

ARTHUR DANTO'S ONTOLOGY OF AESTHETICS UPON POP ART

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ABSTRACT

ARTHUR DANTO'S ONTOLOGY OF AESTHETICS UPON POP ART

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The main objective of this dissertation is to examine Arthur Danto's method of indiscernibles in his theory of aesthetics. In order to explicate this conception, Danto's method of indiscernibles is elucidated by means of Andy Warhol's works of Pop Art. Through this study Danto's critical approach against traditional realism in philosophy of art is examined and Danto's renewed solution for the reality problem of artworks is exposed with the acquaintance of Warhol's art. After the examination of Danto's use of indiscernibles in order to generate new realism in the philosophy of art, Richard Wollheim's method of seeing-in is explicated in order to criticize Danto's method. Danto dismisses the material quality of artworks at the expense of his conception of indiscernibles and Wollheim restores the material with his theory of seeing-in. This dissertation is centered on the critique of Danto's conception of art and Wollheim's understanding of art is used to underscore the deficiencies in Danto's theory.

Keywords: Pop Art, Brillo Box, Indiscernibles, Seeing-in, Pentimento

ÖZ

ARTHUR DANTO'NUN POP SANATI EKSENİNDE ESTETİK ONTOLOJİSİ

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Bu tezin temel amacı Arthur Danto'nun sanat felsefesinde fark edilemez olanı yöntem olarak kullanmasını incelemektir. Fark edilemez kavramını açık bir biçimde ortaya koymak için, Andy Warhol'un Pop sanat eserleri örnek olarak incelenmiştir. Bu çalışmada Danto'nun sanat felsefesindeki geleneksel gerçekçiliğe karşı duruşu ve de Warhol'un sanatının katkısıyla Danto'nun sanat eserlerinin gerçeklik problemine dair sunduğu yeni çözümler ortaya konmuştur. Danto'nun sanat felsefesinde fark edilemez olan yöntemini kullanarak yeni gerçekçiliği oluşturması incelendikten sonra, bu yöntemi eleştirmek için Richard Wollheim'in içinde-görme metodu incelenmiştir. Danto fark edilemez olan teorisini uygulayabilmek adına sanat eserlerindeki materyal niteliği yok etmişken, Wollheim içinde-görme teorisiyle sanat eserlerine materyal özelliklerini geri yüklemiştir. Bu tez, sonuç itibarıyla Danto'nun sanat anlayışının bir eleştirisi olarak yazılmış ve de Wollheim'in sanat eserine yaklaşımı, Danto'nun teorisindeki eksiklikleri vurgulamak adına ele alınmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Pop Sanatı, Brillo Kutusu, Fark edilemez, İçinde-görme, Pentimento

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- A Arthur Danto, "The Artworld"
- AIO Richard Wollheim, *Art and Its Objects: An Introduction to Aesthetics*
- ART Arthur Danto, "Artworks and Real Things"
- BB Arthur Danto, *Beyond the Brillo Box: The Visual Arts in Post-Historical Perspective*
- OAM Richard Wollheim, *On Art and the Mind*
- PA Richard Wollheim, *Painting as an Art*
- PI Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*
- TC Arthur Danto, *Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art*

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Pop Art's New Realism

All throughout the history and philosophy of art, there has been an enduring question about the reality of artworks. Started from Plato, until Modernism the artworks – representations have been considered as *mimesis*. By means of theory of *mimesis* the artworks are taken to be inferior to physical objects, that is to say they are ontologically dependent on what is called real. For both Plato and Aristotle every artwork is a copy of nature or natural states. The essence of drama, for instance is an imitation of appearances; that is to say, actors imitate the actions of whomever they represent. Painters also imitate the appearances of things therefore painting is essentially a matter of imitation or of verisimilitude. Therefore the *mimetic* theory of art advanced by Plato and Aristotle is based on the *re*-presentation of the world, human actions, emotions and perceptions. Every artwork finds a one-to-one correspondence in nature and represents the real world as imitative replicas.

Until Modernism, artists have struggled with reality and have sought for the best way to imitate the world. Once artists accepted that the world is beyond the reach of art, they settled with the idea that art can only resemble the real, but itself can never be one. Seeing artworks as the representations of appearances therefore submitting them ontologically inferior to natural reality, defines the characteristic of the traditional realism. Imitation and resemblance theories (as widely called Illusion theories) constitute the

system of traditional realism in art. Accordingly, the refusal of these theories engendered the Modernist era in the history of art. Modernism is emerged from the Pop Art movement in New York by the early 60's.

This movement brought a new conception of reality for the philosophy of art, with the act of using real objects and readymades as being artworks. With the instances like Andy Warhol's *Brillo Box*¹ and Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain*² there occurred an ontological paradigm shift when the artworks were materially mere objects. Therefore, an everlasting question of 'Are artworks real?' is superseded by "How real should artworks be?" And the traditional realism that prolonged since Plato is replaced by New Realist account of Pop Art.

This replaced philosophical question of "How real should artworks be?" is the crucial subject matter of all kinds of debates on Pop Art, and it brings conflicting responses along with it. Peter Selz, for instance, denotes the most common-sensitive dilemma about these artworks in asking:

I think most of us always felt that one of the absolute necessities for anything to be a work of art was the aesthetic distance between art and the experience. Now, if any aesthetic distance is necessary for a work of art, is an aesthetic experience possible when we are confronted with something which is *almost* the object itself?³

¹ Fig. 1. Andy Warhol, *Brillo Box*

² Fig. 2. Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*

³ Peter Selz, "A Symposium on Pop Art", in *Arts Magazine*, April 1963, p. 43

So Pop Art raises the question of why an ordinary object in a museum or gallery is considered as an object of art, while the same object in everyday life is not considered as an artwork. For Peter Selz, “an artwork should not be *too* real; rather it should transform reality and expose the metaphysical kernel in existence.”⁴ Like Selz, Hilton Kramer also asserts that, “Pop art does not tell us what it feels like to be living through the present moment of civilization – it is merely part of the evidence of that civilization.”⁵ Pop artworks have nothing to do with artistic representation; they are mere objects in the sense of readymades. But, Henry Geldzahler, on the other hand asks that, “Is it not logical that art be made out of what we see?”⁶ He points out the radical directness of common-sense realism’s ontological approach: What we see is what there is to see. For Geldzahler, Pop artworks are real enough, that “we have an objective record of the world that we inhabit.”⁷ His claim is that “Pop artworks are visual records of a particular moment in time and that their distinguishing qualities are such that we have a sense of that moment as a result of having viewed its representation in painting.”⁸

The sensual qualities of artworks and their sensory effects are essential defining characteristics of New Realism of Pop Art. What distinguishes New Realism from traditional Realism is its capacity to affect our experience excessively. “In standing before New Realist paintings we submit our bodies to the aggressive assault of New Realism.”⁹ In New Realist paintings, we as beholders, embody what they represent. In other words, we are so aggressively assaulted by their physical qualities that we become as if we lived a corporeal experience. In other words, they transform us by sensorially working us over and thereby making us feel something of

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 44

⁵ Hilton Kramer, “A Symposium on Pop Art”, p. 33

⁶ Henry Geldzahler, “A Symposium on Pop Art”, p. 37

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 38

⁸ *ibid.*, p.38

⁹ John Ashbery, “The New Realism”, in *New Realists*, New York: Sidney Jannis Gallery, 1962, pp: 20-34, p. 21

what they represent, in such a way that we become the embodiment of artworks. And that is our capacity of embodiment which is constitutive of New Realism and with the idea that artworks can cause us to have experiences, they become a part of our corporeal reality.

New Realist paintings of Pop Art, as I will explicate in my discussion of Warhol's *Death and Disaster* series in the fourth chapter, work to heighten the spectator's response in ways that strikes him or her as if confronted by reality as a perceived aspect of human experience. Real feelings of horror, for instance, however described, would qualify as a perceived aspect in this sense. We become transformed in a sensorial way as if we really lived that experience.

The sensual qualities of artworks and their sensory effects that define New Realism are called the extra-representational qualities of artworks. The extra-representational qualities are material qualities that are not directly involved in depicting something in the world but aggressively address our senses. The visible world or pictorial representation is only a part of what paintings deliver. But the feelings are essential components of these paintings. In order to have feelings, we must live an experience which exceeds the material features of the painting. In the creation of the experience of Pop Art, to exceed the material object means to leave it untransformed, that is to say, to leave "the object alone"¹⁰. And the non-transformation of the object (as in the case of readymades and found objects) leads to the transformation of the beholder, transformation of us.

So, the New Realism of Pop Art is distinguished from traditional Realism by transforming us rather than the objective world. Art then, is no longer the means for imitating the world, but it is the meaning itself in our embodiment of its extra-representational features. By foregrounding the material in such an excessive form, (as seen as blatant copies from a

¹⁰ John Ashbery, "The New Realism", p. 28

negative aspect), we live another kind of aesthetic experience than the ones we are used to. We become more than beholders and become even the part of an artwork as we are sensorially worked over. Pop artists do not depict an external object, but they intentionally point out our mental states, which eventually evolved from socio-cultural, historical and political manifold of our lives. And what I find attractive in Pop artworks is this viable experience we live when we encounter with them. So to speak, there is nothing like still-life representations of the world on these paintings, but the expressions of life in its all inter-connected variety.

1.2. Arthur Danto & Richard Wollheim

The discourse on realism that began with Pop Art's New Realism proposed that the sensual quality and the sensory effect of artworks are real. The realisms of Pop Art are twofold. First, Pop artworks activate sensory perception in a manner that is commensurable with real-world objects. Second, they are not facsimiles of real-world objects because they are transformative in their formation of embodied responses in the beholder. The transformation of the beholder through embodied responses is the result of Pop Art's New Realist creation of artworks with easily accessible representations of common objects that at the same time can manipulate the visual-material character of artworks.

Arthur Danto intervened in this discourse by claiming that the traditional realist theories of art could not adequately account for the sensory-perceptual or extra-representational features of Pop Art. Danto was especially taken in by his encounter with Warhol's *Brillo Box* in Stable Gallery. According to Danto, Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* that were identical to the Brillo boxes found in supermarket storerooms announced the end of Realism. Danto's thesis of the end of Realism came at the expense of the

sensuous qualities of artworks and of our perceptual capacity to apprehend those qualities. A New Realist account of Warhol's *Brillo Box*, on the contrary, reasserts or reinscribes those sensations or sensory-perceptual aspects that Danto denies.

Andy Warhol, one of the most famous Pop Artist is considered more philosophical than others especially by Danto. Danto claims that Warhol is an artist philosopher who turned art making into a philosophical enterprise. It was Warhol, according to Danto, who proved that it was not the material appearance of an object that determined whether or not it is an artwork but a theory of art that defined artworks in contrast to mere things.¹¹

What struck Danto about Warhol's *Brillo Box* was its visually indiscernible features from the mere Brillo pads in the market. "Never mind that the *Brillo Box* may not be good, much less great art. The impressive thing is that it is art at all. But if it is, why not the indiscernible Brillo boxes in the stockroom? Or has the whole distinction between art and reality broken down?"¹² According to Danto, it had. Danto disputes with the "prevailing realism" in visual arts, which considers the visible and the tangible to be sufficient conditions for representation. By 'prevailing realism' Danto refers to neo-Wittgensteinians' "family resemblances", which offers us a world that is comprehensible through the intervention of manifest properties in visual arts.

In this dissertation we will see that how essential the concept of indiscernibles is for Danto's philosophy of art. Accordingly, what Danto found attractive about New Realism is its ability to handle some difficult cases of Pop Art. We know that the specific aspect of Pop Art is the readymades or the found objects. Like Warhol's *Brillo Box*, Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* is one of the most famous works of this sort. *Fountain* is an ordinary urinal, which came as readymade from the factory assembly

¹¹ Arthur C. Danto, "The Artworld", *Journal of Philosophy* 61, No: 19, 1964, p.580 (A)

¹² A, p. 581

line and had not been crafted by the artist. Duchamp's readymade is perceptually indiscernible from its ordinary, mass-production counterparts. Yet we classify Duchamp's *Fountain* as an artwork, while we classify its perceptually indiscernible counterparts as non-art; we radically place these indiscernibles in distinct categories. And inevitably the philosophical question remains: What makes one of an indiscernible part an artwork, and the other counterpart an ordinary mere thing? Why do we make such a categorical distinction between things that are exactly similar?

Clearly, we cannot respond to this question by looking at those features of an artwork that imitated or resembled an object; but what *Fountain* possesses and its counterpart on the assembly line does not, is its semantic property. Then what is the semantic property of *Fountain*? What is *Fountain* about? According to Danto and Wollheim it is about the nature of art. It makes us question the nature of art in general so as to make us conscious about the properties and definitions of art. For instance Wollheim maintains that *Fountain* is about the nature of art where Duchamp showed us that artworks need not be literally created or sculpted by the labor of the artist; therefore, the essence of art is not physical artistic creation. According to Wollheim, however, the lack of manifest effort in Duchamp may "show about the abiding nature of art."¹³

And if it is worth considering artworks due to what semantic features they have, it is because New Realist theory enables us to interpret these kinds of readymades. *Fountain* makes sense when we ask what it is about; that is to say, when we interpret its semantic content.

Our behavior confronting readymades versus their indiscernible real-world counterparts is awesomely different. With readymades we

¹³ Richard Wollheim, *On Art and The Mind*, London: Allen Lane, 1973, p. 101

presume that it is correct and appropriate to interpret them – we presume that they are about something and that an appropriate response to them is to determine what they have to “say” or what they imply concerning whatever they are about. This is not the appropriate response to ordinary urinals – if we stand in the men’s restroom contemplating what the urinals express, we will probably get arrested.¹⁴

The semantic context; the aboutness; the interpretative capacity constitutes the representational aspect of artworks other than the extra-representational features. For Danto, the representational aspect of an artwork is the necessary condition of an artwork of which “its esse being interpretari.”

For both Danto and Wollheim, the main contribution of Pop artworks is to exhibit an aesthetic problem in the act of philosophizing, but not to express a solution. For Danto, it is enough that an artwork illustrates a philosophical problem: “I believe it was Warhol's chief contribution to the history of art that he brought artistic practice to a level of philosophical self-consciousness never before attained.”¹⁵ And for Wollheim; “These paintings may illustrate a philosophical problem, but they do so in order to present an aesthetic problem, which we are not required to resolve but to experience.”¹⁶

In the next chapter, I consider Arthur Danto's response to Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* as they first appeared in the exhibition at the Stable Gallery in

¹⁴ Noel Carroll, *Philosophy of Art: A Contemporary Introduction*, London & New York: Routledge, 1999, p. 28

¹⁵ Arthur C. Danto, *Philosophizing Art: Selected Essays*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999, p. 63

¹⁶ Richard Wollheim, *Art and Its Objects: An Introduction to Aesthetics*, New York: Harper&Row, 1968, p. 226

1964 and how he sees Warhol's artworks as putting an end to realism in the visual arts. Danto's abstract claim that artworks can be indiscernibles – visually identical with physical objects – becomes transformed into a historical theory of “The Artworld.” *Brillo Box* explicitly identified the problem of indiscernibles because it is perceptually indistinguishable from the ordinary Brillo box in the grocery store, which is not an artwork.

The end of realism is, for Danto, the end of a realist theory of art, a theory that provides the means to identify the salient features of artworks by comparing them to real things. Warhol's *Brillo Box* ended realism in a way of defining the unique qualities of artworks when compared to things in the world. Danto argues that the difference between Warhol's *Brillo Box* and a Brillo box found in the supermarket is a matter of interpretation rather than perception, in other words, what defines an artwork is not an object's visual – extra-representational properties – but its representational qualities. For Danto, what we need is an “Artworld Theory”. His central idea is that in order to know that something is art; we must know the history of art theories which is inhabited by the artist's conceptions and our interpretations over an artwork.

In the third chapter I tried to illuminate “The Artworld Theory” in the light of *Transfiguration of the Commonplace (TC)* which is Danto's most profound study on art. In this sense the second chapter of this dissertation may be taken as a preliminary of the third one. In Chapter 3, I also studied Danto's *Beyond the Brillo Box* in order to explicate those complex theories in *TC*. Throughout *TC*, Danto searched for the essence of art; the definition of the nature of art by inscribing the necessary and sufficient conditions for something to have a status of art. Danto aims to identify the essence of art in virtue of his theory of indiscernibles. He admits that, merely by looking at an object like *Brillo Box*, we cannot determine its identity as artwork; what we need is a proper knowledge of history – an interpretation; that is, the Artworld.

Danto speaks of self-consciousness in conjunction with *Brillo Box* where Warhol taught us what kind of things artworks are, in other words, Brillo Box, as a sculpture indiscernible from its equivalent in the grocery store *is* an artwork because it exemplifies a theory of what art is. “Nothing really is a work of art outside the system of reasons which give it that status: works of art are not such by nature [they need to be learned].”¹⁷

Therefore, Danto’s Artworld theory appeals to our capacity to interpret artworks and ascribe meaning to them. And for Danto, Pop artworks, by proliferating meanings for a single object, extend our visual horizon and multiply our experience to arrive at semantical treasures hidden under interpretations. “To be a work of art is to embody its meaning... To see something as art is to be ready to interpret it in terms of what and how it means.”¹⁸ And once we are ready to interpret an ordinary object as exceeding our visual capacity, it is transfigured into an artwork; a commonplace is transfigured into an artworld; and an artwork becomes embodied within our real experience. If, for Danto, “to interpret a work is to offer a theory as to what the work is about, what its subject is”¹⁹, then, I think what really is the subject of transfiguration, is the theory of art.

The primacy of perception reasserts itself in Richard Wollheim's philosophy of art. His conception of “Minimal Art” contributes to the discourse on New Realism in Pop Art. Wollheim reclaims perception when he determined that the minimal condition for an object to be art is a state of “work or manifest effort” in the material production of artworks and what can and cannot be seen *in* art as a result of that effort. This minimal requirement of perceivable work (effort) is the basis of Wollheim’s notion of *seeing-in* – the two-fold perceptual capacity to attend to both the extra-representational

¹⁷ Arthur C. Danto, *Beyond the Brillo Box: The Visual Arts in Post-Historical Perspective*, New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1992, p. 21

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 41

¹⁹ Arthur C. Danto, *Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981, p. 119

and the representational aspects of an artwork – which reintroduced the primacy of perceptual acuity necessarily linked to the apprehension of artistic meaning.

Danto's end of Realism comes at the expense of the sensuous qualities of artworks and of our perceptual capacity to apprehend those qualities. Richard Wollheim's theory of *seeing-in*, however, reasserts or reinscribes those sensations or sensory-perceptual aspects that Danto denies. When we confront the pair of indiscernibles, for Danto, our visual sense can tell us only that they are identical. Wollheim, on the other hand, claims the opposite. For Wollheim, not only can we perceptually differentiate the art box from the mere box, but we also come to embody two distinctly real, but entirely unrelated, sets of experiences.

In the fourth chapter, I will examine Richard Wollheim's study on art which is presented in *On Art and the Mind* and *Art and Its Objects*. Wollheim describes the relationship between the artist's work and the beholder's perception as realism. The relationship between the artist's work and the beholder's perception of work in art is further developed in Wollheim's theory of *seeing-in* – our perceptual capacity to attend to both the surface and the subject of an artwork. Contrary to Danto, Wollheim claims that we may take notice of the Brillo boxes in an installation of *Brillo Boxes* while, at the same time, we are stunned by their brightness and their wavy appearance formed by the ordered arrangement of the boxes.

According to Wollheim, the conception of *seeing-in* is a matter of perception and interpretation at once. In other words, the perceivable materiality and the mental expression of art are re-engaged by means of the capacity of *seeing-in*; the form and the content, the surface and the subject are re-united when perception and interpretation become simultaneous in order to generate the *meaning*.

Wollheim's *seeing-in* is important in underlying the extra-representational features which become apparent specifically when we consider how we cannot completely ignore the fact that the surface of Warhol's *Brillo Box* resembles the mere Brillo box on the assembly line. The resemblance between the artwork and its commonplace counterpart is acknowledged no matter how we might be taken with the extra-representational qualities of Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* – their all salient features, like their brightness.

Wollheim's realist account of *seeing-in* (rather than Danto's method of indiscernibles) provides us with a method by which we can better understand the complexities of Warhol's new realism – a method that allows us to account for both the representational and extra-representational character of Warhol's Pop Art. Wollheim considers extra-representational level of paintings as the *pentimento*. *Pentimento* in Wollheim's usage is the material content of an artwork, in the sense that through *pentimenti* the process of artists intentional effort is seen on the surface of a painting.

By the end of the fourth chapter, I tried to express Wollheim's theory, by means of Warhol's *Death and Disaster* series, which exemplify what they represent. Exemplification is an instance of *seeing-in*, which can be understood as the embodiment in Danto's view. By exemplification or embodiment, both Wollheim and Danto imply our direct and immediate experience with the artwork, which transforms us. Yet, for Wollheim, transformation is based on the sensual grounds, which makes us feel something of what they represent; while, for Danto it is based on the conceptual ground, which makes us develop new theories about art.

1.3. The Subject Matter

In this dissertation I mainly focus on Arthur Danto's philosophizing on art that lasted more than a half century. I see this process as an evolution of his method of indiscernibles, which finally arrived at the end of art. Danto believes that Pop Art with the use of indiscernibles, presents a solution to the problem of the ontological status of art, which has plagued the consciousness of artists as well as philosophers since Plato. This solution will be elaborated in Chapters 2 and 3 as I explicate Danto's philosophy of art. With the discovery of the use of indiscernibles, Pop artists rendered art "not visual but conceptual" as they raised the question "What is the nature of art?" By posing the question about its own nature and enigmatically presenting itself to disclose the answer, Pop Art reaches the limits of its self-reflexive capacity. When the answer to the question about the nature of art is given, the historical development of art is terminated.

Danto's thesis that Pop Art consummates the historical process of art by making art reflect on itself and therefore reveal its essence is clearly a Hegelian one. In Hegel's thought, historical materiality is superseded in the moment of self-reflection as Absolute Knowledge. The sensuous content of works of art also constitutes an obstacle to the Spirit's understanding of itself as Spirit. Similarly, in Danto's theory, the sensuous (extra-representational) features of the artwork are superseded through the use of indiscernibles. At this moment what is also superseded is the struggle of artists and art theorists throughout history to position art in a way that will ontologically vindicate art against Plato's challenge.

While Danto's focus on the question of the nature of art is based on an essentialist approach, his theory of the Artworld which he develops as an answer to this question invites us to take history into account, wherein a serious tension lies between his theoretical essentialist approach and the

historical dimension. With his End of Art thesis, we can see that, being an essentialist and a historicist at once, Danto finally makes his choice in favor of the former in that he can rest at a conceptual/theoretical resolution.

Even if Danto celebrates the end of art history by claiming that art is now liberated from philosophy of art, I believe that Danto leaves us in a very problematic and alienated relation to reality. I argue that this is because Danto's thesis of indiscernibles rests on a very theoretical conception of art which fails to account for the viable relation between the production and the perception of artworks. Danto proposes that if an object is subsumable under an aesthetic theory, then the object can be admitted to arthood, in other words, anything can become an artwork if the Artworld provides it with a theory.

I criticize Danto's theory of Artworld for being a vicious circle. We see that for Danto, a work, in order to be defined as an artwork, it needs to be generated by an art theory, but again for the generation of an art theory, we need an artwork which improves its theory. He asserts that for an ordinary urinal to be seen as an artwork *Fountain*, we need another kind of theory of art, for the imitation and the resemblance theories fail to see *Fountain* as an artwork. But here we find ourselves in a position where we already see *Fountain* as an artwork before we seek for the theory that *Fountain* is generated from.

This theoretical circle finally collapses into itself and I believe it is this collapse causes the end of the history of art. Danto's optimistic celebration of the collapse of his self-enclosed system appears to be mere rhetoric to me. And this is the point where I criticize Danto's approach with respect to its emphasis on theory rather than practice. Within the use of Wollheim's discussion of the extra-representational features of art, I develop an individual and hopefully original understanding of *pentimenti* and use this understanding to criticize Danto's approach. Wollheim, however, takes

pentimenti only on the material level of paintings as the production process of an artist; I expanded its context through the beholder's interpretation, (therefore, production) of an artwork within its manifold framework of psychological, cultural, historical, and socio-political dimensions.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF ART: THE ARTWORLD

In this chapter, I will explicate how Danto criticizes imitative or mimetic theory of art that has persisted since Plato and Aristotle. The artwork or representation was described as an inferior illusion of the real, copy of the original, imitation of the nature throughout ancient times. And until modernity *mimesis* continued to present aesthetic reality. In order to assign its true nature of art, Danto proposes a unique ontological theory of art, in which he reversed the traditional sense of realism: The Artworld Theory. I will examine this theory in its application to Pop artworks, especially Warhol's *Brillo Box*. Throughout this chapter, we will come to see how artworks become "not visual but conceptual" entities.

