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**Creed, the criticisms and institutional context**

A content analysis of critiques on Martin Creed's *Work No. 227: The lights going on and off*

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KOVK03, 15 ECTS. B.A course, autumn semester 2018

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## **Abstract**

### **Creed, the criticisms and institutional context**

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In December 2001, Martin Creed received the Turner Prize for his artwork *Work No. 227: The lights going on and off* (2000). A minimalist light installation, simplistic in its effectuation, yet complicated enough to hold questions about what art is and what role the institution plays in valuing and validating art. The purpose of this thesis is to conduct an investigation of critiques in newspaper articles, art journal articles and from websites of major art galleries on Martin Creed's *Work No. 227: The lights going on and off*. This will be done through a context analysis of critiques on Creed's *Work No. 227: The Lights Going On And Off* published in newspapers during the days following the Turner prize announcement and critiques published in art journals and on gallery websites until written day. The results of the content analysis suggest that the newspaper articles were considerably more negative in their validations of *Work No. 227*. This could especially be seen in the article titles, how they chose to reference to other artists and their lesser appreciation of the phenomena of presenting an empty space. The content analysis will lay ground for a discussion on the relationship between *Work No. 227* and the gallery space as well as its institutional context.

Key words: Martin Creed, Turner Prize 2001, *Work No. 227: The Lights Going On And Off*, installation art, institutional art theory

# List of Contents

<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1 Background	4
1.2 Purpose of study	5
1.3 Theories and methods	5
1.3.1 Methods	5
1.3.2 Theories	6
1.4 Earlier research and relevance of subject	6
1.5 Subject delimitations and material	6
1.6 Definitions	8
1.7 Thesis structure	8
<b>2 Work No. 227: The Lights Going On And Off</b>	<b>9</b>
2.1 Analysing Work No. 227: The lights going on and off through documentation	11
2.2 The white cube phenomena	12
2.3 Institutional art theory	13
2.4 Literature summary and comparisons	15
<b>3 Content analysis</b>	<b>16</b>
3.1 Material and relevance	16
3.2 References in article titles	17
3.3 References to the artwork and artist's practice	19
3.4 References to the event	21
3.5 References to other artists and allegories	22
3.6 References to the gallery space	24
3.7 Other observations	26
3.8 Conclusions and results of content analysis	27
<b>4 Analysis and conclusion</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>6 References</b>	<b>31</b>
6.1 Printed references	31
6.2 Internet sources	31
6.3 List of figures	32
<b>7 Appendix A</b>	<b>33</b>

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

In 2001, Martin Creed received the Turner Prize for his *Work no 227: The Lights Going On And Off* (2000).<sup>1</sup> The artwork consists of an electrical timer installed to already fitted gallery lights, making the lights go on and off in five-second intervals.<sup>2</sup> The day following the 2001 Turner Prize-winner announcement, Creed's installation got eggs thrown at it by fellow artist Jacqueline Crofton. Crofton, who is since barred from the Tate galleries, explained her actions by saying how she has nothing against Creed, just that she does "not think his work should be considered as art".<sup>3</sup>

The Turner Prize is one of the most prestigious art prizes in Britain and a debated annual art event, both in art journals and commercial newspapers. Martin Creed and *Work No. 227* faced numerous critiques in the days that followed the 2001 announcement and got another round of publicity after being purchased in 2013. The artwork was by estimation valued at £110 000, and bought by Tate Britain, which already owned the space and light bulbs which were used to create the artwork.<sup>4</sup> *Work No. 227* holds a special relationship with the gallery space in which it is installed. Since the work solely consists of an electrical timer that modifies an already existing light source, the room in which it is viewed becomes part of the artwork. At Tate Britain and MoMA New York, the artwork was displayed in spaces that had the architectural qualities of the white cube. Therefore, the impact of the white cube is relevant when regarding *Work No. 227*. Martin Creed is a well-known artist in Britain and around he world, continually playing with the rules of art making and the notion of what art is, or can be. He is known for artworks *Work No. 79: Some Blu-Tack kneaded, rolled into a ball, and depressed against a wall* (1993) and *Work No. 88: A sheet of A4 paper crumpled into a ball* (1995).

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<sup>1</sup> *Work No. 227: The lights going on and off* will from now on be shortened to *Work No. 227*

<sup>2</sup> H. Delaney, 'Work No. 227: The lights going on and off', *Tate Britain* [website], 2010, <<https://www.tate.org.uk> > accessed 10 Dec. 2018.

<sup>3</sup> M. Mcglown, 'Protester eggs Turner light show', *Evening Standard*, 12 Dec. 2001, <<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/protester-eggs-turner-light-show-6335112.html>>, accessed 3. Jan 2019.

<sup>4</sup> N. Clark, 'Tate acquires Martin Creed's controversial Turner Prize-winning piece Work No 227', *The Independent*, 2 Sep. 2013, <<https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/tate-acquires-martin-creeds-controversial-turner-prize-winning-piece-work-no-227-8795204.html>>, accessed 3 Jan. 2019.

## **1.2 Purpose of study**

The purpose of this thesis is to conduct an investigation of critiques in newspaper articles, art journal articles and from websites of major art galleries on Martin Creed's *Work No. 227: The lights going on and off*. The institution will play a central role in this thesis. Both the architectural involvement of the gallery space and the institutional context will be analysed. Hence, this study will be conducted with the purpose of finding an answer to the following thesis question: In what ways are *Work No 227: The Lights Going On And Off* presented and criticised in British newspapers, art journals and on gallery websites? Which words or phrases are reoccurring and how do these act as valuation of the work? The sub-question to this thesis is: Can the ideas about the institution collected from institutional art theory be applied to the results of the content analysis?

## **1.3 Theories and methods**

### **1.3.1 Methods**

This thesis will be divided into three sections where the first part of the essay will conduct research on installation art, how to write about performances through documentation, on the white cube phenomena and on institutional critique. This is partly done in order to function as a knowledge base where the conditions and perspectives from where this thesis is written are established. This literature research will also present the actuality and authenticity of the research that will follow. The second part of the thesis will be a formal analysis of *Work No. 227*. This is done in order to analyse the artwork and to set *Work No. 227* in relation to earlier works by Creed. The third part of the research will be a content analysis, conducted through the methods provided by Gillian Rose in chapter 3, Content analysis and chapter 6, Discourse analysis I in *Visual Methodologies* (2016)<sup>5</sup>. Here, the content is based on intertextuality, focusing on reoccurring words and phrases in the articles, but also on the value these phrases bear and suggest.

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<sup>5</sup> G., Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, 4<sup>th</sup> edn, SAGE Publications Ltd, California, 2016.

### 1.3.2 Theories

The theories that will be used in this thesis will be institutional art theory, derived from Arthur Danto's 'The Artworld' from 1964<sup>6</sup>, George Dickie's 'Defining Art' from 1969<sup>7</sup> and 'What is art? An institutional analysis' from 1974<sup>8</sup>. Both articles written by Dickie somewhat work as responses to Danto's 'The Artworld'. Partly, since they are written within the decade following Danto's 'The Artworld' and partly since they are derived from Danto's ideas about institutional art theory. Brian O'Doherty's theories on the white cube phenomena from chapter I. 'Notes on the Gallery Space' in *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*<sup>9</sup> will also be used.

### 1.4 Earlier research and relevance of subject

Martin Creed, being a Turner Prize-winner and a relatively famous artist around the UK, is quite frequently written about and appears in books such as *Contemporary Art in the United Kingdom* (2014)<sup>10</sup> and *Martin Creed: What's the Point of It?* (2014)<sup>11</sup>. Biographical texts and exhibition catalogues will not be regarded, as this thesis only will focus on *Work No. 227*, and the selected articles. In 2007, Bente Larsen published the article, 'On – Off – On – Off. A Discussion of Martin Creed's Work, The Lights Going On and Off' but the article is inaccessible.<sup>12</sup>

### 1.5 Subject delimitations and material

The restrictions of this thesis will be to the case study of *Work No. 227*. Earlier works of Martin Creed has resemblance to *Work No. 227* but the only artwork that will be researched is *Work No. 227* (2000), displayed at Tate Britain and MoMA New York. The installation will only be regarded through photography and video documentation from Tate Britain and MoMA New York. Hence, the work will only be assessed in the format of a gallery space with the architectural elements of the white cube.

