

**Re-defining Arts,
Readymades and Secrets
by**

Manfred J. Holler*

Verlag von Kosuth-Aufsatz?

Abstract

Einstein's and Duchamp's work are quoted for their respective redefining of physics and art. The consequences of this redefinition for contemporary art and historical concepts of art are discussed with a focus on creation, creativity, and style. As an illustration, John Ruskin's interpretation of Venetian Gothic and its reference to economic reasoning is confronted with Arthur Danto's concept of a definition of art. A discussion of Nicola Atkinson-Griffith art work "Secret of the World" concludes the paper.

*Institute of SocioEconomics, IAW, University of Hamburg, Von-Melle-Park 5, D-20146 Hamburg, Germany. e-mail: holler@econ.uni-hamburg.de

1. On Defining

Einstein published his first papers on his special theory of relativity in 1905. Although Newtonian mechanics works well enough for objects of moderate size and moving at moderate speeds, it is inadequate to describe the motion of very small objects, such as atoms, or very fast ones, such as cosmic-ray particles. Einstein's special theory and the later developed quantum mechanics bridge the gap. In 1915, Einstein announced his general theory of relativity which replaced Newton's theory in describing very large systems and makes possible investigation of distant planetary systems and the universe as a whole. Gravitation was no longer the same. Mass and energy turned out to be the two sides of a coin: $E = mc^2$. The lapse of time is different in different frames of reference: time became relative. Einstein's work redefined Physics, if not our conceptions of the physical world.

In 1917, the freshly created New York-based "Society of Independent Artists" organized an exhibition to which Marcel Duchamp contributed a urinal entitled *The Fountain*. The piece carried the signature of a fictional R. Mutt. The now famous art collector Walter Arensberg bought the piece, thus turning immediately into an object of the art market. Alfred Stieglitz made an exquisite photo of *The Fountain* which was then published in the journal "The Blind Man", published by Marcel Duchamp, Beatrice Wood and H.-P. Roché. Arensberg lost the original version of *The Fountain* in the course of time, but authorized copies are still exhibited today in many important museums: "Art 'lives' through influencing other art, not by existing as the physical residue of an artist's ideas" (Kosuth 1974,148).

In 1995 April, the Hamburger Kunsthalle (Museum of Fine Art) exhibited a white earthenware and heavily damaged urinal entitled *Ghost Falling Down the Staircase* ("Gespenst die Treppe herabstürzend") by a German artist of the name of Klaus Kumrow. The piece is an obvious reference to *The Fountain* while the title points to Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase* ("Nu descendant un escalier") which was first exhibited at the Amory Show, New York, in 1913. This painting crowned Duchamp as the most famous modern artist in America even before he

arrived there. Duchamp's painting created a scandal – not because it violated moral norms but because it did *not* violate moral norms. The awaiting audience had its expectations upset. Instead of sexual sensation they were confronted by a cubist painting in which even the staircase was difficult to identify. Octavio Paz (1978, 8) remarked: “The *Nude* is an antimachine ... we don't even know if there is a nude in the picture”.

Kumrow's *Ghost* is an artifact of the ongoing dialogue of the artists with the concept of art. It also demonstrates the substantial inertia in this dialogue as it took a while before the art world was aware of the dialogue. It seems, however, that there is still enough power in this project to feed a second and third generation of artists. In his first major one-man exhibition in Europe, *On the Other Side of the Borders* (“Jenseits der Grenzen”) at the MAK (“Museum für angewandte Kunst”) in Vienna in 1996, Chris Burden exhibited his “Flying Steamroller” which was kept in the air by a counter-weight of 40 tons. Unfortunately the 12 ton steamroller was lifted into the air only every second hour instead of every two minutes as the Burden originally wanted. By this limitation the show, which not only included the steamroller but also a the sculpture “Samson”, a 100 ton piece, did not match the machine concept which the artist had in mind.

Chris Burden's “Flying Steamroller” was also part of the 1997 Lyon Biennale. Here the steamroller was made to ‘fly’ by a mechanical system which included a counter-weight of 16 tons. It was a favorite with the audience.¹ The piece demonstrates nicely just how unlimited art can be. Burden is convinced that art has an impact on how people think. He sees himself “more like” a scientist or an experimental researcher with a strong interest in problems such as what is art, and how is art related to the real world, to life, to our perception.² He quite literally added weight to these questions, questions which are in fact identical with those attributed to Duchamp's *Fountain* of 1917. Doubtlessly earlier works of art also raised these questions but it is

¹ Reported by Amine Haase (1997).

