

Kant, Art, and Art History

Moments of Discipline

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I

Introduction

Bo(a)rders

Hegel and Kant were the last who, to put it bluntly, were able to write major aesthetics without understanding anything about art.

Theodor W. Adorno

What counts in judging beauty is not what nature is, nor even what purpose it [has] for us, but how we receive it.

Immanuel Kant

Proper names are indeed, if not passages, then at least points of contact between heterogeneous regimes.

J.-F. Lyotard¹

This book examines the far-reaching and varied reception of Immanuel Kant's thought in art history and the practicing visual arts from the late eighteenth century to the present. Although many art historians, critics, and artists are aware that Kant's name and formalist critical practice were summoned by Clement Greenberg in his apologies for the European avant-garde and for post-World War II abstract painting, or that Kant's ideas were used by the central founders of academic art history – especially Wölfflin and Panofsky – as a way to demarcate and ground the discipline, Kant has not been perceived as pervasively influential in art history and the visual arts. Yet, for better or worse, his ideas (or those attributed to him) are immanent to these fields. To note an example so obvious that it tends to slip from our consciousness, his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) is the source for the famous analytic/synthetic distinction used traditionally in discussions of cubism to distinguish both the working methods and

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the chronological development of this art movement. Panofsky's distinctly Kantian search for a stable Archimedean vantage point outside the flux of empirical reality from which to judge individual works of art is another central instance of Kant's profound influence. It is worth emphasizing that the need for grounding in or from philosophy is itself a Kantian legacy, one that has done much to shape and place the discipline of art history, both in its infancy and today. Kant's authority has also been used recently to buttress what we might call an ethics of art-historical behavior: in the final paragraph of his essay on Hegel, Ernst Gombrich invokes Kant's "stern and frightening doctrine that nobody and nothing can relieve us of the burden of moral responsibility for our judgement" as an antidote to the "theophany" that Hegel purportedly saw in history (1984, 69). L. D. Ettlinger similarly looked to Kant to support his defense of individual, humanist priorities in art history. In a lecture delivered in 1961 titled "Art History Today," Ettlinger mentioned Kant in his final remarks, relying on him as the ultimate exponent of a renewed humanism that focused on "those central problems which concern man and his works" (1961, 21). It is as a humanist that Kant is of greatest importance to the later Panofsky.

Willi Goetschel has provocatively suggested that "the two hundred years that have elapsed since the publication of the [first] *Critique* seem to mark just the beginning of Kant interpretation" (1994, 115). Even in the face of a Kant bibliography of sublime and rapidly expanding proportions, Goetschel is right. Kant's thought is topical and pertinent across the humanities today in an unprecedented way. It is increasingly clear, as Tobin Siebers has put it, that we cannot discover "a single defense of art on ideological grounds that does not owe a substantial debt to Kant" (1998, 34). I also agree with Koenraad Geldof that he is "an author whose authority doubtless has never been so great as it is today." We should heed Geldof's caveat that in addition to being sensitive to the implications of invoking Kant, we must also guard against misusing "the authority of counterauthority" gained by resisting Kant (Geldof 1997, 23, 28). While I will be critical of how Kant's ideas have been used, my primary goal is to establish the extensive historical and theoretical presence of his thought in the historiography of art history and art criticism as well as in the work of artists from his time to our own.² But *how* is he important? I exhibit Kant – the man and his ideas, his name and its authority, and the discipline of philosophy that he frequently came to personify – as an active, contouring force in the visual arts and their histories. This force I call Kant's "discipline," a term

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with broad implications, whose shifting meanings I will exploit rather than attempt to define narrowly. I describe the manifestations of his reception with the term “plasmatics.” In ways that I will examine in detail, it is precisely because of his apparent “outsider” status in these contexts – and that of philosophy generally – that he has been so influential. Kant himself established a juridical hierarchy between historical and theoretical pursuits that applies to his treatment by art historians. Because he is an outsider, and because philosophy is often held to be different from and antithetical to art, it has been possible for the discipline of art history to suppress the importance of his name. I seek to illuminate the effects of Kant’s thought on the minute level of individual interaction between a theorist and art critics during the inception of cubism or American color-field painting, for example, and I also deal with Kant’s influence on the broader plane of disciplinary interaction. My primary concern is with the practical implications of high theory as it has been employed by the art historians, artists, and critics who have received Kant’s philosophy.

As the book’s subtitle suggests, I proceed by paying close attention to the spatial and temporal aspects of Kant’s legacy. The selective “moments” of reception that I examine – Rome during the Napoleonic invasions, the Paris of the cubists, Clement Greenberg’s New York, and others – are, however, not allied with the transcendental judgments and the categories of space and time set out by Kant in his *Critiques* but are, rather, the historically inflected intersections and intensities of “placed” reception. For example, whereas Kant’s moment of “quality” in the *Critique of Judgment* (1790) is defined as “aesthetical” and depends upon disinterestedness, my first moment (Chapter 2) focuses on the broadly political use made of a wide range of his writings in the German-speaking artists’ colony in Rome circa 1800. Kant as a German icon and his manipulation for various nationalistic ends is a theme I establish here and follow throughout the book. In Chapter 3, I examine Kant’s immense authority in twentieth-century art and art history. I look at Panofsky’s Kantianism, the strategic use of the philosopher’s name in early defenses of cubism, and finally at Clement Greenberg’s deployment of Kant’s arguments for the autonomy of the aesthetic as a way of discriminating high art from “kitsch.” In Chapters 4 and 5, I consciously allow the layering of multiple instances of Kant’s influence to become more complex and less ordered by chronology. My goal is to enact as well as to analyze Kant’s legacy in current art and art history. In Chapter 4, I study the return to the Kantian sublime in recent French

