Essays:

Philosophy, Aesthetics & Art!

By FRED AMA
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This book is dedicated to all my professors at the Institute of Aesthetics of the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile and the Institute of History of the Pontifical Catholic University of Valparaíso, who revealed aspects of culture to me that I was previously unaware of. Their contribution to my education has been invaluable, which is reflected, in part, in this book, a collection of thirteen essays on Philosophy, Aesthetics, and Art. These essays were written between 2024 and 2025, while I was enrolled in the Diploma programs in Aesthetics and Philosophy at the PUC and in Art History at the PUCV.

FRED AMA

Index:

Introduction:

These thirteen essays address diverse Philosophical, Aesthetic and Artistic themes. They range from pre-Socratic conceptions to the limits of Contemporary Art, compassing various angles and topics. Clearly, there is a group that is conceptualized within the History of Art: Post-Columbian, Latin American and Chilean Art, Ancient Art (Greek, Roman, and Etruscan). In addition, they will be able to read an essay that analyzes Michelangelo`s *Tondo Doni* using the Panofsky method. Along the same lines, but in a more near future, they will have access to reflections on some works by Blake, Manet, Toulouse-Lautrec and Paolozzi.

On the other hand, there is another line of work, which tends more towards the aesthetic-philosophical. In this collection of works, you will be able to read and immerse yourself in pre-Socratic, Medieval and Modern Aesthetic conceptions, enriched by the ideas of Kant, Adorno, Heidegger and others.

I am sure that the variety and depth of the subjects covered will contribute to the cultural development of the reader.

<div align="right">Fred Ama</div>

Aesthetic ideas in the pre-Socratics and in Plato:

"Art imitates imitation"
Plato.

The Platonic conception of mimesis[1] has as its central element the idea of imitation, representation, or reproduction; that is, a "certain" resemblance between entities of different ontological importance. Thus, the theory of mimesis presupposes the existence of a scale, ranging from the truest (the original, the intelligible idea or form) to the least true, namely, the copies. Among these copies, a hierarchy is also possible, since they share or participate to varying degrees in some attributes of the idea. In this sense, the theory of Socrates and Plato has both an ontological and an epistemic dimension, as it shows us how reality is composed (originals and copies) and provides us with tools (copy-original correspondence and the essence-accident pair) to gain some degree of access to reality and, to a certain extent, to understand it.

It seems appropriate to emphasize that delving into the various meanings of the expression "mimesis" is highly complex, as it is a multifaceted issue with multiple layers and nuances. It should be noted that

this term has been understood in different ways throughout history. In this regard, I only wish to point out that the term in question comes from the expressions "mimos" (imitation) and "mimeisthai"[2] (to imitate). It should also be mentioned that the idea of mimesis was used long before the ideas of Socrates and Plato, but with a different meaning[3]. The "ancient" meaning was linked to the "change of personality" that some believers supposedly underwent during ancestral rituals of a magical-religious nature. These "changes of personality" would consist of an ordinary person, through the consumption of wine and other substances, being able to embody the behavior of animals and gods. As we can see, mimesis is a polysemous expression; its "ancient" use (transfiguration or incarnation) differs from that proposed in the Republic, but they also have a common denominator, since both senses (the one used in rituals and the Platonic one) share the original meaning of the expression "re-presentation," that is, "To make something present with words or figures that the imagination retains."[4]

If we consider the conceptions developed before Socrates and Plato, I must say that thinkers such as Thales[5], Anaximander, Anaximenes, Ionophanes, Heraclitus[6], Pythagoras, Anaxagoras[7], Empedocles[8],

Leucippus, and Democritus share a common goal: to overcome magical thinking by resorting to some initial element, a combination of elements, some principle, or relationships, in order to provide us with a "rational" explanation. Finally, it should be mentioned that the Atomism[9] of Leucippus and Democritus has both an ontological and an epistemic dimension, since it shows us how reality is composed (atoms and void) and provides us with principles (contingency, the fall of atoms, like attracts like, things are composed of what predominates in them, and the primacy of unity) to achieve a certain understanding of reality.

Regarding the ideas of beauty and ugliness, it should be said that in Socrates and Plato, they are related to the degree of participation with respect to the intelligible form, with the most beautiful being the most true[10], that is, the ideas or intelligible forms are beautiful and true, whereas ugliness or dissonance will be linked to that which is separated from the truth, that is, the copies that are found in the sensible world. It is worth adding that there are good, average, and bad copies; the latter have that status because they share very little or almost no attribute with the true.

Therefore, in this theory, there would be an equivalence between beauty and truth, as well as between degrees of ugliness and falsehood. In contrast, in pre-Platonic conceptions (Heraclitus, Empedocles, or Atomism[11]), beauty and ugliness are found in contingent forms, in material textures, in the arrangement of what flows. If one wanted to speculate on what separates beauty from ugliness, one would have to resort to criteria of composition, such as the fact that the more homogeneous something is, the more beautiful it tends to be, since it follows the principle "like attracts like." Consequently, in pre-Socratic conceptions, beauty would be related to a homogeneous and unitary constitution, while ugliness would be that which is formed by heterogeneity and diversity (since it does not fulfill the principle of unity).

On the other hand, eminent, sublime, or transcendent beings—in Socrates and Plato—are the intelligible ideas or forms, which are multiple or diverse, yet unchanging, stable, and eternal. In contrast, the mediocre and the immanent reside in the material world, which is contingent and ever-changing. It is worth noting here that in the material world there are varying degrees of mediocrity. If an object is very useful and largely embodies (though it can never

fully) the characteristics of the ideal, it will be a good copy, less than ideal but more than mediocre. However, the concept of transcendence, in pre-Socratic thought, is meaningless, since everything changes, flows, falls away; every being is transient, finite, and limited. Regarding what is eminent, sublime, or mediocre, I would have to repeat that this depends on its composition; the more homogeneous, unitary, and whole something is, the more eminent or sublime it will be (again resorting to the principles of similarity and unity). On the other hand, for something formed by dissimilar or heterogeneous parts, only mediocrity could be predicated.

Now I will delve deeper into the value of the work of art. As is known[12], in the Republic, the work of the artist, be it poet[13] or painter, is considered to have a lower status. This is based on the fact that artistic expressions are copies of copies, and therefore are further removed from the truth[14]. Since they participate to a minimal or almost negligible degree in the characteristics of the "original," they have no utility and do not fulfill a function. In contrast, with the "first copies" (things), we can have a relationship of thing-idea experience. Artistic mimesis would thus have a phantasmal relationship with reality.

In the theory presented by Socrates and Plato, there are permanent and immutable entities that represent true reality. However, if we consider the value of works of art within the pre-Socratic conceptions, the situation is radically different. In a universe where everything changes, where instability reigns, artistic expressions are highly valuable. For example, consider a sculpture. It could have enormous pedagogical importance, as it would allow us to access or fix in our minds characters, heroes, gods, or situations. Recall, in this regard, the sculptural group of "Laocoön and His Sons." Thus, in the pre-Socratic world, a work of art would fulfill an educational or propaedeutic function, enabling future generations to access the transient or fleeting nature of an event.

Another dimension of the previous topic lies in the artistic themes that each of the analyzed paradigms would enable. In this sense, a theory of mimesis like Plato's, where a bed depicted in a painting imitates a bed made by an artisan, and this latter bed shares some of the characteristics of the idea or intelligible form of a bed (things participate in the idea or ideal form, but the ideal form does not participate in things), is, in my opinion, compatible with or "permits" naturalistic artistic expressions,

that is to say, works of a realistic or imitative nature. On the other hand, models like Heraclitus's continuous flux or Atomism[15], where the order in which atoms (homeomeries) appear is always transitory and changigns, in my opinion, "permits" a greater number of aesthetic sensibilities. The numerous artistic movements that developed after the invention of photography in 1836 illustrate this point. Impressionism, for example, sought to capture the fleeting and unique nature of the moment; in this regard, I'm reminded of Monet, Renoir, and Degas. The same is true of Cubism and Expressionism.

One could also speculate about non-figurative sensibilities or aesthetics. I would say preliminarily that these are almost inconceivable within the Platonic model, but in pre-Socratic conceptions, where the orders in which the atoms or minimal elements are presented or connected with classical meaning, or not, are perfectly possible. Consider the history of art in general and painting in particular. For example, Velázquez's portrait of "Innocent X" fits into both paradigms, but as I said, in different ways. In contrast, Francis Bacon's "Study for the Portrait of Pope Innocent X by Velázquez" is a work about which it would be difficult to answer (within the Socratic-Platonic model): What form or idea does it copy?

However, it represents a material order that makes sense within pre-Socratic conceptions. The same applies to Abstract Expressionism, specifically to its greatest representative Jackson Pollock, where figuration has completely disappeared. Here we can see an encounter of "atoms" without a conventional meaning, but this work "fits" within pre-Platonic ideas, since it is a valid expressive order.

It seems pertinent to point out that the Socratic-Platonic trilogy of Eidolon, Eikon, and Phantasm—namely, faithful image, icon, and simulacrum or absent presence—collapses in the conceptions of Thales, Heraclitus, Empedocles, Leucippus, and Democritus, since, as there is only contingency and becoming, the aforementioned triad is clearly nonsensical. Everything occurs or unfolds in the physical world; everything is subject solely to the temporal encounter of the elements. There would be (at least for an instant) a "present presence"; the image would always be faithful to the order in which matter presents itself to us. In this sense, there would be no copies, only originals; even a painting that imitates a landscape would be a valid conjunction of matter. It is worth mentioning, to illustrate the point discussed, that Anaxagoras' ideas of mixture (everything is in everything) and those that take

Empedocles' epistemic leap to the extreme would be very useful, since they would allow us to better understand some modern questions, such as "the crisis of the author," where authorship seems to be a diffuse phenomenon, composed of countless influences, and therefore hardly attributable to a single individual.

Another interesting aspect, when comparing Plato's conception with those of his predecessors, is the idea of rhythm[16] . In Plato, it can be understood as a distinctive form, a certain proportion or harmonic symmetry; here we find the possibility of meter or measure. In contrast, for the Pre-Socratics, the notion of rhythm is not linked to the idea of meter, but it does possess a strong qualitative character. It presents itself to us in an infinity of forms[17] and is based on material texture, namely, on the sensation that things can give us. Rhythm would be, above all, an order or a flowing disposition toward change. A contingent form that must necessarily become something else.

Another relevant aspect in this comparison is how language is treated in both conceptions. In Cratylus[18], Plato first dismisses the naturalist (Cratylus) and conventionalist (Hermogenes[19]) schools of thought. He then tells us that what is valuable in language lies

in speech, in this sense pointing to the voice[20] as a discursive instrument (because it is spontaneous and formless). For Plato, the spoken word can somehow connect with the ideal. Let us recall the distinction between true and false discourse. In contrast, what would be the genesis or nature of language in the pre-Socratic conceptions? Here, it should be said, firstly, that the pre-Platonic conceptions of language are varied and not systematic. Secondly, Cratylus was a disciple of Heraclitus, and therefore, we could find in Naturalism[22] —where there is a direct and inherent relationship between language and what is named[23]—a first answer to the question posed. This doctrine of the one true name would then be a good candidate to be the conception adopted by the majority of thinkers before Plato.

Thirdly, Pythagoras[24] referred to number as a way of naming an intelligible order, and those words would be similar (a kind of mimesis) to the things they name; that is, names are by nature. Pythagoras believed that numbers would provide us with certain knowledge, without falling into naive naturalism, where there is an equivalence between names and things. We also find in Parmenides a close link between being, thinking, and speaking, that is, naturalism. This thinker warns us that humans can

create false names; that is, he admits that illusory conventionalism can occur, although in Democritus we do find a defense of chance in naming, that is, of conventionalism.

In conclusion, the differences surrounding the problem of Platonic mimesis and the pre-Socratic conceptions of sensibility are partly ontological in nature. Plato equates the beautiful with the true, but since for Atomism everything is contingent, the beautiful and the true must be present in the sensible world. A work of art, in this conception, would be a valuable expression (due to its pedagogical function); however, in the mimetic theory expounded in the Republic, it would be merely a duplication, and this does not increase being, but rather diminishes it. Similarly, with epistemology, which for Socrates and Plato is based on the correspondence between thing and idea, the principles of Unity and Similarity would be valid for Atomism. Regarding language, we see a diversity of pre-Socratic conceptions, in which Naturalism predominates, but for Socrates, names are given by a power more divine than human.[25]

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Possible aesthetic implications of monastic reading:

This critical reading examines various aspects of Chapter III, "Monastic Reading," from Ivan Illich's book, "In the Vineyard of the Text." This book is a collection of essays based on the reflections of the prominent medieval theologian, Hugh of Saint Victor (1096-1141), a fervent advocate of the arts of memory.

Regarding the selected text, it should be noted that it presents the main elements of a theory of reading, understood as one of the central elements of the complex meditative activity in medieval monasteries. Hugh's writings marked a turning point between monastic book culture and Scholasticism. Finally, it should be noted that for Illich, the work of the saint born in Saxony represents a change of era, namely, a division is occurring between: (1) reading aloud and silent reading, (2) writing and reading gradually occupying independent spaces, and (3) a new conception of the book is being generated, in which scriptio continua is abandoned and the page slowly mutates, until it becomes a logically and grammatically organized text.

Analysis of the main concept or argument of the selected text: The first thing to say is that the idea that permeates the entire text is: reading is seen as a meditative moral exercise that allows one to approach divine truth and wisdom. This can be seen from the beginning: "The studium legendi challenges the reader to invest everything in the ascent up the steep path that leads to wisdom…"[1] then continues, "Meditation begins with reading, but is not limited by any of the rules or precepts of reading."[2] As we can see in these first two quotes, reading is not an end in itself; it is therefore a means to a greater purpose. This is emphasized on the same page: "The beginning of learning is in reading; its consummation is in meditation."[3] Therefore, in addition to the above consideration (means/end), reading is also considered a necessary activity to travel the path that leads us to wisdom; however, it is not sufficient. In other words, reading must be present, but it necessarily requires other elements. Therefore, we are being persuaded (step by step) that reading is an activity that, if done properly, can modify habits and actions, allowing us to access higher levels of truth.

A little further on, it is noted that "Meditation is an intensive reading activity, not a passive, quietist

immersion in feelings."[4] Here we see how the author introduces another factor. Reading, being a necessary means, must also be an active exercise, and consequently, Hugo wants to convince us that reading must involve our bodily being. Regarding this, he goes so far as to say, "Through reading, the page is incorporated and literally embodied."[5]

The saint asks, "How does this moral exercise lead us to wisdom?" and with his answer, he adds a key point in his characterization of reading, because by comparing the page to a vineyard, he shows us the relationship between practicing reading as a moral exercise and the gain in wisdom. In this respect, Illich says, "When Hugo reads, he harvests; he gathers the fruits of the lines."[6] That is to say, reading is an act that involves gathering material (branches) with which we can construct ourselves as subjects. Elsewhere in the text he adds "the eyes must choose the letters of the alphabet and put them together into syllables"[7]. As we know, syllables form words and with these we build sentences, which have the ability to transmit concepts and new points of view that go beyond individual experience.

It is worth noting that for Hugo, reading, besides being a necessary, physical means that yields

intellectual harvest, was also a central activity of the medieval monk's way of life. Recall the Rule of Saint Benedict: "Ora et labora" (Pray and work). In this regard, the text reminds us that "Verses are the path of his pilgrimage to heaven, both when he prays and when he works. Reading permeates his days and nights."[8] In other words, there was an uninterrupted duty to read. This commitment to reading comes neither from Greece nor Rome, but from the Jewish tradition. Illich teaches us that the studium legendi (study of legends) is founded on the concepts presented in the Old Testament. The idea is that the divine word becomes part of one's being, and for this purpose, the monks used different techniques, such as those linked to movements of the fingers, hand, head, or different inflections of the voice. However, the central point was to make meditation (internalizing the sacred scriptures) the axis of their lives.

Finally, Illich reminds us that the Christian exegete Rufinus of Aquileia was the first to define the monk as someone "who liberates himself in solitude for God alone.[9] This had to be a genuine and personal desire, deeply committed to a new way of life. To emphasize his point, the author quotes Augustine when he says: "to become divine through leisure." This reveals the kind of control over earthly pleasures, the effort to

accumulate wisdom, and the purpose of achieving spiritual elevation to "give rest to the soul".[10]

The problem the author attempts to resolve: Illich points out that the saint faces a spiritual dilemma (salvation) since he wanted the monk-reader to be freed from his "sinful inner darkness" through moral reading, with the purpose of elevating his soul toward divine wisdom. This prompted Hugo to offer a path or way to resolve this issue, because, in order to "cleanse" the stains (sin) associated with the human condition, it was necessary to provide a path that would lead us to the light of revealed truth.

Now we can briefly consider the method proposed by the saint. The text reads, "Beginning with the children's game of memory training; ascending to history, then interpretation by analogy between the events of history; and further still to anagogy, the incorporation of the reader into the history he has come to know."[11] That is to say, for Hugo, the ascent takes place on three levels: first, developing memory from early childhood; second, making comparisons or constructing relationships between various concepts; and finally, being able to grasp the mystical meaning of a text. Later, we are offered an expression that encapsulates the previous idea: "The beginning of

learning is in reading; its consummation is in meditation."[12]

As Illich explains, the transition between cogitation (conceptual analysis) and meditation is equivalent to the journey between "continuous thought along planned lines"[13] and the ultimate purpose, which is meditation, namely, penetrating the unknown by eliminating all opacity. Illich then goes on to explain that meditative reading requires a natural disposition, constant practice, and discipline. The author also emphasizes that meditative reading is not a social activity; what is important here is "the attitude with which the (monk-reader) approaches the book as the center of his life"[14]. He then offers a discussion on the true meaning of the word "vacare", since it is a central term that allows us to express the ultimate meaning of what it means to have or practice a "life of reading."

