



The art object does not embody a form of knowledge

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Introduction

This paper is concerned in particular with visual arts research (although I would like to think that the argument could be extended to art generally and certain kinds of design). Why, in the context of debates about visual arts research, has knowledge become such a hot topic? At least part of the answer can be found in the very idea of research, which is generally understood as an original investigation undertaken in order to gain knowledge and understanding. Given this definition, visual arts research must contribute to knowledge. However, the visual arts community places great significance on the art object and the art making process. Consequently, many visual artists wish to see a form of research in which art and art making are central: that is to say, the art making process is understood as a form of research and the art object as a form of knowledge. If one takes this position and accepts the common understanding of research then one must be able to explain how visual art contributes to knowledge.

In this paper, I start from the position that the proper goal of visual arts research is visual art. An alternative position is that the art making process yields knowledge that is independent of the actual art objects produced. However, this relegates the art object to that of a by-product of the knowledge acquisition process, and, in my view, places visual art making in the service of some other discipline. Notwithstanding the fact that valuable knowledge may be acquired in this way, from my standpoint it would be undesirable for this to become the dominant mode of arts research. Therefore, from my position the most interesting proposition to explore is the claim that the art object is a form of knowledge since it locates the art object as a central and fundamental component of the knowledge acquisition process.

Nevertheless, as you will see, in this paper I argue against this proposition. I will not claim that the visual art object cannot communicate knowledge – it can. Instead, I will argue that this knowledge is typically of a superficial nature and cannot account for the deep insights that art is usually thought to endow into emotions, human nature and relationships, and our place in the World, etc. In short, I aim to demonstrate that visual art is not, nor has it

ever been, primarily a form of knowledge communication; nor is it a servant of the knowledge acquisition enterprise.

I will claim that the objectives of the visual art are different to the objectives of the sciences, etc., and that art may lose sight of its own objectives by adopting predefined notions of research. Indeed, art needs to ensure that what it chooses to call research contributes to its interests first and foremost. Hence, my aim is not to diminish the significance of visual arts research as compared to scientific research, for example. Quite the contrary, I hope to show that art research performs an equally important but complementary function to that of the knowledge acquisition research domains.

As noted above, in the following I shall restrict my discussion to visual art and painting in particular, since I will only drawing on examples from this domain. Henceforth, I shall use the artworld, art and artwork to stand for the community of interest, the discipline and products of painting respectively.

Change and the context of change

Why has knowledge become a topic of so much discourse, particularly among artists and theoreticians in academe, and particularly in the UK? Indeed, outside of academe the issue would appear to raise little sense of urgency or heat. The nineteen nineties saw radical change in the UK Higher Education system. During this period the proportion of eighteen years olds undertaking degree education more than doubled whilst the unit of funding per student decreased. In 1992, the binary divide was removed, polytechnics became universities and the artworld found itself firmly embedded as an "equal" player in the academic world of the university. As a consequence, the artworld became entitled to research funding, distributed via the Research Assessment exercise (RAE). Not surprisingly perhaps, the word "research" has become part of the artist's vocabulary and the artworld has committed wholeheartedly to the competition for research funds provided by HEFCE and the Arts and Humanities Research Board.

Since 1992, the UK Higher Education Funding Councils has recognised some activities of artists as research (HEFCE, 1996: 5):

"Research" for the purposes of the RAE is to be understood as an original investigation undertaken in order to gain knowledge and understanding. It includes...the invention of ideas, images, performances and artefacts including design, where these lead to new or substantially improved insights;...

Research then is a knowledge derivation enterprise and, by definition, art is a part of that enterprise. Here then is the first reason for having an interest in knowledge. Research gains knowledge and although images and artefacts are acceptable outcomes it would appear that they are only relevant to research if their production leads to knowledge. In parallel with the changes noted above, there has been an enormous growth in the number of artists progressing on to Ph.D. programmes and the acquisition of new knowledge invariably figures as a central component in institutional regulations governing the Ph.D. award. So we have a second reason for being concerned about knowledge: to offer a Ph.D. a discipline needs to understand how its research contributes to knowledge, what kind of knowledge is produced and, where the creation of artefacts is central to the process, how these artefacts convey knowledge.

