University of Reading

Peter Lamarque's Aesthetic Essentialism

PhD Thesis

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Abstract

This thesis argues that the aesthetic character of some conceptual works of art can be determined by the possession of essential aesthetic properties. By discussing Peter Lamarque's account of individual aesthetic essentialism one can suggest that conceptual works can be aesthetically investigated. Chapter I introduces the concept of the aesthetic and discusses Frank Sibley's account of aesthetic concepts. Chapter II analyses in detail Sibley's two-fold relational character of aesthetic properties. Chapter III introduces Lamarque's concept of aesthetic properties and it also insists on a distinction between artistic and aesthetic properties. Chapter IV introduces a general account of essentialism and then discusses Lamarque's new-object theory. Chapter V investigates Lamarque's weaker version of individual aesthetic essentialism and analyses the distinction between essential and inessential aesthetic properties. Finally, Chapter VI considers the aesthetics of conceptual art and argues that some conceptual pieces have essential aesthetic properties. The philosophical discussions are supported by appeal to many different works of art, from traditional works to contemporary works. I conclude that all conceptual works have aesthetic properties but mostly there are inessential properties. My suggestion at the end of this thesis is more radical. A close analysis identified essential aesthetic properties in some conceptual works of art and this contributes to the aesthetic character and value of these works.

Declaration

I confirm that this is my own work and the use of all material from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged.

Mona Roxana Shields

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Contents

INTRODUCTION

1 Motivating Questions

This thesis is motivated by the debate in contemporary aesthetics about the nature and main characteristics of works of art, in particular conceptual works. On the one hand, I am interested in the main philosophical theories of art which deal with the characterisation of works of art and their main features. On the other hand I am interested in the explanatory force these theories have in clarifying ontological questions about works of art and the complex subjective experiences prompted by works of art.

In contemporary aesthetics there are two sets of important conceptions that function as a basis for most discussions. The first set consists in these three concepts: the work of art, the artist and the art audience. The second set has the following three important concepts: the aesthetic attitude, the aesthetic properties and the aesthetic experience. I have become fascinated by the relations of dependency and the impact that those concepts have on shaping our understanding of art and art responses. Therefore, I decided that I have to make a choice about a starting point in investigating works of art and their experience, and this starting point was the concept of aesthetic properties.

There are rival theories about aesthetic properties and the most important dichotomy is that between a realist position (aesthetic properties are in the work) and an anti-realist position (aesthetic properties are not in the work, they are imputed to the work). The most important philosophical literature about aesthetic concepts and properties are the papers by Frank Sibley and his supporters. I focused mainly on Sibley's work and that of his philosophical descendants. There are also other discussions, like the one about the distinction between artistic and aesthetic properties, which contribute to a larger picture of the importance of aesthetic properties in art.

While developing a picture about philosophical contributions to explanations of the nature and the role of aesthetic properties in art experiences and appreciation, in particular in conceptual works' appreciation, I have become conscious of a contemporary predilection for anti-essentialist approaches to art. However, I realised that I am a realist about aesthetic

properties and I believe that an essentialist position about aesthetic properties can be sustained. I found Peter Lamarque's position on aesthetic essentialism very convincing, even though there are a number of serious objections to it. Interestingly, I found that the most effective way to tackle some of these objections is by a detailed analysis and discussion of particular works of art.

2 Overview of the Thesis

Experiences of works of art are some of the most rewarding experiences one has. There is a fierce debate about what kind of experiences are responses to conceptual art. In this thesis I shall suggest that conceptual art can be aesthetically experienced and appreciated. In order to support this claim, I shall first discuss Lamarque's individual aesthetic essentialism. Lamarque's essentialism proposes that some works of art necessarily possess a distinctive aesthetic character. In order to present this account and consider objections to it, it is useful to set up a strong conceptual framework. The concept of the aesthetic and that of aesthetic properties are vital for an understanding of Peter Lamarque's aesthetic essentialism.

CHAPTER I of this thesis has two main sections. In *Section 1,* I introduce the main historical dimensions of the concept of the aesthetic in order to reveal interesting developments in the use of the term and to identify a number of contemporary philosophical arguments about works of art and aesthetic properties. In *Section 2,* I discuss Frank Sibley's conception of the aesthetic, proposed in his investigation of aesthetic concepts. I close the chapter with an initial proposal about main features of the concept of the aesthetic: the concept is indissolubly linked to the perceptual and any account of the aesthetic needs to involve an understanding of the distinction and the relationship between the aesthetic and the non-aesthetic.

CHAPTER II discusses one of the most important concepts of any theory about works of art, that of aesthetic properties. In this chapter I focus mainly on Sibley's account of aesthetic properties, an account which had a big influence on Lamarque's aesthetic realism, in particular his property realism. I analyse in detail the two-fold relational character of aesthetic properties: aesthetic properties are dependent upon non-aesthetic perceptual properties (*Section 1*) and aesthetic properties have a relation to qualified observers (*Section 2*). I conclude, in a Sibleyan manner, that the dependence of aesthetic properties on non-

aesthetic properties is one of emergence. Moreover, I propose a broad employment of the concept of the aesthetic, beyond sense perception.

CHAPTER III introduces Lamarque's account of key features of aesthetic properties. In *Section 1* of this chapter, I go over the main characteristics of aesthetic properties, on which Lamarque agrees with other thinkers, and also the characteristics which Lamarque argues for, in opposition to other views. In *Section 2*, of this chapter, I discuss in detail the difference between aesthetic and artistic properties, a distinction which is important of discussions of the aesthetics of contemporary art. Also here I analyse a number of 20th century works of art in order to illuminate the attribution of important aesthetic properties to those works.

CHAPTER IV proposes first a general introduction to essentialism (*Section 1*) and secondly an introduction to Lamarque's argument for individual essentialism (*Section 2*). This particular type of essentialism rests upon two premises. The first one is that works of art are ontologically different objects from the mere objects that embody them (Lamarque calls this view, new-object theory). Lamarque's new-object theory is the subject of *Section 2* of this chapter. But Lamarque's second premise is dealt with in the next chapter. The conclusion of this chapter agrees with Lamarque that works of art are cultural objects which are public and perceivable, they are new things brought into the world by artists' manipulation and creation under a certain conception and these new objects have a certain identity and certain survival conditions.

CHAPTER V discusses Lamarque's two versions of individual essentialism and explains why Lamarque prefers the weaker version. It also analyses in detail Lamarque's second premise of his aesthetic individual essentialism, which suggests that some aesthetic properties have a necessary relation to the individual works of art and not to the objects that embody them. One of the pillars of the investigation into individual aesthetic essentialism is the distinction between essential and inessential aesthetic properties. I apply this distinction by looking at a number of works of contemporary art. The conclusion of this chapter is in agreement with Lamarque's essentialism, that some works of art necessarily possess a distinctive aesthetic character because they possess potentially identifiable essential aesthetic properties.

CHAPTER VI considers conceptual art and argues that conceptual works can be aesthetically investigated if one is able to show that some conceptual pieces have essential aesthetic properties. Thus, in the first section of this chapter I briefly remind the reader of the main concepts I discussed in previous chapters (*Section 1*), in the next section I try to present a general characterisation of conceptual art (*Section 2*), and in the third section I propose my own characterisation of conceptual art, arguing that works of conceptual art can be assessed aesthetically and that a small number of conceptual works have essential aesthetic properties (S*ection 3*).

Therefore this thesis shows that Lamarque's individual essentialism can be applied to conceptual works of art, and an in depth analysis of conceptual art works shows that many conceptual works can be aesthetically assessed.

CHAPTER I
The Concept of the Aesthetic – Historical Dimensions

There are two ways in which the term 'aesthetic' is used: one refers to the discipline of aesthetics[1] (as a branch of philosophy) which deals with the appreciation of art and nature and the other is used mainly as a qualifier applied to a variety of substantives. For example the term 'aesthetic' can be applied to the words: perception, attitude, distance, experience, enchantment, interest, inclination, emotion, dimension, situation, intentions, judgement, principles, evaluation, theory, realism, properties, object, appearance, style, etc. Richard Shusterman emphasises that the vagueness and variability of the concept lead some philosophers to frustration and scepticism regarding the usefulness of such a concept:

> One source of the concept's blurredness is that the aesthetic ambiguously refers not only to distinctive but also diverse objects of perception [...]. It also refers to a distinctive mode of consciousness that grasps such objects [...] To complicate things further, 'aesthetic' also applies to the distinctive discourse used to discuss those objects and modes of perception.[2]

Despite these ambiguities Shusterman argues that 'even vague terms still signify' and one way of dealing with this lack of precision is through a detailed investigation into the myriad of conceptions that are embedded in different uses of the term. My initial attempt to deal with this vagueness is to look at some of the historical usages of the term 'aesthetic' and briefly distinguish between them. Although I am aware that an overview of the history of the term 'aesthetic' appears painstakingly meticulous, I believe that such an enterprise would reveal interesting developments in the use of the term and could illuminate a number of contemporary philosophical arguments of the experience and appreciation of art.

One could argue that the 18th century was a turning point for the meaning and the theoretical functions of the concept of the aesthetic. The roots of the conception of the aesthetic could be trace back to two main periods: the period before the 18th century (when there was a general conception of sensory perception) and the period after the 18th century

[1] Noël Carroll makes a different kind of distinction between a broad sense of aesthetics, which is interchangeable with the term 'philosophy of art' and a narrow sense of aesthetics, which refers to the audience's response to artworks or nature. (N. Carroll, *Philosophy of Art*, Routledge, London, 1999, p.153).

[2] R. Shusterman, 'Aesthetic Experience: From Analysis to Eros' in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 64, No. 2, Spring 2006, p. 217

(when the aesthetic referred to a particular mode of perception). The history of the concept of the aesthetic becomes even more complicated in the 20th century when some philosophers begin to be sceptical about using the term 'aesthetic' to describe a particular mode of perception and apply the qualifier 'aesthetic' not to modes of perception but to experiences, attitudes, properties or situations.

Section 1 of this chapter deals with the period before the 18th century when I briefly mention the etymological roots of the term 'aesthetic' – in particular Plato's and Aristotle's use of the term *aisthētikós*, and for the 18th century period I mention the British taste theorists, and the German philosophers Alexander G. Baumgarten and Immanuel Kant. In *Section 2*, I discuss a 20th century essential conception of the aesthetic proposed by Frank Sibley in his investigation of aesthetic concepts[3] and I end up with an initial proposal of how I intend to use the term 'aesthetic'.

Section 1

The word 'aesthetic' comes from the Greek *aisthētikós* and means things perceptible by the senses and a person who perceives is an *aesthētēs*.[4] Diane Collinson underlines that during the Ancient Greek period the term 'aesthesis':

> ...had no special application to the perception of works of art and beauty; it described every kind of perception based on the senses and it marked out one side of a division that was important in Greek thought, namely, the division between the sensory perception of things and the intellectual apprehension of them. (Collinson 1992, p. 112)

I would argue that although this sense of the term did not refer specifically to the appreciation of nature or art it is an important part of the history of the term 'aesthetic', because any philosophical discussion of the aesthetic experience should start with perception. There are a number of preliminary observations I would like to make regarding the role of perception in aesthetic experience. First, there are some philosophers in contemporary philosophy who argue that all discussions about the aesthetic experience should be conducted within the

[3] Frank Sibley 'Aesthetic Concepts' in *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art* eds. Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen, Blackwell, Oxford, 2004 and 'Particularity, Art and Evaluation' in *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art* eds. Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen, Blackwell, Oxford, 2004

[4] *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, 1966

sphere of philosophy of perception. For example, Bence Nanay in his paper 'Aesthetic Attention' argues that: 'What is distinctive about aesthetic experiences is the way our perceptual attention is exercised'.[5] Indeed when discussing aesthetic experience one needs to start with an investigation into the phenomenal character of a perceptual experience, which according to D.W. Hamlyn is:

> ....the result of the ways in which sensations produced in us by objects blend with our ways of thinking of and understanding those objects (which, it should be noted, are things in the world and should not be confused with the sensations they produce). (Hamlyn 2000, p. 463)

However, a comprehensive account of aesthetic experience should not stop here; discussions of the phenomenal character should be combined or followed by discussions of the role of imagination, the importance of art history knowledge and the deployment of a varied array of concepts related to art encounters.[6] The second observation is that there are many philosophers that speak of aesthetic perception as a special faculty of perception, a tradition started by the British taste theorists, and it is important to critically acknowledge the role of perception in the aesthetic experience of visual arts. And the last observation is that in recent decades an interesting debate has started about the distinction between two types of art: perceptual and non-perceptual art and therefore discussions about perception in the arts are crucial to this debate.[7] To conclude, arguments from philosophy of perception have an important role to play in arguments about the aesthetic experience but an investigation into the nature of the aesthetic experience should not be exhausted by arguments from the philosophy of perception.

To go back to the original intention of presenting historical uses of the concept of the aesthetic, one should start with Plato's use of the term *aisthesis.* In the second part of

[5] Unpublished article presented by B. Nanay at the 50th Anniversary of the British Society of Aesthetics, Heythrop College, London, 2010

[6] One can mention here the two fold character of such an experience (phenomenal and representational or conceptual). For defences of such a view see Millar's argument that the phenomenal character of an experience can be detached from its conceptual character (A. Millar, *Reasons and Experience*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991, pp. 495-505) and Peter Lamarque's remark that: 'The permeability of experience (and perception) to belief plays a crucial part in the perception of all visual art' (P. Lamarque, 'On Perceiving Conceptual Art' , eds. Peter Goldie and Elisabeth Schellekens, *Philosophy and Conceptual Art,* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007, p 12)

[7] For example, this is discussed in detail in James Shelley's article 'The Problem of Non-Perceptual Art', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol. 43, No. 4, Oct. 2003 and in P. Lamarque's article 'On Perceiving Conceptual Art', 2007.

Theaetetus (151d-186e), Plato puts forward an argument that knowledge is perception which he rejects in the third part of the dialogue (187a-210c):

> Theaetetus: [...] It is perfectly clear now that knowledge is different from perception.
> Socrates: [...] we have completely given up looking for knowledge in perception. Instead we'll look for it in whatever one calls the function of the mind when it is involved with things by itself. (Plato 1987, 187a, p. 91)

In the third and fourth part of the dialogue, Plato seems to argue that *aesthesis* is both sensation and perception (the Greek term means both) which implies that it has a non-cognitive and a cognitive use. Different scholars agree that Plato is not very clear about what kind of capacity *aesthesis* is: judgemental/cognitive or non-judgemental/non-cognitive. For example, Allan Silverman argues that Plato does not distinguish between perception and sensation (Silverman: 1990, footnote 1)[8] and Robin A. H. Waterfield justifies the use of 'perception' in his translation of *Theaetetus* as follow:

> 'Perception' is the closest we can get in English to the initial vagueness of *aesthesis*: the dictionary definition of both terms range from sensation to mental understanding (Waterfield, 1987, p.144)

Aristotle dedicated most of *De Anima* to the faculty of perception (*aesthesis*); Hamlyn makes two important observations about Aristotle's treatment of the term *aesthesis*, one is that Aristotle does not take a traditional epistemological approach:

> But his approach is nevertheless philosophical (whatever else it is) in that he clearly attempts to give an account of the concept of aesthesis. He is concerned with the logic of our talk about perception, or, to be more exact, of Greek talk about aesthesis. (Hamlyn 1959, p. 7)

Hamlyn's other observation is that Aristotle is inconsistent in using the technical vocabulary

[8] For a detailed discussion of the Platonic sense of *aesthesis* see Allan Silverman: 'Plato on Perception and "Commons" ', *The Classical Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No.1, 1990, pp. 148-175 and J. Cooper, 'Plato on Sense-Perception and Knowledge (Theaetetus 184-6)', *Phronesis* Vol. 15, No. 2, 1970, p. 123-46. For an in depth discussion regarding Aristotle's use of the term aesthesis see Hamlyn's article: 'Aristotle's Account of Aesthesis in the De Anima', *The Classical Quarterly*, New Series, Vol. 9, No. 1, May, 1959, pp. 6-16

related to *aesthesis*. Hamlyn's concludes of the Aristotelian use of the term *aesthesis* that:

> It covers both what we should call 'perception' and also what we should call 'sensation'. There has always been a tendency (natural but incorrect) on the part of philosophers to assimilate perception to sensation, and where, as in Greek, there is no distinct terminology, it is only too easy not to make the distinction at all. [...] The faculty of sense-perception is that faculty by means of which we are able to characterize or identify things as a result of the use of our senses. It is reasonable, therefore, to connect perception with judging, as Aristotle does, although it is incorrect to identify it with judging, as he also does. (Hamlyn 1959, p. 6)

Although Plato and Aristotle used the term 'aesthesis' to refer to perception in general[9] and did not use the term in relation to the appreciation of art and nature, I wanted to emphasise that the Greek roots of the term 'aesthetic' point to the importance of understanding the role of perception in aesthetic experience.[10]

After Plato and Aristotle other philosophers like Plotinus, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas or the Renaissance thinkers continued and developed arguments regarding the appreciation of beauty and the arts but the term aesthetics started to be used in connection with the appreciation of art and nature only after Alexander G. Baumgarten proposed the term 'aesthetica' for a 'science of perception' in 1750.[11] Roger Scruton notices that Baumgarten used the term 'aesthesis':

> ....to denote what he considered to be the distinctive feature of poetry, namely that it presents a form of "sensuous" knowledge, through which we grasp particulars, as opposed to intellectual or conceptual knowledge which always generalizes. [...] This means that the content of poetry is always at some level a perceptual content and not expressible through concepts alone.' (Scruton 2007, p. 233)

[9] Roger Scruton in his article 'In Search of the Aesthetic' also points out that the Greek term *aesthesis* means, depending on context 'sensation, perception or feeling (as in 'anaesthetic')'. *British Journal of Aesthetics*, No. 3, July 2007, p. 233

[10] There is a another discussion that one can have with regard to Plato's and Aristotle's contributions to debates about beauty, different art forms (poetry, music, painting, dance, tragedy) and other art related terms (for example: mimesis, catharsis, artistic value).

[11] Aesthetica (Frankfurt 1750, 1758) and an earlier version of arguments about the sensuous perception appears in his *Meditationes Philosophicae de Nonnullus ad Poema Pertinentitous* in 1735.

What Scruton draws attention to, is that Baumgarten did consider the perceptual level of poetry as well as the conceptual level as part of the content of poetry. Similarly Nicholas Davey explains that Baumgarten's account shows that poetic works have an intensive as well as an extensive clarity:

> ....intensive in so far that they invoke a highly particular object, and extensive in as much as the richness of poetic allusions involves making all the implicit associations of an image explicitly clear. (Davey 2001, p. 41)

The most important observation regarding Baumgarten's theory is that for him aesthetics was a 'science' of sensitive knowing, which involved perception in order to experience beauty. He emphasised the importance of immediate experience as oppose to an intellective/scientific approach. But what was this sensitive knowing? According to Shusterman, Baumgarten considered the sense of sight and hearing not as lower senses but as 'higher' senses, primarily associated with mental activity. Because we have this independent source of knowledge – exercising the higher sense perception, one could argue, we can appreciate the content of poetry both perceptually and conceptually.

Before moving to the discussion regarding the Kantian use of the concept of the aesthetic one needs to mention the British taste theorists' tradition (Lord Shaftesbury, Francis Hutcheson, Thomas Reid and David Hume). James Shelley in his article 'The Concept of the Aesthetic' argues that:

> The concept of the aesthetic descends from the concept of taste. [...] the eighteenth-century theory of taste emerged, in part, as a corrective to the rise of rationalism, particularly as applied to beauty, and to the rise of egoism, particularly as applied to virtue. (Shelley 2009, p.2)

Shelley argues that the rationalism about beauty meant that judgements of beauty were judgements of reason and that the British empiricist tradition reacted against the idea that judgements of taste were 'mediated by inferences form principles or application concepts' (Shelley, 2009, p.2). He calls this reaction against rationalism the *immediacy thesis* and points out that as early as 1719 Jean-Baptiste Dubos said that:

> We have a sense given us by nature to distinguish whether the cook acted according to the rules of his art. People taste the ragoo, and tho' unacquainted with those rules, they are able to tell whether it be good or not. The same may be said in some respect of the production of the mind, and of pictures made to please and move us. (Dubos 1748, vol. II, p. 238–239 quoted in Shelley 2009, p. 2)

Shelley underlines that other thinkers like Dubos, for example Hume, Shaftesbury, Hutcheson and Reid regarded the faculty of taste as a kind of "internal sense" different from the five senses and this sense was dependent 'for its objects on the antecedent operation of some other mental faculty or faculties' (Shelley 2009, p.3). The taste theory argues for a capacity that is used for distinguishing different aesthetic features of objects and in particular beauty. According to David W. Whewell the taste philosophers argue for different understandings of what taste involves: (a) an 'inner sense' – a form of aesthetic perception (as described earlier), (b) an attitude one needs to adopt – the correct aesthetic attitude (for example, Kant's disinterestedness) or (c) an aesthetic response to the formal features of an object (for example, the most obvious such features are unity, balance and harmony).[12] Although there are a lot of objections to the taste theory (for example: how can we account for the diversity of aesthetic responses, what is a competent judge, what are the universal principles of taste, how can we explain such a thing as natural good taste?), my intention in this section was only to briefly look at some usages of the concept of the aesthetic and to draw attention to its multitude of senses in order to create an historical navigation map for my own journey.

To return to the exploration of different senses of the concept of the aesthetic, the history of the concept culminated in the 18th century with Kantian aesthetics. First I briefly mention the Kantian employment of the term (a more detailed analysis of Kantian aesthetics is presented in Appendix 1) and secondly I point out different worries about the conception of the aesthetic after Kant.

Kant used the term 'aesthetics' long before the *Critique of the Power of Judgement* (1790), in his lecture courses (1765-66):

> And in this, the very close relationship of the materials under examination leads us at the same time, in the *critique of reason*, to pay some attention to the *critique of*

[12] David A. Whewell 'Taste', in: David Cooper (ed.), *A Companion to Aesthetics*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001, p. 417

taste, that is to say, *aesthetics*.[13]

Kant was influenced by Baumgarten's work and he gave lectures in 1772-73 about 'aesthetics' when discussing 'the nature of poetic invention, differences among the arts and genius as the source of artistic creation' (Paul Guyer's Introduction to *CPJ*, 2003, xvi). Guyer argues that, during this period, Kant worked on the association between taste and the faculty of pleasure which becomes the focus of his third critique. By 1781 when he wrote the *Critique of Pure Reason* he had already thought of a systematic way of arguing for universal principles of feelings and taste. The term 'aesthetic' appears in Kant's first section 'The Transcendental Doctrine of Elements' of his first critique; section which is divided into: 'Transcendental Aesthetic' and 'Transcendental Logic'. However here the term 'aesthetic' is used differently from its modern usage; Kant writes in a footnote from Transcendental Aesthetic:

> The Germans are the only ones who now employ the word "aesthetics" to designate that which others call the critique of taste. The ground for this is a failed hope, held by the excellent analyst Baumgarten, of bringing the critical estimation of the beautiful under the principles of reason, and elevating its rules to a science. But this effort is futile. […] For this reason it is advisable again to desist from the use of this term and to save it for that doctrine which is true science (Kant, *CPR*, 2000, p. 156)

In his first critique Kant rejects Baumgarten's idea of a science of taste proposing to use the term 'aesthetic' for 'his theory of the contribution of the forms of sensibility to knowledge in general' (Guyer & Wood, *CPR*, Introduction, 2000, p. 4). By 1790 when Kant published the *Critique of the Power of Judgement* (1790) he accepted Baumgarten's usage of 'aesthetics' as a science of taste and he believed that he could find *a priori* principles for taste. In his third critique, particularly in the first section, the 'Analytic of the Beautiful', Kant focuses on the analysis of Beauty and aesthetic judgements and the grounds for making these judgements: the immutable features of the aesthetic experience (subjectivity, pleasurableness and disinterestedness). Kant's introduction of the aesthetic judgement as a special faculty which allows the free play between the cognitive faculties of imagination and understanding is one

[13] Kant's *Announcement of the Program of his Lectures for Winter Semester* 1765-66, 2:303-13, quoted in Editor's Introduction to *CPJ*, ed. P. Guyer, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. xvi

of the most influential proposals to the problem of taste (the cornerstones of this proposal are: the distinction between judgement and pleasure, the universality of aesthetic judgement and his concept of *sensus communis* as a universal shared faculty of agreeing).

To return to the semantic dimension for Kant the 'aesthetic' has two usages: as a general term to refer to sensible aspects of our cognition of nature and in a narrower way as referring to those sensible objects valued as art or being beautiful.[14] Regarding the latter, Scruton says:

> In Kant's usage the term 'aesthetic' denoted the sensuous aspect of our appreciation of beauty, which in turn is suppose to explain its 'freedom from concepts': in other words it was part of a theory designed to *explain* the phenomena that in Baumgarten are merely observed. (Scruton, 2007, p. 233)

However, James Shelley points out that there is a terminological discontinuity between the Kantian concept of taste and our contemporary conception of the aesthetic. He suggests that we use the term 'aesthetic' instead of the term 'taste' first, because we prefer an adjective to a noun and secondly, because the etymological Greek root of the term 'aesthetic'('sensory perception') maintains the strong link to 'immediacy' that is manifest in our understanding of the conception of taste. Shelly explains that the consequence of this preference:

> …has allowed for the retiring of a series of awkward expressions: the expressions "judgment of taste," "emotion of taste" and "quality of taste" [which] have given way to the arguably less offensive "aesthetic judgment," "aesthetic emotion," and "aesthetic quality". (Shelley 2009, p.5)

Another interesting characterisation of the evolution of concept of the aesthetic in a post-Kantian era is proposed by Nick Zangwill who maintains that we need to centre the discussions of the aesthetic on the concept of aesthetic judgement. He argues that the current concept of aesthetic judgement includes judgements of beauty and ugliness and this way of thinking uses a wider sense of the concept of the aesthetic than the Kantian conception. However Zangwill notices that:

[14] D. Burnham, *An Introduction to Kant's Critique of Judgement*, Edinburgh University Press, 2000, p.40

> ….there is also a respect in which the contemporary notion seems to be narrower than Kant's notion. For Kant used the notion to include both judgments of beauty (or of taste) as well as judgments of the *agreeable* […]. The contemporary notion also excludes judgments about pictorial and semantic content.[15]

Zangwill's view captures well the contemporary notion of the aesthetic and the perplexity related to its different uses as a predicate which qualifies 'many different kinds of things'. He also reminds us that the two most important conceptions of the aesthetic of the 20th century are Monroe C. Beardsley's and Frank Sibley's.[16] In the following section I focus mainly on Sibley's characterisation of the aesthetic, view which influenced most of the debates about aesthetic vocabulary and aesthetic appreciation, and a view which is also foundational for Lamarque's aesthetic essentialism.

Section 2

Taking into consideration the development of the arts in the 20th century[17], the trajectory of aesthetics as a discipline[18] and the preoccupation with different issues of empiricism, ontology, interpretation and intentionality, shows that the more traditional usage of the term 'aesthetic' suffered noticeable changes. For example, Berys Gaut underlines the puzzlement provoked by the term 'aesthetic' which is 'a frustrating one' and 'at once indispensable and yet obdurately obscure'.[19] According to Gaut, there are two main senses of the word 'aesthetic', a narrow one and a wider one. The narrow sense has to do with traditional usage: when people talk about something that is aesthetically good they mean that it is beautiful and when they talk about something aesthetically bad or 'unaesthetic' they mean it is ugly. The wider sense goes beyond the beautiful and the ugly and it gets its main force from Frank

[15] Nick Zangwill, 'Aesthetic Judgement', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2014/entries/aesthetic-judgment/>

[16] The main critics of Beardsley's and Sibley's theories about the notion of the aesthetic are George Dickie, and Ted Cohen and Peter Kivy (Nick Zangwill, 'Aesthetic Judgement', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2014 Edition)

[17] The development of the term 'aesthetic' reaches a critical mass at the beginning of the 20th century, especially in the formalist tradition when the term 'aesthetic' was used in relation to the perception of the formally unified (the most significant representatives are Roger Fry, Clive Bell, Monroe C. Beardsley). Lamarque discusses in detail the role of formalism in literary appreciation and also his views are relevant in discussing visual arts and aesthetic empiricism – I will return to the importance of formal qualities in the arts in the following chapters.

[18] Interestingly R. Scruton remarks that there are many doubts about the subject matter of aesthetics and also that a number of thinkers argue that aesthetic is an invented category which has nothing to do with the human condition. However he rejects such approaches. ('In Search of the Aesthetic', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, No. 3, July 2007, p. 232)

[19] B. Gaut, *Art, Emotion and Ethics*, OUP, Oxford, 2013, p. 26

Sibley's article 'Aesthetic Concepts' (1959). Sibley also wrote about the distinction between aesthetic and nonaesthetic properties, the link between aesthetics and perception and most importantly, about our use of aesthetic vocabulary. An interesting historical point is that Sibley, according to Colin Lyas, is reported compiling his list of aesthetic concepts by carrying out an extensive research between 1948 and 1949 of critical writings of literature and paintings and finding a wealth of 'praise words', 'merit and demerit terms' and 'aesthetic terms'.[20] Sibley's original heterogeneous list of aesthetic concepts includes concepts like: 'unified, balanced, integrated, lifeless, serene, sombre, dynamic, powerful, vivid, delicate, moving, trite, sentimental, tragic' as well as the following expressions: 'telling contrast, set up a tension, conveys a sense of…'.[21] This rich terminological resource made Sibley versatile in discussions of aesthetic concepts and one can see how this resource was useful in his construal of his arguments from his two influential papers 'Aesthetic Concepts' and 'Particularity, Art and Evaluation'.[22] Here one needs to add that, although Sibley speaks about application of aesthetic concepts, he also often switches his discourse to aesthetic properties.[23]

Another feature of Sibley's take on aesthetic concepts is pointed out by Derek Matravers who suggests that Sibley's choice of 'concepts' instead of 'properties' suits better the aesthetic discourse because it avoids a lot of problems related to 'the varied and often obscure' uses of 'property'.[24] However, Eddy Zemach suggests that Sibley's list is a compilation of predicates which attributed to different things denote different properties. For example, Zemach explains how the attribution of the predicate 'black' to a poem denotes an aesthetic property but its attribution to a surface does not.[25] Thus, although I take Matravers's point about the importance of the distinction between aesthetic concepts and aesthetic properties, I am not worried about this distinction here, because in this section I talk about Sibley's analysis of aesthetic concepts and in the first part of Chapter II of this thesis, I look at Sibley's discussion of aesthetic qualities (indeed Sibley ends up using the term 'qualities' instead of 'properties' in his later works). In other words, because I am interested in the

[20] Colin Lyas 'Sibley', in *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetic,* eds. Berys Gaut and Dominic McIver Lopes, 2005, p. 173

[21] Frank Sibley, 'Aesthetic Concepts' in *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art* eds. Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen, Blackwell, Oxford, 2004, p. 127

[22] In this section will mainly use Sibley's paper 'Particularity, Art and Evaluation', *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art* eds. Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen, Blackwell, Oxford, 2004

[23] Interestingly, Lamarque mentions that in 1965 Sibley refers to the aesthetic concepts as aesthetic qualities (Sibley, 'Aesthetic and Non-Aesthetic', Philosophical Review, 74, 1965, p. 135).

[24] Derek Matravers, 'Aesthetic Properties', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society,* Supplementary Volume, Vol. 79 (2005), pp. 191-227)

[25] Eddy Zemach, 'What is an Aesthetic Property?', *Aesthetic Concepts, Essays after Sibley,* OUP, 2001, p. 54

properties that are the focus of aesthetic experience and the nature of our aesthetic responses to works of art, inevitably means to talk about both aesthetic concepts and the properties they name – in other words, to consider how one makes aesthetic attributions. In addition, I need to mention that I am not very worried about the 'existence' claim about aesthetic properties – I assume that there are such things as aesthetic properties. However, I find the question about the nature of such properties intriguing and for the rest of this thesis I will often come back to this by trying to clarify claims about the nature of aesthetic properties, in particular in Chapter II and III.

There are many issues arising for Sibley's famous papers about aesthetic concepts and properties; the most important ones that I would like to briefly mention here are: certain requirements for the aesthetic properties to be perceived, their relational character and the descriptive and evaluative character of the aesthetic concepts that name the aesthetic properties. For the rest of this section I am going to focus on Sibley's influential view on aesthetic concepts and their character.[26]

The distinction between the evaluative and descriptive character of aesthetic concepts is discussed in detail by Sibley in his paper 'Particularity, Art and Evaluation' (1974) where he questions P.F. Strawson's claim that all general terms used in supporting aesthetic verdicts are evaluative but not descriptive.[27] Although Sibley considers the distinction surrounded by 'murk and ambiguity' he thinks that there are ways in which people use this distinction in aesthetic assessment that make sense.[28] Sibley's analysis of such characterization has become well known and is given a prevalent treatment in a number of important aesthetic arguments, for example, in the works of M. Beardsley, J. Levinson, A. Goldman, A. Isenberg, P. Lamarque. To begin the discussion of evaluative and descriptive characterizations of aesthetic concepts and of the aesthetic properties they name, I present Sibley's distinction and afterwards I discuss in particular Livingston's usage of this distinction.

Sibley argues that there are three different ways in which people call a term 'evaluative' depending on what weight one puts on the thing that the term is applied to (to what extent the thing is considered valuable as a whole, or to what extent the term is just naming a property which is considered a merit or demerit of that thing, or to what extent it is used not only to show that a property is attributed to the thing but also to indicate that the speaker has a

[26] In Chapter II, I also analyse aesthetic properties and I discuss Sibley's view about the requirements that aesthetic properties are perceived and they have relational character.
[27] F. Sibley 'Particularity, Art and Evaluation', in *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art* eds. Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen, Blackwell, Oxford, 2004, p.244
[28] Ibid., p. 245

favourable or unfavourable attitude towards that property).[29] Accordingly, Sibley thinks that people use three categories of terms when applying evaluative terms or expressions to things:

a) *Intrinsically* or *solely evaluative terms*. These do not attribute a particular quality to the object but imply a range of qualities. Sibley says that it will be 'contextually implied' that the thing to which we apply such a term has 'some qualities in virtue of which it is valued or disvalued but no indication is given of what these qualities might be'. Such terms are: 'good', 'bad', 'mediocre', 'nice', 'nasty', 'obnoxious', 'valuable', 'effective' or 'worthless'.[30] Sibley gives the following examples with regard to aesthetic assessments: 'beautiful', 'ugly', or 'lovely'.[31]

b) *Descriptive merit-terms* merely name properties of things and could be applied by a person who does not even value those properties but only names them. Sibley gives the following examples from common language: 'sharp' (which names a property for razors), 'selective' (for wireless) or 'spherical' (for tennis balls). He thinks that these terms are straightforward property terms. His examples from aesthetics are: 'balanced', 'unified', 'evocative', 'vivid', 'funny', 'witty', 'dynamic' or 'moving'; they are descriptive terms and they point out qualities generally valued in art and aesthetic matters'.[32]

c) *Evaluation-added* property terms. These terms have both a descriptive and an evaluative component and when used, they name the presence of a particular property in an object, as well as, an indication that the speaker favours or disfavours this property. Sibley's examples from casual language are 'tasty', 'insipid', 'flagrant', 'cacophonous' or 'brash'.[33] The terms from aesthetics which appear to be part of this category are: 'elegant', 'graceful', 'handsome', 'pretty', 'ungainly', 'garish' or 'hideous'. However, Sibley rebrands this third category as 'descriptive' because the terms it contains, he argues, are initially 'evaluation added quality words' but they are commonly used 'in a neutral and purely descriptive way'.[34]

[29] F. Sibley 'Particularity, Art and Evaluation', in *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art* eds. Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen, Blackwell, Oxford, 2004, p. 245
[30] Ibid., p. 245
[31] Ibid., p. 246
[32] Ibid, p. 246
[33] Ibid., p. 246
[34] Ibid., p. 246

There are a number of issues to discuss in relation to this tripartite categorization of evaluative terms and how aesthetic terms are applied. First, the category of *solely evaluative* terms appears to be accepted by most contemporary aestheticians as a category which contains purely evaluative terms and I think this category should be retained. To elaborate one could add other terms to Sibley's first category: 'striking', 'splendid', excellent', 'mediocre', 'miserable' and execrable'[35] and argue that the *solely evaluative* category encompasses terms with the following characteristics: they represent the viewer's approval or disapproval of an object or of a subject-matter (a positive or a negative reaction), and it will be contextually implied that the object has some properties for which it is approved or disapproved of. For example, the term 'mediocre' is never used in a positive way; it is used to show disapproval of an object and this is a clear indication that the term conjures a negative reaction, which can be justified by appeal to some properties of the object if needed. A painting can be characterised as 'mediocre' because the composition is unbalanced and the chromatics are not subtle enough for the depicted subject, or on a different occasion another painting is 'mediocre' because the depicted subject is very conventional and is the execution is very crude or unskilled. Because on one occasion the application of 'mediocre' can be justified by the identification of one set of properties and on another occasion by a different set of properties, to paraphrase Sibley, applying the term 'mediocre' does not give any or very little indication of what these properties might be and this is the case with all of the terms in the first category, the *solely evaluative* one.

Secondly, although Sibley points out that the *descriptive-merit terms* (b) are straightforward property terms (even though when applied they indicate qualities which are valued in aesthetic matters) and that the *evaluation-added terms* (c) are recognised as having both a descriptive and an evaluative component, it appears that the second category (b) and the third category (c) are not very different. What is the exact difference between the two categories as envisaged by Sibley? One could say that Sibley's distinction is not very clear and the two categories are not distinct because they both contain terms that identify qualities

[35] J. Levinson, 'Aesthetic Properties, Evaluative Force, and Sensibility', in *Contemplating Art –Essays in Aesthetics*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2006, p. 316. In Note 7 from the same page, Levinson points out that he is not inclined to put 'beautiful' and 'ugly' in this first category because he thinks that these two terms in their primary employment when applied to visual objects imply a particular phenomenal impression such as 'pleasing harmoniousness' and 'displeasing disharmoniousness'. Even though, one could go along with Levinson's possible explanation of what the terms 'beautiful' or 'ugly' refer to in a visual object, there is still the issue of further qualification of how one understands harmoniousness. For example, in a painting the harmoniousness or disharmoniousness could refer to the chromatic of the painting or to its composition or its mood. Thus, I am more likely to agree with Sibley that the application of 'beautiful' or 'ugly' appear to imply that the object is valued because of a range of properties in the object which are not specified. To reiterate, I would include the terms 'beautiful' and 'ugly' in the category of solely evaluative terms contrary to Levinson's warning.

which are thought to be valuable from an aesthetic point of view. On the other hand, one can argue that the *descriptive-merit terms* (b) are terms which are recognised as describing qualities which are generally regarded as valuable without an individual speaker's approval or disapproval of those qualities. For example, if I understand Sibley, 'balance' as a *descriptive-merit term* describes something which is valued in art (certain compositional equilibrium) and the application of such a term does not involve the speaker's attitude towards this property – 'being balanced' is generally considered a valuable quality of a work of art. While the *evaluation-added terms* (c) are terms which not only indicate the presence of a particular property in an art objects but they also (clearly) express the speakers' favour or disfavour of that property.

However, a number of the aesthetic terms listed by Sibley in the second category appear problematic. One could make a good case that 'unified' and 'balanced' can be considered *descriptive* terms. However, terms like 'evocative', 'witty', 'moving' or 'funny' appear to have an evaluative component. To exemplify that the terms 'unified' and 'balanced' have a strong descriptive core, one can 'look and see' how these terms are used in visual art descriptions, in particular to the compositions of paintings.[36] To illustrate this, here is a first group of paintings which display compositional balance: the fresco of *The Holy Trinity* (1424) by Masaccio (Fig.1), *The London Crucifixion* (1475) by Antonello da Messina (Fig. 2) and *The Last Supper* (1495-98) by Leonardo da Vinci (Fig. 3). And here is another group of paintings whose compositions are characterised by uniformity: *Snow Storm – Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth* (1842) by J.M.W. Turner (Fig.4), *Forest* (1890-92) by Paul Cezanne (Fig. 5) *and Grey Tree* (1912) by Piet Mondrian (Fig. 6). One can 'look and see' why the first group of works can be described as compositionally balanced and the second group as displaying uniformity. In the first case the main reason is because of the spatial relationships between the elements of the paintings which give the composition geometrical balance and proportionality, and in the case of the second group of works, it is because of oneness in colour and composition.

[36] In general the art historian and the literary critic are able to identify balance and uniformity in works of art because these properties can be explained through the features of the design of the work which are easily discernible by an ideal critic.

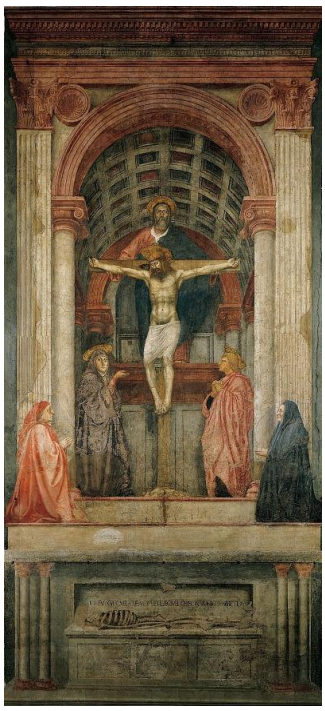

Fig.1 *The Holy Trinity* (1424) by Masaccio

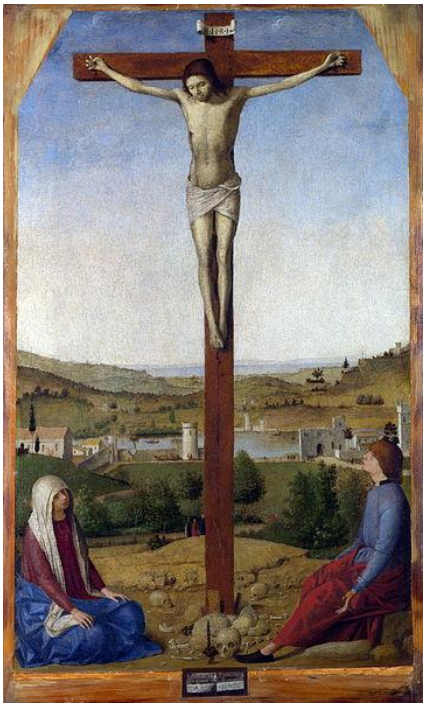

Fig. 2 *The London Crucifixion* (1475) by Antonello da Messina

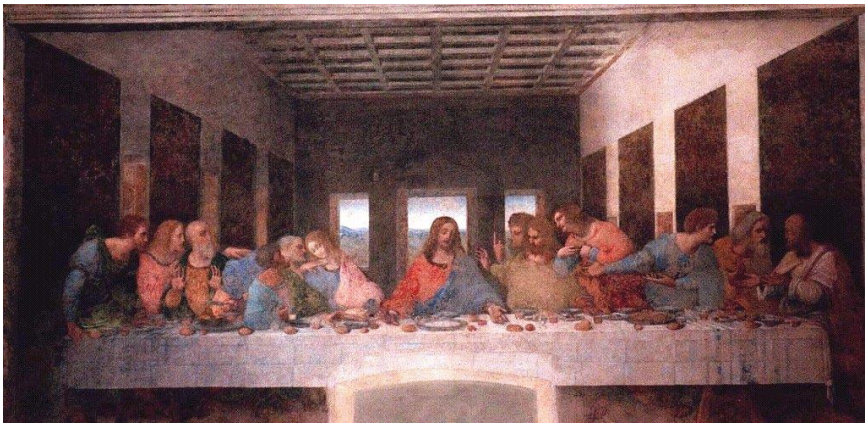

Fig. 3 *The Last Supper* (1495-98) by Leonardo da Vinci

Fig. 4 *Snow Storm – Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth* (1842) by J.M.W. Turner

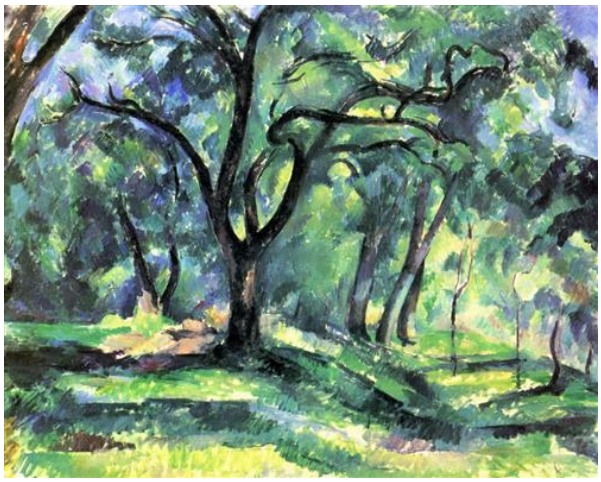

Fig. 5 *Forest* (1890-92) by Paul Cezanne

Fig. 6 *Grey Tree* (1912) by Piet Mondrian

Returning to the other terms from Sibley's second list, it is difficult to see how terms like 'witty' or 'funny' or 'moving' are not partially evaluative terms. The application of 'witty' for example involves not only that a property is attributed to a work but also a strong hint that the informed perceiver finds this property valuable and approves of it. It will be uncharacteristic to use the term 'witty' in aesthetic matters in a derogatory way or in a neutral way. However, Sibley claims first that such terms (the ones in the second category, including 'witty') could be applied by a person who did not value such qualities and then, he recognises that such usage would be odd:

> …though [the mentioned qualities] are widely valued, it would, as I said, be unlikely that a person using them would not either value these qualities himself or know that they were valued by others in a certain way.[37]

But why does Sibley insist that many aesthetic terms like 'evocative', 'moving', 'funny' 'vivid', 'dynamic' are fully descriptive terms? He claims that those terms are correctly applied as straightforward property terms because people who apply them do not always 'need to know' that the properties these terms name count as 'a merit in something'.[38] Following Sibley's reasoning then, to call a painting 'balanced' or 'unified' or 'witty' or 'moving' or 'vivid' a viewer does not need to know that balance , uniformity, wittiness, expressiveness or vividness are properties which are considered merits in the painting. But is this so?

I understand that those descriptive terms, what Sibley calls 'straightforward property terms' could gain a strong evaluative force only if used in a particular way or expressed with a particular tone. For example, one could use the term 'balanced' in an emphatic positive way when comparing a series of works whose compositions are uneven or asymmetrical with a work from that series which is balanced. In this case, the comparison makes the work in question to stand out and this also betrays a strong evaluative stance that the viewer expresses – the viewer approves of the work because it is 'so' balanced. But, one could say that a composition 'being balanced' is always considered a positive evaluation, reflecting the admiration for the painter's skill, his awareness of his predecessors' work and the audience preference for such a quality in visual compositions. However, Sibley would argue that

[37] F. Sibley 'Particularity, Art and Evaluation', in *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art* eds. Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen, Blackwell, Oxford, 2004, p. 246.
[38] Ibid., p. 245.

'balance' as a formal feature of the design of the work is an objective feature of the work regardless of the viewer's evaluative stance. Here is an example of how one can support Sibley's reasoning: if one replaces the elements of a painting which is characterised as 'balanced' with black patches, the painting will still exhibit compositional balance (albeit it can now be argued that it is a different painting). The point of this thought experiment is to show that 'balance' is a quality that is more dependent on the compositional structure and is less dependent on the viewer's evaluation and attitude towards different aspects of the painting. What I mean is that 'balance' is a term that names a property of an object which can be easily identified in the object and this is the reason one can say that 'balance' describes something in the object. In the same way, a painting which is called 'unified' names an identifiable property in the painting – that of uniformity, property which is not dependent for identification on the viewer's approval or disapproval of uniformity.

In contrast, if one tries to replace any of the elements of a funny painting, with black patches or even other features that match the larger composition, the painting would case to be funny. For example, erasing the text 'Ceci n'est pas une pipe' from Magritte's painting *The Treachery of Images* (1928/29) or getting rid of the moustache from Mona Lisa's face in Duchamp's painting *L.H.O.O.Q* (1919) would make the application of the term 'funny' to these two paintings inappropriate. Although Magritte's words and Mona Lisa's moustache are part of the compositions, the humour of these works is related to a particular reaction that most of the viewers have to these elements – a particular understanding of the painters' intentions. Thus, it can be said that these paintings are funny for certain viewers, the ones that understand the context of origin of the paintings, the place of these paintings in the artists' body of work, the relation with the cultural milieu of the time of the painting, the connection of the paintings with the preceding artistic traditions, and most importantly for the viewers who like to admire and consider this sort of things.[39] Here is one observation from the above discussion I would like to make: 'funny' appears to be a term that exhibits a stronger evaluative force than terms like 'balanced' or 'unified' because most people who use the term 'funny' to describe the above paintings, not only refer to an objective feature of the paintings

[39] One is aware that there are viewers who would not find that these elements of the paintings funny; in particular Duchamp's moustache on Mona Lisa's face. It need not be necessary to consider the term 'funny' as having a very strict demanding criteria of application; one can be satisfied with an understanding of funny as an a playful, humorous quality – in the case of Duchamp's *L.H.O.O.Q* one can argue that the artist wanted to convey a sense of rebellious play against old masters. On the contrary, the painting of moustache would have been disrespectful and an act of vandalism if Duchamp attempted to paint the moustache on the real painting. He chose to create a clever pun which for a lot of people is an interesting comment on the reverence of the art object.

but they also characterise something in the painting that people need to react to, in an approving manner in order to justify the application of the term 'funny'. I would argue that the term 'funny' is a term leaning towards the descriptive more than the evaluative but it is not a fully descriptive term as Sibley proposes.

Thus one could say that Sibley's characterisation of the second category of terms, the *descriptive merit-terms*, points out a subtle distinction between (1) expressing approval and (2) identifying a feature that is in general valued. To exemplify this one can think of a person who can say: 'This thing is F, but I do not care for things which are F', where 'F' could stand for 'balanced' or 'unified' or 'dynamic'. In this example the terms 'balanced' or 'unified' or 'dynamic' are used as descriptive terms but Sibley is right to say that if the things to which these terms are applied are works of art then the terms point out qualities that are generally approved by the majority of speakers.

But how does one explain the differences between some of Sibley's aesthetic terms? There is at least one thing that can be said straightaway: Sibley's *descriptive-merit terms* (b) appear to be on a continuum; some of these terms having a strong descriptive core[40] and being devoid or almost devoid of any evaluative force at one end, and terms which have less descriptive content and more evaluative force at the other end. For example: 'balanced', 'unified', 'dynamic', 'vivid' are at the end with a strong descriptive core and 'witty' and 'funny' are at the other end where the descriptive core is weaker and there is a stronger evaluative component. What I mean here is that we are more inclined to take terms like 'funny' and 'witty' as evaluative; we appear to approve more of objects/situations which are described by those terms.

The problem with such a continuum is that we still need to clarify a way of showing how one decides the position on the continuum of each aesthetic term. I think there is a more direct approach which explains better how we use aesthetic terms and how we can catalogue them. This approach considers the meaning of aesthetic terms as an indication of their descriptive content, evaluative force and of their correct application.[41] For example, the correct application of the term 'balanced' indicates that the object (for example a painting) to which the term is applied has characteristics which can be recognised in the object, for

[40] Levinson calls it a 'a substantial descriptive content (J. Levinson, 'Aesthetic Properties, Evaluative Force, and Sensibility' in *Contemplating Art –Essays in Aesthetics*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2006, p. 316).

[41] This approach is inspired by Severin Schroeder's suggestion from his paper 'Art, Value, and Functionalism', NJA 46, October 2013. In this paper Schroeder investigates philosophical attempts to define art as an evaluative concept. The conclusion of his paper is that 'art' is not an unconditionally evaluative concept; it is a prestige concept (p. 7). Thus, there are aesthetic concepts which reflect the standards of approval by people of a particular epoch and of a particular cultural context and this is part of the meaning of these concepts.

example, a symmetrical or harmonious arrangement or design of the elements of the composition.[42] The meaning of the term 'balanced' is descriptive, referring to a particular physical arrangement or design of the elements of a composition. However, the particular way in which the elements are arranged is characterised as 'symmetrical' or 'harmonious' – characterisation which, one could argue betrays an attitude of approval towards such an arrangement or design. But again, 'symmetry' or 'harmoniousness' as properties can be considered objective features of a painting regardless of the individual or societal preferences. Thus the term 'balanced' and some of the other terms, 'unified', 'dynamic' and 'vivid' have a strong descriptive core and very often their use does not amount to approval or disapproval of the properties they name – this is the reason Sibley called them 'descriptive'.

