



Working papers : the artist as critical consciousness
by Larry Eugene Shelby

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF APPLIED ARTS Approved: airman , "Exaiftining Committee
Montana State University
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Abstract:

I. An Inquiry into the Definition of Art and Artist. This paper inquires into the nature and relevance of ex-isting definition of "Art" and "Artist." There is an analogy between the manner which art as an institution and a dictionary definition function. If language (or art) is to remain viable, it must be open to the continual revision necessary as part of the constantly changing social environment.

In the sense that a dictionary is a reference book, an "inbuilt" dictionary is part of each of our mental equipment. The inbuilt dictionary is best altered through the educational system. Lexical items which have become irrelevant to the situations which they are to describe should be restructured.

II. On the De-Definition/Re-Definition of Art. This essay is a rebuttal to Harold Rosenberg's article "On The De-Definition of Art" chosen because it is typical of arguments for defining art by morphological characteristics (i.e., formalist criticism). Approaches of this type have failed to deal with questions raised by "conceptual" artists regarding the existence, function and future of art, and, by implication, the education of the artist.

III. Art: An Open Textured Concept. A condensed version of Morris Weitz' essay "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics" was provided. As a theory of aesthetics it is quite sufficient but Weitz presupposes that art is always of an aesthetic nature. This supposition is examined and shown to be incorrect.

Weitz pointed out that art cannot be defined as containing a true definition or set of "necessary and sufficient properties." However, he contends that works of art have "strands of similarities" and this entails deducing 'art' from observable data.

There is no room in Weitz' category for the work of art which operates outside of traditional paradigms, Perhaps, then, it is not the object but rather the context which is significant. A thing is art because it functions meaningfully within an art context not because it is categorized by name.

IV. A Prolegomenon to a Radical Praxis in Art Education. This essay consists of five (5) sections. The first deals with the theory/practice disjunction in both studio art and art history. The reluctance of art historians, as guardians of the ontology, to examine critically their presuppositions sets an unfortunate example for the studio practitioner who has already accepted the theory (art history)/practice (studio) split institutionalized in the curriculums of most art departments.

Section II states that in order to penetrate the morphology of art education, we must first direct our inquiry toward education in general as it is posited by our industrialized society. Rooted within is a positivistic objective consciousness seen largely as an undisputed social good. Rooted within art education is the subjective consciousness that alienates the artist from the rest of the university community. The inactment of critical theory would be in proper order.

Outlined in Section III are the assumptions of critical theory or dialectical reasoning. The term praxis (a

Greek word for action) is introduced as a self creating purposeful activity untainted by random undirected motivation. In Section IV a distinction is made between praxis and practice.

Section IV concludes that in order for the artist student/teacher to transcend the present theory/practice disjunction, a thorough understanding of his/her actions is necessary allowing for control. Theory is implied. By developing a diacritical attitude perhaps the artist can transcend the posture of adaptation and become integrated with the world.

Praxiological alternatives for art education are dealt with in Section V.

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Name

Larry E. Shelly

Date

Aug. 31, 1975

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"If I graduate I will devote part of my life to removing sneaks and creeps from art education."

Les Levine

WORKING PAPERS: THE ARTIST AS CRITICAL
CONSCIOUSNESS

by

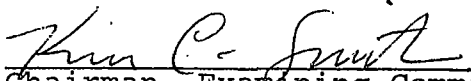
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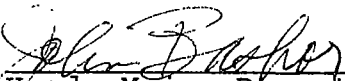
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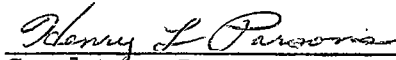
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August, 1975

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VITA

Larry Eugene Shelby was born on November 3, 1943 in Kennett, Missouri. He is the son of J. D. and Dorothy Shelby of Caruthersville, Missouri. Larry spent his childhood in Caruthersville where he graduated from Caruthersville High School in 1960. In 1968 Larry entered the Memphis Academy of Arts in Memphis, Tennessee and received a Bachelor of Fine Arts in both painting and printmaking on February 4, 1974.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My initial debt is to Kim Smith who was responsible more than anyone else for my coming to Montana State. I am deeply grateful to Kim for sharing his time and ideas. In the truest sense of the word, he made it possible for a meaningful dialogical encounter. I am sure I express the sentiments of a number of other students whose lives have not been quite the same after studying and working with Kim. It must be noted that we did not study under Kim but rather studied with him. I have known no other teacher who was able to learn as much from his students as his students did from him. Kim possesses a tremendous advantage in that he is in a continual process of re-education, not only in art but in a variety of disciplines, as well as questioning his own past assumptions and, consequently, expecting the same from his students.

My loving appreciation goes to my wife, Jane. Without her editorial assistance and advice a difficult task would have otherwise been impossible.

I would also like to thank my committee, Bob DeWeese, Gunars Strazdins and Kim Smith for their continued support, encouragement and questioning throughout my past two years in attendance at Montana State.

No less of an acknowledgment is in order to my fellow students, Silvie Granatelli, Dorothy Newton Semple, Keith Hammer, Martha Igoe, Jean Harkin, Tim Atkinson, and Marcia Hocevar. Interaction with them has been invigorating and often comforting.

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ABSTRACT

Working Papers: The Artist as Critical Consciousness

I. An Inquiry into the Definition of Art and Artist. This paper inquires into the nature and relevance of existing definition of "Art" and "Artist."

There is an analogy between the manner which art as an institution and a dictionary definition function. If language (or art) is to remain viable, it must be open to the continual revision necessary as part of the constantly changing social environment.

In the sense that a dictionary is a reference book, an "inbuilt" dictionary is part of each of our mental equipment. The inbuilt dictionary is best altered through the educational system. Lexical items which have become irrelevant to the situations which they are to describe should be restructured.

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Section II states that in order to penetrate the morphology of art education, we must first direct our inquiry toward education in general as it is posited by our industrialized society. Rooted within is a positivistic objective consciousness seen largely as an undisputed social good. Rooted within art education is the subjective consciousness that alienates the artist from the rest of the university community. The inactment of critical theory would be in proper order.

Outlined in Section III are the assumptions of critical theory or dialectical reasoning. The term praxis (a Greek word for action) is introduced as a self creating purposeful activity untainted by random undirected motivation. In Section IV a distinction is made between praxis and practice.

Section IV concludes that in order for the artist student/teacher to transcend the present theory/practice disjunction, a thorough understanding of his/her actions is necessary allowing for control. Theory is implied. By developing a diacritical attitude perhaps the artist can transcend the posture of adaptation and become integrated with the world.

Praxiological alternatives for art education are dealt with in Section V.

INTRODUCTION

"Art is guilty of the worst sort of crime against human beings: Silence."¹

"Silence is not nothing to say, it is saying 'I will say nothing' or 'I have nothing to say'. . . . a whole life of nothing to say is a lifefull of saying 'I have nothing to say' or 'I will say nothing'. . . . Anyone who claims language hasn't got a hold on him had better never make the claim, else he utters an absurdity. Anyone who says nothing, (i.e., intentionality), to prove language hasn't got a hold on him, is a demon and practising self-deception; similarly anyone who doesn't say much for the same reason."²

The interlocking thesis of the four essays which make up the content of *Working Papers - the Artist as Critical Consciousness* is that art as it is now constituted is limited and grossly inadequate at providing a meaningful dialogical encounter, both for the experiencing individual and for the much larger cultural community.

¹Jon Hendricks, Poppy Johnson and Jean Toche, "Toward a New Humanism," The New Art, a critical anthology edited by Gregory Battcock (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1973), p. 79.

²Edizioni Di Centro, Contemporanea (Roma: Parcheggio di Villa Borghese, 1973), Art-Language, p. 101.

"Modernist art with its dissonances and torments . . . has become the staple diet of an increasingly voracious army of culture consumers who know good investments when they see them. The avant-garde, if indeed the term can still be used, has become an honored ornament of our cultural life less to be feared than feted."³

My discontent with standard art became critical when I became disillusioned with art's inability to extend itself critically and began asking new questions and consequently began expecting new answers concerning the function and possible future of art. At that point, I began lifting *heuristics* from sources both in and outside of art. That is, I began scrutinizing the work of the art-language community, a body of criticism produced by artists who saw as their task the unraveling of the mythic ideology or false consciousness surrounding the art mystique. This community (A & L) is seeking answers and possible directions from other disciplines. Initially, I began looking at the philosophy of language, structuralism and later dialectical materialism, with the hope of providing for myself and

³ Martin Jay, "Introduction," The Dialectical Imagination (Boston, Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1973), p. XIV.

others a direction of study which would result in *ad hoc* new methods, new concepts and consequently a new language.

My education is primarily that of visual artist not writer. However, this is not to be interpreted as a handicap but to be viewed as the beginning of my education as writer. To state it another way, art education is proposed as an *open-textured concept* (replenishment or re-defining one's scope of activity). In order for an artist to remain viable in a community, he/she must maintain an "*open-texturedness*" with respect to the changing environment of that community. To "*re-open*" the language of art, a return to the root meaning of the words "art" and "artist" (i.e., learning) is in order. This leads to the artist as *praxel-ogist*. Praxis (a Greek word for "action") is informed by theoretical reflection as opposed to mere action. The artist uses praxis as a vehicle of enlightenment or cultural fluency.

AN INQUIRY INTO THE DEFINITION
OF ART AND ARTIST

Each period of time has its own truth.

Max Horkheimer

ART (ärt), n. [*<OFr. < L. ars, artis*]

1. creativeness.
2. skill.
3. any specific skill or its application.
4. a making or doing of things that have form and beauty: see also fine arts.
5. any branch of this; esp., painting, drawing, or sculpture.
6. products of creative work; paintings, statues, etc.
7. *usually in pl.* any of certain branches of academic learning, as literature, music, and mathematics.
8. any craft, etc., or its principles: as, the cobbler's *art*.
9. cunning.
10. *usually in pl.* a trick; wile.¹

ARTIST (är'tist), n. [*<Fr. < It. < L. ars, artis, art*]

1. one who is skilled in any of the fine, especially graphic, arts.
2. one who does anything very well, with a feeling for form, etc.
3. an artiste.

¹ Concise Edition - Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language (1966).

ART (ärt), n. [ME. <OFr. *arte* <L. *artis*, gen. of *ars*, art < IE. base ar-, to join, fit together, whence arm, articulate, Ratio]

1. human ability to make things; creativity of man as distinguished from the world of nature.
2. skill; craftsmanship.
3. any specific skill or its application [the *art* of making friends]
4. any craft, trade, or profession, or its principles [the cobbler's *art*, the physician's *art*.
5. creative work or its principles; making or doing of things that display form, beauty, and unusual perception: art includes painting, sculpture, architecture, music, literature, drama, the dance, etc.: see also fine art.
6. any branch of creative work, esp., painting, drawing, or work in any other graphic or plastic medium.
7. products of creative work: painting, statues, etc.
8. pictorial and decorative material accompanying the text in a newspaper, magazine, or advertising layout.
9. a) [ARCHAIC] learning,
b) a branch of learning; specif., [*Pl.*] the liberal arts (literature, music, philosophy, etc.) as distinguished from the sciences.
10. artful behavior; cunning.
11. sly or cunning trick; wile: *usually used in pl.* -- adj. 1. of or for works of art or artist [*art* gallery, *art* colony] 2. produced with an especially artistic technique, or exhibiting such production [*art* movie, *art* theater]

ARTIST (är'tist), n. [ML. *artista*, craftsman, artisan <L. *ars*, craft, art]

1. a person who works in or is skilled in any of the fine arts, esp., in painting, drawing, sculpture, etc.

2. a person who does anything very well, with imagination and a feeling for form, effect, etc.²
3. *same as* artiste.

²Webster's New World Dictionary - Second College Edition (Cleveland and New York: William Collins & World Publishing Company, Inc., 1974).

SECTION I - THE RELEVANCE OF EXISTING DEFINITIONS OF ART AND ARTIST

The purpose of this paper is to open some lines of inquiry in to the nature and relevance of existing definitions of art and artist. Some observations are included and some possible procedures for the redefining of these terms are suggested.

Any language is continually in a state of change as long as it is spoken. These changes usually go unnoticed. A language is sustained through the process of learned imitation within a language community; therefore, changes in language occur slowly as either new words, changes in the meaning of words, or changes in syntax. These changes are often the result of modifications in the environment of the language community. For the most part this paper will deal with the change in meaning of words (i.e., the denotation).

Each language is composed of a large number of words and idioms referred to as "lexical" items or components. The dictionary functions as a catalogue for these items giving necessary information about the way they fit into the particular language system. The information about any particular item is referred to as a "lexical entry." The ordinary user of the dictionary probably refers most often

to the definition or semantic part of the lexical entry consisting of the formulation of the meaning or meanings of the particular item listed. It should be as concise and complete as possible.

Dictionaries are always open to revisions through addition of new lexical entries. However, this can be misleading; a dictionary is a living social institution and must answer the questions the user asks. These questions may not be inclusive of the everyday usage. For instance, a user may wish to know the history of the origin of a word.

A dictionary of common usage, however, concerns itself with neither slang, technical or specialized vocabularies. Only the frequent, durable and consistent use of a word in books and magazines, makes the term worthy of inclusion in a current dictionary.

Two words of special interest to the artist are the terms "art" and "artist." Up to nine or ten years ago the common semantic models for "art" were painting and sculpture. (See entries 5 and 6 under Art, footnote 1; entries 5 and 6 under Art, footnote 2, entry 1 under Artist, footnote 2.) This held true for the avant-garde as well as for the amateur. Although the content of painting and

sculpture (e.g., figurative versus non-figurative imagery) has often been debated (resulting in much stylistic leap-frogging), the usefulness of painting and sculpture as mediums for structuring any content other than the materials involved has rarely been subjected to sustained criticism.

To paraphrase Terry Atkinson in Art-Language, 1969, Volumn 1, No. 1, art since 1966 has questioned the idea that the visual arts (as they have come to be known) must remain visual. Artists have begun to express the content of their ideas through the semantic qualities of written language. The institution of art (the art school-gallery-museum-critic-collector matrix) currently functions normatively much like a dictionary definition. A language to remain viable in a community must maintain its "*open texturedness*" (see Essay #3 "Art: An Open Textured Concept") with respect to the changing environment of that community. To "*re-open*" the language of art, a return to the root meaning of the words art and artist (see entry 9 under art, footnote 2) is in order.

Many of these inquiries into the definition of art (theory) are being read within an art context as part of the art condition. Theory presented within the gallery context questions the "object" (ontological) basis of art.

Other members of the British art-language group have spent considerable time investigating the linguistic structure, both of plastic art (semiotics) and its support languages (criticism). For very specific reasons they have chosen to concentrate on the support languages. The support language is collective, offering access to the cognitive structures underlying the entire community; specialized languages such as those found in the plastic arts subsist within this greater cognitive framework. An example from western art would be the development of linear perspective that objectifies the separation of subject and object that is found in the structure of the spoken language.

In the following quote from Great Western Salt Works, Jack Burnham discusses the work of Joseph Kosuth, American editor of Art-Language. Kosuth maintains that the value of a work of art is to be found in the internal consistency of the work. This notion of internal consistency has its major codification in the cubist program (analytic phase) in the early 1900's. Kosuth extends the cubist notion of excluding reference to the physical world to excluding reference to the material aspect of the art object itself.

Drawing parallels between art and language, Kosuth defines art as a series of analytic propositions which have no value as information outside the context of art. Here his investigation into linguistic analysis and logical positivism are crucial. Like logic and mathematics, Kosuth views art as a system of tautologies which, while self-contained, depend upon the context of the real world for social meaning but not verification. He doubts the validity of phenomenological considerations which have been attached to the art experience.³

Whether or not I agree with Kosuth's above contention is irrelevant to this paper. I am not trying to give a definition of art, but rather to point out how language models can be employed to deal with the semantic problems arising from the attempt to redefine art.

Procedures for finding a new and more relevant definition for the terms "art" and "artist" (re-defining the scope of activity) would include the use of professional magazines and journals from other disciplines. These journals provide both relevant usage of terms, concepts and methodologies that might be employed by the artist, while the journal itself provides the artist with a format model for the presentation of theoretical material generated within the context of art. I have included a table which

³Jack Burnham, "Alice's Head," (1970) Great Western Salt Works (New York: George Braziller, 1974), p. 57.

gives a sampling of the literature that has to date been generated in this area.

