

The Aestheticization of History and the Butterfly Effect

Visual Arts Series

Edited by

Nancy Wellington Bookhart

Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts

Series on the History of Art



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Introduction

The Question Concerning History

Nancy Wellington Bookhart

Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts

History never confesses.

—Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*

In one of the final scenes of the 2004 film *The Butterfly Effect*, the protagonist Evan, played by Ashton Kutcher, crouches under a table, convulsing while watching a home movie. He has literally only seconds before the authorities bombard the sealed door and cart him off to his ward. The space in which he occupies begins to rumble as if one is experiencing an eruption, an avalanche, or worse, an apocalypse. But this is the desired effect for Evan because, for him, it signals the promise of a return to history to overturn injustice. Evan has returned innumerable times with minute alterations to the past. Each time he returns and changes any component or event, it disrupts the fluidity of time in an attempt to restage history. This manipulation of history not only modifies the past but shifts the present order of things. The reordering of the spatial-temporal teleology circumvents standard codifications and maps out alternative probabilities in the crafting of an entirely new composite across all time portals—past, present, and future.

We are not ignorant regarding time travel in its relegation to the realm of science fiction with no answerability to logical configuration. But this does not forestall science fiction's grandiose advancement in popular culture—novels, film, and conventional facets of human imagination with fantastical sophistication. Science fiction in these art forms titillates our senses and raises our imagination to sublimity in the possibility of averting history, altering time—changing destinies. Contemporary artists and theoreticians persist in what has been performed in art for some time in the creation of other potentialities, possibilities—worlds, some to the amelioration of society, and others to subversion, ruination—its death.

Friedrich Schiller belongs here for his aesthetic competency in his text, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, in which he emphatically declares, "We must be at liberty to restore, by means of a higher Art, the wholeness in our nature

which Art has destroyed.”¹ What Schiller postulates in this statement and his aesthetic letters is the necessity for the aestheticization of history in a reversal of art’s pernicious effect in its showing throughout Western art’s history. Schiller argues that art as a determined form that once relegated the spectator as a subjugated viewer should now aim to free them in the decentered gaze, the dialectic object.² Schiller charges art as being involved in both the underside of ontological manipulation and, at once, the restoration of humankind. What he suggests appears paradoxical, confusing, a riddle even. Knowledge, and therefore, the essence of humankind, asserts Schiller, was singularly conjoined until the division of the intellect and sensible.³ As for art in its hiddenness, there lies within the cavity of its walls the possibility for emancipation.

How many times have we heard the question asked, what would you do if you could go back in time, what would you change? The Butterfly Effect, in scientific terms, proposes that an incidence of minute gestural significance can cause a seismic paradigmatic shift.⁴ What if we could find a way to rewrite history by returning to the past through art? I argue the aestheticization of history as that rewrite, and so it accounts for the analogy of the Butterfly Effect. This introduction seeks to promulgate the framework wherein the return to history and its questioning necessitates and further evinces how time is mitigated vis-à-vis art. This survey intends to offer a poignant picture of what history is and what history does. “[Jacques] Derrida has reminded us to say it anew, is that a certain view of the world . . . has been accepted as the correct one, and, if the minute particulars of that view are examined, a rather different picture (that is also a no picture, as we shall see) emerges”⁵ This emptying out in Derrida as “no picture” implicates history as invention.

In this introduction I will examine three major ideas in an attempt to unravel these spatiotemporal matters. I will broach history firstly as invention, agency, and apparatus. I argue history as the primal scene, which will be explicated at length to establish this charge in amplification. History as the primal scene situates history as the genesis of the event of trauma and, thereby, the location of the traumatic subject. And now history identified as such must be confronted to recoup the originary of subjectivity. Secondly, the two-fold agenda of art which Schiller introduces in his aesthetic letters and Jacques Rancière extends in his theories of the distribution of the sensible and the regimes of art—these theories will be explored later in this introduction—is paramount to the current discussion of art’s potential in the tracing of history. Finally, the intersectionality of aesthetics to history and art will be probed, whereby accessibility to an otherwise unrecoverable past can be proffered.⁶

This manuscript is a product of a conference session bearing an abbreviated title, *The Aestheticization of History and the Butterfly Effect*, in which the session presenters agreed to contribute their research to this collection. Several contributors to this anthology are colleagues from IDSV (Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts) whose research bears a resemblance to the scholarly pursuit in this project, and one of the contributors was recruited by an IDSV colleague for which I am grateful. These scholars exuded enthusiasm and passion from the onset of this project in the undertaking of aesthetics in art's redemptive role. I am honored to have traversed this journey with them as partners as we seed the next generation towards a greater hope of the equilibrium of visibility.