Sibley's third category of *evaluation-added* property terms contains terms like: 'elegant', 'graceful', 'handsome', 'pretty', 'ungainly', 'garish' or 'hideous', terms which appear to have both an evaluative and a descriptive component. However these terms are very unusual. There are two remarks about Sibley's explanation of how to catalogue these terms: one is that there is acknowledgment of the importance of standards in assessments (this is Sibley's point about what is recognised as valuable in 'certain spheres') and the second one is that the recognition of a property which is valued becomes reflected in the way we use the aesthetic language – the term which names a particular valued property is used more in a descriptive rather than evaluative way. With regard to aesthetic matters, Sibley says about all terms:

> I see therefore no overriding case for denying that we have a use for many or most aesthetic terms which is not only partially but wholly descriptive. [43]

For the sake of classificatory clarity, I will call these terms, in Sibley's third category ('elegant', 'graceful', 'handsome', 'pretty', 'ungainly', 'garish' or 'hideous'), the 'problematic' terms. Sibley argues that, these are terms which although have 'some evaluative element […] typically present' they are used in a descriptive way.[44] I would like to point out that, in the above mentioned list there is at least one term that raises immediate concerns – the term 'handsome'. If this term is the masculine equivalent of the term 'beautiful', shouldn't this term be considered a *solely evaluative* term? When one

[42] The OED defines balance as 'harmony of design and proportion' (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, OUP, Oxford, 1985, p. 63).
[43] Sibley, 'Particularity, Art and Evaluation', in *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art* eds. Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen, Blackwell, Oxford, 2004, p.247.
[44] Ibid., p. 246.

characterises a man (real or depicted in a painting) as 'handsome' what is one expressing? Sibley says that the application of a term like 'beautiful' will be contextually implied according to some properties that one values, without mentioning those properties. But if one considers the term 'handsome' as being the masculine equivalent of the term 'beautiful', according to Sibley, 'handsome' should be a term applied when the speaker values some unspecified properties in the man. Therefore, according to this line of reasoning, the term 'handsome' should be part of Sibley's first category, that of *solely evaluative terms*.

Then, why does Sibley ultimately, catalogue 'handsome' in the descriptive terms category? Is it because 'handsome' indicates the presence of a particular property or a set of particular properties and in this way, it is very different from the *solely evaluative* terms like 'beautiful', which do not name any particular properties? There are a number of possible answers here: one is that the term 'handsome' is not the masculine equivalent of the term 'beautiful' – people can talk about beautiful men too even though is not very common[45] or another answer is that 'handsome' is the male equivalent of 'beautiful' but when beautiful is understood in a very narrow way (for example, when beautiful refers only to physical attractiveness or fine physical form) or a third possible answer is that the term 'handsome' is not a *solely evaluative* term because in common usage, there is a set of characteristics that can be identified and named when referring to a human being and these properties can be recognised and valued by the particular society that the speaker is a member of (which appears to be different from an evaluative term). I am going to focus on the third answer which can be supported by the claim that, there is more of an expected agreement about the application of the term 'handsome' (the socio-cultural standards of a particular society are the main guide to such applications) in comparison with the term 'beautiful'. One can think of evolutionary, as well as cultural justifications for the recognition of properties which people would identify when calling a man 'handsome'. For example some of those properties are: body symmetry, including face symmetry, a certain waist-to-hip ratio, the characteristics of a certain male ideal depicted in the arts of that particular period and images of successful males and characteristics of physical attractiveness of the epoch. The idea here is that, when the term 'handsome' is applied to a man there is a sense that everyone understands what the speaker refers to – a good-looking man in that particular socio-cultural context where the attribution

[45] According to what relationship the speaker has to the man characterised (for example, if the speaker knows the man very well), the expression a 'beautiful man' can mean different things: from exceptional physical attractiveness to a man with an extraordinary character (having kindness, courage, empathy, selflessness, etc.)

takes place. Nevertheless the sceptic can rise two objections here: first, that there is not a clear consensus about the properties the speakers refers to when calling a man 'handsome' even if the socio-cultural context is well defined and secondly, if we could agree that there is such a consensus for the properties required to call a man 'good-looking', why are we then so reluctant to agree about a consensus of application for a term like 'beautiful'? To answer the sceptic one needs to distinguish between criteria of application of a term and the properties that the term names – a distinction which can be used to explain why the term 'handsome' is part of a different category from the term 'beautiful'. First, I would say that the conditions of applications of the term 'handsome' appears to be easier to discern, because the term 'handsome' applies mostly to human beings (one can say that it applies mainly to men[46]) while the term 'beautiful' has a wider application (applies to a range of objects not only to the human form). Secondly, the meaning of the term handsome has to do with the appearance of the physical human body (attractiveness, good-looking body and face) while the term 'beautiful' has a much wider meaning (it is not only about the physicality of the human form but it also can refer to a more profound, mental or spiritual aspect of humans or other things). Thus, one could argue that the term 'handsome' has stricter criteria of application than the term 'beautiful' and the properties it names are particular properties that are easily attributable to a man in comparison with a range of unspecified properties as in the case of the properties named by the term 'beautiful'.[47] Levinson argues in a similar vein that certain aesthetic terms include an evaluative component 'irreducibly' but: '….whatever evaluative force is carried by such terms […] there are clearly descriptive limits on their application.'[48] I would like to propose that 'handsome' when applied to men is such a term: it has both, an evaluative component because people do admire and favour a set of qualities that the term names and this is reflected in the positive way it is used, and it also has a descriptive core because the meaning of the term (an attractive or a good-looking man) refers to particular

[46] There are however, interesting usages of 'handsome' that appear to fly against what I have already said. For example, the expression 'handsome woman' shows that the term 'handsome' is not only applied to men. The expression a 'handsome woman' has an interesting history: from the etymology of 'handsome' meaning 'easy to handle' to 'good looking', to Jaen Austen's usage and to the 20th century sense proposed in the Urban Dictionary. I think describing a woman as 'handsome' is to characterise the woman in a different way from characterising her as beautiful – the speaker means that she is having some distinctive features which are not necessary about physicality. One contemporary understanding of the expression 'handsome woman' is a woman who has dignity, strength of character, a vertical moral stance or having life experience and who is not necessarily characterized by sex-appeal – age appears to not be relevant here. In addition, the term 'handsome' could also be applied to things not only to people, for example a 'handsome present' is a generous present.

[47] Sibley is right when claims that *solely evaluative* terms can be applied to any subject matter and there is no indication of what particular properties are attributed to the thing in order to call it for example 'beautiful'.

[48] Levinson, 'Aesthetic Properties, Evaluative Force, and Sensibility', in *Contemplating Art –Essays in Aesthetics*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2006, p. 320

identifiable properties in a man – a fine form or figure, proportionality, symmetry, attractiveness of the body and face, properties which do not need to be contextually implied.

In the light of the above discussion we need to return to Sibley's characterisation of aesthetic terms. He does end up with only two categories of aesthetic terms: *solely evaluative* and *descriptive* because he says, we use 'many or most aesthetic terms' in a descriptive way.[49] The above discussion about Sibley's initial three categories of aesthetic terms wanted to point out the complexities of understanding how we apply aesthetic terms should start with a preliminary understanding about what kind of terms these are. To exemplify, Levinson claims that many people think that most of aesthetic terms have a mixed character – having both a descriptive and an evaluative component and the most common aesthetic terms have an identifiable descriptive aesthetic content. Also he points out that aesthetic attribution of works of art:

> …are based on, and obliquely testify to the occurrence of certain looks, impressions, or appearances which emerge out of lower perceptual properties.[50]

Levinson's position can be briefly summed up in the following way: the work of art has aesthetic properties which supervene on the work's intrinsic and relational properties (those are its structural and its artistic features), the aesthetic properties are manifest ways of appearing phenomenally, [51] and the terms used to characterise such properties have descriptive limits on application determined by 'distinctive phenomenal *impressions* or *appearances* associated with such terms'.[52] There are different problematic issues with Levinson's claim that aesthetic properties are 'ways of appearing phenomenally'[53] but what I would like to retain for discussion from Levinson's account is his idea that aesthetic terms have descriptive limits on their application, limits which are fixed ultimately by distinctive phenomenal impressions associated with such terms. To shed further light on what he means,

[49] F. Sibley 'Particularity, Art and Evaluation', in *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art* eds. Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen, Blackwell, Oxford, 2004, p. 247.
[50] Ibid., p. 315.
[51] However, Levinson says that the aesthetic properties are different form perceptual properties like colours, which are manifest ways of appearing visually; for him aesthetic properties are 'higher-ways-of-appearing'. Ibid., p. 320.
[52] Ibid., p.320.
[53] Derek Matravers points out some of these limitations in a paper co-authored with Levinson, entitled 'Aesthetic Properties' – Matravers claims that Levinson's explanation of aesthetic properties as 'ways of appearing phenomenally' entitles revelation, which is explained as the intrinsic nature of the property being revealed in immediate perception; this is based on Levinson's claim that aesthetic properties are 'ways of appearing', which are properties that the others call 'manifest properties' whose nature is revealed through their appearances.

Levinson gives examples of how aesthetic terms like 'gaudy', 'chaotic' or 'flamboyant' are used. He says that one can characterise a visual pattern as being gaudy or chaotic or flamboyant in different ways. For example, a visual pattern can be correctly characterised as gaudy if there is a certain kind of appearance which according to Levinson is different from an evaluative reaction. The distinctive phenomenal appearance or impressions are the grounds for the aesthetic attribution (the visual pattern being gaudy) and the attribution has a descriptive, distinct aesthetic content which can be approximate in the following way: 'bright, non-harmonious, eye-catching colour combination'.[54] What Levinson argues for, is that when disputes are involved, critics can appeal to certain overall impressions of their encounter with a work of art as the common perceptual ground in aesthetic responses. Thus even if the viewers or the critics disagree if they approve or disprove of a work of art as a whole or of a particular property, there is an awareness of a certain look or appearance that the work has and there can be some inter-subjective agreement about the descriptive content of an aesthetic attribution.[55]

As already discussed a symmetrical or harmonious arrangement of elements is part of what it means for a composition to be balanced. How is this different from what Levinson argues? For Levinson the distinctive descriptive content of aesthetic attributions consists in the overall impression afforded by the work of art while a common sense view of how people apply aesthetic terms is by considering the meaning of aesthetic terms as a guide to their correct application. But how does one apply correctly the term 'balanced' to a visual composition? To reiterate, S. Schroeder and most Wittgensteinians would say by 'looking and seeing' that the composition has a symmetrical or harmonious arrangement of its elements and by knowing the meaning of the term 'balanced'. The 'seeing' of this arrangement entitles the informed perceiver to name the composition 'balanced' – there is no mysterious overall appearance or impression of symmetry or harmonious arrangement. Levinson's critics could say that somehow Levinson added another layer to the process of attributing aesthetic characteristics to works of art instead of just saying that one 'looks and sees' the particular composition of the work and then correctly applies the aesthetic concept of balance.[56] If the aesthetic term 'balanced' has a dominant descriptive core that is easily recognised by most competent speakers as part of the meaning of the term, then the problem

[54] J. Levinson, 'Aesthetic Properties, Evaluative Force, and Sensibility', in *Contemplating Art – Essays in Aesthetics*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2006, p. 318

[55] Here I speak only of inter-subjective agreement about the identification of certain aesthetic properties in a work of art; here I am not discussing inter-subjective agreement about the value of the work.

[56] Maybe Levinson's critics believe that he could be accused of forgetting Ockham's razor.

of its application does not appear at the conceptual level (in general people do agree about the meaning of the term 'balanced' and the fact that it is considered a valued property). It can be argued that the problems of attributing 'balance' to a composition appear at the empirical level: the actual observation of an arrangement of elements in a visual composition. However, with a term like 'balanced' the worries are arguably, minimal – most suitably informed perceivers would be able to identify a symmetrical or harmonious arrangement of elements thus correctly attributing the concept 'balanced' to the visual composition of the work they look at. And in the case of 'balanced' one could say that the evaluative component of the term has very little force (albeit a positive one), which is an indication of the 'undisputed' accepted standards of aesthetic characterisations within certain genres in a particular socio-cultural context.[57]

Here is an observation about the way the aesthetic perception of the same property of an object can lead to very different uses of aesthetic characterisations: on the one hand, one characterisation tries to capture the more 'descriptive' features of the property and on the other hand, another characterisation tries to emphasise the overall effect of that property on the viewer, which could be considered a characterisation with more evaluative force. For example, describing a monochrome painting as 'brilliant blue' or describing the chromatic of the same painting as 'pure energy' appears to emphasise different aspects of the same property. Both of these characterizations are based on the experience of the same property[58] and if there is disagreement about the aesthetic of the painting, it can be argued that the disagreement would not be about the existence of the chromatic property as such, but it would be about which of the two expressions is more appropriate in capturing the unusual chromatic of the painting. In the above case of the monochrome painting, the first aesthetic characterisation focuses on the brilliance and vividness of an unusual nuance of blue, while the second characterisation focuses on that aspect of the chromatic of the painting which is considered a source of vigour or energy and which is highly valued by the viewer. If one reveals that this painting is *IKB 3* painted by Yves Klein in 1960 (Fig.7) and the characterisation of the painting as 'pure energy'[59] is how Klein himself described the effect of

[57] One is aware that an avant-garde artist or critic could disagree that 'balanced' is always a valued property. He would go even further and argue that balance in a visual work can be boring, not dynamic and conservative. However, balance in general still retains a positive characterization in spite of these attacks. In addition, one can consider balance an 'objective' characterization and emphatically express approval or disapproval of this feature in a certain context.

[58] As already mentioned in aesthetic assessments it is customary to assume that the viewers are suitably informed perceivers with normal eyesight and to assume that the perceivers share a certain level of linguistic competence.

[59] Hannah Weitemeier, *Yves Klein*, Benedikt Taschen, Koln, 1995, p.15

the colour of the painting, then it appears that, the same aesthetic property can be on one occasion characterised well by emphasising the more descriptive aesthetic aspect of the chromatic – 'a saturate, brilliant, all-pervasive ultramarine'[60] and on another occasion, it can focus on something about the property as well as, the artist's reaction to this property – an admiration and approval captured by the expressions 'pure energy' or 'poetic energy'.

Fig.7 *IKB 3* (1960) by Yves Klein

In 1955 at the opening of his exhibition at Editions Lacoste, Klein said about the chromatic of his paintings:

> For me, every nuance of a colour is in a sense, an individual, a living creature of the same species as the primary colour, but with a character and personal soul of its own. [61]

This explanation in a way justifies why Klein characterises his novel nuance of blue as 'pure energy' or 'poetic energy' – Klein's blue is not only a perceptual property (a secondary quality) but because of its particular vigour this becomes an aesthetic property. This vigour is the result of Klein's many years of experimentation with pigments and his intention to give the chromatic of the painting a 'character and a personal soul' – the viewer is stunned by this

[60] Yves Klein in *Yves Klein (1928-1962),* Benedikt Taschen, Koln, 1995, p.15.
[61] Ibid., p.15.

effect 'akin to a double exposure' and takes the vivid chromatic to be the main aesthetic property of the painting.[62]

Going back to other aesthetic characterizations of the colour of *IKB 3* by Klein, 'a sensitized image' or 'the most perfect expression of blue' one can see that those are used by the painter to point out not only a novel nuance of blue, but to express a particular aesthetic outlook. Hannah Weitemeier describes in detail Klein's technique ('the pure blue pigment was painted without modulation and without a trace of personal touch') and the way he presented his series of blue paintings ('the artist deliberately mounted the canvases not on the wall, but up to twenty centimetres in front of it') and concludes that:

> The viewer felt drawn into the depths of a blue that appeared to transmute the material substance of the painting support into an incorporeal quality, tranquil, serene.[63]

As already mentioned, Klein is famous for his determination to find a new aesthetic effect with his monochromes of uncut colour and it is well documented that he worked many years to retain in painting the brilliancy of pure pigments; in 1960 he took out a patent of the colour he 'invented', he called the colour 'International Klein Blue' (IKB). I hoped that this example illustrates one way in which aesthetic language is used to characterise an aesthetic property – to illuminate a certain aspect of the property (the arresting blue which has a double exposure effect with an energizing impact on the viewer). If the viewer chooses to use an aesthetic expression which has a strong descriptive core (for example, the 'brilliant blue' of the painting is easily perceived as unusually vivid blue), then it can be argued that this way of characterising the vigour of the colour could be more conducive of inter-subjective agreement about the painting's aesthetic attributions than the characterisation 'poetic energy', expression which captures the same property. It needs to be pointed out that what I mean by 'inter-subjective agreement' refers here to the existence of a certain aesthetic property, in this case the brilliant blue, and it does not imply inter-subjective agreement about the value of the painting. To some extent Levinson is right when he says that even though people agree about

[62] Interestingly enough, Weitemeier reports, when Klein showed his paintings in 1955 many viewers considered his uniformed coloured canvases as 'new kind of bright, abstract interior decoration', *Yves Klein (1928-1962)*, p.15. However, towards the end of the 20th century, Klein's works were considered classical achievements of modern art – paintings with extraordinary inspiring surfaces imbued Klein's artistic presence – no contemporary informed perceiver would consider the paintings interior decorations at least because Klein's blue paintings were sources of a new type of aesthetic experience.
[63] Ibid., p.19.

the perception of an aesthetic property in a work, they still can disagree on their evaluation of the work.[64] I also say 'to some extent' because I think certain aesthetic terms impose a particular evaluative stance through their meaning – my earlier examples of aesthetic terms: 'balanced' or 'unified' are such terms which are mainly used as positive evaluations, characterisations which would contribute in the end to the overall aesthetic evaluation of the work. To return to Klein's own terminology, it can be argued that 'poetic energy' has a strong evaluative force – the artist appears to emphasise his subjective feelings about the chromatic of the painting, thus making the viewer who hears his characterisation to think about the chromatic of the painting in a particular way – as having lyrical invigorating powers. The fact that the same property of a work of art can be successfully characterised by a 'descriptive' term, as well as the term having a more evaluative dimension does not preclude one of being an aesthetic realist – the aesthetic property of brilliant blue is *in* the work (albeit depending on normal conditions of perception) and different uses of aesthetic language only contribute to enriching the aesthetic characterisations *of IKB 3*. Another consequence of this way of thinking about aesthetic attributes is that the viewers are influenced in their language choices by 'the looking' and 'the seeing' of one or more aesthetic properties or aspects of aesthetic properties. What I mean is that according to the perceived property (for example, if the chromatic of the painting has a strong visual characteristic like an intense unusual nuance of blue, which one looks and sees as 'unusual'), the informed perceiver can choose to characterize this property with an aesthetic expression which has a strong descriptive core. The expression 'brilliant blue' suggests that there is an intense nuance of blue in the painting and this is the aesthetic property that viewers point to when they encounter the painting.[65] Here I think is important to mention that the chromatic is perceived as unusual, because otherwise any perceiver could maintain that the painting is, purely and simply, of a certain nuance of blue, which would amount *only* to a description of the colour of the painting as a secondary quality. Another way of looking at the distinction between an aesthetic property and a secondary property, like the colour of a painting, is to paraphrase Zemach and to argue that the attribution of 'brilliant blue' to Klein's painting is an attribution of an aesthetic property while the attribution of 'brilliant blue' (as described on an emulsion paint bucket) to

[64] Levinson's example is about the application of the aesthetic term 'gaudy'. He says: 'it seems possible to approve of a work *for* its gaudiness, […] or *despite* its gaudiness'. J. Levinson, 'Aesthetic Properties, Evaluative Force, and Sensibility', in *Contemplating Art –Essays in Aesthetics*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2006, p. 317

[65] Maybe this is one possible explanation why aesthetic empiricism should not be disregarded: 'the seeing' and 'the looking' are important when using aesthetic language to evaluate art.

a surface is not.[66] In addition, one can suggest that what makes this particular blue unusual is two fold: one, is that the viewing of International Klein Blue (the particular colour 'invented' by Klein) attests to the perception of an arresting colour, which is an unusual nuance from what one would have commonly seen in every days encounters with the colour blue and the second, is that the whole painting, the way it is painted, its texture, being monochromatic and the way it is hanged could give the viewer a new experience, an aesthetic one. Thus the appropriate aesthetic perception of International Klein Blue in Klein's painting means that the informed perceiver is prompted to have an aesthetic experience when looking at *IKB 3*. The naming of the chromatic of the painting as 'brilliant blue' characterises the property which the viewer perceives *in* the painting thus this characterisation has a strong descriptive content. On the other hand if the viewer (in this case the painter himself) characterises the chromatic of *IKB 3* as 'poetic energy' he tries to capture something about both: the painting itself and the strong visual impact that the chromatic of the painting has on him – a vigorous lyricism felt by the artist while looking at the painting. This is something the artist wants to share with the others and he uses the expressions 'pure energy' or 'poetic energy' as an indication of his feelings, and one could add as an indication of his aim. The artist's aim in using such an expression could be to attract attention to the power of the painting's chromatic to be experienced in a certain way.

If one agrees that most aesthetic concepts display both a descriptive and an evaluative aspect in varying degrees, then an informed perceiver can choose to use one aesthetic concept/expression rather than another according to different aspects of the property. It could be also said that this preference for one expression rather than the other rests upon the viewer's aims: to describe the work's property in neutral way in order to justify his aesthetic characterisations/judgements or to express an approval or disapproval of the property encountered. Although people appear often to use the terms like: beautiful', 'ugly', 'bad', 'lovely' etc., (Sibley's *solely evaluative* concepts) because they only want to express their approval or disapproval of the works encountered, there are more complex aesthetic characterisations than this. First, informed perceivers (art critics, artists and art lovers in general) tend to use a more varied aesthetic language in order to capture well the aesthetic properties of the works viewed and criticised. Secondly, the informed perceivers are

[66] As mentioned earlier (p.10), Eddy Zemach used the example of 'black' applied to a poem and to a surface. I am aware that Zemach's example of 'black' attributed to a poem is a metaphor while my example of attributing 'brilliant blue' to Klein's painting is not a metaphorical move. However like 'black', 'brilliant blue' becomes an aesthetic expression when a viewer attributes it to a work of art while a decorator painting the bottom of a swimming pool 'brilliant blue' does not use consider the expression 'brilliant blue' an aesthetic characterisation.

interested in inter-subjective agreements about aesthetic attributions and the overall value of works. By choosing to use aesthetic characterisations which have a strong descriptive core, the informed perceiver can justify his aesthetic attributions and he can ask the other informed perceivers to recognise in the work the aesthetic properties that his aesthetic terms name. The art or literary critic has a similar role: to be able to point out aesthetic qualities in works and one of the best ways of doing this is to use aesthetic language that is conducive to identifying certain properties in a work. However, this does not mean that aesthetic characterisations which use aesthetic concepts with strong descriptive core are sufficient for aesthetic evaluations. A number of aestheticians would consider that the most apt aesthetic characterisations are using both types of aesthetic terms (the ones which are more descriptive as well as the ones with stronger evaluative force). Aesthetic characterisations with strong descriptive core can create solid grounding for inter-subjective agreement about the identifications of the properties encountered in the work and this is the reason that they are very important. Aesthetic characterisations could become arid if one uses only 'neutral and purely descriptive' aesthetic concepts. However rich aesthetic characterisations use complex aesthetic language: descriptive, evaluative, imaginative, metaphorical and affective.[67]

To sum up, I discussed how Sibley divides aesthetic terms and I looked at different ways of understanding how aesthetic terms are applied. Now I would like to propose an amended account of aesthetic terms, with two main categories[68]:

i. *Purely evaluative* terms (like: beautiful, ugly, sublime, good, bad, striking, splendid, excellent, mediocre, miserable or execrable)
ii. Terms with *mixed character* which are on a continuum: at one end terms with a substantial descriptive core and minimal evaluative force and at the other end terms with strong evaluative force and a basic descriptive core. Examples of the terms on this continuum are: 'unified', 'balanced', 'ideal proportion', 'chaotic', 'dynamic', 'moving', 'evocative', 'true-to-life', 'distorted', 'elegant', 'original', 'conservative', 'tightly knit', 'witty', 'funny', 'grotesque', 'powerful', 'repulsive', 'ephemeral', 'joyful', 'sad',… [69] However, some would argue that there is a number of aesthetic

[67] This kind of analysis of aesthetic concepts and the way the concepts name aesthetic properties has interesting corollaries and I think one of the most important one is linked to the explanation of how we interpret and evaluate works of art. I will come back to this when discussing Lamarque's distinction between 'revelatory' and 'creative interpretation'.
[68] This characterization is different from Sibley's; for him the two categories are: purely evaluative and descriptive.
[69] This division is also mirrored by the more recent distinction in ethics between thin and thick concepts.

terms which are purely descriptive: sombre[70], vivid, gaudy, flamboyant, dynamic, chaotic or the earlier discussed terms like 'balanced' and 'unified'. I would say that these terms have a very strong descriptive core and a minimal evaluative force, with terms like 'balanced' and 'unified' at the descriptive end of the continuum.

An in depth analysis of each term would be necessary if one wants robust distinctions between different types of aesthetic terms (*descriptive* and *mixed character* terms). However, at this moment I opt for a continuum where one of the ends is occupied by terms with strong descriptive core and minimal evaluative force and the other end is occupied by terms with a stronger evaluative force.

I would like to exemplify how an aesthetic term like 'graceful' is a *mixed character* term with a strong descriptive core. Characterising a dancer as 'graceful' one could say that the term alludes to certain features of the movement or the style of the dancer: flowing style or elegant or harmonious movement. The meaning of the term 'graceful' is a pleasing, attractive movement, or a movement which has elegant proportions or refinement. It appears that appropriate application of the term 'graceful' would mean that these characteristics are identified in a dancer's movements. If these characteristics – pleasing, attractive or flowing movement – are described as such, and these descriptions represent the descriptive core of the term 'graceful', then what it is its evaluative component based upon? Why saying that a dancer is graceful expresses a positive evaluation? An immediate answer comes from the explanation of the meaning of the term 'graceful' which contains characterisations of the movements of the dancer that are positive in character: pleasant, attractive, harmonious or refined. One could take a different explanatory route and argue that a movement or a style of a certain kind is 'graceful' depending upon what is considered 'graceful' by the contemporary dance scene (if one is assessing a contemporary dancer). The evaluative part of the term 'graceful' appears to be determined by the standards of what is upheld in contemporary dance, for example an extremely skilled and harmonious movement.[71] Also a *mixed character* term like 'graceful' has in contemporary dance different levels of agreed application; certain good making features will make the application easier and certain bad making features will make the application inappropriate. Common understanding of the meaning of the term 'graceful' points to a positive evaluation. However, because of the

[70] I owe the particular suggestion of the term 'sombre' to Severin Schroeder.

[71] This does not mean that only dance critics and artists can identify a graceful movement but it means that some movements are easier to justify as being graceful if the person who makes the aesthetic assessment is aware of the larger tradition of dance. Background knowledge is important in aesthetical assessment.

recognised standards in contemporary dance, the term appears to be used easily by art critics, regular dance spectators and the dancers themselves as a descriptive term. This is the reason why Sibley gives examples of aesthetic terms, like 'graceful', 'pretty', 'elegant', 'ungainly' or 'hideous', which although, he says, originally are '*evaluation-added* quality words' they become mainly used in a neutral and purely descriptive way. I think Sibley's observation about this phenomenon is accurate because if one follows his reasoning what makes those terms aesthetic is their context of application not their descriptive meaning. Nevertheless, technically speaking, I still think the term 'graceful' and those other terms should be categorised as terms with *mixed character* and not fully descriptive terms. Even though these terms have an identifiable descriptive core they also have a strong evaluative component (in the case of 'graceful' the evaluative component is the approval of such a property, which is implied in the positive usage of the term).

My justification of the claim that the 'problematic' terms are part of the *mixed character* category and not fully descriptive terms, as Sibley would say, is based on a discussion about how one learns to apply different aesthetic concepts. For example, the discussion about the application such a term would be the way a child learns to use the word 'pretty' when characterising a quality in human beings. A simplified version of such a process would be that the parents teach the child to use the term in an ostensive way, by pointing to different pictures of princesses or girls or by pointing out a real girl or if the child is a girl herself by pointing out this quality in her. This application of the term 'pretty' by the parents implies most of the time a form of admiration or positive evaluation. However, the parents will not always give an explanation of what quality this term picks out. If there is a justification of the application by the parents then it would comprise a variety of qualities recognised in that particular socio-cultural context as valuable, for example: certain type of hair and eyes, proportionate body, nice face etc. What Sibley could say here is that the child learns to use the term 'pretty' very early by applying it to girls with a certain look (what is recognised as valuable appearances by the parents and the others) and in this way the term starts being used almost in a descriptive way. In addition, after many applications, the child will know the meaning of the term 'pretty'.

But how does the child learn later to apply the term 'pretty' to other things? Two quick answers come to mind: one is that the child learns by multiple examples – which particular persons in different instances (in real life, photographs, paintings, on a stage, etc.) are considered pretty, and the other is that the child starts recognising the property of 'prettiness' not only in other girls but also in pictures ('pretty portrait'), objects ('pretty house') or even

some animals ('pretty dog'). Of course the learning is acquired in both ways. For the aesthetician the interesting question is what aspects of a person (real or depicted) make up what is 'prettiness' and how 'real' are these aspects, while the philosopher of language is interested in the meaning of the term and its application.

To reiterate, Sibley says that once the person (the older child) recognises that something has a quality like 'prettiness' and calls it as such, then the term 'pretty' can be used to characterize 'a particular aesthetic quality of an object or an art-work' in a purely descriptive way.[72] Sibley mentions that terms of this type (like 'pretty' and 'elegant', 'graceful', 'handsome', 'ungainly', 'garish', 'hideous') have an evaluative component and also that they are learnt in relation to aesthetic matters. For example, the older child learns to use and apply the term 'pretty' initially by learning that there is something admirable about a particular property that the term describes. The problem with Sibley's argument is not that such terms become used in a descriptive way; the issue here is that Sibley says that such terms name particular properties. What is the particular property that the term 'pretty' names? It is of course, 'prettiness', but is there any agreement about what is this property or what are the properties that the term names? The justifications of why someone applies the term 'pretty' to a person usually is because that person has a number of aesthetic qualities that can be subsumed under the term 'pretty' and most people would use the term 'pretty' in a positive way – admiring some qualities in a certain person. Nevertheless there are disagreements about which qualities are constitutive of what makes a person pretty because an aesthetic property cannot be reduced to non-aesthetic properties; it is commonplace that two viewers can look at the same person and express two different opinions: 'she is pretty' and 'she is not pretty'. This type of disagreement is one of the most debated issues in aesthetics since Hume and Kant. However, here I am interested to explore the idea that the term 'pretty' has a descriptive content which could be identified. The term 'pretty' is a term with *mixed character* (having both a descriptive core and an evaluative component) and that its problems of application are linked to its descriptive core not to its evaluative aspect. If one could say that, in general, people do approve of prettiness and the term 'pretty' is commonly used in a positive way then this means that the evaluative level is not disputed (if a perceiver characterises a person as pretty without other qualifications and in a normal conversational context, the term is a laudative one but never considered a negative one). It might be objected that one can give an example from pictorial art and think of a painting of a landscape

[72] F. Sibley 'Particularity, Art and Evaluation', in *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art* eds. Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen, Blackwell, Oxford, 2004, p. 247

characterised as 'being pretty' – in this case 'pretty' could express disapproval from an aesthetic point of view. To illustrate this, one could imagine that such a painting will be small in size, having delicate pastel colours, having an attractive and unthreatening natural setting. One viewer could characterise such a painting as 'pretty' because this painting, in his view, is what he calls 'chocolate box art': not a very high quality painting which although pleasant, lacks originality and rests upon the uncritical emotional responses of the viewer. In this case the term 'pretty' is still used in an evaluative way, but not a positive one; the use of the term 'pretty' is derogatory and expresses disapproval of the 'prettiness' of the painting. The above example is an account of a peculiar use of the term 'pretty' and one would need to know the context in which the painting is evaluated and maybe to be present while our viewer expresses his views in order to get the disapproving stance of the viewer. Let us now focus on the identification of the descriptive content of the term 'pretty' One alternative is to look at the meaning of the term: 'attractive in a dainty or graceful way; attractive to the eye, ear or aesthetic sense' (when applied to women or children)[73] and take this as a starting point for a descriptive content of the concept. One can assume that most competent speakers would agree with the idea that there is a minimum descriptive level of the term 'pretty'; this can be qualified as something which has to do with attractiveness or looking good in a familiar, homely way and maybe, it has to do with delicacy or something small in size. I suggest that the minimum descriptive core of the term 'pretty' comprises two characteristics: attractiveness and delicacy and these are the main qualities that a speaker considers when wanting to correctly apply the term 'pretty' to a woman or a child. To return to the initial discussion about the application of the term 'pretty', let say that, one viewer describes a little girl as 'pretty' and the other as 'not being pretty' and the little girl is Shirley Temple (Fig 8). Is one of the speakers applying the term 'pretty' incorrectly? If this exchange takes part in the context of the 1940s in USA with its the standards of perfection and beauty then most people will agree that Shirley Temple is pretty (most people will go even further and say she was beautiful[74]) then the speaker who said that Shirley Temple is 'not pretty' has a problem

[73] *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, OUP, Oxford, 1985, p. 814.
[74] Toni Morrison in her novel *The Bluest Eye* (published in 1970) gives wonderful explanations of people's attitudes to Shirley Temple's media promoted beauty.

in justifying his answer.[75]

Fig. 8 *The child star in her signature pose, Shirley Temple* (1930)

Is the disagreement of these two speakers due to the confusions about the meaning of the term 'pretty' or due to the naming of a certain set of properties that the little girl has? If both speakers appear to be competent speakers, then here are three alternative answers: one possibility is that the speakers understand the term 'pretty' in slightly different ways – this will be a linguistic disagreement, the other possibility is that the disagreement is at the empirical level – the speakers identified or fail to identify properties in the little girl that they consider make up prettiness and the third answer is that both speakers have different standards of agreeing what combination of properties constitute 'prettiness'. To illustrate here is *Speaker A's* aesthetic characterisation: 'Pretty means attractive and delicate. Shirley

[75] The problem is that the speakers discuss 'prettiness'. If they would discuss about beauty then Kant and his *sensus communis* should be the beginning of such discussion. Thierry de Duve his paper 'Do Artists Speak on Behalf of All of Us?' explains that Kant's concept of *sensus communis* 'testifies to a universal shared faculty of agreeing' (*The Life and Death of Images* eds. Diramuid Costello and Dominic Willsdon, 2008, p. 141). But characterising something as 'pretty' is a judgement of the agreeable, Kant would say, and this means that 'prettiness' appeals to most people but not to all of them, thus justifications for approval or disapproval of prettiness are different from the ones about beauty.

Temple has definitely both: beautiful blond hair, blue eyes and delicate features.' And this is what *Speaker B* says: 'Pretty means attractive but not necessarily small or delicate. Shirley Temple has nice blond hair and big blue eyes and a cute face but her head is too big and her legs too short. Also she is too dynamic, loud and mercurial and her presence on screen is overwhelming. Nothing delicate, here! She gives me a headache. Pretty should be sweet and familiar.' Both speakers appear to disagree about different aspects of the descriptive core of the term 'pretty' and they also disagree about a number of the properties this term names in Shirley Temple. In order to settle their disagreement (let us suppose that the speakers are willing to try) both speakers can agree first, about the minimum characteristics for a descriptive core of the term 'pretty' and secondly about identifying a number of aesthetic qualities in the little girl that they can agree upon. If one takes it that attractiveness and delicacy are the two characteristics which one can consider as constituting the descriptive core of the term 'pretty', then *Speaker A* is from a linguistic point of view right, if the little girl has these two qualities. Issues arising from the descriptive level of a concept are not irresolvable; there is the possibility of inter-subjective agreement for the characterisations of a descriptive core. Most of the time competent speakers recognise the minimum characteristics which constitute the descriptive core of a concept in a particular context of discourse – I would argue that these minimal requirements are usually of a definitional kind (like in the case of the term 'pretty' the two minimal descriptive requirements are 'attractiveness' and 'delicacy'). I think the main aesthetic disagreements start at the empirical level, when one has to identify certain properties in an aesthetic object. In addition one might add that the problems start multiplying when one tries to justify aesthetic judgements not only by using aesthetic concepts and the properties they name, but also by appealing to non-aesthetic properties and people's strong emotional responses to those. Thus, the important requirement for correctly applying the term 'pretty' is knowing the meaning of the term and understanding the context of discourse when using this term – knowing its minimum descriptive core and knowing its positive evaluative dimension. Secondly, when applying an aesthetic term to a person, animal or an object one would try to justify its application by looking for properties in the person or in the object; moreover one needs to try to point some properties out to other people if he is looking for aesthetic agreement.[76]

[76] Of course, this is not the casual way we apply the term 'pretty'. Observation comes first (noticing certain characteristics in the person) and then the naming (although in most cases there is no time lag as such between observing and naming). One is aware of many debates from philosophy of language about how we learn and name things but this will be another discussion.

To sum up, terms like 'pretty', 'elegant', 'graceful', 'handsome', 'ungainly', 'garish', 'hideous' – the problematic terms, are terms with *mixed character,* with a minimum identifiable descriptive core (of a definitional kind) and with an evaluative component. In the category of terms with *mixed character,* there are a number of aesthetic terms that are used as descriptive terms ('balanced, 'unified', 'evocative', dynamic', 'handsome', 'graceful', etc.), depending on the strength of their descriptive core. However, I maintain that with the exception of the *solely evaluative* terms ('beautiful', 'ugly', 'striking', 'splendid', excellent', 'mediocre', 'miserable', 'execrable') all aesthetic terms have *mixed character* and they are situated on a continuum where their descriptive content fluctuates from strong to weak.

In this chapter I looked at a number of important changes in the evolution of the concept of the aesthetic and its different uses. First, I would like to propose an initial working concept of the aesthetic which uses a wider sense of the concept which goes beyond the beautiful and the ugly. In addition, despite that fact that the aesthetic is applied to different 'objects of perception' and 'modes of consciousness' and appears vague, as Shusterman says, the concept has at least five important characteristics that are, I think, indisputable:

1) The concept is linked to the perceptual[77]
2) Whenever applied, the concept invokes a relation between a perceiver and an object (the object can be natural, a work of art or an everyday object)
3) Understanding the concept and its uses involves understanding the distinction and the relationship between the aesthetic and the non-aesthetic and the fact that this dependence of aesthetic on non-aesthetic is not, in Sibley's terms, condition governed.
4) Aesthetic concepts can be divided between pure evaluative and mixed concepts, where mixed concepts have two dimensions (evaluative and descriptive) which can fluctuate greatly forming a continuum

[77] The claim that the aesthetic is linked to the perceptual is a traditional view rooted in early philosophical ideas (e.g. Aristotle, Plato), and in 18th century discussions about aesthetic judgements of beauty as having 'the immediacy of straightforwardly sensory judgements' (Shelley calls this view 'the immediacy thesis' in 'The Concept of the Aesthetic', 2009). This view culminated with the artistic formalism developed at the end of 19th century and beginning of the 20th century. However, the link with the perceptual was indirectly challenged by artists creating newer art forms (in particular, conceptual art) and directly by critics and philosophers who become dissatisfied with the limitations of the idea that attributing aesthetic properties to works of art necessarily depend on properties being perceived by the five senses. I will argue for a concept of the aesthetic construed in a wider sense where the 'perceptual' does not refer only to the engagement of five senses but it also refers to the phenomenal aspect of the perception (I will come back to this discussion in Ch. III, where I look at Lamarque's conception of the appreciative experience, his view that perception is important in aesthetics and also his distinction between aesthetic and artistic properties).

5) The term applies to a variety of things and one of the most important classes in this variety is that of *aesthetic concepts.*

Secondly, in any aesthetic attribution or judgment it is imperative to understand the linguistic expressions we use when we make such attributions or judgments. Thus the meanings of aesthetic concepts shed light on the way we interpret our responses and appreciation of aesthetic objects; we use a complex aesthetic vocabulary in our aesthetic judgements, our characterisations of aesthetic experiences and the naming of aesthetic properties. I am aware of Zangwill's warning that Sibley cast aesthetic issues at the linguistic level not at, what Zangwill calls, the 'level of thought' – the level of aesthetic judgements and responses.[78] Nevertheless it seems to me that the 'level of thought' cannot be invoked without the support of a solid conceptual framework – which means that an analysis and evaluation of aesthetic concepts is mandatory for an investigation of aesthetic experiences.

[78] Zangwill does mention Sibley's footnote from 'Aesthetic Concepts' about Sibley's concern with aesthetic uses of aesthetic terms, but he thinks that Sibley and followers focused too much on the linguistic level. 'Aesthetic Judgement', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2014/entries/aesthetic-judgment/>

CHAPTER II
Aesthetic Properties

Alan Goldman suggests that there are three important concepts in aesthetics which are inter-definable: the aesthetic attitude, the aesthetic properties and the aesthetic experience, and often contemporary aestheticians define one of these concepts in relation to the others, thus ending up with a circle.[79] He proposes that one should take one of these three terms as 'basic' in order to avoid the circularity trap. Without doubt some of the most interesting developments of 20th century aesthetics were due to different proposals to take one of the three mentioned aesthetic concepts as central.[80] I think fundamental to Lamarque's essentialism is his conception of aesthetic properties and how a number of these properties contribute to both the identity of a work of art *as* art and the appreciative experience of that work.

One way of tackling the question about aesthetic properties (some would argue, a very conventional way) is to try to see what all aesthetic properties have in common. The quest for common features of aesthetic properties can be divided into: first, an account of the aesthetic attitude and the identification of the aesthetic properties that are the focus of such an attitude, second an attempt to directly identify what all these properties have in common and third, the direct characterization of aesthetic experience.[81] However an analysis of the theories which tried to explain the aesthetic attitudes in terms of intrinsic qualities and of the theories which took aesthetic properties as having a common factor suffered lots of setbacks in the last decades.[82] Moreover the third alternative – trying to characterize the aesthetic experience directly – appears to collapse into discussions about the aesthetic attitude or about the aesthetic properties which are the objects of aesthetic experience. However, I believe that there is still room for a robust analysis of the nature of aesthetic experience as long as one has a clear methodological and conceptual framework.[83]

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[79] A. Goldman, 'The Aesthetic', *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetic*, eds. Berys Gaut and Dominic McIver Lopes, 2005, p. 258.

[80] The main advocates of each of the three concepts as central to aesthetic investigations are: for aesthetic attitude – E. Bullough and J. Stolnitz; for aesthetic properties – F. Sibley and J. Levinson; for aesthetic experience – J. Dewey and M. Beardsley.

[81] B. Gaut, *Art, Emotion and Ethics*, OUP, Oxford, 2013, p. 28.

[82] B. Gaut gives an in depth evaluation of the failure of such attempts. Ibid., pp. 28-33.

[83] For example, one should distinguish between different levels of discussion: generic, epistemic, semantic and ontic and also one should be clear about the senses used for the main culprits in this debate – aesthetic objects, properties, attitudes, experiences, judgements and values.

Returning to the question about common features that works of art, or aesthetic properties, or aesthetic experiences could have, one cannot escape the Wittgensteinian warning from the middle of the 20th century about the misplaced hope in an essentialist approach to define certain terms. In addition to this warning, Sibley's influential work after the 1940s showed that there is an 'almost endless variety'[84] of aesthetic concepts and of the properties they name, which would suggest that finding common features that aesthetic properties have is an almost futile task. Despite this, Goldman points out that Sibley does not initially try to give a definition of aesthetic concepts but provides:

> a list that he takes ostensibly to indicate the extension of the concept. His list includes: being balanced, serene, powerful, delicate, sentimental, graceful and garish. He assumes that, having grasped this list, we could easily extend it, showing a grasp of the general concept of an aesthetic property.[85]

Most aestheticians would agree that Sibley did not offer a definition of aesthetic properties with necessary and sufficient conditions, but what he offered was: 'a description or a clarification of the ways these terms are used or of the nature of these properties'.[86]

In order to be able to discuss aesthetic properties and their role in the aesthetic character of a work of art one needs a guide through the complex myriad of different types of properties. I suggest two initial working tools: one a very brief characterisation of aesthetic properties (inspired by Sibley, Levinson and Lamarque) and the other a preliminary list of different types of aesthetic properties. First, aesthetic properties are properties or qualities attributed to works (cultural objects, including works of art)[87] or natural objects. Because in this thesis I am interested in works of visual arts, I ignore natural objects and the questions of aesthetics of nature. When applied to works of art, aesthetic properties refer to appearances of objects or ways of appearing or perceptual or experiential ways of presentation and their role is to contribute to a certain rewarding artistic/aesthetic experience of competent perceivers and to the aesthetic value of the works they belong to. On the one hand, one reading of the above characterisation of aesthetic properties is that the value of a work of art as art is the value of

[84] F. Sibley, 'Aesthetic Concepts' in *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art*, eds. Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen, Blackwell, Oxford, 2004, p.127.
[85] A. Goldman, 'The Aesthetic', in *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetic*, eds. Berys Gaut and Dominic McIver Lopes, 2005, p.256.
[86] Ibid., p. 258.
[87] 'Object' is a very general term; here are included all art entities: physical objects, actions, performances, bodies, etc.

the experience and this experience is the perception of the relevant aesthetic properties (this is a form of empiricism about the aesthetic value). On the other hand a different reading is that the value of a work of art is intrinsic – aesthetic properties are part of the content of the work of art and they are the ones we appreciate in a work of art (this is a kind of aestheticism).

The second working tool which I use as a preliminary guide is Goldman's list of different types of aesthetic properties:

(1) pure value properties: being beautiful, sublime, ugly

(2) emotion properties: being sad, joyful, sombre

(3) formal qualities: being balanced, tightly knit, loosely woven, graceful

(4) behavioural properties: being bouncy, daring, sluggish

(5) evocative qualities: being powerful, boring, amusing

(6) representational qualities: being true-to-life, distorted, realistic

(7) second-order perceptual properties: being vivid, dull

(8) historical relate properties: being original, bold, conservative, derivative[88]

In what follows in this chapter I focus mainly on Sibley's account of aesthetic properties (conception which is one of Lamarque's main influences), in particular the two-fold relational character of aesthetic properties: aesthetic properties are dependent upon non-aesthetic perceptual properties[89] and they are response dependent (there is a relation they have to qualified observers). This relational account of aesthetic properties suggests both an ontological dimension and epistemological one. The two main sections of this chapter are: the dependence of aesthetic properties upon non-aesthetic perceptual properties (*Section 1*) and the relation of the aesthetic properties to informed perceivers (*Section 2*).

[88] Alan H. Goldman, 'Aesthetic properties' in *A Companion to Aesthetic*, ed. by David Cooper, Blackwell, Oxford, 2001, p. 342-347.

[89] Sibley's terminological choice for non-aesthetic properties is 'non-aesthetic features', while J. Levinson's calls them 'lower-order perceptual properties' and P. Lamarque prefers 'lower-level perceptual properties'.

Section 1: The dependence of aesthetic properties upon non-aesthetic perceptual properties

Sibley in the first part of 'Aesthetic Concepts' argues that, there is a relation of dependence between aesthetic properties and non-aesthetic features, but:

> …Whatever kind of dependence this is, and there are various relationships between aesthetic qualities and non-aesthetic features, what I want to make clear […] is that there are no non-aesthetic features which serve in *any* circumstances as logically *sufficient conditions* for applying aesthetic terms.[90]

This emphasises the fact that when applying aesthetic terms to different objects or works of art there are no conditions or rules that normally govern most concepts. But Sibley shows that one can make at least one concession when talking about conditions or rules which could govern aesthetic concepts application – the negatively governing types:

> If I am told that a painting in the next room consists solely of one or two bars of very pale blue and very pale green set at right angles on a pale fawn ground, I can be sure that it cannot be fiery or garish or gaudy or flamboyant.[91]

Indeed, knowing the meaning of concepts like 'fiery' or 'garish' or 'gaudy' or 'flamboyant' one should know that the correct application of these aesthetic concepts to a painting cannot involve the description offered by Sibley. However, even if most aestheticians would agree with Sibley here, there is still the problem of how to characterise the relation between non-aesthetic properties and aesthetic properties and how to explain the application of aesthetic terms to different works of art. The contemporary orthodoxy is that most aesthetic properties or features of a work of art are dependent upon non-aesthetic perceptual features of that work but the nature of this dependency is still one of the most puzzling issues in aesthetics.[92]

A dependency relation between two sets of properties could be characterised in different ways: causal, emergent, supervenient or dispositional. There is a clear consensus that the

[90] Frank Sibley, 'Aesthetic Concepts' in *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art* eds. Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen, Blackwell, Oxford, 2004, p. 129.
[91] Ibid., p. 129.
[92] I say 'most of the aesthetic properties are dependent upon non-aesthetic perceptual features' because there are aestheticians who believe that there are a number of aesthetic properties which are dependent upon other factors than perceptual ones (e.g. the history, the context or the creation of the work of art).

relation between non-aesthetic properties and aesthetic properties in Sibley's argument is not causal, there is no logical or inductive relation between an object's non-aesthetic properties and this object possessing certain aesthetic properties. Indeed, one cannot make inferences from judgements about non-aesthetic properties to judgments about the aesthetic properties, but as Sibley says, one could show that a description of a work with certain non-aesthetic properties can involve inferring that the work is not having certain aesthetic properties. It can be said that Sibley saw the relation between aesthetic properties and non-aesthetic properties as one of supervenience or emergence. Supervenience can be characterized as the relation between two sets of properties where one set depends on the other in such a way that a change in one set would produce a change in the other set. In aesthetic matters this translates as aesthetic properties supervening or depending upon lower level perceptual properties and any change in aesthetic properties must be due to a change in the base, non-aesthetic properties. For example, a few lines or blobs on a painting might make no difference to the aesthetic properties of the painting (its balance or chromatics), but any change in its aesthetic properties must be due to a change in its non-aesthetic properties.

There are a lot of controversial issues over the characterization of supervenience which I am not going to go into details in this thesis, but with regard to Sibley's account, the traditional interpretation was that the dependence of aesthetic properties on non-aesthetic properties was one of supervenience. But more recently this interpretation has been re-assessed. For example, MacKinnon argues that Sibley 'is not so much inclined towards or away from supervenience as he is indifferent to it'[93] and Lamarque points out that the relation between the two sets of properties is 'far from clear' and he suggests that the question of supervenience is a 'red herring' in aesthetics.[94]

It needs to be added that although Sibley did not clearly qualify the nature of this dependence, he used the concept of emergence to describe the dependence between aesthetic properties and non-aesthetic properties ('aesthetic qualities are emergent'[95]). This is how I understand emergence: properties are emergent if they are novel and distinct properties arising from the lower level properties of an object at a certain time and these properties will exist insofar as the particular lower level properties exist in that particular way. Thus to me it

[93] John E. MacKinnon, 'Scruton, Sibley, and Supervenience', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism,* Vol. 58, No. 4 (Autumn, 2000), p.390.

[94] Lamarque's main justification for rejecting supervenience is that aesthetic properties do not supervene on intrinsic, non-relational properties; he bases his claim, on the one hand on the distinction between weak and strong supervenience and on the other on distinguishing between object, work of art and aesthetic properties. I return to his justification in the second section of this chapter when I analyse Lamarque's aesthetic essentialism.

[95] Sibley, 'Aesthetic and Non-aesthetic', *The Philosophical Review,* Vol. 74, No. 2 (Apr., 1965), p.136.

is not clear if Sibley would have liked to call the dependence of aesthetic properties on non-aesthetic features one of supervenience.[96] The two main reasons why this is so, are: first, because supervenience does not tell us anything about the nature of the aesthetic properties and secondly, because Sibley does not say that changes in the work's aesthetic character 'result *only* from changes in its non-aesthetic qualities.'[97] This reading of supervenience has an interesting ramification pointed out by MacKinnon, who says that it is not clear if Sibley believes 'that aesthetic character can change if non-aesthetic features remain the same while contextual factors shift.'[98] A conventional reading of Sibley's account suggests that Sibley argued for the aesthetic character of a work as being the result of the perception of its non-aesthetic features (a combination of them). In principle this conventional reading should support the supervenience thesis: 'No aesthetic difference without a nonaesthetic difference'.[99] Maybe Sibley would agree with the supervenience thesis if one would only look at the dependence between, what Sibley calls, the descriptive aesthetic properties and the non-aesthetic features of works. Thus any change in the non-aesthetic features of a work would impact directly on the descriptive aesthetic properties resultant form those lower level non-aesthetic features. In contrast, one could say that Sibley could reject the supervenience thesis because of the existence of pure evaluative aesthetic properties. This can be justified by remembering what Sibley says about solely evaluative terms. He insists that when applying evaluative terms to works of art, there is no indication of what particular properties are attributed to the works. In this case, because one is not able to identify 'exactly' the perceptual non-aesthetic features responsible for attributing evaluative aesthetic properties to a work, it is not clear if and what kind of change in the perceptual non-aesthetic features will amount to an aesthetic change. Simply, one cannot say.

