

The Evident Need for Specialization in Visual Art Studies¹

Bruce Anderson

1 Introduction

In 2007 I 'accidentally' became an art student at the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design and recently graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Art degree. The majority of my courses were studio courses where the focus was making art. But I also had to take traditional lecture type courses in art history and art criticism. What struck me about those courses was the fragmented and disorderly nature of the study of art. I figured that the messiness of art studies could be ordered along the lines of Bernard Lonergan's eight functional specialties. I had taken a stab at ordering legal studies so why couldn't I do the same for art studies?² The following text is a version of a paper I submitted for a course in Twentieth Century Art History.

A glance at the first three pages of "Course Descriptions" in the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design's (NSCAD) Academic Calendar indicates the range of the field commonly called Art History and Critical Studies. Courses cover diverse disciplines: fine arts, craft, design, photography, and film. Survey courses in Ancient Art, Medieval Art, Renaissance and Baroque Art, Nineteenth-Century Art, Twentieth Century Art, and Canadian Art cover different historical periods. Other courses cover the histories of craft and design. The history of photography and film are the concerns of others. Courses such as Modern and Contemporary Art Theory and Criticism, Postcolonialism and Craft, and Modernism and Postmodernism address contemporary issues. The critical side of Art History is stressed in Film History and Criticism and in Introduction to Art Theory and Criticism. Philosophical issues are dealt with in courses such as The Philosophy of the Arts and Crafts Movement and Marxism and Aesthetic Theory. Two other courses

¹ I would like to thank Mike Shute and Philip McShane for commenting on versions of this paper.

² For instance, see Bruce Anderson, "The Nine Lives of Legal Interpretation," *Journal of Macrodynamical Analysis*, 5 (2010), 30-36.

deal with research methods in art history. There is even a course called Art and the Garden.

It is evident from taking some of these courses that art scholars have to be competent in numerous disciplines—painting, sculpture, photography, film, history, psychology sociology, political science, and philosophy—and they have to be able to integrate the discoveries of these disciplines creatively and critically. Without doubt, art studies, as a field, is rich and varied.

A quick peek at the textbook for my Survey of Twentieth-Century Art course, *Art Since 1900*, reveals the wide-ranging concerns and analyses of art historians since World War II. Fascinating interpretations of a wide variety of artworks and movements are offered. Not only is there an effort to relate artworks to earlier work, but works are placed in their historical and social contexts. Debates and criticisms are also rehearsed, and sometimes a stance is taken. Consider just one topic, namely how the author tackles postmodernism in the chapter titled *1984*.³ Two competing interpretations of postmodernism are presented, one the author calls neoconservative postmodernism and the other poststructuralist postmodernism. The author explains how the emergence of these two rival types of postmodernism is related to modernism and indicates the importance of Fredric Jameson's work *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*⁴ and Jean-Francois Lyotard's text *The Postmodern Condition*.⁵ The broad lines of the conflict between neoconservative postmodernism and poststructuralist postmodernism are also summarized. The author ends this brief chapter by tentatively pointing toward a resolution of the conflict when he writes that "the neoconservative 'return' to individual style and historical tradition (as exemplified here by Schnabel) might be revealed, twenty years after its peak moment, to be similar in effect to the poststructuralist 'critique' of these things (as exemplified here by Anderson)."⁶ This type of analysis demands the author be at home in visual art, the history of art, political and cultural theory.

Despite such engagements in interdisciplinary studies, art history and critical studies courses and related texts point to a larger problem. Art studies cover just about everything connected to art. At times the field seems to be a bewildering and disorganized array of information, topics, opinions, debates, conflicts, and confusions, though discussions about the criteria for evaluating art and particular movements in art history seem to be avoided. Is it possible to make more sense of this rich

³ H. Foster, R. Krauss, Y-A Bois, B. Buchloh, *Art Since 1900* (New York, Thames and Hudson, 2004) 596-599.

⁴ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Duke University Press Books, 1999 [original edition 1990]).

⁵ Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition* (University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

⁶ *Art Since 1900*, 599.

area of inquiry? I will take a stab at answering that question by investigating what type of intellectual tasks or work people do who write about art.