The objective of such a program would be the adequate description of all language phenomena and more specifically the correct description of the terms "Art" and "Artist." The purpose of these pages has been to suggest lines of basic research which may ultimately be of significance to a *lexicography of art*.

A dictionary is a reference book. In a sense we all carry around a dictionary as part of our mental equipment. Geoffrey Leech in his book Semantics refers to this as the "inbuilt" dictionary. In the second part of this paper, it is this inbuilt dictionary with which I wish to deal.

SECTION II - THE INBUILT DICTIONARY - A LIVING SOCIAL INSTITUTION

In an interview in the book, Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object, Lucy R. Lippard was asked this question by Ursula Meyer:

Do you think visual art may eventually function in a different context altogether?

LL: Yes, but there's going to have to be an immense educational process to get people to even begin to look at things, to say

nothing of looking at things the way
artists look at things. . . .⁴

This immense educational process to which Lucy Lippard refers brings to mind the educational process which Alvin Toffler suggests in his book Future Shock.

As for curriculum, the Councils of the Future, instead of assuming that every subject taught today is taught for a reason, should begin from the reverse premise: nothing should be included in a required curriculum unless it can be strongly justified in terms of the future. If this means scrapping a substantial part of the formal curriculum, so be it.

This is not intended as an "anti-cultural" statement or a plea for total destruction of the past. Nor does it suggest that we can ignore such basics as reading, writing and math. What it does mean is that tens of millions of children today are forced by law to spend precious hours of their lives grinding away at material whose future utility is highly questionable. (Nobody even claims it has much present utility.) Should they spend as much time as they do learning French, or Spanish or German? Are the hours spent on English maximally useful? Should all children be required to study Algebra? Might they not benefit more from studying probability? Logic? Computer programming? Philosophy? . . . Mass communications?⁵

⁴Lucy Lippard, Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object (New York, 1973), p. 7.

⁵Alvin Toffler, Future Shock (New York, 1972), p. 409-410.

Following Toffler's line of thinking, if children are going to spend time learning (i.e., inbuilding) art, would it not be pertinent for them to learn (inbuild) about concepts in art which they could apply to the present and especially to their futures rather than inbuilding concepts pertinent only to the past?

Toffler goes on to say that the strict compartmentalization of curriculum is not based on contemporary human needs and imposes unnecessary standardization on schools. Curriculums are often determined by college requirements which further reflect vanishing social requirements and vocations.

In updating education Toffler suggests the use of curriculum review boards which would not design a permanent all-purpose curriculum but rather sets of temporary curricula which would be evaluated and renovated with time.

Especially relevant to the idea of revising our in-built dictionaries is Toffler's observation that "today's 'fact' becomes tomorrow's 'misinformation'." He further states that this, however, is not an argument against learning of information but an argument for how to manipulate restrictive data. The individual in tomorrow's

society will constantly change his job, residence, and persons he comes in contact with.

Toffler agrees with psychologist Herbert Gerjvoy of the Human Resources Research organization that an individual must learn to classify and reclassify all information in ways useful to him and be able to look at problems from several different directions. Gerjvoy is quoted as saying "tomorrow's illiterate will be the man who has not learned how to learn."⁶ Put another way, tomorrow's illiterate will be the person who hasn't gained control of his own inbuilding process.

It seems ironic that in the 1974 definition of "art" the archaic meaning is given as learning. This idea is at the heart of much contemporary art seeking to redefine itself. *Art is a learning process and learning is an art process.*

Bernard Venet in 1967 selected and made a list of topics from specific disciplines or areas of knowledge which he would exploit over a period from 1967 through 1971.

⁶Toffler, p. 414.

--Astrophysics	
--Nuclear Physics	1967
--Space Sciences	
--Mathematics by Computation	
--Meteorology	1968
--Stock Market	
--Meta-Mathematics	
--Psychophysics (Psychochronometry)	1969
--Sociology and Politics	
--Meta-Mathematics again (Mathematical Logic)	1970

In Conceptual Art Ursula Meyers quotes Bernard Venet as saying on January 9, 1971:

I do not present my work as art, but I present mathematics and other scientific disciplines for what they are, i.e., pure knowledge as such. My proposition is: Cultivez-vous, Exploitez-vous, Eliminez-vous. (Educate yourself, Exploit yourself, Eliminate yourself.)⁷

The inbuilt dictionary is best altered through the educational system which teaches the individual to restructure lexical items at a time when they become irrelevant to the situation they are to describe.

⁷Ursula Meyer, Conceptual Art (New York, 1972), p. 214.

Sampling of Professional Art Journals

Author	Title	Date	Type	Nation
Meyer, Ursula	Conceptual Art	1972	Book	Amer.
Kosuth, Joseph	Art After Philosophy	1969	Essay	Amer.
Atkinson, Terry Bainbridge, David Baldwin, Michael Burn, Ian Hurrel, Harold Harrison, Charles Howard, Grapham Pilkington, Philip Ramsden, Mel Rushton, David	Art-Language Art-Language Press	1967 1975	Journal	Brit.
Lippard Lucy	Six Years: The Dematerial- ization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972	1973	Book	Amer.
Burnham, Jack	Great Western Salt Works Real Time Systems Les Levine: Business as Usual Alice's Head Willoughby Sharp Interviews Jack Burnham The Artist as Shaman Objects and Ritual: Toward a Working Ontology of Art	1973	Book	Amer.

Sampling of Professional Art Journals (continued)

Author	Title	Date	Type	Nation
	Contemporary Ritual: A Search for Meaning in Post-Historical Terms			
Karshan, Donald	Conceptual Art and Conceptual Aspects	1970	Catalogue	Amer.
Boice, Bruce	The Axiom of Indifference	1973	Magazine	Amer.
Butterfield, Jan	An Uncompromising Other Way	1974	Magazine	Amer.
Witten-Pincus, Robert	The Constant as Variable	1972	Magazine	Amer.
Heller, Preston and Menard, Andrew	Criticism In Absentia	1973	Magazine	Amer.
Boice, Bruce	Joseph Kosuth: 2 Shows	1973	Magazine	Amer.
Horvitz, J. Robert	Beyond Reductivism	1974	Magazine	Amer.
Witten-Pincus, Robert	Three Ideas and Seven Procedures	1971	Magazine	Amer.

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ON THE DE-DEFINITION/RE-DEFINITION OF ART¹

Introduction

The subject of this essay is the rebuttal of an article written by Harold Rosenberg and entitled "On the De-Definition of Art." Rosenberg's article is reproduced here in its entirety. Our primary reasons for choosing this particular article are:

- (a) Rosenberg's article is typical of formalist criticism that is either incapable of or unwilling to deal intelligently with the questions being raised by "conceptual" artists regarding the conditions of art's existence (ontology), art's function in society, the future of art, and, by implication, the education of the artist.
- (b) Rosenberg's article has been presented within this department as an argument for defining art by morphological characteristics (i.e., paint on canvas) rather than by concept (intension). In this sense, the article chose us.

¹In collaboration with Kim Smith.

It is not our intention to attack or ridicule individuals in this department, but rather our intention is to attempt bringing the level of discussion on the subject of art in general, and "conceptual" art in particular, to a higher level by attacking arguments. We feel that the questions being raised by "conceptual" artists are important questions having bearing on the future of this department. The result of the debate of these questions, which is beginning among students and faculty in this department, will hopefully be a program of education with direction (based on awareness of the issues) to replace the muddled "laissez-faire" program we currently have that attempts to cover all options while sacrificing excellence.

We invite rebuttal to the arguments we present here.

ROSENBERG 1

AN EXCITED VIEW, RECENTLY BECOME PREVALENT IN ADVANCED ARTISTIC AND ACADEMIC CIRCLES, HOLDS THAT ALL KINDS OF PROBLEMS ARE WAITING TO BE SOLVED BY THE MAGICAL TOUCH OF ART. SO INTENSE IS THIS ENTHUSIASM FOR WHAT THE ARTIST MIGHT ACCOMPLISH THAT MERE PAINTING AND SCULPTURE ARE PRESENTED AS UNDESERVING OF THE ATTENTION OF THE SERIOUS ARTIST.

REBUTTAL 1 (KS)

Rosenberg's quarrel seems not to be with the artist's attempt to solve the problems of society, but rather with the manner in which the solution is attempted. As long as solutions are attempted within the confines of painting and sculpture, i.e., object making, "the magical touch of art" so sarcastically referred to with regard to conceptual artists, keeps society from degenerating to a sub-human level (See Rosenberg 13). Were we to accept the social role for art that Rosenberg suggests, it is a fair question to ask if painting and sculpture, as they are presently formally constituted, perform this role either in the best or in the only possible manner.

To question painting and sculpture's ability to perform a social role, we must more clearly define what that role is and what it should be. Many conceptual artists are actively engaged in such an inquiry. When one accepts, as Rosenberg has, a non-negotiable definition of art as being the formal object qualities of painting and sculpture, one precludes any real questioning of social function since "by definition" art's primary function is to exist as an aesthetic object.

An analogous situation might be found in the current investigation of energy needs in this country. Following Rosenberg's example we might define "energy" as being oil and only oil, since oil has been a major source of energy in the past. Defining energy as oil precludes the discovery of alternative and perhaps more desirable energy sources. An alternative source such as nuclear power would first have to satisfy the condition of being oil (by definition) before it could qualify as being energy. Most would agree that this would be a curious if not idiotic situation (to be in) with regard to energy considering the implicit survival questions. That critics can make and get away with such definitions in art is a sad reminder of art's superfluous role with regard to contemporary society.

ROSENBERG 2

THERE ARE ALREADY ENOUGH OBJECTS, WRITES AN ARTIST, AND THERE IS NO NEED TO ADD TO THOSE THAT ALREADY EXIST.

I CHOOSE NOT TO MAKE OBJECTS, WRITES ANOTHER. INSTEAD, I HAVE SET OUT TO CREATE A QUALITY OF EXPERIENCE THAT LOCATES ITSELF IN THE WORLD.

REBUTTAL 2 (LS)

Rosenberg has committed a scholarly error in failing to provide the artists' names as well as the context of

the above statements. However, this writer is at least familiar with the content of the statements if not the context. No doubt, it comes as a surprise to the above-mentioned critic that an artist is capable of recognizing that it is no longer a viable form of activity to continue making objects. This must be a disquieting thought to a critic whose belief system is rooted in a stylistic and methodologically-based proceduralism (i.e., shape, color, form, texture, etc.) as opposed to perception (conceptual mechanisms).

The critic and art historian have traditionally been responsible for processing art information, and this processing has taken the form of aesthetic judgments resulting in art values. For example, household artifacts of earlier times which did not exist as art are now considered as such when seen within the framework of existing values.

Aesthetics and art are often confused leading to the common misconception that the art lies within the object (i.e., painting and sculpture). However, it is necessary to make distinctions. Decoration has traditionally been one of art's purposes. Therefore, any branch of philosophy (specifically aesthetics) which deals with beauty,

and thereby taste, is obligated to deal with art. This has perpetrated the belief that the two are one and the same. Any object in the world can be the subject of aesthetic contemplation. This means that aesthetic judgment has no relevance to the object's function in an art context. Art which depends exclusively upon aesthetic considerations is determined to function as decoration and is consequently semiotically meaningless.²

ROSENBERG 3

AND HERE IS A CLINCHER BY THE SCULPTOR ROBERT MORRIS, WHO CONCLUDES IN A RECENT ARTICLE THAT THE STATIC, PORTABLE INDOOR ART OBJECT (A RATHER NICE MATERIALISTIC WAY TO DESCRIBE A PAINTING OR SCULPTURE) CAN DO NO MORE THAN CARRY A DECORATIVE LOAD THAT BECOMES INCREASINGLY UNINTERESTING.

Note: Refer to Footnote (3) for context of the above statement.

²Joseph Kosuth, "Art After Philosophy," Conceptual Art, ed. Ursula Meyer (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1972), pp. 158-9.

³Robert Morris, "Art of Existence; Three Extra-Visual Artists' Works in Progress," Artforum, 1971, p. 28.

It seems a truism at this point that the static, portable, indoor art object can do no more than carry a decorative load that becomes increasingly uninteresting. One waits for the next season's polished metal boxes, stretched tie dyes and elegantly applied liquitex references to art deco with about as much anticipation as one reserves for the look of next year's Oldsmobile--Ford probably has a better idea.

REBUTTAL 3 (LS)

The following quote by Joseph Kosuth should shed some light on the relevance of Morris' statement.

Aesthetic considerations are indeed always extraneous to an object's function or 'reason-to-be.' unless of course, that object's reason-to-be is strictly aesthetic. An example of a purely aesthetic object is a decorative object, for decoration's primary function is 'to add something to, so as to make more attractive; adorn; ornament,' and this relates directly to taste. And this leads us directly to 'formalist' art and criticism. Formalist art (painting and sculpture) is the vanguard of decoration, and, strictly speaking, one could reasonably assert that its art condition is so minimal that for all functional purposes it is not art at all, but pure exercises in aesthetics.⁴

The object artist (i.e., painter and sculptor) is undergoing the solemn misfortune of realizing that he/she has maintained an ideology that is indeed impotent. Formalistic painting and sculpture have been reduced to mere permutation/combinations of formal elements (color, shape, line, etc.) at best arranged to be harmonious to the senses. "Field painting," for example, accentuates the unfoldment and effects of color juxtaposition with an emphasis on the continuity of the field. In contrast, "spatial abstraction" emphasizes the interplay of abstract patterns

⁴Kosuth, loc. cit., p. 159.

revealing the physiognomy of rectangles, circles, ovals, squares and triangles. Formalist object art remains true to the cubist program (analytic phase) of internal consistency excluding reference to the physical world. From the above description formalist object art can be described as a tautology and a meta-language. As a self-contained system it is tautological in the same manner as mathematics and logic whose propositions have nothing to do with the physical world although we conveniently apply them in this way. Formalist art is a meta-language in that the picture plane speaks of the picture plane, paint speaks of paint. In essence, the painting speaks of itself: a language speaking about itself.

Such styles as pop, metaphysical funk, neodada differ from formalist art. They are not tautological and do not function as meta-language. Instead they propose to make social statements through the use of cultural residue as subject matter (e.g., war, racism, alienation, etc.). The object depicted is of utmost importance and the formal elements (color, shape, line, etc.) are subordinate to the message. However, problems arise when there is an attempt to engage such works hermeneutically. It is submerged in ironic twists and paradoxes and is intensely subjective

and remote as to conceal the artist intention. Each individual has his/her own enigmatic, ironic and paradoxical private language. The work is experienced in much the same way as formalist art; content becomes subordinate to the sensualness of the paint and the harmonious arrangement of formal elements. The work may be intended as a social statement but essentially the work is speaking to the viewer about color, form, etc. Because painting and sculpture are inseparably bound to formal elements, they are rendered impotent.

In an attempt to deal with art on art's terms, artists are beginning to present information which does not need processing in aesthetic terms or reorganizing by the critic. Those art historians and critics that attribute a stylist impetus to the idea of dispensing with the object are completely misreading, or, in most cases, not reading the propositions put forth. It must be pointed out that it is not necessarily the artist, or the art object, that is undergoing epistemic invasion but the foundation that supports the art object. So dispensing with the art object can be read as heuristic in its objectives, i.e., the process of examining art's foundations. Visual manipulation becomes inappropriate and incompatible with the idea of

examining art's presupposition. If artists did not make an effort to ponder these states-of-affairs, art would be rendered as impotent as painting and sculpture.

ROSENBERG 4

IN CONTRAST TO THE MEAGERNESS OF ART, THE ARTIST IS BLOWN UP TO GIGANTIC PROPORTIONS. HE IS DESCRIBED AS A PERSON OF TRAINED SENSIBILITY, A DEVELOPED IMAGINATION, A CAPACITY FOR EXPRESSION AND DEEP INSIGHT INTO THE REALITIES OF CONTEMPORARY LIFE.

REBUTTAL 4 (KS)

(A) ". . . THE MEAGERNESS OF ART . . ."

