THE CONSTRUCTION OF A RHETORICAL RESPONSE TO VISUAL ART:
A CASE STUDY OF BRUSHSTROKES IN FLIGHT

DISSERTATION

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* * * *

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Scholars from various disciplines agree that visual images constitute significant forms of communication. Whether we are conscious of it or not, we use our eyes in almost every communicative experience. Curtiss (1987), for example, notes the pervasiveness of visual images and the integral role they play in communication:

From 75% to 80% of human sensory perception is visual. Ten percent of vision is in the eye, 90% in the brain, and at least 60% of brain activity--cognition, memory, emotion, and perception--is linked with vision. (p. vii)

Berger (1985) concurs, noting that the visual is our connection with and principal source of information about the world: "The visible brings the world to us . . . the visible implies an eye . . . it is the stuff of the relation between the seen and seer (p. 215).

McFee (McFee & Degge, 1980) also articulates the importance of visual images, especially visual art images, as a principal means of communicating ideas and emotional meanings:

Ideas are communicated through art as well as through words. Poets often "paint pictures" with words to
stimulate our visual imagery; to force us to go beyond the ideas to the images they convey. But visual artists can provide us with both images and ideas. Some artists are concerned with the communication of ideas, some with communicating feelings and emotions, some with the aesthetics or beauty or form, some with the effects of manipulating materials, and others are concerned with some synthesis of all of these communications. (pp. 272-273)

Feldman (1987) agrees and explains that visual works of art can present properties of an experience through references evoked by spatial signification, color, and form. He suggests that "art satisfies a social need for communication" and that it calls for a "social response" (p. 11). Such comments as these attest to the significance of visual images and visual art as forms of communication.

Despite a general agreement over the importance of visual images as communication, however, a great deal of diversity exists in individual responses to visual images, a diversity that often is made visible in responses to art. The Chicago Picasso sculpture that graces Chicago's Civic Center, for example, prompted diverse responses from residents; they looked at the work and made comical comparisons to a "baboon, bird, phoenix, horse, sea horse, Afghan hound, nun, Barbra Streisand, and a viking helmet" (Stratton, 1982, p. 145). Similarly, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., carefully chosen from a national competition of artists and architects in 1981,
generated controversy when it was presented to the public. Many veterans and politicians argued that it did not memorialize those who died in the war; in fact, one veteran described it as a "black gash of shame and sorrow" (McCombs, March, 1982, p. 14).

_Split Pavilion_, by Andrea Blum, commissioned for an ocean-side site in Carlsbad, California, in 1992, provides yet another example of the diverse--and often negative--reactions generated by works of art. It is referred to by nearby residents as "the gorilla cage" and the "endless Blummer" (Fried, 1994, p. B1). Viewers so dislike the work that they have engaged for two years in complaints, demonstrations, and petitions and finally have brought a lawsuit against the city demanding the work's removal from its site.

Other works of art critically acclaimed by art experts have fared no better with their audiences. Richard Serra's _Titled Arc_ in Manhattan, New York, and George Sugarman's _Baltimore Federal_ in Baltimore, Maryland, for example, were perceived by their respective publics as physically dangerous and "likely to inspire bomb throwers and rapists" (Senie & Webster, 1992, p. 237). A figurative sculpture by Joel Shapiro proposed for Charlotte, North Carolina, was mocked and derided as resembling the pop-culture toy, Gumby. _Landscape of Time_,
a minimalist sculpture by Isamu Noguchi in Seattle, Washington, was viewed as part of the "pet rock" craze by audiences because of its use of natural stone (Senie & Webster, 1992, p.237). Even Rodin's *Burghers of Calais*, erected in Calais, France, in 1886, was rejected and scorned by the audience for which it was commissioned.

As Senie (Senie & Webster, 1992) notes, "time and again well-meaning individuals (local officials, public art administrators, and artists) involved with a public art commission are shocked that their carefully considered project is so glaringly misunderstood" (p. 237). Art works that were expected by those who commissioned or created them to celebrate or commemorate, to achieve or represent consensus, or to express a national culture instead have generated unexpected responses in viewers. Clearly, not everyone constructs the same meaning for specific art works.

**Statement of the Problem**

The focus of this study is on the process by which sense is made of visual art images. The primary research question in which I am interested is: How is a rhetorical response to visual art constructed? Within this general area, my specific interest is in the process of viewership by which a rhetorical response to nonrepresentational art is developed from a lay position. A study of the
construction of rhetorical responses to nonrepresentational art from a lay position must begin with definitions of rhetorical response, viewership, art, nonrepresentational art, and lay position.

Rhetorical Response

For the purposes of my study, I am defining rhetorical response as an interpretation of or meaning ascribed to a work of art. In a rhetorical response, viewers spend enough time and give the work enough attention to develop a meaning for the work that they are able to articulate. To respond rhetorically to an art object is to attribute meaning to the object.

Responses other than rhetorical responses are possible to works of art. An aesthetic response, for example, involves a sensory response to the work of art in which the work's form, texture, color, shape, or composition is valued for its own sake and not used to attribute meaning to the work. An emotional response—in which viewers simply feel an emotion such as anger, disgust, or joy—also may not be interpreted but merely experienced. Should viewers articulate why a specific work evokes a sensory or emotional response, they are putting an interpretation on the work and, hence, are engaging in a rhetorical response. Another response that does not fall into my conception of a rhetorical response is a received
response. In a received response, the viewer accepts the explanation of what a work of art means and how to respond to it from someone else--an art critic, the artist, or a museum brochure or catalogue, for example.

**Viewership**

By the term, *viewership*, I am referring to the process by which a rhetorical response is constructed. Viewership is the process that culminates in the product of a rhetorical response to a work of art. With the concept of viewership, I am adapting the notion of spectatorship to works of visual art.

The notion of spectatorship in film studies is concerned with the relationship between the spectator and the film being viewed and, in particular, with the pleasures and values of film viewing. Several scholars have expanded this notion to texts other than cinema. Mulvey (1989), for example, suggests that spectatorship applies to various types of cultural material, both discursive and nondiscursive, and she explores the work of artists Barbara Kruger and Victor Burgin. Foss and Foss (1994) define spectatorship as "a preferred viewpoint from which to view the world of the text" (p. 410), and they examine the rhetorical construction of feminine spectatorship in Garrison Keillor's radio monologues.
Such work expands the notion of a spectator to one who has a relationship with a visual medium or who is constructed into a spectator position by a viewed visual text.

Viewing art is also a spectating activity, although works of art differ considerably from film. Mitchell (1992) provides a convenient summary of the distinctions and contrasts between art and film:

The monument is a fixed, generally rigid object, designed to remain in its site for all time. The movies, in contrast, "move" in every possible way—in their presentation, their circulation and distribution, and in their responsiveness to the fluctuation of contemporary taste. Public art is supposed to occupy a pacified, utopian space, a site held in common by free and equal citizens whose debate, freed of commercial motives, private interest, or violent coercion, will form "public opinion." Movies are beheld in private, commercial theatres that further privatize spectators by isolating and immobilizing them in darkness. Public art stands still and silent while its beholders move in the reciprocal relations of festivals, mass meetings, parades, and rendezvous. Movies appropriate all motion and sound to themselves, allowing only the furtive, private rendezvous of lovers or autoeroticism. (39)

Despite these differences, however, both film and visual arts are spectating activities similarly invested with cultural values and conventions. My interest in this dissertation is in explicating viewership as a process that results in a rhetorical response or interpretation of a work of art.
**Art**

For years, theorists have been debating the definition of art. Some arts scholars claim that art can be distinguished by its special qualities--its expressive or significant form, for example, or its aesthetic elements--while still others contend that "art is a collective term for what artists do" (Bongard, 1983, p. 28). Berleant (1986) notes that historical conceptions of art characterize it as objects that possess a special status and warrant a particular regard. Others, such as Herskovits (1948), believe that art is a process--the aesthetic dimension of any human activity--or that art is what art experts say it is (Dickie, 1969, 1992). Hatcher (1985) notes that the confusion over defining art lies in the fact that "art is not a phenomenon but a concept" and "being a concept it has no objective referent, and so one cannot say what it is or is not, but only what the user means by the term" (p. 8). For this study, I will define art as any human-made visual object, image, or process that is creatively embellished or enhanced beyond any utilitarian or strictly informational sense.

**Nonrepresentational Art**

For the purposes of this study, nonrepresentational art refers to works of art whose images have no obvious models in physical reality.
**Lay Position**

In using the term *lay position*, I am trying to avoid drawing distinct boundaries between elite and lay audiences, yet I am referring to a position generally thought of as outside of the traditional art discourse. It is a position from which viewers develop responses to art not on the basis of art protocols or frameworks but on the basis of their own experiences and knowledges, developed from living and looking in the world. Many within the audience in which I am interested may have received some art training or education—such as classes offered as part of primary or secondary education or as part of liberal arts requirements in college. They also may have attended some sorts of art functions—community art fairs, museum exhibitions, or art galleries, for example—and may hold notions and expectations about art and arts traditions. Despite such knowledge and involvement, however, these individuals remain outside the formal discourse of aesthetics, art history, or art criticism in that they do not incorporate the protocols and practices those disciplines sanction in their response to the particular object in question. A lay position, then, is the one from which viewers not participating in the traditional or formal art world come to understand and evaluate public art objects.
I am interested in viewers' rhetorical responses from a lay position to art because disciplines that deal with art have not addressed the question adequately. Traditional studies of visual art objects, such as those conducted by art history and art criticism, ignore responses of viewers in favor of concerns foregrounding the production of art images. Art history, for example, is concerned with determinations of who produced a particular work, when and where it was produced and under what circumstances, and classifications of style or technical variation. Art criticism focuses on the formal and expressive features of art objects and on evaluations of a particular work's success or failure within its historical context or the contemporary art world. Both the critic and the historian offer interpretations of the meaning of an art work--although the historian more often relies on the critic for such determination--but both rely on documentation and historical data that privilege the artist's intent or historical precedent. Freeberg (1989) posits that such disciplines do not confront or analyze responses because they are "unrefined, basic, preintellectual, and raw" and are "too embarrassing or awkward to write about" (p. xx). With this study, I hope
to provide an explanation for the process by which responses to visual data are constructed that is not being provided in disciplines that deal with art.

I also am interested in discovering the process by which rhetorical responses to art are constructed from a lay position because most of the theories about response to art do not deal with viewing from such a position. Scholars in aesthetics, art history, and art criticism and artists who talk or write about their work often hand viewers a ready-made response--galleries, museums, and publications, for example, are filled with text that tells the viewer what art works mean. These expert sources about art give the viewer criteria for constructing a response along with standards for measuring the art work's success. They privilege the artist's intent or the art expert's knowledge of art traditions and conventions in attributing meaning to the work; they also often suggest to the audience that there is only one correct meaning for a work of art. Danto's (1981) view is representative; he argues that "without theories of art, black paint is just black paint and nothing more" (p. 135). Lay viewers, however, often develop responses to works of art without the theories and knowledge of experts, and my interest is
in understanding these responses, which are constructed outside of the perimeters of the traditional art discourse.

Finally, I am interested in rhetorical responses to art from a lay position because such knowledge might account for the controversies that often erupt over works of art. The clash between responses cultivated by the traditional art world and those unmediated by it seems to be responsible for much of the controversy around art objects and, in particular, around public works of art. The issues involved in controversies over public art vary considerably from work to work and include expectations for the work by the factions involved, questions of funding, control over content, ideological uses of public space, the role of the public in determining the representation of culture and the choice of art for public spaces, and the rights of artists to control the destiny of their work. Underlying all of these issues, however, are differences in the understanding of and response to art works among the factions involved in the controversies. Responses developed from a lay position often are not in agreement with those developed from the position of the traditional art world. Identifying the elements that affect rhetorical responses to public art from a lay position will give artists, architects, city
planners, and those who commission such works a better understanding of the processes by which audiences not schooled in the arts come to understand and accept or reject works of art.

