The Artist and the Artisan

A Pamphlet for Contemporary Art

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Table of Contents

Introduction

As introduction to this essay, I reproduce hereafter an extract from my novel 'The Borgherini Enigma'.

The text needs some explanation of the narrative and a short introduction to the characters. The novel plays in Florence at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Young Pierfrancesco Borgherini has received an enigma to solve, but neither he nor his friends can find the solution to the encoded message. His friends are four painters called Francesco Ubertini or Bachiacca, Francesco d'Andrea di Marco Granacci, Andrea del Sarto and Jacopo Carucci da Pontormo. They help him in his quest. At a certain moment of the narrative, the painter Granacci proposes to call in the help of a former statesman called Niccolò di Bernardo dei Macchiavelli. Macchiavelli needs to be coerced into coming back to Florence, for he has gone into voluntary exile. He was evicted from authority when the Medici family regained control of the city after a period of republican government. Macchiavelli will know ow to decode the mysterious message.
Granacci proposes to invite Macchiavelli at the meeting of the 'Company of the Cauldron', evening dinners organised by another nobleman and artist of Florence, Giovanni Francesco dei Rustici. The invitation will show to Macchiavelli that he is still very welcome and appreciated in the city. The friends hope thus to incite Macchiavelli to return to Florence and help the men solve the coded enigma.
Rustici invites the members of the Company of the Cauldron in his palace, his friends being all Florentine artists and their invitees. The guests sit inside the two halves of an enormous wine barrel. The table on which the food is served rises up from the lower floor of the Rustici palace.
Rustici invites, but certain artists must bring a table of food, presented as a work of art, as a fine sculpture in meat, legumes, fruit and pastry. Granacci prepared such a table, paid for by Pierfrancesco Borgherini.

So, imagine a hall on the first floor of a Florentine palace, in the evening. The hall is illuminated by candles. The guests are sitting around a long, rectangular table on which the most exquisite food is presented as true works of art, and the artists talk.
When the food on the table is eaten, the table descends down onto the lower rooms through a large opening in the middle of the floor. A little later the table comes up again, as if rising from the underworld, filled with a new work of art in comestibles.

The extract from 'The Borgherini Enigma' begins:

'We have a problem, my friends,' Rustici declared.
The Company of the Cauldron looked at him, wondering what the issue might be.
'This dish,' Rustici continued 'calls on several questions for us to solve!' He paused. 'To begin, a piece of art must please. We can all agree to that. Why is this dish a piece of art then, because it pleases our palates or our eyes? Suppose the food were excellent, tasting extraordinary well, but the sculpture ugly. Should we then say the dish was not art?'

They all agreed that a fine dish was not necessarily art. Granacci said that a dish had to be pleasing to the eyes to be called a work of art, but a simple dish well-presented though not a sculpture, would be for him a work of art indeed.
'Then my cook makes many pieces of art and should be called an artist,' Rustici intervened.

'Why not?' Granacci wondered.
He argued then that even if the food was bad, putrefied and stinking, but finely sculpted, it would still be pleasing to the eyes and be a work of art.
No, no, said many others, bad food, even well sculpted, would rebuke and not be pleasing. The work would be gratifying to the eyes only, but certainly not to the mind. Rustici objected, for even a putrefying sculpture would be art, because one could pinch one's nose and still find the scene pleasing.
True, said the others, but why would one pinch one's nose? This food, finely presented, was a real object, and that object should be considered in its entirety. A work of art should not be pleasing just to the eyes, but to all the senses, in its entirety, to the mind. A stinking sculpture would not be pleasing, so not art.

'Well, I do not fully, wholeheartedly agree, but I accept your opinions so far,' Rustici said. 'Another issue is even more serious. The concept for this dish, this work of art, as we all agreed to call it thus, was proposed by the illustrious Ser Niccolò dei Macchiavelli, our friend.'
Macchiavelli beamed, but wondered where Rustici led the Company to.
'The composition, the design, was Granacci's,' Rustici continued. 'The work of assembling the dish was done by Granacci's grocer. What is the name of your grocer, Francesco?'
'My grocer's name is Dino di Guasparre Nori,' Granacci replied.
'So,' said Rustici, 'who then would we call the artist for this work of art? Niccolò had the idea; Granacci made the drawing; Dino assembled the pieces. Who is the artist? Where does the artist begin and the artisan start?'
'That is indeed not an innocent question!' Niccolò Macchiavelli exclaimed. 'Indeed, a painter might have an idea for a picture and have his assistants paint it. Would he then be the artist and his assistants the artisans? I suppose there would be no issue if the painter drew the composition in charcoal outlines himself, or drew the sinopia of a fresco picture, and his assistants then only filled in the colours; in such a case, I suppose, we would all agree that the painter really is the artist. But what about the artisans? If they filled in the drawing with fine colours, excellent chiaroscuro to show the volumes of the bodies by the shadows on the dresses, a fine landscape in the background, the play of light on a majolica vase or a glass filled with wine, would then the artisans also not be artists?'

The point was hotly disputed. The men agreed that more than the idea, more than the initial concept was necessary for the conceiver to be called an artist. The artist, to be called by that name, had at least to draw or to explain in detail a complete composition of the story of a picture - "story" in the way Leon Battista Alberti spoke of "istoria" -, the overall image. If the painter did this clumsily, he could not be called an artist, or at least not a good one.
The painters and sculptors in the cauldron of the wine vat agreed much less, however, about calling their assistants artists. Some argued assistants were indeed artisans, not artists. Others said the relation master-assistant was quite another thing than the relation artist-artisan. A master could have artists as assistants. Still, some men did not agree that assistants, or artisans, who did not design a composition, should be called artists, however finely the assistants could fill in details and colours. Of course, assistants could be artists when they designed a picture by themselves, but only then; as assistants they were artisans, not artists.
'Is it not strange, then,' Rustici marvelled, 'what happens to a painter-artist or a sculptor-artist who can design fine compositions and fine poses, which might very much please our minds, yet is incapable of painting nice details and fine colours. Would such a man be an artist?' Rustici let these words sink in.

'Such a painter might still produce fine pictures by the aid of his artisans-assistants,' Rustici argued with some cunning.
No, no, no, the artists shouted from out of the wine vat. An artist should be able to work as well, as finely, as his assistants. Otherwise he would not be a good artist.
'He would not be a good artist,' Rustici agreed, 'but would he be called artist nevertheless or not?'
Many were in favour, but not all.

'What is certain so far,' Niccolò Macchiavelli sighed, 'is that I am not an artist although I had the idea for the dish, and I wholeheartedly agree to that. We all said that Granacci is the artist for this "Judgement of Paris", for he composed a fine scene pleasing to the eye, the palate, the nose, and the mind. I would be happy to call Dino the grocer also by the name of artist, because he has assembled the various foods so diligently, with such skill and fine taste, in such matching nice colours and forms, that surely we have an extraordinary pleasing object before us.'
Although some noses went up, some fronts frowned, the wine helping, and nobody on this joyful evening wanting to begrudge Niccolò's proposal, all drank to Niccolò, to Granacci and to Dino di Guasparre.
Only Bachiacca continued to grumble, saying that however fine the craft applied, in food or in painting, a piece of art needed a soul to be called art, and only when an artisan infused a soul in a work could he be called an artist, the soul being the design, the story and the composition.

'Should we also not toast on the one who made this all possible?' Francesco Granacci asked. 'Without someone to pay for this dish, for any piece of art, there would be no art. So I propose to drink to our young friend, Pierfrancesco Borgherini, the commissioner, who allowed us this happiness!'
The Company of the Cauldron stood and drank to Pierfrancesco.
When the glasses were empty, Pierfrancesco remained standing and said solemnly, 'there is one more person to whose health we should drink, for if the noble Ser Giovanni Francesco Rustici had not founded this Company of the Cauldron and not offered us his palace, his servants, his wine, his decorations, his other dishes, his good mood, his generosity, his intelligence, then there would be no art this evening, and a lot less pleasure in our lives!'
The wine glasses were filled once more and emptied as readily. Rustici held his glass to Pierfrancesco, showing to all how pleased he was with the address of his new guest.

The supper was not at its end. The wine continued to flow way into the night.

Here ends the extract from 'The Borgherini Enigma'.

The text introduces several issues of works of art and of artists.
In the following essay we will develop the concept of the work of art as being constituted of two essential elements: on the one side the idea that lies at the basis of the creation, and on the other side the actual production of the work.
The idea for a work always originates in the mind of the artist, but in many works of art, especially in very many contemporary works, the work stops there for the artist, and the work of the artisan, of the craftsman, begins. Sometimes the artist is also the craftsman, but not always.

Just when does the craftsman begin, when does the work of the artist end, and does the artist need also to be the craftsman who realises the idea?
Is the artisan, who did not conceive the idea for the work of art never an artist?

These are some of the questions that will be handled hereafter. While doing so we will try to define what art is, how art is contemplated or experienced, and handle many other questions about art, artists and artisans.

What is art?

Before embarking on discussions of the artist and the artisan, a practical working definition of what is understood by the word *art* might be useful. We should at least understand a little of what we are talking about.

Art is a word with many meanings. In this essay we will not handle art as a branch of learning taught in academics, not as the dexterity of performing certain actions acquired by study or experience, not as the application of a skill to obtain a desired result, and not as a method of doing some specialised work.
In this essay we will therefore not talk about the art of masonry, of carpentry, of metal working, and so on. We consider these as skills or crafts, even though they can also be denoted by the word of *art*.

The definition of art has remained very controversial. Look up the word *art* in dictionaries and encyclopaedias, and you will find as many definitions as there exist books or electronic texts, if you find any satisfactory definition at all. Many authors have doubted art can be defined, and as many others have even doubted the usefulness of a definition.
Nevertheless, we need a working definition.
We believe a few common features can be deduced from all the existing definitions or descriptions of the word *art*.
Art can be used in the sense of creative art and in the sense of a *skill*.

In general, to distinguish art from the above meanings of what we do not mean by the word of *art* in essays such as this, one distinguishes between *fine arts* and the above meanings.

In this essay therefore, we will mean by *art* in fact the fine arts. Hereafter follows a proposal for a working definition. The definition of the author of this article fro what he experienced as fine art is as follows.

Art is the expression of ideas formed in the human spirit in such a way that it creates an aesthetic feeling in the spectator. A work of art is beautiful, original, and made by the artist with outstanding artisanal skill.

Important elements in this definition are the terms *idea*, *creation* and *aesthetic feelings* induced.

Art is a creative activity, but what the aesthetic feeling actually amounts to is not specified in this definition. The aesthetic feeling may lie only with the created object, or it may lie in the intentions of the creator of the object or work or expression. Nevertheless, the activity or the resulting work of art must engender feelings of aesthetic in the spectator.

The main criterion in the above definition is of course the word *aesthetic.* I deliberately left it in my definition even though some authors have argued that art has nothing to do with the aesthetic. I believe the word to be essential in the definition, and to belong inextricably to it. The word aesthetic means something beautiful.

