

The Art of Summoning:
Art in the Fall of Institutions and the Rise of Social Media

By kevin william thomas

Xavier University

Drs. Gabriel Gottlieb, Timothy Brownlee, and Myron Jackson

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Part One: The Beginning

I. *Introduction*

It's about time for a new definition of art. We live in a new age, one where the internet can answer essentially any question a person might ask with fact-checked information provided by the greatest minds to come across our mortal plane. However, these answers can only go so far and are dependent upon past knowledge, and for questions of art, they are inherently unsatisfactory. The world has changed and continues to change with each passing day. Art, which for so long has been defined by its relationship to institutions created with the patronage of the wealthy, has entered into a freefall. It began to do so during the early part of the 20th century, a time when we had a non-definition of art that ceased to follow the imitation theory, an idea that had been prevalent for about 2,000 years, because it was something that philosophers argued could not have any necessary or sufficient conditions.¹ This theory that art cannot be properly or philosophically defined, which I shall call the "no-theory," fell out of fashion in the early part of the 1960s and later on in the 1970s when philosophers like George Dickie and Arthur C. Danto created new definitions that required art to be dependent upon the institutions² with which it interacted. However, these institutional definitions, while impressive in their own right, do not satisfactorily hold up in our current day and age because of two things: The internet

¹ See Morris Weitz ("The Role of Theory in Aesthetics," 1956) and others influenced by Wittgenstein's theories.

² The institutions I am referring to in this essay are the societies and organizations that have for so long been the groups deciding upon whether a work has value or can be viewed as art, such as literary magazines, museums, art galleries, colleges and universities, and others of that ilk. The institutional definition, which I will explain more thoroughly later, is one where the status of art is conferred by institutional recognition, meaning acknowledgment as art comes from the aforementioned institutions.

(and with it, social media), and the associated increasing presence of technology available to everyone.

The internet and the seemingly unstoppable advances in technology have created a series of challenges and questions to almost everything that we consider to be specifically human, ranging from personhood and free will to the beautiful and art. One of the biggest questions that we must face is the question of what personhood means. The development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has led us to this problem of defining what a person is, what a person can do, what human acts are, and what non-human acts are. AI has seemingly forced upon us the recognition that rationality is not the core of the human person, as has been the traditional argument in philosophy for thousands of years, because we live in a world with machines that are programmed with the same gift at their core. While this essay may be focused on defining art, something we have long since held to be a specifically human concept and thing, these questions of AI cannot be escaped due to the uncertainty of what a person is in this day and age. This question is further complicated by the realization that there have been court cases in the last several years that discuss whether AI can create art, who owns the copyright to such creations,³ and what the implications of such claims might be.⁴ One legal article on this questions notes that “The rise in AI-art has raised fundamental questions in copyright law that... [people] are struggling to address, including questions of copyrightability, ownership, and infringement,” but it does not advance far enough to ask the question about whether what these AIs have created

³ A group called Obvious created an AI that created and printed a portrait on canvas with inkjet that sold for \$432,500 in 2018 and a 17-year-old created a program that wrote its own rap lyrics using 6,000 Kanye West lyrics.

⁴ Louise Carron. “Welcome to the Machine: Law, Artificial Intelligence and the Visual Arts.” Center for Art Law, Nov. 26, 2018; Sarah Ligon Pattishall, Mcauliffe, Newbury, Hilliard, & Geraldson LLP. “AI Can Create Art, but Can It Own Copyright in It, or Infringe?” Lexis Practice Advisor Journal, February 28, 2019.

actually is a work of art or not.⁵ This uncertainty is one of the many things that has brought us to the point of needing to redefine many human acts and concepts. Art is, in my opinion, one of these acts and concepts that needs the most defense and requires a new understanding.

However, beyond the mere necessity to redefine what certain human acts are, we must also consider the role of the institution in our present day and age, something that was in question when Danto and Dickie came up with their theories, but never to quite the degree it is in our present day. The rise of the internet and social media has redefined power structures through its radical democratization of knowledge and the influence it has on moral values. This notion has been addressed in dozens of different ways, but I plan to address it solely on the way it affects art. One of the primary results of this democratization of knowledge and destruction of the institution, which will be explained later, has been the removal of the exclusionary force behind art, which can be clearly seen by the fame of contemporary poet Rupi Kaur.

Kaur's poetry is simplistic, to say the least. One of her poems, published in her second book, *the sun and her flowers*, and shared on Instagram, simply reads, in a single line: "i want to honeymoon myself."⁶ It is straightforward, dull, and frankly trite, but nonetheless, Kaur is probably the most famous poet of the 2010s, despite the opinion that, as one headline reads, "Instagram Poet Rupi Kaur Seems Utterly Uninterested In Reading Books."⁷ Kaur was named "The Poet of the Decade" by Rumaan Alam in an article published by the *New Republic*, even though she has received seemingly nothing but hate from the "Institution" of artists and poets.⁸ Despite this, Alam claims that Kaur ought to be recognized as "the poet of the decade" because

⁵ Pattishall, McAuliffe, Newbury, Hilliard, & Geraldson LLP. "AI Can Create Art, but Can It Own Copyright in It, or Infringe?" Lexis Practice Advisor Journal, February 28, 2019.

⁶ Kaur, Rupi (@rupikaur_). March 29, 2018. <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bg715pSjIyQ/>

⁷ Lindsey Adler. "Instagram Poet Rupi Kaur Seems Utterly Uninterested In Reading Books." Deadspin, October 4, 2017.

⁸ Rumaan Alam. "Rupi Kaur Is the Writer of the Decade." The New Republic, December 23, 2019.

the approachability of her work brings a new population of otherwise uninterested people into the world of poetry, and because it mimics the world we live in: It is short and surface-level, not unlike an Instagram post. I am inclined to agree with Alam in his decision to call her the poet of the decade even though, similar to him, her “writing is not itself to my taste.” Her poetry, which as Lindsey Adler says in her article attacking Kaur, is “an aesthetics-first approach to poetry [which] is the perfect strategy for an aesthetics-first platform,” referring to Instagram, and this approach is seemingly painful to the author of this article.⁹ Adler even goes as far as to call Kaur “a hack.” However, all of these aspects are incredibly important when it comes to a question of art and the fading of an institution because Kaur did not receive any formal recognition of her skill and talent until she self-published her first book, *milk and honey*, in 2014 and it exploded on the marketplace.¹⁰ In the FAQ section of her website, she details her origins before self-publishing, and she mentions getting “rejection after rejection” from magazines and journals, the institutions that decide upon the quality of a work and whether it can be viewed as art.¹¹ This is in part due to the fact that Kaur seems to enter the art of poetry from a very low level,¹² but her ensuing popularity reveals the failing and fading of the institutions that once were the only ones able to decide the legitimacy of art.¹³ It is apparent that it is through social media, with her

⁹ Lindsey Adler. “Instagram Poet Rupi Kaur Seems Utterly Uninterested In Reading Books.” *Deadspin*, October 4, 2017.

¹⁰ This explosion wound up earning her a two-book contract with publisher Andrew McMeel, a company that then re-released her debut collection to even more success. Agatha French. “Instapoet Rupi Kaur may be controversial, but fans and book sales are on her side.” *Los Angeles Times*, October 12, 2017,

¹¹ Rupi Kaur, “FAQ,” last visited April 24, 2020, <https://rupikaur.com/faq/>

¹² In an interview with *The Cut*, Kaur seems more interested in the aesthetics of appearance with her noting the cover design on books and the appearance of being a writer than with the actual craft itself. Molly Fischer. “The Instagram Poet Outselling Homer Ten to One: Meet Rupi Kaur, author of the ubiquitous *Milk and Honey*.” *The Cut*, October 3, 2017.