There is much anecdotal evidence of a steer toward research in academe, perhaps at the expense of art making (i.e., practice). If so, who is holding the harness? Is this the artworld driving forward in response to internal needs, or is the artworld being pulled along by largely external forces? There is a clear danger if the latter is the case: driven by external rather than internal imperatives it may lose sight of its own purposes. For example, let's assume for argument's sake that the removal of the binary divide has stimulated a desire in the artworld to be seen as equal to other academic disciplines. This being the case, undertaking research (perceived as the highest form of intellectual inquiry) and offering and obtaining doctorates (perceived as the highest form of academic qualification) might be seen as one way of achieving such equality. However, the artworld will need to show its research and its doctorate to be the same or equivalent to those of other disciplines. If research as defined in these other disciplines serves the purposes of those disciplines, and if the purposes of those disciplines are different to that of the artworld, unless great care is exercised the artworld might find itself drawn to an activity that fails to serve its purposes. This being the case, a shift to research in the arts could be extremely damaging as it has implications for academic competence, through its graduates the non-academic world, and through them the general health of the arts.

It can be argued that this danger has been recognised and is reflected in the plethora of recent literature debating the nature and role of art and design research (cf., Strandman, 1998; Buchanan et al., 1999; Korvenmaa, 1999; Biggs, 2000; Durling and Friedman, 2000; Pizzocaro, et al., 2000). Artists make things, this is what they do and value. Consequently, some artists and designers would like to place making and the products of making at the centre of their research, i.e., practice-based research. This notion that art making is a form of research and that the art produced enables knowledge to be extracted has been and continues to be hotly debated. In fact, to believe in making as knowledge derivation does not require one to believe in the artefact as a conveyor of knowledge. For example, it is not inconsistent to argue for the former idea while making no claims for the latter. However, this would relegate the art produced to that of a by-product of the knowledge derivation process. If we start from the position that art is the proper goal of arts research then knowledge derivation through art making would be research in some other discipline.

Taking art as the proper goal of arts research and gaining knowledge as the goal of research, we will need to consider whether art making can be seen as generating knowledge and how the art object might be understood as a knowledge transfer medium, or knowledge artefact. (By knowledge artefact I mean an artefact designed with the intention of communicating knowledge. However, I do not mean to imply that knowledge is stored in these artefacts.)

Knowledge and the experience of knowing

According to Dancy (1985: 23) the standard account defines knowledge as justified, true, belief: it holds that "a" knows that "p" if and only if

1. "p" is true,
2. "a" believes that "p",
3. "a"'s belief that "p" is justified.

For example, it's true that my partner's name is Deborah, I believe that her name is Deborah, and I'm justified in my belief on the basis of my having seen her birth and marriage certificates, heard her identify herself as Deborah, etc. In short, I know that my partner's name is Deborah.

The tripartite account of knowledge defines propositional knowledge; knowledge THAT "p" is true. It does not define knowledge by acquaintance as in "Stephen knows Walter" nor knowledge-how, e.g., how to drive a car, unless it can be reduced to knowledge-that.

As defined above, knowing concerns the individual, e.g., "a". Philosophically, there are problems with the tripartite definition of knowledge and indeed with the whole epistemological enterprise of determining what it is for a belief to be justified (Darcy, 1985:53). Consequently, the sceptical conclusion that we do not know because we cannot know has not been conclusively countered. In so far as it affects our personal and professional lives the philosophical debate is somewhat peripheral, except at times such as these when there seems to be a pressing need for definitions of knowledge.

In our everyday lives we have a sense of knowing and this is distinct from, for example, merely thinking or feeling that something is the case. For example, sitting typing this paper at 4.30pm, I know that there is a cup of tea on the table (I can see it). I think that I have the conference "information for contributors: full papers" document on my desk (I vaguely remember it being there earlier today, but I can't see it now). And I don't know where my partner is (I can't remember when she finishes work and so she could be at work, shopping or on her way home). I can distinguish many different mental states and "I know" seems appropriate to some mental states, whereas "I think" (unjustified belief), "I'm not sure", or "I don't know" seem appropriate responses to others. Asked to distinguish one state from the other, I might appeal intuitively to the tripartite definition of knowledge. I would claim to "know" if I hold a proposition to be true, believe it to be true, and can provide a justification for believing it to be true, as for the cup on my table. With the "instructions to authors", it was true they were on my desk (concealed by other documents), I didn't believe they were on my desk, although I had some justification for belief: in short I didn't trust my memory of past events.