The aesthetic is concerned with beauty or with the appreciation of beauty, with something that has a pleasant appearance to our senses and mind.

The English language denotes with the word art every creative activity. We add the word *fine* to emphasize the aesthetic, but the word *beauty* or *aesthetic* is also not directly expressed with the term '*fine'*. Other languages are more specific. Museums of Fine Arts are called in French '*Musées des Beaux-Arts'* and in Dutch '*Museums voor Schone Kunsten'*. In French and in Dutch, the word beauty is thus explicitly added, in '*beau*' and in '*schone*'. The fine arts lack meaning if we do not join *beautiful* or *aesthetic* to it. That word is therefore essential in the definition.

The expression or the work of art must create feelings of beauty. Beauty may mean a form of intense satisfaction. It does not necessarily mean ethical or moral, but the art must give the spectator a feeling that something beautiful is created, either in the intention, in the expression or in the work of art itself.

In the proposed definition we must take account of two actors, of the one who creates a work of art and who expresses himself or herself, and of the spectator who experiences the work of art. The dichotomy allows for the spectator to remain the ultimate judge of the experience of the aesthetic. The spectator may perceive beauty in what the creator, the artist, expressed, or he or she may not. One spectator may perceive the aesthetic in pleasant feelings, the other may not, which accounts for the differences in what we call *taste*.
It seems trivial to deduce that if no other human being but the artist deems a work an object or an expression or an intention worthy of being called beautiful, that work can hardly be called art.

The above definition provides us with a few criteria for a work of art:

1 The creator, the artist, must have had the intention to produce a beautiful work or object or expression.

2 The work or object or expression must have aesthetic properties, it must be beautiful in form or expression and please the spectator.

3 It must have the capacity to convey its intention of beauty, to convey emotions from creator to spectator.

Must the work of art be intellectually challenging? We believe not necessarily, and nothing in our definition demands that. Some spectators may feel heightened aesthetic emotions from understanding the deeply hidden beauty (see later more about this notion). Other spectators may be very satisfied by the simple, direct, outward, instantaneous view or experience of the work or expression as such. The aesthetic feelings may also come independently of the moral or ethical value of the expression nor work. The expression or work also does not have to belong to any established art form.

Everything above emphasises the aesthetic character of the experience. Without aesthetic feelings of perception one cannot call an expression or work with the word of *art*.
This assertion seems simple, trivial and generally accepted, but we will provide examples later in this essay of works of art that do not satisfy this criterion at all and yet seem to have

been accepted in the art world as fine art. Contemporary so-called art is wrought with works that even violate this first rule in the definition.

The definition of art has been controversial, so that some authors have arrived at such simple but circular definition as ‘art is what the artist says is art’ or ‘art is what the artist does’. Such definitions may hold much wisdom, but they allow for anybody to take, grab or produce whatever object or expression, and call it art. The so-called artist might take an object from his water-closet, his chair, his dog, bring it to a museum, exhibit it, and call it art. This expression or work hardly satisfies our definition of art as presented above.

Other authors have defined the value of art in terms of what the expression or work added, contributed, to the concept of art. In other words, artists question the nature of the concept of art, and in doing so create art. The notion of aesthetic does not necessarily enter such expressions or works. Therefore such expressions or works, especially when they do not provide feelings of aesthetic in the spectator, do not satisfy our basic definition of art.
The questioning of the nature of art may of course be very interesting for the sake of definitions and help us to understand art better, but the expressions or works are not necessarily art when the aesthetic lacks. When they do not convey a feeling of beauty, they cannot be called art. They may be objects displayed, objects that shock or question us, but they not necessarily deserve the qualification of art. This argument means a rejection of the so-called Conceptual Art, which does just that – add to the understanding of the concept of art – when the expression or the work is not beautiful. Everything that is interesting is not necessarily beautiful.
Of course, objects intended as being Conceptual Art can also be beautiful, and thereby satisfy our definition – as well as question us on the nature of art.

The aim of a work of art is to induce feelings of beauty in the spectator. The fine arts engage the audience’s aesthetic sensibilities.
It is hard to define beauty, but words such as admiration, pleasure, fascination, stimulation, pleasure, inner peace come to mind and are generally associated with the feeling. Shock, turmoil, utter surprise, aversion, revolt, disgust, come not to the mind. Beauty appeals to our better feelings, not to feelings of violence, decadence, horror, and of the macabre or of ugliness. A beautiful object must please and be enjoyable.
A beautiful object is something that can be admired, an object that possesses features by which we experience an intense pleasure or satisfaction, to which we feel attracted and by which we feel emotionally well.
Ugliness is the contrary. Ugly things are unpleasant to look at, harsh to listen to, etc. Beauty is a different concept than the interesting and the provoking. Interesting things may appeal to our intellectual capacities, may surprise us, but they do not necessarily appeal to our emotional pleasure, to our sense of aesthetics.

Aesthetics, the other big word used in this essay, is a branch of philosophy which deals with the nature of beauty, of art and of taste. It is the study of what beauty is, of what constitutes beauty.

Taste would then be the personal appreciation of the degree of beauty present or showing in the object or expression. We allow for differences in taste. My taste is different from yours. We accept somebody to love and feel fine with Pop Art, for instance, if only he or she perceives feelings of beauty.

The creator of fine art is called an *artist*.

The philosophy of beauty is called aesthetics, as mentioned. Scholars have been studying aesthetics and publishing their opinions on that subject since more than two thousand years. That may have been so because the concepts of art and beauty are so difficult to define and because the views on art and beauty have changed constantly. By analysing art as a communication system, we can situate the notions of art and beauty and present a proposal for their definition.

Some authors have argued that a work of art is a tautology in that it is a presentation of the artist's intention. The artist claims that this particular work of art is art, which means is a definition of art. Thus, that it is art is true a priori. When someone calls a work art, it is art. Art is a tautology that defines itself.
This is a perfectly workable statement. An artist creates something because he or she has a need to express his or her emotions or inspirations, and a need to propose this expression to other humans in the system of communication. The artist may construct a work primarily because of the pleasure of creation, but ultimately there is always present the desire to communicate, to present the work to the appreciation by spectators. The artist decides to present his or her work as a work of art. He or she decides on the qualification '*art'*.

Calling something *art* does not mean however that the entire world now should applaud the work and like it.
Calling something *art* and liking a work, are two entirely different notions and the first does not cause the second.
The act of liking, of appreciating a work is an act of the receiver of the communicated message, of the spectator. We will explain art as a communication system in more detail in a later chapter.
In the act of perceiving the work of art, the artist is not physically present. He or she can have no immediate influence and take no immediate role. The artist can try to influence the spectator, but the spectator is free to like or not the work of art. In principle, the spectator considers only the message given by the artist, which is the work of art.
When the spectator likes the work, he or she can agree with the qualification *art* or want to reject it.
So, once the work of art finished and presented, the work may be appreciated or not. The spectators may have emotions of pleasure or of interest, be pleased, surprised, and delighted by what they see. The spectator may feel very different emotions also, of intellectual interest for instance, and derive pleasure from that. This pleasure, which often contains recognition of the message of the artist, is the very aim of the work of art. Take care, however, not to confuse the term 'interesting' with the words aesthetic or beauty.
A work of art stands separate from any other aim. If the work of art will also be used in practical life it may be called artisanal work, or as decoration, but it retains the quality of art.

The spectator of a work of art decides on what is beautiful. Nobody else can claim the arrogance to tell him or her what he or she should like.

Whether you like a work of art or not is entirely your individual appreciation. Since the liking is as much decided by the evocation of emotions, and since emotions that lead to pleasure can be so manifold as there are individuals on the planet, each spectator has his or her individual and mostly intuitive set of values to decide on the fact of whether he or she likes the work,

that is how he or she derives a kind of pleasure from the contemplation or the experience of the work. That is *taste*.
One person may like a work of art and the other person may dislike it. It may become possible that no spectator at all likes the work of art, or spectators may only start to appreciate art long after the death of the artist. It is even possible that no spectator, not ever, appreciates the work. In this last case, the work of art disappears from history! It will very probably be destroyed soon, and the name of the artist will be forgotten in the common memory.

So, spectators can affirm their absolute, undeniable and unalienable right to interpret and to evaluate a painting according to their own judgement, to their own taste. Beauty is a very relative quality.

Spectators also have a few duties. They must search for the real intention of the artist. It is rare for an artist to declare and fully disclose on his or her particular work of art. Often also, the idea that an artist started with evolved during the work. The final work of art presented may come to mean and present something entirely different from the idea of the beginning. This point is not always acknowledged by the artist.
Still, the explanations given by an artist remain the closest to the real intentions of the painting, and it is more valuable than the conclusions of a spectator or a critic. But even when the intentions of the artist are known, another meaning and significance can be laid in the work of art by the spectator. This evaluation is justified as much as the artist's intention. We prefer the original intentions of the artist, of course, and will seek out this *truth*, but we will allow for other meaning and significance, as expressed by spectators.
Some artists, notably Symbolist artists, have played consciously on the ambiguity of meaning. They produced works that were intended by the artist to be interpreted variably by spectators. The only criterion that could be applied very broadly to an audience's opinion is that the arguments must remain plausible and justifiable in the terms of the interpretation and evaluation of that audience.

The fine arts are not the only arts, the word *art* otherwise used is in the meaning of *craft* or *skill*.
The creator of a product of any other art than the creative arts is called an *artisan*. The difference in the words of *artist* and *artisan* make only sense, once more, when we take into account the word *beauty*.
By artisan we mean a skilled manual worker, a craftsman. An artisan produces works, objects, which are utilitarian, designed to be useful rather than attractive. The artisan takes pride, however, not only in making objects that are useful but also beautiful, so that the distinction between artist and artisan is not always obvious.
The word *creative* can therefore not make a strong case for the difference between artists and artisans; a craftsman creates things and is therefore creative too. The artisan is creative and his or her activity is an art, but not necessarily fine art. His or her objects are not necessarily primarily destined to be admired as such, but to be used. The primary aim of his or her products are utilitarian. I have to admit here that currently, I find many works produced by artisans more beautiful than works produced by so-called artists, and therefore more prone to be called fine art.

Again and still, holding out the word *beauty* in a definition of the fine arts seems senseless. The products of the fine arts are not utilitarian; they exist for their beauty only, they demand to be admired for their aesthetic qualities, for their beauty. They may be utilitarian, but not necessarily so.

The fine arts are works of beauty produced for normal-minded people. Do we have to include in art objects that seem beauty to the deranged mind? Most people will suppose not. We have not to enumerate what kinds of deranged minds exist and then explain what kinds of objects might appeal to such minds. The list would be endless.
Yet, in that list would not be mentioned the beautiful objects that are provoking or are ugly at first sight and yet have been made with the best of intentions, and with great skill.
We all know the example of Francisco de Goya's drawings of the disasters of war, which are terrible in idea but wonderful in execution, and produced with the best of intentions, namely to show what war can lead to. Such drawings are true fine art.

