6

Kant After LeWitt: Towards an Aesthetics of Conceptual Art*

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6.1 Introduction

Conceptual Art is generally portrayed as a rejection of aesthetic theory as an adequate basis for understanding artistic value or significance. In what follows I want to see whether one can understand Conceptual Art, contrary to this orthodox art-historical and philosophical narrative, in aesthetic terms—but without fundamentally distorting the nature of the work.[1] Perhaps even more outlandishly, I want to examine whether Conceptual Art's aesthetic dimension can be understood by extrapolating from Kant's enigmatic account of what works of art do in the third *Critique*—namely, 'express aesthetic ideas'. Now, given that the third *Critique* is generally taken to underwrite the kind of theorizing about art that conceptual artists repudiated, largely in reaction to Clement Greenberg's use of it to prop up his practice as a formalist critic and theorist of modernism, this will entail departing from art-historical and

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[1] Hence I have no intention of adopting the kind of approach that takes ostensibly anti-aesthetic objects, such as readymades, and admires them for their previously overlooked formal qualities. To my mind, that is to misconstrue the nature of aesthetic value in art as surely (and for the essentially the same reasons) as those who understand Conceptual Art in unreservedly anti-aesthetic terms.

philosophical orthodoxy, both about Conceptual Art, and about what the third *Critique* may have to offer art theory, even today.

As a consequence, this might be regarded (especially by artists, theorists, and historians) as a piece of flagrant historical revisionism. Against this, I will try to show that it can also be seen as a corrective to what is underplayed in both the standard accounts of Conceptual Art's anti-aestheticism, and of the third *Critique* as little more than a discredited basis for formalism in art theory. But to see this first requires retrieving the third *Critique* from Greenberg: this is because it was Greenberg's recourse to Kant that set the parameters against which Conceptual Art is routinely held up as a paradigm of the inadequacy of aesthetic theory to art after modernism, and in the light of which Kant has come to serve as the whipping boy for formalist aesthetics in the theory of art. Hence, I put the stress on the word 'towards' in my title: what I try to do here is no more than clear the ground for an aesthetic theory of Conceptual Art, by removing certain *prima facie* obstacles to bringing Kantian aesthetics to bear on Conceptual Art, rather than seeking to provide a fully articulated aesthetic theory of Conceptual Art *per se*. Though I will conclude by indicating how I think such a theory should proceed.

One final disclaimer: I do not try to define Conceptual Art in this paper. All I want to say on this front is that, in terms of the various attempts at definition articulated by key first-generation Conceptual artists, I take a broad view of it, both as a historical and as a descriptive term.[2] As will become apparent, my use of the term is closest to what Peter Osborne recently called Sol LeWitt's 'weak' or 'inclusive' Conceptualism.[3] By 'Conceptual Art,' then, I mean a kind of art that came to prominence in the latter half of the 1960s and in doing so initiated a tradition that, broadly speaking, foregrounds art's intellectual content, and the thought processes associated with that content, over its form. What I do not mean by the term is work that focuses narrowly on a putatively philosophical analysis of the *concept of art* (as typified by Joseph

[2] For an idea of the competing positions of early Conceptual artists see the statements, documents and polemics collected in Alberro and Stimson 2000. Alberro's introductory essay, 'Reconsidering Conceptual Art, 1966–1977', provides an elegant overview. See Alberro 2000.

[3] Osborne 1999 distinguishes between the 'expansive, empirically diverse and historically inclusive' taxonomy of Conceptual Art advocated by Sol Le Witt in his 'Paragraphs' and 'Sentences' (discussed in detail below) which he calls 'weak' or 'inclusive' Conceptualism, and the 'restricted, analytically focused, and explicitly philosophical definition' advocated, in competing ways, by Joseph Kosuth and the Art & Language group, which he calls 'strong' or 'exclusive' Conceptualism, for obvious reasons. See Osborne 1999: 48–9 and 52–6.

Kosuth's recourse to A. J. Ayer to underwrite an incoherent theory of art as analytic proposition).[4] I have a more generous idea of Conceptual Art as a classificatory term in mind, one that picks out a broad cultural shift away from its historical art world's prior formalist commitments. Of course, to those internal to the often fiercely partisan fine-grained debates about the nature of Conceptual Art, and its legacy, that will no doubt seem woefully unspecific, but my wager is that there is something to be gained from adopting this more aerial perspective.[5]

6.2 Greenberg's Kant

I therefore begin with the theoretical context against which many Conceptual artists polemicized in writings and interviews, and to which their work may be seen as a series of practical counter-demonstrations: Clement Greenberg's co-option of aesthetics, particularly Kant's theory of 'taste', for modernist theory. Greenberg's interpretation of Kant came to the fore during the same period as Conceptual Art became prominent. As such, Greenberg's explicit recourse to Kant in the late Sixties and early Seventies may be viewed, symptomatically, as an attempt to fortify modernist aesthetics in the face of Conceptual Art's challenge to taste as an adequate basis for understanding or appreciating art. In the teeth of this rejection of taste and aesthetic quality in art, Greenberg claimed:

> when no aesthetic value judgement, no verdict of taste, is there, then art is not there either, then aesthetic experience of any kind is not there . . . it's as simple as that. [. . .] I don't mean that art shouldn't ever be discussed in terms other than those of value or quality. [. . .] What I plead for is a more abiding awareness of the substance of art as value and nothing but value, amid all the excavating of it for meanings that have nothing to do with art as art.[6]

[4] On this point see Osborne 1999: 56–62 and Sclafani 1975: 455–8. The latter is invoked by Thierry de Duve in his critique of Kosuth (de Duve 1996a: chs. IV and V, 244–50, 269–71, and 305–7 in particular). See Kosuth 1991 for the best collection of Kosuth's own writings.

[5] A flavour of such internecine debates can be gleaned from Corris 2000.

[6] Greenberg, Seminar VII, first delivered as one of nine such 'seminars' at Bennington College, Vermont, in April 1971. It was subsequently published in *Arts Magazine*, 52 10, June 1979. Both have since been collected in the posthumously published in Greenberg 1999, a book that Greenberg had projected since the late seventies, but failed to bring to fruition at the time of his death in 1994. See 'The Experience of Value', 62–3.

