Lost in Translation
On the Intelligibility of Art Discourse

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Merijn Oudenampsen focuses on some of the deeper issues and paradoxes that underly both art discourse and the recurring discussion about its intelligibility in the Netherlands. Can it be that the "unassailable jargon" of art discourse and the anti-intellectualism of newspaper journalists criticizing it stem from a similar background? Could it be that they are both actually feeding and reinforcing each other?

Frans Hals, Regentesses of the Old Men's Alms House in Haarlem, 1664, oil on canvas, Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem.

Animosity and mutual miscomprehension have come to characterise the relationship between journalists and the modern art world in the Netherlands. At the core of this discord is a recurring discussion on the intelligibility of art discourse *[www.onlineopen.org/concept-has-never-meant-horse-a-response-to-merijn-oudenampsen]*. The more recent point of departure was a much-maligned exhibition of the *Prix de Rome* in 2013, one of the foremost Dutch art prizes. Newspaper critics complained about the difficulty of the artworks on display, which were deemed not visually appealing enough and therefore sure to repel the ordinary public. Not long thereafter, another journalist, Ernst-Jan Pfauth, decried the abstract, jargon-filled nature of the texts that accompanied exhibitions in the Stedelijk Museum. [1]

The reviews were met with criticism from voices within the art scene. Domeniek Ruyters and Vincent van Velsen complained that journalists not only left their coats at the museum cloakroom, but their brains as well. Why can't journalists simply look at art without having to have everything explained to them, Ruyters asked. [2] Vincent van Velsen noted that every profession in society has its own jargon. [3] Why can't journalists make an effort to try to understand art discourse, and function as intermediaries and translators with respect to the broader newspaper audience? Koen Kleijn responded in *De Groene Amsterdammer*, by describing Ruyters and Van Velsen's vision as elitist: an "old-fashioned dogmatic order: the arts as a dazzling citadel, surrounded by unassailable moats of jargon". [4] If art does not exist to communicate something to the public, Kleijn wondered, why is it exhibited in the first place? And why do artists and art institutions often restrict themselves to English, when their purported goal is to reach out to a broader audience?

The aim of this text is to explore this disagreement and focus on some of the deeper issues and paradoxes that have up until now scarcely been addressed. For starters, one of the most prevalent arguments used in the discussion regarding the cuts in the Dutch culture budget has been the notion that the art world is too closed in on itself. Related to this issue is the complaint that the international art discourse that accompanies a lot of contemporary art production is too hermetic for the broader Dutch audience to be able to appreciate. At the same time, however, the aim of the Dutch government's official cultural policy is to stimulate culture that is competitive on a global level. No wonder then that the primary focus of artists and art institutions has shifted from addressing a more general audience to addressing the international field of cultural producers, curators and critics, in English (*Open!*'s website being no exception). And no wonder artists feel the need to present their work within the framework of international art discourse. Not the artists themselves but the contradictions of the present cultural policy seem to be the real problem here.

A second, more essential paradox is that the inaccessibility of art has historically been one of its defining characteristics. The use of jargon in the art world is therefore of a wholly different nature than the jargon found in other areas such as the medical profession or the construction industry where the use of jargon is functional; it has a well-defined and singular meaning used to identify certain diseases, instruments and so forth. Meanwhile, modern art has historically been defined by its opposition to functionality by a long tradition of aesthetics. Ambiguity is widely seen as a precondition for an accomplished work of art. The difficulty seems to be that art discourse often reflects these qualities, and tends to become a form of aesthetics itself. The demand now being voiced by many journalists that art should be more accessible to a broader public is therefore a more complicated undertaking than it is made out to be. One of the problems here is that both newspaper critics and significant parts of the art world depart from a traditional conception of autonomy that precludes a more fruitful intellectual and pedagogical relation to the arts.

