

The Modern Paradigm of Art and Its Frontiers

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Abstract

The awakening of art to self-awareness and the statement of its autonomy are modern phenomena.

The way we think about art in the modern age may be derived from the Kantian “beauty without concept”. Beautiful art is the work of the genius, who creates a work of art that is valuable in itself and is admired in museums by the public. That which I call here “the modern paradigm of art” is based on an absence: the non-conceptuality of the beautiful, i.e., the fact that objective qualities cannot define the beautiful. This absence establishes originality as the essential requirement for modern art and creates the possibility for artists to push the boundaries of the modern paradigm. Thus, the 20th-century sees the appearance of strategies for overriding or substituting originality. The artist withdraws from behind her work, and the work of art is no longer an unapproachable object with an aura, just as the museum is also no longer the temple of the arts. But do these experiments overcome the frontiers of art’s modern paradigm? And, more generally, can this paradigm be overcome at all?

Here I deduct three elements of the modern paradigm of art from the idea of “beauty without concept”: (1) the original artist, who is seen as a genius, (2) the work of art with an aura, and (3) the museum as the temple of art. Then I present how artists, based on the requirement of originality, worked on dismantling the frontiers of the modern paradigm.

Keywords: modern art, autonomy of art, originality, beauty without concept, genius