

CHAPTER ONE

WAKEFUL DREAMS

Early in the twentieth century, beginning in France, the visual arts were revolutionized. Up until that point, they—which, unless otherwise indicated, I shall simply designate *art*—had been dedicated to copying visual appearances in various media. As it turned out, that project had a progressive history, which began in Italy, in the time of Giotto and Cimabue, and culminated in the Victorian era, when visual artists were able to achieve an ideal mode of representation, which the Renaissance artist Leon Battista Alberti, in his *On Painting*, defined as follows: there should be no visual difference between looking at a painting or looking out a window at what the painting shows. Thus a successful portrait should be indiscernible from seeing the subject of the portrait looking at us through a window.

This was not possible at first. Giotto's paintings may have dazzled his contemporaries, but, to use an example from the art historian Ernst Gombrich's *Art and Illusion*, Giotto's pictures would be considered crude in comparison with the image of a bowl of cornflakes made with an airbrush by a commercial artist of today. Between the two representations lay a number of discoveries: perspective, *chiaroscuro* (the study of light and shadow), and physiognomy—the study of achieving naturalistic representations of human features expressing feelings appropriate to their situation. When Cindy Sherman visited an exhibition of the work of Nadar, the French photographer of the nineteenth century, showing actual people expressing different feelings, she said: they all look alike. Context often tells us what someone's feelings are: horror in a battle scene could express hilarity at the Folies Bergère.

There were limits to what art—composed of such genres as portraiture, landscape, still life, and historical painting (the latter of which, in royal academies, enjoyed the highest esteem)—could do to show movement. One could see *that* someone moved, but one could not actually see the person move. Photography, which was invented in the 1830s, was considered by one of its inventors, Englishman William Henry Fox Talbot, to be an art, as is implied by his expression "the Pencil of Nature," as though nature portrayed itself by means of light, interacting with some photosensitive surface. Light was a far better artist than Fox Talbot, who liked to bring home pictures of what he saw. Using a bank of cameras with trip wires, Eadweard Muybridge, an Englishman

who lived in California, photographed a horse trotting in front of them, producing a series of stills that showed stages of its motion, settling the question of whether horses in motion ever touched ground with all four hooves at once. He published a book called *Animal Locomotion* that included similar photographs of moving animals, humans included. Because the camera could reveal things that were invisible to the unaided eye, it was deemed more true to nature than our visual system. And for this reason photography was regarded by many artists as showing how things would actually appear if our eyes were sharper than they are. But Muybridge's images, like what we often see in contact sheets, are frequently unrecognizable because the subject has not had the time it takes to compose his or her features into a familiar expression. It was only with the advent of the cinematographic camera, in which strips of film moved with mechanical regularity, that something like motion could be seen when the film was projected. Using that invention, the Lumière brothers made genuine moving pictures, which they screened in 1895. The new technology represented men and animals in movement, seen more or less the way the spectator would actually see it, without having to infer the motion. Needless to say, many may have found cloying the scenes that the Lumières shot, such as workers streaming out of the brothers' factory, which may have been why one of the Lumières concluded that moving pictures had no future. Of course, the advent of the narrative film proved the opposite.

In any case, the moving picture united with the literary arts, ultimately by means of sound. In adding sound to motion, mov-

ing pictures had two features that painting could not emulate, and thus the progress of visual art as the history of painting and sculpture came to a halt, leaving artists who hoped to take the progress of painting further with no place to go. It was the end of art as it was understood before 1895. But in fact painting entered a glorious phase when it was revolutionized a decade after the Lumière's moving picture show. For philosophers, Alberti's criterion ended its reign, which somewhat justifies the political overtones of "revolution."

Let us now move to a paradigm of a revolutionary painting—Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger*, executed in 1907 but which remained in the artist's studio for the next twenty years. Today it is a very familiar work, but in 1907 it was as if art had begun all over again. It in no sense aimed at taking a further step toward fulfilling Alberti's criterion. People may well have said that it was not art, but that would usually mean that it did not belong to the history that Giotto opened up. That history had more or less excluded as art some of the greatest artistic practices—Chinese and Japanese painting were exceptions, though they did not exactly fit the historical progress. Their system of perspective, for example, seemed visually wrong. But Polynesian, African, and many more forms of art were beyond the pale and today can be seen in what are called "encyclopedic museums" like the Metropolitan Museum or the National Gallery in Washington. In Victorian times, works from these various other traditions were designated as "primitive," meaning their work corresponded to the level of very

early European work, like the Sieneese primitives. The thought was that such work would be art in the sense of copying visual reality with exactitude, provided those creating the works were able to visualize doing it. In the nineteenth century, works from many of these traditions were displayed in museums of natural history, as in New York or Vienna or Berlin, and studied by anthropologists rather than art historians.

Still, it was art and, as such, has considerable importance for this book, which means to analyze the concept of art in a sense far wider than my initial use of the term. The huge differences between the art that belongs to what we might as well call Albertian history and most of the art that does not mean that the pursuit of visual truth is not part of the *definition* of art. Art may well be one of the great achievements of *Western* civilization, which means that it is the defining mark of the art that began in Italy and was furthered in Germany, France, the Netherlands, and elsewhere, including America. But it is not the mark of art *as such*. Only that which belongs to all of art belongs to art as Art. When they see work that puzzles them, people ask, "But is it art?" At this point I have to say that there is a difference between *being* art and knowing whether something is art. Ontology is the study of what it means to be something. But knowing whether something is art belongs to epistemology—the theory of knowledge—though in the study of art it is called *connoisseurship*. This book is intended mostly to contribute to the ontology of Art, capitalizing the term that it applies to widely—really to everything that members of the

art world deem worthy of being shown and studied in the great encyclopedic museums.

Most veterans of Art History 101 will have carried away the information that Picasso's *Demoiselles* is an early Cubist masterpiece, whose subject is five prostitutes in a well-known Barcelona bordello named after Avignon Street, where it was situated. Its size—eight feet by seven feet eight inches—is on the scale of a battle painting, which implies a revolutionary declaration, flaunting its message. No one could suppose that the women really looked the way Picasso painted them. A photograph of the quintet would make it plain that Picasso was not interested in copying visual appearances, but the image has its realisms. The scene takes place in the bordello's salon, where two of the women lift their arms to display their charms to clients. There is a bowl of fruit on the table, emblemizing that the scene is indoors.

The painting features three types of women, shown in different styles. It would be impossible to see through a window what the painting shows. The two women with raised arms are painted in a style developed by the Fauves, whom I describe below. Their facial features are outlined in black, and their eyes are exaggerated. To the viewer's right of these women are two other women, one whose face is covered by an African mask and another with a head that belongs to effigies of African goddesses. One of them squats. On the left side of the canvas is an attractive woman, about to enter the space, if the two central figures fail to attract. Reading from right to left, Picasso has painted an evolution of women

from savages, to Fauve-like flirts, to an attractive woman of the kind he painted in his Rose period. The two beckoning women are bathed in light, as if from a floodlight shining down on them, and this divides the scene into three vertical areas; the one to the right is a kind of curtain composed of Cubist fragments, the one to the left is straight up and down, like the wing of a stage, giving the space a theatrical feeling. The sequence of female bodies—and heads!—is like a Freudian scheme of id, ego, and superego. If he had been compelled to respond to criticism that the women don't really look the way the painting shows them, Picasso might have said that he was interested not in appearance but in reality. The Africanesque pair are savage, fierce, aggressive. The middle pair are seductive, willowy whores. Entering the stage from the left is a Parisian girl with regular features. From the perspective of traditional painting, there is a stylistic incoherence. Picasso needed this incoherence between the three kinds of female to represent three psychological strata, or three stages in the physical evolution of women. Both the psychological triad and the evolutionary one have a bordello as their setting. If someone asks what the painting is about, the right answer would probably be women, as Picasso believes they really are. They are destined for sex. Picasso's art is a battle against appearances, and hence against the progressive history of art. The *Demoiselles* are painted in a new way to bring out the truth about women as Picasso saw it.

