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Every work of art has a “particular identity” that everything else lacks. That every work of art has an identity means that it is to be understood to be a particular object or objects of some kind or kinds of object. However, it must be understood that the concept of object is employed in the widest possible sense, making anything of any kind of thing—whether an event, action, abstraction, state of affairs, concept, process, property, or something else—an object, and an artwork need not be a perceptual object, such as a painting or sculpture. It is impossible to give an example of anything that is not an object since what would be offered as an illustration would have at least to be an object of thought, thus confirming what the example was meant to contravene. Depending on their nature, objects can be somewhere or nowhere, and may be at the same or different places at the same or different times, and they can have such coherent properties as being cohesive or scattered, singular or multiple, temporal or atemporal, or recurrent or non-recurrent. Objects can be conceived or imagined in addition to being perceived, felt, recollected, or otherwise experienced. And certain objects can be conceived or imagined that do not or cannot exist. In addition to objects that are possible or actual in not violating any law of logic, certain objects are impossible, in the sense of being logically contradictory. And an interesting question for both art and philosophy is whether or not an artwork can be an impossible object and, if so, how it would be produced and understood, and what value it may have as a result of that production. This issue forms part of a more general theoretical consideration of what kinds of object, in addition to perceptual objects, might figure in the creative production of artistic possibilities of interest not yet identified, and how any such novel determination would depend on, and be related to, the thought, perception, and understanding on which all artworks depend.

Certain artworks since Duchamp are radical in the sense of being identified with objects that depart in extreme ways from norms of artistic practice established prior to their appearance. Works of the kind cited below invite the question of just how far something can be pushed towards an abstraction of pure thought, immateriality, or even nothingness, and still be a work of art. For reasons stated below, answering this question must include examining the sense in which something can also be radical in the sense of being fundamental. As a result, the question of the extremes of identity in art has both an artistic and philosophical aspect.

Consideration of the fundamental aspect of radicality involves identifying the basic requirements of making and apprehending works of art; showing how certain matters in the epistemology and ontology of art are relevant to this investigation; and looking at how the notion of *where* a work is can include situations, events, or circumstances that, in being determined by thoughts and actions, extend that notion beyond the customary concept of place and its relation to space. Artistic identity depends on the temporal events of thinking, perceiving, and choosing, as well as the fluid framework that underlies, and is affected by, the social construction and consumption of artworks as cultural objects. The relation of art to time and culture must then also be recognized, and the question of *when* a particular object is a particular artwork is not only philosophically significant but is an issue that may be investigated artistically by tying the identity of a work to time, agency, and comprehension.

All of these things are relevant to the deviant sense of identity in art that I call "radical," and can be seen to underlie a particular kind of exploration of the artistic possibilities for radical artworks that, in also being radical in the fundamental sense, I call "Essentialist."[1]

I. Historical generation of artworks with kinds of radical identity

One can understand any artwork to be radical when it differs unexpectedly from the customary construction and understanding of artworks at the time at which the novel work appears. It is implicit in the previous sentence that conventional "artwork identity" is culturally determined

and sustained until a novel effort results in a new perspective on artistic possibility. An artwork, although it may be novel in another sense, is not radical unless its offering as art requires that the concept of art be modified or extended for it to be recognized, interpreted, and valued as art. There are different kinds and degrees of radicality in art, and it is part of the creative dimension of art to attempt to determine them. Part of art history is the record of the development of such radicality in different places at different times. For instance, different ways of presenting different kinds of image, and various explorations of space in painting prior to the twentieth century, can easily be understood to have been quite radical in their time. It is in a certain sense arbitrary, then, where one might begin to consider "radical identity" in art history, since one could cite different works of different artists at different times to have been a kind of creative assault on what was artistically conventional at that time.[2] Notwithstanding these many and varied instances, a series of radical changes in the early part of the twentieth century have made certain things, including examples discussed in this chapter, possible.

When Braque and Picasso introduced the artworld to *papier collé* and collage in 1912, they initiated an investigation of the relation of mind, art, and reality that spawned Marcel Duchamp's readymades, led to such works of minimalism as Dan Flavin's fluorescent sculptures, and inspired works of conceptual, performance, earth, and installation art that replaced the discrete stable object of traditional painting and sculpture with ideas, constructions, and actions that often existed independently of established places of exhibition. Relations of mind, art, and reality that have been explored artistically since papier collé and collage are complex, challenging, and multifarious. However, for the central notion with which this volume is concerned—that is, the question of where art is located, or where it *can* be understood to exist, subsist, or otherwise reside—perhaps the most important consequence of papier collé and collage is the insight that once reality comes into art on the wall, art can come off the wall and enter other parts of reality, or even irreality.

The remaining paragraphs of this section briefly examine some of the kinds of work that are part of the progression of radical artistic identity. In the most general sense, the works cited involve and explore, in ways suited to their particular identity, the use and dialectical relation of subjects

and objects. More particularly, such works can use, and reflect the use of, such things as: perception and conception; stability and change; actions and events; presence and absence; process and product; acts and objects of thought; manufacture and invention; use and reuse; language, information, and sense data; sense, paradox, and nonsense; intellect and emotion; privacy and publicity; origination and derivation; single and multiple objects; time and space; institution and object; and an extended perceptual, conceptual, active, and temporal aesthetic that recognizes the relevance of the things cited to supplement (in various ways) a view of valuing art that is traditionally linked to more common and stable objects. The things listed are relevant to critical and creative consideration of the location of art and show that that issue is not a simple and isolated matter.[3]

