

# Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers

---

Volume 21 | Issue 3

Article 8

---

7-1-2004

## A Tradition Transfigured: Art and Culture in Reformational Aesthetics

Lambert Zuidervaart

Follow this and additional works at: <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/faithandphilosophy>

---

### Recommended Citation

Zuidervaart, Lambert (2004) "A Tradition Transfigured: Art and Culture in Reformational Aesthetics," *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers*: Vol. 21 : Iss. 3 , Article 8.

Available at: <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/faithandphilosophy/vol21/iss3/8>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at ePLACE: preserving, learning, and creative exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers by an authorized editor of ePLACE: preserving, learning, and creative exchange.

# A TRADITION TRANSFIGURED: ART AND CULTURE IN REFORMATIONAL AESTHETICS

Lambert Zuidervaart

Reformational aesthetics arises from the Kuyperian current within Reformed Christianity. It takes shape in the work of Hans Rookmaaker, Calvin Seerveld, and Nicholas Wolterstorff. The essay begins by contrasting reformational aesthetics with Evangelical and sacramental traditions of aesthetic reflection. After giving a general description of the reformational tradition, the essay uses debates among Rookmaaker, Seerveld, and Wolterstorff to chart new directions for the philosophy of art. I propose that reformational aesthetics break with modern notions of worldview, artworks, and aesthetics, in favor of contemporary emphases on artistic interaction, cultural institutions, and cultural theory.

Three traditions of aesthetic reflection flow through Christian scholarship in North America: the reformational, the Evangelical, and the sacramental traditions. Loosely fed by correlative traditions in liturgy, doctrine, and church governance, these aesthetic traditions freely cross contemporary ecclesiastical alignments. Evangelical scholars at Evangelical colleges might show a sacramental fondness for symbols; Reformed scholars at Reformed colleges might adopt an Evangelical emphasis on worldviews; and Catholic scholars at Catholic universities might share a reformational concern for the transformation of culture. Fusions of this sort are not uncommon in a postdenominational landscape. Yet these three broad streams of intellectual reflection continue. They spread across many academic disciplines, and they spill between the academy and the surrounding culture.<sup>1</sup>

If one asks about aesthetics in a narrower sense, however, and regards it as a branch of philosophy that acquired its characteristic topics and questions in eighteenth-century Europe, then the contributions of reformational scholars stand out. For reformational aesthetics has been more overtly philosophical and less explicitly theological than the other two traditions. Indeed, philosophers, not theologians, have articulated the most influential ideas in the reformational tradition, and few theologians have had much to add on topics of aesthetic concern. Perhaps this tells us something about the strengths and weaknesses of Reformed theology—I leave that for others to discuss. In any case it provides an excuse, given a primarily philosophical audience, to limit this essay's attention to just one tradition and identify new directions in it.

Let me define a few terms to begin. By "aesthetics" I mean a branch of



Western philosophy that has had two main topics since the eighteenth century: the nature and purposes of the arts, and the nature and role of the aesthetic dimension in life, culture, and society. The arts are a broad range of cultural endeavors that include music, film, dance, visual arts, and much more, whether fine art, popular art, or folk art. By "Reformed" I mean a worldwide movement within Protestant Christianity that stems from the Calvinist Reformation in sixteenth-century Europe. Ecclesiastically it includes Presbyterians of various persuasions, the various Reformed churches in or from continental Europe, and twentieth-century ecumenical formations such as the United Church of Canada and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. The term "reformational" indicates a current from within Reformed Christianity whose main impetus comes from the nineteenth-century Dutch educator, church leader, and politician Abraham Kuyper.<sup>2</sup> I do not use the term "Kuyperian," however, both because other figures have been genial spirits in the reformational tradition and because the strongly pietist elements in Kuyper's work have dwindled among his reformational followers.