2.1. Imitation Theory

Throughout *What Philosophy Is* Danto speaks of the interrelatedness of various branches of philosophy. "It is not only that it is difficult to discuss one set of philosophical problems without bringing in implicit reference to another set of philosophical problems, but it is also the goal of discussion to move from one branch to another"²⁰, accordingly the philosophy of art is logically tied to the other branches of philosophy. In his famous article "The

²⁰ Arthur C. Danto, *What Philosophy Is: A Guide to the Elements*, New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1968, p.17

Artworld"²¹, we see that Danto's interest in artistic theories has much to do with their relation to whole other philosophical systems.

The article begins with a brief discussion of the Imitation Theory. In Plato's *Republic* in Book X, where he discusses three different beds made by the painter, the carpenter and the god, there is a Socratic formulation, which is taken art is a mirror held up to nature.²² Danto finds this Socratic formulation defective because it renders art non-cognitive. "Socrates saw mirrors as but reflecting what we can already see; so art, insofar as mirror-like, yields idle accurate duplications of the appearance of things, and is of no cognitive benefit whatever."²³ Here, Danto is pointing to the consequences for art of the Platonic epistemology and ontology; the discussion is carried out within the context of the Platonic system, wherein art is related to the mere "appearances of things" and hence lacking in "cognitive benefit."

Danto adds that, it is on "profound grounds" that he is exploring the defectiveness of the Socratic position, and goes on to show how the Imitation Theory as re-formulated by Shakespeare²⁴ corrects the earlier formulation: "Hamlet, more acutely, recognized a remarkable feature of reflecting surfaces, namely that they show us what we could not otherwise perceive – our own face and form – and so art, insofar as it is mirror-like, reveals us to ourselves, and is, even by Socratic criteria, of some cognitive utility after all."²⁵

When Danto returns to the formulation at the end of the article he restates a contemporary application of it: "And, to return to the views of

²¹ Arthur C. Danto, "The Artworld" *Journal of Philosophy*, 61, No:19, 1964, pp. 571-584. (Hereafter A)

²² Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997, 595b ff.

²³ A, p. 571

²⁴ *Hamlet*: "Do you see nothing there?"

The Queen: "Nothing at all; yet all that is I see."

²⁵ A, p. 571

Hamlet with which we began this discussion, *Brillo Boxes* may reveal us to ourselves as well as anything might: as a mirror held up to nature, they might serve to catch the conscience of our kings.”²⁶ On this formulation imitation is reflective; it can tell us about ourselves and increases self-knowledge.

The attention Danto points here to the relation between the reflective quality of art and the role it plays in self-knowledge is Hegelian. According to Hegel, consciousness, in order to arrive at self-consciousness, needs the mediation of other subjects and objects outside itself, which can take the form of social and cultural institutions and products. In this respect work of art plays an important role in the attainment of Absolute knowledge. The self-reflective quality of art is being emphasized and this is part of Danto’s general program of the self-referential quality of artworks. As I will discuss in the third chapter, Pop artworks by being real objects rather than imitations of reality, become self-referential.

This is also in line with Danto’s Hegelian approach as self-referentiality is a key aspect of Hegel’s spirit. At the end of his journey in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* the identity of subject and object is revealed so that consciousness discovers that it was thinking itself all along. And according to Danto, the non-imitativeness provides a resolution for the Platonic reality problem concerning artworks. First they are not copies; there is no “original” in relation to which they are inferior. Second, their self-referential quality of non-imitative artworks renders them cognitive in the sense that these artworks raise a question concerning their “whatness”.

Danto also states that Aristotle retained the Platonic distinction between artworks and real things, although Aristotle did not develop the distinction as one between an inferior category of illusions and a category of things that at least participated in reality.

²⁶ A, p. 584

In *Poetics*²⁷ Aristotle distinguishes three forms of human activity and their associated products in order to explain different manners of presentation. *Theoria* is the activity of theoretical knowing and as product has its knowledge, which is the explicit presentation of general relations among kinds of things. *Praxis* is the activity of doing and has the product of objects or alterations of objects in order to satisfy desires. And finally *Poesis* is the activity of non-original or imitative making, which has the product of imitations or presentations of the universal in the particular. To explicate these distinctions it is required to classify them in Aristotelian way. All these intelligent human activities differ in their ends. *Theoria* aims at knowledge or understanding of the general, *praxis* aims at well-being as the satisfaction of reasonable desires, and *poesis* aims at the achievement of a felt sense or understanding of rational finitude.

The goal of *poesis* is the *catharsis* of emotions. Catharsis means clarifying or making clear an object of attention. To say that a successful work of art brings about the *catharsis* of emotions means that it clarifies the natures of the objects toward which emotions are appropriately felt. Aristotle, then, showed how the pleasure we take in art logically pre-supposed the distinction between art and reality, and that art belongs to a category of things that are cognitive.

Danto, however, does not explain that it is because Aristotle rejected the Platonic separate category of the Forms that art renders cognitive in the Aristotelian aesthetics. Rather, Danto points out the differences in the Platonic and Aristotelian evaluation of art depend upon, and can be explained in terms of the differences in their respective ontological schemes. For Aristotle, universals are *in* things. Because imitations are directly related to the universals in things, art is knowledge-giving and thus cognitive. Aristotle's metaphysics is a realist metaphysics in the sense that ordinary things exist independently of our consciousness of them.

²⁷ Aristotle, *Poetics* New York: Dover Publications, 1997

Although, the theory of *mimesis* is more profound than Danto's oversimplification, my concern is to show how Danto addresses this theory. Danto also rejects the Aristotelian kind of *mimesis* despite its cognitive property, as long as it is related to appearances of things. As we will see briefly in the following chapter, according to Danto visual features of artworks do not suffice to give us the knowledge about the true nature of art.

2.2. Reality Theory

Nine years after the publication of "The Artworld", Danto returned to the problem of *mimesis* in "Artworks and Real Things"²⁸. In this article, Danto reconsiders his ontological approach on aesthetics by revisiting the Imitation Theory. He states that in Platonic metaphysics art is defined as an imitation belonging to an ontological category inferior to the category of real things. Here, art is defined relative to a third and superior ontological category, the Forms. The Platonic theory of *mimesis* marked out a distinction between art, and an antecedent and duplicable reality; that is to say, Plato's concept of art presupposed an antecedent world that was capable of being duplicated.

Danto states that artists have traditionally participated in ontological matters, and he suggests that they have sought ways to redeem the status of art ontologically and thereby answer Platonic criticism. One way that artists have attempted to promote art has been to identify artworks and real things: Pop Art of the New York painting from circa 1961 to 1969 has moved in this direction, with its ready-mades and found objects.

But before Pop Art's New Realist accounts, another way in which artists have promoted art to redeem from Platonist Reality and to create a

²⁸ Arthur C. Danto, "Artworks and Real Things" in *Theoria*, 39, 1973, p. 3. (Hereafter, ART)

new ontological category for art was Post-Impressionism. The Post-Impressionists, by the early 20th century moved in the direction of disfiguring spatial conventions on paintings, and pictured objects and nature with distorting shapes, forms and perspective. Post-Impressionists mainly refused to depict objects and things but focused on painting colour, light and shade. This move, thus, led the artists to represent not the appearances of Reality, but the multiple conditions of perceptions. Therefore, art resisted categorization as imitations – as illusions of anything.²⁹

With this latter move, non-imitativeness becomes the criterion of art, and it is thought that the more artificial and the less imitative a work is, the purer it is. For Danto, however, this move is problematic since non-imitativeness is also a criterion for reality and thus this move is in danger of reaching the conclusion of that of the identification of artworks and real things.

Non-imitativeness becomes the criterion of art, the more artificial and the less imitative in consequence, the purer the art in question. But a fresh dilemma awaits at the other end of the inevitable route, namely that non-imitativeness is *also* the criterion of reality, so the more purely art things become, the closer they verge on reality, and pure art collapses into pure reality.³⁰

Danto continues his discussion of the Imitation Theory by contrasting it with a description of the Reality Theory. The latter was a theory

²⁹ Edward S. Casey: *Earth-Mapping: Artists Reshaping Landscape*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005, pp. 94-98

³⁰ ART, p. 4

enunciated within the period of Post-impressionism in European art. Some such episode transpired with the advent of Post-Impressionist paintings, which in terms of the prevailing artistic theory (Imitation Theory), it was impossible to accept these as art unless “inept art”. Post-Impressionist paintings would be discounted as “hoaxes, self-advertisements, or the visual counterparts of madmen's ravings”³¹ in the light of the *mimesis* theory.

So to get them accepted as art, on a footing with the *Transfiguration* required not so much a revolution in taste as a theoretical revision of rather considerable proportions, involving not only the artistic enfranchisement of these objects, but an emphasis upon newly significant features of accepted artworks, so that quite different accounts of their status as artworks would now have to be given.³²

When we inhabit of any kind of art theory, we are supposed to be able to separate those objects which are works of art from those which are not, because we already know how to correctly use the word ‘art’ and to apply the phrase ‘work of art’. Theories, on this account, are “somewhat like mirror-images on Socrates’ account, showing forth what we already know, wordy reflections of the actual linguistic practice we are masters in.”³³ According to Danto the theoretical revolution entails a change in ontology. His discussion however, is not based on the denial to recognize ontological commitments; rather based on a theoretical revision in our ontological commitments. The Reality Theory furnished a whole new mode of looking at

³¹ A, p. 573

³² A, p. 573

³³ A, p. 572

painting, which enables us to interpret, for instance, the crude drawing in Van Gogh and Cezanne; the dislocation of form from contour in Rouault; the arbitrary use of color planes in Gauguin.

According to Reality Theory the artists in question were to be understood not as successfully imitating real forms but as successfully creating new ones, quite as real as the form which the older art had been thought, in its best examples, to be creditably imitating. Art, after all, had long since been thought of as creative (Vasari says that God was the first artist), and the post-impressionists were to be explained as genuinely creative, aiming, in Roger Fry's words, 'not at illusion but reality'.³⁴

In other words, the Imitation Theory embraced an ontological distinction between the unsuccessful imitation or illusion and the real forms that they tried to imitate, but the Reality Theory embraced the view that the new created forms "were quite as real as" the forms which the older art had been thought to be imitating. The Reality Theory could be interpreted as committed to one real category of things, to which both artworks and real things belong. Danto, however, asserts that we need not assume automatically that the Reality Theory postulated one ontological category; that is, we need not assume that artworks, which are non-illusions, belong to the same ontological category as real things.

³⁴ A, pp. 573-574

An artwork rather occupies a freshly opened area between real objects and real facsimiles of real objects: it is a non-facsimile, if one requires a word, and a new contribution to the world. By means of Reality Theory, artworks re- entered the thick of things from which Socratic theory (Imitation Theory) had sought to evict them: if no more real than what carpenters wrought, they were at least no less real. The Post-Impressionist won a victory in ontology.³⁵

Danto chooses to interpret the Reality Theory as opening up a new ontological category to which the new artworks belong, rather than as identifying the reality of the new forms and the reality of real things.

Here, Danto is setting the stage for his own ontological views to emerge. Real objects are, and must remain, distinct from these new real forms. This interpretation of Reality Theory hinges upon his insistence that the world is distinct from representations. Danto's ontology demands that he makes a distinction not only between imitations and the objects they represent, but also between non-imitations and the objects they refuse to imitate; between Van Gogh's *Potato Eaters* as a non-facsimile, for instance, and the real life potato eaters that they do not imitate but that they are *about*. As it will be developed in the next section that aboutness is one of the true definitions of the nature of artworks.

Danto proposes that what was considered to be a deficiency according to one theory could be seen differently according to a new criterion of judgment and thus considered to be a positive attribute under the terms of a new theory of art. Danto refers to this shift as a "conceptual

³⁵ A, p. 574

revolution" in art history. The shift from Imitation Theory to Reality Theory was "not so much a revolution in taste as a theoretical revision of considerable proportions."³⁶ The revision responded, according to Danto, to artworks that were incompatible with the former. He explains that at the time of the revolution or revision, as a result of the new theory's acceptance, not only were Post-Impressionist paintings taken up as art, but numbers of objects (masks, weapons, etc.) were transferred from anthropological museums into museums of fine arts. Thus, these artworks could not be judged according to how well they imitated the real world, because Imitation Theory was not applicable to artworks that were intended to be real objects rather than imitations of objects. In the face of this dilemma, Reality Theory recovered the materiality of the world for art.

2.3. Danto's Philosophy of Art

In order to be in a position to understand Danto's view of the ontological structure of an artwork, we must look at the larger ontological framework. Danto's approach centers on the relation between art and reality and the connection between artistic theories and ontology. It is general by intent, addressing the fundamental problem of the structure of our thought about art objects and answering questions as to what general elements of our thought are permanent and what elements are impermanent. This deep structure cannot be read off the surface of the artworks themselves, but it is this deep structure out of which the artworks are produced, which will be announced as the Artworld, following this chapter.

Danto is interested, to be sure, in those aspects of our thought that change through the years, in those theoretical revisions that need to be

³⁶ A, p. 573

made to get certain artworks recognized as art, but the center of his interest has to do with those permanent aspects of our thought about art: what in the most general sense can be said about artworks and our thought about them. We can clearly see that Danto does not seek for the nominal definitions of artworks, rather he searches for the essential definition of art in general, which later he will state as 'semantical feature' of artworks.

We are told that we are supposed to be able to separate those objects which are works of art from those which are not, because we know how correctly to use the word 'art' and to apply the phrase 'work of art', but that today on the contemporary art scene, telling artworks from other things is not so simple a matter, even for native speakers.³⁷ In the present state of the artworld it is possible that a square of primed canvas be exhibited as a painting. The problem this raises is then how to distinguish this painting as an artwork from a mere square of primed canvas. What is called for, in order to differentiate the two, is an approach that goes "outside the objects and into the atmosphere of their ontological status, and seek criteria under-determined by retinal indiscrimination."³⁸

As we see clearly, for Danto, the contemporary art scene calls for an ontological approach to the new definition of an artwork. Danto is working in an area, in the philosophy of art that is primarily concerned with the generation of artworks out of something, broadly called the Artworld. In this area, the philosopher asks ultimate questions about art which cannot be answered by scrutinizing the faces of the artworks, therefore, he is interested in the deep structure of our thought about art. As I will discuss in the third chapter, in the light of indiscernibles, Danto asserts that the physical appearances of artworks are no more definitive for the ontological status of art.

³⁷ A, p. 572

³⁸ Arthur C. Danto, *Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981, p. 140. (Hereafter TC)

The essential quality of artworks, however, is their capacity in order to elaborate theories about their nature. Danto seeks for a general condition of art theories rather than finding out what physical properties they possess that distinguish artworks from mere things. Therefore, what he finds crucial in Post-impressionist paintings is the fact they go beyond the physical imitateness of reality. However, as long as these paintings are still in a strict relation with physical qualities, they ceased to become exactly cognitive, as they ceased to give us the true definition of art.

2.3.1. The Essentialist Account of Art

In “The Artworld” Danto does not only deny the validity of the Imitation Theory, but The Reality Theory as well for making a distinction between an artwork and a real thing. According to Danto the Reality Theory of Art relied too much on the senses to determine the difference between an artwork and a mere real thing when the two are identical. Especially while there are many Pop Artists who were producing objects that were indistinguishable from their common counterparts, Reality Theory could not suffice to make the distinction.

When Danto initially began to advance his theory on art in the early 1960s, there was an influential consensus that essentialist theories of art were impossible. This consensus is mainly based on the neo-Wittgensteinian agreements, which assert that art can never be defined. The neo-Wittgensteinians take the manifest or perceptual properties of artworks as “family resemblances” and use them to identify art. The method of family-resemblances identify art in the way that a new object that we encounter is defined as an art object if it resembles past paradigmatic works of art. And since neo-Wittgensteinians argue that anything can resemble anything in

some respect, thus, anything can look like something else that is art; therefore, there is no essential definition of art with respect to philosophical identities.

The method of family-resemblance is pertained to the manifest properties of artworks, but by the use of readymades and found objects of Pop artists, there remained a problem for neo-Wittgensteinians. By means of the restriction of visual attention to manifest properties, neo-Wittgensteinians confront the problem of differentiating, say, ordinary urinals from Duchamp's *Fountain*. Therefore, for Danto, it gradually became a commonplace theory that one should not look to manifest discernible properties in order to distinguish art from non-art.

Warhol's *Brillo Box* ended traditional realism in a way of defining the unique qualities of artworks compared to things in the world. Danto argues that the difference between Warhol's *Brillo Box* and the Brillo box found in the supermarket is a matter of interpretation rather than perception. All our visual sense can tell us when we confront the pair is that they are identical. The discourses on Pop Art's New Realist accounts while claim otherwise. As I will discuss in the fourth chapter on Wollheim's theory of *seeing-in*, not only can we perceptually differentiate the art box from the mere box, but we also come to embody two distinctly real, but entirely unrelated sets of experiences when we confront them. An acknowledgement and investigation of these two experiences, one with artworks and one with other non-art things is to be considered by Danto.

Accordingly, the end of realism reflects a major theme in Danto's philosophical aesthetics, where he announces that there could be an end to realism in the visual arts. For Danto the copy, the imitation, the duplication or the *mimesis* are indiscernibles and the true nature of the artwork never can be attained by common-sense reality theory. In order to define the nature of indiscernibles we need another kind of reality theory. The Reality

Theory of Art ended when Pop Art, specifically Andy Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* begged the question: "Can one have mistaken reality for reality?"³⁹ Common-sense realistic approach of ontological aesthetics "came to an end when the works of art and mere real objects could no longer be articulated in visual terms, and when it became imperative to quit a materialist aesthetics in favor of an aesthetics of meaning."⁴⁰ For, materialist aesthetics always define artworks by means of perceptual qualities, however, as I will explicate later, aesthetics of meaning needs a definition of artwork, which is "not visual but conceptual."

Danto's philosophy of art is essentialist. He seeks for a real definition of art in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. Therefore, Danto's philosophical aesthetics is founded on exploring the questionable relationship between reality and vision – can we trust vision to tell us what is real and what is not? – that he sees addressed by Pop Artworks. And, this is the self-consciousness of philosophy wherein Pop art opened the gap between representation and reality.

The Reality Theory of Art collapsed by the creation of Pop artworks that often seemed visually identical to "mere real objects." Danto's belief that conventional realism ended – as Reality Theory of art could not accommodate artworks that were identical to real things – is not a belief that realist artworks would cease to be made, rather, it is a belief underscoring a paradigm shift in the history of art. The end of realism is, for Danto, the end of a realist theory of art – a theory that provides the means to identify the salient features of artworks. Danto's Artworld theory provides the necessary criteria for identifying the context in which the salient features of artworks are contrasted with real things.

Danto's claim that sensory-perceptual experience is immaterial to the constitution of art directly intervened in the debates that were focused on the

³⁹ A, p. 575

⁴⁰ Arthur C. Danto, *After the End of Art*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997, p. 77

status of realism in New Realist and Pop artworks. His definition of artworks as “not imitations but *new entities*”⁴¹ more closely resembles definitions of New Realism rather than conventional definitions of realism in the visual arts. Danto states, “I believe it was Warhol's chief contribution to the history of art that he brought artistic practice to a level of philosophical self-consciousness never before attained.”⁴² Danto emphasizes the radical nature of Warhol's contribution to the history of art and the philosophy of art when he argues, “At the very least the *Brillo Box* made plain that one cannot any longer think of distinguishing art from reality on perceptual grounds, for those grounds have been cut away.”⁴³

It was, however, Danto and not Warhol who cut the perceptual grounds away from art in his attempt to resolve the problem posed by New Realism in contemporary art. In counter-distinction to Danto's assertion, as I will explicate in the fourth chapter, Warhol's intervention was compatible with New Realism since his artwork further heightened our sensory-perceptual experience of art.

2.3.2. Pop Art's New Realism

When Danto saw Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* at the Stable Gallery, he could not distinguish one from the mere Brillo pads in the stockrooms and immediately struck by the idea that the boxes in the gallery are artworks while their indiscernible counterparts are not. Therefore, this experience let him to discover another kind of ontological domain: The Artworld. But Danto interpreted Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* as if they dispensed with a traditional

⁴¹ A, p. 574

⁴² Arthur C. Danto, *Philosophizing Art: Selected Essays*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999, p. 63

⁴³ Arthur C. Danto, “Aesthetics of Andy Warhol” in *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, ed. Michael Kelly, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 41

realistic iconography. That is to say, Danto by his manipulation of Warhol's idea of *Brillo Boxes*, dismissed their relations with socio-cultural network, and cut the correlation between Warhol's work and Brillo pads off. Danto intends to do this for an exact purpose: to revoke the extra-representational level of the artwork, and to foreground the indiscernibles. Because if he considered the extra-representational surface of *Brillo Boxes*, he would see that they were not identical with Brillo pads, and therefore, they were discernible.

In order to mend the hierarchical distinction between art and reality, Danto offered his Artworld Theory of art. The Artworld is a theory that wrestles with the definition of artworks when they are identical to real things in the world, like Warhol's *Brillo Box*. Danto's proposal is that our visual sense cannot help in such cases; therefore we must rely on historical and theoretical constructions to guide us in distinguishing art from reality.

According to Danto, contemporary critiques of Pop Art's New Realism collectively went wrong by confusing art and reality at the level of perception and materiality. This is a confusion that Danto understands Warhol to have exploited in order to beg the question of ontological difference. Ontology is a domain of philosophy broadly concerned with the study of existence itself; it distinguished between actual existence and appearance. Ontology investigates the ways in which things are said to exist and are categorized. Danto expresses his ontology of art in two key statements from "The Artworld," the article that followed his encounter with Warhol's *Brillo Boxes*.

In the first statement, he asserted, "To see something as art requires something the eye cannot descry –an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld."⁴⁴ In the second statement, he proposed, "What in the end makes the difference between a Brillo box and a work of art consisting of a Brillo box is a certain theory of art. It is a theory

⁴⁴ A, p. 580

that takes it up into the world of art, and keeps it from collapsing into the real object which it is (in a sense of is other than that of artistic identification)"⁴⁵ Danto's radical intervention in the philosophy of art was to acknowledge that Warhol's *Brillo Box* challenged the common-sense idea that the ontological status of artworks could be judged visually.

It is not Danto's understanding, however, that artworks became more material or real than they had been in the past. Rather, as I mentioned before, he argued that "by means of Reality Theory artworks re-entered the thick of things from which Imitation Theory had wrought, they were at least no less real."⁴⁶ But, Reality Theory as a counter-attack to Imitation Theory could not suffice for fulfilling its project. Therefore, Pop art's New Realist account posits that artworks are real things; artworks and real things share the same material properties that, unlike real things, the artwork emphasizes by calling attention to its materiality.

Pop Art and its New Realism pushed the critical and descriptive boundaries of Reality Theory by blurring the distinction between art and reality. The blur occurs because there exists an inherent problem in Reality Theory: its criteria of non-imitativeness too closely match the same criteria for judging real things as real, thus, "pure art collapses into pure reality."⁴⁷

According to Danto, Pop Art, on the contrary, protects art from collapsing into reality; it raises questions that Reality Theory cannot answer; and, more importantly, Pop Art begs the question that has always haunted Reality Theory: "Can one have mistaken reality for reality?"⁴⁸ The mistake is made at the level of perception and we cannot trust our visual perception.

Danto's interest lies not in the actual artworks produced, but in the critical theories that explained them. He refers to the shift from Imitation

⁴⁵ A, p. 581

⁴⁶ A, p. 574

⁴⁷ ART, p. 4

⁴⁸ A, p. 575

Theory to Reality Theory as a conceptual revolution and as a theoretical revision. He does not refer to the shift as an aesthetic revolution or as an art historical revision. The critical theories produced by artists are not Danto's concern. He is less interested in what Cezanne had to say about his work than he is in what Roger Fry had to say about it⁴⁹.

