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Teacher who will receive this document:

..Dr. Simon Gusman.....

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Signed:

.....


Name of student:

..Thill Cathy.....

Student number:

..S1047520.....

Beauty And Contemporary Art:
Locating the Notion of Beauty in Jeff Koons
Series *Balloon Dogs*

by

Cathy Thill

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fig. 1 Koons, Jeff. *Balloon Dog (Orange)*. 1994-2000, Location Unknown.

Abstract

During the 19th century, the opinion that beauty could only be expressed through art was prevalent - one even thought that beauty was essential to art. One way for art to acquire beauty was by imitating nature. Objects in nature possess organic forms of what was considered as being beautiful. Masters such as Leonardo Da Vinci, Michelangelo, aimed to perfect their techniques of naturalism. The notion of *beaux arts* was created. Now, hundreds of years later, the notion of beauty is highly avoided while referring to art. One can even say that it is a crime to speak of it and to refer to it. Contemporary Art is striving towards a reduction to the very essence that makes art become art. But where does that leave the concept of beauty in contemporary art? Through the examination of history, philosophy and theory, a deeper understanding of contemporary art will be achieved and applied on the “Balloon Dog” series by the American artist Jeff Koons.

This thesis strives to answer the following questions: How is beauty perceived by its viewer? Can beauty help us to navigate contemporary art? Is beauty still a component of contemporary art or has it become an antidote? Is beauty a component of Jeff Koons Balloon Dog?

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Introduction

If you foolishly ignore beauty, you'll soon find yourself without it. Your life will be impoverished. But if you wisely invest in beauty, it will remain with you all the days of your life. - Frank Lloyd Wright

Beauty is out of style. Artists avoid it to not be pigeonholed as creators of decorations and art books stopped using the term. Where once artists were on the quest to capture beauty, a preference for grids dominates. The creation of contemporary art reminds more of an analytical, rational process where functionality and meaning are more important than a free individual creation. The principles of Modernity are often not suitable to transmit something deeply individual such as Emotions and Personality. The problem for this is the misbelief that beauty is old fashioned and that it is not a serious aim for contemporary creatives. This thesis hopes to situate beauty amongst contemporary art and as an example analyses its relevance in the sculpture *Balloon Dog* created by the American artist Jeff Koons.

In chapter one, I will examine the experience of beauty. What is an aesthetic experience? Anjan Chatterjee, a neuroscientist analysed this appreciation in his book *The Aesthetic Brain*. He explores that beauty is not useless at all and he tries to “gaze at beauty, pleasure and art through the bifocal spectacle of neuroscience and evolutionary psychology” (Chatterjee 15). He explains why humans appreciate some faces, bodies or landscapes over others and by this shows that beauty is not subjective but it is deeply rooted in humans subconsciousness. According to Christoph Thun-Hohenstein, director of the Austrian

museum MAK, beauty is more than what the eye can capture. All human senses are susceptible to beauty. The ability to capture it, is what distinguishes humans from any other species. It is the origin of human urge to produce art. Therefore, one can say that we need beauty in times of digital Modernism. The design duo Jessica Walsh and Stefan Sagmeister exemplify this same idea in their book *Beauty*. To set against common thinking that beauty is irrelevant, they elaborated a book that unifies philosophy, history, science and design to understand why people have always been drawn to beauty and how it can influence behaviour. To underlie this idea, they questioned their Instagram community and assembled the results in their book along with objects that are defined as being beautiful.

Chapter two will examine philosophy on beauty and aestheticism with focussing on Immanuel Kant. The book *The aesthetics of Modernism* provides an introduction on aestheticism from 1900 until 1970. According to the author, during this period a coherent art movement was nonexistent since an attitude criticizing Christianity and scientific rationalism was emerging. The historical fact and the contrasting notions of naturalism and realism will help by defining aestheticism itself. In Kant's book *The Critique of Judgement* the philosopher analyses how beauty can be perceived. For him, it was clear that the aesthetic pleasure depends on the reflection of an object and therefore differs from the pleasant. This means that Beauty does not exist without thinking and helps set up a framework on how humans respond to contemporary art. The book *Beauty* edited by John Miller contains a collection of texts about beauty in different contexts. Not only does that expand the perspective but some texts include information on how art is perceived. One of these texts is Clifford Bax's *In Ancient Egypt*. In this work, he mentions that "the earliest statuettes have no beauty at all" (Miller 242). This was because the men that produced them simply enlarged the feminine private parts. Moreover, he comments that in ancient Egypt the wives of the

Pharaoh were considered as being beautiful because of their wealth. This might be linked to the artworks of Jeff Koons who are considered as extremely expensive artworks - the statue Balloon Dog was sold in 2013 for 43,46 Million Euros.

Chapter three examines what has been labelled as contemporary art and how aestheticism has evolved. Gilbert Rolfe's book *Beauty and the Contemporary Sublime* the author, an artist himself, takes a critical view on what was considered as being beautiful in art from 1986 until 1993. The book develops on the notion of the sublime and analyses its relation to technology rather than nature. This will be relevant while analysing the notion of beauty in contemporary art since the importance of technology in art has increased over the last years. Arnd Schneider and Christopher Wright's book *Contemporary Art and Anthropology* goes even further by exploring the links between anthropology and contemporary art. This will especially be relevant in the last part of the third chapter. Even though anthropology has been commonly linked to tribal artefacts, the approach that it is incorporated in contemporary art provides a useful framework while analyzing a modern artwork. In the case of Jeff Koons, the artist plays with the binary oppositions of natural and artificial. The impression of wonder and curiosity viewers have, while gazing at Jeff Koons objects can be compared to the cabinets of curiosity, that is deeply rooted in anthropology.

The thesis ends with a demonstration if and how beauty is still relevant in contemporary art while examining Jeff Koons and his *Balloon Dog*. In Martin Jörg Schäfer's article "'Fantasy Realism': Rainald Goetz, Jeff Koons, and the Ethics of Pop Art", the author analyses the artist in relation to ethics. To do so, he refers to Rainald Goetz, a German author who wrote an artistic screenplay called *Jeff Koons*. The play is not meant to be a portraiture of the American artist but is a critique of what the limits of art are. Schäfer mentions that art should be compared to a text that needs to be read. Even though *Balloon Dog* seems to be a

copy of realism that was enlarged, this is certainly not the case, when sticking to Schäfer's article. The artist himself describes the artwork as a "symbol of us" which can be interpreted in many ways. The book *Better living through criticism - How to Think About Art, Pleasure, Beauty and Truth* by Anthony Scott builds a framework for this. The book not only shares information about the relevance of beauty in art but also shares ideas on how an object of art should be analysed and investigated.

Because of the already mentioned different interpretations of the *Balloon Dog* series, I will not reach a fixed conclusion on the meaning behind it. I will, however, argue what relevance beauty in this series and contemporary art has.

Experiencing Beauty

Beauty has always occupied humans, they have always been drawn to it and will always be. It has always been a source of inspiration that at the same time engages to go further but also has the power to destroy. The fact that “many objects in the world have great beauty” (Chatterjee, 4) and their differences, make it hard to analyse what makes them beautiful. Thus, beauty is at the same time a mysterious and powerful thing that is difficult to explain. To evaluate how beauty is experienced, we will explore what an aesthetic experience consists of before going into its roots. In the section about the roots of beauty, we will elaborate on if beauty has always played a role in human history or if it only has become relevant in modern days. After this, we will analyse how the idea that beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder functions. We will find out if there is a universal truth about beauty or if beauty is always subjective. At the end of the chapter, we will have a good idea about the notion of beauty and this framework will help us in the chapter about the philosophical aspects of beauty and art.

Aesthetic Experience

To build a framework that can analyse an artwork in relation to beauty, one needs to define how beauty is perceived and what this aesthetic experience consists of. One way is by looking at this phenomenon scientifically and by analysing the meaning of the word *Beauty* itself. To do so, we will first have a look at different definitions of an aesthetic experience before looking at the scientific aspect of how aesthetics are experienced.

To define an aesthetic experience already brings forth many different characterizations. One way is by looking at an aesthetic experience as an enjoyment of an object for its own sake. According to Scruton, the aesthetic experience has nothing to do with the appreciation of aesthetic properties of the object but with the imagined properties that relate to the object. An aesthetic experience is therefore extremely personal. This, however, poses several problems because of its ambiguity. Walton, on the other hand, describes an aesthetic experience as a diverse pleasure one gets when admiring something. This would mean that an aesthetic pleasure has double pleasures: the pleasure in an object and the pleasure of admiring it. If that is the case, this would mean that the simple appreciation of a sunset would not be considered as an aesthetic experience because its viewer often does not take further pleasure in valuing it. The experience would be too superficial. Levinson on the other hand, thinks that one appreciates an object because of its features. However, when an aesthetic experience arises, one can say that it is object-oriented. It can emerge through a range of features such as meanings, forms and intuitions. The experience is valued because of its own sake. Capturing beauty psychologically and scientifically might however provide new insight or the methodical investigation might lead to a restriction of sensual and emotional experience.

Since an aesthetic experience can be the source of pleasure, people wrongly think that this experience can be compared to a good meal. Even though the brain uses the same system for pleasure one gets while eating chocolate and the pleasure that derives while appreciating art, one should not treat them as equal. Aesthetic experiences go a lot further than the sense of taste. Art is often experienced as an emotional composition. Art can evoke, shape and modify human feelings. It is not surprising that aesthetics is one of the oldest interests in

psychological research. To get a better understanding of how art is experienced, we are going to look at different aesthetic approaches.

