

The Vanity of Small Differences: Empirical Studies of Artistic Value and Extrinsic Factors*

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Abstract

To what extent are factors that are extrinsic to the artwork relevant to judgments of artistic value? One might approach this question using traditional philosophical methods, but one can also approach it using empirical methods; that is, by doing experimental philosophical aesthetics. This paper provides an example of the latter approach. We report two empirical studies that examine the significance of three sorts of extrinsic factors for judgments of artistic value: the causal-historical factor of contagion, the ontological factor of uniqueness, and the contextual factor of appreciative environment. In particular, we explore the difference in the context of appreciation by performing a study in a museum and a study in the lab. Our studies affirm previous empirical research, primarily done in lab settings, that suggests some extrinsic factors can in fact make a difference to the evaluation of art. We found that contagion made a difference to judgments of artistic value in both a museum and a lab setting. These results are congruent with recent philosophical work that defends the significance of authenticity in the artistic realm. However, we only found that uniqueness made a difference in a lab setting, but not in a museum setting. In turn, this difference suggests that the context of appreciation may make a difference to judgments of artistic value. Of broader significance, these studies show the value of experimental philosophical aesthetics and the value of doing *in situ* empirical research on art.

In this paper, we report two empirical studies that examine three extrinsic factors which might be thought relevant to judgments of artistic value but are underexplored in the philosophical and empirical literature on artistic value: the causal-historical factor of contagion, the ontological factor of uniqueness, and the contextual factor of appreciative environment. Of particular interest is that one of the studies was done not in the lab, but in the museum: we conducted it on site during Grayson Perry's *The Vanity of Small Differences* exhibit at Temple Newsam House in Leeds, UK. This allowed us to directly explore the effect of the appreciative context on judgments of artistic value.

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As is discussed below, the results of our studies are intriguing. The studies confirm previous experimental research which suggests that some extrinsic factors can make a difference to the evaluation of art. In particular, we found that the causal-historical factor of contagion made a difference to judgments of artistic value in both a museum and a lab setting. This is in line with results from previous studies. On the other hand, we did not find that the ontological factor of uniqueness had a univocal effect. Uniqueness made a difference in a lab setting but not in a museum setting. And this difference also suggests that the contextual factor of appreciative environment may make a difference to judgments of artistic value.

As the reader will see, we also learned a few lessons about doing *in situ* aesthetic research. We'll say more about the challenges and prospects of this sort of research. We'll also say more about the relevance of the experimental results for philosophical thinking about artistic value.

1. Theoretical Background

1.1. Artistic Value and the Causal-Historical Factor of Contagion

The dominant view in contemporary philosophical aesthetics is that causal-historical factors such as artists' intentions, their achievements, and the art-historical contexts of their creations are relevant to artistic appreciation and evaluation (Walton 1970; Danto 1981). So, for example, one work of art might be artistically better than another simply in virtue of being a greater achievement (Currie 1989). Or a work may possess the artistic value it has because of its relation to, and commentary on, a prior work of art (Levinson 2007).

In the section, we focus on a different sort of causal-historical factor which has been extensively explored by psychologists but only minimally addressed by philosophers of art: contagion. *Contagion* refers to "the belief that, through physical contact, objects can take on a special quality or essence" (Newman & Bloom 2012: 559). Contagion is driven by the psychological mechanism of magical thinking (Huang et al 2017). In turn, contagion influences the evaluation of objects. For example, an object may be thought to be authentic, and hence valuable, insofar as it has acquired some non-physical essence from an individual (Newman & Dhar 2014; Newman 2016; Newman & R. Smith 2016a; Newman & R. Smith 2016b).

The effect of contagion has been studied in the context of consumer research, in the lab and in the wild. For example, among the collection of the Central Midwest Barry Manilow Fan Club, the most valuable items are ones that "actually touched Barry" (O'Guinn 1991; Newman et al 2011; Newman & Bloom 2014; Huang et al 2017). The effect of contagion has also been studied in the context of evaluation of art, albeit only in the lab and only focused on judgments about monetary value (Newman & Bloom 2012).

