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Book forum

Diarmuid Costello, Stefano Velotti, Michalle Gal, Espen Hammer, Robert R. Clewis

On Diarmuid Costello, *Aesthetics after modernism*

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Diarmuid Costello (University of Warwick)

Précis of *Aesthetics after modernism*

Aesthetics after modernism argues for the ongoing relevance of aesthetics to art after modernism. In it I try to show that even what are typically taken to be the hardest of hard cases engage individuals in recognisably aesthetic ways and thereby remain amenable aesthetic analysis in principle. Why, if that is true, do so many art theorists, critics, and even artists appear to think otherwise? I trace the first order artworld's rejection of aesthetic theory to Clement Greenberg's success in co-opting the discourse of aesthetics, and in particular Kant's aesthetics, to underwrite his own brand of formalist criticism. Greenberg applied this predominantly to modernist painting and sculpture. Not only has this led to Kant being tarred with the brush of Greenbergian formalism; it has also led critics and theorists of subsequent art to miss the resources within Kant's aesthetics for capturing what is distinctive about our cognitive relation to precisely those aspects of art that most interest them. There is a tendency simply to assume that Kant's aesthetics cannot speak to the more conceptual dimension of our interactions with art. I offer an interpretation of Kant's theory of art that seeks to show otherwise, taking Conceptual Art as my primary test case: here is a kind of art that, at least in its "stronger" or more purist forms, claims to forgo sensible properties altogether, in favour of direct engagement with ideas as art. But if Kant's aesthetics can be shown to accommodate our cognitive relation to art with no sensible features relevant to its appreciation as art, then it should in principle be able to withstand the challenge of any form of art.

The book is divided into three Parts. Part I focuses on the internal structure of Greenbergian theory, affording it the kind of sustained, scholarly

treatment it has yet to receive from a philosopher. Treated in the round – and not, as is typical, dismissed on the basis of some of the more obvious argumentative shortcomings of his better-known essays – Greenberg's position repays such treatment. Seen from this perspective, most philosophical criticism of Greenberg to date appears at best ill-informed and at worst opportunistic. Alerted to the sophistication of Greenberg's theory by reading Thierry de Duve, I focus instead on the internal structure of his theory as a whole. No other critic or theorist of his day developed a theory of remotely similar ambition.

Greenberg's theory marries a formalist conception of aesthetic judgement with a medium-specific theory of artistic development. The opening chapter focuses on the depth of the connection Greenberg succeeded in establishing between these two wings of his theory, pivoting on his understanding of artistic conventions. Modernism works by artists testing the conventions of the medium as they inherit them as to their necessity or otherwise; formalism works by judging the state in which a given work leaves the conventions of its medium having so tested them. Without the testing procedures of modernism, formalist criticism would be without a suitable artistic object; without the artist's judgements on the results of her testing procedures as she works in her medium, modernism would be without an internal motor. Formalism is thus internal to modernism; without it there would be no explanation of how the artistic self-criticism driving modernism functions. But modernism is also internal to formalism; it produces the distinctive objects upon which formalist judgement gains traction.

The upshot was an unusually tight, mutually sustaining relation between aesthetic value and medium-specificity at the core of Greenbergian theory. More than anything, it is the tight correlation between the two, intersecting in the role that conventions play in conditioning the creation and reception of art, that has overdetermined subsequent attitudes to aesthetics in art theory. Seen in retrospect, the lack of aesthetic theories of art after modernism capable of compelling widespread assent, together with art theorists' willingness to appeal to a variety of theoretical paradigms of varying degrees of externality to art, suggests the majority of art theorists must believe the conceptual limits of aesthetic theory have been breached by the internal development of art after modernism. But why do art theorists believe this? In my view it is largely a product of Greenberg's success in co-opting the discourse of aesthetics – particularly Kant's aesthetics – for modernist theory. The strength of the internal connection between modernism and formalism in Greenberg's theory, in particular his identification of medium-specificity with the pursuit of aesthetic value in art, has overdeter-

mined attitudes towards the aesthetic – both positive and negative – in subsequent art theory.

With this reconstruction of the internal structure of Greenbergian theory in place, the following chapter critiques of each wing of his theory in turn. With respect to Greenberg's formalism, I take issue with his account of both the "objectivity" of aesthetic judgement and his conception of "aesthetic distance". The former mistakes "subjective universality", Kant's characterisation of the normativity of a kind of judgement that claims to generalize over the feelings of all other judges, for something that might be established empirically through the historical record of consensus over time. The latter conflates a psychological characterisation of a particular empirical state of mind in which idiosyncratic interests are put "out of gear" for "disinterestedness", Kant's characterisation of one necessary precondition on the freedom from determination of aesthetic judgement. With respect to Greenberg's modernism, I question his confidence that the arts can be parsed on non-question-begging grounds either in terms of medium or sensory modality. This is to assume that the arts are separate in principle simply because to date they have been (largely) separate in practice. This assumption was put under pressure not only by the non-medium-specific development of art after modernism, but by the conflicted place of modernist sculpture within Greenberg's own division of the arts. Despite modernism's supposed medium-specificity, Greenberg's reconstruction of modernist history required him to give an essentially pictorial defence of modernist sculpture's value as art.

Part II comprises two pairs of chapters focusing on the afterlife of Greenberg's modernism and formalism, respectively, for later debates in art criticism and theory. In each case I take one broadly sympathetic and one broadly antipathetic respondent as my examples. The goal is to show that Greenberg's conceptualization of the field is as over-determining for those who reject his theory as it is for those who – in however qualified a sense – endorse it. I single out the work of Michael Fried and Rosalind Krauss, and de Duve and Arthur Danto, as my examples of sympathetic and unsympathetic responses to Greenberg's modernism and formalism respectively.

Chapter three focuses on Fried's critique of Minimalism – notably his recourse to Stanley Cavell's reading of the later Wittgenstein on the nature of conventionality as both a priori yet also rooted in the evolving natural history of the species. *Contra* Greenberg, Fried argues that while artistic media have distinct essences these do not endure ahistorically, but develop under pressure of recent artistic production. I use the more recent work of Gerhard Richter and Jeff Wall to suggest that these criticisms rebound on

Fried's own critique of minimalism. For on this conception of an artistic medium, Richter can be seen as aspiring to make photographs with the means of painting, and Wall as aspiring to make paintings with the means of photography – since these are the media to the highest past achievements of which their work arguably seeks to withstand comparison. But once it is possible to make paintings photographically and photographs by painting, there is no longer any clearly defined space between artistic media that can be safely rejected as "theatre". It may have taken later art to show this, but it was always true.

Chapter four considers Krauss' later appeal to Stanley Cavell on "automatism" and the "automatic" to underwrite her critique of art's supposed "post-medium condition", the belief that artistic media no longer bear on the value of art. Against this, Krauss maintains that even artists working outside traditionally sanctioned media are best understood as inventing their own medium. To show this I focus on her late essays on Kentridge, Coleman and Ruscha. But I question whether Krauss can get what she needs to underwrite this understanding of artistic media from Cavell: although his account makes sense of artists reinventing convention, by reanimating existing media in unexpected ways, it cannot make sense of artists inventing new media *ex nihilo*, especially media that could only be practiced by one. But could her account be coherent, independently of its claims to a Cavellian provenance? I suggest not: the idea of a logically (as opposed to contingently) "private" artistic medium is incompatible with the public grounds of artistic media.

The following pair of chapters turns to the legacy of Greenberg's formalism. Chapter five focuses on Thierry de Duve, without question Greenberg's exemplary reader. De Duve's central claim is that Kant's account of aesthetic judgement, to which Greenberg increasingly appealed in his late writings, needs to be "updated" in light of Duchamp's readymades. Rather than being asked to judge whether the object before us is beautiful we are now asked to judge whether it is art, where this allegedly involves conferring the name (rather than concept) "art" on any object judged accordingly. De Duve appeals to Saul Kripke's work on proper names as "rigid designators" to underwrite this account; yet his own account of the comparative and affective nature of such judgement rules out appeal to Kripke's account of naming. As with Krauss, I then consider whether de Duve's account might yet be coherent, independent of his claims on Kripke, taking his corresponding "updating" of Kant's "Antinomy of taste" as my test case.

Chapter six focuses on Danto, who takes what he see as the indifferent "Kant-Greenberg aesthetics of form" to be manifestly inadequate not only to

Duchamp's readymades, but art after modernism more generally. According to Danto, aesthetic theories maintain that we can tell art from non-art simply in virtue of how each looks and makes us feel. But once art can have real world "indiscernible counterparts", we have no reason to respond differently unless we *already* know that one is art. In sum: aesthetic theories beg the question they are meant to answer. Danto's late work finesses this view: some works may have an aesthetic component, if their beauty is "internal to" their meaning as art, but aesthetics still cannot be part of art's definition since this is not true of all works of art. Against this, I argue that his own theory requires works of art to have an aesthetic component, on pain of being unable to distinguish art from "mere representations". What Danto now calls "rhetorical inflectors" have discharged this function in his ontology from the outset, and his understanding of such inflectors is aesthetic.

The upshot of Part II, if my arguments go through, is to put pressure on some of the leading theories of the medium post Greenberg, and to bring out some of the ways in which Greenberg's claims on Kant continue to overdetermine subsequent conceptions of aesthetics in art theory. One might nonetheless worry that the results of preceding in this way could only be negative: some of Greenberg's claims about modernism and formalism turn out not to withstand scrutiny, and his claims on Kant in particular are shown to be contentious. But so what? This fails to demonstrate that Kant's aesthetics *can* be applied to the kind of non-medium-specific and (the argument runs) anti-aesthetic art after modernism generally taken to undermine modernist aesthetics. I take Conceptual Art as my test case here: if any art can be seen as the hard case for the ongoing relevance of Kant's aesthetics, it is Conceptual Art's demotion of the object of perceptual experience in favour of direct engagement with ideas.

Chapter seven returns to Kant in light of this challenge. I argue that what I call *strongly* "Non-perceptual art", that is, art with no sensible properties relevant to its appreciation as art, offers the stiffest challenge to aesthetic theory, despite being a more minority position within the field than is generally realized. I then turn to Kant's discussion of "dependent beauty" (CJ §16) and works of art as "expressions of aesthetic ideas" (CJ §49), which I take to be the most promising resources within the third Critique for accommodating such art. The former picks out the class of aesthetic judgements that are partially dependent upon, and thus constrained by, a concept of what the object judged is taken to be. The latter concerns what is distinctive about the semantic content of works of art, and the indirect ways in which they are obliged to embody that content as a result. As such both

speak to the more conceptual dimension of art, something I bring out through an interpretation of two works by Lawrence Weiner.