Three emphases form the heart of reformational Christian scholarship and shape reformational aesthetics. One is an historical-redemptive narrative that always returns to God's having created everything good and ever looks forward to God's culminating renewal of the entire universe. A familiar summary of this narrative is Creation/Fall/Redemption/Fulfillment.<sup>3</sup> A second emphasis stems from the first. Reformational scholars hold that Christians and their efforts and organizations are called to be agents of renewal in culture and society, including scholarship and education. Third, although such renewal has a personal side to it, it is not simply about changing persons. It is equally about criticizing and changing cultural practices, social institutions, and the very structure of society, where these dishonor God's intentions for creation, resist God's redemptive work in human history, or violate a Biblical vision of a new heaven and new earth. So reformational scholarship tends to be radical, having a social comprehensiveness and a depth of cultural engagement that does not harmonize easily with Evangelical personalism or pietist escape. It also has a directness of approach, a freedom from ecclesiastical supervision or mediation, that runs counter to a sacramental vision.

Perhaps this directness of approach helps explain why philosophy, not theology, has been the preferred discipline for reformational aestheticians. One notable exception is the theologically inflected work of Hans Rookmaaker, the Dutch art historian whose popular writings influenced Francis Schaeffer and much of the Evangelical world.<sup>4</sup> But even Rookmaaker cut his academic teeth on the challenging and comprehensive reformational philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd, which has been sadly neglected by many Christian scholars in North America. In the generation after Rookmaaker, the two leading figures in reformational aesthetics are philosophers, and both graduated from Calvin College in the early 1950s: Calvin Seerveld, Professor Emeritus at the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto; and Nicholas Wolterstorff, Professor Emeritus at Yale University.

To detect new directions in reformational aesthetics, one does well to recall debates among these three scholars. Rather than recount the debates

in detail, I shall highlight issues that occasion new directions among a younger generation. I shall summarize these new directions under three headings: (1) from worldview to interaction; (2) from artworks to cultural institutions; (3) from aesthetics to cultural theory.<sup>5</sup>

### 1. *Worldview and Interaction*

In 1970 Hans Rookmaaker published a book with InterVarsity Press that was widely read in Reformed and Evangelical circles. It was titled *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture*. Taking a cue from Herman Dooyeweerd, but also from the German Catholic art historian Hans Sedlmayr, Rookmaaker diagnoses modern art as a symptom of Western culture's spiritually motivated decline.<sup>6</sup> "Worldview" is a central category in his diagnosis: he treats artworks as expressions of worldviews. Ten years later Seerveld and Wolterstorff published their own philosophies of art for a Christian audience, under more upbeat titles: Seerveld's *Rainbows for the Fallen World* and Wolterstorff's *Art in Action*.<sup>7</sup> The final essay in Seerveld's book has the telling title "Modern Art and the Birth of a Christian Culture" (pp. 156-201). There Seerveld objects to doomsayers such as Rookmaaker and Schaeffer who fail to appreciate the positive contributions made by modern art and who underestimate the Christian community's responsibilities for distortions in Western culture. Seerveld urges his readers to work toward a contemporary Christian culture, one which builds on the positive achievements of modern art but has its own spirit of "compassionate judgment." Wolterstorff's *Art in Action* gives more cautious advice, urging Christians to awaken from the aestheticist spell cast by the institution of high art and to exercise discretion concerning how and why they participate in that institution. Yet both Seerveld and Wolterstorff free reformational aesthetics from Rookmaaker's obsession with worldviews and their expression: Seerveld, by tracing the dynamic spirits permeating art and by embracing the characteristic allusiveness of modern artworks; Wolterstorff, by emphasizing the vast range of uses and purposes that artworks can legitimately serve.<sup>8</sup>