2 A Possible Ordering of Art Studies

Broadly speaking, two orientations of art studies can be identified. There is an orientation to the *past* in that people who study art do research, interpretation, and history which are focused on past events, completed artwork, documents, texts, and movements. But art studies are also oriented to *future* actions when artists are, for instance, laying down the conditions for Minimalism or when a critic writes about the direction painting or sculpture should take. I will distinguish between the various types of work done by people who study art by zeroing in on the various aims and objectives that can be found in their work.⁷

Research. Let's begin with the tasks that constitute *past-oriented* studies of art. There is a type of work performed by art historians that is aimed at determining the relevance of artworks and texts to particular questions, problems, issues, and contexts. Here the primary aim is to locate, select, collect, and organize the relevant artworks and documents to be examined. What follows are some examples I have noticed in the past year of study at NSCAD. Meaghan Bissonette's study⁸ of the neglect and exclusion of various Abstract Expressionist sculptors from the canon of sculpture immediately comes to mind; Charles Harrison's and Paul Wood's collection of excerpts written by artists and critics in *Art in Theory* is another example of this type of work.⁹ The panoply of documents written by artists collected and organized by Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz is another.¹⁰ Less obvious is the collection of women's names Judy Chicago inscribes in the tiles of *The Dinner Party*.¹¹ Research is an essential part of Hans Haacke's artwork. "*Shapolski et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings* and *Sol Goldman and Alex diLorenzo Manhattan Real Estate Holdings* consisted of cumulative recorded facts

⁷ Regular readers of this journal will recognize that what follows is an attempt to identify a functional division of labour in art studies. In this task I am adopting the strategically minimalist approach advocated by Philip McShane in *Method in Theology: Revisions and Implementations* (2007). See especially Part 1, Chapter 3 "Minimalist Functional Antifoundationism" <http://www.philipmcschane.ca> where McShane writes: [It is summed up in a single categorial stand: (10)] "let there be an operative division of work in any area of human inquiry" *Ibid.*, at 16.

⁸ Meghan Bissonette, *Lecture on Abstract Expressionist Sculpture*, in the Survey of Twentieth-Century Art, NSCAD, May 2009.

⁹ Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, eds., *Art in Theory* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1992).

¹⁰ Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz, *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art* (University of California Press, Los Angeles, 1996).

¹¹ http://www.interiordesign.net/photo/300/300183-idx090801_mod05.jpg

available in the New York Public Library.”¹² The collection of videos of artists installing their work, called *Portikus under Construction*,¹³ is another example. Professor Thierry Delva’s slide shows can be understood as an effort to locate, select, collect, organize, and present images of sculpture relevant to his Introductory Sculpture class at NSCAD. He told us when a particular artist was born, where the artist lived, and the name of the work, but he held back from interpreting and criticizing what we saw (except for a few definitive and colourful pronouncements). The type of work described above can be called *research*.

Interpretation. A second type of work performed by people who study art is aimed at settling and expressing what artworks, documents, manuscripts, and arguments, in fact, mean.¹⁴ This type of work, of course, depends on the work of researchers providing the relevant materials. The results of interpretation can be identified when Harrison and Wood introduce selections written by artists and critics.¹⁵ For instance, their introduction to the work of Jean-Francois Lyotard is a brief interpretation of issues and stances in Lyotard’s work. Many of the assigned readings for the Survey of Twentieth-Century Art course are examples of this type of work.¹⁶ For instance, Susan Sontag’s discussion of Happenings is an interpretation. The chapter called *1975* in the *Art Since 1900* textbook¹⁷ is an interpretation of both visual art made by Judy Chicago, Faith Ringgold, Nancy Spero, Ann Mendieta, and Mary Kelly and of relevant textual documents. The *Art: 21*¹⁸ videos produced

¹² *Art Since 1900*, 546. <http://whitney.org/Collection/HansHaacke>

¹³ Helke Bayrle, *Portikus under Construction* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2009).

¹⁴ The use of the word ‘mean’ would need to be further specified in a technical sense with respect to the particular task of interpretation. The common sense use of the words ‘means’ and ‘meaning’ covers lots of ground and the philosophical debate, or should I say confusion, over the word, is legion. In Chapter 3 of *Method in Theology* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1972)(hereafter, *Method*), Lonergan provides a sketch of ‘meaning’ that includes a relevant discussion in section 3 on meaning in art. Still, if we turn to chapter 7, ‘Interpretation,’ Lonergan identifies three basic exegetical operations relevant to functional interpretation: “(1) understanding the text; (2) judging how correct one’s understanding of the text is; and (3) stating what one judges to be the correct understanding of the text” *Method*, 155. The ‘special’ object, then, in functional interpretation is an *understanding*. The work of art is an expressed ‘meaning’ to be understood. It is left to further specialties to lift the work into an historical context (history) and to sort out the ‘value’ of the art object (conflictual analysis).