However, many aesthetic concepts reflect the competent users' approval or disapproval of a work or some aspects of that work. For example, concepts like 'repulsive' or 'ephemeral' or 'grotesque' suggest an element of disapproval, while concepts like 'pretty' or 'elegant' or 'original' suggest approval. In Chapter I, it was argued that there is also the possibility of the

[96] There are many contemporary debates about emergence and supervenience: some argue that supervenience is a feature of emergence but other argue that supervenience is not necessary for emergence (see Elly Vintiadis' article 'Emergence', *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ISSN 2161-0002).

[97] This observation is made by John E. MacKinnon who tries to explain that Sibley is not fully committed to supervenience in 'Scruton, Sibley, and Supervenience', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 58, No. 4 (Autumn, 2000), p.388.

[98] John E. MacKinnon 'Scruton, Sibley, and Supervenience', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 58, No. 4 (Autumn, 2000), p.388.

[99] John Bender, "Supervenience and the Justification of Aesthetic Judgments," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 46, Number 1, Autumn, 1987, p. 32.

characterisation of and the agreement about the descriptive core of an aesthetic concept; the agreement could happen through the identification of some of the non-aesthetic perceptual features of the work which are responsible for the attribution of that aesthetic concept, by the parties involved in the aesthetic appraisal of a work. Thus, the speakers' agreement in using one aesthetic concept or other could to some extent be justified by the speakers' identification of some non-aesthetic properties in a work. This assumes that the speakers know the meaning of the aesthetic concept and are able to distinguish features of the descriptive core of the aesthetic concept.[100]

This being said, one can only go along with the idea of emergence rather than supervenience because of the difficulty mentioned earlier – it is difficult to point out that aesthetic change is always the result of changes in the non-aesthetic features of a work. Moreover, one can suggest a well known reason why one can dispute the characterisation of the dependence as supervenient: envisaging cases in which changes in the aesthetic character of a work can take place, even if the non-aesthetic perceptual properties of that work remain the same. These cases have been presented by Arthur Danto (his indiscernibles) and Kendall Walton (his examples of the impact of art categories in aesthetic evaluation). Of course, Danto's cases are disputed but what they try to suggest together with Walton's examples, is that the non-aesthetic perceptual features of a work are not the only reason why one characterises aesthetically a work of art. Thus, all of these discussions surrounding the debate about emergence make one aware that the clarification of the nature of the relation between aesthetic properties and non-aesthetic properties will prove essential to the understanding of aesthetic experience and aesthetic value.

To return to Sibley's view, this is what he says about the dependence of aesthetic properties upon non-aesthetic properties: first, he points out that aesthetic properties could not exist without the non-aesthetic properties; secondly that non-aesthetic properties determine aesthetic properties and changes in non-aesthetic properties would affect the aesthetic properties, in other words aesthetic properties are emergent from non-aesthetic properties (he thinks that this a general truth); thirdly that the aesthetic character of something can result from the totality of its relevant non-aesthetic properties (he calls this '*total specific dependence'*) and fourthly that certain salient features of a work would notably contribute to the aesthetic character of the work (he calls this '*notable specific dependence*').[101] There are a

[100] Here 'distinguish' does not mean a conscious act. Most of the time, in casual conversations speakers do not 'stop' and 'think' about different components (descriptive or evaluative) of the meaning of a term.
[101] F. Sibley 'Aesthetic and Non-aesthetic', *The Philosophical Review,* Vol. 74, No. 2 (Apr., 1965), p. 135-139.

number of points arising from Sibley's account of the relation between aesthetic and non-aesthetic properties: aesthetic properties are perceptual properties because one *sees*, *hears* or *notices* them. These are emergent properties and this implies a kind of aesthetic realism. Another point is that, in order to see, hear or notice the relevant aesthetic features of a work, one needs aesthetic sensitivity or needs to exercise taste. Lastly that there are particular features which are 'notably' responsible for the aesthetic character of individual works, with the caveat that these are not condition ruled. I deal with these points in reverse order.

The last point is about the aesthetic character of individual works. Sibley argues that describing the aesthetic character of a work could involve both: reference to the totality of the relevant non-aesthetic features of the work and reference to one particular feature of that work, and this is not contradictory. Here is what he says in support of the former:

> Everything that could possibly be relevant seems on examination so exactly calculated that it plays a vital part in the work.[102]

What he means here is that a critic describes the aesthetic character of a work by 'isolating and pointing out what is (notably, mainly, in part) responsible' for the achievement of aesthetic effects.[103] In other words, by looking at the interactions between non-aesthetic elements and/or interactions of different aesthetic properties of the work one sees how all of these are combined or ordered. Sibley also underlines that sometime, for certain works, small changes even in the 'unimportant details' can affect the overall aesthetic character of those works.[104] However, Sibley is aware that most critics emphasise the importance of one particular feature which is responsible for the character of an individual work. He says:

> We do indeed, in talking about a work of art, concern ourselves with its individual and specific features. We say that it is delicate not simply because it is in pale colours but because of *those* pale colours, that it is graceful not because its outline curves slightly but because of *that* particular curve.'[105]

For Sibley, certain salient features being responsible for the aesthetic character of an individual work, is considered a *particular truth*. If I understand Sibley right, each aesthetic

[102] Frank Sibley, 'Aesthetic and Non-aesthetic', *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 74, No. 2 (Apr., 1965), p.140.
[103] Ibid., p.140.
[104] Ibid., p.139.
[105] Frank Sibley, 'Aesthetic Concepts' in *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art* eds. Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen, Blackwell, Oxford, 2004, p. 133.

object has a distinct aesthetic character because of a specific combination of non-aesthetic properties or because of an important salient non-aesthetic feature.[106] This Sibleyan characterisation of individual works of art influenced a host of aesthetic arguments: aesthetic particularism, aesthetic realism and to an extent Lamarque's aesthetic view.

The second point arising from Sibley's account is that aesthetic properties require taste or sensitivity in order to be perceived. Taste or sensitivity means for Sibley an ability to notice or to see or tell that things have certain qualities. Sibley was inspired by a Humean and Kantian tradition that taste is a kind of special faculty similar to moral intuition but he disagreed with Hume and Kant that aesthetic properties are subjective. I am not going to insist on the problem of taste because there are many criticisms of Hume's original argument of taste and of Sibley's proposal[107] but the issue of perception of aesthetic properties is something that I am going to mention. I would like to briefly discuss Sibley's positive argument that the detection of aesthetic properties requires training of perception through experience and exposure to works of art. This is not a controversial claim; most artists and literary critics, as well as art lovers, in general, would agree that the more encounters with art one has, the more chances of increased aesthetic enjoyment and artistic discernment one has, which suggests a continuous development of capacity or sensitivity to aesthetic objects. Also Sibley adds the importance of the role of the critic in sharpening of our aesthetic sensitivities, through the critic's activities: explanations and perceptual proofs.[108]

There are a number of important criticisms of the view that the perception of aesthetic properties requires special sensitivity and some of the most ardent critics of Sibley's view are George Dickie, Ted Cohen and Peter Kivy.[109] However, here I think the elephant in the room is the qualifier 'special' because it is taken that Sibley understood aesthetic sensitivity as a different capacity or ability from other ordinary abilities. At the beginning of his 'Aesthetic Concepts'(1959) Sibley says about aesthetic sensitivity or taste with regard to aesthetic concepts: first, he says that taste is a rarer capacity than other capacities, and secondly that almost everybody can exercise this capacity to a certain extent and in certain matters. Here is the passage in question:

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[106] I am aware of the discussion surrounding the distinction between particular and types in aesthetics but for the purpose of the above argument I can leave out the complications of such distinction.

[107] The 20th century most well known aestheticians who tackled the problem of taste are: Malcolm Budd, Peter Kivy, Carolyn Korsmeyer, Noël Carroll, Anthony Savile, Jerrold Levinson, Nick Zangwill, James Shelley, Peter Railton, and Mary Mothersill.

[108] F. Sibley, 'Aesthetic and Non-aesthetic', *The Philosophical Review,* Vol. 74, No. 2 (Apr., 1965),p.140-143.

[109] Ted Cohen, 'Aesthetic/Non-aesthetic & the Concept of Taste: A Critique of Sibley's Position', Theoria, 39, 1973 and Peter Kivy, *Speaking of Art*, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1973.

> Thus taste or sensitivity is somewhat more rare than certain other human capacities; people who exhibit a sensitivity both wide-ranging and refined are a minority. [...] But almost everybody is able to exercise taste to some degrees and in some matters.[110]

Sibley suggests that people could lack sensitivity 'at least in some measure', and although people with a 'wide-ranging and refined' sensitivity are a minority, aesthetic sensitivity is a feature or tendency of human intelligence that can be encouraged and developed.[111] Sibley talks about taste as the ability to correctly apply aesthetic concepts and he argues that when one tries to justify his aesthetic remarks or judgments he does often refer to 'features which do not depend for their recognition upon an exercise of taste'.[112] One can be bewildered by this: on the one hand, Sibley appears to talk about aesthetic sensitivity as a linguistic ability (knowing how to correctly apply aesthetic concepts) and on the other hand, he says that the justification of aesthetic judgments makes reference to the detection of non-aesthetic properties, which means that aesthetic sensitivity is a perceptual capacity. It seems that aesthetic sensitivity is both about a 'correct' aesthetic attribution and the justification of such attribution. There is not a lot of disagreement about a normal perceiver discerning non-aesthetic properties but there are disagreements between informed perceivers trying to give reasons for the aesthetic character of a work of art. If we say that one needs to exercise taste in order to discern aesthetic properties and to make aesthetic evaluative judgements then we need to explain in detail this ability. Is this ability a matter of degree which starts with the detection of non-aesthetic perceptual properties and ends up with the attribution of complex aesthetic properties or is it a new type of ability which is distinct and above the simple detection of non-aesthetic properties? Sibley is mainly telling us about the ability to use aesthetic language and about different types of aesthetic concepts but not about what aesthetic sensibility or taste is.

There are different suggestions about the ability to discern or perceive aesthetic properties: some argue that it is a kind of rational intuition (e.g. W. Wollaston and S. Clarke), others that it is something to do with sensing or sentiment (e.g. Earl of Shaftesbury, F. Hutchinson and D.

[110] Frank Sibley, Aesthetic Concepts' in *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art* eds. Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen, Blackwell, Oxford, 2004, p. 128.
[111] F. Sibley, Aesthetic Concepts', in *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art* eds. Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen, Blackwell, Oxford, 2004, p. 128.
[112] Ibid, p. 129.

Hume) and others that it is an intuition (G.E. Moore, D. Ross).[113] Thus, I think instead of talking about a special faculty it would be better to talk about aesthetic sensitivity as an ability to distinguish salient aesthetic features in objects worthy of attention *as* aesthetic objects, and give up the traditional concept of taste which is heavy loaded. Moreover, it can be said that there is at least one undeniable characteristic of aesthetic sensibility – the fact that this sensibility can be refined and developed continuously as a result of particular encounters with aesthetic objects and aesthetic training.

Lastly because Sibley says that aesthetic properties are emergent from the perceptual non-aesthetic properties, one can argue that Sibley is a realist with regard to properties. He characterises most aesthetic properties as descriptive and perceptual. For example, he says about the balance of a picture that regardless of the fact that a perceiver sees or does not see the lack of balance of a painting, there is a fact of the matter that the placing of a certain figure in the picture makes it unbalanced.[114] Thus what makes the painting unbalanced is directly related to a non-aesthetic property; the central figure in the painting. Sibley says that this central figure is something 'discernible without any exercise of taste or sensibility'.[115] Talking about aesthetic properties in this way, indeed, manifests a realist stance with regard to aesthetic properties. According to aesthetic realism aesthetic properties are *in* the works of art.[116] That means that aesthetic properties are instantiated in works of art independently of human judgments which ascribe the properties to the works and independently of the values and perceptions which constitute the basis of these judgments.[117] But what does 'mind-independent' mean here? John W. Bender, for example suggests the following realistic account of aesthetic properties (as mind-independent):

> Aesthetic properties are not mind-independent properties of the physical world in the sense that they are true of objects no matter what *anyone* thinks or how *anyone* reacts, but they may be true of those objects independently of how any *particular*

[113] R. David Broiles 'Frank Sibley's "Aesthetic Concepts"', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Winter, 1964), p. 222.
[114] F. Sibley, 'Aesthetic and Non-aesthetic', in *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art* eds. Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen, Blackwell, Oxford, 2004, p.140.
[115] F. Sibley, Aesthetic Concepts' in *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art* eds. Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen, Blackwell, Oxford, 2004, p. 128.
[116] There are other varieties of aesthetic realism, e.g. realism about aesthetic values, but here I am interested in the discussion about aesthetic properties.
[117] Jonathan Gilmore, 'Realism' Encyclopedia of Aesthetics , Ed. by Michael Kelly, Publisher Oxford University Press Print Publication (1998).

> person might respond to them. So in this sense they are not just subjective reactions.[118]

Then one can opt for a kind of 'realist' position which argues that:

> There can be objective facts of the matter regarding humans' responses to certain objects, and consequently there can be real, if relational, properties ascribable to those objects.[119]

Even if one takes Bender's perspective about aesthetic realism, there are at least two important challenges facing a strong realist: one is the acceptance that there are pure evaluative aesthetic properties (e.g. beauty, ugliness, loveliness ...) and the other is the existence of aesthetic disagreements even between critics with the similar qualifications and sensibilities. Regarding the former issue, it appears difficult to reconcile a realist position with the idea of pure evaluative aesthetic properties because if Sibley is right that *intrinsically* or *solely evaluative terms* like 'beauty', 'ugly' or 'lovely' are contextually implied and they cannot name a particular property of an object but they name a range of properties, then how can one say that the property of beauty is *in* a particular work? Maybe 'beauty' is not a property as such. Here one is reminded of one of the initial difficulties mentioned at the beginning of Chapter I, that Sibley chose in the end to use the term 'qualities' instead of that of 'properties'. Thus when one discusses evaluative concepts then maybe what these concepts name should be refer to as qualities rather than properties. But if one is still adamant about using the term 'properties', then it can be said that Sibley's view about a pure evaluative property like beauty seems to be something like this: there is a certain combination of non-aesthetic properties detected in a particular work and for each work of art this combination varies and by responding appropriately to a particular combination of non-aesthetic properties and to other aesthetic properties emergent from this combination, a qualified observer can be prompted to attribute beauty to the work. Sibley argues that only certain looks and feels can be grounds for aesthetic admiration, and one could say that the informed perceiver would appropriately respond to certain looks (appearances) of the work. If one takes this line of reasoning, without the usual aesthetic complications (the appropriateness of the response, the

[118] J. Bender, 'Aesthetic Realism 2', in *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, ed. Jerrold Levinson, Oxford, OUP, 2003, p. 84.
[119] Ibid., p.83.

level of competency of the observer, or the detection of certain non-aesthetic properties and the ignorance of others) then beauty can be said to be *in* the work (albeit not in the straightforward way that secondary properties are).

But again, one has the problem of the nature of the relation between higher-order properties, like the aesthetic ones, and the lower level non-aesthetic properties: if there is a change of one or more of the lower level non-aesthetic properties would this always mean that the emergent property of beauty cease to be in the work? One tentative answer to this question can be linked with the idea that there are certain salient features of a work that would determine the aesthetic character of that work. For example, appropriately attributing beauty to a painting would depend on different saliencies detected in that particular painting by a competent viewer (the saliencies would be both non-aesthetic ones as well as aesthetic ones). Thus changing one or more of the non-aesthetic perceptual properties could affect the overall attribution of beauty to a work if those non-aesthetic properties are important ones. An informed perceiver/competent viewer would recognise the change and respond accordingly. This way of characterising the attribution of an aesthetic property like beauty, attempts to bridge the gap between subjectivism and objectivism in aesthetics – there must be a direct link to a subjective response when one talks about beauty, as well as, beauty being considered the result of the detection of certain properties of the work (both non-aesthetic and aesthetic). In addition to this, Sibley in his article from 1959 'Aesthetics and the Looks of Things' says something very Kantian in relation to how we talk about beauty:

> If one wanted to give sense to sayings like "beauty is in the object" and "beauty lies in mere appearances, in the eye of the observer," the case of art tends to favour the former, that of nature the latter.[120]

On a first impression this looks Kantian because Kant says that a perceiver 'will speak of beauty as if beauty were a property of the object'.[121] But Kant is a subjectivist and beauty is not a property in the object. Interestingly Sibley points out that we tend to speak of beauty in different ways with regard to art and respectively to nature, while Kant does not distinguish 'two' ways of talking about beauty, albeit he was mostly discussing aesthetic judgements of nature. In addition Sibley, in comparison with Kant, is not a subjectivist or an anti-realist. If

[120] F. Sibley, 'Aesthetics and the Looks of Things', *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 56, No. 23, American Philosophical Association, p.909.
[121] I. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Cambridge University Press, 2003, §6, 5:212.

most aesthetic properties are descriptive and emergent from perceptual non-aesthetic properties as argued by Sibley, then they are perceptible and it can be argued that this justifies a realist position that aesthetic properties are in the works. One other way of interpreting Sibley's characterisation of how we talk about beauty is to think about the role of the artist or creator of the work of art. The work is an intentional object which has certain features which are largely determined by the artist's skilfulness of portraying his creative ideas and by being recognised and evaluated as such.

For example, a number of the non-aesthetic properties of a visual work (like its colours) are the 'ingredients' used by the artist to create a particular painterly configuration and they are part of the intrinsic nature of the work. This appears to justify the viewer's belief that an aesthetic property like beauty (for example, the work's chromatic splendour) is in the work. However, a viewer might say that when he attributes beauty to a painting he does refer to things in the painting even though it is difficult to point out exactly what these things are. He would insist that beauty is more of a diffused aesthetic property than other aesthetic properties but it is a real and perceivable property. Sibley would say that identifying some of the work's most important aesthetic properties would be the result of detecting combinations of non-aesthetic properties or detecting salient features of the work. It can be said that, to a certain extent, the competent viewer's response to non-aesthetic properties and to other salient features of the work would have been envisaged by the artist and thus pursued in the creative process. A very good artist could attempt to elicit a viewer's response of a certain type if his rendering of the work is successful. However, some would argue that the conundrum of pure aesthetic properties like beauty or ugliness still remains for the realist, if by 'pure' aesthetic properties one means like Sibley, properties which are only evaluative. To reiterate for Sibley evaluative aesthetic properties only suggest the viewer's response of approval or disapproval of the work in discussion.[122]

Until now I have mainly discussed one aspect of the relational character of aesthetic properties, the relation that aesthetic properties have with non-aesthetic properties, the ones that are emergent from. However, one can think of another type of relation that some aesthetic properties have – the relation with other aesthetic properties. In what follows I also

[122] This kind of challenge appears to be mirrored in the ethical debates with the distinction between descriptive and evaluative contents of ethical terms and the distinction between 'thin' and 'thick' concepts. Following the suggestions from the ethical debates 'beauty' and 'ugly' could be considered concepts that are thin evaluative while 'balance' and 'unified' are thin descriptive. However, as I tried to argue in Chapter I most aesthetic concepts should be considered thick concepts – with a significant descriptive content and also an evaluative component.

look at this other type of relation and discuss an application to a work from visual art in order to illuminate a number of aspects about aesthetic properties.

One can use as a starting point the idea that aesthetic properties have different relations with other properties. On the one hand, aesthetic properties can have a vertical relation with non-aesthetic properties – they emergent from the non-aesthetic properties, and on the other hand, they can have a horizontal relation with other aesthetic properties. Here is an example: if a painting is characterised as balanced this can be explained by pointing out a number of non-aesthetic features in the painting, like: the symmetry of its composition, the synchronization of colours and lines and maybe the reflection of the golden rule in the arrangement of its main elements. The relation that the property of balance has with some of the non-aesthetic properties from which it emerges can be characterized as a vertical relation. It needs to be emphasised that Sibley was right when he argued that the application of any aesthetic property is not condition-governed – there are no necessary and sufficient conditions for applying the term 'balance' to a painting. The non-aesthetic features I have mentioned, like the symmetry of the composition and the synchronization of colours, are very generic non-aesthetic features. What I mean here, is that for each painting to which one correctly attributes the property of balance there will be a particular composition which exhibits certain kind of symmetry or equilibrium.

In addition, one can see that there are other aesthetic properties which are even more difficult to identify and to describe than 'balance'; for example, the characterisation of a woman in a painting as being graceful. The important question about this attribution is 'What properties of the painting as a whole or of the woman depicted contribute to the attribution of grace to the woman?' Goldman classifies being graceful as a formal property and many others also consider grace a descriptive aesthetic property which means that the formal appearances of a painting or of an aspect of a painting can give rise to this aesthetic formal property . This line of thinking suggests that being graceful is an emergent property from other formal non-aesthetic properties of a work or of one of its aspects. However one is aware that this explanation is not entirely satisfactory. One reason is that there might be other properties beside the non-aesthetic properties that can contribute to the application of the term 'graceful' to a work or to an aspect of a work. Moreover because the application of a term like graceful can be disputed by informed perceivers, this suggests that there is more to this aesthetic term than its 'formal' or descriptive aspects. In order to explain how the property of gracefulness is applied to a person depicted in a painting, I use as an example the woman in Degas' painting *After the Bath, Woman Drying Herself,* 1890-95 (Fig. 9).

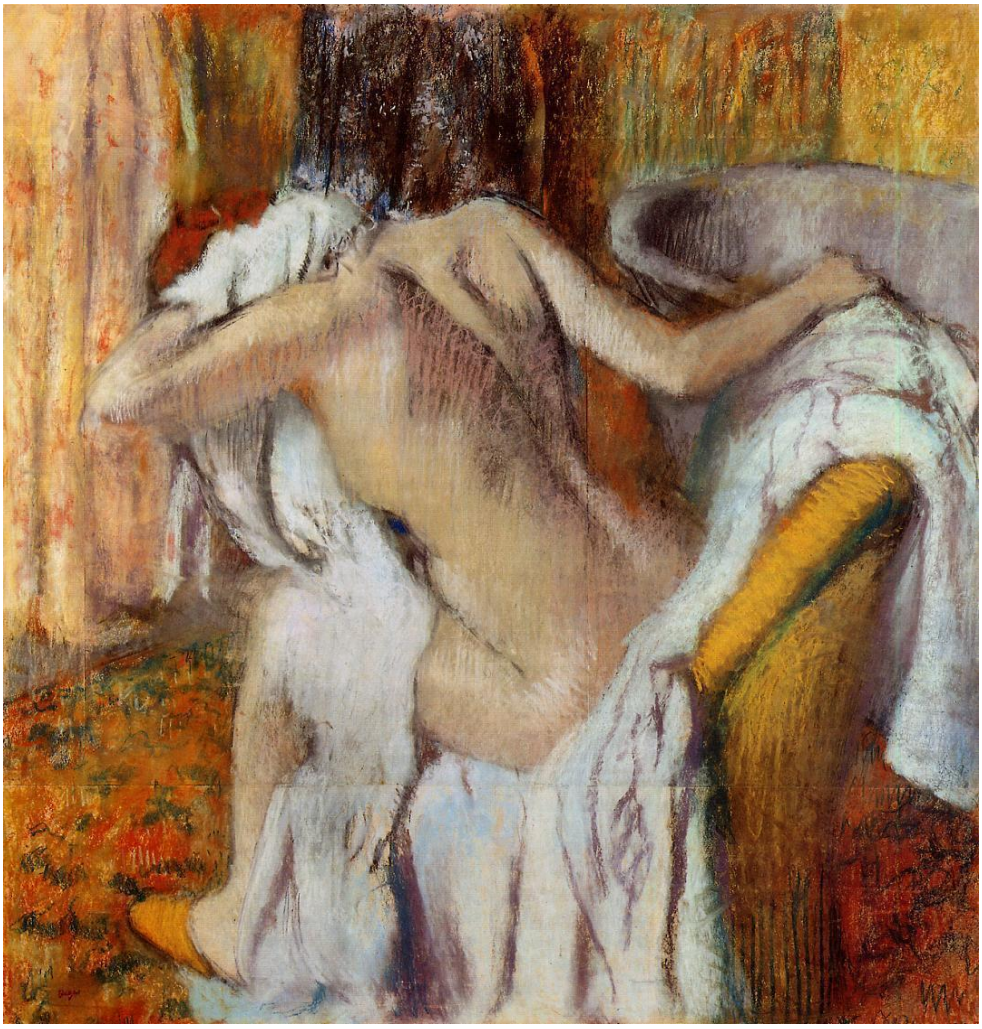

Fig. 9 *After the Bath, Woman Drying Herself* (1890-95) by Degas

The subject of Degas' pastel is a straightforward domestic portrait of a woman drying herself after her bath. The space of the painting is delineated by two aspects: the diagonal line of the floor meeting the vertical line of the back wall (towards the right hand side corner), and the conjunction of the three main elements of the painting: the woman, the wicker chair she sits on and the tin bath. The justification of attributing gracefulness to the woman in this painting is the result of a combination of things and I suggest that the most obvious one is the attribution of certain aesthetic properties which are emergent from the non-aesthetic properties of the woman depicted.

First, the most relevant non-aesthetic properties of the painting and in particular of the central figure in the painting can be grouped into:

- *compositional properties*: the diagonal central positioning of the woman's body, the leaning forward of her upper torso with her right arm on the back of the chair and drawn at an obtuse angle
- *movement properties*: the movement of her left arm, the curve of her back with a slight muscle tension, the woman's bent head, the interplay between repose (her right arm) and movement (her left arm drying her hair)
- *chromatic properties*: warm colours reflecting a domestic interior, the red of the woman's hair, soft dark lines to emphasise the contour of her body and the supple combination of colours of her spine, small touches of greens and blues reflected in the white of the towel, the contrast between the touch of dark green under the line of her breast and the soft colour of her flesh
- *textural properties*: rich pastels for the room's surroundings (carpet, armchair and curtains), smooth pastels for the woman's flesh which makes her body almost transparent, mixture of cross-hatching to suggest the curvature of her back, soft textures for the towel and the white sheet.

Secondly, analysing the painting an informed perceiver could easily find 'perceptual proof', to use Sibley's term, for at least three emergent aesthetic properties: a balanced composition, sumptuous textures and a luminous domestic interior (these are what I would like to call 'basic' aesthetic properties). But there are other aesthetic aspects in this painting which could be noted by an informed perceiver: the woman's radiant body, an atmospheric interior imbued with feminine intimacy, the woman's elegant and effortless posture despite the woman's realistic movement of drying herself and the capturing of absolute absorption and solitude in such mundane activity as drying after bathing. It can be argued that the above aesthetic features require a more sustained aesthetic attention than the noticing of the previous three aesthetic properties which I called 'basic'. Thus the answer to the question: 'Which ones of those properties are responsible for the attribution of gracefulness to the woman in the painting?' appears to be more complicated than initially suggested. One possible answer to this question is linked to the way Degas depicted the woman's posture and movement: the woman's torso leaning slightly forward in an assumed stability, the dynamic created by her right arm which although gripping the chair for balance is depicted in a feather-like position on the back of the chair, the movement of drying the back of her neck with a delicate touch, and her whole body in an elegant and effortless posture. As Sibley would say, being graceful in this case is dependent upon that *particular* angle of her body, of that *particular* curve of her back, of that suggestive delicate movement of her left arm using

the towel to dry, of that *particular* drawing of her right arm resting more than gripping the chair. In contrast, one can argue that if Degas did not use *those* particular smooth pastels colours and *those* rich textures for the painting's interior (the carpet, the walls, the chair or the towels) – all of which suggest warmth and balance – then the depicted woman might have not been graceful. If the chromatic of the painting would have been darker and more violent, maybe the woman's movements and body would have lost their elegance. One could imagine how such a change in colours or in the textures of the interior depicted could make the woman's movements almost grotesque. In addition there are other aspects that one needs to consider when talking about the aesthetic character of the painting and the attribution of gracefulness to the depicted woman. One such example is Degas' skilful portrayal of such an intimate act which makes the viewers part-taking in a voyeuristic activity. However I would argue that the woman is graceful not because her movements are unconstrained but because the artist's gaze and hand imbued her movements with self-assurance and elegance and the resulting image can be characterised by a highly stylized voyeurism. Another aspect of Degas' depiction can be linked to the influences which Japanese prints had, at the end of the 19th century on French art. For example, the dark lines surrounding the woman's body, which were suggestive of the lines from the woodblocks the Japanese prints were made from,[123] make the woman's body stand out from the background and make it almost weightless, thus making her posture and movements effortless. An in depth analysis could reveal which particular combination of non-aesthetic and aesthetic properties justify the attribution of gracefulness to the woman in the painting (e.g. the role of the chromatic and textures of the interior depicted, or the emotive suggestions conjured by such a subject, or the art historical influences on the subject of the painting). It can be suggested that being graceful is a complex aesthetic property and this type of property could be explained through a double relation with other properties: one with some of the non-aesthetic properties of the work and the other with other aesthetic properties of the work. The relation of an aesthetic property with other aesthetic properties seems more difficult to ascertain; also it is not clear how being graceful is emergent from other aesthetic properties. But if one could see or be persuaded that the depicted woman has an elegant posture and she also has delicate movements maybe this can lead to other aesthetic attributions like the one of gracefulness. Thus one could argue that because one notices some non-aesthetic features (chromatic, textural or compositional) as well as the elegance of woman's posture and her delicate movements this leads to the

[123] This was an observation made in a discussion about the painting with the artist Jo Thomas who emphasised that Japanese prints had a big impact on French impressionists through their high stylisation and rich chromatic.

attribution of the aesthetic property of grace. It needs to be said that in a actual encounter with a painting this process of attribution can happen instantaneously or it could happen later after some contemplative deliberation – this would depend on the viewer's acquaintance with art, the category under which the work is perceived, the condition of perception, the context of the work's provenance, history etc. Furthermore Sibley's account of aesthetic attributions points out that a critic could single out 'what may serve as a kind of key to grasping or seeing something'[124]; in this case the critic might say that the 'key' to grasping the gracefulness of the woman, is the perception of her elegant and effortless posture and movement.[125]

The above analysis of the painting showed that aesthetic properties have different relations with other properties and might not be emergent only from the non-aesthetic ones but also from other aesthetic properties. Thus it can be very useful on occasions to try to disentangle some of those relations (with non-aesthetic and with other aesthetic properties) for explanatory and critical reasons.

Section 2: The relation of the aesthetic properties to informed perceivers/competent viewers[126]

Aesthetic properties of works of art are complex and partly evaluative properties and one of their most important aspects is the relation they have with informed perceivers – how they are identified and appreciated in appropriate encounter with works of art. As already mentioned, for Sibley the discussion of the encounter with works of art or other aesthetic objects is a discussion about perceptual ability. According to Sibley aesthetic encounters require perceivers to have both 'normal eyes, ears and intelligence' and to be able to exercise 'taste, perceptiveness, or sensitivity, or aesthetic discrimination or appreciation'. Goldman thinks in the same fashion that:

[124] F. Sibley, 'Aesthetic Concepts' p.136

[125] Of course there are other interpretations that could suggest an idealised view of women which is nothing to do with natural grace. A feminist take on Degas' depiction of the woman as an idealised scene of intimacy would point out the role of the male gaze and the role of the male artist in promoting such an idealised view. However even though there is a criticism of this kind about the scene depicted one still can make an argument using non-aesthetic features and aesthetic properties as 'facts to explain why one can attribute the term 'graceful' to the woman in Degas' painting.

[126] There is a variety of expressions used for 'informed perceivers': 'suitable and sensitive spectators' R. Wollheim's expression (*Painting as Art*, 1998, p. 44), 'qualified observers' D. Matravers, J. Levinson ('Aesthetic properties', 2005, p. 195) or Lamarque's usage of both expressions 'qualified observers' or 'competent viewers'. I opt for 'competent viewer' when I speak about the aesthetic appreciation of the visual arts because qualified observer implies formal training and I find this expression too restrictive. However when I talk about Lamarque's arguments I continue using his chosen terminology: 'qualified observers'.

> Thus, aesthetic properties are to be analyzed in terms of the shared responses of competent subjects with particular tastes to the intrinsic (usually formal) properties of objects.[127]

There is consensus in aesthetics that aesthetic properties are relational properties but there is disagreement about how to characterise the responses of the competent perceivers to works of art if those viewers have particular sensibilities or tastes. Although it is difficult to see how one can be an aesthetic realist about aesthetic responses, the view put forward by aesthetic realists is centred on the role of aesthetic properties. If one is a property-realist he believes that aesthetic properties can be detected by a competent observer because these properties are *in* the works; in addition, the 'detection' of those properties depends upon the appropriate response of the competent observer and the key element is here 'appropriate'. Lamarque thinks that this position is not unattainable and he points out that:

> it has not been thought inimical to defences of aesthetic realism that an element of response-dependence should be acknowledged'.[128]

This discussion about the response-dependent character of aesthetic properties brings us to the objectivist's way of justifying a realist position about aesthetic properties: aesthetic properties are objective properties of works of art. First, K. Walton notes that: 'what aesthetic properties a thing seems to have may depend on what categories it is perceived in' and this fact 'raises a question about how to determine what aesthetic properties it really does have'.[129] If there are aesthetic properties *in* the work then they should elicit detection by the critics or other competent observers. But what if two critics fail to see or notice the same properties or what if they disagree with each other about the role these properties have in the aesthetic evaluation of the work? One suggestion could be that Walton's predicament could be addressed by using Lamarque's distinction between two apparently irreconcilable positions regarding properties of works: the realist position (properties are *in* the works and they can be revealed by interpretation) and the constructivist position (properties of the works

[127] A. Goldman, 'The Aesthetic', *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetic,* eds. Berys Gaut and Dominic McIver Lopes, 2005, 2005, p.184.
[128] P. Lamarque, W&O, OUP, 2010, p. 21.
[129] K. Walton, Categories of Art, in *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art* eds. Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen, Blackwell, Oxford, 2004, p. 150.

are not in the work, they are *constituted* by interpretation).[130] He argues both that one has realist intuitions about properties of works as part of the works' identity (these properties are discovered through 'revelatory interpretation') and that one also has anti-realist intuitions about properties of works, properties which are generated by responses of informed observers (these intuitions are rooted in artistic practices – this is 'creative interpretation').[131] Lamarque believes that there are insights in both positions that ought not to be abandoned, and that one needs to retain a 'robust realist notion of works while acknowledging their grounding in cultural conditions and intentional properties'[132]. What makes some intentional properties important in a work of art is the interplay between the features in the work aimed at an audience and the response of the audience when detecting these properties.

Lamarque defines intentional properties as: 'a property something possesses in virtue of how it is *taken,* or *thought to be,* or *perceived*'[133] or 'involving the thought of an object *under-a-description'.*[134] For Lamarque the crucial point here is that aesthetic properties a subclass of intentional properties. He says that works possess different types of intentional properties, for example artistic, aesthetic or representational. [135]To elaborate on this, one can think of a well known painting like *Guernica* by Picasso which is a cubist painting. Let's take the aesthetic property of the painting: its cubist style. The intentionality of aesthetic properties in general, resides in the idea that works of art express the artist's psychological state or artistic intentions. One can argue for example, that the cubist style has a geometric outlook, depicts semi-abstract elements, has multiple viewpoints, represents a fragmented composition, etc. One can add that the cubist artist wanted to express a particular revolt or indignation and/or to suggest contradictions and tensions, and one of the ways for the artist to achieve this was through his cubist style. Thus the aesthetic property of *having a cubist style* is an intentional property, which 'demands' to be thought of in a certain way. A basic understanding of the demand of an appropriate response, starts with the simple recognition that the object encountered, the painting needs to be perceived *as* a work of art. Once the work is perceived as such, the viewer/informed perceiver should recognize what kind of painting it is and what appropriate response is demanded by the encounter with that work. To

[130] P. Lamarque, W&O, 2010, Introduction, pp. 24-25.
[131] P. Lamarque remarks that similar such distinction between what is revealed and what is constructed in interpretation was pointed out by other aestheticians like Jerrold Levinson, Eddy Zemach and Peter Jones. (W&O, 2010, p.25, Note 33).
[132] In the next pages I will discuss the importance of intentional properties for understanding what is a work of art. (Ibid., p. 31).
[133] Ibid., p. 76.
[134] Ibid., p. 111.
[135] J. Margolis, *What, After All, Is a Work of Art?*, The Pennsylvania State university Press, 1999, p. 34-35.

emphases what I mean here, one can think of different possible counterexamples to an appropriate response to a cubist painting: sentimentality, serenity, piety or romanticism and how these will be inappropriate.

So far I argued that aesthetic descriptions (e.g. attributing a cubist style to a painting) are dependent upon the informed perceiver's level of linguistic competence[136] and cultural background but I want to emphasize that the appropriate viewer's perception is circumscribed to the existence of certain aesthetic properties existent in the work. For example, Lamarque distinguishes clearly between a mere object and a work of art and he argues that because works of art are different from ordinary objects – works of art are cultural objects with certain properties – some of the realist assumptions involved in their characterization are different from normal realist assumptions. Moreover, he says that when one characterizes a work of art one both 'reveals pre-existent properties of works' and constructs 'new saliencies and creative readings'.[137] This last suggestion is an attempt for Lamarque to bridge the gap between realist and constructivist characterization of works of art: some properties are in the works and others are imputed to works by the interpretative process. This reconciliatory solution is based on the idea that acceptable interpretations of any kind are constrained by the properties that the object has in itself, the properties possessed by the object which identifies the object as an object of attention. Again, here is a trace of realism. There are acceptable interpretations of works of art because these works have properties that help a qualified observer to identify the works *as* works of art. One example which Lamarque uses is that of *King Lear*. If the play belongs in the category of tragedies then the play has the aesthetic character of being tragic. Lamarque insists that this is not just an epistemic reading of the play but the statement that '*King Lear* is tragic' is necessarily true. The most appropriate interpretation of the play is that it has tragic properties, thus one is constrained in this interpretation by at least this fact that the identity of the work is determined by one of its salient features, tragic. If the aesthetic property of the play *King Lear* being tragic is not perceived in the appreciative experience of the play then one is not experiencing the play in an appropriate way *as* a work of art.[138]

One could illustrate the role of the distinction between revelatory and creative interpretation by going back to the painting by Degas and trying to show which of its

[136] The perceiver needs a certain level of linguistic competence in order to correctly name the aesthetic properties he 'detects' in a work of art. Without knowing the meaning of an aesthetic concept the viewer cannot apply it correctly and he cannot justify his aesthetic judgements.
[137] Ibid., p. 31-32.
[138] I return to a detailed analysis of the example of *King Lear* in Chapter IV, dedicated to Lamarque's aesthetic essentialism.

aesthetic properties are 'prior' to particular interpretations, being in the painting and which are properties imputed through creative interpretation. To take one example, the aesthetic property of being balanced could be considered an intrinsic, objective property of the painting. One can justify this aesthetic attribution by arguing that the perception of particular non-aesthetic properties in the painting (e.g. numbers and arrangement of the elements of the painting, their position with regard to central axis, the arrangement of colours, the distribution of brushstrokes, etc.) together with the knowing of the correct meaning of the term 'balance' could lead an informed viewer to attribute the property of 'balance' to a painting. One is aware that there are many difficult questions about the perception of non-aesthetic properties, for example: 'Does one notice the symmetry of the composition and the synchronicity of colours straightaway or after some contemplation?' or 'Is there any doubt that these non-aesthetic properties are in the painting?' or 'Is the level of competency that the viewer needs to notice the aesthetic properties different from a normal ability to perceive non-aesthetic properties?'. These questions are interesting from a philosophical or art-historical point of view and attempts to answer them usually enrich our understanding of how we attribute aesthetic properties to works. However, an art lover or an informed perceiver would respond to certain features of a work of art and a number of these features would be considered by the viewer *as if* in the work while others would be revealed through an in-depth analysis, or by accumulation of more background knowledge about the history of the work, its provenance or its immediate context. In other words, if one is a property-realist with regards to aesthetic responses to works of art then it can be said that the pre-existent non-aesthetic features of a work are mind-independent (they do not depend of any particular viewer's idiosyncrasies) and they would contribute to the correct attribution of aesthetic properties, in particular the ones that have a strong descriptive core, like balance. Indeed, saying that a painting like Degas' *After the Bath, Woman Drying Herself* is balanced, it does not depend on a particular viewer's perception of it. The way the elements and the colours of the painting are arranged by the artists can be detected by any informed viewer through a firsthand appropriate experience of the painting. This is what Lamarque characterises as the power of these types of aesthetic properties to elicit a normative response from the viewer; in other words, to respond to the aesthetic character of the work in a certain way because the nature of work demands it. [139] Moreover, some would insist that the informed viewer's perceptual ability for noticing non-aesthetic features of the painting and in turn noticing that the painting is

[139] P. Lamarque, *W&O*, 2010, p. 104.

balanced is usually articulated through the correct understanding of the meaning of the concept of balance and thus through the appropriate application of this concept to the painting.

What the previous discussions have shown is that to some extent Lamarque supports a particular kind of aesthetic realism, property realism, where the aesthetic properties of a work of art are a subclass of intentional properties and they are partially dependent on the informed observers' responses.

Until now I discussed the competent perceivers' responses to encounters with works of art and their salient features. Briefly I want to touch upon the role of the artist in anticipating some of the perceivers' responses in his creative process. It can be suggested that to a certain extent a very good artist attempts to elicit a certain type of response. Moreover, if his rendering of the work is successful then his aim is closely achieved. There are two possible comments with regard to the perceiver's response which are outside the artist's 'jurisdiction': first, an increasing number of artists argue that their creative process is not bound to any putative viewers' responses and the responses to their work are not circumscribed to the artists' aims and secondly, the viewer needs background knowledge and an appropriate cultural context in order to respond appropriately to the work. Even so, the link between the artist, the artistic and aesthetic properties of the work and the viewer's response is undeniable.

The interdependence between the existence of aesthetic properties and an ability to perceive them is to some extent paradoxical: on the one hand, some aesthetic properties (at least the ones named by aesthetic concepts with a strong descriptive core) are said to be *in* the work as objective features of the work, but on the other hand, their 'existence' seems to be dependent on being perceived *as* aesthetic properties by informed observers. This puzzlement is about the approach one has to aesthetics: supporting a realist or an anti-realist position about aesthetic properties. Goldman suggests that both realist and anti-realists have something to agree about in relation to the nature of aesthetic properties: to ascribe aesthetic properties to works is the subject's reaction to the 'objective structural properties of the works' and such responses have a perceptual as well as an affective and evaluative character.[140] This position is similar to Lamarque's and other aestheticians who at least agree that certain aesthetic properties are in the work of art – they are 'objective' features of the work.

Before presenting Lamarque's main characteristics of aesthetic properties in the next chapter, I would like to mention one realist theory that influenced Lamarque's view of

[140] A. Goldman, 'Realism', *Encyclopaedia of Aesthetics*, ed. Michael Kelly, OUP, published online, 2008.

aesthetic properties, namely Jerrold Levinson's.[141] Levinson's realism with regard to aesthetic properties is centred on the relation aesthetic properties have with qualified observers and also by the appeal to a distinction between a descriptive component of aesthetic properties and an evaluative one.[142] Levinson argues that aesthetic properties:

> are *higher-order ways of appearing* depending in systematic fashion on lower ways of appearing but not conceptually tight to them or deducible from them[143]

Levinson explains that 'ways of appearing' are what 'others call manifest properties that reveal their nature in and through their appearances' and that, in general, all ways of appearing have a relational character, they are perceiver-related and condition-related:

> Ways of appearing are, first, ways of appearing to *perceivers of a certain sort*; and second, ways of appearing *in certain conditions*.[144]

Levinson's 'perceivers of a certain sort' are people who 'view a work correctly' by being aware of the work of art's context of origin, its place in the artist's creation, its relation to art tradition and the cultural context. This is not far from a common way of characterizing an informed perceiver and most contemporary aestheticians would agree with this, even though a number of contemporary artists would want to dispense with the idea that there is a correct way of perceiving a work of art. However I think those contemporary artists confuse the idea that there are no fixed rules in art (in creating and experiencing a work) with the idea that a viewer does need artistic sensibility or knowledge in order to fully appreciate a work of art. I suggest that this confused way of thinking is based on a misunderstanding of what is an 'appropriate' perception of a work of art or an authentic response to a work of art. In addition, in contemporary aesthetics the appeal to informed or qualified observers is common place and I would like to emphasise that when I talk about aesthetic responses to works of art I usually prefer to use the qualifier 'appropriate' instead of 'correct' because of the rigid dimension that a term like 'correctness' could have in an aesthetic discourse.

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[141] I discuss in detail Lamarque's property realist position in Chapter IV and V which deal with his essentialism

[142] Also one could see that Levinson's idea about the descriptive and evaluative content of aesthetic properties was inspired by Sibley's analysis of aesthetic concepts – descriptive and evaluative terms. In a way all the discussions about aesthetic properties end with Sibley.

[143] J. Levinson, 'What are Aesthetic properties?' in *Contemplating Art –Essay in Aesthetics*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2006, p.342.

[144] Ibid., p. 341.

To return to Levinson's view, when he talks about 'perceivers of a certain sort' and the need for 'certain conditions' for aesthetic properties to make themselves manifest, one cannot help thinking of Hume's good critic and his five virtues. On the other hand, there is indeed a main difference between Hume and Levinson, which is of metaphysical nature: Hume rejects the idea that aesthetic properties are objective, he is a subjectivist while Levinson is a realist believing that aesthetic properties can be detected by qualified observes who correctly perceive a work of art. Lamarque points out that Levinson accentuates the importance of work-specific facts about the work's provenance and its art-historical context which is different from Hume's view which emphasises the importance of the critic's receptivity and experience; for Levinson the responses are grounded in the ability to see the work correctly.[145] The main reason I have mentioned Levinson's view is because Levinson's view is very influential in the analysis of Lamarque's aesthetics, in particular what it means to be a realist with regard to aesthetic properties.

Thus, I agree with the view that most aesthetic properties with a strong descriptive core can be detected in works of art by informed observers when the work is appropriately perceived. As there are degrees of sophistication in perception of colours or smells, it can be said that there are degrees of sophistication in appropriately perceiving different aesthetic properties. The more exposure and experience one has of works of art, the better the discernment of aesthetic properties in a work (as already mentioned, this is nothing new – it is the traditional argument of the development of aesthetic education that can be found in Hume, Kant, Sibley and Walton) and the better aesthetic justifications of the value of works of art.

To round up the discussion about the relation of aesthetic properties to appropriate perceivers, I use Lamarque's apt characterisation of this relation, that perception of aesthetic properties is 'imbued with *thought*'. [146]This statement suggests that in order to appropriately perceive aesthetic properties one would have certain degree of knowledge about the object being perceived and its art context. Presumably this does not mean that the appropriate perception of aesthetic properties has only a cognitive content because an aesthetic perception/appreciation is a complex process which involves cognitive, affective and imaginative elements. The appropriate perceiver needs the background knowledge in order to have an art experience which is rich in phenomenology as well as content.

[145] P. Lamarque, *W&O*, 2010, p. 21.
[146] Ibid., p.22.

CHAPTER III
Lamarque's account of aesthetic properties – Key features

So far I argued that both Sibley and Lamarque are realists about aesthetic properties,[147] and both discuss the relation that aesthetic properties have with their non-aesthetic base properties – while Sibley emphasises the emergence of aesthetic properties from non-aesthetic properties, Lamarque rejects supervenience and only suggests a kind of dependence of aesthetic properties on non-aesthetic/base properties without specifying what kind of dependence one is talking about.[148] Also both philosophers consider that aesthetic properties are relational, resting on 'modes of responses from qualified observers'[149] and this involves a particular type of perception – a 'special epistemic access' for Sibley and the 'perception imbued with thought' for Lamarque (even though sometime the aesthetic is not perceptual[150]).

Thus on the one hand, Lamarque's view of aesthetic properties has a lot of common characteristics with other aestheticians' views (e.g. Sibley, Walton, Levinson) but on the other hand, there are there are a number of features that set Lamarque apart from these other aestheticians. In the first section of this chapter I go over the main characteristics of aesthetic properties that Lamarque shares with other thinkers and also the characteristics which set Lamarque apart from others (*Section 1*). In the second section of this chapter I discuss in detail the difference between aesthetic and artistic properties. This distinction is important in discussions about the aesthetics of conceptual art (*Section 2*)

Section 1: Main characteristics of aesthetic properties that Lamarque shares with other aestheticians

First here is a summary of the main key features of aesthetic properties which Lamarque shares with others (e.g. Sibley, Walton, Levinson) and which I touched upon in the previous chapters:

[147] In contemporary aesthetics a lot of philosophers defend a realist position; for example, another important property realist is Jerrold Levinson. However there are different nuanced positions within the realist/anti-realist debate in contemporary aesthetics.
[148] Lamarque insists that aesthetic properties have a more important relation with the work of art then the mere object – this is one of his main reason for defending aesthetic essentialism (W&O, 2010, p. 106).
[149] P. Lamarque, W&O, 2010, p. 117.
[150] Ibid., p.227.

a) Aesthetic properties are mainly perceptual or experiential properties: 'Aesthetic qualities are those qualities towards which aesthetic experience is directed'. [151] There are two observations to discuss immediately here about the concept of the perceptual and the concept of the experiential. First, saying that aesthetic properties are perceptual features is a traditional safe claim, and this was touched upon when discussing the history of the concept of aesthetic in the first chapter and also when evaluating Sibley's account. Secondly, Lamarque makes a distinction between the perception of aesthetic properties in works of art, like the visual arts, which are perceptual arts and in literary works (he considers that works of literature are non-perceptual works that are 'open to aesthetic description'[152]).This is one of the reasons he talks about experiential features as well as perceptual features. Towards the end of this section I discuss Lamarque's account of appreciative experience of literature because this is one of the characteristics which set Lamarque apart from the other thinkers mentioned.

b) Aesthetic properties are perceived by exercising aesthetic sensitivity. This is what most of the aestheticians mentioned believe, including Lamarque. However, Lamarque adds that aesthetic properties depend for their perception on a complex array of factors related to the perceivers' beliefs, to art-historical background knowledge, to the work's context of creation. Thus aesthetic sensitivity for Lamarque is something like a viewer's receptivity to aesthetic properties in encounters with art – experiential encounters which are 'informed by knowledge about the object being experienced'[153].

c) Aesthetic properties have intentional and relational character. The relational nature of aesthetic properties is explained by the fact that aesthetic properties are 'grounded in a relation between the work's lower-level properties and the responses of a class of ideal or appropriate perceivers'.[154] Their intentional character as mentioned earlier means that they should be recognised as objects to be perceived or thought of as representing, expressing, showing, depicting or symbolising certain beliefs or attitudes.

d) Aesthetic properties are named by concepts which have descriptive and evaluative components and as mentioned before, Lamarque is influenced by Sibley's and Levinson's

[151] P. Lamarque, *Philosophy of Literature*, Blackwell Publishing, 2009, p. 20.
[152] P. Lamarque, *W&O*, 2010, p. 227.
[153] Ibid., p. 229.
[154] Ibid., p. 108.

accounts in making this distinction. Moreover, all three philosophers believe that most aesthetic attributions are descriptive. The perception or experiential encounter of aesthetic properties in a particular work can be justified to a large extent by the existence of non-aesthetic perceptual base properties from which these aesthetic properties emerge. The reminder here, is the Sibleyan stipulation that the aesthetic properties cannot be reduced to their base properties and there are no rules governing the relation between non-aesthetic and aesthetic properties.[155] Thus as mentioned in Chapter I and II, aesthetic properties can be divided into properties which can be characterised by a concept with a strong descriptive core (these properties are conventionally called descriptive) and aesthetic properties, which are called pure evaluative properties because their perception mainly expresses the perceiver's approval or disapproval of those particular properties. Examples of the two extremes of this dichotomy are: formal properties like being balanced, or unified, or dynamic, etc. and pure evaluative properties like being beautiful, mediocre, good, bad, lovely etc.