In short, I will say that vacare means "to have been freed or to be freed"[15] but what is important here is the commitment, it is being willing to move from "exhausting lectio to idle meditation, for they are two moments of the same lectio divina"[16]. The previous unity is a logical result, since the distinction between Philosophy and Theology, namely, between the

light of reason and of faith, is later than Hugo. Therefore, for the saint, the commitment to "otium" implies being able to integrate both dimensions (reason and faith) in studium. "The study of creatures teaches us to seek their creator; then this creator will provide knowledge to the soul, and will fill it with joy, turning meditation into a supreme pleasure"[17].

The shortcomings and scope of the analyzed concept or argument: On the one hand, in pointing out the shortcomings of the chapter, I must first say that the central idea—reading as a meditative moral exercise to attain divine knowledge—could be described, on the one hand, as rather naive (in assuming that by exercising the faculties of memory and reason one can contemplate the truth) and, on the other hand, as excessively ambitious, since, as is evident, achieving omniscient knowledge far exceeds human capabilities. Secondly, the methodology offered by the saint (based on exhaustive memorization) contradicts other very interesting proposals. For example, it is openly contradictory to the idea that "to remember one must forget" or that "the important thing is to retain only the essential." I emphasize that memorization requires rereading, and each rereading has an alternative cost. As Jorge Consiglio points out, "Choosing readings

means leaving others aside; rereading means not reading." Consequently, when Hugo so radically advocates for a path like "body reading," he restricts the possibility of exploring a greater quantity and variety of texts, thereby reducing the diversity of perspectives a reader could adopt. Finally, it should be noted that there is always a harmful or adverse aspect to following tradition, both for the central idea and for the path Hugo follows, which was initiated by Cicero with "De oratore" and continued by Quintilian, Augustine, and Boethius, since we are not offered a revolutionary proposal. That is to say, we are not offered an epistemic or methodological leap that multiplies the possibilities of the human cultural heritage.

On the other hand, the implications are manifold. First, the text outlines the requirements needed to develop monastic reading (nature, practice, and discipline), thus not only laying out the steps to follow but also offering an invitation that can be embraced by many over time. Second, by continuing the Latin didactic tradition, the argument presented in the chapter stands as a paradigmatic example of medieval methodology, where offering a proposal based on what was already known was central. Third, the path is presented as a challenge, "challenging the reader

to invest everything in the ascent up the steep road that leads to wisdom,"[18] which can have a positive impact, since, as an attractive and motivating way of presenting a complex topic, it can result in gaining adherents to Christian doctrine. Fourth, the path proposed by the saint connects with the notion that rereading is as important as, or even more important than, reading. This idea has been defended by many thinkers; for example, Borges said, "I have tried more to reread than to read. I believe that rereading is more important than reading, except that to reread, one needs to have read." Finally, to conclude that the act of repeating a reading (following Aristotle's advice), that is, revisiting the same pages, is much more than simply reading a book more than once. It is a detective-like act that allows us to deeply internalize conceptual relationships that go far beyond the apparent, because, as indirect connections, they reveal subtle aspects and penetrate more deeply into our being.

The possible aesthetic implications of the main argument: As we know, in the Middle Ages, the discussion regarding beauty had nothing to do with the theory of art. Medieval aesthetics—so to speak—took on a theological form. The aim was to "explain" or "show" God using argumentation or artistic abilities;

that is why beauty in the Middle Ages was a path traveled to reach the divine. Therefore, by relating the aforementioned idea to the main argument of the text, it becomes abundantly clear that the chapter's basic idea reinforces the prevailing aesthetic notion (in Hugo's time), namely, associating beauty, goodness, and truth with divinity.

In the Middle Ages, we find, on the one hand, a secular artistic or aesthetic culture (linked to the peasantry) and, on the other hand, in cathedrals, churches, and monasteries, a "theological aesthetic" unfolded, where there was an intimate connection between how people lived and what the predominant aesthetic notions were. Therefore, the concept of reading as a meditative moral exercise reinforces or underscores the hierarchy between low culture (the common people, who were the majority) and high culture (the religious elite). In short, Hugo's main argument in the third chapter (Monastic Reading) reinforces the idea that aesthetics in the Middle Ages was dual.

The ultimate purpose of the text's main argument—to approach divine wisdom—speaks to the need to acquire (in part) divine light to explain phenomena that escape human understanding. For example, it attempts to find causes (sufficient reason) for marvelous or

grotesque phenomena with divine assistance. On the other hand, in the Middle Ages there was a "theologization" of the senses, with sight being the most elevated, since it implies less corporeality. Therefore, the main concept of the selected text connects with the highest in a twofold sense. On the one hand, seeing (reading) the sacred text, and on the other, it fulfills a theological purpose, since we could look at God with our souls.

The highest beauty in the Middle Ages is not material, but rather related to Theology; that is, it ultimately connects with divinity. In contrast, medieval secular culture associate's beauty with concrete objects. Therefore, a relationship can also be established between the main argument and the aforementioned idea of beauty. In other words, the entire methodology that the saint proposes involves constant work; to access timeless beauty, training is required (it is not achieved on the first try). It is, therefore, a process that requires time and effort, which vividly reminds us of the requirements (exercitium and discipline) that Hugo includes in his method.

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[8] Ibídem 80

[9] Ibídem 84

[10] Ibídem 85

[11] Ibídem 71 and 72

[12 and 13] Ibídem 72

[14] Ibídem 83

[15] Ibídem 84

[16] Ibídem 85

[17] Ibídem 86

[18] Ibídem 71

Adorno: Negative Dialectics:

> **"Art is a lie that makes us realize reality, at least a reality that we are capable of understanding."**
> **Picasso**

This brief work first offers a reflection on a central idea in the thought of Theodor W. Adorno (1903-1969), which could be expressed as follows: by using a more negative, that is, less conventional, artistic language, one comes closer to the truth. Next, it provides some connections between this notion and three famous quotes by Picasso. Finally, it explores some links between Adorno's idea and Aesthetic Qualities.

First, it is worth briefly recalling that dialectics (the technique of conversation or argumentation) has been characterized as a theory of overcoming opposites and has had prominent representatives such as Hegel (Phenomenology of Spirit, 1807) and Marx (Communist Manifesto, 1848). Dialectics typically unfolds in three moments, which have been called by different names throughout history, but can be summarized as: (1) an affirmation, (2) a negation, which makes explicit the contradictions or problems, and (3) a

negation of the negation, which provides a (partial) resolution or a new understanding of the issue.*

Adorno contrasts classical dialectics—which we might call the dialectic of overcoming—with his Negative Dialectics (1966), a book in which he emphasizes the unfinished nature (constant tension) of opposites. The prologue reads, "The formulation of Negative Dialectics is an attack on tradition. Already in Platonic dialectics, the logical instrument is at the service of a positive result; the figure of a negation of the negation was centuries later a pregnant name for the same thing.

This book attempts to liberate dialectics from such an affirmative nature, without losing the slightest bit of precision [1]." Much later (in the same book), Adorno adds, "The negation of the negation is not positive, not even in the extreme [2]." As we can see, Adorno aims to bring about an epistemic innovation; he is offering us something much richer and more complex than a variant of the traditional dialectical method.

* The well-known and overused formulation: Thesis, Antithesis and Synthesis has not been used, since, in the opinion of many, this mode of presentation does not account for the complexity and conceptual richness of the notions that Dialectics involves.

His idea is that after the horrors committed at Auschwitz, new tools are urgently needed to generate a more accurate and plausible approach to what one wants to preach. We need the other, that which has not yet been socially considered, in order to advance in art in general and literature in particular.**

The reader may notice that the very fragmentary style in which the extensive paragraphs of his work, Negative Dialectics, are written (pages interspersed with countless leaps between ideas and authors), reveals, on the one hand, the innovative turn he intends to give his work and, on the other hand, alerts us to his disruptive proposal, which simultaneously offers and demands something from society. In his work, Adorno emphasizes, time and again, that it is imperative to distance ourselves from the concepts that led humanity to barbarism. In this regard, in the third chapter we read, "After Auschwitz, sensibility cannot help but see in every affirmation of the positivity of existence a charlatanism," [3] and a little later he adds, "Auschwitz irrefutably demonstrated the failure of culture." [4]

**Let us recall Adorno's famous dictum, "To make poetry after Auschwitz is an act of barbarism," a phrase that appears in the essay "Society and Critique of Culture" from 1949 and was published in 1951.

If we reconsider Adorno's idea (which we are examining here), we would have to agree that it presupposes a radical break with society: "Changing this direction of the conceptual, turning it toward the different in itself: therein lies the hinge of negative dialectics." [5] For this author, there is an unavoidable need to escape the determination of the concepts we have culturally constructed. This is imperative for multiple reasons: first, because they led us to a catastrophe; second, it is highly probable that if we continue using them, we will repeat the disastrous history; and finally, if we want to move forward and have greater degrees of certainty, we have to separate ourselves from what has been used until now. Building what is to come requires the other, or as Adorno would say, "If negative dialectics demands reflection of thought upon itself, this palpably implies that, to be true, it must, at least today, also think against itself." [6]

When Adorno reflects on Art, he does so to show us that it should be an inclusive space, a place where freedom should necessarily reside—an oasis that offers us respite in the midst of bourgeois society, where rigidity, stereotypes, and segregation prevail. The author tells us, "There is no open and free human existence in relation to objects that is sufficient

to realize the potential enclosed in the spirit of each person; that potential does not coincide with death."[7] That is to say, each individual possesses multiple capacities (innate and others yet to be developed), and however open or free a person may be, there will always be room for personal fulfillment. This is one of the reasons why Adorno advocates for the emancipated individual, since life in society restricts, obscures, and does not enable the development of individual capacities; rather, it rewards a servile or condescending attitude toward the system.

As is well known, and as can be seen from what has been said, Adorno had a very negative view of bourgeois-capitalist society. There are very good reasons to support this, several of which are presented in his book "Negative Dialectics" (where he teaches us that society is the other of freedom and art), in which he reiterates these ideas multiple times. An example of this is when he comments, "Possessed by the apriorism of its synthetic judgments, bourgeois consciousness tends to eradicate from knowledge everything that does not submit to its regulations."[8] That is to say, a central idea revealed in this book is the castrating nature of bourgeois society; that is, it mutilates the potential of its

members. This is why Adorno contrasts this alienated subject with his emancipated subject.

Adorno encourages us to go further, to be courageous, disruptive, and think for ourselves (another classic example of this tendency can be found earlier in Kant). If we pause to reflect on the concepts we use (in the everyday, as well as in the most transcendent), we will see that they impose limits, restrictions, and conditions on us. In this regard, Adorno tells us, "The concept of meaning contains an objectivity that transcends all construction; as soon as it is made, meaning becomes fiction, duplicates the subject, however collective it may be, and defrauds it of what it seems to grant it." [9] And much earlier, in the prologue, he had already warned us, "The name dialectic begins by saying only those objects are more than their concept, that they contradict the traditional norm of adequation." [10]

In short, Adorno contrasts negative and positive artistic language. The former is disruptive, unconventional, allowing the other to appear and negating the traditional. If we wanted to use a single expression to summarize, we could say that it is countercultural. The latter, on the other hand, is open to communication, to the dissemination of light

or superficial entertainment, and is therefore close to conventionalism. In short, it is a submissive language, nothing more and nothing less than the result of the concepts that have prevailed until now. Therefore, Adorno sees in negative language a vehicle, a mechanism, or an instrument that could allow the development of the emancipated subject. Specifically, he is thinking of the cultural avant-gardes, which have always been and will always be places of resistance. Therefore, Adorno encourages autonomy in Art, as an expression independent of or removed from bourgeois society. True Art loses its role of sublimating passions; on the contrary, it must directly account for the falsity of the world.

To conclude this point, it should be said that Negative Dialectics, while a call to develop a counterculture or, at least, to build a space for resistance against predatory capitalism, also contains an eternal cry that calls us to remember (an imperative not to forget, Adorno would say) the horrors experienced at Auschwitz. As human beings, Adorno concludes, we owe ourselves a moral imperative of remembrance so as not to fall back into barbarism.

Regarding the second point of this reflection, and at least in the opinion of this writer, there is a

remarkable harmony and concordance between a portion of Adorno's thought and some well-known expressions of Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), who, as is known, was a contemporary of Adorno and is considered by many to be the archetype of the groundbreaking, creative artist, or, if you prefer, the emancipated subject. It is also worth remembering that Adorno and Picasso shared a political and ideological affinity. Perhaps all of the above explains (at least in part) why they had a shared vision of the new Art that might emerge. Examples of this include the following statements made by Picasso: (1) "Painting was not made to decorate offices; it is an instrument of offensive and defensive warfare against the enemy," (2) "Art is not the application of a canon of beauty, but what instinct and the heart see beyond any canon," and (3) "Learn the rules like a professional, so that you can break them like an artist, because, in order to flourish, a work of art must ignore, or rather forget, the rules." [11]

As can be seen, there is a clear common factor between Adorno's and Picasso's visions: both share a disruptive conception of artistic practice. For them, it is necessary to break with established canons and concepts; only in this way is it possible to move forward. They also both agree in seeing art as

confrontation. Picasso, with his idea that paintings are weapons to be used in ideological conflict—consider, for example, Guernica of 1937—and Adorno, with his notion of the emergence of the emancipated subject, characterized by breaking with social predeterminations. This subject, among other characteristics, must be radically separated from the concepts and procedures that enabled the Holocaust. Adorno tells us: "The concept is not real, as the ontological argument would have it; but it could not be thought if there were not something in the thing that impelled it."[12] That is to say, we must break with stereotypical notions, but there cannot be a void; we must make an absolute shift toward otherness. In other words, Adorno makes a heart-wrenching call to overcome the prevailing conceptual framework, in favor of another set of ideas that will enable the construction of a non-sectarian society.

To conclude this point, it should be added that both Adorno and Picasso see in the avant-garde artist the possibility of finding a free spirit, a being who, by breaking with tradition, or a subject who, by ignoring the rules, can construct a new proposal. That is to say, one could expect with a high degree of certainty that countercultural creation is intimately linked to the art that will flourish in the future. In this

regard, Adorno reminds us that "Dialectics has always prohibited in all its historical forms from leaving it." [13] In short, Adorno, with his Negative Dialectics, offers us the possibility of "thinking outside the box," that is, a dialectic that enables the emergence of the other, of what is outside the market, of the dark and abject, but at the same time of what escapes the coercion of the concept.***

To conclude, regarding the third point of this work—that is, exploring a connection between Adorno's idea that has served as the basis for these lines and Aesthetic Qualities—it is first necessary to clearly establish the speculative nature of these last paragraphs. Then, it is important to point out that the aim is to propose a relationship between the properties that make a work of art valuable and the notion we have been analyzing. Finally, it is worth remembering that Aesthetic Qualities (properties that make a work of art valuable) are commonly presented as a triad: sensory, formal, and vital.

*** "Adorno's work sets out from a central insight he shares with all early 20th century avant-garde art: the recognition of what is primitive in ourselves and the world itself. Neither Picasso´s fascination with African sculpture nor Mondrian´s reduction of painting to its most elementary component (the line) is comprehensible outside this concern with primitivism, which Adorno shared with the century's most radical art". El propósito de agregar la nota anterior, es mostrar la decisiva influencia de Adorno en dos grandes artistas del siglo XX, como son Picasso y Mondrian. Fuente: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodor_W._Adorno.

The first are related to the pleasure that certain attributes awaken in our senses; the second could be summarized by the term composition (how the component elements of the work are combined, for example: contrasts, silences, temporal order, surprises, and variety); and the last are linked to what a creation conveys or suggests.

Therefore, the main argument is that by resorting to less conventional, more disruptive artistic languages, highly detached from the concepts that have permeated culture to date—that is, by using avant-garde elements, methods, and processes—one could expect a greater shock or disturbance of our senses and, consequently, the possibility of conveying a greater quantity and depth of meanings, points of view, and perspectives. Thus, **the use of negative language would promote the emergence of vital aesthetic qualities**.

That is to say, negative dialectics holds a hope, since, because it is not self-contained—that is, it is open to otherness—it can prove to be a vital instrument in artistic practice. Adorno will say, "It is the essence of negative dialectics that it does not settle for itself as if it were total; such is its form of hope."[14] That is to say, whoever opts for this

"counter-method" could be rewarded with the possibility of finding a vein to which they can return again and again. A vein that endures and that is the foreshadowing of a mineral that can be the basis for avoiding a flat reading of the work. On the contrary, it can be the foundation of a polysemous artistic creation and, consequently, can transmit vital qualities.

In other words, and to conclude, a possible causal connection (antecedent and consequent) is proposed between the use of negative language and vital artistic qualities. That is, if a disruptive or unconventional language were used in artistic expressions—namely, an autonomous language or techniques, separate from the rules, radically removed from the coercion of concepts, and therefore countercultural—a greater vital impact on the spectator or contemplator should be achieved. In a society replete with conventionalism, the use of transgressive methods and styles should provoke a greater transmission of feelings, ideas, and experiences.

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Janet Sobel: A new case of invisibility:

Today, the phrase "To do justice through righteous rage" resonates within me, but in a particular sense and within the context of modern art history. I have always admired the work of Paul Jackson Pollock (1912-1956), who, as is well known, exerted an enormous influence on the American art scene, as he was the central figure of Abstract Expressionism.

