The hunting of the duckrabbit: in pursuit of an aesthetics of knowledge

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The Hunting of the Duckrabbit: In Pursuit of an Aesthetics of Knowledge

by

Rob Ward

A Doctoral Thesis
Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy of Loughborough University

December 2010
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Abstract
This is an orthodox thesis in that it is a “book”. However, it is also the practice element of the PhD by part-practice; i.e. it is presented as the practice and the theoretical aspects of the PhD submission. In a sense, it stands for a thesis, in which instance it has become a “stereotypical” thesis, a “straw man” at which the theoretical arguments are launched. The written text describes itself as a self-reflexive paradox, using the well known illusion of the duck-rabbit as an example of its undecidable nature. As a “test” for the representatives of the awarding institution the problem set is whether to regard the thesis as art-work or as theoretical exposition. In order to drive the point home a “version” of the thesis is presented with a spine binding on both ends thus making it impossible to open — literally, a “double-bind”. Much of the discussion is centred on current debates over whether “knowledge” can be extracted from art works — that is to say, knowledge that can be communicated and that could be called “reliable” as a pre-requisite for a PhD. The thesis argues that the available literature on the subject seems to be continually “in pursuit” of a satisfactory answer — a pursuit much like that in Lewis Carroll’s nonsense poem, The Hunting of the Snark. Interpretation of art works is the mainstay of this literature and it is the hermeneutical approach that is given most critical attention from a deconstructive angle. The ontological status of “art” is examined as a consequence of the Duchampian readymade, which is often overlooked as the transparency of art works is often assumed in order to “contain” subject-matter that “embodies” knowledge. This, the thesis argues is a non sequitur and only leads to a dissemination of possible, equally valid knowledge claims and is thus a specious epistemological enterprise. By enunciating the thesis as a work of art, there forms a duality of text and object/image where each reinforces the other at the same time as each cancels the other out. The text fictionalizes the art aspect and the art aspect objectifies the text into a kind of calligram. It is anticipated that claims for the irresolvable nature of the “pursuit” lead to a sense of the uncanny which is characterized by repetition (of themes that result in circular arguments) and disembodiment — separating knowledge from aesthetic judgement and separating textual theory from the readymade that calls itself a Thesis.
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Preface and Introduction
Preface(s) to an Introduction

How to begin <~>

Before the "introduction" to a work such as this, "it is customary" as Hegel says, "to preface a work with an explanation of the author's aim, why he wrote the book, and the relationship in which he believes it to stand to other earlier or contemporary treatises on the same subject". He then goes on to add that, "In the case of a philosophical work, however, such an explanation seems not only superfluous but, in view of the subject-matter, even inappropriate and misleading."¹ In Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's "Translator's Preface" to Derrida's Of Grammatology she echoes Hegel's misgivings and the consequential response from Jean Hyppolite which goes as follows:

When Hegel had finished the Phenomenology
…he reflected retrospectively on his
philosophic enterprise and wrote the "Preface".
… It is a strange demonstration, for he says
above all, "Don't take me seriously in a
preface. The real philosophical work is what I
have just written, The Philosophy of the Mind
(sic). And if I speak to you outside of what I
have written, these marginal comments cannot
have the value of the work itself. … Don't take
a preface seriously. The preface announces a
project and a project is nothing until it is
realized."²

² Jean Hippolyte, "Structures du langage philosophique d'après la 'Préface' de la 'Phénoménologie de
l'esprit' de Hegel," The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man: The Structuralist
Controversy. R. Macksey and E. Donato (Eds.), Baltimore 1970. Translated in the same volume as
"The Structure of Philosphic Language According to the 'Preface' to Hegel's Phenomenology of the
As Spivak rightly points out, Hegel’s “Preface” was retrospectively written so that when we read what appears to come before there is a “tacit acceptance of a fiction” and that “We think of the Preface, however, not as a literary, but as an expository exercise. It ‘involves a norm of truth,’ although it might well be the insertion of an obvious fiction into an ostensibly ‘true’ discourse.”

Spivak adds to the point of her preface when she says that,

Derrida suggests that a very significant part of Hegel’s work was but a play of prefaces. Whereas Hegel’s impatience with prefaces is based on philosophical grounds, his excuse for continuing to write them seems commonsensical: ‘Having in mind that the general idea of what is to be done, if it precedes the attempt to carry it out, facilitates the comprehension of this process, it is worth while to indicate here some rough idea of it, with the intention of eliminating at the same time certain forms whose habitual presence is a hindrance to philosophical knowledge.’

She goes on to illustrate Hegel’s objection to prefaces as “preface/text = abstract generality/self-moving activity” and his acceptance of prefaces as “preface/text = signifier/signified” claiming the “=” as the Hegelian Aufhebung a word that signifies both “raising” and “lifting” as well as “suppression” and “abolition”. As she explains, “Aufhebung is a relationship between two terms where the second at

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3 Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology. (G.C. Spivak. Translator’s Preface ) op. cit. p.x
4 Ibid., p.xi
once annuls the first and lifts it up to a higher sphere of existence;...”

In this preface, then, lies the nub of the enterprise which is to demonstrate that which explains the demonstration, or, conversely, to explain that which demonstrates the explanation — depending on whether the work is looked upon as art practice or a thesis. It unveils a practice that is simultaneously “research” and the annulment of itself as such. Its “contribution” to the enterprise of “practice-as-research” in general seems to be ambiguous, that is to say it confirms the hiatus of the visual and the verbal, the creative and the critical. What is more significant and could be regarded as “new” (as a prerequisite for the PhD) are the possibilities inherent in the necessary fictions derived from such a denial of closure.

In effect, this preface is one of many “frames” that enfold around the “work”. Derrida uses such terms as parergon and exergue to denote an “outside” of the work that is supplementary to it. He demonstrates how the “outside” becomes the “inside” and that there is never a definitive “norm” or resting place where ergon and parergon situate themselves. Such a dizzying enfolding is in danger of plummeting into the abyss. Derrida writes:

- economise on the abyss: not only save oneself from falling into the bottomless depths by weaving and folding back the cloth to infinity, textual art of the reprise, multiplication of patches within patches, but also establish the

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5 Ibid., p.xi
6 Derrida is here using the word “economy” in its original meaning of the “law of the home”. It is a way of staving off the “unhomely” (Ger. unheimlich — trans. as uncanny). The abyss is chaos; the home is where there is a sense of belonging/meaning. The domestic metaphors of cloth/textile/text, patching and weaving work towards repairing the gulls and tears, but, as they mend, these patches or shards proliferate equally to an infinite degree — a chaos of their own making.
laws of reappropriation, formalize the rules which constrain the logic of the abyss and which shuttle between the economic and the aeneconomic, the raising [la relève]* and the fall, the abyssal operation which can only work toward the relève and that in it which regularly produces collapse⁷

Stephen Barker comments on the above passage.

The fall and the relève are both consummate transgressions, by which the law of genre, and thus of acculturation, is formed. In Derrida’s elliptical shard⁸, as he economises on the abyss, the fragment behaves as such: no grammatical sign to open, no period to close the period of its semantic passage: an imitative strategy of abyssal subversion. Thus is the shard, like fragmentarity itself, revealed as oxymoronic: as a parergon in the imperative voice; a parodic work outside the work operating, it seems, sui generis, within earshot of Blanchot’s noli me legere but reading nonetheless.⁹

Here, then is the preface that is both a question and an imperative, introducing a work that is not to be read but demands reading.

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⁸ *relève is Derrida’s translation of Hegel’s Aufhebung.
⁹ The references are to the particular page layout of Derrida’s chapter on the Parergon which demonstrates its meaning through fragmentary passages within/outside of special printer’s marks that act as “frames”.

Introduction

In the late 1960s when it became conventional to argue ad nauseam that anything at all could be called art, an obvious conclusion drawn in five minutes or so by some of us was “OK, let’s nominate-cum-appropriate-cum-declare the whole world as art and get on with something else”. That something else was going to have to be, among other things, finding conditions of exclusion. We could reflect upon art’s own surpassing.10

When Marcel Duchamp’s Fountain, as Thierry de Duve puts it, “passed the test” of becoming an art object, it problematized the ontological condition of Art. It meant that anything could be art if called such, and this had severe repercussions for the meaning of art. It called into question “who” could make such declarations, and more importantly, make them stick! That is to say, which part of society would allow someone to do this kind of thing and acknowledge it as such for the rest of that particular culture? The question of what art “was”, problematical though it appeared, made way for a whole new cluster of approaches that overran the purist concerns for medium specificity crucial to Greenbergian modernist ideology. History has shown that the hybridization of forms since the 50s and 60s has become the “norm” and it is as though Duchamp’s test-case was merely an early stylistic example that could be pluralistically subsumed under a genre. This idea of course serves the continuation of “art” for all who have vested interest in it and includes, besides artists themselves, all the organizations that disseminate art.

10 “Attributed” to Michael Baldwin in the quasi-Interview: Victorine Meurend with Art & Language, Installed in the Style of The Jackson Pollock Bar.  
including institutions of education and academia. In such a world, painting, sculpture and printmaking sit comfortably beside performance art, conceptual art and derivatives of the readymade. Art can now be thought of in terms of academic research and the PhD by part practice is, however uneasily, testament to its burgeoning status.

What the above situation throws up is a double duality — the readymade that is both an object in the world and an object for contemplation as art; and practice-as-research that relies on an “artefact” and a textual positioning of that practice. What this thesis-cum-artwork proposes is a reinstatement of Duchamp’s test but situated within the confines of the PhD itself. Without overstating the obvious it might be useful to inquire what the conditions were that obtained during the famous debacle at the Society of Independent Artists Inc. exhibition of 1917:

(I)f the hanging committee of the show at the Grand Central Palace consented to exhibit the gleaming object poking fun at them, they would have to call it art. If they were to pass the test, so would it. They didn't, as we shall see. But it did, and that's the irony of the joke. Who would dare deny, today, that Duchamp’s urinal is art?11

It is a contention central to this thesis that to be able to accomplish the test, Duchamp had to act outside of the realm of art and in so doing relinquished the role of artist. His was best described as a second order position where “art” was something to be manipulated from outside and hence the nom de guerre, “R Mutt”.

The initial problem, and indeed the real problem that

still holds true is that it formed a double-bind for the institution that agreed to include any "artistic" contribution for the six dollar entry fee. The question simply put was, “Should it be exhibited?” — If yes, the institution would have been made to look foolish for displaying the urinal; if no, the institution would have been made to look foolish, reneging on its own asserted bylaws. By engaging in a practice that is chosen to be a meta-practice rather than an art practice the thesis is able to manipulate through (textual) reading. By asserting its prerogative as art work, it relinquishes the necessity to become anything other than fictional representation of an idea. It forms a double-bind with the institution on whose terms it has parasitically entered.

One major condition of the PhD is that it contributes to “new knowledge” of the specialist subject. New knowledge may not always be synonymous with encouragement; it may also be salutary by virtue of a sceptical assertion that a venture may be fundamentally flawed. New knowledge may be a new awareness of its absurdity, demonstrable and explicable through its own terms — reiterating its point. New knowledge like Occam’s razor may betoken the end of self-serving over sophistication. It may well be that its contribution to new knowledge is to assert art practice to be redundant as a subject for the PhD, not as might be thought because of a lack of academic rigour, but because art itself has diversified into self-perpetuating tautology, driven more by economic than philosophical or aesthetic goals. Whilst the project has emerged from the disturbance caused by shifting the ontological nature of art, it has acknowledged that all questions concerning the potential of art practice lie within the culture of art, that is to say, within its social nexus.

The pre-condition is that it is art. A strange pre-condition — as a pre-condition — a result of years of blague and réclame. For a fuller account see Jeffrey Weiss The Popular Culture of Modern Art: Picasso, Duchamp and Avant-gardism, 1909-17, Yale University Press, 1994.

If a work of art can contain knowledge how can it communicate that knowledge?
When Charles Harrison writes about Modernism in two voices\textsuperscript{12} he separates one “voice” that valorizes creativity and intuition against the “critical”, with the other “voice” that: “perceives these distinctions and priorities not as true reflections of the nature of art but as forms of organization of the culture of art.” He further adds, “It takes the prising apart of the ‘creative’ and the ‘critical’ as a move to defeat the critical purport of art, and the privileging of practice over theory as a mystification of both.”\textsuperscript{13}

The aim then, of this research-cum-art practice is to demonstrate and explain the unreliability of “art as such” within the realm of research: in effect removing the foundations of its initial enterprise. As a PhD submission its contribution to “new knowledge” will be to show that under certain conditions that are in themselves valid, art practice as research can become unstable and delocalized. It will argue against the description of “art” as necessarily hermeneutical, having a “subject” as a basis for research that is a posteriori declared to embed theory, and set in its place a practice that is concerned with its ontological basis and literally take on the form as research by virtue of a self-reflexive strategy that combines the two aspects to create a complexity that is both plausible and absurd. Like Duchamp’s “test” of whether an “art condition” can be proclaimed upon an object in the world, the intention is not only to declare the thesis a work of art, but to make a sound case to test the limits of the “art condition” as a thesis. The supporting arguments presented in this “art-work that explains itself” will draw on writers and thinkers who have influenced my position and generally reflect a dissensus, firstly with the language that is often

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p.6
presumed to offer straightforward meaning, as criticized by Nietzsche as a “mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms” and Derrida’s deconstructive approach of “dissemination” and the wordplay associated with its promiscuous etymologies; and secondly, with the institution(s) that confirm art status on the candidate — whether that be within education or the art world at large. The thesis will attempt to expose the antinomies within the language of research and the relationship with post-Duchampian art strategies. Wittgenstein, although coming from a different philosophical tradition, in later work such as *Philosophical Investigations*, was equally concerned with the way that the contextual *use* of language gives meaning: both he and the deconstructionists emphasise the uncertainty of “truth” as something signified by linguistic means alone. It is Niklas Luhmann who takes up ideas about the “institution” already begun by Wittgenstein adding the idea of autopoiesis — the sustainability of a self-contained system that is to be found within the range of social systems including that of art and education. Luhmann's description of institutions as social systems includes all the forms we use to *declare* something to be the case and are thus self-defined and self referenced. Such institutions as marriage, money, the law, etc. depend on social agreement and consensus but remain independent of each other’s terms of reference. In this way they allude to the original meaning of *theoria*, which, in the ancient Greek world referred to the public pronouncement of what we would now call “fact”. Wlad Godzich, in his “Foreword” to Paul de Man’s *Resistance to Theory* explains that deixis is the rhetorical equivalent of “pointing to” and declaring something to be the case.
Deixis is the linguistic mechanism that permits the articulation … between the here and the there, the now and the then, the we and the you. It establishes the existence of an “out there” that is not an “over there” and thus it is fundamental to the theoretical enterprise.\textsuperscript{14}

Institutions act in a way that is self-replicating and self-referencing and use language to define boundaries dividing what is “in” from what is “outside”. Concerns for the way that institutions use language to ascribe meaning are relevant to the way that the thesis is presented against the regulations of the PhD. Institutional rules are themselves subject to an ambivalency that is highlighted in David Bloor’s \textit{Wittgenstein: Rules and Institutions}. On one hand, they define fairness in that all candidates will be treated equally, on the other; they are bound to restrict “practice” if it is their intention to uphold academic quality. The academicization of art that came about in the USA in the 50s has reached its apogee world-wide in the doctorate awarded for practice as research, and it is the hegemony of the academy that the thesis as artwork seeks to intervene in order to deconstruct it by turning its own terms back upon themselves to expose the conventions that their meanings rely upon. As the theory and practice can be thought of as equivalents to text and image, these seemingly opposing forces can be used in counterchange so that as Foucault would imagine there would be a “viewed” text and a “read” image. For such mental gymnastics to occur, the thesis will lay out possible scenarios such as those that scientists make when describing thought experiments. One such example which also comes through Foucault is the idea of the calligram. Typically, the calligram is a

harmless game of making words form a picture, but what Foucault conjures up in his exposition of Magritte’s *This is Not a Pipe* is a monster with intricately tentacular signifiers. Now, one condition of the thesis is that it could be thought of as such a calligram whose *shape* is that of a thesis. Congruence of thesis as thesis and thesis as work of art practice is crucial to the ambiguity that disturbs the domesticity of institutional language. The thesis then should be seen as a critique of theoretical art practice — but critiqued as practice, and as such has to admit to being blind to itself. There is no escape from such an auto double-bind as it is congruent with written description, whether this be autobiography, where the writer never achieves a “catching-up” of his/her actual existence (c.f. Nietzsche’s *Ecce Homo* — “becoming what one is”) or any “definitive” account — fictional or factional — rhetoric takes charge and language speaks itself beyond the rhetor. Fictionalization was the preserve of Marcel Broodthaers whose *Musée d’Art Moderne, Département d’Aigles* intervened on the institution that was the site of display. It was Broodthaers’ example in the use of strategies of inclusion and negation of an art condition (Fig.1) that initiated the form of this thesis.
By combining the Duchampian “this is a work of art” with the Magrittean “this is not a pipe” — where “pipe” may signify “art” just as easily — Broodthaers created an unresolvable condition when inserted into an institution that thrived on classification, and incidentally was brought to a form of conclusion in which the artist took part in an interview with a cat which went:

«(...) — Alors fermez les musées!
— Miauw
— Ceci est une pipe.
— Miaouw
— Ceci n’est pas une pipe.
— Miaouw (…)»¹⁵

It may be inferred by the lack of punctuation in the cat’s response that this could never be regarded as a language able to affirm or deny, and that the question of “pipeness” will forever remain open.

Broodthaers’ work in the 60s and early 70s was the starting point for this approach to the PhD. Practice initially consisted of conventional forms such as painting, drawing and three-dimensional pieces that would have another “layer” attached to them — whether by way of added information that deflected what seemed to be straightforward, or by selecting materials and subject matter that seemed incongruous (Figs. 4 and 5).

Embarking on the PhD provoked a reconsideration of these kinds of strategies within a more theoretical framework and the idea of making pieces as fictional projects within a totalizing meta-project were the outcome. However, it also became apparent that the problem arises with the “meta” status that it too is potentially subject to an infinitely regressive “meta-meta ...” status. There was something intriguing in this kind of situation that leant itself to such plays of deconstruction to be found in Derrida’s *The Truth in Painting* — particularly the idea of the “frame” and the inside/outside relationship and interchangeableness of the two. The culmination of the book of projects in 2005 was an installation at LUSAD of the piecemeal fabrication of an “artist’s studio” that played on an idea that Daniel Buren had expounded in his 1979 essay.
**The Function of the Studio.** The installation entitled, *Exhibition, Artist’s Studio, No Entry*, was a part-performed demonstration of parallel worlds of the private space of the authentic artist and the public space of exhibition in which an “artist” was seen to be working as an actor playing a role. This idea could be further convoluted by considering the “acting” also as authentic. In order to keep the paradox at a distance, doors were barred to any audience who had to witness the progress via CCTV on a small monitor (Fig. 6).

Is the image a private space or, a public space?

As a starting point for what was to develop as a distinct theme dealing with the creative paradox, chapter one of the thesis deals with the way such ideas have led to more complex manoeuvrings. The installation as video, and transferred to DVD recording is not only described in the chapter, but is itself part of the thesis via a spin-off quasi-theoretical exposition entitled *Hapax* consisting of a fictional interview in which the interviewer and interviewee reverse roles. Chapter one thus lays out the ground and main themes of duality, duplicity, parallelism, and paradox that will have further repercussions in later chapters and the practice-as-thesis as a whole. It might be argued that none of the “art works” actually materialized but were truly “fictionalized” and as such *became* art works by virtue of being included in this
study of them as art works thus autopoietically manifesting themselves as autofiction.¹⁶

Chapter two surveys the ground for practice as research in academic papers, articles and books in their attempt to assert how art practice can be given “equivalence” to academic enquiry. The main criticism levelled at most of these is that they accept that art itself is an unproblematical means to a set of problems. It is the transparency of “art” in these descriptions that makes it seem banal such that there is an ironic distortion of Kantian sensus communis into “common sense”. Regarded as such “art” merely becomes a vehicle to illustrate ideas. The alternative view is laid out in chapter three whereby art itself is discussed as a post-Duchampian phenomenon that vied with modernism and affected resurgence in the 1960s. A strong case is made for a robust appreciation of the conditions that attended this transformation that any application of the term “art practice” should acknowledge. Critical theory and deconstruction were contemporaneously part of that resurgence and affected a self-awareness of the practice itself, where “authorship” could be called into question, and the “location” of art might be immaterial or even fictional. Chapter three consolidates ideas from the previous chapter to espouse practice that is self-referential and interventional. Here the precedent of Broodthaers is highlighted together with other practitioners who have challenged the modes of representation and meaning within an institutional setting. In the final chapter the thesis describes itself as a work of art as well as being an academic study... and it is no simple etymological coincidence that “authority” is gendered male, and westernized concepts as such could also be called into question.

and poses the ambiguity of reception similar to the bistable figure known as the duck-rabbit (Fig. 7).

Fig.7

The problem that has become a double-bind for the project itself is the one facing the conclusion. For if the project is to succeed, the outcome must be the attainment of a PhD, but if the criteria for academic success mean that there has to be closure, then the project could be seen to have failed. The demand for failure is therefore a prerequisite for the success as academic achievement. As such, “art practice” is a coerced collaboration (as distinct from co-option) between the candidate and the institution in the “making” of the work.

Illustrations

Fig.1 Marcel Broodthaers, Musée d’Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section des Figures. *The Eagle from the Oligocene to the Present*. 1972. Various objects each with the image of an eagle. Staatliches Kunsthalle Dusseldorf.

Fig.2 René Magritte, *La Trahison des Images. (Ceci n’est pas une Pipe)* 1929. Oil on canvas. Los Angeles County Museum of Art. 63.5 × 93.98 cm

Fig.3 Marcel Broodthaers, *Ceci est une Pipe* Unfinished project (c.1969). Book published by MERZ Leuven and New York 2001 29 x 22 cm.

Fig.4 Rob Ward, *Portrait by van Ryssel*, 1994. Oil, chalk and crayon on canvas on board, 91 x 76 cm

Fig.5 Rob Ward, *Red Herring Painting* 1994. Gold sweet wrappers over relief of Dürer’s Melencolia1, 91 x 76 cm

Fig.6 Rob Ward, Monitor initial set up 2005 Light and sound room. LUSAD.

Fig.7 Ludwig Wittgenstein’s version of the duck-rabbit in *Philosophical Investigations* Oxford Blackwell Publishing.
Chapter One: Studio

Fig. 8 Rob Ward, *Studio as installation*, LUSAD, 2005
Inspired by my first encounter with Dürer’s engraving I wanted to develop and extend work that pulls in two directions at once: creativity/sterility; light/dark; material/ephemeral; phenomenal/noumenal; manual/conceptual; image/text; practice/research.

About Melancholia – Panofsky says:

In the miniatures and woodcuts of the fifteenth century the secondary figure is as sleepy and as slothful as the principal one, while Dürer’s engraving shows a deliberate contrast between the inaction of the Melancholia (sic), and the strenuous efforts of the scribbling putto.

And, more important, the Melancholia is idle and the women in the earlier illustrations have abandoned their distaffs for entirely opposite reasons. These lowly creatures have gone to sleep out of sheer laziness. The Melancholia, on the contrary, is what may be called super-awake; her fixed stare is one of intent though fruitless searching. She is inactive not because she is too lazy to work but because work has become meaningless to her; her energy is paralysed not by sleep but by thought. E. Panofsky— The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer. Princeton University Press 1955. p.160

Fig 10

My Installation based on Melencolia at Longsides, Bretton Hall

Melencolia is a life-size plaster mould taken from a sculpted clay figure of the character in the Dürer engraving. The mould is not intended for re-casting as it is used to give the illusion of being convex rather than concave when raking light is shone across it. Thus Melencolia becomes an apparition – a void.

I have chosen the word “studio” (as a homophone of *studeo*) in the title of this chapter to reflect two senses of, “I study”, and the place where artists are supposed to initiate their ideas into visible form. It is the move from “workshop” to “studio” that placed the higher status of post Renaissance artists over the “artisan”.

Albrecht Dürer’s allegory *Melencolia I* (1514) (Fig.9)

Typifies this shift and as the title suggests, it is not without certain misgivings. The artist has become a scholar and this attribute brings with it other demands and concerns that are beyond mere hand-work. Later, in Kant’s description of “art” versus “craft” in The Critique of Judgement he refers to the former as free art and the latter as mercenary art and finds the distinction being between pleasure for its own sake and labour for financial reward. Ultimately, what seems to make art Art, comes down to “spirit”, a transcendental ingredient invoking genius, a special quality that the best artists possess requiring that those who experience this quality should be able to recognize it.

From this description and probable over-simplification there arise two features. The first is that art practice has equivalence to knowledge, but that this

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17 Latin. Studium = Enthusiasm, zeal; studeo 1st. person singular = I study
equivalence is un-knowable in the strict sense of the word. The second is the fact that art continues to exist and is appreciated shows that something passes between the creator and one who experiences the work. In times when art had boundaries defining its forms (say until the 1960s), restricting them to morphologies such as painting and sculpture, rules could be devised with general consensus that allowed for dialogue, including disagreement, and yet preserved the Kantian imperative for a sensus communis whilst acknowledging that there is no accounting for taste. This is undisputed. However, how is riding a bicycle to be communicated? We can show that it can be done. We can give instructions based on how our own experience has told us how we did it. We can write these down — but— the manipulation, the coordination of steering and balance etc. does not come about through that communication of knowledge but through sensations felt by the doer.

We can not ignore those things that have, as discoveries or inventions, impinged on our lives. Radioactivity and the atomic bomb can not be un-discovered or un-invented. Likewise, the readymade has made such an impact on all of art in the Western tradition.

The work that ends in the museum is forever both in its “place” and at the same time in a place" which is never its own. In “its place” as this was the aspiration when it was made, yet

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19 A.G. Baumgarten, Aesthetica 1750
it is never “its own” as the place has not been defined by the work that is situated there, nor has the work been made exactly as a function of a place that is necessarily, a priori concretely and practically unknown to it. For the work to be in place without being specially placed, it needs to be identical to all other existing works, which are identical among themselves, in which case it passes (and places itself) everywhere and anywhere (as do all the other identical works).  