¹⁵ Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, eds., *Art in Theory* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1992).

¹⁶ *Art in Theory*, 1008.

¹⁷ *Art Since 1900*, 570-575.

¹⁸ *Art:21 Art in the Twenty-first Century*, Public Broadcasting System, Seasons One to Five, 2003-2009.

by PBS offer artists' interpretations of their own work. Such interpretations are restricted to explaining what the artworks mean or what a particular art movement was about. The aim is not to critically evaluate art or texts, nor to indicate their significance for an account of what is going forward in the history of art. In fact, *Art Since 1900* is largely comprised of collections of interpretations of artwork, movements, texts, arguments, debates, and conflicts. Rarely do the authors take sides. Other examples of interpretation include artists' statements about their own work and blurbs in gallery brochures written by curators.

History. Although I categorized the readings for the Survey of Twentieth-Century Art course as interpretations of artworks, movements, and relevant texts, it is evident that the authors of such texts also do historical work. Of course, this would be expected in a course offered by the Department of Art History. For instance, in *Art since 1900* the authors identify events and factors related to the emergence of new art forms and movements in most chapters. David Hopkins captures the challenge of doing art history *per se* in the "Preface" to *After Modern Art 1945-2000* where he writes that "the most pressing task still seems to be one of structuring the period as a historical entity, and making it coherent. As yet, few books have attempted to encompass the whole period from 1945 to the end of the twentieth century. Those that have done so have often ended up looking self-defeatingly encyclopedic or self-protectively partisan."¹⁹

Despite identifying their work as art history, *After Modern Art*, Michael Archer's book *Art Since 1960*,²⁰ Herbert Read's *A Concise History of Sculpture*, and William Tucker's text *The Language of Sculpture*²¹ are predominantly interpretive, consisting of time-lines of key artworks, events, and ideas. The drive of these books is not primarily aimed at figuring out and expressing what was going forward in the sense of examining the changes that lead to new discoveries and their dissemination by particular groups, at particular times, at particular places that, for the most part, their contemporaries did not know. This is the type of work that would be the specialized job of art historians.

Jonathan Crary's book *Suspensions of Perception*²² can be considered a very crude exercise in doing history in this specialized sense. The connections he suggests between the work of artists (Manet, Seurat, and Cezanne) and contemporaneous discoveries about perception in other disciplines are efforts to explore the implications of the transformation of perception between 1850 and 1900. In *Passages of*

¹⁹ David Hopkins, *After Modern Art 1945-2000* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000).

²⁰ Michael Archer, *Art Since 1960* (London, Thames and Hudson, 1994).

²¹ William Tucker, *The Language of Sculpture* (London, Thames and Hudson, 1985).

²² Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception* (Boston, MIT Press, 2009).

*Modern Sculpture*²³ Rosalind Krauss moves beyond ordering and interpreting key movements and associated ideas when she identifies the transformations that have taken place in how sculptors have treated time and have changed what is demanded of viewers. The question rarely posed, and inadequately answered by scholars who call themselves art historians, “Where did the twentieth century take us?” would be a question within the zone of art history *per se*.

Conflictual Analysis. The analysis of debates and conflicts are important aspects of art history. For instance, I mentioned the conflict between neoconservative postmodernists and poststructuralist postmodernists above. Typically, art critics judge the worth of particular exhibitions and publish their assessments in newspapers, magazines, and journals. Artists also engage in criticism. For instance, in an introductory sculpture class at NSCAD Professor Thierry Delva claimed that Henry Moore set back British sculpture. Jasper Johns critically responded to Abstract Expressionism with his own artwork. The Nazis condemned modern art as degenerate. A seemingly never-ending debate pits fine art against craft. Here is a recent version: in a discussion at NSCAD the artist Antony Gormley claimed there must be an absolute distinction between art and craft. He asserted that art has no function in terms of utility, whereas craft is like tool-making. The opposing view, stated during a discussion at the Dalhousie Art Gallery,²⁴ persuasively countered that craft not only expresses ideas and values, but it also stresses the process of art-making. The conflict between the critic Michael Fried and the artist Donald Judd has been noted and analyzed by art historians.²⁵ Fried’s notion that to be art something must be of aesthetic value (i.e. it must meet the criteria of the discipline to which it belongs) conflicts with Donald Judd’s view that it is enough for a work of art to be interesting, that is, to make you think. While their answers differ, both scholars and artists are concerned with identifying and resolving debates and conflicts involving artwork, interpretations of artwork and texts, histories of art, philosophies of art, the politics of art, and so on.