The title for the introduction, "The Question Concerning History," and some of the content here stems from my dissertation, *The Black Veil of Freedom: On Kara Walker and the Aesthetic Education of the Black Man*, in which I argue the Black man as an invention of history through various art forms in perpetuity as performed subjectivity. I further assert that it would be an aesthetic education that would liberate the black man. My doctoral and current research studies are concerned with the philosophy of art in the conceptualization of aesthetics as the paradigmatic shift in consciousness—subjectivity.

I would like to include here what I believe is an important excerpt from my dissertation in understanding in metaphoric terms the difference between the framework of Reason and that of aesthetics as an educational model. In the film *Kill Your Darlings*, an acute statement is included that surmises the educational model that the West has adopted in perpetuity. The film dramatizes the life of Allen Ginsberg, the poet, philosopher, and writer who was one of the leading figures in the Beat Generation, a group of writers working during the 1950s whose works defied the conventional norms in literature. I bring this into the discussion to establish that the enduring educational programs of Plato and Aristotle prevailed in our institutions in the post-World War era and have been sustained to the present day. In a classroom scene, the professor lectures on the components of a Victorian poem as the high standard of the classical order. He elucidates that the Victorian sonnet contained certain identifiers such as "rhyme, meter, conceit."⁷ He further notes that "without this balance, a poem becomes slack, an untucked shirt."⁸

Allen Ginsberg, one of the students in the class, asks, "Then how do you explain Whitman?"⁹ Professor Steeves asks Ginsberg to expound directly. At this time, Ginsberg states that "Well, uh, he hated rhyme and meter. The whole point was untucking your shirt."¹⁰ Professor Steeves regains his composure and, with a stern disposition, states, "this university exists

because of tradition and form. Would you rather this building be built by engineers, or by Whitman and his boys at play?"¹¹ The profession of engineering falls in the category of planning, mapping, measuring, math, science, and technology under the rubric of logic, while art is relegated to a type of sport, or game, nothing to take seriously in the field of education. Yet, the concept of *play* is one of the major tenets of Kantian and Schillerian doctrine in establishing the characteristic and framework for aesthetics as the study of the beautiful.¹² And in abbreviated terms, this passage speaks succinctly to the history of thought in the division of knowledge that has plagued Western philosophy for centuries, even to this day.

Though vital and markedly evident, this project does not assess the role of the museum as an educational model for restaging the past and therefore aestheticizing history. The role of the museum, though not the subject matter here, is critical in the process and presencing of traditional and new arrangements of communities fashioned by art forms. Consider presently in MOMA's collection, Paul Cezanne, Elizabeth Catlett, and Frida Kahlo in the same space, conflated in time, removed from their originary of place. Having now new forms of thought by way of exhibitions, programs, and directives whose focus is inclusivity versus exclusivity—community. Nor does this writing contemplate any of the other fine arts though they possess the same quality as the visual arts in the engagement of the past and are currently involved in this remarkable initiative of aestheticizing history. John Cage is a case study in the questioning of the Western canon for what qualifies as music. Cage proposed in his music and writing that silence and, at other times, the disruption of that silence with common, everyday noise—a city trolley, birds chirping, a baby crying, chattering in the audience, a loud clinking sound behind the stage—as possibilities belonging to a more equitable signification in the reassignment of history in what counts for music.¹³ This present project is the examination of the visual arts in singularity.

The problem encountered in this study is the question of knowledge and its participation in the invention and construction of history vis-à-vis the visual arts. I contend that it is in Plato's republic that we experience the original seed of the dialectic of desire, recognition, and the establishment of value. In the republic, the great divide of humankind will be weighed one against the other in the master/slave narrative in anticipation of G.W.F. Hegel. Reason will be valorized and gain primacy through the supposed fair exchange of discourse with the interlocutors, while art will be cast as the darker Other in this drama. The intellect assumed the position of the transcendently charged sacred, while the sensible was disavowed as profane. Consequently, the establishment of what history is and what history does is paramount to

how we proceed in the acquisition of art's participation in the return to history in its reversal, affecting our present state.