Unsurprisingly, in view of this identification of art with aesthetic experience, Greenberg characterized modernism in art as a heightened tendency towards aesthetic value, and the foregrounding of such value, in art:

> Modernism defines itself in the long run not as a 'movement,' much less a programme, but rather as a kind of bias or tropism: towards aesthetic value, aesthetic value as such and as ultimate. The specificity of Modernism lies in its being so heightened a tropism in this regard.[7]

The Conceptual cornerstone of modernism, as Greenberg theorized it, was 'medium-specificity': the self-reflexive investigation of the constraints of a specific medium through the ongoing practice of the discipline in question. In this spirit, Greenberg conceived modernist painting as an investigation into the essence of painting that proceeded by testing what had hitherto been accepted as its 'essential norms and conventions' as to their 'indispensability' or otherwise, thereby gradually foregrounding what was genuinely 'unique and irreducible' to its medium (Greenberg 1960 [1993]: 89, 89 and 86). Hence, when Greenberg identified *modernism* with the pursuit of aesthetic value in art, he was thereby identifying *medium-specificity* with the pursuit of such value, for the simple reason that cleaving to the specificity of their respective media is what made the modernist arts modernist.

Now, in so far as art theory has generally failed to interrogate the *legitimacy* of Greenberg's claim to a Kantian provenance for his aesthetic theory and practice as a critic, particularly his use of Kant to underwrite this equation of medium-specificity with value in art, it has been complicit in Greenberg's distortion of Kant's aesthetic. As a result, the widespread contemporary indifference to the idea of aesthetic quality as a significant artistic concern, for which Conceptual Art provided a strong initial impetus, still tends to be framed in opposition to the allegedly Kantian aesthetic Greenberg bequeathed to the art world. Here I concur with Charles Harrison's central claim in 'Conceptual Art and Critical Judgement,' namely, that one cannot understand Conceptual Art without first understanding its relation to modernism, more specifically, its relation to modernist *aesthetics* (Harrison 2000). Nonetheless, I shall contest the widespread art-world belief that Greenberg's aesthetic is a faithful reflection of its alleged philosophical sources. The point of this approach is to clear the ground for an aesthetics adequate to the challenge of Conceptual Art. To extrapolate such

[7] This remark also dates from 1971. See Greenberg 1971: 191–4 (this remark, 191).

an aesthetic from the third *Critique* is no doubt deeply counter-intuitive. Yet, for this very reason, if the third *Critique* can be shown to meet this challenge, it will have gone a long way to demonstrating its contemporary worth.

Greenberg appealed to Kant on several fronts, the most famous being his invocation of Kant as the 'first real modernist' in 'Modernist Painting' (Greenberg 1960: 85), because he used reason to immanently criticize reason, and thereby entrench it more firmly, if more narrowly, in its area of competence. But Greenberg's appeals to Kant are both more varied, and more fundamental, than this well-known remark suggests; I shall argue that *mis*readings of Kant underwrite both Greenberg's modernism, his recounting of the history of the best modern art as a gradual 'reduction' to the essence of each art, and his formalism, the understanding of aesthetic theory that underpinned his activity as a critic.[8]

Greenberg's formalism, his theoretical self-understanding of his activity as a critic in a Kantian mould, is beset by several difficulties. At the most general level, it suffers from his failure to distinguish between free and dependent beauty in the third *Critique*. Greenberg attempts to apply Kant's account of *pure* aesthetic judgement, a judgement about the aesthetic feeling aroused by 'free' (or conceptually unconstrained) beauty, to works of art—thereby ignoring, in a way that has since become the norm, Kant's more apposite remarks on fine art, genius, and aesthetic ideas, in favour of an account that takes natural beauty (and decorative motifs) as its paradigm.[9] It is above all Greenberg's recourse to Kant's *formalism* to underwrite a theory of *artistic* value that is responsible for the general rejection of Kantian aesthetics in subsequent art theory.[10] As a result, Greenberg misses two distinct kinds of

[8] I take this way of parsing Greenbergian theory—in terms of its 'modernism' and its 'formalism'—from Thierry de Duve's exemplary work on Greenberg. See de Duve 1996a: ch. IV 'The Monochrome and the Blank Canvas' and de Duve 1996b.

[9] The influence of this identification is such that it extends to both those opposed to the Kantian legacy in art theory and criticism *and* those who seek to retrieve it. For the former, see Danto 1997: chs. IV and V; for the latter see de Duve 1996a: ch. V. De Duve defends this identification in a forthcoming publication (de Duve 2007). It is also the subject of a debate between de Duve and Paul Crowther, forthcoming Crowther's *Progress and the Visual Arts: Why Art History Matters to Aesthetics*, in preparation. For a critique of this identification in both Danto and de Duve see Costello 2007 (forthcoming).

[10] This identification of judgements of artistic value with pure aesthetic judgement pervades Greenberg's work throughout the late Sixties and Seventies, from 'Complaints of an Art Critic' (1967) onward. It reaches fruition in the essays and seminars, originally dating from 1971, collected in *Homemade Esthetics*.

conceptual complexity that attach to works of art, even for Kant, that present difficulties for the rejection of Kant as an arch-formalist in art theory. That is, the constraint that the *concept* a work of art is meant to fulfil imposes on artistic beauty, and the complexity that conceiving works of art as expressions of aesthetic *ideas*, and hence as having an irreducible cognitive function, adds to Kant's conception of fine art (Kant 1790 [1987]: § 16 and § 49). Indeed, the fact that neither is considered in the rush to reject Kant's aesthetics shows the extent to which *Greenberg's* Kant continues to mediate the reception of the third *Critique* in art theory, even today.

Moreover, Greenberg tends to empiricize and psychologize Kant's theory of aesthetic judgement. Greenberg's erroneous belief that he could demonstrate the 'objectivity' of taste by appealing to the empirical record of past taste—when induction could not possibly provide the necessity he required to support his argument—is evidence of his empiricization of Kant, in this case, the judgement of taste's *claim* (but only claim) to validity over all judging subjects.[11] The fact, if it is a fact, that judgements about artistic worth have tended to converge over time, provides no guarantee that they will continue to do so in future. Should they not, the conceptual fallacy involved in appealing to the arguable fact that they have done so to date would be apparent. In effect, Greenberg mistook the 'fact' of a past consensus for a past consensus of fact.[12] Relatedly, Greenberg's psychologization of Kant is evidenced by his tendency to conflate the Kantian criterion of 'disinterest' as a necessary precondition on aesthetic judgement with his own, psychologistic, conception of 'aesthetic distance'.[13] As a result, Greenberg conflates a transcendental theory with a

[11] 'The solution to the question of the objectivity of taste stares you in the face, it's there in the record [. . .] In effect the objectivity of taste is probatively demonstrated in and through the presence of consensus *over time*. That consensus makes itself evident in judgements of aesthetic value that stand up under the ever-renewed test of experience.' See 'Can Taste be Objective?' (Greenberg 1973a: 23). This is the published version of 'Seminar III'. Both versions are collected in *Homemade Esthetics* (Greenberg 1999: 23–30 and 103–15).

