be inquired into further but goes beyond the framework of fragmentation. Returning to the codified shed, it is possible to read Parker's critical "forensic"

method as an offspring of re-territorialization as both interpretations share certain affinities. As with Deleuze's and Guattari's theory of territories, Parker's reading of objects as intrinsically and symbolically tied to pre-existing discourses, the shed may be read as a sign inside a pre-existing field of signification – it inhabits a space inside territories. Developing this notion further, it is tied to territories of symbolic discourses and territories defined by an asymmetrical subject-object relationship – the shed, as a practical object, is tied to the subject through the object's functionality. Beyond the codification of objects, Parker's forensic inquiries reveal their entrapment inside territories and hierarchies, which define and situate them in relation to other objects and subjects.

The garden shed is, therefore, an object which represents a distinct and codified totality. It maintains a position inside territories and systems and has a practical and symbolic function. However, this inertia of the garden shed is disrupted once destroyed and fragmented. Parker's destruction of the shed leads to its literal loss of totality, as the architectural and functional stature of the garden shed is destroyed, and what is left are only shards of wood. Whilst deconstructing the shed to its constituent pieces would leave the possibility of reconstruction open, exploding the shed closes this option – the past state and totality are irrevocably lost. This development is crucial in the fragmentation process as it distinguishes fragmentation from fracturing – Parker's *Cold Dark Matter* is a product of fragmentation as its production destroys the past totality/whole and leaves it lost in the past. Whilst conducting this literal and material destruction/fragmentation of the past totality, an adjacent and synchronous construction of a new totality must be conducted for the new fragments to obtain any significant meaning/function. In the case wherein fragments arise from a previous object (e.g., a shed) and not from abstract units (e.g., language units in German Romanticism), it is essential to construct a new object that can generate meaning for the fragments. In Parker's case, her artistic practice destroys previous totalities and creates new objects – fragments – whose meaning and function are re-codified in the context of new aesthetic objects. The fragment is, in a vacuum, a piece of a former territory whose expulsion from that territory leads to the creation of a new territory, where it can obtain meaning and function. What this meaning is and whether it is wholly attainable will be the next chapter's subject; for now, it suffices to say that literal and abstract fragmentation are synchronous and parallel processes of destroying past totalities to create new fragments.

The explosion of a shed is a catalyst for an aesthetic production of fragmented forms; it is the retraction of a form (a shed) back to a medium for new forms (*Cold Dark Matter*). The new aesthetic and fragmented object is wholly different from its past self, both visually and materially, and it is distinguished from the axioms which dictated the previous totality. Wherein the garden shed was a practical object, the installation past does not hold practical potential. Instead, it is a novel object whose being is dictated by axioms of aesthetics. The aesthetic discourse and experience, enabled after fragmentation, help Parker construct a new

aesthetic system, like how Badiou proposed destruction processes that will lead to new aesthetic and political systems. The process of destruction and negation are thus critically inverted in Parker's process. By identifying the embeddedness of discourses in objects and destroying their original form, their functionality is diminished, and their *being* is destroyed, leaving space for repurposing the object for a new aesthetic piece. In this process, Parker's work is also different from the Duchampian ready-made, whose practice was ironic. Parker's destruction, on the contrary, is positivistic and oriented toward producing new systems of objects, neo-constellations.

Destruction thus explicitly precedes the construction of the installation piece, whose novel axioms are centred around the aesthetics of fragmentation. What does this entail? The artwork itself is an "exploded view" of a mass, i.e., a deconstructed and internal view of all the elements of the object. Wherein exploded views had historically had functional and epistemic value, Parker's exploded view remains absent of any functional basis. It is a composition of a non-determinable object, neither a shed nor its parts, as they had also been charred. What is thus centred around a lightbulb is something novel, something unsignified. Because of these objects obtaining this un-determinable and epistemically inexhaustible nature, they are also not governed by any overarching internal logic. Corresponding with Rancière's findings on the aesthetic regime, Parker's fragmentation is not necessarily governed by any plot and/or causality, which would explain the artwork.[93] This is even more explicit where the destruction of the original object is absent – i.a. *Mass (Colder Darker Matter)* (fig. 8) and *Neither From Nor Toward*. The process of destruction leads to the object being reterritorialised, which can logically lead to the secession of an object as a sign from a system of signification. Rather than acting as a visual sign for a concrete expression, plot, and/or idea, it can act as its system of signification, i.e., it may obtain its meaning and function as a new (aesthetic) sign. As Rancière points to the greater importance of elements *sans* plot in the aesthetic regime, so are Parker's fragments of wood, stone, and other elements presented after destruction as elements of new constellations *sans* plot. Unlike the shed's architecture, Parker's neo-constellation lacks hierarchy; it floats and is suspended in state after destruction.[94]

[93] Blazwick argues that the elliptic nature of the titles of Parker's works denote a poetic attitude, creating a duality between expectation and experience, presence, and absence, etc. (Blazwick, "Dramatic Acts of Luxurious Violence," p. 62). Implied narrative is thus identified and interpreted as the base of duality in Blazwick's text; however, the shortcoming of the text is that it interprets this attitude and approach as symptomatic of Parker's practice in general, whilst only briefly acknowledging the specificities of her artistic projects. As illustrated in the case of Avoided Objects and *Cold Dark Mass*, these objects are structurally distinct and thus hermeneutically different as well.

[94] Margaret Iversen's text "States of Suspension: Cornelia Parker's Transitional Objects" further develops the notion of suspension in Parker's opus, arguing that Parker's suspension is psychological and semiotic as she interprets destruction as a positive action, similar to the destructive workings of the Eros (Iversen, "States of Suspension: Cornelia Parker's Transitional Objects," pp. 29, 31).

The scheme of the process of fragmentation is thus constructed. An object, which is always tied to pre-existing systems of discourse or signification, can be destroyed, and its constituent elements may act as the medium for novel aesthetic forms. During this process of positive destruction, new territories of signification are constructed, where fragments – elements of an irrevocably lost past – may obtain new signification. This is possible in a milieu which permits aesthetic production beyond representational *mimesis* or *poiesis*.[95] This would be a form of fragmentation identified in contemporary visual arts. A form whose logic is intrinsically tied to exterior aesthetic norms and transformations and distinctly semiotic shifts in the object's nature – this latter element distinguished fragmentation from fracturing and ready-made production. However, before settling for this conclusion, two relevant objections to this proposition must be addressed before proceeding.

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The first objection to the proposed understanding of fragmentation is obvious and has been touched upon in previous subchapters – fragmentation varies amongst different forms of aesthetic production. Fragmentation, based on manipulating material objects, can be found in sculpture and installation art; this does not, however, ring true for painting, music, and literature.

Quickly touching upon these other fields, literature may be first addressed as it had already been presented as distinct from visual arts in the subchapter devoted to Jena Romanticism. As mentioned, literature comprises language micro-units, which form language macro-systems, testifying to a distinctly different form of aesthetic production. The aesthetic effect of literature is based on the distinct techniques of manipulation with language units and their interconnection; fragmentation in literature arises in this form of production in two ways. First, as illustrated in Novalis's poetry, literature may fragment narratives and produce "seeds of thought". This lineage may be traced in subsequent centuries to philosophical fragmentation in Nietzsche's writings and Kierkegaard's *Fragments*, amongst others. Another manner of fragmentation in literature is observed in the fragmenting language, a practice found in avant-garde literature. This practice is utilised in different contexts for diverse reasons, which exceed the frame of this thesis. Suffice to say, fragmentation is distinctly different in literature. The same may be said in music, where "fragmentation" defines the breakdown of compositions into motives or "fragments," which may be repeated for development or closure.[96] Fragmentation, in this case, does not necessarily produce novel compositions but re-structures pre-existing ones and only expands the permutations of compositions themselves.

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[95] Rancière, *Aisthesis*, pp. 11, 14,

[96] Caplin, *Classical Form: A Theory of Musical Functions for the Instrumental Music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven*, pp. 10–11.

This leads us to painting, where a similar shortcoming is observed. Painting does not manipulate external objects to construct novel objects but manipulates painterly material to produce images. It is an exclusively constructive process where destruction is rarely found. If found, for example, in the case of Niki de Saint-Phalle,[97] it is done only after the painterly production is concluded. However, the sole production process does not entail any semiotic transformations that would be conducted synchronously with material manipulation. There are cases of artists using "fragments". An example could be the Cubist "fragmentation" of external reality; I will touch upon this issue in the following chapter as this entails a further developed definition of what a fragment ought to be.

To point to another example, we may turn to Fiona Rae's paintings and her use of "fragments". Rae's flattened abstractions combined with flat images of hyper-capitalist society are often interpreted as examples of postmodern painting.[98] In an interview with Shirley Kaneda in 1994, Rae explained her use of "fragments" as a tool for shifting the context and meaning of images.[99] Translocation thus plays an essential role in Rae's practice, with the images being only partial elements of bigger objects/images. However, this form of translocation is not the same as that of the translocation of spolia, Parker's fragments, or Epaminonda's personal encyclopedias. The translocation is conducted to create a pastiche. The novel territory is distinct but not entirely different from the previous territory of hyper-capitalism – it is a doppelgänger rather than a novel system. Expanding on the pre-existing system – formally and/or critically –can also be identified in the painterly practice of Bridget Riley, whose fragments forms, taken up from Riley's unexhibited compositions, detach elements and give them specific aesthetic being.[100] Both practices expand rather than secede from pre-existing totalities. Fragmentation in painting can thus be termed as tools of abstraction and pastiche rather than fragmentation qua fragmentation.

Whilst not wishing to echo the modernist critique of fraying (prevalent in Adorno's writing, where he criticised the introduction of elements of aesthetic mediums into one another and argued for the necessary boundaries between artistic mediums [101]) or essentializing "art,"[102] it must be noted that the discursive and aesthetic axioms of artistic

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[97] For a closer reading of de Saint Phalle's destructive practice, cf. Applin, Jo. "Alberto Burri and Niki de Saint Pahlle: Relief Sculpture and Violence in the 1960s." *Notes in the History of Art*, vol. 27, no. 2/3 (Winter/Spring 2008): 77–81.
[98] Stallabrass, *High Art Lite*, pp. 89–91.
[99] Rae – Kaneda, "Fiona Rae."
[100] Tate Britain, "Bridget Riley, b. 1934."
[101] Adorno, "Art and the Arts," pp. 368–369, 377. For a critique and misunderstanding of fraying in Adorno's theory, cf. Rebentisch, *The Aesthetics of Installation Art*, pp. 101–103.
[102] Whilst Rancière argues that a symptom of the aesthetic regime is the erasure of boundaries between different arts and the final fusion of art with life (Rancière, *Aisthesis*, p. XIII), I understand that aesthetic project as different from essentializing "art" into a singular term. "Art," as I use the term, implies the erasure of specificities between the arts to provide a general idea of aesthetic production, which would be essential and reductionist rather than transcendent of its boundaries. Furthermore, an essentialized "art" is self-referential and modernist, whilst Rancière's art of the aesthetic regime is dialogic with the Zeitgeist and politics.

mediums are nevertheless distinct. The materialization of the medium into form is also distinct in different artistic mediums, as the form and material of the medium are different in most artistic mediums. The proposed definition of fragmentation is thus productive in the artistic medium, which directly deals with the material manipulation of objects; however, the definition does not prove productive if applied to other artistic mediums.

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The second objection, which I wish to tackle here, occurs when applying the presented understanding of fragmentation to a reading of Parker's *Cold Dark Matter*. As mentioned in the close reading of the artwork, an essential element of the work is the archival documentation, presenting information on the production process to the viewer of the installation. Whereas, confronted with the installation piece, a reading of the artwork can lie in harmony with the theories as mentioned earlier, proposed by Rancière and Badiou, a clear and vital issue arises when comparing this archival element with the essential characteristics of the aesthetic regime.

A vital novelty of the aesthetic regime is the non-hierarchical nature of the elements of an artwork, as mentioned. The aesthetics of the art of the aesthetic regime lies in the interplay of these individual elements, regardless of any plot that would dictate this interplay. Considering it at face value, Parker's installation operates similarly - separate and unique elements are assembled into a constellation, where their arrangement and interaction are determined by pure aesthetics and formalism rather than a cohesive narrative. How can we then understand the nature of the artwork once juxtaposed with the archival dimension, a clear and obvious plot? In her interpretations of the installation piece, Parker frequently retorts back to the process of destruction, chronicling the process of exploding the garden shed, which is clearly of essential value to her understanding of the work. As recent political re-interpretations also show, this dimension of the artwork – its inception story – is gaining greater importance in her interpretational scheme, which would indicate that the plot is becoming more important, contrasting the non-hierarchical purely aesthetic installation piece. There seems to be a sort of dramatization performed by Parker in her work. This notion had previously already been proposed by Iwona Blazwick, who interpreted Parker's destruction as a form of Jacobine theatre – a play with two acts, destruction and presentation, contrasting beauty with aggression.[103] The issue is thus clear – on the one hand, we have an artwork which functions as a good example of the axioms of the aesthetic regime, whilst, on the other hand, the plot (history) is gaining ground and overtaking the autonomous installation piece.

Parker's work is not an isolated example of such issues as Kabakov's installation exemplifies similar complexes. Once again, the autonomous fragmented spaces, composites

[103] Blazwick, "Dramatic Acts of Luxurious Violence," pp. 59, 60–61.

of individual objects and elements subjected to (fictional) destruction, are degraded to elements that illustrate a plot presented by Kabakov as an accompanying text. Moving even further, Rebentisch notes that a typology of installation pieces, which exemplify a similar structure of objects, accompanied by explanatory text, or plots. As it complicates not only the aesthetic function of the artwork but also its semiotic becoming, this structural characteristic is taxing. Rather than providing objects that could construct and exhibit their different systems and territories of signification, plots and texts anchor the meaning and aesthetic function of installations, flattening their potential. It is thus even more puzzling why Parker employed a plot with *Cold Dark Mass,* but not in any other case, except for short explanations in wall and catalogue texts. Despite the puzzling and taxing nature of this inconsistency, I argue that by following Rebentisch's findings and venturing into the realm of reception, we can discover that this aspect of installation artworks may be of lesser importance.

In writing on Kabakov's *total installation*, Rebentisch criticises Kabakov's stressing of the dramatic nature of his installations. Whilst Kabakov understands his installations as set pieces, through which a viewer moves and thus observes the playing out of a pre-planned plot, Rebentisch takes up a reading of the artwork from the viewer's position and argues the contrary. Rebentisch writes: "The individual elements of the installation acquire their meaning by virtue of their arrangement in the space, but now no longer in the general sense according to which it always matters where an element is located in the totality of a work of (installation) art, but also in the sense that it makes a difference where it is located along the viewer's trajectory[.]"[104] Because the installation piece "never appears before the viewer's eyes in its totality," and because the elements of these works are /…/ immediately accessible," the artwork is always perceptible only in sequences.[105] An installation piece, so Rebentisch, is always the basis of a processual experience rather than a form of spatial dramaturgy. A similar case may be argued for with Parker. The constellation of charred pieces is itself an object, presented to the viewer for a processual viewing – it can never be viewed in its totality, as it occupies almost the entirety of a room's volume. The specific arrangement, whilst argued by Parker as being tied to formalist axioms, is neither an index nor a symbol of the drama of the explosion. Its materiality and present state are, thus, in no case, a spatial arrangement of the plot. The plot does not prescribe the function of these elements or the installations, nor does it prescribe the shape of the installation. This may be argued as structurally relevant for all art, as Rebentisch illustrates in the case of Kabakov. Once again, returning to her writing, Rebentisch writes: "Text as part of the work – like a color in the total image of the installation – may overflow the entirety of the installation and engender an effect of meaning in relation to the whole installation. Yet at the very moment when it plays a role that is essential or constitutive of meaning, the text as a supplement immediately undermines this role,

[104] Rebentisch, *The Aesthetics of Installation Art*, p. 160.
[105] *Ibid.*

presenting itself as a mere addition, a minor element in the installation."[106] Parker's installation commits this exact fault – by positioning the text/plot as the essential elements of the installation, it undermined its role, as it is not essential in the aesthetic play of fragments and the subsequent experience of the fragmented state of the installation.

Fragmentation can exist beyond its history. The received fragments, whose history is obscured, testify to this statement. In creating fragments, whilst the artist's intent is crucial in identifying the nature of fragmentation – whether it is ironic, forensic, or distinctly different – its history is not essential to its being. Fragmentation is a complex interplay of material and semiotic transformations, the goal of which is negation and construction. During this process, the result is unpredictable; therefore, the history of it all is also only circumstantial. The structural issue of textual analysis for further chapters is worth noting, especially when focusing on the reception of fragments, where Rebentisch's theory will be reread. For the time being, this objection can be concluded by stating that plots and histories, even when present, do not overflow the artwork in a capacity that would undermine their fragmented nature – the fragments keep their autonomous system of aesthetic being, resulting from acts of intentional destruction.

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As mentioned in the objections to this understanding of fragmentation, *fictionality* poses a relevant issue in contemporary artistic practice, especially in the age of post-postmodernism, wherein the boundaries of fiction and reality are often blurred. Rebentisch's research highlights the significance of these questions in comprehending fragmented objects, which will be elaborated on in the final chapter. Thus far, it is worth continuing this inquiry in a different direction. If fragmentation is a process that transforms and builds, what exactly are the new systems and territories it creates? What does fragmentation construct?

II. Fragment

In the following chapter, I will highlight the specificity of the fragment as an aesthetic category, which results from the process of fragmentation. In doing so, I aim to highlight the importance of conceptual and terminological clarity when assessing the category of the fragment. Despite the distinct and often counteractive meanings the term obtains in these theories, the category of the fragment is frequently invoked in diverse circumstances to evoke and advance theories and ideas, as mentioned in previous parts of this thesis. Take, for

[106] *Ibid.*, p. 162.

example, the evocation of the fragment in Schiller's *Letters* and Winckelmann's *Altherthums* – whereas the first is proto-sociological, the second is visual. Whereas Schiller's fragment is a concept used to diagnose society, Winckelmann's fragment obtains a form of aesthetic sovereignty. It is positioned in the historical past (Greek antiquity) rather than the present (18th-century Germany).[107] The term and concept of the fragment may very well be elastic in colloquial usage, but when speaking and writing about (contemporary) art, it is crucial to be clear and punctual when using the term. In the following sections, I advocate for clarity and exactitude, considering the structural specificities that are frequently disregarded when discussing the term "fragment".

II.I. The History of the Fragment

II.I.I. Winckelmann– an appreciation of partiality

One of the earliest theoretical explications on the fragment in visual arts – a theory which would entail more systematised and self-contained iterations of theory in the future – may be traced back to the already mentioned Winckelmann's *Altherthums*, a survey of Ancient Greek art that contains a short ekphrastic text describing the *Belvedere Torso*.[108] This text is one of the most renowned and influential parts of Winckelmann's survey, as Winckelmann's writing and theory in the short segment are still discussed in scholarly literature today; it is also one of the first instances of a modern reading of the fragment, necessitating a deeper review and analysis of it for the following text. After arriving in Rome to observe the papal collection of Roman antiquities, Winckelmann was commissioned to describe several pieces of sculpture from antiquity, among these the *Torso*.[109] In contrast to the artists that attempted to "complete" the sculpture,[110] Winckelmann approached the sculpture as it was, viewing the loss of the original condition as a positive metamorphosis of the artistic object.

As mentioned, the *Altherthums* is distinct in style, employing many ekphrastic elements and oscillating between poetic and theoretical writing. Winckelmann describes the torso in detail, noting the expressionless nature of the ancient demi-god whilst also stressing the traces of meditation and passiveness of the deity, in contrast to active portrayals of (demi-)gods.[111]

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[107] I stress the following examples as they are historically close to each other; pointing out the different significations the contemporary usage of the term "fragment" may have in comparison to the one Schiller and Winckelmann had would in turn, illustrate the discrepancies to a higher degree.
[108] Winckelmann wrote two texts describing the *Torso* – the following analysis will approach both as complementary works.
[109] Winckelmann, "Description of the Torso in the Belvedere in Rome," p. xiii.
[110] See note no. 27.
[111] Winckelmann, *The History of Ancient Art. Volume II*, X.III.16.10–11., X.III.18.15.; Winckelmann, "Description of the Torso in the Belvedere in Rome," pp. xiv–xvi.

Noting the incomplete nature of the sculpture, Winckelmann's approach differs from previous artistic efforts to retrieve the "original" statue – Winckelmann treats the *Belvedere Torso* as a *received fragment* whose lost perfection is its virtue, rather than a *created fragment*. Instead of reading the fragmented state as a trace of destruction in history, the present form and its "flaws" are read as a complete depiction of the ancient demi-god – rather than portraying his action and will, he has completed his act and presents total meditation and completion.[112] For Winckelmann, a model for beauty is signified by the fragmented mode of expression, which provides the received fragment with positive value. The *Belvedere Torso* acts simultaneously as a visual riddle[113] – continuing the lineage from Antiquity and the Renaissance[114] – and an aesthetic model transcending classical categories.

It can be argued that Winckelmann's text is important as it serves as a paradigmatic shift in the aesthetic understanding of the fragment. Unlike the Classicist preoccupation with the ancient past, Winckelmann diverted attention from the reconstruction of the fragment toward the consideration of the fragment *as is*. In doing so, a different temporal and epistemic dimension of the fragment is suggested, resulting in an evocation of a new aesthetic category, which would come to fruition in the future. The importance of Winckelmann is considerable, not only in the history of art and the fragment but also in contemporary aesthetic discourse. To substantiate the claim, the historical approach, which underlies Winckelmann's theory, will be quickly analysed before advancing into a short detour into Rancière's theory will illustrate the relevance and shortcomings of Winckelmann's text.

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As proposed, Winckelmann's fragment – i.e., the *Belvedere Torso* – can be categorised as a *received fragment*. The affinity between Tronzo's received fragment, i.e., an object of a historical past whose reality is lost and only conveyed through the damaged material form, and Winckelmann's antique fragment can be illustrated by highlighting the historical tendencies present in Winckelmann's engagement with the fragment. For Winckelmann, the main point of his analysis is the conjectural and interpretative potential of the fragment; the fragment, for him, is a tool through which he may acquire access to knowledge of original historical reality. As a relic of the past, the antique fragment functions as the field of reading past histories and civilisations, albeit with occasional informational lacunae. The fragment functions as a tool for projections and assumptions, provided by Winckelmann, on the nature of the Greek civilisation, many of which are highlighted and disputed in Katherine Harloe's reading of *Althethums*.[115] This is not, however, necessarily a fallacy of Winckelmann's but a

[112] Winckelmann, *The History of Ancient Art. Volume II*, X.III.16.10–11.; Winckelmann, "Description of the Torso in the Belvedere in Rome," p. xv.
[113] Winckelmann, "Description of the Torso in the Belvedere in Rome," pp. xiv–xv.
[114] Schlitz, *Music and Riddle Culture in the Renaissance*, pp. 24–26, 31–32.
[115] Harloe, *Winckelmann and the Invention of Antiquity*, pp. 91–94.

symptom of his interest in antiquity. Winckelmann's fragment, as a received object, thus transcends its objecthood by referring to its historical past, its lost totality – it exceeds presentness and stresses the past as an ontologically privileged category. In the space of the lacunae between past and present, conjecture and poetics compensate for informational shortcomings.

The resulting function of the text – more specifically, its second part, focusing on the interconnectedness between Greek civilisation and artistic production - thus reads as a historical (and poetic) account, offering an assumption constructed on a systemic methodological basis rather than concrete information/knowledge of history. Conjecture and historical stress drive Winckelmann's shift from aesthetic and poetic considerations of the fragment to its art historical undertaking; this second approach is relevant, as it ought to provide a more systemic account for engaging with the fragment beyond ekphrastic and poetic engagement. For Winckelmann, the fragment – received and exemplary of past civilisational progression – functions as an artwork, i.e., the object of artistic and poetic production and the starting point for historical conjecture. However, this final stress on the history of the fragment is insufficient in accounting for other forms of fragments, whose aesthetic merit is structured around intentional production and stress on presentness; the latter characteristics will be more developed in further chapters.

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According to Rancière, Winckelmann's praise of the *Torso* exhibited an alienation and critique of traditional representative regimes constructed around the axioms of representation and scientific proportions in visual arts. As mentioned, story and narrative were the basis of the representative regime, which construed intelligible structures; the plastic arts of the representative regime strived for intelligible translations of minute details of expression and harmonious correlation between constituent elements of bodies and buildings, in accordance with narratives (i.a. the story of Hercules or Ajax). In contrast to this striving for intelligibility and totality of representation, Winckelmann's praise of the fragmented body, as per Rancière, points toward the lack of the artistic goals of the representative regime. The idea of an "organic" totality dictated by geometrical, aesthetic, and narrative parameters – a prerequisite to distinguish art from nature – was thus discarded, [116] preparing the stage for the appearance of the fragment as a distinct aesthetic form. The total lack of bodily and conceptual coherency - so writes Rancière - opens the horizon for the realisation of the aesthetic regime, where meaning and expression are undeterminable, and the arrangement/partiality of the artwork becomes central to the art.

[116] *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 7, 9.

Why is Winckelmann's engagement with the fragment, as highlighted by Rancière, noted as the genesis of modern aesthetics? In order words, why do Winckelmann and his text on the fragment take up the inaugural position in Rancière's theory? To quote Rancière at length, the *Belvedere Torso*, as seen and described by Winckelmann, is centred around the accidental loss of cohesion and totality, "[which] corresponds to the structural breakdown of a paradigm of artistic perfection. … [Attacking baroque excess] shatters [the classical representative ideal's] coherence by marking the gap between two optima that it claimed to match together: the harmony of forms and their expressive power."[117] Winckelmann's *Torso* thus functions beyond established formalist and semantic readings taking up the quality of indeterminacy, which had not been plausible in previous regimes of art. For Rancière, Winckelmann's theoretical undertaking of the fragment opened the possibility of appreciating art beyond its harmonious coupling of form and expression, beyond plot – meaning had become suspended, and beauty became separated from preconceived concepts that would define the artwork.[118]

In following Rancière's writing, I propose understanding this liberation of forms, movements, and artworks from representative ideals as the grounds for the subsequent transcendence of the fragment beyond mere representation. By reading a fragment as an object, which holds meaning beyond mere conjecture – although, as mentioned, Winckelmann's method relies significantly on the latter – the aesthetic conceptualisation of the fragment as something created may be formed in contradistinction to exclusively receiving fragments. Whilst Winckelmann is yet to predict and/or systematise the production of fragments and thus operates only with received fragments, the indeterminacy of the fragment deepens the object's aesthetic merit. Acting not only as the field of conjecture and a search for lost totality, the object, positioned beyond this totality in its presentness, holds aesthetic merit for Winckelmann; with this, the fragment does not act as merely an index of the past or a witness to Greek civilisation, but, for Winckelmann, takes up the position of partially embodying an ideal of Greek liberty. With this final step, the fragment's meaning becomes more complex, less direct, and rigid; it presents a field in which past and present collide in aesthetic and historical negotiation, which transcends the movement from one totality (the present) to another (the past) via a cohesive and intelligible totality. As previously mentioned, a part, rather than the whole of an artwork, acquired merit and worth in the aesthetic regime – it is thus Winckelmann's praise of a fragment, rather than the whole figure, which chimed in a modern understanding of fragments, which allowed further developments and theories on fragment(ation).

[117] Rancière, *Aisthesis: Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art*, p. 4.
[118] *Ibid.*, pp. 6–9, 11, 16.

