Artworks, functions, and pluralism about 'artifact'

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Abstract: According to the prominent accounts of artifacts, artifacts are objects produced to serve a function (Hilpinen, 1992; Preston, 2022). If, as commonly suggested, artworks are artifacts then the lack of a viable functional account of artworks generates a problem and leaves us with one of the three following options: (i) Artworks are not artifacts, (ii) Artworks are a special kind of artifacts (Levinson, 2007; Evnine, 2016), (iii) If we follow pluralism about 'artifact', artworks can be captured by a distinct concept of artifacts. (i) is hard to defend. Being an artifact seems to be a necessary condition of being an artwork. To me, (ii) is already hinting at a form of pluralism in our artifact concepts. Ultimately, I conclude that (iii) provides a useful route to spell out what kind of pluralism is at stake and how it can be used to dissolve the tension that arises from the artifactual status of artworks and functions.

1. Introduction

This paper aims to explore to what extent artworks can be considered artifacts and what this implies for the discussion on the nature of artifacts. The literature on artifacts is growing as many theories started to shed light on the different aspects of the nature of artifacts. According to the standard definition, artifacts are objects that are intentionally produced for a certain purpose (Hilpinen 1992; Preston 2022). This definition has three major components: production, intention, and purpose. Each component has been subjected to scrutiny.[1] In this paper, I focus on a specific issue surrounding artifacts: functions and artworks.

Many philosophers consider artworks to be artifacts. In his famous critique of pure anti-essentialist (the view that does not admit any necessary condition for something being an artwork) positions, George Dickie (1974) pointed out that artworks are necessarily artifacts.

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[1] On production see Juvshik (2021a); on intentions see Hilpinen (1992; Koslicki 2018; Preston 2022); on purpose see essays in the collection *Creations of the Mind*. See Koslicki (2018), Preston (2022), and Author (forthcoming) for a detailed summary of the limitations surrounding the current state of the debate.

Through this, he wanted to stress the necessity of intentions in the creation of artworks. Similarly, Jerrold Levinson (2007) maintains that artworks are artifacts in the sense that they are intentionally made, albeit in a weak sense.[2] Christy Mag Uidhir (2013) suggests that artworks are substantively intention-dependent.[3]

Even though there seems to be a consensus on the artifactuality of artworks, what this fact implies for the nature of artifacts is underexplored. Simon Evnine (2016, p. 129) acknowledges that the tension arises from the standard definition of 'artifact' and the artifactual status of artworks and contends that artworks are a distinct kind of artifact. Yet, this ad hoc move calls for closer scrutiny. To that end, here is the simple argument that I will examine:

A1) All artworks are artifacts.

A2) All artifacts are functional.

C) All artworks are functional

In the rest of the paper, I will argue that the argument is unsound. But before that some explanation is due. According to A1 for an entity to be an artwork it needs to be an artifact. As stated above, there seems to be an agreement on the truth of A1. Following the consensus, I will assume A1 holds. My aim is to demotivate the conclusion. I will not offer a knockdown

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[2] Levinson (2007) distinguishes between concept-dependence and intention-dependence and argues that while artifact kinds other than *artwork* are concept-dependent, i.e., the makers have substantive description in creating the members of those artifact kinds, *artwork* is only intention-dependent, where the relevant intention is to create a member of the *artwork* kind even when the artist doesn't have a substantive description of what artworks are. So, based on this distinction, Levinson suggests that *artwork* is a special kind of artifact.

[3] Mag Uidhir (2013) disagrees with Levinson (2007) based on the idea that in order to make sense of failure to create a member of *artwork,* the intentions relevant to the creation need to have more content than Levinson suggests. Regardless of the which suggestion fares better, the import that is relevant to my purposes is that both authors take artworks to be artifacts.

argument; my strategy will be the elimination of prominent candidates. After showing that the conclusion is false, I will argue that the fault lies in A2.

The paper has the following structure: In section 2, I clarify in which sense I use the term function. I follow Simon Evnine's discussion on artifacts and use his distinction between kind-associated functions and idiosyncratic functions to elaborate on the simple argument. In section 3, I attempt to find motivations to support the conclusion of the simple argument. In this section, I consider four prominent functional views of artworks: traditional aestheticism, new aestheticism, historical functionalism, and aesthetic appraisal. After showing that each view is problematic, in section 4, I reject A2 and offer a pluralist framework for artifact concepts that can capture the non-functional status of artworks.

2. Functions

Functions are taken to answer the question 'what x is supposed to do' (Wright 1973 c.f., Juvshik 2021b). For instance, a chair can be used for myriad of ways: reaching top shelves, holding the door, decorative purposes, however, a chair is supposed to seat a single individual. Larry Wright (1973) refers to the initial sense of functions as 'function as', while the normatively charged sense is labeled as 'the function'. The key distinction between these two interpretations of function lies in their explanatory power. The latter sense of function explains the normativity surrounding artifacts as well as historical success and continued reproduction of objects like chairs, while the former sense lacks this explanatory force (Author, forthcoming).

