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THE METAMODERN DONKEY'S ENDLESS CHASE

Introduction

Contemporary art, is and has been, in my view, for some time now in a stalemate-like position. From personal observation it seems that the visual arts have embarked on a tornado like pace, delving into the youngest end of western canonised art history pulling out artists (and movements alike) reviving them for fifteen minutes before getting bundled away into storage somewhere awaiting the next trend to set in. For me, as a young artist, I have noticed a struggle between the referencing and relations contemporary artworks have with artists that were active circa fifty years ago. I believe it is due to the rapid development in technology, and the fast track spreading of ideas online that makes attempts at forming new movements, networks, and thoughts to become almost instantaneously passé, before there has been any possibility to claim ground, sculpt out and refine the core intentions of a process or practice.

In my own art practice, I have developed a keen interest in art historical, or rather 'canonic moments'¹, where I have devised ways of relating and positioning myself and my artworks in the contemporary arena of the western canon, which, on occasion left me envious and nostalgic for the art of the past. This has led me to explore new ways of re-appropriating, or re-using, their thoughts, aesthetics and reasons for art making.

The use of *true experience* in art is something that, most likely, is getting lost or on purpose left out, as it cannot be captured through the lens of a camera. This goes hand in hand with the rapid introduction and now fully established existence of the virtual space, or in other words the internet. For many people, myself included, the first experience of artworks is through a reproduction and not the actual work.

In this thesis, I will introduce an alternative way of making, installing and exhibiting art, using the structure of feeling called *metamodernism* that observes how artists today abandon the

1. The canon as artworks which have been established as representative of the best examples of a particular genre in art history. The works of art included in the canon are considered masterpieces. With canonic moments I refer to the events prior to what led to the final artwork, for example how Sol LeWitt (1928 - 2007) bridged minimal and conceptual art.

modern as: “a deliberate being out of time, an intentional being out of place, and the pretense that desired atemporality and displacement are actually possible even though they are not.” Oscillating between possibilities and impossibilities, like a pendulum constantly swinging between the modern enthusiasm and postmodern irony. To take a different perspective, one could see this as an umbrella that manages to cover all three bases at once, referring and not-referring simultaneously, which vanishes the paradox created by ZERO. After we have cleared the paradox that unintentionally has been made, we can finally, after fifty-two years, take the leap into the new beginning, and use this to achieve the dual concept.

In Rene Descartes¹², *Treatise of Man, 1633*, the French philosopher states that the model of the human is made up of two fundamental elements: a non-thinking body and a thinking soul, which has the potential to exist independently from the other. This statement could be used to explain what I have coined as *dual concepts*. It goes along with the true experience of ZERO; the new beginning, the looking forward, the re-do/start over and use those white works as a platform to communicate the present and possible future. To explain Descartes' duality the non-thinking body could be interpreted as the material experience of ZERO, only talking about itself, whereas the thinking soul would be the concept that one is applying. If one were to apply the metamodern oscillation between opposite poles here, the non-thinking and the thinking will happen simultaneously and not-simultaneously all at once, allowing the work to express both its concepts as singularities, or together as a duality. How will this exist independently and together, simultaneously? When I wrote about these ideas for the first time, I referred to it as “expandable sculptures” instead of dual concept. I saw it as a way to take over and claim an entire space with the non-visible expansion from a physical object. I understood it as a giving of more attention to that certain object in space, as a sound piece could for example; if loud enough, be heard within a huge radius. I was also talking about it as using “non-spaces”, filling the little gaps, i.e. the cracks in the floor. The motivation to decide to change the term to dual concept, lies in the ‘reason’, the reason for the need I had for it to expand. As in most art processes there is the need to take it a step further, in this case I needed something more to take the step away from ZERO. The realization that it could achieve dual concept in other ways (that I will mention later), by applying questions such as *why* it would expand, and *how*, the expansion is possible.