In answering my research question, I will be operating as a lay viewer. Although I have a background in the arts, I will not be drawing on that to discover or frame the processes I formulate for coming to a rhetorical response. I will draw, instead, on knowledge, experiences, and information typically available to any (or most) viewers in our culture—knowledge such as things that are far away appear smaller than ones close up (perceptual experience), knowledge about the myth of creation in the Bible (cultural knowledge), or knowledge about how cars are made (technical knowledge).

There is one way in which I have an advantage over others in a lay position—I know rhetorical theory and am able to use the tools of a rhetorical critic. The use of such knowledge and tools, however, does not invalidate things accessible to most in our culture. Nor do they invalidate the lay position from which I am formulating the process of viewership because these are the tools that are enabling me to formulate the process. Many in a lay position might follow the processes I will construct to develop a response to a work of art, but they would not be
able to articulate the components of that response. This is the contribution my expertise in rhetoric allows me to make.

Method

Data

In order to discover how a rhetorical response is constructed to art images, I analyzed two kinds of data. I reviewed literature on responses to and interpretations of visual imagery to discover material relevant to the construction of rhetorical responses to visual art objects. My literature review constitutes this body of data.

My data also consist of a visual art object, *Brushstrokes in Flight*, an art work created by Roy Lichtenstein and commissioned by the city of Columbus, Ohio. In August, 1983, the Civic Art Advisory Committee of Columbus, Ohio, announced that it had chosen Roy Lichtenstein, a celebrated pop artist, as the winner of a competition to create a sculpture for Port Columbus, the city's airport. The 2-ton; 25-foot-tall; yellow, blue, red, and black aluminum sculpture was dedicated and placed in its site—a small courtyard between a parking garage and the terminal building—on May 29, 1984. Later, the work was moved from between the two buildings to the edge of the airport's long-term parking lot.
I selected this particular work of art as my data for two reasons. First, I selected *Brushstrokes in Flight* as my object of study because it is nonrepresentational. A nonrepresentational work opens up the possibilities for responses in that it allows more latitude in interpretations. A study of a nonrepresentational work, then, is likely to reveal more factors that viewers might take into account in constructing responses than would emerge for a representational work.

Second, I chose *Brushstrokes in Flight* as data for this study because the work remains standing at the Port Columbus airport, making it accessible for my analysis. That I was able to visit and study the sculpture was useful particularly in the development of object-centered features that affect rhetorical responses to art.

The use of one object as a case study to develop theory, as I am doing with *Brushstrokes*, is particularly appropriate for discovering the construction of rhetorical responses to visual art. As Reinhart (1992) points out, a study of an individual case has three benefits. First, a limited frame allows exploration of uncharted issues. As there are no studies such as the one I undertake, I see the generation of questions and new research directions as an important goal for the study of visual images. A case study also allows intensive analysis of many details that
might be neglected with a larger sample. Third, a case study allows me to focus on the process by which rhetorical responses to art images are constructed rather than on comparisons of responses between images.

**Procedures**

My method in this study was both inductive and deductive, oriented toward theory generation and theory validation. The inductive analysis was the starting place of my construction of a theory of a rhetorical response to art. I first developed three rhetorical responses to *Brushstrokes*, readings developed from my own responses to the work of art, guided by my knowledge of rhetorical analysis and rhetorical processes. For each of the responses, I identified and catalogued the vehicles or routes by which the specific reading for the work of art might be developed.

To develop the readings, I did not confine myself to one set of rhetorical theories or analytical procedures, choosing instead to follow Burke's (1968) suggestion to use all that there is to use in order to allow the readings and the vehicles for the readings to be developed without *a priori* boundaries. Because my interest was in discovering how rhetorical responses or interpretations to works of art are constructed, however, my efforts tended to rely on those rhetorical tools and analytical processes
concerned with the attribution of meaning and with how signs function. Thus, the tools on which I tended to draw are those of semiotics—with its concepts of the signifier and the signified—and those of argumentation theory about how claims and assertions are developed and justified; the term vehicle, for example, reflects those tools.

This inductive component of my method is much like the methods used by scholars in the area of spectatorship in film studies. There are two primary ways in which scholars who explore spectatorship conduct their studies. One approach, a more recent development, is to interview actual members of viewing audiences. A second approach is to construct an ideal or preferred position for the viewer; this is the approach closest to the one used in my study. In this approach to spectatorship, scholars examine various dimensions of a text—in this case, a film—to discover the values, experiences, meanings, attitudes, and pleasures that construct a particular audience for the text. In my study, as in these types of studies of spectatorship, I examined both the physical data of the artifact and the characteristics constructed for and required of viewers in order for them to participate in the text. Consistent with studies in spectatorship, the viewers to whom I refer in my study are concepts and not actual persons, although the readings I
constructed sometimes were grounded in interpretations suggested by actual viewers I interviewed or in media accounts about the sculpture.

In the last chapter of the dissertation, the vehicles and routes discovered in each reading are compared, and the dimensions that constitute the process of viewership are identified. At this point, too, the deductive step of the analysis is introduced. I looked for evidence in the readings of the features and dimensions suggested by the three thematic areas that emerged from the literature review—the object-centered, audience-centered, and performance-centered perspectives. In applying these concepts from the literature review, I "tested" them as mini-hypotheses. The significance of the variables was determined by what was used in the construction of a rhetorical response to the sculpture—the kinds of data that were organized to create a unit to which meaning was attributed, the kinds of meanings attributed to those units and the codes and systems on which they depend, and the kinds of claims or interpretations that result. The result of the integration of the inductive and deductive procedures is the organization into a theory that explains the construction of a rhetorical response to nonrepresentational art from a lay position.
Literature Review

Theories of lay viewers' responses to visual art images are conspicuously absent in literature concerned with art. Although there are no studies that inquire into viewers' responses in the manner in which I propose, studies in communication, aesthetics, art criticism, anthropology, film studies, and psychology offer pieces of information about aspects of rhetorical responses to visual art. In organizing these pieces of information into a literature review, I am integrating myriad theories, not all of which are commensurate with each other, but which provide a conversation about visual images that elucidates what is agreed upon and what is at issue in understanding rhetorical responses to visual art. These notions can be grouped into three thematic sections, each of which foregrounds a specific research focus. The organization of these three sections moves from notions concerned with the visual work of art itself to those concerned with societal conventions—from object to culture, in other words. I begin with research that emphasizes the physical characteristics or data presented by visual art. From object-centered approaches, I move to research focusing on the viewer or audience as key to understanding rhetorical responses. Finally, I conclude the literature review by exploring studies in which
cultural uses or performances are seen as influential to
the construction of responses. Throughout this literature
review, I ask the reader's indulgence in recognizing that
the boundaries for these categories are soft, and in many
cases, blurred; an inevitable amount of overlap and
slippage exists between them.

Object-Centered Theories

Many contemporary theories of art and art criticism
identify the physical characteristics of a work--color,
scale, shape, line, media, light and dark values, along
with the design and relationship of those elements--as
essential both to creating visual images and to forming
interpretations of works of art. In this approach,
viewers' interpretations are assumed to be grounded in the
material components of a work of art and their
organizational devices--in the structure of the work. The
physical characteristics of the work, literature in this
category suggests, cultivate the likelihood of one
particular response or type of response more than others.
This section begins with assumptions about physical and
design elements, proceeds to notions asserting that the
physical data of visual images function as a language, and
ends with notions that contend that the physical data of
visual images function in non-language-like ways.
Many artists contend that the physical and design elements of visual works of art speak for themselves and constitute constructions of meaning. The artist Mondrian, for example, defended his use of straight lines and primary colors in his paintings rather than curves because "curves are too emotional" (Freeberg, 1989, p. 1). Mondrian believed that reality best could be expressed through the equivalence of the fixed rhythms and changing relations of color, size, and line. Artist and educator Chaet (1983) posits that "line, value, texture, form, and color are the plastic means by which the artist can express graphic ideas" (p. 11). Textbooks for studio artists, such as Basic Visual Concepts and Principles for Artists, Architects, and Designers (Wallschlaeger & Busic-Snyder, 1992); Drawing: A Contemporary Approach (Bette & Sale, 1980); Working with Color (Kriesburg, 1986); and Design Basics (Lauer, 1979) reveal that artists ground the production of their work in the assumption that the physical elements are expressive.

A semiotic perspective also foregrounds the physical characteristics of images. Semiotics is a method of inquiry into the basic workings of symbolic function that involves the analysis of culturally shared signs and codes. Signs are arbitrary or conventional concepts that stand for something else, while codes are systems of
conventions and rules that determine how we interpret or use signs. Both are used by members of cultures to explicate the world and their relation to it and to each other. Semiotic research focusing on signs foregrounds the significance of the individual physical elements, while research that focuses on codes is concerned with relationships between the sign and its object and the responses codes evoke.

Dondis (1973) and Saint-Martin (1987) each have developed semiotics of visual signs; in their works, they examine the basic visual elements and the strategies, options, and techniques of visual expression. Dondis defines his work as a primer of literacy—a survey of visual components that can be used like language for the construction and understanding of messages. He argues that visual components are "a body of data composed of constituent parts, a group of units determined by other units, whose significance as a whole is a function of the significance of the parts" (p. xi). He presents a theory of both individual elements—such as line, color, tone, and texture—and the expressive power of techniques—such as symmetry, repetition, and accent—as the simplest level of content.
Similarly convinced that visual representations "are signifying practices constituting a language," Saint-Martin (1987) presents a semiology of visual language and a grammar that tells how a given ensemble of signs is organized to convey meaning (p. x). She defines the fundamental units of visual language—coloremes—and develops syntactical rules for their use and description. She also explicates a semiotic analysis to discover the interrelations among elements to illustrate how producers of visual works use the potentialities of this syntax. According to Saint-Martin, a primary characteristic of a visual language is the component of space. Her work clarifies the differences between visual and perceptual space and their function in the construction of meaning in visual images and human environments.

Barthes (1957) too employs semiotics to investigate and uncovering the ways in which sense is manufactured other than by oral speech. He contends that any object or ritual can be a form of signification within a culture; photographs, washing detergents, wrestling matches, or cooking practices, for example, can be endowed with meanings and stand as representations or mythologies of something else. Concerned with unmasking these sign-systems and accounting for "the mystification which transforms petit-bourgeois culture into a universal
nature" (p. 9), Barthes' semiological analyses explicate the values of these signs. It is human history, Barthes argues, that converts reality into the sign; human history is key to the association or correlation that unites signifier and the signified.

Several scholars have developed prescriptive models for constructing meaning from art that depend on analysis of the physical elements of an art image. Feinstein (1989), for example, claims that properties or qualities of visual phenomena--such as color, scale, shape, form, pattern, texture, and space, along with their organization, unity, variety, balance, movement, orientation, and placement--elicit sensory and emotional responses and prompt interpretation of the work. Her model relies on the processes of description of form, analysis of form, metaphoric interpretation of form, evaluation of the image in comparison to others of its kind, and identification of the viewer's preferences. While Feinstein's model seeks to provide a framework from which viewers can construct responses to visual works of art, her suggestions do not attempt so much to mediate viewers' responses as to provide a "tool for accessing works of art, a verbal scaffolding for organizing and expanding visual perceptions" (p. 44) that is rooted in the physical data of a work.
Kanengieter's (1990) work on message formation in architecture formulates a three-step process for the attribution of meanings to built forms that relies on the physical data of the building. Her proposed process emphasizes the identification of presented elements--such as space, media, shapes, colors, and scale--to identify ideas, themes, concepts, and allusions that a viewer then organizes into a message, thesis, or assertion in the attribution of meaning to the form. Kanengieter's procedure is helpful in that it suggests sources of viewers' differing responses to visual images. Kanengieter posits that diverse responses may result from viewers' focus on different presented elements or from viewers' differences in processing the elements.

Degge's (1985) model for visual aesthetic inquiry in television expands the range of physical characteristics under consideration that influence viewers' responses by including phenomenological and cultural aspects of the image. The phenomenological aspects Degge suggests include expressions of immediacy (Are the images being presented as happening right now, for example, or do they reflect a past event?) and reality (Are the images authentic and genuine?). The cultural aspects include the relation of the visual message to the audience and the
effects of the medium (television) on the message. Degge's model is based on the assumption that meanings are dependent on how visual messages are designed.

