

THE POST-DUCHAMP DEAL. REMARKS ON A FEW SPECIFICATIONS OF THE WORD 'ART'

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When people began to talk in the '60s of interdisciplinary trends in art, using terms such as 'mixed media', 'intermedia' and 'multimedia art', the primary focus was on finding a place for the new and quite diverse practices that could not be assigned to the traditional categories of painting and sculpture. Those new names, as well as the descriptive terms 'performance art' or 'installation art', which were also new at that time, had a merely journalistic character. However, a more serious theoretical debate was simultaneously taking shape around Pop, Minimal and Conceptual Art, a debate in which the growing influence of Marcel Duchamp on this generation of artists and the impact of the readymade on artistic theories were palpable. By the end of the decade, the debate had reached academia. Philosophers who rarely set foot inside a gallery began to question the very concept of art, exemplified by borderline cases that were either real, such as Duchamp's readymades and other 'found objects', or imaginary, such as the five red monochromes, identical but bearing different titles, which Arthur Danto (who does visit galleries more often than not) wittily proposed at the beginning of his book, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*.¹ During the '80s, my own work on the readymade has led me to study the relationship of painting, in particular, to art, in general, and then to develop an aesthetic theory of art as proper name, the result of a somewhat unexpected meeting of Duchamp with Immanuel Kant.² What motivated me at the time was the mixture of excitement and anxiety produced by a situation that was an obvious legacy of the readymade, namely, the radical openness of art (in the singular) resulting from

¹ Arthur Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981).

² Thierry de Duve, *Pictorial Nominalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991); *Au nom de l'art* (Paris: Minuit, 1989); *Résonances du readymade* (Nîmes: Editions Jacqueline Chambon, 1989); *Kant after Duchamp* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996).

the blurring of the boundaries between the arts (in the plural). In today's paper, I would like to make a few terminological proposals, which, if adopted, might perhaps facilitate the debate, taking as my starting point what I wrote for the back cover of *Au nom de l'art*: "One should never cease to marvel at, or to worry about, the fact that it is nowadays considered perfectly legitimate for anyone to be an artist without being a painter, or a writer, a musician, a sculptor, a film maker, and so on. Would modernity have invented *art in general*?"

I propose to use the term *art in general*, or *art in the generic sense of the word*, to refer to the a priori possibility that anything can be art. *Art in general* is in a way an empty concept, for it contains only potential, not actual works of art; it is, however, a historical concept that can be dated and that describes the situation in which we consciously find ourselves following the legitimation of Duchamp's readymades by art history. It is, therefore, neither a medium, nor a genre, nor a style. *Art in general* doesn't get added to the traditional media such as painting and sculpture; it is not distinct from the traditional genres such as landscape or the nude; it doesn't represent a stylistic category identifiable by some common feature, like the "isms" that abounded in the twentieth century. On the contrary, painting and sculpture, the landscape and the nude, and all the "isms" of the twentieth century are part and parcel of *art in general*, since *art in general* excludes nothing. Indeed, the meaning of the expression is that it is now technically possible and institutionally legitimate to make art out of anything and everything. Of course, it doesn't follow that everything is art. *Art in general* merely registers the a priori possibility for anything to be art characterizing today's art world. *Art in general* is the name, one might say, for the new deal that has apparently become established in the 'post-Duchamp' era. It replaces the old generic term 'Fine Arts' (*Beaux-Arts*, *Schöne Künste*, *Bellas Artes*, etc.) which ruled over the art world before Duchamp.

The difference between the post-Duchamp deal and the old one is obvious. *Art in general* has absolutely no limits, whereas the concept of fine arts is limited by internal and external boundaries. Internal, by virtue of the fact that it includes and juxtaposes painting, sculpture, architecture, drawing, engraving, and so on, and keeps them separate from each other as well as from the other arts such as literature, music or the theatre; external, because it excludes all those things, which, being neither painting, nor literature, nor music, etc., cannot possibly belong to the category of 'art'. Incidentally, the category of 'art', in the singular, does not exist in the fine arts system. Though it is perfectly possible for a nineteenth-century man, standing before a painting he considers successful, to declare "Ah! That is art!", his exclamation

