

## IF ITS NOT FREE ITS NOT ART

### Capitalism, Marxism, Society, Freedom and Beauty.

**Abstract:** Beginning from Jacques Atali's idea of a music of a “different system of organisation “ as “outside of meaning, usage and exchange” this paper will radically critique contemporary art in its political and economic 'use value' at the expense of aesthetics. Using Kant's third critique of judgement, one which Deleuze recognises as fundamental to the other two critiques, it will argue for the re-introduction of the idea of the aesthetic judgement of beauty not only lacking in Art but in our responses to Nature and Being. A role once central to Art.

**Key Words:** Art, Aesthetics, Beauty, Kant's third critique, purposefulness without purpose.

*“Beyond the rupture of the economic conditions of music, composition is revealed as the demand for a truly different system of organisation, a network within which a different kind of music and different social relations can arise. A music produced by each individual ~~for himself, for pleasure~~ outside of meaning, usage and exchange.”* (Jacques Atali in “Noise The Political Economy of Music” p. 137.)

The slogan “IF ITS NOT FREE ITS NOT ART” in the first case could be thought to be a critique of capitalism not only in music but in Art in general, and it is. The critique applies to the two 'Art Worlds', that of the 'Recording Stars', Bond Street galleries and auction houses where 'Art' as a commodity sells for millions, and makes contemporary artists millionaires whose 'factories' generate wealth and expensive trophies for the super rich, The 'Art Industry', where works are valued in monetary terms only'. And the alternative, 'radical' art collectives of critique of late capitalism<sup>2</sup> and the promotion of political and social enfranchisement for all, and compensation for those identified as marginalised groups. Collectives, academia, agencies, institutions, funded by governments and corporations, where 'funding' is behind all of the rhetoric, funding, 'capital', the major concern. Unknowingly or not, nothing other than Capitalism's inoculation against the radical as identified by Baudrillard<sup>3</sup>. The remedial use art gives to Late Capitalism can be seen not only in major projects such as Tate Modern, a practice initiated with the Beaubourg, but in Tate Liverpool, a consequence of the Toxteth riots, the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, and in the UK numerous other galleries intended to 'treat' deprivation. However the real force of the term “FREE” that I am using here is that this other art, which I reference by Atali, is 'art' free from capital, meaning, and so any propaganda, either for the promotion of status, or for social change, is in the last instance, even free of the actual term, “ART”.

It should be obvious, I imagine being told so, that human activity is communal and networked. So Art exists in this (or other) social context, is validated and judged so. In terms of any 'Framework' it is a shared one or a given one<sup>4</sup>. Likewise, it's been suggested, also in Science<sup>5</sup>. But here there is I think a reasonably undeniable difference, even admitted now by those such as Latour who once may have not. The truth of Newton's equations or those of Einstein (in approximately accounting for natural

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1 “The works are by Hirst, and the enormous coral encrusted sculptures are actually meticulously painted bronze. These are displayed near pristine gold or marble editions of the exact same pieces, so-called “reproductions” of the scarred wreckage finds. The exhibition is split between the Punta Della Dogana and the Palazzo Grassi, private museums operated by French billionaire François Pinault, the owner of Christie's auction house, a collector of Hirst's work, and the co-financier of the exhibition.”

From "Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable" by Tiernan Morgan in <https://hyperallergic.com/>  
Hirst is valued @ £300 million, François Pinault @ \$42.9 billion.

2 I need to here apologise for using the term 'Marxism' in my title as a collective for such.

3 “... any given system (such as a capitalist one) which is characterized by efficiency, the possibility of opposition to the system has to be controlled internally if the system is to persist. The single best way of controlling opposition is of course, by accommodation. Hence, using the medical analogy... operate (s) rather like an inoculation against disease.” Thomas Docherty, in *Continental Philosophy in the 20th Century*, p.481, Routledge.

(In passing... I have wondered why Baudrillard's popularity in Academia has waned so? ) The Tate Liverpool was the response to rioting in the city, along with other developments, following the Bilbao used as an (now failed) attempt to deal with deprivation there are many other examples, in the UK amongst these, The Hastings Contemporary, The Hepworth Wakefield, Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art Gateshead, Turner Contemporary Margate, The New Art Gallery Walsall...

