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With respect to the color of the cover:

If works of art are to survive in the context of extremity and darkness, which is social reality, and if they are to avoid being sold as mere comfort, they have to assimilate themselves to that reality.

T.W. Adorno, "Black as an Ideal," *Aesthetic Theory*.

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Post-Modernism: The Discrete Charm of the “Other”

By Gevork Hartoonian

1. The Crisis of Culture

Adolf Loos is well-known for his critical discourse on culture and architecture. He ardently criticized the aristocratic tendencies of the late Viennese bourgeoisie. In doing so, Loos had a hopeful eye on the progressive aspects of the modern culture whose lights were just beginning to dawn in America. Now, after sixty years, what was once a promising light is already setting. The so-called “new reality,” the shiny signs of billboards, remind us that we are at the threshold of another cultural crisis. Indeed, Loos was not speaking into the void; his criticism is still palpable in the context of the historical avant-garde contest, a potentiality which does not exist anymore.

Two years ago, Western societies remembered the 40th anniversary of the atomic attack on Hiroshima. In retrospect, we can assert that the last forty years have had a decisive effect on the historical awareness and cultural development of the entire world. Prior to that period, the positivistic canon projected that the Enlightenment would bring emancipation and social betterment through its technological development. This written and spoken telos is the ideological cornerstone of both a welfare state and a

socialist utopia. On the threshold of a conservative dynasty in America, faced with the perpetual revisions of the Russian revolution through state capitalism, we can argue that the project of the historical avant-garde has lost its critical content: our conviction rests on the belief that the formative themes and concepts of the avant-garde's discourse have become pivotal for the culture industry.¹

It is quite clear that the severity of the current culture crisis differs from that of Loos' time. In at least the last twenty years, we have been witnessing a profound change in the cultural domain. The most striking feature of the so-called post-modern culture is its negative use of notions like "newness" and of concepts like collage and montage. In the context of the capitalist will to commodification, these notions, contrary to their cause, have acquired institutional support.² Montage is vastly used by the advertising industry and the Hollywood star-war movies. On the other hand, the element of "shock" blurs the very domain of art with that of kitsch. Indeed, post-modern architecture in its most modish version has established kitsch as the major theme of its practice. Charles Moore's project of *Piazza d'Italia* is a good example of this development.

It is my premise that the current crisis of culture can be characterized first in terms of its temporal inclination toward kitsch, as a response to a populist sensibility; and secondly, by the void left by the failure of the avant-garde's socio-cultural content. Following this paradigm, my paper unfolds a critical discourse of architecture which addresses the themes and concepts excluded from the dialogue between post-modern and modern architecture.

II. Now and Then

There are many different responses to the question "Where do we stand now?" In the wake of a naive sociological interpretation, some perceive post-modernism as the culture of present day society, labeled "post-industrial." Robert Stern, for example, baptizes his architecture in terms of a linear view of history. For him, post-modernism is the continuation of the modern; likewise post-Renaissance is the succession to the Renaissance.³ On the other hand, Charles Jencks formulates an anti-modern reading.⁴ He declares the death of modern architecture to be simultaneous with the destruction of Pruitt-Igoe Housing Building in St. Louis in 1972. The tenet of these two discourses dwells on the idea of progress; it sees the past as a preparation for the future. In this regard, post-modern polemics against modernism do not surpass the thematic structure of the literary quarrel between the ancients and the moderns. In practice, architecture which represents these views differs from modern buildings merely in its appearance. Post-modern architecture manipulates industrial building techniques and covers its modern sectional and planimetric organizations with scenographic references to history.

Being critical of these positions, our answer to the question raised above is that we are, so to speak, in a "stand-still" historical situation. This position originates in reaction to the failure of the project of the Enlightenment.

In the last four hundred years we have carved out too much from history.

The past is dark and the present, where the utopia should be, is a lacuna. God is dead and those who see the void do not have anything to put in its place.

In the architectural discipline, it is my contention that the metaphoric characterization of telos and its loss has been the major impetus of modern architecture. The genealogy of the current debate of post-modernism versus modernism rests on the detritus of this loss.

Would the Futurist discourse on architecture have any significance without its teleological problematic? Let us hear them tell their tale:

We had been awake all night my friends and I, under the mosque shaped chandeliers which starry-like our souls were lit by the inner radiance of an electric heart. For hours . . . we were alone before the hostile stars . . . Suddenly we heard the roar of the starving cars, let us go, I cried, let us depart. Mythology and mystic idealism are defeated at last. We are in at the birth of the centaurs, we shall see the first angels fly . . . Let us go. There on earth is the first dawn of history and there is nothing to match the red sword of the sun, slashing for the first time through the shadows of a thousand years.⁵

This vision attains a concrete architectural expression in Mies van der Rohe's discourse on the "spirit of time." The latter, i.e., *Zeitgeist*, signifies that "every age attains the fullness of its own, not by being, but by becoming."⁶

Following Renato Poggioli, we can claim that the Futurist discourse on architecture is "valid" only in the context of its continual adherence to the potentialities of the future. The dawn of a "new age" and its implications for architecture is aptly formulated in the De Stijl manifesto. There the hope of bringing art back to life is seen in the search for balance between the universal and individual aspects of art. This quest for the "formation of an international unity in life, art and culture,"⁷ is, indeed, the very position of the avant-garde on architecture.

Ironically, the idea of a global unity in life and art conforms with the will of "capital" for universal domination. The failure of a demand for homogeneous culture can be traced to the desecration of the utopian content by the avant-garde in planning for the real world.⁸ But the most significant repercussion of this failure can be seen in the secularization of national cultures.⁹ Parallel to these developments, the so-called International Style closed the door on any other possible style yet to come. Heterogeneity in the culture of building was exchanged for uniformity in the technology of building. In a very Promethean sense, futurists conceived of technology and its rapid cycle of transformation as the appropriate media for closing the gap between the present and the telos of the future. Nevertheless, the "red sword of the sun," the myth of redemption, disappeared in the indifferent silence of technology.

The modern positivistic view of technology is acutely articulated by Walter Benjamin.¹⁰ Benjamin argues that, after the loss of aura—a break characterized by a major change in the means and structure of production—the new techniques of reproduction provide grounds for the contemplation and reception of art that are different from the bourgeois perception of

aestheticism. In mechanization, Benjamin observed an emancipatory power which was able to give birth to an epical art. The later, being historically different from that of Greece, integrates art with the needs and desires of life. We might have agreed with Benjamin during the era of the historical avant-garde: but now that the culture industry is manipulating the very notions and themes of the avant-garde, we must look beyond Benjamin's hopes for technology.

Nevertheless, a positivistic understanding of technology is critical to a functionalist discourse of architecture. From this point of view, architecture, like industrial products, was seen as a functional and utilitarian object. This mutation can be traced back to Viollet-le-Duc's discourse on architecture.¹¹ But historically it was the Bauhaus school which solidified technological determinism as the basic component of the theory of architecture.

Uniting art with technology and equating form with function, Bauhaus reduced architecture to its denotative aspect. In this context, architecture signifies something outside itself, much like a sign. Almost all orthodox modern architecture either refers to the formal purity of the machine or to the latter's practical functionality. In its dialogue with the machine, architecture is reduced to the objectivity of utensil, and its design mirrors the course of the production line. As a result, architecture loses its metaphoric content. In the formal poverty of orthodox modern syntax, a beam stands merely for its structural function. This differs from classical architecture where meaning was embedded in the interplay of connotation and denotation. The ambiguous relation of classical architecture to culture and nature was changed by Bauhaus into a transparent synthesis of form and function.

According to Jean Baudrillard, the functional rationality of Bauhaus "gives birth to an irrational or fantasy counter discourse which circulates between the two poles of kitsch and surrealism."¹² Surrealism was an attempt to transgress the synthesis of aesthetics and utility in design, and to liquidate Bauhaus' socio-political intentions by reconciling technology with the tradition of building. While surrealism was, to some extent, successful in painting, it did not unfold an architectural discourse which could overcome the Bauhaus' functional and technical rationality. In the absence of such a historical event, functionalism found its posthumous refuge in kitsch.

Kitsch in architecture disintegrates the very *logos* of making. This process is accelerated by the current state of building technology. In fact, the latter plays a paradoxical role. On the one hand, through commodification, the building industry imposes new materials and products on the process of construction. On the other hand, the same materials and techniques provide a vast terrain of fake formal reproduction. Apologetic for the process of commodification, post-modernism promotes a perception of architecture which makes some ways of doing things obsolete. As well as simulating ruins, are not the fallen blocks in James Stirling's Neue Staatsgalerie demonstrating the kitsch character of post-modern construction? Along these lines, replication of historical forms of architecture directs our attention away from the depth to the skin, from the tectonic to the decorative. The commodification of the building industry transforms architecture from a

purposeful cultural product into an object of immediate consumption. From certain works of the New York Five Architects to the Steven Izenour house on Long Island, it is possible to claim that there is a continuous succession of stages which leads to the disintegration of the *logos* of making and the realization of cardboard architecture.

Kitsch does have further implications for architecture. Being itself a non-real, kitsch in architecture does not provide room for image creation. Rather, it reduces architecture to image per se.¹³ The advocates of post-modern architecture conceive of historical forms as meta-reality which can be put into another cycle of signification. Robert Venturi was the first to formulate such a perception in architecture. According to him:

Conventional elements in architecture represent one stage in an evolutionary development, and they contain in their changed use and expression some of their meaning as well as of their new meaning. What can be called the vestigial element parallels the double-functioning element. . . . This is the result of a more or less ambiguous combination of the old meaning called up by associations, with a new meaning created by the modification or new function.¹⁴

In practice, modification takes historical forms as givens and leaves their contingencies dormant. Thus, architecture loses the memory of building which is embedded in its tectonic figuration. History evaporates and forms become mere decoration. This line of thought recalls J.L.N. Durand's act of abstraction by which the content of form is dissociated from the dialectics of *mythos* and *logos*. Thereafter, meaning is considered to be a value inherent in form itself. Abstraction as an end, no matter what the sources of its references might be, invokes the Kantian sublime. In this regard, we can argue that the post-modern obsession with historical forms is indeed the other side of the same delusion that induced the modern functionalists to reduce architecture to a prosaic of the production line. In both of these experiences, the meaning of form is perceived in terms of pure sensuous attractiveness of its objectivity.¹⁵

III. *The "Other"*

With the present stand-still situation bringing to mind the historical debate between Benjamin and Theodor Adorno,¹⁶ we need to ask whether it is desirable to have a "distance" between art in general and architecture in particular, and the aesthetic values of culture industry. The nature and prospect of such a distance differ from those of "l'art pour l'art." As far as the dialectical continuation of modernism is concerned, a semi-autonomous position for architecture does have its merits.¹⁷ Indeed, one might argue that in the domain of capitalism we are obliged to play the dialectical game of rupture and reconciliation. This discourse maintains a critical stand against the idea of progress and Christian eschatology, according to which "history is seen as having a non-reversible direction toward a future goal."¹⁸ At the same time this view does not neglect the concrete aspects of our everyday life experience: "the true is the made."¹⁹ Those who do

not want to repeat the tale of classicism or to re-play the Prometheus myth must face the problematic of the quarrel between the ancients and the moderns. In fact, one of the critical predilections of Western thought is to conceive of truth as a function of time. Jencks' polemics against modern architecture is one manifestation of this phenomenon. Yet, one might call Leon Krier's esteem for the classical and his criticism of both the modern and post-modern as another aspect of the same *episteme*. However, a stand-still perception of time unfolds an orientation of another kind: its dynamism does not point to a forward or backward looking direction. In regard to the question of "temporal distance," we can agree with Giambattista Vico that the externality introduced by time can be excluded through the power of imagination and memory.²⁰ By the same token, in dissociating itself from the so-called "spirit of time," architecture can sustain a "still life" position by adhering to the memory of building.

In moments of rupture, a critical discourse of architecture is motivated by themes and notions which are the traits and marks left by both modern and post-modern architecture. The assumption is that the theoretical power of both modernism and post-modernism is based on the suppression of a non-present discourse of architecture. We shall characterize such an architecture as the "other." The object of the "other" is an architecture which refers neither to the machine nor to nature nor the human body as sources of its meaning. The "other" derives its particular figuration by recollecting the universal aspects of architecture.

The universal ethos of architecture encloses the building relationships among wall, column and beam. At this stage, architecture is equivalent to construction; it is an act of putting load-bearing elements together. But to go beyond construction, the above syntactic dimension should be integrated with the particular aspects of architecture; i.e., the culture of building in a place—a place endowed with a certain sensibility of material and expression. At this level, the relationship among column, beam and wall goes beyond the physical and mechanical needs of construction to become tectonic. The latter postulates the dissolution of functional and structural dimensions of the load-bearing elements, and the simultaneous realization of a figurative objectification. Therefore, it can be inferred that between the syntactic dimension of construction and the tectonic figuration of column, beam and wall, there is a void, so to speak, where the topics of a poetic discourse of architecture resides. By the help of these topics, we place tectonic figuration over the technical facticity of construction. We can trace topical thinking in Alvar Alto's metaphoric language, or in the dialogue between Louis Kahn and material, where the architect pays heed to "what a material wants to be." Finally, topical thinking touches the domain of myth by locating architecture in the rift between sky and earth. In thinking of light and wind as major elements of the tea ceremony, Tadao Ando imparts poetic meaning to his design of tea-house architecture.

The ultimate goal of the tectonic is not merely formal representation. Architecture reveals itself by form, a built-form that possesses certain particularities. "Construction is not a corrective of expression, nor is it a shoring-up of expression by means of objectification, but it is something

that has to emerge in an unplanned way from the mimetic impulse."²¹ Therefore, the concept of the tectonic should address the other aspect of the culture of a building, that is, type: a constructional form which endures and remains permanent throughout the ebb and flow of customs and use. In the absence of this latter consideration, the most expressionistic representation of wall, column and beam does not surpass the picturesqueness of painting nor the rigidity of sculpture. Constructional form is the image of what the mind's eye of an architect sees, that which once realized, remains legible and comprehensible in the context of a place.

The "other" is a critical tool for understanding the positivistic thinking of the Modern Movement and the recent scenographic references to history. The "other" initiates an architectural discourse which is neither abstract and new in terms implied by the discourse of historical avant-garde, nor classical as conceived by traditional academicians. In tectonic and type, architecture addresses both history and progress in a manner in which neither dominates. A stand-still perception of time edifies an architecture whose meaning is not connected to a futuristic utopia or to a nostalgic desire for the classical. Rather, it maintains its being as one instance of many cycles of permanence and change which take place within the culture of building: "The running waters of a river move toward an end but the river does not make any progress."²² On the other hand, the "Other" relates to history by memory. In this context, historical forms are not models waiting in a dormant past for representation, as is the case with post-modern architecture. These forms do not possess any truth in themselves. Yet, their morphological study can teach us the ways things are made, that is the historically shared techniques, i.e., *metier*, which reside in collective memory. The restatement of the latter with available means of production is the content of the "other." In this sense, the "other" is modern *per se*.²³

Footnotes

¹Matei Calinescu argues that: "At the dawn of modernity the myth of progress emerged based on a specularized concept of linear and irreversible time. . . . But the alliance between modernity and progress turned out to be only temporary, and in our age the myth of progress appears to have been largely exhausted. . . ." *Faces of Modernity: Avant-garde, Kitsch and Decadence* (London: Bloomington, Indiana Univ. Press, 1977), p. 246.

²Peter Burger states that the avant-garde's challenge to art as an institution has failed. Therefore, there is no perceivable sublation of art in a changed context; "the means by which the avant-gardists hoped to bring about the sublation of art have attained the status of works of art." *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota, 1984), p. 58.

³Robert Stern, "The Temple of Love and Other Musings," in *Historic Preservation*, Sept./Oct., 1982.

⁴Charles Jencks, *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli Pub., 1977).

⁵Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture, A Critical History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 84.

⁶Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1968), p. 73.

⁷Ulrich Conrad, *Programs and Manifestoes on 20th Century Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1975), p. 39.

⁸Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1977).

⁹I am thinking of Paul Ricoeur's insightful article, "Universal Civilization and National Cultures," first noticed by Kenneth Frampton in, "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance," ed. Hal Foster, *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (Washington: Bay Press, 1983).

¹⁰Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), pp. 217-252.

¹¹Violet-le-Duc, Egen Emmanuel in Lecture VI, argues that: "A moulding has no style in itself: its style consists in its being adapted to the function it fulfills or the place it occupies. . . . What meaning, however, can there be in the moulding of the archivolt, whose voussoirs jut out beyond it and fit into the courses of masonry above?" *Discourses on Architecture*, Vol. I, (New York: Grove Press Inc., 1959), p. 186.

¹²Jean Baudrillard, *A Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1981), pp. 185-203.

¹³Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (London, Boston: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1984), p. 340.

¹⁴Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1966), p. 44.

¹⁵For a critique of the Kantian abstraction of aesthetics, see, Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co.), pp. 80-90.

¹⁶The major themes and categories of this debate are: "Dialectical Image," "aura," and what Adorno calls the "unmediated brand of materialism." For a thorough analysis of these issues see Richard Wollin, *Walter Benjamin: An Aesthetic of Redemption* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), pp. 163-212. Yet, the contemporary importance of the debate lies in the relationship between art and technology. As pointed out previously, Benjamin's hope for the redemptive aspect of technology undermines the critical function of art, which can be significant only by keeping a distance from the dominant ideology. One might question whether Benjamin's view could not initiate a false integration of art with social life. Nevertheless, the appeal to convention by post-modern architecture not only unfolds its loss of critical edge, but also heralds a fake sublation of art with social life.

¹⁷Adorno argues that art has a two-fold essence, "being both an autonomous entity and a social fact." *Op. Cit.*, p. 8. According to Burger, such characterization of autonomy differs from the concept of "l'art pour l'art" and the view which considers the autonomy of the artist's imagination. *Op. Cit.*, pp. 35-54.

¹⁸Karl Löwith, *Permanence and Change* (Cape Town, South Africa: Citadel Press, 1968), p. 24.

¹⁹D. Phillip Verene, *Vico's Science of Imagination* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982).

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 55.

²¹*Op. Cit.*, p. 65.

²²Löwith, *Op. Cit.*, p. 57.

²³According to Adorno, "The concept of the modern is much older than modernity, understood as a category of the philosophy of history. However, modernity is not chronological at all. Rather, it answers to Rimbaud's postulates that in relation to its own time, art be the most advanced consciousness where sophisticated technical procedures and equally sophisticated subjective experience interpenetrate." *Op. Cit.*, p. 49.

Adrian Piper: Self-Healing Through Meta-Art

By Donald Kuspit

Over the years, Adrian Piper has made the following statements: "I have always had a very strong moralistic streak" (*Meat Into Meat*, October 1968); "I have always had a very strong individualistic streak" (*Untitled Performance for Max's Kansas City*, April 1970); "I have always had a strong mystical streak" (*Food For the Spirit*, July 1971); "I have always had a very strong aggressive streak" (*The Mythic Being: Getting Back*, July 1975).¹ Such declarative statements suggest a strong sense of self-confident self-knowledge. (Of course, the "self" alluded to is her artistic persona—her performing self.) Indeed, Piper has written so extensively and well about herself—the self she is absorbed in to the point of obsession, the self that is the alpha and omega of her art—that there seems nothing left to say about her, or her art. She appears to be the proverbial snake that has taken its tail in its mouth—indeed, one can say the bite of self-articulation *is* her act of art—and become a cosmos complete unto itself.

Yet her authoritative statements about herself, uttered with absolute conviction, are embedded in texts that seem so achingly self-conscious, so full of tortured self-awareness, that for all their affirmative character they seem to betray or subvert the self they describe. Her textual performances

are double edged; formally self-assertive, they seem to register a traumatic sense of self. They seem all-knowing, but are full of self-doubt. In this her texts seem Cartesian, but she lacks Descartes' sense of a preconceived cognitive self as the implicit goal of the process of doubt. (Descartes' self-doubt can be understood, like Piper's, as a form of self-analysis—an "ironical" form of self-affirmation.) Taken together, they reveal her search for self-knowledge to be a Sisyphean enterprise, subtly varied but essentially repetitious and futile. Her definitive self-assertions come as a temporary mirage of light at the end of a dark tunnel of twisting thought.

Piper's intellectual apologetics seem to exist to buttress a self that seems on the verge of dissolving, a self so insecure it barely coheres. It is as though all of Piper's extraordinary power of articulation—it seems there is no feeling that she cannot put, or fears putting, into words—exists to pull herself together emotionally, or to camouflage a self so overwrought with anxiety about the threat of disintegration from within that it seems unable to be centered in itself. It must dissolve outward in discourse—in a talkativeness that, while obviously far from incoherent intellectually, masks emotional incoherence. Piper's overwrought discourse seems the centrifugal expression of a collapsing self. Underneath its look of wideawakeness, Piper's discourse is a somnambulist form of distress. In Donald Winnicott's terms, Piper's intellectuality is the sign of a false self, in part the self others expect her—a philosopher as well as artist (a philosophical artist)—to have. This false intellectual self is in search of her true emotional self—indeed, the direct manifestation of its vertiginous condition—as well as its rationalization. In general, because Piper cannot perform without explaining herself—because explaining herself is her performance, as though her self-consciousness was the real spontaneity of her art—we cannot help but wonder whether she is hiding something, despite apparently revealing all.

Her condition is even more complicated, uncanny. In 1973, she began *Talking To Myself, The Ongoing Autobiography of an Art Object*. It is a kind of "talking cure," to use the term that another woman, Anna O., Josef Breuer's patient, gave to psychoanalysis before it was known as such. It reminds us of the cliché that women are more talkative than men, and are especially expert at talking about themselves and the personal in general, as though it was a realm apart. Is Piper's art the archetypal "women's art"—talk about her sense of herself as though she was a being apart?

Piper's artistic autobiography is almost clinically detached in tone, however confessional in character and cathartic in import. Each of her performances reads like a case history. In each she appears as the representative female, her problem-filled life a microcosm of the female problematic, an exemplary symptom of a larger sickness unto female death. Talking is a large part of life—of female life—and in talking one represents oneself in a certain way. Art begins in talking, in consciousness of how one represents oneself, finally of how representative one is of a certain ideal of selfhood, for example, the intellectual self. Art ends in listening, in the witness's analytic consciousness of one's talking. Does Piper want to be both analysand and analyst in one? Is she performing her self-analysis?

Piper talks, but not just to herself; she talks mostly to herself (especially

in the early performances), but she does so out loud, in effect talking to someone else, expecting to be overheard by anonymous others. For Piper, art is in effect a communicative performance between those who don't seriously want to communicate with one another, who have no real desire to interact. It is communication that is far from serious in that it is directed to no one in particular yet serious in that it urgently bespeaks someone in particular. It is about a relationship which seriously happens despite the personal inhibitions and social barriers against serious relationship. It fictionally actualizes possibilities of communicative relationship that rarely occur in life.

Piper implicitly assumes that her talkative performance of herself takes place against a background of dense non-relationality with casually witnessing but fundamentally resistant others. In a sense, such a background is necessary in order to make her talk "self-sufficient," that is, suffice as a kind of self and a kind of art. But Piper also subliminally relates to others, for each of her pieces "propositions," as it were, the audience (actual or potential) with their own self-awareness. It makes them uncannily aware of their own inner conflicts. In a sense, her discursive intellectuality objectifies her self for others, or represents her self in such a way that others can identify with it. The process is two-sided: Piper's self-representation has identification with the other as its implicit goal while ostensibly—because of its intellectuality—distancing her self from the other.

Traditional art assumes that representation could and would spontaneously be experienced as identification. Today identification is a distant goal desperately pursued by art, believed in but not always expected. There is an effort to force it, but it does not always occur. Nowhere is this clearer than in performance art, which is as much a struggle to compel the audience to identify with the performer as the performer's compulsive attempt to identify—represent—her self, and through her self the self of the other.

Ostensibly a history of Piper's development as an artist, her autobiography climaxes in an account of what she calls meta-art, the key instrument of her self-understanding and understanding of art. Meta-art, "the activity of making explicit the thought processes, procedures, and presuppositions of making whatever kind of art" an artist makes, "might exist as part of, alongside, or instead of the art itself."² In Piper's case, I think it is the sum and substance of her art, that is, of her textual as well as "stage" performances. A "regressive proof" in Kant's sense, meta-art "would consist in beginning with the fact of the work itself, and from its properties inferring backwards to the conditions necessary to bring it into existence," conditions that might be "social, psychological, political, metaphysical, aesthetic, or any combination thereof." Meta-art is clearly a form of self-inquiry; for Piper, it is the actual "work" of art, replacing any object of art. In meta-art, the interpretation of art *is* art. Piper's art is conceptual because it is meta-art, which is conceptual art at its best. In a sense, meta-art is an attempt to objectify art without arriving at any object of art—without reifying the concept of art in an object. Piper's meta-art is of major importance because it gives conceptual art a significant content: the self—as an art, an institution, and a suffering.

Meta-art necessarily leads to “the problematic solution” of performance art, as Piper calls it. For Piper, performance art is the logical extension and execution of meta-art—its theory in concrete practice. For performance art exists to deal with the problems of “*interpretive control*, i.e., of how an artist can successfully retain control over the cultural interpretation of her work,” and “*transformation*, i.e., how an artist can resolve the tension between personal significance and aesthetic significance in her work.”³ The one is a psychopolitical problem, the other a more or less psychopathological problem, but both are meta-art problems, and both have more than a hint of the narcissism that motivates Piper’s activity. She articulates a self preoccupied with the conditions of its appearance in the world, a self that attempts to control the way the world mirrors it. It can even be said that such control is part—the essence?—of her art. Piper is an actress who wants, almost hysterically, every condition for her performance to be just right, including its interpretive aftermath. Despite her efforts to include this interpretive aftermath in the performance, pre-empting the autonomous witnessing of others, Piper knows before hand that the performance will be spoiled. Its cultural interpretation can never be completely controlled, nor can the tension between its personal and aesthetic significance ever be completely resolved—and must not be, if the work is to be successful, that is, to be an interpretation of the personal. By its very nature, the performing self can never be narcissistically satisfied. It is in the double bind of always trying to be but never really wanting to be.