tion simply expresses his aesthetic appreciation without, however, placing the picture in a category to which it did not belong prior to his favourable verdict. Clearly, objects such as a bicycle wheel, a snow shovel and a urinal are excluded a priori from the fine arts, because it is impossible to assign them to one of the arts in particular. They don't respect the conventions of any of them and, hence, cannot be compared with the products of any of them. On the other hand, the worst nineteenth-century picture belongs a priori within the fine arts, because it respects a certain number of conventions according to which it may be established, without any further trial, that the picture is comparable with other painted pictures and thus belongs to the specific art of painting. The internal and external boundaries of the fine arts are coextensive: they set a multiplicity of well-defined artistic practices in opposition to the vast domain of what is not art. This is why, when the question arose of legitimating works initially judged impossible to include in any of the fine arts, the 'category' of *non-art* was invented. When first mention was made of the notion of 'art' in the singular – of art, period, or art, as such – it was with an appellation that negated it. Non-art was the paradoxical name given to the kind of works that proved incomparable with works belonging to any of the fine arts yet could not simply be dismissed.

I have just introduced a new term: *art as such*, or art, period. This is not at all the same thing as *art in general*. We have seen in the example of our nineteenth-century man standing in front of a painting he considers successful and exclaiming "Ah! That is art!", that *art as such* expresses an aesthetic judgement, i.e., the *feeling* that the painting in question really deserves to be called a work of art. *Art as such* doesn't further describe or qualify the 'art feeling' it expresses. Definitely no feeling is expressed by *art in general*, which describes a situation – to repeat: the situation we find ourselves in at least since Duchamp's readymades have shown that art can be made from anything whatever. When the utterance of the man in our example, or the more sober phrase "This is art," is applied, precisely, to the historical example of the readymades rather than to a nineteenth-century painting, a new element is introduced: in addition to expressing the appreciation resulting from an aesthetic experience, *art as such* reclassifies the designated object. Indeed, it is by means of the phrase "This is art" that the readymades became art. Not being comparable with works belonging to any of the fine arts, they could not be called good or bad art without being called art first or by the same token – *art*, period. When faced with a borderline case such as that of the readymades, it is no longer possible to make the distinction between art in the classificatory sense and art in the evaluative sense, to use George Dickie's

terminology.³ The same holds true for all the things, including works in traditional media, which artists submit to our appreciation from within the conditions of *art in general*. It is simply clearer in the case of art authorized by the readymades or having otherwise broken its ties with painting, sculpture, or any other of the fine arts. The phrase “This is art,” with which we express our feeling that *this* is art indeed, is a baptism; hence my theory that the word ‘art’ (*art as such*) is a proper name, not a concept. Proper names have no meaning, only referents. Or if they have meanings, designating rather than signifying is what they are used for. When an object – any object – is plucked from the great no-man’s-land of *art in general* and yields an aesthetic judgement – especially the kind of judgement that attaches positive value to the object’s negation of existing art, or, better said, the kind of judgement that recognizes artistic quality in the object’s incomparability with existing art – this object gets called by a name which, like proper names, doesn’t have any fixed or determinable meaning aside from the subjective aesthetic meaning attached to the experience, but only refers to something. When exclaiming, “This is art,” you express yourself with a word that is not fit for expression but has referents. The feeling of dealing with art that you express in this way remains inaccessible to others, perhaps even to yourself as well, inasmuch as what you refer to with the word ‘art’ is equally inaccessible to others, and to some extent to yourself, too. You are neither fully in control of your feelings nor in conscious possession of the things the word ‘art’ designates. Like all proper names (and common nouns alike), the word ‘art’ acts as an index finger enabling you to point at something in its absence, in other words, without having to show it. And you don’t show the art you refer to when saying “This is art,” any more than you display the feeling of having to do with art that makes you utter the phrase in the first place. You don’t fully visualize the referents of ‘art’ either. “This is art” in fact contains two index fingers: the word ‘this’, a mobile designator that refers to the work under discussion, displays it and moves from work to work; and the word ‘art’, a ‘rigid designator’ (following Saul Kripke’s theory of proper names),⁴ which doesn’t display anything and which points toward ... what? Toward art altogether.

Now we encounter another new expression, *art altogether*, by which I mean everything referred to by the word ‘art’ in the phrase “This is art” when used to express an aesthetic judgement. This might seem a little odd, for we don’t consciously point a finger at things when uttering the word

³ For a ‘post-Duchamp’ theory of art that rests on this distinction, see George Dickie, *Art and the Aesthetic, An Institutional Analysis* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974).