The strategies of the metamodern are using neo-romanticism¹³, whether as a style, philosophy, or attitude, to shape the works. Romanticism, as well as the metamodern, oscillates between different poles, e.g. love/hate, life/death, irony/sincerity, so on and so forth. One of the most poignant strategies of the metamodern is what

14. Raoul Eschleman, 1956, Germany

15. The sign-frame is a paradoxical signifier generating a larger frame. When the sign is accepted by the second subject, it forms the first sign.

16. Performatism in Architecture. On framing and the Spatial Realization of Ostensivity, 2001

17. Brian O'Doherty, Ireland, 1928

18. Marcel Duchamp, Artist, 1887 – 1968, France

19. Exposition internationale du surréalisme, Galerie Beaux-Arts, Paris, 1938

the author Raoul Eschleman¹⁴ coined as *Performatism*, which can be explained as a work set up in such a way that the viewer has no choice but to opt for a single solution to the problems raised within the work. The author is imposing a solution using coercive means. The coercive frame cuts off the context that surrounds the work and forces us, the viewer, back into the work. Once we are inside, we have to identify with the object, as well as the frame that is closing off the reality around us. The ordinary sign-frame¹⁵ lays the groundwork for a larger, cultural frame that allows language-bearers to generate increasingly, complex, predicative modes of communication no longer relying on the immediate presence of a thing. He also says: it works simply through the truth of its own existence [...] It is also the place where beauty, love, belief, morality and all the other ordinary, performative situations that postmodernism dismisses as “meta-physical” were established-situations that are now being revitalized in aesthetic settings.¹⁶

Furthermore, he uses the notion of “triangulation” in relation to the spatial, interior, referential, powers it contains, wherein one angle is pointing to something particular, and on the other, two lines are extending out to infinity. I will talk about this in relation to the dual concept, as it allows artworks to simply function as arrows referring to something else than themselves completely, but still have a conceptual value beyond their functionality. In some ways I would go as far as calling it the guide to bringing the observer closer to a ‘true experience, where communication is created with oneself, and the objects on display, functioning separately, yet when placed together create a dual concept.

The referential aspect of this theory, is what can allow two pieces in an installation talking simultaneously as individual objects, also perform as a duality, together. This is a different approach, as in most installation works if one piece were to be removed and placed isolated in space it would not be able to communicate what the installation is trying to say, as conventional installations need all of their components to function conceptually.

Talking about the objects, pointing and using the frames of a space to close it off made me think of Brian O'Doherty¹⁷, *Inside the White Cube: Ideologies of the Gallery Space, 1972*, and Marcel Duchamp's¹⁸ *1,200 Bags of Coal*¹⁹. The work is an excellent example of where dual concept could be broken down into pieces and re-assembled a new. The work of Duchamp consists of coal bags hanging from the ceiling, covering most of it, and on the floor a “chimney piece” is placed. The work at that time was very controversial as he used a, what I will refer to in the coming segment as, non-space, a space that had never before been used to display an artwork, within the

12. Rene Descartes, Philosopher, Mathematician, and Scientist, 1596 – 1650, France

13. The term neo-romanticism is used to cover different movements in art, architecture, literature, and music and other artistic fields, that incorporate elements from the era of Romanticism

white cube: the ceiling. When Duchamp decided to hang his work from the ceiling, its presence became emphasized, i.e. noticed as a possible space to display one's artworks. Another reason the artwork was quite controversial was that it managed to *flip* the perspective of the room, making the chimney on the floor act as if it was a chandelier and the coal bags as the floor, as if the conventions of gravity has been reversed. It has been suggested that the coal bags themselves were a comment on the mining of coal, a big industry at that time, but have been argued that it might have been because it could have been anything, coal was just cheap and took up a large area.

