

Tom Lowenstein: AFTER THE SNOWBIRD, COMES THE WHALE. [Life on ice](#). The 2018 Serial.

THE
FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW.

NEW SERIES.

18 FORTNIGHTLYREVIEW.CO.UK 65



The Beginning and the End of Art

...in Tasmania.



By TRONN OVEREND.

1. MONA.

THE MUSEUM OF OLD and New Art (MONA) is in Tasmania, a beautiful island state of Australia. In its colonial past, it was an English Penal Colony. Sheep grazing soon followed. In the first half of the twentieth century mining and forestry became profitable, along with hydroelectricity. In the second half, mining lacked scale. Then questions were asked about the wisdom of damming wild rivers, or cutting down ancient forests for wood chips. Exported to Japan, for paper, this enabled the Japanese to maintain their own pristine forests, as they had done for millennia, whilst Australia put at risk its own World Heritage Area. There is plenty of political controversy here; Tasmania now lacks the wealth, the prosperity and jobs of other Australian states.



NOTE: In *The Fortnightly's* online template, illustrations are thumbnails with captions or onward text links embedded. To enlarge an illustration, click on it. To read a caption, hover over the illustration. To play an embedded video in a larger size, click twice.

Enter the local boy, David Walsh, professional gambler-turned-art collector.¹ An entrepreneurial visionary, much could be, and has been, said about Walsh. Uncontroversial, however, is the observation that his museum has become an epicentre of tourism and much needed employment on the island. “I’ve now moved into a world that I don’t understand, and that’s the nature of risk and innovation,” as Walsh told the [Guardian](#) recently.² Although portrayed as a mathematical genius, Walsh merely claims insight into a “tiny” part³. He writes computer programs, reserves the word “genius” for his partners, is a devout atheist and his success in business is easily sufficient to finance his obsession with art. The construction of MONA — between 2006 and 2011 — was a collaboration between Walsh, his design team, and Nonda Katsalidis, of Fender Katsalidis, Architects, Melbourne. Its size — though it has been considerably extended with Pharaoh’s Wing in 2018 — was 9500 square meters⁴. This is comparable to Brisbane’s new Gallery of Modern Art (GOMA), larger than the State Galleries of South Australia and Western Australia, and is nearly the size of Frank Gehry’s Guggenheim at Bilbao. (11,000 square meters.) Although a recipient of architectural awards, MONA is not Bilbao. And Walsh is less than complimentary on Gehry’s gallery. It was, he says, “architectural masturbation”:

While Gehry does building as art, the connection with function is so tenuous as to make the whole conception seem fatuous.⁵

MONA is different. It's a subterranean cave, eschewing "white-cube curation", and where the lighting designer, Adam Meredith, has modulated Katsalidis' Brutalism.⁶

In 2007, before the completion of construction, MONA's "Museum statement" included the following remarks. There was

...an overarching belief in the power of evolutionary mechanism to sculpt human motives. (And) ...that sex and death predominates in art, both as subject matter and as a significant motive for its creation.⁷

"Eros and Thanatos" was the leitmotiv of David Walsh's collection. The first exhibition, *Monanisms*⁸, in 2011, was a presentation of his general collection of old and new art. The anthropologist, Adrian Franklin, equated it with the normative transgressions of the carnival:

In spring, particularly, their focus was fertility and the cycles of birth and death..."⁹



From November 2016 to April 2017 an exhibition entitled '*On the Origin of Art*¹⁰ considered questions of biological and cultural evolution, and themes found in the carnival. Curated by Steven Pinker, an experimental psychologist; Geoffrey Miller, an evolutionary psychologist; Brian Boyd, a Professor of English; and Mark Changizi, a theoretical neurobiologist; each presented a separate exhibition that illustrated their arguments. Some seven years earlier, however, *The Art Instinct: Beauty, Pleasure and Human Evolution*, by Denis Dutton, had appeared.¹¹ Dutton was familiar with the earlier work of Pinker, on language, and Miller, on sexual selection, even 'aesthetic fitness', and Boyd, on evolution and art. There are plenty of references to their work. But Dutton pieces together the argument, which Pinker described as "bold, original and exciting".

2. THE ART INSTINCT.



INSPIRED BY THE WORK of Pinker on the evolution of language, Dutton explained the universals in language, which enable translatability and the universals between cultures that refute incommensurability.¹² Art is one such universal and can be understood, psychologically, as part of individual adaption, sociologically, as part of culture. Underpinning an investigation into how art has evolved, Dutton, like the MONA curators, starts with biology. The Pleistocene saw *Homo sapiens*, over a period of 80,000 generations, develop and prosper. Through natural selection, the genes of the fittest human and his social group "selfishly spread themselves". Our brain, which these genes have built — Kant called this our 'facilities'; evolutionary psychologists our "modules" — "account for the interests and capacities that best suited the survival of our Pleistocene ancestors."¹³ This was the evolution from nomadic hunter gatherers to the Holocene. The emergence of agriculture, cities, writing, occurred 380 generations ago; the life of Socrates, 120 generations ago. Statistically, even a one percent difference in mortality rates would explain the extinction of overlapping Neanderthals in a mere 30 generations.



It is conjectured by some anthropologists that Neanderthal man had no art, but Dutton extrapolates from the Pleistocene,

that human nature embodied art.

It is conjectured by some anthropologists that Neanderthal man had no art, but Dutton extrapolates from the Pleistocene, that human nature embodied art. *On The Origin of Species* is only the starting point for an explanation, because it was immediately apparent to Darwin, and others at the time, that natural selection fails to explain “nature’s excesses”. A paradigm case was the peacock. Was not an elaborate tail a waste of energy, an impediment for speed and survival? Moreover, if natural selection is the only mechanism, variations in nature would be far less complex. The displays and colours of birds would be but the beginning of unnecessary differentiation. Darwin’s second work, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, solves the problem. Such excesses, such extravagance, is itself a marker of fitness upon which sexual selection is predicated. The peacock with the most magnificent tail is also the healthiest; the one to which a female is most attracted. With natural selection and sexual selection hand-in-hand, Dutton proceeds to enumerate the biological basis — across all cultures — of human nature.

There is, he wrote, a “... very long list of innate, universal features and capabilities of the human mind.”¹⁴ There is “intuitive physics” and dexterity for tracking the movement of objects. For survival, humans have a “deep interest in plants and animals”, an “engineering module for making tools”. Tattooing, “body adornment” and jewellery are common practice. There is numerical and probabilistic understanding. Facial expressions are read, and there is a fascination with sound, pitch and rhyme. Exchange always includes a sense of “fairness and reciprocity”. There are rights and obligations, notions of justice and a facility of logic, plus the recognition of different “beliefs and intentions” in others. Dutton notes there is nothing that is culturally specific about these human traits. They are as “universal as the blinking reflex”. Games, jokes, gossip; feelings of envy, pride, shame and grief are the human condition. To this list must be added the making of art.



Natural selection is part of the evolutionary explanation. Both Pinker and Dutton speculate that the landscape painting most people admire has its roots in our Pleistocene past. There is an innate landscape preference that depicts a favourable habitat. Prospect for food, refuge from danger. This is called by Dutton and paleoanthropologists the Savannah Hypothesis. According to Dutton, this

...would only take a small average survival advantage...toward green, watery landscapes, flat or undulating, with open spaces and thickets of forests...for such a response to become ingrained in the species at the level of emotional and aesthetic preference.¹⁵

Pinker makes the same point this way:

There are...adaptive explanations why certain visual patterns give human beings aesthetic, intellectual and sexual pleasure: they are cues to understandable, safe, productive, nutritious or fertile things in the world. ...one of the things we can do with our ingenuity...is to create purified, concentrated, supernormal, artificial sources of these visual pleasures...¹⁶

The evidence for this hypothesis is survey data. Where it leads, is another question. One of Dutton’s suggestions: golf-course design.