[12] For a reading of this Seminar see de Duve 1996b: 107–10 ('Wavering Reflections').

[13] This conflation of 'disinterestedness', for Kant a necessary condition for judgement to count as aesthetic, with aesthetic distance, a mental act or state of mind, is often explicit: 'Kant pointed [. . .] to aesthetic *distance* when he said that the "judgement of taste [. . .] is indifferent as regards the being of an object"; also when he said "Taste is the faculty of judging of an object, or a method of representing it, by an entirely *disinterested* satisfaction or dissatisfaction".' See 'Observations on Esthetic Distance', in Greenberg 1999: 74 (my italics). Greenberg attributes his own psychologistic conception of aesthetic distance to Edward Bullough's account in 'Psychical Distance' (1912), reprinted in Neill and Ridley 1995: 297–311.

psychological description of a particular state of mind. This deprives his own theory of what is in many ways most persuasive about it, its attention to the specificity of its artistic object. For if aesthetic experience really were as voluntaristic as this implies, a matter of merely *adopting* a distancing frame of mind towards an object, the nature of that object itself would fall away as a significant determinant on aesthetic judgement. Or, at the very least, its role in determining such judgement would be significantly underplayed; for one can adopt such an attitude towards anything—at least in principle.[14]

Greenberg's modernism is similarly compromised, in this case by dogmatic epistemological and ontological assumptions about the individual senses and their relation to individual arts. As early as 'Towards a Newer Laocoon' (1940), his second major paper on modernism, Greenberg seeks to align specific arts, under the influence of music, with specific senses in a way that continues to underpin his theorization of modernism throughout his career.[15] But in order to do so he is forced to conceive the intuition of works of art in terms of *discrete* sensory tracks. Like his psychologizing of Kant, this is essentially a product of Greenberg's deep-seated empiricism as a critic. As a result, he conflates judgements of taste, properly so-called, with what Kant would have concurred were aesthetic judgements, albeit of sense rather than reflection.[16] That is, judgements grounded, like judgements of taste, in feeling, albeit, unlike judgements of taste, in feeling occasioned

[14] To his credit, Greenberg meets this consequence head-on: 'the notion of art, put to the test of experience, proves to depend in the showdown [. . .] on an act of distancing. Art, coinciding with aesthetic experience in general, means simply a twist of attitude towards your own awareness and its object.' See 'Seminar One' (Greenberg 1973b: 44). De Duve attributes this conclusion to Greenberg's tussle with Duchamp's readymades in 'Wavering Reflections', (de Duve 1996b: 89–119).

[15] 'The advantage of music lay chiefly in the fact that it was an "abstract" art, an art of "pure" form. It was such because it was incapable, objectively, of communicating anything else than a sensation, and because this sensation could not be conceived in any other terms than those of the sense through which it entered consciousness. [. . .] Only by accepting the example of music and defining each of the other arts solely in terms of the sense or faculty which perceived its effect and by excluding from each art whatever is intelligible in the terms of any other sense or faculty would the non-musical arts attain the "purity" and self-sufficiency which they desire.' Greenberg 1940: 31–2.

[16] 'Agreeable is what the senses like in sensation'; 'A liking for the beautiful must depend on the reflection, regarding an object [. . .] This dependence on reflection also distinguishes the liking for the beautiful from [that for] the agreeable, which rests entirely on sensation'; 'Insofar as we present an object as agreeable, we present it solely in relation to sense' (Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, 1790 [1987]: § 3, p. 47, Ak. 206; § 4, p. 49, Ak. 207; § 4, p. 49, Ak. 208 respectively). Here after *CJ*.

by objects impacting causally on the sense organs (what one might call 'sensation'), rather than in reflection on an object or perceptual configuration's 'subjective purposiveness' for cognition in general (that is, its suitability for engaging our cognitive faculties in an optimally enlivening way).[17] As such, Greenberg's key idea of medium-specificity is based on an attempt to align an essentially empiricist notion of cognitively uninflected 'sensation', that owes more to Hume than to Kant, with specific artistic mediums, as if the sensory impression made by a work of art were a simple correlate of the intrinsic properties of its medium, from which it could therefore be directly read off.[18]

If Greenberg's desire to align specific arts with specific senses explains *why* he sought to differentiate the arts in terms of media, the question it provokes is analogous to that provoked by his view of the senses. Namely: *can* the arts be so easily parsed in this way? The fact that they could, as it so happens, be separated at the height of Greenberg's authority as a critic, clearly does not entail that this is a *necessary* feature of art's, or even good art's, identity. This was demonstrated by minimalism, an art form Greenberg's theory could not accommodate simply because it refused to accept that the arts were discrete (see de Duve 1996a: ch. IV, de Duve 1983: 249). Had Greenberg not hitched his idea of aesthetic quality so irredeemably to the separateness of the arts in the first place he could have avoided this impasse. Moreover, had Greenberg's supposed Kantianism stretched as far as the 'Transcendental Aesthetic' of the first *Critique* he would not have sought to parse the arts in terms of either

[17] '[P]leasure in aesthetic judgement [. . .] is merely contemplative [. . .] The very consciousness of a merely formal purposiveness in the play of the subject's cognitive powers, accompanying a presentation by which an object is given, is that pleasure. For this consciousness in an aesthetic judgement contains a basis for determining the subject's activity regarding the quickening of his cognitive powers, and hence an inner causality (which is purposive) concerning cognition in general, which however is not restricted to a determinate cognition. Hence it contains a mere form of the subjective purposiveness of a presentation' Kant, *CJ*, § 12, p. 68, Ak. 222.

[18] Thus Hume comments on the famous anecdote about the key sunk in the barrel of wine: 'The great resemblance between mental and bodily taste will easily teach us to apply this story [. . .] Where the organs are so fine, as to allow nothing to escape them; and at the same time so exact as to perceive every ingredient in the composition: This we call delicacy of taste, whether we employ these terms in the literal or metaphorical sense' ●(Hume, 'Of the Standard of Taste', (1757), reprinted in Neill and Ridley 1995: 260. As a result, Hume recognizes no distinction between what Kant will subsequently distinguish as aesthetic judgements of taste and of the agreeable (not because he confuses intersubjective validity with mere personal preference, but because he grants no distinction, akin to Kant's, between reflection and sensation). See *n.* 16 above.

