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After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History by Arthur C. Danto
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hands of an artist, be sources of aesthetic pleasure, whereas the sight of their originals may be the cause of dismay to the viewer. (Silver's question relates to the problem of tragedy, which has puzzled philosophers from Aristotle to Hume. She reviews a number of candidate answers, finds none adequate, and offers interesting, if tentative, suggestions of her own.) French feminist theory has always been a mystery to me, and although Hilary Robinson's exposition of the views of Luce Irigaray may be solid stuff, it left me in the dark.

In "Beauty and Beautification," Arthur Danto commends attention to what he calls "The Third Realm," which comprises those activities and appreciations that are not included in either the Kantian concept of the beauty and sublimity of the natural world or the Hegelian idea of Fine Art as the vehicle for revelatory experience. Like philosophy, Art embodies the highest form of knowledge, directed to eternal truths but, in contrast to philosophy, presents them in sensuous form. Danto's "beautification" is designed to cover homely arts and crafts, do-it-yourself home improvements, make-up, and (I guess) gardening, cooking, and couture (not necessarily "haute"). He has penetrating observations to make about stereotypical images and about the intertwining of aesthetic, moral, and utilitarian considerations in the Third Realm. He believes that no taste is, in Kant's sense, autonomous, and that every exercise in beautification aspires to a moral ideal, to a vision of how we ought to live.

Beauty Matters is a miscellany that is well worth study. It has a virtue rare in books from university presses: It has many excellent illustrations. I am sure it works well in the classroom. My only worry has to do with the assumption, occasionally explicit, that adopting a "gendered perspective" and an interdisciplinary agenda will make it evident that traditional puzzles should be recognized as otiose. How, for example, is a "gendered perspective" of a work of art related to a valid critical judgment of that work?

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DANTO, ARTHUR C. *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History*. Princeton University Press, 1997, xx + 239 pp., numerous b&w illus., \$26.95 cloth.

In this book, based on his A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts, Arthur C. Danto reviews and re-

vises his argument, first presented in 1984, that art's history ended when Andy Warhol's *Brillo Box* (1964) forced philosophers to ask why it was art when its real, visually indiscernible equivalents were not. This book is fascinating not just for its content, but for the ever-questioning, flexible mind it reveals.

Here are the main points of Danto's "end of art" thesis. Art has an unchanging essence. Necessarily, this essence is revealed through a particular historical process that unfolded between 1400 and 1964. In the first stage, art sought to achieve perceptual verisimilitude, taking mimesis as its goal and (mistakenly) also as its defining characteristic. The next phase, that of Modernism (also called the Age of Manifestos and the Era of Ideology), began in 1880. Modernist movements, which were no longer concerned mainly with representational fidelity, took many directions. Each regarded the others as competitors and (wrongly) claimed it had identified the one true path for future art. What eventually emerged was a concern with the material of paint itself, with shape, surface, and pigment. Also, it became increasingly evident that a thing's art-status does not depend on its appearance. Finally, with Pop Art, the history of art could be seen as dedicated to bringing to prominence a question asking for an account of art's own essence. Having then gone as far as it could toward self-knowledge, art leaves its historical phase. The master narrative, the story of art's history, ends, and art enters its post-historical era. Anything then can be art, because art is no longer ruled by an historical imperative. No movement or style is more legitimate or authentic as art than any other.

I am intrigued to see how this latest version differs from its predecessors. Danto retains some of the refinements introduced in the early 1990s. Art does not become transformed into philosophy; instead, it surrenders to philosophers the task of articulating its essence. Also, in its post-historical phase, art is no longer characterized as exhausted, without purpose, devoid of anything new to say. Instead, it is described as liberated from a burden, as free now to please itself and to celebrate its polyglot multiplicity. Danto even suggests that now, perhaps, it might be enlisted in the direct service of humanity.