² Interview with Johanna Hofleitner, published in *Kunstforum*, 134, May-September 1996, pp.336-345.

fair to say that at least in the view of conceptual artists, the discussion was dominated by formalistic issues: problems of color and form, perspective, representation, etc.

If everything can be art, then of course art has no longer physical limits. Lawrence Weiner, the conceptual artists whose work is perhaps most directly related to words, remarked that the space of words is infinite while the physical space of a painted canvas is defined by its edges (sometimes, however, by the edge of its frame). Weiner concludes that words are the adequate means for the art project – as is a dialogue with an infinite space of possibilities. However, the dialogue is strictly limited to artists, i.e., to people who work in the art context.

Marcel Duchamp was credited for raising the function of art as a question and defining it as its content of art, thus “giving art its own identity”. “With the unassisted *Readymade*, art changed its focus from the form of the language to what was being said. Which means that it changed the nature of art from a question of morphology to a question of function. This change – one from ‘appearance’ to ‘conception’ --was the beginning of ‘modern’ art and the beginning of ‘conceptual’ art. All art (after Duchamp) is conceptual (in nature) because art only exists conceptually” (Kosuth 1974, 146). “The ‘made-ready’ and the tradition of the readymade has shown us what the process of art is; the path of that showing has meant the development. through its self-reflection, to the critical location of an ideological self-knowledge; this alternative tradition sees art, simply put, as a questioning process” (Kosuth 1991, 18). Here the “made-ready” is the constructive appropriation of the object which is a precondition such that the process of art is accountable and demystification is possible. “The practice of the ‘made-ready’ has clarified, within its constructions, how specific elements (or forms) used within art, as within language, are by and large arbitrary; the sense can only be understood in the systematic whole. And it is such a systematic whole that not only makes possible the production of further meaning, but joins the viewer/reader and artist author within a *social* whole as well” (Kosuth 1991, 23). This, of course, also holds for the unassisted readymade.

Duchamp's readymades entered the art world through the reactions of his fellow artists, the art critics, and the public. Following Duchamp's path, in the second half of the 1960s, some artists no longer sought dialogue with the art audience but with art itself. Art is a very complex and demanding partner and one that is not always very spontaneous in its reaction. The dialogue is also not without complications. Moreover, the objects of the dialogue are ideas and the regular art audiences — museums, galleries, collectors and art critics — had to rest content with traces of them since objects were seen as conceptually irrelevant to the condition of art. Often these traces were words which are difficult to hang on walls. I am talking about conceptual art which is seen as an inquiry into the foundations of art. Its content is to question the nature of art. By this, Joseph Kosuth (1974, 148) claims, “art ‘lives’ through influencing other art, not by existing as the physical residue of an artist’s ideas”. “The ‘value’ of particular artists after Duchamp can be weighed according to how much they questioned the nature of art; which is another way of saying ‘what they *added* to the conception of art’ or what was not there before they started” (Kosuth 1974, 146). There is a potential of conceptual growth in this definition.

2. *Creation, Creativity, and Style*

The use of readymades as art naturally challenges the notion of the artist as creator which is widely shared by the audience. However, it also concurred with the focus on creativity (or originality) as one of the core principles of Abstract Expressionism.³ Oscar Wilde summarizes this view in his Preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: “The artist is the creator of beautiful things”. By creation it is meant something new, something which did not exist before. Wilde was a proponent of aestheticism and to him “living” meant “living beautifully, down to the last detail. Despite its apparent superficiality – or indeed, because of its apparent superficiality – the insistence that

³ “Originality, like abstraction, was an important way predicated on the denial of politics” (Gibson 1997, xxviii).

every aspect of lived life be exquisite and unconventional was part of a philosophical and artistic project of subversion” (Mendelsohn 2002, 18).

The Middle Ages lacked a concept of beauty as a general principle and an idea of the artist as creator: the creation was God’s work with the result that the fine arts did not exist. In the tradition of Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas made a distinction between the *servile* and the *liberal* arts: manual arts were servile, and the superiority of the liberal arts was due to their rational subject-matter and their being arts of mind rather than the body. The belief in the inferiority of manual activity and the low social status of the artist in these fields are most likely the result of the verdict that the artist can make new compositions, but he cannot make new things. Only God— and Nature under God’s Law—can create new things: “The artist can help or hasten the productive rhythm of nature, but he cannot compete with it” (Eco 1986, 96). Not surprisingly, this view has an echo in Marcel Duchamp’s perspective on art as a craft. He “denounced the superstition of craft. The artist is not the maker of things; his works are not pieces of workmanship – they are acts” (Paz 1978, 23). Duchamp’s readymades are a straightforward consequence of this view.