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medium or sense. For on Kant's account of space and time as *a priori* 'forms of intuition', our perception of works of art, like perception in general, would have to be grounded in an underlying *unity* of sensibility.[19] While it may make sense to talk about the contribution made by an individual sense to our intuition of works of art in the anomalous event that a given sense is defective, it is both alien to Kant's epistemology, and phenomenologically unpersuasive, to construe normal instances of intuition as mere *aggregates* of the senses—the more so when it comes to such culturally and historically complex entities as works of art.

The point of these objections to Greenberg is to show that rejecting Kantian aesthetics on the basis of Greenberg's appeal to it is an ill-founded rejection.[20] And herein lies the irony of art-world hostility to Greenberg since late 1960s: despite that antipathy, the majority of artists and art theorists continue to operate with an essentially *Greenbergian* conception of aesthetic theory. What Greenberg once valued is now roundly devalued, but what has *not* changed is the understanding of aesthetics underpinning his critics' position. As a result art theory has rejected Kant's aesthetics as a viable discourse about art after modernism on the basis of a distortion. So far this result is entirely negative: if the argument is sound it shows only that art theory goes astray to the extent that it takes Kant at Greenberg's word; it does not preclude the possibility that the art world may have been right to reject Kant nonetheless, if for the wrong reasons. That is, it does not show that Kant's aesthetics *can* accommodate ostensibly anti-aesthetic art. To show that it can (and that what passes for anti-aesthetic is such only when viewed through the optic of a formalist aesthetics) I now want to consider what Kant himself had to say about works of art as expressions of 'aesthetic ideas,' and whether this can be applied to Conceptual Art.

[19] For Kant, space is the form of all outer sensibility, hence a condition of perceiving anything at all in the external world, while time, as the form of inner sensibility is a condition of perceiving anything whatsoever. 'Time is the formal *a priori* condition of all appearances whatsoever. Space, as the pure form of all *outer* intuition, is so far limited; it serves as the *a priori* condition only of outer appearances. But since all representations, whether they have for their objects outer things or not, belong, in themselves, as determinations of the mind, to our inner state; and since this inner state stands under the formal condition of inner intuition, and so belongs to time, time is an *a priori* condition of all appearance whatsoever.' See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1781 [1929]: A34/B50.

[20] I deal much more fully with all these issues and problems in Greenberg, and the way in which they overdetermine subsequent attitudes towards aesthetics in art theory, which I have only summarized here, in Parts I-II of my forthcoming monograph, *Aesthetics after Modernism*.

6.3 Kant on Works of Art as the 'Expression of Aesthetic Ideas'

For Kant, works of art are expressions of 'aesthetic ideas.' Kant introduces such ideas with the explanation: 'by an aesthetic idea I mean a presentation of the imagination which prompts much thought, but to which no determinate thought whatsoever, i.e., no [determinate] concept, can be adequate, so that no language can express it completely and allow us to grasp it.'[21] As such, aesthetic ideas have both a technical and an architectonic significance for Kant. As I intend to largely abstract from their significance for Kant's critical project in what follows, I shall begin by outlining his own conception, in order to make clear where I am departing from it.

To put it in the most straightforward terms, an aesthetic idea is Kant's take on what is distinctive about both the content of works of art, and the way in which works of art present that content. What is distinctive about the *content* of works of art is either that they present concepts that may be encountered in experience, but with a completeness that experience itself never affords or, more radically, that they communicate ideas that cannot, in principle, be 'exhibited'—that is, presented by imagination to intuition—in experience.[22] Think, for example, of the difference between the *idea* of freedom, the object of which cannot be presented in intuition, and everyday *concepts*, the objects of which can. What is distinctive about the way in which works of art *present* such content is that they 'expand' the ideas presented, by virtue of the indirect means through which they embody them in sensible form.

This is because, rather than seeking to present the idea itself (which would be impossible, ideas being by definition what cannot be exhibited in experience for Kant), an aesthetic idea presents the 'aesthetic attributes' of its object, thereby expressing an idea's 'implications' and 'kinship with other concepts'.[23] In effect, aesthetic ideas present indirectly what cannot be presented directly.

[21] *CJ*, §49, p. 182, Ak. 314.

[22] Kant claims, for example, that the poet 'ventures to give these [ideas such as death, envy, love and fame that *are* exemplified in experience] sensible expression in a way that goes beyond the limits of experience, namely, with a completeness for which no example can be found in nature' and, more radically, that aesthetic ideas are properly so-called because 'they do at least strive toward something lies beyond the bounds of experience, and hence try to approach an exhibition of rational concepts . . .'. See *CJ*, § 49, pp. 182–3, Ak. 314.

[23] *CJ*, § 49, p. 183, Ak 315.

To take Kant's own example, 'Jupiter's eagle with the lightning in its claws' expands the idea of God's majesty by presenting it aesthetically.[24] What Kant calls the 'logical' attributes of an object, in this case God, would be those in virtue of which it fulfils a concept, in this case majesty. Jupiter's eagle with the lightning in its claws, by contrast, is a *metaphorical* expression of those same attributes, through which we are encouraged to envisage God's majesty in the light of the thoughts provoked by Jupiter's eagle, thereby opening up a rich seam of further associations. In this way, works of art present ideas in sensible form that would otherwise remain unavailable to intuition, by using their 'aesthetic' attributes in ways that provoke 'more thought' than a direct conceptual elaboration of the idea itself would facilitate, thereby 'expanding' the idea in the process.[25]

In one respect, then, aesthetic ideas might be said to achieve the impossible: they allow works of art to present rational ideas which exceed the bounds of sense in determinate sensuous form. Consider Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People to Victory* (1830) as a sensuous embodiment of the idea of freedom. The aesthetic attributes through which freedom is personified in the guise of 'Liberty', and shown leading her people to victory (fearlessness, spontaneity, resoluteness, leadership, all attributes of an active self-determining will) while holding a flag, symbol of freedom from oppression, aloft in one hand and clutching a musket in the other, serve to 'aesthetically expand' the idea of freedom itself. By presenting freedom metaphorically in the guise of 'Liberty' in this way, freedom is depicted concretely as something worth fighting for, indeed, as something requiring courage and fortitude to attain. Through the expression of ideas in this way, Kant claims, works of art 'quicken the mind' in a way that is purposive for cognition itself. This quickening inheres largely in the freedom of the imagination from mechanically schematizing concepts of the understanding. Rather than being constrained to present one or more concepts of the understanding in sensible form, aesthetic ideas stimulate the imagination to range freely and widely over an 'immense realm of kindred presentations'. As such, works of art stimulate the mind, albeit in a less

[24] *CJ* § 49, p. 183, Ak. 315.