Roger Fry, for instance, considered the shift from the Impressionist view to the Post-Impressionist view as a result of the feeling that the Impressionists were "too naturalistic". Impressionism was therefore still involved with the longstanding project of imitation as a proper mode of pictorial representation. Imitation necessarily required the interpretation of paintings based on their subject matter rather than on their formal, material qualities.⁵⁰

Likewise, Danto is not interested with what Warhol and other Pop artists say about New Realist approach on their works. Therefore Danto manipulates the work of Warhol and consequently manipulates the New Realist Theory in order to generate his Artworld Theory. While New Realist idea of Pop Art takes the extra-representational qualities of art for not directly depicting something in the world but for aggressively addressing our senses, Danto rejects the extra-representational features of artworks and manipulates Pop Art's account of New Realism to underscore his theory of indiscernibles.

⁴⁹ *BB*, p. 18

⁵⁰ Roger Fry, *Manet and The Post-Impressionists*, London: Ballantyne & Company, 1910, pp. 7-8

2.3.3. Artworks: Not Visual but Conceptual

As I mentioned above, Danto's thesis develops from a key passage: "To see something as art requires something the eye cannot descry – an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld."⁵¹ He asserts that the visual appearance of an artwork cannot count constitutively as anything other than being a suitable cue for a classification of the vast array of objects that happen to appeal to the visual sense but paradoxically are not defined by their visual appeal. The difference lay in a historically germane art theoretical description (or model) under which the artwork was produced.⁵²

To see *Brillo Box* as part of the Artworld, "one must have mastered a good deal of artistic theory as well as a considerable amount of the history of recent New York painting"⁵³ and the Artworld "only brings to consciousness the structures of art", which required "a certain historical development before the Brillo-box-as-work-of-art was possible."⁵⁴ Our knowledge of art theory and recent art history gives *Brillo Box* the ontological distinction of being an artwork.

When materialist aesthetics has exhausted all possible descriptions of artworks and still cannot articulate the distinguishing material qualities that separate them from mere real objects, Danto claims that "aesthetics of meaning" must take over the job of judging which objects are artworks and which objects are not. In other words, for Danto, we cannot get enough meaning from the sensual and perceptual aspects of artworks apart from interpretation.

⁵¹ A, p. 580

⁵² A, p. 581

⁵³ A, p. 581

⁵⁴ TC, p. 208

What the Pop artists showed, like the Minimalists who were working along a parallel track, was that there is no special way a work of art has to look. It can look like a Brillo box if you are a Pop artist, or like a panel of plywood if you are a Minimalist. It can look like a piece of pie, or it can look like a curl of chicken wire. With this came the recognition that the meaning of art could not be thought through examples, and that what makes the difference between art and non-art is not visual but conceptual.⁵⁵

The visual qualities that he claims both Warhol's *Brillo Box* and the mere Brillo box share drop away. Danto sees Warhol's *Brillo Box* as an artwork because it fits into a system of meaning (the Artworld) that is theoretically and historically appropriate to artworks. As the same system of meaning is not appropriate to commercial packing cartons, Danto cannot see mere Brillo Boxes as art.

The discourse on New Realism and Pop Art, on the contrary, proposes that attentiveness to the sensual particularities of artworks and their affective qualities constitutes meaning in the pleasures or displeasures taken in beholding artworks. For instance, Susan Sontag who supports Pop artworks' qualities of immediacy, vitality and sensation, proposes that Pop Art is against the idea that artworks are given meaning through an act of interpretation "a conscious act of the mind which illustrates a certain code [theory and history].⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Arthur C. Danto, *Beyond the Brillo Box: The Visual Arts in Post-Historical Perspective*, New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1992, p. 225 (Hereafter *BB*)

⁵⁶ Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation and Other Essays*, New York: Delta, 1966, p. 5

For Danto, “the code” is the Artworld that gives artworks meaning rather than an artwork being sensually and perceptually meaningful. For Sontag, however, artworks like *Brillo Boxes* are meaningful in their materiality, i.e., in their woodenness, in their bright whiteness and red and blue colour saturation. From this perspective, the kind of interpretive codes – history and theory – that Artworld supplies seem redundant for the sensual and perceptual reality of Warhol’s *Brillo Box*.

The New Realist discourse that is at the heart of Pop Art suggests that, because Warhol’s *Brillo Boxes* are so much like the common Brillo boxes the subject matter or representational status (Danto’s understanding of meaning) of mere Brillo boxes declines in comparison to their extra-representational – material vitality. Yet we have to ask: if Sontag is right in her assumption that apart from interpretation, we can get enough meaning from the sensual and perceptual aspects of artworks, then why is it not possible to have the same experience with their mere real counterparts? Danto’s aesthetics of meaning will be elaborated in the next chapter when I discuss the semantical features of indiscernibles.

Danto’s distinction between a real world and an artworld and between a real object and an artwork places him within the discourses⁵⁷ on New Realism and Pop Art, which claims that artworks are perceptually similar to real objects other than artworks and, despite the perceptual similarity, they are not copies of real objects because, as artworks, they are transformative or transforming. Danto challenges realism as a viable paradigm for the visual arts at the level of sense perception and sensuous particularity, or materiality, by denying that knowledge is perceptually gained. Danto’s denial inverts or reverses the logic of perceptual realism. As he explained in

⁵⁷ See discussions of Peter Selz, Henry Geldzahler, and John Ashbery in my Introduction

Beyond the Brillo Box; "What Warhol taught us was that there is no way of telling the difference by looking."⁵⁸

The discourses on New Realism and Pop Art claimed otherwise that artworks can give us knowledge through our perceptual receptivity and in the physiological responses of our bodies; our interaction with artworks transforms us. Danto claimed the opposite and thus reversed the order: We give knowledge to objects and thus transform, or, as Danto would later say, "transfigure"⁵⁹ them into artworks. We can clearly see that "one may be a realist about objects and an idealist about artworks."⁶⁰

It is entirely possible that Danto never saw Warhol's boxes in terms of their sensuous particularities. Even if he did, he decided that the appearance of the boxes was deceptive. The doubt that arises in the face of indiscernibility is, as Danto points out, the *prima face* philosophical problem that began with Descartes and ostensibly ended with Warhol.

In his *Meditations*, Descartes offered his reader a series of thought experiments where examples of knowledge and belief were both thought to be secure but were undermined by counter-examples that established "a ground for doubt." In the First Meditation, he presented an example of a firm belief: "I am here, seated by the fire, wearing a dressing gown, holding this paper in my hands..."⁶¹ Descartes then attempted to turn over his belief by suggesting that it was possible that he dreamed the fire, the gown, the paper, and his experience of the warmth of the fire and the texture of the paper. For Danto, Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* offered the same narrative of belief and counter-belief as Descartes' thought experiment.

Danto's distrust of appearances turns the existence of external world into a problem. The perceptual skeptic's problem is, however, his

⁵⁸ *BB*, p. 5

⁵⁹ *TC*, p. 208

⁶⁰ *TC*, p. 125

⁶¹ René Descartes, *Discourses on Method and Meditations*, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1960, p. 76

disconnection from the world. He does not allow himself to be touched by or to touch the world. Danto's perceptual skepticism as it manifests itself in his reversal of the logic of realism suggests that our connection to the world is not a connection in the literal sense of touching or being touched by the world but is in our *linguistic* and *pictorial representation* of the world.

It can be said that Descartes' doubts concerning the veracity of the senses were reasonable, but it may be unreasonable to doubt that the senses are ever reliable. The condition of visual sensory perception is our way to establish a connection with the world. Quite literally, our point of view is established by where we stand on the world. But Danto leaves us no place to stand on.

I may find no reason to criticize why Danto's dismissal of the *mimetic* theories that depend only on physical appearances and render artworks inferior to reality. But indeed what bothers me with his transformation of reality is that he leaves no room for experience. I find The Artworld, even if it is made up of museums, art galleries, artists, curators, collectors, critics and art historians, as Danto says, to be a purely theoretical realm. I will give an account for this assertion in the next chapter, but here I should maintain that, Danto's aspiration for producing indiscernibles completely distances us (as the beholder's of an artwork) distance from what we encounter.

As far as we can give meaning and interpret artworks through the theories that are supplied by the Artworld, we come to a point where, there would no occasion to experience art, if we ceased to be historians or philosophers of art. Such a formal structure of an Artworld excluding perceptual, socio-cultural and political contents within interpretation of an artwork, causes crucial suspicions about the credibility of the theory. I have serious problems about the exclusion of extra-representational aspects of artworks, especially when they are replaced with theoretical – representational forms.

As a matter of fact, Danto manipulates Pop Art's New Realist account and puts an end to visual reality at the expense of extra-representational features of Pop artworks. The dismissal of the material quality of an artwork, ignores not only its production process, but also our aesthetic pleasure. As a beholder, I really doubt what I can embrace before an artwork since Danto's end of realism distances us from the world and disconnects us from the artwork. When the artwork is not treated as a case of *praxis*, it becomes only a means for the generation of ontological theories, I do not feel easy about Danto's understanding of art. In the next chapter, I will discuss these concerns in more depth.

CHAPTER 3

THE ONTOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE DEFINITION OF ART

In this chapter I will try to clarify much of what is left unexplained in the previous chapter. Danto's most significant work in aesthetics, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, tends to identify the essence of art, to give a full definition of art with necessary and sufficient conditions for something to be an artwork. This is a work in ontological aesthetics and it discloses the epistemological and ontological views upon which its definition of art is founded. The non-visual characteristic of artworks, as we saw in the previous chapter, is developed through the semantical feature, which is the main issue of this chapter.

3.1. The Goal of *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*

In the Preface to *TC*, Danto tells us that this book "aims at being an analytical philosophy of art."⁶² He describes his way through a whole cycle of internally related topics, perhaps beginning with art like Nietzsche, or ending with art like Kant. For this systematic philosopher, conceptual or philosophical analysis results in a general description of the world or reality, or what Danto calls, a representation of "reality as a whole."⁶³ This general description is made out by an analysis of certain concepts that are thought to be inherently philosophical: a single philosophical concept, for example, will be analyzed; having analyzed this concept, a move to the nature of the

⁶² *TC*, p. viii

⁶³ *TC*, p. 78

thing in the world is allowed. Then analyses of other concepts in other areas of philosophy are carried out, and if a structural parity between the various concepts is discovered, the scope of the analysis is enlarged and it moves closer to its goal of a general description of the world.

Philosophical analysis, then, involves not only defining a concept in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions, but also describing the ontological structure of the thing in the world to which the concept refers. As his definition of art leads to the ontological structure of artworks in the world, this places Danto on a standpoint where he is doing aesthetics and ontology at the same time.

Danto combines his aim in *TC* for "an analytical philosophy of art" with another goal. He refers to the "aspiration of artists from Platonic times to the present of redeeming art for reality."⁶⁴ He tells us that "the possibilities of success for this aspiration are exceedingly limited and it is interesting to consider how little has been achieved in actualizing the dream of centuries."⁶⁵

In *TC*, Danto aims to establish the limits to which art may be redeemed for reality. In other words, the task of *TC* is to establish the limits to which art may be taken as real; that is, the limits to which an artistic product may be said to be a real thing. This stated task underscores Danto's intention to analyze artworks from the perspective of the relationship between art and reality – a perspective that Danto considers exceptionally philosophical and appropriate for the philosophy of art.

In order to achieve this aim of *TC*, Danto first needs to show that there is indeed a distinction between artworks and real things. This task is preliminary to a definition of art. Danto first constructs a case that appeals to our intuition that the distinction between art and mere things has not been

⁶⁴ *TC*, p. v

⁶⁵ *TC*, p. v

erased, contrary to what *Brillo Box* indicates. This case suggests that we cannot rely upon our eyes to decide whether an artwork is a real thing: we need an approach that is meta-empirical.

Before Duchamp it had seemed obvious that the distinction between artworks and other things was perceptual, that paintings looked as distinct from other things as roses, say, look distinct from tomcats. With Duchamp, and those who followed him, it became philosophically evident that the differences are not of a kind that meets or even can meet the eye.⁶⁶

According to Danto, “from a realist metaphysical aesthetics an artwork cannot be strictly identified with a real thing: it is not logically possible.”⁶⁷ In “Artworks and Real Things” Danto implies that a dualistic ontology that distinguishes between the world of real objects and our experience of it results in a view of art that distinguishes between artworks and real things. A monistic idealism, on the contrary, postulates only a world of our own making, and results in a view of art that identifies artworks and real things. It is obvious that arguments in ontology impinge directly upon arguments in aesthetics; but Danto is neither compatible with a realist approach of ontological aesthetics nor monistic idealist ontology. As he himself claims to be “one may be a realist about objects and an idealist about artworks.”⁶⁸

⁶⁶ *BB*, p. 95

⁶⁷ *ART*, p. 15

⁶⁸ *TC*, p. 125

This is the reason why in *Transfiguration of the Commonplace* Danto invokes the Platonic theory in the first place since it posits an ontological distinction between an imitation and a mere thing, and this is the distinction that Danto seeks to preserve even in cases such as Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* and Duchamp's *Fountain*, where the artwork is in part a mere thing. But there is a further distinction, between the world of common things and the world of Forms that Danto finds at the root of Plato's criticism of art, and it is this further distinction that he wishes to subvert.

In a brief discussion of "the complex metaphysical structures that compose the core of Platonic theory"⁶⁹ Danto tells us that, for Plato objects were exemplifications of the Forms, and we may take this to mean that sensibles stand in place of, as an inferior proxy of the Forms. The Platonic metaphysics asserts a designative relation between things and the Forms, or to follow Platonic language, it is the things that are representations or imitations of the Forms, while artworks in consequence become representations of representations. This Platonic concept of Reality is incompatible with Danto's concept of reality, and Danto dismisses it summarily. From this point on in the discussion Danto assumes that we stand in direct relation to reality and that the distinction between illusions (or appearances) and real things can be made out *within* experience.

To say, as Danto does, that the external world is devoid of representationality means that it has no descriptive and semantical capacity. Danto treats artworks as representations, on the other hand, in the sense that they possess this semantic capacity; *aboutness*.

⁶⁹ TC, p. 11

3.2. Representation

Danto's epistemological theories are beyond the scope of this dissertation. It is nevertheless necessary to discuss some crucial points in order to illuminate his understanding of representation, which is what I proceed to do in this section.

In *TC*, Danto begins his account by arguing that works of art, like bits of language, have *aboutness*; they present a subject matter. Only in virtue of this is an artwork distinct from a mere thing, which is perceptually indiscernible from it. Duchamp's readymade sculpture *Fountain*, unlike its numerous indiscernible counterparts in the world, is *about* something, for instance, the presence of striking form in ordinary objects; the overcoming of boundaries between art and life or the vital importance of humor in art making.

Artworks are variously spoken of as "vehicles of representation"⁷⁰, as "semantical vehicles"⁷¹ and as "vehicles of meaning"⁷² and they belong to a special class of things that are *about* something. Informally, this means that a certain object is an artwork if it possesses a meaning structure; this is to say that an artwork is an interpreted thing. Aboutness and interpretation therefore, are essential features that distinguish artworks from mere things; these features constitute the necessary condition for arthood.

In his *Analytical Philosophy of Knowledge* Danto argues that a fatal mistake in the history of epistemology has been to take the ordinary objects of our experience as representative of something else. This mistake has been made by advocates of a representational theory of perception. Such a theory was championed by Descartes who took our true perceptions to be

⁷⁰ *TC*, p. 77

⁷¹ *TC*, p. 79

⁷² *TC*, p. 71

representations of something in the External World. Danto argues that it is this application to ordinary objects of a theory that properly applied only to imitations that has given rise to the arguments from illusion and their purported demolition of common-sense realism. Once we recognize this misapplication, we come to see that there is no problem of the External World: there are objects of our experience and they are external and independent of us, and we are in direct relation to them; the problem of our knowledge of them does not even arise.⁷³

All these defective theories of epistemic and ontological traditions that began with Plato and culminated in Descartes misled us within the world we live in. According to Danto, there is no indirect relationship between the external world and our cognition of it. Rather than relating to the representations of the real world, we may construct a relation in a direct way. That is to say; it is possible to see objects in a neutral way, universally invariant and independent of our interpretations and representations.

Danto's conception of realism may seem extremely naïve; however, as I mentioned before, this is not the concern of my study. What is crucial, though, is to set the ontological distinction between the real world and the Artworld.

To understand this distinction better, it may help to compare artworks with propositions in language which also possess semantic properties.

Artworks as a class contrast with real things in just the way in which words do, even if they are "in every other sense" real... Art differs from reality in much the same way that language does when language is employed descriptively (when it

⁷³ Arthur C. Danto, *Analytical Philosophy of Knowledge*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968, pp. 191-194

is about something)... This is not at all to say that art is a language, but only that its ontology is of a piece with that of language, and the contrast exists between reality and it which exists between reality and discourse.⁷⁴

Danto analyzes the concept of knowledge in more depth in his book *Analytical Philosophy of Knowledge*, and finds that the concept implies a distinction between our perceptions – as given in our knowledge claims— and the reality that these claims are *about*: only the knowledge claims are designative and not what the claims are about. In other words, knowledge claims as products of designating consciousness are representational or semantical but those objects or events that these representations are *about* are neither semantical nor representational.

Taken as having representational properties – as being about something, or of something – and hence subject to semantic identification – there exists an essential contrast between words and things, between representations and reality, as the latter in each instance is logically immune to such assessment since devoid of representationality.⁷⁵

It is part of Danto's theory of knowledge that we know that something is true because we are in direct relation to the world at that time and place,

⁷⁴ TC, pp. 82-83

⁷⁵ TC, p. 79

and we know it immediately. It does not follow, however, from the fact that we know it immediately that the sentence itself pictorially corresponds to the objective features of the world. To make clear Danto's position with respect to representation it is useful to look more closely at his views on the "picture theory" of language.

3.2.1. The Picture Theory of Language

The *Tractatus* picture theory of language asserted that the world is independent of our picturing it. Danto's position is initially compatible with Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* theory, which draws a contrast between the world on the one side and its mirror image in discourse on the other side. This is because Danto claims that the concept of reality can emerge only "when a contrast is available between reality and something else – appearance, illusion, representation, art – which sets reality off in a total way and puts it at a distance."⁷⁶ This is the point Danto finds crucial in early Wittgenstein; the representational gap between the reality and the language.

The idea seems to be that representation places us *opposite* reality and it is only in this way that we become aware of it as such. As long as reality is not represented we remain part of it and we can give content to the notion of reality. We can only have a concept of reality if we stand in a

⁷⁶ TC, p. 78

relation to it and that requires that we are ourselves outside it.⁷⁷

Danto agrees that, when it is the case of having representational properties – as being about something and therefore subject to semantic identification – there exists an essential contrast between words and things, between representations and reality, for the latter is devoid of representationality. However, according to Danto, Wittgenstein's theory wrongly assumed that there was a picturing connection between our sentences and the world. In Wittgenstein's words:

In the picture and the pictured there must be something identical in order that the one should be a picture of the other at all. The proposition communicates to us a state of affairs, therefore it must be essentially connected with the states of affairs.⁷⁸

For Danto, on the other hand, a sentence that truly describes what it is about need not share a common feature with its subject matter; it need not resemble nor give back the world's structure. According to Danto, words connect to the world not by mirroring it but merely by being associated with it. That relational aspect of a language that reaches across to the world is the semantical aspect that the words bear.

In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein asserts that "What the picture must have in common with reality in order to represent it is its form of

⁷⁷ F.R. Ankersmit, "Historical Representation" in *History and Theory*, Vol.27, No.3, 1988, p. 219

⁷⁸ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, New York: Humanities Press, 1961, 2.162

representation”⁷⁹ and again “What every picture, of whatever form, must have in common with reality in order to be able to represent it at all is the form of reality.”⁸⁰ Since it asserts that ordinary language gives back the form of the thing pictured, Danto rejects the *Tractatus* picture theory of ordinary language.⁸¹ According to Danto, this kind of mirroring relation distorts and destroys the semantical relation that should exist between language and the world. I believe that this is the same problem that Danto finds in the relation that supposedly “exists” in Plato’s ontology between appearance and reality.

In both *Tractatus* and Plato’s account of *mimesis*, the relation between reality and its representation is conceived as a mirroring relation. But recall that, as Danto insists, there needs to be an ontological gap by means of which reality must be kept at a distance from its representations (in Danto’s case artworks). When the relation is conceived as one of mirroring, the representation (the language or the artwork) and what it represents come dangerously close to being identical and therefore destroying the distinction.

3.2.2. Danto and Plato

In Plato’s theory, the only way in which ontological realms are kept distinct is through establishing a hierarchy between them. Danto states that, “artistic representation is logically tied up with putting reality at a distance”⁸² but he emphasizes that there is no ontological hierarchy between artworks and real things, as there is an epistemological one between the words and

⁷⁹ *Tractatus*, 2.17

⁸⁰ *Tractatus*, 2.18

⁸¹ Danto, *Analytical Philosophy of Knowledge*, pp. 260-262

⁸² *TC*, p. 78

the world. Representations of art are never the representations of reality as a transcendental domain.

This is where Danto differs from Plato: there is no conceptual hierarchy in Danto between the notions of “representing something” and “being self-identical”. (In so far as an object does not refer to anything other than itself, Danto speaks of it as “being self-identical.”) In the case of the artwork, a self-identical object is not prior to its representation according to Danto; in other words, the work of art is representative, but it does not imitate what it represents; it represents a theory. Its identity as a work of art (its nature, the nature of art) is not prior to its representation; they both come into being at one and the same time. The distinction between them is *not* of the same kind as the distinction between words and things; language and world; so to speak, representation and reality, that exists in an epistemological model. So the gap between a representation and what it represents is an ontological or aesthetic gap but not an epistemological one.

Real objects are not semantical or representational because they are deprived of interpretation. Mere objects are not representational because they are not about something else; they are not interpreted things; they are just perceptual. Artworks, on the exact contrary, are not perceptual but representational. They represent theories of the Artworld. The use of indiscernibles in Pop Art proves that representations of artworks are the pure forms of theories; as they are *about* the question ‘what is the nature of art’, as their *aboutness* is a matter of ontological aesthetics. Danto says, “I came to feel that with the *Brillo Box*, the true character of the philosophical question of the nature of art had been attained.”⁸³ “What Warhol's dictum amounted to, was that you cannot *tell* when something is a work of art just by looking at it, for there is no particular way that art has to look.”⁸⁴

⁸³ *BB*, p. 6

⁸⁴ *BB*, p. 5

It is crucial to clarify that artworks are never representations of the real world; they are intrinsically representational but not the representations of so called reality. Artistic representation of reality, in other words, is not an imitation or mimesis of reality, but a substitute for reality. Traditionally, artistic representation had always needed an “alien medium”⁸⁵ in order to express itself through resemblance features, but with the disappearance of imitation, which eventually leads to the superseding of all the material sensory features of the artwork (in the case of indiscernibles), only the pure form of artistic representation remains. Art, especially Pop Art, is no longer merely the means for the achievement of an illusion of reality in the form of appearances, but the reality as such, which manifests itself *immediately*.

For Danto, not only is a representation a symbol for reality, but reality is also a symbol for a representation. In other words, the gap created by the representation in art is not a gap between language and reality but between things; that is to say, between the represented thing and the thing representing it. Representations are always *things* representing other things. In epistemology, the representative relation may be merely nominal and thus hierarchical, but in art it’s a semantical one without hierarchy. “Something is real when it satisfies a representation of itself, just as [in epistemology] something is a ‘bearer’ when it is named by a name.”⁸⁶

⁸⁵ TC, p. 20

⁸⁶ TC, p. 81

3.2.3. Danto and Wittgenstein

Danto insists that epistemology does not suffice to give a true conception of reality. Only artistic representation can do this because of its interest in the gap between language and reality or between appearance (representation) and reality.⁸⁷

This is what Danto finds philosophical in the *Tractatus*: the picture it presents of the relationship between language and the world. Therefore, Danto's objection to the way the relation between reality and its representation (in language) is conceived in the *Tractatus* is somewhat different from his objection to Plato. The problem with the *Tractatus* is that, since the relationship is *between* language and the world, it cannot be represented in the language itself. That language characterized in the *Tractatus* has no room for the propositions of the *Tractatus* itself.