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theory and link this preoccupation to “examples” of the sublime in contemporary art practice. The final chapter interprets the history of Kant portraiture from the late eighteenth century to the present as both representative and constitutive of his remarkable authority in art and its history. As I have mentioned, Chapter 2 details how an early form of German cultural nationalism precipitated around Kant’s texts as they were received in the German *Künstlerrepublik* in Rome in the late eighteenth century. The identification of Germanness with philosophy and of philosophy with Kant found in this context remains topical in our own time, as Anselm Kiefer demonstrates in two of his three *Wege der Weltweisheit* images (1976–80), which include miniature portraits of Kant in the company of others who have shaped German national and cultural identity. By investigating Kant portraiture, then, I gain access to one of current art history’s most theoretically and historically engaging domains and I delineate a Foucauldian “genealogy” of Kant himself that reflects how he figures culturally and how his image has been used to model disciplinary relationships.

The moments of reception that I will examine feature literal references to Kant’s texts and ideas on the part of the artists and historians in question: they are more explicitly Kantian than much of the diffused neo-Kantianism that is to be found everywhere in European thought for much of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.³ Looking for Kant, one can all too easily find and thus reify his doctrines. It is easy to claim too much in his name. For this reason I have focused on only a few instances of his influence. There are others – in architectural theory and contemporary art especially – and I happily anticipate that readers of this study will point them out. My principal claims about Kant’s interactions with art and art history emerge from and can be amply corroborated through the selective probings into the very extensive legacy that I present. I hope to display patterns of influence, not an exhaustive survey. At times my investigation may seem to specialists in art history or philosophy to be too broad; to others, I may seem to provide too much detail about relatively little-known instances of Kant’s influence. My defense for this approach is that I use Kant very much as he has been used outside philosophy over the past two hundred years. If my technique seems to some to be inappropriately informal, it is again for the reason that much of Kant’s influence is precisely “casual” in ways that I will describe. I will show that Kant’s leverage in art history and the visual arts extends well beyond the themes of the *Critique of Judgment*, the book in which he seems to have the most to

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say about art and the aesthetic, and the source to which critics today tuned to Kant's peculiar interest in the arts therefore turn almost exclusively. In general, Kant's political writings have been at least as influential in the contexts examined here as have his *Critiques*. I will argue that his legacy has been "political" as much as "formal," even when his name is dropped by Clement Greenberg. The shape of Kant's reception depends in large measure upon what I will describe as "concurrency," the specific temporal and "placed" contexts in which his ideas are received. I have shaped my study very much in accord with this principle. While Kant in the third *Critique* famously demands universality for his second moment of "quantity," for example, I insist on the particularities of reception. In his moment of "relation," "purposiveness" depends on the autonomy and freedom of the Kantian subject, which I redescribe according to the interdependencies and vagrancies of genealogy. While he requires "necessity" to satisfy the moment of "modality," I emphasize the contingencies of how his ideas were known and used. In arranging my chapters chronologically, I hope to demonstrate that Kant's influence has been constant (if not consistent) from the 1770s until the 1990s, that his impact is in some ways cumulative, and that it has appeared across (and may well define the formation of) boundaries between theoretical, historical, art-critical, philosophical, and strictly artistic practices. Finally, it seems to me that Kant's reception in art history and the visual arts is paradigmatic of a relationship among disciplines that leads to a redefinition and reshaping of their priorities and methodologies. More often than not, a discipline's central concerns are defined not so much by self-conscious, programmatic statements of principle but by the activities of *bordering* fields. There is no pure Kant and no secure border between the many areas that he has influenced. In its attempts to understand Kant's relations with art and art history, then, this book is systematically un-Kantian and frequently anti-Kantian. I acknowledge but also resist his terminology and the often seductive securities of his architectonic, his penchant for systems built from the purifying rituals of critique.⁴ At the same time, in reading Kant's reception in detail, I find that many aspects of his theories remain potent for art and art history today. But the book is "about" Kant and art history and the visual arts only in a spatial sense. Responding to an oral version of parts of Chapter 5 in the fall of 1998, a colleague from a philosophy department was kind enough to remark that my paper was not really about Kant; she meant that I did not deal with philosophical issues in the Kant canon, which was true. But in exploring his propinquity to the visual

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arts and art history over two hundred years, I will argue for a greater and more complex interaction than the old disciplinary protocols allow. As I hope to show in my final chapter especially, Kant's image has not and should not be left behind in the visual arts and art history. Reciprocally, his migrations to and from these disciplines help us to understand and assess his philosophy.

The manipulations of Kant's name and ideas are paradigmatic of disciplinary interactions among art, its history, and philosophy, each of which adopts his "critical" method and arguments about disciplinary freedom and autonomy to keep itself pure and yet is systematically dependent on its neighbors. Fundamental to my work is the notion that each field recurrently uses another as a Derridean *supplement*, a *parergon* in a perpetual process of self-definition. The result is a spatial interaction that constantly places and realigns these disciplines in terms of one another, frequently and paradigmatically with Kant as the fulcrum point. As Timothy Lenoir suggests, "disciplines are political institutions that demarcate areas of academic territory, allocate privileges and responsibilities of expertise, and structure claims on resources" (1993, 82). It is in these terms that I emphasize how Kant has often been taken as the synecdochic personification of philosophy in his interactions with art history and the visual arts. I characterize these relations as analogous to those performed by a domestic boarder – a temporary and sometimes both involuntary and unwelcome lodger or visitor – whose presence "in" art and art history helps to define the shifting borders among these areas. Kant's legislative bo(a)rder work in the third *Critique* and *The Conflict of the Faculties* (1798) epitomizes the spatial and temporal complexity of these disciplinary interrelationships.

