

'There really is no such thing as Art. There are only artists.'¹
E. H. Gombrich

I.

By definition art is made by artists. Even readymade art is made by an artist. Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917) may have been produced in a factory, but it was Duchamp's touch that transformed a urinal into art. Although the myth of the artist's unique genius and originality has lost its lustre (it is customary for contemporary artists to reappropriate existing things rather than make new things), the belief in the figure of the artist remains commonplace. We continue to believe that standing behind every work of art is an artist who has authored (i.e., authorised) this work. For this reason, if we want to identify whether or not something is art, we know that all we need to do is identify an artist who produced it. But what happens if we can't clearly identify an artist? What if the artist does not show himself or herself? What if there is no artist? Can art appear through a figure that is indistinguishable from a 'non-artist'? That is, can art be created by a non-artist?

The possibility that art can be created by a non-artist represents something new. It therefore elicits unfamiliar questions: Who is the non-artist that can produce art? What is the origin of this non-artist? These questions seem somewhat strange and have an air of novelty, but this is not entirely true. In fact, they are rather old questions. The problem of the non-artist producing art can be traced back to the origins of modernism. But it was only in the 1960s that this problem appeared on an unprecedentedly mass scale. At this time, many artists became suspicious that their sovereignty over art was being seized by an art world system of curators, dealers, collectors, critics, historians, etc. These 'non-artists' made the artist feel increasingly powerless, inconsequential—even unnecessary. Currently there exists an expanding discourse on the curator 'as artist.'² Today, for example, a curator can produce an exhibition without artists and the audience does not necessarily doubt they are in the presence of art.³ However, little has been said of the broader problematic of the non-artist. This essay can be thought of as a preliminary attempt to form a concept, and trace a possible history, of this non-artist.

II.

The 1960s witnessed a crisis of modernism, in which the dematerialisation of art also threatened to dematerialise the artist. Lucy Lippard first described the 'dematerialisation' of art nearly fifty-years ago. She argued that in art practices of the 1960s, the art object had started to become 'wholly obsolete.'⁴ In place of art objects, artists were writing theoretical essays, organising short-lived performances, engaging in political activism, forming temporary environments, collaborating with their audiences, and using the public postal system, telegrams and telex machines. Artists also started to perform roles once considered the prerogative of the non-artist: Marcel Broodthaers posed as a bureaucrat when he founded the *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section XIXième Siècle* in 1968, and members of Art & Language and the Society for Theoretical Art and Analysis became art-theorists. Conceptual art practices were the main subject of Lippard's diagnosis, but the idea of dematerialisation would eventually be applied to many other practices in which the art object lost its primacy.

Thierry de Duve claims that artists of the 1960s—not just conceptual artists, but also artists like Andy Warhol, and to some extent, even institutional critique artists—were simply the first art world figures to receive a message sent by Duchamp in 1917, when he attempted to exhibit a urinal as art. Since the art world acknowledged Duchamp's urinal as art, it has often been said that anything can be art. We now live in what de Duve calls the 'Art-in-General' system, 'where works of art can literally be made from anything whatsoever.'⁵ The 1994 issue of *October*, which was dedicated to the reception of Duchamp since the 1960s, termed the effect of this condition the 'Duchamp Effect.'⁶ During the 1960s, not all practices embraced this effect, but its impact was

decisive. The Duchamp Effect immediately raised doubts about the ontological nature of the artwork and the authority of the artist. If Duchamp handed the artist almost unlimited authority to name anything (even an idea) as art, then he also brought on an air of foreboding. 'Many so-called artists see "art" everywhere in this world,' Robert Smithson wrote in 1962. Smithson called it an 'orgy of aesthetics,' which, he warned, 'must be prevented, or else the artist will die in his own art.'⁷

Dematerialisation raised at least two fundamental questions related to the ontology of art. First, it called into question the conventional idea that 'art' is given presence through an object traditionally termed a 'work of art.' This idea was a product of the modern concept of the autonomous artwork, which developed after the founding of the art museum at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries.⁸ These museums were created so that objects looted from across Europe by Napoleon could be valorised and made available to the aesthetic gaze of the public. Opened in a former Royal Palace following the French Revolution, the Louvre is the most emblematic of these museums. The art museum established a relationship between an autonomous work and a new museum-going public (a public itself brought into existence by the museum institution). Since the 1960s, when heightened attention was given to the institutional context of art, many have believed (or, at least been aware of the belief) that the experience of art is largely a product of the institution, museum or exhibition space in which the artwork is displayed. According to this belief, art is not solely a product of the artwork. However, before this idea was popularised by artists and theorists in the 1960s, it was widely believed that the artwork *stood on its own*. The autonomous work was its own hermetic ground—what Theodor Adorno, appropriating the terminology of rationalist metaphysicians, called a 'windowless monad.'⁹ From this perspective, art was not the product of the museum or gallery context, but was instead reified in the object itself; an object that, in theory, would be self-sufficient regardless of its context.