For Wittgenstein, language is the "total natural science" and philosophy is not in any respect part of that, therefore, philosophy mirrors no facts and its propositions accordingly do not attach to the world the way the scientific propositions do. And when philosophy, in contrast with science, pretends to be informative, and to tell us something true, for instance about art, "either it will be a disguised way of saying something we already know, in which case it is useless, or an undisguised way of saying something contrary to what we know, in which case it is false. Either it duplicates or it violates human knowledge."⁸⁸

When Danto talks about the real world, he says that, "the way something is represented is not a property of it."⁸⁹ That is to say, the way how the world is described is not a matter of what it is. The properties of

⁸⁷ TC, p. 77

⁸⁸ TC, p. 57

⁸⁹ *Analytical Philosophy of Knowledge*, p. 212

thought, consciousness or mind cannot be identical with its content. We can see that Danto is opposed to both early and later Wittgenstein when language is at stake. While in *Tractatus* there is a one-to-one pictorial correspondence between the words and the world, in *Investigations* language does not represent the world at all.

We cannot give a definition of art in Wittgensteinian theory. It is because the concept of art excludes the possibility that there is a criterion for artworks, therefore, excludes that there is some set of conditions necessary and sufficient to works of art. Therefore, we should have to take a position outside the language and talk about the language and the world. A strong case can be made that realizing this problem is precisely why Wittgenstein later abandoned the picture theory of the *Tractatus*.

But if we cannot establish any hierarchical difference between an artwork and the mere object nor give a non-hierarchical account of the ontological gap between them, how are we to keep them from collapsing into being identical? Danto continues to search for a proper account of the semantical relation between the world and its representations and he finds it in the indiscernibles of Pop Art. What we need is a language in which an indiscernible can refer to another. An adequate account of the semantical aspects of this language should be able to explain this relation between these indiscernibles rather than focusing on only the resemblances that we perceive.

In *Beyond the Brillo Box*, Danto points out that, throughout much of the history of Western art, people believed that in order for something to be a work of visual art, it had to portray accurately that which it represented. This was the belief, for instance of the ancient Greeks, Danto states, "Resemblance mistakenly became the definition of art, and the eye became the arbiter of artistic excellence and opticality the criterion of artistic

structure."⁹⁰ Even into the modern period, artists strove to be able to imitate with more and more fidelity what they saw.

As late as the Impressionists, artists were in the spirit of wholeness with their tradition. The Impressionists in particular saw their task very little differently than Vasari did: as the conquest of visual appearances, of arranging colors across flat surfaces in such a way as to affect the retina as it would be affected by some scene in the real world to which the painterly array corresponded. They felt themselves closer to visual truth than their predecessors... Their discoveries regarding the colors of shadows belonged to the same progress as linear perspective, aerial perspective, chiaroscuro.⁹¹

As we have seen, Danto argues against the traditional accounts which define art as imitation or as a form of expression. He claims that "over time, the mere designative or mere symbolic character of artworks became less important, except in the case of commemorative portraits, historical paintings and the like."⁹² What becomes important to artworks is what Danto calls their semantical or representational character. The semantical or representational aspect of an artwork is a relational aspect that connects the descriptive structure, or meaning structure of an artwork to what it is about. The presence of meaning, therefore, not the presence of imitation or resemblance is constitutive of art's essence. Warhol's *Brillo Box*, a sculpture

⁹⁰ *BB*, p. 111

⁹¹ *BB*, p. 123

⁹² *TC*, p. 77

indiscernible from its counterpart in the grocery store, *is* an artwork because it exemplifies a theory of what art is.

3.2.4. Danto and Nietzsche

In his portrayal of the historical development of a conceptual scheme that distinguished between art and reality, Danto considers Nietzschean theory of imitation in addition to the Platonic and Aristotelian theories of *mimesis* because the Nietzschean account brings us closer to understanding how the Artworld is distinguished from the everyday world. Nietzsche proposed that the distinction developed as part of a historical process reflecting a change in the general conceptual scheme of man. Nietzsche's discussion of tragedy reveals that with the birth of tragedy, a distinction arose between an imitation and its object of imitation: what was previous to this conceptual change, a bit of reality, a re-presentation in the Dionysian rites, became, as part of a historical process, a representation, an artistic form distinct from reality.

Nietzsche explains in *The Birth of Tragedy*⁹³ that Dionysian rites were orgiastic occasions, the celebrants working themselves up, through intoxication and sexual games, within which the most horrible savage instincts were released. The effort was to stun the rational faculties and the moral inhibitions, to breakdown the boundaries between selves, until, at the climactic moment, the god himself made himself present (re-present) to his celebrants. However, in time, this ritual was replaced by its own symbolic enactment, which was tragic drama. Unlike early times, at the climax of the ritual, not Dionysus himself, but someone (the tragic hero) was representing him made an appearance on the scene. According to Nietzsche the tragic

⁹³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, New York: Dover Publications, 1995.

hero was an evolution out of this “surrogate epiphany”. This was another kind of representation, which is something that stands in the place of something else.

Nietzsche's theory, gives a clue to the feature that distinguishes artworks and mere things. Nietzsche discloses in what respect a tragedy is distinct from its object of imitation: this is in its designative or symbolic respect. Danto describes this designative or symbolic character of an artwork as standing in the place of something else: the tragic hero stood in place of or represented, Dionysus himself. Two senses of representation correspond to two senses of appearance. According to the first sense of representation, the thing itself appears; there is no distinction with the reality. For instance, when the Sun appears in the sky, it is ridiculous to say that it is only the appearance of the Sun, but not the Sun itself. And according to the second sense as Plato admits, appearance contrasts with reality. And mediation of reality as such is essentially related in art since the artists have a power of making a given reality present again in an alien medium.⁹⁴

In conclusion, Danto claims in *TC* that he is as interested in carving out the nature of the philosophy of art as he is interested in defining the concept of art and we may understand that by the philosophy of art he means the semantics of art.⁹⁵ And if “to see something as art requires something the eye cannot descry”⁹⁶ now it is time to discuss Danto’s examples of red squares which all share the same sensuous properties and are, therefore, all sensuously indiscernibles. Among the artworks created during the period of the distinction between artworks and real things, works like Duchamp’s *Fountain* and Warhol’s *Brillo Box* were such that if

⁹⁴ *TC*, pp: 18-21

⁹⁵ *TC*, p. 54

⁹⁶ *A*, p. 580

philosophers had applied the method of indiscernibles to them, the question of art's essence could finally be answered.

3.3. The Method of Indiscernibles

At the outset, it is important to note that indiscernibles have a crucial significance in Danto's overall philosophy. In his entire philosophical study, Danto worked on to differentiate action from movement, reality from appearance, knowledge from belief, prudence from morality and artworks from mere objects; so to speak, according to Danto, distinguishing indiscernibles is what philosophy is all about. The problem of reality emerges when we are able to imagine two phenomenally indistinguishable states, like Descartes' thought experiment of perfectly coherent dream and the so-called external world or Kant's well-known example of a honest grocer.

When it comes to philosophy of art, Danto finds in Warhol's transfiguration of Brillo pads in the grocery store into a work of art an ideal occasion for presenting his case that artworks can be indiscernibles, visually identical with physical objects. This gives rise to the philosophical problem of why one of this indiscernible pair of two Brillo boxes succeeded in acquiring the status of a work of art while the other will probably be recycled.

Danto points to method of indiscernibles which he believes might assist *philosophers* to uncover art's essence: "A good philosophical procedure for drawing lines [that is, in this case, for finding out what the difference between art objects and non-art objects is] consists in imagining things on either side of them that have in common as many properties as

possible, for at least it will be plain that what divides them cannot be located in what they share."⁹⁷

3.3.1. The Context of Indiscernibles

There are two detectable philosophical sources for Danto's linguistics of indiscernibles. The first source is Quine and his critique of traditional empirical models for determining meaning. Quine doubts whether a single sentence is meaningful apart from its broader context. He observes that "there is a gulf between meaning and naming even in the case of a singular term which is genuinely a name of an object."⁹⁸ Citing the German mathematician Gottlob Frege's famous example centered on the phrases "Evening Star" and "Morning Star," where both phrases name the same object, Quine explains how the two names have two distinct senses even though they share the same referent. He later expanded his observation and posited his theory of the "indeterminacy of radical translation."

Quine's theory accounts for the fact that a sentence can have multiple meanings and those meanings are determined by the context of use. For instance, if we consider "Great" to be a single-word sentence, it can have multiple meanings; we might be using it sincerely or ironically. Danto paraphrases Quine when he states that to refer to something as being "real" or to something as being "art" was simply to "satisfy a semantic function" and not a verifiably perceptual function.⁹⁹

The second source lay in Wittgenstein's aspect of perception and *seeing-as*. The problem of distinguishing between two materially and

⁹⁷ *BB*, p. 95

⁹⁸ W. V. O. Quine, *From a Logical Point of View: 9 Logico-Philosophical Essays*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953, p. 9

⁹⁹ *TC*, p. 80

perceptually identical objects is a key theme in *Philosophical Investigations*. Wittgenstein's example of the problem is a Necker cube (astonishingly similar to Warhol's Brillo Box): "You could imagine the illustration appearing in several places in a book, a text book for instance."¹⁰⁰ The illustration always remains the same throughout Wittgenstein's hypothetical textbook. Yet, at the same time, each appearance of the illustration is different throughout. "In the relevant text something different is in question every time: here a glass cube, there an inverted open box, there a wire frame of that shape, there three boards forming a solid angle. Each time the text supplies the interpretation of the illustration."¹⁰¹ And each time the box changes into a different object. "But we can also see the illustration now as one thing and now as another. So we interpret it, and see it as we *interpret* it."¹⁰² The text is crucial for us to see the illustration as a glass cube, as an inverted box, as a wire frame, or as three boards that form a solid angle.

Wittgenstein explains the phenomena as an "expression of a change of aspect" where there is an "expression of a new perception and at the same time of the perceptions being unchanged."¹⁰³ The same problem takes on a slightly different sense, though relevant to issues in art theory, in the "Brown Book" section of *The Blue and Brown Books*. Wittgenstein starts with drawing a face:

Now although the expression that seeing a drawing as a face is merely seeing strokes seems to point to some kind of addition of experiences, we certainly should not say that when we see the drawing as a face we also have the experience of

¹⁰⁰ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1953, p. 193 (Hereafter, *PI*)

¹⁰¹ *PI*, p. 193

¹⁰² *PI*, p. 193

¹⁰³ *PI*, p. 196

seeing it as mere strokes and some other experience besides.¹⁰⁴

Wittgenstein means that to see a drawing as a face is to have our perception of the strokes fall away. We do not see "mere strokes" and a face. The material and perceptual qualities – the lines – of the drawing may have something to do with seeing it as a face, but it is our ability to recognize drawings as faces that facilitates the fading of the strokes. Danto sees a similarity between the seeing of a drawing of a face as the strokes fade away and our ability to embody the meaning of an artwork as the visual qualities gradually drop away. We come to understand the meaning of Warhol's Brillo Box as the visual qualities of both Warhol's *Brillo Box* and the mere Brillo box are superseded to reveal the theoretical meaning of Warhol's *Brillo Box*.

We see here Danto's manipulation of Pop Art's New Realism. Pop Art is a kind of inversion of Wittgenstein's *seeing-as*, where the ordinary Brillo box supersedes the sensory delivery of the material qualities of the box, just as strokes fade to become a face in Wittgenstein's example. However, as we will see in the next chapter, Wollheim criticizes Danto for his standing on the level of *seeing-as*, and for missing the material qualities of artworks. According to Wollheim, as the ordinary boxes and Warhol's boxes look so alike, the subject matter or representational status of them wanes in comparison to their extra-representational vitality.

Danto sees Warhol's *Brillo Box* as an artwork rather than as a mere Brillo box, but he points out that we cannot determine an object's identity as artwork merely by looking at it; we can do so only with proper knowledge of its history which leads to its meaning; its interpretation.

¹⁰⁴ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Blue and the Brown Books*, New York: Harper Torch Books, 1958, pp. 168-169

The "text," as Wittgenstein says, or the "code," as Sontag says, that informs Danto's perception is art theory and history. Danto sees Warhol's Brillo *Box* as an artwork because it fits into a system of meaning that is theoretically and historically appropriate to artworks. Because the same system of meaning is not appropriate to commercial packing cartons, Danto cannot see mere Brillo Boxes as art.

3.3.2. The Semantics of Indiscernibles

At the beginning of *TC*, Danto makes use of a thought experiment to illustrate his point. He invites us to imagine a gallery that is exhibiting eight red surfaces, all of which are taken to be perceptually *indiscernible*. Our task is to differentiate between the red surfaces. The first red surface is a painting of "The Israelites Crossing the Red Sea" (the artist having explained that the Israelites had already crossed and the Egyptians were drowned). The second square of red paint, entitled "Kierkegaard's Mood," is a painting based upon Kierkegaard's having commented that he found an analogy between the first red square and his own spiritual struggles that ended in a mood, a single color. The next red surfaces are both entitled "Red Square" and one is a clever bit of Moscow landscape and the other is a minimalist example of geometric art. The fifth is entitled "Nirvana," an example of religious art. The sixth is a still-life executed by an embittered disciple of Matisse, called "Red-Table Cloth." The seventh red surface has historical interest for it is a canvas grounded in red lead by Giorgione, but its anticipated painting was never realized, Giorgione having died before its realization. The last red surface is painted in red lead, but is a mere artifact, in the exhibition not because it is a painting, but because it has some

philosophical import, it being a mere thing with paint upon it.¹⁰⁵ The important question that arises from this constructed case is how we are to explain that the last two red surfaces are mere things, whereas the preceding ones are artworks.

To begin trying to answer this question, Danto recommends that we should go back to historical theories of imitation, which maintain a distinction between artworks and mere things. He admits that "there is a [formalist] description under which paintings are 'flat stains of color,' or, speaking realistically and reductively, that to be a painting is to be made of flat stains of color,"¹⁰⁶ but he says that it is a mistake to suppose "so close a relationship between certain ideal paintings and the world that the *world*, reductively and realistically, is made of flat stains of color: and that it is thus that the innocent eye sees the world ... but the miracle of painting is that we see things and scenes and not, or not just, the flat stains of color of which the painting consists."¹⁰⁷

Starting sometime in the nineteenth century, Danto says, and ending in 1964 (Pop Art era), artists produced works which had the effect (and he suggests that, often, this was an effect which these artists consciously desired to bring about) of helping to uncover the essential nature of art. Thus, these works of art, less and less exemplified the mimetic theories about the nature of art. "The history of Modernism beginning in the late 1880s is a history of the dismantling of a concept of art which had been evolving for over half a millennium."¹⁰⁸ And Danto declares:

Beginning with the Pre-Raphaelites, artists have distanced themselves from their histories in a

¹⁰⁵ *TC*, pp: 1-8

¹⁰⁶ *BB*, p. 19

¹⁰⁷ *BB*, p. 19

¹⁰⁸ *BB*, p. 4

more or less total way, which meant that they were implicitly involved in a semi-philosophical enterprise of saying what was and what was not art. The definition of art has accordingly come to play an increasing role in the making of art in modern times, climaxing in recent years when the question of whether something was art became more and more frequently and more stridently, expressed.¹⁰⁹

If we take the thought experiment above, "The Israelites Crossing the Red Sea" and a minimalist painting called "Red Square" would appear visually indistinguishable as both are solid fields of red, but they will be seen quite distinct objects once their histories are understood. The self-same object, a red square, has an identity which depends upon how it is interpreted.

The criteria through which perception allows us to pick things out will not greatly help in identifying works of art when ... the artifact of one [culture] might look exactly like the artwork of another. What makes one an artwork is the fact that it embodies, as a human action gives embodiment to a thought, something we could not form a concept of without the material objects which convey its soul... To be a work of art, I have argued, is to embody a

¹⁰⁹ *BB*, p. 47

thought, to have content, to express a meaning...”¹¹⁰

The method of indiscernible pairs is ideally suited for dealing with the problem of what art is. Comparing two objects that are materially completely indiscernible, while one belongs to the art world and the other does not, reveals that their ontological domains are distinct from each other. And what generates these distinct ontological statuses, are their representative; semantical; interpretative features. What makes the difference between a work of art and its visual twin cannot be something *visual* but *conceptual*.¹¹¹

3.3.3. Artworld: The Theoretical Context

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, for Danto, the meanings whose presence defines art's essence are always an integral part of the causal network which is the discourse of the Artworld to which both artist and spectator belong and "Nothing really is a work of art outside the system of reasons which give it that status: works of art are not such by nature [non-natural meanings are such that have to be learned]"¹¹² and that is why, "The discourse of reasons is what confers the status of art on what would otherwise be mere things."¹¹³

In order to be able to see the *Brillo Box* as a work of art, one has to participate in a conceptual atmosphere, a discourse of reasons, which one shares with the artists and with others who made up the Artworld. It is

¹¹⁰ *BB*, pp: 110-112

¹¹¹ *BB*, p. 225

¹¹² *BB*, p. 39

¹¹³ *BB*, p. 21

essential to understand a nature of an art theory that detaches objects from the real world and makes them part of a different world, an Artworld. Therefore, "Seeing something as art is not perceptual skill wired in but a matter of being located in theory and in history."¹¹⁴ Art is the kind of thing that depends for its existence upon theories; without theories of art, "black paint *is* just black paint and nothing more."¹¹⁵

Danto's constructed cases of indiscernibles suppose that there are non-perceptual properties of an artwork. All red squares are unique as works of art, each having and each embodying a different content. The presence of meaning and the embodiment of this meaning is what makes a work, an artwork. When we respond to them as art instead of mere red squares, it is not mechanical seeing but interpretative seeing that is at issue.

If I am allowed to reiterate that, there is a semantical difference between representations and the world. We can now understand that it is the non-perceptual semantical aspect of the first six red squares that distinguish them from the last red squares that are not artworks. The case of the red surfaces is designed to show that there is an ontological distinction, between an artwork and a mere thing, and that an ontological difference is not something that can be perceived by the eye. The case in fact rests upon the principle that there are non-perceptual properties of an artwork; these non-perceptual – semantical-- properties are those relational properties that connect each of the first six red surfaces to its content: "To be a work of art is to embody a thought, to have content, to express a meaning."¹¹⁶ The case reveals that a mere examination of the surfaces of the red canvases is insufficient for a philosophical analysis of an artwork. In order to uncover what the various surfaces say or mean, we need to think in terms of the relationship between the surface of each and its content or meaning.

¹¹⁴ *BB*, p. 21

¹¹⁵ *TC*, p. 135

¹¹⁶ *BB*, p. 112

3.3.4. Form and Content

In order to discover the semantic features of paintings we should move to a meta-empirical perspective that examines relationships rather than canvases *per se*. It is revealed that each of the first six red surfaces stand in a relationship to meaning, some of these paintings being extensional representations, like the Moscow landscape painting, and some of these paintings being intensional representations, like those that represent an action or a mood or a geometric form. These first six representations belong to one class of things and are distinct from the last two red surfaces, which do not stand in a semantical relationship to anything; these surfaces not being about anything. Although they are perceptually identical to the others, they are not artworks at all. They are just mere representations but do not attain a representational property.

Danto moves from the concept of imitation to that of an artwork via the concept of representation. He tells us that imitation need not be a purely extensional concept; in other words, reference to an existent object need not be entailed by the meaning of the concept of imitation. Instead, it is better to understand imitation as a representational concept, whose *aboutness* is relevant whether or not what is represented exists. An imitation, therefore, does not entail an object existent in order to copy, but imitation or a picture of an object becomes a representational concept about something.¹¹⁷ To clarify this point, Danto distinguishes two kinds of representations:

1. “an external sense of representation”¹¹⁸ in which pictures denotes the things they resemble, as in a portrait,
2. “an internal sense of representation”¹¹⁹ or “a pictorial concept of representation”¹²⁰ which has to do “with the content of a picture”¹²¹

¹¹⁷ TC, pp. 68-69

¹¹⁸ TC, p. 72

In the latter case Danto continues to maintain that there is a distinction between the representation and what it is about; this distinction is filled out as one between the way something is represented and what is represented, a distinction is formulated between form and content. There remains a distinction between the way something is represented and what is represented. "Paintings and artworks in general have none of the properties associated with what they are of."¹²² This distinction of form and content is prerequisite to the formulation of a sufficient condition for an object being a work of art.

Danto's claim is that these distinctions cut across the mental-physical distinction, and he insists that his program is neither a Cartesian dualism, that posits an ontological distinction between an artwork and a mere object, nor a version of reductionism that reduces everything to one ontological category; either to mind or material thing. Artworks for Danto, are complex entities in the sense they possess both a physical and perceptual part, and a non-physical and non-perceptual part. He explains what he means by means of the distinction between the descriptive level and the semantic level of thought and language.

When we use 'real' descriptively or nominally, he says, we attach the term to something outside the mind; but when we use 'real' semantically, what is outside the mind and what is inside the mind belong alike to 'reality'. For instance, when we say "real money" we use 'real' for external description but when we denote a statue, which represents the 'real' bed of Napoleon, the bed made by the sculptor, is in every sense 'real' like Napoleon's bed. The world, then, is not to be identified with what is outside the mind: the world or reality in its semantical (philosophical) sense may be

¹¹⁹ *TC*, p. 72

¹²⁰ *TC*, p. 75

¹²¹ *TC*, p. 72

¹²² *TC*, p. 109

construed broadly as any object of consciousness, including those ordinary objects of perception and what we usually speak of as mental contents.¹²³

The form and content discussion is applicable to sentences, pictures, stories and theories and Danto finds the case of representational art to be particularly instructive in clarifying this distinction. In representational art there always remains a distinction between the way something is represented and what is represented. A picture of a tree can never have identical properties with that real tree. "Paintings and artworks in general have none of the properties associated with what they are of."¹²⁴ Because, otherwise, the artworks would have turned into their mere counterparts.

We see that, it is as crucial to distinguish between form and content as it is to distinguish the perception of representational artworks from the perception of mere objects for the construction of the true ontological status of indiscernibles. In a traditional Imitation theory we see that the form is reduced to its content by means of its resemblance power. However, Danto shows that our commonly used aesthetic predicates like; "is powerful", "is swift" "is fluid", "has depth", "has solidity", "is sharp", "is delicate" are applied to the drawings of flowers, rather than to flowers themselves.¹²⁵ Consequently, if our aesthetic predicates have any validity at all in use, we must rid ourselves of an account of art that reduces the form to the content. Art belongs to an ontological category fundamentally distinct from the category of mere things. The artworks and the mere objects do not share the same ontological properties. Whatever property belongs to an artworld is differed from the real world.

We know as human beings, to be conscious of something is to be aware of something external to consciousness; there is always content in the way our consciousness has always to be about something. And for

¹²³ *Analytical Philosophy of Knowledge*, pp: 207-209

¹²⁴ *TC*, p. 109

¹²⁵ *TC*, p. 155

Danto, who considers artworks to be of the same complexity as conscious beings, representations of art are always about something. This means that an artwork has the capacity of self-reflection by placing itself out of its material identity. Because the structure of an artwork is composed of both physical and non-perceptual parts, it becomes something “which can no more be identified with matter but with content.”¹²⁶ The formalist theories of art insist that an artwork can be reduced to its material part, that an artwork “*is* the canvas and paper, ink and paint, words and noise, sounds and movement.”¹²⁷ And this theory fail to recognize what our aesthetic consciousness say about the ontological structure of an artwork.

3.4. The End Of Art

Especially with Pop Art, which made artworks out of their indiscernible counterparts of non-art objects, we no longer have perceptual capacity in order to define art. That is why Warhol’s chief contribution is that he brought artistic practice to a level of philosophical self-consciousness. For Danto, *Brillo Box* exhibition asked not simply “what is art?” but rather, “why is something a work of art when something exactly like it is not?”¹²⁸ It is crucial to understand that Pop Art is distinctive on Danto’s account, because of its self-reflexive, cognitive capacity, which is committed to discover the nature of art, as for Danto “[pop] art serves the purpose of making consciousness aware of itself.”¹²⁹

Warhol, by both transfiguring the identical material into a work of art, and by transfiguring our conceptions about reality and representation,

¹²⁶ TC, p. 159

¹²⁷ TC, p. 159

¹²⁸ Arthur Danto, *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, p. 15

¹²⁹ TC, p. 207

transfigured all commonplace we live in, and generated an ontological shift about reality. Warhol managed to do that according to Danto's understanding of art history, wherein all previous theories are replaced by novel ones whenever a counterexample appears in a prevailing theory. Like Imitation theories replaced by Reality theories, when the former ceased to endure before distorted shapes and forms of Post-Impressionist paintings.

