

ON THE “NATURALIST” CRITIQUE OF CLEMENT GREENBERG *VIDE* KANT: A MISTAKEN & HANDED-DOWN CRITIQUE

ABSTRACT: According to commentators like Rosalind Krauss, Briony Fer, Caroline Jones, and Michael Fried, Clement Greenberg’s formalist/positivist device of “medium-specificity” debars errant affective aesthetic experiences that are embodied; despite significant differences in how these theorists arrive at this conclusion, one shared point of emphasis is Greenberg’s inheriting Kant’s disinterested conception of pleasure in reflective judgments of beauty. Offering a textualist review of Kant’s *Analytic of the Beautiful*, I seek to demonstrate that neither Greenberg, nor Greenberg’s critics, are correct in their account of Kant’s judgments of beauty.¹ Specifically, I argue that Greenberg conflates Kant’s conception of judgments of free beauty (*pulchritudo vaga*) with merely adherent beauty (*pulchritudo adhaerens*). In formulating a rejoinder to Greenberg and the misplacement of Greenberg as a Kantian, and following Diarmuid Costello, I hope to save a path for a Kantian aesthetics of the present, much in the spirit of other broadly Kantian art historians and philosophers of art/aesthetics (e.g., Thierry de Duve, Paul Guyer, Ido Geiger, etc.).

KEYWORDS: Immanuel Kant; Third Critique; Free Beauty; Adherent Beauty; Judgments of Beauty

In an unpublished and undated manuscript, Greenberg remarks that “[a]esthetic considerations have no place in politics, and political considerations no place in

¹ Citations to Kant’s *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (*Critique of Judgment*) include both an abbreviation of the German title and the corresponding volume and page numbers in the standard “Akademie” edition of Kant’s works: *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, edited by the Königlich Preussischen (now Deutschen) Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: G. Reimer [now de Gruyter], 1902—). I generally follow the standard English translations of Kant’s works, but have occasionally modified them where appropriate. For references to the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (*Critique of Pure Reason*), I follow the common practice of giving page numbers from the A (1781) and B (1787) German editions. Because the Akademie edition contains only the B edition of the first Critique, I have also consulted the following German composite edition: *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, ed. W. Weischedel, Immanuel Kant Werkausgabe III (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1968).

art”.² For Greenberg, this is because, “[a]rt has to do with a certain disinterested order of experience that provides pleasure”, which is entirely distinct from the operations of “[p]olitics [,which] has to do with power as it affects the weal and woe of human beings”.³ Where art has markedly been serviced for politics—as with the Nazi-bolstered exhibitions of Josef Thorak, Arno Breker, Emil Nolde, Werner Peiner, Arthur Kampf, Adolf Wissel and Conrad Hommel, or Stalinist state-sanctioned Socialist Realism—the conscription of the arts “as a means to power” demands “that human beings subordinate the pursuit of happiness to the ends of power”.⁴ Certain remarks by Greenberg suggest that he saw the Abstract Expressionists as uniquely untroubled with art in service of politics—for instance, in a 1944 remark both on William Baziotes and the Abstract Expressionists *tout court*, Greenberg remarks that they were “deflected by nothing extraneous to painting”.⁵ In an undated note penned between 1940 and 1950, Greenberg extols the Abstract Expressionists’ quest “for the ultimate factors of painting at their nakedest and simplest. It is around these that the struggle [...] to decide the fate of easel painting in our day revolves.”⁶ Such comments bolster revisionist accounts that aver that Greenberg’s ultimate theorization of Abstract Expressionism depoliticizes his earlier accounts of the avant-garde’s lineage; furthermore, these remarks allow the revisionists to posit Abstract Expressionism’s formal negation of representational content as in continuity with a kind of rugged Cold War American exceptionalism and individualism, which, revisionists like Francina and Osborne argue, aesthetically informed the movement’s co-optation.⁷

Remarks like these suggest that, indeed, Greenberg’s aesthetic valuation of abstract art is divorced from its utility as an instrument of political praxis.

² Greenberg, unpublished lecture notes on *Aesthetic Considerations in Politics* [undated manuscript], Getty Research Institute, 1.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Greenberg, “Review of Exhibitions of William Baziotes and Robert Motherwell” (1944), *The Collected Essays and Criticism: Volume 1*. Ed. John O’Brian (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), 240.

⁶ Greenberg (n.d.d. n.p.) quoted in Neofetou, *Rereading Abstract Expressionism*, 42. These remarks were retrieved by Annalise Welte at the Getty Research Institute and, while believed to be written between 1940 and 1950, are undated.

⁷ See: Francina, “Greenberg and the Politics of Modernism”, *Art Monthly* 111 (November 1987), 6–11; Peter Osborne, “Aesthetic Autonomy and the Crisis of Theory: Greenberg, Adorno, and the Problem of Post-Modernism in the Visual Arts”, *New Formations* 9 (Winter 1989), 31–50.

However, in his recent book, *Rereading Abstract Expressionism*, Daniel Neofetou draws our attention to how, in the 1959 short essay, “The Case for Abstract Art”, Greenberg explicitly argues that aesthetic and political considerations cannot be separated, insofar as visual art supplies “[a] disinterested order of experience that provides pleasure” which, although not opposed to the social conditions circumscribing the status quo, offers a kind of “relief” from the “exigency that human beings subordinate the pursuit of happiness to the dominant rationality of capitalism.”⁸ Greenberg describes this facet of the aesthetic experience of abstract art and its illuminating a distinct form of life in explicitly phenomenological terms:

When a picture presents us with an illusion of real space, there is all the more inducement for the eye to do [...] wandering [...] the whole of a picture should be taken in at a glance; its unity should be immediately evident, and the supreme quality of a picture, the highest measure of its power to move and control the visual imagination, should reside in its unity. And this is something to be grasped only in an indivisible instant of time. No expectancy is involved in the true and pertinent experience of a painting; a picture [...] does not "come out" the way a story, or a poem, or a piece of music does. It's all there at once, like a sudden revelation. This "at-onceness" an abstract picture usually drives home to us with greater singleness and clarity than a representational painting does. And to apprehend this "at-onceness" demands a freedom of mind and untrammelled of eye that constitute "at-onceness" in their own right. Those who have grown capable of experiencing this know what I mean. You are summoned and gathered into one point in the continuum of duration. The picture does this to you, willy-nilly, regardless of whatever else is on your mind; a mere glance at it creates the attitude required for its appreciation, like a stimulus that elicits an automatic response. You become all attention, which means that you become for the moment selfless and in a sense entirely identified with the object of your attention. The "at-onceness" which a picture or a piece of sculpture enforces on you is not, however, single or isolated. It can be repeated in a succession of instants, in each one remaining an "at-onceness"—an instant all by itself. For the cultivated eye the picture repeats its instantaneous unity like a mouth repeating a single word.⁹

Although Greenberg strikes an arbitrary distinction between abstract

⁸ Neofetou, *Rereading Abstract Expressionism*, 84. Also see: Greenberg, “The Case for Abstract Art” (1940) in *The Collected Essays and Criticism: Modernism with a Vengeance, 1957–1969*, Ed. John O’Brian. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 80.

