

COVER AND UNCOVER:

ERIC CAMERON

edited by Ann Davis

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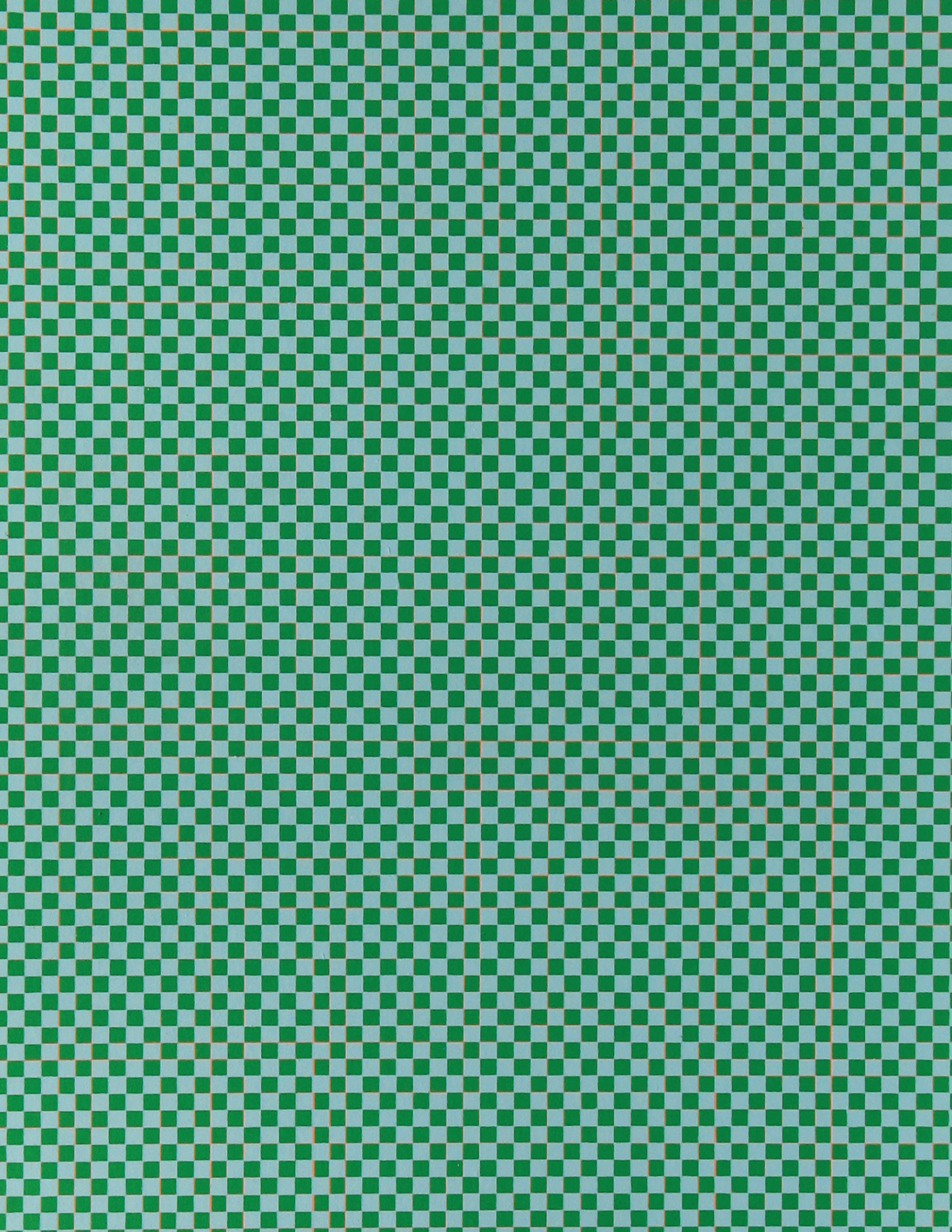
Notes

