

# CHAPTER VI

## RELATED LITERATURE

### *Aesthetics, Hermeneutics and Deconstruction*

Aesthetics is a fairly recent Western philosophical discipline concerned with theoretical speculations on *art*. Originally, in the middle of the eighteenth century, it was formulated by Alexander Baumgarten as a philosophical discipline concerned with the whole region of human sensuous perception. In its original formulation, it was not referred to *art* but to the domain of human knowledge of perception and sensation which, in the context of the age of rationalism, was part of science. The need for aesthetics in the eighteenth century was stimulated by the rational development of science which imposed its models of investigation on other realms of human activity. The historical development of modern aesthetics as a philosophy of art is the result of the continuous tendency to frame *art* within a series of theories and definitions, therefore, reducing *art* to a theoretical formalization.

Morris Weitz in *The Role of Theory in Aesthetic* argued against the possibility to define *art* by categories and opened the question of what was “art as definition.” The problem that Weitz raised was not “what is art” but “what sort of concept is art.”

"Art," itself, is an open concept. New conditions (cases) have constantly arisen and will undoubtedly constantly arise; new art forms, new movements will emerge, which will demand decisions on the part of those interested, usually professional critics, as to whether the concept should be extended or not. Aestheticians may lay down similarity conditions but never necessary and sufficient ones for the correct application of the concept. With "art" its conditions of application can never be exhaustively enumerated since new cases can always be envisaged or created by artists, or even nature, which would call for a decision on someone's part to extend or to close the old or to invent a new concept. (For example, "It's not a sculpture, it's a mobile.")<sup>1</sup>

Weitz gave to the concept of “art” the value of an “open game,” as it was stated by Wittgenstein in *Philosophical Investigations*, and defines the concept of “art” by a criterion of evaluation and of recognition with the intention of giving some recommendations for criteria of excellence. Wittgenstein rose as an illustrative question “what is a game?” The traditional philosophical and theoretical answer would be in terms of some exhaustive set of properties common to all games. What Weitz pointed out in Wittgenstein's *Investigations* was that there were no necessary and sufficient properties common to all games, but only “a complicated network of similarities overlapping and overcrossing such that we could say of games that they formed a family with family

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<sup>1</sup> Morris Weitz, *The Role of Theory in Aesthetic*, p. 149, 1987.

resemblances and no common traits." For Weitz, the basic resemblance between the open concept of "game" and "art" was in their open texture, where conditions of application were amendable and corrigible. What was not so important was the formula-definition but what lies behind it. "Art," Weitz claimed, as the logic of the concept showed, for its open nature, had no set of necessary and sufficient properties.

Aesthetics theory is a logically vain attempt to define what cannot be defined, to state the necessary and sufficient properties of that which has no necessary and sufficient properties, to conceive the concept of art as closed when its very use reveals and demands its openness.<sup>2</sup>

The criteria of recognition for works of art was made by "strands of similarity, conditions and bundles of properties". None of the criteria of recognition, for Weitz, was a defining one, either necessary or sufficient. As Weitz argued the definitions of the necessary and sufficient properties of art were honorific definitions pure and simple, in which "art" had been redefined in terms of chosen criteria. "If we take the aesthetic theories literally, as we have seen, they all fail" Weitz claimed by pointing out their role in our understanding of art and in teaching us what to look for and how to look at it in art.

To understand the role of aesthetic theory is not to conceive it as definition, logically doomed to failure, but to read it as summaries of seriously made recommendations to attend in certain ways to certain features of art.<sup>3</sup>

Weitz argued that the role of theory in aesthetics was to summarise "recommendations" to attend in certain ways to certain features of "art." Where there is a convergence between "art" and "philosophy," which in turn converges with "science." John Dewey in *Art As Experience* claimed against the isolation of art and its appreciation, caused by theories, rose from "specifiable extraneous conditions," which disconnected art from other modes of ordinary experience of life. These extraneous theories, he argued, were also responsible for intellectualizing the dualistic distinction between sensuous and "borrowed" mediated quality, which, aesthetically, could not be immediately experienced.

While some theorists make a distinction between sensuous and borrowed value because of the metaphysical dualism just mentioned, others make it from fear lest the work of art be unduly intellectualized. They are concerned to emphasize something which is in fact an aesthetic necessity: the immediacy of aesthetic experience. It cannot be asserted too strongly that what is not immediate is not aesthetic. The mistake lies in supposing that only certain *special* things—those attached just to eye, ear, etc. - can be qualitatively and immediately experienced.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.147.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>4</sup> John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, p.119, 1980.

Dewey, by pointing out the imaginative value of the aesthetic experience as a conscious perception, extended by meanings and values only imaginatively present, further stated:

Aesthetic experience is imaginative. This fact, in connection with a false idea of the nature of imagination, has obscured the larger fact that all *conscious* experience has of necessity some degree of imaginative quality. For while the roots of every experience are found in the interaction of a live creature with its environment, that experience becomes conscious, a matter of perception, only when meanings enter it that are derived from prior experiences. Imagination is the only gateway through which these meanings can find their way into a present interaction; or rather, as we have just seen, the conscious adjustment of the new and the old *is* imagination.<sup>5</sup>

Aesthetics, as a philosophical mode of inquiry applied to the experience of art, was pointed out by Eugene Kaelin in *An Existentialist Aesthetic*.

The job of philosophy, then, is to refine meanings, not by empty logic-chopping, but by continual referral of ideas to the conditions of everyday experience. And when the critical reflective method of philosophy is applied to the area of our experiences of art it is called "aesthetics."<sup>6</sup>

Kaelin defined *aesthetics* as a "philosophical interpretation of the significance of human experience," in which consciousness and objects were correlates.

Benedetto Croce claimed in *The Essence of Aesthetics* that the nature of *art* that had arisen down in the course of history, at a determined moment, yet it was limited by the history of that moment, and could not pretend to have a value of totality, or what was called a definitive solution. He defended the a-logical character of art against any utilitarianism. Croce presented art as a form of intuition and he denied that theories that attempted to explain "art" as "philosophy" as well as "religion" or "science" had the rights to occupy the greater part of the history of aesthetics. In *Aesthetic as Science of Expression and General Linguistic*, he claimed that to conceive aesthetics as "a science of art" separates "art" from its general spiritual life, was making "art as a sort of special function or aristocratic club," which did not allow to reveal the true nature of art and its roots in human nature. Croce affirmed the indivisibility of the work of art as a whole, arguing against the customary traditional approach of aesthetic inquiry to divide a work of art in parts, for the sake of the theoretical inquiry.