On the supremacy of form over function

Some time ago, I attended the Studium Generale at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam. Described as "an extensive transdisciplinary theory program", it hosted an impressive array of philosophers and theorists, discussing everything from Gilles Deleuze's views on Kafka to contemporary media activism. The lecture that stuck with me the most, however, addressed Felix Guattari's work in the La Borde clinic, a psychiatric institution that became famous in the 60s and 70s for encouraging its patients to become more actively involved in running the facility. Guattari developed an extensive philosophy based on his experiences here, moving beyond the Freudian tradition of psychoanalysis towards what he called "schizoanalysis". But it is not Guattari's work that I wish to discuss here.

The majority of the audience at the lecture was comprised of Rietveld art students, with limited training in philosophy. [5] I had the advantage of being roughly familiar with Guattari's theories, and having a basic understanding of the philosophical space in which to locate his ideas. The presentation, however, progressed on a level of abstraction that was far beyond my grasp. I estimated that it would confound all but a select few, specialized in this particular field. At a certain point in the lecture, I stopped listening and started looking around to see how the rest of the audience was taking it in. Two female students in their early twenties sitting next to me, tried to make the most of it. One confessed to the other: "I don't understand anything, but I like the rhythm of the words." Her friend, dutifully taking notes in a small notebook, responded by saying that she was writing down the words she thought sounded nice, like "semiotics". Maybe she could use it in her own work sometime in the future.

I left the presentation puzzled and perplexed, only to have the phenomenon repeat itself during the rest of the program. I felt for those art students who were obliged to submit themselves to a forbidding language whose intricate meaning must have remained almost completely opaque to them. I discussed my confusion with some friends with an academic background who professed to having had similar experiences in the Dutch art scene. At university, we would never dream of presenting students with this level of complexity. To our common confusion, the pedagogical intent seemed to be missing here. What we were confronted with was high theory presented as a form of aesthetics and students were clearly learning to relate to theory aesthetically: as something that sounded nice, or looked beautiful and reassuringly complex when written down.

I began to suspect that a lot of the incomprehensible art discourse one is typically confronted with at exhibitions, flowery language that simply makes no sense, stems from this particular way of relating to theory. That is why recurring complaints by journalists and newspaper critics about art discourse devolving into an academic discipline (qualifying something as "academic" has somehow become the preferred form of anti-intellectual invective in the Netherlands) are beside the point. If art discourse was indeed academic there would be some didactic aspect to it.

An interesting parallel appears: both the newspaper critics who reviewed the *Prix de Rome* and the Studium Generale lectures – organised with the best of intentions, no doubt – departed from the assumption of a spontaneous appreciation of art and / or theory. Could it be that both the "unassailable jargon" and the anti-intellectualism of newspaper critics stem from a similar background? Could it be that both actually feed and reinforce each other?

The ideology of charisma

Pierre Bourdieu's *Distinction* proved helpful in making some sense of this phenomenon. [6] In this seminal study, Bourdieu convincingly takes aim at what he describes as "the ideology of charisma": the assumption that cultural taste is a gift of nature, that art can be appreciated spontaneously. Art lovers beholden to this idea often see scholarly knowledge and the interpretation of art as pedantic or scholastic, ruining the artistic enchantment. One can find a similar attitude expressed in the demand that an artwork should remain completely open to the personal interpretation of the viewer. Any explanation or interpretation of the artwork is considered a restriction of the many-sidedness of its meaning, implying that art discourse should remain deliberately abstract and vague. What this view denies or obscures, according to Bourdieu, is the fact that the appreciation of art is dependent on one's knowledge of artistic codes:

A work of art has meaning and interest only for someone who possesses the cultural competence, that is, the code, into which it is encoded. The conscious or unconscious implementation of explicit or implicit schemes of perception and appreciation which constitutes pictorial or musical culture is the hidden condition for recognizing the styles characteristic of a period, a school, or an author, and, more generally, for the familiarity with the internal logic of works that aesthetic enjoyment presupposes. [7]