To look at it from the perspective of 'dual concept', the representation of the coal bags as working as one concept, and the perspective change as another. Same as in the notion of the sound pieces, that I referred to as expandable sculptures, one of the concepts will decide *how* the perspective swaps, in this case coal bags and a chimney. But the swap and use of non-space could have been achieved by simply placing carpets on the ceiling and ceiling-lights on the floor. This would only require one concept though, or another reason to use carpets. In Hito Steyerl's²⁰ text, "*In free fall: a thought experiment on vertical perspective*", 2011, she points out that the last couple of years has seen the visual culture saturated by the 'birds-eye-view' perspective. This has been due to a forwarding in the technology of drone footage, first off in the military sphere that has now filtered through into the domestic arena. She states in her text is that the previous horizontal perspective, the one we as humans' experience with our own gaze, has been replaced with the later vertical overview that creates an abstraction of land-/cityscapes, and that we have learned to orient ourselves in it, where horizons have in fact been shattered. Let us pretend that Duchamp would visualize this change of perspective in his work *1,200 Bags of Coal*. Instead of commenting on the coal-production industry and the action to activate a non-space, the switch of perspective in his piece could still have been used. It would have almost acted as an optical illusion where one in theory could visualize the change of gravity as truth and that one was seeing it from above, and not underneath, but instead of coal bags and a lantern, other objects would have been needed for the dual concept. Where one concept will decide *how* and the other concept will decide *why* it will be executed in a certain way.

22. Originally designed as interior of German art collector named Ida Blumenthal in 1925

23. Jörg Heiser, Writer, publisher and art critic, 1968 - Germany

24. Book released in 2008, the interview took place the same year by "Art & Research - a Journal of ideas, contexts and methods

25. Bas Jan Ader, Artist, 1942 - disappeared 1975, Netherlands

*of Madame B.*²² where it is said to be a more neutral space than a white cube, as the space, similar to his paintings, would block the viewer from entering the paintings, creating a somewhat self-referential setting or, a space only referring to itself as a space. But, that would no longer be true, as it would, in contemporary art, refer to the performance, and romantic conceptualism, the German writer Jörg Heiser²³ put it beautifully in an interview, with the same title as his book: *All of a Sudden: Things that Matter In Contemporary Art*²⁴:

I realized that conceptualist art making a) doesn't have to neglect emotion to make a 'depersonalised', i.e. anti-narcissist statement and b) that that is the case because emotions themselves have a 'conceptual' side to them: they are cultural techniques of coming to terms with one's environment, whether productively or destructively. *Romantic Conceptualism* questioned the still prevalent assertion that cool depersonalization is the precondition of an art that makes itself checkable, revisable (when the actual aim is to become unassailable, not to expose any tender spots).

He follows this up with a work by Bas Jan Ader²⁵, *Broken Fall* (*Geometric!*, 1971, where Ader falls sideways onto a saw horse and into the bushes, with the Westkapelle lighthouse in the background, a frequently featured structure in early paintings by Piet Mondrian. The work refers to Mondrian's modernist rejection of the diagonal, as Mondrian abstracted from physicality, Bas Jan Ader is bringing it back, and plays with it, becoming the diagonals that Mondrian rejected. This nicely leads back to performatism and triangulation as the new aesthetic of the modern. The dual concept that can be made with the help of the 'meta' is to use the thoughts of Mondrian to create a neutral space, and apply the concept of triangulation or diagonality, to adapt the neutral space with a set of tools that can either pinpoint a specific object in the room, or expand to infinity. Where the modern creates an awareness of what it was originally thought of, how it changed in the future as a reference to Mondrian is unavoidable, and looking beyond it with re-applying thoughts of performatism and the romantic conceptualism of Bas Jan Ader, making it oscillate between irony and sincerity.



