

JOSEPH HAVEL: THE BRONZE DRAPES AND THE VIEWER'S EXPERIENCE

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JOSEPH HAVEL: THE BRONZE DRAPES AND THE VIEWER'S EXPERIENCE

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Introduction

Joseph Havel's bronze drapes, produced from 1998 to the present, are intriguing for many reasons. The drapes' elegant forms propose stratified meanings, which layer art historical associations atop social and feminist critiques atop everyday, utilitarian products. The extraction of these meanings depends on the viewer's interest in exploring the associative power of the drapes. Many times, as Havel has noted, the endeavor becomes a personal one for the viewer, who constructs meaning using his or her unique history. Furthermore, the viewer's encounter with the drapes is a personal discovery of self-awareness and embodiment.

Focusing on the viewer's experience, I have chosen to base my arguments in observation, history, and theory rather than in a biographical account of Havel and his practice. However, I will include Havel's anecdotes when they reinforce or augment portions of my argument. This non-biographical focus is supported by Havel's own observation concerning his role in the meaning of the bronze drapes.¹ He suggests that when they are exhibited, they are removed from him; they have nothing to do with him. He is only the catalyst for their production, and when they are installed, they have moved into another realm that the viewer has to confront without him. He will not offer meaning to the viewer, because the drapes are more about the viewer and the viewer's experience than anything else.

¹ Personal conversation with the artist at his studio, Houston, Texas (29 November 2006).

Specifically addressing *Drape* (1999), Havel has observed that it "wishes not to tell you a story and tells you more about the way it fills the space and occupies that space."² The drapes are less about his specific interests than they are about architectural installation. That space includes the viewer and his or her individual experience of the object. It is this personal encounter, one in which the viewer remains embodied and corporeally self-aware in relation to the presence of the drape, that is the subject of my endeavor. I argue that this treatment of the viewer's experience is properly characterized as theatrical, and that Havel's theatricality is far more indebted to Minimal and Postminimal objects than to Baroque sculpture, to which its form has often been compared. I will analyze these three sensibilities in order to establish the ideology that informs Havel's bronze drapes.

I first encountered Havel's *Drape* at the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth in spring, 2003. Walking toward the museum's modern building, designed by Tadao Ando, I first glimpsed the tall, hanging sheet through the window-wall façade. It looked as if the drapes' maker, unknown to me at the time, had simply suspended a white sheet, which took a conical shape, from the gallery's ceiling. Standing alone, away from any other art in the collection, the sheet looked, frankly, out of place. Expecting to see modern painting and sculpture, I wondered what business a hanging sheet had in this prestigious assemblage of art. I entered the museum's front doors and slowly approached the sheet from the left, rounding a corner in the windowed façade. I began to admire the sheet's elegant folds and vertical arrangement as well as its over-head height at about ten feet. A thin crevasse near the base of the sheet exposed a sliver of its interior space. I thought that the curator had made excellent use of the

² Joseph Havel, Tuesday Lecture Series, Spring 2003. Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth (18 March 2003) [DVD]; Joseph Havel, Lecture at University of Texas at Arlington (April 11, 2007).

museum's double-height hall, acknowledging the loftiness of the gallery by suspending the sheet from such a great height. Still, I felt almost bored by the hanging sheet, which was unimpressive in its ordinariness. It was anti-spectacular, because it was an ordinary sheet and the act of hanging it was unexceptional as well. I see sheets everyday, and this hanging one did not seem to offer anything remarkable.

However, as I drew closer, the sheet suddenly changed. I noticed that the soft, flimsy, hanging representation before me was not suspended at all and was, in fact, standing of its own volition. Immediately, I felt a nauseating drop in my stomach, and debated the sheet's astonishing defiance of gravity and my own surrender to it. Yet, the sheet and I shared the same space. I escaped my feelings of boredom, realizing that the sheet's effect on the gallery's space and my own body was exactly what made it uncommon and intriguing. This reaction occurred within a matter of seconds, yet I remained transfixed by the sheet and began to walk around it.

As my curiosity concerning the sheet's technology deepened, I discovered that I had been misled by the white coloration, fabric-like texture, and sewn fold near the top of the bronze that made it look so much like a real bed sheet. Looking closer, and consulting the museum's object label, I found that the sheet was actually made of bronze treated with a patina to mimic the color of a soft bed sheet. I felt compelled to walk around the bronze sheet repeatedly, concentrating on the deceptive surface texture, seams, folds, and tears, as well as the material's thin constitution, exposed by the slim crevice. These qualities had been so exquisitely preserved in the casting process and, with the patina's aid, made the drape look completely soft and weak. Simultaneously, I acknowledged the paradoxical strength with

which the drape supported itself, all the while having a strong awareness of myself and my own body in the gallery space with it.

This situation was not like prior museum experiences I had encountered in which I became lost in the time and illusionistic space of a painting or left myself behind to imagine the actions of a sculpted figure in another place and era. It was as if once I entered the museum's front doors, the drape forced me to acknowledge it and would not leave me alone. Now, I realize that I was experiencing the drapes' "mute presence," as Havel calls it. It stood quietly to the side of the entrance, but confronted me directly in the gallery space as another person might. I participated in an experience with the drape in which I was fully aware of myself as partly forming and being involved in that encounter. This inclusive, experiential art so affected my museum visits that I felt compelled to return to *Drape* as the subject for subsequent analysis and lectures concerning its entropic form, animation of space, and affectation of the viewer.

A large selection of the bronze drapes constituted Havel's mid-career exhibition at The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston in 2006. In the accompanying catalogue to the exhibition *Joseph Havel: A Decade of Sculpture, 1996-2006*, Howard Singerman characterizes Havel's work first as drawing on the language of Postminimalism and then in relation to Baroque sculpture, recalling specifically Gian Lorenzo Bernini's sculpted drapery.³ The connection of Havel's drapes to Bernini's drapery is an easy one to suggest, since both appear to exist in a

³ Howard Singerman, "Joseph Havel's White Collar Practice" in *Joseph Havel: A Decade of Sculpture 1996-2006* (London: Scala Publishers, 2006). In Havel's Tuesday Lecture, he confessed that he never liked Bernini until he saw the artist's small terracotta angels. They inspired him to make small bronzes out of twisted napkins, at least one of which bears the title *Bernini's Angel*. He has not addressed his larger bronze drapes in relation to Bernini as Singerman has. In a personal conversation with the artist (29 November 2006), Havel contrasted the ordinariness of his bronze drapes to Bernini's spectacular *Ecstasy of St. Teresa*. Rather, he feels that his drapes are anti-spectacular.

context that is free from the gravitational pull that would have them collapse. However, while Bernini's sculpted drapery levitates, Havel's drapes calmly subsist and the only action they display is one of having-been-suspended. They do not float upward but rather hang downward, preserving the original fabric's suspended position. Singerman brings about the comparison to Bernini only to make note of this disparity. Havel's free-standing bronze drapes exhibit evidence of once having-been-hung and are the inert opposite of flamboyant, billowing Baroque drapery. While Baroque drapery floats upward, caught in a divine wind, Havel's drapes are, rather, at rest and hang downward.

While Singerman distinguishes Havel's drapes from Bernini's drapery, he does not take notice of the similarity between the Postminimal and Baroque quality of theatricality. Theatricality characterizes a sculpture or object that is activated by the viewer's presence and, in a sense, performs for the viewer. Without the viewer, the effect of the sculpture's or object's inclusion of space, architecture, and the viewer is lost. Baroque sculpture and Postminimal objects qualify as theatrical, because the viewer's in-person apprehension of them is of such importance to their effects.

The Postminimal sensibility shares much with Minimal art, although in the 1960s the differences between the movements were promoted as an extreme rupture by artists and their discourse.⁴ Rosalind Krauss observes that, in hindsight, "one begins to see the absolute

⁴ Robert Pincus-Witten, "Postminimalism" in *The New Sculpture 1965-75: Between Geometry and Gesture*, ed. Richard Armstrong and Richard Marshall (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1990), 27. Havel says that the exhibition *The New Sculpture 1965-75* was especially influential on his practice and thinking. As a former graduate student and now artist and art school director who understands the importance of art historical influences and dialogue, he is also familiar with 1960s theory and discourse, like that of Fried and Judd. Personal conversation with the artist at his opening, *Tell it to the Forest Fire, Mention it to the Moon.*, University of Texas at Arlington Gallery (23 March 2007).

continuities of meaning that connect 'post-Minimalism' to Minimal art."⁵ She most likely refers to their treatment of the object and the viewer's embodied experience. Michael Fried correctly, if negatively, described the theatricality of Minimal objects, in his 1967 landmark essay "Art and Objecthood," that existed primarily for the viewer's experience of them. His analysis of the objects' theatricality can be applied to Postminimal forms as well, but this is not to say that the movements were not motivated by varying objectives. Postminimalism, spurred by the uprising of social and feminist movements, rejected the masculine, geometric, designed and fabricated forms of Minimalism in favor of organic shapes determined by process and un-imposed composition. In their evidence of the process, the forms reinstated the presence of the artist. Although the two attitudes differ in their treatment of artist-involvement and process, the work of Postminimal artists continued the Minimal practice of producing objects, as opposed to sculpture, that addressed the viewer in the real space of the gallery. With regard to producing objects, Donald Judd, in his 1964 essay "Specific Objects," which delineated much of the Minimal practice and informed subsequent analysis of the sentiment, distinguished the singularity of three-dimensional objects from the composed, relational sculpture of tradition.⁶ Although this break with the sculpture began with Minimalism, Postminimalism adopted the new non-sculptural language in three dimensions.

⁵ Rosalind Krauss, "Sense and Sensibility," *Artforum* 12 (November 1973): 44. This article mostly concerns Conceptual Art. Krauss's brief statement that compares Minimalism and Postminimalism also distinguishes them from the Conceptual movement on the basis on the former two's focus on objects and the latter's focus on concepts or ideas.

⁶ Donald Judd, "Specific Objects" (1964), *Arts Yearbook* 8 (1965). Reprinted in *Complete Writings 1975-1986*, by Judd (Eindhoven: Van Abbemuseum, 1987), 118-119.

Although Judd promoted Minimalism's break with sculpture, Baroque sculpture has also been described as theatrical. The similar characterization makes Singerman's discussion of Havel's work in relation to both Postminimalism and the Baroque seem convincing. Baroque theatricality, in which a sculptural program and its surrounding architecture construct dramatic scenery for the spiritual uplifting of the viewer, is quite similar to Fried's theatricality that is based on the relationship between the actor and audience in theater. The Baroque treatment of the church's interior transformed the walls, space, sculpture, and painting into scenery much as theater does to the stage. Minimal art aspires to the same involvement with the gallery walls, floor, ceiling, and space as well as the object, but it stops short of spiritual inspiration. Rather, the emphasis is placed on the corporeal experience instead of a psychological, disembodied one.

Two qualities, allusionism and illusionism, contribute to the viewer's disembodied experience of anthropomorphic sculpture and were, therefore, first avoided by Minimal artists. In her 1966 essay "Allusion and Illusion in Donald Judd," Krauss defines these conditions, which Minimal art avoids. She offers an explanation of these terms, writing that allusion is "any reference to experiences or ideas beyond the work's brute physical presence."⁷ I would suggest that she refers to marble or bronze sculpture that represents the human figure. In opposition to sculpture's allusive tendency, she quoted Judd's praise of another Minimal artist's work: "Rather than inducing idealization and generalization and being allusive, it excludes. The work asserts its own existence, form and power. It becomes an object in its own right." The object is specific and literal in contrast to allusive,

⁷ Rosalind Krauss "Allusion and Illusion in Donald Judd," *Artforum* 4 (May 1966): 24.

anthropomorphic sculpture. Furthermore, in Judd's essay "Specific Object," he describes the disparity between allusionistic, illusionistic sculpture and specific, literal Minimal objects, writing,

The new work obviously resembles sculpture. Its materials are somewhat more emphasized than before. [With sculpture] that parts and the space are allusive, descriptive and somewhat naturalistic. Together they form a naturalistic and anthropomorphic image. There is little of any of this in the new three-dimensional work.⁸

Similarly, Robert Morris wrote that "sculpture was terminally diseased with figurative allusion. There is no question that so far as an image goes, [Minimal] objects removed themselves from figurative allusions."⁹ On the other hand, Baroque sculpture alludes to events beyond the sheer physicality of the marble or bronze material. Since these allusionistic figures and experiences are not part of the viewer's reality, they are irrelevant to the experience of Minimal objects.

Concerning a reality separate from the viewer, Greek Atomist philosophers like Democritus and Leucippus had conceived of a spatial reality independent of the real world, and F. David Martin notes that this space is comparable to the spaces shown in paintings that are imaginary spaces.¹⁰ This idea of imaginary space developed further in the Renaissance when perspectival systems demanded a need for a proper terminology of the space they so illusionistically depicted. In other words, the space that receded from the picture plane looked real but was only an illusion. The need arose for an adequate descriptor of this realistically un-real space.

⁸ Judd, "Specific Objects," 118-119.

⁹ Robert Morris "Notes on Sculpture, Part IV: Beyond Objects," *Artforum* 6 (April 1968): 50.

¹⁰ F. David Martin, *Sculpture and Enlivened Space: Aesthetic and History* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1981), 188-189.

David Summers calls this realistically receding space "virtual space." It describes and records actual or imaginary places and times and is only entered into by way of the viewer's imagination.¹¹ Summers elaborates, "Whatever illusionistic force they may have, virtual spaces show what is always at an unbridgeable remove, at a distance in space or time, another present, a past of future." He argues that virtual space is created whenever an image is put on a surface, suggesting that virtual space is solely an aspect of illusionistic painting or drawing. Using the example of a Rembrandt drawing *Landscape with a Farmstead (Winter Landscape)*, (c. 1648-50), he observes that the artist transformed the qualities of the two dimensional surface of the small sheet as well as the paper, ink, and wash, into the qualities of an expansive landscape. Flatness becomes a plane through which the viewer sees a realistic, three dimensional space; the paper sheet's small size aptly describes a larger, life-size landscape; and paper signifies the various properties of the ground, sky, trees, etc. While the material paper exists in viewer's "real space," as Summers labels it, the believability of the drawing's illusionism relies on the viewer forgetting the circumstances of real space and submitting to the fantastical conditions of virtual space.

Although Summers categorizes virtual space as a quality of images on two-dimensional surfaces, like paintings, drawings, or relief sculpture, I would argue that virtual space, created by illusory materials and descriptive of places and times that are not shared by the viewer, may be applied to three-dimensional, anthropomorphic sculpture, ranging in size, that sits atop a base. Traditional sculpture's marble or bronze material transformed into other matter like flesh, hair, and clothing; its actual size, relatively smaller than or larger than life-size,

¹¹ David Summers, *Real Spaces: World Art History and the Rise of Western Modernism* (London: Phaidon, 2003), 43-44, 50-51.

has the ability to metaphorically suggest a life-size body to the viewer; and its cubical base sanctions a virtual space separate from the real space of the viewer. While Summers posits that all sculpture participates in the viewer's "personal space," which he defines as sculpture's relation to the "real spatial conditions of [the viewers'] embodied existences, that is [their] sizes, uprightness, facing, handedness, vulnerability, temporal finitude, capacities for movement, strengths, reaches and grasps," I would argue otherwise. He seems to apply the category of sculpture to all three-dimensional art forms, including objects. Although he is correct in his assertion that sculpture and objects physically exist in the viewer's "personal space," illusionistic sculpture exists in virtual space and requires the viewer's psychological disembodiment. For the illusion's believability, sculpture requires the viewer to read the sculpted marble or bronze form as existing in virtual space. I would argue that his conception of "personal space," more aptly applies to objects, and that illusion, characteristic of both two-dimensional and three-dimensional forms, can only believably exist in virtual space.

Likewise, Krauss observes that illusion is opposed to the "sphere of transparently real objects," implying that Minimal objects rejected the artifice of traditional sculpture's materials, which metaphorically stood for all substances. In Minimal specific, anti-illusionistic, non-anthropomorphic objects, the materials were staunchly literal. They were not illusionistic, and instead maintained their integrity. Judd's Plexiglas is not metaphorical, and the viewer apprehends the material as nothing other than Plexiglas. The same idiom can be applied to any number of materials that Minimal artists employed. Moreover, the literal, self-referential materials logically constituted self-referential objects. They were not like

Rembrandt's drawing, for example, that is small but illusionistically suggests a larger landscape. Instead, Minimal objects only suggested their own, literally presented size. And although sculpture's marble or bronze material mass exists in the viewer's "real space" or "personal space," as Summers conceives of it, the anthropomorphic figure does not. Furthermore, being of literal material and size, Minimal objects also rejected the base, situating themselves in the viewer's real space.

To a degree, Havel's drapes are involved with illusionism. The bronze's patina gives the sensation of real, soft fabric. However, the preserved texture of the sheet and threaded seams are not illusions. Havel did not apply them to deceive the viewer. Rather, they are impressions of the fabric. In the same way, Havel's drapes are not illusionistic. Although meant to look like fabric items, the drapes only refer to themselves. They are, in fact, doppelgangers instead of representations after the original fabric. As it is, Havel's anti-illusionistic drapes promote an embodied experience with the objects at hand much as Minimalism and Postminimalism did.