Arthur Danto writes portentously of the "essential division between philosophy and art" and the ultimate "disenfranchisement" of art at the hands of philosophy (1986, xv). By contrast, my examination of Kant's reception suggests that the borders among disciplines cannot adequately be imagined as straight lines or impenetrable boundaries with uncomplicated insides and outsides that can be associated with simple, hegemonic hierarchies. Philosophy, art, and art history are not as separate as Kant, Danto, and many others have wished them to be. How, then, can philosophy stand over art to disenfranchise it? A conventional geometrical model of disciplinarity where Kant is seen as either inside or outside a field needs to be rethought in terms of a more organic and less hierarchical scheme of what I will describe in detail below as "plasmatics," both in order to understand as fully as possible his re-

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markable effects in the visual arts and art history and to adumbrate a more widely applicable model of disciplinary description and change. Without plotting an a priori map of the territories I will examine or succumbing to the fantasy that I can, through critique, offer a self-transparent description of my motives and theoretical position, I want now to describe more fully the shape of the project.

Why (Not) Kant?

On the face of it – and the contours of Kant’s face and skull will become central to my argument in Chapter 5 – Kant is an unlikely thinker to influence the visual arts or the discipline of art history. The epigraph from Adorno at the beginning of this chapter invokes what has become a common refrain: Kant knew little about the arts, so how was he qualified to judge them? Adorno attempts to understand why Kant (and Hegel) have been instrumental in spite of this apparent handicap. But like many commentators before and after him, he assumes that Kant, as a philosopher, is somehow outside the orbit of the artist. Construed somewhat reductively, Adorno’s complaint about Kant is a version of the simplistic opposition of thinker and maker, idea and matter. Variations on this theme may be heard today, especially with regard to Greenberg’s famous invocation of Kant’s name. Even very sophisticated commentators surmise that Greenberg did not (or could not) understand Kant and thus misused him.⁵ Beneath this assertion often lies the prejudice that art and art criticism have no business with philosophy. As I show in greater detail in Chapter 2, Friedrich Schlegel was perhaps the first to censor Kant’s aesthetics because of its a priori method, for which Schlegel self-consciously substituted the (return to) empirical descriptions of style, a method that depended on knowledge of individual artists and works. Nietzsche applied this prohibition to disciplines. “Kant, like all philosophers,” he argued, “instead of envisaging the aesthetic problem from the point of view of the artist (creator), considered art and the beautiful purely from that of the ‘spectator’” (1989, §6). Many contemporary historians and theorists adopt a weaker or stronger version of this position when they discuss Kant’s relationship to the visual arts and, by extension, the disciplinary interactions among philosophy, the visual arts, and art history. For David Rodowick, “the object of Kant’s [third] *Critique* is not art per se. Art or the making of art has no place in Kant’s philosophy” (1994, 100). Terry Eagleton is equally outspoken: “With the birth of the aesthetic . . . the sphere of art itself

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begins to suffer something of the abstraction and formalization characteristic of modern theory in general” (1990, 2). As I have noted, Danto – whose sympathies for Nietzsche are evident – envisions the “disenfranchisement” of art by philosophy, a belief that is based on his assumption of an “essential” separation between these spheres. While we might have sympathy for Nietzsche’s and Danto’s attitude and grow justifiably impatient with Kant’s abstractions about the arts, the reception of Kant’s ideas nonetheless shows that those who would bar philosophy from art or vice versa are in effect behaving as good Kantians by drawing disciplinary boundaries in too rigid a fashion. Put more positively, perhaps in spite of himself, Kant helps us to understand that one need not be an artist to comment effectively on art, or a philosopher to theorize.⁶

Nietzsche’s assessment that Kant’s aesthetics acknowledges only the position of the spectator is correct but need not be taken as a weakness. If Kant’s subjectivist, “Copernican” turn in his critical philosophy, his experimental supposition “that objects must conform to our knowledge” (1967, Bxvii), establishes the mind’s capacities as constitutive of the only reality we can know – while positing the necessity of a noumenal thing-in-itself – it follows that his will always be an aesthetics of reception, of how the mind shapes its world. As he put it in the second epigraph to this chapter, how we receive nature (or art) occasions and determines the judgment of beauty.⁷ There are resources in this theory for our examination of Kant’s own reception in art and art history, especially when we recall that for him judgment is fundamentally social and public in nature. Kant made it clear that he was writing “about” art in the third *Critique* for transcendental and architectonic purposes only. “Since this inquiry into our power of taste . . . has a transcendental aim, rather than the aim to [help] form and cultivate taste,” he claimed in his preface, “I would like to think that it will be judged leniently as regards its deficiency for the latter purpose” (1987, 170). Because Kant was constantly inveighing against the epistemological uncertainty of any empirical or indeed historical procedure – whether in aesthetics, ethics, metaphysics, politics, or natural history – his reference to the “deficiency” of the *Critique of Judgment* must be read as heavily ironic. For him, the transcendental method was anything but deficient. As method and system, it needs the empirical – in this case, art – as a foil or supplement. Kant needs art in the third *Critique* just as reason and its discipline – philosophy – need other fields to judge and govern. Art is not cognitive; it always remains “other,” even though it exists for us only