Critics, such as Quatramère de Quincy at the beginning of the 19th century,¹⁰ were quick to attack the museum institution. De Quincy argued that when aestheticised in the museum, the work lost its meaningful (e.g., religious) purpose in the life-world of its original context (on the altar wall, for instance), and thus became merely art. Walter Benjamin, on the other hand, criticised the 'cult' value of religious art, though he thought that this value was partly retained in the quasi-religious 'aura' of the unique artwork in a museum setting. Benjamin claimed that the avant-garde (his example was Dada) aimed at the 'relentless destruction of aura'; a task that he anticipated would finally be accomplished through the rise of film.¹¹ Whether or not Benjamin was right, he identified an important fact that contradicted the reified concept of the autonomous artwork. Benjamin pointed out that 'artness' resided in the art object's aura of 'authenticity' and 'authority'—both concepts with etymological roots in the concept of authorship, and thus not necessarily in the object itself.

However, contrary to Benjamin's prognosis that the prevalence of mechanical reproducibility would erode artistic aura, in the dematerialised practices of the 1960s art's aura undoubtedly existed. Artists continued to 'produce' aura in the absence of its exclusive reification in the art-object. Yves Klein, for example, indicated this in his 1968 exhibition *Empty Gallery*, in which he claimed his paintings were now invisible. They were invisible, but they were 'authentic'; each authorised by Klein, the artist.

Around this time, the conceptual art dealer Seth Siegelaub's distinction between 'primary' and 'secondary' information provided a solution to the problem of giving presence to dematerialised art. Primary information (i.e., the artwork), be it absent, invisible, or no longer existent, could be made present through secondary information (catalogues, essays, various forms of documentation, etc.). 'This information is just to tell you,' Siegelaub says, 'that a work of art ... that something has been *done*, you see, whereas before, when someone painted a painting, what had been done and what you saw were the same thing.'¹²

Klein's theme of emptiness or blankness was widespread throughout art practices of the 1960s and 1970s—finding its historical precedents in the likes of Kasimir Malevich's *White*

on *White* (1918), Robert Rauschenberg's *White Paintings* (1951) and John Cage's *4'33"* (1952). In a discussion between Robert Smithson and Allan Kaprow in 1968, Smithson speculated that 'a museum devoted to different kinds of emptiness could be developed.'¹³ Kaprow suggested 'clearing out the museum and letting better designed ones like the Guggenheim exist as sculptures.' Feigning seriousness, he added that 'such an act would put so many artists out of business.'¹⁴ Yet Kaprow's comment makes explicit a central condition of art since the 1960s. This condition was recently described by Boris Groys: the elementary unit of art is 'no longer an artwork as object but an art space in which objects are exhibited: the space of an exhibition, of an installation.'¹⁵ As we shall see shortly, Groys is echoing statements made by artists in the 1960s and 1970s. Yet he hints at a second issue: when the elementary unit of art production is an 'art space' (i.e., art context), it becomes increasingly difficult to differentiate between the various types of authorship directly and indirectly involved in art production—between the authors of primary information (artists) and the authors of secondary information (curators, dealers, critics, historians, etc.).