By splashing threads, stains, and drops of paint onto the raw canvas, Pollock challenged several deeply ingrained conventions, not only by painting from all directions and directly from the brush, stick, or syringe "without the mediation of a technique," but also because of the radical and groundbreaking nature of his approach. However, while reviewing various texts, photographs, and videos to write this essay on his works, I came across the following image:

With a mixture of surprise, unease, and admiration, I discovered that this painting was created by Janet Sobel (1893-1968), a Ukrainian-American painter who began her drip painting in 1945—two years before

Jackson Pollock started his series of works characterized by the dripping technique. Even Greenberg admitted that they were the first all-over paintings, but he downplayed her work, calling it "primitive" and a "housewife's" hobby. Later, Pollock himself acknowledged that Sobel's creations exerted a significant and decisive influence on his painting.

As seems evident, many of the characteristics of Abstract Expressionism can be seen in the images made by Sobel, namely, frontality, flat lighting, 2D illusion, use of saturated and contrasting colors, replacement of the brushstroke by direct application, shock or confrontation effect, free gesture, in short… at least for the opinion of the writer, it would be necessary to rewrite the history in relation to the origin and development of abstract painting movements after WWII in the United States.

Observing this new injustice, I am reminded of the preface to Foucault's "The Order of Things," where he speaks of a certain Chinese encyclopedia—created by Borges—which presents us with an arbitrary or conjectural taxonomy. Considering the Argentine writer's idea, I can only reaffirm the capricious, or at least partial, nature of all classification. On the one hand, since our intellect is limited, the

categories it generates cannot be absolute. On the other hand, there are diverse experiences that are not translatable; therefore, our lexicon will always be limited. Consequently, Borges's notion destabilizes the relationship or division between "The Same and The Other."

The preceding idea can be applied to Sobel's case in two ways. First and more broadly, recall the distinction between the figurative and the abstract. This separation seems firm and well-established; therefore, the vast majority of viewers would classify the image created by Sobel as non-figurative. But one might ask, why can't it represent the electrical activity of the brain? That is to say, this seemingly clear boundary, like all categorical limits, contains various porous areas. Second, it seems fair and pertinent to question another classification, namely, the one that places Pollock, Gorky, Klein, and de Kooning as the pioneers of the "second avant-garde" developed in New York City, specifically correcting this and granting Sobel a leading role in the aesthetic shift that the Action Painting movement (theorized by Rosenberg) represented in the history of modern Western art.

On the other hand, and somewhat contradicting what has been said, the lack of easily recognizable elements allows for the appearance of "the other." That is to say, the abstention from or silence of classical figuration enables the emergence of "disorganized explosions of random energy," as Coates said, this time criticizing Pollock's work. But what kind of meaning emerges in these kinds of paintings? Perhaps it allows for the emergence of the progressive purification of non-contextual form and color, so characteristic of modern abstraction. At the same time, this style of splatter painting literally erases or eliminates the self of the creating subject. In this sense (as in others, for example, it does not refer to an image outside the painting, as Velázquez does), Sobel's work is the antithesis of "Las Meninas," where the subject-painter emerges, on the condition of representing the one he represents.

It could be said that the unconscious is a key aspect of modern art. Many believe that—as in the case of Sobel—unconscious impulses dictate the strokes of the abstract images he created. This type of painting, devoid of apparent figuration, reveals an alternative, personal, dreamlike, and fantastical reality. Several theorists have suggested that these images unveil the

creator's inner world, potentially provoking an "opening" of consciousness in the viewer.

As we know from Hegel, consciousness perceives the immediate through sensory dynamics, but at the same time, the immediate is the most abstract, namely, the most unknown. That is to say, we need the mediated, the articulation of an explanatory narrative, to understand. Valéry rightly said, "the skin is the deepest thing there is," meaning that the superficial hides the greatest enigmas. In this respect, and in the case of the painting created by Sobel, we are faced with an apparent paradox. Sobel's image will be immediate for the viewer; however, due to the technique employed—the dripping or splashing, so to speak—it can be explained by itself without great difficulty. In this image, we do not find the technical mystery of the sophisticated master brushstroke. That is to say, here, the image, the immediate, does not conceal a sequence of mysterious or unknown steps. This is precisely due to the "gestural simplicity" used by Sobel, Pollock, and others. However, this was one of the fundamental reasons that some critics used to describe the works of the early American abstract expressionists as a "childish game".

Considering a new aspect and drawing a parallel with Lacan's idea, one could say that, just as a subject is born and develops on the condition that institutions already exist—institutions that have been imagined and created as a product of a complex and intricate linguistic sequence—so too, for a (non-conventional) work like Sobel's to be housed, for example, within a museum, the pre-existence of social institutions, previously imagined and organized through various discursive articulations, is required.

Now, if we analyze the invisibility suffered by Sobel and his work from another perspective, we might find in Berkeley's statement, "Esse Est Percipi" (To be is to be perceived), a powerful tool for understanding that existence exists only as a phenomenon of consciousness.

In other words, for the British empiricist, this image of Sobel, and in general all her paintings, being excluded from the prevailing perceptual register, it was literally impossible that it could have provoked the surprise or astonishment that it produces or generates today, much less the adaptation to the sociocultural context of her time, which in our days we can truthfully assert, pointing out that she was

the first artist to create what would later be called dripping painting.

Finally, it should be said that this style of abstract painting, developed by Sobel, Pollock, Klein, and others, could be described—using Deleuze and Guattari's concept from "A Thousand Plateaus"—as a type of "rhizomatic painting." That is to say, these painters have created an image with multiple entry points, each containing an infinite number of connections.

There is no linear hierarchy; rather, the background dissolves, blends, or mixes with the foreground. In other words, there is no contrast between "ground and figure," and for this reason, various critics describe it as a frontal, flat painting where perspective—that is, the "geometry that orders space"—is completely impossible. This same lack of formal order can be transferred or displaced to the viewer, often causing a certain perplexity, instability, or disbelief due to the absence of recognizable patterns, thus expanding the perceptual range.

Note: We see Janet Sobel in her studio (in the 1940s) with the canvas laid on the floor, applying paint directly—elements supposedly characteristic of Pollock's groundbreaking work. This also calls into question the origins of Abstract Expressionism, which considered Pollock, Gorky, Klein, and de Kooning its founders.

Taking notes with photos: Replacement, Complement, or Reinterpretation?

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"Technical images signify concepts"
Flusser

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I will address the relationship between one of the most characteristic technological devices of our time, the cell phone, but in a singular function and in a very particular context. Namely, using the smartphone as a camera in the academic setting, specifically as an "alternative" exercise or activity to taking traditional notes with pencil and paper.

This behavior is common in my experience as a teacher (my presence in the world), since students take photographs of various diagrams and summaries that are written or projected on the board, with the purpose of capturing and retaining information.

First, it is worth asking what is characteristic of note-taking. However, I should clarify that I do not intend to offer a definitive conclusion on this matter, but rather—as Heidegger says—"at least to move in its vicinity."[1] Taking notes would essentially be retaining a certain set of data by using an external

medium. In this way, one could say that note-taking is creating an "artificial memory." More incidentally, other secondary characteristics could be added: "It is a study technique that summarizes information," "Collecting relevant aspects on a topic," and "Promoting active learning." [2 and 3]

It is also necessary to define and emphasize the role of some of the key concepts in the problem analyzed. On the one hand, we must distinguish between data, information, and knowledge.

On the other hand, we must underscore the role of repetition or redundancy in this process. According to Davenport and Prusak,[4] data are the "minimal semantic unit" and are not crucial on their own, but data can be transformed into information (fulfilling a useful function) when processed, when context is added, when they are hierarchized, and when various types of relationships are established between them. For these authors, information can become knowledge if it is compared and connections are sought, generating a network in which future experiences have meaning. This is done to establish logical or coherent predictions, in the same way that conclusions are deduced from premises.

Regarding repetition, it's worth adding that the traditional experience was taking notes in notebooks. This process—from a certain perspective—reinforced learning, since students had to perform a double task: on the one hand, understanding the teacher, and on the other, writing down their ideas.

This redundant behavior —According to the RAE (Royal Spanish Academy), redundancy is "Repetition of the information contained in a message, which allows, despite the loss of a part of it, the reconstruction of its content."- highlights the idea that emphasizing is a strategic communication factor, as it allows for intensifying, underlining, and completing information so that "background noise" doesn't cause a loss or distortion of what is being conveyed.

With the brief framework above, we can venture some answers to the question posed in the title, but not before stating that the contemporary practice of taking photographs in classrooms is a current and particular expression of an age-old conflict, as Flusser reminds us: "The struggle between writing and images, between historical consciousness and magic, has characterized all of history."[5] However, it seems that we are facing a significant change in the experience that students have in relation to taking

notes in their classes, so it seems appropriate to make the following classification:

1. **Taking photographs as a replacement for notebook notes**: This mere mechanical collection of data would create a false impression, since, as the concepts explained have not yet been internalized, students might mistakenly believe that simply having immediate access to the information means they are up to date with their coursework. As seems evident, if this behavior (replacing note-taking with cell phones) becomes widespread, it would be a dangerous practice, as it hinders academic progress.

2. **Taking photographs as a complement to traditional note-taking**: Here the situation is different, since students might be aware that they have only captured diagrams, charts, or summaries, but haven't yet processed them; that is, they haven't established relationships, solidified ideas, or even conducted a critical analysis, etc. However, this behavior doesn't eliminate the possibility that in the future they will return to "photographic notes" in a methodical and critical way. In other words, it doesn't eliminate the possibility that students will later advance in

the data---information---knowledge chain, transforming their "photo notes" into relevant information for themselves.

3. **A reinterpretation of note-taking**: this third type of behavior connects with Heidegger's idea that "Dasein takes on a technical form in the 20th century." That is, machines, devices, and gadgets are acquiring an increasingly prominent role in what was considered traditional human activity. Therefore, we must address the question: What new meaning does take notes with photographs entail? Perhaps we can find some insight in Flusser when he says: "Technical images, for their part, are third-degree abstractions, since they are abstracted from texts, which are abstracted from images, and these in turn are abstracted from the concrete world." [6] And when, a little earlier, he anticipates that technical images (such as those produced by cell phones) will replace texts. One could speculate, then, that for younger students, the traditional idea of note-taking would take on a new meaning. Note-taking will undergo a shift in the "world to come." An image could be a note in a discontinuous format, that is, a presentation containing information arranged non-sequentially. Consider, for example, the possibilities offered

by the digital age in this regard. These openings of the world challenge the very idea of taking notes, since today a digital photograph is easily modifiable, allowing the addition of: vignettes in various colors and shapes, links to short clips and/or videos, traditional and interactive text, emoticons, links to other images, and hyperlinks to connect to a website, etc. In other words, a single photographic image (with the help of specific software) can now contain descriptions, comparisons or contrasts, and causal relationships. Finally, it is worth emphasizing that there are a couple of key elements in this possible redefinition, which are common to all digital capture; that is, the electronic image would be:

1. Extremely manipulable, not only in the obvious sense that its primary informational content (its own binary code) can be easily altered, but also because a growing number of new digital attributes (additions to the original code) can be added, which can be activated via touchscreen, like interactive infographics.

2. Infinitely multipliable, since it can be shared rapidly (in the extreme, instantaneously) with everyone on the planet;

it's simply a matter of transmitting its information—its particular sequence of zeros and ones—over the network.

Naturally, the previous classification provides us with—so to speak—"pure" types of behavior, but in everyday practice we observe a mixture. However, the three modes presented would have in common, on the one hand, that they all begin with a capture or appropriation that goes from the analog to the digital; that is to say, something is written on the board, diagrams are projected onto the white screen, a summary is shown, and the students, using their cell phones, "digitize the image." On the other hand, the students create a database using the functions their phones allow; that is, the device allows for a seemingly very broad deployment, however, this potential always occurs within a restricted range or limits imposed by the prevailing technological or political ideology. It is also worth highlighting two ideas from Flusser and Heidegger, which, at least in the opinion of this writer, can help to understand and anticipate a new sense, meaning, or expression for the act of note-taking:

1. As Flusser pointed out, "Technical images were invented in order to make texts imaginable again, to fill them with magic and thus overcome the

crisis of history."[7] As is known, the text "Toward a Philosophy of Photography" was conceived for analog photography; however, the above quote is also true for digital images, since, with new applications and functionalities, with patches and cracks, with free and proprietary programs, a massive re-enchantment with indispensable or essential educational content can occur.

2. It could also be said that Heidegger's conclusion, when he points out that the essence of technique is "The provocative unveiling"[8] is applicable to this new behavior of "taking photographic notes", since it involves a revelation or at least a massification of data, which – thanks to the contemporary iconic device – can be accumulated, transformed, renewed and shared.

Finally, it seems appropriate to briefly point out that (among the three alternatives mentioned: replacement, complement, or resignification) my personal inclination is toward the latter, as I firmly believe that Heidegger's assertion is correct, in the sense that being is progressively, and will increasingly be, dramatically determined by technology. Consequently, countless behaviors and processes (including note-taking) should acquire a new sense or meaning.

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The shift from "the object" to "the conceptual" in some modern artistic manifestations:

"All changes, even the most longed-for, carry with them a certain melancholy."
Anatole France

First, a theoretical framework is offered to clarify the notions associated with traditional art focused on the aesthetic object and with conceptual art. Then, some hypotheses are presented regarding how this transition might have occurred. These provisional answers are based on the following notions: the matter-form pairing, the distinction between earth and world, various political critiques, the transition between machine and apparatus, the preeminence of the text, and finally, the disdain for "commodity art."

These paragraphs begin with a discussion of the nature of both types of art, the object-based and the conceptual, delving into the notions of object-based or material art (the formed or elaborated thing, the matter-form binomial, the relationship between physical features and sensory perception) and, secondly, showing certain characteristics (the

preeminence of the idea, the textual, social denunciation, anti-formalism, photography as a record and the disciplinary mixture) with respect to the phenomenon that began with Duchamp and that, more than six decades ago, placed the dematerialization of art as the central axis of discussion.

Subsequently, six hypotheses are offered on how this remarkable transition would have occurred, between the work as a substance elaborated with aesthetic sense, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the paradigm where the idea or concept is much more significant than the materiality employed.

First, we will turn to Heidegger, and especially to his book "The Origin of the Work of Art," to establish a solid foundation for this analysis. In this text, Heidegger begins by examining the term "origin" and then proposes a close connection with the notion of essence: "Origin here means that from which and by which a thing is what it is and as it is. What something is and how it is, is what we call its essence. The origin of something is the source of its essence."[1] Consequently, the question of the origin of the work of art is the question of its essence. Later in the text, in this same vein (seeking its essence), Heidegger concludes that the work of art is

not just another entity in the world, primarily for two reasons:

1. It has a thing-like character, that is, it is an artificial or cultural entity, but without a specific function; in other words, it is not a tool. This could lead us to say that the work of art is not useful, or as the text reminds us, "The tool-being of the tool resides in its utility." [2] And clearly, true works of art are valuable without fulfilling a practical use or function.

2. It has the capacity to say something about the other. Here we are presented with a fundamental characteristic of Art, which consists in the fact that artistic expression allows us to unveil part of the world. In this regard, Heidegger points out, "The work of art opens up the being of beings in its own way. This opening, that is, this unveiling, the truth of beings, occurs in the work. In the work of art, the truth of beings has been put to work. Art is this putting to work of truth."[3] That is, Art possesses the potential to produce an opening of the world, or as the German thinker teaches us, "To raise up a world and to bring the earth here are two essential

features of the being-work of the work. Both belong to the unity of the being-work. We seek this unity when we think about the subsistence of the work and try to express that closed stillness proper to repose in itself."[4]

Later, this fascinating writer adds that the work of art not only allows us to know otherness (this would be its allegorical character) but that the work could also be conceived as symbolic, since it is an encounter with something different; that is, it brings together the heterogeneous or, in other words, it is a conjunction or mixture of materials, ideas, and techniques. Regarding this, Heidegger tells us, "The work makes another matter known to us publicly; it is something different: it is allegory. Besides being a finished thing, the work of art has an added character. To have an added character—to carry something with it—is what in Greek is called 'symbolein'; the work is a symbol."[5] That is to say, for Heidegger, Art has unfolded, from the beginning, as an allegorical symbol; that is, the work of art is a manufactured thing that "opens up a world," either because it reveals truths about human existence or because of its representational capacity.

Another essential feature of Heidegger's conception of art is that it attributes to artistic expression a connection with truth. Regarding this, the original thinker explains, "In the work of art, the truth of beings has been put to work… According to this, the essence of art would be this putting to work of the truth of beings."[6] If we consider it, the very term "Fine Arts" connects with the explanation this philosopher gives us: "Beauty is one of the ways in which truth presents itself as un-concealment."[7] Consequently, art is one of the means (Heidegger himself says that logic is another) that we human beings have to contemplate "The True." Finally, we should add that, if we follow the Heideggerian path, we would have to say that a masterpiece is such because in it, truth truly happens, or, as Heidegger expresses it, "In the work, the event of truth is at work."[8] That is to say, in a "masterpiece," there would be, to use a metaphor, a window onto the truth.

After this brief conceptual review, we will concentrate on the first pole of this shift, namely, the thing-like or object-like character of the work of art. In "The Origin of the Work of Art," Heidegger makes four comparisons to show us the material nature of works, specifically telling us, "The painting hangs on the wall like a hunting weapon or a hat. A painting,

for example, that canvas by Van Gogh showing a pair of peasant boots, travels from exhibition to exhibition. Works are transported just like coal from the Ruhr and logs from the Black Forest. During the campaign, soldiers packed Hölderlin's hymns in their knapsacks alongside cleaning supplies. Beethoven's quartets lie piled up in publishers' warehouses just like potatoes in cellars."[9]

Heidegger makes these comparisons because he wants to show us that, from a certain perspective, works of art are things or objects that are exhibited, stored, transported, and accumulated, in the same way as weapons, hats, coal, logs, cleaning utensils, and potatoes. "In short, the word thing here designates everything that is not ultimately nothing,"[10] and a little later he adds, "Everything is a thing (thing = res = ens = an entity)."[11] That is to say, the work of art cannot escape its thingly or objectual character; as an entity, it must have materiality, or if you will, at some point it needs a physical support.