Both Seerveld and Wolterstorff prepare the way for a new direction in reformational aesthetics. This new path leads away from a fixation on worldviews and their supposed expression in artworks. It leads toward a fresh exploration of complex, dialogical, multicultural, and creative interactions within the more or less public spaces that artistic efforts help generate and frame. Seerveld stresses the importance of communal Christian efforts in the arts. Wolterstorff reminds us that artists accomplish many different actions by making artworks. What the new emphasis on interaction adds here is a recognition that contemporary artistic efforts rarely arise within only one community. Artists themselves are members of many communities—ethnic, political, local, national, religious, educational, artistic, etc. So are the people who support them, challenge them, and receive the benefit of their efforts. Moreover, the emphasis on interaction takes into account significant new forms of artistic activity that are collaborative and site-specific, destined not for the museum walls or the concert repertoire or mainstream movie theaters but for the groups of participants from which an AIDS quilt or a women's music festival or a local church video arises, and

perhaps, by way of these groups, for a larger public. The new interactive path leads away from the old paradigm in which a professional artist makes the artwork, and then paying customers, aesthetic connoisseurs, and professional scholars and critics try to make sense of it. It leads toward a much more messy and exciting model that redefines the roles of artist and audience and gives greater prominence to additional roles such as creative collaborator, dedicated participant, and community activist. Such a model would learn from the experiments that Suzanne Lacy labels "new genre public art."<sup>9</sup> It could also reframe the way in which scholars interpret art from the past and from other cultures. It would certainly be less susceptible to the outmoded distinction between high art and low that continues to shape philosophical aesthetics in Western societies.<sup>10</sup>

Indications of this new direction occur in the *Festschrift* published when Seerveld retired in 1995. In "Suffering in High and Low Relief," for example, South African philosopher and social critic Johan Snyman asks how people whose ancestors suffered in English concentration camps could themselves create the oppressive apartheid regime. He says part of the explanation lies in the memorials Afrikaners used to come to terms with their own suffering. His essay draws aesthetic and political distinctions between memorials and monuments and says what can count as a genuine memorial. Then, through a close reading of written records, sculptural dynamics, and cultural ethos, Snyman shows that the Women's Memorial (1913) in Bloemfontein was "not so much a memorial dedicated to the suffering of the dead, as a monument for the grief of those left behind."<sup>11</sup> Its actual role in Afrikaner life opposed the "human rights" philosophy of Emily Hobhouse, the English feminist who campaigned for the memorial's creation and installation. Against this perverting of a generous vision, and as admonition for the future, Snyman concludes: "Memorials should not . . . invoke the discourse of greatness by elevating victims to the purported height of their . . . victimizers and thereby offering false restitution. Memorials vow silently for the sake of future victims."<sup>12</sup>

Such close, multidimensional, and contextual art criticism presupposes that the primary phenomenon under examination is layered, dialogical, and participatory. The "artwork"—here a public sculpture—does not simply express a worldview, does not have one dominant spirit pervading it, and does not simply function as the object of discrete actions. It participates in a complex process where "artist," "patron," and "audience" have contrary interests and visions. It takes on the meaning of a certain culture-political constellation that, presumably, could change after the dismantling of apartheid. No one in the sculpture's primary (Afrikaner) community can escape responsibility for the role this sculpture has played in South African culture and politics. As this example shows, a new emphasis on interaction brings forth both a new range of phenomena and a new understanding of previously interpreted phenomena.<sup>13</sup>

A crucial consequence of this new emphasis is that worldview interpretations of artworks seem inadequate, for they presuppose an Enlightenment paradigm that is too thin and rigid to do justice to art as interaction. It's not only the case, as Seerveld indicates, that the spirits pervading art are rarely so fixed and readily discernible as worldview talk

suggests. And it's not only the case, as Wolterstorff argues, that the expression of worldviews is only one action accomplished via artworks and not always the most important one. In addition, it is misleading to think of art as the production of discrete artworks into which artists pour worldviews that interpreters then distill. This paradigm for art is just as problematic as the banking model of higher education, according to which learned professors stuff valuable information or ideas into the receptive vaults of students' minds, from which the students regularly withdraw their interest (pun intended). Beyond this, however, not even an emphasis on allusive spirits (Seerveld) or on multiple actions (Wolterstorff) frees us from the older paradigm, since the three-part structure of artist, artwork, and audience remains in place. That brings us to the second new direction, from artworks to cultural institutions.