⁹ Greenberg, “The Case for Abstract Art”, 81.

artworks and figurative artworks, abstract representations are here taken to stand in an intentional relationship to our automatic emotional responses, where the latter are embodied appraisals initiated prior to subsequent cognitive monitoring. Insofar as Greenberg is uniquely concerned with the abstract artwork, the evoked emotions are in continuity with the properties of the medium's formal content.¹⁰ Greenberg distinguishes abstract painting and its reified representational basis on the basis of abstract painting driving home its "at-onceness"—i.e., the stimulus-response that elicits an "automatic", all-encompassing, selfless sense of identification with the object of our attention. Nevertheless, suspicious readers may take this somatic description to be something of an outlier in Greenberg's thinking. However, in his 1960s notes from "How Art is Acquired", Greenberg reinforces this point by underscoring the "surrendering" of "attention" that accompanies our apprehension of "authentic art".¹¹

Greenberg's account is also not a reductive and crude return to empiricist sense-datum theories, either. For, according to sense-datum theorists ranging from William James to Roderick Chisholm, our sensory experience is conceived of in terms of subjects' being aware of sense-data *and their properties*.¹² For such sense-datum theorists, there is a family resemblance between objects given in perceptual experience and their concepts, and the latter is epistemically "given" in conjunction with the former. Contra empiricist sense-data theorists marred in what Wilfrid Sellars famously terms "the Myth of the (Categorical) Given"¹³—where concepts and sense-impressions are mistakenly understood as sententially pre-formed representations, cognitively taken up such that concepts are seen as an ontological entity of a piece with their empirical physical correlates—

¹⁰ For a similar account of embodied aesthetic experience, see: Jenefer Robinson, *Deeper than Reason: Emotion and Its Role in Literature, Music, and Art*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

¹¹ Greenberg, "How Art is Acquired" (n.d.), Getty Research Institute, 2-3.

¹² According to Chisholm, while we perceive with the ordinary senses of vision, touch, olfaction, etc., so too do we perceive with the introspective "mind's eye"—this introspective relation to the sense-data thus constitutes their conscious state. See: Roderick Chisholm, "The Theory of Appearing" (1950) in *Perceiving, Sensing, and Knowing*, ed. Robert Swartz (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1965), 56; also see: William James, *Principles of Psychology, 2 Volumes* (New York: Dover, 1950).

¹³ O'Shea summarizes Sellars' "The myth of the categorical given" as follows: "If a person is directly aware of an item which has categorial status C, then the person is aware of it as having categorial status C". See James O'Shea, *Wilfrid Sellars, Naturalism with a Normative Turn* (Malden: Polity Press, 2007), 115. Also see: Wilfrid Sellars, "Foundations for a Metaphysics of Pure Process" (The Carus Lectures), *The Monist* 64, 3–90.

Greenberg's understanding of taking in an artwork's "at-onceness" portrays the spectator's receptivity of abstract artworks as pre-conceptual. Greenberg's emphasis on the "repeatability" of this experience also distinguishes it from contextualist accounts that stress the unique "importance of historical factors and context-specificity in art and its appreciation"¹⁴. For while our spatial and historical context undoubtedly informs our phenomenological reception of an artwork, the lack of "expectancy" that Greenberg highlights speaks to the fact that our reception of these artworks is pre-conceptual and thus distinct from our comprehension of its historical framing within art history. This is why, according to Greenberg, we can have repeated instances of similarly affective and automatic experiences of an abstract artwork. For in this automatic response, we are not weighed down by concepts that map the physical particulars of the abstract artwork to representations. In short, the identity-based thinking that matches abstract particulars to mimetic concepts is cleft. For Greenberg, this is unique to abstract artworks, since figurative artworks are concept-laden, such that our cognitive faculty of the understanding readily subsumes the particulars of a figurative artwork under representational conceptual categories.¹⁵

When Greenberg underscores the "automatic" nature of "at-onceness", he draws our attention to the empirical surplus of the subject's somatic response to the abstract artwork. This empirical "surplus" is opposed to the positivist/naturalist "science" which, as Merleau-Ponty contends in his opposition of the aesthetic reception of artworks to scientific instrumental reason, simply "manipulates things and gives up living in them".¹⁶ Following Greenberg's account, the operation of modernist abstract painting, "brackets our comprehension in terms of manipulability,"¹⁷ allowing for us to, however briefly,

¹⁴ Nicolas J. Bullot, "A Psycho-Historical Theory of Art" in *Brain Theory: Essays in Critical Neurophilosophy*, ed. Charles T. Wolfe (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 243. For aesthetic contextualist accounts, see: George Dickie, *The Art Circle: A Theory of Art* (Evanston, IL: Chicago Spectrum Press, 1984); Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981).

¹⁵ Greenberg's distinction here is, in my opinion, too fast and loose; for in "taking in" an abstract artwork like Bradley Walker Tomlin's *Number 20* (1949), we can at the very least identify the particular hoary, typographic signs with the concept "text", or simply the dark, inky square blocks with conceptual predicates like "blackness" and "squareness".

¹⁶ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind" in *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting*, eds. Galen A. Johnson and Michael B. Smith (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993), 256

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

live in them.