The fact that we divide a work of art into parts, a poem into scenes, episodes, similes, sentences, or a picture into scenes, episodes, similes, sentences, or a picture into single figures and objects, background, foreground, etc., may seem opposed to this affirmation. But such division annihilates the work, as dividing the organism into heart, brain, nerves, and muscles and so on, turns the living being into a corpse.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 272.

<sup>6</sup> Eugene Kaelin, *An Existentialist Aesthetic*, p. 322, 1966.

<sup>7</sup> Benedetto Croce, *Aesthetic*, p. 47, 1922.

Croce further argued against the tradition to present science as well art as part of a single linear human development which pretended to show the whole history of knowledge as one single line of progress and regress. He conceived art as intuition, and intuition, for Croce, was individuality which did not repeat itself. For this reason, for Croce it was erroneous to represent the history of art as developed following a single line.

Consequently, any attempt at an aesthetic classification of the arts is absurd. If they be without limits, they are not exactly determinable, and consequently cannot be philosophically classified. All the books dealing with classifications and systems of the arts could be burned without any loss whatever.<sup>8</sup>

Hans-Georg Gadamer in *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays* argued that the word "art" was a Western cultural context-bound word.

The problem that we have posed is that of bridging the enormous gap between the traditional form and content of Western art and the ideals of contemporary artists. The word *art* itself gives us a first orientation. We should never underestimate what a word can tell us, for language represents the previous accomplishment of thought. Thus we should take the word *art* as our point of departure. Anyone with the slightest historical knowledge is aware that this word has had the exclusive and characteristic meaning that we ascribe to it today for less than two hundred years.<sup>9</sup>

For Gadamer, each theory of art and each interpretation of an art work took place within its own historical world related to a particular time and space. Each interpreter had his/her own angle of interpretative participation depending upon his/her personality, education, and culture.

That is, without any doubt, the excellence of the humanities, that we share a common world of tradition and interpreted human experience. The interpretation of the common world in which we participate is certainly not in the first place the objectifying task of methodical thinking. That may certainly be included, but it is not the *raison d'être* of our activity. When we are interpreting a text, it is not to prove "scientifically" that *this* love poem belongs to the genre of love poems. That is an objective statement and nobody can doubt it, but if that conclusion is the only result of investigating a poem, then we have failed. The intention is to understand *this* love poem, on its own and in its unique relation to the common structure of love poems. It is an absolutely individualized particular form, so that one participates in the utterance or message which is there embodied by the poet.<sup>10</sup>

The history of interpretation was a history of application and it was rather a function of spiritual conservation and tradition, and carried into every present its hidden history. The changing substance of a text was determined by the widespread cultural effects and manifestations it had passed through, and that this wider significance was commonly understood and accepted within any present culture.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>9</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, p. 12, 1986.

<sup>10</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Hermeneutics of Suspicion", p. 64, 1984.

To the extent that hermeneutics brings the contribution of the sciences into this context of mutual agreement that links us with the tradition that has come down to us in a unity that is efficacious in our lives, it is not just a repertory of methods....<sup>11</sup>

The historical perspective, in the procedure of understanding, accounted prior the perspective and idiom of the interpreter. For Gadamer, interpretation did not require the neutralization of one's personal historical horizon, because no method could transcend the own historicity of the interpreter.

In its original meaning, interpretation implies pointing in a particular direction. It is important to note that all interpretation points in a direction rather than to some final endpoint, in the sense that it points toward an open realm that can be filled in a variety of ways. We can distinguish two different senses of interpretation: pointing to something and pointing out the meaning of something. Clearly both of these are connected with one another. "Pointing to something" is a kind of "indicating" that functions as a sign. "Pointing out what something means," on the other hand, always relates back to the kind of sign that interprets itself. Thus when we interpret the meaning of something, we actually interpret an interpretation.<sup>12</sup>

Gadamer further clarified this idea of interrelation between interpreter and what was to be interpreted. He argued that between the two there was a "sustaining agreement" which linked one to the other.

Social life consists of a constant process of transformation of what previously has been held valid. But it would surely be an illusion to want to deduce normative notions *in abstract* to and to posit them as valid with the claim of scientific rectitude. The point here is a notion of science that does not allow for the ideal of the non participating observer but endeavors instead to bring to our reflective awareness the communality that binds everyone together. In my own works I have applied this point to the hermeneutic sciences and stressed the way the being of the interpreter pertains intrinsically to the being of what is to be interpreted. Whoever wants to understand something already brings along something that anticipatorily joins him with what he wants to understand - a sustaining agreement.<sup>13</sup>

In the hermeneutical circle, we could not understand a part as such until we had a perception of the whole, because a genuine dialectic always occurred between our idea of the whole and our perception of the components that made it. Once the dialectic had begun, neither side was totally determined by the other. Claiming that because "interpretation is always on the way and the very idea of a definitive interpretation seems to be intrinsically contradictory," Gadamer argued against the claim of the legitimacy of a definitive scientific "objective" knowledge.

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11 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Reason in the Age of Science*, p. 137, 1992.

12 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful, and Other Essays*, p. 68, 1986.

13 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Reason in the Age of Science*, p. 135-136, 1992.

If one wishes to appraise the significance or the task and the limits of what we call hermeneutics today, one must bear in mind this philosophical and humane background, this fundamental doubt about the legitimacy of objective self-consciousness. In a certain way, the very word *hermeneutics* and its cognate word *interpretation* furnish a hint, for these words imply a sharp distinction between the claim of being able to explain a fact completely through deriving all its conditions; through calculating it from the givens of all its conditions; and through calculating it from the givens of all its conditions; and through learning to produce it by artificial arrangement - the well-known ideal of natural scientific knowledge; and on the other hand, the claim (say, of interpretation), which we always presume to be no more than an approximation: only an attempt, plausible and fruitful, but clearly never definitive.<sup>14</sup>

Gadamer underlined the shifting of legitimacy in science of the criterion of measurability applied in the old objective scientific paradigms.

Perhaps even more significantly, the notion of objectivity so closely coupled in physics with that of measurability has undergone profound changes within more recently theoretical physics.<sup>15</sup>

Gadamer attacked the neutrality of scientific procedures and in particular he denied the “neutrality” of hermeneutics.

