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Seeing at Stake: The Anti-Aesthetic of Bio-Art

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Abstract

In this age of biotechnology the concepts of biology and life are being radically transformed. Biotechnology is not only a category of science, but is also closely related to social, economic, and cultural fields, which are often overshadowed by technical rationality. Bio-art draws on emerging biotechnologies to create works of art that remove technology from the context of using, accomplishing something similar to Duchamp's revolutionary art production models while providing a value-neutral platform to examine the current state of biotechnology. Foster's anti-aesthetic is here, not in a pejorative sense but rather marking an interdisciplinary practice that disrupts the order of appearances so that unconcealment (aletheia) and re-examining the problem of bio-art not only challenges the established aesthetic, but also challenges our conceptual paradigms of the life, the body, and the constitution of life. At this level, art also becomes an effective attempt to bridge the gap between science and the humanities.

Key Words

Bio-art, anti-aesthetic, technology criticism, difference

The medium of art is undergoing a fundamental change. Although the exodus from easel painting since *Fountain* (Marcel Duchamp, 1917) has led to the continuous dismantling and deconstruction of the technical component in the creation of contemporary art, the variety of art mediums has been constantly renewed and the boundaries of art have gradually become blurred. The influence of technology has weakened the essential character of art as a form of handicraft, and the special effects of spectacle and dazzling new materials can substitute for the meaning and value of creation. While this liberates art, it undoubtedly leaves the potential for a deluge of materials being crowded into a small work of art, which is clearly a crisis that arises from equating medium and material. In fact, as early as 1957 Marcel Duchamp, who pioneered a new way of transforming the medium of art, described the artist as a medium in a lecture at the University of Texas and discussed the process of interaction between the viewer and the work of art to produce meaning, which undoubtedly laid the groundwork for a new paradigm of contemporary art

creation. Postmodernism first killed the author, allowing the viewer-generated elaboration of all the meaning of the artwork; bio-art has further expanded generation, thus completely breaking the traditional narrative pattern of dichotomy between the subject and the object of art. This is also a reversal of the traditional aesthetic paradigm, which has been based on the image as the ontology of art.

1. Biotechnology as Rationalism

Even if to some extent we do not agree that the development of science and technology has "lead the progress" of social thought, and the argument about the relationship between them is a chicken and egg situation, it is undeniable that the epistemological transformation and the development of technology are indeed synchronized, and they are closely linked in the same epistemes.¹

Since Aristotle's first research into natural history,

the knowledge and understanding of life has been in a constant state of flux. For Aristotle, “life” was eternal and immutable, it came into being with the first mover, and will always be what it is. Thus, evolution was a heresy for this pioneer of natural science. Centuries later Horace, the forerunner of classicism, began his *Poetic Art* by asking: “If a painter chose to join a human head to the neck of a horse, and to spread feathers of many a hue over limbs picked up now here now there, so that what at the top is a lovely woman ends below in a black and ugly fish, could you, my friends, if favoured with a private view, refrain from laughing?”² Horace’s, or rather the classicists’, insistence on coherence and unity and their categorical condemnation of incongruity had a profound impact not only on art and literature but also on the entire classical epistemes, and this image from Horace—which seemed so absurd in its time—became an iconic image in surrealist painting, the epistemological rupture between which is self-evident. Part of this great rupture came from Darwin, whose *The Origin of Species* (1859) set off a dramatic rupture in the history of human thought which, while shaking up creationism, undoubtedly undermined at its roots the hierarchy of human beings at the top of the hierarchy, a presumed system that had been held in high regard for centuries. This discovery not only introduced a sense of continuity between humans and the family of life, but more importantly blurred the clear-cut boundaries between humans and other creatures. This was followed by Mendel’s experiments in genetics (1865) which brought about a groundbreaking paradigm shift in the understanding of life, pushing biology to the level of molecular biology, and thus the dystopian image that Horace satirized was readily called out in the laboratory.