One contemporary approach is Daniel Berlyne's "the new experimental aesthetics". According to him, structural features of art contain stimuli factors such as conflict, uncertainty, complexity and novelty. Paintings could be described as a variation of those factors. He states that a difference between interest and liking exists. Interest can be temporary and persistent. The drive of both interests is the concept of *Arousal*. The core of the aesthetic experience is therefore the feeling of arousal. Interest is thus created by arousal generating stimuli. Those stimulus factors have two core similarities, each of them involves comparison and the ability of excitement. Besides the concept of interest, the concept of liking also plays a significant role in the aesthetic experience. The potential of evoking pleasure is described as *pleasingness*. The act of pleasing which is associated with the concept of liking is, therefore, different from the one of interest.

Berlyne explains the concept of arousal in relation to the variable of complexity, which emerges out of a comparison process of different patterns. He states that an inverted U model is at the basis of arousal and the determinant of an aesthetic experience. The potential of arousal increases with the rise of stimuli factors. If for example, a painting has many components that contribute to the stimulus of complexity, the potential of arousal rises. If however, the complexity is too high, the potential arousal decreases. This inverted U curve (fig.1) is one of the most replicated findings of experimental aesthetics.

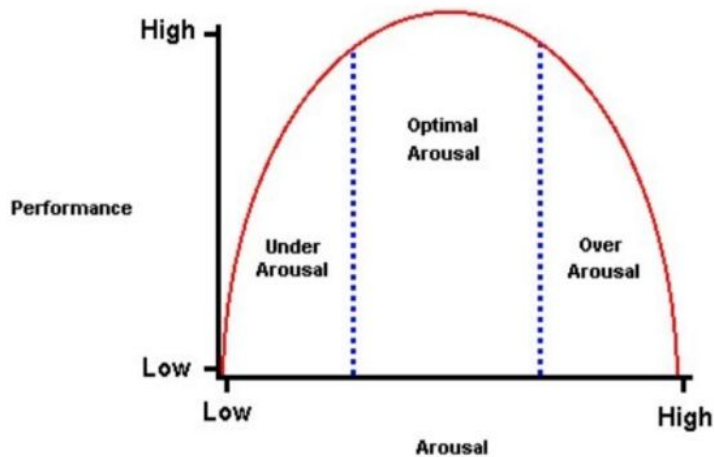


fig. 2 Inverted U curve by Daniel Berlyne

Another way to understand an aesthetic experience is by looking scientifically at beauty. This helps us to understand which different parts of the human body are involved during an aesthetic experience. According to Anjan Chatterjee “brain studies show that there is no specific neural network dedicated to aesthetics.” (Chatterjee, 12) However, if aesthetics are broken down into component parts, one notices, that those flexible ensembles apply to the brain mechanisms. This means, that neural subsystems flexibly combine during aesthetic experiences. Those aesthetic experiences are guided by experience and culture and can change over time and space.

Faced with beauty, it is often difficult to break the gaze and step away. Thus the aesthetic experience begins in the eyes, where different nerves interact. Afterwards the received information is processed in different regions of the brain and interacts with emotions in a different part of the brain, the limbic area. This area, however, depends on the aesthetic experience. While finding an object attractive, the limbic areas are turned on, whereas if one finds the meaning of an object beautiful, the temporal lobes are activated. Moreover, when an

aesthetic experience is created through personal memory, the inside of the temporal lobe is engaged.

As already mentioned, neuroaesthetics studies present humans not having a dedicated aesthetic module, nor a receptor in their brain. Therefore, during an aesthetic experience “ensembles of sensory, emotional, and cognitive systems” (Chatterjee, 183) engage flexibly. It is this flexibility, that makes the aesthetic experience of art unpredictable and variable. While some images produce immediate reactions that play on adaptive universal responses, others are biased by personal experiences. Because those emotional reflexes are often unmediated by thought, they produce quick changes in heart rate, pupil size and even skin conductance.

Finally, we are going to look at the meaning of the word “beauty” to comprehend what different roles it played over time and why it is negatively associated today. The word “beauty” has experienced different meanings throughout time and cultures. For example in ancient Egypt, women wanted to become as thin as possible, during the baroque plump bodies were on-trend. Besides the evolution of what is considered as being beautiful, the reputations also changed. What was once a striving of many, was tried to banish and destroyed after the war. One element is however often forgotten while illustrating beauty is its attachment to ugliness and pain. Charles Baudelaire describes this ambiguity in his poem *Hymn to Beauty*. He states that beauty can be positive and negative at the same time, or as he says “godless yet divine” (Miller, 47). Beauty has the power to seduce but also to engage and inspire. Because of this duality, the word “beauty” has often been the subject of countless discussions. The words “beauty” and “beautiful” are currently attached to a negative stigma that is rarely used to describe contemporary art. Monet’s lilies are seen as banal because they are representations of plant life and thus lack conceptual work. However, beauty is essential

to our lives. Being always connected with imperfections such as illnesses, competition, war, poverty and starvation, aesthetic experiences help to overcome these negative aspects of life.

To conclude, one can say that an aesthetic experience is a deeper encounter than a simple admiration or liking, it does not need a purpose but can change the way you look or feel about the world and provide new insights. As the inverted U curve by Berlyne however shows, an aesthetic experience depends on the tangibility of the object. The possibility of finding an object beautiful rises with its complexity and depth, however, if the object is too complex, the possibility drops. Additionally, the scientific research shows that humans do not have a specific module or receptor in the brain specifically for aesthetic experiences. The module that is engaged, depends on the trigger of pleasure. The part that is engaged when finding an object attractive differs from the one that is engaged while finding an object beautiful because of personal memory. It is this flexibility, which makes the notion of beauty difficult to grasp and comprehend. Because of the myth that is, therefore, associated with the word 'beauty', its significance changed over time. Contrary to a time when once people were striving to find perfect beauty, was destroyed after war and moved into the background. Despite this ambiguity, beauty has always played a significant role in human life as we will see in the next section.

The Roots of Beauty

Analyzing the activities that happen in the brain while experiencing beauty, does not testify its relevance. Evolutionary psychology, however, can help explaining why objects are considered to be beautiful. It is through survival, that human mental abilities evolved. People were considered to be beautiful when their faces and bodies had certain features. Those physical features advertised a person's health which was important in the choice of partners.

The most fertile looking partner was chosen to survive. In terms of beauty in landscapes, survival was certainly important when settling down. The scenes that looked rich in resources and safe were more attractive than others. When captivated faces, one research strategy suggests, if people from a different culture share the same opinions on beauty, the other suggests looking at how babies respond to beauty. In this section, we are going to see how beauty is rooted not only in the human mind. To do so, we will first look at the historical aspect of beauty, to see if beauty has always played a role in human history, before looking at how this anchorage is still relevant today. Additionally, I am going to analyse how human beauty and beauty in landscapes is experienced and apply this knowledge on art.

To begin, the relevance and human core of beauty can be seen when looking at human history. One of the first tools of human history was a hand axe. These objects were always perfectly symmetrical. (fig.1) However, there is no practical reason for this. One can easily cut meat with an asymmetrical polished stone. The philosopher Dennis Dutton believes, that the main reason for the symmetry is beauty. They found that a symmetrically shaped stone is more aesthetic than an asymmetrically shaped one. This shows that even before language and before the birth of the human species (the homo sapiens evolved 200.000 years ago), human ancestors were interested in aestheticism and shaped things because they were simply more beautiful.



fig. 3 hand axe from Africa, between 1.5 mio and 100.000 years old

Moreover, this anchorage can also be found when analysing how humans respond to physical beauty or the beauty in nature. In a study, two tribes, that were isolated from the rest of the world, were shown faces from different origins. The woman's faces with larger eyes were considered to be more attractive by both tribes. Despite of being isolated, they agreed on beauty judgements. However, this does not mean that culture does not affect which faces are considered to be attractive. For example, some facial embellishments of African and Southern American tribes are not considered being beautiful by many Western people.

One hour after birth, babies can already capture faces. After one week, they can distinguish faces such as the one of their mother. In this same week, they learn how to mimic facial expressions. Their behaviours can already express what they like. The technique of preferential looking used by developmental psychologists can determine what catches a babies attention. By measuring how long a baby looks at one face, they can analyse which face is more attractive to a baby's eyes. A different experiment can support this theory. Two identical dolls, that could only be set apart through the look of their faces, were given to 1-year-old babies. The result was, that the babies played twice as long with the doll with the attractive face than the one with the unattractive face.

Both strategies suggest that humans mostly share the same opinions on beauty in regarding faces. Even though adults are bombarded with advertising images considered as beauty, the results show that there is a core of what is considered as beautiful in everyone, independent of culture. The core of this lies in the hormone system. Because “sex hormones, estrogen and testosterone, produce sexually dimorphic features” (Chatterjee, 13), faces with feminized features which can also be found in babies faces are regarded to be more attractive. On the other hand, male features that show a high testosterone percentage such as a squared-off jaw, are preferred by most women. However, as studies have shown, physical appearances are not as important for women when choosing their partner as it is for men.

Moreover, research has shown, that humans prefer an environment, that makes sense to them. In 1982, the philosophers John D. Balling and John H. Falk published a study showing that most children are drawn to a picture of a savannah when asked to show their favourite landscape. Again it is the survivor instinct, that lies in the human core. Places, that provide safety are considered to be attractive. Those places contain large trees to hide, water to drink, distant views to see enemies. This preference particularly applies to young children who haven't yet been influenced by cultural preferences. The roots of beauty can be explained by evolutionary psychology that suppress not only cultural but also daily influences.