Greenberg's self-described "positivism"/naturalism and its coeval preconceived formalist theoretical framework is often taken by commentators such as Caroline Jones to be at odds with embodied renderings of the aesthetic experience of abstract art. Directing us to Frankenthaler's soak-stain technique paintings, Jones' *Eyesight Alone* underscores "the embodied trace of the body" that opposes itself to Greenbergian "disembodiment".¹⁸ However, the somatic exhilaration at the heart of Greenberg's conception of "at-onceness" identifies a conception of aesthetic experience that is genuinely embodied and, more importantly for our purposes, rendered unavailable to capitalist reification. As Neofetou underscores in his recent *Rereading Abstract Expressionism* (2022), this is what places Greenberg's account of embodiment incontinuity with Adorno's conception of experience (viz., *Erfahrung*), which is at odds with capitalism's mechanization of identity-based thinking.¹⁹ For Adorno, a viewer must submit "[t]o the work's own discipline,"²⁰ where "[o]ne does not understand a work of art when one translates it into concepts [...] but rather when one is immersed in its immanent movement [...] when it is [...] repainted by the eye".²¹ Greenberg's account of medium-specific art praxis has an affinity with the dialectic of construction and mimesis that Adorno sees as central to authentic art production. For both Adorno and Greenberg, the apprehension of authentic art entails an assimilation to a semblance of otherness, which is pre-conceptual, automatic, and immanent to the work's formal qualities.

In "The Crisis of the Easel Picture", Greenberg claims that authentic artworks do "[s]eem to answer something deep seated in contemporary sensibility."²² But

¹⁸ Caroline Jones, *Eyesight Alone* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 307. Also see: Brett Schumacher, "The woman problem: gender displacement in the art of Helen Frankenthaler", *Woman's Art Journal*, 31, 2 (2010), 1-12.

¹⁹ De Duve also notes that Greenberg and Adorno follow "...the same deeply rooted intuition of the avant-garde as working in a materiality that Greenberg calls respect for the medium and Adorno, the progress of the material", although he does not elaborate on this. See: Thierry de Duve, *Kant After Duchamp* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 43.

²⁰ Neofetou, *Rereading Abstract Expressionism*, 4, 22, 27, 58; Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (London, Routledge, 1997), 265.

²¹ Adorno, *Notes to Literature Vol. 2*, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992): 97

²² Greenberg, "The Crisis of the Easel Picture" (1948) in *The Collected Essays*, 2, 224.

Greenberg does not indicate what, exactly, this “something” is. According to critics like Ann Gibson, Greenberg’s recourse to abstractions and remainders like the aforementioned “something” which appears to “answer” the non-discursive elements of aesthetic experience places Greenberg close to the position that he castigates Harold Rosenberg for—i.e., the determinate negation of illusionism and mimesis in Abstract Expressionism rendering these artworks to the status of “nothing more than things among things”, where artworks are taken up “to the in-itselfness of observed fact”.²³ This more broadly related to the now-popular critique of Greenberg’s putative “Kantian positivism”/naturalism.

Many of Greenberg’s critics—chief among them being Donald Kuspit, Leo Steinberg, Rosalind Krauss, Briony Fer, Amelia Jones, and Michael Fried—relate Greenberg’s positivism/naturalism/formalism to his putative Kantianism, often identifying Kant’s conception of disinterested pleasure in judgments of beauty as of a piece with Greenberg’s positivism.²⁴ Notably, however, Kant ascribed disinterestedness to *pure* aesthetic judgments aroused by “free” beauty, not “adherent”, or “dependent”, beauty—fine art painting, for Kant, belongs to “adherent beauty.”²⁵ Worse yet is that these critics never directly cite Kant or Kant scholarship, taking Greenberg’s self-ascribed Kantianism at his word. We will return to the issue of Greenberg’s so-called Kantianism at the end of this

²³ Gibson, “Abstract Expressionism’s Evasion of Language” in *Abstract Expressionism: A Critical Record*, eds. David Shapiro and Cecile Shapiro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 205.

²⁴ Kuspit sees Greenberg’s medium-specificity as a positivist/naturalist purification, which “ignores the intention of non-objectivity to protest against rigidification ... [and] against totalitarianism”; Donald Kuspit, “Utopian Protest in Early Abstract Art”, *Art Journal*, 29 (Summer 1970), p. 430-41. Steinberg argues that “[w]hatever else one may think of Greenberg’s construction, its overwhelming effect is to put all painting in series...the approximation of the depicted field to the plane of its material support—this was the great Kantian process of self-definition in which all serious Modernist painting was willy-nilly engaged”; see: Steinberg, *Other Criteria*, 67. Krauss claims Greenberg takes on “positivist science’s . . . neutral observation” when he contextualizes Pollock’s drip paintings instead of “the material” and “tactile”, which entail bodily/somatic engagement; Rosalind Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993): 244–7. Fer sees Greenberg’s formalism as foreclosed to the “tangible touch”; Briony Fer, *On Abstract Art* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1997), 106. Jones highlights Greenberg’s “denial of the body, of subjectivity, of sensuality”; Amelia Jones, *Body Art: Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1998): 74. Fried claims that Greenberg lacks a theory of attention (which he calls “theatricality”); Michael Fried, “Art and Objecthood” (1967), in *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago University Press, 1998): 163.

²⁵ See §§16-17 of the third moment of the Analytic of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment in Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*,. Abbreviated: KU. Also see Kant’s principal discussion of fine art (KU, §§43–50).

paper, but let us first deal with one of Greenberg's critics, Donald Kuspit, who sees Greenberg's Kantianism as precluding errant affect from entering his theory of art criticism.

Kuspit argues that Greenberg's theory of (abstract) art criticism "seems to confirm preconceptions rather than to convey [the] freshness or vitality of perception", allowing "only for certain kinds of perceptions and certain kinds of statements"²⁶. Kuspit, turning his attention to Greenberg's 1961 revisions in *A New Sculpture*, sees the "concrete, purity" that Greenberg ascribes to "a modernist work of art [that] must try, in principle, to avoid dependence upon any order of experience not given in the most essentially construed nature of its medium"²⁷ as offering a "positivist" idea of modernism which excludes analyzing works from the vantage of social art history, degenerating to a retrograde and ahistorical Kantian transcendental position of criticism. For Kuspit, the mature Greenberg is markedly Kantian—Kuspit finds his argument confirmed by Greenberg's well-known reference to Kant in the 1960 essay, "Modernist painting", where Greenberg draws an analogy between the medium-specificity of modern art's "self-criticism" and the "self-criticism of Kant's epistemology".²⁸ Greenberg's heralding taste's objectivity and its preclusion from history is here posed as a departure from his earlier position in "Laocoön", where Greenberg had previously promulgated that modern art and its reception is "held in a vise" by a critical imperative that "comes from history, from the age in conjunction with a particular moment reached in a particular tradition of art."²⁹

For critics such as Kuspit, Greenberg's Kantianism delegitimizes any errant,

²⁶ Donald Kuspit, *Clement Greenberg, Art Critic* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), 173-174.