⁴ Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980).

'art'. We think, rather, that we apply evaluative criteria to the 'this' we consider artistic. The fact is that aesthetic judgements are comparative (even when they compare incomparable things),⁵ and that our 'criteria' have been forged by all the aesthetic experiences accumulated as a result of looking at works of art throughout our lives. Our artistic culture varies in richness and sophistication depending on the quantity, diversity and intensity of these experiences. Rather than criteria, what this accumulated culture generates in us are expectations – what classical aesthetics termed a taste. We make judgements according to these expectations, which means that when we are presented with a candidate for art, we compare this object spontaneously, even unconsciously, with the works of art we already know. More precisely, we compare our subjective experience of the object we are looking at with the memory of a large number of similar subjective experiences we have had in the past of the works of art we have learned to appreciate. If we then give expression to our aesthetic judgement by saying, "This is art," it is easy to see that the word 'this' designates the object under consideration while the word 'art' designates the collection of objects already labelled with the word 'art' in the layers of aesthetic experience deposited in our memories, and acting as standards of comparison. The content of *art altogether* thus varies from individual to individual, and is only defined extensionally, not intensionally; in other words, it is made of things and not of meanings.

Because it varies from individual to individual, from culture to culture, from epoch to epoch, *art altogether* does not really deserve its name. For this to be the case, one would have to imagine an ideal art lover, one whose taste and first-hand acquaintance with art have been shaped by contact with the entire artistic heritage of humankind, and would form the absolute (as opposed to relative) comparative benchmark for all aesthetic judgements. To judge that a given thing extracted from the a priori reservoir of *art in general* is art, indeed, is to pretend having compared that thing with *art altogether* and, on this basis, to lay a claim on the right of entering it into the common artistic patrimony. At this stage, I hope to have raised strong objections in your minds regarding any person's self-proclaimed right, on the basis of his or her personal culture and subjective experiences, to approve or refuse entry of a given thing into the common artistic patrimony. The question of authority – and the legitimacy of that authority – is at the core of the post-Duchamp deal, as we all know if we are familiar with today's art world and

⁵ See Thierry de Duve, "Comparer les incomparables, ou : comment collectionne-t-on?" in Proceedings of the colloquium, *La place du goût dans la production philosophique des concepts et leur destin critique* (Rennes: Archives de la Critique d'art, 1992).

the institutional critique exerted on it by a great deal of the art practices born from conceptual art. As these issues of authority and legitimacy are far too complex to be seriously addressed here, I propose an imaginary scenario in which they are resolved in the following manner. Let's imagine that the ideal art lover does exist. This person would have shaped her taste in contact with the entirety of the human artistic patrimony. She alone would warrant its legitimacy because it is only for her that *art altogether* would deserve its name. Let's further imagine that it is empirically possible to gather *art altogether*, say, in Malraux's 'museum without walls' or in some other global Museum, with or without walls but with a capital M. Finally, let's suppose that humanity, following democratic consultation, has appointed our ideal art lover chief curator of this Museum, where all the things in the world she personally deems worthy of the name 'art' would have found their home. This single individual would implement humankind's supreme aesthetic tribunal and would be the only person with the legitimate authority to utter the liminal aesthetic judgement that enters any given thing into the common artistic patrimony. All artists in the world would come to lay down before her what they have created, and she would decide: "This is art" or "This is not art". She and she alone would perform the baptism that declares the comparability – in terms of quality – of *this* with the universal art collection that's entrusted to her, whether or not *this* is comparable with it in terms of medium or conventions. In each of this person's individual judgements, then, the aesthetic, i.e. affective, meaning of *art as such* would coincide with the purported globally human significance of *art altogether*. Each time she utters, "This is art," she would judge that the feeling elicited by *this* is congruent with all those yielded by *art altogether*, and she would thereby express the comparability both of the works of art among each other (formally) and of the feelings among each other (subjectively). The term I use for this universal comparability among works of art, in other words, for the universal mapping of art *felt*, (intensionally: *art as such*) onto art *referred to* (extensionally: *art altogether*) is: *art itself*.