In "Art and Objecthood," Fried condemned Minimal objects for their theatricality, and his characterization of the Minimal object is also applicable to Postminimal work. Fried instead championed ideal art that is self-absorbed, relies on a fixed relationship between itself and a hypothetical viewer, and does not concern itself with the duration of the viewer's experience. He negatively, but also correctly, characterized the sentiment of Minimalism that had been theorized and transcribed principally in Judd's "Specific Objects" and Morris's late 1960s multi-part essay "Notes on Sculpture." Minimal objects existed to provoke an experience for the specific viewer or participant, rather than traditional sculpture's hypothetical

spectator, that was characterized by the viewer's control of the experience's duration. Fried argued that this quality degraded Minimal objects to the level of theater, which, as an anti-modern sensibility, exists for an audience and not solely for itself. Citing Morris's 1966 "Notes on Sculpture," Fried observes that this experience encompassed much more than the object itself and included the gallery space, light, and the viewer's body. Postminimal artwork can also be understood as theatrical, as it continued the practice of placing the work, free of the sculptural base or pedestal, in the real space of the viewer who controls the situation's temporality.

The difference between sculpture's virtual space and the real space of Minimal and Postminimal objects creates varying experiences of theatricality for the viewer. Minimalism's abstractness and rather obvious non-anthropomorphism, Krauss noted, barred the viewer from projecting into the work as he or she might have with traditional sculpture.¹² The principal difference between Baroque and Minimal theatricality, which Postminimalism adopted, results from the viewer's disembodied, psychological projection into the former and embodied, corporeal experience of the latter. The disembodied experience results from viewing an anthropomorphic sculpture that represents or alludes to figures in an imaginary space or time, sanctioned by the base, and being induced to empathy. In this sense, the viewer is also a participant involved in a more imaginative, projective experience. The empathetic experience of art is principally theorized in Wilhelm Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy* (1906). The empathetic experience promotes a loss of self-awareness and a psychological, cerebral experience instead of a bodily one.

¹² Rosalind Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (New York: The Viking Press, 1977), 279.

In Baroque sculpture, many figures were represented in states of an ecstatic, spiritual experience. As prescribed by contemporaneous Jesuit teachings, exemplified by the principal founder of the Jesuit order Saint Ignatius of Loyola's 1541 *Spiritual Exercises*, viewers were encouraged to lose self-awareness and mentally project into the time and space of the contemplated figure, usually a saint, to relate to that person's spiritual experience. Although Ignatius urges this practice in spiritual meditation rather than specifically for viewing art, Giovanni Careri has applied Jesuit teachings to the Baroque audience's experience of religious painting and sculpture in his 2003 *Baroques*.

On the other hand, the embodied experience, which Havel's drapes foster, results from sharing space with a self-referential object that makes the viewer aware of him or herself, the object, and the surrounding space. These factors constitute a situation in which the viewer is actively involved while remaining embodied or self-aware of his or her presence in that situation. Krauss applies French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty's conception of the "lived bodily perspective," in which the viewer is not a spectator but is immersed in real space, to the experience of Minimal art.¹³ This association can also be applied to Havel's drapes. By eliminating the sculpted base and the anthropomorphic figure, Havel's drapes deny the disembodied, psychological experience. The drapes' theatricality prescribes the viewer's embodied experience, which has not been addressed in scholarship concerning Havel. Working in the vein of Postminimalism, which retained the theatricality, anti-illusionism, and anti-allusionism of Minimalism, Havel's drapes prioritize the viewer's embodied experience and self-awareness. The purpose, here, is to properly characterize the

¹³ Rosalind Krauss, "The Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum," *October* 54 (Fall 1990), 9.

viewer's experience of Baroque sculpture in opposition to that of Minimal and Postminimal objects and, accordingly, the embodied experience of Havel's bronze drapes.

Joseph Havel's Background

Joseph Havel, born in Minneapolis in 1954, is an artist now living and working in Houston, Texas. He received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis in 1975 and his Master of Fine Arts degree from Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania, in ceramics and drawing in 1979. Since 1996 he has served as the Director of The Glassell School of Art at The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and has headed the school's Core Residency Program. The subject of a recent mid-career exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, he has exhibited both nationally and internationally. Notably, the Whitney Museum of American Art included a selection of his bronze drapes in their 2000 Biennial, and his work was exhibited at the Basel Art Fair in Paris, France in 2003. His work is represented in prestigious collections such as the Musée d'art et d'industrie in Roubaix, France; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the Dallas Museum of Art; and the Modern Art Museum, Fort Worth. Havel has also received a number of awards and grants including an Artist's Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1987; The Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Award in 1995; and the Artist's Award from the Cultural Arts Council of Houston in 1994 and 1999. He is represented by Dunn and Brown Contemporary in Dallas, Texas; Devin Borden Hiram Gallery in Houston, Texas; and the Galerie Gabrielle Maubrie in Paris, France.

Scholarship concerning Havel's work is scarce. Numerous short journal essays and magazine and newspaper articles have only described or briefly mentioned his work, and significant analysis of the work is lacking. The Huntington Beach Art Center in Southern California published an accompanying catalogue to his 1996 solo exhibition with short essays, most of which addressed work outside of the bronze drape series. Another short essay by Associate Director of the Core Residency Program Mary Leclère, included in the catalogue accompanying Havel's 2006 solo exhibition *Joseph Havel: Drinks are boiling. Iced drinks are boiling.* at the Laumeier Sculpture Park in St. Louis, Missouri, only briefly mentions the few bronze drapes exhibited. The Houston exhibition catalogue that includes essays by Howard Singerman, Alison de Lima Greene, and Amelia Jones as well as an interview with Havel by Peter Doroshenko, serves as the only major scholarship on Havel's bronze drapes.

The essays in the exhibition catalogue elucidate Havel's biography as well as his artistic career and practice and focus on his work with white shirts and drapes. In the interview by Doroshenko, Havel recalls that as an undergraduate, he was interested in Fluxus and early Claes Oldenburg happenings, including the material residue that remained from those art-meets-life events.¹⁴ However, his focus soon shifted to contemporary drawing and painting and finally ceramics. It is unusual that Havel, whose signature work appears in the form of large, bronze drapes, would not have focused his concentration in sculpture. After two

¹⁴ In late 1961, Oldenburg opened *The Store* in a space on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. For nearly a month, Oldenburg sold plaster objects inspired by the food, clothes, wrapping, and signs of his commercial surroundings to the public. Although these commodities, now in major museum collections like the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, and photographic records serve as evidence of the event, the happening actually consisted of people coming to the store, making an exchange, and leaving. The salable objects were only props that were secondary to and facilitated the happening.

sculpture courses, he admits to being bored by the "strong mans' aesthetic"¹⁵ that characterized sculpture at the time. Instead, clay presented a more easily manipulated sculptural material that also closely related to his interests in painting and drawing.

Following his graduate work, Havel began teaching at Austin College in Sherman, Texas. He eventually abandoned ceramics and painting for drawn still lifes, all of which are now lost, that he describes as "psychologically loaded." It was in these endeavors that he says he began to reconsider objects, their ability to embody information and associations, and the transformation they undergo when exhibited as art. Drawing still lifes led him back to three-dimensional work, from which his drawn still lifes were composed, in the form of lampshades. They were desirable subjects for Havel since they were not readily associated with fine art, maintained their contemporaneity, and yet recalled seventeenth century Dutch still lifes (See Plate 1).¹⁶ It is this kind of multiple layering of associations that informs Havel's practice. Havel, illuminating this stratification, has said that he condenses meanings, squeezing them into the object, which might seem plain initially but then reveals itself as something more complicated and layered.¹⁷ Although Havel's various lamp shades, shirts, and drapes at once seem straightforward, they then begins to suggest relationships with the

¹⁵ The term "strong mans' aesthetic" refers to the male gendered, modern treatment of welded sculpture.

¹⁶ Paul Taylor, *Dutch Flower Painting 1600-1720* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 43-46. One of the most commonly understood symbols in seventeenth century Dutch still life painting was the flower. The short life of cut flowers was comparable to the brief life of man, and the similitude was often utilized in contemporaneous sermons and poems as well as prints and paintings. To emphasize the message of life's fleeting nature, cut flowers were often, but not always, juxtaposed to skulls, hourglasses, and rotting or half-eaten fruit as well as other objects that suggested decay; hence, the terminology *memento mori* or *vanitas* paintings. Havel explains that the form of the lampshade resembles a blossoming flower and that he was attracted to the notion that mortality could be embodied in everyday objects. In *White Virus* (1994), two lampshades are connected at their tops so that the bottom ends flair outward like blooming flowers. Not only does the viral title suggest sickness and decay, but the shades also recall their original function as houses for light bulbs that will undoubtedly burn out. See Peter Doroshenko, "Interview with Joseph Havel," in *Joseph Havel*, 140-142.

¹⁷ Havel, Tuesday Lecture Series.

art historical tradition, disease, social conditions, gender constructions, and even personal concerns.

On New Year's Day, 1993, Havel visited a resale shop and bought used men's white shirts that he then buttoned together. The work was a continuation of Havel's interests from high school, but the white shirt would appear many times in Havel's work in the form of stacked fabric or bronze collars, buttons embedded in a gallery wall, sewn fabric labels, and columnar, knotted cast shirts.¹⁸ He found the white shirt attractive for all the layers of biological, economic, historical, sociological, as well as autobiographical associations the garment embodies. They immediately evoke the male, white-collar worker and a social critique of his condition in the business world. They lack the ambiguity of meaning that much of Havel's other work exhibits.

According to Havel, his bronze drapes, which he began to produce in 1997, evolved out of the early work with shirts that he feels became too transparent and obviously associative.¹⁹ In contrast to the white shirts, the evocation of social and gender issues is more ambiguous in

¹⁸ Havel explains that he made an animated film about white shirts titled *Sanforized* in high school. He was also drawing white shirts at the time and thinking about instigating happenings and performances. His later return to the white shirts as a material exhibits what Havel calls an expansion of his high school work in a "more sophisticated vocabulary." See Doroshenko, "Interview with Joseph Havel," 142. With regard to the fabric labels, Havel initially cut them directly from shirts. Later, he employed independent manufacturers to make labels according to his specifications, a practice closely linked to the Minimal habit of industrial fabrication.

¹⁹ Havel's first bronze drape *Bedsheet* (1998) was a sheet that Havel claims to have slept on. Thereafter, he bought them at the neighborhood Value Village, K Mart, or Target. Similarly, he alleges that the first shirt he ever used in his mature work was one that he owned and wore. Havel's use of white shirts and collars, whether presented in fabric or bronze form, welcome associations with the gendered, classed "white collar" American workforce. The term originated in the 1920s to distinguish salaried, technical or clerical workers from those with manual, wage labor jobs. Singerman notes that sociologist C. Wright Mills describes the way in which the white collar worker sells his (not her) time, energy, and gregarious personality, repressing aggression. Therefore, the white shirt symbolizes the homogenous middle class' imprisoning masquerade. Notably, Havel himself was born into a middle class, white collar family, and Singerman suggests that Havel might have lamented his father's imprisoning assimilation into white collar America. See Singerman, "Joseph Havel's White Collar Practice," 17-18. See also Mills, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1972).

his drapes, which are cast from bed sheets, curtains, and tablecloths. The most likely associations are with domesticity and, more specifically, the Post-World War II constructed "woman's domain" and feminized labor. In post-World War II America, an all-male army returned home to re-secure the corporate workplace and forced women back into the home.²⁰ Thus, the all-male workplace was tautologically not-female, and the domain of the house and everything it included became feminized as well as devalued. Although this construction began in the post-war era, it is not unique to that time and has affected subsequent generations. Havel's cast bed sheets, curtains, and tablecloths immediately bring to mind such domestic activities as choosing and hanging window treatments in the home, doing laundry, and making beds, all of which had been accepted as gendered, feminine responsibilities before the Women's Movement. Although these gender constructions were persistently challenged by the Women's Movement, the aftershock of those imposed associations persists. In their cast bronze state, the drapes are rendered useless as they can no longer serve their domestic purpose and, in a sense, question the validity of their gendered associations. They consistently recall those constructions only to banish them. If the viewer first associates the bronze curtain, bed sheet, or tablecloth with domesticity and the woman's domain, they are almost simultaneously aware of the absurdity of that relation. For Havel's

²⁰ Caroline A. Jones, *Machine in the Studio: Constructing the Postwar American Artist* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 10, 254-255. The effects of the feminization of labor still run rampant in today's commercial culture, especially throughout the advertising industry. Countless television and print advertisements for household cleaning products and childcare goods picture women as primary users and, therefore, target female consumers. Men are largely absent from this area of advertising. Although the feminization of labor has been exposed, its construction still pervades commercial culture. Only one of Havel's drapes, to my knowledge, is exhibited in a domestic space. A private collector in Houston commissioned a bronze drape that was to lie over and run the entire extent of the hand rail of a curving staircase.

items are cast and can no longer serve their original purpose, much in the same way that they can no longer reinforce gendered associations.

In consideration of Havel's decidedly non-sculptural concerns that developed during his collegiate years, his production of the bronze drapes is closer in spirit to drawing, painting, and something that is other-than-sculpture. His procedure is non-sculptural in that it is neither additive, as with modeling, nor is it subtractive, as with carving. Although the final product can easily be categorized as sculpture for its bronze, three-dimensional form, the process reveals that it is far removed from the traditional conception of sculpture and is more indebted to painting and drawing. Havel has admitted that he has started to think of himself as a sculptor, although he had hoped to avoid that categorization.²¹ Seeming to acknowledge that the heading of sculpture has come to encompass anything existing in three dimensions, he avoids qualifying his work as sculptural by speaking of his drapes as "material presences" and of their "thingness." His use of the terminology "presences," and "thingness," suggests that conceives of his work as a continuation of the 1960s Minimal sensibility. Minimal artists made three dimensional objects that were neither modeled nor sculpted and staunchly rejected the illusionistic, anthropomorphic sculptural tradition. Minimal artists strongly dedicated their practice to making objects that were neither painting nor sculpture and were set apart from the sculpting process and the sculpted form. Similarly, Havel's forms are objects and are neither painting nor sculpture.

²¹ Havel, Tuesday Lecture Series.

In Havel's process, the entirety of which takes place at the artist's one-acre complex in the Houston neighborhood of Lindale,²² he suspends a bargain store sheet, curtain, or tablecloth from the ceiling in his large studio and lets it take on a natural, gravitationally defined configuration resting slightly on the floor. He sketches the object, making compositional suggestions to himself (See Fig. 2),²³ and then makes the final arrangement for the hanging fabric. Although the degree of manipulation varies from piece to piece, Havel observes that the great amount of effort that goes into idealizing the fabric is not evidenced in the bronze form, which looks as if it were cast from naturally arranged fabric. He brushes layers of reddish wax onto one side of the fabric until it retains the strength to stand alone. From this stage the waxed fabric is then cut into many pieces, each of which is fitted for a plaster mold with sprues by his assistant Kertia Bastion-Scott. Then, in a direct casting method that Havel stresses is not a lost-wax technique, the waxed fabric pieces literally disintegrate in the kiln's 2,200 degree heat, and the molds are filled with a bronze doppelganger, to use Havel's terminology, of the fabric item.²⁴ Working with the bronze cuts, Ken King welds the pieces

²² Havel bought the fenced property, which includes two buildings and a large yard, in 1999. Ken King's 4,000 square foot foundry faces Havel's 9,000 square foot studio that provides apt space to construct large pieces, a half-lofted exhibition space to experiment with installations, and a temperature-controlled studio for preparing molds.

²³ This sketch is a study for a site-specific work that Havel constructed for his 2006 exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. He extended Lilly Reich's white, translucent curtains that line Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's window-wall gallery. Calling attention to themselves and Reich's role in van der Rohe's work that is so often forgotten, they flow out onto the gallery floor. Although the final form in this piece is made of fabric, the study resembles one that Havel might make during the process of hanging, waxing, and casting his bronze drapes.

²⁴ In traditional lost-wax casting, the process yields a bronze positive and preserves the original, positive plaster mold. The wax that surrounds the plaster mold burns away and is replaced by bronze, but the inner plaster mold remains. In Havel's procedure, the waxed sheet burns away entirely and only the new bronze exists. Thus, Havel's production distinguishes itself from lost-wax casting by creating a doppelganger, a term he used to characterize the work. A doppelganger, as defined by *Random House Webster's College Dictionary* (New York: Random House, 1992), is a ghostly double or counterpart of a living person. Havel most likely uses this terminology to specify his process and emphasize the bronze drape as a replacement or counterpart to the fabric rather than a reproduction or representation of an original. See "Laumeier Sculpture Park: Joseph Havel: Drinks

back together to form the bronze drape.²⁵ The piece is then sandblasted with environmentally safe sand and treated with a patina, a mix of paint and chemicals, that Havel applies himself and heats. The application of the patina varies, ranging from thin and spontaneous to calculated and thick. For example, *Drape* (1999) bears fifty-five coats. The patina obscures the bronze and mimics the color of an ordinary sheet, curtain, or tablecloth and can range anywhere from a grayish white to a deep black. The result is an object that maintains the qualities of the original fabric item, including seams, warp and weft texture, and color (See Plate 4). On the other hand, it stands unsupported in a way very uncharacteristic of flimsy fabric.

In most cases, except for *Curtain*, which The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston commissioned in 1999, the bronze curtains are experienced in-the-round (See Plate 3). *Curtain* consists of two 10 foot wide patinated bronze panels that flank the front doors of the Audrey Jones Beck Building at The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. The piece is installed in a relief manner on the building's façade. Although the top of the panels does not reach the building's overhang above and the bottom hovers slightly above the ground below, the back of *Curtain* is not visible to the viewer. Therefore, *Curtains* is experienced as a relief instead of in-the-round, and the viewer suspects that the panels might be secured to the building's wall for support. Weighing 1,800 pounds, *Curtains* is in fact bolted to the building's walls by

are boiling. Iced drinks are boiling," *Electronic Flux Corporation* (8 February 2006), www.e-flux.com/displyshow.php?file=message_1139409115.txt (accessed 25 October 2006).

[The Electronic Flux Corporation is a New York based information bureau that distributes information for contemporary visual art institutions via the Internet. This article concerns his 2006 exhibition at the Laumeier Sculpture Park.]