To produce his *Step Piece* in 1971 Vito Acconci stepped up on, and down from, a stool in his apartment "at the rate of 30 steps per minute" for a period determined by the artist in advance of initiating the actions of which the work would come to consist. He performed the stepping action each morning and continued in each session, at the rate stated, for as long as he was able to "perform it without stopping."[4] Because it consists of a number of actions that follow from a concept, one might think that the point of *Step Piece* is to function as performative recognition of the fact that every artwork depends on an act or acts of thought, and on somatic actions of the sort required to result in what the work is intended to be. One might also link this work, as the product of a sequence of movements designed to result in a work of art, to works of abstract expressionism by earlier artists, such as Jackson Pollock, that were called "action paintings" by Harold Rosenberg, and that were thought by Allan Kaprow to have been forerunners of Happenings and performance art.[5] However, whereas Pollock's activity was designed to result in a visible aesthetic object, Acconci's activity, in not being linked to the realization of something that would outlast the series of actions that produced it, seemed to have no artistic point, and little or no aesthetic merit. There was nothing to see, nothing to contemplate, and nothing to judge, at least not according to conventional conceptions associated with seeing, contemplating, and judging received works of art.

Whereas Pollock used his mind and body to produce a constructed visual whole that was the aesthetic result of a sequence of coordinated actions, Acconci's movements—although also coordinated—were not meant to do anything but conform to the program of physical exertion that would seem, from a traditional perspective, to result in nothing beyond the factual occurrence of a number of repetitive exertions. What they culminated in was the artwork *Step Piece*, now past, that Acconci recorded in writing and partially documented in black and white photographs. It is only because these records and photographs were made available to the artworld—not as themselves being or supplanting the work that they document, but as traces of a work that no longer exists—that it is possible to think about and evaluate an artwork that cannot be seen but only understood.

Christine Kozlov's *Information, No Theory* (1969) used a tape recorder to record detectable sounds in the space in which it was exhibited.[6] The recorder included a loop tape, so that a completed cycle of recording was followed by a new cycle that recorded new sounds over the sequence of sounds captured on the cycle before it. New information replaced old information according to the working of a tape recorder that was set up to realize a design articulated in language by Kozlov. *Information, No Theory* represents a contrast and a contest between the cycle of obliteration by preservation of related sets of historical data, and the unchanging abstract rule according to which the ephemeral information is to be recorded and then erased.

Kozlov's earlier *271 Blank Sheets of Paper Corresponding to 271 Days of Concepts Rejected* (1968) uses blank sheets of ordinary typing paper, each of which represents a day in which the artist had at least one idea for an artwork that she did not then think good enough to be realized in a form that would have fit the concept rejected. The title page of this work contains the information of the title with the artist's name and date of the work. The empty perceptual expanse of each remaining page is not offered to vision as a discrete kind of formless visual datum. In fact, no page or part of a page can be seen as a specific, or segregated, part of the stack of paper that it helps to compose, and the individual contribution that each edge makes to the boundary of the stack is less a visual than a factual datum for awareness. Each blank page of this work is meant to function as a symbol, and so comes to resemble the language in which a

rejected idea would have been framed. And each is just as anonymous as the particular discarded concept of which it is the vehicle for representation. This work then makes novel use of the blank surface, and creates a different kind of representation, in both signifying something in a novel way, and in signifying an absent object that, in being mental or conceptual, is no more something that can be seen than is the concealed piece of paper by which it is represented. Something present is connected to something absent through the language of the title that makes the concept of the work comprehensible. It is significant that this work uses something present to connect to something absent, by means of a concept whose being made public depends on the use of language in the title of the work. And as use of language would have been required to make public any discarded idea represented by the material parts of this work, there is a connection through that medium of an original work to a number of formerly possible works whose counterfactual actualization forms the content of the work that uses them to be realized.

The Confession is a work by Chris Burden in which the artist invited twenty-five people that he had met and conversed with during an exhibition of his work at the Contemporary Art Center in Cincinnati in 1974 to a performance that would become the work of that title. The exhibition included books that documented earlier works by Burden and a videotaped interview with the artist about his work. Given their interest in, and knowledge of, his work, and the opinions that they had formed of him based on their conversations with him, Burden supposed that it was likely that they had formed an image of him as an artist and individual that was largely positive. Burden decided to make a work based on the contrast between this image and another less positive view of him that might result from information that he would provide about a troubling part of his personal life. When the invited guests arrived at the appointed time, they saw Burden on the same monitor on which the recorded interview with him had previously played, but now talking about his unhappiness, and how he had lost control of his life due to his involvement in "a love triangle." The audience sat in silence as Burden talked, revealing "disturbing knowledge," until he could no longer continue. With the monologue over, the performance ended, and the audience left without discussing amongst themselves what they had just listened to.[7] Although this work is an interesting exploration of how artist and audience respond to publicizing private information in a place meant for a different kind of audience engagement and reaction, its principal relevance here is due more to the way in which the work extends beyond

the space and time of the exhibition through the minds and memories of the people that witnessed the performance. That this work was not restricted to its realization in a particular concrete form in a particular place at a particular time is part of its radical nature. Instead, it included content that was disseminated through the people who became participants in the realization and continuation of the work. Burden is now deceased, and when the last memory of this work is lost no part of the work will survive. Knowledge of it will be limited to its documentation and continuation in reports such as this.