II.I.II. Jena Romanticism and the Romantic Fragment – the whole in itself

The begginings of the *modern* theory of the fragment in aesthetics may further be traced to the period of Romanticism, specifically to Jena Romanticism. As a theoretical and aesthetic model used to represent modern ideas, the fragment appeared in several texts written by a circle of German poets and philosophers, who circulated ideas in Jena, the first significant centre of the Romanticist movement in Germany.[119] As a specific form – as presented in several of their texts – the fragment was the Early Romanticist poetic form *par excellence*.[120] Notwithstanding the aforementioned shortcomings of this theory, the paradigmatic nature of it necessitates an inquiry into the proposed fragment, as presented by Friedrich Schlegel, Friedrich Schiller, Novalis, and others.

In scholarly literature, Friedrich Schlegel is usually considered the most prominent German Romantic figure to write on the fragment.[121] Through his publications in the *Athenaeum* magazine, which Schlegel co-edited with his brother August Wilhelm, Schlegel would compile several concise texts on the fragment. These would later be compiled into two integral collections, *Critical Fragments* and *Athenaeum Fragments (AF)*. Because of the ironic nature of Schlegel's text – irony being understood as the effect of deliberately failing to convey the unconveyable truth in a limited form, such as thought or speech[122] – the theory of the fragment, as present in these works, is itself fragmentary in form; in contradistinction to Winckelmann's concise and ekphrastic theory, the Romanticist theory of the fragment is more difficult to discern. Two fragments indicate two paradoxical stances: AF 116 and AF 206. The latter fragment uses the motif of a hedgehog to convey the self-contained fragment, isolated from the exterior totality.[123]

The fragment, here, is understood as a microcosm with limitations; they vacate the sphere of aesthetics, where they hold infinite definitions yet are disconnected from exteriority. However, contrasting this self-sufficient, minute fragment, whose rhetorical and poetic potential is limited, *AF 116* presents a different understanding of the same concept and form. Here, Schlegel writes of the universal progressive poetry (*progressive Universalpoesie*), the optimal potential of Romanticist poetry, as a form of poetry which is never completed and is always in-becoming – it is the moment state of poetry and life coalescing into one aesthetic experience.[124] This stance negates the sufficient and fully developed image of the fragment, which Schlegel presented and caused a paradox with it in his work; a paradox not unusual for Early Romanticism and early Schlegel, who wrote that "classical poetical genres have now

[119] Safranski, *Romanticism: A German Affair,* pp. 31–33, 49–52; Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism,* pp. 131–132.
[120] Lacoue-Labarthe – Nancy, *L'absolu littéraire,* p. 58.
[121] See, for example, Safranski, Otabe, Berlin, etc.
[122] Safranski, *Romanticism: A German Affair*, pp. 36–37; Schlegel, *Ideas*, f. 69; Schlegel, *Athenäeum Fragments*, f. 121; Schlegel, *Critical Fragments*, f. 42.
[123] Schlegel, *Athenäeum Fragments*, f. 206.
[124] *Ibid.*, f. 116.

become ridiculous in their rigid purety,"[125] deliberately mocking traditional articulations of truth and form. Whilst it is difficult to extract a systemic thought from this conceptual paradox, it can be asserted that Schlegel's understanding of the fragment and the process of fragmentation is a positive process – a positive fragmentation. For Schlegel, the fragment is a step towards the disintegration of the classical poetic forms (*die Vorstufe*), therefore, paradoxically, moving away from totality but still being tied to it, rejecting organicist readings of art, and maintaining the form of *being-in-becoming*.

Whilst we may discern an acute urgency to construct a new and distinct form of thought and poetry in Schlegel's and Novalis' texts, a different understanding of the fragment also occurred in Jena Romanticism, which would have long-standing effects on the humanities. In Schiller's work, touched upon in Ch. I.III.I., especially in the *Letters for the Aesthetic Education of Man*, Schiller also evokes the concept of the fragment and fragmentation; however, his theory does not touch specifically on the arts but on Schiller's "sociological" critique of contemporaneity.[126] On the other hand, Novalis proposed a wholly poetic understanding of the fragment as the expression of the world's Universality, pushing for a transcendental reading of it.

The preceding listing of prominent theorists of the fragment and the fragmentary nature of art and society in Jena Romanticism thus reveals an ambivalent and dualistic attitude towards the process of fragmentation. Whilst one may continue to pursue this stage of the history of the theory, the plurality and diversity of these theories and their embeddedness in complex historical and philosophical discourses far exceed the framework of this chapter. Therefore, to return to the discerned issue, we must focus on the *positive fragmentation*,[127] as explicated by Schlegel and Novalis, as this form of fragmentation leads to the production of new singular forms and aesthetic fragments, in contradistinction to pluralities, explicated in Schiller's societal atomism; the stress of this inquiry thus migrates toward the nature of the fragment as it appears in poetry, philosophy and, more scarcely, in the visual arts.

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[125] Schlegel, *Critical Fragments*, f. 60.

[126] This sociological reading of Schiller's work is the dominant reading, presented by Safranski, who reads the work contextually through Schiller's relationship with the French Revolution and its effects on German society (Safranski, *Romanticism: A German Affair,* pp. 21, 23)

[127] Although Herder's concept of history, which focuses on the self-sufficient nature of micro-narratives and microsystems in human history – each period being a logical and self-contained unit – presents a model of the positive fragmentation of a trans-temporal concept, this will not be explored in the following section. The reasoning for this is the multi-layered nature of Herder's concept of history, as it evokes many other philosophical questions that extend outside this paper's limits. For a thorough analysis of Herder's concept of history, cf. Safranski, *Romanticism: A German Affair*, pp. 8–11. I will read *positive fragmentation as* a constructive endeavour, as a form of fragmentation, which "constructs" fragments from material, rather than a destructively-oriented act. In other words, *positive fragmentation* views fragments as a positive product of fragmentation, whilst *negative fragmentation* propositions a negative dimension to it (e.g. alienation in society in Schiller's case)

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Whilst a compilation of relevant Jena Romanticist literature on the fragment and the critical reading of it is illustrated as plausible, Jean-Luc Nancy and Phillipe Lacoue-Labarthe stress the difficulties of defining the *sine qua non* of the concept as explicated in the same texts – there is no general proposition of the fragment, followed by Jena Romanticists. In their elaborate analysis of German Romanticism, both authors devote a chapter to the early history and the specificities of the concept of the fragment. As they write, the Jena Romanticists never explicitly present their theory, whose axioms and functions are further complicated as they live symbiotically with the systematised understanding of Romanticist theory, which Schlegel, Novalis, Johann Wilhelm Herder, and various others stressed in their work.[128] In their exhaustive inquiry into the Romanticist concept of the fragment, Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe propose that the best solution to locate the basics of the idea is by extracting them from the texts. In tracing this methodological path, they reveal three conditions of the fragment, which exist *a priori*.

As Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe stress, the fragment is not necessarily a novel concept whose "birth" occurs in Jena; the fragment, instead, can be interpreted as a re-formulation and continuation of the tradition of French philosophical thought, more specifically, that of the French Moralists.[129] Based on this, they discern the three essential conditions as permutations of literary forms present in French philosophy. The fragment, as a form, has to be relatively incomplete (as an *essai*), and it has to be defined by an absence of a discursive progression of its elements (as a *pensée*)– its components ought not to develop into a more extensive totality -, and it must give the effect of totality when viewed from a distance.[130] All the conditions thus conform to Schlegel's famous *AF* 206: the fragment as a form must be concise, simultaneously fully developed, and *not yet developed to a complete form.* "[L]e fragment comme propos déterminé et délibéré, assumant ou transfigurant l'accidentel et l'involontaire de la fragmentation."[131]

A vital characteristic of the Romantic theory of the fragment, which both Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe surprisingly do not stress, is understanding the Romantic fragment as a form exclusive to modern aesthetics. Schlegel explicitly distinguishes the ancient fragment from the modern fragment, writing that "[m]any works of the ancients have become fragments.

[128] Lacoue-Labarthe – Nancy, *L'absolu littéraire,* pp. 60–61.
[129] The moralists were French writers working in the era of the *Ancien régime* who produced texts dealing with conduct. These texts are distinct for their employment of maxims and other short literary forms and their public readings and debates in salons. The tradition of moralist writing started with Michel de Montaigne's *Essais* (1580) and included works by La Rochefoucauld, Nicolas Chamfort, etc. (MacLean, "Moralistes").
[130] Lacoue-Labarthe – Nancy, *L'absolu littéraire,* p. 58.
[131] *Ibid.,* p. 60.

Many modern works are fragments as soon as they are written."[132] The Romantic fragment thus manifests itself as a modern form of expression and a modern form of societal organisation /stratification; in both cases, the fragment echoes a new, distinct epoch and, following Herder's concept of history, requires a self-contained reading[133] – a reading of the fragment as a logical and necessary form of expression of the Romanticist epoch. However, this does not suffice, as we shall illustrate that the concept and form of the fragment are not exclusive to the period of the brink of the 18th century. But it suffices to conclude that the early Romanticist writers understood their partaking in the fragmentation of form as an expression of modern thought, as opposed to earlier ancient and Enlightened thought, determined to present the totality of the world in aesthetic forms.[134] As a form of philosophising, the modern fragment transcends the philosophy of totality, expounded particularly by Kantian thought.

Exemplifying a diverse selection of Romanticist ideas and concepts – irony, systemic thought, aesthetic living, etc. – the fragment appears to be the Romanticist form *par excellence*; various scholars, as shown, would agree with this assessment, yet the disciplinary limitations are not noted in most scholarly literature.[135] It is accepted that the concept of the fragment is best exemplified in the disciplines of poetry and philosophy, yet, what is omitted is that none of the authors writing on the fragment discerns their understanding of the concept in the domain of visual arts. Schlegel explicitly refers to the fragments of visual arts in his fragments; however, in evoking visual arts, his theory moves from specific aesthetic mediums toward transcendent poetics, which is his primary concern. Rather than speaking of specific mediums, his goal of establishing universal poetry leads him to considerations of literature, philosophy, and poetry. Because of this semi-exclusivity of the concept, i.e., the predominant focus on the literary arts, I argue that the Romanticist theory of the fragment is an essential pillar in understanding the contemporary idea of the fragment, as various traits of the

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[132] Schlegel, *Athenäeum Fragments*, f. 24. Cf. this with the binary division between received and created fragments in Ch. I.

[133] Safranski, *Romanticism: A German Affair*, pp. 8, 11; Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism*, pp. 67–72, 104, 159.

[134] An opposing reading of Schlegel's *AF* 15 is argued for by Elizabeth Wanning Harries, who understands "the Moderns," cited by Schlegel, as referring to either the "planned fragments," in other words, aphorisms, written by Lessing, Lavater, Jean-Paul and others, or as a reference to pre-existing tendencies in European literature, which Wanning Harries traces to Petrarch as the earliest example of a writer consciously employing fragmentation in their work (Wanning Harries, *The Unfinished Manner*, p. 2). Wanning Harries' analysis, whilst expansive and coherent, needs to provide objective and tangible evidence that would point towards this understanding of Schlegel's fragment; her theory is constructed on the assumption that Schlegel would entertain these ideas based on his broad interests in literature and philosophy. Furthermore, *AF* 53, in which Schlegel writes of modern poems as mostly allegories or novellas, contradicts Wanning Haries' claim for Schlegel's anticipation. Due to this fallacy, the following text does not consider this alternative interpretation of Schlegel's assertation of the form of the fragment.

[135] E.g., Otabe evokes some of Schlegel's references to antique sculpture yet devotes the majority of his analysis to Schiller's handlings of poetry (Otabe, "Friedrich Schlegel and the Idea of the Fragment"); similarly, Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe do not devote attention to fragments, evoking or negotiating with visual arts, but, instead focus exclusively on the literary aspects of fragments – both in form and in content (Lacoue-Labarthe – Nancy, *L'absolu littéraire*).

Romantic fragment are echoed in contemporaneity; however, it is also a somewhat limited concept. The Jena Romanticists do not provide enough room in their theory to extract a systematic reading of the visual fragment, therefore necessitating the reading of the Romanticist theory of the fragment as the first concrete and systemic step towards an approach to the fragment in aesthetics, which would only, later on, develop in visual arts.[136] The achievements of this theory are even more crucial once they are juxtaposed with an earlier (successful) attempt at a *positive* understanding of the visual fragment found in the work of Winckelmann, where the fragment is not deliberate but a trace of disintegration of a whole.

II.I.III. The Whole and Truth – Adorno

After the Romantic fragment, the aesthetic theory of the fragment would develop further in diverse manners. Whereas the literary fragment would, as presented prior, develop into a fully-fledged literary form for various reasons – either aesthetic or pragmatic – the visual fragment did not develop in a linear, "organic" manner. In more determinate words, the fragment as a category in the visual arts became more object-centred rather than abstract. A concrete example of this is the proliferation of depictions of antique fragments of sculptures and the depictions of bodily fragments. This intermittent period of the fragment will be discussed in the following subchapter as it relates to Linda Nochlin's readings of the fragment. Instead, I wish to point to another vital moment in the fragment's history, which leads to important considerations of the fragment, and that moment is the coalescing of the proto-sociological and aesthetic lineages of the theory of the fragment in the writings of Theodor W. Adorno.

Adorno, a prolific member of the Frankfurt School, left several writings on aesthetics in which he analysed and deconstructed contemporary aesthetics by applying conceptually dense and abstract methodology. Analysing aesthetics and aesthetic production by abstracting art and relating art production to the cultural Zeitgeist, his theory would push a stark materialist and dialectic reading of art.[137] In simple terms, it can be summed up as a reading of art as strictly tied to the socio-political-historical tissue of the production of art. Not only is the content of art determined by the context of its emergence, but also the material and the forms

[136] A discussion on the possibility of a semantic methodological approach, which would examine a visual fragment in the same manner as a textual fragment, would be a sensible path to follow. However, as the Romanticist fragment exemplifies, the mechanisms in which it functions in literature are tied to its rhetorical potential – e.g., the conception of irony. A visual fragment, notwithstanding any detailed or deconstructed viewing, could not be perfectly aligned with the inner logic of the literary fragment, whose basis lies in the semantic and rhetoric field rather than the semiotic and symbolic fields of visual arts.

[137] For a more in-depth analysis of Adorno's reading of Marxist materialism and Hegelian dialectics, cf. Freyehangen, *Adorno's Practical Philosophy,* pp. 30–41.

the artist uses.[138] In all stages of artistic production, the aesthetic object and producer are dependent and determined by the surrounding reality, either in its "first nature" or its "second nature."[139] As such, the contemporary aesthetic production of Adorno's age is tied to the development of capitalism and the capitalist social order; this production, for example, cannot translate ideas of liberty and freedom present in J.S. Bach's early music, as that is not present in the contemporary social order.[140] Thus, Man and art are subjected to the influence of capitalism similarly as society is subjected to the alienation and atomisation of the development of capitalism in Schiller's theory. But whereas Schiller provides a straightforward solution to exit this suspended fragmentation via art and aesthetic play, Adorno's theory works more analytically and less pragmatically. The disparities and affinities between both, however, run deeper.

The fragment in Schiller's theory was explicitly referent to Man, i.e., to the individual as an atom of the broader social structure; in Adorno's work, the fragment refers to artwork and art. Adorno, influenced by German Romanticism, evokes the term "fragment" in relation to art as both a partial element of life and art in a fragmented state.[141] The Jena Romanticist fragment was a particular category which sought to transcend the divide between the subjective and objective to reach the end goal of the transcendental idealist programme of philosophy – the ideal of self-awareness.[142] As was emphasized, the Jena Romanticist fragment is thus a self-sufficient and self-enclosed category; it is both a fragment *and* a whole. Adorno's theory of art and aesthetics contrasts with this proposition and understanding of the fragment, as it is conceptually and contextually tied to Adorno's negative reading of contemporaneity.[143] For Adorno, the experience of capitalist contemporaneity diminishes any utopian ideal of wholeness or unity. We are left only with a fragmented depository of elements whose compiling leads not to truth or knowledge but to understanding the un-wholeness.[144] If we are to read Jena's Romanticist writings on the fragment through the theory of Adorno, we would be led to understand the Romanticist fragment as a utopian concept whose utility is diminished in the wake of post-WW2 capitalist reality.

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[138] Bowie, *Theodor W. Adorno: A Very Short Introduction,* pp. 87–88.
[139] *Ibid.*, p. 92.
[140] *Ibid.,* p. 101.
[141] The function and status of the fragment in Adorno's theory may still be the topic of disputes. Ian Balfour notes in his essay, "The Whole is Untrue," that it is not entirely discernible whether Adorno refers to the fragment as an object in itself or to the nature of the contemporary art function, as he defines the fragment as that which acts *against* totally. The fragment may thus also be read as the category of artworks, which fragment the organic whole (Balfour, "The Whole is Untrue," pp. 84–85).
[142] Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism,* §1.3, §2.2, "On the Principle of Transcendental Idealism, Section One."
[143] Balfour, "The Whole is Untrue," pp. 83–84, 86.
[144] Adorno, *Beethoven: The Philosophy of Music*, pp. 182–183.

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Adorno's claim about the loss of wholeness and form is read as a convincing critique and analysis of some cultural products. In *Aesthetic Theory,* he points to, for example, the loss of form and conclusion in music and literature, highlighting Brecht as an example of a writer whose work does not contain a whole structure or line of development. Notwithstanding this absence, Adorno asserts that there is a desire for the whole in content – the temporal arts require an ending.[145] The fixation on the whole, truth, and a desire for the whole is directly tied to Adorno's negotiation with Hegel's philosophy, which asserts that truth can only be obtained from the observation and perception of the whole. Only the enclosure and conclusion of an event leads one to obtain knowledge and truth; the fragment, in contradistinction, is only partial truth.[146] Hegel's theory will be of greater relevance in the following subchapter: for now, it is worth noting that Adorno takes up this proposition and vehemently denies the possibility of truth as the result of the development of capitalism. This materialist reading of aesthetics and hermeneutics – proposing a combination of both the socially connected aesthetics of Schiller[147] and the autonomous aesthetic production of Novalis and Schlegel[148] – is too materialistic for it to be of positive merit in assessing the contemporary artistic fragment.

If we look back at the examples analysed in Chapter I, Adorno's diagnosis of a desire for wholeness proves to help assess some artworks. This is especially true of Kabakov's and Parker's installations that incorporate a plot to accompany their material being. The suspended state and fragmented state of the material installations, their constellations of fragments, following Adorno's thesis, would move towards wholeness with a desire for it. This desire would manifest itself in the parergon of the additional text; Adorno's theory also rings true to the false sense of wholeness that this textual accompaniment entails. As Rebentisch stressed, the parergon does not act as an equal element to the material being of the installation, but only as an expansion and punctuation of some of its elements – either the temporal, spatial, or contextual dimensions. The whole, which Adorno proposes art to provide to the viewer, is thus only a false image of true wholeness; in reality, it is always only fragmentary and incomplete. Whilst we can agree with this, rather than viewing artistic production's incomplete and inconclusive nature as negative, I argue it should be seen as a positive structural art form.

The fragmented state of Parker's installations is inconclusive in presenting a final form. The neo-constellation lacks a function; it lacks a conclusive signifier. It is a suspension of

[145] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, pp. 146–147, 187.
[146] Adorno famously paraphrases Hegel's "The truth is the whole" (Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Preface #20) in *Minima Moralia*, writing: "The whole is the untrue." (Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, I.29).
[147] For a comparative reading of both Schiller's proposition of aesthetic play and the Frankfurt School, cf. Rosenfeldt Svanoe, Lisbet. "Schiller Revisited: Aesthetic Play as the Solution to *Halbbildung* and Instrumental Reason." *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, vol. 53, no. 3 (Fall 2019): 34–53.
[148] Balfour, "The Whole is Untrue," p. 86.

material remains of a fragmentation process and is left to exist in a fluctuating state of signification. The experience and being of the fragment are thus open-ended; this, however, does not entail that there is no conclusion to its being or the experience of it. The concrete constellation is only one possible constellation in which the fragment can co-exist with other fragments; it can be implemented into an altogether different system, which is one of the crucial mechanisms of the fragment. By the chance interplay of the subjective (the artist's intent) and the objective (the fragment as a material object), we witness the artwork; the artistic gesture is one of arbitrariness and could be repeated to produce a new system. The state of being is thus inconclusive but somewhat arbitrary and spontaneous; Adorno's theory, implying a nostalgic yearning for past wholeness, leaves little space for the spontaneous and nonchalant production of fragments. The modernist tendency to discard past states is also structurally distinct from the contemporary fragment, whose present form contains a connective link to its past state. In its contemporary manifestations, the fragment does not move in a progressive linear manner but in a temporally synchronous way. This will be of greater interest when discussing the Hegelian development of the Spirit. For now, it is worth pointing to a structural disparity that denies the importance of Adorno's' closure when faced with contemporary fragments. The contemporary fragment is spontaneous and self-sufficient, rather than an element of progression or the determined whole – as Rancière had shown, it received its merit in the absence of plot and axiomatics.[149]

In contrast to the Jena Romanticist fragment, Adorno's fixation on truth and meaning, in the absence of it, limits the potential of his understanding of the fragment. It would be possible to relate the conditions of production and emergence of fragments to the socio-political-historical context of the actors involved in this same production. Parker's evocation of the IRA bombings in the 1990s,[150] Kabakov's deconstruction of the Soviet regime,[151] and even the ecologically charged phobias in the contemporary nuclear age present in some contemporary artworks (see Hito Steyerl's *Power Plants*, Ch. II.II.) all point to the influence of social and political reality to fragmentation and the usage of fragments. These fragments, however, are not mirrors of this reality; rather than replicating reality, artistic production can negotiate with it and translate phenomena into an artistic language. This is general for art but not specific for the fragment. What is specific to the fragment is the inconclusive nature that Adorno views as negative, which the Jena Romanticists view as positive. Overall, the utopian ideal of closure and comprehensibility can only be attained if we measure art via a plot or a programmatic goal (e.g., the harmony between emotion and expression). None of this applies to contemporary artworks that evoke an aesthetic experience by utilizing elements rather than totalities or wholeness. By putting stress on the potential of the individual element, this

[149] Rancière, *Aisthesis,* pp. XIV–XV.
[150] Sebag-Montefiore, "Steamrollers, explosions, and "cartoon violence": the artistic eruptions of Cornelia Parker."
[151] Jackson, "Ilya Kabakov and the Concentrated Spectacle of Soviet Power."

element can obtain its wholeness. Take, for example, the singular elements in Epaminonda's work, which can be extracted and exhibited as individual fragments. Or, to move further back into history, one can relate this notion of a partial whole to the Catholic reliquary, which implies wholeness whilst simultaneously being partial.

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The qualities of the partial and the fragmentary are of much greater importance than Adorno stresses. What is significantly lacking in Adorno's theory is the element of the active observer.[152] Rather, it proposes truth-content (*Wahrheitsgehalt*) to be in the artistic objects rather than the subject.[153] Artistic production can go on without the observer in mind; however, once we attempt to think of it in installation art, where the observer is of crucial importance, this absence of the observer in Adorno's work becomes a crucial point of critique. When faced with an inconclusive and fragmentary work, the observer can act as an agent in (re-)constructing the work. By moving around and through the artwork, fragmentary observations are made, and elements are tied together in a spatially and temporally determined manner. This is an inconclusive action that can be permutated to construe new experiences. This is not true only of installation art but also of temporally based art, which Adorno presents as an example of the desire for wholeness. The experience of the video installations shows us that an observer can be inserted at any point, which can create a plethora of singular experiences of the video. Take, for example, Chris Marker's *La Jetée*, a film created using image stills and fragments of a "plot" – any different sequence of images can create a new storyline that the observer must create through active observation. There is no centring, "true" plot, or axioms – only *constant motion through time and space.*

By the potential of the active observer, the singular object can be permutated and expanded beyond its temporal or spatial suspension. This is more pronounced with the fragment, whose being and meaning are interchangeable and elastic, moving from one system to another and obtaining new meaning. The contemporary fragment is thus tied to the structural potential of the art and can exist beyond the contextual reliance on its socio-political-historical context. The main shortcoming of Adorno's theory is thus the overreliance on materialist readings and the isolated readings of artworks. For a more fragment-focused,

[152] Adorno does write on the subject as an observer in *Aesthetic Theory*, especially in relation to the archaic nature of some artworks. For Adorno, it is vital that the subject approaches the artwork through appropriation, appropriating the form for a contemporary reading; the experiential boundaries are thus not, as Adorno puts it, fixed, but liquefied by *correspondence* (Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, pp. 348–349). This form of appropriation and aesthetic autonomy of the object, however, constructs a quasi-theological scheme in which the observer is not a fully active agent but, instead, a translator relegated to expanding the object's transcendental qualities (visual form, historical background, meaning, etc.). This mechanism is thus structurally different – both spatially and temporally – from the one argued for in this thesis, the aesthetic experience.
[153] Jarvis, *Adorno: A Critical Introduction*, p. 96.

less materialist reading of the fragment, I propose to turn to contemporary writings on parallel 20th-century developments in the theory of the fragment.

II.I.IV. The Fragment as an informal category – Liechtenstein, Mellamphy, 20th century French Philosophy

Jacqueline Liechtenstein's previously mentioned essay, "The Fragment: Elements of a Definition," takes a philosophical approach to the fragment to provide a universal definition of the category of the fragment; this entails a more philosophical, less art-historical reading of the fragment, which, still has merit. Liechtenstein starts with the fundamental problem of the fragment, and that is its identification – how do we identify an unfinished work and how a fragment? [154] Proceeding from this ontological issue, her reading stresses the semiotic understanding of the fragment in relation to the dictionary and material definitions. Four main characteristics are emphasized: 1.) the fragment must be material (philosophical and literary fragments are thus excluded from Liechtenstein's considerations); 2.) it must be a part of the whole from which it had been broken from, distancing itself from the totality of the original object through a process of fragmentation or destruction; 3.) the lost whole/totality of the original object of the fragment must be able to be identified; 4.) the fragment can only result from a process of fragmentation. [155]

Whilst we may deduce the first three characteristics to be commonly accepted in literature, the fourth and final characteristic is essential in Liechtenstein's proposed understanding of the fragment. The fragment can only be conceived through fragmentation if a part of the whole becomes missing. If all pieces of the whole may be retrieved and the restoration process possible, the fragmentary element does not function as a fragment but as a part.[156] To point to a concrete example of the utility of this differentiation, we may turn to Laura Gray's use of the term fragmentation when discussing the artistic practice and work of David Cushway, an English contemporary artist. Cushway's work – focused on the process of destroying ceramics – is based on the practice of restoration of the damaged object, thus working to retrieve the whole rather than produce the fragment. [157] As such, we are not operating with fragments, but pieces or components, as the possible space for the fragment is closed off.

Gray's understanding of the fragment, which attempts to enclose an "original essence" of the whole in the new material fragment, is much more akin to an essentialist theory;

[154] Liechtenstein, "The Fragment: Elements of Definition," p. 115.
[155] *Ibid.,* pp. 115–116.
[156] *Ibid.,* p. 119.
[157] Gray, *Contemporary British Ceramics and the Influence of Sculpture,* pp. 65–68.

however, it negates any transformative potentials of the fragment and acts only in the limited field of essentialism. Essentialism in relation to the fragment bears many theoretical issues and will be deconstructed more in-depth as it relates to Nochlin's materialism. For now, it is vital to stress that essentialism proposes a centre and a transcendental significance, as Derrida notes; this is structurally alien to the reading of the fragment I argue for. Following Romanticist and contemporary iterations of the fragment, it defers meaning and signification. A proper term that side-lines classical and limited denominations would be the *sine qua non*, i.e., the basic axioms on which the term may be proposed. Liechtenstein's theory searches for these axioms rather than a transcendental category of essence to comprehend the fragment as an artistic form.