Please bear with me and keep your objections for the question period, if you would be so kind. The interest of my disingenuous imaginary scenario lies in its personification of the art institution as if it were one and unanimous – obviously something that is implied by the fantasy of the Museum with a capital M. How to conceive of this personification critically is a crucial matter, which I'm afraid goes beyond the scope of the present paper – hence my little conceit, as a shortcut. Each time the Museum collects a new piece, it acknowledges that "This is art" and proclaims it. Conversely, each time it considers that *this* deserves to be called art, it declares its view that

the candidate has crossed the threshold of admissibility into the world art collection. In other words, *this*, though perhaps not great art or even good art, is on a sufficiently high aesthetic level to be qualitatively comparable with (which does not mean qualitatively equal to) everything humanity has hitherto called art, and is thereby allowed to enter the world art collection. Once *this* is inside, the Museum's twofold task is to preserve and to exhibit it. When the Museum displays *this* to its visitors as art, it no longer declares, it quotes: "This is art." It shows the object on behalf of the comparative test it successfully passed, which is to say, on behalf of the affective coincidence of *art as such* with the purported common feeling yielded by *art altogether*. At that particular moment, the Museum is legitimately acting in the name of *art itself*. Legitimately? More objections, I'm sure. Scandalously, is a more likely verdict. "You bet your ideal art lover is a fiction; it's covering up the Museum's real abuse of power. And what, for Pete's sake, is *art itself*? The true metaphysical essence of art? Nonsense. Sheer ideology, that's what it is!" Those objections are welcome. They are also fragile, because in demystifying the Museum with a capital M, they leave no other alternative than radically delegitimizing the museums with a small m, as they actually exist. In fact, *art itself* is an idea, and nothing more. It is the idea of art, or art as idea, either way. Indeed, the mapping of *art as such* (feelings) onto *art altogether* (things) can only be an idea. I would add for the benefit of the philosophers that it is an idea in the Kantian sense, not in the Platonic or, much more important for the fate of aesthetics today, in the Hegelian sense. Such an idea supposes, postulates, demands, that in each of the objects that have successfully passed the test there exists a quality that it shares with all the others, albeit a quality that can neither be conceptualized nor demonstrated. It is not even, properly speaking, a quality in the sense of an objective or objectal property. It is a quality only inasmuch as the Museum claims to attach to all the works composing *art altogether* the affective content expressed case by case by *art as such*, as if, conversely, the affects attached to each of the cases it collects as art (*as such*) were expressing a quality shared universally by all the works of art in the world. Many thinkers in the field of art, eminent ones at that, have lost their way as a result of confusing *art itself* with the *essence of art*. This confusion leads to idealism, drawing all manner of objections from the materialist thinkers aimed at denouncing *art itself* as sheer essentialist ideology. They make the same confusion. But art itself is not the mysterious essential quality that all works of art in the world have in common; it is merely the *idea* that all works of art in the world must have something in common, ought to have something in common. *Art itself* names the idea, the mere idea, of universal comparability among works of art, in the absence of demonstrably common

‘aesthetic predicates’. The idea that all works of art in the world *must* have something in common has been regulating aesthetic judgements on art all along, and it is the cornerstone of every humanist view of art and culture. But the idea that all works of art in the world *ought* to have something in common – i.e. the idea that *must* translates as *ought* – is new, modern, and made mandatory by the switch from the fine arts system to the *art in general* system and the radical doubt this switch cast on the humanist view. Indeed, the scandal in Duchamp’s readymades, which signalled the switch, is that they were definitely not comparable to anything hitherto encompassed by *art altogether*. They performed a sort of thought experiment replacing the uncertainty of universal comparability among works of art with the certainty of their incomparability. One exception is enough: if *Fountain* is to be admitted into the world art collection, then it is not true that all works of art have something in common. The theoretical necessity of supposing, postulating, demanding that they do is now verging on ethical obligation. To the art-historical switch from the fine arts system to the *art in general* system, there corresponds a switch in aesthetics from a confident and pre-critical to a sceptical and post-Duchampian idea of *art itself*. Whether it is anti-humanist, post-humanist or humanist in a new sense is an open question.

