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Master of Concealments:

On the Traps of Appropriation in Jasper Johns' Work

In what seems like an unconsciously premonitory postmodern statement, Jasper Johns once said that his work nourishes itself. He was probably referring to the self-nourishing dynamic present in his work, which created a situation in which development and growth were by-products of accumulation. By containing what had preceded it, his oeuvre may be likened to a stratified geological formation: the deeper we go in examining his later work, the more images from his earlier work will come to light. The mode of accumulation of the images in these later works ranges between layered arrangements – *i.e.*, where one image conceals another – and collagistic arrangements in which the images are placed beside or above one another. In any case, this practice obliges the viewer to begin a complex task of decipherment that is similar in its essence to a detective's investigation or the solving of a riddle. In this essay I will therefore employ a flash-back tactic, a kind of reverse chronology that makes possible a retrospective reading of his oeuvre – from the later works to the earlier ones – in order to understand the distinctive way in which his work nourishes itself.

The Concealed Quotation

Towards the late 1970s a tendency to summation or retrospection began appearing in Johns' work. It entailed, on the one hand, recurrent forays into the past (Leonardo, Grünewald, Cézanne, Picasso and Duchamp) and, on the other hand, a return to his own personal past through incorporation of images from his early work. This practice of self-quotation, which is so essential in his oeuvre, accorded the works an inner logic that connects them in a coherent succession, a kind of “continuous consciousness”,¹ which places him, beside Rauschenberg and Lichtenstein, as a central figure who impressed his stamp both on the practice of quotation in Pop art and, inevitably, on the postmodernist discourse.²

The most significant series that provides one of the major keys for an understanding of Johns' oeuvre is *The Seasons* (1986). *Fall, Winter, Spring* and

Summer (Figs. 1-4), together with drawings and prints related to the development of this series, were shown at the Leo Castelli Gallery in New York in the fall of 1987. Conspicuous in each of the four paintings is a gray silhouette of a human figure, slanted a little to its side. In *Fall* the figure is divided, and everything around it seems to be collapsing and breaking (autumn leaves); in *Winter* it appears on the right, with snowflakes on it; in *Spring* it appears in the center, slightly blurred by diagonal lines (rain); and in *Summer* it is on the left, as though about to leave the picture. The source of the silhouette as a representation of the figure of the artist is Picasso's painting *The Shadow* (1953; Fig. 5), in which a silhouette of a human figure appears in front of a painted canvas. Motifs from another painting by Picasso, *Minotaur Moving His House* (1936; Fig. 6), such as the ladder, the rope, the branch and the yellow stars, were also incorporated directly into the *The Seasons* series. The silhouette in *The Seasons* embodies the complexity of the entire series – a complexity whose meaning resides in a complicated system of signs, misleadings and concealments, out of which we can extricate a meaning of darkness and mystery beside an allegorical interpretation of the cyclicity of life.

The seasons are distinguished from one another by means of conventional identifying attributes such as snow, rain, autumn leaves, the direction of the “clock” hands, and various states of blossoming and wilting (the broken branch). Besides these, the series also contains other motifs that appear as allusions to Johns' own works (the *Mona Lisa*, the American flag, the clock-hands, and the pots). One of the motifs quoted in all four paintings, however, provides an additional key: the pattern of crosshatchings inside a rectangular frame, which creates an illusion of depth and a sense of movement. This pattern is connected with Johns' intensive engagement, in the 1970s, with art history, and its source, like that of the paving stones and the brick wall, is in a kind of “street art”, a pattern that he saw on a car that passed him quickly on the freeway. During the 1970s, the linear, diagonal, paint applications partially covered undefined forms that hinted at past works of his. Thus, for example, in *Weeping Women* (1975) – a triptych that was painted after Picasso's pre-Cubist nude paintings from 1907-1909 – the women are not identifiable, but the entire painting obeys some Cubist code of an image that develops outwards from the center; similarly, the form of the tracks of the iron in the central panel recalls the breasts of the woman in Picasso's *Seated Woman in an Armchair* (1913), a work that had been acquired by the Ganz family, to whom Johns was close.

