

Aletheia and Art

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Abstract

When conceptual art values the art object only as a vehicle of an idea with little intrinsic value there is separation of the concept and object. This I see as being dependent on truth based on the object/subject dichotomy as distinct from truth understood as *aletheia* or unconcealment. Martin Heidegger identifies *aletheia* having a significant role has in relation to art. I investigate the origins and differences in these two concepts of truth and the relationship between art and truth in the West. According to Heidegger, Plato initiated the change of truth as *aletheia* or unconcealment to its evolving into correspondence where sensible experience becomes relative to a rational knowing subject. Understanding from within the world becomes that of a separated subject observing their world. This supposedly objective, rational scientific understanding has been challenged by Philosophers, scientists, and artists who consider it to be subjective, relative and exclusive of a greater reality; the work and strategies of Marcel Duchamp and John Cage exemplify this. Although Duchamp is a pioneer of conceptual art, important for me are his works where he has a high regard for the materials and finish. I hope to show the importance of *aletheia* is still valid for art and that the object need not be subject to the concept.

How is Heidegger's concept of *aletheia* relevant to art and is it still relevant today in the visual and aural elements of contemporary art, in particular sculpture/installation?

Important to my artwork is the term *aletheia* the ancient Greek term for unconcealment or truth. I work in the field of kinetic sound sculpture where my work consists of both sound and movement of sculptural elements. An aim of my work is to disclose infra-sound; a part of the total range of sound frequencies but is below 20 hertz and inaudible the human ear. It is a part of our reality that is not discernible through our normal perspective. I enable visualization of infra-sound through synaesthesia into the visual realm. To accomplish this I use domestic audio equipment such as amplifiers, speakers and DVD players coupled with the movement of materials, brass, wood, Kevlar thread, Carbon fibre and polystyrene. The sculptures are essentially visual amplifiers incorporating some secondary audible mechanical sounds. Sine wave signals from an electronic signal generator are transferred from electrical into physical energy in the sculptures. In addition I incorporate other audible sounds which were initially generated by four polystyrene blocks bouncing directly on an upturned paper speaker cone oscillating at 19 hertz. The constant rhythm of the speaker generated a random or chaotic audible percussion from the inaudible source. Recordings were made and these manipulated electronically to create sound fields. The soundtracks which activate the sculptures are a combination of both the audible and inaudible. They are composed using audio engineering programs and recorded onto a compact disc. A high degree of control and fine tuning of materials, mechanisms, design and soundtrack is required for effective operation.

I place a high importance on the visual physical components through the choice of materials and finish which I combine with the experiential nature of the sound fields.

This may seem at odds with some contemporary conceptual art where the concept has importance over the physical object. However, I wonder if they need to be mutually exclusive. For me this seems to indicate two kinds of truth in operation; one based on the sensible or experiential, and one based on rational concepts. Two truths; one being *aletheia* and the other being correspondence based on an object/subject dichotomy. I will look at the history of *aletheia* and the importance of truth in relation to art. I will also look at the work of the conceptual artists John Cage and Marcel Duchamp to see how their work might relate to Martin Heidegger's concepts of art and *aletheia*. Their work not only deals with truth, but also addresses the relationship between the material or aural aspects of the artwork with the concept.

Throughout the history of the West there has been an extremely close relationship between truth and art. The understanding of the meaning of truth and of art has also varied over this time, as has the relationship between them. I hope to show the importance of *aletheia* as disclosure having a significant role in art.

In tracking the origins and history of truth and art we can trace the changes from a mythological paradigm to a scientific paradigm. Mythology for the ancient Greeks communicated their understanding of the world and themselves. Poetry and plays as art forms were an integral part of this. I introduce the concept of *aletheia* as described in myths through Heraclitus, Parmenides and Plato. However a major shift occurs in Plato who attempts to formulate a more accurate way to understand the world. In doing so he changes the concept of truth from disclosure to correctness. Plato is also significant because of his mistrust of the physical sensible world being a copy of the ideal. This has an impact on his views on art which he regarded as not being able to convey truth. Rene Descartes scientific approach sees a separation from the sensible world which needs

verification by way of the trusted rational mind of the subject which is seen as separate and independent of it. This leads to a subject/object worldview reliant on reason.

Friedrich Nietzsche introduces the challenge to this rational scientific supposedly objective and infallible way of understanding the world questioning totalizing or absolute values or truth which he sees as being arbitrary. The creative power of art through the power of the will is his solution. Henri Poincare also notes purely rational absolutes as being deficient and subjective, relying on pre-existing understanding which hasn't been questioned. (Poincare, 1905, preface page xxiv). He also identifies chance as having significant influence in reality, creation, and even the way we think. John Cage and Marcel Duchamp address these very issues and use chance as an important strategy in their work.

Martin Heidegger states that the shift of truth from *aletheia* to *veritas* has resulted in a significant shift in the way we understand the world; a change from unconcealment to that relying on the verification of object by a rational subject. (Heidegger, 1998, p.234). Essentially truth changes from an experiential engagement within the world to one separate to the world. The object/subject or scientific truth is reliant on rational thinking and the experiential becomes subject to correspondence or correctness as the senses may no longer be trusted. This limits truth to only what can be known rationally and excludes other forms of truth or disclosure of reality. The object subject dichotomy also creates the possibility for dominance or power where man is placed in a position of mastery over the world. In *aletheia* man is not at the centre or in control, however, the situation is totally reversed in *veritas* where man is at the centre and in total control of the truth. Essentially truth becomes relative to man which is the reversal of man being relative to truth in *aletheia*.