Clearly, this sense of knowing is not knowing as defined above, because in many cases I will not be able to distinguish, at the moment, true belief from false belief. For example, had I been asked at 3.00pm today where my partner was, I would have said with confidence that she was at her place of work, but in fact she might have had to go to a meeting in another building. Nevertheless, when responding to the question my experience would have been that of knowing. Generally speaking, this knowing might better be described as justified belief. Hence, knowing makes sense to me as a cognitive experience and it is this sense of knowing that enables me to function in the world. By the same token, I would require any definition of knowledge or claim for a type of knowledge to be capable of being known in the sense above. In other words, it must be possible to specify a situation consistent with a definition of knowledge which when confronted would engender knowing in me.

Some would argue that knowledge only exists in the minds of humans (cf., Freidman, 2002): knowledge is not a stuff that resides in artefacts, such as books. Colloquially, we talk about books and other artefacts as repositories of knowledge implying that such artefacts store knowledge that may be merely extracted. But this cannot be the case if we accept that only humans can have knowledge. Instead, it is argued that information rather than knowledge is stored in artefacts and humans derive knowledge by extracting it. For

example, let's say on arrival at my local railway station I don't know the time of the next train to London. I walk to the timetable and find that the next train is in thirty minutes. I would now say that I know the time of the next train to London and would draw little distinction between being informed and knowing. The latter seems merely a restructuring of the former. In other cases, I might have to work harder to know. For example, arriving at Picadilly Circus underground station I find myself confronted by two exits one labelled Picadilly North and the other Picadilly South. I'm heading for Jermyn Street, which I know runs parallel for Picadilly, but I don't know whether it runs to the North or South side. I return to the local area map in the station foyer, locate Picadilly and then Jermyn Street, noting the latter's location relative to the former. Examination of the magnetic North indicator tells me that Jermyn Street runs to the South of Picadilly. I now know that I should leave the station by the Picadilly South exit. In either case, the knowledge is extracted by processing stored information. In this sense, we might claim that artefacts embody knowledge, which merely needs to be extracted. From this perspective, since art objects are artefacts it is possible that they can embody knowledge in this way.

Ways of knowing

We can know in at least two ways. First, we can know through direct experience. I can know, for example, that my watch is on my wrist. Second, I can come to know through communication (knowing can be the result of a transfer of knowledge from one individual or agency to another individual). For example, by inspecting a train timetable I can know that there is a train to London at 9.00am. In this instance, I have not acquired this knowledge via an exploratory, investigative interaction with the world, e.g., by testing a hypothesis. Rather I have used something (let's say stored information) passed to me from another via the artefact to extract knowledge. (Henceforth, I shall use the word derive to signify a process of knowing through discovering and extract to signify a process of knowing by "reading" from artefacts.)

Clearly, since knowledge artefacts at the very least communicate information this must involve representation as information is about something that is other than the actual information. Young (2001:24) defines a representation as follows:

R is a representation of an object O if and only if R is intended by a subject S to stand for O and an audience A (where A is not identical to S) can recognise that R stands for O.

A knowledge artefact is a special kind of representation meeting the following additional conditions: it is intended by a subject to inform an audience and an audience can recognise that it is intended to inform. Consider Figure 1, for example, which shows a fragment of the London Underground map. The map is an intentional representation of the London Underground system and I recognise what it stands for. Furthermore, the map is intended to inform and I recognise this intention. As far as I am concerned this artefact meets the conditions of being a knowledge artefact, i.e., an artefact designed to engender knowing. On a recent visit to London I used one of these maps in the foyer of St. Pancras underground station to establish which line to take for Oxford Circus. The map informed me that both St. Pancras and Oxford Circus are on the Victoria line. Given my situation and goals, I utilised this information to extract the knowledge that this was the line to take to achieve my goal: I knew which route to take. I say "knew" because I experienced this cognition as a certain fact about the World: there were no ifs, buts and maybes.