What lies at the centre of Liechtenstein's definition is an understanding of the fragment as an index of the *absent*. A fragment is simultaneously an object and a symbol[158] with its own temporal and material qualities. The fragment does not function as a synecdoche of an absent concept but transcends to a dual status. Whilst it may be situated the Wittgensteinian family of symbols, relics, fetishes, etc., its crucial characteristic is its ambivalence – it is tied to a totality; however, it also *is*; "nothingness is necessary for something to exist."[159] This final notion echoes Romantic thought and the postmodern abject. The main shortcoming of this text lies in this last point, as it does not divulge deeper into the interplay between the totality and the fragment. Focusing only on the material aspect of the fragment, Liechtenstein's definition loses the possibility of applying literary and rhetorical mechanisms to expand on this complex relationship, leaving it in its rudimentary form. Such a shortcoming is problematic when analysing works based on a transformative process in which the base – the totality[160] – is completely transformed, permutating the original constellation.

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Similarly to Liechtenstein, Dan Mellamphy attempted to discern the fragment as something distinguishable from parts of wholes. Basing his research on the readings of Nietzsche, Heidegger, Bataille, Blanchot, Barthes, Deleuze and Nancy, Mellamphy posits the fragment to be a particular concept distinct from the dialectic pair of the whole and its parts. In discerning this particularity, he presents four demands: 1.) the fragment ought to break with the dialectic of wholes and parts; 2.) the fragment ought to be broken and have no form; 3.) the fragment ought to *call for its own formation*; 4.) the *calling for formation* is the voice of

[158] The term symbol, in this occurrence, signifies the surplus of meaning and value an aesthetic object possesses rather than the aesthetic category noted by the same term.
[159] Liechtenstein, "The Fragment: Elements of Definition," pp. 124–125; Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, pp. 7–8.
[160] The term is evoked sceptically, as referring to Ch. II.II., the term totality ought to be evoked with special care in the same discourse as the fragment.

fragmentality. Mellamphy sums up these demands by stating that "to think the fragment as the fragment is to avoid giving it a form and to allow its calling for(th) a form[…]"[161]

Regarding art (historical) discourse, the most relevant of the proposed demands is the first one, positing the fragment outside the dialectical relationship between the whole and its parts. Similarly to Liechtenstein's demand for the fragment to be a part of a non-reconstructible whole, Mellamphy writes of the fragment as wholly distinct from the whole, constituting another relation – "a relation without relation, or rather the approach (or approach to) a relation[…]"[162] This contrasts with Liechtenstein's demand for a visible connection between the fragment and its former whole, presenting the fragment as an element, transcending its former materiality – similar to the Romantic idea, albeit going further, by discarding any notions of totality completely; Mellamphy's fragment is thus beyond totality. In this transcendental movement, the fragment undermines any semantic connection to the former whole or progression, becoming a never-ending reorganisation of meanings.[163] This movement evokes the Deleuzo-Guattarian concept of re-territorialisation as it points toward the "essential" inexhaustibility of the fragment in relation to ontological binaries. Mellamphy concludes his preliminary thinking by proposing that the fragment is the state of becoming rather than a state of being – the fragment is, for Mellamphy, processual in nature.[164]

Mellamphy's theory may apply to philosophical or literary discourses, as its chief sources come from these fields; translating this theory into art history and art proves complicated. Whilst we may apply these conceptual frameworks to a close reading of the concept of fragments, this would ignore the fundamental materiality of the material fragment. Instead, we can posit Mellamphy's theory of the fragment as an element that transcends a dialectic of wholeness to be in affinity with Liechtenstein's theory and declare a final conceptual characteristic for the fragment, which Mellamphy implicitly expresses: the fragment's meaning is in a constant flux of de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation as its original context – the former whole – is lost; the importance of the fragment is determined by the framework it inhabits in its new environment. The material re-territorialisation bring forth a call for formation; it opens new realities of aesthetics, thus working in manners proposed by German Romanticist poetics.

[161] Mellamphy, "Fragmentality," pp. 82, 97.
[162] Liechtenstein, "The Fragment: Elements of a Definition," pp. 115–116, 124; Mellamphy, "Fragmentality," p. 82.
[163] Mellamphy, "Fragmentality," pp. 82, 88, 92
[164] *Ibid.*, p. 85.

II.I.V. Synthetic Conclusion of the Historical Overview

The cursory overview of the fragment's historical development(s) reveals that no distinct theory would satisfy to define the fragment completely. There are certain lineages of thought which pervade this analysed history, most notably, the materialist lineage – Winckelmann's conjecture, Schiller's aesthetic education, Adorno's fragmented capitalist art – and the lineage of thought, which analyses the fragment as an autonomous category, as something *in itself* – Winckelmann's ekphrasis, the Romanticist poetic fragment, etc. These two lines of thought are not exclusive to each other but correlate in important analyses of the proliferation of models of fragmentation; Adorno's theory of the fragment, albeit criticised for its shortcomings in tying artistic production to close to the means of general production to account for semiotic and aesthetic shifts, poignantly asserts that the fragment is a necessary condition of modernization. Whilst this position is retroactive and modernist, it is essential to understand the fragment as a category whose production and reception are tied to modern and contemporary models of thought. If we operate in the framework of mimetic or ethical art, this proposed understanding of the fragment does not fully function; it is only once art achieves aesthetic integrity and self-referentiality that it can produce intentional fragments. This is the essential distinction we have pointed to in the previous chapter.

Whereas there are thus certain points of convergence between the diverse theories of the fragment, they all illustrate a paradoxically different point – *the fragment exists in the absence of a centre.* What is meant by this? The theories analysed have attempted, initially, to trace the origin of the fragment to a concrete material condition. Winckelmann's reading of the *Belvedere Torso* was an attempt at appreciating the fragment *as is*; however, his historical conjecture searched for a concept or idea that would rationalise the fragment's form through its content – Winckelmann's theory thus centred the form around the content and the content around a historical element, the liberty of the Greek polis.

In the following period, Romanticism, operating with a distinctly different form of the fragment, centred the content and the form of the fragment around the *theory of the fragment*, i.e., the articulation of the fragmentary reality. The tautology of Romanticist theory allows Romanticists to transcend classical notions of the production of meaning and produce fragments, which do not, unlike Winckelmann's fragment, account for the lacunae of knowledge but self-referentially analyse and critique the impartiality of knowledge. Following the transcendental idealist programme, the only "actual" knowledge that may be obtained is the knowledge of self-knowing;[165] the entire experience of reality and the fragment is, therefore, centred around the subject that negotiates with the fragment's particularity and universality. In both Winckelmann's and the Romanticist's case, the subject forms the centre

[165] Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism,* §1.3, §2.2, "On the Principle of Transcendental Idealism, Section One."

of the fragment's existence. The fragment is lent to the subject to perceive it and provide meaning and function.

In following Winckelmann's proto-materialistic readings of the fragment, the 20th-century tradition of the Frankfurt School, especially via Adorno's theory, furthered the intrinsic interplay between the means of production and cultural production, providing social reality as the basis for the production and reception of the fragment. The fragment is thus not centred around the subject but the collective mechanisms of capitalist reality. Adorno's theory most explicitly relates that the fragment is a reflection of absent or present realities, rather than an autonomous being. This centring, which privileges presence and meaning in the fragment – the presence of meaning, with Winckelmann – diminishes the fragment's potential for the semiotic and material permutations and transformations presented in the first chapter. If we have shown that the contemporary fragment can obtain multiple meanings and forms, if it can obtain its meaning by itself and with other fragments, then such a reading would be inadequate. However, there is another way to read the fragment, beginning with Winckelmann and the Romanticists and concluding with 20th-century post-structuralism.

As shown, Winckelmann's ekphrasis illustrates the appreciation and openness towards the fragment as a specific aesthetic category whose merit is its open-ended and inconclusive nature. Winckelmann himself is motivated by this quality of the fragment to pursue in an attempt to rationalise and theorise the incomplete form of the fragment to account for its "beauty". The appreciation of the partial and the incomplete would continue in the Romanticist writings on the fragment, especially in poetry. Whilst it has been stressed that this exclusivity, the stress on poetics, parallel with a significantly lower quantity of writings on visual arts, leads us to consider the Romanticist theory of the fragment to be more poetic than art historical. Notwithstanding this shortcoming of Schlegel, Novalis, and others, the readings of art beyond their mediums in a striving for a *Universalpoesie* and *Bildung* is relevant as it once again reasserts that the artwork can be appreciated even if incomplete, devoid of conclusive meaning and function. The fragment's inconclusive nature leads the reader to multiple re-interpretations and the permutations of the fragment. As argued, this reception of the fragment is structurally integral to the fragment and its elasticity, as it showcases how a fragment can relate to itself and contextual tissues. There is no straightforward structure through which the fragment is read, as opposed to the materialist readings of the fragment – every reading depends on the reader and how his comprehension/reading will develop the seed of the fragment.

Finally, this absence of a structure and potential for non-linear development is realised in post-structuralist philosophy, which laid the groundwork for contemporary writings by theoreticians like Liechtenstein and Mellamphy. The contemporary fragment is formed in understanding the fragment as an aesthetic category lacking function and form that is

inconclusive and therefore liberated of classical models of reading and producing. In the "informal" state, the fragment can transcend classical models of the artwork, which are static and linear. Structurally, the fragment is not an architectural element of a more complex artwork; it is *in itself* an artwork, albeit incomplete. This incompleteness calls on the observer to "complete" the work, which leads to possible re-readings, re-interpretations, and re-imaginings of the fragment. As the previous whole is lost, the future is anticipated – the potential for new structures and interpretations is opened –, whilst the present and its potentialities are most pronounced. We are thus faced with an aesthetic category whose meaning is not centred around any transcendental signifier or structure of comprehension, but it is an object *in becoming* consistently present – it is thus not a form of identic or prioric art, but, as explicated further on, *dialogic*.

II.II. The Fragment in Contrast with Totality

When speaking of granting the fragment meaning, this discourse often harks back to the question of totality, a structured compendium of elements, tied to an exhaustive logic; the fragment is often seen as complementary or constituent of a higher level of being, of a distinct form of totality. I will not dive fully into the question of totality and its relation to the fragment; this would exceed the topic of this thesis. Rather, I will shortly interpret two models of totality – one commonplace and one more specific. It is my goal to use these to highlight the ontology of the fragment and its functioning in contemporary and modern art. Whereas one will point to an exhaustible and conclusive being, the other will counter this.

II.II.I. Latitudinal Totality

Beginning with totality in antiquity, it is evident that the concept of totality served an essential role in establishing the fundamental axioms of philosophy. As the discipline whose end goal was identifying the central essence of all being, the *telos*, totality was seen as an intelligible compendium of all components of the external reality, whose logic is established based on the *telos*. Totality as such was already a pronounced interpretation of the world as an organised and logically established object;[166] following this, if the logic of this totality were to be grasped, thus totality would be grasped as well.[167] This led to the pre-Socratic search for the

[166] The term totality, as used in this chapter, signifies both the concept of totality as the material objectification of totality, i.e., the accumulative compendium of objects and/or parts. This dual meaning attempts to bridge the distinction between the conceptual and material, coalescing both in a manner inspired by recent object-oriented ontological discourse (E.g., Graham Harman's *Object-oriented Ontology: A New Theory of Everything*).
[167] Jay, *Totality and Marxism*, pp. 23–24.

arche, Plato's search for essence and Aristotle's writings on the various disciplines, which serve to grasp reality.[168] The French Enlightenment, a few centuries afterwards, continued in this vein of understanding totality, establishing what Martin Jay terms "longitudinal totality," the accumulative form of totality.[169] Finally, adding to pre-existing knowledge and categorising it in a structural logic, the Enlightened idea of totality would find its purest example in d'Alembert's and Diderot's *Encyclopaedia*.[170]

In the history of visual arts, a distinct manifestation of this totality can be observed with *Wunderkammers*. Serving as a microcosm, which encompasses the materials and knowledge of the macrocosm, the *Wunderkammer* is a micro-totality constructed on the proposition of structural integrity of reality and its comprehensive nature of it. In more discrete terms, the Wunderkammer, as a totality, points to the possibility of accumulating objects from reality and obtaining complete knowledge of external reality through accumulation. The case of *wunderkammers* also points to accumulation having an end goal and a longitudinal dimension. The concrete elements of the *Wunderkammer* collections are not in themselves of primary importance but are downgraded to symbols that illustrate the broader structure of reality; the elements and their interweaving connections are thus of primary importance, a notion which has evolved in Western thought in the sphere of political thought as well.

The plurality and heterogeneity of elements become even more apparent if we consider the 17th-century aesthetics of landscape paintings. In the contemporary writings of artists the notion of plurality and the aesthetic enjoyment this plurality creates lies in the search for a Universal. To be more precise, each element leads the observer to realise the theological genesis of the plural and diverse Nature; the Universal created the particular, and through the organic and natural interrelations between these particular elements, the Universal is presented.[171] Some of these notions of universality and particularity were later developed into more fully fledged aesthetic systems, such as Kant's writings on the Universal beauty in his *Critiques*.[172] In all these cases of "classical aesthetics" the notions of organic unity and totality seem to dictate the privileging of the Universal rather than the particular.

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Let us now consider, does this totality serve to interpret contemporary art at all? Two distinct shortcomings of it must be emphasized, as they often return as symptomatic when thinking of totality. First, the "longitudinal totality," especially in its accumulative form, is based on the

[168] E.g., Kirk et al., *The Presocratic Philosopher*, p. 25; Plato, *Philebus*, 19c; Aristotle, *Physics*, 2.8, 100b27–9.
[169] Jay, *Totality and Marxism*, p. 47.
[170] *Ibid*., pp. 30–31.
[171] Ogden – Ogden, *English Taste in Landscape Painting in the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 38–39, 65–66; Ogden, "The Principles of Variety and Contrast," pp. 159, 160–162, 168–189; Norgate, *Miniatura*, p. 43.
[172] Kant, *Critique of Judgement,* 5:212, 239, 240.

understanding of the external reality as a graspable and intelligible category or object; as such, it is implicitly functional, as it metamorphoses every inkling of knowledge into a functional piece in the broader mosaic of external reality. Totality is thus the state that the systems aspire to attain, acting "normatively," as Jay terms it. For Jay, this approach implies a state, which is not yet attained, but is strived for;[173] with knowledge, it is the totality of knowledge and intelligibility. Art, especially contemporary art, whose aesthetic character is contra-distinctly non-functional and non-intelligible but experiential and aesthetic, clashes with this approach to reality. Rebentisch's thesis highlights the problems and contradictions that arise from taking an objectivist approach. To summarise, if we approach art as the materialisation of an idea and/or concept, which testifies to its intelligibility, then an asymmetrical relationship between the subject and the object is established. The subject can grasp the object and obtain its knowledge. Yet, art is not graspable but fluid and aesthetic.[174] It is not an element of external reality that testifies to any veracity of the "intelligible order of totality," nor is the gazing of it elicit any totality. As Boris Groys emphasizes, every view of the artwork is "fragmentary" and changing.[175] The "longitudinal totality" and its implicit intelligible order thus operate on an entirely different set of axioms than the mechanisms of being that contemporary art exhibits. Rather than pointing to the intelligible order of totality, an artwork catalyses the self-reflective comprehension of the subject of their position and the position of the artwork;[176] the aesthetic object induces fluid self-comprehension rather than the linear accumulation of knowledge.

Second, a vital element of the elaborated approach to totality, which is symptomatic of totality, is the insistence on a teleological goal. As was implied, the accumulative approach attempted to compile all the necessary knowledge to grasp and comprehend the totality of reality, thus working towards the final goal of comprehension. Similarly, in the antique thought of the *theleos*, which forms the etymological root of "teleology," the workings and advancement are governed by a final point, a point at which the totality will be enclosed and thus graspable. This form of the concept of totality is thus construed on a linear path, which leads to enclosure and apprehension. However, enclosure and apprehension are structurally alien to the concept of the fragment to a greater or lesser degree.

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The comprehension of the fragment as an enclosed concept can be tried and tested against several different iterations of the concept of the fragment. Once applied to the Jena Romanticist idea of the fragment, there is a certain degree of overlapping. As both Schlegel

[173] Jay, *Totality and Marxism*, p. 23.
[174] Rebentisch, *The Aesthetics of Installation Art,* pp. 194–195, 216.
[175] Groys, "Curating in the Post-Internet Age."
[176] Rebentisch, *The Aesthetics of Installation Art,* pp. 62–63, 64–67.

and Novalis wrote of the fragment as a sort of universe-in-itself, the fragment was interpreted as a self-contained idea using metaphors.[177] Whilst it signified a transcendent Universal, it was self-contained and enclosed. The Romantic fragment was based on a structural logic, albeit significantly fragmented and heterogeneous.[178] The fragment is an enclosed system whose knowledge and intelligibility arise from the fragment itself rather than from an outsourced system.[179] However, this is contrasted by Novalis' understanding of the fragment as a seed for thinking.[180] The embryonic nature of the poetic fragment, as exemplified in Novalis' writing, which shares the appeal to the Universal propagated by Schlegel, points to a different fragment. Here, the fragment does not present itself as enclosed, as it can develop in diverse manners and directions, depending on the *Bildung* of the reader. We are thus, once again, confronted with a fragmented and fractured moment – the Jena fragment both adheres to closure and denounces it. A final answer to whether it is enclosed, however, would be detrimental to the programme that Jena Romanticism produced; an oxymoronic answer would be most adequate, based on the Romanticists' understanding of their work.[181]

It also does not serve the argument for totality that later propositions of the fragment trended toward the idea of the fragment as an embryonic concept. Georges Bataille's cursory remarks on the fragment point to the fragment as a concept whose shape and *being* are constitutively inconsistent; the fragment, following Bataille, is "formless."[182] By "formless," Bataille proposed comprehending objects and concepts as obtaining and maintaining being beyond a definite meaning and signification. A dictionary signifies and assigns tasks to objects in reality, thus giving them concrete shape and form in relation to one another; it solidifies the form of reality itself.[183] However, once we handle concepts, such as the fragment, whose constituent characteristic is the ability to transcend singular and coherent

[177] Schlegel, *Athenaeum Fragments*, f. 206.
[178] There is thus a distinct feedback loop between the content and the form in the Romantic interpretation of the fragment – as the content of the fragment is impartial, the theory is also determined to be impartial, inconclusive, and fragmented in structure; if, following this thread, the theory is fragmented. Therefore, the materialization of this theory also results in impartial, fragmented elements. The feedback and tautology of the fragment are structurally ingrained into the fragment and complicate objectivist and exhaustive readings of it. Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe acknowledge this in their analysis, noting that Jena Romanticist fragments did not entail homogenous wholes and that both theory and practice derived from the same notion of fragmentedness (Lacoue-Labarthe – Nancy, *L'absolu litteraire*, pp. 59–60).
[179] Schlegel, *Athenaeum Fragments*, f. 206,
[180] Novalis, *Logological Fragments*, f. 100.
[181] Whilst not advocating a strict position regarding the discourse on Romanticism, I argue that the general notion of Jena Romanticists toward totality was more negative rather than positive. Whilst there is a significantly stark affinity to universality in their writings, this universality is commonly interpreted as chaotic and ungraspable in nature. Following Otabe's reading of Schlegel, Schlegel anticipated that there the ideal of the "whole," similar to totality and assumed by Schlegel to be found in ancient literature, could, by Schlegel's theory, not exist (Otabe, "Friedrich Schlegel and the Idea of the Fragment," pp. 59–60). Thus, the general system of Romanticism opposes the idea of totality, albeit interspersed with occasional musings on it (Safranski, *Romanticism: A German Affair*, pp. 33, 35–36).
[182] Bataille, "Formless," p. 31.
[183] *Ibid.*

meaning, this task of signifying reality becomes less potent.[184] Once again, the fragment becomes less evidence of enclosure but evidence of plural meaning and the potentiality of signification.

In even starker terms, Deleuze's readings of the fragment, once complemented with his idea of the rhizome, push the fragment well beyond any enclosed structure. According to Deleuze, a fragment results from a continual process of detachment and the cutting of flows; an example would be the schizoid scheme of the fragmentation of language, wherein every element of speech is likened to a brick, a heterogenous element, whose detachment creates cuts and stops in the general flow of communication. Each detached element is in itself, however, composed of other heterogeneous elements, which may induce further utilisation of themselves; they are thus "formless" in nature, yet require new utility, i.e., they require to *become* a part of a new system.[185] In a similar vein to the Roman spolia mentioned in the first chapter, the fragment is thus *in-becoming*, detaching itself from one system into another and creating a system of potential rhizomes of meaning. The path a "formless" fragment may undertake in its search for being and meaning is thus fluid and rhizomatic rather than linear and arboreal. This results in a structural chiasm between the idea of totality that attempts to account for an intelligible and predictable structure. As modern philosophy and aesthetics propose, the fragment is structurally distinct from the totality. To consolidate this division between the two categories, we must look to another structure of totality – the Hegelian totality.

II.II.II. Hegelian Totality

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's philosophy, as much as it is influential and central to the development of modern European thought in its various facets, is subject to several theoretical and interpretative analyses, disputes, and inquiries. Although several significant authors have attempted to interpret his works and theories, research on Hegel's philosophy is still ongoing.[186] For that reason and because of the sheer width of Hegel's theory, the following segment will not deal with his philosophy in total but, in cursory remarks, present his conception of totality before attempting to contrast it with a concrete case of contemporary artistic practice.

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[184] Returning to the Romanticist tautology and the fragment's feedback loop – if the fragment is partial and inconclusive, it can only signify in the same manner. On the other hand, the external reality as a conclusive, structurally organized whole/totality is structurally contradistinctive to the partiality of the fragment.
[185] Jobst, *Architectural and Urban Reflections After Deleuze and Guattari*, pp. 53–54
[186] To point to only a few recent and still active proponents of Hegel's philosophy and readers of it, one may point to Slavoj Žižek's consistent re-readings of Hegel, Rancière's return to Hegel's lectures on aesthetics, Judith Butler's reflections on Hegel's writing in *Subjects of Desire*, among others.

In Hegelian theory, totality is a graspable and comprehensible sum of diverse objects and elements.[187] Whereas this may also be asserted for the previous conception of totality, Hegel's interpretation of totality entails a different form of totalizing, i.e., a different movement of this same totality. Whilst the previous totality, most evident in either the encyclopaedias or the Minimalist object, entailed a linear trajectory, which surpassed the previous states to achieve the goal of totality (the *Wunderkammer* subjected the collected artefacts to the ideal of the microcosm and the Minimalist object subjected the partial element to the new grammar of Minimalism), Hegel's totality does not discard of these previous stages of development. Instead, Hegel proposes reading totality as the sum of diverse, contrasting, and differing elements which interact through a dialectical relationship.[188] The dialectical progression from a thesis and antithesis toward a synthesis entailed the identification of different identities of objects and their dialectical transcendence. To obtain knowledge of a synthesis, the knowledge of its previous stages of development should also be known; as a result, the synthesis enclosed in itself the previous stages of its development. For Hegel, every moment of the development of history and concept would thus be a self-enclosed and self-sufficient totality;[189] he asserted this in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, famously proclaiming, "The whole is true."[190] In some respects, Hegel's proposition of the monastic and dialectical totality of reality shows signs of the influence of Herder's philosophy, which has arisen on multiple occasions so far.

Returning to the fragment, Hegel's totality would entail that a fragment of the totality would be self-sufficient whilst also pointing toward the system of the totality, i.e., a Universal. The fragment is sublated into the totality, where it points to itself and the totality, working as both an index for the totality and a fully-fledged object of *presentness*.[191] Hegel's system would imply a functioning of the fragment manner to the Jena Romanticist fragment, as both attest to a Universal idea whilst also being self-referential; however, the dialectical and cyclical nature of the system of totality in Hegel's philosophy points to a significant structural difference, which is the temporal duality of the fragment. The Jena Romanticist fragment is predominantly a *present* category, which does not entail any further radical development;[192] Hegel's system, because of its predictable dialectics and the anticipation of the Spirit's realisation, entails both a *presentness* and *anticipatory being* of the fragment. The fragment is

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[187] Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit,* §143, 439.
[188] *Ibid.*, §143, 679.
[189] *Ibid.*, §754, 789.
[190] *Ibid.*, *§*20.
[191] This is asserted in §789: "Thus the object is in part *immediate* being or, in general, a Thing – corresponding to immediate consciousness; in part, an othering of itself, its relationship or *being-for-an-other*, and *being-for-itself* /…/; and in part *essence*, or the form of a universal – corresponding to the Understanding. It is a totality /…/ or the movement of the universal through determination to individuality, as also the reverse movement[.]" (Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §789).
[192] The Romanticist fragment opens itself to potential re-readings and new interpretations; it does not, however, strive for a (de)finite goal, such as Hegel's anticipation of the Spirit. The Jena Romanticist fragment is, therefore, much more enclosed, and self-referential than the fragment in Hegel's system.

both in the now as part of reality but also implies a future development, where it could be subjected to sublation into a new synthesis. Staying at these introductory, cursory remarks, Hegel's system opens the possibility of reading the fragment as a phase in a broader development, arguing for its significance as an element of the present and a future reconfiguration. This potential of transitional self-sufficiency is what I believe separates Hegel's theory from the modernist totality; the possibility of retraction to a previous state of development is furthermore also helpful in laying the ground for the singularity of the fragment-in-itself. It is not insufficient to view the fragment by itself, but, like Jena Romanticist fragments, it can be read as self-sufficient and anticipatory of a Universal development. Hegel's teleology thus gives opportunity for the appreciation and reading of the singular fragment.

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In simplified terms, Hegel's totality implies that progression is inherently cyclical and dialectical and that recursion to each stage of this development yields knowledge-in-itself rather than knowledge, whose value and merit are present only in combination with other pieces of knowledge. This proposition of a structure of totality gives (somewhat) equal value to the individual piece rather than privileging the whole of totality. Following this notion, art also attests to both the partial and the universal; take, for example, Hegel's appreciation of genre paintings, which Rancière also takes up in *Aisthesis*.[193] Through the particular, which can imply several meanings and messages, the Universal is present as a potential point of reference, but not the sole one. Instead, the particular and partial motif can contain the transcendental and universal, moving from the particular to the universal and back in a cycle. The cyclical and dialectical nature of Hegel's totality and the fragment implemented into this system can be tested with the help of contemporary installation.

Hito Steyerl's *Power Plants* (2018)

Hito Steyerl's *Power Plants* (fig. 9-10) is an installation piece commissioned for the 2018 Venice Biennale. The installation comprises a series of video sculptures, predominantly showcasing video footage of various plants and text in English. The video sculptures are attached to a general steel architecture, which holds the sculptures together and connects them into a singular structure. However, the piece is not devoted to documenting and presenting elements from the external reality but is instead a simulacrum of reality[194] – the footage of the plants is a product of a central neural network created for the installation, which is

[193] Rancière, *Aisthesis: Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art*, pp. 35–37.
[194] The simulacrum in question relates to the plot of the installation piece and the project *This is the Future* (2019), which provides the observer with a "salvaged" garden from a fictional future and the subsequent finding of it in the present (L.L.P., "Hito Steyerl," p. 112).

programmed to predict the next frame in a video. Using this neural network, Steyerl produced a series of "predicted plants," whose ontological being is not tied to external reality but to the neural network, which predicted the existence of these plants close to the exhibition space. The plants develop and exist in a plane separate from external reality, thus independent of the logic of our reality. In the case of the Venice Biennale, the external reality was the surrounding area of Venice, whilst in the Serpentine Gallery,[195] it was the surroundings of London. In both cases, the product was a series of approximations and simulacrums used to structure an augmented micro-system of plants. The piece's title, *Power Plants*, is a wordplay on the electronic and technological nature of the biological and natural flora.