The triangulation and performatism setting Esheleman talks about, the making of a setting in the white cube that has no connotations to the outside world is something that can be questioned with the help of O'Doherty and the *non-neutral white cube*. In modernism there was more acceptance for this neutral space, however, in the post-modern manners of de-construction, one can clearly see that it is not any more neutral than any other empty space. Something I have been curious about is the Dutch artist Piet Mondrian's²¹ *Salon*

21. Piet Mondrian, Artist, 1872 - 1944, Netherlands

26. Rebecca Partridge, Artist, 1976 -, United Kingdom
27. Sinta Werner, Artist, 1977-, Germany
28. A non-arbitrary mapping between speech sounds and the visual shape of objects.

the works, or poles, having the possibility to observe one as it was intended too, or both simultaneously and not-simultaneously. This is able to be achieved through light, smell, sound, etc., but the surface of a lone painting can become restricted by the frames of the painted surface (this would also be the case of some sculptures, if they were just to be placed as objects, referring to an event/thought/relation to something happening somewhere else, as Raoul Esnelman suggests that a work of art has a lot to do with performatism, the frames of the artworks cut the observer from reality, and forces them back into the questions that were initially raised by the same artwork).

Examples of this would be the works of the British artist and writer Rebecca Partridge²⁶ and German Artist Sinta Werner²⁷. In Partridge's exhibition in Kunstverein Springhornhof, *Notations*, 2014, Partridge combines paintings with seemingly unrelated sculptures. With the *Bouba Kiki Effect*²⁸ as her underlying concept. This feeling of the works being unrelated, stems from a combination of photo-realistic paintings of trees, oceans, together with other imagery from nature, juxtaposed next to geometric, non-organic, clay sculptures, highly glazed. Every part of each sculpture was glazed the same, as monochromes, clearly making a distinction of where that sculpture ends. The separately the parts of the work have the capability of talking on their own, making references and connections with each other, however, with the notion of the Bouba Kiki effect thrown into the mix, the more precise connections decided by the maker become clear, and are ultimately the focus of the work. Sinta Werner on the other hand, in her work "*Broken Tautologies*" displays sculptures that refer to the interior architecture of the space they are shown in. Space specific works can apply the *dual concept* idea, making it work without another artwork, as it utilises the surroundings as part of the work, making every object in the space a referential counter piece. This can also link to the theory of performatism, as this pointing out, will make the observer act, or go through, the works in a manner decided by the artist, thus creating a true experience.

29. John Berger, Art Critic and Writer, 1926 – 2017, UK

In the book and television series entitled, *Ways of Seeing*, 1972, by John Berger²⁹, he analyzes the way art is observed. He uses Leonardo da Vinci's (1452-1519) Mona Lisa (1503) as an example of how the perception of an artwork can change depending on how it is viewed. By this he means whether it is to be viewed in the flesh at the Louvre, or through an online image search, or even an official postcard the surroundings from which we, the viewer, observe this image will change our perception of how an artwork will be perceived, or at least the intention of how, is, usually, in the hands of the artist, but when an artwork like the Mona Lisa becomes framed in a glass box, surrounded by a huge number of tourists photographing it every day; as a tourist attraction, the intentions of the artist become a whisper. In this sense it could be argued that even a postcard is as true of an experience as seeing the painting itself. I believe that in conten-

porary art, the observations of Berger are still very much relevant, however, the notions of this are being used as tools, rather than hinders, or distractions of how it was intended by the artist to be observed. A lot of artists make works that look great in reproduction. They are able to have full control with the 'ideal' angle and perfect lighting. An observation I have made is that it seems that most young artists first encounter with contemporary art have been through reproduction. It is only then that people decide, myself included, to go to openings or visit exhibitions. It is only after experiencing the works through images first, that one decides to see the work in the real. I believe this is very limiting as one would only go to exhibitions based on what they already like, and ignore the questions: *why doesn't it like this? What is this about?* The trust of someone else's words stands higher than your own experience of the work. Why I believe the true experience of ZERO is to be reconsidered is because of this, as we cannot (yet) experience it solely through documentation and text, one has to physically be there to feel it, or as a single caption of the space cannot possibly capture all the reference points.