For artists working in the wake of the dematerialisation of art, the second (more pressing) issue was not how art was brought into presence without an object, but who was the author of art? *Who* brought art into presence? If dematerialisation compromised the ideal of the autonomous artwork, it did not altogether undermine artists' claims to be the ontological agents behind the appearance of art's 'aura.' In the 1960s and 1970s (especially amongst North American artists), these claims became more speculative, overtly tautological and somewhat confusing. Some of these claims are relatively well-known: 'Art is what we do' (Carl Andre); 'It is an artwork if I say it is' (Rauschenberg); 'If someone says it's art, then it is art' (Joseph Kosuth). The curator Okwui Enwezor has commented on the ability of the artist to name anything as art as a phenomenon engendered by the Duchamp Effect: 'The Duchamp Effect is the most traditional view to my thinking, because what it purports to do is delineate the supremacy of the artist: the artist not only as a form giver, but a name giver.'¹⁶

I would suggest that the Duchamp Effect indicates more than the artist's power to name—it is also indicative of the artist's power to think. That is, to think about their role in the institutional production of art. This is comparable, at a different level, to Walter Benjamin's well-known 1934 address, 'The Author as Producer,' in which he articulated the demand on the writer 'to *think*, to reflect upon his position in the production process.'¹⁷ I hope to show that this capacity to think is essential to understanding the present figure of the non-artist. In fact, in the 1960s and 1970s, contrary to Enwezor's claim, many artists were concerned not with their authority and 'supremacy' (be it to name 'art,' or otherwise), but with their utter powerlessness within the art world.

In a simple sense, conceptual art can be seen as the heightened production of concepts by artists. The tendency for artists to make theoretical pronouncements (i.e., to think conceptually), rather than make 'conventional' artworks, follows a tradition that started long before the 1960s. Consider, for instance, the manifestos of modernism and the historical avant-garde. These artists reacted especially to the non-artist aesthetic decision maker—the figure, that is, responsible for making the customary aesthetic decisions handed down to the artist by tradition. For this reason, a dominant paradigm of modernism and the historical avant-garde is the rejection of tradition in favour of the creation of 'the new.' In the 1960s, however, many artists ceased reacting against tradition and took aim at other non-artist aesthetic decision makers: the main non-artist figures of art production who were seen to compete with the artist in the authorship of art. This critique of the conditions of art production was a key aspect of conceptual art, and was further developed in institutional critique practices (a term first used by the conceptual artist Mel Ramsden).¹⁸ Its target was therefore not tradition, but what could simply be called the art world 'system' of non-artists: the curator, the dealer and collector; the art museum, art history and criticism; and the market.

The new 'superstar' curator was one obvious such non-artist, exemplified by figures such as Harold Szeemann, René Block, Pontus Hultén, Kynaston McShine, Lucy Lippard, Konrad Fischer,

Walter Hopps and Germano Celant.¹⁹ 'More and more,' Daniel Buren wrote in 'Exhibitions of an Exhibition' (1972), a critical reaction to Szeemann's *Documenta V* of the same year, 'the subject of an exhibition tends not to be the display of artworks, but the exhibition of the exhibition as a work of art.'²⁰ Buren added that, 'even if the artwork was formerly revealed thanks to the museum, it now serves as nothing more than a decorative gimmick for the survival of the museum as tableau, a tableau whose author is none other than the exhibition organizer.'²¹ Similarly, in a 1969 *Artforum* review of Lippard's *557,087: Seattle*, Peter Plagens suggested that Lippard's 'total style' was 'so pervasive as to suggest that Lucy Lippard is in fact the artist and that her medium is other artists.'²²

The quasi-authorial status of art institutions was also called into question. The museum experienced what Rasheed Araeen, in his 1987 founding statement for the journal *Third Text*, called a 'crisis of legitimation.'²³ Numerous artist and anti-colonial groups campaigned against and picketed major art museums.²⁴ In 1977, the Artists Meeting for Culture Change published *An Anti-Catalog* that critiqued and corrected what they saw as a sexist and racist historical exhibition by the Whitney Museum of American Art.²⁵ Hans Haacke and Adrian Piper also developed critical art practices in this period. In later writings, Haacke calls the museum a 'consciousness industry' that did not just produce art, but produced the modes of public perception in which art is received.²⁶ Piper critiqued the art world in so far as it trained, marketed and employed artists; indoctrinating them through a process she terms 'aesthetic acculturation.'²⁷ In terms of the market, Ian Burn stated that 'not only do works of art end up as commodities, there is now an overwhelming sense in which works of art start off as commodities.'²⁸ Seth Siegelaub also later reflected on the period: 'We thought that we could demystify the role of the museum, the role of the collector, and the production of the artwork ... we tried to demystify the hidden structures of the art world.'²⁹