Steyerl's installation, as much of her artistic opus, is focused on researching the complex interrelations between society, art, the digital world, and capitalism; rather than focusing on Steyerl's entire project, which would extend beyond the limits of this paper and has been subject to other writings,[196] I bring up *Power Plants* to use it as a case for and against totality in contemporary art. The work comprises several videos of plants, which act not as the entirety or totality of the digital simulacrum but as only a portion of what could be generated. The major neural network could proliferate the produced simulacrum and accumulate a diverse and extensive set of elements, giving a greater view of the approximated ecosystem. If the network was thus pushed further, it could produce an entire eco-system with no limitations and basic knowledge of this eco-system structure might be obtained; however, the network's production is limited and the products, i.e., the digital plants are only parts, detached from a whole, and set up by themselves. They are detached from the previous whole via an aesthetic gesture, which posits them into a novel system of signification. Whereas not violent and destructive but constructive, Steyerl's digital plants can act as fragments of a digital ecosystem *in-becoming*. The production process differs from the Badiouian destruction, as it does not attempt to reform any previous system of axioms – rather, it attempts to critique the notion of a determinate future, one which may be predicted, stretching beyond the aesthetic into the broader cultural sphere.[197] Nonetheless, it offers fragments that point to a past whole – they represent flora found in the immediate surroundings – and a novel aesthetic system – flora independent of environmental logic. This novel system, established to induce aesthetic experiences, is also the loci of the chiasm between the fragment and totality in Steyerl's piece.

Steyerl's digital plants do not offer a totality of the digital world, as their presentation is not supposed to represent any concrete structural logic of digital construction. The main

[195] Serpentine Galleries, "Hito Steyerl: Power Plants."
[196], E.g., T.J. Demos's "Traveling Images: The Art of Hito Steyerl" in Demos's *The Migrant Image: The Art and Politics of Documentary during Global Crisis* or the exhibition catalogue *Too Much World: The Films of Hito Steyerl*, edited by Nick Aickens and published by Van Abbemuseum.
[197] L.L.P., "Hito Steyerl," p. 112.

technological aim of the neural network is approximation, a never-ending process, as it cannot lead to the immediate and exact reproduction of reality. Thus, the goal is not a reproduction of a structural logic of totality, but an approximation of segments of the external reality. Any process of induction and deduction would lead back to the neural network and its operations, rather than to higher plateaus of knowledge. The knowledge units encapsulated in these plants are not unified into a concept, but are proliferated and diversified into equally relevant plateaus of knowledge.

This is much more pronounced once the aesthetic dimension of the installation is added into play. As these video sculptures are used to create an environment and an ambience, their function is nominally different from that of plants in *wunderkammers* or scientific museums – they are not degraded to a particle of the whole but are themselves the nexus of the aesthetic experience. The viewer confronts each fragmented plant in its singular form and observes as it moves and sways, thus never obtaining a static stance or giving itself to the viewer's entire gaze. The view of the fragment of the digital world is fragmented, veiled behind the LCD screen. What could be obtained of knowledge on the digital plants is thus minimal and un-normative. Any concrete form of accumulation of knowledge, which would lead to the understanding and comprehension of a produced digital ecosystem, is thus restricted, and attention is brought from the epistemological to the aesthetic dimension.

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By aestheticizing the digital reality produced in her artistic projects, Steyerl's opus produces philosophical and aesthetic considerations of contemporaneity; her work speaks to the intricacies and complexities of the post-postmodern world, where the diverse and heterogenous mechanisms of power and micro-narratives constantly re-territorialise subjects and systems.[198] Her work induces reflection and sometimes fully fledged knowledge of the techno-capitalist world.[199] The aestheticization of this critiqued world is a logical result of the interrelation of information and entertainment, which was diagnosed as symptomatic of contemporaneity by Jean-Francois Lyotard, and further pushed by Steyerl.[200] All these trends and shifts in the artistic production, located in Steyerl's work and also present in *Power Plants*, are important for considering the fragment and totality as it speaks to the excess that the concept of totality brings to her work. The viewer cannot and does not have to comprehend the totality of the digital ecosystem, as that would be only additive to the piece – it would add quantities of knowledge. Still, it would not change the basic structure of the

[198] L.L.P., "Hito Steyerl," p. 112.
[199] E.g., the essay "Politics of Art: Contemporary Art and the Transition to Post-Democracy," published in *e-Flux Journal* Issue #21 in December 2010.
[200] Steyerl invokes Lyotard's philosophy directly in her essay "How to Kill People: A Problem of Design"; additionally, I would argue that the criticism of linear perspective and the limitations of linearity in "In Free Fall: A Thought Experiment on Vertical Perspective" echoes Lyotard's call for a plurality of stories to counter the loss of belief in the grand narratives.

experience of viewing the work. The basic structure is simple and fluid; plants are observed, never grasped, nor dominated by the viewer.[201] The aesthetic experience is both partial and never-ending, as the videos loop and approach no end; Rebentisch, analysing video installation, stresses that this is the structural principle of the video installation – the observer can enter and exit it at any time, thus always having a different, un-enclosed experience.[202] The existence – temporal and spatial – of these fragments is dictated not by an external and/or constructed totality (material or immaterial) but by order of existence; the micro-system of the aesthetic object construes itself. Steyerl's plants are neither teleological nor linear – they are continuously in a cycle of becoming. Within this cycle, they witness nothing but the process of their *becoming*. They do not transfer information on flora; they do not bear witness to any past (this past is ontologically non-existent) but only repeat themselves, pushing towards a non-existent future. Continuing from this, the plot of their emergence is also of circumstantial importance to the experience – the consistent becoming can be a bare-bones visualisation of the flora's evolution or substantiate it by a story; in the end, both cases result in constant repetition and no closure.

Perhaps Steyerl's piece does not immediately jump out as an example of a fragment in contemporary art. However, in her texts, there are several allusions to social and aesthetic fragmentation, which points to Steyerl's consciousness of the omnipresence of these strategies and concepts;[203] how much her work aligns with contemporary and historical theories of the fragment would entail an entirely new inquiry. However, taken as an example of an artwork, which shares affinities to the structure of a science museum and a *wunderkammer*, the structural and aesthetic comparison shows that it would be insufficient to attempt to identify and sketch out *Power Plants* as a visual totality.[204] Starting from the idea of totality as the

[201] This point is stressed in the text included in the Venice Biennale catalogue, where it is stated: "Through a system of elevated walkways that emulate those installed in Venice when it floods, the viewer can walk among the digital flowers, whose sensuous shapes and colours appear and dissolve on screens like an algorithmic fantasy. These flowers bud, bloom, and wither – yet never come into existence. They cannot. The garden is lost in the future because the future is not written." (L.L.P., "Hito Steyerl," p. 112)

[202] Rebentisch, *The Aesthetics of Installation Art*, pp. 181–186. A similar notion of the autonomy of the observer was also pushed by Boris Groys in several of his articles ("Comrades of Time," "From Image to Image File"). For Groys, contemporary art is characterised by a specific temporal economy, i.e., there is a specific notion of time distinct to contemporary art. In a museum, Groys argues, the spectator engages with this temporality as they move in the exhibition space; this movement supposedly cannot be arbitrarily stopped as it constitutes the functioning of perception. In other words, the experience of viewing an artwork is always uncertain – each decision may or may not affect the observation of the artwork, positioning it in constant presentness in relation to observation (Groys, "From Image to Image File," pp. 88–89). Whilst Groys thus gives the object sovereignty and power, I contend, in contrast to Rebentisch, his argument overpowers the object and suggest a much more dominant influence on the subject. In my thesis, I favour the equprimordial structure of Rebentisch's theory.

[203] A few examples would be the concept of "junktime" as the "fragmented time of networked occupation" (Steyerl, "The Terror of Dasein"), Steyerl's affirmation of an individual's fragmentation in "Cut! Reproduction and Recombination" (Steyerl, "Cut! Reproduction and Recombination," pp. 178–179), and an interest in the articulation of fragmentation in Walter Benjamin's writing (Steyerl, "A Thing Like You and Me," pp. 51–52).

[204] Reading Steyerl's work with and against other aspects of the concept of the fragment in contemporary art can bring up other productive tensions. To point to a single example, Steyerl's work, which is radically intermedial in nature, also strongly negates modernist notions of a teleology of the medium of art. Whilst being self-reflexive of

privileged category, this would require *Power Plants* to present a coherent, intelligible, and normative structure of an (external) reality; as stressed, it does not do so. Instead, it shows fragments of augmented digital reality, simulacrums of a potential future. Its ontological detachment from the observer's reality speaks to the potential diversity and multiplicity of the elements of a digital reality but never reveals it. With *Power Plants*, the conditions of existence of fragments are explicitly pronounced – fragments can transcend the necessary accumulation needed to achieve totality as they can anticipate non-linear, repetitive futures structurally alien to the teleological totality. Steyerl's plants do not accumulate but proliferate into an anticipated future, into an anticipated rhizome. The fragments' present and future are never closed, but evolve, like seeds – as much as Novalis promoted the literary fragment, even he would assert in *Logological Fragment*: "Everything is seed"[205] Comparing this to the aforementioned *wunderkammers* also points to this structural difference. If the *wunderkammer* has an explicit endpoint - the accumulation of diversity that evinces the Universality present in each specific element - the fragments in Steyerl's work does not develop an explicit ending. The particular is not an element in a greater epistemic whole, but an open-ended and specifically aesthetic totality, where the particular can stand for itself.

A similar case may also be argued for with *Cold Dark Mass.* It is an example of an installation constructed using fragments – elements detached from a context and providing space for the creation of meaning(s)/experience(s) – where the interplay of spectator's desires for knowledge acts primarily as productive and not reflective. The original context of the installation acts as a secondary pre-requisite for the construction of the artwork, distant from its new meaning. The origin/environment of the object and its essential provenance are insufficient in explaining and understanding the work, creating a territory where the element and its adjacent meaning are in flux and limbo – suspended in an epistemic re-territorialization, always *in becoming*. The environment around the exhibition space, the acts of destruction are set aside to potentiate open-ended readings. And, as both Steyerl's never-ending evolutions of flora and Parker's constant developments in the eyes of the spectator, the fragment is dependent on its reception.

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itself as artistic production, by fragmenting the produced aesthetic reality and realizing it through technological and modern means, the artwork does not open itself up to final self-realization. As it presents its material in a fragmented way, it does not contain a trajectory to this self-realization, thus presenting its current state as final and thus completed. Once again, the fragmented nature of Steyerl's work brings up structural tensions between the fragment and a "whole" and "total" work.

[205] Novalis, *Logological Fragments I,* f. 100.

III. Fragmentedness

The central concern of the following chapter is not the specificities of the state of being of the fragment – i.e. the temporal and spatial specificities of it – as these have been indicated previously; instead, the onus of the following chapter is on the *aesthetic experience*, a term mentioned previously in the thesis. I take up this term from Rebentisch's writings on installation art; the term originates prior in aesthetics and ontology (Heidegger, Adorno). Side-stepping the issue of aesthetic autonomy previously revealed (cf. Badiou's concept of destruction), the aesthetic experience will serve as a catch-all term with which I will attempt to consolidate three distinct elements of the interaction between the fragment and the observer: the temporal and spatial specifics of the fragment, the chain of signification and epistemological grasping, and the open-ended structure of both the fragment and the medium of installation art. This entails consolidating two distinct yet equally essential actors, the object and the subject. Rebentisch's writings, as will be stressed, are of vital importance for this project, as they account for the symmetry in the subject-object relation, whose roots lay in the discourse surrounding American minimalism. However, the issue of this undertaking lies in a lack of genealogical research into this specific form of experience and operating with a concept, such as a fragment, whose solid function/being constantly slips conventional forms of observing and reading.

What is also important for this chapter is the distinction between the experience of and the grasping of a fragment. Often, these terms are used interspersedly and synonymously. However, they imply two distinct experiences. Grasping and comprehending art imply a rational faculty of deconstructing artworks and creating logical conclusions to its form and content. The conclusion of such is thus a supposed interpretation. This can be achieved via readings of the artwork in person or in photographic reconstructions. In the case of the experience of the artwork, on the other hand, we are engaging with a situated and specific experience pertaining to each individual. The tempo-spatially defined experience is what interests me, as it is often overlooked in art history although it can act as an important building block for the interpretation as it precedes it. In the case of the fragment, this element is quite clearly evinced, as I wish to argue here.

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Before stepping immediately into the field of contemporary installation again, let us briefly consider the way minuscule and partial elements were considered in visual arts prior to the establishment of Rancière's proposed aesthetic regime, which we shall once again utilise as

an arbitrary border between the "pre-fragment" and the "post-fragment". With visual arts predating the aesthetic regime, we may notice a reception of the partial and minuscule as constitutive elements of a bigger whole; in other words, the minuscule and fragmentary are perceived as stepping stones toward a greater (non-dialectic) totality. This sentiment is most evident in the theologically inspired readings of visual arts, which stressed the importance of diversity and plenitude as evidence of a God-made Nature. This sentiment, found in the works of different writers, amongst them William Sanderson[206] and Edward Norgate[207] in 16th-century England, is later taken up by empiricist philosophy[208] and secularised into a (semi-)scientific reading of the plenitude of nature and its fragmented elements. Bence Nanay poignantly exemplifies such readings of visual signs with the case study of Pieter Brueghel the Elder's work *The Fall of Icarus*, where the titular character is barely recognisable in the backdrop of the image; Nanay's observation is that one element – the central point of the plot – ties together the vast array of auxiliary elements of nature and culture.[209] For Nanay, it is attention that actualises the pieces, i.e., the faculty of Reason;[210] for now, let us stay at the question of the structure of perception and observe the centrality of a plot to the model the reception of the representational regime. The reception of minuscule elements is – for a lengthy historical period – structured around pre-existing conceptual frameworks and plots and follows them to argue for their legitimacy – the receptive pattern acts accordingly to the systems of the representative regime of art. The privileging of plots and pre-existing models implies a rational approach to art, a privileging of the objectivist notion of comprehension and graspability.

The representative structure of this form of reception, which works by addition and accumulation, is always implicitly teleological, as its final goal is the transmission of the plot and message of a visual sign.[211] In the case of the contemporary practice of developing and presenting visual fragments, as was evidenced thus far, we cannot account for such a structure of transmission; in effect, the receptive structure of the contemporary fragment does not follow a one-sided communication but an experiential dialogue. Focusing on the modern and contemporary, however, if Brueghel's work was an example of the accumulative reception – subject-centred and objectivist in its transmission of a plot – it must be noted that this same teleology is still present in the 20th-century modernist practice.

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[206] Sanderson, *Graphice*, pp. 2, 6.
[207] Norgate, *Miniatura*, 43.
[208] Bacon, *Novum Organum*, 15–18; Bacon, "On Beauty," 425–426.
[209] Nanay, *Aesthetics: A Short Introduction*, p. 25.
[210] For other examples of such readings, see Badiou, "Fifteen Theses on Contemporary Art, " th. 3.
[211] The accumulative and non-dialectical reception of works shares a common teleology with the more quantitatively reductive model of Modernism. In a previous chapter, I had already pointed out the teleological aspects of Modernism via a critique of Badiou's neo-modernist project; here, it is relevant to point out that both models of reception share a common teleology and a common stress on the faculty of Reason – implicit or explicit – as the guiding principle of the reception of artworks (see Rebentisch, "Sept négations," p. 114).

As Badiou's neo-modernist texts reveal, the trans-historical notions of modernism – its search for purified forms and sovereign states of being – are all tied to an established concept of the transcendent space of art and the artwork.[212] Whereas the representational regime manifested works and signs located in a transcendent space, i.e., a space *different* from the observer's, Modernism established itself in the wholly transcendental space par example. The escape into the abstract and conceptual only served to alienate further the space the artwork is located in and the space the observer occupies; the transcendental and immanent thus position themselves in contrast.[213] Nevertheless, as Greenberg and other modernist theorists propose, the reception of these works is still tied to the objectivist views, wherein the work stands for a concept, i.e., the aesthetic autonomy of an art piece.[214]

Whilst acknowledging the structural differences between the aesthetic regime of Modernism and the representational regime, I nonetheless argue that the form and structure of the proposed reception of these works are tied to an implicit teleology. An end goal is nonetheless proposed and sought after. This teleological aspect has already been criticised in Ch. II. II. on totality, but it nonetheless is a vital element of considering the fragment as a distinctive aesthetic concept. The fragment as a concept has been reviewed as a plastic entity, which may be coupled with other elements to create a higher concept, following in the vein of Luhmann's idea of the medium, as I proposed in Ch. I.II.II. Nevertheless, the constellation structure, as proposed by Benjamin, still holds objectivist implications, which I will attempt to discern further. I propose presenting the fragment as a distinct aesthetic concept whose reception is aligned with both anti-teleological readings and stress on the immanence of the object. As such, I will advance this argument from the constellation of Walter Benjamin as an established and partially adequate model to the more open-ended aesthetic experience of Rebentisch and Wesseling.

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[212] To once again point to evidence of this transcendental nature in Badiou's conception of art, I point to Badiou's second ("Art cannot merely be the expression of a particularity[.] Art is the impersonal production of a truth that is addressed to everyone"), sixth ("The subjects of an artistic truth are the works which compose it.") and seventh thesis on contemporary art ("The composition is an infinite configuration, which in our contemporary artistic context is a generic totality.") (Badiou, "Fifteen Theses on Contemporary Art"). For a critique of this stance, see, once again, Rebentisch's "Sept negations."

[213] In the following chapter, a transcendent(al) space will be a term used to signify a space which is not connected to the material and three-dimensional space of the artwork-as-object; in contrast, the immanent space will be a term used to denote the space of the object as perceived and experienced by the spectator/subject.

[214] Hammer, *Adorno's Modernism: Art, Experience, and Catastrophe,* pp. 74–77.

III.II. Dynamic Constellations – Walter Benjamin's Theory of Constellations

In writing on aesthetics as a means of communication, Benjamin understood artistic forms as sites of translations for "the language of things into an infinitely higher language";[215] the artwork can thus be translated into a higher level of communication in its total capacity. The symbol, however, revolts against this process of translation as for Benjamin, it marks the presence of the "non-communicable"; the symbol, through its symbolic representation of metaphysical "truth"[216] and its self-sufficient being, entails a presence of the "truth," which cannot be translated into language and thus communicated.[217] A symbol, therefore, is a partial and minuscule element whose "truth-value" is integral and exhaustible, as it can be revealed in a "mystical moment". In a close reading of the symbol, Benjamin's theory traces the epistemic nature of the symbol to its theological basis and notes that a quasi-theological moment of revelation is present in the *being* of the symbol.[218] In contrast with the stable and momentary symbol, however, the allegory presents a process of dynamic re-constellations.

Whereas the Romantic symbol provides a model for harmonic unity between the immanent and the transcendent, the allegory presents an unstable and dynamic expression. The allegorical method of expression is brought upon because of the lack of meaning reserved for objects – in clear contrast to the over-valuation of the symbolic object – and thus enables the re-establishment of interrelationships these objects may have. In more concrete terms, the allegorical method assembles fragments of reality, past objects, and events into constellations – new forms created from materials of the past.[219] In a similar move to the archivist, the artist, starting from an awareness of a crisis of representation[220] – e.g., the crisis of the "Fetishist

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[215] Benjamin, "On Language as Such and On the Language of Man," p. 73.

[216] Cowan notes that the "truth," thought by Benjamin, is closer to the Platonic conception of the truth as "a transcendent reality in which objects may only partake" rather than the Aristotelian truth as "an *adequation* existing in the relation between the sign and signified" (Cowan, "Benjamin's Theory of Allegory," p. 113).

[217] Benjamin, "On Language as Such and On the Language of Man," p. 64–65, 67.

[218] Cowan, "Benjamin's Theory of the Allegory," p. 111. In *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, Benjamin proclaims that the symbol presumes that "the beautiful is supposed to merge with the divine in an unbroken whole" (Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, p. 159f). The interconnection between the aesthetic and transcendent dimensions is thus structurally ingrained into the symbol, necessitating a distinct form of reading the fragment. The following scheme, wherein the visual and sensible relationship to the "divine" or the "Good" is quite akin to the ethical regime of arts proposed by Rancière – in both cases, the partial and minute are only such insofar as they represent a divine and ethical Ideal.

[219] Caygill, "Walter Benjamin's Concept of Allegory," pp. 245–246, 248.

[220] Cowan, "Benjamin's Concept of Allegory," pp. 119–120. Cowan's text on Benjamin's concept of allegory goes into greater depth as Cowan relates Benjamin's abstract and aesthetic reflections on the allegory to his critique of capitalist ideology and social transformations. Whilst the connection between the Marxist-inspired critique of capitalism and aesthetics is vital for Benjamin's theory, I will limit myself to discussing only the formal aspects of the symbol and allegory explicated by Benjamin.

Commodity"[221] – "restores" work from its fragmented elements into a new work while re-establishing the artwork.[222] The process of fragmentation, i.e., losing a Whole and meaning, therefore, leads Benjamin to expose a new form of expression, where convention and stability are replaced with restoration and re-establishment of "truth".

The issues of meaning and fragment are of particular significance for this inquiry as they relate not only to the topic of the fragment but also expose the formal distinctions between the fragment and the symbol. As meaning has been destroyed for Benjamin, the first phase of the allegorical method correlates to the fragmentation process insofar as this means the destruction of contexts of meaning.[223] This relates closely to the exposition of the fragmentation process in the previous chapter and once again stresses the semiotic and epistemic dimensions of fragmentation. From this loss of context, a state of emergency is established in which the artist may restore a work and re-establish an artwork. This artwork, importantly, is constructed according to "structures that are indifferent to their natural meaning"; [224] Benjamin highlights the trend of spatialising time, suspending temporal meanings and stratifying objects – all of which have been seen before in the installations mentioned above. In each of these cases, the allegorical method presents itself as a mode of artistic expression that is dynamic, unrestful, and inconclusive; its temporal being is intrinsically tied to *both* the past and the present. The symbol, however, leads to a structurally different category and form of reading. This division, I argue, is evidenced strongly by juxtaposing Nochlin's bodily fragments with Benjamin's theory of constellations.

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In *The Body in Pieces: The Fragment as a Metaphor of Modernity*, Nochlin proposed the bodily fragments, found depicted in 18th- and 19th-century French art to be exemplars of the fragmentation of Modernity; they were allegories and symbols of a new historical and cultural era.[225] Nochlin's theory is presented as a textual reading of the representational methods of fragmentation, basing the conclusions on primary sources – drawings, etchings, etc.; however, an underlying cyclical system of thought is present in this reading. Nochlin reads fragments as primarily tied to the human body, a body society exerts power on.[226] Nochlin's research into the fragment offers the reader the fragment as an index of a lost past

[221] The term denotes the translation of all values and meanings of objects into its own terms – exchange value. The term was coined by Benjamin, firstly, as "Capitalism as Religion" and later, in *Arcades Projects*, as "Fetishist Commodity." (Caygill, "Walter Benjamin's Concept of Allegory," p. 251.)
[222] Caygill, "Walter Benjamin's Concept of Allegory," p. 248, 252.
[223] Caygill, "Walter Benjamin's Concept of Allegory," p. 248.
[224] *Ibid.*
[225] Nochlin, *The Body in Pieces*, pp. 24–25.
[226] *Ibid.*, pp. 10–11, 16–19.

and a visualisation of the present human condition;[227] the meaning and being of the fragment are tightly connected to the historical and cultural contextual tissue in which it was constructed.[228] Following this, the fragment obtains a symbolic value, negotiating material presence with a transcendental symbolical level. Such a reading and movement of the fragment is problematic, as it ties back to the Wittgensteinian familiarity argument – the symbol and the fragment are quite familiar concepts and categories, so much so that they appear to coalesce in Nochlin's theory.

I argue that Nochlin's bodily fragments, when imposed onto this binary division of the allegory and the symbol, can be categorised as symbols. Whilst the historical background of the process of decapitation and the revolutionary development lends itself to an allegorical reading – Benjamin himself presents the allegorical depictions of history on many occasions via German baroque theatre – these partial elements of the body are still momentary, their form and content synchronous. The semiotic relation between the decapitated head and the revolutionary vitality and outburst is not veiled, but highly explicit. Once the (pre-)history gives significance to the fragmented object, the past overflows into the present and the fragment becomes characterised by its synchronic (re)presentation of the present and the past. However, the past is not sublated but dominates the present by providing the fragment a "correct" meaning, suspending its potential readings. Once this relation to the past is unravelled, the meaning exhausted, no further interpretations and readings seem to be possible, according to Nochlin's methodology – the bodily fragment reflects a psychoanalytic fetish or a historical revolution, which appears to be all.

The privileged moment and presentness of the fragment, which, for Nochlin, is much more relevant than the indexical potential of the fragment, is thus never sovereign but always synchronous with an overflow of the past. The process of the signification of Nochlin's fragment depends on this coalescing of the present image and history into an intelligible rhetoric of the fragment. This coalescence exhausts the fragment; it is the *mystical moment* where the head, corpse, and limb acquire meaning. None of this, however, can assist us in analysing non-representative, non-figurative fragments observed thus far.

Nochlin's theory posits that the fragment is simultaneously in the present whilst referring to some past moment(s). The present is thus subject to the power of the past; the temporality of the fragment is shifted towards its pre-history. If the Romantic fragment's self-sufficiency and sovereignty gave way to re-readings of the fragment, Nochlin's fragment provides little potential for re-readings. There is an implied "correct" reading of the fragment, exhausting the meaning of the fragment. Similarly to the symbol, it is a momentary totality. However, all the preceding examples of installations I have pointed to argue for the exact opposite of aesthetic functioning. As argued, the contemporary fragment is structurally distant

[227] *Ibid.*, pp. 10–11, 24–25, 53.
[228] *Ibid.*, pp. 30, 53.

from the teleological and enclosed totality – inexhaustive, self-referential, and dynamic. This dynamism is based on the excessive presentness of the fragment – it can be subjected to translocations, transfigurations, and permutations in meaning; the meaning is not dependent on extra-artistic discourse or rhetorical translations of these same discourses. As a rhetorical and aesthetic category, the symbol presents itself as temporally, semiotically, and aesthetically different from the fragment – it offers knowledge and closure. In contrast, the contemporary visual fragment lends itself much more quickly to reading the fragment as a part of the Benjaminian allegory. This reading stresses the processual nature and dynamism of the fragment, which is necessary for its being and reception.

Benjamin's idea of constellations as the sensorial materialisation of an idea/concept has similar antecedents in aesthetics and psychology. One can point to Novalis's writings, whose idea of the *Bildung* of fragments, i.e., the open-ended joining of diverse fragments into a learning of the experiential world, is a similar construction of constellations. Gestalt psychology, which advocates for the composition of the Self from several diverse parts, can also be seen as processual and dynamic construction of constellations.

However, like the criticisms of Nochlin's work, this latter example concludes in an expected moment – psychoanalysis, a symbolic form of catharsis. Even Benjamin's theory implies a cathartic moment in which the constellation exhausts itself as it offers the observer the knowledge of the concept of the artwork in a sensory fashion. Whilst Benjamin's theory thus presents a productive framework to think of the aesthetic experience as processual and oscillating *between* the past and the present, rather than diverting from the present to the past (e.g., the symbol), it is not sufficient in accounting for contemporary installation practice, which foregoes depiction and representation of concepts; it also doesn't account for the importance of the experience to the final grasping of the allegory, as the semiotic value is greater importance than the experiential value. Once operating with artworks whose aesthetic value lies in a dual projection (e.g., Minimalism), we must go beyond the implicit exhaustiveness of artworks and seek to account for a more complex aesthetic experience. Furthermore, we must move beyond the conjectural and rational approach to art, privileging the contextual tissue of the fragment over the fragment, and evolve a theory of the experience of observing the fragment. Rebentisch's writings offer a productive example of this exact demand.

III.III. Aesthetic Experience(s) – Juliane Rebentisch's Aesthetic Experience

Whereas Benjamin's theory lays the groundwork for thinking of constellations as areas in flux, it is noteworthy that there is a distinct lack of active interaction between subject and object. Whereas the subject is vital in conceiving the constellations via (re-)readings, the object-as-such does not receive much attention from Benjamin, especially as it affects the subject. Whilst some affinities between such an open-ended model and Rebentisch's proposal of an aesthetic experience may be noted, I argue that Rebentisch's theory pushes the *becoming-in-flux* implicit in Benjamin's constellations to an expanded context. Before diving deeper into the theoretical aspects, let us unravel Rebentisch's model.