## 2. *Artworks and Cultural Institutions*

Philosophical aesthetics since Kant has tended to make autonomous artworks central to the field of art. The dominance of this tendency might make it seem self-evident that everything in art revolves around the artwork, and that the roles of artist and audience hinge on their relationships to the artwork. In addition, and for the most part, post-Kantian aesthetics defines artworks as peculiarly aesthetic objects. So philosophers have tended to define artists and audiences as aesthetic role-players whose script comes from the work of art in its aesthetic dimension. In the past, reformational aesthetics has not thoroughly challenged this tendency. Certainly one finds uneasiness along the way, for to call attention to worldviews, spirits, or actions modifies somewhat a post-Kantian emphasis on aesthetic objects. Yet the notion of the aesthetically qualified artwork remains central to Rookmaaker's worldview interpretations, to Seerveld's discerning of spirits, and to Wolterstorff's elucidation of art in action—it is always the work of art by which worldviews get expressed, spirits go to work, or actions are accomplished.<sup>14</sup>

What would happen to a reformational philosophy of art if we would acknowledge that "being a work of art" is itself an historically dated and societally situated phenomenon—that it is tied both to the development of certain economic, political, and social structures and to the emergence of certain cultural institutions that make it possible for works of art to exist as works of art: museums, public concert houses, professional theaters, and the like? Moreover, what would happen if we did not assume that works of art have always been central to those branches of culture Westerners call art, nor that they need to remain as central as they once were? Undoubtedly there have long been *products* of one sort or another, products that have had many different functions including ones we label "aesthetic." But the institutional arrangements and the intellectual categories whereby these products come to stand on their own as *artworks*, independent from the artist's activity and available for an anonymous audience, are themselves historically dated and societally situated phenomena.<sup>15</sup>

I think the future of reformational aesthetics lies in pursuing this shift in emphasis, from artworks as such to the cultural institutions and broader

societal structures that make artworks possible, and could eventually also make them impossible. In fact, a number of reformational scholars are already pursuing this shift, both theoretically and empirically.<sup>16</sup> Recently, for example, I have investigated the transformation in self-understanding that occurs when artists no longer see themselves as isolated geniuses in pursuit of originality but as gifted participants in an interactive process where nonartists have a legitimate role. The preferred result, I argue, is a creative and necessary tension between the ideal of artistic authenticity and the ideal of social responsibility. This dialectic can apply to other participants just as much as it holds for professional artists. Hence collaborative public projects such as the AIDS Quilt and *The Great Wall of Los Angeles* and *Womanhouse* have special social and philosophical significance. Such art “encourages us to regard artists as community members who make crucial contributions to a cultural environment that is itself essential to the well-being of all communities in contemporary society.” It suggests a relationship of “directed co-responsibility” between artists and their public: “co-responsibility, because all of us have a stake in the environs we inhabit; directed, because some of us—the artists—have special contributions to make to the care of that environment.”<sup>17</sup>

This transformation has vast implications for arts education, arts organizations, and programs of public and private arts funding. But is not simply an intellectual reorientation: it arises in part from political and economic developments. The critical issue is what we should make of these changes. With appropriate and supple categories at hand, reformational scholars can use these changes to point artists, educators, critics, community activists, arts funders, and arts administrators past the Scylla of modernist elitism and the Charybdis of postmodern consumerism. One might ask, however, “What are the implications and advantages of this shift for reformational aesthetics itself?” Let me mention two advantages.

First, it will help reframe the debate between Wolterstorff and Seerveld over the legitimacy of what Wolterstorff calls “the institution of high art” and what Seerveld calls “art as such.”<sup>18</sup> This debate reached a stalemate, it seems to me, because neither scholar challenged their shared assumption that works of art lie at the center of what art is and does. By asking about cultural institutions and societal structures instead, we can pose broader questions about how the Western artworld participates in societal patterns and trends either detrimental or conducive to human flourishing and the renewal of creation. Such questions, which not have been the concern of mainstream philosophical aesthetics since Kant, are clearly important to both Wolterstorff and Seerveld. But a work-centered paradigm imported from the mainstream has restricted the ways in which such questions are asked. By excluding them, almost by definition, from the field of philosophical thought about art, mainstream philosophers have contributed to both hyperinflating and marginalizing the worth of artistic efforts. This has also helped isolate philosophy from other fields of inquiry and critique, especially in the social sciences.