However, it seems premature to consider these two great discoveries as the beginning of the biotechnology we are about to discuss. Rather, would it not be more appropriate to look back to the discovery of DNA in 1952, or to the first successful production of recombinant DNA in 1973? It was not until then that this field of science really left the realm of pure empiricism and observation, and it was then that human initiative came to the fore. The vast amount of intellectual data and knowledge derived from empirical observation determined substantive and conclusive knowledge, and at the same time the principles and mechanisms governing their interaction emerged. Since there are certain a priori assumptions that govern the entire research program at the outset of research and discovery, we can use this empirical knowledge in a systematic and organized manner to creatively obtain new products, derivatives, therapeutic technologies, etc. Today, in the post-pandemic era, we certainly have a more profound understanding of such biotechnology.

Throughout the history of bioscience it is easy to see that from the traditional, pre-modern “encyclopedic” understanding of biology to the recent application of biochemistry and genetics, biotechnology has been expanded and refined while also becoming more precise at the same time. People today are no longer amazed by common biotechnology, the products of traditional technologies that have occupied every stage of our entire diet, but genetic modification, the product of modern biotechnology, is more or less feared, rejected, or restricted by most countries. This fear is even infinitely magnified in the era of pandemics, when people cheer the success of vaccines while the same shadow of modern biotechnology floats around their origin.

This paradoxical ambivalence undoubtedly characterizes what Derrida calls *pharmakon*, which “is not a simple thing. However, it is also not a synthesis, not a perceptual or empirical compound (*suntheton*). It is indeed a prior medium in which general differences arise.”³ This medium is simultaneously both a poison and a cure: the “medicine” of genetic engineering, while greatly reducing the probability of congenital diseases, also generates the extremist ideology of so-called “eugenics”. While the “medicine” of genetic modification has dramatically increased agricultural crop yields and alleviated global starvation, it also has a variety of hidden dangers that are not yet known. The “medicine” of reproduction and cloning raises new legal and ethical problems that are difficult to resolve in the face of the diversity of human reproductive methods. This paradox is best described as a *pharmakon*: “If not prescribed correctly (and not just in the wrong dosage), it can be toxic to the patient and even produce what is known in pharmaceutical science as a ‘paradoxical reaction’, that is, the drug exerts an effect opposite to the one it is supposed to.”⁴ This pharmacological paradox also applies to social organizations such as institutions and groups which always employ political technologies, governance techniques, and management. In this sense, Foucault places political techniques at the core of his ideology of biopolitics, and this idea can be traced back even to Max Weber.

Obviously, it is impossible and unacceptable to think the problems caused by biotechnology exist only in the area of scientific research or industrial production; while affecting the health of the individual, they also affect the construction of social relations as a whole. Human reproduction technologies, which are in the laboratory or a theoretical state and have not yet been swallowed up by capital, will bring future humans into the world through new methods that include oocyte fusion (the fusion of two eggs from different females), haploidization (the transformation of the nucleus of a male or female

somatic cell into a haploid—i.e., a cell containing cells containing a single chromosome set—to give them the function of ordinary germ cells), and human cloning. However, once the novelty and unfamiliarity fades and social curiosity wanes, these techniques will eventually be industrialized and become routinely used, just like in vitro fertilization and embryo transfer, as long as they are safe in operation. They can even remove barriers between species and play a direct role in evolution, all of which will undoubtedly create new lives and unprecedented legal issues, and the new products created by these technologies will redefine the market. Biotechnology not only affects these obvious areas but may play an even greater role in less obvious places. Medical discourse is repeatedly mentioned in Foucault’s discussion. In modern society, medical discourse distinguishes whether a person is normal or not, and the discipline and normalization of each person in society is entirely attached to the medical-ethical discourse through which the normal person enters into biopolitics and becomes part of the operation of this discourse dispositif.

The production of modern knowledge, especially medical knowledge and biological science, has largely advanced this discourse of distinction, whether it is the attempt to solve the last obstacle to the biological nature of the human body through the study of the white-crowned sparrow (which attempts to abolish the sleep mechanism), or the attempt to accomplish the construction of behavioral habits and thoughts through hormonal regulation. Such purposive biotechnological developments are symptomatic of logocentrism, a discourse pattern that is also the original substrate of biopolitics. In this way society, as the “Big Other”, will have complete control over the individual through biotechnology, from cognitive to physiological structures. Like the concepts that directly affect personal identity, this has undoubtedly changed the cultural paradigm. The reductive dichotomy between nature and culture—once the norm for critics, essayists, historians and philosophers throughout the Enlightenment—is no longer sustainable on its foundation.