However, as already argued in the previous chapters, I would like to maintain that most aesthetic terms are part of a continuum and suggest that many of them have a mixed character, a descriptive as well as an evaluative component. The two extremes of the continuum are determined by the strong dominance of one or the other component: the descriptive at one end and the evaluative at the other. To reiterate form Chapter I: first, when in aesthetic terms the descriptive core is dominant (as in a term like balance) one is justified in characterising these terms and the properties they name as descriptive. Secondly, all the pure evaluative terms have a clear evaluative dimension and an indeterminate descriptive character. For example, terms like 'beautiful', 'masterly', 'good', 'nice' are always used to show approval while terms like 'ugly', 'bad', 'mediocre', 'obnoxious', 'disgusting' are used to show disapproval and all these terms do not name a particular property in an object (they can refer to a range of properties in different contexts). Thirdly, the evaluative component of a certain descriptive aesthetic term can, on occasion, shift its value – the term can used either as a sign of the speaker's approval or as a sign of disapproval; the shifting happened in accord with the speaker's affiliation to a community, or with certain artistic context, or in relation to different types of audiences. I would like to elaborate here what I mean by 'shifting' its value.

For example, 'being balanced' is considered a descriptive term. In addition one could argue that a large majority of people would say that, when they use this term to describe the

[155] To reiterate an earlier point, Sibley makes the case for negative rules governing the application of concepts related to the relation between aesthetic properties and their base properties (his example, mentioned in Section 1 of this chapter, was about which properties could not count towards the correct application of the concept flamboyant or garish to a work).

composition of a painting[156] as being balanced, this term is used to show approval of this property. However, in different artistic discourses on some occasions, this term can be used to show the speaker's disapproval of balance as a characteristic of a composition. In such cases, there is a 'calibration' of aesthetic terms in accord to the weight of the evaluative component within each term. By speaking of 'calibration' I am not proposing a new way of characterising a linguistic mechanism; I am only suggesting that there are occasions in which the evaluative component of a term can shift, changing its emphasis within that term. What I mean is that an aesthetic term can be used for a long time with the evaluative assumption that everybody recognises as having a positive value – e. g approval of the property that the term describes. However, because of the fluidity of the artistic discourse and its continuous innovative tendencies, an aesthetic term which was used to show approval of a property could in newer contexts start being used to express a disparaging attitude towards that property. Another way of explaining why this is the case, is that the property of being balanced is a descriptive property which can adopt different values according to the speaker's context of communication –its stable core is that of the descriptive and not of the evaluative.

To illustrate the above proposal, for example one can look again in more detail at the application of a term like 'balance' to a particular painting and argue that the application can be justified to a large extent by the detection of a symmetrical composition, the equilibrium of its chromatic elements and the uniformity of textures or mark making features of the painting. Being balanced describes a particular painting and regardless of the liking or disliking of this property by a viewer, or of the viewer's taste or his idiosyncrasies, this property can be considered as being in the work – a descriptive property. As mentioned in Chapter I, there are a number of descriptive features of a composition that can be recognised in a particular work of art by different competent viewers and this could lead to the possibility of inter-subjective agreement about the existence of a number of descriptive aesthetic properties within that work. In general, if there is a possible agreement about a certain descriptive aesthetic characterisation of a composition, one could insist that descriptive terms, like 'balanced', 'unified', 'dynamic' or 'evocative' do not have an inbuilt positive or negative evaluation in their meaning.

On the one hand, it can be said that when using aesthetic descriptions in every day characterisations, e.g. charactering a composition as 'being balanced', it is usually accepted that the speaker approves of this property – the viewer who talks about this property could

[156] Here one can add other examples of visual works when composition is discussed: drawings, sculptures, woodcuts, etchings, installations, photography etc.

say that he likes the painting because it is very well structured, it has a symmetrical composition, it shows an awareness of the golden ratio, its elements sit in a harmonious relation to each other, it has chromatic uniformity or it breaths an atmosphere of calmness, equilibrium. On the other hand, on some occasions (in the context of an avant-garde movement or a particular artistic outlook) if one characterises a particular painting, or drawing, or installation, as 'being balanced' this could express the speakers' disapproval of that property in the work of art – it could mean that the painting is boring, has no dynamism, no tensions between parts, there is no bold combinations of colours, and it does not show courage in the arrangements of its elements. Even though there is this possible difference in the way the evaluative component of an aesthetic term impacts in the use of the term (approval or disapproval), there is at least one thing which most competent perceivers agree about in an artistic discourse: the term 'being balanced' has a strong descriptive core which describes features or properties that the viewers could possibly identify in the composition of a work. Moreover, if the viewers are part of the same community of speakers or they refer to the same artistic context then they will most likely use the aesthetic terms in the same way – thus agreeing about the direction of the evaluative component.

For theoretical and methodological reasons sticking to characterising some properties, like being balanced as descriptive is a safe bet. The approval or disapproval of such a property will transpire in the way the speaker attributes the property to the work under the influence of contextual features related to the work or related to the speaker's community.

On a different note, it should be mentioned that one can add to the above mentioned descriptive terms their conceptual counterparts, for example: 'unbalanced' to 'balanced', 'chaotic' to 'unified', 'static' to 'dynamic' etc. The continuum of aesthetic terms and the properties they name starts with descriptive terms and ends with evaluative terms but it also includes all the pairs of aesthetic concepts. Here by pairs of aesthetic concepts I do not mean the viewer's response of approval or disproval of the named properties but a conceptual opposition of properties, which means that a work is having or not having certain characteristics. For example, in a pair like 'static'/'dynamic' when applied to describe the composition of a visual work of art, the static could refer to: not representing movement, and/or not portraying change, and/or suggesting stillness, and/or presenting equilibrium of shapes, elements, and/or depicting lifelessness, and/or having chromatic or textural uniformity, flatness, etc. On the other hand the property of dynamic would refer to features like movement, change, tension between shapes or elements, chromatic boldness, clash of textural features, engaging perspective, etc.

One analysis of the pair 'static'/'dynamic' could show that that both terms suggest alternating evaluative stances: disapproval for a work of art which is described as static but in some cases the approval of the viewer and the other way around for dynamic. Looking at two important works from contemporary photography one can show how the two concepts static and dynamic are applied to describe the works and how one can make an argument that, they both express the approval of the viewer for the two properties they name, even though from an evaluative point of view, static and dynamic are opposite properties. The two photographs are Andreas Gursky's *The Rhine II*, 1999, (Fig. 10) and Jeff Wall's *A Sudden Gust of Wind (after Hokusai, 1983*, (Fig. 11).

Fig. 10 *The Rhine II*, 1999, by Andreas Gursky

I discuss first Gursky's photograph which was produced in an edition of six chromogenic prints and the print that I am interested in, it is owned by Tate Modern and it is the fifth in the series; its image size is 1564 x 3083 mm. Before arguing for the characterisation of this composition as static, one needs to know a number of important facts about Gursky's photography. The artist is a German photographer who works with medium format cameras and who digitally manipulates his works, mainly being interested in creating places without specificity, almost abstract and depersonalised, and usually with strong formal elements. The subject of *The Rhine II* is the river Rhine outside Düsseldorf and although this subject is very

prosaic when the work is encountered in a gallery (a large scale print like the one in Tate Modern) the image has an arresting impact on the viewer. The most important features of the photograph are its formal features and the chromatic of the picture. The formal features are the strong horizontal elongated bands of grass, footpath and water and these are situated in the lower half of the composition and the other half (almost equal in size) is a greyish sky. The way the grass is horizontally split by the narrow footpath and the wider body of water in the lower half of the picture, creates an almost abstract composition. Moreover, one can argue that the only colour in the picture, which is green, is mixed with neutral colours (black, grey and white) and this reduces to the minimum the chroma of the image, resulting in a combination of tints and tones which create a sense of uniformity and coherent atmosphere. Because the way the image is manipulated (Gursky eliminated a lot of elements which he considered unimportant, like walkers or far away buildings), and because of its green, grey, silver and metallic nuances and their ordered horizontality, the image initially conjures up a sense of bleakness, lifelessness and alienation. However after a longer contemplation one notices the velvet like texture of grass, the perfect order of the natural features in the horizontal layout, the peacefulness of the river and the vastness of nature – all these aesthetic features which impose a different feeling on the viewer, that of calmness and stability.

My claim is here that *The Rhine II'*s static composition is one of the main factors which contribute to the aesthetic and artistic purpose of the photograph: to capture the essence of a contemporary Rhine as imagined by the artist. Gursky says about the purpose of the image:

> I wasn't interested in an unusual, possibly picturesque view of the Rhine, but in the most contemporary possible view of it. Paradoxically, this view of the Rhine cannot be obtained *in situ*; a fictitious construction was required to provide an accurate image of a modern river.[157]

Gursky's explanation about his artistic intention betrays a preoccupation with a certain artistic outlook. He is interested in portraying idealised urban landscapes (urban because of the role of the asphalted footpath in the foreground). However, here one can also refer to his other works which depict strong urbanized landscapes which are quintessentially about the

[157] Andreas Gursky, '... I generally let things develop slowly', Fotografien 1994-1998, Interview with Veit Gröner, in *German Open: Contemporary Art in Germany,* Gijs Van Tuyl, Andrea Brodbeck, Veit Gröner, 2000, p. ix.

people's imprint on the world. His images are views of the globalised monumental (e.g. monolithic architectural structures, industrial landscapes, office buildings, airports, etc).

The idealisation in *The Rhine II* is not about perfection or a certain kind of out of this world beauty, it is about capturing the essence of things which are heavily anchored in both reality and our understanding of them. Thus, I think how Gursky portrays the Rhine is *the ultimate urban river*. He says:

> A visual structure appears to dominate the real events shown in my pictures. I subjugate the real situation to my artistic conception of the picture.[158]

One could say that, describing the composition of *The Rhine II* as static reflects the viewer's approval of this property because of the above mentioned admiration for both non-aesthetic and aesthetic elements. Also because of its static and non-perspectival composition the landscape has a uniformity that allows the eye of the viewer to slowly roam on the main elements of the image without a need for direction or a vanishing point. There is no 'stage directions' in this image and the viewer discovers a reflective freedom in the visual aesthetic which is very rewarding. Such a characterisation of the elements of the image and the reference to artists' intention leads one to the conclusion that the viewer has a positive aesthetic appreciation of the depiction of the landscape; and the encounter with the photograph offers a rewarding experience. Therefore the static composition is here a valued feature of the work which has a powerful impact on the viewer's aesthetic experience.

In addition to this, one could argue that changing the size of Gursky's *The Rhine II,* from 1564 x 3083 mm to 1560 x 3079 mm would not change the work's identity and its reception. But if the photograph's size is reduced dramatically to an A4 size, or if one changes the rectangularity of the work to a square image, then it can be argued that these changes will affect the appreciative experience of the work – the effectiveness of means to ends, to use Lamarque expression, would be negatively affected. The 'end' in Gursky's *The Rhine II* is the shaping of a subject matter – the Rhine, around the artist's contemporary vision of an idealised urban river; the means used by Gursky are aesthetic properties like a static composition of a certain size. Now that we have suggested that one essential aesthetic property of Gursky's photograph is 'a static composition of a certain size', it can be argued that loosing this particular property it will definitely transform the photograph into a different

[158] A. Gursky, quoted in *The Genius of Photography* by Gerry Badger, Quadrille Publishing, London, 2007, p. 201.

work with a different aesthetic response. The crux of the matter here is about the actual size of the print in Tate Modern: Can the size of *The Rhine II* be an essential aesthetic property? One could maintain that, the size of the image is not important as long as the proportions and the rectangularity of the image are preserved. However, I would argue that for Gursky's works the size of the prints are important and one could argue that the large scale of the *The Rhine II* is an essential aesthetic property of this work. Gursky talks in an interview about the importance of large scale print for his works; he says that certain images 'can't be read in small size' and that such images develop their power 'in a bigger format'.[159] In order to have the appropriate experience of the work *as* the work it is (the work as intended by the artist and the work which captures something contemporary urban about the banks of the Rhine) one needs to encounter this work on a large scale print as presented by Gursky. A much smaller print will not have the immediate impact of the large horizontal elongated bands of atmospheric, river like, reality. Thus in the case of *The Rhine II* the size of the photograph as chosen by the artist is an aesthetic property of the work and an essential one (this discussion can be extrapolated to other of Gursky's works whose large scale are an essential aesthetic feature).

The second photograph I look at is by Jeff Wall and is called *A Sudden Gust of Wind (after Hokusai, 1983,* (Fig. 11) and it is a well known homage of the Canadian artist to Hokusai's famous woodcut colour print *Eijiri in the Provice of Suruga*, 1832 (Fig. 12). This photograph by Wall is a digitally manipulated image displayed as a colour transparency in a light box (light boxes are Wall's artistic signature).

[159] Guy Lane, 'Andreas Gursky Interviewed', *Art World* magazine, 8 June 2019.

Fig. 11 *A Sudden Gust of Wind (after Hokusai)*, 1983, by Jeff Wall

Fig. 12 *Eijiri in the Province of Suruga*, 1832, by Hokusai

In the first encounter with Wall's *A Sudden Gust of Wind (after Hokusai)*, the photograph suggests a subject which is close to the subject of Hokusai's original work: a gust of wind disrupting people's daily routine. However, Wall's image is an unusual landscape with a stronger vanishing point created by the canal in the middle of the picture which bends towards the left and also by the bending towards left of two trees in the foreground. What I mean by 'unusual' landscape is that the image presented to the public has three unsettling juxtapositions: in the foreground the almost urban scene (two of the people in the picture are formally dressed – a woman with a scarf and a man in a suit which together with the papers/documents flying about, could be indicative of a scene from the interior of an office with an open window, the small metallic bin suggesting a close by human habitation), in the middle ground a hybrid landscape (from left to right: an rural scene with a man working the land, a canal, a post industrial scene with a derelict bridge, a few abandoned buildings and many telegraph poles aligned as if they border the end of civilisation), and in the background a city landscape (the outlines of a few tall buildings, steam and a polluted atmosphere). Wall constructed the image as a tableau, as a striking arrangement of all the above mentioned elements to create a sense of alienation or dislocation. The most important elements in this arrangement are the people in the foreground who both appear individually frozen in their movements as well as being part of the same windy and derelict landscape with floating papers and bending trees. The way in which Wall digitally manipulated these elements and their juxtaposition generates a powerful aesthetic and an interesting artistic narrative. First, the strong artistic narrative of the picture is revealed by a sense of alienation and a rupture in the fabric of the viewer's expectations with regard to a depiction of an industrial farming landscape: the town people in smart dress appear teleported in this setting and even the other two people, who wear more appropriate clothing for such a scenery, appear out of place through their gestures and positioning which does not related to any other elements in the picture. Nevertheless, what gives this picture a strong unified aesthetic coherence and integrity is the dynamic of its composition which is created by the gust of wind which 'carries' the scarf of the woman in the foreground, other people's clothes and their gestures, the leaves of the trees, the papers and other debris, towards the vanishing point at the far end of the canal. Again, even though the people in the foreground and other elements of the landscape appear incompatible, Wall gave the whole landscape the same atmosphere through strong post-industrial earthly colours, a very realistic sense of proportions and a naturally diffused light of an industrial farming land before a storm. To develop further the idea of a complex and dynamic composition of *A Sudden Gust of Wind (after Hokusai)* one can think

of another juxtaposition: on the one hand , that of the gust of wind (representing spontaneity, having an opened direction – in this case towards the vanishing point of the picture and suggesting forces beyond human control) and on the other hand that of the individual frozen characters in the foreground (suggesting defensive movements, closed gestures – even the man whose arms are stretched wants to catch the papers, to bring them towards him and the theatricality of the whole human ensemble). One can characterise this juxtaposition as a symbol of people's small world preoccupied with quotidian tasks, with a sense of urgency and centred on oneself (a lot of Wall's works are about the shiny and the commercial contemporary world) and the power of nature where a gust of wind represents an uncontrolled flowing of both the physical and the temporal elements.

The two above examples of photographic works showed how two aesthetic concepts like static and dynamic can be used to describe properties which are considered aesthetically valuable this expressing the viewers' approval, even though the two terms are a pair of aesthetic opposites.[160] Thus the two terms name two aesthetic properties with a strong descriptive core, which could lead to inter-subjective agreement about the detection of the two aesthetic properties in the photographs but on the other hand the evaluative elements of the two concepts can vary (approval or disproval) suggesting that in an aesthetic discourse this needs to be specified in the aesthetic discourse.

e) In addition to the broad dichotomy of descriptive-evaluative Lamarque also uses a fine-grained distinction between different traditional types of aesthetic properties: representative[161], expressive, formal or affective. Lamarque mentions Margolis's wide-ranging list of intentional properties that works of art have: representational, semiotic symbolic, expressive, stylistic, and historical.[162] A number of these mentioned properties will be considered by aestheticians as being aesthetic properties, but not all of them. Also some of these properties will be essential properties.[163] Lamarque suggests that certain kind of expressive and representational properties are 'more naturally thought of as "objectively

[160] In the same manner one can think of works of art in which the evaluative stance in using the terms static and dynamic, expresses aesthetic disregard, when the two terms are used to show disapproval of the compositions of two works.

[161] In Note 13 on p. 101, Lamarque points out what he means by 'aesthetic representational properties': the properties that involve interpretation or are symbolic or thematic'(P. Lamarque, *W&O*, 2010, p.101)

[162] Ibid., p.61, note 8.

[163] I discuss in detail Lamarque's distinction between essential and inessential aesthetic properties in the next chapters. However, I need to mention here very briefly what Lamarque considers an essential aesthetic properties: the property without which the work will not be the work of art it is.

possessed" by the works concerned'.[164] Because according to Lamarque, these types of properties, in particular the representational, the expressive and the formal ones, are the most important in the class of essential properties, one can understand why they directly contribute to, what Lamarque calls, the aesthetic character of a work (this is part of Lamarque's individual essentialism).

These are the main characteristics of aesthetic properties that Lamarque shares with others (I did not insist in mentioning again of that for all these thinkers aesthetic properties are objective properties found *in* the works and all these thinkers are realists about aesthetic properties rejecting a subjectivist view of aesthetic properties). To return to the initial proposal of this section, in what follows I am mentioning two distinctive features of Lamarque's view of aesthetic properties:

i) Aesthetic properties reward a particular attention, characterised by Lamarque as 'aesthetic experience' in the case of visual arts[165] and as 'appreciative experience'[166]in the case of literature. He argues that in the case of literature we do use our perception as traditionally understood – we perceive the sensuous aspects ('fine writing, mellifluous prose, elegant phrases, vivid images,...') and formal features ('structure, organization, and unity') of a literary work.[167] However Lamarque proposes that literary appreciative experience involves more that the perception in the narrow sense, it involves attending to the aesthetic features of a literary work in a deeper sense. He suggests that when reading literature, we think about the consonance of means to end: 'how the sensuous and formal aspects are used to achieve a literary purpose'.[168] Another way of explaining this experience is, according to Lamarque thinking about the imaginative reflection involved in reading literature.

But how is Lamarque's account of aesthetic appraisal of literature different form the aesthetic perception/experience of a painting? Lamarque says that both the perception in the case of visual arts and the appreciative experience in the case of reading literature have in common the experience of art *as* art.[169] When a competent viewer encounters *Guernica* he does attend to the formal, representational, expressive and symbolic properties of the painting in a deeper sense and he does 'ask' how aesthetic properties contribute to the aesthetic purpose of the work. I want to point out that the 'asking' here is not an activity in literary

[164] P. Lamarque, *W&O*, 2010, p. 102.
[165] Ibid., p. 126.
[166] Ibid., p. 226.
[167] Ibid., p. 227.
[168] By literary purpose Lamarque means thematic ends. Ibid., p. 227.
[169] Ibid., p. 229.

sense, it is something like wondering 'what is the point of the painting?', or 'what is the meaning of the painting?' and this is not necessarily a question directed to someone. I think the subtle difference, which Lamarque tries to point out between the two ways of aesthetically appreciating a work of literature and appreciating a work of visual art, consists in the extent to which the senses are involved. Lamarque claims that the aesthetic is not necessarily perceptual, if by 'perceptual' one refers to only sense perception. In the case of literary works the appreciative experience is not centred on the sense responses as much as in the case of visual arts (of course, the senses are involved, otherwise, how could we access any literary text or work?). In other words, the viewer's sensual experience could have in the case of the visual arts a higher phenomenal content (being pleasant, disturbing, vivid) in comparison with the literary appreciation where the intentional content is dominant (here intentional content refers to the experience as what is thought to be of) [170]. But one needs to emphasise here that an appreciative experience of art and literature, according to Lamarque involves both phenomenology and an intentional content and the phenomenology and the intentional content weigh differently in the experience of different art forms. My reading of Lamarque is that in the literary appreciation the aesthetic pleasure comes from an understanding and admiration of consonance of means to ends. The concept of *consonance* is important here. The reader 'sees' how the author achieved his literary purpose and this is a kind of aesthetic experience. While in the case of visual arts the aesthetic appreciation has a more direct route through sense perception, with an emphasis on its phenomenal character. The viewer 'sees' the aesthetic/artistic intention in a more literary way than in the case of literary works. The crucial point is here the interplay between the intentional content and the phenomenology of the experience of literature and other arts.

Thus for Lamarque, the 'perception' of works of art and literary works involve an appreciative experience, the experience of art *as* art – an experience 'permeable to background knowledge'.[171] This is where Lamarque's account differs from the other thinkers. I am not going here into the discussion of non-perceptual works of art and their experience, because Lamarque's conception of aesthetic appreciation will be discussed in the chapters dedicated to his aesthetic essentialism.

[170] P. Lamarque, *W&O*, 2010, p. 127.
[171] Ibid., p. 229.

ii) Lamarque employs a conception of the aesthetic which is wider than traditionally understood. Aesthetic properties (the representational, the expressive, the formal or the affective ones) are located in a continuum with art-historical properties.[172] There would be also other properties which would be relevant to how a work is perceived/experienced, thus relevant to its aesthetic appreciation. For example, some of these properties can be linked to certain factors related to the history of the work, its context or provenance.[173] The example I use in the next section of this chapter is the art-historical property of 'being first Cubist painting' referring to Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon.*

Also, Lamarque briefly discusses Berys Gaut's broader sense of 'aesthetic value properties' that a work has *qua* work of art.[174] Although Lamarque mentions that the use of artistic or historical properties to describe a work (e.g. to describe it as a sonnet or as alluding to Marvell) is the result of classification or interpretation not of perception, in some cases if one adopts Gaut's wider sense of the aesthetic then some of these properties can become aesthetic properties.[175] Maybe, in this wider sense 'being a sonnet' can in some circumstances be an aesthetic property if this 'is a quality that a work has *qua* work of art'. [176] The form of the poem (sonnet) could be considered relevant to the aesthetic experience of the poem. Lamarque suggests that some properties that do not appear to have an aesthetic character but can become aesthetic qualities. Not many would agree with the claim that a sonnet can sometimes be considered an aesthetic property. However, I think, without going into too much detail, that the strict poetic form of a sonnet which combines images and sounds, can in *some* cases be relevant to the presentation of the sonnet's theme and thus relevant to the appreciative experience of the sonnet. One needs to insist here that the form of a particular sonnet, its fourteen lines and its four quatrains could be considered a part of what Lamarque calls the aesthetic means and noticing this property along with other aesthetic properties and with the poetic purpose of the sonnet, will create a consonance of means to aesthetic ends.

Here, I want to emphasise again that, Lamarque sees aesthetic properties and art-historical properties as situated on a continuum[177] because works of art are cultural objects embedded in an art-historical context and their perception is permeated by the knowledge of that particular context and the art practices that produce the works. There will be circumstances in which the art critic or art practitioner or the competent viewer can argue for an art-historical

[172] Ibid., p. 24
[173] Ibid., p.126
[174] Lamarque, *Philosophy of Literature*, Blackwell Publishing, 2009, p. 18.
[175] Ibid., p. 18
[176] Ibid., p18
[177] P. Lamarque, *W&O*, 2010, p. 22.

property to be considered an aesthetic property because of its relevance to the aesthetic experience of the work.[178] However, this should be argued for case by case and if new saliences of a work are found in this way then the work in question could be seen in a new light.

Section 2: The distinction between aesthetic properties and artistic properties

The first impulse when tackling the distinction between aesthetic and artistic properties is to look at different lists compiling various aesthetic properties and artistic properties respectively. However, this appears to be easier for aesthetic properties and more difficult for artistic ones. In general, artistic properties are considered to be related to art historical backgrounds and details about the creation and the context of the work, while aesthetic properties have to do with ways of perceiving and experiencing a work of art. For example, some artistic properties are: being part of modernism, being the first cubist painting, being a sonnet, being the result of many preparatory drawings, looking square, being written during WWI, being a Renaissance painting, etc. Examples of some traditional aesthetic properties were presented earlier in Alan H. Goldman's list: pure value properties, emotion properties, formal qualities, behavioural properties, representational qualities or evocative properties. Even though, the concepts of art and the artistic are much older than the concept of the aesthetic, the main reason why the discussion about artistic properties is slightly more difficult than the one about aesthetic properties, is because philosophical discussions of aesthetic properties have received a sustained attention since the 18th century, while the philosophical focus on artistic properties is more characteristic of the 20th century and the rejection of aestheticism.[179]

The distinction between the aesthetic and the artistic become acute when the concept of the aesthetic became more and more attacked for its 'inability' to account for characterizations of the development of newer artistic forms (e.g. conceptual art, social sculpture, performance art, body art etc). According to Carolyn Korsmeyer the problem of the aesthetic can be summed up in the following dilemma:

[178] Again the art-historical feature of Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* as being considered the first Cubist painting can be such a property relevant to how the work is experienced.
[179] I need to emphasise here that I am talking about sustained philosophical considerations with regard to artistic characterizations not the art-historical or art-critical characterizations which have a longer tradition.

> either "aesthetic" means something fairly precise but does not accommodate the range of artistic value we feel it is appropriate; or "aesthetic" is defined in terms of art, is expanded to include all sorts of artistic qualities and looses whatever precision…[180]

Korsmeyer's characterization of the aesthetic is echoed by B. Gaut's warning that a too inclusive treatment of aesthetic properties 'allows the aesthetic to balloon out so as to cover an extensive chunk of our mental life'.[181] Both Korsmeyer and Gaut appear to agree that a distinction between the aesthetic and the artistic is paramount in contemporary philosophical discussions about the notion of the aesthetic, but their reasons for this adjustment in our conception of the aesthetic are different. For Korsmeyer the change is due to the theoretical difficulties that mushroomed out after Dickie's institutional theory of art while for Gaut the adjustment is necessary in a larger scheme when one needs to give an account not only of aesthetic values but also of the ethical values of works of art.

One general way of trying to disentangle different accounts of the distinction between the aesthetic and the artistic is to look at different usages of the terms. The terms 'aesthetic' and 'artistic' characterize different kind of things: objects, properties, experiences, judgements, etc. In what follows, first, I am going to focus briefly on the distinction between aesthetic and artistic objects. Secondly, I discuss in detail the distinction between aesthetic and artistic properties.

First, I introduce Marcia Muelder Eaton's characterization of objects that are characterized by the two terms. She suggests four possible interactions between the class of aesthetic objects and the class of artistic objects.[182] Before mentioning these alternatives one needs to briefly characterize an aesthetic object. An aesthetic object is an object which can be viewed or assessed from an aesthetic point of view. Thus, potentially any object could be viewed aesthetically, which means that the object is perceived or experienced based on the impact of its appearances (visual, auditory, haptic, or gustatory).

Here are Eaton's four alternatives:

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[180] C. Korsmeyer 'Distinguishing 'On Distinguishing "Aesthetic" from "Artistic"', Journal of Aesthetic Education, Vol. 11, No. 4, Oct 1977, p. 53.
[181] B. Gaut, *Art, Emotion and Ethics*, OUP, Oxford, 2013, p. 33.
[182] M. Muelder Eaton, 'Art and the Aesthetic' in *The Blackwell Guide to Aesthetics*, ed. Peter Kivy, 2003, pp. 63-65.

1) *The class of artistic objects and aesthetic objects are identical* (all objects that are of aesthetic interest become works of art). Eaton argues that although people's talk reflects this idea, this is an imprecise use of language.[183] Indeed, nowadays one can hear people expressing their admiration for aesthetic objects in the same way they express admiration for art, for example: 'Beckham's kick was beautiful!' or 'His Ratatouille is a masterpiece' or 'The Grand Canyon displays a spectacular chromatic palette' (my examples). However, one can argue that these expressions are used in a figurative way.[184]

2) *The class of artistic objects and aesthetic objects are not identical, nevertheless they intersect.* This means that some aesthetic objects are not works of art (most of the natural objects) and that some of the works of art are not aesthetic objects. This alternative is supported by many who reject aestheticism and think there are works of art that should not be assessed from an aesthetic point of view. This position could be illustrated by appeal to some well known pieces of conceptual art or performance art that are considered as having have an aesthetic appeal.

3) *The class of artistic objects is strictly included in the class of aesthetic objects but is not identical to the class of aesthetic objects.* In this case all works of art are aesthetic objects but not all aesthetic objects are works of art. This is the view that Eaton supports. This is a traditionalist view where the artistic is defined in terms of the aesthetic. It is well captured by P.F. Strawson's view that a judgement of a work of art as art needs to be from an aesthetic point of view. Strawson's claim had a strong antecedent in Monroe Beardsley's view that a work of art has an aesthetic function which couples the artistic with the aesthetic.[185]

4) The two classes are totally discrete (this is possible form from a logical point of view). Eaton argues that there are no supporters of this view although someone could make an attempt to explain that Kant's aesthetic/artistic distinction falls in this category. However, because Kant does consider that the aesthetic pleasure of natural beauty is similar to that

[183] M. Muelder Eaton, 'Art and the Aesthetic' in *The Blackwell Guide to Aesthetics,* ed. Peter Kivy, 2003, p.63.
[184] There are very disturbing cases when some people choose to have literary interpretations of human actions as art and to speak about such actions as 'works of art'. For example: choosing to shoot a person and claiming that this is the greatest work of art ever, or describing a tragic event like, the falling of people who tried to escape the fire in the Twin Towers 9/11 Attacks as an ultimate art work.
[185] M. Beardsley, *Aesthetics*, Hartcourt USA, 1958.

which people feel when they experience art then, Eaton suggests that Kant adheres to the second or the third alternative.[186]

Eaton thinks that Kant was one of the first to distinguish between the aesthetic and the artistic with his arguments about the experience of free and adherent beauty (the experience of natural beauty and respectively the pleasurable experience of art). Eaton's discussion of different alternatives of the relation between the aesthetic and the artistic is about the class of objects that are aesthetic and the class of objects that are artistic. Although one could use the same procedure to characterise the relation between aesthetic properties and artistic properties, there are more problematic issues when one attempts to classify artistic properties in relation to aesthetic ones. For example, if one has a more traditionalist view and considers that all works of art are aesthetic objects, then one appears to have problems with accommodation the works of conceptual art. I emphases 'appears' because this is a problem only if conceptual works are not considered aesthetic objects or if more radically, they are not considered art objects. I do not subscribe to the idea that art is not aesthetic; here I agree with Eaton's traditional view that the class of works of art is included in the class of aesthetic objects. Nevertheless I disagree with Eaton's claim that conceptual art is not art. In the last chapter of this thesis I discuss certain examples of conceptual works and show that these particular works can be considered aesthetic objects because they possess essential aesthetic properties.

Another way of trying to explain the distinction between the aesthetic and the artistic is by looking at how the two terms are characterizing properties. For example, the already mentioned Carolyn Korsmeyer proposes that the two concepts of the aesthetic and the artistic overlap but are not congruent and she believes that one should not attempt to construct a theory of art and to explain artistic properties and values through a limited notion of 'aesthetic'. Her argument rests on the one hand on a strong criticism of the attitude theories, which stretch the notion of "aesthetic" until it becomes indistinguishable from "artistic", and on the other hand, on a sympathetic analysis of George Dickie's institutional theory which promotes a theory of artistic perception freed from 'the theoretical shackles of the aesthetic'.[187] However, Korsmeyer focuses her analysis on the criticism and evolution of the concept of the aesthetic without actually identifying characteristics of the artistic. The only

[186] M. Muelder Eaton, 'Art and the Aesthetic' in *The Blackwell Guide to Aesthetics*, ed. Peter Kivy, 2003, p. 66.
[187] C. Korsmeyer 'Distinguishing 'On Distinguishing "Aesthetic" from "Artistic"', *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Vol. 11, No. 4, Oct 1977, p. 50.

clear clue from Korsmeyer about the distinction is that aesthetic qualities are dependent upon the nature of the object in consideration and these qualities are: '[….], elements like composition and balance, imagery and coloration, sensuous arrangement of forms, and the like'.[188] She also says that artistic qualities 'extend beyond the narrowly aesthetic' which probably means that artistic qualities can characterize aspects of works of art which are not directly linked to the perceptual.

Another important view of the distinction between aesthetic and artistic characterizations of works is discussed by Lamarque. He says:

> To describe a work as elegant or finely balanced or unified or beautiful is to characterise its aesthetic nature, but to describe it as a sonnet or alluding to Marvell or symbolizing hope is to offer an art-related or more broadly literary characterization.[189]

He argues that aesthetic qualities rely on perception whereas other qualities like artistic or historical ones are related to classification or interpretation.[190] Even though this seems an appropriate characterization of the distinction, Lamarque himself thinks there are still difficulties in how others distinguish between aesthetic and artistic. He suggests that the problems lie with two false assumptions that characterise professional people's reactions to art and the aesthetic:

> The critics are assuming that art is necessary aesthetic, the artists that the aesthetic is necessary perceptual.[191]

Lamarque is right that one should consider a wider sense of the concept of the aesthetic, which goes beyond the traditional belief that the aesthetic is only perceptual. His conception of the perceptual/experiential encounter with works of art or literature suggest a wider understanding of the aesthetic and this will have implications for understanding the aesthetic value of a work of art. Moreover, his suggestion that the aesthetic is not necessary perceptual, will help to solve some of the theoretical difficulties that are prompted by discussions of non-

[188] C. Korsmeyer 'Distinguishing 'On Distinguishing "Aesthetic" from "Artistic"', *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Vol. 11, No. 4, Oct 1977, p. 54.
[189] P. Lamarque, *Philosophy of Literature*, Blackwell Publishing, 2009, p. 18.
[190] Ibid., p.18.
[191] P. Lamarque, *W&O*, 2010, p. 227.

perceptual art like literature or by discussions about conceptual art works. Thus I agree that the aesthetic is not necessarily perceptual. Nevertheless, I do not agree with what Lamarque says about art and the aesthetic. One can say that the aesthetic involves the perceptual, as well as, other experiential aspects which are not directly perceptual. For example, literary works and maybe other newer art forms like conceptual art can be assessed from an aesthetic point of view if the aesthetic is understood in a wider sense. Here Lamarque's consonance of means to ends comes to mind. A work of literature can be appreciated aesthetically not only because of its sensuous writing and formal aspects, but also because the reader experiences the harmonious effect of the way in which the writer used those sensuous and formal elements to achieve a literary purpose. Therefore, one can claim that all art forms (including the so called 'non-perceptual' arts) are necessarily aesthetic.

Thus to round up this discussion I think that all works of art are aesthetic objects (because they can be aesthetically appreciated). In other words, the class of works of art is included in the class of the aesthetic objects. Works of art are objects which require for their appreciation an aesthetic engagement (or contemplation or attention) [192] which is conscious of the intentionality of art (works of art as human creations are 'demanding' certain kind of responses when appropriately perceived or experienced *as* art). On the other hand, the class of aesthetic properties and the class of artistic properties intersect and the class boundaries are not fixed. For example, some artistic properties can be considered as aesthetic properties if they are aesthetically relevant to the experience of the work. For example, referring to a painting as 'looking square' is an artistic property, but in some cases this can become relevant to the aesthetic appreciation of the painting and then such a property becomes an aesthetic property of the painting). If one uses a wider sense of the aesthetic, like Lamarque, then this slightly changes how one thinks about aesthetic terms. In what follows, I give an example of a work that I hope briefly illustrates my position about the 'distinction' between aesthetic and artistic properties.

Here are some characterizations of a work: it is an oil painting, its final version was created 1907, it is painted by Picasso and is called *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (Fig. 13). The painting has a rectangular shape of 243.9 x 233.7 cm, the colour scheme is a combination of monochromatic and contrastive colours, it represents five female figures in nude, the

[192] Even if one brings the example of conceptual art and insists that conceptual pieces are not aesthetic objects I would disagree. In the last chapter of this thesis I will mount a defence of the view that conceptual pieces are aesthetic objects with the caveat that they aspire to be characterised by minimal aesthetic descriptions. Here everything will rest on what sense of the aesthetic one is using and how can an informed perceiver describe the engagement with the conceptual piece.

nakedness of the figures is provocative, it looks unfinished, it looks square, it was shocking for Picasso's contemporaries, it was a radical painting, it is considered the first Cubist painting, it is dynamic and powerful, it is a bold statement about a new iconography and it is beautiful. From this list, some of the characterizations of the painting are factual – about its history, context and creation and some of the characterizations are artistic and aesthetic.

Fig. 13 *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon,* 1907 , by Picasso

The painting has a 'rectangular shape' and its 'final oil version was created in 1907 by Picasso' are factual descriptions of *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*. These descriptions are not considered aesthetic but one could make a case for considering two of these characterizations as artistic: 'being an oil painting' and 'being painted by Picasso'. In the visual arts the medium is an important choice for artists and painting in oils is a respected choice. An informed perceiver would claim that oil paint represents an artistic property of a painting; some of the reasons given by the informed perceiver for this claim are: it is considered that the most versatile medium for depicting human flesh is oil paints, or it is considered a sign of

artistic maturity to use oil paints, or that most of the greatest painters used oils. The mentioning of the medium of a painting can be described as both: a non-aesthetic property and an artistic property depending of the context of description.[193] Looking at the second characterization – the painter's name – one could argue that this is again not only an historical fact but also an artistic property. The name 'Picasso' has a particular resonance by being associated with certain artistic standards (e.g. experimental, unconventional, radical or simply genial) – thus it can be said that, 'to be painted by Picasso' it is an artistic property. Pushing this line of argument even further, one could consider what Sibley said about evaluation-added terms: they name a quality that is widely recognised as being of value in certain sphere. Then one can think how Sibley's predicament can be used to characterise the painting as having the quality artistic quality of 'being by Picasso'. Saying that the painting is 'by Picasso' could be even more, it could be an expression of recognition of value from an aesthetic point of view. The term that we sometimes use to describe figures by Picasso and in Picasso's Cubist style is 'Picassoesque'. Thus the evaluation added to the name 'Picasso' makes the term 'by Picasso' a descriptive-merit term in a certain sphere (in the artworld as Arthur Danto would say). My characterization of *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* names different properties of the work and my view is that, there is indeed a continuum between the properties that are non-aesthetic, artistic and aesthetic and sometime the boundaries between these become blurred according to background knowledge, ways of perceiving and socio-cultural contexts of the viewer who appreciates the work. Here is a possible arrangement of a number of the properties of *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon,* on such a continuum:

non-aesthetic properties	**artistic properties**	**aesthetic properties**
● a rectangular painting	● looking square	● unusual visual effect
● yellows, browns, greys, blues, blacks	● monochromatic and contrastive colour	● disruptive blue within earthy/fleshy colours
● Hellenistic figure	● traces of iconography	● new visual language
● painted in 1907	● first cubist oil painting	● Picassoesque

[193] A classic example of such difference in description is to show the reaction of different people when they hear the following sentence: 'We are going to see one of Henry Moore's bronze sculptures'. An art lover would immediately consider 'bronze' as a medium favoured by Moore and the artistic and aesthetic implications of such a medium while a person interested in bronze as raw material would not consider the property of bronze as being an artistic property. For the artworld, the most shocking example of disregarding the medium used by Moore as an artistic property, was the theft of one of the sculptures from the Henry Moore park. The shock was that the sculpture was not stolen for its artistic and aesthetic value, but for its raw material – the bronze.

The aesthetic properties mentioned above are some of the aesthetically relevant properties of *Guernica*. This list could continue but it is possible that many of the artistic properties can 'migrate' to the next category when used in aesthetic assessments, becoming aesthetic. For example, the property of the painting 'looking square' can be both an artistic and an aesthetic property. Artistic because it is applied to a painting and aesthetic because although the painting is actually rectangular, the effect on the viewer is disconcerting appearing square which has an impact on how the painting is aesthetically appreciated (in particular if one thinks of the phenomenological aspects of this appreciative experience). This is what Carsten-Peter Warncke says about the rectangularity of the painting works:

> The marginal difference between the height and the breath is significant because it leaves us irresolute. […] Everything in this picture teaches us of the inadequacy and randomness of customary concepts in visual representation.[194]

Here one can bring Lamarque's previously mentioned example of an artistic property of a work being described as a sonnet. To elaborate against an objection that says that being a sonnet is not an aesthetic property, one can think of another type of poem whose form can be show to be essential to its aesthetic experience and value: a haiku. The elements of such a Japanese poem (its juxtapositions of images or ideas, it 17 syllables and its temporal reference to a season) are circumscribed to this particular form which works beautifully in an accomplished haiku. This description of a poem as a haiku or as a sonnet is similar with describing *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* as a cubist painting. The descriptions of the style of the works (the poems and the painting) could be considered both: art-historical or artistic properties (having to do with how we classify such works) and they also can be considered aesthetic properties, which reflect a particular way of perceiving or experiencing those works. Moreover, qualifying *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* as 'the first cubist painting' could have aesthetic resonance for the contemporary viewer. On one hand, the qualifier 'the first cubist painting' could only add to the aesthetic appreciation of the painting as being daring, stirring and being original. On the other hand, the viewer could be moved by the powerful effect that such a qualifier can have on one (this effect could be an imaginative transference into the shoes of the first viewers of the painting).

[194] Carsten-Peter Warncke and Ingo E. Walther, *Picasso*, Taschen, 1997, p. 153.

The intention of this chapter was to identify different terminological differences between Lamarque and other thinkers and to look at a number of different conceptions of the aesthetic and that of the artistic, in order to clarify some of Lamarque's aesthetic architectonic and in order to be able to build a defence of his aesthetic essentialism.

Chapter IV

Lamarque's Individual-Essentialism

Part 1: New-Object Theory

Lamarque defends a version of aesthetic essentialism in which aesthetic terms are construed in a realist manner, 'as standing for properties' and in which some of those properties play a crucial role in the description and identity of works of art. He claims that some works of art have necessarily and essentially a certain aesthetic nature or character and some aesthetic descriptions of works of art are necessary truths that identify that aesthetic character.[195] Thus, according to Lamarque some works of art possess some aesthetic properties essentially and these contribute to the works' distinct aesthetic character.

There are many questions one needs to address when evaluating such an aesthetic essentialist view, but I think an urgent one is a general question about essentialism and its terminology. In this chapter I am going first to present a general introduction to essentialism (*Section 1*) and secondly I introduce Lamarque's argument of individual essentialism (*Section 2*).

Section 1: Introduction to Essentialism

In order to evaluate Lamarque's aesthetic essentialism I introduce the main terminology of the essentialist framework and I characterise an aesthetic essentialist view of art. The question about essentialism is an ontological question about what makes a thing the thing it is, and according to this doctrine the answer is based on a belief in the existence of essences. Although there is a long history of the concept of essence, starting with Plato and Aristotle and then continuing with J. Locke, G.W.F. Hegel and 20th century philosophers like G. Santayana, G.E. Moore, R.G. Collingwood and S. Kripke[196], what interests me here are contemporary usages of the concept of essence. There are two main approaches in

[195] P. Lamarque, *W&O*, 2010, p.95.

[196] Some of those philosophers dealt with the concept of essence in relation to art. However, although many other philosophers did not discuss the concept of essence in relation to art, they had a big influence on the essentialists who were interested in aesthetics. A detailed analysis of most of these philosophers' conception of essence can be found in 'Essentialism' by T.J. Diffey from *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, Ed. Michael Kelly, Publisher OUP, Print Publication Date:1998 Published to Oxford Reference: 2008 Current Online Version: 2012.

philosophical literature with regard to the concept of essence: one is the conception which follows the model of definition, and the other one follows the model of modal attribution.[197] But what does this mean and how is it useful to the current discussion?

The first approach suggests that 'essences' are used in the definitions of concepts (for example, essences of an object are those essential properties/attributes of the object which are inherent in the definition of the object), while the second approach is a modal account which is important for the metaphysics of identity (essences are those essential properties/attributes that make the object necessarily being that way).

In order to have a clearer terminological framework for the analysis of Lamarque's aesthetic individual essentialism, in what follows I briefly look at the above mentioned two approaches: the definitional characterisation of essences (1.1) and the modal characterisation of essences (1.2).

1.1 The definitional characterisation of essences

The first approach is inspired by an Aristotelian view of essence: 'a definition is a phrase signifying a thing's essence'.[198] This approach links the concept of essence to the concept of definition. According to Aristotle when one gives a definition, he characterises the essence of the thing being defined. However, Bertrand Russell's analysis of the Aristotelian conception of essence points out that: 'In fact, the question of "essence" is one as to the use of words'. Russell emphasises that the discussion about 'essence' is 'purely linguistic: a *word* may have an essence, but a *thing* cannot'. [199] Russell's observation that the notion of essence is 'muddle-headed'[200] is also echoed by Wittgenstein's attack on essentialism. As far as I understand, the Orthodox interpretation of Aristotle is that he is discussing definitions because he is interested in what things are really like not in the way we use words. For example, Marc Cohen underlines that, when Aristotle discusses the notion of essence he does not talk about words but he defines things.[201] Agreeing with Cohen does not solve a lot and

[197] Kit Fine in 'Essence and Modality: The Second Philosophical Perspectives Lecture', *Philosophical Perspectives*, Vol. 8, Logic and Language (1994), p.2.
[198] Aristotle, *The Organon: The Works of Aristotle on Logic*, Vol. 5 Topics, Ed. Roger Bishop Jones , CreateSpace Independent, 2012 , p.220.
[199] B. Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, Routledge, London, 2002, p. 211
[200] Ibid., p. 210
[201] 'The definition of tiger does not tell us the meaning of the word 'tiger'; it tells us what it is to be a tiger, what a tiger is said to be in respect of itself. Thus, the definition of tiger states the essence—the "what it is to be" of a tiger, what is predicated of the tiger *per se*.' S. Marc Cohen, 'Aristotle's Metaphysics', in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* online, 2012.

some would argue that even though someone is interested in what things are like, this cannot be attempted without a clarification of the terms used. Indeed the scope of this section is to try to clarify different terminological essentialist views not to muddy the waters even more. Nevertheless, if the temptation to refer to essences of things is intuitively too powerful one can think of a less problematic approach and opt for the term 'essential property' instead of 'essence'. In some sense this will be a better option but, before I go on, it is a good idea to mention that the concept of essential properties is considered a 'misnomer' by some, because it is argued that it confuses 'the idea of a thing's essence with that of its properties'. For example this is argued by David Oderberg whose argument springs from a defence of Locke's characterisation of properties of an object as 'those features that "flow" from its essence'.[202] Thus, I choose to use the term 'essential properties' instead of 'essences'. There are three main reasons for my choice. First, because I am aware of Oderberg's warning and I do not want to say that works of art have 'essences' ('essence' is a very heavily loaded term and when used with respect to art, it has almost mystical connotations). Secondly, because the term 'essential property' is a common usage in contemporary aesthetics and most arguments of aesthetic essentialism incorporate this usage. Thirdly, because by 'essentials properties' I simply understand the most important or significant properties without which the object would not be what it is – in the case of essential aesthetic properties these would be significant for the aesthetic character of the work.[203]

I would like to make two observations about the above mentioned approach – the definitional characterisation of 'essences', in relation to the discussions about arts:

i) One should be wary of strong essentialist views with regard to definitions of art or works of art which promote analytic definitions (necessary and sufficient conditions for something to be a work of art). Indeed the definitional characterisation of works of art suffered significant setbacks after the Wittgensteinian turn. But, if one still opts for the concept of essential aesthetic properties, then what kind of essentialism are we talking about here? If the question is about concepts, according to Severin Schroeder there are two avenues for the essentialist: one is that the essentialist could try to look at the formation of a concept without talking about defining properties, and the other is that the essentialist should think about the model of family resemblance or that of a cluster concept when using concepts like game,

[202] D. Oderberg, Essence and Properties, *Erkenntnis*, Vol. 75, No. 1, July 2011, pp. 85-86.
[203] This is the sense used by Lamarque in his writings with the caveat that he opted for the term 'aesthetic qualities' instead of 'aesthetic properties'.

science or work of art.[204] I would go along with the suggestion that one needs to treat differently the formation of a concept and its use, but one needs to note here that an essentialist would still insist that he is primarily interested in the nature of things 'out there' in the world. For example, someone like Lamarque is interested in individual existent works of art and not only in the way words describe or characterise those things; but necessarily conceptual investigations are part of Lamarque's whole architectonic.

ii) The second observation is linked to the above remark that, there are two different levels of discussions about essential properties: the semantic one and the metaphysical one. Although many Wittgensteinians would complain that any metaphysical claims are 'incomprehensible'. For example, Severin Schroeder attracts attention to the fact that even Wittgenstein's work contains 'a fair amount of metaphysics in his Tractatus.[205] Thus, I want to clarify that I am mainly interested in the ontological level of discussion (discussions about the nature and the identity of existent things out in the world – in particular, works of art existing in the artworld). However, I am aware that without a solid understanding of the meaning and the use of the main concepts in aesthetics the ontological approach will be a hard road to travel.

1.2 The modal characterisation of essences

The second account of the concept of essence[206] 'the modal approach to essentialist metaphysics' is very much favoured in contemporary debates and the essentialist claims are considered under *de re* modality.[207] Broadly the distinction between *de re*/*de dicto* modality can be described like this: ascribing 'de re' modality is about what is essential or accidental to an object, while ascribing 'de dicto' modality is about a proposition having a certain property (for example, being necessarily true).[208] Even though there are different conceptions of the

[204] S. Schroeder, *Wittgenstein*, Polity Press, 2007, p.143.
[205] Ibid., p. 28.
[206] Here it needs to be said that this second approach, the modal one, is also to some extent inspired by Aristotle's work. For more details see S. Marc Cohen, 'Aristotle's Metaphysics', in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2015/entries/aristotle-metaphysics/> and Teresa Robertson and Philip Atkins, 'Essential vs. Accidental Properties', in *Stanford Encyclopedia* online, First published Tue Apr 29, 2008; substantive revision Mon Oct 21, 2013.
[207] However after Kit Fine made this observation, he concluded that the contemporary view of the modal account does not capture anything 'which might be reasonably called a concept of essence'. K. Fine, 'Essence and Modality: The Second Philosophical Perspectives Lecture', *Philosophical Perspectives*, Vol. 8, Logic and Language (1994), p.3.
[208] M. J. Loux, *Metaphysics: a contemporary introduction*, Routledge, 1998, p. 173.

de re/*de dicto* distinction (syntactic, semantic and metaphysical),[209] as already mentioned, I am more interested in the metaphysical conception because in aesthetic disagreements, critics are not only quarrelling about the meaning of the terms they use and their correct application but often they disagree about attributing certain aesthetic properties to works of art and about the importance of some of these properties to the work of art's identity. Thus, understanding the *de re*/*de dicto* characterisation is important if one wants to stay away from the murky waters created by the confusion between on the one hand, propositions or what has been said about works of art and their properties, and on the other hand, existent individual works of art and their properties.[210] And again, thinking of Russell's warning that the properties of language should not be confused with properties of the world, I would argue that one still can use the concept of 'essence' in metaphysical characterisations if one makes it clear that by 'essences' he means essential properties of objects out in the world without which the object could not be what it is. Of course, in the case of works of art one would have to explain what these essential properties are (this assumes that works of art have such things as essential properties). In addition, a basic understanding of the *de re*/*de dicto* distinction is useful because this distinction appears in Lamarque's argument for aesthetic individual essentialism, in particular when Lamarque discusses essential properties as *de re* necessities.

To return to the initial question about essentialism, from different readings of the essentialist positions I think there are two ways of looking at essentialism: one is what I would call 'object-based' and the other 'property-based'. What I mean here is that one way of looking is centred on grouping objects according to their essential properties and the second one is dealing with the distinction between different types of essences/properties.

Thus the first perspective encompasses many types of essentialism. Here are some of the most important ones: kind essentialism, origin essentialism and sortal essentialism. Very briefly this is how these three types of essentialism can be characterised: if one refers to kinds, natural ones (plants, animals or natural substances) or artificial ones, and believes that these have at least some essential properties, then this position is called kind essentialism; origin essentialism argues that an object could not have a very different origin from the one it

[209] These three forms of the distinction are presented and discussed in detail by Thomas McKay and Michael Nelson, in 'The De Re/De Dicto Distinction', Supplement to Propositional Attitudes, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* online, 2014.