All that remains to bring the above remarks full circle is to link the post-Duchampian (quasi-ethical) idea of *art itself* to the apparently post-Duchampian (theoretical) concept of *art in general*. You will agree that my disingenuous imaginary scenario is at once exciting and worrying, which brings me back to the mixed feelings I had at the time of writing the back cover for *Au nom de l’art*. It is easy to see why it is worrying. Since the ideal is not of this world and since desire for power is what it is, it is better not to invest the monopoly of aesthetic judgement, or of anything else for that matter, in a single individual. Put yourself in the artists’ shoes. Who would voluntarily submit his or her work to such a dictator of taste, regardless of whether she has been democratically elected? But for the same reasons – because the ideal is not of this world and because of the nature of the desire for power – I don’t believe that we need fear my scenario becoming reality, despite the recurring fantasy in some people’s minds of the Museum with a capital M, and despite it being true that the art institution has annoying monopolistic tendencies. It is the exciting aspect of the conceit that deserves reflection. One can only marvel at such a spontaneous agreement of humankind, resulting in the democratic election of the chief curator of the Museum with a capital M. There is only one explanation to her having won the election: humanity as a whole must have perceived that this person not only possessed an exhaustive, encyclopaedic, first-hand knowledge of the global artistic heritage,

but also had an astonishing degree of empathy with human beings in all the diversity of their subjectivities, their aesthetic experiences, their tastes, cultures, levels of education, national, linguistic, ethnic and gender identities, and social backgrounds. Such is the way she earned her unbelievable power position in the art world: her authority is legitimate because it is grounded in her representativity vis-à-vis the human species. She got elected because she was capable of representing all human beings individually in terms of their most intimate features. If this person existed, it would not occur to her to reject an artist's offering without submitting it to a universal comparative test, a test that, given the catholicity of her taste, would be both ideally open and ideally severe. Our ideal art lover would examine the totality of the things proposed to her without the slightest prejudice, yet would allow only those things into the Museum that incarnate that totality, i.e. things that express our common humanity. And her judgements would be just, because her prodigious power of empathy would enable her to slip by turns into the shoes of every human on the planet, espouse their taste and comprehend their culture from within, in all their diversity, while identifying with what all humans the world over have in common.

But this is not all. In order to imagine the democratic election by the whole of humankind of such an exceptional individual, we would have to imagine a humankind as exceptional as that individual: a humankind totally impervious to demagogy and unbelievably sensitive to the properly human qualities of the candidates. If my little conceit were to be possible in this world, everyone would have the same empathy for his fellow men as the chief curator of the global Museum. Heaven on earth, no less. But then, why her rather than me? She is no better delegate of the human species than I am. Representativity would no longer be the seat of legitimacy. Anyone and everyone would be chief curator, or, what in the post-Duchamp era amounts to strictly the same thing, anyone and everyone would be an artist. Not that Duchamp has realized Joseph Beuys' utopian "*Jeder Mensch ist ein Künstler,*" not at all. It's just that when confronted with a readymade, the chief curator, the artist and the man or woman on the street are on an equal footing *technically*. None of them has made the object with his or her own hands; the three of them can only say, "This is art" or "This is not art," period. *Art as such*. In short, if my fictional scenario were of this world, anything and everything would have the potential to be art because anyone and everyone would be free to so decide and would decide in full consciousness of the human implications at stake. With this we return to the new deal, for in our post-Duchamp art world, anything and everything *is* potentially art, indeed.

Not only technically, but also institutionally, at least in principle. This, may I remind you, is precisely the definition I gave of *art in general*.

Obviously there is a gulf between principles and reality, a gulf that is the terrain for all the power struggles that exist in the art world as in the rest of the world, for commercial competition in the art market, for every possible ideological dispute about art, and for a wide variety of tastes and artistic institutions. All of this is part of the healthy life of democracy, and should not result in our preference for the ideal over the real. What is crucial to recognize is that the difference between principles and reality, and hence between *art itself* and *art in general*, is not the difference between the ideal and the real, but rather, the difference between the transcendental and the empirical. See Kant on this subject. It is because of this difference that the coincidence of *art as such* with *art altogether* is an idea and nothing else – I mean, ought to remain an idea, ought to be thought of as being no more than what Kant called a regulative idea: the idea in the name of which real art museums with a small m present their collections. Museum directors being appointed experts in public institutions, they are indirectly elected to be delegates of an ideally cultivated humanity, with the pedagogical mission of educating the real humanity (or so the humanist view has it). But museum visitors don't need any such mandate. And the museum's legitimacy is ultimately in their hands.⁶ They are free to judge: "This is art," and "That is not." Lastly, it is the same difference between the transcendental and the empirical that ensures that *art itself* not be conflated with *art in general*. If this were the case, anything and everything would indeed be art, and art would collapse into the "anything whatever," as some reactionary opponents of contemporary art contend.