²⁵ Beginning in 1987 King and artist Harry Geffert cast Havel's pieces at the Green Mountain Studio and Garden in Crowley, near Fort Worth. Geffert closed operations at Green Mountain in 1999, and King, Havel's former student at Austin College, has done all subsequent casting and welding at the Lindale foundry. *Drape* (1999) is the last of Havel's bronze drapes to be cast by Geffert.

stainless steel scaffolds. It is the only work, as of yet, to be installed in a relief manner and hover above the ground, causing the viewer to infer that a manner of support exists. In contrast, the method of support remains mysterious in pieces that are presented in-the-round and rest on the ground. The ability to walk around the bronze drapes gives the viewer the opportunity to discover that the soft, flimsy-looking object is really not supported by any mechanism other than the strength of its own, illusionistically patinated material. It is precisely the viewer's apprehension of the bronze drapes and his or her corporeal awareness during that exploration that is of relevance to the characterization of Havel's drapes as Postminimal rather than Baroque.

Baroque Sculpture and The Disembodied Viewer versus The Bronze Drapes

The cast contemporary bed sheet, curtain, or tablecloth is not so readily considered an art object, especially when juxtaposed to its "Other," traditional, artistic drapery. Singerman describes traditional drapery as the body's counterpart that served to purify the body by both obscuring and alluding to its nudity. Gen Doy writes that the sculpted body was transformed into an artistic nude beneath elegant drapery instead of remaining a naked body beneath everyday cloth.²⁶ However, Havel has eliminated the human figure altogether, solely exhibiting the everyday object transformed by its bronze casting, a material and process that carries high art associations. Still, Havel does not allow the bronze drape to serve its traditional function of clothing the nude figure. Therefore, it must remain an everyday object according to Doy's analysis. Furthermore, the marble and bronze draperies of the Renaissance and Baroque periods were sculpted by hand. The artist either modeled a clay form from which the bronze drapery was cast or chiseled into marble to sculpt the drapery.²⁷ Havel's bronze drapes, when compared to these traditional processes, are distinctly non-sculptural in terms of process.

In his essay for *Decade of Sculpture*, Singerman discusses Baroque drapery, specifically to that of Bernini, due to its superficial resemblance to Havel's bronze drapes (See Plate 5).

²⁶ Gen Doy, *Drapery: Classicism and Barbarism in Visual Culture* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002), 26.

²⁷ Morris makes note of a rare case in which Donatello dipped cloth in wax and draped it over the figure of Judith in his *Judith and Holofernes* (1455-60). In the casting process, bronze replaced parts of the waxed cloth. Morris distinguishes this life casting process from modeling, because the artist did not create the drapery from an additive process. Rather, the fabric was replaced by the bronze directly and the final sculpture exhibits the texture of the original cloth material. See Robert Morris, "Some Notes on the Phenomenology of Making," *Artforum* 8 (April 1970): 62-66.

The relation seems appropriate since Havel's bronzes appear to recall Bernini's drapery that possessed an other-worldly ability to float against the pull of gravity.²⁸ Singerman observes that Bernini's drapery "flew confusingly and weightlessly free," from the body and that Havel's bronze drapes are also independent of any body whatsoever. He also notes that without that body, Havel's "theatricality is given away," in his "low-tech, domestic Baroque." In other words, Havel's drapes do not depict any dramatic, spiritual experience as Bernini's often did. They remain domestic objects and are, therefore, not drapery and are distinctly not Baroque.

In a more zealous manner, Michael Ennis has expressed the "swirling, rapturously Baroque quality of line" Havel's pieces exhibit, and posited that these household items seem to be "caught up in some supernatural vortex, bound for heaven like an Old Testament prophet in a divine whirlwind."²⁹ Ennis has fallen into the superficial analysis of Havel's work that Singerman rejects. An assessment of Baroque sculpture's contemporaneous involvement with the religious community validates Singerman's resistance and shows that Havel's bronze drapes are hardly relatable to Baroque sculpture. The formal and contextual characteristics of Baroque sculpture elicit an experience from the viewer that is entirely different from that evoked by Havel's drapes. Yet, both Baroque sculpture and Havel's drapes can be similarly characterized as theatrical or depending on an audience for their effect.

²⁸ Singerman, "Joseph Havel's White Collar Practice," 14-16.

²⁹ Michael Ennis, "Joseph Havel: From Houston to New York, His Works are Museum Pieces," *Texas Monthly* 28 (September 2000): 226.

The notion of the Baroque church as a theater parallels the typical characterization of Baroque sculpture as theatrical. In his 1965 monograph *Bernini*, Howard Hibbard explains that Bernini devoted himself to producing a complete religious experience for the viewer. Hibbard applies this analysis specifically to Bernini's work in Sant' Andrea al Quirinale, Rome, yet his characterization of this example is indicative of the theatrical condition of much Baroque sculpture. The church served as the theater and the program of sculpture, painting, and relief décor "are the means by which all religious drama unfolds. Pilgrims ... witness a divine event and are encouraged to experience it with all their senses,"³⁰ just as Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises* prescribed. The theatricality of Bernini's sculpture induces the viewer to empathy, a loss of self-awareness and absorption into the dramatic presentation. Similarly, with regard to the Baroque church, Per Bjurström, in his essay "Baroque Theater and the Jesuits," refers specifically to Bernini's Cornaro Chapel to explain the way in which the interior is transformed into a *theatrum sancrum* or sacred theater by the sculptural program:

There are obvious analogies between Bernini's work and the theater: a striving after illusory and dramatic effects. The entire chapel is a theater, with the visitor and the Cornaro family making up the audience, and the stage depicting the ecstasy of St. Teresa occupying a space separated from the body of the chapel by a heavy proscenium frame and separate lighting: golden daylight is admitted through a window above the group, deriving a non-illusionistic tangibility from the golden rays that form the background to the group in white marble.³¹

Bjurström further notes Rudolf Wittkower's explanation of the viewer's experience of the Cornaro chapel, taken from the latter's influential 1955 monograph on the artist:

³⁰ Howard Hibbard, *Bernini* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1965), 147.

³¹ Per Bjurström, "Baroque Theater and the Jesuits" in *Baroque Art: The Jesuit Contribution*, ed. Rudolf Wittkower and Irma B. Jaffe (New York: Fordham University Press, 1972), 107-108.

In the theater we encounter a fictitious reality: the audience allows itself to be deceived by illusions of the heavens opening, the fires of hell burning, and deities flying through the air. The same applies to the Cornaro chapel. 'The boundary between real and imaginary space, past and present, phenomenal and actual existence has been eliminated.

If, as Wittkower argues, the boundary is eliminated, it is only because the viewer, forgetting real space, is fully absorbed into virtual space. Bjurström concludes that the viewer encounters the otherworldly, which demands the viewer's participation in the represented reality.

The Jesuit encouragement of the fully absorbed experience, described in St. Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises*, relates to an early interest in drama and the transformation of the church into a theater. With the permission of the Father Sebastiano Romei, Principal at the Collegio Germanico, students began presenting theatrical performances as early as the mid 1560s.³² Often performing inside churches, Jesuits transformed these congregational interiors into a *theatrum sacrum*. Therefore, the church served as the setting for the unfolding of religious drama. Jesuit stage designs, many of which were contemporaneous with Bernini's Cornaro Chapel, combined realistic verisimilitude with grandiose fantasy. Although records of these designs are lacking in number, visual components in theatrical production are known to have been of great concern to the Jesuits.

These theatrical settings aided the Baroque viewer in the disembodied meditation that Ignatius encouraged. Written as a component to Jesuit training, *Spiritual Exercises* exhibits the spirit of the Counter-Reformation to which Ignatius was deeply dedicated. Bernini was an extremely devout Catholic, practiced the meditations encouraged by *Spiritual Exercises*,

³² Bjurström explains that Jesuit theatrical entertainment was offered as an alternative to the debauched carnival celebrations of the time.

and was influenced greatly by Jesuit teaching, which pervades his inspirational sculptures.³³ Depicting spiritual visions, Bernini made it all the more feasible for the devout to comprehend the spiritual experience recommended in Ignatius's writing. The exercises require that the participants mentally project themselves into the respective time and place of those they are contemplating. For example, in the exercise "Meditation on Hell," participants are motivated to take part in the pain of those in Hell by way of the imagination. The exercise provides that participants put themselves in the place of the souls in hell by seeing the fires, hearing the cries of fellow damned souls, taking in the horrible smells, experiencing bitter tastes as the damned do, and finally touching the fires themselves. This exercise and other ones require that the participant mentally project his or her respective body to another place, forgetting his or her place in the real world. This mystical enterprise is, therefore, a disembodied one.

Mystic saints who were popular during the Counter-Reformation, which began in mid-sixteenth century Italy and greatly influenced the production of Baroque art, included, among others, St. Ignatius, canonized in 1609, and St. Teresa, canonized in 1622. Desiring a complete union with God, these saints practiced fervent meditation, in which they would transcend their own existence to acquire the purity, humility, and charity of Christ, often experiencing ecstatic visions that brought them into the realm of the Divine.³⁴ In depicting saints like Teresa in states of heightened spirituality, Bernini made visible the complete union with God. Yet, he sculpted an otherworldly occurrence that appealed to the imaginative rather than the rational viewer. Fourth century A.D. theologian Saint Augustine promoted

³³ Hibbard, *Bernini*, 137-138.

³⁴ John E. Schloder, *Baroque Imagery* (Cleveland: The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1984), 12.

the physical representation of internal emotions and psychological experiences. As a result, the latter two would be made comprehensible to the viewer. Working within this sensibility, Bernini made visible and realistic that which was once only imaginable.³⁵ In this respect, Bernini facilitated the viewer's imaginative meditation by producing naturalistic, visual representations of divine unions.

Bernini's *Ecstasy of St. Teresa* (1647-52), in the Cornaro Chapel, represents one of the saint's visions first recounted in her *Life* (1565). A child-like angel pierces the chest of the sixteenth century Spanish Carmelite reformer with Divine Love. The Saint at once feels joy and pain, creating an expression of ecstasy. Her drapery simultaneously floats to convey the divine, otherworldly quality of her experience. By visually explaining a divine union, Bernini made the experience comprehensible to viewers who have presumably only read or heard about them. The Baroque viewer, upon seeing a sculpture that presented animated drapery and depicted ecstatic visages in highly illusionistic, anthropomorphic forms, began to understand not only what it was like for the Saint to have a union with God but also what it might be like to have one of his or her own.

In its anthropomorphic, illusionistic form, sculpture induces the viewer's disembodied experience. Careri clarifies Baroque sculpture's involvement in contemporaneous religious practices and service to the meditative viewer:

The [effects] of the sculpted figures in Baroque churches can be understood only within the context of devotional practices based upon the connections between soul, senses, and emotion. This is because Baroque art uses the body's attitudes to represent the movements of the soul and because viewers, in turn, exercise their own imaginations and emotions to shape

³⁵ Bruce Boucher, *Italian Baroque Sculpture* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1998), 10, 48.

their soul so as to resemble as closely as possible the soul of the saint or martyr they are contemplating.³⁶

Similarly, Martin describes his own participative experience of artwork in *Art and the Religious Experience* that induces one to the loss of self-awareness, although he terms it self-consciousness, and, therefore, disembodiment:

Thus my self-consciousness, that barrier that keeps me aloof from things, is pushed to the background. My consciousness becomes so immersed in the thing that there is no conscious energy left for explicitly reflective consciousness. In the absence of that barrier the individuality of the thing pours through. In this exposed self-abandonment the space between me and the thing disappears. In steadfast intimate concentration, I allow the thing to abide as a thing. The anaesthetic of self-consciousness no longer prevents the complete aesthetic or participative experience.³⁷

Although Martin describes an experience that he applies to any work of art, the empathetic, participatory experience is also an objective of the Counter-Reformation spirit. Therefore, Martin's description of the loss of self-awareness and complete absorption is applicable to the viewer's experience of Baroque sculpture. As Careri notes, the ecstatic marble figures "are both the model and the trigger for the viewer's desire to resemble, and so they define the position of the viewer in the Baroque decor. As in the [Spiritual Exercises], the viewers are called upon to make themselves like the figures of the saints they find in places of prayer."³⁸ This participatory experience provides that the viewer discount his or her self-awareness and become part of the space and time presented by the sculpture.³⁹ Only then can the viewer fully take part in the experience represented in that other reality.

³⁶ Giovanni Careri, *Baroques* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003), 66.

³⁷ F. David Martin, *Art and the Religious Experience: The "Language" of the Sacred* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1972), 70-71.

³⁸ Careri, *Baroques*, 65.

³⁹ Martin, *Art and the Religious Experience*, 26-30.

This absorbed experience can be described as an empathetic one. Identifying the viewer's empathetic relationship to sculpture, Martin characterizes sculpture's welcoming of the disembodied experience in *Sculpture and Enlivened Space* (1981). Sculpture persuades the viewer to empathy, because most anthropomorphic sculpture "is a compelling invitation to bodily identification."⁴⁰ Coincident with the development of the practice of art history, empathy, meaning "a feeling into," was first theoretically addressed in the late-nineteenth century. German philosopher Robert Vischer, in his treatise *On the Optical Sense of Form: A Contribution to Aesthetics*, wrote the initial theoretical statement about the concept *Einfühlung* (empathy), the bodily response to an anthropomorphic image, addressing its application to art work only towards the very end.⁴¹ He derived the notion of *Einfühlung* from the viewer's projection of his or her corporeal self into the form of the object, such as a sculpture.

However, Vischer ultimately countered that corporeal projection by arguing that the viewer remains embodied and becomes more aware of the self, through such sensations like goose bumps that are spurred by a visual experience. In Vischer's analysis, the embodied experience is both a part of and yet at odds with the concept of *Einfühlung*. According to Juliet Koss, Bertolt Brecht, the German socialist dramatist and stage director, pointed out that Vischer had been mistaken, noting that bourgeois entertainment, like the *Einfühlungstheater* (empathy theater) "encompassed an experience of psychological and emotional identification that encouraged spectators to lose control of their own identities and prevent the possibility

⁴⁰ Martin, *Sculpture and Enlivened Space*, 168.

⁴¹ Juliet Koss, "On the Limits of Empathy," *The Art Bulletin* 88 (March 2006): 139.

of critical thought."⁴² Koss explains that, according to Brecht, *Einfühlung* had little to do with the active experience of embodied spatial perception that its theorists had debated in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.⁴³

In the early twentieth century, Wilhelm Worringer further theorized notions of empathy, specifically concerning the experience of art, in his doctoral dissertation *Abstraction and Empathy*, one of the most influential writings in the history of modernist art and criticism.⁴⁴ The will to abstraction is one of two fundamental, antithetical impulses in art, the other being the urge to empathy, which is constructed in naturalistic representations, specifically those of the European past, including the Renaissance. He makes the distinction between art that illusionistically represents space and art that takes a flatter, abstract form and, therefore, suppresses illusionistic space. Arguing that abstraction was evidence of man's feeling of alienation from the hostile world, Worringer notes that abstraction also prescribes the viewer's alienation or exclusion from the flattened, non-illusionistic space. Therefore, the viewer, when faced with an abstract representation, remains embodied. On the other hand, he characterizes the empathetic, aesthetic experience as one of the viewer's absorption into the represented space or object: "Aesthetic enjoyment is objectified self-enjoyment. To

⁴² Ibid., 152.

⁴³ Koss explains that Brecht adamantly criticized this loss of the self, because he observed the German people do so in an uncritical acceptance of the Nazi regime. See Koss, "Limits of Empathy," 153.

⁴⁴ Hilton Kramer, "Introduction" in William Worringer; translated from German by Michael Bullock, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1997), vii. T. E. Hulme, introducing Worringer's ideas to London in a 1914 lecture, was the first English critic to recognize the importance of the dissertation to the discourse. Although Worringer's writing remained untranslated into English until 1953, his ideas had already entered into American literary criticism in Joseph Frank's essay "Spatial Form in Modern Literature" *Sewanee Review* (1945). And while Worringer's writing is invested in a modernist teleology that is laced with cultural prejudice, which characterizes primitive man as "lost and spiritually helpless," Worringer's analysis of the viewer's oppositional experiences of naturalism and abstraction is valuable. See Kramer, vii-viii. See also "Wilhelm Worringer (1881-1965) from *Abstraction and Empathy*," in *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, ed. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 66-69.

enjoy aesthetically means to enjoy myself in a sensuous object diverse from myself, to empathize myself into it."⁴⁵ The viewer recognizes his or her own form in the naturalistic object. Although the physical object is a discrete entity, the viewer mentally projects his or her body into the object in the aesthetic experience of it. He continues,

In empathizing ... into another object ... we *are* in the other object. We are delivered from our individual being as long as we are absorbed into an external object, an external form, with our inner urge to experience. We feel, as it were, our individuality flow into fixed boundaries. Popular usage speaks with striking accuracy of 'losing oneself' in the contemplation of a work of art.

Thus, the viewer is alienated from his or her own body, losing self-awareness, in the empathetic experience, which characterizes illusionistic, anthropomorphic sculpture.

This imaginative, psychological process is applicable to the viewer's disembodied experience of Bernini's *St. Longinus* in St. Peter's Basilica, Rome. For the purpose of uplifting the viewer's soul, the sculpture of St. Longinus beckons the viewer to project him- or herself into the persona presented to attempt to become the receptor and not the simple spectator of a divine union. Longinus is represented at the very moment of his conversion to Christianity. As legend has it, after Christ's crucifixion, Longinus, a centurion, pierced Christ's side with his spear to make sure he was deceased.⁴⁶ When blood ran down his spear, it cured Longinus's blindness. The viewer sees Longinus at this very moment, spear in hand, arms outstretched and eyes wide open, receiving Divine healing and participating in a spiritual union.