[210] Here one needs to mention a paradoxical situation: even though the focus of an investigation is about 'existent individual works of art and their properties' one is aware that this is carried out through linguistic means. For example, from the analysis of conditions of production and reception of works of art and the art historical context to putting forward arguments and explaining aesthetic and artistic concepts, all of these are directly dependent on a strong and consistent terminological usage.

actually has, while sortal essentialism means that the object could not be very different in kind from what it is.

The second perspective is characterised by the way in which one divides essences, for example trivial essences and individual essences, or by the way one contrasts essential properties with other properties, in particular with accidental properties. One uses the term 'trivial essences' when referring to the properties of 'being that object' or 'not being that object' and the property of an object being self-identical. But if one refers to specific individuals (people, artefacts or works of art), it is said that existent individuals have special kinds of individual essences. The individual essences are the properties/features which make an individual the individual it is and moreover it is considered that the individual essence of an object cannot be possessed by another object.[211] However, this type of essentialism should not be confused with what Lamarque means when he argues that some works of art possess aesthetic properties essentially. Although Lamarque's individual essentialism (I-essentialism) suggests that individual works of art have essential individual properties, this does not mean that each work of art has a 'special' individual essence which no other work of art has. For example, an aesthetic property like 'being tragic', which for Lamarque is an essential property of the last scene in *King Lear,* can be possessed by different works of art as well: the description of Anna Karenina's last moments is tragic, the depiction of the father's and his sons' struggle in the sculpture *Laocoon and His Sons* is tragic or Robert Cappa's 'Death of a Loyalist Soldier' captures the tragic moment of the end of a soldier's life.[212] Lamarque's proposal is that an aesthetic property like 'being tragic' can be essentially possessed by different works of art – in other words in some cases, 'being tragic' can define the aesthetic character of some works of art.[213]

The above remarks bring us to the discussion towards another important distinction in characterising essentialism, the one between essential and accidental properties. This distinction is:

[211] Most of these characterisations of different types of properties are inspired by Teresa Robertson and Philip Atkins, 'Essential vs. Accidental Properties', in *Stanford Encyclopedia,* online 2013.

[212] Interestingly, since 1975 Cappa's photograph is surrounded by a huge controversy about its authenticity because of its assumed location, the name of the soldier in the picture and moreover even because its authorship. But this still not deters from arguing that the image depicts a tragic moment.

[213] I return to this discussion in Chapter IV when I analyse Lamarque's view of essential aesthetic properties in individual works of art.

> currently most commonly understood in modal terms: an *essential property of an object* is a property that it must have while an *accidental property of an object* is one that it happens to have but that it could lack[214]

The distinction between essential and accidental properties is important in understanding Lamarque's own terminological choices with regard to aesthetic properties. For example in his argument for aesthetic I-essentialism, in particular his distinction between works of art and mere objects, he uses 'inessential' properties and not 'accidental' properties. This is what he says about the two types of properties: essential properties of works are those properties that help to determine the work's identity[215] and if these properties are lost then the work is lost,[216] while inessential properties are those properties which an object could lack or could lose and remain the same object[217]. One notices that this distinction between essential and inessential properties looks very much like the classical above mentioned distinction between essential and accidental properties. But, one could argued that Lamarque's terminological choice of the term 'inessential' instead of 'accidental' is more appropriate in the artistic context because, as mentioned in Chapter II, Lamarque claims that aesthetic properties are a subclass of intentional properties. Intentional properties are characterised in a traditional way by Lamarque, as the properties:

> deriving from the attitudes, desires, thoughts and fears they invoke in human beings: desirable, frightening, inspiring, dangerous[218]

If one accepts that works of art are cultural objects designed by artists to be desirable or inspiring then, one could argue that using the term 'accidental' to characterise aesthetic properties is indeed inappropriate. The rejection of using the term 'accidental' for aesthetic properties, I think, can be justified in different ways. One way is the undeniable role that the creator of a work of art has in the production of the work, in particular in the creative aesthetic choices the artist makes and the way these choices would be determined by the skill, materials and imaginative creation of the artist – in other words, the artist chooses most of his non-aesthetic means which could contribute to the emergence of aesthetic properties. Thus,

[214] Teresa Robertson and Philip Atkins, 'Essential vs. Accidental Properties', in *Stanford Encyclopedia,* online 2013
[215] P. Lamarque, *W&O,* 2010, p.19.
[216] Ibid., p.74.
[217] Ibid., p.74.
[218] Ibid., p. 27.

aesthetic properties are to a certain extent 'intended' by the artist, they are not there by accident.

Lamarque's term 'inessential' rather than 'accidental' is a more fitting choice for the characterisation of some of the aesthetic properties of works. This does not mean that some actual accidental properties (a small blob of paint dripped by accident in the creative process on a canvas, or an unintended extra line in a drawing or a certain crack of the canvas of a painting, or a missing nose of a sculptured figure) could not be considered from an aesthetic point of view. Such particular properties could be characterised as aesthetic – they can be paid attention to and be assessed from an aesthetic point of view, but I would argue that they would be inessential, in the sense that these properties although analysed from an aesthetic point of view are not essential to the aesthetic character of the work (without them the work would remain the same work, in Lamarque's words, the work will have the same aesthetic character).[219]

Section 2: Lamarque's Individual Essentialism

So far I have introduced a number of basic terminological tools used in the debate on essentialism because my main aim was to introduce a particular essentialist approach in discussing works of art. In aesthetics the main motivation of the essentialist is linked to the attempt to answer the question 'What is art?' Also springing from this, is the preoccupation about the role of aesthetic properties in determining the aesthetic character of a work of art. Trying to answer the question about the nature of art or trying to define art through the employment of essences or essential properties is an essentialist approach to art. A number of essentialists are concern with the question about works of art having their aesthetic properties essentially – this is what is usually called 'Aesthetic Essentialism'[220]. The contemporary picture of an essentialist persuasion is though very diverse because there are different essentialist views: works of art as aesthetic objects (general aesthetic essentialism), the importance of the origins of works of art (Levinson's artistic origins essentialism), works of

[219] Some would argue that there are some exceptions to this, for example the weathering of a particular painting or the fading of the colours on a certain sculpture, or the missing arms of *Venus de Milo* (130-100 BC) – these properties could acquire an important aesthetic status. The case of *Venus de Milo* (130-100 BC) is particularly interesting when thinking about the missing arms as a 'newer' feature of the sculpture – feature which, it can be argued, acquired a certain aesthetic importance. Lamarque would maybe insist that in the case of the Greek sculpture we are *now* considering a different work form the one that was intended and admired when the sculpture had her arms. This argument is discussed in the next section of this chapter, in conjunction view with Lamarque's argument about prehistoric cave paintings as different works from their original.

[220] Nick Zangwill, *Aesthetic Creation*, OUP, 2007, p. 82.

art as part of a historical tradition (Danto's historical essentialism), all works of art as members of a class (class-essentialism) or about individual works of art having essential aesthetic qualities (Lamarque's individual-essentialism). [221]

Lamarque points out that there are different types of essentialist theses in aesthetics and the most common ones are based on attempts to define art in terms of the properties that works 'must possess to be works of art'[222]. According to Lamarque one such essentialist thesis is 'class essentialism' (C-essentialism), a thesis which is characterised in the following way:

> There is at least one property that all works of art possess necessarily. [223]

This thesis assumes that there can be at least one property which is the same for all works of art. If one asks what this 'one property' could be, then a myriad of philosophical answers engulf the concept of a work of art. Traditionally many of these answers are focused on essential aesthetic properties as candidates for a common trait that all works of art could have. Examples of such traditional aesthetic properties are: certain representational properties, the property of being beautiful or sublime, expressive properties or formal properties like significant form, unity or coherence (to mention only a few). However, in the last century newer candidates claimed the role of a common property that all works of art could have; for example, such properties are 'being part of an art tradition' or 'being related to art genres or art-history' or 'being part of an artistic creation' (historical property), or 'being part of the artworld' (institutional property), or 'being directed at an art audience' (intentional property), or 'being related in a certain way to the perceiver's responses' (relational properties). Which one of those does Lamarque consider worthy of attention in the attempt to answer the question about a common trait that all works of art could have?

First, it needs to be said that Lamarque does not fully endorse C-essentialism, although he thinks that such a thesis is most likely true. Secondly, if there is 'at least one property' which all members of the class 'works of art' necessarily possess, he says, this property (or

[221] There is a whole tradition of aestheticians supporting or rejecting views about essences and art. The most well known essentialists are: B. Croce, G. Collingwood, A. Danto, M. Beardsley, J. Levinson, E. Zemach., N. Wolterstorff and P. Lamarque. The anti-essentialists are: M. Weitz, W. Kennick, M. Mandelbaum, J. Derrida, R. Tilghman, R. Shusterman, A. Silvers, R. Stecker, B. Gaut, and S. Schroeder. In both positions there are subtle differences. For example, an aesthetician like Levinson is an essentialist about the concept of art and artistic origins, while he is an anti-essentialist about art having an unchanging essence. Another example is Lamarque who is an essentialist mainly about aesthetic properties.
[222] P. Lamarque, *W&O*, 2010, p. 96.
[223] Ibid., p. 96.

properties) is not an aesthetic property or an intrinsic property of the work, but a type of historical or relational or institutional property. One could draw here two quick observations, one is that Lamarque's preference for 'some species of relational, historical or institutional properties'[224] as candidates for a specific property which all members of the class 'works of art' possess is a good option, even though, to some this would appear to be too inclusive. The other observation is related to the impossibility of identifying clear boundaries of such a class of objects – the class of works of art (both conceptually and epistemically). This last point comes to mind when one thinks of W. E. Kennick's 'large warehouse, filled with all sorts of things'. [225] Kennick proposed a thought experiment which makes one to consider rejecting the idea that works of art form a class of objects; the premise of such a class of objects is based on the idea that all the objects in this class have in common some specific property as a condition of their membership to this class. Also, one could add here the fact that class membership can be a matter of family resemblance. To return to Kennick's thought experiment, one is asked to imagine a large
warehouse full of different objects:

> ….pictures of every description, musical scores for symphonies and dances and hymns, machines, tools, boats, houses, churches and temples, statues, vases, books of poetry and of prose, furniture and clothing, newspapers, postage stamps, flowers, trees, stones, musical instruments.[226]

Kennick indicates that when one is instructed to go in the warehouse and to bring out all the works of art it contains, this person (an ordinary person) would mostly succeed in such a task. According to this scenario, Kennick argues, a person is able to identify the works of art because he or she simply knows English – not because the person has the ability to define art or knows what the common nature of all works of art is. One of Kennick's conclusion is that traditional aesthetics makes a mistake when it assumes that all works of art possess 'some common nature, some distinctive set of characteristics which serves to separate Art from everything else'.[227] To me this thought experiment does not eliminate the possibility that works of art could have a common nature and hence form a class of objects but it points out two possibilities. One is that the boundaries of such a class of objects are impossible to be

[224] P. Lamarque, *W&O*, 2010, p. 96.
[225] W.E. Kennick, 'Does Traditional Aesthetics rest on a Mistake?', *Mind*, Vol. 67, No. 267 (Jul., 1958), p. 321.
[226] Ibid., p. 321.
[227] Ibid., p. 319.

firmly pinned down because of the innovative dimension that art has and its dependence of socio-cultural contexts. The other possibility is that the search for a definition for such a class of objects could be replaced by Wittgenstein's idea of family resemblance. For example, Schroeder argues that:

> a family resemblance concept (or one might also call it a 'cluster concept') must be taught by giving a sufficiently long list of example of different types and instances.[228]

Schroeder also suggests that the possibility of newer, unusual works in art 'is no hindrance to our definition of our *current* concept of art'. Indeed, he is right to point out that what one needs doing from time to time, is to update the definition of art in the same way one already does with definitions form other domains (in particular the ones from the scientific and legal domains).[229]

Returning to Kennick's thought experiment, Oswald Hanfling suggests that one weakness of this experiment is that an establishment of art experts had always had an influence in identifying more challenging examples of objects which later would be recognised as works of art – which means that the ordinary man is successful in identifying works of art only if, the works in the warehouse would conform to 'existing notions and paradigms' which would be known to him as an ordinary speaker of the language.[230]

I mentioned Kennick's thought experiment to support the idea that although a class of objects like works of art is very interesting to consider as a whole, what seems to be impossible is to try to identify a specific common property that all members of this class have.[231] However, Kennick wanted to make a point about the definition of a term like 'art' and emphasised that we "know quite well how to use the word 'art' and the phrase 'work of art' correctly"[232] even though we cannot give an example of one property which all and only works of art have. Moreover, Lamarque himself does not try to defend the idea of C-essentialism even though, as already mentioned, he suggests that some species of relational, historical or institutional properties can be good candidates for the role of common properties that works of art have.

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[228] S. Schroeder, *Wittgenstein*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2007, p.141.
[229] Ibid., p. 143
[230] O. Hanfling, 'The problem of Definition', *Philosophical Aesthetics, An Introduction*, The Open University and Blackwell Publishers, Milton Keynes and Oxford, 1995, p. 18.
[231] Most anti-essentialists would agree with this remark.
[232] W.E. Kennick, 'Does Traditional Aesthetics rest on a Mistake?', *Mind*, Vol. 67, No. 267 (Jul., 1958), p. 322

On the other hand, what Lamarque defends is a particular type of essentialism: 'individual essentialism' (I-essentialism), which, as far as I know, was coined by him in *Work and Object* (2010) in relation to his ontology of works. A general reading of I-essentialism as presented by Lamarque is that certain aesthetic descriptions of some works of art are necessary truths.[233] This type of essentialism promotes the idea that individual works of art which have a certain aesthetic character possess some of their aesthetic properties essentially. This essentialism also suggests that, the aesthetic character of some works is identified when we attribute aesthetic properties to these works (for Lamarque to attribute aesthetic properties to works of art means to aesthetically describe the works of art). There are two main premises that Lamarque discusses in support of his I-essentialism: the first is the distinction between a work of art and the object that embodies it[234] and the second is about the close relation between aesthetic properties and the work of art. The first premise reflects the classical ontological preoccupation with the nature of works of art and the second premise is a more controversial proposal about the role of some aesthetic properties in the identity of individual works of art. I said 'more controversial' because Lamarque ultimately argues that 'some works have some *aesthetic* properties essentially' [235] and 'objectively' [236] even though aesthetic properties are response-dependent properties.[237]

In the rest of this chapter I am going to discuss Lamarque's first premise that works of art are new objects which are different from the material base/the object that embodies them (he calls this view new-object theory). I deal with the second premise and with the application of Lamarque's I-essentialism to works of visual art in the next chapter. However I need to mention here that the two above mentioned premises are very much intertwined and their separate analysis is mainly a methodological devise.

2.1. Lamarque's conception of works of art

Ontological enquiries deal with what kind of things are in the world and in the case of ontology of art the philosophers' main preoccupations are about the distinction between

[233] P. Lamarque, *W&O*, 2010, p. 95.
[234] Ibid., p.104.
[235] Ibid., p. 19.
[236] Ibid., p. 60.
[237] Ibid., p. 20.

works of art and other objects and the form and the mode in which works of art exist.[238] Lamarque in *Work and Object* (2010) concentrates his ontological investigation on the analysis of the main differences between artefacts (in particular, works of art) and mere objects, and the main core of this investigation is about aesthetic properties and the role these play in the identity conditions of works.

One can start with Lamarque's very basic ontological distinction: 'natural' (or 'ordinary') objects are different from works (cultural artefacts) because ordinary objects do not depend for their existence on our perception or interpretation of them as artefacts do.[239] In order to understand Lamarque's ontological view, one needs to give four terminological clarifications from the onset: one is about the use of the adjective 'ordinary', the second is about how Lamarque sees cultural artefacts, the third is about the different divisions within the category of works of art, and the last one is about the term 'mere objects'.

First, I would like to propose that one is in a better position if one chooses to use the adjective 'ordinary' instead of 'natural' when characterising the ontological status of most objects in contrast to the term work of art – very often Lamarque uses those two adjectives interchangeably. There are two reasons for this: one is that Lamarque himself means by 'ordinary' objects more than natural objects (ordinary for him are plants, animals, planets, mountains, and 'even those constituting the materials of paintings and sculpture'[240]) and the other is that Lamarque mentions that the pigment of paints and many sculpture materials are manmade and thus 'products of human artifice and invention, thus, arguably, not separate from human culture'[241], thus not 'natural', yet ordinary.

The second clarification is about how Lamarque divides artefacts; for him there are two main types: cultural artefacts, which he calls 'works', and 'other artefacts', which are defined by their function, like tools and machines.[242] Lamarque talks about the differences in identity between works (cultural artefacts) and other artefacts due to reception conditions – what works are taken to be or how they are perceived is an important feature of work-identity and this makes the works to be different from other artefacts or other ordinary objects. Here is Lamarque's view: in a doomsday scenario works of art could not exist because their identity

[238] In addition, another ontological focus in contemporary aesthetics is on different ways of classifying the arts, according to their media, their species or their style and content. (Stephen. Davies, 'Ontology of Art', in *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, ed. Jerrold Levinson, OUP, 2005, p. 155)
[239] P. Lamarque, *W&O*, 2010, p. 27
[240] Ibid., p. 26
[241] Ibid., p.5
[242] Ibid., vii

is strictly linked to conditions of reception (he speaks about the role of 'uptake'[243]), on the other hand other artefacts like: screwdrivers, CD players or wheel barrows could survive because their identity is bound up with their function.[244] Although I agree that there is clear difference between works of art and other artefacts in their dependence on people's responses, I slightly disagree with Lamarque's view concerning the role of the difference between non-cultural artefacts (screwdrivers, CD players or wheel barrows) and works of art in a doomsday scenario. As far as I understand, for Lamarque all tools and machines possess their function as a disposition if there are no people around thus they still could exist as tools or machine even when there are no people around. To some extent this is true, but only if one accepts that there are fine-grained differences within this category. What I mean is that, the way tools and machines work, they have different degrees of functionality – they depend in different ways upon people's intervention in making them work and in sustaining them in working. For example, a nutcracker as a devise for cracking nuts, it has the disposition to crack nuts if used in a certain way, but the conditions for manifesting this disposition are to a large extent dependent on people's intervention. I would argue that a similar case is that of the disposition to function of a screwdriver. For example, both tools retain their disposition if there is a total lack of human intervention. However, Lamarque is probably right about a CD-player which could still work in a world without people. However, I think the disposition to function/to work is in some ways is stronger in the CD-player, than in the screwdriver or the nutcracker. If the CD-player is solar powered it could function even if there are no people around. What I want to emphasise here, is that not all tools and machines have the same intensity of power to manifest their function. There are different degrees of functioning.[245] Thus my quarrel with Lamarque's view is when talk about 'other artefacts' and works of art one needs to be aware of functioning degrees of freedom or fine-grained distinctions in their dispositional power. If Lamarque talked about functions as dispositions then maybe the enumerated tools, screwdrivers, CD players or wheel barrows could survive as tools (even if

[243] By 'uptake' Lamarque means appropriate social conditions for a work to come into existence and to continue existing. P. Lamarque, *W&O*, 2010, pp. 68-71.
[244] Ibid., p.71.
[245] One interesting thing about a doomsday scenario is that, even if we imagine all the people or higher animals gone, when discussing such hypothetical cases we are still in 'the picture' by observing things and reporting on them (Lamarque's suggestion which is rooted in Berkeleyan reason. Ibid., p70). What I think Lamarque means here, is that we can imagine a doomsday scenario only if we are somewhere observing the Earth from 'above' if we take a bird's eye view. We could imagine a CD-player fully functioning if solar powered or a wheelbarrow going down the hill with some soil in it because a strong wind and thus somehow retaining their function, but I find it very difficult to imagine how a screwdriver could still manifest its function. Of course, if there is a solar powered robot programmed how to use the screwdriver then the screwdriver retains its function. But to me this is a slightly different type of disposition from that of the CD-player.

not ever used) because they are not reception. Lamarque claims that works of art could not survive *as* works of art because their dispositions are reception bound. However, do works of art stop existing in a doomsday scenario because their identity is reception bound? Does the Guernica stop being a painting because there are no people around? Some would consider this suggestion implausible. The extreme doomsday scenario of an Earth, where there will never be people again, is an interesting case. When one imagines Earth with all the physical objects intact, but without a human presence there is at least the point of view from where the imagining happens. This bird's eye view is the person's who imagines this world, always the putative viewer who does the imagining. Thus, what one thinks about the doomsday scenario, can be described because there is the putative person who imagines what objects are left on Earth after people. Does the person who imagines this think that those tools somehow retain their disposition to function but works of art do not?

Maybe here a comparison between a functionalist view of art and that of Lamarque's is helpful. The functionalist says that it is important that a work of art is designed to be perceived in a certain way, and most functionalist believe that the function of art is to produce (pleasurable) aesthetic experience. However, Lamarque makes the claim that works of art are *public* and *perceivable* ('they can be seen, heard, touched, as appropriate, and by different perceivers'[246]) and it is part of their nature to demand a response from the public. Is Lamarque's position very demanding? If there is a certain novel, or a painting or a musical score of a symphony which has never been seen by a public, is this object not a work of art? If one adds that such a novel is by Kafka, such a painting by Monet and such a musical score by Beethoven, would Lamarque still say that these undiscovered works were not works of art (some of these artists are reported to have destroyed or having wanted to destroy some of their works)? Lamarque's answer could not be that these were not works of art. However, Lamarque wants to show that there is a particular distinction between the bigger class of artefacts and works of art. He insists that a work of art could not exist *as* a work of art in a world without people because works of art are ontologically different from other artefacts. This last point links with Lamarque's argument that a work of art is not identical to its constituting material because it has 'fundamentally different identity and survival conditions'[247], an argument which I will tackle later in this section. Lamarque has a more demanding view of works of art than of other artefacts. As already mentioned, some of the

[246] P.Lamarque, *W&O*, 2010, p.60
[247] Ibid., p.4.

works of art desiderata are to be *public* and *perceivable*.[248] Lamarque does not defend these desiderata but he considers them commonsensical. But, is Lamarque saying that if the work of art is public and perceivable, the artist creating the work is not a sufficient receptor for the work? Does the work need to be seen and responded to by at least another person? For example, let us assume that one does not know if the undiscovered novel, or painting, or the musical score of a symphony were ever seen by someone else other than the artist. If they were not, does this preclude them of being works of art? If the answer is that works which will never be discovered by the public are not works of art, then this will be a very unusual view of works of art. I think that Lamarque is right to some extent that works of art should be public and perceivable. If the works are not continuously public and perceivable, this should not preclude the works existence as objects/entities disposed to require a certain art response from people. However, as I understand Lamarque, the conditions for survival of a work of art are' inextricably bound up' with condition of reception of that work thus in a doomsday scenario there will be no reception thus no survival of the work.

The third clarification is about Lamarque's view about the category of works. Although Lamarque speaks of 'works' in general, he points out that there are two classes of works: a narrower class containing works of art and a wider one containing simple tunes of popular music, folktales, children's stories, genre fiction, amateur drama, run-of-the-mill paintings, sketches and sculptures.[249] He mentions that the two classes do not have clear boundaries but he alludes to the fact that the narrower class is pinned down by the relation that its objects have with value – in other words, works of art are objects evaluated in a particular way (aesthetically, artistically or *as* art). The concept of a work of art has a strong honorific dimension which other concepts like works do not have.

The last clarification is about the distinction between ordinary objects and mere objects. 'Mere real object' is a term introduced by Danto in his book *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art* (1981) when he discussed perceptually indiscernible objects (for example Danto discusses the difference between two urinals which, he says, are physically identical but one of them is a work of art while the other is not).[250] Danto ontologically contrasted mere real things with works of art by emphasizing that works of art are about the world (they require to be interpreted) while mere objects are not[251] and also

[248] Ibid., p. 61.
[249] Ibid., p 56.
[250] A. C. Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1981, p. 5-6
[251] Ibid., p. 52.

ordinary objects are part of the physical world while works of art have a wealth of features that ordinary objects do not.

I suggest that after more than three decades since the publication of Danto's book (1981)[252] and after G. Dickie's institutional theory and all the subsequent developments of Danto's ideas, there are two ways in which the term 'mere objects' is used: in a wider way in which the term covers all objects other than works of art (other artefacts and all other ordinary objects) and a narrow way in which, it refers to the underlying constituting material of a work of ar. For example, if one thinks of the doomsday scenario, then the object by Picasso which hangs in the *Reina Sofia Museum* in Madrid and which people called *Guernica*, becomes a mere object. In the doomsday scenario, the mere object which embodies the painting *Guernica* would be the canvas and the paints with its other physical features which could be scientifically recorded by a robot. This mere object would not have anymore, any cultural wrappings, as Lamarque would say. I believe most people when asked how they understand the term 'mere things' would probably think about the wider sense of the term (all objects ordinary and artefacts that are not works of art). Nevertheless one needs to point out that the term 'mere objects' is usually used when thinkers or artists or art critics encounter and analyse works of art, including ready-mades or found objects as part of works of art, and when they try explaining how a work of art comes into existence and how it goes out of existence. A quick note here: 'ready-mades' refer to mass produced objects selected by artists and displayed as works of art (first used by Duchamp) while 'found objects' (objet trouvé) is a wider term referring to any object which in its normal context is not considered art (these 'objects' can be natural objects, like a stone or a twig or they can be manmade modified objects) but which can be used by artists to create works of art. Here I understand that a work of art is more than its physical base, even if the physical base constitutes one single found natural object. Thus I use the term 'create' a work of art even in the case of found objects. Also ready-mades were initially artefacts, but not necessarily cultural objects (a urinal for example or a bicycle wheel), which can be transformed by 'interpretation' (to use Danto's expression) [253] in a different ontological object – in a work of art, which becomes part of the artworld. Two such mass produced objects a urinal and a bicycle wheel were transformed

[252] One could go even further and see the seeds of Danto's arguments in his influential article 'The Artworld' published in 1964 or his paper with the same name as the book 'The Transfiguration of the Commonplace,' published in 1974.

[253] Here 'by interpretation' one could mean different things: proclamation, repositioning, contextualisation or ostentation in its traditional sense, and this interpretation is carried out by the artists with the participation of the informed perceivers and/or the art critic. This is, of course, an institutional reading of artistic creation and reception of works.

into two works of art: *The Fountain* and respectively *The Bicycle Wheel* by Duchamp and these two are after the artist creative moment two different objects, ontologically speaking, from their material base (the urinal and the wheel). Therefore paintings, books, poems, hand-painted decorative tiles or a shaman's hand-made cape are cultural objects which are works of art but mass produced objects can also become works of art. Moreover ordinary objects like a stone, a meteorite, a stick, a river could become conceptual pieces or art installations. Lamarque would say that an institutionalist view[254] could explain why such objects can become works of art (ready-mades) and he would argue that ready-mades are ontologically different objects from their physical, mere object base. Lamarque's distinction between 'mere objects' and works of art is based on the idea that each work of art has 'an underlying constituting medium, describable (broadly enough) in culture-independent terms'.[255] Thus Lamarque uses the term 'mere object' to refer to the object that embodies the work of art he talks about.

To return to the initial proposal of this section, that of the preoccupation with the nature of works of art, one needs to analyse Lamarque's way of tackling this ontology. Lamarque has two avenues of this investigation: one which deals with general conditions for works of art to be art (work-identity and work-survival) and the other which is about work-specific identity conditions. In the first investigation there are questions about the identity of works of art (questions about the creation process: how works came in existence, the role of the artist in manipulating a medium and when is a work complete) and questions about the survival conditions of works (what conditions contribute to sustain the work in existence, what makes it to be recognised and responded to as a work of art and as the work it is?). The above enumerated questions are about works of art in general. The second investigation is focused on questions about individual works and their specific identity conditions, for example questions about the creation of certain works, their reception and survival. The work-identity and work-survival conditions of a certain work nurture a particular character of a work with salient features (intentional and relational properties – in particular its specific aesthetic properties) and value; but the work's character is intimately linked to the historical and cultural context of that work.

[254] Lamarque's definition of works of art and his appreciative experience have a institutionalist character but here one needs to emphasize that this does not mean that Lamarque's approach is part of an Institutional Theory of Art (as proposed by George Dickie in 1974). Lamarque's view – an institutionalist approach, resides in the importance that the philosopher gives to conventions and rules of artistic practices.
[255] P. Lamarque, *W&O*, 2010, p. 6.

In order to answer all those questions about the conditions of work-identity and survival conditions, Lamarque suggests the following desiderata for works of art, which he argues, are 'commonsensical and desirable': works of art are *real*, not ideal entities; they are *public* and *perceivable*; they possess their properties *objectively*, some essential, some inessential; they are *cultural objects*; they are essentially tied to *human acts* and *attitudes*; they are *created* (by artists); they can *come into existence* and *go out of existence* and their identity conditions are value-laden.[256] Lamarque points out that in the aesthetics literature each desideratum was rejected but he maintains that these desiderata need preserving even though he does not offer arguments to support each desideratum.

There are two ways of dealing with his suggestion. One is to choose a number of very different works of art and investigate whether each desideratum is suitable for them. However, this approach would require more than the scope of this thesis. The second way of dealing with Lamarque's desiderata is to select the most important ones and discuss them in relation to a reduced, but hopefully representative number of works of art. This seems a more appropriate approach with regard to the aim of this section. However the question of which works one should choose as 'representative' is still very difficult and there is no easy answer. For example, Lamarque considers that 'it is important not to focus exclusively on the most revered and most well-known works of art, for this can lead, as we shall see, to theoretical distortions'.[257]A possible acceptable compromise is to choose works that are "representative". This choice could be a combination of works of art that are accepted and revered and works that are considered to be controversial but influential in the history of art. The puzzlement about representative works of art is mainly a 20th century affair. It can be argued that this puzzlement was always there when works of art were produced and responded to. However, the Dadaists ignited a more focused and poignant debate about the ontology and status of works of art. One can insist that there is a number of works of art that are generally regarded as artistically significant and this significance does not have to be debated (works which are recognised by an important segment of a culture as influential and valuable). Lamarque warns us against considering only the most 'revered and well-known' works of art because he claims that this can lead to distortions. In general when one uses the expression 'revered works of art' it is understood that this is a positive evaluative characterization and that this characterization is usually an aesthetic or an artistic one. There are other works that can be representative but not necessarily 'revered' and some of the most interesting ontological

[256] P. Lamarque, *W&O*, 2010, p. 61, Lamarque's italics.
[257] Ibid., p. 56.

discussions start with arguments about the exceptions – some works are borderline and not 'revered' in a traditional sense but they are representative (from an art history point of view, or from a cultural perspective, or even form an anti-aesthetic perspective[258]). Choosing to use the adjective 'representative' or 'significant' instead of 'revered' for works of art would allow more manoeuvrability when selecting individual works of art to be discussed. Because my main interest is in the aesthetic experience of visual arts, in this section I am going to mainly focus on the following works: the painting *Guernica* by Picasso, the sculpture *Laocoon and His Sons* from the Hellenistic period and *the Chauvet Cave* pre-historic paintings.

The term 'works' covers a large class of entities from paintings, sculpture, novels, poems, sonatas, jazz improvisations, kabuki plays, contemporary pieces of dance, films, video pieces, photographs, installations, buildings, performance pieces to social sculpture, or land art works. Lamarque says about works:

> Works *are* objects (broadly construed) but objects of a distinct kind, cultural or 'institutional' objects. The crucial distinction is between that which depends essentially on human thought and cultural activity and that which does not.[259]

What Lamarque emphases here is that the difference between works and mere objects is an ontological difference – the objects are different in kind and this is due to the fact that works have relational and intentional properties which mere objects do not have. Works of art are essentially dependent on appropriate cultural conditions (e.g. cultural practices, people's attitude, art history, the role of the artist and social context). I will discuss what Lamarque says about the essential role of cultural conditions in the identity of a work of art in this section when I analyse some of the above mentioned works of art. Lamarque uses a beautiful expression to capture this important role: 'cultural wrappings'.

To shed light on Lamarque's characterisation of works of art as *cultural objects* which are ontologically different from mere objects (from the objects that embody them)[260], I start with the painting *Guernica* (1937) by Picasso (Fig. 14).

[258] The anti-aesthetic perspective is a very fashionable attitude promoted by artists who 'revolted' against the reverence that most critics and art lovers show to traditional art forms and to traditional works. For example, the rejection of the aesthetic is a particular demand that many conceptual artists strive for. This is also because they consider that 'reverence' is not an attitude that one should have to art.
[259] P. Lamarque, *W&O*, 2010, p. 4.
[260] Ibid., p. 60.

Fig.14 *Guernica* (1937) by Pablo Picasso

First of all one can begin with the idea that there is a physical object, the oil painting with black, white and grey colours, that is 349.3 x 776.6 cm and is now in the *Reina Sofia Museum* in Madrid and which was painted in May 1937 by Picasso. Secondly, *Guernica* is an object of a distinct kind, a cultural or institutional object (it depends essentially on human thought and cultural activity). *Guernica* as a work of art depends essentially on human thought and cultural activity because it was created by an artist, it demands certain responses from the viewers (aesthetic/artistic or contemplative), and it needs its viewers to be sustained in existence as a work of art. Here, for example I think Lamarque would need to add a caveat: *Guernica* can be sustained in existence as long as there is a faint possibility of human responses to its encounter.

One way to tackle all these characteristics is to start with this basic question related to the nature of the painting: 'Is *Guernica* identical with its constituting material?' According to Lamarque (and most other aestheticians), *Guernica* is constituted by physical materials but is not identical with its constituting materials: '...for every work there is an underlying constituting medium, describable (broadly enough) in culture-independent terms'.[261] This view suggests that the properties of the canvas, the paints and the colours of *Guernica* can be investigated using the language and the methods of physical sciences while works of art would require different types of investigation. Thus one of the most challenging tasks is how to investigate the nature of the relation between the medium (the materials out of which

[261] P. Lamarque, *W&O*, 2010, p.6.

Guernica is made) and the work of art *Guernica*.[262] One needs to point out that here materials of *Guernica* are maybe easily identifiable, but Lamarque insists that 'material' needs to be understood in a wider sense as a medium, because when talking of other types of works of art there is not only the canvas, the bronze, the paints, the charcoal, the paper, etc. but also there are word-types, sound-types or structure-types, and I would add found objects, gestures, movements, bodies etc. which are the 'materials' of works of art.

One traditional view about the relation between *Guernica* and its physical base is that Picasso manipulated the physical medium (the canvas and oil paints) in such a way that the result was the creation of a painting called *Guernica*. The resultant object is still a physical thing but with a different outlook from its original physical materials that were used to constitute it. The most common example used to illustrate such a traditionalist understanding of the relation between the material constituting the work and the work, is the explanation of the creation of figurative sculpture. In the case of a statue made of bronze, the work would be the bronze shaped in a particular way by the artist. In the same vein when discussing musical works the explanation could be that the composer manipulates the medium (arranges in patterns, sequences and juxtaposes sound-types with certain pitches, tones, rhythms or harmonies) until the completion of the musical work or in the case of literature, the writer does something similar by manipulating the medium of language by structuring words, meanings, sentence-structures and putting them in a certain context of ideas, themes and genres until the literary work is completed.[263] This kind of approach proposes a simple view of creativity and of the relation between the work of art and its physical constitutive material; it argues that the work is identical with its constitutive material manipulated into a certain structure.

There are a number of direct consequences if one accepts this view of the creation of works of art. First, we could dispense with the artist as a creative genius (a robot could be programmed to manipulate a material into a certain structure and consider this structure a work of art not the software or an agent could by mistake manipulate the materials is such a way that the product could be considered a work). Secondly, the identity of a work would be wholly dependent on the integrity of the material manipulated in a certain structure (changes of the constitutive material would mean changes of the work). Thirdly, the work could be the

[262] In general the materials that the work is made of are called 'medium' but the medium is not always physical. The materials of musical works or literary works are as Lamarque points out abstract entities: sound-types, word-types or structure-types.

[263] Lamarque argues that a completed work depends on a decision by the maker and being a work depends on how it is conceived by its maker. (*W&O*, 2010, p.43) I will come back to the notion of a 'completed work' in the next section.

result of the material accidentally being manipulated into a certain structure (the wind carving a stone into a particular shape or the Polaroid camera falling down from a moving car and producing an image of an urban scene). The problem here is not so much with the claim that the materials are combined in a certain structure but with the idea of intentionality; a work is an intentional object. Some of the consequences mentioned in accepting the simplistic traditional view point towards the idea that objects which are not intentional can be mistaken for works of art.

The supporters of the simplistic view argue that the work of art is a physical object and the artist only manipulates the (physical) materials into a certain structure, emphasising the idea of a '*certain structure'*. What is important for them is the fact that the artist's creativity is only about his or her ability to arrange things into a coherent and recognisable structure that they would call a work of art. One can think of a number of obvious reasons to reject such a view; here are these reasons and comments to support them:

i) Often changes in the physical base of a work do not necessarily affect the identity and value of the work itself. Of course here one is referring to certain 'changes' which are not major changes to the appearance and the composition of a work. Thus, if a radical supporter of the simplistic view says that the work is identical with its material base, then even a small transformation of the base should directly and wholly affect the work. However, this is not the case and there are very few supporters of an identity view. In most instances when the medium of a work is slightly modified this will not affect the identity and reception of the work (e.g. a missing nose of a statue, or the slight fading colour of a 15th century painting, or the missing of a note on a symphony, or a change of the sex of one of the performers of one particular a piece by Pina Bausch, or taking out a particular scene of a feature film[264], or the typing errors of the publishing of a novel[265] etc.). Of course, the discussion here changes depending on which each art form one talks about. In some cases, like a dance piece some of the properties of the performance can change often without affecting the value of the work (but this is another discussion about performance works and the choreography score). However, there are some dance pieces in which the sex of the performer can be an essential

[264] I mentioned a 'particular' scene or 'particular' aspect of a performance because not all scenes or aspects of works are significant to the overall character of a work.

[265] A very recent case could contradict my suggestion about the importance of 'typing errors' in a literary work; this was the publication in UK of Jonathan Franzen's novel *Freedom*. In October 2010 HarperCollins published an earlier draft of the novel in which the author made 200 changes and this was totally unacceptable to Franzen who asked for the recall of all the distributed books. However, the recall of the books was due to the fact that that the novel in that form was not the literary work that the author completed for public reception thus, for him the earlier manuscript was not the novel. In other words the changes he made latter were a significant feature of his completed novel.

ingredient of the piece and changing it could affect the work (usually the choreographer's instructions are important for the integrity of the performance).

Here one can also envisage cases when 'significantly altered' means changing only one colour in a painting and this change could mean the changing of the identity of a work. For example changing one of the neutral colours, let us say the white in Picasso's *Guernica* with a primary colour like red or blue would mean that there is a different work to be contemplated. The explanation of the change would be that the monochromatic composition in *Guernica* is an essential property of the work and changing it will change the work (but not because of a simple change in the physical base, although changing one colour would appear so, but because the chromatic effect of *Guernica* is a feature of the aesthetic of the painting not of the base material).[266]

ii) One could argue that the traditional view has a narrow understanding of what artists do. If 'manipulating' materials in a certain structure is all that is required for a work than artists' creativity is a simple matter of compositionality.[267] Lamarque argues that works of art are distinct from the 'objects' that constitute them and they are more than the physical support/material that constitute them:

> There is more to a musical work than just a sequence of sounds. More to a literary work than just a sequence of words, more to a pictorial work than just the configuration of line and colour, more to a sculpture than just a shaped block of marble.[268]

This 'more' can be easily accepted as an explanation of what distinguish works of art from other objects but the puzzle arises when one wants to qualify the nature of 'more'. What makes the sequence of sounds to be music? Is Lamarque saying that there is another ingredient that one needs to add to the sequence? One can suggest that this 'more' is not another thing. What makes us to consider something being music, are certain qualities of the sound arrangements that we call music.

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[266] This is a sketchy explanation of an application of Lamarque's individual essentialism – the monochromatic composition of *Guernica* is an essential property without which the work will not be *Guernica*. I return to this in detail in this section when I discuss the identity conditions of *Guernica.*

[267] Of course, very sophisticated computer programmes or chimpanzees and elephants could 'create' objects that could be worthy of aesthetic attention but those will not be what we consider works of art ,even though tricks are often played on people or critics like Brian Swell to accept such objects as art. The main reason is that, as Lamarque would say, works have intentional properties while the objects created by programmes and animals do not.

[268] P. Lamarque, *W&O*, 2010, p. 56.

Lamarque's answer to the above question is that one way of showing that a work of art is more than the stuff that constitutes it is to make use of Danto's distinction between the 'mere real thing' and the work. Thus Lamarque rejects an identity theory which proposes that a work is the result of 'a change occurring in a pre-existing thing in the world, a thing that remains essentially the same, albeit with evolving properties.[269]

Lamarque proposes the new-object (non-identity) theory which explains how a work comes into existence and how it is sustained in existence. There are two central ideas running through his theory. The first idea is that the new object is different from the mere object which embodies the work, even though this new work of art is still a physical object (if physical is construed in a wider way):

> ....a *new* thing is introduced into the world when a work of art is made. This new thing is still a physical object or a sound- or word-sequence-type but it is not the same physical object or type that existed earlier.[270]

The second idea is about the central role of the conditions of creation and survival of the work, conditions which are totally embedded in the cultural context of the work. Lamarque talks eloquently about the intimate link between the works and everything related to their coming into existence and their survival. He says that works:

> .....are inseparable from their cultural wrappings, such that features of these 'wrappings' can be thought to 'belong to' the works themselves [271]

What are these cultural wrappings? Lamarque would say that cultural wrappings are the historical and cultural context of the creation of works of art ('what must obtain for a work to come into existence'), as well as how the work is responded to (the conditions under which the work is 'sustained in existence'). Thus with the new-object theory we come full circle because this is Lamarque's initial suggestion of how to tackle the question about the nature of works: to establish what makes something a work of art is to explain how a work comes into existence, to show what role the artist plays in the creation of a work and to understand the importance of how a work is recognised and responded to as a work of art. As already noted,

[269] P. Lamarque, *W&O*, 2010, p. 64.
[270] Ibid., p.64.
[271] Ibid., p. 29.

Lamarque does not defend each desideratum of works, but by arguing for his new-object theory he invariably discusses most of the enumerated characteristics of works of art.

Now that I have presented a number of Lamarque's main claims with regard to the nature of works of art, in what follows I return to the painting *Guernica* and I analyse its conditions for coming into existence and its conditions for survival in order to support Lamarque new-object theory and to show that a work of art is a different kind of object from the mere object that embodies it.

When did *Guernica* become the work it is and what does it mean to say that it is a *real entity* which is *public* and *perceivable*? Picasso started working on the idea of *Guernica* at the beginning of May 1937. There are 45 studies on paper for *Guernica* which Picasso did in Paris between 1st May and 4th of June using various techniques (most of the sketches were in pencil and crayons). The big canvas that was the physical base for the painting went through seven stages before it was completed on 4th June 1937.[272] As already mentioned, Lamarque endorses the view that works are more than manipulations of the existing material in the world or the rearrangement of pre-existing items. *Guernica* as a work is a cultural entity because it is the product of human agency and intention and the work that is *Guernica*, emerged when the work on it was completed, when a new object, a work of art entered the world. But are the 45 studies on paper which Picasso did in preparation of the painting part of the physical medium or part of the artistic medium? Or are they preparatory sketches that only contributed to the creation of *Guernica* in the same way that other sources of inspiration did – for example the images from the newspapers reporting the destruction of the Basque town of Guernica in three and a half hours? The preliminary studies for *Guernica* can be considered both part of physical medium (Picasso used the studies physically by looking at them, handling them, using them as other tools whose function was to help in the physical production of a work) and part of the artistic medium (Picasso used the studies as inspiration, as the basis for his artistic conception of atrocities of the war, for compositional ideas). Thus one can argue that Picasso manipulated the physical medium (paints, canvas, preliminary studies on paper) under certain practical constrains (time, the flexibility of the actual materials Picasso used, his physical power of work etc.) and under certain artistic conditions (e.g.: his ability to depict figures and objects, his response to war atrocities, his compositional ideas, usage of certain socio-cultural symbols, his cubist and surrealist style, his earlier

[272] A detailed description of the stages of the work and reproductions of the 45 studies of *Guernica* is to be found in Carsten-Peter Warncke and Ingo E. Walther, *Picasso*, Taschen, 1997, pp. 387-401.

studies, his trust in an informed public who was aware of the event depicted, etc.) and all of these were part of the creative process.

In order to better understand the creative process of *Guernica* one needs to mention David Davies' distinction between *vehicular* and *artistic* medium, a distinction which Lamarque adopts in his explanation of how an artist brings a work into existence. Davies mentions that the debate about the distinction between the two media started in the 20th century with Beardsley and it continued with other philosophers like Levinson, Margolis and Binkley. Davies has a detailed discussion about these philosophers' conceptions in his book *Art as Performance*, 2004, a discussion which I am not going into. However, the distinction is important for Lamarque's account of how a work is completed, thus I briefly present and discuss Davies' distinction. He says:

> We may adopt the term "vehicular medium" as a generalization of Margolis' notion of physical medium [...]. The product of an artist's manipulation of a vehicular medium will then be the *vehicle* whereby a particular artistic statement is articulated[273]

and

> An artistic medium of a work, so construed, will be the means employed by an artist to articulate an artistic statement, and thereby specify a piece that is accessible to receivers.[274]

An immediate comparison springs to mind when thinking about the distinction of vehicular medium and artistic medium, which is a traditional conception that the artist manipulates the material he uses (mostly physical, although these can also be actions or sounds or words) with a certain artistic or aesthetic goal in mind. But this comparison is not very apt when one analyses what both Davies and Lamarque mean by artistic medium. The artist creates a work of art with representational, expressive and formal properties[275] and it is central to the creative process how the work is conceived or articulated – this is the artistic medium. The most interesting characteristic of the artistic medium is that:

[273] David Davies, *Art as Performance*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2004, p. 59.
[274] Ibid., p. 59.
[275] These properties are subsumed by Davies under the title of 'artistic statement'. The artistic statement is what is articulated in the work – the artist generates representational and expressive meanings. Ibid., p. 53.

> [...] An artistic medium mediates between what the artist does, naively construed, and what the work "says", in a broad sense, in virtue of what the artist does.[276]

Such a view introduces the powerful idea of the intentionality of the artist who creates a work by manipulating a vehicular medium in order to articulate his artistic or aesthetic intentions by producing certain salient features of a work (what earlier I mentioned as representational, expressive and formal properties and meanings). Thus having the materials to work with, knowing how to manipulate these materials, having skill and having a conception about what kind of work one wants is what is involved in the creative process. Lamarque says that: 'The combination of vehicular medium and artistic medium allows for a richer understanding of what it is to make a work.'[277]

But how is this distinction between vehicular and artistic medium applied to *Guernica*? In the case of *Guernica*, Davies says the vehicle is the physical object. By this he means, I suppose, the physical particular that can be found in the *Reina Sofia Museum* in Madrid which is comprised of canvas and paints and having a certain. In the case of *Guernica* the artistic medium is well known because we know about Picasso's intentions from his discussions with contemporaries, about his creative process by looking at his many preparatory sketches and also because we understand Picasso's conception of how he could express his revolt. In other words, the artistic medium of *Guernica* is a distinctive aesthetic 'vocabulary' embedded in artistic conventions and practices which Picasso used when he manipulated the vehicular medium (this formulation stems from Davies' own explanation).

Another important discussion with regard to the coming into existence of a work of art is the idea of completion of a work. For example most people would say that when Picasso considered that the work was completed, then the work of art *Guernica* came into existence. But is the matter of completion only dependent upon the artist's deliberate decision 'to stop'? Lamarque says that a work of art is completed, when it satisfies the artist (what Lamarque calls a 'genetic completion') and then a new kind of object comes into existence. There are two types of completion of a work: an aesthetic completion and a genetic completion; both are value-dependent. The *aesthetic completion* refers to a judgement made about the work by others than the creator of the work and the *genetic completion* involves a value judgment

[276] David Davies, *Art as Performance*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2004, p. 59.
[277] P. Lamarque, *W&O*, 2010, pp. 40-41.

about the work by the artist.[278] The aesthetic completeness means that the work is well-structured, unified and pleasing and if the work is aesthetically unsatisfactory, it means that it fails in certain respects.[279] However, Lamarque is not clear about who are the 'others' making the aesthetic judgment that the work is complete. He says that a work can look aesthetically complete even though an artist left the work unfinished. This suggests that other people than the artist could declare the work aesthetically complete, but a fully completed work is the result of the artist's decision that the work is complete.[280] Nevertheless, Lamarque does not elaborate on the people who can make the judgement about aesthetic completion. Are they the art critics, the art public or even a group of the artist's friends who are able to see the work? Also Lamarque does not say what would be a sufficient number of these people.

It is accepted that Picasso started working on *Guernica* on 1st of May 1937 although the bombing of Guernica by German and Italian forces allied with the Spanish nationalists happened earlier on 26th April 1937. But because we know a lot about some aspects of the creative process of *Guernica* one is wondering when the work came into existence, when the work was complete? Its genetic completion suggests that Picasso 'finished' the work by mid-June when the painting was mounted on the walls of the Spanish pavilion of the World Fair.[281] And if one thinks of aesthetic completion then there are at least two alternatives: on the one hand, friends and critics of Picasso might have seen the work immediately after the completion and made aesthetic judgments about it. On the other hand, one can consider that the date for the public aesthetic reaction to the painting was the opening of the Spanish pavilion on 12 July 1937 and this should be considered the date of the aesthetic completion. I think the former is a better candidate for the establishing the parameters of aesthetic completion. However, it appears that the concept of 'aesthetic completion' is a tall order requirement for an explanation for the completion of a work of art. If a work of art is completed when the artist considers it is completed, then it would not matter if the work is never discovered by another person or never experienced as a work of art. But according to the idea of aesthetic completion the work needs an audience to make aesthetic judgements about the work. Thus, one can imagine a fire that would have destroyed *Guernica* before Picasso exhibited the painting (let us assume that other people would not have visited Picasso and seen different stages of the work). Nevertheless one would still be entitled to consider

[278] P. Lamarque acknowledges that these terms are borrowed from Livingston's 'Counting Fragments and Frenhofer's Paradox' (BJA, vol. 39, 1999., pp. 14-23). This is mentioned in note 3, p. 35, in *W&O*, 2010.
[279] Ibid., p.35.
[280] Ibid., p.36.
[281] Carsten-Peter Warncke and Ingo E. Walther, *Picasso*, Taschen, Koln, 1997, p. 388.

that there was a work of art which perished in the fire. Lamarque's distinction between genetic and aesthetic completion could help with similar hard cases. For example: if the artist was interrupted in completing a work, or if there was no other person who saw the work, or if all the people die as in the doomsday scenario, or when we do not have any details about the context of the work production or about its historical provenance, like cave paintings.

Another intriguing example of a work for the current discussion is that of the classical marble sculpture *Laocoon and His Sons* (from the late Hellenistic period, 160-31 BC) which is attributed to three Rhodian sculptors (Fig. 15). Interestingly, Pliny the Elder believed that the three sculptors were copyists and the Laocoon Group was probably not their composition.[282] One can assume that if there is collaboration for a work of art there are many possible ways in which such work could have been completed in the genetic sense.

One can imagine the following situation that could take place if there are three sculptors involved in the creation of a statue: two sculptors work intensively in the last stages for the completion of the work and the third sculptor comes much later and tells the other two sculptors that he is going to work a little more on the sculpture. They all agree that the sculpture still needs some work. After agonising over the sculpture (it is
not important how long – it can be a short or a long period) the third sculptor decides that 'in the light of what has been achieved' he does not need to add or modify the marble and leaves the sculpture as it is.

The three sculptors then decide that the work is complete and then they present it to a group of art lovers (Roman buyers if the sculpture was the *Laocoon* Group). The viewers and the buyers are astonished by the skill of the sculptors in portraying the death struggle of the three bodies and the suffering of the characters of the group. Thus the aesthetic experience of such a work is hugely rewarding and the sculpture becomes an exemplar of the portrayal of sufferance and agony in sculpture. This imaginary example about the creation of such a work suggests that the genetic completion of the work, as understood by Lamarque, happened when the three sculptors decided that the work was ready to be exhibited or presented to viewers. Was the sculpture completed when the three sculptors agreed to stop working on it because they were aesthetically satisfied?

[282] This is suggested by R. R. Smith's 'The Hellenistic Period' in The Oxford History of Classical Art' ed. by John Boardman, OUP, 1993 (p.199); for other discussions on *Laocoon Group*, see Werner Fuchs' 'Late Hellenistic Period' in *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Greece* eds. John Boardman, J. Doring, Werner Fuch & Max Hirmer, Thames and Hudson, London, 1967 or the Lessing's famous work *Laocoon: an Essay of The Limits of Painting and Poetry* (1766).