- 1 Eric Cameron, *Bent Axis Approach* (Calgary: The Nickle Arts Museum, 1984), p. 1 and *passim*; see also Eric Cameron, "Oedipus and Sol LeWitt," in his *Divine Comedy* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1990). The Greenberg quote is taken from "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," in *Art and Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), p. 3.
- 2 "Other things being equal, we might set Reinhardt, Duchamp and Pollock in an ascending hierarchy of values according to the level of implications against which their art operates: art; society; and nature." Cameron, *Bent Axis Approach*, p. 9.
- 3 Robert Coates, "The Art Galleries: Extremists," *The New Yorker*, no. 26 (9 December 1950): 111; Meyer Schapiro, "The Younger American Painters of Today," *The Listener* (26 January 1956): 146; Robert Goodnough, "Reviews & Previews: Jackson Pollock," *Art News* 49, no. 8 (December 1950): 47; Sam Hunter, "Among the New Shows," *New York Times* (30 January 1949): 9. (Coates's, Goodnough's, and Hunter's pieces are reproduced in Pepe Karmel, ed., *Jackson Pollock, Interviews, Articles, and Reviews* [New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1998], pp. 73, 74, and 61, respectively.)
- 4 "When I went round my apartment looking for things on which to apply gesso, I selected them with a deliberate casualness, hoping some unconscious significance would later become apparent to me if I did not preclude the possibility through overly self-conscious choices." Eric Cameron, *English Roots* (Lethbridge: University of Lethbridge Art Gallery, 2001), p. 123.
- 5 Eric Cameron's ambition is of a piece with his ethics. Being convinced that serious art is a public affair, he has long refused to sell to private collectors. This rule has in recent years been softened, as the artist realized that the public institutions his art addresses more often than not yield to market forces, while those collectors genuinely attracted to his work tend to appreciate it for its non-market-sensitive ethics.
- 6 "Oedipus and Sol LeWitt," in Cameron, *Divine Comedy*, p. 15.
- 7 Eric will certainly understand in what way this quotation he once made is addressed to him in return. I trust he will see in it my discreet and elliptical way of thanking him for having written "Looking Beyond" (*English Roots*, pp. 149–62).
- 8 "Oedipus and Sol LeWitt," in Cameron, *Divine Comedy*, p. 24. See also Cameron, *English Roots*, p. 24: "my decisions referenced the concept and the resulting works to the external reality of my own life and death."
- 9 Cameron is nonetheless alive to the possibility of being this programmer, as shown by his stated sympathy with Albert Camus's opinion that suicide is the only truly serious philosophical problem. See Cameron, *English Roots*, p. 131.
- 10 The expression was used by Marcel Duchamp to describe the *Large Glass*.
- 11 "Looking Beyond," in *English Roots*, p. 154. The emphasis and the remark in brackets are Cameron's.
- 12 Cameron, *English Roots*, p. 102.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 61; see also p. 93.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 102.
- 15 See William Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," *Sewanee Review* 54 (1946).
- 16 Marcel Duchamp, "The Creative Act," in *Salt Seller: The Essential Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, edited by Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson, p. 139 (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973).
- 17 *English Roots*, p. 99. And: "I have long felt ... that the only material that lies within the area of competence of the artist to address in his or her art is his or her own lived experience and, even then, it is more authentically revealed by imprinting than in formulated expression." Eric Cameron, "Why I Was So Pleased..." in *Desire and Dread* (Calgary: Muttart Public Art Gallery, 1998), p. 25.
- 18 Eric Cameron describes in detail the methods taught by the Euston Road painters in *English Roots*, pp. 84–88. On the "effect," see *ibid.*, p. 68; on the principle of "deferring the aesthetic decision" and the question of its origin, see *ibid.*, p. 69. Eric pointed out to me that "to defer" has the double meaning of delaying and referring, and that he was convinced that, like himself, his mentors Lawrence Gowing and Quentin Bell