Second, following the path from artworks to institutions will bring into aesthetics the critique of the artwork that artists themselves carried out for most of the past century. It has always felt odd to watch fellow philoso-

phers force their standard aesthetic categories upon the provocations of dada, neo-dada, earth art, and the like, when these attack the very same categories, not through philosophical argument, but through direct action. Philosophers need to reexamine their categories, and where necessary change them, to make sense of ongoing cultural developments. This does not imply fawning endorsements of whatever artists are up to. But it does imply understanding the reasons and motivations for artists' dissatisfaction with the cultural, political, and economic settings in which their efforts take place. It also implies that philosophers might learn something significant from practitioners in the field about the perils and promise of artistic efforts in a society such as ours. In short, philosophers would be better equipped to be the cultural coworkers that reformational aestheticians have tried to be.

### 3. *Aesthetics and Cultural Theory*

The phrase "cultural coworkers" introduces the third new direction in reformational aesthetics. This one may sound paradoxical, since it involves a turn from aesthetics to cultural theory. Another way to formulate the turn would be that the concerns of philosophical aesthetics will move closer to cultural studies, social theory, and a philosophy of culture. In fact, this redefinition of the field is underway in Europe and on other continents. Eventually it will pervade Anglo-American aesthetics as well, where one already sees greater attention paid to popular culture, urban design, environmental aesthetics, and the human body. In Germany the humanities (*Geisteswissenschaften*) are being redesignated as cultural sciences (*Kulturwissenschaften*). This implies a shift from studying the human mind (*Geist*) to studying materially embedded and embodied cultures (*Kultur*). Moving from aesthetics to cultural theory would require a similar shift within philosophy.<sup>19</sup>

Reformational aesthetics has never fully embraced the separations between mind and body and between mental and physical labor that sustained traditional aesthetics and its focus on fine art. Rookmaaker found more hope for Western culture in jazz and the "applied arts" than in the modern art movement. Seerveld includes play, lifestyle, liturgy, and many other ordinary phenomena within the field of aesthetics. Both he and Wolterstorff tie the fine arts to the so-called cultural mandate. And Wolterstorff has long insisted that art involves the honorable work of one's hands on materials from God's good creation. All three scholars share an anti-elitism that resists both the deification of artistic genius and the denigration of daily life.

Yet their theories are not set up to deal with newer themes in cultural studies and social theory. One such theme is the question of power and oppression and how these play out in contemporary culture. Another is the question of cultural pluralism and how to do justice to it in one's theory without making the fact of cultural diversity the final word on norms for cultural practices. A third question pertains to the implications of electronic media and information technologies for how cultural products and events are made, disseminated, and experienced. And a fourth question concerns the nature and operations of systemic distortions in contempo-



rary culture, including the arts—distortions that have sources in economic and political structures but do not leave the field of aesthetics unaffected.

The need for a new approach becomes clear when one tries to address interdisciplinary questions concerning the role of the arts in contemporary society. Many examples can be found in debates about so-called “postmodernism.” One cannot adequately grasp the complex issues in such debates, it seems to me, if one thinks that we are simply dealing with worldviews or spirits at work in culture. Nor can one develop a sufficiently comprehensive account by employing an action-theoretic model. That is why, in an essay whose title alludes to writings by both Rookmaaker and Seerveld, I have posed a different question from the ones that typically arise when Christians enter these debates. “Postmodern Arts and the Birth of A Democratic Culture” asks what contemporary practices, products, and institutions in the arts can contribute to the democratization of culture.<sup>20</sup> I raise this question against the backdrop of several hypotheses concerning mutual dependencies among political, economic, and cultural democracy. I pursue it in light of societal trends that seem to block or reverse the development of a democratic culture. And, drawing on my own experience as Board President of the Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts in Grand Rapids, Michigan, I indicate how, despite the apparent obstacles, artists and arts organizations can work to strengthen rather than undermine cultural democracy. An approach along these lines avoids the habit among some Christian critics to divide cultural endeavors between the redeemed sheep and reprobate goats. It calls attention to deep struggles over power, pluralism, new media, and systemic distortions in which all cultural workers have a stake. And it resists the bleak pessimism and naive optimism toward which various other commentators on “postmodernism” tend.