Samson is an installation first created by Burden in 1985 that consisted of a one-hundred-ton jack placed between sixteen-inch pieces of timber with steel ends.[8] These ends were placed against walls in the Henry Art Gallery in Seattle, and set up in such a way that the jack incrementally increased the pressure that it exerted on the walls through its connection to a turnstile used by visitors to the installation. Accordingly, each person who came through the turnstile slightly increased the pressure on the walls of the gallery, which meant that if enough people came into the gallery the jack could in theory cause the building to collapse.[9] In using a jack, *Samson* employs a perceptible object with strong visual and sculptural qualities to realize a state of affairs that includes the institutional setting in which the perceptible object itself is exhibited as a key constituent element. For this state of affairs to be understood to be a work of art, the perceptible object—the jack—that is itself a member of the state of affairs, must be located either in, or in relation to, the museum or institutional space of which—through its relation to beings of the sort on which the institution depends—it threatens to be the destruction. The effect of a person's entering the museum through the turnstile not only becomes part of the state of affairs at the time at which the event occurs, it represents a dimension of the work that cannot be perceived but can only be understood.

The importance, value, and particular identity of *Samson* as a work of art depends on understanding the relation of object, event, and institution, since it is in virtue of that understanding that *Samson* can be seen to be a work of art that relies on a cultural framework that it is set up in theory to destroy. Although all of the perceptible aspects of the state of affairs set up in the museum are very visual, and in that sense fit well with the history of sculpture, the

understanding of how these things are designed to work in relation to their place of exhibition makes that understanding as important, or more important, than any aspect of the work that is visible. If understandings can be understood to have locations, they must be where the brains on which understandings depend are located, and so Burden multiplies and mobilizes the spaces relevant to the work to include all of the changing places in which understandings of the identity of the work exist.

Dennis Oppenheim did a series of works over a period of about two years, beginning in 1968, that he called *Transplants*. A few of these were created by taking the dimensions of the floor plan of a gallery space, such as gallery number three in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, and marking, with an implement such as a shovel, an area in the ground of another location—such as an empty lot or field—that represented the size and shape of the gallery meant in this schematic way to be reproduced and relocated. The residue of the performance of this action—the depicted space—was then photographed to document the action and its effect, and the photograph became part of a montage that included a map of where the outline of the gallery was made. In the case of the Stedelijk gallery transplant, this was at a site of bare winter ground in Jersey City, New Jersey. In addition to the colored map that had been stamped by the artist to mark the location where the outline of the gallery space was realized, the montage included a scaled black and white floor plan of the Stedelijk Museum with the gallery outlined in red that was outlined in full size in land in the United States. It also contained the following text: "GALLERY TRANSPLANT. 1969. Floor specifications Gallery #3, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, transplanted to Jersey City, New Jersey. Surface: Snow, dirt, gravel. Duration: 4 weeks." This language also functions as the title of the work, the montage of which is now in the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago.[10] Each *Gallery Transplant* work from Oppenheim's *Transplant* series employed, as a starting point, the size and shape of a room of an institution of the kind on which the recognition and preservation of important works of art depend. The realization of the size and shape of that room in the bare earth of a different location was not motivated by the desire to make a realistic picture of something, to create significant pictorial form, or to make an artifact that represented the externalization of the artist's emotions. Instead, the intention was to use diverse things in diverse locations to produce a work in which art, nature, and concept are related through association with a cultural structure on which the work itself relies to be a work

of art, at least one that is important enough to contribute to the history of art that museums are dedicated to preserving. This multi-dimensional work, which must be understood to include concept and action in addition to the other things cited, can be understood to make us reflect on the relation of human beings and culture to nature given the nature and culture of human beings.

In 1969 Robert Barry produced *Inert Gas, Helium* by releasing helium from a standard container of balloon gas into the atmosphere in the Mojave Desert.[11] This work consists of the artist's past action of discharging the gas into the atmosphere, and of the history of its expansion and distribution in the atmosphere according to the physical conditions to which it was then, and continues to be, subjected. As the gas was and is invisible, the only evidence that the artworld has of the work is a photograph of the container of the gas in the location in which it was released, with Barry's written testimony to the action of its release. Works such as this linked the material of the work to time in addition to space allowing the temporal dimension of the work to extend beyond the time of the action on which it depended. Seeming to take invisibility to the extreme, it made the location of the artwork and its borders, such as they were then and are now, something that one can only imagine and cannot precisely identify.

Inert Gas, Helium did not, however, take dematerialization to the extreme to which it was taken in Barry's *All the Things I Know but of Which I Am Not at the Moment Thinking – 1:36 PM; June 15, 1969* (1969). This work is determined by using language to specify or single something out that it is to be understood to be. The work is not the language written on a wall or typed on a piece of paper. It is what is specified by the language. And this is something that is invisible and unknowable in all of its particular content, both by us and by the artist who is responsible for the work. Exactly what is specified by the language though has its difficulties. One would assume that it is a class consisting of a very large number of things known by Barry of which he was not conscious at the time appended to the specification. This could seem then to have a straightforward relation to Barry and to the language that he used to single out that class of objects of knowledge. Where is that class though? To the extent to which the language concerns things that Barry could have called to mind, it would be reasonable to suppose that they were states of knowledge located in his brain. However, what is meant by "things" in the language *the*

things I know is ambiguous concerning the concept of things known, since things known could be thought to concern, not just states in an epistemological being, but the things themselves to which the states pertain.