- used the word in its second sense. They expected aesthetic decisions to be deferred (referred) to the mechanics of the process in order not to be too willed. I myself tend to think that both meanings of the word contaminate each other, both in language and in Eric's practice.
- 19 See "Oedipus and Sol LeWitt," p. 4. See also Eric Cameron, "Sapere Aude," in *Desire and Dread*, p. 32.
 - 20 "Besides, it is always the others who die." This is the epitaph that is engraved on the tombstone of Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968) in the Rouen cemetery. He said that "delay in glass" was "a kind of subtitle" for the *Large Glass*: "Use 'delay' instead of picture or painting; picture on glass becomes delay in glass – but delay in glass does not mean picture on glass", in Sanouillet and Peterson, *Salt Seller*, p. 26.
 - 21 "And rose she has lived what roses live, the space of a morning."
 - 22 Not all three roses, in fact, display red-yellow-blue layers, and you might want to see in this a relevant instance of "deferring the aesthetic decision." When painting *Alice's Rose*, the artist at some point ran out of gesso. Remembering that he had some acrylic colours given to him by John Elderfield after a term of teaching at the University of Guelph when he went on to New York and couldn't take them with him, Cameron simply decided to use them as a stand-in for the missing gesso. Because of Elderfield's choice of colours, the colours on *Alice's Rose* expressed a rather Greenbergian modernism, which however disappeared when the artist worked on *Alice's Second Rose*. There he used every colour he had in the studio. When the time came for *Alice's Rose-is-a-rose-is-a-rose*, aesthetic decision could no longer be deferred. The choice of red-yellow-blue was a deliberate reference to Mondrian and the tradition he launched, down to Gene Davis, an artist Cameron admires in spite of him having been neglected by Greenberg.
 - 23 Cameron, *Bent Axis Approach*, p. 32.
 - 24 Cameron, *English Roots*, p. 102.
 - 25 "Why I Was So Pleased..." in *Desire and Dread*, p. 27.
 - 26 "My view of the order of things is ultimately monistic, not dualistic: I see no reason to believe other than that matter, strange and complex as science shows it to be, is the one and only source of everything; that mind is a manifestation of matter and subordinate to matter; and that the end of material existence closes out the world and everything in it for each and every one of us." Ibid.
 - 27 In conversation, 9 November 2004.
 - 28 Cameron, *English Roots*, p. 131.
 - 29 Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* (3 vols., comprehensive commentary by Cyril Bailey), Latin text Books I–VI (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947).
 - 30 In conversation, 9 November 2004.
 - 31 Sol LeWitt, *Paragraphs on Conceptual Art*, quoted by Lucy Lippard in *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (New York: Praeger, 1973), p. 28. For Eric Cameron's comments, see *English Roots*, p. 16, and "Oedipus and Sol LeWitt," in *Divine Comedy*, pp. 21–22.
 - 32 LeWitt, "Sentences on Conceptual Art," in *Conceptual Art*, ed. Ursula Meyer, p. 174 (New York: Dutton, 1972).
 - 33 Regarding La Mettrie, see Eric Cameron, "Given," in *The Definitively Unfinished Marcel Duchamp*, ed. Thierry de Duve, pp. 8ff. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991).
 - 34 Ibid., p. 25.
 - 35 Ibid., pp. 25–26.
 - 36 Cameron, *Bent Axis Approach*, p. 1.
 - 37 Ad Reinhardt, "Twelve Rules for a New Academy," in *Art as Art: The Selected Writings of Ad Reinhardt*, ed. Barbara Rose, pp. 203–7 (New York: Viking Press, 1975).
 - 38 Cameron inserted this well-known reply of Pollock to Hans Hoffman, who suggested that he draw from nature, into a passage of *Bent Axis Approach*, which clearly equated Pollock's unconscious (Freudian or Jungian) with the physical laws (gravity, the viscosity of pigments, the mechanics of levers), that account for the particular forms of his drips. Cameron, *Bent Axis Approach*, p. 19.
 - 39 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 186. "Genie ist die angeborene Gemütsanlage (ingenium), durch welche die Natur der Kunst