- (1) The artists that Rosenberg is criticizing feel that art is meager only vis-a-vis painting and sculpture, not vis-a-vis art.
- (2) Look for a moment at the current use that is made of "art" (sculpture and painting); "art" provides cultural prestige and power for wealthy collectors;⁵ "art" makes money for gallery owners; "art" makes an "art scene"; "art" decorates the walls of

⁵See Hans Haacke's "Manet" that was to have been shown in a show called "Projekt '74'" at the Wallraf-Richartz Museum in Cologne. See Jack Burnham's "Meditations on a Bunch of Asparagus," Arts Magazine (Feb., 1970), p. 72-75.

middle-class homes; "art" lends prestige to businesses; "art" sells cigars. "Art" makes the "artist" into a commodity to be bought and sold "while the supply lasts." Compare this current "art" use with the central cultural role that art has historically played and most would agree that outside of the 19th century, art and artists have seldom before played such "meager" roles as they are now playing.

- (3) Many minority groups who have become tired of being "screwed, chewed, and barbequed," have investigated their origins in order to develop cultural forms that are not easily co-opted by those wishing to exploit those forms to ends detrimental to that minority. Conceptual art represents an attempt by artists to explore art's origins and to avoid exploitative co-option of artists and art forms.

(B) ". . . . THE ARTIST IS BLOWN UP TO GIGANTIC PROPORTIONS."

- (1) Rosenberg writes as if this were a phenomenon unique to non-object making artists. The "blown-up" artist phenomena first appears, with any regularity, in the Renaissance period. The appearance of this phenomenon in the Renaissance is not the result of a genetic quirk that affected only artists giving them enormous egos, but rather its appearance reflects a general ability in the culture, to begin to think of individuals as separate from their roles in the society. For a discussion of this, see McLuhan's discussion of "the King's two bodies."⁶
- (2) Many times more people know of Van Gogh the Man-Myth than have ever experienced Van Gogh's paintings. It is the life of Van Gogh that is meaningful to most

⁶Marshall McLuhan, The Gutenberg Gallyaxy (University of Toronto Press, 1966), p. 120.

people. The paintings and reproductions of paintings function to commemorate a life rather than functioning as aesthetic objects of and for themselves. It may be true in some sense that artists are products of painting (see Rosenberg 12). It is also, however, abundantly clear in the case of Van Gogh, that Van Gogh's paintings are a product of his life. In essence, the expressionist theory of art (Rosenberg's reputation rests on his work as an abstract expressionist critic) holds that art is the outward expression of an inner necessity. When Rosenberg asserts that artists are the products of particular disciplines, such as painting, he seems to be suggesting that the discipline dictates the inner necessity. Instead of the monkey wiggling the brush, for Rosenberg, the brush wiggles the monkey.

- (3) With Jackson Pollock in particular and abstract expressionism in general,

attention is focused on the artist's and critic's actions in front of the canvas. These actions were given heroic proportions by critics who saw in these actions the microcosm's search for meaning in a meaningless macrososm.

ROSENBERG 5

THE ARTIST HAS BECOME, AS IT WERE, TOO BIG FOR ART. HIS PROPER MEDIUM IS WORKING IN THE WORLD: ECOLOGY --TRANSFORMING THE LANDSCAPE--CHANGING THE CONDITIONS OF LIFE. AMONG THE FOLLOWERS OF BUCKMINSTER FULLER THIS SUPER- OR BEYOND-ART ACTIVITY IS CALLED, SIGNIFICANTLY, THE WORLD GAME.

REBUTTAL 5 (KS)

- (A) "THE ARTIST HAS BECOME, AS IT WERE, TOO BIG FOR ART."

What these artists are saying is that they are bored with the trivial formal problems left to painting and sculpture.

- (B) "HIS PROPER MEDIUM IS WORKING IN THE WORLD:
. . . ."

The lineage of this desire by artists to "work in the real world" is rich and honorable. One need only point to Leonardo whose work had

scientific import; to the fact that many Renaissance artists were mathematicians, their painted work representing some of the best treatises of the subject at that time; to the fact of political involvement by artists of the last century and the political impact of their work, to see that art has traditionally functioned as a tool for "working in the real world." Abandoning a tool such as painting which is no longer useful for "working in the real world" is perhaps the first step an artist must take in returning to the art tradition.

(C) ". . . TRANSFORMING THE LANDSCAPE . . ."

Unless Rosenberg means to suggest that artists in general are motivated by base desires to push material around, why should he single out "beyond art" artists as having those base motives?

(D) ". . . THE WORLD GAME."

The world "game" is used to connote a sense of joyousness, not a lack of commitment.

ROSENBERG 6

THIS AGGRANDIZEMENT, AND SELF-AGGRANDIZEMENT, OF THE ARTIST SEEMS ON THE SURFACE TO REPRESENT AN EXPANDED CONFIDENCE IN THE CREATIVE POWERS OF ARTISTS TODAY. EVERYTHING CAN BE DONE THROUGH ART, AND WHATEVER AN ARTIST DOES IS A WORK OF ART. WHY IS THE CHELSEA GIRLS ART? ANDY WARHOL REFLECTED IN AN INTERVIEW, AND ANSWERED, WELL, FIRST OF ALL, IT WAS MADE BY AN ARTIST, AND SECOND, THAT WOULD COME OUT AS ART. YOU HAVE THE CHOICE OF ANSWERING, AMEN!-- OR, OH, YEAH?

REBUTTAL 6. (KS)

Warhol is not a typical conceptual artist; in fact, by most definitions, is not a conceptual artist at all. Warhol is "conceptual" to the extent that his work functions as a heuristic for discovering the mechanisms by which certain classes of non-art objects or concepts are transformed into art objects and concepts.

ROSENBERG 7

ACTUALLY, THE ARTIST WHO HAS LEFT ART BEHIND OR-- WHAT AMOUNTS TO THE SAME THING--WHO REGARDS ANYTHING HE MAKES OR DOES AS ART, IS AN EXPRESSION OF THE PROFOUND CRISIS THAT HAS OVERTAKEN THE ARTS IN OUR EPOCH. PAINTING, SCULPTURE, DRAMA, MUSIC, HAVE BEEN UNDERGOING A PROCESS OF DE-DEFINITION. THE NATURE OF ART HAS BECOME UNCERTAIN. AT LEAST, IT IS AMBIGUOUS. NO ONE CAN SAY WITH ASSURANCE WHAT A WORK OF ART IS--OR, MORE IMPORTANT, WHAT IS NOT A WORK OF ART. WHERE AN ART OBJECT IS STILL PRESENT, AS IN PAINTING, IT IS WHAT I HAVE CALLED AN ANXIOUS OBJECT: IT DOES NOT KNOW WHETHER IT IS A MASTERPIECE OR JUNK. IT MAY, AS IN THE CASE OF A COLLAGE BY SCHWITTERS, BE LITERALLY BOTH.

REBUTTAL 7 (LS)

Actually, the artist has left art behind, if, indeed one considers art's purpose an aesthetic one. The standards which Rosenberg and others through their functioning as critics have imposed for the judging and justifying art, are arbitrary. Rather than accept new criteria which deal with art in terms relevant to its intent, Rosenberg assumes that "anything" can be art or--what amounts to the same thing--that nothing which exists outside his criteria can be art. Rosenberg further assumes that the artist himself does not understand what he is about, but rather arbitrarily proclaims "this" and "that" to be art.

Painting, sculpture, drama, and music have been undergoing a process of de-definition (see Kosuth, Footnote 7) but this is part of the process of re-definition.

⁷Kosuth, ob. cit., p. 161.

Being an artist now means to question the nature of art. If one is questioning the nature of painting, one cannot be questioning the nature of art. If an artist accepts painting (or sculpture) he is accepting the tradition that goes with it. That's because the word art is general and the word painting is specific. Painting is a kind of art. If you make paintings, you are already accepting (not questioning) the nature of art. One is then accepting the nature of art to be the European tradition of a painting-sculpture dichotomy.

By the definition of re-definition we know that if a term is to be re-defined, then, at least part of the existing definition will no longer be pertinent and must then be "de-defined."

Rosenberg concludes that the nature of art has become so ambiguous that we can no longer say what is or is not art. He has hinted at an inability on the part of artists to come to grips with a high critical standard for determining what constitutes art. The source of Rosenberg's problem is a fixed standard (Rosenberg's) versus a standard that is constantly open to question and revision. Conceptualists are actively involved in the questioning and revising of criteria. In fact, it is often this questioning itself which becomes the art product, as in the case of art-language.

ROSENBERG 8

THE UNCERTAIN NATURE OF ART IS NOT WITHOUT ITS ADVANTAGES. IT LEADS TO EXPERIMENT AND TO CONSTANT QUESTIONING. MUCH OF THE BEST ART OF THIS CENTURY BELONG TO A VISUAL DEBATE ABOUT WHAT ART IS. GIVEN THE CHANGING NATURE OF TWENTIETH-CENTURY REALITY AND THE UNBROKEN SERIES OF UPHEAVALS INTO WHICH THE WORLD HAS BEEN PLUNGED SINCE WORLD WAR I, IT WAS INEVITABLE THAT THE PROCESSES OF CREATION SHOULD HAVE BECOME DETACHED FROM FIXED FORMS AND BE COMPELLED TO IMPROVISE NEW ONES FROM WHATEVER LIES READY AT HAND. IN COUNTRIES WHERE HIGH ART IS

MAINTAINED ACCORDING TO THE OLD DEFINITIONS--AS IN THE SOVIET UNION--ART IS EITHER DEAD OR ENGAGED IN UNDERGROUND REVOLT. SO ART MUST UNDERGO--AND HAS BEEN UNDERGOING--A PERSISTENT SELF-SEARCHING.

REBUTTAL 8 (LS)

It is agreed that constant questioning is an advantage of the uncertain nature of art. It is precisely this self-searching that has given the conceptual art movement its impetus. That high art cannot be maintained (anywhere) according to old definitions is also agreed.

ROSENBERG 9

HOWEVER, IT IS ONE THING TO THINK ABOUT ART IN NEW WAYS--AND ANOTHER NOT TO THINK ABOUT IT AT ALL, BUT TO PASS BEYOND ART AND BECOME AN ARTIST IN A PURE STATE. THE POST-ART ARTIST CARRIES THE DEFINITION OF ART TO THE POINT WHERE NOTHING IS LEFT OF ART BUT THE FICTION OF THE ARTIST. HE DISDAINS TO DEAL IN ANYTHING BUT ESSENCES. INSTEAD OF PAINTING, HE DEALS IN SPACE; INSTEAD OF DANCE, POETRY; FILM HE DEALS IN MOVEMENT; INSTEAD OF MUSIC, HE DEALS IN SOUND. HE HAS NO NEED FOR ART SINCE BY DEFINITION THE ARTIST IS A MAN OF GENIUS AND WHAT HE DOES WOULD, IN WARHOL'S PHRASE, NATURALLY COME OUT AS ART. HE NEED NO LONGER CONFINE HIMSELF TO A SINGLE GENRE OR FORM LANGUAGE, SUCH AS PAINTING OR POETRY --OR EVEN TO A MIXTURE OF GENRES, SUCH AS THEATER OR OPERA--HE CAN GO FROM ONE MEDIUM TO THE OTHER, AND INNOVATE IN EACH THROUGH REFUSING TO FIND OUT WHAT IT IS ABOUT. OR HE CAN BE AN INTER-MEDIA CREATOR WHO BLENDS THE VISUAL, THE AURAL, THE PHYSICAL, INTO A SUPER-ART PRESUMABLY ABLE TO ENCOMPASS ALL EXPERIENCE INTO SOMETHING HE CALLS A QUALITY THAT LOCATES ITSELF INTO THE WORLD.

REBUTTAL 9 (LS)

If art is limited to a purely aesthetic concern, then the artist has indeed gone beyond art--but not to a fictional state. If to no longer place all faith in the physical manifestation of the art but rather in the art concept is to deal in essences, Rosenberg is again correct. Conceptually speaking, the "value" of a work of art cannot lie in its physical presence but only in its power to generate concepts and thus to influence other artists. It has been stated earlier that critics and historians have previously been held responsible for bestowing art value through their functions as art information processors. Jack Burnham has noted some of Les Levine's thoughts on the effect of art tradition on "new" art forms.

All art may appear to bring us more information, but in fact it is only sustaining our notions of "good art" with perhaps minor modifications. In reality the concept of art is built into all art. By learning about the art tradition, Levine feels, we pre-program all further responses to any new art stimuli. More effective artists realize that for a brain programmed to absorb only ritualized art experiences, 'new art' is the result of interrupting only a tiny portion of the art-viewing program. So far only one artist has substituted a totally non-art experience for art. This, of course, was Marcel Duchamp.⁸

⁸ Jack Burnham, Great Western Salt Works (New York: George Braziller, 1974), p. 41.

ROSENBERG 10

THE POST-ART ARTIST CAN GO FURTHER--HE CAN FASHION AN "ENVIRONMENT" (MOST POTENT WORD IN PRESENT-DAY ART JARGON) IN WHICH ALL KINDS OF MECHANICALLY INDUCED STIMULI AND FORCES PLAY UPON THE SPECTATOR AND MAKES HIM NO LONGER A SPECTATOR BUT, WILLY-NILLY, A PARTICIPANT AND THUS A CREATOR HIMSELF.

REBUTTAL 10 (KS)

It is difficult to discover from this paragraph just what Rosenberg is objecting to. Does he object to "environments"? If so, is his objection based on the fact that they are mechanical, or is his real objection the fact that they aren't painting and sculpture? Perhaps his objection is to the notion of the viewer becoming a "creator" by the fact of participation in the work. If Rosenberg's objection is the latter, he should consider the following. A sign without an interpreter is meaningless. It is the viewer that bestows meaning upon symbols or systems of signs. A Rembrandt without viewers is just so much paint on canvas. A Rembrandt with viewers acts as a matrix that keys into the viewer's cognitive structures allowing that viewer to restructure his/her experience. When a viewer speaks of having a revelation in front of or in the presence of (not in) a certain painting, that a viewer is in

effect saying that he/she was able through the medium of the painting to create associations between elements of his/her own experience new to that viewer.

ROSENBERG 11

THE VISION OF TRANSCENDING THE ARTS IN A FESTIVAL OF FORMS AND SENSATIONS RESTS UPON ONE CRUCIAL QUESTION: WHAT MAKES ONE AN ARTIST? THIS ISSUE IS NEVER RAISED IN THE POST-ART WORLD, WHERE IT IS ASSUMED THAT THE ARTIST IS A PRIMAL FORCE, A KIND OF FIRST CAUSE--AND THAT HE THEREFORE EXISTS BY SELF-DECLARATION.

REBUTTAL 11 (LS)

To assume that this issue is never raised is gross innocence on Rosenberg's part. The artist-idea generator is no more or less self-proclaimed than the artist-object maker. Rosenberg is mistaken in stating that the post-art artist never questions what makes an artist. All one must do is read the critical theory that is available to and by the art community. Anyone involved in determining what the nature of art is is at least indirectly concerned with the nature of the artist. It is precisely by abandoning painting and sculpture as a primary element definition of art and artist that one can begin to question the nature and function of art and the artist. Artists have been

working with an entrenched concept of revealing the inner self. Like (or perhaps through) the critic, the artist has been led to assume that art is inherently mysterious, and, therefore, not subject to understanding. In the art community this mediumistic model is couched in purity and tradition; thus, all questioning of this prevailing belief system is suspect of the most charlatan of motives. The positivistic art of conceptualism is an epistemological art that investigates that which makes possible one's knowledge of art.

ROSENBERG 12

IN REALITY, HOWEVER, AN ARTIST IS A PRODUCT OF ART --I MEAN A PARTICULAR ART. THE ARTIST DOES NOT EXIST EXCEPT AS A PERSONIFICATION, A FIGURE OF SPEECH THAT REPRESENTS THE SUM TOTAL OF ART ITSELF. IT IS PAINTING THAT IS THE GENIUS OF THE PAINTER, POETRY OF THE POET--AND A PERSON IS A CREATIVE ARTIST TO THE EXTENT THAT HE PARTICIPATES IN THAT GENIUS. THE ARTIST WITHOUT ART, THE BEYOND-ART ARTIST, IS NOT AN ARTIST AT ALL, NO MATTER HOW TALENTED HE MAY BE AS AN IMPRESARIO OF POPULAR SPECTACULARS. THE DE-DEFINITION OF ART NECESSARILY RESULTS IN THE DISSOLUTION OF THE FIGURE OF THE ARTIST, EXCEPT AS A FICTION OF POPULAR NOSTALGIA. IN THE END EVERYONE BECOMES AN ARTIST!

REBUTTAL 12 (KS)

(A) ". . . AN ARTIST IS A PRODUCT OF ART . . ."

See Rebuttal 4, (B), (2).