4 The failure to decide on a framework was the cause of the famous failure of the Art & Language Group.

5 Latour et al.

phenomena) were first thought and then written down before any public appraisal, or confirmatory network, and they did not alter in themselves when published, and their truth as approximates accounting for natural phenomena remained 'true'. Is Art different in that it only exists in a public arena, and is only validated by and in that arena<sup>6</sup>? by significant people and groups in the humanities. This seems to be now the case. The idea of innate 'truth' <sup>7</sup> or innate qualities for evaluation is not limited to science, they exist in technology, medicine and even simple performance criteria, ones ability to run, perform a task, can, and are, not judged by extrinsic, mediated methods and ideas, in their quality, but by the intrinsic abilities and qualities. The truth, as in functionality, what it does, of an invention is not judged by extrinsic, mediated conventions, although its use might be. Its 'truth' is like those of the scientific equation, is in what it is. And this truth exists independent of extrinsic, mediated social arenas. The invention, or equation 'works' outside of any social extrinsic, mediated conventions or ideologies, just as a virus does<sup>8</sup>. However the 'obvious' social arena model in the arts / humanities ignores its objects unique independent reality and regards culture as a social phenomenon. The idea of any independent 'truth' function, or criteria is ignored and/or denied. Thus the work in this scenario becomes a social condition, and primarily that. Primarily because any external and independent truth, validity of the cultural object, (its science) must be rejected. If the criteria of assessment is external to and prior in the cultural networks, and they now are, any intrinsic value located within the cultural object has to be ignored. If accepted, this would destroy the priority of the prior framework, and raise the possibility of (art) objects (freely) refuting these frameworks. Once a work's value, Joyce's Ulysses in the case cited, is validated in the world (social extrinsic, mediated conventions or ideologies) and not in the objects particular qualities in the world, then anything can become the object for mediation for this network of validation. The process for evaluation is the application of an already given set of criteria. Criteria which are prior to the object, as above, criteria to which the object has no power over, unlike the power of an experiment regarding a hypothesis, an experiment can invalidate a hypothesis. A fixed and prior set of criteria, which are the priority of the framework, which we see now in the humanities, cannot be invalidated by any external object. Moreover these frameworks can now invalidate what was once considered to be 'art', on the basis of external criteria, social, cultural, gender, race, 'bourgeoisie', 'degenerate' ... And so this culture of the arts is thus not like science where external objects, nature, can and do support or invalidate criteria. In science an observation of nature can verify or not the equation. In the frameworks of cultural assessment the object cannot do this, it is either ignored or re-configured to suit the criteria. The bad book can become a good book by this process. That these extrinsic, mediated values can elevate anything to be art maybe then accounts for the banality of contemporary / post modern art. Not only must its value be extrinsically mediated, this 'anything' must have no intrinsic value which would challenge this. But why should Ulysses, for example, be any different to the truths of science or mathematics in not having innate value? Though as above, if it did, the extrinsic, prior mediated values established in the humanities would become redundant. And if so the idea that extrinsic, mediated values can elevate a 'bad' book becomes as nonsensical as Latour's critique of science where the TB bacillus is a social phenomenon and not 'real'.

Those who wish to see the extrinsic, mediated work of art as valid by virtue of their networks of production, Art exists in a social context, might follow Latour in asserting that science is so likewise, that the TB bacillus only existed only from 1882 and not before. I think the argument which has been

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6 From Duchamp's 'fountain' as elsewhere a common ideology in the Humanities. "[if] it didn't have important people (like Eliot) who ran journals writing about it, Ulysses might just have sunk. There's no magic about this, I think; value is in the real world... A bad book, could, presumably, be exalted in very much the same way..." Frank Kermode *Truth after Theory* p. 74. Sir John Frank Kermode, FBA was the Lord Northcliffe Professor of Modern English Literature at University College London and the King Edward VII Professor of English Literature at Cambridge University.

7 Truth as the image, picture or model of a thing in science, or effectiveness of a drug, unlike the truth in logic or mathematics and elsewhere, in the functioning of technology. All though have intrinsic frameworks for judgement not extrinsic, mediated frameworks, though some would maintain they do, Latour in particular, though he now it seems regrets this given the ability for people to deny the scientific 'truth' of climate change, or the effectiveness of vaccines.