Whilst visiting and reading about exhibitions and works of art that have been considered metamodern, I have made an observation about the topics and strategies that are often used. A lot of these artists are struggling with the current loop in art; that *everything contemporary has already been made before*. What the metamodern allows artists to do is to refer back to previous works of art, movements, concepts, styles, allowing them to play with the canonic foundations without being in competition with the past. To re-appropriate alone without adding or amending anything can already change perceptions as the work has then been removed from its original context and into a new one. A lot of the works are dealing with topics that have for a long time been discussed, whether they have reached an answer or are still in debate about, for example what beauty is, colonialism, environment, surveillance, and many more. What the dual concept and metamodern can do together, is to break down these topics into smaller ones, making small parts of an installation work on their own, but that together will talk about past, present and possible future while being combined.

To make an example of this *use of long term topics*, I would like to take a closer look at surveillance, and break it down. The topic has through time changed so much due to the rapid advancements in technology, which have abstracted the topic to a degree that makes it hard, close to impossible, to talk about.

Ἰωάννης – Io and Argus Panoptes

One of the first introductions of surveillance comes from the Greek myth Io, Hermes, and the one-hundred eyed guardian,

Argus Panoptes (the all-seeing).

Io was a young beautiful girl that Zeus felt attracted to and wanted to seduce. Zeus's wife, Hera, became aware of this, became angry at Zeus and wanted to prevent him from seeing her. To do so, Hera transformed Io into a white heifer, and cursed her to always have bees sting her. Some variations of the myth suggest that Zeus then transformed into a bull to have sex with Io, and that was why Hera asked Argus Panoptes to watch over Io at all times, as when some of his hundred eyes were sleeping the other remained open. To set Io free, Zeus asked Hermes, the piper, to kill Panoptes, and to do so Hermes played the most beautiful lullaby, making all of Panoptes eyes fall asleep at once, and when they did, Hermes stabbed him with a spear in the chest. That became the end of Argus Panoptes. To honour him, Hera placed all of his eyes on the feathers of a male peacock, as a memory of his service to her. The peacock has later been used as a representation of God: the all-seeing metaphysical observer.

~~Between~~ – The Panopticon Prison Model

30. Jeremy Bentham, Philosopher, jurist and social reformer, England, 1748 - 1832

31. The Panopticon design ensured that no prisoner could ever know when being surveilled, this mental uncertainty proved to be a crucial instrument of discipline.

The name Panoptes has later been used to name an architectural structure that will use the ~~between~~ post-modernism, which is the *Panopticon prison model*, designed by Jeremy Bentham³⁰ in the end of the 1700s. The structure of this prison would allow it to be guarded by a minimum amount of guards, sometimes even zero. The prison was designed in a cylindrical shape, with a watchtower at its centre. The windows of the watchtower would be made so that one could look out of it, but not in. This would make the prisoners believe that they were being observed at all times. The realisation of this structure was never completely build, as the cctv-camera was developed, and did not require an entire architectural structure to achieve it. But the Panopticon, and its intention, became what is called the panopticon effect³¹, and is being used a lot in cities, even up to date, as most cameras are just visual replicas without any mechanisms inside, and placed so that they are really visible to the public, and sometimes even backed up with a sign saying that a specific area is being surveilled, sometimes they only use the sign without any camera, but the cameras does not need to work, because just having it visible, people will act as if the camera is real. The fake cameras have the same function as real ones, until something actually happens.

~~Beyond~~ – Argus-IS and Friends

The last, the ~~beyond~~ post-modernism in this case, will of course be the speculations of what might happen, but will originate from a drone also named from Argus Panoptes, the *Argus-IS*. The most advanced of the drones currently existing, with a camera system

32. The reasons of Rome's downfall are many, but one of them is the spread of Christianity, the rise of a new faith helped contribute to the empire's fall, Christianity displaced the polytheistic Roman religion, which viewed the emperor as having divine status.