By way of contrast, consider Figure 2, which illustrates a fragment of an artwork created by Simon Patterson called the "Great Bear". Here I recognise the object as an artefact (an art object). However, the fact that it is an art object does not allow me to assume that it is intended to represent. Even if I take it to be a representation I am not sure what it represents - I can't read it (i.e., its meaning is not obvious to me). In fact, I can read the picture to a certain extent. I recognise the names of famous historical celebrities (i.e., I take the words to represent these figures). I recognise lines and by association with different conceptions of lines, including underground lines, I can see that the location of celebrities on lines implies some kind of relation between them (i.e., I take the lines to represent some kind of relation). However, when I examine the picture further I find it difficult to resolve what is represented (and hence what the elements of the picture mean). For example, the "circle" line seems to be concerned with philosophers, so perhaps each line represents a discipline or profession. Further examination reveals this to be a reasonable interpretation. However, what do the intersections between lines mean? The artist (art) line connects with the philosopher (philosophy) line. Does this mean that Raphael was also a philosopher (as distinct from the other artists depicted), that art and philosophy are related or both? Consequently, my experience of the picture is not one of being informed or of extracting knowledge, rather it is one of possibilities and multiple potential meanings.

It might be argued that this is simply a matter of lack familiarity and that it is possible to learn to read the Great Bear. Although the meaning of the London Underground map appears clear to me now there must have been a time when it wasn't, when I had to grapple with its meaning in much the same way as that described above in relation to the Great Bear. Of course, I simply don't know how I learnt to read the London Underground map. Maybe, I already understood a lot about the world of the Underground, about stations, lines, etc. Maybe, I discovered this world by using the Underground system and with this discovery the relation between the world and its representation. Whatever the case, it is highly likely that the map's meaning was not self-evident and that I had to learn how to relate representational components to the objects represented. Perhaps, but this assumes that Patterson intended the map to represent something specific and intended to inform us about something specific, and this does not appear to be the case. The artist has said of his work that, "the idea of the viewer finishing the work is important...meaning is always shifting, anyway you can't control the meaning of a work" (Pirman, 1997:21). It would appear that he had no intention of conveying information: hence, the work is not a knowledge artefact according to my definition.

Again, we might want to argue about what Patterson means by the viewer finishing the work. Perhaps by this he just means the process of learning to read the meaning of the picture. In other words, that the work has specific meaning but the viewer has the task of discovering that meaning. If this is what he means, isn't his view about meaning and the work surprising? I would find it so and for this reason believe that Patterson means that the viewer completes the work by postulating meanings. That is to say, since the work's creator does not intend it to convey any specific meaning, if a viewer arrives at specific meaning then it is he or she who has given it this meaning.

Earlier, I implied that arriving at an understanding of the intended meaning of informational elements is a prerequisite for extracting knowledge from a knowledge artefact. I have argued that the Great Bear is not a knowledge artefact because it was not intended to convey specific information and hence knowledge. However, in each case I have acknowledged that the viewer has to assign specific meaning to pictorial elements. This

being the case, and given that knowledge can be extracted from London Underground map, is it not reasonable to argue that an individual who is able to assign specific meaning to the pictorial elements of the Great Bear can then proceed to extract knowledge from it, and hence know?

The fact of something being a representation does not imply that what is proposed is knowledge (i.e., true, justified belief). Clearly, fictions are represented. I would argue that to take a representation as knowledge we have to recognise an intention to communicate knowledge: along with learning to read a representation we need to establish that it is intended to communicate knowledge. On the basis of what we have learn about Patterson's interests, it can be argued that anyone who takes the Great Bear to be a knowledge artefact has made an error of judgement. Such a person may acquire what they take to be knowledge but they would be mistaken in their belief that the artefact communicated true, justified belief.