8 Latour (again) is at times ambivalent regarding this, see Latour Pandora's Hope p. 149 and elsewhere. "In the correspondence theory of truth, the ferments have always been there... Pasture's statements in, contrast... may appear or disappear" and elsewhere famously ... "How could he have died of a bacillus discovered in 1882.. the attribution of tuberculosis and Koch's bacillus to Ramses II should strike us as an anachronism of the same calibre as if we had diagnosed his death as having been caused by a Marxist upheaval, or a machine gun, or a wall street crash. It is only if we believe that facts escape their network of production that we are faced with the question whether Ramses II died of tuberculosis... an isolated Koch bacillus is also a pragmatic absurdity since those types of facts cannot escape their networks of production."

made that the objects of science didn't exist prior to science is now difficult, or should be made so<sup>9</sup>. The idea that philosophers thought things can't exist outside their human correlations, found in Meillassoux<sup>10</sup> is ridiculous and simply not true. But then those who wish to see the extrinsic, mediated work of art as valid by virtue of their networks of production as true might allow this but see the truths of science and mathematics as being different. They might allow the objects of science, relativity, gravity, TB Bacteria etc. to escape their networks of production, but not those of art. Though in some extreme cases they may not<sup>11</sup>. The objects of science can escape social networks, as can technologies (Both the cowboys and the Indians can effectively use guns), their truths are not social constructs. And the same could be true of art. Just as the TB bacillus existed 1300 BC, so did the artworks of the Nineteenth Dynasty of Egypt, or those of ancient Greeks, and the earliest evidence of homo-sapiens<sup>12</sup>... and are considered to be "Art" now, though they in many cases existed before the term and before the concept, and are no longer in their original networks of production, if such networks existed. Their value or status as Art objects has existed in different social networks, not to say that some social networks might not consider them to be art. Unlike the current criteria re 'Art', historically what makes objects to be considered as art in some given network has been the object's intrinsic qualities. In even greater contrast to contemporary criteria, the objects themselves are the cause and establishment of the criteria. Such a model, the object determining the theory, unlike the Duchamp theory determining the status of the object, is no different to the natural sciences where theories are determined by objects.

Artworks created outside of extrinsic, mediated networks of production could be 'original', and being original occurred as art objects prior to theory, becoming in some cases theoretically problematic, in much the same way as objects in science can be problematic to theory<sup>13</sup>. The same way in that the theory has to change, not the object. This was prior to the dematerialization of the art object, and what is now called 'conceptual' art. The objects of conceptual art now merely serve to illustrate the idea. As such they cannot invalidate the idea, at worse only fail to adequately express the idea. 'Objects' as art, created by external concepts, - de-materialized art - can in no way alter the concept, they are the products of a concept, an illustration of a concept. This post-modern paradigm is the reversal of idea / object status. Once a bottle rack was a none art 'thing', by virtue of its thingness, it became an art object by virtue of illustrating the concept, whereas say some neolithic cave painting became to be considered as an art object by virtue of its 'thingness' altering or adding to what was considered as art. A thing like the cave painting, not the bottle rack, identified as being 'Art' prior to the category - "Art" is no different in its prior existence than the TB bacillus or the arche-fossil of Meillassoux's After Finitude. It was what it was before any conceptualization was made about it, or could be made. In the case of the cave painting it had to be recognized as art, in the case of the bottle rack it had to be conceptualized (cognized) as art. Hence the originator qua art of the cave painting was the painter, the originator of the bottle rack as art not its maker but Duchamp.

Meillassoux argues things existed before human minds, for conceptual art, in the case of Duchamp the

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9 The 'Sokal Affair' is an obvious example but more recently the popular 'philosopher' Timothy Morton has predicted the failure of finding the Higgs particle as in OOO (Object Oriented Ontology) it is impossible, making the prediction 6 months before it was found. He also stated that Heidegger maintained gravity didn't exist before Newton, where in actual fact in Being and Time Heidegger states that prior to Newton his theory of gravity "was neither true or false".