This is a very sparse sketch of a much bigger picture. However, the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu succinctly states the implication of these critiques by artists of the various non-artist figures of the art world: 'It becomes clear,' Bourdieu writes,

that the 'subject' of the production of the art-work—of its value but also of its meaning—is not the producer who actually creates the object in its materiality, but rather the entire set of agents engaged in the field. Among these are the producers of works classified as artistic (great or minor, famous or unknown), critics of all persuasions (who themselves are established within the field), collectors, middlemen, curators, etc.³⁰

Bourdieu wrote this in the 1980s, some twenty years after the conceptual art practices of the 1960s. Just as de Duve argues that artists of the 1960s received a message sent by Duchamp in 1917, Bourdieu—whose writing coincides with the 'second wave' of institutional critique art of the 1980s—could also be regarded as the recipient of a message sent out by artists in the 1960s. To a significant degree, it was these artists who produced the concept of the non-artist 'subject' described by Bourdieu.

The idea of art as the product of a sovereign art world system dominated by the non-artist (curators, dealers, historians etc.), rather than a sovereign artist, instilled great anxiety into the souls of many artists. In this vision, the role of the artist is greatly diminished—or even, in its most extreme version, entirely negated. Yet this idea of the non-artist was precisely the idea that would, as I will argue below, eventually be taken up by certain artists.

Working through the legacy of the historical avant-garde, the art of the 1960s and 1970s is marked by an overwhelming preoccupation with artistic identity—with the question, in other words, of who the artist is, and what their role is. During this period, many artists sought to reimagine what it meant to be an artist. As described at the start of this essay, many refashioned themselves as entrepreneurs, bureaucrats, as well as workers who needed to unionise, or as celebrity figures of the mass media—in other words, into non-artist figures. Seth Siegelaub and

Joseph Kosuth made market and entrepreneurial innovations central to the program of conceptual art.³¹ Frank Stella, Andy Warhol and Robert Rauschenberg passed themselves off as executives, mass media celebrities and blue-collar workers.³² Feminist art historians such as Griselda Pollock began to deconstruct (with the aim to ultimately discard) the very idea of the artist—the artist was seen as a patriarchal emblem whose defining image was the white male protagonist of art history's canon.³³ On the other hand, Joseph Beuys said that everybody is an artist, expressing the utopian hope that all non-artists—not only of the art world system but also beyond it—were in fact artists. Other artists went further. As though the death of the artist might render powerless those who had power over the context of art, Lee Lozano abandoned the art world altogether, staging this as an artistic gesture in her final work *Dropout Piece* (c. 1970 until death). 'Artists of the world dropout!' Allen Kaprow exclaimed, 'You have nothing to lose but your professions!'³⁴

III.

Kaprow called for artists to drop out of the art world and become what he called an 'un-artist.' Many artists did just this. Some, resigning to their fate within the art world system, never made art again. As portrayed by Charles Green, many of those who were prepared to leave the art system, 'disappeared into the alternative milieus of inner-city community activism and rural hippy-commune politics, leaving little trace of their existence.'³⁵ However, Kaprow's injunction can also be read as a call for artists to drop out and become a non-artist in the specific sense that I wish to explore in the remainder of this essay. The type of non-artist I have in mind stopped making artworks and instead assumed other roles within or at the fringes of the art system, becoming a curator, an art critic, an art historian, an arts administrator and so on. In this instance, the non-artist—an idea created by artists in the 1960s and 1970s—became the basis for a new artistic program, a project for a new kind of artist.

Primarily, the anti-art gesture of abandoning art arose from the belief that artistic context had taken authority over artworks. The system that commissioned, collected, exhibited, marketed, critiqued and historicised artworks, was essentially seen as a system that governed the context within which the artist and the artwork was defined, and thus given meaning. To be an independent artist, therefore, would require possessing authority over the context of art—over a system that made the context of art itself appear. In other words, it would entail the artist assuming the guise of various non-artist figures in order to assume authority (i.e., authorship) over art.