Liking and appreciating art is a matter of emotions primarily. The intellectual interest of a work of art can be more or less explained so that the spectator can be assisted, can be taught in that aspect. The aspect of evoking pure emotions in a spectator at the experience of a work of art cannot be entirely taught, however. It seems to be an innate quality that belongs to the human nature. Emotions may well up spontaneously, and grow powerfully in an individual at the sight of a work of art, whereas another person may not be moved at all by the work. The same person may be in a more receptive mood for art at one time than at another moment. Appreciating a work called art by an artist is thus a very individual, subjective affair.

The appreciation by a spectator is not on *beauty* alone, however, whatever the meaning of that word.
Appreciating a work of art consists mainly of three stimuli in the spectator.
The first stimulus is the amount and the force of the emotions evoked in the spectator at first impression. When these emotions appeal to the spectator instead of being emotions of horror or of rejection, then a work of art is appreciated in the first crucial moment of learning to know the work.
As a second stimulus, the spectator can admire the artisanal and compositional skills of the artist in what we may call the discovery phase.
The last stimulus lies in the recognition of the ideas and inspiration of the artist, as well as in the information about the artist's self, his or her life and history. In this phase also we will discover how the work of art enriches us.

In all these descriptions of the appreciation of a work of art, we have not used the word *beauty*, as the word appeals in various and many ways to spectators, in ways that have nothing to do with possible aspects of *beauty*. It is perfectly possible for a spectator to like and feel pleasure at a picture that looks ugly at first sight. How then can we define that word *beauty*?
Beauty is a quality of the appreciation by the spectator of a work of art.
It is linked to the spectator, and to the individual spectator alone.
Every individual person can define his or her concepts of beauty, and mostly, these concepts come intuitively.

For instance in the art of painting, one person can define beauty as the quality of a work of art that is created by the gentle harmony of the lines and shapes of a painting, by the harmony of the composition and the use of colours more or less according to Chevreul's findings on harmonies of colour, even though we know that the appreciation of colours remains extremely individual. For that same person beauty may also mean that the content of the picture might be either absent – in abstract art – or nice and sweetly picturesque. Beauty then often is a general term used to indicate impressions of joy, cheerfulness, brightness of hues, lyrical moods, and for instance to qualify the detailed rendering of natural landscapes.

Very beautiful - or sublime- could mean that the picture has a high moral content and inspires ideas of heroism, of power or of spiritual transcendence. But you, reader, may have another and better definition for yourself.

Every individual may use different criteria in the definition of beauty. If art is what the artist says is art and spectators may like a picture or not. *Beauty*, though not necessarily in the sense of sweetness, is a *conditio sine qua non* for the qualification of what is to be art, or for the necessity of liking by the spectator.

Beauty, as defined by sweetness and picturesque, may take a secondary place in the general appreciation of art. When people like art, many more feelings and impressions may grasp the spectator than the mere prettiness of the representation. Beauty in harmony is but one possible reason why a spectator can like and appreciate a work of art. By principle, there are no definite rules for appreciating art.

The liking or appreciation of beauty only lies with the spectator (at the receiver's end in the communication system). And this cannot be imposed by the artist.

Formalism and the undefinable

The writer of this article is foremost a formalist. He is an engineer and a mathematician. He has obtained university degrees in that science and in that applied science. He has extensively studied the elements of style in the art of painting: how are lines, forms, composition, the use of colours, perspective, shadowing, etc. been used by the painter to convey feelings. The writer is inclined to judge a painting by how well a painter has intelligently used these elements of style to induce emotions of beauty and of interest or of repulsion in viewers.
The author realises, of course, there is more to art than pure form. While beauty is so difficult or sheer impossible to define, there is something yet more in a work of art that what can be analysed in scientific terms.

We, spectators, should distinguish between the outer beauty of a work of art and its inner beauty.
The outer beauty, the exterior beauty, the formal beauty, should mean the use of the elements of style of the particular art to create feelings, impressions of beauty in the viewer. This use of the elements of style can be examined scientifically. The psychology of the viewer comes into play, of course. This last domain has been the subject of several investigations and essays. We know the colour red means danger. We know an oblique line used by a painter means feelings of movement induced in a viewer. Outer beauty can be analysed. It can be the subject of study by an analyst of form and a rather objective judgement can be formulated about it.
Work of art, however, have something more. They have a soul. They radiate an inner, internal beauty. This quality is much more difficult to define. Many considerations can be proposed about this inner beauty. However difficult it is to define, how much it differs from work to work, we can nevertheless talk about the notion and provide lines of thinking about it. For a definition of fine works of art, this inner beauty must be dined, however difficult the task.

We add here three additional qualities for great works of art, for the seemingly undefinable inner qualities of good works of art.

A work of art incites in the spectator the need to understand the origin of the emotions and reflexions he or she experiences. Inner beauty indicates the intentions of the artist towards the aesthetic, and it tends to make of the spectators enriched, better individuals.

A truly fine work of art incites the spectator always to want to find out more about the picture, the sculpture, the song, the dance, etc. The spectator probes his or her emotions and reflexions the work of art has brought about. It brings us to want to understand our feelings and to understand how these feelings have been provoked. A fine work of art always induces a need to understand and to seek for more of the same.

The spectator's curiosity is enticed. He or she wonders about the intentions of the artist with the work. Why was it essential to the artist to present this work? Why did he or she feel the need to express herself or himself in this particular way? Who was this artist? What messages are contained in the work? Was the work made merely to show a pretty piece, or are more fundamental messages conveyed? Does the work of art have a soul of its own or is it merely a piece of decoration? Was it meant to have a soul, or is it a soulless object? We could add many other considerations and items of introspect here.

Finally, a truly fine work of art should make us feel better, more satisfied, and happier than before, for having seen, heard or experienced the work. Without this feeling, the work of art is a piece of junk, pure kitsch, soulless, bereft of flavour, something without interest, something to be discarded immediately. The spectator must feel connected with the mysterious, with something that is transcending his or her material being, urges him or her to higher experiences than his or her everyday reality.

The arts

The expression and the works of fine art have been classified. For the purpose of this essay it is not necessary to dress an exhaustive list of the activities that produce works or expression of art. We should mention the most frequent ones applied. We will talk of architecture, sculpture, painting, music, poetry and prose, dancing, theatre and cinema, and photography.

Among these fine arts, we should distinguish between arts and performing arts. Some of the arts mentioned above have a double aspect, they are constituted of arts combined. A few examples may clarify this concept.

First an example of a 'single' art. A painter may have an idea for a painting, after which he or she produces his or her work, his or her painting. This artist who had an idea expressed himself or herself in a work of art. He or she not only had the idea. He or she also produced the actual work.

In an example of a 'double' art, an architect may have formed an idea for a building. He or she created preliminary sketches and then he or she drew the final plans for the building. These plans and what they represent in the imagination of the spectator constitute the work of art.
The plans demand, however, that they be realised into the actual building, into the building of bricks or stones, cement or steel, or of any other material of the real building. We admire usually only the finished building as the work of art, even though the architect has not put one brick above the other. We still say the architect is the artist of the work.

In a third example, a choreographer expresses his ideas, his feelings, in a choreographic language on paper, in a plan of scenes and dance movements. This plan or choreography is later performed a number of times. More than one artist is here at work. We call the choreographer by the name of *artist*, but we also call the dancers artists. Moreover there must exist a master dancer who interprets the work of the original choreographer, and who can be called an artist too, because he or she adds his or her own ideas to the performance. More than one artist is at work. We also call the dancers artists for the way in which they interpret the commands of the master and of the choreographer. Dancing is a performing art.

The same is true for the author of a theatre play. The author of the play delivers a work of art in the form of the piece of literature that is the play. The director interprets the phrases of the play, stages the play, and the actors that perform the play are artists in their own right. These 'second' artists, the master dancers, the dancers, the theatre director and the actors, add their own idea to the work of art and then form a work of art in their turn, the dance or the play performed.
We make a distinction between the elaboration of the choreography and the dance performance as two separate works of arts.
We do not think much, however, about the distinction while such art is being performed.
For our essay, the distinction is quite essential. In the same way, when we say that theatre is an art, we should distinguish between at least three activities of art, the activities of the playwright, of the director and of the actors.
This distinction is basic and very significant.

The distinction plays of course also in the art of music, for instance in a piece of music written for a symphonic orchestra. The piece of music is conceived by a composer, the orchestra director interprets the piece, and each musician in the orchestra is an artist for his part of the piece.

And what to say for a film, in which several arts come together, the scenario, the directing act and the acting by film actors, the music and the film editing afterwards.

A problem arises with the art of photography. The problem is twofold.
First, one may walk around with a camera in hand and take photographs of whatever meets the camera's eye by chance.
When one takes hundreds of such photographs, there will usually be one or two in the batch that are show beautiful and striking scenes. There will be very little idea of the artist in such pictures.
One or two will also prove technically almost perfect. There will be very little skill of the artist in such pictures.
Exhibiting these photographs produced by chance, and for which no special skill has been applied, seems hardly an exhibition of a fine art.
We should therefore consider photography as a fine art only when the photographer has deliberately sought a particular beautiful subject and then applied great skill to the technological medium used.

The phases in the creation of a work of art

Important to notice in the various art forms is that the activity always has two distinct phases. Phase one consists of the formulation of the idea for the work or the expression. Phase two is the execution of the idea into the work of art, the production stage.
In view of the analysis of the preceding chapter, we must not forget that certain arts, though called by one word, are art forms in which several activities of art come together, each activity always being characterised by the two phases. Examples may illustrate this.

For example in the art of painting, the painter has first an idea of the subject he or she wants to paint, of which colours he or she wants to apply. The artist decides on the mood the painting will show, what composition of forms the painting should present, in general on how the style elements of the art of painting should be used. Later, in phase two, the painter actually produces the painting, the work of art. While actually painting, he or she can still adapt his or her idea, but usually not in a major way.

In architecture, the architect forms an idea of the building in his imagination. He or she represents the volumes of the rooms in his or her mind. In phase two, the architect draws the sketches for the plans of the building.

The playwright or the novelist thinks in phase one about his or her subject, his or her plot, his or her characters, the background for the play or novel, etc. In phase two he or she writes the play or the novel.

It is essential for what follows to understand well the difference between these two phases.

The artist cannot produce a work of art without a phase one, but he or she does not always have to execute phase two himself or herself. We must illustrate this with a few examples.

A painter may work in a studio with assistant-painters. How does he or she proceed? The painter has an idea for a painting, for instance for a landscape painting. He or she draws on a canvas the outlines of the landscape.
Then, he or she allows one of his or her assistants to paint the sky and the clouds in the sky. Another assistant will paint the wood beneath the sky. A third assistant paints the river, a fourth paints a few figures walking along the river, a fifth the pastures. When the assistants have finished, the master-painter may be satisfied with the result, or he or she may not be thoroughly satisfied, upon which he or she will make a few, last changes to the result. The master-painter may add a few clouds in the sky, bring more intricate detail on the leaves of the trees, add the effect of sunrays on the water of the river, and so on.
Still, we call such paintings as executed entirely by the hand of the master-painter, unless we can distinctly recognise the work of an assistant.
Phase one is the exclusive work, the exclusive expression of the master-painter, but phase two is not executed exclusively by the master-painter. In common practice, the work of art is a work done in community, but according to one idea, the idea of the master-painter.