The question concerning history is fundamental to the theoretical scope of all philosophical inquiries. From the onset of Western thought from Plato to Immanuel Kant, we are not without witnesses as the sons refute the fathers. There can be no resolution without this redress of history. The question concerning history, if not the most important question, is the measuring rod by which what counts for questioning commences. Therefore, there is no moving beyond history except in the undertaking of history. The question concerning history is relegated to the codified model of the ordering of things. It is concerned with the practitioners who specialize in the acquisition not of punctuated events but in the aggregation of what calls for myths, fairy tales, and legends. The question of history comes down to the question of knowledge and its compartmentalization, the question of the *Word made flesh and dwelling among us*.¹⁴

The problem lies in the very question of history and its legitimacy, or more adequately, whether history is autonomous as an agency unto itself or a hegemonic handmaiden utilized as the carrier of Western elitist thought. And it is, therefore, in this knowledge that lies the question of freedom and subjugation. Rancière insists that "Schiller's notion of the *aesthetic education of man* . . . established the idea that domination and servitude are, in the first place, part of an ontological distribution (the activity of thought versus the passivity of sensible matter)."¹⁵ Though aesthetics have not been explicated to this point in this writing, it should be understood in its examination not as an anomaly belonging to an isolated theory of perception bereft of meaning. Rather its reach is expansive, covering the landscape of the human experience—its worldview.¹⁶

Consequently, history is exposed for its crafty seduction, beguiling the ages with the serpentine representation of time and matter in the guise of the natural order of things while concealing the truth.¹⁷ History has forgotten itself. Believing its own lie, it operates as truth, performing legitimation in the name of art. The innocence of history has long been shattered beneath the weight of questioning. Hidden beneath the veneer of art lies the question of history, which is only answerable by art in its hiddenness as far as this project is concerned. For these false presumptions of history to perpetuate as truth, they would have been passed over in silence. This passing over in silence is passing over as silence. Hegel posits familiarity as deception and passing as the very account of familiarity.¹⁸ This statement attends to what has been the protocol in the West for ages. It appears that truth is not the validation of collective knowledge; it is the acceptance of an adopted narrative that has become common—intimate.

Again, what then is the birth of Western civilization except that of the birth of desire, recognition, and predilection of value attributable to Plato as the progenitor of a certain school of thought? I am not alone in this charge against Plato. I intend to establish the historical thread of thought in its originary. Jean-François Lyotard accused Plato of using narratives to prop up his “scientific discussion.”¹⁹ Martin Heidegger situates Plato’s doctrine and assignment of value as the manipulation of truth in his essay “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth.”²⁰ And Plato reorders desire in the transposition of his desire by calling into question the desires of others. These theoretical postulates of desire, recognition, and value originate in the republic’s founding principles in pursuit of an absolute apart from Nature, raising the specter of the Other. Desire, so readily locatable in Hegel and Sigmund Freud, is first enunciated in the nascent womb of the Socratic dialogues. Human history is but the history of desire, contends Alexandre Kojève in his reading of Hegel, maintaining that the self-conscious emerges in “risking his life to satisfy his human Desire—that is, his Desire directed toward another Desire.”²¹ A will to power is present in Friedrich Nietzsche. And Arthur Schopenhauer asserts that “human beings are not essentially rational, but are desiring, emotional animals, whose rationality was developed to serve and maximize the will to life.”²² Are we then to propose that history is not a matter of recording ‘truth’ but desire in its unfolding?

Heidegger argued this premise of truth in Western ideology in “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth” that: “the false and the true are not in the act (itself) . . . but in the understanding.”²³ Is there a truth that can be returned to as a compass for truth, or is all speculation? What is the application for authenticity; how is it understood? As we found with history, the problem is the idea of self-legitimation in procuring the groundswell of authenticity. There is no external system of validation, no outside authority to valorize these doctrines. Instead, for Plato, “truth becomes . . . correctness of the ability to perceive and to declare something.”²⁴ The statement here is an assumed position Plato will take in educating perception and establishing the “something” else of what I will call thinking through seeing. Thinking through seeing conceptually ignores the actual. Instead, it constructs the preferred outcome through invention.