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in judgment.⁸ The transcendental mission of Kantian reason is therefore fuelled, not distracted, by what Ted Cohen and Paul Guyer revealingly call “mere digressions on some specific issues raised by judgments about works of art” (1982, 4). Just as Kant’s epistemology is one of reception, so too we can productively focus on how his ideas about art were in turn received. John Zammito claims with ample justification that “Kant was primarily and professionally enmeshed in the *Aufklärung*’s epistemological project. He was not interested in fine art, in its system, in creativity or artistic taste” (1992, 21). Even if we accept this very restrictive view, however – one that takes Kant literally – artists, critics, and historians were and remain free to use Kant’s ideas and to trade on his considerable authority. And as a corrective to Zammito’s claims, we should recall that aesthetics is marginal within Anglo-American philosophy and, though this is changing, that the arts remain peripheral within aesthetics (Devereaux 1997).

The notorious conceptual and stylistic difficulty of Kant’s texts – recognized in his time as much as in our own – might also seem to exclude them from a significant role in less theoretically inclined fields. What Nietzsche memorably calls Kant’s “garrulousness due to a superabundant supply of conceptual formulations” (1974, §97) accurately enough describes the three *Critiques* and his other full-length works. The early and frequent appearance of popular restatements of Kant’s theories would seem to corroborate the intuition that his main works would be of little interest outside a circle of professional philosophers. Yet Friedrich Grillo wrote a lengthy text titled “Ueber Kunst nach Herrn Kant,” published in 1796 specifically “Für denkende Künstler, die Critik der Urteilkraft nicht lesen” (721)!⁹ His publication points to the acknowledged difficulties of Kant’s text, but also to the existence of a wider audience that sought to understand Kant. As a recent critic puts it, “perhaps only Goethe was a more unavoidable presence to his contemporaries than was the Kantian philosophy” (Simpson 1984, 3). In addition, Kant’s own writing was not always too difficult for nonspecialists, and the disciplinary specialization we take as a given was in any case only beginning to form when he wrote. His essays were frequently praised for their engaging style as well as their trenchancy. Reading the chapter titles from *Dreams of a spirit-seer elucidated by dreams of metaphysics* (1766) – “Preamble, which promises very little for the execution of the project,” “First Chapter: A Tangled Metaphysical Knot, Which Can Be Either Untied or Cut As One Pleases” (1992c, 305, 307) – one could be forgiven for thinking more of Derrida than of the Kant of the

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Critiques. As Goetschel argues in detail, both in his precritical and critical phases, Kant very much groomed himself as an “author” in order to survive economically and to speak publicly to a large educated class (Goetschel 1994). At the same time, his reputation for difficulty, which characterized the discipline he increasingly came to personify, had measurable cachet in his time, as “theory” does in the visual arts and art history now. Yet, then as now, artists, critics, and art historians did not necessarily wish to provide the systematic and often technical readings of Kant often demanded by self-identified philosophers. Their interested uses of Kant are not, therefore, inferior.

Patterns of reception tell us as much about Kant’s thought, and about the evolving relationships between the disciplines in question here, as do attempts to explicate a supposedly timeless, “correct” version of his ideas; but these unauthorized, “undisciplined” narratives take paths divergent from the “reconstructive” (Yovel 1980, 5) or “augmented analysis” (Henrich 1992, 41) of Kant’s texts commonly prescribed in philosophical circles. While these and other philosophical readings are essential to our understanding of Kant’s historical and theoretical import, we should also remember that most readers of Kant (and of other philosophers) receiving his ideas in places beyond the orbit of professional philosophy will select from his work what they need for their own purposes. To censure and correct this practice, Paul Crowther adopts the (Kantian) position of the superior philosopher, rectifying terminological misunderstandings so that he may conclude, for example, that the analytic/synthetic contrast employed by the critic Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler and others involved in the early definition of cubism “is entirely at odds with the underlying expressive dynamic” of this art movement (1987, 197). He cites Kahnweiler’s statement that “Picasso never, never spoke of Kant” as evidence of the inappropriateness of philosophical distinctions in an art context – Nietzsche’s complaint again. To balance these restrictive measures, we might recall that Kahnweiler and other artists and critics instrumental in the evolution of cubism *did* speak of Kant. The matter of whether they used Kant’s terms correctly or whether his terminology was apt to cubist art is (or should be) distinct from the question of why philosophy, and Kant’s especially, should be sought as the ground for their speculations. What the symbolist critic Albert Aurier wrote of Paul Gauguin’s free and creative relationship with Platonic and Neoplatonic texts is generally true of Kant’s reception: Gauguin’s is the “plastic interpretation of Platonism done by a savage genius.”¹⁰ I will argue more fully in Chapter 3 that “savage,”

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situated reception is, in the contexts I develop, more productive than the dream of pure philosophy.