- (B) "THE ARTIST WITHOUT ART, THE BEYOND-ART ARTIST, IS NOT AN ARTIST AT ALL."

Since Rosenberg defines art as painting and sculpture, we might substitute his definition for the word "art" wherever it appears in his statement. Thus: the painter without painting, the beyond-painting painter, is not a painter at all.

ROSENBERG 13

DESPITE THE GREAT EXPECTATIONS HELD FOR THE NEW OPEN-FORM FABRICATIONS, THE INDIVIDUAL ARTS, IN WHATEVER CONDITION THEY HAVE ASSUMED UNDER PRESSURE OF CULTURAL CHANGE AND THE ACTIONS OF INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS, HAVE NEVER BEEN MORE INDISPENSABLE TO BOTH THE INDIVIDUAL AND TO SOCIETY THAN THEY ARE TODAY. WITH ITS ACCUMULATED INSIGHTS, IT DISCIPLINES, ITS INNER CONFLICTS, PAINTING (OR POETRY, OR MUSIC) PROVIDES A MEANS FOR THE ACTIVE SELF-DEVELOPMENT OF INDIVIDUALS--PERHAPS THE ONLY MEANS. GIVEN THE PATTERNS IN WHICH MASS BEHAVIOR, INCLUDING MASS EDUCATION, IS PRESENTLY ORGANIZED, ART IS THE ONE VOCATION THAT KEEPS A SPACE OPEN FOR THE INDIVIDUAL TO REALIZE HIMSELF IN KNOWING HIMSELF. A SOCIETY THAT LACKS THE PRESENCE OF SELF-DEVELOPING INDIVIDUALS--BUT IN WHICH PASSIVE PEOPLE ARE ACTED UPON BY THEIR ENVIRONMENT--HARDLY DESERVES TO BE CALLED A HUMAN SOCIETY. IT IS THE GREATNESS OF ART THAT IT DOES NOT PERMIT US TO FORGET THIS.

REBUTTAL 13 (KS)

- (A) ". . . THE NEW OPEN-FORM FABRICATIONS . . ."

Not only does Rosenberg define "art" morphologically, he insists on defining "beyond-art

art" morphologically, thereby failing to comprehend the real source of the threat conceptual art poses. It is not that conceptual artists seek to replace formalist art with a new morphological twist, it is that conceptual artists seek to remove morphology all together from consideration. For a further discussion of this subject, see my essay entitled "Materials, Concepts and Richard Serra."

- (B) ". . . ACTION OF INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS . . ."
 ". . . ART IS THE ONE VOCATION THAT KEEPS A SPACE OPEN FOR THE INDIVIDUAL TO REALIZE HIMSELF."
 ". . . PRESENCE OF SELF-DEVELOPING INDIVIDUALS . . ."

- (1) The inference here is that painting and sculpture somehow preserve the individual and individual achievement while conceptual art does not. Formal or stylistic change only gives the illusion of individual innovation. Substituting English for art, we can say that an infinite number of sentences can be formulated in English. If you make up sentences about oranges, I might make up sentences about apples to

preserve my individuality. However, at the syntax level, your sentence about oranges and mine about apples may be identical. Conceptual art, by examining the syntax level of the language of art, is accused of destroying individuality because it points out the superficiality of much that passes for individuality.

- (2) Art history is the study of periods and of groups of individuals unified by similar concerns. When individuals are singled out for study, it is usually because they typify a direction in art history.
- (3) In the entire history of art there has never before been such a variety of stylistic types (individual expressions) co-existing, yet it is precisely now that art performs the most meager social-cultural role in its history.
- (4) The critic's role is to rationalize individual artistic output into the framework of art history. This is primarily attempted on the formal level. The more

easily rationalized an artist's output is, the more likely it is to be rationalized. To be included in the history of art, one must do work that can be rationalized. Thus, individuality is pressured to conform to the formal limits of the history of art. Should it prove to be difficult or impossible to rationalize a particular individual's art, that individual's art would be defined as not-art (i.e., beyond-art art). Initially, all modern art movements are defined as not-art movements by critics. All these movements, with the exceptions of Dada and conceptual art, have remained within the formal definition of art, thereby posing only a temporary rationalizing problem. Conceptual art will re-rationalize art history along concept lines.

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ART: AN OPEN TEXTURED CONCEPT

Why is it, then, that, as a rule, an experiential statement is not verifiable in a conclusive way? Is it because I can never exhaust the description of a material object or of a situation, since I may always add something to it--something that, in principle, can be foreseen? Or is it because something quite new and unforeseen may occur?

Friedrich Waismann

In discussing Morris Weitz' essay "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics," I will provide a condensed version of his theory which for brevity's sake will be enclosed in asterisks (* . . .*), all quotations from other sources will be contained in the usual quotation marks (" . . ."). I will then proceed to examine the validity of his claims. As a theory of aesthetics, Weitz' theory is sufficient and illustrates the fact that previous theories have attempted to provide interpretive models and this has been their downfall. However, there are problems with Weitz' theory in the broader context of art, as Weitz makes the mistake of presupposing that all art must be aesthetic. It is this supposition that I will examine and hope to prove invalid. A summary of Weitz's theory will precede my discussion.

SECTION I - THE ROLE OF THEORY IN AESTHETICS

If I may paraphrase Wittgenstein, we must not ask, what is the nature of any philosophical X?, or even, according to the semanticist, what does "X" mean?, a transformation that leads to the disastrous interpretation of "art" as a name for some specifiable class of objects; but rather, what is the use or employment of "X"? Weitz goes on to provide us with an argument typical of the current rhetoric found in the philosophy of art: *'art' cannot be defined as containing a true definition or set of necessary and sufficient properties common to a given class of art. Hence, a theory of it is logically impossible and not merely factually difficult. Such efforts conceive the concept of art as closed when its very use reveals and demands its openness.*

Professor Weitz continues constructing his argument by citing Wittgenstein's "game" model. *Wittgenstein raises an illustrative question, what is a game? The traditional philosophical, theoretical answer would be in terms of some exhaustive set of properties common to all games. To this Wittgenstein says, Let us consider what we call "games": I mean board-games, card-games, ball-games, Olympic-games, and so on. What is common to them all?--

Don't say: 'there *must* be something common, or they would not be called "games"' but *look and see* whether there is anything common to all.--For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to *all*, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that . . ."

Hence in "art" we find no necessary and sufficient properties--only strands of similarities. Knowing what art is is not apprehending some manifest or latent essence but being able to recognize, describe and explain those things we call "art" in virtue of these similarities. The relationship that connects the two concepts of game and art are their open texture.* Weitz goes on to say *a concept is open if its conditions of application are amendable and corrigible; i.e., if a situation or case can be imagined or secured which would call for some sort of *decision* on our part to extend the use of the concept to cover this, or to close the concept and invent a new one to deal with the new case and its new property. If necessary and sufficient conditions for the application of a concept can be stated, the concept is a closed one. But this can happen only in logic or mathematics where concepts are constructed and completely defined. It cannot occur with empirically

descriptive and normative concepts unless we arbitrarily close them by stipulating the ranges of their uses.*

*I can illustrate this open character of "art" best by examples drawn from its sub-concepts. Consider questions like "Is Dos Passos' *U.S.A.* a novel?", "Is V. Wolff's *To The Lighthouse* a novel?", "Is Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* a novel?". On the traditional view, these are constructed as factual problems to be answered yes or no in accordance with the presence or absence of defining properties. But certainly this is not how any of these questions is answered. Once it arises, as it has many times in the development of the novel from Richardson to Joyce (e.g., "Is Gide's *The School for Wives* a novel or a diary?"), what is at stake is no factual analysis concerning necessary and sufficient properties but a decision as to whether the work under examination is similar in certain respects to other works, already called "novels," and consequently warrants the extension of the concept to cover the new case. The new work is narrative, fictional, contains character delineation and dialogue but (say) it has no regular time-sequence in the plot or is interspersed with actual newspaper reports. It is like recognized novels, A, B, C, . . . , in some respects but not like them in others. But then neither were

B and C like A in some respects when it was decided to extend the concept applied to A to B and C. Because work N + 1 (the brand new work) is like A, B, C . . . N in certain respects--has strands of similarity to them--the concept is extended and a new phase of the novel engendered. "Is NI a novel?" then, is no factual, but rather a decision problem, where the verdict turns on whether or not we enlarge our set of conditions for applying the concept.*

Weitz concludes his essay by asking *what is the logic of "'X' is the work of art," when it is a descriptive utterance" What are the conditions under which we would be making such an utterance correctly? There are no necessary and sufficient conditions but there are the strands of similarity conditions, i.e., bundles of properties, none of which need to be present but most of which are, when we describe things as works of art. I shall call these the "criteria of recognition" of works of art. . . . mostly, when we describe something as a work of art, we do so under the conditions of there being present some sort of artifact, made by human skill, ingenuity, and imagination, which embodies in its sensuous, public medium--stone, wood, sounds, words, etc.--certain distinguishable elements and relations. "X is a work of art and . . . was made by no

one," or . . . "exists only in the mind and not in any publicly observable thing," or . . . "was made by accident when he spilled the paint on the canvas," in each case of which a normal condition is denied, are also sensible and capable of being true in certain circumstances. None of the criteria of recognition is a defining one, either necessary or sufficient, because we can sometimes assert of something that it is a work of art and go on to deny any one of these conditions, even the one which has traditionally been taken to be basic, namely, that of being an artifact: Consider, "this piece of driftwood is a lovely piece of sculpture." Thus, to say of anything that it is a work of art is to commit oneself to the presence of *some* of these conditions. One would scarcely describe X as a work of art if X were not an artifact, or a collection of elements sensuously presented in a medium, or a product of human skill, and so on. If none of the conditions were present, if there were no criteria present for recognizing something as a work of art, we would not describe it as one. But, even so, no one of these or any collection of them is either necessary or sufficient.*

Weitz goes on to examine the logic of "X" as an evaluative (good) utterance as a work of art which I feel

to be superfluous to the thrust of my argument. So I will dispense with a further account of Weitz' theory.

SECTION II - DON'T LOOK FOR THE MEANING, LOOK FOR THE USE

There is a pragmatic view of language embodied in the statement "Don't look for the meaning, look for the use."

The contribution Professor Weitz made to aesthetic theory was that of enunciating that "art cannot be defined as containing a true definition or set of necessary and sufficient properties" which he elucidated quite clearly, first through examples provided from Wittgenstein and, secondly, by the introduction of a term coined by Friedrich Waismann, "open texture." On the surface Weitz' argument certainly appears stable enough and in fact is a welcome relief in view of past theories which perpetuate limiting definitions of art. Such limiting definitions would include, for example, expressionist theories that classify objects with respect to the "inner necessity" evidenced in the creation of those objects, and formalist theories that classify objects according to purity of form, etc. Each theory claims to embody the correct definition of art and each charges the others with failure to include some necessary or sufficient property. The most disastrous aspect of

this discourse is the arrogance of its participants in supposing that they speak for a fixed, omni-present hierarchy of values. Put another way they mistakenly assume that the synchronic values of the present hold diachronically. They can perhaps be forgiven this mistake since it is in the attempt to emulate the all pervasive (in our culture) scientific model of objective fixed laws that such a fiction arises. The effects of these misguided arguments are, however, no less sinister for their being understandable. The effect of this argument is to place the artist and his/her art in a passive role with the critic providing (it is called interpreting) the content of the work.

If we are to follow Weitz' claim that the art model is isomorphic with the 'games' model and that there is nothing in a formal sense common to all types of games (i.e., board-games, card-games, Olympic-games, etc.), then we are provided with a fairly useful taxonomic device with regard to subclasses of art taken in the broadest sense. Thus we divide art into: the visual arts; literature; music; dance; theatre, etc. However, a problem arises when we deal with subclasses of subclasses. The subclasses of the subclass, visual arts, are painting, sculpture, ceramics, photography, etc. Should I claim that this paper

is a "work of art" and present it in a visual art context (i.e., a gallery), it would be impossible to deal with within Professor Weitz' taxonomy. Perhaps he would classify it as "framed" literature, drawing with words, "framed" criticism, or just criticism. However, it would not be my intention to present this paper as literature but rather to present it as a 'work of art' in a visual art context, the subject matter of which is the subclasses of the subclass visual art, namely painting and sculpture. It should be noted that my insistence on presenting this paper in a visual art context is not arbitrary, but is so presented because "a thing is not art because it is called 'art,' but is simply called 'art' because it is art, i.e., it belongs to a given acknowledged framework for art-activity by virtue of how it functions meaningfully within that framework rather than by the merely nominal assertions of its genius."¹ This expanded framework, which might include a conventional taxonomy, would eliminate many counterproductive problematical issues present in the criticism and philosophy of art.

¹Rosetta Brooks, "Problem Solving and Question Begging: The Work of Art-Language and John Stezaker," Studio International, Dec. 1973, p. 276.

These sorts of questions do not arise when the claim 'this is an art-work' is posited with respect to artworks that conform to the traditional paradigms for art (e.g., painting and sculpture). The statement 'this is an art-work' within Weitz' framework is equivalent to 'this is painting,' or 'this is sculpture.' These categories rest on empirical foundations. The identification transpires in a fashion parallel to the identification of a particular chair as of the class chair. The proposition that a particular painting is a work of art is verifiable empirically by this system because it is analogous to stating that this painting is a painting or, in other words, this painting consists of paint on certain specified materials.

Weitz, instead of employing Wittgenstein's pragmatic "use" dictum throughout, chooses to ignore "use" at the subclass of subclass level in favor of a look for morphological "strands." This renders his argument of limited use to the artist actively engaged in a critical examination of art usage. That a 'work of art' must share with past art some strand of similarity in its physical manifestation, fails to provide for future 'works of art' void of such strands. A radical shift in context would suggest a radical shift in use. In essence, his theory remains a

classificatory dictum, a taxonomy which fails to acknowledge the possibility of different contexts, and of different use within these contexts.

Weitz presupposes that before a 'work of art' can be of ontological status, it must be denotative and extensional (i.e., a space-occupying thing) which entails deducing 'art' from observable data. Instead of providing us with an open-textured concept of art, Weitz has proposed an "open-textured theory of naming." Naming, and theories of naming, have been central to much early 20th century philosophy. Presently such theories are all but disregarded by philosophers except in such minor areas as aesthetics.

Weitz, instead of asking for the use or employment of "X", asks instead what is the best name for "X"? Weitz' pitfall is a misbegotten empiricism--the problem with most aesthetic theory. Empiricism forces one to deal exclusively with appearances, drawing generalizations from a physical approach to the work of art, leaving the semantic underpinning or intention of the work unexposed. If art is indeed an open-textured concept as Weitz suggests, the strands of similarities are points to constitute the closing of this concept. Any art which fails to stack up per Weitz' rules of classification is left uninvestigated.

Friedrich Waismann in his essay "Verification" states that "the question of the verification arises only when we come across a new sort of combination of words (or art) . . . we create a new context, we step outside the boundaries of common speech (expected art modes) and then the question arises as to what is meant by such a word series." He then goes on to say:

Open texture is a very fundamental characteristic of most . . . empirical concepts, and it is this texture which prevents us from verifying conclusively most of our empirical statements. Take any material object statement. The terms which occur in it are non-exhaustive; that means that we cannot foresee completely all possible conditions in which they are to be used; there will always remain a possibility, however faint, that we have not taken into account something or other that may be relevant to their usage; and that means that we cannot foresee completely all possible circumstances in which the statement is true or in which it is false. There will always remain a margin of uncertainty. Thus the absence of a conclusive verification is directly due to the open-texture of the terms concerned.²

SECTION III - A THEORY OF USE IN ART

We have a tendency to confuse meanings with objects. We ask "what is the meaning" of a word, a sentence, a work of art. In dealing with word meaning, the idea that a words means a particular thing, e.g., "object" means

²Friedrich Waismann, "Verifiability," The Theory of Meaning, ed., G.H.R. Parkinson, Oxford University Press (1970), pp. 36, 38, 39.

"la: something that is or is capable of being seen, touched, or otherwise sensed."³ In this sense we view art as a material construct which draws its meaning from the fact that it is a material object which can be seen and touched.

As pointed out earlier in looking for a relationship between a word and its meaning, it is easy to be misled into thinking that a word is a sign or name for a specific thing. However, this is not the case. The meaning of the word chair cannot be the chair. It does not make sense to sit on the meaning of chair.