[25] '[A]esthetic attributes [. . .] prompt the imagination to spread over a multitude of kindred presentations that arouse more thought than can be expressed in a concept determined by words. These aesthetic attributes yield an *aesthetic idea* [. . .] its proper function is to quicken [*beleben*] the mind by opening up for it a view into an immense realm of kindred presentations.' *CJ*, § 49, pp. 183–4, Ak. 315.

structured way than determinate thought, by encouraging us to think about such ideas in a new light.[26]

This gives rise to what Kant calls a 'feeling of life' in the work's recipient, a feeling of the enhancement, or furtherance, of the subject's cognitive powers. Works of art do this, not by giving rise to determinate thought, but to a *feeling* of mental vitality that mirrors the cognitive state to which Kant attributes the production of aesthetic ideas.[27] Hence the common claim that Kant's theory of art is a form of expressionism. Accordingly, 'genius' (the productive faculty responsible for fine art) is defined as the ability to 'discover [aesthetic] ideas for a given concept' and 'hit upon a way of expressing these ideas that enables us to communicate to others [. . .] the mental attunement [. . .] those ideas produce.'[28] Genius, in other words, is the ability to 'communicate' the free play of the faculties (the cognitive state responsible for the production of aesthetic ideas in the first place) and thereby occasion a similarly enlivening cognitive play in the work's recipient. The little Kant says concretely about what this free play of imagination and understanding occasioned by aesthetic ideas might amount to empirically, suggests a kind of free-wheeling, associative play in which the imagination moves freely and swiftly from one partial presentation of a concept to another. Thus Kant claims that aesthetic ideas encourage the imagination to 'spread over a multitude of kindred presentations that arouse more thought than can be expressed in a concept' and thereby 'quicken the mind by opening up for it a view into an immense realm of kindred presentations.'[29]

What I want to emphasize, and retain, from Kant's account of works of art as expressions of aesthetic ideas is his stress on the *imaginative engagement with ideas* that works of art induce in the spectator, far removed from the

[26] Hence, Kant claims that the aesthetic attributes that yield the aesthetic idea 'give the imagination a momentum which makes it think more in response to these objects, though in an undeveloped way, than can be comprehended within one concept and hence in one determinate linguistic expression'. *CJ*, § 49, p. 184, Ak. 315.

[27] In *CJ*, § 1 Kant distinguishes aesthetic from cognitive judgements by characterizing the former as those in which a given presentation is attended to exclusively for the feeling of pleasure or displeasure it occasions in the subject: 'the presentation is referred only to the subject, namely, to his feeling of life, under the name feeling of pleasure or displeasure, and this forms the basis of a very special power of discriminating and judging. This power does not contribute anything to cognition, but merely compares the given presentation in the subject with the entire presentational power, of which the mind becomes conscious when it feels its own state' (*CJ*, § 1, p.44, Ak. 204).

[28] *CJ*, § 49, pp. 185–6, Ak. 317.

[29] *CJ*, § 49, pp. 183–4, Ak. 315.

astringent formalism generally attributed to the third *Critique* as a reception aesthetic. Given that this is all I want to take from Kant's account, it might reasonably be asked why I bother going through Kant, and the reception of his aesthetics in art theory, to arrive at something so minimal. By doing so, I have sought to clear enough ground to demonstrate that there is no *prima facie* obstacle to the application of Kant's theory of art to the kind of art generally perceived as anti-aesthetic on the formalist interpretation of his aesthetics that holds sway in the art world. To show that the way in which much Conceptual Art engages the mind—*despite* its strategy of deliberate formal self-impoverishment—may still credibly be called 'aesthetic' in Kant's terms, I now want to analyse Sol LeWitt's 'weak' or 'inclusive' account of Conceptual Art in some detail.

6.4 The Aesthetics of Conceptual Art: LeWitt after Kant

Though it would be misleading to categorize LeWitt narrowly as a 'pure' (as opposed to 'proto-') Conceptual artist himself, LeWitt is nonetheless widely regarded as having been hugely influential for both the production and the reception of Conceptual Art through the publication of his 'Paragraphs' and 'Sentences' on Conceptual Art in Summer 1967 and January 1969. Though these texts are generally remembered today for programmatic claims such as the 'idea is the machine that makes the art' or 'ideas alone can be works of art', they are also striking when reviewed in the light of the foregoing account of Kant's theory of art as the expression of aesthetic ideas. Consider the following empirical generalizations LeWitt makes about the new art in 1967:

- This kind of art is not theoretical or illustrative of theories; it is intuitive, it is involved with all types of mental processes and it is purposeless.
- Conceptual Art is not necessarily logical [. . .] Ideas are discovered by intuition.
- Conceptual Art does not really have much to do with mathematics, philosophy, or any other mental discipline.
- Conceptual Art is made to engage the mind of the viewer rather than his eye or emotions.
- Conceptual Art is only good when the idea is good.[30]

[30] I have taken these remarks out of the order in which they appear in the text.

What I want to draw attention to in such early formulations is the rejection of the analogy with philosophy or logic and of the narrow definitional project (so pronounced, in Osborne's terminology, in the work of 'strong' or 'exclusive' Conceptual artists such as Kosuth and Art & Language), and the related stress on 'intuition' in the creation of art. Intuition, as LeWitt employs the term here, can only mean something like 'grounded in feeling'. An idea reached 'by intuition', then, is one reached, neither through ratiocination, nor through following a logic, but by an artist 'feeling' or 'sensing'—that is, *intuiting*—his or her way. A 'good idea', in this context, is presumably one that just *feels right* as art, for which no rule may be given in advance, but for which ideas that have worked well in past art may serve as exemplars. On this account, a 'good work of Conceptual Art' would be one in which a good idea is reached in an intuitive (and to that extent 'irrational') way, through feeling. This set of concerns is even more pronounced in the 'Sentences on Conceptual Art,' from a year and a half later:

- Conceptual artists are mystics rather than rationalists. They leap to conclusions that logic cannot reach.
- Rational judgements repeat rational judgements. Illogical judgements lead to new experience.
- Ideas do not necessarily proceed in logical order.
- Once the idea of the piece is established in the artist's mind and the final form is decided, the process is carried out blindly.
- The process is mechanical and should not be tampered with. It should run its course.
- The artist's will is secondary to the process he initiates from idea to completion. His willfulness may only be ego.[31]

At least two important considerations emerge from these and similar remarks. First, that what distinguishes art from philosophy is precisely that it does *not* proceed rationally or according to logic. As 'mystics rather than rationalists', for LeWitt, the source of an artist's ideas is opaque and cannot be rationally reconstructed. Moreover, for LeWitt, the true Conceptual artist endeavours to efface him or herself as much as possible in the service of their ideas. Hence ideas should be allowed to 'run their course' once the idea for a work has been conceived, the work being merely executed in accordance with it. Tampering

[31] Again, the remarks do not appear here in LeWitt's own order.

with an idea by amending it, for example in the light of the way its execution looks, always compromises the integrity of the work and may be merely an expression of the artist's willfulness or 'egotism'.[32] By interfering with their idea, the artist only 'gets in the way', so to speak, of their own work. As a result, the work risks coming off as laboured or willful. To put the same point in Kant's idiosyncratic terminology in the third *Critique*, it ceases to 'look like' nature; that is, not so much to *resemble* nature, as to appear *similarly free* of any hint of laboriousness that might impede its free appreciation.[33]

Hence, one suggestive way of reading these remarks is as a critique, *avant la lettre*, of the belief, bordering on solipsism, that a self-reflexive stress on the artist's declarative intentions (typical of 'strong' Conceptual practices such as Kosuth's or Art & Language's) could suffice to determine what is actually achieved in a work of art (what might be called, after Robert Rauschenberg's infamous telegram, the 'This is a portrait of Iris Clert if I say so' syndrome).[34] That bit of art-world enthusiasm is no more true (and no less ridiculous)—*if* taken as a statement of fact—than my claiming that this paper is an elephant;

[32] That this is a hard trap to avoid is attested to by the following anecdote about LeWitt himself conveyed to me by several people who were present. In 1971 LeWitt was invited to participate in the forward-looking lithography workshop at NSCAD (Nova Scotia College of Art & Design). He sent through the instructions for a suite of ten lithographs in advance, as was his practice, and students were employed to execute the work accordingly. When he arrived to view the results he balked at signing two, because the students responsible had found clever ways to interpret the instructions that totally undercut LeWitt's expectations about how the finished works would look. One in particular had been done in such a way that rather than the random series of lines LeWitt expected, the results looked like an early work by Frank Stella. To his credit, however, LeWitt accepted that the results did represent a legitimate interpretation of the instructions and signed them accordingly. See Kennedy 1994: 24–5.

[33] 'Nature, we say, is beautiful [*schön*] if it also looks like art; and art can be called fine [*schön*] art only if we are conscious that it is art while yet it looks to us like nature.' Contrary to the assumption that Kant is here committing himself to the claim that art must literally *resemble* nature, his real meaning, that art must appear as free or unwilled as nature is clear: 'In [dealing with] a product of fine art we must become conscious that it is art rather than nature, and yet the purposiveness in its form must seem as free from all constraint of chosen rules as if it were a product of mere nature.' And further: 'Even though the purposiveness in a product of fine art is intentional, it must still not seem intentional: i.e., fine art must have the *look* of nature even though we are conscious of it as art [. . .] the academic form must not show; there must be no hint that the rule was hovering before the artist's eyes and putting fetters on his mental powers.' *CJ*, 45, pp. 173–4, Ak. 306–7.

[34] This was the text of the infamous 'nominalist' *Portrait of Iris Clert* that Rauschenberg sent to the French dealer in 1961, consisting of a postcard bearing these words.

the conditions for *x* being correctly described as a portrait or an elephant (or, for that matter, an oak tree) not being open to willful dictat—*even* if one is an artist. Here I am essentially in agreement with Alexander Alberro, that what most differentiates LeWitt's position from Kosuth's is the former's stress on eliminating the subjectivity of the artist (Alberro 2000: xx). As LeWitt puts it: 'To work with a plan that is pre-set is one way of avoiding subjectivity [. . .] This eliminates the arbitrary, capricious, and the subjective as much as possible. This is the reason for using this method (1967 [Alberro and Stimson 2000: 13]).' But this hardly commits LeWitt, as Alberro would have it, to a 'mode of production [. . .] that does not require intuition, creativity or rational thought (Alberro 2000: xx).' LeWitt's own stress on intuition, amply documented in the 'Paragraphs' and 'Sentences' cited above, flatly contradicts this, and it is at the level of intuition, in LeWitt's sense of the term (namely, that of *conceiving* the idea for the work) that the aesthetic and what, I take it, Alberro must mean by the 'creative' dimension of the work resides. Indeed, even the claim that LeWitt's work lacks rational thought is potentially misleading; it is 'irrational' only in conception, though anything but in execution.

Moreover, this suggests a way of overcoming what would otherwise be an embarrassing difficulty for the analogy with Kant's theory of art that I am proposing. Namely, how can *mechanically* executing a work in accordance with a pre-set plan not constrain the freedom of the artist's and the viewer's imagination so essential to Kant's aesthetics in both its productive and its receptive dimensions? My suggestion is that aesthetic feeling, as it is being theorized here, operates at the level of the *intuition* (or conception) of the idea on the part of the artist, and of its subsequent *appreciation* on the part of the viewer, and *not* at the level of its execution or realization. Like Kant's theory of art, LeWitt's is essentially a species of expressionism, indeed, in LeWitt's case, a fairly bald form of expressionism: 'A work of art may be understood as a conductor from the artist's mind to the viewers (1969 [Alberro and Stimson 2000: 107]).' On LeWitt's expressionism—which I am not endorsing—the aesthetic dimension of art is pushed back to the conception and reception of the idea alone. 'In terms of idea,' Lewitt writes, 'the artist is free to even surprise himself. Ideas are discovered by intuition (1967 [Alberro and Stimson 2000: 13]).' As I interpret him, this makes 'intuition' LeWitt's term for what Kant means by 'Spirit' in his account of genius, namely: 'the ability to apprehend the imagination's rapidly passing play and unite it in a

concept [the aesthetic idea] that can be communicated without the constraint of rules'.[35]