Heidegger concludes that “from now on, the mold of the essence of truth becomes, as the correctness of representing through an assertion, the standard for all of Western thinking.”²⁵ Heidegger postulates this according to his analysis of Plato’s cave allegory. Plato shapes the discourse for what counts as authentic by redirecting the glance toward what he counts as value. Heidegger argues:

The story told in the allegory of the cave gives the aspect of what is now and always will be what really happens in the history of the humanity molded in the West: man thinks in terms of the fact that the

essence of truth is the correctness of the representing of all beings according to “idea” and esteems everything real according to “values.” The decisive point is not which ideas and which values are set, but that the real is expounded according to “ideas” at all, that the “world” is weighed according to “values” at all.²⁶

Heidegger explains the “allegory of the cave” and its shift of truth as the shift of perception through education. These are two major components in Platonist discourse prevalent throughout his dialogues, perception and education or, more correctly, educating perception. The idea of educating the mind of the prisoners, having ascertained a certain knowledge from birth as truth, has now been altered, not by inner enlightenment, but rather, this shift of truth as an exterior persuasion, engineering that is didactically rendered. Society has been educated in a type of truth; an authenticity predicated on the manipulation of seeing. And this regulatory perception, this adjustment of the lens of the authentic, this shift of the truth is but an invention, a myth propagated through art.

Michel Foucault’s *The Archaeology of Knowledge: And the Discourse on Language* identifies history as a discipline—belonging to the pedagogical framework—created to establish unmovable chains of thought. What Foucault is questioning is the document (written record) of history. These documents are living witnesses to the tracing of time but not faithful witnesses.²⁷ The phrase ‘unmovable chains of thought’ is locked in perpetually by the term ‘history’, which for many denotes an eternal fixed value taught and disseminated as fundamentally sound. As an educational necessity, history then serves as correlative value to always already established thought.

So, it accounts that knowledge and the question concerning history are indelibly intertwined in the contrived socio-political construction we are now witnessing as historical truth.²⁸ I would propose, for all practical purposes, that this is a report on knowledge. When I state that this project is a report on knowledge, I do so by two means. Firstly, this project regards what Karl Jasper’s read of Kant states as the two stems of knowledge,²⁹ the intellectual and the sensible, and what Schiller refers to as humankind’s “whole power.”³⁰ I am at once contemplating Lyotard’s *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, in which Lyotard surmises that science insists on using unscientific knowledge in the narrative to prop up their scientific discoverables. Lyotard claims that it is the narrative that science has relied on throughout history to validate and authenticate scientific hypotheses.³¹ And it is the science that has been conveyed as concretized truth, unassailable.

For Plato, what is paramount then to the posterity of his republic is a palatable narrative, the storyline, the intricate components in how it is told,

and to whom it is told. Lyotard claims that Plato's dialogues are the very thing of narratives that function as science when stating, "the new language game of science posed the problem of its own legitimation at the very beginning—in Plato . . . in which the pragmatics of science is set in motion."³² Elsewhere, Lyotard insists that "the legitimation effort, the *Dialogues* of Plato, gives ammunition to a narrative by virtue of its own form: each of the dialogues take the form of a narrative of a scientific discussion."³³ Is this not then the invention of science? And if science, history. What is important in this survey in the preponderance of the evidence, is the claim of history as invention from the beginning, not as linear in its unfolding as has been previously misrepresented. This unfurling in time has been performed as time.

How are we to rectify this conundrum of aestheticizing history seeing that history is a foregone conclusion and time cannot be re-cast or recovered? For Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari history is no longer regarded as the closed book of determinism. Rather, rhizomatic with possibilities of lines of flight.³⁴ And Slavoj Žižek insists that "in theological terms, Redemption does not follow the Fall; it occurs when we become aware of how what we previously (mis)perceived as Fall "itself" already was Redemption."³⁵ These theoreticians conceptually refute the narratives in history (chronology) of history (apparatus) that transcribes previous happenings as irrefutable and irreversible. In Žižek, 'Redemption' and 'Fall' belong to the order of signification and naming by way of linguistics. And it is in this signification and naming that the appearance of the act is locatable. 'Redemption' and the 'Fall' does not happen in the act, it happens in the naming, as the act. It is not cause and effect; rather, signification and myth, "a type of speech chosen by history."³⁶ History's double.

For this bold proposition and vital proposal, it is necessary to set history straight, to exact an account of history, not history as an event, but history as an agency, as apparatus, even. According to Giorgio Agamben, an apparatus "appears at the intersection of power relations and relations of knowledge."³⁷ History, then can be identified as a particular compilation of knowledge, legitimating a selective regime of consciousness. How did history become the agency of a certain regime of thought, parading the grand narratives in its concealment of non-thought? These power relations, these relations of knowledge, are allocated to a few and forbidden to others. Even as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil theologically speaking was forbidden, attributing such audacity of inquiry as sin and the threat of death in banishment, separated from the Supreme Being of knowledge who claimed total dominion of thought.

