

The 'moment of art' or the assignment of 'aura' to an object can also be interpreted as the fetishisation of the object in question – the object is alienated from the ordinary and everyday, it assumes a mystical power, it demands reverence, "either it's art or it's nothing."

--

"Conceptual art is a performative utterance."
Josh Ginsburg

--

"Art becomes a private mental cognition."
Josh Ginsburg

--

Michel Foucault suggested that conceptual art operates in the "discursive field" where "the pure function of [the] existence of the statements, recognized by the simple fact of having been uttered, that he calls enunciative function." The ostensive becomes discursive. Object becomes readymade. Object to art. Without this transformation the work would fail to "function" as art. The enunciative function places the 'moment of art' in language and knowledge. The statement "This is art" is sufficient to transpose an idea and its objects into the realm of art, shifting the attentiveness with which it is approached, and the discourses that concern it. This reveals the basis of conceptual art to be linguistic, reliant on language, and perhaps, analogous to it.

--

"With the appearance of conceptual art, artistic practice became meaningful and communicative again. Art began to make theoretical statements again, to communicate empirical experiences, to formulate ethical and political attitudes and to tell stories. Thus, rather than art beginning to use language, it began to be used as language—with a communicative and even educative purpose."
Boris Groys

--

"The form itself is of very limited importance; it becomes the grammar for the total work."
Sol leWitt

--

"Now the real, epoch-making achievement of conceptual art becomes clear: it demonstrated the equivalence, or at least a parallelism, between language and image, between the order of words and the order of things, the grammar of language and the grammar of visual space."
Boris Groys

--

"Conceptual art is made to engage the mind of the viewer rather than his eye or emotions."
Sol leWitt

--

"That is why conceptual art prefers clear, sober, minimalist forms—such forms better serve the communication of ideas. Conceptual art is interested in the problem of form not from the traditional perspective of aesthetics but from the perspective of poetics and rhetoric."
Boris Groys

--

"Successful ideas generally have the appearance of simplicity because they seem inevitable."
Sol le Witt

--

"Meaning is 'made', it is an action invested by the audience."
Josh Ginsburg

--

"When attitudes become form become attitudes."
Jens Hoffman

--

Questioning the elusive definition and unstable position of art is the primary role of the conceptual artist. If there is anything common to all conceptual art, it is perhaps this shared attitude; a certain criticality informed by rigorous self-reflexivity. This criticality is often subversive, and sly. As art about art, conceptual art necessarily questions the complex art systems that affirm (if not dictate) particular art objects as significant. It is critical of the commodification of art, of the role of galleries and museums, of dominant 'stories' of art history, and of its

Conceptual Art For Consumers

Lucienne Bestall
E: lucienne.bestall@gmail.com
W: lucienne-pallas-bestall.tumblr.com

Sharné McDonald
E: sharnemcdonald@gmail.com
W: sharnemcdonald.com

own necessary position within these fraught coordinates. Conceptual art appears largely uncomfortable with the art systems on which it ultimately relies for validation. However, conceptual art is not isolated from the 'real' world. It's critical engagements often extend beyond the systems that govern art, posing questions about external structures; politics, societal norms, consumerism, and so on.

--

"Conceptualism distanced itself from the material quality and commodity status of art - its rejection of art's conventional object status, for example, and its attempt to eliminate or appropriate many of the institutions of art, such as the critic and the gallery."

Blake Stimson

--

"In its broadest possible definition, then, the conceptual in art means an expanded critique of the cohesiveness and materiality of the art object, a growing wariness toward definitions of artistic practice as purely visual, a fusion of the work with its site and context of display, and an increased emphasis on the possibilities of publicness and distribution."

Alexander Alberro

--

"Conceptualism successfully renegotiated its place in the social order, gaining new authority for art and artists in the process and, at least momentarily, redefining the social function of art."

Blake Stimson

--

"Conceptual art becomes an important modality of practice in this respect: while conceptual artists managed to shift much of the work involved in art production to the viewer via self-reflexive framing, and explicitly stated that objects of art need not be made at all"

Anton Vidokle

--

"Spend a day in Paris."

Yves Klein

--

Given the indeterminacy of conceptual art, and an initial sense of suspicion, a feeling it is all an elaborate joke, conceptual art is perhaps accompanied by a certain weariness. A weariness of things that cannot be described in a single sentence. That cannot be easily defined. If conceptual art is so disparate in its multitude of guises, how is it to be recognized? Must one approach all ambiguous objects with the reverence of art, at the risk of humiliation? Or assume that it is not art unless it has a corresponding label, a photograph in a weighty catalogue, and is situated within four white walls?

--

"So gathered, the corpus [of art] seems incredibly heterogeneous to you. It includes images, but not all images; sounds, but only some; written or printed texts, but only certain ones; two- and three-dimensional objects, some made in the image of humans, but also others that are unrecognizable; gestures, cries, and speeches, but performed or uttered only under certain, extremely variable, conditions; and so on."

Thierry de Duve

--

[Pause]

--

"Midnight: Nocturnal walk through the forest to help facilitate the convergence of various points of view."

Harald Szeemann

A Vague Introduction To Conceptual Art II

LUCIENNE BESTALL