Chatterjee mentions that specific reward systems in the brain are linked to appetites. Thus, human beauty is tied to sexual desire and landscapes are tied to the desire of safety. Therefore, the roots of beauty were: find a partner, make healthy children and survive. Philosophers such as Immanuel Kant, on which I will elaborate subsequently, however, thought that aesthetic experience was more profound than this. One can say, that the pleasures perceived through an aesthetic experience, create a certain paradox. This paradox is

that the roots of beauty are survival practices, whereas, the aesthetic responses are not supposed to be useful.

These pleasurable experiences also apply to art. Wittgenstein states “that when the eye sees something beautiful, the hand wants to draw it.” (Scarry, 3) When looking at the painting *The Scream* by Edvard Munch, the property to read faces is tackled. People can recognize and read basic emotions such as fear and anger. When looking at a painting that expresses these emotions, the same neural machinery that also engages in real life, gets engaged. The same applies to when looking at painted landscapes. Human survival instinct engages the same neural machinery when looking at a painted landscape that looks inviting and when looking at a real landscape. Moreover, facial beauty can be applied to Leonardo Da Vinci’s *Mona Lisa*. The woman depicted is considered to be the most beautiful woman in the history of art. For this painting, Da Vinci used the ideals of beauty of the Renaissance. The eyes are big, catching the gaze of its viewer, the landscape in the background provides safety with the distant view and her skin shows no wrinkles or impurities. The woman that is depicted is in a fertile age. The stare in her face gets the attention of the painting’s viewer and reinforces the image of fertility, her gaze depicts the power that infuses women in the early stages of pregnancy. Her facial expression, which is the source of endless discussion, is a striking example that faces are engaging and captivating. It is at the same time seductive and shyly mesmerizing. Abstract artworks, however, require more complex analysis. It is less clear how an abstract painting can convey emotions. Those aesthetic experiences are often linked to the principles of mapping elemental visual properties such as shape, colour and movement.

Thus, one can say, that beauty is deeply rooted in the human mind and has always played a central role in human history. As the different researches prove, most humans share

the same taste of what they consider as being beautiful. This common taste is rooted in the survival instincts that still play a role. Those instincts are also relevant in what we consider as beauty in art. Consequently, we prefer what gives us a feeling of safety or what we find attractive. One could, therefore state, that beauty is objective and does not lie in the eye of the beholder. In the next section, we are going to see if one can say, that beauty is a personal preference or if universal beauty exists.

The Eye of the Beholder

The quote “Beauty lies in the Eye of the Beholder” is often mistaken to be written by a philosopher from antiquity. In reality, it resulted out of a romantic comedy. During the 19th century, the novel *Molly Bawn* written by Margaret Wolfe Hungerford firstly played with this idea. This led to a misunderstanding of beauty. Most people assume that taste is personal and involuntary. This is, however, often not the case as Anjan Chatterjee demonstrated. As already mentioned, beauty commences in the retina of our eyes, so instead of saying that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, one should say, that it lies in the brain of the beholder which is processing the different signs. To see if beauty lies in the beholder or if one can find an universal truth of what people consider as beauty, I am going to first have a look at the philosophical perception of this idea before analysing how scientists think about it.

One philosopher, who was very concerned about aesthetics was David Hume. He supports this idea, stating that beauty depends on the mind that contemplates beauty in things. In his eyes, beauty is, therefore, subjective and a matter of feelings and emotions. What may be beautiful to one person might be completely different to another. This theory is supported by many psychologists. They have developed the idea, that how one looks at something has an impact on the emotional reaction, into the “appraisal theory of emotions”. By this, one

interprets objects in a way that our goals and desires are fulfilled. This would explain why an object can trigger fear in one person and anger in another. This would, however, also suggest that the idea of beauty is meaningless because it is only a matter of personal taste. The idea of beauty would then become invaluable.

Studies sustain this idea but show, that beauty is more than a superficial preference. Dr Helmut Leder is the leader of the «Empirical Visual Aesthetics Lab», one of the leading institutes for visual aestheticism in psychology. In one of his studies, he analyses how people who suffer from Alzheimer's react to beauty. He repeated the experiment two weeks after he first showed them images and questioned which one they found the most beautiful. Even though the patients could not remember the images shown nor ever having suffused the task, they chose the same images as the most beautiful ones. This shows that beauty is rooted in the eye of the beholder even if memory is restricted.

Additional to this study, Dr Norbert Schwarz conducted similar researches regarding beauty and familiarity. He found out, that objects that can easily be grasped leave a much more impactful impression to its viewers than objects that are difficult to understand. According to Schwarz features such as simplicity, symmetry, proportion and contrast “probably facilitate the processing of the stimulus.” (Schwarz, 2) The sensation of beauty relies therefore on the intelligibility of an object but also on the familiarity to its viewer. The more one is familiar with an object or with a person, the more they recognise its beauty and consider it to be attractive.

An aesthetic experience can, as already stated, take place everywhere. Over time those experiences can create a pattern and tendency of personal preferences. Those patterns can also be created through cultural influences who build “on universal biases by interacting with or enhancing their effects” (Chatterjee, 64). Anthony Scott compares this phenomenon

to a Facebook wall. Social networks and marketing algorithms have used traditional forms of aesthetic discourse for marketing strategies. Users are constructing a private universe of taste by sharing and liking. By this, the advertisements displayed are matching with personal taste. Users who liked Nintendo might also want to buy the newest Playstation or the newest game and users are persuaded to buy and try those things.

Taste, however, is, as already mentioned, never constant. It can change through personal experiences, the influence of others or even newly acquired knowledge. Most people will already have experienced this variable taste. The music that one loved at the age of thirteen, might not sound interesting anymore. One might even recognise the flaws of the artwork that seemed to be perfect at the initial encounter, years later. This shows that even though beauty can lie in the eye of the beholder, it can be variable.

To conclude, one can say that beauty can be very personal, it is however often shaped by external influences and can be found in the core of the human mind. Influences such as culture affect our experiences of beauty and how one responds to them. Through this personal patterns can be created. The saying that 'beauty lies in the eye of the beholder' is, therefore, only partially true. Beauty is rooted in the object, but it "exists only for the mind able to behold it" (Hartmann, 16) The questions one should ask while experiencing art should be if one likes it because of the work itself or because of personal memories. This theoretical starting point will be further developed in the chapter about Immanuel Kant, whose *Critique of Judgement* investigates the fundamental nature of taste.

The Philosophy of Beauty and Contemporary Art

To begin the examination of beauty and contemporary art, it seems appropriate to examine how philosophy and philosophers have looked at beauty and contemporary art over time. The urge to define beauty or art is nothing new or modern. Even though art is an old discipline, the question of its essence still occupies many and differs from one person to another. This is also the case when defining beauty. The question of whether beauty is dependent on the object or the eye of the beholder was already prevalent in many philosophers from antiquity on, as we will see in the first section of the chapter. After having built a framework about different approaches, we will have a brief introduction into aesthetics. This philosophical branch links together the different philosophical approaches with art, building frameworks about how an artwork can be analysed. In the last section of this chapter, we are going to have a look at Kant's approach on beauty and Art. We will dedicate an entire section to him not only because he is the founder of all formalism in modern aesthetics but also because his Critique of Judgement remains one of the most important contributions that have ever been made in aesthetics.

The Evolution of Beauty and Art in Philosophy

As we have already mentioned the perception of what is beauty or art is nothing modern. As we will later see, philosophers have tried to capture both complex notions in order to make them more comprehensible. To get a better understanding of what philosophers thought about what the essence of those two phenomenon are, I will examine beauty and art,

placing it within a broad philosophical context. To do so, I will explore how its perceptions changed over time, analysing different well-known philosophers in a chronological order.

Plato stated that even the universe was beautiful with or without humans. This would mean that beauty would not depend on whether humans define an object as being beautiful or not. In his text *Symposium*, he underlines that humans will never know entirely what beauty is, instead, they should live in constant contemplation of absolute beauty. However, he assumes that “creativity is somehow essentially tied to the beautiful” (Hyland, 49). Additionally, he said that beauty and truth are linked. What is beautiful, is also true. Humans tend to believe in beauty and its power. This also explains why beauty promotes reproduction. When looking at something beautiful, one often feels the urge to capture it forever. Thus “when the eye sees someone beautiful, the whole body wants to reproduce the person” (Scarry, 4). This phenomenon of duplication has led artists to translate images into a different media, style or even the representation of a painting moments later. By this Plato assumed that art could only be a copy of the original. This idea differs from the contemporary understanding of art where art has the aim of improvement and depicts a higher level than a simple representation. Contemporary art is able in some way to communicate a higher truth and improve the human being in some way.

Plato’s student Aristotle was also concerned with the quintessential philosophical question of what is art. He even “gave art a central place in his political theory” (Allen, 27). According to him, art defines people as soon as they are born. Both philosophers used the term *mousiké* to describe this - a word that describes all arts associated with muses. Similar to the concept of high culture and low culture, he differentiated between “amusement” and “civilized pursuits”. The “civilized pursuits” that can be triggered by art can “help fulfil human nature” (Allen, 27). Aristotle introduced the term *Katharsis* and applies it to art.

Through art, strong emotions can arise but one does not have to be led by them. Through *katharsis* those emotions are processed and one can conduct with an ameliorated life.

Aesthetic experience can, therefore, be compared to a purifying treatment. He explains that because art reflects or imitates, it can trigger “recognitions”. Those “recognitions” of certain insights, such as how certain events can trigger certain emotions, arise and ameliorate the knowledge of life. This is because “human beings learn almost everything they know through one kind of imitation or another” (Allen, 28). Because of this imitation, art mirrors the truth about human beings and the world and can teach invaluable truths. Thus art can serve as an awakening of what one might be and what one should be. He relieved art to necessarily produce something aesthetically beautiful. According to Aristotle, beauty is also above the useful. It can be experienced through useful skills such as reading, drawing and writing, thus it can be found in both action and stillness. Additionally, he argues that beauty does not lie in the eye of the beholder but is instead deeply embedded in science. This is because he found objects that apply to the ‘golden ratio’, a mathematical formula found in nature, of great beauty.