Truth

First we need to understand the origins and history of the two truths and then the relationship between the two. *Aletheia*, *alethes* and *aletheie* mean unconcealed and *alethes* (truthful), *aletheno* (I conform to truth). *Aletheia* can be broken down into *a* and *letheia*, the *a* is the negative or privative in relation to *letheia*. *Lethos* and *lathos* have roots in *ladho*. *Letho* and *lethe* mean forgetting. *Lanthano* (I pass away I slip, lose memory), *lath* (forgetting). (Florensky, 2004, p.16). It is important here to note for Heidegger that *lanthano* has the meaning of concealment from the one who forgets and is effectively a double concealment in that this concealment is also concealed. Heidegger indicates that to understand forgetfulness as the ancient Greeks did we should think of it as concealment. Important in light of this distinction is *lethe* which means concealment, the opposite of *aletheia*. (Sousa, 2000, p.82). In Greek mythology the River Lethe is one the rivers surrounding Hades, the land of the dead. If the dead drink the water from the river of forgetfulness (*Lethe*) they will no longer remember anything of their previous earthly life. (Florensky, 2004, p.16). Here *aletheia* has the ability and function of preserving what is known and stopping and countering oblivion.

Heraclitus (535-475 BC) saw *aletheia* as having the ability to combat forgetfulness that occurs through the ever-changing flux of time. *Aletheia* “is the eternal memory of some consciousness” (Florensky, 2004, p.16). *Aletheia* had the ability to keep something present in sight, or in the light, preserving it from complete oblivion. In the time of Parmenides (515-445 BC) the word *aletheia* meant discovery, exposure, and

denudation. Importantly for Heidegger *aletheia* was now understood in terms of unconcealment rather than forgetting.

In bringing the term *aletheia* out of concealment Heidegger shows the paramount example of revealing and concealing. Rational truth causes the forgetting of this original originary truth. *Aletheia* is the more primal truth chronologically and as the way in which things are initially encountered, or become evident. *Aletheia* is the foundation or basis that allows the things in question to be identified as the things in question. This is the first step or primordial truth, the establishing of the conditions that makes correspondence possible.

Heidegger identifies how the transformation of truth from *aletheia* to correspondence started with Plato. In the allegory of the cave the enlightened moves from the cave, which represents the sensible world through stages to the open and to the sunlight which represents the highest ideal. There is a shift from truth as unconcealment by firelight to unconcealment by sunlight with an adjustment of vision through the stages as the light improves and gets brighter. A significant change occurs where unconcealment becomes relative to this light and becomes “yoked to seeing” as a “correctness of vision.” Thus “truth becomes the correctness of apprehending and asserting” (Heidegger, 1998, p.231). *Aletheia* or unconcealment is now subject to the idea; the truth of senses becomes the truth of ideas. For Plato there is a separation of the realm of the ideal and the mind from the realm of the sensuous physical body. Plato mistrusts the natural physical world which he sees as only an imitation of the ideal forms so effectively thinking is more real and trusted than physical presence. Heidegger describes the significant shift from *aletheia* as the essence of truth to its subjugation to the idea and correctness;

However, idea is not subordinate to unhiddenness in the sense of serving what is unhidden by bringing it to appearance. Rather, the opposite is the case: it is the shining (the self-showing) that, within its essence and in a singular self-relatedness, may yet be called unhiddenness. The idea is not some foreground that *aletheia* puts out front to present things; rather, the idea is the ground that makes *aletheia* possible. (Heidegger, 1998, p.233).

Veritas or the truth of reason has a totally different root to the Greek *aletheia* but has come to dominate how truth is understood. Originating in Sanskrit *Var* is the original root of *veritas* and based on the fear or reverence of idols (Rappaport, 1997, p.22). *Verdictum* was the verdict of a judge which later in Law became the real situation of the case. Then it came to mean the evidence of a witness. The Latin *Veritas* became the truth as opposed to false accusations (Rappaport, 1997, p.22). Heidegger traces the link with the roman *justitia* where a distinction between true and false was required *falsum* and *verum*. Judgment and authority is the focus of *veritas*, a will to power (Sousa, 2000, p.94). *Veritas* evolved as correspondence or propositional truth where truth can be described as the accurate representation or correctness.

Aletheia versus Veritas

In ancient Greece, mythology revealed the concepts of truth and being. The Roman world that followed was not defined by myth but by imperialism with a motive of calculation, conquering and mastering. The Roman *veritas* over time completely concealed *aletheia*. Heidegger states as a result of Romanization that a “change in the essence of truth and being” had occurred (Sousa, 2000, p.94). At the beginning of the

Modern epoch Descartes further evolved truth in the object/subject dichotomy. Where truth is now the domain of reason only; “Truth or falsehood in the proper sense can be nowhere else but in the intellect alone” (Sousa, 2000, p.94). In Descartes thinking there is a separation of the inner known and outer unknown resulting in the rational subject calculating, measuring, classifying, ordering and ultimately mastering his object world. Descartes rationalization of the world where all things as objects are subject to doubt and scrutiny develops Plato’s mistrust into the object/subject dichotomy as a scientific worldview. *Veritas* now dominates and excludes *aletheia*. Heidegger would challenge this supposedly objective view as being narrow, subjective and relative to man.

