

# **A CRITIQUE OF MODERATE FORMALISM**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Moderate formalism is a view that all artworks which have aesthetic properties have formal aesthetic properties, and some but not all of those works also have non-formal aesthetic properties. Nick Zangwill develops this view in his *Metaphysics of Beauty* after having argued against its alternatives – extreme formalism and anti-formalism. This paper reviews his arguments against the rivals of moderate formalism, and argues that the rejection of anti-formalism is unjustified. Zangwill does not succeed in proving that the broadly determined (context-determined) properties of artworks are in some cases irrelevant to their aesthetic properties – and following that, interpretation and assessment. A historical argument presented here shows how aesthetic properties of every work must supervene partially on this work's contextual properties. In particular, this disproves Zangwill's claim that epistemological matters are unessential in determining the artwork's properties, and exposes some problems his account has with explaining relations between non-aesthetic and aesthetic properties.

## **KEYWORDS**

properties, moderate formalism, history, epistemology

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## 1.

Moderate formalism, a view developed by Nick Zangwill in his *Metaphysics of Beauty*, states roughly that all works of art have aesthetic properties determined by the physical features of the artefact that instantiates them, and some (but not all) also have aesthetic properties determined in part by the history and the context of their creation. I discuss the second of those claims, arguing that the contextual properties are in fact vital to all, not just some artworks.

Zangwill writes that an object ‘has the aesthetic property in virtue of the conjunction of non-aesthetic properties’<sup>1</sup> – or, as he says elsewhere, aesthetic properties supervene on non-aesthetic ones (43f.). But what kinds of properties are included in the above-mentioned conjunction? Zangwill considers two possibilities – the intrinsic properties of the artwork itself, and the properties it has in virtue of standing in certain relations to other objects and the history of its production (56f.). Sharpening the distinction, he gives a definition of the ‘narrow’ and ‘broad’ non-aesthetic properties:

the word ‘narrow’ includes both sensory properties, nonrelational physical properties, and also any dispositions to provoke responses that might be thought to be partly constitutive of aesthetic properties. The word ‘broad’ covers anything else.

Later Zangwill includes internal relations between parts (e.g. rhyme or contrast) in the narrow properties as well. The aesthetic properties supervene on the non-aesthetic as follows: the conjunction of narrow non-aesthetic properties entirely determines the formal aesthetic properties, and the conjunction of the broad non-aesthetic properties partially determines the non-formal aesthetic properties. Thus there can be two kinds of aesthetic properties: formal and non-formal. Zangwill holds that the former are loosely comparable to Kant’s free, and the

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<sup>1</sup> N. Zangwill, *The Metaphysics of Beauty*, New York 2001, pp. 55-56. All following bracketed and otherwise unreferenced page numbers refer to this book.

latter to dependent beauty.<sup>2</sup> An example might clarify the above distinction: El Greco's *View of Toledo* has the following physical properties: sharp colour contrast, blurred contours and elongated shapes, as well as the following relational properties: not accurately depicting the contemporary city of Toledo and being created in the late 16<sup>th</sup> Century' Spain. The former narrowly determine formal aesthetic property of being mysterious, and together with the latter they broadly determine the non-formal aesthetic property of e.g. being disturbing.

The question now is: are there really these two kinds of aesthetic properties? It seems undeniable that all works of art have both narrow and broad non-aesthetic properties, but can they both give rise to aesthetic properties? This question is of vital importance – if there were no non-formal aesthetic properties, then the history of production, the cultural context, representative qualities, etc. of a work would all be irrelevant to its aesthetic assessment; or if there were no formal ones, colour and internal structure alone would be of no aesthetic importance. Extreme formalism is the view that all aesthetic properties are formal; and anti-formalism is the view that all aesthetic properties are non-formal (58). Extreme formalists would naturally agree that an object has both narrow and broad non-aesthetic properties, but deny that there are any broadly determined aesthetic properties. Anti-formalists, on the other hand, would deny that any aesthetic properties are determined solely by narrow non-aesthetic ones. Moderate formalism attempts to stand in between:

*Moderate formalism* is the view that while *some* aesthetic properties of a work of art are formal, others are not (...) but (...) there are *some* works of art that *only* have formal aesthetic properties. (59)

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<sup>2</sup> Only loosely, however. Non-formal properties need not involve the concept of an end or purpose (60) – a representative painting is beautiful not *because* it represents something, but *as* a representation; similarly, contextual works do not need any extra-aesthetic purpose, their non-formal properties are broadly determined just by standing in some relation to other works. The definition of being determined by broad non-aesthetic properties does not imply anything of this sort, though, so I will disregard Zangwill's invoking of Kant.