The narcissistic self is inherently “spoiled,” in the double sense of the term, that is, it expects too much from the world and itself, and it is inherently impaired. These may be the same thing. It is impaired because it exists in a dialectical state of discourse with itself—this is its art—a discourse which has no clear and distinct terms (even though it expects to be resolved into them), and so is always spoiled by ambiguity. It is ambiguous—volatile—to the point of anxiety. In Piper, ambiguity and anxiety are resolved through aggression, but the aggression is a vicious circle that leads back to them. Piper cannot escape the labyrinth of her spoiled self. Neither intellectuality nor aggression—aggressive intellectuality—is a way out of it. Piper’s *Untitled Performance for Max’s Kansas City* (April 1970)—a performance which takes place entirely in Piper’s mind—describes the vicious circle perfectly: the more aggressive Piper becomes, the more she tightens the noose of anxious ambiguity around her psychic neck. Her struggles with her snaky feelings about the artworld tighten its hold on her, to the point of intellectual exhaustion signalled by the self-contradiction she concludes with. I cite the performance in its entirety, because it is typical of—almost a model for—everything that Piper does.

Max’s was an Art Environment, replete with Art Consciousness. To even walk into Max’s was to be absorbed into the collective Art-Conscious Consciousness, either as object or as collaborator. I didn’t want to be absorbed as a collaborator, because that would mean having my own consciousness co-opted and modified by that of others: it would mean allowing my consciousness to be influenced by their perceptions of art, and exposing my perceptions of art to their consciousness, and

I didn't want that. I have always had a very strong individualistic streak. My solution was to privatize my own consciousness as much as possible, by depriving it of sensory input from that environment; to isolate it from all tactile, aural, and visual feedback. In doing so, I presented myself as a silent, secret, passive object, seemingly ready to be absorbed into their consciousness as an object. But I learned that complete absorption was impossible, because my *voluntary* object-like passivity implied aggressive activity, an independent presence confronting the Art-Conscious environment with its autonomy. My objecthood became my subjecthood.

It is difficult to realize the anxiety that permeates a Piper performance and text. So intellectually self-assured does she seem, so calm and collected and knowledgeable about herself, that it is hard to realize that these are exactly the traits that indicate how minimal her sense of herself as an "active subject" is—how alienated from herself she is—despite all appearances to the contrary.⁴ She is focused and poised like a transcendental fiction, for all her gut feelings about her condition. Her implicit sense of her self as a fictive character implies disavowal of the affect generated by her performance. It gives Piper's activity its subliminally cryptic—peculiarly inscrutable—air. It is self-expression as self-repression. Piper is far from being as transparent as she seems. Despite her denial of the transcendental conditions of art-making, she takes a distanced, quasi-transcendental view of her self—her art—as though her mind was standing with that of Hegel on the peak of pure Spirit, and witnessing her body perform. Indeed, a good deal of her art is about her body; for her, the abstract spirit of the self seems to have complete control of the concrete body, a necessary evil she would like to make unnecessary, like the meat she despises in *Meat Into Meat*:

The performance consisted in my transforming a pound of chopped hamburger meat into food for David [a former boyfriend] and watching him eat it, while simultaneously delivering an improvised running commentary on the immorality of eating meat when other less expensive forms of protein were available, the danger to one's health due to higher concentrations of pesticides and uric acid in meat, the insensitivity to undernourished peoples exhibited by squandering such a large portion of one's relatively large personal income on superfluous goods such as meat, etc., etc.

For her, narcissism is in part a form of numinous regulation of her body, and philosophy is perhaps the ultimate narcissism, as *Food for the Spirit*—for me perhaps her most exemplary performance because of its sharp focus and concentration—makes clear. (In that work, her identification with Kant—the philosophical self-object—becomes so overwhelming that she loses her sense of her physical body, abetted by the fact that she is fasting (to the point of anorexia?). She is restored to her self by the mirror.) Her introspective perspective is that of a puppeteer watching herself control the puppet while it performs, and watching it perform. There is a ventriloquist sense to Piper's performances, as though a numinous self spoke

through them. It is a self which for all its exhibitionism remains resolutely detached from any of its manifestations. Piper proclaims the authority of her art through her intellectual performance of it, and the authority of her self through her self-disclosure, but her true self is peculiarly invisible, almost as though it had never existed.

Piper is self-consciously a "split personality," at once woman/man, black/white, body/mind, artist/philosopher.⁵ Her psyche is the prey of a host of unresolved dualisms, that parasitically feed on her enormous energy. Each dualism articulates a different anxiety, each is a form of anguish; each is a facet of an incompletely integrated self, a deconstruction of an incompletely constructed self. The sense of self-contradiction each be-speaks—the interminable condition of inner conflict they amount to taken together—suggests the "tragic self" Heinz Kohut has spoken of.⁶ One thinks of Piper as forever coming into being through contradiction but never truly being. There are many signs in her writing of not wanting to exist, which is not exactly the same as being suicidal. For all her increasingly explicit audience orientation and desire to be catalytic for a public,⁷ her feeling of alienation from her audience—an extension of her feeling of self-alienation—remains essentially unchanged. This is perhaps her most "heroic" contradiction. Each contradiction underscores the abysmal sense of personal inadequacy underlying her heightened sense of intellectual adequacy, indeed, the intellectual bravado which makes her seem to stand on a peak of self-understanding. Piper experiences herself as wracked with contradictions—including the reality of her intellectual self-understanding and her physical self-experience—that cannot be reconciled in themselves or with each other. She emerges as peculiarly self-defeated for all her self-celebration.

Nonetheless, Piper's work can be understood as an ingenious attempt at self-integration—self-healing—through a dialectic that integrates material and idealistic elements. Dialectic states the problem—lack of integration—and holds out the promise of a solution—integration—whether in the individual psyche or in social reality. Dialectic signals disintegration and integration simultaneously; it is equally pessimistic and optimistic, frustrating and satisfying. Disintegration hopefully leads to a more comprehensive and binding integration—to "progress"—but there are no guarantees that it will, no guarantees that individual and society will not regress to an earlier condition of integration, which amounts to a form of disintegration from a progressive point of view. Absolute integration seems like an impossible dream, for dialectic seems to continue indefinitely and goallessly—at least from a post-Hegelian and post-Marxist point of view—for all the clarity of its form. (One can call this the "postmodernist" condition of dialectic. Piper's endless dualisms, which lack any real prospect of resolution either in themselves or in relation to one another, seem to exemplify it perfectly.) It promises the most uncertain of utopias. It is always threatening to become idle unity—false stability—rather than tense balance.

To preclude this—to create the semblance of integration—Piper sets herself special goals. She recreates her theoretical contradictions dialectically as "tension arcs" or in a "tension gradient," that is, she articulates

each contradiction as an "action-promoting" situation.⁸ She dramatizes the structure of contradiction so that it becomes a personal energy field rather than an abstract universal map. The contradiction is not passively suffered, but becomes the self's polemical thrust into the world. Perhaps more crucially for the purposes of self-integration, she implicitly conceives of meta-art as having a goal: *complete* understanding of all the conditions for her self-performances. To put this another way, the integrated self is the self that can integrate all its interpretations of its performances. It is a completely "philosophical" self—a self that in the process of understanding itself understands all its interpretive methods and establishes a general theory of interpretation of which each is an example. Her assumption of complete interpretability or comprehension—a utopian assumption—is the backbone of her meta-art. It justifies her dialecticizing of the contradictions of her being into tension arcs.

The ideal of complete interpretability is a kind of magical thinking, another form of the infantile illusion of omnipotence (so pervasive in philosophy). But it serves its purpose, at least in the illusion of integration that Piper's art finally creates. It seems to catalyze a union of opposites, an uncontradictory state of being. Piper seems to think that if she could integrate all her interpretations, in a kind of philosophical self-apotheosis, her narcissism would mature—sublimate—into integration. But personal integration built on the illusion of philosophical integration is more utopian than ever. Wittingly or unwittingly, Piper transcendentalizes her self. While interpretation is reparative integration of the bifurcated self for Piper, she seems unable to face the fact that interpretation can never be complete. There is never any unconditional integration of the self. This makes her meta-art all the more tragic and dramatic. Piper's art pursues a therapeutic goal through utopian interpretation, that is, through integration of all self-interpretations—an act of intellectual madness. It remains a psychoanalytic issue as to whether interpretation is a sufficient cause of cure—solidifying the self, strengthening the ego—or only a necessary one. Is something else required? Does Piper unconsciously yearn for the empathy of an audience—for an audience that can transcend its own analytic tendencies after exercising them, and care for the object of its interest, see it as a subject? Would Piper then have her sense of herself as an active subject—an integral being—restored to her? This is perhaps the most vital issue that Piper's art addresses.

Notes

¹Piper wrote up her performances after—apparently several years after—they occurred. These statements are taken from her descriptions, which I call "textual performances."

²Adrian Piper, "In Support of Meta-Art," *Artforum*, 12 (1975): 79-81.

³"Performance: The Problematic Solution," March 1984. Unpublished paper presented at the conference on "Philosophical Problems of Self-Consciously Created Arts," The Kitchen, New York, New York.

⁴According to Erich Fromm, *To Have or To be?* (New York, Harper & Row, 1976), p. 90, "In alienated activity, I do not experience myself as the active subject of my activity; instead, I experience the outcome of my activity as something 'over there,' separated from me and standing above and against me."

⁵In the *Mythic Being* series (begun late 1972) she transforms herself into her "seeming opposite: a third-world, working class, overtly hostile male." In *Self-Portrait Exaggerating My Negroid Features* (June 1981), among other works, she deals with, as she put it in *Art For The Artworld Surface Pattern* (December 1976), her "marginality as a non-White (but not obviously Black) member of society, and . . . the ways in which the social and political implications of [her] presence . . . were systematically repressed or avoided." For me, the political aspects of Piper's art, admirable as they are—*Aspects of the Liberal Dilemma* (August 1978) is a particularly strong, forthright example—are secondary to, and grow out of, her self-interpretation, which includes the sociopolitical interpretation and demonstration of her blackness.

⁶For Kohut, *The Restoration of the Self* (New York, International Universities Press, 1977), p. 238, "the problems of Tragic Man" are those of "fractured, enfeebled, discontinuous human existence"—problems of fragmentation, the struggle to reassemble the self, to overcome the despair that accompanies the failure to realize one's nuclear ambitions and ideals. These contrast with the conflicts of Guilty Man.

⁷As Piper develops, she becomes more and more overtly other-directed, that is, performs explicitly for others not just for herself—not just in her mind. *Funk Lessons* (1982) is perhaps her most extroverted work. Her conception of *Art As Catalysis* (August 1970)—"the work is a catalytic agent, in that it promotes a change in another entity (the viewer) without undergoing any permanent change in itself"—makes her audience-orientation explicit.

⁸Heinz Kohut, *How Does Analysis Cure?* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 4-5, states that "the defective self of the patient with a narcissistic personality disturbance will mobilize its striving to complete its development, that is, it will try again to establish an uninterrupted tension arc from basic ambitions . . . toward basic ideals. The tension arc is the dynamic essence of the complete, nondefective self." By Piper's determined performance (physical and philosophical) of contradictions—an indication of defect, that is, lack of integration—she makes manifest the potentially integrative tension in them, that is, their resolution in a singular sense of selfhood. In *The Restoration of the Self*, p. 180, Kohut writes, "Just as there is a *gradient* of tension between two differently charged (+, -) electrical *poles* that are spatially separated, inviting the formation of an electrical *arc* in which the electricity may be said to flow from the higher to the lower level, so also with the self. The term 'tension gradient' thus refers to the relationship in which the constituents of the self [each term of Piper's various dualisms] stand to each other, a relationship that is specific for the individual self . . . it indicates the presence of an action-promoting [performative] condition."

The Critique of Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century Art

By Thomas Crow

Author's note: This essay represents the corrected version of a text that appeared in *Art Criticism*, v. 3, no. 1. That text was inadvertently published without galley-proof corrections. The result was a quantity of typesetter's errors, particularly but not only in the French quotations, that made the essay all but unreadable. *Art Criticism* has kindly offered to reprint the entire text in this number. I have decided in the meantime to translate all quotations. (These passages can now be found in the original French in the translation of this essay that appeared earlier in the *Revue de l'Art*, 73, (1986), pp. 9-16.)

The tie between eighteenth-century painting and Enlightenment thought is central—if only implicitly—to the dominant accounts of the period, accounts that stress variously the official efforts to reassert the primacy of history painting, the didactic critical program of a *philosophe* like Diderot, or the painterly empiricism of artists such as Chardin, Greuze, or Joseph Vernet.¹ Whether or not the painting in question is found adequate to its rational and moralizing criteria, the view of the Enlightenment inscribed in these accounts is invariably an affirmative one. Few writers on art indeed think to challenge the heroic narrative that is implicit in the term itself.

In the larger fields of history and philosophy, however, another and harsher view of the Enlightenment has been argued with increasing frequency. The critique of enlightenment (to generalize the term beyond the eighteenth century) sees the processes of secularization and rationalization that constitute our received notion of modernity as belonging to a new order of mythology. The human subject at the center of this modern myth, transparent to itself by virtue of reason, has been dethroned and consigned to the category of temporary and contingent ideological constructions. The great emancipation of civil society and its material economy from the constraints of superstition, dogma, and ritual is now understood to have meant the invention of new and more efficient forms of control over individual lives.

This critique of enlightenment probably begins most forcefully in Nietzsche;² it was taken up and adapted to a pessimistic Left position by Horkheimer and Adorno,³ and continues with the recent writings of Gilles Deleuze,⁴ Jean-Francois Lyotard,⁵ and Michel Foucault⁶ among others. To follow Foucault, whose work encompasses the historical period under discussion here, the story of escape from older forms of domination is rewritten as one of re-submission to more pervasive forms of discipline that advertise themselves as humane, compassionate, and liberating. Therapeutic discourses and institutions have come to occupy and control more and more the intimate actions and feelings of the individual body. The discourses of penal reform, psychiatry, hygiene, and other improving regimes meant the colonization and supervision of whole dimensions of life heretofore out of the sight of political power. The enlightened society becomes inevitably the disciplinary society.

Central to Foucault's thought is attention to the processes of *enclosure*, that is, the physical and legal separation of person such that new and falsely uniform identities are enforced on the human body: the madman, the patient, the criminal, the deviant are historical products of specific discursive disciplines. At the same time, the lives of "ordinary" persons, defined as those not inscribed within these disciplines, are ringed round and reordered by a network of supervision and boundary control.

It would not be difficult to apply this negative construction of enlightenment to the history of painting. In precisely the period covered by Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, ambitious artistic practice is removed from the heterogeneous functions, often hidden physical locations, and undeveloped enabling discourses in which it had been imbedded. Thereafter it is assigned to a single space. In time this space would assume the dramatic physical form of the Salon exhibitions in the Louvre.⁷ Initially, however, it took less material form: it presented itself as a new form of knowledge, a way for the first time of setting up painting as an object of systematic comprehension and making it somehow transparent to itself.

We are talking now about a period in which the term "art" still designated one of many technical and craft skills.⁸ The practice of painting had only recently won for itself some share in the intellectual prestige possessed by literature, but that new status was still unstable and open to challenge.

All of this was of course tied to the shifting fortunes of the French Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture. In order to create and maintain its distinction from the old and still-powerful guild, it first attempted to annex the visual arts to the literary ones, particularly to poetic drama; thus the theories of the stage and the dramatic text would essentially become those of the picture. This institutional strategy constituted a decisive moment in the formation of the modern idea of "the arts," that is, the partitioning-off of the aesthetic domain. Previous, largely Italian, theories that had argued for that link were now embodied in a permanent institution backed by a culturally ambitious state power.⁹

One can thus move readily from Foucault's model of enclosure or confinement to his equation between knowledge and power: there is a demarcation and exposure of a previously heterogeneous and unsupervised practice; that coming to knowledge then allows the systematic intervention of political authority. As is well known, the Academy grew rich and confident as it was deployed in the embellishment of Louis XIV's centralizing regime. But the opening to knowledge came first, the mapping and codifying, the imposition of clear hierarchies, central tenets to which concrete examples could be referred in tests of validity. That transformation, of course, appeared under the sign of emancipation: the claim that the guild had illegitimately enclosed a noble pursuit within demeaning and inhibiting self-interest.

This was made plain in Roland Fréart de Chambray's *L'Idée de la perfection de la peinture* of 1662.¹⁰ This was arguably the first work of pictorial aesthetics published in France, and it came from someone close to Poussin and to the academic leadership. In his introduction he describes this emancipation in terms that we would immediately understand, those of the democratic franchise. The most promising aspect of painting in France, he declares, is that the common man takes an interest in it and freely offers his opinion. In this is the promise of a return to the days of Apelles, who would place his pictures on the street and hide behind them in order to overhear the comments of passersby.¹¹

Where Chambray sees failure is in the artists' refusal to submit to this scrutiny, to the opening up of art to the light of the public space. As a result modern painting cannot match the achievements of the ancients. Instead of striving like them for "glorious renown and the immortality of their names as their reward," French artists look only to immediate utility; their aims are ones that they have "uniquely determined for themselves. . . . They have introduced some kind of libertine painting that I do not recognize, an art entirely detached from all the strictures that once made painting so admirable and so difficult. . . ." ¹²

The language of the last sentence is enough, however, to indicate the disciplinary drift of Chambray's argument. His test of freedom in discussion of and access to art is in fact how closely the examples of Raphael and Poussin have been adhered to. The democratization of art's audience will be the most efficient means of enforcing a unified standard of seriousness and significant form in the arts. The essentials of the later, polemical Poussiniste position are evident here. The ideal model is one that is seen

to provide the greatest cognitive clarity, one that yields maximum transparency to the subject matter and to the rational intelligence of the artist. In the Academic orthodoxy of the 1660s and 70s, those aspects of painting that could not be subsumed under a literary/theatrical model were more or less ignored. André Félibien, the intellectual put in charge of formulating the Academy's doctrine, came up with precise instructions concerning *composition*, the mental ordering of the subject, but refused to establish rules that would govern *ordonnance*, that is, the strictly visual arrangement of forms and figures on the canvas. An artist's ability in painterly practice was "a special gift of nature," honed in the studio and not in the lecture hall or textbook.¹³

Around 1700, however, a strong theoretical effort was made to give painting its autonomous, and primarily visual, rationale. And its author was not initially an academician, but rather a critic and theoretician whose main support came from influential private collectors: Roger de Piles.¹⁴ The last years of the seventeenth century, in fact, witnessed an increasing accommodation between art theory and aristocratic values alien to the new public sphere. The prestige and intellectual clarity with which the Academy had invested painting began to stimulate a whole new style of informed and systematic collecting, something that had barely existed among the French elite before this time.¹⁵ That prestige and knowledge proved tremendously useful to this new kind of *amateur*, but both the democratic and disciplinary implications of previous academic theory were not. Certainly aristocratic culture in this period was about escape from discipline, specifically the discipline of the Versailles court and the absolutist regime. The ideal of the seventeenth-century *honnête homme* had been resistant to any standard of lucidity and transparency in expression. As the qualities of *honnêteté* were codified and refined in this period, the exceptional man was distinguished from the mass by his artfully indirect and formalized style of expression and self-presentation; his preferred mode of communication was by suggestion and insinuation.¹⁶ It would be surprising if these values did not find their way into discussion of painting, and it was de Piles who had given them their most persuasive formulation.

He was concerned, as Chambray and Félibien had not been, to define the proper effects of painting in terms other than those applied to literature: criteria of quality are displaced from subject matter to something else—something supportive of narrative but not identical with it. For him, the kinds of cognition that they had evoked by the term "truth," fidelity to natural appearances and the rhetoric of "the passions," are not directly accessible or even welcome in a picture. Nature as observed is inevitably lacking in the persuasive sense of rightness and completeness that a successful painting must provide. The natural-seemingness of the work of art is another matter, one achieved not by transparency to the world but by the internal consistency of its artifice.¹⁷

He shores up this belief by an analogy between the composition of a picture and the structure of vision.¹⁸ The field of vision, he argues, is not the angular, geometric field of perspective construction, but is rather circular or oval in shape with perceptual acuity sloping off in all directions. The

corollary in pictorial composition is a central field patterned after the distortion of a convex mirror or the shape of a "cluster of grapes." This form of pictorial order approximates the natural unity of vision. His consistent stress is on unity of the total view rather than on accurate transcription of appearances onto canvas. Human vision will seek to impose its natural pattern on any scene, real or fictional, put in its way. But painting will achieve its greatest effect of rightness and completeness if the mind need not work to re-order what it sees, but finds that order already present. This is something rarely encountered in nature; it is almost entirely an effect of art. It allows the narrative of the picture to penetrate most directly to the sensibility of the viewer; it can take him unaware, impose an immediate unified concentration, and move him to that state of "enthusiasm" that de Piles saw as art's greatest reward. The function of painting is to persuade, not to convince, and strictly rational cognition needs to be suspended in the process.¹⁹

De Piles' criticism is based on a retrospective reading and putting into order of the great art of the past, such that the principle behind its achieved autonomy is identified and used as a guide to new projects. The "cluster of grapes," following Du Fresnoy, he ascribed to Titian,²⁰ but the highest development of an autonomous painting he naturally saw in Rubens. He had examples at hand in the duc de Richelieu collection, and several of these clearly manifest the guiding principles of his criticism, answering his demand for a highly artificial use of color and light such that more peripheral objects function as a background for contiguous ones nearer the center of the pictorial field, but are never detachable as background in any distinct figure-ground relationship. In a picture like the "Rape of the Sabine Women," de Piles sees the exaggerated aerial perspective, in which peripheral foreground figures are almost entirely drained of strong light and hue, as providing a necessary rest, "repos," for vision, that is, the necessary internal frame by which visual communication is facilitated.²¹ "Facilité" is an important word for him; it appears in his celebration of what might seem as unrestful a picture as Rubens ever painted; the Munich "Fall of the Damned," also then in the Richelieu collection. The "grand fracas" of bodies "lets itself be viewed with as much facility and repose as though the viewer were seeing but one figure alone."²²

De Piles' ideal viewer quickly suspends direct attention to the subject matter of the latter picture, despite Rubens' incomparable success in bringing the Day of Judgment to horrifying life. "The ignorant," he states, will feel themselves witnessing the real torments and despair of the damned souls, but sophisticated viewers will quickly find any imagination of terror transformed into a positive pleasure in the aesthetic "effect of the *Tout-ensemble*" created by the artist. Theirs is a mode of cognition that is truly pictorial, in that attraction to and pleasure in the object are largely separable from its intimidating textual referent.²³

De Piles was looking back over the history of art with an eye to providing an inner logic of the visual that would justify the novel concept of painting as an elevated and centralized practice. He was as committed as the older academicians to a systematic and unified standard, but he reversed its

valence by drawing on largely aristocratic values, counter-Enlightenment values, in his effort to construct a persuasive argument for the autonomy of painting as a mode of experience. The displacement of the moral or instructive referent blocks that transparency to power that had so quickly overtaken history painting in the Academy's early years. It undertakes to preserve the integrity of the picture as a space of *fiction*, neither window nor mirror nor map, its mimetic structure loosened from the restrictive geometry built into the framing edge.

De Piles' biography is in keeping with this ambivalent stance, affirming and at the same time resisting the transparency of art to knowledge and discourse. In 1699, under the patronage of Hardouin-Mansart, he was in fact made the Academy's chief theoretician, but he never seems to have achieved any great influence among the membership.²⁴ During the last years of his life, during the completion of his summa, the *Cours de peinture par principes*, he was a pensioner of Pierre Crozat.²⁵ Thus he was linked to the same alternative academy—part private, part public—that had incubated Watteau. Our question at this point is whether de Piles' suspended position was in any way as productive for art criticism as it had been for the painter. Did it make a difference for the subsequent practices of both writers and artists?

* * * *

One sign that it did comes nearly a half-century later and from inside the Academy. It appears in texts either written or animated by Charles-Nicolas Cochin and offered in defense of Francois Boucher. Boucher was of course from 1750 forward the favored artist of Pompadour, and Cochin owed his eventual executive authority over official art in France to the protection of her and her family.²⁶ Cochin's defense of the painter is thus a loyal one to be sure. But it also involves another, more principled position: resistance to the re-imposition of the disciplinary order of Le Brun and Félibien. The call for this return to order was not coming from outside the academic hierarchy but from inside it, and its expression lacked the tact that had characterized its earlier manifestations.²⁷

Its best known voice is La Font de Saint-Yenne, the first man to make a public identity for himself as an unofficial, journalistic critic of art.²⁸ Writing in 1754, La Font made Boucher into a symbol for all that is decadent and corrupt in French painting, the artist against whom he rallied a (largely imaginary) public in defense of the verities of seventeenth-century classicism. His principal target was a pair of large pendant canvases, allegories on the rising and setting of the sun, done for Pompadour and shown in the Salon of the previous year. His report on the exhibition takes the form of a mock-letter to a provincial correspondent, and he puts the most severe condemnations in the mouth of his friend:²⁹

You do not like his color, nor his composition, nor his sense of drawing, nor his thinking. You carry the extremism of your antipathy to the point of saying that he has enervated the progress of our school by his seductive cosmetics and by the tint of his flesh-tones which have nothing to do with nature.

La Font, or his authorial voice, will not go that far (though he certainly has given form to the thought); his criticisms are more specific to the pictures. For example, he observes that “though the sea seems agitated, one observes all the divinities enjoying a perfect repose and one that is highly unlikely.” He objects to the attribute of the lyre which a nayad hands to Apollo in the *Rising*, one inappropriate to his manifestation as Helios: “If the painter had been better versed in poetic history, he would have known that when a divinity was given different names, this was normally to designate its diverse functions. . . . a little more reading would have saved him from this historical mistake in his subject.” A more serious error for La Font, and one he finds more difficult to excuse, is the indifference of the attendant figures, which leads him to believe that they were included only to fill the voids in the composition.