Chapter eight considers some potential worries for my presentation of Kant's theory. They include the charge that Kant's theory is not only uninformative about the object of aesthetic judgement, but narrowly formalist, ruling out aesthetic reflection on the semantic aspects of art. But even if these worries can be assuaged, insofar as aesthetic judgement is conceived as a response to complexity in a perceptual manifold, Kant's theory will struggle to accommodate Non-Perceptual Art. I respond to each challenge in turn, the last by turning to Kant's understanding of poetry. Like Danto's, Kant's is a general theory of art; also like Danto's, it bottoms out in a theory of metaphor: unlike Danto's, however, on Kant's theory metaphor cannot be reduced to a proportional analogy between relations in distinct domains, making it the richer and more versatile of the two.

The final chapter addresses the metaphysics of Kant's broader critical project. There is ongoing debate in the literature as to how substantive a metaphysical thesis this involves; I endorse Lucy Allais's "moderately metaphysical" interpretation of transcendental idealism. The metaphysics of transcendental idealism need not only be considered a limiting factor on the methodological availability of Kant's aesthetics, however; it may also add to its appeal: not least for explaining why – from a Kantian perspective – natural beauty would have to be considered epistemically and morally more significant than artistic beauty. For this reason, it is doubtful that de Duve's proposal to substitute "this is art" for "this is beautiful" – the most ambitious attempt to employ Kant in recent art theory – could yield a recognizably Kantian theory, his protestations that Kant "got it right" notwithstanding. The book concludes with a "burden of proof" challenge to Kant's detractors.

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Stefano Velotti (Università di Roma La Sapienza)

On Costello's *Aesthetics after modernism*

This remarkable book by Diarmuid Costello can be divided into a *pars destruens* and a *pars construens*. The *pars destruens* is an excellent critical survey of the conceptual framework underlying the trajectory of Clement Greenberg and some of his followers and/or critics. Costello's considerations on conceptual art (weak and strong non-perceptual art) and the analysis of case studies are also particularly enlightening.

Regarding the *pars construens*, I fully support Costello's approach of revisiting Kant's aesthetic reflection, demonstrating its richness and adequacy as a framework for understanding artworks across all eras - including conceptual art and the diverse landscape of contemporary artistic practices. However, I find his strategy for executing this project unconvincing[1]. My objections center on two key points: I. The distinction between free and dependent beauty[2]. II. Aesthetic ideas and genius.

I. *Free vs dependent beauty*

In the *pars destruens* of his book, Costello shows how often even those who, at one time, adopted positions strongly critical of Greenberg have remained prisoners of his categories, merely "reactively" supporting the opposite of the rejected theses: Some "'apostates' of Greenbergian modernism […] derive their own understanding of notions like 'artistic value', 'good visual form', and 'the aesthetic' entirely from the theory they mean to contest. Indeed it is largely because they do so that they are obliged to reject them" (Costello 2024: 103).

Now, my impression is that the re-reading of Kant offered by Costello – albeit incomparably more adequate than those of his interlocutors – is still marked by a sort of overreaction to certain theses of Greenberg. Put roughly: anxious to demonstrate how the *Critique of the power of judgment* is by no means reducible to a merely formalistic theory of aesthetic judgement – calibrated on natural beauty and only secondarily concerned with the semantic, conceptual, historical and contextual density of the creation

[1] I have developed similar arguments on some of Costello's articles before the publication of his book in Velotti (2023).
[2] Cf. Kant 2000, 5: 229 ff.

and reception of works of art – Costello leaves the free beauty hostage to Greenberg's legacy and places upon dependent beauty the entire burden of proving Kantian redemption. If this is true, Costello would relegate the relevance of free beauty – which, in my view, he inadequately conceives – to natural products only, in order to unequivocally mark its distance from certain theses of Greenberg.

To illustrate this, let us examine how Costello critiques Greenberg's highly problematic notion of assigning a specific medium to each art form.

Apart from the refutation that comes from artistic practices – which attest that such specificity proves to be a historical contingency arbitrarily elevated to principle – this thesis of Greenberg reveals its weakness even further when he assigns to each art its peculiar sensory organ, "a discreet sensorial experience" (Costello 2024: 54). Greenberg takes as a model the analogy with music to support the attained "purity" of modernist art: "Guiding themselves, whether consciously or unconsciously, by a notion of purity derived from the example of music, the avant-garde arts have in the last fifty years achieved a purity and a radical delimitation of their fields of activity" (Greenberg, *Towards a newer Laocoön*, cited in Costello 2024: 54). Costello is well placed to reply that "Greenberg's appeal to music, taken at face value, is as informative an account of what responding to a work of art involves, as the empiricist epistemologist's 'red patch now' is as a description of apprehending the world" (Costello 2024: 54)[3].

In this easy and plausible objection to Greenberg's rash statements, Costello makes use of an expression that he will employ every time he opposes free beauty to dependent beauty:

> Just as we perceive books of a particular colour, volume and anticipated heft, […] and not *mere coloured patches arrayed in space*, so we hear the distinctive rumble and throb of a diesel engine idling, and not bare noise. Similarly, we perceive particular paintings and musical compositions: that is, perceptually and cognitively complex, historically embedded, and culturally emergent structures, not *mere collections of lines or colours arrayed in space*, or bare successions of notes sounded along a temporal continuum. (Costello 2024: 54, my emphasis)

I have italicised the recurrence of the expression "arrayed in space" because it is the very expression that Costello uses to describe "free beauty".

[3] In Kant's thought, music occupies a problematic position, oscillating between being considered a "*beautiful* play of sensations" and an "*agreeable* play of sensations". It would be interesting to explore Costello's perspective on music, which undeniably possesses some kind of semantic dimension – however undefined – but is hardly reducible, I would argue, to a "dependent beauty". For instance, on what determinate concept would the appreciation of the *Goldberg variations* depend?

Returning to a famous example brought by Kant in §16, Costello writes that:

> [T]he botanist may judge the beauty of a flower freely, abstracting from everything she knows about the function of flowers in attracting bees and thereby securing pollination, or she may judge it dependently, taking account of its function in her judgement of its beauty. In the former case she focuses exclusively on *the visual array that greets the eye* [my emphasis], in the latter case the fittingness of such an array to a thing with this particular function. I suggest it is the latter form of judgement that should – at least standardly – apply to works of art on Kant's account. (Costello 2024: 214)

And, again, "While we are in principle free to judge abstract or any other kind of art non-dependently, *as pure visual array* [my emphasis], we cannot judge its beauty as artistic beauty freely, even for Kant" (Costello 2024: 215).

Incidentally, Costello's insistence on the senses in the case of free beauty to characterise a pure judgement of taste is merely contingent or contextual. Not only does all of Costello's argument concerning the place assigned by Kant to poetry and literature and the possibility of accommodating Kantian thought to the appreciation of conceptual art exclude a special prerogative of the senses in general, but it is also evident that Kant himself does not at all conceive of a perceptual limitation in aesthetic appreciation. On this point, it would be appropriate to cite the clear thesis, formulated by Kant already in §1 of the third Critique and often overlooked, according to which "even if the given representations were to be *rational* [my emphasis] but related in a judgement solely to the subject (its feeling), then they are to that extent always aesthetic" (Kant 2000, 5: 203).

In the same section (§1) also appears the well-known example of the building, "a regular, purposive structure", which can be apprehended with the mediation of a concept (its purpose) or without that mediation. In this case,

> [T]he representation is related entirely to the subject, indeed to its feeling of life, under the name of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure, which grounds an entirely special faculty for discriminating and judging that contributes nothing to cognition but only holds the given representation in the subject up to the entire faculty of representation, of which the mind becomes conscious in the feeling of its state. (Kant 2000, 5: 203)

Although Kant is only taking the first steps of the Analytic and remains rather generic in delineating the principle of determination of a judgement of taste (its *Bestimmungsgrund*, *to be always distinguished from actual judgements*), I believe it is noteworthy that here he speaks of the "entire faculty

of representation" (the free play of imagination and intellect and the role of reason) not of a mere play of sensations.

Starting from the fateful examples provided to illustrate free beauty in §16 ("many birds […] a host of marine crustaceans […] designs *à la grecque*, foliage for borders or on wallpaper, etc., […] all music without a text") it has often been believed that these are the privileged objects of Kant's pure judgement of taste – objects without meaning, history, or context, "merely formal". It is evident, however, that Kant uses them only insofar as they reflect common opinions and thus thinks he can facilitate the understanding of his theses. To be sure, Costello recognises that these are not classes of objects. However, he believes it is necessary to correct Kant on one crucial point:

> My account departs from Kant's in one important respect. Kant holds that 'designs *à la grecque*, foliage for borders or on wallpaper' and 'fantasias' ('music without theme') are free beauties (§16, Ak. 229). I think this cannot be right, even by Kant's own lights: while such objects may be judged freely, they are not then being judged *as art*, and it is what is involved in judging an object or event as art on Kant's account that is of interest here". (Costello 2024: 193, n. 38)

Here, as elsewhere, arises the question of whether when Costello writes "judged *as art*" he means "beautiful art" (art in an evaluative sense) or simply "human art" (in a descriptive sense: a technique, a know-how, "the art of the shoemaker", etc.). The first case is to be excluded, because if the judgement were based on a determined concept of "beautiful art" we would be dealing with a determining judgement (deciding what beautiful art is, in an evaluative sense, before having judged it aesthetically). But if "judged *as art*" simply means that the product depends on a human action directed towards a purpose, free and intentional, then the distinction is rather trivial and depends on empirical clues, information, and contexts - not to mention how difficult it is to identify something purely natural in our experience (cf. e.g. Noë 2023). This issue resurfaces more clearly in Costello's interpretation of Kant's passages on beautiful art, genius, and aesthetic ideas.

II. *Works of art as free beauty*

In my view, the applied aesthetic judgement (associated with dependent beauty) is by no means extended by Kant to all works of art, nor should it be (by "correcting" Kant), but rather constitutes a special case. If I consider a church a free beauty by referring my judgement to the principle of deter-

mination of pure judgements of taste, I am well aware that it is a church (not a "visual array in space"); nor can I forget this fact or "abstract" from this knowledge in my actual judgement. Psychologically and empirically, I cannot simply "remember to forget" that it is a church. But I can "abstract" at a transcendental level, that is, refer to the pure aesthetic principle of determination, (without forgetting that it is a church or "abstracting" from this awareness).

In a specific historical context, I can admire the *Sagrada Família* as a work of art, even if I am at war with the clergy and ready to burn churches and what they mean. Orwell considered the *Sagrada Família* horrible but maintained that the anarchists spared it because of their judgement of taste. And they certainly knew that it was a church (they did not consider it a "visual array in space") and what it represented:

> For the first time since I had been in Barcelona I went to have a look at the cathedral – a modern cathedral, and *one of the most hideous buildings in the world*. […] Unlike most of the churches in Barcelona it was not damaged during the revolution – *it was spared because of its 'artistic value', people said*. I think the Anarchists showed *bad taste* in not blowing it up when they had the chance […]. (Orwell 1938: 280, my emphasis)

We cannot know the possible arguments in support of the judgements expressed here respectively by Orwell, by "the people" and "the Anarchists", but from the Kantian exposition of the "Antinomy of taste" we know that in principle they could have discussed them (without providing conclusive evidence). Probably, a Protestant Christian believer (or a Calvinist) would find the *Sagrada Família* ugly or offensive *as a church* or perhaps – with a bit of ecumenism – beautiful *as a Catholic church*, or beautiful in any case, *as free beauty* (without forgetting that it is a church). The condition that qualifies a pure judgement of taste lies in the disinterestedness that underpins *its principle of determination*, and certainly not in the absence of any interest (emotional, conceptual, historical etc.) associated with it in our actual judgements: "That the judgment of taste […] must have *no interest for its principle of determination* [*Zum Bestimmungsgrunde*] has been adequately demonstrated above. But from this, *it does not follow that, having been given as a pure aesthetic judgment, an interest cannot be connected to it*" (Kant 2000, 5: 296, my emphasis).