In the middle ages, beauty had not yet been discovered as a general principle for characterizing art (at least in some periods), although there were clearly pioneers in this direction. St. Bonaventure (1217 (1221?) -1274), for instance, “distinguished two reasons for the beauty of an image, even when the object imitated was not beautiful in itself. An image, he said, was beautiful if it was well constructed, and if it faithfully represented its objects” (Eco 1986, 102). It should be noted that at the time of St. Bonaventure, angles and devils were common objects of representation. One need only look at the great works of *Giotto* (1270? - 1337), the Tuscan father of art, and his Roman “rival” *Pietro Cavallini* (1250? - 1325?). The question is, then, what guaranteed their faithful representation? Tradition, style, or the words of the Scripture?

If there is no creation in art, can there be progress? Paul Feyerabend (1984, 29) remarks: “There is no progress in art, but there are different styles and each style is perfect in itself and follows its own law. Art is the production of styles and art history

is the history of their sequence”. Here, Feyerabend draws on Alois Riegl’s work on the Late Roman art industry and his interpretation. In his book on the *Spätromische Kunstindustrie*, first published in 1901, Riegl (1973 [1901]) analyzes the early Christian art which is widely considered as a rather primitive imitation of the art of antiquity – cleansed of some of the characteristics which are thought to contradict Christian ideals. However, the critics overlooked that the early Christian art reveals a completely different understanding of the representation of space than in antiquity, a fact which is later most eminently manifested in the gothic cathedral. This understanding necessitates a more isolated presentation of figures in space which often violated the proportionality of figures in size, shape and position to each other. This is not a decline, but change of style.

Le Style c’est l’homme (même). (“Style is man himself.”) There are many interpretations to this quote made by the 18th century natural scientist *Comte de Buffon*. The definition has often been wrongly taken to mean that style is a personal idiosyncrasy to be cultivated deliberately. But as *Heinrich von Stein* (1857-1887) claimed, Buffon is to be understood in general and not specific terms: The human dimension lies in the stylizing of the material, in giving material a style, in its “rational presentation”, and not just in collecting it (see Wölfflin (1984 [1905])). Style is characteristic of human productions at their best, not something to be added as an ornament. In his *Discourse on Style* (1753), delivered on his admission to the Academie Francaise, Buffon protested against the artificialities of the day, in favor of a simple direct manner, suitable for intelligent communication. Can we classify Duchamp’s readymades and the “made ready” à la Kosuth as a farewell to artificialities?

In his recent book, *Paths to the Abolute*, John Golding points out that, in a special sense, *Mondrian*, *Malevich*, and *Kandinsky* accepted nature as object to be “made ready.”⁴ They drew inspirations from science and from various kinds of mystical thought. Kandinsky was particularly interested in the ‘fourth dimension’ and

⁴ See Flam (2002) for an excellent review.

in Theosophy. Malevich was obsessed by the scientific and mystical properties of geometry. Mondrian “sought an art that would give expression to a higher order of reality by transcending subjective experience and eliminating what he called the ‘tragic’ from his painting” (Flam 2002, 12). The abstract expressionists of the 1940s and 1950s, i.e. the painters of the *New York School*, considered painting as a means to discover nature. *Robert Motherwell*’s psychic automatism implied that painting started with a process of “doodling” or scribbling – it “really was what the hands did, acting on their own” (Danto 1999, 30). It was a method to abandon consciousness and to find out what is there: Nature.

When *Jackson Pollock* was asked why he did not paint from nature, he famously responded, “I am Nature.” “Painting is self-discovery. Every good artist paints what he is.”⁵

3. *Defining Gothic*

”If there is to be a definition of art that fits contemporary art as well as all previous art, it has to be consistent not only with the fact that there are no limits on what can be art but also with the possibility that artworks and mere objects can resemble one another to any degree whatever” (Danto 1999, 8). Art defines itself and definitions change with styles; but it seems that there are patterns which repeat each other. Even the readymade can be found in earlier art periods. Venetian Gothic is such an example. According to John Ruskin, it seems that Venetian Gothic was defined by economic reasoning and the use of readymade inputs can produce an economically efficient form of art.