A second revolutionary mood is to be found in 1905, at the Autumn Salon, held in the Grand Palais in Paris. One of the galleries particularly aroused hostility, harsh enough to explain why

Picasso kept his masterpiece from public exhibition. The subjects were part of everyone's world—sailboats, bouquets, landscapes, portraits, picnics. But these were not shown as they look to ordinary vision. A critic at the time described the works in this gallery as "a Donatello surrounded by wild beasts [Fauves]." The critic, Louis Vauxcelles, was expressing the term ironically, as he did when he described Picasso and Georges Braques as "Cubists," which was not in the dictionary of the time. "Wild Beasts" fit the paintings relatively to those made in the later progressive history in terms of Alberti's criterion, even if the subject was terrifying, like a painting by Paul Delaroche of Lady Jane Grey, blindfolded, feeling about for the chopping block on which she was to be beheaded. It was the artists that were "Wild Beasts," not what they painted, which was gentle enough.

One cannot but praise the curator who arranged this striking juxtaposition. Donatello was a Renaissance master, in this case surrounded by the work of artists who the public thought did not know how to paint or carve. They used bright colors, in all likelihood squeezed directly from paint tubes, edged by often heavy black lines: Picasso's two pink *Demoiselles*, outlined in black and with eyes wide open like early Spanish sculptures, show the spirit of Fauvism. Two of the Wild Beasts were Henri Matisse and André Derain. And whether the artists there appreciated it or not, the strategy of showing works that were marked by the same extravagant style—the wilder the better—implied that something new was happening in the art world. All the better if visitors jeered and laughed, since that authenticated the art as revolutionary. There was a tradition for that. Because of the unusually severe judges who excluded

a great many works from the Salon of 1863, the emperor, Louis-Napoléon, proposed a *Salon des refusés* in which artists excluded from the main event could exhibit their works if they wished. The Parisians, true to type, laughed themselves silly at the paintings, including Manet's *Olympia*, which showed a well-known prostitute, Victorine Meurant, naked and beautiful, with dirty feet and a ribbon around her neck, glaring, as it were, at the merry-makers while being waited on by a black servant bearing flowers, doubtless sent by a patron. Claude Monet later organized a body of admirers who purchased *Olympia*, which survived as a national treasure.

An important purchase from the 1905 exhibition, *Woman with a Hat*, by Matisse, was acquired by the American collector Leo Stein—not Gertrude(!)—who had originally been among those who felt that Matisse did not know how to paint. Leo recorded his first impression of *Woman with a Hat*: "Brilliant and powerful, but the nastiest smear of paint I had ever seen." It was, John Cauman writes, the first purchase of a Matisse by an American. The model was Matisse's wife, and he must have wanted to make visible her character as a particularly strong and independent woman. Once more it is clear that the artist did not paint her the way she would look if photographed but rather as she was, providing one interpretation of what is going on in the painting. Matisse painted her with certain character traits, rather than visual traits. So the painting had to express his admiration, which leaves it to us to understand what he meant by what we see. My sense is that the extraordinary hat shows her character. A woman who wears a hat like that draws attention to herself, and this is reinforced by the play of colors on her dress, which is radically

different from the standard black dress bourgeois women wore. And the background consists of a collection of brushy patches of colors that reflect the dress. He paints her not in a room or a garden, but against a background of controversial patches of paint borrowed from Cézanne. Responding as they did to any art that deviated from the Albertian standards, the French public howled with laughter at the way Matisse represented his wife. But he was, in the end, human, and he had begun to doubt his gifts. The acceptance by the Steins restored his confidence. Sales at art exhibitions are never merely an exchange of art for cash. Especially in early Modernist time, money emblemized the victory by art over laughter, which was intended to defeat the purchased art.

I would like to pause here to cite an excerpt from "The Man with the Blue Guitar," by the American poet Wallace Stevens, who clearly understood the paintings we have been analyzing.

They said, "You have a blue guitar,
You do not play things as they are."

The man replied, "Things as they are
Are changed upon the blue guitar."

And they said then, "But play, you must,
A tune beyond us, yet ourselves,

A tune upon the blue guitar
Of things exactly as they are."

But that in effect is what the early Modernists did.

In 1910 the American Arthur Dove began to make abstract paintings, along with the Suprematist Malevich, who painted his *Black Square* in 1915, as abstraction appealed to avant-garde painters of Early Modernism as well as later to painters of High Modernism, in the so-called New York School—also known as Abstract Expressionism—in the forties and fifties.

Up until the advent of abstraction, paintings were also pictures. For a long time, the two terms were interchangeable. The critic Clement Greenberg, for example, spoke of Abstract Expressionist works as "pictures," as though a painting had to be a picture, even if abstract, raising the question of what its subject could be, since it really did not look like any recognizable object. The usual move was to say that the artist painted his feelings, rather than something visible. In a famous article Greenberg's rival critic Harold Rosenberg contended that what abstract painters did was perform an action on a canvas, the way a bullfighter performs an action in the ring. This explained, in a way, the excitement of Jackson Pollock's flung painting, thrown from a stick or a brush, or Willem de Kooning's distinctive heavy brushstrokes, which often combined to form a figure, as in his celebrated *Woman* paintings of 1953. But such was the state of criticism at the time that Rosenberg's theory was felled by quips like "Who ever hung an action on a wall?" The brushwork of the painters Rosenberg had in mind represented traces of action, the way a skid mark is a trace of a skid.

Two concepts of abstraction existed in New York in the 1940s. The European sense of abstraction was this: the artist abstracts

from visual reality so that there is a path, so to speak, from the surface of the painting to the real world, different from the traditional path, where the surface of the painting "matched" what one might call the surface of reality. This derives from the Renaissance tradition discussed earlier, that looking at a picture was like looking through a window onto the world. It was as if the artist reproduced on the panel or canvas surface the same array of visual stimuli that would affect the eye if one were looking through a transparent surface at the subject of the picture. Abstraction broke this connection. The surface of the painting resembled only abstractly what the subject matter of the painting would show. But still, there was a path from subject to painting, which explains why everyone continued to speak of abstractions as "pictures." A famous and influential sequence of paintings by Theo van Doesburg shows the stages by which Cubism goes from a straightforward picture of a cow to an abstraction of the same subject matter, which does not in the least look like a cow. Had Pasiphaë, who lusted after the Minotaur and disguised herself as a beautiful cow, looked like van Doesburg's final canvas, no bull in the world would have perceived her as a sexy heifer. There was no obvious resemblance between cow and painting, as there was none between the first and final picture in the series. But van Doesburg's point was that abstract art must begin with nature—with objective visual reality. At the time, the path of abstraction was one or another form of geometrization, which almost meant Modern. The major protagonist of natural abstraction was the artist and teacher Hans Hofmann, who ran a successful school in

Greenwich Village and, in the summer, in Provincetown on Cape Cod. When Hofmann said to Jackson Pollock that abstraction comes from nature, Pollock responded, "I am Nature." But this rested on the theory of automatism as used by the Surrealists. The mind, even the unconscious mind, was part of nature.

Hofmann was skeptical about Surrealism, which insisted on *sur*-reality. *Sur*-reality was a kind of psychology of reality, *hidden* from the conscious mind, and it was on this psychological reality that the Surrealists felt true art is finally based. It is based on nature, which can be penetrated to reveal its psychic basis. In the case of an individual, his or her psychic reality is what the Freudians term the "unconscious system." One main path to the unconscious system is through dreams—the "royal road to the unconscious," according to Freud. Another avenue to the unconscious is through automatic writing or automatic drawing—what Robert Motherwell domesticated under the name "doodling." For American abstraction, as against European abstraction, the path was not geometry but spontaneity, where conscious control was suspended. Automatic drawing or writing connected the artist to his or her inner self.

During the Second World War, the Surrealists were in exile in New York, and they had an immense impact on New York's artists, who were dazzled by André Breton and able to meet truly famous artists like Salvador Dalí.