Be that as it may, the crucial point is another. When Kant addresses artistic production, he is well aware that it is the result of intentional and largely conscious actions directed towards a purpose (a concept). The agent may be a more or less recognised artist who perhaps aims precisely to cre-

ate a work of "beautiful art". But the concept that guides him cannot be that of "beautiful art", because such a concept is at least indeterminate and depends on singular pure aesthetic judgements, more or less motivated – and debatable – which claim to refer to the aesthetic principle of determination set out in the Analytic and legitimised in the Deduction, thereby advancing a claim to subjective universality and exemplary necessity. It will therefore be a matter of other concepts, empirical or otherwise, more or less determined, which direct the intentional activity of the (aspiring) artist.

It is also true that in every work of art a concept of what the thing must be (and thus a certain degree of perfection) comes into play. But what concept? For instance, what sense would it make to say that the dog sculpted by Jacopo della Quercia at the feet of Ilaria del Carretto in the Cathedral of Lucca is more or less "perfect" than Giacometti's bronze dog (*Le chien*, 1951)? Certainly, in order to recognise that in both cases it is a dog, I must have a certain experience of the world (and possess an "empirical schema" of a dog). But this concept fades entirely into the background in the case of beautiful art, endowed with "spirit in an aesthetic sense" (and with the free schematism between imagination and intellect that involves "the entire faculty of representations"). And, if not of the dog, on which concept should I verify the (relative) perfection of the work implied by a dependent beauty?

If and when it happens that, beyond the exhibition of a concept in the imagination, its realisation in a medium (or several media, or even in a "rational representation") arouses aesthetic ideas and therefore also an indefinite multiplicity of determined concepts, none of which is adequate to exhaust this activity, then the "thing" can be considered a successful artistic production. In Kant's words: genius, in its production, certainly presupposes "a determinate concept of the product, as an end, hence understanding, but also a representation (even if indeterminate) of the material, i.e., of the intuition, for the presentation of this concept, hence a relation of the imagination to the understanding" (Kant 2000, 5: 317). In fact, genius "displays itself *not so much in the execution of the proposed end in the presentation of a determinate concept* as in the exposition or the expression of aesthetic ideas, which contain rich material for that aim […]" (Kant 2000, 5: 317, my emphasis). And Kant adds, crucially, "that *the unsought and unintentional* subjective purposiveness in the *free* correspondence of the imagination to the lawfulness of the understanding presupposes a proportion and disposition of this faculty that cannot be produced by any following of rules, whether of science or of mechanical imitation, but that only the nature of the subject can produce" (Kant 2000, 5: 317-8, my emphasis).

The notion of the (supersensible) "nature of the subject" would require a discussion that cannot even be broached here. But I believe that even a clarification of the nature and role of the determinate concepts which, according to Costello, form the basis of the "applied aesthetic judgements" for appreciating any work of art as dependent beauty would be a valuable starting point.

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Michalle Gal (Shenkar College)

Against conceptualism yet again

In his inspiring quest to revive an aesthetic-based philosophy of art in our after-modern era, Diarmuid Costello navigates a somewhat rigid conceptual space, where modernism and aesthetics are generally considered inseparable. As he argues, this "conceptual space largely precluded being a postmodern aesthete or an anti-aesthetic modernist" (Costello 2024: 69). Costello aims to reconcile this divide in his insightful, instructive, and intellectually engaging book. He achieves this by bringing together two opposing perspectives: on one side are Clement Greenberg and Immanuel Kant, along with Greenberg's interpretation of Kant and the readings of Greenberg by Thierry de Duve and Michael Fried. On the other side is what could be termed after-modern 'cognitivist-conceptualist aesthetics', represented by figures like Arthur Danto and Rosalind Krauss, and movements such as Conceptual and Readymade Art. The book is well-structured, progressing

along clearly defined themes, and effectively presenting ideas within impartially delineated controversies about the relationships between modernism and formalism, the ontological status of ideas or forms in artworks, medium specificity, conventions and history, as well as the role of aesthetic attitude and taste. In my view, Costello's exploration of this major debate in aesthetics – formalism versus cognitivism – is guided by a broader philosophical inquiry into our nature: are we primarily perceptual or cognitive beings, reaching epistemological and cultural heights through compositions or ideas? Therefore, his juxtaposition of opposing formalist and conceptualist cases serves as an instance of "the medium is the message".

Costello thoughtfully chooses Conceptual and Readymade Art as focal points because they exist at the margins of aesthetically neutral – or even anesthetic – art, marking the after-modernist break between aesthetics and art along with its philosophy. As such, they are often labeled as non-art by formalism, while at the same time "routinely presented as a rejection of Greenbergian discourse about value and quality" (Costello 2024: 206). Costello correctly defines Conceptual Art as Non-Perceptual Art, distinguishing between strong and weak kinds based on the relevance of their perceptible properties to their identities (Ch. 7). Endorsing the notion that ideas can have aesthetic qualities, such as elegance or incisiveness, Costello proposes that Conceptual and Readymade Art do not entirely reject aesthetics, but rather a specific kind – the perceptual one that focuses on a sensuous response to form. Furthermore, he suggests that Kant's notion of "aesthetic idea" – representations that provoke deep thinking without being fully encapsulated by determinate concepts – may resonate well with conceptual or readymade artworks. These works prioritize ideas and concepts over sensuous and perceptual forms, prompting viewers to engage with themes beyond mere visual experience. Costello, therefore, concludes that this view aligns with Kantian aesthetics as shaped by Greenberg's formalism (Costello 2024: 211). By rejecting the reduction of aesthetics to perceptuality, he believes the debate between formalism and conceptualism can be resolved (Costello 2024: 181-2).

While the gap between formalism and cognitive-linguistic philosophy of art may not need to be bridged, Costello's sensitive study of formalism's depth and relevance through a postmodern lens is both timely and necessary. We are facing a visual turn that wraps up the linguistic-cognitivist age in philosophy, which thought about us as cognitive-linguistic beings. Philosophy of art curiously joined linguistic philosophy in the mid-20th century, allowing cognitivism to take precedence in the discussion on defining art and visuality. As a result, it increasingly misrepresented the rich, intricate,

and dynamic nature of visual experience as subordinate to concepts, language, and meaning, despite their shortcomings. The rejection of formalism was a foundational premise of the 1960s philosophy of art, which criticized formalism's emphasis on "aimed-at-the-eye" art, shifting toward a meaning-based theory of art that reduced it to yet another language-based system of aboutness. Consequently, formalism has been largely sidelined in recent decades. Even so, in today's visual age, where the visual sphere is more insistent and ubiquitous than ever – surrounding us with screens, interfaces, social media, and generative AI imagery – we may need to reconsider the notion that we are primarily cognitive or linguistic rather than visual – or better yet, perceptual, as Costello rightly emphasizes. The emergence of theories such as non-conceptualism and embodied cognition also reflects a reaction against the overemphasis on cognitive conceptualism. Therefore, we need to reassess the apologetic stance that linguistic aesthetics has taken toward the linguistic turn in philosophy, overlooking the autonomous language-defying power of visual forms.

In direct opposition to this apologetic attitude towards language, Greenberg and his aestheticist predecessors, such as Walter Pater, rightly emphasized the risk of literality that painting has always faced (Pater 1990: 49). Costello rightly points to Greenberg's linkage between the separation of the arts and their unique direction to their corresponding sense, classifying both as materialism. For Costello, this materialist stance does not fully align with Kantianism, which is frequently linked to Greenberg's thought. However, it should be noted that Greenberg developed his theory of medium specificity from Pater and the aestheticists. Building on Lessing's distinction between sculpture and poetry in *Laocoon*, Pater argued in 1877 that each art possesses its own "untranslatable sensuous charm" (Pater 1990: 49), giving rise to a unique aesthetic experience and a "special responsibility to its material" (Gal 2015: 24). In *Towards a newer Laocoon* (1940), Greenberg also revisits Lessing's ideas, echoing Pater's concerns about the pictorial medium's fate and its vulnerability to being reduced to language. Like Pater, he also explores the musicality of the arts as a means of securing their distinct identity. Rather than pursuing purity of the senses, Greenberg sought to liberate the arts from the constraints of language. Given the shortcomings of linguistic philosophy and the renewed interest in formalist concerns, I do not believe that presenting ideas as aesthetic in themselves (without visuality) is the key to reconciling the after-modern philosophy of art with aesthetics. Rather, the reconciliation must come through the recognition that forms often possess greater depth and complexity than meaning.

Accordingly, Conceptual or Readymade Art often functions as little more than a pseudo-philosophical exercise or even entertainment. Unlike Kant's aesthetic ideas, whose depth remains inexhaustible, these artworks are often easily translated into a clear concept. In simpler terms, once you grasp the idea behind the work, you're all set. There's no need to revisit the visual medium, as you're unlikely to discover anything new upon further exploration. Sometimes, merely acquiring information about the piece is sufficient. Therefore, instead of adopting a philosophy that diminishes the visual aspect to incorporate conceptual and readymade pieces as art, we should consider the possibility that they may not be art at all, as attributing aesthetic significance to them (even broadly) often seems forced.

Similarly, given that conceptuality is sometimes foreign to the ever-productive essence of artistic forms (hence the dullness of conceptual works), attributing cognition and referentiality to modern art (and art in general) often seems forced as well. Costello critiques, for example, the way Krauss, originally Greenberg's student but later a rival, reads Kentridge, calling it "a category mistake" (Costello 2024: 115). He argues that she miscasts Kentridge's deliberate artistic judgment as unconscious automatism, disregarding his own account of a process that blends intuition, experience, and structured creativity. More broadly, Krauss has attempted to impose conceptuality and meaning onto even the most abstract, grid-based paintings, claiming they transparently reflect the artist's ideological positions. Namely, Krauss compels even the most purely modernist works to be considered conceptual (Krauss 1985: 158).

Unlike Krauss, Danto, a brilliant philosopher, did respect the artist's intention, arguing that interpretation should "correspond to the artist's" as Costello points out (Costello 2024: 169). More importantly, Danto recognized the thickness of the artistic medium, conceiving of embodiment as central to his definition of art: in the artwork, the idea is not merely referenced but is saturated in sensory material. Danto even "endorses Greenberg's basic understanding of modernism" (Costello 2024: 175). But as Costello reminds us, Danto shifts the philosophy of art from considering the pressures of medium-specific conventions – or their violation – to considering art as a whole. Therefore, a piece like Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain*, which has nothing to do with the material density of sculpture but conceptually addresses the boundaries of art as a whole, is accepted by Danto but not by Greenberg.