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<sup>6</sup> A. Danto, 'The Artworld', *The Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 61, no. 19, 1964, pp. 571-584.

<sup>7</sup> G. Dickie, 'Defining art', *American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 6, no. 3, 1969, pp. 253-256.

<sup>8</sup> G. Dickie, 'What is art? An Institutional Analysis', in P. Alperson ed., *The Philosophy of the Visual Arts*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1992, pp. 434-444.

<sup>9</sup> B. O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, The Lapis Press, San Francisco, 1986.

<sup>10</sup> P. Adler & J. Slyce, *Contemporary Art in the United Kingdom - Artworld 5*, Blackdog Press, London, 2014.

<sup>11</sup> R. Rugoff, P. Morley & B. Bailey, *Martin Creed: What's the Point of it?*, Hayward Gallery Publishing, London, 2014.

<sup>12</sup> Through email correspondence with Larsen I have learnt that the article has not been published online and that Larsen herself has not saved a hard copy of it either.

Ideas from Amelia Jones' "'Presence" in absentia, Experiencing Performances as Documentation' (1997)<sup>13</sup> and Claire Bishop's *Installation Art: A critical History* (2005)<sup>14</sup> will be used as a foundation in conducting a case study through documentation. Chapter I. 'Notes on the Gallery Space' in Brian O'Doherty's *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (1986)<sup>15</sup> will be used to understand the architectural phenomena of the white cube. Critiques on *Work No. 227* will be researched through a content analysis. This method will assist in understanding how the artwork has been discussed in media and in more established art contexts. The critiques on *Work No. 227* will be restricted to only a handful of newspapers, where all of the articles have been published between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> of December 2001. This is because of their actuality in regards to the announcement of the 2001 Turner Prize-winner, their accessibility and relevance. This is also done with the idea that these articles are written independently of each other. The critiques from art gallery websites and art journals will have a larger range on their publication dates, arguing that they are not as dependant on actuality, neither are they published to sell headlines.<sup>16</sup>

Among these articles, two have been written by Adrian Searle, art critic of *The Guardian*. The first article, published on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December 2001, 'A work that did not need to be made' is a one-page comment to the announcement of the Turner Prize-winner. The article published on the following day, 'Easy does it', is a longer article that entails more personal reflections from Searle. Although both are written by the same writer, they highlight different aspects and have therefore been used. *Prospect* and *New Statesman* are periodicals focusing on topics such as politics and culture. Articles retrieved from here will still go under the range of art journals, as they are written quite differently from the newspaper articles. Two articles have been retrieved from the

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<sup>13</sup> A. Jones "'Presence" in absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation', *Art Journal*, Vol. 56, No. 4, 1997.

<sup>14</sup> C. Bishop, *Installation Art: A Critical History*, Tate, London, 2010.

<sup>15</sup> O'Doherty, loc. cit.

<sup>16</sup> The newspaper articles that will be used are: 'Blink and you'll miss it' by Louise Jury and 'The tailor who created the emperor's new clothes' by Charlotte Mullins for *The Independent*. 'Easy does it' and 'A work that did not need to be made' by Adrian Searle for *The Guardian*. 'Turner Prize won by man who turns lights off' by Nigel Reynolds for *The Telegraph*. The art journal articles that will be used are: 'Work No. 227: The lights going on and off', written by Helen Delaney, May 2010 for Tate Britain's website. 'Martin Creed Work No: 227: The Lights Going On And Off', the gallery label from MoMA New York's exhibition *Out of Time: A Contemporary View*, August 30, 2006–April 9, 2007, writer unknown. 'Tate that', Ned Denny for *New Statesman*, Vol. 31, Issue 4565, 2001 and 'Turner Prize 2001: Tate Britain', Anne Colin, *Art Press* no 277 75-6, 2002. Hephzibah Anderson, 'Genius or joke? What's the point of the artist Martin Creed', published in *Prospect* March 2014.

websites of Tate Britain and MoMA New York but will in this essay go under the category of 'art journal articles'.

## **1.6 Definitions**

*Art journal articles:* This phrase will be used further on as a collective phrase for the articles retrieved from *Prospect*, *New Statesman* and *Art Press* as well as from the websites of MoMA New York and Tate Britain. This is simply due to limited space and simplicity for the reader.

*Installation art:* Three-dimensional works that are created to change the perception of a space.

*Newspaper articles:* The articles that have been retrieved from *The Independent*, *The Telegraph* and *The Guardian* will in the future be referenced to as 'newspaper articles'. This is simply due to limited space and simplicity for the reader.

*Performance:* Artistic actions presented in front of an audience.

*The White Cube:* An architectural phenomenon that often is seen in modern museums and art galleries around the world. Elements include white painted walls, hardwood floors and limited access to natural lights. The term is derived from its resemblance of a white cube.

## **1.7 Thesis structure**

In chapter two, this thesis will begin with a formal analysis on Martin Creed's *Work No. 227: The Lights Going On And Off*. Continuingly, research from Amelia Jones, Claire Bishop and Brian O'Doherty on analysing performance and installation art through documentation and the white cube phenomena. George Dickie's and Arthur Danto's theories on institutional art critique will be used to understand *Work No. 227* in its relations to the institution. In chapter three, a content analysis will be conducted through critiques retrieved from *The Independent*, *The Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, *Prospect*, *Art Press*, *New Statesman* and the websites of MoMA New York and Tate Britain. This will be followed by an analysis in chapter four, where the thesis will take the results from the content analysis into consideration in regards to the institutional context around *Work No. 227*.



## 2 Work No. 227: The Lights Going On And Off

Martin Creed is an English born artist, brought up in Scotland. He is known for his minimalist artworks saying how he is an “artist who doesn’t make art.”<sup>17</sup> Since the early 90s, Creed has given his artworks numbers that in some cases are followed by an explanatory title. He began with number 3 and has in written time reached above number 2000, having skipped some numbers intentionally.<sup>18</sup>

*Work No. 227* is a one-medium light installation consisting of an electrical timer that switches the light on and off consequently in five-second intervals. The timer is placed onto fitted gallery lights within an existing gallery space where nothing has been placed, nor been removed. The installation is placed within a gallery space that has the architectural qualities of the white cube. The space has painted white walls, concrete floors and the only light source are the ceiling lamps.<sup>19</sup> What *Work No. 227* here does, is to take advantage of the

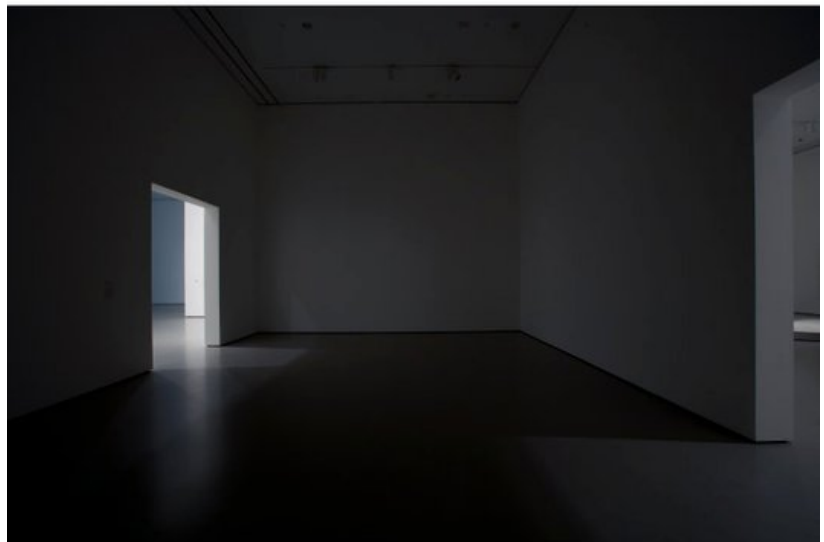


Figure 1: Martin Creed, *Work No. 227: The lights going on and off*, 2000, MoMA, New York, 2000.

constructed room and modifies the space by simply adding a timer, creating an installation that consists only of what was already inside the room. Although only modifying the lights, the feeling and understanding of the space changes drastically as the eye vigorously seeks for materials, only to find the empty space. Here, the focus gets drawn to the empty walls, floors and ceilings, and Creed creates an installation that’s

<sup>17</sup> A. Colin, ‘Turner Prize 2001: Tate Britain’, tr. C. Penwarden, *Art Press*, no. 277, 2002, p. 75.

