



# NEW ART

writes on installation art, performance, theater, cinema, painting, sculpture, digital art, and more —

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WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2006

## Size matters?

I'm sorry. The post from two days ago was bad. I'm putting it offline and leaving only a minimalist version.



Claes Oldenburg and Coosje Van Bruggen, *Cupid's Span*

### Size matters? How exactly?

---  
 Kant's distinction between aesthetic experience and sublime experience could mean that, for instance, when visiting a pyramid I am so overwhelmed by it, the experience ceases to be aesthetic and becomes sublime. If we hold on to this distinction, we could risk saying that the experience of art may be similar if it belongs to the same category: in this example, the Louvre pyramid can have a strong aesthetic effect, but it lacks the *size* that could overwhelm. Does our sensibility really work the way the kantian categories would like it to? I'm not sure. Today, size, even when we're talking about really large-scale sculptures, seems just another element of our overall artistic judgement (notice how we're backing up from the idea of *aesthetic* experience, though...).

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 Take a few works: Jeff Koons' *Puppy*, Douglas Gordon's *24-Hour-Psycho*, and Chris Bors's answer to it, *24-Second-Psycho*. Or even the *Colossus of Rhodes* a few years before.

Why, then, does playing with size/scale often feel like cheating? Is Kant the answer? Do we basically enter other categories here and become *overwhelmed*? If so, shouldn't the issue of the scale be ignored?



Jeff Koons

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 Then again, scale is balance. Looking for balance is also looking for the right size. The right *ontology*, the right way of being, as if we were looking



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for some sort of homeostasis, balance or harmony, a balance which has as much to do with the object itself as with the context. But is Michelangelo's *David* any worse for standing in the Accademia Gallery?

---

When Cattelan makes a praying Hitler, the strike of genius is making him *small*, like an innocent being. Because size plays a *role*. That means size has a *character*, smaller is cuter, larger is more impressive, etc.



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But then how do we cope with pictures of things? Why would our imagination compensate so well in a model representation, but have so much difficulty in regards to the original?

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Going back to Kant, we could say that playing with the size factor is an expression of frustration with other qualities. Take Oldenburg, for example. Here is a fragment of a [beautiful text](#) he wrote in 1961:

I am for an art that (...) does something other than sit on its ass in a museum.  
 I am for an art that grows up not knowing it is art at all, an art given the chance of having a staring point of zero.  
 I am for an art that embroils itself with the everyday crap & still comes out on top.  
 I am for an art that imitates the human, that is comic, if necessary, or violent, or whatever is necessary.  
 I am for an art that takes its form from the lines of life itself, that twists and extends and accumulates and spits and drips, and is heavy and coarse and blunt and sweet and stupid as life itself.  
 (...) I am for the art that a kid licks, after peeling away the wrapper.  
 I am for an art that joggles like everyone's knees, when the bus traverses an excavation.  
 I am for art that is smoked, like a cigarette, smells, like a pair of shoes.  
 I am for art that flaps like a flag or helps blow noses, like a handkerchief.  
 I am for art that is put on and taken off, like pants, which develops holes, like socks, which is eaten, like a piece of pie, or abandoned with great contempt, like a piece of shit.  
 I am for art covered with bandages, I am for art that limps and rolls and runs and jumps. (...)  
 I am for the art of underwear and the art of taxicabs. I am for the art of ice-cream cones dropped on concrete. I am for the majestic art of dog-turds, rising like cathedrals.

So, in the case of Oldenburg, where is all this art gone? What is it that makes one move from the majestic art of dog-turds to huge post-ready-mades? Could size-ism be a form of escapism?

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For the lover of big-scale things: how to create large [projections on buildings](#).

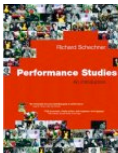
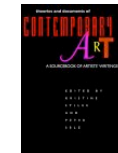
For the lover of small-scale things: [very small objects](#). And also, a [site](#) full of small bits and pieces of small-scale video art by Alex Pearl, a reader of this blog.



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1 COMMENTS:

 VC said...

Your post makes me think that we also react to the proportions of groups made by several objects and not only to the size. So, scale would be the proportion of measurable things.

Small things are also impressive when working in a whole of big proportions. This is part of the job, this is part of the art's game. To impress, to make people stare, without words: do you include this in the role of art or of something else?

May be an easy kind of art, an art of the overwhelming, or the charming of senses. As a face with a lot of make-up, as a pair of big heels shoes, but do we need to be so strict, put such a bad label to these things?

Returning to the question of proportions, size and impressing. For me, an example of this, are the art works that became a collection. Big and small at the same time: The very small objects. Small and big at the same time: the Jeff Koons' Puppy, or big rooms full of cigarettes' boxes etc...

For me there remains another question: do we apprehend big things in the same way we do it to small things? Recently I read a book telling that we apprehend the colour of small objects in a different way than we do big objects. I'm thinking now if we have something similar for the size. If so, can we judge in the same way the sensations about dimension? Does it matter? Art a sensation or a feeling?

27/9/06 7:37 PM

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