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THE CONCEPT OF THE SUBLIME IN CONTEMPORARY ART

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ABBREVIATIONS

CPJ Critique of the Power of Judgment (1790). Immanuel Kant, Critique of the Power of Judgment. Ed. Paul Guyer. Trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Enquiry A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful (1757/1759). Edmund Burke. Ed., intro., and notes J. T. Boulton. New York: Routledge, 1958/2008.

Observations Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime (1764). Intro. and trans. Paul Guyer. In: Immanuel Kant, Anthropology, History, Education. Ed. Gunter Zoller and Robert B. Louden. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

ABSTRACT

This essay is concerned with the exploration of a possibility of the concept of the presence of the sublime in today's art. The idea of the sublime was a concept that was widely discussed in the 18th century, in the field of visual arts, and most especially in relation to landscape paintings in the Romantic era. Even though the concept evolved in rhetoric, it became a term that is related to nature and art. With the seminal work of Edmund Burke, together with Kant's theorization on the concept, the appreciation of the sublime in art gained value and treated as a concept to be experienced. In the modern era, its reinterpretations in visual arts reemerged, particularly in American abstract expressionism. However, the fact that the term has reached to today's context brought along a modified state of presentability and representability that also being shaped according to today's conditions of art. The occurrence and nowness of the concept of the sublime together with the conditions, openness, possibilities, and limits brought up by contemporary art are discussed, considering interpretations of Jean-Luc Nancy and through an investigation of the selected works of the American artist James Turrell.

ÖZET

Bu tez, yüce kavramının günümüz sanatında bulunma olasılığının araştırılmasını incelemektedir. Yüce fikri, 18. yüzyılda estetik alanında çok tartışılan ve özellikle Romantik dönem peyzaj resimleriyle yakından bağlantısı kurulan bir kavramdı. Kavram, her ne kadar retorik alanında ortaya çıkmış olsa da, doğa ve sanat ile ilgili bir terim haline gelmiştir. Edmund Burke'ün öne çıkan çalışması ve Kant'ın kavramı kuramsallaştırmasıyla birlikte yüce, sanat alanında tartışılmaya ve deneyimlenebilen bir kavram olarak ele alınmaya başlandı. Kavram modern dönem görsel sanatında, başta Amerikan soyut dışavurumculuğunda olmak üzere yeniden yorumlanmıştı. Fakat, terimin bugünün bağlamına ulaşmış olması, günümüz sanat koşullarına göre teşekkül eden, modifiye edilmiş bir sunulabilirlik ve temsil edilebilirlike durumunu getirmiştir. bağlamına göre değişen bir sunum ve temsil edilebilirliği de beraberinde getirmiştir. Güncel sanatın getirdiği koşullar, açıklıklar, olanaklar ve limitlerle birlikte yüce kavramının vuku bulma ve şimdilik hali Jean-Luc Nancy'nin yorumları dikkate alınarak ve Amerikan sanatçı James Turrell'in seçili işlerinin incelenmesi üzerinden tartışılır.

INTRODUCTION

Speaking within the language of the art history, since the beginning of modern European art, the art world has undertaken a change beyond recognition. Beginning with the institutional collapses, the formation of independent groups, and World War I the artists released from the regulations of the state, which were in charge of the fine arts until that time. Thereafter, artists had a chance to perform remarkable independency in their arts. Subsequently, Duchamp's gesture exercised one's aesthetic judgment on a work of art by means of proclaiming a mass-produced object an artwork; the readymades. The message that Duchamp's readymades gave us is the movement from a Beaux-Arts system to an art-in-general system, which induced a transfiguration from an *enclosed* set of art conventions to an *open* one, to where an aesthetic appreciation is inquired to be articulated. Readymades made a tremendous concussion on art that transformed the art, which Kant knew as fine arts, into an *art-in-general*, of which requested the ontological question of "What is art?" The shift from painting to the conceptual art practice displaced *beauty*, in a textual sense, and replaced it into *art as such*. With the destruction of beauty, *art* and *non-art* is conventionalized, and now, quality is the content and content is the quality of art. In Kantian terms, the aesthetic judgment of what is called art formed a theoretical model of which asks and answers the same ontological question, where *taste* and *genius* is combined. In other words, in a conceptual sense, making art is condensed into *one* and *same* action of one's choice. The act of choosing and deeming any object as art gave the possibility to the object to be comprised of anything whatsoever. The total abandonment of any convention of art form caused a generalization of modality; i.e. sound, or even silence is deemed art rather than music. Therefore, it, perhaps unintentionally, opened new categories, new forms of making art and so new mediums. The aesthetics have transformed into anti-aesthetics and art into anti-art. In the context of today's visual art practices, what we are facing is the time when this ontological question is most explicitly and significantly mentioned. Today is not an *absence* of movements, but a cluster that does not appoint to any specific aesthetic modality that we could depict in any way, as we once did in neo-classicism, impressionism, or Dadaism. The name 'contemporary' defines nothing but a disjunctive unity of times, a temporality, whose actuality is at stake. In a sense, it is nonetheless a post-conceptual art that has long since eluded from the traditional representations, significations and forms of the beautiful. However, what I intended to ask here is

neither this nor regarding the crisis of contemporary art; it is about its possibilities, of exhibiting, the exhibiting of possibilities of the sublime it opens up and offers, in this state of crisis. I attempted to examine not the *art as such* taking the place of the beautiful, but that with the destruction of the beautiful is there any possibility of a sublime, where the beautiful does not exist, or at least inexistent in the sense it used to be. The concept of the sublime Romantic art carried a significant role, which set the mind in motion and activated the strongest emotion on the viewer. It awakens an awe-inspiring, unusual feeling that lies within oneself and makes one stumble. The concept was once a style in rhetoric that has been transformed into a subject, most notably with Edmund Burke's treatment on the sublime and the beautiful. Thereafter, the concept got a new context through the most detailed and distinctive study on the sublime until that day. His examination was based on his own experiences that had both described the psychological and physical characteristics of the sublime. Because of the fact that it is unusual for its time, by being an empirical study on the concept, and the most detailed study ever done until its day, I wanted to examine Burke's treatise, together with the ones that have the most impact on his study. On the other hand, I wanted to study Kant's analysis on the sublime where the concept reaches its utmost theorization that perhaps, in a sense, it even enabled to survive until today. He first treated on the subject as a distinctive topic *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, and later further analyzed in the *Critique of Judgment*. In this thesis, it is the Critique of Judgment that I mostly take into consideration. The sublime feeling that Burke attributed to the object transforms to the recognition of man's own power of capacity of reason on Kant's account.

My aim was to explore the possibilities of representation and presentation of the sublime, which itself is problematic, in contemporary art, which itself has its own problematic likewise. "One can gain access to the sublime by passing argumentatively through the insufficiencies of the beautiful."¹ But how is the beautiful now that one can trespass into the sublime? As a subject matter, it was executed and so examined in the field of painting in the 19th century, perhaps most notably in the paintings of J.M.W. Turner. I did not attempt to identify the characteristics of the sublime specific to painting and make a comparison or analogy with any specific representational artwork of the 19th century. I aimed to examine the matter of the sublime, the

¹ Nancy, J.-L. (1988). The Sublime Offering. In *Of the Sublime: Presence in Question*. State University of New York Press.

feeling that is triggered by artwork, and the possibilities of presenting the sublime in a nonrepresentational state of the art, by means of both its tools and its state of being. Also, the relevancy of this study is established by the fact that researches on the sublime and contemporary art have derived recently, and as I have influenced by the anthology of Whitechapel Gallery *The Sublime: Documents of Contemporary Art*. In doing so, I considered Jean-Luc Nancy's *The Sublime Offering*, in which he embraces the sublime in a contemporary state and with the Kantian theory of aesthetics. In line with this objective, I pursued to investigate the selected artworks of the American contemporary artist James Turrell, which I believe that the possibility of the contemporary sublime can be experienced.

CHAPTER 1

1.1 Origins of the concept

The origin of the concept of the sublime has a long-standing history. The concept of *hypsos* was first translated as *genus grande*, before Nicolas Boileau has made the most known translation of the Latin word as *sublimitas*.² The root of the word *sub* means “up to” and *-limen* means “a doorstep”, referring to any kind of metaphorical threshold. In this regard, sublime is convenient to speak of any kind of limit or boundary, anticipating its modern interpretation, of the great, lofty emotion that excites us in both fearful and delightful ways. In its most general sense, the sublime is the idea that uplifts us through a magnitude upon us that exceeds the bounds of our comprehension.³

First study on the sublime presented in the 1st century, *Peri Hypsous*, a treatise whose author is in fact unknown, but generally attributed to Greek rhetorician Cassius Longinus. In 1674, neoclassical literary critic Nicolas Boileau translated the treatise into French under the title of *Traité du Sublime* (On the Sublime). Longinus describes sublimity as an experience of a sudden elevation and an overwhelmed moment in speech, the ability of ‘great’ oratory and poetry. The rhetorical proficiency, by itself, was not the only concern of the sublime, but the aim to enrapture the audience in a state of transport (*ekstasis*). Through ecstasy, sublimity becomes useful to conduce the greatness in the mind of the audience, by engendering the strongest emotions like awe and terror, more effectively than a persuasive speech. In the preface of Boileau’s translation, he mentions that the sublime is “not a style, and by no means identical to what the ancient rhetoricians called the grand style.”⁴ The sublime should rather be understood as the extraordinary, the delightful properties of a speech that carry the audience away.”⁵ The grandeur as a sense of divine correlates the mind of the writer with its effect on the hearer. Thereby, Longinus defines the idea of grandeur in verbal arts as the “echo of a noble mind”⁶. Besides the employment of the sublime in rhetoric, Longinus gives example from the sublime in nature, which constitute the underlying discussion in the 18th century: “the Nile, the Ister, the Rhine, or

² Eck, Caroline van, *Translations of Sublime*, p. 55

³ Burke, *Enquiry*, p. 64

⁴ *le stile sublime*

⁵ Eck, Caroline van, *Translations of Sublime*, p. 55

⁶ Doran, R. (2015). *Theory of the Sublime from Longinus to Kant*. Cambridge University Press., p. 28

still much more, the ocean... Nor do we reckon any thing in nature more wonderful than the boiling furnaces of Etna, which cast up stones, and sometimes whole rocks, from their labouring abyss, and pour out whole rivers of liquid and unmingled flame.”⁷ Along with the association of the sublime with nature, Samuel Monk suggests that the sublime is not only connected to the style but the content as well, leads the sublime to be related with the features of the objects, which also constituted its development into the aesthetic theory.⁸ Before moving onto the *Enquiry*, it would be convenient to mention few significant names that have contributed to the concept of sublime and which Burke have been influenced.

John Dennis (1658-1734) aimed to reconcile his aesthetical ideas, of orderliness and regularity, with the enthusiasm of the sublime. He argues that the sublime expressed in poetry evokes an enthusiastic passion, a passion that is linked to morality and terror, horror and admiration and beguiles us of the divine presence and awakens the unknown power of the world and our vulnerability, in harmony. Likewise in Longinus, Dennis stated that poetry is the greatest to accomplish such elevation in mind, because it is much sensual and passionate. He also adopted the term as a positive appreciation for the first time, to depict the terror in aesthetic experience, where it was primarily being used in literary criticism. He imposes the aspects of the sublime into the contemplation of nature; the display of the power, the vastness and terror of God in nature evokes the feeling of “delightful horror”. In his letter *Miscellanies* (1688), written after a journey to the Alps, he states: “In the very same place Nature was seen Severe and Wanton. In the mean time we walk’d upon the very brink, in a literal sense, of Destruction; one Stumble, and both Life and Carcass had been at once destroy’d. The sense of all this produc’d different motions in me, viz. a delightful Horror, a terrible Joy, and at the same time, I was infinitely pleas’d, I trembled.”⁹ This entry does not reveal a usual aesthetic experience that one reflects on the mere magnitude of mountains but one's probability of falling from the cliffs, one's near-death experience. The trembling stimulates opposite feelings such as joy and terror, delight and horror, pleasure and shiver. In an entry from the same year he further describes delight, associating with

⁷ Longinus, D. (1996). On the Sublime. In A. Ashfield, & P. d. Bolla, *The Sublime: A Reader in British Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory* (pp. 22-29). New York: Cambridge University Press., p. 28

⁸ Monk, S. (1960). *The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in Eighteenth-Century England*. University of Michigan Press.

⁹ Dennis, J. (1943). *The Critical Works of John Dennis. 2 vols.* (E. N. Hooker, Ed.) Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press., vol. I, p.380

reason and creating or improving meditation. He makes the distinction between the sublime and the beautiful, that the beauty in nature pleases, exalts a calm meditation, where the tension he experienced in the Alps produced rather a complex and unusual feeling, a pleasure “mingled with horror”. The remark of his religious resonance reveals in his connotations on literary rather than in the relationship of nature and sublimity. Dennis, unlike Longinus, set poetry apart from great literary and does not consider poetry to be sublime thoroughly. The poetry is sublime, to the extent that it inclines on religion. In he clearly admits that the greatest, strongest and worthiest poetry must be religious, in order to be sublime. Poetry, with passions, informs and instructs us and designs the ‘true religion’. For Dennis, among six types of enthusiastic passions, (of terror, admiration, joy, horror, sadness and desire) terror is an impression that one cannot resist and is the strongest and worthiest passion necessary to poetry: “So thunder mentioned in common conversation, gives an idea of a black cloud, and a great noise, which makes no great impression upon us...this idea must move a great deal of terror in us, and it is this sort of terror that I call enthusiasm. And it is this sort of terror, or admiration, or horror, and so of the rest, which expressed in poetry make that spirit, that passion, and that fire, which so wonderfully please.”¹⁰ The painting and poetry, which is an imitation of nature, must be described with passion, the more passion it contains, the better the painting and poetry are.