<sup>18</sup> H. Anderson, ‘Genius or joke?’, *Prospect*, Mar2014, no. 216, pp. 50-54.

<sup>19</sup> O’Doherty, op. cit., p.15.

filling the entire room although nothing has been added to the existing space. *Work No. 227* bears similarities to other works of Martin Creed and lights switching on and off is a reoccurring theme in Creed's practice. Examples are *Work No. 127: The lights going on and off* (1995) where the light went on and off in 30 second intervals and *Work No. 254: The lights in a building going on and off* (2000) where the lights at Camden Arts Centre in London went on and off in one-second intervals.



Figure 2: Martin Creed, *Work No. 127: The lights going on and off*, 1995, location unknown.



Figure 3: Martin Creed, *Work No. 254: The lights in a building going on and off*, 2000, Camden Arts Centre, London, 2000.

*Work No. 127* is in particular similar to *Work No. 227* but this thesis will argue that they are individual pieces of art. For once, since the artworks bear different titles, the artist

claims that the works differ from each other. Secondly, the dimensions and placement are different from each other, emphasising on the importance of the space in which the artwork has been installed. The experience inside a white cube within a major institution compared to the experience as can be imagined from Figure 2 would also differ considerably. No doubt, *Work No. 227* is inspired from *Work No. 127* but should be regarded separately and independently from earlier works of Martin Creed.

## **2.1 Analysing *Work No. 227: The lights going on and off* through documentation**

Amelia Jones writes in “‘Presence’ in absentia’ about analysing performances through documentation. Jones, born in the beginning of the 1960s, claims she was too young to experience many of the most notable and radical body art performances.<sup>20</sup> Although focusing on performances, Jones’ article can be applicable on other types of works studied through documentation. She suggests the viewer may seem to have some advantages in having experienced the performance first hand but raise the question of difficulties in comprehending the narrative in the moment. These difficulties might be easier to grip when regarding the performance in retrospect after the performance has etched itself into the viewer’s memory.<sup>21</sup> Primal feelings such as fright, excitement or discomfort may affect the initial understandings of the performance and the viewer may not be able to disregard these until they have been processed. Performances, according to Jones, rely on documentation for acknowledging it ever having happened as well as achieving status amongst other art forms. The documentation may simply seem as a supplement to the actual performance but becomes in itself a work of art representing an action that has occurred. The photograph, like an active viewer, captures one point of view of the performance and can be credited equally to the viewer, the difference being that the photograph can be closely studied whereas the human mind cannot.<sup>22</sup>

In the case of Creed’s *Work No. 227*, the simplicity of the installation may cause confusion with the viewer in the initial approach. Because of the lack of raw material, the search for artefacts and the attempt to understand the work may interfere with appreciating the minimalist installation for what it is. Equally to performances, *Work No. 227* is dependant on existing through documentation. Since the artwork is no longer on

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<sup>20</sup> Jones, op. cit., p.11.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, p.14.

display at Tate Britain, documentation of the work is crucial for proving the event ever having happened.

In *Installation Art: A Critical History*, Claire Bishop aims to straighten out the term 'installation art'.<sup>23</sup> What installations aim to achieve is to highlight the viewer's awareness and experience. As installation art forces the viewer to physically enter the space, the work demands a more active role from the viewer, whether he or she is comfortable with this or not. An installation should always be seen as a whole entity, joining the materials, venue and artefacts as one.<sup>24</sup> The presence in the space gives little freedom to the viewer in being parted from the installation and Bishop raise the question of what sort of participation the installation suggests, or demands. Is it possible to just be a viewer of the work or does he or she inevitably become part of the installation? Emphasising on the active presence whilst experiencing installation art, Bishop brings up the difficulties of writing about installation art, especially the ones you have not experienced first-handed.<sup>25</sup> Bishop states, "Visualisation of a work as a three-dimensional space is difficult via a two-dimensional image, and the need to be physically *inside* an installation renders photographic documentation even less satisfactory than when it is used to reproduce painting and sculpture."<sup>26</sup> Even though Bishop makes this statement, she continues to analyse installations she has both seen first-handed and works she has only experienced through documentation.

Activeness and awareness of the viewer is central in Creed's *Work No. 227* and as Bishop states, this is the aim of installation art. Bishop also states that installation art can present actual elements instead of represent them and therefore heightens the sense of reality. Using already fitted gallery lights, Creed not only presents elements but takes advantage of already existing ones in the gallery space. Hence, not presenting or re-enacting reality but *is* reality.

## 2.2 The white cube phenomena

Brian O'Doherty coined the expression the white cube in his three part essay *Inside the white cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, published 1976 in *Artforum*. Here, O'Doherty deals with different aspects of the notion of the white cube. In Chapter I. 'Notes on the Gallery Space', O'Doherty acknowledges how since modernism, once we

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<sup>23</sup> Bishop, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*

enter a room which displays modern art, we see the space before we see the objects.<sup>27</sup> The white, clean and artificial space that goes hand in hand with modern art is difficult to disregard in both the discourse and experience. What this space contributes with is the subtraction of everything that could not be considered being art. The architectural features of the room produce a unique place where art and aesthetical work is expected to be viewed and judged.<sup>28</sup> “So powerful are the perceptual fields of force within this chamber that, once outside it, art can lapse into secular status. Conversely, things become art in a space where powerful ideas about art focus on them.”<sup>29</sup> As O’Doherty here states, the impact of the white cube is so powerful that whatever is placed within it becomes art. Not because of the artistic qualities, but because of its context within the institution. The outside world is sealed off from the space and nothing within it reminds of natural elements. The walls are painted white and the windows are sealed off. The only source of light is usually either from overhead lamps or roof windows. Everything about the space is meant not to distract the eye, so that the artworks can be free.<sup>30</sup> A central part in the white cube is inevitably the wall, which according to O’Doherty has become an aesthetic force, modifying anything hanged on it.<sup>31</sup> O’Doherty brings up the example of William Anasti, who in 1965 took photographs of the gallery walls at Dwan in New York. The photographs were silkscreened onto canvases that were slightly smaller than the actual walls. The exhibition consisted of just that, photographs of walls, mounted on top of those very walls.<sup>32</sup> Not only would the photographs be related to those very walls at Dwan, but the walls would since bear a different status than previously, being levelled to the same status as other works of art presented on the same walls.

### **2.3 Institutional art theory**

In ‘What is art?’, Dickie refers to Danto’s ‘The Artworld’ in explaining the term of the institution. Here, he brings up the example of the theatre:

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<sup>27</sup> O’Doherty, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, p.34.