Danto's primary method for proving that artworks are meaning-based was his juxtaposition of visually indiscernible artworks and mere objects, demonstrating that the key distinction lies in their aboutness. Only after

grasping this can the eye know what to look at in the work. Contrarily, Greenberg and the formalists believed that art presents itself as art without the need for preceding interpretation. Moreover, Costello rightfully asserts that aesthetics has never aspired to be a classificatory practice or "sortal mechanisms for distinguishing art from non-art" (Costello 2024: 165). Costello's own version of Greenberg's anticipated answer to Danto is a witty counter-attack, more even than a defense, to the rise of non-aesthetic theories on art: "Greenberg would have replied, I take it, that if a red monochrome really cannot be distinguished from a flat surface that, it just so happens, is covered in red paint, then it had not succeeded as a picture; its identity as a picture had failed to eclipse our awareness of it as a physical object" (Costello 2024: 28).

Though this anticipated Greenbergian response may sound conservative or narrowly focused, Costello offers a fresh outlook on Greenberg's method, challenging the common notion – held by Danto and others – that his theory was merely a reflection of his personal taste or, conversely, that his taste was dictated by a rigid modernist framework. Instead, Costello highlights how Greenberg's modernism and formalist criticism were deeply interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Greenberg's strength lies in emphasizing the medium's role in shaping the taste of artists and viewers alike while taking into account the history of conventions and the challenge of constraints they shed on the medium (Costello 2024: 20). According to Costello, this is the meeting point between modernism and formalism. Greenberg does not conceive of aesthetic judgment as an isolated act of preference but as something that emerges through the way a work interacts with the pressures of its inherited medium – by either conforming to or challenging its established conventions, shaping new aesthetic possibilities in the process (Costello 2024: 26). In this sense, aesthetic judgment and taste are not arbitrary but are deeply embedded in medium-specificity and the historical and material conditions of artistic production. These aspects in Greenberg's theory pertain to a wide philosophy instead of a specific art movement as often attributed to him. Costello explains that "philosophers in particular have tended to dismiss his work out of hand as lacking in theoretical sophistication, but have done so on the basis of the most scant familiarity with his writings" (Costello 2024: 63). In this respect, Costello does justice to the aesthetics community by reintroducing Greenberg's philosophy into the contemporary discourse, stressing its sophistication, their historical depth, and ongoing relevance.

A particularly compelling example of Greenberg's nuanced aesthetic perspective is his distinction between a work's "aboutness" – its subject,

themes, ideas, or emotions – and its actual content or meaning. For Greenberg, aboutness alone does not determine the effect of a work or define the nature of an aesthetic experience. Instead, content exists only within the aesthetic experience itself, in a way that is inseparable from it and ultimately beyond full articulation in language. This view stands in stark contrast to the linguistic turn in the philosophy of art, which has attempted to reduce aesthetic experience primarily to conceptual meaning. Indeed, Danto's extreme position that a work is beautiful only if its beauty is internal to its meaning, disregards the fact that while aesthetic features may be employed for some concepts or functions, beauty often surpasses meaning or aboutness entirely, striking us with an immediacy that resists reduction to interpretation. To claim that beauty emerging from form or composition is external to a work – simply because it is not tied to its conceptual content – is to disregard the fundamental power of visuality and its direct impact on perception. While I think that Costello is sometimes too inclusive when it comes to conceptuality and cognition in art and its philosophy, he does remind us that rather than classificatory practice, philosophy of art is concerned with the nature of aesthetic experience itself. Aesthetic experience is something that cannot be reduced to propositional statements or linguistic analysis.

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Espen Hammer (Temple University)

Comment on Costello's *Aesthetics after modernism*

That a German philosopher writing almost 250 years ago in the most austere and abstruse language imaginable about logic, epistemology, metaphysics, and morality would be a key figure in debates over the meaning and fate of contemporary art from post-World War II modernism and beyond is, for an outsider at least, nothing short of surprising, if not puzzling. Yet from Clement Greenberg to Stanley Cavell, Michael Fried, Thierry de Duve, and many other central theorists and critics in the post-War period, Kant's contribution, in particular his reflections on aesthetic judgment, beauty, art, and genius in the first part of the *Critique of the power of judgment* (1790), has formed the indispensable background – and often foreground – to their accounts of especially pictorial art in its various configurations and formal self-understandings. In *Aesthetics after modernism* (2024), his terrific new book, Diarmuid Costello traces and discusses Kant's significance within this lineage, arguing eventually for the importance and productivity of viewing at least modern (but probably all) art through the lens of Kant's conception of aesthetic ideas. Among its many claims to originality, the highlighting of the theory of aesthetic ideas at the expense of the more familiar analysis of aesthetic judgment, whose impact on for example Greenberg is said to restrict his view to modernist art, is perhaps the most striking.

While supporting their general turn to Kant, Costello meticulously identifies and analyzes how, in his view, misinterpretations of this philosopher lead several of the theorists I just mentioned astray. Possibly the most glaring source of purportedly bad uses of Kant relates to the distinction between the well-known analysis and deduction of aesthetic judgment, on the one hand, and the account of the arts, on the other. As opposed to the numerous approaches to the *Critique of the power of judgment* that try to tease out a theory of art from the analytic of the beautiful, in which Kant tries to understand how judgments grounded in feeling may claim (subjective) universal validity, Costello rightly points out that his account of art does not really start until §43 and includes, most importantly, the discussion of adherent beauty, aesthetic ideas, and genius. Unlike nature, which forms the backdrop for thinking about free beauty (beauty experienced without any concept of an internal purpose determining its possibility) and pure judgments of taste (judgments made exclusively on the basis of the form of purposiveness of an object for the free play of the imagination and

the understanding), art, on Costello's Kantian account, must be approached as presenting significantly adherent aesthetic properties, representing or signifying something, though typically in terms of the presentation of aesthetic ideas, "that representation of the imagination that occasions much thinking though without it being possible for any determinate thought i.e., concept, to be adequate to it, which, consequently, no language fully attains or can make intelligible" (Kant 2000: 192). Art, however, "can only be called beautiful" (Kant 2000: 185), that is, be aesthetically pleasing and therefore successful, if it looks to the recipient as nature, which for Costello means not that it imitates nature but that it is made without constraint by arbitrary rules (which itself is a necessary though hardly sufficient component of genius).

Can this view form something like a viable conceptual apparatus for distinguishing art from non-art? Not only does it seem to illuminate unproblematic cases such as a painting by Manet or a poem by Baudelaire, but it may arguably, at least according to Costello, also provide an account of why Warhol's *Brillo Box* counts as art that, as Danto famously argued, no mere visual properties could ever do. Yet exactly how wide Costello's Kantian universality-claim is supposed to be is left somewhat unclear in the book. He starts out by discussing modernism specifically, with debates surrounding Greenberg, Fried, Cavell, and Krauss as defining moments, but when he gets to de Duve and Danto, the subject matter shifts to the art vs. non-art question. Yet attempts at defining the nature of art in general risk being hopelessly uninformative or even vacuous. Even more than nature, which traditional interpretations of Kant have made crucial in their accounts of beauty, art is profoundly historical, seemingly impossible to think of independently of its historical emergence and shifting practices. Yet, unlike Greenberg's conception, Costello's Kantian view is not tied mainly to modernism.

One hesitation one might have about the emphasis on aesthetic ideas as constitutive of what art can be is that while it is not intellectual in Kant's sense, calling for the formation of determinate ideas of reason, it does intellectualize art, perhaps to an undue extent. As the imaginative flipside of ideas of reason, it serves to make sensible rational ideas of ideal, non-sensuous conceptions, for example, Kant writes, "death, envy, and all sorts of vices, as well as love, fame, etc." (Kant 2000: 192). Following in this track, Costello maintains that an abstract painting such as Barnett Newman's *Onement I* may be able to express and "indirectly communicate the indeterminate and indeterminable idea of something coming out of nothing"

better than "Michelangelo's bearded Old Testament God" (Costello 2024: 233). Yet is abstract painting well accounted for if enlisted for this kind of purpose? Is not the meaning and aboutness attributed to, say, a Pollock or a Still painting potentially arbitrary or misleading, and may it not direct one's attention away from the qualities that do arguably matter for one's appreciation of this kind of work: rather than symbolization ("metaphor," as Costello thinks of it), the specifically painterly qualities, how paint on canvas – color, shape, brushstroke, texture, rhythm, composition – itself generates conviction and satisfaction. Of course, the Kantian, including Costello, will want to retain the requirement that the object must be subjectively purposive for judgment and occasion a harmony of faculties in free play. Without that requirement, Kant's claim that the work of art must seem *unabsichtlich* ("unintentional"), and thus seem like nature, would make little sense, since it is this which accounts for its purposiveness without purpose and hence for the non-conceptual feeling of aesthetic satisfaction. Yet one would still want to know how the imaginative idealization involved in viewing a work of art in terms of its expression of ideas fits with cases, such as abstract expressionism, that in at least some paradigmatic instances (a Pollock drip-painting, for example) may aggressively seem to challenge idealization.

Costello uses the appeal to aesthetic ideas to theorize not only abstract expressionism but conceptualism, the movement associated with theorists such as Lucy Lippard and, in its early phase, artists such as Bochner, Kosuth, Huebler, LeWitt, and Weiner. In its extreme form, as "strong" non-perceptual conceptualism, this is art whose properties relevant to its appreciation are not available perceptually (via the senses) but only to imagination and thought. Surely, this appears to be something that theories, such as Greenberg's formalism, which are beholden to conceiving of art in terms of its media-specific availability to the senses, presenting this as a Kantian view, seem unable to account for; and Costello wants a theory with a larger scope than that.

While conceptual works typically have a perceptible component, the pleasure we take in them, Costello claims, relates exclusively to and is occasioned by the ideas for which that component is only a mean or a vehicle with which to convey or express. As long as the imagination gets to work with a material with sufficient complexity to generate, upon its beholding, the requisite play and animation, aesthetic appreciation will become possible. The fact that Kant sees poetry as the "highest" of the arts surely seems to support Costello in his endeavor to marshal the art-theoretical sections

of the third *Critique* for his purpose of theorizing non-perceptible conceptualism with this thinker. Yet doesn't Kant ultimately presuppose that even the most immaterial of the arts is imagistic, that what it entertains are mental images serving to satisfy the imagination? Mental images of the poetic kind are not abstract like the empty ideas and "tautologies" invoked for example in Kosuth's art (*One and three chairs*). If so, does this not suggest that the most "ambitious" aspirations of conceptualism fall outside the purview of Kant's conception of aesthetic ideas?