For Danto, the essence of art is always vulnerable to counterexamples of innovative developments in the history of art. After Warhol, however, since anything indiscernible from mere objects can be a work of art, there is left no future counterexamples, thus, no further development for the history of art. That is the reason why five years after than *Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, Danto announced that art is *historically over*.

Having reached this point ... art ... has brought us to a stage outside history, where at last we can contemplate the possibility of a universal definition of art and vindicate therewith the philosophical aspiration of the ages, a definition which will not be threatened by historical overthrow.¹³⁰

Pop Art, when discovers the problem of indiscernibles, it enormously extended the problem by means of numerous readymades. Pop Art, though, when reaches the limits of its capacity to disclose the nature of art, historical development of art is terminated. Once art places the question into its proper philosophical form, philosophy takes over it. What makes the

¹³⁰ *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*, p. 209

difference between art and non-art is a matter for the philosophy of art to discover, and having brought the matter to this point, “Pop Art had brought the quest to an end” and thus, “artists no longer needed to be philosophers.”¹³¹

Danto’s argument about the end of art depends on the notion that, art ends once it gets the problem of indiscernibles in its proper philosophical form, it ends with the “advent of its own philosophy.”¹³² With the disclosure or discovery of true philosophical nature, art attains the end of its history, just same as the Spirit in Hegel’s philosophy, unfolds itself in history and comes to awareness of its own drives and resources. Like Hegelian Spirit, art in Danto’s mind, brings itself to the threshold of self-consciousness and hence to its own philosophy.

As Danto states, “The importance of art lies in the fact that it makes philosophy or art possible and important. The historical stage of art is done with when it is known what art is and means”¹³³, art is superseded with the philosophy of art. Artworld supersedes the sensual material, and becomes purely theoretical/philosophical; when the material reaches its limits of disclosing of its own nature, the history of art becomes purely formal and is excluded from *praxis*.

Artists, enigmatically, will continue to make art after the end; such art may be the representation of expressing emotions, symbolizing *Zeitgeist*, criticizing society or fulfilling all human pleasure, but it will not be guided by a developmental historical theory. “There are no objects left in terms of manifest properties that the theorist does not already have before him, since art can look like anything.”¹³⁴ As the modernist project of self-definition is over; art history in the developmental sense is over, therefore, all the

¹³¹ *BB*, p. 225

¹³² *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*, p. 107

¹³³ *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*, p. 111

¹³⁴ *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*, p. 87

possible innovative counterexamples ceased to threaten the essential nature of art. Being an essentialist from the beginning of philosophizing on art, Danto, finally accomplished to generate its nature via ending the history of art.

Despite the end of history seems negative attribution to art, Danto finds it as a liberating opportunity for artists: “We live at a moment when it is clear that art can be made of anything, and where there is no mark through which works of art can be perceptually different from the most ordinary of objects.” “This condition is the end of the possibility of progressive development, the end of the tyranny of history.”¹³⁵ According to Danto, the idea that the progressive historical theories come to an end, means that anything can be art, in the sense that nothing can any longer be excluded. Once artists are freed from being philosophers, they become liberated as such: “Once art had ended, you could be an abstractionist, a realist, an allegorist, a metaphysical painter, a surrealist, a landscapist, or a painter of still-lives or nudes. Everything was permitted, since nothing any longer was historically mandated. And I call this the Post-historical period of art.”¹³⁶

3.5. Shortcomings of Danto’s Account

Danto sees the end of art as liberation of artists from the historical mandates and philosophical constraints, but I argue that this move was inevitable for his theoretical system which is enclosed in itself. Any kind of system, which excludes practical and individual developments and innovations, is destined to collapse into itself. Accordingly, as Danto constructs his method of indiscernibles based on the elimination of visual reality in art, this method would eventually collapse in its purely conceptual

¹³⁵ “The End of Art: A Philosophical Defense”, pp. 139-140

¹³⁶ *BB*, p. 9

form. I, therefore, take Danto's account on the end of the art, as a philosophical maneuver to protect his system from its time of decadence.

When Danto describes his whole philosophy of art "in a nutshell, finding the deep differences between art and craft, artworks and mere things, when members from either class look exactly similar"¹³⁷ I criticize him for his aspiration to see artworks as nothing but indiscernibles. What we get at the end is just mere ontological theories of art. I argue that Danto not only excludes form at the expense of visual properties, but he excludes also content by leaving *pentimenti* outside the artwork. It is the Artworld theories as a vehicle of interpretation make statements about the reality and the art. Therefore, the Artworld theories constitute the semantic contexts of an artwork.

Maybe with the Pop Art's final response to the Platonic Reality "Artists no longer needed to be philosophers"¹³⁸ but it is clearly seen that with Danto's theory of the Artworld and its method of indiscernibles, we have to become philosophers of art. As far as it is concerned that in order to see a work as an artwork, we should be acquainted with its theoretical context, we are supposed to be philosophers or historians of art.

According to Danto, before the Pop Art era, "All art ... stands outside life, in a space of its own, metaphorically embodied in the Plexiglas display case, the bare white gallery, the aluminum frame. But now we might be able to obtain a deeper connection between art and life and ... to reconnect to life."¹³⁹ What Danto sees at the window of the Museum of Modern Art is "an effort to reconnect art and real life, full of marvelous meanings."¹⁴⁰ I find it self-contradictory and ironic that he says this because, for Danto, art is only

¹³⁷ *BB*, p. 53

¹³⁸ *BB*, p. 225

¹³⁹ *BB*, p. 129

¹⁴⁰ *BB*, p. 160

a matter of representation of theories. In order to see *Brillo Box* as an artwork we should have a clue about its theory, about what it represents.

I, on the other hand, think we should see Warhol's *Brillo Box* with an acknowledgement of the expressions of *pentimenti* that it designates. As long as the visual appearance of artworks is impenetrable to the manifold background of *pentimenti*, we are only left with the theoretical structure, wherein we can find no place to experience artworks in a true sense. Nor are we given access to the experience of works of art by means of our psychological and socio-cultural being.

He may be seen as asserting an idea of meaning and interpretation in a socio-cultural, political or psychological sense; but since he says that "to interpret a work is to offer a theory as to what the work is about, what its subject is", I think there is still no room for us to produce immediate meanings and interpretations over *pentimenti*. Here we can see that, as Danto ignores all the manifest effort in an artwork, he overlooks a certain kind of labor in its production process.

Danto states that, "The Brillo pad emblemizes our struggle with dirt and the triumph of domestic order"¹⁴¹ but I argue that its representations can be extended so far as to encompass socio-political contents, like the social function of women in daily life; our obsession with popular consumption; alienation of industrial fabrication or the standardization of mass production of a capitalist system. Without all the meanings and representations, the *Brillo Box* would have the same status as a Brillo box that, presumably, "one of the cleaning women of the museum had left lying around."¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ *BB*, p. 41

¹⁴² F. R. Ankersmit, "Danto on Representation, Identity, and Indiscernibles" in *History and Theory*, Vol. 37, No. 4, 1998, p. 64

CHAPTER 4

ART RECONSIDERED: WOLLHEIM ON CANVAS

In this chapter, I discuss Richard Wollheim's philosophy of art, which contrasts with Danto's method of indiscernibles. With Wollheim's putting the extra-representational features at work, the primacy of perception reasserts itself when we encounter artworks. By explicating Wollheim's theory of *seeing-in* I develop an individual idea of *pentimenti* that I interpreted as a combination of the representational and the extra-representational features of an artwork and in my study I use it to criticize Danto's understanding of art.

4.1. The Surface Regained

The primacy of perception is recovered with Wollheim's conception of "Minimal Art", which contributes to the discourse on Pop Art's New Realism. Wollheim recovers perception when he determines that the minimal condition for an object to be art is a state of "work or manifest effort" in the material production of artworks and what can and cannot be seen *in* art as a result of that effort. The minimal requirement of perceivable work is the basis of Wollheim's notion of *seeing-in* – the two-fold perceptual capacity to attend to both the extra-representational and the representational aspects of an artwork – which reintroduces the primacy of perceptual acuity necessarily linked to the apprehension of artistic meaning.

Wollheim supports a New Realist account of Warhol's *Brillo Box* by proposing that "the minimal requirement of an object to be considered an

artwork is the *real* work done by an artist and subsequently perceived by a beholder."¹⁴³ Wollheim describes the relationship between the artist's work and the beholder's perception as realism.

According to him, New Realism is a strategy adopted by artists to create artworks whereby our perception of their intentions materializes as a constitutive minimal condition for defining an artwork. Wollheim introduces the material manifestation of intention and its perception in "Minimal Art" and further expands on the relationship in his theory of *seeing-in*. *Seeing-in* is Wollheim's critical revision of Ludwig Wittgenstein's *seeing-as* – to see an illustration or artwork "now as one thing and now as another."¹⁴⁴

Modifying Wittgenstein's *seeing-as*, Wollheim defines *seeing-in* as our two-fold perceptual capacity to attend to both the surface of and to the subject of an artwork. The two are fused in the making of art and should be apparent in the beholding of art. Wollheim's *seeing-in* acknowledges the real impact of objects on our perceptual-sensorial system; he recognizes that the force of an artwork's sensorial impact is meaningful in that it is intended. The artist's intention, according to Wollheim, is that his artwork has sufficient impact on the beholder such that it is recognized, or perceived, as being intentional. Wollheim's realist account of intention and perception is productive in two ways.

First, Wollheim's realism allows us to counter Danto's philosophy of the end of realism. Second, Wollheim's realist account of *seeing-in* provides us with a method by which we can better understand the complexities of Warhol's realism – a method that allows us to account for both the representational and extra-representational character of Warhol's Pop Art.

In *Art and its Objects*, Wollheim focuses on the question of what it is for something to be a work of art. He seeks for the concept which would

¹⁴³ Richard Wollheim, *On Art and The Mind*, London: Allen Lane, 1973, p. 106 (Hereafter *OAM*)

¹⁴⁴ *PI*, p. 193

encompass all those things we call works of art, or distinguish them from other classes of object. It is crucial to illuminate that when Wollheim talks about the works of art, he specifically talks about pictorial art. In both cases, however he states two necessary conditions for understanding of art – history and meaning.

Throughout *Art and Its Objects*, Wollheim examines the different ways in which history, meaning and materiality are related to each other. For instance, in considering how it is that a certain material becomes suitable as a medium, he distinguishes between asking the question in the context of an enduring history of art and asking it as general and abstract question. He does this by taking an analogy with language: there is a difference between asking why a certain range out of all phonetic possibilities was taken up by a particular language and asking why we use the phonetic range of a language that we do in fact use. Once a phonetic range is in use, once we have grown up with it, it is not arbitrary that we should go on using it, and we may well have great difficulty in adjusting to another range; the same seems to be true, Wollheim says, with the medium (surface of the painting) in art. It is such internalization of artistic tradition, its becoming natural to the artist then constitutes a pictorial theory.¹⁴⁵

Wollheim rejects two dominant theories about representation called, the illusion and the resemblance theory. He rejects the illusion theory in the sense that the material surface of a picture and the subject it depicted are treated as mutually exclusive; in other words, according to the illusion theory the surface is merely instrumental in producing the illusion of the depicted subject. As against the illusion theory he proposes that we possess the perceptual capacity that he calls *seeing-in*. The capacity for *seeing-in* entails twofoldness, which is seeing both the marked surface and what is represented in it, at once. It is a capacity deeply seated within the historical

¹⁴⁵ Richard Wollheim, *Art and Its Objects: An Introduction to Aesthetics*, New York: Harper&Row, 1968, p. 108 (Hereafter *AIO*)

tradition and it is logically¹⁴⁶ prior to seeing what is represented in a painting.¹⁴⁷

The historical tradition that makes *seeing-in* possible consists of interrelated complex structures such as the acknowledgement of art history, psychology of the spectator and the asserted intention of the artist. The theory of *seeing-in* is a culturally developed project in which the artist and the spectator collaborate within a shared world as the former knowing what to expect concerning how his work will be interpreted and the latter knowing what to see – the artist's intention for instance – accordingly his psychological mood and the capacity of his artistic intention.

A second theory of pictorial representation that Wollheim is opposed to is the notion of resemblance. He objects that if we were to see something in the picture by virtue of seeing a resemblance, we would already have to know which aspects of the marked surface we had to pick and which aspects we had to ignore. For Wollheim, the spectator may seek to explain recognition in painting by reference to resembling features and isolating certain configurations shared by the picture and what it represents, but that is something done by the resemblance theory rather than the spectator himself.¹⁴⁸

In pictorial representation – *seeing-in* – we start out from what we saw represented in the marked surface and then allow our thought to reflect on its significance (for Wollheim, its significance in the light of the artist's intention) and we must finally return to what we see in the surface in order to

¹⁴⁶ In *Arts and Its Objects*, Wollheim explains 'type-token' duality. However it is beyond the scope of my study, I should clarify that there is no material kind of type in pictorial arts. The 'original' is not even what the artist manifested; Picasso's original *Guernica* is also a token. Although it is not clear in Wollheim that what is 'type' in pictorial art, he occasionally defines it with the intention of the artist. However, the important thing is that we first establish type form and its token form results from our having established the type form. A token does not precede its type, that is to say, a copy is not manifest prior to its original. Therefore, *seeing-in* that provides us types, is 'logically' prior to seeing what is represented on the surface.

¹⁴⁷ *AIO*, pp: 12-22

¹⁴⁸ *AIO*, pp: 12-22

find out whether our reflection contributes to our understanding of the painting in an historically appropriate way.

This is what alters and enriches the representational or expressive character of the painting; and according to Wollheim, the conception of *seeing-in* is a matter of perception and interpretation at once. In other words, the perceivable materiality of art and the mental content involved in it are re-engaged by means of the capacity of *seeing-in*; the form and the content, the surface and the subject are re-united when perception and interpretation become simultaneous in order to generate the *meaning*.

4.2. The Interpretation

Wollheim mainly focuses on the twofoldness of perception and interpretation in *Painting as an Art* in order to give true definitions for works of art.

The twofoldness of seeing-in does not, of course, preclude the one aspect of the complex experience being emphasized at the expense of the other. In seeing a boy in a stained wall I may very well concentrate on the stains, and how they are formed, and the materials and colours they consist of ... and I might in consequence lose all but a shadowy awareness of the boy. Alternatively, I might concentrate on the boy, and the long ears he

seems to be sprouting ... and thus have only the vaguest sense of how the wall is marked.¹⁴⁹

We see that, *seeing-in* does not simply involve visual awareness of the surface, that is to say, an attention in some degree to a surface, and therefore, it is not just seeing in the ordinary sense, but requires an extended level, called interpretation. If perception is a visual awareness, interpretation is a conceptual awareness, which makes us know what we see in the surface.

In the era of contemporary art, Wollheim to an extent finds it difficult to arrive at an interpretation of artworks. The extreme examples of Pop Art give rise “to certain doubts or anxieties, which a robust respect for fashion may fairly permanently suppress but cannot affectively resolve.”¹⁵⁰ Wollheim, does not consider the identity of art as the imitation of the real or the duplication of the original, he yet finds the undifferentiated ready-mades or facsimiles of the artifacts difficult to classify.

For Wollheim, such kind of art – minimal art – is those works which have minimal art-content in that the painting is almost not an artwork. According to him, black monochrome canvases of Reinhardt¹⁵¹ or Duchamp’s *Fountain*, for instance, have very low content of art as they are “extremely undifferentiated.”¹⁵² They happened to be the instances of the point of almost-not-art or minimal art.

For Wollheim, the real problem with minimal works is not their lack of identity at all, but rather their apparent lack of achievement of artistic work. Commonsense suggest that an artwork’s existence requires an artist to

¹⁴⁹ Richard Wollheim, *Painting as an Art*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987, p. 47 (Hereafter *PA*)

¹⁵⁰ *OAM*, p. 101

¹⁵¹ Fig. 3 Ad Reinhardt, Black Monochromes

¹⁵² *OAM*, p. 103

make a physical effort. "I suspect that our principle reason for resisting the claims of minimal art is that its objects fail to evince what we have over the centuries come to regard as an essential ingredient in art: work or manifest effort."¹⁵³

When he asks what might be the minimal state of such an effort in art, his answer is to propose a minimal requirement: artworks must just barely "evince" an essential ingredient, which is "work or manifest effort". According to Wollheim the essential ingredient in art is ostensibly challenged by the putative minimality of Pop artworks. Monochrome canvases and readymade objects seriously challenge our notion of work; our conception of what it is to make a work of art. And in doing so, Wollheim states, "they make it clear where these conceptions are insensitive or deficient."¹⁵⁴ He suggests that the lack of work manifested by Duchamp and Reinhardt may show us something about "the abiding nature of art."¹⁵⁵

Wollheim's agenda is similar to Danto's; both philosophers see Pop Art as philosophical occasions for defining art. Danto positions Warhol's *Brillo Box* at the end of an "entire structure of debate which had defined the New York art scene" and where a "whole new theory [of art] was called for other than the theories of realism, abstraction, and modernism."¹⁵⁶ And Wollheim maintains that Reinhardt's paintings offer the most minimal material object capable of being art – underscoring the "conceptual" character of minimal contemporary arts. The difference between them is that whereas Danto sees Warhol's *Brillo Box* as cause for denying the role of perception in defining art, Wollheim sees Reinhardt's near-black monochromes as cause for reasserting the role of perception in defining character of art.

¹⁵³ OAM, p. 106

¹⁵⁴ OAM, p. 107

¹⁵⁵ OAM, p. 101

¹⁵⁶ Danto, *After the End of Art*, p. 124

Wollheim considers the work of making an art object to be composed of two phases. The first as commonly used, means the physical or mental exertion such as, the activity of applying paint to canvas, the welding of metal, the hacking of stone, and so on. The second phase of production is a conceptual work which involves the decision of an artist and a spectator that the first phase of work has gone far enough and that the object is completed. In other words, in the second phase of production as “manifest effort”, work means to work the spectator’s senses while beholding art. And according to Wollheim, we cannot judge a work even to be minimally art unless we can visually verify that the artist did his “work”.

The first phase is insufficient without the second one, except the special statues of Michaelangelo which are generally held to be unfinished. What Duchamp has done, that contends Wollheim, is to celebrate this second phase of work by isolating it “in the starkest fashion.”¹⁵⁷ Duchamp has arbitrarily picked one urinal out of millions of identical ready-mades and turned it into an artwork. By entrusting the first phase of work to anyone other than himself, Duchamp made us aware of the crucial role that the second phase plays in artistic production. Wollheim underscores that the production of the material is not alone a sufficient condition for art, but the conceptual work of art – the unity of the artistic intention and the interpretation of a spectator – is not only necessary but sufficient as well.

In Reinhardt case, it seems that the artist has been involved in both cases of artwork as he has applied paint to canvas himself and has decided that enough paint applied and the picture is finished. According to Wollheim, there is no doubt that Reinhardt fulfilled the demands of art making, but he is concerned with how well Reinhardt has satisfied those demands. “A totally

¹⁵⁷ OAM, p. 107

black canvas is only minimally ahead of the *tabula rasa* which it supersedes.”¹⁵⁸

As it is with all Pop artworks, there are both negative and positive commentaries on Reinhardt’s case. According to Ralph Colin, for instance, there is nothing to get from an almost solidly black canvas, which is “the description of brush work brushed out to remove brush work all over again.”¹⁵⁹ But James Thrall Soby, on the other hand, describes these paintings as an exciting craftsmanship that reveal themselves slowly, as they are “the objects of contemplation, serene events of the spirit, elegant in their mystery. They invite meditation.”¹⁶⁰

Whether speaking positively or negatively about Reinhardt’s black monochromes, the emphasis is on what there is to see. I think that, however, the surfaces of these paintings appeal more to the hand than to the eye. During their exhibition through the years, Reinhardt himself said “the paintings were roped off” because “too many viewers were unable to resist touching the surface of the painting and leaving their marks.”¹⁶¹ I think we can argue that the beholders of black monochromes are not touched by the paintings, but rather they touch them. As in the case of blindness when we are deprived of visual satisfaction, we put our hands to work.

What is criticized by Wollheim of minimal art is that, traditionally the art of painting involved rather more than spots in the canvas; the surface is the scene wherein there is generation of an image from a blank canvas to a complex and highly differentiated artifact. What bothers him about Reinhardt’s activity is the artist’s decision that a totally black canvas constitutes a picture. It was the paintings’ refusal to immediately deliver their visual qualities that led Wollheim to claim that there was very little to see in

¹⁵⁸ OAM, p. 109

¹⁵⁹ Ralph Colin, “Fakes and Frauds in the Artworld” in *Art in America*, Vol. 51, 1963, p. 89

¹⁶⁰ James Thrall Soby, “Letter to the Ed” in *Art in America*, Vol. 51, 1963, p. 143

¹⁶¹ Ad Reinhardt, “The Black Square Painting Shows” in *Art in America*, Vol. 51, 1963, p. 186

Reinhardt's black monochromes. The beholder always remains at a distance from those paintings, as if there was almost no trace that the artist had in fact 'constructed' or had worked a blank canvas 'into an artifact of some complexity.'¹⁶²

According to Wollheim, the low degree of work required a process of marking a canvas with paint wherein each mark modifies the preceding mark until "the canvas bears the finished picture"¹⁶³, but Reinhardt works in the opposite direction. We think of Reinhardt's work as that of destruction rather than construction; because, instead of building an image, he dismantles one. For Wollheim, Reinhardt has reduced form, colour, texture and composition to a bare minimum wherein the image becomes discernible only as a faintest appearance of "a shadowy preexistence."¹⁶⁴ For Wollheim, although the work is destructive, it is still creative; but still creative only within the context of the history of art. What is striking about the Reinhardt is the extreme that the work is carried to:

...the canvases of Reinhardt exhibit to an ultimate degree this kind of work, which we ordinarily tend to think of as having made some contribution to the object of visual art. Within these canvases the work of destruction has been ruthlessly complete, and any image has been so thoroughly dismantled that no *pentimenti* any longer remain.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² OAM, p. 109

¹⁶³ OAM, p. 109

¹⁶⁴ OAM, p. 110

¹⁶⁵ OAM, p. 110

4.3. The Intention

By '*pentimenti*', Wollheim means the presence of or gradual appearance of earlier images or forms that have been altered. No such working over of Reinhardt's canvas surface is apparent to Wollheim. There are no discernible figures, fragments, or objects apart from the push and pull of vertical and horizontal bands that structures Reinhardt's black monochromes. In short, according to Wollheim, there was very little to see in Reinhardt's canvases.

In order to explicate *pentimenti* in Wollheim, I should clarify the concept of intention as the main component of meaning in artworks. For Wollheim we see that intention is a defining characteristic of art, as he explains: "If we wanted to say something about art that we could be quite certain was true, we might settle for the assertion that art is intentional. And by this we mean that art is something we do, that works of art are things that we make."¹⁶⁶ What Wollheim means by intention is an act or instance of deciding mentally upon some action and result, and, in particular, what can legitimately determine the meaning of a work of art. In art, intentions are made manifest in material: "Within the concept of art under which most of the finest, certainly most of the boldest, works of our age have been made, the connotation of physicality moves to the fore."¹⁶⁷ And by physicality, he means that modern artists intentionally take full "possession of surface, equating picture and physical object."¹⁶⁸

Wollheim maintains that Reinhardt's black monochromes are extreme cases of "surfaces that could not be the surfaces of paintings because we are sure there could be no intention which would justify a painting having

¹⁶⁶ OAM, p. 112

¹⁶⁷ OAM, p. 118

¹⁶⁸ OAM, p. 119

one of them as its surface."¹⁶⁹ Wollheim's main complaint is that Reinhardt's paintings are devoid of intention and thus the artist does not take full possession of surface. Although Reinhardt's paintings thoroughly dismantled any semblance of image and composition, Wollheim considers its inherent negativity, the lack of intention in them to be however an "identifiable feature or aspect"¹⁷⁰ of their minimal artness.

If we are to know when to say that something is art, we do determine not only by means of the surface as such, but with our capacity to know, to think and to represent what we see as the artist's intention, all possessed by the surface and all its references to history of art. And this is the capacity of *seeing-in* that enables us to treat the surface we behold.