A comparable distinction between the two senses of functions is presented by others using different terminology. Vermaas and Houkes (2003, pp. 262-66) refer to them as standard/accident functions, while Evnine (2016) uses the terms kind-associated/idiosyncratic

function (Author, forthcoming).[4] The question then relevant to the current topic is the following: Are artworks functional? There seem to be two different formulations of this question:

1. Do all artworks have a function?
2. Do artworks have a shared function?[5]

In the rest of the paper, I will stick with Simon Evnine's (2016) terminology and call the first sense *kind-associated function* and the latter *idiosyncratic function*. There are two reasons for this choice. First, for all artifact kinds, the associated functions seem to be intention-dependent, whether on their creators' or users' intentions and so any theory of function that does not refer to mental states would miss a significant aspect of artifacts.[6] Second, the distinction between artifact kinds and individual artifacts avoids Paul Bloom's (1996) charges. Paul Bloom (1996) writes: "Someone can create a chair without intending anybody to sit on it, yet it is difficult to see how someone can create a chair without intending it to be a chair." He raises the example of exhibition chairs as an objection against functional theories. Evnine as a response claims that exhibition chairs still have the function of seating a single individual because they are made with the intention to be a member of the chair kind. To elaborate on Evnine's distinction by an example, the kind-associated function of a pen is *to write* but, if I give someone a pen as a gift *being a gift* would be the idiosyncratic function of that pen. That pen acquires its kind-associated

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[4] See Preston (2009), Vermaas and Houkes (2010), Juvshik (2021b) for a detailed discussion on artifact functions.
[5] In a recent paper, Juvshik (2021b) challenges the idea of function essentialism for artifacts by raising various objections. One objection involves the absence of functions in artworks. However, Juvshik's main focus is not on challenging art-functionalism and thus he does not consider a wide range of possibilities. This paper aims to build upon and improve that discussion.
[6] It should be noted that this claim is not universally accepted. Preston (1998), for instance, offers an alternative non-intentionalist view on artifact functions. See also Carlson and Parsons (2008) for an application of a non-intentionalist function in the case of artworks.

functions by being made with the intention that it be a pen (Evnine, 2016, p. 123). According to Evnine, the kind-associated functions originate as idiosyncratic functions, but once the idiosyncratic functions are sufficiently widespread they become kind-associated functions (Evnine, 2016, p. 123).

Considering this distinction between kind-associated and idiosyncratic functions, the first question can be trivially answered as yes. We can, at least in principle, use or produce all artworks for a myriad of reasons which then could be their idiosyncratic function. Riefenstahl produced *Triumph of the Will* to influence the political views of the audiences in accordance with Hitler's vision. Fra Angelico created *Annunciation* to heighten the religious experience of the viewers. If there is no idiosyncratic function for a certain artwork, still it seems plausible that one can always envision a new use for it. That's why I think the second question is more interesting. Given that we group certain entities together as artworks under the kind *artwork*, and assuming that *artwork* is an artifact kind, is there a kind-associated function of *artwork*?

> **Kind-associated Function of Artworks:** Necessarily, for all x, if x is a member of *artwork*, then there's some F such that *artwork* has F and x has F in virtue of being a member of *artwork*.

In light of the above discussion on functions, we can refine the simple argument as follows:

A1*) *Artwork* is an artifact kind.

A2*) Every artifact kind has a kind-associated function.[7]

C) *Artwork* has a kind-associated function.

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[7] One might, of course, object that not all artifact kind has a kind-associated function. See Thomasson (2003, 2007) for such an account. Yet, according to Evnine's account, A2* holds. That's also why Evnine claims that *artwork* is a special case of an artifact kind.

3. Motivating the argument: *Artwork* has a kind-associated function F

With the given tools, we can now attempt to motivate the conclusion of the revised argument to show that it is actually sound. The task, then, is to find a kind-associated function for *artworks*. This would, in turn, ideally give us a clue about what makes an artwork a 'good' artwork. Two caveats: First, I do not intend to claim that the conclusion of the revised argument is unarguably false. The literature on artworks is immensely rich, so my discussion is bound to be non-exhaustive. My modest aim is to present some prominent candidates and suggest that they fail to provide a kind-associated function for all artworks. The prominent candidates seem to be the following four: traditional aestheticism, new aestheticism, historical functionalism, and aesthetic appraisal. Let us examine each option in detail.