Further, is it not a certain type of knowledge perpetrating as history that sealed the fate of the marginalized Other through various *chains of representation*? What relationship can there be between history and

emancipation, as Schiller posits? How, then can history, the instrument for the formation and defacement of subjectivity, redeem itself as a dialectic turnabout?³⁸ Theologically speaking, Nicodemus came to Jesus by night and asked, "How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born."³⁹ This second return is to the womb of history in the confrontation of history in the overturn of said history by means of aesthetics.

It is this dialectic turn, this point of return, in which the aestheticization of history is achievable. It is not possible to fully explicate aesthetics volumetric history in this brief exegesis. But it is critical for this examination of history and art that the term in play be defined in context as closely as possible. Aesthetics is thrown around in our contemporary age as a popular cultural catchphrase to imply the installation of a certain ambiance or visual experience that meets or does not meet certain observable qualifications. In this common usage, aesthetics as a profound way of understanding the world is minimized in its actualization in human intervention. The term aesthetics came to age during a very politically disturbed era of the Eighteenth-century European Enlightenment as a response to the aftermath of the French Revolution, giving rise to the questioning of Reason as the primary framework in which civilization had been governed up to that point, but now, gravely faltering.

Aesthetics is a branch of philosophy that concerns itself with the study of beauty, understood as the sensible, sensuous, the senses, versus Reason and logic. But aesthetics is no cosmetic arrangement that we moderns have become so easily captivated by; it is beyond that veil of illusion. Aesthetics is an ethical arrangement, if anything, a political one at best.⁴⁰ Reason, which held primacy in humankind's intellectual and moral advancement, is seen during this era as a political failure as agency. Andrew Bowie's *Aesthetics and Subjectivity* offers a detailed account of the period and the aesthetic moment that is encapsulated in this statement. He stated that "in 1796, a German politico-philosophical manifesto. . . proclaims the 'highest act of reason' as an 'aesthetic act.'"⁴¹ Aesthetics, according to Bowie, is the true character and nature which Reason was intended to exemplify as holistic knowledge. It is the coronation of the intellect and the sensible unionized. The manifesto attributed to Hegel or Friedrich Holderlin proposes aesthetics not as enmity to Reason, or antithetical, but as its companion in education, its fulfillment in human moral and intellectual advancement.

The aestheticians during the Enlightenment recognized that the nature of beauty in pursuit of a more excellent society had not been considered essential in the ordering of the civilized Being. The division of knowledge, as stated previously, was emphatically pronounced and practiced as organic since Plato. It is not that political freedom seeks the removal of the dominant

thought of Reason, but the creation of a place for the political in the equilibrium of thought and knowledge in its manifested forms. The political here assumes the etymological meaning of the political as a place and space for community—inclusion, not in the current actualization of the political as policing.⁴² The study of beauty has been a matter of grave importance since Plato and is replete in his dialogues. In the *Republic*, translated by C.D.C. Reeve, beauty in some form—the form of *beautiful* is listed with defining terms as fine, good, better, best, well, and right—is indexed over two hundred times. In the creation of his ideal city, Kallapolis, beauty must be constructed, fashioned—willed.

In “Book 3” of the *Republic*, Plato proposed that “if the fine habits in someone’s soul and those in his physical form agree . . . wouldn’t that be the most beautiful sight for anyone capable of seeing it?”⁴³ If one recalls, the soul for Plato is the seat of knowledge and, therefore, Reason. In opposition, he considered the sensuous world, to which the physical form belongs, as imperfect. Consequently, he conceptualized the doctrine of the *Theory of Forms* to offset what he perceived as a flawed reality. Plato believed that for a society guided by logic and Reason to exist, it had to be created because it did not exist in the Athenian democracy.⁴⁴ So, to discuss aesthetics is to discuss beauty, and beauty is no stranger to the political but is, in fact, the political.⁴⁵