The psychological account of meaning which I favor, and which I have been pushing in these lectures, roots meaning in some mental condition of the artist which, when it finds some outlet in the activity of painting, will induce in the mind of the spectator a related, an appropriately related, mental condition.¹⁷¹

Wollheim explains the psychological account of meaning as the relationship between the artist's mental condition, the activity of painting and the spectator's mental condition, which rests on intention and on the work of painting. Meaning, in this sense, is the result of generating an intended response in a spectator. The idea that an artwork can generate a response in a beholder as a result of the artist's intention leads us to the second

¹⁶⁹ *OAM*, p. 124

¹⁷⁰ *OAM*, p. 110

¹⁷¹ *PA*, p. 357

phase of “work” in Wollheim’s “Minimal Art.” Work as “manifest effort”, then, implies a beholder’s sensory-perceptual apprehension of the artist’s intention as it is made manifest in the artwork.

The artist’s intention, furthermore, can be captured not only from the surface but within the context wherein pictorial seeing (*seeing-in*) occurs. As Wollheim’s example shows, the artist Hans Hofmann invited his students to see a black line on canvas (as history invites us to see Duchamp’s *Fountain* or Warhol’s *Brillo Box* as an artwork). Hofmann’s invitation to see the black line in front of the white canvas is like Wittgenstein’s example of the transparent box illustration and its description, as I mentioned in the last chapter: “In the relevant text something different is in question every time: here a glass cube, there an inverted open box, there a wire frame of that shape, there three boards forming a solid angle. Each time the text supplies the interpretation of the illustration.”¹⁷² With Hofmann’s invitation several interpretations follow: here a black line in front of white canvas, there a black slit in white canvas, and there a white canvas divided in two.¹⁷³

The intention captured from within the surface which Wollheim calls *seeing-as*,¹⁷⁴ does not suffice to generate the meaning of the work of art. We need to know its context since the meaning cannot be constrained by what there is to see. When we encounter an artwork we should be aware of all representational content other than the material surface – the extra-representational content.¹⁷⁵

Some artworks like, *Fountain* or *Brillo Box* can call our attention so brutally that, even if we are aware of the representational content, the material surface dictates our sensory-perceptual response. In other words, while we are in the phase of conceptual *seeing-in*, since we are under the

¹⁷² *PI*, p. 193

¹⁷³ *AIO*, p. 206

¹⁷⁴ *AIO*, p. 20

¹⁷⁵ *AIO*, p. 213

assault of the brute physical features of those artworks, we remain constrained in the perceptual phase of *seeing-as*.

We become confused about what we see and we may never know what there is to see *in Brillo Box* beyond seeing Brillo boxes. The identifiable feature that is the stuff of art may very well be beyond our reach, as Wollheim asserts that “These paintings may illustrate a philosophical problem, but they do so in order to present an aesthetic problem, which we are not required to resolve but to experience.”¹⁷⁶

For both Danto and Wollheim, the main contribution of Pop artworks is to exhibit an aesthetic problem in the act of philosophizing, but not to express a solution. We are to see the problem – the gap between the ontological status of mere objects and artworks – but we have no aesthetic theories announced to repair this gap. For Danto, as we saw, it is enough that an artwork illustrates a philosophical problem.

For Wollheim, however, there must be something to gain beyond the illustration and the acknowledgment of a philosophical problem. There must be experience. I think that this is the fundamental difference between *seeing-as* and *seeing-in*: the former is beholden to philosophy and the latter is beholden to aesthetic experience. We can both philosophize about *Brillo Box* and we can experience *Brillo Box*. In the former case, the case of *seeing-as*, we are constrained in our perceptual seeing. We either see *x* as an artwork or we see it as something else; we see Brillo box as *Brillo Box*, or we do not. While it certainly is a matter of fact that, “The Artworld” aids us in *seeing-as*, our resolution to see an object as an artwork only gets us so far.

But according to Wollheim, our resolution to see an object as an artwork depends upon our interest in making and viewing artworks. We try to get what the artist intends us to see in an artwork and there is an exact relationship between the artist’s intention and our perception of it. And all

¹⁷⁶ *AIO*, p. 226

these interrelations of the artist's inner experiences, the spectator's capacity of interpretation and the context of artistic history of artworks constitute meaning for Wollheim.

4.4. *Pentimenti*

In order to illuminate my emphasis on *pentimenti* we would better turn back to the extra-representational features of the artwork that Danto denies. The discourses that articulated what was new in Pop Art's realism emphasize the sensory perceptual impact of Pop artworks. There is an important discussion centered on the use of easily identifiable subject matter in Pop Art. The accessibility of the available images used by Pop artists led critics to claim that this acknowledged aspect of the artworks quickens the beholder's sensorial response, because there is no need to linger over the meaning of what is represented. These are easily identifiable images of everyday objects, which there is no need for beholder to interpret.¹⁷⁷

The ease with which these common images accelerate the beholder's sensory-perceptual experience is caused by the minimally worked surfaces of the artworks. As Ashbery asserts, "several of the artists in this group simply leave the objects alone."¹⁷⁸ According to Ashbery, Pop Artists in this sense used popular imagery as an occasion for the foregrounding of the extra-representational qualities of art.

An 'object left alone' is a hallmark in Wollheim's sense of minimally worked surface that transports us little meaning. His theory of *seeing-in* encourages us to attend to the surface, no matter how minimally worked, and to the subject of an artwork at once. For instance, in the gallery we may

¹⁷⁷ John Ashbery, "The New Realism", pp: 21-24

¹⁷⁸ Ashbery, p. 29

very well be aware of the representational character of *Brillo Box* as the Brillo Boxes in the supermarkets, while at the same time, we may be amazed by their brightness and shiny waves formed by the ordered arrangement of the boxes.

Wollheim's *seeing-in* posits that, no matter how much we are amazed by the extra-representational qualities of Warhol's *Brillo Boxes*, we cannot completely ignore the fact that the surface of *Brillo Box* resembles the Brillo box as a readymade. However, *Brillo Box* visually conforms to mere Brillo box, it does not indicate that Warhol intended to create his *Brillo Box* to be indistinguishable from the mere one. If we rely our attention only on the surface as Danto does, then we have to assume that Warhol intends us only to see an identical counterpart as art.

As we know Warhol strikes Danto as exemplifying the philosophical problem of indiscernibles. When he sees Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* at the Stable Gallery he mistakes them for real Brillo boxes. Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* have so much in common with Brillo boxes that Danto claims the only way that we can distinguish the artwork from the mere real thing is to disregard their visual appearance. Rather than discern one from the other by visual means, Danto argues that we must look to "an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld."¹⁷⁹

As we saw that Danto's special case of skepticism leads him to reject any descriptions of artworks that are drawn from visual observations. The artworld and the ordinary world have nothing in common except that they are visually identical. He rejects *Tractatus* kind of power to word the artworld, because the words that word the artworld are distinct from the words that word the ordinary world. As we can see that, Danto rejects all common imagery that has been used by Pop Artists in order to foreground the extra-representational features of artworks.

¹⁷⁹ A, p. 580

But I argue that beyond all these extra-representational features, there lies the true meaning of artwork. True meaning lies beneath the representational and the extra-representational domains of an artwork. In other words, a mere object is transformed into an original work of art when we see the representational through the extra-representational. And what the spectator sees through the surface, is called '*pentimento*'. If we return to Reinhardt's black monochromes we see that, "... any image has been so thoroughly dismantled that no *pentimenti* any longer remain."¹⁸⁰

In Reinhardt's case, Wollheim uses *pentimenti* in its literal sense but according to me *pentimenti* metaphorically denote any kind of historical, socio-cultural, artistic knowledge that we have about an artwork, which we encounter. *Pentimenti* in my usage do not only connote all acknowledgements of art theories and historical process of a subject matter as a Pop Art iconography. For Wollheim, there may be no physical *pentimenti* on Reinhardt's black monochromes, but I can read *pentimenti* as his criticizing on visual pollution, say of the urban sprawl or of excessive advertising mode of popular culture, or of our obsession with visual beauty, and so on.

Likely, when we see the commercial of Brillo box in Warhol's *Brillo Box*, we *see-in* through the *pentimenti* of socio-political and economical dimensions. I think the ordinary Brillo box image establishes the common ground as *pentimenti*, which "create experiences that exceed the objects."¹⁸¹ Therefore, the representational and the extra-representational are bound together in the act of *seeing* "all the modern things" in *Brillo Box*.

The combination of sensory-perceptual effects – extra-representations, and representations is also a structural aspect of Warhol's *Death and Disaster* series; silk screen paintings of race riots, car crashes, suicides, poisonings and capital punishment as also great modern things.

¹⁸⁰ OAM, p. 110

¹⁸¹ OAM, p. 113

This series of paintings actuates the extra-representational qualities of artworks which Wollheim embraces and Danto all together neglects. By giving us images of death and disaster, Warhol shifts *pentimenti* from the representational to the extra-representational. The *Death and Disaster* series causes us to have feelings of dread and displeasure, but these feelings do not transcend their objects, rather are tightly bound to them. The experience that results in beholding the *Death and Disaster* series is an experience of paintings that attack and shock.

In the sense of Danto that “to be a work of art is to embody a thought, to have a content and to express a meaning ...”¹⁸² these paintings embody what they represent: car crashes, race riots, suicides, poisonings and capital punishment. But contrary to Danto, these artworks transform us sensorially and therefore make us feel something, that is to say we embody an aspect of the artwork and become transfigured.

One of Warhol’s *Death and Disaster* series is an image of the electric chair from Sing Sing prison called *Blue Electric Chair*¹⁸³ that embodies what it represents as an electrical shock and therefore makes the painting real for the beholder through his embodiment of that shock. As a result of this experience, the painting becomes a part of the beholder’s corporeal reality; in other words, they make us feel as if we are actually confronted by the scene itself. Its blue monochrome background and repeated grainy photograph reproduction of the Sing Sing electric chair assault our sensations, where the representational character of painting embodies the sensible.

Again, apart from Wollheim, I argue that *Blue Electric Chair* represents *pentimenti* as death penalty, political violence, official punishment, electrocution in its *seeing-in*, while in its surface it stands as – *seen-as* electric chair in a claustrophobic prison room. In both cases it

¹⁸² *BB*, p. 112

¹⁸³ Fig. 4,5 Andy Warhol, *Blue Electric Chair*

exemplifies and embodies death by shock. Our visual perception in this case, generates our artistic experience, as the painting manifests the brutal fact of violent death upon all our bodies.

Besides we also see that there is no agent in Warhol's *Blue Electric Chair*, there is no sense of movement or action and therefore, nothing happens in the painting. But instead, the painting happens and besides it happens to us. The action occurs outside of the canvas, but in front of it, and happens before us. As we embody what Warhol represents, by means of the shock we feel, *Blue Electric Chair* not only represents violence, but does violence to us. As a result of the embodiment power of its representation, we become worked over and transformed in our experience with the painting, and *Blue Electric Chair*, therefore, possess its meaning and the status of being an artwork.

If *pentimento*, in its literal sense, is the reappearance in a painting of an underlying image that had been painted over, this is to say artist's faults, change of mind, altered intentions, creation process and so on, then *pentimento* depicts us a kind of path that the artist has passed through. We see the artist's inner experience by means of *pentimento* as if tracing his hand prints. And when I construe *pentimento* metaphorically, I replace the artist's experience with the spectator's experience and tend to create implicit layers, which belong to the spectator under the surface. Our perceptual, cognitive, psychological, phenomenological and cultural experiences provide an artwork with its multi-dimensional, intricate and manifold structure. We as spectators, so to speak, while creating *pentimenti*, penetrate into the surface and the painting becomes our individual experience.

As long as meanings are not visible but conceptual for Danto, when he asserts that "to see something as art is to be ready to interpret it in terms of what and how it means,"¹⁸⁴ he only points to the historical frameworks of

¹⁸⁴ BB, p. 41

art theories. Being the authority on deciding what is art and what is non art, theories leave no space to our individual experiences. That is why; I argue that there is no *pentimenti* that can be sought in the Artworld, therefore, we can never be in the act of transfiguration. Wollheim however, opposing to Danto on the foundation of visual perceptions, seeks for an aggressive sensuous effect of an artwork upon the beholder in order to transform him. Yet, for Danto, despite the fact that transfiguration is essential, it is only on the philosophical level, so to speak, that new generation of art theories transfigure mere objects into the works of art. Therefore, if there is any philosophical kernel in the aesthetic experience, I wonder how such an extreme idealism would render us transfigured into aesthetes.

4.5. Wollheim vs. Danto

In “Danto’s Gallery of Indiscernibles” Wollheim objects to the method of indiscernibles because of its assumption that two objects will continue to look the same, even after the beholder has learned a great deal about differences in their backgrounds. In other words, Danto’s use of the method of indiscernibles relies on the assumption that an initial indiscernibility between an artwork and a mere object, in so far as are visual perception is concerned cannot be overcome by subsequent knowledge; for instance, concerning their histories of production or their manifest effort. For Wollheim, the growth of knowledge in a beholder, can lead him to see a difference between two identical objects. Here Wollheim asserts that the context (theory in Danto’s lexicon) can penetrate perception.

Wollheim criticizes Danto by questioning “why he doubts that a proper understanding of a work of art might infiltrate our perception of it, and

thereby make, at least in principle, the indiscernible discernible.”¹⁸⁵ As we know, for Danto, interpretation is an essential feature of the definition of an artwork. And interpretation is involved both in compliance to the art theory that defines an object as a work of art, and in assignment of meaning to it as its semantic capacity. And interpretation is completely independent of perception. We can interpret two indiscernible objects differently without acknowledging any visible difference, since “there are no subtle differences between these objects.”¹⁸⁶ According to this view it is only what we see, as opposed to how we see it is in question.

According to Wollheim, Danto’s view implies that vision is cognitively impenetrable, in other words, this view of perception is isolated from the effects of background knowledge and beliefs.¹⁸⁷ And Wollheim questions the assumption that early visual capacities are cognitively impenetrable; as Danto thinks that our basic pictorial competence depends on these capacities. But Wollheim argues that, “since such isolation is not found beyond the level of early vision, the effects of knowledge at higher levels of perceptual processing might supersede the earlier constraints, producing a difference between an artwork and its non-artwork twin that is discernible to the eye.”¹⁸⁸

Yet Danto insists that “manifest properties of visual arts itself cannot be defined in terms of anything that meets the eye when one looks at them.”¹⁸⁹ His philosophy of art requires perception that remains impenetrable to the beholder’s knowledge about the meaning or *pentimenti* of an artwork, because if such knowledge changes the beholder’s perception of an artwork in comparison to the indiscernible counterpart, then they will become discernible. And since an artwork need not be perceptually

¹⁸⁵ Richard Wollheim, “Danto’s Gallery of Indiscernibles” in *Danto and His Critics*, Mark Rollins (ed.), Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012, p. 52

¹⁸⁶ *TC*, p. 44

¹⁸⁷ Richard Wollheim, in *Danto and His Critics*, p. 53

¹⁸⁸ Richard Wollheim, in *Danto and His Critics*, p. 53

¹⁸⁹ Arthur Danto, “Responses and Replies” in *Danto and His Critics*, p. 305

distinct from a real thing in order to posit the ontological essence of art, Danto will naturally take visual perception to be impenetrable to cognition.

The philosophical task *is* to find the difference. But once one has found the differences in a given case, the artwork member of the indiscernible pair will instantly be seen possessed of all manner of properties: it will have a meaning, a structure, a point. But these have to be invisible, since their indiscernible counterpart lacks them. ...The artwork, say, is the one with the interpretation which the “mere real thing” systematically lacks.¹⁹⁰

For Wollheim, however, it is not clear that we can generalize from the cognitive impenetrability of simple perceptual phenomena to complex works of visual art. Because even if impenetrability is true for the early stages of vision directed at artworks, the constraints of vision can be superseded by the effects of complex processes, which are not visual but cognitive.

The putative indiscernibility of some artworks and some mere things cannot necessarily be generalized across the class of all artworks as a revelation of their essence. ...The putative indiscernibility of some artworks and some mere things might be overcome – discernibility might be introduced – when the mere real things or objects

¹⁹⁰ Arthur Danto, in *Danto and His Critics*, p. 305

become artworks in our process of perceiving and understanding them.¹⁹¹

As we saw that for Danto, being an artwork is not a matter of extra-representational features, on the contrary, it is a matter of non-visual properties. What makes *Brillo Box* a work of art and its indiscernible counterpart a mere object, is that the former possesses meaning and interpretation while the former does not. Brillo pads are not about something, they just represent what they are, say; our struggle with dirt, but *Brillo Box* represents the essential nature of artworks by exceeding the limits of visual constraints. And, as they possess no common properties we do not see Brillo pad *in Brillo Box*. As Danto treating perception impenetrable to interpretation, what he sees before *Brillo Box* sculpture or *Blue Electric Chair* paint as a work of art is a matter of Artworld. What we see on the painting is not defined by our visual capacity, but it is defined by means of the profound knowledge we gain about the history of art theories.

Wollheim (and myself), by all means, is suspicious of Danto's theory of indiscernibles, which is said to generate the ontology of art upon the non-visual foundation. It is a fact that according to both philosophers, artwork is the embodiment of meanings and the embodiment of interpretation but with an essential difference. For Wollheim, meanings and interpretations, as I call *pentimenti*, are engendered out of the extra-representational surface of an artwork; *Brillo Box*, for instance, embodies the socio-cultural Brillo pads. But with my manipulation of *pentimenti* I see-in *Brillo Boxes* all cultural iconographies as the implications of the hegemony of mass-production; our desire for popular consumption; the power of advertising, our obsession with hygiene and so on. And besides, since the Brillo is a company of cleaning products, Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* being stainless, bright and shiny as such,

¹⁹¹ Richard Wollheim, in *Danto and His Critics*, p. 50

exemplify what they represent. The representational and the extra-representational are always conjoint in *pentimenti*.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In my study I intended to explicate Arthur Danto's theory of indiscernibles in his philosophy of art. Despite the fact that, I mainly focused on the method of indiscernibles proposed as his art theory in *Transfiguration of the Commonplace* in this dissertation, the method of indiscernibles has a crucial significance in Danto's overall philosophy. In his entire philosophical study, Danto worked on differentiating action from movement, reality from appearance, knowledge from belief, prudence from morality and artworks from mere objects; so to speak, according to Danto, distinguishing indiscernibles is what philosophy is all about.

In order to explicate Danto's method of indiscernibles, I started my inquiry from his early articles and in the second chapter I tried to reveal his preliminary theories which underpin the ontology of art in *Transfiguration of the Commonplace*. In this chapter I discussed Danto's rejection of the *mimesis* theory of art, which identifies artworks as inferior to mere objects, and I tried to define Danto's theory of the Artworld, which aims to dismiss this hierarchical position between art and the world.

In the third chapter I intended to illuminate Danto's essentialist approach, in which he seeks for the necessary and sufficient conditions for the true definition of art. Danto attempts to capture the essential nature of art, where he believes that art cannot be essentially characterized in virtue of perceptual properties. Danto generates his rejection of the visual features of artworks, from the use of the indiscernibles of Pop artists.

As we saw in Warhol's *Brillo Box* and Duchamp's *Fountain*, these artworks have indiscernible counterparts as a mere Brillo pad and an ordinary urinal. Despite the perceptual indiscernibility of the pairs as such, there remains an ontological distinction in between; that is why, for Danto, the primary task of philosophy is to produce theories, which will place the perceptual indiscernibles into their appropriate categories.

According to Danto, what distinguishes artworks from mere objects as indiscernible pairs is not something perceptual but conceptual. As I explicated in the third chapter, by means of his rejection of conventional realism in visual arts, he offered a theoretical conception of artworks. For Danto the aesthetic appreciation of art lies on the conceptual backgrounds, that is to say, we as spectators, interpret artworks in an appropriate way by means of the art-theoretical context – the Artworld. What an artwork says depends on the theoretical circumstances in which they are articulated. In short, we happen to interpret and understand what the artwork is about, through the theoretical Artworld that we inhabit. An aesthetic experience, then, means embodying theories of art rather than producing sensual or perceptual responses.

Danto sees only Pop artists as having grasped the true nature of art by their discovery of indiscernibles. They thus placed the essence of art into its proper philosophical form by raising the question: "What makes something art, while its indiscernible counterpart is not?" This is the self-reflexive capacity of Pop artworks that Danto finds crucial. Finally, when Pop Art reaches the limits of its self-reflexive capacity to disclose the nature of art; when it finds the essence of the difference between art and non-art, the historical development of art is terminated. That is to say, art comes to an end with the "advent of its own philosophy".

Throughout my study, I criticize Danto's thesis of indiscernibles as it rests on a very theoretical conception of art and his manipulation of Pop

Art's New Realist account that addresses extremely sensory-perceptual properties of Pop artworks. I argue against Danto's exclusion of the visual material of artworks, and make use of Richard Wollheim's theory of *seeing-in* to counteract the method of indiscernibles. In the fourth chapter, I tried to disclose Wollheim's philosophy of art, which restores the perceptual features of artworks into our aesthetic experience. For Wollheim, art is considered within its representational and extra-representational features, which brings the spectator back in the unity of the perceptual and the conceptual experiences.

While for Danto, anything can become an artwork if the Artworld provides it with a theory, for Wollheim, in order for something to be an artwork, the artist's intention should encounter with the spectator's psychological response in the act of aesthetic experience. Wollheim describes the experience of the spectator with an artwork, as the disclosure of the *pentimenti* in the paintings.

Wollheim takes *pentimento* in its literal sense and only on the material level of paintings as the signs of the production process of an artist implicit in the material of the painting. By incorporating the psychological dimension of the spectator's experience into Wollheim's understanding of *pentimenti*, I expand its context to uncover a manifold framework of psychological, socio-cultural, historical, political dimensions of the production of an artwork. I expanded the context of *pentimenti* metaphorically through the beholder's interpretation of an artwork within its manifold dimensions.

As I am inspired by Pop artworks, I argue that the meaning of an artwork can only be found within these manifold contexts. For instance, I think the ease with which we can see the commercial readymade Brillo pads in Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* (the relation that Danto denies and Wollheim takes only on the surface material), suggests that we should look for and can find the *pentimenti* in these artworks in the countless aspects of modern life in

which we all participate/collaborate and out of which these art works emerge.

This perspective on *pentimento* reveals that the convergence of the psychological experiences of the spectator when beholding the artwork and the artist's intention is only the surface layer of their coalescence; if we scratch this surface and examine the strata underneath, we will find this fusion to be way more integrated at the level of social production and consumption, within the history of which we all have our moments of regret (*pentimenti*) that get expressed in these artworks, as confusion, alienation and self-mockery.

All these are precisely the layers that Danto overlooks. I consider the combination of the representational and the extra-representational as *pentimenti* and assert that the only way for understanding Pop artworks truly, is to manifest *pentimenti* they consist of.

The *Brillo Box* in the museum would be completely pointless outside the context of *praxis*. All these semantic contexts cannot be ripped off the manifold layers of psychological, socio-cultural and political framework. If there is any meaning in Pop artworks, it can be grasped by means of their manifold contextual structure that I call *pentimenti*, rather than theories that they generate.

With the exclusion of manifest properties, there is left no manifest effort of an artist, and this leads to an ethical problem for me. If we are to read Pop artworks within its ethical and political context, we realize their criticism of the system, which encourages the ease of consumption with all our disposable goods. With the ease to possess anything we have, it is this system that alienates us to terms like 'labor', 'effort', and 'work'. I, therefore, find the exclusion of artist's manifestation disturbingly ironic and think that Danto could not get the kernel of Pop artworks, very from the beginning.

I criticize Danto in this study because of this mechanical nature that his philosophy of art possesses. It is true that artworks cannot be seen without the background knowledge, without any “gerrymandered” vision; however, the background is only the extension of art theories. Although Danto has asserted that with the method of indiscernibles, the artworks ceased to be artificial entities behind the plexiglas walls, I cannot find any viable circumstances within the theoretical habitat of artworks to support this claim.

If we are not organically bound to works of art, then we are left as dummies of historical art theories. If for Danto, we have no access to the experience of artworks with their extra-representational level, for me we have also no access to their representational level because of the exclusion of *pentimenti*. I argue that because of his aspiration to place representation of art into its proper ontological category, there is no phenomenology of art that remained.