This type of knowledge, Bourdieu stated, is often attained unconsciously through "insensible familiarization" in the family circle. Of course Bourdieu was writing on France in the 60s, where the acquisition of legitimate culture was an important precondition for elite membership. In the Netherlands of today, art schools seem to fulfil a similar function of educating their students on how to appreciate art, mostly through implicit and subconscious means. When Domeniek Ruyters asks journalists to simply look at art, without needing to have everything explained to them, he seems to be reaffirming the ideology of charisma. According to Ruyters, who praises Rudi Fuchs for eliminating all exhibition texts during his tenure at the Van Abbe Museum, knowledge and understanding is no precondition for aesthetic enjoyment. In fact, Ruyters suggests, it is more often an impediment. [8] When journalists criticise the *Prix de Rome* because the art works on display require reading and intellectual effort and cannot be appreciated spontaneously, they seem to adopt a similar position.

Bourdieu traced these ideas on how to experience art back to Romantic aesthetics and, in particular, Immanuel Kant, who famously stated that aesthetic judgment departs from *Begrifflösigkeit* (notionlessness). According to Kant, we do not understand why we enjoy art, it is beyond rational categories of thought. This position, often present in a rather vague or vulgarised form, leads to the notion of intuitive and spontaneous art appreciation that is still very prevalent in the Netherlands. One is reminded of the former State Secretary of Culture, Halbe Zijlstra who, in an interview, admitted that he did not know the artist who had painted the modern painting that hung in his office: "I am not interested in names; art is taste, it should make you happy, it has to give you energy". [9] Kant presented the artist as a genius, a person who is not rationally aware of what he or she is doing but who can intuitively express the intangible beauty of nature through art. In conversations with artists and critics, I have often found that these Romantic notions continue to linger. In fact, they seem to have fused with a broader strain of anti-intellectualism that has pervaded Dutch culture over the last century or so. Johan Huizinga, the famous Dutch historian, described the Dutch mind as "more reflective than philosophic" and characterised by "intellectual placidity, in which a deeply rooted element of scepticism can be found". [10] Others, such as the sociologist Ernest Zahn, noted the absence of theoretical traditions in the Netherlands and the notable lack of an intellectual elite when compared to neighbouring Germany [11]. Although these observations were made in the 1920s and the 1980s respectively, they seem to have lost little of their relevance today.

Having discarded the notion of the spontaneous appreciation of artworks, Bourdieu goes on to define "the aesthetic disposition": the legitimate and acculturated way of dealing with art. For Bourdieu, the aesthetic disposition is defined by the ability to consider works of art in terms of their form rather than their function. Similar rules apply to the professional ethics of artists themselves. When artists assert their autonomy, Bourdieu writes, they "give primacy to that of which the artist is master: form, manner, style, rather than subject". To be an autonomous artist is to be "a master of his or her product, to resist the meaning imposed on the work by outside critics and viewers". The final stage in the conquest of artistic autonomy is the production of an open work "intrinsically and deliberately polysemic".

Again, much of this is based on a reading of Kantian aesthetics. Kant proposed that aesthetic judgment – the assessment of Beauty – distinguishes itself by "disinterestedness". This is in contradiction to moral and empirical judgments, which are aimed firstly at the assessment of the Good on the basis of Reason and secondly, the True on the basis of sensuous experience. While the latter two forms of judgement are considerations of practical utility we make in everyday life, aesthetic judgment is distinguished by its nonfunctionality: art should not entertain, it should not please the senses, it is there to offer a higher form of gratification. The autonomy – or after Kant, *Selbständigkeit* – of a work of art, lies in the fact that it needs to be appreciated – first and foremost – aesthetically. Who waxes enthusiastic over a Rembrandt exhibition for his depiction of naked women takes a much too "functional" approach. Kant would describe it as "barbarous taste". To enter the world of art, in short, means to depart from our everyday means of observation, conditioned as they are by purpose and necessity.