3.1. Traditional Aestheticism[8]

In an oft-quoted passage, Monroe Beardsley (1982, p. 299) formulates the condition of something being an artwork: "an arrangement of conditions intended to be capable of affording an experience with marked aesthetic character…" According to Beardsley, an experience is aesthetic when the attention is directed at the formal qualities of the work, namely, unity, complexity, and intensity. The paradigmatic examples of artworks Beardsley focuses on are Beethoven's *Eroica* and Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. These works, Beardsley claims, if *correctly* experienced–by paying close attention to the formal qualities—yield aesthetic gratification. As he writes, "this type of gratification (once distinguished) has a paramount claim to be denominated 'aesthetic'–even though there are many other things that works of art can do to you,

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[8] I borrow the distinction between terms 'traditional aestheticism' and 'new aestheticism' from Iseminger's (2004) discussion.

such as inspire you, startle you, or give you a headache" (1982, pp. 15-34). On Beardsley's account, then, the kind-associated function of artworks is to provide an aesthetic experience where this experience yields gratification to the receivers.

Following Beardsley, Oswald Hanfling (1995) claims that "a work of art is an artifact of a kind whose main function is to provide aesthetic satisfaction to others." All artifacts if they function well yield some sort of satisfaction to the users. Hanfling argues that since artworks are artifacts they too must yield satisfaction if they function well. Yet, unlike other artifacts, artworks give the appreciators aesthetic satisfaction. The stress is on 'main'. While other artifacts such as knives can yield aesthetic satisfaction due to their craftsmanship, still this is not a knife's main function. The main function of a knife is to cut. Hanfling's discussion of the 'main function' seems to correlate with the kind-associated function explained above. The kind-associated function of artworks, then on Hanfling's account, is to provide aesthetic satisfaction where aesthetic is characterized in accordance with the Sibleyan (1959) properties. What makes the satisfaction we get from artworks 'aesthetic'? Unlike Beardsley, Hanfling does not offer an answer but only suggests that the Sibleyan aesthetic properties such as symmetry, elegance, and vividness can give us a blueprint for distinguishing 'aesthetic' from 'non-aesthetic'.

Traditional aestheticism, however, is subject to some well-known objections.[9] The two prominent problems relevant to my purposes are definitional problems and the problem regarding the scope.

The definitional problems concern the difficulty of defining aesthetic experience. There seem to be two routes one can take in identifying aesthetic experience: external or internal (Young, ms.; Peacock, 2023). Externalists attempt to find what is common to all aesthetic

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[9] See Iseminger (2004, pp. 4-20) for a succinct list of the problems traditional aestheticism faces.

objects. Whereas internalists aim to find a common feature shared by experiences that count as aesthetic experience (Young, ms.). However, James O. Young argues that both routes lead to a dead end and fail to provide a principled way to distinguish aesthetic from non-aesthetic experience. The externalist route fails because everything can be an aesthetic object, and thus everything can provide an aesthetic experience. Sunsets, sharp blades, fountain pens, daffodils, etc. all are capable of providing an aesthetic experience. So one cannot point out a certain kind of objects and characterize aesthetic experience as an experience generated by such-and-such objects. The internalist route also fails as there seems to be no hard distinction that can be drawn between aesthetic and non-aesthetic experiences.

The common attempt to delineate the distinction between aesthetic and non-aesthetic experience is to invoke some form of 'disinterestedness' (Beardsley, 1982; Hanfling, 1995; Iseminger, 2004; Levinson, 2016). This strategy suggests that aesthetic experience is a kind of experience valued for its own sake, which broadly means that the experience is detached from any practical concerns. Jerrold Levinson (2016) notes that there are minimalist and non-minimalist versions of aesthetic experience. The minimalist version, such as Carroll's content-oriented approach, characterizes aesthetic experience in terms of the properties of its objects. In Carroll's approach, these objects are formal and aesthetic properties (Levison, 2016, p. 33).

Yet, this brings back Young's charge against externalists; there is no consensus on which objects count as aesthetic objects (Young, ms.). To differentiate aesthetic experience from other sorts of experiences (e.g., cognitive, perceptual, informative experience) Levinson (2016) offers a non-minimalist account. According to the non-minimalist version, aesthetic experience involves a distinct state of mind, namely aesthetic attention. Levinson characterizes this type of attention as "absorbed and arrested" and that "typical of non-aesthetic engagement as watchful

and wary" (Levinson, 2016, p. 29). However, one can direct such "absorbed and arrested" attention to almost anything. For instance, an advanced climber climbing a dangerous boulder or a healthcare professional responding to a life-threatening situation seems to involve such attention, yet it is not clear why we should say these experiences involve *aesthetic* attention (Young, ms.). The upshot is thus this: if there is no promising way of distinguishing aesthetic experience from non-aesthetic experience, the function of art as eliciting aesthetic experience would turn out to be devoid of any interesting content.