He concludes by dismissing any notion that Boucher’s “poetry” might invalidate these bookish complaints. The standard repertoire of *galant* mythology is not “poetic” painting; such painting would, unlike Boucher’s, manifest “a divine fire, a flame that ignites the genius of the artist. . . a grand, new, ingenious, even sublime manner.” While displaying all this, however, the artist must take care not to offend the morals of well-brought-up young girls: shaking a finger at the abundant nudity in Boucher’s two canvases, he declares, “. . . many women who still possess modesty have refused to allow their daughters to attend the Salon containing these pictures.”

This moralizing over children and indecent pictures in fact comes directly out of Rousseau’s polemically philistine first discourse of 1750.³⁰ It is the voice of discipline again, the Platonic severity of one side of the Enlightenment. La Font is calling for a separation of art from the life of the senses, and it leads him to stress a new, middle-class definition of *honneteté*: “These indecencies will doubtless be applauded and admired by libertines, but they will always be despised by *honnetes gens*.”

La Font’s evocations of genius and sublimity are not dissimilar to de Piles’ rhapsodies, but one wonders how easy it would be for the artist to maintain his divine fire of inspiration while worrying over the tender sensibilities of children. The language seems somewhat automatic and raises the question as to who, in the 1750s, truly had the right to use it. Cochin would make a better case for his priority. On the subject of Boucher’s 1753 pictures, he produced a lengthy published reply to La Font and some other critics. His defense is whole-hearted:³¹

I do not believe that you will have seen from this master or from any other, two pictures so endowed with grace and harmonies. They make a treasury of admirable genius, both for poetic composition and pictorial ordering. Join to this a magnificence and brilliance of color that charms the eyes without destroying in any way the general accord of the paintings.

For Cochin, the presence of these overall unities is the sign of the artist’s ability to recreate and give persuasive order to an imaginary world. And there reappears in his criticism much of the same kind of terminology that de Piles had used to evoke, if not to explain, the fundamentally formal

unity of the picture: *effet, repos*, the seduction of the *non-fini*, the imbeddedness of form and drawing in color.

This achieved unity is doubly important to Cochin in that it allows the artist to provide arresting and unexpected details that are in keeping with the painting's internal system, if not with strict narrative construction: why, he asks, would a critic deprive us of the female figure supporting Thetis in the *Setting*?³²

Among all the beauties united in this figure, the effect of light is one of the most piquant; she receives direct light only on her face, which lends vigor to the shadows, while the rest of her figure in reflected light is painted without black and treated with an intelligence and freshness of color that is altogether admirable. In general, it must be conceded that M. Boucher excels in the treatment of flesh under soft shadow.

These were concerns close to Cochin's heart; they were the reasons for his high estimation of Guercino among the masters of the past (again, there is a refutation of a unitary standard of perfection established by Raphael). Guercino, says Cochin, offers to contemporary artists "a magic of shadow-tones" along with "a soft fullness of touch and a certain uncertainty in the tracing of contours" that from a distance "do not at all compromise the decisiveness of his forms."³³ Cochin could have used the same words to describe the "magic" of Boucher's style. He in fact goes on in the same passage to make the link between the two artists explicit, conceding nearly all the objections of the anti-Rococo party to the latter's mannered and superficial style in order to shift the ground of discussion to his unrivalled command of the principles of *coloris*.³⁴

The interesting aspect of this last text is that Cochin does not in fact expect to be believed, at least not by a lay public. He expects most of his contemporaries to be surprised by his claim and consoles himself that painters at least should understand. The present-day viewer is likely to be skeptical as well. Boucher's repetitive imagery, facile handling, and uncomplicated delight in the coyly compliant female nude have made him seem more a cultural symptom than an artist with a project worth serious consideration. The first question to be asked of Cochin's defense of Boucher concerns its cogency as criticism: do de Piles' criteria, revived in this way, fit their object and succeed in providing another means of evaluating the artist? In 1753, we can certainly see the circular, convex-mirror compositional structure. It is there too at the beginning of his career. In his first securely dated picture, the *Venus seeking Arms from Vulcan for Aeneas* of 1732, the poses of the figures all conform to the "cluster of grapes" arrangement; the fall-off in intensity of hue and contrast is marked and serves to underscore the integrity of the central oval; the pliant circulation of form is picked up in the handling, in the characteristically broad, flowing touch used to delineate detail.

Right from the start, all of the elements of Boucher's mature style are in place. The impact of this particular picture was strong and immediate. Natoire, for example, reproduced Boucher's composition in his Academy

reception piece of 1734 (the same year as Boucher's own entry).³⁵ The same arrangements reappear in his major canvases throughout his career: the *Rape of Europa*, done for the state competition of 1747, and, a decade later, the large *Venus at Vulcan's Forge*, display the same basic logic of picture-making. P.-J. Mariette, a knowledgeable art-world insider, wrote in his mid-century biography of the painter that the origins of his style remained mysterious. His contemporaries too saw Boucher's manner as having emerged fully formed.³⁶

The works that we know from the 1720s are attractive, but do not prepare us for the extraordinary will-to-style that appears in the following decade and continues until the end of his life. He was very briefly a student of the dominant history painter of the period, Lemoyne, but that relationship may not have lasted more than a few months. He took a belated two-year trip to Italy beginning in 1728, but he seems to have been ill most of the time and no picture can be securely dated to that time.³⁷ His earlier pictures are by and large a pastiche of North Italian styles: Castiglione and Sebastiano Ricci come to mind. At the same time, he was working hard at his engraving, employed in the Jean de Jullienne group then completing the monumental sets of prints after Watteau. But even those few pictures that employ Watteau-like motifs filter them through an Italianate lens.

Jullienne's project came of course out of the old Crozat circle, where Venetian artists and connoisseurs had been frequent guests.³⁸ And this was where de Piles' color-oriented criticism had also found its ultimate home. That criticism drew on Venetian painting as it drew on Rubens, and more than that, made that painting into the basis of a *system*. Boucher's extraordinarily consistent output represents painting as system, and bears all the marks of his own synthesis between the theory and practical examples available in his youthful milieu.

The substance of Boucher's painted worlds mimics the fluidity of his brush: mist, water, and cloud are the common binding materials that surround his figures. That, and the suppression of any hard obstacles in the foreground corners of his compositions, have been interpreted as a systematic opening of access to the erotic imagination.³⁹ That is inarguably the case in his *galant* subjects, but the meaning of the structure goes beyond that particular kind of appropriateness. It appears as well in his religious pictures, as in *The Light of the World* of 1750, done for Pompadour's private devotional altar (this was the painting that established the tie between artist and patroness) and the *Sleeping Christ Child*, shown in the Salon of 1759. Joseph de la Porte, a practiced critic and journalist close to the Pompadour family, applied this vividly de Piles-descended reading to the later picture in his review of the exhibition:⁴⁰

The disposition of the heads of the cherubs is as intelligent as it is uncommon in the normal employment of this allegorical device. It gives the artist opportunities to distribute light vapors here and there, which contributes to the harmonious effect of the entirety of the tableau. It is this harmony of tones that we found especially striking. It is found in all of the work of this same painter with a finesse and a certain wisdom that one never sees elsewhere.

De la Porte sums up his feelings by calling it a “masterpiece of the science of painting’s magic,” and seeking to “penetrate the cause,” finds an impromptu experiment at hand. Stepping back, the critic finds that the Boucher shares a rank with two large landscapes by Joseph Vernet. (One should remember that Vernet was regarded by eighteenth-century observers as providing an almost miraculously accurate account of nature.⁴¹) Though the little Boucher canvas had seemed “merely soft and tender” when viewed alone,

by moving a certain distance away from the painting, to a point where the eye could take in a number of objects at once, we saw it, between the two grand views of Vernet, display a firmness of color . . . without losing any of its soft embellishments . . . We concluded that the painter had apparently sensed this interpenetration of tones that in nature we perceive amongst all objects, but that the eye can neither measure in gradation nor locate in their transitions.

And de la Porte goes on to conclude that paintings, such as Boucher’s, in which tonal gradations seem artificially slight can provide a truer rendering of the world than a vigorously modelled illusionism. What he finds in the *Sleeping Christ* is “an ensemble over which the gaze can extend itself without obstruction at any point. We ventured to say that it is precisely in this that an exact imitation of nature is achieved.”

This comparison with Vernet was evidently so persuasive a defense of Boucher that it was repeated in the 1765 Salon review of the official *Mercur de France*, one written by de la Porte’s associate, the abbé de la Garde.⁴² For viewers, however, who did not feel similarly responsive, Boucher’s *Sleeping Christ* had another message. An anonymous critic wrote that “the Virgin, rather than imposing silence on the young St. John, seems to forbid to the spectators the liberty to voice their feelings on the effect of the picture.”⁴³ That remark tallies with repeated complaints that Boucher failed to treat the Salon and its public with any seriousness, refusing to display his work or submitting only indifferent pictures.⁴⁴

Boucher, and Cochin with him, do indeed resist the public sphere. Their common practical and theoretical assertion of the autonomy thesis runs against the grain of the demands for cognitive transparency and discipline that were the very terms by which the existence and interests of an enlightened public were articulated. In a later essay, Cochin would make one of the most interesting cases against the hegemony of the new public sphere of discourse. It takes the form of letters of advice to a young painter just off to Rome.⁴⁵ The days are over, he laments, when an artist could be an individual and follow a special gift for one aspect of art at the expense of others. Critics enforce an equal attention to all areas of the craft, forcing painters into a uniform, bland, and watered-down style, inhibiting invention, experiment, and tests of difficulty. Citing an example, he advises the student not to spend much time studying the denser compositions of the Carracci, with their highly foreshortened figures; these have been declared incomprehensible to laymen, and thus forbidden by public discourse.

What Cochin is drawing from his de Piles-like vision of painting, and from Boucher, is some guarantee of a continuity of practice, something he sees as foreclosed by the monotony of a single standard. He is not advocating a simple eclecticism, but looking for another kind of unity, one that is visual in character and specific to painting. Within the larger *Tout-ensemble*, there was room for experiment, for a creative sifting through the art of the past in search of sources of renewal, of overlooked achievements and chance discoveries. His *Letters to a Young Artist-Painter* are full of this; his opponents, the advocates of purely public, rationally intelligible criteria, were generally taking no such care.

This was Cochin's principal argument with them, and to that extent he was right. The opening of art to a space of transparency and knowledge was a necessary precondition to both the idea of a resistant autonomy of painting and a practice that might enact it. But in this instance, as in many later ones, the internal substance that makes the autonomy of the art object more than an empty definition is borrowed from outside that space: from *resistance* to its organizing power.

Boucher has recently been likened to Diderot's fictional creation "Rameau's nephew," that is, to the most vivid literary counter-voice to the rational and improving mission of the *philosophes*.⁴⁶ The latter of course owed his living to his ability to flatter and entertain in the households of the rich. In 1768, Gabriel de Saint-Aubin is supposed to have written these lines on the painter:⁴⁷

If Boucher, in his gentle medleys,
Does without more vigorous chords,
It is out of pity for the rich
And out of longing for their hoards.

It would make sense, in this light, to present Boucher as the counter-Enlightenment painter *par excellence*. But it should be recalled that the *neveu de Rameau*, *lui* in the dialogue, was the loving creation of the Enlightenment thinker *par excellence*. Diderot makes *moi*, the voice of reason, relatively weak and ineffectual in the face of the unbridled materialism advocated by *lui*. It never required the reactionary stance of a Nietzsche for the critique of enlightenment to find a voice: the critique first emerges from the heart of the phenomenon itself.

The theory of a De Piles and the practice of a Boucher add up to the first persuasive manifestation of the autonomy thesis in visual aesthetics, that is, the idea that the work of art reaches its maximum degree of authenticity to the extent that it dramatizes the material possibilities and limitations of its unique medium. This is of course a concept central to twentieth-century accounts of pictorial modernism, the most powerful formulation of which has come from Clement Greenberg.⁴⁸ Though he and others begin their histories with Manet and the 1860s, Greenberg has insistently tied his fundamental tenets of self-reflection and self-definition in modernist painting to the Enlightenment aesthetics of Kant.⁴⁹ That link is just as firmly made by certain of Greenberg's latter-day antagonists, those who tie their rejection of formal purism to the critique of enlightenment

discussed at the outset of this essay.⁵⁰ Modernist theory and practice constitute for them an arid, falsely totalizing teleology, the constraints of the picture plane and the framing edge having been transformed from an enabling to an imprisoning discipline. Their arguments for the end of modernism (defined as the extension of modernization as a historical process into the conduct of the visual arts) posit the contemporary visibility of the marginal, atavistic, and previously disenfranchised as signalling that end. But those making such arguments should question how that visibility has come about, now and in the past. During the eighteenth century, in the time of Diderot, it was possible to argue for the autonomy of painting only by drawing on interests and values hostile to those of a tutelary and disciplinary rationalism. Thus an attack on the inwardness and self-sufficiency of high modernist painting misses its mark if it fails to recognize the two-sidedness of that autonomy at its moment of origin: it was founded in discipline but grounded in resistance. Looking at the issue historically, one can ask to what extent has the autonomous object repeatedly functioned—as it did in Greenberg's very aristocratic form of nostalgia⁵¹—as a refuge from domination.

Notes

¹A definitive bibliography would be impossible here. The unsurpassed account of the didactic official programs of patronage in the later eighteenth-century remains Jean Locquin, *La Peinture d'histoire en France de 1747 à 1785*, Paris, 1912; the most thorough effort to trace the intellectual sources and affinities of Diderot's criticism is Else Marie Bukdahl, *Diderot, Critique d'Art*, trans. J. Pilosz, Copenhagen, 1981, II, pp. 17-160; on the possible links between Chardin and empiricism, see Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention*, London, 1985, pp. 74-104; on Greuze and Vernet in the context of contemporary English and French aesthetics, see Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1980, passim.

²It is present at the very beginning of Nietzsche's writings; see his remarks on "Socratism" in *The Birth of Tragedy*, 1872, sections 12-18; of his later work, *The Genealogy of Morals*, 1887, has become a central text in this critique.

³See Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik des Aufklärung*, Frankfurt am Main, 1969; original edition, New York, 1944 [*Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. J. Cumming, New York, 1972].

⁴Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *L'Anti-Oedipe*, Paris, 1972 [*Anti-Oedipus*, trans. R. Hurley et. al., New York, 1977] was the anti-rationalist manifesto of the 1970s.

⁵See Jean-Francois Lyotard, *La Condition postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir*, Paris, 1979 [*The Postmodern Condition*, trans. G. Bennington and B. Massumi, Minneapolis, 1984].

⁶This position is most strongly argued in the later work: see *Surveiller et punir; Naissance de la prison*, Paris, 1975 [*Discipline and Punish*, trans. A. Sheridan, New York, 1977]; *La Volonté de savoir*, Paris, 1976 [*The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, trans. R. Hurley, New York, 1978]; also the interviews and lectures collected in *Power/Knowledge*, ed. Colin Gordon, London, 1980.

⁷For a history of the Salon exhibitions as a public space, see Thomas Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris*, New Haven and London, 1985.

⁸For the best account of the Academy's efforts to distinguish painting and sculpture from the other manual "arts," see Louis Olivier, "Curieux," *Amateurs, and Connoisseurs: Laymen and the Fine Arts in the Ancien Regime*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, The Johns Hopkins

University, 1976, pp. 67-71. On the early Academy, see Ludovic Vitet, *L'Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture, étude historique*, Paris, 1861.

⁹See A. Fontaine, *Les Doctrines d'art en France. Peintres, Amateurs, Critiques, de Poussin à Diderot*, Paris, 1909, pp. 41-98. On the theoretical links between literature and painting in the Renaissance and Baroque periods, the basic study is R.W. Lee, "Ut Pictura Poesis: The Humanistic Theory of Painting," *The Art Bulletin*, XXII, (1940), pp. 197-269. On the relationship between discursive theories of art and the demands of power, see Norman Bryson, *Word and Image: French Painting of the Old Regime*, Cambridge, 1981, pp. 29-57.

¹⁰Fréart de Chambray, Roland, *Idée de la perfection de la Peinture*, Paris, 1662.

¹¹Fréart de Chambray, 1662, preface, unpaginated.

¹²Fréart de Chambray, 1662, preface, unpaginated.

¹³André Félibien, *Entretiens sur les vies et sur les ouvrages des plus excellents peintres anciens et modernes*, Trévoux, 1725 (first published between 1666 and 1685), V, p. 319; see also Thomas Puttfarcken, *Roger de Piles' Theory of Art*, New Haven and London, 1985, p. 29.

¹⁴On de Piles' biography and for a comprehensive account of his writings, see Bernard Teyssèdre, *Roger de Piles et les débats sur le coloris au siècle de Louis XIV*, Paris, 1957; an insightful recent study of his aesthetics is Puttfarcken, 1985.

¹⁵On elite collecting, see Olivier, 1976, pp. 59-61.

¹⁶On the cult of *honnêteté*, see M. Magendie, *La Politesse mondaine et les théories de l'honnêteté au XVIIe siècle de 1600 à 1660*, 2 vols., Paris, 1925.

¹⁷See Roger de Piles, *Cours de peinture par principes* Paris, 1708, p. 307; Puttfarcken, 1985, pp. 63-71, has stressed this feature of his criticism.

¹⁸See de Piles, *Cours*, 1708, pp. 381-3; also de Piles, *Conversations sur la connoissance de la peinture*, Paris, 1677, pp. 233-4.

¹⁹See de Piles, *Cours*, 1708, pp. 70-1; for a detailed interpretation of de Piles' conception of *enthousiasme*, see Puttfarcken, 1985, pp. 115-24.

²⁰See de Piles, *Cours*, 1708, p. 231; Puttfarcken, 1985, p. 87.

²¹See de Piles, *Conversations*, 1677, pp. 119-24; on de Piles and the Richelieu collection, including texts of his descriptions of the pictures, see Teyssèdre, "Une collection française du Rubens au XVIIe siècle: Le Cabinet du duc de Richelieu décrit par Roger de Piles (1676-1681)," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, series 6, LXII, (1963), pp. 241-99.

²²De Piles, *Dissertation sur les ouvrages des plus fameux peintres*, Paris, 1681, p. 94.

²³See de Piles, *Dissertation*, 1681, p. 89. On the idea of painterly resistance to the discursive, see Bryson, 1981, pp. 58-88 and *passim*.

²⁴On these events, see Teyssèdre, *Roger de Piles*, pp. 458-67; also Oliver, 1976, pp. 91-3.

²⁵See Teyssèdre, *Roger de Piles*, p. 519. On Crozat, see M. Stuffman, "Les Tableaux de la collection de Pierre Crozat," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, series 6, LXXII, (1968), pp. 1-144.

²⁶On the administration of the Lenormand family over official art production, see Alden Rand Gordon, *The Marquis de Marigny: A Study in Royal Patronage*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1978.

²⁷A good recent introduction to unofficial Salon criticism in the eighteenth century is Richard Wrigley, "Censorship and Anonymity in Eighteenth-Century French Art Criticism," *Oxford Art Journal*, VI, (1983), pp. 17-28.

²⁸See Crow, 1985, pp. 119-26.

²⁹La Font de Saint-Yenne, *Sentimens sur quelques ouvrages de peinture, sculpture et gravure*, n.p., 1754, pp. 34-43.

³⁰See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Si le rétablissement des sciences et des arts a contribué à épurer les mœurs," in *Du Contrat Social*, Paris, 1962, p. 19.

³¹[Charles-Nicolas Cochin], *Lettre d'un amateur en réponse aux critiques qui ont paru sur l'exposition des tableaux*, n.p., n.d., Cabinet des Estampes, B.N., Collection Deloynes, no. 61, p. 3.

³²[Cochin], *Lettre d'un amateur*.

³³[Cochin], *Lettres à un jeune artiste peintre*, n.p., n.d., pp. 28-9.

³⁴[Cochin], *Lettres*, pp. 31-2.

³⁵See Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, *Francois Boucher, 1703-1770*, 1986, p. 135.

³⁶See P.-J. Mariette, *Abécédario*, ed. P. de Chennevières and A. de Montaignon, Paris, (1851-3), I, p. 165; on Boucher's early life, see Pierre Rosenberg, "The Mysterious Beginnings of the Young Boucher," and Alastair Laing, "Boucher: The Search for an Idiom," in Metropolitan Museum, 1986, pp. 41-72.

³⁷See Rosenberg, pp. 44-5.

³⁸See Francis Haskell, *Patrons and Painters*, New Haven and London, 1980, pp. 284-5, 341. On the prints after Watteau, the definitive source is E. Dacier, A. Vuafart, and J. Hérold, *Jean de Jullienne et les graveurs de Watteau au XVIIIe siècle Paris*, Paris, 1921-9.

³⁹See Bryson, 1981, pp. 91-9.

⁴⁰*Observations sur l'exposition de peintures, sculptures et gravures du Salon du Louvre, tirées de l'Observateur littéraire*, 1759, Deloynes no. 1259, pp. 833-42.

⁴¹See, for example, *Lettre à l'auteur sur l'exposition de cette année, Extrait des Observations sur la physique et les arts*, Paris, 1757, Deloynes no. 83, p. 17.

⁴²*Mercure de France*, (October 1765), p. 154.

⁴³*Lettre critique à un ami sur les ouvrages de MM. de l'Académie exposés au Salon du Louvre*, 1759, Deloynes no. 90, p. 22.

⁴⁴See, for example, "Lettre sur l'exposition des peintures, sculptures et gravures du Salon du Louvre de 1759," *Journal encyclopédique*, (1759), Deloynes no. 1258, p. 777; "Exposition des peintures, sculptures et gravures," *L'Avant-Coureur*, (August 1763), Deloynes no. 1286, pp. 275-6.

⁴⁵*Lettres*, pp. 52-3.

⁴⁶See Georges Brunel, "Boucher, Neveu de Rameau," in Marie-Catherine Sahut and Nathalie Volle, *Diderot et l'Art de Boucher à David*, Hotel de la Monnaie, Paris, 1985-6, pp. 101-9. De la Porte of course figures as a character in the dialogue, a fellow parasite to Rameau: Denis Diderot, *Le Neveu de Rameau*, Paris, 1967, pp. 117ff.

⁴⁷See Alexandre Ananoff and Daniel Wildenstein, *Francois Boucher*, Lausanne and Paris, 1976, I, document 991.

⁴⁸See especially "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" (1939) and "Towards a Newer Laocoon" (1940) in F. Francina ed., *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate*, London, 1985, pp. 21-46; also T.J. Clark, "Clement Greenberg's Theory of Art," in Francina, 1985, pp. 47-64.

⁴⁹See "Modernist Painting," *Arts Yearbook*, no. 4, 1961, pp. 103: "The essence of modernism lies, as I see it, in the use of the characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself, not in order to subvert it, but in order to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence. Kant used logic to establish the limits of logic, and while he withdrew much from its old jurisdiction, logic was left all the more secure in what remained to it. . . . A more rational justification had begun to be demanded in every formal social activity, and Kantian self-criticism, which had arisen in philosophy in answer to this demand in the first place, was called on eventually to meet and interpret it in areas that lay far from philosophy."

⁵⁰See Crow, "Modernism and Mass Culture in the Visual Arts," in Fascina, 1985, p. 237 and passim, pp. 233-61.

⁵¹See Greenberg, 1939, pp. 32-3: "... it's Athene whom we want: formal culture with its infinity of aspects, its luxuriance, its large comprehension."

Responses to the Scenographic in Postmodern Architecture

By Barbara S. Christen

Postmodern architecture's scenographic qualities of overall flatness and seeming impermanence have been passed over in the extensive critical debate of recent years, apparently deserving little more than a quick comparison to the stage set. But these qualities encourage us, as viewers, to respond on a number of different levels, often mixed together in our experience. However, these levels need to be separated out from one another, in order for us to understand the impact postmodern architecture has had and will continue to have on our lives. The metaphor of theater of (and in) the world informs the scenographic postmodern. We become involved with it by considering it as a performance, both in itself and in us.

The most obvious, yet in some ways the most complicated level of performance, is that of allusion, operative in the facade-centered architecture of the postmodern. Allusions to past styles now run rampant; what would have been a stripped-down Modern glass box twenty years ago is now frequently neither stripped down nor a box. The fragment quoted from previous styles, or as I refer to it, the fragment-quotation, is operative in allusion as a kind of common denominator in the diversity of the current time. The use of the fragment-quotation raises issues that initially go back

to Robert Venturi's mid-sixties inquiry into ornamentation in *Learning from Las Vegas*. More often than not, the postmodern fragment-quotation is independent of the architectural program, so that ornamentation is separated from form, as in the "decorated shed."²

The "decorated shed" and the postmodern facade share an emphasis on the surface of the facade,³ which misleads the viewer at first glance. For instance, Philip Johnson and John Burgee's *1001 Fifth Ave.* (New York, NY 1965) is well-known for its mansard-like roof, which seems to be propped up by a simple truss system. On a simplistic level, the viewer may respond to the facade by playing a kind of stylistic bingo in a search for the fragment-quotations of the Renaissance-type string courses, the more modern vertical strips of fenestration, or the whole facade's starkly geometric neoclassical reference.