¹³ Kaur has sold more than 2.5 million copies in 25 languages for her 2014 book, *Milk and Honey*, which also spent 77 weeks on the *New York Times* Best-Seller List. This indicates that, while the gatekeeping institutions appear to deem her unworthy, the media and marketplace, which typically had no say in the definition of art, are able to legitimate her as an artist.

Instagram having 3.9 million followers, she built her audience and recognition as a poet and artist, despite not having an institutional backing or appreciation, other than an appreciation based off her sales.

Additionally, it is social media, not any recognized or typical institution, that has brought about more conversation about art than ever before. It seems as though anyone can be an artist, and anyone an art critic — there no longer needs to be an institution or formally recognized organization that decides on these titles. A work of art displayed in a gallery in Miami during the fall of 2019 called “Comedian” by Maurizio Cattelan went viral on the internet and across the world.¹⁴ It was a banana taped to the wall. The piece was, to undersell it, a popular topic of conversation, inspiring hundreds of parodies, and many people across the internet and various social media pages argued that it was not a work of art because of how “easy” it was to create.¹⁵ It is, after all, simply a banana taped to a wall. Literally anyone with duct tape and a banana could create this, so the argument seems to have some logic behind it. Discussions about whether a banana taped to the wall is a work of art occurred all over social media, in popular magazines, in friend groups, and on the street.¹⁶ It was made fun of everywhere, derided as being too simple, as part of a conspiracy among the wealthy to get tax breaks, and more. Despite these objections, the work did a wonderful job creating discussion about the value of art and commercialization, especially because of its price tag of \$120,000. However, questions about what art is, and what should be considered art have been raised in this manner since Marcel Duchamp placed a urinal marked “R.Mutt” in an art gallery and called it “Fountain.” Duchamp’s work sent ripples through the art world, whereas Cattelan’s work did not — it instead sent ripples through the real world,

¹⁴ Megan McCluskey. “There’s a Totally Reasonable Explanation for Those Taped Up Bananas Popping Up All Over the Place.” *Time Magazine*, December 11, 2019.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

outside of the art community, because of its popular presence on social media. It was instead through this work that philosophical conversations about art entered a sphere it had previously not been present in.

In these ways, which I will elaborate on later in the essay, the institutions that have held tight to the definition of art, decisions of what is and what is not — along with whether they have merit — have fallen to the wayside. Art is no longer defined by the institution; it is defined by something else. In this essay, I would like to add a fourth phase to the definition of art, similar to how Dickie added a third phase with his argument for an institutional definition.¹⁷ The phase I would like to introduce is the interpersonal phase of art, wherein art is defined by the relationship that persons have to a work of art and to the person who created it. Nothing comes into being through one person alone. Even Jesus had a belly button. Art should be no different — it hinges upon the relationships between people, as expressed through works of art. The definition that I have come up with, one that I hope to be satisfactory, has three qualifications: (1) A work of art must be a thing or experience created or curated by a person; (2) the work must summon a different person, a non-creator or non-artist,¹⁸ to recognize it as art through a second-person demand; and (3) the work must have a meaning embodied in it by the artist, whether intentionally or unintentionally, that the second person, the non-artist, must interpret and find understanding or meaning inside. While the first qualification comes from my own independent thought, the second and third qualifications arise from my readings of German Idealist Johann Gottlieb Fichte, who also influences the notion of what a person is in the first qualification, and Arthur C. Danto, respectively. While Danto's influence is obvious and explainable, given his

¹⁷ George Dickie, "What is Art? An Institutional Analysis," in *Aesthetics: A Comprehensive Anthology*, ed. Steven M. Cahn and Aaron Meskin (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 426-437.

¹⁸ In this essay, I will use creator and artist interchangeably, for the most part, and non-creator and non-artist interchangeably.

work in the field of the philosophy of art and aesthetics, Fichte may come as a surprise due to his lack of writing on aesthetics. However, I am utilizing his notion of the summons, which I will explain in the second part of this essay, because I believe it to be one of the strongest arguments for both the presence of a person in the world, and in particular, the necessity of interpersonal relationships. It is not, however, a literal application of Fichte's notion; instead, it is one inspired by his work. In this essay, I will attempt to explain why my argument is necessary and other definitions are, for the most part, unsatisfactory given our current situation, what exactly I mean by each of these points, why each one is necessary and cannot exist without the other, and to detail more in depth what the significance of this means for the art world, and for the world of everyone else in daily life, if it has any.

II. Problems with the Past

Obviously, one cannot propose something new without first addressing the old, and what it is replacing.¹⁹ Thus, this begins an account of the previous and most famous definitions and accounts of art, and why they are unsatisfactory, beginning with, quite understandably, the beginning of the conception of art in philosophy. The first phase of a definition of art is what George Dickie calls "the imitation theory," which, he notes, "more or less satisfied everyone until some time in the nineteenth century."²⁰ This theory was first put forth by Plato in the *Republic*, when he claims that "the arts are representational, or mimetic," and while others after him might have argued differently in terms of specifics, this notion stood the test of time until

¹⁹ Most of this section will be drawing from George Dickie's essay, "What is Art? An Institutional Analysis," though I will build off it and add my own critiques of Dickie's argument for an institutional definition of art.

²⁰ George Dickie, "What is Art? An Institutional Analysis," in *Aesthetics: A Comprehensive Anthology*, ed. Steven M. Cahn and Aaron Meskin (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 426.

“the expression theory of art broke the domination” of it.²¹ The primary problem with this theory was that it “focused on a readily evident relational property of works of art, namely, art’s relation to subject matter,” and this was only exacerbated when expressionism, and especially abstract expressionism, entered the art world and created works that were not readily capable of being related to subject matter.²² Instead, these works related to more conceptual things through abstract images or expressions. This development revealed that, while art often mimics the world, imitation is not a necessary property for something to be a work of art.

The second phase of art, per Dickie, is the non-definition of art, which has been most famously argued by Morris Weitz in his essay “The Role of Theory in Aesthetics” and then debunked in Dickie’s article. This definition of art claims that it cannot be defined because of two arguments: The first is his generalization argument, and the second is his classification argument. The generalization argument is Weitz’s belief that the concept of art is open due to the presence of many different subcategories. A person might call a novel a work of art, they might call a painting a work of art, and they might call a play a work of art. Therefore, because of the diversity of different items that we may call art that have seemingly no characteristics in common, there can be no way to call all of them “art.” However, as Dickie notes, “it may be that there are common characteristics that works of art have which distinguish them from nonart,” which is an objection I am inclined to agree with.²³ The classification argument has more intrigue to it. With this argument, Weitz claims that a work of art does not necessarily need to be a thing, or an artifact, it just needs to be classified as art. Dickie essentially agrees with this

²¹ Thomas Adajian, “The Definition of Art,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (2018); George Dickie, “What is Art? An Institutional Analysis,” in *Aesthetics: A Comprehensive Anthology*, ed. Steven M. Cahn and Aaron Meskin (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 426.

²² Dickie, 426.