In his first Surrealist Manifesto of 1924, Breton defined Surrealism methodologically. It was "pure psychic automatism by which one intends to express verbally, in writing or by other

method, the real functioning of the mind. Dictation by thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, and beyond any aesthetic or moral preoccupation." It is important to stress that Breton saw the unconscious from an epistemological perspective: it was like a cognitive organ which disclosed a world with which we have lost contact—a marvelous world which appears to us in dreams and to which automatic writing and drawing give us access. It is, that is, not simply to the unconscious mind that automatism takes us, but through that mind to the world with which it is in contact, past the real to the sur-real. That world, through the mediation of the unconscious, speaks through the medium of automatic writing. To practice automatism means to disengage reason, calculation, and indeed everything component in "the highest cerebral centers," to cite a useful expression. And since Breton found it imperative to identify automatism with art, the art he favored was an unpremeditated and uncontrolled pouring forth of language, without guidance or censorship—a kind of "speaking in tongues" which was, for the Spiritualist mouthpiece, the persona of the Holy Spirit. It is little wonder that the early Abstract Expressionists, who were profoundly affected by the tone of Surrealist thought if not its substance, should have seen themselves as shamans through whom objective forces poured forth.

But the Surrealist who was closest to the New Yorkers was Roberto Matta, an architect and artist from Chile who held a class in automatic drawing. Among those who participated in it were Robert Motherwell, Arshile Gorky, and even Jackson Pollock. Motherwell did not admire Matta greatly as a painter—"For me

[his paintings] were theatrical and glossy, too illusionistic for my taste"—but he thought highly of his colored pencil drawings: "His painting never compared to his drawings." And drawing lends itself to "doodling" rather more readily than painting does: or painting has to be reinvented, so to speak, in order to make room for painterly doodles. (Dalí could make a splendid painting of a doodle, but it is difficult to picture him doodling as such.) "The fundamental principle that he and I continually discussed, for his palace revolution, and for my search for an original creative principle," Motherwell wrote in a 1978 letter to Edward Henning, "What the surrealists called psychic automatism, what a Freudian would call free-association, in the specific form of doodling."

The "original creative principle," Motherwell said more than once, was "the thing lacking in American Modernism." It was to be something which, once discovered, would enable American artists to produce original Modernist works, by contrast with what was the practice at the time, which involved the attempt to be Modernist by emulating European works which were by definition Modernist. And it was in formulating this that Motherwell's philosophical training and sensibility comes through. "The American problem," he emphasized in his discussion with Barbara Lee Diamonstein, "is to find a creative principle that was not a style, not stylistic, not an imposed aesthetic." He formulated this as a problem, on at least two occasions, with Gorky specifically in mind. In his interview with Diamonstein, he said: "The enormously gifted Gorky had gone through a Cézannesque period and was, for the 1940s, in a *passé* Picasso period, whereas much

lesser European talents were more in their own 'voice,' so to speak, because they were closer to the living roots of international Modernism (in fact, it was through the Surrealists and, above all, personal contacts with Matta that Gorky shortly after would take off like a rocket)."

Motherwell said that Matta "shifted Gorky from copying *Cahiers d'art*—a European journal something like *Artforum* is today—to a full-blown development of his own." So Gorky was the model of what the original creative principle could do. "With such a creative principle, modernist American artists could cease to be mannerists," Motherwell told Henning. It transformed Gorky, realizing his native gift, from a mannerist of Modernist idioms to the original artist he became (alas, he lost his wife to Matta in exchange and committed suicide). Psychic automatism was an almost magical device for enabling each person to be at once artistically authentic to his or her true self, and at the same time modern. "And," Motherwell noted, "what was 'American' would take care of itself as it did soon enough."

Early in his marriage to an American girl, Agnes Magruder, Gorky accompanied her and their children to her parents' summer home in Virginia in 1946. There he was gripped by the similarity between the flowers in the meadows around the house and those he remembered from his homeland in Turkey, from which he and his mother were forced to flee for religious reasons. As an artist, he was first slavishly dedicated to the School of Paris, and particularly to Picasso. "If Picasso drips, I drip." But he drew and painted the fields that so moved him through their similar-

ity to those in his homeland. So in a way, his "original creative principle" was Turkish American, just as Motherwell said. Gorky became an early member of the New York School.

In 1912 Marcel Duchamp's brothers, members of a group of Cubists that took seriously the mathematics the movement celebrated, pressed him to withdraw a painting from a Cubist show in Paris, because it did not fit in. That painting—*Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2*—was exhibited in New York in the Armory show in 1913, and made him famous in America. The problem was that Duchamp used Cubist tactics to convey the movement of the nude down a staircase, which contaminated pure Cubism. The overlapping Cubist planes introduced movement into the picture. But movement, and especially speed, was the central mark of Futurism, hence the doctrine compelling Cubists to zealously guard the movement's boundaries. In America, critics were delighted by the overlapping planes, which were wittily described as an "explosion in a shingle factory." Together with Brancusi's *Mademoiselle Pogany*, the two works gave America its first glimpse of Modernism. While jokey, American laughter was nevertheless quite different from French laughter, its main weapon against artistic innovation.

There were many artistic movements, beginning with Cubism and Fauvism, down the years, each with a distinctive style, often with a manifesto of the social and political benefits that the movement endorsed. Futurism supported Fascism in pictures and architecture, and Social Realism of course celebrated labor, indus-

trial and agricultural, as the hammer and sickle projected, though there were voices in Russia that supported Cubo-Futurism as the future of art. The Alberti criterion went from being what art was to a movement like the rest, now identified as Realism, which boasted masters such as Edward Hopper, who picketed the Whitney Museum because he believed its curators were prejudiced in favor of abstraction. New York in the thirties had many Communist or at least Marxist artists whose work Gorky stigmatized as "poor painting for poor people." Scholars have identified upward of five hundred manifestos, though not every movement produced one. There is, for example, no Fauve manifesto. Following Cubism and Fauvism, there was Surrealism, Dada, Suprematism, Geometric Abstraction, Abstract Expressionism, Gutai in Japan, color-field painting (supported by Greenberg), Pop Art, Minimalism, and Conceptual Art in the sixties, Irwin in Slovenia and Appropriationism in SoHo, and then the Young British artists in England, led by Damien Hirst, and many, many more.

While most of these abandoned the strict Albertian format of pictures matching how things really look just outside the window, and were not interested in adding to the progression taken for granted in the nineteenth century, there was a continuity of media—oil paint, watercolor, acrylic (once it was invented), pastel—and then clay for modeling, plaster for molding, bronze for casting, and wood for sculpture carving. And then the various print media involving woodblocks, copper plates, and lithographic stones.

The one major change that characterized the seventies and

that has lingered into the present was that many artists turned away from the traditional "artists' materials" and began to put to use anything whatever, but especially objects and substances from what phenomenologists spoke of as the *Lebenswelt*—the ordinary daily world in which we live our lives. That raises a central question of contemporary philosophy of art, namely, how to distinguish between art and real things that are not art but that could very well have been used as works of art.

This struck me one day when I had agreed to meet with some art students—or perhaps they were philosophy students—to hold an informal seminar at Berkeley. When I entered the building, I walked past a large classroom which was being painted. The room contained ladders, drop cloths, cans of wall paint and turpentine, and brushes and rollers. I suddenly thought: what if this is an installation titled *Paint Job*? The Swiss artist duo Fischli and Weiss in fact made an installation in the vitrine of a shop on a main street in a town in Switzerland—perhaps Zurich—that consisted of ladders, paint cans, paint-splashed drop cloths, and the like. People who knew about Fischli and Weiss came to see it as a cultural object. But what interest would it have for art lovers if it was, instead of art, merely a paint job (not capitalized)?

In the seventies, the German guru Joseph Beuys—who taught at Düsseldorf—declared that anything could be art. His work supported this claim, since it made art out of fat—when he was given an exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum, there was, in the atrium, a hump of fat the size of a small iceberg. His other signature material was felt blankets. The explanation—or legend—of

what these two materials meant to him corresponded to a plane crash he experienced in Crimea while a fighter pilot during World War II. He was found by a group of natives, who nursed him back to health by slathering him with animal fat and wrapping him in felt blankets. These accordingly became tokens fraught with meaning—far more than oil paint could possibly have, as warmth is a universal human need.