In general we call the assistant-painters artisans, in that they work according to the idea of a master. The aim of their work is to assist, to be useful to the artist, to the painter. If they add idea to the painting we must call them artists; if they do not add idea to the picture, we can

call them artisans. When they add ideas to the final product, however, they too should be called artists.
Of course, assistant-painters who produce their own work, according to their own ideas, are then artists by their own right.

In a second example, a sculptor makes a clay statue with his hands. This clay statue, a model, is not higher than one foot. The sculptor continuously changes the statue, he or she may start all over several times, until the sculpture in clay expresses well the idea he or she had in his or her imagination, the statue he or she wanted to create. We are still in phase one.
In phase two, the sculptor hands over the statue in clay of only one foot high to assistants. These start hacking and chiselling at a block of marble or of French stone of three metres high. The sculptor may well never learn to use a chisel, but order his assistants to chip here or there more to render the final statue of three metres high conformant to the idea the sculptor had in his head.
It would never enter our mind to give as name of the sculpture, for the work of art, the name of one of the assistants. The name given to the creator of the work of art is the name of the person who had the original idea for the work and has given indications to his or her assistants as to how the work of art should be produced.
The assistants, the craftsmen, who added nothing to the idea, are called artisans. Their aim is to assist, to be useful to the artist.
The picture blurs, of course, when the assistants add ideas to the work of art, which is often the case. Then, the names of several persons should be mentioned as creators of the piece of art, even though this is seldom done. When artisans add ideas to a work of art, they should be called artists.

In architecture, one might argue that phase one ends with the detailed plans of the building and that phase two is the actual building. We will consider architecture as a ‘double’ art, however.
The architect formulates the idea for the building, imagines the layout of the volumes, then he or she draws up the detailed plans. We may regard as phase two the production of these detailed plans, from the sketches and ideas of phase one. The architect may draw the plans himself, or present his sketches to professional draughtsmen to produce the final, detailed plans. Nowadays, this production phase is more often than not done with electronic means. The architect uses then the functions of a computer program to represent walls and volumes, instead of using a professional draughtsman for his plans. During this production stage, especially when working with digital computer programs, many modifications can still be introduced by way of experiment. The computer program allows many such modifications to be made at low cost. We are still in the production phase of the plans, however.
Afterwards, when the plans are ready, begins a second activity, the actual building according to the plans. Either the architect directs the building phases, or an assistant, a master-mason or a director. We cannot deny that the architect supervises the actual building phases usually only infrequently. The master-mason or master-builder must then make his or her own decision concerning certain aspects of the building, which makes of him or her – when he or she adds his her own ideas to the conception of the real building – equally an artist.
The master-builder looks at the plans, makes final adaptations, which must also be called a phase of idea, and then he or she enters the final production phase, which is actually the placing of brick upon brick, stone upon stone, making the wooden casings for the cement walls, placing the steel beams, and so on.

In this way, architecture become a ‘double’ art with twice the double phases of idea and production. When the architect is the master-builder, he or she become one and the same actor of the two arts.
Architecture is thus rather a ‘double’ art than one sole art with a design stage and a building stage, the more so when we consider that one plan can be executed a number of times without the least intervention of the architect.

We accept readily that certain art activities are ‘double’ or even ‘multiple’ art activities, but we accept it rarely for certain other arts.

For example, we accept readily that architecture and all the performing arts are ‘multiple’ arts. It is quite natural for an architect to produce plans and for an entrepreneur to actually build the structure. We do not readily accept, however, that painting and sculpture are delivered as ‘multiple’ arts. We do want our architect to draw a few sketches and then hand over the work of producing detailed plans to an assistant. We want a choreographer to design the dances and scenes as detailed as possible himself or herself. We allow a composer to deliver the partition of a sonata to future directors.
We usually do not allow a painter to only deliver a rough outline of a picture to his or her assistants. We do not allow a sculptor to provide only a rough description of a statue to his or her assistants. We prefer a painter to actually also paint physically, produce his or her picture. We prefer a sculptor to chisel himself or herself at the actual statue.

Idea and production

In the previous paragraph we have established that all works of art are produced in two phases, in the idea phase and the production phase. Which of these two phases is the most important?

One might be tempted to argue that the idea for a work of art is the only important element. Once the idea conceived, this idea of the work contains the essence, the soul and the justification for the work of art. It is in the idea that the artist, the creator of the work, distinguishes himself or herself from other artists.
The idea is the work of the spirit, and the spirit has always been considered the better of manual work. Thinking has more value than actually doing something with one's hands or one body. The idea phase is the realm of the designer, of the engineer, of the artist, the essence of the creative art, whereas the production phase was the realm of the craftsman who executes without thinking, merely using his or her tools among which of course his or her hands.
The generally accepted view has therefore been that the idea is noble, unique, rare, whereas the actual production of a work is repeatable, can be executed by many in the same way and is in every aspect inferior to the spiritual work of finding and refining the idea, the design. The noble and the sublime lies in the idea, it is here that the artist shows his or her true nature, whereas the production phase is the phase of the craftsman, the phase of the artisan.

We must revisit this view on the fine arts.

Is the view that the idea for a work of art is rare, unique, demanding a considerable talent the right one?

Works of art are designed, devised, by human beings. It seems trivial to state that what characterises all human beings is that they can think and imagine things.
Thinking, dreaming up something, imagining an object, is not, however, a very rare phenomenon at all. Everybody can think of an object, draw its contours in his or her mind. Everybody can imagine a dance or a drama, think of fine scenes for a poem. Contrary to maybe accepted views, ideas are not rare at all!
People who have organised brainstorming sessions in enterprises are generally surprised at the wealth of ideas, often very original and out-of-the-box that emerge from such sessions. Enterprises organise such sessions to tap the minds of their employees and dig for fine, original ideas. Very few people are unable to imagine at least the basic forms of a cathedral. Ideas are not rare, the creative spirit is inherent to all men and women. Ideas are not rare and not restricted to the happy few, to the enlightened spirits, to the noble intellectuals or to the artists.

On the other hand, are craftsmen who can deliver really marvellous objects by the work of their own hands or by their special skills, also technologically, so numerous? We use the word of *specialists* often to denote unique skills. Not many men or women can sculpt a wooden piece of furniture with intricate curves and patterns as excellent cabinet-makers do. Not many people can master the technique of violin-playing to excellence. We must accept that there are much less excellent craftsmen or artisans than people who can think.

Why then do we consider the idea as compared to the actual making of a work of art so much more valuable?

Let us illustrate this with an example. 'The Birth of Venus' of Sandro Botticelli is a well-known painting of the Italian Renaissance period.
We admire in this painting both the idea, the subject of the painting, and the skill with which Botticelli has represented his idea for a painting. The painter had first the idea of showing a nude Venus standing in a shell of her element, the sea, from which she was born. Botticelli has had to read texts on Greek myths to be able to come up with this subject. He imagined her gracious posture as a modest Venus, flanked to the left by the figures of the winds representing the spirit, and to the right by a girl who might represent nature and birth that serve the Venus.
The painter imagined a composition of figures in a background of sea and earth, the latter depicted as a few trees forming a wood behind the girl representing nature. We admire Botticelli for the grace of his figures and for the fine composition. Looking at the grace gives us pleasure.
We admire equally much, however, the skill with which Botticelli painted all the intricate details of the folds of the thin robe of the girl representing nature, the way the folds sculpt the body of the girl, the tiny flowers painstakingly painted on the robe, and the way the waves of the curls of her hair are drawn and then coloured. We also admire the way Botticelli has painted the light of the sun on the leaves of the trees, each leaf being painted separately, and we admire how much work the artist spent in painting such detail.
In paintings of Sandro Botticelli we admire as much the idea of the painter, the idea imagined during the idea phase, as his particular talent and skill in the act of painting itself, in the realisation of his idea in the production phase. In Botticelli's century, by the way, painters were considered craftsmen first and it would have been unheard-of for a painter not to display extraordinary skills.

In fact, with Sandro Botticelli, we must admit that most people admire much more the enormous talent of the craftsman of the art of painting, more than his intelligence of taking up the subject of the birth of Venus and of representing the Venus the way he did. The artistic value of the 'Birth of Venus' lies more in the very rare, extraordinary talent of Botticelli as a craftsman of painting than in the talent of imagination of the scene, which is after all not so difficult to think of and to compose.
A specialist of the use of elements of style in the art of painting may find this picture in the design even weak. Indeed, the composition is not well balanced around the Venus on left and right, the right figure is too heavy in form as compared to the left figures.

We admire in art that gives us true pleasure of aesthetic feelings as much if not more what is done by the artist during the production phase, than what is done during the idea phase. And yet, conventional thinking seems to grant an enormous preference to the idea phase.
We tend to believe that the artist is characterised by the idea for the work, and that artisans are common people who would never have been able to produce the idea. We should, however, give as much attention in a work of art to the execution as to the idea, for the essence and the value of a work of art lies in both equally, in the excellence of the idea and in the excellence of execution. We also generally appreciate an artist as much for the idea as for his or her talent in the execution, the forming, the production of the work of art.

What happens when one of both aspects of a work of art are lacking?

A painting, a sculpture, a dance without an excellent idea remains lacklustre, uninteresting, lacking inspiration, dull, lacking originality and character. Such a work of art does not capture our attention. We still may admire the skill with which it is painted or sculpted or performed, and hence have its place in a museum, purely loved for the sill of the artisan. It lacks, however, the sparkle of the spirit.
A work of art made with a wonderful idea and not finely produced, does also not very much attract our attention.
The common feeling for such works is, 'I could have made such a thing too. I too can think of something like this! Why is this placed in an exhibition area?'
Such a work of art lacks value in the eye of the beholder, it is hard to admire. It is not considered to be exceptional and exceptionally beautiful, hence also it remains uninteresting.

The reason is of course that excellent artisans are rare and exceptional, whereas we all possess the ability for imaginative and creative thinking. This last point is extremely difficult to accept by intellectuals, also by the intellectuals who write about art and who exhibit art. We are too much attracted by the idea for a work tan by the artisan skills needed to produce it.

The issues of the Borgherini Enigma solved

We are now able to discuss more and even provide answers to the issues presented to us by the character of Rustici in the 'Borgherini Enigma.'

Suppose the food on the table was excellent but the sculpture ugly, would the dish then be art?

No, the object of the dish would then merely be to sustain, not to present a thing of beauty. On the other hand, if the food was bad but the sculpture beautiful, the object of the sculpture would have been to present a thing of beauty. Too bad if the food cannot be eaten, the sculpture would exist as a sculpture, as a fine thing.
A simple dish well-presented would also be art, for being well presented it would have a fine idea embedded in it, and the tasty food would prove fine craftsmanship of the excellent grocer or cook. We are not going to insult French cooks by claiming gastronomy is not an art. It is!