In addition, things known would include knowledge of particular and general impersonal facts as well as biographical knowledge in the form of personal memories. The relation of the latter kind of knowledge to Barry's brain might seem relatively clear, given the dependence of memories on brains. And although *retention* of, and *access* to, knowledge about impersonal facts can be understood to have the same kind of dependence on brains, the location of such facts, including facts as known, is not clear. Where is the fact that 1 + 1 = 2? If this is better expressed as a relation between the concepts of unit number, addition, and equality, where is that relation and where are those concepts? If the right answer is that concepts and relations are abstract objects—so that concepts inhabit a spaceless and timeless region in which relations obtain, if that qualifies as, a location—then part of the class singled out by *All the Things I Know . . .* would consist of things that, although targeted by knowledge, are not themselves located in the brain. Then things known by Barry would have been different in nature with diverse locations fitting their heterogeneity as different kinds of epistemological object. This diversity of location could be thought to be part of the artwork's radical identity in addition to that associated with the opaque or anonymous nature of what is singled out by the specification, given its relation to thinking as a conscious event.

This relation of thought to Barry's *All the Things I Know . . .* specification has also been thought, by Margaret Boden, to be paradoxical, and, by Diarmuid Costello, to generate an infinite regress.[12] The paradox concerns the language *of which I am not at the moment thinking* since to have the notion of things not then being thought of, one has to have the thought of the things of which one is not then thinking. But then one is thinking of those things as not being thought, even if only descriptively as a group, and not individually as particular items of knowledge. The infinite regress results from forming the thought stated in the language *All the Things I Know but of Which I Am Not at the Moment Thinking* since, as seen, in thinking about not thinking about such things, one knows that one is thinking of them. But if the intention is, as seems clear, to

single out things known that are not then being thought of, then a new thought would have to be formed to fit the terms of the specification that would exclude the previous problematic thought. And the specification, or equivalent ways of wording it, seems to be the only way to single out what is intended to be conceptually discriminated. However, the same problem that arose in relation to the first thought violating the terms of the specification would arise here, and this problematic relation between thought and specification would simply continue without end.

It is intriguing to consider whether the paradox and the infinite regress can themselves be understood to be singled out, as objects of thought, by the language that results in them, or whether they are simply byproducts of the attempt to single something out that is problematic in the ways indicated. Where might either be located? The question of the location of a paradox or an infinite regress, whether singled out or educed in thought, may not be one that can be properly raised, given the kind of thing that each is. Or it might be said that each is located in the understood product that results from the use of the conceptual or abstract relations of the concepts involved in the determination of each problem.

However all of these things may be, the following assertions seem defensible:

1. Barry used the language *All the Things I Know . . .* to delineate something for thought that used the thought expressed by the language to effect the delineation
2. The use of this specification produces a contest between what clearly seems possible and comprehensible for Barry's language to single out and the problems with thought and language noted above
3. This opposition—between the conceptual clarity and friction noted—is part of the character of the radical identity of this work

The works of art cited, and perhaps Barry's *All the Things I Know . . .* in particular, invite the question of just how radical artistic identity can be. The answer to this query depends on understanding what is essential both to producing and understanding any work of art, no matter how radical or reductive, as indicated in what follows.

II. Making and apprehending works of art: Essentialism and the basics[13]

a. The fundamental artistic action presupposed by any work of art is singling something out. Artworks can be singled out in creation, as in a painting by Fra Angelico; in selection, as in a readymade by Marcel Duchamp; or in specification, as in Robert Barry's *All the Things I Know*. . . . A complex artwork can also be singled out by using a combination of any two or all three of these things.

b. What is singled out is an object, in the widest sense of the concept of object, as previously indicated. Objects can be divided generally into those that are existential and non-existential, and particularly into those that are phenomenal and noumenal relative to a particular individual at a particular time.

An object exists if it is a temporal or spatio-temporal object now, in a framework in which the present can be marked off from the past and future. For art and culture this demarcation is effected in relation to consciousness since the present is the time of consciousness—or all consciousness occurs when it occurs in the present—all of art and culture depends on consciousness to exist, and things that exist are located in the present. An object that exists is a present "existential" object, one that existed in a past present is a past existential object, and one that will exist in a future present is a future existential object. Past and future existential objects, for the purpose of art and culture, are determined in relation to memory and expectation. Thinking is an existential event or process, and a rock is an existential object that can be perceived in an existential event of perception. Any object that is not an existential object is a "non-existential" object. Abstract objects, such as numbers, and impossible objects, such as a forest without trees, are non-existential objects. Non-existential objects are conceived, thought about, imagined, or understood, but are not in any case located in time or space and time, although any kind of conscious event directed at or pertaining to them, is. The existential-non-existential bifurcation is produced in relation to relevant kinds of conscious event since art and culture depend on consciousness, and the understanding of the division depends on relevant

kinds of conscious event.

An object is “phenomenal” when it is either a conscious event, such as experiencing pain, or is the object of a directed conscious event, such as thought or perception, relative to a particular conscious subject when she is conscious. A tree when seen is phenomenal relative to a person then seeing the tree. The concept of a tree is phenomenal relative to someone thinking about that concept. Any object that is not phenomenal relative to a particular subject in the present is then “noumenal” relative to that conscious subject. The same object can be phenomenal relative to one subject at the same time that it is noumenal relative to a different subject at that time, and the same object may be phenomenal relative to the same subject at one time that is noumenal relative to that subject at another.

The categorial distinctions between existential and non-existential, and phenomenal and noumenal objects, are made in relation to current consciousness since that is a necessary condition of both the continuation and advancement of art and culture. They are recognized here because of their relevance to the topic of this chapter. In particular, how noumenal in addition to phenomenal, and non-existential in addition to existential objects can profitably figure in the artistic investigations of “Abstraction” and radical identity are things to be determined *a posteriori* in particular artistic investigations. Thus no *a priori* statement can be made about the superiority or importance of one kind of object or another to artistic inquiry once it is realized that the identity of any artwork of any kind depends on a present existential object that is then phenomenal relative to at least one observer.

c. Every object, including each work of art, has the particular property of being the particular object that it is, which is the object’s haecceity, and pertains to its thisness, or its being *this* thing that it is that is nothing else and that nothing else is. The haecceity of any artwork is the property that it has of being that particular work, which everything else, including every other artwork, necessarily lacks. Each object, including each artwork, is different from each object to which it is not logically identical, and as it is only logically identical to itself, it is

logically distinct from every object that lacks its particular identity. These things apply to any object, no matter its nature, complexity, location(s) in space or time, or its independence of space and time.