On one hand, then, there are works like El Greco's *The View of Toledo*, and on the other – Kandinsky's *Composition VII* or Bach's *Fugue in E BWV 854*. Aesthetic properties of the former are based on its physical properties (i.e. colour contrasts, vertical composition) and the fact that it is a representational painting, created at a certain time and place, etc. (i.e., it is disturbing *as a depiction of Toledo created in 16<sup>th</sup> C. Spain*).<sup>3</sup> Abstract paintings or absolute music, on the other hand, have no broad non-aesthetic properties that could influence the aesthetic judgement: Bach's fugues are elegant, etc. only in virtue of their perfect structure, regardless of where, when, or by whom they were created, save the fact that they are not representational at all.

## 2.

Zangwill tries to give his account some plausibility by criticising the alternatives – extreme formalism and anti-formalism. I reconstruct his arguments briefly, partially because similar arguments can be used to criticise moderate formalism, and partially to soften up his conclusions, showing that they are not as inevitable as they might seem.

Zangwill's strategy to disprove extreme formalism is simply to falsify it with examples of works of art that uncontroversially have non-formal aesthetic properties. Firstly, it seems simply false to say that representational properties of paintings are irrelevant to their aesthetic value, as surely a painting can be better or worse depending on how well it depicts its subject.

Secondly, most representational paintings operate with an illusion of depth – they appear to be three-dimensional, although they are in fact flat (Zangwill calls this a “plastic property” of painting). Surely there must be some cultural or historical conventions that determine our viewing of a flat picture as having depth, and indeed the history of art knows several different types of perspective, each one being thought to be the ‘natural one’ at some

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<sup>3</sup> The notion of ‘being beautiful as’ is taken from the anti-formalists, and specifically from K. Walton, *Categories of Art* [in:] *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 79, No. 3. (Jul., 1970).

point in time.<sup>4</sup> To argue that three-dimensional properties are narrowly determined by what is on the canvas alone, would either beg the question against the variety of ways to represent perspective, or require us to broaden the definition of formal properties to include plastic properties.

Finally, in the case of architecture, the function of the building partially determines correct aesthetic judgements about it. A mosque can be judged beautiful, but if the same structure was to be a post office, it is quite likely that it would not be assessed along the same lines. It is not ‘beautiful *and* functions well (non-aesthetically) as a mosque, but [it is beautiful partially] because the building aesthetically expresses or articulates the religious function of a mosque’ (68). In such cases the object's beauty depends on the category it belongs to – the artwork here is not just beautiful *simpliciter*, but only beautiful *as a member of a category* (Walton 1970). Although it is possible to make an aesthetic judgement on the basis of the narrow properties of the building without taking its function into account (e.g. when the function is unknown to the observer; this would be treating it as an abstract sculpture), such a judgement would be at best incomplete.

To undermine anti-formalism, Zangwill criticises the arguments supporting it. Two of the seven arguments that he discusses and dismisses with the charge of irrelevance (104-106) seem central to his case .

First, judging an artwork seems impossible without basing on one's knowledge of other works – this knowledge is always present and thus it seems that every aesthetic judgement is partially based on the relations between the object judged and other works. Zangwill's response is that indeed one's judgement may rely on one's broader knowledge, but this has nothing to do with an object actually *having* any determined kind of properties, only with one's *knowledge* of these properties. Zangwill builds the following analogy: one can use Geiger counters to determine whether an object has the property of being radioactive; one has

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<sup>4</sup> see E. Panofsky, *Perspective as symbolic form*, Boston 1993.

to know about radioactivity and Geiger counters to do that, but this does not mean that using a Geiger counter on an object is part of what it is to have the property of being radioactive. Thus the knowledge of other works seems to be an epistemological matter that tells nothing about the metaphysical nature of the properties in question, but only about how we come to know about them. I find this solution deeply unsatisfactory and will discuss it in the following sections.