33. Carl Andre, Artist, 1935 -, America

that uses hundreds if recycled mobile phone cameras that can auto track every moving object within a thirty six square mile area (if the moving object is larger than 15 centimeters). The Argus-IS drone can stay airborne for a month without landing, and can mark out vehicles, pedestrians, or even groups of pedestrians that can then in turn be identified individually. If one were to zoom in, the overview of the image would still be recorded, and can be re-used to later track single objects or persons.

This is where it links back to ancient Greek and Roman times, as it becomes the return of a metaphysical observer. The end of the longest peace in history is the Roman Empire, and the downfall of peace was the rise of God.³² But in current times, where the rulers are also in charge of the metaphysical observer, which also have the possibility to demonstrate its destructive powers, or survey our every step, it raises questions of how it will be used, or if it is already too late to prevent it from happening.

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As mentioned before I have noticed this re-use or re-appropriation of works within the canon of art through metamodern observations, by taking one of the works that has been important for the history of art and remake it in a contemporary art setting. For example, the sculptures of the american artist Carl Andre³³, sculptures as objects and nothing else. His reasoning for working with and on the floor stems from childhood; life starts on the floor, then we learn to stand, and hopefully walk. The objects are placed on the floor to also emphasize the space above them, which is why one is allowed to walk on the work. How could one use the thoughts of Andre in his art in the same way, but add another concept to it? To do so, the similarities with the original work have to be close enough to the original to really point at the reference, for example squares in red, yellow, and blue on a canvas would right away bring us to the works of Mondrian. In order to analyse Andre's work further, I will again refer to Hito Steyerl's text, as the space on top of Andre's sculptures creates a hypothetical vertical space from floor to ceiling, talking about the vertical in relation to what Andre said about the floor as a starting point, and later rise up. That could already now be a reading of the work for now, but could be changed by simply using a material we rarely, or barely see from above, for example rooftop panels, airplanes, the top of light posts (in general things that are above us out of our regular point of view). Another option is to use prints or engravings on top of the flat surfaces, to pull connections to the surface of the sculpture, almost canvas like, as the sides that stretches around the frame is rarely considered to be a part of the painting itself, but for a sculpture, as it deals with three-dimensionality rather than two-dimensions, the sides of the work would still be sculptural. This idea would be able to keep the intentions of Carl

Andre, whilst still adding a layer of information on top. To re-use another artist's work or idea can only happen by removing elements things that might communicate something else, with the addition of elements that would strengthen what the artist wants the work to communicate to the public.

34. Sven-Olov Wallenstein, Philosopher and Writer, 1960-, Sweden

35. Joseph Kosuth, Artist and Writer, 1945, America

The philosopher and writer Sven-Olov Wallenstein³⁴ wrote in his book, *Konceptkonst* (Swedish for Conceptual Art) about curating being seen as an art form. To use ready-mades in art, or *finished objects*, was key for this. For example, Duchamp's Fountain or American artist Joseph Kosuth's³⁵ *One and Three Chairs*, 1965, are both using ready-mades to make a comment on art, as a curator the same strategies could be used, as the work of Kosuth and Duchamp are now *finished objects*, so a curator could re-appropriate their works to change their meaning through combining them with other objects in a room. This would make the exhibition into an *installation-like* setting. In certain way the artworks are being claimed as part of the curators installation rather than separate artworks in the same exhibition. A similar mindset has to be adapted into art making, as this would allow the dual concept to occur. The original intention of the work will be one concept, and the re-appropriated one the other. However, the original would be the key to unlock the new one (together with other pieces in the room that will have the same purpose as the others, to work as parts of a combined meaning).