Anthony Ashley Cooper, the Third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713), likewise in Dennis, does not argue sublimity as an aesthetic concept only in its own right, but associated with morality. He argues that the sublime is a state of rhapsody or ekstasis and associated with disinterestedness. The experience of nature involves both beauty and sublimity, for nature is divine and attests the power of God, both his harmonious and mysterious aspects and his goodness. By this, his aim must be to raise the mind from its dependency on sensual things in the world and to lay the grounds for intellectual and moral harmony in juxtaposition. It is an area of conflict, where God and Nature are united, along with the harmonic order and chaos, “the abyss of Deity”. However, for Shaftesbury, the sublime is not opposed to beautiful, as in Dennis “but rather works in concert with it to assist the mind in its ascent from corporeal distraction to visionary

¹⁰ Dennis, J. (1998). John Dennis, from *The grounds of criticism in poetry* (1704). In A. Ashfield, & P. d. Bolla, *The Sublime: A Reader in British Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory* (pp. 35-39). New York: Cambridge University Press.

perception.”¹¹ From its astonishment, one can sense the divinity of nature, as he stresses on his travel to the Alps “giddy horror they look down, mistrusting even the ground, which bears them; whilst they hear the hollow sound of torrents underneath, and see the ruin of the impending rock...Here thoughtless men, seized with the newness of such objects, become thoughtful, and willingly contemplate the incessant changes of this earth's surface.”¹² The nature and God, good and evil unite, as the chaos becomes a part of the order, and men enter the landscape where he finds new visions, new images of the Alps, where the ‘divine’ is immanent.

Joseph Addison’s (1672-1719) employment of the sublime is based on literary style, where the elevation, the tension of the opposites, concurrent feelings of pleasure and pain. He makes a significant distinction by stating, “to write on the sublime is to write on aesthetics” and identify sublimity as an aesthetic response. In his journal-magazine *The Spectator* in 1712, he states that the greatness is a source concerning the pleasure of the imagination and highest kind of imagination arises from the sublime, it frees the soul detained by the passions: “By greatness, I do not only mean the bulk of any single object, but the largeness of a whole view, considered as one entire piece. Such are the prospects of an open champaign country, a vast uncultivated desert, of huge heaps of mountains, high rocks precipices, or a wide expanse of waters, where we are not struck with the novelty or beauty of the sight, but with that rude kind of magnificence which appears in many of these stupendous works of nature.”¹³ He continues with expressing that the imagination loves to be filled with ungraspable object and it is in the nature of men to detest everything “that looks like a restraint upon it”. The imagination strives to reach the limit of imagination in a sense that it gets satisfaction by it. The pleasure of the sublime he explains as “Our imagination loves to be filled with an object, or to grasp at any thing that is too big for its capacity,” Here, Addison sort of paves the way for, or at least recalls the mathematical sublime, which Kant mentions in the *Critique*. Addison states that our imagination fails to grasp the thing that is ungraspable, it presses upon the boundaries of apprehension, and even so arises satisfaction of a kind by means of the overwhelmingly large and magnificent natural

¹¹ Shaw, P. (2005). *The Sublime*. Routledge., p. 40

¹² Shaftesbury. (1998). Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, from *Characteristics* (1714). In A. Ashfield, & P. d. Bolla, *The Sublime: A Reader in British Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory*. New York: Cambridge University Press., p. 76

¹³ Addison, J. (1712-14). Joseph Addison, from *The Spectator* (1712-14). In A. Ashfield, & P. d. Bolla, *The Sublime: A Reader in British Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory*. New York: Cambridge University Press., p. 62

phenomena. The undetermined and wide state of sublime in nature is associated with political freedom “a spacious horizon is an image of liberty”. Addison was one of the travelers to the Alps. He associates the vision of Alps with “that they fill the Mind with an agreeable kind of Horror, and form one of the most irregular misshapen Scenes in the World.” In one of his remarks on his travel, he draws attention to the freedom of man by a sensuous depiction of the landscape, which he later on transforms into a merely political insight. By the imagination presenting an image of liberty that pleases us, is the reason why we take pleasure from sublime, is a pre-Kantian idea of the sublime, where Kant discussed the feeling of the sublime engenders the awareness of our freedom. The uncommon “raises a pleasure in the imagination, because it fills the soul with an agreeable surprise, gratifies its curiosity, and gives it an idea of which it was not before possessed.”¹⁴ Given that pleasure in the sublime is of interest for moral disposition, pleasure in the novelty applies to our cognitive disposition: curiosity. Both Shaftesbury and Addison stressed the novelty that awakens the mind and gratifies curiosity, the curiosity, which Burke will pronounce, and initiate the analysis of the sublime.

In *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725), Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746), further improves Shaftesbury’s theory and he describes the concept of “internal senses” as the ‘power perceiving the ideas of beauty’ with respect to regularity, order and harmony. The moral sense on the other hand, shows the moral qualities perceived by actions, through which pleasure or pain obtained by the moral sense leads us to approve or disapprove them. He asserts that the role of sublimity is confined to the extent that the sublime morality causes disruption of the universal and impairs the movement of the passions. Hutcheson attributes sublimity to an artwork, inasmuch as it triggers the sense that appears not in the object but as a response of the sense. He describes the uncommonness and greatness in nature as “There are Horrors rais’d by some Objects, which are only the Effect of Fear for our selves, or Compassion toward others, then either Reason, or some foolish Association of Ideas, makes us apprehend Danger, and not the Effect of any thing in the Form it self: for we find that most of those Objects which excite Horror at first, when Experience or Reason has remov’d the Fear, may become the occasions of Pleasure; as ravenous Beasts, a tempestuous Sea, a craggy

¹⁴ Addison, J. *The Spectator*, Vol. 3. No.412, p. 457

Precipice, a dark shady Valley.”¹⁵ Hutcheson links the experience of the sublime to the feeling of horror that is independent of objective form and identifies it as subjective. He refers to one’s capacity of reason overcoming fear in the face of an experience of the object and identifies it to the rational power of the mind over nature. In this unique experience, beholder receives a successive pain and pleasure and Hutcheson defines this experience as the limit of our imagination reveals our own transcendent power, likewise in Kant, the experience of the limitation reminds us of the power of our capacity of reason “which cannot admit an infinite Multitude of singular Ideas or Judgments at once, yet this Power gives us an Evidence of the Largeness of the human Capacity above our Imagination”¹⁶

1.2 The Sublime in Art before Edmund Burke

The sublime in nature is employed in the content of literature and theology and it mostly depict the supreme power of God. John Dennis brought the empirical experience into discussion by making a description of nature and lead the concept of sublime to become a subject matter itself. The ability to link disparate entities by means of language and its image raised, the sublime enters into the realm of taste and it achieves a transition from style to materiality since its evolution. In the 1700s, the aesthetic valorization of the Alps and the depiction of Alpine experiences were in demand, as well as the Grand Tours. In the eighteenth century, Grand Tours and Alps throughout Europe have been a popular “field of experience” among young upper-class men. In the meantime, the discussion concerning the theory of taste burst into prominence and the effects of neo-Gothic style, the *je ne sais quoi*, the picturesque and the sublime, besides beauty and grace, were blended in together with many ways of seeing. Various intellectuals and aristocrats were visiting Swiss, Italian and French Alps, separately at all different times, but end up with similar discourses of experience that have been influential on their writings. The irregular forms and wildness of Alps apt to raise unawakened feelings, of horror and excitement, simultaneously with delight. With Addison, the conception of the sublime got wider, in a sense that it is distinguished from the beautiful, and included in the context of aesthetic response. Both Shaftesbury and Hutcheson state the relation of aesthetic values to the moral actions and

¹⁵ Hutcheson, F. (2004). *An Inquiry Into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*. (W. Leidhold, Ed.) Indianapolis: Liberty Fund., p. 62

¹⁶ Ibid p. 36

correlate the sublime with morality. Hereby, the landscapes were appreciated in an aesthetical manner and adopted a new meaning, especially when the beautiful and the sublime were in comparison: “transporting Pleasures follow'd the sight of the Alpes, and what unusual transports think you were those, that were mingled with horrors, and sometimes almost with despair? But if these Mountains were not a Creation, but form'd by universal Destruction... than are these Ruines of the old World the greatest Wonders of the New.”¹⁷ The disinterestedness of nature forms and differentiates the idea of the picturesque, the appreciation of roughness and of a scenery struck with sudden abruptness with precipices, rocks and meadows. In fact, the relation of the picturesque and the sublime in the nature gets integrated after Burke, and mostly with Uvedale Price, which I will mention in the following sections.

As a terrible majesty of nature, Alps seemed to be the place for the clashing of terror and joy. One must attempt to be a protagonist in order to record the awe and shift the passion and the fear of sublime experience that is trapped in the literary style. Numerous travel journals have been an inspirational source for literary and artistic works, exhibiting expressions on the re-evaluation of nature and the world. The pleasurable fear that affects one does not get raised by the real danger it posits but the secondary and imaginative images that it awakens, like the Hannibal crossing the Alps in J.M.W. Turner's painting *Snow Storm: Hannibal and his Army Crossing the Alps* (1812). (Figure 1.1) Landscapes were ever since associated with the literature or images in painting as a reply to what mythological stories present to us. The landscape, as an area of play, induces the interplay between feelings and nature unfolds the “seeing subject”. The discovery of mountains by first person with bare eyes, the thrilling near summits drew attention as an unprecedented experience, as a new image, where its curiosity thrills man. Even, the Alpine travelers were reading the books to stimulate the imagination meanwhile wandering through mountains.¹⁸ The thrill and strive to experience the feeling of the sublime was desired in an even more intensified version, by additional efforts to feel the intensity of terror and joy. The encounter with the terrible aspects of nature, the threatening visions of a tempestuous sea, rude rocks, mossy caverns, and huge heaps of mountains evoked feelings of awe in the exerciser.

¹⁷ Dennis, J. (1996). In A. Ashfield, & P. d. Bolla, *The Sublime: A Reader in British Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory*. Cambridge University Press., p. 59

¹⁸ Milani, R. (2009). *The Art of the Landscape*. Toronto: McGill-Queen's University Press., p. 23

The illustrated relationship of nature and the architecture of nature in this sense valorized aesthetics of nature through contemplation and knowledge. The depiction of mountainous regions or riverside landscapes embodied a movement from life with the movement of the mind. As Alexander von Humboldt suggests, landscape is not only a simple frozen evidence of history but “an area of play for future sketches as well as sketches of the future”¹⁹. The *paysage* or the landscape painting carries the encountered expression, the images obtained by imagining and thinking, of living and writing. With Gothic-like architectural models in a picturesque nature practiced in that era includes the real and imitative ruins and enables a turn in development of taste “from picturesque *vedutismo*²⁰ to the genuine experience of an intense emotion inspired by nature.”²¹ Petrarch, in the first modern document on the aesthetic description of the landscape *Ascent of Mount Ventoux* (1336), combines his philosophical reflections and aesthetic experiences of the landscape and describes the intensive feeling of the mythic mountains of Greece. He implies his motivation saying “Nothing but the desire to see its conspicuous height was the reason for this undertaking”²² The curiosity of Petrarch does not belong only to a physical travel but a transcendental as well. His writings carry spiritual implications rather than solely aesthetic or descriptive, as a way to find the instruction of men by curiosity²³.

The medium of the fine arts was the canvas or basically a paper and painting tubes only, differing with the techniques being used. Despite the visual representation of the sublime in a two-dimensional medium were problematic in Burke and Kant, it was approved by some of the critics. John Baillie points out in *An Essay on the Sublime* (1747), the question of the ways of representing the sublime is dependent on how well the passions are represented “Landscape painting may likewise partake of the sublime; such as representing mountains, etc. which shows how little objects by an apt connection may affect us with this passion: for the space of a yard of canvass, by only representing the figure and colour of a mountain, shall fill the mind with nearly

¹⁹ Braae, E., & Steiner, H. (Eds.). (2019). *Routledge Research Companion to Landscape Architecture*. New York: Routledge.

²⁰ *veduta* (view) is an Italian term that defines large-scale, highly detailed painting of a cityscape.

²¹ Milani, R. (2009). *The Art of the Landscape*. Toronto: McGill-Queen’s University Press.

²² Petrarch’s quote cited from: Harries, K. (2001). *Infinity and Perspective*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.

²³ Burke underlines curiosity at the beginning of *Enquiry*, and implies that it is the first and the simplest emotion, which we discover, in the human mind. (*Enquiry*, p. 29)

as great an idea as the mountain itself.”²⁴ Baillie was convinced that not only words do represent but also the use of colors and figures enables the surface of a canvas to become a locus for interpretation. Several years later after Baillie, in *An essay on taste* (1759), Alexander Gerard implies that decent imitations, which form the ideas and create images of the real sublime, are nearly equal to the sensations of the experience of the sublime in real life: “chiefly those performances are grand, which either by the artful disposition of colours, light, and shade, represent sublime natural objects, and suggest ideas of them; or, by the expressiveness of the features and attitudes of the figures, lead us to conceive sublime passions operating in the originals. And so complete is the power of association, that a skilful painter can express any degree of sublimity in the smallest, as well as in the largest compass.”²⁵ Gerard draws attention to the importance of vastness in dimension and suggests that even small paintings can give rise to such feeling and the feeling of the sublime is not dependent on the vastness of dimension but the quality of expression of the passion, dependent on the sleight of hand of the genius. In terms of its physicality Burke will express that the greatness of dimension is a powerful cause of sublimity and its striking effect gets more powerful as it becomes greater, insofar as it causes the feeling of terror, from a safe distance.