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Rebentisch's engagement with installation art is centred around an attempt to reconcile the division between art theory and philosophical aesthetics; more precisely, she uses the discourse on installation art to critically deconstruct what she calls "objectivism" in art theory. The privileging of the artistic object *sans* observer, a remnant of modernistic tendencies, pushed by the concept of aesthetic autonomy (Adorno, Greenberg) has, following Rebentisch, limited potential endeavours into art forms, such as installation art. Per Rebentisch, installation art's potential lies in its stressing of some fundamental qualities of visual arts, amongst which is chiefly the subject-object relation.[229] As per the privileging of the object as the result of objectivist readings, the artistic object has become equivalent to the aesthetic experience, because reading/comprehending the object has become the aesthetic experience of the artwork. The object is thus second to the subject, whose mental faculties dictate the ontology of the aesthetic experience.[230] Additionally, what objectivism entails is the conflation of comprehension with experience; the experience of the artwork becomes less important than the final grasping of it. Some of these issues, which Rebentisch highlights as the departure points of her academic research, are present in Benjamin's constellations as well – the constellations lend themselves to the comprehension of the subject. The mental faculty of the observer/reader induces and concludes the experience specific to the aesthetic object. For Rebentisch, however, one must move beyond this asymmetrical ontology to highlight the specificities of the *aesthetic experience*.

The term "aesthetic experience" is not a neologism formed by Rebentisch; in the introduction to *Aesthetics of Installation Art*, Rebentisch points to a shift in German art theory

[229] Rebentisch, *Aesthetics of Installation Art*, pp. 13–14.
[230] *Ibid.*, pp. 10–12, 112–113.

from the 1980s onwards that privileged the concept of engagement as the basis of an aesthetic experience. The works of theoreticians such as Rüdiger Bubner, Martin Seel, and Christoph Menke, among others, subordinated the importance of the aesthetic object, focusing on the engagement of the observer.[231] Yet, as the postmodern turn and the previous paradigms of Minimalism have emphasized, the object is not entirely subordinate to the subject, nor can it function as an element of the aesthetic experience.[232] As I will argue later, this is of essential relevance when attempting to reconcile the previously established specifics of the fragment with the structure of an aesthetic experience.

In its most rudimentary ontology, the aesthetic experience, as proposed by Rebentisch, is structured around an experience which is *in relation* to an aesthetic object; the aesthetic experience is a fluctuating experience in which the subject and object play an equally important role and in which neither of them becomes the sole subject of this experience. Unlike the asymmetrical structure of Benjamin's constellations or the Kantian notion of aesthetic pleasure, the subject never centres itself in relation to the object; instead, these two equivocal elements of an equation create the basis for an open-ended and developing *relation*.[233] Rebentisch writes:

> "Aesthetic experience /…/ exists only *in relation* to an aesthetic object; conversely, this object becomes aesthetic only by virtue of the processes of aesthetic experience. The aesthetic object cannot be objectified outside aesthetic experience, nor does the subject ultimately become, on the occasion of an object that must be bracketed, the object of its own experience. The new conception of aesthetic experience as a process that comprehends the subject as well as the object of this experience to the same degree and equiprimordially, and which therefore cannot be attributed to either of these entities alone, follows a new conception of aesthetic autonomy, as well. Art is not autonomous because it's constituted in this or that way, but because it allows for an experience distinct from the spheres of practical and theoretical reason, by virtue of the specific structure of the relation between its subject and its object."[234]

Much of Rebentisch's argument relates to the subchapter on the conception of the fragment in visual arts. As was argued, the fragment in visual arts is distinct from one in the practical/functional sphere; whereas we may discern practical objects as elements/fragments of newly formed artworks, it is crucial that their being and function are distinct from the previously signified one. Whereas the practical and functional spheres may follow a chain of signification and structure, one which Jean Baudrillard, for example, diagnosed in the architecture of objects – each element being subjugated to either the hierarchy of function or

[231] *Ibid.*, pp. 8–9.
[232] Rebentisch, *Aesthetics of Installation Art* pp. 21–23, 138–139; Botha, *A Theory of Minimalism,* p. 42.
[233] Rebentisch, *Aesthetics of Installation Art.*, pp. 11–12, 56–57, 112–113, 130.
[234] *Ibid.*, p. 11.

the hierarchy of societal norms – the aesthetic fragment evades this signification. Following Rebentisch's theory, the aesthetic object represents a semi-sovereign object whose role in the aesthetic experience is crucial, yet always semi-tied to the object. One cannot observe the aesthetic experience without both object and subject in mind; the lack of the first leads to objectivism, whilst the lack of the latter leads to radical autonomy.

Rebentisch's argument about the practical applications of the theory of aesthetic experience can be divided into two clear lines. On the one hand, in close proximity to the discourse of 1960s Minimalism and drama studies, there is a distinct concern for the spatial ontology of the aesthetic experience;[235] on the other, a concern for temporality, especially concerning the phenomenon of theatrical, cinematographic, and sound installation, can also be discerned.[236] For the sake of brevity, however, let us only synthesize the spatio-temporal framework that influences and constructs the aesthetic experience of an artwork.

III.IV.I. Time-space of the Aesthetic Experience

Rebentisch's venture into installation art is not only based on her claim that installation art "offers an experience of what art, correctly understood, really is[,]"[237] but also on the consequence of installation art being an art medium which is tied to both the space it dominates and the space it creates. Rebentisch states in her work: "[T]he third dimension /…/ is essential to our experience of [installations.]"[238] As iterated by Claire Bishop in her text "But is it Installation Art?," the differing factor between an installation piece and an installation of pieces is that the environment in which elements are installed is part of the work; the totalising space is instrumental to the work's being. For Bishop, the quality of an installation piece lies in its "sense of antagonism towards its environment, a friction with its context that resists organisational pressure and instead exerts its own terms of engagement."[239] As previously stressed, Rebentisch offers a critique of one element of the aforementioned terms of engagement – the plot, envisioned by the artist to offer a dramaturgical narrative, is a type of second nature of the artwork. It is not of essential value but an additive element guiding one signification trajectory.[240] With Rebentisch and Bishop, the urgency and agency of space are highlighted, but what is the space the installation occupies if the transcendental and narrative space of the plot is of second nature?

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[235] *Ibid.*, pp. 146–170, 225–250.
[236] *Ibid.*, pp. 155–218.
[237] *Ibid.*, p. 14. Further on, Rebentisch attributes this claim to a correct experience of art via installation works by asserting that installation as a medium offers transgression of boundaries that separate "the traditional, the organic work of art from the space that surrounds it[,]" reflecting "the constitutive role of the viewer" (Rebentisch, *Aesthetics of Installation Art*, p. 15).
[238] *Ibid.* p. 17.
[239] Bishop, "But What is Installation Art?"
[240] Rebentisch, *Aesthetics of Installation Art*, pp. 159–163.

An important stepping stone in the untangling of the space and time of installation art is the novelties and paradigms set out by Minimalist art in the 1960s.[241] Whilst it may be argued that Minimalism has not yet extended from the object to occupation of an entire space, Minimalist objects ushered in a paradigmatic review of the position of both the object in space and the object in relation to the subject. Rebentisch, closely reading Michael Fried's critique of Minimalism – especially "Art and Objecthood" – notes that the Minimalist object, unlike the Modernist painting and sculpture, does not occupy a transcendental space but an immanent space.[242] Rather than constructing a space devoid of the subject's own body (spatial matter in time), the Modernist object creates its logic of space-time; the subject, in this matter of construction, plays no role in the genesis of the transcendental space but only works in comprehending it.[243] This notion of space and time is typical of the (neo-)Kantian branch of aesthetics, which Rebentisch's arguments oppose. As Rebentisch emphasizes, this subordination of the subject to the object/Idea leads to an objectivist reading of an artwork, whose meaning is subjugated solely to its Idea.[244] In contrast to this sublimation of the object into a symbol (vis-à-vis the instantaneous and quasi-theological reading of the symbol, proposed by Benjamin), the Minimalist object re-orients the relation of the subject to the object. Moving the action from a transcendental to an immanent space, from a transcendental to an immanent subject, also subverts how the artwork functions in space.[245]

The Minimalist object does not let go of Modernism in full; instead, Minimalism as a project takes up Modernism and maintains some of its conceptual architecture but overturns the Modernist project to create a novel aesthetic form.[246] En face, the Minimalist object has no epistemological meaning, only structural, limiting the importance of the visual dimensions of the work; this latter part brings forth the need for an experiential moment of witnessing the work, which was the main topic of discussion for contemporary writings on Minimalism. In

[241] The latter's importance is illustrated by many cited authors in this chapter, touching on Minimalist art (Bishop, Rebentisch, Wesseling, Fried).
[242] When referring to the imannent space, this refers to the plane and horizon of being, which is situated in the objective, three-dimensional space objects occupy. The immanent space is conditioned by the logics of material being and presence. It is the here-and-now of objects and subjects. In contrast, the transcendent space is the plane and horizon, which extends beyond the immanent space; it is the space of abstract being. The transcendent space, in relation to the subject, is the plane which conditions abstract faculties. The planes can be tied together or even synchronous via faculties, such as interpretation – a movement from the immanent to the transcendent – or, e.g., by the Romanticist notion of the harmony between the singular and the Universal. When mentioning immanent spaces in art, however, these are not thought of as distinct and concrete spaces. In other words, the term does not signify specifically a gallery or museum space but rather any material space which an installation may occupy. This broadening of the term is taken up to circumvent theoretical engagement with concrete historical contexts, undermining this specific immanent space of institutional contexts. For a text dealing with that theoretical subject, cf. Barbara Pfenningstorff's PhD thesis, *Aesthetics of Immanence* (Goldsmiths, 2014).
[243] Rebentisch, *Aesthetics of Installation Art,* pp. 100–101; Greenberg, " "American-Type" Painting," p. 226–227.
[244] *Ibid.*, pp. 130–131.
[245] The expansion of the modernist sculpture and its severing of ties to its site were written on by Rosalind Krauss in her article "Sculpture in the Expanded Field" in 1979. The issue of site-specificity and the importance of contextual tissue are thus sidelined in ontological considerations of modernist pieces; as proposed before, both elements play an important role in this thesis argument.
[246] Foster, "The Crux of Minimalism," pp. 40, 42.

the structural "degradation" of the objects, i.e., from displacing them from self-sufficient objects to elements of an architecture, the project shifts from creating purified forms to constructing a defined and fully formed visual language. In this visual language, structure and value are given to the correct placement of elements and their tight constellation. The constellation in question defines the skeletal framework of the totality of Minimalism. Like the linearity of the idea of totality, Minimalist objects are presented as pieces of a novel grammar, which ought to be comprehensive and graspable. In this sense, the Modernist projection of meaning and transcendentalism is still present; its purification functions closely to the purification of forms presented by Badiou, where the artwork is isolated from concrete (immanent) space and time.[247] We are thus pressed with a case of objects that are neither here (immanent) nor completely beyond the current time-space (transcendental). They function in both a site-specific matter and in a matter that lays itself to modernist reflexivity. This structural issue is stressed by Rebentisch, who uses it to highlight the structural oscillations of artworks in space-time.

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Minimalist objects are often constructed from pre-existing elements. This notion of taking up pre-existing elements from "reality" is present in other traditions in contemporary art, some mentioned previously (Parker, *objet trouve*, etc.), whilst also continuing to be an important segment of practices that continue the "tradition" of Minimalism (e.g., Liam Gillick's installations). Importantly, for the consideration of the time-space of the fragment, these objects present themselves simultaneously as objects and signs/artworks. Rebentisch writes of this in the following segment:

> "For Fried, the uncanniness of the Minimalist object he discusses resides in the fact that, despite their highly simple forms, they take on quasi-subjective traits without wearing them "on their sleeve." They seem to disguise themselves like actors. Yet it is not entirely clear how this disguise actually works[.] Whether this object shows itself to be a mere thing in order to obscure its true character or as a quasi-subject that is in reality, nothing but an object with certain qualities, what appears to be "incurably theatrical" is the tendency of these objects toward "self-transformation and self-reversal," their indecisive oscillation between literalness and meaning. What is "incurably theatrical," in other words, is their *double presence* as thins and as signs. The doubling into thing and sign is indeed incurable, for the oscillation between thing and sign can never be fully sublated into meaning, as in the symbol, but it can never revert into mere literalness."[248]

[247] Badiou, "Destruction, Negation, Subtraction," pp. 269–270.
[248] Rebentisch, *Aesthetics of Installation Art*, pp. 51–52.

As previously argued, the fragment can result from the process of fragmentation, through which the previous object is latched out of a pre-existing architecture and trajectory of signification into a new aesthetic system. Via this fragmentation, the fragment takes up a new partial form and becomes the base for an aesthetic inscription of meaning. The fragment does not entirely lose its ties to its previous state, as it can still function as an index of the past and an element of the present; in a similar vein, the Minimalist object functions both as a sign (a present state) and an object (the previous state) – William Morris's *Box with the Sound of its Own Making* lends itself perfectly to an inquiry into its space between functionality and aesthetics, sign and object. This oscillation between two systems of signification is what leads Rebentisch to argue that the relationship between subject and object begins to destabilise, as the subject cannot subordinate the object to one type of comprehension; instead, the object influences the subject and vice-versa. The subject and object are tied to an active relationship in time and space, both transcendental and immanent. The fragment displays a similar active engagement. Parker's fragments, for example, relate the observer to their previous immanent state – the shed, the church, the cliff – whilst constructing, fragment-per-fragment, a transcendental space in which the aesthetic object enacts itself. The object, therefore, possesses the potential to extend itself, prompting something akin to the "pregnant moment" of painting proposed by Lessing – the artwork and its "depiction" are subject to a process of becoming, becoming an object and a sign.

One can also point to other instances of this double presence in contemporary installations; Georg Schneider's *Totes Haus u r* (figs. 11-12) can also act as an example. In Schneider's work, rooms from his childhood house in Rheydt, Germany, are removed from their previous architectural state; they lose their place in a functional system and are relayed into a new, aesthetic space. Here, we may argue that we are considering a quite literal example of fragmentation, but, importantly, these rooms sometimes double as Schneider duplicates them, which does not lead to a loss of the original state but an extension of it. Still, Schneider's case also illustrates the doubling of object and space, as altered rooms act as the space one encounters as an artwork and a compendium of wholly practical objects. We are faced with what Bishop highlights in her text, an antagonism of the installation piece toward its environment, as the *double presence* exerts pressure on the subject to experience it aesthetically. The constant fluctuations between object and sign, object and subject, are what Rebentisch's theory argues for as structurally inherent to the aesthetic experience:

> "Neither thing nor sign and yet both at the same time, the object does not seem clearly determinable – it appears to elude any definitive establishment of meaning or literalness, instead confronting the viewer with a dynamic of mutually conflicting productions and subversions of meaning that cannot be brought to rest either by projecting a particular meaning or by determining formal facts. /…/ Inexhaustibility is no longer attribute to the object; it is instead the *experience* of the object that is inexhaustible. /…/ [T]his "incurably

> theatrical" doubling into things and signs – it is, I think, a structural aspect of all art."[249]
>
> "When Fried writes that the dimensions of a Minimalist work, together with its uniformity and non-relationality, *distance* the viewer /…/this does not indicate the installation of the modern subject-object relation in the space of art. To the contrary, it implies that the distance, the becoming-unfamiliar of the object, which makes the aesthetic reflection on the object-relation possible in the first place, should be understood less as the result of a subjective act /…/ than as a characteristic of a situation marked as aesthetic by this very distance."[250]

The artwork and the space it occupies are thus not entirely autonomous agents; Minimalist practice was, according to various writers, a paradigmatic moment that questioned and disturbed the self-assured autonomy of both. Minimalism presented its claim to site-specific and phenomenological readings of its objects, which necessitated multiple viewpoints and movement rather than a single (linear) point of observation. They were thus not subjugated to the ocularcentric and rational deconstruction of its presentness, but an unravelling becoming and evolving constellation of sensory stimuli. A sense of presentness, an acute awareness of one's *being*, leads to a process of *becoming*, wherein, as argued, the object and subject have equiprimordial roles. This process is enacted in a limited and exact place – the immanent space of an artwork – whose plane of movement is quite open. When thinking of the open-ended nature of the spatiality of art – these can range from minuscule elements to large-scale installations– the temporality of the experience goes hand-in-hand. Whether it be in more abstract terms, such as the processual unravelling of a suspended installation (Parker's *Masses*), a development in concrete time-lapses (Steyerl's *Power Plants*, Sam Taylor-Woods's *Still Life*), or the temporality determined by the subject entering and leaving an artwork's space (cinematic installations), there is a simultaneity being conducted between the temporal and spatial dimensions of the artwork, and the relationship between the subject and the object – the aesthetic experience.[251] I wish to illustrate some of these theoretical points with the example of Mike Nelson's *The Coral Reef*.

Mike Nelson's *The Coral Reef* (2000)

The Coral Reef (figs. 13-15) is a large architectural installation comprising 15 rooms connected with corridors in a maze-like outline. The rooms are filled with several objects, most of which have no distinct connection with one another other than implying a

[249] *Ibid*., pp. 52–53.
[250] *Ibid*., p. 63.
[251] Cf. note no. **205** on Groy's argument for the uncertainty of completion in contemporary art.

narrative/dramaturgical happening pre-dating the observer's entrance into the installation.[252] Bishop classified the work as an installation piece that is similar to Ilya Kabakov's pieces in simulating dream-like scenarios and realities;[253] I argue that the criteria of theatricality, proposed by Rebentisch, brings both practices closer than Bishop's. In between loosely tied topics present in individual rooms, the observer's active participation in Nelson's piece, which has no specific beginning nor end, brings this piece to life.

There is no prescribed route through Nelson's installation nor a specific timeframe for the observer to experience the piece. Therefore, the spatial and temporal outplay of the aesthetic experience is predicated on the subject. In the plane of immanent space and time, the time and trajectory of the subject dictate the experience of observing and interacting with objects. By their implementation in a loose and implicit narrative, these objects are provided with meaning and signification, exemplifying the double presence assigned to modern artworks; their meaning is not exhausted in a cathartic unravelling, as there is no plot to resolve in Nelson's architecture.[254] Unlike Kabakov's pieces, where the narrative, given to the subject via text, assigns a temporal and narrative closure, Nelson omits such potential by staying devoted to the possibility of enclosing his piece. The chain of signification is not retroactively constructed as in Kabakov's conjecture (similar to the manner of reading by Winckelmann) but actively occurs as the subject walks through the installation. The chain of signification advances as the subject observes and creates loose connections between each piece in the assigned and immanent space, subject to shifts in the time-space of the subject. This processual nature of both the subject and the signification process is possible only because of the uncanny nature of the objects, acting as both objects and signs. These constellations may be construed through their loose couplings and links with semantic units. In a similar manner to Parker's fragments, suspended in space and subject to the observer's orbital movements, Nelson's fragments of an alien reality are subject to the observer's spontaneous and unexpected movements through a large architectural installation, concluding in a distinct constellation/accumulation of these fragments into a structure/narrative.

While connections between individual elements in Nelson's spaces are pre-determined via loose topics, they are not distributed to the subject as an exhaustive piece of information and meaning but as a starting point for constructing an *experience* of the work. As the subject cannot survey the entire installation due to the scale and presence of other subjects (the installation can be accessed at the same time by a small number of people), it is essential to the piece that the experience of it dictates the knowledge and information around the work. As Rebentisch emphasizes in the introduction to her work, the third dimension and the experience of it cannot be substituted neither by discourse nor two-dimensional photographic

[252] Bishop, *Installation Art*, pp. 45.
[253] *Ibid*., p. 47. Bishop defines Nelson's *Coral Reef* as "paradigmatic of the 'dream scene' type of installation" she proposed in the first chapter of her analysis of installation art.
[254] Cullinan, "Mine Nelson's 'The Coral Reef'," pp. 763–764.

reproduction. We may still deduce that the experience of the work is equiprimordially predicated by both the subject – through their active engagement and observation in time-space – and the object – through its processual unravelling and proliferation of objects/signs. The experience of Nelson's *The Coral Reef* is a pronounced form of engagement with artwork in an intrinsic space; the experience of it stresses the structural relationship between the subject and object that dictates the aesthetic experience of an artwork.[255]

Moving from the immanent space to the transcendental space, however, we are once again struck by fluctuations and processualism regarding the chains of signification and the developments in time-space. When speaking of the transcendental time-space, I here allude to the developments of the chains of signification in each subject. This does not refer to the faculty of Reason, proposed by (neo-)Kantian readings of art, where the possibility of rational "completion" of artwork via associating it with pre-established concepts is possible; this would entail that the object is passive and stable, which, with installation works, especially the case study in point, does not hold truth. Instead, the process of confrontation with an installation piece can enact plural and diverse readings, which are set out on trajectories of development specific to each subject in the installation. As a result, the work expands in the transcendental sphere via the plural readings of its signs and facilitates multiple scenarios for unfolding these signs. What is crucial in Nelson's piece is the stressing of the spatial aspects of the installation and the fragment's arrangements. If we compare this element of the work to Kabakov's and Epaminonda's installations, we can argue that the spatial element of the spectator's reception of the fragment is a structural component of all installations. All of them require movement from the observer; however, Nelson's unpredictability and scope exponentially heighten this awareness, which makes his work a good example to highlight this element of the fragment's functioning.

By following Rebentisch's writing, we can account for the outcome of the structural distance between object and subject (evidenced prior by the Minimalist double presence) as the open-ended structure of the aesthetic experience. Even further, by contrasting Nelson's objects to the fragments presented in the previous chapter, we may deduce that they function structurally similarly – both are non-exhaustive in meaning and oscillate between two presences. The ontological and temporal dimensions of both objects differ, however. The fragment is tied to its past state and offers a loose residual line through which we may extract knowledge of the past. It does not, in contrast to Nochlin's proposal, necessitate raeding the

[255] Nelson's piece does not expand beyond the *nowness* and *presentness* of the exhibited objects. An altogether different model of the faculty of interpretation would be analysed here if Nelson had presented explicit correlations between his objects and the immediate surroundings of the exhibition and installation spaces. Dan Fox notes this in his 2007 review of Christoph Büchel's *Simply Botiful* installation at Coppermill building in London; noting the similarities with Nelson's practice, Fox argues that Büchel's explicit engagement with the local context – the predominantly blue-collar and Muslim population of east London – influences the interpretation of the work and adds to it an ethical consideration, absent from Nelson's work (Fox, "Christoph Büchel").

history of the fragment to grasp its current state. In Nelson's case, because of the overlaying of an implication of a plot, this previous state is further distanced, preventing us from "travelling" back to the original form. The presentness of the experience of both is structurally quite similar. Via Rebentisch's theory, there is a cross-section between the theoretical fragment and the theoretical-practical experience of contemporary installation practice. Rebentisch's engagement with experientiality opens the horizon of including the experience of the installation into the reading of the work; in Nelson's case, for example, this becomes a crucial element as the unpredictability of the development of the experience substantiates Nelson's unpredictable implied plot. The fragment as well thrives off of this open-ended structure and the construction of constellations – the construction of possible readings.

However, we are still left with a subject implicated in this process of being of the fragment, whose perception and being are not further advanced. To exemplify the potential that the subject holds for the rhizomatic and open-ended fluctuations of the fragment, we must look further into this subject and its specificities. Continuing from Rebentisch's theoretical model, let us move to Wesseling's phenomenologically oriented *The Perfect Spectator.*

III.V. The Perfect Spectator – Janneke Wesseling's Proposal of Spectatorship

Wesseling's theory follows in a similar vein to Rebentisch's proposition of the aesthetic experience. It proposes that the object and subject interact in a feedback loop, constantly influencing each other without completely exhausting their potential. For Wesseling (and Rebentisch), the object acts not as an objectivist representation of a concept or plot but as the basis for the experiencing and becoming of an aesthetic object and the adjacent spectator.[256] Similarly, the implication of a decentred and anti-Cartesian reading of the subject is also present in Wesseling's writing, as with Rebentisch and Bishop.[257] However, Wesseling's theory's novel element lies in taking up the tradition of aesthetic reception to delineate the spectator. As such, Wesseling's theory may act as a complementary reading to Rebentisch's event-centric theory and Bishop's object-centric theory.

Whilst not a definitive and exhaustive reading of reception aesthetics but a sketch of the model, Wesseling's theory supposes analysing how interpretation occurs and is constructed; she argues that such an approach must resist subordinating the form of an art object to content

[256] Wesseling, *The Perfect Spectator*, pp. 35, 37, 46, 55.
[257] Wesseling, *The Perfect Spectator*, pp. 76, 83, 117–119; Rebentisch, *Aesthetics of Installation Art*, pp. 160, 183; Bishop, *Installation Art*, pp. 11, 13. In all the cases, the distinct anti-Cartesian reading of art stems from the privileging of movement and the embodiment of the spectator in a three-dimensional space.

and vice-versa whilst also opposing the psychologicalization of interpreting art.[258] For Wesseling, the faculty of interpretation requires an active relation between the object and the subject that cannot be conclusive but requires an open-ended and plural structure. Wesseling takes this reading up from Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutic writing;[259] it is here that the origin of the affinity shared by both Wesseling and Rebentisch to the open-ended structure probably arises from. Both theorists propose an anti-structured structure of the reception model.[260] However, whereas Rebentisch follows hermeneutics into the sphere of aesthetic autonomy, Wesseling proposes following comparative literature and the work of Wolfgang Iser to propose a theoretically charged phenomenological reading of the interpretation and reception of art.

This departure is immediately noticeable in Wesseling's focus on the subject and the "composition" of him/her/them. For Wesseling, the spectator enters the relationship with the object from a "horizon of expectations," which is a biased and pre-structured understanding of the artwork based on the interests and expectations of the subject.[261] The horizontal aspect of the subject is necessary for entering into relation and the following development of the subject in relation to the object – depending on one's expectations, the subject may change and evolve via the aesthetic experience, as may the object. This is an aspect of the aesthetic experience that Rebentisch did not fully develop in her work, creating a lacuna that implied a universal character of the subject in her proposition of the aesthetic experience. In contrast, Wesseling's stress on the horizon implies a plurality and diversity of both the subject and the experience. The artwork can constantly be "updated" – changed or transmorfed -, implying trans-historical readings and interpretations.[262] Nevertheless, Wesseling does not dive further into the past of visual arts beyond the aesthetic regime consistently.[263] To surmise, though, the "horizon" of the spectator implies a never-ending, open, and unpredictable structure of the aesthetic experience and its further development.

The "horizon" of the spectator further evolves in Wesseling's theory into the function of the "internal critic," the principle on the subject's end – i.e. of the implicit spectator –that enables interaction from the artwork. The plurality and diversity subjects/spectators are what Wesseling proposes offer engagement with the artwork. Vis-à-vis, the artwork and its interactivity also offer interpretative potential that grants the spectator knowledge and interpretative information. Unlike in Rebentisch's and other authors' implicitly universalistic

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[258] Wesseling, *The Perfect Spectator*, pp. 21–22.
[259] *Ibid.*, pp. 25–27, 33–34.
[260] The critique of a structure and the construction of one is shared by both Wesseling and Rebentisch, who advocate for an open structure whose further construction cannot be anticipated. The common position may be attributed to their readings of Derrida's critique of structure.
[261] *Ibid.*, pp. 33–34.
[262] *Ibid*., p. 33, 35. In her reading of Gottfried Boehm's *Simultaneität der vershiedenen Sinnrichtungen des Bildes*, Wesseling notes directly that, for the artwork, "[i]t is impossible to draw up a complete inventory of all the possible meanings and relations." (*Ibid.*, p. 35).
[263] *Ibid.*, p. 26.

reading, the subject is subjected to the historical and contextual tissue that occupies their position. This is reflected in the "horizon of expectations" being an adjustable category since the subject, in interaction with an artwork, may reflect on their expectations and their interpretation's historical determinacy. We are edging towards a radically subjective understanding of the subjective via this departure into Gadamer's hermeneutics (*Erwartunghorizont*).[264] Nietzsche's perspectivism, it is this radically decentred and anti-universalist understanding of the subject that enables us to understand both the material and abstract position – i.e. the tempo-spatial and abstracted epistemic position – to be of equal importance. In contrast to the mere actions of movement and spectating of the artwork, implied in some elements of Rebentisch's theory of installation art, we move toward a more phenomenologically oriented proposition for the aesthetic experience, which moves us towards the discourse surrounding the Minimalist moment of the 1960s once again, to defer once again from the totalizing model of gazing and spectating (the teleological readings proposed in chapter's the introduction) to the embodied and participatory perception of artwork and subsequently the fragment.