The simplest way to describe this conversion of the artist into a non-artist, is to say that this artist moved from producing artworks to producing the context of art. To explain this, I will return to de Duve's argument regarding the reception of a message sent by Duchamp in 1917, and received by the art world in the 1960s. De Duve argues that this message not only stated that anything could be art, but also that anyone could be an artist. The message took the form of what de Duve calls the 'Duchamp syllogism': 'When a urinal is art, anything can be art; and when anything can be art, anybody can be an artist.'³⁶ De Duve claims that Duchamp was read the wrong way around by those who received his message in the 1960s—he claims that the propositional order of the Duchamp syllogism should be logically reversed: 'Duchamp's message goes the other way around: When anybody is institutionally allowed to be an artist, it is about time to show that anything can be art, even a urinal.'³⁷ De Duve argues that following the collapse of the traditional academic art system at the end of the 19th century (which not only decided who was an artist, but also what could be art—namely, painting, sculpture, etc.), everyone was 'institutionally allowed' to be an artist. Indeed, anybody who could pay the \$6 entry fee to the Society of Independent Artists' 'First Annual Exhibition' (1917), where Duchamp proposed his urinal as art, could be an artist.

It is striking that de Duve does not make explicit the introduction of a new proposition into his reversed reformulation of the Duchamp Syllogism: that is, that everyone must be 'institutionally allowed to be an artist.' In other words, anyone can be an artist on the precondition that the art institution grants authority

for anyone to be an artist. Part of the 'genius' of Duchamp, as pointed out by de Duve, related to his strategic involvement with the institution that would authorise (or reject) the proposition that a urinal might qualify as an artwork, and its maker an artist. It is sometimes forgotten that when Duchamp presented his urinal to the Society of Independent Artists under the pseudonym 'R. Mutt,' he was a founding member of the Society and on the judging committee that refused the work. When Duchamp proposed the mass-produced object as an artwork, then, he deliberately tampered with the context within which it would be received as art or non-art, thus determining whether R. Mutt qualified as an artist or non-artist.

As demonstrated by Duchamp, to move from producing artworks to producing or manipulating the context of art does not necessarily entail an outright rejection of the institutional system of art. In fact, as de Duve shows through the example of Duchamp, the opposite is true. To produce the context of art would require total authority over the context of artistic production and reception—be it the context of collection, display, marketing, criticism or history. This kind of non-artist effectively imagined the total system of art production (literally constituted by multiple agents or actors) as though it was the work of one all-powerful artist—an artist akin to the subject behind what Bourdieu later called the field of art. In seeking to occupy all positions within this field, this non-artist might be more fittingly termed a 'total artist.'

We therefore give our non-artist art producer a name: the total artist. It also helps to give the total artist an image. The image of the total artist is easy for any art world functionary to imagine—for each art world functionary performs one of the many roles the total artist aims to usurp. There are many examples of artists since the 1960s that have displayed elements of the total artist's project. This includes Andy Warhol's factory, Moscow Conceptualist 'Apt-Art' (i.e., apartment art, made outside the officially sanctioned system of the Union of Soviet Artists) or Damien Hirst's self-marketing. Perhaps the figure who best exemplifies the total artist—and yet, perhaps as a result of this, is also the most enigmatic—was the Australian-born artist, Ian Burn. Alongside many other conceptual artists who claimed to encounter the limits of producing artworks, Burn ceased making artworks in 1976, at which time he returned from New York to Australia. From this period onwards, he started what might be termed a 'post-conceptual' practice. It entailed assuming the role of the non-artist as a form of artistic identity. Burn became an artist-art-theorist, an artist-art-critic, an artist-art-historian, an artist-curator, educator, bureaucrat and administrator, etc. Alongside a number of other artists, Burn also involved himself with trade unions and played a role in founding the first artist union in Australia. This can be understood in terms of the logic of the total artist—because every artist is also a worker, the context of the art worker is therefore central to the context of art.

In a peculiar sense, the central and defining goal of the total artist's project is to preserve the autonomy of art—for art to be a project of artists—as it had once been during the reign of the autonomous artwork. To achieve this, the total artist assumed the roles of the non-artist in such a way as to create a rupture within the conventional apparatus of art—through this, it was hoped, a new form of authorship over art could be claimed. It would therefore be wrong to conclude that the total artist brought an end to the aesthetic project of modernism. Rather, the total artist aimed to rescue this project through assuming the roles of the various non-artists that together constitute the art world system. Having established this point, it remains necessary for us to inquire further into the nature of the total artist's aesthetic creation.

IV.