Talk of "magical thinking" may tempt the reader to think that contagion effects on judgments of value are unambiguously irrational and, hence, irrelevant. We are, if this is right, led astray when magical thinking affects our judgments about art, as is allegedly manifested in a contagion effect. But this alleged irrationality is

not obvious. Carolyn Korsmeyer (2012) has recently argued that the “transitivity of touch” (that is, contagion) can be vindicated; that is, she argues that aesthetic concern for the authentic can be defended. So even if contagion effects are rooted in magical thinking, they are not unambiguously irrational factors which lead us astray from correct judgments about art.

1.2. Artistic Value and the Ontological Factor of Uniqueness

Uniqueness refers to the belief that “original art objects are unique and thus, by definition, are a scarce commodity” (Newman & Bloom 2012: 560). The effect of uniqueness is most readily recognized in the ordinary preference for original artworks over copies. Yet, one might also wonder whether this ordinary preference is truly driven by an ontological factor—the numeric rarity of an artwork—as opposed to a causal-historical factor, such as contagion. After all, the originals may be seen as containing an essence not contained by the copies. In that respect, contemporary art arguably provides excellent examples for disentangling uniqueness from contagion: there exist many works that have multiple authentic editions or instances rather than mere copies (R. Smith, Newman, & Dhar 2016).

The effect of uniqueness on the evaluation of art has also been studied in the lab (Newman & Bloom 2012). Uniqueness was found to influence judgments about the monetary value of a work. Moreover, uniqueness was found to interact with contagion, such that “the effect of high versus low contact [that is, contagion] was much larger when there was only one original compared with when there were 100 [that is, uniqueness]” (Newman & Bloom 2012: 567). Despite this result, it remains an open question whether uniqueness—and, indeed, contagion—affects people’s judgments of *artistic* value. The question remains open because it is unknown whether people’s judgments of monetary value truly reflect their own judgments of artistic value. Perhaps they do, but it might also be that judgments of the monetary value of works of art float free of judgments of artistic quality; that is, they may reflect estimates about what is financially valued by others rather than what is valued as art by oneself.

1.3. Artistic Value and the Contextual Factor of Appreciative Environment

Contextualism in philosophy of art is standardly defined by a focus on the context of artistic production:

Contextualism is the thesis that a work of art is an artifact of a particular sort, an object or structure that is the product of human invention at a particular time and place, by a particular individual or individuals, and that that fact has consequences for how one properly experiences, understands, and evaluates works of art.
(Levinson 2007)

But that is not the only potentially relevant context in the realm of art. There are also the contexts—including physical, historical, artistic—in which audiences encounter

works of art. In particular, given a contemporary picture of cognition on which the mind is “not incidentally but *intimately* embodied and *intimately* embedded in its world”, we have reasons to think that the environment can influence psychological processes of artistic evaluation (Haugeland 1995/1998: 237; see also Clark 1997; Nannicelli 2019). Yet, it is relatively recent that psychologists of art have recognized the significance of the contextual factor of appreciative environment in theorizing about artistic evaluation (Leder et al 2004; Bullot and Reber 2013; Leder & Nadal 2014; Gartus & Leder 2014; McCallum, Mitchell, & Scott-Phillips forthcoming).

In the last couple of decades, only a small number of studies on art have been done *in situ*, such as in a museum, as opposed to in the lab (Locher, L. Smith, & J. Smith 1999; J. Smith & L. Smith 2011; Brieber et al 2014; L. Smith 2014; Brieber, Leder, & Nadal 2015; Brieber, Nadal, & Leder 2015; Pelowski et al 2017). In general, participants evaluate art more positively *in situ*, as compared to in the lab. Researchers have identified the following factors as potentially explaining this difference: immediacy and physical presence, (perceived) physical remnants of artists’ touch and effort, perceived authenticity, categorizing the objects as “art”, and size (Pelowski et al 2017).