Now interpretation refers not only to the explication of the actual intention of a difficult text. Interpretation becomes an expression for getting behind the surface phenomena and data. The so-called critique of ideology called scientific neutrality into doubt. It questioned not merely the validity of the phenomena of consciousness and of self-consciousness (Which was the case with psychoanalysis) but also the purely theoretical validity of scientific objectivity to which the sciences laid claim.<sup>16</sup>

Gadamer further argued:

Once we presuppose that there is no such thing as a fully transparent text or a completely exhaustive interest in the explaining and construing of texts, then all perspectives relative to the art and theory of interpretation are shifted. Then it becomes more important to trace the interests guiding us with respect to a given subject matter than simply to interpret the evident content of a statement. One of the more fertile insights of modern hermeneutics is that every statement has to be seen as a response to a question and that the only way to understand a statement is to get hold of the question to which the statement is an answer. This prior question has its own direction of meanings and is by no means to be gotten hold of through a network of background motivations but rather in reaching out to the broader contexts of meaning encompassed by the question and deposited in the statement.<sup>17</sup>

The interpretation of a work of art, as not just as an object standing, passively, front us, was by Martin Heidegger examined in “The Origin of the Work of Art.”

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14 Ibid., p. 105.

15 Ibid., p. 14.

16 Ibid., p. 100.

17 Ibid., p. 105-106.

The world is never an object that stands before us and can be seen. World is the ever-non-objective to which we are subject as long as the paths of birth and death, blessing and curse keep us transported into Being.

Heidegger pointed out that it was art that made artist and work possible. For him, the work was the origin of the artist, and the artist was defined by his work which was the source of the artist.

The artist is the origin of the work. The work is the origin of the artist. Neither is without the other. Nevertheless, neither is the sole support of the other. In themselves and in their interrelations artist and work are each of them by virtue of a third thing which is prior to both, namely, that which also gives artist and work of art their names, art.<sup>18</sup>

The question of the origin of the artwork was presented by Heidegger as a question concerned the essence of art and the conception of truth in art was evaluated not on the basis of its correspondence to whatever was being represented, but it was envisioned to something that rose from the work of art. The truth of a work of art was that it disclosed the being of the work and it was part of the nature of art to disclose the ontological world in which it was created. For Heidegger, the work as work set up a world, and the work opened the open region of the world. The horizon or context of the world placed "the setting-into-work of truth" in which the work of art functioned. The appreciation experience of a work of art let happened the truth openness in the work of art. The appreciators as preservers of the work of art were essentials as well as the creators, and art originated both the creator and the preserver. Heidegger claimed that "the world worlds," it meant that the world was not static and the same dynamic character was true of the work of art. The existing world however, at the moment of interpretation, was important as the work of art and had be interpreted within the existing context. With his "art lets truth originate," Heidegger claimed that "to originate" was what the word origin meant, and because the question of the origin of the work of art was the origin of the historical existence of the creator and of the preserver, Heidegger, with a circular move, opened this question to the origin of the human historical existence and to the question of what was time as a way of "being-in-the-world" by being temporal with respect to its Being.

Being futural as we have characterized it is, as the authentic 'how' of being temporal, that way of Being of Dasein in which and out of which it gives itself its time. Maintaining myself alongside my past in running ahead I have time....<sup>19</sup>

In *Being and Time*, with "to the things themselves" he expressed his conception of phenomenology as a mode of grasping objects "in such a way," in which they *show themselves from themselves*.

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<sup>18</sup> Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art", p. 143, 1993.

<sup>19</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Concept of Time* p. 14E, 1992.

Phenomenology' neither designates the object of its researches, nor characterizes the subject-matter thus comprised. The word merely informs us of the "how" with which *what is* to be treated in this science gets exhibited and handled. To have a science 'of' phenomena means to grasp its objects *in such a way* that everything about them which is up for discussion must be treated by exhibiting it directly and demonstrating it directly.<sup>20</sup>

To grasp "in such a way" an event which was taking place in its own time span and which was already becoming a future event, it brings time and space together. In these circumstances we were forced to re-think what time was. Heidegger in *The Concept of Time* pointed out that "Time too is nothing. It persists merely as a consequence of the events taking place in it."<sup>21</sup> Heidegger further argued that time was that "now" within which events took place.

What is the now? Is the now at my disposal? Am I the now? Is every other person the now? Then time would indeed be I myself, and every other person would be time. And in our being with one another we would be time - everyone and no one.<sup>22</sup>

Heidegger's temporal analysis of human existence had shown that understanding was not just one of the various possible behaviours of the subject, but the mode of the Being of being-there, within its finiteness and historicity, and Hermeneutics hence denoted the whole of its experience of the world in which the work of art constantly renewed the mode of being experienced.

In *Reflections on the Problem of Relevance*, Alfred Schutz claimed that such a dialectic process of understanding, as "a specific attention à la vie," was sedimented in previously experiences, interconnected into an "experiential framework" or context and from which depended the horizon of the understanding.

It seems a precondition of any thematization that the experience constituting this theme has its own history of which it is the sedimentation. Any one of these experiences inherently refers to previous experiences from which it is derived and to which it refers. I am, thus, at any time in a position to question any of these as to its genesis or historical origin. In other words, each theme refers to elements which formerly have been within the field of our consciousness....<sup>23</sup>

Understanding, for Schutz depended from the "actual interest" of the subject, as a form of relevance, which in turn depended from the situation in which the problem was raised and from the system of problems to which that specific problem belonged.

It is the set of "actual interests," which itself depends upon the autobiographical and situational circumstances of the individual that limit what is commonly called

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20 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 59, 1962.

21 Martin Heidegger, *The Concept of Time*, p. 3E, 1992.

22 Ibid., p.5E.

23 Alfred Schutz, *Reflections on the Problem of Relevance*, p. 14, 1970.

the level of investigation (that is, the borderline up to which a segment of the world has to be put into question)...<sup>24</sup>

Each of us, for Schutz, had a “stock of knowledge at hand” which characterized the multiple layers of meaning of our own social world, “our own system of reference.”

The interpretatively relevant moment of both - the experience to be interpreted and the scheme of interpretation (i.e. the applicable previous experiences as found in our stock of knowledge at hand) - are integrated into systems, and systems, at least as to their type, as well as the typical ways in which they are applied, are within the stock of what we have already experienced. Such already acquired history has its genetic and autobiographically determined history and is itself the sediment of habitually acquired practice.<sup>25</sup>

Schutz claimed that our knowledge was derived and distributed socially and a small part of it and of our stock of knowledge at hand had originated from our own personal experience, but the greater part of it was socially communicated to us. He argued that there was not such a thing as an isolated experience without a context, a social world, a system of reference:

Any experience is experience within a context. Any present experience receives its meaning from the sum total of past experiences which led to the present one and is also connected by more or less empty anticipations to future experiences, the occurrence of which may or may not fulfil these expectations.<sup>26</sup>

Schutz in *The Phenomenology of the Social World* argued that the problem of the interpretative relevances in the process of understanding could not be taken as isolated but was interrelated with others, forming a complex system, within systems of problems. He further claimed that between the interpreter and his reflective vision there was a social world which played with decisions relevant in the interpretative act.