A key article that attempted to extricate the meanings of *The Seasons*, and through this to crack other codes in Johns' early works, was published by Jill Johnston in October 1987.³ The author concentrated on the autobiographical aspects that received emphasis in the later works, and sought to characterize Johns' distinctive kind of quoting by means of these. Although the article does not deal directly with quotation, it makes several distinctions connected with the way Johns made new use of used materials, and his well-known declaration "not mine but taken". The most significant distinction is the one that distinguishes between the practice of "taking" and the practice of "inventing" – between a "taken" image that serves Johns as a means of concealment, camouflage, or diversion of attention, and an "invented" image that stems from an inner world of experiences that the artist recoils from exposing without encryption. Johnston claims that almost all of Johns' images are "taken" from artists such as Leonardo, Dürer, Grünewald, John Peto, Duchamp, Cézanne, Magritte, Picasso and Munch, and that they appear beside allusions to poets and authors such as Frank O'Hara, Hart Crane, Wallace Stevens, Samuel Beckett and Louis-Ferdinand Céline.

Johnston's study is conducted like a detective's investigation, in the course of which she as-it-were attempts to solve a mystery in which the artist (the suspect) tries to conceal evidence. The key to the mystery is the crosshatching – the "trap" that already appeared in works such as *Perilous Night* (1982; Fig. 7) and *Racing Thoughts* (1984; Fig. 8), and is connected with Grünewald's *Isenheim Altarpiece* near Colmar.⁴ In these works the diagonal crosshatching encrypted the motif of the Roman soldier who has fallen asleep, a segment of the *Resurrection* scene from the central panel of the altarpiece, as well as the monstrous creature with webbed feet from the *Temptation of St. Anthony* on the left panel. These motifs can be distinguished only through deep contemplation, or, as Johnston puts it, they reveal themselves "like a picture being birthed out of emulsion".⁵

The religious motifs, both the Roman soldier who failed in his duty to guard Jesus' tomb, and the dying monster whose emaciated body is inflamed with wounds of the black plague – simultaneously a victim and a symbol of temptation – point to an exposure of a world of religious dread that is incongruous with the common images of the consumer society or with the aesthetics of indifference characteristic of the Pop culture. The way that Johns went to the trouble of concealing these images

points to emotional motives and is more congruous with the postmodern discourse of the 1980s.

A retrospective view of his total oeuvre shows that towards the second half of that decade an absolute turnabout occurred in Johns' work: while his earlier works had presented familiar and common public icons taken from mass culture (the flag, targets, numbers, or, as he put it, "things the mind already knows",⁶ his later works presented icons taken from high culture (*e.g.*, Grünewald), and these are disguised and charged with autobiographical and emotional meaning. Johnston writes here about a transition from games of concealing and revealing in the Pop spirit of coolness to an introverted direction that entailed greater emotional exposure. It seems likely that the choice of emotionally charged subjects for quotation (Munch, Cage, O'Hara, Grünewald) freed him from making a personal statement, as though the quoted subject was already doing the work for him.⁷ Thus, when he quotes Munch's painting *Self-Portrait: Between Clock and Bed* (1940-1942), this is not a direct quotation but an abstract, patterned allusion to the pattern of the bedspread that appears in that painting. Munch's painting depicts the old and weary artist, alienated from his world, standing erect between his bed (sleep, death) and the wall clock without a face (time slipping away), while in the background, on the studio wall, there appears a partial representation of his works. In Johns' version of this painting (1981-1982), all that remains apart from the work's title is the crosshatched pattern of the bedspread, which hints at the chaotic atmosphere. Similarly, in *Perilous Night* (1982), Johns related to a musical work by John Cage from 1945 that dealt with "the loneliness and terror that comes to one when love becomes unhappy" and was connected with a crisis in the musician's marriage.⁸ A page of the score of this composition appears beside the crosshatched motif, three casts of children's arms, a handkerchief that seems to be hanging on a hook, and a "decorative" element that imitates a weave of wood-like wall covering, while the motif of the soldiers from the Isenheim altarpiece appears on the left. Here too this is a charged quotation, suffused with religious tension, almost unidentifiable, which connects with the *Resurrection* scene and with those soldiers, be they sentinels or spies, who failed to fulfill their duty.