Other scholars find form essential to the construction of meaning. Bell's (1913) theory of significant form is representative; he argues for the existence of an aesthetic emotion aroused by the form of the art object. An object, according to Bell, must possess this form—seen as a visual pattern, not as a representation of the external world—in order to be art. Viewers, as constructed in Bell's theory, are merely spectators and need bring "nothing from life, no knowledge of its ideas and affairs, no familiarity with its emotions" in order to respond to art (p. 27).

Langer (1953, 1957), too, finds form essential to the construction of response and meaning in visual art. According to Langer, a work of art is an image of feeling—an expressive form that presents the subjective for contemplation and cognition. Expressive form is composed of tensions and their resolution; balance and unbalance; and rhythms that correspond to the tensions, balance, and rhythms of our somatic, mental, and emotional life.
functions. Langer (1957) contends that art works are experienced as objective because of the correspondence between our life functions and expressive form:

But this image, though it is a created apparition, a pure appearance, is objective; it seems to be charged with feeling because its form expresses the very nature of feeling. Therefore, it is an objectification of subjective life, and so is every other work of art. (p. 9)

The complexity of expressive forms results from the fact that form is not abstractable from the works that exhibit them; while the form is more than the material elements of the work of art, the material aspects create the form.

Burke (1968) articulates a theory of form for literature that also may be applied to visual images; it explores how effects are produced. Burke defines form as "an arousing and fulfillment of desires" (p. 124), with a work both creating an appetite in its audience and providing satisfaction for that appetite. The form of the work, then, becomes its own appeal: the "form is the appeal" (p. 138). In Burke's conception, form is also the organizing principle of the work, and he identifies three aspects of form that work in this way: progressive form, repetitive form, and conventional form. Form is also a way to experience the work, Burke contends; "there are no forms of art which are not forms of experience outside of art" (p. 143). Burke's notion of form, then, suggests
that the organization of physical data in visual art images constitutes both an appeal to audiences and evokes certain responses in them.

Still other scholars have developed theories that explicate the processes by which certain physical features of work of art come to have meaning. In his essay on the ways that certain architectural works symbolize or come to have meaning attributed to them, Goodman (1992) contends that viewers may read buildings through a "vocabulary of reference" that includes four terms (p. 369): (1) Denotation, which includes naming, prediction, narration, description, exposition, portrayal, and pictorial representation; (2) Exemplification, a reference to structure such as columns, beams, and planes that literally or metaphorically allude to certain properties or qualities associated with the structure; (3) Expression, the ascription of emotions or ideas; and (4) Mediated reference, the use of referential links or chains for more complicated ideas. Buildings that use mediated reference may depict other forms in order to refer to the properties with which they are associated.

Goodman acknowledges that buildings may come to have meanings because of their functions or usage rather than because of their physical characteristics, but he insists on staying grounded in a work's physical characteristics.
--in assertions that the material aspects of a work define and constrain interpretations--arguing that "to mean in such a way is not thereby to function as an architectural work" (p. 373). Although Goodman's notions of a "vocabulary of reference" seem to imply a theory centered on viewers (in fact, he does have a theory of viewers that will be dealt with in the next section), his insistence on foregrounding the physical characteristics of the building in this study situates his ideas within an object-centered focus.

Foss (1993) asserts that the physical data of images are central to the construction of their appeal. Foss contends that viewers are attracted to and interested in images in which a technical novelty--"some dimension of the form, structure, or construction technique of the image" that "stands out as exceptional or extraordinary" --violates viewers' expectations and engages them in constructing a new context in which to interpret the image (p. 9). Foss also contends that viewers participate in the construction of their responses to the physical characteristics of visual images. In an earlier study, Foss (1988) explains that while the viewer has the primary role in the establishment of meaning for a work of art, "a viewer's interpretation is limited by the actual object itself"; the work's "solid physical presence makes
possible the work's aesthetic and rhetorical effects" and "renders one rhetorical interpretation more likely to occur than another" (p. 12).

Some scholars assert that titles constitute physical data that play an important role in the assigning of meaning and in the construction of responses to works of art. Berger (1972) notes, for example, that paintings and other works are often accompanied by words or titles and that when this occurs, the image often fails to maintain its own authority and, instead, becomes the illustration of the text:

It is hard to define exactly how the words have changed the image but undoubtedly they have. . . . The meaning of an image is changed according to what one sees immediately beside it or what comes immediately after it. Such authority as it retains, is distributed over the whole context in which it appears. (p. 29)

Grombrich (1960) concurs that titles and other adjacent text influence responses to works of art. He asserts, in fact, that a caption or title is often necessary for a viewer to ascertain the "correct" meaning of a work of art. For Berger, titles change art images by overriding the nondiscursive elements; for Grombrich, the nondiscursive cannot stand alone as a determinant of culturally significant meaning.
For some scholars, then, the interpretation of visual and art images is rooted in analysis of the physical data of the image. An object-centered perspective provides several pieces of information relevant to understanding a rhetorical response to works of art. Scholars are in agreement that the physical data of visual art play important roles in cultivating the likelihood of particular responses and in limiting the potential interpretations available to viewers for any specific work of art. At issue in this perspective are the processes by which the physical data operate in the construction of responses. Several scholars foreground the identification of and attribution of meaning to individual elements as instrumental, while others assert that overall form is the only significant determinant of response. Contest over the language-like properties of the physical data of visual images also is paramount as an issue. Notions of the effects of time/immediacy and appeal, while not addressed by all scholars, also are at issue.

Of particular use in understanding the object-related aspects of the process of constructing a rhetorical response for my analysis are the notions of a semiotics of visual images--theorizing visual components as units organized through the use of syntactical rules--and the idea that the significance of the whole (the form of a
work of art) is dependent on the significance of the material parts. Ideas of the processes by which these elements work--such as those presented in the models by Kanengieter, Degge, Feinstein, and Goodman--and the notions of appeal as hypothesized by Foss and Burke also seem particularly pertinent to the development of an explanation of the nature of responses from an object-centered perspective. They provide means to get at the meanings of symbols and provide descriptions of processes by which some of the data can come to mean something--to have a rhetorical effect.

**Audience-Centered Theories**

The largest number of studies with information relevant to viewers' rhetorical responses to visual art are those with an audience-centered focus. This perspective situates the viewer as the dominant factor in the construction of meaning and response to art. Research foregrounding audiences and viewers includes theories emphasizing the psychology of perception, qualities inherent in viewers, shared societal or cultural meanings, audience-response concerns, and theories of spectatorship. I have organized the notions within this perspective into four categories: those concerned with qualities inherent in the viewer, those asserting culturally shared visual codes and meanings, those asserting both systems of
representation and ways of seeing are learned and culturally determined, and those concerned with the locus of difference in rhetorical responses.

Many scholars of psychology note the importance of understanding how the eye works in coming to an understanding of perception. Sekuler and Blake (1985), for example, argue that knowledge of the eye's anatomy is important because the physical structure of the eye influences how and what is seen. The eye is regarded as an optical instrument that senses light waves emitted by electromagnetic radiation and relays visual information in the form of neural impulses to the brain. Sight, these scholars believe, actually occurs in the brain.

Various theories have been proposed to explain how the process of perception is accomplished; the most popular are the structuralist and Gestalt theories. Structuralist theories are based on the notion that "complex mental processes--ideas and perceptions--are created by combining fundamental components"; in other words, "simple sensations constitute the building blocks of perceived form" (Sekuler & Blake, 1985, p. 139). Gestalt psychologists, however, maintain that "overall structure or pattern is the major determinant of form perception" (Sekuler & Blake, 1985, p. 140). Gestalt theories of perception are based on three assumptions: (1) The
tendency to group or integrate fragmentary impressions—
even vague pieces of information—into organized,
meaningful patterns; (2) the instability of perception—
what happens in the brain may change and fluctuate for a
variety of reasons even though the information received
remains stable; and (3) the eyes are more sensitive to
edges and changes. While structural theories have fallen
from favor and neither school of theories has been proven
conclusively, Gestalt principles of organization are used
by many scholars to explain perception.

Several scholars (Wertheimer 1923/1958; Hochberg,
1971; Sekuler and Blake, 1985) categorize the properties
of vision according to five Gestalt principles of
organization. The first principle is the principle of
proximity—objects that are near one another tend to be
perceived together as a one unit. The principle of
similarity—the second principle—is an organizational
tendency for stimuli presented together (those similar in
lightness, size, or spatial orientation) to be grouped
together as a perceptual unit. A third principle of
Gestalt organization is the principle of closure—the
tendency to close small breaks or gaps in figures to
complete them and to unite boundaries of figures that are
close to each other. Figure-ground perception, another
Gestalt principle, is the "tendency to see parts of a
scene as solid, well-defined objects (the figure) standing out against a less distinct background (the ground)" (Sekuler and Blake, 1985, p. 144). A final property of perception that Sekuler and Blake (1985) note is that of size constancy—the tendency to realize that size changes due to distance, and objects are perceived as the same size even though they may appear as smaller when far away.

Arnheim (1974) also articulates a psychology of perception derived from Gestalt theory, arguing that "a whole cannot be attained by the accretion of isolated parts" (p. 5). Arnheim posits that we see objects and visual elements in relationships, not alone; vision is not a mechanical recording of elements but apprehension of patterns within total visual fields. This means, Arnheim argues, that we see perceptual categories before we see particular objects; we see "doggishness," for example, before we recognize a particular dog (p. 45). Arnheim also suggests that every visual experience is embedded in a context of time and space—what a person sees is based on what was seen in the past—and that the greater the relevance or meaning an object has for us the easier its recognition.

Other scholars are concerned with the psychology of color perception. Work by Albers (1963), for example, studies the interaction of color and perception from a
Gestalt perspective. Albers argues that color is almost never seen as it is physically due to interaction with other elements in the visual field; in visual perception, there is a discrepancy between physical fact and psychic fact. Our perception of color changes, Arnheim notes, for example, when a tone is heard simultaneously with the viewing of a color.

Some scholars study the effects of color perception. Sekuler and Blake (1985), for example, note that color affects moods, productivity, discrimination between objects, and perception of distance and can alter the taste of food. Murray and Deabler (1957) maintain that colors have a general affective meaning for individuals within a culture. Blue and green, for example, are associated with feelings of security, calmness, and tenderness, while red connotes excitement, cheerfulness, defiance, and power. Such associations are learned, not inborn, as Yaffe (1972) points out; color associations and preferences are learned and consistent within groups of people. Yaffe contends that the lighter or more saturated a color, the more happiness it connotes; red and blue tend to be preferred by more people than yellow. Mehrabian and Russell (1974) suggest that a general relationship exists between color brightness and pleasure. Viewers report experiencing the most pleasure from viewing blue, green,
and blue purple and the least for the green side of yellow. Mehrabian and Russell assert that pleasure in combinations of colors is a weighted sum of the pleasure response in the individual colors.

Several scholars suggest that viewers' responses to art are dependent on characteristics or processes inherent in the viewer. Among those who espouse such a view is Carlson (1992), who asserts that we know how to appreciate art objects because they are human creations, made for human purposes; thus, we know what acts of aspectation to perform regarding them. Since they are human creations, we know what is and is not a part of them, which features are for aesthetic appreciation, and how to accomplish that appreciation:

In creating a painting, we know what we make is a painting. In knowing this we know that it ends at its frame, that its colors are aesthetically important, but where it hangs is not, and that we are to look at it rather than, say, listen to it. All this is involved in what it is to be a painting. . . . Works of different particular types have different kinds of boundaries, have different foci of aesthetic significance, and perhaps most important, demand different acts of aspectation. (p. 592) Scholars who present arguments for a visual mode of thinking recognize visual cognition as a characteristic of viewers that is necessary to the construction of rhetorical responses. Arnheim (1969), for example, although more concerned with how artists and others use visual thinking to create than with reception, contends
that "visual perception is visual thinking" (p. 14), and
he posits that the cognitive processes called thinking are
"not above and beyond perception but the essential
ingredients of perception itself" (p. 14).