Postmodern pluralistic interpretations of “art” and “text” and “ethnoreality” have undermined the Western modern belief that there was a singular truth as well as a singular ground for art, moving contemporary artists to redefine their role and the significance of art, as it was pointed out in the brochure of the symposium on *The Dematerialization of Art*, organized by the International Center for Advanced Studies in Art at New York University, in 1987.

Postmodern thought points to a total redefinition of the role of the artist and the significance of art. Scientific breakthroughs have presented not just a new version of reality but also of time and space. The body, mind and senses are no longer the only means by which we experience the world. What significance this will have for art cannot yet be said but we are clearly on the brink of the most extraordinary leap in human perception.

Jean-Francois Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* claimed in act in the contemporary culture and society a process of *delegitimation* of the Western

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 88.

knowledge, which he argued has lost its objective and scientific credibility. This crisis for Lyotard caused an erosion of the separation among scientific disciplines and, through the loss of the control by the dominant power of the territory of the knowledge, new realms and scientific breakthroughs were originate.

The classical dividing lines between the various fields of science are thus called into question - disciplines disappear, overlappings occur at the border between sciences, and from these new territories are born. The speculative hierarchy of learning gives way to an immanent and, as it were, "flat" network of areas of inquiry, the respective frontiers of which are in constant flux. The old "faculties" splinter into institutes and foundations of all kinds, and the universities lose their function of speculative legitimation.<sup>27</sup>

Lyotard further argued that this delegitimation has opened the road to the emergence of new frontiers and of new languages, leading to the current postmodern theory attacking to the legitimacy of the Western dominant thought. He argued that postmodernism has opened new territory to art and to the artists by questioning the modern art theory.

The postmodern would be that which, in the modern, put forward the unrepresentable in presentation itself; that which denies itself the solace of good forms, the consensus of a taste which would make it possible to share collectively the nostalgia for the unattainable; that which searches for new presentations, not in order to enjoy them but in order to impart a stronger sense of the unrepresentable. A postmodern artist or writer is in the position of a philosopher: the text he writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by preestablished rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determining judgment, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work. Those rules and categories are what the work of art itself is looking for. The artist and the writer, then, are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what *will have been done*.<sup>28</sup>

The postmodern thought and deconstruction theory have challenged the modernist tradition. *Deconstruction* in art allowed a new pluralism in aesthetics and expanded the artist's cultural domain.

But by relating it to something to which it has no relation, is one not immediately permitting oneself to be encoded by philosophical logos, to stand under its banner? certainly, except by writing this relationship following the mode of a nonrelationship about which it would be demonstrated simultaneously or obliquely-on the philosophical surface of the discourse-that no philosopheme will ever have been prepared to conform to it or translate it.<sup>29</sup>

Derrida argued that there was a "reappropriation" shift in the theory of interpretation which attacked the existing limits and distinctions by bringing inside what was outside and viceversa.

How to interpret - but here interpretation can no longer be a theory or discursive practice of philosophy - the strange and unique property of a

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<sup>27</sup> Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, p. 39, 1979.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>29</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, p. xiv, 1982.

discourse that organizes the *economy* of its representation, the law of its proper weave, such that its *outside* is never its outside, never surprises it, such that the logic of its heteronomy still reasons from within the vault of its autism? For this is how *Being* is understood: it's proper. It assures without let-up the *relevant movement* of reappropriation. Can one then *pass this* singular limit which is not a limit, which no more separates the inside from the outside than it assures their permeable and transparent continuity?<sup>30</sup>

Derrida further questioned the resistance of the philosophical discourse to deconstruction, in reference of two kinds of appropriating mastery, hierarchy and envelopment.

It is the infinite mastery that the agency of Being (and of the) proper seems to assure it; this mastery permits it to interiorize every limit as *being* and as being its own *proper*. To exceed it, by the same token, and therefore to preserve it in itself. Now, in its mastery and its discourse on mastery (for mastery is a signification that we still owe to it), philosophical power always seems to combine *two types*. On the one hand, a *hierarchy*: the particular sciences and regional ontologies are subordinated to general ontology, and then to fundamental ontology. From this point of view all the questions that solicit Being and the proper upset the order that submits the determined field of science, its formal objects or materials (logic and mathematics, or semantics, linguistic, rhetoric, science of literature, political economy, psychoanalysis, etc.), to philosophical jurisdiction. In principle, then, these questions are prior to the constitution of a rigorous, systematic, and orderly theoretical discourse in these domains (which therefore are no longer simply domains, regions circumscribed, delimited, and assigned from outside and above). On the other hand, an *envelopment*: the whole is implied, in the speculative mode of reflection and expression, in each part. Homogenous, concentric, and circulating indefinitely, the movement of the whole is remarked in the partial determinations of the system or encyclopedia, without the status of that remark, and the partitioning of the part, giving rise to any general deformation of the space.<sup>31</sup>

Derrida challenged the *logocentric* tendency of the Western thought to refer "all questions of the meaning of representations," to a singular founding source, which allowed, within an hierarchical view, to identify a presence of an "author" behind them, as well as to imagine an artist fully in possess of his own art, as it was argued by Victor Burgin in *The End of Art Theory. Criticism and Postmodernity*.

When we consider what Derrida calls "logocentrism - the belief that all questions of meaning are to be referred to a privileged origin - together "humanism" - the view of man as in full and spontaneous possession of himself and of his own expression - we can see one of the reasons why painting continues to be so very highly valued, not only in conservative aesthetics....<sup>32</sup>

## *Artworld and Contemporary Changes*

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. xvi.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. xix-xx

<sup>32</sup> Victor Burgin, *The End of Art Theory. Criticism and Postmodernity*, p. 33, 1986.

The individual identity of the artist and the commodity identity of the work of art are critical concepts in the contemporary art world debate. In order to debate art theories, art critics and philosophers of art usually referred to an "artworld," a kind of social world made by the history of art and by art theories.