From a personal perspective, my experience of the Great Bear is not one that I would describe as knowing. Rather, if asked I would say that I thought it was about this or that. In other words, my interpretation is a kind of hypothesis or possibility. I accept that we probably find ourselves in this position whenever confronted by an unfamiliar form of knowledge artefact (i.e., in the sense of an unfamiliar representation). But the purpose of the artefact is to communicate knowledge not to engender possibilities and any exploration involved on the part of the receiver in order to assign meaning is a means to this end. In the case of the Great Bear we have seen that the artist makes no claims for communicating knowledge and instead seems to imply that the purpose of the work is to stimulate the viewer to construct possible meanings. Indeed, the artist makes no claims for any specific meanings and hence no claims for their truth or otherwise. In effect, the artist provides perspectives or ways of viewing the world, which may or may not be true.

To illustrate, let's say that I take lines to mean disciplines and intersections to mean individuals who contributed to the intersecting disciplines. Given this interpretation, I might infer that that Raphael was an artist-philosopher, that Titian was an artist-scientist-magnate, and that Nietzsche was a philosopher-comedian. All of these inferences seem slightly odd to me, particularly that regarding Nietzsche. Nevertheless, given this perspective, I might read up on Nietzsche and discover that in his spare time he was a stand-up comic. In other words, I might discover that the perspective on Nietzsche that I registered as a consequence of assigning meaning to the Great Bear was true. However, as argued above, it would be wrong to take this as knowledge communicated to me via the representation. In effect, I would have assigned meanings that offered a perspective on Nietzsche and led to my obtaining knowledge new to me. In short, I'm suggesting that the function of the Great Bear is to offer hypotheses or possibilities rather than conclusions or certainties. Furthermore, I do not think this is peculiar to this work, rather I would argue that it characteristic of what is important about most, if not all, art objects. Additionally, I would argue that, generally speaking, art objects are not understood as knowledge artefacts.

Notwithstanding the above point, it is clearly possible to know something through pictures. Consider, for example, Millais's, "Return of the Dove to the Ark" painted in 1851. Inspecting the picture I can see that it depicts two young girls and a dove in a stable-like space. The girls stand side by side. The girl to the left of the picture leans back slightly, as

does the bird, which she holds in one hand, while holding a flower in her other hand which rests on her friend's shoulder, who in turn leans forward in the act of kissing the dove. I would claim that I know (i.e., my experience is that of knowing) these things, inter alia, about the objects depicted and their spatial arrangement. Assuming that the Millais intended to convey knowledge, do you think this is the knowledge he intended to convey? Clearly, there is more to the picture than this as indicated by the title. I'm inclined to the view that the girl holding the bird is using her arm to protect it from embrace of her friend while recognising her need to acknowledge the debt owed to the bird for bringing news of salvation. On the other hand, perhaps she is seeking to stay the embrace in order to pass the news on to the other occupants of the Ark. My point is that once I move beyond the physical objects represented to the meaning of their interaction and beyond that to the meanings implied by those meanings, then my experience is one of possibilities rather than certainties. I have ideas about what the picture is designed to communicate or engender in me, indeed I might want to hold to several different interpretations of the work, but I wouldn't claim to know what it is about, or to know anything as a result of viewing it. Even if I arrived at a certain interpretation of the picture that engendered knowing it seems to me that this knowledge is likely to be different to that intended by the artist. Once again, I would claim that the above discussion reflects a general feature of my experience of art objects. Although we may be able to talk of knowledge being conveyed by art this tends to be of a superficial nature that doesn't approach the deep insights that art is usually thought to endow into emotions, human nature and relationships, and our place in the World, inter alia. In short, knowledge does not seem to be the right term for the cognitive states experienced when viewing Millais's work, Figure 3, which are better described as possibilities, or potentialities.

Shared knowing

The ability to convey knowledge means that we can share it and pass it from generation to generation. Hence, we talk about "bodies of knowledge" associated with different disciplines, such as physics, geography, etc. These "bodies of knowledge" can be refined and elaborated over time. This is only possible if individuals can derive knowledge consistently from a knowledge artefact, i.e., if there is a high degree of agreement between the knowledge that different people read from it. If the knowledge received by each person through inspection of a knowledge artefact is different to that of every other person, and if these differences cannot be resolved then we can't talk about them having shared knowledge. This consistency of reading seems to be true of pictures such as the London Underground map. For example, I think that you will agree with me that three lines pass through Oxford Circus station: the Central, Bakerloo and Victoria lines. However, as implied above, consistency of interpretation is unlikely to be a characteristic of a group's experience of an art object. For example, take a few moments to write down what message you think is conveyed by Millais's, "The Return of the Dove to the Ark". Now look at the bottom of the paper where you will find what I think is the message of the painting: I suspect that our interpretations differ, probably quite markedly.