If we appreciate the History of Art in perspective, we can easily realize that the thing-like or object-based has been present from the beginning (cave art) and remains central to the present day (contemporary avant-garde art), and how could it be otherwise? If,

as we read in Heidegger, the lack of materiality in a work would be an impossibility, even if we turn to what Nietzsche describes as the most Dionysian of artistic manifestations, namely, Music, it must be written and/or performed with the help of a material support.

Given the above, that is, the inescapable physical support that works of art must have, Heidegger lists three interpretations of the thing or the cosmic in Art: "A mere thing is, for example, this block of granite, which is hard, heavy, extensive, massive, formless, rough, has a color, and is partly matte and partly shiny. Everything we have just listed we can observe in the stone. In this way we know its characteristics. But the characteristics are proper to the stone. They are its properties. The thing has them. The thing? What do we think of now when we mention the thing? It seems evident that the thing is not only the sum of the characteristics nor a mere accumulation of properties that give rise to the whole. The thing, as everyone thinks they know, is that around which the properties have been grouped. Then, we speak of the core of things. It seems that the Greeks called this "to hypokeimenon." That quality of things that consists of having a core was, for them, what always and fundamentally underlay the

whole. But The characteristics are called "ta snmbebekota", that is, that which is always already linked to what underlies each case and appears with it."[12]

In summary, Heidegger proposes the following three interpretations or characterizations of things in general, but with applications to art in particular. Things would be:

1. Substances that possess properties or characteristics.
2. The variety or diversity of sensory perceptions.
3. A collection of formed or elaborated matter.

In conclusion, "the determination of the thingness of the thing as a substance with its accidents seems to correspond with our natural way of seeing things."[13] That is to say, the object-like character of the work of art is a manifestation or unfolding that connects in a primary way with our sensory activity. In other words, works of art have features; these are presented to us as integrated, yet their properties can be broken down, since they originate from two sources: their materiality and the form it takes. Therefore, when we discover particular features in a work, it is due to the impressions they make on our minds through

the stimulation of our sensory activity, which is excited by colors, shapes, and textures. For example, when contemplating a sculpture, it first interrupts our visual field (testing our acuity, convergence, binocular vision, and color vision), imbuing us with sensations that can be intensified if we then have a tactile relationship with it (receiving and interpreting stimuli arising through contact with the skin).

In short, what Heidegger proposes at this point (from the perspective of the writer) is that the multiple entities -with their almost infinite features and characteristics- account for the multiplicity of perceptions that we humans have, or as he would say, "the unfolding of Dasein in the world" is possible thanks to the fact that there is a bijective relationship between each individual feature of the multiple existing things and each of the particular sensory perceptions that we are capable of generating.

There is another fundamental issue that must be addressed when studying the material nature of Art. Today it seems obvious to us that matter manifests itself or unfolds in an extended body, but this was taught to us by Descartes: "A body is a certain matter extended in length, width, and depth, which has all

those properties that we clearly perceive as belonging to an extended thing."[14] That is to say, the material or objectual must be presented in the pair matter-form. In this respect, Heidegger asks and answers: "But isn't this pair of concepts, matter-form, the one commonly used in the field in which we must move? Undoubtedly. The differentiation between matter and form is the conceptual scheme par excellence for all aesthetics and theory of art under any of its modalities. Matter and form inhabit, as determinations of beings."[15] Here is, the essence of the thing-like in Art, since, according to this perspective, matter and form have constituted the skeleton of how the various aesthetic conceptions have been understood, at least until the middle of the nineteenth century.

To characterize the other pole of our analysis, namely Conceptual Art, it is essential to go back to the invention of photography, that is, to the process that took place between 1824 and 1839. Before this fundamental event in the History of Art, works were dominated, on the one hand, by their material-aesthetic qualities and, on the other hand, by mimesis. However, after this event, considered "the culmination of the modern European rationalist project," the visual arts, literature, music, and, in general, all the arts were profoundly affected;

mimesis seemed to have been definitively overcome. Artistic expressions, especially painting and sculpture, began to renew their themes and experiment with varied styles, different materials, and multiple conceptions.

In relation to the above, the early artistic avant-gardes (Impressionism, Cubism, Futurism, Fauvism, etc.) that were centered in Paris around 1900 are well known. After World War II, this dynamism of radical artistic expression shifted to New York, especially with the development of Abstract Expressionism. Within this revolutionary, changing, and innovative context, Conceptual Art (our second pole) emerged in the early 1960s.

As the renowned contemporary theorist Lucy Lippart16 states, conceptualism represented a profound critique of the foundations of art; it was a true revolution that found one of its pillars in the work of Marcel Duchamp, especially in his "ready-mades." That is to say, in found art, which is art made with common, mass-produced objects. In these works, the artist modifies, interprets—using a conceptual framework—or adapts, decontextualizing and/or associating them with a gallery setting. Also, highly relevant in this process were the works of Yves Klein (with his

monochromatic paintings) and Piero Manzoni (especially his works with lines and paper); in both, ideas predominated.

Later, in 1961, Henry Flynt proposed the term "conceptual art" to account for the growing dematerialization of art. Also, very important (in this brief chronology) are the "anti-formalism" of Robert Morris, considered the founder of minimalism, as well as the black, expressionless paintings and number paintings of Reinhardt and Jasper Johns, respectively. These works are milestones within this new conception. In this sense, the words of Douglas Huebler resonate: "The world is full of more or less interesting objects; I do not wish to add any more." Here we can see a prevailing characteristic of those years: a weariness with the materially crafted work and a growing interest in the idea behind it. In short, it is the "concept as work of art."

A special role was reserved for the Argentine psychoanalyst Oscar Massotta, considered by many to be a major precursor of conceptual art. In that same country, but in 1968, the avant-garde art project "Tucumán Arde" emerged, developing new aesthetic canons and directing artistic creation toward political ends, specifically against the Onganía

dictatorship. Its aim was to make visible the numerous political and social injustices. In short, this milestone in the Latin American avant-garde was a collective and multidisciplinary process, or collective exhibition (in which artists, sociologists, actors, etc., participated), within which numerous denunciations were made regarding poverty, hunger, abuses, and other injustices in that Argentine province. Here, another key feature emerges: social denunciation as a banner of artistic struggle. Lippart[16] characterizes conceptual art as a process by which art moves away from its materiality and emphasizes the relevance of words and written ideas; that is, there is a revaluation of the text over the image. Photographs are, in this type of art, the central elements of the visual record. The main points of the new paradigm are:

1. **The idea is central, the thing is secondary**: The concept takes precedence over the object itself; that is, there are multiple interchangeable materialities to express the idea.

2. **Antiformalism**: The meaning of the artwork is not in the work itself; there is a deeper meaning than its mere materiality, its concept.

3. **It is transversal to multiple disciplines**: It has been and is present in film, theater, land art, installations, painting, performances, and sculptures.

4. **Increasing dematerialization of art**: With Duchamp and more specifically, since the 1960s, the object or the thing-like has lost ground; matter-aesthetics has lost value (in a part of artistic practice), and the idea or concept is the measure or the standard of mastery.

5. **The text takes on an important role**: Words and lectures, writings and specialized papers, are the preferred expressions where the avant-garde unfolds, that is, conceptual developments were relevant in artistic endeavor.

6. **Photographic Record**: Typically, first analog and now digital images have served, and continue to serve, as a medium for preserving various expressions of conceptual art. This is explained by the widespread availability, relative ease of use, and increasing accessibility of all types of cameras.

7. **Art as Protest:** An important branch of conceptual art makes social protest its primary objective. The idea is to provoke change in the community through disruptive actions in order to bring certain social injustices to light.

Following this second characterization, we arrive at the most personal and challenging part of this work, as it offers some hypotheses (possible explanations) about how this shift from object-based or material art to the dematerialization of the art object, expressed in conceptual art, might have occurred. These six provisional answers attempt to shed some light on this transition; they are:

1. **The Crisis of the Matter-Form Pair Due to Technological Advancement:** As we saw with Heidegger, the matter-form dichotomy has been key in traditional artistic expression; that is, these concepts have been able to account for traditional aesthetics. However, this pair entered into crisis, as it failed to account for the expressive complexity of modern and contemporary art. In other words, the explanatory capacity of this pair was overwhelmed by current themes and

manifestations. Therefore, it is worth suggesting its replacement with the triad matter-form-idea, which encompasses a wider range of explanatory possibilities. In conclusion, due to technological and cultural development from 1960 onward, the classical structure (matter and form) used to explain aesthetic phenomena revealed its limitations, contributing to the dematerialization of art.

2. **The "fall" of the earth and the "rise" of the world:** As is well known, Heidegger distinguished the physical planetary support (the earth) from the set of notions, ideas, dreams, and models that constituted the world. Again, the growing influence of technology (recall that the philosopher of Dasein said that "being takes on a technical form in the 20th century") has brought about a shift in favor of the world, at the expense of the earth. World-making, that is, the elaboration of new notions, conceptions, and theoretical models, became the most valued pursuit for a significant portion of the artistic avant-garde.

3. **The proliferation of diverse social and political denunciations**: For more than half a century, art has also taken a path where the denunciation or public exposure of multiple social injustices has begun to generate new forms of expression. "Protest art" was and has been a new direction for many creators. Consequently, modern and contemporary art found new aesthetic canons and, above all, a new role: to exert social influence and, in some cases, to reveal and help resolve various community inequalities.

4. **The Transition Between Machine and Apparatus in Artistic Practice:** Until the nineteenth century, human activity was influenced and shaped by machines. Consider, for example, a sculptor or painter working in their studio surrounded by hammers, brushes, canvases, and chisels. That artist was immersed in a world of machines, but with the advent of appliances in the twentieth century, traditional sculpture and painting lost (in part) their meaning, since appliances could quickly and mass-produce many tasks that were previously the domain of the artisan. Consequently, the idea that a

sculptural or pictorial work sought to express became more important than the object itself.

5. **The Return of the Text's Preeminence**: A characteristic of the conceptualization of art is that it initially existed halfway between image and writing, but the image alone was insufficient; it was surpassed by the prevailing theoretical and expressive complexity. Subsequently, various artistic manifestations made the text (developing notions) the central axis. "The idea as work of art" had emerged. It should be noted that the aforementioned "dispute" is a modern expression of an age-old conflict, as Flusser reminds us: "The struggle between writing and images, between historical consciousness and magic, has characterized all of history."[17] In short, the revaluation of spoken and written ideas or notions gradually diminished (in certain groups or circles) the importance of the image or the perceptual, and consequently, conceptual explanation became, by far, central.

6. **The disdain for "art as a commodity"**: For centuries, the work of art has been valued as an aesthetic object and a commodity for

exchange, but after World War II, numerous questions arose regarding this. The phenomenon described intensified in the last third of the twentieth century, when the tangible or object-like aspect of art began to lose value (within certain circles) and the idea or concept acquired increasing importance. In this context, we recall Jan Dibbets's statement, "Selling is not part of art." This disdain for art as a commercial object also significantly contributed to the dematerialization of art.

It should be noted that conceptual art was and has been (for more than six decades) a significant vein in modern and contemporary artistic practice, clearly driven by technological developments. On the other hand, for some years now, various artists and theorists (such as Baldessari) have spoken of post-conceptual art or post-conceptualism to describe the artistic practice that succeeded conceptualism, where the idea and the object are relevant, or at least carry similar weight. Finally, it should be noted that today, many see the development of digital art and generative artificial intelligence as the next link, that is, the manifestation that could carry the torch (in the twenty-first century) of dematerialization in art.

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Can we speak of a typically Latin American art?

"Art is not what you see; art is the gap."
Duchamp

In these paragraphs, I will present a couple of reasons to support my affirmative answer to the initial question. Following Duchamp, I believe that art lies between the defined and the undefined. I think that the manifestations generated within a community are worthy of being called art if they point in the direction of a quest, that is, if they explore their identity and evoke their roots. I believe that one can indeed speak of Latin American art, since the multiple artistic expressions that have emerged in our countries correspond to a questioning that transcends apparent visuality and have helped to redefine the present. True art—for great figures like Duchamp—has the capacity to broaden and change individual and communal perception, generating new bridges between diverse concepts and emotions that propose meaning to the gap that is art.

I will base my affirmative answer on two pillars. First, Latin America has developed a set of "schools" that account for a part of our identity and have helped shape or build the future. Specifically, I will refer (in this sense) to Brazilian modernism, Mexican muralism, and Cuban concretism as movements that support the existence of "Latin American Art." Second, the foundation upon which I will base my position is a certain aesthetic unity that would constitute or give rise to a relatively autonomous artistic current.

Brazilian Modernism [1] was a broad and heterogeneous cultural movement that emerged in the South American giant in the 1920s. A central aspect of this movement was the desire to update the Brazilian character and way of life. This led to a rejection of classical academicism, fostering a greater awareness of social issues. Although it drew from Cubism and Futurism, it always displayed an inclination to forge its own identity. In this sense, the thought of the writer Oswald de Andrade is well-known, whose theory of anthropophagy, or the assimilation of external cultural influences, could help construct a new Brazilian identity. We can identify two stages in this

movement: the first, from 1922 to 1930 (more radical in its break with the past and its search for a truly Brazilian identity. It should be noted that in 1924 they presented a manifesto that valued the indigenous and criticized the non-national) and the final stage, from 1930 to 1945, which was more focused on building a proposal and reconstructing an identity from the fissures of the first phase.

We can see the painting "The Fisherman" by Tarsila do Amaral, created in 1925. The painting depicts a fisherman (representing ordinary people) engaged in his daily work in a rural setting. The work was executed with vibrant, bold, and contrasting colors

using simplified geometric forms. This painting reflects Tarsila do Amaral's interest in representing Brazilian cultural identity, in which the working class of Indigenous or African descent should be the protagonist. We can also see how the central figure blends into the landscape, which is a sign of the importance of being in harmony with the environment. This painting is an example of how the modernist movement helped shape a Brazilian identity and encourage reflection on the relationship between Brazil and the world.

Mexican muralism [2], for its part, developed in the first half of the 20th century (approximately between 1920 and 1950) and was characterized by large-format works, generally on the walls of public buildings (mainly in Mexico City), with a clearly social message, frequently depicting the historical, political, and cultural conflicts of Mexico. The "Big Three"—Rivera, Orozco, and Alfaro Siqueiros—are usually cited as its most prominent representatives. This movement drew inspiration from European murals (biblical themes) and pre-Columbian indigenous art (Olmec culture).

The aforementioned visual art movement was promoted by the government after the Mexican Revolution, as political leaders sought to disseminate and cultivate certain values to forge a national identity. This movement shares with the earlier Brazilian current a sense of national reconstruction and modernism. However, Mexican muralism had a far greater international impact, as its style and format were imitated in the United States and several European countries during the 1930s. Some have even theorized that "Street Art" and other expressions of "street resistance" have their roots in Rivera's muralism. Therefore, this movement was a complex phenomenon, serving both as an artistic expression and as a means of conveying a critical and defiant vision, in which mestizos and the lower classes played a central role.

We observe Diego Rivera's "Dream of a Sunday Afternoon in Alameda Central Park" (1947). This impressive mural is not only the "coming-out party" of La Catrina (a Mexican icon of death) but also depicts stages of Mexican history, from the arrival of Cortés to Zapata's revolution. It is, therefore, a critical look at Mexican history, highlighting the struggles against inequality, discrimination, and the isolation of Indigenous peoples, as well as various European influences, especially French, and the power of the Church. All of this evokes Rivera's personal childhood memories. As we can see, this piece of Mexican muralism clearly demonstrates a style that is developing an aesthetic with diverse aspects of originality.

The third movement I will use to illustrate my first argument is **Cuban Concretism[3]**, which is chronologically the last in this series, as it emerged on the largest Caribbean Island during the 1950s. It was characterized by a strong rejection of figurative art and, consequently, a significant emphasis on geometric abstraction, exploring and experimenting with forms and colors.