For Bourdieu, Kantian high aesthetics demands detachment as a condition for the viewing of art. It is a detachment made possible by a distance from the necessities of the natural and social world. High culture is therefore not universal and equally accessible to all. In fact, it's a relational phenomenon, defined negatively against popular culture:

The denial of lower, course, vulgar, venal, servile – in a word, natural – enjoyment, which constitutes the sacred sphere of culture, implies an affirmation of the superiority of those who can be satisfied with the sublimated, refined, disinterested, gratuitous, distinguished pleasures forever closed to the profane. That is why art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfil a social function of legitimating social differences. [12]

For Bourdieu "the popular aesthetic" is in everything the polar opposite of the high aesthetic. The lower educated, Bourdieu claims by means of interviews and questionnaires, expect every image to fulfil a function. Art, in this perspective, should be subservient to reality and show the beauty of the world; art should entertain, it invites moral judgment. The popular desire for personal investment and participation in culture leads to a refusal of formal experimentation, which is at the base of the disinterested appreciation of the high aesthetic. This results in a popular hostility towards high culture, which is characterised in the eyes of the ordinary public, by "a desire to keep the uninitiated at arm's length".

Having read Bourdieu, it is hard not to view the debates surrounding the budget cuts in Dutch culture in terms of the cultural divide he sketched between the high and the popular. For example, in the middle of the discussion on the budget cuts, the newspaper of note, *NRC Handelsblad*, published a survey stating that the majority of the Dutch public views culture as entertainment. [13] In the accompanying editorial, the newspaper implored artists to listen to their public; in other words, entertain more. The political campaign against culture, spearheaded by the leader of the rightwing liberal party (VVD), Halbe Zijlstra, successfully mobilised the popular hostility to high culture that Bourdieu so aptly describes. Zijlstra pleaded that the public (understood as a synonym for the market), not the cultural elite should be the arbiter of good art: "Else a small group decides which art

should be subsidised. Art is for society. If that society is not willing to come and see art, something is fundamentally wrong". "Creativity implies that sometimes things are presented that society is not yet ready for. However, one never knows whether new art is actually really good, or ordinary trash. (...) Who am I or the Art Council or some other expert, to proclaim that we know what is good or bad art?" [14] Of course, much has changed in the 35 years since Bourdieu wrote *Distinction*. High culture has lost much of its hallowed character and social stratification has become less pronounced. Also, the Netherlands isn't France: the Dutch bourgeoisie, as Zahn wrote in *Das unbekannte Holland* , has retained its historically puritanical character, and is still relatively ill-disposed to aesthetic enjoyment and cultural aplomb. [15]

It could explain why an established journalist like Ernst-Jan Pfauth is able to publicly express his admiration for those who "can comprehend high culture, kneel down, and bring across their knowledge in an intelligent and accessible way to those who want to discover true beauty". That humbly imparted knowledge concerning high culture, we find out, consists of the discovery that it's okay to want to recognise a spaceship in the abstract figures of Malevich, and that Malevich "finished off a shopping list" of artistic styles, before arriving at absolute abstraction. It's an example of what seems to have developed into an accomplished style among Dutch newspaper critics: to pretend to be aesthetically and intellectually illiterate and to place themselves in the position of their reading public, who are assumed to be culturally ignorant.