Indeed, I would argue that, in general, artists do not strive to control the meaning that a work of art can have (cf., Patterson's comments above). Few artists, to my knowledge, make claims for their work as having particular meaning and many appear to revel in the fact that a work can engender multiple and even inconsistent interpretations. The painter Eric Fischl has said of his work:

Well, I'm not interested in narrative in the strict sense, as a kind of linear progression. I try to create a narrative whose elements have no secure, ascribed meanings so that an effect

of greater pregnancy can be generated than in customary straightforward narrative. (Kuspit, 1987:38)

This being the case, it seems implausible to claim that the primary function of an art object is to communicate knowledge and of the art making process to create knowledge artefacts.

Justification

Darcy (1985) has noted that it is generally held that claims to knowledge demand justification. To what extent do we usually possess justification for our shared knowledge? For example, what grounds do any of us have for believing that the Oxford Circus underground station can be reached from St. Pancras by taking the Victoria line? I think we possess little real justification for believing this to be true, particularly when using the system for the first time. This, like a lot of knowledge, is taken on trust of authority. Through education we receive via our teachers what we accept as knowledge. Rarely, does this knowledge come with justification. For example, I learnt at school that Henry VIII had six wives, but I didn't see the marriage certificates. Nevertheless, if asked whether I know how many wives Henry had, my answer would be yes, six. In such instances it is not the justification that causes us to believe the truth of such statements it is our trust in the communicator of the knowledge, i.e., the educational system. In effect, we take it on trust that someone in the system has justified the knowledge we receive. Thus, in the case of the London Underground map we trust that the London Underground Authority has knowledge of the underground system and has established that the lines and stations, etc., are in reality as they are represented on the map. Hence, in many cases we get by with the statement component of knowledge without the justification of that statement.

However, sometimes we may feel that this trust cannot be taken for granted, leading us to question the status of a given piece of shared knowledge. To do this we must be able to gain access to its justification preserved somewhere in an artefact. In most disciplines, "bodies of knowledge" are systematically organised such that it is possible to do just this: it is possible to trace through a "body of knowledge" to authenticate a component of it for oneself. I cannot see that art artefacts are organised in this way. We might wish to claim that the art literature provides the structure that glues together the "knowledge" and "justification" embodied in art. However, the art literature is largely comprised of claims to knowledge of what artworks mean, etc., and justifications of those claims. In short, the art literature comprises a "body of knowledge" about art and artists produced by a separate knowledge acquisition discipline that takes these phenomena as matter for study. Therefore, I would argue, that there is little evidence to point to the existence of an organised, systematic "body of knowledge" in which art objects function as claims to knowledge and justification of those claims.

New Knowledge

Earlier I suggested that there is a difference between the knowledge and extraction and derivation. The former belongs to the realm of learning and education and the latter research. Gaining knowledge that is new to the world is a process of knowledge derivation. Claims to new knowledge require justification since they are not already articulated within the knowledge system, and hence cannot be taken on trust. Most of us have direct experience of this need. For example, we are likely to take a sceptical position when a friend or colleague makes a claim to new knowledge – we would expect that person to justify that claim.

Research is concerned with new knowledge and justification has to come with the knowledge claimed. If an artwork is to communicate new knowledge it must communicate both the knowledge claimed and the claim to the knowledge, i.e., its justification. It would appear that we have little difficulty in recognising claims to new knowledge when represented and justified by linguistic statements (i.e., propositions). Here the justification of new knowledge is understood as an argument.

