

The Lacanian Review

STILL LIFE?

School

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WHAT TO DO WITH OBJECTS

Consider the earth artists who dig out and inscribe abstract formal signifiers into wide open land in the western American deserts. Contrast art, writing, and psychoanalysis as political acts insofar as they negotiate a field of the Other that is inherently unstable. Cor blimey, a love letter to the new normal! What we can learn from objectum sexuals is that 'normality' is a reactionary concept—there is no sexual norm, there is no norm at all.

Siberiethic

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Lucie de Saint Blanc holds two Masters in Her research focuses in French Studies, an International Association
1. Jacques Lacan, (2013).
2. *Ibid.*, 34.

either. Because “if art is art”
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ART AND PSYCHOANALYSIS BEYOND (LACK-OF) BEING

Rik Loose

Introduction

For Freud and Lacan art provided a passageway that psychoanalysis could go through. But to where, to what purpose, what does it open-up to? Art is not able to answer the question what an artist is nor what the impulse is that gives rise to the creation of a work of art.¹ In psychoanalysis we have come to a similar conclusion about art and indeed the question of what a psychoanalyst is. Nevertheless, it is often expected that an answer will come from her. Yet, every time we try to formulate an answer we hit a wall. Likewise, psychoanalytic theory cannot explain the creative process. Picasso said in 1939: “Everyone wants to understand art. Why not try to understand the songs of a bird? Why does one love the night, flowers, everything around one, without trying to understand them? But in the case of painting people have to understand.”

Psychoanalysis can demonstrate something about the end of an analysis through a saying via the pass. Art also demonstrates something, namely, that a creative process took place that led to the work of art. With regards to the culture we inhabit, the artist, not unlike the analyst, takes up an *extimate* position that allows him or her to condense its essence and which allows, through the result of the creative (or analytical) process, a commentary on the times that we live in.² Art and psychoanalysis are thus political in that both negotiate a field of the Other that is inherently unstable. However, there is a beyond of politics that both open-up to.

Singularity Beyond Being

Singularity concerns that which stands utterly on its own. It cannot be related to anything universal nor even particular. Singularities are elements

Vander Weg dir., *Michael Heizer, Altars*,
al Publications, 2016), 176.

Logiques de l'esthétique: Recherches sur la pensée
239.

A re-written and edited version of a paper presented at the ICLO conference “Art and Psychoanalysis: Possibilities and Politics,” 21 September 2019. Rik Loose is a psychoanalyst practicing in Dublin, and a member of the WAP and NLS. He is a Senior Lecturer of Psychology at Dublin Business School.

1. Hubert Van Hoorde, “Kunst, Creativiteit en Psychoanalyse,” *Psychoanalytische Perspectieven*, no. 22 (1994): 50.
2. Hubert Van Hoorde, “Kunst, Creativiteit en Psychoanalyse,” *op. cit.*: 44.

what this year shall be my examination of art.”⁸ Joyce was someone who made art with language rather than being a writer who wrote to be read. He was someone who was able to invent and create art with his object as his singular language material. Joyce demonstrated a know-how with language in such a way that he stripped it back to its meaningless material. The ability in him to do this is the very singularity of his *sinthome*; his way of being a response to the singularity of his *lalangue*. For the artist this ability is a necessity. For him or her there is a necessity to demonstrate that the step from the singularity of *lalangue* to language, as the foundation for the social bond, is always problematic and indeed for some impossible.

Art and the Inmost Core of the Real of life

It is not clear what elevates the common object to the dignity of the Thing as a work of art. Every art object is also a common object that opens to exchange, to functioning in institutions and the market. This is the vulgar aspect of art that some artists, like Damien Hirst (see here his diamond skull *For the Love of God*) and Jeff Koons try to operate on. This is particularly interesting in that it is the inverse of Joyce’s art. Whereas Joyce turned the common object of language into the singular material of *lalangue*, artists like Hirst and Koons turn material into a common or vulgar object. However, the vulgar/common aspect of art can only function that way precisely because there is another aspect to art that makes it *extimate* with regards to the market and the political environment. This aspect relates to the singularity of the artist as something that can only be demonstrated, like the pass demonstrating something of the effect of an analysis.

Let’s listen to another artist who like Joyce was not without influence. In response to a question Picasso was asked, he said that he only ever painted one painting.⁹ This is an extraordinary comment on his painting especially if you consider how prolific he was. If Picasso only painted one painting in all the paintings he painted, he is saying that every painting that he painted had left him with a residue, something unfinished. He then tried to finish it with the next painting and the next one, etc. In other words, Picasso was saying that painting is his *sinthome* in which every painting tries to reach the singular inmost core of the real of his life and body. This latter, as we indicated, includes the singular body-event. Painting was Picasso’s failed attempt to establish a relation between the singular real

8. Jacques Lacan, *The Sinthome: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XXIII*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. A.R. Price (Cambridge: Polity, 2016), 14.

of his body and the painting, by failing to be more interesting than the failure of language. This failure can be testified in that it cannot be explained. It also shows clearly relevant to the inmost. Only does the analysis he or she now also as a testimony of the transmitted and common. The latter’s knowledge demonstration of the into public discourse losing its capacities.

Conclusion

Art and psychoanalysis attempt to obfuscate. What Picasso’s “one painting” is that art is the elevation of the his response that art as such, it operates by singular for each subject against a standardization via his study of Joyce’s life of One (*Yad’lun*) and the fictionation of life by our

9. Francisco-Hugo Freda,

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of his body and the social bond. In the process of painting the same painting, by failing to complete the picture, Picasso became an artist. The more interesting modern art invites the viewer to experience the inherent failure of language in the subject and his or her body. The singularity of this failure can be transmitted such that it has a value beyond its own *existence* in that it can touch, disturb and affect other people. However, it cannot be explained. This is what Picasso aimed for in the interview whilst it also shows clearly how crucial art is for psychoanalysis. For example, it is relevant to the innovation Miller introduced in relation to the pass. Not only does the analyst go through the pass, as was the case in Lacan's time, he or she now also speaks about it to others such as analysts. This is called a testimony of the pass. In this way the singularity of the analysand can be transmitted and come to function in a psychoanalytic discourse such that the latter's knowledge does not become a mortifying one. Likewise, via the demonstration of the art object the singularity of the artist can find its way into public discourse where its traces can cause effects that prevent art from losing its capacities to surprise, astonish and renew itself.

Conclusion

Art and psychoanalysis in the Lacanian orientation both reject the attempt to obfuscate singularity through standardization and homogenization. What Picasso demonstrated when he said "I always paint the same painting" is that art is not a sublimation of an unsatisfied drive nor that it is the elevation of the object to the dignity of the Thing. He indicated with his response that art is doing something with the hole in language and that, as such, it operates beyond representation, by giving shape to a real that is singular for each subject and that in doing so one takes a heretical stance against a standardizing world. Picasso said, before Lacan demonstrated it via his study of Joyce, that, probing life beyond the ontology of being, the life of One (Yad'lun), art and psychoanalysis are the antidotes to the mortification of life by our standardising and homogenizing culture.