There are many challenges to conducting studies in a museum (L. Smith 2014). In a lab, it is relatively easy to ethically implement experimental manipulations, secure access to a participant pool (traditionally, college-age students), and recruit enough participants for adequate power. All three factors are relatively difficult to execute in a museum. As such, some museum studies are only observational (for example, J. Smith & L. Smith 2011). And many museum studies still use traditional but unrepresentative college-age students as participants (for example, Locher, L. Smith, & J. Smith 1999; Brieber et al 2014; Brieber, Leder, & Nadal 2015; Brieber, Nadal, & Leder 2015). Finally, many museum studies are relatively underpowered by today’s standards (for example, Gartus and Leder 2014; Brieber, Leder, & Nadal 2015).

2. Study 1: *In Situ*

2.1. *Theoretical Rationale*

To study the influence of contagion and uniqueness on artistic evaluation *in situ*, we conducted an experiment during Grayson Perry’s *The Vanity of Small Differences* exhibit at Temple Newsam House in Leeds, UK. Temple Newsam House was a somewhat unusual venue for this exhibit because it was originally built as a country house, not a “white cube” gallery or art museum. There was thus a special interest in the interplay between Perry’s contemporary tapestries and its 19th century environment for artistic appreciation. However, for the purpose of our experiment, the venue was unambiguously used for the art exhibit, and thus constitutes an *in situ* context of appreciation.

Like many other contemporary artists, Perry did not physically make the works that are credited to him (Arts Council Collection 2018). Instead, for the tapestries in this exhibit, he designed the image on the computer and then sent the

files to a manufacturer in Flanders, where other people programmed computers that controlled the looms, sourced and dyed the yarns, and laced the looms. For studying the effect of contagion, we investigated whether this information about the works' causal history influenced exhibit visitors' artistic evaluations. We predicted that it would.

Like many other contemporary artworks, multiple editions of the tapestries exist (Arts Council Collection 2018). For each design of the tapestries, eight instances were made: six for display and two for artist's proofs. Unlike many other objects in art museums, Perry's tapestries are not literally one of a kind. (Still, Perry was also adamant that only one edition of a design can be shown in any given exhibit.) For studying the effect of uniqueness, we investigated whether this information about the works' ontological status influenced exhibit visitors' artistic evaluations. Again, we predicted that it would.

2.2. Participants

A total of 286 adult visitors who paid the standard museum entrance fee participated in this study. They were given a small gift related to the exhibit in exchange for their participation in this study. 76 visitors self-identified as men, 195 self-identified as women, 1 self-identified as non-binary, and 14 did not respond to the gender question. Only 19 participants did not self-report their age; of the ones who did, the mean was 47.3 years, the median was 52 years, and the minimum and maximum were 18 years and 79 years.

Participants were randomly assigned into one of two conditions. 144 participants were in the experimental condition, in which information about the causal history and ontological status of Perry's tapestries was given prior to questions about their artistic value. 142 participants were in the control condition, in which information about the causal history and ontological status of Perry's tapestries was given after questions about their artistic value.

2.3. Procedure and Materials

Participants viewed six tapestries by Grayson Perry *in situ*, in the intended order of the exhibit: 1. *The Adoration of the Cage Fighters*, 2. *The Agony in the Car Park*, 3. *Expulsion from Number 8 Eden Close*, 4. *The Annunciation of the Virgin Deal*, 5. *The Upper Class at Bay*, 6. *#Lamentation*.

Before they entered the exhibit, participants received a paper questionnaire packet to complete. Participants were explicitly instructed to "go through this questionnaire packet page by page, and **do not return to the previous page after you have moved on to the next one**".

In the experimental condition, participants received the following information at the start (all emphases are reproduced as they were in the materials):

Grayson Perry initially designed each of the six tapestries in Photoshop.

Each of the six tapestries **were then woven by computer-operated machinery** at the Flanders Tapestries in Belgium. Perry's computer files were adapted for programming the computers that control the looms. With the design finalised, the actual process of weaving each tapestry then took about 5 hours.