The problem regarding the scope concerns the artworks whose very purpose is to reject affording any 'aesthetic' experience or was not intended to afford such an experience. In the case of chairs, even though exhibition chairs are not intended to be sat upon, they are still *capable of* seating a single individual. More specifically, the exhibition chairs have the kind-associated function on top of their idiosyncratic function of *being an exhibition chair*. However, a similar story does not apply to the cases such as Duchamp's *Fountain*. The groundbreaking achievement of *Fountain* presumably comes from its denial of affording an aesthetic experience, especially if we follow traditional aestheticism in characterizing aesthetic experience. Many artworks on the other hand were produced for religious, political, social, and financial purposes without any need for their makers also intended to elicit aesthetic experience in receivers.

However, is there no way out from the scope problem that stems from a ready-made such as *Fountain*, or conceptual art in general? One account that largely follows traditional aestheticism addresses the scope problem above: Nick Zangwill's (1995) creative theory of art. Zangwill (1995) argues that something is an artwork if and only if it is produced with i) an aesthetic insight that specifies which aesthetic properties will be determined by which non-aesthetic properties, ii) and this leads to the object's endowment with aesthetic properties

(Zangwill, 1995, p. 307). Aesthetic insight, according to Zangwill, is "the psychological process of apprehending or grasping an aesthetic/nonaesthetic determination relation without being prompted by some actual instantiation of the aesthetic property in combination with the nonaesthetic property" (Zangwill, 1995, p. 310). Aesthetic properties come in two forms: substantive and verdictive/evaluative. Substantive aesthetic properties are, again, Sibleyan properties such as elegance, balance, symmetry, and the like. Verdictive or evaluative properties specify the aesthetic merit and demerit. The latter, according to Zangwill, ontologically depends—supervenes—on the former. Non-aesthetic properties comprise primary qualities such as shape and size, secondary qualities such as color and sound, and lastly representational and semantic properties.

So, if a given artwork, say Duchamp's *Fountain*, has aesthetic properties specified by Duchamp's aesthetic insight that determines which aesthetic properties will be realized by which non-aesthetic properties, then Duchamp's *Fountain* both satisfies the condition of being an artwork and has the kind-associated function we derived from Zangwill's account. Now, the question is: Does *Fountain* really have such aesthetic properties? Zangwill suggests that it does. For instance, he agrees with Arthur Danto (1981) that *Fountain* is a clever and witty work (Zangwill, 1995, p. 317).

However, one might worry that the aesthetic properties of *Fountain* do not depend on non-aesthetic properties such as the shape and the color of the urinal. Like most conceptual art, *Fountain*'s aesthetic properties depend, if it does, on the work's contextual properties such as standing in a juxtaposition with certain other artworks. To accommodate this worry, Zangwill (1999, 2001) proposes a weaker form of aestheticism—i.e., *moderate formalism*. While in traditional accounts, such as Beardsley's, all aesthetic properties are formal properties, Zangwill

distinguishes *formal* aesthetic properties from *non-formal* aesthetic properties. Formal aesthetic properties, in Zangwill's account, are determined by sensory or physical properties. Whereas non-formal aesthetic properties are determined by what Zangwill calls broad non-aesthetic properties, which include properties, for instance, related to artwork's history of making (Zangwill, 1999, p. 611). So, on this account, the non-formal aesthetic properties (e.g., wittiness, cleverness) of *Fountain* are determined by its non-aesthetic properties (e.g., standing in juxtaposition to other artworks that follow more traditional artistic norms such as involving technical skills). If that's the case, then it seems that we can secure aesthetic properties for 'unaesthetic' contextual works which in turn might support the idea that even those works have the kind-associated function of eliciting aesthetic experience.

Even though this route, if successful, answers the scope problem, we do not need to accept that it avoids the definitional problem. The reason is that moderate formalism fails to provide a substantive distinction between aesthetic and non-aesthetic experience. Such distinction assumes that the concept of aesthetic is clearly delineated. Berys Gaut (2007) notes that aesthetic properties that make it to, for instance, Sibley's list are informed by the formalist criticism prevalent in the first half of the 20th century (c.f. Young, ms.). Elegance, balance, and delicacy were valued by the formalist critics. However, as Young argues, if properties make it to the list of aesthetic properties because they are valued, then this brings back the problem internalists face. Insofar as we do not know what kind of valuing renders certain properties as aesthetic properties, the distinction between aesthetic experience and non-aesthetic experience would not be possible (Young, ms.). As noted before, this would not yield any informative kind-associated function for *artworks*.