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Wesseling turns to Minimalism in the fifth chapter of her book, titled "Discourse on Spectatorship," where she focuses on the discursive aspects of reception aesthetics, providing close readings of 1960s theory on minimalist art as the proposed moment of the "birth of the spectator". Focusing on the writings of Fried and Brian O'Doherty, Wesseling challenges the concept of a passive spectator and proposes that the spectator is an active and participatory agent in aesthetics. Focusing on the active nature and model of the spectator, Wesseling thus returns to 1960s art.[265]

For Wesseling, the subject's action and its permutation are not the result of a complete and enclosed object, countering the proposition made by Fried that the object alienates the subject and thus creates distance. In her theory, Wesseling follows a line of thought which states that the subject acquires a set of instructions and "rules" from the artwork to maintain interaction with it. An example of such a set of instructions can be presented by taking up Carl Andre's *144 Lead Square* (fig. 16). This work, which also shows up in Wesseling's writing, provides the spectator with two sets of rules – one options the spectator to step on the metal tiles, whilst the other offers the option to circumvent this action. In both actions, the

[264] There are occasional references to Renaissance works, 17th-century Dutch paintings, and examples of Neoclassicism; however, these references are often made in connection with other pieces of literature dealing with these eras and works.

[265] *Ibid.*, pp. 168–170. Due to the goal of Wesseling's book being to analyse reception aesthetics, cross-referencing and analysing different media of contemporary art often occurs; in the case of the fifth chapter of the book, Wesseling quickly shifts from the "theatrical" discourse, specific to 1960s Minimalism, to relational aesthetics in reference to Nicolas Bourriard's and Claire Bishop's writing. Whilst this approach assists Wesseling in accounting for a structural model of reception aesthetics, for the purpose of this thesis, I adhere to an intentional fallacy. I will not divulge deeper into her analysis of spectatorship and participation in photography and performance.

artwork provides the spectator the option for active engagement and creates a "situation" in which the object/artwork cannot be separated from the instance.[266] It is essential to divulge here that the instance of the "situation" prescribed by Wesseling does not follow the aleatory nature of Benjamin's "moment"; it is also not wholly similar to the "situation" of Winckelmann's conjectural interaction with the *Belvedere torso*. In the first case, we are focused primarily on the temporal and metaphysical aspects of the artwork, whilst in the second case, we have processed the ontological and epistemic nature of the work and the fragment. In Wesseling's case, following reception aesthetics, I argue we are addressing the intersection of ontology (of the object) and aesthetics.

Following this proposition of a situational nature that comprises the artwork (in its intrinsic relationship with the subject), Wesseling once again returns to Fried's Minimalism, focusing on his critique of the exclusion of the subject. Once again opposing the notion of an excluded and distanced spectator, Wesseling's reading of contemporary art stresses that the distance may be productive once understood as qualitatively positive – if one is positioned at a distance, the embodied and situated spectator may act based on the prescribed behaviour of the artwork. Referencing constructivism, Lissitzky's Proun experiments, Schwitter's *Merzbau* and other works, Wesseling maintains that distance and exclusion from an immediate proximity to the artwork to be productive and "correct" ways of looking at an artwork.[267] Whilst I maintain that the argumentation for an open proposition of rules, established by an object, to be a productive abstract tool for observing the participatory and equilibria relationship between the subject and object, I argue that the following line of thought falls too far into holistic interpretations.

Rebentisch's readings of Minimalism were focused on the aesthetic experience and the open-ended nature of the object in relationship with the subject. This was presented as necessary for a theoretical understanding of the fragment, which falls into the field of open and inconclusive aesthetic concepts. With Rebentisch's proposition, the theory matched the open-ended and non-totalizing structure – the object may be open to conclusions as the essential structural model is the reciprocal influence of the subject on the object and vice-versa. Whilst Wesseling followed in this manner in most of *The Perfect Spectator*, the reading of theatricality and positioned spectators imply a recapitulation – whilst arguing for an absence of conclusive knowledge and the structure being an open-ended accumulation of potential inter-relations, Wesseling falls back and calls for a holistic and totalising spectatorship of artworks.

Whilst applicable to art predating the aesthetic regime, this segment does not account for championing the fragment's partial elements and counter-totalizing nature. Making up for this backstep in her reading of Andre's work, she prescribes two ways of interacting with an

[266] *Ibid.*, pp. 182–183.
[267] *Ibid.*, pp. 181–182.

artwork – walking around it and observing it from a distance[268] –; however, the theory does not fulfil its potential in creating a fully non-partial and in-conclusive model of reception aesthetics. To argue for the fragment as an in-conclusive and non-exhaustible category, I wish to further this open-ended system of reception. To do so, I will consolidate both theories examined so far to propose a model of reading the fragment via an interaction between the object – a double sign and object – and subject – a complex compendium of "horizons" and possible "verticons" – that does not lead to conclusive interpretations, but, to potential bases of readings and embodied experiences.

III.V. Fluctuating Experiences: The Fragment in Flux

With all the theories mentioned – Benjamin's, Rebentisch's, and Wesseling's – there is a noticeable deviation from readings of artworks that favour totalities. The artworks and their semantic content are subject to a reading of their elements via a constellation model in all theoretical models. This constellation can be either subject to the viewer's interpretative potential – Benjamin's constellations of sensible meaning -, the experiential moment(s) between the subject and object – Rebentisch's aesthetic theory –, or the reciprocal building of interpretations and cross-influences between the artwork (and its obligatory readings) and the diverse array of subjects – Wesseling's model of the spectator. This turn from a totalising and objectivist proposition of the artwork as a pure and graspable idea leads us to consider the fragment as an aesthetic form whose function in relation to the subject works in many similar decentred and "nomadic" manners.

When attempting to reconcile these diverse theoretical models, a synthetic reading of the constellation(s) at play may be offered. The basic model, most explicitly eschewed by Rebentisch, proposes a consideration of the equilibrium between the object and the subject. It is worth considering the object in relation to the proposed understanding of the fragment from Ch. II. There, it was noted that the fragment could not obtain "complete" and totalising meaning, but as I argued in Ch. I. it must be understood as positioned at the intersection of different potential systems of meaning and signification. It falls in line with the anti-objectivist reading proposed by Rebentisch, whilst also gaining the structural form of a constellation proposed by Benjamin.

This object-as-constellation does not function entirely transcendentally as the theory Benjamin proposes does; the "transcendental" constellation leads the spectator to meaning and interpretation, which is positioned beyond the visible and the material, eschewing a reading beyond the immanent. This type of reading aligns more with the teleological and

[268] *Ibid.*, p. 176.

quasi-theological readings of the symbolic and moral regimes presented at the beginning of this chapter. As emphasized, the essential difference is that the teleological reading proposes that the diversity and plenitude of minor elements form a distinct – and a priori implied – reading of the artwork. Wesseling's proposition of artworks as propositions for action/interpretation lies in close proximity to this proposed function of an artwork. As Wesseling's proposal of the artwork as a series of potential rules for interaction dictates, the artwork can propose "right" ways and methods through which a subject can interact with the object, thus dictating the trajectory of observation – via the eye and by use of the body in space. All these descriptions dictate the structure of observing/spectating an object, whose function and meaning are pre-circumscribed and thus "beyond" the object's materiality – it is transcendental and thus does not necessitate immanent materiality. In the case of the fragment, however, this is not necessarily the case, as the assumed function and meaning are not fixed but slip from one system of signification to another based on the subject's perception. When analyzing the fragment as the object of reception, it is thus vital to comply with its semantic value's inexhaustible nature and propose another constellation form.

This constellation is thus a non-exhaustive and un-disclosed one; unlike the finite constellation of Benjamin, who proposes that the ending be always *a priori* constructed, the fragment's finitude is subject to the subject's perception of it. Let us look at a concrete example to explain both the undisclosed nature of the constellation and the importance of the subject's agency. We will compare Parker's *Cold Dark Matter* with an installation by Sheela Gowda, *Behold.*

Sheela Gowda's *Behold* (2009)

Behold (fig. 17) is an installation by Sheela Gowda, composed of four kilometres of knotted rope, braided from human hair, and twenty car bumpers arranged into a gallery space. The artist suspended the car bumpers on a gallery wall and arranged the knotted rope into differently-sized loops opposite it. The artwork's composition may differ by gallery space and can take up different degrees of volume in a space – it can occupy a whole room or just a wall. Regarding materials, Gowda, like Parker, takes up elements from the quotidian and transforms their function – car bumpers do not function as elements of vehicles, and hair is used to create knotted ropes. Again, we are considering a case of transfiguration, albeit to a lesser degree and without the implications of destruction in Parker's case. The work is – on a structural level – a composition of more minor elements, transfigured quotidian elements, arranged for the subject to walk around and observe the artwork.

However, the differences in the function of these constituent elements arise once we focus on how they are received and how they provide interpretative material. I have already pointed to Parker's installation as an object whose interpretation is not a priori proposed and

is highly influenced by the subject's awareness of it whilst walking in space. This experience of walking around the artwork is the basis for both the perception of the materiality, i.e., the immanence of the work, and the potential reception of the work – be it via the plot (destruction) or the bare processualism of perception. In Gowda's case, on the contrary, we are attending to transfigured elements located at a specific position in a system of signification, which significantly influences the reception of artwork. As Trevor Smith indicates, the installation *Behold* and the choice of its elements is not arbitrary; the car bumpers point to the economic and material contemporaneity in India (the massive increase in accessibility and popularity of cars), whilst the use of hair implies a different industry, that of local rituals.[269] Unlike the fragments in Parker's *Dark Mass*, which do not stand in an explicit system of signification, Gowda's elements act as signifiers of both the vehicular and the ritual industry of contemporary India; their juxtaposition also acts as a signifier of a higher signified, further pushing the chain of signification from the element and its immanent materiality towards the transcendental. Whilst this movement was implied already in the pre-history of the fragment, in Jena Romanticist texts, which ushered the idea that the particular fragments can lead to the transcendental, those fragments were still open to interpretation and slips in signification. Each fragment offered material for diverse readings of it – the result was also the proliferation of diverse *Bildung(s)* – and did not follow the linear line of teleology. With Gowda's installation, the structure holds great similarity to the structure of the visual fragment – transfiguration, minimality, spatiality, etc. – however, its semantics and teleology distance it from the proposed fragment, developed based on previous readings. In comparing the potential reading of Gowda's fragments to Parker's, Gowda's are read as indexes, substitutes for pre-existent meanings. In Parker's case, on the other hand, the experience is the element of the work which conditions interpretation. Whereas Parker's fragments condition experiences as bases for interpretation, Gowda requires engaging with extra-artistic discourses to grasp her choice and intent to fragment. Gowda's fragments can function beyond material observation, whilst Parker's, Nelson's and Kabakov's require it.

Rather than the teleological readings implied by the injection of symbolic value into the elements of an installation, the fragment-as-object acts in a more fluid and nomadic manner. It has no discernible beginning or end – either materially (Parker's installations), plot-wise (Kabakov's fictional plots), or spatiotemporally (Nelson's rooms and many cinematic installations[270]). The perception of the fragment is thus a base of fluid and nomadic reading; my proposition thus only partially agrees with Wesseling's proposal of the artwork being a set of orders. I agree with Wesseling that the artwork may invite the observer/spectator into

[269] Smith, "The Specific Labour of Sheela Gowda," pp. 30–31.
[270] Rebentisch, for example, points to Bruce Yunemoto's *The Time Machine* (1999), Stan Douglas's *Win, Place or Show* (1998), Bill Viola's *The Quintet of the Unseen* (2000), and others. Some other, more contemporary examples include the works of the Swiss duo Pauline Boudry / Renate Lorenz and the English artists John Akomfrah and Isaac Julien, among others.

interaction by proposing specific ways of acting/moving; however, I cannot entirely agree that there is always an *a priori* set of propositions made. Especially in the case of art created post-Minimalism, where the object acts as a double-sing – a sign and an object – and where the fixation of the sign to a signified is not consistent – slippage is warranted, especially with the fragment, which is undisclosed – there is a proposed fluid field of interpretation. This fluid field is closest to the aesthetic experience proposed by Rebentisch, albeit more complex. The act of reading and interpreting the fragment is, I propose, not the linear following of a proposed set of rules, nor is it the following a proposed implicit ending; it is the complex inter-connected relation between the fragment in space and the subject in space, wherein both actors create a constellation *beyond* the mere object (Minimalism) and the mere transcendence (Benjamin's constellations). When dealing with the fragment, we must focus on both the immanent (the object-in-space) and the transcendent (the perception of the object-in-space) as building blocks of diverse readings, influenced by the position of the spectator in time and space and his horizon of expectations.

§

The artwork as an object, if comprised of fragments, can thus be read as an object-as-constellation; the construction of the constellation rests both on the processual building-up of the artwork in the eyes of the spectator and the perception of the spectator – visually and semantically. In other terms, the constellation rests on the observational and the semantic/interpretative perception of the object and its constituent elements. On the other side of the aesthetic experience, the subject is also a complex agent, not simply an abstract or universal entity. This focus on the subject as a unique individual is implied in Jena Romanticist *Bildung* and the general anti-modernist sentiment found in theories such as Rebentisch's.[271] However, whereas Jena Romanticists and Rebentisch stress the uniqueness of the subject – their preferences (*Bildung*) and movement – the subject is still presented in abstract and general terms. The subject, however, is not just an entity walking through time and space or an obscure faculty of the mind that groups together fragments of interest but a complex compendium of interests, movement patterns, knowledge, preferences, etc. Wesseling goes some way to address this issue by providing a localising model for the subject, proposing a three-dimensionality of the subject's faculty of interpretation – the verticon and the horizon (of expectations) serve to position and calibrate the proposed spectator. This diversity of spectators also reflects the fluidity of both the interpretations – being subject to

[271] At this point, it is worth noting that Wesseling, another author prominently analysed in this chapter, also delves into an analysis of Modernism, albeit briefly and in relation to Rancière's critique of it. Concerning Rancière's proposition of the existence of two (or, as Wesseling comments, perhaps more) Modernisms – "a movement relating more to itself and the art context, the other a movement relating more to life itself" – Wesseling argues that Modernism is, structurally, a form of (self-)reflection of reality. The distance from reality and materialisation of it into elements "as themselves" (e.g., images) work to illustrate that an artwork is simultaneous, for Wesseling, part of reality and an allusion to itself. This is an intrinsic element for Wesseling and a characteristic that enables the function of an internal critic (Wesseling, *The Perfect Spectator*, p. 101).

each individual's experience of the work – and the subjects themselves – as Wesseling emphasizes, the historical context can influence interpretations, and, as I argue, individual's interpretations may also change with time and experience. As such, the subject cannot be predetermined and expected, as cannot be interpretations of the work.

If a structure of relations occupies one side of the aesthetic experience of the fragment – potential relations between fragments of no particular or explicit symbolic meaning – then the other side, the subject, similarly mirrors the vague structure, i.e. the structure as potential and arbitrary relations. This complements the undisclosed nature of fragments as it further argues that each work made of fragments contains potential readings. While Parker's fragments can be read as indexes of explosions and destruction, they can also be read as constellations of matter. Similarly, Steyerl's flora offers the possibility of reading them as symbols of a fictional universe beyond contemporary reality or as small containers of potential developments of natural flora. And, in the radical case of Nelson's *Coral Reef*, the rooms are almost entirely left to the viewer to deduce the meaning. As I propose, this deduction of meaning and sense is subject to the observer/spectator. Tracing the history of the fragment back to Winckelmann's writing, this structure of inter-relatedness is already implied – Winckelmann reads the *Belvedere Torso* via conjunction because of his interest in ancient Greek culture and democratic politics. With Schiller's reading of *Juno Ludovisi*, which he posits to be "a wonderful expression, for which the understanding has no idea and language no name,"[272] we are once again dealing with a fragment filled with potential significations and meanings, whose reading is influenced by the motivations and the horizon of expectations of the spectator, searching for aesthetic beauty. However, this structure in the installation art field becomes even more complex when the verticon, i.e., the spatial and temporal elements, is added.

§

Let us now consider how to term and define this slippage of centres and stable structures in the fragment's aesthetic experience. The limited literature on reception in aesthetics makes finding appropriate terminology harder. As a result, I look to other fields of research/theory and propose taking up the concept of the nomad to fixate the proposed structure partially.

An example of applying the conceptual model of nomadism and rhizomes is Layer-Burchart's essay on metamorphosis in Parker's practice. Lajer-Burchart's essay proposes an interpretation of Parker's metamorphoses of objects as a post-humanist critique of the anthropologic attachment to objects. She uses several of Parker's works from the late 1990s to illustrate the importance of the category of time on the object, pointing towards the existence of objects after the death of a subject and subjectivity. The object itself outlives the subject, therefore doubting the pre-established hierarchy. What is left in Parker's work is the call to

[272] Schiller, *Letters Upon the Aesthetic Education of Man*, l. XV.

reposition the subject in relation to its object-counterpart.[273] The subject loses its fixation as it moves from one partial object to the other, based on its libidinal needs – similar to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of desiring-production.[274] Both the subject and the object are thus detached from fixed categories and hierarchies, losing their singular meaning and turning to a fluctuating state. *Autonomous relatedness* and *discontinuous belongings* become the primary form of being.[275] At its core, Lajer-Burchart proposes a different approach to understanding the subject's role – it goes beyond the subject-centric understanding of the artwork – and beyond the immanent present to suggest extensions in time. I do not propose diving further into the questions of the ontology of time beyond the immanent perception or to the psychoanalytic readings of the libidinal actions of the subject; instead, I propose taking up Lajer-Burchart's idea that the subject and object are not fixed categories and do not maintain any fixed hierarchy. What we are engaging with in her analysis is similar to my proposition of a fluctuating and decentred reading of the aesthetic experience of the fragment.

If the fragment is a category in a constant state of fluctuations between diverse meanings, an agent of de-territorialization and re-territorialization, it is thus the subject's agency that can influence the new territories formed by the fragment. These new territories, constellations, are models of reading which are not predicated by a pre-existing structure – as one is absent in the artwork itself. Therefore, the territories and constellations are nomadic, as, per Deleuze and Guattari, the nature of nomadism is based on presuppositions, virtuality, and fragility, which counter the fixed and rigid structures of royal science. With the fragment and installations, nomadic territories are loosely coupled territories produced by the intrinsic faculty of the spectator/subject, whose observation and perception of the installation piece groups the fragments together unexpectedly. No fixed scenario dictates that the observer connects all the fragments in any way; the fragment is not subjugated to the higher narrative. The subject may observe only a segment of Kabakov's fictional rooms and ignore other segments of it. He may not even find any virtual logic to connect specific fragments –for example, in Haris Epaminonda's work (Ch. I), fragmented *objets trouvés* may be too hermetic for the spectator to connect into meaningful constellations. The constant fluctuation from the subject to the object and vice-versa is built on the assumption that the subject can or cannot influence the object and its becoming.

[273] Lajer-Burchart, "Metamorphoses," pp. 88–89.
[274] Deleuze – Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, pp. 1–8.
[275] Lajer-Burchart, "Metamorphoses," p. 92.

III.VI. Spatializing Spectatorship and Interpretation: Immanence and Transcendence

When addressing the issues of immanence and transcendence, we once again touch upon the ontological aspects of the fragment. As mentioned before, the fragment, by transfiguration, similar to a Minimalist object, acts as a double sign. The reception of the fragment dictates the specific acknowledgement of it being both a material three-dimensional object and a sign, with its signification being much looser and open that other cases. These two categories can be ascribed to two distinct planes of being: the immanent and transcendent. Because of the complexity and diverse usages of both terms in the history of Western thought, it is worth stressing initially that both the immanent and the transcendent do not signify any theological conception of being but are focused on the intrinsically three-dimensional present the subject can perceive (the immanent) and the negative of it, i.e., the transcendent. Other authors and theoreticians have suggested far more complex readings of terms and concepts; however, we shall analyse only the more simplistically proposed binary division for the sake of argument here.

The fragment slips between the two different topologies, but it is not unique in that sense; nevertheless, its capacity and potential to do so is intrinsic to it. Following the proposed argument in this chapter, the slippage between the object as an immanent being and the sign as a transcendental signifier may be identified as a symptomatic transformation in art from the 20th century onwards, especially after 1960s Minimalism. The trend of transfiguration may be traced as far back as the first *objets trouvés*; however, it gained more significant importance with the phenomenological expansion of the artwork's perception in the 1960s. It is not only the object by itself that acquires the double-binding element of both being-by-itself and being-a-signifier, but also the surrounding area; Rosalind Krauss, for example, points to this greater importance of space in her text "The Expanded Field."[276] Returning to the slippage of the object, however, it can suffice to say that the post-1960s contemporary art object can function as both a sign and an object. It is via either the artistic gesture that the object is filled with meaning – e.g. by destruction, fragmentation, or a simple re-constellation of objects – or via the subject's interpretation of it – as proposed by Wesseling and, even further back, by Lessing. In both cases, we follow a similar trajectory of a symbolic "upgrade" of an object.[277] Nevertheless, as subject and spectator, we face concrete objects – furniture, wooden shards – and signifiers and indexes *simultaneously.*

Nevertheless, as Minimalist projects attest, the fixation of the object as either an object or a signifier is not as straightforward in a gallery setting. Focusing once again on Carl Andre's work, for example, *144 Lead Square*, a sculpture composed of 144 lead units, can

[276] Pfenningstorff, *Aesthetics of Immanence,* pp. 57, 60–63.
[277] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," pp. 8–9.

illustrate this example. On the one hand, the object can be perceived as solely the accumulation of 144 lead units on the floor. As a result, walking on the units of lead – one potential pattern of behaviour in relation to the work – is not questioned. The subject can thus react and perceive the object as nothing but the bare material and materiality of the art object. The object can also be perceived as an aesthetic object, as something which may or may not signify something *beyond itself.* On the other hand, this model of perception conditions a different pattern of behaviour in relation to the work – the subject may walk around the work, they may be more focused on the identical units of lead, etc. This different pattern of behaviour subsequently leads to different models of perception and interpretation – the spectator may ponder on the relation between the spectator and the object, the repetition of the units of lead, or, in another case, may perceive the object as something in the way of a train of movement in space. In the intrinsic space of the gallery, the object occupies space – and sometimes time – and can, with its materiality, condition routes of movement and observation.

This is the point of perception where the subject is not fixated on one point from which an object's meaning may unravel. In contrast to linear perspectives and central points of observation, which condition the focus on the totality of the artwork's depiction and content, the contemporary object and fragment require movement and oscillation. The spectator must move in space and time; otherwise, the phenomenological unravelling – the mediation of the relationship between oneself and the object – and the aesthetic consideration of the double-bound object cannot occur. With the fragment, for example, the spectator must move around and observe the fragments in the installation space, as, otherwise, they may acquire only a partial grasp of the artwork. What occurs in the time and space of this movement in an immanent space is a constant shifting of the verticon – the concrete position in a topological space – and the horizon of expectations. With each step, the observer learns more about the space and the installation's material. A similar argument can be made even for other forms of installation – the cinematic installation also shifts in the horizon of expectations as each subsequent frame of the film conditions a "calibration" of the subject to the witnessed film. In summation, the subject constantly adapts itself to the object whilst the object unravels in vision and scope.

This unravelling and expansion in space also consider the relationship between the whole and the part, as mentioned in the previous chapter. Taking up a concrete example and returning to Parker's *Cold Dark Matter*, if viewed from a fixed point in space, one may consider the installation more sculpturally as a volume in space. If, however, one is to move around and approach the installation pieces, each shard may act as its particular element and thus condition the consideration between the whole and the part. The coupling of the whole and the part is not always wholly fixed, especially with Parker's work, where the only bind between the piece's history and its present being is the usage of gallery text. However, as was also indicated via reading Rancière's proposal of the aesthetic regime and Derrida's writing

on the parergon, this plot and pre-history of the work are not necessary to consider the artwork. This is even more so the case once we consider Parker's work in relation to Minimalism, which she cites as a significant influence, where the object had an autonomous being and was not necessarily dependent on other – transcendental - signifieds.

Other concrete examples mentioned before also allude to similar findings on the importance of movement in the immanent space. One traverses the room of Steyerl's *Power Plants* and observes LED screens of videos, displaying both concrete images of the development of flora and Steyerl's proposals of a fictional future. Epaminonda's installations give space for the spectator to observe sculptures, ceramics, furniture, etc., whilst presenting an idiosyncratic encyclopaedia for the observer to piece together. And, perhaps most radically, Nelson's imaginary spaces provide the spectator with a labyrinth of a plethora of concrete objects whilst piecing together fictional and implied narratives and characters. All these cases are not only evidence of the importance of immanent materiality as the basis of interpretation, but also of the mutability of the binding of an interpretation to the object. In an echo of Winckelmann's reading of *Belvedere Torso* – motivated and not abiding by conventional and pre-established readings beyond artistic iconography – the spectator may find diverse readings of the constellations they perceive in real time. These neo-constellations are the bases for transcendental readings, all loosely related to the object and thus constantly in familiar resemblance.

This decentralised form of the installation and art object is also mirrored in the its perception. Rancière's writing had already pointed toward a decentralised aesthetic formation, one where a plot or order does not dictate the lineage, development, positioning, and interrelations between the parts of the whole. Even starker, not all parts must be well-articulated for the artwork to function. In contrast to the totalizing sculptures and paintings of the representative order, the contemporary installations provide a plethora of objects that do not have to all be taken in to perceive the whole; they can sublate to create a new interpretation or be disregarded or unnoticed. This decentralization of the artwork's nexus and structure is central to constructing a "transcendent" meaning of the fragment as an artwork. As was already stressed, the fragment must relate to other fragments to gain more "meaning" and "content," i.e. to further construct a reading. These autonomously related fragments do not connect to one another in a vacuum; as both Rebentisch and Wesseling have stressed, this happens with the immanence of the subject. This immanence is nomadic – it moves around – and so does the transcendent constellation of the fragments. Each subject, via the faculty of reading an artwork, constructs their perception in real time beyond the material presentness. The whole maintains its intrinsic autonomy whilst acting as a necessary and essential building block of the interpretative whole. This can be seen in most of the analysed installation pieces, but, once again, most noticeably in the radically non-figural installations made by Parker. In her works, this necessary binding of the fragment as both an object by itself and a building

block of possible interpretations is essential for both the object's workings and the spectator's behaviour.

Conclusion

To conclude this probing into the term "the fragment," I wish to synthesize the findings of this thesis and my research. In following the initial research question of how the fragment can be thought of in contemporary art, I was lead to research three important aspects of it – its pre-history or fragmentation, its being and specificities, and, finally, its reception by a spectator. This conclusion will parallel my findings.