Arnheim explains visual processing as occurring in
two ways. The first is an intuitive mode whereby the
viewer takes cognizance of the image all at once simply by
looking at it. In this mode, all of the properties of the
image--its size, shape, and color, for example--are
projected by means of the eyes onto the brain field of the
visual cortex. In the intuitive mode, what the viewer
sees in the picture is "already the outcome of an
organizational process" (p. 177). The second way is an
intellectual mode in which the viewer makes a conscious
analysis of each element of the image independently.
Arnheim suggests that the viewer sacrifices the full
context of the image in order to accomplish visual
processing in this mode.

Work by Langer (1953, 1957) provides another example
of a theory that proposes interpretation and understanding
of art works as dependent on qualities and characteristics
possessed by viewers. Closely related to her notions of
form, Langer's (1957) ideas of audience response begin
with the notion that art, a symbolic process with no
discursive referent, picks up where language leaves off
and relies on a "deeply intuitive process in the human brain" (p. 60). She states, "I do believe, with many aestheticians and artists, that artistic perception is intuitive, a matter of direct insight and not a product of discursive thinking . . ." (p. 61). In Langer's conception, then, each art object is unique and untranslatable and is comprehended as a whole by a single act of intuition; critical discourse does not mediate its reception.

For Langer, the burden of the process of interpretation and response to art rests on the viewer, who must have the intuitive capacity to grasp the work. She argues that this intuitive capacity cannot be taught, may be hindered by inhibiting prejudices, and may be heightened through experience. Her conception is of an elite audience; while everyone may have this intuition to some degree, only a specific few have the ability to respond to works of art.

Other scholars hold that responses to works of art are dependent on the skills of the viewer. Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) work on discerning the structure of and optimizing the aesthetic experience, for example, contends that increasing the quality of viewers' aesthetic experiences requires controlling the conditions of viewing and an investment in training and sharpening the skills of the
viewer. Although more concerned with art professionals, such as curators, educators, art critics, and museum administrators and with aesthetic experiences—the feeling of "awe and exhilaration people feel upon seeing or hearing something beautiful" (p. 5)—Csikszentmihalyi's work has implications for understanding the viewing experience and thus the construction of rhetorical responses in lay viewers. Csikszentmihalyi asserts that his studies reveal that viewers interact with and experience works of art through four modes:

- a perceptual response, which concentrated on elements such as balance, form and harmony; an emotional response, which emphasized reactions to the emotional content of the work, and personal associations; an intellectual response, which focused on theoretical and art historical questions, and finally what we characterized as the communicative response, wherein there was a desire to relate to the artist, or to his or her time, or to his or her culture, through the mediation of the work of art. (p. 28)

Each category of response is intended to describe a variety of discrete but related types of viewing that were the most commonly described by the respondents in Csikszentmihalyi's study.

Another type of audience-centered theory is grounded in a concern for meanings shared among viewers. Scholars articulating this perspective suggest that viewers use or are aware of socially constructed meanings or codes for art images and that these shared meanings or codes are instrumental in influencing viewers' responses. Reid's
use of cluster analysis to discover the meaning of a painting by Hieronymous Bosch and to demonstrate the method's applicability to visual images, for example, concludes by suggesting that shared understandings between the artist and viewer for the meanings of the physical elements are key to the construction of viewers' interpretations and evaluations of images: "The extent to which the visual communicator and viewer have similar interpretations is based on the extent of their shared knowledge and understanding of the elements" (p. 52).

Wood is representative of scholars who articulate perspectives about audience-centered theories of response concerned with cultural codes. Codes are collections of rules or systems of conventions that facilitate making sense of signs. Wood (1985) claims that cultural concepts about communication--such as the correct times for communication, socially appropriate locations for presenting or perceiving communication, the social rules of who may or may not be present or perceive artistic forms, and the setting in which the work is presented--significantly affect and influence viewers' perceptions and attribution of meaning. Wood believes that works of art are "part of extremely complex communication networks
and that definition and appreciation are affected by social concepts and perceptual processes that are only marginally derived from sensory contact" (p. 24).

Panofsky (1955), too, argues that cultural codes are the key to understanding visual art images. Panofsky is credited with developing the science of iconography and iconology as ways of classifying and understanding the relations between the common signs used as conventions of visual representation in art works. Panofsky asserts that visual representations can be reduced to three categories of subject matter, each representative of a different level of meaning. Primary or natural subject matter—configurations of line, color, and shape that represent natural objects such as human beings, animals, plants, houses, and tools—carries natural or primary meanings. Secondary or conventional subject matter—comprised of artistic motifs, themes, or concepts—is the secondary carrier of meaning. The third level is intrinsic meaning or content, described by Panofsky as the underlying attitudes of a nation, time period, class, or religious or philosophical persuasion. Panofsky claims that the process of interpreting these three layers and attributing meaning to an image based on them requires a code common to both artist and viewer; he contends the art work is indecipherable and meaningless without access to the code.
Panofsky provides a model of interpretation that focuses attention on the equipment used for interpretation—such as practical experience, knowledge of literary sources, and synthetic intuition.

Other scholars find cultural codes an integral part of visual symbol systems that are both arbitrary and polysemic. Audigier (1991) uses a semiotic method to discover how non-linguistic sign systems function as communication. She asserts that the image is a complex structure of multiple signs—polysemic and ambiguous—and that cultural codes play an important role in reading the image. She describes the reading process as dependent on the viewer's discovery of a system by which to make sense of the image. First, the viewer scans the image, trying to discover among the undifferentiated stimuli elements that will refer to a past experience or to some more or less collective knowledge. Next, the viewer explores the recognized signs for suggested values. Through the discovery of a system beyond the obvious material signs, the viewer is able to perceive the values and construct meaning for the image.

Questions of reality and natural referents concern other scholars interested in cultural codes. Theories of codes distinguish between arbitrary referents and natural referents; arbitrary referents are grounded in the notion
that any image can be a sign for anything of which those who participate in the code choose it to be a sign, while natural referents operate on the idea that certain signs naturally signify specific objects in a known reality because of shared characteristics. An example of a sign with a natural referent might be a so-called realistic painting of a dog; the argument is that the conventions used in such a painting mimic the actual physical appearance of the dog. Another example is a photograph, which is argued to have captured the visual reality of an object. Questioning the division between the two kinds of signs brings into play larger questions related to the influence of cultural conventions on viewers' perceptions of reality, objectivity, and pictorial representation.

Grombrich (1960, 1972) holds that visual representations, while they may be shared within a culture, vary considerably across cultures. He (1982) argues that the very understanding of pictorial representation differs from culture to culture; someone who never experienced a specific pictorial style—photography, for example—may not be able to make sense of it. Viewers make sense of images by using a stock of images and pictorial styles in their minds gleaned from experience and learning. Grombrich (1972) posits that what a picture means to the viewer is strongly dependent
on the viewer's past experience and knowledge. For Grombrich, then, a visual image is not a mere representation of reality but an arbitrary cultural "symbolic system" (p. 86).

Goodman (1976) also speculates about theories of cultural codes and viewers' understanding of pictorial representation. He contends that all images are arbitrary symbol systems, and he refutes the natural and cultural differences used in semiotics, whereby signs have natural or arbitrary referents. Goodman argues that realism itself is a result of a viewer's cultural conditioning, not an image's relationship to or appearance of reality. He believes that the world is always a construction and that realistic imagery, such as that offered by photographs or realist paintings, constitutes conventionalized ways of seeing; we still have to learn how to read what is depicted. He contends that almost anything can serve as a picture of anything else if a culture so wills it. Goodman contends that different sorts of visual images—charts and maps, for example, as opposed to art images—use different systems. Audiences know how to read images by determining what system is in effect, and they know how to read various systems by habit and convention.
Studies exploring visual literacy contribute additional information concerning the audience's role in the construction of rhetorical responses to works of art. Such work, grounded in the assumption that visual representations differ considerably from their real-life appearances, investigates whether viewers need prior experience to understand visual images. Messaris (1987, 1991, 1994) exemplifies this area of inquiry with an exploration of the effects of increased exposure and heightened awareness of the workings of visual media on viewer comprehension and aesthetic appreciation of visual images. Messaris' data include both still images--paintings, advertising images, and photographs--and film and televisual images. Messaris (1987) identifies three central components of visual literacy: analogical thinking, the ability to perceive a formal analogy between a visual device and some aspect of everyday experience; spatial intelligence, the ability to derive a coherent sense of a three-dimensional scene out of a limited number of partial views of that scene; and sensitivity to contextual information in the interpretation of nonverbal behavior.

Although Messaris' conception of a literacy of visual images situates his studies in an audience-centered approach, his findings about responses to images often
involve object-centered dimensions. Messaris asserts, for example, that many of the informational cues of which people make use in their perception of physical and social reality are present in visual images and that viewers depend on these cues in attributing meaning to images. He also concludes that familiarity with images does not result in the "broader cognitive advantages analogous to those that result from learning a language" (p. 165). In other words, viewers do not acquire a "system of conceptual categories or a set of analytical operators for ordering those categories" (p. 165). Finally, he suggests that knowledge and awareness about the mechanisms of visual images are not necessary for their understanding but do lead to increased conscious appreciation of their artistry by viewers.

Theories of audience response to literature and television constitute another area of literature relevant to lay viewers' rhetorical responses to visual art. Work by Barthes (1974) is central to questions of representation, subject position, and ideology in visual images. Although S/Z (Barthes, 1974) deals with literature, the model Barthes develops in it for the analysis of subject effect is useful in understanding how any text organizes meaning and addresses its readers in particular ways. Barthes proposes five codes by which to
organize the reading of a text, refusing to privilege one
over the others as a determinant of meaning, and instead
using them to remain attentive to how the interplay of
different discourses may form the text. Through the use
of these codes, Barthes proposes a method of analysis by
which readers can discover possibilities for multiple,
shifting, and sometimes contradictory meanings.

Several other scholars suggest that the determination
of meaning occurs as an articulation between the
individual reader and the text. Differences in meaning
attribution are explained as differences in the viewer or
the viewer's situation. Eco's (1965) model for semiotic
inquiry into the televisual message is illustrative.
Interested in aberrant decodings of televisual messages,
Eco questions whether different individuals in different
environments actually receive the same message or
different ones. He posits that the sender and addressee,
systems of signs and their correlations, and the context
of the communication need to be recognized as determinants
of meaning.

Social position also has been theorized as a
determinant of meaning in decoding visual images. Hall
(1980), for example, investigates the correlation between
a text's ideology and the procedures and mechanisms by
which viewers interpret or decode that ideology based on
their own social positions. Hall proposes that three decoding strategies are available to audiences to make sense of cultural texts: (1) the dominant reading, in which the audience accepts the ideology; (2) the negotiated reading, in which the ideological stance of the image is adjusted to the social conditions of the audience; and (3) the oppositional reading, in which the audience takes a stance in total opposition to the ideology presented.

Similarly, Morely (1980, 1981) relates variations in television viewers' decodings to differing cultural factors such as socio-economic position, educational level, cultural or interpretive competencies, and position within various social discourses. He concludes that the text does not construct or determine the reader; rather, contexts for viewers determine which referential potentialities are influential in any given decoding situation. Viewers are always connected to multiple discourses, and these discourses are always involved in the relationship between the viewer and the text.

Radway's (1984) study, _Reading the Romance_, an analysis of romance novels and a small group of women who read them, also raises issues pertinent to the determination of meaning as an articulation between the individual reader and the text. Radway posits that
reading is an active process controlled partially by the readers themselves who resist, alter, and reappropriate materials designed elsewhere for their purchase. In her study, Radway provides a model of how researchers may push evidence of a sample audience against that of the text, bringing into sharp focus the rub between the ideal viewer, as positioned by the text, and the real reader, a more active agent.

Shields (1990) argues that both ways of seeing and ways of looking affect viewers' responses to visual images. Shields defines ways of seeing as "culturally imbued codes which are consistent across not only advertising images but other visual images as well such as oil painting and portraiture"; ways of looking refers to "the address of the image to its spectator" (p. 26). Shields contends that the relationship between the two processes must be explored to deconstruct viewers' responses.