Robert Rauschenberg wrote in the catalog of *Sixteen Americans* at the Museum of Modern Art in 1955 that "a pair of socks is no less suitable to make a painting with than wood, nails, turpentine, oil and fabric." He used a quilt, Coca-Cola bottles, automobile tires, and stuffed animals in his art. Bringing reality into art, when reality had been what art was to represent, changed the way people thought of art. It brings us to the substance of the question of "what art is" today. But there are issues I need to address before I can take on that question philosophically.

The first artist I need to discuss is the composer John Cage, who raised the question of why musical sounds are limited to the conventional notes on scales. The auditory world is filled with sounds that play no role in musical composition. He raised this question in a work played by the pianist David Tudor on August 29, 1952, in Woodstock, New York.

The piece is called "4'33," which is the performance time Cage designated for it. It consisted of three movements of different lengths. Tudor signaled the beginning by covering the keyboard with the keyboard cover, and then he measured the length

of the movement with a stopwatch. At the end of the movement, he raised the keyboard cover. He then did the same thing a second time, and a third. He did not play a note, but when he was finished he took a bow. Cage used as many score sheets as he thought were needed. It is often proposed that Cage was teaching his audience to listen to silence, but that was not his intention. Rather, he wanted to teach his audience to listen to the sounds of life—barking dogs, crying babies, thunder and lightning, the wind in the trees, motor vehicle backfires and putt-putt noises. Why can these not be music? Woodstock is not Paris, but the audience might as well have been Parisians. They walked out in droves. The murmured judgment was that "Cage had gone too far."

Cage had taught at Black Mountain College, where he met the great dancer Merce Cunningham and Rauschenberg. The three of them were involved in an early avant-garde work, *Theater Piece*, and influenced one another profoundly. Rauschenberg painted an all white canvas, which Cage described as a "landing field," with lights and shadows—or houseflies—being part of it. In truth, the white painting inspired the concept of a silent piece of music, where the vernacular noises became part of it. The noises became part of the music.

The use of such items as those that Rauschenberg incorporated into his work brought reality into art in the early fifties. Plus, of course, the slathered paint, as in Rauschenberg's *Bed*, which connected Rauschenberg's work with that of the New York School. Jasper Johns used targets, numerals, and flags because, as

I see it, a picture of a flag is a flag, a numeral is a number, and a painting of a target is a target, so the object is ambiguous between art and reality. And Cy Twombly, at least in the early years, took the substance of scribbles as his subject.

Sometime in the seventies, the social configuration of the art world changed. Organizations sprang up that sought to identify emerging artists, who were given one-person shows by leading galleries, and whose work was collected as investments. For the most part, movements disappeared as the wave of the future, and the search for emerging talent took its place. By the end of the seventies, when the artist Robert Rauschenberg, whose work represented domestic spaces and objects, wanted to start a movement to oppose the prevailing Minimalist aesthetic, he had to ask people how one started a movement. There were enough artists sympathetic with his ideas that Pattern and Decoration—P&D—was formed. It was, in my view, pretty much the last significant movement, at least in America.

I recall how New Yorkers expected to learn from the Whitney Biennials the direction in which art was headed. For years Greenberg was the authority on this. But by 1984 the reign of Greenberg was largely over. Instead of art movements, political movements like feminism began to demand space to show its work. Multiculturalism was less a movement than a curatorial decision to feature the art of blacks, Asians, American Indians, and gays of either sex. The Biennial of 1983—the year before I became an art critic—made me feel that the work displayed was not, to

paraphrase the art world expression, what was supposed to happen next, which then raised the question of what was to happen instead. The "next big thing" seemed suddenly not expected, and the artistic corps consisted of a large pool of talented individuals, emerging or emerged, looked over by increasingly powerful curators who promoted their tastes and commitments.

The issue of what art is has become a very different matter than it has been in any previous moment in history. That is because, especially in the late twentieth century, art had begun to reveal its inner truth. It is as though the history of art, after centuries of progress, finally began to disclose its nature. In Hegel's masterpiece, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, "Spirit" finally finds what it is at the end of its search. Art, in his philosophy, is a component of Spirit, together with philosophy and religion. In a way, my analysis to this point has something in it of the *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, to use the book's German title. I have tried to trace the history of modern art with giant steps to a point at which I can finally address the question itself. There was something in the way art was thought of that answered the question of what it itself is.

I want to analyze in some degree the two major artists who, to my mind, made the greatest contribution to the issue—Marcel Duchamp in 1915 and Andy Warhol in 1964. Both of them were connected with movements, Dada in the case of Duchamp, and Pop Art in connection with Warhol. Each movement was to some degree philosophical, removing from the concept of art conditions

which had been thought to be an inseparable part of what art was. Duchamp, as a Dadaist, tried as a matter of Dada principle to forebear producing beautiful art. He did so for political reasons. This was an attack on the bourgeoisie, whom Dada held responsible for the Great War, which many members of the movement sat out in Zurich or, in Duchamp's case, in New York from 1915 to 1917, when America entered the war. Drawing a moustache on a postcard of Mona Lisa "uglified" the famous portrait of a beautiful woman. In 1912—the year in which he was pressured to withdraw *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* from a Cubist exhibition—Duchamp attended an aeronautical show just outside Paris, with the painter Fernand Léger and the sculptor Constantin Brancusi. According to *Marcel Duchamp: Artist of the Century*, among many sources, the artists found themselves in the presence of a great wooden airplane propeller. Duchamp said, "Painting is washed up," adding, pointing to the propeller, "Who'll do anything better than that propeller? Tell me, can you do that?" Perhaps the propeller stood for speed, which the Futurist painters—and Duchamp himself—thought a mark of modernity. Or perhaps it conveyed flight, which was fairly novel. Or perhaps power. The episode was not further commented on. It was an early statement in which a piece of machinery was compared or contrasted with works of art.

The propeller in any case was not, and could not have been, an example of what Duchamp called "readymades"—an expression that he saw in the window of a dress shop, where it contrasted with "made to order." This was in 1915, when he sailed into New York harbor a famous man, thanks to *Nude Descending a Staircase*,

No. 2. In interviews with the press he seemed to say that painting was European, and that European art as a whole was "washed up." To the reporters he said, "If only America would realize that the art of Europe is finished—dead—and that America is the country of the art of the future, instead of trying to base everything she does on European tradition. . . . Look at the skyscrapers!" He later added bridges and, notoriously, American plumbing.

Also in 1915 Duchamp purchased a snow shovel in a hardware store on Columbus Avenue, which he carried over his shoulder to the apartment of his patron, Walter Arensberg. He gave it the title "In advance of the broken arm," which he carefully lettered on the shovel's handle. Many years later, he stated, in "Apropos of 'Readymades'"—a talk he gave at the Museum of Modern Art in New York—that "a point I want very much to establish is that the choice of these 'readymades' was not dictated by aesthetic delectation. This choice was based on a reaction of visual indifference with at the same time a total absence of good or bad taste . . . in fact a complete anaesthesia." Duchamp had a deep distaste for what he called "retinal art"—art that gratified the eye. He felt that most art since Courbet was retinal. But there were other kinds of art—religious art, philosophical art—which were far less concerned with pleasing the eye than with deepening the way we think.

Notice the date: 1915. It was the second year of the First World War—"the war to end wars"—and Duchamp was doing his Dadaist bit by abusing beauty. But in attacking "taste" he was calling into question the central concept of aesthetic theory for such

philosophical writers as Immanuel Kant, David Hume, and the artist William Hogarth. Beyond that, all twenty of the readymades that Duchamp created took objects out of the Lebenswelt and elevated them to works of art, which subtracted from the concept of art everything having to do with craftsmanship and touch and, above all, the artist's eye. Finally, there was more to the abuse of beauty than simply the Dada decision to punish the bourgeoisie for its decision to go to war, consigning to their death millions of young men on the battlefields of Europe. So the readymade was by far more than a joke. Small wonder that Duchamp said, "I'm not at all sure that the concept of the readymade isn't the most important single idea to come out of my work." It certainly entailed problems for philosophers like myself concerned with defining art. Where are the boundaries of art? What distinguishes art from anything else, if anything can be art? We are left with the not very consoling idea that just because anything *can be* art, it doesn't follow that everything *is* art. Duchamp managed to condemn pretty much the entire history of aesthetics, from Plato to the present.