Fragmentation

First, touching upon the concept of fragmentation, I argued visual fragment results from fragmentation, a synchronous translocation from one system into another. As a general structuring principle, visual arts possess the potential to conduct this translocation, extracting objects and images from one context into another. In contradistinction to visual referencing in pastiche, fragmentation moves beyond the past state into new territory, necessitating the reading of a product of fragmentation as its system of meaning and aesthetics. Instead of reading fragmentation as the expansion and proliferation of previous works into new ones, fragmentation is the construction of new objects and artworks. Whilst the structural principle of fragmentation is semiotic and aesthetic, it manifests differently in diverse art mediums. For example, in sculptural fields – installation and sculpture – it has been illustrated that fragmentation is most explicitly achieved through the means of destruction, which destroys the past state of totality. The process of literal destruction causes the dissolution of an object's architectural, functional, and semantic dispositions and creates new objects, which an artist may use to create novel works. This entails constructing medium/form dynamics, which Luhmann writes about. Destruction is thus not only a face-value process but contains synchronous structural and constructive processes, which lead to the production of aesthetic objects.

As fragmentation is a synchronous compendium of aesthetic and semiotic transformations of signs and objects, the specificity of fragmentation in contemporary artistic production lies in the potential of the fragmentation process to construct new objects and meanings. This artistic nature of the object results from the aesthetic practice of fragmentation, a practice that produces partial elements rather than totalities; it follows Rancière's theory of the aesthetic regime, privileging the interplay of elements as opposed to a

plot or hierarchy. The structural principle of fragmentation is thus distinctly aesthetic, endowing both the production and the result with an aesthetic value. Following this, the process of destruction is transformed into a paradigmatic aesthetic strategy. Through the destruction of forms, new systems and axioms may arise – through losing the past and producing the present object, a pre-existing functional object can become an aesthetic piece. And, as destruction and fragmentation are thus boiled down to forms of aesthetic production, their factuality becomes secondary, often even fictionalized. Whilst this chapter thus stressed the importance of fragmentation as a paradigmatic process, its enactment can be fictional if it attests to the necessary and vital metamorphoses of objects into artworks.

The Fragment

In the second chapter, a deduction the specificities and the aesthetic being of the fragment was proposed; rather than posit a fully-fledged definition of the fragment – as the cursory remarks of Bataille and the diverse case examples showed, this theory-of-everything would be redundant – some of the crucial characteristics of the fragment as a specific material object were emphasized. The distinction that the fragment contains and exemplifies contrasts with totality and is exercised in *semiotics* and *ontology.* Let us briefly repeat these specifics.

To begin with the semiotic characteristics of the fragment, it would be valuable to divert attention back to the fragmentation process, wherein the material object undergoes a semiotic transformation, transitioning from one system of meaning to another. The notable examples of Parker's contemporary practice and Roman spolia stressed the structural mechanisms of semiotic transformation; the subsequent stage of the fragmentation process is relevant for the fragment-in-itself. Unlike the symbol, index, or fetish, the fragment is not only tied semiotically to its production process as the transcendent frame of signification. In simpler terms, the process of fragmentation – the destruction or loss of a previous state – enables the fragment to obtain a new meaning. However, it is not intrinsically tied to this meaning as the essential origin of meaning. The index, for example, results from the absence of the subject and obtains meaning solely based on the absence of the same subject; the absence, i.e., the past beyond the imminent present, provides the object meaning and comprehensibility. One may grasp the idea of the absent object/subject if one is to grasp the index. This is even more pronounced in the case of the case, wherein the absent represented subject is the key to unravelling the meaning and essence of the work of art. In the case of the fragment, however, this transcendent signifier is only one aspect of its semiotics; it acts as an index of the past and an object-in-itself.

Following the Romanticist argument for the fragment, it was stressed that it has a high degree of self-referentiality. This is perhaps even more pronounced with the material fragment

than the poetic fragment. The self-referentiality is manifested in the interdependence of one fragment to another in the system of fragments, i.e., in the works that contain multiple fragments. The case of Parker's *Cold Dark Matter* is a clear-cut case study of this phenomenon – the compendium of fragments exists as an artwork only insofar as they are collected together. They represent a non-representation and non-figurative constellation of fragments, wherein their co-dependant immanent being comprises the artwork's being. What is at play here, semiotically speaking? The observer is confronted with both the previous state – the loss of the architecture of the shed – and the present state – the artistic object as a non-figurative, non-representative collection of destroyed fragments. The "meaning" of the artwork fluctuates between the past and the present, between the objective (the shed) and the subjective (the gaze of the observer).

Whereas this scheme edges closely towards the transcendental idealist scheme of Schlegel's philosophy, I believe it is much closer to the asymmetry of the aesthetic experience, as Rebentisch argued. Rebentisch's findings on installation art stress the inexhaustible nature of the artwork's meaning and, more importantly, the fragment. As the installation depends on the observer's reception of it and its processual unravelling, this is even more urgent for understanding the fragment. Its unravelling of the conditions of being it adheres to moves towards the past and the present; the indexical and present being of the fragment is thus synchronous. To put it in simple terms, the fragment provides some objective meaning in relation to its past. However, it also provides no objective meaning or knowledge in the present. The fragment is contradictory; it does not achieve the mystical moment of the symbol but is constantly expanding and *becoming.*

Accepting the fragment as working structurally distinctly from the symbol and the immanent signifier, what does that entail in ontological matters? In the case of the fragment, the temporality and semiotics expounded in the previous paragraph affect its being. By disregarding the ontological aspects of the fragment and focusing on its semiotic value, we can interpret it as a symbol, similar to Nochlin's interpretations of bodily fragments representing political ideals. Reading the fragment solely as the surrogate for an absent object, we are once again pushed into reading it as an index or a received fragment (e.g., Winckelmann's *Belvedere Torso*). In both cases, the fragment is understood as a stable form of being, a whole and organicist entity. Whilst Romanticist writers would also risk reading the artwork as an organic whole, their propositions lead us, once again, toward a re-interpretation of the fragment as an unstable category.

The instability of the fragment is understood as a positive value of the fragment; if the fragment's "meaning" is multi-temporal and multi-dimensional, the being of the fragment is expanded. Unlike the organicist model of the artwork, which attempts to understand the fragment as present, immediate, and logically constructed, the fragment can function beyond

this model and can be a category *in-becoming*. The Romanticist conception of the fragment was relatively straightforward, albeit obscured in writing – the objective fragment could benefit from the subjective readings of it, thus expanding the fragment's interpretations and providing the base for self-realisation, the ideal of transcendental idealism. The notion of self-realisation is not currently interesting; instead, the idea of a possible re-interpretation of the fragment is. As mentioned, fragmentation transformed the fragment from one object into a semi-sufficient and semi-independent object, whose meaning depends now on the system it gets to inhabit. In this system, the fragment *becomes* itself whilst never fully obtaining a definitive function or value. Take Steyerl's *Power Plants,* for example – the digital flora, the extension of the biosphere of Venice and London, are transmitted into the system of the digital bios. This flora has no particular value or function; its being is not graspable as it would in the functional external reality. In this space of suspension, the flowers are in a constant state of *becoming*. They cycle through stages of development, without reaching a final stage or any form of conclusion. The fragment thus metamorphoses itself in relation to other fragments – other images of plants (*Power Plants*), other pieces of furniture (Kabakov's total installations), or other fragments (Parker's exploded installations). The co-dependency of the fragment is not its shortcoming, but its structural characteristic. It gains potential re-readings from its subjective and objective contextual tissue, from the observer and other fragments. The conception of the whole object as the ideal form of being is thus inadequate, as the fragment *is not* solely there but is always *in-becoming*.

The analysis and perception of the fragment, if we are to understand it as a singular and distinct material category – and the discourse, surrounding artists, like Parker, Kabakov, and others, suggested this to be the case – thus necessitates the re-calibration of the ontological being of an artwork and its place in space. The artwork should not be read as a totality or a whole, meaning it should not be read as a graspable and comprehensive translation of a structural order of external reality. It can, of course, translate the Real into visual terms; however, once again, reverting to Rebentisch's reading of Derrida, it is not a necessary condition for the emergence of an artwork. The necessary conditioning for the fragment to exist is the simultaneous extension of a past and the constant re-working of the present. This can occur in a singular piece, either on its own or in constellation with other similar pieces. Any modernist conception of the fragment cannot grasp the fragment in this manner as it evades the teleology of aesthetic autonomy. If one attempts to discern it, the "end goal" would be an endless reworking of the fragment by itself and other means. In this sense, the Romanticist project of the transcendental idealist artwork would share close affinities with this reading of the contemporary material fragment. Nevertheless, whereas the ontological and epistemological bases may share similar ground, the Romanticist theory fails to account for the spatial and temporal dimension of the fragment's materialization.

Reception/Experience of the Fragment

In comparing the reception of the fragment to that of other visual manifestations of the aesthetic regime, which I have now referred to at length, it is not a simple task to discern the differences between one category and the other. In both cases, the spectator is faced with an object whose partial elements are organised around a nexus, which is not conditioned by plot or some external organising principle. Instead, we are addressing decentralised objects whose meaning can be attached to the sign without the pressure of an *a priori* structure. Through this understanding of the aesthetic regime and the fragment, an example of it, I attempted to sketch out the reception model by starting with the question of structure. This question of structure and construction of the object in both sensory and epistemic manners give way to the consideration of the reception of the fragment. In contrast to teleological readings of art before the 19th century, it is not appropriate to emphasize the tight structures and couplings of the object's elements as the central focus of reception and interpretation. If a plot or a message was pre-existent and necessitated the faculty of Reason for the appreciation of an artwork, the fragment, because of its lack of any concrete structuralism, meaning, or conclusive content, requires a different understanding of the readings of the artwork.

"Classical" models of reading and perceiving an artwork rely on an instantaneous unravelling of an artwork for the spectator's enjoyment and appreciation of the artwork. Nochlin's text, referenced in the first part of this chapter, is one example of such readings – it is only when the signifier, the fragment of a body relates to a signified beyond the visual image, i.e. the social structures of 19th-century France, the Napoleonic wars, etc., can the artwork be understood and wholly appreciated. This model of a "miraculous instant" is a model that has been criticised before, especially in Walter Benjamin's writings on aesthetics. Benjamin's perspective differs from this model by emphasising the processual development of artworks and their interpretations. By offering the metaphor of the "allegory" as an alternative, Benjamin pushes forth the idea that the "Idea" of a cultural manifestation can be sensed via a constellation of elements in a particular moment; the Idea can transform from a metaphysical element to a sensed image. This metaphor is adequate for considering the fragment, as there is no prescribed moment or pattern through which fragments can be accumulated or coupled. In the early writings of Jena Romanticism, this idea is explicitly mentioned, primarily through their considerations of the importance of the plurality of interests for the construction of a *Bildung*. With the contemporary visual fragment, this stress on the processual nature of reading an artwork proves important. However, Benjamin's theory is still somewhat lacking in his consideration of both the object and the subject. The subject in Benjamin's case is a universal category with no identifiable variable element. The object, on the other hand, is described merely in structural terms as a composition of “elements”. To proceed with considering the processual construction of constellations of fragments, it was thus important to shift focus to both the subject and the object.

The relationship between the subject and object was observed in the context of the "aesthetic experience," the specific experience pertaining to an interaction with an artwork. This relationship was thus analysed in a semi-vacuum, disregarding the external discourse of art criticism and theory, which influence the subject's relationship to an artwork – something which Rancière's proposition states explicitly – to focus more explicitly on the fluid nature of the fragment. With Rebentisch's and Wesseling's writings, I argued that the aesthetic experience is characterized by its unpredictability. It is not centred on specific details, but rather the reciprocal influence between subject and object. The subject, via his expectations and positions in immanent space, interacts with the surrounding material elements of the artwork. It is up to the subject to discern these elements as either material elements or signifiers of a signified; the subject breaks the double bind of the artwork as an object and a sign. The positionality of the subject in space and time, written on by Rebentisch and, more concretely, by Wesseling, helps the object to unravel to the spectator processually; this is even more crucial with fragments, as the subject can processually link one fragment to another in time and space, thus creating constellation in time-space.

This construction of constellations helps the object affect the spectator/subject. The reading of the artwork conditions the subject's relationship with the object as either a functional object or an aesthetic sign. If one ascribes the fragment to the field of functionality or the field of aesthetics, it is crucial to the behavioural pattern the subject displays in interaction with the fragment. This fluid relationship with the object conditions the shaping of the subject, i.e., it influences how the perception of the object unravels and how possible interpretations are constructed. The last section of this chapter argued that fragments and meanings fluidly connect, resulting in a consistent interplay of territorialization and nomadic movements across both immanent and transcendent spaces.

Asserting that the fragment conditions a somewhat specific form of perception is possible. Rather than stressing the potential of the miraculous moment, which re-affirms the faculty of Reason, the fragment conditions a model of perception, which stresses the potentiality of production of interpretation. The perception of fragments in contemporary visual arts produces constellations whose form and meaning are not fully realized but are in suspensions, open to the viewer's aesthetic engagement with them. The fragment and its produced territory are in flux. It cannot be constructed through subconscious desire but requires a schematic re-territorialization; it is a wholly conscious process. The work of some of the analysed artists, such as Parker, Kabakov, and Nelson, creates works that engage with the viewer and create space(s) to produce multiple interpretative models for positive differential multiplicity. Turning, once again, to Jena Romanticist writings on the fragment, Schelling's comparison of the fragment to the hedgehog holds merit – the fragment is the base for the transcendental and the immanent re-territorialization of the object and the interpretation. Rather than presenting a wholly unique model of aesthetic reception, the

fragment offers a distinct model of meaning-production – fluid and spatialised. The fragment in visual arts always requires another fragment to develop; as such, it always anticipates the future and does not speak for the past. The fragment and the reading of it is always in becoming, always in flux.

Final Remark

What would thus be a fragment in visual arts? To provide a definition, it would be possible to define the fragment as the partial element of a previous whole whose function and meaning are irrevocably lost. The fragment can transform into an aesthetic object, devoid of singular meaning or function, but capable of combining and transforming into new material forms and constellations. In its suspended state – post-fragmentation and pre-transformation into a new functional element – the fragment translates the knowledge of the past whilst evading strict signification in the present. Through centuries, artists have attempted to translate fragments from one context to another, initially with a stricter form of signification – Roman spolia creating plots and histories from pre-existing material objects and images – and afterwards gradually loosening the bond between the contextual tissue and the fragment. If the process of re-territorializing of the fragment before the period of the aesthetic regime signified an insertion of the fragment into pre-existing models of meaning, the contemporary fragment maintains autonomy whilst also relating itself to other elements of a whole (an artwork). The fragment thus points to the past state through its materiality and (often) its shape – e.g., the wooden shards, the rocks from a cliff, the still images of a plant, etc. – and can also relate this past state to its current form of an artwork. At the same time, once displaced from one system and transformed into a novel artwork, whose meaning is not strictly pre-determined, the fragment can also present itself as an aesthetic object, whose being is intrinsically tied to the present, its aesthetic state as observed by the observer. The observer is therefore faced with two options of reading the fragment – retrieving information of its past state and probing into it to recover a cohesive history of the object or observing and experiencing the object as-is and partaking in the open-ended aesthetic experience.

The fragments being and function thus don’t rest on its past state, but on the negotiation it creates with the viewer, subjecting him to consideration of its present constellation and present state. Parker's fragments lead to the destroyed architecture and present exploded views; Kabakov's total installations imply a past event whilst being intrinsically tied to the present experience of the ambience of the dramaturgical stages; Steyerl's work similarly implies a past event whilst illuminating the processual repetition and inconclusiveness of the fragments of digital flora. The fragment is thus both a material object and an aesthetic object, like the Minimalist object; the critical difference is that the fragment is not solely the base of a

phenomenological experience or an aesthetic unravelling of knowledge/concepts, but *both*. If Minimalism constructed objects whose end-goal was the raising of the awareness of the subject to the materiality and existence of the artwork in an immanent space, the fragment also functions in this manner, whilst simultaneously pointing to transcendent concepts. As observers we are thus not faced with solely practical elements – wood, rocks, images of flora, etc. – but with material for possible interpretations. Reading the fragment is thus not solely a one-dimensional process – a conclusion already determined and anticipated by the artist – but an open-ended play of constructing constellations – both visually and semantically.

The fragment, in its most significant aspect, is the material form that consists of contrasting and synchronous temporal, semiotic, and ontological categories. The fragment is not a dialectical overcoming of a past state or its objective being, but the result of sublation of the past/being into a present suspension, whose articulation of the future depends on the observer and the contextual system of signification. The fragment is both passive in subjecting itself to the viewer and active in its dialectical negotiation with its history. It is unstable in meaning, being, time, or perception. As such, it does not lead to classical reception models – organicist wholes, totalities of knowledge, etc. – but is the site of plural dynamics of perception and plural and fragmented observations. The fragment, in conclusion, should be understood as a materialized index of disconnection – not only cultural but also material. The fragment should be an object whose ties to the (former) totality can be retrieved, but whose signification is not completely exhausted by reference to this (former) totality. The fragment's former "original" object can be retrieved, but it is not crucial in understanding the fragment as an artistic medium; the fragment points to its past form and present manifestation. Our understanding of the fragment should thus combine this retraction and consider the importance of the temporal contextual tissues in reading the fragment. In this way, we open the possibility of a transformative process of fragmentation and the autonomous nature of the fragment based on its aesthetic presentness. The fragment is, most importantly, *both an index of absence and a thing-in-itself*. By highlighting the fragment in this thesis, I hoped to build up from the proliferation of its use to accentuate the fragment as a distinct category; a category that calls attention to classical models prevalent in art history. By turning its focus to experiences, processes of becoming and slippages in meaning, the fragment points to a different type of reading art – a reading which is constantly evolving and shifting, always *suspended* and *in becoming.*

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Illustrations

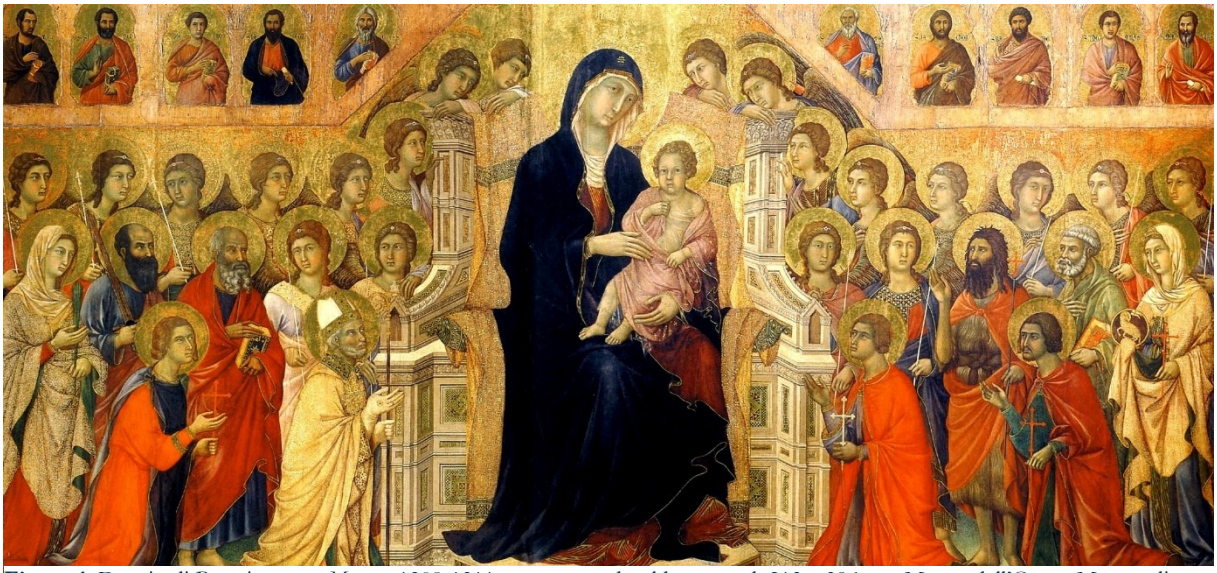


Figure 1: Duccio di Buoninsegna, *Maesta*, 1308-1311, tempera and gold on wood, 213 x 396 cm, Museo dell'Opera Metropolitana del Duomo, Siena (https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f0/Duccio_maesta1021.jpg)

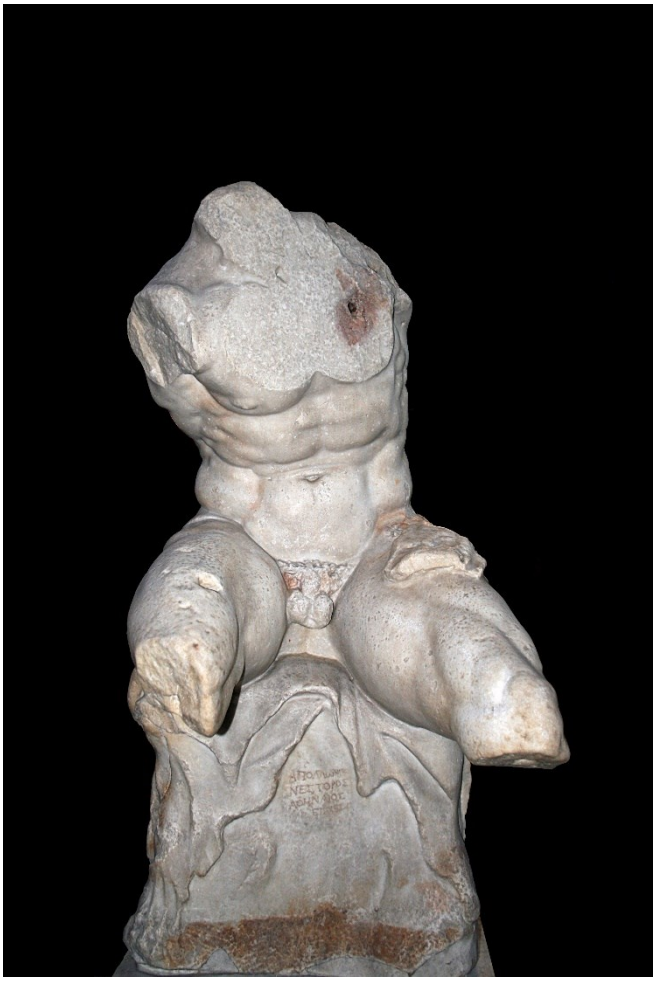


Figure 2: Apollonios (sign.), *The Belvedere Torso*, 2nd century BC, marble, 1.59 m, Musei Vaticani, Vatican City (https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/55/0_Torse_du_Belvédère_-_Museo_Pio_Clementino.JPG)

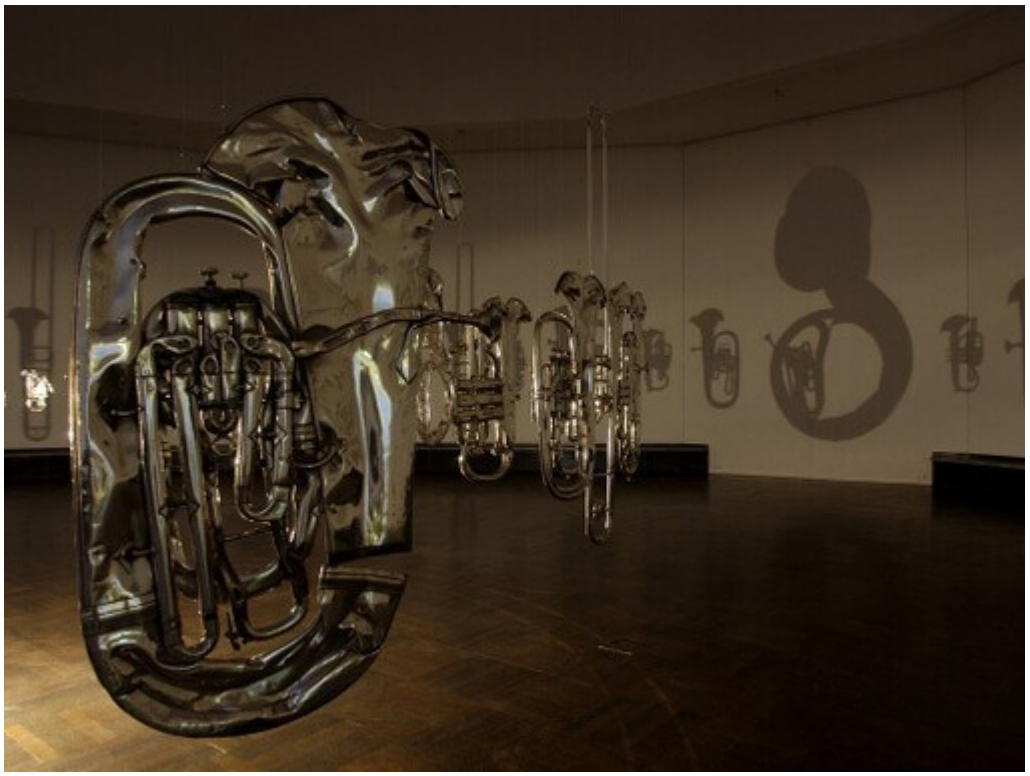


Figure 3: Cornelia Parker, *Perpetual Canon*, 2004, squashed brass band instruments, 700 x 700 cm, Fundación "la Caixa," Barcelona (https://media.meer.com/attachments/9e4706a796544e8e3830d805fd682ab3636c4775/store/fill/510/383/02fc9e4e715f5387cf7851ad66739bc15ac78444e7f26308122527368a91/Cornelia-Parker-Perpetual-Canon-Courtesy-of-Turner-Contemporary.jpg)

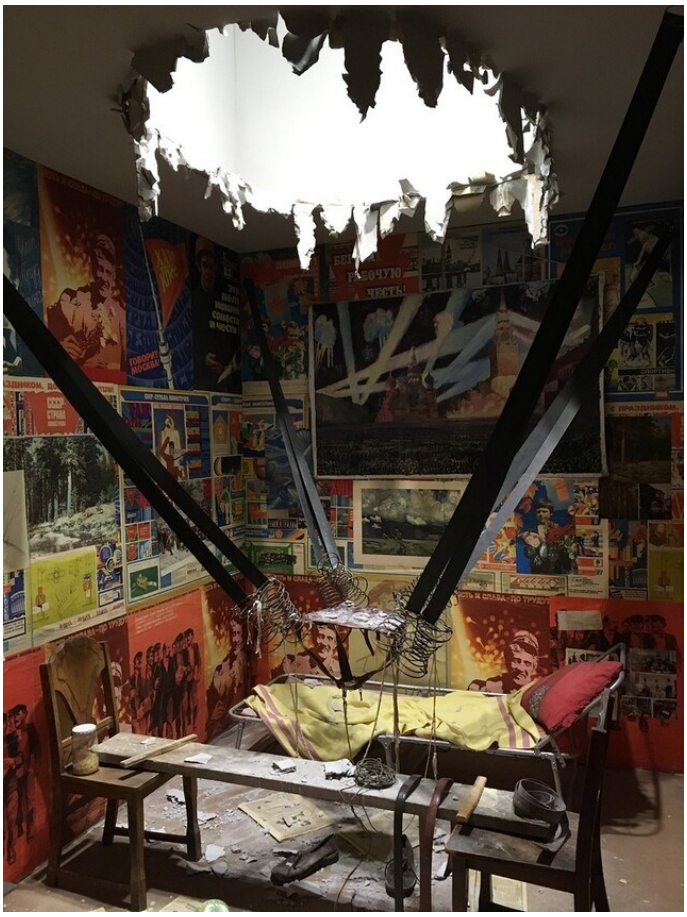


Figure 4: Ilya Kabakov, *The Man Who Flew Into Space from His Apartment*, 1985, installation, 1,4 x 3,0 x 2,5 m, Collection Musée National d'Art Moderne – Centre de creation industrielle, Centre Georges Pompidou (https://images.e-flux-systems.com/IMG_5797_2_.jpg,640)

