

Walls not windows is a handy ~~portmanteau~~ term to get people thinking about abstraction as the means to communicate perceptions of the world that artists felt could not be communicated through the limited and surface forms of naturalism. Looking through a window might show you that certain things are there, but what if it were only revealing the surface of life, of experience? The artists who form part of the preparatory reading, the Dadaists and Surrealists were confronting their own contemporary world and could not explain it through the tired artistic forms of the earlier generation. Their world, too, was shattering, increasingly complex and sliding inexorably towards a war that was to be the most destructive in human history. That this war was to be followed by an even greater cataclysm thirty years later, with an accompanying Holocaust, pushed some artists even further towards declaring that God was dead, the world meaningless, violent and futile etc and they sought to express such perceptions in challenging new forms such as those of early Pinter and Beckett. Windows are about cogent, objective, consistent perceptions that make immediate sense – but those who felt that this did not 'explain' life needed new forms. And this process is not new – the Naturalists had pushed aside the Romantics, who had, in their turn, elbowed aside the Neo-Classical world-view and its art forms, each generation seeking to affirm the truth of their understanding.