⁴⁵ Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy*, 4-5, 14, 24.

⁴⁶ Jacobus de Voragine; translated by William Granger Ryan, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), 184.

In reality, the viewer sees a removed, sculpted marble representation of Longinus, larger-than-life size and positioned atop a sculpted base. It must be noted that the space viewers share with each other in the various settings of Bernini sculptures, like the Cornaro Chapel, St. Peter's, or the Borghese Gallery, is not the same illusionistic space occupied by the marble figures represented. Writing in *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (1977), Krauss argues that, as a signifying material, the exposed marble "withdraws the sculptural object from literal space and places it in a metaphorical one."⁴⁷ Furthermore, Hibbard describes the "removed, white" qualities of marble sculpture, specifically that of Bernini's *Ecstasy of St. Teresa*, referring to the viewer's experience of a representation that is set apart in space and time by its illusionism.⁴⁸ The marble stands as the sole signifier for flesh, hair, clothing, and other represented materials and, therefore, connotes a separate reality in which the marble is no longer a metaphor. Although the sculpture and its base might physically occupy the real space of the viewer, the base sets the sculpture apart much in the same way a frame does a painting. Just as one understands the frame setting off the painting as a window onto another world, so the base divides the sculpted figures psychologically from the real world of the viewer. Jack Wesley Burnham stated in his 1967 essay, "Sculpture's Vanishing Base," that, in essence, the base "physically define[s] the esthetic distance which necessarily remain[s] between viewer and art object."⁴⁹ As an illusionistically sculpted representation positioned atop a base, Longinus cannot be understood to exist in the viewer's reality.

⁴⁷ Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, 266.

⁴⁸ Hibbard, *Bernini*, 138.

⁴⁹ Jack Wesley Burnham, "Sculpture's Vanishing Base," *Artforum* 6 (Nov 1967): 55.

St. Longinus is a commemorative representation set apart from the viewer by its pedestal, material, and the allusion to a figure in another time and place. The pedestal is a part of the structure that cannot be ignored by the viewer, because it operates as a segue between the physical location of the sculpture and its existence as a representational sign.⁵⁰ Although the marble base connects the figurative hunk of marble atop it to the surrounding architecture, it does not situate that figure in real space but rather segregates it psychologically as an anecdotal figure.⁵¹ Although appendages in Baroque sculpture extend outward and break the vertical, columnar space designated by the base in the Renaissance tradition,⁵² the base still functions as a device that divides the imaginary space of the sculpture atop the base from the quotidian space of the viewer. In order to fully experience *St. Longinus's* ecstatic moment, the viewer must lose self-awareness, becoming empathetic, and disregard the sanctioned sculpture's illusionism and allusionism.

However, this projective, empathetic experience is challenged in Bernini's *David* (1623). The sculpture complicates the viewer's relationship to the space sanctioned by the sculptural base. Early Renaissance artists depicted *David* after his victory standing over Goliath's decapitated head. Michelangelo's *David* exhibited a new sense of tension by depicting *David* gazing at his unrepresented opponent shortly before he begins to take action. Bernini escalated the drama of the moment by sculpting *David* in action. The *David's* body contorts as he twists and prepares to hurl a rock at Goliath. His grimacing face portrays the extreme tension and concentration in this decisive moment. The *David's* serpentine form, exhibited at

⁵⁰ Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," *October* 8 (Spring 1979), 33.

⁵¹ Burnham, "Sculpture's Vanishing Base," 47.

⁵² Rudolf Wittkower, *Gian Lorenzo Bernini: The Sculptor of the Roman Baroque* (London: Phaidon Publishers Inc, 1955), 7-8.

the Galleria Borghese, was originally placed against a wall, and Bernini meant for the viewer to see the dramatic instant from a single, principle viewpoint, standing directly in front of the base.⁵³ Although a number of subordinate views exist, Wittkower states that "only from the correct standpoint is the movement entirely homogeneous and the great sweep fully effective, going through leg, body and neck, and counterbalanced by the turn of the head and the arm holding the stone in the sling."⁵⁴ In this respect, Bernini continues the Renaissance tradition in which a climactic action can be fully apprehended at a glance.⁵⁵

In the *David's* case, the viewer's position is complicated by the sculpture's theatricality. The *David* more obviously depends of the viewer's activation for its effect, because the viewer's involvement with Bernini's *David* is implicated by the conspicuous absence of David's opponent. Hibbard delineates the role of the spectator with regards to *David*:

As spectators we must imagine a Goliath towering somewhere behind us; we too become physically involved with the action of the statue. *David's* eyes sight past us: our space is his and will soon be the stone's; we are in an activated space embracing a statue, real spectators, and an unseen adversary who cannot be far away – three levels of existence fused into one. The spatial continuity was originally emphasized by the small plinth, now enlarged, whose edge was gripped by *David's* toes.⁵⁶

Similarly, Wittkower writes: "the boundary between the stone figure and the space in which we live and move has been abolished."⁵⁷ The *David* projects his focused stare into the viewer's space, prepares to hurl his rock into that space, and curls his toes curling over the base's edge. Beginning to break out of the allusionistic space set forth by the base, the *David*

⁵³ Hibbard, *Bernini*, 55. In a note to page 55, Hibbard observes that now, the *David* is not exhibited as Bernini intended. Originally, it was placed against a wall with large vases on each side that prevented the number of subordinate views that are now available to the viewer.

⁵⁴ Wittkower, *Gian Lorenzo Bernini*, 6.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁵⁶ Hibbard, *Bernini*, 55.

⁵⁷ Wittkower, *Gian Lorenzo Bernini*, 6.

exemplifies Bernini's concern for overthrowing the tradition of autonomous, self-sufficient sculpture and involving the viewer as well as the surrounding space and architecture.⁵⁸

Still, the *David* does not absolutely abolish the boundary between sculpture and viewer, as Hibbard and Wittkower suggest, but rather begins its breakdown. After all, Wittkower continues to identify the *David* as a stone figure, one which does not exist in reality as flesh and bone. The figure is still partly sanctioned from the viewer's reality by material illusionism and the base still separates the figure from quotidian space. Furthermore, Hibbard's viewer's experience is not one of being directly and specifically confronted but is instead looked over for the imaginary Goliath. However, Bernini accomplishes the beginning of the deterioration of this illusionism as well as the melding of the sculpture's space with that of the viewer. Although the viewer remains disembodied, since Bernini's sculpted figures could not escape their bases' illusionism or their materials' illusionism, Baroque sculpture did instigate a crumbling of the physical space between itself and the viewer by breaking the columnar, spatial limitations of the base.

The confrontational installations that concerned Donald Judd and Robert Morris, among other Minimal artists, and shortly thereafter Postminimal artists furthered Bernini's efforts by completely dissolving the physical and psychological boundary between object and viewer. Judd's non-anthropomorphic floor pieces sit directly on the gallery ground, occupying the same real space as the viewer and forcing the viewer into a situation. In this situation, the viewer does not lose self-awareness but rather becomes all the more aware of his or her perceptual and corporeal experience. There is no illusionistic, anthropomorphic figure into

⁵⁸ Hibbard, *Bernini*, 57.

which the viewer may project, so the experience of a Minimal or Postminimal object allows the viewer to remain embodied. In contrast to Bernini's dramatic moment that is preferably apprehended immediately from a single viewpoint, Marcia Tucker, co-curator of *Anti-Illusion: Procedures/Materials*, an important 1969 exhibition of Postminimal work, characterized the work as temporal, because it could not be "visually or physically encompassed by the viewer in a single glance or motion."⁵⁹ The viewer is aware of his or her body's movement around the specific object as well as its reaction to the object's anti-illusionism and scale. Although both Baroque sculpture and the Minimal and Postminimal object may be said to have a theatrical quality, the former is one of psychological disembodiment and divided space while the latter two are of an embodiment typified by duration and shared space. This difference provides quite opposite experiences for the viewer.

Similarly, Havel's drapes prevent the disembodied experience by eliminating the human figure and resting directly on the gallery floor. There is no human figure into which the viewer can project. Moreover, the viewer is confronted in real space by the object situated on the shared gallery ground. In occupying the same real space as the viewer, the bronzes promote the viewer's embodied experience. Therefore, the drapes' theatricality is more in line with a Minimal and Postminimal sensibility than with the ecstatic Baroque form. Moreover, Baroque drapery floats upward, is composed undoubtedly in a relational manner, and is in the midst of its animation. Havel's bronze drapes are actually still and in the resting position of hanging. Although the viewer awaits the drapes' animation, it never comes.

⁵⁹ Marcia Tucker and James Monte, *Anti-Illusion: Procedures/Materials* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1969), 37.

Therefore, Havel's drapes are closer to Richard Serra's entropic, propped steel sheets than they are to Baroque animation. Although the bronze drape is caught in a remarkable moment, one of having-been-suspended but standing without any visible support, the theatricality seems to rest in the viewer's activation of a situation and embodied experience.

The Bronze Drapes, The Language of Minimalism, and The Disembodied Viewer

Havel's drapes are distinctly non-Baroque in terms of the viewer's experience. The viewer cannot mentally project into the bronze drape, absent of the human figure, and so remains embodied, having a heightened sense of self-awareness. Furthermore, the bronze drapes avoid the use of a sculptural base, thwart allusionism, and situate themselves in the real physical space shared by the viewer. Rather than empathy, the bronze drapes promote Brecht's counter-notion of *Verfremdung*, an estrangement or alienation that forces the viewer back into bodily awareness.⁶⁰ Havel's bronzes, in relation to space, the embodied experience, and anti-allusionism, are affiliated with a practice that began with Minimalism in the 1960s. His work is more closely aligned with this movement that was not based on but rather questioned and redefined prior artistic systems.

Havel's representation of cast everyday sheets, curtains, and tablecloths, looking every bit like their original, fabric selves, exhibited in the museum or gallery context seems like a nod to Marcel Duchamp.⁶¹ However, Havel's bronze drapes are not as quickly made into art as Duchamp's readymade *Bottle Rack* (1914). Duchamp only had to select the bottle rack and exhibit it as art, and the transition from everyday object to artwork was, therefore, dependent on immediate presentation. However, with other pieces, like urinal, Duchamp's process was

⁶⁰ Koss, "Limits of Empathy," 152

⁶¹ In the mid 1990s Havel produced various pieces that can be considered assisted readymades. Taking men's white shirts, Havel constructed compositions made of un-cast shirts, shirt collars, and shirt buttons. Although the materials were readymade, Havel altered the shirts by composing free-standing or wall pieces, like *White* (1994) and *Boogie Woogie* (1995) made from multiple shirts. He also isolated collars in a columnar arrangement in *Spine* (1996), and strung buttons in *Aura* (1995-96).

arguably less immediate. With *Fountain* (1917), he signed and dated a urinal "R. Mutt 1917," turned it on its side, and exhibited it on a plinth, which signified its elevation to art-status. Although he was first met with opposition from the Société des Artistes Indépendants, he later successfully presented it as art, challenging the qualification of art production. Although Havel and Duchamp both choose readymade objects, the former transforms them through an relatively more involved process and the latter through almost immediate presentation.

Havel's objects, which are cast from readymade items and hover between readymade and created form, are more accurately comparable to Jasper Johns's painted bronze pieces. Choosing to confuse the boundary between the readymade object and handmade object, Johns made cast bronze objects that he then painted to resemble their utilitarian counterparts. In opposition to what he viewed as the expressive surface of Abstract Expressionist paintings, Johns detached himself from his work by suppressing the gestural manipulation of his materials.⁶² For example, *Painted Bronze* (1960) looks like two ale cans placed atop a flat plinth. They are actually cast bronze, but mimic the size of ale cans and are painted in such a way as to resemble cans, one being unopened and awaiting consumption and the other being opened and presumably having been consumed. Similarly, his *Painted Bronze* of the same year is a realistically-sized, cast bronze painted to look like a Savarin coffee can filled with dirty paint brushes. Johns paints the bronze to look like usable brushes sitting in a readymade coffee can holder.

⁶² Alan R. Solomon, *Jasper Johns* (New York: Clarke & Way, 1964), 6-7.

In Johns's two *Painted Bronze* pieces an ambiguity exists between the identity of the objects as sculpture or readymade objects. Certainly, the ale cans and the Savarin can and brushes are anti-allusionistic. The viewer does not "see real beer cans 'through' the sculpture," Andrew Forge wrote in 1964.⁶³ Instead, the viewer sees "precisely the thing in front of [him or her], an object which appears incredibly to resemble a beer can, and offers [him or her] all sorts of ways of reflecting on how it might be related to a beer can, but which is ultimately itself an absurd object." Absurd objects are useless, and the layering of absurdity over objects like beer cans or paintbrushes that are meant to be used adds to the ambiguity of the objects' identities. Although they resemble beer cans or paintbrushes, the viewer is not fully misled by their illusionism and acknowledges their bronze material. After all, the titles *Painted Bronze* refers literally to the materials, and the viewer recognizes that they are not readymades. Johns's new possibility of the detached, anti-allusionistic object served as a model for 1960s Minimal artists like Morris and Judd, and is the prototype for anti-allusionism in Judd's thinking on the "specific object."⁶⁴ Havel shares the precedent and sensibility of John's work with the Minimal artists.

Havel's readymade materials are rendered useless and become absurd, linking Havel's art closely with Johns's ale cans and paintbrushes rather than Baroque sculpture or the tradition of sculpture entirely. In a sense, Havel's drapes take Johns's *Flashlight I*, an actual flashlight covered with sculpmetal, a step further. Johns's flashlight remains encased in the sculpmetal material, while Havel's fabric burns away in the direct casting process. While Havel and

⁶³ Andrew Forge, "The Emperor's Flag," *The New Statesman* (11 December 1964): 938.

⁶⁴ Max Kozloff, *Jasper Johns: Modern Artists* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1972), 13. Judd writes that "John's few cast objects ... are beginnings," for the singular object in Minimalism. See Judd, "Specific Objects," 119.

Minimal artists conceivably model parts of their practice after Johns, the corporeal, empiricist ambitions of Havel's work can be more closely associated with a sensibility defined in Minimal theory by Judd and Morris than specifically with John's ambitions.

The movement that critics came to call Minimalism, a characterization loathed by many whom critics classified as Minimal artists, is one that rejected the sculptural tradition's anthropomorphism, illusionism, allusionism, and relational composition and emphasized perception through gestalt, scale, and presence. These conscious negations were expounded upon at the time by artists like Morris and Judd as well as in contemporaneous interviews like Bruce Glaser's 1966 conversation with Judd and Frank Stella. Critics were also quick to define the new sentiment as is the case with Fried's "Art and Objecthood," as well as Barbara Rose's 1965 "ABC Art." With regards to the "specific object," in "Recentness of Sculpture," Clement Greenberg criticized the non-art "look" of the Minimal objects, saying that Minimal "works are readable as art, as almost anything is today—including a door, a table, or a blank sheet of paper."⁶⁵ However, these new exceptions expanded the very notion of artwork. Judd characterized them more accurately, saying that Minimal objects were not overtly art.⁶⁶ They were free of decoration, were characterized by strict geometry, lacked any relational composition, and were made of industrial materials. To most critics like Greenberg, these objects resembled furniture, in their geometry, scale, and material, more than they did art.

⁶⁵ Clement Greenberg, "Recentness of Sculpture" in *American Sculpture of the Sixties* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1967). Reprinted in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1968), 183.

⁶⁶ Judd, "Specific Objects," 123.

In contrast to Greenberg's comment concerning Minimalism's "look," Rose noted, the work termed Minimal art was more unified by a sensibility than a style.⁶⁷ As she posited, although the work seems to be void of content, the content is actually the shape, its size, its color, and its material. It does not allude to anything outside of its own form, so it is "not supposed to be suggestive of anything other than itself." It exhibits a resistant passivity and appears to be characterized by a "blank consciousness, of meaningless tranquility and anonymity." Although accurate, this physical reading does not include the phenomenological properties of the situation it provokes. Although Minimalism is most readily associated with industrial materials and factory fabrication and its objects are seemingly cool and non-referential, they welcomed the viewer to experience more fully his or her own presence in real space. As Morris noted, the object is simply less important and involves the viewer as well as the surrounding space. With all of these Minimal characterizations noted, Havel's drapes exhibit qualities and concerns that are strikingly close to this theoretically-based movement. Examining Minimalism's approach to the viewer's embodied experience, Havel's practice will emerge as a contemporary reference to the sensibility of this revolutionary movement of the 1960s.

Reminiscent of Minimal practice, Havel appears to be more involved with making "specific objects" than he is with making sculpture. As Morris decreed, with the art that critics classified under the movement Minimalism, "sculpture stopped dead and objects began," and Judd similarly noted the demise.⁶⁸ Judd was careful to note the distinction

⁶⁷ Barbara Rose, "ABC Art," *Art in America* 53 (October-November, 1965). Reprinted in *Minimal Art*, ed. Battcock, 280-296.

⁶⁸ Judd, "Specific Objects," 115-121.

between the Minimal practice of working in three dimensions and sculpture, and stated that much of the new work was neither painting nor sculpture. Rather, he and other artists worked in objects and were neither involved in the subtractive process of carving nor the additive process of modeling. The artists stripped expression from their objects through the hands-off process of industrial fabrication. Illusionistically treated, Havel's bronzes stand in contrast to the Minimal artists' choice and literal presentation of industrial hardware, the bronze drapes do retain an objecthood rather than a quality of having-been-sculpted. Unlike traditional bronze sculpture that is cast from a form that has been modeled or carved by the artist, Havel's bronzes are cast from a manipulated or assisted readymade form, and share Minimalism's approach to non-sculptural, three-dimensional work.