As with the other two movements (Brazilian Modernism and Mexican Muralism), this movement was heavily influenced by European art (especially Russian Constructivism), but it was also an effort to find its own identity and artistic language. It is worth noting that ten painters stood out in this movement, among whom Rafael Soriano (1920-2015) is known for his long and prolific sixty-five-year career. Below, we can see one of his most recognized paintings, called "Composition" from 1954. Geometric shapes and a composition in earth colors can be seen, which also evoke, but in a non-figurative way, a connection with his native island and the search for his own expressiveness.
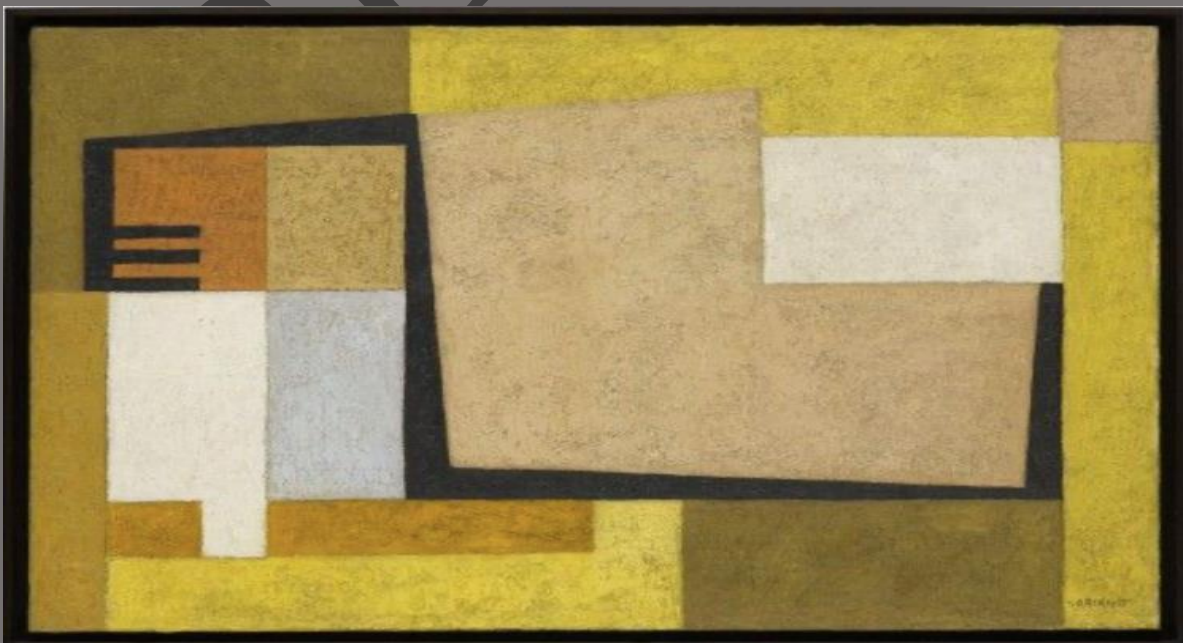
Similar to what we saw in the works of Do Amaral and Rivera, Soriano shows us the result of his search for Cuban identity in particular and Latin American identity in general. Evidently, from an abstract or non-figurative perspective, we can nevertheless see how different planes (clearly imbued with an earthly quality) intertwine, an indication of the racial and cultural mix characteristic of our peoples. One could also speculate on the presence of an arm and hand of African or mixed-race origin, which would serve as an articulating axis, a common factor, or a unifying element of the Caribbean nation.

The second argument (to support my affirmative stance on the existence of an art that can be described as Latin American) will maintain that there is a certain aesthetic unity that constitutes or gives rise to a relatively autonomous artistic current in Latin America. It seems appropriate, first of all, to turn to Heidegger, and especially to his book "The Origin of the Work of Art", in which he tells us that true artistic expression has the capacity to say something about otherness. Here we are presented with a fundamental characteristic of art, which consists in

its ability to unveil part of the world. In this regard, Heidegger points out, "The work of art, in its own way, opens up the being of beings. This opening, that is, this unveiling, the truth of beings, occurs in the work. In the work of art, the truth of beings has been put to work.

Art is that undertaking of the work of truth."[4] That is to say, Art possesses the potential to produce an opening of the world or to unveil part of it, or as the German thinker teaches us, "To raise up a world and to bring the earth here are two essential features of the being-work of the work. Both belong to the unity of the being-work. We seek this unity when we think about the subsistence of the work and try to express that closed stillness proper to repose in itself." [5]

Later, this fascinating writer adds that the work of art not only allows us to know otherness (this would be its allegorical character) but could also be conceived as symbolic, since it is an encounter with something different; that is, it brings together the heterogeneous or, in other words, it is a conjunction

or mixture of materials, ideas, and techniques. Regarding this, Heidegger tells us, "The work makes another matter known to us publicly; it is something different: it is allegory. Besides being a finished thing, the work of art has an added character. To have an added character—to carry something with it—is what in Greek is called 'symbolein'; the work is a symbol."[6] In other words, for Heidegger, Art has unfolded, from the beginning, as an allegorical symbol; that is, the work of art is a manufactured thing that "opens up a world," either because it reveals truths about human existence or because of its representational capacity. Applying Heidegger's ideas to support the existence of a certain aesthetic unity in Latin America, one could point out that:

1. Latin American art has produced an opening to the world, as it is a unique mixture that includes developments from Mesoamerica, Central and South America with diverse European expressions, from the classical to the most avant-garde. This "opening to the world" is observed in the images created in our countries, which give rise to a mixed or dual perspective, not only in racial and

cultural terms, but also in the creation of new symbols such as "La Catrina" in Mexico. In music, we also have very particular manifestations, for example, the Brazilian rhythm created in 1950 known as "Bossa Nova," or, to use one last illustration (of many possible ones) in literature, the style known as "Magical Realism" created by Gabriel García Márquez.

2. There is a certain regional or geographical unity in the artistic production of Latin American countries, characterized by artistic creation that is relatively distinct from realism, with a clear regional identity, multiple indigenous aspects (which permeate everything), and a mixture of various characteristics of "magical thinking" and a notable influence (direct or indirect) of Christianity.

3. Local artistic creation reflects the identity, history, and cultural context of Latin America, which, to this day, allows us to trace its mixed heritage with the countries that make up the Iberian Peninsula. The long colonial period, with

its positive and negative aspects, has had an impact on all our countries.

4. The role of art in the construction of Latin American identity reflects: (1) the past, with its Spanish and Portuguese roots, marked by the rich Latin tradition and the indigenous peoples, in addition to the more than five hundred years of post-Columbian history; (2) present-day problems, namely, prevailing inequality, widespread discrimination against minorities, technological backwardness, and intermittent and superficial democracy; and (3) shared dreams for the future, namely, to consolidate and deepen social gains, as well as to achieve greater freedom and autonomy.

5. The region has been marked by the complex dialogue between indigenous traditions and European influences produced during the colonial or viceroyalty period, which lasted approximately three hundred years (from the conquest in the 16th century until the wars of independence in

the 19th century) and continues to exert its influence to the present day.

To conclude, I'll leave you with a reflection on a controversial issue: Who defines what art is? First, it's worth noting that traditionally, the great academies (especially European ones), established critics and theorists, and renowned masters dictated the canons on this matter. Naturally, for a 19th-century Parisian artist, it would be difficult to accept the existence of this type of art under that paradigm. Many (perhaps most) would consider that a truly Latin American art doesn't exist. However, there have been numerous adjustments to the initial paradigm. Consider, for example, the invention of photography, the historical avant-gardes or the early avant-gardes, the entire development of abstract expressionism in New York City after World War II, the reevaluation of alternative art, the development of digital media, and so on. From my perspective, today museums and galleries have lost power to determine what is Art (due to the information explosion that the emergence of the internet brought about), so if artistic expressions (like Latin American art) reveal

part of reality, fulfill a symbolic role and contribute to the creation of an identity, it seems logical to affirm the existence of a Latin American Art.

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The Plastic Turns of Luis Vargas Rosas:

"When we were doing Cubism, we had no intention of doing Cubism, but rather to express what was inside us."
Picasso

Until 1919, the Osorno-born (Chile) painter Luis Vargas Rosas (1897-1977), under the influence of masters Juan Francisco González, Pedro Luna, and José Caracci, painted urban landscapes of Santiago and Valparaíso (Chile) with a clear Impressionist influence. That is to say, before his first trip to Europe, we can detect in Vargas Rosas's paintings the representation of reality through the various angles from which light makes it visible, with a use of pure colors, and above all, an attempt to capture the fleeting nature of the moment through impressions.

We see "Panorama of Santiago" (1915) by Juan Francisco González. His disciple Luis Vargas Rosas followed this style (characterized by the capture of visual impressions, painting outdoors, experimentation with lighting, with every day and urban themes) until his encounter with the first avant-gardes or the historical avant-gardes developed in Europe, especially in Paris.

Consequently, we could venture to establish (in Vargas Rosas's work) an initial "Neo-Impressionist" period from 1915 to 1919. But what happened in 1919 that explains this shift in his work? As mentioned, that year the painter embarked on a journey through Europe, specifically Italy, Germany, and France. Undoubtedly, the answer to this question can be found in the capital of the latter country (where he met Picasso).

The Cubist revolution of Picasso and Braque deeply influenced Vargas Rosas's art. That is to say, the Parisian movement of the early 20th century, which broke with the rules of classical perspective, simultaneously decomposing objects into geometric structures and revealing diverse angles of the portrayed "reality," profoundly impacted the mind and painting of this Chilean artist, who was one of the

founders of the Montparnasse avant-garde group and is considered Chile's first abstract painter.

Therefore, the painter's encounter with the ideas that shaped the historical avant-gardes; Fauvism, Expressionism, Cubism, Futurism, Dadaism and Surrealism (all of them arising as a direct or indirect reaction to the invention of photography in 1836 and, therefore, attempted to move away from realistic representation) marked Vargas Rosas's artistic future, not only in his "cubist stage", but also with his later abstract works.

We see "Houses of Puerto Montt" (1925) by Luis Vargas Rosas. We can appreciate how, after his encounter with Cubism, his painting became geometric. A steep dirt road climbs a hill with a cluster of houses along its side, all of them cubic in shape. In the distance, there is a green, circular hill, behind which a small patch of blue sky is visible. Multiple posts and trees, like arrows pointing in various directions, complete the image. All of this is set in a stark, nostalgic, and earthy atmosphere, perhaps recalling his childhood. Consequently, Vargas Rosas's Cubist turn consists of a shift from an expressiveness centered on the predominance of light to a geometrization of his drawings, prints, and paintings, making him one of the first national Cubist painters. However, it should be noted that figuration persists as a common factor between his early "Neo-Impressionist" period and his Cubist works.

To conclude, it is important to point out that the aforementioned shift was not (by any means) the only change in Vargas Rosas's aesthetic expression, since his innovative and experimental nature led him, shortly thereafter, to the creation of works with a distinctly abstract character, where he experimented with forms and color, "abandoning" his figurative works.

We see "Seaweed" (1945) by Luis Vargas Rosas. This painting represents his third turning point, and it shows an experimentation with the non-figurative using vivid and contrasting colors, which, however, are combined in an attractive and novel composition. In conclusion, one could speculate on at least three expressive stages in Vargas Rosas's career: the first influenced by the master Juan Francisco González, the second with a clear cubist accent, and the third, which seeks to create a new reality, independent of real visual references (although in this last painting, the title may guide us towards these marine eukaryotic organisms), carrying out a work of introspection that transcends to this day.

Analysis of a Work:
Michelangelo`s *Tondo Doni*

"Perfection is no small thing, but it is made up of small things."
Michelangelo

Within the context of the Diploma in Art History and specifically for the Art Historiography classes, this analysis offers the work "Doni Tondo"[1]:(1508) by Michelangelo (1475-1564), considered one of the jewels of the Italian Cinquecento. It presents:

1. Technical aspects.
2. Historical and artistic methodology.
3. Contents.
4. Analysis of style.

This study uses the iconological method proposed by Erwin Panofsky, with its three stages: pre-iconographic, iconographic, and iconological.

Technical Data Sheet of the Work:

• Year: 1508 (although some analyses place its execution around 1504-1506).

• Author: Michelangelo Buonarroti, known as Michelangelo.

• Title: "Doni Tondo", "Holy Family", or "Doni Madonna".

• Technique: Oil and tempera on wood (this work is Michelangelo's only altarpiece) using the colorful effect or painting technique known as Cangianti.

• Style: Renaissance

• Size: 120 cm in diameter, not including the width of the circular frame.

• Location: Uffizi Gallery, Florence, Italy.

• Patron: Agnolo Doni.

• Frame: Designed by Michelangelo himself and executed by the Del Tasso brothers.

The first approach to the work, before discussing its iconography, reveals a circular painting (in Italian, "tondo" means "round") set within a carved and gilded frame that occupies approximately one-third of the painting's diameter. Within the painting itself, three central figures are visible: a woman in the foreground (seated and turning backward), an older man, and a child holding the woman's hair (this child is being passed from the older man to the woman).

Further back, a gray band or wall divides the painting in two. The first section contains the three central figures mentioned above (a woman, a child, and an older man) situated in a kind of garden or on a lawn. Immediately behind the band or wall is a child or young man; further back are five nude men, and in the far distance, a mountain range and a portion of the sky are visible.

The colors used in the painting are vivid, bright, and contrasting. The garments (of the main figures) are made in a classical style with folds and gradations of the main color, giving them a silky appearance. Regarding the tones used, warm colors predominate in the middle of the garments, while cool colors are found in the upper and lower parts. In the background, there is also a contrast between warm and cool colors,

the former represented by the naked bodies of the five men and the latter by the mountains and the distant gray-blue sky. This gives the painting a sense of great depth, as it transitions from the foreground (the three central figures) to a very distant landscape, mediated by the band or wall and by the child or young man who is immediately behind the balustrade.

All the figures—the three central ones and the men in the background—display an athletic or muscular build. The central figurative core is triangular and deeply connected in a dynamic spiral that links the older man and the woman through the child. Clearly, this group of the three central figures (of large proportions) constitutes the work's main point of interest, and within it, the most central figure is the child, who stands out for his robustness, as well as for the fact that the older man and the woman gaze at him attentively, almost hypnotically.

In summary, the first approach to the work reveals a novel and bold composition, with a very clear point of interest in the conjunction created by the child (between the arms and faces of the woman and the older man); this point is located in the middle of the upper third of the painting. The work contains multiple

figures and elements in a relatively small space, and as mentioned, these convey a sense of great depth.
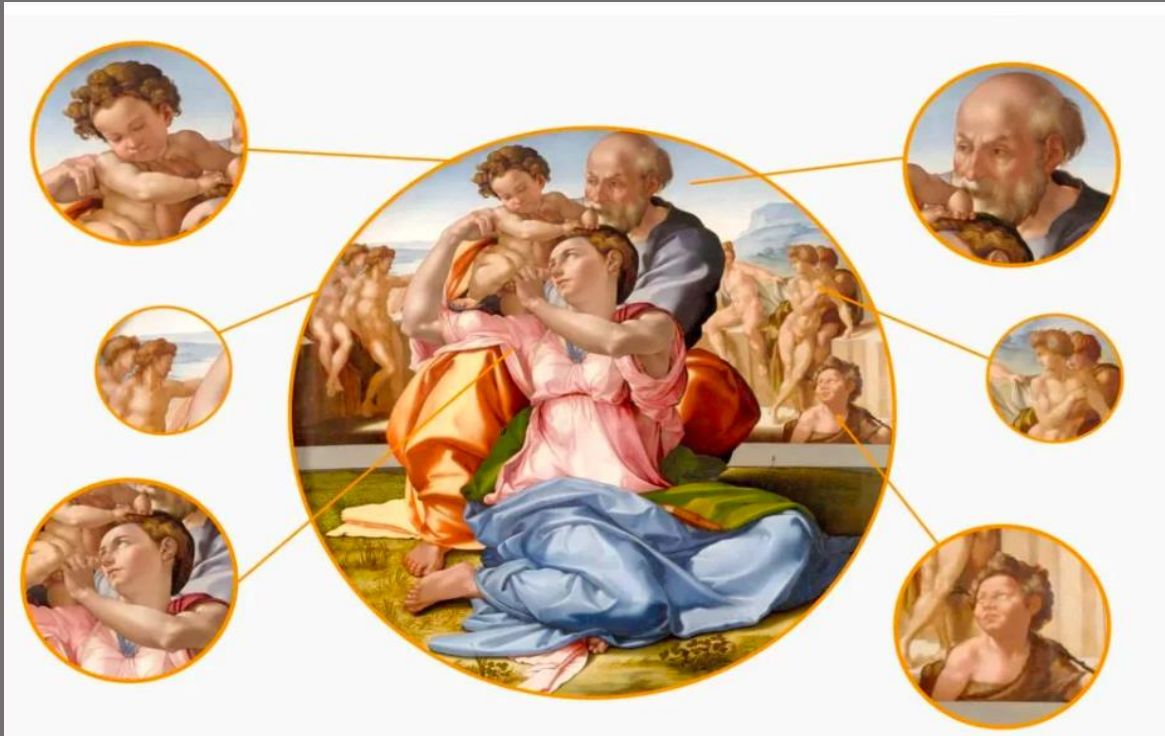
Regarding its iconography, this is partially revealed by the fact that other names for this work are "The Holy Family" and "Madonna Doni." Therefore, the painting depicts the Virgin Mary seated in the foreground, with Saint Joseph behind her and the Christ Child. Consequently, these three central figures constitute what is known as the Holy Family. It has been speculated that the transfer of the Christ Child (from Saint Joseph to the Virgin Mary) may represent the presentation of Christ to the viewer and the world.

Behind the gray balustrade, Saint John (son of Saint Elizabeth, who was a cousin of the Virgin Mary) can be seen. In Christian tradition, he is considered the last prophet (in the painting, he mediates between paganism and Christianity, representing the end of messianic hope and the fulfillment of the divine promise) before the arrival of the Messiah. In the background of the painting are the five naked men, or "ignudi". Some experts have seen them as wingless angels, although the prevailing interpretation is that they represent the pagan world before the arrival of Christ, the Savior. The men are in various poses and attitudes reminiscent of Greek and Roman statuary, highly valued during the Renaissance. It has been speculated that the men's nudity may also represent not only a primitive or pagan state, but that their lack of clothing could symbolize the limitations or shortcomings of pure reason in the Hellenic world.

The various planes mentioned can be interpreted as different eras of human history. In the background, pagan civilization is represented, followed by Saint John (the prophetic precursor) and Saint Joseph, who represent the prophetic era and the hope in the Messiah. The Virgin Mary and Jesus symbolize the beginning of the redemption that the Incarnation of God represented. Finally, it should be noted that the

Virgin Mary holds a book on her knee, symbolizing the theological and doctrinal activity of the Church.

El marco del Tondo Doni.