Aestheticizing history or restaging history vis-à-vis art is not simply about beautifying the past cosmetically, though the form is not impotent in its showing.⁴⁶ To think as such would be a matter of misunderstanding beauty philosophically. Beauty thrives in a more profound field of advancement as far as this writing is concerned. In Schiller’s “Sixteenth Letter,” he states the following about beauty, “From the interaction of two opposing impulses, then, and from the association of two opposing principles, we have seen the origin of the Beautiful, whose highest ideal is therefore to be sought in the most perfect possible union and equilibrium of reality and form.”⁴⁷ It is not a matter of fashioning a removed sphere to satiate the desire for the absolute. Rather what is proposed is the symbiosis of systems that have formerly worked separately and performed distinctly. And this separatism of knowledge has produced what Schiller asserts regarding the state of humankind, an automaton, an “imprint of their occupation,”⁴⁸ a mere memory machine, and nothing more.⁴⁹

Schiller discusses here and throughout his aesthetic letters three impulses, Reason, sensuous, and a third, which is a concatenation of both in equilibrium, which he denotes as the play impulse. The play impulse is what accounts for the possibility of the entrance of beauty. The play impulse is introduced in Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*, adopted in Schiller’s aesthetic letters, and continued in Rancière as the exercise of freedom divorced from

the stringent law of Reason. The aestheticization of history is about the fairness/equity of perception and the correction of intentional misperception in refashioning Nature affecting the past, present, and future. When these histories are revisited vis-à-vis art, there is an opportunity to alter the present in past vistas by democratizing the demands of perception and perception itself. Aesthetics can be understood as a category of knowledge perceptually undertaken and unfolded as freedom of thought and will apart from the conventions of the institutionalization of Reason.

Let's consider Schiller's paradoxical dictum regarding art's dichotomous role as pernicious and emancipatory. Schiller perceives art as having occupied a principal role, not as an eyewitness in the commission of the chronological record of Western art history, but rather as a discriminatory reporter in the creation and concretization of an elitist social order. Schiller is tracing many of Kant's theories of aesthetics from his 1790 *Critique*. Kant proposed what he considered to be his Copernican Revolution⁵⁰ in the subject/object relationship in which the object is no longer determined in its showing but gives way to the liberated spectator in the utilization of their free will. Kant's *Critique* carries with it the explication of the beautiful in the First Book of the First Section of Part I, "Analytic of the Beautiful." This probing is intensive and cannot be analyzed properly on these pages. But perhaps in an abbreviated manner, his thinking can be interrogated as the groundbreaking moment for the science of the beautiful—an argument for the sensible as a legitimate form of knowledge. Kant strategically uses everyday objects to best translate the art object's new relationship with the emancipated spectator. This is not only important in the explication of aesthetics but art as a living form in Schillerian terms and Rancièrian theoretical postulate as non-art. In so much as aesthetics is the science of the beautiful, it is a rewrite of art's former signification, a rewriting of its own history as devaluation.

Schiller posits art as agency and utility in the construction of history and the fashioning of subjectivity in his admission of art as an ordered system of visibility. He calls for the moral efficacy to right the wrong of history through art that will perform political adjudication as sensible and logical in the aesthetical, dialectic image.⁵¹ Dialectic always presupposes a way back, not to return to the womb of history as time, but by way of an "awakened consciousness."⁵² And finally, Schiller breaks the code of silence by confessing that traditional art forms have pillaged humankind with unconscionable reverberations evidential in our present age.

In his writings, Schiller asserts that art in the Greek city-states participated in the collective whole of human orchestration and development and was, therefore, an integral component of the educational system. We are made aware of the disbanding of the system in poetic terms⁵³ in Schiller's "Sixth

Letter,” in which he rebuffs the State as holding the principal role in the subversion of form, leading to an alienated subjectivity. Schiller states, “At that time, in that lovely awakening of the intellectual powers, the senses, and the mind had still no strictly separate individualities, for no dissension had yet constrained them to make a hostile partition with each other and determine their boundaries.”⁵⁴ No law instituted, no schism, no threat or banishment.

Schiller set the stage for what Rancière extends in his theories of the distribution of the sensible and the regimes of art as a way to situate his proposal of the duality of art’s participation in humankind’s redemption and the probability of the revision of history. Rancière will state this of the distribution of the sensible. Rancière’s distribution of the sensible is the starting place in as much as he states that it is,

The system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it. A distribution of the sensible therefore establishes at one and the same time something common that is shared and exclusive parts. This apportionment of parts and positions is based on a distribution of spaces, times, and forms of activity that determines the very manner in which something in common lends itself to participation and in what way various individuals have a part in this distribution.⁵⁵

Our current political milieu involves the disturbing tactics of dividing the community into factions and groups, occupying specific spaces and encampments into parts that are not necessarily equal. This partitioning, beginning with the project of Plato, assigns specializations and determines the space which each of these separate units occupies. This distribution is engaged in time as measured and limited in factoring participation of one’s occupation and ability to interact otherwise with the community at large.⁵⁶ An example used by Rancière in this demarcation is the occupation of the shoemaker, whose primary task is that of manufacturing shoes and nothing else.⁵⁷ And in this, nothing else, he cannot participate in communal forums because he is otherwise preoccupied (determined) in his station as a shoemaker. Nor can he be involved in the work of any other specialized field. This specialization of Being is problematic on so many levels and creates pockets of nomenclature of knowledge and departmentalized humanity.