The fact that speakers of a language agree on what words mean implies that the aspects of language which give it meaning can be publicly observed. This points to the context of the speech act or the work of art as the place to look for the meaning in language or art. Various media employed in art derive their meaning almost exclusively from context, e.g., a painter's drop cloth on the studio floor and that same drop cloth pinned to the wall of a gallery.

³Webster's New World Dictionary (The World Publishing Company, 1966).

Each language has conventions for speech acts which must be taken into account by any speaker wishing to communicate. Art, too, must work within conventions to be understood. This is to say that words must have some relationship to the things about which they speak, yet these relationships may change while the object remains the same. Words must also stand in some relationship to other words to be understood. Spoken languages have word order conventions. To take the analogy into painting and sculpture, composition serves the function of word order. Many formal works can only be understood in terms of the relationship of their components, and context. It is upon the function of context that I wish to concentrate. Wittgenstein points out the fault in separating the speech act from its context. He says that many sentences cannot be understood outside the context of the speech act--even though we know the words, such a sentence is "this is here." We do not understand this sentence unless we know how it is used. The sentence is given meaning by the context of the speech act which carries with it the conventions of language.

Duchamp's ready-mades are an excellent example of art which depends solely on context for meaning. Our past experience with the objects he presents does not prepare

us for the unexpected connotations the objects take on in the context which he presents them.

Different functions are performed by different sentences within the same context. The sentence "most artists are hopelessly mired in morphological muck" may function to alienate the "object" artists reading such a sentence. The sentence "intellectualizing about everything is a form of mental masturbation" may comfort those same artists.

Similar functions may be performed by different sentences within the same context. A dialogue between lovers serves to prolong contact rather than to communicate information. The specific content of the sentences is secondary to prolonging the dialogue.

Different functions may be performed by the same sentence in different contexts. Let us consider here some works by Donald Judd.

One could say that if one of Judd's box forms was seen filled with debris, seen placed in an industrial setting, or even merely seen sitting on a street corner, it would not be identified with art. It follows then that understanding and consideration of it as an artwork is necessary, a priori to viewing it in order to "see" it as a work of art. Advanced information about the concept of art and about an artist's concepts is necessary to the appreciation and understanding of contemporary art.

Any and all of the physical attributes (qualities) of contemporary works, if considered separately and/or specifically, are irrelevant to the art concept.⁴

In conclusion, I suggest that the meaning of a word lies within the context of its relationship to other words in a sentence, and that both words and sentences derive meaning from the specific context of their usage. Although a theory of naming may have some useful applications within a theory of language or theory of art, it disregards the public or speech aspect of communication. While empirical data offered by art objects is important, that information must be interpreted in the context (social convention) in which the work of art is presented. This brings us to a discussion of praxis.

⁴Joseph Kosuth, "Art After Philosophy," Conceptual Art, ed. Ursula Meyer (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1972), p. 168.

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A PROLEGOMENON TO A RADICAL PRAXIS
IN ART EDUCATION

Theory will preserve the truth even if revolutionary practice deviates from its proper path; practice follows the truth not vice versa.

Herbert Marcuse

SECTION I - AN APPEAL FOR STUDENTSHIP

The college and university art department and professional art school versions of an artist's education still exist for the most part as formal indoctrination of students in art historical media. Inexperienced youngsters are conducted through righteous formats of technical vocational training couched in the pieties of occasional art talk, are instructed in lessons of pretentious past aesthetics, all of which is encompassed by the ultimate censorship of art history.¹

Studio art is coming under much academic confrontation from within its own ranks. An epistemic inadequacy exists which has a basis in the studio's dependence on "expression theories,"² With the advent of "Romanticism" the

¹ Dan Flavin, ". . . on an American artist's education . . .," Art Forum (March, 1968), p. 28.

² Harold Osborne, "Theories of Expression and Communication," Aesthetics and Art Theory (E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1970), pp. 225-226: Expression theories of art tie in closely with theories which regard art as an instrument of emotional communication, a language of the emotions, . . . Both classes of theory have usually held that the expression--or communication--of emotion is the central function of art and that works of art are successful insofar as they express--or communicate--emotion . . . Both classes of theory came to prominence in the West at the time of the

idea of self expression becomes predominant in the activity of the artist. The activity of the artist is both justified and regulated internally--free from external control. The preoccupation with Romanticism embodies a non-objectivism that has promoted delapidation of other consequent views of education and has helped further entrench the laissez-faire, anything goes notion so prevalent in art education today.

There is a fundamental misunderstanding of art's priorities at present, demonstrated by the idea that "art is less a body of subject matter than a developmental activity."³ This misunderstanding can be called a theory/practice disjunction.

Romantic movement, and since that time have been taken for granted and are accepted with as little question as were didactic theories in classical antiquity and through the Middle Ages.

It is convenient to discuss these theories under three general heads, although in many formulations ideas from each of the three clusters may be combined. These heads are (1) art of self-expression on the part of the artist; (2) art as the transmission of emotion from the artist to his public; (3) art as the embodiment of emotions in an art object. The word "expression" is commonly used in all three cases. Works of art may be called "expressive" under any of these heads and are valued for their "expressiveness" in any of these senses.

³Ralph A. Smith, ed., Aesthetics and Criticism in Art Education (Chicago: University of Illinois, Rand McNally & Company, 1966), p. viii - Preface.

The importance of theory can be viewed against the background of the linguistic competence of a speaker of a language. A language can be viewed as a collection of words and the rules for their use. It is the knowledge of these words and their rules of usage that enable us to speak a language. Therefore, speech becomes an activity that we do with a language. Theory then can be said to function in much the same relationship to practice or performance as language does to speech.

However, the keywords for art are often "poetic license" and "the wordless," the latter being the most popular. The logical function of language (art theories) are lacking. No knowledge is communicated; no information is conveyed. All such failures to communicate can be explained away in an appeal to metaphysics (used in its perjorative sense: *kantianism*; being beyond the limits of all possible experience and knowledge) which provides a more than adequate loophole for the less rigorous minded. To amplify this further one only needs to contrast the artist/instructor with the teacher from another discipline. Anyone laying claim to teach physics, sociology, or any other

of the sciences or humanities must provide rational paradigms,⁴ entailing both theoretical and methodological frameworks. However, it is accepted as perfectly reasonable for the artist/instructor to provide only the methodological models and then to rely upon a belief system that is rooted in a speculative psychology which is equivalent to theoretical osmosis, e.g., verbal criticism, or for that matter, the presentation of alternative models is often looked upon as an intrusion upon the spontaneous purity of the artist's "statement." Historically this theory/practice disjunction so prevalent in today's studio practice was virtually non-existent. Utterances which fill the halls and classrooms of practically every university in-build in the student this theory/practice disjunction. "Artists should make art--not talk about it." Translation: art is an intuitive--sensual activity which is stultified

⁴I prefer to make the distinction made by sociologists. The term paradigm has become "popular among sociologists of late because it communicates the notion expressed by the term "model" without invoking that word's physical imagery. A paradigm is an "example," but one that is typically linguistic in base rather than physical, a conceptual reference rather than a perceptual one." Robert A Friedrichs, A Sociology of Sociology (New York: The Free Press; London: Collier-Macmillan Limited, 1970), p. 4.

by critical reflection. "Aesthetics is for philosophers or possibly critics." Translation: Theory is important although exactly why is unclear. Thus, theory is better left to those who cannot make art. This renders theory the role of Muzak in relation to the pragmatics of normative art making. Art theory as culture (enlightened social discourse) has become art theory as culture (mere refinement of sensibility).

Classicism and Romanticism are the first two historically significant modes of thought to effect a general disengagement (theory/practice disjunction) of the artist from the society at large. The objective consciousness of the scientific ethos embodied in the enlightenment had banished ritual and myth from their "contemporary" world. "Magic" takes on for that period a perjorative sense. The classical artist sought to revive "classical" mythology while the romantic artist searched his/her own psyche for the roots of mythic understanding. In each case the artist is forced to seek sustaining material outside of the main fabric of social concerns. It is this model, that of the alienated artist, that obtains not only in the minds of the public, but most destructively in the general "literature" of the art establishment. With the 20th century, a

new spirit of acceptance of and engagement with the "modern world" arises among artists. Scientific thought was embraced for its intellectual framework which provided for developments in art along similar lines--e.g., the analytic spirit found in cubism is typical of this new consciousness on the part of artists. The artists and writers who gathered from about 1905 to 1945 were intellectually well-equipped to formulate explanations and theories. They gave lectures and regularly met together to discuss the relation of their work to poetry, music and science. The members of these groups were prolific writers, and they issued an enormous body of articles, novels, essays, and manifestoes. For example, the theoretical writing by the cubists was supported by research in science, non-Euclidean geometries, and the fourth dimension. Constructivism found its impetus in the evanescences of modern structural engineering, mathematics, physics, and perceptual psychology. Surrealism rested its validity in Freudian interpretation of the subconscious mind seen within the context of Marxism. An understanding of these theories is fundamental to the comprehension of these forms of art.

Beginning about 1945, the contemporary period saw the New York School emerge as dominant. "Surrealist

theories and practices release the Americans from the comparatively moralistic teaching of Henri and his school, and the sober dogmatism of the artistic congress, and revealed to them the exhilarating freedom possible in the play of the spontaneous imagination."⁵ Surrealist theories and practices were removed from the Marxist context by American artists. The American artists were attracted to group discussions but unlike the closely-knit European groups, the Americans shared no common ideologies. The tradition of the progressive individual was too much a part of the American experience to foster common ideologies. The climate of postwar American art saw the advent of art as the free expression of belabored feelings by neurotic loners who often verged on mental illness. Professional critics and self-proclaimed aestheticians, who were not artists and consequently did not know nearly enough about art, attempted the synthesis of theory and practice. The effect these people had was just the opposite and was determinative in creating the lacuna that exists between theory and practice. The reading that these

⁵Herschel B. Chipp, Theories of Modern Art (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1969), p. 510.

critics and self-proclaimed aestheticians placed on history is the instrument by which the theory/practice disjunction was effected. Their reading imbedded the idea that artists are and should be concerned only with the appearances of things and leave any theorizing (questioning usage context) to the critic or art historian. This removal of theory from the public sphere allows for the popular notion that art is and always has been primarily an entertaining diversion or a meaningless manipulation of materials.

Art historians have been reluctant to discuss the multiplicity of possible theoretical models underpinning the art of past and present. Instead of structural models, we receive descriptive generalities about the physical attributes of works. When consideration is given to parallel developments in science, music, philosophy or other fields, these parallels are again drawn descriptively rather than structurally or cognitively. Jack Burnham in the introduction to his book The Structure of Art offers us the following observation:

It appears likely that we never perceive the conceptual mechanisms of art because art scholarship, upon which most of our knowledge of art relies, is directed only toward secondary structures. The fact that historical and critical analyses of art

are essentially descriptive rather than analytical is of singular importance. Historical research, criticism, and connoisseurship, moreover, can never define art; their real function is to perform elegantly and gratuitously as pendants to the work of art. In other words, they prevent explanation. In elaborate detail historians tell us how to look at and think about art. The most impeccable scholarship, utilizing newly verified documents, voluminous footnotes, and convincing empirical generalizations about the development of the art impulse, only succeeds in further indoctrinating us into the art mystique . . .

. . . it indicates that all their efforts are directed toward explaining the physical evidence of the art impulse, rather than the conceptual condition which make art objects possible under vastly different circumstances.⁶

Patricia Sloan in her essay Teaching Art History gives us a far more dismal picture.

As a discipline art history is either dead or else never was fully alive. It is too much out of touch with art and too much out of touch with history. As a field of study it is conceptually chaotic and untidy, not because there are so many art-historical facts to deal with but because art historians as a group are disinclined to examine their own intellectual prejudices, limitations, and assumptions. Although there have been a few hopeful stirrings recently, art history has traditionally neither studied its own history nor analyzed its presuppositions. Historians, by comparison with art historians, cultivate a different attitude, and since the time of Thucydides have been in the habit of stepping back from their work to ask themselves what they think they are doing. On account of this self-examination there is even a body of literature

⁶Jack Burnham, The Structure or Art (New York: George Braziller, Rev. Ed., 1973), pp. 2-3.

dealing with what might be called the philosophy of history. There is no philosophy of art history, a study that winds its unwitting way onward caring neither where it is going nor where it has been.⁷

Miss Sloan goes on to say that

Nothing is more revealing of art-historical attitudes about the nature of history than the familiar saw that art historians cannot study contemporary art because it is happening now. Art historians will analyze modern art--it is said--when the flux of its happening has subsided, providing a more favorable opportunity for dispassionate investigation. I presume it is common knowledge by now that some art historians see themselves as antiquarians, and are reluctant to deal with contemporary art because of an antipathy to it. What is even more interesting about the argument, however, is that it seems to imply that history is a body of data within which no lacunae exist. It seems to me that in a number of ways it is *easier* to study the present than the past since a greater amount of data is available, making it easier to separate the facts from the fiction. One can always call Robert Morris on the telephone and ask him to verify some point of fact about his sculpture. One cannot do this in the case of Michelangelo.⁸

Art history constitutes the ontology of art. The reluctance of art historians, as guardians of this ontology, to examine critically their pre-suppositions sets an

⁷Patricia Sloan, "Teaching Art History in the Community College"--pp. 106-107, in New Ideas in Art Education --A Critical Anthology, ed., Gregory Battcock (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1973).

⁸Sloan, p. 114.

unfortunate example for the studio practitioner who has already accepted the theory (art history)/practice (studio) split institutionalized in the curriculums of most art departments.

Upon further reflection the problem goes much deeper. Much more is required than the mere examination of effects. The theory/practice disjunction is an effect, not the major cause. The cause is rooted in our whole conception of reality which finds expression in our capitalistic industrialized society. Answers to these problems are not going to be found by arousing the interest of middle-class philosophers, sociologists, psychologists and leaders of cultural affairs in government as Howard Conant suggests in his essay "Season of Decline." They would only help to further confuse and muddle the issues and continue to apologize for the prevailing system. These questions are proper only to internally committed individuals (e.g., artist and art historians) who have developed a critical consciousness intent on questioning and unraveling the prevailing order which affects them and in turn is affected by them. What this entails is a relentless critical front designed to study all theoretical models within our culture. Art education as it is presently constituted

is not producing this kind of individual. Perhaps it is time that art educators begin to ask themselves why. At the very least, art education ought to be more critically examined in light of other academic disciplines. Art education as it stands today is largely academically meaningless.

Only the systematic interpenetration of pertinent cognitive and critical maps in the multiform contexts of art education in particular, and education in general is likely to cultivate socially relevant thought. The present state of art is so rooted in confusion that the situation cannot be cured just "by stepping back in order to get one's theoretical support structure into good shape and then returning to the fray ready to make fundamentally the same kind of art."⁹ We must begin picking away the layers of morphological muck that have been allowed to collect and obliterate the pragmatic function of art. Our arguments must be directed at revealing bankruptcy not only at the infrastructure level, but also at the super-structural level.

⁹Terry Smith, "Art and Art and Language," Art Forum (September, 1973), p. 50.

A great truth wants to be criticized not idolized.

Nietzsche

SECTION II - THE OBSOLETE CONSCIOUSNESS: THE OBJECTIVE/
SUBJECTIVE DIACHOTOMY

In order to penetrate the morphology of art education we must first direct our inquiry to education in general as it is envisaged and posited by our industrialized society. Rooted within our education system is a positivistic objective consciousness which is seen by society at large as an undisputed social good. It is the "objective consciousness" referred to by Theodore Roszak in his book The Making of a Counter Culture.

Thus, if we probe the technocracy in search of the peculiar power it holds over us, we arrive at the myth of objective consciousness. There is but one way of gaining access to reality--so the myth holds--and this is to cultivate a state of consciousness cleansed of all subjective distortion, all personal involvement. What flows from this state of consciousness qualifies as knowledge, and nothing else does. This is the bedrock on which the natural sciences have built; and under their spell all fields of knowledge strive to become scientific. The study of man in his social, political, economic, psychological, historical aspects--all this, too, must become objective: Rigorously, painstakingly objective.¹⁰

¹⁰ Theodore Roszak, The Making of a Counter Culture (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1969), pp. 208-209.

One of the roles of the modern university is to turn out trained personnel to insure the continuance of the present economic and social systems.