²⁷ Clement Greenberg, "The New Sculpture," in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 2:316.

²⁸ Greenberg, "Modernist Painting" (1961) in *The Collected Essays and Criticism: Volume 4*, 58. Also see Greenberg, "The New Sculpture" in *The Collected Essays and Criticism: Volume 4*, 85-86: "I identify Modernism with the intensification, almost the exacerbation, of [the] self-critical tendency that began with the philosopher Kant. . . . The essence of Modernism lies, as I see it, in the use of characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself, not in order to subvert it but in order to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence. Kant used logic to establish the limits of logic, and while he withdrew much from its old jurisdiction, logic was left all the more secure in what there remained to it. . . . Modernism criticizes from the inside, through the procedures themselves of that which is being criticized. . . . Modernism used art to call attention to art. The limitations that constitute the medium of painting – the flat surface, the shape of the support, the properties of the pigment . . . came to be regarded as positive factors, and were acknowledged openly."

²⁹ Greenberg, "Laocoön," 34.

affective reception of Abstract Expressionism, chiefly due to his inheriting Kantian formalism and “disinterestedness”. This is a line often repeated, albeit often without recourse to Kant’s own writing on “disinterestedness” in the third Critique. Before turning to Kant’s writing on disinterestedness, and showing why it is not equipollent to Greenberg’s own disinterested stance, let us turn to the first fork of Kuspit’s criticism: that Greenberg goes from a theory of art criticism that allows affect to one that, due to a preconceived theoretical formalism, does not.

Contra Kuspit, there *is* a marked sense of disinterested conceptual bracketing already articulated in the Greenberg of “Laocoon”—one in which the experience of avant-garde art is disinterested but not circumscribed from errant affect. For even in “Laocoon” Greenberg writes of the experience of avant-garde art as one in which “there is nothing to identify, connect or think about” but, due to this disinterested bracketing, “everything to feel.”³⁰ The affect here described compels our experience not due to our recognition of determinate concepts, such as the concept of “medium-specificity” subsumed by the faculty of our understanding but, instead, by a kind of “emphatic physical presence.”³¹ This supports the aesthetic judgment of abstract expressionist art as being extra-linguistic, pre-conceptual, sensorial, somatic and embodied. Determinate concepts do not mediate these affective aesthetic judgments.

Let us now turn to the broader charge of Greenberg’s Kantianism. As a preliminary move, we must understand what the word “aesthetic” means for Kant, who is using the term in the same way as his contemporaries Christian Wolff, Georg Friedrich Meier, and Alexander Baumgarten. In the first Critique, especially in the “Transcendental Aesthetic,” Kant delineates three different kinds of objects, each of which is defined by the specific way the subject relates to the object: 1) objects of empirical intuition (*empirische Anschauungen*), to which one relates via sensation; 2) objects of thought, to which one relates via judgments; 3) objects of experience, to which one relates via empirical cognition.³² The object(s) of empirical are “appearances,” i.e., “the [yet] undetermined object of an

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 28.

³² Kant, A22-23/B37.

empirical intuition”³³. Sensibility (*Sinnlichkeit*) is our receptive capacity to acquire sensible representations by way of being affected (*affiziert*) through objects. By being affected, the senses receive manifolds of sensation (*Mannigfaltigkeiten der Empfindung*) and yield empirical intuitions (*empirische Anschauungen*), that is, singular representations of particulars that immediately relate to objects. For Kant, space is the form of outer sense and time is the form of inner sense; these are the a priori forms of intuition and, as such, are transcendental conditions under which an object must be intuited.

The proper object of a judgment of experience is an object of experience, which is the *determined* object of empirical intuition. Such objects are determined due to the object of experience’s inherent empirical, conceptual, logical, apperceptive/self-conscious, judgmental/propositional, and ultimately categorial structures. By contrast, what makes an “appearance” an “undetermined” object of empirical intuition is that it is perceptually represented in a “blind,” nonconceptual, nonlogical, non-self-conscious, on judgmental/nonpropositional, and noncategorial way, under the spatiotemporal “pure forms of intuition” alone.³⁴ Kant thus writes that “appearances can certainly be given in intuition without functions of the understanding”.³⁵ As Robert Hanna writes,

[t]hus the *sensible world*, made up of spatiotemporal appearances, accessed by perception, that is fully shared by rational human cognizers qua sensible cognizers with nonrational, human or nonhuman, conscious animals, aka ‘babes and beasts,’ is sharply distinct from the experiential world, including the empirical self and its ‘inner experience’ ... that is made up of outer and inner objects of experience under necessary ‘laws of experience’ ... under the categories, and that is shared by rational human cognizers only with other discursive animals, including rational, sense-perceiving aliens, if there are any, but not by babes or beasts.³⁶

This difference between the world of conceptual experience and world of mere sensations/perception is critical to understand Kant’s point in the third Critique on “disinterestedness,” found in his “aesthetic judgments of taste,” which,

³³ Ibid., A20/B34. “Determination”, for Kant, means conceptual specification. Hence, an “appearance” is the object presented as it is in an empirical intuition, which means independent of it as specified via concept(s).

³⁴ A21/B35.

³⁵ A90/B122.

³⁶ Robert Hanna, “Experience (*Erfahrung*)” in *Cambridge Kant Lexicon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 185.

like the “judgments of [mere] perception,” are subjective and nonconceptual. Aesthetics judgments of taste have sensible content that constituted by our feelings of pleasure but unlike “judgments of (mere) perception” are also *disinterested*, self-conscious or reflective, and intersubjective. This is by virtue of aesthetic judgments of taste intentionally being focused on the *purposive* forms of appearances. This means that they are cognized as if these appearances were designed to harmonize with our imagination and understanding for the production of disinterested pleasure—i.e., pleasure that is hence cognized as beautiful.³⁷ Kant attends to a formal notion of purposiveness here—i.e., purposiveness that is “apprehended in an object without any further determination”.³⁸ When making a reflective judgment, a particular is given and, via reflection, a universal concept is sought such that we might comprehend that particular. In judgments of pure beauty—i.e., pure judgments of taste—an object is given and the object’s form is reflected upon *disinterestedly*, which means in view of the purpose of cognition in general, so that we can secure empirical knowledge. Judgments of taste are disinterested and non-conceptually grounded. That judgment of taste are “aesthetic” relates to Kant’s writing on the first Critique, insofar as they are based on feeling/sensation alone. Rather than identifying a specific concept or purpose that is appropriate to the object, the object’s form is judged via feeling/sensation in reference to its amenability to our cognition in general. As Wicks writes, if:

the object’s form is apprehended as being sufficiently systematic, then when it is ‘compared’ with the cognitive faculties, it stimulates a pleasurable accordance, or harmony, between the faculties of imagination and understanding insofar it renders them well set in anticipation for acquiring empirical knowledge [...] The resulting pleasurable feeling of universal validity signals that nature, through the contingently appearing, impressively systematized object, operates in accord with the principle of the purposiveness of nature and conforms to our cognitive interests. To judge that the object is beautiful is thus to make an aesthetic judgment of reflection from which emanates a feeling of universal validity – one that makes us feel rationally at home in the world.³⁹

³⁷ KU, 5:203–44.