However, the points made pertain to the bare logical form of the concept of haecceity, and the more interesting metaphysical question concerns the properties on which an object depends to be the particular object that it is. The particular identity of a particular work of art is determined by what it is that makes the work that particular work, or on the properties on which it depends to have its particular haecceity, and so requires examination beyond the simple statement of haecceity guaranteed by logic. How particular artwork identity can be constructed or determined within a fundamental framework that reflects, as it utilizes, essential conditions of making and apprehending works of art is the inquiry motivated both by the reductive interests of Essentialism and by its concern to identify kinds of radical identity that can emerge from such an investigation.

d. Any artwork presupposes the consciousness and agency of the artist whose work it is. Consciousness is heterogeneous and includes thought, reflection, memory, and understanding in addition to the perception on which any artwork relies. No being, while unconscious, can produce a work of art, and any artist must have at least one thought, and make a least one choice, in bringing about a particular work of art. Thus, an artist must intend to create or otherwise produce a work of art, and that informed intention must be followed by at least one action that follows from that decision. This requirement of intentional action holds even if determinism is true, since the kind of determined action that appears to be a free choice must occur for an artwork to be possible.

e. It must be possible in theory for conscious subjects in addition to the artist to be aware of the intended identity of a particular work of art. In particular, it must be possible for the artworld to be aware of the identity of any artwork that would enter art history. Any artwork depends on a perceptual object for the identity of that work to be understood.[14] However, it is not

the case that an artwork must be a perceptual object itself, and so need not be identified with, as opposed to depending on, any perceptual object that is a condition of its identity. This is not the case, for instance, with Barry's *All the Things I Know*. . . . The point about publicity is that any perceptual object on which any artwork depends must be directed to communal understanding. This is as true of radical as it is of traditional works of art. The works of art identified in the first section could only be cited and discussed because of the public nature of the perceptual object or objects on which knowledge of the intended identity of the work depends.

f. To understand what a particular artwork is to be understood to be, one has to attend to a perceptual object or objects that the work is meant to be, or through which the identity of the work is made comprehensible. This involves consciousness and agency since one has to be conscious of that object and one must choose to attend to it. Each is required for appreciation, interpretation, and judgement, in addition to comprehension.

A concern of Essentialism is to use the consciousness and agency of someone attending to a perceptual object, on which the identity of an Essentialist artwork relies, and to construct the perceptual object in a way that uses the consciousness and agency that inform that attention as means to produce the Essentialist identity intended.

III. Essentialism and the concept of an artistic complex

When a subject chooses to attend to a perceptual object that an artwork is meant to be, or on which its particular identity depends, an "artistic complex" results of which the subject and perceptual object are necessary constituents. These two things are united through the consciousness and agency that are also ineliminable elements of the complex. Conceptual consciousness is an active constituent of the complex, with sensation, since one must understand that the object being attended to is either a work of art or an object on which the identity of a work of art depends.

Any artistic complex is essentially characterized by a number of things in addition to those just stated that can be understood to be elements of the complex, and that can be used in certain ways to investigate the most extreme ends of reductive art and certain possibilities of radical identity. For instance, they include epistemological relations of the subject to the perceptual object, her indexical relation to that object, her history of awareness and agency, and causal relations that hold between subject and object.[15] A question for Essentialism is whether or not the ingredients of an artistic complex, as elements essential to the comprehension of artistic identity, can somehow be used to produce, and to be reflected in, the very identity to be comprehended.

IV. The time and place of conventional and radical works of art

In depending on perceptual objects and conscious subjects, the issue of identity in art must also consider the relation of art to space and time.

The perceptual objects of conventional artworks, such as paintings, are commonly thought to be physical. However, physics assures us that paintings, qua physical, are nothing like what they appear to be. For art then, one must make a distinction between physical and perceptual space. Perceptual objects can be understood to depend on physical objects, but perceptual objects, as works of art, in having properties such as color that physical objects do not, cannot be thought of as being physical objects. Perceptual artworks are located in places in space determined in relation to other perceptual objects in a network of perceptual objects of which they form part. Perceptual objects in perceptual space are key for understanding art.

A radical artwork will be wherever what it is meant to be is located, if it has a location. Any perceptual object on which a radical artwork depends will be in perceptual space, but a radical artwork might be located in the understanding of someone attending to it, it could be spaceless, or it could be a combination of things thought to occupy different places that, even if they cannot be given a location in relation to conventional notions of space or place, can be marked off logically in relation to things that we can understand.

A conventional perceptual artwork depends on a particular material organization to be that perceptual object, but no perceptual artwork exists, as art, when not being perceived. Even if objects retained the properties they have in perception apart from perception, a perceptual artwork would still have to be perceived to be perceived as art. That having been said, one can recognize a distinction between public and private time. Private time is the time of individual consciousness and action. Any perception, thought, or act has a particular position in the history of awareness of the being whose perception, thought, or act it is. Accordingly, each occurs at a time, or for a time, that delineates, as it composes, part of the private time of the biography of a particular individual. At the same time everyone lives in a common public time determined by clocks and calendars, and a more traditional artwork can be thought to have an ostensibly continuous biography suited to that public time, from its coming to its ceasing to be, as long as it is understood to be a factually discontinuous entity during that time. Art history pertains to public time. The subjunctive discontinuous status of artworks is linked to private times that occur within public time.