But recognizing these stylistic throwbacks does little to question what is being done with them on a deeper level. It is significant that the stylistic sources for these fragment-quotations cannot fully reclaim their historical context, but must undergo a necessary transformation. Frequently cited as the paradigm for such transformation is Michael Graves' work, which may trigger a metaphorical response. The use of the column as a repeated element in his Best showroom facade provides no more than a reminiscence of classical forms, and the use of niched square piers similarly engenders a new type of pilaster.⁴ Arthur Drexler writes that the Best project, "cannot be associated with a given style—except that the delicate stripes banding his column (30' high and 8' in diameter) recall Art Deco *objets de luxe* along with ocean liners."⁵ The historical sources of Graves' *Plocek House* are also subject to this crucial process of change. The house, Charles Jencks writes, which is

one of the first designs to synthesize Post-Modern Classicism from different sources—Rationalism, the vernacular and Art Deco—abstracts the grid and column at different scales. Instead of copying a Tuscan column, Graves transforms it and gives it a flaring capital by the hillside entrance and chimney. Enough remains of the representation for us to understand it—the hint of rustication at the base, the suggestion of a capital and abacus—and not too much is present to dismiss it as a cliché.⁶

Graves therefore creates enough of a recognizable reference in order to stimulate associations and comparison, but not so much as to stagnate on a simplistic level. Alan Colquhoun discusses Graves' transformational process in terms of a de-historicization and a measured reduction of elements. The elements retain some of their connotative value, but at the same time they carry meanings which relate to their function. This fine line between measured reduction and extreme simplification achieved by Graves reaps praise from Ada Louise Huxtable, who says the architect's overall work extends the boundaries of the architectural vocabulary and makes him perhaps the only "genuine eclectic" of all postmodern architects today.⁷

Graves is representative of other postmodern architects, who believe direct copying of a historical reference is not entirely possible. Arata Isozaki

himself emphasizes the lack of direct reference in his own work.⁸ Allan Greenberg discusses the benefits available from an adapted classical language, a language which becomes useful to the architecture of our time.⁹ And when Charles Moore creates a hybrid of orders in the *Piazza d'Italia*, he is able to manipulate the flexibility of classical forms to suit his own taste.¹⁰ This awareness is described by Paolo Portoghesi as one of three central fears he believes architects were plagued with at the 1980 Venice Biennale: the fear of memory, that in looking back one might be "turned into a statue of salt."¹¹ Through transformation of the past, however, architects were then, as they are now, able to reclaim their ties to history without bringing harmful effects into their work.

The compilation of many transformed fragment-quotations, which can be startling or shocking, often lends itself for use within the postmodern scenographic. Generally such compilation challenges us to expand the parameters by which we understand fragment-quotation and ornament to work. As Venturi wrote in 1966 in his manifesto against Modernism, architects need to use "a common element with a unique context in an uncommon way."¹² Indeed, as part of an enactment of Venturi's call for change, some currently used fragment-quotations, particularly classical ones, are placed in uncommon ways in "unique" contexts. And, the compilation of varied fragment-quotations in the facade and building in the postmodern arena further presents us with something to which we are not too accustomed: a reference, both disjointed and coherent, to the many sources of our history.

Yet, as part of a larger performance which tries to stimulate and excite critics, architects, and viewers, the postmodern scenographic risks trivialization. For the simplistic, the popular and the media-oriented mask deeper, more sincere intentions. This set of responses is part of the fundamental dichotomy of how the architectural postmodern is interpreted. On the one hand, some see it as a basically insubstantial fad which we will outgrow. On the other, it is regarded as a serious endeavor that holds an important place in our history. Central to the first argument is the idea that the fragment-quotation is stylistically exploited and the overall result is harmful to society. Postmodern architecture opens itself to attack because it seems to flaunt its lack of firm ideological roots. Both critics who want more of a theoretical framework and critics who want to argue about what the framework may be address this issue. Of the former group, Huxtable writes that today's architects "are preoccupied with making reputations and images. For many it is no longer considered important or even necessary, to relate those images to the facts of the case,"¹³ of constructing stylistically potent buildings. For her, recycling the past produces an impure product—a product without historical integrity.

Karsten Harries states this problem in terms of the arbitrariness and devaluation which results when the fragment-quotations are separated from their original sources. He believes the symbols float in a sea of ambiguity since they are not tied to ideology.¹⁴ But this view ignores the fact that no matter how separated the transformed fragment-quotation is from its original context, it always carries some aspect of ideology that makes it

recognizable as a reference to the past. Yet Harries' perspective rightly acknowledges that historical cooption can impair the associative power of the fragment-quotation.

Linkage of the transformed fragment-quotation to the immediacy of spectacle is an implication of Huxtable's and Harries' position. Spectacle, Huxtable believes, is what Johnson and Burgee's *AT&T Building* (New York, NY 1978-82) and *PPG Industries Building* (Pittsburgh, PA 1980) rely on for their achievements. She writes that "these buildings are flying the flag for postmodernism . . . in the name of such things as historical allusion, because this kind of superficial shocker that doubles as a calculated crowd pleaser is so beloved by the popular press."¹⁵

It is significant that she, like other critics, emphasizes the role played in spectacle by the media. Not only does publicity become more important than the product, publicity itself becomes the product. Kenneth Frampton, an avowed Modernist like Huxtable, believes the scenographic technique becomes a means of "feeding the media society with gratuitous, quietistic images rather than proffering, as they [the postmodernists] claim, a creative *rappel a l'ordre* after the supposedly proven bankruptcy of the liberative modern project."¹⁶ The media is thus portrayed as a ravenous creature whose hunger must be sated, or at least appeased.

Media influence is particularly apparent in the case of two postmodern monuments. The first, the *AT&T Building* was, according to Curtis, part of a media takeover organized to promote the design break made with the tenets of high Modernism and the International Style. One need only look at the cover of *Time* magazine—showing Johnson stoically holding a model of the corporate project, as if he and the model together were an icon—to realize his and Burgee's work was big news in 1979.¹⁷ With Michael Graves' *Portland Public Service Building* (Portland, Ore, 1979-82), media influence was intensified. Attention was showered on this project partly because of the competition that was held for the design and partly because of the economic stakes that were involved.¹⁸ When Graves' design was selected over submissions made by two other, more well-known teams, public response was plentiful in area newspapers.¹⁹ Architectural journals and magazines faithfully followed the debate from the date of the project's inception to the date of its completion.²⁰ Most serious was the charge that the choice of Graves' design was a product of the media in New York, which was then pushed onto the unwilling Northwest coast city. This charge stems largely from recommendations by Johnson and Burgee that the jury received before making its final selection.²¹ Furthermore, major proponents of the design lived mainly in the East, near Princeton, where Graves' firm was based. That the Portland municipal building and the AT&T corporate headquarters in New York are the most well-known and most talked about postmodern monuments existing today attests not only to the influence of the Eastern architectural establishment but also to the power of media promotion.

The fragment-quotation, from this perspective, is treated as a social product whose sole function is to be consumed by the mass media, by the public, and by the economy. Another aspect of this question, the integration

of art and business, is discussed by two groups of critics. Socially concerned critics such as Vincent Scully and Paul Goldberger, who tend to work out of the tradition of urban planning critic Jane Jacobs, comprise part of one group. Like Jacobs, they are concerned with quality of life in the present-day city—a quality which is threatened by overdevelopment, poor planning and a general lack of concern for human needs. Scully addresses issues regarding the social responsibility of both architect and client. He is conscious of the increasing economic and geographic dichotomy between the rich and the poor, and believes human life is becoming inconsequential to planners.²² More and more wealthy people are commuting into cities and supporting corporations who build structures that do not relate to the urban fabric. At the same time, the poor are increasingly becoming shut out of these buildings. Moreover, Scully is greatly distressed about the architecture which has come out of Venturi's attack on canonical Modernism. He writes that "the special human [and] somehow contemporary glow" that Venturi has achieved in his own work has been lost in some of the recent architecture.²³ Goldberger, in slight contrast, does not go to such extremes as Scully, but he is similarly concerned with the quality of life afforded by some postmodern projects.

Architecture's connection with the economy is more severely addressed by the second group of critics, Marxian-oriented critics such as Fredric Jameson, Mike Davis and M. Pawley. Jameson interprets postmodern's "historicism" as the complacent eclecticism of postmodern architecture, "which randomly and without principle but with gusto cannibalizes all the architectural styles of the past."²⁴ For Jameson, the postmodern fragment-quotation is subsumed into the substance of the art which, in turn, is subsumed by the commodity exchange system of capital.²⁵ Davis focuses on the specific nature of the commodity exchange process.²⁶ He contends that the postmodern fragment-quotation has taken on more of an exchange-value than a use-value. He writes:

The postmodern trend in architecture, however, has little organic or expressive relationship to industrial production of emerging technology; it is not raising "cathedrals of the microchip" or even, primarily, singing the hymns of IBM. Instead it has given freer exhibition than ever before to the spirit of fictional capital. Revolting against the austerity of Miesian functionalism it has broken any allusion to the postmodern process and loosened the commodity-form of the building from its use-value supports.²⁷

The fragment-quotation, as a commodity form almost entirely stripped of its historical potency in the capitalistic marketplace, is an object exchanged and combined according to the degree of showiness and superficiality desired by the client-buyer.

From a different, yet still Marxian-oriented perspective, the fragment-quotation can be seen as a stylistic link to capitalist economics. In a brief but interesting article, M. Pawley discusses a Thamesmead, England housing project, characterized, in part, by system-built maisonettes. Added to one of the units are a small pediment and vertical supporting elements made

of thin wood strips. Pawley links this tiny, anonymous example of a Thamesmead porch with the concurrent Jencksian “death of Modernism”—the death which occurred with the demolition of the *Pruitt-Igoe Project* (St. Louis, Mo. 1952-55).²⁸ Both the project and the porch demonstrate the same economic phenomena of capitalism which respectively mark “the end of public housing and the beginning of home ownership.”²⁹ From this obscure reference to public housing flows a new theory for Pawley of the birth of postmodernism in England. In the Thamesmead house a sell-function was added to the use-function, or in his Marxian vocabulary, the house became “a use-value dwelling with an exchange-value appendage”³⁰ that responded to the increase in private home ownership. Although Pawley concentrates on the housing unit and not the fragment-quotation, he arrives at conclusions similar to those of Davis. Both their arguments assume that the fragment-quotation is a commodity, hungrily consumed by our economic society. The limited remains of history, then, are raked over by the present. For Jameson, Davis and Pawley, the postmodern architect who recalls the past in certain stylistic forms validates the consumerization of history.

These kinds of negative responses to postmodern architecture conflict with responses which emphasize the serious way that postmodern architecture quotes from such wide-ranging sources as Lutyens’ and Soane’s nineteenth century eclecticism, Schinkel’s and Ledoux’s eighteenth century neoclassicism, Greek classicism, and the modernism of the early twentieth century. Allan Greenberg writes that recalling the past provides a potentially coherent means for the communication of societal conventions:

The meaning of our architectural past is more complicated than simply duplicating or distorting the forms bequeathed to us by history. As a tradition, it is the vehicle through which we embody our systems of social, political and religious norms. This is accomplished by means of typologies of buildings which are continuously modified, as circumstances in society change. These building types provide a range of expressive and functional solutions to architectural problems.³¹

Greenberg explains his preference for the classical language as a highly developed means available to us, for it “can facilitate both communication and expression of the meanings of the institutions of society.”³² For him the classical is particularly valuable in that it can embody messages from different parts of society; he believes it is the responsibility and duty of the architect to express these messages. Portoghesi offers a similar perspective on how classicism is part of social experience. He considers classicism to be not so much a style as a way of looking at architecture as a social institution.

It is no longer understood as the art of a perfect and balanced society to be nostalgically evoked, but as a way of thinking about architecture that makes use of certain historical invariants of the collective memory, of the possibility of agreeing by referring to a patrimony of conventions revisited and shared critically by society.³³

Classicism's communicative value is what allows people to understand and transfer conventions from one generation to the next. One of the most obvious and rich advantages of turning to classicism and the classical tradition, as Henry Hope Reed writes, is the evocation of comparisons.³⁴ These comparisons arise out of the long and involved history surrounding the five orders.³⁵ While it is clear that postmodern architects do not seek to depict conventions of beauty in the Greek or even Roman sense, they are interested in the general sense of classical proportions. They are interested, too, in the order, discipline and control which Sir John Summerson describes as an important attribute and benefit of the language.³⁶ Greenberg himself employs the "grammar and meanings of classical architecture" to organize his work,³⁷ as do Ricardo Bofill with the Taller de Arquitectura and Thomas Gordon Smith.

This richness is grounded in Venturi's ideas from *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* about the success of inflection, or the art of the fragment-quotation. Venturi says that in order for inflection to occur, there must be a "valid fragment" which "is economical because it implies richness and meaning beyond itself."³⁸ This associative value of the fragment-quotation, as has been mentioned in relation to Graves' work, also operates in the scenographic environment, for it carries a potent vibrancy that defies the deadened quality that characterizes it when it is coopted as a social commodity.

The jumble of many fragment-quotations provides an opportunity to challenge the senses of the viewer in ways that the pared-down forms of Modern buildings did not. This issue begins to be addressed by Jencks, who explains that a viewer of Le Corbusier's *Ronchamp* may associate it with a boat, a hat, praying hands, and so on.³⁹ The viewer is provided with even more material in the more ornamental, scenographic environment. This increase in ornamentation, through the fragment-quotation, is part of an open invitation for the viewer to respond to the postmodern building. On a first viewing of the drawings for Graves' Fargo-Moorhead project, the jumbled elements might be confusing. But the more jumbled the building seems to be, the more we tend to rely on what we know for making sense of the confusion. We become curious about the peculiarities of the elements and associate them, as did some viewers, with elements of *Ronchamp*, with familiar things in our experience. Most important, we do not have to identify formal characteristics in order to respond. For instance, the water that goes through the project's bridge "looks like" someone spitting up words, the arches "look like" a split English muffin. Postmodern architecture, more readily than past styles, encourages associating with things we know, primarily because of the oddness or eclecticism that often occurs in the current architecture. That we respond, no matter what the level of response, is an important outcome of the associative process.

Viewer involvement is also encouraged through the use of architectural archetypes that can be recognized collectively. This participatory aspect carries the general associative process further toward a connection with the "memorable" past. The most notable architectural archetype, aside from

the columnar orders, is the post and beam system which, as a fundamental element, has psychological currency in its simplicity. How the archetype is part of our memory and how it is recalled is suggested by Portoghesi, who has told a story about an experience he once had. When he asked some children to draw the kind of house in which they thought they would someday live, most of them made houses of a simple post and beam construction, with sloping roofs and small windows. But most of the children lived in apartment houses which looked nothing like their drawings. Thus, they thought of the "typical" house even though they, themselves, lived in dwellings which were quite different.⁴⁰

Even though the fragment-quotation from classicism is broken away from its source, as in the post and beam framework of the *Nisson House* (Bel Air, CA, 1976-79) or Graves' less obvious structure in the *Plocek House*, some sense of the original meaning is always retained. The fragment-quotation's source of classicism exists in the collective memory and any reference to that source triggers an association of the whole. The classical tradition provides an especially potent archetype which taps into the entire tradition of Western humanism by being able to carry and transmit shared cultural values from one generation to another.⁴¹ Thomas Gordon Smith and John Blatteau use the classical language for its rich iconological associative tradition.⁴² And, aside from reasons of fashion and the attempt to reach a broader audience, Jencks similarly believes that reaching forwards and backwards across time within Western tradition indicates a strong desire to work on a larger, more collective scale.⁴³

For Portoghesi, the hope implicit in the continued use of recognizable archetypes is even stronger. He believes that if we relate to the past in this way, we will be able to live free from the past and not as prisoners within it.⁴⁴ Portoghesi poetically defines his position and that of other architects as this:

We are really interested in declaring a richness of the motivations and thoughts that animate a great common effort, that of linking old and new, of contaminating memory and the present, of gradually focusing a set of contrasting methods, a patrimony of experiences which, summed up and compared, already make possible the identification of a long road of collective research.⁴⁵

Therein lie the means by which Portoghesi challenges the Modernist predicament of purist buildings and failed urbanism. This new kind of historical atmosphere will in turn encourage contextualism and a visual and social dialogue with the surroundings.⁴⁶ Given this, Portoghesi ultimately desires to reestablish meaning and communication between people and the built environment.

The dichotomy of these two arguments, which favorably and unfavorably look upon postmodernism, suggests a split in the way the postmodern is thought to relate to the Modern. Alan Colquhoun explains the two positions of this issue, using the distinctions of "Progressivist" and "Culturalist" originally established by Françoise Choay. The Progressivists, according to Colquhoun ("Progressivists" to Choay), believe postmodernism is just

another stage of Modernism. Modernism, in effect, has progressed to a state that continues and transforms the idea that Modernism represents a break with the continuity of history.⁴⁷ Using Lyotard's book *The Post-Modern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1984) as an example of this position, Colquhoun explains that the Progressivists hold a historicist position which paradoxically does not respect the past as the past. Rather, their brand of historicism obliterates the past, because when the past is reenacted, it becomes present.⁴⁸ The Culturalists, however, do not see postmodernism as a continuation of, but a dissociation from, Modernism. In so doing, the Culturalists embrace tradition as Modernism did not, especially in its highest and more pure form.⁴⁹ Yet the reclamation of the past occurs within a "de-historicist" position in which architecture is thought to be free of historical determination. A paradox again occurs when past forms are used, because then "we are reminded the past *is past*."⁵⁰

To return to the debate over interpretation of the postmodern image—as superficial yet historically powerful—an undeniable tension has been acknowledged by only a few critics. Andreas Huyssen is one critic, however, who acknowledges a tension inherent in the process of looking back, for he does not want to adopt either a predominantly Progressivist or Culturalist stance. He writes that "the question of historical continuity or discontinuity simply cannot be adequately discussed in terms of such an either/or dichotomy."⁵¹ Furthermore, his main point about contemporary postmodernism is that

it operates in a field of tension between tradition and innovation, conservation and renewal, mass culture and high art, in which the second terms are no longer automatically privileged over the first; a field of tension which can no longer be grasped in categories such as progress vs. reaction, Left vs. Right, present vs. past, abstraction vs. representation, avant garde vs. kitsch. The fact that such dichotomies, which after all are central to the classical accounts of modernism, have broken down, is part of the shift I have been trying to describe.⁵²

Huyssen articulates the "dead end dichotomy of politics and aesthetics" that has long dominated accounts of modernism and ultimately tries to heighten the tension and

even to rediscover it and to bring it back into focus in the arts as well as in criticism. No matter how troubling it may be, the landscape of the postmodern surrounds us, it simultaneously delimits and opens our horizons.⁵³

This tension, apparent to Huyssen in a perspective of the overall characterization of postmodernism, is comparable to the tension in the more specific questions of the scenographic in postmodern architecture. Using Venturi's formula, one may say that "both" spectacle "and" richness operate in the scenographic image, not just one or the other.

Edward Levin, although he does not acknowledge this tension, offers an explanation of why so many periods from architectural history are post-

modern sources. He believes the sampling and transformation occurs because of an impoverishment in the architectural language:

if this [impoverishment] has been recognized—which it has and . . . if it seems obvious as well that one of the remedies for this condition must involve the connection of architecture to its pre-modern past, it must be equally clear that any attempt at the recuperation of historical form will be seen *within the context of modernism itself*. Such a recognition must surely preclude any *unself-conscious* applications of pre-modern form, and must consequently lend either to the abstraction and reduction of historical elements or to the manipulation and deformation of elements within their various systems.⁵⁴

Levin does well to underscore the idea that Modernism *must* be acknowledged as part of our past. Robert A.M. Stern similarly writes: "Modernism cannot be ignored. We cannot pretend that it never existed and that we can return to a pre-modernist condition."⁵⁵ Thus, although nineteenth century eclectics and eighteenth century neo-classicists provide appealing sources, Modernism must not be forgotten.⁵⁶ Levin and Stern therefore identify the return to the past within the scope of the present. Likewise, Jencks, who has stated that postmodernism is "doubly-coded, ½ modern, ½ Post,"⁵⁷ suggests such a return for these critics and architects is justly characterized as both working within yet outside the tradition of Modernism.

Both Progressivists and Culturalists provisionally agree that Modernism has failed to the extent that Modern buildings often do not relate to the environment and to human needs and behavioral patterns. Culturalists want to dissociate themselves completely from this failure; Progressivists want to transform it. As Graham Shane has said, *context* refers to a design that "must fit with, respond to, mediate its surroundings, perhaps completing a pattern implicit in the street layout or introducing a new one."⁵⁸ The context of the neighborhood in which a building was located was not a central issue in Modernism; rather, the machine aesthetic often sequestered the individual from nature by showing his domination over nature or isolation from it. However, in recent years the contextual concerns that have become a significant factor in evaluating architecture are at the root of an increasing sense of a public theater. The sought-after goal in recent years is to create an urban fabric of interrelating places that is not hermetically sealed off from the urban landscape. Among the successes are Graves' *Humana Building* (Louisville, Ky. 1982-86), which is responsive to the immediate and outlying area. The building does not intrude on Louisville's basic grid system, in the manner of the effects produced by Helmut Jahn's drawings of skyscrapers with diagonal thrusts which intrude upon, and ultimately harm, the grid system of the Loop in Chicago.⁵⁹ Graves' Portland building has been hailed as well as "a grand building" that relates to City Hall, the public park and the existing arcades of the surrounding metropolitan area.⁶⁰ The Chicago Seven's townhouse project (1978) similarly returns "to the American street tradition by combining individual variation within an overall street morphology."⁶¹ The townhouses

do not ignore their surroundings; they relate to them while also presenting interesting and varied forms for their streetscape.

Other postmodern projects and buildings, like some of the Modern ones they succeeded, have more noticeably failed to relate to their surroundings. Goldberger identifies the primary inward orientation of *Horton Plaza* as its major flaw. The shopping mall has almost no connection with the surrounding streets.⁶² Even more severely cut off from the urban fabric is John Portman's *Bonaventure Hotel* (Los Angeles, CA 1974-76). Davis' assessment of the separation of a self-sufficient miniaturized city within the hotel's boundaries is vehement, for the Bonaventure represents to him a skyscraper fortress, designed to segregate and secure the rich from the poor. Built on the model of Atlanta's *Peachtree Center*, the Bonaventure, likewise, is a "citadel," "anchored" and "buttressed" as if to protect the upper classes from undesirable realities.⁶³ Just as important as the lack of success in these complexes is the discussion of and attention paid to the issue of contextualism.⁶⁴

Operative, too, in the contextualist perspective is the underlying principle that respects not only the given surroundings but also nature itself. This principle is another of the "lessons" postmodern architects have learned from Schinkel, which Ungers identifies as

unity in diversity which is concerned with the unity of nature and culture, of the grown and the built, or environment and architecture. Schinkel's designs and buildings are not long part of the mental world of ideas, but also amalgamate the organic world of nature. They are not conceived in contrast to their natural surroundings. They do not wish to assert themselves against the landscape in which they stand, nor do they fight it. Instead of separating from nature they unite with it to form a morphological whole, so that they become a part of nature just as nature becomes a part of the built.⁶⁵

This harmonious relationship between the built and the natural is affirmed by Stern's renovation of a neo-Georgian home in Llewellyn Park, NJ (1981-82). The pool house addition, sunken into the landscape, recalls a late eighteenth century conceit of man living cooperatively with nature. Spectacular palm tree columns, which refer to Nash's nineteenth century kitchen at the *Royal Pavilion*, also make arboreal references to the Abbé Marc-Antoine Laugier's classical archetypal hut from the *Essai sur l'Architecture* (1753).⁶⁶

Michael Graves' work similarly relates to this eighteenth century conceit. Colquhoun states that Graves' thought is "permeated with a kind of eighteenth century deism, and a belief that architecture is a perennial symbolic language, whose origins lie in nature and our response to nature."⁶⁷ This idea is embodied in the Fargo-Moorhead project, which destroys the concept of nature equated with the machine by using traditional classical and neoclassical references which relate to the landscape.⁶⁸ Likewise, the *Polcek House* seeks "whatever completion it can find in nature, by nestling into a hillside, by figure/ground reversals with the landscape and its cut-out V-shapes (or keystones) and by forming part of a long promenade to

a water source."⁶⁹ The *Aspen House* (Aspen, CO 1978), too, is a case in point, located near the confluence of two rivers. Graves admits of his work that he employed Schinkel's idea of a temple at the top of a mountain in order that a metaphorical connection be established with the landscape that lies beyond. He writes, "The building in Aspen does not attempt to imitate the mountain so much as it attempts to call attention to the special qualities of the local landscape."⁷⁰ Isolated from the main body of the house, the small pavilion refers to the point at which the two rivers meet and also recalls Romantic classicist elements of C.F. Hansen who interpreted the same primitive hut by Laguier as Stern did.⁷¹ This use of the natural in Graves' work, however, goes beyond simply establishing harmony between building and landscape. Colquhoun believes that Graves' work also functions as part of "a continual dialectic between architecture as the product of reason, setting itself against nature, and architecture as a metaphor for nature."⁷² Cited as an example is the *Rockefeller House* (Pocantico Hills, NY 1969), which allows outside space to penetrate the house and thus creates both a frame for and a container of nature. In later work, Graves' classicist preferences are for topiary and trellis garden structures, such as those in the *Crooks' House* in Indiana and the *Environmental Education Center* in Jersey City, New Jersey (1980-82) and

for those architectural motifs that are associated with a mythologized nature—rustication, grottos, cascades, ruins. . . . [Furthermore], the fragmentation of the buildings suggests the presence of natural obstacles to conceptual completeness, and the inability of man to establish order in the face of Time and Chance. One has the impression of an arcadia which is not only irretrievable, but also somehow flawed.⁷³

The fragility of our existence is revealed by such references, a fragility which we both can and cannot control.

Graves is not alone in addressing this issue of human limitations. On a more populist level, Goldberger and Huxtable discuss the dangers of too much urban growth in too small an area, such as upper midtown Manhattan. Goldberger contends that overbuilding has made the streets "feel as if they contain only tall buildings jammed together, which the romantic image of New York as a busy, crowded city is not able to or even should permit."⁷⁴ The evidence around Madison Avenue between 50th and 60th Streets show, as Huxtable says, "an appalling concentration of new super-skyscrapers [which] makes pre-1916 Wall Street and post-World War II midtown look picturesque."⁷⁵ The increase in the traffic of cars and people on the streets, and the forcing of more and more into what is already there, is choking what little space is left on the small island.⁷⁶ The overcrowding of which they speak touches upon central environmental and health issues of our time. Air quality is further endangered, just as our psychological sense of being is taxed by the increase in noise and decrease in space available to us.

As part of the resurgence of interest in contextual questions, the post-modern scenographic building becomes part of the greater environment. Jencks' idea of multivalency, where many associations are coded into one

work, can be extended to this sense of the building's performance in the urban setting. The better a building can adapt, through different roles, to the needs of the urban theater, the more layered are its codings.