1.3 Edmund Burke on the Sublime

The only contribution of Edmund Burke (1729-1797) to aesthetics is *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* in his early ages, in 1757. The *Enquiry* was an “open revolt against neoclassical principles” and the first to define a distinction between the beautiful and the sublime in the 18th century. It deeply clarified the distinction between the beautiful and the sublime for the first time since Longinus: “For sublime objects are vast in their dimensions, beautiful ones comparatively small; beauty should be smooth, and polished; the great, rugged and negligent; beauty should shun the right line, yet deviate from it insensibly; the great in many cases loves the right line, and when it deviates, it often makes a strong deviation; beauty should not be obscure; the great ought to be dark and gloomy; beauty should be light and

²⁴ Baillie, J. (1996). *An Essay on the Sublime*. In A. Ashfield, & P. d. Bolla, *Sublime: A Reader in British Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory* (pp. 87-100). New York: Cambridge University Press., p. 99.

²⁵ Gerard, A. (1759). *An essay on taste*. In A. Ashfield, & P. d. Bolla, *The Sublime: A Reader in British Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory* (pp. 168-172). New York: Cambridge University Press.

delicate; the great ought to be solid, and even massive.”²⁶ For Burke, although being constantly compared, the beautiful and the sublime are rigorously independent and irrelevant, in fact mutually exclusive.

The *Enquiry* was finished by 1753 and the part *Introduction to Taste* was added to the second edition in 1759.²⁷ However, the philosophical language was familiar to that time, the method was unusual, questioning aesthetics on a scientific basis that is concerned with its physiological impressions based upon empirical method of his own psychological and physiological experience. It was an attempt to lay a theoretical ground for sensibility and passions, by attributing the senses and the origins of our experiences into physical causes. As a young man, his aim must be to indicate the commonly established principles or standards of reason and taste intrinsic to the nature of humans. In the introduction part, Burke states that there is a fixed, universal principle of judgment on taste by accepting there is something fixed and universal to all mankind.²⁸ By admitting that all men, physiologically, have the same organs, the manner of perceiving external objects must be more or less the same. Accordingly, the identification of arising pleasure and pain should be the same, through the senses, the imagination and do the judgment. In the same manner, the pleasure obtained by sight is the same in all men, and under normal circumstances, any perceiver must respond to the aesthetic properties ‘correctly’ or ‘same’, by a true or false judgment. So for the objects that contain the qualities of the sublime must evoke the feelings of sublime in every man, undoubtedly. In this manner, Burke provides a durable place for the sublime to inhabit in the discussion of taste and to be accepted in the universal principles of taste.

Burke states that both the pleasure and the pain were produced independently, in their own positive nature, where pain is not produced by the elimination of pleasure and relief of pain does not produce pleasure. In fact, there is a state of indifference where neither of them exists. The dissociation of the sublime from the beautiful, each having a positive nature was significant in terms of disrupting the dialog in between. With their independent natures, the feelings they evoke have a separate origin too. Pain does not exist in contrast with pleasure, meaning that the removal or softening of pain does not conduce towards pleasure. The presence of the positive

²⁶ *Enquiry*, p. 113

²⁷ It is generally accepted as a response to Hume’s essay “Of the Standard of Taste” (1757) which has been published two months earlier the *Enquiry* first appeared.

²⁸ *Enquiry*, p. 11

pleasure is the pleasure that is simply obtained by the beautiful. The pleasure that is caused by the removal of pain and danger is what Burke calls 'delight'. He gives physiological explanations of the pleasure of the beautiful which relaxes the nerves, and the sublime, the feeling of terror and pain produce unnatural tension of the nerves. The source of the feeling of the sublime is grounded within the excitement of the ideas of pain and danger. For Burke, pain is the most powerful emotion that affects the mind and the body and produces delight only at a certain distance or in certain modified condition. Astonishment is a state where the causes of passions operate most powerfully, accompanied by some degree of horror. The highest degree of sublime is astonishment that fills the mind entirely with its object and disables to entertain with any other. Caused by the great and the sublime in nature, the beholder gets frozen and petrified with the feeling of astonishment, a state of sensory overload where nothing can further be perceived. It is the feeling raised at the summit of a mountain or the edge of a cliff. However, if danger presses too nearly, then mind becomes incapable of arousing delight and turns simply into feeling terror. It is this terror that enables artistic representations of the sublime to be thrilling. The representation, the state of fiction, is what defines the safe borders and keeps the beholder in the comfort zone, yet evokes a thrilling feeling. However, the representation of the sublime in painting for Burke is nearly always an attempt of failure. He describes the possibility of the failure in relation with the obscure intention of the painter and the possibility of the painting ending up as ludicrous, ridiculous or grotesque.²⁹ The painting is a medium that presents clear representation, whereas the sublime necessitates obscurity. Only verbal art is capable of providing a representation of obscurity, by means of the language. Thus, he puts poetry above all art, since only words have the strongest influence over passions. The lack of clarity gives enlivening touch to words: "words affect the mind more than the sensible image did"³⁰. Noble assemblages of the words would represent the feeling of the sublime certainly more obscure, more capable of affecting the mind, and so better than to a painting that has clear images and descriptive language of representation. The effects of words in the mind of the hearer unfold with first, the sound, then the picture or the representation that sound signifies, and finally the affection of the soul produced by its premises. The obscurity is indeed necessary to make anything terrible. Clarity is the opening and revealing of the limits, or the unknown. When the

²⁹ Ibid, p. 58

³⁰ Ibid, p. 159

finitude and limits of a thing becomes perceivable, seen and known, it is no more harmful or superior and lacks sublimity. Thus, darkness and not being able to see, is a productive feature of the ideas of the sublime. At this point, he gives an example from the line of 666 of Milton's *Paradise Lost* and deems as dark, confused and sublime to its highest degree:

*The other shape,
If shape it might be called that shape had none
Distinguishable, in member, joint, or limb;
Or substance might be called that shadow seemed,
For each seemed either; black he stood as night;
Fierce as tenfuries; terrible as hell;
And shook a deadly dart. What seemed his head
The likeness of a kingly crown had on.³¹*

The darkness and the obscurity of things causes movement in imagination as one tries to 'imagine what is coming', the thrilling rose by the ideas of the possibility of encountering terrible and dangerous things. The darkness, the privation of the light raises the ideas of the unknowable, unseeable, the one that give terror.

Burke stresses that vastness of scale and great heights awaken the feeling of the sublime, due to their association with infinity.

Besides Burke does not find any painting capable of evoking sublime feelings, after several decades from *Enquiry*, J. M. W. Turner's paintings were repeatedly mentioned as great examples of the feeling of sublime in painting. In the painting and in any representational visual art, the object represented triggers sympathy in the observer, as a kind of substitution of oneself, in which a man is affected by the passion of others. The sympathy that Burke mentions does not correspond to compassion, which corresponds to the meaning of sympathy today, but the idea of empathy and that is why the representation encountered excites the onlooker. In the similar manner, Jean-Baptist Dubos, whom Burke was impressed by, argues in his theory of aesthetics that imitation and representation relies on sympathy regarding painting "The more our compassion would have been raised by such actions as are described by poetry and painting, had we really beheld them; the more in proportion the imitations attempted by those arts are capable

³¹ Ibid, p. 55

of affecting us.”³² As much as the idea of fiction moves away and one gets closer to the reality with representation, the experience gets more powerful.³³ The object of art is by means unreal or fictional, but only stands at an adequate distance, even so presenting a certain degree of danger.

At this point, I would like to give an example in advance, from contemporary art to present the analogy between the representation of the sublime in nature and its reappearance in the world by substantially developed technological mediums. In *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living* (1991) by Damien Hirst (1965-), a shark is preserved in a vitrine filled with formaldehyde. Much more than familiarity, a real dead shark itself appears in front of the viewers. Its lidless eyes filled with fury and the mouth wide open, terrorize one at a moment as if it was frozen while attacking. It is not like a taxidermy that is displayed and viewed as a source of pride, but rather scraped out of its natural habitat in order to retain spreading terror in an unexpected territory. The plainness of the ocean, Burke argues, induces obscurity and unexpectedness and the possibility of an instantaneous attack of a creature that is superior in terms of power, which contains a considerable degree of strength and ability to hurt. The shark floats on the borders of danger, at the highest point possible of bodily closeness that one can experience and also take pleasure. It is neither an experience of an aesthetic quality of pictorial nor language, but an experience of still life. However, due to a failure with formaldehyde, original version of the shark has been dissolved and lost its dramatic power of appearance, as well as the idea of sublimity. As Burke suggests that “Whenever strength is only useful, and employed for our benefit or our pleasure, then it is never sublime”³⁴, it becomes harmless and subservient, and is no more subject to us. Hirst also argues that "A shark has got to look fierce" and replaces the decayed shark with a new one to give its visual power back. The experience one faces with the shark is nothing less than a real bodily experience, the fear in the face of death; in fact, it creates a delicate play of the imagination. The frozen moment of attacking turns into taxidermy and one start to get elevated by the thrilling experience, as danger loses its power, as one notices the medium of art ensuring an actual position of safety.

³² Dubos, J. B. (1993). *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et la peinture (1719)*. Paris: Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts.

³³ Ibid, p. 43

³⁴ Ibid, p. 61

1.4 Kant on the Sublime

Kant's inquiry on the theory of the sublime was first published in *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime* (1764) several years after Burke's *Enquiry*. Despite the dates of publishing *Enquiry* and *Observations* are quite close, there is no evidence that Kant is specifically replying to Burke. In *Observations*, Kant holds less theoretical approach towards sublime than in the *Critique of Judgment* (1790). I will mainly rely on his remarks in the *Critique* in this case and his remarks on the sublime considering its relations with ethics and morality, more than aesthetics, which I find important to mention here.

Kant defines subjective judgments that are deduced by the feelings of pleasure and displeasure, do not reside in the nature of the external things but on the person's own disposition, own ideas.³⁵ An object, by itself, can't convey sublimity and causality; it is 'applied by' judgments. Thus, the concept of sublimity is a concept of understanding, it reside only over the feelings of the subject rather than an attribute of the object. However, the idea associated with reason and senses is experienced through the object. For Kant, in the very inadequacy of presentation of the sublime, the mind abandons sensibility and engages itself upon higher purposive ideas. Differently from Burke, which only visual sight over a raging storm overwhelms and the power of the thing makes one think outside itself, Kant suggests that the higher purposiveness of sublimity asserts our superiority towards overwhelming nature, both in terms of our imaginative capacity (mathematically sublime) and instinct of self-preservation (dynamically sublime). Kant approaches the feeling of pleasure among the agreeable, the good, the sublime or the beautiful. The degree of agreeableness differs in the beautiful and the sublime. The agreeable and the good contain the idea of desire or possession to the object. The agreeable relies only on senses and stimulus and the good is based on reason and concepts of purpose. The judgment of the beautiful and the agreeable differentiates through the pleasure in beautiful consisting of 'disinterestedness'. In the judgment of the beautiful, no desire or no interest is produced towards the object; one only gets pleasure after a judgment has been made on the representation of the beautiful. In the agreeable, one has a direct interest towards a thing and it gives pleasure that is solely produced by sensations. In the judgment of the sublime, the faculties of the understanding and the imagination are in disharmony; the sublime includes displeasure. The disinterestedness

³⁵ Kant, I. (1764). *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*. , p. 13

of the sublime does not coincide with freedom from any interest but only from the specific interests of sense. In other words, sublime pleases not because it simply includes interest but precisely due to its freedom from specific interests of sense deemed as an aesthetic (not conceptual but imaginative) satisfaction of the higher demand of 'inner freedom'.³⁶ The critical distinction between the sublime and the beautiful for Kant is the experience of the sublime includes a free play between cognitive powers, not between the imagination and the understanding but an initially painful, ultimately pleasurable play between the imagination and the reason, which is triggered by the magnitude of nature. The imagination engages with understanding in the beautiful, without a concept, in the sublime with reason. The magnitude leads our imagination to the edge where it cannot grasp anything and in a sense, one becomes aware of the infinite, as if the infinite is graspable. The sublime brings out the limitlessness of the cognitive powers in opposition to the limitedness of everything sensible. The experience transcends our limits of understanding and leaves no concepts that one can fully capture; the pleasure is produced indirectly, through "momentary inhibition of the vital forces"³⁷ followed by a more powerful release of them. The inadequacy of the imagination presenting the idea of a whole leads the imagination to attain its maximum, and in the effort to extend it, it sinks back into itself, and in doing so the initial negative feeling is transformed and the displaced into a moving satisfaction. While the beautiful excites positive pleasure in a restful contemplation, the sublime sets mind in motion and arises a negative pleasure with its complex feelings of both being repulsed and attracted by it. The ones that lack getting pleasure from the beautiful are deemed to lack *taste*, in this context the ones that remain unmoved by the sublime are deemed to lack *feeling*.³⁸ The satisfaction in the beautiful is related with the representation of the quality, in sublime with quantity. The feeling of the sublime arises in nature, with the presentation of an indeterminate concept of reason, formlessness, limitlessness, but at the same time as a totality. In contrast to the predecessors of Burke, Kant does not find mountains, seas, torrents or hills, or any vast natural forms, the objects of sublime experience, rather it is in human capacity to figure the idea of nature, as well as defying its 'threats' or dangers, within our capacities of reason and imagination. The delightfulness in nature is hereby transferred to the realization of human

³⁶ Guyer, P. (1993). *Kant and the Experience of Freedom: Essays on Aesthetics and Morality*. New York: Cambridge University Press"., p. 223

³⁷ *CPJ*, 5:245

³⁸ *CPJ*, 5:265

capacity. In other words, the sublime in nature transcends cognition and eventually evolves into the realm of morality.