Eight identical copies of each tapestry were then produced.

In the control condition, participants received the same exact information, but only at the end of the packet. Note that since our aim was to conduct this experiment as part of—and without detracting from—visitors' ordinary museum-going experience, we were only able to experimentally manipulate information order as a difference in emphasis; the information given about causal history and ontological status can also be found online and, albeit in smaller print, as part of the exhibit.

Participants were asked for their artistic evaluations for each of the six tapestries. Participants circled their response to the statement

This tapestry is of high artistic quality.

on a 7-point agree-disagree scale. Participants were given an image of the tapestry in the questionnaire packet for reference.

Participants then responded to statements about the exhibit in the following order. First, there were statements related to contagion (partly drawn from Newman & Dhar 2014):

Each tapestry embodies Grayson Perry's very being.
Each tapestry contains the true essence of Grayson Perry.
Each tapestry gets its special aura from Grayson Perry.

Second, there were statements related to uniqueness:

Each tapestry on display is very rare for an artwork.
Each tapestry on display is very scarce.
Each tapestry on display is unique.

Participants also responded to these questions on a 7-point agree-disagree scale. Finally, participants responded to demographic questions. In addition to standard questions about age and gender, participants also responded to questions about their level of experience with art on a 7-point scale:

How often do you go to art museums, art galleries, and art exhibitions?
How interested are you in contemporary art?
How educated are you in the fine arts?

And participants also responded to questions about their prior knowledge of the exhibit on a 7-point scale:

**How much did you know about Grayson Perry before this exhibit?
How much did you know about the production of tapestries?**

We note that we asked the experience and knowledge questions in order to better understand our sample demographic in order to control for potential factors outside of the ones that we were primarily investigating: the causal-historical factor of contagion and the ontological factor of uniqueness. As such, we did not make any predictions about the influence of experience and knowledge on artistic evaluation.

2.4. Preliminary Analyses and Discussion

Reliability analyses were performed on participant responses. There was very strong agreement on participants' artistic evaluations of the six tapestries (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.970$), and so they were averaged into an *artistic evaluation* rating for subsequent analyses. There was strong agreement on participants' responses to contagion questions (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.852$), and so they were averaged into a *contagion* rating for subsequent analyses. There was strong agreement on participants' responses to uniqueness questions (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.706$), and so they were averaged into a *uniqueness* rating for subsequent analyses. For the two extrinsic factors of interest, we chose to ask about them in a few different ways to better capture the psychological construct, even though we realize that the exact phrases might involve subtle conceptual differences. The reliability analyses suggest that there is indeed a stable psychological construct that is captured by the different ways of asking about the respective extrinsic factors.

In addition, there was strong agreement on participants' responses to questions about their level of experience with art (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.786$), and so they were averaged into an *experience with art* rating for subsequent analyses. However, there was only moderate agreement on participants' responses to questions about their prior knowledge of the exhibit (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.653$), and so the two questions were treated as separate for subsequent analyses.

As we have noted, given the constraints of conducting a study *in situ*, we were only able to include a weak experimental manipulation as a matter of emphasis. Our own subjective impression was that the experimental manipulation was not very successful, in the relatively uncontrolled environment: we observed some participants ignoring the explicit instruction of going through the packet page and page and not turn back. Indeed, statistical analyses confirmed our subjective impression. For *contagion*, the difference between the experimental group ($M = 4.90$; $SD = 1.50$) and the control group ($M = 5.19$; $SD = 1.38$) is not statistically significant ($p = 0.094$; Cohen's $d = 0.202$). For *uniqueness*, the difference between the experimental group ($M = 4.97$; $SD = 1.59$) and the control group ($M = 5.36$; $SD = 1.46$) is statistically significant but small ($p = 0.034$; Cohen's $d = 0.256$).