Although sculpture shared the third dimension with Minimalism, the phenomenological difference between it and Minimal objects appeared in the fourth dimension. Sculpture's treatment of time and space is ideal or timeless and internal while the latter is temporary and external. The former's timelessness was, in part, tied to its position atop a base. Burnham notes that the base "with its limited area has implied a fixed situation where the 'frozen' condition of the sculpture necessitated no room for mobility. Traditional sculpture is virtually life that cannot move."⁶⁹ He most likely refers to Renaissance sculptural forms that were confined to the vertical, columnar space designated by the base. Baroque sculpture ruptured this confinement, extending appendages beyond the imprisoning block of the base below. Minimalism, in a sense, continued this break with the base's designation of space to the point of eliminating or absorbing it. Situating the Minimal object directly on the gallery

⁶⁹ Burnham, "Sculpture's Vanishing Base," 45-55.

floor exhibits a move towards spatial mobility and real-life confrontation, the most important innovation in the display of the object after the Second World War.

By removing the base and avoiding allusionism, Minimal objects fostered a confrontation with the viewer in real space or the space of the gallery. Fried characterized this real space confrontation in "Art and Objecthood," defining the Minimal object's theatricality. The theatricality of the object depends on the viewer's experience of the "situation," the presence and arrangement of the works in the space of the gallery. The work is not ideal or timeless, but instead performs for the viewer and depends on the viewer's experience of it. In the same way, theater needs an audience or else there would be no need to perform. Therefore, Fried's "situation" partly resulted from the viewer's presence in the space with the object, and was, therefore, temporal. As Fried notes, the viewer is the focus of the situation at hand.⁷⁰

Although the viewer is confronted and made to deal with the objects, the viewer ultimately instigates, completes, and ends the encounter. Minimal art rejects an encounter between a spectator, one outside a situation, and the ideal work of art that exists solely for itself.

Previous sculpture had absorbed the viewer's body, and, as with Baroque art, had depended on the viewer putting self-awareness aside. Minimalism rejected the prior idealism and timelessness of sculpture for an empirical and temporal experience. It is, therefore, "far from cerebral [as previous sculpture was and] corrects the ideality of conception with the contingency of perception—of the senses in the body in a particular time and space," according to Hal Foster.⁷¹ It is because of the inclusive situation created and the temporal

⁷⁰ Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," in *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 154-163.

⁷¹ Hal Foster, "The Crux of Minimalism" in *A Selected History of Contemporary Art 1945-1986*, ed. Howard Singerman (New York: Abbeville Press Publishers, 1986), 163.

character of that situation that Minimal art was characterized correctly, if negatively at first, as theatrical.

Greenberg appears to have first recognized the experiential quality of the work, although he did not go so far as to call it theatrical. Defined by presence, the reliance on which Greenberg criticized in "Recentness of Sculpture," and scale, the Minimal object commands a response rather than recognition.⁷² In his discussion of Anne Truitt's box-like pieces at The André Emmerich Gallery, New York in 1963, he noted the need to repeatedly return to the objects in order to experience their presence.⁷³ Similarly, in reference to his resin coated planks, John McCracken aptly expressed the Minimal focus on the viewer's response to presence: "I want [them] to have a definite presence or individuality of [their] own, but at the same time function interactively with things around [them]."⁷⁴ In other words, the viewer does not recognize his or her own figure in the non-anthropomorphic object, but instead responds to the object as a presence or as if it were another body in the gallery. In this temporal response, the viewer, who is made corporeally aware, interacts with the object, as McCracken noted. This experience is fostered by a number of the object's qualities like its shape, proportions, size, and surface.⁷⁵ However, these qualities are experienced by the viewer who also becomes aware of his or her own body in a situation with the object. For this reason, Minimal art is not fully comprehensible in photographic reproductions.

⁷² Frances Colpitt, *Minimal Art: The Critical Perspective* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1993), 70-72.

⁷³ Greenberg, "Recentness of Sculpture," 185.

⁷⁴ Quoted in Barbara Rose, *A New Aesthetic* (Washington DC: Washington Gallery of Modern Art, 1967), 57. McCracken is one of the founders of West Coast Minimalism.

⁷⁵ Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture, Part II," *Artforum* 5 (October 1966): 23.

The same theatricality typical of Minimalism permeates Havel's bronze drapes that not only confront the viewer through scale but also depend on the viewer in a theatrical way. Because they are installed directly on the floor, Havel's drapes exist in the real space of the gallery, and include the viewer in a situation. Havel "considers the viewer as a player in the situation," who has agreed to participate and consider him- or herself as he or she considers the object in a changing situation.⁷⁶ The viewer, Havel observes, becomes aware that he or she had a body in the space with the object, rather than conceiving of him or herself as a pair of disembodied eyes looking at the object. Prior to Minimal objects, the viewer extracted everything from within the illusionistic space sculpted atop a base, but the viewer's experience of Minimal objects was one of being in an inclusive situation with the object.⁷⁷ Inserted into the real space of the gallery, Minimal objects and all other bodies in the gallery became the subject or figure, and the previously neutral walls, floor, and space of the gallery became the ground.⁷⁸ Therefore, meaning was relocated from the privacy of psychological space to a corporeal situation in real, quotidian space.⁷⁹ The meaning of Havel's drapes

⁷⁶ Personal conversation with the artist (29 November 2006); Havel, Lecture at UTA (April 11, 2007).

⁷⁷ Fried, "Art and Objecthood," 153.

⁷⁸ Considering this new inclusive situation, the installation of the object was of great concern to Minimal artists, especially Judd who conceived of permanent installations now at The Chinati Foundation and The Block in Marfa, Texas. Although Havel's *Curtain* at the MFAH is his only work yet to be permanently installed, his installations do exhibit an understanding of the importance of the space in which they are shown. He is frequently consulted on the installation of his bronze drapes. He explained that in his exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, he placed a single bronze drape in one gallery, set apart by free-standing walls, and knew that viewers might be curious about the sparse installation. However, he knows that the drapes involve the surrounding gallery space as well as the viewer, making the installation appropriate. Havel similarly noted the effectiveness of Curator Michael Auping's installation of *Drape* (1999), in which the drape is installed in a large hall surrounded by great space in the Modern Art Museum, Fort Worth. Personal conversation with the artist (29 November 2006).

⁷⁹ Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, 270; Frances Colpitt, "Report from Los Angeles: Space Commanders," *Art in America* 78 (January 1990): 71.

concerns their treatment of real space, as Havel has explained, and his objectives are born out of a Minimal sensibility.

And while Havel's process is quite different from the industrial fabrication employed by Minimal artists, the final bronzes retain a quality of ease similar to Minimal objects. As Richard Wollheim noted, critics of Minimal art distinguished the Minimal object from the artistic tradition of painting and sculpting due to the perceived lack of work.⁸⁰ Skeptics felt that the artist had not made enough effort, in contrast to what they perceived as the great amount of physical work involved in executing a traditional painting or sculpture, to call the Minimal object a *work* of art. Of course, this absence of the artist's hand was desired in Minimalism, and the viewer intuits that Havel may have similar goals of focusing the viewer on the object rather than on the artist's involvement. It is difficult to tell exactly how much work has gone into the making of the bronze drapes, because they appear to be the result of spontaneously hanging fabric items. Havel has admitted that the process of folding, bending, and manipulating the fabric items in order to idealize their arrangement is extremely time consuming.⁸¹ However, the bronzes do not exhibit any of that effort and look as if they were hung and cast in an instant. Just as it is difficult to find any sign of artistic toil in Minimal objects, the viewer is similarly hard pressed to deduce Havel's exact artistic process, since his drapes exhibit an ease unlike that of sculpted Baroque drapery. The "look," which counters the process, of Havel's objects is simply readymade, much like that of Minimal artists. Instead of distracting the viewer with the expressionistic touch of the artist, Havel focuses the viewer's attention on the drape as a discrete object.

⁸⁰ Richard Wollheim, "Minimal Art," *Arts Magazine* 39 (January 1965): 30.

⁸¹ Havel, Tuesday Lecture Series.

Minimal artists avoided autobiographical expression in their objects so as to evoke the viewer's self-awareness and prohibit absorption. Like the Minimalists, Havel avoids gestural, expressive surface treatments not only to heighten the viewer's corporeal experience but also, in a Johns-like fashion, to deceive the viewer into perceiving that the bronze drape is an everyday, fabric item rather than a product of his artistic expression. Morris promoted the rejection of surface treatments, because they produced an intimate relation between the viewer and the object.⁸² Instead of focusing on the whole object and its relation to space, the viewer becomes lost in the details of surface treatments. Although Havel employs a patina, his bronzes still promote a public, rather than a private relationship, as Morris defined it. Havel's surface treatment is not expressionistic nor is it gestural. It serves the viewer's perception that the object is simply a soft drape rather than a sturdy piece of bronze. The drapes do not draw the viewer into the patinated surface as if the alteration is evidence of Havel's artistry. Rather, he or she stands back to apprehend the unitary object. The perceived whole, as Judd noted with respect to Minimal objects, determines the viewer's complex, embodied experience.⁸³ Likewise, the viewer's complex experience of Havel's drapes results from the perception that they are real, singular fabric items.

Havel chooses colors like white, brown, or dark grey that do not distract the viewer from the perception that the bronze looks like fabric and contribute to the everydayness or ordinariness that Minimal objects share. The quality is similar to the way in which Judd once described John Chamberlain's crumpled car parts: "exceedingly keen on remaining junk, and

⁸² Morris, "Notes on Sculpture, Part II," 21.

⁸³ Judd, "Specific Objects," 122.

proud to be confused with an ordinary wreck."⁸⁴ Havel's bronzes are content to be mistaken for ordinary, fabric sheets, curtains, or tablecloths. Although the patina is subsequently applied, the effect is one of wholeness, a quality that Judd promoted. At first, the viewer does not perceive the bronze as a surface onto which the patina is applied. Rather, the patina is read as the drapes' intrinsic color. Instead of marveling at the treatment the viewer is not interested in the surface detail and pays attention instead to the seemingly everyday drape as a whole.

Minimal artists desired a public relationship produced by undetailed, unexpressionistic objects that were scaled to the viewer. These types of objects made the viewer stand back, putting more space between him- or herself and the object, and therefore involving a greater quantity of space in the situation. The Minimal revolt against details and surface variations is a reaction to Abstract Expressionism that dominated the art world prior to the 1960s.

Abstract Expressionist painters seduced the viewer to look closely at each and every painted mark as if it were autographic, evidence of the artist's identity and raw encounter with the canvas. The viewer was not drawn into an illusionistic space, since painters emphasized the flatness of the canvas, but was rather hypnotized by the visible spontaneity of the artist, as Harold Rosenberg argued in his 1952 essay "The American Action Painters." According to Rosenberg's analysis, the Abstract Expressionists were concerned solely with the act of spontaneous painting: "The act-painting is of the same metaphysical substance as the artist's

⁸⁴ Donald Judd, "Exhibition at Castelli Gallery," *Arts Magazine* 36 (March 1962). Reprinted as "In the Galleries," in *The Chinati Foundation Newsletter* 11 (Marfa: The Chinati Foundation, 2006): 20. Havel made small bronzes out of crushed shirts that reminded him of Chamberlain's crushed cars. See Havel, Tuesday Lecture Series.

existence. The new painting has broken down every distinction between art and life."⁸⁵

Rosenberg interprets Abstract Expressionist painting as the release of the artist's emotional and intellectual energy into the arena of the canvas. Therefore, the art object and the life and vivacious activity of the artist melded into one another. In contrast, Minimal artists criticized Abstract Expressionist paintings for the qualities which Rosenberg had celebrated: drawing the viewer into an intimate relationship and warranting close attention to surface detail. Reacting against this private relationship, Minimal artists avoided it in their own objects.

For example, Stella admonished Abstract Expressionist painting for enticing the viewer to stand before it for a lengthy period of time and closely inspect the layers of paint and the autographic brushwork.⁸⁶ For Stella, Abstract Expressionist painters were involved in emphasizing process and he, on the other hand, wanted to concentrate his effort on the final object. Implicit in his approach is the conception of the self-referential, Minimal object that would eradicate any and all evidence of the artist's subjective hand. An emphasis was placed on what the new art object did as opposed to what it might relay about the creativity or subjectivity of its maker.⁸⁷ Stella wanted to "keep the paint as good as it was in the can," rather than drawing with the brush as if he were recording his process or personal mark. By eliminating gestural expression, Stella focused the viewer on the objecthood of his canvases as well as their spatial effects.

In similarly focusing the viewer on the unitary object in a public relationship, Havel draws on the Minimal concern with a holistic approach to the art object rather than

⁸⁵ Harold Rosenberg, "The American Action Painters," *Art News* 51 (December 1952): 23.

⁸⁶ Lucy R. Lippard, ed., "Questions to Stella and Judd," *Art News* 65 (September 1966): 55-61. Reprinted in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1968), 157-59.

⁸⁷ Colpitt, *Minimal Art*, 72; Krauss, "Sense and Sensibility," 47-48.

compositions that involve part-to-part relations. In rational methods of composing, addition of parts is informed by the relation of parts. In Minimal works that contain multiple elements but are apprehended as a unified work, Morris states that the "regularity of the shape and homogeneity of material" constitutes the wholeness of the work.⁸⁸ Judd, making note of the disparity between sculptural methods and the Minimal objective of fabricating an object, a single thing, observes that sculpture is "made part by part, by addition, composed. The main parts remain fairly discrete. They and the small parts are a collection of variations, slight though great."⁸⁹ Havel's bronze drapes are single forms and are not composed in a relational method. The amount of composing in Havel's bronze drapes is very minimal especially when compared to sculpted Baroque drapery. The drape is hung, and its preliminary composition is therefore determined by gravity. Although Havel makes adjustments and arranges folds, the bronze does not clearly exhibit that manipulation. To the viewer, the bronze drape looks as if it has simply been hung. As a cast item, the drape retains its objecthood and is, therefore, apprehended as a singular form.

The attention to the whole and its simple shape is defined by gestalt theory. The word *gestalt* is the German noun for shape or form, and its psychology, as conceived of by Christian von Ehrenfels, has been understood as integral to art production from its beginnings.⁹⁰ According to Rudolf Arnheim, Gustaf Britsch first applied the psychological theory to art. He identified the instantaneous visual and perceptual process that apprehends the simplest form of a given pattern and subsequently notes its increasing complexity. The

⁸⁸ Morris, "Notes on Sculpture, Part IV," 50.

⁸⁹ Judd, "Specific Objects," 118-119.

⁹⁰ Rudolf Arnheim, *Art and Visual Perception: A Psychology of the Creative Eye* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974), 4-6, 68.

viewer is not aware of this process and only recognizes its ends. Although the pattern's parts are noticed, the form is still apprehended as a whole. Both Minimal objects and Havel's bronze drapes exhibit strong gestalts that emphasize their singularity and wholeness.

Strong gestalts, according to Morris, greatly enhance the viewer's embodied experience and heightened self-awareness. He designated shape or gestalt as the most important characteristic of Minimal objects.⁹¹ He favored objects that exhibited strong gestalts, because the viewer could easily perceive them and did not become caught up in part-to-part relationships. The stronger gestalt, or the simpler shape, prevents the viewer from intimately looking at detailed complexities and instead immediately grasps the form. In contrast, Baroque sculptures offer a variety of forms that are different from every side. The viewer can never grasp a unitary shape and only experiences variables. In the apprehension of a Minimal work of art, the viewer immediately grasps the unitary shape and then gradually experiences variables as he or she moves around the object.⁹² Morris employed simple polyhedrons to achieve a strong gestalt, because the shapes exist as unified wholes and do not easily fracture into parts.

However, geometry is not the only way to achieve a unitary shape. For instance, Havel's drapes, which are more organic than geometric in shape, can still be grasped instantly. Some are pyramidal when they are hung from a single point while others resemble a square or rectangle when hung along the top edge. Upon first glance, the configurations of the drapes are understood, and, as Morris observed with respect to Minimal objects, the viewer does not necessarily have to walk around them to get a sense of the drapes' form. The quick

⁹¹ Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture," *Artforum* 4 (February 1966), 44.

⁹² Morris, "Notes on Sculpture, Part II," 23.

apprehension of Havel's gestalts results from their simple suspension as well as the ultimately simple, rectangular shape of the original, fabric object itself. Unlike Bernini's flying drapery that does not hold a strong shape or gestalt and separates into parts, Havel's drapes exhibit a unitary shape closer to that of Minimal objects. Morris was careful to posit that in spite of instantly being understood, an object with a strong gestalt does not produce a simple experience. Rather, the complex experience is produced by multiple, intricately related factors including scale and presence, constituted by anti-allusionism, anti-illusionism, and non-anthropomorphism, as well as the viewer's self-awareness. Morris notes that these factors are bound more cohesively if the object exhibits a powerful gestalt.⁹³

Both Havel's drapes and Minimal objects produce complex experiences partly through anti-allusionistic forms. Minimal objects rejected the allusionism that previous sculpture had exploited. Sculpture's representation of the human figure made it possible and desirable to mentally project the body into the transpiring event. In contrast, "specific objects," as Judd referred to them, rejected representations of the human figure and were only self-referential in their static, simple geometric forms.⁹⁴ They were not objects that alluded to other forms in the way that traditional sculpture referred to the human beings or objects they depicted. For example, the sculpture *Ecstasy of St. Teresa* is not the actual, living and breathing Teresa of Avila but rather refers or alludes to her. On the other hand, one of Judd's floor boxes only refers to itself, meaning that it is actually floor box. In the same way, Havel's bronze drapes eliminate the human figure and are not an allusion to or representation of the original fabric object. They are closer to the fabric item than a representation and are more accurately a

⁹³ Morris, "Notes on Sculpture," 44.