Art and Truth

The way truth was understood changed with the change from mythology to reason and science. This had a significant impact on the understanding of art, its role and significance for Western society. Art changed from a position describing truth for the whole of society to an inconsequential individual aesthetic experience. According to Heidegger in ancient Greece the truth was communicated through art; poetry, plays, the temples and mythology. “The temple, in its standing there, first gives to things their look and to men their outlook on themselves” (Heidegger, 2008, p.168). Plato called the position and importance of art as a foundation for truth into question by replacing mythology and poetry with reason. For Plato art is in opposition to rational truth because of its sensual irrationality. He mistrusts the natural physical world which he sees as only a second-hand copy of the ideal forms. Art as an imitation of this degraded changing copy is even worse. For Plato art can in no way know the truth of the ideal form because there is a separation of the realm of the ideal and the mind from the realm of the sensuous

physical body. A gap exists between the two and the copy cannot equal the ideal. For Plato art had the potential to lead away or distract from the discipline required for philosophical thought.

By 18th century Science and reason had become the main way Western society conceptualized their knowledge of the truth. Art no longer had importance for entire societies but became entertainment for the educated and the well-off. Art had become trivial aesthetics in which Hegel saw the “death of art” (Young, 2004, p.6). Art had become an aesthetic “experience in which great art dies” (Young, 2004, p.8). Although Romantic art was a counter to reason and scientific empirical methods, reason had been applied to art and aesthetics where the skill of the artist using the formal aspects of the work such as simplicity, balance, harmony and proportion could give an emotional experience or a moment of peace for the viewer. An aesthetic experience was thus reduced to a scientific formula. Art had become a work of beauty, a commodity or entertainment (Young, 2004, p.10). Truth was subservient to the effect and the artist craftsman following a set of formulae in effect has mastery through science over aesthetics.

There has been an inversion of the people being informed about truth by art to art being subject to people. Art is no longer needed to tell the truth about the world but in fact becomes an escape from reality of life through the peace given in the aesthetic experience. The question might be asked whether in the modern age art can play any role in relation to truth.

Nietzsche

In Nietzsche there is the awareness of power struggles and that the solution lies in the self. There is a uniqueness of the individual which also has its own internal struggle of the will. “A living thing seeks above all to vent its strength — life itself is will to power”(Nietzsche, 1990, p.44). This world is the will to power — and nothing besides! And you yourselves are also this will to power — and nothing besides!”(Nietzsche, 1968, p.550). There are two struggles, one the struggle with the overarching powers (values and norms of society) and the second a struggle within the individual. Winning the struggles will allow the uniqueness and potential of the individual to be realized. This Nietzsche describes as the “will to power”. The overarching mastery is only held in place by a stronger will and as such Nietzsche sees its laws or truth as arbitrary and changing over time. Replacing of one will with another, the ‘will to power’ creates an eternal return. This dynamic flux of changing power and will leads to relativism where there are no longer any absolutes. For Nietzsche there can be no single objective truth but many truths, with the underlying truth that change is constant.

For Nietzsche the laws for the masses although useful need not apply to elite unique individuals. They should follow their own “inner law” through their “will to power.” Nietzsche’s solution to the arbitrariness of truth and meaning of the external is to turn inward and seek the answer in Art. He suggests living a life of Art of the “grand style’ which means living a life which brings forth that which is important and lasting; a pursuit of the excellence in excellence. Art is extremely important and a “stimulant of the will to power” and the power of self will defeat arbitrary moral systems. “Art is given to us to prevent us dying of truth” could be taken two ways; one being the truth is horrible, so we need the lies of art as a salve, as the moment of peace from this world (Nietzsche,

1967, p.153-4). This implies no truth in art or that art is also corrupted, or alternatively that the solution lies in art. I think the greater value is in the latter.

Truth means bringing of power into effect, raising to the highest power. In Nietzsche, “we the artists” = “we the seekers after knowledge or truth” = “we the inventors of the new possibilities of life” (Deleuze, 2002, p.103).

For Nietzsche, art is about truth where truth is the bringing forth of power into effectiveness. Art has the power and is the way to bring forth the new. Heidegger would agree with Nietzsche on the importance of art and the artist is the ability to bring forth or disclose. A life of Art of the “grand style” is to bring about a foundation of new values as the way to overcome nihilism. Heidegger suggests the essence of an artist for Nietzsche is dissatisfaction with the present or what has been done resulting in a looking forward to something better and new, a feeling of plenitude and rapture which allows ascension out of and beyond the self (Zimmerman, 2005, p.4). Effort and a resoluteness of will it is required to sustain the resulting perpetual cycle of improvement.