Kant distinguishes the sublime in two forms: *mathematically sublime* and *dynamically sublime*. In both cases, the experience of the superior feeling originates in our ideas over nature, and there is a movement towards reason and a movement of an emotion, where the imagination applies to the faculty of cognition or desire. The complex feeling of sublime, a kind of displeasure followed by pleasure happens as the imagination fails to attempt and reason overcomes. In *mathematical sublime* reason gets overwhelmed by the faculty of imagination, and its inadequacy encounters with the absolutely great. Thus, it awakens the feeling via the judgment, based on the representation of the encountered. Its magnitude is incomparable to anything, since everything other than itself is small and it is only equal to itself.³⁹ Kant suggests that this magnitude, i.e. a wide ocean, produces the feeling of the sublime without mathematical quantification but aesthetically, grasping the ‘absolutely great’ in its totality. The non-numerical magnitude in the faculty of imagination refers initially to the apprehension that can persist ad infinitum; the further apprehension reaches, the more difficult the comprehension gets, and at that point it reaches its limits and the infinity simultaneously. In thinking the magnitude, the imagination reaches its limit, reminding us of its inadequacy to apprehend the totality of the vast objects, and at this point, it produces pain. However, the immensity does not rely on the infinity of the object, but implies a relation to the power of the judgment of the subject. The reason supplies the idea of infinity and shows itself that it has the ability to exceed imagination in estimating the magnitude of the objects, and so it eventually gives pleasure. On the other hand, *dynamical sublime* evokes a feeling of a fear that is reassuring, reminding us of our smallness, likewise seeing a volcano or thundercloud. Even if the power of nature evokes fear that one cannot judge at the moment of encountering, its cessation of the trouble leads to joy. It reminds us of the judgment of nature having no dominion over us in spite of the immensity of its power. For instance, the physical inability when encountered with a storm produces displeasure due to the inability of defending oneself. At this point, Kant asserts that this leads one to reflect on the inadequacy of the power of nature endangering one’s moral free choice, and so it gives pleasure. In any case, only after one reaches to the moment of safety the identification with sublimity can

³⁹ *CPJ*, 5:250.

be made. This causes for us to be reminded of his “great” capacity that lies within ourselves “which gives us the courage to measure ourselves against the apparent all-powerfulness of nature.”⁴⁰ In the mathematical sublime, in the fear of superior power, we get noticed of our intellectual superiority and in the dynamically sublime, the resistance and feeling of our superiority over nature reminds us of our independency and superiority as individuals. That is to say, for Kant, sublime uncovers either our moral capacity resisting all powers of nature or our cognitive capacity to consider whatever is greater than any magnitude in nature. By distinguishing the sublime into two, Kant distinguishes from Burke to the extent that the feeling of the sublime is not only related to our desire to live but in our desire to know as well. Since the sublime is unrepresentable, formless, and so cannot be represented in art, the faculty of reason becomes a matter for a supersensible power that governs experience; the unrepresentability of the sublime overwhelms the imagination by the affect of reason. Besides their discrepancies, both forms of the sublime relates us with our moral powers and sensibilities, as well as the pleasure they produce that is ultimately grounded in the moral superiority over nature of man.

However Kant categorizes the experience of the sublime as a form of aesthetic experience, it is “exclusively an experience of nature rather than art”⁴¹. In Kant’s words, sublime in art is “always restricted to the conditions of agreement with nature”⁴² The concept of nature is extended into the concept of nature as art, sublimity must be grounded in ourselves and regarding nature, in the way of thinking that introduces into representation. Likewise the idea of deity, to which no sensible intuition can ever be adequate, Kant finds that religion is better represented with symbolism for making supersensible objects sensibly present so us, “Religion is better represented by the symbolism of beauty than by the terror of the sublime, because its proper function is to uplift us morally toward the ideal, not to frighten us with lurid and superstitious visions of arbitrary divine power administering eternal punishment.”⁴³ Kant’s significant emphasize on the relation of the sublime and God is to make a distinction, since a self-respecting human does not have a reason to fear from God and such an attempt only dishonors both God

⁴⁰ *CPJ*, 5:262.

⁴¹ Guyer, P. (2006). *Kant*. Routledge., p. 312.

⁴² *CPJ*, 5:245.

⁴³ Wood, A. W. (2005). *Kant*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing., p.168.

and ourselves.⁴⁴ Thus, the experience of transcendence does not coincide with such relation but in our minds, and the aesthetic experience of a sublime object does not relate with God but our own moral disposition and vocation.

1.5 Implications of Burke and Kant in Painting

From the mid-17th century to the beginning of the 18th century, ideas on the beautiful and the sublime were based on nature, divinity and spirituality that is somehow emphasized mystery, emotion and imagination. By the end of 18th century, Burke's scientific investigations together with Kant's emphasis revived the concept of sublime in philosophy, visual art, music and poetry. Especially in visual arts, the treatment of the subject was in fashion, despite the fact that both Kant's and Burke's insights were that the sublime was unsuitable and impracticable to be treated in the realm of visual arts. Its reason is mainly because of the fact that art is human-made, where humans determine the end and magnitude of the form. However, it was inevitable to mention J.M.W. Turner, Caspar David Friedrich, and John Constable, who were closely related to the sublime feeling in painting. The paintings were seemingly including elements that were likely to be related to the sublime feelings, such as stormy oceans, fascinating mountain ranges, bottomless caverns, dizzying cliffs, rumbling waterfalls, or horrifying display of a volcanic eruption. In addition to the sublime, the picturesque was often ascribed to the subjects of landscape art. Popularized after the *Enquiry*, William Gilpin and his follower Uvedale Price introduced the term picturesque to describe the landscape paintings that were 'picture-like' or 'worth painting'. Along with the theoretical framework of the sublime, the picturesque was included in the vocabulary of romantic landscape painting and gained the possibility of representing the sublime in visual arts. The picturesque did not form a new aesthetic category, but act as an intermediate term, which was later distinguished from both the sublime and the beautiful. It gained popularity with Price's theorization and it was determinately relating the sublime with representation, to the extent that the landscape was designing in accordance with the feeling of the sublime. Thus, the mimetic representation of the nature somehow get reversed in a way to reveal the sublimity of the nature, and transform the experience of a painting into the experience of the sublime. In this way, the picturesque indicate that by means of artistic

⁴⁴ *CPJ*, 5:264.

intervention, one could design and artificially produce the feeling of the sublime, even more stimulatingly. As Burke mentioned, scale of the painting plays a significant role in order to transmit the sublime by a vicarious sense of the experience, and in order to overcome the challenge to represent the sublime in painting, in a two-dimensional medium, the greatness of dimension was a feature of the picturesque paintings. Especially in the Hudson River School, an American art movement that is influenced by Romanticism, the picturesque and the sublime views were of large-scale landscapes. Such as in James Ward's *Gordale Scale*, the size of canvas is 332.7 x 421.6 cm. The greatness of size aims not to realize an exact experience of nature, for sure, but to endeavor for greater intensification of the medium. In the words of Burke, as well as Gerard, "Greatness of dimension, is a powerful cause of the sublime."⁴⁵ The picturesque has both sensory scenery and composition regarding form, and oscillates between the magnitude of the sublime and the elevation of the beautiful, acting as a regulatory, and differentiating itself through captivation. From romantic period paintings to modern paintings, the concern for scale in sublime and picturesque representation maintained its importance, especially in the paintings of the American abstract art, which was the most important case the sublime experienced while transforming into its present state.

⁴⁵ Burke, *Enquiry*, p.66

CHAPTER 2

1.6 Contemporary Interpretations of the Aesthetic Experience of the Sublime

Contemporary art, in the first place, is a result of the certain formation of art in its history, and it is an entirely different art than that Kant knew. It would be indeed insufficient to summarize the entire history of this relatively rapid change in this context in any case. However, in order to be able to talk about the sublime in today's art, to underline the most significant aspects and impacts of this transformation is essential.

Beginning with the rejection of the “retinal art”, Duchamp triggered the first step that enabled the shift from aesthetics (appearance) to thought (conception). However, the shift tempted not to question a world of exact meanings and forms, but a more suspended one. It appears that the readymades dispelled the building blocks of art, precisely by being deprived of artistic creation of form as well as skill, beauty and aesthetic pleasure obtained by it. The work of art is no longer an artefact and there is nothing to do about its representation, figure or form, but the idea or the content of it. The central concept of aesthetic theory interrupted with this unsettling state of being; being anti-aesthetic and bringing the anti-aesthetic or even the taste-less into the realm of taste: “This choice was based on a reaction of visual indifference with at the same time a total absence of good or bad taste... in fact a complete anesthesia”⁴⁶ However, it was not an avoidance of taste Duchamp attempted to imply, but rather the impossibility of such state of mind, in a way that the act of “choosing” an object as an artwork and the act of “making” gets integrated in the idea of “readymade”, which leads “taste” and “genius” to be constrained in one, and so producing and judging an artwork has become one, which deemed as impossible. What matters in this context is that with readymades, the judgment of “This is art” has been replaced with “This is beautiful” and the aesthetic idea of the readymade, or the art itself has become the idea of reason, in a Kantian sense. As a consequence of this transition, the difference between viewer and artist dissolves, and the difference between “artist” and “painter”. With modernism, a complex synthesis of receptivity and intentionality appeared through the act of “choosing” and the brush strokes that are free of conventions, first in impressionists, but later more radically in abstract painting. The “genius” and “taste” getting deprived of talent and skill, as well as the

⁴⁶ Duchamp, M. (1961). Apropos of "Readymades".

building blocks of art that makes art “art”, underlines the ontological disparity between mere things and artworks and so generates the ontological question regarding the essence of art. It was impossible to avoid the question, since the conventional mediation between artworks *as aesthetic ideas* and art *as an idea of reason* is condensed. As a consequence of readymades that disobeys any conventional art forms, the problematization begins as the mediation vanishes. This problematization apparently starts with Duchamp and his posteriors. Apart from the media of painting and sculpture as the traditional art forms, the transition into the concept of *art-in-general* first conducted with Duchamp and later Warhol’s boxes. What Warhol initiates and Arthur C. Danto elaborates on is the instinctively conceivable claim concerning the appearance and identity of visual artwork, and that its transfiguration only happens historically and theoretically. Danto claims the difference of mere objects and objects as artworks through indicating the problem of indiscernibility. The context of an object belonging to the art world is always concerned with the historical and theoretical context. He elucidates the notion of art world in three phases. Firstly, the objects of the art world are real things like ordinary objects. The indiscernibility of objects does not make them unreal things, indeed, the shovel of Duchamp or boxes of Warhol are just real things on a basic level. However, the state of being real by itself does not explain the totality of what it means to deem a thing as a work of art. An artwork has something else that is something more than merely real objects. He deems art works composed of parts and the superimposed, non-real parts besides the realness of objects is what makes an art object “a complex object”. The form of its complexity is neither irreducible to its real parts nor its predicated constituents of real objects. Secondly, regarding this, any part of an artwork without reducing the artwork to a mere real thing is consists of an understanding of the relevance of part and whole relationship. He explains this with the “is of artistic identification”; the “is” that is used to make the artistic identification first, and then the constitutive interpretation that engenders the transfiguration of the object into a work of art.

The introduction of readymades into the world of art remains as important as what makes the emergence of new interdisciplinary practices of the 1960s. Named as mixed media, multimedia or intermedia, the attempt was to label new categories that integrate diverse practices deprived of traditional categories. This attempt to describe the new trends caused new terms to appear, such as installation, happening, performance, assemblage or event, but what actually these words imply by themselves were merely descriptive. The influence of Duchamp and Warhol revealed a

more theoretical debate on the definition of the word art, which was being discussed in the sixties under the movements such as Fluxus, minimal art, or conceptual art. The most radical question regarding the art itself appeared, where the concept of art at large was discussed aside from the traditional forms of art. However, conceptual art failed, in a way that it totally eliminated the mediation of aesthetic ideas and rather aimed to present directly as an idea of reason. Which then, consequently, such an entirely dematerialized presentation of the art object resulted inevitably as a visual presentation of the ideas. Through this transition of art, the greatest examples of conceptual art did not avoid its aesthetic responses but rather present their impossibility of escaping presentation. In a sense, in the form of the contemporary sublime, the impossibility of the unrepresentable is where the presentation has its only chance. In the case of Barnett Newman, the aesthetic ideas enact with the ideas of reason and the most substantial works of conceptual art occur, as neither more nor less convincing than the sculptures, in painting. In fact, through painting, where Newman examines for the exalted, and with the bypassing of the painting into three dimensions, the conceptual art is formed. Despite these movements emerged as moving away from or as a critique of painting, their roots nonetheless lie within the painting. Minimal and conceptual art arises from the mixture of sculpture and painting, where painting played a greater role due to its more problematic state of being. Although most of the conceptual and minimal artists abandoned painting, once they all started as painters. Therefore, the decade of sixties is regarded as a milestone that witnessed the transfiguration of numerous *painters* into *artists*.

The fashion of the concept of the sublime in visual arts reemerged in the 1950s and 1960s, mainly with Barnett Newman's seminal text *The Sublime is Now* (1948). Newman made a remarkable description of his artistic subject matter and explored the American abstraction as a realm of sublimity, and sublimity as the essence of his body of work. He states that initially in the representational Renaissance art, the struggle of the sublime and the beautiful had its peak. It is nonetheless that the sublime has been quested through the accompaniment of the beautiful, in an absolute form, building itself up in the history of the plastic arts, but in where a representer and a represented is too traditional, or even outdated and problematic within the search of the sublime. He asserts that both the sublime content and the sublime imagery becomes a concern of the absolute emotions, the 'man's natural desire for the exalted' in abstract imagery. The renewal of representations of Christ and the antique ideals in a sublime way were used for the absolute

beauty, in order to upheave through Christian sublimity. Then, the destruction of the beautiful by impressionists in modern era was an attempt made “without an adequate substitution for a sublime message” and remained nothing but a futile preoccupation that only transferred the values rather than designing new ways of ‘experiencing life’. The following failures, of Dada movement, which likewise repeated the same mistakes as same pattern, of Picasso, whose effort was close, and of Mondrian, who succeeded more, yet paradoxically the geometry, perfect sensations, got drowned in his exaltation. Consequently, Newman states that the European art in general, failed because of the claim to last inside the reality of the sensation, in the objective world. His foremost question was “The question that now arises is how, if we are living in a time without a legend or mythos that can be called sublime, if we refuse to admit any exaltation in pure relations, if we refuse to live in the abstract, how can we be creating a sublime art?”⁴⁷ Newman’s question is still relevant today; if we refuse to live in an ambiguous form of art world, or even a formless, unaesthetic or unartistic, where can we be creating a sublime in art? For Newman, the failure of modern art for achieving the sublime was entrapped by nothing but “without a sublime content...incapable of creating a new sublime image and unable to move away from the Renaissance imagery of figures and objects except by distortion or by denying it completely for an empty world of geometric formalism –a *pure* rhetoric of abstract mathematical relationships- became unmeshed in a struggle over the nature of beauty: whether beauty was in nature or could be found without nature.”⁴⁸ Newman believed that American art is competent to find an answer, by means of being deprived of both the nostalgia and the remnants of old notions of sublimity and of beauty in European culture, in which he obtained a post-war painterly language that abolished the images of the gesture. He asserts that American art would disregard the problem of beauty and look for ‘man’s natural desire for the exalted’ in the creation of new images, which comprise self-evident realities that are made out of one’s own feelings, coinciding the universal and the subjective, ‘the self-evident’ and ‘the absolute’. The tension of the aftershock of war is carried between the positive and negative, the possibility of cheerfulness and irrecoverable memory, past and future; now. For Newman, this "now" is the seizure of the aesthetic concept that uncovers the aperture intrinsic to the aesthetic history.