36. Daniel Buren, Artist and Writer, 1938, France

In artist Daniel Buren's³⁶ text *La fonction de l'atelier*, 1979, (The function of the workshop) he posed the question: what if the word *installation* actually got replaced by the word *exhibition*? I found this very interesting in relation to what Wallenstein said about conceptual curating and what I am saying about dual concept, as this works as another opportunity to re-appropriate or use existing works of art. During the period of writing this text I have had two exhibitions where I was able to try this alternative way of making and reading artworks. I realised that curating definitely played a big role, as it allowed for works to function as an installation to achieve the dual concept. A work could manage to talk about the past, present, and future simultaneously, but in an exhibition format, do not they necessarily have to do so. Instead of an installation, where the components might not have much to say on their own, but the context or relation to the other components will ultimately create the installation. The difference with sculptures is that they can communicate as single objects, as seen in Partridge's work, and in the context of an exhibition they are less dependent, or not at all, to the works surrounding them. If one would try to create the dual concept, without changing the existing artworks, a new way of approaching the show will have to be communicated. As Kosuth wrote in his text *Art after Philosophy*, 1969, art can be seen as art just because it looks like art, i.e a work

37. Sol Lewitt, Paragraphs on Conceptual Art, Artforum, 1967

38. Jackson Pollock, Artist, 1912-1956, America

from the past that has been accepted as art. After the fountain by Duchamp it became clear that everything possibly could be an artwork, but to be able to look at it as art, you have to accept it as art. Quite often in contemporary art, information about the work, concept, or even the artist himself must be read before the work can be fully understood, as it is no longer the aesthetics that are the driving force. Joseph Kosuth said that the first conceptual artwork was the fountain by Marcel Duchamp, and that everything since then has been conceptual work. But for this to be true, people must have been aware of it, and of course there is always a concept behind the works, as America artist Sol LeWitt said:

In conceptual art, the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work. When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes a machine that makes the art.³⁷

Which contradicts the notion from Marcel Duchamp to the present, as for example the abstract expressionists worked a lot with the subconscious as the decision maker. The idea that creates art is there, for example in Jackson Pollock's³⁸ action paintings, and it does make it work as a machine to create an artwork, but in the case of abstract expressionism I believe that the feeling it produces in the viewer is more important than the reason or making of the work itself. But what I want to stress in the exhibiting of works to create dual concept is that it would be possible to apply a concept to it now, in relation to other works of art. As the original ideas of Pollock will remain, another one could be added on top of it, making his paintings talk by themselves, and in regular exhibitions continue to do so, but if one were to curate a dual concept show it would no longer be the case. By using his works, and what it meant for the canon of art history, is an example of where one could use a works art historical value, with its ancestors and artworks to be made, applying the metamodern of *with, between, and beyond*, to break it down and visualize it as a mind map.

39. Rosalind Krauss, Art Critic and Art Theorist, 1941, America

40. Agnes Martin, Artist, 1912-2004, America

The art theorist and critic Rosalind Krauss³⁹ wrote in her essay *Grids*, 1979, about the critical step of modern art by using a grid, she wrote about its first appearance in pre-war cubist painting, about a structure within visual arts that announces modern art's will to silence, its hostility to literature, to narrative, and to discourse. The use of the grid has evolved over the course of the century, as seen in the paintings of Agnes Martin⁴⁰ and her final break from representational painting, as it also serves as the most basic form of drawing. Agnes Martin herself claims to be an abstract expressionist painter, but critics have argued against that saying that she is a minimalist, or at least a foreshadowing of minimalism. One artist in particular

was Sol LeWitt, who adopted the grid as an underlying element of his artworks, which bridged minimalism and conceptual art.

By using separate objects, while trying to link them, also in relation to what Eshelman referred to in his explanation of performatism, the grid can be used as: "[...] everything that separates the work of art from the world, from ambient space and from other objects."

By using the grid on the exhibition space itself, as a mathematically divided space, or as for example the Salon of Madame B., the works placed within the grid would be joint in as a single installation, or even work. If the separate works manages to get linked together through the grid, they would still keep their original intentions and readings, but seen as one unit, they would act as tautologies of the same topic, but different epochs, as the metamodern suggests *with, between, with, between, and beyond*.