²³ *Ibid*, 427.

notion, though he expands it. He argues that there are “at least three distinct senses of ‘work of art’”: the classificatory sense, the derivative sense, and the evaluative sense.²⁴ It depends upon the way in which a work of art is spoken about, and whether something is attributed the qualities of art that are generally agreed upon. Weitz argues that we rarely use this understanding because it is so common: “We generally know immediately whether an object is a work of art, so that generally no one needs to say, by way of classification, ‘That is a work of art,’” and while this is true, we *do* generally know when something is a work of art, I believe it to be absolutely necessary that we have this kind of outward recognition when we come to defining the concept.²⁵

The third phase of art is the institutional phase, which is most clearly argued by both Dickie and Danto. Essentially, in this argument, art is dependent upon an institution in order for it to be recognized as such. In his incredibly influential essay, “The Artworld,” Danto claims that “to see something as art requires something the eye cannot decry — an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld,” and while this sentence is beautiful, it necessitates that the creator has *some* understanding of the artworlds that have come before, a level of aesthetic knowledge.²⁶ Danto goes on to argue that it is the sociological context that elevates something to the position of art (the location where the piece was first shown, who the viewers are, the history of the style), and it is this context that allows for us to differentiate a work of art from something that is nonart. Dickie expands on this and claims that a work of art is essentially the christening of an object as a work of art, although more complex because it entirely depends upon who the person is that confers the object as art,²⁷ and to whom the work is

²⁴ Ibid, 428.

²⁵ Ibid, 428.

²⁶ Arthur C. Danto, “The Artworld,” in *Aesthetics: A Comprehensive Anthology*, ed. Steven M. Cahn and Aaron Meskin (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 422.

²⁷ Dickie, 436; Adajian, Stanford Encyclopedia.

conferred to. For both Dickie and Danto, a work of art can only be made by someone who has the status of artist placed upon them by an artworld (one that is composed of those who have a historic and aesthetic knowledge of art) and if it is displayed in an artworld (which is a world composed of those with historic and aesthetic knowledge of art). Art is, in this sense, restricted from the public because the necessity of a previous knowledge and presence in an artworld that both claim to be necessary does not allow for an everyday person to have access to it. However, as I mentioned before, art is now being displayed outside of the artworld through the presence of social media. Art is now being shared outside of the historic institutions in the form of posts Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook, places where there is no way to confer the status of art to a work (according to an institutional definition) because it has now become more difficult to differentiate what is a work of art, and what is not a work of art but rather something created in an artful manner by someone with aesthetic knowledge. Additionally, the democratization of knowledge that once formed the backbone of the artworld and institutions has created too many people with a knowledge of art, and this has created much more uncertainty about what truly is art, and what is not.

Part Two: The Middle

Now that we have established that previous well-known definitions of art are not satisfactory, it is time to move forward with my own definition, one that I believe to be a better, more comprehensive understanding. My definition, as stated before, has three qualifications. The first qualification is that art is a thing or experience created or curated by a person. The second qualification is that the thing or experience created or curated by a person, the work, summons a

different person, a noncreator, to recognize it as art through a second-person demand. The third and final qualification is that the work summons the noncreator to not only recognize it as art but also to find a meaning that has been embodied in the work.

These three qualifications are necessary conditions for something to be deemed “art.” Of course, a thing can have art-like qualities; things or experiences can be reminiscent of creations deemed art, but this does not mean that they are art. A urinal, for example, is a thing that is created by a person. Or, at least, it is an object designed by a person. Indeed, this urinal also has a meaning embodied²⁸ in it through its function — it was created to have the meaning as an object to contain urine. However, a typical urinal does not summon a noncreator to recognize it as art through a second-person demand.²⁹ This does not mean, however, that a urinal cannot summon a person to recognize it as art. In 1917, Duchamp placed a urinal in an art gallery, demanding that viewers recognize it as art, and this not only altered the meaning of the urinal, but it elevated it to the status of a work of art.

Of course, Duchamp’s work only made that particular urinal into a work of art. Obviously not all urinals are works of art; it would be quite ridiculous for every urinal in the world to be a work of art, but it is entirely possible that, if every urinal were gathered and imbued with meaning, they could be viewed as art. While anything has the potential to become a work of art, not everything is art. Currently, there are only sixteen urinals that are works of art as a result of Duchamp recreating this piece throughout the 1950s and 60s (not counting any other

²⁸ While I will explain what an “embodied meaning” is later on in the essay, it is, in short, a meaning or understanding of a work that has been “embodied” in the form that the work takes, whether it is a poem or a painting, by the artist. This meaning is embodied and exists beyond the mere surface-level appearance of a work. The function of an item, while not necessary to an item as a work of art, can add an element of meaning to it.

²⁹ This is primarily because neither the creators of most urinals or those who decide upon the placement of them intend for them to be viewed as art; typically, most urinal-creators and placers merely intend for them to be privately pissed in.

urinals that I am unaware of that have been raised to the status of art). This elevation to the status of art when something fulfills the necessary conditions can get confusing, especially because of the way objects and experiences can vacillate between being art and not, so I will here go into more clarity explaining each of the necessary qualities.

I. *Creation and/or Curation*

The first necessary condition for something to be a work of art is that it is a thing or experience created or curated by a person. On the surface, this condition does not seem like it could be that complicated. However, it is much more than what it seems. This condition calls for a definition of what a person is, which is a concept that could be constructed into an essay all unto itself. However, I will attempt to define what a person is briefly before jumping into explaining what I mean by a thing created or curated. Therefore, I will draw from Fichte,³⁰ and briefly define a person as a finite being with rational capacity and free efficacy.³¹³² The person is a being that will eventually die but has rationality at its center and the ability to reflect upon itself and apply these rational faculties to other existent and nonexistent things. Fichte's conception of the person is the basis of his notion of a natural right, but the person at the center is a finite being that has rational faculties and has the free determination to exercise its efficacy. I am not utilizing

³⁰ I am utilizing Fichte's notion of the person for two reasons: First, I will be using Fichte's notion of the summons later on in my essay, and using his conception of a person allows for consistency; and second, I find myself compelled to agree with his idea.

³¹ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Foundations of Natural Right*, trans. by Michael Baur. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000, pg. 18. This book will be referred to as *FNR* from now on.

³² As Gabriel Gottlieb notes in his essay on Fichte's notion of self-consciousness, Fichte uses the terms "individual," "human being," and "rational being" in, for the most part, the same way. I combine them all here under the umbrella term "person" to avoid confusion. Gabriel Gottlieb, "Fichte's Developmental View of Self-Consciousness," in *Fichte's Foundations of Natural Right: A Critical Guide*, ed. Gabriel Gottlieb (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 117-137.

Fichte's conception of the person for the same purpose that he did — in this essay, I am wholly unconcerned with the rights of man or the relationship that we have with each other inside a society, but instead in the relationships created through art. For my purposes, this person, following from Fichte's definition, is the human person, for the time being.³³ It is these qualities, to be brief, that constitute a person. This person is the only thing capable of being the artist, the creator of a work of art, and it is necessary that this creator is a person because of both the second and third qualifications that I have proposed. If an artist is not a person with free efficacy and rationality, they would then be unable to summon a second person who is their equal to recognize their work as art, nor would they be able to place a meaning inside said work for a noncreator to interpret.

It is also necessary that art belongs to the material world — art is not something that can exist purely in the realm of ideas. Here, too, I will draw from Fichte who claims that “If there is any human being at all, then there is necessarily a world as well,” and it is only in this world that a work of art can exist.³⁴ Essentially, because persons exist in a material world, it is necessary that art exists in the material world and can therefore only exist in the material world. Art is something that necessarily belongs to the material world — it must be something that can be comprehended through the utilization of any of the five generally accepted human senses. Art must be touchable, tasteable, seeable, hearable, or smellable.³⁵ It cannot exist solely in the realm of imagination, otherwise it cannot fit the other qualifications. If something exists solely in the mind of a person, it cannot work as a way to summon a noncreator into recognition of it as art

³³ I say “for the time being” because the conception, based upon these qualities, could grow with the development of artificial intelligence. However, I have yet to read a compelling argument for the personhood of artificial intelligence.