⁹⁴ Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, 266.

direct replacement or doppelganger of it. The viewer does not look at the bronze drapes and wonder about the original fabric object as they do when they look at a marble allusion to a body, animal, or drapery. Rather, the viewer is immersed in an experience with the object at hand. Although the fabric object has become bronze and is no longer cloth, the form is defiantly anti-allusionistic. It does not submit itself to virtual space as allusionistic sculpture does.

The anti-allusionism of Havel's bronzes is also comparable to Claes Oldenburg's soft sculptures such as *Ghost (Toilet)*, 1966. Havel admits that his current approach to sculpture is influenced partly by Oldenburg. Arguably, the viewer does not look at the soft, Kapok-filled canvas sculpture and wonder about a hypothetical, real toilet. Although it is recognizable as a toilet, it is not an allusionistic representation. The canvas sculpture is transformed from an ordinary object and avoids representation by way of gigantism and softness.⁹⁵ Similarly, Havel's everyday objects are transformed by their impossible verticality and strength; not hardness, because the solidity of the bronze is obscured by the patina. The viewer is confronted by and maintains interest only in the present bronze drape that avoids allusionistic representation and remains in real space with the viewer.

Minimal objects also maintained their position in real space by making literal use of materials and avoiding the illusionism favored by the sculptural tradition. One material like marble, for example, signified other materials like skin, hair, and fabric clothing, among other things. Therefore, the Baroque viewer understood that sculpture was a representation of the subject in an imaginary space in which the figures were alive, their skin was real, and

⁹⁵ Ibid., 229.

their bodies were moving. Although Havel is engaged in illusionism, his practice is closer to Johns's than traditional sculpture. Like Johns's *Painted Bronze*, the illusionistically treated objects remain in real space. As a result of the casting of the original fabric, the texture of the cloth, produced by the warp and weft, as well as thread seams are preserved in the bronze drapes. They are not created to signify fabric but rather replace the fabric object's details. Although the preserved details appear to look like fabric, they are not illusionistic in the same sense that figurative marble sculpture is. While the former is a result of material preservation, the latter is a consequence of material mimicry. On the other hand, Havel treats the surface of his bronze drapes with a patina that obscures it and mimics a color that the viewer might expect from a bed sheet, curtain, or tablecloth. The viewer's perception that the bronze drape is soft and flimsy relies on this illusion. Although Havel's patinated bronze and preserved details from the fabric item create the illusion of soft flimsiness, they do not require that the viewer read the drapes as existing in virtual space. Rather, these illusions allow the viewer to comprehend the drape as an everyday object existing in the real space of the gallery. By making the bronze appear as soft as fabric, Havel's illusionistic patina places the bronze material in real space. In this sense, Havel departs from Minimalism's literal treatment of materials, but he does so in order to avoid the slippage of his drapes into virtual space.

Minimalism's focus on anti-allusionism and anti-illusionism as well as its emphasis on gestalt and a public relationship in real space was, at first, misunderstood by some critics. Part of Fried's salient critique incorrectly asserted that the obvious hollowness of Minimal objects made them anthropomorphic or illustrative of the human form and its behavior. Fried

ascertained that Minimal objects constituted a container of the space inside them much in the way skin encases the body's inner space.⁹⁶ The insides of the objects were sometimes visible, for example, in Judd's metal and Plexiglas boxes, giving the viewer a clear idea of the quality of the materials and the constitution of the object. On the other hand, the viewer could only surmise that Morris's plywood opaque beams were not solid and had an inner space.

However, the objects' hollowness does not constitute anthropomorphism.

Minimal objects are not anthropomorphic, because the viewer and the object are afforded equal standing as presences. Morris, clarifying the work's non-anthropomorphism, wrote:

"The specific art object of the Sixties is not so much a metaphor for the figure as it is an existence parallel to it. It shares the perceptual response we have toward figures."⁹⁷

Previously, sculptural tradition prescribed anthropomorphism in order to raise the block of marble or stone to humanness.⁹⁸ With Minimalism, this elevation was no longer desirable.

According to Judd, "an image has never before been the whole work, been so large, been so explicit and aggressive."⁹⁹ This image was defiantly non-anthropomorphic and separated

itself from exhibiting bodily forms or behaviors. Fried's presumption of anthropomorphism results from a confusion of the presence of the work and the resulting self-awareness. The

viewer's body and his or her awareness of that body is the co-existent subject of Minimal objects. Rather than mirroring the viewer's body by anthropomorphizing the form,

Minimal objects reference the viewer's body through scale. Morris and other Minimal artists

⁹⁶ Fried, "Art and Objecthood," 155-156. In Fried's critique, he also cited size and the non-relational character of Minimal objects as qualifications for anthropomorphism. For him, the unitary object reflected the unity of the human body and the objects were similar in size to the viewer.

⁹⁷ Morris, "Notes on Sculpture, Part IV," 50.

⁹⁸ Burnham, "Sculpture's Vanishing Base," 45.

⁹⁹ Judd, "Specific Objects," 123.

acknowledged that the human mind perceives the size of other objects in relation to the body it inhabits, making scale a relative measurement.¹⁰⁰ The viewer's body is always the constant on that scale to which all other objects are compared. Therefore, the viewer recognizes the object's presence and equal standing rather than its resemblance to the viewer.

The qualities of presence, non-anthropomorphism, anti-allusionism, and anti-illusionism are all intricately related to scale in Minimal objects.¹⁰¹ As Morris noted, Minimal objects are not allusions to the human figure but they do reference the body.¹⁰² They command the same response the viewer would have towards other viewers. In avoiding allusions to the human figure and scaling the object in relation the viewer, the Minimal object projects a presence. Presence denies anthropomorphism since it is felt or responded to and not recognized as the human figure is. Tony Smith's stated that he had made a presence instead of an object (relatively smaller) or monument (relatively larger) with *Die* (1962),¹⁰³ illustrating the Minimal preoccupation with scale. In contrast, environmental sculpture is preoccupied with size instead of scale. For example, Robert Grosvenor's *Transoxiana*, a large, cantilevered, red and black V-form is bolted directly to the ceiling, shoots downward almost to the floor, and then projects upward close to the ceiling again. Although the form might have the "look" of Minimal sculpture in the absence of the artist's hand, the monumental "V" dominates the space occupied by the viewer. Instead of making a presence that mimics human size, Grosvenor makes an overwhelming monument, as Smith would characterize it. It is no longer human scale or presence but rather sheer size that confronts

¹⁰⁰ Morris, "Notes on Sculpture, Part II," 21; Phyllis Tuchman, "An Interview with Carl Andre," *Artforum* 8 (June 1970): 57.

¹⁰¹ Judith Weschler, "Why Scale?" *Art News* 66 (Summer 1967): 32-33.

¹⁰² Morris, "Notes on Sculpture, Part IV," 50; Colpitt, *Minimal Art*, 70.

¹⁰³ Morris, "Notes on Sculpture, Part II," 21.

the viewer,¹⁰⁴ making the piece environmental rather than Minimal. The contrast between Smith's presence and Grosvenor's monument illustrates Minimalism's attention to the viewer's size by scaling to the object to it.

Havel's bronze drapes also exhibit a focus on scale, and the viewer responds to them as presences rather than anthropomorphic sculpture. Their objecthood, meaning an existence as an object rather than a surrogate person,¹⁰⁵ gives the bronze drapes their presence. Havel, referring to this presence, has suggested that the bronze drapes resist being read as anthropomorphic or figurative, and that the viewer instead identifies with them in terms of scale.¹⁰⁶ Referring to the drapes' scale, he describes them as "stand in[s] for a figure," in the same way Alison de Lima Greene does.¹⁰⁷ For Havel, any anthropomorphic qualities result from the drapes' verticality, an orientation that mimics the viewer's uprightness, and the viewer's vanity or willingness to see a reflection of him-or herself in them.¹⁰⁸ However, the drapes' verticality is not an adequate qualifier for anthropomorphism. They are not anthropomorphic, but they do constitute a presence of their own that confronts the viewer in the same way another object in real space or person does. They exist on equal ground with the viewer much as Minimal objects do. Since scale is a relative measurement, the viewer

¹⁰⁴ Colpitt, *Minimal Art*, 76.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹⁰⁶ Personal conversation with the artist (29 November 2006).

¹⁰⁷ Havel, Lecture at UTA, April 11, 2007; Alison de Lima Greene, "Joseph Havel: The Activity of Still Objects," in *Joseph Havel*, 54.

¹⁰⁸ Personal conversation with the artist (29 November 2006). Colpitt notes an object's mimicry of the viewer's verticality. See Colpitt, *Minimal Art*, 67. A willingness to bestow human characteristics or behaviors upon Havel's drapes is best clarified in relation to John McCracken's description of his own objects: "The more complex forms ... are attempts to give different 'personalities' to sculptural form. They're almost representations of individuals within a species. As a matter of fact, all my sculptures are to an extent figurative. Some of the 'character' are fat and wide, some are thin and tall, some are blocky, some incline this way or that way. It's part of an attempt to make them more animate, allow them to gesture or 'say' things." See Frances Colpitt, "Between Two Worlds," *Art in America* 86 (April 1998): 89.

gains a heightened sense of self-awareness in the continuous comparison of the object's size to his or her own. Havel describes this specific experience as one in which the viewer becomes aware of being alone in the space with the drapes and is made conscious of the gallery's space in which the viewer and drapes exist together.¹⁰⁹ Elaborating, he says that the drapes make the viewer conscious of his or her place as an individual and his or her relationship to the exhibition space. As stand-ins, the vertically-oriented drapes reference the figure of the viewer through scale rather than representing it.

In their original state, bed sheets, curtains, and tablecloths are of a human size anyhow, making the quality of scale inherent in the found material. The size is already determined in the fabric object itself; Havel does not make it any bigger or smaller. So, it seems that the size of Havel's work is determined by the object at hand, and the viewer's experience of the scale is a result of the height at which they are hung (See Plate 6). Most of the drapes rest only slightly on the floor, giving them their over-head height.¹¹⁰ It comes as no surprise that Havel himself, six feet tall by the time he was thirteen, takes interest in the relationship of the drape's height to his own when he hangs the fabric. After all, sculptor Henry Moore has noted that sculpture,

is based on and remains close to the human figure. We make the kind of sculpture we make because we are the shape we are, because we have the proportions we have. All those things make us respond to form and shape in certain ways. If we had the shape of cows, and went about on four legs, the whole basis of sculpture would be different.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Havel, Lecture at UTA, April 11, 2007.

¹¹⁰ At least three bronzes stand 14 to 16 feet high: *Black Drape* (2002), *Twisted Curtain* (2004-5), and *Torn and Twisted Curtain* (2004-5). As de Lima Greene explains, these bronzes consciously address traditional public sculpture, which typically reaches great heights. However, installation photographs in the catalogue show these works displayed in a private, indoor gallery. However, these bronzes are not expansive enough to qualify as environmental and remain vertical, slender, and preserve the viewer's sense of scale. See de Lima Greene, "Joseph Havel," 50.

¹¹¹ Martin, *Sculpture and Enlivened Space*, 164, note 7.

Hovering anywhere from a few inches to a several feet above eye level, the drapes are slightly intimidating. Yet, they do not loom over the viewer as monumental or environmental sculpture does. The viewer's sense of scale produced by the bronze drape's similar height to his- or her own is a result of Havel's awareness of the human body. For Havel, scale is a tool imbedded in his artistic vocabulary.¹¹² Regarding the relationship between the height of the viewer and the height of the drape, Havel considers the distance at which the viewer will desire to stand back or draw close to the object and the space implicated in that distance. Therefore, scale to the viewer's height is integral to the production of the bronze drapes. Had they been layed flat on the floor, committing to a horizontal orientation, the viewer's experience of the bronze drapes' relation to the body might not be as dramatic.¹¹³ Morris noted that placement played an important role in Minimalism, pointing out that the viewer apprehends a vertically oriented beam quite differently from one positioned horizontally.¹¹⁴ Although both orientations confront the viewer, the former does so in an arguably more aggressive manner. Therefore, Havel obviously considers the human body when hanging the fabric at a certain height in a vertical orientation as well as the viewer's experience of scale and heightened self-awareness.

Although Havel's drapes are indebted to the Minimal sensibility concerning objecthood, gestalt, presence, and theatricality, they welcome historical and feminist associations that distinguish them from the movement's treatment of the object. Their form exhibits their

¹¹² Personal conversation with the artist (29 November 2006).

¹¹³ Havel lays un-cast sheets on the floor in *Thirty Sheets with Stain* (2004-05), and the confrontation is quite different from the cast, vertically oriented drapes. An encounter with verticality, in which the viewer meets the drapes "face to face," is arguably more aggressively confrontational.

¹¹⁴ Morris, "Notes on Sculpture, Part II," 23.

having-been-hung and a precarious quality that is distinctly in opposition to fabricated, stabile Minimal objects. Havel's drapes infuse the space of the gallery with dramatic tension and affect the viewer in a more aggressive manner than Minimal objects. These distinctly non-Minimal characteristics suggest that Havel's drapes are more indebted to Postminimalism, as Singerman suggested. Although Postminimalism was a departure from Minimalism, the slightly subsequent movement enlisted much of the Minimal language and practice. Therefore, the viewer's dramatic, embodied experience of Havel's drapes is quite similar and more applicable to that of Postminimal artwork.

The Bronze Drapes, The Postminimal Sensibility, and The Viewer's Experience

Havel's drapes welcome art historical, biographical, and process associations and are, therefore, distinctly non-Minimal. The bronze drapes appear to be more dynamic than reductively factual, deadpan, or cold as Minimal objects were often, though unfairly, characterized. They also welcome social and gender associations much in the way that 1960s Postminimal forms, like those of Eva Hesse and Lynda Benglis, did. Havel names Hesse and Benglis as two artists who influenced his practice and whose work he sees in close relation to his own.¹¹⁵ At the time, Postminimal and process art challenged the notion of gendered art forms. These developments reflected contemporaneous political and civil movements including the Women's Movement.¹¹⁶ Set in opposition to the geometric, masculine gendered forms of Minimalism, Postminimalism questioned the apparent masculinity and higher value of modern art forms. Processes, such as sewing, and soft materials that had been termed feminine had largely been excluded from gallery shows and museum collections and exhibitions. The Women's Movement in art embraced processes and materials that had been misogynistically undervalued as feminine, regardless of the artist's sex. Havel's forms are not only indicative of process but also question the constructed notion of the woman's domain. The viewer first associates the drapes with the home and the housewife's chores and then questions the validity of the construction that promotes those associations. Havel is, after all, a man interested in processes as well as objects and activities that are often gendered

¹¹⁵ Personal conversation with the artist (23 March 2007).

¹¹⁶ Robert Pincus-Witten, *Postminimalism* (New York: Out of London Press, 1977), 14-16.

female.¹¹⁷ Therefore, Havel's drapes are distinguished from the Minimal object by their suggestiveness and feminist spirit and align themselves more closely with the Postminimal sensibility.

Most obviously, Havel's drapes relate somewhat to the reinstitution of the pictorial, if abstract, object that Postminimalism initiated.¹¹⁸ Havel's drapes have a pictorial subject that can be compared to Oldenburg's figurative, soft sculptures or Hesse's biomorphic forms that referenced the uterus or umbilical cord. The bronze drapes are figurative or pictorial in the sense that they present a recognizable bed sheet, curtain, or tablecloth rather than an abstract form. Havel has suggested that a few of the drapes, like *Drape* (1999), could ambiguously reference either a woman's ball gown or an erect phallus, or both.¹¹⁹ Yet, these are only associations; not biomorphic references as Hesse's were. Furthermore, Havel's drapes are not constructed to look like phalluses or ball gowns, and most of them only look like bed sheets, curtains, or tablecloths. Rather, they are figurative, because they are replacements of readymade items. A few might suggest other figurative associations but do not set out to. In this way, Havel's drapes are closer to the reinstitution of figurative sculpture and Oldenburg than Hesse's abstract forms that reference the body's innards.

¹¹⁷ In other series, Havel employs sewing, an activity previously defined as "women's work" beginning in the Post-World War II era. He sews fabric around wire text, and stitches shirt labels into large grids that hang on the wall or blankets that are suspended from the ceiling by monofilament. Most recently, Havel has sewn together stars cut from an American flag in *Night*, 2006 and stitched a 12 by 8 inch flag from fabric and buttons in *Fragments*, 2006. These sewn pieces are delicate and sensitive and simultaneously suggest feminine activities and question the very validity of that suggestion, since Havel is a man executing that process with those materials.

¹¹⁸ Robert Pincus-Witten, *Eva Hesse: A Memorial Exhibition* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1972), n.p.

¹¹⁹ Personal conversation with the artist (29 November 2006). At his lecture at UTA (April 11, 2007), Havel showed installation photographs of his exhibition at the MFAH in which a wedding ceremony had been set up around his bronze drapes. *Wash* partially blocked the middle aisle and a tall, black, conical drape stood on the groom's side of the wedding arch. Havel humorously discussed the drapes' appropriateness for such a ceremony, saying that the phallus-like drape and *Wash*, a bed sheet, signify the subsequent copulation of the newlyweds.

Furthermore, Havel's entropic drapes, exhibiting the dynamism that pervades much Postminimal art, distinguish themselves from the starkly geometric, static Minimal objects. Characterizing the beginnings of Postminimalism, Max Kozloff noted that "the new sculpture is a subtle, liberating spectacle. As a reaction to the rigid, Minimal sculpture that immediately preceded it, it displays much of the same conceptual coolness and devaluation of 'relationships' at the same time that it opens up new possibilities of freedom from the object and collaboration with the environment."¹²⁰ Much of this work, like Serra's flung or propped lead or stacked steel and Benglis's poured foam, came to be characterized as post-studio work, meaning that it was literally made in the gallery space. They were furthermore characterized as anti-form in Morris's 1968 essay of the same title,¹²¹ meaning that the form was not rigid or imposed but was rather arrived at through process. Morris observed the Postminimal "disengagement with preconceived enduring forms and orders for things. It is part of the work's refusal to continue estheticizing form by dealing with it as a prescribed end." On the other hand, Havel's work is clearly not aligned with this post-studio process or anti-form aesthetic. His drapes are obviously discrete forms. However, by clearly hanging, the drapes do exhibit evidence of their making much in the way other process art does.

