

Paradigm Shifts in Personal Symbolism in Contemporary Art

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Abstract

Considering the characteristics of contemporary art—most notably the simultaneous emergence of numerous schools, styles, and movements, which makes historical classification in contemporary art nearly impossible—and the increasing importance of personal symbolism by artists, often intertwined with pre-established collective symbols within a particular culture or the global cultural context, the issue of paradigm shifts in personal symbolism in contemporary art becomes especially significant. This article seeks to address the following research questions: 1) How do paradigms shift in personal symbolism in contemporary art? and 2) How does personal symbolism relate to the denotative and expressive concepts proposed in analytical philosophy? It focuses on the denotative and expressive concepts in the process of personal symbolism in contemporary art. Accordingly, all human actions, including the creation of artworks, derive from one of these concepts. To identify the underlying concept, the motivation or driving reason for each human action must be considered. If an action is motivated by an individual's intention to communicate with an audience, it belongs to the category of expressive concepts; conversely, actions without such motivation fall under denotative concepts. It should be noted that in this study, the artwork itself is considered as a whole unit, with attention to both analytic approaches—from part to whole and from whole to part—within the artwork. In this study, using an analytical research method and library-based data collection, it was concluded that, with paradigm shifts in contemporary art, what transforms a human act into a work of art is the discussion and exchange of ideas that occurs within the accepted cultural framework of each country or the global art world—without requiring consensus among all members of the art world to recognize the work as art.

Keywords: *Symbolism, Paradigm, Personal Symbolism, Collective Symbolism, Conventional Signs, Denotative and Expressive Concepts.*

Introduction

When examining artworks created throughout art history, whether in the East or the West, one observes a common core element: these works always contain symbolic codes or conventional signs. These symbols vary depending on the cultural context, so what appears familiar to members of one culture may seem alien to those from another.

This article seeks to address the following research questions: 1) How do paradigms shift in personal symbolism in contemporary art? and 2) How does personal symbolism relate to the denotative and expressive concepts proposed in analytical philosophy? In this study, denotative and expressive concepts in the process of personal symbolism in contemporary art are examined based on Arthur Danto's theory within analytical philosophy. Accordingly, all human actions, including the creation of artworks, are derived from one of these concepts. To identify this fundamental distinction, the motivation behind each human action must be considered: if an action is motivated by the artist's intention to communicate with an audience, it falls under expressive concepts, rather than denotative concepts, which lack such a communicative impulse.

Fundamentally, every artwork conveys the cultural paradigm to which it belongs. As members of the visual arts community, we are familiar with the conventional symbols in medieval paintings, Italian Renaissance art, Northern European Flemish art, Iranian miniatures, Chinese paintings, and so on. However, an illiterate European viewer in the Middle Ages would have interpreted these paintings differently: for them, these symbolic conventions were fully recognizable and were designed to guide the viewer toward God and genuine Christian faith. For example, in this context, a dove symbolizes the Holy Spirit, a lamb represents

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Christ, who was sacrificed for humanity's sins, the cross signifies Christ's suffering, and the twelve lambs symbolize the twelve apostles.

In Iranian visual culture, as we know, interior and exterior spaces of buildings and day and night are often depicted simultaneously, reflecting the paradigm of traditional Iranian art and symbolizing the celestial realm—a fragment of paradise. This allows viewers to grasp the intended meanings immediately; a familiar Iranian audience can interpret these symbols without confusion, unlike an unfamiliar viewer who might find such scenes puzzling or surprising.

As time progresses, paradigm shifts in art expand, and the catalog of conventional symbols becomes increasingly complex, requiring greater familiarity from audiences. As humanity moved toward humanism, personal symbolism gained greater significance, culminating in contemporary art, where an infinite variety of subjects and methods of creation emerge through the work of artists from each generation.

As Alireza Sami Azar notes in the introduction to the book *Concepts and Approaches in the Latest Art Movements of the Twentieth Century: Globalization and New Art*, regarding paradigm shifts in contemporary art:

“New art, with all its possibilities and modern tools, constantly asserts itself on important global issues such as freedom, the environment, nuclear threats, feminism, technology and human alienation from machines, human tragedies, and the atrocities of world wars. Today's critics, art experts, and exhibition organizers often emphasize the confrontational attitude of artists toward many pressing human issues and acknowledge that contemporary art experiences a kind of return to the commitment-driven nature characteristic of the Romantic period.” (Sami Azar, 2005 [1384], p. 10)

This underscores that in contemporary art, paradigm shifts are closely intertwined with the personal and socially conscious symbolic expressions of artists, reflecting both individual perspectives and broader cultural concerns.