The most famous readymade is a urinal, lying on its back and crudely signed with the false signature "R. Mutt 1917," splashed onto the urinal's rim. That was the year when America entered the war and Alfred Stieglitz's 291 gallery (so-named because it was located at 291 Fifth Avenue in New York) closed shop. Duchamp had submitted it to the exhibition sponsored by the Society of Independent Artists, mainly, one feels, to put pressure on the organization, whose policy was that anything would be shown if the artist paid the admission fee, and that there were

to be no prizes. This in fact was the policy of the French Society of Independent Artists, whose members need not have been members of the Academy of Fine Art. As is widely known, the Society managed to reject *Fountain*, as Duchamp ironically named it. The chairman of the committee justified the action by saying that any piece of art would be accepted—but a urinal is a piece of plumbing, not a work of art.

The 291 gallery was the leading such institution dedicated to Modern art, displaying the work of such artists as John Marin, Marsden Hartley, Charles Demuth, and Stieglitz's wife, Georgia O'Keeffe. Stieglitz himself was an artist, since, if any photographs are works of art, his photographs are. But photography as art was highly contested in those years, so perhaps for that reason Duchamp's sponsors carried the readymade to 291 to be photographed by Stieglitz, who did so in rich sepia, as a work of art, placed as a sculpture just under a painting by Marsden Hartley. It can be recognized as a flat-back Bedfordshire urinal that Duchamp is said to have spotted in the window of a plumbing supply store. The mystery is that this model, purported to be manufactured by the Mott Iron Works (cf. *Mutt Iron Works*), appears to have vanished from the face of the Earth. Not even the Museum of Modern Art was able to find one for a major exhibition of Duchamp's work. But at least we know what it looked like. Lying on its back, with the drain holes at its base, it is very much like a woman assuming the bottom partner in the missionary position, even if the urinal is designed for the comfort of the male. Duchamp never avoided a sexual touch, if he could find one. His oeuvre is philosophi-

cally rich, particularly in its attitude to beauty, which for centuries was believed internal to the concept of art. After all, most of the institutions that graduated artists since the seventeenth century had the word "beautiful" in their title: *beaux arts*, *bellas artes*, and the like. That something could be art but not beautiful is one of the great philosophical contributions of the twentieth century. Arensberg sought to defend Duchamp at the meeting where it was decided not to accept "Mr. Mutt's" urinal: "A lovely form has been revealed, freed from its functional purpose, therefore a man clearly has made an aesthetic contribution." In truth, Duchamp's contribution was to have made a work of art minus aesthetics. He contributed "The Richard Mutt Case" to *The Blind Man*, an ephemeral publication published in conjunction with "The Blind Man's Ball": Whether Mr. Mutt, with his own hands made the fountain or not has no importance. He chose it. He took an ordinary article of life, placed it so that its useful significance disappeared under the new title and point of view—created a new thought for that object. He concluded his text by saying, "As for plumbing. . . . The only works of art America has given are her plumbing and her bridges." Like the skyscrapers, these are good, practical things. These are not, as Arensberg said, an aesthetic contribution. Turning it on its back ensured that "its useful significance disappeared."

Andy Warhol's contribution to the definition of art was made not through a text, but through a remarkable body of sculptures, which constituted his first project upon taking possession of the

Silver Factory in 1963, and was shown the following spring at the Stable Gallery, which is today the business entrance on 74th Street of the Whitney Museum of Art. The *Brillo Box* became a kind of philosophical Rosetta Stone, since it allowed us to deal with two languages—the language of art and the language of reality. The partial definition of art that I developed in *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* was the result of reflections on the questions this remarkable object raised.

The leading aestheticians in America before what we may as well call the Age of Warhol were greatly influenced by a famous analysis in Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, in which he generated what seemed like a powerful attack against the search for philosophical definitions, which in a way was Socrates' contribution to philosophy, at least as he is portrayed in the dialogues of Plato. The dialogues usually show Socrates in discussion with a circle of various Athenians. They address concepts like justice, knowledge, courage, and others, including art—though the Greeks had no word for art—which everyone in the culture more or less knows how to use. There would have been definitions in the dictionary, if ancient Greece had dictionaries, but no one would look them up, since the terms Socrates is interested in are used by everybody in daily conversation. Thus in the dialogue *The Republic*, which deals with a kind of ideal society, the topic is justice. Socrates asks an elderly businessman named Cephalus what he considers justice to be. Cephalus answers that it is paying one's debts and keeping one's promises—certainly the code of an upright man of business. Socrates then offers a

counterexample. Would it be just to return a weapon to a man who has since gone mad? True, it belonged to him and he has a right to have it. But weapons are dangerous, and one can no longer be confident that the owner of the weapon knows when to use it. The form of the dialogue consists of a thesis, an antithesis, and a revision of the thesis in the light of the antithesis, until the participants cannot go any further. In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates and a gifted young mathematician define knowledge as true belief, though they realize that there is more to knowledge than that. Epistemologists have added further conditions in recent times, but no one thinks we are home-free. Socrates defines art as imitation in the tenth book of *The Republic*, which certainly captures Greek sculpture. Naturally Socrates looks for a counterexample and quickly finds one—namely, a mirror—which gives us reflections effortlessly, and better than anyone can draw.

Everyone generally knows what justice is, or knowledge. The definition of knowledge in *Theaetetus* consists of two conditions, but the search for further conditions is a vital part of epistemology. Socrates' definition of art crumples totally when abstraction and then readymades come along in the twentieth century. Beyond question, most works of art in the West have been mimetic, to use the word derived from the Greek, and Western artists have become more and more adept at it. When the camera was invented, it took some decades before the human face could be rendered lifelike, but the camera did not invalidate as art early efforts at imitation, like those of Giotto or Cimabue. But imitation can no longer be part of the definition of art, since Modern

and contemporary art is full of counterexamples. But one cannot be expected to know what art will be like in two millennia! Only if art has reached an end can that be. Socrates, for all his sharpness, has little to say about the future of art. He seems to imagine that things basically will go on as they are, so far as art is concerned. Abstraction and readymades make it increasingly difficult to find a definition of art. That is why the question "What is art?" has been raised more frequently and often more heatedly. The nice thing about imitation is that people in general are able to identify art in cultures such as the one in which Socrates offered his definition of art. But how useful are definitions? Wittgenstein offers an example in which definitions seem useless, since we can do without them: the concept of *games*.

We can usually pick out which activities are games. But when we consider the array of games—hopscotch, poker, ring around the rosie, pick-up sticks, spin the bottle, hide-and-seek, Simon says, and countless others—it is difficult to identify what they have in common. It is accordingly difficult to see how we could possibly frame a definition, though children rarely have difficulty in picking up and playing different games. Someone might say games are play, and not serious. But that can't be part of the definition, since people riot when their teams lose. It would not stop them from doing so if we tried to say "It's only a game." So we don't have a definition and, Wittgenstein claims, having a definition would not make us wiser. The best we can do is find a *family resemblance*. Thus a child might have its father's nose and its mother's eyes. Or we can imagine a set of things: *a, b, c, d*.

But though *a* resembles *b*, *b* resembles *c*, and *c* resembles *d*, *a* does not resemble *d*. So there is no overarching property on which to base a definition. How interesting, followers of Wittgenstein thought, that games should not share a common property! Even philosophers did not look further.

In 1956 an effort was made to replace the paradigm of games with the paradigm of artworks. An important paper, "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics," was published by Morris Weitz, who argued that "art" is an *open concept*, which seems intuitively true if we consider the immense variety of objects in an encyclopedic museum. Weitz himself used the far less compelling example of novels, but though there are great differences between Jane Austen's novels and those of James Joyce, the history of visual art would appear more open by far if we track the changes beginning with Manet to, well, Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger*. With the visual arts, moreover, more and more traditions of art from the different cultures were franchised for what I have called the Art World, which consists of all the artworks in the world. What does it take for an object to be an artwork in the light of changes in museum acquisitions? How does something get franchised as part of the Art World? Blacks and women in America were long prohibited from voting, hence they were disenfranchised. Unquestionably this was grounded in a wide belief in their inferiority. But in fact it rested on racism and sexism. Ultimately, blacks, abetted by whites, were able to help other blacks to claim their civil rights. The brutality that was televised worldwide ultimately led to the end of most Southern resistance. In 2008 the contest

for the Democratic nomination for president was between a black man and a woman. Race and sex had become legally irrelevant.