On the sexual selection thesis, however, Pinker is sceptical. There is not, he says, an analogue between the nest-building of the Bower Bird and the sexual attractiveness of the artist and his works. Although others, such as Geoffrey Miller, may disagree by arguing it is significant that Lucian Freud and Gustav Klimt each had fourteen children, and many sexual partners, statistical analysis fails to support any difference in fertility rates between artistic and non-artistic cohorts. Miller certainly recognises problems with the sexual selection theory. He notes that most speculations fail to

...identify the specific selection process that favour art-making...the adaptive function...the concrete fitness payoffs for...survival and reproduction.¹⁷

Nevertheless, Miller concurs with Dutton’s sentiments by contending that “...art-making ability can work as a hard-to-fake sign of biological excellence.”¹⁸ Art is a “signalling system”, and artists are “signallers”. The artwork is a “signal” and the viewers, possibly admirers, are the “receivers”. This is all part of what Miller calls the “mate attraction function of art”. He readily admits his speculations fail to explain, perhaps, a remaining one percent. This includes the readers of *Artforum*, makers of pretentious installation art, and those engaged in art-speak. But, for everyone else, there are “...cross-culturally universal forms of artistic passion and skill that provoke spontaneous admiration.”¹⁹ He continues:

...admiration of art shades over into sexual attraction towards the artist – and this has been happening for several thousand generations. We’re all descendants from artists because art was sexy and art was romantic.²⁰

3. A CLUSTER OF RELATIONS.

IF THE ABOVE COMMENTS outline the convergence between Dutton’s *The Art Instinct* and the curators’ theories in *On the Origin of Art*, there is a departure in how Dutton, the philosopher, develops his conceptual argument. Here art is seen as a artefact or performance, a cross-cultural universal, comprising a cluster of constitutive elements. By enumerating these elements, a description is derived which gives meaning to the question, “What is art?” In other words, this cluster is a set of empirical statements about art, in “...its totality a definition of art.”²¹ The “cluster criteria” is “inclusive” of all cultures and epochs. It is not a stipulatory definition, rather a list of conjectures that are subject to revision on the basis of “...investigation into the arts by neurophysiologists, philosophers, anthropologists, critics, historians.”²²

As an aside, the concept of a ‘cluster’ has been used by some, including Dutton, to describe John Searle’s approach to proper names: “The poverty of a ridged sense-reference, denotation-connotation approach to problems in the theories of meaning.”²³ Paradoxes have been suggested by linguistic philosophers — for example, that proper names have a reference but not a sense (they denote but do not connote). Others, that they have a sense but only contingently a reference. None of this has anything to do with

Dutton's description of art. And, in Searle's paper, one can find "pegs on which to hang descriptions"²⁴, but not "clusters".

In Dutton's cluster there are twelve constitutive elements. Some are more important than others. Because it is a cluster, not all cases of art will include all twelve. Seen in this light, the artefact or performance can be placed on a continuum. At one end, will be a clear case of art, at the other, non-art.

Enumerating the elements in Dutton's cluster, a distinction can be made between those psychological or sociological elements that form a relation to the artefact or performance, as opposed to the qualitative character of the work itself. Starting with the abstract relations, there are eight in Dutton's list.

First, for the individual, art involves the emotion of pleasure, which is quite distinct from its utility. It is an aesthetic pleasure in the harmony, the plot, colour, shape, whatever. This is not unlike the pleasure derived from non-artistic activities such as playing sport, engaging in sex, or eating fatty foods.

Second, art requires a skill or virtuosity. Again this is not peculiar to art, as the *Guinness Book of Records* attests.

Third, there is a conversation between individuals about the object, a critical discourse between the audience and producer.

Fourth, art is not simply everyday life. It is always bracketed off by a curtain, a frame, a spotlight, an *entré* ticket.

Fifth, art is saturated with emotion. Psychologically this might elicit "...fear, joy, sadness, anger, disgust, contempt... surprise."²⁵ As to the work itself, it might also be an exploration of these emotional themes. What might be termed the work's "emotional contour" or perspective.

Sixth, because of inherent complexity, art extends the individual's "perceptual and intellectual capacities". It is an intellectual challenge.



Seventh, art arises within an existing tradition. These are institutions, an art world of customers and commentators, which socially construct the meaning of the work. The notion of a work being intellectually challenging, and being institutionally accepted, enables Dutton to account for, and accept as art, the difficult cases of "readymades", such as Duchamp's *Fountain*.

Eighth, art is always an expression of an individual. It is his individuality that has created the work. This is encapsulated in the "signed piece". Even in preliterate cultures, such as the Sepic River in New Guinea, everyone knows the maker of the unsigned carving. Similarly, in the Middle Ages, where individuality is also less developed, community awareness takes its place. Expressive individuality is not restricted to art. Most social interaction – speech, "the presentation of self in everyday life" – is expressive.

Dutton's problem at this point, and something he readily admits, is that the first five elements — pleasure, skill, criticism, focus and the saturation of emotion — can also be used to describe football in its many forms. Soccer, for example, involves many of the individual emotions and social relations common to his conception of art. The relations in Dutton's cluster boil down to the psychology and sociology of art. To distinguish art from other forms of behaviour, the character of the work must be considered.

Subjectivist theories of aesthetics commonly adopt, or are encapsulated by, Dutton's cluster of relations.

Subjectivist theories of aesthetics commonly adopt, or are encapsulated by, Dutton's cluster of relations. The emotional reactions of the audience, the emotional contour of the work, the pleasure and intellectual challenge derived from the work, the way the art-world socially constructs the work. At one level, these are all objective psychological or sociological dimensions to art. No one would contend the origin and development of art arises in a social vacuum. Art is always imbedded in a nest of abstract relations. Emotions lead to the creation of art. Art elicits an emotional response. An empirical investigation of these reactions, attitudes, and social constructs, is the proper study for the psychology or sociology of art. This, however, is not the subjectivist's project. These relations are woven into the artefact, to become part of its aesthetic character. Judgments, or appraisals, are then made on the efficacy of this response. How the work might 'move' the audience. And there is also an explicit or implicit "truth" uncovered, a subjective view on the 'meaning' of the work and the social agenda it is a part. This is the well worn track, of constitutive relations, that relativists follow.

4. A CLUSTER OF QUALITIES.

THERE ARE THREE FURTHER criteria of art where the investigation rests firmly with the object itself, not a set of constitutive relations. First, the work will be part and parcel of a particular style. This is not an instant of the more general institutional framework, where arts are socially constructed, but a school of thought on "...form, composition, or expression..."²⁶. It provides a vocabulary, as it were, in which the artist is free to explore themes in a comprehensible way. A break away from a particular style is a second way of describing a work. This is where a different form of creativity or originality might develop. This

is working outside the paradigm. The uncovering of new ways to precede. It is where genius is weighed.



The rise of Impressionism illustrates this point on style. The invention of lead tubes of paint enabled *en plein air*, and the exploration of the optics of light. Masters of Impressionism, such as Monet, emerged. Styles evolve, and moving outside this paradigm, Cézanne is important as he incorporated blocks and forms of colour. These spheres, cones and cubes, plus experiments, in his still life work, with its horizontality of surface and the bunching of objects, became a basis for the Cubism of Picasso and Braque.