Costello gives a relatively short shrift to the period in Krauss's career in which, inspired by ideas about formlessness in Bataille and in collaboration with Yves Alain Bois, she curated the exhibition *L'Informe: mode d'emploi*. Its premise of escaping Greenbergian modernism by simply negating its commitments to the idea of aesthetic progress, medium-specificity, the primacy of pure vision, and the artist as a pure form-giver, is simply too dependent, Costello submits, on what it was that it attempted to negate. I do see the point. Nietzsche's anti-platonism, his invocation of the senses and the body against intellectual intuition and ideas, can likewise seem too dependent on its object of criticism to have any genuine bite. Yet while negations of this kind are semantically and dialectically dependent on the negated, it doesn't follow that they necessarily fail to disclose new ground. Among the ambitions in the *L'Informe*-project was the attempt to carve out a new way of approaching much of the modernist canon that Greenberg had theorized (as Bois puts it [Hugo 1996], to "deal Modernism's cards a new hand... so that certain works can never be read as before"). A Pollock drip-painting, for example, is not (at least not primarily) a vertical, framed, flat surface inviting visual involvement and promoting pure aesthetic judgment-formation. Rather, it is horizontal, to be thought of in terms of the artist's violent splashing of paint: a site of chaos and disruption.

There are more developed visions of modernism emphasizing sensuousness and sensuous particularity, assigning to those notions a privileged role in accounting for the very project of modernism. From what is admittedly a very high altitude, one may consider Adorno as conceiving of "serious art" under the conditions of modernity as art that responds to a certain crisis, originating in social life and centered on what Weber called "rationalization", in which embodiment and materiality tend to be dealt with and accounted for in idealizing and instrumental terms, by seeking to restore or redeem sensuous particularity in its role as inescapable components of human sense-making. The idea, which undoubtedly is saddling art with a role to play that may seem implausible or just too ambitious, is to explain why

modernism emerged by pointing to what it responded to, what its significance was, but also to understand some of the pressures it was faced with. Unsurprisingly, Adorno follows Kant in assigning a priority to nature even in the appreciation of art: serious art imitates nature not by representation but by imitating the non-identity to be found in natural beauty, and whatever meaning or significance there can be at this level must be wholly incorporated and expressed in the sensuously available yet formed material of art.

Conceptualism, with its call to appreciate meanings that are only to be apprehended intellectually, seeks to escape the difficult dialectic besetting art on the Adornian account, assuming it makes some sense. No longer is there any tension between sensuousness and form, the tension that drives Adorno's critical reworking of Hegel's understanding of beauty as the sensuous expression of human freedom, although on Costello's Kantian account, the enjoyment of conceptual works of art is supposed to be internal to an aesthetic appreciation of them. The price, however, may be that the defining achievement of traditionally aesthetic art – art that primarily appeals to the senses – becomes unavailable.

Danto can get around this problem by simply declaring that art was never primarily in the business of being aesthetically presentable: "I'm not sure that I want to furnish examples of this yet, but I can say that most of the art being made today does not have the provision of aesthetic experience as its main goal. And I don't think that was the main goal of most of the art made in the course of history" (Danto 2013: 150). Costello restores aesthetics (and with that the irreducibly first-person nature of aesthetic judgment) but potentially by sacrificing the element that always defined *aisthēsis*, namely sense perception.

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Robert R. Clewis (Gwynedd Mercy University)

Can we really distinguish between strong and weak non-perceptual art?

Many scholars working in aesthetic theory and art history in the wake of Clement Greenberg were inclined to understand aesthetics in the restricted sense of Greenberg's particular appropriation of Kant. Diarmuid Costello's book succeeds in showing that we need not follow Greenberg's interpretations and applications of Kant's aesthetics, which narrowly drew from the first part of Kant's *Critique of the power of judgment*. Costello achieves his aim of removing "some of the most obvious obstacles to rereading Kant in the light of recent art", and he shifts "the burden of proof onto those who would suggest otherwise" (Costello 2024: 3; see also the book's concluding sentence, Costello 2024: 275). In other words, we can go beyond the notion of pure or free aesthetic judgment and look at what, in later sections of the *Critique of the power of judgment*, Kant actually says about art and the fine arts. In particular, we can consider Kant's notion of aesthetic ideas, according to which an art work simulates and expands the audience's imagination.

After an overview of Greenberg's modernist aesthetics (part 1), Costello investigates the legacy of Greenbergian theory (part 2) in the work of interpreters or critics Michael Fried and Rosalind Krauss (on modernism), and Thierry de Duve and Arthur Danto (on formalism). In the book's third and final part, Costello turns to Kant's theory of *art* to help provide a response to the challenge posed by Conceptual Art, including works by Robert Barry and Lawrence Weiner.

I leave aside the question (explored at the end of the book) of the extent to which Kant's aesthetics makes sense if one does not take a position on core questions concerning Kant's epistemology and metaphysics (such as things in themselves, the supersensible, or freedom). Perhaps Costello is right that we cannot get away from such commitments as fast as many scholars in philosophical aesthetics would like to. In particular, what position we take on these interpretive questions might matter in the case of *aesthetic ideas*, which, as ideas (in Kant's sense), connect to other key aspects of Kant's systematic philosophy. After all, the notion of aesthetic idea *a fortiori* invokes Kant's notion of an "idea" and thus, at least indirectly, of the supersensible (the notion of aesthetic ideas also brings up the relation of imagination to sensibility, a point on which I think Costello could be more precise or consistent).

Roughly, an *idea* is a concept of reason. "Reason" is Kant's name for the capacity to think the unconditioned; thus, reason is the source of morality

as well as of our ideas of God, freedom, and the soul. Ideas of reason, in Kant's terminology, are concepts that cannot be given or realized in sensibility, that is, in experience. An *aesthetic* idea, Kant thinks, is the counterpart of the idea of reason. Aesthetic ideas, we might say, offer too much (imaginative) *intuition* (they "exceed our capacity for rational reconstruction"), whereas ideas of reason offer too much *concept* (they "exceed our capacity for sensible presentation") (Costello 2024: 255). By using what Kant calls "aesthetic attributes," such imaginatively rich intuitions are able to somehow *express* the ideas of reason. Kant scholars debate how inclusively to interpret aesthetic ideas. I agree with Costello (Costello 2024: 217) it is best to interpret aesthetic ideas in a broader sense: aesthetic ideas do not have to be limited to the ideas of God, freedom, and immortality, nor even to the morally or religiously oriented ideas such as envy, love, and death, but could be understood more expansively. Such an inclusive view would support Costello's aims to show that Kant's aesthetics (and the notion of aesthetic ideas) can make sense of modern and contemporary art.

Costello wants to test the power of Kant's aesthetics by its ability to accommodate the "hard" cases – a term Costello gets from Dominic Lopes (Costello 2024: 277, fn. 24) – such as strong non-perceptual art.

What are weak and strong non-perceptual art? Strong non-perceptual art works are "works presented in the context of visual art, the perceptible properties of which are *entirely irrelevant* to their appreciation as art". In contrast, weak non-perceptual art works are "works presented in the context of visual art that are *not reducible to* the sensible properties of what enables us to pick them out" (Costello 2024: 212). Thus, strong non-perceptual art "denotes works that have no sensible properties, so proper appreciation of such works *cannot* involve appreciation of the sensible object or event that picks them out". And weak non-perceptual art "denotes works that do possess sensible properties, but which are not exhausted by those properties; so proper appreciation *cannot only* involve appreciation of such properties" (Costello 2024: 212).

An example of strong non-perceptual art is Robert Barry's *All the things I know but of which I am not at the moment thinking – 1:36 pm; June 15, 1969*. Here the aesthetic idea (evoked by what is written on Barry's index card, which provides access to the thought) could be a number of expanded imaginative reflections brought about by the notion of everything that one has thought but is not at a given moment thinking. This can give rise to a plethora of other imaginative intuitions that cannot be conceptualized. Who, for instance, counts as a thinker? What *are* all the things one knows? And so on.

According to Costello, another example of strong non-perceptual art (really, the only other example he discusses in this book) is Larry Weiner's *THE ARCTIC CIRCLE SHATTERED* (1969), whose title Costello takes very seriously: the idea of shattering the earth's Arctic Circle with a gunshot, even though the Arctic Circle is not actually a physical object (and thus cannot be shattered). Presumably this leads to the expansion of the imagination and cognitive enhancement that is intrinsic to Kantian aesthetic ideas (Costello 2024: 224). How might Weiner's work enhance our imaginative activity? We could ask questions about the end of mapping, or the end to the imposition of human order on the earth, or the end to humanity, or of humanity's habitation of the earth, or the end of our solar system, or the eventual decay of our sun (Costello 2024: 225).

But is the Weiner really a case of strong non-perceptual art? Surprisingly, Costello reads the work against Weiner's intentions. "Here I depart from Weiner" (Costello 2024: 224). Costello thinks that Weiner is wrong to think he has instantiated the work: Weiner misconstrues the implications of his own work. Why? Because the Arctic Circle is a cartographic abstraction which denotes the *virtual* line generated by joining a series of points on the earth's surface. Since it is an abstraction, it cannot be shattered. The work cannot be instantiated.

Tellingly, Lucy Lippard photographed Weiner shooting a gun in the Arctic (included as Figure 7.3 on page 219 in Costello's book). What does one make of these photographs, and how do they relate to the identity of the artwork? Whereas Costello rejects Weiner's own view that he can instantiate the art work, I am inclined to side with Weiner's interpretation of his work. If one followed these stated views or intentions, the work would not count as strong non-perceptual art, but as weak non-perceptual art.

Weiner's *THE ARCTIC CIRCLE SHATTERED* and Barry's *All the things I know*, Costello states, "remain the same works whether spoken aloud, projected on the side of a building, tapped out in morse, or communicated through the raised surface of brail" (Costello 2024: 243). I am not convinced that this is the case. In a footnote appended to this (Costello 2024: 258, fn 22), to his credit, Costello admits that his claim is more contentious than he is suggesting. He then offers a distinction between what is required to *appreciate* such a work (say, perception of sensible properties of some kind, providing access) and its *identity* conditions. But I find this distinction somewhat arbitrary. Since he concludes that footnote, "But I grant there may be more to say here", I hereby invite him to say more.

This hints at some of the main issues I would like to raise in order to advance the discussion. I wonder how one can decide between what are, as in weak non-perceptual art, sensible properties that belong to the artwork, and sensible properties that are, as in the strong kind, irrelevant. Costello might appeal to some distinction between vehicle or "means" (Costello 2024: 210), on the one hand, and work, on the other (or what provides access, and the idea/concept itself). Yet I'm not sure how to draw that distinction in actual practice.

A similar worry can be raised about *appreciation* of such works. It is hard to discern what counts as success or failure in a work, if there is no contextualized audience reaction to some sensible features presented in a medium. What does the audience respond to or appreciate (in the harmonious free play, to use the Kantian terms used by Costello), if not to some content, whether perceptual, linguistic, or conceptual (thus raising the question of the difference of strong non-perceptual art from poetry/literature/fiction)? How are we to have a conversation about and evaluate peer reactions and imaginative reflections inspired by the aesthetic ideas in such strong non-perceptual art? If the manner is the same as the one used to discuss and assess poetry, then I would like to hear how strong non-perceptual art *differs* from poetry. If strong non-perceptual art is different from poetry because it has a unique set of background assumptions and expectations associated with the particular artistic practice (say, the expectations associated with visual art), then I wonder why and how the sensible properties do not matter for the constitution of the work.