³⁸ See: Robert Wicks, “Reflective judgment (die reflektierende Urteilskraft)” in *The Kant Cambridge Lexicon*, 379.

³⁹ *ibid.*, 380.

In the third Critique, Kant's exposition of his aesthetics begins with an analysis of "judgments of beauty," which he also calls "judgments of taste". Kant starts with the simplest of cases—the "pure judgment of beauty," which he, thereafter, terms "free beauty". Kant considers examples like natural objects (e.g., a flower) or works of decorative art, like the borders on wallpaper. Notably, Kant distinguishes the decorative arts from fine art. Kant then proceeds through his analysis with four "moments", or features, of judgments of taste. The results are consequently presented as constituting a definition of the predicate "beautiful" or the property of beauty.⁴⁰ In keeping with the four respects in which we can classify any judgment whatsoever, as outlined in the table of categories found in the first Critique,⁴¹ the four "moments" of judgments of taste are organized around: 1) Quality; 2) Quantity; 3) Relation; 4) Modality.

The first moment of the judgment of taste concerns its "quality". Kant notes that it is made "through a satisfaction or dissatisfaction without any interest," so that "the object of such a satisfaction is called beautiful".⁴² As Paul Guyer notes,

[t]hat which is agreeable is opposed to that which is 'agreeable' or 'good'—that which is 'agreeable' pleases our senses without any higher cognitive activity, while that which is good is judged to be so by the subsumption of the object under some determinate concept of its practical use or moral purpose.⁴³

Kant further elucidates that the *disinterested* pleasure in beauty is brought about solely by the "mere representation" of the object rather than any concern regarding its "existence," meaning this kind of beauty is not elicited by how the object was produced/made or how it may be used/instrumentalized.⁴⁴ The second moment of the judgment of taste concerns its "quantity" and has to do with universality. Kant writes that "[t]he beautiful is that which, without concepts, is represented as the object of a universal satisfaction".⁴⁵ This is unlike a judgment of mere agreeableness, which does not claim universal validity. It is also unlike a judgment of "goodness," which may also claim universal validity but

⁴⁰ KU, 5:211, 219, 240, 5:235–6.

⁴¹ A80/B106.

⁴² KU, 5:211.

⁴³ "Aesthetics" in *The Cambridge Kant Lexicon*, 655.

⁴⁴ KU, 5:204–5.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 5:211.

solely on the basis of the subsumption of an object under a determinate concept.⁴⁶ The claim of subjectively universal validity that Kant attributes to “the beautiful” is *ideal*, meaning that it would be valid for all rational human cognizers under optimal circumstances—this means that it is not undermined by a failure of consensus among actually existing people, since they may not be operating under such optimal circumstances.⁴⁷ The third moment concerns “relation”, i.e., the “relation of the ends that are taken into consideration” in judgments of taste, where Kant states that:

nothing other than the subjective purposiveness in the representation of an object without any end (objective or subjective); consequently, the mere form of purposiveness in the representation through which an object is given to us [...] can constitute the satisfaction that we judge, without a concept to be universally communicable, and hence the determining ground of the judgment of taste.⁴⁸

Thus, for Kant, a beautiful object satisfies our general aim for cognizing it without it being subsumed under any “more determinate concept of its own purpose or any other purpose of the subject.”⁴⁹ This is Kant’s requirement of “formal purposiveness”. Stated more concretely, “formal purposiveness” means that beauty properly lies only in the purposiveness of the form of the object or its representation, which is related to the medium. (Here we might note a similarity between Greenbergian medium specificity and Kant.) For instance, in the case of a visual artwork, this has to do with the design, configuration, and distribution of the artwork rather than the colors used in it; in music, formal purposiveness has to do with the composition of the piece rather than the instruments used to play it.⁵⁰ Finally, we have the fourth moment, which concerns “modality”. Kant

⁴⁶ As Guyer notes, Kant notes “that a ‘judgment of beauty’ claims ‘subjectively’ rather than ‘objectively’ universal validity, meaning validity of the judgment about a particular object for all human subjects or experiencers of it, but not validity for all members of some class to which the object is assigned on the basis of some determinate concept of it”. See “Aesthetics” in *The Cambridge Kant Lexicon*, 655; also see: KU, 5:215.

⁴⁷ KU, 5:216.

⁴⁸ KU, 5:221

⁴⁹ Guyer, “Aesthetics” in *The Cambridge Kant Lexicon*, 656

⁵⁰ KU, 5:225. Kant’s third moment is undoubtedly very controversial, as many would argue that the form of art cannot be divorced from its content. Kant writes on the third moment that “[t]aste is always still barbaric when it needs the addition of charms and emotions for satisfaction” (KU, 5:223). As Guyer reminds us, the “remark is directed against theorists who stressed the emotional impact of aesthetic objects, especially works of art, such as Jean-Baptiste Du Bos and Moses Mendelssohn.” See: Guyer, “Aesthetics” in *The Cambridge Kant Lexicon*, 656.

writes: “[t]hat is beautiful which is cognized without a concept as the object of a necessary satisfaction”,⁵¹ or as an “exemplary [...] necessity of the assent of all to a judgment that is regarded as an example of a universal rule that one cannot produce.”⁵² This furthers the coincidence of universality and necessity found in the second moment.