2. From Technology to Art

“Molecular biology, nanotechnology, and pervasive computing are not only products of commercial research and political determinism, but are also associated with scientific idealism and, as I argue, can also be servants of artistic idealism. Technology is first and foremost a response to human desire; our desire to escape the constraints of the body, to extend the sphere of the mind,

to communicate across the planets, finds its response in computation and biotechnology.”⁵

As Ascott argues, the teleological essence of technology makes itself manifest in the constant satisfaction of desire and transhumanism, which emerged at the beginning of science, is now growing with modern technology and has further developed into many different schools of thought. The overwhelming modernization has permeated every corner of social life and has made logocentrism the cornerstone of modern society. The modern philosophy that there is a definite and objective basis for scientific knowledge was soon challenged by the postmodernists. Derrida has asserted that “there is no nature, only effects of nature: denaturation or naturalization. Nature, the meaning of nature, is reconstituted after the fact on the basis of a simulacrum that it is thought to cause.”⁶ For postmodernists, this definitive basis of intellectualism is the product of metaphysics reinforced.

It is worth noting that the bio-art we are discussing at the present time did not emerge from the modernist milieu of the mid-twentieth century but was born precisely from the postmodern shakeup of formerly certain and unmistakable perceptions, a questioning that not only dissolved the epistemological position of foundationalism but also brought into question the original ways of producing art and culture. The biological artist Eduardo Kac has asserted that he sees biological art as something new, something we do not get from Duchamp and Picasso, something we do not get from anyone, but when it comes to bio-art as postmodern art, we have to turn back first to Duchamp, who cast a long shadow over contemporary art practice, a shadow that has acquired a difference with each new generation of artists.

Just as *Fountain* strips away the commodity and thus gives a new ideology to the urinal, the creators of bio-art adopt unconventional materials, tools, and ideas. By stripping away the practical functions of bioscience, although these ideas are inspired by the world of science and technology, artists revitalize the questions raised by Duchamp and give them a postmodern context. But the first thing that needs to be clearly defined is that, as a new artistic practice or movement worthy of discussion, there must be something that distinguishes it from other art, and here bio-art brings fresh blood in terms of medium, expression and concept: a concern with the basic processes of life, with genetics, and even the creation of new species. Most easily confused with this are artworks that use traditional or digital media to deal with biologically related subjects, such as paintings depicting chromosomes, or computer simulations of DNA data or models, etc. While the boundary between

biology and digital simulation may be blurred in the future by technologies such as brain machines, the core subjects of biological art are ontogeny (the development of the organism itself) and phylogeny (the evolution of the species) and are open to the whole range of life processes and entities, from DNA and the smallest viruses to the largest organisms and even the evolutionary spectrum of species. This further distinguishes biological art from conceptual art. Conceptual art emphasizes the use of ideas, language, and events to convey the author's conceptual consciousness, and biological art emphasizes dialogue and relationships. Nature, which for Kant was a "thing-in-itself (Ding an sich)", no longer exists in modern times with the intervention of biotechnology; it is no longer an agnostic object, nor is it a dichotomy between subject and object, but is transformed into a dialogue between subjects, such as cross-pollination, cuttings, cellular interaction, inter-species communication; and the material transformation or formal transformation of subjects, such as the shape of a frog, the color of a flower, the aging of a creature, the pattern of a butterfly, etc.

Bio-art, as a new direction in contemporary art, is no longer limited to making images or mimesis, and technology no longer appears as a mere tool; the artist Kac attributes the creation of bio-art to three paths: 1) guiding biomass materials to form specific shapes or behaviors, 2) unusual or disruptive use of biotechnology tools and processes, and 3) the invention or modification of organisms beyond the products of evolution or subversive use of biotechnological tools and processes. The first two paths are more popular in the contemporary art scene, but the third path indeed deepens Duchamp's rebellion further in the ontological sense, fundamentally subverting artistic production and the course of art history's internal logic. Technology is not degraded or dissolved here, but gains even greater elevation: bio-art may make marginal, naturally occurring mutations the basis of material for some kind of scientific research, thus undermining its evolutionary, natural selectionist position, and it may provoke somatic or germline changes within organisms or simply use their properties in unexpected ways. Theoretically, many works of biological art could take their place in Earth's biological genealogy catalog, as long as they are capable of copying or reproduction, and at some point, in the future, the atomic synthesis of life will become possible and new forms of life could be created by virtue of atoms as well. Bio-art should not be seen as limited to today's understanding and technology, but rather as a general principle of life-based creation. Bio-art uses the characteristics of life and its materials to break out