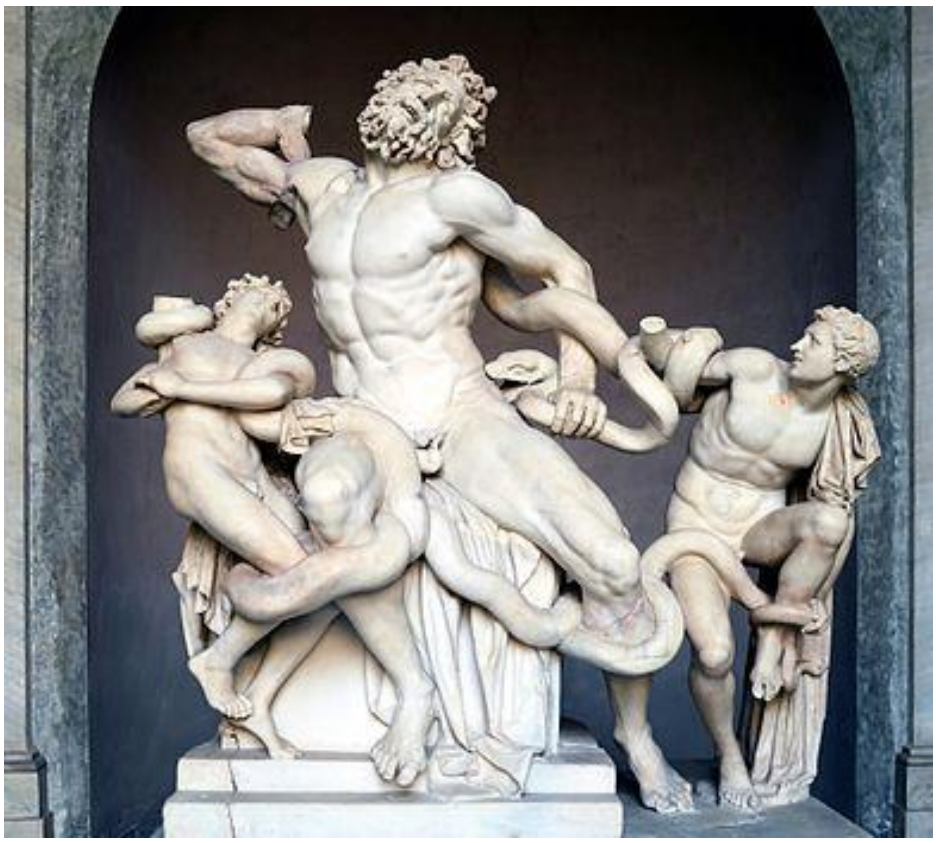

Fig.15 *Laocoon and His Sons* (160-31 BC)

In this imaginary case the decision was a collective one and even though the third sculptor did not carry out additional work on the sculpture, all three sculptors guided by aesthetic and artistic considerations, decided that the work was completed. However, this is an interesting case. One can suggest that the genetic completion happened at the same time with the aesthetic completion because of the collective aspect of the creation of the sculpture.

The distinction between the genetic completion and aesthetic completion is very useful although there are many cases when the two conceptions will be impossible to separate or to establish. To reiterate, Lamarque's new-object theory suggest that an ontologically different object comes into existence when a work is completed. On the downside of this theory, if there is a 'before' and an 'after' the completion of a work there will be cases which do not fit within this dichotomy, for example: incomplete works, diaries, repainting of different sections of works much latter, reworks of an author by another author, some collective works etc. I want to conclude here that the question about the genetic completion of a work should not be given too much weight by the viewers or the critics if such a completion is not identifiable from the artist's memoirs, interviews and testimonials of his contemporaries. As

Lamarque says, the decision of the artist of what constitutes a work brings into the world a new object, but this is not always something that the viewer or critic can establish. But, there are cases as already mentioned, where the artist's decision to complete the work in the genetic sense, does not exist.

Given what we said until now, one can see that Lamarque's idea is that the existence and survival of a work of art is dependent upon appropriate cultural conditions and this idea is crucial for understanding the nature of works of art – without those conditions the work would not be essentially what it is. Lamarque uses an illuminating example to illustrate what he means by the appropriate cultural conditions: prehistoric cave paintings. These paintings are examples of objects with certain lines, colour configurations, representational and expressive properties but Lamarque raises the question: Are they works of art?

In his paper 'The Aesthetic and the Universal' (1999), Lamarque discusses the 1994 discovery of the prehistoric paintings of *The Chauvet Cave* which is located along a bank of the river Ardèche near the Pont-d'Arc, southern France.[283] (Fig. 16)

Fig.16 *The Chauvet Cave* (detail), 32,000 years old

[283] However since Lamarque's paper was published in 1999, there have been other discoveries of cave art. The most recent is from El Castillio, a cave in Northern Spain whose paintings are dated at more than 40,800 years old thus making them the oldest paintings in the world.

Lamarque argues that the discovery of these prehistoric paintings, thought to be 32,000 years old, makes art historians uncomfortable because: on the one hand, the perceptual qualities of the paintings invite aesthetic and art historical characterisations and on the other hand the paintings remain mysterious and hard to be appropriately interpreted. He considers that this kind of uncomfortable situation is also reflected, in contemporary aesthetics, by a tension between two significant motifs: one, the essential embeddedness of cultural objects in cultural traditions that give them identity and make them intelligible and the other, the easiness with which these cultural objects are appropriated by other cultural traditions and assimilated into different contexts.[284]

If one accepts the proposal that works of art are cultural artefacts inseparable from their cultural wrappings, then it is understandable why Lamarque is worried about the above mentioned tension. The main problem lies with the second motif described as the 'easiness' with which we appropriate cultural objects of other cultural traditions. The first culprits which come to mind are the rise of cultural relativism and postmodern tendencies which encourage a significant permeability between cultures and an unrestricted appropriation of works of art. However, even if one does not buy into this loose characterization of cultural relativism or postmodernist tendencies and believes that an informed observer has some recognition of the established practices of different cultures there is still the problematic interpretation of works of art from isolated cultures or very distant historical periods. Lamarque points out that if one considers that there are certain conditions that must obtain for a work of art to come into existence and be sustained in existence as a work with a specific identity then one should be wary of identifying and appreciating works like the prehistoric cave paintings *as* works of art. Did the people making the Chauvet Cave paintings (palaeontologists call the people who live there around 40,000 years ago Cro-Magnons) not created works of art? Lamarque says that we don't know and we cannot know if these paintings are works of art or they could have been: 'The line and configurations are still there to see, but arguably the *works* are lost.'[285]

However a chorus of art lovers, nature enthusiasts, speleologists, poets, artists, art critics, film makers, historians etc., would univocally praise the beauty and the expressive qualities of the paintings and the rewarding aesthetic experiences they had when encountering theses

[284] P. Lamarque, 'The Aesthetic and the Universal', *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Vol. 33, No. 2, Summer 1999, p. 2.
[285] P. Lamarque, *W&O*, 2010, p. 70.

works. [286] For example, one such artist is contemporary artist Jo Thomas, who was aesthetically inspired by seeing reproductions and documentaries of the cave paintings (Fig. 17). She responded to those prehistorical images through sketches, paintings and writings – creating her own homage to the aesthetics of the Chauvet Cave. Thus from an art historical perspective the images form Chauvet Cave are some of the first in a line of extraordinary representations of nature in movement and for all subsequent artists who are aware of these paintings, the images from 40,000 years ago cannot be other than a source of aesthetic inspirations, of the first works of art.

Fig. 17 *Lion Cave* by Jo Thomas (Diary page)

Lamarque does not deny that we do appreciate the prehistoric cave paintings for their beauty; he thinks that we enjoy the prehistoric depictions simply through their appearance.

[286] Many people visited the Chauvet Cave between 1994 and 1997. However nowadays the cave is closed to tourists and only authorized persons are allowed in the cave. The French state tries to minimise all biological exchanges within the cave. Thus nowadays people see only reproductions of the cave walls' paintings.

We do, indeed consider them worthy objects of attention. What he denies is that we can understand and appreciate them as prehistoric works of art:

> Because we do not know what practices they were embedded in or what meanings, if any, they express, we are literally in the dark as to what intentional objects they are; this should make us wary of importing an artistic vocabulary in our attempts to understand or explain them[287]

His argument starts with his ontological view of works of art: works of art are distinct from 'mere objects', they are intentional objects with aesthetic, artistic and representational properties, they have no independent existence from the very practices that serve to discriminate them from other things. If the interpretative process means seeking to understand and appreciate the prehistoric cave paintings, then according to Lamarque 'reading' them as works of art is misplaced. He points out that even if these works were works of art during the last Ice Age, they do not exist anymore *as* works of art; we now, appreciate them as something else. Perhaps, he says, 'different works have arisen in their place'.[288]

Lamarque argues that as the Chauvet Cave paintings as *works of art* are lost, they do not exist anymore because we do not know the appropriate conditions of production and reception of these works and because works survive only when we apprehend the works as the works they are[289]. For example according to this view we can find a text in an unknown language and what we discovered is a string of letters, a text but not a work. One could agree with Lamarque that the original *works* did not survive but the mere objects did. There are two reasons to support this claim: one is that because we do not know the conditions of production and the cultural context of these objects we cannot experience the original works[290], and the second is that although we do experience them as paintings and as aesthetic objects it is possible for our experiences of them to be inappropriate for the works they were supposed to be. However, whatever they were originally, now we think and appreciate them as works of representational art or aesthetic objects, but Lamarque points out that maybe we appreciate different works from the originals. Not knowing anything about the practice that encouraged such works and how they were supposed to be received *as works,* is a handicap

[287] P.Lamarque, 'The Aesthetic and the Universal', *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Vol. 33, 1999, p. 15.
[288] P. Lamarque, *W&O*, 2010, p. 70.
[289] Ibid., p. 116.
[290] Ibid., p. 70.

for experiencing the cave paintings as the works they were intended to be. A particular cultural object exists as long as the appropriate cultural conditions exists or are known. Indeed the 40,000 years since the Chauvet Cave paintings conception could be considered a barrier to the appropriate appreciation of these works as works of art. Here the emphasis is on 'appropriate' appreciation – as already mentioned we do enjoy the aesthetic appeal of these paintings but what Lamarque insists on is that the origin and intention behind these works are not known to us and this drastically reduces our chances of appropriately perceiving the paintings for the works they were supposed to be appreciated.

'Never mind!' will cry the chorus (art lover, writers, artists, film makers, historians, scientists, etc), we should be satisfied with the great aesthetic experiences and with the cognitive puzzles that these prehistoric cave paintings conjure. To a large extent the chorus is right and we are not aesthetically impoverished when we appreciate those paintings (or at least, we think we are not). But Lamarque makes an important point that the reception conditions of a work are part of its identity as a work of art and in order to sustain a work in existence one needs the awareness and understanding of the cultural wrappings of the work. I believe it is important here to mention that Lamarque is not worried about calling the Chauvet Cave paintings, works of art or not (indeed it should not matter if the Cro-Magnons called them 'works of art' or if they used a similar concept). Lamarque makes a point about the appropriateness of the experience of the work – by having the suitable cultural background and knowledge about the context of creation of a work, one could experience a work of art appropriately for the work of art it is. The idea that we do not know anything about the cultural wrappings of the pre-historical paintings, warns us against making unsubstantiated claims about the works as works of art of that period. However, these images are no doubt a continuous source of aesthetic delight for both artists and the general public and both representing the aesthetic outlook of a contemporary audience.

In addition to this discussion about pre-historic cave paintings an interesting application of the distinction between vehicular medium and artistic medium is the interpretation and evaluation of some works whose makers are not known. In order to recognise and experience a work of art *as* art, as a new object in the world, one needs to know something about its properties and its cultural wrappings. But if one does not know anything about the artistic medium of the pre-historic paintings then one does not know the works' conditions of existence and reception. Therefore, one is not able to experience and appreciate the pre-historic cave painting *as* the works intended to be, because we do not know if they are works of art – to be more specific, as the works they were supposed to be when they come into

existence 40, 000 years ago. Moreover considering the case of not knowing anything about the creators or contexts of creation of works can be very useful to warn us against famous art hoax examples of paintings presented to the art public as paintings created by famous 'artists', where the 'artists' are animals (e.g. the case of Pierre Brassau, the chimpanzee from Sweden's Boras zoo, in 1964).

In this chapter I introduced the main terminology of an essentialist framework and I introduced Lamarque's aesthetic essentialism by discussing the first premise of his argument. His essentialism proposes that some works of art necessarily possess a distinctive aesthetic character which is supported by his two premises, the first one is works of art are ontological different objects from the mere object that embodies them and the second premise is about some aesthetic properties having a necessarily relation to the individual works of art and not to the object that embodies them. I agreed with Lamarque that works of art are cultural objects which are public and perceivable, they are new things brought into the world by artists' manipulation and creation under a certain conception, and that these new objects have a certain identity and survival conditions. In the next chapter I deal with the second premise which is about the importance of the role that aesthetic properties play in the identity of a work and I discuss a number of applications of Lamarque's I-essentialism to works of visual art.

CHAPTER V
Lamarque's Individual Essentialism
Part 2: Aesthetic properties and works of art

Lamarque proposes two versions of aesthetic I-essentialism:

i) The strong thesis

(T*) All works of art that possess aesthetic properties possess at least some of them essentially [291]

ii) The weaker thesis

(T) Some aesthetic properties are possessed essentially by some works of art[292]

Both these theses assume that there are two kinds of aesthetic properties: essential and inessential.

The stronger thesis assumes that some works of art have aesthetic properties but there are some works which might not have them. It also states that for some of those works which do have aesthetic properties some are possessed essentially. Lamarque mentions in the same context that maybe all works of art have an aesthetic character essentially.[293] First, if one has a more traditional view of art, the idea that there are some works of art which do not have aesthetic properties at all, appears puzzling. We can remind ourselves about P. F. Strawson's warning which was briefly touched upon in Chapter III:

> …the concepts 'work of art' and 'aesthetic assessment' are logically coupled and move together, in the sense that it would be self-contradictory to speak of judging something *as a work of art*, but not from the aesthetic point of view.[294]

Strawson argues that assessing a work of art *qua* art implies an aesthetic approach because the concept of aesthetic appraisal is intrinsically linked to the concept of a work of art. I would say that a work of art 'demands' an aesthetic consideration. This means that no work of art can be judged *as* art if there is no aesthetic judgement involved. Does this mean that

[291] P. Lamarque, *W&O*, 2010, p. 96.
[292] Ibid., p. 96.
[293] Ibid., p. 95.
[294] P. F. Strawson, 'Aesthetic Appraisal and Works of Art' in *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art* eds. Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen, Blackwell, Oxford, 2004, p. 239.

supporters of Strawson would disagree with the idea that there are works of art that are non-aesthetic and thus not susceptible of being the objects of aesthetic descriptions or judgements? Strawson insists that the objects we call 'works of art' are named as such because we mark them primarily for aesthetic appraisal. Thus one can see that a supporter of Strawson's view would not accept that works of art could be non-aesthetic (the raison d'être of works of art is to be aesthetically appreciated). However, Lamarque envisages the possibility that a small number of works of art may not possess aesthetic properties at all:

> Maybe some works of art (conceptual art, 'transfigured' urinals or snow shovels) have no aesthetic properties.[295]

This is also the opinion of many conceptual artists who claim that their conceptual pieces are not aesthetic in nature but they are about an idea or a concept which does not need aesthetic wrappings. Before discussing works of conceptual art one needs to establish what Lamarque means, in general, by an aesthetic nature or aesthetic character of a work and which of the two essentialist theses he supports and why. According to Lamarque, the aesthetic character of a work of art is determined by the possession of essential aesthetic properties and when one makes an aesthetic judgment about a work of art he is also saying something about what 'partially constitutes it [the work] as the work it is'.[296] Some aesthetic descriptions or judgments about the possession of aesthetic properties are for Lamarque necessary truths. Having some aesthetic properties constitutes partly what the work is, it is part of its identity as a work of art. Hence Lamarque argues for the weaker essentialist thesis (T) which commits him to a moderate aesthetic individual essentialism. The weaker thesis is not referring to all or the majority of works of art but makes a statement about some aesthetic properties which are possessed essentially by some works of art partly constituting the identity of the work as the work it is.

The main question here is: what makes an aesthetic property an essential one? As noted in the previous chapter, Lamarque's argument for I-essentialism rests on two main premises: the work of art is different from the object that embodies the work (his new-object theory), and aesthetic properties have a relation with the work of art and not with the object that embodies the work. This last premise is the backbone of Lamarque's essentialism because he says that

[295] P. Lamarque, *W&O*, 2010, p.97
[296] Ibid., p.95

the type of essentialism he defends rests on this premise that there is a relation between a *work of art* and an *aesthetic property*. Here is how he explains this:

> It is always only a contingent fact that an object O possesses aesthetic property P. It is also a contingent fact that a work of art *w* emerges from O. My claim is only that a property P can in certain cases be an essential property of *w*.[297]

I think that one way of understanding I-essentialism is linked to the idea that for Lamarque it appears that ordinary objects and works of art have different modes of existence. For example, the work of art (*w)* has different ontological characteristics from the mere object (O) that embodies the work. Lamarque argues that the mere object (O) and the work (*w*) have different identity and survival conditions (different conditions of creation, of sustainability, of identification). And this difference between *w* and O transpires when one agrees that a work of art possesses essential aesthetic properties but, the mere object which embodies the work does not have aesthetic properties essentially.

The innovative aspect of Lamarque's aesthetic essentialism is that in works of art aesthetic properties although emergent from non-aesthetic properties, have a relation with the work of art not with the mere object, thus they are 'inherent' in the work of art, they are an essential part of the work, not of the object that embodies the work. However, the problem is that, because we agreed that aesthetic properties are emergent, or they have a kind of dependency on non-aesthetic properties of the base object, we cannot escape the thought that aesthetic properties have an 'umbilical' relation with the non aesthetic properties of the mere object which embodies the work.

Here is an example that could illustrate this 'relationship' of aesthetic properties to the non-aesthetic properties of a material object. Many of Alberto Giacometti's sculptures (in particular his late works) are made of bronze but they were originally casts from models made of iron and plaster or clay. The original medium of the model sculptures, the plaster or the clay (before being dried), had a craggy surface which could be considered a non-aesthetic property of the plaster or the clay at the beginning of the creative process. Giacometti's work has many extraordinary essential aesthetic properties but here I am interested in a particular one, the unusual texture of his final bronze pieces: the surface of his bronze sculptures which retained the rough, craggy, tactile qualities of the plaster or clay they were cast from. A

[297] P. Lamarque, *W&O*, 2010, p. 106

particular aesthetic property of Giacometti's sculptures, like the craggy reflective surface, has a direct link with the non-aesthetic property of the original medium, but as an aesthetic property becomes constitutive of the bronze sculpture. For example, *Large Head of Diego*, 1954, (Fig. 18), as a work of art, retains the craggy surface of the original clay medium.

Fig.18 *Large Head of Diego*, 1954 by Alberto Giacometti

This aesthetic property, the ragged tactile texture has a relation with the work of art, not with the material base of the sculpture (in particular in this case because the base material is bronze which does not have this quality). However, one can say the same about the initial models of the sculptures: the textural qualities of the medium before modelling were not aesthetic in nature. Of course, one can say that the surface of original material (clay in this

case) can be characterised as ragged if aesthetically contemplated. However, this characteristic is not an essential aesthetic property of the medium as such. This example is meant to show that the essential aesthetic properties of a work have a relation with the work of art not with the medium (the object) which is the base of the work. Even though one can attribute an aesthetic property to the object this will not be an essential property.

But as pointed out in the previous chapters, when I discussed Lamarque's view of the identity and survival conditions of works of art, the dual aspect of aesthetic properties, being intentional (being possessed by 'culturally emergent, institutionally grounded and intentional objects'[298]) and being relational properties (response dependent) is what makes aesthetic properties have a paradoxical status, being part of the identity conditions of works of art. The detection of aesthetic properties in a work of art, its aesthetic character, is a fundamental aspect of what makes the work of art the work it is. Lamaque says that works are '*intrinsically* intentional and relational'[299].

One can give again the example of the aesthetic property of being tragic.[300] It can be argued that this property is an essential property of the sculpture *Laocoon and His Sons* without which this work could not exist as the work of art, *Laocoon and His Sons.* The group's suffering is depicted in such a way that the appearance of the father and his sons (their expression of agony and physical struggle with the two serpents) and the way the story (the terrifying moments before death and in particular the father's powerlessness to help his two sons to escape[301]) is told in marble, have the character of being tragic. The aesthetic property of being tragic is constitutive of what *Laocoon and His Sons* is *as* a work of art.

But again what does make an aesthetic property like being tragic, essential to some works of art and not to others? Or do most works of art which possess this aesthetic property, have the property of being tragic as an essential property? Lamarque says that:

[298] P. Lamarque, *W&O*, 2010, p.107.
[299] Ibid., p.28.
[300] In contemporary aesthetics there is an intense preoccupation with the quality of being tragic (in particular in discussion of tragedies). However, here I am not intending to define what it is for a work to be tragic and I am assuming a common understanding of this aesthetic property.
[301] There is a possibility that the elder son could escape the serpents' constrictions because the way he is portrayed as being more able to manoeuvre his body in order to free himself, there is also a glimpse of regret on his face as if he knows he could escape without being able to help his father and his brother.

> A property is essential to a work only if its presence makes a relevant difference to the experience of the work (when correctly experienced) and bears on the work's value as a work.[302]

Then if an aesthetic property impacts directly on the aesthetic experience of the work (an appropriate experience) and this property also contributes to the aesthetic value of the work then this property is an essential of the work. Two things need to be said here. One is that, according to Lamarque, essential aesthetic properties determine the aesthetic character of a work of art because these aesthetic properties are salient features without which the work would not be the work it is – this is his aesthetic essentialism.[303] The second one is that Lamarque links the aesthetic experience of a work of art (the detection of essential aesthetic properties in a work of art) with the aesthetic value of the work – this is his aesthetic empiricism.[304]

It is easier to point out examples where the aesthetic property of being tragic is an essential property of a work (Lamarque's favourite example was the last scene in King Lear and my previous examples were the description of Anna Karenina's last moments, Cappa's depiction of the death of a soldier, or the depiction of the struggle against the deadly serpents in *Laocoon and His Sons*). Thus if being tragic 'defines' how one experiences a work then the aesthetic property of being tragic is part of the identity of the work, it is an essential property of the work. It is not easy to think of counter-examples of a work having aspects which can be described as tragic, but not having the aesthetic character or nature of being tragic. However, one can think of some works which are not quintessentially tragic but contain depictions of some tragic moments. For example, Grayson Perry's series *The Vanity of Small Differences,* 2012, of six tapestries, which portray death, relationships breakdowns, tears, car accidents and sufferance before death, characteristics which taken out of the pictorial context are tragic depictions of events but the character of the whole work (the six tapestries) is not tragic *The Vanity of Small Differences* is Perry's social satire on our contemporary world; it is about social mobility, taste, our obsession with upper classes, technology and social media.

In the next paragraph I focus on one of the six tapestries, from the above mentioned series by

[302] P. Lamarque, *W&O*, 201, p.72.
[303] On a different note here needs to be said that Lamarque insists that the type of essentialism he defends, the aesthetic individual essentialism, applies only to works of art and not to natural objects. Ibid., p 118
[304] Here one can also bring Lamarque's reminder of Malcom Budd's thesis that the value of a work of art as a work of art is dependent upon the experience that the work has to offer (Lamarque, *W&O*, 201, p.72, Note 30)

Perry entitled *Lamentation* (Fig. 19).

I would argue that the essential aesthetic property of this work is a humorous evocation of contemporary life embodied in the visual narrative of the main character, Tim Rakewell's life events. Perry's work is inspired by Hogarth's 18th century famous series of paintings *A Rake's Progress*. Thus the aesthetic nature or character of Perry's series as a whole is not being tragic and the appropriate response to the work should be both: recognition of what the work is – a visual social satire – and an understanding of the work's reflective message. However, *The Vanity of Small Differences* contains tragic elements which it can be argued, are essential to different aspects of the work, they are integral parts of the series, thus contributing to the overall experience of the work (in particular to the reflective aspect of the response). But again, it needs to be pointed out that the overall experience of Perry's series is not a response to a tragic work, even though it contains essential tragic elements.

Fig. 19 *Lamentation*, from the series *The Vanity of Small Differences* (2012) by Grayson Perry

In order to clarify even further Lamarque's idea that the identity of an individual work of art is intertwined with the possession of salient properties, in particular essential aesthetic properties, and their experience, it is important to understand what Lamarque means by recognizing a work of art as the work it is (his main identity claim about works of art). This is what he says:

> To recognize a work for what it is – the Fra Angelico [the *Lamentation over the Dead Christ*] as sorrowful, but also as a depiction of the dead Christ, a painting in the devotional tradition, and so forth – is to be in a cognitive state internally related to the experience the work affords.[305]

Lamarque makes a point here about the link between the perception/experience of the painting and the identification of a work of art for what it is, underlining that this experiential state is the basis of aesthetic characterisations of the work. In the case of the Fra Angelico's painting, the identification of the painting for what it is (a sorrowful work, a depiction of a dead Christ, a painting in the devotional tradition, etc.) is dependent upon the appropriate experience of the work. In other words, recognising the painting as a sorrowful work is dependent upon having the appropriate experience: feeling distress or being troubled by the depiction of the dead Christ being in a certain mental state.

What interests me at this moment is Lamarque's claim about aesthetic essentialism, that the aesthetic description of a work of art (an aesthetic description means the attribution of aesthetic properties to a work of art) is a necessary truth which can identify the aesthetic character of the work.[306] Lamarque uses two stages or interpretations to explain the recognition of a work of art for what it is, and his main aim is to re-emphasize that aesthetic properties are related essentially to both, the response of perceivers and to the works of art themselves.[307]

The two interpretations or stages of recognizing a work of art for what it is are as follows. The first is recognizing that the object is a work of art and the second is recognizing what work of art it is.[308] It is important to re-emphasize that Lamarque thinks that the two interpretations or stages of the identification of works of art are directly linked with aesthetic

[305] P. Lamarque, *W&O*, 2010, p.110.
[306] Ibid., p.95
[307] Ibid., p.111.
[308] Ibid., p.110.

characterizations (characterizations which are based upon the perceptual or experiential encounter with the work of art). Lamarque says:

> To recognize a work as a work – a colour configuration as a painting (i.e. an **intentional object** conforming to cultural practices) – presupposes fairly complex background conditions.[309]

This first stage of the identification is described by Lamarque in the following way: when encountering a work of art an informed perceiver has the thought of an object *under-a description.*[310] The informed perceiver (having background knowledge) directs his attention to the object and sees it as a work of art; the object has intentional properties which sets it apart from other objects. Lamarque argues that the identification of the object as a cultural object, as a work of art, involves a *gestalt* switch or a 'seeing as' mode of perception or experience. In addition he reminds us that this is very similar to what Sibley meant by requiring a 'special epistemic access' to the aesthetic properties of a work of art. Thus, this first stage establishes only that the object perceived is a work of art of a certain genre. For example, it establishes that the painted configuration on the wall is perceived as a painting, or the chair on a plinth as a sculpture, or the synchronized moments of a young group on the street as dance, or the rhythmic loud reading of a text in Trafalgar Square as a poem, or the acid burning of a canvas in South Bank as a performance. It is conceivable that one can stop at this level of recognition if no other attention is paid to the object. For example, encountering a rectangular object on a wall and identifying it as a painting could not be followed by any other subsequent thought about the painting (most of the time we do this in a quotidian context when our attention is not aesthetically inclined)[311]. One could remember that a house was full of paintings without identifying what kind of paintings they were.

Also at this stage, identification mistakes are possible; one can totally fail to recognize an object as a work of art. A very rare case would be when a work of art like a painting is shown to a member of a primitive tribe who had no contact with the western world – the viewers from the tribe have no background knowledge to identify the object with a work of art. One observation is necessary here, even the most primitive tribes were acquainted or used some form of basic decorative art (for bodies or objects) and this means that there was a basic

[309] P. Lamarque, *W&O*, 2010, p.28.
[310] Ibid., p.111.
[311] Of course this does not refer to people who are deeply interested in art and are instantly noticing the type of paintings they are looking at.

understanding of the configurations of colours and lines representing something or symbolising something and having a decorative function. The members of the tribe would probably not recognise the painting as an aesthetic object to be hanged and contemplated as such. Of course, this is an example of an extreme and very rare case. One knows that to recognise something means to be aware of previous samples or to have seen similar objects which can be related to the new encountered object or simply put to have the concept of art. Thus maybe the example of the primitive tribe cannot be used to show that there is failure at the first stage of recognising an object as a painting because as described, the tribe does not have the concept of art.

The first stage of recognising a work of art as a work of art also can be used as a simple explanation of how children learn how to recognize objects. For example, initially children are shown many examples of paintings, then maybe they are asked to paint themselves pictures and they are taught how to use the language associated with the paintings and all of these will help them later to discern between paintings and other objects.

Lamarque mentions more common misidentifications at this first stage: found art or ready-mades being mistaken for the mere objects that constitute their base. My favourite examples are those of contemporary works of art that are confused with the mere objects that constitute their physical base. For example, one of Christo's sculptures was destroyed by a porter at an art auction who failed to see that the wrapping on the chair was the sculpture[312]. Another example is of a work of art consisting of a typewriter which was sent to be exhibited with the label 'This is not a work of art' and which was taken by one of the gallery's attendances to be a real working typewriter and was sent to the art gallery's office. Such objects were not seen as intentional objects conforming to artistic practices and because of this they were taken to be ordinary objects. The viewer looked at only the non-aesthetic properties of the object and failed to see the work of art (or as Lamarque says, the viewer did not see this object *as* art or did not have a '*gestalt* switch'). If the person making these mistakes would have thought of the object encountered under-an-artistic-description and paid minimal attention to its aesthetic and artistic properties, maybe the mistakes could have been avoided. In contemporary art, in particular conceptual art which uses found objects and ready-mades this difficulty is overwhelming if the institutional framework is not imposed on the work and if the viewer does not have sufficient background knowledge about the contemporary artworld.

[312] Jonathan Jones, 'Modern art is rubbish? Why mistaking artworks for trash proves their worth', *The Guardian*, 27th Oct. 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/global/shortcuts/2015/oct/27/modern-art-is-rubbish-why-mistaking-artworks-for-trash-proves-their-worth.

Lamarque's second stage of work recognition is more complex because once the object is recognized as a work of art having the intentional property of being thought as a work under-a-description (for example, a painting), this object will be perceived or experienced in a particular way. Thus the viewer would partly respond to or experience the encountered work in a certain way. But what does it mean to say that a viewer responds to a work in a 'certain way'? Thinking of the example of *Guernica*, Lamarque would say first that the viewer recognizes the object as a work of art of a certain art form – as a painting – and then he recognizes the object for the work it is.[313] It is not clear to me what Lamarque means when he speaks about this second stage in encounters with works of art. For example, in the case of *Guernica* 'what work of art it is' could mean: a cubist painting, or a painting by Picasso, or an exemplar of artistic achievement, or a work with unusual representational, expressive and formal properties, or an extraordinary depiction of the consequences of war, or the artist's visual statement against atrocities of war, or that the painting is *Guernica*. It could mean one or a number of those things. Let's suppose that one takes the most immediate response of the informed viewer to the encounter of the painting *Guernica*: 'it is *Guernica*'[314]. First it can be said that this response encompasses most of the other responses to the painting: once it is recognized as being *Guernica*, this recognition has a rich hinterland (the viewer knows a lot about the painting even if this is not explicitly thought of). Secondly, by a certain response, Lamarque means a normative response, which is demanded by the encountered painting. *Guernica* possesses an aesthetic character which is determined by its essential aesthetic properties and this character is the one that elicits a certain normative response.

Lamarque points out that, many interesting misidentifications are possible at this second stage. This could happen for different reasons: because the viewer responds to elements which are not in the painting or because some of the elements of the painting are taken to be what they are not. For example: 'This painting is by Vermeer' (when it is not), or a painting is identified as surrealist when there are no surrealist elements present in the painting, or when a viewer argues that the painting is by Picasso because of its cubists elements while the painting is by Braque, etc. Thus these confusions are about the misinterpretation of some aspects of the work, including aesthetic properties, which impact on establishing the identity of the work.

[313] Of course, an informed perceiver would instantly recognize *Guernica*, even if he never saw the painting in reality. Here for the informed perceivers the two stages are overlapping. One can agree that Lamarque's explanation is not an epistemological exercise to illustrate the chronological stages of art perception but only a methodological devise to attempt an explanation of the process of identifying works of art.

[314] 'Cubist' is used as a description which refers to an art-historical perspective or a style of painting.

In order to illustrate Lamarque's distinction between essential and inessential aesthetic properties and how some works of art possess essentially some aesthetic properties, I choose to analyse two paintings. One is Lamarque's example, the earlier mentioned Fra Angelico's fresco *Lamentation over the Dead Christ* (1440-1442) from the cell 2 of San Marco Convent, in Florence (Fig.20), and the other is also by Fra Angelico, *Lamentation*, from Florence Museum 1436-1441 (Fig. 21).

Lamarque characterises the first fresco, *Lamentation over the Dead Christ* (Fig.20), as having a *sorrowful intensity* and he also argues that this aesthetic judgment identifies the sorrowful intensity as an essential aesthetic property of the fresco.[315] No doubt many critics and art lovers would find the aesthetic characterisation of the fresco as a having a sorrowful intensity very appropriate. However, the more challenging task is to show that this aesthetic property is an essential property of the fresco – without which it would not be the work of art it is. Thus, the litmus test for Lamarque's suggestion would be the way in which one answers the following question: 'Can you imagine *Lamentation over the Dead Christ* (1440-1442) as not having a sorrowful intensity?' If the answer is 'no' then Lamarque would be entitled to say that the sorrowful intensity is an essential aesthetic property.

[315] Lamarque initially discusses the last scene of *King Lear* as having a tragic character essentially, but he also enumerates many other different works of art and their essential aesthetic character, including the *Lamentation over the Dead Christ.* (W&O, 2010, p. 101).

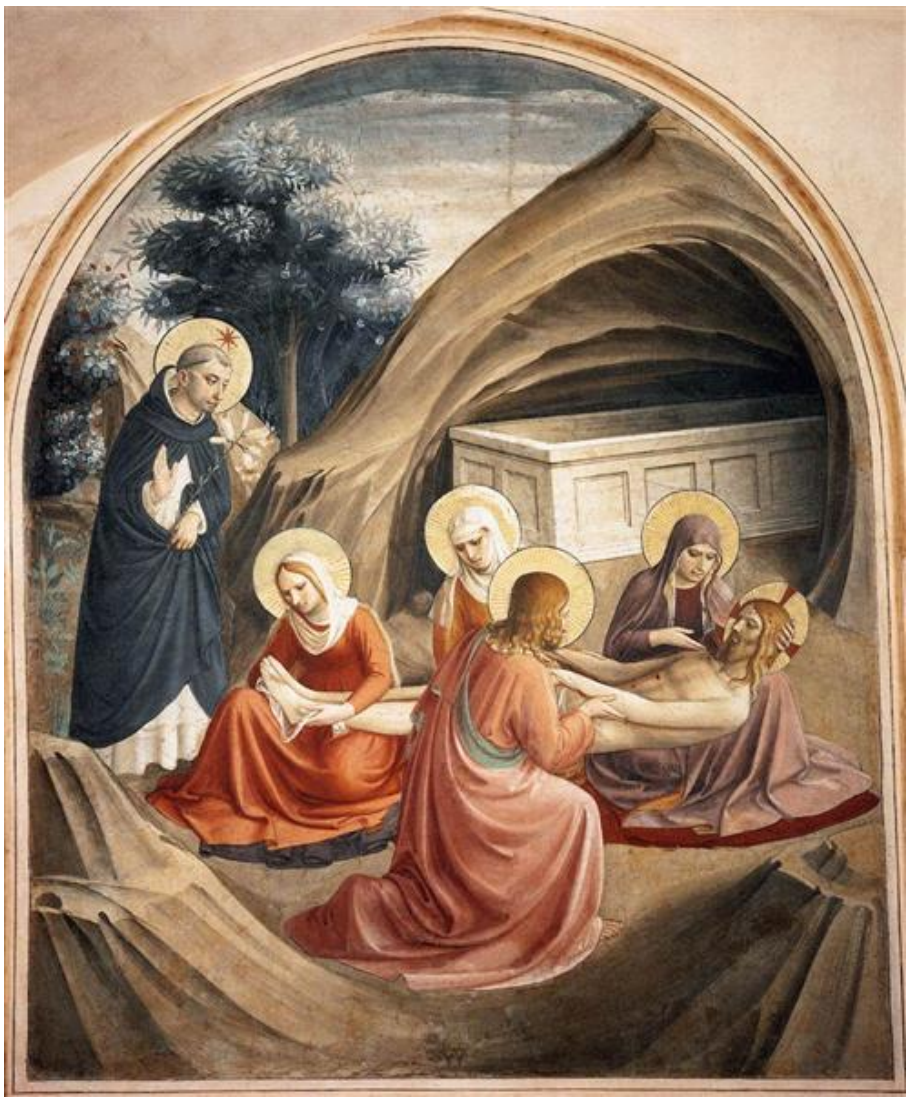

Fig. 20 *Lamentation over the Dead Christ* (1440-1442) by Fra Angelico

But what makes the aesthetic property of sorrowful intensity to be quintessential to this work? An analysis of the fresco could point out the following important properties: a balanced composition of concentric interplay of different elements (the curves of the cave and of the rocks, the folded curves of the mourners clothes and the halo circles of all the characters of the scenes); the bare rocks mirroring the folds of the women mourners; the harmonious chromatic of the mourners' clothes; the strong emotional intensity of the mourners; St. Dominic's calm witnessing and the whole atmosphere of reverence, piety and sorrow. One could justify the description of the fresco as having a sorrowful intensity as the result of a combination of both aesthetic and non-aesthetic elements: the sombre unity of the kneeling mourners and the tenderness of their gestures, their devoted expression and profoundly absorbed attitude, the quiet pain of their faces, their ordered position around the

body of Christ, the meaning of the depicted scene (a literal and figurative Entombment) and the interplay of curves focusing the viewer's attention on the mourners' group and the mourners absorbed concentration which makes the body of Chris to appear weightless.

However, a critic or an art lover could disagree with this interpretation and contradict the claim that *Lamentation over the Dead Christ* (1440-1442) has essentially a sorrowful intensity. Lamarque himself is aware that in some cases he might be mistaken about some of his claims that the works he mentions have the essential aesthetic properties that he is suggesting[316]. However, Lamarque points out that he is not making an epistemological claim. His defence for his essentialist claims is that a possible deep analysis of the works he describes can show if those works have certain aesthetic properties as part of their aesthetic character, as part of their identity as individual works of art.

In accordance with Lamarque's view one could say that the fresco by Fra Angelico, *Lamentation over the Dead Christ* (1440-1442) from the San Marco Convent in Florence, cannot be otherwise than having the sorrowful intensity that it has. Without this essential aesthetic property, the fresco would have a different aesthetic character and be a different work of art. Thus, saying that the fresco has a sorrowful intensity is a claim about the fresco's identity.

I suggest another similar analysis of a painting in order to extrapolate Lamarque's claim that certain aesthetic properties are possessed essentially by some works of art and they define the aesthetic character of these works. I have chosen another painting with the same subject by Fra Angelico, *Lamentation*, tempera on panel from Florence Museum, 1436-1441 (Fig. 21) and I propose that this painting also can be characterised by strong emotional intensity. With regard to this paining, there are many intrinsic properties of Fra Angelico's painting which do not pertain to its aesthetic character: the size and weight of the panel of the painting, the tempera paints, the direction of the brush strokes, etc. Lamarque would say that these properties belong to the mere object which is the basis of the painting and they are inessential to the work. The essential properties of the painting which would identify the painting as a particular work of art are certain formal, expressive and representational properties. The main formal properties are: a balanced composition, chromatic unity and delicate brush strokes. Some of the representational properties of the objects in the painting can be considered not aesthetic in character: the mourners – four men and ten women, the

[316] Here are a number of other works Lamarque mentions and their essential aesthetic properties: Piero della Francesca's *Baptism of Christ* and its mood of tranquillity, Thomas Hardy's *The Darkling Thrush*, which expresses a glimmer of hope amid a pervading gloom, or Brahms' Violin Concerto in D Major, op. 77 which is clam and peaceful (*W&O*, 2010, p.101).

unanimated body of Christ, the emptiness of outskirts of town (a Tuscan landscape) or the bare crucifix etc. (these are aspects that can be noticed without an aesthetic engagement with the work).

Fig. 21 *Lamentation*, Fra Angelico, Florence Museum, 1436-1441

However the aesthetic representational and expressive properties which are important for the aesthetic character of paintings require a more sustained effort of aesthetic identification by the informed perceiver. For example, one could argue that the aesthetic representational properties of the paintings are: a highly stylised depiction of a group of mourners, the peaceful lifelessness of Christ's body, the portrayal of devoted followers around the dead Christ, the emblematic human responses to loved and revered figure's death, the oblique delicate traces of Christ's blood on the cross or the symbol of the cross as the instrument of Christ's death. But the bare natural surroundings of Christ's crucifixion and the particular number of mourners and the colours of their clothes have in devotional paintings a symbolic importance which can bear on the aesthetic interpretation of the work, thus these elements can be of aesthetic importance. The examples of the expressive properties that the work could

have are: the reverence of each kneeling person, the care expressed by the mourners' postures, the concentrated devotion of their hands, and the emotional intensity of the whole subject. But which ones of those formal, representational and expressive properties are essential to the aesthetic character of the painting? This question appears to ask two things: one is about the essential aesthetic properties of the painting and the other is about the (overall) aesthetic character of the painting. I said it 'appears' because it can be argued that by establishing the essential aesthetic properties of the painting one will be able to underpin the aesthetic characterization of the work. This is a difficult question because there are many essential aesthetic properties of the painting and trying to capture its rich aesthetics with one description requires a complex search which should include the appropriate response to the work and the understanding of its meaning. I suggest that *Lamentation*, (1436-1441) from the Florence Museum, has an essentially carefully constructed composition which supports the depiction of emblematic human responses to Christ's death by its devotees.

This analysis of the paintings showed that in many cases works of art are too complex to be characterized by one essential property even though one can agree that there is an overall aesthetic character or nature that works of art have. Lamarque's argument of aesthetic individual essentialism stipulates that some aesthetic properties are essentially possessed by some works of art (T) – that some works of art necessarily possess an aesthetic character – without elaborating in detail on individual cases.

In conclusion in this chapter I focused on Lamarque's argument for aesthetic essentialism which proposes that some works of art possess some aesthetic properties essentially and that these properties contribute to the identity of these individual works as the work they are. Lamarque's position rests on two important points: the distinction between work and object and the proposal that aesthetic properties are dependent on their relation with the work (as a cultural object) not with the mere object.

My main interest in Lamarque's individual essentialism took a more decisive role when I started analysing works of conceptual art. This became more acute when I thought about contemporary radical positions which argue that conceptual works do not have aesthetic properties, which means that one is subscribing to the idea that conceptual works do not have an aesthetic character and they should not be considered and judged from an aesthetic point

of view.[317] My position with regard to conceptual art is slightly different from Lamarque's, who suggests that maybe conceptual pieces do not have aesthetic properties. Although it can be argued that a large majority of conceptual works do not have many *essential* aesthetic properties (I would argue in the following chapter that some of them do), I claim that all conceptual works have *inessential* aesthetic properties. Thus, the inessential properties of conceptual works are not responsible for determining a certain aesthetic character or the aesthetic value of the works because conceptual art works are not supposed to be experienced aesthetically or to make aesthetic statements but to make conceptualist statements. The basis of my argument about conceptual art, which I develop in the next chapter, will rest on some previous discussions: how one uses the concept of the aesthetic, what are essential aesthetic properties and how these properties impact on the identity of the works as works of art and their value and how important is the role of the conceptual artists in characterizing their work.

[317] There is another extreme position, which I disagree with, that considers conceptual pieces not being works of art at all. I think this view can be better supported if one stipulates that conceptual works do not need to be aesthetically experienced and judged. Thus such a position will not necessarily deny that conceptual works are part of the artworld but it will consider conceptual works *aesthetically* unimportant or not valuable.

CHAPTER VI
The Aesthetics of Conceptual Art

I began this thesis with a question about the concept of the aesthetic and about aesthetic properties and I tried to clarify Lamarque's theory of individual essentialism. In order to offer an adequate application of these ideas to the analysis of conceptual art, I need two preliminary set ups: one is to reiterate which senses of the above concepts I use and the second is to give a general characterization of conceptual art. Thus in the first section of this chapter I briefly remind us of the main concepts I discussed in previous chapters (*Section 1*), in the next section I try to present a general characterisation of conceptual art (*Section 2*), in the third section I propose my own characterisation of conceptual art, arguing that works of conceptual art can be assessed aesthetically and a small number of conceptual works have essential aesthetic properties (S*ection 3*).

Section 1: Main conceptual framework

The concept of the aesthetic is used in two ways: in a narrow sense, when it refers to the perceptual (in relation to aesthetic properties this includes the beautiful and many other perceptual properties directly linked to sense perception) and in a wider sense when it refers not only to the perceptual but also to the experiential (this includes a long list of aesthetic properties which was initially proposed by Sibley and developed later by many aestheticians including A. Goldman's list). I am interested in the wider sense of the term and I think Goldman's list of aesthetic properties presented in Chapter II (pure value properties, emotion properties, formal qualities, behavioural properties, evocative qualities, representational qualities, second-order perceptual properties, and historical relate properties), captures an extensive use of the qualifier 'aesthetic' in characterizing properties of works of art. Also I need to add that Lamarque's conception of aesthetic appraisal uses the wider sense of the aesthetic. Even though, in general Lamarque is preoccupied mainly with the appreciative experience of literature, which he argues, it must include the consonance of (aesthetic) means to (literary) ends, he also discusses the aesthetic appraisal of the visual arts. As mentioned before, he suggests that the experience of visual art works is similar to the experience associated with reading literature in that, both experiences (perceptual or imaginative) are

informed by knowledge about the objects experienced.[318] Thus Lamarque uses a wider sense of the aesthetic including both, perception as traditionally understood (through the senses) and experiential or imaginative occurrences as part of an appreciative experience of works *as* works of art.

The second concept I need to re-emphasise is that of aesthetic properties. As stated previously, according to Lamarque's view there are two main types of aesthetic properties: essential and inessential. The essential aesthetic properties are responsible for determining the aesthetic character/nature of a work of art (without those properties the work will not be the work of art it is – it will be a different work[319]) but the same aesthetic property can be possessed by different individual works of art. When appropriately perceived or experienced, an essential aesthetic property of an individual work shapes the character of the aesthetic experience and the aesthetic value of that work. However, a work of art could lose some of its aesthetic properties and remain the same work – these properties are inessential to the work as the work it is. I would like to add here that certain essential aesthetic properties are more easily detectable in a work than others, and these will help the informed perceiver to identify the work and its aesthetic character without difficulty. For example, the property of being a static work for *The Rhine II* by Gursky, or being a dynamic work for *A Sudden Gust of Wind (after Hokusai)* by Wall, or having a sorrowful intensity for *Lamentation over the Dead Christ* by Fra Angelico, or being tragic for the last scene of *King Lear* are essential aesthetic properties that are immediately evident to an informed perceiver's aesthetic encounters with these works. However, the large scale of *The Rhine II*, or the monochromatic grisaille composition for *Guernica* are not evidently essential aesthetic properties of these works – the need for an in depth analysis in the case of these aesthetic properties is more pressing than in the case of more obvious essential aesthetic properties like a composition being static or dynamic. In short, I believe that although one can speak of essential aesthetic properties of individual works, it needs to be pointed out that the acceptance of such properties as essential to the identity of the works and their character often requires fine-grained justifications from the viewers, critics or the artists.

[318] P. Lamarque, *W&O*, 2010, p. 229.

[319] For example, one of the essential properties of 'King Lear' is being tragic and without this property the play would not be the work of art it is, it will be a different work. One could argue that if the play would lack its other essential aesthetic properties then the 'play' could become a simple text or narrative – not being a work of art at all.

Section 2: General characterization of conceptual art

The attempt to give a general characterisation of conceptual art will prove to be a difficult task because, as Lucy Lippard says, there are as many definitions of conceptual art as there are conceptual artists,[320] or as Elisabeth Schellekens argued more radically that 'there are, in fact, as many definitions of conceptual art as there are conceptual artworks.'[321] First in this section, I am going to briefly present three perspectives on conceptual art – the artist Sol LeWitt's perspective, the art historian Paul Wood's and the philosophers Peter Goldie and Elisabeth Schellekens'. Secondly, I am going to discuss the prevailing tendency to characterize conceptual art in opposition to other art forms.

2.1. Three perspective on conceptual art

i) The first perspective that I want to briefly focus on is Paul Wood's description of the history of conceptual art in his introductory book *Conceptual Art*. He proposes three distinct phases in the development of the term 'conceptual art':[322]

1) 'Concept art' was introduced for the first time by the musician and writer Henry Flynt who wrote about conceptual works in the context of 'Fluxus' group in New York in 1961. The term referred to an art which uses concepts as its materials.

2) 'Conceptual art' as an historical form of the avant-garde practice which thrived in the 60s and 70s. The term describes an art that included language usage, photography, serialisation of images and process based activities.

3) 'Conceptualism' is the third term used for conceptual art; this term is used in two different senses:

    a) Representing the variety of contemporary art practices that do not comply with the usual art expectations (for example, the 'Turner Prize' entries) and are described as practices that are not interested in 'showing hand-crafted objects for aesthetic contemplation'.[323]

[320] Lucy Lippard, 'Six Years: The dematerialisation of the art object' University of California Press, 1997.
[321] Elisabeth Schellekens 'Conceptual art' in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* on line, 2007
[322] Paul Wood, *Conceptual Art*, Tate Publishing, 2002, p. 7-9
[323] Ibid., p. 9

b) A manner of working which started in the 1950s in a larger geographical context than the Anglo-American one. Here Wood points out that there are two identities of conceptualism: one is the 'Analytical conceptualism' (as the 'art of white male rationalists, mired in the very modernism they sought to critique') and 'Global conceptualism' (the art of men and women alike who began working in a conceptualist manner in the 1950s tackling issues form 'imperialism to personal identity in far-flung place from Latin America to Japan, from Aboriginal Australia to Russia').[324]

For Wood these developments of 'conceptual art' as a term represent important reference points for art critics and aestheticians but he recognises that these are 'rival senses of the term' which sometimes overlap while other times grow in opposition to each other. As a response to this difficulty his main take on conceptual art is not directly about the changes the term went through but about focusing on three things: first, the preconditions of conceptual art – Dada, Surrealism and Constructivism; secondly, the non-medium-specific art activities of the regenerated avant-garde at the end of the 1950s modernism; and thirdly, the importance of ideas as art through the rejection of the aesthetic and the politicisation of art practices in the 70s. It is very difficult to tease out a definition of conceptual art from Wood's introduction to conceptual art because Wood himself thinks that the boundaries of the concept of conceptual art are hard to draw. On the one hand he says, conceptual art is like Lewis Carroll's Cheshire cat:

> ….dissolving away until nothing is left but a grin: a handful of works made over a few short years by a small number of artists, the most important of whom went on to do other things.[325]

On the other hand conceptual art is like:

> … the hinge around which the past turned into the present: the modernist past of paintings as *the* fine art, the canon from Cezanne to Rothko, versus the postmodernist present where contemporary exhibition spaces are full of anything

[324] Paul Wood, *Conceptual Art*, Tate Publishing, 2002, p. 9.
[325] Ibid., p. 6.