In the sixties the philosopher George Dickie developed a theory known as the Institutional Theory of art. It more or less overpowered Weitz's theory of art. In response to criticisms, Dickie has developed various versions of institutionalism, but it basically states that determining what is art is altogether a matter to be decided by his designation of the Art World, which he defines differently than I do. For Dickie, the Art World is a sort of social network, consisting of curators, collectors, art critics, artists (of course), and others whose life is connected to art in some way. Something is a work of art, then, if the Art World decrees that it is. Duchamp's idea that Mr. Mutt chose to turn a urinal on its back transformed it from a piece of plumbing to a piece of art. But there has to be some reason for the members of the Art World to judge something to be art. Arensberg felt that Duchamp wished to make the urinal's beauty salient. Someone else might have said that he wanted to draw attention to the eroticism in putting it on its back with the drain holes as the female urinary outlet. Dickie's idea turns out to be like knighthood; not everyone can do it, it has to be done by kings or queens. The knighted individual kneels, and then rises once his or her knighthood has been conferred. But even there, some knightly reasons can be stated: dragons were slayed, maidens were rescued, and the like. Some mad king might confer knighthood on his horse. He would have that power, though he might justify the knighthood in the light of the horse having brought his master out of danger. In Plato's dialogue

ustrade. The gallery itself was to the left, behind a baronial door of varnished mahogany. It was a far cry from the actual stable in which the gallery was previously situated and that gave it its name. It was really one of the beautiful galleries in New York. Upon entering, one felt one had made a mistake. It looked like a supermarket stockroom. All the furniture had been removed, and there were just rows of cartons, with the boxes neatly stacked—Brillo, Kellogg's, Del Monte, Heinz, etc. Delighted visitors who had purchased cartons at the gallery attracted attention outside on the street as they walked along carrying the plastic-wrapped works.

The individual boxes looked as much like actual commercial containers as Andy and his helpers could make them. They were fabricated in a woodworking shop to Andy's specifications. Real cartons were photographed and the labels then stenciled onto the fabricated boxes, making them, as Gerard Malanga, Warhol's assistant, said, three-dimensional photographs. Except for the occasional drips, his boxes look just like the real boxes, designed, in the case of Brillo, by James Harvey, actually a second-generation Abstract Expressionist. The point of the work was to subtract the perceptual differences between art and reality. A marvelous photograph by Fred McDarrah shows Andy standing among his boxes, like a stock boy in the stockroom, his pasty face looking out at us. Nobody would pay attention to the drips, if they could be seen at all.

The question, then, was, in what way did Andy's Factory-made boxes differ from the factory-made boxes? That is, what differenti-

ating visible properties separated them? The Factory-made boxes were wood, while the factory-made boxes were fashioned from corrugated cardboard. But the difference between them could have been reversed. The Factory-made boxes were painted white, with the design stenciled onto four sides and the top, but so were many of the factory-made boxes. Other factory-made boxes were unpainted except for the logo—they were the normal brown of unpainted corrugated cardboard. The commercial boxes contained scouring pads, while Andy's boxes had no such contents, but he could have filled his boxes with the pads and they would still be art. Could members of the Art World differentiate them as art? Maybe—but they would be guessing. Externally, both sets were alike.

My sense is that, if there were no visible differences, there had to have been *invisible* differences—not invisible like the Brillo pads packed in the Brillo boxes, but properties that were *always* invisible. I've proposed two such properties that are invisible in their nature. In my first book on the philosophy of art I thought that works of art are *about* something, and I decided that works of art accordingly have meaning. We infer meanings, or grasp meanings, but meanings are not at all material. I then thought that, unlike sentences with subjects and predicates, the meanings are *embodied* in the object that had them. I then declared that works of art are *embodied meanings*. Most philosophers of language are fixed on semantics, analyzing sentences in such a way that the subject falls within the scope of the predicate. Except for Wittgenstein, who offered in his great early work, *Tractatus*

Logico-Philosophicus, the thesis that sentences are pictures and the world itself is made up of facts that pictorial sentences match, leaving the question of what happens when they don't. The opening sentence of the *Tractatus* is: "The world is the sum total of facts, not things." Semantics uses external relations like "denotation" or "extension." But the kind of relationship art depends upon is internal. The art object *embodies* the meaning, or partially embodies it. Suppose an artist sets out to paint some murals that celebrate important laws of science. He paints a single horizontal unwavering line on one wall and, on the facing wall, he paints a dot. The two walls together picture Newton's first law of motion: "Every object at rest stays at rest, and every object in motion stays in motion unless it is acted upon."

I must admit that I have done relatively little to analyze embodiment, but my intuition was this: The artwork is a material object, some of whose properties belong to the meaning, and some of which do not. What the viewer must do is interpret the meaning-bearing properties in such a way as to grasp the intended meaning they embody. An example I often use is Jacques-Louis David's 1793 *Marat Assassiné*—Marat Assassinated—which represents a scene from the then ongoing French Revolution. Marat was an incendiary blogger, to use the current term, who wrote for the publication *Friend of the People*. He was stabbed to death by an aristocrat, Charlotte Corday, who had come to petition this powerful figure on behalf of her brother. Marat is said to have begun to write a pass for Corday's brother when she stabbed him to death. Since Marat represented the revolutionaries, there was a

general sense that the event should be painted by David, himself on the revolutionary side, so when the people shouted, "David, take up thy brush," he had little choice. But he painted not a crime scene, but rather a metaphorical scene of the meaning of the work.

Here is an interpretation of his painting. David portrays Marat in the bathtub, where he spent considerable time because the bathwater helped ease the pain he suffered from a noxious skin disorder. In front of him is Corday's dagger and some spilled blood. Marat is lying back, in death, with the instrument of his death in front of him. I interpret Marat in his bathtub as comparable to Jesus in his sepulcher. The painting suggests that he will rise up as Jesus did, but in any case, there is also the thought that he died for the viewer as Jesus died for Christians, so Marat is a corresponding martyr for the sansculottes, as the ordinary revolutionaries were called. But just as Jesus expected something of those present, namely that they should follow in his steps, there is an injunction that, since Marat died violently for the Revolution, you, the viewer, must follow in Marat's steps. The viewers are part of the picture, even if not seen. David was addressing them as they stood before the very compelling representation of a very central moment. The scene appeals to the revolutionary audience. One may say that the fact that it is painted on canvas does not enter into the meaning. It just supports the painting. It is not at all part of the meaning, even if it is part of the object that embodies the meaning. The explanation that an embodied meaning is what makes an object a work of art applies as much

to David's work as to Warhol's. In fact it applies to everything that is art. When philosophers supposed that there is no property that artworks share, they were looking only at visible properties. It is the invisible properties that make something art.

Of course, a property could be both, part of the object and of the meaning. A convenient example might be a Donald Judd sculpture, which typically consists of a row of uniform compartments, often facing the viewer, and is made of sheet metal and is coated in enamel. Typically they were titled "Untitled," mainly, I would suppose, to inhibit the viewer from giving them a specific meaning, like "desktop." Judd wanted them to be seen as "specific objects" and not as imitations of specific objects. He wanted them, that is, to enrich the inventory of the world. Judd sent his pieces to a machine shop to be fabricated, since it lay beyond his powers to make sufficiently sharp corners. The corners were naturally properties of the object, but they entered into the meaning of the work, contributing to its specificity.