Havel's form is determined by the manipulation of his specific material much as Postminimal work was. With forms that exhibited process and the manipulation of material, Postminimalism reinstated the Abstract Expressionist gesture.¹²² Morris credited Jackson

¹²⁰ Max Kozloff, "9 in a warehouse," *Artforum* 7 (February 1969): 42. This essay reviews an exhibition that Morris organized.

¹²¹ Robert Morris, "Anti-Form," *Artforum* 6 (April 1968). Reprinted in *The New Sculpture*, ed. Armstrong and Marshall, 101. The title "Anti Form," was assigned by *Artforum* editors rather than Morris himself. See Richard Armstrong, "Between Geometry and Gesture," in *The New Sculpture*, ed. Armstrong and Marshall, 14

¹²² Pincus-Witten, *Eva Hesse*, n.p.

Pollock and Morris Louis with making work that emphasized rather than obscured the artistic course of action,¹²³ recalling Rosenberg's characterization of those artists as "action painters." However, gesture did not carry with it all the self-expressive, emotive qualities that it did with Abstract Expressionism. Instead it recorded a process. Moreover, the prioritization of action was also an investigation of the nature of the artists' respective materials. Benglis recognized Pollock as "[pioneering] the movement of dealing with the materials used by the artist as the prime manifestation of imagery."¹²⁴ Pollock's work only recorded the movement of his body and hand, holding the dripping paint brush, over the canvas. Describing the importance of materials and process to the Postminimal form, Tucker concludes her essay in the *Anti-Illusion* catalogue, writing:

For some artists in this exhibition, meaning results from the activity of making the work; for others, meaning resides in the configuration dictated by the choice of materials; for still others, meaning can be found in an expressed intention. In all cases, meaning and material cannot be separated.¹²⁵

Similarly, Havel's form records the process of its hanging. Havel continues the Postminimal tradition, influenced by Abstract Expressionism, of producing forms that are determined by the manipulation of the materials rather than by imposed composition.

Previously, at the time that Morris was making "unitary forms" from within the Minimal perspective, he properly distinguished Minimal objects from those which evidenced process.¹²⁶ Stella had more adamantly proscribed procedural notion from his work, because he was not concerned with making variations.¹²⁷ However, in the late 1960s, Morris

¹²³ Morris, "Anti-Form," 100-101.

¹²⁴ Robert Pincus-Witten, "Lynda Benglis: The Frozen Gesture," *Artforum* 13 (Nov 1974): 54.

¹²⁵ Tucker and Monte, *Anti-Illusion*, 44.

¹²⁶ Morris, "Notes on Sculpture," 44; Morris, "Notes on Sculpture, Part II," 21.

¹²⁷ Lippard, ed., "Questions to Stella and Judd," 157.

dematerialized, to a degree, the Minimal object in *Threadwaste* (1968). In the piece, he scattered shredded fabric waste onto the gallery floor. As the piece is exhibited and re-exhibited in different gallery contexts, its anti-form changes. Since it is not a stable object, the varying arrangements of the waste are never identical. Furthermore, the piece serves as a record of the process by which it was made or strewn atop the gallery floor. Other records of process can be found, for example, in Agnes Martin's sensitively layered drawn grids, in which the viewer is privy to the drawing process. The emphasis is not on the composition of a perfect grid, but rather on the act of repeatedly pulling the pencil across the surface. Similarly, Benglis's polyurethane anti-forms are determined by the process of pouring. Procedurally, Havel's hung drapes align themselves more closely with this Postminimal work.

Perhaps Havel's approach to form can be compared to Serra's stacked steel pieces to establish evidence of process as a characteristic that the bronze drapes and Postminimal art share. An interest in procedure and action pervades Serra's prop pieces. A long list of transitive verbs such as "to roll," "to split," "to drop," fills a late 1960s page in Serra's notebook and defines his verb-motivated method of making objects.¹²⁸ Referring to his *Skullcracker Stacking Series* (1969), in which he stacked large pieces of steel with an overhead magnetic crane, Serra wrote, "The structures were not conceived in advance."¹²⁹ Likewise, Havel says that he tries to work against imposed composition for an arrangement

¹²⁸ Richard Serra, "Verb List, 1967-68." First published in *The New Avant-Garde, Issues for the Art of the Seventies* (New York: Praeger, 1972). Reprinted in *Richard Serra: Interviews, Etc. 1970-1980*, ed. Clara Weyergraf (Yonkers: Trevor Park-on-Hudson, 1980).

¹²⁹ Richard Serra, "Play it Again, Sam," *Arts Magazine* 44 (February 1970): 24-7. Reprinted in *Richard Serra*, ed. Weyergraf, 16.

that is inherent in the original fabric.¹³⁰ Therefore, process precedes rather than follows the conception of the form, and Serra and Havel arrive at final forms through process. Although final forms exist in Havel's and Serra's work, the processes are emphasized and made apparent by those forms. While Serra could conceivably predict that stacking sheets of steel would result in a stack of steel sheets, his objective was not to make a stack but rather "to stack." In the catalogue for *Anti-Illusion: Procedures/Materials*, the most significant exhibition of Postminimal work, co-curator James Monte observed that Serra's steel sculpture "is a displayed act as much as it is an exhibited sculpture,"¹³¹ because the form clarified the process by which it was made. Similarly, Havel's bronze drapes might be understood as a result of the impulse "to suspend" or "to hang," and he conceives of them as evidence of his activity.¹³² Like Serra, Havel does not set out to make an unsupported sheet that is of a certain height, falls this-or-that way, or folds in a specific place or twists in another. He focuses on the act of hanging primarily to determine the drapes' forms. Therefore, the bronze drapes record and emphasize their having-been-hung and exhibit a dynamic fluidity close to that of Postminimal process art.

In their unsupported stance, all of Havel's bronze drapes exhibit evidence of their having been once suspended. The knotted tops of *Curtains* (1999, See Plate 7) makes the method of

¹³⁰ de Lima Greene, "Joseph Havel," 47.

¹³¹ Tucker and Monte, *Anti-Illusion*, 5-6. The exhibition was installed in the fourth floor galleries at the Whitney Museum and included paintings, sculpture, and performances by twenty-one artists. Armstrong argues for the exhibition's impact. See Armstrong, "Between Geometry and Gesture," 16.

¹³² Serra's verb list also includes infinitives that are pertinent to Havel's process. Such verbs, listed closely together, include: 'to suspend' and 'to hang.' Serra also includes other phrases such as 'of tension,' 'of gravity,' and 'of entropy,' that apply equally as well to Havel's production. See *Richard Serra*, ed Weyergraf. During Havel's gallery talk at the opening to his show, *Without Stars*, at Dunn & Brown Contemporary (17 November 2006) he joked that *Wash* (2004-5) might look like Serra's laundry. The large, wall-like bronze form is visually similar to Serra's steel sheets he used in prop pieces or his larger, wall-like constructions, like *Tilted Arc* (1981). Yet, Havel's bronze preserves a bed sheet, welcoming the reference to Serra's laundry.

hanging apparent, and *Drape* (1999, See Plate 8) evidences the process in the top overhang where the original fabric was draped over a supporting armature. With other works like *Silk Drape* (2000), *Black Drape* (2002), *Torn Flannel Duvet Cover* (2003), and *Twisted Drape* (2004-05), the original fabric was hung only at a single point (See Plate 9). Other wall-like bronze drapes, like *Wash* (2004-2005) and *Twin* (2006), were hung from two or more points along the top edge, and the process by which they came to stand is less obvious than with the drapes hung at one point (See Plate 10). In comparison to the drapes from 1999, the later pieces record the process of their making more subtly. With regards to exhibiting process, Havel's mention of Benglis's influence is particularly revealing of his motivations. Just as Benglis's poured pieces are frozen gestures, congealed in space,¹³³ Havel's drapes are also hardened evidence of the artist's action. And just as Benglis's anti-form illustrates the natural path of the once-liquid foam, Havel's drapes exhibit the gravitational pull of the once-hung fabric. By exhibiting the process of their materials' manipulation, the drapes affiliate themselves with Postminimal interests.

As a result of the viewer's ability to deduce process, Postminimal works and Havel's bronze drapes exhibit the quality of being-in-flux. Postminimal forms caused the viewer to imaginatively recreate that process of the pieces' making.¹³⁴ While the form exists in front of the viewer in the present, the viewer recreates the process carried out in the past. Although the process goes unseen, the viewer deduces that process from the piece that is essentially a narrative of that procedure. In some cases, these forms demonstrate a precarious formation, implying that the fluid process by which they came to be could also cause their destruction.

¹³³ Pincus-Witten, "Lynda Benglis," 57.

¹³⁴ Pincus-Witten, "Postminimalism," 23.

This impending destruction is illustrated in Serra's *One Ton Prop (House of Cards)*, 1969, in which four heavy sheets of steel support one another as they stand in a cubical formation. Although the cubical form first suggests a permanent, timeless quality that characterizes much of the sculptural tradition, the viewer soon notes the precariousness of the propped steel sheets. Clearly, the piece evidences the process of its having-been-propped. The viewer becomes aware that the piece is not timeless but is "visibly dependent on each passing moment for its existence," and is, therefore at a perpetual climax.¹³⁵ Perhaps Serra's *Corner Prop*, 1969 makes a more appropriate comparison with Havel's tall drapes due to its vertical orientation. In the piece, the bottom corner of a weighty lead cube is propped up in the gallery ceiling's corner by a steel pole. The viewer is aware of the propping action by which the piece was realized and is conscious of the instability of the unsecured form. The viewer senses that the pole might slip and that the heavy cube may come crashing downward. In effect, the instability suggests that the process is unfinished and may continue.¹³⁶ The precarious prop instills a foreboding quality into the gallery space as well as the viewer.

Although not identical to Serra's piece, Havel's bronze drape shares a precarious existence that thwarts the idealistic timelessness of the sculptural tradition and wills itself towards spatial mobility.¹³⁷ In describing his own work, Serra explains the effects of coupling suspension with the potential for movement: "The perception of the work in its state of suspended animation, arrested motion, does not give [the viewer] calculable truths like

¹³⁵ Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, 269.

¹³⁶ Armstrong, "Between Geometry and Gesture," 15.

¹³⁷ Some collectors have added pedestals to Havel's bronze drapes, so that their yard crews wouldn't damage them (See Plate 12). The pedestal's effect is ultimately petrifying. Havel prefers the bronze drapes to be installed directly on the ground, whether it is in a gallery or outside. Personal conversation with the artist (29 November 2006).

geometry, but a sense of presence, an isolated time. The apparent potential for disorder, for movement endows the structure with a quality outside of its physical ... definition."¹³⁸

Havel's arrested, fabric items appear to have the potential to fall although that potential may be outside their "physical definition" as stabile, bronze forms. They are entropic beyond their physical structure and have the potential to collapse. In Havel's case, this potential is a result of utilizing materials that oppose the viewer's perception of those materials.

Irving Sandler noted that forms that exhibit precariousness, regardless of their Minimal "look," are distinct from Minimalism. For example, artists like Tom Doyle and Ronald Bladen made objects that appeared as if they might collapse at any moment. Doyle's 1964 "weighty, sail-like sheets ... appear about to keel over—to look 'impossible,' as [Doyle] puts it."¹³⁹ Similarly, Bladen's 1965 row of three, vertically oriented, nine-foot high rhomboids thrust diagonally into the space, resulting in an appearance that is "dynamic, precariously balanced, and on the verge of toppling. Although Bladen's geometric forms of aluminum and painted wood look very similar to Morris's Green Gallery installation of columnar "unitary forms," Sandler distinguishes the "spirit" of Bladen's and Doyle's works from Minimal objects due to their seeming instability.

While the same entropic effect is achieved, Doyle and Bladen's "impossible" objects are different from Havel's drapes. Doyle and Bladen's precariousness is a result of the

¹³⁸ Richard Serra, "Play it Again, Sam," 15. Serra's phrasing closely reflects Merleau-Ponty's sense of perception when he writes perception "does not give me truths like geometry, but presences." See Merleau-Ponty, "Cezanne's Doubt" in *Sense and Non-Sense* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 9-25. Serra's comment on the object's "physical definition" is quite similar to one by Judd concerning John Chamberlain's work. Judd observed that Chamberlain's crushed cars were voluminous beyond their structure and had the potential to expand. A potential for movement beyond the form's allowance is also applicable to Havel's drapes. See Judd, "Exhibition at Castelli," 20.

¹³⁹ Irving Sandler, "Gesture and Non-Gesture in Recent Sculpture" in *American Sculpture of the Sixties* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1967). Reprinted in *Minimal Art*, ed. Battcock, 315-16.

positioning of their objects, which are massive and lean diagonally. Havel's precariousness is a result of choosing to present an object like a drape free of support that has the strength to stand alone. It is impossible, because, although it is bronze, it still looks like flimsy fabric that should give way but does not. Instead of waiting for the object to tip over due to its precarious positioning or its high center of gravity as with Doyle and Bladen, the viewer awaits the drape's collapse because of the object's flimsy, physical nature and its, therefore, impossible, unsupported gesture.

In opposing the viewer's perception with material reality, Havel's drapes follow the sentiment of much Postminimal work. Therefore, Havel's precariousness is more a result of the drapes' exhibition of process and illusion. Although Serra is not involved in illusionism, Havel's drapes achieve the same apprehensive quality as Serra's prop pieces, but it results from the very absence of any prop or support. The viewer's experience of Havel's drapes is more riddled with excruciating tension than it is with the more reserved, static, inert Minimal objects. With Havel, the viewer encounters a soft looking drape that should fall at any moment as a result of its being a drape and being subject to gravity. This experience is one intended by Havel as he has admitted that he is "interested in capturing the ordinary, whether it be an object or a momentary event. [He wants] to make it permanent but make it seem like it isn't."¹⁴⁰ In other words, Havel's subject is an ordinary piece of fabric and the act of hanging it is mundane. He makes it permanent through the casting process, which preserves the fabric's texture. The texture and patina only further suggest that the drape is not a hard,

¹⁴⁰ Michael Auping, "Joseph Havel" in *Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth: 101*, ed. Auping (London: Third Millennium Publishing, 2002), 244.

heavy bronze but is rather soft, airy linen. So, although the final piece is a permanent, standing bronze, the preserved texture and soft patina make it appear otherwise.

In her 1966 essay for the catalogue to the first major group exhibition of Postminimalism *Eccentric Abstraction*, Lucy Lippard identified the artists' embrace of visual and material oppositions. For example, although Benglis's polyurethane hardens, the form looks as if it is flowing liquid. In lesser known Harold Paris's work, Lippard notes that a "deceptively squashy looking shape will be hard as metal while a flat, wall-like surface gives resiliently when touched."¹⁴¹ The argument is, of course, that touching art objects has been forbidden by the gallery and museum establishment. Knowing this, Lippard continues:

Unexpected surfaces separate the work still more radically from any sculptural context, and even if they are not supposed to be touched, they are supposed to evoke a sensuous response. If the surfaces are familiar to one's sense of touch, if one can tell by looking how touching them would feel, they are all the more effective.

Although the viewer does not touch Havel's drapes, the patina mimics the color of fabric items familiar to the viewer. Therefore, the viewer supposes that the drape would feel soft like fabric. Yet, the bronze is actually hard and sturdy. The opposition of the viewer's visual perception to the drapes' materials is quite similar to the Postminimal objective that Lippard notes.

Furthermore, the viewer's sensuous response to the drapes' material and evidence of process results in a tension-riddled, embodied experience. In *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, Rosalind Krauss describes modern sculpture as "at the juncture between stillness and motion, time arrested and time passing. From this condition ... comes its enormous expressive

¹⁴¹ Lucy R. Lippard, "Eccentric Abstraction," *Art International* 10 (November 1966). Reprinted, slightly cut, and rearranged in *Changing Essays in Art Criticism*, by Lippard (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1971), 104-5.

power."¹⁴² The viewer's visual experience is one of seeing a drape that appears to be hanging, realizing that it is not and that it is suspended in mid air, and then both visually and corporeally awaiting its impending plunge because of what is known about the flimsy nature of a bed sheet, curtain, or tablecloth. Yet the collapse never comes, and the viewer is stuck in a state of bodily anxiety, always waiting for the fall. Unlike Doyle or Bladen's impending tip, Havel's imminent collapse is a result of exhibited process and material ambiguity rather than positioning.

How is it that such expressive power, as Krauss characterizes it, can apply to an everyday bargain store product? The viewer experiences the seemingly mundane drapes as he or she would any common object in everyday life. Therefore, Havel's drapes, much like Minimal and Postminimal objects, allow the viewer to be relaxed. Instead of being amazed by the virtuosity of a composed, sculpted form, as the viewer often is with sculptural works like those of Bernini, the viewer can instead be subdued by the simple shape and ordinariness of Havel's object. However, this boredom is not one that causes the viewer to become uninterested but rather allows the viewer to reach what, according to Jonathan Flatley, Walter Benjamin called "an apogee of mental relaxation."¹⁴³ The ability to be relaxed by Havel's drapes results from what Alan R. Solomon, in the catalogue to Johns's 1964 retrospective at The Jewish Museum, accurately describes as the viewer's "visual overexposure to the image; it [is] so familiar that [he or she has] no reason to look at it closely."¹⁴⁴ The viewer sees bed sheets, drapes, and tablecloths on a daily basis, so the site of one in a gallery or museum

¹⁴² Krauss, *Passage in Modern Sculpture*, 5.