Later philosophers had an entirely different view on beauty. David Hume described beauty as a mental construct which is not dependent on the quality of the object but only exists in the head of the beholder. His theories on beauty changed a lot over time, whereas in earlier theories he argued that beauty is nothing but a form that produces pleasure, he later defined beauty as a feeling that derives from the mind when it takes pleasure in an object. Thus, beauty can be natural or moral. Opponents thought that beauty is associated with things. Paleness, for example, was considered as being beautiful because it was linked to purity and wealth. Hume countered this idea saying that firstly different people would be more likely to respond in the same way towards a beautiful object than an object that

provides bodily pleasure. Moreover, he argues that beautiful objects trigger calm and this feeling can hardly be differentiated from the perception of that object. Lastly, he states that the “sentiment of beauty” is projected onto an object. This, however, leads to confusion since objects that are not genuinely beautiful can also cause the sentiment of beauty even though beauty feels different from any other sentiment. He claims that only connoisseurs that have studied art can differentiate if an artwork is beautiful or not. He expects them to make use of their objective reason. It is only rational considerations that recognize differentiations and can make comparisons to capture the beauty in art.

The German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel had a different approach. As stated by him, beauty could only take place in art and not in nature. He does so because he thinks that beauty in nature is too vague. Art, however, does not just imitate but shows spiritual freedom. In his eyes, only conscious beings can have freedom and since nature does not have that consciousness, it can never reach a higher state. This would mean that flowers can be defined as being beautiful, however, a painting of flowers would reach a higher level. This distinction between the beauty in art and beauty in nature is an important turn in aestheticism, one that as we will later see, Kant failed to take. He states that a work of art has three characteristics: it is brought into being by humans, it is created from a sensuous medium and has a purpose. In his theory, Hegel points out, that there is a distinction between the representation and the content, on which he mainly focuses, of beauty. The content or the idea behind an artwork is similar to Aristotle’s theory linked to truth. According to him, it is when the idea and the material that is used for the creation of an artwork, perfectly merges, that ideal form of beauty arises. Thus he calls true beauty the expression of spiritual freedom. Even though one could comprehend this in a way that the function of art is to reveal the truth by using beauty, Hegel points out that art is not a means to something else. This is where he

uses the concept of “art for art’s sake”. This would mean that there is an “end of art”, because “art, considered in its highest vocation, is and remains for us a thing of the past” and no longer affords that satisfaction of spiritual needs which earlier ages and nations sought in it” (Hegel, 10-11). Thus contemporary art is in his eyes no longer a “representation of the absolute” but the awareness of the historical presence of men. Because of this change in function, art is liberated and can turn to the "living presence" of human experience in its entirety, including the self-presentation of the artistic materials and media that are responsible for the artistic appearance. This means that material forms or objects are no longer adequate to represent spirit.

Nietzsche took the interpretation of beauty a lot further and looked at it as the essence of the world. He differentiates between the “Apollonian” that stands for reason, form, intention and individuality and the “Dionysian” in which we can recognize nature, reason, suffering and drive. He shows that both elements already lie in nature itself. Thus art that cooperates with the “Apollonian” and “Dionysian, it imitates mimesis. As a consequence, human become artists and create a second reality, an aesthetic reality in which both opposites can simultaneously be expressed and cancelled. Whereas Plato treated beauty and truth equally, Nietzsche wanted to fight truth with beauty. This would mean that the ugly would have a possible aesthetical power. This can be captured while listening to dissonant music. Even though dissonant chords sound jarring, while listening, those can translate into pleasure. In his eyes, human beings are the source from which the universe is made up, it is through language and ideas that the universe gets shaped. It is through art that humans can become “Übermensch” - a goal that people can set for themselves. He grounds this saying that “Nothing is beautiful, only man: on this piece of naivete rests all aesthetics, it is the first truth of aesthetics. Let us immediately add its second: nothing is ugly but degenerate man - the

domain of aesthetic judgment is therewith defined.” (Nietzsche, 53) To create art, a particular psychological state is required, this state can translate into the artist's strength - *intoxication*. This intoxication can be triggered through sexual arousal or even narcotics. The only thing that matters is that it gets “rid ourselves of a prejudice here: idealization does not consist, as is commonly believed, in subtracting or deducting little, incidental things” (Nietzsche, 47). It is in this state that “man transforms things until they reflect his power—until they are reflections of his perfection. This need to transform into perfection is art” (Nietzsche, 47). Thus art is more than simple representations of things that already exist, it is a metaphysical component that makes the transcendence of nature possible. Art is therefore linked with human existence - meaning that in which ways art is justified or its connotations and qualities are answered by life itself. By this, he was the first theorists that radicalized its functional character against the “freedom of value”. According to him, the world was so horrible that without beauty or art humans would commit suicide.

To sum up, one can say that since the concept of beauty and the concept of art are constantly evolving, they are both struggling to find common ground in a relationship dominated by generalities. Both concepts seem far too imprecise to be defined by a simple concept. Due to the variations in form, it is hard to capture both phenomena through a simple description. Contemporary art is thus anything, everything and nothing together. Or as Hegel states, art becomes more conceptual as it progresses over time until it finally becomes a thought itself. However, what Plato, Aristotle, Hume, Nietzsche and Hegel can agree on is art's attachment to beauty. It is beauty that makes art increasingly accessible for an audience and makes it more comprehensible. The bridge that many philosophers constructed between both phenomenons should therefore again open art to the possibility of beauty. This does not suggest, that all art that is not strikingly beautiful on first glance should be ignored. But one

should be open for an aesthetic experience. Even though, contemporary art is leading towards a reduction of visual components and increasing importance of meaning, aesthetic understanding and acknowledging can lead to a better understanding of the world.

Aesthetics

Aesthetics build on what ancient philosophers said about beauty, linking art and philosophy together. It deals with questions about how we react to aesthetic experiences and how those experiences can affect our experience, or as Anjan Chatterjee would say: “Aesthetics focus on properties of objects and our emotional responses to those properties”(Chatterjee, 116). These questions, however, do not bring forth any clearly defined or ultimate answers. To get a better idea, however, it is inevitable to analyse what people associate with the term aesthetics and how they are perceived. One framework on how the aesthetics of an artwork can be analysed was done by the German philosopher Nicolai Hartmann on which I will elaborate further. This not only will help later in analysing beauty in Jeff Koons series *Balloon Dogs* but also shows the dualism that is present in aesthetics.

It is only since the eighteenth century, the period of Enlightenment, aesthetics are considered as a subject area for study. During that period, many scholars wrote and discussed the value and characteristics of beauty which lead to a romanticized understanding of art and how it is perceived. The concept of aesthetic experience has since then gained importance and defines how art is comprehended. It has become nearly impossible to think about a work of art without questioning its meaning or aesthetical worth. Contrary to Plato’s ideas of embedded beauty, the tendency shifted to an increasing importance of the viewer’s perception of an artwork. Or as Hartmann says, “a thing becomes beautiful when the real foreground becomes transparent” (Hartmann, 16) Thus art is a creation of something invisible

and visible at the same time. Even if artistic creation is at first glance a realization of a physical object, it is the invisible aesthetic experience which is of primary importance.

This shows that there are unsolvable mysteries in aesthetics. The deepest of them lies primarily in the creativity of the artist and the individuality of the art object itself. The effect of an artwork merely lies in the skill of the artist to allow a deeper meaning to come through basic elements such as paint. The beholder is capable to understand the work as a physical object but is not able to grasp how it achieved the effect on him or her. Another aesthetic mystery is the uniqueness of a work. The laws of beauty differ from any other section. Every work and its attached beauty is unique because it reveals a distinctive world and the experience depends on its beholder. Thus the mystery of art is unanalyzable but comprehensible.

Hartmann explains that one can see an artwork as a formation of different layers. These layers are no physical components of the art object but are questions that the beholder may ask of it. The first level of an artwork is the foreground or the medium of which the work consists of, such as paint, marble or even written words. The second layer is the spatiality that the work shows such as a “scene that the colors and shapes “represent”” (Hartmann, 19). The next level is the movement that a painting presents. On the fifth motion is the human psychic realm, the inner life of persons. On the sixth level, the individual idea of the depicted person may appear. On the last level, various individual ideas appear such as the idea of childhood or ideas of humanity. The level of appreciation then depends on the *transparency*, the ability to communicate ideas, of the level, thus the skills of the artist. The observer may see through the arrangement of those layers and apprehend the full meaning of the work. Thus those layers create an internal dialogue and explain how the painting provokes the disinterested pleasure that will be further explained in the chapter about Kant.

The duality of aesthetics is, however, more and more acknowledged by many. In a study, the neuroscientist Thomas Jacobsen asked people to pick words they associate with aesthetics. Over 91 per cent of the time, people picked “beauty”, the word “ugly” on the other hand was picked 42 per cent of the time. This shows that people think there is a link beauty and ugly in the notion of aesthetics. This intuition has also historically influenced on how art is analyzed and explains why the word of beauty disappeared in aesthetic discussions. The word has become too vague and too banal to describe an experience that goes deeper than externalities. Thus one can say, that every artwork is created to evoke an aesthetic experience, even if the artwork lacks beauty, the response would then be an absence of aesthetic.

Consequently, art does not necessarily have aesthetic properties. However, it comprises different layers in which the beholder can find beauty, dependent on their personal experience. Those layers can provoke the disinterested pleasure on which we will elaborate in the next chapter. Additionally, as already seen in the previous chapter, aestheticism is linked to the duality of beauty and ugly. Because of this association, beauty has become too vague to express something that goes beyond simple appearances.