⁴⁷ Newman, B. (1948). *The Sublime is Now*. MIT Press.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*.

In the course of today's art, art remains as a matter of condition, as is suggested by its name; *con-temporary*⁴⁹. It is merely an attribution, or "a category that does not designate any particular aesthetic modality", as Nancy suggests and a criterion that relates the state of art with the production techniques of the era, or simply the state of belonging to the space and actuality of its time. It embodies a gamut of categories of artistic practices, currently and continually moving, continually expanding its borders. This category-state of *art* appears, in its singular form, differentiated from *the arts* in its plural form, and results as the *art-in-general* system. What we are facing today is merely a matter of naming and which raises a series of questions together with the concepts it treats. Today, *art-in-general* deals with "A certain formation of the contemporary world, a certain shaping, a certain perception of the self in the world."⁵⁰ It is a world where the totality of possible significations, the circulation of meanings gets shaped; it is now a matter of a very specific historical awareness. As Nancy admits, "contemporary art gives an account of the self, of this shapeless state of self."⁵¹ The question that brought up by contemporary art is of a new form that is above all, as well as the form of a question. In the words of Nancy, "it is a question of forms for which there are no preliminary *schemas*"⁵²

Jean-Luc Nancy reformulates the state of the sublime as a fashion that has always been present in the history of art, and that was a present itself, which offered itself and the sublime is offered through. His offering does not carry the intention of reply to Newman's text but is concerned with the state of sublime in art today, in a Kantian sense. He treats the sublime in Kant, not as an appendix to the analysis of aesthetic judgment, as Kant mentions in the third *Critique*, but instead as a thorough dependence on the theory of his aesthetic theory. As I previously discussed in the section of Kant, both the beautiful and the sublime appear in between the agreeable and the good, Nancy's statement is only passing through the insufficiencies of the beautiful, one can access to the sublime.⁵³ The beautiful slides into the pleasure or satisfaction of the reason and indicates that the beautiful is responsive to the interest of reason, but it is not completely in the state of enjoyment, i.e. the agreeable, but in between, as if it "is always about to slide into it".

⁴⁹ *Con* meaning 'together, with' and *tempus* meaning 'time'

⁵⁰ Nancy, J.-L. (2010). Art Today. *Journal of Visual Culture* , 91-99.

⁵¹ Nancy, J.-L. (2010). Art Today. *Journal of Visual Culture* , 91-99.

⁵² "a non-sensible image that precedes the possibility of sensible images" (Nancy, 2010)

⁵³ Nancy, J.-L. (1988). The Sublime Offering. *Of the Sublime: Presence in Question*. State University of New York Press.

Nancy recalls this state of in-betweenness as an intrinsic feature of the beautiful. So, the pure judgment of taste (judgment of sublime and beautiful), as a cognitive experience, is not pure and regardless of its disinterestedness, it is always interested in the deep self-enjoyment of the imagination. The aforementioned difference between judgments of the sublime and the beautiful that the pleasure obtained by the beautiful consists in disinterestedness is what slides into the realm of interest, as an instable and not non-autonomous intermediate. As the beautiful slides into the agreeable, it loses its quality, of being beautiful, in its form of pure self-adequation, its pure accord with imagination and strictly in accordance form and contour of its design. Proceeding to the side of the formless, on the other hand, is what transforms and transfigures the sublime, as Nancy argues, by adding itself to the beautiful and even transforms the entire concept of presentation. Considering Arthur C. Danto's suggestion that "The art Kant knew was entirely representational, and though sublime things can be represented they cannot be represented as sublime"⁵⁴, Nancy suggests that it is not a matter of presentation and representation of the sublime.

What remains from an artistic act disengaged from the world of significations are the gesture and the sign that does not certainly signify at the end of the gesture. The work of art, which is not a signification, is a gesture, and gesture is the companion of an intention. Nancy elucidates the gesture as neither a movement nor the outlining of a form but "is sensible dynamism that precedes, accompanies or succeeds meaning or signification, but it is sensible sense [*sens sensible*]."⁵⁵ In this state of anesthesia, the only possibility to capture the sublime feeling has its only chance. The gesture is essentially requisite to art and as a matter of fact to the whole history of art. The possibility of the sublime opens up by means of gesture "all finite forms gets carried away into the absence of the form"⁵⁶ where the unlimited ends up in the form of the infinite. With the unlimited, sublime transports into and replays the beautiful, and so the limitation, and this is why it should not proceed as merely the presentation of the infinite. Most importantly, Nancy expresses that therefore the presentation or the representation of the infinite is not a matter of the sublime. The lack of presentation is what the sublime necessitate to take place. The

⁵⁴ Danto, A. C. (2004). *The Abuse of Beauty: Aesthetics and the Concept of Art*. Chicago: Carus Publishing., p. 149.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Nancy, J.-L. (1988). *The Sublime Offering. Of the Sublime: Presence in Question*. State University of New York Press.

movement of the unlimited is “*that takes place on the border of the limit, and thus on the border of the presentation.*”⁵⁷, but not as *just presentation*. It is due to the feeling of the sublime that one can speak of an unlimited installing of oneself as something, at somewhere. The absence of figure is not what the infinite causes to, but it is a beginning of the delimitation of a form. The sublime is, then, the gesture of a formation itself, as long as the formless accompanies. It is a presentation without presentation, what Kant calls as ‘negative presentation’ or ‘indirect presentation’. It is not a matter of an indirect presentation, by means of symbols or analogy, in order to figure the nonfigurable, or an adequation of presentation, to present the unrepresentable. It is the presentation of the limit, at the limit, the limit of the imagination that is unrepresentable. The imagination operates at the limit, where the presentation embraces the Idea of a whole, but it touches upon something, by overflowing itself. It actually does take place, and so it actually has a presentation. However, in this singular mode of presentation of a limit, that is touched and must be touched, the sublime imagination becomes involved in presentation insofar as the imagination is sensible. It consequently leaves its state of overflowing, by this sensible instant, the touching to limit, to itself, in its impossibility of touching. In the motion of presentation, the subject loses its feeling, paradoxically both in its appropriation and exposition. Thus, it presents nothing, or the non-presentable. This is what Nancy calls the offering; the imagination, the limit, the freedom is offered in a single gesture, here in the gesture of an artwork. The thought of the offering is an offering of liberty; the limit of presentation, and it is also what liberty offers and schematizes itself in gesture. Nancy implies ultimately that indeed this thing is a thing of art “the sublime is that art should be exposed and offered”, but necessarily in the works that touch, at the limit of art but not beyond art. There is all the less a beyond as art is always an art of the limit. But at the limit of art there is the gesture of an offering: the gesture that offers art and the gesture through which art reaches, touches upon, and interferes with its limit.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Nancy, J.-L. (1988). *The Sublime Offering*. In *Of the Sublime: Presence in Question*. State University of New York Press.

CHAPTER 3

1.7 The Sublime in the Works of Contemporary Artist: James Turrell

The American contemporary artist James Turrell (b. 1943) works mainly on light and space and its interaction with human perception. His artworks are highly associated with the paintings of Mark Rothko, in terms of the experience it evokes on the spectators, but attained through a different medium. Turrell's installations contain intensified experience, by means of recalling the infinite, spatio-temporally. His use of the advanced tools of media transformed his sight-specific works, the three-dimensional effects of light, and space as a post-medium.

Turrell was born into a Quaker family in 1943, in Los Angeles. Since his early childhood, he was taking flights with his father, who is an aeronautical engineer. He developed interest in cosmological phenomena and at the age of 16, he got a pilot's license. In 1960s, he completed the degree of perceptual psychology. He pursued a degree in art, in an experimental program that combines technology and art; he was a part of generation that was influenced by the accelerated advancements in technology in 1960's. He was influenced by the minimalist movement, which is a practice of form moving towards extreme abstraction composed of geometric shapes. The works of Turrell are mostly not exhibited in the institutional buildings or museums but installed as an independent space, and require extra effort to visit. The architecture of Turrell has been strongly linked with minimalism, and associated with the Light and Space movement⁵⁹. The inclusion of abstract geometric figures on the body of gigantic façades, pedestals and walls were treated as sculptures, and even in some cases trespassing the functionality. There was no attempt to represent or imitate aspects of the real world.

From 1966 to 1974, he rented an abandoned hotel room and used as his studio for several years. He sealed off the windows by painting the whole interior to white. Turrell produced many of geometric shaped holograms within the series of *Projection Pieces* (Figure 3.1). It is basically a single geometric shaped glowing light that seems like floating on the corner of the room, as if a solid object. Under closer observation, it turns out to be a play of light and what is seemingly to be object is actually an illusion of volume. Turner had used light in a similar way to show the sublime power of nature. The light was either focused at a single point, similar to the one in

⁵⁹ A sub-movement of minimalism originated and related to geometric abstractionism.

Beacon Light (Figure 3.2), or dispersed throughout the painting, or in a room in case of Turrell, which I will mention thereafter. With light, an apparently intangible medium, Turrell creates transient illusions within space. Using architecture as a tool, he either plays with the artificial light or daylight by making cuts in the walls or in the ceilings. He builds a relationship between interiority and exteriority, both physically and mentally. At the moment where one sees the cube and wants to touch it, it disappears; the image appearing is untouchable, yet present. One falls into the abyss when trying to grasp the image. It is the perceptual experience through illusion and manipulation, site-specificity, domination and privation of light, politics of seeing, and absence as abundance or incorporeality as wholeness.

In *Space Division Construction* series Turrell places lights recessed into the wall. It creates an illusion that appears as a flat surface, which also seems to hover before it. In *St. Elmo's Breath* (Figure 3.3), a work from the series, is a large rectangular purple-pink colored lighting inserted in a wall and seems like a painting as if the wall encloses the light, transforming it into a canvas. The disorienting emotional and perceptual experience of light traps the apparatus of seeing. The unmappable depth creates an illusion of two-dimensional rectilinear light and although it is three-dimensional it creates a trompe-l'œil effect⁶⁰ and so becomes three-dimensional. In other words, it transforms from two-dimensionally depicted three-dimensional space to actual three-dimensional space. As Turrell states "to create an experience of wordless thought, to make the quality and sensation of light itself something really quite tactile. It has a quality seemingly intangible, yet it is physically felt. Often people reach out and try to touch it."⁶¹ It is not to reveal, to shed the light onto the things that can be seen clearly but rather to reify the light itself. The lustrous atmosphere creates an effect quite similar to the phenomenon of the St. Elmo's Fire, of which one can recall by its name, the weather phenomenon that is fork-shaped atmospheric electricity that has purple like color and has a similar look with a lightning. The sailors mostly used the term since it was observed while thunderstorms were happening when the ships were sailing. As a matter of fact, sailors deemed this phenomenon as a religious indicator, an awe that is called "glow discharge". The relationship between light and terrifying natural phenomenon were Turner's renowned tool, and light was his medium as well. In his terrifying yet spectacular depiction of the eruption of Vesuvius (Figure 3.4), the explosion gets its power from the lustrous

⁶⁰ A technique in painting that is too realistic and used to give imagery a three dimension effect

⁶¹ Adcock, C. (1990). *James Turrell: The Art of Light and Space*. Oxford: University of California Press.

brush strokes. Turrell's use of light is likewise simulating the light of Turner. The climactic and climatic drama is present, in the painting, where one stands at a safe distance from the landscape yet experiences the sublime. Fire's radiant and swirling heat overwhelms the darkness beneath; Turner's landscapes convey the movement and power of the natural sublime, where they are possibly the truest pictorial manifestations of the Romantic sublime.

Roden Crater Project (1974)

The year that his studio works were ended, he started working on his most prominent and everlasting project *Roden Crater* (Figure 3.5). The unfinished large-scale project consists of an extinct volcano located in the Painted Desert region of the Northern Arizona in United States. Being categorized as a land art, the entire part of natural formation becomes the work of art. For this project, Turrell indicates his influence on the monumental man-made ancient ruins, like Mount Meru, Machu Pichu or pyramids when making the project. Turrell worked with many well-known astronomers in order to form this naked-eye observatory for celestial events. A series of tunnels and viewing spaces are positioned in the 400,000-year-old crater. It is impossible to glance at the *Roden Crater* at once as a whole, since the cinder core is 3.2 km wide and over 180 meters tall surrounded totally on 4,8 km land. One enters into the enormous volcano to wander inside and try to grasp the wholeness of the crater. However, at that very moment, one fails to grasp in the face of hugeness of crater, because it is physically impossible to do so. It is what Kant calls mathematical sublime; the physical greatness of the "object of art" exceeds our comprehension and challenges us with its incompatibility of logical calculation of its size. In the attempt to grasp the whole in a single stroke, first, rather than a measurement an aesthetic estimation is made by the eye alone. The spatial magnitude overwhelms the imagination, where the experience is too great for the imagination to grasp it all at once. And therefore it gives pain, in the useless attempt to do so, and the imagination gets interrupted to its accordance with the understanding. The disruption of both the imagination and the understanding prevents us from reaching to a logical comprehension of the magnitude of the volcano. But then somehow we realize that our effort to do so is impelled by the influence of our faculty of reason upon our imagination, where this recognition of reason becomes a pleasurable act in the end.