2.5. Main Analysis and Discussion

Given that the experimental manipulation was not very successful, we analyzed the data set in its entirety and focused on uncovering the relationships between participants' perceptions of contagion and uniqueness and their artistic evaluations. We specified a linear mixed model for the main analysis: *artistic evaluation* was defined as the dependent variable; *contagion*, *uniqueness*, and their interaction were examined as fixed effects; and the demographic variables of experience with art, prior knowledge about Perry, and prior knowledge about tapestry were treated as random effects.

Effect	Estimate [95% CI]	SE	df	t	p
(Intercept)	6.106 [5.945, 6.268]	0.082	268	74.171	< 0.001
Contagion	0.236 [0.116, 0.355]	0.061	267	3.858	< 0.001
Uniqueness	0.077 [-0.041, 0.195]	0.060	267	1.283	0.201
Contagion * Uniqueness	-0.011 [-0.071, 0.048]	0.030	267	-0.368	0.713

Table 1. Parameter Estimates for the Linear Mixed Model in Study 1.

The main results of our *in situ* study partly coheres with, but also partly contradicts, previous lab study findings (Table 1). In congruence with previous lab study findings and our own prediction, we found a direct relationship between contagion and artistic evaluation ($p < 0.001$). That is, to the extent that participants thought that the tapestries took on Perry's essence, they made more positive artistic judgments of the tapestries. However, contrary to previous lab study findings and our own prediction, we did not find a relationship between uniqueness and artistic evaluation ($p = 0.201$) and we did not find an interaction between contagion and uniqueness ($p = 0.713$). That is, it does not appear that participants' thoughts of the uniqueness of the tapestries—either by itself or in combination with participants' thoughts on contagion—affected their artistic judgments of the tapestries. We will return to hypothesize about these results in the general discussion.

3. Study 2: In the Lab

3.1. Theoretical Rationale

We wondered whether the discrepancy between the results of our *in situ* study and the results of extant lab research, with respect to the ontological factor of uniqueness, is due to the difference in appreciative environment. As such, we sought to investigate this contextual factor with a follow-up study online in which participants viewed the same artworks and answered the same questions.

3.2. Participants

A total of 199 participants were recruited via Amazon Mechanical Turk in exchange for standard market-rate monetary compensation. Participation was restricted to those whose computer's geographical location was identified as being in

the United States of America. 106 participants self-identified as men, 92 self-identified as women, and 1 did not respond. Only 3 participants did not self-report their age; of the ones who did, the mean was 34.2 years, the median was 31 years, and the minimum and maximum were 18 years and 68 years.

In the same setup as Study 1, participants were randomly assigned into one of two conditions. 100 participants were in the experimental condition. 99 participants were in the control condition.

3.3. Procedure and Materials

Participants answered the exact same questions, with the exact same manipulation, as implemented in Qualtrics. Participants viewed digital reproductions of the tapestries as components of the questionnaire itself.

3.4. Preliminary Analyses and Discussion

Reliability analyses were performed on participant responses along several dimensions. There was very strong agreement on participants' artistic evaluations of the six tapestries (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.920$), and so they were averaged into an *artistic evaluation* rating for subsequent analyses. There was strong agreement on participants' responses to contagion questions (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.838$), and so they were averaged into a *contagion* rating for subsequent analyses. There was only a moderate agreement on participants' responses to uniqueness questions (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.603$), but they were—in order to facilitate comparisons to Study 1—still averaged into a *uniqueness* rating for subsequent analyses. There was strong agreement on participants' responses to questions about their level of experience with art (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.769$), and so they were averaged into an *experience with art* rating for subsequent analyses. However, there was only moderate agreement on participants' responses to questions about their prior knowledge of the exhibit (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.618$), and so the two questions were treated as separate for subsequent analyses.