Kant: Beauty and Art

The most important philosopher that has investigated on aesthetics and that many referred to is Immanuel Kant. In his third critique which Dennis Dutton calls the “most powerful aesthetic theory ever devised”, *The Critique of Judgement*, the German philosopher investigates the fundamental nature of taste. The dense and abstract arguments may not only arise from the philosopher’s mind, but also from the complexity of the topic itself. While there is a consensus in what is right and what is wrong in taste, the categorical imperative

makes it right. Kant believed that the aesthetic is a source of pleasure that can be met by an individual. This idea of enjoyment is still relevant today. His theories relate to art but are not limited to it. In fact, his original goal was to capture the beauty in nature and not in art objects. To get a better understanding of his theory, I will begin with what he defines as the reflective judgements. By this, we will get a clearer idea of what is beautiful according to Kant. After defining beauty, I will analyze what Kant defines as dependent and free beauty, before interpreting his notion of disinterested pleasure since those notions play a significant role in contemporary art.

In his book, he begins discussing the four aesthetic reflective judgements: the agreeable, the good, the beautiful and the sublime. By agreeable, Kant means a sensory judgement which one, for example, receives while eating pasta. Because those judgements are purely perceptions of pleasure, they are purely subjective. The good on the other hand is an ethical judgement. This judgement is according to Kant the exact opposite of the agreeable judgement because it demands objectivity, it is the reason that evaluates if something is moral or not. Moreover, he recognized that there is also a difference in taste: pure judgements of taste and impure judgements of taste. The judgements of the sublime and the beautiful are “subjective universal” judgements and are not tied to any concept. Their judgement, however, is thought to be universal, people think that others should agree with it even if they know that many won't. This is because everyone considers beauty to be a property of things. To capture this beauty, he establishes the concepts of free beauty and dependent beauty, on which I will elaborate later. He defines sublime as a judgement that goes beyond everything, it is incomprehensible. Because this goes beyond the limits of comprehension, it must according to him be recognized as a powerful threat.

In his examination he realized, even though artists are able to create beautiful objects, beauty is rooted in the natural world. He recognizes that, however, those perceptions of beauty differ from each other and thus created the concept of four classes of beauty in objects: beauty in nature, beauty in art, dependent beauty and free beauty.

By making these distinctions, he acknowledges that not every aesthetic experience is captured by the notion of good taste. According to him, this notion is only established without prejudices. Personal opinion does not make it right or as Anthony Scott writes “believing something does not make it true”(Scott, 48). It is only reason, that legitimizes. This poses many problems in matters of taste. According to Kant

“the judgement of taste is not an intellectual judgement and so not logical, but is aesthetic - which means that it is one whose determining ground can not be other than subjective.” (Kant, 35)

He tries to counteract this thinking and defines it as a starting point, rather than a conclusion. His objective is to elevate aesthetic perception from a personal sensation to reason and by this transform the knowledge of truth into a judgement of artistic value. He does so, by building up a three-part hierarchy. On the foot of this hierarchy lies individual pleasure, or as he calls it *the agreeable*. According to him, this condition does not count as an aesthetic experience, since this judgement is expressed by only saying that one likes something.

He elaborates a distinction between free beauty and dependent beauty. By free beauty, Kant means a “singular judgement of taste” (Mallaband, 66), such as the pleasure one receives when looking at flowers. This beauty does not suppose a concept of what an object should be, it is merely superficial. The beauty of a flower is apprehended by many even though barely anyone except botanists know its true nature. When judging it for its looks, no one pays attention to the natural organ of the plant but only on its appearance. This shows

that free beauty or in this case the beauty of nature does not rely on a concept or an idea, it exists on itself. The judgement of free beauty is, therefore, in his eyes pure because the object does not have to fulfil any purpose. Dependent beauty which he also calls fixed beauty, on the other hand, is attached to a concept. He first gives the example of beauty in human beings. Because, as already mentioned, human consider the most fertile looking beings to be the most attractive. Beauty in people does, therefore, have to fulfil a purpose, the purpose of producing descendants.

He suggests that most art contains dependent beauty. This means that most art does not require a pure judgement of taste to be properly understood. However, this would suggest that anything can be aesthetically valued and thus would make art insignificant. To counter this idea, he introduces the notion of pleasure that belongs to the experience of beauty. He states that beauty serves a higher state than sensuous appetite since according to him beyond this beauty lies *the good*. One might criticise this idea, that the aesthetic appreciation leads to moral improvement, but Kant builds on this the foundation of the difficulties one encounters to define what one feels or sees. The pleasure for which art is valuable is not sensuous but a pleasure that results from the same interaction that provides knowledge. Thus to experience beauty, one requires intellect. However, one should not draw a clear distinction between the value of enjoyment and cognitive value.

Kant agrees with Hume's view that one must find an object pleasing in order to find it beautiful and that therefore, beauty is subjective. One idea that plays a significant role in this perception is the idea of disinterestedness. In his discussion, Kant claims that firstly pleasure in the beautiful is "disinterested" and that secondly, only pleasure in the beautiful is "disinterested". The German word "Interesse", however, should not be understood as the similar-sounding English word. By "Interesse", Kant means a type of pleasure that is neither

grounded nor connected with desire. Because he distinguishes between aesthetic judgements and rational judgements, he argues that concepts are not significant in aesthetic judgements. Thus they are disinterested and free. He believes that we only respond to the design of the object that satisfies our imagination instead of focussing on the purpose of the object. One could, therefore, say that Kant agrees on the saying of “Art for art’s sake” and thus the purpose of art is, therefore, simply to exist. Additionally to this, Kant thinks that art needs to be rooted in nature, even though, its beholders need to be aware of its artificiality.

This idea of disinterestedness, however, poses many problems in the appreciation of fine art. As we already saw some philosophers such as Nietzsche argued that the perception of art depends on the individual beholder. An aesthetic experience could, therefore, never be intuitive and objective. As we will later see, meaning has become one of the main roles of contemporary art. This meaning implies social, cultural and political factors which are criticized by many artworks. The judgement of art is, therefore, not always free of purposes.

Thus, one can say, that according to Kant beauty can be dependent and free. Dependent beauty which can be found in art can, however, reach a higher state than free beauty never will. By saying this, Kant enhances the meaning of art but also creates challenges in evaluating art. In the notion of disinterested interest, one should evaluate art without any prejudices and because of this art has no other purpose other than being art. An aesthetic judgement differs, therefore, from a rational judgement in terms of concept attached to the artwork. Aesthetic judgements are not based on concepts while rational judgements are, they are free and a simple sensation of unconstrained pleasure. This pleasure can, however, be the source of knowledge and to understand and be able to capture it, one needs knowledge.

Contemporary Art

To get a better understanding of why beauty seems to be banned from contemporary art, we will have a look at artworks from famous artists and see what their perception of beauty was. This will not only provide us with knowledge about various artists but also why beauty became irrelevant and will help us in understanding what contemporary art is. In the chapter “Contemporary aesthetics” we are going to go further and analyse the word and the perceptions itself. The definition of this will reveal what is relevant and focussed on in a

world that becomes more and more globalized not only in terms of linguistic and geographical aspects but also cultural fields. By defining what is considered a contemporary aesthetic, we might get a better understanding of Jeff Koons artworks and understand why contemporary art often seems to be very banal on first glance. This will lead us onto the next chapter “The Importance of Meaning”. As we will already have seen by then, the concept or the meaning plays a significant role in contemporary art. In the chapters about the philosophical aspects of contemporary art, we have seen that its beauty often differentiates from the retinal beauty because of the concept that lies behind it. Because the meaning differentiates conceptual art from purely aesthetic art that is mostly only working on the surface. Conceptual art that plays a huge role in contemporary art goes a lot further and gives art a new role.

The Evolution of Art

While contemporary art is seen as a challenge that is often too complex to understand, art itself is understood as an old discipline. An enduring idea is that art depicts the world, this idea is, however, questioned in contemporary art. While art was about imitation, contemporary art challenges this idea and purpose. Though culturally speaking art is understood to be important and encouraged, one can even describe it as “fundamental to our nature” (Chatterjee, 165), while facing it, people are often feeling a lack of understanding and anxiety. This leads to an imprecise understanding of what contemporary art is. While the reason for art to exist was long defined as “art for art’s sake”, it is no longer sufficient to appreciate art for itself. To understand the modern world, it seems necessary to understand the art made by the contemporaries. Because of the elitarian level, that contemporary art has acquired, understanding the often hidden meanings, however, becomes problematic. To get a

better understanding of this problematic, we will analyse a few artworks made by contemporary artists such as Chuck Close and David Hockney after looking at their pioneers Duchamp and Manzoni. This will not only show us how the notion of beauty has developed but also explain why it seems to be missing at first glance.

Only a few contemporary artists speak publicly about beauty as the purpose of their art. One can even say that striving for perfect beauty was banished from contemporary art. However, this is not a recent phenomenon. Earlier works from well-known artists such as Francis Bacon or Edvard Munch were already powerful without bursting elements of beauty. This does not mean that modern artworks do not contain beauty or are never considered as being beautiful. What is often forgotten is, that the binary opposition of beauty is pain and ugliness. As stated by Anthony Scott “all serious art, music and literature, is a critical act” and therefore “art is a criticism of life” (Scott, 21). If one does not ignore this attachment, one understands beauty as an experience and is open to things that try not to please but are still beautiful.