Notably, Kant claims that a judgment of taste is “aesthetic” insofar as this judgment is based solely on the subjective feeling of pleasure in its object but yet “without any interest.”⁵³ Again, this means that it is concerned solely with the judge’s response to the representation of the object of the aesthetic judgment and not to the object’s existence. Guyer provides an illustrative example:

In their independence from interest, Kant claims, judgments of taste about beauty differ from judgments about the “agreeable” and the “good,” both of which are connected with interest in the existence of the object. A judgment that something is agreeable, e.g., that this glass of wine tastes good, is dependent entirely upon physiological contact with the object, in this case upon smelling and tasting it [. . .] and in this sense it is dependent upon the actual existence of the object, and also generates an interest in the existence of like objects: Having found this glass of wine good, I will (likely) want to taste it again and thus have (more of) it available to me— that is, more of the wine, not just a further or repeated representation of it. In the case of anything that I judge to be good from the point of view of either mere instrumental (prudential) or pure (moral) practical reason, my judgment is a judgment that the object of my representation ought to exist, thus it is also connected to an interest in the existence of the object.⁵⁴

Having now summarized Kant on judgments of beauty, we can turn to Greenberg’s supposed Kantianism. Neofetou, though he sees Greenberg’s project

⁵¹ KU, 5:240.

⁵² KU, 5:237.

⁵³ KU, 5:203. Recently, Thierry de Duve has proposed a resolution to the antinomy of taste as it relates to abstract art. De Duve claims the judgment “X is art”, even in cases of ready-mades or action painting, accords with Kant’s first moment of the beautiful, since it is based on a feeling; he also claims universality in these judgments, insofar as the subject’s places themselves as exemplary for all of humanity. When it comes to readymades, specifically, for De Duve the judgment “X is art” is achieved via acts of comparison. Despite de Duve’s ambitiousness, however, his redirecting aesthetic judgments into comparisons between objects belies the kind of comparison Kant has in mind when it comes to objects that are beautiful, which is between a given intuition and the “free play” between the imagination and the understanding. As Costello notes, De Duve’s conception of comparison can “neither be noncognitive nor aesthetic... in Kant’s sense”. See: De Duve, *Kant After Duchamp*, 488-50; also see: Costello, “Greenberg’s Kant”, 223.

⁵⁴ Paul Guyer, *Reason and Experience in Mendelssohn and Kant* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2020), 226.

as in keeping with errant and embodied affect, also sees Greenberg's Kantianism as problematic. Following Adorno's critique of Kant, Neofetou castigates Kant's putative ahistoricism.⁵⁵ For Neofetou, if we are going to salvage Greenberg, we require the Adornoian critique of historicism. Contra Neofetou, I disagree that we need to dispense with Greenberg's Kantianism for there is no Kantianism to

⁵⁵ See: Neofetou, *Rereading Abstract Expressionism*, 114. Neofetou unfortunately takes on Adorno's critique of Kant's transcendental idealism wholesale. Adorno's critique of Kant is that Kant's epistemology is anchored in identity-based thinking. From this, Adorno reaches the mistaken conclusion that Kant's transcendental subject produces an "establishment of fixed regulative determinants estranged from human beings, to which human beings must adapt". See: Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 115-16. Neofetou further arms his argument by recourse to Adorno's critique of Kant's epistemology as moored in a trans-historical transcendental ontology. From this he draws the conclusion that Kant's transcendental subject produces an "establishment of fixed regulative determinants estranged from human beings, to which human beings must adapt"; Adorno, *ibid.*, 115-16. It notable that Adorno's critique mistakenly runs together Kant's conception of the categories with concepts. Turning to where Kant speaks of the categories as it relates to the transcendental subject in the first Critique, we ought look at B128, "Transition to the Transcendental Deduction of the Categories". Kant says that the categories are not concepts of any object in particular, like the concept "body" or the concept "Divisible"; rather, categories are all concepts of "an object as such" and there are 12 of them altogether (there would be one if we could not distinguish them from one another). Kant also makes the point that categories are not concepts of any object in particular at A245 of the section "Phenomena and Noumena". As Laywine aptly summarizes, "the categories are, in and of themselves, independent of the 'sensible condition' that alone gives them any meaning, contain nothing but the 'logical functions' of judgment: 'beyond this function, nothing can be known, nor can anything be distinguished, what object belongs under it.'" See: Alison Laywine, *Kant's Transcendental Deduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 194 ff47. Adorno is also wrong that, for Kant, we must "adapt" to the transcendental subject's pre-given forms, eluding precisely what it is *transcendental* about the transcendental subject—i.e., that which makes it beyond the realm of empirical intuition. Elsewhere, Adorno is also wrong to castigate Kant's refusal to do away with things in themselves—which, for Kant, are mind-independent, transcendently real ontological existents that causally affect outer appearances (i.e., all empirical objects, which are in space and time). We cannot conceptualize or have empirical knowledge of things in themselves, for Kant. Neofetou rehearses Adorno, writing that "Adorno understands Kant's refusal to do away with the notion of noumenal things in themselves which transcend the supposedly transhistorical circumscription of possible experience, as evidence against the transhistoricity of this circumscription, because it implies that our concepts are dependent upon objects which these concepts do not exhaust." *Rereading Abstract Expressionism*, 114. Adorno's conception that our empirical concepts are not exhausted by appearances in space are time implies that things in themselves are concept-laden, which amounts to the charge of "transcendental amphiboly" that Kant ascribed to his predecessor Leibnizian-Wolffians—that is, in the first place, identifying the empirical concepts delivered via sensible objects or appearances with objects of the pure understanding (viz., things in themselves. See: A326/B270. Note that, for Kant, the things that that are acted upon by transcendental causes must be things in themselves and cannot be appearances. Kant is careful to not apply our empirical concepts to things in themselves/objects of the pure understanding and, as Jauernig notes, "sensibility is not an appearance but a mind-independent cognitive faculty"; see Anja Jauernig, *The World According to Kant* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 77. That Neofetou takes on Adorno's criticism of Kant's a prior conditions of experience—insofar as, for Adorno, these must be historically contingent—is unfortunate.

dispense of. Thus, at this point, I would like to demonstrate that the charge of Greenberg's Kantianism is duly misplaced.