Theories of spectatorship provide other insights regarding lay viewers' rhetorical responses to visual images. Mayne's (1993) overview of the history, theoretical background, and contemporary paradoxes of spectatorship theory provides several bases from which to explore the nature of lay viewers' rhetorical responses to visual art images. One such base is the notion that the
term *spectatorship* refers not just to the acts of watching and listening or to identifying with the characters on the screen but also to the various values with which film viewing is invested. Mayne notes that the cinema functions as a powerful form of pleasure; entertainment; socialization; and a channel for cultural myths of gender, class, and private and public life. As such, it acculturates individuals into the structures of the culture's dominant ideology.

Another potentially useful theme to explore in the spectatorship literature concerns its potential to mediate the unresolved tension between the ideal spectator as constructed by the text and the real spectator. Some models of spectatorship posit an ideal spectator position that posit certain requirements the viewer has to fulfill in order to make sense of the film and participate in its pleasures, while more contemporary notions challenge the ideal position as marginalizing the real viewer. Recent theories contend that the two positions are not so easily separated or explained. Mayne (1993), for example, posits that "spectatorship occurs at precisely those spaces where subjects' and viewers' rub against each other" (p. 37). Mayne argues that to locate spectatorship at the tension
between the two terms is to recognize the need to negotiate and problematize competing yet simultaneous claims about subject positions and real viewers.

A third potentially useful notion derived from the literature on spectatorship is that of the gendered spectator as discussed by Pribram (1988). Recent film studies question film pleasure and spectatorship from a feminist perspective. Feminist film theorists suggest that women hold a cultural and historical position that is absent from or marginalized in dominant forms. Cinema, these scholars contend, incorporates the male gaze, leaving women with no active spectatorial position. As Pribram notes, more recent studies involve "rereading women's cultural positioning as well as a reworking of the theoretical approaches by which we read" (p. 5). Pribram suggests a need for future studies that investigate our differences--economic, political, racial, as well as gender--as spectators.

Many scholars posit an audience-centered approach as instrumental to unlocking the nature and function of responses to visual images. Several notions are in contest within this perspective. A primary issue is whether rhetorical responses to visual art are dependent on individual human physiology and psychology or are the result of culturally determined and learned rules and
systems of conventions. Still at issue--a question implicit in Arnheim's notion of visual cognition--is the relationship between visual communication and language. If humans engage naturally in a visual thinking, is that thinking different from or mediated by language? In question, too, are the factors instrumental in individual differences among viewers and the degree of participation by viewers in creating meaning from visual works of art. While most scholars agree that viewers "bring themselves" to interpretations of works of art, disagreement still abounds over exactly what is brought and to what degree it influences individual readings and interpretations.

The notions of a visual cognition and visual communication as a discursive process similar to verbal language constitute hypotheses about the process of constructing rhetorical responses to visual works of art from a lay position. Variables suggested as important are conventions of seeing and looking and differences in viewers and viewers' situations that account for shifting and multiple readings of works of art.

**Performance-Centered Theories**

Another potentially useful perspective from which to study viewers' rhetorical responses to visual works of art is that of performance. A performance perspective examines publicly accessible behavior such as rituals,
myths, jokes, ceremonies, contests, and games to discover how people reflect or theorize about themselves. Foss, Foss, and Trapp (1991) define performance as the "act of bringing to completion a sense of reality--of bringing out the significance or meaning of some cultural form" (p. 329). I am using performance in this study to mean a performance on the part of the viewer rather than on the part of the artist or creator of the artifact. The use to which a work of art is put and actions performed by viewers in the course of or as a result of viewing a work of art constitute the sorts of things that could be considered performance from this perspective.

I acknowledge that my goal in this study is somewhat different from that of traditional performance-based analyses, which are used to discover information about cultures and how the people who constitute them theorize about themselves. I suggest, however, that the social function of an art image, the use to which it is put, and the performative activation of the image by viewers all may provide clues to how rhetorical responses are constructed to visual art images as well as provide information about the culture and its members. In this perspective, I begin by exploring assumptions, then provide examples of units of meaning, and end with samples of responses that have been analyzed in this way.
Work by communication scholar Dwight Conquergood (1986) exemplifies studies examining performative practices. By using performative expressions as a unit of analysis for a study of the textile art of Hmong refugee women, Conquergood builds on the work of anthropologist Victor Turner, who sees humankind as using multiple genres of cultural performance to induce self-awareness and self-knowledge and to mobilize core beliefs and values. In this study, Conquergood's emphasis is on the intercultural exchange between the Hmong women and the Americans who buy their art work, but in his later studies of Chicago street gangs, Conquergood (1992) uses performative analysis to uncover meanings of and responses to gang graffiti. Conquergood's studies suggest that a performance perspective may be useful in discovering the role the actions and discourse that surround works of art might have in viewers' rhetorical responses to works of visual art.

Performers-audience relations and comparisons of ideological status and social function are used by Ward (1994) in a performance-approach study of an *ibeji*—"a hand-carved wooden figure of a stylized human form from the Yoruba tradition of West Africa"--and an American Barbie doll--"the commodified object *par excellence*" (p. 271). Ward's study has implications for work concerned
with rhetorical responses to visual art images in that she suggests that viewers or audiences construct and express meaning for objects through performative actions: "what distinguishes these two objects [the *ibeji* and the Barbie doll] is how meaning is made from them by their respective societies as they are performatively activated" (p. 271). Finally, she suggests, echoing ideas of scholars who study spectatorship, that analysis of performative responses may shed light on the tension between imaginary audiences--"the absent audience that film makers imagine for their movies, that authors writing in silence imagine for their texts, that musicians rehearsing in an empty hall imagine for their performances"--and unimaginary or real audiences (p. 279).

Scholars in areas other than performance studies also articulate findings that support a performance approach to research focused on responses to visual art. Freeberg's work (1989), which chronicles viewers' behavioral responses to visual art, for example, is replete with examples of performative expressions by lay viewers who are strongly affected by art images. For Freeberg, the term *response* refers to "the symptoms of the relationship between the viewer and the image," and his studies classify such symptoms or behavior into categories (p. xxii). Although Freeberg does not attempt to discover or
explain the factors involved in viewers' responses or how those factors work, his work suggests that the performative aspect of a viewer's relationship with an art object or image is crucial to the meaning the viewer constructs for the image or object.

Dickie (1969), in his essay defining art, also argues that the ways individuals or cultures treat or use art give it meaning for us as art. Dickie contends that the social function and practices connected with an object determine its meaning. We confer a specific status upon an object by the uses to which we put it. When the artist Duchamp hung a common, porcelain urinal on the wall of an art gallery in the 1917 exhibition of the New York Society of Independent Artists and declared it to be an article of aesthetic appreciation, for example, it ceased to be a bathroom feature and became art.

A performance perspective offers to an understanding of the rhetorical response to art the notion that individuals both construct and exhibit the meaning certain objects have for them through any performative actions in which they engage that involve that object. How an object is used indicates a response to that object, and expressive actions involving an object influence that same response.
I have attempted, in this literature review, to identify the major thematic perspectives applied to the study of visual images and to identify relevant information that may provide insights into rhetorical responses to visual art from a lay position. Although many studies explore meaning and aesthetics in the arts, comprehensive inquiries addressing responses from a lay position do not exist. Clearly, the issues concerning how responses to visual images are constructed are not resolved, and agreement does not exist on how visual images function to create particular responses. To gain a more complete understanding of the construction of rhetorical responses to works of art from lay positions, I will extend the inquiry begun in these studies, hoping to discover more information about the components and factors that affect viewers' responses to art. My study will be one small step in the process to try to begin to explore this process in a somewhat systematic way from a rhetorical perspective, focused on the process of meaning attribution. I hope the results of my study will add greater clarity to the notions and processes described in the literature review and will allow for a sorting out and evaluation of those notions and processes.
Limitations

My study is limited in several ways. Clearly, my data constitute one limitation. In examining only one artifact, the scope of my study is narrow, and I may miss processes involved in rhetorical responses that are constructed to other visual images. Also, I recognize that I am not able to generalize to all visual images because the image I am studying is but one type among many. The nature of visual images is such that categories or types are inexhaustible; therefore, I cannot presume that my findings will be applicable to all rhetorical responses to all visual images. My study is also limited by the theoretical material I am reviewing. The material is vast, diverse, and sometimes seems incapable of being tamed. I do not aim to settle all theoretical issues having to do with response. Rather, I hope to take an initial step in providing a research framework for and ideas about the processes included in the rhetorical construction of visual images.

Structure of the Study

This study is presented in six chapters. Chapter One includes an introduction and statement of the problem, description of the method, literature review, and the limitations of the study. In Chapter Two, I present background and historical information about Brushstrokes
In chapters Three, Four, and Five, I present different readings of *Brushstrokes in Flight* and an analysis that suggests the vehicles that allow a particular rhetorical response to be constructed. Finally, in Chapter Six, I synthesize the findings in the three different readings and attempt to construct a theoretical umbrella to unite them, offering a coherent explanation for the construction of rhetorical responses to visual works of art.
CHAPTER II
THE HISTORY OF BRUSHSTROKES IN FLIGHT

In 1982, Columbus, Ohio, commissioned Roy Lichtenstein, a celebrated pop artist, to create a sculpture for the city. Although art controversies often are in the news, arguments and debates surrounding this work, Brushstrokes in Flight, are still being debated 11 years after its debut. The discussion about Brushstrokes in Flight ranges from arguments about its placement, monetary value, ownership, and suitability to represent the city to its value and definition as art. In this chapter, I present a history of Brushstrokes in Flight and a chronology of the controversy with which it has been surrounded.

The history of Brushstrokes in Flight began on August 17, 1982, when the Civic Art Advisory Committee of Columbus, Ohio, announced that three artists had won a competition to create sculptures specifically for courtyard sites at Port Columbus, the city's airport. The works--to be paid for from airport bond money at a total cost of $200,000--included Athena Tacha's Crossings and
Stuart J. Fink's *Observation*, commissioned for $25,000 each, and Roy Lichtenstein's *Brushstrokes in Flight*, commissioned for $150,000. *Brushstrokes* is a yellow, blue, red, and black enameled aluminum sculpture that weighs two tons and stands 25 feet tall. One of the largest sculptures Lichtenstein has created, it is composed of four long panels--three vertical and one horizontal--outlined with thick black lines. The width of the sculpture is narrow in comparison to its height, giving it a flat, cut-out look.

*Brushstrokes in Flight* was chosen by the committee, in part, because Lichtenstein is an alumnus of Ohio State University; in the 1940s, he received a bachelor's and a master's in fine arts from the University and taught classes in the art department there until 1951. The brushstrokes theme has been in his work since 1976, when he "borrowed" the idea from the work of DeKooning, an artist of the expressionist school who used brushstrokes as the subject of his paintings.

The sculpture was manufactured at the Tallix foundry in Peekskill, New York, where planning for and fabrication of the work took several months. Full-size stencils of each shape were used to cut and form thin sheets of 4-by-12 foot aluminum into the pieces that comprise the sculpture; a hydraulic metal-bender then formed the
curvatures within the "brushstrokes." The various shapes were fitted together over an armature or skeletal base and then welded to one another, with each of the hundreds of welds individually sanded. Following the sanding and buffing of the entire work to an even finish, the sculpture was spray painted with primer and then painted with its final bright colors; every bit of the surface is covered with paint.

Wrapped in green canvas and transported in a flatbed truck, Brushstrokes arrived in Columbus on March 14, 1984, and was placed in its site—a small courtyard between the short-term parking garage and the terminal building—that same day. It was dedicated on May 29, 1984, along with the other two commissioned works. Local papers carried announcements of the dedication along with stories about Lichtenstein and the fabrication of Brushstrokes.