As distinct from representational theories of art, where the “most real” is the most valued, “imaginative representation” is the third quality of art in Dutton’s cluster. As Gombrich might explain this, there is no such thing as the “innocent eye”. The artist does not simply “copy appearances” but starts with a way of seeing, a schemata he has learnt and adopted. This is why there is such a wide variation in how naturalism is presented. Although Egyptian art, for example, is two-dimensional, this is not because Egyptian artists did not understand three-dimensionality. Less important figures, such as slave girls, are sometimes depicted in this way. The prescription of two-dimensionality came from their notions of the sacred. It was conceived as a more precise, less ambiguous, depiction for the Gods.

Plato was an admirer of Egyptian pictographs and hieroglyphs. Reality was represented not as a particularity, but something closer to Pure Form. The images were timeless, something to last for eternity, as the dead Pharaoh watched slaves labour on his estate. Gombrich writes:

If he could thus ‘watch’ the year come round and round again, the passage of time, the all-consumer, would be annihilated for him. The sculptor’s skill would have anticipated and perpetuated the recurrent cycle of time, and the dead could thus watch it forever in the timeless present...²⁷

In its own way, the vocabulary of artistic conventions employed by the Egyptians was comparable to the Greeks. It was just that the Greek’s adopted a different schemata that explored shadow, foreshortening and perspective. For Plato, these were imaginative tricks, designed to deceive. Imagination, however, is part of the artist’s schemata.

All representations are grounded on schemata which the artist learns to use...The injunction to ‘copy appearances’ is really meaningless unless the artist is first given something which is to be made like something else. Without making there can be no matching.²⁸

Dutton’s final criterion explores further this notion of imagination. Of all the elements in his cluster, this is the most important. It is why football is not art. Art is an “imaginative experience”. In as much as this imagination is developed within the artefact or performance, and forms part of its character, this is a fourth quality. But Dutton also describes it as providing “an imaginative experience for both producers and audiences.”²⁹ Following Kant, “works of art are imaginative objects subject to disinterested contemplation.”³⁰ Seen in this light, this is another relation of art, and consistent with the subjectivism of Kant. As Dutton describes it, “Artistic experience takes place in the theatre of the imagination.”³¹

5. EXPRESSION IN ART.

Dutton elevates the importance of these relations to defining characteristics. For Karl Popper, they are merely accompanying characteristics.

OBSERVING THAT ART IS a form of expression drenched with emotion, Dutton elevates the importance of these relations to defining characteristics. For Karl Popper, they are merely accompanying characteristics. Popper’s objection to expressive theories of art — where relations take on a central importance — is that emotion is common to all social behaviour, including the making of art. Therefore, because it is not distinctive of art, it cannot be the principal element of a theory of art. Two of “the Enemies” in his “Open Society” — Plato and G.W.F Hegel — provide the groundwork of the argument, though it is probably significant that in his particular presentation of the argument Popper only draws on Plato. The reason why Hegel’s position is also instructive, and compatible with Popper’s objections, is that he also wishes to develop an objective theory — in Hegel’s case, one that transcends the subjectivism of Kant.

Although Kant also strove for objectivity, through a disinterested aesthetic judgement, he ultimately fails, because, as Hegel points out, there is no resolution to the dualism in his philosophical system: between the material and spiritual (or transcendental ego), between noumena (things in themselves) and phenomena (things for us), between the heteronomy of facts and the autonomy of values. For Hegel, “truth only lies in the reconciliation and mediation of the two.”³² Kant does the opposite, by falling “back again into the fixed antithesis of subjective thought and objective things.”³³ Expanding on this, Hegel points out that, although Kant

...recognises the required unity in what he called the *intuitive understanding*...he comes to a standstill in the contradictions of subjectivity and objectivity...[Accordingly, his] “abstract

solution of the contradiction between concept and reality, universality and particularity... makes the solution and reconciliation itself a purely subjective one...[my elaboration—TO]³⁴

Hegel characterises art in the following way: First, he asserts, there is a universal need in man to express himself in art. Second, “it is made for man’s *sense*, and for this reason is more or less borrowed from the sensuous.”³⁵ As if writing contemporaneously, he continues:

Beauty and art...pervade all the business of life like a kindly genius, and form the bright adornment of all our surroundings, both mental and material, soothing the sadness of our condition and the embarrassments of real life, killing time in entertaining fashion, and where there is nothing good to be achieved, occupying the place of what is vicious, better, at any rate, than vice.³⁶

Art does not, however, serve moral ends. It stands independent of morality. Nor should we simply ask what is the use of art? This would assume an instrumentalist stance, and would give undue importance to something that is “*outside* the sphere of art.”³⁷ Hegel elaborates:

Against this it is necessary to maintain that art has the vocation of revealing the truth in the form of sensuous artistic shape, of representing the reconciled antithesis just described, and, therefore, has its purpose in itself, in this representation and revelation. For other objects, such as instruction, purification, improvement, pecuniary gain, endeavour after fame and honour, have nothing to do with the work of art as such, and do not determine its conception.³⁸

Turning to the question of the expressive in art, Hegel accords with Popper in these objections. Art arouses feeling, but distinctions between feelings “...are also quite abstract, and are not distinctions of the actual object-matter itself.”³⁹ For Hegel, “Feeling, as such, is a thoroughly empty form of subjective affection,”⁴⁰ so that any “inquiry into the feelings which art arouses...comes utterly to a standstill in the indefinite...”⁴¹

Consistent with Hegel’s objectivist philosophy, expression and emotion still resides in art, but within Absolute spirit.

Consistent with Hegel’s objectivist philosophy, expression and emotion still resides in art, but within Absolute Spirit. This is distinct from subjectivist theories of art, where “feeling which art arouses” is given primacy. So for Hegel, art is expressionistic in a specific sense, it is an ‘...expression of spiritual inwardness...’⁴² The argument advanced in his lectures on painting runs like this: Although art is anthropomorphic, it is not imitative, rather imaginative. It ‘makes visible’ nature and human form ‘...in order to make manifest the inner life of the spirit.’⁴³ In considering Raphael’s *Madonna and the Christ-child*, for example, Hegel says this: ‘What depth of imaginative feeling, what spiritual life, what inner wealth of profound emotion...’⁴⁴ He continues, a ‘genuine work of art’ is one where the subject is ‘...imaginatively grasped and brought before our vision in figures expressing themselves, displaying their inner life through a succession of feelings...’⁴⁵ The portrayal objectifies this spirit, to make it at once intelligible and recognizable⁴⁶ This is Hegel’s attempted reconciliation of the subject with the object, and the sublation of Kant’s antinomy between subjectivity and objectivity.

We are left with a study of aesthetics which is cut off, or “abstracts” itself, from “...the content proper and from its concrete essence and notion.”⁴⁷ Hegel here is making the objectivists’ point that it is the character, the structure, of the work itself that is to be studied, not the abstract relations in which it is embedded. As with feelings, Hegel goes on to point out, as does Popper, that evocation of emotions through art is not peculiar to art and is no different to the arousing of emotion “...with eloquence, historical composition, religious edification, and so forth...”⁴⁸ Hegel also suspects this cacophony of emotions would tend to cancel each other out.

If the essential content of art was...to present as a delight to emotion...all that the mind possess of real and lofty...thought...all the splendour of the noble, the eternal, and the true; and no less to make intelligible misfortune and misery, wickedness and crime...pleasure and delight⁴⁹

we would be

...at once met by the remark that the manifold feelings and ideas, which art aims at provoking or reinforcing, intersect and contradict, and by mutual interference cancel one another.⁵⁰

Art would simply magnify

...the contradiction of our feelings and passions, and either set them staggering like Bacchantes, or pass...into sophistry and scepticism.⁵¹

It is this point about sophistry and scepticism, inherent in expressionist theories of art, which Popper takes up.