The disciplinary framework of traditional aesthetics, and its modification by earlier reformational scholars, cannot provide the theoretical resources needed to address such issues. Usually the issues come up in footnotes or asides to the discussion of art and aesthetic experience.<sup>21</sup> If we moved toward cultural theory, however, and away from aesthetics as traditionally defined, these newer themes would become leading concerns, and traditional aesthetic categories would undergo redescription. We could still talk about the nature and role of the arts and of the aesthetic dimension, but such discussions would become ways to address issues of power, cultural pluralism, technological mediation, and systemic distortion. In effect, reformational philosophers would be recapitulating in theory the creative border crossing that pervades contemporary arts. For scholars who have a calling to be agents of healing and renewal, and who hear the cries of the oppressed, the wounds of God’s world require nothing less than an ongoing transformation of reformational aesthetics.<sup>22</sup>

*Institute for Christian Studies, Toronto*

#### NOTES

1. Examples of the Evangelical tradition of aesthetic reflection include

Leland Ryken, *The Liberated Imagination: Thinking Christianly about the Arts* (Wheaton, Ill.: H. Shaw, 1989); Gene Edward Veith, Jr., *State of the Arts: From Bezalel to Mapplethorpe* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1991); and Roger Lundin, *The Culture of Interpretation: Christian Faith and the Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1993). Contemporary expressions of the sacramental tradition include James Alfred Martin, *Beauty and Holiness: The Dialogue between Aesthetics and Religion* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990); Richard Viladesau, *Theological Aesthetics: God in Imagination, Beauty, and Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); and Frank Burch Brown, *Good Taste, Bad Taste, and Christian Taste: Aesthetics in Religious Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). My essay discusses several texts in the reformational tradition, so these will not be listed here. For a successful fusion of Evangelical language and reformational concepts, see Adrienne Chaplin, Hilary Brand, and Graham Cray, *Art and Soul: Signposts for Christians in the Arts*, 2d ed. (Carlisle, UK: Piquant; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2001).

2. Excellent introductions to Kuyper's thought can be found in two publications marking the centennial of Kuyper's "Stone Lectures" at Princeton Theological Seminary in 1898: James D. Bratt, ed., *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), and Peter S. Heslam: *Creating a Christian Worldview: Abraham Kuyper's Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998). The lectures themselves are available as Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1975, c1931).

3. For helpful explications of this narrative that address a general audience, see Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1985), and Brian J. Walsh and J. Richard Middleton, *The Transforming Vision: Shaping a Christian World View* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1984). The most important philosophical source for these explications is Herman Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought* (1953-1958), trans. David H. Freeman et al., reprint ed., 4 vols. (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1969); see especially vol. 1. Since Dooyeweerd does not emphasize the fourth theme of "fulfillment" or "renewal" or "consummation," the narrative is often summarized as having three themes (Creation/Fall/Redemption)—inappropriately, it seems to me, given the importance of eschatology in Reformed theology. See, for example, Gordon Spykman, *Reformational Theology: A New Paradigm for Doing Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1992), especially Part Five, "The Consummation" (pp. 513-60). The eschatological theme receives its due in a recent updating of this reformational narrative by Cornelius Plantinga Jr., who emphasizes "longing and hope" in *Engaging God's World: A Reformed Vision of Faith, Learning, and Living* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002).

4. His writings are now collected in *The Complete Works of H. R. Rookmaaker*, ed. Marleen Hengelaar-Rookmaaker, 6 vols. (Carlisle, UK: Piquant, 2002).