Second, to judge an artwork accurately one has to know whether it has representational or contextual content or not (even if only to be sure that it does not), and this means knowing about the history of its production. In fact non-representational and non-contextual works seem to have a negative non-formal property of *lacking non-formal aesthetic properties*. Zangwill's counterargument is to dismiss if not the very possibility of negative properties, then their relevance to the matter, for anti-formalists claim that aesthetic judgements are to be dependent on *positive* representational or contextual properties. And if this was the case, the argument can again be reduced to the irrelevant epistemological point that in order to be able to give an aesthetic judgement one has to know whether the object is (non)representational or (non)contextual, which is not the same as the object itself having a property of being (non)representational or (non)contextual.

This dismissal seems too quick. I can see at least two accounts on which the supposedly negative properties become important. It is confirmed by numerous avant-garde programmes<sup>5</sup>, that being abstract can be thought of as not just removing the representational properties from the work (making it have a negative property of not-representing), but emancipating its actual non-representational properties (making it have a positive property of being clear and undistorted by representation). Secondly, Arthur Danto gave an interesting account of how 'negative' properties can historically become aesthetically relevant. For example, with the rise of representational expressivism the property 'is expressive' became definitional of some

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. S. I. Witkiewicz, op. cit. The idea can be traced back to Hegel.

works, but since it was the only property that differentiated it from earlier art, 'is not expressive' turned relevant for definitions of other works. There seems to be no reason to think that it should be different for representation – it can be aesthetically relevant for expressive works if they are representational (as in fauvism) or not (abstract expressionism).<sup>6</sup>

Further on, Zangwill attempts to show that not all aesthetic judgements depend on non-formal properties by discussing Walton's *guernicas* example, in which a culture, which knows no other works of art but various three-dimensional and extremely dynamic versions of Picasso's *Guernica*, judges the flat *Guernica*, which we would describe as violent and dynamic, as dull and static. Zangwill gives his own real example of Minoan and Mycenaean seals (90-96) and argues that Walton's view has odd consequences – we cannot compare items from different categories, i.e. we cannot say whether the Minoan seal is more dynamic than the Mycenaean seal, only that it is more dynamic *as a* Minoan or *as a* Mycenaean seal. However, as Zangwill notes, there can be nothing easier than broadening the categories and judging all Minoan *and* Mycenaean art as belonging to the same category of prehistoric Greek art, thus providing grounds for comparison. I believe that such an answer is in fact sufficient, and the arguments Zangwill uses against it are inconclusive. He first writes that such a broader category would be somewhat mysterious, since the subject would apply it subconsciously, and we have no independent reason to believe that such a subconscious application of categories is taking place. I do not see why using broader categories must be subconscious. It seems perfectly acceptable that we should apply such categories consciously, and surely the category 'prehistoric Greek art' is hardly mysterious. But even if this were true, I cannot see an independent reason to disbelieve the application of such subconscious categories either. In fact, there seem to be a number of subconscious mechanisms involved in

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<sup>6</sup> A. Danto, *The Artworld*, [in:] *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 61, No. 19, American Philosophical Association Eastern Division Sixty-First Annual Meeting. (Oct. 15, 1964), pp. 582-584.

aesthetic judgements and people are often not aware, for example, why exactly they find certain things dynamic.

Zangwill's second claim is that aesthetic properties are gradated, i.e. an artwork can be more or less elegant. Thus when we judge the Minoan seal to be dynamic, our judgements do not have to involve categories – i.e. the Minoan seal may be dynamic *as a Minoan seal*, but not very dynamic when considered by itself, and thus we can make category-neutral aesthetic judgements. But what are the universal criteria for judging that a certain work is dynamic *per se*? There are no independent reasons to believe that there are universal (i.e. category-neutral) criteria for judging the degree to which artworks are dynamic any more than there were for category-specific ones. In fact, I believe that a very simple answer to this puzzle can be given on Walton's account: what seems to be a category-neutral judgement is in fact embedded in an even broader category of all the works that the judging subject knows. One does not have to be aware that one judges a work relative to all other works one knows, but surely *Guernica* is judged differently in both our culture and other cultures precisely because we place it in the context of all the art we know and they – all the *guernicas* they know. This stands in opposition to the first of the reconstructed arguments against anti-formalism by Zangwill and is one of the reasons to deny it.