Research Method:

This article has been written using an analytical research method, and the data collection technique is based on a library (documentary) approach.

Research Background:

The book *Movements in Modern Art*, in Iran was published in Iran under the title: *Concepts and Approaches in the Latest Artistic Movements of the Twentieth Century: Globalization and New Art*, authored by the renowned art historian Edward Lucie-Smith—a familiar name to Iranian art enthusiasts—was published for the second time in 2005 by Nazar Cultural, Artistic, and Research Institute in Tehran, featuring a complete translation and preface by Alireza Sami-Azar. In this book, the author, through eloquent prose—enhanced by Sami-Azar's refined translation—presents and discusses contemporary issues in art within the context of globalization for the Iranian reader. The publication of this book coincided precisely with the emergence of a new generation of Iranian artists who regarded themselves as committed to articulating the concept of globalization through artistic expression. Their works drew notable international attention, achieving remarkable success. From this perspective, the book serves as a significant source in understanding the paradigm shifts and the evolution of personal symbolism in contemporary art. The book *Après la fin de l'art* (“After the End of Art”) by Arthur Danto, the eminent philosopher of analytic philosophy specializing in aesthetics and contemporary art, was published in 1996 by Éditions du Seuil in Paris. In this influential work, Danto presents the perspectives of analytic philosophy concerning art. With eloquent yet accessible prose—free from the literary complexities that often characterize philosophical writings—he examines and refutes several essential ontological theories of art.

This significant book, regarded as one of the primary sources in the philosophy of contemporary art, has played a fundamental role in advancing the theoretical framework of the present research.

The article “*Contemporary Aesthetics after Andy Warhol’s Brillo Boxes Based on the Theory of ‘Applied Ontology’*” by Hoda Zabolinezhad and Parisa Shad azvini, published in the journal *Fine Arts – Visual Arts* in 2021 (1400 AH), is among the key research sources referenced in this study.

In that article, through a discussion on paradigm shifts and personal symbolism in contemporary visual arts—topics that are also examined in the present research—the authors explore the philosophical and aesthetic transformations that followed Warhol’s conceptual revolution. Therefore, this work has been cited as an important reference within the framework of the current study. The book *ART ET POLITIQUE (Art and Politics)*, published in 2006 under the supervision of Jean-Marc Lachaud by L’Harmattan Publishing in Paris, addresses one of the most fundamental questions in contemporary aesthetics: the nature of the relationship between art and politics in a world profoundly shaped by globalization.

In this volume, Marc Jimenez and Daniel Vander Gucht, as two of the principal contributors, examine whether contemporary art can truly be separated from the regional or global political issues of its time. They further inquire whether the theory of “neutral art”—which advocates for the liberation of art from all possible forms of commitment—has, in fact, been embraced by contemporary artists.

The theoretical discourse presented in this book, encompassing both the arguments of its proponents and critics, is well-documented and of notable significance to the ongoing dialogue concerning the political and ethical dimensions of contemporary art.

Paradigm Shifts in Contemporary Art and the Recognition of the Artwork as a Symbol

In historical studies, works of art from each era can readily be regarded as research objects, allowing for a deeper understanding of the worldview of the people of that time as well as the structural paradigm shifts that occurred throughout the history of human civilization.

For instance, as an Iranian, the author was familiar with the visual conventions of Persian miniature painting even before entering the field of art. We all know that the creators of these miniatures, through the use of vivid colors and materials such as gold, silver, and copper, sought to depict an otherworldly realm—an ethereal, transcendent world beyond earthly existence. All these elements were intended to provide a visual representation of a “lost paradise” for an audience already well-acquainted with such pictorial conventions.

Thus, the external space in these works is always exaggerated, depicting a celestial environment filled with flowers, trees, and animals inhabiting this lost paradise. In this artistic context, the concepts of time (day and night) or place (interior and exterior) differ entirely from those of the real world.

The conventional symbols employed in Persian miniature painting undoubtedly reveal the philosophical paradigm underlying the Iranian perception of life. In fact, the visual conventions of Iranian culture—deeply internalized through upbringing—may appear unfamiliar, strange, or even somewhat surreal to a Western observer unfamiliar with them; and, of course, the reverse is equally true.