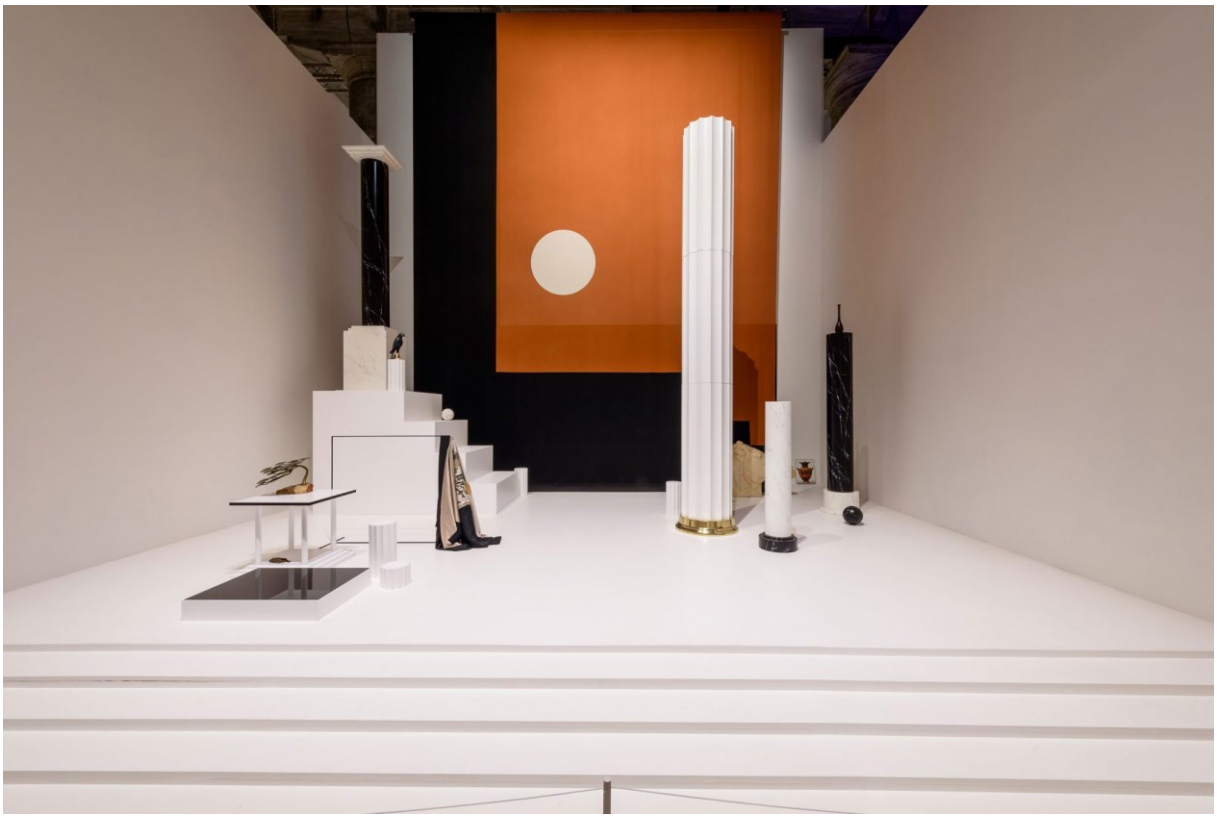


Figure 5: Haris Epaminonda, *Vol. XXVII*, 2019, installation (https://trendland.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/haris-epaminonda-ancient-greek-installation-venice-biennale-1.jpg)

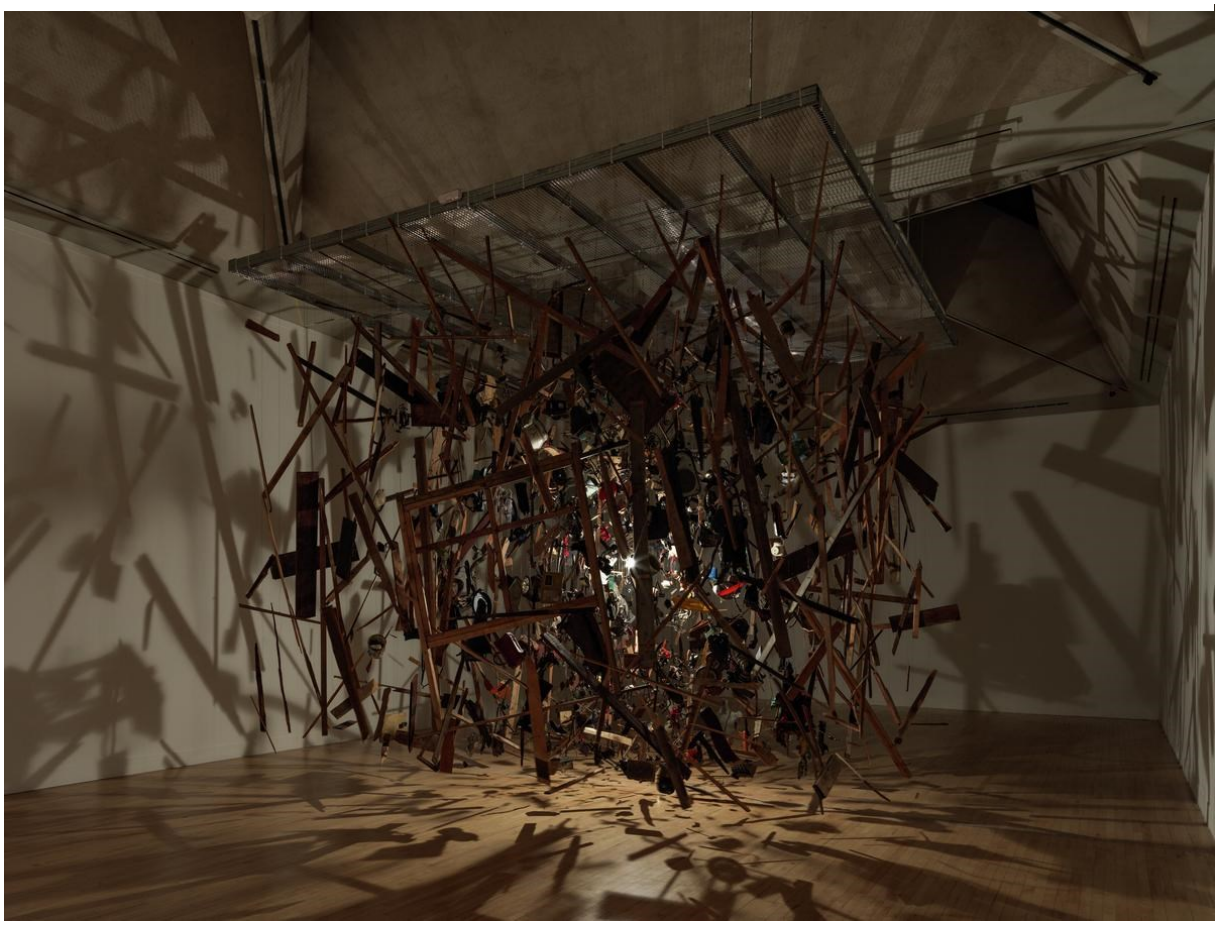


Figure 6: Cornelia Parker, *Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View,* 1991, wood, metal, plastic, ceramic, paper, textile and wire, 400 x 500 x 500 cm, Tate, London (https://media.tate.org.uk/art/images/work/T/T06/T06949_614769_9.jpg)

Figure 5: Cornelia Parker, *Neither From Nor Towards*, 1992, bricks and wire, Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London (https://firstsite.uk/content/uploads/2020/02/PARKER-Cornelia-ACC4_2003-1000x788.jpg)

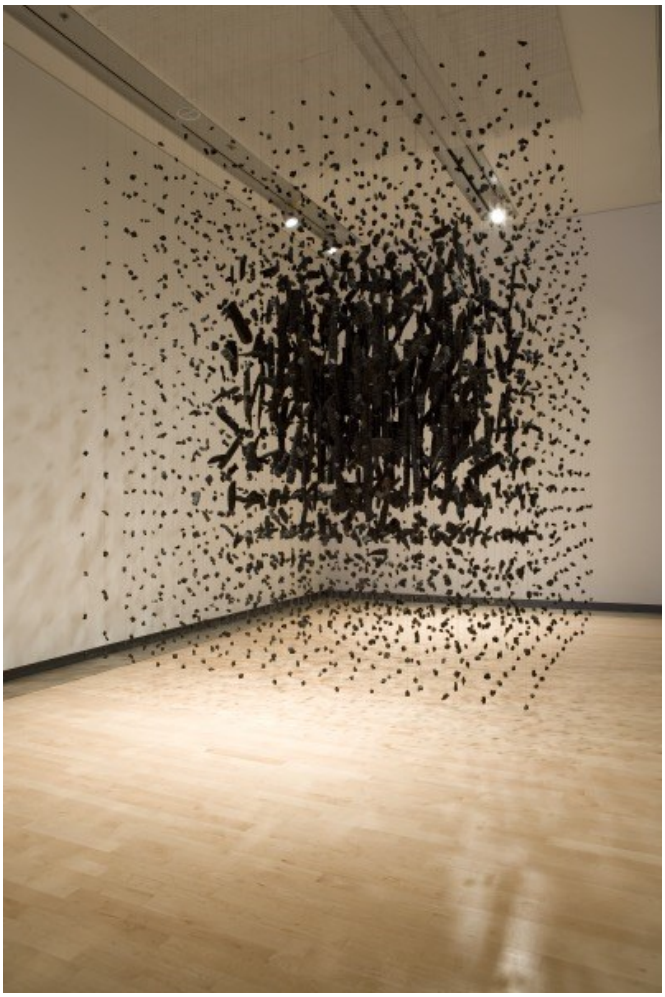


Figure 6: Cornelia Parker, *Mass (Colder Darker Matter*), 1997, charcoal from a (White congregation) church in Texas struck by lightning, dimensions variable (https://en.phxart.org/piction/ump.di?e=C0BE5987B4A0B68061D13225D4B65F07D59A1370FD3F83837CA438459DB4C9F2&s=21&se=14950276&v=1&f=xx2002_1_CP1_w.jpg)

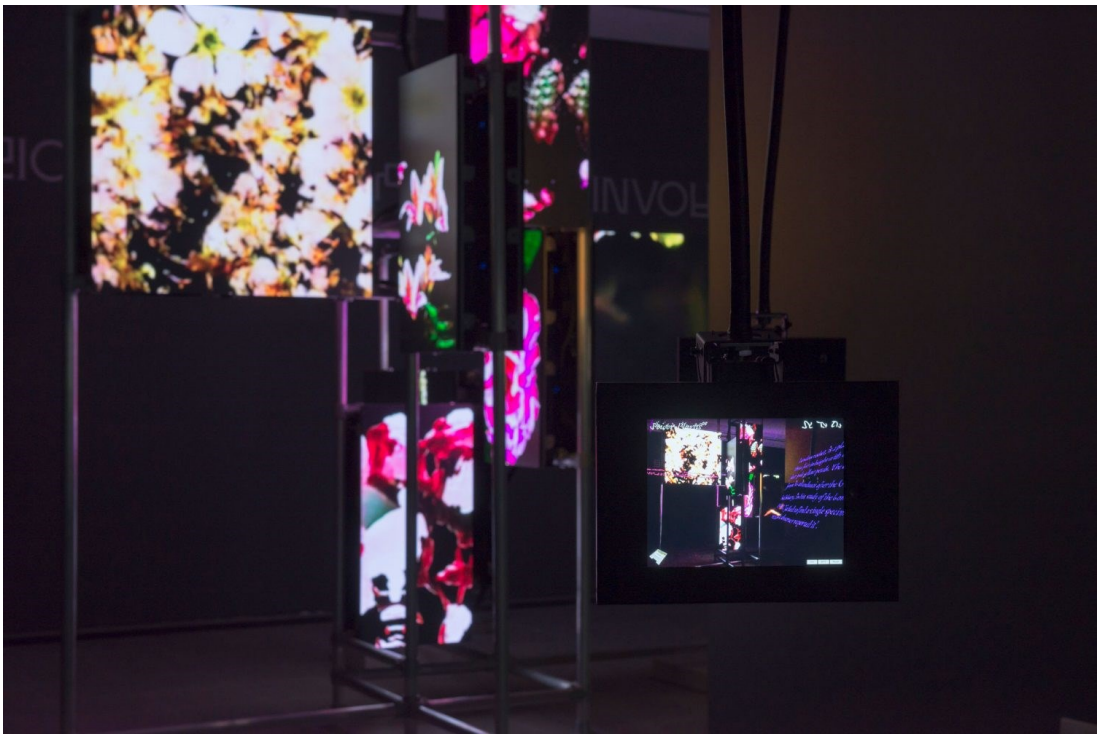


Figure 9: Hito Steyerl, *Power Plants*, stainless steel scaffolding structures, LED panels (3,9 mm pitch), multichannel video loop (12 channel, color, silent) and LED text panels, display dimensions variable, installation view at Serpentine Galleries, London (https://d37zoqglehb9o7.cloudfront.net/uploads/2020/03/dsc2409_0-1500x1001.jpg)

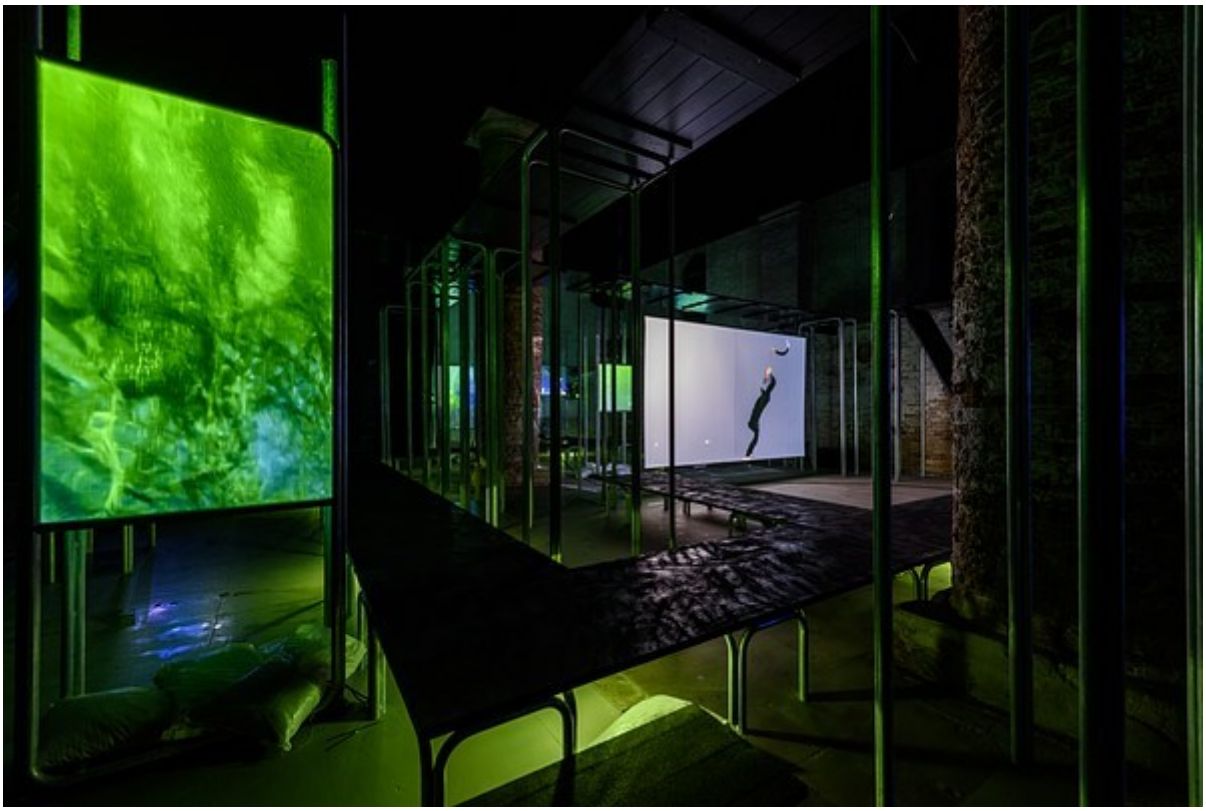
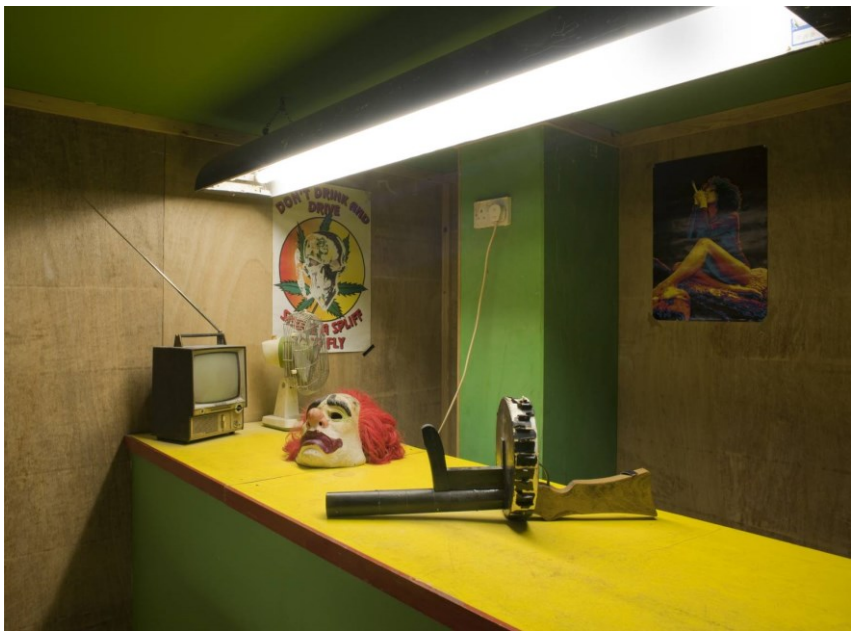
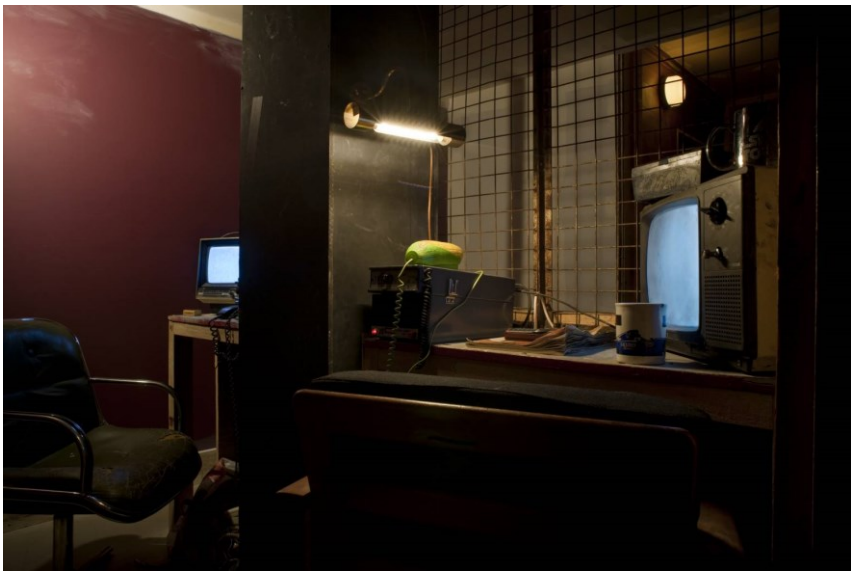


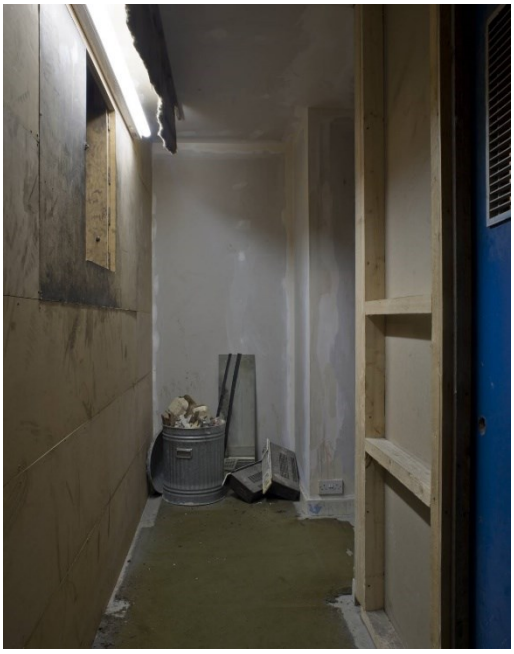
Figure 10*:* Hito Steyerl, *Power Plants*, stainless steel scaffolding structures, LED panels (3,9 mm pitch), multichannel video loop (12 channel, color, silent) and LED text panels, display dimensions variable, installation view at Venice Biennale, Venice (https://cdn.contemporaryartlibrary.org/store/image/478103/imagefile/caq_thumb-3707efe0d33caee0b25c38d9e49d82cf.jpg)

Figure 7: Gregor Schneider, *u r 1,* 1986, Rheydt (https://elephant.art/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/ur01.jpg)

Figure 8: Gregor Schneider, *TOTES HAUS u r*, 2011, constructed room, mixed media, 8,5 x 18,5 x 22 m, German Pavillion, 49th International Art Exhibition La Biennale di Venezia, Venice (https://www.gregor-schneider.de/places/2001venedig/images/20010610_deutscher_pavillon_venezia_31.jpg)







Figures 9-15: Mike Nelson, *The Coral Reef*, 2000, 15 rooms, lights, columns, chairs, mirrors, printed papers and other materials, overall display dimensions variable, Tate, London (https://media.tate.org.uk/art/images/work/T/T12/T12859_300205_10.jpg / https://media.tate.org.uk/art/images/work/T/T12/T12859_300211_10.jpg / https://media.tate.org.uk/art/images/work/T/T12/T12859_300209_10.jpg)

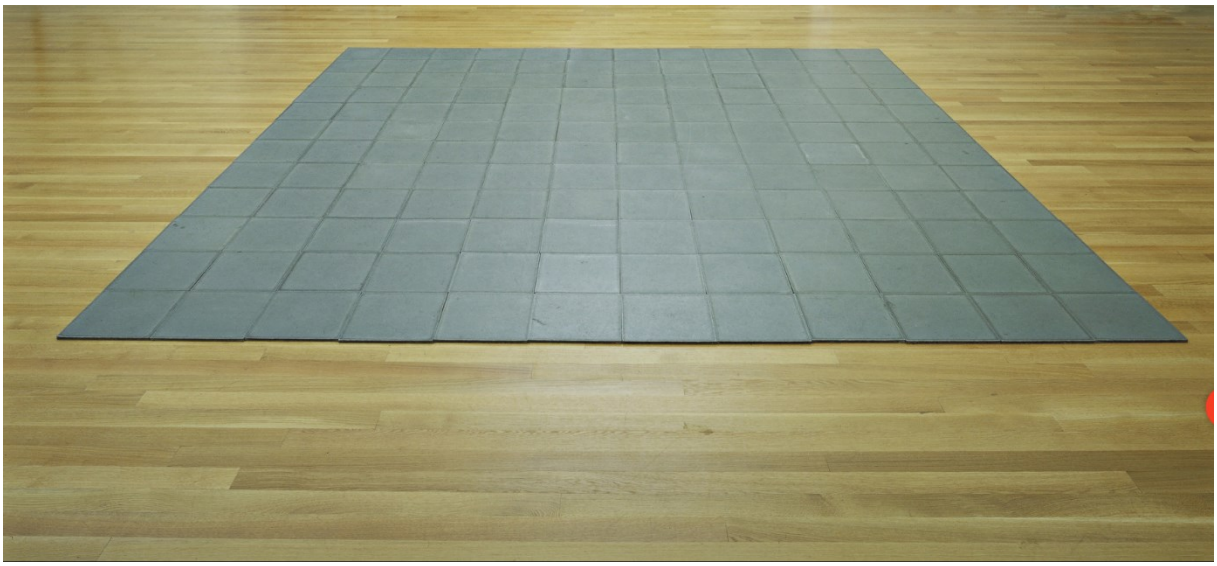


Figure 16: Carl Andre, *144 Lead Square*, 1969, lead, 1 x 367,8 x 367,8 cm, MoMA, New York (https://www.moma.org/collection/works/81497#:~:text=144%20Lead%20Square%20is%20one,copper%2C%20magnesium%2C%20and%20tin.)

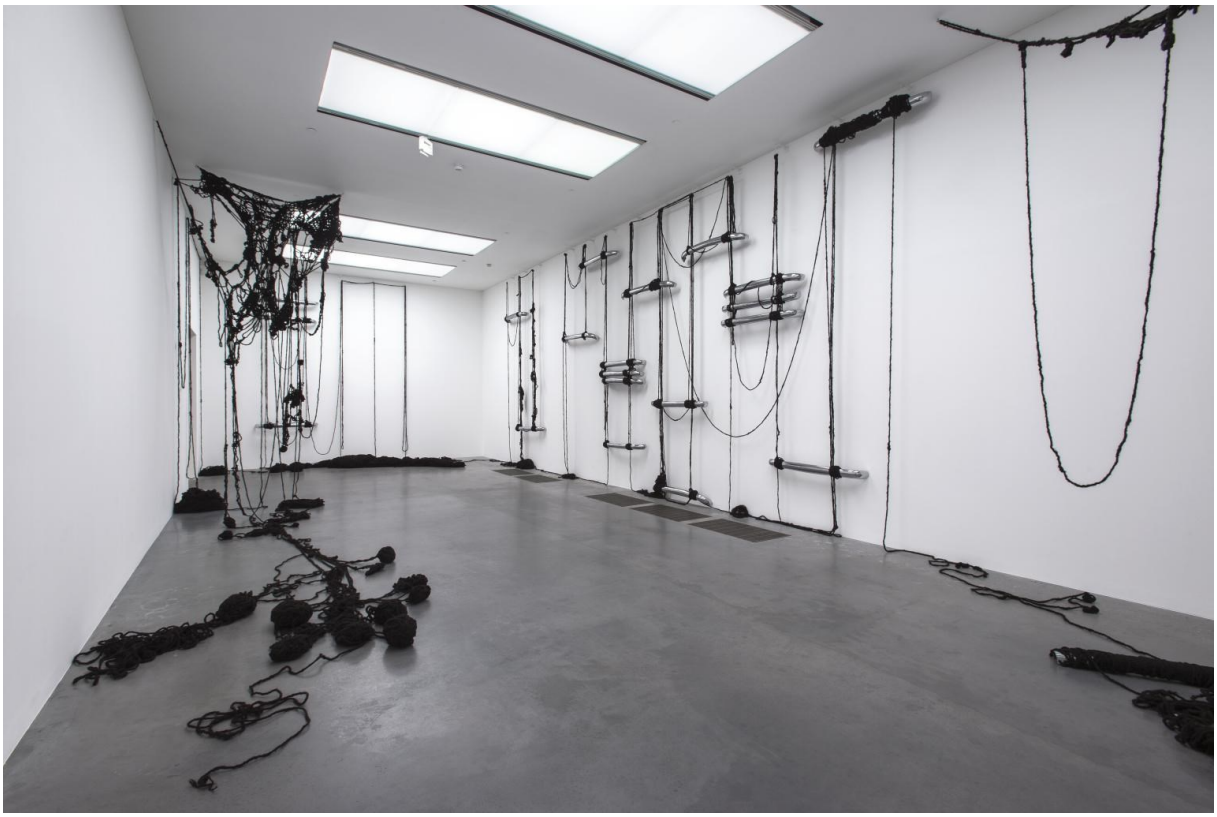


Figure 17: Sheela Gowda, *Behold,* 2009, human hair and car bumpers, overall display dimensions variable, Tate, London (https://media.tate.org.uk/art/images/work/T/T14/T14118_547809_10.jpg)