### 3.

Zangwill claims that the perceiver's knowledge of the historical background of the work or his own background are irrelevant to whether an object actually possesses certain properties. In other words, an object does not change its properties relative to the perceiver's knowledge.<sup>7</sup> Walton, on the other hand, claimed that the epistemological position of the

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<sup>7</sup> Although by maintaining his view Zangwill escapes 'relativism', other options are available to anti-formalists who want to avoid it when judging art and other social phenomena, e.g. J. Kmita, *Towards a cultural relativism "with a small 'r'"* [in:] *Poznań Studies in the Philosophy of the Sciences and the Humanities, Vol. 47*, Poznań



perceiver does influence his aesthetic judgements – one has to learn what properties a given artwork was supposed to have and recognise them to properly appreciate the work.<sup>8</sup> But this implies that since the formal properties supervene on the object's physical properties, if the judgement is not history-dependent, these formal properties have to supervene on the same physical properties at all times. However, I think there is a lot of evidence against this claim – historically people do change their judgements on the aesthetic qualities of some works, and not just locally so. For example, Vasari and Petrarca despised the whole of medieval art and the art of the Northern Renaissance, by this expressing the general change in the way certain physical properties of the works were perceived – e.g. preference for idealistic representation, classical composition, geometrical perspective and bright colours, over naturalistic representation, allegorical composition and perspective, and allegorical or toned down colours – which in turn gave rise to differences in the supervening aesthetic properties. But since on Zangwill's account the same artwork cannot change its aesthetic properties depending on how people view it, either the aesthetic property of being, say, elegant, supervenes on all of the above mentioned physical properties, or just some of them. Thus either the Italian Renaissance critics somehow failed to see that relation holding for medieval and Northern artworks or the latter were not elegant at all. One could naturally argue that Vasari may have simply been wrong or blind to the merits of medieval art, but such an explanation would require one to hold that virtually all his contemporaries were wrong as well and that for hundreds of years most people misjudged a style with regards to its properties. Since people kept changing their views on past art rather often, a moderate formalist would need to hold that for most of history most people were wrong about most works – a somewhat revisionary thesis considering that there is a simple and quite intuitive alternative: admit that some

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1996, pp. 541-614; Sadly, this essay cannot accommodate their reconstruction.

<sup>8</sup> K. Walton, *op. cit.*, pp. 337-338.

change, perhaps only a change in the general perception of art, not art itself, has actually taken place.

So how exactly are the historical and cultural properties of art aesthetically relevant? Firstly, the same aesthetic property can supervene on one set of non-aesthetic properties at one time and another set at another time (or, to avoid unnecessary metaphysics – the criteria for applying aesthetic predicates vary with time). For example, the aesthetic property of being consonant supervenes on certain acoustic features of the sounds produced – the relations between pitches. In the 16<sup>th</sup> Century the set of intervals and harmonies considered consonant (call it A) was relatively narrow, while by the 19<sup>th</sup> Century it (B) was enlarged by a number of intervals and harmonies earlier considered dissonant. Thus the intersection of A and B (and since A is a subset of B – all of A and the part of B which intersects with A) contains intervals which are consonant at either time, but the part of B which does not intersect with A contains intervals which are consonant only in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Therefore it seems that music featuring intervals included in the remaining part of B is consonant later, but not earlier, e.g. Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* played at the court of Elisabeth I would not gather much applause. But for a moderate formalist 'being consonant' must supervene on the same set of non-aesthetic properties at all times, that is – either Wagner's audience or the Tudors were wrong. It could be argued that the set was always broad, but it took some time before people learned to appreciate it (which would stress the distinction between the aesthetic and epistemological judgements). But in other cases similar sets seem to shrink – an aesthetic property of being colourful supervened on a much narrower set of colours and relations between them at Rubens' time than it does now, e.g. a Rubens is not considered particularly colourful nowadays, but a Matisse would have been outrageously colourful in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. Or it may happen that two works will have the same aesthetic property supervening on completely different sets of physical properties, e.g. Romanesque figurative sculpture's being mysterious

or sublime supervened on slightly unnatural symbolic body proportions, while in Renaissance – on idealised natural proportions.<sup>9</sup> All this suggests that the base of supervenience of one and the same aesthetic property can change over time, in which case the knowledge of the history of production of every single work is relevant to its assessment.