The question of *when* a work of radical art is depends on the kind(s) of object(s) that it is to be understood to be, and so whether any such an object is itself temporal or atemporal. In any case though, because of the dependence of art on perception and understanding, and because of the temporality of consciousness and comprehension, any artwork of any kind has at least an indirect relation to time, including one of radical identity.

V. Language, surface, ideational objects, and the configuration space of Essentialism

The aim of Essentialism is to determine artwork identity in relation to use of essential elements of artistic complexes as the means of identifying ultimate kinds of radical identity and the limits of Abstraction in art. This requires using language in relation to consciousness, agency, and understanding to single out objects that all or part of an artwork is to be understood to be. A

piece of language used to single out such an object is a "specification." The language of specification must be publicized as a permanent possibility of comprehension. As such, it must be so written and exhibited to make it theoretically available to any number of different subjects at the same or different times. Thus, the language, and the space of which it forms part, must be apprehensible and reapprehensible by the same and different subjects. The phenomenal nature and location of this language will involve considerations of space and time.

An object is "ideational" when whether it is all or part of a work of art depends on understanding language that singles out the object in relation to that understanding. Essentialist specifications single out ideational objects. The relation of an ideational object to understanding may be implicit or explicit, depending on the wording of the language, but it is Essentialist in either case in being indexed to the understanding on which it depends to be ideational. Because of my interest in thisness and particular identity, I call an Essentialist specification a "*Haecceity*," and give it a number that locates it in the *Haecceities* series (2002–), of which it is a member. An ideational object either closes the separation of subject and object, or links them by design in understanding. Eliminating that distance is not part of most traditional artwork identity since, although dependent on consciousness, the relation of the object to the subject is not typically directly addressed by the character of the object.[16] For instance, no non-Essentialist artwork of which I am aware explicitly makes the act or state of understanding what the work is to be understood to be, itself the work to be understood. This is the case though with *Haecceity 9.241.1*, which reads: *understanding that understanding what is understood is to be understood in understanding this is what is to be understood in the understanding of this in any understanding* (2021). Here the specification singles out the understanding of the specification as what is to be produced and identified by that constructive comprehension. Any understanding of what is singled out singles itself out as what is meant to be understood, and so determines in a reflexive act of understanding what is designed to be determined by that understanding. As nothing can be understood to be the work except understanding the intended identity of the work, it represents one limit of Abstraction. And it is radical in placing the work in the invisible and terminal act or state of understanding what the work is to be understood to be.[17]

I call the constructed space of the Essentialist perceptual object a "space of apprehension" to underline its relation to the cognitive processes of reading, reflecting, and understanding in addition to perception. And these and other things, such as memory, that are explicitly or implicitly used in the construction or determination of Essentialist identity are part of the "field of understanding" that every subject attending to an Essentialist perceptual object brings to that encounter. Both of these things are aspects of an Essentialist artistic complex, and each is used in the investigation of Abstraction and the exploration of identity.[18] The particular way in which an Essentialist artwork uses the space of apprehension in interactive relation to the field of understanding creates an Essentialist "configuration space," the being and character of which depend on the nature of the work's specification, its relation to the space of apprehension in which it appears, and of which it forms part, and its relation to the field of understanding on which it depends, and to which it is directed.[19] How to use and delineate this configuration space, and so how to construct the space of apprehension to engage the field of understanding in the construction or determination of ideational objects is, with language, the primary target of creative explorations in Essentialism.

VI. Essentialism and radical identity

As every artwork must have a particular identity that everything else lacks—being *this* thing that nothing else is—the fundamental investigation of the possibilities of identity must focus on the creative production of identity itself as actualized in various ways, in diverse kinds of object, that reflect the essential elements of artistic complexes and the necessary conditions of making and apprehending works of art. This includes not only identifying ways and results of producing the various identities that can be produced as a consequence of that interest, but includes exploring how the relation of identity to the consciousness and conditions on which it depends to be brought about and recognized can be reflected in the identity determined and understood, and includes investigating the relation of an identity to the difference established in relation to it.

As concentration on the essential elements of an artistic complex constitutes the most effective and reductive means of exploring thisness and the identity-difference relation, a creative inquiry of this nature must concentrate on delineating the fundamental identity-difference relation in relation to particular uses of essential elements of artistic complexes to produce a work that is a particular *this*. This requires using language to engage certain elements of a complex explicitly, as others figure implicitly, in the construction or determination of artwork identity. In particular, consciousness and agency can function as media when engaged in particular ways by language to figure in the determination of something that an artwork is to be understood to be.[20] Artworks will be more reductive and Essentialist to the extent to which they reflect the conditions on which they depend to be the works that they are.

I suggest then that Essentialism is an inquiry that can use language and the essential elements of an artistic complex to explore certain artistic possibilities that cannot arise from a different artistic approach or conceptual perspective. The Essentialist inquiry includes identifying the reductive limits of art in works in which kinds of radical identity, such as the following, are exhibited:

1. Two different artworks can be identified with the same object
2. Two different objects, of the same or different kinds, can be the same work of art
3. The same work of art can be understood to be identified with nothing, something, and everything, at the same or different times. This is the case with *Haecceity 1.0.0* seen in figure 1, given the ways in which different lengths of the language can be read and understood.[21] The circular language of illustration 1 appears beneath the loupes in the work so that they read symmetrically from each of the longer sides.

