

For the sake of clarity, addressing each objection in its own right rather than formulating a blanket statement to reconcile multiple different points seems to me the most logical method. Some points are not objections, but observations based on the objections of others, especially in how those objections apparently could not turn the cultural current, and the subject of their criticism still finds itself well years later.

This last point, one of subjects outliving their criticism, seems especially relevant in regard to Krauss's *Sculpture in the Expanded Field* which comments on the state of art as an infinitely malleable term, serving any level of abstraction, and ultimately losing its meaning of "art" as a whole. This criticism could apply to any number of cultural phenomena today, and at the highest level of commercial success. When Virgil Abloh makes a handbag and prints "SCULPTURE" on it in bold white lettering (and sells it for an egregiously high amount), he is calling an object, typically understood as part of the fashion world, a sculpture. Clothing can certainly be sculptural, and beautiful clothing often is. But to claim such a thing so bluntly, paired (as always) with the arbitrary quotation marks that has somehow enamored an entire generation of Complex and Hypebeast readers, serves the point that Krauss is making¹. *Things* that are not sculpture can have sculptural qualities. I do not mean to box in all categories of art and leave them there, but there ought to be an end to calling everything *anything*. Perhaps even the word "sculpture" should be lost, and more accurate terminology should be set. A failure to do so relegates Virgil to a simulacrum: always reaching, ambiguous, infinite. The handbag becomes not a copy, which reproduces likeness, but a simulacrum, which produces semblance. In the simulacra, the Idea of the model (and the copy) is entirely skipped². It is, again, arbitrary.

¹ Sculpture in the Expanded Field, Krauss (33)

² Plato and the Simulacrum, Deleuze (47,48)

Evidently, arbitrary sells. Maybe it is the profound ambiguity in much of popular work (again thinking of Virgil calling certain things other things in quotation marks), allowing the layman to finish the sentence of the designer. The piece becomes their own, as their own intellect filled in the blanks left by the designer, the Virgil. Whether this cultural Mad Lib is for the betterment of art, I am not sure. Its commercial success is clear, which brings me to the next point.

Taste is made. For the most part, it is a product of exposure. Instagram and other outlets have streamlined exposure for popular commercial ventures. People wear Off-White because they see popular social media personalities wearing it. Their taste has been molded by their exposure. Pushing the Virgil analogy further, a great irony lies with the success of the brand. Essential to the brand's image is an industrial imprint on many of the pieces. Off-White clothing, and especially shoes, seek to emblemize the process of production. Burnished on the side of the shoes is the name "Off-White" and the location of the Nike headquarters, as if the product is a prototype that has not been fully polished. Additionally, the shoe makes extensive use of extremely visible stitching, furthering the narrative of construction and the actual process of building. Here lies the great irony. It is the opposite of honest (populist?) design. The Wassily chair, composed of metal tubes and some leather, is extremely expensive. However, it started, like many pieces in the Bauhaus, as a piece of mass production, destined for the houses of not just the ultra-wealthy, but the working class as well. But the Wassily chair was seen as a piece of significant importance from tastemakers in the field, and thus fetched a high price over time. The opposite is true for Off-White. Off-White *started* as a brand for the elite, not by virtue of design innovation, but of ambiguity and the power of influence on social media. By switching the order

of significance to price, to price to significance, a great issue has been born. The plague of wealth signaling is rampant on social media, with brands like Off-White capitalizing on such.

Aside from the inexplicable success of Off-White, examining the influx of price of the Wassily chair may also be fruitful. The chair costs thousands of dollars because people perceive it to be worth such, and I believe this perception is once again about taste-making of influential thinkers in design. This reasoning for the increase in price of the Wassily chair is, to me, missing in the analysis of Tafuri on the idea of architecture as a machine for capital. The Wassily chair became valuable when “authorities” saw it as such. In this vein, architecture is eating itself. If people follow the lead of authority, then they will be willing to spend more money based on the *assurance* that what they are buying is worthwhile. Design is expensive when people in the field say that it should be. Much like how those with a large following can sway thousands to buy clothing they might normally avoid.