Social scientists, too, examine works of art without necessarily considering their artistic or aesthetic value. For them, the essential point lies in the role such works play in revealing the spirit of their contemporary era. However, the fundamental question remains: can a single artwork—or a body of work belonging to a specific artistic movement—be regarded today as representative of the worldview of modern humanity?

The answer to this question is both *yes* and *no*. To clarify this issue, it is necessary to move beyond the art-theoretical debates of the Enlightenment through the twentieth century and to return instead to Roger Pouivet’s theory of “Applied” (*l’appliquée*) and the non-cognitivist discussions within Arthur Danto’s analytic philosophy of art.

According to this new paradigm in contemporary art, the focus must be placed solely on the artwork itself. Any attempt to seek meaning outside the work is of no use. Yet, if the viewer, by exploring the latent layers

embedded within the work, is guided outward from the artwork as a source of knowledge, such a process can indeed be fruitful.

It is, of course, beyond the present discussion to consider cases where the viewer imposes an external concept or interpretation upon a work of art—whether in an attempt to explain it or to determine in advance whether it qualifies as “art” at all.

In continuation, another aspect of the artwork is discussed in this article:

“What is at issue here is that artworks always reveal hidden layers—whether familiar or unfamiliar—to the eyes of their viewers. Therefore, audiences need to decode these works, and it can be readily asserted that all artworks are inherently symbolic, whether these symbols are collective or entirely personal. What distinguishes modern and subsequent artworks from those of earlier artistic periods lies precisely in the paradigm shifts of collective and personal symbols that each culture’s artworks embody.

Thus, throughout the era of humanism—when individualism increasingly gained importance within the evolution of human thought—we can observe a corresponding structural transformation in the process of artistic creation. From the beginning of the twentieth century and the advent of modern art, personal symbolism gradually replaced collective symbolism in artistic works, the latter of which had once been either universal or specific to a particular sh (*Zabolinezhad & Shad azvini, 2021, p. 107*) Today, we can assert that considering the political function of an artwork—such as treating it as a tool of propaganda—is entirely futile and illogical. An artist, for reasons that belong uniquely to their own individuality, chooses a particular visual method through which they express their personally constructed symbolic forms. It may also be acknowledged that these personal symbolic forms are more readily comprehensible to audiences who share the artist’s cultural background than to those belonging to different cultural contexts.

A pertinent example is the photomontages of John Heartfield, the German artist associated with the Dada movement. From 1928 onward, he identified himself as an anti-fascist artist, and following the rise of the Nazis to power in Germany, he began working as a **cover** illustrator for the workers’ magazine *A.I.Z. (Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung)*. Heartfield was the first artist to employ the technique of simple, rudimentary photomontage to convey powerful and biting critiques against the growing might of Hitler’s regime. In 1933, coinciding with Hitler’s appointment as the head of the Nazi Party, Heartfield was forced to flee—first to Czechoslovakia and later to London. (See Figure 1.) What is entirely evident in Heartfield’s works—and what places them firmly within the realm of **pure propaganda**—is his insistence on **shifting the artistic paradigm** to employ art, and the artwork itself, as a tool of combat, or what might be termed **militarized art**. The term **propaganda art** refers to art that serves as an instrument in the hands of its patrons or commissioners, aiming to influence and persuade the majority of people—based on the culture of the target audience or the global community—toward primarily political, social, religious, economic, cultural, or artistic objectives through an **artistic translation accessible to the general public**.

“When art seizes power, this approach inevitably tends toward totalitarianism. Democracy, however, is a process that relies on debate and dialogue, not on methods of coercion or persuasion. Democracy re (Vander Gucht, 2000:17)

From this perspective, propaganda art can be seen as closely aligned with populist objectives. As the term “populist” derives from the word *people*, in political and social sciences it refers to political orientations that, through appealing propaganda and popular stimuli, seek to mobilize public support for the goals of their initiators.

In any case, the theory of art intertwined with populism leads to the conclusion that, ultimately, such art reduces itself to a mere instrument, serving no purpose beyond advancing an ideological mechanism. This has been the historical fate of art under totalitarian regimes—whether Marxist, Nazi, Fascist, or others—throughout the modern era. Adhering to such a theory renders this destiny (Zabolinezhad, 2018:111)

Heartfield and his contemporaries—many of whom were active members of the German Communist Party—viewed contemporary art, through a paradigm shift, as a means to influence audiences and encourage them to embrace their political perspectives. This idea was common among communist artists worldwide and reflects precisely the interpretation of art endorsed by Lenin and later Stalin.