What this discussion shows is that the Johns of the 1980s deals with loneliness and the fear of death through a profound identification with a victimal figure. Johnston found the victim-creature from Grünewald's *The Temptation of St Anthony* in nine of Johns' works, and the soldiers from the *Resurrection* panel in three

additional works. The partly concealed skull that appears in *Fall* is connected with the figure of Grünewald's risen Christ and may be read poetically as a hovering shadow – a figure of the artist-victim. The allegorical subject and the symbolic motifs such as the ladder (the Cross), the clock hands (the arms of the Cross) and the inner light that stems from the semicircles of the clock (a negative of the halo), which appear in all the paintings of the series, also become part of this reading. The artist's identification with the figure of the Christ-victim also connects with his choice of the monstrous creature from *The Temptation of St Anthony* as a figure that arouses simultaneous feelings of alarm and compassion, as it surrenders to death and to the dark forces that encompass it.

The Imprinted Quotation

This reading of *The Seasons* can serve as the basis for a reading of earlier works by Johns from the 1960s and 1970s in which the images also seem to sacrifice their clarity on the altar of mystification, and operate in the framework of witty and sophisticated interplay of objects, hints, puns and meanings. Works such as *Decoy* (1971; Fig. 9) and *According to What* (1964) belong in this category.⁹ With its abundance of reflexive allusions, *Decoy* sums up years of artistic activity and makes possible a retrospective viewing of Johns' work in the mid-1960s. The idea of imprinting had already appeared in the early 1960s in his *Studies for Skin*, where he had put oil on his face and hands, pressed them against the paper, then rubbed the paper with charcoal that adhered only to the oily parts. This imprinting of body parts later developed into the actual imprinting of objects such as architectural elements of his studio (a door and a window) in his *Studio* paintings (1964, 1966). This practice of imprinting is analogous in spirit to the concept of the "memory imprint" coined by Duchamp in his notes to *The Green Box*, and is also related to Max Ernst's concept of randomness and his practice of frottage, but also to the diversity of Pop works around the ideas of duplication and reproduction and the subversion of the aura of the "original".

In the lower strip of *Decoy*, like footnotes at the bottom of a page, there is a row of quotations from Johns' earlier works: the lamp, the light globe, the beer cans, and the paintbrushes in the "Savarin Coffee" tin in which the artist used to stick his brushes – an image that came to be a sort of trademark of his work. In the center,

through the layers of black paint, there appears the can of Ballantine Ale from Johns' several versions of *Painted Bronze* (1960).

One of the early works in which an actual "imprint" of a foot appears, although it represents a different practice of quotation from what we have discussed so far, is the print titled *The Cup We All Race 4* (1962). This conceptual quotation refers to a painting with the same title (1900) by John Peto, and is associated with the painterly tradition of *trompe l'oeil*. The central part of the print is taken up by a large imprint of a foot, a kind of track – or evidence – of the "race". Above it are two stenciled representations of the number 4, echoing the word FOR, beside the word CUP. In the lower part of the print the work's title appears: *The Cup We All Race 4* – a sentence that embodies man's Sisyphean competitiveness and the race for achievements. Peto's name appears as a footnote at the lower left, and above it hangs a kind of cup or mug – an object quoted directly from Peto's painting, where it is painted hanging on a hook in the center of the composition that imitates an upturned picture-frame.¹⁰ The use of a kitchen mug to represent an aspired-for trophy cup emphasizes the irony in Johns' (and Peto's) attitude to the pointlessness of the race for success. Johns' choice of Peto, who represents a tradition of illusionary painting, an artist of tautologies and puns, suited his concerns with the question of representation.¹¹ On the thematic level there is also a nostalgic engagement with objects that have a suggestive value, "souvenirs" and "forgotten treasures" as part of Johns' engagement with memory (e.g., in works such as *Souvenir*, 1964, or *Memory Piece*).

The Implied Quotation

According to What (1964; Fig. 10) is considered one of Johns' most important works, and has been compared to Courbet's painting *The Studio* (1854-1855), which opens the discussion on the beginnings of Modernism. In both cases there is an attempt to sum up the state of art, the former dealing with the state of Realism in the mid-19th century, and the latter with the collapse of Abstract Expressionism. In both works there are figures, motifs, images and symbols beside quotations from the artist's own works and allusions to styles and movements in art history. Yet while Courbet's work is perceived as a socio-political statement, in Johns' work we find reflexive speech about painting itself.¹²