10 Meillassoux conflates 'being' with 'intuiting'. A thing can exist, be, without a human, a thing can not be intuited without something, a person for example, to intuit it. From this he arrives at the erroneous idea that certain philosophers deny the existence of objects outside of human perception. They do not, they deny the ability of something to be perceived without something to do the perceiving.

11 Capitalism Caused the COVID-19 Crisis – <https://jacobinmag.com/2020/04/coronavirus-covid-19-crisis-capitalism-disaster>. Delueze and Guattari in 'Capitalism and Schizophrenia' presented psychological conditions as products of or reactions to Capitalism, or in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1935), by Walter Benjamin... "a theory of art that is useful for the formulation of revolutionary demands in the politics of art" in a mass-culture society; that, in the age of mechanical reproduction, and the absence of traditional and ritualistic value, the production of art would be inherently based upon the praxis of politics." re-defines Art from a political praxis... and to the extent that Alan Sokal's deliberately ludicrous claim "it is becoming increasingly apparent that physical 'reality'" is fundamentally "a social and linguistic construct" was accepted by the editors of Social Text...

12 The Bhimbetka and Daraki-Chattan cupoles are the oldest pieces of prehistoric art ever discovered and have been dated to around 700,000 BC.

13 This is very significant though outside of the scope of this paper. Science has 'problems' and 'unaccountables', e.g. Dark Matter, The twin slit experiment. Such is the hallmark of genuine as opposed to pseudo science. This lack of complete accountability is used by many who would offer this as disproof of climate change, vaccination, The Moon Landings or even a spherical earth.

bottle rack becomes art, and did not exist as art before hand, in the case of recognising the cave painting as art, it always was art. The recognition now that a thing is a bacteria, or radioactive even before the terms existed does not change the things properties, or bring these things into existence! but merely recognises them. The curator who once presented the art was not responsible for the art, whereas in the case of Duchamp who curates the bottle rack and all subsequent post modern art, the original creative act is one of curatorship. For Latour "In the correspondence theory of truth, the ferments have always been there... Pasture's statements in, contrast... may appear or disappear" - however the ferments were not always there, and will not always be there, no different to the statements. The significance is the relation of the statements (theory) to the objects, and the priority of the object. These may disappear like an artwork might, but the validity of the statement doesn't disappear, as the validity depends on the 'thing' and not the other way round. A theory might claim that viruses do not exist, but that will not alter the virus 'thing', however the actuality of the virus will alter the actuality of the theory. It wont make the theory disappear, it will simply invalidate it. The contemporary idea of 'Art' is the reverse, a correlational error, an error where 'The real is the ideal'<sup>14</sup> and one where the ideal, the theory, can and does invalidate the object<sup>15</sup>. Art is no more a product of theory as is the world a product of theory. And history now shows the nonsense of idealization of the world, not only in philosophy, and politics, but in religion also. As allowing idealism not only allows radical politics, but also as Meillassoux argues in After Finitude, radical and religious fundamentalism and religious conservatism.

The activity, of science, mathematics, art, technology needn't be social. I can light a fire and warm myself. In fact that is ALL I can do, any 'audience' making no difference to the heat of the fire, the function of the wheel, the relevance of the equation or the poem. We make our own criteria just as the branch of the tree does, its size, weight etc. This unity of individual criteria is then the subject in relation to the object, the world. The artwork is finite, the world into which it is located is infinite. The artwork is no different then to the tree branch in having its own distinctive attributes. It is only relatively recently that art became validated by extrinsic, mediated networks of convention, like The Fountain and Post Modern conceptual art. Extrinsic, mediated networks create art from anything, and they must reduce anything to base material 'artistically' in order to do this. Otherwise they become subject to the work's intrinsic value, and if so their extrinsic, mediated conventions and norms account for nothing. (Norms typically political, activism, revolutionary, critical, Marxist, Feminist, Environmentalist, LGBT etc.) And become in danger of being repudiated as concepts by some real 'thing'. Such Art & the Humanities which just focuses on these particular arenas & social networks has objects of null (intrinsic) content. The materiality of art objects disappears – becomes null<sup>16</sup>, as the internal concerns of a committee replace this content which it first, if any exists, must remove. So the aesthetic form of say a Greek statue in this case must be removed. What once made it art is removed. This process has been termed deconstruction, but it is more an erasure which allows new criteria to be placed on the work, ones which must ignore the implicit criteria, form, shape etc. for social, arbitrary (re object) networks of production. In effect the actual object becomes a placeholder, the Greek statue or a photograph of it, a bad reproduction, pastiche copy is as good as the real object, as the criteria are external to the object. Those criteria are already in place, the object just vocalizes, illustrates, these, like the term 'colonialism' attributed to a Victorian statue, when it derives its aesthetic from Greek and Roman sculpture which is ironically not seen by some networks of production as products of colonialism, which of course they were. From deconstructing a given work of art the networks of production now select objects which can be used by these networks of production for their criteria. A criteria established before the chosen