A work of art must be pleasing not just to the eyes but to all the senses. A stinking sculpture would not be pleasing, not be art.

We should rather agree with this statement. A work of art must please the senses and the mind. One may look at food and not eat it because the food does not taste good, but still find the sculpture beautiful. When the food is putrefied, the aspect cannot be beautiful, and if it stinks, the sculpture would not be very pleasing, therefore not be art. When the information from the senses is contradictory, the work of art can hardly be pleasing to the mind. Beauty being the most important characteristic sought, the issue can rapidly be solved by using fresh food.

Who is the artist, the person who offered the first idea, the person who elaborated on the idea, or the person who assembled the sculpture?

We have already answered this question in the preceding chapters. For a true work of art, we prefer the artist to have the sparkle of the idea, to have elaborated the idea and to have the excellent skill to be able to produce the fine object or expression. When one of these phases lacks with a particular artist, the artist is less admired.
One must accept the production phase to be executed in certain cases by other people, but not without the regular presence of the artist, of his or her indications and modifications to the ultimate work. The artist should have the master skills of the artisan. We admire the work of art all the more if it is produced, made, expressed, with the special talent of the excellent craftsmanship of the artist himself or herself.
In 'The Borgherini Enigma,' Macchiavelli only provided a theme, not really an idea. Granacci elaborated on the theme by an idea of the composition and other final aspects of the sculpture. He is the artist. If Dino only executed what Granacci told him, placing the artichokes and the sugar where Granacci told him to, then Dino is the artisan. But Dino may have chosen the food by which to build the sketch of a scene. Dino then added his own ideas and of course his very special skills as a grocer to the sculpture, and he should be called an artist, too.

How do we admire a work of art?

We admire works of art when they are beautiful. The definition of beauty remains nevertheless elusive and complex. We express the concept sometimes with words like *harmony* and *balance*, but rarely dare to come on the word itself. We are not just anymore and only searching for feelings of pure pleasure incited by aesthetic beauty, even if we could more narrowly define or describe what that means.

Viewers of paintings of the sixteenth century might have looked exclusively for the criterion of beauty, and have tried to define it in terms of solemnity and dignity in the content. They tried to define the concept in terms of symmetries in colours and shapes, in terms of clever and balanced composition, of true observation and skilful imitation of nature. But these criterions of formal qualities do not satisfy us anymore. After the discoveries and experiments of the twentieth century, our feelings over what might be *beautiful* in the art of painting can be, have become more complex. The same can be said of the other fine arts.

The reactions of contemporary viewers determine the many-faceted pleasure given by art. Their reactions are complex, but come in three discernible separate phase. The feelings of pleasure, interest or admiration of each phase add up or destroy each other. We will propose in the following paragraphs a definition of those phases. We illustrate the phases with the art of painting.

First, viewers look at the picture and take in the whole view of the painting. They have an immediate impression and reaction in their mind to the overall image that they see. They see mainly the general hue of the colours, the global composition and the subject, the content, the scene.
After the pleasure – or aversion - offered by the first impression, viewers start to look more attentively at the painting. They discover the details then, and will look over all the painting with focused interest to discover the skill of the painter. This can bring additional interest and admiration. In this phase, the formal beauty can be analysed in the elements of style. We look at the outer or exterior beauty of the painting.
After that will come the mostly intellectual pleasure of the comprehension of the idea of the picture, the idea of inspiration expressed by the artist. This may involve and need extensive knowledge of the history of art and of the life and motives of the painter. Then the viewer will recognise – or reject - the genius and the inspiration and motives of the artist. We are looking for the inner or interior beauty of the work of art.

I will call these three phases by the main words we have used to describe them. I will call the phases by the terms *Impression*, *Discovery* and *Recognitio*n. I describe these three phases in the following paragraphs.
I do not believe that for all of these phases the sensation of pleasure as an agreeable emotion, is necessary for viewers to admire and like a work of art. One sensation of the three is sometimes enough for viewers to admire a painting and call it fine art.

The three phases emphasise three aspects of our reactions to paintings. The three aspects add up to the aesthetic pleasure and any of the three is enough to lead to appreciation – the pleasure – of the experience of a painting. But since we handle the aspects usually in sequence and separately, I prefer to use the word *phases* to indicate the additional aspect of time as our

admiration grows – or declines -, since admiring and recognising art is also a matter of maturity and of gaining knowledge.

This emphasis on time or on the act of comprehending art is not new. Beauty is, quite simply, not an object – it first comes into being through perception.

Impression

When viewers look at a painting, a first and short glance evokes in most viewers a strong emotion of admiration and pleasure. For some paintings, the patterns of the coloured areas and then of the lines and forms induce aesthetic feelings almost instantaneously. These feelings are close to what we experience when we hear music. They are an immediate appeal to still unknown, and therefore mysterious processes, which go on in unknown centres of our brain, focused probably on overall harmony. Some people are very sensitive to patterns of colours and of lines. Their reaction to the purely visual composition of a picture is immediate and strong. Most people to a lesser, but to some extent certainly, find a picture appealing at first glance or repulsive. They use the terms of the *beautiful* or of *ugliness* to express their first impression.

The most sensitive viewers will be touched by the patterns of colours alone, by the harmony of forms, and that will be the case for most abstract art. Patterns of pure hues placed together in a well-balanced way will always attract and appeal rapidly when viewers come to a picture. Viewers may include in their first impression the content, the feelings expressed by a scene, by the object matter of the painting, as far as there is content matter, for figurative art. We understand the urgency for abstract painters of the twentieth century to probe into the essence of the immediate impression by the means of the infinite combinations of the fundamental style elements. In abstract art, only composition of lines, forms and colours are displayed without subject matter. It remains true however, that most viewers receive stronger impressions when content matter is added, the content matter being representation of objects, of landscapes or of scenes with human figures or animals.

The first impression will more often than not be generated by the colour patterns of a painting. Colours are seen first, before the details of a scene, before its lines and structure. Very intense, saturated pure colours will attract attention first, as these colours tend also to dominate a scene. But also other more subdued patterns, forming a particular mood in the picture, will be noticed instantaneously. Or the viewers will perceive the energy of the picture, maybe represented in harder colours, and in the content.

The first impression phase then is one of immediate emotions, during which the viewer will obtain an instant feeling of the harmony of forms and colours, or the lack thereof. This is the phase that corresponds to the emotional aspect of the painting created by the form of the art of painting and the perception of content.

It is rather irrelevant in this phase to know or to understand whether the emotions the viewer feels are also those expressed by the artist, or whether the artist has felt nothing at all but used the technique of painting to arouse emotions in the viewer. In other words, it is rather irrelevant to know whether the feelings were expressed, or whether the artist manipulates to a certain extent the viewer. As viewers we simply feel, and we appreciate the degree to which

emotions are invoked in us. Whether or not the painter felt the same emotions is what the viewer might explore and try to discover in subsequent phases of viewing the picture, and while learning to know more about paintings and painters.

Discovery

After the first impression, viewers will take some time, and perhaps even a long time to discover the details of a painting. The patterns of lines, shapes and colours are then analysed by the viewer.

The viewer will look at what the general direction of the picture is, how the horizontal and vertical or oblique lines are used in the composition. The viewer will maybe discern movement or more static poises, and find out by what means these aspects were created. He or she will look at the general composition, and discover the pyramid, open V, stage theatre, diagonal triangles, or other presentation structure. The viewer will find how the colour areas are cleverly distributed over the panel, how the forms are in equilibrium, and how this distribution is harmonious, that is symmetrical and balanced, or whether balance is broken and thus tension introduced. He or she will remark how the artist has laid emphasis on certain parts of the content or of the colouring to guide his or her view. The viewer will analyse the scenes for the professional skills of the painter in representing a known or uncommon theme. The viewer will discover the symbols in the picture, as well as elements of linear and aerial perspective. He or she will look at how volume and depth is created. In short, the viewer will look over all the elements we have discussed in the previous chapters, in detail.

Finally, the viewer will analyse the colours. We have exposed in these lessons the difficulties that painters have to take into account when they juxtapose various colours. We cannot fully explain the pleasure at seeing nice contrasts of colours or the pleasure at seeing a picture almost entirely painted in analogous colours. Yet, the viewer can admire the harmony and judicious choice of hues.

We hope that these lessons might help viewers to systematise their analysis of the single elements of style in paintings. The viewer will admire the intelligence and the intuition of the painter in the diligent use of these elements.

In the discovery phase, the viewer looks at the details of the elements of the form of the art of painting. The viewer remarks the lines, shapes, colours, the rendering of volume, the perspective, and the space and depth of the picture. He or she discovers the content, as well as the skills of the artist. This phase corresponds to the artisanal and intellectual aspects of the picture. The viewer analyses the picture, and discovers its formal features. He or she finds out how the painter has used the elements of design that artists of the visual arts have at their disposal. This discovery may heighten the degree of appreciation of the work of art. Thus, the analysis of form, as much as the emotions evoked in a first phase, is important for the appreciation of a work of art.

Recognition

A few viewers will additionally seek information on the painting, and thus show an interest that goes well beyond the visual overall view and the detailed view. These viewers will look at the title and at other information supplied by the museum researchers, so that he or she

better understand the ideas that lay at the basis of the work. He or she will find further information in a summary study on the picture. The viewer will look up the period in which the picture was made, the art tendencies of the moment, the evolutions of art that took place during the lifetime of the artist. Often, a picture can be admired because it is part of a series that in its totality only shows the evolution of the artist and the times. The viewer will find out how much this particular picture was a precursor of new trends in art and in society. He or she will investigate on what the intentions of the artist might have been with the work, what the intentions were of his or her whole oeuvre, on the way the artist lived, and on the cultural state of his or her society. The viewer will place the particular work in the context of the entire work of the artist, and of the works of other artists of that time and that society. In a wider perspective still, the viewer will situate work and painter in the context of history.

This phase is not merely an intellectual phase, because sympathy for the painter and the work may grow steadily in the viewer, as he or she proceeds with his or her investigation. The viewer will develop an intimacy, an empathy with the artist, with his or her emotions, and with the visions developed in the painting. Or the viewer will develop aversion.

It remains true that scientific research is necessary for this stage. Luckily, art historians have written much on the subject of art, on painters and their work, and on styles of painting. Historians have uncovered not only the facts of history, but also the undercurrents of economic, social and psychological developments of the past. This information may add to the understanding of the idea, of the inspiration of the picture.

During this phase, the viewer may develop admiration for the painter and possibly understand, then find interest even in apparently ugly paintings. Knowledge leads to understanding, to recognition both of the work and of the painter. Understanding leads to acceptance of the painters' motives for strange works, then to loving.

The phase of recognition is an intellectual phase. The viewer likes to find out more in a painting than the picture yields at first sight. We suppose this to be more true for the researcher and truly interested amateur than for the occasional viewer, but even the curiosity of a casual visitor is touched more often than not by knowledge of the works of art and their history and story.