In the public theater where space is activated in and around the post-modern building, public sculptures acting as ornaments and even buildings themselves become stage properties or "props" in the performance of daily living. The viewer's psychological response to the physical environment consequently becomes crucial. Stanley Tigerman uses props of various kinds to adapt his *Best Home* model to the holidays of an American consumer. Depending on the season, certain ornaments appear on the combination front lawn/parking lot and showroom/home.⁷⁷ The Best home becomes a gigantic generic stage set subject to decorative changes which correspond to occasions with which the buying public may identify. The life of the average American consumer, spent filling a house in the suburbs with lots of stuff, becomes a big production.

On a larger scale, entire buildings act as ornamental props for public activity. Like their miniaturized equivalents in the form of sculptural baubles placed in urban plazas (such as Isamu Noguchi's red cube at the Marine Midland Broadway Plaza in New York), larger backdrops have followed a kind of formula in a number of places. The odd, jumbled combination of buildings at Portmeiron is a huge prop for vacationing tourists and visitors. Jencks has stated that the public square was the "first creation of a formula that was later applied, in a cheapened version, to communities such as Port Grimbaud, and ride-through parks such as Disneyland."⁷⁸ Unlike public sculptures, however, which often are neutral, throwaway objects in the urban landscape, larger postmodern backdrops are more interesting in their environmental quality—that is, in how they more successfully activate the surrounding space. The *Rodes House* by Moore, Ruble and Udell (Los Angeles, CA 1976-79) offers this kind of activated space as part of its literally theatrical function. People in an audience may sit in fragments of a terraced amphitheater, looking on the stage where plays and readings are performed in front of the house. The house thus serves as a backdrop for the actors and readers. Hans Hollein's travel bureau in Vienna (1976-78) also makes use of a schematic reference to performance: the theater ticket desk is a theater itself with a stage-like area that has seats nearby for a small audience. The simple action of buying a ticket becomes part of a scenario in a similar way that buying Best items is a production or that even ordinary living in the city is part of a larger drama in which people's movements are choreographed into sometimes coherent and sometimes incoherent sets of actions and gestures.

This public quality of the postmodern scenographic, which indiscriminately allows everyone to become involved, peripherally relates to Happenings. Both rely on the Artaudian concept of involving an audience in the performance. Antoine Artaud, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century actor, director, playwright and poet, who believed that the supremacy of speech should be rejected in the theater, advocated the use of a pure theatrical language based on the *mise en scene*, in which "representation would be secondary to the sensory knowledge of the

elements.”⁷⁹ Artaud therefore wished to eliminate the traditional duality between author and director as well as audience and actor. By being placed within the event, the audience was no longer a distanced observer. In Allan Kaprow’s *18 Happenings in 6 Parts*, for example, the cast was “‘The visitors—who sit in various chairs [in the audience],’” as the program notes indicate.⁸⁰ Oldenburg, too, refers to the audience as “‘an object’” whose behavior is part of the event.⁸¹ Likewise, the audience subjected to the postmodern scenographic does not maintain a distance from the spectacular yet historical event. When Frank Gehry says his *Loyola Law School* (Los Angeles, CA, completed 1985) creates a stage set “‘where students become actors,’”⁸² the distinction between the traditional audience of observers in contrast to the participating user breaks down. Students play out their expectations of and roles as law students when they mill around the broken classical columns at the center of the project. They become part of the event of going to law school, which is integrated with Gehry’s concept of the public stage.

Happenings and postmodern architecture also commonly operate as “‘non-matrixed’” spaces established outside the traditional boundaries of theater in which specific times and places are delineated. Kirby explains that as part of the “‘non-matrixed’” space of Happenings, actors, actresses, and viewers in general, do not bring a consciously possessed world other than their own to the event.⁸³ Rather, the participants in Happenings, like those in postmodern architecture, bring whoever they are to their respective non-traditional stages.

This participatory experience is based on the populist notion that everyone is able to respond. But, it depends on the medium whether or not this concept is achieved. Happenings generally fulfill this assumption since anyone can be a performer or participant in the audience. Kaprow talks about how he does not strictly direct his performers in order for them to feel comfortable, natural, and uninhibited.⁸⁴ Likewise, Dine capitalizes on an individual’s everyday experience and not on specialized theatrical training.⁸⁵ But in postmodern architecture, the goal is only partially achieved. Many critics and architects have found populist sentiments in postmodernism, such as Jencks who identifies the classical revival of “‘keystones, quoins, columns and architraves [which] are there explicitly for everybody to enjoy.’”⁸⁶ Portoghesi, too, says that everyone may contribute to how architecture is seen today. The authorities are no longer the only ones to “‘deliver praise and criticism about architecture.’”⁸⁷ And Stern states that a retreat has occurred from high Modernist abstraction toward more popular images and references, such as the vernacular iconography of Venturi. For example, he refers to Venturi’s use of a TV antenna as a sign everyone can read in the adorned housing project for the elderly, *Guild House* (Philadelphia, PA, 1960-63).⁸⁸

But a thoroughly populist methodology is difficult, if not impossible, to implement in architecture. Although nearly everyone associates television with popular culture—which is part of the move toward more commonly understood references—not everyone can read the not so explicit and even explicit references in postmodern architecture. A degree of exclusivity has

always been associated with the profession, as Denise Scott Brown admits, and even her firm's populist and vernacular leanings result in images accessible to only a few.⁸⁹ A prime example of this problem is, once again, Graves' Fargo-Moorhead project. As Jencks writes, "the codes are too esoteric, the meanings too private to Graves and architectural scholars, to communicate the depth of reference intended. . . for the uninformed beholder, there are not enough explicit cues for this rich interpretive process [of analysis] to take place."⁹⁰ Not everyone can see the Cubist or collage elements, let alone the neoclassical and classical references without some coaching in stylistic architectural history. This problem, endemic to architecture, hinders a realization of the populist vision.

Yet the various forms of wit which characterize some fragment-quotation combinations can elicit laughter at a somewhat populist reponse to the postmodern scenographic. Anyone may laugh at wit which is playful when a large corporate skyscraper such as the *AT&T Building* is associated with a Chippendale highboy, an eighteenth century grandfather clock, a gigantic Lanvin perfume bottle, a Rolls Royce radiator⁹¹ or even a large pink pay phone.⁹² Hans Hollein's use of Rolls Royce radiator grills for marking the cashier desks in the Vienna travel bureau is playful, too, but in a more luxurious and sensuous way. Wit may be ludicrous, as in the case of Moore's *Piazza d'Italia*, where the four more traditional columnar orders are offset by a fifth "Deli" instead of composite order.⁹³ Or wit may be more sarcastic, as in the case of Venturi and Scott Brown's *Gooding House* (Absecon, NJ 1977), whose exaggerated proportions play off of the *Petit Trianon* and seemingly mock the act of historicism.⁹⁴

But how much conviction can there be in the play of aesthetic elements? Harries contends there cannot be much, as in the *Plocek House*.⁹⁵ The displaced keystone reminds us not only that the past is past but also that outward appearances are central to postmodern architecture.⁹⁶ It is as if the classical elements in Graves' house are part of the production of a grandiose illusion and also part of self-critical realities at which we laugh. Conviction is difficult, too, when a cultural center project or a skyscraper look like familiar objects. But perhaps this is a new kind of conviction to which we must become attuned. Whatever the case, postmodern architecture's play with the fragment-quotation decidedly is "freer, more playful, less intimidated by the past. But by the same token, it is also less convinced by its borrowing and less able to convince."⁹⁷ This sense of ambiguity created by postmodern architecture alludes to Lutyens' method of paradox. Greenberg writes, "The spectator walking through a Lutyens' house finds his senses held in a constant state of flux, and surprise, wit, anti-climax, conflict, ambiguity or sheer delight wait at the end of each turn."⁹⁸ The viewer likewise becomes involved with the constant sense of shifting and not knowing what comes next.

The processional element in postmodern architecture is another means by which the viewer becomes involved. As early as 1957, the processional element was of interest to art historians, when Frank E. Brown addressed the issue of the viewer's approach to the Roman temple.⁹⁹ Less than ten years later, in 1965, Philip Johnson wrote about the temporality and beauty

in the viewer's perception of movement through the space of the Propylaeum and other great Western architectural monuments. Although an element of change is always apparent as the viewer progresses, Johnson greatly admires the clarity by which the viewer never doubts "where he has come or whither he aims."¹⁰⁰ This sense of always knowing where one is in relation to the greater whole is addressed by a Maguire Group project proposal for the Bunker Hill section of Los Angeles, a proposal praised by Portoghesi for both its contextual approach, that respects the complexities of the city, and the way an urban theater was developed with the spatial sequences of Baroque cities.¹⁰¹ (The proposal, however, was rejected in favor of a Modern/Late Modern design of the Erikson Group.) Portoghesi implies that the downfall of such a selection is a loss of the richness in the sequential space, and in how one might have been able to progress through it. The potential for ordering space successfully seems to have begun to be developed but is not yet fully tapped. On a smaller, more limited scale, traditional spaces are an important part of urban planning. Despite their problems, the *Portland Public Service Building* and the *AT&T Building* are both successful in having a series of transitional spaces leading from public to private domains.

In numerous examples which illustrate this sequential element, some attempts in the postmodern scenographic have been made to regain a sense of order and consistency through ritualistic origins. The entrance vestibule to Graves' *Sunar Showroom* in Chicago (1979), which is representative of his other showrooms in Los Angeles, Houston, and New York, has small columns that are arranged like the Egyptian hypostyle hall, where more massive columns delineate the ritual route to the innermost sacred spaces. The entrance to Graves' Best products facade leads the automobile along a similarly directed route. Graves, like a Roman architect, raises the facade on a podium and provides a clear path for the automobile to approach it. But his interest is far more related to the consumer than the ancient architect's concern and the processional element is far more secular than its equivalent in the Egyptian temple. Closer to ritualistic origins is the direct and bold processional element in the *Nakauchi House* (Nara, Japan 1975) by the Toyokazu Atelier. The viewer of this house, Jencks suggests, may feel as if he or she progresses through a Cistercian shrine, which by the end of the following passage is transformed into a more Eastern version:

There are, it is true, slight "window frames" repeated from the outside, which run through the trusses and walls to underscore the paradoxical figures "outside-in," but these are the most minimal of decorative touches. They serve to connect, mentally, the major and minor spaces and turn them into aedicules, an interpretation which is reinforced when we look at the section, for here we can see the small "house/shrines." We are thus involved on a professional [sic] route through a series of purifying "layers," one cut-out wall after another being penetrated twice, coming and going, until we end up looking at the round windows (sun) framed between pillars reaching skyward (trees, and now the polished surfaces remind us of Shinto columns), all contained within an absolute symmetry (mirror), like the culmination of a walk through the Ise shrine.¹⁰²

Jencks' interpretation is clearly valid, however, for as one progresses up the steps into the house it is as though one penetrates the various gates and layers of space marked by the concentric fences of the shrine at Ise. Even entrance into Stirling's Sackler Wing at the Fogg Museum (1985) makes the viewer think the building is a temple, but it is Far Eastern art and not some celestial deity which is revered there. Despite the differences in these examples, what they share is a conscious effort to guide the viewer through directed, closed-in sequential spaces.

Through these aspects of participation, the Venturian idea of the "decorated shed" is left far behind. Where Venturi emphasizes the exterior qualities of the shed, this participatory view goes on to stress the viewer's psychological experience both inside and outside the postmodern building. Spurred on by the debate on interpretation, the viewer is urged to see "both" the spectacular, superficial, exploitative aspects "and" the seriously historicist ones in search of a means for personal expression, ordered distinctions, and collective meaning. Finally, this architecture, which is "both" fun "and" disheartening in its increasing alignment with big business and commercialization, seems to be charting a course different from, yet similar to, the course charted by Modernism. Karsten Harries has stated that the modern dictum of art for art's sake has "led to a view of architecture as essentially caught between the demands of beauty and those of life."¹⁰³ Although he contends these realms are irreconcilable, at least he does not present an ultimatum, as some critics do with postmodernism. But unlike Harries, I believe the dichotomy has led to a view that conclusions about postmodern architecture are fundamentally concerned with both art and life. The tension which lies in the scenographics of the postmodern occupies the territory between art and life, and both sustains and is sustained by the social, psychological, and physical needs of people who live and work in the built environment.

Footnotes

¹The metaphor of the theater in and of the world suggested by the scenographic in postmodern architecture is by no means new, especially with respect to the ideas behind the architectural section of the 1980 Venice Biennale, since the exhibition was built according to cinematic techniques which were used for creating stage sets. See Paolo Portoghesi, *Postmodern: The Architecture of the Postindustrial Society* (New York: Rizzoli, 1983), p. 29.

²Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form* (1972; rpt. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1977), pp. 87f.

³Patricia Conway, *Ornamentalism: The New Decorativeness in Architecture and Design* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1982), p. 144. Jensen and Conway state that although La Strada Novissima was an indoor mock-up, designs were expressed relatively easily in the thin, superficial construction which "confirms the importance of the surface as a medium for conveying, in modern architectural terms, allusions to historical styles and the meanings associated with them."

⁴Philip Johnson, "Foreword," in *Buildings for Best Products* Exhibition catalogue (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1979), p. 7.

⁵Arthur Drexler, "Introduction," in *Buildings for Best Products*, p. 21.

⁶Charles Jencks, *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture*, 4th rev. ed. (1977; rpt. New York: Rizzoli, 1984), p. 162.

⁷Ada Louise Huxtable, "The Troubled State of Modern Architecture," *Architectural Record*, 169 (Jan. 1981), p. 77.

⁸Arata Isozaki, "The Rhetoric of the Cylinder," in *Post Modern Classicism: The New Synthesis*, ed. Charles Jencks (London: Architectural Design, 1980), p. 83.

⁹*Speaking a New Classicism: American Architecture Now*, Exhibition catalogue (Northampton, Mass.: Smith College Museum of Art, 1981), p. 33. Also see Edward Levin's and Jorge Silveti's statements about the American emphasis on transformation in *ibid.*, pp. 36 and 39 respectively.

¹⁰Refer to Sir John Summerson, *The Classical Language of Architecture*, (1963; rpt. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1985), pp. 11 and 17. Summerson reminds us that the canonization of classical orders to begin with is not as stable as we might think.

¹¹Portoghesi, *Postmodern*, p. 35. The other two fears were the fear of heresy and the fear of hegemony.

¹²Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1966), pp. 43.

¹³Ada Louise Huxtable, "The Tall Building Artistically Reconsidered: The Search for a Skyscraper Style," *Architectural Record*, 172 (Jan. 1984), p. 71.

¹⁴Karsten Harries, "Thoughts on a Non-Arbitrary Architecture," *Pespecta*, No. 20 (1983), pp. 18-19.

¹⁵Huxtable, "The Troubled State," p. 76. To further illustrate her point, other examples which quickly catch the public's eye are the almost day-glo colors of Thomas Gordon Smith's *Tuscan and Laurentian Homes* and the neon moldings of Moore's *Piazza d'Italia*. Perhaps the architects have created these works in good fun, but the intense hues in Smith's design on the exterior seem like neon lights, while those in Moore's fountain plaza, in fact, are. Materials in these examples, just as style in Huxtable's, are manipulated for their spectacular effects.

¹⁶Kenneth Frampton, "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Port Townsend, Wash.: Bay Press, 1983), p. 19.

¹⁷See *Time*, 113 (Jan. 8, 1979). The building's pediment also instigated great controversy since it was the first of its kind to articulate a Manhattan skyline otherwise filled with flat-topped Modern designs that had quickly and efficiently met increasing post-war commercial and residential needs up through even the 1960s and early seventies.

¹⁸William E. Roberts outlines the specification and budget restraints in a letter to City Council. He stated that the Graves/Pavarini team met the dollar budget and all the major specifications. They provided 362,192 net square feet at \$61.90 per square foot. In contrast, the Erikson/Dillingham team exceeded the budget by \$804,000. They met specifications with minor exceptions and provided 340,291 net square feet at 68.80 per square foot. In third place was the Giurgola/Wright team which exceeded the budget by some \$6 million. They generally met specifications and said the budget was subject to negotiation. They provided 316,998 net square feet at \$90.02 per square foot. (Cited in Charles Jencks, ed., *Post-Modern Classicism*, p. 138).

¹⁹Jencks shows a good sampling of articles that range from an interview with architectural historian, Neil Levine, to editorial comments by news editors, letters from opinionated taxpayers and architects, and political cartoons from staff artists. See Jencks, ed., *Post-Modern Classicism*, pp. 138-139.

²⁰For a few of the many examples of commentary on the building, refer to Elini Constantine, "The Case for Michael Graves' Design for Portland," *Architectural Record*, 168 (Aug. 1980), pp. 96-101; Martin Filler, "Michael Graves: Before and After," *Art in America*, 68 (Sept. 1980), pp. 99-105; V. Bazjanac, "Energy Analysis: Portland Public Office Building," *Progressive*

Architecture, 64 (Feb. 1983), pp. 108-115; J. Pastier, "First Monument of a Loosely Defined Style: Michael Graves' Portland Building," *AIA Journal*, 72 (May 1983), pp. 232-237.

²¹Susan Doubilet, "Conversation with Graves: The Portland Building, Portland, Oregon," *Progressive Architecture*, 64 (Feb. 1983), p. 114.

²²The loggia in Johnson and Burgee's *AT&T Building* makes the viewer feel inconsequential in the urban environment.

²³Vincent Scully, "Buildings without Souls," *The New York Times Magazine* (Sept. 8, 1985), pp. 42-43ff.

²⁴Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *New Left Review*, No. 146 (July-Aug. 1984), p. 66.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 55. It is important to note, however, that the only building discussed by Jameson is John Portman's *Bonaventure Hotel* in Los Angeles, which carries hardly any historical allusions. Since the building's interior fragmented slab looks like a permutation of the Modern glass box, it has been classified by Jencks as "Late-Modern" and not "Post-Modern." This problematic identification of the *Bonaventure Hotel* as "postmodern" for Jameson is not challenged by Davis, either. Their Marxian-oriented perspectives thus should not be taken at face value since postmodernism in this discussion is referred to that which carries allusion. Yet, on the other hand, their extensive discussion cannot be dismissed, for it raises pertinent issues that relate to other postmodern work.

²⁶Mike Davis, "Urban Renaissance and the Spirit of Postmodernism," *New Left Review*, No. 151 (May-June, 1985), p. 107.

²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 108.

²⁸Refer to Jencks, *Language* (any edition), first page of Part One.

²⁹M. Pawley, "Back-Seat: Economic Foundations of Post-Modernism," *Architectural Review*, 176 (Aug. 1984), p. 63.

³⁰*Ibid.*

³¹Allan Greenberg, "The Meaning of the Past," *Sun and Moon: A Quarterly of Literature and Art* (Summer 1980), p. 33.

³²*Ibid.*

³³Portoghesi, *Postmodern*, p. 34.

³⁴Henry Hope Reed, "The Classical Tradition in Modern Times: A Personal Assessment," in *Speaking a New Classicism*, p. 25.

³⁵Summerson, p. 34. Summerson briefly traces the history of the orders from Vitruvius to Alberti, Serlio and others on down the line. The canonized orders have had a great impact as carriers of meaning for conventions ranging from beauty and perfection to a certain eloquence as well as philosophy and ideology.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-18.

³⁷Jencks, *Post-Modern Classicism*, p. 61. Notably, increasing popular interest has also been a factor in the return to the most worked and reworked set of architectural elements in the history of Western architecture. See Helen Searing, "Speaking a New Classicism: American Architecture Now," *Speaking a New Classicism*, p. 16.

³⁸Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction*, pp. 88-90.

³⁹See sketches in Jencks, *Language*, pp. 48-49.

⁴⁰Portoghesi, *Postmodern*, p. 100.

⁴¹"Architecti, Vitae, Verba," *Speaking a New Classicism*, p. 27.

⁴²Smith's and Blatteau's statements are in *ibid.*, pp. 48 and 27-28, respectively.

⁴³Jencks, ed., *Post-Modern Classicism*, pp. 16-17.

⁴⁴Portoghesi, "The American Situation," in *After Modern Architecture*, trans. Meg Shore, (New York: Rizzoli, 1982), p. 89.

⁴⁵Portoghesi, *Postmodern*, p. 26.

⁴⁶Portoghesi, "Italy in Retreat," in *After Modern Architecture*, p. 38.

⁴⁷Alan Colquhoun, "Postmodern Critical Positions," *Art Criticism*, 2 (Fall 1985), p. 33.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, p. 33

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁵¹Andreas Huyssen, "Mapping the Postmodern," *New German Critique*, no. 33 (Fall 1984), p. 10.

⁵²*Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁵³*Ibid.*

⁵⁴Edward Levin, "Architecti, Vitae, Verba," in *Speaking a New Classicism*, p. 36.

⁵⁵Robert A.M. Stern, "The Doubles of Post-Modern," *Harvard Architectural Review*, 1 (Spring 1980), p. 83.

⁵⁶Such diverse attempts at historicism can also be understood in relation to the entrenchment of the International Style in architecture. Whether the entrenchment is called a "terrorist stance" which falls away with the postmodern (see Jameson's introduction to Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition*, xviii) or simply an "extraordinary hold" (Pommer, "Some Architectural Ideologies after the Fall," *Art Journal*, 40 (Fall-Winter 1980), p. 353), there is no doubt about the strength and force by which high Modernism was intertwined with building design and practices for over half a century. Postmodernism's delving into the complete spectrum of history and selecting out certain works have been part of the challenge to sever the bonds formalist Modernism had to an architecture which sometimes lacked expression. As Portoghesi believes, postmodernism challenges the patrimony of architectural history, whether that patrimony is the Eurocentric system based on classicism or the patrimony of Modernism. Whatever the case, the shaking of foundations is clear.

⁵⁷Charles Jencks, "What is Post-Modern Architecture?" *Progressive Architecture*, 59 (Apr. 1978), p. 8. This duality is apparent on another level for Jencks in his conviction that postmodern architects should communicate with both users of their buildings and other architects.

⁵⁸Graham Shane, "Contextualism," *Architectural Design*, 46 (Nov. 1976), p. 676.

⁵⁹Scully, "Buildings without Souls," pp. 64-66. This contextual emphasis on the street and the surrounding area was possibly one of the reasons why Graves was awarded a commission in 1981 to design an addition to the Whitney Museum. Ironically, however, Graves' plan has been attacked by architects who do not want the original Breuer design to be marred. Critics are especially threatened by the possibility that the exaggerated reveal of Breuer's stair, which now sets the museum off from the surrounding brownstones, will be buried by Graves' proposal. Since the spring of 1986, however, other proposals by Graves are being evaluated by the museum staff.

⁶⁰Jencks, *Post-Modern Classicism*, p. 17.

⁶¹Jencks, *Language*, 4th rev. ed., p. 134. The Chicago Seven was a group formed in 1976 which by 1978 had eleven members: Thomas Beeby, Lawrence Booth, Stuart Cohen, James Freed, Gerald Horn, Helmut Jahn, James Nagle, Kenneth Schoreder, Stanley Tigerman, Cynthia Weese and Ben Weese. (Nf. 66 in *ibid.*)

⁶²Paul Goldberger, "Freewheeling Fantasy in San Diego," *The New York Times* (19 Mar. 1986), A:12. Nevertheless, Goldberg is hopeful about the prospects for renewal in the immediate downtown area of San Diego.

⁶³Davis, p. 112. Davis uses these terms in reference to downtown Atlanta.

⁶⁴Some of the reasons why this has occurred relates in part to the reuse of particular architectural styles. Contextuality is clearly evident in the eclecticism of Lutyens' work, for in it he is responsive to the limitations of a site and the building program, as is the case with the integration of a new plan with an old one for the capital at New Delhi. "Both" the rectangular "and" the hexagonal systems of the city are considered in Lutyens' final plan. See Allan Greenberg, "Lutyens' Architecture Restudied," *Perspecta*, No. 12 (1980), p. 141.

⁶⁵Matthias Ungers, "Five Lessons from Schinkel," in *Free-Style Classicism*, Charles Jencks, ed. (London Architectural Design, 1982), p. 26.

⁶⁶Searing, "Speaking," p. 13. Laugier argues in his essay that the rustic hut is the archetypal unit for all subsequent buildings.

⁶⁷Alan Colquhoun, "From Bricolage to Myth, or How to put Humpty-Dumpty together again," *Oppositions*, No. 12 (Spring 1978), p. 10.

⁶⁸Richard Pommer, "Some Architectural Ideologies after the Fall," *Art Journal*, 40 (Fall-Winter 1980), p. 358.

⁶⁹Jencks, *Post-Modern Classicism*, p. 130.

⁷⁰Michael Graves, "Referential Design: Vacation House in Aspen, Colorado," *UIA International Architect*, 1:1 (1979), p. 24.

⁷¹Searing, "Speaking," p. 13. Searing also notes that the transformed gazebo crowns Graves' *Red River Heritage Center* (Moorhead, Minn.) and a 1980 drawing for the *Portland Public Service Building*.

⁷²Colquhoun, "From Bricolage," p. 16.

⁷³*Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁷⁴Paul Goldberger, "The Limits of Urban Growth," in *On the Rise: Architecture and Design in a Postmodern Age*, (1983; rpt. New York: Penguin Books, 1985), p. 44.

⁷⁵Huxtable, "The Tall Building," p. 79.

⁷⁶Goldberger more recently has criticized the "line-up" of skyscrapers on 52nd St. where the buildings are so tall and close together that there is neither space nor sun to set them off as towers in the urban world. Instead, they are just crammed in for the highest investment return. See Paul Goldberger, "A Darkened Canyon of Towering Offices," *The New York Times*, (April 23, 1986), B:1.

⁷⁷Stanley Tigerman in *Buildings for Best Products*, p. 24. Tigerman writes:

Halloween would feature a 10' black cat peering from behind the draped living-room windows, with 20' corn shocks on the lawn and a grinning 8' jack-o-lantern sitting right there on the lawn. At Christmastime 16" lights would be strung around the picture window revealing a 25' Christmas-tree—and on the roof, a 25' Santa sleigh, and reindeer. Easter would find 4' tall bunny rabbits hopping up and down on the lawn searching for colorful 12" Easter eggs hidden between the cars. A 24' American flag would join the rest of the neighboring flags in celebrating America's birthday. Red and white striped bunting would surround the garage door, and a 16' wide and 32' long and 10' high picnic table would be found at rest in the driveway, with a 12' high Weber grill nearby.