Moments and Places of Discipline

In my discussion of the reasons why Kant's thought would seem unpromising as an influence outside the borders of philosophy, I have asserted the near equation of Kant's name with that discipline since the late eighteenth century. Kant/philosophy know little of the visual arts. Kant/philosophy are too difficult and technical to have important effects outside their own field. I will add detail to this picture in the "moments" that follow this introductory chapter. At this point, it is necessary to consider in some detail two questions that follow from the merging of philosopher and discipline. First, what is Kant's doctrine of the relationship between philosophy and other fields? Second, is his reception in art and art history more the result of general, disciplinary hierarchies or of a unique place for "Kant" among philosophers? Kant's philosophy is marked by a constant preoccupation with limits, boundaries, and prescriptions of proper disciplinary behavior. The urgent motivation of his critique of metaphysics to limit, in both a positive and a negative sense, what we can know characterizes his thinking generally. As Ernst Cassirer writes, Kant "regarded philosophical reason itself as nothing else than an original and radical faculty for the determination of limits" (1951, 276). Geoffrey Bennington has recently echoed this claim: "Kant's philosophy in general is . . . all about drawing frontiers and establishing the legality of territories" (1994, 261). Kant's constant use of terms such as "territory" and "domain" expresses spatially the essentially legislative, juridical nature of his thought. Ultimately, this border work is accomplished in his writings by the faculty of reason, defined in *The Conflict of the Faculties* (1798) as "the power to judge autonomously . . . freely (according to principles of thought in general)" (1992b, 43). Reason is "pure" because it proceeds transcendently from a priori self-investigation, critique. This procedure and its results entail both the territorial and patriarchal¹¹ imperatives of Kant's work: "a complete review of all the powers of reason," he claims in the first *Critique*, "and the conviction thereby obtained of the certainty of its claims to a certain territory . . . induces it to rest satisfied with a limited but undisputed patrimony" (A768/B796). Reason neither consults nor (directly) impinges upon the empirical. It is definitively "disinterested," which in Kant's mind guarantees its universal and necessary efficacy. In

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the first *Critique* as well as in the late *Conflict of the Faculties*, Kant speaks of reason in terms of the freedom of the liberal, judging subject,¹² of jurisdictions surveyed and governed. Kant refers to reason's dominance and priority within philosophy itself, to the relationship of philosophy to other disciplines and faculties, and finally to the interaction of the state, ruler, and philosopher. Adequate governance on any of these strictly parallel and analogous planes, Kant argues, needs a "lower" and truly independent judge, "one that, having no commands to give, is free to evaluate everything" (1992b, 27).

Reason and philosophy are "lower" in the hierarchy of the university faculties – the stated context of Kant's analysis – because they are not directly useful, practical powers, compared with the concerns of those he memorably deems the "businessmen or technicians of learning," the lawyers, doctors, and theologians who comprise the higher faculties in his scheme (1992b, 25). But precisely because philosophy is outside (or beyond) these domains and answerable to no authority but itself, it may, for Kant, "lay claim to any thinking, in order to test its truth" (1992b, 45). Reason – and its institutionalized discipline, philosophy¹³ – have the right, and indeed the duty, to "control" the other faculties and to do so in public (1992b, 45). This doctrine is initially difficult to square with Kant's insistence that reason operates through pure freedom. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, he claims that "reason depends on . . . freedom for its very existence. For reason has no dictatorial authority; its verdict is always simply the agreement of free citizens. . . ." (A739/B767). Thus Kant will often speak of the "peace" promised by reason in intellectual and state matters. Freedom is for him possible only by knowing and working within limits, the limits determined by reason's self-examination. "The whole concept of an external right," he argues, moving transcendently from a priori principles to practical effects, "is derived entirely from the concept of *freedom*. . . . *Right* is the restriction of each individual's freedom so that it harmonizes with the freedom of everyone," as he puts it in "Theory and Practice" ([1793] Kant 1991c, 73). In Kant's mind, then, other disciplines attain "freedom" only as subordinate parts, "subjects" of philosophy's reasoned system, which has the right of disciplinary surveillance, inspection, and coercion in the name of the tribunal of reason. "The agreement of free citizens" in the context of faculties and disciplines in a university, then, is the freedom to agree that philosophy and reason are correct and within their rights with regard to the limits and methodologies they prescribe. Kant associated this freedom with that enjoyed by the (male, middle- and higher-class)

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subjects in Prussia under Frederick II (“the Great”: king from 1740 to 1786), about whom he famously wrote, in “An Answer to the Question: ‘What Is Enlightenment?’” of 1784: “Only one ruler in the world says: *Argue* as much as you like and about whatever you like, *but obey!*” (Kant 1991a, 55).

The judgment of beauty examined in the third *Critique* partakes in a similar manner of both freedom and coercion. For Kant, the predicates beautiful and sublime apply, not to objects, but to the pleasure (or, in the case of the sublime, pain, followed by pleasure) taken in the form of judgment by the perceiving subject. This pleasure comes only from the free harmony of the subject’s mental faculties, a harmony that seems as if it were designed to accord with the observer’s abilities.¹⁴ But because this harmony is in Kant’s sense pure, it warrants universal approbation and even allows for coercion. In the judgment of the beautiful, Kant asserts, the subject “*demands* that [others] agree. He reproaches them if they judge differently, and denies that they have taste, which he nevertheless demands of them, as something they ought to have” (213, 56). Kant explains in his *Anthropology* (1798) that “taste is a faculty of *social* appraisal of external objects” (1963, 64), though strictly speaking we only behave as if we are judging the world of external objects and not our own responses. “Sociability with other men presupposes freedom,” he goes on to say, and the internal feeling of freedom is pleasure. All these components are then linked with reason: “the faculty of representing the universal is *reason*. The judgment of taste is, therefore, an esthetic judgment, as well as a judgment of reason, but conceived as a unity of both” (1963, 65).