In his three volume essay on architecture, “*The Stones of Venice*”, John Ruskin elaborates on the impact of economic necessity on the construction of churches and palaces and the fashioning of their decoration. He did not denounce this impact as improper. “Suppose a nation of builders, placed far from any quarries of available stone, and having precarious access to the mainland where they exist; compelled

⁵ Quoted after Flam (2000, 12).

therefore either to build entirely with brick, or to import whatever stone they use from great distances, in ships of small tonnage, and, for the most part, dependent for speed on the roar rather than the sail. The labour of cost of carriage are just as great, whether they import common or precious stone, and therefore the natural tendency would always be to make each shipload as valuable as possible” (2001[1851/53], 83). Ruskin speaks of “natural circumstances which give rise to ... style”. The concept of “precious stone” reflects scarcity and the natural tendency reflects the invisible hand of some sort of competition, either through alternative employers of ships or of alternative opportunities of usage. In any case, by economic reasoning, the transportation of precious stone will drive the transportation of less precious stone out of the transportation market and out of being used. Obviously, Ruskin assumes that the Venetians builders and their employers engaged economic reasoning. He proposes that they obey the scarcity argument of value – which will become an essential ingredient of main-stream economics just several decades later.⁶ “But in proportion to the preciousness of the stone, is the limitation of its possible supply; limitation not determined merely by cost, but by the physical conditions of the material, for of many marbles pieces above a certain size are not to be had for money” (Ruskin 2001[1851/53], 83). This reflects the neoclassical idea of scarcity: if substantial demand faces an endowment, which is relatively small and, at least in the short-run, given, then the value of this good is high.

However, inasmuch as the supply of marble is a matter of costs, then, as Ruskin observes, “there would also be a tendency ... to import as much stone as possible ready sculptured, in order to save weight; and therefore, if the traffic of their merchants led them to places where there were ruins of ancient edifices, to ship the available fragments of them home” (2001[1851/53], 83). This reasoning matches the modern theory of semi-manufactured products.

Ruskin concludes that the scarcity of material and the recourse to pre-prepared products determined the Gothic architecture of Venice which he prefers to all other

⁶ In his *Elements d'économie politique pure*, Léon Walras relied on scarcity to derive the value of goods from it. The first edition of this book appeared in two instalments in 1871 and 1874.

styles which can be found in this city. “Out of this supply of marble, partly composed of pieces of so precious a quality that only a few tons of them could be on any terms obtained, and partly of shafts, capitals, and other portions of foreign buildings, the island architect has to fashion, as best he may, the anatomy of his edifice. It is at his choice either to lodge his few blocks of precious marble here and there among his masses of bricks, and to cut out of the sculptured fragments such new forms as may be necessary for the observance of fixed proportions in the new building; or else to cut the coloured stone into thin pieces, of extent sufficient to face the whole surface of the walls, and to adopt a method of construction irregular enough to admit the insertion of fragmentary sculptures; ...”(Ruskin 2001[1851/53],.83f.).

Another result of the practice of Gothic architecture to integrate “pre-manufactured products”, is the variety of the size and shape of shafts which characterizes most buildings. “The architect cannot lay aside one column in a corner of his church till, in the course of traffic, he obtain another that will match it; he has not hundreds of shafts fastened up in bundles, out of which he can match sizes at his ease; he cannot send to a brother-tradesman and exchange the useless stones for available ones, to the convenience of both. His blocks of stone, or his ready hewn shafts, have been brought to him in limited number, from immense distances; no others are to be had; and for those which he does not bring into use, there is no demand elsewhere. His only means of symmetry will therefore be, in cutting down the finer masses to equality with the inferior ones; and this we ought not to desire him often to do” (Ruskin 2001[1851/53]), 88).

The cutting down of the finer masses violates the *principles of jewellery* which are an immediate consequence of scarcity and the value which derives from it. “Since the value of each shaft depends upon its bulk, and diminishes with the diminution of its mass in a greater ratio than the size itself diminishes, as in the case of all jewellery, it is evident that we must not in general expect perfect symmetry and equality among the series of shafts, any more than definiteness of application” (Ruskin 2001[1851/53]), 87f).