of the empirical world in which science is situated. It transforms organisms under the classification of existing species or invents life with new characteristics. If *Fountain* reveals the beauty of artificially designed products by stripping them of their social context, then this creation of new life is an evolutionary strategy that directly challenges the mainstream concept of aesthetics, and the accompanying spectacle further breaks the current spectacle created by the accumulation of simulacra and simulations.

The use of living materials in the creation of bio-art blurs the otherwise clear line of demarcation between art and science, allowing "bio-art to stand in two worlds at once".⁷ Oron Catts also argues that "Bio-art provides direct and intuitive access to science and technology. It is a discipline that uses both art and life sciences." Thus, in a sense, bio-artists can also make their own unique contribution to science: "Bio-artists can allow scientists to revisit their work from a completely different perspective, while also potentially stirring intellectual materials in a new way or applying them in a different way."⁸

It seems that this way could also complete the disenchantment with modern biotechnology. Instead of examining the products of biotechnology in cold laboratories and under pale lamplight, they may not necessarily be shrouded in the aura of Beshaba like in Hollywood disaster films but may appear as creatures more in line with human aesthetic demands. However, when artists manipulate life freely, or use biotechnology exclusively for their own creative preferences, without regard for the so-called functionality in the evolutionary sense, the sacredness of life itself may be destroyed and become a toy that can be trampled on. This undoubtedly places a higher ethical demand on biological art; even in the art forms of traditional media there is still no shortage of destruction of the very essence of life, not to mention biological art which is an art form that acts directly on life itself. This ethical discussion, on the other hand, needs to be explored at the aesthetic level.

3. The Art of Anti-Aesthetic

Although the creation of art has long since drawn the prologue of the postmodern era, the greatest difference between art and other cultures lies in the fact that "skill has ingenuity and clumsiness, art has no antiquity", so that even today the understanding of art and beauty is still not completely out of Kant's influence. The Oxford English Dictionary defines art as "the application of skill to the arts of imitation and design, painting, engraving, sculpture, architecture; the cultivation of

these in its principles, practice, and results; the skilful production of the beautiful in visible forms.”⁹ This definition largely follows Kant’s view. In his *Critique of Judgment*, Kant describes the aesthetic experience as an experience of the beautiful or sublime, a pleasure that is “unrelated to interest.” In this view aesthetic judgment, though subjective, is a universally valid law because of the human capacity for a priori synthesis of reason. Art is for all, so it is not a social construct. The autonomy of art liberates art from instrumental use and emphasizes its nonutilitarian orientation. However, this Kantian understanding of art and aesthetic judgment can hardly be generalized to artworks since the postmodern era. The aesthetic principle of disinterest and the demand for artistic innovation have together driven art to become more and more refined, but more and more distant from people themselves. Artists are slowly moving towards an increasingly free and thin atmosphere, a long journey that will take them out of the living fabric of society and into the no-man’s land of aesthetics in the far north. They will search in vain for food in this barren land and eventually become like the monstrous Catoblepas in Flaubert’s *The Temptation of St. Anthony*, who unwittingly begins to devour his own hands and feet.