In a similar vein, I would like to learn more about how the acquaintance principle applies to strong non-perceptual art (Costello 2024: 227, fn. 33). Costello writes of presenting ideas to *sense*. "Kant's *theory* requires only that works of art indirectly present ideas to sense and in so doing so engage their viewers in imaginatively complex ways" (Costello 2024: 233). But, if this is applied to strong non-perceptual art, as Costello does in the book, we can ask: how can strong non-perceptual art, which is defined as *lacking* sensible properties, "indirectly present ideas" to *sense*? For the ability to sense or have sensations (for Kant) is not the same as the ability to have images or an enriched imagination.

I return to the question of how strong non-perceptual art works are to be appreciated aesthetically (even if) on the basis of aesthetic ideas and enriched cognitive activity. The answer Costello seems to give is: by the work's semantic properties. Semantic properties are the "most obvious candidate" for the source of strong non-perceptual art's "value of art" (Costello 2024:

213). "If our relation to a work's semantic properties may be understood aesthetically, then it should in principle be possible to appreciate SNPA aesthetically" (Costello 2024: 213). This seems to bring us back to the question of how such strong non-perceptual art differs from poetry.

There is a clear analogy between strong non-perceptual art and poetry. It risks being more than an analogy. Costello is indeed keen to point out that strong non-perceptual artworks do not collapse into works of poetry or literature more generally (Costello 2024: 247). The reason this does not happen, he claims, is that strong non-perceptual art comes with background expectations or a framework that trades on certain basic assumptions about the nature of the art in question (Costello 2024: 246-7), that is, "expectations elicited by its standard contexts of dissemination and display" (Costello 2024: 272), such as, for instance, the expectation that paintings typically be hung on a wall, upright, to be seen. Poetry does not come with this expectation. But I am eager to learn more about the difference between these SNPA cases that use *words* (sometimes in a title) to expand the mind through imagery, and poetry (in the broader, Kantian sense closer to fiction and literature).

Although Costello usually distinguishes sensibility (sensations or perceptual syntheses) from imagination (images) (Costello 2024: 255), sometimes he runs these together in a way that his account does not appear to allow. For instance, he refers to "the *sensible* claims of Conceptual Art, understood in terms of the *imaginative* play with ideas that such art provokes" (Costello 2024: 248; my emphasis). Costello is aware of the need to distinguish between sense and imagination (Costello 2024: 255), but I am not sure he always does so in a consistent or convincing manner.

In the case of poetry (just as with strong non-perceptual art, allegedly) the type, size, or color of the font (Costello 2024: 243) through which the poem is communicated or presented typically do *not* matter to the identity of the work (as opposed to the poem's line breaks, spacing, stanza use, or the sound created by rhyme, rhythm, and timbre (Costello 2024: 245) or alliteration, which *do* matter). It does not change the identity of the aesthetic object, the poem, when it is read online rather than on a page. Note that if we classify the cases such as the Barry and the Weiner works as *weak* non-perceptual art, we can easily point to the given sensory qualities for what distinguishes it from poetry. If that is the case (and I recognize that Costello does not read Barry this way), the color and size of the font, the texture of the card on which Barry's work (like Adrian Piper's cards) is printed, and similar sensible properties, *would* be part of the artwork and could

therefore potentially affect the kind or range of aesthetic ideas that could be elicited.

To move the discussion forward, I would like to ask Costello to give, and if possible interpret, more examples of strong non-perceptual art. If in strong non-perceptual art there does not have to be a medial/material basis in order to animate the imagination, to initiate and guide that cognitive enrichment, how do we know when the sensible properties are the mere *vehicle* for the concept/idea, and when the sensible properties are part of the work? If there is such a thing as strong non-perceptual art, how can we identify such art in a non-arbitrary way? And how do we avoid the collapse of strong non-perceptual art into poetry?

To pose these questions is not to disagree with the overall aim of the book, namely, to recover Kant's aesthetics after Greenberg and to show that Kant's aesthetics can accommodate modern art and non-perceptual art, but to ask for further clarification concerning the hard cases. I look forward to Costello's elaborating his views or correcting any of my misunderstandings.

In any case, strong non-perceptual art, as far as I can tell, seems to be a relatively rare specimen in the artworld. Thankfully, then, even if Costello understandably wishes to make sense of the hard cases in light of Kantian aesthetics, doing so would not seem to significantly affect how we comprehend many actual artistic practices.

I think Costello usefully shows how we can accommodate *weak* non-perceptual art. Even if alleged instances of strong non-perceptual art turn out to be instances of the weak kind, or cannot in a non-arbitrary way be shown to in fact be cases of strong non-perceptual art, still the Kant-inspired philosopher, now able to draw from Costello's book, is in a good position to make sense of them.

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Diarmuid Costello (University of Warwick)

Responses. Kant, cognitivism and non-perceptual art: a reply to Gal, Hammer, Velotti and Clewis

It is several decades since I embarked on *Aesthetics after modernism*: it has been a desk drawer manuscript intermittently returned to over the years between more time-limited projects since I completed my PhD. That I persisted shows, I suppose, that I believed there was a coherent project here that had been incompletely realized across the articles I had published during the intervening years, and that it was worth setting out fully once and for all before moving on. Because the thinking behind the project spans several decades, I naturally now have mixed views about the results; there is much in it that I would do differently – if at all – and it is quite different in both spirit and methodology to the kind of "philosophical criticism" I am currently trying to develop. That said, I stand behind the goals of the project as a whole, and I am honoured to have this opportunity to respond to the thoughts of a constructive group of commentators.

1. Although she clearly has reservations about my "inclusiveness" regarding conceptuality in art, Michalle Gal seems broadly supportive of the approach I take in the book – particularly the attention I accord Clement Greenberg. Of my four discussants, Gal seems most receptive to the thought that what is rich and vital in Greenberg's thinking has been missed in philosophy. Since I strongly believe this to be true, this is gratifying.

Gal's is probably the most "broad brush" approach of my discussants, and she makes some interesting suggestions about what might be called the "big picture" considerations underlying my remarks about individual theorists, and what may be at stake more generally in the debate between formalists and cognitivists. As Gal tells it, this is a question about our fundamental nature qua human: are we primarily perceptual or cognitive beings? Are our highest epistemological and cultural achievements arrived at through what Gal calls "compositions or ideas"? This is an interesting, and properly philosophical, question. My answer, although it is not a topic I broach directly in the book, is that this is a false opposition. We are irreducibly *both* sensible and intellectual: as embodied beings, we cannot but be responsive to sensuous particularity and generalizing ideas. Indeed the fact that art is a privileged site for their interaction, a domain in which the interaction of somatic and intellectual response does not merely take place but is thematized *as* taking place, is one major source of art's significance. This

is something that Kant's theory of mind and associated conception of experience – rooted in the combined deliverance of a spontaneous understanding and a receptive sensibility – builds in at the ground level.

Gal is right that I see Conceptual Art and other (supposedly anti-, non- or an-aesthetic) art forms widely believed to have severed the relation between art and aesthetics to be such only on a narrowly formalist conception of aesthetics that the book disputes. But the aim of my book was not to *replace* a conception of aesthetics that pays insufficient attention to art's semantic dimension with one that pays equally little attention to art's sensible dimension; it was to draw attention to what the former conception – heavily indebted to Greenberg – *leaves out*, and to show that this was not left out by Kant, to whose authority Greenberg increasingly appealed. I tried to do this retrieving those aspects of the third *Critique* that have to be marginalized to present Kant as some kind of father to art world formalism. That both Espen Hammer and Stefano Velotti voice similar concerns suggests my aspiration not to replace one lop-sided account with another was not wholly successful.

I can only agree with Gal that an exclusive focus on the cognitive dimension of art misses much of what is most interesting about it, notably its capacity to draw attention, in a highly focused way, to the complexity of visual experience. I also agree that the interest of aesthetically engaging forms goes much deeper than anything they might "mean". Nothing I say in the book should be taken to deny this. The goal throughout is to argue for a neglected possibility: that aesthetics *can* speak to the limit cases I call "strongly non-perceptual". Cases that, I point out, are far rarer than the pronouncements of either artists or philosophers might lead one to think. This should not be mistaken for an argument either in favour of (or against) such art; it is the argument that, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, Kant's aesthetic theory has no difficulty accommodating such cases. In showing this, my aim was to shift the burden of proof onto those who would say otherwise: the common claim – often treated as though it were a truism – that the limits of aesthetic theory have been exceeded by development of advanced art remains to be established.

That said, I think Greenberg was right to insist that being able to judge the art of one's day requires subjecting one's capacity to judge to the "pressure" of the most challenging art of one's day – irrespective of whether one conceives this capacity narrowly, in terms of "taste," or more expansively. To judge Conceptual Art (which like any other art can be good bad or indifferent) requires sustained exposure to art's ongoing development. Some Conceptual Art may indeed reduce to what Gal calls a "pseudo-philosoph-

ical riddle" but, if and when it does, that is just *bad* Conceptual Art. What makes some ideas good *as art* is a very interesting question, but not one that has received much attention from philosophers of art to date. Be that as it may, I want to dissociate myself strongly from any *ex cathedra* claims to the effect that such works "may not be art at all". This is what the art-world of our day has delivered: our task as philosophers is to make sense of it, not to scold artists and critics from our armchairs for their failure to understand art's true nature. I remain unsure whether art – as a thoroughly historical and cultural undertaking – has a "true nature" in the implied sense in any but the thinnest of terms. At the very least, one would need to specify the historical and cultural scope of the concept of "art" one has in mind before making such claims.

As to whether Arthur Danto did indeed recognize what Gal calls the "thickness" of the medium: it would be wonderful to believe that he did, but to my mind Danto's philosophical understanding of works of art as "embodied meanings" too often turned his activity as a critic into one of *extracting* the work's meaning from its material host. A question I have pressed elsewhere is what being sedimented in an artistic material *does* to meaning, and whether it does not do more than simply render it communicable (Costello 2007). Given that most artistic media are less transparent than natural languages, it seems reasonable to think that they must throw up at least *some* resistance to interpreting a work's meaning.

2. In his sympathetic review, Espen Hammer points out that the focus of the book seems to slide midway through part II from questions of modernism (notably, medium-specificity) to the questions of art vs non-art. My justification for this slide, if slide it is, is that – at least in this context – the latter question is implicated by formalism, and in the book I turn explicitly from questions about modernism to questions about formalism. Still, I can see why it might be read in terms art vs non-art, since formalists tend to believe they can tell the art from the non-art simply on the basis of the kind of experience to which the latter gives rise. Thierry de Duve's claim that when one judges art aesthetically one confers the name "art" on any object judged accordingly should, perhaps surprisingly, be considered a version of this view. Since, if pressed as to *why* he confers this putative name when he does, de Duve would have to reply that he "knows an art feeling when he feels one". Where formalists believe one can tell art from non-art on the basis of experience alone, cognitivists like Danto want to show that until one knows whether something is art one will be unable to have the relevant experience.