To see something as art requires something the eye cannot decry--an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld<sup>33</sup>

Arthur Danto in "The Artworld" claimed that what made "art" was its artistic identification within an artworld, within a certain theory of art, which, belonging to the history of art, in turn created an artworld. Using as an example the case of the Andy Warhol's Brillo Boxes, Danto argued that, because they were made by a person with an "is" of artistic identification belonging to the artworld, it was this identity that made them "art." He further argued that "...and the Brillo box of the artworld may be just the Brillo box of the real one, separated and united by the "is" of artistic identification."<sup>34</sup> Danto pointed out the discrimination between a Warhol's Brillo box and a Brillo box in the stockroom of a supermarket consisted in a certain theory of art that brought the first up in the artworld, and "keeps it from collapsing into the real object."

What in the end makes the difference between a Brillo box and a work of art consisting of a Brillo Box is a certain theory of art. It is the theory that takes it up into the world of art, and keeps it from collapsing into the real object which it is (in a sense of is other than that of artistic identification). Of course, without the theory, one is unlikely to see it as art, and in order to see it as part of the artworld, one must have mastered a good deal of artistic theory as well as a considerable amount of the history of recent New York painting. It could not have been art fifty years ago...It is the role of artistic theories, these days as always, to make the artworld, and art, possible. It would, I should think, never have occurred to the painters of Lascaux that they were producing *art* on those walls. Not unless there were Neolithic aestheticians."<sup>35</sup>

For Danto, because "art" was possible "through an atmosphere compounded of artistic theories and of the history of recent and remote painting," it derived that "art" belonged to the "artworld." For Danto was the "is" of artistic identification belonging to the artworld, that after it was mastered by the artist transformed a simple work in a work of art. The identification of this special "is" of artistic identification was by Danto further pointed out:

There is an *is* that figures prominently in statements concerning artworks which is not the *is* of either identity or predication; nor is it the *is* of existence, of identification, or some special *is* made up to serve a philosophic end. Nevertheless, it is in common usage, and is readily mastered by children. It is the sense of *is* in accordance with which a child, shown a circle and a triangle and asked which is him and which his sister, will point to the triangle saying

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33 Arthur Danto, "The Artworld", p. 162, 1987

34 Ibid., p. 164

35 Ibid., p. 164.

"That is me"; or, in response to my question, the person next to me points to the man in purple and says "That one is Lear"; or in the gallery I point, for my companion's benefit, to a spot in the painting before us and say "That white dab is Icarus." We do not mean, in these instances, that whatever is pointed to stands for, or represents, what it is said to be, for the *word* 'Icarus' stands for or represents Icarus: yet I would not in the same sense of *is* point to the word and say "That is Icarus." The sentence "That *a* is *b*" is perfectly compatible with "That *a* is not *b*" when the first employs this sense of *is* and the second employs some other, though *a* and *b* are used nonambiguously throughout. Often, indeed, the truth of the first *requires* the truth of the second. The first, in fact, is incompatible with "That *a* is not *b*" only when the *is* is used nonambiguously throughout. For want of a word I shall designate this the *is of artistic identification*; in each case in which it is used, the *a* stands for some specific physical property of, or physical part of, an object; and finally, it is a necessary condition for something to be an artwork that some part or property of it be designable by the subject of a sentence that employs this special "*is*".<sup>36</sup>

Danto claimed that in the 20th century the question of "what is art?" became urgent because the existing art models collapsed and it became more visible the inadequacy of the art theories.

Now if we look at the art of our recent past in these terms, grandiose as they are, what we see is something which depends more and more upon theory for its existence as art, so that theory is not something external to a world it seeks to understand: hence in understanding its object it has to understand itself.<sup>37</sup>

George Dickie in "Defining Art:II" identified "art" for its institutional nature and he used the term "artworld" to refer to the broad social framework in which have place works of art.

The artworld consists of a bundle of systems: theatre, painting, sculpture, literature, music and so on; each of which furnishes an institutional background for the conferring of the status on objects within its domain. There is no limit to the number of systems which can be brought under the generic conception of art and each of the major systems contains further sub-systems. These features of the artworld provide the elasticity whereby creativity of even the most radical sort can be accommodated.<sup>38</sup>

For Dickie, the artworld was made by an infinity of systems and subsystems, which operated as institutional framework for presenting works and "conferring" upon them the status of candidates for appreciation as "works of art." Within this setting, the artworld was conferring this status of candidate for appreciation. But who had the status to be a candidate for appreciation?

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 159.

<sup>37</sup> Arthur Danto, "The End of Art", p. 31, 1984.

<sup>38</sup> George Dickie, "Defining Art: II", p. 124, 1973.

A work of art in the classificatory sense is (1) an artifact (2) upon which some person or persons acting on behalf of a certain social institution (the artworld) has conferred the status of candidate for appreciation.<sup>39</sup>

Dickie admitted that the notion of conferring status within the framework of the artworld was “excessively vague.”

Certainly this notion is not as clear-cut as is the conferring of status within the legal system...The counterparts in the artworld to specified procedures and lines of authority are nowhere codified, and the artworld carries on its business at the level of customary practice. Still there is a practice and this defines a social institution, a social institution need not have a formally established constitution,...in order to exist and have the capacity to confer status...Assuming that the existence of the artworld has been established or at least been made plausible, the problem is now to see how status is conferred by this institution. My thesis is that analogous to the way in which a person is certified as qualified for office, or a person acquires that status of wise man within a community, an artifact can acquire the status of candidate for appreciation within the social system which may be called "the artworld." <sup>40</sup>

But how it was possible to recognize that this status has been conferred to some candidates? For Dickie it was shown by their appearances in galleries, theatres, museums, etc., recognized institutional places of the artworld. It was a social property of the artworld and the artworld conferred this status. Dickie, arguing about the treating of an artifact as a candidate for appreciation, raised the case of an action made by a salesman of plumbing supplies compared with Duchamp's entering in an art show with a urinal, labelled *Fountain*, and with the Walter de Maria's naming as “art” a stainless-steel bar. He argued that what made a thing a work of “art” was the important difference between “placing before” and “conferring the status of candidate for appreciation” which made possible that Duchamp's *Fountain* was not just a misplaced urinal because of its artistic identification, in this case, conferred by the artist Duchamp.

The difference is that Duchamp's action took place within the institutional setting of the artworld and the plumbing salesman's action took place outside of it. The salesman could do what Duchamp did, that is, convert a urinal into a work of art, but such a thing probably would not occur to him...Walter de Maria has in the case of one of his works even gone through the emotions-no doubt as a burlesque-of using a procedure which is used by many legal and some nonlegal institutions-the procedures of licensing. His High Energy Bar (a stainless-steel bar) is accompanied by a certificate which bears the name of the work and states that the bar is a work of art only when the certificate is present. <sup>41</sup>

The institutional context of “art” within the artworld setting and the philosophical theories of aesthetics have never been of more crucial importance in the understanding and making “art” in the twentieth century.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 126.