Quantifiably, the distribution of the sensible is how the world and its parts are arranged, and the regimes of art participate in this assemblage as the ethical, representative, and aesthetic. The distribution of the sensible

concerns itself with the what and who of the commission of division, of staging communities, environments—worlds. It is the place where republics are born, kingdoms are quantified and qualified, and governances are established. The marginalized are invented in the shadow of the inclusive. It is here in the distribution you will find classifications as the framework for the ethos of the community, where classes, sects, and groups are identified, meaning and value are specified, and terminology is defined according to presuppositions or probable commission in the order of things. Participation in the distribution of the sensible is to participate in the ordering and reordering of Nature. As much as this distribution concerns itself with ordering in real time and space, it is transmuted as a visible record as a form wherein society takes its lead.

Rancière distinguishes the regimes of art as the *ethical regime*, the *representative regime*, and the *aesthetic regime*. These regimes give way to structures of power and arrangement of visibilities. “The *ethical regime* . . . characteristic of Platonism is primarily concerned with the origin and telos of imagery in relation to the ethos of the community. It establishes a distribution of images . . . to educate the citizenry concerning their role in the communal body.”⁵⁸ In Plato’s *Republic*, Socrates controlled the images circulated in the community, deeming moral suitability for unifying the singularity of thought in the republic. The *representative regime* sets up a system of visibility by categorizing perception. The representative regime “is an artistic system of Aristotelian heritage that liberates imitation from the constraints of ethical utility and isolates a normatively autonomous domain with its own rules for fabrication and criteria of evaluation.”⁵⁹ Finally, the *aesthetic regime* abolishes “the dichotomous structure of *mimesis* in the name of a contradictory identification between *logos* and *pathos*.”⁶⁰ It transforms the *a priori* categorization and hierarchy of visibility that is at work in the representative regime.⁶¹

Throughout the history of Western art, Greek art has been marketed as a model of how art should work in the community as a living form. Schiller will cite that the works inherently bore the “fullness of form with the fullness of content, at once philosophic and creative . . . uniting the youthfulness of fantasy with the manliness of reason in a splendid humanity.”⁶² A “splendid humanity” attends to the individual and the community. In Schiller’s “Sixth Letter,” he states that “the Greek nature...united all the attractions of art and all the dignity of wisdom, without, however, becoming the victim of them as does our own.”⁶³ The victimization of art in Schiller refers to the lure of form in the reconstitution of nature. He further states that “however high Reason might soar, it always drew its subject matter lovingly after it, and however fine and sharp the divisions it made, it never mutilated.”⁶⁴ This state of art’s

pursuit as “lovingly” was possible before the overreach of Reason in the perversion of form.

Representative art has as its end to serve the state apparatus. A host of images are available in the Western art tradition to illustrate this point. One such example is the theme of *Madonna and Child*, in which the message is transposed upon the flesh of the figures in the works as a declaration of the redemption of humankind through divine conception (Mary) and the godchild (Jesus). For thousands of years, the message resounded through the commissions of the Holy Roman Catholic Church. The arrangement is an arrangement of ideas that presents itself to the viewer as a closed discourse and an inaccessible entrance.⁶⁵ Giotto’s *Ognissanti Madonna*, 1306 performs this arrangement in the holy entourage of saints and angels, anointed with the halos identified with spiritual transcendence beyond the realm of human existence physically and intellectually distanced. Flanked at the bottom of the composition are two angels permitting no space to enter into the divine installment in similitude as the angel in Massacio’s 1425 *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden* from the Brancusi Chapel fresco, marked as a type of threat and violence of exclusion. It is not that the form does not come with some semblance of content, but it does not arrive as a law of perception.