This, in itself, is nothing new. What has changed is that the art world, as a result of internationalisation, has become more disposed to theory and intellectual debates on societal issues. The particularity of the Dutch context is that both the curatorial (and journalistic) expertise to explain and translate these themes to a broader public is missing, as well as a broader conception of art fulfilling such a reflective and social function. Many continue to follow in Kant's footsteps and remain deeply uncomfortable with the idea of functionality of the arts as such. There was once the bourgeois notion of *Bildung*, the process of individual development via aesthetic education, which Bourdieu not only criticised but also sought to democratise. The limitation of Bourdieu's writing is that it doesn't provide much – due to its rather reductive determinism – in terms of an alternative intellectual or pedagogical relation to the arts. [16]

A total approach to art

An interesting example of an alternative view is the author, critic, painter and poet John Berger. In *Ways of Seeing*, a seminal 1972 BBC documentary series, later published in book form, John Berger developed a "materialist" approach to oil painting, analysing the tradition as a testimony of the then-current social relations:

No other kind of relic or text from the past can offer such a direct testimony about the world which surrounded other people at other times. In this respect images are more precise and richer than literature. To say this is not to deny the expressive or imaginative quality of art, treating it as mere documentary evidence; the more imaginative the work, the more profoundly it allows us to share the artist's experience of the visible. [17]

Berger proposes an active relationship to our past, as a "well of conclusions from which we draw in order to act". However, when images are presented as works of art, an entire set of learned assumptions comes to the fore that tells us how art ought to be appreciated. These assumptions, Berger argues, often result in a form of cultural mystification, entailing a double loss: works of art are made "unnecessarily remote" and there is less to learn from the particular experience these works give testimony to, and thus "we are deprived of the history that belongs to us".

As an example of this mystification, Berger discusses an "authoritative" work of art history,

concerning Frans Hals' *Regentesses of the Old Men's Alms House in Haarlem* (1664):

Each woman speaks to us of the human condition with equal importance. Each woman stands out with equal clarity against the enormous dark surface, yet they are linked by a firm rhythmical arrangement and the subdued diagonal pattern formed by their heads and hands. Subtle modulations of the deep, glowing blacks contribute to the harmonious fusion of the whole and form an unforgettable contrast with the powerful whites and vivid flesh tones where the detached strokes reach a peak of breadth and strength. [18]

Berger observes that the art discourse here is instrumental in prioritising form and technique and sidelining the subject matter. "As if the emotion provoked by the painting does not come from the plane of lived experience, but only from its composition, which can be approached through disinterested art appreciation." Here Berger anticipates Bourdieu's subsequent critique, who described disinterested art appreciation as hinging on "the bourgeois denial of the social world". [19] For Berger, the psychological and social urgency of the Frans Hals painting resides in the fact that we can still relate to the vision of the painter in the present. The people, gestures, faces and institutions portrayed in the painting are still recognisable to us, because "we still live in a society of comparable social relations and moral values". The austere nature of the faces in the painting becomes even more meaningful when we learn that Frans Hals was at that time a pauper himself, dependent on the charity of similar institutions as the ones that he immortalised in his paintings.

Similar points can be made concerning the texts accompanying the present Rijksmuseum collection. For instance, Willem Claesz. Heda's famous painting *Still Life with Gilt Goblet* (1635) is accompanied by the following text:

The range of grey tonalities that Willem Heda could paint is astounding. With this subtle palette, he deftly rendered the objects – of pewter, silver, damask, glass and mother-of-pearl – on this table. A few yellow and ochre accents compliment this refined interplay of colours. Heda specialized in near monochromatic still lifes, so-called "tonal banquet pieces". [20]

Willem Claesz. Heda, Still Life with Gilt Goblet, 1635, oil on panel, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Here we are presented with what Bourdieu called "form, manner, style, rather than subject". What the painting signified in 17th-century Dutch society is not addressed. For the viewer, the information that Heda could paint an astounding "range of gray tonalities" and a "refined interplay of colours" seems rather technical and redundant. This description applies to many paintings in this particular gallery in the Rijksmuseum. Was Rembrandt not also capable of painting an "astounding range of gray tonalities"?