Commentators like Jones, Fer, Fried and Krauss see Greenberg's positivism as in keeping with Kant, but make these charges without citing Kant or Kant scholarship. Instead, they simply identify Kant's conception of disinterested pleasure in judgments of beauty as equipollent to Greenberg's formalism and the requirement of distance when judging an artwork—i.e., not allowing historical or affective factors to inform one's reception of an artwork (where Greenberg had abstract artworks, specifically, in mind), turning instead to the form and material composition of the work at hand. Notably however, Kant ascribed disinterestedness to *pure aesthetic judgments aroused by free beauty*, not *adherent beauty*—fine art paintings, for Kant, belong to *adherent beauty*. Where Kant is concerned with *free beauty* in the visual arts, his interest is in “non-representational, aesthetic painting” which merely picks out decorative art (like wallpaper), which is non-conceptual, indeed, but not “fine art.”⁵⁶ With such remarks about the “non-representational” genre of painting, Kant should not be read as presaging a stance that would readily apply to abstract art as well. Kant is concerned with merely decorative art, music as fine art, and horticulture as fine art, contrasted to “adherent beauty” as found in representational painting and sculpture, architecture as fine art, and poetry. One may here further aver that since abstract art is non-representational, considerations regarding Kant's conception of judgments free beauty do, indeed, apply, bringing Greenberg into proximity with Kant. However, abstract art may depart from “naturalistic” or “realist” representations, but finds its meaning and aesthetic grounding in figurative stimuli.⁵⁷ This is echoed by Slifkin's remark that “...Action Paintings were first and foremost works of the imagination: fictive, artificial, dramatic, theatrical, and consequently, fundamentally *figurative*.”⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Aviv Reiter and Ido Geiger, “Natural Beauty, Fine Art and the Relation between Them”, *Kant-Studien* 109, 1 (2019): 72–100.

⁵⁷ Pepe Karmel, *Abstract Art: A Global History* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2020), 24.

⁵⁸ Robert Slifkin, “The Tragic Image: Action Painting Reconfigured”, *Oxford Art Journal*, 2011, Vol. 34, No. 2 (2011), 233; emphasis added. Slifkin sees the “fundamentally figurative” facet of action paintings as something that Greenbergian “self-reflexive medium-specificity and formal autonomy” could not account for. I agree, and hence have brought in Karmel as a necessary supplement. Without this “fundamentally

In their brilliant essay, “Greenberg's Kant and the Fate of Aesthetics in Contemporary Art Theory”, Diarmuid Costello delineates that Greenberg’s medium-specificity and its formalism actually is closer to Hume’s conception of fine-grained descriptions of taste than Kant.⁵⁹ Costello recalls

Hume[s] comments in the famous anecdote about the key sunk in the barrel of wine: "The great resemblance between mental and bodily taste will easily teach us to apply this story ... Where the organs are so fine, as to allow nothing to escape them; and at the same time so exact as to perceive every ingredient in the composition: This we call delicacy of taste, whether we employ these terms in the literal or metaphorical sense." Hume recognizes no distinction between what Kant distinguishes as aesthetic judgments of taste and of the agreeable—not because he confuses intersubjective validity with mere personal preference, but because he grants no distinction, akin to Kant's, between reflection and sensation.⁶⁰

Even charitable readers of Greenberg’s Kantianism, such as Neofetou, have erred in this regard. Consider, for instance, where Neofetou argues that “in terms of his criticism, Greenberg’s self-identification as Kantian is grounded in his conviction that reception of artworks should be rooted in the way in which the intrinsic intelligibility of the given artwork resonates with a spectator independent of determinate categories.”⁶¹ Neofetou here repeats a mistake that Greenberg also makes, which is identifying a priori categories with concepts. Such an equivalency betrays a careful distinction that Kant makes between the categories of the understanding and empirical concepts.⁶²

Reading Greenberg as a Kantian is indeed plagued by many problems. As is relevant to the critics I am responding to in this paper, I am interested in two of the most notable difficulties. The first is that Greenberg adopts Kant’s conception of “disinterestedness” from the latter’s aesthetic judgments of (free) beauty. The second difficulty is one which is detectable in Neofetou’s *Rereading Abstract Expressionism*, which relates Greenberg on the experience of Abstract Expressionist artworks—where we find “[i]nsight[s] into the constitutive

figurative” relationship between abstraction and its representational anchor of meaning unearthed, we are left spinning in the void and deprived of a dialectical conception.

⁵⁹ Diarmuid Costello, "Greenberg's Kant and the Fate of Aesthetics in Contemporary Art Theory", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Spring, 2007, Vol. 65, No. 2 (Spring, 2007), 217-228

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 228 n.34.

⁶¹ Neofetou, *Rereading Abstract Expressionism*, 116.

⁶² Cf. Kant’s “Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic”, A669–71/B697–9.

character of the nonconceptual in the concept”⁶³—to Kant on the non-conceptual grounding of aesthetic judgments of (free) beauty.

As far as the first point is concerned, and as already outlined, Greenberg fails to distinguish between judgments of "free" beauty and judgments of "dependent", or “adherent”, beauty. Greenberg attempts to apply Kant's account of pure aesthetic judgment—i.e., judgments about the aesthetic feeling aroused by "free" (or conceptually unconstrained) beauty—to artworks. This ignores Kant's remarks on fine art, genius, and aesthetic ideas in favor of an erroneous account that takes natural beauty and decorative motifs (viz., "*designs à la grecque*, foliage for borders or on wallpaper, the foliage on borders or on wallpaper")⁶⁴ as its paradigm.

On the second point, Neofetou claims non-conceptuality as at play with Kant's aesthetic reflective judgments, and extends this to Greenberg.⁶⁵ Indeed, for Kant there exist works of art the beauty of which is “free”—for instance, musical fantasies and music *sans* text; these examples of art are “free” because to appreciate their beauty we do not presuppose a concept of "what the thing is supposed to be".⁶⁶ For Kant, decorative visual arts, which are distinguished from fine visual arts, also produce such free beauty.⁶⁷ When Kant talks of “free beauty,” which does not have a concept, we must keep in mind that this is distinct from adherent/dependent beauty—the latter, indeed, has determinate concepts, which transpire as human ends, achieved through “ideas of reason” (viz., humanity and morality) that are sensually tracked.⁶⁸ As Reiter and Geiger note

It is a central claim of the later discussion of art that works of art present ‘aesthetic ideas’ and that an aesthetic idea is the counterpart of an ‘idea of reason’...[for Kant,] humanity generally and its highest realization in morality are the ideas presented aesthetically in works of art. Of course, it is not that the idea of humanity is the immediate subject of all works of art. A work might indeed depict, say, human mortality, but it might also present an older woman picking lice out of the hair of a young boy. It is Kant’s view [...] that in both cases humanity is the conceptual space

⁶³ Neofetou, *Rereading Abstract Expressionism*, 68. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, Trans. E.B. Ashton (London: Routledge, 1973), 12.

⁶⁴ KU, 5: 229.28–29.

⁶⁵ Neofetou, *Rereading Abstract Expressionism*, 101–116.