I realize that in opening the Kantian can of worms, I'm also opening Pandora's box. In my book, *Kant after Duchamp*, I have argued extensively in favour of the continued, if on some points amended, validity of Kant's *Critique of Judgement* for aesthetics today. I cannot take this up here again. But as a footnote to my paper and a way to launch the discussion, let me share with you the strategic reasons for my choice of words when I decided after some hesitation to call the congruence of *art as such* with *art altogether* by the name of *art itself* – in French, *l'art en soi*, and in German, *Kunst an sich*. There is no trace of *Kunst an sich*, or of *Schönheit an sich*, in Kant's third *Critique*, and I want to tell the Kantians among you, if there are any, that I

⁶ This is the gist of Broodthaers' "The artist as Museum director" in response to Beuys' "Everyone an artist". Inquisitive (and Dutch-speaking) readers can refer in this connection to my article, "Museumethiek na Broodthaers: een naïve theorie", *De Witte Raaf*, no. 91 (May–June 2001).

am aware of assigning the *Ding an sich* from the first *Critique* the reflexive function of a regulative idea that has become clear in Kant's mind only with the third. A discussion might ensue for those interested as to how to conceive faithfulness to Kant. Meanwhile, what is strategic in this choice of words is its deliberate anti-Hegelianism. If it were not for its Kantian overtones, *Kunst an sich*, especially in view of my little conceit involving the concentration of all aesthetic judgements in the hands of one super-curator of the Museum with a capital M, could be read as heralding the typically Hegelian moment when the phrase "This is art" is uttered by the Spirit of the World become absolute. This moment is that of the end of art. Now, as we have seen, *Kunst an sich* is the idea of the congruence of *art as such* with *art altogether*. *Art as such* expresses the subjective, affective content of the word 'art' in the sentence "This is art," and *art altogether* designates the universal gathering of the objective referents of the same word. Kantianism sees the congruence of both as the mapping of *feelings* onto an empirical set of *things* via the *idea* of a communality of feelings (*sensus communis*) that respects the heterogeneity of both domains. Defining art in its material existence as "*das sinnliche Scheinen der Idee*," Hegelianism assumes a dialectical passageway between these heterogeneous domains. It considers the referents of *art altogether* as an 'embodiment of aboutness' (to rephrase Hegel's formula in Arthur Danto's terms), and aligns them according to a historical *telos* inexorably leading to the realization of *art itself* by way of the progressive *Aufhebung* of *art altogether's* objective spirit by the Absolute Spirit. According to both the Kantian and the Hegelian views, *art altogether* refers to everything humankind has called art in the course of its history, and keeps calling art. But from the Hegelian point of view of this Absolute Spirit, it would be a closed set, to which nothing new can be added, conceptually. Artists may well continue to produce works; the concept of art has reached its completeness. This is what is implied by Hegel's notion of the end of art and, I suspect, by Arthur Danto's 'art beyond the pale of history' or by Hans Belting's 'end of art history' as well.⁷ My remarks are meant to offer an alternative to their views, one that both acknowledges that art is inevitably appreciated by comparison with previous art and yet leaves room for true artistic innovation. As a regulative idea, art (*art itself*) is neither an accomplished concept nor a thing of the past. As a collection of things, art (*art altogether*) is neither a closed set nor a basis for comparison having become an absolute benchmark. As the expression of

⁷ See Arthur Danto, *After the End of Art* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997); Hans Belting, *Das Ende der Kunstgeschichte, Eine Revision nach zehn Jahren* (München: Verlag C. H. Beck, 1995).

aesthetic judgements claiming universal validity, art (*art as such*), is not immune to contamination by the most idiosyncratic preferences coming from all cultures and all niches of society. Quite to the contrary, that's what it's made of. And as the condition our present-day culture finds itself in, art (*art in general*), is the widest open situation imaginable, from which there is or should be no retreat in the foreseeable future.

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