5. A complementary account of these developments is provided by the art historian Graham Birtwistle, a younger colleague of the late Hans Rookmaaker at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam: G. M. Birtwistle, "Filosofie van de kunst en de esthetica" ["Philosophy of Art and Aesthetics"], in the collection *Kennis en werkelijkheid: Tweede inleiding tot en christelijke filosofie* ["Knowledge and Reality: Second Introduction to a Christian Philosophy"], ed. R. Van Woudenberg (Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn; Kampen: Kok, 1996), pp. 342-70.

6. H. R. Rookmaaker, *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture* (London: InterVarsity Press, 1970). A decade earlier Dooyeweerd had published a series of

lectures titled *In the Twilight of Western Thought: Studies in the Pretended Autonomy of Philosophical Thought* (Philadelphia, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1960). Hans Sedlmayr's approach to the visual arts is best exemplified by *Verlust der Mitte: Die bildende Kunst des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts als Symptom und Symbol der Zeit* (Salzburg: Müller, 1948) and by *Kunst und Wahrheit: Zur Theorie und Methode der Kunstgeschichte* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1958).

7. Calvin G. Seerveld, *Rainbows for the Fallen World: Aesthetic Life and Artistic Task* (Toronto: Toronto Tuppence Press, 1980). Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Art in Action: Toward a Christian Aesthetic* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1980). Jeremy Begbie's *Voicing Creation's Praise: Towards a Theology of the Arts* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991) has made Seerveld and Wolterstorff's aesthetic theories more widely known among English-speaking Christians. His own intellectual roots seem to lie primarily in Paul Tillich and the sacramental tradition, however. See Begbie's *Theology, Music, and Time* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000) and *Beholding the Glory: Incarnation through the Arts*, ed. Jeremy Begbie (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2000).

8. Although one such function is the fictive projection of a world, Wolterstorff insists that we not confuse world projection with the expression of a worldview. He gives a detailed and rigorous account of world projection in *Works and Worlds of Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), a technical companion volume to *Art in Action*.

9. Suzanne Lacy, ed., *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995).

10. Examples and articulations of this model that arise from the reformational tradition can be found in Lambert Zuidervaart and Henry Luttikhuisen, eds., *The Arts, Community and Cultural Democracy* (London: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000). On the diverse social roles of visual artists and their audiences, see Timothy Van Laar and Leonard Diepeveen, *Active Sights: Art as Social Interaction* (Mountain View, Calif.: Mayfield, 1998).

11. Johan Snyman, "Suffering in High and Low Relief: War Memorials and the Moral Imperative," in Lambert Zuidervaart and Henry Luttikhuisen, eds., *Pledges of Jubilee: Essays on the Arts and Culture, in Honor of Calvin G. Seerveld* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), p. 192.

12. Snyman, p. 209.

13. For another example of close, multidimensional, and contextual art criticism that emphasizes interactivity, see Peter Enneson, "Senggih's *The Survivors*: An Exercise in Artwriting," in *Pledges of Jubilee*, pp. 227-48. In the same volume (pp. 78-104), Henry M. Luttikhuisen's "Serving Vintage Wisdom: Art Historiography in the Neo-Calvinian Tradition" provides illuminating comparisons and criticisms of Rookmaaker and Seerveld's approaches to art history.

14. In correspondence about this essay, Nick Wolterstorff has suggested that *Art in Action* makes actions rather than works of art central, but it treats actions "too atomistically." Subsequently he has developed a more holistic idea of "social practices" and has argued that we should think of the arts in terms of ongoing composition-, reception-, and performance-practices. See, for example, his seminal essay "Philosophy of Art after Analysis and Romanticism," in *Analytic Aesthetics*, ed. Richard Shusterman (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), pp. 32-58. I am not convinced that his older account of "art in action" can avoid making works of art central, since the actions in question are all ones that have works of art as their objects or instruments. The notion of social practices is more promising in this regard, although I wonder how easily it can be applied to conceptual art, new genre public art, mass-mediated art, and the new infor-

mation technologies.