The roles of the actors and the audience are defined by the traditions of the theater. What the author, management and players present is art, and it is art because it is presented within the theater-world framework. Plays are written to have a place in the theater system and they exist as plays, that is as art, within that system.<sup>33</sup>

Like the theatre, the artworld consists of a system where objects presented within an art constellation become art. Not because of their aesthetics and not because of whom it was created by but because it exists and is placed within the system of the institution. Dickie continually states that even though the theatre is a rich illustration of the nature of the institution, Dadaism far more easily reveals the essence of the institution. In particular, he is referring to Duchamp and other Dadaists who worked with readymades and the discussion about conferring the status of art.<sup>34</sup> Before the Dadaists, classical painters and sculptors followed a certain system. In this process the artists, according to Danto, created art for the purposes of portraying a person, fulfilling a commission, working for his living and so on.<sup>35</sup> The aesthetic aspects, techniques or accurate representation were in focus and bore status. In Dadaism, the works of art may not be worth much as objects, but very valuable for art theory. Duchamp's readymades forced the spectator away from the physical and aesthetical properties, pushing him or her to consider the concept and their social contexts.<sup>36</sup> Dickie clarifies he does not claim that Duchamp and other Dadaists invented the conferring of the status of the art but that they used the existing institutional device in an unusual way. Duchamp did not invent the art world; it was there all along.<sup>37</sup> Danto in 'The Artworld' also discusses the concept of readymades, and the example of Warhol's *Brillo Box* is raised.<sup>38</sup> The argument why Warhol's *Brillo Box*, in opposition to commercial Brillo Boxes, is an artwork is because of its placement within the gallery space. In contrast to commercial Brillo Boxes, Warhol's *Brillo Box* could not be found in the general store but only within an institution.<sup>39</sup> Hence, when placed within a gallery space, an object becomes an artwork, not because of by

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<sup>33</sup> Dickie, 'What is art' pp. 437-438.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Warhol's *Brillo Box* is an artwork from 1964 where Warhol copied the design and dimensions of actual packaging for Brillo, an American steel wool company. Instead of being made out of cardboard, Warhol's artwork was made out of wood, painted in white with serigraphic print in blue and red.

<sup>39</sup> Danto, *op. cit.*, pp. 580-581.

whom it was made or what material was used but because it has earned a place in the art world.<sup>40</sup>

As for Creed's *Work No. 227*, the similarities to Warhol's *Brillo Box* are many. As stated by Danto, it is not the material, how much the production cost or by whom the artwork is made that is important, but that the artwork has earned to be placed within an institution. This is the core of the discussion on what art is and the role of the institution. Artworks are not placed in institutions to be functional, but to evoke opinions and emotions.

## **2.4 Literature summary and comparisons**

The key elements in Jones' text centre on the ability of visualising two-dimensional work into three-dimensional. She performs this herself via case studies, some she only has studies through documentation and one she has experienced herself. She believes that her analysis of the works she has only seen through documentation does not suffer in any way. Bishop, on the other hand, act as a response to Jones claiming that the capture of the room and the feeling of not being in control is crucial in experiencing and analysing installation art. Installations present textures and spaces, which cannot be experienced through documentation but only through physical interaction. Even though this statement, Bishop chooses to analyse installation art she herself only have seen through documentation. When regarding the white cube, O'Doherty claims that the white cube is not pinpointed to a certain location but to architectural elements. The white cube is shielded from time and space and the experience is a particular one. Hence, hypothetically, experiences with different white cubes would not differ from each other as the white cube has a set architectural form. This would then mean that if one has experienced the white cube once, one would have the ability to imagine and visualising any white cube. Hence, the visualisation of *Work No. 227* two-dimensionally would be supported by one's previous experience of the white cube would and therefore no longer only be a visualisation but in fact an experience. The one element missing then would be the ceiling lights going on and off in intervals, which would be considered as an easy function to visualise.

The white cube holds a second function, as can be understood from Danto and Dickie's ideas on institutional art theory. As Danto and Dickie writes, the art status

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<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*

shifted with Duchamp and the Dadaists. Instead of focusing on techniques, preciseness between the portrait and the portrayed or aesthetic properties of artworks, Dadaists moved the focus to the concept and social context of an artwork. Here, we see examples such as Duchamp's readymades and consecutive artists such as Warhol who worked with the same type of concepts. The example of Warhol's *Brillo Box* is very relevant to Martin Creed's *Work No. 227*. As Danto states, the artwork *Brillo Box* differed from actual Brillo Boxes as they were placed within an institution. The same applies to *Work No. 227*, which also is constructed to live and stay inside the gallery space. The similarities between *Brillo Box* and *Work No. 227* is that they both take the shape of items, packaging boxes and lamps, one is used to see in ordinary constellations (the real world). They both may have taken inspiration from events happening in the real world, lights switching and packaging boxes, but transformed these into concepts, which has been placed in the institution, or artworld. If they were to be brought into the real world, the artworks have no function, as the *Brillo Box* is too heavy to be a packaging box and *Work No. 227* being a non-functioning lamp.

### 3 Content analysis

#### 3.1 Material and relevance

Which words or phrases are reoccurring and how do these act as valuation of the work? Every year, the Turner Prize-winner becomes one of the most debated in the artworld and media. Martin Creed was no exception in 2001 and his work was discussed and criticised in most major newspapers around Britain. A content analysis will be conducted in order to provide answers to the thesis question: In what ways are *Work No 227: The Lights Going On And Off* presented and criticised in British newspapers, art journals and on gallery websites?

Five newspaper articles have been chosen, all published between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> of December 2001. This selection is made partly because of its news value as these articles were published in the days following Creed's announcement as the winner and partly because the short time range indicates that the articles were written independently of one and other.<sup>41</sup> Five more articles have been chosen to represent art journals and the

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<sup>41</sup> These newspaper articles will be analysed: 1. L. Jury, 'Blink and you'll miss it, the light work that took the Turner prize', *The Independent*, 10 Dec. 2001. 2. C. Mullins, 'The tailor who created the emperor's new clothes', *The Independent*, 11 Dec. 2001. 3. A. Searle, 'Easy does it', *The Guardian*, 11 Dec. 2001.



websites of major art institutions. Descriptions of the work have been retrieved from the websites of Tate Britain and MoMA New York. Articles from *Art Press*, *Prospect* and *New Statesman* have also been retrieved. These articles' publication dates range from 2001 until 2014, with the argument that these articles does not rely on actuality as much as the newspaper articles does.<sup>42</sup>

The words and phrases that have been selected for this content analysis are reoccurring words that were found when examining the articles. The selections were made without preconceived notions and the process developed by reading the articles repeatedly. Words and phrases that discuss the artwork, the event inside the installation and adjectives describing the artist, artwork and the gallery space have been prioritised as these fit the best purpose for this thesis. Following, a number of headlines will be presented where the critiques have been divided into references in article titles, references to the artwork and artist's practice, references to the event, references to other artists and allegories and references to the gallery space. Three to five reoccurring phrases, words or indications will be presented, where the number of articles that include these will be presented (X/10). Please see Appendix A for the full table chart. In the table charts, the word or phrase has been marked as neutral (neu.), negative (neg.) and positive (pos.), after how they have been discussed by the writers in their context. These associations are strictly in relations to this particular content analysis and should not be seen as a common knowledge. The article writers has neither anywhere stated if they have written these words in a neutral, negative or positive context, but has been conducted by this thesis for the purpose of analysing the data.

### 3.2 References in article titles

Reference to the artist or the artwork	3/10
References to the Turner Prize or Tate Britain	3/10
Reference to the simplicity or invisibility of the artwork	5/10

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4. A. Searle, 'A work that did not need to be made', *The Guardian*, 10 Dec. 2001. 5. N. Reynolds, 'Turner Prize won by man who turns lights off', *The Telegraph*, 10 Dec. 2001.