Fig 11 CCTV view

The implication of the baptismal moment is one of creation at the very instant of display. Thus, an installation that is also called a “studio” (Fig. 11) may be seen as the enactment of that baptism. Should the studio, which by tradition has been a private space, distinct and introspective, be presented as an installation, it would become indistinguishable from the site of display. The problem, and indeed the resonance of such ambiguity are to be found in the oscillation of encounter. Firstly, there has to be an “adequately sensitive, adequately informed, spectator”, a term coined by

Richard Wollheim and taken up by Charles Harrison in his *Essays on Art & Language*21. This spectator, then, has to be aware, not only of what the art is about, but what the art *is*; that is to say, the conditions that make it so ontologically. Under conditions in which the studio becomes an installation, that is to say it is making itself — (paraphrasing Nietzsche) becoming what it is, certain speculations may reflect upon the nature of spectatorship and the mutable meanings of artwork and spectator.

In the studio-as-installation the artist is both “real” and *acting the part of an artist*. He is authentically creating and dissembling; acting out his act. Thus, everything in the studio is an empty sign as the nested space empties out its meaning. The artist is a ghost artist having neither actual body nor virtual body at any one moment. His actions are like the “asides” of the *eiron* — the ironic actor who “knows” more of what is “going on” on stage than his fellow actors — but of course this is equally an act to the audience. The artist is “present” twice at the same time — or nearly the same time. In another sense, he is absent twice! The work is uncanny — a curated studio consisting of a meta-collection of remnants and remains that the artist embodies. What then, is the spectator? As “observer” of either/or; either the art-work called *Studio* or a studio that happens to be presented as an art-work. The choice resembles that of seeing a duck or a rabbit in the well known optical illusion hybridized as the *duckrabbit* (Fig. 12). When one recognizes the “duck”, the “rabbit” disappears. When the *Studio* is a studio, it is private space and action within it is “authentic” and non-ironic; when it is perceived as an installation called *Studio*, irony intervenes as performance. The spectator who perceives him or

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herself “entering into” the work will supplement the artist. If however, the mode is one of observation or critique, “regarding” will reflect an externalized “body”. If it is supplement it will disembodied: if regarding it will embody conditions for the paradox to be re-stated. Both conditions are unstable and irreducible. The second condition may be thought of as the one taken up by the “Institution” whose representative may incorporate hermeneutical description. For Gadamer aesthetic hermeneutics relies on a **subject**. However, in this instance, such an approach is fraught with the perils of infinite regression and should be considered ontologically as testing the limitations of a non-hermeneutical approach, as there is in no real sense a subject to interpret, unless it is the subject of a subject: subjective-ness without subjectivity. It operates like a **duckrabbit**.

The duckrabbit that began as a minor amusement in a popular German magazine\(^\text{22}\) was given serious consideration by the American psychologist Joseph Jastrow\(^\text{23}\) from whom Wittgenstein produced a more schematic form in his *Philosophical Investigations*\(^\text{24}\). The psychologist John F. Kihlstrom in an unpublished letter to *Trends in the Cognitive Sciences* states that the duckrabbit is not strictly speaking an illusion but rather “an ambiguous (or reversible, or bistable)...

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\(^\text{22}\) *Fliegende Blätter* Munich, October 23 1892. p.147  
\(^\text{23}\) Joseph Jastrow, *Fact and Fable in Psychology*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin 1900  
The duck-rabbit is both a duck and a rabbit. Traditionally, this contradiction is held together and overcome by the fact that both the duck and the rabbit are ways of seeing a single drawing. People are convinced that the drawing is a duck and argue strenuously against the suggestion that it might be a rabbit. A third group of people think that the issue of whether the drawing really is a duck or a rabbit is undecidable and abandon all hope for a theory that could illuminate the essence of the drawing. For his part the positive sceptic sees the drawing as an aspect as well. Now there is no longer anything to which two incompatible predicates can be attached. There are no neutral marks that can be interpreted in different ways because the "neutral marks" have themselves become just further ways of seeing.

We are left with a duck, a rabbit, a drawing and the ability to move between these three ways of seeing. (my bold type emphasis)

Expectations, world-knowledge and direction of attention seem to be the very elements of Gadamer’s subject fields and historical horizons and it is these conditions that are thrown out of kilter. Wittgenstein writes in Philosophical Investigations emphasizing the temporality of perception:

I am shown a picture-rabbit and asked what it is; I say “It’s a rabbit”. Not “Now it’s a rabbit”. I am reporting my perception. — I am shown the duck-rabbit and asked what it is; I may say “It’s a duck-rabbit”. But I may also react to the question quite differently. — The answer that it is a duck-rabbit is again the report of a perception; The answer “Now it’s a rabbit” is not. Had I replied “it’s a rabbit”, the ambiguity would have escaped me, and I should have been reporting my perception. …

…”Now I am seeing this”. I might say (pointing to another picture, for example). This has the form of a report of a new perception.

The expression of a change of aspect is the expression of a new perception and at the

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26 Ibid., but with quotation from Long & Toppino. 2004 Enduring interest in perceptual ambiguity: Alternating views of reversible figures. Psychological Bulletin 130, pp.748-768
same time of the perception’s being unchanged.\textsuperscript{27}

When Arthur Danto describes works of art that display similar traits of ambiguity in \textit{The Body/Body Problem}\textsuperscript{28}, he cites examples such as Warhol’s \textit{Brillo Boxes} (Fig. 13) that are exact opposites to the readymade, having been fabricated to look like found objects.

![Fig. 13](image1)
![Fig. 14](image2)
![Fig. 15](image3)

What is more interesting to me is his description of visual congruence found in Johns’s \textit{Targets} and \textit{Flags} (Figs. 14 and 15) where the edges of the images are not depicted within an illusory pictorial boundary but reach an actual boundary of the edge of the picture. They \textit{become} what they represent. He gives this a further twist by describing two hypothetical canvases: one in which, upon a white canvas, is painted the \textit{illusion} of a white canvas (as if resting obliquely against a wall). On the second canvas, the painting is skewed round towards the observer so that the illusory canvas fits exactly onto the dimensions of actual physical canvas. Under the latter condition, he maintains that this is still a painting \textit{of and not identical to} the unpainted primed canvas (Fig 16).

\textsuperscript{27} Wittgenstein, op. cit. p.167  
The absurdity of painting a white canvas as a “painting of” a painting may as well rest on the “empirical” painting: en plein air, of an Ideal image. (The white coat connotes a scientific approach as well as the “white robed” candidate.)

Ironically enough, the “once happened” is now recorded, discussed, reviewed, published etc. so that it is in one sense to “happen” over and over again.

“Out” of the studio
There is an interesting question of what should come “out” of a “studio” that is itself a fictional entity. The answer must be that what is produced is necessarily metafictitious, that it continues a narrative that reasserts the origin of the disseminating studio. The artworks’ description thus testifies to their becoming art as in the follow-up to the Studio entitled Hapax a word taken from hapax legomenon meaning a word of which only one instance of use is recorded. This was to emphasize the restricted appearance as a quasi report and interview on the subject of the “studio”. Hapax begins with an “interview”, which is, in effect a re-establishing of the studio as description (ekphrasis) with equally ambiguous tones in that neither of the “characters” in the interview is identified and in fact the interrogator and interrogatee swap places part way through. Below is a section of the first part.

Let’s get this straight before we begin: this is not a film, nor is it a structured video with a beginning, middle, end. It’s surveillance — right?

What happened happened, and that’s all there is to it.

But there is a record of what happened?

All surveillance pre-supposes recording. Surveillance requires reconstructing events that led up to a certain point.

But the recording is not the work of art?

Nor is it the point. Something happened once. Recording is not anything except a record.

Therefore it isn’t a medium?

I believe it occupies a very odd place in that it educes mediation without rewarding expectation. It requires attention without offering the lure of intentionality.

Except that there is the lure of curiosity — and the frisson of voyeurism.

Moment by moment — and boredom! Most of the time the view is one of a static environment, both the “studio” and the model. Even my actions are repetitious and forced.

Your movements around the work — they were superfluous weren’t they? After all, you could have made the piece and dismantled it in about half an hour. Why spin it out for eight hours?

That’s right, but it wouldn’t be surveillance! Here, I think you have prised apart a little ambiguity; that in order to become surveillance, the subject must begin to look like he is unaware of the camera — even though he is the perpetrator of the surveillance. The actions and movements are thus equally perplexing in that they are authentic when constructing or dismantling, but are ironic when such acts are posed for the consuming eye. These modes work simultaneously, synchronically, not in series.

A strange transformation, not altogether obvious, but when it becomes clearer it is as if you have become two personae — maker and spectator! Maker and the maker of the maker!

What you describe is de facto the condition of the artist, isn’t it? All I am doing is laying bare that by a kind of demonstration.

Coming back to the use of the medium of CCTV; isn’t this a simple example of a formalist approach using the medium-specificity of television?

Kraus describes television and video as “Hydra-headed”, and let me quote from her book A Voyage on the North Sea, “[it exists] in endlessly diverse forms, spaces and temporalities for which no single instance seems to provide a formal unity for the whole. This is what Sam Weber has called television’s ‘constitutive heterogeneity,’ adding that ‘what is perhaps most difficult to keep in mind are the ways in which we call television also and above all differs from itself.” She continues, “If modernist theory found itself defeated by such heterogeneity — which prevented it from conceptualizing video as medium — modernist, structuralist film was routed by video’s instant success as a practice. For, even if video had a distinct technical support — its own apparatus, so to speak — it occupied a kind of discursive chaos, a heterogeneity of activities that could not be theorized as coherent or conceived of as having something like an essence or unifying core.”

You reiterate that you are dealing with something that is not a medium, and because of this, there is no structure, in a formalist, medium-specific sense. However, are you not exhibiting a modicum of bad faith? For instance, The structuring of the event over two days of equal duration; the deliberate use of white on the first day, black on the second; construction with its counterpart of dismantling — all these suggest not only formalist intentions but a seduction by structuralist oppositions?


Here, then is a staged interview with the supposed creator of Studio. The interview (subsequently a written report of an interview) genre can be seen to cross over into a “medium” for the purposes of fictionalization. The “nesting” of works within fictional

29 See supplemental appendix on electronic copy for full version of Hapax
spaces creates a set of meta-subjects that emerge from Studio (as indeed such a nesting that is taking place within this chapter). A similar set of strategies is employed by the German conceptual art group known as “The Jackson Pollock Bar” (Fig 17), whose Interview: Victorine Meurend (sic) with Art & Language, Installed in the Style of The Jackson Pollock Bar\(^\text{30}\) consists not only of a quasi-interview, but can also be performed as “mimed” to “real” recorded voices of members of the symbiotically attached Art & Language conceptual art group.

Victorine Meurent (1844—1927) appears as the naked model in Manet’s Déjeuner sur l’herbe and Olympia. She was a respected painter in her own right exhibiting a number of times at the Salon and on one occasion when Manet’s own submission was rejected.

The strange destabilizing effect is one that draws attention to itself and the link with the receiving audience that adds a challenging dynamic to the anticipated conventional interview.

**Book of projects**

Books can take on, in a retrospective way, similar roles to the studio and the sites of display. Exhibition catalogues, reviews and monographs containing illustrations of artists’ works sit alongside commentaries ranging from critical appraisal to autobiographical minutiae. As an analogy with the studio, the contents are captive and distant, merely

\(^{30}\) The Jackson Pollock Bar: Theory installation at the Lisson Gallery December 13\(^\text{th}\) 2002
potentially graspable. As sites of display, they narrate a purpose and supplement the main idea and subject. This dilemma is noticeable in Marcel Broodthaers’ assembled archive which he called *Ma Collection*, which hovered between reporting about and *becoming* an art work. As a precursor to *Exhibition, Artist’s Studio, No Entry*, my own *Book of Projects* contained some elements used for the installation (a miniature scale model of a (specifically) painter’s studio was one example that included a scale model of the Rietveld *Blue and Red Chair* (Fig 18); another such “studio” had a similarly scaled down model of the Breuer *Wassily Club Chair No. B3* [Fig 19]).

Two stereotypes of studios – one stereotype of a Thesis

The *Book of Projects* represented a fictional approach to the reporting of artworks, that was itself a liminal work of art. The “content” of the *Book* ranged from descriptions (with illustrations) of individual pieces such as paintings, and their situation within a context to more complex sub-projects such as *Mumbo and Jumbo* — a fictionalized interview with two portfolios.
and the Malevich Archive (Fig.20), a vitrine containing “artefacts” associated with the Suprematist painter.

These examples of reporting works were accompanied with “illustrations”. Other projects were ostensibly textual, though they strove to be autonomous rather than belong to any genre, for example, the short story. The work entitled Project IX TALKING ABOUT ART The Aporia of Emperors (Fig 21)

The text to be read or, the instance of the text to be viewed as an example of “text” – such as that to be read here
is such a “formless” form starting as a short story with added marginal commentary, it adds a further development of the commentary becoming an essay on the theme of deception (the Emperor’s New Clothes) and Platonic invisibility in the references to “Black Geometry (Malevich once again) White Writing”, “Ekphrastic Notice” and “Closed Book.” Textual works are at pains to explain themselves, but at some point they recognize their own susceptibility to paradoxical outcomes, a susceptibility that is associated with writing about writing, or writing per se. Papers given at conferences were admitted to the Projects as works of art as with the one given at Tate Liverpool 31 which bore the title “Evasive Display (it’s a fair co-opt!)” and began with: “If, with Duchampian aplomb, I were to declare the delivery of this paper as a work of art, would I be the one co-opting the institution?” Along similar lines was the paper “Studio as installation” given at Staffordshire University in February 2008 which has been incorporated into this chapter to be read and recognized as praxis that incorporates theory. Of course all that has been described relies on the agreement that such practice is what it says it is. Furthermore, it is important by whom this agreement is brokered. As mentioned at the start of this chapter, this approach could only have been considered with the precedent of Duchamp’s readymades. Their resonance only occurs within an institutional theory of art; that is to say, within a system that has had to tell its participants what art is before it can begin to develop what it encompasses. Arthur Danto’s artworld is one such attempt at a definition: “the artworld provides the theories of art which all members of the artworld tacitly assume in order for there to be objects

31 Rob Ward, Co-option, Co-operation, or Collaboration? Art & institutions in Focus. Tate Liverpool 2nd March 2006. (unpublished)
considered as art.”

George Dickie’s 1974 attempt at constructing a social, contextual and relational definition of art could briefly be summed up as: a work of art is:

an (original) artefact; a set of the aspects of which has had conferred upon it the status of candidate for appreciation by some person or persons acting on behalf of a certain social institution (the artworld).

The issue of “conferral” and “candidature” would seem problematic when one considers works of art such as those already within an art system where definitions of this kind do not arise, for example, the work of past “masters”. However, Dickie has to encompass the readymade in his all inclusive theory, and it is perhaps the idea of “conferral” that comes closest to how something becomes art. He makes another attempt at a broader definition in Art Circle: A Theory of Art, which Danto criticises as weakening the original robustness of the definition. In one later version Dickie considers the artworld as “the totality of all artworld systems” which reminds one of the Russell paradox in which the set of all sets has to be and yet cannot be in a set of itself. In fact it is argued by De Duve that institutional theory pursues a circular argument when he writes:

If you say that something has become art because it was placed in the art context of a
museum or a gallery, you must admit that the context is artistic because it contains art. Or else it was instituted as *art* museum or *art* gallery on the basis of some other conception of what art is, and then it is not true that anything it contains and exhibits out of “habit” is art. In both cases, if your theory is true it is circular and if it isn’t circular it is false.\(^\text{35}\)

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The **Studio** as installation and the *Book of Projects* highlight a form of site specificity grounded on the institution in which they have been invited. They respond to Buren’s call for works to form a critique of the institution, which in my own instance, is the university rather than the museum.

Whether the place in which the work is shown imprints and marks this work, whatever it may be, or whether the work itself is directly — consciously or not — produced for the Museum, any work presented in that

framework, if it does not explicitly examine the influence of the framework upon itself, falls into the illusion of self-sufficiency — or idealism.\(^{36}\)

![Fig.22](image)

Buren’s work (Fig.22) is predicated on the compromise of art’s authenticity to the site where the famous “stripe” marks the artwork/institution dialectic. What Buren assumes in this practice is that critique can be levelled from a position that distinguishes between artworks’ autonomy and institution, whereas the position itself is already marked such that the critique must also critique itself. Miwon Kwon states that site specific works that critique the institution:

> decode and/or recode the institutional conventions so as to expose their hidden operations — to reveal the ways in which institutions mold art’s meaning to modulate its cultural and economic value; to undercut the fallacy of art’s and institutions’ autonomy by making apparent their relationship to the broader socioeconomic and political processes of the day.\(^{37}\)

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The emphasis here is on the mutual dependence of the two that effectively neutralizes the critique:

Typically, an artist (no longer a studio bound object maker: primarily working now on call) is invited by an art institution to produce a work specifically configured for the framework provided by the institution (in some cases the artist may solicit the institution with a proposal). Subsequently the artist enters into a contractual agreement with the host institution for the commission.38

In the case of Exhibition, Artist’s Studio, No Entry, there is complicity and duplicity working simultaneously that stands for the project “PhD by part practice” as a whole. Complicity binds the project to the institution where its success should be marked by the attainment of a PhD. Duplicity, as a form of deferred engagement should, on its own terms fail if institutionally endorsed. In this way, institutional critique is doubly bound to, and not merely insulated from the work itself.

The artist who extended Buren’s dichotomy of “authentic” studio space versus “inauthentic” exhibition space was Marcel Broodthaers in his Museé d’Art Moderne Département des Aigles, a fictional “museum-cum-gallery” that existed in various forms, inaugurated in 1968 (Section XIXe Siècle Rue de la Pépinière, Brussels — Broodthaers own abode) and disbanded after being installed as Section Publicité; Section d’Art Moderne and Musée d’Art Ancien, Galerie du XXe Siècle at Dokumenta V, at Kassel in 1972. This installation as museum of modern art demonstrated that the exposition would

38Ibid., p.46
become the artwork, which begged the question of whether the exposition was, in this guise, "authentic"; or, was the authenticity (of the work as art) and the inauthenticity of the work (as the context as exhibition) fictional?

**Autofiction as a strategy of evasion**

It is at this point that it would appear relevant to introduce the idea of “visual autofiction” as a way of contextualizing this approach, lending it support as both a contemporary and significant way forward. “Autofiction” was a term coined by Serge Doubrovsky in the 1970s as a form of literary genre. It encompassed literary forms, ostensibly autobiographical, that place the “author” in a fictional “space”. Such “spaces” can become vertiginous through the proliferation of avatars that may transcend particular locations and occur in fictional timeframes such as flashbacks or imaginary scenarios described as if they were concurrent with the ongoing narrative. Joost de Bloois finds that the usage of the term and the situations it describes are not purely coincidental with what was happening in the art of the 1970s and aques a case for its transference into art practice as “visual autofiction”:

Far from being the mere transposition of a literary genre to currents in visual art, “visual autofiction” forms a contemporary aesthetic stratagem that creatively appropriates conceptual art’s aporias.³⁹

Autofiction may be seen as a response to Buren’s dilemma, in that it can accommodate its own critical

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moment as it critiques the “other”, as de Bloois continues:

“Autofiction” coins no less than the artistic self as an instrument of critique: “autofiction” makes “critique” (be it historical or institutional) run parallel to investigations into imaginaries of the self.40

When considered alongside the Book of Projects, visual autofiction is the mechanism that sets in motion a strategic plan:

As Vincent Colonna, one of its specialists in the field of literary studies writes à propos “autofiction”: it has to be looked at as an agencement, as an assemblage of strategies that serve as so many answers to questions that are not confined to one particular medium or genre.41

Whilst the proliferation of fictionalized projects may appear disconnected in the Book, it is the very disjunction that throws into relief the act of discernment. This applies particularly to the “indexical trace” where something is metonymically, rather than metaphorically, transformed. Documentary “evidence” of a work’s existence is one such instance and de Bloois gives a reminder of this type of strategy in the work of Marcel Broodthaers (Fig.23),

that, already within conceptualism, indicate(s) certain lines of flight, which will prove crucial for the very possibility of “visual autofiction”. In addition we will highlight the extent to which

40 Ibid., p.2
41 Ibid., p.3
conceptual art’s use of documentary photography, in relation to performance, announces autofictional strategies, as well as the importance of the notion of the “indexical trace” (already present in conceptual art) for the dominant stratagems in “visual autofiction”.  

Marcel Broodthaers, *Ma Collection*  
… Where a contract is at issue.

Since I appear in this collection, which is also a selection from among the art catalogues of the past several years, it does not constitute a traditional readymade.

But, if one accepts that the representation of my art carries with it a change of sense/non-sense, it would then be a new form of readymade, a baroque readymade.

This dubious readymade would therefore be equivalent to a dubious work of art. How to market doubt if it does not have a clear artistic quality? Moreover, I do not have the nerve to speculate on *Ma Collection*, although with the money received I could relieve the misery that ravages the Indies, or even finance an avant-garde revolution. A contract, a good contract would get me out of trouble by aligning my interests with established customs. For further information, please contact …

Personally, I would like to receive a tax (a royalty?) on the publications, if there are any, that reproduced my declaration and the images from this page of the catalogue of the Cologne 71 fair.

However, should anyone still wish to own the physical object of *Ma Collection*, then the price would be up to my conscience (Price negotiable.  
© M. Broodthaers *)

It is the limit of the indexical trace that marks out the route taken (and taken knowingly within a fictionalized space) and transforms it into theory. In this way de Bloois contends that such work opens up possibilities for further exploration.

It is precisely the fact that artistic practice and theory keep crossing one another that provides “visual autofiction” as a concept with its heuristic potential.

The point that I am attempting to establish is that only through a strategy of fictionalization or “visual

42 Ibid., p.4  
* Broodthaers is here parodying the capitalist approach to fine art dealing in the form of *readymade records* of his art works as “a work of art” — a source of ever-increasing generation of wealth.  
43 Ibid., p.4
You speak of the gendered title of “the Author”. The concept can be interrogated as can “authority” — as that which authorizes — that which describes the “Other”.

autofiction” can practice and theory really become congruent and that theory is practiced. Seen in this way the practicing of theory obviates the necessity for a “subject”.

Authority, Authenticity and Authorship
The following section will look at how traditional concepts such as authorship and originality can be unravelled when the consequences of fictionalizing the “site” of display are extrapolated. Much of the following is well established in post-structuralist epistemology as a consequence of the way language is used, or, as a consequence of the way language uses us. Concepts like the author, and the individual creative artist can be manipulated to become “players”, who nevertheless play the roles of “author” and “creative artist”. In her book, One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity, Miwon Kwon states:

… (W)hat is the status of traditional aesthetic values such as originality, authenticity, and uniqueness in site-specific art, which always begins with the particular, local, unrepeatable preconditions of a site, however it is defined? Is the prevailing relegation of authorship to the conditions of the site, including collaborators and/or reader/viewers, a continuing Barthesian performance of the “death of the author” or a recasting of the centrality of the artist as a “silent” manager/director?44

As a set of statements about a project, the thesis authorizes its legitimacy. The “author” of the thesis makes statements about a project to which the thesis

44 Kwon, op. cit. p.31
itself is subjected. The “author” is in this way a meta-character described from “outside” — the outside in this instance being its reception within the institution. The “artist” as author is a fictional character, but there is a sense in which the “author” is present in the way he has negotiated entry into the candidature for a PhD at Loughborough University. Kwon’s generalized statement here highlights the particularities of how this “work” can be authenticated through the management of a role:

Perhaps because of the absence of the artist from the physical manifestation of the work, the presence of the artist has become an absolute prerequisite for the execution/presentation of site-oriented projects. It is now the performative (original emphasis) aspect of an artist’s characteristic mode of operation (even when working in collaboration) that is repeated and circulated as a new art commodity, with the artist him/herself functioning as the primary vehicle for its verification, repetition, and circulation.45

Kwon’s emphasis on the difference between non-locational site specificity and traditional models of art’s reception is particularly relevant to this enterprise. Here the artist becomes the administrator of the totality of the work’s dimensions through social interaction rather than manipulation of media.

Thus if Richard Serra could once distil the nature of artistic activities down to their elemental physical actions (to drop, to split, to roll to fold, to cut etc.), the situation now

45 Ibid., p. 47
demands a different set of verbs: to negotiate, to coordinate, to compromise, to research, to promote, to organize, to interview. This shift was forecast in conceptual art’s adoption of what Benjamin Buchloh has described as the “aesthetics of administration”.46

This particular “site” that is being situated as it is being seen/read began as an application to do research and co-opt an institution into the project. Whilst the administration of the initial move was by the author, the terms on which a successful outcome would be achieved had to be devolved to the institution. Seen in this way there is a close tie of partnership that still retains a modicum of coercion on either side that has its equivalence in the dialectical exchanges within education. Kwon sees this kind of discursiveness as one such role for site specificity:

… (T)he distinguishing characteristic of today’s site-orientated art is the way in which the art work’s relationship to the actuality of a location (as site) and the social conditions of the institutional frame (as site) are both subordinate to a discursively (original emphasis) determined site that is delineated as a field of knowledge, intellectual exchange, or cultural debate. Furthermore, unlike in previous models, this site is not defined as a precondition. Rather, it is generated by the work (often as “content”), and then verified by its convergence with an existing discursive formation.47

46 Ibid., p.51
47 Ibid., p.26
The “work” that is presented as the practice is embedded in the text of this thesis and the supplementary exchanges that have taken place whilst the author has been engaged in the PhD. Self-referentiality leads to a duality wherein the “authentic voice” merges into the “ironic voice”. Thus, an oscillation takes place depending on whether this, the text which is being read, is read as narration or as “artefactive”. Such oscillation is symptomatic of the undecidable condition at any one moment. The narration itself, whilst describing the strategies adopted in the thesis, falls into the inevitable trap of failing to grasp an original intention. According to Roland Barthes, this is the inevitability of writing.