According to What is a very wide work (223.5x487.7 cm.) that is divided into six panels. An upside-down chair with a plaster cast of a leg attached to it – a motif taken from Johns’ painting *Watchman* (1964) – hangs down from the top of the first panel from the left. A small canvas, its verso side to the front, is hung at the bottom of the panel. It shows a silhouette of Duchamp in profile, with the initials M.D. inscribed on it, and the work’s date and title, in a scribble that imitates mirror-writing, and again in capital letters. These motifs are quoted from *Souvenir I* (1964). The names of the primary colors (RED YELLOW BLUE) are printed in vertical columns at the juncture of the second and third panels from the left. A vertical column of circles containing the colors of the spectrum on metal templates – a motif that previously appeared in the painting *Diver* (1962) – appears in the center. To the right of it is a tonal fan of grays ascending from black to white. A real bent wire (a coathanger) hangs down from the painted upper square in the sixth panel and casts a shadow, partly real and partly painted – a motif taken from the work *Evian* (1964), on the broad off-white margin below it. Across the center of the painting is a strip of newspaper pages that were transferred to the canvas by a technique of imprinting (silkscreen), and the painting as a whole is unified by the broad brushstrokes that paste all the components together. The degree of concealment of the quotations is different in this painting: rather than meticulous encryption, like that of the Grünewald monster in *The Seasons* series, we find here clear allusions to Duchamp and Abstract Expressionism. It is likely that at this stage of his oeuvre Johns allows himself greater freedom to apply bold emotionally expressive brushstrokes. Hence, the common public icons (the flag, the beer can, the target) are treated with a lyrical touch, while the later emotionally-charged works (with their quotations of Munch, O’Hara, Grünewald) are treated with relative restraint. But we should make no mistake about Johns’ brushstrokes in *According to What*. Far from being spontaneous, they structure a typology of painterly touch. This is an ironic display of the broad range of different kinds of “sensitive” touch possible in abstract painting: the oblongs in the right panel recall the paintings of Hans Hofmann; the gray fifth panel looks like a section of a Barnett Newman painting, and the tonal shifts at its center recall Rothko’s “color fields”, while the straight vertical sectioning of the panels recalls hard-edge painting. The question “According to What?” thus appears to be addressed ironically to the conventions of abstract painting, with an ironic allusion to the formalistic theories of Clement

Greenberg: What, from a painterly perspective, is the best kind of touch? What causes a certain kind of touch to be considered “right”?

As already mentioned, this work quotes details from seven of Johns’ earlier paintings, the most significant of which is the upside-down chair and the cast leg taken from *Watchman*, which Johns created in the same year. According to Johns’ own testimony, this is a watchman/guard/art critic who “dives” into the space of the painting and falls into “the trap of looking”.¹³ Johns compares the “Watchman” to the “spy”, and his enigmatic remarks have sparked countless political and psychological interpretations.¹⁴ Roberta Bernstein, for example, identified the figure of the “Watchman” with that of the art critic, and the figure of the “spy” with that of the artist.¹⁵ Patricia Kaplan supported the idea of the affinity between the spy and the artist, on the basis of Johns’ practice of disguise and camouflage.¹⁶ In my opinion, the “spying” and the “watching” actually relate to Johns’ ways of quoting and “taking”. The poker face, the stratagems, the manipulations, the misleadings and the “traps of looking” are embodied in both the figure of the watchman and the figure of the spy, and it is also these figures that connect Johns with Duchamp.

Indeed, one of the works that is closest in spirit to *According to What* is Duchamp’s last easel painting, *Tu’m* (1918). Much has been written on the relations between the two artists,¹⁷ but their affinity around the practice of allusion seems not to have been adequately researched. Already in 1964 Max Kozloff listed a number of congruencies between Duchamp and Johns, among them the principle of displacement, of giving a “new thought to the object” – “the transposition of an idea, motif or object from one context to another”; Duchamp’s use of ready-mades and Johns’ use of “things the mind already knows”; the principle of discontinuity – the “disintegration, divisiveness, fragmentation” of the process of vision; the importance of the verbal element, of puns and tautologies; the enigmatic connections among the images; the aesthetics of randomness – “the effective use of chance” – and the principle of reproducibility.¹⁸ Barbara Rose’s study (1976) brings into sharper focus the affinity between *Tu’m* and *According to What* as works that propose a kind of taxonomy, an indexical, typological classification of ways of representation, from the illusory to the real, and from the concrete to the conceptual.¹⁹ And indeed, both works display a diversity of possible ways without any hierarchy, in a fragmented and enigmatic positioning, while the very absence of a hierarchy and of absolute values become the central subject of the work. One of the interesting connections between