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14 Hegel, in his idea of the earth being the 'perfect' inner planet because it is the only inner planet to have a moon is not true, it is not 'real'.

15 I'm in dangerous territory here, recently under the guise of BLM (and they do!) statues of people, white males, have been attacked, and monuments to colonialism mocked (Kara Walker's Fons Americanus) and defaced. So the ideal idea has priority in the world of things. Though how far should this go, Roman and Greek civilizations were dependent on slavery, should all Greek and Roman Art, literature and philosophy be destroyed, and all art based on those aesthetics. Capitalism is also responsible for 'great art artworks'... Isn't the justification for such destruction precisely the same as that of the Taliban justification for the destruction of The Buddhas of Bamiyan. If we accept the absolute truth of an idea as more significant than any object's existence... In this already overlong footnote there are alternatives, Rodin's notable Burghers of Calais, Picasso's Guernica... Removal of such monuments might eventually remove knowledge of their causes, which is I guess the motivation for the Taliban.

16 "Every word instantly becomes a concept precisely insofar as it is not supposed to serve as a reminder of the unique and entirely individual original experience to which it owes its origin" Friedrich Nietzsche, On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense, p.16.

object. So now networks of production do not analyse the external (art) object but synthesize their own objects, from the norms in the humanities, onto existing material by a process of overwriting it. Whereas once the art object was, like other things, finite, within an infinite world, its original finitude could be experienced, now the networks of production are potentially infinite, not bound by intrinsic attributes. Where once the experience of the sculpture was in its finitude, is to experience its form, now it is to used as a pretext for networks of ideological<sup>17</sup> production. Its use is as a vehicle for any given norms which are potentially infinite. The actual object, (as also actual individual persons) becomes irrelevant. The networks of production are infinite and immortal. The object's 'thingness', the objects 'realness', the objects life, has been replaced by an idea which removes it from anything definitive, even from its self and its own being<sup>18</sup>. A computing example, a bit pattern is definite, finite, '10001110', but can be said to have infinite meanings, be an instruction, part of some text, or a picture, sound etc. But the realization of its infinite meanings can only be undertaken by an infinite machine or being, finite beings can only ever produce finite meanings, many, but finite. How much the finite intention of the bit pattern is relevant is to the extent the interpretation is altered. Any interpretation is likewise finite. Saying interpretation is infinite is empty unless achieved. What remains is the judgement of any finite interpretation, but any such judgement must be dependent on the originator to exist at all. The bit pattern is not arbitrary, if it was you couldn't be reading this. The dematerialization, deconstruction of the art object generates infinite horizons, which can only be achieved by infinite thought. In the post-modern production of such horizons, those theorists who do so must likewise become infinite.

The finite world existed before concepts.

If it, the object, the thing, is not free of being for... or from... then it, its being for itself is not, it is therefore not Art. Art must negate, escape, not be bound to the label 'Art'.