⁶⁶ KU, 5:229

⁶⁷ Ibid., 5:229f.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 5:232; cf. KU, 05:314.

of reflection upon these works and that which makes works of art generally significant to us. What Kant is claiming is that humanity and its highest fulfillment in morality are the conceptual space within which we seek and find the endlessly productive meaning of works of art. Plainly put, works of art present and invite us to reflect upon human life. In this way, they allow us to gain deeper and richer insight into the meaning of the rational idea of humanity.⁶⁹

Contra Greenberg's debarring of conceptuality, for Kant, when it comes to the experience of fine visual art, concepts *are* at play. Aesthetics judgments adhere to idea of reason, for Kant. And "ideas of reason" are shot-through with conceptual richness. The fine arts give us beautiful representations of humanity. They do so even if the actual painting or sculpture is not aesthetically beautiful, even if something horrid, violent, or disastrous is depicted. For it is the cognitive act of representing, not the represented, that is beautiful: "the aesthetic properties of the work must awaken and further productive reflection upon the idea of humanity".⁷⁰

Unfortunately, however, those secondary commentators whom I have argued are incorrect in their reading Greenberg as a Kantian are simply following Greenberg. Greenberg often cites Kant as an important methodological bulwark for art criticism, especially in his later texts of the 1960s and 1970s (e.g., his 1967 "Complaints of an Art Critic"). Where Greenberg sees himself as Kantian, he unduly psychologizes Kant, dovetailing Kant's criterion of disinterestedness as a necessary condition for aesthetic judgments with Greenberg's own psychologistic conception of "aesthetic distance". Greenberg's "aesthetic distance" amounts to a "separation, a kind of transcendence, if you please", which precludes our phenomenologically contending an artwork to "moral" lessons the likes of which are .⁷¹

⁶⁹ Reiter and Geiger, "Natural Beauty", 90. Cf. Samantha Matherne, "The Inclusive Interpretation of Kant's Aesthetic Ideas", *British Journal of Aesthetics* 53, 1 (2013), 21–39.

⁷⁰ Reiter and Geiger, "Natural Beauty", 89. Also see Kant, KU, 5: 229.10–17: "There are two kinds of beauty: free beauty (*pulchritudo vaga*) or merely adherent beauty (*pulchritudo adhaerens*). The first presupposes no concept of what the object ought to be; the second does presuppose such a concept and the perfection of the object in accordance with it. The first are called (self-subsisting) beauties of this or that thing; the latter, as adhering to a concept (conditioned beauty), are ascribed to objects that stand under the concept of a particular end."

⁷¹ Greenberg thus writes of fiction literature as follows: "fiction celebrating cruelty will fail as art because it collapses aesthetic distance by offending too much in terms of life as lived." See: Greenberg, "Autonomies of Art", *Moral Philosophy and Art Symposium* (Mountain Lake Virginia, 1980).

Greenberg's account of "aesthetic distance" places him closer to the phenomenological tradition than Kant. In Merleau-Ponty's "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence" (1952), for example, we get a theory of both art practice and the reception of the artwork where in phenomenologically receiving or creating an artwork, there is no predetermined form (conceptual or moral). Concrete art materials instead take their own fluid course, the artist and the viewer "processually guided by their materials".⁷² For Merleau-Ponty, the immediate aesthetic experience is first and foremost, but this is not one of conceptuality—instead, it is errant and embodied. This account befits both the artist and the perceiver of Abstract Expressionist artworks as pre-conceptually and somatically ushered in their experience of autonomous art, following the embodied account of Greenberg (and Neofetou's reading). Again, none of this is to say that Abstract Expressionist artwork cannot be conceptually cognized—they certainly can. Consider Beauford Delaney's *Yellow Abstraction* (1961), where one might perceive its mustard yellow marks and consequently conceptually contain them as indices of the artist's attuned wrist and its flowing gesture. But, at least according to Merleau-Ponty and Greenberg, such a reflective cognitive operation requires a second-order reflective judgment upon the first-order experience, the latter of which takes place under "aesthetic distance".⁷³

CONCLUSION

Indeed, Greenberg's conception of "aesthetic distance" picks out a "a psychological description of a particular empirical state of mind."⁷⁴ As Costello

⁷² Neofetou, *Rereading Abstract Expressionism*, 131.

⁷³ Greenberg's account of "aesthetic distance" well comports with Merleau-Ponty's. This is also in keeping with de Kooning's argument against Rosenberg that there is no optical illusion in the perceptual experience of painting—for de Kooning, any recourse to measurable properties or judgments ignores "the very strength of painting"; see: De Kooning, *Works, Writings, Interviews*, ed. Sally Yard (Barcelona: Ediciones Polígrafa, 2007), 147. Similar accounts can be found in Motherwell's conception of painting as detached and "warm, sensual...felt" and David Smith's description of "touch[ing] with the eye". See: Motherwell, *The Collected Writings* 147; Smith quoted in Krauss, *Terminal Iron Works: Sculpture of David Smith* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971), 63. Although Merleau-Ponty does not make use of Abstract Expressionist artists in his account—instead turning to Giacometti, Cézanne, de Stael, Matisse, Klee, Richier, and Rodin—Schreyach has convincingly argued that Abstract Expressionism and Merleau-Ponty similarly reject "the objective viewpoint in order to comprehend the genesis of meaning in and through a subject's embodiment." See: Michael Schreyach, *Pollock's Modernism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 148.

⁷⁴ Costello, "Greenberg's Kant", 221.

correctly notes, relating this to Kantian disinterestedness means running together Kant's "transcendental theory of the epistemic conditions of [an] aesthetic judgment with a psychological description of a particular empirical state of mind."⁷⁵ As we have seen, Greenberg conflates specific empirical judgments of taste with what Kant called aesthetic judgments, which are grounded in "subjective purposiveness" for cognition in general. We have seen how Neofetou, Krauss, Freidman, Jones, and Fer's rejection of Kantian aesthetic theory of the basis of Greenberg's putative appeal to it is ill-founded. Engaging with Kant first-hand, we have also seen how Greenberg's conception of the experience of abstract art is, in fact, closer to the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty than Kant.

There has recently been admirable work on Kantian pure aesthetic judgments by the likes of De Duve. But, as I hope to have demonstrated, there may be good reason for philosophers of art and art historians/critics to turn towards away from the pure aesthetic judgments aroused by "free" beauty towards what Kant had to say about "adherent", or "dependent", beauty. For the conceptual richness wrought by the ideas of reason illuminate something deeper and more fundamentally human regarding the artworks from which they are elicited.

⁷⁵ Ibid.