- die Regel gibt." *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974), pp. 241–42.
- 40 Friedrich von Schelling, *Textes esthétiques*, trans. Alain Pernet (Paris: Klincksieck, 1978), pp. 11, 24, and 27.
- 41 Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, p. 192. I am sorry to have to stress that when Kant says "a man," he implies a *male*. I wish he hadn't. I nonetheless believe that a gender-blind reading of Kant is *provisionally* more fruitful than a gender-suspicious one, simply because it leaves more interpretative paths open.
- 42 This triple characterization of the supersensible substrate is given by Kant in the Remark II that follows the solution of the antinomy of taste. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, pp. 220–21.
- 43 Friedrich Schlegel, *Athenaeum*, fragment 366; August W. Schlegel, "Lessons in art and literature"; Novalis, "Fragmenten," no. 1,073.
- 44 Gottfried Reinhold Treviranus published the first volume of his *Biologie oder die Philosophie der Lebenden Natur* in 1802, and Lorenz Oken his *Abriß des Systems der Biologie* in 1806. As for Jean-Baptiste de Lamarck, who is said to have coined the word "biologie," he used it for the first time in his *Hydrogéologie*, published in 1802.
- 45 Friedrich Schlegel, *Lyceum*, Fragment 115.
- 46 Joachim Dietrich Brandis, *Versuch über die Lebenskraft* (1795); Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, *Über den Bildungstrieb und das Zeugungsgeschäfte* (1781); Carl Friedrich Kielmeyer, *Über die Verhältnisse der organischen Kräfte untereinander* (1793); Karl Ernst von Baer, *Über die Entwicklungsgeschichte der Thiere* (1828–37); Schelling, *Von der Weltseele* (1798). On these authors and others, like Johann Christian Reil, convinced that one had to give *force* a definition suitable to the organic as well as the inorganic world, or Franz Xaver von Baader, a philosopher and theologian whose mystic world view influenced Schelling, see: Timothy Lenoir, *The Strategy of Life: Teleology and Mechanics in Nineteenth Century German Biology* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1982); and: "Kant, Blumenbach, and Vital Materialism in German Biology," *Isis* 71 (1980): 77–108; Iain Hamilton Grant, *Philosophies of Nature after Schelling* (New York: Continuum, 2006); Robert J. Richards, *The Romantic Conception of Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Andrew Cunningham and Nicholas Jardine, eds., *Romanticism and the Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
- 47 Albrecht von Haller was the main proponent of the *preformationist* theory in embryology, vis-à-vis which everybody had to take a stand, for it implied the Platonic primacy of "design" over mechanical forces. He also launched the search for the evasive "vital force" with his work on the irritability (*Reizbarkeit*) of the muscular fibres. Georg Ernst Stahl was the artisan of the theory of the "phlogistic" and a convinced animist in matters of physiology. Blumenbach and Kielmeyer, as well as Reil, were fostering *teleomechanism*, a dialectical reconciliation of mechanicism and teleology, also dubbed "vital materialism" by Lenoir (*The Strategy of Life*, pp. 17ff.).
- 48 Schelling, *Von der Weltseele* (*On the World Soul*), 1798. I used Stéphane Schmitt's French translation, *De l'âme du monde, une hypothèse de la physique supérieure pour l'explication de l'organisme général* (Paris: Éditions Rue d'Ulm, 2007). See pp. 182–85, in particular. See also Schmitt's postface, "Mécanisme ou organicisme? Schelling et la 'cause positive' de la vie," *ibid.*, pp. 229–96.
- 49 Schelling, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* (1797); *On the World Soul* (1798); *First Plan of a System of the Philosophy of Nature* (1799); *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800).
- 50 I am paraphrasing Schelling in more explicitly Kantian words. Schelling wrote: "If the unconscious (blind) activity finds itself reflected upon as conscious in the case of an organic product, conversely, the conscious activity finds itself reflected upon as unconscious (objective) in the case of the product [of genius] that is discussed here." *Textes esthétiques*, p. 13.
- 51 Schelling, *Textes esthétiques*, p. 17.
- 52 *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, p. 279.
- 53 *Ibid.*, p. 246.
- 54 Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. Kevin Attell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).
- 55 Cameron, *Bent Axis Approach*, p. 47.
- 56 *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, p. 259.
- 57 "Intelligent design" names the supposedly scientific theory behind which hides the Creationist doctrine held by certain