These four types of past-oriented art studies can be named in light of their primary concerns: *research*, *interpretation*, *history*, and *conflictual analysis*.²⁶

²³ Rosalind Krauss, *Passages of Modern Sculpture* (Boston, MIT Press, 1981).

²⁴ NeoCraft Conference, Panel Discussion, Dalhousie Art Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 2009.

²⁵ <http://www.artandeducation.net/paper/minimalist-artvs-modernist-sensibility-a-close-reading-of-michael-fried's-“artand-objecthood”>

²⁶ I have used the term *conflictual analysis* to refer to the functional specialty Bernard Lonergan calls *Dialectic*. My experience is that when people unfamiliar with Lonergan’s work read the term *Dialectic* they think of Marxist notions of dialectic and quickly dismiss Lonergan’s work.

But art history also has a *future-orientation*. A serious concern with the future is evident in artwork and texts.

Policy-making. Art studies also include the identification of the positions, policies, and doctrines expounded by artists and scholars. You may be surprised that art involves policy-making, but consider the following declarations made by artists. Louise Bourgeois declared that “To express yourself is your birthright.” She also wrote that “Art is not about art. Art is about life, and that sums it up.”²⁷ Joseph Kosuth wrote that “Being an artist now means to question the nature of art.”²⁸ And Reinhardt claimed that “Reason in art shows what art is not.”²⁹ According to Saul LeWitt “artists should have a social and moral purpose.” Antony Gormley decreed that “to be a full subject we have to be reflective on our experience.”³⁰ Barry Flanagan asserted that “a sculpture has to be the right size to do the right job.”³¹ Sol LeWitt’s *Sentences on Conceptual Art* are sentences that are basically policy statements: “Rational judgments repeat rational judgments.” “Illogical judgments lead to new experience.” “Formal Art is essentially rational.” “Irrational thoughts should be followed absolutely and illogically.” “The conventions of art are altered by works of art.” “Perception of ideas leads to new ideas.” “Perception is subjective.” “Banal ideas cannot be rescued by beautiful execution.” “It is difficult to bungle a good idea.”³² Such declarations can be understood as providing general directions for future investigations and experiments.

The manifesto-like essays of art movements are policy statements of that particular group. For instance, Group Material’s statement that “we invite everyone to question the entire culture we have taken for granted” is a statement of their policy.³³ A more obvious illustration of policy-making consists in a few random selections from Sol LeWitt’s *Paragraphs on Conceptual Art*: “In conceptual art all the planning and decisions are made before execution.” “The ideal of concept is the most important aspect of the work.”³⁴ “An artist is concerned to make his work mentally interesting to the spectator.” “Conceptual art is made to engage the mind of the viewer rather than his eye or emotions.”³⁵ Allan Kaprow’s rules of thumb covering Environments and Happenings can be understood as statements of policy. Here are a few:

²⁷ *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art*, 41.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 840.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 88.

³⁰ Antony Gormley, in a discussion with faculty and students at the Port Campus during his visit to NSCAD, 2008.

³¹ *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art*, 657.

³² *Art in Theory*, 837-839.

³³ <http://www.manics.nl/site/quotes/inartwork/weinvite.htm>.

³⁴ Sol LeWitt, “Paragraphs on Conceptual Art,” 10 *Artforum*, June 1967, 79.

³⁵ *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art*, 826.