From the communist viewpoint, art was expected to be committed to the goals of the ruling Communist Party in the former Soviet Union. This perspective, of course, is not unique to communism; it is a characteristic shared across all totalitarian regimes, where art is subordinated to the objectives of the state.

1. John Heartfield, *Adolf Superman*, cover of *A.I.Z. (Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung)*, photomontage technique, 1932. In analytic philosophy, based on Arthur Danto's theory, we understand that:

“All these forms of expression are, in fact, manifestations—an outward sign of an inner state. This is the sense i(Danto, 1996, p. 68)

Accordingly, we recognize that all human actions, including the creation of artworks, originate from one of these conceptual forms. To identify this fundamental distinction, it is necessary to consider the reason or motivation behind each human action. It is impossible for a single human act to simultaneously belong to both expressive (communicative) and non-expressive (descriptive) categories.

If the individual's motivation, based on personal will, is to establish communication with an audience, then the action falls under the category of expressive concepts, which can be schematically represented as:

1. Actor (human agent)



2. Reason or motivation for the action: to communicate with others

3. Personal action: communicative act

4. Presence of spectators or audience

This general schema can readily be observed in the creative process of an artist or a writer. Consequently, the processes of creation in art and literature are fundamentally similar, and the context of presentation—the space where the intended audience engages with the work—must also be taken into account.

Thus, if we remove the motivation to communicate with others, we arrive at the concept of a non-expressive (descriptive) act. In this case, the agent performs an action that manifests merely one of their personal habits, arising naturally from their character, without any intention of establishing an interactive connection with an imagined audience.

In any case, both types of actions reflect the agent's attitude toward their surrounding environment, but the motivations behind them are fundamentally different—that is precisely the key distinction.

Accordingly, the schema for the second type, representing a descriptive act, can be outlined as follows:

1. Human agent
2. Motivation for the act: the agent's personal habit
3. Personal action: no communicative intent
4. Irrelevance of the location of the act
In discussing paradigm shifts in personal symbolism in contemporary art, we can highlight three nearly contemporaneous Iranian artists.

The first artist, known as Ghazal, resides in France. In a notable performance in 1997, she created small posters in protest against the bureaucracy and rigid regulations faced by immigrants in France. On these posters, she wrote:

“Emergency: A 31-year-old woman from the Middle East is urgently seeking a husband with European Union citizenship, preferably French, not racist, tall or short, humorous or not, smoker or non-smoker, for a white marriage as a husband or, in other words, a passport. Eligible individuals should contact [her email address].”

This was a bold, striking, and thought-provoking act of protest, confronting the often complex and occasionally discriminatory laws of the host country toward immigrants who, for various reasons, have chosen it as their new home. Ghazal's action was not aimed solely at the French government but also highlighted the broader systemic challenges faced by immigrants, particularly Muslims, in receiving countries where legal and social frameworks frequently fail to treat newcomers fairly.

The second Iranian artist who captured attention both in Iran and internationally through notable personal symbolism is Siamak Filizadeh. In 2008, he created a series of montages titled *The Return of Rostam from the Land of Demons After 30 Years*. In this work, Rostam, the legendary hero of Iranian mythology, returns to contemporary Tehran and confronts the cultural deficiencies that have become normalized in modern Iranian society, as well as the moral and social anomalies present today.

Through a form of bitter yet measured humor, free from mere mockery, Filizadeh produces compelling works that serve as a critical commentary on contemporary Iranian society. His art encourages viewers—particularly Iranian audiences—to reflect anew on their roles and responsibilities as members of society. (See Figure 2.)



2. From the montage series *The Return of Rostam from the Land of Demons After 30 Years*, Siamak Filizadeh, 2008.

Next, we turn to the video installation *Rappelle-toi Barbara* (“Remember Barbara”) by Iranian artist Hoda Zabolinezhad and her Moroccan collaborator Zahra Nadij, which was exhibited in February 2014 at the Palais Universitaire in Strasbourg and other cities in France.

In this video-installation, the two Muslim artists—one from the Middle East and the other from North Africa—decided to juxtapose their personal symbols to create a new form of symbolic expression. This symbolic language was designed to be more accessible and comprehensible within the framework of international art.