- fundamentalist Protestants who read the Bible literally, and for whom Darwin is the devil. A “soft” version of the same theory finds favour with those (though they are admittedly less fanatical) who subscribe to the “anthropic principle,” according to which the fundamental properties of the universe (the four constants) are so inexplicably adapted to the emergence of life, and thus of man, that one is entitled to conclude that they are and have been such all along *in order to* have generated our existence.
- 58 The expression “ghost in the machine” was coined by the philosopher Gilbert Ryle in *The Concept of Mind*, 1949, as an ironical designation of Cartesian dualism.
- 59 See Léon Briloin, *La science et la théorie de l’information* (Paris: Masson, 1959).
- 60 *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, p. 185.
- 61 See §59 of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* and the subsequent Appendix (§60), “On the Methodology of Taste,” which conclude the first part of the third *Critique*.
- 62 Henri Focillon’s *The Life of Forms*, 1943, is the epitome of this vitalism, which is as vague as it is enthusiastic. It seems to me significant that, despite the vagueness, Focillon talks about an “order of studies” that is still to be carried out, and which would be aimed at understanding “the sort of specific causality” that is to be found in works of art, “so that the concept of a world of forms should cease to appear as a metaphor, and that our sketch of a biological method should be justified in general terms.” Henri Focillon, *The Life of Forms in Art* (New York: Zone Books, 1992), (Henri Focillon, *Vie des formes*, Paris: PUF, 1970, p. 67).
- 63 Friedrich Schlegel, *Athenaeum*, fragment no. 51.
- 64 Cameron, *Bent Axis Approach*, p. 9.
- 65 “Beauty has always been a matter of indifference to me in my art – not Duchamp’s ‘Beauty of indifference’ but indifference to beauty.” Eric Cameron, *Squareness*: (Lethbridge: Southern Alberta Art Gallery, 1993), p. 40.
- 66 Schelling attempted this transfer from nature to art without really having the means to it, and Hegel accomplished it at the cost of a violent *coup* from which art theory still suffers today. This misunderstood transfer is central to my reading of Kant, *after* Duchamp, as it is set out in the fifth chapter of my *Kant after Duchamp* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), and in the second chapter of *Au nom de l’art* (Paris: Minuit, 1989), which was already putting forward a “cybernetic” reading of reflexive judgment.
- 67 Clement Greenberg, “Towards a Newer Laocoon,” *Partisan Review*, July–August 1940; repr. in Clement Greenberg, *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. I, *Perceptions and Judgments*, ed. John O’Brian, p. 34 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).
- 68 Cameron, “Looking Beyond,” in *English Roots*, p. 154 (see above).
- 69 “Modernist Painting,” *Forum Lectures* (Washington: Voice of America, 1960), repr. in Clement Greenberg, *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. IV, *Modernism with a Vengeance*, ed. John O’Brian, p. 85 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).
- 70 Cameron, *English Roots*, p. 103.
- 71 See Cameron, *Bent Axis Approach*, p. 48.
- 72 Cameron, “Given,” in *The Definitively Unfinished Marcel Duchamp*, p. 26. He added, as if to show me that he had not waited for me to arrive in order to translate his material mysticism into the language of transcendental materialism himself: “I would not quarrel with the logic of Kant’s arguments regarding the inaccessibility of the suprasensible substrate, but would rather assert that the role of the artist has always entailed a mystical revelation beyond the logic of argument, albeit, in the present, this must imply a material mysticism.”
- 73 Jacques Monod, *Chance and Necessity: An Essay on the Natural Philosophy of Modern Biology* (New York: Random House, 1972), p. 180.
- 74 I refer to my dear father, Christian de Duve, who, like Monod, is a biologist and a Nobel laureate, and I am thinking specifically of one his recent books, *Singularities: Landmarks on the Pathways of Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
- 75 Cameron, *Bent Axis Approach*, p. 13.
- 76 See Cameron, *English Roots*, p. 69.
- 77 “Art and History – ART and HISTORY,” in *Desire and Dread*, p. 41.



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