Importantly, it is not only the case that a single aesthetic property can supervene on two or more sets of non-aesthetic properties – this would be hardly problematic, as surely a non-history-relative property such as 'having the sum of 12' can supervene on an infinitely many sets of numbers. But aesthetic properties are more than that – their bases of supervenience *change*, i.e. 'being elegant' ( $\alpha$ ) may supervene on a set of formal properties A at one time but not at another. Both '6 + 6' and '5+7' have 12 as their sum, but it is never the case that once 12 starts supervening on '5 + 7' it stops supervening on '6 + 6'; however, once  $\alpha$  started supervening on bright colours and geometric perspective in the Renaissance, it stopped supervening on dark colours and allegorical perspective. This suggests that either the relation between aesthetic and non-aesthetic properties is not that of supervenience, or that it is history relative: we should admit that  $\alpha$  supervenes on more than just the formal properties, and talk not about 'being elegant' *simpliciter*, but 'being elegant as a Renaissance painting'.

Secondly, the same set of non-formal properties can give rise to different; possibly even mutually exclusive aesthetic properties at different times. For example, Penderecki's *St Luke Passion* uses the cluster and microtonal techniques to narrowly determine the properties of being, again, mysterious and sublime. But if the same music were composed by Clemens non Papa, arguably his contemporaries would rather hold it to be boisterous and terrifying – which would be hardly compatible. A variation of this case is even more striking – most of the

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<sup>9</sup> A great Art History description of this issue was presented by Panofsky in his analyses of different kinds of perspective, body proportions, iconography, etc. used at different times. Panofsky himself was very careful not to imply that there is an aesthetic (and not just artistic) change involved here, but in the light of the current discussion his examples may serve to back my view.

avant-garde works, even as ‘classical’ now as abstract painting, have physical properties we consider to determine aesthetic properties, but which would not have been seen as such if created and seen two hundreds years ago, i.e., the same set of physical properties would give rise to different sets of aesthetic properties in the year 2000 and 1800, and the latter set would be empty.<sup>10</sup> It seems now that the aesthetic properties which arise from a given set of physical properties are contingent on when the work was produced and when it is perceived. But for moderate formalists this is unacceptable, as some aesthetic properties supervene on narrow non-aesthetic ones independently of historical properties – and if so, the same set of narrow non-aesthetic properties should give rise to the same set of aesthetic properties at all times. Once again, it seems that either the relation is not that of supervenience (since the same supervenience base should always give rise to the same property), or the supervenience bases actually differ – and since they include only the same formal properties, they must differ in the non-formal, historical properties.

Finally, art is full of clearly history-dependent processes of changing relations between aesthetic and non-aesthetic properties.<sup>11</sup> Consider the following simplified example: until the 19<sup>th</sup> Century an aesthetic property, elegance ( $\alpha$ ), supervenes on a set of non-aesthetic properties: toned down colours (A), complication (B) and being representational (C). With impressionism and the emancipation of bright colours the base of supervenience for  $\alpha$  changes slightly, it is now the set  $\{\neg A, B, C\}$ . Further, Fauvism simplifies the composition to attain maximum expression, thus the set changes to  $\{\neg A, \neg B, C\}$ , and abstract art finally brings  $\alpha$  to

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<sup>10</sup> Physical properties which were not thought to give rise to aesthetic properties once but are now, e.g. the background free brushwork of Titian’s or Velasquez paintings, are discussed by R. Wollheim, op. cit., pp. 104-5.

<sup>11</sup> The following example may be treated as a variation on Walton’s theory of categories in art; cf. K. Walton, op. cit.; and Levinson’s theory of historical change in art, cf. J. Levinson, *Defining art historically*, [in:] British Journal of Aesthetics, Vol. 19, No 3, pp. 232-250; see also A. Danto, *The Artworld*, op. cit.

supervene on  $\{\neg A, \neg B, \neg C\}$ .<sup>12</sup> In fact, all combinations of these three non-aesthetic properties can give rise to  $\alpha$ .<sup>13</sup> Clearly, in this case the relations between the physical and aesthetic properties of the work are changing quite drastically, and the change is allied with the paradigm in which the work is created. In other words, the aesthetic property is relative to the time of the work's creation – it is a non-formal property. To hold otherwise would be to agree that the aesthetic property supervenes on an inconsistent set of physical properties, which threatens Zangwill with a relativism he wants to avoid.