<sup>42</sup> These art journal articles will be analysed: 6. H. Delaney, 'Work No. 227: The lights going on and off', *Tate Britain* [website], 2010. 7. 'Martin Creed. Work No. 227. The Lights Going On And Off. 2000', Gallery label, MoMA New York's exhibition *Out of Time: A Contemporary View*, August 30 2006–April 9 2007, writer unknown. 8. N. Denny, 'Tate that', *New Statesman*, vol. 130, no. 4565, 2001. 9. A. Colin, 'Turner Prize 2001: Tate Britain', *Art Press* no 277 75-6, 2002. 10. H. Anderson, 'Genius or joke? What's the point of the artist Martin Creed', *Prospect*, no. 216, 2014.

When being faced with the articles, the titles stand out as they differ from quite distinct and opinionated titles to more objective and neutral ones. The titles instantly set the tone for the writer's perspective and a grand difference can be seen between the newspaper articles and the art journal articles. Three of the articles have titles that contains references to the artist Martin Creed, or the title of the artwork. All of these articles are retrieved from art journals, and are all interpreted neutrally. Additionally, three articles bear titles where references to Tate Britain or the Turner Prize are made. Two of these are from the art journal articles and one can be found in the newspaper articles. An example is article no. 8 'Tate that', written by Ned Denny for *New Statesman*.<sup>43</sup> The title may be a play to the phrase 'take that' which sometimes is said as someone hits someone else, especially in comical films or cartoons.<sup>44</sup> This title is the only art journal article that has been interpreted negatively. When it comes to the titles of the newspaper articles, all five of the titles have been interpreted negatively. An example is no. 5, written by Nigel Reynolds for *The Telegraph*, 'Turner Prize won by man who turns lights off'.<sup>45</sup> Although referencing to the Turner Prize, the entire title is written sceptically of both *Work No. 227* and Martin Creed. For instance, Creed is not mentioned by name but is being referenced to as 'man', not even calling Creed an artist. The results of the analysis of titles are that the art journal articles bear more often neutral titles where the artist and artwork are referenced to correctly. The newspaper articles bear more often opinionated titles that seldom contains the artist's name or the title of the artwork.

The initial analysis must take into consideration that the newspaper articles rely more on the headline standing out in order to sell, whereas the art journals often aren't faced with the same issue. The analysis suggests that art journal articles often bear neutral titles, which makes the reader expect to read critiques that have a more neutral standpoint. The newspaper articles have more colourful titles, many of them already giving away the critics perception of the artwork.

In conclusion, half of the article titles have a reference to the simplicity or invisibility of the artwork incorporated within the title. All of these are titles of newspaper articles

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<sup>43</sup> N. Denny, 'Tate that', *The Statesman*, vol. 130, no. 4565, 2001.

<sup>44</sup> Definition: said as someone hits someone else, especially in humorous films or cartoons (Cambridge Dictionary, <[www.dictionary.cambridge.org](http://www.dictionary.cambridge.org)>), accessed 18. Dec 2018.

<sup>45</sup> N. Reynolds, 'Turner Prize won by man who turns lights off', *The Telegraph*, 10 Dec. 2001, <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1364860/Turner-Prize-won-by-man-who-turns-lights-off.html>>, accessed 10 Dec. 2018.

whereas all of them are interpreted negatively. The other five art journal articles choose to reference either to the artwork, the artist Martin Creed, the Turner Prize or Tate Britain. Of these five articles, only one of the titles is interpreted negatively (article no. 8), whereas the remaining four have been interpreted neutrally. The result of this is that by solely looking at the titles, the art journal articles seems to be written more professionally and objectively than the newspaper articles. Thus, these are seen as more trustworthy and less opinionated.

### 3.3 References to the artwork and artist's practice

Minimalistic	6/10
Almost nothing	5/10
Witty	4/10

In six of the articles, either Work No. 227 or the practice of Martin Creed is described as 'minimalistic'. Three of these descriptions occur in the art journal articles and three of them can be found in the newspaper articles. This find is not surprising, as Creed's practice would fall under the category of being minimalistic.

The phrase 'almost nothing' or 'nothingness' can be found in five of the articles studied. This usage is interpreted as positive or neutral in four of the articles, and negative in one article. The phrase is interpreted negatively in newspaper article no. 2, written by Mullins. "For in reality, he's [Martin Creed's, editor's note] not the Emperor, but the Emperor's tailor, making works of nothingness and convincing others – curators, directors writers – that they are the future of art."<sup>46</sup> In this article the usage of the word 'nothingness' is interpreted negatively as she names Creed not only as the Emperor but as the tailor, blaming Creed to be fooling the entire art world with invisible art. The term 'almost nothing' can also be seen in the description retrieved from MoMA New York's website, article no. 6: "The content of this work is almost nothing: a gallery with bare walls in which the lights turn on and off in intervals of five seconds."<sup>47</sup> Here, the description is neutral, explaining the simplicity of the installation. The usage is also

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<sup>46</sup> C. Mullins, 'The tailor who created the emperor's new clothes', *The Independent*, 11 Dec. 2001, para. 2, <<https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/commentators/charlotte-mullins-the-tailor-who-created-the-emperors-new-clothes-619760.html>>, accessed 10 Dec. 2018.

<sup>47</sup> 'Martin Creed. Work No. 227: The Lights Going On and Off. 2000', Gallery label, MoMA New York's exhibition *Out of Time: A Contemporary View*, August 30 2006–April 9 2007, *MoMA New York* [website], accessed 1 Dec. 2018.

interpreted as neutral since the word 'turn' is used in explaining the event that occurs in the installation.

Some of the articles discuss Creed as an artist or his practice and in these descriptions some reoccurring words can be found. The word that can be seen most frequently is 'wit'<sup>48</sup>, which is occurring in four of the articles. This word is often presented in the context of a quote taken from head of the jury, and former director of the Tate art museums, Sir Nicholas Serota. In a statement, the jury said: "[...] they 'admired [Creed's] audacity in presenting a single work in the exhibition and noted its strength, rigour, wit and sensitivity to the site'".<sup>49</sup> Since the word is most often taken from a quote, most articles present this information as neutral. A positive description of the word 'wit' can be found in article no. 2 written by Mullins, the word wit is used positively as she compares Creed to Alighiero Boetti and the Arte Povera artists, saying that Creed has his wit in common with them.<sup>50</sup> The usage of the word 'wit' is only interpreted negatively in one of the four articles where it can be found. This is in article no. 5, where Reynolds state, "They [the jury, editor's note] insisted last night that The lights going on and off had qualities of 'strength, rigour, wit and sensitivity to the site.'"<sup>51</sup> As Reynolds uses the word 'insisted' when presenting the quote, it can be understood as if Reynolds does not agree with the statement. Therefore, the word has been interpreted negatively.

In conclusion, the references to the artwork and artist's practice are similar in the words they choose in describing it. Either 'minimalistic' and/ or 'almost nothing' occur in nine articles and a positive usage of these descriptions dominate. Describing Creed and his practice as witty and/ or sensitive can be seen in four of the articles, where half of them do it positively. A conclusion cannot be drawn in either the newspaper or art journal articles using these phrases more positively or negatively.

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<sup>48</sup> Definition: The capacity for inventive thought and quick understanding; keen intelligence. (Oxford Dictionaries <[www.oxforddictionaries.com](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com)>), accessed 3 Jan. 2019.

<sup>49</sup> L. Jury, 'Blink and you'll miss it, the light work that took the Turner prize', *The Independent*, 10 Dec. 2001, para. 20, <<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/blink-and-youll-miss-it-the-light-work-that-took-the-turner-prize-9194210.html>>, accessed 10 Dec. 2018.

<sup>50</sup> Mullins, op. cit., para. 4.

<sup>51</sup> Reynolds, op. cit., para. 15.