In this respect, at the risk of sounding pretentious, I would like to suggest that my critique of Danto echoes, at the level of philosophy of art, of Marx’s critique of the return to consciousness in Absolute Knowledge in Hegel’s philosophy. Just as Marx criticized Hegel for undermining the reality and importance of the material world, I criticize Danto for undermining the importance of the extra-representational features of an artwork. And just as returning to the material basis of history reveals for Marx the importance of labor and production, where alienation is not yet overcome, focusing on the extra-representational features of an artwork reveals *pentimenti* — the signs of work and tokens of “regret” therein.

This dissertation, at last, is centered on the exposition of the lack of *pentimenti* in Danto’s Artworld, the lack which finally leads him to end the history of art, and therefore, art. By exclusion of the material and the manifold contextual structures from the work of art, there is nothing left for

our embodiment. Just in order to render the essential features – indiscernibles – permanent, Danto leaves us no room where we can really experience art. Therefore, we have no intrinsic power of being spectators, but we are merely the dummies of theories. When I read Danto in this sense, I come to conclude that, Pop Art may have redeemed art from Platonist reality, but we as being aesthetes, definitely became inferior to the theories of art.

APPENDICES



Fig.1 Andy Warhol, *Brillo Box*



Fig. 2 Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*



Fig.3 Ad Reinhardt, *Black Monochrome*



Fig. 4 Andy Warhol, *Blue Electric Chair*

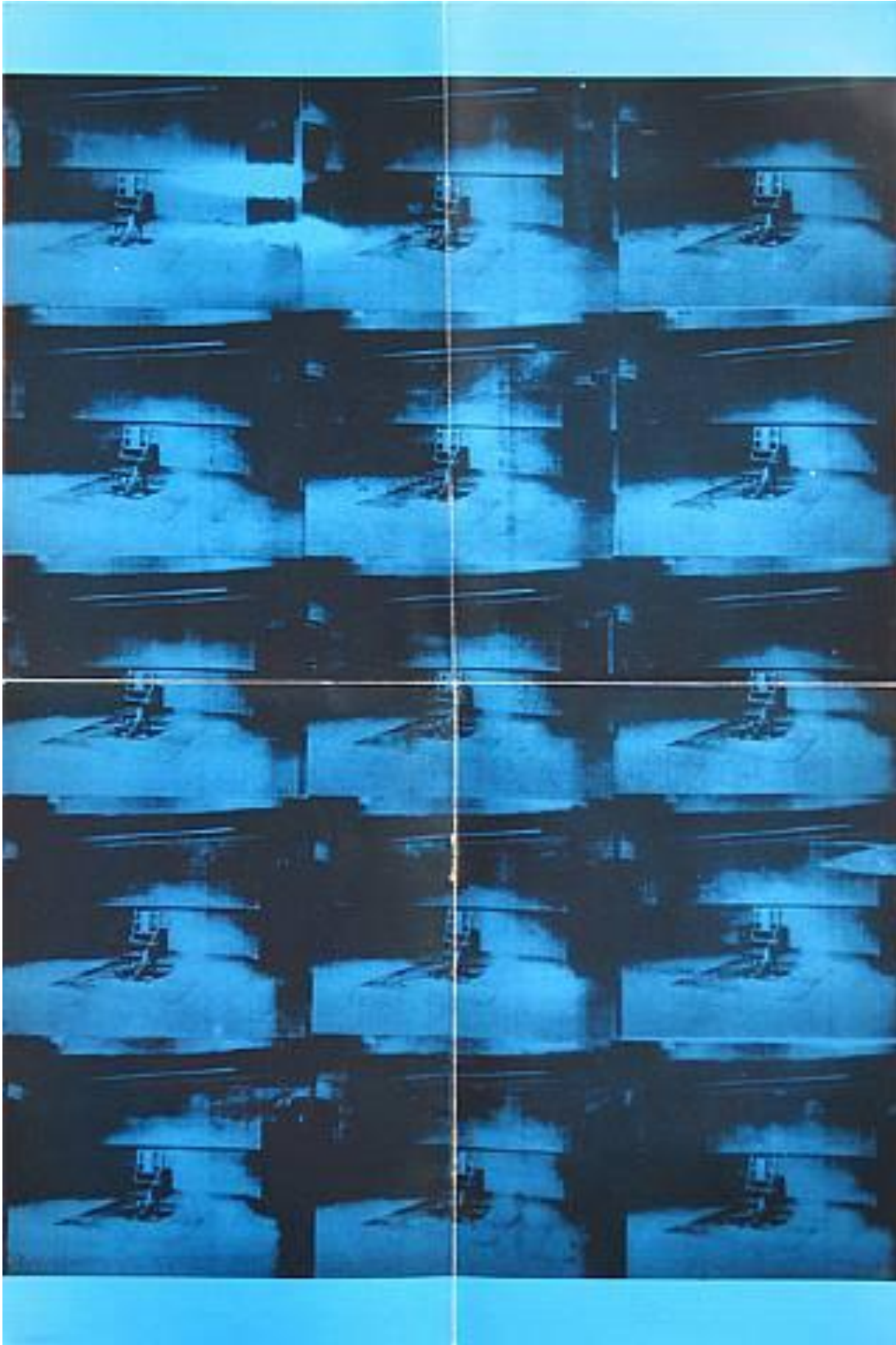


Fig.5 Andy Warhol, *Blue Electric Chair*

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TURKISH SUMMARY

Bütün bir sanat tarihi ve sanat felsefesi boyunca sanat eserinin gerçekliğinin ne olduğu sorusu geçerliliğini koruyan bir soru olmuştur. Plato'dan başlayarak Modernizme kadar süregelen süreçte sanat eserleri taklit (*mimesis*) olarak kabul görmüştür. *Mimesis* teorisi sanat eserlerini fiziksel nesnelere, doğaya, dış dünyaya kıyasla ikinci ve aşağı bir derecede değerlendirmiş ve buna bağlı olarak sanat eserlerini ontolojik açıdan gerçek denen dış dünyaya ve onun nesnelere tabi kılmıştır. Hem Plato hem de Aristo için her sanat eseri doğanın ya da doğal durumların birer kopyası ve taklidi olarak kabul edilmiştir. Ressamlar nesnelere ve doğanın görüntüsünü taklit ederek resmetmiş ve Plato ve Aristo için resim sanatı doğası gereği tıpatıp benzerliğin konusu olmuştur. Bu nedenle Plato ve Aristo tarafından geliştirilen *mimesis* teorisi, sanatı gerçek dünyanın, insan edimlerinin, duygularının, algılarının, duyularının bir yeniden temsili olarak değerlendirmiş ve bu bağlamda her sanat eseri ontolojik kategoride gerçek olarak nitelendirilen dünyanın birebir kopyası biçiminde sınıflandırılmıştır.

Modernizme kadar sanatçılar gerçeklikle mücadele etmiş ve de dünyayı en iyi biçimde taklit etmenin yollarını aramışlardır. Gerçek dünyanın, sanatın ulaşamayacağı ayrı bir ontolojik boyutta var olduğunu kabul etmeleriyle, sanatçılar sanatın sadece gerçeğe benzeyebileceği ama kendisinin asla gerçek olamayacağı fikriyle yetinmek zorunda kalmışlardır. Modernizme kadar süregelen bu geleneksel gerçekçiliğin esas tanımı, tam da bu şekilde sanat eserlerini görüngülerin yeniden temsili olarak kabul ederek onları doğal gerçekliğe kıyasla ontolojik olarak ikincil addetmesidir. Geleneksel gerçekçilik akımlarının en geniş kapsamıyla yanılısma teorileri olarak nitelendirilen bu taklit ve de benzetme teorileri sanatta Modernizm tarafından reddedilerek yeni bir gerçeklik teorisi ortaya konulmuştur.

1960'ların başlarında New York'da ortaya çıkan Popüler Sanat akımı, sanat tarihinde Modernizmin temellerini atmıştır. Popüler Sanat'ın kullanıma hazır gerçek nesnelere materyal olarak kullanılması ve sıradan nesnelere sanat eseri olarak ortaya koymasıyla birlikte sanat felsefesinde yepyeni bir gerçeklik kavramı ortaya çıkmıştır. Andy Warhol'un olağan bir deterjan kolisini sergilediği *Brillo Kutusu* ya da Marcel Duchamp'ın sıradan bir pisuarı sanat eseri haline dönüştüren *Fountain* adlı yapıtların örnek teşkil ettiği Popüler Sanat dahilinde sanat eserlerinin salt "şeylerden" ibaret olmasıyla birlikte sanat felsefesinde ontolojik olarak bir paradigma değişimi ortaya çıkmıştır. Sonuç itibarıyla, Plato'dan beri süregelen 'Sanat eserleri gerçek midir?' sorusunun yerini 'Sanat eserleri ne dereceye kadar gerçek olmalıdır?' sorusu almıştır.

İşte bu yeni felsefi sorunsal Popüler Sanatın ekseninde meydana gelen bütün sanatsal ve felsefi tartışmaların temel konusu olmuştur. Kimi sanat teorisyenlerine göre Popüler sanat eserleri sıradan nesnelere ve eşyaların değersiz kopyaları olarak görülürken, kimi teorisyenlere göre de Popüler sanat eserleri mantıksal gerçekçilik gereği bize tam da gerçek olanı sundukları için değer teşkil ederler. Popüler Sanat'ın yeni gerçekçiliğini geleneksel gerçekçilikten ayırt eden asıl nüve tam da bu kullanıma hazır eşyaların, bir sanat eserine dönüştürülmesini sağlayan olanağın ne olduğudur.

Kullanıma hazır eşyalarla karşı karşıya geldiğimizde, bizi farklı türden bir deneyime maruz bırakan ve karşımızda duran şeyleri bir sanat eseri olarak görmemizi sağlayan asıl nüve, bu nesnelere bizde yarattığı duyuusal etkilerin sıradan deneyimimizi aşan özelliğidir. Sıradan bir nesneyle karşılaştığımızda yaşadığımız deneyimin çok ötesinde bir estetik haz ya da rahatsızlık duyduğumuz aşkın bir deneyim boyutuna ulaşmamızın nedeni, Popüler sanat eserlerinin tıpkı sıradan nesnelere kendisi gibi görüldüğü halde, bundan daha fazla ve de daha başka bir niteliğe sahip oluşlarıdır.

Yeni gerçekçi sanat eserleriyle karşı karşıya geldiğimizde izleyici olarak bizim deneyimlediğimiz şey, fiziksel özelliklerinin etkisiyle maruz kaldığımız şiddetli bir algı durumudur. Yaşadığı deneyimin gerçek mi yoksa yanılsama mı olduğunu ayırt edemeyecek raddede izleyeni duyuşsal olarak kuşattığı etkileme gücüyle Popüler sanat eserleri bizi yeni bir gerçeklik anlayışına davet eder. Bu eserler gündelik olanla karşılaşmamızın ötesinde sundukları deneyimle algısal olarak bizi deęiřtirmeleri sonucu sıradan olan eşyalar birer sanat eserine dönüşür. Bu dönüşümün ortaya çıktığı yer de izleyici olarak biz olduğumuzdan dolayı, bizim deneyimlerimiz Popüler sanat eserlerinin somut olarak meydana gelmesi anlamını taşır. Bu bağlamda sıradan bir nesnenin sanat eserine dönüşmesi bizim duyularımızın dönüşümüne bağlıdır ve de sanatçıdan ziyade izleyici olarak bizler bu eserlerin yaratıcısı konumunu teşkil ederiz.

Popüler Sanat eserlerinin duyuşsal özelliklerinin bizim duyularımızı deęiřtirip dönüřtürme yetkinlięi, geleneksel anlamda dünyayı resmederek onu temsil etmekten çok, şiddetli bir biçimde algılarımızla oynayan materyal özelliklerinin gücünden kaynaklanır. Görsel dünya ya da onun resimsel temsili Popüler Sanat tablolarının sunduęu gerçeklięin sadece bir bölümüdür, asıl ayırt edici olan bu tabloların ya da heykellerin bize sunduęu duyuşsal ve duygusal niteliklerdir. Bu duygu deneyimine ulaşabilmemiz için de izleyici olarak bizim bu eserlerin sıradan ve gündelik olan şeylerle ortak paylaştığı materyal özelliklerinin ötesine geçebilmemiz yani sanat eserini materyal olarak deęiřip dönüřtürmeden olduęu gibi bırakmamız gerekmektedir. Bu eserlerin, tıpkı kullanıma hazır seri üretim nesnelere gibi materyal olarak olduęu gibi kalmasıyla, izleyici olarak bizim deęiřip dönüşmemize olanak tanınmış olur.

Özetle, sanattaki bu yeni gerçekçilik anlayışının geleneksel olandan farkı doğayı ya da dünyayı deęil bizi dönüřtürme çabasıdır. Bu nedenle, sanat artık gerçek dünyayı taklit etmenin bir yolu olmaktan çıkmış ve de bizim onu somut bir biçimde deneyimlediğimiz bir gerçekliğe bürünmüřtür.

Popüler sanatçıların asıl uğraşı dış dünyayı resmetmek değil, yaşamlarımızın sosyo-kültürel, tarihsel ve politik çok katmanlılığının oluşturduğu zihinsel ve ruhsal durumlarımıza işaret etmek ve bu çok katmanlı yapıyı ifade etmektir. Tam da bu sebepten, Popüler sanat resimlerinde cansız doğa temsilleriyle değil bütün zenginliği ve karmaşıklığıyla hayatın ve yaşamın ifade ediliş biçimleriyle karşılaşırız.

Çağımızın en önemli sanat felsefecilerinden biri olan Arthur Danto için de geleneksel gerçekçi sanat anlayışı Popüler sanat eserlerinin duyuşal ve materyal niteliklerini değerlendirmede yetersiz kalmıştır. Danto'ya göre, herhangi bir süpermarket standında bulunan kutularla birebir aynı olan sanat galerisindeki Andy Warhol'un *Brillo Kutuları* sanattaki gerçekçiliğe geleneksel anlamda son vermiştir. Arthur Danto'ya göre Andy Warhol sanatı tamamıyla felsefenin etki alanına yönlendirmiş olan bir sanatçı filozoftur. Danto'nun Warhol'un *Brillo Kutusu*'nda keşfettiği şey, bir nesnenin sanat eseri olmasını sağlayan koşulun o nesnenin fiziksel görünümü değil ama o nesneye sanat eseri vasfını veren bir sanat teorisi olduğudur. Bir nesne sanat eseri olarak kabul görürken, onunla birebir özdeş olan başka bir nesnenin sıradan bir eşya olarak görülmesinin nedenini sorgulamak, Danto'ya göre sanat tarihi boyunca sanatın felsefeye ilk defa bu denli yer açmasına olanak tanımıştır.

Danto'yu Warhol'un kutularını gördüğü zaman sarsan tam da sıradan deterjan kutularından görsel olarak ayırt edilemez oluşudur. Bu bağlamda sanat ve gerçekliğin arasındaki ontolojik ayırım tamamıyla ortadan kalkmıştır. Fark edilemez olan kavramı Danto'nun sanat felsefesi anlayışında son derece önemli bir yere sahiptir ve Danto sanat ontolojisini bu kavramın üzerine kurmuştur. Başka bir deyişle, Danto sanat olan ve olmayan arasındaki farkı, görsel ve duyuşal özelliklerin değil kavramsal ve teorik olanın üzerine inşa etmiştir. Birebir özdeş olan nesnelerin arasındaki ontolojik ayırım görsel sanatlardaki geleneksel gerçekçilik anlayışı tarafından

bu nedenle doğru biçimde değerlendirilemez ve Danto yeni bir gerçekçilik anlayışına ihtiyaç duyar.

Doğayı ya da dışsal nesnelere benzerlik ya da taklit ilişkisi dahilinde resmeden görsel sanatların yetersizliği, Popüler Sanat'ın sanat eseri olmayan nesnelere özdeşi olarak sanat eseri yaratma kapasitesi sayesinde açığa çıkmıştır. Marcel Duchamp'ın *Fountain* adlı eserini, seri üretim bandındaki özdeş kopyalarıyla görsel olarak birebir aynı olduğu halde bir sanat eseri olarak görebilmemizi bize Popüler Sanat'ın yeni gerçeklik anlayışı sağlar. *Fountain* örneğinde görüldüğü gibi, Danto için bu eserin sanat olarak nitelenmesinin sebebi onun gündelik olan özdeşiyle görsel olarak aynı olduğu halde, görsel sanatların gerçekçilik anlayışını görsel algının ötesine taşımış olmasıdır.

Görsel sanatlarda geleneksel gerçekçiliği temsil eden Yeni-Wittgensteinci akıma göre bir sanat eseri ancak sahip olduğu fiziksel özelliklerine göre sanat eseri olarak sınıflandırılabilir ve bunun için daha önceden sanat eseri olarak kabul edilmiş olan herhangi bir esere benzemesi yeterlidir. İşte bu görsel sanatlarda hakim olan Yeni-Wittgensteinci anlayış, *Fountain*'in bir sanat eseri olarak görülmesinin olanaklarını bize sunmaktan uzaktır.

Birebir özdeş olan nesnelere, haller, durumlar, görüngüler arasındaki kategorik ayrım Danto için felsefenin esas konusudur. İşte Danto'nun Popüler Sanat'ın devrimi olarak nitelediği bu yeni anlayış, görsel olarak fark edilemez olan sanatın konusu haline getirmiş olmasıdır. Bir sanat eserinin, onun sanat eseri olmayan özdeş kopyası ile arasındaki fark; başka bir deyişle gündelik kullanıma tabi eşyaların sanat eseri olarak yorumlanabilmesine olanak tanıyan şey, sanat eserinin semantik özelliklerinin olmasıdır. Gündelik bir pisuarın sahip olmadığı fakat *Fountain*'in sahip olduğu bu semantik özellik Arthur Danto'ya göre bize sanatın doğasına dair soru sordurmasıdır. Daha açık bir şekilde izah etmek

gerekirse, Popüler Sanat'ın tam da gündelik eşyaların ya da sıradan nesnelere kullanımı vasıtasıyla ortaya çıkardığı eserler, sanatın ne olduğu; bir eserin sanat eseri olarak kabul edilebilmesi için hangi özelliklere sahip olması gerektiği sorularına cevap aramamıza olanak tanır.

Meta-sanat felsefesine ait bir düzlemde ortaya çıkan bu eserler, gerek Arthur Danto gerekse İngiliz sanat felsefecisi Richard Wollheim için değer arz ederler. Sözü geçen iki sanat teorisine göre bir sanat eserinin semantik içeriği yani onun ne hakkında olduğu, bizim onu yorumlamamıza imkan tanıyan şeydir. Materyal özelliklerinin dışında onun sahip olduğu temsil gücü, bize bir eserin neyi temsil ettiğini sorduran ve üstünde düşünmemizi sağlayan nüvedir. İşte, fiziksel olarak özdeş olsalar da sıradan bir nesneyle sanat eseri arasında yatan ayrım, sanat eserinin temsili özelliklerinin olmasıdır. Sıradan bir nesne yorumlanmaya ihtiyaç duymazken, bir nesnenin sanat eseri olarak nitelendirilebilmesi onun yorumlanmasına; bir anlamı olmasına yani semantik içeriğe sahip olmasına bağlıdır.

Bu sebepten, Arthur Danto'ya göre *Fountain* ile sıradan özdeşi arasında yatan fark algının konusu olmaktan ziyade bir yorum meselesidir. Başka bir deyişle, bir sanat eserini tanımlayan özellik, o eserin görsel, fiziksel nitelikleri değil, onun temsili yani semantik nitelikleridir. Ve bir sanat eserinin semantik niteliklerini bize sunan yani onu sanat eseri olarak yorumlayabilmemizi sağlayan şey de Danto'ya göre sanat tarihini ve sanat teorilerini bilmemizde yatar. Bir sanatçının kavramsal dünyası ile izleyici olarak bizim, sanatçının yarattığı eseri anlama ve de kavrama yeteneğimizin birleştiği yer bu sanat teorileri tarihidir.

Bu nedenle Danto için sanat algısal ya da görsel değil kavramsal ve de teorik bir edimdir. İçinde yer aldığımız sanat teorileri sistemi olmaksızın hiçbir eser sanat eseri olarak nitelenemez. Danto'nun ortaya koyduğu Sanat Dünyası teorisi tam da neyin sanat eseri olduğunu belirleyen mercidir. Sanat

Dünyası teorisi netice itibariyle, bizim bir sanat yapıtını yorumlamamızı ve ona bir anlam yüklememizi sağlar. Ve de Danto için Popüler sanat eserleri, tikel bir nesneye çok katmanlı anlamlar ithaf etmesi sayesinde bizim görsel ufkumuzu genişleterek ve de basit bir nesnenin altında gömülü olan semantik hazineleri açığa çıkararak nesneyle olan deneyimimizi fazlasıyla çoğaltan felsefi bir nüve taşır. İşte, görsel olarak özdeş olan sıradan bir nesneyi bir sanat eseri olarak görebilmemiz için görsel kabiliyetimizin sınırlarını aşmamız gerekir. Bu sınırları da ancak Sanat Dünyası teorisi sayesinde aşabilir ve böylece sıradan bir nesneyi bir sanat eserine, gündelik dünyayı da bir sanat dünyası haline dönüştürebiliriz.

Bu bağlamda Danto için bir yapıtı yorumlamak demek, o yapıtın anlamının ne olduğunu bize sunan bir teoriyi ortaya koymak demektir. Kısacası, bir eser ancak ve ancak beraberinde bir sanat teorisi ortaya koyduğu takdirde sanat eseridir. Bir nesnenin ne anlama geldiğini bize sunan, başka bir deyişle taşıdığı gizil anlamları somut bir biçimde nesnede görebilmemizi sağlayan şey sanat teorisidir. Danto'nun Sanat Dünyası teorisini kendi sanat ontolojisi sürecinde fark edilemez olan teorisine evrilmiştir. Özcü bir filozof olarak sanatın da özsel tanımını belirlemeye çalışan Danto, bir yapıtın sanat olarak nitelenebilmesi için gereken zorunlu ve de yeterli koşulları fark edilemez olan teorisinde bulmuştur.

Sanatın doğasını yani sanatın ne olduğunu bize bir yapıtın fark edilemez olan özellikleri verir. Popüler sanat eserleri de fark edilemez olan özelliklere sahip olan tek sanat akımı olduğu için de Danto'ya göre, Popüler Sanatçılar sanat felsefesini en üst seviyeye taşıyan birer filozofturlar. Sanatın neliği üzerine düşündürmesi ve de kendi öz-bilincine vakıf olması bakımından Popüler Sanat felsefi bir tasarıdır. Warhol'un sanat felsefesine en büyük katkısı sıradan nesneyle materyal olarak özdeş olan bir nesneyi sanat yapıtı haline dönüştürmek ve de bizim gerçeklik ve gerçekliğin temsiline dair düşünce yapımızı değiştirmek olmuştur.

Kendi doğasına dönüşlü yapısı ve de kendi özsel koşullarını aşma kabiliyeti sayesinde Popüler Sanat, sanatın sınırlarını geri dönüşsüz bir biçimde aşmıştır. Başka bir deyişle materyal olan, kendini doğasını ortaya koymanın yani kendini temsil etmenin sınırlarına ulaştığında sanat nesnesi katıksız bir biçimde felsefi hale gelmiştir. Danto'ya göre sanat tarihindeki her yeni gelişme ve ilerleme tarafından ortaya konulan karşıt olgular karşısında sanatın özü her zaman için savunmasız kalmıştır. Ancak Warhol sayesinde sıradan şeylerden fark edilemez olan her ne varsa sanat eseri haline gelmesi itibarıyla, gelecekte vuku bulacak bir karşıt olgu kalmamıştır. Her an her şeyin sanat olarak addedilebildiği bir çağda, mevcut sanat teorisinin yerini alacak yeni bir teorik akımın ortaya çıkması beklenemez. Ve tam da sanat teorilerinin daha fazla gelişemeyeceği savıyla, Danto sanatın tarihsel olarak sonunun geldiğini iddia etmiştir.

Tekrar edecek olursak Popüler Sanat fark edilemez olan sorununun keşfiyle birlikte sayısız gündelik eşyayı kullanarak bu sorunu aşırı derecede genişletmiştir. Ve Popüler Sanat böylelikle sanatın doğasını açığa çıkarma kabiliyetinin sınırlarına ulaştığında sanatın tarihsel gelişimi sona ermiştir. Sanat kendi doğasına dair soruyu felsefi bir yapıya bürüyünce, felsefe bu soruyu sanattan devralmış ve de neyin sanat olduğu ve olmadığı sorunu artık sanat felsefesinin meselesi haline gelmiştir. Felsefi doğasını keşfetmekle birlikte sanat kendi öz-bilincinin hududuna erişmiş ve neticede kendi tarihinin sonuna varmıştır.