Because music is the most obvious of the arts where emotion is evoked, Popper starts here. In Bach, it is less central than in Beethoven. Quoting Arthur Schopenhauer, it is in the latter that “all human emotions and passions speak: joy and grief, love and hate, fear and hope...in countless delicate shades.”⁵² This is what an expressionist theory of music explores. Popper thinks it is “a mistaken theory of the relation between human emotion on the one side and music – and art in general – on the other.”⁵³ In his lectures on music, Hegel is not quite so obvious, or unequivocal, as Popper on expression in art. Because, in Hegel’s view, music is abstract and temporal, not material and “persisting in space”, it “communicates the inner life and yet in its objectivity remains subjective.”⁵⁴ Music “is the art of the soul and is directly addressed to the soul.”⁵⁵ The reconciliation of the subjective feelings and emotions of music is achieved through “artistic expression” and “treatment”, then assimilated as “expression of an inner life.”⁵⁶ In some sense, music becomes “spirit, or soul, which resounds directly on its own account and feels satisfaction in its perception of itself.”⁵⁷ This reins in, or acts as a “summons to bridle the emotions themselves as well as their expression, so that there is no being carried away into a...tumult of passions...of despair...the outpouring of emotion whether in jubilant delight or the deepest grief.”⁵⁸ There is a suggestion that this break on expression leads “to the enjoyment of art as art”⁵⁹, not art as expression. A possible return to objectivity, where “the principle thing (is) the purely musical structure of [the] work and the ingenuity of such architecture.”⁶⁰

Popper, by contrast, explores expression and emotion by taking Plato’s example of the divine madness and frenzy in the poet or musician: Plato believed this to be no more than the skilful deception of the artist, not an inspiration from the gods. When the performer is emotionally affected, it is because of the message of the gods within the work itself, not his or his audience’s emotional state. These emotions *follow from* the work itself.

Popper unpacks this point in the following way. From Plato, Popper distinguishes four conjectures about art.

1. The musician, or poet, performs not his work, but that of the gods.
2. This entails frenetic emotions, which are conveyed to the audience.
3. There is a distinction between this divine inspiration of the artist, and his competence through training and study. Without such inspiration he is merely a skilful deceiver.
4. It is not these emotional states, however, that so move the performer or audience, but the character of the work itself.

From these four propositions, Popper suggests a modern expressionist theory of art that is independent of divinity.

From these four propositions, Popper suggests a modern expressionist theory of art that is independent of divinity. First, the mouthpiece of the gods becomes the common perception of the artist as a genius. The idea of genius was cemented in the Renaissance. With the convergence of a number of social determinants, not the least of which was the rise of individualism, the virtuosity of figures such as Leonardo da Vinci could be known and recognised. As art evolved from the striving for mimesis, to its rejection in the twentieth century, the concept of artistic genius also changed. A certain secular divinity, or at least a morality returned. Art became politicised. As Paul Klee expressed it, art no longer represented the visible, but made visible. The artist became a prophet or seer. Second, subjective emotions become the striving for self-expression. As is well known, Expressionist movements followed Impressionism at the end of the Nineteenth Century. This was epitomised by Vincent van Gogh and Edward Munch. Later, as a response to the First World War, German Expressionism incorporated self-expression as political protest and revulsion against the Weimar Republic. Third, the inspiration of the artist takes centre stage. As Ernst Gombrich has observed, there has arisen a tradition in artistic appreciation where ‘inspiration’ is looked for, and when this is judged absent the work is dismissed as “false” or “insincere”. Gombrich continues:

In the context of Renaissance theories and prejudices, insistence on inspiration and imagination goes hand in hand with emphasis on art as the high intellectual activity and the rejection of mere menial skill...nonchalance...marks the perfect courtier and the perfect artist.⁶¹

The reformulation of Plato’s first three notions — of genius, self-expression, and inspiration — are the basis for most subjectivist theories of aesthetics. Not surprisingly, these are also within the relations found in Dutton’s cluster. Popper’s objectivist theory of aesthetics takes as its starting point Plato’s fourth contention. It is an examination of the structure of the object itself, not its relation to these emotions, which is important. This does not deny self-expression, wrapped up with the inspiration of a genius, but simply “...stresses its utter triviality.”⁶² Of course, it is not trivial for the investigation of other things. Here such insights will abound. A study of emotions will be instructive in showing the power of art—how art elicits a range of social behaviour. Marching to war, calm contemplation, manic exaltation, weeping or joyfulness. Indeed, the work of art, that is the composition, may be an exploration of these emotive themes. A study of such emotions would become the psychology of art. If these expressions were externalised as a political agenda, the exploration of this would properly be seen as the sociology of art. But both enterprises, however worthy, should not to be confused with the philosophy of art.

6. ORIGIN AND REPRESENTATION.

BEGINNING WITH THE GREEKS, there has always been a debate on the nature of representation, or imitation, in

art. Plato takes as his example an everyday object, a bed. The universal, or Pure Form of a bed, can only be created by God; the “author of the nature of things...”⁶³. A carpenter can make a particular example; the artist, only a reflection, an illusion from one angle or another, not the real thing. Hence, “The artist’s representation stands at third remove from reality...third in succession to the throne of truth...”⁶⁴

Plato is harsh on the artist. Why would you choose a “superficial representation” over the original? Why would you “expect Homer or any of the poets to explain medicine or any similar skilled activity to us...”?⁶⁵ You wouldn’t. They are “merely manufacturing shadows at third removed from reality.”⁶⁶ Indeed, “Art and poetry appeal to, and represent, the lower, less rational part of our nature.”⁶⁷ No more than a conjuror peddling tricks. So in Plato’s *Republic*, the artist is “a poor child born of poor parents.”⁶⁸ — and refused admittance.

This limitation of artists, and artistic representation, reoccurs throughout the history of philosophy. Although G.W.F. Hegel predicts “the end of art” — there are more than a few shades of Plato here — he regarded its apotheosis in Greek culture.

Dutton, on the other hand, turns to Aristotle for a more sympathetic judgement. Individuals, he writes, “take an irreducible pleasure in representation...”⁶⁹ We “are born image-makers and image-enjoyers.”⁷⁰ This is innate. The Greeks called this mimesis — the imitation of nature — and from Gombrich’s reading of the story of art, it has proved a difficult task.

[I]t took the artists of the ancient world some 250 years of systematic research to achieve this end, and the artists of the Renaissance took the same time before they were able to eliminate what Albrecht Durer Called ‘false-ness in pictures.’⁷¹

If the pleasure of representation is innate, the form it has taken certainly evolved.

Particularly in the twentieth century, modern art has even questioned mimesis as the “worthy aim of art”.