In the aesthetic as in the political sphere, reason maintains its integrity for Kant by being “regulative” rather than “constitutive” of experience. Through self-critique, the theory goes, reason can present ideas or principles that can regulate but not directly inform what Kant calls the “practical” aspects of human activity. Reason constructs only the form of aesthetic judgment, for example, by presenting the regulative principle of purposiveness without purpose. A close analogue to this principle in the *Critique of Judgment* is the teleology of nature, without the enabling regulation of which scientific progress would not be possible, because nature could not be assumed to operate according to consistent and predictable laws. As I will argue more fully in Chapter 3, Kant’s insistence on the primacy of form – his undeniable “formalism” – is not an attempt to *prejudge* the content of an aesthetic judgment, to dictate taste a priori. Content is always and crucially present, but only in indi-

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vidual cases and regulated by form. Philosophy itself is for Kant ideally regulative, as he makes clear in the (little read) first chapter of the final section of the first *Critique*, which is called the “Discipline of Pure Reason” (Neiman 1994). Here we find the root of his thoughts about the conflict of the faculties in 1798: reason’s “proper duty is to prescribe a discipline for all other endeavours” (A710/B738). To this end, “a quite special negative legislation seems to be required, erecting a system of precautions and self-examination under the title of a *discipline*” (A711/B739). How might the practice and study of art be so disciplined? In a comment closely allied with the academic teaching of art in the neo-classical period, Kant argues that “taste, like the power of judgment in general, consists in disciplining (or training) genius” (1987, §50, 320/188). When reading Kant’s warnings about disciplinary purity, we should recall Clement Greenberg’s notorious doctrine of medium specificity and aesthetic progress through self-criticism and Michael Fried’s critique of the supposed “theatricality” in minimalism. “As soon as we allow two different callings to combine and run together,” Kant insisted, “we can form no clear notion of the characteristic that distinguishes each by itself” (1992b, 37). Purity is lost, and reason can no longer achieve its mandate to establish clear boundaries and jurisdictions. Kant’s immediate target in this passage is the encroachment of the theology faculty on the business of philosophy, but the point is easily generalized. Indeed, he supremely manifests what Barbara Stafford has deemed the Enlightenment’s characteristically “fearful disdain of mixtures” (1991, 211).

The irony is that Kant’s doctrine of philosophy’s right to assess and command other disciplines is constantly enacted and also inevitably contradicted in the history of his ideas’ reception. Philosophy may guarantee the autonomy of art and the aesthetic for Kant, but to do so it must “mix.” If we think of artists who used Kant’s theories to justify their work, for example, we are faced with just such a mixture, a word–image interaction. Is Barnett Newman’s invocation of the Kantian (and Burkean) sublime in his 1948 defense of abstraction “philosophy”; is it still “Kant”? For a Kantian model of purity that must insist on the separateness of art and philosophy, artist and philosopher, vexing issues arise, ones that can be seen to have helped to define modernism itself. As Stephen Melville and Bill Readings have suggested, “‘modernism’ names the break with [the *Ut pictura poesis*] tradition, the sundering of the rhetorical unity of the visual and textual in favour of the acknowledgment of a radical difference between the two modes” (1995, 9).¹⁵ To

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use Kant to justify a medium's necessary self-criticism and purification (as Greenberg does), or to underwrite a return to the discourse of the sublime (as Newman does), is to reveal the tension in the Kantian doctrine of border autonomy and disciplinary purity.

Although Kant thought that even pure reason had a history, his position on philosophy's regal role vis-à-vis the other disciplines sprang from historical contingencies more than he would have admitted. In his time, the authority of reason was widely challenged by several relativist or historicist theories, especially those of Johann Georg Hamann (1730–88) and Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803). “To the German mind at the end of the eighteenth century,” Frederick C. Beiser writes, “reason seemed to be heading towards the abyss” (1987, 46–47). Kant attempted to reverse its decline by putting it on an irrefragable footing. He also had political motivations for the articulation of a philosophy of right based upon the directives of reason instead of constantly shifting empirical exigencies. In the 1790s, Prussia was in conflict with France over Napoleon's territorial exploits across Europe. Only in 1795, with the Treaties of Basel, were these disputes suspended. Kant wrote *Perpetual Peace* (1795) as a protest over the inability of these parties and mankind generally to find lasting peace, a situation that could follow only from negotiations based on reason. As I argue in the next chapter, Kant's book was crucially important to German-speaking artists and critics in Rome at this time. *The Conflict of the Faculties* was composed and published in the wake of Kant's personal and bitter experience with state censorship. Frederick the Great's nephew Frederick William came to power in 1787. His minister of justice, Wöllner, was very much opposed to the perceived secular advances of the *Aufklärung*, especially in matters of religion, and took repressive measures against Kant's publications in this field. Because Kant's 1793 *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* intruded, according to some theologians, on their territory, he was banned from writing on religion and all professors in Königsberg were forbidden to teach his philosophy of religion. Kant's initial attempts to have the work published in spite of a hostile censor trace the path of what became his theory of disciplinary interaction. The first section of the book actually cleared censorship without difficulty and appeared in the April 1792 issue of the *Berliner Monatsschrift*. To publish the balance of the manuscript, Kant then solicited the opinion of the theological faculty at the university in Königsberg “as to whether the book invaded the territory of biblical theology or whether it came under the jurisdiction of the philosophical faculty” (Gregor, in Kant

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1992b, xiv), as he believed, and which – given his theory of disciplinary relationships discussed above – would allow the book’s approval by the censor because it behaved itself within the limits of philosophy “alone.” He also submitted the manuscript to the philosophy faculty at the University of Jena at this time for the same purpose. Their imprimatur was granted and signified that the book was a work of philosophy. *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* was published in 1793, after which Kant was forbidden to write further on religious themes.