As one gets inside the *Crater* from the *Fumarole Staircase* down to the entrance called *Fumarole*, it follows the way to the *Sun and Moon Chamber*, where the celestial observation

takes place (Figure 3.6). One can see the movements of the sun and moon on the surface of the large basalt stone called “image stone”. The chamber acts as a camera obscura or a pinhole camera and projects the events in the sky with the light coming from the aperture in the *East Portal* and transmits the movements through the *Alpha (East) Tunnel*. The 275 meters long *Tunnel* serves as a refractor telescope, where one feels as if walking inside a telescope (Figure 3.7) that reaches to a large circle with an opening to sky. From the middle of the tunnel, the light that comes from the chamber seems like looking from a telescope. As one proceeds through the tunnel, the shape of the tunnel gets changed and the end of the tunnel takes the form of a keyhole with light coming from behind it (Figure 3.8). The architectural structure of uninterruptedly successive forms throughout the tunnel corresponds to Burke’s depictions of physical features intrinsic to the sublimity in buildings. Indeed, the sense of artificial infinite awakens while walking through the tunnel, the “imagination has no rest” besides the uninterrupted accompaniment of a mere light. As coming closer to the light, the form of the keyhole portal enlarges and changes shape and color, and the light that first seems like a circle inside the keyhole transforms into an elongated ellipse aperture that is hanging on the ceiling. The room accessed is called *East Portal* (Figure 3.9). A spectacular bronze staircase with no railings reaches towards the aperture in the ceiling, as the stairs get narrower as one climbs up. At the summit, the explosion of light comes directly from the sun in daylight hours and makes one stumble white light, where pulse and respiration are increased and one experiences a sensation that resembles a rebirth, or can be interpreted as *Post tenebras lux*⁶². Besides the fact that darkness evokes more productive ideas than light, Burke suggests that extreme light has great power, overcoming the organs of sight that creates an effect nearly resembling darkness. It makes one freeze at the moment of encounter; the light creates a strong impression on the mind and evokes immense feelings on the beholder. Likewise in Pantheon, the light enters from the ceiling like a divine eye that looks down upon “My spaces are sometimes dim because low light opens the pupil and then feeling comes out of the eye as touch, a sensuous act”⁶³. At nights, it captures the view and light of the starry sky. The change of light from its lowest point in the tunnel, to a sudden flashing light in the aperture, is what Burke depicts on the relationship of

⁶² After darkness, light

⁶³ Kimmelman, M. (2006). *The Accidental Masterpiece: On the Art of Life and Vice Versa*. New York: Penguin Books.

light and building “when therefore you enter a building, you cannot pass into a greater light than you had in the open air; to go into one some few degrees less luminous, can make only a trifling change; but to make the transition thoroughly striking, you ought to pass from the greatest light, to as much darkness as is consistent with the uses of architecture. At night the contrary rule will hold, but for the very same reason; and the more highly a room is then illuminated, the grander will the passion be.”⁶⁴ The vacuity, darkness, solitude, and silence, are sources of terrible that reminds us about our smallness and mortality by overcoming the senses, where one meets with all of these elements from the entrance up until to the opening in the *East Portal*.

After the *East Portal*, two round ramps appear, which both leads up to the center of the crater called the *Crater Eye* (Figure 3.10). The aperture on the ceiling of the circular room in this center acts as an oculus, enables one to watch the sky as it distorts the view of the sky not into a frame but a Claude-glass view. Turrell names this architectural design of the room "skyspace" and installs many of its examples throughout the world. The *Crater* “heighten our sense of the heavens and earth” and elevates one in a transcendental sense. The starry sky that appears above arises the feeling to us, a feeling as if we are directly grasping the infinite, even though we are aware of a degree of understanding that we know we do not. Again, the mathematical sublime appears by the infinite view of the sky. A myriad of stars is brought to the surface of the earth. The crater floats the attention on the infinite while wandering around, with its interior and exterior design, and performs in conjunction with the sky events. With the lightness and darkness reflected from it, the experience goes beyond the worldly into the area of unique, unbounded seeing, with a singular mode of feeling: “My work is more about your seeing than it is about my seeing, although it is a product of my seeing. I’m also interested in the sense of presence of space; that is space where you feel a presence, almost an entity — that physical feeling and power that space can give.”⁶⁵ The possibility of engaging in the totality of the image, of the whole structure of the crater is impossible to gaze at once, considering the fact that it is grounded on several kilometers. It is also what Burke explains, physiologically, when gazing at the totality of its whole, the eye is incapable of grasping the uniformity at once and it creates a strong effect of the sublime: “The sum total of things of various kinds, though it should equal the number of the uniform parts composing some *one* entire object, is not equal in its effect upon the organs of

⁶⁴ *Enquiry*, p.74.

⁶⁵ *Introduction*. James Turrell: <http://jamesturrell.com/about/introduction/>

our bodies.”⁶⁶ The unity of the image involves the union at the limit, the imagination of the figure. The *Roden Crater* is what reminds us of our power, both imagining its absolute greatness in its physicality and infinity, the presentation of the Idea of a Whole.

Skyspaces

All of his works are designed to be experienced, adjusting, and moving the body as space and perception lead. Beginning in the 1970s, Turrell started to make a construction series named “skyspaces”. Either integrated into an existing building or are built independently, skyspaces are located numerous around the world. The concept of this permanent series of work consists of a room with an aperture in the ceiling that uncovers the sky, with no objects found in the room, except a bench to sit. Its structural characteristics vary between circular, square, rectangular, to oval. The architecture has sharply defined edges, deprived of any concern regarding decoration. Removing all distractions, immateriality leads the focus to be captured only towards the sky in its purest form. Except for a few differences, the concept is always the same. In the cylindrical-shaped observatory room, visitors stare at the sky, whether seated or standing up, from the opening in the ceiling. Usually, a bench runs in line with the wall in order for the viewers to be seated while gazing upon the ceiling. The design of the bench is positioned with an incline in purpose, in order to guide the viewer’s gaze towards the sky. The apertures that are intentionally constituted in a way that does not bother the eye nor can identify the thickness of the material, compresses the distance between the sky and earth and creates an impression as if the distance between the earth’s surface and the sky has been brought together. The intervention of the ceiling enables a two-dimension effect of the view of the sky. The ceiling serves as a framing picture with the sky in focus. The construction is fairly simple, yet the experience of the sky is by no means simple. It brings the sky down to earth, generating an experience of sublime obtained both by the vastness of the concept and the physicality of the greatness of dimension. The *trompe-l’œil* effect is most visible here. Like an experimental Renaissance painter, Turrell installs the ceiling as if it's framed with the technique of *di sotto in su*⁶⁷. (Figure 3.11) The technique used to create an illusion of the space by introducing the elements of visual excitement into drama was used to

⁶⁶ *Enquiry*, p.126.

⁶⁷ The literal translation of the Italian term is “from below upwards”. It refers to a painting technique for showing an illusionistic view upward into a seeming dome or sky, which has come into use to describe the techniques of decoration that are typically Baroque.

make a strong influence on Baroque interior design. As can be seen in the fresco of Andrea Mantegna, the skills of perspective and light, which were new in the fifteenth century Italy, made a truly spectacular effect on the viewers for that time. The purpose of this method, to inspire wonder and awe in the viewer, is as same as in the skyspaces, in which such feeling is made through sublime effect. In both, the viewer becomes the viewed as the figures look down into the room from the eye, *oculus*. The discrepancy between the retinal orientation and physical space is accompanied by a LED light show, in a series of colors differing several times a day, such as sunrise or sunset, which further enriches the effect. The artificial colors interact with the daylight coming from the sky and play with the viewer's perception. At night, the play of the artificial light with the billion years old star and moonlight transforms into another intensified experience. With the simplicity of its presentation, the sky is not in its purest form of presentation or its solely beautiful state, but it is framed and experienced inside out. The work embodies the tension of modernism through providing contradictory experiences, of being numbed and getting re-stimulated by senses. Skyspace gives both a momentary relief from complexity with its minimalist, nonmaterial setting and gives the occasion to engage straight with the reality. By doing so, the imagination is offered and it offers the apprehension of the unlimitation. As a result of this contradiction of complexity and reality, the imagination engages in a rupture, a seizure against a nondelimited ground.

Although skyspace is a series of work, each skyspace has its own unique architectural features, geographic locations and tones of atmosphere. *Piz Uter* (2005), one of the skyspaces, is located on a mountain in Zuoz, Switzerland (Figure 3.12). Its name comes from the mountain near Zuoz, which is exactly in line with the entrance and clearly visible from the inside and designates the structure's spot in the landscape. The building has an archaic-looking cylindrical structure, covered externally with stones. There is no division of rooms in the building, no architectural orientation that guides but a single room with a direct entrance through a coffin-shaped cut just on the wall (Figure 3.13). The other cut, as common to all skyspaces, is the large round opening centralized in the ceiling. It is located next to a hotel, and in fact, it is specifically developed for a hotel. Like the grand villas and hotels that were established in the Alps in the 18th century, *Piz Uter* was located near a hotel in order to either revive the Alpine tourism today or to make use of a sublime nostalgia through the economy of art. Another skyspace called *Skyspace Lech* (2014) is also located in the high alpine landscape, in Austria (Figure 3.14). By being physically on the

Alps in Arlberg, it offers a unique experience that appeals to all senses. What is once an image of the imagination now literally transforms into a physical experience. The architecture itself takes part in creating the sublime experience, by means of using spatiality as an apparatus, cultivates people's capacity for a physical and spiritual experience. The entire parts of nature become work of art, where the construction acts merely as a tool. Here, the picturesque is not just viewed but experienced. By means of architecture, Turrell designs both the skyspace and the view of the landscape by installing the skyspace in the landscape. As a matter of fact, Turrell admits that he is indeed inspired by the high alpine landscape and his intention to use the light as a threshold to create a sublime experience: "However, everyone that talks about the near-death experience, or enlightenment or samatha⁶⁸, always does this in a vocabulary of light."⁶⁹ Through a confrontation with the wilderness of nature, the skyspace refers to Kant's commentary between the relationship of the sublime and nature, that "the sublime of art is always limited by the conditions of agreement with nature". The viewer not only looks upon the painting that creates the experience but also takes part in the painting, travels to the mountains, and obtains the experience with all its senses. The Alpine scenery can be viewed as if a framed painting, as if Price once argued. Turrell places the building as an artistic intervention that transforms wild nature into an aesthetic experience. Like those who once read a book while traveling the Alps to intensify the experience of the sublime, or view a large-scale painting, the skyspace accompanies the one who travels to the mountains.

In these skyspaces, the beholder neither participates in the landscape nor stays totally outside of it. As Turrell himself implies, the sky is not out there, away from us, but in close contact here in the skyspace. Located in Unna, Germany, the *Third Breath* (2005) is a skyspace that has a structure resembling a tiny medieval castle. It has two floors that act as a system of camera obscura (Figure 3.15). The visitors initially enter into the cube-shaped camera obscura room, where the image of the sky is reflected through a lens from the ground of the room above. From the projection on the floor, one can see the birds or planes in the air. The concept behind the work remains the same, where the stairs connect the camera obscura room to the regular skyspace room on the upper floor, where the reflections become reality, upwardly. He introduces the play of light and integrates into the play of perception: "I make spaces that apprehend light

⁶⁸ A Buddhist term used to define the tranquility of the mind.

⁶⁹ *Skyspace Lech*. Accessed May 2, 2020 <https://www.skyspace-lech.com/about/skyspace-lech/?lang=en>

for our perception, and in some way gather it, or seem to hold it. So in that way it's a little bit like Plato's cave. We sit in the cave with our backs to reality, looking at the reflection of reality on the cave wall. As an analogy to how we perceive, and the imperfections of perception, I think this is very interesting. And there is the making of Plato's cave literally-at New Grange in Ireland, or Abu Sembal where you don't have a pointing sculpture like Stonehenge. Instead you have an architectural space that is arranged to accept an event in light on the horizon. When that event in light occurs on the horizon there is an event in light, inside that space.”⁷⁰ This fascination and usage of light through the lens has a long-standing history, tracing back to the second half of the 18th century. The camera obscura was a technique of the optical, used as a tool to draw the panoramic, large-scale landscapes, i.e. the *framing* technique. In the skyspace, Turrell changes the direction of this framing method vertically, in a way that frames the sky rather than the landscape.

With no objects, no focus, and no image being used, except the light images, a quality that is ineffable to light and nature as it is, is traced most notably in skyspaces. The mass of walls with minimalist design block everything else than the opening to the sky and makes the sky the center of attention, rather than throwing out of focus and leaving it only as a background. The kaleidoscopic sky with a natural light coming from the sun in the daytime and artificial light from the interior at nights puts the mind in a restful contemplation with its slowly changing atmosphere. As Turrell states "What takes place while looking at the light in a Skyspace is akin to wordless thought. But this thought is not at all unthinking or without intelligence. It's just that it has a different return than words.”⁷¹. From this restful contemplation, the imagination involved and the unlimited presented at the limit, the mind gets moved by the motion, with emotion, into the freedom of presentation as well as the presentation of freedom. Georges Didi-Huberman notes that “the sky is no longer the neutral background of things to be seen, but the active field of an unforeseeable visual experience...the sky is not vaguely around or above us but exactly there on top of us and against us present because it is changing, obliging us to inhabit it, if not to rise up to meet it.”⁷² What is present upon us is a gift, a present, the offering itself. From the ground,

⁷⁰ Turrell, J. (1999, May 22). Greeting the Light: An Interview with James Turrell. (by Richard Whittaker) Accessed on June 2020, <http://www.conversations.org/story.php?sid=32>.