If the pleasure of representation is innate, the form it has taken certainly evolved. Particularly in the twentieth century, modern art has even questioned mimesis as the “worthy aim of art”. Gombrich cites an amusing reply of Matisse to a critic who queried his representational skills: “Madam, you are mistaken, this is not a woman, this is a picture.”⁷²

Representational or not, the origin of art is a different question. Steven Pinker doubts art is a biological adaption. As an allegory, he asks, “What is the adaptive function of cheesecake?” The answer is none. “Cheesecake is a by-product of our evolved tastes and our evolved inventiveness.”⁷³ We have created and enjoyed art for exactly the same reason. Veblen’s theory of conspicuous consumption illustrates this point. When the middle class observed an increase in leisure time and higher social status coincide, the upper class choose to differentiate themselves in different ways. Non-representational art may be part of this differentiation. Pinker continues:

It may...explain some conceptual art (and Art writing) where conspicuous obfuscation is part of the mode by which the elite status of artist and collectors alike is maintained.⁷⁴

Geoffrey Miller is far closer to Dutton, and has a different take on cheesecake: Just as cheesecake tastes good because it is super-charged with sugar and fat,

Art looks good because we evolved visual systems orientated towards objects, people, and landscapes that show strong cues of novelty, distinctiveness and relevance to fitness.⁷⁵



This is even evident with Pleistocene erotica from some 25,000 years ago.⁷⁶ With her augmented sexual organs, the finely carved female figure might be mistaken as contemporary. Neither Miller nor Dutton are reductionists, however. They are quite clear on emphasising “hundreds of other social, familial, cultural, economic and ideological functions”⁷⁷ of art. For Miller, at least, sexual selection is far from complete as an explanation of the signalling system of contemporary art. There are two reasons for this. First, the signals might be directed to

...tribal affiliations, glorifying religion, designing propaganda...fetishizing luxury brands, optimising websites...⁷⁸

and much else. Second, representational skills have been devalued in the twentieth century “as reactionary, bourgeois or sexist.”⁷⁹

This is a bleak view, where art schools would rather teach students

...how to talk pretentiously about their 'process' and their 'practice,' rather than actually teaching technical processes or requiring any practice.⁸⁰

The hope, for Miller, lies in the emerging Asian art schools. Here representational skill is nurtured. And

Art investors are starting to notice that they can buy works that satisfy both their ancient aesthetic instincts for costly trait signalling and their postmodern taste for stylistic creativity.⁸¹

According to Miller this is “a return to Pleistocene art-making instincts... and good old-fashioned sexual charisma.”⁸²

Brian Boyd disagrees; natural selection and sexual selection, he claims, drive biological evolution, but not art. This follows from the observation that the signals of art are not confined to the opposite sex.

[I]n the case of art, all that needs to drive development is a co-evolution of 'signals' — artistic displays — and preferences.⁸³

By introducing culture into the evolutionary scheme, Boyd, along with Mark Changizi, suggests a theory of social selection.

By introducing culture into the evolutionary scheme, Boyd, along with Mark Changizi, suggests a theory of social selection. It does not deny the biology, but stresses co-evolution. For example, lactose tolerance enabled human groups to become herders. This is a case of gene-culture co-evolution, with “culture itself...a powerful inheritance system that works the same way as genetic evolution.”⁸⁴ Throughout history, art has been shaped by sacred ritual, such that the most significant co-evolution is between social aspects of “pattern play, control and attention.”⁸⁵ Boyd describes it this way: The earliest art that survives today are hand axes. Even before *Homo sapiens*, *Homo erectus* had a

...taste for crafted shape. Symmetry stands at the core of many kinds of pattern in nature. The makers of showpiece hand axes played in scale and finesse with design...They demonstrated unusual control in knapping the stone...to satisfy their own preferences and their audience's...⁸⁶

Fast forward to France, 13,000 BCE, and these same tastes in pattern and symmetry are finessed to a remarkable degree in a spear-thrower – displayed as part of Boyd’s exhibition.⁸⁷

The carver deploys the natural pattern of doe and birth sac, and combines the delicately observed posture of a real doe with formal design: he places one of the back legs so that it elegantly continues the line of the spear-thrower shaft while the other rear leg crosses over delicately to support the animal's weight. The artist pointedly plays: not only is this non-functional, but the scene elicits a virtuoso arpeggio of emotions, the solicitude of the birth scene, amusement at the superfluity of the image....⁸⁸

Boyd’s view of representation in the twentieth century would rest on these same notions of cognitive play and pattern. These human preferences are universal. There is a love of abstraction — highly developed much earlier in Islamic art — but also in facial recognition:

[C]aricature, masks, portrait painting and sculptures have therefore been made to provide what biologists call a super-stimulus to the fusiform gyrus, the area of our brain specialised to interpret human faces.⁸⁹

The traditions of representational art, based on pattern, can be found in all cultures.

Meanwhile, Mark Changizi explores the neurobiology of what he terms a “nature-harnessing theory”:

[C]ulture could shape writing to look like nature in just several thousand years...culture could have shaped speech to sound like nature over the course of hundreds of thousands of years.⁹⁰

Similarly, cultural artefacts do not simply appear. They are *shaped* and evolve through the “selection pressure” of culture. Music — in contradistinction to Hegel, “the pinnacle of the arts” — affects us not because of a music instinct...

but, instead, because music has culturally evolved to sound like the natural evocative human-movement sounds we already have brain regions designed to detect and recognise.⁹¹

These human-movement sounds he describes as “footsteps beat and gait pattern, Doppler shifts, loudness modulations, tempo and so on.”⁹² With the plastic arts, Changizi is of the view that colour and, as with Boyd, facial recognition are important: Colour in art...can only be understood by grasping how colours mimic skin spectral states....Symbols nature-harness our facial-expression instinct”.⁹³

So red indicates oxygenation; yellow, a fear. Changizi explains the origin of art by the evocation of emotion. The process is “human

stimuli-harnessing”. “Colours...are evocative...because they’re ultimately about skin, blood, emotions...health and so on...of people.”⁹⁴ Although “not all evocative stimulus artefacts are art...I suspect that being evocative is usually a necessary condition.”⁹⁵ As Dutton might have put it, art is “saturated with emotion.”

7. THE END OF ART.



AT THE BEGINNING OF the twentieth century, Dada, in its own way, proclaimed the end of art. It is this social movement that Dutton examines to test his theory of art. By far the most famous and controversial work was Marcel Duchamp’s *Fountain*.⁹⁶ well ahead of works by Picasso, Warhol, Pollock, Matisse et al. Dutton applies his cluster criteria to resolve the issue. An already accomplished sculptor and painter,⁹⁷ Duchamp had been exploring the assemblage of works of art from freely available hardware. He called these “readymades”, and *Fountain* was not even assembled; it was simply bought from the J.L. Mott Iron Works in Brooklyn and inscribed, on the side, “R Mutt 1917”. Was this art? Or to put the question his way: “Can one make works that are not works of art?”⁹⁸ As far as the Society of Independent Artists was concerned, the answer was no. It was rejected from their exhibition, and Duchamp, a founding member, resigned. *No, No, No*, was the clarion call of Dadaists. Their fight was against what they saw as bourgeois morality and rationality seen in the art establishment. In Europe it was the barbarity, the insanity, of the First World War and its aftermath. Originating in Zurich, Dada was initially critical of German Expressionism, but after the horrors of the war, it morphed into Berlin Dada and became a trenchant critic of the Weimer Republic. Incorporating photomontage, half-mechanical creatures and the prosthetics of a population maimed by war, these works forged new directions in representation.⁹⁹ Amongst this group, as Gombrich has remarked, it was Marcel Duchamp “who launched art on [a] path of puzzlement.”¹⁰⁰ Is the act of buying a urinal from a plumber, and attempting to hang it in a gallery,¹⁰¹ art, anti-art, or the end of art?

Dutton is quite clear: it is “an artwork of incandescent genius.”¹⁰² All but one of the criteria of his cluster is met. For fellow travellers of Dada it provided great pleasure, a humorous protest. As a readymade, the physical skills were not his, but as a symbolic gesture it was brilliant; a rejection not of a particular style, but the rejection of the whole notion of artistic style. For novelty and creativity, it was wondrously original. For a form of criticism it could not be surpassed. For art as representation, *Fountain* goes beyond Andy Warhol and his critique of consumerism.

It is not about urine or about commodification of plumbing in modern society. It is not even about ugliness. It is at heart a Dadaist critique of the art world and art idolatry.¹⁰³

Being the first of its type, there is a dramatic focus in the work. Later conceptual artists, by contrast, struggle because they lack, in the words of Robert Hughes, “the shock of the new”. There is expressive individuality. It was a unique gesture, “shot through with emotion” and, in its own way, an intellectual challenge, not as a piece of art, but a challenge to the philosophy of art. After the Turner Prize declared to be the most influential artwork of the twentieth century, its intuitional acceptance cannot be doubted. According to Dutton, it fails to fulfil only one criterion: Because it is, in Duchamp’s own words, simply a “work”, not a “work of art”, it cannot be presented as an imaginative experience.

