

ART AND
AGENCY

An Anthropological Theory

Alfred Gell

CLARENDON PRESS · OXFORD

CONTENTS

<i>List of Figures</i>	xx
1. <i>The Problem Defined: The Need for an Anthropology of Art</i>	1
1.1. Can there be an Anthropological Theory of Visual Art?	1
1.2. The Art Object	5
1.3. Art Sociology	7
1.4. The Silhouette of an Anthropological Theory	10
2. <i>The Theory of the Art Nexus</i>	12
2.1. Constructing a Theory: Terms and Relations	12
2.2. The Index	13
2.3. Abduction	14
2.4. The Social Agent	16
2.5. 'Things' as Social Agents	17
2.5.1. Paradox Elimination	19
2.5.2. Agents and Patients	21
2.6. The Artist	23
2.7. The Recipient	24
2.8. The Prototype	25
2.9. Summary	26
3. <i>The Art Nexus and the Index</i>	28
3.1. The Table of Agent/Patient Relations between Four Basic Terms	28
3.2. Index-A \longrightarrow Artist-P	28
3.3. Index-A \longrightarrow Recipient-P	31
3.4. Index-A \longrightarrow Prototype-P	32
3.5. Artist-A \longrightarrow Index-P	33
3.6. Recipient-A \longrightarrow Index-P	33
3.7. Prototype-A \longrightarrow Index-P	35
3.8. The Centrality of the Index	35
3.8.1. The Logic of 'Primary' and 'Secondary' Agents and Patients	36
3.9. The 'Illegitimate' Expressions	38

3.10. Index-A → Index-P	41
3.11. Artist-A → Artist-P	45
3.12. Recipient-A → Recipient-P	47
3.13. Prototype-A → Prototype-P	48
4. <i>The Involution of the Index in the Art Nexus</i>	51
4.1. Hierarchical Embedding of Agent/Patient Relations	51
4.2. The Effect of Substitutions	52
4.3. Tree-Structures	53
4.4. Some more Complex Tree-Structures: The Nail Fetish	59
5. <i>The Origination of the Index</i>	66
5.1. Agency	66
5.2. Captivation	68
6. <i>The Critique of the Index</i>	73
6.1. On Decorative Art	73
6.2. Attachment	74
6.3. Decorative Pattern = Index-A → Index-P	76
6.4. Symmetry and the Appearance of Animation	77
6.5. Complex Patterns	79
6.6. Complex Patterns as 'Unfinished Business'	80
6.7. Taste and Tackiness	81
6.8. The Apotropaic Pattern	83
6.9. <i>Kolam</i>	84
6.10. <i>Kolam</i> , Tattoo, and the Cretan Maze	86
6.11. Sand-Drawings of Malakula and the Land of the Dead	90
6.12. Drawing and Dancing	94
7. <i>The Distributed Person</i>	96
7.1. Mimesis and Sorcery	96
7.2. The Mimetic Faculty	99
7.3. Volt Sorcery	102
7.4. The Epicurean Theory of 'Flying Simulacra' as Parts of the Body	104
7.5. From Sorcery to the Cult of Images	106
7.6. Decortication and the Exchange of Indexes: Tahitian <i>To'o</i>	109
7.7. <i>Darshan</i> : Witnessing as Agency	116
7.8. Animism and Anthropomorphism	121
7.8.1. Stocks and Stones	122
7.9. External and Internal Conceptions of Agency	126

7.10. The Animation of Idols: The Externalist Strategy	133
7.11. Concentric Idols and Fractal Personhood	137
7.12. The Rites of Consecration	143
7.13. Conclusion: From the Individual to the Collective	153
8. <i>Style and Culture</i>	155
8.1. On the Concept of Style	155
8.2. Hanson on Style and Culture	159
8.3. Style and Cognitive Saliency	162
8.4. Formal Analysis and the Linguistic Chimera	163
8.5. Synecdoche: Axes of Coherence in Stylistic Unities	165
8.6. The Marquesan Corpus	168
8.7. The Table of <i>Etua</i> Motifs	171
8.8. From <i>Hope Vehine</i> to <i>Vai O Kena</i>	174
8.9. From <i>Hope Vehine</i> to <i>Kake Kea</i>	176
8.10. From the <i>Etua</i> to the Face Motif (<i>Mata Hoata</i>)	180
8.11. From <i>Mata Hoata</i> to <i>Ipu</i> : Additional Face Motifs	182
8.12. Some Additional Motif-Transformation	186
8.13. Figure-Ground Reversal (Tortoiseshell Diadems)	187
8.14. From Two to Three Dimensions	190
8.15. Backlessness and Split Representation: Shell Crowns	192
8.16. Janus-Faced Images: Scale Transformations	196
8.17. Multiplication, Transposition, and Proboscis-Formation: Fan Handles	202
8.18. The Same Continued: Stilt-Steps	205
8.19. <i>U'u</i> : The Ultimate Double-Double-Double <i>Tiki</i>	209
8.20. Fusion: The Narrative Art of Ear-Ornaments	211
8.21. Conclusion: Coherence in Marquesan Art and Social Relations	215
9. <i>Conclusion: The Extended Mind</i>	221
9.1. Distributed Objects	221
9.2. Malangan	223
9.3. Gawan Kula	228
9.4. The Artist's <i>Œuvre</i> as a Distributed Object	232
9.5. The <i>Œuvre</i> of Marcel Duchamp	242
9.6. The Maori Meeting House	251
<i>Bibliography</i>	259
<i>Index</i>	265