Heidegger challenges Nietzsche by showing the concentration on the power of will entails a form of mastery of object by subject relationship. The origin and essence of freedom has to do with destining and bringing forth. *Poeisis* is the making something present which was not present or “bringing-forth out of concealment into unconcealment” (Heidegger, 2008, p.317). In *poeisis* “man becomes truly free only in so far as he belongs to the realm of destining and so becomes one who listens, though not one who simply obeys. ...the freedom of the free consists neither in unfettered arbitrariness nor in the constraint of mere laws” (Heidegger, 2008, p.330). Heidegger can see a remedy or a

different path to the will to power of the individual working in cooperation with the world, relinquishing man's dominance recognizing the value of the other and becoming a team player. In his discussion of artistic making Heidegger identifies the original Greek concept of *cause* as '*aiton*' which means indebtedness rather than 'means to an end' when interpreting Aristotle's four causes. The *material* cause is the 'what' or the physical stuff or materials something is made out of. The *formal* cause is the plan or the 'how' these things are put together. The *efficient* cause is the 'who' or the agent involved in the construction. The *final* cause or the 'why' is the purpose or reason for the thing to be made. Heidegger sees the artist or *techne* having an active role in *poeisis* which is not an imbalance of power or control but a combined interdependence of man and his world. Man is decentralized which is in contrast to Nietzsche and Stirner with an outlook of mutual dependency and care. This not only solves the problem of the will but explains the process of *poeisis* where things are brought forth.

Heidegger

Heidegger thinks an important way of being our world was held by the ancient Greeks in the concept of *Poeisis* a bringing forth or allowing. It has a very strong link with *aletheia* which means unconcealment and truth. The artist or *Techne* in ancient Greek has a significant role to play in unconcealment however it is not in their practical skills but rather it is the essence of *techne*, the ability to bring something into existence. "What is decisive in *techne* does not lie at all in making and manipulating nor in the using of means, but rather in the revealing" (Heidegger, 2008, p.319). Heidegger notes the essence of technology has changed significantly to the original Greek concept where revealing by *techne* was based on an attitude of wonder (Livingston, 2003, p.12). In modern times this

has changed to an attitude of calculation and usefulness. Heidegger calls this attitude *enframing* which he considers to be the essence of modern technology. The problem with *enframing* is that it shuts off other ways of seeing the world which are not man centered or only conceives of the world in terms of a resource. “The rule of enframing threatens humanity with the possibility that it could be denied to him to enter into a more original revealing and hence to experience the call of a more primal truth” (Heidegger, 2008, p.333). The “more primal truth” is *aletheia* or unconcealment. *Enframing* is based on a scientific rational object/subject truth. Heidegger indicates this rational kind of viewpoint is narrow and has a deficiency in that there are things that lie outside of reason. The truth of being can’t be fully analyzed or calculated by reason alone. This is borne out in *aletheia* where things are unconcealed or brought into view for the first time and occur before the application of reason.

In “The Origin of the Work of Art” Heidegger asks the question whether art can be a relevant way that we can discover truth and therefore understand ourselves. He identifies the revealing nature of the Greek temple as a non-representational work of art having significance and the ability to give understanding and meaning for a whole society.

It is the temple-work that first fits together and at the same time gathers around itself the unity of those paths and relations in which birth and death, disaster and blessing, victory and disgrace, endurance and decline acquire the shape of destiny for the human being (Heidegger, 2008, p.167).

For Heidegger Art defines a world as the Greek Temple had done, however this conception of art as significant for the whole society seems to have become trivial, mimetic and subjective. In contrast to this insignificance he puts forward a circular concept which somewhat resembles Nietzsche's "will to power" based on the truth of disclosing *aletheia* of lived experience. Importantly for Heidegger for an artwork to exist there must be strife between 'earth' and 'world' otherwise it would only be mimetic, a representation of something. This means that art is the creation of something new, the "opening up of a world" which creates a new world or Being. This 'world' is the intangible social cultural historical beliefs and practices of society; the background upon which propositional truth operates. The 'earth' on the other hand includes all that is concealed, that which escapes reason, hidden by one viewpoint or the mysterious. Through this power struggle the new tries to emerge and the old tries to submerge it. If the new now unconcealed holds position or wins then it changes the way things are comprehended from that point on. Therefore the new 'world' is a new start or new ground for the artist and essentially becomes his origin. "The artist remains inconsequential as compared with the work, almost like a passageway that destroys itself in the creative process for the work to emerge" (Heidegger, 2008, p.166).

Although the artwork is made through *techne* it is not just equipment where the material is used up but rather is a combination, process and revealing of many parts. The result is greater than all its parts combined and it creates something for the first time. Now included in the mix are the preservers, including the artist who now live in this new world. Art is the *ursprung* the leap forward which means the origin, the beginning of the new (Heidegger, 2008, p.203). Art is the beginning of new paradigms. For Heidegger there is a serious role of art in modernity "- that is to facilitate dwelling - and in

postmodernity - that it is to recreate authentic community” (Young, 2004, p.173). It would seem a tall order for an artist today to set in motion these world changing events which seem few and far between in the history of man. Perhaps there is a gradual unearthing or unconcealing that readies the ground for the forwards leap, *ursprung*.