Theodor Adorno in *Prism* attacked the institutional role of the “critics” within the setting of art in the market of intellectual products of the ruling mind of the bourgeois society.

When the critics in their playground – art - no longer understand what they judge and enthusiastically permit themselves to be degraded to propagandists or censors, it is the old dishonesty of trade fulfilling itself in their fate. The prerogatives of information and position permit them to express their opinion as if it were objectivity. But it is solely the objectivity of the ruling mind.<sup>42</sup>

The crises of art in the beginning of the XX century was pointed out by Walter Benjamin in “The Work of Art in the Age of Technical Reproducibility” as a consequence of the negative rising of “art for the sake of art” and the decreasing of the work of art in social significance.

With the advent of the first truly revolutionary means of reproduction, photography, simultaneously with the rise of socialism, art sensed the approaching crisis which has become evident a century later. At the time, art reacted with the doctrine of *l'art pour l'art*, that is, with a theology of art. This gave rise to what might be called a negative theology in the form of the idea of “pure” art, which not only denied any social function of art but also any categorizing by subject matter.<sup>43</sup>

The concern of cultural and artistic renewal was historically felt by the avant-garde as attack to the bourgeois institution of art and against aestheticism and its concept of autonomous art, challenging the separation of art from its context and bridging artists and public together as integral components of the work of art.

Lambert Zuidervaart in “The Social Significance of Autonomous Art: Adorno and Burger” argued that avant-garde movements rejected both bourgeois life praxis and aestheticism. The avant-garde tried both “to organize a new life praxis from a basis in art” and to eliminate autonomous art as an institution. Zuidervaart, claiming that the self-referentiality of autonomous art might make truth possible in some works and prevent this disclosure in others, argued further against the support of Adorno for autonomous art and its self-referential import.

In Adorno's account, autonomy and social character mark the position of the work of art within advanced capitalist societies...The autonomy of art works is conditioned by society as a whole, but their autonomy is itself a precondition for truth in art. The notions of autonomy and truth, in turn, provide the impetus for Adorno's claims about social significance. Although Adorno locates the social significance of the art work in both its import and its social functions, he understands these social functions as primarily cognitive functions, and he regards their significance as directly dependent on the import of the work.

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<sup>42</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *Prism*, p. 20, 1981.

<sup>43</sup> Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Technical Reproducibility”, p. 224, 1969.

Although import consists of both social content and truth content, truth provides the ultimate criterion for the social significance of the work's import....<sup>44</sup>

Zuidervaart pointed out that the final import of the work of autonomous art was "distance from life praxis," a complete detachment of art from life. Against this detachment, he claimed the truth and social significance of "heteronomous art."

By "heteronomous art" I mean art that has not become relatively independent from other institutions of bourgeois society and whose products are produced and received to accomplish purposes that are directly served by other institutions. The term covers both traditional folk art and contemporary popular art.<sup>45</sup>

Zuidervaart argued that the avant-garde, by attacking the institution of autonomous art to eliminate it, and rejecting both bourgeois life praxis and aestheticism, in order to disclose human aspirations, helped to understand the need of a more open scenery where to disclose their "art."

"Avant-gardiste manifestations" undermined the notion of art's intended purpose, negated the categories of individual creation and individual reception, and challenged the distinction between producer and recipient.<sup>46</sup>

To make possible such an attack to the normativity of autonomous art, he introduced a "complex normativity" on which a heteronomous art could operate.

"Complex normativity" means a network of norms, no one of which has preeminence, and some of which apply to phenomena outside the institution of autonomous art. Some of the norms could apply to the functions of works within an institution of art. Other could apply to the functions of works within other institutions.<sup>47</sup>

The individuality of the artist and purity of autonomous art, which characterized the aesthetics of the Modernism, instead of being really free or pure from any particular other interest which was not of art, on the contrary, was by Zuidervaart claimed to serve to consolidate the institutional bourgeois control of art through a process of self-referentiality.

The process and structures that have come to characterize autonomous art are such that the products in this institution tend to be self-referential. This self-referential tendency has become increasingly evident in the twentieth century. For products of autonomous art the primary means of serving this institution's purposes are to affirm and criticize other products of autonomous art. The functions of these products in other institutions tend to be secondary means that are subservient to self-referential functions.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Lambert Zuidervaart, "The Social Significance of Autonomous Art: Adorno and Burger", *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 48, 65-66, 1990.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

Clement Greenberg in "Modernist Painting" claimed the *purity* of the self-definition of art as an independent domain.

It quickly emerged that the unique and proper area of competence of each art coincided with all that was unique to the nature of its medium. The task of self-criticism became to eliminate from the effects of each art any and every effect that might conceivably be borrowed from or by the medium of any other art. Thereby each art would be rendered "pure," and in its "purity" find the guarantee of its standards of quality as well as of its independence. "Purity" meant self-definition...<sup>49</sup>

On the contrary, David Novitz in "The Integrity of Aesthetics" argued that it was false to keep the idea that aesthetic values were independent and pure of particular economic, religious, gender, production interests and that each of them tried to advance certain view of art and undermining others.

Different social structures serve different interests, and it is well known that not all interests are served equally. Much the same is true of that cluster of social relations that is called the art world. It too embodies and reflects (in the form of criteria of value) certain artistic and social interests while subverting or undermining others. This is why it is false to maintain that aesthetic values are pure and totally unmediated by economic, moral, intellectual, religious or gender interests. For all of these reasons, then, any attempt to explain aesthetic judgements as devoid of, and wholly uninfluenced by, the concerns and interests of everyday life is bound to fail.<sup>50</sup>

During modernism, aesthetics becomes a central component in the constitution of the ruling Western bourgeois ideologies, and Terry Eagleton in "The Integrity of Aesthetics" foresaw in it the emergence of a form of Western cultural imprisonment or theoretical slavery of "art" from a not well defined ideology of aesthetics.