I quite realize that there may be more conditions for a definition of art. It took millennia to add conditions to the two that Socrates and Theaetetus found in the definition of knowledge. But I can imagine the aestheticians of various cultures saying that my definition does not explain why people are moved or revolted by this or that work. Of course, the aestheticians don't explain things like that. They help identify the artworks of a given culture, but these, which vary from culture to culture, do not belong to the definition of art. The definition has to capture the universal artness of artworks, irrespective of when they were made or will

be made. We have to learn, from culture to culture, how to interpret them and fit them into the life of that culture, like icons, for example, or fetishes. And, of course, they have the style that is appropriate to the culture in question. They have to have the style that belongs to that culture.

From that perspective, it is worth considering the Brillo box's style, designed by James Harvey, whose day job was as a commercial designer.

To begin with, his Brillo carton is not simply a container for Brillo pads; it is a visual celebration of Brillo. You can verify this by looking at the way Brillo is shipped today, in a plain brown wrapping like pornographic literature. The difference between the container of 1964 and the container of today expresses as eloquently as anything could the difference between then and now. The 1964 box is decorated with two wavy zones of red separated by one of white, which flows between them and around the box like a river. The word "Brillo" is printed in proclamatory letters: the consonants in blue, the vowels—i and o—in red, on the river of white. Red, white, and blue are the colors of patriotism, as the wave is a property of water and of flags. This connects cleanliness and duty, and transforms the side of the box into a flag of patriotic sanitation. The white river metaphorically implies grease washed away, leaving only purity in its wake. The word "Brillo" conveys an excitement which is carried out in various other words—the idioms of advertising—that are distributed on the surfaces of the box, the way the idioms of revolution or protest are boldly blazoned on banners and placards carried by demonstrators. The

pads are GIANT. The product is NEW. It SHINES ALUMINUM FAST. The carton conveys ecstasy, and is in its own way a masterpiece of visual rhetoric, intended to move minds to the act of purchase and then of application. And that wonderful river of purity has an art historical origin in the hard-edged abstraction of Ellsworth Kelly and Leon Polk Smith. As I suggested above, the design exalts its own contemporaneity and that of its users, who belong to the present the way members of what was called the "Pepsi generation" were congratulated for their nowness.

Nevertheless, the factors that engender the Brillo boxes' goodness contribute nothing whatever to what makes Warhol's *Brillo Box* good or even great art. All the grocery boxes have the same philosophical properties. It is important to remember that all the philosophical points *Brillo Box* helps us see could have been made by means of any of the more humdrum cartons also fabricated for the Stable Gallery show. We cannot allow what makes Harvey's box so successful to penetrate the art criticism of Warhol's box! The art criticism for *Brillo Box* really cannot differ significantly from the art criticism of any of the cartons Warhol made or could have made instead of it. Philosophically speaking, the design differences between the different sets of cartons are irrelevant. Warhol was not influenced by hard-edged abstraction: he reproduced the forms of an existing artist (Harvey), only because the forms were already there, the way the logo of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis was there, certifying that Brillo was kosher (as it was in 1964). It was essential that Warhol reproduce the effects of whatever caused Harvey to do what he had done, without the

same causes explaining why they were there, in his *Brillo Box* of 1964.

So how does art criticism come in? It comes in because commercial art through its ordinariness was in some way what Warhol's art was about. He had a view of the ordinary world as aesthetically beautiful, and admired greatly the things Harvey and his Abstract Expressionist heroes would have ignored or condemned. Andy loved the surfaces of daily life, the nutritiousness and predictability of canned goods, the poetics of the commonplace. Roy Lichtenstein once said in my presence, "Isn't this a wonderful world?," adding that it was something Andy said all the time. But in terms of ordinariness there is nothing to choose between in considering the various cartons he had fabricated for his exhibition. This approach shows a philosophical shift from the rejection of industrial society—which would have been the attitude of William Morris and the Pre-Raphaelites—to endorsement, which is what one might expect from someone born into poverty and who might therefore be in love with the warmth of a kitchen in which all the new products were used. So the cartons are as philosophical as the wallpaper of William Morris, meant of course to transform rather than celebrate daily life and, in Morris's case, to redeem its ugliness into a kind of medievalized beauty. Warhol's boxes were a reaction to Abstract Expressionism, but mainly with respect to honoring what Abstract Expressionism despised. That is part of the art criticism of *Brillo Box*, and there is a great deal more. But the two pieces of art criticism are disjoint: there is no overlap between the explanation of Harvey and the explanation of

Warhol. Warhol's rhetoric has no immediate relationship at all to that of the Brillo boxes as such.

There is one problem in concluding that the commercial Brillo box is what Warhol's *Brillo Box* is about. Although I would have hoped for the contrast to be between art and reality, it is hard to deny that Harvey's Brillo box is art. It is art, but it is commercial art. Once the design is set, the cartons are manufactured by the thousands. They are made of corrugated cardboard to protect the contents while still being light enough to be lifted and moved, and to allow for easy opening. None of that is true of Andy's boxes; only a few were made, and their purpose was purely to be seen and understood as art. It is pure snobbishness to deny that commercial art is art just because it is utilitarian. And besides, cardboard boxes are part of the *Lebenswelt*. Andy's box is not. It is part of the Art World. Harvey's box belongs to visual culture, as that is understood, but Andy's boxes belong to high culture.

Lichtenstein, who had a revolutionary agenda, wanted to bring vernacular art into the art gallery, which until then had been open only to fine art. So he painted panels from comic strips, as in his wonderful painting *The Kiss*, which shows a pilot and a girl kissing. The pilot is in uniform, the girl is wearing a red dress and red lipstick. But that is not vernacular, like a page from a comic strip would be—say, *Terry and the Pirates*, which would be published by the thousands. Roy's painting is unique. We can display sheets of comic strips in a gallery open to vernacular art, but since the sixties we have opened it to *paintings* of vernacular art, especially in showing Pop Art. We wrap food in the funny papers, or dump

coffee grounds in them—but it would be barbarism to do such things with *The Kiss* by Roy Lichtenstein.

I am not really an art historian, so I had no interest in Warhol's influences when he had the idea of making those cartons—if, indeed, he had any influences then. I am reasonably certain that Warhol had not read much philosophy. But I felt I saw certain philosophical structures in the pairing of an artwork with an object it resembled, even if the object and the artwork were perceptually indiscernible. In fact, philosophy is full of such examples, such as the contrast between dream and perception when the content is the same—for instance, René Descartes's *Meditations*, a book that undertakes to find what, if anything, its author knows with certainty. The *mise-en-scène* provided by his *Discourse on Method* has Descartes returning from the wars in Germany, when he becomes snowbound. Since he has nothing more pressing to do, he applies himself "earnestly and freely to the general overthrow of all my former opinions."

He peels off the layers of belief like an onion. "All that I have, up to this moment, accepted as possessed of the highest truth and certainty, I received either from or through the senses. I observed, however, that these sometimes misled us, and it is the part of prudence not to place absolute confidence in that by which we have even once been deceived." This may be too harsh a move. There may have been cases under less than ideal circumstance in which anyone may make a mistake. Still, there are things I cannot honestly doubt: "How could I deny these hands and this body, and

not be classed with persons in a state of insanity, whose brains are so disordered and clouded by dark bilious vapors as to cause them pertinaciously to assert that they are monarchs when they are in the greatest poverty . . . or that their head is made of clay, their bodies of glass, or that they are gourds." But then it occurs to him that, though he feels certain that he is holding a piece of paper that he looks at, "How often I have dreamt that I was in these familiar circumstances, that I was dressed and occupied this place by the fire, when I was lying undressed in bed? I perceive clearly that there exist no certain marks by which the state of waking can ever be distinguished from a vivid dream of ordinary life. I almost persuade myself that I am now dreaming."

There is no internal way of distinguishing between dreaming and perceiving. Not always, but sometimes. Sometimes I dream I am writing a book on a computer when in truth I am in bed asleep. There are cases in which dream and waking experiences are indistinguishable, which is our circumstance with the *Brillo Box* and the *Brillo box*. They are for all practical—and philosophical—purposes entirely alike. And that makes the first part of the first "Meditation" much like the case of the artwork *Brillo Box* and the ordinary commercial *Brillo box*. We cannot distinguish the artwork from the ordinary *Brillo box*, at least as far as each of them meets the eye.