As soon as a fact is narrated no longer with a view to acting directly on reality but intrinsically, that is to say, finally outside of any function other than that of the very practice of the symbol itself, this disconnection occurs, the voice loses its origin, the author enters his own death, writing begins.\footnote{Roland Barthes (trans. Stephen Heath). The Death of the Author, Image Music Text, London, Fontana Press. 1977. p. 142}

The limitless dissolution of the Author

An Author — etymologically derived from autor or auctor (a father) meant “to cause to grow”, or “increase” as in “augment” and implies “one who sets forth written statements” (1380).\footnote{From the Online Etymological Dictionary, http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?1=a (accessed October 2008)} This is obviously the case for examination purposes of the philosophical content that is argued; as Barthes goes on to say:

The argument is attempting to establish “grounds” for a lack of any traditional foundation, be it “authenticity”, “originality” or logocentric “meaningfulness”. Of course, such a “grounding” is itself subject to the “logocentricity” of its own use of language. Any further attempt to refine it is equally doomed for the same reason. What prevents all from spiralling into the abyss are the parameters of the institution that the work of the “candidate” must test and abide by. That is, a rule of economy.

What if none of the thesis made any sense; would it still be a work of art? We have said as much. Its content would be a parody of a thesis. Now consider if it did make sense…. Is there a remainder of the parodic in the text that pertains to the rule of economy?
You speak of the Author dissolving entirely. How does this aspect of the voices of the Other fill the vacuum left by the dissolved Authorial presence? What fills this space is the voice that is feminine, the voice that is what has been referred to as the subaltern now speak on their own terms — no longer authorized to do so.

The Author, when believed in, is always conceived of as the past of his own book: book and author stand automatically on a single line divided into a before and an after. The Author is thought to nourish the book, which is to say that he exists before it, thinks, suffers, lives for it, is in the same relation of antecedence to his work as a father to his child.  

His meaning behind such a “death” is twofold, in that not only are words themselves capable of creating as many signifieds as there are readers, but that texts are themselves always some form of plagiarism:

We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single “theological” meaning (the “message” of Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from innumerable centres of culture.

So that when the necessity arises for the text to be “given” an Author as when the thesis is a Thesis, a limit must be drawn that forecloses the enterprise as Barthes goes on to write (and here, perhaps “critic” may be substituted with “institution”):

Once the Author is removed, the claim to decipher a text becomes quite futile. To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing. Such a conception suits criticism very well, the latter then allotting itself the

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50 Barthes op. cit p.145
51 Ibid., p.146
important task of discovering the Author …
beneath the work: when the Author has been
found, the text is “explained” — victory to the
critic.\textsuperscript{52}

Barthes’ does claim at the end of his essay that it is the
“reader” who is able to continue the text by deferral and
by allowing those signifieds to proliferate rather than
atrophy. The supreme form of irony is “acting” where
the understanding lies between author, actor, and
audience:

Recent research … has demonstrated the
constitutively ambiguous nature of Greek
tragedy, its texts being woven from words
with double meanings that each character
understands unilaterally; …there is, however,
someone who understands each word in its
duplicity and who, in addition, hears the very
defarness of the characters speaking in front
of him — this someone being precisely the
reader …\textsuperscript{53}

In his essay “What is an Author?” Michel Foucault
writes about the “author-function” as a process rather
than an “identity” that valorises authenticity. His
description of writing in this vein has close affinities
with the fictional “maker” of the \textit{Studio}. Such writing is:

… an interplay of signs regulated less by the
content it signifies than by the very nature of
the signifier. Moreover, it implies an action
that is always testing the limits of its

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., p.147
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., p.148
regularity, transgressing and reversing an order that it accepts and manipulates.  

Here are echoes of modernism in the testing of limits. The “modernist” connection is deliberate in that the enterprise of The Hunting of the Duckrabbit is basically transgressive. It evinces similar concerns about the precedence of the process over “subject” and would claim that the project (“writing” in Foucault’s case; “writing” and “making” in my own):

... unfolds like a game that inevitably moves beyond its own rules and finally leaves them behind. Thus, the essential basis of this writing is not the exalted emotions related to the act of composition or the insertion of a subject (artefact) into language (world). Rather, it is primarily concerned with creating an opening where the writing (making) subject endlessly disappears.  

(“Endless” disappearance presupposes, at least, a momentary “reappearance” that fleetingly registers itself only to be transformed. The duckrabbit of the Studio and the thesis operate such worlds of fictionalized subjects — a self-imposed difficulty when submitting practice for academic assessment (it would probably be a unique event if the doctorate were awarded to a fictional character!) But, as Foucault continues:

So, that which transgresses the Author Function gives credibility and value to those who have hitherto been denied a voice that distinguishes itself, speaks its love, its dissent, its needs its desires. These voices of the material world are voices that make things happen in ways that are ultra-aesthetic.

This is a radical re-think of the role of narrative.

Who has the “right” to speak?

“Does philosophy constitute itself in thinking of the poor? If so, can it ever refrain from thinking for them?”

Editor’s Introduction p. ix in:

Jacques Rancière, The Philosopher and His Poor.
Raleigh-Durham, Duke University Press 2004

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55 Ibid., p.116
It is well known that in a novel narrated in the first person, neither the first person pronoun, the present indicative tense, nor for that matter, its signs of localization refer directly to the writer, either to the time when he wrote, or to the specific act of writing; rather, they stand for a “second self” whose similarity to the author is never fixed and undergoes considerable alteration within the course of a single book. It would be as false to seek the author in relation to the actual writer as to the fictional narrator; the “author-function” arises out of their scission — in the division and distance of the two.

Such a description seemingly applies solely to “fictional” works so that in the case of the “thesis as Thesis” there is the opportunity to resolve the problem by differentiation. However, Foucault thinks such an application, however plausible, is misleading:

One might object that this phenomenon only applies to novels or poetry, to a context of “quasi-discourse”, but, in fact, all discourse that supports this “author-function” is characterized by this plurality of egos.\(^\text{56}\)

\(^{56}\) Ibid., pp. 129-130
This chapter began with the notion of a studio as a place of study. My installation *Exhibition, Artist’s Studio, No Entry*, (Fig.24) was an example of dislocating that “placeness” into a fictionalized “space” that could be said to *take place* as a thought experiment on the duality of maker/spectator, or maker/actor (eiron). The location of what should be called “practice” rather than “the work” shifted firstly, into text and thence into a performative aspect of negotiating strategies. What is being described here is in fact the making of the thesis as the practice, which may seem, on the face of it, fairly straightforward. But, as with all self-reflexive, self-referential forms there are always problems with openings and closure. This locus is indeed a “place” where the verb “I study” happens. It happens simultaneously as research and autofiction in which either course is unsustainable in the other’s terms. What the studio has *produced* is a microcosm of what all practice as research stumbles over: namely, the incompatibility of fictional extension of factual

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**Aporias of practice by research**

The poster in a limited edition consists of a blind embossed text on white hand-made paper. Other text is hand written lightly in pencil.

Is the practice, then, the work that “goes into” the thesis, or, the Thesis itself?

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What is “contained in” is merely an *aspect* — say, duck. Thesis as the work — rabbit

— the work — ergon
— Thesis — parergon
— Or, a reversal of the two
discourse. One attempts to represent the other, and as Socrates tells Glaucon, “(W)e seem to be pretty well agreed that the artist knows little or nothing about the subjects he represents and that the art of representation is something that has no serious value …” 57

Whilst one can be certain that Plato and indeed Socrates did not have in mind the PhD by part practice, there are nevertheless, aporias that obtain through the incompatibility of certain definitions of “knowledge” and “creativity”. Much of the discussion on the subject to be found in academic papers and other literature is due to association and confusion of such terms with “science” and “expression”. Many of these will be examined and critiqued in the next chapter.

Returning to the duckrabbit and its pursuit: is there not something in common here with one of the Reverend Dodgson’s (or is it Lewis Carroll’s) elusive beasts — the Snark? 58 The voyage towards its whereabouts is charted with a map that is “A perfect and absolute blank!” and its hybrid form, the Boojum causes its discoverer to disappear (Fig. 25). The “duck” (in Jastrow’s diagram) “looks” to the left, the “rabbit” to the right; it is a matter of a sense of direction that orientates the spectator as Deleuze comments in The Logic of Sense,

For personal uncertainty is not a doubt foreign to what is happening, but rather an objective structure of the event itself, insofar as it moves in two directions at once, and insofar as it fragments the subject following this double direction. Paradox is initially that

which destroys good sense as the only direction, but it is also that which destroys common sense as the assignation of fixed identities. 59

Fit the Eighth

The Vanishing

They sought it with thimbles, they sought it with care;
They pursued it with forks and hope;
They threatened its life with a railway-share;
They charmed it with smiles and soap.
They shuddered to think that the chase might fail,
And the Beaver, excited at last,
Went bounding along on the tip of its tail,
For the daylight was nearly past.
"There is Thingumbob shouting!" the Bellman said,
"He is shouting like mad, only hark!
He is waving his hands, he is wagging his head,
He has certainly found a Snark!"
They gazed in delight, while the Butcher exclaimed
"He was always a desperate wag!"
They beheld him — their Baker — their hero unnamed —
On the top of a neighbouring crag.
Erect and sublime, for one moment of time.
In the next, that wild figure they saw
(As if stung by a spasm) plunge into a chasm,
While they waited and listened in awe.
"It’s a Snark!" was the sound that first came to their ears,
And seemed almost too good to be true.
Then followed a torrent of laughter and cheers:
Then the ominous words "It’s a Boo-"
Then, silence. Some fancied they heard in the air
A weary and wandering sigh
That sounded like “-jum!” but the others declare
It was only a breeze that went by.
They hunted till darkness came on, but they found
Not a button, or feather, or mark,
By which they could tell that they stood on the ground
Where the Baker had met with the Snark.
In the midst of the word he was trying to say,
In the midst of his laughter and glee,
He had softly and suddenly vanished away —
For the Snark was a Boojum, you see.

In practice as research, the “scientific” and the “expressive” appear to point in different directions. However, it would be well to consider scientific research as having its own methodological assumptions revised. This is relevant to critics of the practice-based PhD who wish to retain “hard” research of the scientific kind. Thomas S. Kuhn60 describes scientific revolutions in terms of changes of paradigms such as the big shifts from Aristotelian to Newtonian to Einsteinian physics. Paradigms are something like “world views” that bring with them their own “rules”. However, such rules need not have consistency or even relevance across the fields within such a paradigm, as Kuhn remarks:

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59 Gilles Deleuze, (Trans Mark Lester with Charles Stivale) The Logic of Sense, London, New York, Continuum, 2004. p. 5 The “Sense” here is manifold and is used deliberately in the original French “sens” to mean “direction” as well as “common sense”, or “sensibility”.

Scientists can agree that a Newton, Lavoisier, Maxwell, or Einstein has produced an apparently permanent solution to a group of outstanding problems and still disagree, sometimes without being aware of it, about the particular abstract characteristics that make those solutions permanent. They can, that is, agree in their *identification* of a paradigm without agreeing on, or even attempting to produce, a full *interpretation* or *rationalization* of it (all italics in the original).\(^\text{61}\)

However, such disagreement does not necessitate the imposition of a “standard” set of rules as Kuhn goes on to claim: “Lack of a standard interpretation or of an agreed reduction to rules will not prevent a paradigm from guiding research.” and even: “Indeed, the existence of a paradigm need not even imply that any full set of rules exists.”\(^\text{62}\) The move from the purely academic doctorate to one that introduced “soft” forms of “apprehension” could mark such a paradigm shift in attitudes to research with all its concomitant anxieties about rules and standards that Kuhn recognises as symptomatic.

Normal science can proceed without rules only so long as the relevant *scientific* community accepts without question the particular problem-solutions already achieved. Rules should therefore become important and the characteristic unconcern about them should vanish whenever paradigms or models are felt to be insecure. That is, moreover, exactly what does occur.

\(^{61}\text{Ibid., p.44}\)

\(^{62}\text{Ibid., p.44}\)
The paradigm period, in particular, is regularly marked by frequent and deep debates over legitimate methods, problems, and standards of solution, though these serve rather to define schools than to produce agreement.\textsuperscript{63}

The paradigm shifts to be found both in the earliest manifestation of the readymade and in the tentative acceptance of the PhD as (at least in part) a practical doctorate have subsequently established themselves in the sense that there can be “no going back”. The conditions that necessitated their arrival may be isolated and apparently unrelated much like the indiscriminate smudge in a gestalt test, awaiting recognition as it becomes recognizable: but as Kuhn points out:

The subject of a gestalt demonstration knows that his perception has shifted because he can make it shift back and forth repeatedly while he holds the same book or piece of paper in his hands. Aware that nothing in his environment has changed, he directs his attention increasingly not to the figure (duck or rabbit) but to the lines of the paper he is looking at. Ultimately he may even learn to see those lines without seeing either of the figures, and he may then say (what he could not legitimately have said earlier) that it is these lines that he really sees but that he sees them alternately as a duck and as a rabbit. ...As in all similar psychological experiments, the effectiveness of the demonstration depends upon its being...

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., p.47
analyzable in this way. Unless there were an external standard with respect to which a switch of vision could be demonstrated, no conclusion about alternate perceptual possibilities could be drawn.\textsuperscript{64}

In order to capture the \textit{duckrabbit} “alive” it is necessary to see the “lines” that make both appearances possible. Though it may not be possible to see the hybrid figure in its totality (always some duck, always some rabbit) there comes a closeness that may be described as \textit{asymptotic}, that is, infinitesimally contingent. The recourse to an external “standard” that would settle the account could only be an arbitrary one devised by the institution, though this could be deliberately planted in order to reveal momentary glimpses and thus fulfill its own role as a \textit{sine qua non} of the assessment process. This would highlight the performative as opposed to the constative aspect of the language domain of the university.\textsuperscript{65}

For the purposes of a PhD submission one could imagine there would have to be something that to all intents and purposes \textit{resembled} a PhD thesis and was a PhD thesis, congruently so. What is implied here is that when a thesis is a work of art it is \textit{not} research but when it is research it is \textit{not} a work of art and yet ostensively they appear one and the same. One could speak of a meta-thesis (which in grammar concerns the transposition of letters or sounds in a word), or antithesis, which the Concise Oxford Dictionary’s third definition is most apposite and states: “a contrast of ideas expressed by parallelism of strongly contrasted words”. The term implies a purely philosophical stance

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., p114

\textsuperscript{65} This refers to speech-act theory found in J. L. Austin’s \textit{How to Do Things with Words} (second edition) Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1975. But as Derrida would point out, such a structuralist opposition is itself subject to the aporia of identification.
that I suspect that Gadamer would decry as lacking the sensibility of encounter. Indeed, the self-reflexive artwork is more of a demonstration of art’s sublimation into philosophy. Yet in a post-ironic, ironic sense it is grounded exactly in the right place when it intervenes in the institution of education. Whilst it still retains the name of art, the thesis as antithesis, and the studio as installation remain in a dialogical relationship between the maker and representatives of the institution. It is by concentrating on the conditions that make it so that places the studio-as-installation between the realms of structure and event.

The nexus of rules and *differends.* — see J.F. Lyotard and Ch. 4 “Thesis”

Illustrations

Fig.8 Rob Ward, *Studio as installation*. Assembled pieces for performance, 2005 dimensions variable

Fig.9 Albrecht Dürer, *Melencolia I*, 1514, engraving. 31 × 26 cm, British Museum

Fig.10 Rob Ward, “*Ghost Melencolia*” concave plaster mould in raking light to give convex (solid) appearance 150 x 110 x 40 cm. (part of MA installation, Longsides, Bretton Hall 2002)

Fig.11 Rob Ward, CCTV view of *Exhibition, Artist’s Studio, No Entry*. 2005. Performance piece, Light and sound room LUSAD

Fig.12 The Duck-rabbit from *Fliegende Blätter* 1892

Fig.13 Andy Warhol, *Brillo Box* 1968, Silkscreen ink on painted wood 43.5 x 43.5 x 35.5cm. Private collection. New York

Fig.14 Jasper Johns, *Flag*, Encaustic, oil and collage on fabric mounted on plywood,1954-55, 106.7 x 155cm., Museum of Modern Art, New York

Fig.15 Jasper Johns, *Target* 1958 oil and collage on canvas 91.44 x 91.44 cm Collection of the Artist.

Fig.16 Rob Ward, Painting *en plein air* 2009. Photograph, dimensions variable.

Fig.17 The Jackson Pollock Bar theory installation.

Fig.18 Rob Ward, *Studio with Rietveld Blue and Red Chair* 2005. Card model 45 x 40 x 30cm

Fig. 19 Rob Ward, *Studio with Breuer Wassily Club Chair* 2005. Card model 45 x 40 x 30cm

Fig.21 Rob Ward, *Project IX  TALKING ABOUT ART The Aporia of Emperors* 2005-6. essay/short story, A4.

Fig.22 Daniel Buren, *Peinture-Sculpture (Painting-Sculpture)*, work in situ, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1971

Fig. 23 Marcel Broodthaers, *Ma Collection* 1971, Photographs and documents. Front view and back view. Photo, © Maria Gilissen

Fig. 24 Rob Ward, *Exhibition, Artist’s Studio, No Entry*. Hand made paper poster, blind embossing and pencil. 2005, 55 x 80cm.

Fig. 25 Henry Holiday (illustrator) From Fit the Eighth: *The Vanishing The Hunting of the Snark: An Agony in Eight Fits* by Lewis Carroll 1876
Chapter Two: Art as Common Sense (Canny Ideologies)
Art as Common Sense (Canny Ideologies)

If art practice is to “contain” knowledge (as some would argue as the prerequisite for a PhD by practice), and be able to communicate that knowledge it would have to assume a common understanding. It would have to be “common sense” in the broadest connotation of the term. This chapter will highlight attempts, both historical and contemporary, to bridge the gap between sensation, reason and meaning within an art context. I have chosen to refer to this and the following chapter in terms of what Jonathan Culler describes as “canny” and “uncanny” oppositions of structuralist and post-structuralist thinking. The “canny” is characterized by a faith in the ability to probe and revise notions of truth through what Nietzsche called, “the thread of logic”. The uncanny, Culler insists, is not simply the opposite of the canny, “for the uncanny is neither a refutation of nor a replacement for the canny.” The uncanny work is that which takes the canny to the point where it recognizes itself as unhinged, that is to say, it is inherent in the logic of the canny to deconstruct itself — which is the uncanny. In some ways it is unfortunate that the literal English translation of the German unheimlich (un-homely) misses the sense that Freud intends of the strange-in-the-familiar. “Uncanny” and “canny”, in English, are related to being aware or knowing. However, the misnomer of un-canny (literally, un-knowing) can be useful for the purposes of this and the next chapter. To “know” is not neutral but, I would maintain, ideological and therefore bound to the nexus of power structures and dominance. In this instance, knowledge becomes interpretation, and it is the hermeneutical project

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67 Ibid., p.24
applied to art and meaning that lies at the heart of regarding art practice as a form of research. In the chapter following this one, “un-knowing” will be offered as the most appropriate approach to a methodology. The aim of this chapter is to show ways that art practice can be argued as having equivalence to knowledge. Also, it will be shown that the arguments that try to prise that knowledge out of practice rely on what I have chosen to call “common sense”, a deliberate conflation of the demotic usage with sensus communis, the basis of common understanding, or, of “good sense”. That there is something in the academic community called “research” is self-evident but in this instance needs to be clarified, and that there is something within the culture of the twenty-first century called art practice will, for the time being, be assumed to be merely self-evident. “Art as such”, in relation to research, will come under scrutiny in the following chapter.

Research may be divided into two kinds, for the sake of highlighting what, in the literature appears to be a stumbling block. Firstly, with its rigorous methodologies quantitative research has gained reputation as a result of adhering to the mathematical and scientific principles of testing hypotheses and secondly, qualitative research has strong links to theoretical and philosophical systems that underpin ideas. Both are considered as research because both are creating new insights and knowledge. Since the inclusion of art practice into higher university degrees the problem has arisen of how something practical can, of itself, contain knowledge. Practice which is not written practice is mute⁶⁸, and even written practice itself does not necessarily convey knowledge, especially when regarded as an aesthetic act. Also, it would appear that

⁶⁸ This is used in the defined sense of “refusing to plead” its case. This, of course does not apply to art practice that is overtly didactic by means of the spoken/written word. However, even in this instance it could be regarded as such from the understanding of practice as being strictly aesthetic, as opposed to the political etc.
any product that has a subjective basis falls into such a trap of untrustworthy communication in that it is impossible to verify. Subjectivity, it would appear debars practice from communal research because it is singular and not universal.

Before a discussion of the problem can be extended, it will be necessary to make reference to Immanuel Kant’s Critique of Judgement\(^69\) whose central thesis concerns the antinomy of “taste” as something subjective and at the same time, necessarily objective. The Critique of Judgement is the third in line to the Critique of Pure Reason and the Critique of Practical Reason both of which are concerned to make a rational case for knowledge and ethics respectively. The third critique is seen as a bridge between the two in that it offers a rational account of sensation and in this respect it has implications towards “art” as it attempts to objectify “taste” and universalize judgment.

Whenever we make a judgment declaring something to be beautiful, we permit no one to hold a different opinion, even though we base our judgment only on our feeling rather than on concepts; hence we regard this underlying feeling as a common rather than as a private feeling. But if we are to use this common sense in such a way, we cannot base it on experience; for it seeks to justify us in making judgments that contain an ought: it does not say that everyone will agree with my judgment, but that he ought to (emphasis added).\(^70\)

Whilst what is under discussion is the possibility of a shared


\(^{70}\) Ibid., pp. 91-92
judgement about the condition of “beauty”, it is interesting to set Kant’s problem in the context of its time in order to see the analogy with the problem offered in this chapter. The term aesthetics given in its modern usage as a system of conditions was first coined by A.G Baumgarten (1714 – 1762) meaning the ability to judge via the senses rather than the intellect. The hope was to create a systematic approach to judgment that would have a universal appeal and so satisfy the need brought about by the appearance of contemporaneous art to a wider connoisseurship. The senses, properly attuned, it was hoped, would find a commonality, a “common sense” of agreement in other words. It is this sensus communis\textsuperscript{71} that Kant acknowledges as a necessity and yet can only be \textit{a priori} true as obligation — it ought to be so given that humans are rational beings.

(W)e must [here] take sensus communis to mean the idea of a sense shared [by all of us], i.e., a power to judge that in reflecting takes account (\textit{a priori}), in our thought, of everyone else’s way of presenting [something], in order \textit{as it were} to compare our own judgment with human reason in general... Now we do this as follows: we compare our judgment not so much with the actual as rather with the merely possible judgments of others, and [thus] put ourselves in the position of everyone else...\textsuperscript{72}

The \textit{concept of the supersensible} is Kant’s attempt to justify an origin of the claim to universality, and he goes on to invoke a transcendental \textit{supersensible substrate}

\textsuperscript{71} Aristotle’s sensus communis was a physical entity situated near the heart and was responsible for gathering sense data from the sense receptors. As such it was responsible for the discernment and discrimination of qualities and was concerned with judgement: cf. Kant’s usage.

\textsuperscript{72} Kant, Op. cit. p160
of humanity — a condition common to all human beings that causes the compulsion to expect a consensus of the judgment of taste — a “common sense” in its restricted meaning.

Kant’s three Critiques, and particularly the third, served the purpose of showing the limits of what can be claimed for knowledge, and contributed to the eighteenth century Enlightenment programme of achieving a rational basis for all human dealings, be they scientific, political, judicial, ethical or aesthetic. By claiming a rational universality of humanity, Kant’s system echoed the French republican ideals of Liberty, Equality and Brotherhood. What he achieved was a system that legitimated judgments of quality based on human reason rather than dogma.

In the mid twentieth century Clement Greenberg, in attempting to legitimate judgments of taste in modern art cites Kant as his antecedent.

I identify Modernism with the intensification, almost the exacerbation, of this self-critical tendency that began with the philosopher Kant. Because he was the first to criticize the means itself of criticism, I conceive of Kant as the first real Modernist.

The essence of Modernism lies, as I see it, in the use of the characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself not in order to subvert it, but to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence. Kant used logic to establish the limits of logic, and while he withdrew much from its old jurisdiction, logic was left in all the more secure possession of what remained to it.73

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It is the notion of self-critique that forms the basis of a methodology common to disciplines that aspire to qualities such as integrity and the adjudication of “quality” itself. The kind of self-critique offered by Kant is based upon reason and as such becomes an adjudication of the limits of reason. Thus, the tendency to self-critique is claimed for scientific enquiry in Karl Popper’s falsifiability principle where true scientific theory has to be capable of risk of being proven untrue, and marginalizes areas of “science” such as psychoanalysis and sociology for their lack of ability to have their findings proven “wrong”. Given all of this, Kant’s rationalist account takes very seriously aesthetic judgment and struggles to find the operational mechanism that connects sensation (of the beautiful) with a rational cause. In his paper Art and Knowledge in Kant’s Aesthetics Clive Cazeaux writes:

The fact that reflective judgement does not assign a determinate property to its object is initially a major problem for Kant, since his entire theory of judgement is based on the premise that each and every judgement requires the subsumption of an intuition under a concept. If this is the foundation of Kant’s theory, yet he entertains a (reflective) form of judgement which does not determinatively exercise a concept, how can his theory of judgement be accepted as complete and coherent? It would seem that his own definition of judgement precludes reflective judgement from taking place. Kant’s solution is to argue that since judgement always requires a concept, what reflective judgement does in these circumstances is not categorize its objects but produce a concept which reflects the mind’s capacity to form a
judgement, (original emphasis) that is to say, the mind’s capacity to get a purchase on the phenomenon before it that is posing a challenge to categorization. The concept that is produced is “nature’s subjective purposiveness”, the concept that nature appears as if it were designed for our form of perception\(^{74}\) (my emphasis).