On the other hand, circular frame [2] (designed by Michelangelo himself and executed by the brothers Marco and Francesco del Tasso) contains five carved heads: two sibyls (prophetesses capable of seeing the future, in Greek and Roman mythology) representing paganism; then, the heads of two prophets (intermediaries between humanity and divinity); and in the central and upper part of the frame, the face of Christ, the Redeemer of humanity, is sculpted. Furthermore, the Doni Tondo frame features intricate and elaborate decorations, including intertwined plants, animals, and satyrs.

As is well known, the divine sculptor Michelangelo created this work at the behest of Agnolo Doni, who commissioned it to commemorate his marriage to Maddalena Strozzi. It is worth noting that the circular or round format was associated with marriage during the Renaissance, as it symbolized wholeness and completeness. The work is unique and unusual in the oeuvre of this great artist for several reasons. First, it is Michelangelo's only painting on a wooden panel (a "unicum" in the artistic production of this Renaissance genius). Second, it is the only work definitively attributed to this great artist on a portable support. And above all, the unusual poses of the central figures are extraordinary (out of the ordinary) or highly unorthodox for the standard representation of the time. They depict the Virgin Mary seated and spiraling backward to receive her son, who leans on her, grasping her hair, thus forming a triangular composition.

Regarding the lighting, in the Doni Tondo, the figures are illuminated by a strong light coming from the left, which spreads throughout the painting, giving the work depth and a great sense of volume to the figures depicted. Furthermore, as mentioned, the subject of the work is the Holy Family, a common theme at that time, as there was an attempt to depict

religious and civic virtues in paintings and sculptures. However, Michelangelo's approach is particularly original, offering us different perspectives and ideas on this theme, which, at the same time, give the Doni Tondo a unique character that sets it apart from other works with similar themes.

Regarding technique, Michelangelo used tempera and oil to create this work. It was traditional to apply oil paint in successive layers, from dark to light tones. This effect is called Cangianti (changing). It should be noted that the Flemish school used a similar but inverted technique, starting with light tones and progressing to darker ones. From a stylistic perspective, Michelangelo adopts two angles or perspectives to depict the figures in the work. The group of three central figures (the Holy Family) is viewed from below (the viewer looks up at them, a sign of the sacredness of the message conveyed by the images). In contrast, the nude men in the background are depicted frontally, emphasizing the mundane.

With this, the Renaissance genius, or as he was called, "The Divine," bestows monumentality upon the Holy Family and proposes a contrast between the secular and spiritual worlds, that is, he establishes different symbolic hierarchies. Some scholars have

also suggested other figurative relationships, the most important being the mirrored repetition of backs and arms. In the Doni Tondo, a key idea in Michelangelo's thinking about painting is evident (which is also naturally apparent in the monumental frescoes of the Sistine Chapel, which date from a later period): the subjects, and especially the figures to be painted, should be created with the same detail and anatomical meticulousness as is used to create a sculptural work.

Finally, it should be noted that the Doni Tondo belongs to the Cinquecento, that is, the 16th century of the Italian Renaissance, specifically the second phase of the Renaissance. This period is characterized by an emphasis on classical harmony and proportion. Just as the Quattrocento Renaissance was centered in Florence, Rome became the capital of this second Renaissance phase, driven by papal patronage. In conclusion, it is worth remembering that the Doni Tondo is memorable for several reasons, including the refined beauty of its drawings, the transmission of historical and theological knowledge, a series of extraordinary symbols, its uniqueness within Michelangelo's oeuvre, and because it continues to be a source of inspiration and learning for generations of artists.

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Tondo Doni
Michelangelo Buonarroti
Italia, 1508

Three Works: Etruscan, Greek, and Roman

"Roman naturalism, influenced by Greek classicism, manifested itself in Latin art and literature, but with a more pragmatic and less idealized approach than its predecessor"
Raúl Buono-Core

Within the context of the Diploma in Art History, specifically for the Ancient Art History classes, the analysis of three works is offered: (1) The Chimera of Arezzo, (2) The François Vase or Krater, and (3) The Forma Urbis Romae, from the Etruscan, Greek, and Roman cultures, respectively.

The Chimera of Arezzo:[1] Etruscan art (8th to 3rd centuries BC) is renowned for its vitality, color, and cosmopolitan character. The Etruscans, "a people considered distinct and with unique customs," [1] appreciated foreign art, especially Greek art (particularly that of the artists of Magna Graecia), from whom they learned various techniques. However, they also developed their own aesthetic style. This is evident, for example, in their beautifully decorated and painted tombs. Etruscan sculpture benefited from the abundance of metals in Etruria (copper, iron, lead, silver, etc.). The bronze works deserve special mention: "Bronze was hammered, cut,

cast using molds or the lost-wax technique, embossed, engraved, and riveted using a whole range of techniques. Bronze statuettes, often with a small stone base, were typical votive offerings in sanctuaries."[2]

Regarding the name or designation, "Chimera of Arezzo," and if we consult the RAE dictionary[3] (2025), it should be noted that the word Chimera has two meanings: (1) In classical Greek mythology, it was the imaginary monster that breathed fire and had the head of a lion, the belly of a goat, and the tail of a dragon or serpent; and (2) Something presented to the imagination as possible or true, when it is not. It

should also be clarified that Arezzo is an Italian municipality (in Tuscany) and was the place where this work was discovered, near the Porta San Lorentino in Arezzo (an ancient Etruscan and Roman city), in 1553. In short, the Chimera of Arezzo is a well-known bronze sculpture that represents the mythological creature known as the Chimera, which terrorized Lycia.

This sculpture, one of the largest Etruscan pieces, measures 80 centimeters in height and dates from approximately the 5th to 4th centuries BC. It is considered a masterpiece of Etruscan art and is currently housed in the National Archaeological Museum of Florence. It is worth noting that on the sculpture's right leg is an inscription that reads "TINSCVIL," believed to mean "Donated or gift to the god Tinia." This suggests that the sculpture was an offering to the god Tin or Tinia, the Etruscan deity of the sky and head of the Etruscan pantheon. Another hypothesis is that the Chimera of Arezzo may have been part of a larger sculptural group that included the hero Bellerophon and the mythical winged horse, Pegasus.

The Chimera—as mentioned—was a mythological creature (that breathed fire) and wreaked havoc in the region of Lycia (Asia Minor), killing and wounding its inhabitants, tormenting them both physically and psychologically, until the Greek mythological hero Bellerophon ("Slayer of Bellerus") killed the Chimera riding his winged horse. Some interpretations say he used arrows, and others, a spear. It is also believed that the wound on the goat's neck (in the bronze sculpture) could represent Bellerophon's fatal attack against the Chimera.

From a purely sculptural perspective, the Chimera of Arezzo is a magnificent work, crafted from cast bronze and then polished to create a detailed and expressive surface. It rests on a plinth, upon which the body of

a lion serves as the base for a mythical beast with three animal heads.

First, the head of a lion (some say with dog-like features) faces upward and is turned to the right, its mane adorned with thorns. Next comes the head of a goat, turned to the left, and finally, the tail transforms into a serpent. This alludes to the multiple threats this beast could generate, thus combining various forces of evil into a single being. Ultimately, from a contemporary and symbolic perspective, the Chimera embodied (in a multifaceted monster) numerous atavistic fears and phenomena that were inexplicable at the time, such as plagues, diseases, floods, earthquakes, and eruptions. In other words, the Chimera combined multiple natural dangers that could be caused by other human groups.

On the other hand, Bellerophon (the slayer of the Chimera) managed to tame the winged horse, Pegasus, which is itself a symbol showing us how humankind has the potential to (very slowly) gain ground against the forces of nature. By increasingly understanding all that is unknown and, to some extent, "controlling" nature, we can build tools (both material and conceptual) with which to gradually curb the evils that have plagued and continue to plague human beings.

The François Vase:[4] This is an Attic black figure krater, a large vessel used for mixing water and wine (generally in the proportions of three parts water to one part wine). It should also be noted that classifying it as Attic pottery means that it is a product of the Attica region, centered on ancient Athens (Greece). Regarding the black figures (on their outer surface) they represent -in various friezes or horizontal decorative bands- mythological figures and tell stories that recount various adventures.

It should be emphasized that this remarkable ceramic vessel, known as the François Vase or François Krater, is famous for its large size and the enormous number of mythological figures that decorate it. It measures 66 centimeters in height and 57 centimeters in diameter. The mouth and body are very wide, so that diners attending the symposium could insert their own cups to serve themselves. It is generally agreed that this krater was created by the potter Ergotimos and decorated by the painter Clitias or Klitias. The vase dates from around 570-560 BC and was discovered broken into multiple fragments in an Etruscan tomb near Chiusi (Italy) by Alessandro François in 1844. It is currently housed in the National Archaeological Museum of Florence.

The Vase or Krater contains—as mentioned—several friezes on its body. The upper frieze depicts the Calydonian Boar Hunt, a story in which the hero Meleager leads the hunt for the monstrous boar sent by Artemis. The lower frieze shows the funeral games in honor of Patroclus, Achilles' friend, including races, wrestling, and discus throwing. Both friezes present the procession of gods attending the wedding of Thetis and Peleus, Achilles' parents. The lower frieze also shows scenes from the siege of Troy, including the death of Troilus.

The figures (which narrate mythological stories through sequences of images, creating a visual narrative) are depicted in black against the red background of the pottery, with details added through

incisions. Several scenes from Greek mythology are shown across its six friezes and 270 figures. These scenes recount stories such as the wedding of Thetis and Peleus, the Calydonian Boar hunt, the funeral games in honor of Patroclus, and the siege of Troy, among others. The arrangement of the figures in friezes, with open figures in the center and closed figures at the ends, creates a sense of harmony and visual balance.

In addition to the body of the krater, the handles and the base of the vase feature decorations: (1) One handle depicts Ajax carrying the body of Achilles, while the other shows Artemis as mistress of the animals; and (2) The base of the krater depicts the battle between the pygmies and the cranes. Experts agree that the François Vase is a prime example of the

pinnacle of miniaturist-style production and decoration techniques.

In summary, the François Vase or Krater is an exceptional work of Greek art, combining technical mastery with a rich mythological narrative, offering a fascinating glimpse into the culture of ancient Greece, since in its six friezes we can see the core of the ancestral narratives that shaped (establishing values and a hierarchy of virtues) Hellenic culture.

The Forma Urbis Romae:[5] (abbreviated as FUR), also called the Forma Urbis Severiana or Forma Urbis Marmorea, was a marble map of Ancient Rome created during the reign of Emperor Septimius Severus between 203 and 211 AD. This gigantic map was composed of 150 slabs or plaques (which depict the city of Rome in great detail in the 3rd century AD) and measured 18.3 meters wide by 13 meters high. As a whole, it is an invaluable piece that shows us what the Eternal City looked like at a scale of 1:240, depicting streets, part of the Tiber River, neighborhoods, baths, buildings with their names carved into them, Tiber Island, temples, the Colosseum, theaters, and other details, making the map an exceptional document. Its original location was the interior wall of the Temple of Peace in the Roman Forum. On the other hand, its

unusual orientation, with the south at the top, unlike the current standard orientation (north-up) has given rise to some hypotheses about its purpose, ranging from an administrative, representative or aesthetic function. The matter is further complicated by the fact that it is estimated that only ten percent of the original has been recovered (since 1562). This rediscovery has been made in numerous fragments (approximately 1200) which then became part of the Capitoline Museums, that is to say, they are exhibited in Rome's main civic museum.

It should be noted that the marble map was destroyed throughout the Middle Ages, with the slabs being reused as building materials and for making lime, so that today only small fragments of the original map survive. Most of these were recovered in 1562, when Giovanni Antonio Dosio discovered some fragments of the Forma Urbis in the rear garden of the Basilica of Saints Cosmas and Damian, near the Colosseum. These fragments all ended up in the Farnese family collection until, in 1741, a large portion of them were donated to the people of Rome. Since then, discoveries have continued regularly to the present day.

We can see a fragment of the Forma Urbis from Via Anicia. It is speculated that the room where the complete map was originally located was the office of the urban prefecture of the city of Rome. Several fragments of other Forma Urbis have been preserved, but the most important is the so-called Forma Urbis from Via Anicia. This piece is made up of fifteen small fragments joined together, depicting the area of the Circus Flaminius. It was found in 1983 on Via Anicia.

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APPENDIX I:

Since 1999, Stanford University has had a project (Stanford Digital Forma Urbis Romae Project 6) that virtually reconstructs the Forma Urbis Romae. Clicking on one of the 150 virtual plaques or slabs shown below displays the details. Stanford Digital Forma Urbis Romae:

https://formaurbis-stanford.edu.translate.goog/docs/FURslabmap.html?_x_tr_sl=en&_x_tr_tl=es&_x_tr_hl=es&_x_tr_pto=tc

APPENDIX II:

These two very interesting diagrams of the François Krater or Vase are offered, showing its two views: front and back, which provide a summary of its friezes. This information was obtained from the work of Marysol Rodríguez Maldonado, "Presence of the Homeric Hero on the François Vase" (2017), from the Institute of Philological Research, UNAM. Published in the Annals of the Institute of Aesthetic Research, available at:

https://www.scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0185-12762017000100077

1. Frisos del lado "teseida". Diagrama: Marleth Rodríguez.

Gorgo

Cacería del jabalí de Calidón

Juegos fúnebres en honor a Patroclo

Bodas de Tetis y Peleo
(Peleo recibiendo a la procesión)

Sitio de Troya y muerte de Troilo

Friso animal

Cáliz decorativo

—Ártemis
—Áyax cargando
el cadáver de Aquiles

—Ártemis
—Áyax cargando
el cadáver de Aquiles

Firmas verticales

Geranomaquia de pigmeos contra grullas

2. Frisos del lado "calidonio". Diagrama: Marleth Rodríguez.

Two Striking Images: Diverse Implications in Art:

"Not only have we ceased to have images of death that we are forced to believe in, we are also becoming accustomed to the death of images, which once exerted the ancient fascination of the symbolic." — Hans Belting

I will analyze Blake's "The Punishment of a Slave on the Rack" (1796) and one of Manet's masterpieces, "Olympia" (1863). These nude works (included in the Appendix) share some visual resources, but also differ radically in other elements and concepts, since nudity in art—as a rule—has reflected the standards that societies have assigned to aesthetics and morality in each era.

The late 18th-century image shows the cruel punishment of a Black man, revealing not only the atrocious discrimination and injustice of the time, but also the perceived legitimacy of such practices over two hundred years ago. In contrast, the image from the second half of the 19th century depicts two women: a prostitute (naked in the foreground) and a Black servant in the background. Cruelty, sarcasm, and

discrimination are still present, but in a much more subtle way.

In William Blake's (1757-1827) small hand-colored etching, we can appreciate a brutal image that serves—among other things—as an illustration for "The Narrative of a Five-Man Expedition Against the Black Rebels of Suriname."

The work is, at once, a warning and a statement of radical domination. That is to say, in the anonymous or unidentifiable face of the tortured slave:

"What is visible here is not the face we have, but the face we make, that is, an image, which as such can be read symbolically" [1] Belting

we are shown the millions of human beings who have suffered similar punishments and discrimination.

We can see the work of Blake, called "Punishment of a Slave Chained to a Torture Rack" from 1796. It is a hand-colored etching on paper (after a drawing by J.G. Stedman) measuring 27.5 cm x 17.1 cm. It is an illustration for John Gabriel Stedman's Narrative of a Five-Man Expedition Against the Black Rebels of Suriname (1796). Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

A Negro hung alive by the Ribs to a Gallows.

The bones beneath him and the two skulls placed on pikes (in the middle ground) foreshadow the inexorable fate that awaits the chained man and, on the other hand, serve as historical testimony to the violent conquest by some Europeans with the aim of establishing colonies in northern South America. It

is curious that the man's genitals are covered, which clearly tells us about the moral conditions of the time, where it was considered more scandalous to openly display the sexual organs than the brutal flagellation. In the far distance, a vast sky is visible, and a small part of the sea is visible with a caravel-like ship leaving a wake of violent impact. "The sea and the sky are a way of bringing together 'the world' in a totalizing image, in an image of completeness, in a field constituted by the logic of its own frame" [2] (Krauss). Finally, it should be noted that this work has a long and descriptive title, which guides the viewer in a clear and unambiguous way.

It must be said that Blake abhorred slavery and believed in the equality of genders and races. In several of his poems and engravings, he expresses the notion of a universal humanity; for example, in his poems "The Body of God" and "Human Existence Itself," he extols imagination as the defining characteristic of the human condition. Therefore, since a degree of imagination is always found in every person, Blake believed that a part of God existed within each individual. Hence, his absolute rejection of discrimination in all its forms.

The starkness of the image also indicates that new types of representation are now possible, types that were impossible to find in Neoclassicism. From a certain perspective, this is a liberation, since previously it was inconceivable to pay for such brutal images. It was believed that the creation of images was reserved for great feats, sacred texts, or mythologies.

Let us recall that tradition told us: "The first mark made on a surface destroys its visual smoothness." [3] and "This is because each of these smooth, white surfaces is nevertheless the index of a kind of emptiness, of a basic smoothness, the smoothness of the visual field as a projective field." [4] (Krauss).

For his part, Gombrich emphasizes the visual leap that occurred during this period: "The most striking effect of the break with tradition was that artists felt free to express their visions on paper as only poets had done until then. The most outstanding example of this new dimension of art was that of the English poet and mystic William Blake… He was the first artist after the Renaissance who thus consciously rebelled against the norms established by tradition." [5]. Furthermore, the rise of engraving (late 18th century) dramatically increased the accessibility of illustrations, as

images produced by this technique circulated in books, newspapers, and magazines.