During the phase of recognition, the title will help the viewer. The viewer will reflect on the idea, on the inspiration of the painter, and on the objectives of the artist with the work. The viewer will learn why the picture came to be. He or she will investigate into the social, political, economic and artistic state of the painter's society. This phase corresponds to the intellectual aspect of the aesthetic pleasure

In the third phase of *Recognition*, we try to recognise the idea that the painter expressed in his work of art. Whether that was the original idea of the artist or the idea that he or she ended up with while working is interesting to know and may help us in admiring the work of art more. But it is not a necessary perception. It is not a necessity to discover this idea for us to like a work of art. We may discover our own idea, discover an interpretation of our truth, maybe not exactly the idea intended by the painter, or the original idea expressed by the painter at the end of his or her work. This last idea might be the *Truth* or the *Idea*.
Suffice it for our purposes to discover our own *idea* or our *truth*, our particular and personal interpretation. It is more than often anyway extremely difficult, if not impossible, to grasp, to understand fully the artist's idea. Even if the artist described in words, in letters or in explicit

explanations what he or she intended in the work (the title may help), it is hopeless for viewers to grasp the whole idea, the whole *truth*, the being, of the painting.

If a viewer learns to know the intentions of an artist with his work - a few artists have done that in writing or provided explanation in filmed interviews -, then the viewer comes closer to the true meaning of a work.
A viewer can always see another interpretation in a work than the explicit intention of the painter. Is such an interpretation then to be condemned as a lie? To us, the explicit intentions of an artist are not necessarily relevant. Still, they will enrich in most cases the viewer's admiration and certainly the viewer's understanding of the work; but the viewer has always the right to formulate his own interpretation.
This puts of course again the question of communication between artist and spectator: how can there be communication when the viewer sees something else in a picture than what the artist intended? In our view, the communication does not stop when the sender allows for various interpretations of the message at the receiver's end; this intention is then part of the message.

A viewer does not merely look at a painting. He or she experiences it thoroughly. One quick look at a painting seldom goes further than a first phase impression, and this is in most cases inadequate to fully appreciate a work of art. This is very much the case for contemporary and abstract art. The intention to present the un-presentable, as abstract art often seems to aim at, can often not be appreciated in a first or second phase.

Art as a communication system

The visual arts are a system of communication that can be analysed using the terminology of the communication theory defined and studied in the applied sciences. The analysis may clarify the processes a few points of the appreciation of art.

In communication systems, the elements that create and govern the processes are the sender, the message, the medium of communication and the receiver.

In the arts considered as a communication system, the sender is the artist. He or she produces a work, which is his or her message. The means of transmission is the exhibition of the work in galleries of museums, or the performance in a place where a public of people can enjoy it, and the perception by the senses of the spectator. The form of the message is the work of art.

Some authors have argued that art is no communication at all; the artist usually works for his or her own satisfaction only, and has rarely the spectator in mind. They argue that the artist does not usually think of his work as *communication*, and that he or she just works for fun, for money, or for his or her own pleasure of creation.

The communication system of the arts is of course very peculiar compared to the communication systems of applied science. In traditional communication systems, the aim is to bring the message to the receiver exactly as the sender sent it. In the fine arts, the sender, the artist, produces a work of art and what is received are emotions induced in the receivers, in the spectators. Something quite different from the original form of the message is sent and received. Nevertheless, an exchange goes on between sender and receiver, as in traditional communication systems.

We must analyse some more what we mean by communication for the fine arts.

I have not yet met an artist who did not want to be appreciated dearly, to be liked and to be approved, to be applauded for his or her work. Artists want to show their work of art, to have it performed, to have it experienced by spectators.
The artists go a long way to evoke reactions in spectators. Man is a very social animal. Artists aim to please, to inspire, to be loved or even to be feared for their work. Artists have their fellow-humans always very much in their minds when they create. And that statement is true even in their anti-reactions, when they brag that art and creation exist only for the expression of the artist's feelings, of his or her most individual emotions. Even then they seek eagerly the reaction of their public. Refusal by that public leads them into deep depressions.
The artist loves to present his or her work and he or she is eager for the reactions of the public.
The two actors of the communication system, sender and receiver, are hence very much at work.

We have to modulate our definition of a communication system, however, for the fine arts.
In general, the information contained in a message can be measured. It can be measured in terms of the number of questions to be answered by *yes* or *no* that can be asked to determine the contents of the message. For any work of art, that could be an impressive number of questions, but that number would be the total information expressed in *bits*, elements that can take the value zero or one, two states, according to the answer *yes* or *no*.

Communication is one thing, information another. Information is something told, it is knowledge of something that was not known before.
Works of art do not bring us knowledge, do not at first sight teach us something we did not know before. Moreover, the spectators may find in a work of art something quite else than what the artist may have put in it. The artist means something, but how are we to know what he or she has meant? Some works of art may hold content and present a narrative, and that may teach us something we did not know before. But many other works of art hold no content, just form.

All depends on the definition of information. We define information as a change of the state of the mind in the receiver.
A work of art evokes feelings, emotions, and these change the state of mind of the spectator. The transition of state of mind can be expressed in bits. You are in one state of mind, look at a work of art, and that look changes your state of mind. We call that *information* in the context of this essay. In formation content can be expressed, measured in bits. Even if the job is extremely difficult.

But when we eat a biscuit, which changes our state of mind because we were in a state of mind of being hungry before, and after having eaten the biscuit we are not hungry anymore. So, is that information? Isn't this absurd?
We are talking about a system in which there is a sender, the artist. In the example of the biscuit, there is no sender, so no system. Still, if you are hungry, another communication system is working. Some of your organs sense the hunger and send that information over your neurons to your head. When you eat, the same organs send a signal of satisfaction to your head, and that information is treated there.
So, in that example also, the cause of the change of the state of mind is information, or the immediate result of the message or signal.
In the same way, a work of art that is presented to us changes our feelings, bringing us emotions, changes our state of mind, and we define that as information. In the strictest sense of information being new knowledge, of something we did not know before, our state of mind also changes from ignorance to knowledge. The change is a transition of the state of mind, the cause of which can be measured in bits. One might even say that one flip is one bit, but also the quality of the emotion would have to be expressed in bits.
The most important to take into account is that there is exchange in a system, whatever name one gives to that system.

We have to illustrate this with an example. The artist sends us a work of art and whatever he or she has felt while making the work does not matter much. When a spectator looks at it, it changes the spectator's state of mind and since the artist exposes or performs the work, it enters the communication system.

Communication system theory use the notion of noise as the cause of the corruption or change of the message between sender and receiver.
Noise is what deters a message, the message's content, the information. Noise diminishes the information. By noise, the meaning of the message may even be totally destroyed, as the information detained by the message is blurred more and more.
By *noise* in our communication system of the arts, we mean again another concept than the concept of what this word usually means.

The artist, when he or she shows a work of art, always has intent of communication, which is to change our state of mind, even when he or she originally made the work of art solely for his or her own intent. When the artist offers the work to a public, there is intent to share, and hence to offer a message, as the minds of the spectators will change states. But the artist may hide the message of the work of art, or the message may be only partly understood by the spectator, or even completely misunderstood, at the receiving end, at the audience's side. This then could be called the equivalent of *noise* and this *noise* may break down the information content expressed as knowledge, even though the work of art still changes the state of mind of the spectators. Nevertheless, the work and the artist, as well as the spectator, remain part of a communication system, because the work of art is shown and shared with the public.
Noise is a term used to give a name to the breaking down of information. Information can be broken down at the sender, during the transport of the message, and at the receiver. It is broken down at the artist's side when he or she hides his or her meaning, willingly or unwillingly. The original information content can be diminished or changed when the work of art is shown, listened to or viewed.
For instance, a picture of a tree hung upside down has quite another meaning than a picture of a tree that shows the foliage at the top and the roots at the bottom. And, of course, a spectator may miss the original meaning of the picture, in which case communication breaks down at the receiver's side.

Works of art support and evoke very different ideas, feelings, interpretations and hence evaluation. That is the fallacy, the limits but also the richness of art. This joins the notion of *noise* that distorts a message, so that the receiver understands something else than what the sender intended. The information contained in the work of art then only partially arrives at the spectator. The spectator utilises his or her own imagination and that imagination may modulate the original meaning of the message. The artist may even have produced a work of art that allows the spectator to interpret it, to have emotions of his or her own, without the intention of the artist to prefer one emotion over another.

The intention and meaning of an artist is most often conveyed in the title of the work of art. The title directs the change of the state of your mind. The title may be missing, have no meaning at all or conveying a false message other than the original, or the title may even have been given deliberately by the artist to hide the meaning and bring the spectator to an unintended meaning. In this case, however, one may ask what the real message of the work was: was it not then to deceive the spectator? That also is a kind of communication.

If an artist only works for himself of herself and destroys his or her work before it is seen by someone else, there is no message and hence no communication. When an artist completely hides the meaning of his painting and the emotions he or she wanted to evoke, but yet presents it an audience, then there is no communication in the sense of knowledge transmission, but there is communication in the sense that our state of mind changes anyhow. Even the fact of hiding the message is often a message by itself.

Communication is the transmission of a message. The message contains information, even though the information may have been blurred or misunderstood. And the spectator's state of mind changes by him or her looking at the painting, which we mean by information.
All works of art of new art forms that protest against established art, for instance, are very pregnant with the information of the protest. Artists that express their own feelings do exhibit

and sell their work. They do not destroy it. That should be proof enough that they want to share their feelings with an audience.

It is difficult to talk of information exchange when the artist made an abstract work that has to be seen as an object merely. Artists, however, always seek effects in the spectator and evoke emotions. Such effects carry a message of respect, of wanting to pleasure the spectator, or of revolting the spectator, and so on.

Art is therefore a communication system. It is not just that, but it is always communication in some form and to a certain extent.

The communication system can of course be manipulated. Artists may try to do that to influence the appreciation of their art in ways that are interesting for them, either in their eagerness to please or in their economic eagerness. Such manipulation is only very human, but in face of a too credulous audience, it may shape the appreciation of art towards forms of art that hide the incompetence in ideas or the lack in talent of craftsmanship of the artists.

Appreciating art as a collective act

Not just one sole spectator looks at art. Viewing or experiencing art is a collective act. And since many spectators look or experience the work of art, there is information exchange among spectators of their individual experience.

Spectators talk among each other about their act of appreciation. The exchange of information can be a private or a public act. The interactions gradually converge to a collective opinion. This opinion interferes in subtle and in overt ways with the act of appreciation by the individual spectator. More importantly, the appreciation can be sent back to the artist (as a new message, sent in the reverse direction) and interfere with the artist's views on his or her art.
This then is a feedback process towards the artist of the appreciation of the spectators, which may influence the artist and have an effect on his or her production. Such feedback processes are common in human and more generally in all organic processes, which become by the feedback regulated processes that evolve towards stable systems instead of towards changing, revolutionising, perpetually innovating systems of interaction.