³⁴ Fichte, *FNR*, 38.

³⁵ For the idea of poetry and other written works, I constitute these as both seeable and hearable.

because it cannot be put before another person. So, it is for the sake of the other qualifications that it is necessary for art to exist only in the material world. In another way, it is also necessary that art exist in the material world because all art must be influenced in some way by the artist. There must be some act of the person's will that changes and alters the substance in a slight but substantial way in order for it to become a work of art — this change, or transfiguration, as Danto puts it, is in a sense the way that art is a thing that must be created or curated.³⁶

Now that we have defined (albeit briefly) what a person is and come up with the requirement for art in the material world, we must now move forward to examine what it means for a thing or experience to be created or curated. First, we must examine the difference between creation and curation before we can get into explaining what it means to fully create or curate a thing or experience. Obviously, a person cannot truly create something new.³⁷ We use the word “create” here and in common usage to denote a change, or a transfiguration of other material parts into something greater than the whole. While Danto uses the word “transfiguration” to refer the change of something from being non-art to a work art, I am using it in a different sense to refer to the change from one substance to another, outside of the mere embodying of meaning. The creation of something is the changing of the nature of a substance — it is the sculpting of clay into a bowl, the addition of paint to a canvas to form a new image, placing one note after another to compose a song, or the transfiguration of otherwise individual words into a meaningful poem. Creation refers not to the adding of meaning to an object in the experiential³⁸ world, but to the changing in the original appearance, sound, or understanding of a thing to make

³⁶ Arthur C Danto, “The Transfiguration of the Commonplace,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 33, no. 2, (1974), p. 146.

³⁷ See the *Law of the Conservation of Mass* by Lavoisier, where he says that matter can neither be created nor destroyed. Thus, it is not technically possible for a finite being to “create” something, per se.

³⁸ This is an aspect that is present in the formation of a work of art, but it is not something necessary at this level. It becomes necessary with the formation of a work of art in the third qualification.

it different than it was before. To bring back into conversation Duchamp's "Fountain," he did create the "fountain" by painting "R. Mutt" on it, but he did not create the urinal. That work was done by the company that produced it out of porcelain. When I refer to creation, I am referring to the alteration of an experiential object with regard to its final appearance.

Curation, on the other hand, is the direction that comes with a thing or experience. While creation refers to the physical altering of an experiential object, curation is not something that necessarily involves physical interaction with a thing. Curation is the mere direction of a thing. If I am standing beside you, and I say, "Look over there," I am curating your vision. I am directing you to look at something and altering the way it might be perceived. Again, this is a type of transfiguration³⁹ of a thing because it is an altering of something, but the thing it alters is not through a material change necessarily, but rather merely through an altering of mental perception. This notion is similar to what Dickie is referring to when he says that when people call something a work of art, they draw attention to it as such, as might be necessary with works of art that he calls "junk sculpture and found art [that] may occasionally force such remarks."⁴⁰ The easiest way to go about explaining what curation is exactly can be done by looking at the theater. When we are talking about a play, we first examine it in terms of the actual words, the story being told on the page. This is the creative aspect — the words are arranged, transfigured from being individual words with their own individual definitions into a narrative, a story that is told. A play is created. A show, on the other hand, occurs when the play is put into action, when it is directed, or curated, to be something different than the mere creation. The show is the curation of a play. The director alters the way that the narrative works merely as a created object

³⁹ I am using the word "transfiguration" to refer to the change in understanding of a singular item as something more or different than it previously was believed to be.

⁴⁰ Dickie, 428.

into something different, and it is because of the way the director alters our vision through their own direction, their own curation of how things are presented. This is why no two performances of the same play are the exact same — they are curated in different manners. So, curation refers to the changing of an experience to make it different than it otherwise would be, whereas creation refers to the physical altering of an object to make it different than it otherwise would be. Now, to examine Duchamp's "Fountain" in terms of its curation (as the work is something both created and curated), it is through Duchamp putting the urinal on its side that he curated it. Duchamp altered the perspective that the urinal was viewed; he transfigured the view that a person would have of a typical urinal to curate the vision of the noncreators, the audience. Thus, Duchamp's readymade is not a simple urinal placed in a position to be viewed as art, it is a work that he both created and curated.

Creation and curation are the two ways to fashion something in order for it to be recognized as a work of art, and it is necessary that these works of art are fashioned by a person. It is not necessary that a work be both created and curated in order for it to meet this qualification, as Duchamp's "Fountain" was, but it is necessary that a work is either created or curated for it to fulfill the first aspect. While one could argue that the act of creation is an act of curation, because the application of paint to a canvas or word to a piece of paper is a form of altering the perception of a thing, this is an overcomplication because the act of creation changes the form of one or more material objects while curation merely alters the perspective of the object. The creative aspect is the alteration of certain parts into a unique whole, whereas the curatorial aspect is the presentation of an existing whole in a manner different from its original presentation.

There is another objection that has risen in the past few decades that would never have existed more than 100 years ago, and that is the question of works created by animals or robots. I am referring here, with regard to the animal objection, to works of art that have been shown in museums that are paintings by elephants,⁴¹ as this is something that has become popular in recent decades and is an objection that I can foresee arising because of my necessary qualification that art be created by a person. I am currently not extending the definition of a person to elephants or other animals.⁴² I am not saying that these works were not created by elephants nor am I saying that they are not eligible to be viewed as art. It is clear that the elephants held the brushes in their trunks and that they acted by altering a canvas through the application of paint to it. What I am arguing is that the elephants are not capable of being viewed as the artist behind these works if it is desired to argue for them as works of art because of their status of not being persons, despite the fact that they are finite beings. It is their lack of rationality and free efficacy, so far as we know, that removes them from being able to be viewed as the artist because they are not intentionally creating their paintings, and this lack of intentionality prevents them from being able to both summon noncreators to view it as art and to place a meaning inside the work. The artist is, instead, the person who put the brushes in the trunks of the elephants and placed the canvas before them. This kind of art is a form of curation. A person is directing the elephants to do the painting, curating it, and thus providing for it the eligibility of it to be viewed as art. To look at it in another light, when Jackson Pollock took his dripsticks and dipped them in paint, it was not the dripstick that was the artist behind the paintings, it was Pollack who created the works as candidates for recognition as art. While there is an obvious difference between a piece

⁴¹ "About," The Elephant Art Gallery, accessed April 28, 2020, <https://elephantartgallery.com/pages/about>

⁴² If a person were to write a compelling essay arguing for the personhood of an elephant, I could be persuaded, but elephants and other animals are currently excluded from my definition of a person.

of wood used as a dripstick and an elephant, they are both used as tools in the formation of something as a work of art. Thus, because we do not recognize the dripsticks as the artist, we ought not recognize elephants as the artists behind their paintings, merely as the makers of them.