Incrustation and the shallow cutting of decoration, both typical for Gothic architecture, are other consequences of the principles of jewellery and the scarcity of finer masses of marble. Ruskin (2001[1851/53]), 89) points out these implications of his architectural theory which is an immediate result of sound economic reasoning. Either Ruskin has learned quite a bit of economic reasoning from reading Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*⁷ and is readily applying his knowledge, despite the negative evaluation he will give in his later years about Adam Smith's work,⁸ or it is true for him that "logic is unnecessary for men who can reason" (Ruskin 2001[1851/53]), 314). In any case, the ideas he developed were quite original. However, if we want to make use of these ideas we should not hesitate to work like a Gothic architect and follow the principles of jewellery: we should accept his style of economic reasoning about art.

4. *Secrets of the World*

To conclude, I will present a made ready à la Kosuth (see above). Not only did I already publish earlier versions of this text (Holler 2002a, 2002b), but there exists plenty of work on "secret", the central concept of this section. What is new is the particular perspective offered here which aims to illustrate the notion of an art concept called ARTS&Games. There is as yet no formal definition of this concept, but substantial activity: festivals, workshops, seminars, and publications. The core of this work can be described as "playing over concepts." One set of work is on *Scandal and its Theory* (Holler, 1999). Here I will report on the playing over another concept, "the secret", and the results I presented at the "de-fine arts" workshop at Vienna, February 2001.

⁷ In the Preface of his *The Political Economy of Art*, Ruskin boasts that he "had never read any author on political economy except Adam Smith twenty years ago" (Cook and Wedderburn 1903-12, volume XVI, 10).

⁸ In his major work in political economy "Unto This Last" (1970 [1867], 22), John Ruskin reproduced in a footnote Adam Smith's well-known consideration that, in the end, work discipline is implemented through the decision of the customers: "It is the fear of losing their employment which restrains his frauds, and corrects his negligence." As a comment to this "modern insight", Ruskin asks "a very earnest request to any Christian reader to think within himself what an entirely damned state of soul any human creature must have got into, who could read with acceptance such a sentence as this: much more, write it; ..."

In 1996, I had the pleasure to organize and to attend the weekly microeconomic research seminar at the University of Hamburg when the Glasgow based artist Nicola Atkinson-Griffith asked the participants to write down their personal, private, and public secrets. More recently, I took the liberty to replicate Nicola's work at a seminar on guru management which I gave to students of jewellery making at the *Technisk Skole* in Copenhagen. I have to confess that I did not ask for Nicola's permission to replicate her work, but I do not feel guilty: pieces of art belong to the public – at least, the ideas, questions and experiences which they provide. If not, then they have to be kept in secret. A constituent element of Nicola's work is the discussion which it stirs and the questions which it induces. Replications are a means to find answers to forthcoming questions and new arguments for the discussion.

Nicola's 1996 Hamburg experiment was attended by close to 40 participants – nearly double the usual number who regularly attend the seminar. More than ten participants were attracted by the fact that an artist was presenting some material (they would not attend a seminar in microeconomic theory) and another ten participants were economics doctoral students from other departments. They were attracted by the expectation of spending two hours on problems that have no obvious relation to their regular work. They were trapped by their curiosity – the curiosity which is the heart of research work. The rest of the participants were members of my department, external and former doctoral students, and guests. This heterogeneity will be important for the interpretation of what follows.

After Nicola's lecture on some of her previous art work, she distributed to each participant a sheet of paper with the three categories labelled, "personal, private and public secret" together with a greyish-green envelop, donated by my department (it looked very bureaucratic). Immediately, discussions started between neighbouring participants as to the difference between public, private and personal secrets. After a while the bilateral discussions turned into multilateral discussions and in the end there was a general discussion which ended with asking Nicola for a resolution. Most participants appeared satisfied with Nicola's response.

The discussion then turned to the question of whether or not the secrets were safe with Nicola. No one, it seems, doubted that Nicola would try to keep the envelopes closed and keep the secrets secret. The question, however, was whether she actually had the ultimate *power* to do so. What if she gets robbed on her way back to Scotland, or if somebody broke into her home while she is in California? The general conclusion was that Nicola could guarantee that the secrets will be kept secret but that there was a very small probability that she might fail.