Again, in order facilitate comparisons to Study 1, we used the same experimental manipulation. The online questionnaire was programmed such that participants could not return to modify their answers once they moved on from one section (for example, artistic evaluation statements) to another (for example, contagion and uniqueness statements). Unfortunately, contrary to our expectation, the experimental manipulation was still unsuccessful. For *contagion*, the difference between the experimental group ($M = 4.95$; $SD = 1.16$) and the control group ($M = 4.96$; $SD = 1.07$) was not statistically significant ($p = 0.935$). For *uniqueness*, the difference between the experimental group ($M = 4.87$; $SD = 1.16$) and the control group ($M = 4.99$; $SD = 1.09$) was not statistically significant ($p = 0.428$). These preliminary analyses results suggest that the experimental manipulation was too weak: in our studies, participants were either given factual information about historical and ontological sources of value or not; by contrast, in previous experiments (for example, Newman and Bloom 2012: Study 5) participants were

given drastically different information, such as being told about a hands-on vs. hands-off process (for contagion) and about 1 vs. 100 sculptures (for uniqueness).

3.5. Main Analysis and Discussion

Given that the experimental manipulation was not successful, we once again analyzed the data set in its entirety and focused on uncovering the relationships between participants' perceptions of contagion and uniqueness and their artistic evaluations. We specified a linear mixed model identical to the one used for Study 1.

Effect	Estimate [95% CI]	SE	df	t	p
(Intercept)	4.752 [4.581, 4.924]	0.088	104	54.235	< 0.001
Contagion	0.231 [0.060, 0.401]	0.087	188	2.648	0.009
Uniqueness	0.412 [0.244, 0.581]	0.086	187	4.794	< 0.001
Contagion * Uniqueness	-0.007 [-0.097, 0.084]	0.046	189	-0.143	0.887

Table 2. Parameter Estimates for the Linear Mixed Model in Study 2.

The main results of our online study were overall more in line with previous lab study findings, and less in line with our *in situ* study (Table 2). We again found a relationship between contagion and artistic evaluation ($p = 0.009$). That is, to the extent that participants thought that the tapestries took on Perry's essence, they made more positive artistic judgments of the tapestries. However, in this study, in congruence with previous studies, we also found a relationship between uniqueness and artistic evaluation ($p < 0.001$). That is, to the extent that participants thought that the tapestries were unique, they made more positive artistic judgments of the tapestries. In contrast to previous lab studies, we did not find an interaction between contagion and uniqueness ($p = 0.887$). That is, participants' thoughts about contagion and their thoughts about uniqueness appear to independently influence their artistic judgments. Given these more nuanced, but no less puzzling, results, we will look across both studies and hypothesize about salient differences in the general discussion.

4. General Discussion

4.1. Artistic Value and the Causal-Historical Factor of Contagion

Across our studies, we found a positive relationship between people's perception of the artist's contact with an artwork and their artistic evaluation of that work. In this respect, our studies affirmed previous lab study findings on contagion in particular, and magical thinking in general. However, our studies also go beyond previous ones in two important respects. First, previous studies were primarily conducted in the context of consumer research, and so focused on judgments about monetary value; by contrast, our studies explicitly focused on judgments of artistic value, and so extends the study of this extrinsic factor into a related, but plausibly

distinct, psychological domain. Second, previous studies were conducted in a lab, and so our *in situ* study adds to the ecological validity of the psychological phenomenon.

Of philosophical significance, our empirical findings cohere with an important recent account that emphasizes the aesthetic and artistic significance of authenticity. As mentioned earlier, Korsmeyer (2012) argues that the experience of genuineness (that is, “being the real thing”) is an aesthetic experience rooted in the sense of touch. Moreover, the fact that we value such experiences—as evidenced in the common preference for authentic artifacts over perceptually indistinguishable replicas—is, she argues, not irrational. That is, despite the fact that our concern for the genuine seems rooted in apparently irrational factors such as the “transitivity of touch” and “magical thinking”, that concern is defensible. The effect of contagion, on Korsmeyer’s view, might be explained by ordinary processes of cognitive penetration and its functional similarity to other non-fungible emotions. While our studies do not speak to the rationality or appropriateness of valuing authenticity, they do provide some empirical support for Korsmeyer’s claims that authenticity commonly affects artistic evaluation.