The same understanding ought to be applied to the situation of robotic art. As technology progresses and our robotic inventions become more and more self-sufficient, growing closer to becoming truly artificial intelligence, we must think about any kind of creation that might be made by a robot and examine whether or not it is suitable for candidacy as art through this first qualification alone, the necessity of the person in the creation or curation of a work of art. So, we must play the theoretical game of imagining a future possibility where a robot with artificial intelligence creates a painting and it fits the other two necessary qualifications for a thing to be viewed as a work of art.⁴³ Would this painting be a work of art? It would be something created by a being with artificial intelligence, and we assume that artificial intelligence also entails some kind of free efficacy, an ability to choose, and a form of rationality. It would seem that the robot would then be completely able to create or curate a work of art because, to a certain extent, it would be a person in a way. However, we must also examine the idea of the programming behind the robot. If a robot is programmed to create art, this would remove the actuality of the free efficacy of the robot. But this is where things get more complicated when we then look at the human person — if indeed we are created, as robots are created, by something grander than us, would we then be truly capable of creating art? For the ease of this argument and to avoid going down a rabbit hole, we will simply assume that any kind of creation done by a robot, even one with artificial intelligence, must be something programmed into it by a person which would remove its ability to have free efficacy and remove its ability to fully qualify as a person. This

⁴³ We will examine later on if this is an actual possibility for a robot, but in this experiment, let us imagine that it is without delving too deep.

lack of free efficacy then removes the ability for said robot to embody a meaning inside a work, and to summon a noncreator. The robot would then be a tool, much as the elephant or the dripstick, for a person to curate a work and put it into the position to be viewed as art.

The most necessary aspect for the first qualification is the integration of the person as the artist, the creator of a work. It is because the person has free efficacy and rationality that a thing, an object in the experiential world, is able to be elevated to a new level through the embodiment of meaning and the free choice to alter something in a new way. It is because of this requirement for art to be made by a person that works made by animals or works made by robots are not capable of being viewed as art, except when we understand that it is a work curated by a person. As Raquel Cascales says in her article on Danto's notion of the end of art, "were an animal or robot to make a piece, it could capture colors, but it would have no meaning" because its inability to act in a freely efficacious way denies it the ability to fully and completely be a person.⁴⁴ It is imperative that we recognize this first qualification before we can move on to the other qualifications of art, as if there is not first a physical object or experience that is sensible, there can be nothing to be placed in the position to be viewed as art.

II. *The Summoning*

Now that the first qualification has been addressed, we must address my second qualification, namely that a work of art must summon a non-artist to recognize it as such through a second-person demand. What this means, in the plainest of terms, is that there must be two persons involved in order for a thing or experience to be elevated to the position of art: The creator, who

⁴⁴ Raquel Cascales. "The Development of the Sense of 'the End of Art' in Arthur Danto." *Rivista di Estetica* 68 (2018): 131-148.

designates something as art, and the non-creator, who either recognizes it as such or denies it that status. However, regardless of the response of the non-creator, the mere act of their consideration provides the work with recognition as art. In essence, a work of art needs to be recognized as art in order for it to become a work of art. While this may seem tautological, the status of art is something that must be conferred upon it by a person other than the artist, a noncreator, and it is only through this that it may receive said status. It appears, then, that there is a necessary interpersonal relationship for art to become such.

This interpersonal relationship that is necessary for art to have its status can only come about when an artist puts the work in a place for the noncreator to view it as such. Through the act of forming a work and putting it in a position for it to be viewed as art by asking for it to be viewed as such, the artist summons other rational beings into a form of response not only to understand the meaning of the work, but to recognize it as a work of art. The simple asking of another person to recognize a work as art forces the non-artist to view it as art, which then places the work as art because of this act of consideration. The idea of recognition through a second-person demand derives from Fichte's notion of the summons. Although Fichte, in his work, intends for the idea of the summons, which builds upon his argument of the person, to be a foundation for his notion of natural right, I am using the basis of his idea of reciprocal acknowledgement as a way to discuss the backing of art as necessarily relational.

The definition of the person, as I spoke on before in my section on Creation and Curation, is a finite being with rational capacity and free efficacy, and while this person exists at the beginning in a vacuum, the person necessarily exists in a world, and where there is a world, there are other beings.⁴⁵ Fichte goes on to create what he calls the "summons to engage in free self-

⁴⁵ Fichte, *FNR*, 18.

activity,”⁴⁶ which, as Gabriel Gottlieb notes, is “an act in which one subject calls upon another subject to exercise its efficacy by actively determining itself” which leads to a necessary relationship between persons.⁴⁷ As Fichte says, one person⁴⁸ must call upon another person “to resolve to exercise its efficacy”⁴⁹ and when this call is made, it posits the existence and relationship between these two persons. The summons is a demand from a first person⁵⁰ to a second person to act in a way that calls the second person to use both their free efficacy and their rationality, thereby allowing for both of them to exist in a state of mutual recognition of the position of both actors as persons.

The summons is not a simple ask from one person to another, it is a demand that the second person act. The summons only works when the first person provides a reason for the second person to act, and this reason is a way in which the second person ought to act but it does not necessitate that the person *do* act. As Fichte notes, a person “cannot find itself necessitated to do anything, not even to act in general; for then it would not be free,”⁵¹ but the demand made by a first person summoning a second does not force that second person to act, it commands them to use their free efficacy and rationality to take action by providing it with a reason. Stephen Darwall, in his essay on morality, uses this notion of the summons and provides a good example of the demand by speaking about a time when “you might try to convince someone to stop causing you pain, say, to remove her foot from on top of yours.”⁵² If a person (person *B*) were to

⁴⁶ Fichte, *FNR*, 38.

⁴⁷ Gabriel Gottlieb, “Fichte’s Developmental View of Self-Consciousness,” in *Fichte’s Foundations of Natural Right: A Critical Guide*, ed. Gabriel Gottlieb (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 117.

⁴⁸ A finite being with free efficacy and rational capabilities.

⁴⁹ Fichte, *FNR*, 31.

⁵⁰ This demand is made when the first person uses their free efficacy and rational capability.

⁵¹ Fichte, *FNR*, 32.

⁵² Stephen Darwall, *The Second-Person Standpoint: Morality, Respect, and Accountability*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), pgs. 92-113; 94.

be standing with their foot on top of another person's (person *A*) and were causing them pain, then *A*, who is being stepped on, would naturally ask *B* to remove their foot so as to stop causing them pain. While it may appear to be a question from *A* to *B*, it is more than just that: It is a demand that *B* recognize they are causing pain to *A* and then for *B* to use their rationality and efficacy to make a change. *A*'s demand provides a reason for *B* to act because *A* demands recognition in an agent-relative⁵³ manner. As Darwall says, this "require[s] the agent⁵⁴ to relate to the other person in certain ways, respecting their ("external") freedom and their standing to demand this respect."⁵⁵ However, while it is a demand, the demand does not need to be met or accepted. It is merely by demanding, and thereby summoning, the second person that it allows for the second person to find themselves "as something that *could* exercise its efficacy, as something that is summoned to exercise its efficacy but that can just as well refrain from doing so."⁵⁶ It is clear, I hope, that the summons must operate as a demand from one person to a second person that respects the autonomy and rationality of both actors. The demand for the recognition of something as a work of art follows in these same lines: It does not matter whether a person decides to recognize something as art when summoned to do so, it is their potential to legitimize it, not their necessity to do so, that allows for a work to be elevated to the position of art, regardless of whether the noncreator believes it to be so.

The next question that must be asked is regarding what kind of demand must be made, and that answer is clear: The demand must be made in the second-person. It must be, as Darwall

⁵³ In Darwall's essay, he explains further the difference between agent-relative and agent-neutral, which I will not be going into detail about.

⁵⁴ In the example, the agent would be *B*, who is receiving the demand and being given the ability to act as agent.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 96. *A* demands that *B* respects the freedom of *A* by summoning them to act, and thereby use their free efficacy and rationality to make a decision.