Johns and Duchamp is the linguistic context – the distinctive use that each of them made of language. Duchamp's notes to *The Large Glass*, the texts that accompanied his works, his aspiration to invent a new alphabet and to seek out primary words, as well as his frequent use of ambiguous names – all these establish him as an artist for whom language served as raw material for his work. In Johns' work, too, language has a central place, especially in his engagement with relations between signifier and signified, with the multiplicity of changing points of reference, and of course with questions of representation. Through the influence of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, Johns related to the familiarity of objects: the more "familiar" the object, the more essential it is. His work implies that the profoundest and most meaningful insights are hidden in the simple and familiar things. This way of thinking is expressed in *According to What* in its array of possible ways of applying paint on a canvas, but it is also connected with the transformation of a sign into an object – a practice that already appeared in Johns' early works, in images such as the flag and the target.

The Quotation as a Recognizable Sign: "The Shift from "Nature" to "Culture"

Like the flag, the numbers, the targets and the letters, the *Mona Lisa* too is a recognizable sign. From 1961 on it became a major feature in Johns' repertoire. It appeared in *Litanies of the Chariot* (1961), *Figure 2* (1962), *Figure 7* (1969), and in other works. This use of the *Mona Lisa* helps to highlight the fact that in his early work Johns already made use of "taken" familiar images, and that the act of concealment occurred only later. In *Figure 7*, for example, the *Mona Lisa* is visible in the lower part of the painted digit, in a free-flowing treatment that turns it into an almost abstract image. Johns' fondness for the *Mona Lisa* can also be associated with Duchamp:

The *Mona Lisa* is one of my favorite paintings, and Da Vinci is one of my favorite artists. Duchamp is also one of my favorite artists, and he painted a moustache on a reproduction of *Mona Lisa*. Also, just before I came to work at Gemini someone gave me some iron-on decal "Mona Lisas" which you would get from sending in

something like bubble gum wrappers and a quarter. With the decals all one has to do is iron the decal on cloth and one makes his own “Mona Lisa”. I had some of these decals when I came to Gemini, and I thought I would use the Mona Lisa decal because I like introducing things which have their own quality and are not influenced by one’s handling of them.²⁰

This statement shows that Johns’ choice of the *Mona Lisa* had to do with his fondness for cultural clichés, and reflects a most significant moment in the development of modern art – the transition from “nature” to “culture”. Indeed, Leo Steinberg, in his attempts to characterize the common denominator of all of Johns’ subjects, claims that all of his images are “man-made objects”, *i.e.*, no longer representations of nature or reality, but representations of culture. This shift also occurred in the work of Rauschenberg and other Pop artists, who thus mark the transition to the postmodern era.²¹

Conclusion: Johns and Postmodern Art

Although Johns is perceived as one of the last of the modernists,²² he is also seen as having had a decisive influence on postmodern art. The transition from representation of nature to representation of culture, the shift away from the singular “original” with its unique aura, the absence of any hierarchy, the use of doubles, reflections and simulations – all these express a sense of the collapse of meaning, and connect with the postmodernist discourse. Likewise, Johns’ interest in “spying” – a practice based on disguise and camouflage, which he distinguished from “looking” – attests to his attraction to the twilight zone of illusion and the unrealistic.

His sophisticated quotation practice, with all the effort of concealment entailed in it, established him as one of the fathers of postmodern quotation, a practice characterized by endeavors to blur the original handwriting and the encounter with the work quoted, to demote the sanctified presence of the unique, the original with its aura, and to connect the artist doing the quoting with a network of earlier artists. Johns’ foregrounding of the collapse of the connection between signifiers and signifieds, and the tautologies entailed in his displaying ways of representing reality, attest to his profound affinity to ideas such as Barthes’ “death of the author” and

Baudrillard's "simulacra", ideas that flourished in the 1980s at the core of the postmodernist discourse. His use of the *Mona Lisa* and the images from the paintings of Grünewald echoes the aura of these masterpieces in a way that brings to mind Walter Benjamin's remarks on that "aura" that is distinctive of the original art work which, being unique and authentic, is irreproducible – an aura that in Benjamin's view radiates an authority that is condemned to dissipate in the era of technical reproduction.