“A. The line between art and life should be kept as fluid, and perhaps indistinct, as possible... B. Therefore, the source of themes, materials, actions, and the relationships between them are to be derived from any place or period except from the arts, their derivatives, and their milieu... C. The performance of a Happening should take place over several widely spaced, sometimes moving and changing locales... D. Time, which follows closely on space considerations, should be variable and discontinuous... E. Happenings should be performed once only... F. It follows that audiences should be eliminated entirely.”³⁶

Claes Oldenburgh’s text comprising sentences that all begin with “I am for...” is another illustration of policy-making. To take a few examples, “I am for art that is political-erotic-mystical, that does something other than sit on its ass in a museum. I am for an art that grows up not knowing it is art at all, an art given the chance of having a starting point of zero. I am for an art that embroils itself with the everyday crap and still comes out on top...”³⁷

In a book discussing various public art projects in Canada, Rebecca Burke claims that public art should “stimulate audience participation and mobilize its public for social change.”³⁸ Further, “art should expose social and political problems and question value systems.”³⁹

Policy-making in art seems to be marked by individual pronouncements and done haphazardly. It is not an organized and coherent process.

Systematic-Planning. Deciding what to do depends on having a range of plausible options from which to select. Although this is not stressed in the world of art, planning is an important part of art. The aim of planning is to come up with what possibly and plausibly could be done and then organizing those options. Let’s call this type of future-orientation *systematic-planning*.

An array of plans aimed at supporting or promoting art in some way can be identified. Government grants for visual artists such as the Social Science and Humanities Research Council⁴⁰ funds and provincial grants to artists in Canada are examples. The creation of publicly funded museums, private galleries, and artist-run centres all depend on plans. Art education depends on planning. For instance, the recent creation of

³⁶ *Art in Theory*, 706-708.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 728.

³⁸ ed. Annie Gerin and James MacLean *Public Art in Canada* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2009), 16.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁴⁰ Artists and art scholars connected to universities are eligible to apply to this federal funding council for grants to aid their research. Applications are peer-reviewed.

low residence masters and doctorate degrees had to be carefully planned. Richard Florida calls for a plan when he asserts that “we should invest in our stock of creativity in all its forms, across the board—research and development, education, arts, music, culture, design, and related fields...”⁴¹ The 1% solution, requiring 1% of the cost of new commercial buildings in some cities to be spent on art, is a plan. The panoply of professional artists residencies sponsored by private institutions represent another sort of planning.

A less obvious form of planning is exemplified by the instructions given by Sol LeWitt, Jan Dibbets, Mel Bochner, Dan Graham, and Lucy Lippard to students at NSCAD to carry out.⁴² The instructions were plans for making art. It is obvious that a great deal of planning by the group of artists calling themselves “General Idea” would have preceded the production of their artwork which merged different art forms.⁴³ The same, presumably, could be said for the artists comprising “ACT-UP” and “Grand Fury.”⁴⁴ Their strategies and campaigns were not formed by accident.

Unfortunately, planning in the field of art studies occurs more or less haphazardly. But we can imagine a group of people specializing in planning how to move art and art studies forward, inventing new ways to implement the policies created by the specialist group of policy-makers.

Executive Reflection. The job of this specialist group would be to examine the range of plans created by the planners, to examine particular situations and to choose and implement particular plans. Consider a range of institutions that support art-making. Artists teaching at universities in Canada can apply for SSHRC funding to cover the costs of their work. Independent artists in Nova Scotia, for instance, can apply to the Department of Culture and Heritage for help to cover the costs of materials. Some galleries have artist-in-residence programs which provide studio space and small honoraria for a limited period of time. Another type of program, The Banff Artist in Residence Program, provides studio space and accommodation to artists interested in making art related to selected themes. Other types of programs offer a quiet and secluded place for artists to work. Recently, low residence MFA and PhD programs have been created to support and cultivate art-making.

⁴¹ Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class* (New York, Basic Books, 2004).

⁴² Class Handout, from G. N. Kennedy, “NSCAD and the Sixties” in Bruce Barber, *Conceptual Art: The NSCAD Connection, 1967-1973*, Anna Leonowens Gallery, 2001 (Exh. 1994), 18-19, 23.

⁴³ For information about this group see, <http://www.aabronson.com/art/gi.org>

⁴⁴ Information about these collectives can be found at: <http://hbombmag.wordpress.com/features/new-features/act-up-new-york-artactivism-and-the-aids-crisis> and

http://inside.massart.edu/Administration/Presidents_Office/Commencement/2011_Honorees.html

MIT's Media Lab and Center for Advanced Visual Studies are examples of interdisciplinary research centres where artists play a key role.