The personal symbolism of the two artists is presented alongside recognized global symbols in the work. For example, delicately colored fabrics are displayed hanging like noose-shaped ropes, a form instantly recognizable to viewers. The shocking contrast lies in the tension between the noose—a harsh, deathly symbol—and the delicate, beautiful, and colorful fabrics (Figure 3).

In effect, delicacy and violence, life and death, hope and despair are brought together. The two artists use the globally recognized symbol of the noose to complement and complete a wholly personal symbolic system, creating a dialogue between universal and individual meanings. Another globally recognized symbol featured in this work is the dollar, long associated with power and wealth. In the installation, the dollars are transformed into small rose-shaped flowers and placed on a mannequin wrapped in a white shroud, evoking the image of a corpse. This personal symbolic gesture, presented alongside the collective symbol of the dollar, references roses used in funerals, highlighting the human lives lost due to the greed and ambition of politicians around the world—for the sake of a few dollars (Figure 4).

In the accompanying video, the opening shot shows hands digging into the ground with a shovel. It is intentionally ambiguous whether they are digging a grave or laying the foundation for a building. This serves as another personal symbol, offering a critique of how ordinary people are often unaware of the ultimate outcomes of political actions—whether these actions construct a better environment for public life or create a grave-like space that consumes and destroys us all. In the second shot, a dark space is presented: a metal pot is placed upside down on the ground, and the same hands from the first shot strike it with a spoon, producing a highly unpleasant, jarring sound. The audience is subjected to this harsh noise for over a minute, creating a personal symbolic gesture that reflects the loud but meaningless words and actions of politicians, which have no positive effect on our lives—truly, much ado about nothing.

In the final, third shot, we see what appears to be a playful “bread-bring, kebab-take” interaction between two masculine hands (the same from the first shot) and two delicate feminine hands. While it may seem like a game, in reality, the male hands are pushing aside the female hands, leaving the latter visibly confused and uncertain how to continue. This personal symbolism critiques the dominance of men in the political sphere. Although women have entered politics, the opportunities and space available to them are far from comparable to what male politicians enjoy. In this shot, the entry of women into politics is partially symbolic of propaganda, but in reality, it highlights the harsh and illogical maneuvers of male politicians to sideline women.

It is also noteworthy that the title of this video installation, *Rappelle-toi Barbara*, is derived from the famous poem by Jacques Prévert, the contemporary French poet known worldwide for his humanitarian, anti-war poetry, particularly this poem, which has become part of the global literary heritage. The choice of this title was intended to strengthen the connection with the French audience, as the host country, and to emphasize the humanitarian and anti-violence message of the work, rather than referring to any specific geographic context. The positive reception of the piece during its exhibition demonstrates the effectiveness of this title in aligning with the content and intentions of the artists. (Figures 3–7)



3. Colored fabrics shaped like nooses, from the video-installation *Rappelle-toi Barbara*, Palais Universitaire, Strasbourg,

Hoda Zabolinezhad and Zahra Nadij, 2014.



4. Dollars shaped into small roses, placed on a mannequin wrapped in a white shroud, from the video-installation *Rappelle-toi Barbara*, Palais Universitaire, Strasbourg,

Hoda Zabolinezhad and Zahra Nadij, 2014.



5. First shot of the video from the video-installation *Rappelle-toi Barbara*, Palais Universitaire, Strasbourg, Hoda Zabolinezhad and Zahra Nadij, 2014.



6. Second shot from the video of the video-installation *Rappelle-toi Barbara*, Palais Universitaire, Strasbourg,
Hoda Zabolinezhad and Zahra Nadij, 2014.



7. Third shot from the video of the video-installation *Rappelle-toi Barbara*, Palais Universitaire, Strasbourg,
Hoda Zabolinezhad and Zahra Nadij, 2014.

Today, when we encounter still-life paintings of the Flemish school in Northern Europe, the entire paradigm and symbolic content of this artistic tradition is already familiar to us and immediately apparent. Every element in the painting serves as a symbolic reminder of the ever-present specter of death and the brevity and futility of life. An incomplete skull represents the futility of human endeavors, a candle burning down signals the approach of life's end, and so on.

Whether we are experts or not is largely irrelevant; in the West, most people recognize the symbolic language of eighteenth-century still-life painting, so these works convey little that is new. They fail to evoke contemporary human emotions. Why? The answer is clear: due to paradigm shifts and changes in the reception of artistic content, the symbolic language of Flemish still lifes has become historically complete. In today's artistic perception and interpretation, these symbols no longer hold a meaningful place, and the world to which these paintings refer has effectively vanished.