The discussion then moved on to the quest for secrets. Isn't such a question tasteless, impolite or even immoral? Why not go looking for something else? However, even days after the experiment nobody could think of something equivalent to a secret. A branch of the discussion led some participants to discuss the nature of information as complementary to a secret. For example, it was argued that one can destroy the secrets in the greyish-green envelopes, as locked away in a steel box in Glasgow, by making the information in the envelopes public knowledge. (I was thinking of exam questions which are a secret only up to the exam day when the secret is destroyed.) Discussion about asymmetric and private information, which are basic concepts of modern microeconomics, continued to dominate lunch conversations for several weeks in connection with questions of trust and power.

Slightly more than half of the participants returned a closed envelope to Nicola. Some of the other half claimed that they abstained because they could not work with the classification into public, private, and personal secret. Others felt like under a shock: they could not cope with being asked to write down their secrets. I had the impression that the number of abstentions and the arguments which supported this reaction could not be differentiated between the group of economists, trained in rational choice modelling, and the other participants with no similar training. (I must admit that I did not undertake a systematic survey and therefore cannot claim scientific status for this observation). I felt myself much too involved and some arguments became only clear days after. Needless to say, my curiosity was not satisfied and I took the next opportunity, albeit five years later, to replicate Nicola's experiment.

The Danish artist Sten Bülow Bredsted arranged that I led an 8-hour seminar on guru management with master students of jewellery making at the *Technisk Skole* in Copenhagen on 20-21 February 2001. It was felt that the students should become aware of the interactive relationships in which they and their work is embedded and get some training to succeed in their social nexus. We discussed the concepts of strategies, players, and preferences and looked for Nash equilibria in Prisoner's Dilemma and Battle of the Sexes games. We learned that it was Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) who invented the sealed-bid second-price auction and that its remarkable properties were first analysed by the late William Vickery who was not only awarded a Nobel Prize for this work but also gave his name for this type of auction. We also learnt how to share property when we get divorced or inherit a house, a garden, a model T car, and a dog jointly with our brothers and sisters. Trust, reputation, morality were reduced to rational choices and the forming of corresponding beliefs (i.e., assessments). It seemed that all members were quite happy with this perspective – at least, in the class room.

Things changed dramatically when after more than seven hours of the seminar about rational thinking I asked the students to write down their personal, private, and public secrets. Of course, I promised not to look into the greyish envelopes, and to defend the sealed envelopes with all my strength until my last breathing day. In the end, only four out of the eight seminar participants gave me their sealed envelopes. All of them argued that this was a real challenge and some of them considered it an immoral demand to ask them for their secrets.

It took quite some time until the waves of emotions calmed down and we could start to discuss a game-theoretical approach to analyse the various strings of expectations, mistrust and rejection. In the end, it was felt that situations of conflicting interests and expectations tended to be less threatening to friendly or successful social interaction when interpreted as a game and transformed into game models, which we then tried to solve either by applying game theoretical reasoning or simulation, i.e., playing games.

In its most abstract form, a game is defined by the set of players, by the sets of strategies from which each player can choose his or her plan of action, and by the payoffs of the players which express their interests in the game. *Nicola's Game of Secrets* (NGS) is characterized by the fact that the set of players is ill defined: in general, we know the interviewer and the respondents. Furthermore, there is no perfect guarantee that the envelopes will not be opened. However, making secrets known may imply bringing new players into the game, for example, through activating those agents who share the secrets or are even objects of the secrets.

By the design of the game, it is as yet not clear what the interviewer will do with the secrets – in addition to keeping them secret. Will he or she exhibit the secrets in a public space, or incorporate them in his or her art work, or just simply lock them away in a steel box? Is it in his or her interest to inform others that he or she has the secrets or will he or she open the envelopes one day in the dark room – or destroy them unopened? The payoffs and interests of the respondents are even less obvious. For those who have decided to return a sealed envelope, the social pressure of the situation causing them to obey an instruction or to support science or art seems to be a major motivation. Some confessed, however, that they enjoyed writing down their secrets and that they felt better after.

Obviously, however, neither the social pressure of the situation nor the possibility of a mental sensation is sufficient to convince everybody to follow the temptation of submitting secrets. Moreover, there is no guarantee that those who contributed a sealed envelope actually wrote a secret on their sheet. There is no proof at all that they contributed a secret. Perhaps the secret they contributed was a lie, and not a secret. This has to be considered when we discuss the strategies of the respondents. The contents of their writing cannot be controlled before sealing *and* hence for as long as the envelope is sealed. This is implicit to asking for secrets and promising to keep them secret. All that could be observed, depending on the setting of the experiment, is whether a respondent contributed a sealed envelope or not.