¹⁴³ Jonathan Flatley, "Allegories of Boredom" in *A Minimal Future? Art as Object 1958-1968*, ed. Ann Goldstein (Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 2004), 53.

¹⁴⁴ Solomon, *Jasper Johns*, 8. Regarding Postminimal work, Duchamp, Johns, Oldenburg, and Morris are major influences on the late 1960s artists. See Tucker and Monte, *Anti-Illusion*, 16-17.

space does not illicit excited interest. Although the viewer is at first bored by the appearance of what seems to be hanging drapes, he or she soon realizes the unsupported, paradoxical presence and experiences an extreme transformation of the space and the self. It is the prior boredom that greatly enhances the latter reaction. In an absence of entertainment, the viewer is open to affectation, transformation, and interest in the corporeal experience. In this sense, the drapes' expressive power lies in their ability to present mundane forms that, in suddenly becoming precarious, startle the viewer who is made corporeally aware.

This heightened, corporeal awareness results from the viewer's awareness of gravity's affect on Havel's drapes. As Morris noted, "one of the conditions of knowing an object is supplied by the sensing of the gravitational force acting upon it in actual space."¹⁴⁵ Although Morris was referring to the necessity for the Minimal object to sit directly on the ground, Havel seems to have been influenced by this notion in his bronze drapes. Havel's once-hung drapes exhibit a concern for gravity that Morris observed early on in the beginnings of Postminimal work: "Random piling, loose stacking, hanging, give passing form to material," and the acknowledgement of gravity shares equal importance with a consideration of space.¹⁴⁶ However, the trace of gravity on the original fabric is undermined by the strength of the bronze. Havel observes that he must be motivated to cast an object in bronze, and, wanting the drapes to resist entropy and gravity, he chose to transform fragile fabric into hard bronze. While the evidence of gravity is presented in the once-hung fabric, the bronze drape, looking as if it is flimsy and hanging, appears to resist gravity.

¹⁴⁵ Morris, "Notes on Sculpture," 43.

¹⁴⁶ Morris, "Anti Form," 101.

If, as Morris suggests, one of the conditions of knowing an object is sensing the way in which gravity acts upon it, then the viewer's relationship to Havel's bronze drape becomes confused. The viewer knows the absolute peculiarity of Havel's standing drapes by experiencing the discrepancy between the gravitational force enacted upon him or herself and the lack thereof upon the object. Simultaneously, the viewer is at once aware of the space that he or she shares with the bronze drape and the strange tension to which the space is subjected. While the viewer's body is relaxed or moving in the gallery space, the drape remains tense and frozen. According to Morris, objects that do not submit to tension and do not exhibit stress as the body does when it is standing are most clearly separate from the human body.¹⁴⁷ Then, Havel's sheet occupies a strange state with respect to Morris's suggestion. For while the patinated bronze, with its soft appearance, exhibits the tension of the original suspended fabric, it does not submit to that tension and collapse. Rather, being made of bronze, it is stable and inert, and is therefore distinct from the human body.¹⁴⁸

The discrepancy in tension between the bronze drape and the viewer's body is the chief catalyst for the viewer's dramatic experience of space. The viewer's encounter with Havel's drape is the incident of sharing the space and yet being alienated from it, and it is one that is chiefly experiential. As the viewer, standing or in motion, is affected by gravity in real space, the bronze drapes remain standing but appear as though they, lacking any visible support, are about to fall to the ground. The feeling, as David Pagel described it in a catalogue to Havel's exhibition at The Huntington Beach Art Center, is one the viewer feels

¹⁴⁷ Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture, Part III," *Artforum* 5 (June 1967): 29.

¹⁴⁸ With regard to tension, Postminimal artist Eva Hesse's hanging, rubberized cheesecloth curtains somewhat resemble Havel's once-hung forms. Necessarily suspended and hanging on the wall, Hesse's works could not support themselves. Therefore, their exhibition of tension links them to the human body as Morris conceived of it. Contrastingly, Havel's drapes resist the tension that pervades Hesse's curtains.

in the pit of his or her stomach.¹⁴⁹ This vertigo-like reaction results from sharing the space with the heavy bronze drape in all its illusion to the original, lightweight fabric and the incongruity between that space's gravitational effect on the corporeally-aware viewer and the bronze drape.

The experience therefore is equal to if not more important than the drape itself, reiterating Morris's declaration that the object had only become less self-important. The arresting of real gallery space in which the viewer exists creates the situation that includes Havel's bronze drape, the viewer, and the surrounding architecture. Just as Benglis's fluid yet frozen polyurethane gestures, like *Pinto* (1971) and *Adhesive Products* (1971), shot off walls, boldly defied gravity, and placed the viewer's space in tension, so do Havel's once-hung drapes freeze the gallery space in which the viewer exists. Lippard suggested that various Minimal objects had differing installation effects, saying that some occupied space, some conquered space, some dispersed space, and others incorporated it.¹⁵⁰ Postminimal objects arguably continued this transformation of space. Havel's bronze drapes, drawing on the Postminimal tensing of space, must then arrest, halt, or seize space and give the viewer a similarly anxious position in the situation. As Havel noted, the bronze drapes do not tell the viewer a story but rather they are indicative of the way in which they fill space and occupy space. By seizing

¹⁴⁹ David Pagel, "Now You See It, Now You Don't: Joseph Havel's Mundane Magic" in *Joseph Havel* (Huntington Beach: Huntington Beach Art Center, 1996), 18. Although Pagel refers specifically to *Tumbling* (1996), a cast column of men's shirt collars, and *Endless* (1996), a column of fabric men's shirt collars sewn with monofilament, his comment refers to the works' magical suspension and the way in which the bronze appears weightless. He writes that the two works are "less concerned to sustain the illusion of levitation than to make you feel it in the pit of your stomach." Therefore, his statements are applicable to the bronze drapes, as well.

¹⁵⁰ Lucy R. Lippard, ed., "10 Strukturisten in 20 Absätzen," in *Minimal Art*, by Enno Develing and Lippard (Düsseldorf: Städtische Kunsthalle, 1969), 16. [translation in *Esthetics Contemporary*, ed. Richard Kostelanetz (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1978), 236].

the gallery space that the viewer shares, Havel's drapes instill in the viewer a heightened sense of corporeality in real space.

In their forms that hover between precariousness and stability, record their process, and possess stratified meaning, evoking a feminist critique of gender constructions, Havel's bronze drapes are more accurately aligned with the Postminimal sensibility and treatment of materials than with the sculptural tradition. Furthermore, the viewer remains embodied when participating in a situation with the bronze drapes, much as Postminimal art, continuing the phenomenological objectives of Minimalism, allowed. The artists of the 1960's and 1970's fostered these objectives and the viewer's self-awareness through close attention to literal materials, self-referential forms, presence, scale and the avoidance of sculpture's anthropomorphism, allusionism, and illusionism. Havel, modeling his objectives after those of Minimalism and Postminimalism, produces bronze drapes that similarly promote the viewer's embodied experience and heightened self-awareness in a situation occurring in real space.

Conclusion

Havel's bronze drapes reflect a consciousness of the art historical traditions associated with drapery and bronze, and the readymade, as well as Minimal and Postminimal formal concerns and theatricality. Havel's bronze drapes may superficially resemble traditional sculptural drapery, particularly as it was employed in Baroque art. However, nothing about Havel's sheets can be legitimately classified as Baroque. Michael Ennis' superficial detection of a "swirling, rapturously Baroque quality of line," in Havel's drapes is possibly a result of art historical hindsight, in which anything resembling unsupported drapery warrants a Baroque association, and Singerman makes note of this mistake. Havel's drapes exhibit their having-been-hung rather than the otherworldly levitation of Baroque drapery. The form is affiliated with 1960s Postminimal art and a Minimal treatment of space and the viewer. Therefore, Havel's bronze drapes evidence a consciousness of artistic precedents of the more recent past rather than the more distant Baroque era.

The form of Havel's drapes is affiliated with the Minimal and Postminimal object rather than Baroque sculpture. Their embrace of a non-anthropomorphic, non-allusionistic form as well as a projection of a strong gestalt, an attention to scale, and the elimination of the base relate the drapes to the Minimal and Postminimal practice. They are discrete, unitary objects in contrast to relationally composed sculpture. Although they may look like sculpture, Havel's drapes are not produced by the traditional lost-wax method, in which a modeled form is cast, nor are they carved in a sculptural manner. They are directly cast from fabric items,

and although casting is a traditional sculptural process, Havel's procedure and form is not sculptural. The drapes, appearing as if they are suspended cloth, look more like assisted readymades rather than sculpture. They are distinguished from the sculptural tradition and aligned more closely with Johns's work, a prototype for Minimal and Postminimal objects.

Although the bronze drapes take many cues from Minimalism, their form, which evidences process, precariousness, and exploits the opposition of its material to its appearance, is more closely associated with Postminimal art. Minimal artists avoided evidence of process in their industrially fabricated forms, but Havel aligns his practice with Postminimal art, in which the artist's procedure was exhibited in the final form. This evidence allows the viewer to mentally recreate the process and gives the form its precariousness. From this seeming instability, the bronze drapes' viewer experiences the dramatic tension to which the gallery space is subjected. The viewer perceives the drape as soft and flimsy fabric, but, despite a lack of visible support, the patinated drape does not waver. The viewer, acknowledging that he or she submits to gravitational force as he or she moves around the drape, shares the gallery space with an object that perceptibly should collapse but does not. It remains frozen, seemingly defying gravity. This discrepancy between the viewer's body and the drape results in a dramatic, corporeal experience of the viewer's self and the drape in real space. Havel's attention to process as well as perceptual and material opposition is distinctly indebted to Postminimal art.

Baroque sculpture and Minimal and Postminimal objects have been similarly characterized as theatrical, because they perform or exist for the viewer's experience. However, the former promotes the disembodied experience, the loss of self-awareness, and

the absorption into virtual space while the latter two prescribe the viewer's embodiment and a heightened sense of self-awareness in real space. The drapes bar the viewer from mentally projecting or empathizing into the non-anthropomorphic bronze drapes as he or she is wont to do with naturalistic, anthropomorphic Baroque sculpture. Although Baroque sculpture began to break the columnar space of the sculpted base and reached out into the viewer's reality, the viewer could not escape the impulse to empathize into the anthropomorphic form that was still set apart from real space by the base. Rather, Havel's bronze drapes continue the Minimal and Postminimal successful conglomeration of space in which the viewer and art object exist. Havel's drapes take Minimal and Postminimal theatricality, in which the embodied viewer encounters an object that emphasizes its existence in real space, as their model. Therefore, the drapes are distinctly non-Baroque in their theatricality and instead provoke an embodied experience and heightened corporeal awareness for the viewer.

It is in this embodied experience that the viewer finds meaning in Havel's drapes. Arguably, a portion of the art audience is intimidated by the insecurity that it knows too little to fully understand that which is authoritatively represented. With some art, the meaning is already fixed and depends on the viewer being knowledgeable enough to comprehend it. In these instances, the art does not depend on the viewer for its interpretation. However, with Havel's drapes the viewer is not left to interpret predetermined symbols or represented narratives as with various other forms of art. As Havel has noted, the significance of the drapes lies in their installation and affectation of space rather than in embodying any personal interests or expression of his own. The viewer, he has observed, is a participant in the space with the drapes and occupies equal ground with them in the embodied experience. He or she

only has the task of experiencing the drapes in real space and reading them in the context of his or her personal relation to the household items from which they are cast. Although the viewer is endowed with more responsibility than a spectator of naturalistic sculpture, Havel's cast everyday items are approachable and easily graspable. The result of the viewer's increased responsibility is an enhanced sense of self-awareness and powerful activeness in the apprehension and embodied experience of the art object. Herein lies the simple, rewarding elegance of Havel's graceful, provocative bronze drapes.



Plate 1

Joseph Havel, *White Virus*, 1994

Reproduction from *Joseph Havel: A Decade of Sculpture 1996-2006*

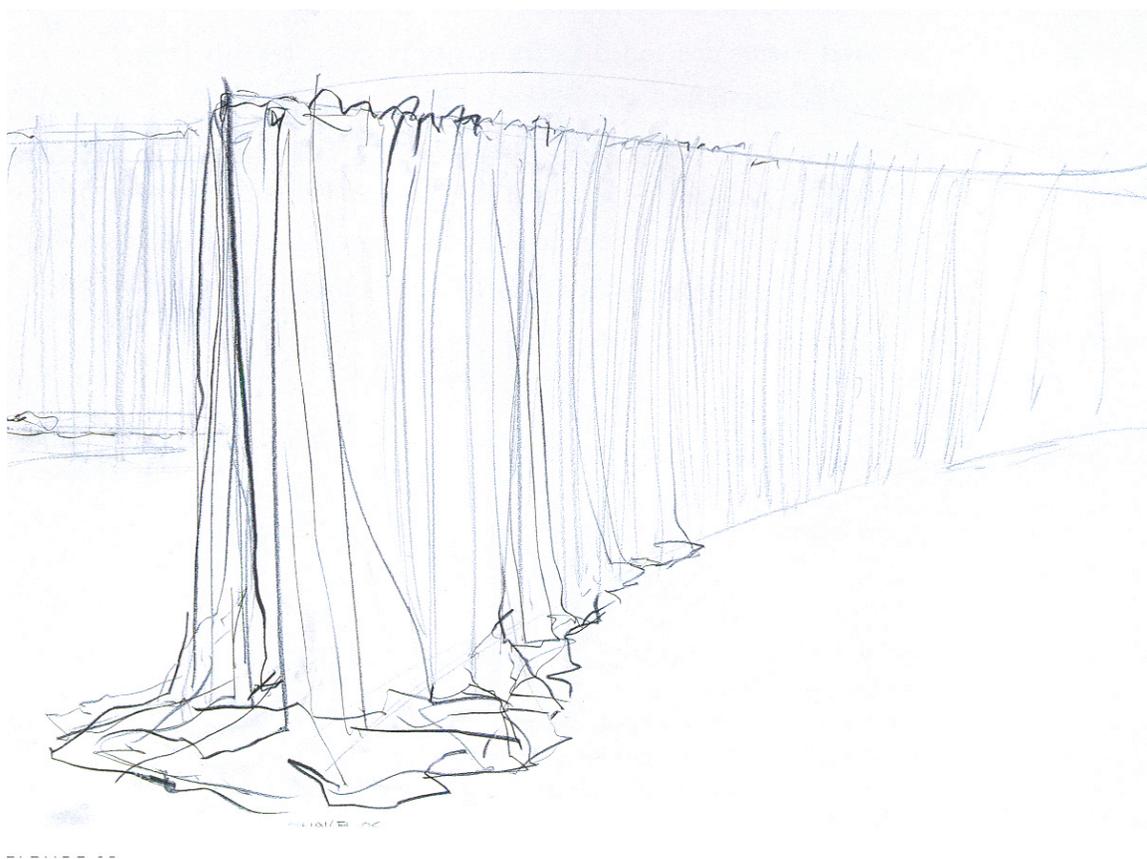


Plate 2

Havel, *Study for Fallen Reich*, 2005

Reproduction from *Joseph Havel: A Decade of Sculpture 1996-2006*



Plate 3

Havel, *Curtain*, 1999

Reproduction from *Jopseh Havel: A Decade of Sculpture 1996-2006*



Plate 4
Havel, *Curtain* (details), 1999
Author's digital photographs



Plate 5

Havel, *Torn Flannel Duvet Cover*, 2003

Reproduction from *Joseph Havel: A Decade of Sculpture 1996-2006*



Plate 6

Installation view of the 2000 Biennial Exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (left to right: *Drape*, 1999; *Curtains*, 1999)

Reproduction from *Joseph Havel: A Decade of Sculpture 1996-2006*



Plate 7

Havel, *Curtains*, 1999

Reproduction from *Joseph Havel: A Decade of Sculpture 1996-2006*



Plate 8

Havel, *Drape*, 1999

Reproduction from *Joseph Havel: A Decade of Sculpture 1996-2006*



Plate 9

Havel, *Table Cloth*, 1999

Reproduction from *Joseph Havel: A Decade of Sculpture 1996-2006*



Plate 10

Havel, *Wash*, 2004-5

Reproduction from *Joseph Havel: A Decade of Sculpture 1996-2006*



Plate 11

Havel, *Wash* (detail), 2004-5

Reproduction from *Joseph Havel: A Decade of Sculpture 1996-2006*



Plate 12

Havel, *Black Drape*, 2002

Reproduction from *Joseph Havel: A Decade of Sculpture 1996-2006*

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ABSTRACT

Joseph Havel: The Bronze Drapes and The Viewer's Experience offers an analysis of the Houston artist Joseph Havel's series of cast bronze sheets, curtains, and tablecloths, produced from 1998 to the present. A large portion of the drape series was included in Havel's 2006 exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. In the catalogue to the exhibition, Howard Singerman relates Havel's drapes to both Postminimal art and Baroque sculpture, only to argue that Havel's drapes are quite disparate from the latter. In this thesis, the author explores the drapes' relation to Baroque sculpture as well as Minimal and Postminimal objects. Furthermore, she contrasts Baroque theatricality to Minimal and Postminimal theatricality based on the viewer's disembodied, psychological experience of the former and embodied, corporeally-aware experience of the latter two. She argues Minimal and Postminimal theatricality as precedents for Havel's approach to the bronze drapes and the viewer's experience with them.

The author gives a personal account of her experience with one of Havel's bronze drapes, briefly imparts information concerning Havel's career, and characterizes the viewer's relative experience of Baroque sculpture, Minimal objects, and Postminimal forms. Havel's bronze drapes are set in relation to each style or movement.