Cazeaux is making a case through Kant that there is a direct link between subjectivity and the “real” world that would lay the foundations for the transmission of knowledge via subjective means such as is found in art works. Kant’s “purposiveness” is, it would seem, circular, in that the presupposition of a “Natural Law” which is “out there” — a thing-in-itself, and therefore unknowable, can only be conceivable through a human concept: the Natural Law that regulates human law that defines the Natural Law. This is not the only flaw in Cazeaux argument as is shown by the insecurity of language when trying to extend his thesis.

However, what is innovative about Kant’s theory of judgement is that this apparent lack of determination or objectivity — for example, the fact that concepts or metaphors are used which can’t be evidenced or empirically supported by the object in question — is claimed to be part of the purposiveness whereby we reflect on our own capacity to find or produce concepts which organize the world and generate knowledge.\(^{75}\)

Such terms as “reflection”, “capacity to”, “organize the

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\(^{75}\) Ibid., p.5
world” and “generate thinking” do little to substantiate his claim that this gets us any closer to establishing that “knowledge” can be extracted from the sensation of an artefact. His admission of metaphor as a legitimate trope that is “vital to the construction of knowledge” should be received with caution. He states that, “(F)ar from being merely a source of decoration or peripheral imagery, metaphor is theorized as the generation of conceptual relationship and cross-referral which allows knowledge to be constructed and coordinated.”

I would argue that with metaphor, as with allegory, what is interesting and significant is not so much the “primary meaning” aided by some other image, but more the choice of secondary image itself that gives it force. This secondary image is, in fact, the subject-as-frame, that says that the primary image is encapsulated. In a sense, metaphors are, of themselves, reducing the primary images to mere examples of possible figurations and images that proliferate ad infinitum. Cazeaux’s paper is one of many attempts at a squaring of the hermeneutic circle that attempts to invoke sense out of sensation by appealing to a transcendent quality assumed to be already present. Here, the invocation of “purposiveness” is used to overcome the aporia of reflective judgement in the service of “sensory cognition”.

Purposiveness — the appearance of the world as if it had been designed for our awareness — is the concept which allows

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76 Ibid., p.7
77 Paul de Man in his essay “The Epistemology of Metaphor” examines how a number of philosophers have attempted to derive a language free from the excesses of connotation caused by tropes such as metaphor, catachresis, prosopopeia etc. He writes, Contrary to common belief, literature is not the place where the unstable epistemology of metaphor is suspended by aesthetic pleasure, … It is rather the place where the possible convergence of rigor and pleasure is shown to be a delusion. The consequences of this lead to the difficult question whether the entire semantic, semiological, and performative field of language can be said to be covered by tropological models, a question which can only be raised after the proliferating and disruptive power of figural language has been fully recognized.

Kant to claim that … this process does not involve the imposition of order but rather occurs as the emergence of order and graspability necessary for our faculties to obtain a unified, coherent purchase on the world. …it is precisely because reflective judgement is positioned at the centre of Kant’s thought that his philosophy can be used to give aesthetics a cognitive dimension.\textsuperscript{78} (my emphasis)

It is the cognitive dimension that appears to legitimate art practice as a form of knowledge, but it is not clear how this knowledge is articulated for the practitioner and particularly for the “other” who experiences the result of that practice. It is with this consideration that various attempts have been forwarded that “interpret” the cognitive dimension such as the phenomenological approach of Graham Sullivan:

\begin{quote}
The artwork carries its own status as a form of knowledge. Research of art subsequently communicates new insights into how objects carry meaning about ideas themes and issues. As an object of study an artwork is an individually and culturally constructed form that can be used to represent ideas and thus can be examined as a source of knowledge.\textsuperscript{79}
\end{quote}

Hans-Georg Gadamer’s magnum opus \textit{Truth and Method}\textsuperscript{80} devotes significant space to the sensus communis, arguing that Kant and the German

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., p.4
\end{footnotesize}
rationalists, through theorization, degraded it from its practical, social dimensions. This aspect would be manifested in the well-rounded, cultured, community spirited characteristics that the Germans call Bildung. This aspect of “common sense” referred to shared values for the common good (cf. French “le bon sens”) and placed an emphasis on the pursuit of knowledge, as Gadamer writes, “This is the art of finding arguments and serves to develop the sense of what is convincing, which works instinctively and ex tempore, and for that very reason cannot be replaced by science.”

Verbally articulated knowledge, of course, need not be the goal of cognition. An example might be found where cognitive faculties are brought to bear on a drawing in terms of say, accuracy to a given intention such as visual proportion. However, Steven Scrivener would remove the necessity of knowledge altogether, holding that the artwork itself conveys its own equivalence in what he calls “apprehension”.... I start from the position that the proper goal of visual arts research is visual art. ... Therefore, from my position the most interesting proposition to explore is the claim that the art object is a form of knowledge since it locates the art object as a central and fundamental component of the knowledge acquisition process. ... Nevertheless ... I argue against this position.

And

(V)isual arts research can be seen as being

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81 Ibid., p.19

concerned with novel insights through the apprehension of and discourse surrounding artefacts.\textsuperscript{83}

What seems to become problematic is not that practical outcomes have cognitive meaning, but what sort of meaning is invested and how it is to be extracted. In art practice outside of academia the problem need not arise and it may even seem preferable for it not to arise. Art and research seem to imply incompatibility as Picasso implied in reaction to the over-theorization of cubism.\textsuperscript{84}

Of course, academic respectability for art in education has been achieved in the UK and elsewhere by the creation of university degree status culminating in the PhD. David Durling has noted that the current debate over practice as research has the potential to weaken academic integrity through the kind of interpretive forms of equivalent value such as “apprehension” substituting for hard won knowledge. Scientifically “falsifiable” or “hard” knowledge and “probable outcome” based “soft” knowledge are both communicable in terms of data or by philosophical argument based upon empirical evidence. Apprehensions are not knowledge but are supposed to infer or confer an equal value. It is the conferral of value that makes apprehension a specious ideology in its desire to change the parameters of the PhD and as such is what so irks Durling. It must be added, however, that “hard” scientific enquiry has also


\textsuperscript{84} “I can hardly understand the importance given to the word research in connection with modern painting. In my opinion to search means nothing in painting. To find, is the thing.” Pablo Picasso in “Picasso Speaks” part of an interview given with Marius de Zayas in 1923 published The Arts New York May 1923pp. 315-26 cited in \textit{Art in Theory 1900-2000 An Anthology of Changing Ideas}. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Eds.) Oxford, Blackwell Publishing 2003 p.215
been shown to conform to ideological stances, particularly in the twentieth century with the Einstein-Bohr debate which continues to this day to highlight belief systems that appear to be the basis of actual fact.\textsuperscript{85} In his paper “Reliable knowledge in design”\textsuperscript{86}, Durling expresses concern over a number of issues he sees as contributing to the erosion of the worth of the PhD with particular reference to the practice-based or led forms. The issue he wants to elucidate is implicit in the title of his paper which is firmly entrenched in knowledge as it is traditionally understood. He concludes that the artefact has an important role but only as an accompanying element to the academic content found in the traditional thesis. To this extent it might even be superfluous unless it bears relation to a new invention.

It follows that publication by exhibition alone would not satisfy these requirements. However, if the exhibition were accompanied by a substantial catalogue explaining the process, it may be argued that there is an enduring record that can be published. If the catalogue contained all of the elements of a PhD thesis and were published and accessible, then it would satisfy these points. It would then be stand alone with all of the process embedded in it, and would be indistinguishable (my emphasis) from a conventional thesis. The extra burden of exhibition would seem unnecessary in these circumstances.\textsuperscript{87}

\textsuperscript{85} See \textit{New Scientist} vol.\textbf{195} No.2615 4\textsuperscript{th} August 2007 p.10 debate concerning determinism as proposed by the theoretical physicist Gerard ‘t Hooft and the theory of effects without causes which is hoped to be determined by Anton Suarez at the Center for Quantum Philosophy in Zurich.

\textsuperscript{86} David Durling: Reliable knowledge in design. \textit{Working Papers in Art and Design} 1 http://www.herts.ac.uk/artdes/research/papers/wpades/vol1/durling2.html ISSN 1466-4917 (accessed September 2007)

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., p.10
“These circumstances” being “all circumstances” if “exhibition alone” will not do.

It has been pointed out that Durling is writing specifically about design and that art-practice has very noticeable differences in the way it is approached and particularly in its intentions – and thus its role within society. Design, by and large, serves society, and as such fits comfortably into the academic community’s ideal of innovation that can be useful to future application and further research. The same need not necessarily be what artists aspire to. It would seem therefore that the kind of art that aspires to become academic research does so by denying the “art” aspect in order to become a strange hybrid form of “design-art” — an art with a common sense – a common purpose.

Such a view might equally be seen to be ideologically predicated by the admission that art does not necessarily have to be recalcitrant — though avant-garde art always had an edge of anti-establishment to it. Much art of today now engages with ethical, ecological and social issues that give it respectability and imply that it has become integrated into society. At the beginning of this chapter art practice was assumed to be a self-evident enterprise that would lend itself to examination as an object of research. This appears to be how it has emerged within practice as research, for it has become a well-behaved model — diverse perhaps in its form, yet homogeneous in exposition. In effect, art practice, in the wider context of the world outside of academia, has created its own homogeneity by abandoning the aesthetic in favour of complex agendas. As such, the Kantian model that relies upon disinterest no longer holds, and with it the judgement of value as understood in the modernist canon. As such,

Can you think of a design that was intended not to serve a social purpose — in contrast with an “art” that purported to be nihilistic? This contrast is the one intended. (One could suppose the computer virus to be one such design?)
this all-embracing quality that characterizes post-aesthetic art can be seen to be banal, as it relies on self-evident explanation — in effect relying on a common-sense interpretation of its intensions. In The End of Art Donald Kuspit cites Frank Stella’s reaction to the MOMA show “Modern starts” (October 2000):

Stella has articulated, with uncanny accuracy and discomforting ridicule, the post-aesthetic character of art. He implies that it is the end of art, which does not mean works of art will not be made, but that they will have no important human use: they will no longer further personal autonomy and critical freedom, strengthening the ego against the social superego as well as the instincts, both of which stifle individuality with conformity.\(^8\)

Individuality and non-conformity are the hallmarks of modernist thinkers and practitioners, and as such defy interpretation that aspires to be definitive or even in ‘everyday terms. According to Stella and Kuspit, the mysterious quality that makes modern art becomes mystification inculcated by post-modernist galleries, and other art institutions. Stella’s depressing and depressed view is shared by Kuspit who deems post-modernist, post-aesthetic art to be:

… (A) psychosocial construction defined by its institutional identity, entertainment value, and commercial panache. No effort will be required to understand it, for there will not be much to understand, or rather it will be comprehensible in everyday terms. The post-aesthetic is not simply ironically opposed to the aesthetic or an

alternative ironical aesthetic, as the anti-aesthetic has been understood to be, but, to use Duchamp's words, wilfully indifferent to the aesthetic, which is almost to deny its reality. Duchamp clearly wants to deny the finality of aesthetic judgment - the kind of aesthetic objectivity that Kant spoke of- but in doing so he denies that there is any such thing as aesthetic experience.\textsuperscript{89}

What Kuspit and Stella react to is the \textit{banality} of means that often conceals complex conceptual ideas. The front jacket illustration to his book which is referred to as an example of degradation of the aesthetic is Damien Hirst's \textit{Home Sweet Home} of 1996 consisting of an ashtray filled with cigarette stubs (the show which was cleared away by a cleaner, unaware of its art status). Kuspit objects to the theoretical conceptual justification of such work and quotes a passage from Hegel.

\begin{quote}
Hegel writes: “the interest in art is distinguished from the practical interest of desire by the fact that it leaves its objects alone in their independence, while desire adapts them, or even destroys them, for its own purposes.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., p.29
Conversely, artistic contemplation differs from the theoretical contemplation of the scientific intelligence in cherishing an interest for the objects in their individuality; it does not busy itself in reducing them to universal thoughts and conceptions.\textsuperscript{90}

In the Hirst piece degradation is the theme and the means to show it. Whilst it may look as if the introduction of the banal is a quality of post-modern irony, there are many instances of art practice that attempt to address popular issues and concerns through discarded debris that are presumably intended to be sincere. Here, the means is also meant to convey literal content and becomes prime material for research practitioners.

Graeme Sullivan’s \textit{Art Practice as Research Inquiry in The Visual Arts} gives a number of illustrated examples to his text that purport to “explain” what the artists’ intentions were that, at first, give little leeway for interpretation. One example of this is Chakaia Booker’s (Fig. 27) use of “rubber tires (sic) to give form to social commentaries that address issues from black identity to urban ecology … Booker however extracts (my emphasis) an intense concentration of meanings from the tires.\textsuperscript{91} Another example is Natalie Jeremijenko’s \textit{Tree Logic} that consists of an outdoor “sculpture-installation” formed from tree saplings planted in tubs suspended upside down from an armature. “Our perceptions of trees change when we view them as a collection of growth responses rather than immutable symbols of the natural world.”\textsuperscript{92}

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., p.35  
\textsuperscript{91} Sullivan, 2005 Op. cit p.25  
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., p.36
Yet another if less sympathetic interpretation might be that the tyres just happened to be around and looked “interesting”, or that the inverted trees were actually a kind of sublimated form of torture. Whatever the interpretation, the practitioners, and Sullivan also, presumably, would welcome these as well because of the relativistic stance of apprehending the work at a communal level. A common consensus prevails over a sense of wonder. The “art” has become a secondary discourse — a fiction that justifies and initiates discussion.

These variations on a theme of objet trouvé are in contrast to the Hirst ashtray in that they may be seen to stem from surrealism’s imbuing of psychical significance as opposed to dada’s nihilistic valorization of the commonplace. This latter form that began as an attack on bourgeois values and institutions has since become the most easy to explain and present in museums and art galleries to a public eager to learn about “art”. In this context:

Subtleties of connotation disappear into blatant denotation, making the subject matter seem larger than life and, at the same time, instantly comprehensible: what you see is what you get, as both Warhol and Frank Stella said. Paradoxically, this "enlargement" into obviousness - this re-invention of the subject matter as an image, more pointedly, as a socially representative representation -
desensitizes the viewer to it rather than intensifies his relationship with it. Unable to be taken personally, it becomes simply another social product on the market of mass-reproduced images - images meant for the masses not for the individual. Thus, mechanical reproduction makes social subject matter "comprehensible" to the mass mind by turning it into a facile spectacle.93

Kuspit attacks the vacuity of the banal that achieves art status from a particular ideology and theory.

The artist has become a "positivist," "represent[ing] things as they are, or rather would be, supposing [he] did not exist." In postart this means things are understood according to ideology and theory, which become glosses on their banality. Ideology and theory confirm it: they use real things as banal illustrations (thus outsmarting them and suggesting that ideology and theory are in control of reality).94

Implying “after” aesthetics – not just in a temporal sense but as a progression … ideologically loaded

Ideology and theory are what permeate the explanatory labels that are fixed to the wall beside art works in the modern museum and art gallery. Ideology and theory are what go into a PhD thesis, and in Durling’s terms, taken together with Kuspit’s argument, the “art” part has become superfluous.

Surrealism would seem to offer more scope for an integrated practice and theory based upon meanings that go beyond the facticity of the object. Practices that attempt to locate significance that lies “underneath”

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94 Ibid., p.97
surface appearance are vestiges of modernism’s alternative route taken to mean the (re)awakening of the “primitive” within. Infatuated by Freud’s psychoanalytical method, the surrealists found an underground passageway to liberation through art; an art with meaning, but whose meaning was deliberately dislocated. Freud was a rationalist, and as such sought to explain mental states, and was not impressed by the claims that the surrealists made of him as their progenitor.

It is surrealism’s heritage that has allowed the found-object to engender “readings” other than purely ontological theorizing. But whereas surrealism, following Rimbaud’s admonition to “disorganize all the senses” aimed towards the symbolic, art practices such as the ones cited in Sullivan’s book are allegorical. Things stand for other things. Paul de Man, examining the tropes of symbolism and allegory states:

(The) appeal to the infinity of a totality constitutes the main attraction of the symbol as opposed to allegory, a sign that refers to one specific meaning and thus exhausts its suggestive potentialities once it has been deciphered. “Symbol and allegory” writes Gadamer, “are opposed as art is opposed to non art, in that the former seems endlessly suggestive in the indefiniteness of its meaning, whereas the latter, as soon as its meaning is reached, has run its full course.” Allegory appears as dryly rational and dogmatic in its reference to a meaning that it does not itself constitute, whereas the symbol is founded on an intimate unity between the image that rises...
up before the senses and the supersensory totality that the image suggests.\textsuperscript{95}

If Gadamer is correct, it adds further substance to the argument that art based on the explicatory methods associated with allegorical meaning have run their course as art, though they could well serve the purposes of research. Whereas Kant’s \textit{sensus communis} was a transcendental concept and as such intangible, the allegorical artwork is grasped by one and all as if it simply made “common sense”.

A critique of the concept of interpretation of artworks can be pressed even further, taking ideas from Gadamer’s \textit{Truth and Method} as a starting point. Gadamer is, of course, primarily associated with hermeneutics — the philosophy of interpretation — an offshoot of phenomenology. Gadamer addresses the question, as Terry Eagleton puts it: “Is ‘objective’ understanding possible, or is all understanding relative to our own historical situation?”\textsuperscript{96} This holds significance for art practice as Eagleton goes on to say, “There is … a good deal more at stake in these issues than ‘literary interpretation’ alone.”\textsuperscript{97} E. D Hirsch Jr, who, in \textit{Validity in Interpretation}\textsuperscript{98} claims that despite there being the possibility of numerous interpretations of a work there exists one original intention. If all possible interpretations were completely valid this would lead to the absurd consequences of “anything goes”. Works created at a time different to our own had very specific intentions due to the prevailing conditions. However, both Heidegger and Gadamer insist on the ability to engage with the historically unfamiliar, for although intentionality may


\textsuperscript{97} Loc. cit.

\textsuperscript{98} E.D Hirsch, \textit{Validity in Interpretation} New Haven, Conn., 1976
What is the nature of this “meeting” point? Is it a compromise? Is it a “near as we can achieve” truth to intention? Does it disturb us? Do we disturb it? Horizons are always “beyond”!

differ at different times, there is one unifying aspect which prevents our alienation, which is our own culture. “Meaning” is that which happens when our own “horizon” of interpretation meets the “horizon” from which the work is conceived: all belong to the same cultural tradition. These issues raised primarily in literary theory are often extended into the visual arts — and this would seem most apt in art practice that incorporates written exegesis.

Basing his arguments on Gadamer’s approach, Nicholas Davey proposes ways in which the hermeneutical understanding of artworks is a form of cognitive research. In his essay In between Word and Image: Philosophical Hermeneutics, Aesthetics and the inescapable Heritage of Kant,99 as the title suggests, he tries to insert the idea of disinterested method into Gadamerian hermeneutics, as when he says, “a hermeneutical aesthetics cannot operate without either an appeal to disinterestedness or without invoking an equivalent of Kant’s “aesthetic idea”100. This, of course runs counter to Gadamer’s own position which embeds the encounter in such a way that, as Davey concedes, “(V)ulnerability to the claims of art depends upon the interlocking openness and porous nature of the plurality of meanings that constitute the ontological fabric of both art work and ourselves.”101 He introduces the idea of “method” in order to forestall complacency, that is, to cover for the fact that interpretation might in some way get stuck through routine approaches to the work. (Gadamer’s hermeneuticist, even if he or she has not gained many insights is always assumed to be alert, always willing to participate — that is to say, creatively prejudiced.) The second reason for this “heresy” is to

100 Ibid., p.4
101 Ibid., p.12

We have to go “out” of ourselves to meet the horizon which is one’s understanding that the horizon is coming to meet us — each understanding relies on the other.

More on p.80
strengthen Gadamer’s approach by stimulating new interpretations.

An invocation of method and disinterestedness seems very unGadamerian but as we approach our conclusion, we shall claim that when seen from a wider hermeneutic perspective, the invocation is far from heretical. Though enabled by deliberate methodical intervention, a new alignment of meaning will often arise independent of the intentions or expectations of the interpreter.¹⁰²

This approach that satisfies both hermeneutical freedom and a method for its stimulation is precisely what the proponents of practice as a research require. Davey is thus making a strong case that satisfies the unpredictable nature of “art outcomes” and a means to interrogate it rationally. Davey’s account makes Gadamer’s methodology “reliable”, that is to say, more institutionally palatable. Eagleton, however, condemns the entire enterprise as being too cosy. The reliance on “tradition” as the “home” where hermeneutics can function is challenged when he writes:

It might be as well to ask Gadamer whose and what “tradition” he actually has in mind. For his theory holds only on the enormous assumption that there is indeed a single “mainstream” tradition; that all “valid” works participate in it; that history forms an unbroken continuum, free of decisive rupture, conflict and contradiction; and that the prejudices which “we” (who?) have inherited from the tradition are to be cherished. It assumes, in other words, that

¹⁰² Ibid., p.24

history is a place where “we" can always and everywhere be at home; that the work of the past deepen — rather than, say, decimate — our present self-understanding; and that the alien is always secretly familiar. It is, in short, a grossly complacent theory of history, the projection on to the world at large of a viewpoint for which “art" means chiefly the classical monuments of the high German tradition.\(^\text{103}\)

Wolfgang Iser, following on from Gadamer concentrates on contemporary rather than historical interpretation of works finding that the hermeneutical approach has value in its direct challenge to our assumptions, changing our critical awareness. The work of art or literature is “transgressive" when its value lies in its ability to shake up the complacent reader or spectator, to disturb in order to elicit creative understanding:

The work interrogates and transforms the implicit beliefs we bring to it, “disconfirms" our routine habits of perception and so forces us to acknowledge them for the first time for what they are. Rather than merely reinforce our given perceptions, the valuable work of literature violates or transgresses these normative ways of seeing and so teaches us new codes for understanding.\(^\text{104}\)

Eagleton’s criticism of Gadamer is equally dismissive of Iser’s version of hermeneutics called Reception Theory, comparing it to “a club for the like minded.”

\(^\text{103}\) Eagleton, op. cit. p.63
\(^\text{104}\) Ibid., p.67
Behind this case lies the influence of Gadamerian hermeneutics, with its trust in that enriched self-knowledge which springs from an encounter with the unfamiliar. But Iser’s liberal humanism, like most such doctrines, is less liberal than it looks at first sight. He writes that a reader with strong ideological commitments is likely to be an inadequate one, since he or she is less likely to be open to the transformative power of literary works. What this implies is that in order to undergo transformation at the hands of the text, we must only hold our beliefs fairly provisionally in the first place. The only good reader would already have to be a liberal: the act of reading produces a kind of subject which it also presupposes.  

What can be said for hermeneutics in literary theory can also be said for (at least the written aspect of) art practice in a research context. The kinds of dialogues opened up by artworks and their exegeses, even if they are considered of “higher” value, become another kind of common sense. They share their commonality within the institutional language, the tropes and rhetoric that preserve both the observer/critic/assessor and the researcher/artist/candidate. This narrative of self-preservation will be examined in the last chapter and is a result of the circular nature of hermeneutics that make the part dependent on the whole, which is in turn dependent on the part. In the practice by research doctorate the integrity of the whole is preserved by a grounding of capacities and responses, no matter how heterogeneous the effects that are produced; the

— And, as if this isn’t difficult enough in the literary field, surely it must be compounded in the visual field!

105 Ibid., p. 69
grounding — the “at home” is that cultural tradition. As Eagleton concludes:

As with Gadamer, we can foray out into foreign territory because we are always secretly at home. The kind of reader whom literature is going to affect most profoundly is one already equipped with the “right” kind of capacities and responses, proficient in operating certain critical techniques and recognizing certain literary conventions; but this is precisely the kind of reader who needs to be affected least.¹⁰⁶

The “effects” of the hermeneutical approach, under such criticism, only confirm what is already expected of the work in question. Interpretation of an art-work, whilst it may serve to elicit new responses, does so within the narrow confines of closed communities of cultural concession. It is this approach that has been invoked in the literature of practice-as-research in order to open up the debate into the possible “knowledge outcomes” from art practice. Interpretation, whilst it offers possible outcomes, fails to establish claims that are of the order of “knowledge that can be communicated.”