"The system needs an ever increasing number of engineers, technicians, scientists, teachers, administrators and sociologists to organize production, to 'rationalize' industrial methods, to run the gigantic state machine, 'to adjust the psychology of individuals and groups' and to preserve their sanity, even to 'organize' leisure activities."¹¹ "In the academic business the corporate executives and managers (presidents and deans) who employ the work force (faculty) in order to 'handle' the customers (students) share the aims of their industrial counterparts: The prevention of customer malaise, the avoidance of strikes, the satisfaction of stockholders, and the growth of the firm. The academic work force and their customers similarly share, by and large, the attitudes and aims of their non-academic counterparts: they play it cool, they

¹¹ Daniel and Gabriel Cohn-Bendit, Obsolete Communism the Left-Wing Alternative (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company), p. 41.

do not 'rock the boat,' they grind out acceptable reports (books and articles), and so forth."¹²

Contemporary industrial culture stresses conformity, respectability, rationality, practicality and security. If the objective-consciousness can be described with such terms as positivistic, rational, unbiased and unemotional, the romantic consciousness can be described with such terms as irrational, emotional, sentimental and personal expression. Conventional taxonomy places the artist on the subjective side of the subjective/objective dichotomy. Thus the artist finds himself alienated from the rest of the university community. If the artist attempts to reform, the artist is accused of following the current fads and faces hostility from all sectors of the university including his fellow artists. If the artist sits back uncritically and continues to make art under the "Material-character/physical-object paradigm (model)"¹³ he/she is accused of being too personal or esoteric for the comprehension of the community at large. He is also vulnerable to

¹² William Leiss, John David Ober and Erica Sherover, "Marcuse as Teacher," The Critical Spirit, edited by Kurt H. Wolff and Barrington Moore, Jr. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), p. 423.

¹³ A term coined by Terry Atkinson and Michael Baldwin in their essay "On the

judgement from those artists who are seeking reform. He/she is criticized for continuing to perpetuate an art which has ceased to be meaningful to society. An art which is, in other words, disengaged. This is not a suggestion that an artist should reduce his work to the lowest common denominator, which itself would be an evasion of the real issue; that is, to "engage" art in society making it purposeful and socially relevant.

Our society follows the philosophical model known as positivism. Henri Comte de Saint-Simon first used the term to designate the extension of scientific methods to philosophy. Positivism is characterized by the thesis that the only valuable knowledge is scientific and the only possible objects of knowledge must be facts. The task of philosophy becomes to uncover the general principles common to the sciences and apply these to social organization. Any forces or substances which cannot be ascertained by scientific methods becomes unintelligible.

Material-Character/Physical-Object Paradigm of Art," Art-Language, Vol. 2, Number 1 (Feb., 1972), pp. 51-57--I would tend to substitute model in the place of paradigm because of the physically implied in the use of the terms "Material-Character/Physical Object"--refer to Footnote (4).

The eighteenth century industrial revolution and the great optimism for technology gave rise to the proper cultural climate for this philosophy to take hold. The English empiricists and philosophers of the Enlightenment were its principal sources. Positivism is dead as a philosophical movement, although its influence is deeply imbedded in our culture.

Positivism deliberately restrains "from any criticism, by reducing philosophy to a neutral, value free, uncritical theoretical activity which either avoids all vital human issues or, even worse, becomes a servant of an existing ideology,"¹⁴ thus, the value free scientific methodology that characterizes our western society. Scientific methodology gives rise to an extreme materialism. Matter occupies a primary position while mind occupies a secondary position or possibly is accorded no reality at all. Physical properties only are considered to be components of material objects. Materialism has allied itself with the sciences which attempt to explain a class of phenomena by study of physical conditions.

¹⁴ Mihailo Marković, From Affluence to Praxis, Introduction (The University of Michigan Press, 1974), p. 3.

The 'pure' facts of the natural sciences arise when a phenomenon of the real world is placed (in thought or in reality) into an environment where its laws can be inspected without outside interference. This process is reinforced by reducing the phenomena to their purely quantitative essence, to their expression in numbers and numerical relations.¹⁵

In this way arise the 'isolated' facts, 'isolated' complexes of facts.¹⁶ It uncritically accepts the nature of the object as it is given and the laws of that society as the untenable foundation of 'science.'¹⁷

Materialist epistemology as so far described has resulted in a manipulative, dominating attitude on the part of our social institutions with respect both to nature and to persons. The reification of the capitalist world is the effect of the destruction of the context of experience and its replacement by lifeless concepts. Science, void of its true meaning in relation to context, provides only partial surface knowledge. Abstract thinking when it avoids involvement in the real world is a one-sided synchronic mode of cognition which is an inadequate mechanistic world view.

¹⁵ Georg Lukács, History and Class Consciousness (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1968), p. 6.

¹⁶ Lukács, p. 6.

¹⁷ Lukács, p. 7.

Bertrand Russell's theory of denotation offers a clear picture of the one-sided formal logic described as it has been applied to the philosophy of language. P. F. Strawson in his article "On Referring" gives an account of Russell's theory and offers useful criticism of the theory. Russell's theory arises in part to determine whether sentences which lack referents for the things which they describe can be significant. For instance, how could the sentence The King of France is wise be significant if indeed, there is no King of France? Strawson points out that Russell was anxious to give a correct answer to this question, because the answers usually given he thought incorrect.

Prior to Russell, it was concluded that before the sentence could be significant there had to exist, or subsist, in some world a King of France. This idea called for a special world occupied by strange entities. Russell felt that such a world would be in opposition to "that feeling of reality which ought to be preserved even in the most abstract studies".¹⁸ However, Russell himself is

¹⁸ P.F. Strawson, "On Referring," The Theory of Meaning, ed., Gittiri Parkinson (Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 63.

guilty of abstracting this and all sentences like it from their function in the real world. He answers in theory the question of how sentences of this type can be significant but fails to deal with them as they are used in practice.

Russell's solution to this problem was to make a distinction between the grammatical subject of the sentence and what he called the logical subject of the sentence.

'The King of France is the grammatical subject of the sentence, the King of France is wise, but not the logical subject. For Russell says that logically the sentence is not even a subject predicate sentence, but rather an existential proposition which could better be expressed if the sentence were rewritten deleting the subject-predicate which leads to "special world" conclusions such as those stated earlier. He "recognizes only two ways in which sentences which seem, from their grammatical structure, to be about some particular person or individual object or event can be significant: (1) the first is that their grammatical form should be misleading as to their logical form, and that they should be analyzable, like "s", as a special kind of existential sentence; (2) the second is that their grammatical subject should be a logical proper

name, of which the meaning is the individual thing it designates."¹⁹

By asking under what circumstances someone uttering the sentence the King of France is wise would be making a true assertion we can see how Russell arrived at the idea that asserting "s" is asserting that: "(1) there is a King of France, (2) there is not more than one King of France, (3) there is nothing which is King of France and is not wise."²⁰

By following this line of reasoning, "s" the sentence becomes significant because someone uttering it today would be uttering the three propositions outlined above. The first that there is a King of France is of course false. If an assertion consists of three propositions and one of those propositions is false, the assertion as a whole is false--but significant.

It is easy to see that Russell has only bypassed the issue. He was aware of the fact that the sentence could be significant whether or not there was a King of France, but saw this significance as resting on a

¹⁹ Strawson, p. 64.

²⁰ Strawson, p. 65.

theoretical form rather than in the relationship of the statement to the real world.

Strawson presents the distinction between sentences and the statements made by the use of such sentences on separate occasions in differing circumstances. He believes Russell's failure to note this difference was his mistake. If two men speak the sentence the King of France is wise one today when France is not a monarchy and one at a time that France did indeed have a king, the second man would be making a true or false assertion depending on whether or not the King actually was wise. However, the first would not be saying anything true or false because there is no King of France, yet both men have spoken the same sentence.

The preceding account of Russell's theory is a perfect example of formal logic and its biases for static, synchronic, atemporal abstract thought. It must be noted that this is not an argument against formal logic per se, but rather its unmeditated isolation from context. Logic is essential to the organization and qualification of congruent formal correctness of thought which is essential to the principles of truth. However, as I have already shown, logic is not being used to mediate between concept and

usage context, or put another way, nature and thought. Nature is completely excluded from any considerations other than as an isolated phenomenon in the laboratory. This holds true for all fields of knowledge in Western society. Some earlier conceptual art by Joseph Kosuth and Mel Bochner was designed to examine the logic of language and mathematics in their applications to the physical world, revealing that these architectonic systems are constructed without reference to the physical world making their application problematical. These applications exposed the natural contradictions occurring in the physical world which should be considered. The world is in a constant state of flux where contradiction is wedded to our very existence. Thus, through formal logic, our men of science seek to dismantle and supercede the contradictions that make our lives possible.

"Science must not ignore its own social role, for only by becoming conscious of its function in the present critical situation could it contribute to the forces that would bring about all necessary changes."²

² Martin Jay, The Dialectical Imagination (Boston - Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1973), p. 27.

The distinction between the natural and social sciences are concerned with the study and classification of inanimate objects within a rational conceptual scheme, while the social sciences study and classify socially mediated institutions viewed through rational paradigms. The rationalists stencil their paradigms to the facts and the empiricists methodize their observations around their models. Most social scientists, regardless of their camp, fail to take into account that the institutions which are the object of their study are "Composed of and created by conscious agents, and are thus potentially free and not fully predictable historical subjects."²² The reason for this failure is the fact that the posture of the scientific ethos is to view the whole world objectively regardless of its natural or social subject matter. The social scientist seems to forget that there are a large number of "homo sapien" experiences and decisions which are hidden in the adumbrate process of abstraction. "In the legitimate effort to establish certain social laws there has always been a tendency to reify these laws, to construct them as if they are independent from human action, and to

²²Mihailo Marković, From Affluence to Praxis (The University of Michigan Press, 1974), p. 9.

forget that they are only the expression of certain regularities of human behavior.²³

The social scientist must maintain a cogent view of man both diachronically and synchronically. A one-sided synchronic view leads to the atomic ossification of science. Time applies to the natural and social sciences quite differently in meaning and in its structural appearance. Natural occurrences repeat over long periods of time. Motion and change are common to both of the sciences with fixed patterns emerging in the natural sciences. Social scientists make the mistake of believing that the same fixed patterns can be observed in social institutions. This is the same mistake that Russell has made in his theory of denotation: he failed to realize that conscious agents create language and that language is in a constant state of flux. Nature differs in that it is gratuitous and void of conscious agents. Both natural and social scientists tend to be concerned only with the here and now, excluding the past and the future.

However, past and future must be considered in relationship to the present in order for social scientists to

²³Marković, p. 10.

penetrate the real world. Man lives in the past, the present and the future. His existence in the present is somewhat determined by his existence in the past which will indirectly determine a large part of his future.

Man is a conglomerate of experiences which constitute his "experience-grammar." This grammar represents the collected experience of previous generations and finds its cultivation first through the process of formal education and learning. After the formative years the individual enters into a process of self-education or self-motivated experience constituting the framework for viewing and interpreting the past, present and the future. Contained within the future is always an element of the present and, through the present, the past which influences each individual's world view (i.e., choices, preferences, and decisions). To use Jean-Paul Sartre's terminology, man is a "product of his own product."²⁴

It should be quite clear that the history of man cannot under any circumstances coincide with physical time. Nonetheless, most social scientists (and art historians)

²⁴ Jean-Paul Sartre, Search for a Method, Introduction (New York: Random House, 1968), p. xxiii.

rely upon the material-character/physical object model "which is the outgrowth of the rigid empiricism which dominates 'normal' science." Thomas Kuhn in his book The Structure of Scientific Revolution was the first to use the term "normal" in relation to science to designate that activity in which the participants of the scientific community share a common paradigm.

A science conceived in a rigorously empirical mechanistic language has resulted in deadening and restrictive edifice of immaterial laws. Social scientists fail to realize that social laws are pliable and open-ended because man is a rational being with the capacity to introduce novelty into his behavior. Man is able to regulate and change the status of norms he has created.

Man's "Biogrammar"²⁵ is composed of unlimited sensory power; reason, imagination, a capacity for communication, creative activity and the ability to evolve a critical consciousness about himself. Any reasonably intelligent man has limitless potential. However, man at the present time is being lulled by a laissez-faire social

²⁵ A term coined by Lionel Tiger and Robin Fox, The Imperial Animal (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1972).

system that does not motivate him to develop his faculties to the fullest.

"Dialectical reasoning" is a self reflective critical paradigm that develops in its users the ability to consciously modify and control human institutions through a creative use of one's own biogrammar. Such a paradigm, if employed within the educational community, would eliminate much of the restrictive morphological muck accumulated there. The hierarchies of control in educational institutions are primarily concerned with self aggrandizement. The prevailing superstructure outside of the educational system ensures this, e.g., educational practices must be justified on economic grounds consequently, those in control continue a mechanistic conventionalism that perpetuates stagnation. In order to alleviate this stagnation the inactment of critical theory is proper for a full scale attack in all branches of education.

At this point the introduction of the dialectic and its theoretic assumptions might prove to be useful in unraveling the ideology or "false consciousness"²⁶ imbedded within the conservative and liberal ideology.

²⁶ A term used by Marx to denote the perjorative sense of ideology. Mihailo Marković, Affluence to Praxis

The premise of dialectical materialism . . . 'it is not men's consciousness that determines their existence, but on the contrary, their social existence that determines their consciousness.'

Georg Lukács

SECTION III - THE DIALECTIC: A CRITICAL THEORY

Dialectic is a generic theory and a method of establishing knowledge, as well as a revolutionary negation and transcending of the status quo. Thus it is both a collection and evaluation of knowledge fused into a radical criticism.

Practical activity is the hand maiden of theory, and when the two are viewed in dialectical relation we have praxis. Praxis is any meaningful or purposeful activity untainted by random undirected motivation. So the unison between theory and praxis is not arbitrary. It is the conscious enactment of the intellectual precepts which enable one to increase his/her knowledge about themselves and

(The University of Michigan Press, 1974), p. 54: "all ideologies in this sense are dangerous because they create illusions and prejudices, and they are all conservative both because their function is too rationalize and preserve the particular interest of various social elites, and because they are too static and thus necessarily lag behind the facts. Based as they are on interests, emotion, and sometimes most irrational, blind, unconscious drives, rather than on objective observation and critical thinking, . . ."

their actions. It is the realization that one has meaningful control over one's own cognizance as well as the ability to reflect and make decisive critical and rational judgements in order to improve one's future doing. In other words, praxis becomes man's ethics.

The idiosyncratic alignment of dialectic is designed to locate the intrinsic limits of all systems and to make explicit those structural elements which hinder the maturation of that system and to point out the concrete ingredients necessary to transcend such a limit. This would constitute the negation of negation. Dialectic as a critical theory is not the criticism of concepts but the criticism of concrete relationships existing in the real world.

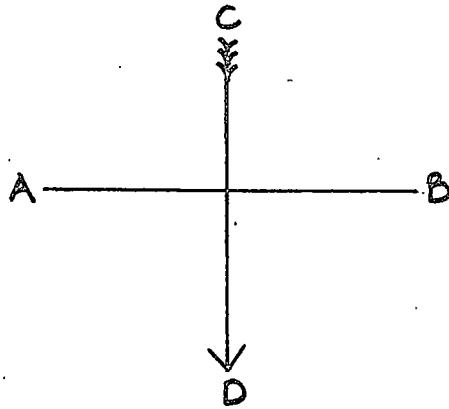
The dialectical *modus operandi* can best be portrayed as an investigation into the multifarious procedures which form the intrinsic connections ". . . not only between different entities, but between the same one in times past, present and future."²⁷ Contrast this with our own one-sided materialism which abstracts and considers phenomenon in isolation as its object of study. The dialectic has the whole world as subject and object. That is, any part of

²⁷Bertell Ollman, Alienation (Cambridge: The University Press, 1973), p. 52.

the whole which the dialectic might consider is studied in relation to the totality. Dialectic is a diachronic/synchronic interaction which "reduce[s] itself to the science of the general laws of motion--both in the external world and in the thought of man--two sets of laws which are identical *in substance*."²⁸

During the nineteenth century, comparative philologists studied the facts of language or rather took inventory of the mechanical total of the units used in speech. The results were fragmentary and precluded insight into a total framework of which they were only a part. Saussure was among the first to recognize that language is a self-contained system in which the value of the parts is derived from their function in relationship to the whole. Speech is at the same time both individual and social, i.e., synchronic and diachronic. It is an established system yet is continually in evolution. This notion can be best understood by referring to a model provided by the linguist Ferdinand De Saussure.