So, in the system of communication that we analysed, exchanges of information take place between artists and spectators, between spectators and other spectators. Information exchange goes back and forth between the spectators and the artists. These information exchanges influence the artist and shape to a certain extent his or her art. They can be analysed for their consequences on the evolution of styles in art. By virtue of the feedback, the communication system can become a regulated process, which is called in systems theory a cybernetic process.

We first look more closely at the information exchange between spectators.

Some of the spectators will express themselves publicly and explain in writings and also verbally, why they like a work of art or why not. When such spectators receive credibility in a society, we call them *art critics*.

All art critics build their own individual set of criteria, of values, of rules by which they appreciate art. These criteria are very subjective and personal, but the art critic will openly expose them in publications. They ma rules become so generally accepted in a society, through their acceptance by a public eager to be taught, that these rules may grow to become *the* rules. Although individuals of the society may feel otherwise than the art critics, the public may openly accept the opinion of the art critics as their own. Art critics are therefore teachers, and as such they can have a very positive influence. They can propose to the artist means for augmenting their message. They can explain to the artist why – in their opinion – he or she may have lacked in skill. They can show the artist why his or her work is not appreciated. Art critics can applaud the work and in doing so bring the piece of art to the attention of the public. Art critics have an important role in the process of appreciation of art.

By using the communication media, critics try to persuade their audience of the validity of their arguments. Formulating critic is also a mode of communication, directed always at an audience. A critic's inherent aim is to state his or her opinion on a work of art, to judge it, and to convince others of the points made. By persuasion, even if the critics would deny this assertion, critics try to force upon an audience a certain attitude towards a work of art. But we

know that there are no universal criteria for aesthetic judgements. So the critic must persuade by other means than objective arguments to press his views on an audience.

An audience cannot just be persuaded by any statement. The statements must be plausible. The more statements feel right, the more forceful will be the judgement of the critic. The question is not so much to what individual elements of evidence a critic appeals, but his total amount of evidence. Still, no universally agreed upon set of rules exist to define this amount of evidence. In the face of many and repeated plausible arguments, it is more difficult for an audience to resist to the compelling statements.

I plead of course for the formulation of opinions without influence on each individual taste, without that element of force. Yet, the power of the communication media and the power of humans to aspire to a common understanding are great and compelling.
The public hears itself in interaction among peers, and it hears the opinions of the art critics. The art critics reach a very broad public. Their opinion is broadcasted in books, by radio or television, so that their influence is much higher than the influence of the common, individual spectator in the interaction of appreciation.
All these interactions among the spectators of the public gradually build a consensus on the criteria for liking an art style or for rejecting it.
We may deplore this coming to a consensus opinion, but it is a fact throughout the history of centuries, as the processes of mutual influences are part of our nature.
Every individual should learn as much as possible about the elements of the form of art. Every spectator should ideally establish his or her personal criteria and be proud of that. If these match the values of the art critic, then that is all the better. There will always be a subtle influence while the art critic teaches every spectator new ways to appreciate works of art, to open up new views on the form of painting. Instead of this ideal, we cannot but remark that societies of individuals converge to a common appreciation of art and that critics exert a considerable influence.

Thus, inside a society and due to the information exchange between its people, a consensus on criteria for the liking of works of art develops, not only by a few forerunners that speak out on art, but also by many other persons from that same public.
The artists of course have an equally important role in this process, as they also speak out, write about their work and about their inspirations.
The consensus about what kind of art pleases in a society depends upon many factors. Individuals can be powerful actors by their charisma, but also the social, economic and political situation can exert a strong influence.

In the process of mutual influences, another type of influence is between the spectators and the artists. Spectators act in essentially two ways on artists and these two ways have the same basis.

A common consensus develops among spectators, due to the expressed opinions of the people that speak out on art. Artists, as members of the same society, are usually very sensitive to how spectators react upon their works. The artists created their work as a means of appealing to spectators and as a means of communication. Rejection of that communication by spectators is hard to take for any human (the artist) who is naturally inclined to be accepted, understood and even loved by his or her countrymen. As the spectators collectively and individually develop their criteria of appreciation, the artists take more – or less – of these opinions into account.

In the history of the past centuries, there have been periods in which artists fully developed their art and delivered work that conformed to the generally accepted views of the public. Academies of art were established by governments, in which the common criteria and values of the form of the arts were taught, and most artists worked indeed according to these as these were the schools in which they could learn the basic of their artisanal skills. In other, transitional, periods of history, artists deliberately revolted against such influences and tried to evolve their art independently. If many artists take such a course, the artistic revolt becomes the norm. Then the artists themselves influence society in their turn most powerfully, as they break the established consensus views.

There is of course a great danger in the way critics and the artist may try to influence the public.

Imagine an artist who puts together something entirely ordinary, for instance a set of chairs welded together. The artist welds steel chairs together, not too many chairs so that he or she can get the result through a door, and he or she devises a system to assemble such sets of welded chairs into a gigantic structure. If he or she succeeds to place the resulting structure in the hall of a large enterprise, preferably one of the top ten economic enterprises of a country, preferably a well-known financial institution, or a public company, or a university. When that artist has a friend critic of his or her to applaud the structure in the media, in the press and perhaps on television, then that structure may well be considered a fine work of art by many people. The structure and similar structures of that artist may be sold to other so-called art lovers or Maecenas's at high prices. Do not think such schemes remain entirely hypothetical and impossible! I know of at least of one structure of glued-together chairs, and this so-called work of art must be valued at an extremely high price. Similar schemes have been tried by certain institutions of journalists, and they have been proven to work!

The weapon against such schemes is the individual taste for beauty by the spectators, but that weapon is all too often very blunt. The critics and artists that favour such schemes also hope for us to follow them. They do not teach us to judge by ourselves.

Avant-garde

Artists have consistently tried to evolve views of art. They have tried to be original and innovating in form, which usually simply meant that the artists proposed new forms of art, new styles, and new inspirations. When these do not conform to established consensus, and all change and innovation means exactly that by definition, then the artists are commonly called of the *avant-garde*. *Avant-garde* is always a synonym for a transition in art. It means dissatisfaction with the art form that existed and the desire to innovate and to change. *Avant-garde* is thus a word that cannot only be applied to certain East-European and West-European artists of the years between 1910 and 1930. Avant-garde artists have lived and worked in any century.

Humans generally do not like change. Humans build around them a cocoon of beliefs and of views of the world. When that cocoon is shaken, when forces try to break up the cocoon and modify its shape, then the human goes through a period of stress. People do not like stress. Most humans are by their nature conservative; they desire to preserve their cocoon. They do not like to be changed. They can change, and will, but then they prefer to do so exclusively by their own initiative. In that way they keep their freedom and the control over their cocoon.

Avant-garde artists shake up existing cocoons of beliefs, and they shake society by an external force. The public generally resists such force unless it is a force of the public itself. Such periods, in which avant-garde artists led a process of change, are transitional periods of tension in art and in society.
Avant-garde artists receive support only if society desires to change and then perceives the avant-garde only as the forerunners of that change. Even when an avant-garde is revolutionary, the transitional waves that pass through society will damp out, and a public may slowly adopt the avant-garde views to become mainstream ideas.
Avant-garde ideas may become so strong that they are adapted by the society. The avant-garde art then becomes the modernism of the epoch, after the transitional period has passed. All art forms have been avant-garde art and then, with time, these modernisms became established art forms.

The power of the artist to propose alternatives is so great, that he or she shapes the new directions. These directions are sometimes taken up in a blind way, whereby society accepts eagerly any direction or transition in its avidity of innovation. In some periods of history however, we can observe how several paths have been proposed and how gradually only that one emerged, which corresponded best to the aspirations of society, or which was proposed by the more powerful artist. The power of the artist lies not only, however, in his or her strength to propose a new style, a new way of representation in the pictorial arts. The power of the artist also lies in the means of communication he or she has with society.

If avant-garde is a powerful proposal of innovation in art, avant-garde should not be judged a fine and desirable for avant-garde's sake. The new works still must agree with the definition of art as we proposed it, and the element of beauty and of craftsmanship still preponderant. Embracing avant-garde for avant-garde's sake is nothing more than a form of snobbery, of following the claims of artists and critics eyes and ears closed, without exercising one's own good judgement according to the definition of art.

The spectators of art can wield a very simple but powerful way of influencing artists. They can buy or refuse to buy works of art!

The most direct way by which a society, which means for any art the society of spectators, enacts on artists, is by economic means, which is by its purchasing behaviour. Painters need to sell their work in order to be able to create. They may have independent means, but artists from wealthy families remain the exception. The exceptions also have remained those artists that had other paid activities, a job in society, next to their art, and who created art despite other occupancies, despite other paid activities.
Most artists need to sell their work in order to live. Selling works of own-created art is a very normal way of production and retribution. But art can only thrive plentiful where the money is, and where artists can find a market for their work. Until the twentieth century therefore, art thrived in centres of wealth, and these centres can be easily determined.

The Flemish Primitive painters of the fifteenth century, for instance, concentrated on Bruges, because Bruges was then the richest city in Western Europe. Very few of these painters were actually born in Bruges. But here they found a market, buyers for their work, and thus here formed an *Association of Saint Luke* of master-painters where students could learn the art. Renaissance art thrived in Florence and Venice because these were the richest regions of the Mediterranean. Baroque art reached its apogee in Rome because the Popes concentrated funds from the Catholic Church in the Vatican. Genoa, Naples and Venice were other centres of wealth and thus of art. In the North, Antwerp became the new centre of art in the sixteenth century because Antwerp had taken over the role of most important sea-port of Western Europe from Bruges, as the sea-bay to Bruges silted in so that it became ever more difficult for ships to reach the town.
In the nineteenth, and much more so in the twentieth century, the art markets spread over the entire world. An artist could now work anywhere in the world and try to sell his paintings in any market. Of course, money and art-lovers still need to be present. It is not enough to have a centre of capital to have a market. But art-lovers in impoverished regions of our earth cannot buy even if they would want to, so markets cannot develop there. Markets only develop in centres of economic wealth. It is by the buying process that spectators influence most directly artists. Artists will to some extent deliver what has success in a market, and that means generally the established, stable art, the art of the societal consensus.

Avant-garde art sells usually badly in the beginning, and then artists are paupers. We have remarked time and time again for the finer avant-garde art, however, that artists were able to withstand economic pressure. These artists produced avant-garde work and continued to do so persistently.
The first Impressionist painters like Camille Pissarro, and even at the beginning Claude Monet, as well as many others, were willing to live in dire poverty to realise their ideals and their proper views on art.
Such character among artists is not an exception. It is of course through this spirit of perseverance and sheer obsession of the avant-garde, that art advances and transmutes. These artists had the steadfastness of personal commitment to their new visions of art, which in the end brings forth new movements in art, in confrontations with established views. The first Impressionists thus were banned from government sponsored official art exhibitions, and art critics generally mocked their new ways of representation.
So, although it is a truism to state that the public, that is the spectators and buyers as well as the art critics, generally influence artists, it is also true that such influence must be relativized.