These binary opposition of beauty and ugliness are very important in modern art. Contemporary artworks can cause different emotional combinations. The experience of a modern artwork often differs from the one of a classical painting. To accommodate art, one needs to recognize, that a critical triad lies in its core. The psychologist Art Shimamura points out, that this triad consists of sensations, emotions and meaning. In art, those sensations might relate to bold colours or vivid lines. Emotions provoked by especially contemporary art are often related to disgust, shock but also pleasure. As we have seen in the inverted U curve by Berlyne those emotions can be the trigger an aesthetic experience, if they are, however, too complex, they can generate the opposite. It is therefore important for contemporary art to include those different emotions but not to overuse them. As we are exposed all the time to

images such as design or art, we only remember images that provoked feelings such as disgust or remind us of a memory we had. Thus it is no surprise that contemporary artists use these trigger elements to catch the beholder's attention but also to cause them to think critically.

One example of this complexity is Piero Manzoni's artwork *Artist's Shit* (fig. 3). The artwork that was sold for 124.000 Euros in 2007 is a component of 90 cans with the labelling "Artist's Shit Contents, 30 gr freshly preserved, produced and tinned in May 1961". What looks like a banal object that gained value by defining it as a work of art was, in fact, a critique on the depersonalisation of the artist. Or as Manzoni wrote to the artist Ben Vautier

"I should like all artists to sell their fingerprints, or else stage competitions to see who can draw the longest line or sell their shit in tins. The fingerprint is the only sign of the personality that can be accepted: if collectors want something intimate, really personal to the artist, there's the artist's own shit, that is really his" (Sophie Howarth).

The artist, therefore, criticises the fact that art is simply consumed. By using faeces as a work of art he also criticises the idea that art needs to be beautiful. However, because of the work's conceptual meaning, it is viewed as a beautiful object. As this artwork shows, contemporary art does not have to involve any technical skill and it does not have to be aesthetically beautiful, the message that it transmits is, however, of great importance as we will later see.



fig. 4 Manzoni, Piero. *Artist's Shit*. 1961, Tate Museum, London.

Another example is Marcel Duchamp's famous work *Fountain* (fig. 4) where the artist presents a urinal as a work of art. With this artwork that was a statement against aestheticism, the artist wanted to ban beauty from art. He wanted art to go deeper than the purely visual aspect. He proposed an alternative to what he called retinal art, which is art that wants to appeal the eye rather than the mind. After the first world war, he did not think that he should produce something beautiful in a world that is cruel and in which many people are unnecessarily killed. In the beginning, his supporters misinterpreted this artwork and thought that Duchamp wanted to show the beauty of everyday objects. He replied that his thought was to: "threw... the urinal in their faces as a challenge and now they admire it for its aesthetical beauty." (Richter, 207-208) Walter Arensberg who was a close friend of the artist later stated that the point of the sculpture was to reveal its beauty. Even though the object itself might be aesthetically pleasing in terms of its form and its colour, I think that the beauty of this object really lies in the conceptual meaning behind it. By enhancing an everyday object as art, he started a discussion of what is art and who has the right to decide what object can be seen as art. By signing it with the name R. Mutt, Duchamp criticised the notion of the artist as a producer in the same way as Piero Manzoni did with his cans years later.



fig. 5 Duchamp, Marcel. *Fountain*, 1917, Replica 1964, TATE Museum, London.

An opponent of this critique of beauty and art is Chuck Close. The American artist fights against the notion of de-skilled art that is associated with art that has the purpose to please people. He mentions that not only the concept of art is important but the craftsmanship and skills that are required to make such art. In the *New York Times Magazine*, he mentions that after becoming paralyzed in 1988, he could also have started making conceptual art and “put a spirit level on a shelf like everyone else! But I would miss the pushing around of colours” (Hylton) Instead, he decided to work from photographs and paint intensely realistic portraits in large scale. The portraits help the artist to deal with his disease. He is suffering from prosopagnosia, a disease where one has problems in recognizing faces. Besides this therapeutic effect that the creations of them have on its creator, the beauty of his artworks is binary. When looking at his paintings, they seem to be pictures but when looking closely, one realises that they are made out of abstract grids and colours. This often confuses the

beholders of his works because what one thinks to see at first glance, is not really there. What seems to be a very detailed artwork, is, in fact, a very abstract work without any details other than colour blocks.

One can see in these examples, that art uses the phenomenon of shocking to be memorized by its beholders and trigger thoughts or feelings. The strive to shock the bourgeoisie has, however, become commonplace and boring. Because there is an overproduction of images and humans are constantly exposed with the ugly, it becomes more and more difficult to produce something offensive. Artist such as Chuck Close have recognised this and began making room for beauty in their works. In the installation “Skyspace” by James Turrell, the artist invites its viewers to look through an aperture at the dusk and dawn projected on the ceiling. By this, the artist not only creates an inexpressible atmosphere but also invites to gaze at the beauty of nature and leaves people mute and reflecting. Art is, therefore, a “messy collection of adaptations, spandrels and exaptations” (Chatterjee, 185) and blossoms only when it is produced without boundaries. Thus, beauty should not be banned from art and can even be an element that surprises its beholders because it was long oppressed from art.

Contemporary Aestheticism

Contemporary art raises new questions on our idea of beauty and art, such as if beauty helps in our understanding of art or make contemporary art more accessible. Most of contemporary art is concerned with the mental and social aspects rather than the visual pleasure. The desire to create art that is more than a “pretty” picture leads artist to constantly pressure themselves to create critical art with conceptual meanings. One can even say, that contemporary art expels art that wants to be beautiful. For example, Joseph Beuys Fat Chair

was so ugly, that a facility manager confused it with trash and threw it away. Thus art, that is merely beautiful is not enough, whereas art that raises questions and is often not understandable to the middle class, has become the standard. To get a better understanding of what those contemporary aesthetics are, we will begin with analysing how art should be apprehended before looking at what we mean by the word 'contemporary' and what its characteristics are.

As we have already seen in the chapter before to evaluate art, one needs a disinterested interest. After discarding all personal interests, one can experience the artwork for itself and think of the possible meanings that it may contain. It is important that one does not confuse art evaluation with simple liking or disliking. As we have seen and will see in the next section of the chapter, there are rational reasons, why we prefer a painting or sculpture more than another. To evaluate it, we need to get a clear idea of what this is based on.

Throughout history, periodization has led humans to form ideas of history through subdividing periods. Those periods, however, do not have a singular identity even though they are used to get a better understanding of what has happened at that time. Instead of taking these subdivisions for granted, one should think critically about them in relation to why we think that a certain period started and ended at that particular moment and what the characterizations are for that period. Contrary to other periods, we are still a part of the contemporary era. By saying this, we already imply that the word 'contemporary' refers to the present. This, however, raises questions on when this so-called 'present' started and when it will end. Because we can not define a single year as a temporal period, as it is too short, many papers define the contemporary space as a period that started in the late 1970s. Many confuse this period with the period of modern art who came before contemporary art. One turning point of both periods was the abstract expressionism movement. In this movement,

the main focus drifted away from the content of the works towards the process of producing art. One example of these artists is Jackson Pollock whose art was about the process of dripping paint onto the canvas. This led to a rethinking of what is considered as being art. Many artists such as Piero Manzoni criticised the privileging of the 'artist genius' and the concept of the art, as we will later see, became more important. Because of this interest in meaning, rather than beauty, art took many different forms such as performances and installations. The audience also changed since art came out of its traditional spaces.

To characterise contemporary art, one prevalent idea is that contemporary art does not lie in the artwork, it "isn't held in the brushstrokes of paint, or the marble of a sculpture" (...) One main focus of contemporary art lies in the effect and the experience its beholders have because of it, one can even say that the artwork is formed by its viewers. Contemporary art can, therefore, be anything and by this often confuses its beholders with questions such as "is this art?" or in German "Ist das Kunst oder kann das weg?" ("Is this art or can it go away?"). These questions, however, prove that contemporary artists achieve what they want. They want us to question our conception of aesthetics and perception of what makes something art.

To conclude, one can say that contemporary art is because of globalization and technological progress, extremely diverse art. It continues to push boundaries and questions prevailing ideas. Even though a common idea is that art seems to be either thoughtful or aesthetically pleasing, every contemporary art comprises hidden meanings on which we will elaborate in the next chapter. Thus contemporary aesthetics must be apprehended with an open mind in order to experience the artwork for itself. Because this can be very challenging, contemporary aestheticism is often misunderstood and either defined as too complex or too banal. Thus one can see contemporary aestheticism as a kind of language. If one does not know how to speak it or understand it seems to be nonsense.

The Importance of Meaning

As a lot of contemporary artworks often seem to be grey in quality because of their very minimal content, the value of art is constantly criticised. One reason for this is that in contemporary art anything and everything can become art as we have seen in the examples of Duchamp's *Fountain* or Piero Manzoni's *Artist's Shit*. Contemporary artists challenge the concept of art by continuing to push boundaries and question things. The paradox, that art can be anything is thus simultaneously a curse and a blessing. The question about defining art, however, restrains people to fully understand its beauty. An understanding of aestheticism can lead to an understanding of not only art but also of the world around us. Thus, art can be an invitation for people to think. As we have already seen in the chapter about the philosophy of beauty, the question about the essence of art has occupied many philosophers. Even though they all had different interpretations of what art is, they all agreed that meaning plays a significant role in the experience of aestheticism. In this chapter, we are first going to analyse the purpose of art before going further into the importance of meaning in art.