It is worth recalling a conceptualization by Belting that can be applied to the engraving by this great Romantic artist: "The image of the human being and the image of the body are more closely related than current theories admit. One indication of this is that the lament for the loss of humanity occurs simultaneously with the lament for the loss of the body." [6] That is to say, the gradual but constant process of the loss of human dignity is the consequence of the loss of the individual body image. Now, for many corporations and governments, we are not people; we are merely numbers.

On the other hand, Édouard Manet's (1832-1883) oil on canvas, measuring almost two meters, presents us with a scene that is also striking, but far more subtle than the previous one. It offers more layers of interpretation or decoding to the viewer. The first thing to say is that this painting caused a great scandal at the Paris Salon of 1865. Manet, under the title -given by Baudelaire- of "Olympia", painted Victorine Meurent, which was the antithesis of the nude maidens used in the Cinquecento.

In the painting, we see a cat bristling at the presence of a stranger and a Black maid carrying a bouquet of flowers offered by the client. Olympia has an orchid in her hair (a clear sexual reference) and wears only one high-heeled shoe (symbolizing lost innocence). On the other hand, Meurent covers her genitals, not as a gesture of modesty, but to indicate that the client (observer) has not paid to see her.

Zola fully understood the reason for the great scandal this caused. Manet insults museums and salons, for this painting does not offer us the idealized nude of a Greek goddess; on the contrary, he uses a prostitute to point out that institutions linked to art have become brothels. Art is like a fetish that is bought and sold; it has lost its higher symbolic character; you must pay to see it.

Édouard Manet (1832-1883) "Olympia" from 1863. Oil on canvas, 130.5 x 190 cm. Musée d`Orsay, Paris.

Gombrich gives us the first glimpse into the importance of this particular work and of Manet's artistic production: "The third revolutionary wave in France (after the first, by Delacroix, and the second, by Courbet) was initiated by Édouard Manet and his friends. These artists took seriously the program established by Courbet, despising pictorial conventions as worn out and meaningless. They found that the claim of traditional art to have discovered how to represent nature as we see it rested on a mistaken conception." [7]

For his part, Professor Millán Alba tells us: "Manet's work had to make its way through the most closed-minded incomprehension of his contemporaries… Originality: that is the great horror. We are all, to a greater or lesser degree and against our will, creatures of habit who stubbornly tread the path we have already traveled. Any new path frightens us; we sense unknown precipices and refuse to advance." [8] Manet's work, like most revolutionary proposals, faced great obstacles in its time; however, critics and viewers of the future placed it in a prominent position.

Foucault, in analyzing this painting, emphasizes the light. "What was scandalous about this painting? What made it so unbearable? Art historians say that the moral scandal was a clumsy way of expressing what was actually an aesthetic scandal… All of this is absolutely true. However, I wonder if there is another, more concrete reason for the scandal, linked precisely to the lighting… Observe that Manet's Olympia is visible because it is illuminated by a very harsh light that shines on it from the front… Where does it come from if not precisely from where the viewer is? … That is to say, the viewer's own gaze upon the nudity illuminates Olympia. We make her

visible: our gaze upon Olympia is illuminating, our gaze projects the light." [9]

Gombrich tells us that Manet's painting was different from the rest, since: "This procedure (flat brushstroke) seemed to those who were unaware of Manet's intentions a sign of pure ignorance. But the fact is that, outdoors and in full daylight, voluminous forms sometimes appear flat, like mere-colored patches. This effect was what Manet wanted to analyze, and the consequence is that, when we stand before one of his paintings, it immediately seems more truthful than any of those belonging to the old masters." [10]

As we have seen, both images were revolutionary in their time, representing an expansion of visual expression. Both depict nudes; in the first, we see the brutality of conquest, and in the second, subtle sarcasm and provocation. The first work, like all prints, could be produced in multiple, finely finished copies, thus achieving much wider dissemination. In contrast, although the painting establishes intense contrasts of light and dark with flattened colors, its unique nature meant it required a visit to a salon or museum.

Blake and Manet were two artists misunderstood in their time, primarily due to the innovative nature of their proposals. Both were also fiercely independent. Blake clearly possessed a mystical character and created works inspired by his inner world. Manet, on the other hand, had a confrontational and honest approach. Finally, it should be noted that the two works analyzed marked their era and remain for posterity as milestones of change in relation to what had been done up to that point.

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A Toulouse-Lautrec Poster and a Paolozzi Collage:

"The idea is not to live forever; the idea is to create something that

will." — Andy Warhol

In the context of the Contemporary Art History course, I will analyze two works that share certain visual and conceptual similarities. The first illustration is Toulouse-Lautrec's famous lithograph "Moulin Rouge," and the second is Paolozzi's revolutionary collage "I Was a Rich Man's Toy," which launched Pop Art!

The first thing to discuss is the techniques, namely, poster art and collage. Posters, generally created with paper or plastic and paint, are used for political, social, or advertising purposes. They typically present a highly striking or impactful visual message, relatively simple, and above all, must have a highly persuasive image. During the Belle Époque (late 19th century), artists like Chéret and Toulouse-Lautrec created posters that are true icons of their time. Collage, on the other hand (from the French coler: "to glue" or "to join"), is a technique that uses the assembly of different flat elements to create a whole that is different from the simple sum

of its parts. The pieces that are joined can be magazine clippings, photographs, newspaper clippings, etc. Collage is a long-standing technique, but it is associated with Modern Art due to its strong resurgence in the 20th century. Finally, it should be added that Braque and Picasso coined the expression "Papier Collé," and this expressive medium became a distinctive element of their revolutionary approach.[1]

We see the famous poster "Moulin Rouge: La Goulue" created by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901) in 1891. It is a color lithograph on paper, measuring 170 x 120 cm. Currently, replicas are on display at the Museum of Fine Arts in Lyon and Indianapolis. The poster masterfully captures the bohemian atmosphere of Parisian life at the end of the 19th century, creating brilliant advertising for the famous cabaret. It features a limited color palette, with a clear Japanese influence (flat colors, cutouts, and prominence of the central figure), and a bold and very well-executed combination of figures and lettering. The floor is in perspective, separating the image into at least three planes, where the proximal and distal planes have contrasting silhouettes, while the middle plane is the focal point: the protagonist "La Goulue" (Louise Weber) in white and colors, dancing the Can-Can.[2]

Some years after, the British artist Eduardo Paolozzi (1924-2005) created the work "Collage: I Was a Rich Man's Plaything" in 1947. The image measures 35.9 x 23.8 cm. This collage is currently housed in the Tate Gallery in London and is considered the starting point of Pop Art, although this term was coined by the English art critic and curator Lawrence Alloway in the 1960s. [3]

Paolozzi's work celebrates consumer culture, emphasizing the importance of mass culture and advertising. It also highlights the disconnect between media interests and reality. The artist created this piece with juxtaposed clippings (from American magazines) that today evoke the aesthetics of comics. As can be seen, there are three main clippings, the

largest being the most manipulated in a way that anticipates the works of Warhol and Lichtenstein.[4] Everything mentioned so far is the standard when presenting these works and techniques. However, from this point forward, I will offer some conclusions about the techniques of Collage and Poster Art, as well as about the two works by Toulouse-Lautrec and Paolozzi, attempting to incorporate some degree of originality.

As is known, Lithography applies the biblical principle of the repulsion between water and oil. This technique involves first creating the "drawing" on a stone or metal plate (the modern support) and then allowing the image to be printed or reproduced on paper countless times. Collage, on the other hand, requires first having the flat pieces or elements that will be assembled. In this sense, the posters and prints produced by the lithographic process have "nourished" Collage.

If the aforementioned relationship (poster art provided the basic elements for creating collage) is true—that is, if a relationship of dependence exists between posters and collages similar to that between food and the body—then one might speculate that the lithography technique (created by the German

playwright Alois Senefelder at the end of the 18th century), or similar techniques, must necessarily be older than collage, or at least what is understood as modern collage. If we examine history, collage was used in Chinese works two centuries before Christ, then in Japan, and later in medieval Europe, but collage in the modern sense of the term, namely, as an independent artistic technique, originated in the works of Braque and Picasso around 1912 with the work "Still Life with Chair Caning." Therefore, the proposed relationship of dependence makes sense.

On the other hand, lithographic posters, offset printing, and offset lithography are high-volume or mass-production techniques; that is, they are designed to generate a large print run with a very attractive cost-effectiveness ratio for the client. Collage, in contrast, creates a work—in principle—that is unique, using serial elements. I want to emphasize here that poster art is a serial technique, while collage is not, although it uses serial pieces. As a curious fact, 3,000 copies of Toulouse-Lautrec's poster "Moulin Rouge: La Goulue" were printed, causing a sensation in Paris.

From the above, a very relevant notion also emerges: Collage, and not Poster Art, because it uses serial

elements, might remind us of or evoke something of Duchamp's ideas. That is to say, in Collage, the artist uses "found objects," which are images printed on posters, flyers, newspapers, or magazines, and as is known, by selecting and assembling these, a new and autonomous work of art is created. It is as if what the artist uses or designates, simply by virtue of having been pasted or arranged by a creator, becomes a work of art.

The central element in both techniques is the order or combination of the elements. In other words, by answering these two questions: (1) How are the phrases and figures alternated in poster art? and (2) How are the elements or pieces chosen and juxtaposed in collage? we would have a criterion for distinguishing well-made posters and collages from those that are not. In the case of posters, the letters and illustrations must enhance each other, achieving a dialogue between these two types of language: writing and images. For collages, the section, the cut used, and its placement are crucial, since certain areas of the image will allow for a rich interaction between the pieces or elements used, while other areas will show a much poorer interaction.

The two techniques are synergistic; that is, poster design, by combining letters and images (giving us a blend that surpasses the words and illustrations separately), and collage, by implementing the synergistic principle (the complexity of the whole cannot be understood by simply adding up or analyzing its component parts) in its creations, indicate that the artist's ability to select cutouts, words, and images, placing them where the visual potential is maximized, is the creative key. However, it must be said that in poster design—unlike collage—traditional drawing also plays a leading role.

In both images shown, those by Toulouse-Lautrec and Paolozzi, a sexualized woman is the central figure. In the first case, the meaning is direct: the poster is an invitation and advertisement to visit the cabaret. However, in the second work, Paolozzi's approach is much more ironic—and, at least for this writer, possesses more layers of meaning. For example, the collage plays with the role of the media, critiques the marketing of mass-market products, masterfully combines symbols of capitalism with postwar imagery, satirizes the traditionally feminine role, and creates a word (Pop!) that will become the linguistic expression of a visual-aesthetic movement to come. The entire collage is the foundational image

of what would later develop in North American art after Abstract Expressionism.

Another noteworthy aspect is that Toulouse-Lautrec's poster is a unified piece, not only formally, but also because all its component elements are designed to enhance a single visual experience. In contrast, Paolozzi's collage clearly comprises three different pieces; however, words and images can be seen in all of them. These cutouts can be hierarchically ordered from largest to smallest, using their area as a criterion: (1) The largest is a full magazine page that has been altered by the artist. It presents various images and multiple phrases, making it the most complex of the three. (2) The medium-sized piece is a single image of war with a short text directly connected to it. (3) The smallest piece presents two Coca-Cola images and lettering with the characteristic slogans.

The "Moulin Rouge" poster, although based on a drawing and printed on paper, clearly follows an aesthetic similar to or akin to the pictorial tradition. In contrast, the collage "I Was a Rich Man's Toy" creates a different aesthetic. We can distinguish different images on the same plane, interventions with added letters and phrases. Although these may be integrated

and form a whole with its own meaning, there is no doubt that it is a non-traditional visual style.

Finally, regarding the artists Toulouse-Lautrec and Paolozzi, it should be said that they play very different roles. The former is prominently and originally embedded in the Neo-Impressionist movement; that is, he is a notable representative of a trend that had (at that time) various exponents. The latter, on the other hand, is the one who gave rise to Pop Art; in other words, he is the precursor of a new aesthetic. On the other hand, both artists (despite their many differences) fulfilled (at least from the perspective of the present) Warhol's mandate, "The idea is not to live forever, the idea is to create something that will."

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The Limits in Contemporary Art:

Oscar Bony's 1968 performance "**The Working Family**"

*This essay is an exception to the self-imposed limits for this book, as I wrote it in 2015 while I was completing the Diploma in Visual Arts Theory at PUC.

The basic premise of this work is that "**Not everything can be Art**" Therefore, if this is true, there must necessarily be boundaries to artistic practice. These boundaries have evidently shifted throughout history; that is, they have become more elastic or have simply been broken. The History of Art seems to support this position, especially when considering the continuous overcoming of paradigms by artists. Evidence of this is the total or partial abandonment of various conceptions, for example: (a) Beauty, (b) Pre-established techniques, (c) The artwork as a unique object, (d) Disciplinary purism & (e) The artwork as an object with exchange value.

But to make any progress in this search—that is, to draw some kind of valid conclusion about the boundaries in Contemporary Art—it seems necessary to discuss the **center-boundary** pair as the basic distinction that articulates this work, as well as the concepts of **demarcation** & **desublimation**.

The object of study should also be defined; therefore, Performance Art has been chosen as the specific discipline to demonstrate the potential limits of Contemporary Art. By developing these points, we will move toward a clarification of what can be considered

Art & with this, we can specify the type of knowledge we should demand of this discipline. Performance Art (of apparent youth, since, in conversation with the Chilean artist Francisco González Castro, he explained to me that its earliest manifestations date back more than a century) allows for a more radical exploration, as it enables the use of extreme resources, such as placing the artist's own body or the bodies of others in highly unusual, provocative & avant-garde situations. Characteristics like these make Performance Art a very suitable activity for addressing the issue of limits in Contemporary Art. Among the multiplicity of performance art actions, the work of the Argentine artist **Oscar Bony** stands out as an early, radical & seminal example, particularly what specialists generally consider his masterpiece, namely, **"The Working-Class Family"**.

This essay posits, at least, two hypotheses:

1. Art is merely one more system embedded within a larger political, economic & social system. Therefore, artistic practice cannot, through its concrete actions, disregard the order of which it is a part, no matter how much one appeals to the artist's creative autonomy.

2. Contemporary Art exhibits what Baudrillard called "*Disillusionment with Art*" Art no longer creates illusions, hopes, or beauty; on the contrary, it often depresses, humiliates & objectifies the subject. It is not validated by any activity that engages (however radical) with an aesthetic notion.

Consequently, we are reaching an extreme that may be the prelude to a boundary, since an activity that does not exalt & frankly often only degrades, the artist &/or the spectator would have no reason to exist.

CENTER VS. LIMIT

According to its definition (RAE, 2015), the pair center-limit constitutes a distinction that contrasts with the idea of: (a) a starting or natural place, (b) an interior point, (c) an intermediate tendency, or (d) the nucleus of a unit, with the concept of limit, that is, with the notion of edge, extreme, or end of a real or imaginary terrain.

Therefore, in the domain of Art & particularly in the Visual Arts, what is central would be the orthodox, the traditional conceptions of beauty (for example, such as "*Splendor of Form*") & the classical ideal

(represented by the traditional French Academy). That is, following a canon of beauty within a disciplinary purism & based on technical mastery.

The limit, on the other hand, would lie in the opposite tension, namely, in the heterodox, in new avant-garde conceptions of expression (where aesthetics is not reduced to the value of classical beauty) & in avant-garde or disruptive and provocative expressions.

Consequently, the following paragraphs should be directed toward explaining how traditional conceptions have been surpassed & expanded, attempting to reach extreme expressions to see if there it is possible to find an ultimate frontier of Art. It seems appropriate, then, to begin with a brilliant & great irreverent figure… Marcel Duchamp.

Provocative, groundbreaking, and innovative, he impacted tradition so profoundly that it is no exaggeration to consider him a figure who marks the beginning of a new era. He is an artist who anticipated Conceptual Art by at least half a century. Duchamp inaugurated a time marked by the indicative gesture, that is to say, by a new conception in which what the artist designates (for example, his "Bicycle Wheel" or "Bottle Rack") becomes, through some process of

transformation, Art, since the artist assigned it a new meaning.

The *ready-made* reveals the artwork as a demarcating device, as the artist did with the celebrated "Fountain" (1917), which changed what was considered worthy of being designated as a work of art and questioned the exhibitionist status of the museum institution. This is because Duchamp proposed a novel reading of what we understood as a work of art; now it must be decontextualized and re-contextualized, exalting the value of the ephemeral and the contemporary. This allowed for a shift in the boundaries of art, or, equivalently, the collapse of old ideas and conceptions about what artistic proposals should be.

OVERCOMING SOME PARADIGMS

With the historical avant-gardes (Fauvism, Expressionism, Cubism, Futurism, Dadaism, and Surrealism), and especially with the revolution sparked by Duchamp, many conceptions of what was considered worthy of being designated as a work of art fell away. Among these, we can cite:

1. The crisis of the object, that is, a (partial) liberation of the object in the artwork, until 1964 when, with Conceptual Art, this crisis became total.

2. There is also, somewhat contradictorily to the previous point, a return to the objects themselves, that is, the transition from representation to presentation, initiated by Braque in 1912 with his first collages. It is a return to reality.

3. In Sculpture, the abandonment of the plinth, where now the work is integrated and interacts with its environment, no longer stands out for a physical preeminence but for the semantic or interpretative possibilities it proposes, which Professor Rodrigo Zúñiga calls the "Fall of the Pedestal".

4. "Aesthetic Sufficiency" (Zúñiga, 2012) dismantles, through the work itself, the idea that value comes from beauty, derived from skillful technical execution.

5. The artistic proposal ceases to be entirely retinal and incorporates a strong conceptual component, given, among other things, by the title, the context, the artist's opinions, and, above all, by the proposed concept.