Two days later, the sculptures received their first review from Dick Campbell (1984), editor of the Columbus Citizen Journal:

The good news is that they are hard to find. The three pieces are buried in what have euphemistically been described as courtyards. More honestly, they are obscure grassy plots where such pieces as "Observations," and "Crossings" can do no serious damage. The third and major piece is a pip and I like it. (p. 6A)

Crossings and Observation, although the first to receive public criticism, did not attract much public interest and
eventually were dismantled and moved to other sites—they are no longer at the airport.

As Campbell (1984) noted in his early review, there was little initial audience reaction to Brushstrokes—the sculpture was in an obscure location, and the work simply was not noticed:

I positioned my self in the airport lobby so I could watch people near the window overlooking Brushstrokes. Everybody I saw overlooked Brushstrokes. Nobody paid it a bit of attention. (p. 6A)

Art critic Charlotte Curtis, writing for the New York Times, said of the local reaction to the work, "Mostly the silence was deafening" (Curtis, 1985, p. 23).

In January, 1985, two things happened that brought Brushstrokes to the attention of the general public and heightened its visibility. The primary event bringing the sculpture to the public's attention was the Central Ohio Marketing Council's decision to promote the use of Brushstrokes as a logo, along with the slogan, "Discover Columbus," in marketing efforts by local businesses and organizations. The Council—16 local business and civic leaders—was formed in August, 1984, to coordinate the marketing efforts of the city, county, Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Greater Columbus Convention and Visitors Bureau. They had budgeted $250,000 for a program designed to enhance the city's image based on research by Ohio State University business marketing
professors. A member of the marketing council quoted anonymously at a press conference said, "Brushstrokes in Flight is meant to be to Columbus as the (Golden Gate) bridge is to San Francisco and the apple is to New York" (Rakowsky, 1985, p. 1).

A second event also drew attention to Brushstrokes. The Civic Art Advisory Committee, which had commissioned the work, became concerned that the work was not being noticed and organized a task force to study the advisability of moving the sculpture. The Committee members suggested the work was being neglected by the public because it was difficult to see in its location on the airport grounds. The location was "inconspicuous," they claimed, and the sculpture was hidden from view except through a second-story terminal window (Rakowsky, 1985, p. 1). Breiner (1985), a Columbus Dispatch reporter, summarized the problems encountered in trying to view the sculpture:

If you happen to be in the ticketing area, which overlooks the courtyard and sculpture, plants screen one of the windows. Blinds are sometimes closed to shut out the sinking sun in the late afternoon. Only part of the sculpture can be seen by motorists in the parking garage or the pickup and drop off areas. The best view is in the courtyard itself, which is not on a well-traveled path. (p. 1D)

Four new locations on the airport grounds eventually were proposed for the work. City officials, however, rejected suggestions to move the sculpture, citing fears that it
would block walkways and be vulnerable to vandalism in any of the new locations. Increased lighting and signs were proposed as an alternative to draw more attention to *Brushstrokes*.

The public became aware of the sculpture when newspapers began detailing these events as part of their coverage of city news. The controversy began when local newspapers printed a few letters to the editor from individuals who criticized the work and a few interviews with spokespersons for the Committee and the Council defending the work. One letter to the editor of the *Columbus Dispatch*, for example, described the work as "a piece of junk," (Dirk, 1985, p. 7), while another characterized the work as "a unique work, a colorful sculpture" (Nance, 1994).

In May of 1985, a new location for the art was chosen and approved--a landscaped area away from all buildings at the edge of the long-term parking lot. Eleven local businesses volunteered help with the $75,000 worth of materials and labor needed to move the sculpture. That same month, the Council began its marketing program, placing photographs and drawings of the work on marketing materials such as bumper stickers, cups, and stationary and commissioning signs and billboards urging everyone to see the sculpture. In June, 1985, the work was
rededicated at its new location at the edge of the long-
term parking lot. The new location allowed the work to be
seen in its entirety but only by those persons using the
long-term lot or those who parked near the exterior wall
of the parking building.

The work's move provoked another flurry of letters and
media-sponsored discussions in the press. The majority of
the letters were irate in tone and ridiculed the work. In
response, the newspapers invited and published editorials
about the work, and local radio and television shows
hosted interviews with members of both the Committee and
the Council to explain and defend the work. Arguments
centered around whether the work should be considered art,
whether it was worth what was paid for it, what it meant,
and whether it was an appropriate image to represent the
city.

In May, 1988, after several years of controversy,
the mayor of Columbus, Dana Rinehart, proposed giving the
sculpture to Genoa, Italy, claiming "nobody here likes it,
so let's get rid of it" (Johnson, 1988, p. 1A). He
proposed Genoa as the city to receive the sculpture as a
way to commemorate the 500th anniversary of Columbus'
arrival in the new world and as a way to thank the
Italians for their 1955 gift of the statue of Christopher
Columbus that stands in front of Columbus' city hall.
Local papers reported that "Genoa officials appeared pleased but not overly enthusiastic about the gift" (Johnson, 1988, p.1), and the city council, members of the two committees, and several local businesspersons passionately objected.

As the news media covered these debates, the controversy was recharged, resulting in more letters to the editors of local newspapers. The arguments involved few representatives from the art world but, instead, generated a variety of responses in the public. Comments ranged from: "it's kind of gross" to "it's just ugly" to "it's like a Mcdonald's advertisement" to "it's inspiring, cheerful, whimsical" (Carmen, 1988, p. 3F). Local citizens began wearing buttons with a picture of the sculpture and the words, "Don't give it away."

Two weeks later, the mayor changed his position and announced that the work would stay in Columbus. Rather than settling the dispute, the mayor's action fueled it; comments in response ranged from "the controversy is good for the city" (Cahill, 1994) to "the mayor's fuss has ruined the work" (Holderidge, 1994).

In 1991, the city gave the work to the Columbus Metropolitan Airport Authority, once again generating controversy over ownership rights and aesthetics. Controversy over the work's appeal and interpretation
continued; those in the city who supported the work demanded that the city maintain ownership; those who disliked it advocated that it be given away. A strong contingent still ridiculed the sculpture, in spite of the fact that art critics and investors, including the executive director of the Greater Columbus Arts Council, Ray Hanley, claimed it had increased in value from $150,000 to $750,000 (Johnson, 1988).

Concerned about the ravages of time and weather on the work, airport authorities hired Artglow, Inc. to restore the sculpture in 1993. Artglow worked with Lichtenstein and the Greater Columbus Arts Council at a cost of $2,800 to restore the work with sandblasting, priming, and painting. Brushstrokes remains standing at the edge of the long-term parking lot at the Port Columbus airport, although it soon may be moved. Airport manager, Christine Stern, recently announced the sculpture will be moved inside as part of a display honoring Lichtenstein and later may be moved to a site at the Wexner Center on Ohio State University's campus. "Art isn't permanent here. . . . Anything is possible," said Stern (1995, p. 1). Enveloped in controversy throughout its history, it provides an excellent case study for my effort to discover factors that affect and create diverse responses to works of art.
CHAPTER III

BRUSHSTROKES IN FLIGHT: REWRITING CREATION FROM A MASCULINE PERSPECTIVE

In this chapter, I analyze a reading of or rhetorical response to *Brushstrokes in Flight* in which the work is constructed as a rewriting of the process of creation by a male artist. In this response, the sculpture is seen as the four brushstrokes of a painter. The canvas for the brushstrokes is the sky and the surrounding landscape, and because of their large scale and position overhead, they appear to have been made by a larger-than-human force. *Brushstrokes* does not paint an interpretation of the world; rather, it paints over the world, foregrounding the process of artistic creation. This, then, is an act of creation by someone with powers that extend beyond usual human limitations: Using the innovations of technology and industry, this reading suggests, a male artist can recreate the world.

Analysis

Analysis of this reading of *Brushstrokes* reveals seven vehicles or routes that viewers are likely to take in order to construct this rhetorical response: 1) artistic
creation as the subject of the work; 2) recreation of the world; 3) a larger-than-human creator; 4) a notion of the transcendence of human limitations through technology, industry, and art; 5) movement; 6) masculine viewership; and 7) the embodiment of the viewer as creator of the brushstrokes. I suggest that a reading of Brushstrokes as the transcending of human limits and the consequent rewriting of creation by a male artist occurs through the application and interrelationship of these vehicles, which move the viewer from the data of the object to the rhetorical response. In each vehicle, signifiers are developed from data inherent in the work that evoke a signified or concept which, in turn, becomes a signifier for other signifieds or complex chains of concepts and eventually results in the attribution being discussed. **Artistic Creation as Content of Brushstrokes**

The interpretation of Brushstrokes as a male artist rewriting creation begins with the recognition that the subject of the sculpture is artistic creation. Two sub-vehicles were discovered that lead to attributions of artistic creation as the subject matter of Brushstrokes, each centered around a different primary signifier. The first sub-vehicle is grounded in viewers' recognition of the forms of the sculpture as an artist's brushstrokes,
making them the signifier. A second sub-vehicle is grounded in recognition of the object as a work of art; art, then, is the signifier for this sub-vehicle.

In the first sub-vehicle, recognition of the work of art as an artist's brushstrokes is suggested by the arrangement of the sculpture's design elements, conventions of representation, and title. The design elements of the sculpture central to recognition of the work's forms of an artist's brushstrokes are shape, line, color, and spatial orientation. The shapes--four simple, somewhat linear, flat panels--closely resemble the rectangular marks that are made by chisel-shaped artists' brushes. The sides of each panel are not straight and at right angles to the tops and bottoms of the panel but gently curve and bend, indicating the flow of a paint-laden brushstroke.

Line is a second design element that contributes to the recognition of the panels as brushstrokes. The heavy black lines delineate the brushstroke marks of the sculpture. The black line that defines the contour of each panel shapes a ragged edge similar to that left by the individual bristles of a brush stroking on paint. The black contour lines also function within the smooth interior of each panel to indicate the textures that brush bristles inscribe in thick paint. When a paint brush
spreads thick oil paint across the surface of a canvas or a wall, each paint-laden bristle leaves a mark on the surface. A brushstroke, then, is a series of lines made by individual bristles; it only appears as a wide, smooth, and uninterrupted mark as a result of an overlap of individual bristle marks. A close look at any brushstroke reveals the indentation of individual bristles as they drag across the surface with paint.

The particular arrangement of colors in the sculpture functions as a third design element that indicates that the panels are brushstrokes. The arrangement and position of the colors of the brushmarks provide the modeling or definition of surface changes within the panels. Objects in a physical reality—whether a human figure, a still-life object, or, as in the case of Brushstrokes, an artist's brushstroke marks—have three dimensions: height, width, and length. Length and height are indicated by the limits or boundaries of the shape or form, but width and depth are indicated by changes or gradations of tint—lightness or darkness—and by hue—subtle changes in one particular color, as in the portrayal of a tree with near foliage colored a vibrant green and more distant foliage colored a bluer green. In Brushstrokes, there is no change in surface that would indicate depth, and the colors of the panels lack the
subtle gradations of tint and hue that also are an indication of depth of form. Instead, indications of depth are made through the use of two different colors that provide emphasis for the textural quality of brush work on the panels' surfaces.

The spatial orientation of the panels further serves to indicate their nature as brushstrokes and is a fourth design element active in this sub-vehicle. Each brushstroke mark follows another in an order that indicates their application to the canvas. The overlap of each panel on the one above it indicates that the top mark was applied first, followed by the others in descending order. A black half-circle forming the base of the four brushstroke panels reads as the tip of the brush from which they were painted.

As a complete form, the panels seem contained in a two-dimensional plane indicative of painting—a genre of art characterized by a flat, two-dimensional nature—rather than of sculpture, which traditionally projects mass in three directions, is in the round, and does not consist only of flattened shapes. Because the work is seen as a painting instead of a sculpture, the forms tend to be read as brushstrokes. The design elements of
Brushstrokes--its shapes, lines, colors, and spatial orientation of shapes--thus can be recognized as an artist's brushstrokes.