Sanatçılar, Danto'ya göre, sanatın sonundan sonra elbette ki zamanın ruhunu, insanın duygularını, çağın olgularını temsil eden yapıtlar üretmeye devam edecektir ancak sanat daha fazla tarihsel teorilerin rehberliğinde ilerlemeyecektir. Popüler Sanat'ın sayesinde artık her an her şey sanat olabileceği için herhangi bir teorisyenin daha önceden karşılaşmadığı bir nesne sanat dünyasında kalmamıştır. Fiziksel özelliklerin sanatın neliğine dair bir bilgi sunmaması durumunda, sanatın tarihsel gelişimi sonlanmış, bütün olası karşıt örnekler elimine edilmiş, gelecekte

ortaya çıkabilecek her yeni sanat akımı etkisiz hale gelmiş ve geriye sanatın mutlak özü kalmıştır.

Popüler Sanat'ın görsel algıya, fiziksel ve materyal özelliklere vurgu yapan anlayışına karşıt bir biçimde Danto'nun görsel algının yetersizliğinden yola çıkıp geleneksel gerçekçiliğin sonunu getirdiği fark edilemez olan teorisi, en nihayeti sanat tarihinin ve de sanatın sonunu da getirmiştir. Danto'nun geleneksel gerçekçiliğe son verme teşebbüsü bu fiziksel ve materyal özelliklerin yok olma pahasına ve de fark edilemez olan teorisinin uygulanabilmesi adına gerçekleşmiştir. Danto, bu bağlamda fark edilemez olan metodunu garantiye alabilmek için, Popüler Sanat'ın manifestosu olan materyal nitelikleri yok saymış ve de bir bakıma Popüler sanatçıların anlayışını manipüle etmiştir.

Görsel algının önceliği, Richard Wollheim tarafından sanat eserlerine yeniden iade edilmiştir. Wollheim'in sanat felsefesi bu anlamda Popüler Sanat akımı ile uyum sağlamaktadır. Danto'nun aksine Wollheim için bir yapıtın sanat olarak nitelenebilmesinin asgari koşulu, bizim gördüğümüz fiziksel materyaldir. Her ne kadar Wollheim'a göre, Duchamp'ın *Fountain*'i materyal olarak bir eserin sanatçının uğraşı sonucu oluşması gerekmediğini gösterse de, Wollheim için *Fountain* bir sanat eseri olarak sayılmanın ancak asgari koşullarını sağlamaktadır. Çünkü, daha önce de belirttiğim üzere tıpkı Danto gibi, Wollheim için de Popüler sanat eserleri sanatın özüne ve neliğine dair sundukları bilgi bakımından değerlidir. *Fountain* da bu bağlamda, sahip olmadığı bütün özellikler sayesinde, bize sanat eseri olmanın gerekli ve yeterli koşullarına dair bilgi verme ayrıcalığı taşır.

Richard Wollheim'in öne sürdüğü içinde-görme teorisi, Danto'nun fark edilemez olan teorisinin aksine, sanat eserinin materyal ve temsili niteliklerini aynı anda görebilmemiz gerektiğini vurgular. İçinde-görme teorisinin bize olanak tanıdığı bu iki katlı algısal kabiliyet sayesinde, sanat eserinin hem fiziksel, yüzeysel, görsel alanı ve de onun temsili, semantik,

yorumsal alanı ile aynı anda ilişki kurarız. Biliyoruz ki Danto için Andy Warhol'un *Brillo Kutularını* gördüğümüzde onların süpermarket raflarındakilerle özdeş olduklarından başka bir şey algılamayız. Oysaki Wollheim'a göre, biz bu sanat kutuları ve de sıradan kutular arasındaki ayrımı duysal olarak fark edebilir, üstelik birbirinden tamamen ayrı nesnelere farklı türden gerçek deneyimler yaşayabiliriz.

Böylece, Wollheim'ın içinde-görme teorisi algısal ve duysal olan ile temsili ve kavramsal olanı birleştirir. Başka bir deyişle, gördüğümüz şeyde neyi görmemiz gerektiğini bize sanat teorileri değil, içinde bulunduğumuz sosyo-kültürel, politik ve de tarihsel yapı belirler. Bir eserle karşı karşıya geldiğimiz anda bizde ortaya çıkan duyular ve duyular Popüler Sanat anlayışının çok katmanlı göndermeler sisteminin bir parçası olarak Richard Wollheim'ın sanat felsefesi anlayışında da yer bulmaktadır. Arthur Danto tarafından tamamıyla yok sayılan duysal deneyim, Richard Wollheim sayesinde yeniden estetik deneyimde yerini bulmuştur.

Danto'nun son verdiği görsel sanatlardaki geleneksel gerçekçilik, Wollheim tarafından gene görselliğe dayalı olsa da başka bir biçimde yorumlanmıştır. Wollheim'a göre, sanatçının niyeti ve uğraşı ile izleyici olarak bizim algımızın birleşmesi yeni türden bir gerçekçilik ortaya çıkarır. Bir materyal olarak sanat eserinde birleşen sanatçının öznel ve içsel dünyası ile izleyicinin onu algılayabilme kapasitesi, sanatçı ile izleyicinin kurduğu ilişki sonucu ortaya çıkardıkları ortak bir dünya ve eser yaratır. Bu ikili ilişki Wollheim'ın içinde-görme teorisi dahilinde gelişerek materyal yüzeyle eserin konusuna aynı anda dikkatimizi verebilme durumuna varır. Warhol'un örneğinde olduğu üzere, onları özdeş kılmaktan ziyade, *Brillo Kutuları'nda* hem aynı anda sıradan deterjan kolilerini görebilir hem de galeride karşılaştığımız kutuların parlaklığından, canlı renklerinden, dizilişlerindeki dalgalı yayılımdan etkilenebiliriz.

Bu bakımdan ele alındığında, Wollheim'in içinde-görme kavrayışı aynı anda algılama ve anlama durumudur. Başka bir deyişle, görsel bir eserin algısal fizikseliği ile ruhsal ve zihinsel dışavurumu içinde-görme teorisinde eşzamanlı olarak birleşir. Eserin anlamını ortaya çıkarmak ya da oluşturmak için birleşen algı ve anlama eşzamanlı hale gelince de biçim ve içerik; yüzey ve konu; madde ve mana da böylece birleşmiş olur. Görsel sanatlardaki geleneksel gerçekçilik anlayışında biçim ve içerik arasında dışsal bir nedensellik ilişkisi söz konusu iken, Wollheim'in bu anlayışı bu şekilde revize ettiği ifade edilebilir. Neyi gördüğümüz nasıl gördüğümüzle aynı anda oluştuğu için, algı ve idrak arasında zamansal bir kırılma kalmamıştır.

Wollheim'in içinde-görme teorisinin gerçekçiliği bize Popüler Sanat'ın sunduğu eserlerin karmaşık yapısını daha doğru biçimde kavramamıza olanak tanımaktadır. Popüler Sanat'ın açıkça gösterdiği gibi bu eserlerin materyal ve fiziksel nitelikleri, temsili, zihinsel, ruhsal, kavramsal niteliklerini anlamak için olmazsa olmaz bir önem taşımaktadır. Çünkü Popüler sanat eserleri tam da temsil ettikleri şeyin örneğini oluşturarak biçim ve içeriği birleştirir ve ifade etme şekliyle ifade ettikleri şeyi aynı hale getirirler.

Örneklendirme temsil etmekten ayrı bir sınıf olarak içinde-görme metodunun unsurunu teşkil etmektedir. Örneğin, Warhol'un *Ölüm ve Yıkım Dizileri* resimlerinde gördüğümüz ırklar arası savaşlar, trafik kazaları, intiharlar, zehirlenmeler, idam cezaları gibi konularla bu resimler temsil ettikleri şeylerin örneklendirmesini teşkil ederler. Popüler Sanat'ın yeni gerçekçilik anlayışı doğrultusunda bu resimlerde sunulan görüntülerin bize yaşattığı duygu durumları, aynı görüntülerle gerçek hayatta karşılaştığımızda yaşadığımız duygu durumlarıyla aynı biçimde sarsıcı ve etkileyicidir.

Andy Warhol'un *Ölüm ve Yıkım Dizileri* içinde bulunan *Mavi Elektrikli Sandalye* adlı eseri de elektrik şokunu temsil etmesiyle birlikte hem fiziksel

hem de kavramsal açıdan temsil ettiği şeyin somut örneğini teşkil ederek bizde şok duygusunu vücuda getiren gerçek bir deneyim yaşatır. Temsil ettiği gerçekliği vücuda bürüme kabiliyeti sayesinde *Mavi Elektrikli Sandalye* karşısında yaşadığımız duygu izleyici olarak bizim bedensel gerçekliğimiz haline bürünür. Bu resmin karanlık tekrenkli mavi arka planı ve de art arda tekrar eden karlı görüntüsü duyularımıza saldırarak bize kloströfobik hapisane hücrelerini yaşatır. Yani resmin temsili özelliği duyusal özelliğini vücuda getirerek onu bizim deneyimimizde somutlaştırır ve de sadece görsel algıdan ya da zihinsel temsilden öteye geçerek fiziksel bir deneyim haline gelir. Bu eserde hem materyal yüzeyde elektrikli sandalye olarak hem de temsili boyutta elektrikli şokla ölüm cezası olarak resmedilen olguda sanat eserinin duyusal ve temsili özellikleri birleşir ve sonuç itibarıyla bizler acımasız bir ölüm biçimini bütün vücudumuzda hissederiz.

Bu türden tablolar temsil ettikleri deneyimlerin, olguların, görüngülerin tam da örneğini oluşturarak, karşımızda duran sahnelerle gerçek hayatta karşılaşmışçasına yaşadığımız rahatsızlık, şok, korku ya da panik gibi duygular Popüler sanat eserlerinin bizi duygusal olarak kuşatma ve sarsma amacı gereğidir. Tıpkı Danto'nun sanat teorisindeki somutlaştırma kavramı gibi Wollheim'daki örneklendirme kavramı da bizim değişip dönüşmemizi sağlayan, sanat eseriyle kurduğumuz doğrudan ve dolaylı deneyimi ifade eder. Ancak, Wollheim için bu dönüşüm sanat eserinin bizi duygusal olarak etkilediği, algısal ve duyusal zeminimizde oluşurken; Danto için bu dönüşüm kavramsal düzeyde yeni sanat teorileri geliştirmemiz anlamına gelmektedir.

Bu doktora tezinin temel konusu Arthur Danto'nun yarım yüzyıldan uzun süren sanat felsefesi anlayışını incelemektir. Bu uzun süreç Danto'nun fark edilemez olan yöntemini geliştirmesiyle başlayıp sanatı bitirmesiyle son bulur. Daha önce de belirttiğim gibi Danto'ya göre Popüler Sanat fark edilemez olanı kullanması ile birlikte Plato'dan beri hem sanat

felsefecilerinin hem de sanatçıların aklını meşgul eden sanatın ontolojik statüsünün ne olduğu sorusuna bir çözüm sunmuştur.

Fark edilemez olanı keşfetmekle birlikte Popüler sanatçılar, sanatın doğasının ne olduğunu sorgulayarak sanatı görsel değil kavramsal kılmış ve sanatın gerçeklik problemini ortadan kaldırmıştır. Popüler Sanat'ın başlattığı Modernizm'den itibaren, sanat eserleri fiziksel nesnelere ya da dışsal dünyayla kurduğu benzeme ilişkisi dahilinde gerçeğin taklidi değil ta kendisidir. Kendi doğası üzerine ortaya çıkardığı sorular doğrultusunda Popüler Sanat öz-bilincinin ve kendi doğasının özüne dair cevaplar bulmanın sınırına ulaşmıştır. Danto'ya göre, fark edilemez olanın kullanımı sayesinde sanatın özünün ne olduğuna dair bütün tanımlamalar yapılmış, başka bir deyişle sanat için kendini dışa vurmanın, kendini açıklamanın bütün olanakları tükenmiş ve de sonuç itibarıyla sanatın tarihsel evriminin sonuna gelinmiştir.

Danto'nun, Popüler Sanat'ın düşünceyi kendi üzerine döndürerek özünü açığa çıkartması ile beraber sanatın tarihsel sürecini tüketmiş olduğu iddiası açıkça Hegelci bir tutumdur. Hegel'in düşüncesinde görüldüğü üzere düşüncenin kendi üzerine dönüş anında Mutlak Bilgi tarihsel maddeciliğin yerini alır. Hegel'de sanat eserlerinin duygulara ait kapsamı Tin'in kendini anlamasında bir engel teşkil eder ve Hegel de özellikle Romantik akımın duygulara öncelik veren yapısına tepkisel bir karşı atakla sanatın sonunun geldiğini iddia eder. Danto'nun fark edilemez olan teorisinde de benzer bir şekilde sanat eserlerinin kavramsal, teorik ya da temsili özellikleri duyumsal, algısal ya da materyal niteliklerin yerini almıştır. Danto'ya göre bununla birlikte tarih boyunca sanatçıların ve de sanat teorisyenlerinin Platon'a karşı durarak sanatı ontolojik olarak temize çıkarmak için onu doğru yere yerleştirme çabaları da böylelikle son bulmuştur.

Danto'nun sanatın doğasına dair yönelttiği soru özcü bir yaklaşıma dayansa bile bu soruya cevaben geliştirdiği Sanat Dünyası teorisi bizi sanat

tarihini göz önünde bulundurmaya davet etmektedir. Ve Danto'nun sanat felsefesi boyunca bu özcü yaklaşımı ile teorisinin tarihsel boyutu arasında küçümsenmeyecek bir gerilim sürüp gitmiştir. Sanatın sonunu ilan ettiği savıyla da görmekteyiz ki aynı anda özcü ve tarihçi olmanın sonucunda Danto tercihini özcülüğünden yana kullanmış ve böylece kendini kavramsal ve de teorik çözümlerin güvencesine alarak fark edilemez olan teorisini ortaya çıkabilecek her türlü karşıt olgunun tehlikesinden korumaya çalışmıştır.

Her ne kadar Danto sanatın sonunu onu sanat felsefesinin esaretinden özgürleşme olarak addetse de bana kalırsa Danto bizi gerçeklikle kurduğumuz ilişkide tamamıyla sorunlu bir konumda bırakmıştır. Bunu iddia etmemin sebebi Danto'nun fark edilemez olan teorisinin sanat eserlerinin ortaya çıkış süreci ile bireysel olarak anlaşılması arasındaki canlı ilişkiyi açıklamakta yetersiz kalan bütünüyle teorik ve kavramsal bir yapıya dayanmasıdır. Danto'nun önermesine göre, herhangi bir nesne eğer bir estetik teori altında sınıflandırılabilirse o zaman o nesneye sanat olma niteliği atfedilebilir; yani eğer Sanat Dünyası ona bir teori temin ederse, herhangi bir nesne sanat eseri haline gelebilir.

İşte bu bağlamda, Danto'nun teorisini kısır döngüden ibaret kalmakla eleştiriyorum. Şurası gayet açık ki, bir yapıtın sanat eseri olarak nitelenmesi için bir sanat teorisi tarafından ortaya çıkması gerektiği gibi, yine o sözü geçen teorinin oluşması için de sanat eserinin onu geliştirmesi gerekmektedir. Daha önce de belirttiğim üzere sıradan bir pisuarın sanat eseri olarak görülmesini taklit ya da benzerlik teorileri sağlayamadığı için Danto yeni türden bir sanat teorisine gereksinim duyar. Ancak bana kalırsa biz *Fountain*'ı oluşturan sanat teorisinin arayışına girmeden önce bu nesneyi zaten hâlihazırda sanat eseri olarak kabul ettiğimiz bir noktada bulunmuş oluyoruz. Bana kalırsa tam da bu teorik döngü en nihayeti kendi içine çökerek sanatın sonunun gelmesine sebebiyet vermektedir. Ve Danto'nun bu kendi içine kapalı sisteminin çöküşünü, sanatın felsefeden kurtulması

olarak ifade edip kutlamasını sadece retorik olarak görmekteyim. Danto'nun canlı deneyimlerin yerine teorik olana öncelik tanıyan anlayışını bu nedenle eleştirmekteyim.

Bu tezde Danto'nun teoriye dayalı sanat anlayışını Richard Wollheim'in görsel sanat eserlerinin materyal niteliklerini betimlemekte kullandığı kavramlardan biri olan pentimento kavramının ışığında eleştirmeye çalıştım. Wollheim için bir yapıtın sanat eseri olmasını sağlayan şey, sanatçının amacının, anlatmak istediği şeyin yani niyetinin, izleyicinin ruhsal ve zihinsel tepkisinde karşılık bulmasıdır. Wollheim görsel sanatlarda izleyicinin estetik deneyimini resmin yüzeyinde pentimento'nun açığa çıkması şeklinde betimler.

Wollheim her ne kadar bu kavramı düz anlamıyla kullanıp bir resmin yüzeyinin altından zamanla açığa çıkan ressamın fırça darbeleri olarak ele alsada, bu kavramın içeriğini metaforik bağlamda geliştirerek yorumladım. Wollheim pentimento'yu sadece resmin fiziksel yüzeyinde, ressamın eseri ortaya çıkarma süreci olarak ele alırken, ben kavramın içeriğini izleyicinin algısını, yorumunu, kavrayışını kapsayan bir düzleme yayarak sanat eserini anlama sürecindeki sosyo-kültürel, tarihsel ve politik kapsamları içeren çok katmanlı yapıyı ifade etmekte kullandım.

Eğer ki pentimento düz anlamıyla boyanın altında yatan görüntülerin yani sanatçının kusurlarının, vazgeçişlerinin, pişmanlıklarının, değişen fikirlerinin yeniden görünür olması ise bu kavram bu bağlamda sanatçının eseri yaratırken geçtiği yolların adımlarını işaret eder. Başka bir deyişle pentimento aracılığıyla sanatçının el izlerini takip ederek onun içsel kişisel deneyimlerini görme olanağı buluruz. Ve bu kavramı metaforik olarak tercüme ettiğim zaman sanatçının deneyimini izleyicinin deneyimiyle yer değiştirerek yüzeyin altında izleyicinin sahip olduğu üstü kapalı katmanlar yaratmaya çalıştım. Bizim duysal, kavramsal, ruhsal, zihinsel ve sosyo-kültürel deneyimlerimiz sanat eserinin karmaşık, girift, çok yönlü ve çok

katmanlı yapısını temin eder. Özetle, izleyici olarak bizler pentimento'lar yaratırken yüzeyin altına nüfuz ederiz ve de karşımızda duran resimler de bizim dolayimsız deneyimimiz haline gelirler.

Popüler sanat eserlerinden ilham alarak bir sanat yapıtının anlamının ancak bu çok katmanlı bağlamlar dahilinde bulunabileceğini düşünmekteyim. Örneğin, Warhol'un *Brillo Kutuları*'nda Danto'nun yok saydığı ve Wollheim'in da sadece materyal düzeyde ele aldığı sıradan deterjan kolilerini zahmetsizce görmenin ötesinde pentimento'lar yattığını fark edebiliriz. Warhol sıradan deterjan kutularını sanat olarak bize sunuyorsa bunun altında seri üretim tarihini, sanayi üretiminin insanı yabancılaştırmasını, popüler tüketimin toplumsal eğilimini, reklam kampanyalarının kültürel gücünü, gündelik hayatta kadının rolünü, ya da modern bireyin hijyen takıntısını ihtiva eden birçok nüveyi görmenin mümkün olduğunu öne sürmekteyim. Popüler sanat eserlerinin temsil ettikleri göndermeler ve onları temsil etme biçimleri yani temsili olanla fiziksel olan pentimento kavramı dahilinde birleşir ve zannederim ki Popüler sanat eserlerini doğru bir biçimde anlamanın tek yolu da içerdikleri pentimento'yu açığa vurmaktan geçer.

Galeride karşılaştığımız *Brillo Kutusu* bu çok katmanlı yorumlar haricinde saçmalıktan ibaret bir hal alır. Danto'nun sanat eserine atfettiği semantik özelliklerin bütün bu ruhsal, zihinsel, sosyo-kültürel ve de politik bağlamların çok katmanlı yapısından ayrıştırılarak dikkate alınması mümkün olmasa gerekir. Popüler sanat eserlerinin eğer ki gerçekten bir anlamı var ise, ortaya çıkardıkları sanat teorilerinde değil içerdikleri pentimento sayesinde kavranabileceğini düşünüyorum.

Bütün bunlara ilave olarak, Danto'nun sanat eserindeki belirgin özellikleri dışlaması ile birlikte sanatçının da ortaya koyduğu emeğin yok sayıldığını ve bunun da etik bir problem yarattığını düşünüyorum. Eğer ki Popüler sanat eserlerini etik-politik bir bağlamda okumak durumunda isek,

bu eserlerin bizi bütün tek kullanımlık mallar ve araçlarla tüketim kolaylığına teşvik eden sistemi nasıl eleştirdiğini de görürüz. Sahip olduğumuz ne varsa ona ulaşmanın kolaylığını sağlayan bu sistem, sonuçta bizi iş, çaba, emek gibi terimlerden de yabancılaştırmıştır. Tam da bu sebepten Danto için sanatçının ortaya çıkardığı işin ve de emeğin yok sayılmasını rahatsız edici biçimde ters anlamlı buluyor ve de Danto'nun Popüler sanat eserlerinin özünü daha en başından itibaren kavrayamadığını düşünüyorum.

Tezimde Danto'nun sanat felsefesini bu denli mekanik olduğu için eleştiriyorum. Sanat eserlerinin bir altyapı bilgisine sahip olmadan, belirli bir vizyondan bakmadan görülemeyeceğini kabul etsem de bu altyapıyı sadece sanat teorilerinin oluşturduğu düşüncesine ısrarla karşı çıkıyorum. Danto, her ne kadar fark edilemez olan yöntemi sayesinde sanat eserlerinin şeffaf plastik duvarlar ardında bulunan yapay varlıklar olmaktan çıktıklarını iddia etse de sanat eserlerinin teorik yaşam alanında bu iddiayı destekleyecek geçerli bir koşul bulamıyorum. Sanat yapıtlarına organik bir biçimde bağlı olmaz isek, o zaman sanat teorilerinin kuklaları haline gelir ve kendimize ait deneyimler yaşayacağımız yerde teoriler nereye çekerse oraya sürükleniriz.

Eğer ki Danto için estetik deneyim dahilinde sanat eserlerinin duysal ve algısal düzlemine geçiş hakkımız yok ise bana göre pentimento'nun eksikliğinden dolayı onların temsili düzlemine de geçiş hakkımız kalmıyor. Danto sanatın temsili yani sanat eserini ontolojik kategori olarak doğru yere yerleştirmekle uğraşırken, sanatın deneyimine hiç yer bırakmıyor. Deneyimimizin dışında kalan bir sanat dünyasının da Platoncu soruna ontolojik olarak nasıl çözüm sunduğunu anlamakta zorlanmaktayım.

Bu doktora tezi, sonuç itibarıyla Danto'nun Sanat Dünyası'ndaki pentimento eksikliğini sergilemek üzere yazılmıştır. Ki bu eksiklik sonunda sanat tarihini – ve Danto için sanat ancak sanat teorileri tarihi sayesinde var olabileceğinden dolayı sanatı da bitirmesine neden olmuştur. Materyal özelliklerin ve de çok katmanlı bağlamsal yapıların sanat eserinden dışarı

atılmasıyla birlikte bizim somut bir hale bürüneceğimiz bir şey kalmamıştır. Sadece özsel vasıflarını yani fark edilmez olanı değişmez kılmak adına Danto bize sanatı gerçek anlamıyla deneyimleyebileceğimiz bir yer bırakmamıştır. Bu nedenle, sanat eserinin karşısında duran izleyiciler olarak hiçbir içsel kuvvetimiz bulunmazken sanat teorilerinin içi boş kuklaları durumunda kalmışızdır. Danto'nun sanat felsefesini bu anlamda okuduğumda gördüm ki, Popüler Sanat sanatı Platoncu gerçeklikten kurtarmış olabilir belki ama estetik olarak bizler kesinlikle sanat teorilerinin karşısında aşağı bir dereceye çekilmiş bulunmaktayız.

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AESTHETICS UPON POP ART

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