Art is a process of revealing or *aletheia* and I think applicable to our time. Heidegger identifies some of the strategies used by the avant-garde that keeps art active in seeking truth and as inventors of new possibilities. This importantly keeps art relevant and not just an aesthetic experience. Artworks that arise out of a relationship and interaction between the rational and that which is not rational so can't be seen in terms of mastery of the artist over an object but one where the other elements or causes have an input. These may even be chance elements allowing the unexpected to arise. It is important to notice here that this is an event or process which involves time and is not the result of a foregone conclusion.

An artwork has the ability to open another world: “in the nearness of the work we were suddenly somewhere else than we usually tend to be” (Heidegger, 2008, p.166). This importantly shows an alternative view beyond the normal perspective into the region of the concealed. By unconcealment and disruption new possibilities are shown which can challenge the status quo.

For Heidegger the essence of the artwork is paramount, it is not something applied to the object afterwards to give meaning. Nor is it simply a piece of equipment. There is a oneness of work and object, however he carefully separates the art object from its essence or the intangible Being of the work. He thus defines a distinction between the ‘art work’ and the ‘work of art’. Although he denies the object the essence of the artwork it remains important as a ground upon which the work manifests. It is the beginning of

and the presencing of another world. “If there occurs in the work a disclosure of a particular being, disclosing what and how it is, then there is here an occurring, a happening of truth at work. Art is truth setting itself to work” (Heidegger, 2008, p.166). ‘World’ is the same as ‘truth’ therefore world is unconcealment and therefore art is unconcealment *aletheia*. World = *aletheia* = art. For Heidegger art only exists in the strife between world and earth and an artist can only be an artist when disclosing a world and in doing so discloses truth and the new. The revealing essence or task of Art is to let truth *aletheia* originate. This is making an opening or a disruption of our normal way of dealing with things. If we look into the work and strategies of Duchamp and Cage we will see this exemplified.

Duchamp

Duchamp used his avant-garde art to call into question his world controlled by seemingly arbitrary authority and where truths were portrayed as absolute. For him they failed to adequately explain truth or reality in a time of scientific advancement. Bourgeois society valued art in terms of aesthetic taste and commodity putting the artist in service to satisfy these needs. Duchamp questioned this authority where the painted surface was of paramount consideration and the result of artist’s individual talent. His anti-art of found objects and ready-mades were in direct opposition to the prized skill of the artist and the norms of the painting world. Duchamp rejected the painted surface or what he called “retinal art” and birthed conceptual art. For Duchamp the idea had become paramount, a reversal or inversion of the situation where ideas or truth seemed inconsequential. The object was now supposedly selected without aesthetic interest and presented as “anti art”.

Duchamp exposed the truth of the art world by disruption of the norms by showing an alternative viewpoint. This is clearly the operation of 'art' set out by Heidegger. Duchamp saw the challenge to the ability of the then, self assured current scientific principles to adequately account for truth because of its narrow rational and subjective perspective. However Duchamp was very interested in science which pointed to a reality beyond normal perception. He lived in a time of scientific discoveries which challenged and stretched the established boundaries of how the world was understood and described. This was a time of awe and wonder. He researched extensively, including the theories of Henri Poincare which had significant influence. Poincare states: "Still things themselves are not what (science) can reach as the naïve dogmatists think, only relations between things. Outside of these relations there is no knowable reality" (Poincare, 1905, preface page xxiv). Poincare also published theories relating to chance. Here was a scientist after Duchamp's own heart who identifies known truths as inadequate, relative and subjective, which are ultimately unable to explain everything with rational logic.

"The Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors, Even" (1915-23) amalgamates science, truth, reality, chance, mythology and mystery. Duchamp credits a stage play of Raymond Roussel's "*impressions d'Afrique*" as its inspiration. There are similarities in the use of wit, wordplay, multiple layered meaning, convoluted plots and mechanized people. Free from the conventions of painting he turned to what would be considered the opposite of fine art to render his ideas; an ensemble of technical drawing, written notes and actual objects.

Frederick Kiesler a contemporary avant-garde artist called "The Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors, Even" the first x-ray painting of space (Otwell, 1997, ch.2). I think this is an x-ray that exposes Duchamp the person and his philosophy. He spent

many years working on this project and a year repairing it, evidencing its importance. Every element of construction was deeply considered. The relationships, layers of meaning and techniques are too complex and extensive to cover here so I will stick to the most relevant. The first thing to note is that the support for the work is glass and as such could be seen as a window looking into the created world of reality and the human condition. Perhaps it is a shop window to affront the bourgeois, a telescope or microscope. Important here is the separation of a viewer who is involved in the activity of looking. Duchamp was well aware of the importance of the viewer in relation to the creative act “the creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the Spectator brings the work in contact with the external world...” (Duchamp,1966). He is also aware that the interpretation the viewer has is likely to be different to the artists. The accompanying and extensive Green Box notes are to be considered with equal importance. Along with the cerebral nature of his work they also reside in the viewer’s world and become a bridge between these worlds. The Glass could be the x-ray plates showing the normally unseen core reality not the surface. Another function of the glass is that it allows a shift in perspective and a multiplicity of viewpoints particularly from front to back in relation to Duchamp’s exploration of the fourth dimension. This entails using the mind in relation to the other three dimensions.