²⁸Georg Lukács, History and Class Consciousness (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1971), p. 4.



(1) "*The axis of simultaneities* (AB), which stands for the relations of coexisting things and from which the intervention of time is excluded; and (2) *The axis of successions* (CD), on which only one thing can be considered at a time but upon which are located all the things on the first axis together with their changes."²⁹

"For a science concerned with values the distinction is a . . . necessity and . . . an absolute one. . . . Scholars cannot organize their research rigorously without considering both co-ordinates and making a distinction between the system of values per se and the same values as they relate to time."³⁰

It should be noted that criticism can be leveled at Saussure for his radical duality in which, from what is a single science, he constitutes two separate disciplines--

²⁹Ferdinand De Saussure, Course in General Linguistics (New York: Philosophical Library), p. 80.

³⁰Saussure, p. 80.

synchronic linguistics to which he relegates language, and diachronic linguistics to which he assigns speech. Saussure sees speech as a part of the individual as well as of society encompassing physical, physiological, and psychological areas. Language is viewed as a static product of society's capacity for speech in combination with the conventions governing language and enabling communication. Saussure's mistake is in considering language a self-contained system analogous to mathematics.

"The idea of the conventionality, the arbitrariness of language is a typical one for rationalism as a whole; and no less typical is the comparison of language to the system of mathematical signs. What interests the mathematically minded rationalists is not its originator, but the relationship of sign to sign within a closed system already accepted and authorized. In other words, they are interested only in the inner logic of the system of signs itself, taken, as in algebra, completely independently of the meaning that gives signs their content."³¹

Although Saussure recognizes the necessity for the distinction between synchronic and diachronic linguistics,

³¹ Valentin Nikolaevič Vološinov, Marxism and the Philosophy of Language (New York and London: Seminar Press, 1973), p. 2.

he misses the point or perhaps goes beyond it, in segregating axis (AB) from axis (CD). Saussure's model is appropriate as long as it is realized that this paper intends the integration of axis (AB) with (CD).

There is no recognition of the necessity for a diachronic world view mediated with a synchronic world view to be found in the prevalent one-sided materialism. The tendency is to look at axis (AB) while excluding axis (CD).

Recently on a national news broadcast it was reported that sociological studies of consumerism had produced differing results. In one study men and women were tested for their ability to mathematically solve problems determining the most economic purchases. The men excelled the women on these tests and it would seem that they would make the thriftiest buyers. However, the second study produced conflicting evidence. In studies of shoppers it seems that men bought much more compulsively than women and were thus less thrifty. It is easy to see that a study of the facts apart from the whole often results in misleading if not incorrect information.

It must be pointed out that dialectic is not dogmatic like our own orthodox materialism. It doesn't search for external laws. To think dialectic, capable of

performing predictive functions is a mistake. In order for dialectic to be predictive it would have to be endowed with a logic it does not possess.

". . . the dialectic knows no 'either-or,' to it everything is 'both this and that.' In the dialectic there are no hard and fast lines between the classes we construct in any sphere of reality. What appears as an element in one class now may appear in the opposite class later."³²

The nature of dialectic does not allow one to study isolated phenomena for this provides only incomplete abstract knowledge. Phenomena must be contextualized structurally and historically providing us with a concrete unity of the whole--not an arbitrary assemblage of objects but a historical gestalt which is germane to our purpose. and answers, our particular needs, thus the following components are necessary for the study of meaningful wholes:

- (1) The edifice of some known phenomena,
- (2) the history of the edifice, and
- (3) our axiological assumptions reflecting needs and aspirations which make up the yardstick of evaluation of the whole edifice and its constituent parts. All objects are involved in a process that undergoes change; thus history is engaged in a self-conscious awareness of itself.

³²Ollman, p. 56.

To negate dialectically entails the abolishment of those decadent components of the edifice (i.e., social institutions) which hinder progressive change. Also to sanction those dialectic elements of the existing system which are positive and help further their existence within the new system. The aim of dialectic is the advent of the theoretical clarification of the real world in the most cogent and practically enriching manner possible. Dialectic is always a heuristic that cannot be finalized or dogmatic. It must constantly be in the position to reverse itself in relation to the larger social spectrum. Dialectic is perpetually progressing from one definition to another.

It's been well pointed out, present education consists in badly damaging our learning apparatus . . . a matter of citizenship factories, learning one particular set of views to the exclusion of all others.

Art-Language

SECTION IV - MORE ON STUDIO AND HISTORICAL EMPIRICISM: THE FROZEN SYLLABUS

Outlined in Section One of this paper were the general ramifications of theory/practice disjunction as it has manifested itself both in the studio and in the lecture halls of art history. The term praxis (a Greek word for "action") was introduced in Section Three and designated as a kind of self creating purposeful activity untainted by random undirected motivation. A distinction can now be made between praxis and practice. Practice can be defined as "a repeated or customary action or one's usual way of doing something." On the other hand, praxis (as opposed to mere action) is informed by theoretical reflection. What this entails is eliminating *doxa* ("a Greek word for opinion"--anything that can be shaken by criticism, conflicting evidence, authority, etc.) from action and replacing it with theory.

At this point a detailed analysis of the two terms praxis and practice is in order. Beginning with practice

I shall outline the negative aspects of such activity unmediated by theoretical consideration.

A - Practice

There is no man-made or natural communication system which does not have in it the potentialities for error. The electronic signal, the written word, or the spoken word all admit the possibility of foreign elements which will get in the way of the intended meaning--a cough, an illegible handwriting, random fluctuations or perturbations in the mechanical signal. These interferences are referred to as 'noise'. Noise in its simplest form is the addition or omission of a symbol in the communication chain which results in a discrepancy between the message transmitted and the message received (or in more human terms, the message intended and the message perceived).³³

Practice as it is understood in the context of studio empiricism is the equivalent of noise. The amount of foreign elements and randomness allowed to filter into the chain of decisions determine the volume of noise. What this entails for a studio with a high level of noise is a low level of competence in the praxiological manipulation of content. Studio empiricism represents a static belief system submerged in a Banausic pandemonium.

Practice, as earlier stated, is a repeated or customary action: habit. Performance on the other hand is

³³Kenneth K. Sereno and C. David Mortensen, Foundations of Communication Theory (New York, Evanston, and London: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1970), p. 70.

the "execution of an action." Performance is necessary to practice; however, practice is not necessary to performance. One can enter into the performance of a particular action and never repeat that action. Performance, then, is a behavioristic term which finds its impetus in the "material-character/physical-object model" manifested in the behaviorist work ethic.

In art education overt behaviorism is a perjorative concept due to the belief that justification of art lies in the physical residue of the individual work. The problem with this notion is the fact that it becomes everybody's guessing game as to the artist's intentions. Each individual has his own behavioristic language or pseudo-language encompassing his private world.

C.L.-S. . . . contemporary art tends towards non-being--the subject-matter disappears altogether and tends to be no more than a system of signs.

G.C. Subject-matter has lost its massivity.

C.L.-S. I agree with you. Only this increases and exacerbates the contradiction inherent in contemporary art, because (and this seems to me to be a typical feature of abstract painters) we are left with nothing but a system of signs, but

'outside language,' since the sign-system is created by a single individual, and he is liable to change his system fairly frequently.³⁴

C.L.-S. Musique concrète seems to me to be very close to . . . abstract painting . . . both are a combination of elements arrived at through the personal likes and dislikes of the painter or composer, but independent of any semantic rule.³⁵

Behaviorism, however, as a scientific method can be very useful is mediated dialectically with other methods of attaining knowledge (such as phenomenology and structuralism).

Phenomenology allows one to move beyond the surface of an object in order to grasp the inner core or essence. It must be understood that the outer appearance of objects is not the same as their essence. This entails detaching the phenomena from their physical occurrences and unlocking the intrinsic links in the inner core of essence.

³⁴ G. Charbonnier (ed.), Conversations with Claude Levi-Strauss (Jonathan Cape, Thirty Bedford Square, London, 1969), p. 87.

³⁵ Charbonnier, p. 121.

Structuralism is "a method whose scope includes all human social phenomena, no matter what their form, thus embracing not only the social sciences proper (anthropology, sociology, politics, economics and psychology) but also the humanities (literature, history and linguistics) and the fine arts. This is made possible by the belief that all manifestations of social activity, . . . that are practised in any society, constitute languages, in a formal sense. Hence their regularities may be reduced to the same set of abstract rules that define and govern what we normally think of as language."³⁶

On the other hand, historicism enables one to progress from the abstract facts and perceive the internal structures historically rendering holistic pictures necessary for dialectical examination.

Behaviorism itself can offer some of the most significant solutions to the understanding of belief systems. This idea is based on the view that one's subjective nature comes to expression in external, objective, material forms. At the root of behaviorism is the inability to deal with mentalistic concepts such as purpose, intention and other abstract mechanism. Such concepts are held to designate unobservable things and events whose locus is located within the organism. What art education has done is to borrow

³⁶Michael Lane, edited & introduced by Introduction to Structuralism (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1975), pp. 13 and 14.

the behavioristic framework, utilizing it in a most perjorative sense. That is, the art student completely disregards the mentalistic concepts (e.g., purpose and intention) which demand more from the artist than mere feelings.

Just what do science and philosophy have to do with art education? Why the elaborate detailing of various scientific methods and philosophical concepts? This answer is simply that our western science and philosophy have a great deal to do with how artists perceive themselves and the world in general. This outlook is responsible for the manner in which they will practice their art. Implicitly rooted in the artist's education are (1) Romanticism, (2) the theory/practice disjunction, (3) the objective/subjective dichotomy, (4) the synchronic bias, (5) behaviorism, and (6) the psychology of Freud. The combination of these modes of perception constitute the 'no-rules' theory of art education. So far the only member of the above listing left untreated is Freudian psychology.

Just what part does Freud play in the private practice of the artist. Freud "took the 'role' of artist seriously, i.e., as a serious subject of psychological study. Freud believed that the artist is an obdurate neurotic,

who by his creative work, keeps himself from a crack-up, but also from any real 'cure'."³⁷

Freud states:

The artist is originally a man who turns from his reality because he cannot come to terms with the demand for the renunciation of instinctual satisfaction as it is first made, and then in phantasy life allowed full-play to his erotic and ambitious wishes. But he finds a way of return from this world of phantasy back to reality; with his special gifts, he moulds his phantasies into a new kind of reality, and men concede them a justification as valuable as reflections of actual life. Thus by a certain path he actually becomes the hero, king, creator, favourite he desired to be, without the circuitous path of creating real alternatives in the outer world.³⁸

This Freudian picture is so entrenched in education that one is considered to be less an artist should he not portray a picture of neurosis and paradigmatic free performance. At this point it might be noted that performance art has been in existence longer than many artists would like to admit. However, only recently has it acquired an intelligent direction. It is interesting to note that some aspects of performance art have made explicit the

³⁷Terry Atkinson and Michael Baldwin, "Art Teaching," Art-Language, Vol. 1, No. 4 (November, 1971), p. 4.

³⁸Atkinson, Baldwin, "Art Teaching," p. 41.

neuroses³⁹ implicit in art education. The difference is that here neurosis is being deal with on a social and cultural scale. However, this distinction is largely unnoticed by the public who view these works as more neurotic acts by neurotic artists, further pointing out the important need for artists to unite and work to engage art in our society--to make art useful again.

In order for artists to accomplish this engagement of art in society, they must first get beyond functioning through the use of "private languages." What is meant by a private language is a means of thinking which in principle the speaker alone can understand. In other words, it cannot serve as a means of communication.

³⁹In Vito Acconci's "Scenes From This Side of Camp," for example, one finds the following roles: the performer . . . the guerilla revolutionary . . . the self in the face of freedom . . . there are also "subroles" of the singer, the dancer, the lonely man, and so forth. The roles are presented together in various ways: the use of different locations for different tapes, slides, etc., allows the division of the (neutral) space of presentation into the dwellings of the different roles, there may be alternations within a single tape; they may be changes of person; . . . there may be artificial dialogues. . . .

Specific frames break down; there is no "entirety," no consistency, no "handle" to these situations. Through these breakdowns Acconci presents situations highly analogous to contemporary life and to the difficulties which occur through the need to contain a great number of incompatible roles within single "self." Alan Sondheim, "Vito Acconci Work 1973-1975." Arts Magazine (March, 1975), p. 5.

Is a private language possible in practice? According to Ludwig Wittgenstein, who did a great deal of work on the private language thesis, private language is meaningless. He sees language as social game which must be played by more than one person. Vital to language is the notion of rule and private rule Wittgenstein says again is meaningless.

Nevertheless the private language notion is still much in vogue in art education. The student's work is free from any meaningful interpretation as a surrogate to a psycho-private language: any attempt to apply interpretative theories to the work becomes everyone's guessing game, each play has his own set of rules.

The success of conceptual art lay in its ability to make explicit the intention of the artist enabling one to engage the work hermeneutically.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, hermeneutics is completely excluded from the artist's education, as it is believed to be proper only to critics and art historians. However, the majority of art historians, due to one-sided scientific practice, have provided only a

⁴⁰ The study of the methodological principles of interpretation (as of the great theories of art--formalism, voluntarism, emotionalism, intellectualism, intuitionism, organicism).

partial analysis, easily evidence in the formal analysis of painting and sculpture, which excludes an examination of a work in relation to the world view of the artist or the society which produced him. Nevertheless, such an analysis would still be incomplete. For a total picture one must continue to compare and contrast the particular society with other societal world views to find important influences and differences. This is best accomplished by a study of a society's infra and superstructure in relation to other societies infra and superstructures. This entails looking at the economics, technological, philosophical and scientific influences on each society. This is necessary for a true dialectic world view. "History becomes fossilized in a *formalism* incapable of comprehending that the real nature of socio-historical institutions is that they consist of '*relations between men*'. "⁴¹

The values which any historian shares in as a part of a community will hinder objectivity.

He will be immune from the charge of arbitrariness, as long as he relates, e.g., the history of art to the aesthetic values of his culture and the history of the state to its political values and, so long as he refrains from making unhistorical

⁴¹ Georg Lukács, History and Class Consciousness (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1968), p. 48.

value-judgements, he will create a mode of historical narrative that is valid for all who regard political or aesthetic values as normative for the members of his community.

By positing the materially unknown and only formally valid 'culture values' as founders of a 'value-related' historical objectivity, the subjectivity of the historian is, to all appearances, eliminated. However, this does no more than enthrone as the measure and the index of objectivity, the "cultural values" *actually* prevailing in his community (i.e., in his class). The arbitrariness and subjectivity are transformed from the material of the particular facts and from judgements on these into the criterion itself, into the "prevailing cultural values." And to judge or even investigate the validity of these values is not possible *within that framework*; for the historian the 'cultural values' become the thing-in-itself; . . .⁴²

Unfortunately, most art historians are engaged only in the process of providing the art student with a descriptive account of the physical residue of past and present art. In other words, the artist's performance is the object of study.

Regretfully, the art historian often leaves the impression that the artist whose work is the object of study was engaged in a kind of blind undirected intuitive activity. As pointed out in Section One, this is a rather fallacious notion. The student comes away with the idea that intuition, which is equal to stumbling around blind in a

⁴² Georg Lukács, p. 150-151.

state of unmeditated feeling, is the lifeblood of his activity. Intuition is an important tool of the artist, yet, so is the intellectual equipment which is pertinent to the justification of intuitive acts. As it stands, to those questions for which the artist has not formulated answers he replies with an appeal to metaphysics, i.e., intuition. One cannot blame the art student. The hierarchy of art education--the studio teacher and the art historian--produce epistemologically inadequate studies.

As so far outlined performance can be said to entail a random undirected motivation which is the equivalent of "noise," as it is conceived in communication theory. There is no attempt to buffer the discrepancies allowed to filter through the mediumistic artist. The behaviorist model further compounds the problem. Mentalistic becomes a performative term. The result is a private language which is, as pointed out earlier, no language at all.

In order for a language to be considered as such, it must become "a constant companion to all human behavior. It is the possession of the individual, yet at the same

time it is the bond which establishes society."⁴³ Language then is communication.

Having outlined the relevant features of practice and performance, it is in order to present an analyses of the term praxis and to reveal its positive aspects in relation to the negative aspects of practice.