⁷⁸Jencks, *Language*, 4th rev. ed., p. 61.

⁷⁹Michael Kirby, ed. *Happenings: An Illustrated Anthology* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1965), pp. 34-35.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, p. 71. The non-traditional role of the audience was also emphasized when the group was asked not to applaud after each set. If people did so, the separation between audience and actors would only be reinforced. And, although the audience was told they could applaud after the final set, they were reminded that there would be no "curtain-call"—another device which would allude to the distance between audience and actor.

⁸²Statement made by Frank Gehry, on "Pride of Place: Building the American Dream," Robert A.M. Stern, narrator (aired April 5, 1986, Public Broadcasting System).

⁸³Of course the major difference of this comparison is that the viewer/participant in Happenings is part of a more regulated, complete environment than the viewer/participant in postmodern architecture. But the general similarities of the two disciplines still stand.

⁸⁴Kirby, p. 49.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, p. 184.

⁸⁶Jencks, ed., *Post-Modern Classicism*, p. 5. Jencks also writes in this essay that "Mass-culture has opened classicism to the masses as well as the classes."

⁸⁷Portoghesi, *Postmodern*, p. 17.

⁸⁸Robert A.M. Stern, *New Directions in American Architecture*, rev. ed. (1966: rpt. New York: George Braziller, 1979), p. 50.

⁸⁹"Interview with Venturi and Scott Brown," *Harvard Architectural Review*, 1 (Spring 1980), pp. 229-233.

⁹⁰Charles Jencks, "Late-Modernism and Post-Modernism," in *Late-Modern Architecture and Other Essays* (New York: Rizzoli, 1980), p. 19.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

⁹²Davis, p. 108.

⁹³Jencks, ed., *Post-Modern Classicism*, p. 8.

⁹⁴Pommer, p. 354.

⁹⁵Harries, p. 13.

⁹⁶William Curtis, "Principle vs. Pastiche: Perspectives on Some Recent Classicisms," *Architectural Review*, 176 (Aug. 1984), p. 15.

⁹⁷Harries, p. 10.

⁹⁸Greenberg, "Lutyens' Architecture Restudied," p. 134.

⁹⁹See "Roman Architecture," *College Art Journal*, 17 (Fall 1957), pp. 105-114.

¹⁰⁰Philip Johnson, "Whence & Whither: The Processional Element in Architecture," *Perspecta*, Nos. 9-10 (1965), p. 168.

¹⁰¹Portoghesi, *Postmodern*, p. 78. The Maguire Group was made up of Robert Maguire, collaborating with Charles Moore, Cesar Pelli, Barton Myers, Lawrence Halprin, Frank Gehry and Norman Pfeiffer.

¹⁰²Jencks, ed., *Post-Modern Classicism*, p. 90.

¹⁰³Harries, p. 11.

Critical Evaluation

By Yve-Alain Bois

"In American cultural politics today there are at least two positions on postmodernism now in place," writes Hal Foster: "one aligned with a neo-conservative politics, the other derived from post-structuralist theory. Neo-conservative postmodernism is the more familiar of the two: defined mostly in terms of style, it depends on modernism, which, reduced to its worst formalist image, is countered with a return to narrative, ornament and the figure. This position is often one of reaction, but in more ways than the stylistic—for also proclaimed is the return to history (the humanist tradition) and the return of the subject (the artist/architect as *auteur*). Post-structuralist postmodernism, on the other hand . . . , is profoundly antihumanist: rather than a return to representation, it launches a critique in which representation is shown to be more constitutive of reality than transparent to it."¹

Now, what the two postmodernist positions distinguished by Foster have in common is their claim that modernism was living in a historicist terror, in the prison of a teleological conception of history as progress of reason, in which each work was defined in relationship with its predecessors and with its posterity. But where those two positions differ is in the attitude which follows the claim. Let us leave, for the time being, the post-struc-

turalist position, and concentrate on the neoconservative one. Against the "darwinism" of modernism, there is no other way, claim the apologists of this position, than to take the "cynical ideology of the traitor"—and those are not my words but those of Achille Bonito Oliva, the author of various books on the neoconservative avant-garde which he baptised "international trans-avant-garde."² For a traitor, nothing has any value if it is not for his own direct profit: against the naive political utopia of the historical avant-garde movements, against the optimistic eschatology which was at the core of their notion of history, Oliva and his peers construct an argument on a fiction of apocalypse which is *stricto sensu*, the exact counterpart of the teleology they pretend to eradicate. It goes like this: the world is going to die, hence we are freed from the burden of history, or in other words, "apres moi le deluge." Being freed from the burden of history, we can return to history as a kind of entertainment, as a remote space of irresponsibility: anything has for us the same meaning, the same value. From the trashcan of history, says this theory, we could dig any quote, any historical style, according to our intention, according to our will (and I'll return later to this new construct about intention). Denouncing the teleological historicism of modernism, the apologists of neoconservative post-modernism transform historical succession into simultaneity: they take the typical historicist point of view of a Leopold von Ranke (*alles gleich unmittelbar zu Gott*), that of a post-historical God which could put everything in the same basket and would never have to take sides. And it is not by chance that this neo-conservative postmodern coincides with a revisionist tendency in art history, which tries to deny that modern art ever existed, which affirms that Bourguereau and Manet lived in the same historical time or that the late Chirico is not a negation of the early one. And when I say coincide, I mean it literally: very often the apologist of the neoconservative postmodernism and the revisionist art historian is the same person, as we shall see.

In 1962, Robert Klein wrote: "Contemporary masters, it has been noticed, work by series and 'periods.' Each master adds his personal note, sharpens his 'contribution'—to what? This can only be to the movement of art as a whole towards its progressive clarification, which is, to use Marcel Duchamp's title, "the Bride stripped bare by her Bachelors, Even"; it is this movement which gives its meaning and eventually its relative value to any invention or discovery, to any new gesture of each artist or school."³ Five years later, in a brilliant text titled "The eclipse of the work of art," Klein addressed again this issue: "We have almost unconsciously taken the habit of historicizing any new object and to grasp the evolution by a comprehensive glimpse, judging it according to its richness, its synthetic power, its inventive quality, the importance of the problems which are addressed, the rightness and the courage of solutions. Those are undoubtedly, in such a context, esthetical criteria, and purely historical considerations of date and priority become at the same time pertinent for art (just as, as the result of the interest and ideology of the collectors, the authenticity of a signature or the attribution to a great name was effectively increasing the beauty of the work)."⁴

You have noticed that Klein is speaking of attributionism as something of the past—which seems highly peculiar in view of the frenzy with which art historians of all kinds have chosen and are still choosing this practice as their major task in life: Klein, whose work can certainly be termed “pre-structuralist,” was obviously thinking that Wöflin’s dictum of *Kunstgeschichte ohne Namen* had a chance to become a reality. I would say that he had underrated the strength of humanism as an ideology, which is not at all foreign to our topic here, as Hal Foster hinted at. But what interests me now is the comparison Klein makes between attributing and dating (and one has only to remember the ongoing polemics about the birth of abstract art or the invention of photography). Dating as criterion seems to Klein as historically bracketed, and hence as perishable, as attributing. For Klein, the shift, in the process of signification, which moves from the work of art to its historical position, is as historically threatened as the shift which moves from the work to its producer.

As it is precisely this mode of historicization which is being attacked today, both by the poststructuralist and by the neoconservative postmodernism, I believe it is necessary to examine it in detail—to historicize it, so to speak.

There is a tendency, in America, to herald the work of Clement Greenberg as the single origin of this mode of historicization in art criticism, and I think this is a misjudgment which represses important issues. Greenberg’s assessment of modernism is well-known: for him modernism is a process of self-criticism or self-purification by which each art was bound to eradicate in itself “every effect that might conceivably be borrowed from or by the medium of any other art,”⁵ each art evolving gradually and asymptotically towards the pure parousia of its own essence, each work being measured by its contribution to this ongoing unveiling of an unreachable zero degree. It would be wrong, however, to assume that this is an idiosyncratic construct: a French critic like Jean Paulhan meant exactly the same thing in the late forties when he wrote a sentence like “it is not useful to have two times the same thing. Lhote makes Bazaine useless, Bazaine makes Manessier absolutely useless,”⁶ even if none of the artists he mentions could find a room in Greenberg’s pantheon of modernism. And Mondrian meant little else when he kept repeating, at least at the beginning of his career as an abstract artist, that each artistic period was the *Aufhebung* of the preceding one (to use the Hegelian concept that he translated in Dutch as *opheffing*, and which is rather poorly expressed in English by “sublation”): for him, neo-plasticism was the logical development—and suppression—of all art that precedes, the last link of the historical chain. Malevich had the same feeling about his own art (he took great pain to explain the logic of his development “from cubism and futurism to suprematism”—this phrase being the title of his first important essay), and one could give endless examples of this historicist compulsion among the theoreticians of the first wave of abstract art. I will only give one more, although it comes from a lesser known artist, as it appears to me quite telling: the Polish painter Wladislaw Strzeminski (whom I hold as one of the most articulate theoreticians of constructivism) explained the decline

in quality of the art of the second generation of the Russian avant-garde by the fact that those artists looked only at the results without having paid any attention to the complicated historical process which led to Picasso or a Malevich to achieve their masterpieces: "it is quality which is important and not quantity," he wrote, "a lot of artists who are by now famous do not have the slightest idea of the efforts which were required to come up with the solutions of cubism or suprematism. Unconscious of the values which are embedded in the realizations of the new art, they nevertheless produce some 'new art,' without developing it, without bringing up any questions, but compiling in their works fragments of those of their predecessors."⁷ In other words, for Strzeminski an artist had to incorporate in his own evolution the entire evolution of art of the recent past in order to be able to produce works of quality—and it is certainly what he did, as well as Malevich and Mondrian and many others: the delivery of the new had to follow a recapitulation of the past. It might sound radically strange or extremely dogmatic, but I think it is quite symptomatic of the modernist credo, and if I am allowed a digression here, I would point to the prophetic character of this text written in 1922, which seems to describe the anti-modernist situation of art today: as a matter of fact, it even contains a description of expressionism, which holds true to me when applied to the current international yuppie-punk neo-expressionism: "Expressionism can be defined as a tendency to express literary feelings, especially the feelings of confusion engendered by our mechanized world, through formal procedures borrowed from the artistic movements of the past, cubism and futurism included. It is, if one could say so, a kind of applied art: the use of somebody else's formal experience."⁸

In order to historicize a theoretical construct, the best empirical procedure which I have at my disposal is to determine the moment before which such a construct would not have been possible. I believe that in art criticism such a moment occurs with Baudelaire—and there is nothing risky on my part to stipulate this, for there is a general consensus in defining him as the first modernist critic. Indeed Baudelaire combines both the kind of teleological historicism and essentialism I have just mentioned—he is, so to speak, the first one to have perceived them as the two sides of the same coin. "Take Delacroix out," he wrote in his Salon of 1846, "and the great chain of history is broken and falls to the ground,"⁹ and we know that one of the most contradictory goals that he set for himself was to clear Delacroix's paintings from the charge of a servile reliance upon literature (that is: from the intrusion of a heterogeneous medium).¹⁰ Now the question is of course the role this conjunction of teleology and essentialism played in Baudelaire's criticism. Here I feel obliged to refer to Walter Benjamin's reading of the French poet, although I have tried very hard not to pay my tribute to the by now ritual invocation of this name. The greatness of Baudelaire, according to Benjamin, is to have recognized that the fetishistic nature of the commodity-form, which was analyzed by Marx at the same time, was the threat which capitalism was posing to art, to its very existence: he perceived that the general process of commodification under capitalism was producing a terrifying and endless return of the same—each commodity

being indifferently exchangeable. Benjamin writes: "this vilification which things suffer by their ability to be taxed as commodity is counterbalanced in Baudelaire's conception by the inestimable value of novelty. The novelty represents this absolute which can neither be interpreted [as an allegory] nor compared [as a commodity]. It becomes the ultimate entrenchment of art."¹¹ A whole investigation could be made of the link between the modernist ideology of the new and the necessity for art to escape the world of commodity, hence to posit itself as radically different from this world through the specificity of its medium. Such an investigation would inevitably lead to Duchamp's critique of the political economy of the institutions of art and to the various stances taken by the artists of this century vis-à-vis the art market.¹² What I would rather do here, as we are supposed to debate over the question of evaluation, is to recall that Baudelaire's passionate criticism, as Lawrence Alloway had noted, had the need of a teleological criterion in the new situation of "postclassical abundance" which was that of the art of his time.¹³ And it is as if the evergrowing dogmatism of the modernist position, after its opening invoice by Baudelaire, had been the defensive response of artists and theoreticians facing an evergrowing abundance and diversity.

Now, as is well known, the hard-core theory of modernism had two major moments of crystallization throughout this century: the first moment, outgrowing from cubism, reached its climax at the beginning of the twenties, in the texts of the first abstract but non-expressionist painters (the writings of artists I quoted earlier are the paragons of this moment). It occurred right before what is called today the "return to order," which is characterized by a world-wide academization of artistic practice (Picasso's Ingresque period, Matisse's Nice period, the transformation of Futurism in *Pittura Metafisica*, *Neue Sachlichkeit*, Socialist Realism). The "return to order" has many different looks, but its main characteristic is a general call back to traditional modes of representation, a global dismissing of the experimental nature of the avant-garde art of the previous decade: it has a lot in common with the current practices of the neoconservative post-modernism, as Benjamin Buchloh showed us in a remarkable article published five years ago.¹⁴ The second moment of crystallization of the modernist theory dates from the post-war period and is constituted by American formalist criticism, that is, the writings of Clement Greenberg and his followers.

Those two theoretical ensembles share a great deal: in the Baudelairian tradition, they both express historicist and essentialist views. When my colleague Michael Fried understood the black paintings of Frank Stella as the culmination of the history of painting since Manet, he was using the same language as Mondrian and Malevich claiming that their paintings were the only true consequence of the art of the past. When he read these black canvases as the result of a deductive logic—the internal division of the canvases being given by the frame—he spoke in exactly the same way as Strzeminski had done thirty years before. The goal of Strzeminski and Stella was to suppress the subjectivity inherent to any composition, to discover a way to transfer the paint from the tube or the can to the canvas which

would be objective, that is historically grounded and logically motivated. Stella, however, did not use the word "universal," which was a key word for the abstract artists of the 1920s, and this is of course an important index of the fundamental difference between those two moments. This difference has been vastly underestimated in most accounts of modernism: contrary to their successors of the post-war period, Mondrian, Malevich and others still believed in the rational progress of sciences and techniques, and through this progress, in the perfectibility of social justice. It is true that a Mondrian and a Malevich spoke about the "zero degree," the "essential" characteristics of pictorial art, etc., but it was always to say that once this zero degree would be determined, the art of painting would have no *raison d'être* any more. They all insisted on this point: art strives toward its end as a separate activity—and the myth of the "last picture" or of the "dissolution of art into life" is one of the most common of the avant-garde theory of the 1920s. Hence the importance of a kind of irrational eschatology in all the texts by the artists of this first modernist wave—an eschatology which was at best transformed into pure mysticism by the post-war artists of the second wave, if not dropped completely. Indeed, of this artistic utopia, grounded in the longing for the future transparency of social relationships in a classless society, the second modernist theoretical moment retained only the linear conception of history. At the base of Greenberg's formalism, one finds both a divinization and a desemantization of history: in his system, the "relative autonomy" of the work of art, which has been theorized by the best marxist writers, became an absolute autonomy. Baudelaire's theory has been integrated as an internal factor giving rigorous criteria for the aesthetic judgment of the works of art, and we arrived at the situation described by Robert Klein.

But as has been stressed by many commentators of Greenberg, there are historical factors for this return to a formal teleology based on the illusion of the absolute autonomy of the work of art: the failure of the avant-garde of the 1920s to fulfill their utopian program, the German-Soviet pact, the collapse, with WWII, of the myth of scientific progress as leading to a progress in welfare, the Cold War, etc., all this led, to some extent, toward this renewed entrenchment of art. The death of the legitimizing "myths," the collapse of the ideologies, which the French philosopher Francois Lyotard sees as the condition of post-modernism,¹⁵ was no less the root of Greenberg's modernist theory. And this leads me again to the fallacy of the neoconservative position mentioned above. When the apologists of the neoconservative postmodernism say that their revisionism is the logical and up-to-date consequence of the fundamental transformation which the world endured during the last quarter of this century, one has to read that what has changed is the political role claimed by the intellectual. When they refer enthusiastically to the "post-industrial" society, it is to veil their quiet approval of the harshest developments of late capitalism.

As is well known, the role of the new art was for Greenberg to rescue culture from its devolution into kitsch (and Tom Crow has effectively argued that this conviction was shared by Adorno).¹⁶ Modernism was understood by Greenberg as a genuine reaction against mass production and mass

consumption: it is not so much the elitism of this renewed Baudelaireanism which is striking as it is the fact that the role of the avant-garde is defined as one of conservation: to keep tradition alive is its task, as if there were any chance that it will come out victorious, in revitalizing the old paradigm, from its struggle against the general trashcanization of culture. As if, in other words, this trashcanization was not the consequence of the rational law of capitalism, the law of the commodity, of the return of the same, of the entropic indifferentiation of all things from which art could by no means be saved. It is because he refused to address those issues, which Baudelaire, Duchamp and the artists of the 1920s had each addressed in their own way, with their own conceptual tools, naive or elaborate, that Greenberg's theory was led to what appears to be a humanist impasse. In 1962, he wrote: "I can see nothing essential in the new abstract painting that cannot be shown to have evolved out of either Cubism or Impressionism (if we include Fauvism in the latter), just as I cannot see anything essential in Cubism or Impressionism whose development cannot be traced back to the Renaissance."¹⁷ If one compares this with the 1920s linear conception of history, the change of emphasis is quite telling: the artists of these years dreamed to displace the old, not to give it a new youth.

Of this kind of humanist thesaurization, our neoconservative apologists provide the caricature. When I first came into contact with the yuppie-punk wave of painting, my immediate reaction was typically modernist in its historicism: Salome's paintings are nothing more than the color and touch of Die Brücke combined with the scale of Barnett Newman and a zest for fashionable fin de siècle iconography (in this case, homosexual themes); Garouste makes pastiches of Tintoretto plus El Greco, Chia's art is a minestrone made of Boccioni's dynamism and the late Chirico's reactionary neoclassicism, Enzo Cucchi uses Malevich's primitivist peasants and again abstract expressionist scale, Christopher Lebrun assimilates early Philip Guston with Odilon Redon, etc. In other words: nothing of that is new, it consists merely of "salades combinées" made up from the history of painting understood as a reservoir of reified styles. This was not wrong, according to me, but I thought at that time that this trend of art, which was then at its beginning, was simply a manifestation of what Robert Klein has identified as the double bind in which modern art is trapped. His analysis started with the necessarily prescriptive or academic character of all art criticism, which is obliged to postulate an ideal model to be able to function. Opposed to this prescriptive model stands the intention of the artist, as both the ground and the negation of his works, of their free existence in the phenomenal world.¹⁸ Klein was struck by Duchamp's extreme nominalism and by the growing necessity of captions in the avant-garde art of his time: he understood the hypothetical non-academism of this art as a replacement of the inherent value of the work of art by that of its intention (and he enumerated the series of attempts at the iconoclastic destruction of the work of art which formed the common experience of what Peter Bürger has called the neo-avant-garde of the 1950s and 1960s).¹⁵ But Klein was well aware of the fact that this criterion of intentionality (this is art because such is my intention) brought art in a tautological circle and

was determining in the last instance consumption as the criterion of art: the criterion of intentionality, which seems to belong to the order of production, makes a reversal and gives to consumption the deciding role in the process of signification and evaluation. Hence, for example, our different reading of the various monochromes produced in this century (we argue about the different intentions of Rodchenko and Yves Klein, among many others, in order to judge their respective monochromes). This brings some light about the prescriptive nature of the essentialism and of the teleological conception of history as the two pillars of modernism: the zero degree of modernism was Ariadne's thread in the Babel of intentions. The whole modernist credo can be summarized as an enterprise of motivation: art being freed from its imitative obligation (this function being now assumed by photography), art being relieved from having to be the direct servant of a cause (be it the church or the prince), a means had to be found to motivate its arbitrariness, a vector had to be determined to guide the judgment in the realm of profusion: the myth of the zero degree was this means. Its historical, transpersonal vectorization was the only way to prevent an impressionistic criticism, to avoid an aesthetics which would rely upon the pathos of expressivity and would necessarily revert to what Roman Jakobson has defined as "mere causerie."²⁰ Historicism and essentialism were the weapon of modernism against the "intentional fallacy."

When I first confronted it, then, the neoconservative postmodernist wave of painting appeared to me as a simple return to this expressionistic pathos—and indeed it was in many ways, as our apologists are keen to underline. On the one hand Hilton Kramer ends his eulogy by these words: "John Ruskin reminds us that in every pictorial style what we most value and most vividly respond to are what he calls 'signs of passion or of thought.' Neoexpressionism so abounds in those precious 'signs of passion' that its appeal is irresistible."²¹ On the other hand, Richard Hennessy, as this wave began its swell, opposed the subjectivity of painting to the objectivity of photography: "the role of intention and its poetry of human freedom is infrequently discussed in relation to art, yet the more a given art is capable of making intention felt, the greater are its chances of being a fine, and not a minor or applied, art"²² (one might wonder here which of these are the statuses of advertising and of Joyce's *Ulysses* in that hierarchy).

With the growing extension of pastiche and of art historical quotes in this yuppy-punk art, I realized that Klein's paradigm could not be conclusive, that the double bind was no longer *prescriptive academism* versus *intention*—not so much because this category of free intention was yet another myth, the imaginary positioning of the self which is the seal of liberal ideology, but because this renewed emphasis on intention was only the last wrapping of a total reification. It had become evident that it was absurd to dismiss this art as "not new," as I had done, for it was precisely its avowed motto: the means of its "intentions" were that of a client in the supermarket of past cultures predigested by the media, their advocated meaning the value of pastness.

To quote: "In so much of to-day's art, we feel that the immensely pon-

derous burden of the whole civilization falling on our late 20th century shoulders, as it once did on the Abstract Expressionist generation, has been lightened by distancing, creating a tower of Babel of casual quotation marks from a boundless universe of visual language and symbols both remote and contemporary, Western and exotic, serious and comic.”²³ With these words, written for a catalogue of an exhibition of late Picabia paintings, Robert Rosenblum reveals how much the neoconservative postmodernism is a glorification of the state of late capitalism. For what is at stake in this caricature of the humanist dream (the atemporal availability of all cultures, past and foreign) is not so much the homogenization of high and low culture which Greenberg and Adorno feared, but the antiquarian devitalization of history transformed into sheer commodity. “In tune with a generation nurtured on TV,” continues Rosenblum, “Picabia changes channels with kaleidoscopic abruptness—academic modeling and contour drawings after Renaissance and greco-roman motifs; paraphrases of Picasso’s monster style which, in turn, paraphrases Spanish Romanesque art; eccentric variants of the hard-edge geometries that dominated the purist, utopian version of the 1920s; self-consciously light-hearted translations of those crude, irregular, densely painted abstractions from the 1940s School of Paris that in New York, at least, we all loved to hate. Picabia’s encyclopedic openness to just about everything in the entire history of art, quoted with a breezy, passing touch and often colliding in the same work, is a conspicuous aspect of younger art today.” We have reached, it seems, the entropic term described by Flaubert in *Bouvard et Pécuchet*: “Everything is equal, the good and the evil. The farcical and the sublime—the beautiful and the ugly—the insignificant and the typical, they all become an exaltation of the statistical. There are nothing but facts—and phenomena. Final bliss.”²⁴ Such was one of the versions of the end of Flaubert’s unfinished novel. And I cannot resist here quoting another of our apologists of neoconservatism, the art historian Gert Schiff, specialist on the late Picasso, who marvelled at the billboard “which forms part of Julian Schnabel’s open-air studio”: “On it, pinned and pasted and exposed to the elements, hand clippings from German pre-WWI magazines, reproductions of details from Goya’s Black Paintings, Mexican playing cards; illustrations of racial types from an old ethnographic publication; turn of the century advertisements; a line engraving from a nineteenth-century tract on mythology; a nude from a physique magazine; devotional pictures; a depiction of tephillim; old postcards and heaven knows what other grist for his omnivorous mill.”²⁵ One thinks at first of Schwitters’ collages, but while the dadaistic trashcan was a diagnosis of the symbolic transmutation operated by the art institution in order for art to be consumed as art, while Flaubert’s “novel of stupidity,” as he called it, was an attack against the levelization of all things operated by the commodity culture, Schnabel’s art, then, is understood as an affirmative synthesis or our visual and cultural universe. In the course of his article, Schiff invokes artists as diverse as Signac, the late Picasso, Klimt, Ensor, Klinger, Grosz, Beckmann, Rembrandt, the late Picabia, Giotto and the late Chirico; historic art as varied as Pompeian, Precolumbian and Eighteenth century Rococo; writers as foreign to each other as Goethe, Antonin

Artaud and Somerset Maugham. But I am sure that the list is not closed and that the omnivorous mill of Julian Schnabel, with his renowned Midas touch, will be able to recycle any past item and to disguise heterogeneity into homogeneity.