For example, in contrast to Flemish still lifes, Raphael's *The School of Athens* (1502–1512)—a mural created in the sixteenth century, roughly a century before the Flemish school—can be said to be paradigmatically and conceptually much closer to our own time, and arguably contemporaneous with us. Raphael's personal symbolism in this work remains vividly alive and relevant in our lives today.

In this painting, one can clearly read the human values that form the intellectual foundation of contemporary societies. Raphael gathers all the great thinkers and scholars up to his era under the roof of the School of Athens, without distinction of scientific discipline or geographic origin—motivated solely by respect for human thought and knowledge, rather than adherence to the superstitious beliefs of his own time. The assembly of thinkers in this mural reflects Raphael's respect for human intellect and his belief in equality among humans.

Notably, the presence of Hypatia of Alexandria, the female mathematician tortured and killed by Christians in 415 CE, marks a bold personal symbolic intervention and a social paradigm shift, especially in an era when the Catholic Church denied women's intellectual capabilities. This form of symbolism was radically forward-thinking, transcending the intellectual norms of Raphael's time. It aligns not with the prevailing Christian values of his contemporaries but with the perspectives and values of our own era.

Raphael himself was acutely aware of this, and thus justifies his own inclusion in the mural alongside these great figures, representing himself through personal symbolic presence. Indeed, the creator of *The School of Athens* participates in the mural through personal symbolism, as Danto notes regarding such symbolic acts:

“The emotions evoked by representations”(Danto, 1996, p. 112)

On this basis, paradigm shifts can be considered permanent, and symbolism can be deemed creative and successful if it possesses the ability to evoke emotions in audiences across different times and contexts, as illustrated by Raphael’s mural. However, it is important to remember that as viewers, we interpret any artwork according to our own paradigm, perspective, and worldview, which are inevitably tied to the historical and cultural context in which we live.

Thus, the meanings we derive from Raphael’s painting do not necessarily reflect the perceptions of his contemporaries. It is likely that they did not recognize Zoroaster, the Iranian prophet and scholar, or even realize that the figure next to Parmenides is a woman. What matters, however, is that Raphael intended precisely the understanding we now derive—this is the dialogue across generations that occurs in significant works of art and literature.

As noted, in the contemporary era, what matters most in an artwork is the vitality of the paradigm on which it is based. A work remains alive and active only if it can communicate with cultures and evoke reflection and emotion across different historical periods. Otherwise, it is easy to conclude that the work’s time has passed, and it has effectively ceased to exist in relevance.

Conclusion:

As stated at the beginning of this article, this study seeks to address the following research questions: 1) How do paradigms shift in personal symbolism in contemporary art? and 2) How does personal symbolism relate to the “denotative” and “expressive” concepts proposed in analytical philosophy?

Based on paradigm shifts in contemporary art, each artwork should be considered as it is, independent of adherence to one or more art-theoretical frameworks. Analysis should proceed from part to whole and simultaneously from whole to part within the artwork itself. In this process, the audience’s awareness of paradigms and the cultural differences in interpreting personal symbolism is also significant. What ultimately transforms a human act into a work of art is the dialogue and exchange of ideas that occur within the accepted cultural framework of each country or the global art world, without requiring formal agreement or recognition of the piece as art.

As discussed, in the process of personal symbolism, it can be concluded that all expressive conceptualizations are forms of symbolism that invite the audience to reconsider their central role in a world that should be made better for all—a world characterized by justice, equality, peace, and well-being. At the same time, the role of the audience as the completing factor (component 4 in the analytical framework) should not be underestimated, and the aesthetic reception cannot be ignored. It functions as the primary and completing element, akin to the actor (component 1) and the motivating factor (component 2); without it, an action shifts from being expressive to merely denotative.

In any case, given the paradigm shifts in contemporary art, a large number of members of the art world—critics, art experts, intermediaries, educators, and others—may consider an object to be a work of art. Equally, if not more, members of the same art world may hold opposing views. The key point is that it is precisely through these discussions and exchanges within the art world that an object becomes a work of art, and its creator—or even more broadly, its presenter—becomes an artist.

This dynamic is exemplified by Duchamp’s *Fountain* (1917) and later by Andy Warhol’s *Brillo Boxes*. Today, thanks to paradigmatic shifts in the contemporary art world, both works are unquestionably recognized as art and are acknowledged as pioneering works that initiated new eras in modern and contemporary art.

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