In an effort to promote the skills of artists and to apply them to other areas of inquiry, including business, the President of NSCAD University drew on the example of the MIT research centres for his proposal to create an Institute for Applied Creativity at NSCAD, an interdisciplinary research and development think-tank with artists and designers at its core. Its aim would be to promote creative and critical thinking in diverse disciplines. Also, a few years ago the Sobey Art Award was implemented to help fill a gap in the promotion and income of mid-career artists in Canada.

To summarize, art studies is future-oriented to the extent that *policy statements, systematic planning, and executive reflection* are concerned with what art could be.

3 The Need for Detached Criticism and Creative Fantasy in Art Studies

Let's investigate how the seven different types of tasks identified above might be related to each other. It is easy to envisage that *researchers* would pass on materials to *interpreters* who would try to settle their meaning, and that *art historians* would draw on interpretations of artworks and texts in order to settle what was going forward.

Presumably policies and doctrines on art depend on their history. But if we moved directly from history to policy-making, policies would be the result of accidents, matters of convention, taste, luck, nationality, power, and bias, rather than emerging from a tradition of critical evaluation and creativity. Is there a better way of moving from the past to the future?

I identified *conflictual analysis* as one type of work performed by artists, scholars, and critics, but the illustrations above are evidence that critical analysis is not performed in a systematic fashion. Generally, we see criticism in art as biased assessments related to some personal, financial, or political agenda or some view on aesthetics. In fact, it seems that one criticism is just as good as the next one. Serious detached reflection on, and critical assessment of, art histories, historical periods, various movements in art, and the attitudes and practices of art teachers, scholars, and artists is a neglected zone of inquiry.

Learning from the past (in the minimal sense that we would not want to make the same mistake twice or make things worse) would require *taking a stand* on what was good and bad in the past and then creatively moving forward. Further, judging good moves and failures and resolving conflicts point to the need for a comprehensive viewpoint—an integral perspective—to be held by the person doing the assessment. It seems it would be quite handy to have a group that specialized in detached criticism. They could concern themselves with promoting open and clear thinking, creative insights, and imaginative

critical judgments, and also with exposing and attacking inattention, stupidity, ignorance, bad judgments, inadequate plans, bias, rationalizations.

Bernard Lonergan's judgment in his conclusion to the chapter on art in *Topics in Education* captures the mood of this specialty: "What I want to communicate in this talk about art is the notion that art is relevant to concrete living, that it is an exploration of the potentialities of concrete living. That exploration is extremely important in our age, when philosophers for at least two centuries, through doctrines on politics, economics, education, and through ever further doctrines, have been trying to remake man, and have done not a little to make human life unlivable."⁴⁵ If a soccer team reflects on its past performance at half-time, and if fighter pilots debrief after each mission, it might make sense to have a dedicated group of people do the same for art.

In order to move from a detached critical evaluation of the past to expressing sensible policies on art, there is also a need for envisaging the direction of fundamental improvements. In other words, we need to build on the work of the people taking a stand on the past by thinking out the fundamental needs of a community and formulating general norms of progress (whatever we might mean by progress). The aim of such people would be to think out the best possible direction for what could happen in the future. In the art studies, the concern would be the ongoing advancement of visual art. If visual art is trying to mediate progress, there is an obvious need for *creative fantasy*.⁴⁶ So why not explicitly recognize the importance of such a group of people interested in the future, imagining beyond present practices, wondering whether we could do things differently, asking if there is something better, fantasizing what might work, envisaging the probabilities of new ideas being implemented, asking what art will be like in the next millennium. Although this dimension has been, and certainly is, the concern of some artists and scholars, this sort of creative edge on the future and thinking about the long term is rare and rudimentary.

The move from past-oriented work to future-oriented work, in particular the move from *history* to *policy-making* depends on *critical analysis* and *creative fantasy*. Either we cultivate a critical assessment of the past and a forward creative turn in art or else we will end up with a deranged visual culture of boredom and banality. Hence it makes sense to order the various types of tasks and work performed in art studies in the following way: *research, interpretation, art history, critical analysis,*

⁴⁵ Bernard Lonergan, *Topics in Education, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 10 (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1988), 232.

⁴⁶ For most contemporary scholars, particularly those with little knowledge of Lonergan's work, any talk of *foundations* is not taken seriously since it brings to mind discredited grand theories. I have used *creative fantasy* to refer to the functional specialty Lonergan calls *Foundations* so that readers unfamiliar with his work will not immediately dismiss the discussion.

creative fantasy, policy-making, systematic planning, and executive reflection.