### 3.4 References to the event

Flicker	6/10
Plunge	2/10
Going	2/10

All of the articles include some sort of description of *Work No. 227* and the event that occurs in the installation. In six of the articles, the word ‘flicker’<sup>52</sup> is used to describe the event, whereof three is in the newspaper articles and three in the art journal articles. An example sentence from the newspaper articles is Reynolds’ article no. 5. As can be seen, Reynolds use the more neutral term of ‘turns’ in the article title but later claims in paragraph 1, “The £20,000 annual Turner Prize, sometimes also known as the Prize for the Emperor’s New Clothes, was awarded last night to an artist who exhibited an empty room with lights that flicker on and off every five seconds.”<sup>53</sup> Here, Reynolds use of ‘flicker’ is recognised as negative. The reason is that he does not write out the name Martin Creed, but names him ‘an artist’. The mentioning of the ‘Emperor’s new clothes’ also bears negative connotations and cannot be disregarded after it is mentioned.

In Anne Colin’s article, no. 9, published in Art Press, the word ‘flick’ is also used in describing the event. “A flick of the switch is enough to activate the installation Creed has chosen for Tate Britain.”<sup>54</sup> Here, the tone is understood as neutral, verging on being positive. The reasons are that Colin chooses to name the artist by name as well as calling the artwork an installation, which confirms the status of the artwork. The word flick is here used as a supporting word in order to explain that this is what activates the installation, not putting any value in the sentence.

The word ‘plunge’<sup>55</sup> is used in two of the articles, once in an art journal article and once in a newspaper article. In article no. 6, retrieved from Tate Britain, Delaney states, “Martin Creed’s *Work No. 227: The lights going on and off* consists of an empty room which is filled with light for five seconds and the plunged into darkness for five

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<sup>52</sup> Definition: (of light or a source of light) shine unsteadily; vary rapidly in brightness (of an emotion) be felt or shown briefly or faintly. (Oxford Dictionaries <[www.oxforddictionaries.com](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com)>), accessed 3 Jan. 2019.

<sup>53</sup> Reynolds, op. cit., para. 1.

<sup>54</sup> A. Colin, loc. cit.

<sup>55</sup> Definition: Jump or dive quickly and energetically. Fall suddenly and uncontrollably. (Oxford Dictionaries <[www.oxforddictionaries.com](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com)>), accessed 3 Jan. 2019.

seconds.”<sup>56</sup> The word ‘plunge’ is here used in a positive sense, painting a picture for the readers of what the experience was like standing in the gallery space, rather than simply explain the event. In article no. 4 by Adrian Searle, the word plunge is also used. “Standing in a darkened basement in King’s Cross is rather different from being plunged into darkness at Tate Britain.”<sup>57</sup> Searle is referencing to Creed’s earlier artwork *Work No. 127: The lights going on and off* which he claims *Work No. 227* to be a variant of. The usage of the word ‘plunge’ is seen as neutral as he is simply stating that the two experiences differ from each other, not valuing which one was better or worse.

Surprisingly, the word ‘going’ could only be found in two of the articles although this is the way the artist choose to explain the art work himself, and thus the most neutral form. This indicates that the writers knowingly and probably willingly, use words such as ‘flicker’ and ‘plunge’ to add valuations in their descriptions of the artwork.

There are three words that are the most reoccurring ones when it comes to the describing the event. The word ‘flicker’ can be found in six of the articles, evenly split between art journals and newspaper articles. None of the articles that use ‘flicker’ do it positively. The word ‘plunge’ can be seen in two of the articles, whereas one of them uses the word positively. This is the only article that has a positive validation in their references to the event. Only two articles use the word ‘going’, which would be named as the correct one as it is the word that occurs in the artwork title. Both of the articles that use this word do it neutrally. Half of the articles are neutral in their usage of descriptive words. A conclusion cannot be drawn if either the newspaper or art journal articles value these words more or less.

### 3.5 References to other artists and allegories

1 Duchamp	3/10
2 Yves Klein	2/10
3 Alighiero Boetti	2/10
4 Other Turner Prize-winners or shortlisted artists	2/10
5 The Emperor’s New Clothes	3/10

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<sup>56</sup> H. Delaney, ‘Work No. 227: The lights going on and off’, *Tate Britain* [website], May 2010, para. 1, <<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/creed-work-no-227-the-lights-going-on-and-off-t13868>>, accessed 1 Dec. 2018.

<sup>57</sup> A. Searle, ‘A work that did not need to be made’, *The Guardian*, 10 Dec. 2001, para. 4, <<https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2001/dec/10/turnerprize2001.20yearsoftheturnerprize>> accessed 1 Dec. 2018.

Comparisons made to other artists are interestingly reoccurring in the majority of the articles, most often comparing Creed to Dadaist father, Duchamp and his readymades. Comparisons to Yves Klein's *The Void* from 1958, where everything had been removed from the gallery and Alighiero Boetti's *Yearly Lamp* from 1966, a lamp lighting up for eleven seconds on one unspecified day a year.<sup>58</sup> These comparisons are historiography that brings Creed to the same category as Duchamp and Yves Klein, two of the greater and well-known artists in modern times. The reference to Duchamp, Yves Klein and Alighiero Boetti are most often done in the newspaper articles. These comparisons vary from being positive, negative and neutral. Mullin's writes in article no. 2:

Artists have been challenging what we perceive to be art for nearly a century, from Marcel Duchamp's provocative placement of a signed urinal in an open-submission exhibition in 1917, to Yves Klein's empty white gallery exhibited as *The Void* in 1958. Perhaps we should be grateful that in Creed's Turner prize artwork, the lights go on and off every five seconds - in 1966, Arte Povera artist Alighiero Boetti unveiled his *Yearly Lamp*, which flickered into life on one unspecified day per year. Creed has a lot in common with Boetti and his fellow Art Povera artists: a knowing wit, an interest in common materials, a subversion of Minimalism, a leaning towards subtle intervention rather than a sensational statement. My problem with Creed's work is that Boetti just did it better; Klein did it earlier [...].<sup>59</sup>

These references are interpreted as both positive and negative since both associations can be found. An interesting find is done in Anderson's article no. 10. The article, which is based on an interview with Creed, is seemingly appreciative but the reference to Duchamp is made negatively. Anderson states, "A century has passed since Duchamp declared that anything could be art, and Creed's own particular brand feels like conservatism masquerading as radicalism. Aesthetically, it has a pleasing of limited neatness, but intellectually, it's arid."<sup>60</sup> Here, although calling the installation somewhat aesthetically pleasing, he calls the artwork intellectually arid, resulting in a negative interpretation.

In two of the articles, both retrieved from newspapers, references to other Turner Prize winners and shortlisted artists are made. One reference is made neutrally whereas one is made negatively. Here, the examples of Damien Hirst and Tracey Emin are brought up, as they both submitted artworks that were seen as radical at the time.

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<sup>58</sup> Mullins, op. cit., para. 4.

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*, para. 3-4.

<sup>60</sup> H. Anderson, op. cit., para. 7.

Three of the articles, all retrieved from newspapers, brings up the Hans Christian Andersen tale of the Emperor’s New Clothes. This comparison does not only imply Creed’s work being non-existing but also implies that Creed is fooling us all, making us believe there is something we are simply not intelligent enough to see. Interestingly though, article no. 2 is the only article to use the comparison negatively, and the other two do it either neutrally or positively. Jury states in article no. 1, “Yet for all the detractor’s claim that the Turner is a classic example for he emperor’s new clothes, the harshest critics of all, the public, are still keenly interested”.<sup>61</sup> Continuingly, Jury writes that 1300 people per day had seen the exhibition by December 10<sup>th</sup> 2001, exceeding the 2000 Turner prize exhibition.<sup>62</sup> This statement is interpreted positively as Jury mentions the factor of the public’s interest.

Comparisons and references between Creed and other artists can be seen in a majority of the articles. The newspaper articles do this dominantly, where four out of five articles reference to other artists. There is no majority of the articles being positive or negative. References made to the Emperor’s new clothes can only be seen in the newspaper articles. In summary, references and comparisons to other artist is mostly used in the newspaper articles. This can be analysed either as the art journal articles lay more focus on the particular artist and artwork or as if the newspaper articles use comparisons and references in order to make the comprehension easier for the reader.