The emergence of the aesthetic as a theoretical category is closely bound up with the material process by which cultural production, at an early stage of bourgeois society, becomes 'autonomous' - autonomous, that is, of the various social functions which it has traditionally served. Once artefacts become commodities in the market place, they exist for nothing and nobody in particular, and can consequently be rationalized, ideologically speaking, as existing entirely and gloriously for themselves. It is this notion of autonomy or self-referentiality which the new discourse of aesthetics is centrally concerned to elaborate; ..that art is thereby conveniently sequestered from all other social practices, to become an isolated enclave within which the dominant social order can find an idealized refuge from its own actual values of competitiveness, exploitation and material possessiveness.<sup>51</sup>

Charles J. Lumsden in "Aesthetics" foresaw aesthetics becoming in the '90s what ethics were in the '80s, namely a new source of ideas to verify sociobiology matters usually considered as being part exclusively of the philosophical discourse.

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<sup>49</sup> Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting", p. 102, 1966.

<sup>50</sup> David Novitz, "The Integrity of Aesthetics", *The Journal of Aesthetic and Art Criticism* 48, p. 19, 1990.

<sup>51</sup> Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, p. 9, 1990.

Thus, until cognitive science abandons the clockwork-in-the-head tack and begin to rejoin, as it were, deduction with passion, a truly profound understanding of aesthetic judgement (and the fights it causes) simply must wait. The wait may not be too long. Novel ideas about microcognition and parallel distributed

processing, about thought as lived metaphor, and about the passions as astute guides to judgment are breaking deductive logic's stranglehold on mind theory. Now there is room for a "calculus of felt distinctions" that makes possible a newly resynthesized science of mind in which feeling, understanding, appreciating, and contemplating are all of one piece - as are we.<sup>52</sup>

Lumsden, by underling that "*we are bred of both genomic and cultural activity,*" further argued that art was an evolutionary experience, independent from any functionalist theory.

Evolutionists, including myself, have tried again and again to put the aesthetic experience at the disposal of the fittest, suggesting by turns that it allows us to judge commodious environments in which to camp and hunt; that it is an efficient and effective means of impressing values and ideas upon the uninformed (or unconvinced), that it is a means of using culture to gain the edge in competing for valuable resources....Functional speculations about service to genetic fitness are as a lot charming, and may sound more than a little plausible to an ear accustomed to Darwinian refrains. Yet , as a lot, they are all bottom-heavy, directing our attention to what serves genes, and genome activity, as we search for understanding about art. So they miss entirely the basic evolutionary point of our species; we are as we are, *what we are*, not because we are genetic creatures but *because we are bred of both genomic and cultural activity*: biocultural organisms.<sup>53</sup>

Howard Gardner in *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* claimed for "art," within a cognitive perspective, a spatial-time intelligence value, able to increase the perception.

While one might underestimate the component of spatial thinking in the sciences, the centrality of spatial thinking in the visual arts is self-evident. The enterprise of painting and sculpture involve an exquisite sensitivity to the visual and spatial world as well as an ability to recreate it in fashioning a work of art.<sup>54</sup>

A cognitive value for "art" was also claimed by Jerome S. Bruner in "Art as a Mode of Knowing." He argued that "art" is a form of knowing coming from "the creation of a stream of metaphoric activity," different from the mode of knowing of science.

The elegant rationality of science and the metaphoric non-rationality of art operate with deeply different grammars; perhaps they even represent a profound complementarity. For in the experience of art, we connect by a grammar of metaphor, one that defies the rational methods of the linguist and the psychologist.<sup>55</sup>

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52 Charles J. Lumsden, "Aesthetics", 259, 1991.

53 Ibid., p. 264.

54 Howard Gardner, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, p. 195-196, 1983.

55 Jerome S. Bruner, "Art as a Mode of Knowing", *On Knowing. Essays for the Left Hand*, p. 74, 1971.

Bruner described this artistic mode of knowing as “the conversion of impulse into the experience of art made by simultaneous presence of several streams of fringe association” in which an active knowing function is played by the beholder in fusing and connecting inner experiences.

John Dewey in *Art as Experience* claimed that “art” was able to advance human development.

A conception of fine art that sets out from its connection with discovered qualities of ordinary experience will be able to indicate the factors and forces that favour the normal development of common human activities into matters of artistic value. It will also be able to point out those conditions that arrest its normal growth.<sup>56</sup>

The survival vital need of a living being for Dewey was bound up with interchanges with its environment, which “reach to the roots of the aesthetic in experience.”

If the gap between organism and environment is too wide, the creature dies. If its activity is not enhanced by the temporary alienation, it merely subsists. Life grows when a temporary falling out is a transition to a more extensive balance of the energies of the organism with those of the conditions under which it lives. These biological commonplaces are something more than that; they reach to the roots of the aesthetic in experience.<sup>57</sup>

Dewey further claimed a close relationship between the nature of experience and related conditions of life.

The nature of experience is determined by the essential conditions of life. While man is other than bird and beast, he shares basic vital functions with them and has to make the same basal adjustments if he is to continue the process of living. Having the same vital needs, man derives the means by which he breathes, moves, looks and listen, the very brain with which he coordinates his senses and his movements, from his animal forbears. The organs with which he maintains himself in being are not of himself alone, but by the grace of struggles and achievements of a long line of animal ancestry.<sup>58</sup>

For Marcel Duchamp in “The Creative Act” the experience of art was closed associated to the experience of the spectator.

The creative act takes another aspect when the spectator experiences the phenomenon of transmutation; through the change from inert matter into a work of art, an actual transubstantiation has taken place, and the role of the spectator is to determine the weight of the work on the aesthetic scale. All in all, the creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his contribution to the creative act.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> John Dewey , *Art as Experience*, p. 11, 1980.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>59</sup> Marcel Duchamp, “The Creative Act”, p. 25-26, 1966.

In the '60s, the reunification of things and thoughts and the breaking of the distinction of function between thing's makers and thinkers or thought's makers was made up as a contemporary art issue by conceptualist artists.

Ursula Meyer in *Conceptual Art* pointed out the shifting from the dualist conception of perception and conception in earlier art, which questioned as no longer useful the presence of the middleman figure of the art critic.

The function of the critic and the function of the artist have been traditionally divided; the artist's concern was the production of the work and the critic's was its evaluation and interpretation. During the past several years a group of young artists evolved the idiom of Conceptual Art, which eliminated this division. Conceptual artists take over the role of the critic in terms of framing their own propositions, ideas, and concepts.<sup>60</sup>

In *Conceptual Art. An American Perspective*, Robert C. Morgan described crosscurrent experimental forms and intermedia hybrid activities made by conceptualist artists as a reaction against the dominance of the modernist formalism in art.