First of all, one can discover art everywhere, because of this universality art is as we have already seen, deeply anchored in the human mind. Even young children, without knowledge, engage in art by drawing with their hands or dance to music. Additionally to this, as we have already seen, art is a source of pleasure. This would imply, that humans possess an art instinct. In the book *The Art Instinct* by Dennis Dutton, the philosopher elaborates on this idea and defines art as a cluster of features. He suggests that art should have a natural source because its practices are recognized across cultures. Based on the already mentioned intuition of which some landscapes are considered as being more beautiful than others, he suggests that humans share an instinct for beauty which can be translated into art. This idea

of an art instinct is reassuring since it elevates the importance of art and makes art a grounded part of the human being. Culture lovers worry that if art is not an instinct, one might think that it is non-essential. This argument, however, would also imply that reading and writing is gratuitous since there is no instinct for reading and writing either.

The counter position of this theory is the belief, that art is only a by-product of other adaptations. This perception is encouraged by several intellectuals such as Steven Jay Gould and Richard Lewontin. According to them:

human culture as we know it has only been around for about 10,000 years, not long enough for the brain to have changed in a substantial way from selective pressures. (Chatterjee, 165)

This would mean, that our ancestors, would only have created cultural artefacts as a by-product since their main aim was to solve problems and survive. This would imply, that art does not essentially involve meaning. When comparing those two counter positions, one can, however, conclude, that art has a purpose. It is however not static but adaptive to the time and space the work was produced in.

One of its purposes is rooted in the importance of meaning. From a Kantian perspective, art belongs to the section of dependent beauty. It goes beyond free beauty because of its importance of meaning and thus it is not merely retinal. In terms of abstract paintings, meaning in art has been rarely discussed. One reason for this is because abstract paintings can trigger a feeling in one person and be completely different for another one. However, the reason why abstract paintings are as popular in contemporary art is that they mean something. Through their colours, forms, motions or even sounds art can evoke feelings and reflections. Most contemporary art even tends to trigger questions rather than give answers.

Because of art's association with meaning, it has performative power. Meaning can influence the perception of objects. While drinking, for example, a glass of Coca Cola, one is influenced by the label and its associated image. This can also be translated into art. When one can read and understand an artwork, the aesthetic experience changes drastically.

Moreover, art serves as an infinite source of knowledge. By making us asking questions rather than giving answers, it can open us to the endless possibilities of the world. The most inspiring art engages themes that are faced, have faced and will be faced by many. Even if art addresses universal topics, it does so in an individual way. Local conditions such as the culture in which art is born, its ancestors, the economic conditions and its relevance shape the content of art and the meaning of an artwork. This is why art has allowed us to get a greater understanding of history, culture and even ourselves. It makes us not only organise but also understand the world. One reason for this is that it shows us things that we might have missed or opens us to new things.

Anjan Chatterjee explains that one encounters limits of what neurosciences can analyse in aesthetics concerning the meaning in art. Neuroscience can investigate the way paintings are recognized since this relates to how objects, faces or places are perceived but this knowledge is limited on a very general basis. It does not include how for example a painting by Picasso, or a still life by Cézanne is perceived. The meaning of individual works of art and how it responds to place and space poses an unsolvable problem to neuroscience. One reason for this is because works often consist of different layered meanings.

Because of these different layers of meanings contemporary abstract art often appeals to a smaller audience than the more representational work. Whereas everyone understands realistic representations of thing from real life, abstract art is often considered as too complex and mysterious. One reason for this is because people often want to know what they are

looking at to attach a literal meaning on it. However, one can say that even art that seems to be very straightforward often has a deeper meaning that is not visible at first glance. This deeper meaning is mostly of an emotional nature. The fact that many people visit museums and galleries each day, however, proves the importance of art. Even though, I would say that many people feel unsatisfied and confused with what they see when facing contemporary art, they tend to think that they are doing something good when looking at art.

To conclude, one can say that art evaluates the quality of life. One important aspect of contemporary art, however, is meaning. Because of the often very conceptual works, meaning has made contemporary art less accessible but when being understood it triggers personal evolution and a greater understanding of almost anything. It is when pressures of comprehension fall, that art can surprise, enlighten and makes one see the world differently. Thus, one can say that 'good art' is art that includes meaning and by this art that is considered as being beautiful.

Koons and Beauty

Koons has always been a very controversial artist as we will see in the chapter about his persona. Along with scandals, many critics do not agree with his way of working. The artist is known for his representations of everyday objects along with sculptures that are inspired by ancient artworks. According to Koons the ancient world and the world of the contemporary are strongly connected and intertwined. He thinks that Roman sculptures should not be forgotten as they represent to him “the most vital information we need as human beings to live our lives to the fullest”. (Artspace) Besides that he is taking strong inspirations from objects that have already existed, as we will later see, he is mostly discussed because of the price tags that are attached to his creations. In this thesis I will not go into the ethical aspects of his works nor will I comment on the moral aspects that are attached to this. Since Koons self-presentation and strategies are not separable from his works, I will start with a brief chapter about his life, persona and how he works before applying the frameworks that we saw earlier on the series *Balloon Dogs*.

Jeff Koons

As we have already seen in the introduction, Jeff Koons is probably one of the most controversial modern artists that is still active. His persona is one of the most disputed in contemporary art. The list of people that either love or hate his art is endless. To get a better idea of his work, I will start with a brief introduction of his childhood and life before going into detail about his way of working. Since he uses media as one of his main advertising methods, I will end with a short introduction of the scandals that are attached to his persona.

Born in Pennsylvania as the son of a furniture dealer and a seamstress mother, Koons developed a taste for arts from an early age on. He began re-creating artworks from famous artists when he was only nine years old and shortly after that was introduced into entrepreneurship. To attract new business, his father displayed his artworks in his shop windows. By this, Koons started earning money from his art from an early age on and this probably already turned him into the businessman he is today. After school, he went door to door to sell candies and gift-wrapping paper to earn even more pocket money. This attachment to candies and shiny wrapping paper might still be the source of inspiration for his works today. To develop the medium of painting, Koons studied art in Chicago and Baltimore. In 1977, the artist decided to pursue his interest in art and moved to New York. To earn money and finance his works, he worked at the Museum of Modern Art while trying to establish himself as a working artist. He quickly realised that to sell his works, he needed to stand out. He began dyeing his hair in striking colours and grew a moustache, similar to Salvador Dali's. In 1980 Koons got licensed by the museum after having sold funds. Thus, he began working as a commodities broker. This job helped him to finance his first series and be independent of the art market. In the 1980s his *Banalities* series brought him fame. This series includes pseudo-Baroque sculptures that depict Michael Jackson with a pet ape and Jayne Mansfield holding Pink Panther. We will further see how Koons contributed to this uprise of fame.

Similar to Andy Warhol or Duchamp, Jeff Koons quickly realized that creating a public persona can work in favour of his artworks. He states that "I believe in advertisement and media completely. My art and my personal life are based in it." (Artsy) He uses the publicity and the media by getting their attention through scandals as we will later see to promote his latest works. To promote his series *Banalities*, Koons took out four full-page

advertising pages in major trade magazines. The advertisements play with the reputations of him that media have propagated, showing him as a gigolo, alongside with pigs, as a bad influence and as a ladies man. These self-representations not only played with the scandals on which we will further develop but also attracted attention and by this promoted his works. Contrary to Warhol and Duchamp, he is very much aware of finances. Having worked as a former broker, the artist possesses an analytical and relentless mind. One can even say that he is a strategist, or as Chuck Close defines him as a “C.E.O of an art-manufacturing company” (Hylton). Through this analytical way of working, Koons managed to become the most expensive living artist.

Koons is well-known for his pop sculptures. He turns everyday objects into icons of high art and takes his inspiration from today’s consumer world. By using everyday objects from advertisements to vacuum cleaners and toys, his work is a contemporary approach to Marcel Duchamp’s readymades. One should however not forget, that his work includes paintings alongside the famous sculptures. Moreover, in his works, many influences of other artists can be found. The artist often states that he wishes a broad audience for his artworks, similar to Andy Warhol who was comparable to a Popstar of his time. Because of this urge for popularity, the artist chooses to not include any hidden meanings in his work other than discourses about power and consumerism. By doing so, he leaves possible interpretations to its beholders and thus creates art for everyone. Similar to Andy Warhol’s Factory, the American artist owns a factory with over 100 assistants. To achieve consistent looks of his artworks, Koons developed a colour-by-numbers system. Through this system, each of the 100 assistants can manufacture his artworks as if they had been done by only one person.

As already stated, Koons works are sold for exorbitant prices such as 58 million dollars. This, however, has not always been like this. It was only in 1999 that Koons’ auction

prices reached a higher peak when the sculpture Pink Panther was sold for 1.8 million dollars. One year before this, the highest auction price for Koons work was only 288.000 dollars, a quite modest price in art sales. Since the sale in 1999, the prices of Koons work have consistently grown. This sudden uprising is mainly due to the artist's talent to promote himself and build up a surrounding of collectors and dealers. One way of him to create his controversial persona is by consistently making people speak of him. He achieves this by persistently bringing out scandals and playing with the reputations that media has propagated as we have already seen in the example of the *Banalilty* series.

In 1988, the series, that brought him fame attracted attention because of the use of copyrighted images. In this series, the artist took inspiration from the well-known Hummel figurines. These accusations have recurred throughout his career. In 1988, he lost a court case for having used a personality of the comic strip "Garfield" without consent. Because of these accusations and court cases, the artist never faded into the background and was always discussed and relevant.

Additionally to this, his works have contributed to his prominence. His works have always been extremely provocative, one can even say offensive. In his series *Made In Heaven*, the oil paintings show the artist and La Cicciolina, an Italian porn star having sex. These oil paintings turned into a kind of artistic performance. The couple got married before publicly fighting over custody. Even as they were fighting in court, they needed a translator because La Cicciolina could only speak very little English. It was only natural, that the series were highly discussed and criticised. People even described them as 'degenerated art'. The artworks crossed lines about what is good and bad art and between art and pornography. But these scandals only helped Koons to gain attention and become famous among many people.