The Embodiment of Knowledge

This acknowledgement of the difficulty of embodying “knowledge” in an artwork was voiced early on in the development of PhDs at the Royal College of Art. In his seminal paper “Research in Art and Design”,¹⁰⁷ Christopher Frayling discusses Herbert Read’s three categories of art based research. These are: research

¹⁰⁶ Loc. cit.
¹⁰⁷ Christopher Frayling, “Research in Art and Design”, Royal College of Art Papers Vol1, No 1, 1-5. 1993
into art, research through art, and research for art. An example of the first kind would be,

“Historical Research, Aesthetic or Perceptual Research (and) Research into a variety of theoretical perspectives on art and design — social, economic, political, ethical, cultural, iconographic, technical, material, structural …”^108 Research through is identified as activities such as,

(M)aterials research — such as the titanium sputtering or colorization of metals projects (etc.); development work — for example, customising a piece of technology to do something no one has considered before and communicating the results. … (and) action research — where a research diary tells, in a step by step way, of a practical experiment in the studios, and the resulting report aims to contextualize it.^^109

It is the third category of research for art that gives Frayling (as well as all who have followed) so much trouble. The problem lies in:

Research where the end product is an artefact — where the thinking is, so to speak, embodied in the artefact, where the goal is not primarily communicable knowledge in the sense of verbal communication, but in the sense of visual or iconic or imagistic communication (original emphasis).^^110

The question that always gets repeated in discussions about practice as research or, research for art, is the one that asks if the artefact in itself can communicate new knowledge. Of those who attempt a way forward in

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^108 Ibid., p.5
^109 Loc. cit
^110 Loc. cit
consideration of Frayling’s last category of research, two academic papers stand out in their different approaches to the “for art” category. These are Michael Biggs’s, “the Rhetoric of Research”\footnote{Michael A.R. Biggs, “The Rhetoric of Research” in Durling D. & Shackleton J. (Eds.) Common Ground. Proceedings of the Design Research Society International Conference at Brunel University 111-118. Stoke –on-Trent, UK: Staffordshire University Press, 2002 (accessed 21/02/09) as URL} and Lucy Lyons’s, “Walls are not my friends: issues surrounding the dissemination of practice-led research within appropriate and relevant contexts.”\footnote{Lucy Lyons’s, “Walls are not my friends: issues surrounding the dissemination of practice-led research within appropriate and relevant contexts.” Working Papers in Art and Design 4 http://www.herts.ac.uk/artdes/research/papers/wpades/vol14full.html (accessed February 2009)} In Biggs’s paper, he “argues that the instrumentality of terms such as ‘research’ should be contrasted by observations of how the register of artefacts is used in the advancement of the field.”\footnote{Biggs. Abstract. Op. cit. p.1} Here terminology is crucial to following Biggs’s thesis as he defines meanings of such terms as “criteria” and “symptoms” in a Wittgensteinian sense and takes a specifically constructivist approach to the subject. He posits words as tools to “construe” meaning, as he says, “ex re”, that is, from the artefacts rather than as argumentum ex verbum that he infers is at the centre of the Arts and Humanities Research Board’s definition of research. “Criteria” (ex verbum) for research are those normative standards that can be shared, and thus become the rules that institutions use to assess the value of the research in question. “Symptoms” (ex re) are the implicit repository of research that the work of art displays. Words are used “instrumentally” — i.e. as an instrument, a tool — by criteria (the rules and regulations allow or prevent by stipulating conditions), but “symptoms” are, besides being “indicators that such conditions are being met”, do not operate instrumentally. Symptoms of artefacts “embody the thinking but fail to make explicit their knowledge and understanding.”\footnote{Ibid., p.116 in the original} For Biggs, the problem of Frayling’s “research-for” is overcome by Meaning is made with the artwork undoubtedly, but once again terminological changes contribute as much to obscurity as they do to clarity.
construing the artefact as a work of art, and therefore an “object of study and cited by researchers.”¹¹⁵ This subtle twist of construction appears to give the artefact in part-practice research a new lease of life as embodiment of knowledge, for as Biggs goes on to state, “(A) ‘work of’ systematically employs a method that results in a novel point-of-view. It deploys it rather than commentating on it. Thus it is embodied or deployed in the work rather than explicated by it.”¹¹⁶ (my emphasis.) This reaches out to the point where such embodiment of knowledge might actually be transferable within the community of those who understand and are sympathetic to the issues. Biggs, however, concedes that:

“(t)he legitimacy of claiming embodiment is not a claim of intention, but a claim of coherence, and whether this point-of-view can legitimately or coherently be explicated as being embodied or deployed in the “work-of” […] . Such a claim needs to be made explicit by “research-into” the “work-of”, and may be understood by the author of the work.”¹¹⁷ (my emphasis.)

What Biggs has achieved is a restoration of the importance of “symptoms” as a means to overcome the term “research-for art” that he sees as misleading and mismatching AHRC criteria. Even so, the issues of intentionality and the transference of knowledge are broached with a good deal of circumlocution. As has been seen in the last chapter, there are many problems that arise from seeking authorial intention, and this difficulty can be magnified further by appeals to hermeneutics and the common-sensibilities of associated communities.

¹¹⁵ Loc. cit
¹¹⁶ Loc. cit
¹¹⁷ Ibid., p.116 -117
In contrast, Lyons’s paper approaches Frayling’s categories with an added concern for where research takes place, reiterating the larger issue of whether to assess the artefact as art or as research. The location of the artefact is, she argues, especially within an art school context, likely to follow conventions of the display of art.

I suggest that the presumption that the art school is the appropriate context for all forms of practice-led research is a problematic one.118

This brings with it implicit notions about the quality of the artwork which is separate from the usefulness of the research.

(The) practice produced itself is not research. It is art. It does not contribute to the knowledge economy and as such cannot be built upon or added to as criteria for doctoral research demands.119

The standard of art school evaluation is to be found in the “crit”, where there are, “four main elements; Identity (what is it?), coherence (is the composition successful?), effectiveness (do the colours work well together?), and purpose (what is the student trying to do?).120 This is the model that assesses quality of the artefact through a defence of the work within the boundaries of the teacher/student relationship, rather than, as she would prefer, the researcher/supervisor relationship. Whilst Lyons maintains a concession to the practice element,

119 Ibid., p.2
as she continues, her scepticism of the role of art-as-such becomes more apparent as when, for example, she states that, “But in the case of some practice-led research, just because it looks like art doesn’t mean it is art.” And if this hasn’t entirely diminished art’s appropriateness, she goes on to add, “But if it looks like art, and then is presented in the same manner as art, then one shouldn’t be surprised if it falls into the trap of being judged within an art context.” Art’s insignificance is rendered complete as it evanescences into research:

The assumption that the PhD thesis is a test — because it doesn’t matter what it looks like — the artefact is a valid part of research and communicates new knowledge, it should not matter whether it is good or bad in these terms. What it does and how effectively it communicates information are far more important concerns than what it looks like. If the artefact is a valid part of research and communicates new knowledge, it should not matter whether it is good or bad in these terms. What it does and how effectively it communicates information are far more important concerns than what it looks like. Here is a double bind in that what is being described is practice as research and yet the practice as art-practice is being subsumed simply as research. It might just as easily be a case of disregarding the art based activity (which is surely the point of it all) and presenting “pure” research. Also, in this model of research, there is no practice as such; merely the illustration of (presumably, written) ideas. Whilst there is a need to reject the extreme implications of these assertions, there is agreement with the thesis that the location of the research-cum-art is crucial to its being (mis)understood.

In order to close this chapter, reference will be made to Professor Timothy Emlyn Jones’ paper “The PhD in Art and Design” which was given at a symposium entitled, “Monstrous Thinking: on Practice-Based Research”. Assuming that one knows what “pure” research is!

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121 Ibid., p.6
122 Ibid., p.6
Jones charts the development of the PhD by practice from its earliest inception to the 2000s. He refers to how Colin Painter, the former Principal of the Wimbledon School of Art won the argument with the Research Assessment Exercise over the inclusion of practical aspects of Art and Design into the research community. He broaches the thorny issue of the *embodiment* of research within the artefact and concludes that, “Alternatively, it might be possible to argue that an object, particularly in Fine Art does have such an active capacity, but such a case has yet to be argued and won.” Whilst he gives support to the idea that practice is a cognitive activity, he nevertheless concedes that “knowledge” for the PhD has to be communicated and assessed as such. What is “monstrous” in Jones’ contention is not that Art and Design is at odds with the whole notion of research as is understood by such bodies as the RAE, but that the qualification of PhD in practice based subjects is distorted if the *examination* process is identical to the ones used for essentially theoretical subjects.

In my view, it emerges that the PhD in Art and Design differs from PhDs in other subjects only in terms of the examination regime being adjusted for the inclusion of a portfolio. In other respects it is the same; a PhD is a PhD.

There is an approach to practice as research that takes “practice” as a “subject” for research. “Practice”, could be, and I suspect in most cases is a continuation of already existing developments that, as Peter Chapman

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The examination process continues on after the *viva voce* in the re-insertion of marginal glosses such as these. Such “margins” or frames behave as supplements to the body text but by inversion, they also *marginalize* the body text.

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*http://www.elia-artschools.org/_downloads/publications/EJHAE/Jones.doc* (accessed March 2009). It is quite useful to think of practice as research in terms of the “monster” in another sense of the word. Etymologically, it has roots in the Latin *monstare*, from which we obtain *demonstrate*. The meaning is “to show” which connects with *deixis* and the readymade which has been “pointed to” and “called” a work of art. Similarly, the original meaning of “theory” depended on a phenomenon being “shown” for speculation.

[Ibid., p.4 (download copy)]

[Ibid., p.8]
Rob Ward: The Hunting of the Duckrabit: In Pursuit of an Aesthetics of Knowledge. says, “(L)eads to a different sort of self-interrogation, thus the work, the artefact reflects this.” Such an approach is contingent upon interpretation of the artefact(s) presented and in so doing allegorizes its meaning. The “key” must therefore lie in the “theoretical exposition” that melds the two aspects into an integrated whole. Hermeneutical description has the burden of setting the “scene” of such practice — explaining what it is, in what context, in relation to past precedents. Of course this is true of any attempt to contextualize a work intended for submission for assessment. Jones regards it as essential that this integration is acknowledged when, quoting Andrew Harrison, he adds that, “the medium of communication (of knowledge) must ultimately be works themselves, not descriptions of them or assertions about them.”

Stable Communities and Institutions
This last section will look at the assumptions that art-based communities and institutions make in order to communicate meaning. It questions the stable ground of meaning that is allied to “common sense”, and aims to show that art practice and communication of meaning are mutually opposed such that there is always an undecidable quality that is as enriching as it is impossible to pin down. In his book, Why Art Cannot be Taught, James Elkins writes:

All criticism — and some would say, all discourse, including science — depends on “interpretive communities”. A group of people who think along the same lines form a “stable

interpretive community”, meaning they will be likely to agree among themselves.\textsuperscript{128}

Indeed, a “collectivist” reading of Wittgenstein would claim that meaning itself is generated through communities and it is this congruence that is called an institution. Wittgenstein’s famous “language games” are how meanings become proliferated by communities that “play” within the “rules”. The rules themselves (within a collectivist reading) are generated agreements as to what is acceptable and what is not possible to say and mean. Jonathan Culler takes this idea to task from a deconstructive point of view when he is reminded of Wittgenstein’s assertion, “one cannot say ‘bububu’ and mean ‘if it does not rain I shall go out for a walk.’”\textsuperscript{129} By asserting a limit of what is not possible, there opens up, by its very mention, that possibility, as Culler says, “(It) has, paradoxically, made it possible to do just that. Its denial establishes a connection that can be exploited.”\textsuperscript{130} Of course, it could be argued that this is just a switch of language games in that these are merely additional rules, but as Culler later points out, “Those who cite Wittgenstein are inclined to adduce the language game and its rules as a simple given. ‘But — it is just a fact,’ Wittgenstein is reported as saying, ‘that people have laid down such and such rules.’”\textsuperscript{131} Culler is making the deconstructive case for the impossibility of the logocentric “origin”, the “grounding” of meaning and the “presentness” of any statement to its intention. This is not in order to nihilistically abort the whole project of the philosophy of meaning (as this in itself would constitute such a “ground”), but is a recognition that at the very point of enunciation there is division; what Derrida

\textsuperscript{129} Culler, op. cit p.124
\textsuperscript{130} Loc. cit.
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., p.131. The quotation is from Wittgenstein: \textit{Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief}. Oxford Blackwell,1966. p.6n
describes variously as *Différance/Différence* an untranslatable homophone that can only be differentiated in the written form as “difference” and “deferral” and where its spoken sound carries the ambiguity. This division is what is enriching in its potential to “disseminate”.

If one is to envisage the institution as a stable community wherein what is being communicated is understood by all participants, there has to be a surplus of that which has to be consigned to the margins. That is to say, there is always an element of a stable structure that is capable of proving the exception and as such, the possibility of its destabilization. One such example in the artworld’s self-description might be the introduction of the *readymade*, whose ready-madness is simultaneously within and without the realms of aesthetics. Concerning the debates prompted by academic papers mentioned in this chapter there are palpable moves to reorientate academic understanding of research in art practice. All the arguments seek presentness to intention and as such are caught up in a game of reshuffling terminologies that seek to define for the sake of “common ground”. James Elkins devotes chapter five in *Why Art Cannot be Taught* to “critiques”, which could be seen as micro versions of the idea of communicating intentionality through artworks. In his summing up he describes “crits” as, “(U)nbelievably difficult to understand and rich with possibilities. All kinds of meanings, all forms of understandings, can be at issue.” He concludes with the admission that, “They just barely make sense — they are nearly totally irrational.”

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132 The choice of homophone is an interesting one as it *demonstrates* the idea it is attempting to explain; which is that the precedence of “speech” over “writing” (i.e. “presentness” to immediate thought and therefore *intention*) can be hierarchically inverted by the very medium itself: e.g. homophones, puns, etc. which Derrida deliberately brings into force.

133 Elkins, op. cit p.166
This chapter has tried to highlight attempts, both past and present, to make a case for art as: an extension of reason (Kant), communicable (Gadamer, et al.) and bearer of knowledge (current debates over practice as research). Each approach has been taken within the humanistic tradition where language and intention are seen to correspond. However, metaphors and other tropes pierce the writings that purport to envelope their ideas, threatening rupture. One of the uncanniest of these metaphors is the term “embodiment” that is used to show how knowledge somehow comes together in a work of art, somewhat like a golem or a Frankenstein monster. If one were to extend this idea, it might imply that “knowledge” is the soul or life force, and the art, the unruly part, is the body. It would follow, then, to express this Cartesian duality in hierarchical terms where soul/immortal/knowledge is superior to body/contingent/sensation. Such a description immediately invites an inversion where dependence is reversed. Apprehension takes over from comprehension, and though it agrees in the sense of, “to be conscious of by the senses: (and) to lay hold of by the intellect: to catch the meaning of: to understand; to recognize etc.,” it is appended by, “to look forward to, esp. with fear”.

Such a rhapsodic creature as the work-of-art-embodiment-of-knowledge is the monster created from a particular patchwork dream of reason. ...And yet this is precisely what this chapter aims to become by explaining the conditions that make it an embodiment of knowledge as a work of art.

The inclusion of “art practice as research” into the realms of the RAE is now no longer in question. Professor Jones is right in his assertion that, “Only once the doctorate is commonplace and doctors abundant in UK Art and Design schools will the development of...
higher education research culture within Art and Design education become mature."135 His opinion that it is within the ways that the institution of higher education deals with the assessment of submissions is also likely to be heeded, as an article in a recent issue of *Times Higher Education* seems to support.136 There is a peculiar kind of irony in the idea that as the world of “art at large” moves towards the spectacular, the commercial success, the cult of celebrity and chic; the “artworld” that Danto (et al.) valorised seems to have found sanctuary within the walls of academia. The move, in British art education, from the vocational arts and crafts to the academic university degree seems to have set the seal on such a project. Perhaps the implication is that “art as such” is in its rightful place here. The institution that fosters common sensibilities has become a teratological place.

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135 Jones, op. cit. p.4
136 Robin Hambleton, “Scholarship is multi-faceted, but the RAE is blind to its richness. Robin Hambleton argues that we need a new vision of academia to replace the myopia of the research assessment exercise.” *THE*.19/03/2009.
Illustrations

Fig.26 Damien Hirst, *Home Sweet Home*

Fig.27 Annotated page 36 from Graeme Sullivan’s book *Art Practice as Research* showing Natalie Jeremijenko’s *Tree Logic* of 1999. Six live trees, metal armature, stainless steel planters, and telephone poles. Photograph Douglas Barlow. Reproduced courtesy of MASS MoCA.

Fig.28 Annotated page 25 from Graeme Sullivan’s book *Art Practice as Research* showing Chakaia Booker’s *It’s So Hard to Be Green* 2000. 381 x 640 x 732cm. Rubber tyres and wood. Reproduced courtesy of the artist and Marlborough Gallery. Photograph by Nelson Tejada.
Chapter Three: Art as Autopoietic Research
(Uncanny Methodologies)
Art as Autopoietic Research (Uncanny Methodologies)

The term “autopoiesis” was originally coined by Chilean biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco J. Varela to describe biological systems such as the cell that contain the means of their own creation. They are characterized as closed systems. There is a compelling congruence between the self-rendering properties of such a system and the self-defining roles of social systems of which the institution of art is an example. This analogy is taken up by the social systems theorist Niklas Luhmann.

… that all subsystems employ the operational mode of the system as a whole, in this case communication, and that they are capable of fulfilling the conditions of system formation — namely, autopoiesis and operative closure — no matter how complex the emerging structures turn out to be.¹³⁷

Within the autopoietic system of institutions that make and define art Luhmann distinguishes between perception and communication, where the former is to do with inner sensation and the latter shared expression. Crudely put, these are seen as mutually exclusive. Communication is always a case of failure to realize perception.

What interests us here is merely that they help clarify how art functions as communication.

communication through art is not concerned with automating understanding.

Rather it is inherently ambiguous

In order to succeed as an understanding of communication, that is, in terms of understanding the difference between information and utterance perception requires the perception of perception. Psychologically, this means that the normal externalization of consciousness takes place. Rather than being suspended, it is modified by the questions "What do I see? Am I seeing correctly what I see?" This means that social communication is dealing with a self-generated difficulty of understanding to which open expectations concerning its meaning can attach themselves: "The... life of a poem is the way it performs itself through the difficulties it imposes upon itself". The artist must therefore observe his emerging work in anticipation of its observation by others. There is no way of knowing how others (which others?) will receive the work through their consciousness. But he will incorporate into the work ways of directing the expectations of others, and he will make an effort to surprise them. This is how, to borrow a phrase from antiquity; the work of art is created for the sake of astonishment. This is how it surprises with information about itself. This is how it unfolds the self-generated paradox of creating and disrupting illusion. And this is how it incorporates the blind spot — its own unity as unfolded paradox — that renders the work incomprehensible to whoever focuses on this spot. The artist might go astray in the process, projecting more into his work or less than others might be getting out of it. This is not the point, since it holds for every communication. Nor are we dealing with a teleological process that strives toward consensus or adequate understanding. This goal, too, may or may not be reached in any communication. What matters instead is the autopoietic organization of an activity that processes distinctions within the frame of self-generated uncertainties, independently of the desires, impressions, and feelings of those who participate in it. In other words, for communication to come about, it is irrelevant whether or not systems of consciousness are capable of figuring each other out.

(semiologists speak of polysémie)

independently of whether or not the divergence of observational possibilities was planned in the sense of an "open work." The fact that observers cannot agree on a single interpretation of a given artwork may even count as evidence of its artistic quality. This is an inevitable and often deliberately cultivated aspect of "differentiation."\textsuperscript{138}

Here then, lies the heart of the problem of art practice as research. The kind of communication associated with art is information about itself, and that information is communicated ambiguously is moreover a sign of its success.

While still working from within the framework established by the principle of imitation, early modern art moves away from merely copying what might as well be just perceived and toward imitating foundational (Platonic) ideas. Art renders accessible what is invisible without it. In the wake of this transformation, the social relationship between the artist and his audience becomes more problematic, provoking debates on the social status of an expert culture of connoisseurs and art critics in the eighteenth century and eventually leading not only to the realization that conversing about art is different from conversing about other objects, but also to the possibility of communicating through art." Is it conceivable that art, as a kind of "writing," builds a bridge between

\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., pp. 39 –40
perception and communication, that it compensates for the communication system’s inability to perceive? Or could it be that art discovers in this very lack a yet unoccupied field of possibilities in which it can unfold?  

Research that is also art practice is therefore not of the kind that seeks “external concordance”, but one that is itself a manifestation of autopoiesis, satisfying its own demands. This places a burden of justification upon the researcher and representatives of the providing institution in a way that goes against the grain of what has been said. For the end product of academic research is unlikely to succeed if it is ambiguous — unless, of course, that ambiguity is found to be a necessary outcome of rigorous testing of a hypothesis. Under the circumstances of practice-based research the testing would require methodological approaches that would seem strangely out of place in the scientific sense. Indeed, the very term “methodology” seems to fade in and out of focus, momentarily graspable in itself but chimerical when seen in an art context. One could ask: what would a work of art look like if it really were research — and what would a piece of research “read” like if it really were an art work?

Then, what is it about the art of today that makes it especially amenable to research? The author believes that this situation that has arisen within the academic community could only have been possible with the appearance of the readymade. It is with an ironical gesture that the readymade, as an object outside of art, has caused art to become “about itself”, that is to say, a closed system. Whilst art prior to the emergence of the readymade was (discounting overtly social or political 

Of course art can be research. E.g., a sketchbook can be research for a more resolved piece of work. However, art and research are used here in opposition.

And indeed, the traditional academic sense

“looks like” — does appearance take precedence?

“Read like”, does literal understanding take place?

Whilst there are a number of “new” forms of the PhD by practice that make such statements seem almost passé, there may be a danger of missing the point that is the emphasis of text and image as mutually exclusive.

See Foucault, This is not a Pipe.

139 Ibid., pp.17 - 18
intentions) also self-referential, it was the readymade's capacity to question the ontological status of art that gave it a novel if threatening role. Joseph Kosuth (Fig.29) expands the Duchampian paradigm:

And there is certainly an 'art condition' to art preceding Duchamp, but its other functions or reasons-to-be are so pronounced that its ability to function clearly as art limits its art condition so drastically that it's only minimally art. In no mechanistic sense is there a connection between philosophy's 'ending' and art's 'beginning', but I don't find this occurrence entirely coincidental. Though the same reasons may be responsible for both occurrences, the connection is made by me. I bring this all up to analyze art's function and subsequently its viability. And I do so to enable others to understand the reasoning of my art and, by extension, other artists', as well as to provide a clearer understanding of the term 'Conceptual art'.

This placed a nominal art in thrall to a theoretical exposition. Without the readymade aesthetics would have dominated discourse. As it stands the readymade's capacity to blur the distinction between reality and fiction has insinuated itself into thinking about art such that art itself requires self-definition. Luhmann states: "(W)orks of art must be distinguishable as such. Otherwise they are perceived as objects of utility or, more recently, as trash — or they are mistaken for sacred objects, instructional texts, and so on." He adds, "Observations of art occur only in the autopoietic

What Kind of Nonsense Is This?
Richard J. Scifani The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism Vol. 33, No. 4 (Summer, 1975), pp. 455-458

Though an "art condition" might have "existed" in some sense, it was assumed — and furthermore, assumed under a different name.

Cf. a post-modern form of pseudo-aesthetics now happens to arise out of attempts to promote artists from gallery "stables".
network of the art system.” This however can become the basis of a duality that is problematical when art is treated to the same requirements for academic standards of research.

The question arises: To what extent is the practice of art equivalent to the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge? To sum up the problem: If art within its system of self-definition is autopoietic — that is, it constantly re-creates itself — it insinuates an approach to methodology that is always on the move. Methodological procedures that are meant to stabilize approaches by consistent reference to formulations are, in the case of art practice, irresoluble. There will always be a “gap” between two types of cognition that entail ideation and manifestation that makes certain methodologies relevant in a provisional (deferred) sense — that is to say, they may be treated either separately, or fictionally. To strive for an all-encompassing methodology is like trying to stabilize the duck-rabbit riddle into one of its constituent parts. For the purposes of the research, the author will attempt inroads into this riddle with the help of examples that whilst they may be regarded as works of art are also projects for the sake of

opening up discourse. Conventional methodologies will be brought into being only as if they are being used in that particular context: that is, I take the fictional option. However, one should be aware that they are being used comparatively, in that, as fictions, they serve to draw out relationships of ideas. The projects themselves may be thought of as meta-projects in that they are subsumed under the Project called, *In Pursuit of an Aesthetics of Knowledge*. The Methodology (capital M) of the Project (capital P) is to take a philosophical stance from deconstruction, institutional theory, the later work of Wittgenstein; and the self-reflexive productions of Duchamp and Marcel Broodthaers. The institution requires the positioning of a Project and a Methodology (as opposed to meta-projects and meta-methodologies) but in doing so must acknowledge that Project and Methodology are both easily capable of slippage into their “meta” counterparts; something that the representatives of the University would claim has to be resisted so that sense may prevail. It is this “closure” that poses the greatest problem to the success of the PhD in that the autopoietic system to which the artefact belongs is immured from the autopoietic system of the academic institution\textsuperscript{142}. For the project to be recognized it will be crucial that there is a distinguishable form of reception, that is able to mark time, and, as in the case of “normal” academic research it will be clear as to what is being researched and what the theoretical underpinning is. It is the author’s intention to test the limits of this distinction by locating practice at the liminal conjunction of art and institution — a place that is fraught with bogies and the bogus! That there is a risk of incomprehensibility is acknowledged, but it is a risk analogical with autopoiesis itself, i.e., the act of creation.

\textsuperscript{142} This also calls into question why art institutions need to consider themselves as “academic”. If funding were not available, would there be a case for a different kind of art practice (by which I mean student practice)?
The Uncanny

In his 1919 essay “The Uncanny”, Freud takes great pains to define the term in an exhaustive way taking up most of the first part with dictionary definitions and literary quotations in order to get a sense of the innumerable nuances offered. Ostensibly, it is in order to surpass an earlier essay by Ernst Jentsch (On the Psychology of the Uncanny 1906) that Freud goes to so much trouble. However, the essay itself gets caught up in its own uncanniness in that it sets out to be a disengaged scientific enquiry that leads the author into contradiction and a compulsion to represent his innermost thoughts. Just as there appears to be some sort of closure on the subject, yet another instance seems to spring to mind, as he “finally” concedes:

On the whole, however, this illustrates the thesis that we have just advanced — that fiction affords possibilities for a sense of the uncanny that would not be available in real life. The foregoing remarks clearly do not exhaust the possibilities of authorial licence and the privileges that fiction enjoys in arousing and inhibiting a sense of the uncanny.\(^\text{143}\)

Nicholas Royle, in his uncannily titled double-take study The Uncanny,\(^\text{144}\) says that,

(t)he uncanny is never simply a question of statement, description or definition, but always engages a performative dimension, a maddening supplement, something

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\(^{143}\) Sigmund Freud The Uncanny (1919) republished as one of five essays in The Uncanny (Trans. David McLintock) Penguin Books 2003 p.157

\(^{144}\) Nicholas Royle: The Uncanny ch.1 “Literature, teaching, psychoanalysis”. Manchester and New York, 2003, Manchester University Press. p.16
unpredictable and *additionally strange* happening in and to what is being stated, described or defined. To quote Freud in another context: “an author’s words are deeds”. They are deeds, we might say, precisely to the extent that they can produce unpredictable and strange effects.