Conventions of representation, or culturally shared ways of exemplifying or illustrating that which is considered real by a culture, function as a second way to indicate that the panels are brushstrokes. The conventions of representation used in Brushstrokes are those of commercial or advertising art. The graphic qualities usually associated with advertising art include simplicity of form; bold shapes; and flatly applied, primary colors with little variation of hue or tint; the same characteristics or qualities can be seen in Brushstrokes. The brushmark panels are flat without much three-dimensional definition; in fact, the sculpture as a whole is less than a foot wide at any spot. The work's colors are unmodulated or flatly applied primary yellows, blues, reds, and whites. The shapes are large and simply defined by thick black lines. Because they mimic the essential characteristics and visual qualities of brushstrokes, the conventions of representation suggest brushstrokes. The design elements of Brushstrokes, then, exemplify the characteristics of brushstrokes and use an easily recognized system of representation to create a quickly recognized object--an artist's brushstrokes.
The title of the sculpture, too, contributes to recognition of the subject of the work of art as brushstrokes and is the data for a third way in which Brushstrokes is recognized as an artist's brushstrokes. From information in the title, Brushstrokes in Flight, viewers can determine the major shapes of the sculpture as brushstrokes even without attention to shape, line, color, spatial orientation, and conventions of representation.

Words influence the ways in which viewers perceive the physical characteristics of works of art and attribute meaning to them. The same red canvas square, for example, means something quite different when it is titled Heart's Blood than when it is titled Sunset. Most visual images have difficulty holding their own against the influences of words and, when titles are given with art images, the images tend to become the illustration of the words (Berger, 1972). When a text or a title is appended to a work of art or a visual image, the work or image becomes part of a discursive argument that may have little or nothing to do with what the image might mean on its own (Berger, 1972). When the title Brushstrokes in Flight intrudes in viewers' perception of the work of art, they may have difficulty seeing the work as anything other than what the title implies, an artist's brushstrokes.
The sculpture's title not only identifies the shapes of the work but foregrounds what usually are merely constituent parts of a work of art as its focus. The title, **Brushstrokes in Flight**, influences viewers to look at the brushstrokes themselves as the subject of the work rather than as constituent parts of another image. Viewers who apprehend the title of the sculpture, then, tend to perceive the work as brushstrokes presented as art.

The design elements of **Brushstrokes**—the physical characteristics of shape, line, color, and spatial orientation; the conventions of representation used; and its title are the primary means by which the forms of **Brushstrokes** as an artist's brushstrokes are recognized. An artist's brushstrokes signify the act of creating a painting. Brushstrokes are known to be the constituent components of paintings; the images that paintings present are created from various kinds and types of brushstrokes manipulated into the forms of an artist's vision. In **Brushstrokes**, the means of representation are what is represented; the subject of this work of art is the manipulation of media—an artist's brushstrokes. **Brushstrokes**, rather than using the techniques of art to create a representation of the world—the usual product of art—points to or highlights the process of art itself.
As the only forms presented in *Brushstrokes*, the brushstrokes thus call to mind the purpose of their existence—the creation of other forms and ideas—and thus suggest artistic creation.

Apprehension of the forms of the sculpture as brushstrokes suggests brushstrokes presented as art and, consequently, creation as the content of the work. One sub-vehicle, then, to an attribution of artistic creation in this response to *Brushstrokes* is through the sculpture's shapes, line, color, spatial orientation, conventions of representation, and title and their common signifier—an artist's brushstrokes. From an artist's brushstrokes, the sub-vehicle proceeds to the concept of brushstrokes as a component of artistic creation, which suggests creation as the content of *Brushstrokes* (see Figure 1).

A second sub-vehicle that results in attributions of creation to *Brushstrokes* centers around the signifier of art. From data that suggest the conventions of art, the signifier of art is developed, which evokes concepts of art as a creation and culminates in the concept of artistic creation.

Certain physical characteristics of *Brushstrokes* may act as cues that suggest that the object is a work of art. The base or pedestal on which *Brushstrokes* rests is one
such cue--cultural conventions for displaying works of art include raising them on pedestals. The inscriptions of title, artist's name, dedication data, and text at the base of the work further serve to provide evidence of the "artness" of the object.

The materials and form of Brushstrokes also serve as cues that the sculpture is a work of art. As a free-standing, three-dimensional, non-utilitarian object of painted and shaped metal placed on a pedestal, Brushstrokes follows the conventions of form for the genre of art known as sculpture. The obvious organization of the sculpture's forms--evidenced by the repetition and placement of color and shape and the asymmetrical balance resulting from the spatial orientation of the panels--indicates attention to aesthetics, another indicator of art. Brushstrokes' materials--the metal comprising the panels and the enamel that colors them--are standard materials for works of art. The data of Brushstrokes' pedestal, materials, form, and organization of forms are cues that Brushstrokes is a work of art.

From the signifier of a work of art, the concept of art as a creation is developed. A work of art is the product of creativity--a creation. Brushstrokes' physical characteristics--pedestal, forms, materials, and organization of forms--evoke the concept that the object
is a work of art, which suggests the work is a product of creativity, which culminates in a claim of creation attributed to the sculpture (see Figure 2).

Two sub-vehicles, then, account for a reading of creation in an interpretation of *Brushstrokes* as a male artist rewriting creation. In the first sub-vehicle, the arrangement of the sculpture's design elements, conventions of representation, and title suggest the signifier of an artist's brushstrokes which, in turn, evokes concepts that culminate in creation. In the second sub-vehicle, the pedestal, inscription on the pedestal, materials, and forms of the sculpture evoke a signifier of art that suggests concepts culminating in the attribution of creation to *Brushstrokes.* *Recreation of the World*

A second vehicle key to the interpretation of *Brushstrokes* as the rewriting of creation by a male artist concerns the sculpture's recreation of the world. The sky as the backdrop for the brushstrokes is the data with which this vehicle begins, suggesting the signifier of the sky as a canvas.

The sky as the canvas for the brushstrokes triggers as a signified the Judeo/Christian myth of creation. While books and sacred documents such as the Bible, the Talmud, and the Dead Sea Scrolls are the foundation and primary means of dissemination of Judeo/Christian myths for
members of Judeo/Christian religions, the pervasiveness of
the myths in Western popular culture makes them familiar
to those in contemporary society who are not members of
these religions.

A primary feature of the creation myth is God as
creator of the world. The Judeo/Christian myth of
creation contends that the world is a created reality that
existed before the creation of humans and was the act of
God. In the myth, God is an artist—a sculptor who first
creates the universe and earth and then its inhabitants
with his hands and who, in fact, fashions the human figure
out of clay using his own image as a model. God creates a
reality based on his personal vision—in these narratives,
a garden that is, in essence, a re-creation of heaven on
earth. God's vision and creativity are lauded and
celebrated in the myth, which depicts the process of
creation and the creator as special and wondrous. The
Judeo/Christian myth, then, depicts the world as a
completed product similar to an art object that was
created by a being very much like an artist.

The sky as a site for the brushstroke marks also
evokes the signifier of the sky as a canvas—a surface on
which an artist can create a new reality and a limitless
canvas that goes on to infinity. The sky is not a blank
canvas, however, but the completed creation of God. The
brushstroke marks' appearance against the sky thus evokes the Judeo/Christian myth that suggests both God as creator of the world and the artist as a creator of a new world with infinite scope and potential. The sky as site for the brushstrokes, then, suggests the concept of a world being painted over or recreated; an old reality--God's vision--is being painted over by another, new reality. To have the world recreated suggests that God's original can be improved upon; the vehicle thus culminates in attributions of the rewriting of creation or the usurping of God's creation by another artist.

The vehicle of Brushstrokes' recreation of the world begins with the sky as the site of the brushstrokes and proceeds to the signifier of the sky as canvas for the brushstrokes. The signifier of the sky as canvas for the brushstrokes both suggests that something new is being created on the sky and that the sky is already painted and thus already created, concepts that evoke the Judeo/Christian creation myth. The myth similarly suggests both the concepts of the artist as creator of a new world and God as creator of the world, evoking the complex concept that God's world/creation is being recreated by an artist; the vehicle culminates in the claim that creation is being rewritten (see Figure 3).
A Larger-than-Human Creator

A third vehicle central to an interpretation of *Brushstrokes* as the rewriting of creation by a male artist is that of a larger-than-human creator. The appearance of brushstrokes overhead on the sky and their scale evoke concepts of larger-than-human size and culminate in attributions of a larger-than-human creator for *Brushstrokes*.

The scale of the sculpture's brushstroke marks--each panel is over a foot long--evokes the concept of an extremely large brush as the only tool that could have been instrumental in their production. Such a tool would require a larger-than-human hand or some other greater-than-human power for its manipulation; an ordinary human could not lift a brush large enough to make brushstroke marks the size of those that comprise *Brushstrokes*. The appearance of the brushstroke marks in the sky positions them overhead, beyond the reach of a human hand and arm, on a canvas that extends to infinity, again suggesting the need for a larger-than-human creator. The appearance of the brushstroke marks in the sky, then, evokes the need for a large brush and an arm that can reach the sky, suggesting that a larger-than-human creator or superior being is required to make the marks (see Figure 4).
Transcendence of Human Limitations

Transcendence of human limitations is a fourth vehicle useful in developing the interpretation of Brushstrokes as a male artist rewriting creation. Human limitations must be overcome in order to displace God's creation with man's. The site of the work, its title, and its physical characteristics are data that construct three different routes to the claim of transcendence of human limitations.

The site of the work provides the data for the first vehicle that leads to attributions of the transcendence of human limitations in this reading of Brushstrokes as a male artist rewriting creation. Brushstrokes is located at Port Columbus, the airport of Columbus, Ohio. Situated at the edge of the long-term parking lot, the sculpture is in the midst of airplanes approaching and departing from the airport. On one side of the work of art is the parking garage and the terminal building; on the other three sides are the cars parked in the long-term parking lot. This site is part of the work of art; it forms the context of the work and mediates the reading developed for the work through various associations and references. Brushstrokes cannot be separated from the sight and sound of planes and cars any more than it can be seen without also seeing the sky against which its brushstroke forms are silhouetted.
Because of the site, then, the physical characteristics of Brushstrokes are filtered through connotations and associations attached to cars and planes; many of these have to do with transcending human limitations, a theme that thus is transferred to the reading of the sculpture and its title. Two primary associations transfer to Brushstrokes from its environment--transportation and technology/industry.

Transportation in the form of cars and planes constitutes a means for overcoming human limitations by transporting humans faster and farther than can be accomplished by the human body itself. Planes, in fact, not only give humans tremendous speed and distance without the investment of great amounts of time and personal energy but free them from gravity and the earth.

The title of Brushstrokes, read in the context of the site, summons associations with flying--with overcoming the bounds of gravity and leaving earth--and so suggests transcendence of human limitations. As discussed in the first vehicle, which explains the recognition of the work of art as an artist's brushstrokes, words affect perceptions of visual data and the meanings attributed to those data. To designate the brushstroke marks as being in flight suggests their ability to leave the bounds of the canvas. Similar to the planes, which comprise an
element of the site and thus also are an element of the work, the brushstrokes overcome the "gravity" of the canvas and move into the sky. The concept of the brushstrokes moving into the sky suggests a superior being with abilities beyond those of ordinary artists--such marks require an artist who can transcend the limits of ordinary manipulation of paint and create brushstrokes that can defy the gravity of the painting and fly into the sky.

The theme of technology/industry also is suggested by the sculpture's environment of cars and planes. Both cars and planes are the results of technological and industrial achievements. They exist and operate because of the development of motors, fuels, and the means of measuring and controlling energy, and they are the products of industrial processes and conventions. Technology makes possible the conversion of one material or form into another--oil into fuel, for example, or ore-laden rocks into planes that fly above the earth, while factories and foundries refine ores, manufacture parts, and construct products. Technology and industry transcend what humans can make with their body and hands alone; with the additional tools of technology and industry, humans can go far beyond human-based products of creation.
In summary, the site of Brushstrokes evokes cars and planes as a signifier that suggests the transportation of humans at fast speeds and the creation—through technology and industry—of products that overcome limitations imposed on human life by gravity and the pace of human locomotion. Humans thus are freed from the limitations of their bodies. The vehicle then culminates with the claim of transcendence of human limitations (see Figure 5).