### 3.6 References to the gallery space

1 Empty space, empty room or bare walls	6/10
2 Manipulation of the space	4/10
3 Higher awareness of the space	5/10

In six of the articles, the empty space or bare walls are mentioned. Interestingly enough, the three newspaper articles that mention the phenomenon do this negatively whereas the three art journal articles do it positively. One example from one of the newspaper articles is from article no. 1 where Jury states, “*Work 227: The lights going on and off* was just that - an entirely white gallery at Tate Britain in London illuminated only by a

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<sup>61</sup> L. Jury, ‘Blink and you’ll miss it, the light work that took the Turner prize’, *The Independent*, 10 Dec. 2001, para. 20, < <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/blink-and-youll-miss-it-the-light-work-that-took-the-turner-prize-9194210.html>>, accessed 10 Dec. 2018.

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.*



handful of lightbulbs flickering on and off.”<sup>63</sup> Here, the sentence is interpreted negatively as Jury uses the title of the artwork to explain her experience of it, not adding any personal reflections or understandings in her description. Jury also emphasises on the vast space rather than the lights filling it. A positive usage of the empty space is seen in article no. 7, retrieved from MoMA New York’s website. It states “[...]: a gallery space with bare walls in which the lights turn on and off in intervals of five seconds.”<sup>64</sup> It continues, “Creed controls the fundamental conditions of visibility within the gallery and redirects our attention to the walls that normally act as support and background for art objects.”<sup>65</sup> Here, MoMA’s description emphasises on the phenomena Creed creates rather than the exhibition of an empty space. The description also entails a personal reflection, where the empty space is seen as something positive.

That Creed manipulates the space is stated in four of the articles, and five of the articles mention a higher awareness that has been brought to the space. Mullins state in article no. 2 that after one is thinking that the lights are broken, one realises that the on-going fault is in fact, the artwork. Here, even though calling the artwork an on-going fault, Mullins does so positively when she continues the paragraph by stating that the installation is designed to make you question the space and to become aware of yourself in the room.<sup>66</sup> This clearly shows Mullins personal reflections about the installation and her acceptance of what its intentions are.

In the articles where references to the ‘empty space’ or ‘bare walls’ are made, all of those found in newspaper articles have been interpreted negatively whereas all of the ones found in art journal articles have been interpreted positively. A ‘manipulation of the space’ is mentioned in four articles, whereas three of these are in the art journal articles, all doing it positively. Five of the articles mention that the artwork ‘brings higher awareness’ to the space. The two art journal articles that mention this phenomenon do it positively. Two of the three newspaper articles that mention this do it negatively. In conclusion, the art journal articles are more positive in their referencing to the empty gallery space and to the visitors’ feeling of higher awareness of the room. This can be analysed to the art journal articles either being more appreciative of the

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<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*, para. 2.

<sup>64</sup> MoMA New York [website], loc. cit.

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> Mullins, *op. cit.*, para. 5.

phenomena Creed has created with his installation or not being as critical to the bare minimum installation.

### 3.7 Other observations

During the procedure of conducting the content analysis, other observations have also been made. In the articles retrieved from the websites of Tate Britain and MoMA New York, the description of the medium used differs. Tate Britain claims that the medium is gallery lights whereas MoMA New York writes that the medium is an electrical timer. This is interesting, as both galleries have exhibited *Work No. 227*. One would imagine that the artist is somewhat involved in explaining what the medium is so the question is if Creed has said two different mediums or simply not stating a medium at all. On Martin Creed's website there is no medium stated, only the time dimensions. Regardless, although the rest of MoMA and Tate Britain's descriptions are quite similar, they are at variance when it comes to the medium.

The phrase 'plunged into darkness' can be found in the article retrieved from the website of Tate Britain, where 'filled with light' is used and an antagonism.<sup>67</sup> In article no. 8, Denny is questioning the phenomena, disputing the extremeness of light and darkness in the gallery space stating:

The pale strip lights and their surrounding halogen lights power relentlessly on and off, though it is not so much a case of extremes of light and dark ("the gallery will be filled with light and then thrown into darkness", the press release declares optimistically) as the cold glow of fluorescent tubes versus the gloom of a winter's day.<sup>68</sup>

None of the other articles mention the little difference experienced between darkness and light. A clear tone of disappointment can be traced in the statement as Denny quotes the press release from Tate Britain. Here, the institution has hyped up the experience of the artwork, failing to provide the space and materials for the installation to live up to its promises. This is not mentioned in either Tate Britain nor MoMA's descriptions of the artwork and one could question if this is done intentionally or if they experienced the installations that much differently than Denny.

Another observation is the newspaper article writers negative look upon the institution. For example, *The Guardian's* art critic Adrian Searle states in article no. 4, "This is not so much a radical gesture as one of those artworks which institutions tend to

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<sup>67</sup> Delaney, loc. cit.

<sup>68</sup> Denny, op. cit., p. 43.

love. Rather than 'challenging' the institution, this piece reaffirms the museum's self-image as courtesan and midwife to the supposedly radical gesture."<sup>69</sup> In contradiction to Sir Nicholas Serota's and the Turner Prize jury's statement where Creed's was celebrated as being bold and having audacity, Searle simply sees Creed's work to enhance the status of the museum as being seemingly radical, instead of actually being so. Anne Colin makes a similar statement in article no. 9:

Creed's art is about redefining the space of the museum, and thereby raising the question of authorial ownership and the artistic value of the banal. A would-be radical challenge to the art space then. Would-be but not really. Once again, the Turner Prize has failed in its mission.<sup>70</sup>

With this statement, Colin, just as Searle, express a disappointment over Creed's work not being as radical as seemingly expected but rather in-line with what the galleries and museums want to be associated with. The institutional context is not mentioned in either articles from Tate Britain or MoMA New York, but can be found in many of the other articles, both from art journals and newspapers. Both the phenomena of the installation and its radicalism are enhanced in the articles from the galleries compared to all other articles.

### **3.8 Conclusions and results of content analysis**

The aim of conducting this content analysis was to see if conclusions about positive and negative thoughts about Martin Creed's *Work No. 227* could be drawn from a small selection of articles retrieved from newspapers and art journals. Here, a presentation of the three most valuable finds will follow. Firstly, by looking at the article titles, it can be seen that the newspaper articles are more critical and questioning against Creed's installation than the art journal articles. Secondly, the newspaper articles are more prone to making references and comparisons between Creed's practice and other artists. These are more often done negatively than celebratory. And thirdly, the extreme minimalism and simplicity of Creed's installation is more criticised in the newspaper articles, emphasising on how artists prior to Creed has done versions of the same phenomena, either having it done earlier or simply better. To get back to the question, are the newspaper articles or art journal articles more positive or negative to *Work No. 227*? This analysis will suggest that there is a majority of negative criticism in the

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<sup>69</sup> Searle, loc. cit.

<sup>70</sup> Colin, loc. cit.

newspaper articles but only with a small majority. What can also be stated is that a majority of the articles used in this analysis have mixed opinions, most of them having a mixture of positive, negative and neutral validations. When looking at the table chart (Appendix A), it can also be stated that the art journal articles are less negative in their critique as most of the art journal articles have been interpreted either as positive or neutral in the interpretations. The only article, which is interpreted negatively on all items, is Ned Denny's article no. 8 and on one occasion is article no. 10 interpreted negatively. In comparison, there is not a single newspaper article that has not been interpreted negatively on one reoccurring word or phrase.