There are two panes one above the other. Positioned above is the bride. She represents at a carnal level the object of desire which is out of reach of the bachelors below. On another level she becomes the object of reason or the embodiment of the unseen, the truth or even the fourth dimension. The space she inhabits is not restricted to the logical rules of geometry to which the bachelors adhere. The bachelors have much scientific equipment or apparatus (loaded with sexual connotations) at their disposal in

their vain attempt to break through and conquer the bride. It is implicated that chance may be the only hope they have of attaining access to the higher realm or truth. Duchamp is interested in the truth or reality of the world he lives in and it seems as if “The Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors, Even” shows a reality, a world which is in fact a complex matrix of realism, energy, mystery, science, carnality, hope, frustration and chance. Even though it is painstakingly fashioned with hundreds of notes there remains confusion and uncertainty.

Although remembered for the ‘ready-made’ and giving birth to ‘conceptual art’ I think it is important not to overlook and ponder “The Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors, Even” as an object. Although the work explores the illusion of perspective, it deals more with reality than illusion. He did not create an illusion of glass but used actual glass for looking and actual physical perspective. He used wire (line) for linear elements as in the literally discursive attack on the authority of standards in “Three Standard Stoppages”. Duchamp depicts a kind of realism or a truth of materials where the inherent material qualities of string are used. It seems ironic that such attention to detail is given to the object of his art when the focus is on the mind. This work relates to directly to Poincare’s writings and seems to be a chance making machine. The term “ready-made” normally associated with available objects made by someone other than the artist have an added dimension in relation to Poincare. It is possible the term ‘ready-made’ originated from Poincare’s essay on creative mathematics which explains the unconscious thought that drops into the conscious seemingly ‘ready-made’ (Cipra, 1999, p.1668). Duchamp mistrusts the visible (retinal) because choices are made at the subconscious level which influence the way things are understood and perceived; these “Initial conditions” determine the result. There are similarities to Cage’s thought on initial conditions and

“indifferent taste” which determine outcomes or influence perception. Duchamp’s exposure of initial conditions and elimination of personal taste or value allow a greater truth to be exposed.

Duchamp shows that art has the ability to change the way people think by confrontation and a challenging of values. In Heideggerian terms he creates an opening and allows a place for the work of art to work. In the same way Heidegger separates the work of art from the object Duchamp replaces the values of outward appearance of the object with that of concept. He reclaims art as valuable and that it has the power to transform. This is a new conception of art, a new art ‘world’ where new movements have come into existence such as conceptual art and minimalism Art has resumed the ability to be instrumental in the exposure of truth and reality. Although Duchamp brings science into art, he shows that reason and technology cannot fully comprehend reality because of the limitations imposed by relativity and subjectivity. In agreement with Poincare he demonstrates that chance is involved in life and the creative process. Although Duchamp was anti the art of his time he seems to embody Heidegger’s idea of art as a vehicle for change.

Cage

In the 1930s and 40s, John Cage, an American avant-garde composer invented prepared pianos where he placed items on and between the strings which created new sounds when played. The traditional piano now produced non-traditional sounds. He worked with rhythm and sounds which would be at the time regarded just as noises. In 1952 his work “four minutes 33 seconds” the orchestra sat silently without playing their instruments. Cage’s intention was not to shock or affront (although this often occurred) rather he was

drawing attention to the ambient sounds that permeate everywhere. He had come to the realization that there was in fact not the dichotomy of silence and sound but rather that there was an absence of intended sound. The listener has an important role in filtering out the unwanted sound and concentrating only on the wanted sound. Here the truth of the totality of sound is determined by the listener by deliberately excluding a wider range. This narrowing of view exposes the reality that the viewer or listener is already focused on what they wish to hear; therefore their truth is based on expectation. This is similar to the views of Heidegger where he thinks that metaphysics misses the truth of the underlying reality because of its narrow view. It seems there are two kinds of truth operating here one deals with correctness and *aletheia* that deals with just being there or existing. One that relates to intention and one that doesn't. Cage would call a narrowing of view a matter of like and dislike. "You can become narrow minded, literally, by only liking certain things and disliking others, but you can become open-minded, literally, by giving up your likes and dislikes and becoming interested in things" (Solomon, 2002). In this idea of disinterestedness Cage brings out of concealment that which already exists, *aletheia*. This is similar to the disinterestedness of Duchamp.

Cage had an interest in chaos theory and created chance generating strategies which he used in his compositions. He believed that art and life are not separate and through his concept of interpenetration works would include sounds other than the intentions of the composer from chance and ambient sound. By bringing out of concealment chance, indeterminate and previously unwanted interjections of noise Cage has revealed the conscious forgetting or concealing in man's everyday way of being. Cage not only revealed these elements but gave them value. Cage states that the role of

the composer/artist is to bring about change in the way people think. “Music is about changing the mind—not to understand, but to be aware” (Solomon, 2002).

Important to Cage’s concept of interpenetration is that it works in both directions. This is shown in his compositions where chance elements have an effect but also he had some initial control over these chance elements. From the 1950s onwards Cage submitted every detail of composition to the *I Ching*, originally a Chinese divination system which gives sixty four possible choices. He used the *I Ching* in a variety of ways for different compositions; not a simple coin toss but through complicated processes.