But Hammer's deeper worry concerns the scope of my account: am I trying to diagnose the limits of *modernism*, specifically, or say something more general about the nature of *art*? I suspect Hammer is right to say that this remains somewhat unclear in the book, as a result of how the argument unfolds. In the book I attempt to show how the influence of Greenberg's modernism and formalism over-determine subsequent debates in various ways, not least in how the limitations of his own thinking get carried over into those debates. That part of the book is largely, if not entirely, negative; it is true that I want my positive account to be more general and correspondingly wider in scope. How wide may be unclear. I take "strongly non-perceptual art", as my test case, suggesting that if Kant's aesthetics can accommodate a kind of art with no perceptual features relevant to its appreciation it should in principle be able to accommodate any kind of art. Hammer thinks that grounding the resulting account on Kant's conception of aesthetic ideas runs the risk of vacuity, given art's deeply historical nature. I recognize the worry: it is the standard charge levied against Kant's aesthetics by philosophers who trace their own thinking about such matters more to G.W.F. Hegel than to Kant. Even so, I take myself to avoid it. This was one reason for making Kant's account of "dependent beauty" so central to my account: in so far as any judgement of art *as art* requires (minimally) that the concept of art itself is implicated by one's aesthetic judgement, this creates room – as I put it in the book – to "plug in" one's preferred theory of art at this point. All Kant tells us is that to judge something "beautiful" *as* or *for* (a given kind of) art requires that we bring our concept of that kind of art to bear. At that point much will turn upon one's concept of art, and this can be as historical and fine-grained as one likes.

Suppose, for the sake of argument, that Hammer is willing to grant this. He may still think me guilty of overdoing the cognitivism by intellectualizing art. I feel the force of this worry – not least because the fact that it is echoed by both Gal and Velotti suggests there is probably some truth in it. But here it may help to recall my aims: one aim of the book was to show that a certain kind of art – a kind generally taken to be intellectual rather than sensible – is accommodated by Kant's theory. In doing so my goal was to challenge what is standardly said both about such art and about Kant's aesthetics; it was not to claim all art is or should be of this kind. One might nonetheless worry that one will then have to intellectualize *all* art – including art not best thought of in terms of indirectly presenting ideas – to shoe horn it into the resulting theory. Hammer gives Abstract Expressionism as an example, singling out my reading of Barnet Newman's *Onement I* (1948) in terms of Genesis I: 1-5. This is unfortunate example to go to bat on, given Newman's

upbringing, education and theological interests, but it seems only reasonable to wonder how well such an approach would fare more generally.

The problem is this: I wanted to show that Kant's aesthetics leaves room for the hard cases; in doing so it may look as though I have inadvertently put in question whether it can accommodate more straightforward cases. As Hammer puts it "The price […] may be that the defining achievement of traditionally aesthetic art – art that primarily appeals to the senses – becomes unavailable". Here I can do no better than cite Kant, for whom beauty *in general* is "the expression of aesthetic ideas", even if the means of yielding such ideas varies with the kind of art in question. Kant's own division of the arts draws a distinction between the "arts of speech" as "representations of mere imagination, which are *evoked through words*" and the "pictorial arts" as "the expression of ideas *in sensible intuition*" (§51, Ak. 5: 322). Consider the manifold differences between what we agree to call "the arts" today. Given how varied they are, is there any reason to expect the ways in which we engage with them will be of a piece? As I read Kant's theory, strong NPA emerges as an art of thought and weak NPA as a hybrid of the arts of thought and intuition. Abstract Expressionism would be a more straightforward case: a work of pictorial art. So I see no difficulty in accommodating both. Granted: this will be on different grounds; but given how different they are this is as it should be.

Hammer also suggests that Kant's view of poetry requires *imagistic* imagining and this will not take us far with the kind of tautologies or definitions presented as art by an artist like Joseph Kosuth. Hammer does not question the account's application to Lawrence Weiner, given the rich play with ideas that I suggest his work provokes, some of which may indeed involve imagistic imagining. I take this to be interesting, in a symptomatic kind of way: what should we make of it? Allow me to be blunt: Weiner is *by far* the more significant artist. The critical attention afforded Kosuth relies much more on his partisan position-taking. This is a critical judgement, of course, so nothing in my account depends on it. Nonetheless, if correct, it may go some way to explain Hammer's difficulties seeing how my account would apply to Kosuth. But rather than grant that the kind of tautologous works Hammer has in mind fall beyond the purview of Kant's aesthetics, I would prefer to say they do not rise to the level it requires: for if they *entirely* fail to prompt the imagination – perhaps because they reduce to a peculiar kind of theoretical demonstration – they are simply bad (as) art. But this is a matter of judgement, as all such claims are.

When it comes to Rosalind Krauss, by contrast, I feel no need to dispute anything Hammer says. Krauss's reading of Pollock is indeed brilliant: it does

indeed enable us to see the work in an entirely new light. But the acuity of Krauss's critical claims is not my concern in the book. Adorno's aesthetics – precisely because it *conceptualizes* modernism in different terms to Greenberg – represents an altogether stiffer challenge. Though it is not a challenge I take up in the book, I grant Hammer's point that Adorno, and perhaps especially those "post-Adornian" philosophers who want to bring his thought to bear on the kinds of example that Adorno himself would never have countenanced, represent a genuine alternative to what I do in the book. I will be content if I have done something to rehabilitate Greenberg's reputation as a serious thinker about both the art of his own day, and the conditions for appreciating art more generally.

3. Stefano Velotti's response is as probing as I would have hoped from our exchanges to date. So far as I can tell, Velotti is willing to give the claims of parts I and II of the book a pass, the better to focus on my reading of Kant in part III. In doing so he takes issue not only with my understanding of judgements of dependent beauty but with how I characterise judgements of free beauty as their comparison class. Velotti regards the latter in particular as a misreading of Kant, so I focus on this in what follows.

What appears to vex Velotti about how I describe judgements of free beauty is my tendency to characterize such judgements in terms of judging the "(pure) visual array" that greets the eye, something I contrast with judging it in the light of some concept when judging dependently. Velotti finds it implausible to think we must abstract from all knowledge of what we are judging to be capable of judging it freely, and maintains that Kant is not committed to any such implausibility. Instead, Kant requires only that we refer what we encounter solely to the "principle of determination [*Bestimmungsgrund*] of pure judgements of taste". That is, the feeling of pleasure or displeasure a given representation occasions in the subject when she feels her entire representational state. The question thus arises: what is it to "refer a given representation to one's entire representational state"? This is the question that divides us, and it is true that I say little about this in the book.

Although I anticipate Velotti would dispute this, this is because I take it to lie to one side of my core concerns. Not only is it a staple of debate in Kant commentary, but one aim of my book, set up in the parts that Velotti brackets, was to retrieve just those aspects of the third *Critique* that tend to fall by the wayside given the focus of Kant commentary on Kant's own critical and systematic concerns. To be clear, I am not disputing that these *do* lie to one side of Kant's own core concerns; but my own goals, as I hope

it is clear, are not those of Kant scholarship. In writing the book, I was motivated chiefly by the fact that contemporary art theory seems to show *so* little interest in aesthetics. *Prima facie* this is surprising, given that art has been a privileged object of aesthetic enquiry for several centuries. Why is this, and is it warranted? These are the questions the book as a whole addresses. So the rest of the book matters, not least because taking it seriously has implications for what I need to show *vis-a-vis* Kant.

As a consequence I say little about how I understand judgements of free beauty. So let me say something about this here, if only to provide some context for the formulations that Velotti takes issue with. Something that I take seriously, but that I do not think Kant or (so far as I can tell) Velotti takes seriously enough, is what might be called the "perspectivalism" of aesthetic judgement. That is, the fact that anything judged aesthetically has to be judged by someone from somewhere under a particular set of perceptual circumstances. Take Kant's classic example, "this rose is beautiful". To my mind, such a judgement must be considered highly elliptical, on pain of being *so* vague as to be vacuous. For "this rose" will not be beautiful in a pitch black room, lit from behind by a blinding light, or judged from so far away that it is a pin prick in one's visual field. What is judged beautiful will always be a particular manifold of perception seen from somewhere under some set of perceptual conditions. That is what I meant by a "perceptual array". In the case at hand, it would be "this rose" *as* judged from somewhere, in some light, against some background. Judged from the other side – such that we are presented with a face of the rose that we cannot currently see – "this rose" might not be judged beautiful at all. Seen against a red wall on a red tablecloth (think of a variation to Matisse's *Red Studio* of 1911) it might not be possible to reach a confident judgement either way. Indeed, perhaps judged against certain colours or from certain angles its form might be found quite jarring.

For reasons of this kind, I take judgements of the form "this is rose is beautiful" to say almost nothing. That being so, how can anyone else tell if their own judgement of the rose is implicated? To make a credible claim to universalize over all other judges, the judgement "this rose is beautiful" must be elliptical for something like "[this aspect or presentational face of] this rose [judged from just here, in just this light against just that background] is beautiful". Such that were, contrary to fact, you viewing the rose from where I am viewing it and under the same conditions, you too should find it beautiful. One might worry that this renders the universality claim trivial, but this would be mistaken: for *however* thickly one specifies the conditions of judgement, one must still judge the manifold so circumscribed for

oneself, and who is to say in advance whether this may not dispose you differently. This is what I had in mind when I talk about the "visual array" that greets the viewer's eye. I can see from Velotti's response that my way of putting this in the book comes across as unnecessarily formalistic, but I believe this has more basis in Kant's own formulations than he grants.