This kind of influence has been strong in the early centuries of the art in Europe. Gothic, Renaissance and even Baroque artists worked mostly on commissions. These artists had to deliver what was asked and expected of them. Their incentive for innovation was real, but

these artists could only innovate as far as they might expect that the commissioner would accept.
If he or she could only just have the commissioner accept this, an artist painter might add a nice landscape in a portrait, even though before his time landscapes were rare in portraits. But the artist could not have it accepted to use un-conventional, hard colours, and paint not straightforwardly ugly features in the faces of his figures if that was not the consensus of the moment. Rosso Fiorentino tried just that in Florence, Rome and Venice in the sixteenth century, and even though times were changing and the Renaissance was in need of innovation, his paintings were refused. Rosso Fiorentino did not meet with success, and he had to leave Italy for France, where King Francis I was either more open to innovation or simply too eager to take in any Italian artist, whatever the latter's reputation.

It has happened in history that regulated society, for instance in political dictatorships, have directly influenced to completely control the art production of a culture. An example of this was the Socialist Realist art imposed by the Russian regime under Stalin. The Russian Communist government took direct control of the artists' associations and condemned avant-garde art. The National Socialist party in Germany after 1935, under Hitler's dictatorship took the same kind of control, as suffocating for artists that wanted to innovate in art, as the control of the Stalinist government.
These are examples of the most direct influence, which evolved simply to total control, of part of the *receivers* of the messages of art, of the spectators, on the *senders*, on the artists. In the end, the society of all spectators, as well as the artists, protested against this control, since it was a fundamental restriction of freedom of appreciation.

The analysis of art as a communication system with feedback in the exchange between artists and spectators thus also exposes the processes of evolution of art.

Lessons for contemporary art

I have as yet to hear another definition of contemporary art than that is tis the art of our times. This statement seems obvious. Nevertheless, when I repeat to guides, to so-called connoisseurs of art that I dislike most of contemporary art, I get the answer that I do not understand contemporary art. My answer to that is that I like fine art and dislike bad art, from whatever century and times. I answer true or fine art has withstood the ravages of time, whereas bad art has not. Therefore, I argue, there is much more bad art in contemporary art than in what remains of previous centuries. Few bad art will survive over the ages, as it has bene the case for bad art of the previous times.

First, much of contemporary art is Conceptual Art. In its purest form, in the form that satisfies the definition of Conceptual art, its aim is to tell us something about the concept of art, of making the spectator interrogate himself or herself about the nature of art. In so far as the aim of that kind of endeavour is not to produce something beautiful, in as far as its aim is not to produce something aesthetical, it does not satisfy my personal definition of fine art at all.

Therefore, when a so-called artist places parts of his or her water closet in a museum, he or she is indeed telling the spectator something about the concept of art. He or she forces me to reflect on what art really is, but the so-called artist is not producing art. That is why most people, with true justification, laugh mockingly when they see such an object in a museum, and pass their way rapidly. The chasm between the spectator and the intellectuals who devised these works and placed them in a museum hall, widens and remains wide open.

The same can be said of artists who place objects of common use such as kitchen pots and pans on a rack in a museum, or when they place a rack of clothes on hangers of a cloakroom in the empty hall of a museum. Only in as far as these objects are also beautiful, and can be admired for their aesthetic value, can they be considered as fine art and have artistic value. Many so-called artists have by now sufficiently installed objects and artefacts, or shown us extraordinarily strange performances, to make their point that the definition of art is difficult. Simple, common sense must now prevail, as well as the search for original beauty. There can hardly be much more originality, and certainly no beauty after the representation of so many objects lacking beauty and common sense, but telling something on the concept of art. The point has been made.

Secondly, only as far as the objects of conceptual art are also beautiful, produce feelings of aesthetic, can they be considered art and have artistic value. When the aim of contemporary art is not the aesthetic, then we have no art and no artists. We must return to these basics in the creation of art.
When somebody slices a cow in two, places the two halves well preserved in formaldehyde in two glass boxes and has the spectator walk in between the two halves, then the spectators who have not outright deranged minds cannot but feel anything else but aversion and disgust at so much disrespect for the living. The aim of the setup is to shock, not to be pleasing, not to seek the beautiful, nor to display what is aesthetic. Such displays provoke, but they do not satisfy our simple definition of what is art.

Thirdly, there is no work or expression of art that does not equally satisfy our need to admire both idea and workmanship, the actors of which we denote with the words of *artist* and *artisan*.

Many works of contemporary art contain only an idea, but they offer no sign of craftsmanship.

When somebody finds a block of wood cut from a tree with a chainsaw, impaled on a fence and brings the section of the fence plus the wood to a museum, the idea may be original, but it is the fruit of chance and not of the mind of the artist. The sense of craftsmanship lacks totally, and also the aesthetic aspect lacks. That object or combination of objects did not have beauty as its aim when chance made it.
Most people look and laugh mockingly at such displays and go their way, shaking their heads and rightfully wondering whatever the museum director had been smoking when he or she accepted such a piece in an exhibition area dedicated to fine art. It is allowed to call such exhibitions provocations to the mind, not fine art. These displays are not fine art. They are not particularly beautiful, usually are not original ideas, and I (who have no artisanal skills at all) could reproduce them. A spectator does not feel particularly enriched by them, nor bettered in his life. The satisfaction of having experienced the work of art is almost nil.

The spectator must perceive a sense of the beautiful and of exceptional skill in a work or an expression of art. Otherwise, the work of art or the expression is simply and truly ridiculous. A strange matter is that in face of such displays the common spectator sees the ridiculous immediately, whereas the supposed intellectual is only puzzled. The intellectual person doubts, where the common man perceives the setup has nothing whatsoever to do with fine art.

Sensation and Provocation

In view of all this, the main question is how to define or to characterise most of contemporary art.
Art should provide a feeling of aesthetics, of beauty to the spectator, even if the feeling of beauty is complex, almost impossible to define and to describe, and knowing beauty is a very personal appreciation. Art and beauty can be hidden in apparent horror or cruelty, and even ugliness to the naked eye. Yet and still, without aesthetic feelings created, no art!

In this sense, the contemporary works currently presented to the public are for 99,99% not art at all!
Aesthetics are not to be found in the works presented. Aesthetics is not the aim of the works. Aesthetics are rejected as a criterium for art. What is to be found in the works presented is merely sensation and provocation. The new cry of most of the works of contemporary art is: aesthetics, beauty, does not need to be present for the works to be admired. Sensation and provocation draw the crowds, and hence the money.

The sensational and provocative works fuel the contemporary ‘art business’, better than works inspiring to beauty could do. Therefore, the presented works do not merit the use of the qualification ‘art’. Spectators, people visiting the museums displaying the works, might still flock to those places, but they are not out for art; they are out for sensation and provocation.

We live in times where, paradoxically, our grand museums of contemporary art, our several million or tens of millions of dollars palaces of culture, are being filled with works that procure no aesthetic feelings anymore to the crowds, but merely short-lived feelings of sensation and of provocation.

Isn't this a poor, poor way of filling our finest buildings of public or private interest, set up to provide culture to the people? Is it really the duty of art critics, of museum curators to provide sensations and provocative, sometimes shocking thoughts, instead of feelings of beauty? Do not feelings of sensation and provocation suggest violence, stupidity and aggressiveness to the people?
More than ever, the people visiting museums of contemporary art seem to be out for the sensational and for the provocations only. Many of them are snobs, who believe they are appreciating art, because other people have told them these are the true, contemporary art forms – although the art, with its definition of having to provide feelings of beauty, of aesthetics, are far. The 'other people' in the previous phrases being the art critics who make money on their writings, induced by private investors or by the self-designated 'artists', who are no artists at all.

Needless to say, the artisanship of these self-designated 'artists' is lacking completely. They merely have an idea of sensation and provocation, think of a work that can shock the spectator out of his or her supposed stupor, and have the work be made by industrial processes, in which they have little or no direct involvement. Of course, yes, the crowds are avid of sensation and provocation, apparently not out for beauty, and with the crowds and the snobs come the money. Artists of this, 99.99% contemporary art are no creators of beauty to lift the spirits. They fail in the definition of being artists in the noblest sense of the word. And they are caught themselves in a spiral of provocation instead of delivering works of beauty.

Feelings of sensation and of provocation, contrary to aesthetic feelings, are indeed very short-lived. Once the sensation and the provocation experienced, the spectator never returns to the work. Sensation and provocation are very short-lived! Therefore, sensation and provocation have to ever start anew, with new, many more, possibly ever more items of sensational and provocative content.

Needless to add, such works will not live long in the general memory. The works disappear almost instantly, after the time of one exhibition. They will not last for tens of years, and certainly not for centuries, except in the form of a few examples to be kept as witness objects of the folly of our times.

A final note

Why is it that we see so many ugly and uninteresting objects, setups, performances and other expressions in contemporary exhibitions, museums and theatres today?

One answer can be in the fact that there exist many more people who can think of something, of anything, than there are people who have been endowed with a talent of excellent craftsmanship in the arts.

Anybody who can think of something, can produce that in a minimum of time, in a period from a few seconds to a few days, have the idea produced in a factory by proper craftsmen and then find somebody foolish enough to accept it in an exhibition room or a gallery or a theatre dedicated to fine art.

For such a work of expression, an enormous amount of money can be asked for the sake only of the idea. The object or expression does not even have to be particularly beautiful, and most are not. The thus produced object can be inexpensively made, and produced in volume. Many different such objects can be produced in a minimum of time. Hence, they easily enter the market. A complete system of marketing based on intellectual snobbism has developed around such works or expressions, and huge amounts of money are involved, for what are essentially items that will not stand up to the test of time. Artists must sell works in order to be able to eat and live, and it is of course comfortable to be able to spew out idea after idea and work after work in a minimum of precious time. Such artists are more known for the sensation they offer than for the beauty of what they produce.

These works remain for the snobs, for intellectuals who are so smart they cannot distinguish anymore between value and no value, between art and ‘no art’, and who obviously believe their taste in the particular area of art is quite superior to the tastes of the larger public, merely because most of the others mock the objects or setups. This makes them separate from the others, as they are the masters of sensation and provocation, and hence they believe they belong to the happy few. They indeed belong to the happy few of the foolish who regard common sense as a lowly quality. But do they produce art? Oh no!

We should return to the basics!
A true work of art must be a thing of beauty, as the poet said with much wisdom.

We must cherish the idea, the inspiration, the originality, and equally much the rare talent of the artisan skill of the artist. We shall feel more aesthetic feelings for an object produced by the artist himself or herself by his or her excellent craftsmanship, for these skills are indeed rare. We shall not allow for copies or mass-produced items as true works of art; these remain copies and must be recognised as such. We shall prefer works of art thought out by the artist and executed to the end with exceptional skill by the artisan. The work of art must enrich us, satisfy our needs for beauty and the fine in life, in short: make us better people and more aware of the beauty of the world we live in.

And we have seen or heard enough works that put to us the question of art; that subject has been utterly exhausted since long.