

Aesthetics in an Expanded Field:

Towards a Performative Model of Art, Experience and Knowledge

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Abstract (Summary)

This dissertation is a recasting of the concept of the aesthetic which seeks to reinstate "the full etymological range of the Greek $\alpha \iota \sigma$ [straight theta] $\eta \sigma$ [straight theta] $\alpha \iota$ –to perceive, sense, feel," which "is analogous with 'sensibility,' the immediate physiological contact with the world through intuition (*Anschauung*)" (Scherer, 1995). This is achieved by recasting the aesthetic as a second order performative phenomenon--that which is illocutionary in any sensory experience, social interaction or utterance (Austin, 1962, Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). With the aesthetic understood as such, art becomes a way of knowing and doing which may function analogically relative to all other facets of human experience and endeavor. The aesthetic--the illocutionary--may be understood as the motive force infusing all socio-cultural relations and productions.

Chapter two defines the performative in the context of photography; a visual medium which may be analogically compared to the arts in general. Chapters three and four extend the performative conception to classroom teaching specifically and education generally. We do not merely teach young people what it means to be members of our society, we engage in an endless performative process--an aesthetic process--of defining that society and identifying the consequences of citizenship. The classroom is therefore a *societas* (Oakeshott 1975) in miniature, in which students are engaged in research; the aesthetically fueled relations which form our socio-cultural conventions and knowledge (Goodman, 1976, 1978, Ingram, 1995, Kuhn, 1970, Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, Rorty, 1989). Chapter three draws its analogy between art production and scientific research and extends that analogy to the studio art classroom.

Chapter four imagines an educational apparatus which has shifted its theoretical base from the currently dominant "forms of knowledge" paradigm (Hirst, 1974) to a poststructural, relational, performative model. Existing art education paradigms--DBAE (Clark, Day and Greer, 1987) for example--are as rooted in the forms of knowledge theory as any other academic discipline and would be altered as fundamentally as any other discipline under such a paradigm shift. Again, art production and consumption are posed analogically to the production of knowledge and the construction of social conventions and relations.

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