The recurrent invocation of the late Picasso, of the late Picabia and of the late Chirico brings me back to Rosenblum, who adds to this senile triumvirat the late Chagall defined as "an ancestral fourth C to join the ranks of Clemente, Cucchi and Chia," three of the most popular of our neoconservative postmodernist painters. His argument is worth looking at for one last time, for it starts with a typically modernist claim: that of a constant shift in our appreciation of the past. "When our vision of the past is altered in this way," he writes, "it usually means, in fact, that younger artists are at work obliging us through their now new imagery and attitudes to reconstruct different genealogical tables from the endless variety of the art of the past."²⁶ Nothing wrong here; the question is: *which past*, and it is an important question in view, especially, of the revolting annexation of Walter Benjamin's famous *Theses on the Philosophy of History* by our apologists of the neoconservative postmodernism (not by Rosenblum, it must be said, but for example by Bonito Oliva). Against the historicist conception of time as empty and homogeneous, against the antiquarian's *acedia*, his indolence of the heart, Benjamin sets up the task of the materialist historian as an enterprise of salvation: such a historian "stops telling the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary. Instead, he grasps the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one," or again: "he takes cognizance of it in order to blast a specific life out of the homogeneous course of history."²⁷ This has nothing to do with the antiquarian recuperation of the past, whose indifferent accumulation of vestiges is a loss of memory: Benjamin's messianic concept of salvation involves the salvation of the present, not the recovery of the past at its expense. "Only for a redeemed mankind has its past become citable in all its moments," writes Benjamin.²⁸ Till this Day of Judgment, not everything is quotable: not to be aware of this is to fall in the trap of Ranke's historicism which always empathizes with the victors.

In their appropriation of the entire past as quotable, our neoconservative postmodernists revert to Ranke's *acedia* which received its economic justification in the commodification of everything, including the past, accomplished by late capitalism. It is not by chance that they have elected Picabia as one of their heroes: this dandy advocated what he called an "immobile indifference," another name for the "ideology of the traitor" urged by Bonito Oliva. Not only did it lead Picabia to reject his previous dadaism and to become one of the most active defenders of the "return to order," but his empathy for the victors ended up in anti-Semitic statements and glorification of the Vichy regime during WWII. I am not saying that the surrender to antiquarianism which we are witnessing today in the art of the neoconservative postmodernist painters leads necessarily to fascism, but the fascination for Wagner one can find today in the German brand of this movement, with all its reactionary pathos, is there to remind us that barbarity remains always possible. To quote everything, or to quote

only the authoritarian heroes of reaction is, ultimately, the same. Hence the urgent necessity of a critical history of quotation in art. For if one does not want to put everything in the same basket, a distinction must be elaborated between the art of quoting of the Renaissance, that of Manet and that of the Schnabels: this history could be understood as a chapter of political history.

Indeed, and it is my last point, we are in a situation where the formalist creed of absolute autonomy for art is no longer acceptable. The forces of reaction are gaining power, the ice-field is growing, effacing any memory, freezing any sense of social responsibility. I believe, in this particular situation, that the lesson of the first modernist artists of the 1920s has to be remembered: even if their use of abstraction as an epistemological metaphor for a future golden society is obsolete, their conception of the role of the artist as a waker is more to the point than ever. This role can be played in many ways, either by a satire of the functioning of the artistic network in late capitalism—this is, for example, the task Hans Haacke has set for himself—or through a questioning of the closed boundaries which the liberal ideologies has fixed for the self and for art in this consumption society—this is the work of many feminist artists who refuse to perpetuate in their career the model which was handed to them by a male governed tradition. I am not saying here, however, that this critical role of art does not need to be directly political: as soon as art is not taken any more as a pure narcissistic spectacle, as a mere product of delectation, the purr of the dominant ideology is being put into crisis. This has been the task of the avant-garde art of this century, even when the works did not seem at first to address such an issue. (Minimalism, for example, certainly does not look like a political art but in its phenomenological analysis of artistic perception, in the new interpretation it gave of the work of Duchamp, it laid the grounds of the fundamental critique of the artistic institution our poststructuralist postmodernist artists are carrying out today: in questioning our assurance as perceiving subjects, our mastery of the public space and our inherited separation between the imaginary space of art and the real space of the world, it opened up a seal which was affixed on our whole behavior as social beings.) My claim then, since we are supposed to debate on the issue of evaluation, is that criteria appear today more than ever a function of what could be called political morality, this being understood in the broadest sense I just mentioned. This is, at least, the criteria on which I base my evaluation of the whole art of this century, it is what makes me enjoy the work of Mondrian, Malevich or Strzemiński—but also Ryman and Serra, yes, Ryman and Serra—and it is what leads me to reject in a lump the whole enterprise of the Schnabels, Cucchis and Chias as a shameless glorification of the political status quo.

Footnotes

¹Hal Foster, "(Post)Modern Polemics," *Recordings—Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics* (Port Townsend, Bay Press, 1985), p. 121.

²Cf. Achille Bonito Oliva, "A proposito di transavanguardia," *Alfabeta*, no 35, April 1982. This text constitutes an answer to Jean-Francois Lyotard's "Intervention italienne," which appeared in the January issue of the same journal (no 32) and in the French journal *Critique* (April 1982, no 419), then in English as a postface to Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1984.

³Robert Klein, "Notes sur la fin de l'image" (1962), in *La forme et l'intelligible* (Paris, Gallimard), pp. 379-380.

⁴Robert Klein, "L'eclipse de l'oeuvre d'art," (1967), in *op. cit.*, p. 409.

⁵Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," in Gregory Battcock, ed., *The New Art* (New York, Dutton, 1966), p. 102.

⁶Jean Paulhan, note passed to André Lhote during a meeting of the Museum Committee (dealing with acquisitions), quoted in the exhibition catalogue *Jean Paulhan à travers ses peintres*, Grand Palais, Editions des Musées Nationaux, Paris, 1974, p. 59.

⁷Wladyslaw Strzeminski, "Notes sur l'art russe" (1922), tr. from Polish in W. Strzeminski and K. Kobro, *L'espace uniste* (Editions l'Age d'Homme, Lausanne, 1977), pp. 50-51. On Strzeminski, cf. Yve-Alain Bois, "Polarization," *Art in America*, April 1984, pp. 152-161.

⁸Idem, p. 42.

⁹Charles Baudelaire, "Salon de 1846," in *Curiosités esthétiques*, H. Lemaître ed. (Garnier, Paris, 1962), p. 130. The original French text is: "Otez Delacroix, la grande chaîne de l'histoire est rompue et s'écroule à terre."

¹⁰Leo Steinberg, pointing out Baudelaire as a precursor of Greenberg, scorned this passage of the poet's essay on Delacroix in his famous article titled "Other Criteria": "A well-drawn figure fills you with a pleasure that is quite alien to the theme. Voluptuous or terrible, this figure owes its charm solely to the arabesque it describes in space. The limbs of a flayed martyr, the body of a swooning nymph, if they are skillfully drawn, connote a type of pleasure in which the theme plays no part, and if you believe otherwise, I shall be forced to think that you are an executioner or a rake." Cf. Leo Steinberg, *Other Criteria* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1972), p. 64.

¹¹Walter Benjamin, "Paris, capital of the XIXth Century," second version (1939), *Das Passagenwerk—Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. V, 1, p. 71.

¹²For such an attempt, cf. my essay, "Painting: the Task of Mourning," in *Endgame*, exhibition catalogue of the ICA (Boston, MIT Press, 1986), pp. 29-49.

¹³Cf. Lawrence Alloway, "The Uses and Limits of Art Criticism," in *Topics in American Art since 1945* (Norton, New York, 1975), pp. 252-254.

¹⁴Cf. Benjamin Buchloh, "Figures of Authority, Ciphers of Regression," *October* no. 16 (Spring 1981).

¹⁵Cf. Jean Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

¹⁶Tom Crow, "Modernism and Mass Culture in the Visual Arts," in *Modernism and Modernity*, Buchloh, Guilbaut and Solkin eds., Halifax, The Press of Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1983. For Greenberg's position see especially "Avant Garde and Kitsch," in *Art and Culture* (Boston, Beacon Press, 1961).

¹⁷Clement Greenberg, "How Art Writing Earns Its Bad Name," *Encounter*, December 1962, vol. XIX, no. 6, p. 70.

¹⁸Robert Klein, "Notes sur la fin de l'image," *op. cit.*, p. 378: "This is today's situation: on the one side the "ideal model" postulated by the academic dichotomy, impossible but essential in the last analysis to all art criticism and to all work; and on the other side art as intention or as act (of the artist or of the public or both), at the same time the ground and the negation of its products."

¹⁹Cf. Peter Burger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

²⁰Roman Jakobson, "On Realism in art," in *Readings in Russian Poetics*, L. Matejka and K. Pomorska eds., Cambridge Mass., MIT Press.

²¹Hilton Kramer, "Signs of Passion," in *Zeitgeist* (New York, Braziller, 1983), p. 18.

²²Quoted by Douglas Crimp, "The End of Painting," *October* no. 16, Spring 1981, p. 76.

²³Robert Rosenblum, "Francis Picabia: The Later Works," New York, Mary Boone Gallery, 1983, without pagination.

²⁴*Oeuvres complètes de Gustave Flaubert*, Paris, Club de l'Honnête Homme, 1971, vol. VI, p. 607. This quote is translated and discussed by Eugenio Donato in "The Museum's Furnace," reprinted in Josué V. Harari, *Textual Strategies* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1979), pp. 214 ff.

²⁵Gert Schiff, "Julian Schnabel and the Mythography of Feeling," New York, Pace Gallery, 1984, without pagination.

²⁶Robert Rosenblum, op. cit.

²⁷Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," *Illuminations* (New York, Schocken Books), p. 263.

²⁸Walter Benjamin, idem, p. 254.

Postmodernism and the Question of Meaning

By Suzi Gablik

I have seen many people die because life for them was not worth living. From this I conclude that the question of life's meaning is the most urgent question of all.

Albert Camus

Meaning has an inherent curative power. . . . Meaning makes a great many things endurable—perhaps everything.

Carl Jung

If it is true that the creation of meaning is vital to our well-being—that the human organism does not fulfill even its essential biological functions when it does not feel a framework of meaning—I would like to argue that postmodernism, with its appropriated images and its “open and drifting” intentions, has hardly begun to deal with the problem. Indeed, the new state of grace achieved by deconstruction seems to be the dispersal of all frameworks of meaning: to see the necessary union of a signifier and a signified as essential to symbolic functioning is now obsolete. According

to the dominant discourse, emancipation of the sign (reports Baudrillard) releases it from any "archaic" obligation it might have had to designate something; every sign (according to Derrida) can be put between quotation marks, and in so doing it can break with every given context, engendering an infinity of new contexts in a manner which is absolutely illimitable. Since signifieds and signifiers are continually breaking apart anyway, and reattaching in new combinations, trying to pin down and fix a specific signified to a given signifier violates the nature of language. In postmodernism, anything goes with anything, like a game without rules; the game is just to stay in totally free fall. Meaning, too, is like a game without rules, subject to any and all possible interpretations.

The more one reads poststructuralist criticism, the more it seems as if all its discussions take place under a glass bell. The writers may adopt up-to-the-minute theoretical models—rhizomatics, semiotics, grammatology, hermeneutics, diegesis (the list goes on and on, mostly incomprehensible to me)—but they all seem to share the same dark desire to undermine the legitimacy of specific meaning. Our whole belief-structure is so pervaded by scepticism that it questions all assumptions and points of view that allegedly perpetuate illusion. Meaning, according to deconstructivism, is one of those illusions; to see the world as indifferent to meaning is to see it "truthfully," without distortion or projection. "Even before Auschwitz," writes Theodor Adorno, "in the face of historical experiences, it was an affirmative lie to ascribe to existence any meaning at all." Is the meaning of art, then, linked to the meaning of life? And if life supposedly is without meaning, does that let art off the hook?

Part of our present confusion is the result of a failure to think clearly about what, exactly, it is that art is meant to do. Does it provide an aesthetic experience, a new world view, or does it seek to provide something else? Modernism was the great impulse to freedom, but in the end, it was a step into negative freedom. Modernism severed the bond between art and society; it drove a wedge between nature and culture; it negated the possibility of transcendence. It certainly left unresolved the vexed issue of whether art has a social purpose, or is a self-justifying end-in-itself. Postmodernism expresses the consensus that the modernist impulse has exhausted itself, but it makes no predictions about where our culture is going, or what will take modernism's place. The painter David Salle, for instance, denies that his paintings intend any commentary on the state of our culture, claiming that his subjects are important to him not as social commentary but "in their own mechanistic ways . . . in a detached way." Image-appropriation involves a refusal to claim for oneself the authority to speak, to be the author, the creator. As viewers, we are expected to experience these images as if they are without intrinsic value, as if their existence had no particular meaning. The ironic detachment of the artist suggests that his choice of images implies no particular commitments or consequences—we can admire the paintings without being convinced of their necessity. Obviously, throwing oneself into an unbounded and empty sea of free choice does not in itself give freedom but is more apt to produce a crisis of meaning. What is the critic to make of this open but totally arbitrary set of possibilities?

Thomas Lawson, writing in *Artforum* about Salle's work, has this to say: "Salle records a world so stupified by the narcotic of its own delusory gaze that it fails to understand that it has nothing actual in its grasp. Amid seeming abundance, there is no real choice, only a choice of phantasms. The world described in Salle's work is a jaded one, rife with a sluggish melancholy. The steady leaching of meaning from objects and images breeds an enervating uncertainty. . . . Artist and viewer alike stumble through a maze of false clues and incomplete riddles, coming on the same viewless arrangements and empty repetitions in the search for a coherent identity. Signs and props are ritually shuffled like so many commodities on the floor of a department store of the imagination, with a compulsive repetition that offers a dwindling satisfaction."

Obviously, for Lawson, Salle's multi-layered images have all the resonance of paper clips clashing in the night. No patterns of meaning, no corrosive flashes of insight are being brought to light. An image must be understood to be valued, in order for us to know how to react to it. Disinterested aestheticism anesthetizes us; the heart has no reaction to what it sees; only the eyes respond. Since we all pattern ourselves and our world view after our culture, if our model of culture is faulty or disordered, we ourselves are often disordered in precisely the same way. Looking at art becomes similar to our stupor before the tv set, as we aimlessly flip from station to station. Unless the idea of choice carries with it the possibility of making a difference, it negates the very freedom it claims to uphold. "Let us hope," Lawson concludes, "we can figure out some better way to represent our dreams, or we will continue to see them turn nightmarish."

Robert Hughes has similarly berated Andy Warhol as an unsuccessful artist because he fails to "discriminate between experience, which is what artists are meant to do for us." The assembly line of duplicated images is like a "blank mirror which refuses all judgments." Even in art, power is either assumed or abdicated. Disinterested aestheticism is the very opposite of waking up, looking at events critically, seeing reality, and feeling responsible, that is to say, responding to what goes on. The basic difficulty is the impaired capacity to feel and to give inner order to experience in general. If power is the capacity to carry out intentions—to know the ramifications of one's own choices—then passive images (such as Salle's or Warhol's), which are devoid of intention, have no power. Such art cannot see itself as a force for meaning in the world. It is consciousness that gives the world a meaning. Skillful use of power depends on a willingness to take responsibility for the consequences of images we put out into the world. Responsibility implies that one is carrying out intentions, shaping the environment, and influencing others. The question is, how much are we willing to take responsibility for exercising intentionality in the world?

"The artist," says Georg Baselitz, "is not responsible to anyone. His social role is asocial; his only responsibility consists in an attitude to the work he does. . . . There is no communication with any public whatsoever. The artist can ask no question, and he makes no statement; he offers no information, message or opinion. He gives no help to anyone, and his work cannot be used. It is the end product which counts, in my case, the picture."

The modern egoic self likes to think of itself as separate, independent and in control of things. I have used this quote many times, because it embodies for me the modernist aspiration for a totally “free” art, which can only be realized, when all is said and done, at the cost of social alienation. There is a necessary correlation, I would argue, between the quest for autonomy and art’s loss of meaning and relevance. Meaning emerges from context and connectedness; without context, nothing makes sense. Pluralism and art for art’s sake may lead to increased freedom, but it can only be had at the cost of social resonance. As Charles Newman points out in his essay, *The Post-Modern Aura*, if an artist proclaims himself as isolated and responsible to no one, he should not be surprised if he is ignored, uninfluential and perceived as irresponsible. The failure of modernism stems from its failure to ask that art be accountable—and not simply another self-justifying enterprise detached from all other values. Certainly the “anything goes” of the moment is no more than a stopgap and a compromise. It expresses the contradictions of our situation without offering any resolution. Remapping the modernist paradigm will entail much more than the reshuffling and multi-layering of aesthetic styles that has been going on. Post-modernism, and the criticism that goes with it, is like a self-protective dodge of consciousness—more a symptom of our alienation than any diagnosis of that condition. The obvious first step in any re-evaluation process is to fully comprehend what it is, as artists (or critics), we believe, where we stand, now, in relation to our culture. For it is our relation to our culture that will define for us our concept of art.

For instance, are we prepared to say what the role of the artist is in a postmodern society? Or what kind of culture is the most satisfactory? Do we know what the necessary ingredients might be for making a transition between the old existential meaninglessness and new images of value? My own answers to these questions will tell you something at least about how I am thinking at the present time. Since publishing *Has Modernism Failed*, I have been writing and lecturing a great deal about the ways that art has become a mirror for the manic materialism of our culture. And as I came to understand how much, as individuals and as a culture, we have suffered our deep creativity and spiritual well-being to become harmed in the bureaucratic drives for power and profit, the need to play by these cultural “ground rules” has lost its meaning for me; I find myself drawn into a redefinition of the role of the artist that is experiential and spiritual, rather than stylistic and aesthetic—that reconnects art with its visionary function of healing and social integration. *Has Modernism Failed?* was my attempt to show how we have alienated ourselves by our marketing orientation—to show how bureaucracy humiliates and ultimately destroys creativity under the guise of nurturing it. We tend to experience our difficulties and conflicts as personal, but often they are larger than personal: many of our present confusions are related to the framework of beliefs and standards of behavior provided by our culture to serve as guidelines for individual lives. What I have come to understand even more strongly is that modern alienation arises from the absence of the sacred in our lives, and I should like to argue that the need to re-experience the world as sacred is a crucial

factor in transforming the dominant social paradigm.

Modernism has been a culture of estrangement. Its legacy is the fall away from soul—the gravitational collapse of the psyche that sucks us into despair as if it were a black hole and gives us the existential vision of man, rattling around alone in an empty universe. Connoisseurs of hopelessness do not breed optimism; they emphasize man's contingency, they erode his sense of belonging—an atmosphere so much the essential characteristic of contemporary art and literature, we could say the spiritual void in our lives is the primary aesthetic fact of our time. The disillusioning effect of the modern world view is not simply a matter of the intellect, it is woven into the very fabric of consciousness itself. Against this nihilistic background, art has been the expression of man's estrangement, his isolation in the world, his disconnectedness and the ultimate futility of life. Art has been a mirror for what Jung called the "general neurosis of our time," which in most cases, has gone hand in hand with a sense of spiritual emptiness. As to whether postmodernism represents some kind of alternative to the disenchantment of the modern world view, we can say only that it has moved the furniture around, but it has not left the room. The old mechanisms are still in place; attitudes which are essential to genuine sacred vision are missing. Formalism stops short of our spiritual needs, and is no substitute for what the visionary energies alone can supply. Modern culture seems to have reached a crossroads; the choice seems to be to advance to the frontier where we can glimpse our transcendence, or else to remain entangled in our disillusionment.

This brings us back to the initial question of meaning. The experience of meaning depends on the awareness of a transcendental or spiritual reality that complements the empirical reality of life and together with it forms a whole. Can an individual work of art still be meaningful when this greater synthesis of meaning no longer exists? For the artist who is willing to turn back from the cultural program of nihilism, futility and cynicism—who trusts that human life and history do not end in a nothingness that explains nothing—the answer is yes. Indeed, at a time of threatening meaninglessness, the work of the artist is best able to meet the spiritual need of the society in which he or she lives by making art into a vehicle through which larger dimensions of meaning are expressed in the world—by renewing the culture's sense of overall purpose and providing an antidote to the metapathologies of purposelessness and alienation that are our legacy. Then the symbol as an active, evocative power becomes possible again, even in a culture where belief has collapsed.

James Turrell's observatory at Roden Crater, to be constructed on the top of an extinct volcanic crater north of Flagstaff, Arizona, is such a symbol for me. Roden Crater, according to Turrell, is a place where you feel geologic time; you have a strong feeling of standing on the surface of the planet. Four lower rooms will eventually align with the axis of the northernmost sunrise and the southernmost moonset; the fifth room, set above the others, will be open to the sky. A large bath at the center of the space will allow one to hear, by lowering one's head beneath the water's surface, the sound of astronomical sources many light years away. "Within that setting," writes

Turrell, "I am making spaces that will engage celestial events. Several spaces will be sensitive to starlight and will be literally empowered by the light of stars millions of light years away."

Turrell's intention is to focus that point around which nature whorls her symmetries, where stars can stream forward and out onto the diamond surfaces of the eyes. In this state of entranced understanding, our senses will begin to receive an amplified vision of the world, and it becomes possible to experience states of consciousness, through the vehicle of art, beyond the limiting patterns built up by the socio-cultural environment in which we live. To see the entire universe thus, as an unbroken whole, is to conceive, or vividly remember, that our connectedness with the world is built into our very cells. It is to intuitively re-envision the foundations of our being as coming from the universe, and to evoke the first function of a living mythology, in the sense of Rudolf Otto's definition in *The Idea of the Holy*: which is to waken and maintain in the individual an experience of awe, humility and respect, in recognition of the hidden and incomprehensibly great mystery in and around us. "If everyone were able to have this kind of experience," writes Count Panza di Biumo about Roden crater, "the use of drugs would disappear, no one would commit suicide, and violence would stop. Unfortunately, few people will make this journey—if they did, the world would change. We spend huge amounts of money for re-education centers and many other institutions devoted to the solution of social problems, but this one place would provide the best education, giving real hope in front of the greatest reality. . . . If this endless and boundless existence is forever, something of us must live on."

Once unity consciousness is seen as man's natural self, the whole idea of a sterile existentialism undergoes a profound correction. The very existence of the world itself "means" something; it is not an inert thing without purpose or significance. This does not need to imply either superficial optimism or "affirmative lies," but quite simply that man, in his innermost nature, appears as a being fundamentally in harmony with his environment. Boredom and meaninglessness are seen for what they are—cultural end-products, not a primal perception at all. Isolation is not a universal condition but a specific social fate. These conclusions have been corroborated by Stanislov Grof, a clinical psychologist known for his work of administering psychedelics to patients in therapeutic situations. According to Grof, three stages inevitably occur among patients, leading to clinical improvement and cure. The third stage invariably involves religious and mystical experience: "Everyone who experientially reaches these levels developed convincing insights into the utmost relevance of spiritual and religious dimensions in the universal scheme of things. Even the most hard-core materialists, positivistically oriented scientists, skeptics and cynics, uncompromising atheists and anti-religious crusaders such as the Marxist philosophers, became suddenly interested in spirital search after they confronted these levels in themselves."

Can works of art still be meaningful at a time of meaninglessness? I would say yes, as long as they are not merely reactive to the received images of modern mass culture, reflecting their limited perceptions and recycling their

contradictions right back into the collective unconscious. It is a mistake to suppose that our modern ideals of culture are rooted once and for all in man's nature; the courage to relinquish the modernist vision of art as nonfunctional, and to allow its uplifting, redeeming and reconciling potential to come back into play, is what will signal the artist's willingness to adopt a different basic attitude. So far as our feeling for art and the experience of meaning are concerned, it makes a tremendous difference whether or not a sense of appreciation and a basic trust in reality is a potent factor at the deepest level of the artist's consciousness. If art has the potential to heal, and to build, culture, then we must dare to dream those qualities that promote cultural and psychic wellbeing; for surely beyond the despair and apathy of the modern era, a less pessimistic, more balanced picture of reality exists, in which individuals may again come to feel their actions count. On this score, a metaphysical view of man is of greater value than an alienated one, however modern and however common such a view might be.

It all hangs, finally, on what kind of culture we take to be the most satisfactory. In its essence, culture is psychic nutrition, so that when a culture's dominant images are attractive and anticipatory—a challenging evocation of the good made visible—they set into motion unconscious psychological processes and tend to direct social change. Images have an important function as conductors of psychic energy. They have an integrating potential which can help bring the world into better balance.

We have made much of the idea of art as a mirror (reflecting the times); we have had art as a hammer (social protest); we have had art as furniture (something attractive to hang on the walls); and art as a search for the self. What I have tried to point to is art as *inspiration*—art which activates the dynamics of hope in a culture saturated with despair, through images that empower the collective unconscious—art which exercises its power to administer the social dreaming. We are just beginning to perceive how our development has been blocked by these existential models of despair—how the images we have programmed ourselves by actually run our lives, unconsciously determining our actions and bringing us the negative conditions they represent. We need to understand the real power of imagination: what we believe, the stories we tell ourselves; the images we have of ourselves, of others, of the world, and of the future are what will guide, create, and pull us, along with our culture, into the future. If art has any purpose beyond the purely aesthetic, if it has any meaning beyond that of fulfilling the need of artists to create, it may be nothing less than remaking the image of our time. "It is generally the creative artist," asserts the Jungian psychologist Marie-Louise von Franz, "who creates the future. A civilization which has no creative people is doomed. So the person who is really in touch with the future, with the germ of the future, is the creative personality." My own personal sense is that it is not a new aesthetic style or technique that is needed from art just now, but a special kind of artist: the visionary: if we want to participate in creating a future different from the past, we must begin by envisioning possibilities. Because we have no future except what we can envision, and what we envision will draw us toward itself.

The Subjective Aspect of Critical Evaluation

By Donald Kuspit

I

One can regard the critical evaluation of art as having an objective and subjective aspect, in dialectical relationship. In this talk I am going to emphasize the subjective aspect of critical evaluation, in part because it is often overlooked or neglected, which amount to the same repression of it. The demand that the critical evaluation of art be objective in basis and as scientific as possible, and the assumption that it can only make sense and be reliable if it is, is a partialization of the critical act which functions to support the illusion that there is nothing psychologically special about one's relationship with art, and that there is a normal, well-adjusted relationship to art to which everyone must aspire. No doubt in rebellious overcompensation, I want to carry my emphasis on the subjective aspect of critical evaluation to an extreme, even an abnormal reductionist extreme. By doing so I want to make a point as strongly as possible: that the most serious reason one turns to art is to satisfy a profound need—the need for a coherent, unified sense of self—that has not been satisfied in life, a need that becomes all the more pressing the more the world forces one to recog-

nize one's limitations, undermines one's fantasy of omnipotence, treats one with the insulting casualness and subliminal indifference which it uses to assimilate everyone into its daily flow. It never mirrors one enough, and it eventually stops mirroring one altogether, or it mirrors one in such a grotesque way that one is unrecognizable to oneself, and would rather be unseen. It does this to everyone big or little, but it is those with pretensions to lasting significance that it most hurts with its callous appropriation, which is as good as disregard.