To conclude, one can say that even though the artist is very controversial and his methods are morally questionable since his machine-made artworks are sold for millions, he managed to reinvent the art market. He discovered that artists can use the same advertising methods as musicians and thus also have a star character that is popular among mass culture. When looking at his life, one recognizes quickly, that he became a businessman rather than an artist from an early age on. Up until today, his works are influenced by the American consumerism that he used as a nine-year-old kid to improve his pocket money. What is going to be interesting for the next chapter is that Koons owes his popularity to his persona and it's associations rather than the artworks itself.

Casting Beauty in *Balloon Dog*

The series that we are going to analyse is part of Koons' *Celebration* series. This series was conceived in 1994 as a tribute to the milestones of life. Until today, the artist's factory is still actively fabricating pieces of the series. Along with easter eggs, hearts and the well-known balloon dogs, the series includes sixteen oil paintings. During the production of the series, the artist and his investors nearly went bankrupt because of the size of the series. Presales of the unfinished artworks then saved the production. Today, this is unimaginable as the orange Balloon Dog became the most expensive artwork made by a living artist, being sold for more than 58 million dollars in 2013. Six years later, the artist's sculpture *Rabbit* even beat that record when being sold for over 91 million dollars. The *balloon dog* series consists of five ten feet tall sculptures in the colours blue, orange, magenta, red and yellow. The form is based on twisted balloons that are shaped into a toy dog. With a size of over ten feet and the highly reflective and colourful surfaces, the sculptures have the appearances of being actual balloons.

First of all, one can say that the series is timeless. Not only in terms of the material that the artist decided to use, which is steel. But also in terms of design. The smooth and shiny surfaces that seem to make the possibility of errors impossible chase an idea of perfection. The reflective surface, as well as the saturated colours, invite the viewers into engaging it. This distinctive feature is enforced by the size of the artworks. The sculptures are at the same time weightlessness by their look but also heavy in terms of their colossal size and weight. Thus the artwork does not make any pretensions of being a down to earth human statement but is a manifesto of consumerism, as we will later see. Through this reflection, the look of the sculpture changes constantly and adapts to its surrounding. By doing so, the artwork is brought into being. This sense of constant change contributes to the classic beauty, that lies in the series.

Additionally to this, the material and design of the sculpture are factors that can trigger aesthetic experiences because of their convertibility. Since the surfaces engage with their viewers and change over time, beholders get the feeling of being a part of the sculpture. They think that they are relevant to it and this lifts the sculpture to a personal level. The shiny surface invites them to look at themselves and the various curved structures form convex mirrors that may distort the beholders' faces and figures reinforce this. Some viewers even take selfies with it and share them on their social media platforms. This contributes to the popularity of the artworks and influences others to think of the work as something beautiful and fun.

This euphoric and childish optimism is reinforced by many other factors besides the material. Because many people remember the inflatable animals from their childhood that they once held in their hands, the artwork seems to be familiar at first glance. This connection is reinforced by the symbol of a dog. Koons deliberately chose to create a balloon dog rather

than a cat because dogs are a symbol of connection. They can be trusted. This familiarity is another reason why the artwork can trigger an aesthetic experience in many. As the study by Dr Norbert Schwarz shows, familiarity and beauty are connected. He found out that "people consider an object that is easy to understand to be more beautiful than one that is difficult to recognize" (Sagmeister, 25). Thus because the overall series is about celebration and the form brings up memories, the sculptures give their beholders a positive feeling and by this triggers an aesthetic experience.

This familiarity plays with the idea of what is inside the sculpture. Because of the extremely shiny surface, the sculptures seem to be very fragile, almost transparent. By this, the beholder is captivated in looking through the sculpture and wonders if something is inside of it or if it is empty. By looking at it, the beholder usually feels calm because he can see himself in the reflections which is according to Hume a characteristic of beauty. The sculpture can, however, also be disturbing because it reminds of the Trojan horse. Thus the series plays with binary oppositions. On one hand, it reminds of the childish optimism and triggers nostalgia. On the other hand, the sculpture seems to be dangerous because of its attachment to the Trojan horse and the idea that its content is unknown. The content may either attack its beholders, similar to the Trojan horse or simply disappear. This mystification underlines the sense of timelessness that is at the same time temporary. Balloons are stable and beautiful for a short amount of time before they either burst or die slowly.

Additionally, Koons' sculpture is progressive. The artworks are a new form of sculpture, bringing together Minimalism, Pop Art and the concept of Readymades by Marcel Duchamp. As we have already seen in the chapter about contemporary art, Duchamp used preexisting objects and ignored its actual function by presenting it as art. Thus, one can say that the *Balloon Dogs* are remade Readymades on the one hand because they are

representations of something that has already existed but putting it in a different context. On the other hand, they are very minimalistic in terms that they do not represent anything other than the actual form of the balloon dog. They do not include any decorative patterns or decorations. By doing so, Koons challenges the idea of what is art. His sculptures are at the same time decorative objects but also iconic artworks. However, many people regard the series as kitsch because of the striking colours and shiny surfaces. When applying Nietzsche's theory of a second reality, this means that because of this kitsch, the sculpture can be considered as being beautiful. In his theory, as we have seen, Nietzsche wanted to fight truth with beauty. Thus objects, that exaggerate can be considered as being beautiful.

As we have seen in the chapter about the importance of meaning, interpretations play a significant role in contemporary art. In this case, critics of Koons, however, think that the artwork lacks meaning. The artist underlines this thinking by stating that he "stresses that his work has no hidden meanings" (Galenson, 176). This lack of meaning that is attached to the artwork might, however, explain its popularity. Because the object is not as abstract as other contemporary artworks, its audience seems to gaze at it because of its simplicity and minimalism. This makes them able to attach their own meaning to it. On the other hand, the series contrasts with other contemporary artworks that are full of hidden meanings and possible interpretations. By making a sculpture that does not actively present connotations, its beholders feel less pressured. Thus, in this case, it is the absence of meaning that gives the artwork its aesthetic value. This shows that the series of Balloon Dogs do not fit into the traditional sense of what is considered to be 'great art'.

From a Kantian perspective, one would say that the series does not include a disinterested interest. Even though Jeff Koons does not indicate any meaning of the series and leaves the interpretation open for its beholders, the artificiality of the objects competes

with the idea that art needs to appear natural to its viewers. The sculptures are not rooted in nature and do not pretend to be. Instead, the artist plays with their artificiality. Not only is the real object, they represent made out of plastic but through the enlargement of the object, the artificiality is enhanced. This idea, on the other hand, enhances the idea that beauty is a component of the series. Plato thought that beauty and truth are linked. By this, it is beauty that promotes reproduction whereas art can only be a copy of the original. This idea also translates into Aristotle's idea that art can be seen as a purifying treatment. Because Jeff Koons tries to capture reality by copying the original, he is showing spiritual freedom, which is the source of beauty.

Furthermore, one reason why people can find the series astonishing beautiful is because of the attached reputations. Since the artist is highly discussed and controversial, his works are famous. This not only contributes to the price tags that are attached to them but also the idea of wealth. Because of the elitarian status that is attached to the sculptures, they are considered as being beautiful by more people. One reason for this is, that because humans associate high prices with high quality, thus something expensive must also be beautiful.

To conclude, one can say that beauty is still a component of Jeff Koons' *Balloon Dogs* series. It may either be through the visual aesthetics that are triggered by the material and size of the artwork or the conceptual meaning that people can independently attach to it. Even though Koons does not indicate any meaning of the series and leaves the interpretation open for its beholders, the artworks offer room for possible interpretations. This diversity might be the reason why the series has experienced strong popularity and why some people are willing to spend millions on one sculpture. Other than that Koons has acknowledged basic human reactions as a source of popularity. The bright and shiny object that reminds us of our nostalgic childhood and hold our gaze.

Conclusion

“In great works of art the mysterious genius of the artist creates, across the strata of his work, a synthesis of his material and the forms he chooses to express it. The beholder senses the lawful rightness of the work, even if he is unable to grasp its rightness fully.” (Hartmann 15)

Overall, one can say that beauty and contemporary art are very complex notions that are hard to grasp. One reason for this is because we are trained that we need proof to analyse a work of art. Beauty, however, is almost impossible to describe nor explain. What we have seen nonetheless is that there are factors which can help an object to be considered as beautiful and that beauty is deeply anchored in men's history. Men have always wanted to capture beauty and art even if they are as Hartmann says unable to grasp it fully. Philosophical approaches help with explanations of how and why people consider certain things as beautiful but they are still too vague to build a secure and universal framework. It is scientific approaches such as the one made by Anjan Chatterjee, that prove, that beauty is relevant and should not be forgotten. Misconceptions such as the idea that beauty always lies in the eyes of the beholder have made the notion of beauty in art seem unimportant and led to a decrease of research on the topic itself. However, one should not forget it as a component of contemporary art. It is often beauty that makes artworks so compelling. It makes us look closer to an artwork and by this opens us to the hidden meanings of artworks. I am not saying, that all art needs to be beautiful in terms of appearances, there are many artworks that are important because of the meanings they transmit. In this case, however, it is the conceptual meaning that can be considered as being beautiful. Beauty has the power to make cultural differences unimportant

and makes us become aware of our mutual humanity. As we have seen in the example of Jeff Koons *Balloon Dogs*, one reason for their popularity is because they can evoke aesthetic experiences and try not to ban beauty from art. Hence, to call something beautiful is not a devaluation of an artwork nor is it a statement that can not be proven. Thus, one can consent Frank Lloyd Wright, that one should not foolishly ignore beauty because one can only experience it if one's mind is open for it.

Appendix

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