3.2 New aestheticism: Aesthetic communication

Rejecting the traditional aestheticist views such as Beardsley's, Gary Iseminger (2004) favors a new form of aestheticism. There are two main differences between the new and traditional aestheticism. First, while traditional aestheticist views focus on aesthetic experience, Iseminger suggests that the function of art is to promote aesthetic communication. Aesthetic communication can be broadly characterized as someone making something with the aim and effect that someone else appreciates it (Iseminger 2004, p. 32). This means unlike traditional aestheticism where the focus is on the appreciators of artworks, Iseminger stresses the importance of the artist's intention to produce a work to be appreciated. He further characterizes (aesthetic) appreciation as a disinterested experience, an experience that is valued for its own sake (2004, pp. 31-37). Second, while traditional aestheticism focuses on the function of artworks, new aestheticism treats the artwork as an end product and focuses on the function of the art-making practices. Iseminger's new functional theory is founded on the following two claims:

> The function of the artworld and practice of art is to promote aesthetic communication.
> A work of art is a good work of art to the extent that it has the capacity to afford appreciation. (Iseminger, 2004, p. 23)

Iseminger is not interested in giving a functional account of all possible artworks, as he contends that his account only applies to artworks produced after the institutional art practices were established in the 18th century (Iseminger 2004, p. 73-5). Although the works before the 18th century can afford aesthetic appreciation (in Iseminger's sense), this is not their artifactual function because those artworks are not intended to perform this function.

Iseminger builds his account based on a distinction he draws between 'artifactual' and 'systemic' function. He does not attempt to define 'artifactual' function but characterizes it in reference to what paradigmatic instances of artifacts do: knives cut, cars transport people, etc. Artifactual functions, for Iseminger, are intention-dependent; the designers of the item bestow the function of the item they are creating (Iseminger, 2004, p. 79ff). Whereas systemic function does not necessarily refer to an intentional design. For instance, the systemic function of the heart is to pump blood, a heart performs this function in a given biological organism. Iseminger leaves open the possibility of attributing systemic functions to art, for instance, in the line of Marxist criticisms, the systemic function of art might be to advance or maintain the economic interest of certain social groups in a social organism (Iseminger, 2004, p. 78).

Yet Iseminger is skeptical in attributing systemic function to artworld institutions, that's why he argues that artworld institutions are artifacts and have the artifactual function of promoting aesthetic communication (Iseminger, 2004, pp. 89-90). This implies that the function of the artworld is bestowed by certain agents. Iseminger traces the origin of the relevant intentions behind the bestowal of the artifactual function of promoting aesthetic communication to the mid-eighteen century, specifically to Charles Batteux (1746) who "provided the conceptual resources for people to enter into the web of mutual recognition that constitutes the artworld as we now know it" (Iseminger, 2004, p. 106). However, it becomes apparent that if we take promoting aesthetic communication as a kind-associated function of *artwork*, the extension would be restricted only to the artworks that have been produced after the 18th century in Western art practices. Furthermore, even if we attempt to amend Iseminger's account in order to cover all art cases (e.g., artworks before the 18th century, non-Western art) since aesthetic communication involves appreciating a work for its own sake, it will leave out many artworks

that are produced before the 18th century. The reason is that those artworks (e.g., the 15th-century Italian religious paintings) were produced for different artifactual functions (e.g., to heighten religious experience) rather than promoting aesthetic communication.

3.3. Historical Functionalism

Robert Stecker (1997, 2010) also presents a functionalist account of art, which he calls historical functionalism, and formulates the following definition:

> An item is a work of art at time t, where t is a time no earlier than the time at which the item is made, if and only if (a) either it is in one of the central art forms at t and is made with the intention of fulfilling a function art has at t, or (b) it is an artifact that achieves excellence in fulfilling such a function, whether or not it is in a central art form and whether or not it was intended to fulfill such a function (Stecker, 1997, p. 50).

For Stecker, then, fulfilling *an* artistic function is a necessary condition of something being an artwork. But what characterizes an "artistic" function? Stecker offers three routes to distinguish what he calls "genuine artistic functions" from accidental functions (e.g., using a sculpture as a door holder). First, he claims that objects fulfill an artistic function by being experientially engaged: A work's capacity to provide an aesthetic experience, to move an audience, even to enlighten, is realized when we are intimately involved with the work (Stecker, 2010, p. 115). Second, he suggests that appealing to common knowledge can yield some firm idea: artworks are objects that represent, express, and allow us to discover "forms suitable to the artistic project being carried out". Third, in difficult cases, he claims, recognized functions can act as a guide:

> Thus, it is easy to see how the project Proust pursues in his great novel, *In Search of Lost Time*, of giving "literal and metaphorical expression to the nuances of self-consciousness and memory" (Stock 2000, 437), arises from a more general function of the novel to provide psychological insight or to explore the first-person point of view. (Stecker, 2010, p. 115)

Although Stecker's account is functional, it crucially differs from previous functional approaches. Whether or not Stecker's way of distinguishing artistic functions from non-artistic functions is satisfactory, the most important difference that is relevant here is that Stecker does not claim that there is a single kind-associated function of *artworks*. There are, for him, multiple functions artworks perform both at a given time t and across times. As such, Stecker's account does not support the conclusion of the revised simple argument. There is no single kind-associated function that would unify the individual artworks under *artworks*.