The uncanny, then, is not only subject but also the way that the subject is transmitted. Its transmission is effected by the modes of engagement, so that the usual source of transmission — for example, an author or maker — is not in control of the transmitted subject, but only of its transmission. Royle again states:

> Freud is storytelling in ways that make his essay irreducibly literary, touched and energized by the fictional. Towards the end he declares: `The uncanny as it is depicted in *literature*, in stories and imaginative productions, merits in truth a separate discussion’ (U, p. 372). Again, it becomes difficult to know how (seriously) to take him. Yes, he is right: in which case, why has he spent so much of his text focusing on literature? No, he is wrong: he has demonstrated very well that the question of literature, fictionality and `imaginative productions’ *cannot* be dissociated from any attempt (including his own) to elaborate a theory or critical account of the uncanny.”

Royle goes on to describe how Freud’s essay loses its grip on its subject as uncanny “voices” interrupt and comment on his attempt to produce a straightforward

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145 Ibid., p.18
Working through digressions, fictional insertions, autobiohanatonheterographical supplements and the subterranean passageways of so-called footnotes, we must try to reckon with the ways in which a text does not belong. There are mixings, deformations and transformations of genre. What is the uncanny? Does it belong to philosophy or literature or psychoanalysis? If it belongs, it is no longer a question of the uncanny. Rather, the uncanny calls for a different thinking of genre and text, and of the distinctions between the literary and non-literary, academic and nonacademic writing.

The uncanny (Das Unheimliche) has entered into research by the admission of art practice as its performative aspect. It is not the intention (by the author, nor one assumes, by the receiving institution) to settle the score by attempting to control this uncanniness, as Derrida says about his own writing:

It is less a question of … trying to master the Unheimliche or the uncanny so that it becomes simply the familiar, than it is of the opposite movement. But this is not to say that one has to turn oneself over, bound hand and foot, to the Unheimliche, because I don’t believe in that. In other words, I don’t believe in seeking out absolute risk, absolute nonreappropriation, alienation and madness for their own sake, and besides, I don’t want to have anything to

In discussing Freud we are led into discussion of how this inflects the text in the margins or, how one is the supplement of the other.

Such writing falls into the margins — is marginalized because it deflects — it reiterates and it “returns” and repeats the main body of the text.

146 Loc. cit.

do with that. I’m too afraid of it. [What I have been] trying to do [is] work out a kind of economy with the means at hand, an economy that would not be one of a maniacal and self-centred autotranslation … [I have been trying to work with texts as] things that don’t come down to me or come back to me. A text, I believe, does not come back … One regulates an economy with one’s texts, with other subjects, with one’s family, children, desire.147

“Economy” is here used in its etymological sense of “law” (nomos) of the “house” (oikos) and as a counter-balance to the Unheimliche (un-homely). It would appear that this “domestic science’s” methodologies are to be “cooked to order”.

So, not a(n) (auto)biographical text but a “being” between the two texts that abrade each other – their resistance to each other forms the economy of the text.

As an attempt to answer their earlier question, “How can we carry out rigorous and respectable inquiry using methodologies and methods appropriate to practice –

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research without wearing a lab coat and safety
goggles?\textsuperscript{148}, Gray and Malins state:

From an analysis of previous and ongoing
research degrees in Art and Design a series of
characteristics emerge which help to define
research, in terms of ontology, epistemology
and methodology.

With regard to the “knowable”, the kinds
of projects that have been tackled seem to
embrace both positivist and constructivist
research ontologies. Exploring “what’s out
there” in an externalist “realist” sense –
especially in relation to technological issues.\textsuperscript{149}

They then go on to cite an example of PhD research
concerned with the development of kinetic sculpture
using solar power. This, merely judging by the title of
the thesis, seems to avoid the issue of “practice as
research” as it separates out into two distinct activities.
Firstly it is concerned with “technology” (and an aspect
which has surely been well documented), and secondly,
it treats something called “kinetic sculpture” as if it were
a commodity requiring upgrading. Practice, one would
assume, being “kinetic sculpture” and research, “solar
power technology”. This should properly be called
“research-becoming-practice” as it would appear that
once the technicalities have been solved there would
then be scope for further developments in some form of
kinetic sculpture. What the research does not address
(again, I have only the title to go on so it will serve as an
example) is whether “kinetic sculpture” is itself viable
practice given its not altogether comfortable nexus in
the1960s multiplicity of artistic genres. Kosuth was

\textsuperscript{148} Carol Gray and Julian Malins: \textit{Visualizing Research: A Guide to the Research Process in Art and Design}
Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004 p18
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid., p.20

This has similarities with the
issue broached by Lucy Lyons
on p. 87 where even an
“outmoded” form might merit
serious research. This might
extend \textit{in extremis} such that, “it
do\textsuperscript{t}n\textsuperscript{t} really matter what is
researched so long as the
research is “good”. See also
B.\textit{Readings on the empty
category of “Excellence”}
adamant that the “art condition” does not “reside” in particular morphologies, but rather in process:

One begins to realize that art's 'art condition' is a conceptual state. That the language forms which the artist frames his propositions in are often 'private' codes or languages is an inevitable outcome of art's freedom from morphological constrictions; and it follows from this that one has to be familiar with contemporary art to appreciate it and understand it. Likewise one understands why the 'man on the street' is intolerant to artistic art and always demands art in a traditional 'language'. (And one understands why formalist art 'sells like hot cakes'.) Only in painting and sculpture did the artists all speak the same language. What is called 'Novelty Art' by the formalists is often the attempt to find new languages, although a new language doesn't necessarily mean the framing of new propositions: e.g. most kinetic and electronic art.¹⁵⁰

Here, at least, there should be clarity about what is meant by practice as research, and it is not surprising that there should be so much discussion around its possibility within already existing frameworks. It is not the author’s intention to make any such separation; however, what will be required by the institution will be some form of justifiable clarity that may be regarded as methodologically transparent. It is to this challenge that the whole research project is aimed i.e. to show through methodologies that pertain to practice as research.

At the outset of this chapter I suggested that it was the arrival on the art scene of the readymade that made the idea of "research" into art practice possible. The readymade, like the atomic bomb, cannot be uninvented. We are stuck with it and its consequences. It does not negate other practices in art and design, even conventional ones, but it does alter the paradigm of reception. What is uncanny about the readymade is its dubious provenance. It is both art and non-art and it allows for the intrusion of other hitherto undesirable (from a medium-specific point of view) aspects such as written text — calling for extra-aesthetic considerations. The autopoietic recusance of the readymade can infiltrate like a virus: it can admit any thing, any situation, and any consequence to "be" a work of art. More insidiously, perhaps, is the converse: that all morphologies have now to be regarded in the light of the readymade. What I mean by this is that since the grand narrative of modernism has run its course, there can be no simple "return" to painting, drawing or sculpture, as authentically these were predicated on past historical conditions. To attempt to retrieve or revive these conditions would be like the Victorian infatuation with mediaeval chivalry and associated Gothic phantasmagoria. If one is not to fall victim to overweening sentimentiality one has to accept this state

151 I diverge from Kosuth in that I suspect he lays his argument(s) open to the criticism that they rely on conventional (i.e. conventionally "modernist") notions of an entity called "art condition" as if this preceded and exceeded morphology. My own view is that there can be any kind of morphology, and that it is the reception (where receiver includes the maker) that creates a "condition" that can be called art.

152 See, for instance, how pre-modernist "genres" gave way to painting "as such", and post readymade painting became "objects as such". Even painting that tries to "return" to some kind of content or formal concern can only do so in a bracketed way, i.e., institutionally regarded in a bracketed way. In his paper "Critical objects: the practice of research through making" in Working Papers in Art and Design 3 Chris Smith (2004) states: "There may of course be a problem in the universalised Duchampian object in so far as it makes a claim that only operates through metaphorical space and context. There is also a problem in so far as it has come to stand for a range of contemporary practices. Whatever, the Duchampian paradigm has created a space where context becomes everything, whether this is the gallery or the textual placing. It has taken from its work the inner complexity of the work. The work stands merely for the other." (http://www.herts.ac.uk/artdes/research/papers/wpades/vol3/csfull.html) (accessed December 2006)

of play. After the convergence of minimalist modernism with Duchampian Objecthood (say, with the instance of Judd’s work [Fig.30]) in the 60s, Morphological forms of art were set to become representations of their former selves and have since become closely related to the readymade in that they map onto themselves their ostensible identities.

When I paint a “landscape” …

Fig.30

Landslapes are landscapes of landscapes — not of “land”. The term “landscape” is already written over — already a palimpsest.

Judd’s work as a terminaton of painting rather than an extension of sculpture: i.e. the three-dimensional Specific Object as a reductive form beyond the flat optical space of the traditional canvas surface into the physical space occupied by its present-ness.


Arthur Danto’s chapter on “Representational Properties and Mind / Body Identity” in The Body / Body Problem cites examples of paintings that map “reality” onto themselves such as Jasper Johns’ Targets, Flags and Maps — they are both painterly representations and the actual forms of the things represented. Even a painting of a painting whose edges are congruent with each other form two co-incidental works:

...Even when the coincidence has been achieved, so that the vehicle of representation indeed has the properties of the thing represented, the former is of the latter and the distinction would remain, granting that it would now be easy to confuse and difficult to recognize the differences between (say) a
square of painted white canvas and a square white painting of a square.\textsuperscript{153}

When Picasso collaged newspaper into an image representing a café table with a newspaper on it the newspaper occupied this strange ambiguous condition of being \textit{actual} newspaper and \textit{representational of itself as} newspaper (Fig.31).

The readymade is the special case in which the artwork is \textit{coincidental} with itself — that is to say; there is no morphological trace of a medium as it is mediated only by the art context. It could be said that the readymade \textit{and} subsequent art morphologies become \textit{meta-forms} for the reason that they are fictions in a location already occupied — the readymade in space, and the painting or sculpture in history.

Accepting that art practice can disseminate polymorphous representations (and the latter half of the twentieth century gives plenty of corroboration for this), it places a great burden upon hermeneutical exposition. Whilst the rest of the humanities may retain a vestige of tradition that is assessable, despite modernist tendencies to such reductive forms as aleatoric

performance, they have not suffered the fate that the readymade has brought to art practice. The areas of literature and music have associated disciplines, whereas art has even lost, despite attempts to resurrect, its morphological exegeses in painting or sculpture. What is residual is that which ontologically opens itself up to interrogation and interpretation. It is this emphasis on hermeneutics that I maintain makes it especially conducive to research. It is the fact that the hermeneutical processes that run parallel with praxis can themselves be called practice that intrigues me to the extent that I sense it is the core of the difficulty associated with trying to impose inappropriate methodologies on a morphological amoeba. If “interpretation” is itself in question, then it becomes clear that any sense of “using” a methodology as if it were a specialized “tool” would suggest expediency through amnesia, forgetting for convenience’s sake, the caveat and presumptuously proceeding as if history had stood still. I believe that the problem of appropriate methodology stems from the confusion of usage. Wittgenstein’s assertion that meaning is socially defined and that usage is its appropriate condition, works very well for social interactions that have a longstanding or traditional (or cultural) milieu such as an aesthetic approach to works of art. The conditions that obtain post-readymade have severed this milieu where, “what is art?” replaces “what is art about?” It is the lack of recognition of this severance that has led to the confused use of terminology of pre-readymade (i.e. Kantian) aesthetics to (Duchampian) deixic pronouncements (i.e. that this thing pointed at, declared, is a work of art!). To talk or write about anything as if it were a work of art now seems possible to the extent that the writing and talking have become autopoietic conditions within the work of art being expounded: in
Derridian terms, they frame the conditions and are themselves framed.

What happens when one entitles a “work of art”? What is the topos of the title? Does it take place (and where?) in relation to the work? On the edge? Over the edge? On the internal border? In an overboard that is re-marked and reapplied, by invagination, within, between the presumed center and the circumference? Or between that which is framed and that which is framing in the frame? Does the topos of the title, like that of a cartouche, command the "work" from the discursive and juridical instance of an hors d’oeuvre, a place outside the work, from the exergue of a more or less directly definitional statement, and even if the definition operates in the manner of a performative? Or else does the title play inside the space of the “work,” inscribing the legend, with its definitional pretension, in an ensemble that it no longer commands and which constitutes it—the title—as a localized effect?\

The object and its associated discourse are also a kind of test — a tried and tested test, but also one that may still be applied with re-invented vigour, testing both the validity of the proposed work and the parameters of the institution to which it is addressed. As Thierry de Duve says of the implications of Duchamp’s proto-readymade, Fountain:

Was Duchamp’s urinal a joke or a test? Or was it both? Jokes and tests certainly

abound in the history of modern art, and they're usually the two sides of one and the same coin. Every futurist prank, dadaist hoax, expressionist farce, or surrealist pun that history has recorded was a way of scoffing at some authority whose liberalism, open-mindedness or resistance to ridicule it put to a test.\textsuperscript{155}

Commentators desperate to uphold art practice to the test of academia agonize over the problem of whether practical methodological approaches to knowledge are sustainable. Stephen Scrivener's attempts to bypass such hard-line definitions of "knowledge" (a litmus test some would say) when applied to art practice seem to get caught up in arguments about justifying what artists do as an alternative (what he describes as "apprehensions"). It is my contention that the "art" he describes is of the pre-readymade, (pre)modernist ethos of being concerned with, "deep insights into emotion, human nature and relationships, and our place in the World, etc"\textsuperscript{156}. However, almost in passing, and as a defensive rearguard response, he admits to the possibility that, "If someone set their mind to it, I’d guess that they could communicate knowledge together with justification pictorially (my italics) (it is another matter whether it would be regarded as art)"\textsuperscript{157}. It is the assumed "pictorialness" that betrays the concern to uphold (at least) modernist values, and in the last parentheses, doubt over this phenomenon's inclusion into the art world is a phrase reminiscent of early twentieth century bourgeois outrage against the


\textsuperscript{157} Ibid., pp. 9-10
avant-garde. My point being this: perhaps there is a kind of art that does directly address knowledge; perhaps this is the only kind of art that can do so, but can only do so by metamorphosing into an interventionist, site specific form of parasitism — or rather, “negotiated symbiosis”, where “art”, “practice”, “institution” and “knowledge” are all part of a discourse on knowledge, institutions, practice and art.

**Interview (Mumbo and Jumbo)**

I suspect it is apposite to try to place some of these ideas into perspective taking, for example, one of the projects undertaken so far, eliciting methodologies both within and without the framework of its making. Let us consider the project called *Interview – Mumbo and Jumbo* (August 2006, [Fig.32]). This consisted of setting up two portfolios on a table, each containing ten sheets of hand made paper. In one of the portfolios the paper had screen printed text of questions and in the other were appropriate answers to those questions. The project took the form of the artist and an “interviewer” taking it in turns to speak the words from each portfolio. The project was described beforehand with the “intention” of the project explained, citing the content of the question and answer sheets. The “event” was photographed in black and white and submitted as part of the end of year research report to LUSAD.

Fig.32
Now, all of this seems pretty straightforward until one begins to question what exactly was taking place. There may be a reaction based on suspicion (the "Emperor’s New Clothes reaction). For instance, one is right to suspect certain “red herrings” here: for example, how do we know that the “interview” actually took place? Or, is there something suspicious about why “still” photography was used to record the process of an interview — and why black and white? Did the “event” qua event take place at all? These reactions are fairly common kinds of response to “obscure work”.

The accompanying text “explaining” the “intentions” of the event follow the usual track of “clarifying” what has come to be one of the many intractable examples of (post) modern art. Are these helpful in any way? Or, are we now used to the idea that certain artists subvert the whole encounter where the frame of the art space violates gallery space, and systems of information are parodied. Is Interview a hoax or a demonstration of its own redundancy as the recording of an artwork — a joke, or a test? Interview could be explained as an interview, or as an artifice mimicking the process by which artists (and particularly student candidates) “pass the test” of inclusion. Interview could stand for something else — a metaphor, for example, for dialogue between two people that is prescribed implying latency of options. Even if all of these suspicions and interpretations were true, what would be the response, given that meaning would be modified; given that this new layer of explanation that we are now working through is taking place? Does it matter if the event Interview did not take place at all? Because, within the context of methodological approaches, it is serving exactly the purpose that other works of art-practice can be found to be doing: that is, being the subject of analysis and discourse. It serves the purpose of inclusion herein — this particular piece of

Once the shaggy-dog story is mentioned, there arises a suspicion about everything presented as sincere!
The canard!
The canard/lapin!


At what point do we get “purchase” on authenticity – if at all?

Or, is awareness of the blague an initiation and another kind of methodological enquiry

Interpreting the locus of interpretation.
text describing, implying (or fictionalizing) an event. However, unlike other practices offered for the purpose of research, Interview opens up the process of interpretation; a process that examines not only the intentional veracity of the “work”, but also assumptions and guiding language of this work that is about the work. What may have been seen to encompass an external event has embedded itself in this text such that the page with its lure of an image and quasi-speculation about its content show an approach to (re)new methodological approaches that seem to fall between representations. It may be thought that the approaches I am taking are both critical and relative, relating to constructivist theory as expounded by Glasersfeld. In Guba’s Paradigms of enquiry this implies that Methodology (capital M) will take the form of Dialogic and Transformative (critique of [mis]appropriation and altering approaches to how practical work can be regarded as research), and Hermeneutic (possibilities for interpreting meaning) and Dialectic (discourse that generates credible constructs). This terminology will suffice as a separator of processes generating more complex interactions, for instance “dialectic” implies thesis, antithesis and synthesis, a philosophical procedure that, whilst satisfying the logic of educational objectives, ought to acquiesce to what Deleuze and Guattari\textsuperscript{158} would characterize as the analogy of the rhizome (i.e. undifferentiated, unhierarchical)

Uncanny Return of the Work – (Re)Beginnings

These last paragraphs have changed tone. From the voice of “the author” of the first paragraph, there is now an “I”, an authorial first person. In much art historical

and theoretical discourse the voice is one of “we”: we are travelling together down this unknown dusty road and “one” of us knows where (s)he is going.
A proposal has been made that offers up the readymade as the quintessence of a paradigm shift in the form of a short essay with illustrations. The essay might read quite reasonably as an argument for the inclusion of any object or circumstance as a work of art — something corroborated in the twentieth century — which threatens value and meaning unless disciplined by context. The rules of the institution become that context, and in the case of research by part practice it is the University and the funding body that decides what the rules consist of and how they are to be implemented. Yet if the “real” situation of twentieth century and early twenty-first century art practice is acknowledged, it should be made clear that the practice of “naming” is legitimate which will eventually find itself voiced in the question: “Under what conditions is the work called a work of art and under what conditions is it called research?” An answer may require a reciprocal antonomasia. The context is made by the art that is made by the context. The short essay is itself a work defining context within context. Although it is composed of words with some illustrations, it need not be regarded as literary. It may be thought of as a fragment of a catalogue of the work of so and so. If worked up into something more “glossy” it may stand alone as an example of art practice. Context (“thought of as a fragment”, “glossy”) changes apprehension.
Nicholas Royle’s Book, The Uncanny unearths the spectrality of Freud’s 1919 essay of the same title (Das Unheimliche) in which he finds a pervasive influence disturbing the familiarity of apprehension into apparition. The “double” (Doppelganger), the “return” and repetition, the change and interchange of “names” are fearfully characteristic of the uncanny. They disturb by their irresolvable ambiguity; alive and dead at the same time.
There is also a kind of dismemberment in operation …” says Royle:

Jeremy Bentham, Utilitarian philosopher and author of “the greatest happiness principle”. His head and skeleton, after dissection, were acquired in 1850 by the University College. The skeleton was stuffed with hay, dressed in his clothes and put on show as an Auto-icon.

See also Marcel Broodthaers: Interview with Jeremy Bentham in his film, Figures of Wax 1974

Fig.33

The uncanny figure of Jeremy Bentham on display at University College London

“that recalls Freud’s remark about
[d]ismembered limbs, a severed head, a hand cut off at the wrist [and] feet which dance by themselves': all these have something uncanny about them’. If the University is a body, it is strangely headless, estranged and disconnected from itself. Directives come from the phantom of ‘the centre’ – and here we might recall Derrida’s provoking contention that the centre, as ‘the absence of play and difference’, is ‘another name for death’.

To return to the living, to use Derrida’s analogy would be to “play” – to de-centre, to live on the “edge”, but also, to “limit” oneself. The automaton’s methodologies are to be mirrored in order to displace them. Such approaches may be thought of in methodological terms as “testing” the limits of the frame. Work that has so far been produced has exposed one common strategy: intangibility. Here there is a connection with

159 Nicholas Royle: The Uncanny ch.1 “Literature, teaching, psychoanalysis”. Manchester and New York, 2003 Manchester University Press. p.54
Broodthaers in that *visibility* holds in abeyance text, texture, touch and tangibility. In one sense it is ironically analogous to all institutionalized exhibition where artworks are present and distant due to protocols of spectatorship and the fragile (and expensive) nature of the objects displayed. The “frame” as such is literally the gilded frame (or absence) around the painting, its form, its shape that addresses by connotation and denotation, the plinth (or absence) upon which the sculpture is situated; it is the gallery’s ambience; it is the title (even untitled) and the “interpretation” often located on a plaque alongside the work. Also, it is “what the spectator brings to the work”. Even accepting these contingencies, the “work” that is framed allows the spectator to engage. Work that debars the spectator by yet another frame – be it literally a barrier, or a contradictory mode of reception, an encasement or a non sequitur of a route map is a different matter. Its refractoriness leads to a kind of “no space” where spectator “grasps” through seeing work-and-frame. His or her *embodiment* is irresolutely situated simultaneously inside and outside of this monstrous hybrid. This chapter may be regarded as one such place where the lure to its encounter is via reading. Its self-reflexive, self-referential strategy is to split into two, where “reading” and “looking” are its modes of counterchange. As lure it is “bait”, etymologically, derived from “an invitation” (even here there is an implicit ambiguity in its sinister and homely etymological nuances!) It is the *lemma*, the point of entry, the “given”:

But since it is necessary, in fact, to begin
"lemmatically, so to speak" (*sozusagen lemmatisch*) by anticipation or precipitation of the circllet, Hegel recognizes that his point of departure is vulgar, and its
philosophical justification insufficient. He will have begun by the "representation" 
(\textit{Vorstellung}) of art and of the beautiful for the "common consciousness"
(\textit{imgewohnlichen Bewusstsein}). The price to be paid may seem very heavy: it will be 
said for example that the whole aesthetics develops, explicates, and lays out the representations of naive 
consciousness.\textsuperscript{160}

We are dealing with the blind spot where writing “about” loses its subject and becomes writing “for”— a performative function. The thing “becoming-what-it-is” has two beginnings that overlap, that map each onto the other. Then the question might be asked:

But how to begin without having begun, since one needs a distinction in order to begin?"
And must not the distinction itself be distinguished from its indication so that the first distinction reenters itself. In the older literature, this problem was treated in quasi-objectivist terms: by appealing to divine inspiration, to the inscrutability of sudden insights, or to the fortune of chance" — all of which obscured the issue. …

… Only an observer can run into paradox and be forced to admit that paradox is always presupposed — in mathematical and even more so in logical operations — as the blind spot that makes distinction, and thus observation, possible in the first place."\textsuperscript{161}

\textsuperscript{161} Luhmann, Op. cit.. pp. 31 – 32
It is nevertheless a knowledge of “figure and ground” that allows the distinction between “a square of painted white canvas and a square white painting of a square” — even if that ground cannot be seen. The knowledge of its possibility supposes the awareness of its existence. What seems an odd proposition is that the observer, (observing/assessing institutional representative) has to create a fiction which is cover for that blind spot in order to find a grounding where two identities coincide? This is anticipated by the maker. That there are such things as beginnings is difficult to apprehend. Heidegger writes about being thrown into the world, and before (spatially in front of) a paradox there is only a sense of “before” (temporally never after, that is, never resolved). What then can be asked of research that distinguishes it from art practice? Is this not the reverse of the burning question that tries to connect the two? Imagine a doctoral thesis (as research) and another thesis (as art practice) — one may be called the anti-thesis of the other. In what way will they differ? Would it be content or form that would disturb the ground, exposing the tectonic plates of either intention, or, could the deferral of that pronouncement be continued indefinitely? Here is tricky terrain that the maker has inadvertently wandered into because if he succeeds in the latter he will quite reasonably fail the requirements of the institution, and if he rescinds the deferral he has failed on his own terms. The maker has become enmeshed in his own paradox!

Should they differ? However, institutional definition makes the difference.

At this point the thesis has become the economy. It is the reconciled abode where the prodigality of the art system finds resolution within the institution.

Does this, then, not reflect on the institutional values (of something that is chimerical)?
(Re)openings and Disinterment

In his chapter “Conceptual Art and the Suppression of the Beholder”[^162], Charles Harrison makes out a case for Art & Language that is different from the conceptual art surrounding it in the late 60s and early 70s. Conceptual art, he has it, was yet another Modernist twist in the tale of Minimalism that was itself (although in self-denial) a twisted form of reductive Abstraction. That twisted form of Literalism dubbed “Objecthood” was different from Abstract painting in that it was not addressed to the spectator as an optical experience — that is, it was not to be beheld.

A(n) …assumption was that works of art are things made primarily to be looked at — or ‘beheld’, to use a term given special currency by Michael Fried. If that seems a truism, we should note that not all possibly canonical works of modern art are necessarily seen as fulfilling the description. The ready-mades of Marcel Duchamp, for instance, were used in the later 1960s and have been used since as examples of a form of art which — whatever its merits or inadequacies — was not addressed to the beholder.[^163]

Harrison goes on to suggest that the form of modernist critique — its compelling if specious American form elicited by Greenberg and Fried — “was such as to contain the reader within the terms of its argument. You either attended to the optical qualities and the syntax of


[^163]: Ibid., p.33
the works at issue, or you were disqualified from discussing them." Minimalist work at that time was often on the cusp of being regarded as either an extension of the modernist aesthetic of criticizing its own discipline ("not to subvert it " but "to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence") or, as an example of "theatricality" — disqualified because of its Literalism. For instance, when it came to decisions about

which camp Frank Stella’s paintings (Fig.34) fell into. Fried and Carl Andre were “fighting for his soul” such was the importance given to the high ground of avant-gardism — that is to say, a continuation of Modernism. When Harrison later introduces the forms of conceptual art that have derived from "a cluster of ‘post-Minimal' forms”, he cites Sol Le Wit’s (Fig.35) declaration in “Sentences on Conceptual Art”.