Dutton is less flattering about the aftermath of *Fountain*. It was certainly an exceptional piece of political protest. But can much the same thing be done successfully again and again over the next hundred years? Today, conceptual art includes a plethora of “found objects” — unmade beds, empty filing cabinets, you name it — but like a joke it is only funny once. The *reductio ad absurdum* is Piero Manzoni’s *Artist’s Shit. Contents 30g net. Freshly preserved, produced and tinned in May 1961*, purchased, in 2002, by The Tate for \$61,000. Today, an unintended fault in the autoclave process¹⁰⁴ means an indeterminate wait for these to explode. Possibly a joke *can* be told twice.

Such as they are, these explosions only mean the “end of art” as it was once known. It is not “the end of art” in Hegel’s sense. Conceptual artists still abound, and if there is no humour for some, the “jokes”, however unwelcome, still keep coming. There will always be new and pressing political or moral barrows to push, and there can never be an end to passion.

Within the Hegelian system “the end of art” is but a wider evolution leading to the “end of history”. This Historicist theory has been questioned by Karl Popper. A logical refutation of Hegel’s dialectic is found in the 1957 “Preface” to *The Poverty of Historicism*. It goes like this:

1. **The growth of knowledge is a significant determinate of the course of human history.**
2. **We cannot predict what this knowledge will be.**
3. **Therefore, we cannot know the future course of history.**

There are further technical points of logic and formal notations, but the inescapable conclusion is that “No scientific predictor ... can possibly predict, by scientific method, its own future results.”¹⁰⁵

Questions about Hegel’s method are one thing, the veracity of his descriptions of modern art something else. The rise of conceptual art in the twentieth century is one response to the problem of representation outlined by Gombrich. The inadequacy of conceptual art, both as conceptual thought and art, can be drawn from Hegel.

The invention of photography had, according to Gombrich, a dramatic effect. The image-makers had lost their niche.¹⁰⁶ Naturalism — or mimesis — was replaced. Just one of the many examples of this was the formal harmony of Art Nouveau. And in Vienna, Secession artists combined architecture, sculpture, painting, even hand craft with geometric themes. Gustav Klimt added mosaic

like jewels in portraiture. Much of the Beethoven frieze was two dimensional. The artist was no longer in the business of providing representational illusions. In their place stepped the entertainment industry with film, and more recently interactive games and virtual reality.

The problem with artistic illusion, the adequacy of artistic representation, is central to Hegel's prediction of "the end of art".

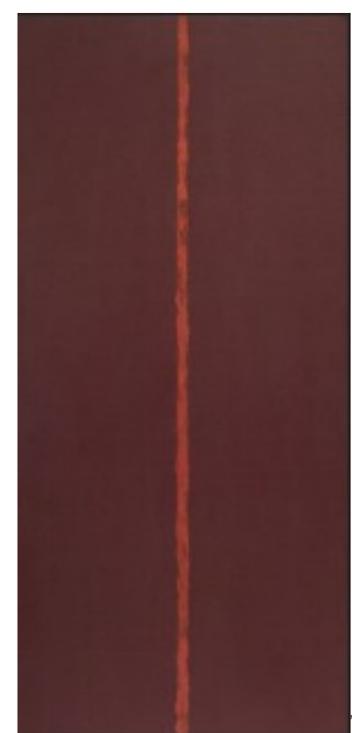
The problem with artistic illusion, the adequacy of artistic representation, is central to Hegel's prediction of "the end of art". Hegel's science of history reserves a special place for art. It accompanies religion and philosophy as an embodiment of Absolute Spirit. It finds representation and expression first in art. Then, with historical development, art becomes progressively inadequate in the portrayal of the sacred. It is not surprising that the high point of art, according to Hegel, was in Greece because their Gods took on both human form and foibles. In early Christian art the parables might also be depicted, but as Christianity developed, apart from the image of Christ, God could not be easily depicted in sensory form. Religion was the beginning of conceptual thought, and ultimately transcended art, just as philosophy, in turn, transcended religion.

In Plato, art is deception. In Hegel, art is inadequate. It is singularly ill equipped to bridge the chasm of conceptual complexity inherent in the Absolute. According to Hegel, "Only a certain circle and grade of truth is capable of being represented in the medium of art."¹⁰⁷ Being restricted to present ideas in a 'sensuous form', it remained for religion, then philosophy to penetrate the supra-sensual world. Because of its medium, art is limited.

We are above the level at which works of art can be venerated as divine, and actually worshiped...Thought and reflection have taken their flight above fine art.¹⁰⁸

Hegel contends the regulation of modern culture by law and maxim is "not favourable to art". And the artist's response to this predicament has "mislead him into putting more abstract thought into his art."¹⁰⁹ This is a mistake, because although aesthetics and philosophy can reflect on art, art cannot reflect on philosophy. Despite the intent of conceptual artists, systematic reflection is beyond the medium of the sensuous. Although there is a philosophy of art, there is not an art of philosophy. In so much as it attempts this reflection, it simply becomes half-baked philosophy and degenerate as art.

The uncovering of truth, through art, is limited because of its sensuous form. Simple statements, such as the call of 'No, No, No', by Dadaists, or simple parables from the bible, in Hegel's case, can be adequately expressed. Complex conceptual issues in morality, politics or philosophy are beyond art. There can be a simple affirmation or rejection, a symbolic emblem or banner for a cause. These might be portrayed. For anything more, the conceptual artist requires a crutch. First, the title of the work. This might help start to resolve the inherent ambiguity of the work. Then, moving on, the inclusion of the ubiquitous "artist statement". Because art cannot explain, or argue, the artist is drawn to extra-artistic devices such as these. In the MONA collection, it is significant that David Walsh side-steps this dilemma. The public is simply confronted with the object. No title. No discussion. This is reserved for those who choose to carry his "'O' Device'" on which is recorded a multitude of explanations, though none has authority, and no verisimilitude. The professional critics' offerings are characterised as "artwank".¹¹⁰ In one sense Walsh is suggesting the object should be appreciated as an object in and for itself, not buried in the clutter of labels and signs and explanations. These crutches interfere with the appreciation of its intrinsic beauty.



The Hegelian case against conceptual art also has currency in other artistic movements of the twentieth century. Pop Art might attempt to avoid it by the incorporation of cartoon sequences¹¹¹ and thought bubbles. However, this is the introduction of words not the refinement of images. The New York School of formal abstraction, known as Abstract Expressionism because its intent is also to convey, or express, a notion of truth, also fails. An example, by Barnett Newman in 1949, illustrates this point. *Onement III*, like much formal abstraction, is a simple expanse of monotone colour. In this early case, it is an oil finish, not the acrylic polymer used from the mid 1950's. The colour is Maroon, and it is painted on a stipple canvas. It is then bisected, top to bottom, by a roughly stroked thin band of orange, which he calls a "zip". This was a signature devise he employed in many of his works. It is only through the title of the work, '*Onement*', and the artists accompanying description, that the sacred, indeed any, connotations could start to be drawn. Yet, for Newman, it expresses a very specific truth.

It alludes to a sense of being 'at one with the world' and the religious idea of atonement.

Newman's interest (is) the idea of the sublime. 'We are reasserting man's natural desire for the exalted'...'for a concern with out relationship to absolute emotions.'¹¹²

Following Hegel, it could be argued, such conceptual thought, however muddled, cannot be conveyed by Newman's sensuous abstraction, particularly in such attenuated form. All we are left with is another case of *obscurum per obscurius* – an explanation of the obscure by the still more obscure.