Taking the stance of interpenetration would seem to remove one mastering the other as value is given to both the rational and irrational. The indetermination allows new possibilities to originate. This seems similar to the four causes used by Heidegger where all elements take part in the creation of the whole where there is mutual indebtedness between them.

Summary/interpretation

In the history of the West, mythology was replaced with rational thought to describe reality or truth. *Aletheia* unconcealment has been overtaken by *veritas*. This has led to the decline of art in importance for all society as a way of finding out about truth to its opposite, an aesthetic experience or an escape from reality for the few. More recently the position of a knowing subject over object has been questioned in relation to its power and inadequacies to truly represent reality. The reliability and objectiveness of a rational scientific worldview has been shown to be relative and subjective. Nietzsche’s approach is to reject this seemingly arbitrary authority and turn to the self using the creative and disclosive power of art, and by the “will to power” effect change. Although Nietzsche

sees the value in art Heidegger thinks he is still involved with a power struggle based on a faulty conception of truth. Heidegger sees the answer in the ability of art to instigate a leap forward *ursprung* to a new paradigm. This is different from Nietzsche in that it does not involve power struggles of the artist. Rather through *poesis* and *aletheia* the artist works with and not against the world facilitating the new. Meaning is established afterward through engagement in the new world that the artwork creates.

Art as I conceive it is no longer on the grand scale of the Greek temple or the medieval church with little hope of relevance and truth for the whole of society. However I think on a smaller scale through small increments it can still be involved in a leap forward *ursprung* to instigate change and the new. Art can deal with matters of truth and not be a decorative escape. Art can also go beyond mimetic representationalism and be the beginning of the new. For Heidegger a work of art can expose the act of looking and preconceptions used in interpretation. Cage and Duchamp both do this by exposing inadequacies of a rationalistic perspective to describe reality. By portraying a new perspective beyond the established perspective and transgressing norms and expectations they expose the limits of the paradigm within which they exist. The resulting controversy or conflict results in an examination, and disclosure of the current understanding of music and art. This unconcealment is *aletheia* truth. For Heidegger an artwork can only exist if there is 'strife' or conflict which means it must be unconcealing, extending boundaries and presenting something new. Artworks function by opening another world and in doing so show that they are 'artworks' allowing 'truth to originate'. The role of the artist is like a facilitator who helps the process on the way. In this way Cage and Duchamp have established new ways of thinking, seeing and listening. The boundaries have been extended for music and art which now include that previously concealed or rejected.

Heidegger indicates an important order in *aletheia*; there are initial or background conditions which allow something to be exposed, once revealed it is understood and valued. The first step of unconcealment is not subject to reason. An artwork is the result of a combination of causes and therefore there may be an element of indeterminacy. These indeterminate elements are crucial in the works of Cage and Duchamp.

Although the artwork embodies the intentions of the artist maker, the object transcends different worlds; that of the artist and that of the interpreter. The uncertainty or indeterminacy between worlds requires an attitude of care and sensitivity. Cage and Duchamp show a self-awareness or disclosure of the viewer's own context and also a realization that the artist's context may be different to the viewer. Like Heidegger I think the role of the artist is to present an artwork and withdraw. "the work is to be released by the artist to its pure self-subsistence" (Heidegger, 2008, p.165). The artist is unable with certainty to predetermine the outcome or interpretation of the viewer. I think this indeterminacy or mystery enables the experience of wonder and the thrill of discovery which are important values in allowing the work of art its power. This enables *poesis* and *aletheia* to continue to work in the preservers and interpreters which can lead to an ongoing multiplicity of interpretations.

I think it is easy to overlook the object and read an artwork as a symbol or to take it as a concept or representation which essentially uses the art object as equipment and only a means to an end. This would be to miss unconcealment *aletheia* and move on immediately to the truth of reason.

Heidegger separates the work or function of art from the physical object; this distinguishes the object from its essence. Similarly Duchamp separates both the context and concept from the object. Although there is a separation I don't think this devalues the

importance of the object. Duchamp claims to be disinterested in the object in regard to aesthetics of beauty and the artist's skill in relation to ready-mades however he spent time and energy carefully constructing "The Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors, Even". Although his technique is anti-traditional, the meticulous attention to detail demonstrates he values the object in this new take on art. The material he uses including dust and wire show the importance of what Heidegger would call their "thingly" aspect. They are not chosen to aid illusion but because their inherent characteristics are essential to the production and meaning of the work. The "interpenetrations" of Cage are essential in the same way in that they are not applied to for effect or aesthetics but are a part of the very fabric of the work. Cage and Duchamp are not interested in illusion, but rather with truth.

The Relevance of *Aletheia* to My Work

I consider Heidegger's concept of *aletheia* relevant to art and agree that art can be an effective vehicle of disclosure. I also see the operation of *aletheia* as central to artworks being more than aesthetic or decorative. This is particularly relevant to my work as I am fundamentally concerned with the unconcealment of infra-sound and our perception of reality. I aim to bring out of concealment part of the sound spectrum that is unable to be heard. In some respects there is a deliberate concealment of infra-sound; domestic electronics manufacturers currently design compact disc players, amplifiers, and even computers which filter out frequencies below 20 hertz. This has led me to use older amplifiers and computers or those that allow the low frequency filters to be switched off. I also use DVD players Instead of CD players to enable me to play and utilize these low frequencies.