In his 1960 essay 'Origin of the Work of Art,' Heidegger argues that the work of art is like a clearing in a forest. Evidently, this idea had its origin in the free time Heidegger spent at his vacation home at Todtnauberg, near the edge of the Black Forest. In German, a clearing is called a *Lichtung*, an area where the dense branches of the forest thin out, and natural light is able to penetrate the shadows—a halo of light and clear vision. 'In the midst of beings as a whole,' Heidegger describes, 'an open place

occurs. There is a clearing, a lighting.³⁸ Heidegger's imagery of a clearing frames the happening of art as a kind of event, something that interlopes on the existing state of the world, and thus opens up a new world; 'to be a work,' Heidegger says, 'means: to set up a world.'³⁹ In other words, to be a work is to produce a clearing. His famous example is the Greek temple at Paestum, which he describes as anchoring the spiritual existence of an entire community.

Heidegger argues that the work of art, like the reified work, is self-subsistent: it produces its own clearing. Like de Quincy, Heidegger believes that the 'whole art industry' destroys this clearing. In the museum, for example, the work loses its meaningful existence in the life-world of its original context. The art industry causes 'world-withdrawal' and 'world-decay.' Heidegger's view, however, is indebted to a deep and complex prejudice against the modern conception of art that has been with us since the first art museums were founded—a prejudice that is also reflected in the example of de Quincy cited above. From the perspective of the total artist, however, this conception of art itself appears to be the product of a kind of clearing. As I noted at the start of this essay, the first clearings of art, as it has been understood in the modern period, were formed following the French Revolution, when a former Royal Palace was cleared to make way for the Louvre.

It is this understanding of the clearing that I believe is helpful for proposing what the aesthetic creation of the total artist might be. If we continue with Heidegger's metaphor, a clearing can be encountered by relying on the light that is a gift of revelation. One can simply stumble upon a clearing, as Heidegger describes, like a 'deer in the forest clearing.' Alternatively, one can attempt to produce a clearing by felling trees, moving logs, branches, sticks and leaves. Admittedly, Heidegger's metaphor seems somewhat inadequate—even inappropriate—to our situation in the 21st century. Our lives are not spent wandering the undergrowth of the *Schwarzwald*, but rather the virtual spaces of the Internet, or the institutional spaces of the art school and the university. However, the clearing can also be imagined in our contemporary times. Even within a modern institution like a university, a classroom can be cleared. We are familiar with these kinds of clearings in contemporary art. Of course, they don't appear in the natural light of the forest, but the artificial light of the institution.

When a clearing appears in contemporary art, it tends to be a weak gesture, a short event—a modest breach that is soon covered over. These events de-functionalise institutional space and disrupt its discourse. The clearing can therefore be an unwelcome and lonely guest because it introduces a heterogeneous time and space into carefully regulated institutions.⁴⁰

The audience of this kind of clearing is different to that of the official art institution and its discourses. Heidegger (who reworked his essay from a series of lectures delivered in the 1930s to an audience of National Socialists in Germany) imagined a great event in the work of art that would have the capacity to constitute an historical people. This is not dissimilar, perhaps, to the way that the founding of the Louvre was initially envisioned as the foundation of a universal 'Républic d'Esprit.' A clearing in the contemporary context, however, blurs the distinction between the public and the private. Whether we encounter it in an artist run initiative, a public intervention, the virtual spaces of the Internet, or a university classroom, a clearing is usually only encountered by a small group of like-minded acquaintances. In order to encounter a clearing, often one has to have access to the right networks, and usually this means either being an artist, curator or some other non-artist of the art world.

At this point, it is timely to return to our original problematic: can art appear without an artist? Sometimes it is argued that in our contemporary culture everybody is an artist.⁴¹ If this is true, then it seems to render the above question redundant. However, as I have argued, as art is currently constituted, it no longer seems to follow that if everyone is an artist then everyone can produce art. The artist requires a context for their art to appear in. Traditionally, the artist accepts an officially sanctioned art context. In this instance, the artist surrenders their authorship to the authority of this 'readymade' context. For the total artist,

however, in order to author art, one must author the context of art, by producing and shaping a clearing through which art appears. And to do this, one cannot only be an artist, but also a collector, a curator, an administrator, marketer, writer, critic, art historian and so on—in other words, a total artist. The total artist's aesthetic creation can therefore be conceived through the metaphor of the clearing, in so far as it is understood as a disruptive or surreptitious interference with the institutional apparatus of art: the total artist authors a clearing through which art as such appears.