Ranci re proposes that “in the aesthetic regime of art, art is art to the extent that it is something else than art . . . it is always posited as a ‘form of life.’”⁶⁶ And this freedom of form, which Ranci re suggests is possible, is not art for art’s sake, which rejects history. Nor is it art for life, as in the concept that all things are art, but a form of art that ushers in a shared vision, no longer autonomous, sublime, unrepresentable of community, but bearing witness to a living community.⁶⁷ How is aesthetics made possible? The aesthetic regime does this by “destroying the mimetic barrier that distinguished ways of doing and making affiliated with art from other ways of doing and making . . . it simultaneously established the autonomy of art and the identity of its forms with the forms that life uses to shape itself.”⁶⁸ In this regime of art, neither the hierarchy of the subject matters nor art as autonomy is elite. Instead, it is the leveling of visibilities to that of life.

In other words, when the mimetic component became an acceptable form in the Aristotelean regime (representative regime of art), it identified itself not with life but as a separate entity, autonomous. Doing so disrupted the relationship of art to the community because it had its own rules creating hierarchized perception and visibility. In the aesthetic regime of art, the relationship to the community, politics originary, and life is restored. Art as a singularity of form was the privileged visibility relieving itself of the responsibility to the community. Aesthetics, the proper name for art as liberation, is returned to the community in its offering of grace⁶⁹ as emancipated perception.

The aesthetic regime restages history and redistributes the sensible arranged previously in keeping with the hegemonic order in the redesignation as acts of democracy.

The problem we are left with today is not simply the non-truth of history but how to create a new truth through aesthetic education. Joseph Tanke cites Rancière in conversation with Fulvia Carnevale and John Kelsey as published in *Artforum* 2007. Rancière states, “the problem is to define a way of looking that doesn’t preempt the gaze of the spectator . . . Emancipation is the possibility of a spectator’s gaze other than the one that was programmed.”⁷⁰ In Schiller’s 1794 essay “On Grace and Dignity,” published before his aesthetic letters, he states, “grace is always solely the beauty of the *form moved by freedom*, and movements which *merely belong to nature* can never deserve this name.”⁷¹ Differing from a humanist education, aesthetic education is “where the activity of thought and sensible receptivity become a single reality.”⁷² This is the moral ground expressed in this concept that allows for a community of equals. The cancellation of both the activity and passivity accommodates a new concept, one that “constitute[s] a sort of new region of being—the region of free play⁷³ and appearance—that makes it possible to conceive of . . . equality.”⁷⁴ And Rancière *would* state in *Dissensus* that “aesthetics promises a non-polemical, consensual framing of the common world.”⁷⁵ At present, there is a proliferation of violence as the status quo of knowledge and visibility incessantly clamor to gain total primacy. An aesthetics of place and space of community breeds partnership to form a ‘common world’ in which there is a buy-in in its making.

Rancière asserts that “the autonomy is the autonomy of the experience, not of the work of art. In other words, the artwork participates in the sensorium of autonomy since it is not a work of art.”⁷⁶ What a fascinating oxymoron that art, which is the site of aesthetic experience, is no longer art. It has become part of the sensorium, which is to state that it is the commonality of the experience equated with that of life. Therefore, a work of art in film, sculpture, painting, printmaking, and other genres of visual art are not works of art experienced *as works of art*, alienated. Consequently, when reading Schiller initially, one can become somewhat confounded by the statement in the introduction to *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* in which Reginald Snell states that “the aesthetic condition itself has no significance.”⁷⁷ What? According to Snell’s read of Schiller, if it has significance, it returns to merely being art, resemblance. “All it does is to *restore* Man to himself so that he can make of himself what he wills.”⁷⁸ This contemplation is a unique and profound component of the aesthetic experience that enters into a new relationship with the art object and the viewer. One that can conceive equality and ignite the will and imagination in becoming. In his explication

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work to develop a counter-memory against the dominance of automation by decentering different modes of work together, such as analysis and artistic expression. By questioning the normalization of analysis, Lunde relies on Henri Bergson's writing concerning lived time as duration to complicate the value and pervasiveness of automation in American education. She examines the work of Franco Berardi on automation, hypercomplexity and poetics - along with Walter Benjamin's work on technological reproducibility - to deconstruct what educator and activist Henry Giroux calls education's modern obsession with order. Benjamin's work illustrates why the changing relationship between media and reception implicates modern technology's method of transmission and its effect on individual and social perception. To counteract automation, Lunde proposes a critical mapping practice through examples of the artist's mode of work - particularly John Cage, Mark Lombardi, and Josef Albers - to serve as a site to build context and widen the student's work in the classroom.

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