> and everything, from sharks to photographs, piles of rubbish to multi-screen videos – full, it seems, of everything except modernist paintings.[326]

I would like to mention here that Wood's metaphor for conceptual art as hinge between the past with its tradition in the fine arts and the postmodernist present with its multivariate art practices was used very recently by Andrew Wilson in his book's introduction to the Tate Britain exhibition 'Conceptual Art in Britain, 1964-1979'. Here is Wilson's similar metaphor about conceptual art:

> It [conceptual art] acted as a hinge between modern art and contemporary art, proposing new ways of thinking about what is art, how it is made and what it is for.[327]

One could argue that this metaphor suggests a double-edged sword role for conceptual art. On one hand conceptual art can be seen as a 'tool' helping with the transition from modern art to contemporary practices (I think this is the intended sense proposed by Wood and Wilson and promoted by most conceptual artists). On the other hand the metaphor can allude to the danger of 'closing up' to the past, which could mean for example, a rejection of the great canon of representational art (this would be a radical interpretation of the metaphor[328]). However, I think both Wood and Wilson have a positive view of the role of conceptual art in contemporary art and conceptual art as a 'hinge', suggests the flexibility of conceptual pieces to connect to a variety of different artistic practices (modern or contemporary). Conceptual artists make use of different media and art practices: from the traditional paint, drawing, collage, sculpture, text, photography, film to unusual presentation techniques, installation, performances, social sculpture[329], body art or land art and this can be seen as an adaptive

[326] Paul Wood, *Conceptual Art*, Tate Publishing, 2002, p. 6.
[327] Andrew Wilson, 'Introduction', *Conceptual Art in Britain, 1964-1979*, Tate Publishing, London, 2016, p. 9
[328] I can think immediately of a contemporary group which would probably agree with this radical interpretation: the Stuckists – who reject conceptual art in order to promote figurative painting. The group was formed in 1999 by Billy Childish and Charles Thompson, but now it has a big membership which organises a lot of exhibitions, and it published a lot of manifestos against conceptual art and the Turner Prize as a contemporary recognition of art achievements. The group would argue that conceptual art is rejecting the cannon of art, wanting to close the door to the past.
[329] Social sculpture is a term introduced by Joseph Beuys in the 1970s, who advocated the art's transformative power and the idea that any person can potentially be an artist who structures and shapes his society and his environment.

method of making art (I am not making here a claim about the quality and value of conceptual works, I am only pointing out some aspects of this type of artistic endeavour). [330]

Here is what Wood thinks are the main aims of conceptual art: 'it raises questions about the products of art activity and about art's purpose in relation to a wider history of modernity' [331] and it takes a political stance especially after the 1970s [332]. One possible criticism of this characterisation is that these aims (questioning the work of art, the creative process, the role of art and its autonomy and art responsibility in relation to social change) appear not to be specific to conceptual art, since other arts (e.g. modernism, minimalism, kinetic art, the political poster, theatre, literature, poetry) posit those questions too. Then, what makes those aims specifically important for conceptual art? Wilson says that the involvement of the viewer in conceptual art is different from the experience of other arts:

> This structuring by time, as event, did not just reflect changes in the artwork – say, from object to performance – but also in the involvement of the viewer of an artwork that perhaps called for participation. If the artwork could be a form of enquiry, participation or a critical act, then this put into question the status of the art object, […].[333]

There are two things that the critic of conceptual art would immediately flag up here. The above characterisation of conceptual art assumes first, that the other more conventional art forms are not demanding from the viewer an active involvement with their works, and secondly, that these art forms are not critical enough of the role and status of works of art.
The critic of conceptual art would argue that the conceptualist is wrong and both of these assumptions are false. But how would the conceptualist defend his position and show that these two assumptions are not false? First the conceptualist could say that the unusual presentation of conceptual works and the works' messages demand a more sustained attention and a more physical and intellectual involvement than the more conventional works of art. There are different examples which the conceptualist could give here to justify his claim about the importance of the participatory role of the viewer in the experience of conceptual works. For example: the recent work of Marina Abramović at Serpentine Gallery in London

[330] The debate about the value of the 'mutation' that is conceptual art is an acerb one. At this moment I am only presenting different characterisations of conceptual art.
[331] Paul Wood, *Conceptual Art*, Tate Publishing, 2002, p. 29
[332] Ibid., p.55
[333] Andrew Wilson, 'Introduction', *Conceptual Art in Britain, 1964-1979*, Tate Publishing, London, 2016, p. 9

(2104) entitled *512 hours*, when the viewers were asked to sit silently in front of the performer at a table inside the gallery, or much older works like Roelof Louw's *Soul City (Pyramid of Oranges)*, 1967, when the audience was invited to interact with the work and could take home an orange, from the 5,800 oranges arranged in a pyramidal from on the gallery floor. However, the critic of conceptual art would say that the example of Abramović's work and the other such conceptual works which involve an overt participation of the viewers, do not show that the traditionalist art viewer is more passive in experiencing conventional works. These examples only point out a predilection of some conceptual artists to create works which demand from their viewers an extroverted engagement with such types of conceptual works. Moreover, not all conceptual art experiences are characterized by the viewer's response involving direct interaction and overt participation in the encounter with conceptual works.

The second assumption could be defended by the conceptualist in the following way: because the conceptualist artists are not so much interested in the material basis of their works (there is no medium specificity in conceptual art) and consider the craftsmanship or the skills related to a specific medium as a small or unimportant part of the creation of a conceptual work, they would say that they have more 'freedom' to be critical of the status of works of art and the role of the artists in society. A conceptualist would mean by 'freedom' an ability to pursue contemporary social and cultural questions by avoiding, what the conceptualist would call the 'aesthetic trap'. I think that, according to the hard conceptualist, the 'aesthetic trap' could refer to the conventional artists' insistence on creating works with certain appearances – the emphasis here is on the aesthetics of the work. This insistence is reflected in a type of conditioning to which the viewer is accustomed when appreciating works of art. The American artist Sol LeWitt says that our reaction to conventional works is a habit that is 'only the expectation of an emotional kick' and this would 'deter the viewer from perceiving' conceptual works.[334] Thus many conceptualists consider that the conceptualist artist can help the viewer to 'escape' what they regard as the obsession with the aesthetics of works of art by creating works which have a minimal visual impact.

ii) A second interesting perspective is that of Sol LeWitt who wrote two famous texts about conceptual art: 'Paragraphs on Conceptual Art' in *Artforum* (New York 1967) and 'Sentences

[334] Paragraphs on Conceptual Art, *Artforum*, New York, vol. 5, no. 10, Summer 1967, article republished in *Art in Theory* ed. by Charles Harrison & Paul Wood, Blackwell Publishers, 2003, p.847

on Conceptual art' in *Art-Language* (Coventry in 1969). LeWitt used to be a painter before he became a minimalist sculptor and started to be interested in conceptual art. He says:

> 'In conceptual art the idea or the concept is the most important aspect of the work. When an artist uses a conceptual art form, it means that all the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair.[335]

Does this claim about conceptualists mean that anybody can make conceptual works even if there is no skill or craftsmanship involved in the creation of conceptual works? I do not think that this is what LeWitt suggests because for him what is important in a conceptual work is the process behind its creation and what should be appreciated is the thinking of the artist and his innovative practice and not his skills as a craftsman. LeWitt thinks that the conceptual artist needs to be interested in making his work 'mentally interesting to the spectator' and because of this the artist will want his work to be 'emotionally dry'. This way of talking about art objects stirred a lot of discussions and protests in the late 60s. But it was not a new thing because there were a lot of previous artists who made what we now call conceptual art (the Dadaists, Surrealists, Constructivists and Minimalists). What was interesting about Le Witt's writings was the way he crystallized his ideas about such art practices and that he started a new way of working based on these ideas. For him the relationship between the idea of the artist and the final work is what counts and the finished work should not obscure the creative process with its physicality: 'What the works looks like is not important'[336]. One quick observation here is that Le Witt's view about conceptual art is a clear rejection of the conception of the aesthetic as one of the main characteristics of works of art (when the aesthetic is traditionally understood as the perceptual aspect of a work of art). The other observation I would like to make is that Le Witt seems to emphasise what we earlier called the artistic medium. In short the conceptualist rejects the importance of the vehicular medium (the physical base of any work) and gives pre-eminence to the link between what the artist thinks (his concepts and ideas) and what his work 'says' or what the work's message is (this being the artistic medium).

To return to the question about the execution of the conceptual work, a supporter of LeWitt's view can make two points: first, that the conceptualist's artistic means are

[335] Paragraphs on Conceptual Art, *Artforum*, New York, vol. 5, no. 10, Summer 1967, article republished in *Art in Theory*, 2003, p.846
[336] Ibid., p. 847

subordinated to the aim of transmitting a concept/idea [337] and the second, that many conceptual artists are actually very accomplished artists at using traditional media. In support of the first point, one can say that conceptual artists use a variety of media which are only 'crutches' for the artists' final aims; for example, conceptualists use ready-mades, repetitions, words, photo-text, indexes, props, performances, live or dead animals, auto-destructive art, body art, video, natural objects, fabrics, paints, collages and take measurements of time and duration as more important than the creation and presentation of their conceptual work. In support of the second point, a supporter of conceptual art could give many examples of conceptual artists that are also very good painters or sculptors, but have chosen at some point in their artistic journey to create conceptual works because they wanted to express certain ideas in a novel or challenging way or in different ways from the traditional arts. The conceptualists can then be divided into three possible categories: one is that of artists who gave up more traditional art forms and their specificity of medium for conceptual art, the second is that of artists who started being well known as conceptualists but returned to traditional art forms, and the third category is of artists who create both traditional works of art and conceptual art. Of course, 'diehard' conceptualists or purists would argue that conceptualists should be dedicated only to the aim of transmitting concepts and avoid a collapse into the aesthetic trap.

But the critic of conceptual art would say that many well known conceptualists who turn to or return to traditional art forms, like painting or sculpture, are actually taking advantage of their 'celebrity' status to present to the art public their newer work – I refer here to a number of artists like Damien Hirst, Tracey Emin, Michele Craig Martin or Michel Landy. The critic of conceptual art goes even further and says that, if those artists would not have been art celebrities (such status is conferred by the artworld[338] because of these artists' controversial conceptual works) then the art critics, art public and the art media would not give too much attention to those artists' more traditional works. This may be true, but the discussion about the value of their work (conceptual or traditional) is a slightly different debate from the discussion about the artistic or aesthetic nature of these works. Even if someone thinks that Tracey Emin's more traditional drawings are not very good drawings (the most common reaction to her work is that 'she cannot draw'), they are still works to be considered and only

[337] Sol LeWitt makes a distinction between idea and concept in conceptual art. In 'Sentences on Conceptual Art' he says on sentence number 9: 'The concept and the idea are different. The former implies a general direction while the latter are the components. Ideas implement the concept' (*Art in Theory* ed. by Charles Harrison & Paul Wood, Blackwell Publishers, 2003, p.846)

[338] By artworld I mean the world of art critics, art institutions and art lovers. I do not take the artworld to be involved in creating works of art, even though it can have an influence on artists.

then, maybe dismissed as aesthetically unimportant.[339] Here are a varied number of examples by other conceptualist 'celebrities', whose more traditional works are worthwhile examples of aesthetic achievements: Marcel Duchamp's cubist paintings, Jean Arp's paintings and sculptures, Joseph Kosuth's architectural design drawings, Richard Long's early natural sculptures, Michel Craig Martin's acrylic works, Michael Landy's portraits of his friends and family, etc. A closer analysis of these particular artists' works would show that regardless of their celebrity status, these are extraordinary gifted artists and their conceptualism is not a cover up for a lack of artistic skill or artistic imagination.

iii) The third perspective on conceptual art I am interested in, is that of Peter Goldie and Elisabeth Schellekens who in their introduction to the book *Philosophy and Conceptual Art* propose five general characteristics of conceptual art:

1. Conceptual art aims to remove the traditional emphasis on sensory pleasure and beauty by replacing it with an emphasis on ideas and the view that the art object is to be 'dematerialized'.
2. Conceptual art sets out to challenge the limits of the identity and definitions of artworks and questions the role of agency in art making.
3. Conceptual art seeks, often as a response to modernism, to revise the role of art and its critics so that the art-making becomes a kind of criticism, at times also promoting anti-consumerist and anti-establishment views.
4. Conceptual art rejects traditional artistic media, particularly the so-called plastic arts, in favour of new media of production such as photography, film, events, bodies, mixed media, ready-mades and more.
5. Conceptual art replaces illustrative representation by what some call 'semantic representation', semantic in the sense of depending on the meaning being conveyed through a text or supporting discourse.

These five characteristic features state the aims of conceptual art in a slightly different manner from Wood's proposal. They are more detailed and are not historically centred although they have an historical dimension. I think Goldie's and Schellekens' characteristics capture a number of essential features of conceptual art and my only quarrel is with the last of

[339] One could argue that Emin's drawing technique is reminiscent of the Austrian artist, Egon Schiele, and that the subject of her drawings comes from an old tradition of artistic observational studies of the female body.

their points about ‘semantic representation’. Although to some extent conceptual art uses semantic representation this is not the case with all conceptual works. For example one of the first conceptual works, *Bottlerack* (1914) by Marcel Duchamp, and other iconic works like *Erased de Kooning Drawing* (1953) by Robert Rauschenberg, or *A Line Made by Walking*, (1967) by Richard Long, or *Self-Burial* (1969) by Keith Arnatt or *The Oak Tree* (1973) by Michael Craig-Martin do not use text. However, one could point out that many conceptual works use, as Goldie and Schellekens suggest, ‘supportive discourse’ which could mean different things: the explicative text presented alongside the work, or the text included in the work, or the instructions of how to present or ‘build’ the work, or the actual title of the work.

For example, the title of Rauschenberg’s work, *Erased de Kooning Drawing*, constitutes an important part of the work. Otherwise, how would one know, what the blank paper presented to an art public in 1953 was, or how should one appreciate such a work? Another example, where the text is essential to a work, is Michael Craig-Martin’s work entitled *The Oak Tree* (Fig 22). The description of this work is disconcertingly simple: an ordinary Duralex glass with water, which is placed in the centre of a glass shelf, installed above normal body height and a printed text which is mounted below the shelf.

Fig. 22 *The Oak Tree* (1973) by Michael Craig-Martin

This is a good example to single out because without the text, which records a conversation between Michael Craig-Martin and a putative viewer of his work, the appropriate experience of the work cannot take place. The text:

> rehearses questions, doubts and explanations regarding the transformation that has taken place, whereby the glass of water has become an oak tree[340]

Here is an interesting story related to how creative interpretation works when one encounters a work like *The Oak Tree.* An artist friend (the viewer) described to me Craig-Martin's work which she saw many years ago, in the following way: a glass of water and *a seed* on a bathroom shelf hung above human high, and an adjacent text about the work, on the left of the shelf, explaining how the work is an oak tree. Now there is no seed on the shelf but the viewer read the text and by the time she left the gallery thought there was a seed there. This is reconstructive memory, a way of dealing with missing information in order to make sense of what we remember – in this case, the viewer read the text and understood Craig-Martin's intention to show how transformation can take place in someone's mind by enumerating all the rational questions about such an act of transformation. The seed was not there (the thinking involved in seeing a seed near a glass of water would have involved the idea of natural growth but it would have been too direct) because the artist tried to show how one can make the leap of faith and buy into the idea of this radical transformation by having very few material clues. Wilson says that the work is not the glass of water or the shelf but the recognition that the transformation took place.[341] Thus the text in *The Oak Tree* is essential in creating the belief that such transformation can be envisaged.

Nevertheless, not all conceptual works use supporting discourse or text. Moreover, the critic of conceptual art would emphasise that using text as a prop to the appropriate experiencing of the work, only shows the feebleness of some conceptual works which need an extra semantic layer for their appropriate perception. Even if the critic is right to a certain extent, one could still think of important conceptual works whose meaning is revealed in conjunction with their adjacent text. I discuss a number of such works in the third section of this chapter.

[340] Andrew Wilson, *Conceptual Art in Britain, 1964-1979*, Tate Publishing, London, 2016, p. 85.
[341] Ibid., p.85.

2.2 Conceptual art and other art forms

Derek Matravers in his paper: 'The Dematerialization of the Object' argues that the existence of conceptual works challenges 'some claims that seem to lie at or near the centre of the traditional concept of art'.[342] According to Matravers these central claims characterizing works of art are:

a) works of art are *objects*
b) which we appreciate through *direct experiential encounter* and
c) such experiential encounter is *non-instrumentally valuable* [343]

In what follows, I discuss these claims in conjunction with the challenges from conceptual art.

a) Conceptual artists would maintain that their works are not 'objects' as such, because conceptual works are the successful communication of ideas or concepts and the physical appearance of the object that embodies the work does not matter. Here it is important to emphasize what traditional artists mean by 'object'. First one could say that when traditional artists talk about works of art as 'objects' the traditionalist does not mean the actual physical embodiment of the work. Works of art are entities which can vary from physical to abstract, from types to particulars and moreover, as Lamarque says they are ontologically different from the mere objects which embody them. Thus the conceptualist claim against the traditionalist's view that works of art are objects is misplaced because the conceptualist takes the term 'object' to mean a concrete, physical object. There are many art forms whose works of art are not concrete objects; for example ballet pieces, or jazz improvisations, or other musical performances, as works of art do not have an object in a straightforward sense.

One characteristic of conceptual art of the 1960s was the aim to avoid using physical objects as vehicles for the artists' ideas or concepts. For these artists their art was more like information – communicating meanings and the best medium were things like language based work or photographs. One of the main reasons for rejecting an object based work was the obsession of the market with the uniqueness and value of the art object. In a famous article from 1968 called 'The Dematerialization of Art', Lucy Lippard and John Chandler suggest that the dematerialisation of art 'may result in the object's becoming wholly obsolete'.[344] For Lippard the physical object in conceptual art was unimportant or irrelevant because it did not occupy a primary position in the experience of the work and also because like all physical

[342] In ' Philosophy and Conceptual Art' eds. Peter Goldie and Elisabeth Schellekens, Calderon Press, Oxford 2007, p.18.
[343] Ibid., p.18.
[344] Lucy Lippard and John Chandler, 'The Dematerialisation of Art', *Art International*, February 1968.

things it was perishable and it did not have an intrinsic value (a clear reaction against the revered perennial works of art from art museums and the art market). Lippard says:

> 'Conceptual art, for me, means work in which the idea is paramount and the material form is secondary, lightweight, ephemeral, cheap, unpretentious and/or "dematerialized"[345]

Here is a paradox about Lippard's characterization of the materials used by conceptualists: although she insists that the materials used are 'lightweight, cheap, unpretentious' which to some extent is true (such materials are ready-mades, cardboards, cheap fabrics, house paints or other disregarded materials), the overall effect of the materials that constitute conceptual works appears to be the opposite. On a closer analysis, the materials used by conceptualists although they appear to be cheap and lightweight, they are carefully calculated choices to shock or unbalance the viewer's aesthetic expectations. Many would suggest that such choices are pretentious artistic gestures. But, one also say that although the materials used by conceptualists may be 'unpretentious' – meaning simple, unsophisticated, cheap, or commonly disregarded materials, the final result – the conceptual work itself and its aim could still be very pretentious.

However, Lippard's 'dematerialization' is a metaphorical term for rejecting a material basis for a work of art in order to emphasize the importance of the creative process, the thinking involved in creating a work. According to the conceptual artist, in conceptual work the importance given to the creative process overshadows the attention given to the actual finished work. But the conceptualists' aim (to transmit ideas and concepts) needs a 'physical' basis in order to be transmitted to or 'perceived' by an audience. The physical basis of the conceptual work could be anything: ready-mades or linguistic expressions, sounds or gestures, serial imagery or symbols and any other means the artist sees fit to engage to achieve his goal. It can be said that this is the weakness of conceptual art and its strength at the same time. First a weakness because there is not an immediate perceptual 'hook' for the traditional audience in the appreciative engagement with a conceptual piece (in contrast with a painting, for example, where the immediate hook is represented by the aesthetic properties of the painting). This can be explained by saying that because the materials used by conceptualists are so ordinary, and in some cases anti-aesthetic, the usual gallery goer

[345] L. Lippard, *Six years: The dematerialization of the art object*, University of California, 1997, p.vii.

remains 'unhooked' if he does not actively seek a cognitive response. However, the conceptualist would say that if the viewer is perceptually 'unhooked' this is a good sign because the conceptual work should not strike the viewer with its appearance. The viewer's appropriate experience of a conceptual work is not dependent upon the perception of the work being immediately striking; on the contrary, it depends upon a non-aesthetic engagement with the work. Thus, for a conceptualist this would be a strength because the perceptual means used by the conceptualist have only the role of a vehicle for his ideas or concepts, without demanding from the viewer an aesthetic response. As mentioned before, conceptualists would say that the traditional viewer is almost conditioned to approach works of art aesthetically and according to them, this would be a limitation when one encounters conceptual works.

However, in response most traditionalists will point out the normative nature of works of art: an appropriate experience of a work of art demands an aesthetic response. Here is clear that conceptualists would have a fundamental disagreement with traditionalists because they would consider part of the nature of conceptual works not to be experienced aesthetically.

There are other radical conceptualists who would go even further by giving as examples a handful of successful 'dematerializations' of the physical basis of certain works, and argue that one can easily reject the idea that conceptual works of art are objects. For example, two conceptual works stand up as the epitome of such radicalism: one is John Cage *4'33,* from1952 and the other is Robert Barry's *Telepathic Piece,* from 1969. First, Cage's famous piano work is a three-movement composition created as a performance in which, according to Cage's instructions the performer or performers should produce no sounds for 4 minutes and 33 seconds. Cage would say that the silences of the three movements were the part of the musical notations and any other ambient sound which filled the Maverick Concert Hall in Woodstock, New York, was centring the attention from the performer to the audience, thus physically dematerializing the 'object' of the work. Secondly, Barry's work was 'shown' simultaneous at different galleries in USA and Europe and the artist told the galleries that: 'for the duration of the exhibition, the gallery will remain closed'.[346] Even though, those works are ingenious efforts to totally dematerialize the art object both works had a 'material' support. In the case of Cage's *4'33,* the framework of the performance (the stage, the performer and the piano, the opening and closing of the piano's lid to mark the movements, the artist's written instructions for different stages of the work, the duration of the work)

[346] Robert Barry, quoted in *Conceptual Art*, by Paul Wood, Tate Publishing, 2002, p.36.

represents the physical support through which the idea was transmitted (the idea was that silences are important structures in musical notation – this work is known as the 'silent' piece). In the case of Barry's *Telepathic Piece*, the framework of the presentation of the work (the empty gallery itself, Barry's announcement about the work printed on the invitations to the exhibition and the closed gates of the gallery) represents a material framework for the work. Now if one is wondering about what kind of properties these two works have *as* works of art then there are possible arguments in favour of the idea that each of these two works has a number of artistic (or more controversially, aesthetic) properties. I return to the possession of aesthetic properties towards the end of this chapter when I discuss different works of conceptual art.

These being said, the conceptual artist needs to concede the fact that there are at least two important things about conceptual works: one that there is an instrumental role for the material/physical basis of a work and the other that the conceptualists still needs to use physical means to communicate their works. Thus the conceptualist cannot dispense with the perceptual means in making his work or with the physical embodiment of the work. Even if the ultimate aim of the conceptual artist is to get rid of the physical basis of the conceptual piece (to dispense with the physical object) this is not something fully attainable. On the one hand, the conceptualist still uses perceptual means in order to transmit a concept (a completed conceptual work is still an 'object' or a kind of entity). On the other hand the conceptualist is mistaken when he is challenging the traditional concept of the 'work of art as object'. The conceptualist is mistaken, because the traditionalist has never used the term 'object' in a narrow way, as standing only for a physical thing. Thus, conceptual artists cannot avoid using physical means to transmit their ideas but this does not necessary means that their works are physical objects. When the conceptualist rejects the idea that a work of art is an object, he assumes wrongly that 'object' means something physical which is only experienced through the senses. Conceptual works are not physical objects but neither all other works of art: 'object' in art needs to be understood in a wider sense.

b) The second claim that traditional art makes is that the appreciative encounter of works of art is the result of a direct experience of the works. For example, Lamarque says about the informed experience of works of art:

> Only the person having the experience can give an authoritative characterization both of its phenomenology and its intentional content.[347]

This remark points out the importance of the viewer's firsthand experience in particular when one wants to describe and judge a work of art (the role of perception of the work is paramount both for affective and cognitive states). Lamarque is not a subjectivist about the aesthetic properties detected and revealed in works of art. But the fact that he is a property realist does not preclude him from arguing that the viewer's experience of a work of art can be authoritatively characterized only by the viewer.[348] Lamarque defends his view by suggesting that an informed viewer would have an appropriate, correct or justified experience – he argues that aesthetic experiences in general, also including the appreciative experiences of literature are normative experiences. Here is an interesting observation for the conceptualist: on the one hand, many contemporary conceptual artists believe that the experience of the conceptual work is very subjective (each viewer has the freedom to experience the conceptual work in his own way, there are no standards of correctness or appropriateness for the response to the work), but on the other hand, there is a transmission of an idea or a concept which the artist wishes the viewer to 'experience' (cognitive understanding) in the encounter with his work. Then, how does the conceptual artist challenge the claim of the traditionalist that the appreciation of works of art takes place through direct experiential encounters with the art object (this includes, of course, the encounter with the physical embodied work)?

The conceptualist argues that the appreciation of conceptual works is a cognitive appreciation, not an aesthetic or perceptual one. Cognitive appreciation starts with 'knowing what the viewer is looking at' and then the viewer focuses on the conceptual level of the work. This is similar to Lamarque's two stages in which the viewer is aware that he is encountering a work of art and then he experiences the work cognitively.[349] Maybe in the cognitive experience of conceptual art there is a subtle separation between knowing what one is looking at and thinking about the message of the work. Even the conceptual art lover finds himself from time to time wondering about the status of the object encountered in a museum, a gallery or an artistic set up. For example, knowing that an object encountered is a work of art is more difficult in the case of ready-mades or 'found art' and this can create a faint

[347] P. Lamarque, *W&O*, 2010, p. 137.
[348] Ibid., p. 137.
[349] To reiterate from earlier chapters, the stages are considered by Lamarque as being distinct for methodological clarity. In reality in art encounters their separation is not necessarily detectable.

separation between the 'knowing' and the 'getting' of the message of the work as a work of art. The 'knowing' about the work is the knowledge of what kind of objects we encountered; this can be the result of being told about the kind of object we encountered, or it can be the reading of a text about the object, or seeing the object placed in a certain context which leads us to believe it is a particular type of object, or simply by 'interpreting' the object encountered as a work of art because we recognise some feature of the work or of the context in which the work is placed. Thus knowing something about the work encountered could lead to 'getting' the idea or concept of the work and this could mean cognitive appreciation which in turn can generate a valuable experiential state. The conceptual artist argues that the valuable experiential state is not due to the work's perceptual features but is the result of detecting or accessing the work's conceptual level.

c) The previous point took us to the third claim of the traditionalists that the experiential encounter with the work of art is a non-instrumentally valuable experience. In short, Matravers suggests that the view of the traditionalist is that what we value in art are the experiences that works of art afford (the link here between the experience of a work and its value is made obvious). For the conceptualist there is one main issue related to this suggestion about the experience and the value of works of art: the way one characterizes the concept of *experience* in an art encounter. If by 'experience' the traditionalist always means a perceptual or an aesthetic experience then the conceptualist rejects that conceptual art affords this kind of experience. On the other hand, if by 'experience' the traditionalist also understands a cognitive experience [350] then the conceptualist supports a link between the value of the conceptual work and the way this is 'experienced'. Thus by 'experiencing' a conceptual work the conceptualist means the successful transmission of the work's ideas or concept.

This being said, although Matravers does not talk specifically about the aesthetic experience of works of art (he talks only about direct experiential encounter and non-instrumentally valuable experiences), he suggests that it is possible but very risky to try to investigate the link between the experience of conceptual art and a satisfaction of a traditional kind, like the aesthetic satisfaction. Matravers proposes two alternatives to evaluate the challenge conceptual art posits to traditional art: the first is trying to defend conceptual art by attempting a rescue of a traditional conception (I call this the 'aesthetic' alternative) and the

[350] For the conceptualist a cognitive experience will be devoid of phenomenological content and a successful conceptual work is, as LeWitt suggests, a conceptual work which is 'mentally interesting' but 'emotionally dry'. (LeWitt, 'Paragraphs on Conceptual Art', p. 849).

second one is not to try to defend conceptual art against the traditional conception of art, but to assess its place in the history of art (Matravers calls this alternative 'Institutionalism' which is a particular interpretation of The Institutional Theory of Art)[351]. In his paper Matravers considers the first alternative – an attempt to link the experience of conceptual art to an aesthetic satisfaction of the traditional kind – a nonstarter and takes up only the second alternative as a safer route into defending conceptual art. His main conclusion is that conceptual art could be defended from an institutionalist point of view and not from an aesthetic one. Although Matravers's defence of conceptual art from a socio-historical perspective can be warranted, the rejection of the aesthetic alternative is unsatisfactory for someone believing that all art encounters have some kind of aesthetic dimension, including encounters with conceptual works. Thus, I think the aesthetic alternative is an avenue worth exploring. I am going to bite the bullet and try to establish whether there is a link between conceptual art and the aesthetic or, if the link cannot be made, to attempt to establish the root of this failure. This is going to be a difficult task but I think one should attempt to discuss the aesthetic avenue.[352]

Therefore, in the following paragraphs I focus on introducing the aesthetic alternative. Here one issue needs addressing straightaway: establishing what kind of art form conceptual art is. Most people would say that conceptual art is part of the visual arts. Interestingly enough, in most art history books conceptual art is presented in conjunction or around the same time with minimal art, abstract sculpture or environmental art.

Conceptual art appears to be very different from other art forms, like painting, sculpture, etchings, architecture, dance, theatre, music, literature or poetry, and to some extent different from all other types of arts. Although all the mentioned art forms are different from conceptual art, one can draw a broad distinction between all of these art forms: some employ perceptual means (things that can be primarily perceived through the five senses) and others employ non-perceptual means (for example, for literature the meaning of the text is more important than the perceptual appearance of that text). Because of this emphasis on the way

[351] By 'Institutionalism' Matravers means that there are 'different stages of the history of the social practice of the production and appreciation of works of art and there are different sets of reasons why an object becomes a work of art' ('The Dematerialization of the Object', in *Philosophy and Conceptual Art* eds. Peter Goldie and Elisabeth Schellekens, Calderon Press, Oxford 2007, p.29),

[352] A confession is necessary here: I am one of those people who goes to a lot of contemporary art exhibitions and enjoys both traditional and more experimental or conceptual works of art. However, I do not feel that 'a terrible fraud' was perpetuated on me (Matravers suggested that failing to establish a link between conceptual art and satisfactions of a traditional kind would prove that the art-going public was grossly deceived). But to what extent would the public be deceived even if there was no such link? Because many art lovers and critics enjoy both types of art, I think one can attempt to explain this issue, if there is an 'aesthetic' dimension of conceptual art.

we perceive these art forms[353] some critics argue for a division between perceptual and non-perceptual arts. The perceptual arts are arguably centred on the importance of directly perceivable characteristics of the artwork (e.g. colours, shapes and textures are important for painting, movement and sound are important in dance, tones in music or images in film) while the non-perceptual arts are centred on the non-perceptual characteristics of the art work (the meaning of the words and symbols or the themes of a novel or a poem). In the case of the so-called non-perceptual arts (e.g. poetry, novels, short stories, etc) the perceptual characteristics are mainly the vehicles for the meaning of the words or the themes of the work.[354] Those art forms have different 'identity conditions' for their experience. For example, painting and dance need to 'be seen', musical works need to be 'listened to', while literature or poetry need to 'be thought of' or 'reflected upon'.[355] I am not saying that paintings or musical works are not to be 'reflected upon' but the demand on the viewer in experiencing the visual arts or the performing arts is *first* on the perceptual aspects of the works, the experience of the visual arts and the performing arts has an immediate impact on the senses (by 'immediate' I mean here a direct, obvious and resonant sense reaction). Poetry or literature can also be 'listened to' (and in the case of poetry this is more acute) but what is essential to them is the meaning of the words, the themes and ideas transmitted and only from this point of view can they be considered non-perceptual arts. Lamarque argues that concrete poetry is an exception to this because the perceptual appearance of concrete poetry is essential to its identity.[356] In concrete poetry the visual elements are more important than meanings or ideas thus the poem is more about mark making or visual patterns, which pushes concrete poetry towards visual works. Moreover, I am not saying that the perceptual aspects (the style of writing, rhythm, or form in general) are not important in literature or poetry, but the emphasis in defining and experiencing literary works is in their semantic content.

Here one needs to recall what Lamarque says about the appreciative experience of reading literature: considering the consonance of means to ends. In other words, the consonance is revealed by *harmonious reflection* between the aesthetic means (formal and sensuous features

[353] This looks almost like an identity condition. For example, what is for something to be a painting? One can argue that a painting needs to involve seeing of some sort in order to be a painting and this is one of the most basic things that makes painting the art form it is.

[354] Of course, we initially *perceive* the text or the story in one form or another (by reading it, listen to it, or feeling it in the case of a Braille reader) but the essential of a literary text consist in the meaning of the words, in what we experience (both phenomenologically and cognitively) when we discover the themes and ideas of the text or the story and the way these are transmitted.

[355] P.Lamarque would probably add here that these works also need these identity conditions for being sustained in existence.

[356] P. Lamarque, *W&O*, 2010, p. 223.

of the text) and the thematic ends of the work – this is a cognitive process which would have its own distinct phenomenology. Thus talking about literature and poetry as non-perceptual arts makes sense to a large extent because the main aim of a literary text is to reveal ideas and themes. One can say that the best way of doing this is through a good marriage between form and content which could be a rewarding experience for the reader. Lamarque describes this valuable experience as having two dimensions: 'imaginativeness and creativity [which is] evident in the design of the work and the richness of its content at both subject and thematic level'.[357]

To return to the question about conceptual art, one can give as an example a group of artists like the Dadaists who started experimenting with new literary forms at the end of the 1910s. When Hugo Ball invented the sound-poems, in which the relation between sound and meaning disappeared, or when the Romanian Dadaist, Tristan Tzara performed 'random poems',[358] the literary form was transformed into something else than 'literature' as traditionally understood. This type of poems were experimental works and Tzara, as a part of the avant-garde, was interested in the process of creation as an instinctual, spontaneous progression, rather than a well crafted poetic structure which has a deliberate deep meaning. I think the Dadaists' experiments pushed those poetic exercises towards conceptual art because the basic identity conditions of the poetic form changed. The meaning of the words and of the whole poem became almost irrelevant, shifting the burden from meaning (or the theme) to the form of the poem (by form here I mean the performance of the poem or how the poem sounds or appears when presented to an audience). But do these types of poems have a new status? Are they now 'perceptual objects' as opposed to more traditional poems? Firstly, most people would say that poetry, as mentioned before, has an important perceptual dimension and in some ways poetry is also close to music, thus being close to perceptual arts. But many could argue that the Dadaists' experiments with words or texts are not poetry as traditionally understood from the start because conceptual artists insist that their art is non-perceptual and moreover non-aesthetic. The Dadaists would say that their experiments (in particular the latter ones) are not about what the poems mean or in the end not even how they sound or

[357] P. Lamarque, *Philosophy of Literature*, 2009, p. 259.

[358] Tzara's explanation of a random poem: 'In order to make a Dadaist poem, take a newspaper. Take a pair of scissors. Choose an article of length of the intended poem. Cut the article out. Then cut each of the words that comprise the article and put them in a bag. Give the bag a light shake. Then take out one snippet after another, just as they come. Write everything down conscientiously. The poem will be similar to you'. (Dietmar Elger quoting Tzara in Dadaism 2004, p.7). The idea behind such experiments is not encapsulated in the written down final products, the poems, but in the subversive way of creating such poems and making this creation an accessible performance by inviting the audience to participate in the creation of the poems.

appear, but they are radical gestures to show that one can reject any rules, structure and preconceived artistic expectations to challenge all ideas about art, life and society.[359] The Dadaists' use of absurd, offensive and random methods of creation and presentation of their works shocked the larger art audience, but intellectually provoked and inspired more adventurous artists and Dadaism, even though an eccentric movement, remains one of the most daring and interesting art movements of the 20th Century.

Then to what extent is conceptual art in debt to Dadaism? The answer is to a large extent, because as Paul Wood says:

> Many of the recurrent themes of the early avant-gardes, such as the identity of the work of art, the relationship of art and language, the relationship of art to a world of commodity production set against an ideology of independence and spiritual value, and what it was that the artist *did*, can all be seen to prefigure later Conceptual art.[360]

This being said, it has to be reiterated that the conceptualist artist's main intention is to resist the temptation to centre his art form on the appearances of the material base of his work. As mentioned before, some conceptual artists will go even further, wanting to reject any material form ('the mere real thing') for their works. This intention is supposed to insulate conceptual art works against an aesthetic perspective; the insulation is necessary according to some radical conceptualists because of the interference that an aesthetic perception of a work would have when experiencing a conceptual work. The fear of the aesthetic that conceptual artists have is about a preconception about the viewers. The conceptualist thinks that the viewer can fail to grasp the concept or the idea of a work if the appearances/perceptual qualities of the material support of the work get in the way when experiencing the work. This rejection of the aesthetic is grounded in the belief that the primary function of conceptual art is to transmit ideas and concepts and this cannot successfully happen if the work is imbued with sensorial appearances; the conceptual work of art needs to be experienced cognitively.

A lot of art lovers will see the conceptualist's move against the perceptual and the aesthetic as an attack on what is most valuable in art – the aesthetic experience. And moreover, if the experience of conceptual art is not perceptual or aesthetic, does this make conceptual art a non-perceptual art? The conceptualist would say that one possible answer is the idea that the experience of a conceptual work should aim at an artistic experience rather

[359] The Dadaists were also very interested in big social and political issues.
[360] Paul Wood, *Conceptual Art*, Tate Publishing, 2002, p. 14.

than an aesthetic experience. 'Artistic' here refers to the artistic practice that the work belongs to and the non-aesthetic connotations it has (social, historical, political or cultural). In other words, the conceptualist argues that an artist should try to avoid using the seductive 'clothing' of the aesthetic[361] when presenting a conceptual work to the public. For the conceptualist one way of talking about an artistic experience of a conceptual work as distinct from an aesthetic experience of the work, is to show that such an experience mainly involves cognitive appreciation of an object in an artistic context without the emphasis on the object's appearance. Thus according to the hard conceptualist, conceptual works should be considered non-perceptual works.

To exemplify the conceptualist's position, one should look at a well known work like Joseph Kosuth's *One and Three Chairs* from 1965 (Fig. 23), and assess the proposal that this work should be appropriately experienced only in a cognitive way, but not in an aesthetic way. Such a proposal insists that it is irrelevant how the work looks like, and what should be essential in the encounter with a conceptual work is the concept that the work transmits.

Fig. 23 *One and Three Chairs* (1965) by Joseph Kosuth

[361] In this case the aesthetic is understood in a narrow sense, as traditionally linked to appearances and the perceptual.

First, a simple description of the work is important here. Secondly, one should attempt to find out what is the concept that this particular work transmits. Thirdly, one should establish if the appearance of the work (or its aesthetics) is irrelevant to what the conceptualist would call the appropriate experience of the work. In the next paragraphs I discuss these in order.

First, *One and Three Chairs* consists of three objects/elements: a wooden folding chair, a mounted colour photograph of that chair and an enlargement of the dictionary definition of a chair. The description of the work is simple because the work contains three distinct elements displayed in a simplistic, didactic way. There are two interesting aspects related to the presentation and preservation of this conceptual work: one is Kosuth's instructions about the presentation of the work and the other is the initial confusion about how to store this work when not exhibited. Kosuth's instructions about the work were very straightforward. The first thing that the curator should do is to choose a wooden chair. Then, he should photograph this chair in situ (in the space the work is going to be exhibited) and the image of the chair should be enlarged to a real size, and it should be hung on the left of the chair. Finally, an enlarged dictionary definition of the chair should be hung on the right of the chair aligned to the top of the enlarged photograph. Those instructions are an essential part of the work, how the work is supposed to be 'created'; I say 'created' because a small number of critics argue that the conceptual work entitled *One and Three Chairs* is the list of Kosuth's written instructions produced in 1965. And all the subsequent 'works' produced in different museums and art galleries are only instantiations of the work (two such instantiations of the work are in MoMA in New York and in Pompidou Centre in Paris).[362] However for the sake of clarity, I am referring to *One and Three Chairs* as the work presented in 1965 in an exhibition at MoMA. One interesting thing about Kosuth's instructions is his precise description of how the work should be presented, the spatial relations of the elements and their alignment against each other. This suggests a clear intention about what the work should look like, thus a particular care for its appearance. One can say that, even a well known conceptual work like Kosuth's *One and Three Chairs,* should be fully appreciated only when it is presented to the viewers as a result of a faithful process of creation and presentation based on the artist's instructions. Thus it appears that in the case of *One and Three Chairs* the appearance of the work, its aesthetics, is essential to the work's identity.

[362] The discussion about types and particulars in conceptual art is very topical, but this is outside the scope of this thesis. There is though one thing that one could say here: although ontologically speaking if the work, *One and Three Chairs,* is considered to be Kosuth's written instructions then this would make the work more like an abstract entity not an installation in a museum. However, then the viewer could argue that even without knowing the artist's instructions he could appropriately experience the work through the physical installation which is comprised of the three elements and is presented to him in an art gallery.

The other interesting aspect of *One and Three Chairs* is linked to an urban legend of how the work was dealt with after being exhibited in 1965. It is said that the curators of MoMA did not know how to store the work as a whole. It was difficult to decide what kind of work of art it was. Thus the work was divided for storage according to its three main elements: the chair went to the design department, the photograph to the photography archive and the dictionary definition to the library. This story betrays a difficulty of art institutions at that time to classify such works because of their unusual nature. The avant-garde artists' response to such institutional difficulties of classification and artistic evaluation was not to reject conceptual art but to embrace it and to provoke radical artistic gestures which tried to redefine the concept of art and the aesthetic. [363]

It was not only the avant-garde artists who stirred up the artworld through new artistic endeavours, but also the art critics and the aestheticians had an interesting response to the theoretical challenges brought about by the existence of conceptual art works: the Institutional Theory of Art. This theory argues that what is important when evaluating art is the position and the place a work of art occupies within an established practice, the artworld. [364] For the Institutional Theory the importance of context (historical, physical, social) and of the knowledge of a particular tradition we employ when encountering art are essential elements of art appreciation. It seems that the Institutional Theory of Art emphasises the work of art and its creation as part of an established practice. Even though conceptualists insist that there is no aesthetic appreciation involved in the appropriate experience of conceptual art, the proponents of the Institutional Theory would claim that we have 'art reasons' to appreciate those works. By 'art reasons' they mean everything from the intention of the artist and the placement of the works in an art institution to the recognition of these works a part of an art practice and a historical tradition. With this line of reasoning it is easier to maintain that conceptual art is a non-perceptual art because there are no aesthetic demands on the viewer when experiencing a conceptual work. Therefore, according to institutionalists a work like *One and Three Chairs* created problems of storage because, unlike a traditional work, it did not possess manifest perceptual properties as an aesthetic object would.

Secondly, although there are many interpretations of *One and Three Chairs*, I propose a simple deconstruction of the work: the concept that the work transmits is 'chairness' and ways of thinking of such a concept, by identifying a real object in the surrounding world, or

[363] I would like to mention only a handful of such works: Gustav Metzger's auto-destructive art, John Latham's spray-gun paintings, Yves Klein's anthropometry performances, Germano Celant's *Arte Povera*, Joseph Beyus' social sculpture, or Rebecca Horn's body sculptures.
[364] The main supporters of the Institutional Theory of Art are thinkers like Arthur Danto and George Dickie.

by having a representation of the object, or by having a verbal description of the object?[365] Language plays an essential part in communicating meaning and Kosuth shows the relation between ideas/concepts and the images and words that help us to convey those ideas or concepts. The simplicity of this work can be disconcerting and many critics of conceptual art would say that the same meaning was already transmitted and discussed in many previous philosophical or literary works. The conceptualist could agree with this, and even say that philosophical and literary works are the most common and effective way of presenting such discussions. However, the artist wants to use a different avenue for expressing or showing an intellectual preoccupation. The artist (rightly or wrongly) thinks that a conceptual work is a more a immediate and 'punchy' way of showing people an idea. A conceptualist would like what Edward Hopper said: 'If you could say it in words, there would be no reason to paint.' [366] Of course, the conceptualist would have a problem here with thinking of a replacement for the verb 'to paint'; maybe the most appropriate replacement would be 'to make art'. But this will be too inclusive and moreover it also will point to visual arts as opposed to an art using words. One can compromise and say that is understandable what the conceptualist means and accept that the conceptualist does not want to use philosophical or literary works (although this is not entirely true if one thinks of the English conceptualist group *Art and Language,* 1968, and their magazine *Art Language*) but wants to use other visual means to create his works and transmit ideas.

Thirdly, one needs to establish if the appearance of *One and Three Chairs* is in any way relevant to the work's appreciation. As mentioned above, Kosuth's instructions betray consideration for the aesthetics of his work. Thus, what *One and Three Chairs* looks like is an important part of the work's identity and some would go even further and suggest that it is an important feature for the appreciation of the work. If a deeper analysis establishes that this work has essential aesthetic properties (for example, the balanced spatial relation between the three elements) then this conceptual work is an aesthetic piece and part of its appreciation as a work of art should be an aesthetic evaluation.

In conclusion first, the conceptualist cannot get rid of the material basis of conceptual works (thus there is still room for a perceptual dimension of conceptual works), and secondly,

[365] One can also think of Platonic forms and use Kosuth's example to show how Plato could have explained the form of 'chair', what he called the real chair. One can say that the three elements of Kosuth's installation are only pale copies, out here in our visible world, of the form of chair.

[366] Edward Hopper. AZQuotes.com, Wind and Fly LTD, 2016. http://www.azquotes.com/quote/136194, accessed October 29, 2016.

one could argue that the experience of a conceptual work like the experience of all other works of art, can be rewarding both cognitively and aesthetically. Thus any conceptual work could also have an aesthetic dimension and this would vary a lot in different works. One way of going about and developing the suggestion that conceptual art has an aesthetic dimension is the application to conceptual art discussions of two of Lamarque's ideas: one is his suggestion about the aesthetic appreciation of literature – the consonance of means to ends, and the other is his theory about essential aesthetic properties. Thus in the rest of this chapter I discuss my own view about conceptual art and the application of Lamarquean ideas to conceptual works. This is an attempt to show that the aesthetic alternative is a viable path in the investigation of conceptual art.

Section 3: My conception of conceptual art

As a preamble to my basic characterization of conceptual art I propose an imaginary story:
Try to imagine you meet a masked entity in a dense fog which tells you: 'Don't look at me! Think of the real me, the one behind the mask!' You would like to ignore the voice and concentrate on its request, but you cannot... The voice is alluring although somehow insubstantial. You try to guess what could be behind the mask. But you cannot escape the impulse of looking. What crosses your mind is the nagging question about what kind of mask this is. You think that you could work it out if you look more carefully at it, if you pay attention. What kind of mask is it, a Venetian mask, a classical Greek one or a balaclava? What is it made of? Is it a well known material, a holographic projection or only a figment of your imagination? You know that you could be in a theatre and this can be an act or a game. What is this entity: a burlesque figure, a robber, a Zorro, a leper, a fancy prince, a well trained actor or an illusion? The mask is telling you: 'THINK! THINK but don't look, looking is irrelevant!' You gradually remember that when you entered this space it had some sort of artistic feel about it. Who or what it is? Again you cannot stop looking – you feel like you have been cursed. You look intensively for clues, symbols, signs....

I intend this short imaginative narrative as a metaphor for illustrating what I think are the essential demands of conceptual art on the viewer: to focus on something behind the visible or the immediate perceptual (to focus on the concept or idea), to recognise that the senses can detract from what the work about is (the interest should lie with something else than appearances), to ignore the specificity of medium (to accept any physical basis for the work)

to resist the temptations of making historical deductions (to reject an art historical hierarchy in interpretation of the work), to reflect on the possible implications of the work (artistic, social or political) and to appreciate the work for its cognitive engagement. All these 'demands' were already identified in one form or another in Wood's, Le Witt's and Goldie's and Schellekens' characterisation of conceptual art but I think there are two important features of conceptual art which, in general, are not identified as such: one is what I call the *flexibility of embodiment* and the other is the inescapability of a *certain aesthetic* of conceptual works. I discuss these two features when I analyse the three most important aspects of existing[367] conceptual works of art: the raison d'être of conceptual works is to transmit ideas (3.1), the necessity of selecting an appropriate object/design for the idea (3.2) and the effort to avoid sensorial pleasure and beauty (3.3).

3.1 'Suddenly the idea was king'[368]

First conceptual art is centred on the overwhelming need for communication of ideas or a concept. I think the most constructive approach is to start with LeWitt's characterization that conceptual art is another art form whose material is concepts or ideas. The question arising from Le Witt is 'What does he mean when he says that the ideas are the conceptual artist's materials?' Conceptual artists give pre-eminence to their ideas in their creative process, and because this process requires deliberations, intellectual challenge and effort, they value the ideas more than the actual physical object which supports these ideas and more than a traditional artistic skill. In other words, what the conceptualist manipulates are ideas while the conventional artist's materials (paints, sculpting materials, and other materials used in visual arts) or the more unconventional materials (the cheap, everyday life materials) are only props which support the chosen ideas.

An interesting conceptual work of art is that of the Brazilian, Cildo Meireles' entitled Insertions *into Ideological Circuits: Coca-Cola project*, 1970 (Fig. 24).[369]

[367] I talk about 'existing' conceptual works because I think there is a difference between the long-established aim of conceptual art – to dematerialize the art object and actual existing works of conceptual art which have a physical embodiment (by material embodiment I mean every possible 'material').
[368] Paul Wood's expression form 'Conceptual Art' Tate Publishing, 2002, p. 33
[369] I came across this work in a beautiful retrospective of Meireles' work at Tate Modern in 2008.

Fig. 24 *Insertions into Ideological Circuits: Coca-Cola project* (1970) by Cildo Meireles

The ideas behind this work were the artist's anger with his country's dictatorship and with a society dominated by American consumerism. Although many other Brazilians were upset or disappointed with the political regime of that time, Meireles thought about disseminating his ideas against the dictatorship through an unusual visual artistic form. Of course people can write protest poetry, write pamphlets or novels with anti-dictatorial themes or paint murals with anti-establishment messages, but the Brazilian artist chooses a newer form of expressing his protest through inflammatory messages written on Coca-cola bottles. His aim was to think of a different way of expressing his anger and disappointment – he used a symbol of American society, the Coca Cola bottle. The Coca Cola bottle did not only represent a consumerist society with an endless production of such an ubiquitous product, but it also represented a symbol of American dominance in Brazil. The Brazilian dictatorship (1964-1985) was supported by the USA and Meireles considered that in relation to Brazil, American society did not pay attention to the degradation of the human spirit and did care only about profit and a physical instant satisfaction (this is represented by the instant satisfaction of drinking of Coca Cola). Meireles wanted to disseminate his ideas to a large

group of people, and thought of doing this by subverting symbols of American society. The artist's idea was to transmit critical political statements without the interference of censorship because the freedom of speech was under total control of the Brazilian government. Meireles also wanted to somehow involve his audience, made up of his compatriots, in participating in this radical form of resistance. Every time when a viewer used one of the modified Coca Cola bottles, probably read the artist's political statements or instructions and this could have had an unexpected reaction for the Coca Cola consumers. The reaction could have varied from anger, militant tendencies, a newer way of protesting, humorous reactions or fear and any of those would have meant an increase awareness of the artist's intentions to move something in his compatriots.

If for a painter the colours, shapes, textures, lines and his ideas are the materials he uses in order to create a painting then a conceptual artist would like to say that only the concepts or ideas are his materials to create the conceptual work. Joseph Koshut says:

> Conceptual art, simply put, had as its basic tenet an understanding that artists work with meaning not with shapes, colours or materials.'[370]

The canvas, brushes, actual paints or pencils are tools which are used by the painter to create or manipulate the colours or shapes and they are the basic physical means which give us a perceptual access to the work, to its aesthetic qualities and to its meaning. Does the conceptual artist use his ideas and concepts in the same way the painter uses his materials? On the one hand, it can be argued that both types of artists want to create a work which represents or encompasses or encapsulates their ideas. On the other hand, the painter or the sculptor does not necessarily need to have a very well defined idea or pre-conceived concept before or during the process of painting. For example, abstract expressionist paintings are very gestural and could be seen as an expression of a mood or emotion; the abstract expressionists are mainly interested in the process and the materials used rather than the communication of an idea. Of course, the other way of interpreting abstract expressionist paintings is that all such paintings have very much to do with an idea: the artist's interest in the physicality of the medium, his attention to capturing the richness of the paint itself. The main difference is that for the conceptual artist the pre-conceived idea is indispensable. This

[370] Joseph Kosuth, Intention, *The Art Bulletin*, Volume: 78. Issue: 3, 1996, p.407, http://www.gallery119.com/images/Intention_S_by_Joseph_Kosuth.pdf.

dependency on ideas is what makes conceptual art the type of art it is.

But one could say that all other artistic forms communicate ideas. One can give particular examples where this is obvious: in the visual arts – religious or historical paintings, in the performing arts – theatre or ballet and in literary works – novels or short stories or poems.