I have arranged each of these eight tasks in terms of how their particular aims are related to each other. Research provides the raw materials for interpreters. Historians use interpretations of artworks and texts as their raw materials. Critical analysts settle conflicts among interpreters and historians and take a stand on what was good and bad in the past. They would pass on their findings to a group specializing in creative fantasy who would work to come up with general directions for the future. In turn, policy-makers would take up their work when formulating policies and doctrines, and so on to systematic planning and executive reflection.

But there is a ninth type of work that stands outside these eight. This type of work would be directed toward communicating some aspect of the other eight types of art studies to people who are not engaged in any of the eight specialized jobs. You can think of a specialist in conflictual analysis discussing with artists their mistaken views on intuition, truth, knowledge, reality and how such views influence art-making. Imagine specialists in creative fantasy trying to communicate to artists the differences between what visual artists do and what scientists who devote their attention to understanding do. Also, think of the conversation between specialists in creative fantasy and artists about the visual artists' equivalent to the physicists' standard model.⁴⁷

Let's summarize this division of labour. The researchers ask *What are the materials relevant to answering some question?* and search for, collect, organize the relevant materials, and then pass them on to interpreters. The interpreters ask *What do these materials mean?* and try to settle their meaning, and then give their various interpretations. Historians take the various interpretations and ask *What has been going forward?* and they come up with narratives about how and why something has changed. The people who specialize in settling conflicts would take the work of interpreters and historians and ask *How can these conflicts between various interpretations and histories be settled?* and they would work to get to the root of such disagreements by trying to identify bias, rationalizations, deficient perspectives, distorted values, and erroneous methodological positions. The group that specializes in creative fantasy would take the work of the conflict analysts and ask *Are there better way to move forward with what we currently have?* The answers they come up with would be taken up by policy-makers who would ask *What sorts of policies would be consistent with and support the way forward proposed by creative fantasizers?* Such policies, in turn, would be passed on to planners who would ask *What kinds of plans would be appropriate?* And the final group would ask *What should I do*

⁴⁷ See Philip McShane, *FuSe 6*: "Working towards a Standard Model."
<http://www.philipmcshane.ca/fuse.html>.

given this situation? and then select from a range of plans what might be appropriate in particular situations.

4 Conclusion

I want to stress that I am not advocating some rigid and formal method of doing research, interpretation, history, or making art. Policies are not meant to place boundaries around the creative energies of artists. Rather, the intention is for policies to support art practices, and to appreciate the function of art and artists. Planning is not meant to dictate the steps for making art. What I am stressing is that it is crucial for people who study visual art to know precisely what they are doing so that art historians for instance, can become more competent in writing art history *per se*, and that competence in doing art history *per se* is not necessarily a license for art criticism. More broadly, learning from the past in an intelligent fashion seems a sensible thing to do.

It seems appropriate to end by giving some indication of what this division of labour would open up, other than a simple carving up art studies, and to locate the artist in this strategy. To do that I will quote part of Philip McShane's comment on a version of this paper. He wrote: "Now the whole circuit is about ongoing meaning, and one can say that the art-maker is outside the circuit, in the culture [later culture!] created by the cycle, at their best incarnating the best full orientation in the rhythms of the local recurrence-schemes [that are challenged in their progressive art] the full meaning is recycled through the molecules of the Tower People so that the Tower People grow and sift and lean forward towards accelerating refinements. But here one needs refinements regarding art and science that are not presently available ... the nature of molecular patterning as home-establishing for human spirit, so we get the Wordsworthian effect. This is a massive climb beyond Langer, who went on, in later works, to a reductionism ... there are signs of an upturn in neuropsychology, and there has to be a renewal in the zones of barren scientific nominalism. But that is getting away from your art-maker. The art-maker is incarnate culture; that culture as cycled; the cycle as revitalizing local artistry; but you have more questions?"⁴⁸

The point of this paper, however, is far more limited—it would be a good idea if art scholars divided up the work, specialized in one particular type of work, and collaborated.

Bruce Anderson teaches business law at Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia. His research and writing have focused on legal reasoning, Lonergan's work in economics, and more recently, visual art and law.

⁴⁸ Philip McShane, email to Bruce Anderson, February 3, 2009.