In composing and seeing into print this text, Kant enacted one of his most cherished principles, the freedom of reason and philosophy to speak publicly, an imperative he derived from Cicero (Nussbaum 1997, 27–30). He did not want philosophy to become hegemonic or philosophers to become rulers. Though not without irony and a touch of bitterness, Kant believed that the pure philosopher should be at most the neutral adviser to society, even if this role went against common sense. In “Theory and Practice” he writes that “the private individual, . . . the statesman, and the man of the world or cosmopolitan . . . are united in attacking the academic, who works for them all, for their own good, on matters of theory . . .” (1991c, 63; italics removed). Despite these aspersions, he explicitly sought a position of resistance¹⁶ for philosophy as an “opposition party [on] the left side” of the government. “In this way,” he speculated,

it could well happen that the last would some day be first (the lower faculty would be the higher) – not, indeed, in authority, but in counselling the authority (the government). For the government may find the freedom of the philosophy faculty, and the increased insight gained from this freedom, a better means for achieving its ends than its own absolute power. (1992b, 59)

Here Kant places philosophy both on the left ideologically and at the ear of those in power politically. In *Perpetual Peace*, he also suggests that philosophy’s role as counsel to power should be “secret.” His reception in art and its history has not always been in the direction of resistance, but, as we shall see, Kant has been placed in ways that are indeed consistently secret, outside, and thus highly influential.

Kant’s name is virtually unmentioned in the historiography of art history: it is “dropped” in the sense of omitted. Kant is noted in art criticism and by artists but rarely discussed in any depth: his name is “dropped” mostly for the authority it carries.¹⁷ When his ideas are discussed in the context of the visual arts and their history, it is usually in terms of the philosophical or aesthetic “background” in which they

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figure. The notions of disciplinary autonomy and separateness that Kant did so much to establish are fundamental to the occlusion of his name in these fields. In the detailed compendium of writings about art, for example, Julius von Schlosser's *Die Kunstlitteratur*, we will not find Kant's name in the "Register" nor in the seemingly exhaustive list of German "Kunstlehre des 18 Jarhunderts" (Schlosser 1924, 585–87). We do not find Kant's name in Evert van der Grinten's *Enquiries into the History of Art-Historical Writing* (1952), nor in Heinrich Dilly's 1979 *Kunstgeschichte als Institution*, in which Hegel is certainly noted. In "The Literature of Art," E. H. Gombrich omits any reference to Kant or any other philosophical writer (1992). One reason for this pattern is articulated in perhaps the most widely consulted recent text on the historiography of art history, W. Eugene Kleinbauer's *Modern Perspectives in Western Art History* (1971): "The aesthete tries to learn the nature of art," he points out, "to evolve a (nonhistorical) theory of art, to define such terms as 'beauty,' 'aesthetic value,' 'truth,' and 'significance.' The modern art historian avoids all such metaphysical speculation. In much of the Western world, and especially in the United States, art history today is nonphilosophical" (3). While accurate enough for its time about the intentions and empirical motivations of most art historians, Kleinbauer's commentary is itself "metaphysical" in a Kantian way. Kleinbauer rigorously separates those fields having to do with art: aesthetics, art criticism, and art history are for him different and autonomous and must keep to their own proper territories. The remarkable success of Kantian disciplinary theory subtends Kleinbauer's confidence as well as that of a more recent commentator, James Elkins, when he claims in reaction against the so-called new art history that "within practice" in the discipline "all is well" without the importation of "theory," new or old (1988, 378). The pattern of territorial separation in philosophy is remarkably aligned with that in art history. With some notable exceptions – especially the work of Sarah Gibbons, Salim Kemal, and Rudolf Makkreel – those writing about Kant's aesthetics from "within" philosophy tend to ignore his interest in the arts in favor of his theoretical and structural arguments. Even two contemporary scholars who *have* added immeasurably to our knowledge of Kantian themes vis-à-vis the visual arts and art history – Michael Podro and David Summers – have done so from the subfield of art historiography, which Elkins (gloatingly and inaccurately) notes, has a "peripheral place" in the field (1988, 359).

The reception and influence of Kant's thought in art history and the

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visual arts conform remarkably to what Derrida has described as the “logic of the *parergon*” (1987, 73). A *parergon* for both Derrida and Kant is something outside the work proper, a supplement that nonetheless stands in close relation to what is deemed essential. In a trenchant reading of Kant’s procedures in the third *Critique*, Derrida demonstrates how Kant’s relationship to art and to the aesthetic as a branch of philosophy is structured according to the movement of the pure and impure, essential and inessential, inside and outside. Performing his principle that he does not and strictly cannot know “what is essential and what is accessory in a work” (1987, 63), Derrida emphasizes what appears to be a doubly unimportant aspect of Kant’s text, a place where he discusses art examples and their even less significant *parerga*. At the end of section 14 of the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant writes:

Even what we call *ornaments* (*parerga*), i.e., what does not belong to the whole presentation of the object as an intrinsic constituent, but [is] only an extrinsic addition, does indeed increase our taste’s liking, yet it too does so only by its form, as in the case of picture frames, or drapery on statues, or colonnades around magnificent buildings. (§14, 226)