For Heidegger *aletheia* discloses underlying conditions which are concealed through normal existence. A good example is Cage's exposure of ambient sound which is excluded by either taste or focus draws attention to inadequacies of perception which can tend to originate from a single point of view. Likewise "Understandan" (2008) discloses the limitations of a single viewpoint. *Understandan* is an ancient Proto/Indo/European word meaning to understand; it is understanding that comes by being in the midst of or near to, and as such seems to be an understanding based on experience rather than knowledge. A speaker oscillates at 19 Hz (unheard) and as such is the source, however there is secondary evidence by way of visual (mirror and partial concealment by dark Perspex), aural (recorded and modified sound), and through air pressure. From a fixed point of view the secondary sound sources from the speakers mask the percussive sound of polystyrene blocks bouncing on the speaker cone. Changing perspective by moving around the sculpture enables different sound and visual fields to be experienced which lead to a greater understanding.

The audible sound tracks of my works are from a single recording; however it is manipulated electronically to sound totally different and evocative of many things. The manipulation of a single sound sample is altered virtually in regards to time and space through altering pitch, reverb, filtering, sustain, decay etc. I see this relating to a viewer's perception and viewpoint which are also dependent on the variables of time and space. Although the sound is generated randomly its evocative nature exposes the viewer's underlying desire to rationalize it. This projecting forward to possibilities based on past experience can also be seen in terms of *aletheia* which exposes the fact that there is a framework for understanding which is already in place. This reinforces Heidegger's point that we don't hear just pure tones or sounds as they are always in some context. "Metre"

(2009) has an obvious similarity to a metronome; however the normal expectations (background understanding) are disclosed with regular time keeping being exchanged with unexpected sound and irregular activity. This disruption of the expected is similar to the strife between concealment and unconcealment, which is essential to what constitutes a work of art for Heidegger.

My work does not exist encapsulated within an illusory pictorial space, but shares the same space the viewer occupies. This is achieved through visual and audible intrusions into the viewer's space and the freedom of multiple viewpoints. "Render" (2008) enables very close observation of the string which is at eye level and can even be touched. I aim to dissolve the separation of a subject looking at a separate object, which I see as being in line with Heidegger's aims. Using larger than human scale and controlling the volume of the sound fields enables a closeness or connectedness of the viewer with the works in their own space. "Wall One" (2010), is a largely linear installation that incorporates the architectural space (Wall) as a major part of the work and as such its object nature is diminished.

The open structures and exposed mechanisms enable the cause and effect relationships between the mechanical and the visual to be traced. This enables the viewer to experience a voyage of discovery where understanding the work is not paramount, also important is the visual and aural experience. I consider this to be an aspect of *aletheia*, where disclosure occurs prior to understanding. I pay attention to detail and place value on the object (including sound) as I believe we live in a world of lived sensible experience and not just the mind. Important is the art objects intrinsic value, not only value applied to the objects by a concept. This I feel relegates the art objects to what Heidegger would call equipment. I agree with Heidegger that the function or work of art is separate to the object. However, I feel an empowering of the concept over the thing

(object) is an example of the dominance of the rational mindset he was trying to overcome. By contrast, Heidegger's example the ancient Greek Temple enabled the concepts to exist within its framework. Therefore I feel that the object although distinct has a crucial role in enabling the work of art by *aletheia* to function.

Conclusion

Although the position and importance of art in relation to truth seemed lost to rationality the work of Cage and Duchamp shows this not to be the case. Their work exposes the shortcomings and concealment that occurs through the rational mindset expressed through the art and science of their time. Art only exists through truth *aletheia* "a happening of truth at work.... Art is truth setting itself to work" (Heidegger, 2008, p.162). Therefore art can be understood in terms of having an important function relating to truth, not aesthetics. Cage and Duchamp also importantly show that art allows the new to emerge *ursprung* through extending the boundaries of art and music.

Separating the object from the function or work of art is necessary to free art from aesthetics; however, I see a danger where the value of the concept is prioritized over the object because this is essentially the subject/object dichotomy Heidegger was trying to overcome. The result would be that art would not function as *aletheia* but as equipment. The object should be seen as the very fabric of the work, and for Heidegger, the Ancient Greek temple shows its importance as the ground upon which the work manifests. This is also evident through Duchamp's attention to the object in his work. For me the art object transcends both the artists and viewers world and it is the location we return to again and again for the work of art to work.

Cage comes close to the essence of *aletheia* when he states “Music is about changing the mind—not to understand, but to be aware” (Solomon, 2002). *Aletheia* is not truth where man is in control but he is a part of a bigger reality. Art is a process of revealing or *aletheia* and I think applicable to our time. Based on the examples of Cage and Duchamp in conjunction with my own work where *aletheia* can be seen to be the function of art; I conclude that *aletheia* is both relevant and essential for contemporary sculpture/installation that is not simply decorative but wishes to explore and extend the truth.

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