Here then, in the image of the total artist, we form a concept, and trace a possible origin, of the non-artist who produces art. This overlap between the non-artist and the total artist seems important. Important, because, according to the analysis above, this non-artist was an invention of the artist, an idea produced primarily through the art practices and theorisations of artists in the 1960s and 1970s. This idea became an artistic project that may have fallen by the wayside. It could be argued that the project of the total artist was usurped by the figure of the curator. Who else undertook this project? Where did it lead? What were its deeper conditions and more remote precedents? What is the relationship between the total artist and contemporary art? How can we better understand the nature of the total artist's aesthetic creation? Such questions can only be answered in an expanded history of the non-artist—which is yet to be written.

V.

For the present, it seems worthwhile to briefly conclude our discussion by posing the following question: how does the total artist show himself or herself? For the most part, the total artist is invisible. This is because they must disappear and assume the role of the non-artist. The total artist's work of art therefore appears indistinguishable from the ordinary work of a non-artist. Yet, as I have argued, this work is actually the condition of possibility for the appearance of art as we know it today. What distinguishes the total artist, however, is that they traverse the multiple non-artist roles within the art world system—and through this, they attempt to (de)authorise a new clearing.

If the total artist assumes an image, and thus becomes visible, then it is an incredibly weak image. From time to time, the image of the total artist can flash before us. This happens when we encounter a clearing of art: when all the signs of art are given to us, but the definitive mark of the artist and the artwork are almost undetectable—left lurking in the shadows of the clearing. We see the signs of collection, of curation that gives order and reason to collection, of event-organisation, social media presence, aestheticised display and a catalogue with documentation and art historical contextualisation. We enter the clearing of art, but there are no artworks and there are no artists.

¹ E. H. Gombrich, *The Story of Art*, 16th ed. (London: Phaidon Press, 1995).

² For example, see Boris Groys, 'Multiple Authorship,' in *Art Power* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2008); Claire Bishop, 'What Is a Curator?,' *IDEA: Art & Society*, no. 43 (2007); Terry Smith, 'Artist as Curator/Curator as Artist,' in *Thinking Contemporary Curating* (New York: Independent Curators International, 2012); Paul O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2012); Dorothea von Hantelmann, 'The Curatorial Paradigm,' in *The Exhibitionist*, no. 4 (June 2011); Anton Vidolke, 'Art without Artists,' in *eflux* 16, no. 5 (2010); Carl André and Viktor Misiano, *The Curator as Producer* (Amsterdam; Manifesta; Cinisello Balsamo, Milano: Silvana Editoriale, 2010).

³ For example, see the 2008 Sao Paulo Biennale, which artistic director Ivo Mesquita and curator Ana Paula Cohen originally planned to contain no artists and no artworks: Ibirapuera Park, '28th Sao Paulo Biennial,' *Frieze*, no. 120 (January-February 2009).

⁴ Lucy R. Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (London: Studio Vista, 1973); Lucy R. Lippard and John Chandler, 'The Dematerialization of Art,' in *Art International* 12, no. 2 (February 1967), 31.

⁵ Thierry de Duve, '"This is Art": Anatomy of a Sentence,' in *Artforum* (April 2014), <https://artforum.com/inprint/issue=201404&id=45761>.

⁶ *October* 70 (Fall 1994), reprinted as *The Duchamp Effect* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996).

⁷ Robert Smithson, letter to George Lester (1961), quoted in Thierry de Duve, 'Pardon My French,' *Artforum* (October 2013), <https://artforum.com/inprint/issue=201308&id=43117>.

⁸ For a history of the concept of the 'work,' see Hans Belting, *The Invisible Masterpiece* (London: Reaktion, 2001).

⁹ This quotation emphasises one aspect of Adorno's theory of the artwork. In fact, Adorno used this concept to develop his dialectical concept of the artwork as simultaneously 'autonomous' and a 'social fact.' Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (1970), trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013), 6.

¹⁰ For example, see Quatremère de Quincy, *The Destination of Works of Art and the use to which they are Applied: Considered with Regard to Their Influence on the Genius and Taste of Artists, and the Sentiment of Amateurs* (1821), trans. Henry Thomson (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1821).

¹¹ Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (1936), trans. Harry Zohn (Schocken: Random House, 1969), <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/ge/benjamin.htm>.

¹² Seth Siegelaub, 'Interview with Patricia Norvell, April 17, 1969,' in *Recording Conceptual Art: Early Interviews with Barry, Huebler, Kaltenbach, Lewitt, Morris, Oppenheim, Siegelau, Smithson, Weiner*, ed. Alexander Alberro and Patricia Norvell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 34.