Yet, following Stecker, one can suggest that there are multiple kind-associated functions of *artwork*, instead of a single one. While, for instance, *chair* has a single kind-associated function of seating individuals, *artwork* might have the kind-associated functions of *providing an aesthetic experience*, *providing psychological insight*, *communicating deep-seated feelings*, and so forth. One can, then, argue for a disjunctive functional account of artworks.

Multiple kind-associated functions of artworks: Necessarily, for all x, if x is an artwork, then there's some F_1 or F_2 or F_3 or F_4 or … such that x has F_1 or F_2 or F_3 or F_4 …, and x is a member of *artwork* in virtue of F_1 or F_2 or F_3 or F_4 ….

However, this move is not desirable as it eliminates the useful distinction between kind-associated functions and idiosyncratic functions. It becomes unclear how to determine which functions would make the list and which would not. For instance, would the function of influencing the political leanings of individuals (e.g., propaganda art) or creating art for sexual arousal (e.g., pornographic art) make the list? In the lack of a principled way to distinguish list-worthy functions and list-unworthy functions, this account does not seem promising.

3.4. Aesthetic appraisal

Another kind-associated function of *artworks* can be derived from Enrico Terrone's (2016) aesthetic appraisal account:

> The work of art is an entity with a special status, a special power within a certain community; it is a social object, that is, following John Searle's formulation, an entity X on which a community bestows a status function Y, which involves rights and duties, commitments and entitlements. *The status function* of the work of art is precisely its *criterion of appreciation*. (Terrone, 2016, p. 497; my emphasis)

Status function is a technical term Searle uses to distinguish between objects that perform their function by their physical features and functions that depend on collective acceptance. The physical stone wall that once functioned as a border, is now destroyed, but can still function as a border by people regarding it as a border (Searle, 1995, p. 41). The remains of the wall have a status function that bestows *deontic powers* to people who regard it as a border. By deontic powers, Searle means rights, duties, obligations, commitments, entitlements, etc. For instance, people on one side of the border might have an obligation not to cross to the other side. Searle builds his theory of institutional facts on this idea: institutional facts involve deontic powers. Terrone, then, uses the term 'status function' to suggest that artworks have deontic powers bestowed upon them by agents in a social practice. Although he does not specify exactly what sorts of deontic powers artworks involve, it seems that the appreciation of artworks *requires* us (as receivers, appreciators, etc.) to attend to certain features of the works. This raises the question of whether the sort of requirement generated by artworks shares a similar meaning with other institutional facts, such as the requirement to pay the debts of one's credit card. Assuming that it does, still, this function seems to be too general to be the kind-associated function of *artworks*.

Within the scope of appreciation, Terrone seems to include all sorts of evaluative activities that assign merit-conferring features (Terrone, 2016, p. 503). Insofar as there is an

evaluating practice based on certain publicly shareable features that do not depend on subjective features we have an appreciative practice. But there is no reason to exclude, for instance, nature appreciation, and cat or dog breeding contests from the list. Also, it should be noted that the production of any kind of artifact involves satisfying certain qualities regarding the form or colors of the objects. In a production chain, any item that does not satisfy the standard does not make it to sales. If that's so, then any mass-produced artifact that undergoes quality control would have the status function of a criterion of appreciation. These examples can easily be multiplied and so the upshot is that to be evaluated according to a criterion of appreciation is uninformative. It brings too many sorts of objects under the same rug.

Even though a proponent of aesthetic appraisal account might concede that the above examples pose a fatal threat to a definition based only on having a criterion of appreciation, they might still maintain that this condition holds for providing a kind-associated function for artworks. According to this line of thought, then, the above examples would only show that many sorts of individual artifacts and natural entities have the idiosyncratic function of being evaluated according to a criterion of appreciation. Yet it does not follow that the above cases of artifacts and natural entities derive this function from their membership of the kind which has the kind-associated function of being evaluated according to a criterion of appreciation. So one can still suggest that while many artifacts might have that as an idiosyncratic function, being evaluated according to a criterion of appreciation is the kind-associated function for *artwork*.

However, I think there is still room to argue that the kind-associated function of being evaluated according to a criterion of appreciation is in fact the kind-associated function of all artifact kinds. As Terrone does not limit the criteria for appreciation solely to the aesthetic features of objects, one can suggest that appreciating a knife involves acknowledging and using

it according to its intended function, which is to cut. This can be generalized for all artifact kinds that are functional. If that's the case, every functional artifact kind would be linked to a specific function, which is to be assessed based on an appreciation criterion, even though the criteria may vary across different kinds. So the objection from uninformativeness remains intact.