**Art = Not Art**

OK, so if an object was created prior to conceptualization, it would either be the result of some instinctive trait, or it would deliberately / accidentally not have a purpose. It would be a matter to see if any instinctive purpose was at play in practical terms, or any that might be psychologically more opaque than others, whether consciously or not by the originator. The opacity might be such that no purpose in theory could be found, which in this case would for the following make no difference. Obviously "Art" engaged in some social/political aim has purpose, and in this case the judgement of the work is subject to the desired outcome. This is "Art" in the service of some desired outcome, and that outcome in turn the subject of some ethical (or other) judgement. The Art serves a purpose. In Kant's critique of Judgement an attempt at a non subjective (I know what I like) explanation for 'Beauty' and hence Art is given as the play of judgement in the content of an object. This aesthetic judgement turns out to be the model for the other two critiques, of Pure and Practical Reason. Ruling out personal taste, as a subjective 'I know what I like', he arrives at the idea of aesthetic judgement which is potentially universal. Potentially because unlike both Pure and Practical Reason it is in the last instance not determinate. That is purposefulness without purpose. This resolves an antinomy, (contradiction). 1) Judgement based not on determinate concepts is not capable of being universally determinate. 2) The judgement of the aesthetic is universal based on reflection which is non determinate. Purposefulness without purpose, because there can be no determinate aim, one which follows from an a priori concept. Aesthetic judgement is then based on a freedom, from a priori determinations, of disinterested (so not subjective) reflection in the aesthetic object. And this act of aesthetic appreciation is neither logically determined or a subjective matter of personal taste. Subjective 'taste' being an immediate sensation, and not universalizable. The idea of Judgement deriving from the play of the imagination towards a reflective judgement, is potentially universalizable. It is a process of disinterested (not personal),

<sup>17</sup> Ideas are infinite, immaterial transcendent objects. In Heidegger such ideas are metaphysics ,which is ontotheology.

<sup>18</sup> This process in the case of Graham Harman is 'withdraw', were objects withdraw from not only humans but from other objects including themselves. And by 'withdraw' he means they exceed any relation. How he can know this is interesting, and how this idea can not or can likewise withdraw, is also. "... even if rocks are not sentient creatures, they never encounter one another in their deepest being" There deepest being is never encountered even by themselves. The set of 'interpretations' become infinite, worse their "deepest being", truth, reality, can never be encountered but is somehow believed to exist?

abstract reflection. Disinterested, as not immediate sensation, abstracted, as abstracted from an object by free reflection. Aesthetic judgement then of an 'object'. It is from this idea of Judgement, as a process, that Kant derives a disinterested and so rational judgement in the case of Pure Reason, and a moral judgement in the case of Practical reason.

The object of aesthetic consideration must be prior to consideration, and without purpose, which is why both nature and Art are sources for such consideration. Art which is free of purpose, is art, and in Kant's terms potentially universalizable. Judgement other than this, for a purpose, is a science. Mathematics, Physics, Biology etc., political and social science, ethics and morality. Art at the service of these other purposes is obviously not free, and determined by the criteria which relates to these. Is subject to these as validation, whether it be sensational pleasure, political critique, or illustration. Such an Art is not free, and in practice therefore not in Kantian (or Schelling) terms 'Art'<sup>19</sup>. An Art which does not copy nature, but is like nature without rational a priori purpose and free is an art from which in contemplation of this is what follows: our cognitive 'being' in the world. And the production of such objects of no purpose is the purpose of those who are 'Artists'.

This conclusion may seem to present the 'Artist' with a huge problem, that is the production of purposeless objects. We have already seen a possible solution in the readymade. And it is interesting that recent poetry has attempted to do much the same in shedding poetic tropes. Here, poets like Kenneth Goldsmith eschews even 'creativity'<sup>20</sup>. The group's collective work is termed 'Conceptual Poetry' in which non-poetic texts are presented as Conceptual Poems, for instance Goldsmith's precise copy of an edition of The New York Times, verbatim. September 1, 2000, transcribed as 'Day' (2003). At first sight this seems a 'solution' in which any object could be presented out of context as art, or in the context of art. There is however a downside to this, one which is referred to above in the case of the Art and Language group. If anything can be art then everything can be art, and no 'artistic' activity is needed to validate this. Hence nothing to bind the process of judgement of disinterested reflection which gives rise to the appreciation of the beautiful and of the sublime. For example the re-reading of Goldsmith's 'Day' can have no disinterested reflection with the content, only with the concept of what a poem is and in failing to establish any frameworks for judgement Art as Art evaporates or becomes just sensation<sup>21</sup>.