It follows that if an art object is to function as a means of conveying new knowledge it must comprise both the new knowledge claimed and its justification. In what sense, then, can an artwork be understood as an argument? Young (2001: 70) has claims that no philosopher of art has argued that artworks provide arguments, and concludes that:

The suggestion that paintings, sculptures, works of architecture and musical composition provide arguments is, however, frankly incredible". (ibid.:71)

Young's conclusion follows from his beliefs that artworks (of all kinds) are essentially illustrative rather than semantic representations that cannot be used to make statements and therefore rational demonstrations. Personally, I find Young's argument against the propositional theory of art persuasive. In addition, the evidence of my own experience supports Young's conclusion. That is to say, I cannot personally ever recall viewing an artwork as an argument. More objectively, the notion does not appear to have featured prominently in the discourse on the role, nature and value of art. Therefore, I am drawn to the conclusion that the history of art cannot be understood as a process of building a "body of knowledge" through the acquisition of new knowledge because the "contributions" were not accompanied by justification.

Recapitulating

The question I have asked is whether art objects can be said to embody knowledge. First, I have suggested that although the epistemological enterprise remains unresolved we experience knowing as a distinct mental state where the thing that we know appears true, we believe it to be true and we can justify our belief. If an art object is to be accepted as a vehicle for engendering knowing, the least we should expect from engagement with a work of art is that it is accompanied by states of knowing.

I have suggested that there are two ways of knowing: we can come to know through active exploration of the World (i.e., by experience) or through messages conveyed to us by others (i.e., by communication). If art provides a way of knowing, then I take this knowing to arise by the latter means, i.e., communication.

I have argued that if we are to talk of something as communicating knowledge, or perhaps more literally engendering knowing, then we should expect to experience this knowing when reading it. In short, we should be able to say, "I know this or that as a result of viewing this artwork". I have suggested that artworks cannot be read, at least to the level where they are usually assumed to function, i.e., to endow deep insight into emotions, human nature and relationships, and our place in the World, etc. If this is the case, then individually we cannot "know" anything of deep significance through viewing an artwork. Therefore, I am claiming that knowing is not the primary or significant cognitive state when viewing artworks. If an individual cannot read an artwork then there is unlikely to be consistency of interpretation between individuals. Since this is a proposed prerequisite of shared knowing, it is unlikely that artworks function as a means of sharing knowledge. I

have argued that a feature of a "body of shared knowledge" is that it is organised such that an item of knowledge can be authenticated by recovering its justification, i.e., the "body of knowledge" comprises both knowledge and justification. I have argued that, at least for the great mass of artworks, such justification doesn't exist. Finally, I have argued that claims to new knowledge require both the knowledge claimed and its justification to be communicated. Again, this does not appear to be a general characteristic of artworks.

Additionally, I have argued that the artworld (including artists, critics and historians etc.) has not presented itself as if it were in the business of knowledge acquisition. Artists, the few that do write or talk in any great length about their work, tend not to make claims that a given work has specific meaning or that it is intended to communicate knowledge. Nor do they attempt to justify specificity meaning or knowledge. Similarly, writers on art rarely make claims for artworks as knowledge or attempt to organise the items of knowledge conveyed via artworks into a coherent whole. If the artworld was primarily concerned with knowledge and knowledge acquisition surely this would be clearly evident in its discourse. To insist that this is the proper function of the artworld is to accuse the community of longstanding and persistent incompetence.

This being the case, I am drawn to the conclusion that it is implausible to claim that the primary function of an art object is to communicate knowledge and of the art making process to create knowledge artefacts.

Ways of seeing and ways of being

You will notice that I have not elected to argue that artworks cannot communicate knowledge, nor have I argued that they cannot communicate justification of that knowledge. If someone set their mind to it, I'd guess that they could communicate knowledge together with justification pictorially (it is another matter whether it would be regarded as art). Rather, I'm advocating that art does not appear to have been concerned with this and if so then it must have been concerned with something else. A wholesale shift toward knowledge and knowledge acquisition is likely to be at the expense of arts longstanding, but perhaps, implicit value.

