

**A RE-INTERPRETATION OF ARTISTIC MODERNISM  
WITH EMPHASIS ON KANT AND NEWMAN**

**by**

**DANNY SHORKEND**

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**SUPERVISOR: DR FJ POTGIETER**

**CO SUPERVISOR: MR FJ EKSTEEN**

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**To my parents,**

**Thank you...**

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## Abstract

One significant feature of this dissertation is an alternative reading of an eminent thinker of the Enlightenment such as Kant, specifically in the arena of art theory and art history. In so doing, one cannot claim that contemporary theory is free of past shortcomings that characterize the assumptions of the Enlightenment; neither should we forget that the past contains the seeds for future theoretical and practical directions.

The focus of this dissertation is to elucidate how Kant's conception of fine art can be reinterpreted in such a way that it can be perceived as both Modernist and Postmodernist.

Initially, I state the position of Kant in terms of a Formalist understanding of art. This focus on the form of an artwork coheres with certain basic Modernist tenets. Kant's aesthetics is shown to converge with that of the Modernist art critic, Clement Greenberg. Based on this Modernist reading of Kant, I analyze the paintings of Newman and Hoffman, who are both Abstract Expressionists.

Thereafter, I question Kantian and Modernist aesthetics with the use of Postmodern theories. The Formalist work of Abstract Expressionism is critiqued first from the perspective of Pop art strategies and then by using the philosophical stance of Conceptual art.

Lastly, Kant is reinterpreted in the light of Postmodern theories, such as the linguistic turn, the sublime and the metaphorical nature of art. In exploring

the overlapping of Kant's aesthetics with Postmodernism, the boundaries between Modernism and Postmodernism become somewhat blurred. In this way, Newman is reevaluated in such a way as to eschew a purely Formalist critique and to offer a critical perspective closer to a Postmodern viewpoint.

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The focus of this dissertation is to elucidate how Kant's conception of fine art can be reinterpreted as both Modernist and Postmodernist.

Initially, I state the position of Kant in terms of a Formalist understanding of art. Kant's aesthetics is shown to converge with that of the Modernist art critic, Greenberg. Based on this Modernist reading of Kant, I analyze the paintings of Newman and Hoffman, both Abstract Expressionists.

Thereafter, I question Kantian and Modernist aesthetics with the use of Postmodern theories. The Formalist work of Abstract Expressionism is critiqued from the perspective of Pop art strategies and Conceptual art.

Lastly, Kant is reinterpreted in the light of Postmodern theories, such as the linguistic turn, the sublime and the metaphorical nature of art. Newman is reevaluated in such a way as to eschew a purely Formalist critique and to offer a critical perspective closer to a Postmodern viewpoint.