Consider those wonderful drawings by Saul Steinberg, in which a commonplace box dreams of the perfect portrait, in which all edges and corners are perfect. Warhol at first thought he would save money and labor by using ordinary cardboard boxes from the

wholesaler. But the edges and corners were too soft and rounded. They were inconsistent with his vision. So he had to take the route of fabrication and stenciling. The stencil gave perfect similarity, but you could not stencil the physical properties of the box. Cardboard is perfect for shipping but not for geometry, whose properties Warhol wanted for his boxes. Sharp corners and edges, as Judd was aware, belong to a dream of exactitude.

In the first known effort at defining art, Socrates, we recall, explained it as mimesis. But though he was a sculptor, so far as he had a job, he designed as ideal a republic that saw no need for artists, who might as well be exiled. At one point Socrates outlines the various divisions of the universe: an upper and lower level, the former being invisible, the latter visible. The upper level of visibility consists of things that carpenters make—tables and chairs. These conform to the concepts, which are invisible but accessible to intellect. At the very bottom of the visible world are shadows and reflections, like mirror images. Photographs did not exist in Plato's time, but they may be classed as reflections of things, and so may paintings, or art in general. In some versions, dreams belong to this lowest level. It represents things. They are made of visible qualities, but they may not be real. I mean that I might dream of my dead wife, which shows her as much as an oil painting would.

I like the way in which art is like a dream in two great philosophical visions. We could add "dreamlike" to meaning and embodiment. Novels are like dreams, as are plays. It is not necessary that they be true, but it is possible. There is something very

compelling in the relationship between art and dream. By contrast with carpenters and craftsmen, those who paint only need know how things appear. They need not be able to make a chest, but they can paint a picture of a chest without that knowledge. Socrates had a soft spot for craftsmen. In Book Ten of *The Republic*, which begins with Socrates' putdown of mimetic art, he tells a story with which he ends the great dialogue. It is the story of Er, a heroic soldier who seems to have been killed in action, but his body did not decay—there was no stench—and he was accordingly not cremated in a funeral pyre. Instead, Er went underground, joining the spirits of the dead. They are instructed in how to choose their next life. At "graduation," they are taken to a meadow where lives are all laid out for them to choose from, as if they were garments. In a way, each chooses a life that seems more desirable than the life left behind. I cannot address them all, but one man, Epeus—an artist, in fact—who designed the Trojan horse that helped the Greeks penetrate Troy by hiding in the horse's body, took the soul of a woman "skilled in all the arts"—a craftsman. In another dialogue, *The Statesman*, Socrates decides that the ruler should be a weaver, since the art of the statesman is to weave together the different strands that make up the state. The crafts are higher because they are more useful than the arts, which deal only in appearances.

I have decided to enrich my earlier definition of art—embodied meaning—with another condition that captures the skill of the artist. Thanks to Descartes and Plato, I will define art as "wakeful dreams." One wants to explain the universality of art.

My sense is that everyone, everywhere, dreams. Usually this requires that we sleep. But wakeful dreams require of us that we be awake. Dreams are made up of appearances, but they have to be appearances of things in their world. True, the different arts in the encyclopedic museum are made by different cultures.

I have only just begun to think about wakeful dreams, which have the advantage over the dreams that come to us in sleep in that they can be shared. They are accordingly not private, which helps explain why everyone in the audience laughs at the same time, or screams at the same moment.

There is another advantage, in that they raise important questions for the End of Art, which I conceived of in 1984. One argument for the End of Art is that it rests on the fact that art and reality are in certain cases indiscernible. I thought if art and reality were indiscernible, we had somehow come to the end. Art and reality could in principle be visibly the same. But I had not realized at the time that the differences are invisible, as we saw in distinguishing the Brillo box from the *Brillo Box* in that they have different meanings and different embodiments. The Brillo box of the supermarket glorifies the product Brillo by all the slogans on the box, as we noticed in analyzing the supermarket boxes. Warhol's *Box* denotes the Brillo boxes. It embodies the latter in that the two look the same. Art always stands at a distance from reality. Thus two Brillo boxes don't denote one another.

A 2005 work by the Appropriationist Mike Bidlo looks as much like Warhol's *Box* as the latter looks like supermarket Brillo boxes. Bidlo's denote all the 1964 *Brillo Boxes*, and this is worth noting.

He did what he did because he wanted to understand what went into making them just as he replicated some Jackson Pollocks in order to learn what was involved in a real Jackson Pollock. In a way, Warhol's *Box* was the defining work of the sixties, while Bidlo's was the defining work of the eighties.

In 1990 the celebrated curator Pontus Hultén, who gave Andy a show at Moderna Museet in Stockholm in 1968, had carpenters fabricate around a hundred Brillo boxes in Lund after Andy's death, which he then authenticated. His boxes were counterfeit, as were the certificates. At the time, 1964 *Brillo Boxes* rarely came up for auction, but when they did, the starting bid was \$2 million. Hultén died before he was exposed. The authenticated boxes were not authentic. They were forgeries. As far as I know, they were worthless. Still, there may be a run on them, people having all the fun of an Andy but also all the fun of calling them fakes that could not easily be told apart from the real thing. We now have four distinct boxes. But there are certainly going to be more, all meaning something different. That feels like End of Art!

Every work of art, if my thesis is true, embodies meanings. But that does not mean they ever have to look like one another! During a lecture I gave at the Sorbonne I invited the audience members to come to a show of my wife, Barbara Westman, whose drawings were on display at the Galerie Mantoux-Gignac, in the rue des Archives in Paris. One of them wrote me a note, saying that he was happy that it did not consist of *Brillo Boxes*! In truth, the immense variation in how artworks look is probably what

made philosophers consider that art is an open concept. One contribution of Cage was the discovery that any noise can be a musical noise if it happens whenever "4'33" is played. In the Judson Dance Theater, it was possible to perform dance movements that are indiscernible from ordinary actions, like eating a sandwich or ironing a skirt. What happens in such cases is that ironing a skirt is what the dancer's movements mean, and hence "ironing a skirt" is embodied in her body. That does not happen when someone just irons a skirt—the action of ironing a skirt is performed because the ironer intends that it be free of wrinkles. That is not what the Judson dancer did. She performed a dance step that exactly resembles a practical chore. It is a clear case of imitative art! But the act that it resembles isn't imitative at all, though there may have been some imitation involved in learning to iron. I remember seeing Baryshnikov imitate a football player, holding his arm out to fend off would-be tacklers. I had never seen something like that. He really did imitate a football player, though the imitated football player was simply keeping others at a distance.

What makes modern imitation dreamlike is that it is not true that it is a move in, for example, a football game, even if a football player made the same moves. But it is a wakeful dream in that the dancer intends that those in the audience see what is being imitated, and that a large portion of the audience read that movement as a football move, even if the football is missing. The perception is shared in a way dreams never are shared, even if a dreamer dreams about running with a football.

Any movement can be a dance movement and hence achieve

the dreamlike. The same may be true of acting, as when, for example, an actress serves cocktails that are actually glasses filled with just water. To taste the tasteless is a kind of bad dream. It is not possible to catalog all the different ways artists have found to dream-ify. I'll take a flier at Michelangelo's masterpiece, the great decoration of the Sistine Chapel's vault, with the scenes of a narrative in which, when I first saw it, figures move in and out of an enveloping dark.

CHAPTER TWO

RESTORATION AND MEANING

The Sistine Chapel looks like an enormous drawing by Daumier.
—Pablo Picasso

A marvelous draughtsman but a poor painter.
—Jean Cocteau

These judgments—that the Sistine ceiling was basically a drawing and that it was essentially monochrome, like the sepia panels painted by Daumier—are reports from the past that tell us how the ceiling looked in the 1930s, when the two men spent time in Rome with the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. They tell us what the ceiling looked like before the most recent cleaning, which was approved in 1994. I visited Rome in 1996 as a guest of the American master Cy Twombly, who was enthusiastic about the restoration, which, he argued, proved that Michelangelo was truly a great painter. Before I left New York I had been persuaded by my colleague James Beck that the restoration was a catastrophic failure. I had seen it when it looked much as Picasso and Cocteau described, except that I felt it was sublime. Until I