What significant role does art perform, if it is not about acquiring and communicating knowledge? Earlier, I noted that it has often been understood as providing deep insights into emotion, human nature and relationships, and our place in the World, etc. This view encompasses much of my appreciation of art, however I do not need to dwell on its accuracy or otherwise for the purposes of my discussion. Instead I wish to focus on cognitive status of these deep insights. Above, I suggested that, generally speaking, we experience these insights as possibilities rather than conclusions: as, "I think that" rather than "I know that". In this sense, artworks offer perspectives or ways of seeing. These perspectives may concern, for example, the way the World was, is, or might be. So far I have not discussed the ability of works of art to affect our perception, emotion and aesthetic sensibility. Because artworks have the potential to arouse such responses we are able to associate sensation and feelings with how things were, are, or might be. In this sense, artworks provide both ways of seeing and ways of being.

Through original investigation (i.e., research) we arrive at knowledge and understanding of the natural and artificial worlds, past and present. In contradistinction, art making brings into existence artefacts that have to be interpreted. Drawing on the natural and artificial worlds and imagination, the artists generates apprehensions (in the sense of objects that must be grasped by the senses and the intellect) which when grasped offer ways of seeing

and being. Whereas original investigation is concerned with acquiring knowledge of what is or was the case, art making is concerned with providing ways of seeing and ways of being in relation to what is, was, or might be.

The practical value of art

It may be argued that a fine line separates "reading" from interpretation and knowing from "seeing", that it to say conclusion from possibility. Nevertheless, these distinctions can be experienced and they have practical consequences. If I know something I am certain of the fit between this knowledge and the World, consequently I can apply this knowledge and understanding unquestioningly. Returning to my earlier example, having acquired knowledge of the line to take from St. Pancras to Oxford Circus, I did not entertain it as a possibility that Oxford Circus was on another line: I took myself to Oxford Circus. Knowledge then can be taken as a given which may be applied to familiar situations without testing. Clearly, life would be very burdensome if every moment was one in which possibilities had to be tested prior to each move.

However, we can only be sure of the application of our knowledge in familiar situations. In novel situations we may be forced to explore. In these circumstances we may draw on stored ways of seeing the World. Seeing the World in a particular way we can do in the World in that way (Schön, 1983). In short, I'm suggesting that art is one of those modes of experiencing that, rather than providing givens for dealing with situations, offers apprehensions that provide potential ways of seeing situations. Only experience will establish whether can be is, i.e., whether the apprehension fits the World. Furthermore, ways of seeing can be applied proactively. For example, an artwork might engender in me a way of seeing and feeling such that I register the latter as desirable. Consequently, I might chose to take this view on the World to see whether it has the perceived desirable consequences. From this perspective, art contributes to a mode of cognition that is crucial to our development and survival. The experience of artworks provides material for seeing and the experience of knowledge artefacts provides material for knowing. Each material contributes in its own way to our behaviour, the former dealing with the known world (in the sense of current beliefs) and the later the unfamiliar, or unknown World (in the sense of a situation that confounds one's current knowledge). One is not a substitute for the other and each needs to be garnered.

Arts research

So what does this all mean in terms of arts research? As noted earlier, HEFCE asserts that research is an original investigation undertaken in order to gain knowledge and understanding. Given the argument set out above, can making art be described as an original investigation and is this undertaken in order to gain knowledge and understanding? I have argued that art making is undertaken in order to create apprehensions (i.e., that is objects that must be grasped by the senses and the intellect) which when grasped offer ways of seeing the past, present and future, rather than knowledge of the way things were or are. Hence, in the context of making art I would define research as original creation undertaken in order to generate novel apprehension.

Why then should this definition be regarded as research, since it could be just as easily be said to describe 'everyday' art making. In reply I would argue that "researcher" intends to generate novel apprehensions (by novel I mean culturally novel, not just novel to the creator or individual observers of an artefact.) by undertaking original creation, and it is this that separates the researcher from the practitioner. Furthermore, the "researcher" would

seek to comply with accepted ways of generating apprehensions and to meet discipline determined norms of original creation.

In conclusion, I would propose that we should not attempt to justify the art object as a form of knowledge and should instead focus on defining the goals and norms of the activity that we choose to call arts research.

[I think Millias's "The Return of the Dove to the Ark" shows that we will be saved if we put our trust in God.]

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