Summarizing the preceding discussions, traditional aestheticism is too problematic in terms of definition and scope to provide any meaningful function for *artworks*. New aestheticism, even if we grant that it succeeds, can only ascribe an aesthetic function to the art institutions and practices established after the 18th century. Failure of traditional aestheticism leads historical functionalism to suggest a plurality of functions of artworks. Finally, an aesthetic appraisal account specifies a function that is shared by artworks and many kinds of non-artworks alike and so fails to provide an informative account.

Given the problems of aesthetic experience accounts, one can suggest that we can characterize the kind-associated function of artworks as *to elicit an artistic experience*. Instead of using the notion of aesthetic one can, then, tie the kind-associated function with 'artistic' appreciation where the appreciation, for instance, might require attention to "the artist's achievement, how aims are realized, problems solved, themes developed, how a subject matter emerges from, and melds with, the materials used" (Lamarque, 2010, p. 213). We can call the experience of such appreciation *artistic experience*. Although this move might be worth exploring, I think it would generate similar problems to the aesthetic experience accounts face. For instance, it would be circular to characterize an experience as artistic in terms of what artists do. The only way to distinguish this experience from the experience invoked by attending to the making process of other sorts of artifacts such as chairs and cars would be to make reference to the status of the creator. In the case of artistic experience, the experience is invoked by attending

to what the artist achieves. However, the experience itself does not seem to differ from attending to the making of other artifacts.

4. Rejection of A2* and pluralism about artifact concepts

Recall A2*: Every artifact kind has a kind-associated function. Artifact kinds such as *chair*, *table*, and *pencil* have kind-associated functions. Yet, the prominent functional accounts failed to provide a kind-associated function for *artwork*. If, as commonly suggested, artworks are artifacts then the lack of a viable functional account of artworks generates a problem and leaves us with one of the three following options: (i) Artworks are not artifacts, (ii) *Artwork* is a special sort of artifact kind (Levinson, 2007; Evnine, 2016), (iii) If we follow artifact concept pluralism, artworks can be captured by a distinct concept of artifacts (Preston, 2022; Author, forthcoming).

i) *Artworks are not artifacts.*

One can claim that artworks are not artifacts and avoid the tension that arises from the artifactuality of artworks. David Davies (2004), for instance, argues that if we take contextualism seriously and build the history of making artworks into the identity conditions of artworks, we should better identify an artwork with the intentional creative acts of the artist not with the final "artistic vehicle" (e.g., the painted canvass). In Davies's view, artworks are performances.

However, it should be noted that the sharp contrast between performances and artifacts depends on the assumption that artifacts are not events and that entities other than physical objects cannot be artifacts. Yet there is no good reason to assume that only physical objects can be artifacts. Many have argued that abstract objects such as fictional characters, establishments,

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words, and symphonies can be artifacts (Thomasson, 1999; Korman, 2020; Irmak, 2021; Friedell, 2020). Others have argued that cultural styles (e.g., goth look) are artifacts (Elder, 2007). Also, some claim that actions are artifacts (Evnine, 2016). Although in the limits of this paper, I cannot pursue this line of thought further, it is enough to note that performances or action tokens can be considered artifacts.

Another option, following Croce-Collingwood's theory of art, might be identifying artworks with ideas. This option, again, raises an alternative general category artworks belong to depending on the assumption that ideas are not artifacts. According to the Croce-Collingwood theory of art, ideas stand in stark contrast to physical artifacts, such as knives, pencils, and painted canvasses. Although identifying artworks with ideal or mental objects might be a promising route to pursue (i)[10], I will leave this discussion to another project and, for this paper, simply appeal to the strong intuition that artworks are artifacts.

ii)   *Artwork is a special sort of artifact kind.*

Failing to find a kind-associated function for the objects we classify as artworks, Evnine (2016, p. 129) suggests that *artwork* is a special sort of artifact kind. Similarly, Levinson (2007) claims that artworks are artifacts in a distinct sense. While, for Levinson, other artifact kinds are *concept-dependent*—the maker has a substantial idea in mind regarding the object they are bringing into existence—artworks are weakly intention-dependent. The relevant intention is weak in the sense that the artist might intend to create a member of *artwork* without having a

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[10] Whether Colingwood is commited to the view that artworks are ideas is controversial. See, for instance, Davies (2008) for a discussion of Collingwood's theory.

substantive idea of what artworks are. To me, these moves already imply a form of pluralism in the case of artifacts.

iii)   *If we follow artifact concept pluralism, artworks can be captured by a distinct*
        concept of artifacts.