If this is correct, it provides a solution to a second potential problem for my analogy between LeWitt's theory of art and Kant's. The idea of 'genius', so out of favour today, is widely understood as signifying something that marks the genius out from other mortals, that is, as a mark of subjective distinction that is out of the ordinary. An argument can be made, however, that in at least one respect this is antithetical to Kant's own use of the term. Seemingly in line with standard usage, Kant characterizes genius as an 'innate productive ability', 'talent', or 'natural endowment' responsible for the creation of works of art.[36] The problem is this: how is one to *reconcile* Kant's stress on an innate, and therefore presumably subjective, talent responsible for fine art, with LeWitt's broadside against the subjectivity or willfulness of the artist getting in the way of their own work? Kant defines genius, in a typically transparent manner, as follows:

> *Genius* is the talent (natural endowment) that gives the rule to art. Since talent is an innate productive ability of the artist and as such belongs itself to nature, we could also put it this way: *Genius* is the innate mental predisposition (*ingenium*) *through which* nature gives the rule to art.[37]

What is this 'innate mental predisposition *through which* nature gives the rule to art'? Kant argues that, like any other intentional activity, the production of fine art must, of necessity, proceed according to some conception (or 'rule') of what the artist is trying to achieve. That is, the artist must have some end in mind that guides his or her actions. But this creates a problem since, in order to please *freely* in aesthetic judgement, the resulting work's 'beauty' (that is, its propensity to engage the mind in an aesthetically enlivening way) cannot be based on any rule against which its success or failure could be measured. For if it could, this would render aesthetic judgement 'determinative' rather than 'reflective', that is, a case of *subsuming* a particular (in this case a work of art) under a rule (the artist's conception of what they were trying to achieve) in order to determine how well the former instantiated the latter, and thereby gauging the success of the resulting work. As should be clear, this could no longer be an aesthetic judgement in Kant's sense, because it would have a concept as its determining ground. Indeed, it would be a largely mechanical

[35] *CJ*, § 49 p.186, Ak. 317. [36] *CJ*, § 46 p.174, Ak. 307. [37] *CJ*, § 46 p. 174, Ak. 307.

process of holding an instance up to a concept to gauge the extent to which the former instantiated the latter. Kant is aware of the problem and even proposes a solution: 'Since [. . .] a product can never be called art unless it is preceded by a rule, it must be *nature in the subject* (and through the attunement of his powers) that gives the rule to art.'[38]

In other words, genius names an artist's ability to grasp what makes aesthetic feeling universal (on Kant's account, the free play of those cognitive faculties with which we are universally endowed *qua* human), and make it manifest by embodying it in a determinate sensible form. For LeWitt this ability resides in the process of 'intuition' through which ideas for works of art are conceived; for Kant it resides in the ability to 'apprehend the imagination's rapidly passing play' and embody it in an aesthetic idea. If this is correct, LeWitt's stress on preventing the subjectivity or willfulness of the artist from coming between their idea and its realization in the work, and hence between the work and its receiver, is compatible with Kant's theory of genius as the productive ability responsible for fine art. For it must be by deferring to something like 'nature in the subject', that is, the free play of the subject's cognitive powers, to which LeWitt as much as Kant attributes a work's inception in 'intuition'. Moreover, like Kant's account of artistic production through genius, LeWitt's account is intended to preserve the *freedom* of the viewer's imaginative engagement with the work from any strictures that might be laid down in advance by its author. Once again, this distinguishes LeWitt's Conceptualism from Kosuth's.[39]

6.5 Conclusion: Towards an Aesthetics of Conceptual Art

Though what I have said thus far should serve to dispel some of the initial implausibility of viewing Conceptual Art through the optic of Kant's theory of art, there are clearly limits to this project—not least the divergent roles of, and significance attached to, the notion of *form* in Conceptual Art and Kant's

[38] *CJ*, § 46 p. 175, Ak. 307; my italics.

[39] Thus Kosuth's famous programmatic declaration: 'A work of art is a tautology in that it is a presentation of the artist's intention, that is, he is saying that a particular work of art is art, which means, is a *definition* of art. Thus, that it is art is true *a priori*. . .' (Kosuth 1969).

theory.[40] The problem becomes acute when one recalls that, for Kant at least, it was largely the way in which a work indirectly presents an idea, by bringing together its aesthetic attributes in a unified form, that is the focus of aesthetic judgements of art. But while Kant's stress on the sensible form of the work *is* a limit on the analogy I have drawn between Kant's and LeWitt's theories of art, this should neither disguise, nor detract from, the broader point: namely, the extent to which writing on Conceptual Art routinely understates the way in which such art *expands ideas in imaginatively complex ways*, ways that may be understood according to the spirit, if not the letter, of Kant's text.

Thus I want to conclude by briefly indicating some examples that might be used to make good this claim. One might point to LeWitt's own work, which plays with the notion of systematicity, often reducing it to absurdity by taking it to extremes.[41] Or one might point to works such as Dan Graham's *Homes for America* which consists of a monotonous piece of prose about suburban tract housing accompanied by deadpan images presented, unannounced as art, in an art magazine.[42] Or one might consider Art & Language's *Index 01*

[40] The debates concerning Kant's formalism are far too complex to go into here. But it is worth remarking, in the light of the received wisdom about Kant's formalism in art theory, that the notion of form in Kant is a far more complex than Greenberg's claims to a Kantian provenance for his *empirical* formalism as an art critic might lead one to expect. There are Kantian aestheticians, such as Paul Crowther, who rely on Kant's theory of perception in the first *Critique,* along with the remarks about form and design in §§ 13–14 of the third *Critique*, to argue that Kant is committed to a substantive, and hence restrictive, formalism—such that when we reflect aesthetically we engage contemplatively with spatio-temporal complexity in a perceptual manifold. Nonetheless, the extent to which Kant may be used to underwrite formalism in art theory remains far from clear. Kant's own conception of fine art clearly cuts against Greenberg's supposedly Kantian claim that aesthetic judgement is predicated solely on form. Moreover, it seems increasingly that the consensus among Kant scholars is shifting away from this view. Thus it is notable that Guyer and Allison concur that Kant slides from invoking the formal notion of a 'form of purposiveness' to invoking the substantive notion of a 'purposiveness of form' in the third Moment in a manner that is neither supported by, nor necessary to, the internal argument of the third *Critique* itself. See Guyer 1997: ch. VII, especially 199–210 and Allison 2001: ch. VI, especially 131–43. For Crowther's view of the relation between aesthetic judgement and perception see, for example, Crowther 1996. It remains unclear how Crowther intends to reconcile this account with his own interest in developing Kant's theory of aesthetic ideas, without turning pure and dependent aesthetic judgement into two entirely distinct forms of judgement, thereby overplaying the distinction.