4.2. Artistic Value and the Ontological Factor of Uniqueness

Unlike the case with contagion, our studies delivered mixed results on uniqueness. While we found in the lab setting a positive relationship between people’s perception of an artwork’s uniqueness and their artistic evaluation of that work, we did not find such a relationship in the museum setting. These mixed results could be, as we have acknowledged, explained away as a mere artifact of our weak experimental manipulation. Or they could be due to a discrepancy between previous studies’ focus on monetary value as opposed to artistic value. Or they could be explained by a difference in the context of appreciation—a possibility that we will explore shortly. Given the number of possible explanations, we caution against drawing any strong inference about this extrinsic source of value from our studies.

4.3. Artistic Value and the Contextual Factor of Appreciative Environment

Comparing the results of our studies also prompted us to hypothesize about the effect that context of appreciation has on other extrinsic factors and artistic value. Remember that Grayson Perry was adamant that only one edition of a design can be shown in any given exhibit. Our museum study suggests that he might not need to be so worried about the effects of undermining the tapestry’s perceived uniqueness. Perhaps factors identified in previous studies on the difference between appreciating art *in situ* and in the lab, such as immediacy and physical presence, overwhelm the effect of uniqueness, such that it only shows up in the lab but not in the museum (Pelowski et al 2017).

Or perhaps the difference in our studies’ results are better explained by a corresponding difference in participant characteristics. In a *post hoc* exploratory analysis, we found a large difference with respect to the level of experience with art

($M_{\text{museum}} = 4.62$, $SD_{\text{museum}} = 1.44$; $M_{\text{lab}} = 3.16$, $SD_{\text{lab}} = 1.31$; Welch's $t(449) = 11.588$, $p < 0.001$, Cohen's $d = 1.094$). So the non-unique nature of Perry's tapestries might stand out much more for participants with a low level of experience with art—and, hence, have a greater effect their judgments of value—than for participants with a relatively high level of experience. This result is intriguing and may be congruent with previous studies which found that art expertise influences affective and, hence, aesthetic evaluation (Leder, Gerger, Brieber, & Schwarz, 2014), but since we did not focus on experience or knowledge in the design of our study, it would be unreasonable conclude much about those *ex post facto*.

4.4. Philosophical and Practical Upshots

As described above, experimental research on the arts and aesthetic matters has largely been confined to the lab. Although things are beginning to change, it is still the case that the vast majority of such work takes place outside the standard contexts in which we experience art. Experimental philosophical aesthetics, an emerging sub-discipline of philosophy which includes this paper, is no different; most work in the area to this date has been done in the lab (see Cova, Garcia, & Liao 2015). Our studies provide further evidence that *in situ* aesthetic research (that is, in the gallery or museum or concert hall or theater) is both possible and productive. Moreover, our results suggest that it may be important to do that *in situ* research because the context of appreciation may be a significant factor in artistic evaluation.

To the extent that philosophical aestheticians draw on experimental psychological evidence in their theorizing, they should be attentive to the ecological validity of findings and be supportive of empirical research beyond the lab. Although philosophers have certainly been aware of the potential significance of the context of artistic evaluation, further focus on empirical findings may help them to refine their psychological models, especially from the perspective of the embodied and embedded mind.

Our studies also suggest that philosophers should take more seriously the role of contagion in artistic evaluation, especially given the ecological validity of the psychological effect. Those who claim that this effect on evaluation is irrational or irrelevant need to explain, or explain away, this phenomenon. Indeed, we think our results provide some support for philosophical accounts that attempt to vindicate people's concern for authenticity in art (Korsmeyer 2012, 2019).

Finally, we hope our results hold interest not just for philosophers and psychologists, but museum professionals as well. For example, thinking about how different causal-historical and ontological factors may affect museum-goers' artistic evaluations might inform museum professionals about the kind of information they want to provide for their audience. In fact, in exploring the significance of the context of appreciation, we hope to have provided some support to the idea—surely familiar to these professionals—that there is indeed something special about appreciating art in the museum.

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