With these confident examples, Kant claims to show what is properly definitive of a work of art and yet also to appreciate the merely supplemental value of that which lies adjacent but outside. Derrida cleverly and profoundly demonstrates that this process of limitation is neither neat nor innocent, that while “the whole analytic of aesthetic judgment forever assumes that one can distinguish rigorously between the intrinsic and the extrinsic” (1987, 63), this process is driven by an indissoluble though frequently reversible link between *ergon* and *parergon*. The delimitation of a work can only be successful through the positing and positioning of an outer limit, an “other,” a not-work. Whereas Kant sees this relation as a straightforward distinction between picture and frame, for example, Derrida argues that framing in general always occurs in a liminal space, one neither truly intrinsic or extrinsic. Timothy Lenoir has argued that a similar relationship is operative in disciplinary formation and interaction: “statements require the positioning of adjacent fields for their meaning,” he claims (1993, 74). Paul Duro expresses the point I will stress: “The paradox of Kantian *parergonality* is that the self-identity of art is what produces the division between inside and outside in the first place” (1996, 5). It is this insight – an enactment of the logic of the *parergon* – that I wish to extend to the context of disciplinary interrelations discussed above, a connection sanctioned in Derrida’s writ-

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ings. In “Tympan,” his introduction to the essays collected in *Margins of Philosophy*, Derrida claims that

Philosophy has always insisted upon this: thinking its other. Its other; that which limits it, and from which it derives its essence, its definition, its production. To think its other: does this amount solely to *relever* (*aufheben*) that from which it derives, to head the procession of its method only by passing the limit? Or indeed does the limit, obliquely, by surprise, always reserve one more blow for philosophical knowledge? (1982, x–xi)

The “others” in the framework I am developing here are of course art and its history. In the third *Critique*, Kant cannot work without these parerga; art history and the practicing visual arts have not – since the late eighteenth century – worked without Kant.

The logic of the parergon operates in Kant’s thought in his most minute examples, given in passing, as well as in the bold architectonic of the three *Critiques* that he describes in the opening sections of the *Critique of Judgment*. This logic delineates the all-important form of his philosophy in general. His examples of art objects and experiences of the beautiful and sublime must be kept incidental, almost secret, given their merely empirical status in his thought. Yet the faculty of judgment in the third *Critique* must also seek, immodestly and perhaps impossibly, to become a bridge between the realms of science and morality, because it trades necessarily with both the sensible and the intellectual. Judgment provides what is for Kant a necessary limit to both reason and materiality, each in terms of the other. The sublime – a seemingly disruptive, limitless category to which I will return in Chapter 4 – actually reinforces reason’s dominion in Kant’s philosophy. Just as the philosophy faculty ultimately stands above all others in judgment in *The Conflict of the Faculties*, so too aesthetics must in the third *Critique* command art in order to have it serve as a limit for philosophy in the direction of the sensible. Because of this perspective, Kant, as we have seen, adopts the critic’s position but never that of the artistic producer. As Zammito emphasizes, Kant always judges the artist “from outside, from the standpoint of – science” (1992, 142). Science in his final *Critique* is indeed Kant’s essential other, aesthetic’s parergon, as the inclusion of the “Critique of Teleological Judgment” as the second part of the book amply demonstrates. Equally important as an outside that figures the inside of art is Kant’s development of Rousseau’s moral imperative in his regulative analogy between the beautiful and the good.¹⁸

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For Kant, philosophy must be both separate from other disciplines and intimate with their subject matter in order “to control them and, in this way, be useful to them” (1992b, 45). This spatial and indeed political relationship obtains between faculties, as I have shown, but also within the faculty of philosophy itself, which for Kant must consist of “two departments: a department of *historical knowledge* . . . and a department of *pure rational knowledge*” (1992b, 45). Although Kant does not mention art history in the historical group, we know that Johann Dominicus Fiorillo (1748–1821), probably the first university-based art historian, who taught at Göttingen from 1781 until his death, was a member of the philosophy faculty.¹⁹ Given Kant’s manifest distrust of all historical pursuits and his characteristically approbative use of the term “pure,” the hierarchy within this faculty is clear. We can speculate, however, that in the third *Critique* as in his idealized university structure, art and art history must be present to allow philosophy its critical role of judging “all parts of human knowledge” (1992b, 45). These “others” are necessary formally, though their content is by definition parergonal. Can the same be said of philosophy from the perspective of art history and the visual arts? Is it for these fields a historically constant parergon or simply one among other defining limits? Looking to ancient Greek philosophy, it is plausible to argue with Stephen David Ross that “art was born in [the] struggle with philosophy, born from exclusion” (1996, 125). Kant makes this relationship systematic in his doctrine of disciplinary autonomy, and it lives on in the reception of his ideas up to the present. But this is not to claim that philosophy has been the only or even the most important “other” in these contexts.

The concern with disciplinarity in general is increasingly present in art history, as it is across the humanities.²⁰ Recently, art history has been portrayed as remiss in its belated acceptance of new methodologies pioneered in adjacent domains, particularly those defined as “literary.”²¹ Significant change in art history, this argument asserts in typically spatial terms that I have thematized here (and that I develop in the following section on plasmatics), is usually initiated from “outside” the discipline. As Norman Bryson – who, along with another former “outsider” from literary studies, Mieke Bal, has changed the practice of current art history profoundly – wrote in 1988: “There can be little doubt: the discipline of art history, having for so long lagged behind, having been among the humanities perhaps the slowest to develop and the last to hear of changes as these took place among even its closest neighbours, is now unmistakably beginning to alter.” He goes on to