⁷¹ Turrell, J. (1996). The Roden Crater Project, 1989. In C. Adcock. Segura Publishing Company.

⁷² Didi-Huberman, G. (2001). Cited from: T. Edensor, *From Light to Dark: Daylight, Illumination, and Gloom*. Minneapolis: University of the Minnesota Press.

the limit, the offering itself lets our imagination gets to touch the limit, in terms of height, the absolute height that is brought into touch by means of the oculus. What is on top of us is an eye, i.e. the *Crater Eye* the one in *Roden Crater*, as the name suggests. The oculus lets crepuscular rays illuminate the interior, as in the Pantheon in Rome; looking up to the eye is like looking up to the divine power, the infinity, the unlimited. (Figure 3.16) Many scholars believe that the Pantheon was built as a temple due to its temple-like features. However, it served many powers throughout history (i.e. emperors, religions), and the metaphorical association with the oculus varied along with each of those ruling powers. Only, the feeling of awe that it evokes in the viewers remained the same, whether the viewer is a believer or not. The design of the building, similar to the skyspaces, is orchestrated like an inverted solar observatory, where the movement of divine light is aligned with the movement of the sun. In Pantheon, with the sun streaming through the 43 meters height open oculus, the light traces a circular disk across the walls and floor; it builds a paradigm of both the metaphorical and literal use of light to shape the space. The craftsmanship of the dome, on the other hand, adds an alluring effect of *chiaroscuro*⁷³. With the *chiaroscuro* effect, here, one can see the use of three-dimension to strengthen the sense of the sublime again. The similarity of skyspaces to Pantheon is not only the structural cut in the building but the use of light. As in many other areas, light stands out as the most important feature used to create the feeling of the sublime, whether through the *chiaroscuro* effect obtained by the use of architecture or through the direct sunlight from the dome. The common unique structural features of Pantheon and skyspace create similar feelings in one who experiences either of them. In both, the users may change but the architecture remains to be awe-inspiring, in any case. The sublime light radiates universality, by directly illuminating from the dome or by indirectly referencing to a sublime concept. Both the Pantheon and skyspace are topped with the universal symbol of wholeness, of infinity, through the aperture. The celestial dome becomes the vault of the heavens; the sun becomes the eye, where the oculus becomes its pupil and it springs the powerful panoptic gaze of the gods down upon the viewer.

It is no doubt that the way of exhibiting is singular and moves one out of his comfort zone by not only challenging conceptually but also physically. The physical discomfort is literally felt in the bodily movements and engagements viewing the work, on standing position and *lifting up the*

⁷³ The literal translation of the Italian term is “light-dark”. The term is used in art to intensify the contrast between dark and light and to add a sense of volume in painting three-dimensional figures and objects.

eyes above⁷⁴. Not only in skyspaces but many of his works challenge the viewers; crawling on the knees, lying down on the floor and facing up, or standing in an upright position with bending the neck backwards (Figure 3.17). *The House of Light* is one of the places that require the most time to get the full experience. It is located in a mountainous city Tokamachi, Japan. The place provides visitors a stay overnight, in order to experience the full effect of light works that are installed inside, to view the natural light that differ from sunrise to sunset in lying flat position. Also called ‘meditation house’, space embodies a traditional Japanese architecture with the use of shojis⁷⁵ to make use of the natural light. Within a day, from dawn till dusk, one can gaze at the sun from the sliding roof and it becomes an ordinary skyspace. The neon lights placed inside the house differ and change the atmosphere of the interior, casting the visitor’s gaze upward to the open sky. The place seems as if a hotel, in fact, it has a bathing place located on the ground floor, named “Light Bath”. In the darkness of the night, the fiber optic tube placed in the water creates an illusion as if one can touch the lights in the water. The beholder literally engages in unusual physical positions; swimming in the bath of light, or lying on back to watch the entire sky and ceiling. In broad daylight, with sliding doors, the barrier between the room and nature dispels and nature gets carried into the room. The shadows seeping through the shojis and fences create an awe-inspiring atmosphere that seizes attention, reminding the concept of Shinrin-Yoku, which means ‘forest bathing’. The disorienting sense of depth accompanies one through accommodation, if the doors are opened, you are outside, if the doors are closed, you are inside. Turrell comments on this house “After reading *In Praise of Shadows*⁷⁶, I decided to create a house in the traditional architectural manner of this region. I wished to realize the “world of shadows we are losing,” as Tanizaki wrote, as a space where one can experience living in light, by relating light inside to light outside.”⁷⁷ The light inside can be attributed to a religious reading of the experience, in fact, in terms of Zen Buddhism, of which Turrell indicated that he was inspired by the emptiness, the closeness with nature, and silence (Figure 3.18). With these features, the meditative house presents “Two rooms only, with a sunroof, where to abandon

⁷⁴ “Lifting up the eyes” also refers to a religious term that engages praying, or calling for vision, to see the reality of God and his majesty.

⁷⁵ A translucent paper stretched over to make a door, window or a room divider used in traditional Japanese architecture.

⁷⁶ An essay on Japanese aesthetics, written by Jun’ichirō Tanizaki

⁷⁷ *Step Inside James Turrell’s House Of Light In Japan*. Accessed June 2020 Collecteurs: <https://www.collecteurs.com/article/step-inside-james-turrells-house-of-light-in-japan>

oneself looking up from a tatami⁷⁸ to the contemplation of a unique work in perennial evolution.”⁷⁹ One finds itself left alone with nature, but the aloneness and the play of light to perception do not let the restful contemplation to flow in its own sense, but rather unsettles the mind and discomforts the body.

Turrell’s works are mostly deemed as minimal art. In a Duchampian sense, the light in Turrell is the readymade material of his.⁸⁰ His interest in minimalism is related to simplicity with the feelings and the work; “it has to do with feeling something all at once”. The simplicity, in its totality, the idea of a whole, is what Nancy expresses for the simplicity that appears in the presentation both as a divine commandment and in the form of the biblical text. This presentation is attempted to be concerned with the “domination of reason over sensibility”, presupposing the prohibition, or abstention of images and lacking a form. The purely light, the simplicity of the light enables the perception to engage with the medium. The *Ganzfeld* is the most effective sensible experience with the light that is presented in this sense. (Figure 3.18). The German term *Ganzfeld* meaning “the whole field” is a phenomenon regarding the total loss of depth by visual perception, as in the experience of a whiteout. It is caused by looking at a homogenous colored of light in space that leads to sensations of blindness or hallucinations, because of the state of indistinguishability in the diffused light. It is possible to see a similar atmosphere in several of the paintings of Turner, such as in "Sun Setting over a Lake". (Figure 3.19) The foggy atmosphere entraps one within a merely immersive light that one enters into; the conquering light of the sun, here appears in the form of artificial light, entrapping the audience as they step in. Being in the color cloud disorients one with its dizzying intensity. Being in the color cloud disorients one with its dizzying intensity. When wandering in the space of *Ganzfeld*, the eye cannot find anything to grasp but only light, one cannot distinguish if the effect is proximal or distal. The rooms were intentionally constructed with inclined floors and without the right angle as if one has the *chance* to stumble into the void. It is the presence of light itself but nothing else, light appears in and for itself as abstraction, released from physical limits of the world, released

⁷⁸ A straw mat used as a traditional Japanese floor covering

⁷⁹ *The House of Light*. Accessed June 2020, Nanban: <https://www.nan-ban.com/en/chronicles/the-house-of-light>

⁸⁰ In *Apropos of “Readymades”* Duchamp concludes by saying that if the color tubes that artists use to make painting are mass-produced and in that case readymade products, all paintings in the world are “readymades aided and works of assemblages. Duchamp, M. (1961). *Apropos of “Readymades”*.”

from the margins of the physicality. As a matter of fact, it is the effect that once Barnett Newman and Mark Rothko attempted to make for beholders to feel when staring too close to the paintings. This must be what Turrell have considered carrying a step forward, to carry the viewer into the painting, not restricted to the activity of retinal but to make ingestion of the disturbing feeling to the body: “There are stray rods and cones in the body that are not in the retina. They are just in the skin, which is an odd thing. They are located on the back of the hand, cheeks and also the forehead and third eye- in fact most are on the top of the head. I’m interested in the physicality of light, in our being irradiated by it, almost like a treatment... As human beings, we do drink light in form of vitamin D through the skin, so we are literally light eaters. We orientate to light and have problems if we don’t have it- psychological as well as physical.”⁸¹ Light is the most fundamental thing that allows us to see, it is by means of light the seeing is possible. Not only seeing in its physical sense but in spiritual, the power of vision was the one that started the whole, the light of *fiat lux*⁸². It is the light that has the power to enlighten, or to illuminate, or to keep in the dark. It is about space and the light that inhabits it, but it is not a new space that opens new forms or figurations or schemas, but a place that exists in any human, but which has not been addressed yet: “I always wanted to create light that looks like the light you can see in your dreams. The way light passes through dreams, colors the atmosphere or reflects the aura of a particular person. We do not normally see light in this way, but we all know it. It is not unknown territory or unfamiliar light. This light is very special, because it reminds us of another place – a place we already know.”⁸³ In line with this, what Nancy suggests comes into mind, that it is not by the empirical sensation that is constituted by the agreeable the subject is presented. However, this unfamiliar light as the material of his work is neither a material that is able to make an empirical sensation, as far as we know it nor a nonmaterial one, since we actually “absorb the light”. In this sense, the light has an intermediate position in between the agreeable and the sublime, as once the beautiful has been. With the possibility of trembling, the mind is set

⁸¹ Turrell, J. (2013). Black Sun, Black Rain . D. Kahn, *Earth Sound Earth Signal: Energies and Earth Magnitude in the Arts* (s. 193-217). California: University of California Press.

⁸² Let there be light, the beginning of everything “And said God let there be light, and there was light”

⁸³ Turrell, J. (2015, 04 24). *I am not an Earth artist, I'm totally involved in the sky*. Accessed June 10, 2020 Lightlive: <https://www.lightlive.com/en/20150424-i-am-not-an-earth-artist-im-totally-involved-in-the-sky/>

in motion, where “Reason takes possession of art”. It is a play of light, and as Nancy states, a “suspending or giving up the gift in the face of a liberty that can take it or leave it”⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Nancy, J.-L. (1988). The Sublime Offering. In *Of the Sublime: Presence in Question*. State University of New York Press.

CONCLUSION

As a consequence, the works of James Turrell tend to be an adaptation of the sublime in contemporary art, but the question I wanted to point out is what in contemporary art that caused this to happen. Turrell's works only implies that such a possibility can be attempted. If we consider how do Turrell's works makes the experience of the sublime possible, or what are the tools that are provided by contemporary art apart from the qualities or quantities of those specific works, there are two things that I come up to as a conclusion; first the space, in the Kantian sense, and second, the use of light, as an essential feature of the sublime, besides the problem of representation that lies in between. Space, which is the form of outer sense, is what provides the possibility of the sublime experience to take place. In both landscape paintings and Turrell's works, the experience of the sublime takes place in space. By means of the space, mainly painting and architecture, or in this case as a hybrid of architecture and installation, creates a so-called safe quake that makes use for one to get stumbled. The onlooker, who merely gazed at the painting, is now *in* the painting. The *trompe-l'œil* effect, which strived to create a three-dimensional effect in the painting, disrupts the sense and perception of time that makes the beholder feel like he is in the painting, he is in where he is staring at and therefore stumbles, and so creates the experience of the sublime. In Romantics, the experience occurs through a depiction of space of encountering within the painting and now, through a realization of such depicted space. The beholder is now a partaker, but still no more than an experiencer of the sublime feeling. In its present form, its end is by no means to enhance or to uprise the experience. Was not, centuries ago, reading books while traveling to the Alps made in order to reinforce the experience and a search for a space that is drowned with the sublime? It seems that still sustaining the desire to see, one experiences the nearly destructive state now in a capturing-atmospheric scene. The distorted perception of space provides the sublime experience with the perception game of light.

It is not due to an object under observation has been reached or presented in today's state of art, as if there is something reachable or presentable in its first place, but rather, it only provides the possibility of a settlement, of an installation that is no more than an offering of a touching experience. For the reasons As Nancy states, it is by no means a merely historical, or a new thing, a rediscovery of the historical concept of the sublime. On the contrary, the sublime in

question “is not so much what we’re going back to as where we’re coming from”. It is a fashion that has been always present, a question of the sensible presentation as well as the destiny of art. I think that even especially Newman's reinterpretation of the sublime played an important role in the transformation of contemporary art in its own right. He argues that this transition of art is in a way that happened through the sublime, in which the sublime can be presented in the painting but only through abstract painting. He attributes abstract painting as the rite of passage to the art-in-general, which in this case it wouldn't be wrong to claim that Newman's search for the sublime in abstract painting laid the ground for the possibility of the sublime in the conditions of the present. Once the transfiguration of the commonplace has been made, and once the artworks as aesthetic ideas and art as an idea of reason generated an *art-in-general* system, the “unaesthetic and unartistic for an aesthetic”⁸⁵ became the common ground for both the sublime and contemporary art. The immensity is both within and outside of us; it is on the border of the presentation of the imagination qua limit. The limit of our imagination gets trembled by our perception of such design of the place, i.e. the one in *Ganzfeld*, where the angles of the room were unusually rearranged. The light touches us, kissing of the light as if getting sun-kissed. *Fiat lux* is comprised of the simplicity, the simplicity as naïveté, where the light becomes playful, daring, chancy and abandoned, on its own. The light plays itself and plays with itself. It creates a sensible experience without actually sensing, and it is this paradox that coincides with the paradox of presentability and representability of the sublime. This unique quality that is intrinsic to light, along with its beauty gets carried away into the quantity of the sublime, yet lacking its numerical dimensions.

