

PURE CREATIVITY

DAVID KAREYAN

In the mid-1850s art experienced an unprecedented breakthrough, and the idea of “pure art” emerged, which continued to fragment and be overcome in the next hundred and forty years. And now, in 1994, we have come to embrace the fundamental question of pure art, that is to say, pure creativity. In the early 20th century the material valuation of art was rejected, and the most valueless object appeared in an exhibition as a work of art. The limitless exploration of materials through a mixed technique brought about the elimination of the limits of the medium. If Picasso sincerely confessed, “Painting is stronger than I am” (and he was right, since painting was not overcome), then the simultaneous but at the same time discrete display of color, rhythm, and form in a *hamasteghtsakan*¹ artwork is the result of the absolute mastery over art. This was the end of art,

David Kareyan’s text is a translation of a short article originally published in the monthly *Garun* (Kareyan, “Pure Creativity,” *Garun* 8 [1994]: 59). It is a concise version of Kareyan’s lecture at the Yerevan State Academy of Fine Arts that same year. This text, among many other unpublished writings and notes, constitutes a programmatic self-commentary that some of the members of ACT took up to provide a philosophical and art-theoretical justification for their “brand” of conceptual art.

- 1 The Armenian word *hamasteghtsakan* can be translated as both “collectively created” and “all encompassing.” It was coined in 1994 by art critic Nazareth Karoyan in relation to the practices of The 3rd Floor, a late-Soviet alternative artists’ movement, and in the absence of a coherent aesthetic or a political program for the group. The term was loosely used to denote conceptual art (A.H.).

and the postmodernists were right. But the end of anything is the beginning of something else.

In 1994 we are at the threshold of a new way of thinking about art as having been overcome, and with its principal basis—“pure creativity”—now being *displayed*. I am placing special emphasis on the word *display* because if creation is not fixed, it remains in the unconscious and does not enter our worldview and belief system. “Pure creativity” is liberated from all the attachments we hitherto knew, but this is not the end. Hegel writes, “For the investigation of cognition there is no way open save that of cognition. We are supposed to cognize reason, and what we want to do is still supposed to be rational cognizing. So, we are imposing a requirement that annuls itself. This is the same demand as the one in the familiar anecdote in which a Scholastic declares that he won’t go into water until he has learned to swim.”²

Then, what is “pure creativity”? There is no painting, literature, music in pure creativity. . . . It is free from all “isms,” it dominates them, and it is what provides the foundation of all “isms.” In “pure creativity” mind and feelings coincide. Pure creativity is based on human experience and the development of society.

TRANSLATION BY ANGELA HARUTYUNYAN

2 G. W. F. Hegel, “Introduction and the Concept of Cognition,” in *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vol. 1, ed. Peter C. Hodgson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 79. The reference was missing from the original text, and has been added by the translator.