⁵⁶ Fichte, *FNR*, 33.

notes, “addressed from one free and rational person to another,” and not any other way.⁵⁷ To continue using Darwall’s example of a person stepping on another’s foot, *A* would make their demand in a second-person manner. *A* would not say, for example, “I sure do hope that *B* stops stepping on my foot, it’s causing me pain.” Nor would they say, “*B* should stop stepping on *A*’s foot because it is causing *A* pain.” They would demand, using the second-person form, saying something like, “*A*, *you* should stop stepping on my foot because it is causing me pain.” A demand must be made in the second-person because of the previous point: Demands, and the summons, provide a reason for an other to act. Darwall says that “Such reasons are second-personal in the sense that they must be capable of being addressed person-to-person” because of the aspect of mutual recognition with regards to free efficacy and rationality inherent in them.⁵⁸ Therefore, if a person were to make a demand of another, one that summons both of them into mutual recognition and posits them in a relationship, it must happen in the intimate manner of the second-person. The demand is necessarily a second-person demand.

However, a problem arises from this with regard to *how* a person must make a second-person demand that summons another into a relationship of mutual recognition. It would appear, especially with the example provided by Darwall, that such a demand must occur verbally between two individual persons. This is, quite obviously, not the case as a verbal necessity would exclude the capability of a non-speaking person to be recognized as a person and would exclude recognition through other manners of communication. The medium of the summons is broad, so long as it works as a second-person demand and takes place in the experiential world that the agents are present in.⁵⁹ If two students are sitting in a class and one passes a note to the other, the

⁵⁷ Ibid, 96.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 95.

⁵⁹ Fichte says that “If there is any human being at all, then there is necessarily a world as well” (FNR, 38).

action of passing the note works as a second-person demand for them to read it or look at it because it is an act that calls upon, or summons, the second person to take an action that is an expression of their free efficacy and rationality. A person can make a second-person demand of another through almost any of the five senses.⁶⁰⁶¹ The question then arises about whether a person can make a second-person demand of another without the first person being there in exactly the same moment. Fichte seems to reject this when he argues that mutual recognition is something that must occur at the same time, saying that it is necessary that “the subject’s efficacy is synthetically unified with the object in one and the same moment,”⁶² but this can happen asynchronously. If a person were to write a note to their roommate at eight in the morning and place it on their desk at that time, with instructions to meet at a coffee shop at 3:30 p.m., they would still be making an immediate second-person demand of the other even if the receiver of the note were to see it at two in the afternoon instead of immediately. It would remain the same even if the person were to see the note after the meeting time suggested by the deliverer because it would nonetheless demand them to act, even if the demand has changed from meeting at a place to notifying the other that they just found the note.

Despite the fact that the summons can be asynchronous, the status of art is not a permanent state. It is a temporary state that is only awarded to a work when the summons is activated through the response and recognition of a second person. To rephrase an age-old question, can someone summon a second person without the presence of them?⁶³ The answer is,

⁶⁰ While I am uncertain how a person could demand another to act through smell or taste, touch (grabbing another’s hand and pulling them in a direction), sound (using the voice), and sight (a written message) seem fairly straightforward.

⁶¹ This is, however, excluding any kind of force exerted by the summoner that does not offer the second person a reason to determine themselves.

⁶² Fichte, *FNR*, 31.

⁶³ The age-old question in question that I am rephrasing is, “If a tree falls in the forest with no one to hear it, does it make a sound?” And the answer is yes. That’s how physics works, but in this case, that’s not how recognition works.

of course, no. In the context of art, a work of art cannot be recognized as art if there is not a second person there to recognize it as such. Therefore, if there were to be something created, it cannot be art without there being a second person summoned and it falls back into the realm of decoration when it is not being viewed or recognized.

Because the summons can act through seemingly any medium and asynchronously, art is able to work as a form of the summons, and, in my argument, a thing or experience⁶⁴ must utilize this summons for it to truly become a work of art. In order for a thing or experience to become a work of art, the creator must demand a non-creator to recognize it as art. In the same way that it is not necessary for a second person to act according to the demand of the first person, only to be able to recognize that it could but “can just as well refrain from doing so,”⁶⁵ it does not matter whether the noncreator recognizes or believes the work is art — it stands as such because of the mere consideration the second person gives it. Darwall claims that belief cannot work through the second person demand because it does not provide reason enough and it depends on the second person’s relation to evidence, and “whether something is evidence itself depends, not on its relation to [a person and the relationship of them] but on its tending to show what is the case,” but this claim does not take into account how a thing or experience up for the consideration as art demands the other to believe it as such.⁶⁶ The creator demands the noncreator to do more than recognize the work as art when they use it to summon the noncreator. When a person creates a work of art and shares it with another person as art, they summon the noncreator to do four things: (1) recognize the work as art; (2) recognize that a person with free efficacy and rationality created the work; (3) interpret the work as art; and (4) discover the meaning embodied in it by

⁶⁴ Using the first premise of my definition of art.

⁶⁵ Fichte, *FNR*, 33.

⁶⁶ Darwall, 96.

the artist. It is through the third and fourth aspects of the demand that the summons does more than just call upon the second person to believe; it calls upon the second person to take the action of interpreting the work as art, which, whether the noncreator decides to interpret it or not, elevates the work to the status of art and demands the second person to find a meaning in it. The work, in the case of art, is always the medium through which the first person demands the second person to take an action.

When someone creates a work, if they want it to be considered art, they must necessarily share the thing or experience with a second person in order for it to realize the status of art. While some may argue that the highest art is that which is created for the self and the self alone,⁶⁷ this does not remove the necessity for art to be shared in order for it to be considered as such. The act of creating a work of art is indeed a solitary activity in most cases, and while some may argue that a work created by the self and for the self is the only way to truly make great art,⁶⁸ this does not mean that something created in a lonely way and for the sake of the artist discovering themselves can go without being shared. The idea of art is a social construct and is dependent upon interpersonal connections for it to exist in the same way that justice and ethical action cannot exist without more than one person to bring it into being. A person cannot act justly without a second person for their action to affect and be realized as just, and a work of art cannot be art without a second person to recognize it as such. It is only through interpersonal relationships that a thing or experience can be elevated to the status of art, and thus it is necessary that the creator of a work, if they want it to be considered art, must demand a noncreator to recognize it as such by summoning them as a freely efficacious, rational being to

⁶⁷ See Nietzsche's account of art, and others influenced by this belief.

⁶⁸ Again, see Nietzsche and others influenced by him. Though this is a popular belief and while I am somewhat inclined to agree that only works created without consideration of an audience are capable of being truly great, my goal is not aesthetic evaluation. It is only the ontological aspect of art that I am interested in.

take the action of interpreting it and discovering the meaning that the creator has embodied into it.

III. The Meaning Embodied

The third and final necessary condition for a work to be considered art is that it must have a meaning embodied in it by the artist, whether intentionally or unintentionally placed there by the artist, for the non-artist to interpret and finding meaning in. The notion of embodied meaning is a model created by Danto for interpreting works of art that he says he uses when “trying to say what a given work means, and how that meaning is embodied in the material object which carries it,” but it works as more than just a mode for interpreting.⁶⁹ Though he did not coin the phrase until later, the idea of embodied meaning was first posited by Danto in his writings where he tried to discover why one thing is art when something that appeared to be the exact same is not considered art in his essay “The Artworld” (1964).⁷⁰ This question of why one thing is art, and another is not, is, the question that anyone attempting to define art tries to answer. While I agree with Danto that the meaning embodied in a work is essential when attempting to differentiate the two, there are more factors at work in identifying a work as art as opposed to not art than just the meaning that is embodied in it.