Art, as Jean-Luc Nancy states, consists of the gesture of taking sensation to a particular intensity. The tools and designs of exhibiting, the present offers in the intensification of the sensible, and in this state of anesthesia, the possibility to capture the sublime feeling has its tools. But, in a way, it is still a presentation of the non-presentable, continuing to sustain its problematic state. It does continue to be an artwork, regardless of its nonrepresentational nature. With regards to a variety of interpretations of the Kantian sublime, the matter of its representability in anywhere other than nature, and especially in art, where human ends define the limits of works seems to maintain as a problem. Even in the works of Turrell, it has the

⁸⁵ Nancy, J.-L. (1988). *The Sublime Offering. Of the Sublime: Presence in Question*. State University of New York Press.

possibility to fail in its own right, by its very essence. The work is placed in nature, on top of the Alps, but still, you exit the building and so you exit the artwork, where you end up remains as mere nature. The artwork only acts as a frame to nature, i.e. in skyspaces, regardless of being an artwork in the first place. Nonetheless, *Roden Crater* is a pursuant artwork to lay the grounds for the discussion of this issue. It is land art, architecture, and installation, or whatever one may call it, but inside of a natural phenomenon, its limits still exceed the artwork, if one wishes to read it as such. It presents an experience of the mathematical sublime, still engaged with nature, in Kantian terms. The *absolutely great* reminds us of our power and capacity by the influence of our faculty of reason upon our imagination that eventually gives pleasure. Thus, as a result of this study, I believe that the relation of the sublime with nature subsists in art today.

Another problematic could be the comparison of the sublime and ugliness, which the sublime is differentiated from the beautiful and share similar roots with the ugly, in terms of being contra purposive to the power of judgment, unsuitable for the faculty of reason and does violence to the imagination. This perceptual and imaginative struggle that the sublime inhabits is a whole different topic, which I find highly valuable to address, especially in relation to contemporary art. It can be studied, over a certain artist or a modality of art. However, for this study such a question would be too extensive to examine, because the matter may even end up with the cliché question regarding the crux of contemporary art; “Is this really art?” and makes the context of the question even wider.

I think that both problematic issues of the sublime exceed its question and enter into the realm of a question regarding the very essence of contemporary art. Where this study can lead the subject within the boundaries discussed is not only in visual arts or specifically installation or land art. It has many other possibilities in contemporary art that offers itself, and in many other fields of art, it has its potential to be experienced. If it is to be investigated over time, contemporary classical music can be studied as a field of possibility of the sublime. Or again, its presentations can be varied and its context can be linked with some other aspect of the sublime rather than Nature, such as Beauty, Reason, and Individual, if it is to be investigated over space. However, regardless of its aspect, the matter of the sublime would still desire the idiosyncratic, singular experience of its own, as long as the impossibility of touching insists, as long as it is touching its limits and so is touching to itself.

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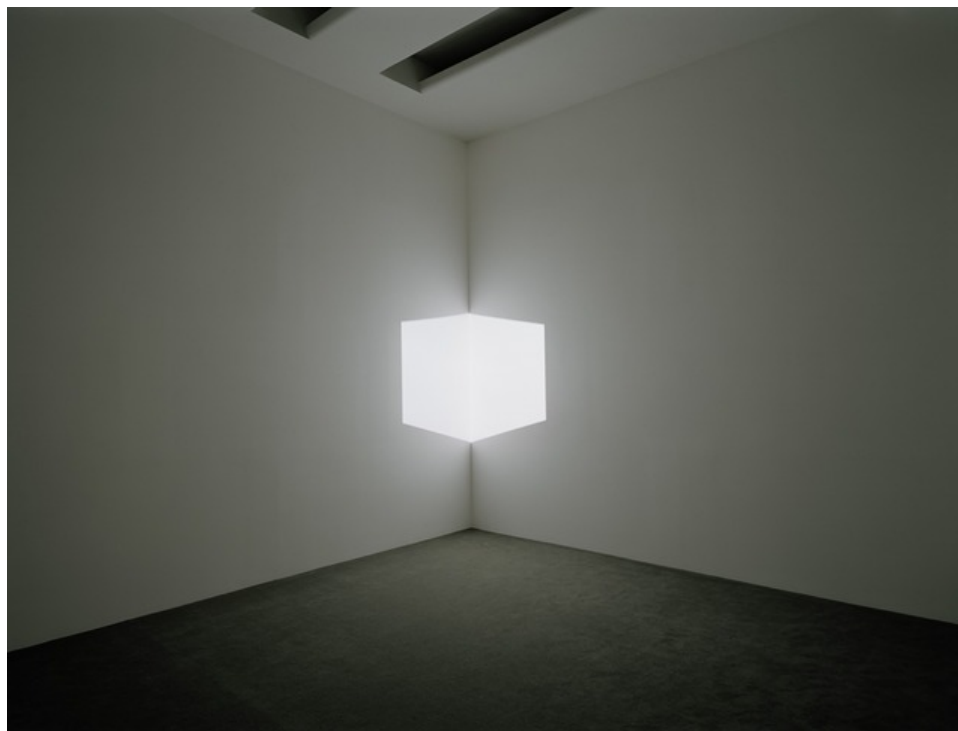


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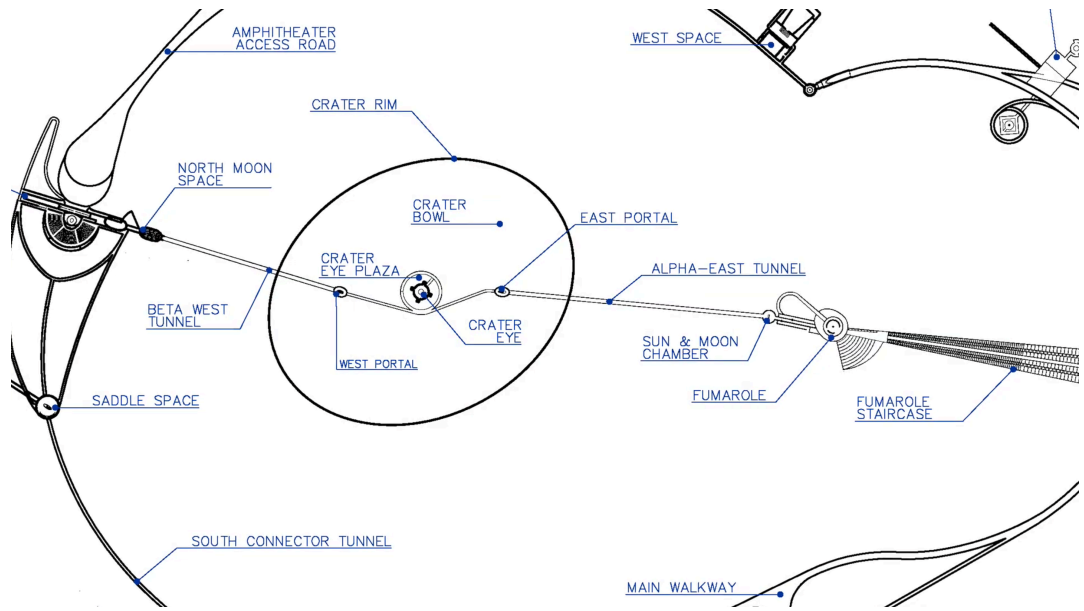


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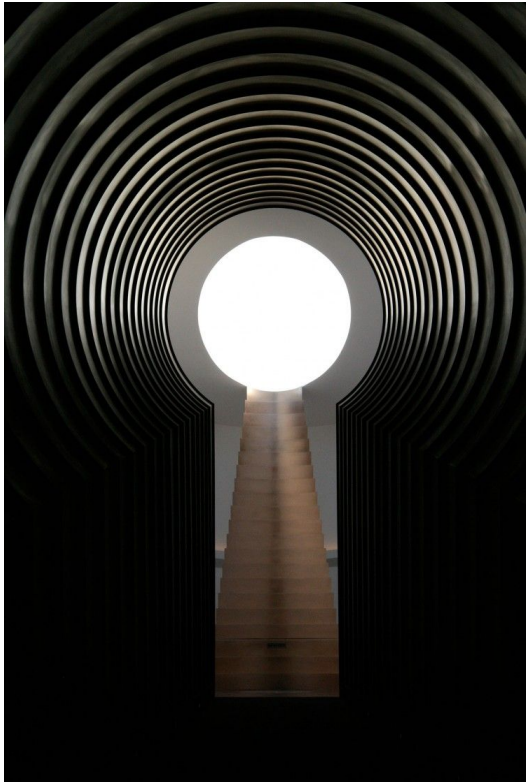


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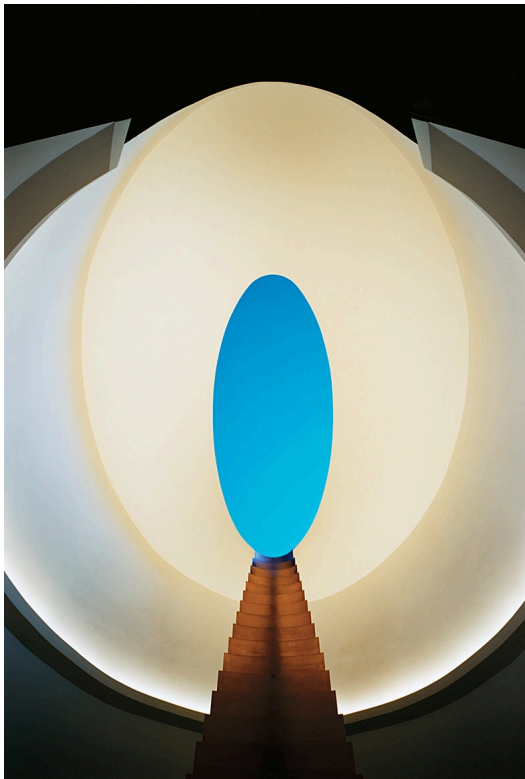


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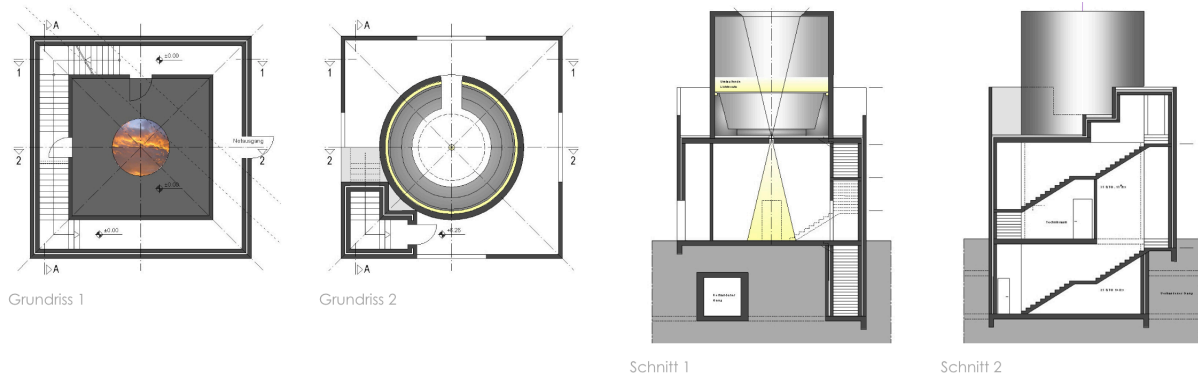


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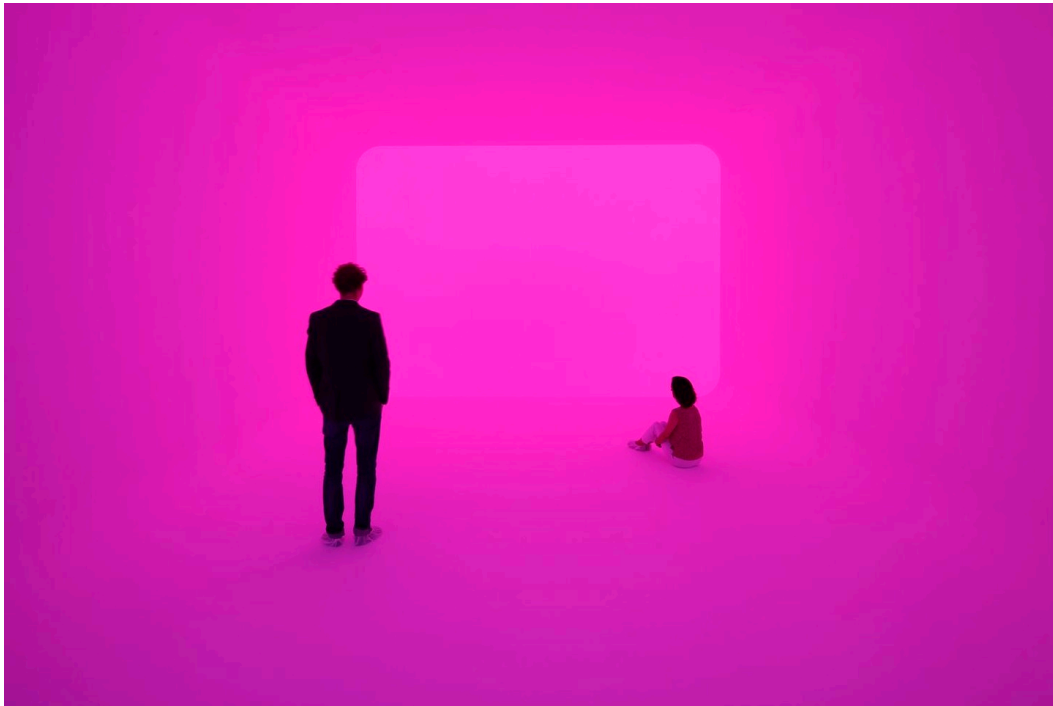


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