Ideas alone can be works of art; they are in a chain of development that may eventually find some form. All ideas need not be made physical.

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164 Ibid., p.35
166 Charles Harrison, Op. cit.. p.44
And

Since no form is intrinsically superior to another, the artist may use any form, from an expression of words (written or spoken) to physical reality, equally.\textsuperscript{167}

It was these forms, seen in the light of reductive Modernism, that confined them to what Dan Flavin said of art, “(S)hedding its vaunted mystery for a common sense of keenly realized decoration … (we are) pressing downward towards no art — a mutual sense of psychologically indifferent decoration — a neutral pleasure of seeing known to everyone”\textsuperscript{168} It is at this point in the essay that Harrison makes his case for the different approach taken up by Art & Language (Fig.36).

He sees the critique of modern art — entrenched rather in a cultural hegemony that has found great advantage in continuing a debate in which the beholder is marginalized into what Richard Wollheim calls “the

\textsuperscript{167} Ibid., p.47 originally in \textit{Art-Language}, vol.1, no.1 (May 1969), pp.11 - 12
\textsuperscript{168} Ibid., p.49 with endnote Quoted by Lucy Lippard in her introduction to \textit{Minimal Art} (catalogue of an exhibition at the Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, 23 March – 26 May 1968, p29
adequately sensitive, adequately informed, spectator¹⁶⁹.

…for the discourse of the beholder is a literary discourse. It constructs retrospective historical accounts, forms of interpretation and systems of evaluation, and it constructs them as kinds of allegories which develop in a time and a space adjacent to practice but separated from it. The mechanisms which animate these allegories, and which give them their systematicness and their autonomy, are those forms of power and interest which define and sustain the beholder’s non-aesthetic existence. The forms of reference to the aesthetic which are the apparent functions of the allegories serve and express these powers and interests even as they mask and misrepresent them. The ‘adequately sensitive, adequately informed, spectator’ historicizes, interprets and judges in the aesthetic realm, and does so securely so long as he is allowed to be disinterested; that is to say, as the material (and other) grounds of that adequacy are not laid open to inquiry.¹⁷⁰

What Harrison is proposing here, which is relevant to this chapter and to the Project as a whole, is that the American interpretation of post-Minimal conceptualism was further evidence of a kind of professionalism vis-à-vis the gallery institution and those forms of commercialized myth-making, whereas (and if the legacy of Modernism in some sense emancipating)

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p.50 quoted from Richard Wollheim Painting as an Art. Thames and Hudson London 1987 p.22
¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p.55
there are grounds for an art practice that disturbs its
own foundations as it builds upon them. Whilst this is
hardly a reassuring allegory from an architectural
standpoint, it emphasises the kind of nomadic un-
homing that finds its rationale through *didactic*
strategies.

Bill Readings describes the ideals of the Humboldtian
University (that has been the model for our modern
“cultural” university) as having “communicative
*transparency*” (his italics):

> For the German Idealists, this transparency
> allows the fusion of ethnic community and
> absolute idea. The fusion takes place at
> multiple levels. Pedagogically, Fichte refers to
teaching as the self-unveiling of the students
to the professors and of the professors to the
students. Self-unveiling has nothing to do with
classroom nudity but with a dialogue that is
supposed to fuse the teachers and the
students into a single corporate body with “a
common spiritual existence … in which they
have learned early on to know each other in
depth and to respect each other, where all
their reflections take off from a base which is
identically known by all and which provides no
matter for dispute among them.” This is the
community of the University, the endless
dialogue of which Humboldt and
Schleiermacher speak. It is a community
whose dialogue is about nothing, in the sense
that no issues for dispute are engaged. There
are no differends, no radical and
incommensurable differences, only arguments

Analogy with
Eagleton’s criticism of
Gadameran
hermeneutics

The uncanny aspect
of language that
urges on the
meanings that we are
made of

Dialogue for the pleasure
of speaking and listening

See chapter four
“Thesis” for an
exposition in the
modern university
I feel that we are now in a position to pull some of these ideas together in order to foreground the main purpose. It seems to me that there is much in common between the dialogues between the artist and Harrison’s (and indeed Wollheim’s) “adequately sensitive, adequately informed, spectator”, and the “dialogues about nothing” between the professors and their students in the University of Culture described by Readings. Both participate in “already givens”; the cultural respect that marks the boundary of hegemonic tolerance. Whilst the term “respect” can have negative connotations of reserve, of leaving well alone, it can also fall back on its etymological meaning of “regarding”, of “looking back”, and therefore “re-viewing”. The kind of reviewing I am suggesting is not dependent on “sensitivity to” or “knowledge of” the autopoietic system that is art theory and practice, but rather it is a speculation about the conditions that operate ontologically when an educational Institution admits a form of critique that is outside of its anticipated curriculum morphology. This is not to naively assume that the Institution will accept defeat – it will, of course, make its own mind up about “quality” and accept the work submitted either for a pass or a fail. However, I might suggest that by doing so, it will be acting in a way very similar to the commercial appropriation of avant-garde stances. Not only will there be no shock value, but that very intended shock value is already anticipated as commercial (or educational) surplus value.

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It is Readings’s intention to show how the idea of a University of Culture that once preserved the identity of ethnicity and nationhood has developed in a high capitalist, globalized era into a University of Excellence. The consequences of this are that as there is no longer any belief in a myth of grounded culture, all manifestations of cultural activity are provisional and valueless per se and are given token accountability in the term “Excellence”. Excellence, then, is a bureaucratized form of intention. It has no immanent subject or purpose besides promoting itself. In this model of the institution, there is neither purpose in “unveiling”, nor in dialogue extirpating the roots of intention. If the rules set down by the Institution are obeyed – or rather accounted for — then work submitted may qualify for the approbation that goes under the name of Excellence.

At this point it would be useful to return to the problem of the practice that set out to test the rules of this institution and to embed the test within the practice itself. The problem for the practitioner as candidate was that any unresolved confusion of the theory and practice would be deemed unacceptable by the institution, and that resolved presentation would fail the test of its own parameters which are necessarily ambiguous. The Institution as authority can, of course, make decisions without compunction. After all, it has its objectives and outcomes clearly stated. Yet, if the University is modelled either on culture or on Excellence — that is, either concerned with dialogue or with accountancy — it ought to engage in the process of engagement, even if that engagement confounds the process. In so doing it would find itself caught up in a similar conundrum to that which faces the practitioner. Legitimately, it needs to fail the candidate, and yet the conditions for successful
completion are all present and correct.\textsuperscript{172} The question that the representative of the institution might wish to ask is: “is the practice to be beheld, or does it mean to ‘take hold of’? Does it contain value, or does it evaluate?” What I am imagining is new kind of engagement here that consists of practitioner and institution in \textit{creating} conditions within the scope of each one’s “failure” to resolve their roles — to dig out a place of habitation from the ruins as Bill Readings suggests:

\begin{quote}
Like the atomic bomb and the readymade, we cannot uninvent — cannot restore a ruin.
\end{quote}

Does it \textit{describe} or does it \textit{perform}? Practice on a fictional stage — see p. 136

\textit{(T)he present model is in its twilight, and I do not think we can continue to make redemptive claims for the role of the University of Culture, be that culture humanistic, scientific, or sociological. Rather than offering new pious dreams of salvation, a new unifying idea, or a new meaning for the University, I will call for an institutional pragmatism. This pragmatism recognizes that thought begins where we are and does away with alibis. By thinking without alibis, I mean ceasing to justify our practices in the name of an idea from "elsewhere," an idea that would release us from responsibility for our immediate actions.}\textsuperscript{173}

In this chapter I have tried to prepare the ground for a legitimate practice that is ostensibly an extension of Modernist art practice but extends interpretations towards a particularly interventionist set of acts. These practices come from the acknowledgement of the readymade as a protean form whose only measure is that it exists within the autopoietic self-definition of art.

\textsuperscript{172} Of course there may be other reasons for ‘failure’ besides the conditions given here. The hypothetical situation given is to show possible consequences if these were the only conditions.

\textsuperscript{173} Ibid., p.129
Examples of practice that derived from the readymade reappeared in the late 1950s and 1960s as a response to reductive tendencies of the American exegesis of Modernism. However, much of what was considered as a break with norms of authorization and spectatorship could be seen as yet more reductionism through Minimalism to the “specific object” and then the “concept”. What this led to was a form of connoisseurship where work was positioned, often ambivalently within or against the gallery. However, the form of conceptual art expounded by Harrison and Art & Language was such that its “form” was critique itself and was thus more conducive to actions and teaching in that it opened up to critique the assumptions that characterized the beholder as part of the aggrandizing narrative of art. The practice that I am expounding is therefore along these lines where “beholder” takes the form of representative of the Institution, or, a personified Institution. The work to be entered is therefore positioned according to assumptions made about practice as discreet from research in such a way that those assumptions are themselves called into question. Whilst there has to be a discreet “originator” and “participant”, it will not be clear which aspect of the practice belongs to which — a situation that can not be resolved by either party. This is the point. It has to become negotiated critique where initiating practice is itself deferred for the sake of a mobile set of conditions.

Of tolerance ——
What are the parameters within particular institutions?
Perhaps this is the implication intended here.
Cf. Terry Atkinson, Ken Hay and Leeds University students (Leeds 13) concept piece billed in the press as: “Con Artists’ Spanish Rip Off” (May 1998). This consisted of students acquiring funds for an exhibition in Spain which was then reported to have been spent on a holiday on the Costa del Sol with an empty exhibition space as a result. The students had in fact faked the Spanish holiday and had stayed on the east coast of Yorkshire.

Are we not also privileging “speech” over “writing” say, in the viva voce?

Greenbergian “flatness” — abstraction reduced to (non-Greenbergian) Objecthood of the physical form. Nevertheless, part of that same logic is that extended into the non-material

This institution that offers the PhD as a personified stereotypical institution.

The viva voce that elicits these comments after - words

Illustrations

Fig.29 Joseph Kosuth, Titled (Art as Idea as Idea). Photographed typographic text mounted on board. 120 x 120 cm 1967 Whitney Museum of American Art.

Fig.30 Donald Judd, Untitled (Stack) 1967. Lacquer on galvanized iron, Twelve units, each 23 x 101.5 x 78.8 cm, MOMA.

Fig.31 Pablo Picasso, Bottle of Vieux Marc, Glass, Guitar and Newspaper 1913. Collage and pen and ink on paper on blue paper support: 46.7 x 62.5 cm Tate Modern.

Fig.32 Rob Ward, Mumbo & Jumbo. Interview with Two Portfolios. Photograph of installation/performance with Simon Gomes at Doncaster College Church View 2006. Dimensions variable.

Fig.33 Effigy of Jeremy Bentham constructed around his actual skeleton. Photo by Michael Reeve: Jeremy Bentham's "Auto-Icon" at University College London. Licensed by author under GNU Free Documentation License.

Fig.34 Frank Stella, Hyena Stomp, 1962. Oil on canvas 196 x 196 cm Tate Modern London.

Fig.35 Sol LeWitt, Wall Drawing #146. All two-part combinations of blue arcs from corners and sides and blue straight, not straight and broken lines. September 1972 Blue crayon: dimensions vary with installation. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

Fig.36 Art & Language Index 01 Documenta 1972. Eight file cabinets, texts, Photostats. Dimensions variable. Collection Alesco, AG, Zurich.
Chapter Four: Thesis

Fig.37 Pipe
Thesis
This is a work of Art

Antithesis
This is not a work of Art

A phrase, even the most ordinary one, is constituted according to a set of rules (its regimen). There are a number of phrase regimens: reasoning, knowing, describing, recounting, questioning, showing, ordering, etc. Phrases from heterogeneous regimes cannot be translated from one into the other. They can be linked one onto the other in accordance with an end fixed by a genre of discourse. For example, dialogue links an ostentation (showing) or a definition (describing) onto a question; at stake in it is the two parties coming to an agreement about the sense of a referent. Genres of discourse supply rules for linking together heterogeneous phrases, rules that are proper for attaining certain goals: to know, to teach, to be just, to seduce, to justify, to evaluate, to rouse emotion, to oversee. . . . There is no “language” in general, except as the object of an Idea.  

The Language of the Institution of the University
In chapters two and three references were made to Bill Readings’ book: The University in Ruins. Readings’ thesis is that the raison d’être of the modern University has radically shifted from its inception as a cultural inculcator to a self-referential role, having no appreciable requirement other than to deliver ‘excellence’. The University of Culture in the Humbolditian sense referred to

the values of the state and to the culture of a people. It was designed to effect Bildung — the forming of a wholly rounded character who would be able to participate in the continuation of those cultural values. Circumstances that led to the disaffection and disillusionment with such values culminated in the widespread protests within universities during 1968. Globalization, as opposed to the interests of particular cultural and social hegemonies, has meant that the language of institutions has had to reform in the interests of plurality and relativity. The Institution of the University is a case in point where the grounding of its ethos lies within its own authoritative capacity. The University may thus be seen as a self-referential institution and ‘excellence’ is its substitute for grounding in authenticity. This is made particularly manifest in the teaching and studying of art.

The demise of avant-garde narratives has left the teaching studio in a state of relativism where the language of teaching art has become less specific to art as such but rather an extension of the language of the institution. In his paper entitled Fictions of the Studio, Mike Belshaw explains the parallel conditions of vacuity of both “excellence” and the indexical nature of (post-readymade) art. He draws upon Howard Singerman’s Art Subjects: Making Artists in the American University which in turn derives its notion of indexicality from Rosalind Krauss (Notes on the Index). It is argued that the indexical sign is ‘empty’ in that it constantly requires assertions of its identity as art. Whilst this may specifically refer to the readymade, I maintain that in the post-historical narratives of studio pedagogy and

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176 Mike Belshaw, Fictions of the Studio. Paper given at The Association of Art Historians’ Conference. 2008 (Unpublished)
179 Consider the mandatory labels beside artworks.
corresponding sites of display, indexicality is appropriately applied to art practice. The language that attempts to fill these empty spaces has necessarily become fictional, allegorizing dialogues between the author(ity) of the institution and the candidate for inclusion. The reference to authorship is one that Belshaw uses in relation to literary studies where there is a notion of ‘implied’ author. This is distinct from (and confused with) the identity of the one who has written the text. Under circumstances of fictional authorship there is no question of authenticity, sincerity or seriousness in the author according to the literary theorist Wayne Booth. The consequences for a dialogue of this nature within the context of the institution of art education are profound and initially pessimistic, as Belshaw states:

...(T)he university, in order to function, must take the student’s account of his or her own work as candid, authentic and transparent — and we can recall here Booth’s doubts about the “sincere” and “serious” author. Some assumptions must underwrite the teacher’s record of a student’s progress. To put the same point in reverse, if the student is thought to be acting a role and treating the crit as the work itself, then the teacher has no credible institutional purchase on it. The language becomes opaque. 180

However, it is only by understanding this lack of purchase that a self-conscious awareness of the dialogue with its tropes of declaration is revealed, as he goes on to say:

What the fiction of the teaching studio can reveal is the nature of the narrative sketched out above. That is to say, when obscured, the procedures of

180 Ibid., p.3
teaching are assumed to be natural, given as the inevitable order of things. But bringing them to light does not necessarily institute a different kind of pedagogy; rather it shows a given reality to be staged in a certain way. This would amount to a kind of institutional critique — a mode of intervention that has in the past almost exclusively belonged to the museum.\textsuperscript{181}

Here there is a sense of\textit{ unveiling}; but what is unveiled is not the Fichtean “dialogue that is supposed to fuse the teachers and the students into a single corporate body”\textsuperscript{182} but a \textit{fictional} stage upon which ‘characters’ present allegories of roles satisfying the rules and conventions of the Institution. Readings describes how a dialogue of\textit{ dissensus} can continue within the emptiness of the ruin that was once grounded in authenticity and autonomy. Taking his cue from Lyotard’s \textit{The Differend} he states:

\begin{quote}
\ldots

What prevents a fusion between teachers and students and makes teaching interminable (structurally incomplete) is that the network of obligation extends to all four poles of the pragmatic, linguistic situation: the sender, the addressee, the referent and the signification. The referent of teaching, that to which it points, is the name of Thought. Let me stress that this is not a quasi-religious dedication. I say “name” and I capitalize “Thought” not in order to indicate a mystical transcendence but in order to avoid the confusion of the referent with any one signification. The name of Thought precisely is a name in that it has no intrinsic meaning. In this sense, it is like excellence.\textsuperscript{183}
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{181} Ibid., p. 4
\item \textsuperscript{182} Readings (1996), op. cit. p.122
\item \textsuperscript{183} Ibid., p.159
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Although the above concerns appear to affect mainly undergraduate or possibly post-graduate levels in that terminology such as “teaching” seems appropriate, it should be recognized that this could be thought of as marginal in the case of art and design education. As Elkins would corroborate:\(^{184}\):

First, we don’t know how we teach art, and so we cannot claim to teach it or to know what teaching might be like. This may sound odd …— … but it’s my experience that studio instruction teachers and students accept some informal version of it.

The assertion is made to distance “teaching” from a traditionally held idea of the autonomy of the *magister*, as Readings describes it, and replace it with the dialogics of the *rhetor*. This relationship is more in keeping with the roles of supervisor and examiner, ostensibly occupying roles of “colleague”. Nevertheless, it is incumbent upon them to address the candidate in the language of the institution. Whilst the persons who occupy these roles are possibly practitioners of fictional diegetics and are sympathetic to the value of these particular language games, they nevertheless, *at some point* have to assume that the candidate’s authenticity is inevitably a requirement. However, a mode of communication may arise that acknowledges the fiction in order to preserve the antagonist’s integrity. Lyotard cites Wittgenstein’s language games to emphasize the agonistic nature of communication:

\[(E)\text{very utterance should be thought of as a 'move' in the game.}\]

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This last observation brings us to the first principle underlying our method as a whole: to speak is to fight, in the sense of playing, and speech acts fall within the domain of general agonistics. This does not necessarily mean that one plays in order to win. A move can be made for sheer pleasure of its invention: what else is involved in the labour of language harassment undertaken by popular speech and by literature? Great joy is had in the endless invention of turns of phrase, of words and meanings, the process behind the evolution of language on the level of parole.  

I have argued in previous chapters that the significance of the enunciative paradigm in relation to declaring art to be art was the point of no return which superficially may lead to eschatological speculations as to art’s end. I have also argued for this position to become one that is most likely to succeed within parasitic (or, more acceptably symbiotic) situations that are site-specifically interrogatory. Thus the indexicality of such practice, which, like the ‘name of Thought’, has no intrinsic meaning other than to keep open the terms of its engagement. This is the Thesis that is herein described, and this is the thesis that describes what lies herein.

Consensus and Dissensus: Assessing art practice as research within the post-historical university.

It is sometimes mistakenly presumed that one may autonomously make judgements from a modernist (or pre-modernist) standpoint of work that engages with postmodern situations such as those intimated at above (one could think of the inauthentic student’s response to a “crit” as the work). Whilst the term post-modern is here

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intended to imply a scission, such interventionist practice may be still interpreted as a continuation of avant-gardist narratives of dissent — be they formalist or pragmatic. Leaving the formalist argument to one side, it is more relevant to discuss pragmatic narratives that impinge both on art practice and its situation within education, particularly at the level of “academic research”. It is at this point that the aporia of consideration of each one’s claim to precedence becomes manifest. What is placed at the disposal of the University is subject to its regulations and would normally consist of a thesis and a product of practice; these representing the theory that underpins a manifestation that cannot “explain” itself. What may elicit alarm might not so much be that the practical manifestation cannot speak for itself but that the thesis, whilst conforming to the requirements for a successful PhD. also determines its own indeterminateness. This indeterminateness is like the Name of Thought in that it represents a horizon of possibility and is central to the idea of a dialogical justification of (doing justice to) its value. Readings’ proposition of the dialogue between institutional representative and student/candidate can be seen to substantiate the same implications.

(W)hat is drawn out is the aporetic nature of this differend as to what the name of Thought might mean: the necessity and impossibility that it should be discussed, despite the absence of a univocal or common language in which that discussion could occur. Thought is, in this sense, an empty transcendence, not one that can be worshipped and believed in, but one that throws those who participate in pedagogy back into a reflection upon the ungroundedness of their situation: …

Pragmatics of making art...
Pragmatics of education that makes some “thing” happen.

Pragmatics of dialogue

This University

...
By drawing attention to the thesis as possible art work the thesis as theoretical grounding is “ungrounded”. As a comprehensive argument for its status with academic respectability, the thesis qua thesis relinquishes its “art” condition except insofar as it is in “Name”. It may be relevant at this point to examine what might be the nature of the content of a thesis declared as a work of art. In structural terms it becomes meta-content; and as such constructs an internal dynamic that in turn reciprocates the forces at work in the rhetoric of the academic thesis. In its simplest terms, it has to keep up with what is being said; it has to search again in order to connect with its alter-ego. The onus thus falls on the candidate to make the work look like a thesis and be a work of art; or conversely, look like a work of art and be a thesis. This latter denotation is most likely to satisfy academic requirements, yet it poses a strange condition of “looking like” something that relies on revelation as its modus operandi. There is perhaps, a suspicion of something disingenuous in the sleight of hand that would have been recognized by Plato in his objections to simulacra. How would one recognize something that “looks like” what it is? What is the “what it is” in these circumstances? In the case of the work of art looking like a thesis, surely this is a requirement for competence. In other words: can the candidate display his philosophical competence as an artist?

This issue is elaborated upon by Fiona Candlin when she writes:

Precisely because the demarcation between specialist areas is so closely tied to judgements of competence and the attribution of authority, it is unsurprising that people feel anxious when


What does a “Thesis” look like – considering the now acceptable variety of forms?

Compeence – i.e. a spin off – a supplement to the frame/re-frame of oscillating self-description

* look like a stereotypical thesis. Re-cognized as a thesis –as a thesis “looks like” – that sets the visual against the verbal – a veritable straw man who nevertheless serves the purpose for this opposition
Projects like practice-based PhDs cross boundaries.\footnote{187} She goes on to add that, “Significantly, the practice based PhD has involved a shift in the institutional arbitration of competence”, and that it is, “a shift in the way that the art object is legitimated as such.”\footnote{188} Legitimation in this sense is to do with the identification of the network through which practice operates, as she continues:

It is not, therefore, the subjects or material that the practice-based PhD works with that potentially make it awkward, because art can unproblematically incorporate academic material (emphasis added), rather, the difficulty arises from the change in networks through which the artwork is recognised.\footnote{189}

Candlin’s assertion is crucial to the methodology adopted by this thesis which is to declare hermeneutical description redundant — a point that has been missed in much practice-as-research literature.\footnote{190} However, in this particular instance, the network changes in which the artwork operates are the work’s ontological condition and as such are produced in order to present difficulty within the networks of the institution. Candlin’s illustration highlights this aporia:

If authority is linked to specifically located and defined areas then it is clear that someone who is differently situated, who employs different processes, norms and frames of judgement, \textit{will}

\footnote{187 Fiona Candlin (2000), “A Proper Anxiety? Practice-based PhDs and academic unease” Working papers in art and design 1. http://www.herts.ac.uk/artdes/research/papers/wpades/vol1candlin2html (accessed May 2008) p.2} \footnote{188 Ibid., p.3} \footnote{189 Ibid., p.3} \footnote{190 I refer to commentators (Sullivan, Scrivener et al.) who regard the “practice” element as unproblematic ontologically and thus “see through” its apparent transparency towards subject matter, material and meaning — “what it is about”.

But this stereotypical thesis displays the ambiguity – the irretrievable nature of two modes of reception – that bedevils reconciliation...
not have the same claim to authority (emphasis added). For example, I may know as much about law as a Queen’s Council but without institutional recognition will not be able to practice as such. An artist could potentially make the same statement as an academic, but like the legal statements uttered by a layman, without the recognised position of an academic, it would lack value and status as an academically legitimate pronouncement. This is not to say that the declarations artists make do not have any status, but that they are constituted differently and have force in different areas. ¹⁹¹

Under the “baptismal” conditions of a work of art that is under discussion, it could be concluded that the “right” to call something a work of art strictly depends on the calling of an artist “an artist”, that is to say that (s)he has passed the test of the institution of art (anyone simply calling a chair a work of art lacks any wider significance and purchase). Here, then, is a two way test of competence: one which asks whether a non-professional’s judgement is appropriately applied; and another which questions the meaningfulness of judgement per se. Each competence question only stands in chance resolution within the institution that it is situated. Lyotard, writes in the “Preface: Reading Dossier” to The Differend:

As distinguished from a litigation, a differend [differend] would be a case of conflict, between (at least) two parties, that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of a rule of judgement applicable to both arguments. One side’s legitimacy does not imply the other’s lack of legitimacy. However, applying a single rule of

¹⁹¹ Ibid., p.3
judgement to both in order to settle their
differend as though it were merely litigation
would wrong (at least) one of them (and both of
them if neither side admits this rule).192

This is not a Thesis
In his lengthy essay *This is not a Pipe*, Michel Foucault attempts several ways that the Magritte painting can be interpreted. In chapter two he describes the work as “The Unraveled (sic) Calligram”. Whilst the painting is ostensibly “an image” it is nevertheless “writing”, not merely containing writing. The demonstrative pronoun “This” constructs multi-layered edifices of senses such that:

‘this’(the drawing, whose form you doubtless recognize ...) ‘is not’ (is not substantially bound to. . ., is not constituted by. . .does not cover the same material as. . .) ‘a pipe’ (that is, this word from your language, made up of pronounceable sounds that translate the letters you are reading).193

![Diagram 1]

But “This” can also be read as:

![Diagram 2]

192 Lyotard (1988), op. cit. p.xi
193 Michel Foucault Trans. and Ed. J. Harkness, *This is Not a Pipe*. Berkeley and Los Angeles California. University of California Press. 1983 p.26 the illustrations are from the same pp. 26 - 28
‘This’ (the statement arranging itself beneath your eyes in a line of discontinuous elements, of which this is both the signifier and the first word) ‘is not’ (could neither equal nor substitute for . . . , could not adequately represent . . . ) ‘a pipe’ (one of the objects whose possible renderings can be seen above the text — interchangeable, anonymous, inaccessible to any name).\footnote{Ibid., p.27}

The “calligraphic play” that is “hovering over the ensemble’s background” renders it as:

‘This’ (this ensemble constituted by a written pipe and a drawn text) ‘is not’ (is incompatible with) ‘a pipe’ (this mixed element springing at once from discourse and the image, whose ambiguous being the verbal and visual play of the calligram wants to evoke).\footnote{Ibid., p.27} (Fig.38)

The calligram’s shock effect is not so much to do with it being a “word-picture” but that the version “bursts apart” when one converts from seeing to reading and vice versa. Foucault eloquently describes the profundity of the effect when he concludes that the calligram, “aspires playfully to efface the oldest oppositions of our alphabetical civilization: to show and to name; to shape and to say; to reproduce and to articulate; to imitate and to signify; to
Look and to read.”¹⁹⁶ Later on in chapter three (Klee, Kandinsky, Magritte), Foucault reiterates the opposition when he says, “What is essential is that verbal signs and visual representations are never given at once. An order always hierarchizes them, running from figure to discourse or from discourse to the figure.”¹⁹⁷ This appears to create a disturbance similar to that of the duck/rabbit in that the latter is a switch between imagery, whereas the calligram is a switch between hierarchies of representation. This thesis that is congruent with itself as artwork has become such a calligram.