The easiest way to enter into an understanding of what an embodied meaning entails is through the “artworld.” Danto coined this term in his essay with the same name, and he claims that “To see something as art requires something the eye cannot decry — an atmosphere of

⁶⁹ Arthur C. Danto, *The Abuse of Beauty* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing, 2017), p. 139.

⁷⁰ I will use the term “embodied meaning” to essentially encompass Danto’s definition of art, despite his usage of it as merely a mode for critique.

artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld.”⁷¹ By saying this, Danto is claiming that, in order to call something a work of art, it must have an aesthetic theory and history embodied in it by the artist. The person who makes a work of art must have an understanding of artistic knowledge, one that can only come about through exposure and knowledge of other works and artists, and they must have a knowledge of the history of art and the way that it has developed. Danto goes on to claim that “It is the theory that takes [a work] up into the world of art” and that “without the theory, one is unlikely to see [a work] as art, and in order to see it as part of the artworld, one must have mastered a good deal of artistic theory” as well as a knowledge of art history in order to transform something into a work of art.⁷² This theory and understanding of history is something that Danto claims to be embodied in the work by the artist, and this is evident through the work’s sociological context. It is how, in “The Artworld” essay, the critic is able to understand a thing as a work of art and Testadura is not. The sociological context of any given work of art can be understood by examining the descriptors of a work, rather than the work by itself, because they are embodied in it: These descriptors are the time period in which the work was made, the date and historical context of it; the title of the work; the location where the piece is exhibited, or first was shown; and the identity of who the artist is and the historicity of the creator, including their sexuality, gender, age, and ethnicity. Essentially, when an artist embodies a meaning into a work, they are imbuing these attributes into the meaning, and adding a portion of their spirit into the medium. Danto says that “We must endeavor to grasp the thought of the work, based on the way the work is organized,” and this organization can be understood by examining the sociological and historical aspects of any

⁷¹ Danto, “The Artworld,” p. 422. I cited this exact quote in the section “Problems with the Past,” but as several pages have passed since then, I figured I ought to attribute it again.

⁷² Ibid, p. 423.

individual work.⁷³ This endeavor cannot be accomplished simply by looking at a work of art. Danto claims that, in order to understand what makes something a work of art, “we must go outside the objects and into the atmosphere of their ontological status, and seek criteria underdetermined by retinal indiscrimination,” essentially meaning that we must look for a meaning that is inherent in the spirit of a work of art that exists beyond the mere appearance of a piece.⁷⁴ There are, according to Danto, aspects that cannot be seen without digging deep into the historicity and sociological status of the work.

However, the historicity of a work, including the identity of the creator, is not all that creates the embodied meaning of a piece. It is also the manner that the audience interacts with a work. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy glosses Danto’s definition with a claim that something is a work of art if and only if it, “by means of rhetorical ellipsis (usually metaphorical) which...engages audience participation in filling in what is missing,” and this can be seen evidently when Danto provides an example of embodied meaning in *The Abuse of Beauty*.⁷⁵ He is describing *The Wedding of Peleus and Thetis* (1610) when he begins writing about how this painting would be viewed when it debuted.⁷⁶ The people viewing it would understand who each character in the painting is, the relationships that they have, and the story behind it, in terms of the story of the actual wedding of Peleus and Thetis. This understanding, not only of the historicity that would come with a work, but of the way that people might have viewed it and interpret it based upon their knowledge is something that is necessary to understanding a piece. The meaning, not only of who the artist is, when it debuted and where, also lies in the content of

⁷³ Danto, *The Abuse of Beauty*, 139.

⁷⁴ Arthur C. Danto, “The Transfiguration of the Commonplace,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 33, no 2 (Winter 1974), p. 140.

⁷⁵ Adajian, “The Definition of Art.”

⁷⁶ Danto, *The Abuse of Beauty*, pgs. 140-142.

the painting and how an audience would have interacted with it. The meaning embodied in a work, one that a non-creator is summoned to interpret, must include these aspects.

Additionally, as I have stipulated, this meaning can either be intentionally embodied in a work, which is the case in art created by an artist with an aesthetic knowledge, or unintentionally, which is typically the case for those who are lacking in said knowledge or awareness of what they are doing. The unintentional embodiment of meaning is one that, in most cases, occurs in the latter situation: The artist, though unaware of it, inserts inside the work an element or understanding of their personal history by accident. This can occur most clearly in an artwork created by a child. If a professional artist, one who grew up in a single-parent home and received aesthetic and professional training, were to paint a portrait of their family, they might create an image only of the person who raised them, thus indicating the sense of loneliness they might have felt while growing up. This meaning and understanding of loneliness as illustrated by the image of a single person, alone, would be an intentionally embodied meaning. However, if a child, growing up in similar circumstances, was instructed to draw their family, and they drew a similar image of a singular person in blue crayon on a white sheet of paper, the same meaning would be embodied. The child, however, would probably not be intentionally inserting a meaning and understanding of loneliness or dependence. However, when a noncreator looks upon this work, they could still interpret it as such. This embodiment of meaning, however, is necessarily tied to the work, despite the fact that it was unintended.

This notion of embodied meaning may seem like a satisfactory way to understand something as a work of art, but it is challenged in our current day and age because of the rise of social media. Today, many artists have social media accounts that they use to interact with and grow audiences. One way that many artists utilize this tool is by posting images of their work on

their account, but it is not only their art that they may post on their social media pages. For example, if we examine the Instagram account of contemporary artist Cbabi Bayoc, he has 2,959 posts on his page.⁷⁷ While the page has hundreds, if not thousands, of pictures of paintings that he has made,⁷⁸ he also has hundreds, if not more, posts of flyers for events, images of him working, friends, family, news releases, or other miscellaneous items. If we examine some of these posts that do not contain paintings through Danto's notion of embodied meaning and compare them with ones that do contain paintings, the line becomes blurry regarding what can be considered a work of art. For example, let us look at a painting called "I'm D.O.P.E.," which he posted to Instagram on April 6, 2020,⁷⁹ and a picture of him working on a mural that he used to advertise an event called WallBall STL that he posted on February 2, 2020.⁸⁰ In both cases, the items in question were posted by Bayoc, and were shared in the same location, his Instagram page. Bayoc is a straight, black American man, nearing 50 years of age, and he lives in St. Louis, where he creates most of his works. In this aspect, the sociological context appears to be the exact same, with the one exception being that Bayoc gave a title to one and not the other. However, many artists have refused to title some of their works, and they are still considered art and given, typically by museum or gallery curators, the title of "untitled" with the date it was created or shared. Additionally, both posts follow certain aesthetic rules and theories. The painting, obviously, engages in aesthetic theory through its usage of color and the subject, a black man with six gold teeth he is showing by pulling down his lips, wearing a crown that says "I'm D.O.P.E." It utilizes certain geometric patterns that evoke some cubist works, and seems to

⁷⁷ Bayoc, Cbabi (@cbabi). April 11, 2020. <https://instagram.com/cbabi/?hl=en>.

⁷⁸ I will not be going into specifics about the percentage of paintings he has made when compared to other pictures because 2,959 posts is far too many to reasonably go through.

⁷⁹ Bayoc, Cbabi (@cbabi). April 6, 2020. <https://instagram.com/p/B-pW1CIAa31/>.

⁸⁰ Bayoc, Cbabi (@cbabi). February 2, 2020. https://instagram.com/p/B8Fuzu6g_TS/.

reference cartoons through strong linework. The WallBall post also engages in aesthetic theory, being a photograph that was taken in accordance with the rule of thirds, following the golden ratio, and has a snippet of some of Bayoc's work. It could be argued that there is a reference to Diego Velazquez's "Las Meninas" by being a piece that includes the artist at work,⁸¹ which would insert it into the artworld through the aesthetic history and theory, both with this reference and by following the rule of thirds, an aesthetic guideline, or theory, for why visual images appear pleasing to the eye.