The attacks made by Conceptualist on Formalist aesthetics had a significant impact in widening the boundaries of contemporary art, as evidenced by the emergence of Pluralism in the 1970s.<sup>61</sup>

Lucy Lippard in *Changing. Essays in Art Criticism* claimed that the task of the contemporary art criticism shifted since the '60s, by taking a closer understanding of the positions of the artists and supplying flexible criteria able to deal with the rapid transformations of art, instead to follow rigid formalist criteria in the description of a new work of art.

In the midst of the flux and transitional confusions that characterize advanced art, a contemporary art critic's major preoccupation must be how to establish criteria flexible enough to encompass rapid and radical change. He must decide how to handle a change of mind (his own as well as the artist's), how to distinguish between innovation and novelty, derivation and originality. The "tradition of the new," by now taken for granted, has drastically altered the roles of both critic and artist, and accordingly, the critic's relationship to the artist has also changed.<sup>62</sup>

Lucy Lippard foresaw these rapid changes in contemporary art with aesthetic values not based solely on consistency but on flexibility, as element of the originality of a work of art. New art forms and art movements started in the '60s to challenge art critics and aestheticians with rapid changes and forcing them to a constant participation more than a distant interpretation of the contemporary process of art in order to understand "the idea in the air" and the related "lattice" of interrelating unlike elements of the new works of art, as Lucy Lippard claimed.

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<sup>60</sup> Ursula Meyer, *Conceptual Art*, p. viii, 1972.

<sup>61</sup> Robert C. Morgan, *Conceptual Art. An American Perspective*, p. xiii, 1994.

<sup>62</sup> Lucy Lippard, *Changing. Essays in Art Criticism*, p. 23, 1971.

Today movements are just that; they have no time to stagnate before they are replaced. Much current art is made in reply to issues raised by previous art. This self-critical aspect need not be strictly evolutionary, but can instead be seen as a continuous lattice of interrelating unlike elements. The connecting grid consists of the ideas and articulations that a new art can force from a constant observer - a substantiation of the "idea in the air," and their relation to the unlike objects - the art. The critical lattice (a four-dimensional one, including the time element) shows not only how the various arts looked when they were first seen, but their interrelationships and possibilities at the time; it can chart the structural growth of these possibilities. A style or so-called movement emerges, crystallizes, splits into several directions over this period. As it does, the critic too finds himself divided.<sup>63</sup>

Lippard pointed out how during the '60s the loss of interest by a significant number of artists in the work of art as a physical object, as well as a materialized economic commodity symbol, provoked a "dematerialization of art," through conceptual art works which emphasised the non visual creative thinking process of "art as idea" and "art as action," which rejected the physical object as a strategic move to reject the economic materialism of the art market built upon objects, since dealers do not sell art-as-idea. She claimed that this "disintegration of art" marked the introduction into visual and performing arts of elements of disorder, change, and chaos, which created an intermedia revolution implying the concept of entropy in art, "in a negation of actively ordering parts in favor of the presentation of a whole."

When works of art, like words, are signs that convey ideas, they are not things in themselves but symbols or representatives of things. Such a work is a medium rather than an end in itself or "art-as-art." The medium need not be the message, and some ultra-conceptual art seems to declare that the conventional art media are no longer adequate as media to be messages in themselves.<sup>64</sup>

Lippard argued on the need to not confuse the "nonvisual" with the "nonvisible" where the conceptual focus might be "entirely hidden or unimportant to the success or failure of the work."

A "nonvisual structure" is nonvisual because it does not inspire the usual response to art; it does not make compositional sense, just as the nonrelational primary painting or structure disregards compositional balance. In this way it may incorporate the irrational as well as the rational, disorder as well as order.<sup>65</sup>

During the twentieth century, a reflexive concern characterized the art avant-garde movements, it was pointed out by Barbara Myerhoff and Jay Ruby in *A Crack in the Mirror: Reflexive Perspective in Anthropology* that "all ask their audience/viewers to become self-aware about their definitions and expectations about art."<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 260.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 273.

<sup>66</sup> Barbara Myerhoff and Jay Ruby, *A Crack in the Mirror: Reflexive Perspective in Anthropology*, p. 12, 1982.

In *The New Art* by Gregory Battcock, speaking about the alchemies in art of the '60s, Allan Kaprow pointed out how the idea of interpenetration of art and the external world raised up from him and several other artists, in the context of a new kind of art form in the open use of the total environment, a new fluid spatial situation with the direct and spontaneous involvement of the public. A new name was required for this new art form, which later was called "Happening."

Michael Kirby in *Happenings* pointed out how many distortions has occurred in the dissemination of information about "happenings."

"There is a prevalent mythology about Happenings. It has been said, for example, that they are theatrical performances in which there is no script and "things just happen." It has been said that there is little or no planning, control, or purpose. It has been said that there are no rehearsals. Titillating to some, the object of easy scorn to others, provocative and mysterious to a few, these myths are widely known and believed. But they are entirely false." <sup>67</sup>

Lucy Lippard in *Mixed Blessing. New Art in a Multicultural America* foresaw an unavoidable demand of change for the contemporary artworld coming from new emerging cross-cultural social issues.

It is only recently that the ways different cultures cross and fail to cross in the United States have come under scrutiny. More or less taken for granted for two hundred years, the concept of the monotone meltdown pot, which assumed that everyone would end up white, is giving way to a salad, or an *ajiacó*-the flavourful mix of a Latin American soup in which the ingredients retain their own forms and flavours. This model is fresher and healthier; the colors are varied; the taste is often unfamiliar. The recipe calls for an undertermined simmering period of social acclimation. Demographics alone demand that a society change as its cultural makeup changes. But the contemporary artworld, a somewhat rebellious satellite of the dominant culture, is better equipped to swallow cross-cultural influences than to savor them. Its presumed inventiveness occurs mainly within given formal and contextual parameters determined by those who control the markets and institutions.<sup>68</sup>

Lippard further pointed out how postmodern thought made broader the contemporary art panorama by forcing cross-cultural exchanges and changing the oppressive continuity of a Western hegemonic civilization.

Postmodern analysis has raised important questions about power, desire, and meaning that are applicable to cross-cultural exchange (although there are times when it seems to analyze everything to shreds, wallowing in textual paranoia.) The most crucial of these insights is the necessity to avoid thinking of other cultures as existing passively in the past, while the present is the property of an active "Western civilization." Both women and artists of color are struggling to be perceived as subject rather than object, independent participants rather than socially constructed pawn.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Michael Kirby, *Happenings*, p. 9, 1966.

<sup>68</sup> Lucy Lippard, *Mixed Blessing. New Art in a Multicultural America*, p. 5-6, 1990.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.