No wonder that Nietzsche’s prophecy of modern art and culture in *On the Genealogy of Morals*. And in *The Theatre and its Double*, Antonin Artaud likewise describes this similar dying state: “It was our Western idea of art and the profits we sought to derive from it that made us lose true culture... Unlike our idea of art, which is inert and disinterested, a genuine culture conceives of art as something magical and violently egoistical, that is, self-interested.”¹⁰

Hal Foster, an art theorist, introduced the concept of anti-aesthetic in his influential collection of essays on postmodern culture to question the original genealogy of aesthetics: “‘Anti-aesthetic’ also signals that the very notion of the aesthetic, its network of ideas, is in question here: the idea that aesthetic experience exists apart, without ‘purpose’, all but beyond history, or that art can now effect a world at once (inter) subjective, concrete and universal—a symbolic totality”.¹¹ The authors of the essays in this book discuss the symptoms of modernity and the cultural structures of postmodernity from different perspectives and positions. But like Foster these critics are unanimous in their determination that we can never be apart from representation, or more specifically, never apart from strategies of presentation. Although it is called anti-aesthetic, it is not a complete rejection of the aesthetic framework, but a redefinition on top of the negation, so that this anti-aesthetic is “not a sign of modern nihilism...but a critique that goes out of its way to deconstruct the order of appearances in order

to re-inscribe it”.

This deconstructive critique was presented in the 1988 issue of *Artforum* with a series of questions: “Why are there not yet blue dogs with red spots? Why are there not yet luminous horses galloping across the phosphorescent meadows at night? Why is animal husbandry still primarily a matter of economy and not in the realm of aesthetics?” It seems to be a modern remake of the scene described by Horace, but at a more profound level, it is a deconstructive challenge to the existing order of appearances because the question here is directed at the real thing. This straightforward exploration of actuality is undoubtedly the most violent attack on Kant’s “no stake”, and reveals the fundamental overturning of the traditional aesthetic framework by biological art. In delineating the boundaries of aesthetics in the form of negation, Kant opens the door for creatures as things in themselves: the beauty of natural things need not be appreciated with reference to any system of negation, just as we do not consider whether a pumpkin is more successful than another pumpkin, or whether a flower is more original than another flower. It undoubtedly isolates biological art directly from the traditional realm of aesthetics because until then we would not have considered the otherness of formal principles behind the products of nature, but this otherness constitutes the most immediate impact when the viewer is confronted with the work of Li Shan, Edward Steichen, or Kac.

Due to developments in biotechnology and the constant overwriting of definitions of biology and life, contemporary art’s judging system can no longer automatically categorize works of bio-art that do not conform to the norm directly into the traditional grotesque category. In the 2011 exhibition for the first decade of the SymbioticA project, although the works composed of living or semi-living tissues were uncomfortable, disturbing, and even disgusting to viewers who were still unfamiliar with bio-art, it is still impossible to define these works of art—which have escaped from the scope of traditional art—in terms of grotesque. The distortions and incongruities that were considered a state of exception in classicism are the norm in the images of modern art, and the corresponding installations and performances can be fully integrated into mainstream art practice over the years which clearly provide a precedent for the evaluation of bio-art. In addition, bio-art brings an unprecedented quality to art—that is invisibility. Many new forms of life may be genetically heterogeneous, but they look and act like members of other species, becoming new individuals who are invisible. The classical epistemological category of grotesqueness can only function in opposition to the

assumed typicality and, to some extent, to the ambiguous property of beauty. It is a structural property constructed through multiple factors such as social conventions, cultural ideas, geographic location, and changes in historical periods. An idealized concept of beauty inherited from Greco-Roman art, consolidated by classicism, became the golden rule of aesthetics and remained influential into the twentieth century. As Foucault argues, the history of Western art and culture can be seen as a vehicle for the normative expression of human and animal biology. In other words, while the traditional representation of atypical forms of life serves to reinforce the distinction between the normal and the deviant, in biological art this representation serves to reveal and emphasize the existence of continuity among all life.