Berger argued that the function of the still life is more than a demonstration of the virtuosity of the artist: "it confirms the owner's wealth and habitual style of living".[21] In the *Embarrassment of Riches*, Simon Schama expands on this "habitual style" and portrays the work of Heda as an exercise in economy, relating it to the then-prevalent humanist ideal amongst the Dutch patrician elite: that of the golden mean, "negotiating prudently between privation and excess".[22]

My aim in this particular instance is not to vouch for Berger or Schama as the only correct reading of the historical meaning of this painting. Rather, it is the idea as such, as expressed by Berger, that paintings could have a function in offering testimony of our past. That is also the official position of the Rijksmuseum, which presents itself to the public as the primary Dutch history museum. But it dramatically fails to live up to that goal. The result of the curatorial approach seems to be to divest the paintings of their historical and social significance. This disdain for the historical context and meaning of the works on display seems to have reached rock bottom with the recent intervention of Alain de Botton, who, in his much discussed "art as therapy" intervention, prescribes rather random psychological "insights" and self-help suggestions that bear little relation to the works in question. An intervention that was subsequently celebrated by Ernst-Jan Pfauth as "the beautiful future of museums".[23]

The complaints concerning the "abstract" nature of the texts at the Malevich exhibition mentioned in the introduction of this essay, could be analysed from a similar perspective. Here is an excerpt from the exhibition program:

In 1915, Malevich created his first abstract-geometric figures paintings. This was a courageous act in what was then Czarist Russia, where academic figurative art was the norm. Early in his career, Malevich was deeply involved with Avant-Garde groups intent on developing new forms of art for a new modern society. In contrast to the Constructivists, however, Malevich aimed to create a suprematist art – an art that bore no connection with society. He developed art theories around Suprematism and took up a teaching post at Vibetsk art school in 1919. During the Soviet regime, he allowed figurative elements to reappear in his work.

Here again we are confronted with "form, manner, style, rather than subject". Notice how the socio-political significance of Malevich's work is sidelined. Politics appears merely as a negative infringement upon Malevich's artistic trajectory towards abstraction and disconnection from society, which is presented as one and the same. This description is strange because Malevich himself provided ample political connotations for his suprematist artworks. As the late *New York Times* art critic Hilton Kramer wrote (in a rather disparaging tone):

He was given to comparing Lenin to Christ, and in what was, perhaps, the most extreme avowal of his irrational conflation of art, religion, and politics, he recommended to his Soviet comrades that Lenin's body be placed "in a cube, as if in eternity," and urged that "Every working Leninist should have a cube at home, as a reminder of the eternal, constant lesson of Leninism," etc. "The cube," writes Robert C. Williams in *Artists in Revolution*

(1977), "would symbolize Lenin's immortality. … In painting, the cube moving through two-dimensional space at an angle had created the patterns of Suprematism; in life, it would now help to build a new Soviet culture." [24]

Of course, for an established art critic like Hilton Kramer, the concurrence of art and politics is somewhat of a scandal. Writing about a Malevich exhibition in the National Gallery in Washington in 1990, Kramer praises them for minimising the ideas involved in the art:

The emphasis in the installation and layout of the exhibition should be on the art, rather than on the ideas governing the art; and this emphasis has the salutary effect of establishing Malevich as an aesthetic sensibility, as the successful exponent of certain aesthetic strategies and devices, and thus tends to minimize the politics, the mysticism, and the rest of the ideological baggage that occupied such an important place in the artist's life and thought.

That is also how the Malevich exhibition in the Stedelijk Museum has been organised: It divested the art of its social context, the politics, the mysticism and the ideological baggage which inherent aspects of Malevich's work. The ideas and the art can certainly be presented together without disqualifying or diminishing the expressive quality of the art, as Boris Groys has recently shown in his essay *Becoming Revolutionary: On Kazimir Malevich*. [25] The "abstract" nature of the Malevich exhibition texts, seems to be a logical consequence of this wilful reduction of the meaning of the work.