#### **4 Analysis and conclusion**

Institutional art theory suggests that the artworld consists of an elaborated system. Objects placed within an art constellation inevitable become objects of art, not because of their aesthetic value, but because of the existence within the system of the institution. According to me, this is the only validation needed for Creed's *Work No. 227*. The validation does not include properties if the artwork is aesthetically pleasing or not, its importance or if it was a worthy winner of the Turner Prize. This validation simply takes into consideration if it exists in the institution and is therefore, artAs for the similarities between William Anasti and his photographs of the gallery walls at Dwan and *Work No. 227*, Anasti also made the separation of the gallery and the artworks impossible. With Anasti's photographs, the value of the gallery walls increased to be validated as highly as other artworks, displayed on those very walls. As for *Work No. 227* leaving the walls empty, simply filling them with light and darkness, the same validation is occurring here - completely executed through the institution.

This is an interesting aspect in the attempt of providing answers to the thesis sub-question: Can the ideas about the institution collected from institutional art theory be applied to the result of the content analysis? As the results showed in the conducted content analysis, it was found that a majority of the art journal articles were celebratory of Creed's installation overall and more positive to the phenomena of the empty space presented. Deriving from Danto and Dickie's theories, the websites of art galleries and art journals are part of the system of the artworld. Hence, their more appreciative tone towards the institution would suggest that they do not work as separate entities, in opposition to newspapers. To be able to provide further answers and evidence to this

particular question, the content analysis would be in need of an extension, reaching over printed and digital media. Interviews with writers, art critics and museum staff would provide a more developed picture where further deductions could be made. Institutional art theory can work as a theoretical base for conducting a research of this kind, but would most probably need further support in discourse theory and Foucault's ideas on power and knowledge. As for the finds in the content analysis, further questions could be raised in regards to the references and comparisons made between Creed and other artists. The references to Duchamp and Yves Klein bear uncountable historiographical connotations as they are two extremely influential artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In making these references, is it at all fair to compare Creed to Duchamp and Klein, who revolutionised 20<sup>th</sup> century art? Will Creed still be remembered in a hundred years in the same way Duchamp is remembered today? One can only ponder the greatness of Creed, but in my opinion, these references should not be made so casually.

The relation between Creed's *Work No. 227* and the institution is one with many aspects. Architecturally speaking, the space becomes part of the installation and the two entities can no longer be regarded separately. Although not having experienced the installation first-hand, the literature research suggests that an earlier interaction with a white cube gallery space will simplify a visualisation of *Work No. 227*. The purpose of this thesis was to provide answers to the thesis question: In what ways are *Work no 227: The Lights Going On And Off* presented and criticised in British newspapers, art journals and on gallery websites? This was answered through a content analysis where reoccurring words and phrases were mapped out in ten newspapers and art journal articles. The usage of these words and phrases were interpreted positively, negatively or neutrally and the result was that the newspaper articles were considerably more negative in their validations of *Work No. 227*. This could especially be seen in the article titles, how they chose to reference to other artists and their lesser appreciation of the phenomena of presenting an empty space. The art journal articles on the other hand, had more neutral titles, not including valuations of either Creed or *Work No. 227*. References to other artists were not common and the appreciation of the empty space phenomena was high. The sub-question presented in this thesis is: Can the ideas about the institution collected from institutional art theory be applied to the result of the content analysis? As this thesis suggests, the institution works as a system, each part controlled and depending on it. Within this system, the artwork, the artist and the visitor

plays important parts and would not be functioning separated from one another. The media come to play the part of advertisement, meaning that the institution is very much dependent on what is written in newspapers and periodicals. What the content analysis suggests, in the case study of Martin Creed's *Work No. 227*, is that newspaper articles present more negative critique against the artwork and institution whereas the art journal articles present a more appreciative and positive critique. The thesis suggests a further and more developed research in order to provide more evidence on this matter, reaching beyond a strictly intertextual content analysis. Foucault's ideas on power and knowledge would most probably serve the analysis profitably.

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### **6.3 List of figures**

Figure 1: Martin Creed, *Work No. 227: The lights going on and off*, 2000, light installation, 5 seconds on/ 5 seconds off, MoMA, New York, photographer unknown, accessed from <http://martincreed.com>.

Figure 2: Martin Creed, *Work No. 127: The lights going on and off*, 1995, light installation, 30 seconds on/ 30 seconds off, dimensions variable, photographer unknown, accessed from <http://martincreed.com>.

Figure 3: Martin Creed, *Work No. 254: The lights in a building going on and off*, 2000, light installation, 1 second on/ 1 second off, Camden Arts Centre, London, photographer unknown, accessed from <http://martincreed.com>.



## 7 Appendix A

A table chart is presented that state the reoccurring words and phrases that has been used in the content analysis. Inside the columns, and X has been put where the word or phrase occurs and they have been valued if they are written in a neutral (neu.), negative (neg.) or positive (pos.) context. The articles have been numbered to fit the columns.

1. L. Jury, 'Blink and you'll miss it', *The Independent*, 10 Dec. 2001.
2. C. Mullins, 'The tailor who created the emperor's new clothes', *The Independent*, 11 Dec. 2001.
3. A. Searle, 'Easy does it', *The Guardian*, 11 Dec. 2001.
4. A. Searle, 'A work that did not need to be made', *The Guardian*, 10 Dec. 2001.
5. N. Reynolds, 'Turner Prize won by man who turns lights off', *The Telegraph*, 10 Dec. 2001.
6. H. Delaney, 'Work No. 227: The lights going on and off', *Tate Britain* [website], 2010.
7. 'Martin Creed. Work No. 227. The Lights Going On And Off. 2000', Gallery label, MoMA New York's exhibition *Out of Time: A Contemporary View*, August 30 2006–April 9 2007, *MoMA New York* [website], writer unknown.
8. N. Denny, 'Tate that', *New Statesman*, vol. 130, no. 4565, 2001.
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<i>References in article titles</i>	1	2	3	4	5
Reference to the artist or artwork					
Reference to the Turner Prize or Tate Britain					X (neg.)
Reference to the simplicity or invisibility of the artwork	X (neg.)	X (neg.)	X (neg.)	X (neg.)	X (neg.)
<i>References to the artwork</i>	1	2	3	4	5
Minimalistic	X (neu.)	X (pos.)	X (neu.)		
Almost nothing		X (neg.)	X (pos.)	X (pos.)	X (neu.)
Wit	X (neu.)	X (pos.)			X (neg.)
<i>References to the event</i>	1	2	3	4	5
Flicker	X (neg.)	X (neg.)			X (neg.)
Plunge				X (neu.)	
Going			X (neu.)		

6	7	8	9	10	Total
X (neu.)	X (neu.)			X (neu.)	3/10
		X (neg.)	X (neu.)		3/10
					5/10
6	7	8	9	10	Total
X (pos.)		X (neg.)		X (pos.)	6/10
	X (pos.)				5/10
	X (pos.)				4/10
6	7	8	9	10	Total
		X (neg.)	X (neu.)	X (neu.)	6/10
X (pos.)					2/10
			X (neu.)		2/10

<i>References to other artists and allegories</i>	1	2	3	4	5
Duchamp		X (pos. & neg.)	X (neu.)		
Yves Klein		X (pos. & neg.)	X (neu.)		
Alighiero Boetti		X (pos. & neg.)			
Other Turner Prize winners or shortlisted artists	X (neu.)				X (neg.)
The Emperor's New Clothes	X (pos.)	X (neg.)			X (neu.)
<i>References to the gallery space</i>	1	2	3	4	5
Empty space, empty room or bare walls	X (neg.)		X (neg.)		X (neg.)
Manipulation of the space					X (neu.)
Higher awareness of the space		X (neg.)	X (neg.)	X (pos.)	

6	7	8	9	10	Total
				X (neg.)	3/10
					2/10
		X (neg.)			2/10
					2/10
					3/10
6	7	8	9	10	Total
X (pos.)	X (pos.)			X (pos.)	6/10
X (pos.)	X (pos.)		X (pos.)		4/10
X (pos.)	X (pos.)				5/10