A conflation of art with morality is a specific case of the conflation of art with truth. It is clearest when art depicts the sacred.

A conflation of art with morality is a specific case of the conflation of art with truth. It is clearest when art depicts the sacred. With the rise of the profane, this connection can still endure, even though the principles of morality might change from a theistic deontology, based on duty, to the consequences of an action – various forms of Utilitarianism, for example – or the virtue of the actor. Three hundred years ago, in Hegel's era, modern art was Romantic art. It still rested on the contention that art had a moral purpose. Art was seen as a means, in Hegel's words again, for "...*purification* of the passions, instruction, and moral perfecting...to bridle savageness and educate..."¹¹³ Although Hegel accepted the conflation with truth – this being the basis of his prediction for the end of art – Hegel rejected a simple conflation with morality. It degraded art to a "...mere toy of entertainment or a mere means of instruction."¹¹⁴ Moral improvement – "...preparing the inclinations and impulses for moral perfection..."¹¹⁵ – is one such form of instruction. Moreover, and this now is Popper's point, the work of art, as art, becomes superfluous.

By such a severance the sensuous plastic form, which is just what makes the work of art a work of art, becomes a mere otiose accessory, a husk which is expressly pronounced to be mere husk, a semblance expressly pronounced to be mere semblance.¹¹⁶

In trying to separate art from morality, Hegel starts with an antinomy found in Kant, and much subsequent moral philosophy. This is the alienation between "earthly temporality, oppressed by want and poverty..."¹¹⁷ and a universal will, a reflective moral point of view conscious of its duty. This distinction between 'is' and 'ought', a contradiction in 'modern culture', Hegel wished to sublimate. It is Hegel's contention that in the absence of such a resolution man remains, and here his metaphors become mixed, an 'amphibian', living in 'two contradictory worlds', 'shuttlecocked from side to side', a 'prisoner' to one or the other.

If the culture of the world has fallen into such a contradiction, it becomes the task of philosophy to undo or cancel it... to show that neither...one alternative...nor the other...possesses truth, but that they are essentially self-dissolving; that truth only lies in the conciliation and mediation of the two...¹¹⁸

In Short: Truth is seen as a resolution of the antithesis, or opposition, between "is" and "ought". Philosophy shows the essence of this opposition, and that 'they are in reconciliation'. Art is not a means for moral ends, it does not simply serve the 'ought'. Art reveals the truth of the reconciled antithesis.

CODA.

TODAY, CONCEPTUAL ART, AND much abstract expressionism, is predicated on this "ought". There is certainly no Hegelian resolution, and art is merely the handmaiden of one particular moral cause or another. Now no longer sacred, but profane, it is, nevertheless, underpinned by a prescriptive ethic. Artistic genius' is very often the voice, and it proclaims the error of our way. A realist theory of art departs from this view. Aesthetics is not ethics, and art is not morality. And Hegel is quite right in remarking that there is a danger that the work of art, as art, is reduced to a husk. It is Dutton's cluster of relations that confuse the sociology and psychology of art with the philosophy of art. When combined with an expressionistic theory of constitutive relations, subjectivism follows.

Dutton is correct, however, in observing that art is an imaginative experience. An artefact can never be reality...Nor, of course, is photography reality.

Dutton is correct, however, in observing that art is an imaginative experience. An artefact can never be reality but, in the forms that it thematically works out, a way of imagining it. Nor, of course, is photography reality. At the turn of the century, it simply directed artists along a different road of representation. In many cases a different abstract niche of imagination, for others, perhaps photo realism. An objective theory of art will be an investigation into the work created by this imagination. There is no truth function in this conception of art, and because there is no Absolute, there is also no Hegelian dialectic leading to the 'end of art'. Traditions wax and wane, Impressionism gives rise to Cubism, for example, and the enterprise continues to evolve.

There is progress in some styles, regress in others. For Popper and Gombrich, this comes down to the number of interesting new aesthetic problems a particular school might generate. The ‘research program’ with the most new problems is the one that prospers. On this view of art, the origin, or the beginning, of art would be the least interesting aesthetic question, because, if progress is made, it is the new complications, or problem shifts, which require study and understanding. That is, of course, unless the problems of art are seen as no more than a Pleistocene instinct working itself out through the history of art. This is a long reductionist bow. It is also a far cry from the position of Dutton and the MONA curators. It fails to explain the many chapters that are found in the story of art.



Dr Tronn Overend is the author of [Social Idealism and the Problem of Objectivity](#) (Queensland University Press, 1983) and the author of numerous articles on social theory and the philosophy of the social sciences. His essay “[An Objective Theory of Modernist Aesthetics](#)” appeared in *The Fortnightly Review* in 2018.

NOTES.



More

1. See David Walsh. [A Bone of Fact](#). Picador. Pan Macmillan Australia Pty Ltd. 2014:6 [↩](#)
2. Sometimes called the MONA Effect, according to the local tourist authority’s website, [Discover Tasmania](#), there were 1.25m visitors to the remote island 240 km off the southern edge of Australia in 2017. The second most-visited attraction on the island, right after the weekly Salamanca Market in Hobart, was the museum. Walsh’s latest project: the construction of a massive entertainment, conference, retail and convention center adjacent to MONA. It won’t be a free public facility, either; visitors may even find it somewhat expensive. As he told the [Guardian](#) in 2017, “You’ll pay because either you’re easily deluded, or because it’s spectacular.” [↩](#)
3. Walsh. 2014:321 [↩](#)
4. Adrian Franklin. *The Making of MONA*. Viking. Penguin Group. Australia. 2014:115 [↩](#)
5. Walsh. 2014:193 [↩](#)
6. Franklin 2014: 236-238 [↩](#)
7. Franklin. 2014:198 [↩](#)
8. David Walsh and Elizabeth Pearce. et al. *Monanisms*. Museum of Old and New Art. Hobart. 2010 [↩](#)
9. Franklin. 2014:265 [↩](#)
10. David Walsh, Elizabeth Pearce, Steven Pinker, Brian Boyd, Geoffrey Miller, Mark Changizi. *On The Origin of Art*. Museum of Old and New Art. Hobart. 2016 [↩](#)
11. Denis Dutton. *The Art Instinct: Beauty, Pleasure & Human Evolution*. Oxford University Press. Oxford. 2009 (paperback 2010). Dutton was the founding editor of the well-known website *Arts and Letters Daily*. Had he not died in 2010, might he have been invited to join the MONA group? For a summary of reviews of his book, see [www.theartinstinct.com](#) [↩](#)
12. For an argument on the incoherence of these theories that Dutton dismisses, notably in the work of Peter Winch and Thomas Kuhn, see Tronn Overend. [Social Idealism and the Problem of Objectivity](#). Queensland University Press. St Lucia. 1983. Chapter 3, “The Problematic of Demarcation”, and Chapter 4, “The Problematic of Incommensurability”. [↩](#)
13. Dutton. 2010:43 [↩](#)
14. All quotes, Dutton. 2010:43-45 [↩](#)
15. Dutton. 2010:25 [↩](#)
16. Pinker. 2016:73 [↩](#)
17. [Miller](#). 2016:183 [↩](#)
18. Miller. 2016:189 [↩](#)
19. Miller. 2016:189 [↩](#)
20. *Ibid.* [↩](#)
21. Dutton. 2010:61 [↩](#)
22. Dutton. 2010:60 [↩](#)
23. John R Searle. ‘Proper Names’ in *Mind*. 1958. 67:173. [↩](#)
24. Searle. 1958:171 [↩](#)
25. Dutton. 2010:57 [↩](#)
26. Dutton. 2010:53 [↩](#)
27. E.H. Gombrich. *Art & Illusion. A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*. Phaidon Press Limited. London. 2012:106 [↩](#)
28. Gombrich. 2012:263-264 [↩](#)
29. Dutton. 2010:58 [↩](#)
30. Dutton. 2010:58 [↩](#)
31. Dutton. 2010:58-59 [↩](#)
32. G.W.F. Hegel. *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*. Penguin Books Ltd. London. 2004:60 [↩](#)
33. Hegel. 2004:62 [↩](#)
34. Hegel. 2004:63 [↩](#)
35. Hegel. 2004:37 [↩](#)
36. Hegel. 2004:5 [↩](#)
37. Hegel. 2004:61 [↩](#)
38. Hegel. 2004:61 [↩](#)
39. Hegel. 2004:37 [↩](#)
40. Hegel. 2004:37 [↩](#)
41. Hegel. 2004:38. [↩](#)
42. G.W.F. Hegel. *Aesthetics: Lectures in Fine Art*. Translated by T.M. Knox. Vol.1 & 11 Oxford at the Carendon Press. 1975:879. [↩](#)
43. Hegel. 1975:814 [↩](#)
44. Hegel. 1975:800. [↩](#)