15. I explore the philosophical implications of historicizing “the artwork” in an essay on Dooyeweerd’s cultural theory titled “Fantastic Things: Critical Notes toward a Social Ontology of the Arts,” *Philosophia Reformata* (1995): 37-54.

16. This is particularly so in studies of the electronic media and popular culture, which do not have the same indebtedness to modern aesthetics as do studies of the so-called fine arts. An especially instructive interdisciplinary attempt to understand and evaluate youth culture can be found in *Dancing in the Dark: Youth, Popular Culture, and the Electronic Media* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991). One of that book’s six co-authors, William D. Romanowski, has since published a couple of studies that wed Seerveldian aesthetics to a social-scientific critique: *Pop Culture Wars: Religion and the Role of Entertainment in American Life* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1996) and *Eyes Wide Open: Looking for God in Popular Culture* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2001).

17. Lambert Zuidervaart, “Creative Border Crossing in New Public Culture,” in *Literature and the Renewal of the Public Sphere*, ed. Susan VanZanten Gallagher and Mark D. Walhout (London: Macmillan Press; New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), pp. 206-224; the quotation is from p. 222.

18. For a fascinating exchange between these two philosophers, in the form of side-by-side reviews of each other’s books, see “Two Writers Engage in Rainbow Action,” in the Toronto-based magazine *Vanguard* 10.6 (November/December 1980): 4-5, 18-19. Seerveld’s review has been reprinted as “Cal Looks at Nick: A Response to Nicholas Wolterstorff’s *Art in Action*,” in *The Fields of the Lord: A Seerveld Reader*, ed. Craig Bartholomew (Carlisle, UK: Piquant; Toronto: Toronto Tuppence Press, 2000), pp. 360-64.

19. Nick Wolterstorff has suggested in correspondence that my emphases on “cultural institutions” and “cultural theory” remain too close to the old way of thinking that he and I wish to reform. He would rather emphasize social practices, which account for the cultural institutions, and have social theory rather than cultural theory be the embracing theoretical framework. His worry could simply reflect a semantic difference tied to the disparate intellectual sources from which our vocabularies derive—roughly, Alasdair MacIntyre in Wolterstorff’s case, and Theodor W. Adorno and Jürgen Habermas in my own. As I explain in greater detail elsewhere, I use “culture” to refer to “the entire network of practices, products and institutions through which traditions are shaped and transmitted, social solidarities are generated and contested and personal identities are molded and embraced.” On this understanding, a proper cultural theory will necessarily also be a social theory, but not every social theory will be a cultural theory. Nor can the work of the cultural sciences (“humanities,” in an older vocabulary) simply be absorbed into the social sciences, even though the traditional isolation of the former from the latter can no longer withstand critical scrutiny. See Lambert Zuidervaart, “Postmodern Arts and the Birth of a Democratic Culture,” in *The Arts, Community and Cultural Democracy*, pp. 15-39; the quotation is from p. 22.

20. In *The Arts, Community and Cultural Democracy*, pp. 15-39. In the same volume (pp. 1-12), my essay “Art Is No Fringe: An Introduction” indicates that cultural theory and social theory need to join hands if scholars and artists are to address “dramatic shifts in the structure of society” and “not merely react to disturbances on the surface of culture” (p. 1). I also indicate the continuity and discontinuity between the approach I recommend and that taken by Abraham Kuyper in his writings on Calvinism and the arts (see pp. 6-10).

21. This is not to deny that the social and political underpinnings of the arts

show up more clearly in Seerveld's recent writings, however, nor to ignore Wolterstorff's important writings on political and economic topics. See Calvin Seerveld, *Bearing Fresh Olive Leaves: Alternative Steps in Understanding Art* (Carlisle, UK: Piquant; Toronto: Toronto Tuppence Press, 2000) and Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1983).

22. An earlier version of this essay was presented in September 2001 at the conference "Christian Scholarship . . . for What?," in a session on "New Directions in Christian Philosophy" organized by the Calvin College Philosophy Department. I wish to thank my fellow panelists and audience members for their helpful comments and questions.