“But in the philosophic tabula rasa of art, “if someone calls it art,” as Don Judd has said, “it’s art.”<sup>22</sup>

This is from the seminal article in Art and Language, of Joseph Kosuth's introduction to the Art and Language group's intentions (written in 1969) namely the determination of art, the determination of what art is, and one in A&L which fixes its determination as being nothing other than Art, to the exclusion of all else, paint, stone, rhyme, representation of... and so...

“art is analogous to an analytic proposition, and that it is art’s existence as a tautology that enables art to remain “aloof” from philosophical presumptions.”<sup>23</sup>

Or any other presumptions! Art and Language became a series of publications which set out to define what an Art about its own definition was. Kosuth's argument in 'Art after Philosophy' (and the rest of the group) was unlike So LeWitt's 35 statements on Conceptual Art<sup>24</sup>, “#35 These sentences comment on art, but are not art.”, Art and Language's statements were to be considered as 'Art' and anything other as not Art.

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19 This prohibition includes 'modern art', minimal and early conceptual art's purpose as in it sort to define 'Art'. It also includes art intended to express... feelings... ideas.... or give sensation(s) etc. Art is not in Tom Wolfe's terms merely painted words.

20 See Uncreative writing : managing language in the digital age, Columbia University Press, New York (2011) & Against Expression: an anthology of conceptual writing, with Craig Douglas Dworkin, Northwestern University Press, Evanston Illinois (2011)

21 Sensation was an exhibition of the collection owned by Charles Saatchi, including works by Young British Artists, (YBAs), which first took place 18 September – 28 December 1997 at the Royal Academy of Arts in London.

22 Joseph Kosuth Art After Philosophy (1969). [https://ubu.com/papers/kosuth\\_philosophy.html](https://ubu.com/papers/kosuth_philosophy.html)

23 Ibid.

24 Sentences on Conceptual Art by Sol Lewitt <http://www.altx.com/vizarts/conceptual.html>

"The "value" now of an original Cubist painting is not unlike, in most respects, an original manuscript by Lord Byron, or The Spirit of St. Louis as it is seen in the Smithsonian Institution. (Indeed, museums fill the very same function as the Smithsonian Institution – why else would the Jeu de Paume wing of the Louvre exhibit Cézanne's and Van Gogh's palettes as proudly as they do their paintings?) Actual works of art are little more than historical curiosities. As far as art is concerned Van Gogh's paintings aren't worth any more than his palette is. They are both "collector's items.""<sup>25</sup>

So for A&L Art is not any object, but an idea, and not any idea, but only what 'Art is'. As above the group famously imploded due to several causes, it produced dense, incomprehensible for many, texts, to the extent of being an internal practice supposedly similar to mathematics.

"To repeat, what art has in common with logic and mathematics is that it is a tautology; i.e., the "art idea" (or "work") and art are the same and can be appreciated as art without going outside the context of art for verification."<sup>26</sup>

Verification became one of A&L's aims and difficulties, no 'framework' for judgement could be found. And in its attempt at a commonality with mathematics it was not concerned with any public and didn't exist for public consumption, Art and Language didn't tolerate fools gladly. Art produced by such activity, by such 'Artists' is of no concern to any public, and in being tautological in Kosuth's sense says nothing new. Not only is this an activity which is not recognizable as art or as producing art, in its practice and its failure to engage a public, and a failure to produce any valid framework the project as intended in the early work of Art and Language and described in Kosuth's article, failed.

It seems then it might be that the alternative is that Art must be free of the Artist. But this too is very unsatisfactory for without any 'Artists' how can there be 'Art'?

Kosuth offers an unintended solution by his criticism of the work of Richard Serra...

"“I do not make art,” Richard Serra says, “I am engaged in an activity; if someone wants to call it art, that’s his business, but it’s not up to me to decide that. That’s all figured out later.” Serra, then, is very much aware of the implications of his work. If Serra is indeed just “figuring out what lead does” (gravitationally, molecularly, etc.), why should anyone think of it as art? If he doesn’t take the responsibility of it being art, who can, or should?”<sup>27</sup>

However Kosuth is wrong in asserting ““figuring out what lead does” (gravitationally, molecularly, etc.)”, Serra takes no scientific interest in the gravitational or molecular properties of lead or cor-ten steel. Simply put – his activity is perhaps best described by his original 'verb list'...