This lends even more power to my above claim that aesthetic properties are not like 'having 12 as a sum', simply multiply realisable, satisfied by a long disjunction of supervenience bases. If  $\alpha$  can supervene both on  $\{A, B, C\}$  and  $\{\neg A, \neg B, \neg C\}$ , such characterisation would become trivial: one could always come up with some mad disjunctive account that gets the answer right without referring to the context, but the moral is that the possibility of such disjunctive accounts can be discarded.

#### 4.

In the light of the above, I can return to the problem of the supposed aesthetic irrelevance of epistemological matters. Zangwill's claim seems just wrong – the aesthetic properties of an object are partially constructed by the way in which they are perceived and depend on their historical or cultural background.<sup>14</sup> It is Zangwill's analogy with the Geiger counter that is irrelevant – aesthetic properties are not like the property of radioactivity and are not assessed by the same means, i.e. by objective, human-independent measuring devices.

<sup>12</sup> Think of Caravaggio's *Crucifixion of St Peter*, Monet's *Saint-Lazare Station*, Matisse's *The Desert* and Malevich's *Black Square*.

<sup>13</sup> E.g.  $\{A, \neg B, C\}$  – Fuseli's *Silence*,  $\{A, B, \neg C\}$  – Pollock's *Lavender Mist Number 1*,  $\{\neg A, B, \neg C\}$  – Kandinsky's *Circles in a circle*,  $\{A, \neg B, \neg C\}$  – Mondrian's *Pier and Ocean*.

<sup>14</sup> As Wollheim put it: 'a clear separation cannot be made of fact and interpretation. For of many of the facts of art, it is required that they are interpreted in a certain way', op. cit., p. 106.

An Aesthetic-Geiger counter would have to be re-calibrated with every changing style and epoch, and the only justification possible for such re-calibrations would be found in the cultural and historical background that artists and critics stem from. Effectively, any accurate readings of such a counter would only be possible if the ‘tested’ artwork’s non-formal aesthetic properties were taken into account.

Although this approach does not disprove moderate formalism altogether, it forces it to assume a very implausible position – if any given work’s broad non-aesthetic properties were irrelevant to its aesthetic properties, then, to prevent the inconsistency arising from different interpretations of the non-aesthetic-aesthetic relations, one would have to claim that most art perceivers throughout history were wrong. Moreover, one would have no guarantee that today’s interpretations were the correct ones. Although, largely thanks to the work of such art historians as Alois Riegl, people are now more inclined to acknowledge the value of physical properties which were not thought to determine aesthetic properties when the artworks were produced (e.g. early Christian art), or even truly appreciate all past works once thought not to have any aesthetic properties (unlike Vasari’s interpretations of medieval art), one cannot be sure that this approach is correct either, because there may still be some relevant properties simply unknown to the present critics. In fact, even if the set of physical properties thought to determine aesthetic properties (call it A) contained the set of all those that actually do (B), it would still not be enough – they would have to be identical, as otherwise one could not distinguish between an objectively true and false aesthetic judgement, i.e. a judgement issued based on the properties included in the intersection of A and B, in which case it would be true, would be indistinguishable from the false ones based on the properties included in the part of A that is not B. Thus the moderate formalist is compelled to say that the objective relations between the physical and formal properties are inaccessible to humans. This seems hugely revisionary, especially since a more intelligible explanation would be that these relations are

historically (and culturally) relative, and thus a full interpretation of an artwork has to include an account on its broadly determined non-formal properties.<sup>15</sup>

Moderate formalism is wrong in claiming that there are works that only have formal aesthetic properties. An analysis of the relations between the aesthetic and non-aesthetic properties suggests that there is no fixed, objective bond assigning a given set of physical properties that determines only one aesthetic property – the relation is rather relative to the historical and cultural background in which the work is created and perceived. I hope to have shown that the epistemological issues related to artwork's cognition should influence aesthetic judgements – aesthetic properties are not objective properties of artworks themselves, but are partially constructed by the perceivers. Consequently, we should reject moderate formalism as a valid theory of aesthetic properties of artworks.

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<sup>15</sup> The additional virtue of this approach is that it explains how an original or anachronistic character of a work can be understood – a work that claims to have some aesthetic property, claims to have it in virtue of possessing a set of physical properties, while at the time that it is created, a different set of physical properties is realising this aesthetic property. If the set of properties has determined the aesthetic property before, it is anachronistic, if it will determine it in the future, it is innovative.

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