[41] For an exemplary account of this aspect of LeWitt's reduction of seriality to absurdity see Krauss 1986.

[42] *Arts Magazine*, December 1966. See Dan Graham's 'My Works for Magazine Pages: A History of Conceptual Art' (reprinted in Alberro and Stimson 2000: 418–22).

(see Illustration 6), 1972 (a.k.a. *Documenta Index*), a vast and complexly cross-referenced index of the group's writings on art and the relations between them. Or Lawrence Weiner's *A 36″ × 36″ Removal to the Lathing or Support Wall or Plaster or Wall-Board from a Wall*, the nature of which is self-explanatory. Or Adrian Piper's early *Catalysis* series (see Illustration 9), in which Piper documents herself doing something, such as traveling on a bus smelling foul, or with a towel stuffed in her mouth, that instantly makes her an outcast within a public space.

In each instance, these works' physical embodiment is crucial to their effect. Without their use of a *particular* sensible form, the experience of these works would trigger no more thoughts or imaginative associations than their bare descriptions, as Kant's account suggests. Contrary to the critical orthodoxy that ideas stand or fall in Conceptual Art without reference to their execution, our response to these works is significantly shaped by *how* they embody their meaning. The 'same' idea in a *different* form might have an altogether different meaning, and give rise to an altogether different experience as a result. Hence, one should be wary of taking the rhetoric of Conceptual Art at face value; in this respect it is not so different from art in general.[43]

Assuming one grants that the particular forms, or means of presentation, of these works are crucial, a question would remain as to whether they constitute indirect presentations of ideas that cannot be directly presented, as Kant's account would seem to require, and, if so, of what ideas. LeWitt's work plays with the ideas of seriality or systematicity, Graham's with standardization and homogeneity in mass production, Art & Language's with the Borgesian idea (which can only ever exist as an idea) of the exhaustive catalogue, Weiner's with making visible the background conditions and support structures of art, and Piper's with the ideas of social exclusion and marginalization. None of these ideas is *directly* or *exhaustively* instantiated in experience in the way that the objects of everyday concepts are, and the success of these works turns on the range of associations and thoughts triggered by their material embodiment. Clearly, there are limits to this argument. These works cannot be conceived, straightforwardly, as metaphors; nor is it clear whether they may be said to 'symbolize morality' in Kant's sense. Nonetheless, they may still be called

[43] The widespread belief that Conceptual Art *does* mark some kind of categorically shift from prior art, or art in general, is to a large extent a result of the art world's unfortunate tendency to take works of art at their producers' word, when artists are about as interested, and hence potentially as *unreliable*, guides to their own artistic achievements as one could hope to find.

aesthetic, in Kant's terms, by virtue of triggering a wealth of imaginative associations through the indirect presentation of an idea in sensible form.

But what about the many works, for which Conceptual Art is perhaps best known, that have no such form, unless one is going to stretch the meaning of form to include the minimal visible properties of a line of text? Here, the analogy with Kant does begin to unravel, though it is worth noting one feature of such works to which their absence of form contributes. While clearly not aesthetic ideas in Kant's sense, their lack of form enables them to fulfill, in a pronounced way, Kant's claim that aesthetic ideas 'emulate the example of reason in striving for a maximum', that is, for a completeness that experience does not afford. Consider the infinite regress opened up by Robert Barry's *All the things I know but of which I am not at the moment thinking—1.36 P.M.; 15 June 1969, New York* or Lawrence Weiner's equally illusive *The Artic Circle Shattered.* In concert with seemingly more banal works, such as Weiner's *One Quart Exterior Green Industrial Enamel thrown on a Brick Wall*, such works have the advantage, by virtue of their linguistic form, of *not* restricting the viewer's imagination through a single determinate empirical realization. Nonetheless, one might also say that this is where Conceptual Art reaches its vanishing point (both literally and metaphorically). Or, perhaps, that the exhaustive projects that constitute a substantial genre of Conceptual Art, and which *are* sensibly realized, do this more successfully. Think, for example, of the Bechers' lifelong project of documenting 'Typologies' of disappearing industrial forms, On Kawara's lifelong project of painting the date or his more 'occasional' pieces such as *One Million Years*, or Douglas Huebler's project to photographically document everyone alive, *Variable Piece 70*. In each case such works (or projects) seem to strain, quite literally, against the finitude of human experience.

I will conclude here. While I hope to have shown that the broad outlines of Kant's theory of art are not *prima facie* inapplicable to Conceptual Art, given the constraints imposed on Kant's theory of art in virtue of his wider critical project, it may be more productive to move from his own schematic account of artistic expression to a more substantial, and psychologically informative expression theory of art, if one wants to do justice to Conceptual Art. Though the emphasis on idea *at the expense of* form in both LeWitt's writings and in the criticism of Conceptual Art more generally, might suggest some version of the 'ideal' or 'mental entity' variant of expressionism as the most obvious way to go, I would resist this move, above and beyond the well-known objections to such theories, for the simple reason that even the most pared-down and

banal work of Conceptual Art makes a *liminal* aesthetic use of its form. The fixation on lists, diagrams, and maps, and the cheap 'xerox aesthetic' to which many early commentators on Conceptual Art drew attention is just that, *an aesthetic*—if not an especially gratifying one, sensuously.[44] Moreover, many of the artists most associated with such an aesthetic in their early work, moved on to carefully crafted, elaborately staged, text installations when this became financially viable.

That Conceptual Art is nonetheless widely assumed to be anti-aesthetic shows how ingrained two assumptions remain in the theory and philosophy of art: how traditional a conception of form many commentators approach such art with, as if Conceptual Art were to be measured in terms of the very art forms it set out to contest (and thereby found wanting), despite having transformed our expectations concerning what *counts as* artistic form; and, more importantly, how quickly the aesthetic dimension of visual art is equated with an affective response to its visual properties *in isolation from* the ideas such properties or qualities convey. What Conceptual Art demonstrates, against such assumptions, on my account, is neither the limit of aesthetic theory *per se*, nor the limit of Kantian aesthetics, but the limit of *formalist* aesthetics, as mediated by Greenberg, in coming to terms with the cognitive dimension of works of art.

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Queries in Chapter 6

Q1. Kindly check closing paranthesis.