“to roll  
to crease  
to fold  
to store  
to bend  
to shorten...”<sup>28</sup>

his figuring out is not a logical tautology but a 'practice' one might say he 'plays' with the materials. And the practice is as he says, and as Kosuth agrees, is an activity whose relation to 'Art' is not his concern, though concerns he certainly has with his materials. These are not scientific, and neither intentionally Art. Now the practitioner uses criteria which are not those of Kosuth's, to define 'Art' but to interact

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<sup>25</sup> [https://ubu.com/papers/kosuth\\_philosophy.html](https://ubu.com/papers/kosuth_philosophy.html)

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> <http://make.cmci.studio/dl/Richard-Serra-Verb-List.pdf>

with materials in a certain subjective way. We have now separated this activity from defining art, and even in its practice from being art. And here is the parallel with the cave painter in there being no intention at making art (as art) in the case of Serra, and no way of knowing the intention of the cave painter, which was not to be considered as an “Artist” making an artwork<sup>29</sup>. My own epiphany was at the Musée du quai Branley, a museum of ethnographic art - the slow realization so called primitive peoples could just get on and make stuff we now call art, without particular recourse to a complex system of galleries, collectors, curators, academic and commercial institutions, capital and expertise. And we could appreciate these works regardless of any knowledge of their purpose, and not from any theory – call it art and its art, but from the intrinsic properties in the work. To answer who takes 'responsibility of it being art..' that is presumably then anyone who wishes to freely do so.

This is not the case of the readymade where the Artist poses the object as art by his / her act, it is more like the cave painting, of which the intentions behind its creation are unknown, and that can be subsequently judged to be 'Art'. But here not judged by creative intention, or context, but by it, the painting's implicit content, and objecthood. Once the break between purpose of production is made, the aesthetic judgement then becomes of purposefulness without purpose. This art is then free for our deliberation and judgement, and so free of a given value. Free of meaning and free of use. In this it is like the aesthetic appreciation of nature.

I'm using Kantian/ Schellingian criteria to re-introduce aesthetic appreciation of beauty in an object as opposed to the Conceptuality of Kosuth and Goldsmith, or the economics of Art, or its political uses. And this has parallels with the appreciation of nature, the world and being in the world. Heidegger differentiates the difference between appreciating nature as a place to dwell rather than as a commodity, a resource to be exploited, as a standing in reserve, and art as being not a technology but poesis. We can see the world as a resource, as an environment, one can exploit its resources, the dangers of doing so can be and should be vocalised. But not withstanding any of this, and any justifiable critique of Capitalism, social deprivation, inequality, elitism and prejudice, my point is that these all seem to be 'technological', that is systematic and mechanical. As technological as the processes they seek to overcome, a 'system', a dialectical system In the case of Marxism is dependent on a synthesis of Capitalism. The logic, truth and ethics I do not dispute, but it is a technological crisis...

“Thus we bear witness to the crisis that in our sheer preoccupation with technology we do not yet experience the essential unfolding of technology... Because the essence of technology is nothing technological, essential reflection upon technology and decisive confrontation with it must happen in a realm which is, on the one hand, akin to the essence of technology and on the other, fundamentally different from it. Such a realm is art.”<sup>30</sup>

What is missing it seems is the act of being in the world as an 'original' experience, one in which one can experience beauty and the sublime, and from which one is truly 'in the world'. A 'being' which Heidegger terms as a throwness, being held over, of Dasein, an authentic 'being' which can be experienced in nature and in Art as the sublime, a kind of 'nothingness', “outside of meaning, usage and exchange.”

“In the work of art the truth of an entity has set itself to work. ‘To set’ means here: to bring to a stand. Some particular entity, a pair of peasant shoes, comes in the work to stand in the light of its being. The being of the being comes into the steadiness of its shining. The nature of art would then be this: the truth of being setting itself to work.”<sup>31</sup>

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29 It's generally considered the term 'Artist' was arrived at during the Renaissance to differentiate the work of an Artist as opposed to the production made by a craftsman. As a Genius - from root \*gene- "give birth, beget"

30 Martin Heidegger, Basic Writings, The Question Concerning Technology, p. 238.

31 Martin Heidegger. The Origin of the Work of Art . p.38.