However, as Danto says, "we must go outside the objects... and seek criteria underdetermined by retinal indiscrimination," and so we will examine these two posts beyond the visual level, and try and figure out what meaning they have embodied in them and if this will allow us to understand why we can view one as a work of art and recognize the other as not a work of art. In the caption of the "I'm D.O.P.E." post, Bayoc says that he "remixed a previous portrait of @tobenwigwe to show how this cat keeps moving, shaking and inspiring," referring to musician Tobe Nwigwe.⁸² This, along with the phrase "I'm D.O.P.E." in the title and on Nwigwe's crown in the painting, push viewers to understand an idea of black excellence and regality in American society, a society built upon and by the tenets of white supremacy. In the WallBall post, there is a similar meaning embodied. The post contains an image of Bayoc working, a black man creating something with artistic and seemingly economic value, and is an advertisement of his presence in the event. It has a meaning embodied in it that emphasizes black excellence, choosing to show a black artist and his work as something that will entice people to attend an event. It also pushes viewers to understand an idea of black excellence in American

⁸¹ While this argument would surely be a difficult one, it is still an argument capable of being made that nonetheless would insert this post into the artworld

⁸² Bayoc, Cbabi (@cbabi). April 6, 2020. <https://www.instagram.com/p/B-pW1CIAa31/>

society. It appears that both works have a meaning embodied in them by Danto's understanding, the sociological and historical context of the works and aspects that extend beyond that. Nevertheless, viewers are still able to understand that the "I'm D.O.P.E." post is a work of art, and the WallBall post is not. This problem, however, is resolved when combined with the other necessary qualifications I have proposed. The embodied meaning in a work of art must be an aspect of the summons in order for a viewer to be able to recognize one thing as art and another as not-art. When these other aspects are in play, it is clear that Bayoc is summoning viewers to recognize "I'm D.O.P.E." as art, while he is not doing so with the WallBall post. He is summoning them, yes, but he is not summoning them to view the work as such, merely to come to an event.

Part Three: The End

I. A Few Quick Examples

When examined, each of my three qualifications fail individually to provide a satisfactory definition of art in the current age. The first qualification fails on its own because clearly any single thing created or curated by a person cannot be a work of art because then everything created that we interact with in the world would be art, and that is certainly not the case. The second qualification fails on its own because it does not extend beyond mutual recognition without the work, as an embodiment of the summons, having something more to it than existence. The third qualification fails on its own because it cannot differentiate art from not-art when they are shared in the same sociological and historical context. When they are all combined

together, as three necessary conditions for one definition, they succeed. The sum is indeed greater than the parts. Once we take the first qualification, we have a medium, a work that can be placed in consideration for the status as art. Once the work exists, it is capable of being used in the summons and it is through the creator demanding a noncreator to recognize it as art that the notion of embodied meaning is activated, and once this happens, it is interpreted and awarded the status of art through the examination of it as such, regardless of whether the viewer believes it to be art.

To provide an example of this theory at work, let us imagine a small office, filled with bookshelves. There is a desk in the center of the office and on it sits a computer and a pile of papers. Behind the desk, Barnett Newman's painting "Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue II" is hanging. In the state of an empty office, the painting is merely decoration, no different than the bookshelves or the computer. However, the moment someone enters the office and gazes at the painting, looking at it as something different than a bookshelf, Newman asynchronously summons that person to view it as a work of art and it becomes, once again, a work of art.

We must then return to the question of poet Rupi Kaur, who I mentioned briefly in the introduction to this essay. Kaur's work is inherently simplistic and easy to understand. With a poem like the one I mentioned earlier, which simply reads, "i want to honeymoon myself,"⁸³ it is difficult to differentiate this work, which I believe to be art, from a post with the exact same wording made by a different person (who I will call Grace) without any intentional reference to Kaur. If Grace were to post an image of this text to Instagram, her followers and any viewers would not interpret it as art, merely as an abstract desire. However, when Kaur posts this phrase, the exact same formation of words that Grace posted (though perhaps in a different font), it is

⁸³ Kaur, Rupi (@rupikaur_). March 29, 2018. <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bg7l5pSjIyQ/>

interpreted as art because Kaur demands that others view her post as such, and embodies a meaning in it that extends deeper, beyond the meaning that Grace intended with her own post. While these two women may have posted the exact same thing, one is viewed as art, and the other is not.

II. Concluding the Conclusion

To create a definition for anything, one must wholly reimagine the concept. Art is a broad and complicated notion, one that most people are able to recognize when they see it, but struggle when asked to explain it. In this essay, I have attempted to reimagine art by examining the way it has expressed itself in our increasingly online world of social media which I believe has brought about the dissolution of the institutions that once had a firm grasp on the determination of what could be defined as art. In order to both understand and expand these previous understandings, I have defined art with three necessary qualifications. First, a work of art must be a thing or experience created or curated by a person, with the understanding that a person is a freely efficacious and rational being. Second, the artist must summon a different person, a non-creator, to recognize their work as art through a second-person demand, a demand that also asks the non-creator to interpret the work. Finally, the third qualification is that the work must have a meaning embodied in it by the artist, whether intentionally or unintentionally, for a non-artist to interpret and attempt to understand. While I did not thoroughly examine and explain this final aspect of the third qualification, namely that the non-artist must interpret and attempt to understand the meaning embodied in any work of art, I ignored it for what I believe to be good reason. It should

be rather obvious that, with anything that can be potentially considered art, viewers and/or interpreters must make an attempt to understand what a work means.

Certainly, there are many limitations to my argument and objections that could be raised. Stephen Davies, in his essay “Defining Art and Artworlds,” dives deep into the history of art, and attempts to define art by justifying it with respect to its origin in the world and how it manifests itself currently.⁸⁴ I do not, in my own work, address the question of when the concept of art entered into our world, even though the mere abstraction and notion of art is necessary to my definition. This is because I am not interested in the question of how art came to be in our world. Art exists. It is a concept almost every contemporary person is familiar with. In regards to my own definition, I do not intend nor desire to explain its origin or how it came to be in our world; I simply desire to explain the function it plays today as a means for persons to connect with each other beyond direct communication.

Additionally, it is clear that some may not see the necessity of a new definition of art, believing instead that the changes brought about with the advent of social media and the democratization of knowledge ought to lead to the expansion of the institutions that previously defined art. However, doing just that would be problematic because of the existence of art forms and venues that exist exclusively in terms of their opposition and rejection of institutions. These art forms and venues (such as graffiti, punk music, DIY culture, house shows, and zines) are now commonly accepted as different and genuinely accepted as forms of art, as having artfulness inherent to them, or viewed as a venue/medium for art to occur and come into being.

Nevertheless, they exist and are legitimated only by their opposition to the values and historical understandings of the institutions that they reject. The meaning they embody is one that can only

⁸⁴ Stephen Davies, “Defining Art and Artworlds,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol 73, no. 4, (Fall 2015): 375-384.

be understood in terms of their opposition to power structures, the previous institutions that rejected them as art. My definition is not one that is intended to destroy past definitions of art; my only goal is to expand the previously accepted understandings for the sake of including art that comes from those who exist and create outside the institutions. Additionally, I am proposing that art is necessarily dependent upon interpersonal relationships. According to my definition, it is impossible for art to exist without a community.

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