It seems that the set of strategies for the interviewer and the respondent are very large and difficult to define. There are however prominent strategies which are candidates for an equilibrium such that no player can improve his position by choosing an alternative strategy, *given* the strategy choices of the other players. A strategy combination which satisfies this condition is a Nash equilibrium. Note that it implies that the strategies are mutually best replies to each other. Obviously, to write down the weather report of yesterday, or another story of no information and no interest, and the decision not to open the sealed envelopes are such mutually best replies which have, in addition, the nice property that they do not invite new players who would like to steal the secrets in order to exploit them.

As soon as this solution was accepted by the participants in the Copenhagen seminar, they were less critical of me asking for their secrets. They admitted that it takes more than an 8-hour seminar to internalise interactive thinking in a way such that it cannot be challenged by “immoral” demands such as writing down secrets. As a by-product of this exercise, we learned some peculiar features of the nature of secrets. I may hand a secret in a sealed envelop to you and you may carry this envelop to the other side of the globe. Still I can destroy this secret by publishing the information which is in sealed envelop. But it could also be that there is no information in the envelop and you merely think that you carry a secret with you.

This report has been published in 2002 as symposium in the quarterly journal *Homo Oeconomicus* together with the reactions of eight artists, social scientists, and economists: Sofia Blind (Geilnau/Lahn), Leonard Dudley (Montreal), Petra Grünig (Berlin), Joanna Hofmann (Poznan), Karola Koch (Hamburg), John Sedgewick (London), and Ben Spencer (Glasgow).

References

- Cook, E.T. and A. Wedderburn, eds. (1903-12): *The Works of John Ruskin* (39 volumes). London. George Allen.
- Danto, Arthur C. (1999): *Philosophizing Art: Selected Essays*, Berkeley. University of California Press.
- Duve, de Thierry (2001): *Dan Graham and the Critique of Artistic Autonomy*, in: *Dan Graham Works 1965-2000*, Düsseldorf. Richter-Verlag.
- Eco, Umberto (1986): *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages*. Translated by Hugh Bredin, New Haven and London. Yale University Press.
- Feyerabend, Paul (1984): *Wissenschaft als Kunst*. Frankfurt. Suhrkamp-Verlag.
- Flam, Jack (2001): Review of 'Paths to the Absolute: Mondrian, Malevich, Kandinsky, Pollock, Newman, Rothko, and Still by John Golding'. *New York Review of Books* 48, (April 26), 10-14.
- Gibson, Ann Eden (1997): *Abstract Expressionism, Other Politics*. New Haven and London. Yale University Press.
- Haase, Amine (1997): *Panik in der Kunstwelt*, *Kunstforum* 138 (September-
November) , 254-269.
- Holler, Manfred J., ed. (1999): *Scandal and Its Theory (Homo Oeconomicus 16)*. Munich. Accedo-Verlag.
- Holler, Manfred J. (2002a): *Shall I give you my secret: An ARTS&Games reconsideration*. *Homo Oeconomicus* 18, 539-543.
- Holler, M.J. (2002b): *Artists, Secrets, and CIA's cultural policy*, in: B. Priddat and H. Hegmann (eds.), *Finanzpolitik in der Informationsgesellschaft. Festschrift für Gunther Engelhardt*. Marburg. Metropolis-Verlag.
- Kosuth, Joseph (1974): *Art after Philosophy*, in: G. de Vries (ed.), *Künstlertexte zum veränderten Kunstverständnis nach 1965*. Köln.
- Kosuth, Joseph (1991): *No Exit*. Ostfildern /Stuttgart. Edition Cantz
- Mendelsohn, Daniel (2002): *The Two Oscar Wildes*. *New York Review of Books* 49, (October 10), 18-22.

Paz, Octavio (1990): Marcel Duchamp: Appearance, Stripped, Bare. New York. Arcade Publishing.

Riegl, Alois (1973 [1901]): Spätromische Kunstindustrie, Darmstadt.

Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.

Ruskin, John (1970 [1867]): Unto This Last. Four Essays on the First Principles of Political Economy (ed. by P.M. Yarker). London and Glasgow. Collins Publishers.

Ruskin, John (2001[1851/53]): The Stones of Venice (abridged version, edited and introduced by John Morris). London. The Folio Society.

Wölfflin, Heinrich (1984 [1905]): Die Kunst Albrecht Dürers (Preface to the 1st Edition, reprinted in the 9th Edition). Munich. Bruckmann.