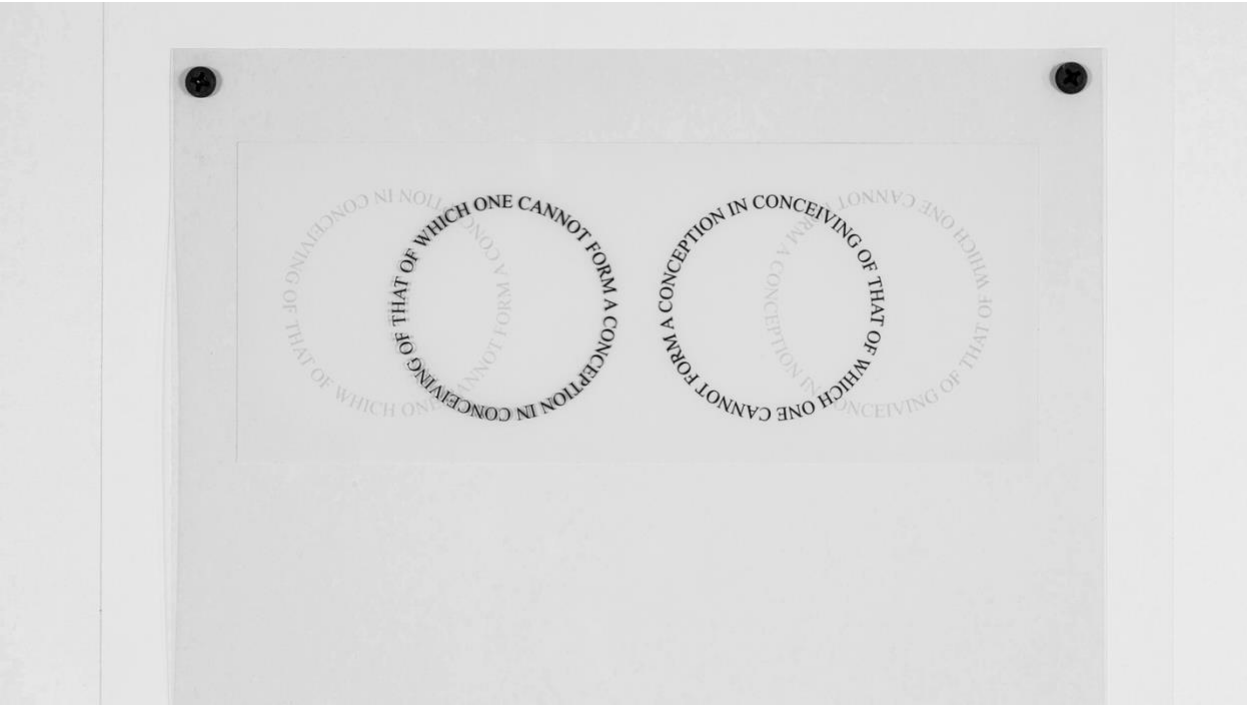
Illustration 1. Jeffrey Strayer, *Haecceity 1.0.0* (detail) 2009. Language.

Jeffrey Strayer, *Haecceity 1.0.0*, 2009. Mixed media, 9½" × 12 $^{1}/_{8}$ " × 4".

4. The identity of an artwork can be "determined in relation to understanding the conditions themselves that provide for the possibility of that determination" as the determined identity reflects the conditions on which that determination is understood

to depend[22]

5. The identity of an artwork can result from understanding that the identity to be understood is actualized in understanding the relation of the identity intended to that understanding, as seen in *Haecceity 9.241.1* (2021)
6. An artwork can be understood to be a nullified possibility that results from its relation to the actual occurrence of an event of understanding language that singles out the cancelled possibility in relation to that understanding[23]
7. The language that specifies a work of art can be written to function in relation to its apprehension so that "nothing understood to be specified by it can be understood to be specified by it given that apprehension"[24]
8. The identity of an artwork can be determined in relation to an act of conceiving of something of which it is not possible to conceive in attempting to form that impossible conception. *Haecceity 12.0.0* (2002) is such a work.[25] The language of this work appears in a detail of the perceptual object of the work in figure 2.



Jeffrey Strayer, *Haecceity 12.0.0* (detail), 2002. Mixed media, 20¼" × 22½"[26]

All of the works and possibilities cited are relevant to the matter of the being, identity, and location of radical kinds of art, considered both artistically and philosophically. Other examples of radical identity are identified in works of what I call the *Haecceities* series that are works of Essentialism.[27] Whether or not there are other kinds of radical identity that are of aesthetic, artistic, and philosophical interest is what ongoing Essentialist investigations are meant to determine.

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[1] I use the terms *Essentialist* and *Essentialism* solely in relation to the project of determining limits of "Abstraction" and identifying possibilities of radical identity in art. Each of these interrelated projects depend on using the necessary, or essential, conditions of making and apprehending works of art to produce works of art in which such limits and possibilities can be recognized. Any other meaning, use, or understanding of the term, inside or outside of either philosophy or art, is irrelevant to, and has no association with, the particular concerns of this investigation. The capitalization of each term is meant, in part, to reinforce the meaning that they have only in relation to the matters to which they are meant to apply. In addition to material on Essentialism and Abstraction seen in sections II–V of this paper, see Jeffrey Strayer, *Subjects and Objects: Art, Essentialism, and Abstraction* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); and Jeffrey Strayer, *Haecceities: Essentialism, Identity, and Abstraction* (Leiden: Brill 2017).

[2] See, for instance, Strayer, *Subjects and Objects*, 15–25.