B - Praxis

Existing studio empiricism is denoted by a complete disengagement of form and content or perhaps more critically, a total lack of content other than form. This disengagement can be attributed to the state of naivete in which the artist's *modus operandi* is embedded. As long as the artist continues to be involved in the prevailing non-critical, non-reflective activity, he/she will believe that content can be derived exclusively from the form of his/her work.

Praxis, by contrast, is the annulment of this belief. In other words theory and praxis have the same reference; as Goethe refers to in the following:

⁴³ John Lotz, "Symbols Make Man," The Language Experience, eds., James F. Hoy and John Somer (Dell Publishing, Inc., 1974).

Everything which man undertakes to perform, whether by word or deed, must be the product of all his abilities acting in concert; everything isolated is reprehensible.⁴⁴

Praxis is the making explicit of objective specific potential competence and prepotency which has remained implicit and subjective. Self-realization is one of the essential elements of praxis. The artist ceases to act by instinct. Praxis is rational and enables the artist to enunciate his individualism and experience himself as a subject capable of changing those features of his environment which do not satisfy him. Individualism as used in this particular context is not to be confused with the ideological, dysfunctional individualism of vulgar romanticism. The romantic individual is a psychologically isolated being who treasures the idea of detachment from the real world. Through praxis, the artist is able to discover the structure of art and to seek the most adequate means of engaging himself and his art within his culture.

Marx once said that "to be radical is to grasp things by the root, but for man the root--is man himself."⁴⁵ In a discipline dominated (as art is) by

⁴⁴ Lukács, p. 141.

⁴⁵ Mihailo Marković, p. 57.

emotional and instinctive functions, the artist will have to energetically utilize his/her intellectual faculties to put emotion and instinct in their proper perspective. The artist who fails to heed the above is doomed to an emotional and uncritical existence which is anti-praxiological and thus anti-communicative.

It is time to ask the question, how can "noise" be dealt with praxilogically? To begin with, the praxiological artist would tend to use "noise" as a heuristic, first attempting to discover points of reference, or relationships with potential for meaningful and purposeful action void of arbitrary decisions. That is, his actions would be theoretically informed. This entails a mapping which can offer the use of one's creative faculties as opposed to mere playful random action. To be praxiological is to enter into a world of relationships in a critical way. It enables the turning to one's advantage of the abrasions and impingements, that is, turning "noise" into praxis.

The normal role of human beings in and with the world is not a passive one. Because they are not limited to the natural (biological) sphere but participate in the creative dimension as well, men can intervene in reality in order to change it. Inheriting acquired experience, creating and re-creating, integrating themselves into their context, responding to its challenges, objectifying themselves, discerning, transcending, men

enter into the domain which is theirs exclusively
--that of history and of culture.⁴⁶

As uncritically accepting as the products of art departments are, they usually attempt to adapt themselves to noisy situations rather than attempt to overcome them. This adaptive process can be found in Renaissance painting and sculpture practiced in the 20th century. During the Renaissance art was praxiological providing the social milieu with a philosophical model used to educate a "rude and illiterate populace in the rudiments of Christian morality and doctrine." Not only a religious but a didactic art as well, Renaissance art theory can be summarized as follows:

"The arts of painting and sculpture are a thing of mind and intelligence . . . a branch of learning and not merely or primarily a matter of craftsmanship. This conception was closely linked with the new social status claimed for the artist as a scholar . . . instead of an artisan."⁴⁷

The twentieth century artist who continues to paint or sculpt in the tradition of the Renaissance is following a model which has gained public support because of its verisimilitude. The artist and the public in most cases are unaware of its original function as a teaching device.

⁴⁶ Paulo Freire, p. 4.

⁴⁷ Harold Osborne, p. 43.

However, even the artist who is aware of the purpose served during the Renaissance can no longer use this means to perform the same didactic function. The praxiological artist realizes this and attempts integration in the twentieth century through the development of an art truly didactic and useful for the social present. "Integration results from the capacity to adapt oneself to reality plus the critical capacity to make choices and to transform that reality."⁴⁸ The artist in praxis is artist as subject--"as root." The non-praxiological artist remains object, an "adaption representing at most a weak form of self-defense."⁴⁹ The non-praxiological artist adjusts himself to a reality he/she either never questions or feels unable to change due to an uncritical inability to grasp the broad context of his/her situation.

"At present the greatest obstacle to genuine teaching is to be found in a pervading and pervasive cynicism, the dominant intellectual temper of our society."

"Cynicism is one of the prime derivatives of that positive thinking which reigns supreme in our time. This way of thinking identifies truth with what exists, focuses on the parts rather than on the whole, disdains any attempt to investigate possible

⁴⁸ Paulo Freire, p. 4.

⁴⁹ Paulo Freire, p. 4.

alternatives to the established reality or the means by which these possibilities might be realized, denigrates reason to the level of mere manipulation of facts, and refuses to judge established conditions in the light of already existing possibilities for transcending those conditions."⁵⁰

In order for the artist, student/teacher to evolve and transcend his/her present theory/practice disjunction he/she must have a thorough understanding of his/her action allowing for control. Theory, of course, is implied in such an arrangement. The artist must begin by providing a narrative that is challenging to his/her environment. By developing a diacritical attitude perhaps the artist can transcend the posture of adaptation and become integrated with the world.

⁵⁰Leiss, Ober, Sherover, p. 422.

EPILOGUE - A PRAXIOLOGICAL ALTERNATIVE
FOR ART EDUCATION

Artists of the world, drop out! You have nothing to lose but your profession!

Allan Kaprow

. . . in a society in which the main changes are to be brought about through collective deliberation, and in which reevaluation should be based upon intellectual insight and consent, a completely new system of education would be necessary, one which would focus its main energies on the development of our intellectual powers and bring about a frame of mind which can bear the burden of scepticism and which does not panic when many of the thought habits are doomed to vanish.

Karl Mannheim

A - Overview

This essay was titled "A Prolegomenon to a Radical Praxis in Art Education" because it became very obvious in the writing of the earlier sections that this paper could serve only as prefatory remarks or as an introduction to a much more extended piece of writing. At best I have laid the foundation for such a work.

In Section One was outlined the academic or epistemic inadequacies existing in both studio art and art history today. By making explicit the studio artist's dependence on the "no-rules" theory, and by outlining the theory/practice disjunction in both studio art and art history. Also indicated was the dire need for art

educators to suspend their presuppositions and to begin to examine the critical issues at hand. This places art educators in an awkward position, for it means they must go through a complete re-education along with their students. A critical consciousness calls for a critical education.

In Section Two was outlined the obsolete consciousness in art and education, and how it must be overcome or transcended if one expects to develop the critical consciousness necessary for going on.

The Dialectic was introduced in Section Three as an alternative for acquiring knowledge for both art and education through the introduction of dialectic. The artist is in a better position to grasp the essence of reality and consequently through internalization and utilization of this understanding to engage art. It is hoped that through this process art can return to its original didactic⁵¹ function.

The present art condition is highly problematic and it is becoming clear to a growing number of artists that we have lost our effectiveness with the culture. Their

⁵¹ Intended to convey instruction and information as well as pleasure and entertainment.--Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (1974).

criticism is directed to all present art forms including conceptual art.

What we have experienced since the Renaissance is an unraveling and wasting away of art. It has become more and more stagnant and less and less engaged. Art as we know it has run a full cycle of decay. The inanimate art object succumbing first to "no theory" and then to "pure theory" and later trying desperately to find its way back emerged in the animate art object (i.e., body art). Simultaneously we experience the theory on one side and the body on the other, each opting for the status of art, each claiming to have the better alternative. In fact, both are one-sided and fail to realize the dialectic possibilities open for a synthesis. Artists were so busy positing "theories" and "arting bodies" that conceptual art was allowed to fall into the same trap as past modernistic art. It succumbed to the bureaucratic and intellectual ethos of the 20th century. In fact, it was destined to such a demise.

Any art which attempts to be radical but continues to utilize the support structure of that which it is opposing, is destined for the same co-opting and consumption that all past capitalist based art has been prone to. It

is naive to believe it possible to develop a radical art while uncritically accepting the traditional gallery foundation. Artists can be so busy questioning the foundations of painting and sculpture that it does not occur to them to likewise question the gallery system just as vigorously. Though artists may acknowledge this failure, they are perhaps guilty of still another: they have lost their ability to function meaningfully within our culture. They have come to be the decorators of bourgeoisie society as well as become "the celebrated buffoon[s] of society's manipulators,"⁵² namely the elite gallery dealers and those elite collectors motivated by a wish to make profitable business investments. They have lost their effectiveness because they are guilty of producing anti-dialogical art and uncritically accepting the anti-dialogical state of our society.

The critical activity I speak of was first set in motion early in 1966 by the art-language community. It is disquieting to note that very few of the ideas they have presented have filtered into university art departments.

⁵²Jon. Hendricks, Poppy Johnson and Jean Toche, "Toward a New Humanism," The New Art. A critical anthology edited by Gregory Battcock (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1973), p. 79.

Their work has been brushed off as another stylistic innovation which will soon run its course. This is to be expected. We live in an anti-dialectical environment where much is accepted or denied without proper critical reflection.

At this point some suggestions and alternatives for the university art department will be provided. Hopefully they will demand some serious critical consideration.

B - Critical Priorities for the Praxiological Classroom

What are the alternatives for the artist? His first task must be to follow Kaprow's dictum and drop out--drop out of art as it is now constituted and engage in a critical activity which will perhaps make it possible for art to regain its cutting edge. It is my belief that once artists begin to question the various models of art education, they will begin to realize the present bankruptcy and only then will be in a position to begin a meaningful reconstruction of the educational edifice. A cosmetological face-lifting will not do. What would be entailed for university art departments is this:

1. The teaching of vulgar studio art would be suspended.

2. Praxiological courses would be designed to produce dialogical cultural fluency. This procedure would constitute the paradigm of critical consciousness which would find its impetus in critical education.
3. The artist educator would be responsible for development and correlation of a critical education with the purpose of helping to formalize critical attitudes which would enable the naive consciousness to overcome irrationality.
4. The educational framework would constitute instructing students to discuss "the problems of their context--and to intervene in that context."⁵³ The discussion of context would include topics relevant to the artist.
 - a. Why are painting and sculpture no longer viable? The answer to this particular question is provided in the three previous essays. However, for the naive artist this question would have priority.
 - b. What is the function of art today and what has its function been in the past? The answer to the first part of this question is again discussed in the previous essays. The second part of the question has yet to be dealt with and the amount of space provided here does not warrant such a discussion.

⁵³ Paulo Freire, p. 33.

- c. Is it possible for the artist to shore up his theoretical foundations and continue making the same old art? This question was answered briefly in the overview of this section.
- d. What function does the gallery serve and what function has it served in earlier cultures? Today the gallery serves the artist by exposing his work to the public as well as an outlet for making money. The main function is the monetary aspect. Briefly in the past the gallery served as a didactic device for informing and educating the public. Churches rather than galleries were the main outlet then.
- e. Are there alternatives to the gallery? At this point in time, "No." One can, however, cease to utilize that particular framework. There needs to be a moratorium on the gallery, constituting the first step to relinquishing the moneymaking aspect. In essence what this means for the artist is to quit making art as we know it today and begin working on alternatives for integrating art back into the society.
- f. Why is art disengaged? Of course the answer to the question is the fact that art is no longer useful to the society. It goes without saying that its usefulness as a decorative object is a very minimal usefulness. It is not useful in an educational manner which could be of service to the society and consequently would be engaged.
- g. How do the crafts relate to the current question asked of painting and sculpture? The most obvious answer is that we should not do away with crafts but they do not belong in the university curriculum.

- h. Should art use material from other disciplines such as philosophy, linguistics, sociology, anthropology, psychology, mathematics, etc.? If art expects to achieve cultural fluency artists must be well versed in all disciplines of knowledge. This is necessary for the attaining of a critical consciousness.
- i. Disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, philosophy, etc., are going through the same self-critical reflections as art. How does the current self-critical era in art relate to that of other fields of study? Many disciplines are questioning rigid value free empiricism and realizing its restrictions. A dialogue needs to be established between all disciplines.

The preceding questions are important to the development of a critical consciousness for they place the artist in the position of engaging his presupposition.

C - The Praxiological Classroom versus Studio and Historical Empiricism

The following discussion can serve only as a general introduction to the praxiological classroom. The praxiological classroom would differ from the standard studio and lecture classes:

1. In the place of teacher there would exist coordinators;
2. In the place of lecturer - dialogue;
3. In the place of classroom, dialogical encounters.

The artists as a group of dialecticians would seek to illuminate context and seek praxis or cultural fluency arising from the illumination.

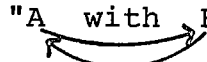
For the artist, obtaining cultural fluency is a dialectical process which, simply put, consists of attempting to affect the culture while he is simultaneously learning from (and seeking the acceptance of) that same culture which is affecting him.⁵⁴

The praxiological coordinator would seek to dismantle all presuppositions that are related to studio and historical empiricism as already discussed. He would seek the transition from a one-sided empiricism through the introduction of the holistic dialectical wedding of theory and practice. Thus, the praxiological classroom would be responsible for developing the artist's fluency in praxis through the process of dialogical encounter with their context reinforced by vigorous criticism. This method is based on a dialogue as an equal exchange between artists, thus producing the artist as diacritic. The following example is provided by Paulo Freire from his book Education for Critical Consciousness.

⁵⁴ Joseph Kosuth, "The Artist as Anthropologist," The Fox (New York: The Art & Language Foundation, Inc., 1975), p. 26.

DIALOGUE

"A with B = communication
intercommunication



Relation of "empathy" between two "poles" who are engaged in a joint search.
MATRIX: . . . , humble, hopeful, trusting, critical

Born of a critical matrix, dialogue creates a critical attitude."⁵⁵

"And so we set dialogue in opposition with the anti-dialogue which was so much a part of our historical-cultural formation, and so present in the climate of transition.

ANTI-DIALOGUE

A
|
B = 'communique'

over

Relation of "empathy" in broken matrix: . . . arrogant, hopeless, mistrustful, acritical.

In Anti-Dialogue the relation of empathy between the "poles" is broken. Thus, anti-dialogue does not communicate, but rather issues communique's."

Toward this end, the first dimension of our new program content would be the anthropological concept of culture--that is, the distinction between the world of nature and the world of culture; the active role of men *in* and *with* their reality; the role of

⁵⁵ Paulo Freire, p. 45.

mediation which nature plays in relationships and communication among men; culture as the addition made by men to a world they did not make; culture as the result of men's labor, of their efforts to create and re-create; the transcendental meaning of human relationships; the humanist dimension of culture; culture as a systematic acquisition of human experience (but as creative assimilation, not as information-storing) . . . in short the role of man as subject in the world and with the world.⁵⁶

In other words, the education of the "artist as anthropologist."⁵⁷

The educator's task is not that of one who sets himself or herself as a knowing subject before a knowable object, and, having come to know it, proceeds to discourse on it to the educatees, whose role it is to file away the communiqués. Education is communication and dialogue. It is not the transference of knowledge but the encounter of subjects in dialogue in search of the significance of the object of knowing and thinking.⁵⁸

The model suggested by Paulo Freire and enacted in Brazil is one to be reckoned with by all educators not just artists. Perhaps if everyone were able to gain praxis there wouldn't be a need for artists any longer. Everyone would be an artist then. On the other hand, if it is

⁵⁶ Paulo Freire, p. 46.

⁵⁷ For more on the "Artist as Anthropologist," see Joseph Kosuth's essay in The Fox, pp. 18-30.

⁵⁸ Paulo Freire, pp. 319-410.

impossible for everyone to gain praxis the artist is in the position to regain his status as prophet, i.e., seeing the future as it might be and working toward that end.

The Hebraic scriptures are quite explicit in distinguishing between the *Roeb* who acted simply as "seers" in foretelling the future, and the *Nabi*--the "prophets"--who sought, through their projection of past behavior into the future, to *alter* their future.⁵⁹

With the return of the "prophetic" mode the artist would once again gain his old position as diacritic of society. The difference between the artist today as critic and the artist in the future as diacritic would be engagement with his society rather than isolation and disengagement.

"Prophecy" in the Hebraic tradition was paired with *iconoclasm*--the *breaking* of icons. . . . The emphasis is upon breaking the false images rather than putting forth the more adequate ones.⁶⁰

Perhaps in this sense more than any other, the artist must become prophet.

⁵⁹ Robert W. Friedrichs, pp. 65-66.

⁶⁰ Robert W. Friedrichs, p. 75.

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