These alterations eradicate some of the less plausible claims of the original theory, but at a cost. It now appears that the impulsion directing art's progress over some six hundred years culminates in its issuing the most elementary question of definition—In virtue of what is this art and not something else?—a question it is incapable of answering. On this account, the importance and

value of art could not be explained as connected to its historical destiny. Moreover, in allowing that its historical duty was a burden from which it was liberated, art's historical phase looks more like a tangent than part of its essential nature and purpose.

What is new? In the past, Danto described the Modernist period as obsessed with self-expression. In this book, he associates Clement Greenberg with the values and preoccupation of Modernism and sees the era focusing at its close on the physical nature of its own medium. Following Kant, Greenberg saw the essence of art's beauty in form, which he equated with abstraction and thereby opposed to depiction. Moreover, Greenberg accepted that art is unconstrained by rules and can be judged, therefore, only by those with taste. Danto returns often to attack the ahistoricism and acontextualism assumed in these doctrines.

This revised account of Modernism perhaps implies that Warhol's achievement was greater than even Danto had earlier supposed. After all, *Brillo Box* provoked the Artworld to confront the nature of art by imitating a mere real thing in a way that distracted attention from its medium and style. As such, it rubs against the grain, valorized by Greenberg, which is now described by Danto as mobilizing the otherwise disunified movements of Modernism.

In the past, Danto has said that, in its post-historical phase, anything can be art, everything is possible, and no one art style can claim hegemony over the others. Without abandoning these claims, he has returned to one of his earlier positions—that the significance of a work's features depends on the Artworld context in which those features are generated—to introduce an interesting qualification. Artists are free to adopt any style they like, but where the cultural and intellectual settings that gave that style its significance are past, they are not free to give their work the content and import that former artists might have done. Invoking a familiar distinction in the philosophy of language, Danto holds that artists can *mention* styles they appropriate, but cannot *use* them:

To imagine a work of art is to imagine a form of life in which it plays a role. . . . One can without question imitate the work and the style of the work of an earlier period. What one cannot do is live the system of meanings upon which the work drew in its original form of life. . . . [Styles] are ours to mention in many cases, but not to use. . . . Rembrandt's painting . . . was very much of its own time and place, even if his message . . . speaks as fluently to us as to his contemporaries. . . . To transmit that

message ourselves, we must find means other than those he used. (pp. 202–209)

Once again, I think Danto has improved the theory, but at the expense of weakening it. The freedom that attends the end of art's history, it turns out, is no less circumscribed than was so in the historical era. Even if any *thing* now might be made into an artwork, artists are not more able to make any *artwork* they like than were their predecessors.

What problems remain? I think Danto's theory is too parochial to provide a convincing account of art's essential nature. It concentrates on painting to the exclusion of other arts, on high art to the exclusion of low, and on the history of the Western Artworld as opposed to non-Western ones. In this interesting and rewarding book, Danto reveals the vast breadth and depth of his knowledge of art, but I do not find that he discusses the problems faced by the attempt to generalize his theory.

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ROTHMAN, WILLIAM. *Documentary Film Classics*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997, xv + 218 pp., numerous b&w illus., \$59.95 cloth, \$17.95 paper.

When Marx admonished us, in his eleventh thesis on Feuerbach, to *change* the world rather than to *interpret* it as philosophers do, he got it right about philosophy, for as Wittgenstein was later to insist, when philosophers behave properly, drawing our attention to the nuances of our working languages, the things of which we were speaking remain as they were. Wittgenstein tried hard, as Stanley Cavell has long insisted, to show us how to *acknowledge* that we are speaking in "perfect logical order" whenever we deliberate about the things with which we are working and thus interacting genuinely. However imperfect our conversations about them may otherwise be, they are, contra the claims of the pseudoscientists of positivism and their mimics, *logically* impeccable. If, therefore, we are as philosophers to learn how better to think of our encounters with things, of whatever kind and by whatever means, we must begin by respecting—and hence learning to think within—the languages through which we work with them.

Small wonder that Cavell and his students, Wil-