Elsewhere I argued (author, forthcoming) that the current debate on the philosophy of artifacts has an unchallenged assumption of monism which, I believe, engenders most of the definitional and extensional problems extant essentialist and anti-essentialist accounts face. According to monism, there is only a single way of grouping entities into artifact kinds. The essentialist accounts converge on the following options for artifact essences as a way to group entities into artifact kinds: functions (etiological or intentional), a combination of functions and physical structure, and maker's intention (i.e., intended category membership). However, I won't provide a summary of the serious objections each account encounters.

Considering these objections, recently, Beth Preston (2022) and I (forthcoming) simultaneously developed two similar pluralistic frameworks for artifacts, which broadly suggest that there are multiple correct ways of grouping entities into artifact kinds.[11] These concepts, according to my account, are the following: purely intentional artifact concept, intentionalist functional artifact concept, morphological artifact concept, and residual artifact concept. The purely intentional artifact concept sorts objects in terms of their intended category membership;

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[11] Although Preston and I follow a similar strategy in building our arguments, the end result is slightly different. Preston (2022) proposes that there are multiple ways to define 'artifact' which takes into account different important aspects of artifacts such as intentions, functions, and modification. For instance, in archeological sense, artifact is anything intentionally or unintentionally made by humans. Various definitions, then, track both real features of the objects and epistemic interests of the relevant inquirers. My project can be seen as refining the multiple definitions sketched by Preston and so I believe our projects are compatible.

the intentionalist functional artifact concept takes the intended functions as the key characteristic

of artifacts. Morphological artifact concept groups together artifacts in terms of displayed

features. Finally, the residual artifact concept is needed to account for the residue and debris

cases that are considered to be artifacts by archeologists and anthropologists since they are laden

with information regarding past cultures. All this suggests that instead of identifying artifacts

with a kind-associated function, we can come up with different concepts that would capture the

heterogeneity of artifacts.

> …in a pluralistic framework, we can fruitfully approach specific kinds of problem
> cases within the boundaries of a specific artifact concept and see to what extent
> that concept manages to account for such cases (Mag Uidhir and Magnus 2011,
> 92-95). Many consider artworks as artifacts (Dickie 1974; Levinson 2007; Mag
> Uidhir 2013). If some artworks are not functional, then we can better approach the
> philosophy of art with a purely intentional artifact concept as the backdrop.
> (Author, forthcoming)

The basic idea behind concept pluralism is that based on the domain of inquiry we get different

(sets of) properties that are significant for the taxonomic practices relevant to the domain. For

instance, for an archeologist interested in uncovering various cultural patterns in an excavation

site, morphological grouping plays a very important role. In some cases, these morphological

groupings provide archeologists with finer-grained cultural information than groupings based on

functions (Kelly and Thomas, 2011, p. 100).

The purely intentional concept is primarily used in art studies. Recalling what Jerrold

Levinson (2007) claims, art objects are artifacts and the minimally relevant intention in creating

such artifacts is the category membership, i.e., being a member of art kind. A purely intentional

artifact concept, then, can be used to capture the case of artworks. Artifacts, under this concept,

are mind-dependent objects that are made to be members of a certain artifact kind. These objects

have functional properties only contingently (Thomasson 2003, 2007; Juvshik 2021a; Author

forthcoming). This concept aligns with Carroll's assertions regarding the improbability of discovering a singular, unifying function for all artworks:

> At one time, the criterion of imitating the beautiful in nature did a tolerable job. But because of historical changes in the various arts, including the rise of absolute music, the proliferation and addition of new artforms, and the experimentation of waves of avant-gardes, there is no longer any feature or function or set thereof that in fact or in concept holds these practices together. If they are related at all, it may be a matter primarily of genealogical bonds. Moreover, rather than theorizing about the artworld … it may be more instructive today for philosophers of the arts (plural) to examine the individual practices, artforms and even genres that are linked genealogically to the now defunct (and if truth be told, long since defunct) modern system of the arts. (Carroll, 2008, p. 740)

If, as Carroll's quote suggests, there is no kind-associated function of *artworks*, then the philosophy of art can benefit more from a distinct artifact concept that characterizes artifacts in terms of their 'genealogical link'. More specifically, instead of the functional artifact concept, intended category membership might be more suitable in the case of artworks to account for the artifactuality of artworks. Thus, the tension dissolves.

Conclusion

This paper argued that artworks are not functional. More specifically, it argued that unlike familiar artifact kinds such as *chair*, the kind *artwork* does not have a kind-associated function. To show that *artwork* does not have a kind-associated function, I considered prominent functional views and suggested that they cannot account for the plurality of artworks. This, of course, does not by itself show the impossibility of a functional account of art. However, the lack of a promising account of functional theory about artworks should make an alternative proposal about artifact kinds attractive.

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