So much for the self-clarifications: how does this bear on Velotti's worry, which is that Kant does *not* require us to abstract from everything we know about the object of judgement, even when judging it freely. I am not quite sure how to respond to this claim. Irrespective of whether Velotti is right to think it is psychologically implausible to require us to "remember to forget" that what we are judging is a church, say, or that, as a transcendental philosopher, Kant should strictly speaking be concerned *solely* with "principle of determination" of such judgements, it certainly looks as though Kant is committed to such a claim. Consider what he says about the differences between judgements of free and dependent beauty: "A judgement of taste in regard to an object with a determinate internal end would be pure only if the person making the judgement either had no concept of this end or abstracted from it in his judgement" [*wenn der Urteilende entweder von diesem Zwecke keinen Begriff hätte oder in seinem Urteile davon abstrahierte*] (§16, Ak. 5: 231). In the previous section, while arguing that pure judgements of taste are always independent of the notion of perfection, Kant writes:

> What is formal in the representation of a thing, i.e., the agreement of the manifold with a unity (leaving undetermined what it is supposed to be) does not by itself allow any cognition of objective purposiveness at all, because since abstraction is made from this unity as an end (what the thing is supposed to be) [*weil, da von diesem Einen als Zweck (was das Ding sein solle) abstrahiert wird*], nothing remains but the subjective purposiveness of representations in the mind of the beholder. (§15, Ak. 5: 227)

Velotti may think I am begging his point about abstracting solely "at a transcendental level" here; but if so I would like hear more about precisely what making a judgement that abstracts solely at a transcendental level, thereby escaping any psychological implications, amounts to. The first remark from Kant cited above, to the effect that an aesthetic judgement of an object with a determinate internal end would be pure "only if the person making [it] either had no concept of this end or abstracted from it in his judgement" certainly appears to be about an actual person making an actual judgement. It continues:

> although this person would have made a correct judgement of taste, in that he would have judged the object as a free beauty, he would nevertheless be criticized

> and accused of a false taste by someone else, who considered the beauty in the object only as an adherent property (who looked to the end of the object), even though both judge correctly in their way: the one on the basis of what he has before his sense, the other on the basis of what he has in his thoughts. (§16, Ak. 5: 231)

How are we to understand this, if not as a description of two judges disagreeing as a result of their respective judgements' grounds, one of which does and one does not take account of its object's end? Note that these comments come hard on the heels of Kant's notorious remarks about form in §14: "All form of objects of the senses […] is either *shape* or *play* [*Gestalt oder Spiel*]: in the latter case, either play of shapes (in space […]) [*Spiel der Gestalten* (*im Raume* […])] or mere play of sensations (in time) [*bloßes Spiel der Empfindungen* (*in der Zeit*)]" (§14, Ak. 5: 225). Although it is true that Kant makes these claims about judgements of artistic beauty specifically, they nonetheless make clear how he conceives the formal dimension of aesthetic judgement more generally, and this also informs those formulations of mine to which Velotti objects.

That said, Velotti's closing remarks about the difficulties of determining, if not quite what concept is implicated by a judgement of dependent beauty, then at least what concept(s) in which specific way(s), have bite. The issues here are complex, not least because a single work may implicate a wide variety of concepts and thereby prompt the mind to range freely over an array of associated ideas. Even a seemingly straightforward painting such as George Stubb's *Whistlejacket* (1762) can, in addition to its luxuriant visual form, implicate a striking array of concepts and ideas: not simply "horse", but "thoroughbred", "Arabian chestnut", "perfect specimen of the kind", "purity of bloodline" and "stud". Not to mention "Derby winner", "trophy possession", "investment" or, more distantly, "inherited wealth". Add to this the more art historical connotations "equestrian monument", "classical sculpture", perhaps even "portrait". I cannot tell whether Velotti regards this as a worry for Kant, exactly – I see it as a strength of Kant's account that it can accommodate such richness myself – or simply as a problem for how I specify judgements of dependent beauty, given their capacity to open onto such ideas. But these are questions for another time.

4. Robert Clewis focuses on my distinction between strong and weak perceptual art. I draw this distinction in part to show how different works of art that philosophers of art often talk about as though they were of a piece may be. When it comes to Conceptual Art, most philosophers in the analytic tradition tend to write as though what I call "strong non-perceptual art" were the norm. Goldie and Schellekens' "idea idea" would be a case in point. On

my account, by contrast, works of SNPA are far rarer than most philosophers seem to think. Clewis and I are in agreement about this. My reason for thematizing SNPA is simply to show Kant's aesthetics can cope with the challenge it presents.

As Clewis notes, I give only two examples of such works, both of which he disputes count as such. Rather than multiply cases, I prefer to stick to the two at issue, as the book provides sufficient context to debate them. Clewis thinks that Weiner's *THE ARTIC CIRCLE SHATTERED* does not count because Weiner believed he had physically instantiated it, and this should render it only weakly non-perceptual[4]. I think Weiner is wrong about this because "shatter the artic circle" is not an intention that could be fulfilled in the way Weiner goes about it. How should we decide who is right? Clewis and I can probably agree that appeal to intention is always in order when it comes to art: works of art are a product of human action and, like any other such product, should be understood in light of the reasons for which they were made. That said, not every intention warrants being taken equally seriously. Artists are subject to the same rational constraints as any other agent: should they contradict themselves or make claims that are manifestly false or nonsensical their claims should be discounted. In sum, consulting the artist's intentions may tell us what she *set out* to achieve, but they cannot tell what she *did* achieve; this should be assessed in light of the evidence. So while intentions matter, we need not always defer to them.

Does it matter who is right? I doubt it. Suppose Clewis is right and I am wrong; we can readily imagine a work by another artist about which what I say holds true. In the spirit of Danto's penchant for angry young artists, let's call this artist Larry Schweiner. Appalled by Weiner's bourgeois capitulation to the market, Schweiner prints *This work does not exist* on cheap cards and distributes it at Weiner's opening. Suppose my analysis applies to this work. Nothing changes: Kant aesthetics accommodates this work, which is what I wanted to show. Perhaps Clewis is making a more fundamental point: that there *can be* no such works. If so, so much the better: there is no challenge to which Kant's aesthetics need be shown adequate. But, if this is correct,

[4] Whether a work is strongly or weakly NPA need not be obvious. I agree that the material properties of Adrian Piper's *My Calling (Card) No. 1* (1986) matter (see Costello 2018, at 177-182). But this need not always be so obvious: take Weiner's own *MANY COLORED OBJECTS PLACED SIDE BY SIDE TO FORM A ROW OF MANY COLORED OBJECTS* (1979). It would be easy to assume this counts as SNPA in my terms. If so, nothing about the vehicle can be relevant to its appreciation. But this is not obvious: imagine an instance of the work in which each of its letters was a different colour.

many artists and much first-order critical practice must be hopelessly confused. Does Clewis feel confident enough to assert that?

Note that there are worries in *both* directions here. Take the standard view that literature is an "allographic" art form in Nelson Goodman's sense. Because its "compliance conditions" can be exhaustively specified by a notation, we can tell which properties are and which properties are not necessary to any genuine instance of a work. Assume that only those instances that respect word order, spelling and punctuation count. Paper stock, book format and the like do not matter. Were this *not* true we would be faced with an implausible multiplication of works every time a publisher brings out a new edition, not to mention metaphysical mysteries of authorship from beyond the grave. But now imagine the following case: suppose someone produces a limited edition of James Joyce's *Ulysses* comprising a single word per page, such that it requires a specially constructed room to house it and bespoke ladders to turn its pages, which now run to 265,222 plus end matter. Word order, spelling and punctuation are retained: on Goodman's account it ought to count as a bona fide instance, but the conditions of reading this edition are so different that many will probably be reluctant to grant this.

It is possible to come up with similarly fanciful examples for many works. Barry never issued a recording of *Everything I know…* being hissed menacingly, screeched deafeningly, or sung acapella by multiple voices. That he did not presumably serves as some kind of guide to what he was (and was not) up to. Perhaps Clewis remains unconvinced. If so, he would share such scepticism with Schweiner. Indeed, so enraged is Larry by Barry leaving room to think that – instantiated in certain extreme ways – the sensible properties of its instantiation may matter after all that he rents the vacant storefront opposite Barry's latest downtown exhibit to project his new piece, This *work has no sensible properties relevant to its appreciation* on its blacked out windows. It is surely stretching a point to dream up circumstances in which the sensible properties of this work matter. I am sure that someone could do it: but to what end?

This speaks to Clewis's question regarding how to draw such distinctions in practice. I take the philosophy of art, as I practice it in this book, to be a "second order" discipline. Like philosophy of science it takes its cue from the first order domain. Leave science to the scientists, and art to those closer to the ground: it is not the philosopher's job to tell artists and critics what to do, as it is not the philosopher's job to tell scientists how to conduct their research. By what authority would philosophers arrogate to themselves such a right? First order practice, so long as it is intelligible and ratio-

nally consistent, has authority over such matters. Does it matter to Barry whether his work is hand written or typed? Are such aspects of the work central to the first order critical, exhibition and dissemination practices that have grown up around his work? If not, then probably not. Does this cut against my revisionism regarding Weiner? No. That turns on Weiner saying something implausible: the Artic Circle *cannot* be shattered. By contrast, there is nothing rationally inconsistent about Barry making no distinction between type and script. Does the work have to be written and read: could it also be spoken aloud and heard, or tapped out in morse and decoded? Perhaps the reality is that we cannot yet say with confidence.

Clewis thinks similar worries pertain to appreciation: how can we tell success from failure in such works. I will admit to some impatience on this front: if the medium of SNPA (and *only* SNPA) is the idea, then what one is appreciating in appreciating such a work is the idea. Some ideas work as art and some don't: some are witty, rich and generative, and others are simply banal: dictionary definitions represented as art might be a case of the latter. How do we tell? The way we always tell: critical judgement not philosophical legislation resolves questions of this sort, because questions pertaining to the success or failure of ideas as art are always questions of aesthetic judgement. There is no reason to expect this to be easy: it takes expertise or, as Greenberg might say, subjecting one's judgement to the pressure of the most challenging work in the relevant medium – here the presentation of ideas as art. Becoming a competent judge of such work is no easier than becoming a competent judge of any other kind of work. How does the acquaintance principle apply? Straightforwardly: if ideas are the medium, it pertains to one's acquaintance with the idea.

Clewis thinks that my understanding of SNPA runs it too close to poetry. The worry is real, not only philosophically but also critically: if it is poetry it is no doubt very bad poetry. But set that to one side: SNPA may indeed often be close to certain forms of poetry. I believe this bottoms out in questions of context, and the expectations generated by its conditions of display and dissemination, rather than anything internal to the work. If that is right one could imagine two indiscernible works, one of which is poetry and one of which a work of SNPA, the difference residing not in anything intrinsic to those works but in facts about the relevant artists' biographies, where they publish or exhibit, their artistic milieu, and the criticism that has grown up around their practices more generally. I accept such implications.

That said, I think Clewis is right to pick me up on formulations about aesthetic ideas requiring "the indirect presentation of ideas to *sense*". Clewis's reminder that "sense" and "sensation" are quite different to imagi-

native play with ideas for Kant is well taken. Such lapses of expression aside, I hope it is clear that my account targets the latter. Note, however, that this does not entail such art cannot have any sensible dimension: certain ideas may *feel* elevating, vertiginous or expansive, others deadening, cramped or restrictive. This may, but need not, involve mental imagery; but it must involve the higher cognitive capacities and not mere sensation. All I need to insist upon, in the case of SNPA, is that such play not depend *directly* on anything sensible in its presentation. Though I do not reproduce this in the book, Barry's piece was also written directly onto walls and similar works from the same period were often projected. If these properties of what I take to be the works' *vehicles* turn out to be properties of the works *themselves*, every time their mode of presentation changes we would be confronted with a different work. The same is true of Weiner: though I do not reproduce it, the same work is often instantiated as a wall text. Is Clewis prepared to bite this bullet?

Let me end by expressing my thanks to my discussants. Responding here has forced me to think harder, even though I am sure I have failed to do justice to many of their comments.

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