¹³ Allan Kaprow and Robert Smithson, 'What Is a Museum? A Dialogue (1967),' in *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists' Writings*, ed. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2009).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Boris Groys, 'Multiple Authorship,' in *Art Power*, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2008), 94.

¹⁶ Okwui Enwezor, 'The Postcolonial Constellation: Contemporary Art in a State of Permanent Transition,' in *Research in African Literatures* 34, no. 4 (2003), 61.

¹⁷ Walter Benjamin, 'The Author as Producer' (1934), in *Understanding Brecht* (1966), trans. Anna Bostock (London: NLB, 1977), 101.

¹⁸ Mel Ramsden, 'On Practice,' in *The Fox* 1, no. 2 (1975), 66-83.

¹⁹ Some major exhibitions include: Lucy Lippard's '557,087 Seattle' (1969), Harold Szeemann's *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form: Works-Processes-Concepts-Situations-Information* (1969), Kynaston McShine's *Information* (1970) and Szeemann's *Documenta V* (1972).

²⁰ Daniel Buren, 'Where are the Artists?,' in *The Next Documenta Should Be Curated by an Artist*, ed. Jens Hoffmann (Frankfurt: Revolver, 2004), 26.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Peter Plagens, '557,087: Seattle,' in *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972*, ed. Lucy R. Lippard (London: Studio Vista, 1973), 111.

²³ Rasheed Araeen, 'Why Third Text?,' in *Third Text*, no. 1 (1987), 5.

²⁴ For example, in 1976, the Artists Meeting for Cultural Change (AMCC)—a loose collective formed largely out of the Art Workers Coalition—protested the Whitney Museum of American Art exhibition '200 Years of American Art'. The show was to be culled entirely from the Rockefeller III collection, and would feature just one female artist, and one black artist. Philadelphia Museum of Art, *Philadelphia, Three Centuries of American Art: Bicentennial Exhibition* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1976).

²⁵ Artists Meeting for Cultural Change, *An Anti-Catalog* (New York: The Catalog Committee of Artists Meeting for Cultural Change, 1977).

²⁶ Hans Haacke, 'Museums, Managers of Consciousness (1984),' in *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists' Writings*, ed. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2009), 276-291.

²⁷ Adrian Piper, 'Power Relations within Existing Art Institutions (1983),' *ibid.*

²⁸ Ian Burn, 'The Art Market: Affluence and Degradation,' in *Artforum* (April 1975).

²⁹ Paul O'Neill and Seth Siegelaub, 'Action Man: Paul O'Neill interviews Seth Siegelau,' *The Internationaler*, no. 1 (2006). See O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the*

Curating of Culture(s), 19.

³⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Historical Genesis of a Pure Aesthetic,' in *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. Randal Johnson (Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 1993), 261.

³¹ For example, see Alexander Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003).

³² For example, see Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

³³ For example, see Griselda Pollock, 'Whither Art History?,' in *The Art Bulletin* 96, no. 1 (2014).

³⁴ Allan Kaprow, 'Education of the Un-Artist, Part I, II, III (1971, 1972, 1974),' in *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, ed. Allan Kaprow and Jeff Kelley (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

³⁵ Charles Green, *Peripheral Vision: Contemporary Australian Art, 1970-1994* (Roseville East, NSW: Craftsman House, 1995).

³⁶ Thierry de Duve, 'Don't Shoot the Messenger,' in *Artforum* (November 2013), <https://artforum.com/inprint/issue=201309&id=43534>.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Martin Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art (1960),' in *Off the Beaten Track*, ed. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 51.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁴⁰ The clearings founded after the French Revolution happened to survive, but this was largely due—at least initially—to the fact they had the power of a revolutionary army behind them. As we know, these clearings survived—or rather, died out—as conventional art museums; our existing official art institutions are their heirs.

⁴¹ Three arguments come to mind: first, Joseph Beuys' claim that every human activity is synonymous with artistic creation; second, de Duve's claim that anyone is 'institutionally allowed' to be an artist; and a third claim, that today the Internet allows users 'to post their photos, videos, and texts in a way that cannot be distinguished from any other conceptualist or post conceptualist artwork.' Boris Groys, 'The Weak Universalism,' in *Going Public* (Berlin; New York: Sternberg Press, 2010), 116-17.