However important the points above are, our era presents some unique characteristics, and therefore we need a thinker who can shed light on this new state of affairs.

WHAT BAUDRILLARD TEACHES US

Baudrillard's work is extensive and varied; however, two texts seem particularly relevant to the topic: the first is "The Conspiracy of Art: Aesthetic Illusion and Disillusionment," and the second is "Fatal Strategies."

In the first book, as its title suggests, Baudrillard exposes a veritable conspiracy. The author begins by stating that, in contemporary art, the image is in mourning, not because it has succumbed to its fears, but because it "lives in a melancholic destiny of having lost its own ends" (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 11). He offers as an example painting "that has withdrawn from the future to orient itself toward the past" (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 11) through the repeated use

of quotation and other repetitive and worn-out artistic resources.

Baudrillard opposes Duchamp's ready-made with the notion of remake, "A recycling that pretends to be ironic" (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 12) but paradoxically what it achieves, according to the author, is a type of criticism that undermines the foundations of Art from within.

This is particularly evident in cinema, where technological progress promotes a decline in imagination. "Current cinema no longer knows allusion or illusion" (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 14); images are losing specificity. Virtuality draws us into the image, which implies a loss of illusion, or as the thinker calls it, "The fourth dimension of the hyperreal" (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 16). The conclusion is clear: mimetic manifestation closes in on itself, thus shattering all illusion.

Today, the sublime of spectacle prevails, but that is not enough. "Subtlety is needed" (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 17). In our time, power comes from addition, from

accumulation, but for the French thinker, "Strength comes from subtraction; power is born from absence" (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 17). It seems appropriate to ask, what underlying reason explains this state of affairs? Baudrillard answers, "There is an inability to face the symbolic domain of absence and that is why we immerse ourselves in the opposite illusion" (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 17).

Art today, Baudrillard teaches us, no longer believes in its own illusion, and thus falls into a simulation of itself and later, into the frankly grotesque. But he warns, "By volatilizing its subject, the subject of painting ventures toward the confines of its own disappearance" (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 21). This last idea is very fitting for this essay, since it speaks directly to a possible limit of Art, which in this case would not be a boundary between Art and non-Art, but rather an extreme beyond which there would be an abysmal separation.

The author insists on his warning, "Now, Art as a whole is nothing more than the metalanguage of banality. Can this undramatized simulation continue to infinity?" (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 22) The author only outlines the following expression as a response:

"We must not be deceived by the false continuity of Art and its history" (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 22).

As we can see, this author warns us that if art continues down the path of images where there is nothing to see, it will not reach a limit, but rather construct its own destruction. However, Baudrillard proposes a possible solution to the dilemma of the "Irreversibility of Simulation" (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 25). This solution, at least provisionally, would be that each image created "takes something away from the reality of the world" (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 25), where "The highest function of the sign would be to make reality disappear and, at the same time, to mask this disappearance" (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 27).

Consequently, there would be a constant tension between illusion and transparency. In the first idea, various secrets would be found, but to reveal them, a symbolic culture would be needed. In contrast, in the second concept, the hyperreal reigns, the virtual of a screen, consequently, a continuous "filling" that empties all meaning. "The image can no longer imagine the real, since it is the real, it can no longer transcend it or sound it, since it is its virtual reality" (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 28).

Later, Baudrillard presents one of the fundamental theses of his text: "Reality has been expelled from reality and we were left with a hyperreality emptied of meaning" (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 29) and continues, "The end of representation, the end of Aesthetics, the end of the image itself in the superficial virtualization of screens" (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 29) concluding that "Everything indicates that, at the same time that illusion and allusion have been expelled from the real by the force of all our technologies, irony, on the other hand, by virtue of these same technologies, has passed into the things themselves" (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 29). This "ironic revenge" consists, therefore, in the fact that "It is no longer the subject who represents the world, it is the object that refracts the subject and, subtly, through all our technologies, imposes its presence and its random form on him" (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 33).

Finally, Baudrillard asks, "What do modern artists do?" "Fetish objects, but disenchanted fetishes, purely decorative and for temporary use. Objects literally superstitious, in the sense that they no longer correspond to a sublime nature of Art nor respond to a profound belief in it" (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 39). Art has been transformed into an idea of Art; that is to say, according to the author, there

are now only a few ideas and a drought of imaginative proposals. This is why Art now has no new ideas, but merely returns to ideas already used. "Art today" is an irremediable void. In other words, for the French thinker, abstraction reigns today "in the sense that (Art) is traversed much more by the idea than by the imagination of forms and substances" (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 40).

In short, Baudrillard teaches us that Art today has moved from illusion to transparency, but this path is harmful because it is a transparency of the hyperreal, of the lack of meaning due to an epistemic deficiency in constructing and deciphering meanings, reaching the dangerous situation of being at such an extreme point that there is a risk of putting an end to Art.

In the second text, "Fatal Strategies," Baudrillard offers us an analysis of some extreme and ironic strategies, for example: (a) obesity, (b) obscenity, (c) the malignant genius of the social and passion. "Things have found a way to escape the dialectic of meaning, which bored them: it consists in proliferating to infinity" (Baudrillard, 2000, p. 4). This escape leads to the extreme of superabundance.

The universe, the author tells us, is not consensual; it tends toward radical solutions, not synthesis. Something similar is happening to art; as a human activity, it cannot escape the tendency toward extremes, which is self-destructive. Today, "We do not differentiate between the true and the false; we will seek what is falser than the false" (Baudrillard, 2000, p. 4). This statement has profound implications, since "Aesthetic form always presupposes the moral distinction between the beautiful and the ugly" (Baudrillard, 2000, p. 5), something that is being "forgotten" or frankly disregarded in current artistic practice.

In our time, what predominates, according to Baudrillard, is the hyperreal: "Truer than true, more beautiful than beautiful, more real than real" (Baudrillard, 2000, p. 6), which currently seems to be our only passion. "Imagine the true that had absorbed all the energy of the false: simulation appears" (Baudrillard, 2000, p. 6). The author insists, "Simulation is the ecstasy of the real: just look at television: on it, all real events follow one another in a perfectly ecstatic relationship, that is, in the dizzying and stereotypical, unreal and recurrent features that allow their senseless and uninterrupted chaining" (Baudrillard, 2000, p. 6).

There would be, so to speak, an exhaustive and permanent editing of reality.

How can artistic endeavor compete in this state of affairs? It seems that only by inserting itself as an extreme manifestation, that is, hyperreal. But if that is its only way out, doesn't it run the risk of falling into a Fatal Strategy? I see in this last idea a conceptual continuum in Baudrillard's work, namely, a constant warning about the dangerous fate that can befall Art.

The previous point is so important that the author returns to the theme again: "Contemporary Art tries to escape itself, to negate itself, and the more it tries to realize itself in this way, the more it hyperrealizes itself, the more it transcends its empty essence" (Baudrillard, 2000, p. 7). It seems tempting to see hyperreality as a limit of contemporary Art, especially when analyzing the content of a key expression of Baudrillard's: "Art currently only exercises the magic of its disappearance" (Baudrillard, 2000, p. 7).

Another recurring theme in the text is that we live in an era characterized by fear: "A state of emergency declared in anticipation of an earthquake would

unleash such panic that its effects would be far more disastrous than those of the catastrophe itself. We are also living in a state of complete absurdity: in the absence of a real catastrophe, it is advisable to unleash a simulated one" (Baudrillard, 2000, p. 19).

We are in a constant state of alert, but "Terrorism is nothing more than the executioner of a system that, in turn, seeks simultaneously and contradictorily both total anonymity and the responsibility of each one of us" (Baudrillard, 2000, p. 33). Later, he points out, "Terrorism must be conceived as a utopian act that violently proclaims an impossible change from the outset, thereby verifying to the extreme a banal situation: our own" (Baudrillard, 2000, p. 47). It is as if "Man were helpless, naked and insecure in the face of monsters" (Baudrillard, 2000, p. 127).

Art, too, could not escape fear; it expresses and experiences it in an extreme way, in its multiple manifestations, but especially in an avant-garde and radical manifestation known as performance, of which Oscar Bony is a great representative.

BONY, A PIONEER.

Oscar Rubén Bony (1941-2002) was an Argentine avant-garde artist, painter, and photographer. He presented his first solo exhibition, "Anatomías" (Anatomies), in 1964. Two years later, he offered "Fuera de las formas del cine" (Beyond the Forms of Cinema), a project consisting of four short films shot on 16mm (black and white and silent).

All of Bony's work is marked by a great deal of cynicism. For example, in 1967 he presented "Sesenta metros cuadrados y su información" (Sixty Square Meters and Its Information), an installation that consisted of displaying the image of a section of woven wire that also covered the floor, accompanied by a recorded voice describing what was seen in extreme detail. This is a typical irony for Bony, since the excess of information places the viewer in a position of doubt, the opposite of what is sought by providing data.

Bony presented a series of installations (in this he was also a pioneer) that scandalized Argentine public

morality at a time when that society was extremely conservative and rigid. In 1968 he presented his masterpiece, which would bring him continental fame: "The Working-Class Family." After the scandal it provoked and the artistic crisis it unleashed, the artist did not exhibit for ten years.

THE WORKING-CLASS FAMILY

In the celebrated month of May 1968, at the Di Tella Institute (a legendary Buenos Aires cultural center that hosted numerous avant-garde exhibitions and works from its founding in 1958 until its closure in 1970), Oscar Bony presented his seminal work, "The Working-Class Family."

Over time, Bony's proposal would be classified as one of the first art actions in Latin America. This performance was considered subversive to the point of being shut down shortly afterward by the de facto government of Juan Carlos Onganía (1966-1970).
The proposal consisted of a live performance (that is, moving from representation to presentation) of the Rodríguez family, made up of the father, mother, and son, all seated on a platform atop a black plinth.

Bony speaks to us with his sharp cynicism about the Peronist ideal, since if we look closely at the photograph, we can appreciate a traditional arrangement, where the head of the household is at the top and the mother near the son, all well-dressed and adorned with numerous accessories. The boy has books, the father is smoking and wearing an expensive watch, the mother wears a pearl necklace and a beautiful dress. Herein lies the first discovery: a working-class family that exists only in the discourse of the political activism of the time. What Bony created was an ironic image of the American dream, Argentine-style.

Despite its apparent simplicity and formal conservatism, the work's meaning is decidedly subversive. To understand the true significance of the piece, it's worth noting that the work is completed with a small sign (attached to the plinth) containing the personal details of the family head: "Luis Ricardo Rodríguez, a die maker by trade, receives double his usual earnings for remaining on display with his wife and son during the exhibition" (Zúñiga, 2012, p. 11).

The work in question is a performance piece belonging to the earliest Latin American experimental art. As has been said, it is a formally simple yet deceptive

proposition, as it allows for multiple interpretations and proposes an expansion of the boundaries of art, but it can also impose some limitations. Such was and has been its international impact that "The Working-Class Family," initially closed, was recreated in 2000 at the Proa Foundation in Argentina and in locations as far away as Slovenia and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

It should also be said, in an effort to find the displacement of the boundaries of Art and based on the text "Aesthetics of Demarcation: Essay on Art at the Limits of Art" by Professor Rodrigo Zúñiga, that there is a common thread between Duchamp and Bony, which is manifested or evidenced in an Aesthetics of Demarcation, that is, a return to things through the indicative and transformative gesture of the artist, which may seem minimal (especially under the purely retinal prism) but which is actually radical and definitive.

The work is the result of a process of desublimation (a term Professor Zúñiga uses as the opposite of Freudian sublimation), namely, a general strategy that moves from representation to presentation, "forgetting" all illusion. This movement toward the things themselves implies a confrontation, that is to

say, a limit experience in an extreme territory of artistic practice. We are in the presence of what has been called an "Aesthetics of Demarcation" (Zúñiga, 2012, p. 8), which, among other things, questions the exhibition component of art.

"The Working-Class Family" represented a groundbreaking proposal in the Argentine context, but the important thing is not on the anecdotal or scandalous level (let us remember that the work was closed by the military government of Onganía) but on the theoretical level, among other things as a limit of desublimation (people reduced to objects of aesthetic contemplation) which also (and according to Zúñiga) occurs with a very singular characteristic, "Exhibiting the impotence of the avant-garde project by staging that limit, accumulating in passing the most extreme tensions" (Zúñiga, 2012, p. 14) especially when considering the cynicism of the strategy (what allows the work to be put on) which consists, in nothing less, than the signing of a work contract with the head of the Rodríguez family.

A groundbreaking work with legal status, this paradox, which Bony himself referred to as his "artistic suicide" (Zúñiga, 2012, p. 15), ironically exposes the use of a last resort in the artist's creation. And not

only for him, it also represented such a radical appeal for many that even today some theorists see it as an initial manifestation of a terminal crisis.

It seems pertinent to ask: Where does this last resort reside? In the fact that people are exhibited as if in a zoo, a humiliating act for the Rodríguez family, for Bony, and for each of the spectators. The body (once deified) transformed into an object (something that clearly differentiates Duchamp's "Fountain" from Bony's "The Working-Class Family"), Art producing such a rupture that it degrades and strips every one of their dignities.

Another limit that this work reveals is the so-called "exhibition status of Art." Can everything be put on display? Or more specifically, are there exceptions when it comes to human beings? By answering affirmatively to this last question, we would have, at least preliminarily, a limit in current art.

Several decades later, we have returned to this gesture: "Cynic and stark—are there more appreciated adjectives in contemporary art? Offensive, absurd, yet this work continues to pose a challenge to our ethical and aesthetic reflection" (Zúñiga, 2012, p. 12). We have already indicated that the cynical strategy of

the work is a work contract, but what is its mechanism, or rather, what activates the meanings? Perhaps it is "the stoic amateur passivity" (Zúñiga, 2012, p. 13) with which the members of the Rodríguez family pose, and how "a human group is reduced to the function of an aesthetic accessory. The circumstance of the payment of fees added, of course, a precise touch of degradation and perversity, as if it were a gesture of exquisite humiliation in the name of art" and "It exhibits its own provocation as a mode of impotence" (Zúñiga, 2012, pp. 13-14).

We are witnessing "Avant-garde and spectacle, between rupture and exhibitionism. Two opposing modalities of aesthetic politics" (Zúñiga, 2012, p. 14). "Art as a fatal passion and creation as a form of perpetuation" (Zúñiga, 2012, p. 15). The performance "The Working-Class Family" and, in general, all of Bony's work "directs a radical questioning of the rupture logic of avant-garde art, by ironically exposing what would be its last resort" (Zúñiga, 2012, p. 15).

This is a "terminal crisis" (Zúñiga, 2012, p. 17). Can everything be exhibited in the name of art? Taking refuge in the avant-garde and with a dangerous cynicism. Under a collective exhibition (as was the case with Bony), can gratuitous provocations be

carried out? Stripping dignity from poverty and, worse still, from those who accept being objectified for a wage. These questions, as relevant today as they were yesterday, make Bony's proposal highly pertinent, unless some mistakenly believe that "Art enjoys a special immunity" (Zúñiga, 2012, p. 18).

There are many positions regarding the above questions, but it seems appropriate to conclude by saying, "In my opinion, what Bony does is precisely question the new myth of the groundbreaking artist, dealing it a very hard blow: not only by showing the temptations and demons of a new kind with which he must deal, but also by dialectically relating his avant-garde genealogy to exhibitionist identification and to the usurpation of the rupture by a mere effect-driven criterion" (Zúñiga, 2012, pp. 34 and 35)

la familia obrera

1968
Obra de Oscar Bony

2000
Obra de la desocupación

CONCLUSIONS:

1. Not everything can be Art; therefore, a line or boundary (even a blurred one) must be drawn to separate artistic endeavor from that which is not. If everything could be a work of art, there would be no specificity in the knowledge that can be demanded of Art.

2. If we consider Baudrillard's work, on the one hand, one might think that the loss of illusion and allusion places Art in an extreme, almost terminal, situation. On the other hand, the cultural debasement that comes from not using a symbolic language (especially of a

visual nature) causes artistic endeavor to become trapped in an increasingly empty offering.

3. Today, Art generally operates by addition, that is to say, more transgression, more rupture, more spectacle, while expressive power—according to Baudrillard—lies in subtraction, since there the sign plays a key and ennobling role.

4. Art generates its own destruction - according to Baudrillard - by submitting to the dictatorship of "Fatal Strategies", it becomes radicalized, becomes hyperreal, is tinged with fear, and is emptied of its initial meaning.

5. Consequently, a limit of Contemporary Art could be found in those strategies that are self-destructive. This should be a point of no return, since continuing down this path would eliminate artistic practice. That is to say, appealing to an instinct for self-preservation, artists should refrain from using these counterproductive resources if they wish to continue being considered as such.

6. By focusing on a concrete practice, such as performance art, and specifically on Bony's work "The Working-Class Family," we can identify other potential

limits (drawing on Professor Zúñiga's text), such as the existence of ethical limits in the "use" of human beings as "objects" of art:

a. Humiliation, degradation, or impairment of people and animals.

b. Exhibiting people or animals as things.

c. Causing physical or moral harm.

d. Infringing upon basic human rights.

e. Violating laws and, to a lesser extent, customs.

These limits must be acknowledged by artists and should therefore constitute an unacceptable practice in Art.

7. Finally, have we reached a limit in Art by encountering a massive loss of dignity? It is an open question, which could only be answered (paradoxically) with other questions: What would be the point of humiliating each other? Who benefits? Or does Art truly expand with this type of practice? It seems that when we encounter a "limit," more questions arise above all else, but there is at least one certainty: **Not everything can be done in the name of Art**.

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