To conclude, yes we are in need of a more accessible language in the arts. But no, that inaccessibility is not caused by the intellectual and academic colonisation of the arts. It is a particular, overly aesthetic and anti-intellectual way of relating to art and theory that seems to be the problem here. In *Ways of Seeing*, Berger proposed a 'total approach', attempting to relate art to every aspect of experience. For that to become a remote possibility, a more critical, intellectual and pedagogical relation to art is needed. It implies some degree of scepticism towards traditional ideas concerning disinterested art appreciation, which foregrounds form and is ill-disposed towards meaning.

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Footnotes

1. Ernst-Jan Pfauth, "Cultuurbarbaren". *De Correspondent*
2. Domeniek Ruyters, "Jip en Janneke in het Museum". *MetropolisM , November 19, 2013.*
3. Vincent van Velsen, "Een ster is geen recensie". Platform BK, November 18, 2013.
4. Koen Kleijn, "Land zonder drempels; de (on)toegankelijkheid van kunst". *De Groene Amsterdammer*, December 12, 2013. In the process, Kleijn seems to wilfully misrepresent Ruyters and Van Velsen's arguments, both of whom maintain that art is there to communicate something to the audience, but that something requires some effort on the part of the public and the journalists to understand.
5. The Gerrit Rietveld Academie, like most art academies in the Netherlands, is a polytechnic school: it mostly teaches practice. The domain of theory is reserved for academically trained art historians, traditionally quite a conservative discipline in the Netherlands. Only recently a few PhD positions have been allocated for artists themselves. Overall, Dutch art education maintains a strict separation between manual and mental labour. This in contrast with the UK for example, where theory has become an integral part of art curricula. The RCA and Goldsmiths have emerged as prominent and leading interdisciplinary institutions.
6. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. (London: Routledge, 1984)
7. Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p. XXV.
8. Domeniek Ruyters, "Jip en Janneke in het Museum". *MetropolisM*, November 19, 2013.
9. Halbe Zijlstra: Er zit pijn in de bezuinigingen, dat klopt", *De Volkskrant*, June 11, 2011.
10. Huizinga cited in Jos De Beus et al., *De ideologische driehoek. Nederlandse politiek in historisch perspectief*. (Amsterdam: Boom, 1989), p. 42.
11. Ernest Zahn, *Das unbekannte Holland: Regenten, Rebellen und Reformatoren* (Berlin: Siedler, 1984)
12. Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p. XXX.
13. "Kunstenaars moeten naar publiek luisteren," *NRC Handelsblad*, 3 September 2011.
14. Niet Raad voor Cultuur maar publiek moet bepalen wat goede kunst is", *Vrij Nederland*, January 12, 2011.
15. Zahn, *Das unbekannte Holland.*
16. Bourdieu's work is at its most useful when read as a polemical critique of class bias in high culture. Bourdieu was no opponent of autonomy as such and would come to defend artistic and intellectual autonomy in later works. It is helpful to read Bourdieu as a corrective of the ideas of philosopher Jacques Rancière. Rancière rather too easily assumes the emancipatory character of artistic autonomy. Vice versa, Rancière can serve as a corrective of Bourdieu, who reduces artistic agency to a struggle over symbolic capital.
17. John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin Books, 1972, p.10.)
18. Italics by Berger, Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, p.13.
19. Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p. XXVIII.
20. www.rijksmuseum.nl
21. Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, p. 99
22. Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An interpretation of Dutch culture in the Golden Age* (New York: Vintage, 1987), pp. 160-161.
23. decorrespondent.nl.
24. Hilton Kramer, "Art, revolution, and Kazimir Malevich". *The New Criterion*, November 1990. Here it doesn't hurt to mention that Kramer is politically firmly on the Right, generally seen as a neoconservative Reaganite.
25. Boris Groys, "Becoming Revolutionary: on Kazimir Malevich". *e-fluxjournal* #47, September 2013.

Crosslinks

Concept Has Never Meant "Horse": A Response to Merijn Oudenampsen: www.onlineopen.org/concept-has-never-meant-horse-a-response-to-merijn-oudenampsen

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