

**Pierre Bourdieu on the Pure Aesthetics and
the Autonomization of the Art Field in the West
—A Gaze from the Sociology of Arts**

Jia-you Sheu

Abstract

This essay looks at and analyzes Bourdieu's major arguments about the genesis and development of the pure aesthetics and the autonomization of the art field in the West. Bourdieu emphasizes that the symbolic revolution brought about by Manet and, after him, by the Impressionists, can only be understood if one analyzes the situation in and against which it developed, that is, the academic institution and the conventional style which is a direct expression of it. From this revolution emerged our own categories of perception and judgment, that is, pure aesthetics, which we now commonly use to produce and comprehend representations. The social construction of an autonomous field of art production goes hand in hand with the construction of a properly aesthetic mode of perception, namely, pure aesthetics, which places the sources of artistic creation in the representation and not in the thing represented. This mode never asserts itself as fully as in its capacity to give aesthetic form to the base and vulgar objects of the modern world.

Furthermore, in order for this new nomos to sustain itself it also requires art lovers a new mental structure or habitus, that is, pure gaze, capable of apprehending the work of art as it demands to be apprehended.

Key Words: pure aesthetics, art perception and dispositions,

autonomy of the art field, symbolic power