**Monsters**

In chapter two (Art as Common Sense), Professor Timothy Emlyn Jones referred to the PhD as “monstrous”, and it is germane to consider this term in relation to the idea of work that de-monstrates (i.e. shows) and explains itself. Duchamp’s deixical gesture pointing at and declaring an object to be “art” is monstrous in this

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., p.21
¹⁹⁷ Ibid., p.33
etymological sense. The notion of the “embodiment” of knowledge in the practical outcome has more than a hint of Freud’s uncanny “living” cadavers. This thesis is equally entitled to be considered as a monster for each of these reasons, but also in another sense of its typographic form.

It is not merely coincidental that the structure of a book makes reference to the human body. There is, of course, the “spine” of the book, but also descriptions of page layout and typographic text refer to what Ellen Lupton and J. Abbot Miller refer to as the “Body of the Book”. Citing Derrida’s consideration of material speech, they state, “But what if one were to see writing as an extension of the body, no different in essence from an artificial limb or a contact lens?” They go on to add:

There is another way in which writing extends the body: it is a physical by-product, a material trace of human activity. Unlike speech, writing leaves behind a physical mark. As the end-product of the so-called “thought process”, writing thus resembles excrement. It is also akin to hair, finger nails, and the surface of skin — each is a part of the body that is continually regenerated yet biologically dead, detachable, disposable. Writing is like blood, sweat, semen, saliva, and other substances that the body periodically produces and eliminates.

They then proceed to define terms common to typographical and physiological usage that constitutes a “body”. First, there is the “head” defined as:

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199 Loc. cit.
Then the “body” is included as:

1. The organized physical substance of an animal or plant, whether living or dead.
2. The dead organism: CORPSE.
3. The trunk of a person or a tree, as distinct from its head, limbs, branches, or roots.
4. The main part of a literary work: TEXT.

They go on to describe how, figuratively speaking, the two aspects of the visceral and the textual relate:

In the language of typography, we refer to the body of a work as its “main part”, its central, substantial core. When we refer to the “body” of a person, we invoke a division between inside and outside: body and soul, body and mind. Similarly, the typographic term “body” suggests division between inside and outside, between that which properly belongs to a text and the secondary limbs attached to it: glosses, footnotes, heads and subheads, figures and appendices.

These last described accessories are parerga, that is, they are “around” rather than “contained” within the “work” (frames, being a prime example of this). But, as Derrida explains, “A parergon comes against, beside, and in addition to the ergon, the work done [fait], the fact [le
fait], the work, but it does not fall to one side, it touches and cooperates within the operation, from a certain outside. Neither simply outside nor simply inside. Lupton and Abbot Miller continue:

One of the Graphic designer’s tasks is to articulate visually the differences between these secondary elements and the “body” of the text. But do such limbs remain safely “outside” the text? Instead we could see these seemingly detachable, external parts as internal organs, life-support systems fundamental to the shape of meaning. As an extension of the text, an element such as a gloss, footnote, figure, or appendix is an integral part of the body, opening up the skin of the text, turning it inside out.

Glosses are particularly important to this thesis in that they incorporate many voices other than those of the author, and may, by definition, contain “a false and often wilfully misleading interpretation”. They include the author’s own commentary as well as notes taken during discussion with supervisors and at yearly reviews showing a consistency in the project that is the PhD by practice. All of these voices, and more, are “embodied” in the text. Lupton and Abbot Miller sum this up when they add:

Whereas the “body” of a text is typically assigned to a single author, notes, glosses, figures, and appendices are organs for importing material from the outside, for exchanging discourse with other documents. Such organs nourish, impregnate, and sometimes deface, infect, the internal body.

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The rhetoric of typography ensures a double encounter with the physical page with its thread of linear sense and counterpoint of voice made noticeable by the use of fonts and spacing. A parallel motion of forward movement in the body text with that of interruption or expansion enables and at the same time frustrates a single cohesive formula. The language of the institution and the language of the artwork that seeks to parasitize institutional language run side by side. The work is at once authentic and ironic, dealing with a fiction and its theoretical underpinning. It tells the truth, and fictionalizes it! However, no amount of self-confession is going to make Epimenides of Knossos a trustworthy companion—even when he is being sincere. The thesis as antithesis has entrapped itself so that it is unable to extricate itself from its own paradox.

**Structure of The Book**

The thesis is constructed symmetrically such that the introduction mirrors the conclusion, chapter one (Studio) mirrors chapter four (Thesis) as both manifestations of a studio and a thesis are in keeping with the duality described in each form. The inner chapters (two: Art as Common Sense: Canny Ideologies, and three: Art as Autopoietic Research: Canny Methodologies) engage with the philosophical underpinning of this particular approach and examine a substantial amount of current literature on the subject of the doctorate in fine art practice. The narrative that carries the argument runs linearly through the centre of each page where occasional significant illustrations are sometimes placed. The left and right-hand columns are spaces for marginal questions and critique and are often synonymous with the “voice” of the institution, sometimes transcribed from

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202 This refers to the “liar” paradox. If the Cretan Epimenides says all Cretans are liars, he is both telling the truth and lying at the same time.
actual discussion and written criticism of the thesis as it has progressed and been tested by supervisors and others. Sometimes a column holds yet another voice “external” to the main thesis that adds commentary and responds to the voice(s) in the opposite column. Thus, there is a hierarchical structure imposed that typographically prejudices certain aspects of the text. However, there is scope to read across the page and down-up where footnotes are brought into the text. Here, then, is the Thesis as thesis speaking of itself and including elements of its own making (becoming what it is). This is a continuing process that potentially has no ultimate resolution — except for the one negotiated between the institution and myself. Lastly, there is the “look” of the text/image/page/book as a whole (Fig 39).

Fig 39

Interment of the body of the text
When Marcel Broodthaers signalled the moment that he was to become a “visual” artist, he did so by encasing the remaindered copies of his literary oeuvre in plaster of Paris, adding a rubber ball and entitling the result as Pense-Bête (Fig.40) — idiomatically translatable as “a
remind" the verbal equivalent of a knot in a handkerchief.\textsuperscript{203}

“Stupid, like a painter”

By trapping the books of poems in this way, he transformed literary texts into three-dimensional “sculpture. Embedding one kind of communication in another that cancels out the original was a strategy often used by Broodthaers, as in his overworking of Mallarmé’s \textit{Un coup de dés jamais n’abolira le hasard – POÈME}. (In Broodthaers’ version the title changes to \textit{Un coup de dés jamais n’abolira le hasard – IMAGE.}) (Fig.41)

\footnote{In her doctoral thesis \textit{Marcel Broodthaers: Strategy and Dialogue}, (PhD Thesis, Trinity College, University of Oxford 1998) Deborah Schultz says, “In 1963 Broodthaers published his second volume of bestiaries which he titled \textit{Pense-Bête}. Once again there is more than one meaning to this phrase. \textit{Pense-Bête} is used to mean a ‘memory aide’, like tying a knot in a handkerchief or a string around a finger. However, it translates literally as ‘Think Beast’ or ‘Think Stupid’. Considering the nature of the contents of the book, Broodthaers seems to have intended that the literal meaning should apply.” (pp. 22-23)}
This strategy of concealment is a *leitmotif* that may be found throughout this PhD practice including, *Exhibition, Artist’s Studio, No Entry, Malevich Archive, Mumbo and Jumbo*, and the *Thesis* itself — hidden under the cover of a *thesis*. Although the regulations pertaining to a successful submission of a PhD dictate that the work must be examined internally and externally and that copies are to be deposited for future reference, there is an inevitability — symbolically at least — that the body of the work should be impossible to extricate, to be literally a “double-bind”.

The “Double”

The coffined work necessarily has a “double” — in fact three identical siblings (three exam copies to be submitted according to university regulations.) However, the term “identical” should be received with caution. The whole concept of identity (*identicalness*) is fraught with difficulty. One could speak of the different substances used to make up the material consistency of paper, ink, board etc. of each printed thesis, but this would be description merely on the level of identical substantive *physical* properties and would reveal an obvious lack of identicalness. What is less clear and more difficult to distinguish is: if all the words, all the syntax, all the grammatical constructions, all the punctuation and all the illustrations and typographical arrangements were the same in each “copy”, would they be *identical*? After all, this is exactly the requirement of “copies to be submitted”. How is the identity of a “thing” to be assigned? Saul Kripke has this to say about objects:

> What I do deny is that a particular is nothing but a “bundle of qualities”, whatever that may mean. If a quality is an abstract object, a bundle of qualities

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204 Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*, Malden (USA), Blackwell Publishing 1981. p.52
is an object of an even higher degree of abstraction, not a particular. Philosophers have come to the opposite view through a false dilemma: they have asked, are these objects *behind* the bundle of qualities, or is the object *nothing but* the bundle? Neither is the case; this table is wooden, brown, in the room, etc. It has all these properties and is not a thing without properties, behind them; but it should not therefore be identified with the set, or “bundle”, of its properties, nor with the subset of its essential properties.

Identity in this sense, as a form of modal logic, is concerned with “all possible worlds” scenarios such that if something exists in our “world”, what conditions would make it “the same thing” under different world scenarios? Kripke adds:

Some properties of an object may be essential to it, in that it could not have failed to have them. But these properties are not used to identify the object in another possible world, for such an identification is not needed. Nor need the essential properties of an object be the properties used to identify it in the actual world, if indeed it is identified in the actual world by means of properties.\(^{205}\)

Of course the “copies” are in the same world as each other and “stand for” an “original” which, however, copies itself every time the word processor “saves” the document. The implication of Kripke’s argument that is counter intuitive is that description is not how we can be assured that we identify things. Contra Kripke, this way of thinking might argue that two things are identical if they

\(^{205}\) Ibid., p.53
are each described in the same way. “In the same way” would then have to mean *using exactly the same words, in the same order*. But even this wouldn’t solve the problem of two extremely similar, but “not quite the same” objects as there would be a slippage in the meaning of the words used to describe one or the other object. The question that is pertinent to the assessment of this thesis is, “Are the ‘copies’ of the thesis submitted for the attainment of the PhD *identical* — and therefore, truly *copies*?”

In 1973 Marcel Broodthaers published a book version of *A Voyage on the North Sea*. The format of the work was odd in many ways. The content consisted of images — mostly in colour, some in black and white — of a nineteenth century amateur painting of a sailing fishing boat photographed in various degrees of close-up. These were interspersed with black and white photographs of a modern day sailing boat. The second oddity is that the pages of the book are joined in pairs which Deborah Schultz highlights as a probable reference to Mallarmé:

In this text Broodthaers was evidently making reference to Mallarmé’s “Le Livre, instrument spiritual” (The Book: A Spiritual Instrument [1885]), in which Mallarmé wrote about the then common practice of publishing a book with the pages uncut. For Mallarmé this implied “an almost religious significance” — the folded pages, pure and uncut, containing the “mystery” of the book.

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206 Marcel Broodthaers, *A Voyage on the North Sea* London, Petersburg Press, 1973. Also published in France and Germany. There was also a film and a diapositive slide “version” of the same name that used the same material as found in the book.


The third puzzle concerning this book is to do with the only written content (see below). Inside the front cover is a written warning not to cut the pages. Inside the back cover is an almost identical, almost symmetrical version of the front cover. The text in the back end-paper varies from the front version in its admonition to:

…fling away that weapon, that dagger, which, swift as a miracle, might turn into a piece of office equipment.\(^{208}\)

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Given Broodthaers’ fascination with children’s books (instructional books, ABCs etc.), it is reasonable to suggest that these end-papers were in some way influenced by picture books that have similar beginnings and ends — where the same picture is repeated, or, where it is a puzzle of the “spot the difference” kind. Hector Obalk, writing about Duchamp’s obsession with the transformation of an object’s ontological status when it becomes a readymade writes:

And it is true that the very, very old philosophical questions about identity versus similarity, or about the existence of concepts versus the true singularity of individuals, must have been completely removed by the Industrial Age. Examples are very important in philosophy and the examples that the greatest philosophers — Duns Scotus, Plato, Occam, Hobbes, whoever — had in mind to discuss these matters could be faces, tables, pebbles or flowers. But all these objects, so similar, so similar could they be, remain very different to the naked eye.

The Thesis, then, will be submitted in the required number of copies. But, in order for this thesis to retain its adversarial stance vis-à-vis the institution one could imagine that a game, a puzzle, might similarly be inserted into it, that only by careful scrutiny of all “copies” could it be discovered. The mere suggestion of such a strategy might well be enough to cause suspicion — of the thesis as an artwork.

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Illustrations

Fig.37 Rob Ward, Charcoal drawing on canvas from installation: Exhibition, Artist’s Studio, No Entry. 102 x 81.5cm. LUSAD 2005

Fig.38 Plate 7 from Foucault’s book This is not a Pipe showing Apollinaire’s calligramatic poem, Fumées

Fig.39 Rob Ward, Blocked out text with footnotes. Word processed sheets A4.

Fig.40 Marcel Broodthaers, Le Pense-Bête. Books, plaster and rubber ball 98 x 84 x 43cm,. Collection Anne-Marie and Stéphane Rena

Fig.41 Marcel Broodthaers, Un coup de dés jamais n’abolira le hazard. IMAGE MOMA 12 13/16 x 9

Fig.42 Marcel Broodthaers, A Voyage on the North Sea 1973, Petersburg Press. Inside of front cover.

Fig.43 Inside of back cover

Fig.44 Rob Ward, Calligram of “Entire” Thesis.
Conclusions
Conclusions

Duchamp's Legacy
The well-known photograph taken by Alfred Stieglitz of Duchamp's Fountain (Fig.45) that was published in volume 2 of The Blind Man (1917) shows the notorious urinal on top of a plinth against a background of vaguely patterned shapes that may be a curtain, or as we now know, a painting entitled The Warriors (1913) by Marsden Hartley. Tied unceremoniously to the left attachment lug (the urinal is turned on its back) of the porcelain object is the entry ticket to the Independents' exhibition from which it was refused.

In chapter one, Studio, the actual studio represented a “thought experiment” offering up a repertoire of possible consequences. It would be interesting to conclude with a similar interrogation of the Duchamp through the Stieglitz photograph in order to demonstrate the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the language associated with the “frame”; with the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the language of the “readymade”.

Fig. 45
Fig 46
As mentioned before, *Fountain* is regarded as a *readymade* — that is, it is an artwork legitimated by the fact that it is in an “art” context. If so, then the *plinth* (as metonymic form of the gallery/art institution) represents such a context. However, the “plinth” as object could equally be seen to be readymade, bearing in mind that it is an object used for the purpose of presenting artworks. Therefore, *Fountain* and *Plinth* become a readymade (*not readymades*). If Bicycle Wheel of 1913 (Fig.46) is seen to consist of two parts — bicycle part and stool part — is there a possibility for Duchamp to declare one of those parts “art” and one “not art”? In this context, can there even be a discussion of “parts”? Is there such a thing as a *semi-readymade*?\(^{210}\) Duchamp regards such an entity as being so liminal as in the instance of *With Hidden Noise* (Fig.47):

![Fig.47](http://www.toutfait.com/issues/issue_2/Artiles/obalk.html)

Make a readymade with a box containing something unrecognizable by its sound and solder the box already done in the semi readymade of copper plates and ball of twine.\(^{211}\)

\(^{210}\) Of course such constructions are termed *assisted readymades* in that they have required some form of construction — however, the whole is to be regarded as an art object. The same applies to the inverse-readymade, for example using an “authentic” artwork (e.g. a Rembrandt) outside of an “art” context (e.g. as an ironing board).


The *semi-readymade* is the actual object and the "other half-readymade" is the statement of its coming into being, as Hector Obalk says:

You will notice that he calls a readymade the object which wouldn’t be recognizable by its sound. But he calls *semi readymade* the real object which could give a body to such a project. In other words: when you make known that you make a readymade, you make a semi-readymade — there is no other way. In both projects, the work is not a readymade, it is a handwritten note here, it is a “not readymade” sculpture there.²¹²

All of these declarations of legitimacy depend upon the framework imposed, and the framework as such depends on the legitimacy of the work as artwork. Take for instance, the entry ticket attached to the urinal. Could this also be included as readymade? If any of the many “replica” *Fountains* in art galleries had replica entry tickets attached, would this imply ready-madness, or, would such an item merely consign the object to the status of a “document of its time” befitting a museum rather than a place of artistic exhibition? If the logic of the readymade means that the plinth and the ticket are also included as readymade, they can also be seen as supporting material, outside of but integral to *Fountain*. They are its “frames”, but a reversal of the situation would be caused by seeing the “artwork” called *Fountain* framing the readymade objects called “plinth” and “entry ticket”. Also, in the Stieglitz photograph, the background pattern gives location, however vague — it is in a place and a time. Here is another *parergon*! — or, the photograph itself can be such a frame, as

²¹² Loc. cit
can the image in the issue of *The Blind Man*, or indeed, in the computer printout from an internet source that has found its way into this thesis. The more the proliferation of images of *Fountain*, the more it seems to become the frame for all that proceeds from it.

This thesis that is offered as the practice element of the PhD by part practice shows and makes a case for a readymade that is framed by the institutional context of the PhD and frames the “content” which is the framing of the object “Thesis” as readymade. As recognizable theoretical argument it makes its case for legitimacy. It alleges certain conditions that apply to itself and awaits legislation on its viability. However, given the consequences of the Duchampian thought experiment (which is ultimately what Duchamp is about) it is not a simple case of an “original” frame. In one sense there is no “opening”, only a tacit agreement on a point of entry. This is highlighted in the *Preface* to this thesis, and similarly, the implication is that there is no conclusion as conclusion. The conclusion that is reiterated *can only be re-reiterated* as the context falls into place offering novel perspectives on what is ostensibly the same issue.

The chapter entitled *Studio* proposed a situation that was irresolvable in terms of how it should be “seen” — as a “real, working, artist’s studio”, or, as an art work called *Studio*. Of course, the “artist” himself could be no nearer to deciding the correct solution to the issue as he was both actor acting the part of an artist and being an artist making the installation in the form of a studio. The installation “framed” the idea of a studio,

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which in turn “framed” an installation based on an artist’s studio. Reliant to a great extent upon visual codes, there appeared to be close affinities with the bistable figures in optical illusions such as the duckrabbit.

In Chapter Two, references were made to art practices that appeared to be relevant to research. The problem that arose from any of the wide ranging approaches was the one concerning the embodiment of knowledge. Two approaches seemed to offer possibilities. These were where the art practice “explained” itself — or, came close to doing so. The banality of the outcomes would in these instances eclipse the art object completely, making it virtually irrelevant to the written aspect. The second approach would valorise the art object, whose “outcome” would in some way become analogous with a scientific experiment — that is, it would be the demonstration or “proof” of a hypothesis. Again, the problem that returns is the one which attempts to extricate words from things, if words are to be the necessary medium of the kind of knowledge acceptable to the Arts and Humanities Research Council or the Research Assessment Exercise. In order to circumvent the problem, supporters of this approach resort to redefinition of knowledge using alternative terms for what is supposed to stand in its place, of which “apprehension” is the most apposite. Chapter two explains how both of these approaches, that start from a rational basis are doomed by either the “disappearance” of the subject (i.e. the art-work), or the merging of knowledge with “apprehension”. What had been ostensibly a rational way forward argued itself into the uncanny realms of tropes whose figurative language was in this sense most apt.
In chapter three the idea of an *uncanny* approach is explored through the notion of *autopoiesis* — the self-defining, self-reflexive quality of the closed system of the “institution of art” in all of its forms but especially art education in the university. This particular choice was made for the obvious reason that this thesis is itself subject to the pedagogical and bureaucratic logistics of the system as it is manifested in the UK. Within this chapter the tropes encountered in the previous one are exposed and given serious consideration as a way forward in the case for embodying knowledge within art practice. These two chapters frame each other in that each necessarily has to refer to the other if a (deferred) resolution is to be extracted for the purposes of justifying the thesis being submitted.

Chapter four is titled “Thesis” in order to demonstrate the work as a whole as a self-reflexive enterprise. Taking Lyotard’s *Differend* as a starting point, it begins with a discussion of how language is used through two opposing networks. This can be summarized by thinking of the thesis as research, or, as an art-work. As research, the language has to focus on authenticity to intention; it has to be seen to be logical, rational and ingenuous. As artwork, these qualities need not be the same, so that taking an extreme case, the language adopted can become ironic, playful and even disingenuous. However, as before, figures of speech, tropes such as metaphor invade even the most austere sentences making the “thread of logic” more vulnerable to charges of misunderstanding. Similarly, “irony” needs a sense of the authentic in order to gain purchase. In these circumstances knowledge becomes playful and art has an urgency to follow up intentions. Language used within and for the PhD must necessarily be used
legitimately so that *legitimacy* itself is the main issue when the two modes of representation become mixed. The effect is of a *fictional* scenario where each representative is acting his or her part. The “law” (the university’s; the AHRC’s; the institution’s regulations) that makes the judgement on the work is itself a self-contained, self-regulating autopoietic system whose basis is equally a fictional space self-defined by consensus. By revealing its own mechanisms, this chapter exposes its paradoxical nature and makes a connection with the first chapter, but in this instance the ambiguity is less reliant on *seeing* things in two opposing ways, but in encountering an art object as seeing and as reading. It is *calligrammatic*.

The chapter ends with an explanation of how the visual layout of the text is important both in terms of supplemental marginal glosses that haunt the text with voices other than the author’s, and the allusion to terms previously encountered such as “embodiment”. The structure of the thesis is thus laid open at the end, inviting it to be read (differently) for a second time.

Identity and similarity are germane issues, and it is no coincidence that the readymade is invoked as the initiator of this project, a point that Duchamp makes in the following note:

Sameness
Similarity
The same (mass prod.)
practical approximation of
similarity
——
In time the same object is not
the same after a 1 second
interval —
What Relations with the identity principle?  

“The” thesis has a single identity if the knowledge, understanding and semantics of the arguments are taken as fixed in spite of making “copies”: as a thesis, copies are still a thesis. The thesis as a “work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction” is subject more to a metaphysical interrogation.

Two Paths

As the PhD by part practice proliferates in academia, the arguments about how art practice can be equivalent to “knowledge” in the traditional academic sense will continue. There are likely to be two main approaches to the question. Firstly, there will continue to be those who are ostensibly “artists” of a particularly academic bent, who regard their work as having something more, or other than retinal significance. They will continue to produce “artwork” but consider the challenge of a PhD as a necessary adjunct to an already theoretical practice. Secondly, there will be thinkers who use a form of art practice as a way of expanding ideas. Duchamp, Magritte and Broodthaers are the examples that necessarily spring to mind as precedents for this approach. This thesis is intended to show how such an approach can be achieved on the back of a PhD. It is unlike other practice based doctorates in that it does not assume practice to already exist so that it can be theorized, but invents it as it explains itself.

Does this really affect the situations that have been described? Whilst innovative formats of “research” and “practice” obtain and are constantly developing in institutions, are not the problems set out by this thesis continued under a different guise? Whether the format for the research is verbal, visual, electronically processed, hypertext or non-material, there are the opportunities to promote a “practice” or to deconstruct practice as such. The latter would constitute a Reductio ad absurdum.

The variable models of ‘art practice-based’ PhD research that exist, even within the UK system are not always adequately taken into account, and the “two paths” for artists pursuing PhDs identified in the conclusion (p.167) are inadequate as a summary of either the currently available approaches or the motivations of PhD-seeking practitioners. In this context the project may not be “unorthodox” and “paradoxical” to the extent that the thesis wants to claim.

(From Notes for Final Joint Report on Thesis and Oral Examination 2nd September 2010)


I don't believe in film, nor do I believe in any other art. I don't believe in the unique artist or in the unique work of art. I believe in phenomena, and in men who put ideas together.

Illustrations

Fig. 45 Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain* Published in *Blind Man*, no. 2 (May 1917) Gelatin silver print; 11 x 17.9 cm © 1998 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York; ADAGP, Paris; Estate of Marcel Duchamp

Fig. 46 Marcel Duchamp, *Bicycle Wheel*. New York 1951 (third version, after lost original of 1913). Metal wheel mounted on painted wood stool, 129.5 x 63.5 x 41.9 cm. The Sidney and Harriet Janis Collection.

Fig. 47 Marcel Duchamp, *With Hidden Noise*. 1916. Readymade: Ball of string between two brass plates held together by four screws. 12.9 x 13 x 11.4 cm. The Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia

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