45. Hegel.1975:857 [↑](#)
46. see Hegel.1975:859-60 [↑](#)
47. Hegel. 2004:38 [↑](#)
48. Hegel. 2004:38 [↑](#)
49. Hegel. 2004:51 [↑](#)
50. Hegel. 2004:53 [↑](#)
51. Hegel. 2004:53 [↑](#)
52. Karl Popper. “Autobiography“, in *The Philosophy of Karl Popper*, edited by Paul Arthur Schilpp. The Library of Living Philosophers. Open Court Publishing Company, Illinois.1974:50 [↑](#)
53. Popper. 1974:50. [↑](#)
54. Hegel.1975:889 [↑](#)
55. Hegel:1975:891 [↑](#)
56. Hegel.1975:910 [↑](#)
57. Hegel. 1975:939 [↑](#)
58. *Ibid.* [↑](#)
59. Hegel. 1975:940 [↑](#)
60. Hegel. 1975:954 [↑](#)
61. Gombrich. 2012:163 [↑](#)
62. Popper. 1974:52 [↑](#)
63. Plato. *The Republic*. Penguin Books Ltd. England. 1967:373 [↑](#)
64. Plato. 1967:374 [↑](#)
65. Plato. 1967:375 [↑](#)
66. Plato. 1967:376 [↑](#)
67. Plato. 1967:379 [↑](#)
68. Plato. 1967:380 [↑](#)
69. Dutton. 2010:55 [↑](#)
70. Dutton. 2010:33 [↑](#)
71. Grombrich. 2012:xv [↑](#)
72. Gomrich. 2012:xxiv [↑](#)
73. Pinker. 2016:73 [↑](#)
74. Pinker. 2016:51 [↑](#)
75. Miller. 2016:165 [↑](#)
76. *Venus of Lespugue*. France. 26,000 – 24,000 BCE in Walsh et al 2016:187 [↑](#)
77. Miller. 2016:193 [↑](#)
78. Miller. 2016:211 [↑](#)
79. Miller. 2016:213 [↑](#)
80. Miller. 2016:213 [↑](#)
81. Miller. 2016:213 [↑](#)
82. Miller. 2016:213 [↑](#)
83. Boyd. 2016:283 [↑](#)
84. Boyd. 2016:287 [↑](#)
85. Boyd. 2016:275 [↑](#)
86. Boyd.2016:277 [↑](#)
87. *Spear-thrower*. Le Mas-d’Azil. France. C. 13,000 BCE in Walsh et al 2016:276 [↑](#)
88. Boyd. 2016:277 [↑](#)
89. Boyd. 2016:289 [↑](#)
90. Changizi. 2016:419 [↑](#)
91. Changizi. 2016:419 [↑](#)
92. Changizi. 2016:419 [↑](#)
93. Changizi. 2016:420 [↑](#)
94. Changizi. 2016:425 [↑](#)
95. Changizi.2016:425 [↑](#)
96. To promote the 2004 Turner Prize, Gordon’s Gin polled 500 dealers, critics, artists, and curators and 64 percent voted *Fountain* as “the most influential work of art of the twentieth century”; Dutton. 2010:193 [↑](#)
97. Gombrich suggests Duchamp’s mixed media work, *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* might have been inspired by a still-practiced Scottish folk tradition, Gombrich does not specify the origins or any details of this tradition, and we are left with the assumption that the contraption’s themes are Miller’s Pleistocene instincts of violence and sex. (See Gombrich.1991:182) [↑](#)
98. Dutton. 2010:195 [↑](#)
99. For example, Robert Hughes, in *The Shock of the New* (Thames & Hudson, 2016), selects the examples of Hannah Hoch’s *Pretty Maiden*; Otto Dix’s *Cardplaying War –Cripples*; George Grosz’ *Daum Marries Her Pedantic Automaton George in May 1920, John Heartfield Is Very Glad of It, and Republican Automatons.* [↑](#)
100. Gombrich.1991:182 [↑](#)
101. Since Duchamp’s sister lost the original, along with other works, Duchamp made multiple “copies” of *Fountain* and *Bride...*, some of which hang at MoMA in New York. [↑](#)
102. Dutton. 2010:201 [↑](#)
103. Dutton. 2010:198 [↑](#)
104. Excrement also features in Pinker’s selection of *Cloaca Professional 2010* by Wim Delvoye. However, the “poing machine” — part of the MONA standing collection — has a more complex biological point on the role of microbes in evolution. (Pinker.2016:52) [↑](#)
105. K. R. Popper. *The Poverty of Historicism*. Routledge & Kegan Paul. Ltd. London. 1969:vi [↑](#)
106. See E.H.Gombrich. *Topics of our Time*; Phaiden. London. 1991:148 [↑](#)
107. Hegel. 2004:11 [↑](#)
108. Hegel. 2004:12 [↑](#)

109. Hegel. 2004:13 [↩](#)
110. The O Device also tracks a visitor’s interaction, time spent, and path through the gallery. This is data that curators, in other galleries, ordinarily would not have. [↩](#)
111. Boyd regards comics as an important ‘low form of art’ in the twentieth century. He sites the work of Art Spiegelman in particular. [↩](#)
112. Exhibition caption. *MoMA at NGV. 130 years of Modern and Contemporary Art*. NGV Publications. Melbourne. 2018:130 [↩](#)
113. Hegel. 2004:55 [↩](#) [↩](#)
114. Hegel. 2004:57 [↩](#) [↩](#)
115. Hegel. 2004:57 [↩](#) [↩](#)
116. Hegel. 2004:56 [↩](#) [↩](#)
117. Hegel. 2004:60 [↩](#) [↩](#)
118. Hegel. 2004:60 [↩](#) [↩](#)

Related

[An objective theory of Modernist aesthetics.](#)
2 April 2018
In “Art & Architecture”

[The Wide Summer Shelf, 2018 I.](#)
10 August 2018
In “Poetry Notes”

[The New Beauty.](#)
24 July 2017
In “Commentary on Art and Literature”



This Fortnightly Review article is filed under the following rubrics: [Art & Architecture](#), [Commentary on Art and Literature](#).

Publication: Sunday, 24 March 2019, at 17:52.

Options: Archive for [Tronn Overend](#). Bookmark the [permalink](#). Follow comments here with the [RSS feed](#). [Post a comment](#) or leave a [trackback](#).

This site uses cookies: [Find out more.](#)

Okay, thanks