Anti-aesthetic as a postmodernist idea is also a manifestation of the current cultural position, and a manifestation of the opening of aesthetics to practice. Bio-art, as the representative of anti-aesthetic, is practical in nature, and is an interdisciplinary practice that also accomplishes a reversal of the aesthetic privilege of traditional art. The aesthetic privilege is based on the discipline of an extremely sophisticated aesthetic judgment where art loses its vitality when it enters this perfect system of appreciation, while the connoisseurs who have this privilege (thanks to their education) become more and more indifferent to being. As Nietzsche predicted, art reaches the limits of its destiny at the “shortest moment of the noonday shadow”, and contemporary art has long since left the horizon of aesthetic neutrality to gain self-recognition within the golden realm of the will to power. The naming of art has thus shifted from an aesthetic of no interest to a concern for existence, while the infinite growth of biological art reinforces the value of life. Moreover, the living organism used in bio-art further reinforces the notion of life, where the transcendence of traditional aesthetics is completely stripped away: it is no longer an object to be viewed but in a constant relationship with everything around it, and any subtle change may be infinitely magnified in the work of bio-art. It also places greater demands on the viewer, as one is asked to watch the progressive process of the growth and decay of an organism rather than a fixed moment. In addition, the viewer will experience the tension between life and death associated with bio-art, a sense of control and immortality associated with life, and also a sense of vulnerability and inevitability associated with death.

This interaction with society and culture will exceed the author’s expectations and the butterfly effect of the work will have ethical and legal implications, all of which are closely related to the environment, culture, and

time. This can be seen by comparing Kac’s fluorescent rabbit *Alba* (2000) with Stelarc’s *Extra Ear* (2007). The biotechnologies and genetic technologies involved in bio-art place it in a challenging and potentially dangerous field, which not only stimulates public reflection on the dangers of biotechnology, the glorification of biological transformation by consumer society, and the changing social environment, but also leads the viewer to rethink the increasingly philosophically blurred areas of the boundaries of life and death and anthropocentrism/non-anthropocentrism. It is exactly this anti-aesthetic characteristic of bio-art that makes it no longer focus on pleasure as the core of creation and its purpose, but to emphasize the Dasein itself in Heidegger’s sense and to bring the viewer back to being (sein) itself through this emphasis and to the unconcealed for being. Through the transformation from nothing at stake to something at stake, bio-art has developed its own moral law within itself. Of course, like the moral law in Kant’s mind, this law is not as immediate effect as any legal and is absolutely mandatory. It is not difficult to surmise that bio-art has been kept in a permanent state of being seduced by the sway of the system, commercial consciousness, and the focus of the media, with the urge to transgress always lurking in it and also preserving a few latent and dangerous forces. This ambiguity and openness points in a negative way to the other side of aesthetics.

4. Biology as Art and Art as Biology

As discussed earlier, there is an aesthetic turn in this century “from the appearance of art, traditionally concerned with the static order of things, to the phantasmagoria of this art, concerned with dynamic relations and processes of formation.” Being is increasingly seen as an ontology of aesthetics, and no longer as a kind of morality or religion, as Nietzsche claimed. The establishment of an anti-aesthetic pushes the principle of technical intellect to become central to art in its development, which furthermore makes all forms of perceptual consciousness an open field where the biological, living being directly transforms its identity into an artwork. While this is a radical transformation of the medium, it also completes the transformation from biology (creature) as art to art as biology (creature). Although it seems to be a semantic inversion, it is in fact a shift from a purely aesthetic to the philosophical-sociological.

From cyborgs to biology to ethical issues, bio-art seems to be ambiguous no matter from which per-

spective one examines it. Genetic art is ambiguous from beginning to end. On the one hand, it becomes a technical extension of what Giorgio Agamben called the naked peculiarities of life, still undefined and unclassified species, rather than a taxonomically controlled, culturally, ideologically, ethically bound life. On the other hand, it poses a profound challenge to the Darwinian theory of evolution and to the morality of evolutionism, which is no longer motivated by purpose, but is subordinated to human subjectivity and can even be manipulated to some extent. It can thus be seen that in bio-art biotechnology itself has a rather complex philosophical connotation, rather than relying exclusively on the infusion of the creator's conception. Thus, it is clearly a misunderstanding to confine the discussion of bio-art to the field of art aesthetics.

As discussed in the previous section on the ontology of biotechnology, the emergence and development of biotechnology has undoubtedly challenged existing epistemologies. In the context of the era of mechanical and digital reproduction, the symbolic images reproduced and multiplied by analogs and simulations have transformed the world we live in into a surreal world of spectacle. Social experience is no longer acquired through the real but consists of symbols and simulacra. Bio-art somehow constitutes a break with this society of spectacle. The viewer returns to existence itself to visualize existence, and with the continuous development of biotechnology its products have penetrated every aspect of daily life, so from the perspective of culture in this "age of biology" biotechnology will fundamentally change the way human culture is produced and disseminated.