Art, for all its insidious worldness and reflection of dailiness—however sublime or ironical that reflection may be, however autonomous its insinuating language is or is not thought to be—has pretensions to lasting significance beyond those of any human endeavor. The scientist expects his truth to be superseded—it rarely becomes more than a working hypothesis—and the technician expects his technology to be improved, but the work of art claims to have enduring significance. To change it makes no sense. We do not look at a significant work of ancient art with the same amused curiosity with which we read about an ancient conception of the universe, but with the sense of being in touch with something immortal. It remains vital after we have analyzed it to death, which is why we regard it as having enduring significance. It is thus in a sense natural that we turn with serious critical attention to art when we feel our own immortality to be in question—when we begin to doubt our own lasting significance and, generalizing resentfully, feel the very notion of lasting significance to be preposterous. And yet it haunts us, for while the desire for immortality or lasting significance seems an emotional deadend and intellectual monstrosity, it also metaphorically articulates in the very act of masking the primitive psychic need for unity or integrity of self. Successful integration promises lasting significance; put the other way, the self that appears to have lasting significance seems substantially whole.

Jung has argued that the main crisis in the course of individuation occurs in middle life, when the conflict between "archaic images of omnipotent selfhood" and "the demands made by social norms"¹ reaches a climax. It is then that one becomes seriously—not just spitefully—critical about life in general, and may be drawn into a seriously critical relationship with art, as a realm in which the conflict can be metaphorically articulated and worked through. The successful resolution of this conflict determines the character of one's maturity, and indeed, it is a conflict about the nature and meaning of maturity. Thus, the critical evaluation of art becomes especially serious—subjectively serious—at a particularly important developmental stage in life, and the dominant conflict of that stage cannot help but inform the critical evaluation of the art the critic seriously relates to. Indeed, it *must* inform his criticism if that criticism is to rise above business-as-usual professionalism and convey the art's significance in the very act of testing it—suggest what it optimally might be theoretically while recognizing what it is in fact.

Santayana has said that criticism is a serious moral activity, for it involves the attempt to distinguish the immortal from the mortal part of an art in the name of civilization.² Broadly understood, criticism is civilization's

defense of itself. More particularly, it examines the changing sense of "immortal" and "mortal" that constitute the dialectic of civilization—the changing weight of meaning and value put on each term. Such serious moral activity requires a mature awareness of the possibilities as well as the actuality of life. That is, if criticism is to be serious it must be motivated by a mature sense of the conflicts that motivate life, and especially of the conflict which shows us life at its maturest. When the conflict between the infantile sense of infinite possibility that fuels the expansion—creative ambition—of selfhood and the socialization process that seeks to normalize selfhood by compelling it to internalize conformist expectations is most overt, criticism can begin in deadly earnest, for it is faced with the most maturing conflict of all. It is the conflict most difficult to emerge from unscathed and yet potentially the most fruitful in creative self-integration. Immersed in this conflict, the critic can test the art for its maturing effect—for its effectiveness in helping the self toward mature recognition of the conflict. The tentative control—if not transcendence—afforded by recognition of the conflict begins the complex integration of its terms, that is, its always tentative and tenuous resolution.

In a sense, the critical act is a way of maturing through conflict with an art. The critic either denies that it is immortal, of lasting significance—omnipotent or symbolic of omnipotence—by confronting it with its mortal part, that is, the sociostylistic norms that motivate—"move"—it; or he confronts a mortal art with the criteria of supposedly lasting significance, reminds it of the factors that would make it all-powerful, turn all eyes to it, and that it is missing. In both cases he shows how the art is an unholy mix of immortal and mortal components, thus using the art to articulate and bring to consciousness the basic unconscious conflict motivating maturity. His criticism becomes a representation of the art in terms that convey the primary conflict of maturity, namely, the wish for immortality (in the guise of an infantile feeling of omnipotence) and the recognition of the reality of mortality (in the guise of recognition of social limitation). The critical act does not so much distinguish the immortal from the mortal part of the art, as Santayana said, as show how they interact—how they are integrated in the art. Criticism reminds every art, no matter what its claims to grandeur, that it is composed of mortal as well as immortal elements, and that it is not always clear which is which—reminding it that just that element which everyone thought guaranteed its immortality at the time of its making may turn out to be just the element that will make it look vulnerable and mortal to a future generation. By presenting the possibilities of opinion about it—simultaneously overestimating and underestimating it, showing the flux of the immortal and mortal variables at play in it, and their nominal character—the critic keeps alive consciousness of the conflict or dialectic between the unconscious archaic wish for omnipotence and the conscious recognition of social limitation that shapes the art's, as well as his own, maturity. In a sense, he uses the art to dramatize the conflict, even uses it as a stage on which to reenact his personal conflict, with the terms of his feeling subtly transposed into the terms of the art. The art becomes a pantomime of the conflict. But since

the conflict is universal or inescapable, the pantomime becomes an accurate articulation of what is most critical in the art.

However, there is a crucial difference between the art and the criticism. Where the art may or may not reconcile its wish for immortality with the reality of its mortality—offer us elements which can be regarded as making it of lasting significance as well as those which seem all too bound to a passing world, or rather put the elements of a particular world together “artistically” so that they seem memorable rather than matter-of-fact—criticism seeks to resolve the conflict, that is, offer us a sense of the art as a harmonious whole despite the contradiction which animates and threatens to disintegrate it. Criticism gets its credibility not only by articulating the contradictions that mature the art, but by showing that the art does in fact have a secret integrity. While it is overtly tense with contradiction, it is covertly a harmonious or cohesive whole, that is, has a secret, deeplying unity of self. This unity is “proposed” by the criticism, and becomes a kind of ideal fiction against which the art is measured. In a sense, it is as fictional as the art itself, that is, as much a “pragmatic” or theatrical offer of ultimate significance to the art by the spectator as the art is a pragmatic or theatrical offer of partial significance to the spectator. In their different ways, criticism and art try to ingratiate themselves with each other. The critic solves, as it were, the riddle of the selfhood of the art—masked as the problem of its immortality—much as the art articulates the problematic character of the spectator’s selfhood by metaphorically articulating the master dialectic of his being, the dialectic that matures self. The art that seems most significant is that which is like a Sphinx, asking the question “Who am I really, underneath this monstrous, crazy disguise which shows me to be self-contradictory, half beast, half human, half mortal, half immortal, it not being clear which half is which?” The critic shows that the art which is significant is the art that offers a covert “correction” of the contradiction, achieves a secret unity of the opposites, which is unconsciously appropriated by the spectator as a basic model of unified selfhood. Unconsciously appropriated, it seems timeless, that is, appropriate for all times if particular to none, which is one way of describing what seems effectively immortal. Thus, the critic shows that the problem of selfhood is solved in some art, if in no life. The critic not only stages the art as the drama of a self at odds with itself, but the drama of a self coming to terms with itself through being at odds with itself—dialectically “finding” itself in the very act of recognizing its contradictory and self-contradictory character.

But the critic does not discover the immortal part of the art he deals with, he imaginatively creates it. The immortal is the ultimate imaginary device by which the self is given ultimate integrity, or that ultimate good called integrity of self. The critic convinces us, through his vision of an art, that the various works of art made by a particular artist have a secret, intricate unity of purpose which bespeaks an integral self. Such “integrity” guarantees the artist permanent significance for civilization. The critic creates the particular artist-self by showing how he secretly, with great ingenuity and effort, reconciles grandiose—god-like—creativity and social limitation, how

he is simultaneously archaically absolute and intimately aware of and subtly articulate about the particularities of a given lifeworld and artworld. Criticism creates the cohesive artist-self as a kind of magical center of artistic production, or rather plots the artistic drama whose product is a seemingly exemplary unity of self. It is really a byproduct of the critic's use of the art to work through the primary conflict of his own existence at its midpoint towards his own mature self—his use of the impersonal art to articulate the conflict as a personal crossroads. He as it were repersonalizes the art in dialectical defiance of the kind of analysis that depersonalizes it. While he comes to recognize the conflict as universal through his "discovery" of it in the "chosen" art, his "recovery" of the buried treasure of integral selfhood from it comes through his own imaginative efforts: it is his own invention. There is more than a little of the hidden critic in every artist-self that civilization proclaims as significant. One of the reasons that every generation reevaluates the significance accorded the artists of the past—sometimes reconceiving them from the ground up—is that every generation has people—critics—who must "find" themselves through art, or rather conceive of a self that seems exemplary or critically significant in the civilization of that generation. The critic is responsible, as it were, for the artist's temporary immortality in a particular generation. The critic gives the art its exemplary value at a particular moment of civilization by showing how the art exemplifies the sublimest idea of self possible at the time.

II

Let us backtrack and start all over. The so-called "critical" evaluation of art is a largely unconscious matter. We approach art with a host of irrational expectations from it. Our cognitive analysis of art is only the tip of the iceberg of our relationship to it. These are truisms, but they have been violently repressed. To shift the metaphor, our cognitive relationship to art is a small island of consciousness in a sea of unconscious involvement with it. Cognitive analysis shores up the work of art against the waves of desire that batter it, but is also the intellectual reconstruction of an original romanticization of it. Reasoning about the historical place or ideological importance of an art tends to rationalize or justify a preexisting, largely unconscious, irrational psychodynamic relationship to it.

We never get seriously—even tragically—involved with a work of art just because it is there to be analyzed professionally, but because it represents certain deep-seated feelings and attitudes we have. The work of art has charismatic power because it seems to satisfy our needs, to give voice to feelings that seem ineffable, even to put in socially presentable form attitudes that seem transgressively anti-social if not outright criminal. We expect the work to mirror us, and when it doesn't, our relationship to it becomes tragic. We feel abandoned by our last hope for an "understanding" relationship. (It is an "ineffable" relationship—one in which there is no need for speech, for we are as close to the unconscious of the work as an infant is to its mother's unconscious.) This psychodynamic symbolic

function of art, whose complexity I have barely intimated, tends to be obscured by the militantly cognitive response to art. Discussion about whether an art is stylistically or ideologically innovative or conservative tends to mask an emotional, even characterological, "prejudice" in favor of the innovative or conservative. Much debate about the critical value of an art is a kind of allegorical warfare to defend certain pre-existing, characteristic "points of view" or "outlooks." The art is a pawn in this fight. It is of value only insofar as it exemplifies the prejudiced point of view, rather than for itself, as it were. "Truth" is in the point of view—the typical prejudice—not in the art. One does not go to art expecting to have one's mind changed by it, but to have it confirm one's pre-existing point of view. If it doesn't, it is dismissed as trivial or reactionary or banal or boring or whatever. One uses the work of art to demonstrate one's commitment to the outlook, even as a kind of proof of it. Attention to art becomes a kind of irrational rationalization of the outlook, as though because one is supposedly rationally attending to the work of art one's outlook is rational and has been arrived at rationally. But the attempt to objectively "justify" the outlook by using art as an example of it is like making the proverbial symbolic slip of the emotional tongue, revelatory of the basic irrationality or subjectivity of the outlook.

The question of the way one evaluates an art is inseparable from the question of the kind of satisfaction the art gives. In *Civilization and Its Discontents* Freud classed art in general as an "auxiliary construction," one of three "palliative remedies" for the difficulty, even unbearability of life, full of "too much pain, too many disappointments, impossible tasks." The "remedies"—consolations—for the wretchedness of life are "powerful diversions of interest, which lead us to care little for our misery; substitutive gratifications, which lessen it; and intoxicating substances, which make us insensitive to it. Something of this kind is indispensable."³ Art is a substitutive gratification. It is, as Freud said, a "phantasy-pleasure," a "sublimation of the instincts" "frustrated by the outer world," the "transferring of instinctual aims" into a direction in which they cannot be frustrated. Art is a civilized kind of satisfaction of instinctual aims, "but compared with that of gratifying gross primitive instincts its intensity is tempered and diffused; it does not overwhelm us physically." It seems to be possible to say that from Freud's perspective art can also be regarded as a powerful diversion of interest and an intoxicating substance. Indeed, the esthete—the absolute lover of art—can be understood to regard art as a kind of superior brandy. As Wilhelm Busch—quoted by Freud in his discussion of art—wrote, "The man who cares has brandy too," and perhaps finally cares more for the brandy than anything else. After all, it is the brandy that restores him to "equilibrium." As Baudelaire said in the preface to "The Salon of 1846," "Art is an infinitely precious good, a draught both refreshing and cheering which restores the stomach and the mind to the natural equilibrium of the ideal."⁴

But Freud's view of human needs—the instincts to be satisfied—has come to seem too limited to many psychoanalytic thinkers. For many of them so-called "gross primitive instincts" are not so primitive, however gross

they may be. Their satisfaction subserves the satisfaction of other instincts, which they in fact "express." Erich Fromm's conception of what he calls "psychic needs" or "existential needs" is one important formulation of these "alternate," more psychologically primitive, needs. To understand them in relationship to art is to gain an understanding of the kind of satisfaction art can afford and the kind of credibility a critical evaluation of art can have. Among the interpersonalists or proto-interpersonalists, Fromm's understanding of the psychic needs which arise from and articulate the "conflict" which is "man's essence," and which "enables and obliges him to find an answer to his dichotomies," seems the most clearly and comprehensively formulated.⁵ The basic contradiction underlying the tragic "contradictions which man cannot annul but to which he can react in various ways, relative to his character and culture,"⁶ is the "essential dichotomy between the unfolding of all a person's potential and the shortness of life, which even under favorable conditions hardly permits a full unfolding."⁷ This is complicated by another contradiction: "man is subject to nature, yet 'transcends all other life because he is, for the first time, *life aware of itself*.'"⁸ Full human unfolding implies a full awareness of life, which is tragically impossible. It is because of this complicated tragic conflict that "man 'is forced to overcome the horror of separateness, of powerlessness and of lostness, and find new forms of relating himself to the world to enable him to feel at home'."⁹ The existential/psychic needs arise from this effort. Fromm identifies six of them: "the need for relatedness, for transcendence, for rootedness, for a sense of identity, and for a frame of orientation and an object of devotion," and "for effectiveness."¹⁰ Taken together, they dialectically articulate the unannulable tragic conflict at the core of life, without overcoming it.

It has been pointed out that Fromm's important distinction between these true human needs and "the 'inhuman needs' . . . suggested to man . . . to draw his attention away from his true human needs" is derived from "Marx's concept of needs that are created to force man to make new sacrifices and to place him in new dependencies."¹¹ However, Marx had no adequate conception of psychic needs. He seems to have understood, at least partially, "alienated man," but as Fromm said, to take alienated man as the point of departure for psychological understanding is to fail to grasp "nonalienated existence, which is determined only by existential dichotomies."¹² It is by putting ourselves "in the psychological position of the person who has lost unity with nature as a result of his specific human qualities, and seeks to recover that unity," that we can understand not only "authentic human needs" but the critical role a relationship to art can play in satisfying them, or rather, in giving us the illusion that they can be convincingly satisfied. Art, I am going to argue, presents itself as the permanent satisfaction of psychic needs. The illusion of permanent satisfaction is the grandest of the grand illusions—the most fundamental illusion necessary to magical survival. It is the expectation on which all the other satisfactions art affords are built. It is the most unconscious expectation we have from art.

An art becomes critically significant when it seems to promise us one

or more of the following satisfactions for the different yet inseparable psychic needs: a seemingly instinctive relationship to it as though it was a new nature, transcendence of what Fromm calls "the hell of self-centeredness and hence self-imprisonment,"¹³ new roots for existence, a sense of being self-identical, a devotional object through which we can orient ourselves to existence, and a sense of primitive mastery. An art is critically significant when it seems to transport us to a realm where there is no tragic experience of recurrent psychic need. In general, successful art, perhaps the most acceptable public form of wishful thinking, creates the illusion of being existentially needless.

These satisfactions form a hierarchical order, with a sense of primitive mastery being the most superficial sense of satisfaction a work of art can afford and the sense of being self-identical—being integral, having integrity—being the profoundest satisfaction it can afford. Generating an instinctive, charismatic relationship to it as though it was a new or second nature seems to me the second most superficial satisfaction it can afford, while a sense of it as a new root for existence prepares the way for the sense of it as a source of self-identity. Instinctive relationship to seemingly charismatic art prepares the way for transcendence of the old everyday self that superficially seems central. In general, I submit that the hierarchy of satisfactions is as follows, moving from the simplest or straightforward to the most complex psychic need art can seem to satisfy: (1) the need for effectiveness; (2) the need for relatedness; (3) the need for rootedness; (4) the need for transcendence; (5) the need for a frame of orientation and an object of devotion; and (6) the need for an experience of identity or unity. It is the last on which I concentrated in the first part of the paper, and the most difficult to assess. If art seems to satisfy the preoedipal need for an experience of identity or unity, then our relationship to art has to be described as ultimately narcissistic, that is, it satisfies the narcissistic need for an archaic sense of selfhood—a need not satisfied in the mundane world. We turn to art for its satisfaction, for it is presumably not satisfied in any durable way in our infancy, although narcissistic satisfaction is one that no doubt has to be frequently renewed throughout life, perhaps more than any other kind of satisfaction. Indeed, one can even argue that the other kinds of satisfaction, from the gross physical sexual kind Freud thought was fundamental, to the psychic satisfactions Fromm thought were necessary, are readily convertible into narcissistic satisfaction, that is, used for narcissistic purposes. In any case, if our relationship to art is ultimately narcissistic, it must be described in terms of Kohut's conception of narcissistic transference, which for convenience I will summarize in Donald Kalsched's words as "a two-faceted transference constellation alternating between the 'mirror transference' and the 'idealizing' or 'twinship' transference."¹⁴ Kalsched remarks that narcissism or the narcissistic transference is "so ubiquitous. . . that we are tempted to conclude that it [articulates] something fundamental about the *process of psychic internalization*, i.e., the processes by which psyche itself is transmuted from the 'illusory' interpersonal space and takes up residence as internal structure."¹⁵ I submit that the Jungian account of the middle life crisis of individuation involving

a conflict between infantile feelings of omnipotence and the recognition of social norms is a crisis of interpersonal space—a crisis which issues in the mature recognition of its illusory or pragmatic/theatrical character—and that the mature result, in which the psyche “takes up residence as internal structure,” that is, as integral, independent self, is the experience of identity or unity so profoundly necessary throughout life but not readily forthcoming from it, and which art affords at its maturest. The critical relationship to art, which I submit is the model relationship to it, begins interpersonally in the theatrical mirror transference—the work of art seems to promise a glimpse of one’s deepest self, seems to reflect as through a glass darkly its basic unity of being. The critical relationship to art then becomes explicitly idealizing: the artist is unconsciously regarded by the critic as his twin, his double. The art is encountered and analyzed in the aura of this two-facted narcissistic transference, out of which emerges a fantasy or transference representation of the artist-self, which is internalized by the critic. But it is in fact the critic’s self “making sense” of the art, that is, giving it a self of which the particular works are regarded as emanations. Through the process of unconsciously narcissistically oriented analysis of the art the critic simultaneously imagines and internalizes the artist-self, but in fact it is his own to begin with. It may have constituted itself by imaginative identification with the artist’s work, but its form pre-existed the work, not Platonically, but in the theatrical interpersonal space of his relationship to it, which arose and became consequential in the first place because of his expectation that art could satisfy his need for integral selfhood, indeed, was the royal road to it, the privileged path to an experience of identity or unity of self. I think this expectation is socio-historically generated, but the key point here is that the critic becomes pregnant, as it were, with a sense of integrity, through his relationship with art. It is not clear to me whether the art that makes him pregnant irradiated him the way the Holy Ghost irradiated the Virgin Mother, or whether he had full-fledged intercourse with it—knows it in a really carnal way—to conceive his self and know its self. I suspect some art makes the critic feel virginal again, while other art makes him feel like a tired whore turning tricks for the same old customer in a new disguise. Whether spiritual or vulgar, the ultimate value of an art seems to depend on the kind of integrity it makes one feel one has. The question for criticism is whether art, having mediated in however perverse way a sense of integrity, can remain, to use Paul Tillich’s term, an object of “ultimate concern,” or whether, having done so, it fades away through overfamiliarity. I think every particular art must lose significance, must come to seem more mortal than immortal, because the satisfaction art offers is not enduring however much it creates the illusion of permanent satisfaction. Once we have experienced the sense of integrity mature art can afford, we are quickly disillusioned by the art if not by the experience of integrity. But the critic returns to relate to other, seemingly fresh, art, in however Sisyphean a way, because there seems few other relationships in our society—apart from the rare significantly intimate ones—which afford the experience of integrity. But in his eternal return to art he has to answer another question the art of our society seems

to confront him with: how much fresh art is mature art, that is, seems to articulate the developmental crisis through which the mature self might be created? How much art speaks to one's mature self? How much art is really worth intimately working through, critically evaluating seriously, that is, for the sake of the illusion of the salvation or integrity of the self?

Notes

¹Elizabeth Wright, *Psychoanalytic Criticism: Theory In Practice* (New York, Methuen, 1984), p. 70.

²George Santayana, *The Life of Reason* (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), p. 356.

³Sigmund Freud, *Civilizations and Its Discontents* (London, Hogarth Press, 1930), p. 25.

⁴Charles Baudelaire, "The Salon of 1846," *The Mirror of Art* (Garden City, NY, Doubleday Anchor Books, 1956), p. 38.

⁵Rainer Funk, *Erich Fromm: The Courage To Be Human* (New York, Continuum, 1982), p. 59.

⁶Quoted in Funk, p. 58.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 59

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 60.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 61.

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³Quoted in Funk, p. 63.

¹⁴Donald Kalsched, "Narcissism and the Search for Interiority," *Money, Food, Drink, And Fashion And Analytic Training: Depth Dimensions of Physical Existence* (Fellbach-Oeffingen, Adolf Bonz, 1983; Proceedings of the Eighth International Congress For Analytical Psychology), p. 302.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 304.

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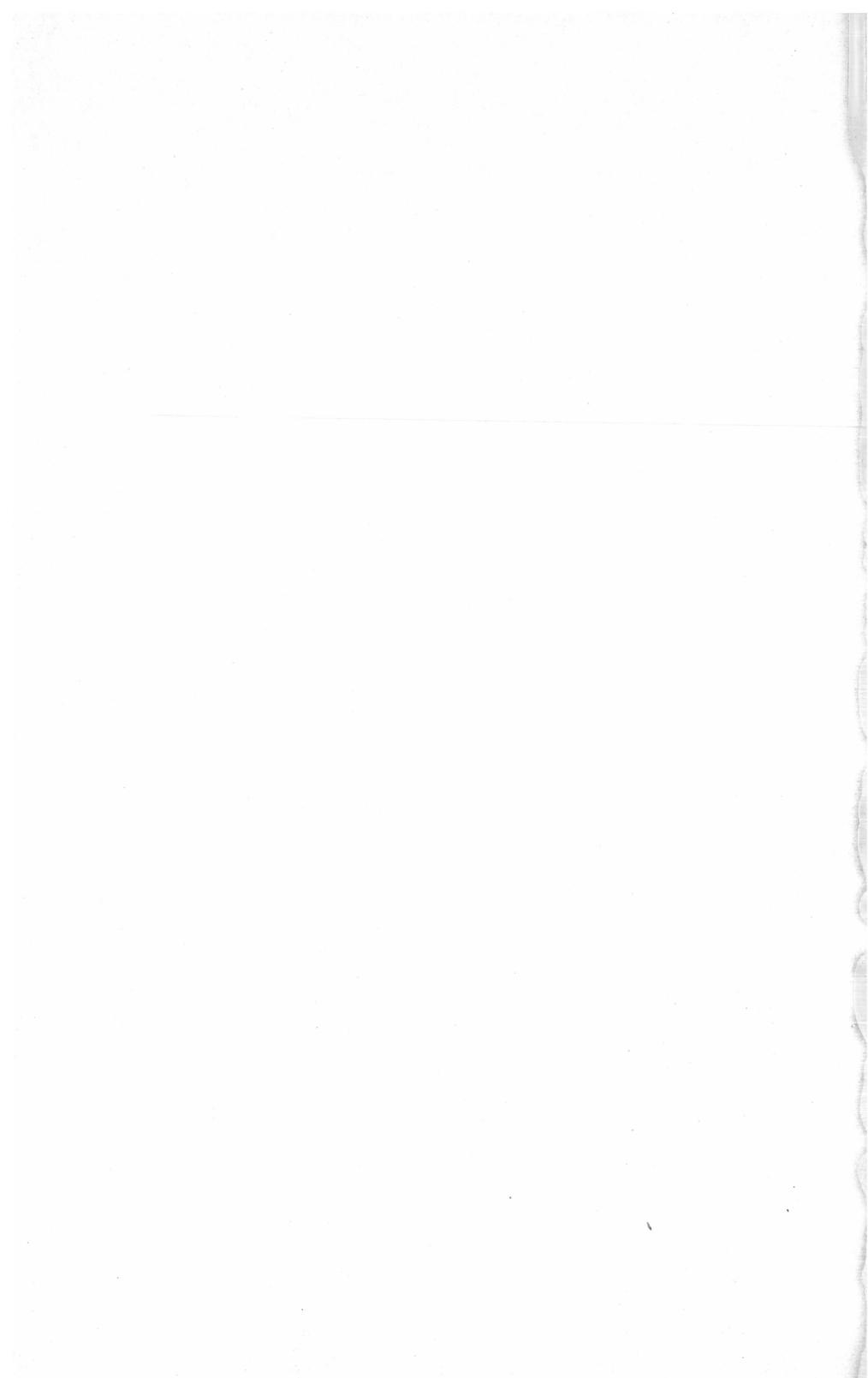
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