It could be said that by the 1960s the unique, original masterpiece had become a culture hero, an icon, one of the status symbols of the 20th century, a rare consumer product. The process by which such works became rare made them even less accessible to the majority of people. At the same time, the reproduced work, with its mass dissemination, took on the superficial and banal character that turned it into a cliché, while the production process brought it closer to the masses. The tension between the two is Pop art's field of discourse, and Johns was one of the first to take an interest in this tension and in the meaning of the masterpiece as radiating an aura while being a cliché at the same time. His *Mona Lisa*, therefore, represents the reproduced masterpiece that is familiar as an industrial product, and it serves as a footnote that embodies traces of the sparks of the original aura, mediated into a new cultural context.

¹ Barbara Rose, "Decoys and Doubles: Jasper Johns and the Modernist Mind," *Arts Magazine* (May 1976): 68.

² The fact that Johns represented the United States at the 1989 Venice Biennale was more than a tribute to an elder artist. The choice of Johns towards the end of the decade, and the emphases placed on his later works, show this phase of his oeuvre as a kind of bridge connecting the Pop art of the 1960s with various trends of return to painting that formed an essential part of the postmodernist discourse of the late 1980s.

³ Jill Johnston, "Tracking the Shadow", *Art in America* (October 1987): 129-142.

⁴ Johnston mentions Johns' 1984 trip to France with Duchamp and his wife as one of the main items of evidence in her investigation. Two years before this Johns had received a beautifully illustrated volume of Grünewald's works that included many reproductions of the altarpiece; see *ibid.*, 132.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁶ See Leo Steinberg, *Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth-Century Art* (London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 31.

⁷ Johnston, "Tracking the Shadow", 139.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 135.

⁹ Patricia Kaplan connected this tension with the suspense plots of Alain Robbe-Grillet. It is known that Johns was an avid consumer of crime fiction. Kaplan compared Johns' "spy"/"voyeur" figure with the protagonist of Robbe-Grillet's *The Voyeur*; see Patricia Kaplan, "On Johns According to What", *Art Journal* 35:13 (Spring 1976), 247- 250.

¹⁰ See: Roberta Bernstein, *Jasper Johns' Decoy: The Print and the Painting* (exh. cat., New York: Emily Lowe Gallery, Hofstra University, 1972).

¹¹ Johns' affinity to Peto can also be identified in other works from the 1960s, such as *The Studio* (1964-1966) and *Fool's House* (1962).

¹² Richard Francis, *Jasper Johns* (New-York: Abbeville Press, 1984), pp. 9-11.

¹³ From Johns' notebook, p. 84, as quoted in *ibid.*, p. 67.

¹⁴ Richard Francis, in his interpretation (*ibid.*), referred to Freud.

¹⁵ See Bernstein, *Jasper Johns' Decoy*, p. 114.

¹⁶ Patricia Kaplan connected this painting with the writing style of Alain Robbe-Grillet; see n. 9 above, 247.

¹⁷ Johns became acquainted with Duchamp in 1957 through Rauschenberg, and already in 1959 Duchamp's influence can be identified in his work. They met in 1959, and in 1960 Johns began collecting works by Duchamp and reading his notes (among them the notes to *The Green Box*, which were published in an English translation signed by Duchamp, and dedicated to Johns).

¹⁸ Max Kozloff, "Johns and Duchamp", *Art International* 8:2 (March 1964), 42-45; see also Jasper Johns, "Thoughts on Duchamp", *Art in America* 58: 4 (July-August 1969), 31.

¹⁹ Barbara Rose, "Decoys and Doubles", 72.

²⁰ Joseph E. Young, "Jasper Johns: An Appraisal", *Art International*, Vol. 13, No. 7, September 1969, p. 53; Roberta Bernstein, *Jasper Johns' Paintings and Sculptures 1954-1974: The Changing Focus of the Eye* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1985), p. 66.

²¹ On this critical moment, see Steinberg, *Other Criteria*, pp. 23-54.

²² Barbara Rose, in "Decoys and Doubles", 68, sees Johns "as a radical conservative intent on preserving, with exceptional clarity in the midst of aesthetic confusion, the dialectical ethos of modernism", and says that "Johns' modernism is implicit in his fidelity to the central modernist themes: reflexivity, autonomy and self-sufficiency of the work of art, aesthetic distancing and unresolved complexity leading to condition of permanent doubt".