[3] The use of such things is also of interest to the multiple interests of Essentialism, including raising questions about where works of art can reside. And as they may be pertinent to other concerns, I do not mean to suggest that they can only be used artistically with the goal of investigating possible locations of art and possibilities of radical identity. Finally, the importance of each work considered should not be thought to be limited to the things that I have to say about them.

[4] See Frazer Ward, Mark C. Taylor, and Jennifer Bloomer, *Vito Acconci* (London: Phaidon, 2002), 37.

[5] Harold Rosenberg, "The American Action Painters," in *The Tradition of the New* (New York: Grove Press 1961), 23–39; Harold Rosenberg, "The Concept of Action in Painting," in *Artworks and Packages* (New York: Delta Books, 1969), 213–28; and Allan Kaprow, "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock," in *Essays on The Blurring of Art and Life: Allan Kaprow*, ed. Jeff Kelley (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1993), 1–9.

[6] See Lucy R. Lippard, ed., *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object* (Berkeley: The University of

California Press, 1997), 80; and Paul Wood, *Conceptual Art* (New York: Delano Greenidge Editions, 2002), 35–7.

[7] Chris Burden, *Chris Burden 74–77* (Los Angeles: self-published, 1978), unpaginated.

[8] *Samson* is now in the collection of the Inhotim Centro de Arte Contemporânea, Mineas Gerais, Brazil.

[9] Guy Nordenson, "An Engineer's View," in *Chris Burden: Extreme Measures*, ed. Lisa Phillips (New York: Skira Rizzoli, 2013), 75–80.

[10] See "Gallery Transplant, Floor Specifications Gallery #3, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Transplanted to Jersey City, New Jersey. Surface: Snow, Dirt, Gravel. Duration: 4 Weeks," Art Institute Chicago, https://www.artic.edu/artworks/211878/gallery-transplant-floor-specifications-gallery-3-stedelijk-museum-amsterdam-transplanted-to-jersey-city-new-jersey-surface-snow-dirt-gravel-duration-4-weeks.

[11] Wood, *Conceptual Art*, 35–7.

[12] Margaret A. Boden, "Creativity and Conceptual Art," in *Philosophy & Conceptual Art*, eds. Peter Goldie and Elisabeth Schellekens (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 230; Diarmuid Costello, "Kant After LeWitt: Towards an Aesthetics of Conceptual Art," in *Philosophy & Conceptual Art*, eds. Peter Goldie and Elisabeth Schellekens (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 112. The formulation of how the paradox and infinite regress both occur is mine. The fact of paradox and infinite regress are cited by their respective authors but are not elaborated upon.

[13] Although the matters written about in the remainder of this chapter are considered more thoroughly in the books Strayer, *Subjects and Objects*; and Strayer, *Haecceities*, the passages as written are sufficiently detailed to fit the purposes for which they appear.

[14] When not otherwise emphasized, it should be understood that perception includes intellectual awareness or comprehension in addition to sensation.

[15] This list is not exhaustive. The complete list, as well as how they can figure in determining the limits of Abstraction in art and possibilities of radical identity, can be found in Strayer, *Subjects and Objects;* and Strayer, *Haecceities*.

[16] Works that explore the relation of the viewer to the artwork include *Las Meninas* by Diego Velázquez, 1656, oil on canvas, 10′ 5″ × 9′ 1″, Museo del Prado, Madrid; *Mirrored Cubes* by Robert Morris, 1965/1971, mirror glass and wood, each cube: 914 × 914 × 914 mm, overall display dimensions are variable, Tate Modern, London; and *Any Five Foot Sheet of Glass to Lean Against Any Wall* by Joseph Kosuth, 1965, transparent glass, 5′ × 5′.

[17] The word *or* here is inclusive since *Haecceity 9.241.1* can be understood to specify an act or state of understanding or both. And the word *terminal* pertains both to *understanding* as the end of a process of reading, and *understanding* in its finite and conclusive nature.

[18] See Strayer, *Haecceities*, 255–329.

[19] See Jeffrey Strayer, *Essentialism and Its Objects: Identity and Abstraction in Language, Thought, and Action* (unpublished manuscript, 2021–), Microsoft Word file.

[20] See Strayer, *Subjects and Objects*, 234–62.

[21] For how this is possible see Strayer, *Haecceities,* 340–64. As noted in the text, Essentialist artworks are called *Haecceities* for their relation to thisness and particular identity, and individual contribution to the *Haecceities* series.

[22] Strayer, *Haecceities,* 394–5, for commentary on *Haecceity 2.10.1* see 393–7.

[23] See Strayer, 398–407.

[24] Strayer, 410, for commentary on *Haecceity 4.7.0* see 408–15.

[25] See Strayer, 433–7.

[26] The media of principal importance that are mixed in the *Haecceities* series are language, consciousness, and agency, and it is in virtue of the latter two working in concert with the words of a specification that the identity of the ideational object is produced or otherwise determined. Sometimes these things are used with, and in relation to, other objects that form part of the perceptual portion of the work, as in *Haecceity 1.0.0* of figure 1. This is done when objects can be used to affect the relation of language to understanding, or to effect a relation of interest of understanding to language that would not hold apart from that use. Perhaps it is worth noting too that the perceptual object of a *Haecceity* artwork is part of the work, and the ideational object is the other part. And, depending on the nature of the ideational object, that part of the work may be in the head, in time but not in space, or nowhere and nowhen in being abstract and so non-existential. For additional thoughts on the notion of a medium see Strayer, *Subjects and Objects* 234–53.

[27] See Jeffrey Strayer, Art and Philosophy, https://www.jeffreystrayer.com/.