The creation of something real may be traced back to ancient Greece, where Plato explains the original meaning of the word production in *The Symposium*: "Anything that causes something to change from non-existence to existence can be called poetry (production)."¹² At this time, artwork and objects were not yet separated, technology and art were unified. In the first industrial revolution in the second half of the eighteenth century, with the development of modern technology as well as the expansion and deepening of the division of labor, "the mode of presence of the things produced by man becomes double: on the one hand, there are the things that enter into presence according to the statute of aesthetics, that is, the works of art, and on the other hand there are those that come into being by way of σέχνη, that is, products in the strict sense."¹³

Since the dawn of aesthetics, the special status that works of art enjoy among things whose cause and origin are not within themselves has been equated with originality (or authenticity). It is in this dualistic

separation that Agamben sees the gift of the ready-made entering the realm of art, thus "inexplicably bringing with it the potential for a certain aesthetic authenticity."¹⁴ It is through the medium of ready-made art that modern art has changed from the original finished state (ἐνέργεια), in which the author grasps the complete idea of the work and the viewer passively accepts it, to the possible state (δύναμις) in which it can never grasp its own subterranean existence in its own purpose and form. This possible state also foreshadows Barthes's death of the author, and the work becomes an infinitely sliding canon.

However, in a way biological art constitutes a transcendence of Agamben's thesis. Unlike ready-made art and pop art, bio-art does not possess a relatively stable shape but is in a state of fluctuation as a whole, and therefore cannot be fully summarized by the term possible state alone, but should be replaced by the term generative state. If the conditions are appropriate, the work of bio-art will remain in a permanent state of generation. In this state, the process of creating art does indeed complete the transformation to Duchamp's conception. The artist becomes the medium in the true sense of the word, which at its most fundamental level overturns the essence of art, and the work becomes a subject that communicates directly with the viewer. Bio-art, which "stands in two worlds at the same time", escapes from the aesthetic enjoyment of artworks through anti-aesthetic, and also moves away from the purposeful production and consumption cycle of science and technology products. While being in the process of amorphous generation, it is constantly in a relationship with the whole environment around it. This double attribute, which is similar to a state of paradox, fundamentally allows it to break away from the existing framework of cultural production, and this gap allows the relationship between the two to be inverted, thus pushing the qualities of biology straight to art and becoming a most radical return to poetry (production). In this return, bio-art demonstrates the unlimited variety of possible ways of seeing, the variety of the possibilities of experience, and the infinite diversity of art, opening up the true essence of art and unifying once again the long-divided theory and practice, spirit and nature.

Bio-art as poetry is in a way a negative existence, a shadow of existence, and therefore the most urgent critique of our time in the awareness of the alienated nature of the work of art. The division of human productive activity, the distinction between mental and physical labor, is not overcome here but taken to its extreme. However, this self-suppression of the privileged status of the work of art now brings together the split apple of human productive activity, and although the two

halves remain irreconcilably opposed, from the biological arts we may be able to emerge from the swamp of aesthetics and science and technology and fundamentally recover the poetic presence of human beings on Earth.

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利害攸關的觀看——生物藝術的反美學

諾敏

摘要：在生物技術的時代，生物、生命本身的概念正在發生根本性的變化。生物技術不僅是一個科學的範疇，也與社會、經濟和文化等領域關聯密切，這卻時常為技術理性所遮蔽。生物藝術借助新興的生物技術創作藝術品，將技術從使用語境中剝離，在完成類似於杜尚對藝術生產模式的革新的同時，提供了一個價值中立的地帶來直觀生物技術的現狀。在這裏，福斯特的「反美學」並非一種貶義，而是標誌著一種跨學科的實踐，通過破壞表象的秩序，以便去除遮蔽，重新審視問題本身——生物藝術不僅挑戰了既有的審美，也挑戰了我們對生命、身體、以及生命構成的概念範式。在這個層面上，藝術也成為了彌合科學與人文之間鴻溝的一種有效嘗試。

關鍵詞：生物藝術；反美學；技術批判；延異

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