What are these ideas that conceptual artists are interested in and how are they different from the ideas discussed by philosophy or history or economics or any other humanistic discipline or traditional art for that matter? Although in the 1960s and 1970s the ideas promoted by conceptual artists were mostly about the definition of artworks, the role of the artist, consumerism and the politicisation of the art world in contemporary art the conceptualists seem to tackle a variety of ideas. There are two main differences form the promotion of ideas by other disciplines and arts: one is that the conceptual artist tries to transmit ideas through different means from the ones used by traditional arts (using unusual and atypical means and skills) and the other is that the ideas of the conceptualists seem to be simpler and more direct than the other disciplines.

The insistence on using other means then the one used by the traditional arts attracted both a lot of criticism and admiration for the innovative mind of the conceptual artist. For example one criticism of conceptual art sounds like this: 'If you want to transmit an idea about something like "the human condition" why not choose the most apt means to do that? See how a novel, a poem, a play or a painting can transmit ideas about the human condition in comparison with a conceptual work.' I think the criticism is justified if we agree that it refers to the richness, complexity and multifaceted aspects of how these art forms can present such an idea. The proponent of conceptual art could agree with this but insists that the conceptual artist wants to transmit something about the human condition but in a different way; not through beautiful or profound prose, not through expressive imagery or complex play plot, not through powerful imagery but through a simple idea encapsulated in immediate and/or minimal artistic means. Here is what Le Witt says about conceptual works aspiration to present a simple, straightforward idea or concept:

> The idea becomes a machine that makes art. This kind of art is not theoretical or illustrative of theories; it is intuitive, it is involved with all mental processes and it is purposeless. […] The ideas need not to be complex. Most ideas that are successful are ludicrously simple.[371]

[371] Sol LeWitt, 'Paragraphs on Conceptual Art', p.849.

One can think of the last century and name a number of conceptual works that are indeed representative of Le Witt's predicament that works with 'ludicrously simple' ideas are 'mentally interesting to the spectator' even though they are 'emotionally dry'.[372]

For example: *Erased de Kooning Drawing*, 1953 (Fig. 25) by Robert Rauschenberg can be seen as a symbol of power of the artist to go beyond the limits imposed by a particular skill or medium.

Fig. 25 *Erased de Kooning Drawing* (1953)
by Robert Rauschenberg

Rauschenberg tried to react to what he would probably like to call an obsession with the uniqueness of the work of art and with the physical traces left by an artist at a certain time, in certain conditions. This reaction went full circle when he attained one of de Kooning's drawings and he wiped out the original drawing, using similar gestures employed by de Kooning in the creation of his drawing – Rauschenberg ended up with an almost blank paper pointing to an earlier state of de Kooning's work. The conceptualist would suggest here that Rauschenberg wanted to show that an artist's creativity should not be dependent upon a

[372] Sol LeWitt, 'Paragraphs on Conceptual Art', p.849.

medium (which has its own limitations) or should not consist in a reverence for the art object, but it should be about courage and rejection of the conventional. These being said, one cannot escape the nagging question: what if Rauschenberg's bold gesture destroyed the possibility of a wonderful aesthetic experience which could have been the result of the encounter with de Kooning's original drawing? The conceptual artist would argue that this type of courageous gesture teaches us more about the role of the artist and raises more questions about art than the potential aesthetic experience of the original drawing. I think the reverence of the artworld with the uniqueness of the art object became more acute in late 19th century and beginning of 20th century, because of the increase in mechanical reproductions of works of art and because the commodification of every existing thing. However, an informed perceiver could argue that Rauschenberg's gesture, although intellectually subversive is to some extent regrettable because the necessity of destruction of another work.

Since Duchamp's and Rauschenberg's innovative takes on the art object there were many other artists pushing the boundaries of creativity in similar ways. More recently the contemporary art scene has seen similar artistic gestures from Michael Landy (*Break Down*, 2001) and Chapman Brothers (*Insult to Injury*, 2003). For example, Landy's *Break Down* was a performance work in London, in February 2001, where the artist destroyed all of his possessions in an empty C&A shop on Oxford Street. His inventory of 7,227 items acquired over 37 years contained different categories of objects and one of these categories was 'works of art' (some of the works belonged to the artist and others were his own works). Two of the works that Landy possessed were by Tracey Emin and Damien Hirst and they were destroyed with all other works and possessions. One can argue that this is an even more radical gesture than Rauschenberg's erasure of de Kooning's drawing. Landy's *Break Down* was a work which transmitted a simple idea: one needs to free himself from the 'tyranny of ownership'[373]. The destruction of Landy's personal belongings (works of art, letters, photographs, his father's sheepskin coat and other mementos) was a complicated process (the famous art organisation *Artangel* was involved in carrying out the whole process) which showed a certain kind of courage. Regardless to what one thinks about the artistic value of such a radical gesture, Landy showed courage in 'freeing' himself from the dominance of his material possessions (this interpretation does not look at the motivation of the artist in the

[373] This characterisationon was used by James Lingwood in the BBC article 'The man who destroyed all his belongings' by Alastair Sooke in 2016, http://www.bbc.co.uk/culture/story/20160713-michael-landy-the-man-who-destroyed-all-his-belongings.

creation/performance of this work[374]).

The other work I mentioned is Jake and Dinos Chapman's series *Insult to Injury*, 2003, (Fig. 26). This work contains 83 mint prints of *The Disaster of War* by Goya bought by the two brothers and defaced with heads of clowns, gas masks, bug eyes, swastikas, etc.

Fig. 26 *Insult to Injury* (2003) by Jake and Dinos Chapman

There are a number of possible interpretations of this particular of Chapman Brothers' work: artistic vandalism, another way of shocking the artworld, aggressive creativity, a tendency for obscenity, a jerk reaction to the horror of Goya's images, a nervous laughter in front of an old master, etc. However, I would like to suggest that Chapman Brothers defacing of Goya's work was a kind of artistic parricide. The two artists have been obsessed with Goya's work since art school and they created different works by adapting or recreating scenes for the old master. Their continuous preoccupation with Goya's *The Disaster of War* boiled up in 2004 when the younger apprentices made a radical gesture to escape their

[374] It is possible to think of a number of Landy's motivations: genuine concern for the increasing consumerism in our lives, or on the contrary, an adolescent cry out for attention or a way of shocking art audiences by creating controversial works and becoming a 'celebrity'.

influence of Goya. When the Chapmans created *Insult to Injury* they were accused by some of vandalism and in response to this criticism the artists justify their gestural defacing by mentioning a precedent in Rauschenberg's *Erased de Kooning Drawing*. After so many years of reverence for the master the brothers started to revolt and to try to escape their obsession with Goya and one can argue that their exhibition at Modern Art Museum in Oxford entitled *Rape of Creativity* in 2003 was a display of the killing of their artistic father, Goya. This became crystallized in the Chapmans' show at the White Cube in 2005, entitled *Like a Dog Returns to its Vomit* (Fig. 27).

Fig. 27 *Like a Dog Returns to its Vomit* by Jake and Dinos Chapman

In this exhibition the artists made the patricide evident with the title of the exhibition; the works presented in the exhibition contained older defaced etchings arranged on a wall in the shape of a dog defecating and vomiting. I think the Chapmans interventions of reworking and defacing Goya's *Disaster of War* hide a simple metaphorical idea: the desire to kill a father who dominated someone's life for too long. This is just a possible interpretation[375] and one would need a more in depth discussion about the artists' intentions, the place of the series in contemporary art (some would not consider the series a conceptual work), the artists'

[375] This interpretation could be developed even further from a psychoanalytical point of view.

comments and interviews and the reaction of the critics, the media and the art lovers. I do believe though that the work is part of a contemporary artistic development and although shocking it created an intellectual debate about the role of artists, the limits of creativity and the artists' moral duty.

The spark which started conceptual art was the proclamation of the idea as the king and this is still the driving force of most conceptualist artists. As a corollary of the argument that conceptual art is about transmitting ideas and concepts, one can discuss another interesting characterization of conceptual art as a meta-language. One way of describing conceptual art as meta-language is to think of reflexive communication – conceptual art talks about itself without becoming art criticism in the academic sense of the term or art history or aesthetics. For example, Donald Brook's definition of conceptual art as a second-order or meta-activity is:

> … characterized by its disposition to comment on or refer to the concept of art as much as, for example, meta-psychology comments or at least refers to first-order or substantive psychology.[376]

It this respect one could make a suggestion that conceptual art could be compared to a philosophical enquiry but this comparison is too weak to hold. However, the conceptualist would say that by meta-language he means another way of talking about art. Of course, when one says 'talking' one is not referring to actual talking but to a form of communication. And to that extent conceptual art like the other art forms is a form of communication. But painting in general does not 'speak' about painting[377], thus painting is not a not a meta-language. But, the conceptualist believes that conceptual art 'speaks' about concepts and itself. Thus it is a self-referential language.

Although the suggestion that conceptual art is a meta-language has a strong appeal I do not think that majority of conceptual art pieces are self-referential. For example, a good part of conceptual art is politically charged and this particular type of conceptual art is clearly not self-referential. There are many conceptual artists involved in politicised conceptual activities[378], but I would like to mention again on Meireles' *Insertions into Ideological Circuits: Coca-Cola project*', a work which is not self-referential. The artist inserting protest

[376] 'Towards a Definition of Conceptual Art' in *Leonardo*, 1972, pp. 49-50.
[377] Some could say that painting is often very self conscious. For example, it uses as reference points its own history by creating homage to other works or re-working classical themes and composition.
[378] Artists like: Janis Kounelis, Daniel Buren and Oliver Mosset, Mario Metz, , Illya Kabakov, Victor Burgin, Hans Haacke or Jenny Holzer.

messages with strong political content on Coca-Cola bottles which he spread into the commercial circuit is not a commentary about art or the creative process, but it is about the artist's needs to communicate his views on the dictatorship in an unusual and thus powerful way.

3.2 'It is necessary to arrive at selecting an object'[379]

The second important aspect of conceptual art is that the conceptual artist aims to dematerialize the art object. However even if the conceptual artist wants to escape the strong grip of the art object and its appearances, he still needs to select an 'object' as a material basis for the transmission of his ideas. For example Duchamp says that 'It is necessary to arrive at selecting an object'[380], and in the same manner, Mel Bochner says that: 'outside the spoken word, no thought can exist without a sustaining support'[381]. Now the interesting question here is if the conceptualist thinks that only one object or one physical base can transmit the artist's ideas or a variety of objects or any object will do it. Le Witt argues that the work needs certain physical parameters in order to 'give the viewer whatever information he needs to understand the work and place it in such a way that will facilitate this understanding'[382]. The emphasis in Le Witt statement should be on 'certain' physical parameters, because I think not any object will do it for the conceptualist. First there is an advantage in conceptual art when it comes to the means to transmit an idea: there is no specificity of medium in conceptual art as an art form. Secondly there are appropriate objects to be used and ways of executing an idea to create a good conceptual art.

i) First this means that there is elasticity in the ability of conceptual art to use different physical forms (embodiments). Returning to the imaginative story from the beginning of this section, I argue that if conceptual art is like the 'masked entity' one of its abilities is to change its mask freely. Sol Le Witt says: 'It has to look like something if it has physical form'.[383] LeWitt recognises that each conceptual work can have different physical forms and like Wood, Goldie and Schellekens he emphasises that the medium in which the work is produced is not important. Then the artistic force of conceptual art rests with this elasticity

[379] Marcel Duchamp quoted in *Art in the 20th Century*, 1999, p. 179
[380] Ibid., p. 179
[381] Mel Bocher quoted in 'Conceptual Art' by Tony Godfrey, Phaidon, 1998, p. 164
[382] 'Paragraphs on Conceptual Art', *Artforum*, New York, vol. 5, no. 10, Summer 1967, article republished in *Art in Theory* ed. by Charles Harrison & Paul Wood, Blackwell Publishers, 2003, p. 848
[383] LeWitt, 'Paragraphs on Conceptual art' p. 846

regarding its form; the conceptual piece can have any form, it can be sculpture-like, painting-like, installation-like, text-like, film-like, social event-like etc. But it will not be a sculpture, painting, installation, text, film or a social event in an absolute way. This *flexibility of embodiment* of conceptual art is an amazing characteristic (see the comparison I made in my imaginative narrative with a well trained actor). Conceptual art can play different roles without becoming one of its portrayed characters. It can masquerade as sculpture but is not sculpture, because for example, sculpture is to be looked at and touched. Sculpture is a very sensorial art form (it is a perceptual art form). But when conceptual art pretends to be sculpture it is not because it wants to be looked at or touched, conceptual art wants to be 'thought of' and it demands that its physical basis (a sculpture-like object) should be only a conduit for transmitting a concept or an idea.

The idea can be a question, a criticism, an allusion, a commentary, an indication of some sort of concept, a protest or a provocation. The strength of conceptual art, I suggest, lies in this extraordinary *flexibility of embodiment*. The idea can take different forms: a literary or philosophical text, concrete poetry, a list of instructions, a painting, a collage, a sculpture, kinetic art, a performance, land art, a photograph, a video, an installation, etc. In all other art forms the medium seems to be a fixed affair (for example: paint for painting, text for literature, notes for music, human body movements for dance, text and music for opera or building materials for architecture.) [384] Conceptual art uses different media without a preference for one or the other. For the conceptualist this flexibility allows the artist to have different means of asking questions without the governance of the vehicular medium (without the imposition of the materials which embody the work).

I intend to illustrate what I call the *flexibility of embodiment* by using again the example of *Fountain*, 1917 (Fig. 28) by Marcel Duchamp. In 1917 Duchamp sent anonymously a very unorthodox 'sculpture' to a competition in New York signed 'R. Mutt': a urinal.

[384] There are of course exceptions and more hybrid works where the medium specificity is not totally fixed.

Fig. 28 *Fountain* (1917) by Marcel Duchamp

Although the competition had an open entry and Duchamp was one of the jury of that competition, he could not secure the urinal's entry. He later wrote an open letter to *The Blind Man* which was a small magazine edited by him. He wrote:

> Now, Mr. Mutt's fountain is not immoral. It is an accessory that one can see every day in a plumber's window. Whether Mr. Mutt has made the fountain with his own hands or not is without importance. He chose it. He has taken an ordinary element of existence and has displayed it in such a manner that the utilitarian meaning disappears under a new title and a new point of view – he has created a new thought for this object.[385]

There are many interpretations of Duchamp's bold gesture and I am not going to present them. I only want to make a point about the innovative aspect of the change form a traditional

[385] M. Duchamp in *Art in the 20th Century*, 1988, p.179

medium of art. Subsequent discussions about Duchamp's work prompted many questions about art, the work of art and the artist. For example, it prompted questions about the uniqueness of the art object and its value, or questions about the reverence for certain works of the past, or questions about the possibility of different creative alternatives, or questions about the artist who does not necessarily need to be a craftsman in the traditional sense (Duchamp was pointing out the rigidity of traditional art schools where the emphasis was on craft and a hierarchical apprenticeship). In addition, there were questions about the most appropriate medium used by artists to transmit their ideas (Duchamp says that there is a necessary process of selecting an object but this should be subordinated to the idea which the artist wants to transmit). One fundamental aspect of *Fountain* is its humour; Duchamp made a joke whose intention was to shock the sensibilities of 'po faced' art gallery goers.

However, some opponents of conceptual art are still wondering why this object should be regarded as a work of art. Even if one accepts that *Fountain* was a joke or a radical gesture and stirred up some interesting discussions, the question remains: why should F*ountain be* considered a work of art? Although until now I assumed that conceptual pieces are works of art, maybe here there is a need for a brief justification of this assumption.

There are many theories of how to define a work of art and without going into too much detail one can mention the best known ones, and then, focus on discussing the one favoured by conceptualists, the Institutional Theory of Art. Most theories of art definitions can be divided into essentialist approaches and anti-essentialist approaches. Of the first approach which looks for necessary and sufficient conditions, one can mention traditional art theories like: art as imitation or representation, art as expression or art as having significant form. As mentioned in Chapter IV, after the Wittgensteinian turn many considered that the concept of art or work of art should be seen as 'family-resemblance' concepts.[386] However, Stephen Davies points out that after the 1960s most definitions of art appear to fall into two categories, functional and procedural ones. On the one hand, functionalism is centred on the value of art:

> Functionalists argue that art is designed to serve a purpose and something is a work of art only if it succeeds in achieving the objective for which we have art. [Art's function] ... is to provide a pleasurable aesthetic experience.[387]

[386] The most important representatives of the Wittgensteinian tradition are Morris Weitz, William Kennick and Berys Gaut. There is also a number of newer philosophers who are anti-essentialists. See Appendix
[387] Stephen Davies, 'Definitions of art', in *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetic,* eds. Berys Gaut and Dominic McIver Lopes, Routledge, Oxon, 2005, p. 229-230

On the other hand, 'proceduralists' definitions are purely descriptive and non-evaluative'[388] and the best known example of a procedural approach is George Dickie's Institutional Theory of Art. In the next few paragraphs I am going to briefly focus on the Institutional Theory which is much favoured by conceptualists.

Dickie's Institutional Theory of Art has developed over a number of years since its first versions in the 1970s. Because of the intense debate and criticism it created, Dickie revised his theory. The revised theory of 1984 proposes that:

> A work of art in the classificatory sense is an artifact of a kind created to be presented to an artworld public.[389]

For Dickie the artist is the person who participates with understanding in the making of a work of art[390]. The description of the artist as 'participating with understanding in making a work of art' points towards the claim that the person creating a work of art has certain 'pedigree'. One can argue that this way of talking about the artist allows both a traditional conception, the artist as a person with skill and craftsmanship, as well as, a more contemporary conception where the artist is the one whose creative process is underlined by knowledge of what is produced. But, it is considered that this is not what Dickie meant. In his original version Dickie argued that a work of art can have its art status conferred by the right person, a person who acts on behalf of a certain social institution. But following a lot of criticisms[391] Dickie focused on different criticisms of his theory. His key concept in his revised theory was the artworld which was not characterised anymore as a rigid institution. He said about the artworld or the 'art circle'[392] (this was also the name of his book Art Circle published in 1984):

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[388] Stephen Davies, 'Definitions of art', in *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetic,* eds. Berys Gaut and Dominic McIver Lopes, Routledge, London, 2005, p. 230.
[389] George Dickie, 'Art and Value', British Journal of Aesthetics 40, 2000, pp. 228
[390] Dickie's characterisation of an artist from Stephen Davies, 'Definitions of art', in *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetic,* eds. Berys Gaut and Dominic McIver Lopes, Routledge, London, 2005, p. 230.
[391] Its main critics were Ted Cohen, Monroe Beardsley, Arthur Danto, Richard Wollheim and Noel Carroll (a detail discussion of these philosophers' positions is presented by Robert J Yanal in 'The Institutional Theory of Art', *Encyclopaedia of Aesthetics*, ed. Michael Kelly, OUP, 1998).
[392] 'Art Circle' was the name of Dickie's book published in 1984 (*Art Circle: A Theory of Art*, New York).

> An artworld system is a framework for the presentation of a work of art by an artist to an art public[393]

There is a lot of ambiguity in Dickie's theory but the most important criticism is that his theory is not saying anything new or specific about art. His theory can be a generic theory for defining anything. All his main concepts can be replaced with concepts form another domain and his theory would explain the key terminology of this other domain.

In addition, Stephen Davies identifies a bigger problem with the artworld conception; he calls it 'the Artworld relativity problem'. He argues that: artworld assumes the existence of a continuous tradition, a historically and culturally body of unified work and the appearance of new art works being related to this body.[394] Looking at the historical account of art one knows that the unified body of work is an appearance, that there are many different cultures which are sometimes separated from each other and that newer works (e.g. Duchamp's Bottlerack or *Fountain*) do not appear to be related to the previous body of works.

Then, how can the Institutional Theory explain that a work like *Fountain* qualifies as art? The institutional theory supporter has an immediate answer: a work occupies a certain place in an institutional framework, in the artworld. But this conceptual work does not appear to be part of an art historical continuum and belong to a particular art practice. But, in this instance the institutionalist fails to find an art historical explanation for the creation of *Fountain.*

There are other theories than the Institutional Theory that the conceptualist could use to explain the creation and the historical place of conceptual works. For example, the conceptualist or any person interested in theoretical explanations of the creation and status of conceptual works can appeal to: functional theories which make reference to the artistic value of works, or to family-resemblance conception (e.g. Gaut's 'cluster' concepts), or to hybrid theories which can have advantages from both rival theories, the functional and procedural ones.

An interesting parenthesis is welcomed here: after the exhibition of Carl Andre's work, *Equivalent VII* (known as the Bricks) at Tate in 1966, the prestigious art gallery was inundated with many works sent by the public to be considered as works of art. According to Dickie's claim, all these works were works of art. However, Dickie would argue that these

[393] G. Dickie, *Art Circle: A Theory of Art*, New York, 1984, p. 80.
[394] Stephen Davies, 'Definitions of art', in *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetic,* eds. Berys Gaut and Dominic McIver Lopes, Routledge, London, 2005, p. 233.

were not accepted as works of art because they were not good works of art not because they were not art.

A newer and more subtle criticism of the Institutional Theory is discussed by Severin Schroeder in his article 'Art, Value and Function' from 2013.[395] Schroeder makes a detailed conceptual analysis of a number of crucial concepts used by the Institutional Theory: art, artefact, creation and presentation. First I think he is right when he discusses the concept of art as presented by the Institutional Theory. Indeed, it seems a non-starter 'to identity something as "art" without in any way committing oneself to a value judgement'. [396] Schroeder attacks the supporters of the idea that the term 'art' is an entirely non-evaluative term. Schroeder's argues that the term art is a prestige concept and that it implies a conditional commendation. Art as a prestige concept means that when used the word has a positive resonance in most cultures, while art implying a conditional commendation means that when people call something art they recommend it to other people interested in art.[397] Schroeder argues that a close analysis of Dickie's sociological approach shows that his approach reflects both that art is a prestige concept and it implies a conditional commendation. Although I agree with the conclusion of this analysis, there are aspects of Schroeder conceptual analysis I dispute. For example, he claims that Dickie on the one hand, does not take into consideration the differences between creation and presentation, and on the other hand his concept of artifactuality is too wide.

Schroeder explains Dickie's conception of an artefact which does not necessarily need to be man-made. A pebble, from a simple everyday object can become a complex object, an artifact, according to Dickie, by 'a mere act of presentation'.[398] Thus, because Dickie allows this 'transformation' one can conclude that he ignores the differences between creation and presentation. Thus my main concern here is with Dickie's expression 'a mere act of presentation'. This expression suggests an uncomplicated gesture, a simple transformation from non-art to art through an effortless act. It also appears disparaging. I think the problem with the Institutional Theory lies in how one understands the process of art creation, which is even more acute in the explanation of the creation of conceptual works. The expression 'mere act of presentation' can be understood, as Schroeder points out, as the act of *making* the work. Dickie would not disagree. The example of a pebble used as 'the-pebble-used-as-an artistic-medium' is interesting. One can envisage that a conceptualist makes a work by using a pebble.

[395] Severin Schroeder , 'Art, Value and Function', *Nordic Journal of Aesthetics* 46, October, 2013.
[396] Ibid., p.2
[397] Ibid., p.7.
[398] Ibid., p.1.

For the sake of the argument, let us assume that the work's physical base consists of only a single pebble. The work could take a long time or no time, it can have a simple title or a complex title, it can be presented in artistic context with a particular theme or in a casual exhibition with no theme, it can be lit in a certain way or shown in natural light, it can stand for something, its creation can be motivated by an intense emotion or cognitive preoccupation or not be overtly motivated by something we can identify, etc. Most of the enumerated possibilities could be established when one perceives the work in situ, but some of these features, in particular the intention of the artist, are not identifiable. But, I think most conceptual artists would describe their process of creation of a work as following a meandering development and very rarely a 'eureka' moment when a simple act of presenting an object constitutes the work.[399]

To return to *Fountain* one knows that Duchamp made a deliberate choice to use an ordinary[400] object. This is regardless of what we think his motivations were. However, the most plausible interpretation of his choice is that a careful selection of an ordinary object allowed Duchamp to express his frustration about the state of contemporary art and the increasing obsession with mass produced objects. Some would consider his gesture an ingenious and funny way to express his frustration. Although some people think that Duchamp opened the flood gate I would argue that without him the 20th century art world would not have seen such a variety of art movements and new art practices.[401]. The post-Duchampians can choose any physical basis for their work and this flexibility of embodiment is what makes conceptual art so different from the other art forms.

ii) Even though any medium can be used by conceptual artists I would argue that if the conceptual work is a good work then the artist's concept or idea is embodied in

[399] Of course one can still reject such an account and argue that many conceptual artists do exactly that. Here is a paradoxical situation. Recently Martin Creed was interviewed for a BBC programme about conceptual art and he said that *Work 88: A sheet of paper crumpled into a ball* (1996), was not a work of art. However the work is still sold as a work of art and it is usually discuss in art colleges as a referential work. The paradox is that the artist rejects his own work as art but he explains in detail the process of making this work (it has a limited edition). The issue is here that the works appears disconcertingly simple but listening to the artist one knows that it was not a 'mere presentation'. Again the question about its aesthetic value is not considered here.

[400] I cannot help thinking about the women's reaction to Duchamp's work. For a male audience the physical embodiment was an ordinary object (there is here room for interpretations having to do with repulsion or disgust or anger) but for a female audience the urinal was a novelty (of course many women in1917 could have felt embarrassed by such an object). One needs to consider all these aspects which Duchamp knew or envisaged.

[401] Even if you don't like any contemporary unusual art forms then one could make an argument for the importance of these art forms as a counterpoint to the traditional art.

an appropriate physical form[402]. The point is here that one of the features of a good conceptual work is an appropriate embodiment; by appropriate I do not mean something beautiful or attractive but as Duchamp says:

> However it is difficult to select an object that absolutely does not interest you not only on the day that you select it but always, and which does not have any chance of becoming attractive or beautiful and which is neither pleasant to look at nor particularly ugly.[403]

I suggest that Duchamp is probably referring to an effort to escape the dominance of a certain perceptual appearance, an effort which is a deliberate reflective activity particularly evident in the selection of a ready-made. Moreover, even the hard conceptualist would recognise that the execution/the process of creating a conceptual art is a skill and the transmission of an idea would be more successful in an appropriate embodiment. Thus selecting an object is an important process because as LeWitt argues, the work needs certain physical parameters in order to:

> give the viewer whatever information he needs to understand the work and place it in such a way that will facilitate this understanding[404]

In the above paragraphs we touched upon the idea of the quality of a conceptual work. Two quick points here about what contributes to the value of conceptual works: first the ideas transmitted – the artist needs to propose a simple, direct and hard-punching idea or concept and secondly, the execution in the design/selection of a work – the importance of the ingenuity of execution in order to facilitate the viewer's understanding. However the most important thing for a good conceptual work is the ideas that it transmits and if the ideas are too complicated or too banal then even with a good execution (the finding of an appropriate

[402] Appropriate physical form has a ring of correctness about it but as LeWitt argues, the work needs certain physical parameters in order to 'give the viewer whatever information he needs to understand the work and place it in such a way that will facilitate this understanding'. Paragraphs on Conceptual Art, *Artforum*, New York, vol. 5, no. 10, Summer 1967, article republished in *Art in Theory* ed. by Charles Harrison & Paul Wood, Blackwell Publishers, 2003, p.847

[403] Duchamp quote in *Art in the 20th Century*, 1988, p. 179.

[404] 'Paragraphs on Conceptual Art', 1967, p. 848.

embodiment) the work will not be good. LeWitt says: 'Banal ideas cannot be rescued by beautiful execution'[405]

3.3 'The desire of the conceptualist to reject sensorial pleasure and beauty in his work'[406]

Although there are conceptual artists[407] who attempted an escape from the material form and in particular from the aesthetic through dematerialization by using ready-mades or cheap, unpretentious, banal, ephemeral materials, there is still the problem of *how the physical support is apprehended* by the viewers. This feature of conceptual art underlines a lack of concordance between the artists' intentions (to transmit an idea without the interference of the perceptual aspect of the work) and the viewers' encounters with the conceptual work (the perception of a physical embodiment used to transmit the idea). The viewers cannot easily escape the immediate perceptual aspect of a work – how it looks or how it sounds or how it feels and this is a problem. For the viewer there is always the 'interference' of what is seen, heard, touched, smelled, felt[408] when encountering art. The conceptualist artist's says: in order to perceive the art (the conceptual work) you need to go beyond your perceptual sensitivity, beyond what is in front of you, beyond the physicality of the object presented to you. But we have established that even the most radical conceptual works cannot escape the physical embodiment, thus there is a perceptual level of an art encounter with a conceptual work.

The recognition of a minimal perceptual engagement with a conceptual piece will bring about echoes of loud protests from some extreme conceptual artists. For example, Timothy Binkley says that an artwork is 'a piece: and a piece needs not to be an aesthetic object, or even an object at all'[409]. Now, one needs to think about the reasons for such vehement protests: are conceptualists upset because although, they have not achieved total dematerialization, they think that they could in the future or because they are afraid of the

[405] Paragraphs on Conceptual Art', *Artforum*, New York, vol. 5, no. 10, Summer 1967, article republished in *Art in Theory* ed. by Charles Harrison & Paul Wood, Blackwell Publishers, 2003, p. 851.
[406] This is one of the already mentioned original five characteristics of conceptual art by Peter Goldie and Elisabeth Schellekens
[407] Timothy Binkley says that a conceptual artwork is 'a piece: and a piece needs not to be an aesthetic object, or even an object at all' ('Piece: Contra Aesthetics', 1997, p.265), Lucy Lippard and John Chandler suggest that art comes before materialization (Lippard & Chandler 1968), or Robert Barry's example of a work entitled: 'Telepathic piece' 1969, which does not need any physical support therefore any aesthetic appreciation.
[408] I refer here at newer art forms like haptic art
[409] Binkley, 'Piece: Contra Aesthetics', 1997, p. 265

dominance of the aesthetic which could deter from the transmission of their ideas? I think the latter rather than the former is what unsettles a lot of conceptualists.

We discussed earlier the view that conceptual art aims to be non-perceptual (this is the reason that sometimes it is compared with literature or philosophy) but we agreed that to a large extent conceptual art is still a perceptual art. Lamarque puts this beautifully by saying:

> Rather than trying to make conceptual art non-perceptual […], it might be better to admit a perceptual level but somehow make it subservient to the conceptual.[410]

Then, if we agree that conceptual works have a perceptual level, we encounter the problem of a possible aesthetic interpretation of works of art. But again, one of the most striking characteristics of conceptual art is this effort of the conceptual artists to avoid the aesthetic. The conceptual artist tries to do this by choosing the physical basis – as much as he can – in an non-aesthetic way. By 'non-aesthetic way' I mean a deliberate policy against employment of aesthetic elements; a resistance to any sensorial importance given to the work. One needs to remind oneself here of Lamarque's distinction between non-aesthetic and anti-aesthetic means, which is this: the absence of aesthetic qualities is non-aesthetic and the presence of negative aesthetic qualities is anti-aesthetic.[411] He considers that the employment of anti-aesthetic means (ugliness, repulsiveness, kitsch, and the shocking) does not lead to the conclusion that a work is genuinely non-aesthetic. Conceptual artists would argue though that, there are many reasons for seeing the aesthetic as an obstacle to the appropriate experience of a conceptual work. For example: the sensorial pleasure of beauty or ugliness can deter the viewer from the ideas transmitted by a work, the emphasis on the sensual and beauty is old fashioned, the sensual does not push the limits of artistic enquiry and using aesthetic means it is not political and critical enough of the consumerist society and the aesthetic interpretation puts too much emphasis on the uniqueness of the work and the artist's skills and it does not challenge the role of art. Two observations about the conceptualists' claims are needed here. One is that, the critic of conceptual art can show that even though the above claims are promoted by many conceptual artists, conceptual works are not as different from conventional works of art, and that all the traditional features mentioned are part of conceptual works in one way or another. Secondly, there are conceptual artists that do not

[410] P. Lamarque, *W& O*, 2010, p.226.
[411] Ibid., p.228.

refuse the power of appearances and consider that aesthetic qualities can be useful in appropriating an idea.

In addition, Lamarque's wider conception of the aesthetic can be applied to the appreciative experience of conceptual art: the seeking of the consonance of means to ends. What are the means and the ends for conceptual artists? I propose that the means are aesthetic or experiential (different embodiments – visual, auditory, tactile) and the ends are represented by the transmission of ideas – the understanding of the work or the getting of the work's message.

One way of making sense of the suggestion that conceptual works have an aesthetic dimension is to look at some successful conceptual works and see if the aesthetic level of the works is contributing to, first the work's identity and secondly to the value of the work. I am choosing three conceptual works from the last half of 20th century, to try to assess the role of the aesthetic in the identity and value of the works: Richard Long's *A line Made by Walking, England 1967*, Jenny Holzer's *Protect Me From What I Want*- from Truisms series, LED light installation (1982) and Anya Gallaccio, *preserve 'beauty'* 1991 – 2003.

Fig. 29 *A Line Made by Walking, England* (1967) by Richard Long

First, Richard Long's famous work *A Line Made by Walking, England 1967* (Fig. 29) is an early work created by the artist in his journeys between Bristol (his home) and St Martin school of Art (his art college) in a field in Wiltshire. The artist walked up and down many times until the grass was flattened to retain his walking trace. Long recoded the resulting line in the grass by photographing it and recoding the date of his performance. There are a number of things worth mentioning here: most of Long's work is carried out in a natural environment and what the audience sees, are records of his walks or interventions (photographs, films, diaries pages, drawings, screenprints, marks on maps, geographic measurement, etc). His work challenges the preconceptions about sculpture and most of his work tries to be free of ownership (because it exist outside and it has a direct connection with its natural context). However, Long had many solo exhibitions[412] in which he brought his performances in a gallery setting by using physical materials like stone, wood, or mud creating both sculptural works and impressions of his performance works. When the audience is presented with a record of *A Line Made by Walking, England 1967*, a photograph, the most important thing is considering imagining the actual performance of the artist and the trace left by his steps on the Wiltshire field after he left. The viewer can imagine the aesthetics of the work by using the photograph as a guide – the interesting thing is that, Long's black and white photograph is in itself a work because it is well balanced, evocative and luminous. I propose that the aesthetic properties of the work after the artist left were: being ephemeral, suggesting a delicate human presence in a semi-wild setting, being shiny, breathing peacefulness, having a diversity of green tonalities and mostly being original. These aesthetic properties are the result of a creative interpretation. To what extent does this work have an aesthetic character, in particular when the viewer is not experiencing the work directly and when the work was a performance from 1967? I like using the present when discussing performance works because even though, these do not exist anymore, there are records of these works or witnesses' testimonials and one can use imaginative interpretation to discuss different properties which these works could have.

I think the most important aesthetic property of Long's work is originality. Here I use Goldman's list of aesthetic properties and 'being original' is a historically related property which he considers an aesthetic property. I am using a wider sense of the aesthetic thus I do not need to say that the aesthetic is only perceptual (as linked to the senses). For example, the first cubist painting was original and this is to a large extent a perceivable property (if the

[412] Long had many exhibitions abroad (1968-1971) – his first exhibition was a group show in Frankfurt in 1967. His first solo exhibition in Britain was in 1971 at the Whitechapel Art Gallery.

viewer was familiar with other styles of paintings before this particular cubist painting). In addition, Lamarque's idea of consonance of ends to means as a way of aesthetically appreciating a work can be used to describe a work as 'being original'. For example, Lewis Carroll literary nonsense displays originality in the way he used language (the means) and this is a property which is perceptually appreciated.

I would compare Long's works, his new conceptual approach to contemplating and depicting nature with the impressionists' bold decision of taking their easels outside and trying to paint in natural settings in order to capture the bathing of light on natural forms and people, and this is an inovative take on art making.

A very different conceptual sculpture is Jenny Holzer's *Protect Me From What I Want*- from Survival series, LED light installation, 1982, New York Times Square (Fig. 30).

Fig. 30 *Protect Me From What I Want*- from Survival series (1982) by Jenny Holzer

Holzer's work is distinctive because of its message and the way the message is presented. Although she uses different modes of presenting her work (posters, notices, T-shirts, paperweights, engraved metal plates, sound recordings, etc) she uses as her signature LED displays or illuminated advertising boards which carry simple one-liners which become well known as her 'truisms'. Most of her truisms are based on a feminist outlook and her three

main themes used in her works are: sex, death and war. Her truisms usually have an immediate impact on the viewer even though often they have an ambiguous meaning. Since the 1990s she started showing her work on a larger scale, for example a big LED sign in the Guggenheim Museum (1989), or illuminated words on Battle of Leipzig Monument (1996). *Protect Me From What I Want* installation must have stopped passers-by in their tracks with its Jungian like message. The work's impact was amplified by the context of presentation – the heart of New York. *Protect Me From What I Want* has a strong conceptual character but is not devoid of an aesthetic dimension and the viewers' response to this work is rich in both phenomenology (in particular if the work is experienced in situ) and in semantic content.

The aesthetic properties of Holzer's installation are twofold: some have to do with appearances of the work, its display and context (formal properties like composition, colour and scale) and the others have to do with the idea that Holzer wanted to transmit because she uses text (these aesthetic properties are emotion properties, evocative properties and art historical related properties). The question now we have to ask is which of those or how many of those aesthetic properties are essential to the identity and value of the work as a work of art. I think that the most important essential aesthetic properties of the work are: being daring and playful at the same time, having a theatrical directness and a seductive façade. The aesthetic character of the work can be described by the viewer as based upon the appropriate experience of the consonance between the aesthetic means Holzer uses and the artistic aim of the work. As mentioned above many passersby would have reacted to the billboard message in Times Square but not all would have had an aesthetic experience. The appropriate perceiver could enjoy the work aesthetically, if we agree that there is the possibility of experiencing a consonance between the means and the aims of the work. In short the consonance can be a realization of the artist's intentions by admiring the way she achieved this. I also believe that the aesthetic value of the work is revealed when the viewer fully feels the work's hinterland of possible interpretations (from feminist interpretations to social, political and humorist ones).

The last work I would like to mention is Anya Gallaccio, *preserve 'beauty'* 1991 – 2003, presented in 2003 at Tate Britain, as part of the Turner Prize (Fig. 31). This work is an installation (the work's dimensions are 2600 x 5350 x 25 mm) consisting of four large panels of glass hung on the wall and which have underneath the glass red flowers. The 2,000 flowers in this work are a hybrid between a gerbera and daisy[413] and all the flowers' heads are facing

[413] An interesting play on words in her title because this hybrid flower is known as 'beauty'

the viewer and their stems are visible only on the bottom of each panel. Gallaccio's installations use organic materials which in time disintegrate and get destroyed; *preserve 'beauty'* is such a work in which the flowers slowly wither and die.

Fig. 31 *preserve 'beauty'* (1991 – 2003) by Anya Gallaccio

The work is both visually and olfactory astonishing because the flowers would decay and they would fell from underneath their glass sheet and they would be left untouched by the gallery's attendants (Fig. 32, detail)

This work is both about the ephemeral through the decay of the flowers and their quality as mass produced 'objects' and the need for the preservation of beauty which is what painters do when they paint still-life or landscapes and what women do when they arrange bunches of flowers in their houses. This works' aesthetic properties are more easily detectable than other conceptual works' properties. Gallacio's *preserve 'beauty'* is beautiful, it is graceful and balanced, its colors range from vivid to pale (according to the time of perception), its smell varies from a natural, pleasant smell to the smell of decay and rotten plants (again, time dependent), it is powerful because it is visually evocative (makes the viewer to reflect upon big themes: beauty, time passing, decay and death). This work has essential aesthetic properties (I have already mentioned some) and one can easily discuss the aesthetic character

of the work and argue that in this work the seeking of the consonance of means to ends has the same experiential feel as if one is in front of an old master's painting. I used the above three examples of conceptual works to try to show the importance of artists' ability to work out their ideas in a material form but not through traditional means.

Fig. 32 *preserve 'beauty',* detail (1991 – 2003) by Anya Gallaccio

There are aesthetic aspects that these works have both detectable aesthetic properties and a general aesthetic outlook. However, the hard conceptualist would have a strong complaint about the three examples of works I have chosen; he would say that most conceptual works do not have the powerful aesthetic impact that my examples have. They could give their own examples (works from the magazine Art & Language which are mainly text based, Andy Warhol's empty plinth, David Tremlett's *The Spring Recordings* 1972, Michael Craig Martin, *An Oak Tree* 1973, or Robert Barry's *Telepathic Piece*, etc) and argue that the properties of the work should be referenced only in conjunction with the idea or the concept of the work not in relation to any of the perceptual properties of the physical embodiment of the work.

There are two answers I have already proposed in this thesis to counteract the conceptualist. First answer is that all works of art including conceptual works have aesthetic properties because even conceptual art works cannot fully dematerialize the art object – a conceptual work can be experienced and judged form an aesthetic point of view. I believe that conceptual works have both essential and inessential aesthetic properties and some of the aesthetic properties can be: the well known ones like the ones present in Sibley and Goldman's lists or the more unusual ones which are the anti-aesthetic properties (like the ones proposed by Lamarque: the banal, the kitsch or the ordinary). My second answer would be to urge the conceptualist to reconsider his conception of the aesthetic and adopt a wider sense which includes an *active* seek of consonance of means (artistic or aesthetic) to ends (the ideas and concept that the artist wants to transmit) in the engagement with a work of art. The conceptualist should be amiable to this last suggestion because I emphasise the active involvement of the viewer in the encounter with a conceptual work (the conceptual artist insists on a mentally focused engagement with a conceptual work).

In conclusion, my intention in this last chapter was to apply Lamarquean concepts to conceptual art and to emphasise that even though conceptual art appears not to be primarily a perceptual art (like painting or music) it is more like the visual arts and performing arts then the non-perceptual arts like literature[414]. I suggested that conceptual art can be aesthetically experienced and appreciated if we actively seek in the work the consonance of means to ends. This appropriate experience of the consonance is dependent of the artist's ideas (what kind of ideas he wants to transmit) and his ability to manifest these ideas by embodying them in an appropriate form. The audience's capacity to 'seek and find' the consonance largely depends on the normative aspect of the engagement with the work (for Lamarque this is having

[414] Lamarque points out that although literature is non-perceptual, it is amenable to aesthetic ends (*W&O*, p.227)

knowledge about the object experienced). In other words, this means the capacity to both abstract from or distance from a quotidian approach to the physical object that embodies the work and to critically engage with a work as part of a historical continuum not as a part of an anti-art movement.

CONCLUSION

This thesis is motivated by an interest in contemporary philosophical debates about the nature and appreciation of conceptual works of art. The received wisdom is that conceptual works do not possess aesthetic properties, or at least that if they do they are not essential to their character as works of art. I closely followed Peter Lamarque's view that the aesthetic character of a work of art is determined by the possession of essential aesthetic properties.

In developing my account of conceptual art, I defend property realism and an aesthetic essentialist account of conceptual works inspired by Lamarque's individual aesthetic essentialism. Part of my defence of an aesthetic essentialist outlook consists in a certain way of thinking about the nature and the role of aesthetic properties in the experience and appreciation of works of art.

Thus, I used Chapter I to introduce the concept of the aesthetic and its multifarious uses. In this chapter, I also presented one of the most important accounts of aesthetic concepts, that of Frank Sibley. I argued that aesthetic concepts can be divided into *purely evaluative* concepts and *mixed* concepts; this division is inspired by Sibley's original distinction between evaluative and descriptive aesthetic concepts. However, I suggested that the category of mixed concepts is a continuum and each mixed aesthetic term has two dimensions: a descriptive one and an evaluative one. Both of these dimensions fluctuate from dominant to minimal. I concluded this chapter with an initial account of the main characteristics of the aesthetic: the aesthetic is indissolubly liked to the perceptual, aesthetic concepts can be divided into evaluative and mixed concepts and each concept in the mixed category has an evaluative and a descriptive dimension. My account of aesthetic concepts although close to Sibley's, it differs from his in that, the mixed category of concepts forms a continuum, even though the bulk of concepts are towards the descriptive end.

Springing from this discussion, Chapter II analyses Sibley's relational account of aesthetic properties, an account which is essential to Lamarque's own conception of aesthetic properties. The crux of Sibley's account of aesthetic properties rests upon the explanation of the relation between aesthetic properties and non-aesthetic properties from which they emerge. Here I used the example of one of Degas' painting to illustrate the relation of a number of the painting's aesthetic properties with some of its non-aesthetic properties and also with some of its other aesthetic properties.

A second important aspect of Sibley's aesthetic properties is their relation to informed perceivers in appropriate encounters with works of art. The discussion about response dependent properties is developed in conjunction with the debate between realists and anti-realists in aesthetics. This debate is used by Lamarque to explain the distinction between two types of interpretations of works of art: revelatory interpretations and creative interpretations. However, Lamarque points out the advantages of both a realist and a constructivist position, and proposes a way to bridge the gap between the two apparently irreconcilable interpretations. He tries to reconcile the two interpretations by showing that acceptable interpretations of any kind are constrained by the properties that the object has in itself, the properties possessed by the object which identifies the object as an object of attention. I concluded this chapter by showing that understanding the relation between aesthetic and non-aesthetic properties and their response-dependent nature, is essential to Lamarque's view of works of art and their aesthetic properties.

Chapter III discusses Lamarque's view of aesthetic properties; a view which has a lot of common characteristics with other aestheticians' views (e.g. Sibley, Walton and Levinson), but which also, has a number of features that sets it apart from these other aestheticians. These differences were important in establishing the conceptual framework which sustains Lamarque's individual essentialism. I used different visual works of art, in particular art photography, to show how different pairs of aesthetic properties are attributed to those works. Here I introduced one of Lamarque's most important explanations of aesthetic appreciation: aesthetic pleasure comes from an understanding and admiration of consonance of means to ends. Lamarque uses the concept of *consonance* in relation to literary appreciation: the reader 'sees' how the author achieved his literary purpose and this is a kind of aesthetic experience. However, according to Lamarque both the 'perception' of literary works and that of works of visual art involve an appreciative experience, the experience of art *as* art. The case of the experience of conceptual works is less problematic if one agrees with Lamarque that this experience is an experience of art *as* art. Here, I assume that the status of conceptual works as works of art is not in question. However a problem resurfaces when one thinks about the suggestion that conceptual works are experienced aesthetically.

In the rest of this chapter, I discussed different contemporary views about the distinction between the aesthetic and the artistic. I focused on Marcia Muelder Eaton's characterization of objects that are characterized by the two terms. I end up agreeing with Eaton's traditional view that the class of works of art is included in the class of aesthetic objects, but I distanced myself from her claim that conceptual works are not works of art. On the one hand, I agreed

with Lamarque's wider conception of the aesthetic, a conception which goes beyond the traditional belief that the aesthetic is only perceptual. But on the other hand, I rejected Lamarque's suggestion that art is not necessarily aesthetic. The distinction between aesthetic properties and artistic properties is different from that of the distinction between aesthetic objects and artistic objects. That is because the two classes of properties intersect and the boundaries between them are not fixed. I illustrated the difficulties of the distinction between artistic and aesthetic properties by analysing *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon (1907)* by Picasso. I showed that some artistic properties can become in certain context aesthetic properties.

In conclusion, this third chapter identified different terminological differences between Lamarque and other thinkers and looked at a number of different conceptions of the aesthetic and the artistic, and clarified some of Lamarque's aesthetic ideas in order to be able to present a defence of his aesthetic essentialism.

In the following two chapters I discussed Lamarque's argument for individual essentialism. Lamarque defends a version of aesthetic essentialism in which aesthetic terms are construed in a realist manner, 'as standing for properties' and in which some of those properties play a crucial role in the description and identity of works of art. He argues that some works of art possess some aesthetic properties essentially and these contribute to the works' distinct aesthetic character. There are two parts of Lamarque's argument for individual aesthetic essentialism. First, is his new-object (non-identity) theory discussed in Chapter IV. Secondly, there is his explanation of works of art possessing different types of aesthetic properties, to which he adds that some of those works possess with necessity essential aesthetic properties (this explanation was analyzed in Chapter V).

In Chapter IV, I introduced essentialism as a general philosophical position in order to clarify the main terminology of the essentialist framework, and in order to be able to characterise an aesthetic essentialist view of art. First, I justified my choice for using the term 'essential properties' rather than 'essence'. By 'essential properties' I mean the most important or significant properties without which the object would not be what it is. In the case of essential aesthetic properties these would be significant for the aesthetic character of the work. The second section of this chapter introduced Lamarque's individual essentialism (I-essentialism) and discussed Lamarque's first premise in support of I-essentialism. The premise is that works of art are new objects which are ontologically different from the material base or the object that embodies them (Lamarque calls this view 'new-object theory'). Lamarque proposes for his new-object theory two ways of investigating the nature of works of art: one is about general conditions for works of art to be art (work-identity and

work-survival), and the other is about work-specific identity conditions.

I focused on the conditions for work-identity, work-survival and work-specific conditions by applying Lamarque's conceptual framework (new-object, cultural wrappings, genetic and artistic completion of works, and vehicular and artistic medium) to three works from the visual arts: the painting *Guernica* by Picasso, the sculpture *Laocoon and His Sons* from the Hellenistic period and pre-historic *the Chauvet Cave* paintings. I concluded this chapter in agreeing with Lamarque that works of art are cultural objects which are public and perceivable. They are new things brought into the world by artists' manipulation and creation under a certain conception and these new objects have certain identity and survival conditions.

Chapter V begins with a presentation of Lamarque's two versions of aesthetic essentialism. The rest of the chapter is dedicated to the investigation of Lamarque's support for the weaker version of I-essentialism, which suggests that some aesthetic properties are possessed essentially by some works of art. I asked what makes an aesthetic property essential to some works of art and not to others. According to Lamarque, aesthetic properties are essential if they are salient features without which the work would not be the work of art it is. In order to show how some aesthetic properties are essential to one work but not to the other I used Grayson Perry's series *The Vanity of Small Differences* (2012) to point out that the work has tragic elements within its six tapestries but as a whole is not a tragic work. Lamarque's argument for aesthetic essentialism which proposes that some works of art possess some aesthetic properties essentially and that these properties contribute to the identity of these individual works *as* the works they are, is put to the test by discussing in detail some of the aesthetic properties of two of Fra Angelico's paintings. I provided reasons for accepting that some of the aesthetic properties of Fra Angelico's paintings are essential to the paintings and make the paintings the works they are. I concluded this chapter tentatively agreeing with Lamarque's individual essentialism. However, I pushed his essentialism further by attempting to show, in the next chapter, that all conceptual works of art have aesthetic properties, with the caveat that only some of these works have essential aesthetic properties (most conceptual works have inessential aesthetic properties).

In the last chapter of this thesis I applied Lamarque's aesthetic essentialism to a number of conceptual works and concluded that some conceptual works possess essential aesthetic properties. Chapter VI has three sections: a reminder of the main conceptual framework I presented in previous chapters, a general characterisation of conceptual art, and my own characterisation of conceptual art. I discussed a number of important views about conceptual

art (by artists and philosophers) in order to capture different characterizations of conceptual works. Moreover I tried to elucidate the conundrum of perceptual and non-perceptual art by discussing other art forms than conceptual art. In addition, I proposed Lamarque's suggestions about the experience of literary works, as guidance for the experience of conceptual works.

My main argument in support of the claim that works of conceptual art are not non-perceptual works and that they can be assessed aesthetically is two-fold: first conceptual artists cannot avoid a perceptual/physical base for their conceptual works and secondly, the experience of a conceptual work, like the experience of all other works of art, is rewarding cognitively, affectively and moreover, aesthetically. This means that, even though the conceptual work is not identical with its physical base (not even in the case of ready-mades), there are still perceptual features that are the focus of appreciation in encounters and interpretations of conceptual works. Ascertaining this was vital in showing that all conceptual works have inessential aesthetic properties. There is always a 'look' or an appearance or an experiential aspect of a conceptual work.

However, my most radical suggestion is that some conceptual works have essential aesthetic properties and this is one of the most important aspects which contributes to the value of these works as works of art. One obstacle to such a view is an anti-essentialist position or an institutionalist's position. Thus, I highlighted different arguments against the aesthetic essentialist by using examples of well known works of conceptual art and I showed that these works have both detectable aesthetic properties and a general aesthetic character.

In conclusion, I suggested that conceptual art can be aesthetically experienced and appreciated if we actively seek in the works the consonance of means to ends. This appropriate experience of the consonance is dependent on the artist's ideas (what kind of ideas he wants to transmit), his ability to manifest these ideas by embodying them in an appropriate form and the viewer's level of engagement both cognitive and affective.

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