Conclusion

The ZERO movement and their ideas on the 'new beginning' felt like a natural starting point for this essay. They stripped the connections to the past completely, thinking only about the present and future, and the material as material played a huge role in realising this, on both an aesthetic and conceptual level. Even though it has never been officially documented that someone took a leap from their 'new beginning' to create art, connections between ZERO and minimal art clearly have connections, as ZERO is art about the materiality and minimalism is art about art, sculpture as sculpture, painting as painting etc. By having these two as the *with and between, with, between, with, between* made this thesis possible, as the *beyond* is completely up to me to speculate on. The beyond became the adding of another concept, not in a hierarchical sense, but as something that could play along with the existing concept. Two separate concepts, talking individually but as a duality talks about something else. To enter this, a distinguish of *conceptual art* and *concept* had to be made clear.

The title of the thesis indicates, as the metaphor to explain the metamodern, and I have entered the role of the donkey, chasing what might forever stay out of my reach, like the eternal punishment from the Greek myth about Tantalus, being forced to stand in a pool of water beneath a fruit tree with low branches, with the fruit always eluding his grasp, and the water always receding before he could take a drink. This topic has not just been existing on a theoretical level it has also been feeding my artistic practice. My studio work has been growing alongside the thesis, shaping each other. When a question is raised in the thesis, it is sometimes easier to find it out, or explore it, through my practice and vice versa; through reading and writing texts. This moving in and out of different media has come to dominate my approach and methodology. Everything I have been doing has been to explore this topic; the arranging and

curating exhibitions, making work in response to the theories and texts read (that I have mentioned here in the text) and finally being reshaped by myself based on my own findings through the exploration of this field of interest.

The mind-map construction, or break down of broad, on-going topics have shown to be one of the most fruitful ways to deal with those topics, and to activate the dual concept, using artworks in relation to each other to function individually but also by having a theoretical, or hypothetical, relation to each other, through the use of words and texts making the works function as arrows pointing out their own reference points, as seen in the observations by Raoul Eshelman and his triangulation in performatism. Using materials as a non-thinking body with a concept as a thinking soul, in relation to art making and having conceptual value on the materials used and the concept itself, with the metamodern oscillation between opposite poles, making the thinking and non-thinking happen simultaneously and not-simultaneously at the same time, with a neo-romantic mind-set to shape the works together with the engine of conceptual art to create in a factory-like manner and re-visit Utopia. To use seemingly non-relatable objects, connected by a description, as in Partridge's work, and the relation to what Kosuth say about knowledge of the artworks before seeing them, and how a space can work as a reference point or opposition work in relation to an artwork, as in Werner's work. Or by using a contemporary research, like the one by Hito Steyerl, and finding ways to use it in works from the past, giving them a new light in the contemporary arts, making the work about something else than originally intended by the artist. However, not ignoring, or removing, the original intentions of the maker. A sort of revival of true experience in art, and the impossibilities of documenting it as it cannot yet be documented, at least not with imagery only, which again goes back to Kosuth's thoughts on knowing about the works or artists beforehand, and that one has to accept the art as legitimate to even be able to analyse them as such.

Throughout the duration of writing this thesis, I have been moving from making works in the studio to showing them in an exhibition setting, exploring the roles of curator as well as artist, adapting word installations of the exhibitions to open up possibilities to achieve the dual concept, allowing a different, or alternative, viewpoint on art. Trying to break the current loop in the art world. As an artist, showing my works in the public domain, connections, references or even similarities are bound to crop up as art today is somehow stuck in the thoughts of the past, in a hopelessness of everything has already been made. The rise of internet art was for a while the new hope, as an alternative platform, coding as brushes and internet as a canvas, but even through this new material to work

with, or new aesthetics, the relations to the past where still present. Van Akker and Vermulens structure of feeling is observing this hopelessness in newer generations of artists, but also unlocks a set of keys, or tools, to make art take a step, not necessarily forward, but a step. Keeping the ^{with}with in mind, applying the ^{between}between to make the **beyond**.

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Designed by Claes Storm
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Special thanks to Hamma Steembergen
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The Metamodern Donkey's Endless Chase