In summary, the interpretation of transcendence of human limitations in Brushstrokes is evoked in one vehicle. Transcendence is evoked by the site of the work, which aligns the physical characteristics of the sculpture—the nature of its manufacture, structure, and surface—and its title with the connotations of transportation and technology/industry associated with cars and planes. Both the planes and the brushstrokes are in the sky, further connecting their meanings. The title of the work in the context of the site suggests the brushstroke marks can transcend the boundaries of art and fly.

Movement

Movement is a fifth vehicle in the interpretation of Brushstrokes as an artist rewriting creation from a male point of view. Brushstrokes is a static work; nothing about it moves or was intended actually to move. Yet, the
brushstrokes seem to tremble and move spontaneously upward as if caught in the act of their painting. Viewers claim, in fact, that the work "gives me a feeling of soaring" (Beavers, 1994) and "uplift" (Holderidge, 1994). Others describe the sculpture as having "lots of motion" (Cook, 1994, Cahill, 1994) and as "being the tremble of the brush just before it hits the canvas" (Pilotta, 1994).

Four sub-vehicles contribute to the attribution of movement to Brushstrokes—those of directional arrows, uneasy balance, rhythmic succession, and obliqueness. Arrangement of the design elements of Brushstrokes provides the data for the first vehicle and suggests the feeling of being pulled upward through the signifier of a visual vector or directional arrow. A visual vector or directional arrow is created in Brushstrokes through the shape and the vertical arrangement of the four panels that comprise the brushstroke marks of the sculpture. Each panel is a rectangular form, convex at its upper edge and convex at its lower edge—a shape similar to that commonly used in our culture as a directional marker. Each form is placed on top of another in a simple progression also indicative of a directional marker or arrow.

The placement of color within the panels—from the bottom band of blue to the top band of yellow to the stroke of a more visually arousing red at the upper edge
of the top panel--contributes to the structuring of the work as a visual vector or a directional arrow that points upward. The shape of the bands of color within the panels--also convex at their tops and concave at the lower edges--echoes and reinforces the upward directional associations of the larger forms.

The signifier of the directional arrow functions as a simple sign that indicates direction. Direction, in turn, suggests someone is going somewhere and, consequently, movement. The data provided by the arrangement of shape and color, then, create a visual vector or directional arrow that signifies a sense of direction, suggests progress toward the indicated direction, and culminates in the attribution of movement to Brushstrokes (see Figure 5).

A second sub-vehicle leading to attributions of movement to Brushstrokes is grounded in the signifier of an uneasy balance achieved by the placement of shape and color. Each brushstroke mark in Brushstrokes appears precariously balanced on the edge of the one below it; the long, rectangular shape of each mark seems to need a more central support than such a positioning offers. This uneasy dependence of each shape on the one below creates an asymmetrical, unsure balance--a leaning stance--that seems on the edge of movement.
Color contributes to this uneasy sense of balance; the more visually arousing and thus heavier red is positioned at the tip of the extended and unsupported top panel or brushstroke mark, making the work appear even more top heavy and impelled by force. The sense that the work is under the influence of a force creates a tension between the stillness of the work and its instability that, in turn, suggests change and motion and thus creates a sense of movement. In the second sub-vehicle, then, the data—the arrangement of shape and color—suggest the signifier of an uneasy balance that then evokes the concepts of change and motion, which culminate in a claim of movement for the sculpture (see Figure 7).

A third sub-vehicle leading to an attribution of movement to Brushstrokes relies on a signifier of rhythmic succession of shapes. Langer (1957) contends that the repetitive placement of similar shapes constructs a visual rhythm that conveys a sense of motion—a periodic or rhythmic succession that also provides a sense of time and movement. The repetitive placement of the brushstroke shapes of the sculpture creates such a rhythm and constitutes a significant aspect of the arrangement of the sculpture's physical elements. The repetition of colors—first yellow, then yellow repeated, then blue, and then yellow again but tipped with red—also provides a rhythm
that moves upward with the movement of the shapes. The repetitive placement of shapes and colors allows for a recognition of rhythm similar to that of repeating and changing musical notes. Just as a succession of notes heard can be felt, a succession with "notes" seen also can be felt. The rhythm of the repeating and changing shapes and colors summons a sense of change over time. The repetitive placement of shape and color thus creates the signifier of rhythmic succession that evokes the attribution of movement to *Brushstrokes* (see Figure 8).

A fourth sub-vehicle operating in *Brushstrokes* that leads to attributions of movement begins with the data of the orientation of the sculpture's shapes or panels in space. The panels are positioned in a three-dimensional space at an oblique angle--on a diagonal axis to the horizontal axis of the ground. Visual scholars have recognized that "almost any obliquely oriented shape creates tension" (Dondis, 1973, p. 419) and that humans have a "felt axis of balance"--a sense of equilibrium based on a horizontal and vertical construct--that provides an important psychological and physical influence on human perception (Dondis, 1973, p. 22). Although all visual directions potentially have strong associative meanings, "obliqueness is spontaneously perceived as a dynamic straining toward or away from the basic spatial
frame work of the horizontal and vertical" (Dondis, 1973, p. 419). Obliqueness commonly is used as a device for distinguishing between rest and action--between a running figure, for example, and one standing still. The slanting, oblique orientation of both the panels and Brushstrokes in its entirety thus functions to suggest a sense of energy and movement. One route to a reading of movement, then, originates with the orientation in space of the sculpture's panels, proceeds to the signifier of obliqueness, and culminates in movement (see Figure 9).

Four sub-vehicles, then, account for a reading of movement in an interpretation of Brushstrokes as a male artist rewriting creation. The arrangement of color, line, and shape and the spatial orientation of shapes suggest the signifiers of directional arrows, uneasy balance, rhythmic succession, and obliqueness, which in turn evoke concepts that culminate in attributions of movement to Brushstrokes.

**Masculine Viewership**

Masculine viewership is a sixth vehicle central to the interpretation of Brushstrokes as the rewriting of creation. A complex vehicle, masculine viewership is constructed from the combination of four signifiers that suggest a male creator and then culminate in viewership structured to correspond with men's values, experiences,
and interests: Cars and planes as men's toys, the concept of God as a male creator, the representation of males as the primary actors in the myths of art, and the construction of the physical elements of the work into a phallus. Each signifier provides a separate thread in the vehicle that constructs the author/creator of the work as masculine.

The site of Brushstrokes provides the data for one thread in the vehicle. The site, the long-term parking lot at the Columbus airport, positions Brushstrokes in the midst of airplanes and cars approaching and departing from the airport. As explicated in the discussion of the vehicle of transcendence, this site is part of the work of art, forming its context and mediating its meaning through the associations and references evoked by the cars and planes.

A primary association transferred to Brushstrokes from its environment is that of men's toys and interests. Men largely developed the technology that is the foundation for the workings of cars and planes; build cars and planes; drive and fly cars and planes; and play with cars and planes. In addition, with but a few exceptions, men are featured in the myths of science, industry, and aviation as the primary agents. Inventors and industrialists Henry Ford and Thomas Alva Edison; flyers
Charles Lindbergh, John Glenn, and Neil Armstrong; and auto racers Mario Andretti and Bobby Rahal, for example, are some of the individuals who are most commonly identified with cars and planes. While some women are known for their achievements in these areas—Amelia Earhart and Janet Guthrie, for example—overall, women are not identified or associated with cars and planes in the same ways or numbers as men. Cars and planes, therefore, signify men's realms and interests. The concept of men's realms and interests suggests that *Brushstrokes* may be a part of that masculine world. Situated among cars and planes, with their masculine connotations, *Brushstrokes* can be seen as a male toy or interest.

A second thread in the vehicle that culminates in attributions of a male creator in this reading of *Brushstrokes* begins with the data of the appearance of the brushstrokes on the sky that evokes the signifier of the world as a creation of God. As discussed in the vehicle of recreation of the world by *Brushstrokes*, the appearance of the brushstrokes against the sky triggers the Judeo/Christian myth of creation and the concept of God as the artist-creator of the world. In the myth, God is depicted as male with attributes associated in our culture with masculinity—power over, omnipotence, control,
agency, and the like. *Brushstrokes* thus evokes the signifier of the world as a work created by a male God and culminates in attributions of a male creator.

A third thread in the vehicle that culminates in a claim of a male creator begins with the data of the sculpture as a work of art that evokes the signifier of *Brushstrokes* as art, which then evokes males as the primary actors in the activity of art. Just as they are explicated in the world of cars and planes, men are featured as the primary actors and agents within the realm of the arts; art's primary creators, critics, and curators are men. Popular culture, the art market, and art history present a white, male narrative that omits from its canon most women artists.

Gallery and museum representation of artists and, consequently, trade and mass-media coverage of artists, for example, is predominantly male. Olin and Brawer's (1989) study measuring the inclusion and visibility of women artists from 1970 through 1985 reports, for example, on the lack of representation given women artists in exhibitions at both the Whitney and the Museum of Modern Art. Similarly, McEvilly (1989) notes that "H. W. Janson's *History of Art*, the standard college text book" (p. 187) does not mention a single women artist during its publication from 1970 through 1985.
Women are known as the objects of art, not its creators; women in the arts are overlooked or relegated to lesser, unimportant roles. The work of Maria Ormani, Sofonisba Anguissola, Artemisia Gentileschi, and Judith Leyster, for example, has been ignored and largely unknown to the general public, while contemporary women artists, such as Miriam Shapiro and Judy Chicago, have been declared craftsmen rather than artists. Others are predominately known as the wives of their artist husbands, as are Sonia Delaunay (married to Robert Delaunay), Frieda Kahlo (married to Diego Rivera), and Lee Kasner (married to Jackson Pollock). Under the weight of such histories and mythologies, the agent operating in Brushstrokes—the artist responsible for the brushstroke marks—also can be interpreted as male.

A fourth thread that is instrumental in the vehicle of male viewership is rooted in the shape of Brushstrokes. The shape, resulting from the composition of Brushstrokes and the use of color in the sculpture evoke the signifier of a phallus. The four brushstroke panels, each balanced on another, stand like an erect penis pointing at the sky. The dynamics of the composition of the work that so clearly evoke movement, discussed in the vehicle of movement, work equally as well in defining the penis. The opposing concave and convex ends of the panels, the heavy
black contour lines, and the progression of color to the visually stimulating red at the tip of the top panel function together to create the shape and energy associated with male desire. As the male sex organ, the penis is a symbol for the male role in the creation of new life, which once again suggests a male creator.

Four threads, then, develop the vehicle of a male creator in the interpretation of *Brushstrokes* as a male artist rewriting creation. The site of the work evokes the signifier of cars and planes as men's equipment that then suggests a male creator. The appearance of the brushstrokes on the sky evokes the signifier of the world as God's creation, which calls up the Biblical creation myth that features a male God, thus suggesting a male creator. Recognition of the work's physical data, materials, and organizational forms provides the data for the signifier of *Brushstrokes* as art, an area that features men as agents and then suggests a male creator. The shape of the sculpture signifies a phallus, which also suggests a male creator (see Figure 10). A male creator is constructed in *Brushstrokes*, then, through the assimilation of gender roles operative in viewers' experience and knowledge of cars and planes, creation myths, art, and men's role in the reproduction process.
These reflect male values, experiences, interests, and perspectives and contribute to the claim of masculine viewership.

**Embodiment of Viewers**

A seventh vehicle important to the construction of a rhetorical response to *Brushstrokes* as the rewriting of creation from a masculine point of view is the embodiment developed in relation to the work of art. With many works of art, viewers sense that they are only an eye—they look at but are not embodied in the work in any way. *Brushstrokes*, however, allows for a process of embodiment, with the viewers becoming the hand wielding the brush, the agent of the process to which they are also witness. Viewers report, for example, feeling the swing of the brush in their arm making the marks in the sky: "I feel (I'm) reaching upward" (Stern, 1994); "it's like I'm reaching toward the sky" (Beavers, 1994); "it's a brushstroke in the act of being done" (Pilotta, 1994); and "I feel movement in the sculpture in my arm--my arm feels the making of the mark" (Cegala, 1995).

Embodiment of viewers in *Brushstrokes* is accomplished through the generation of two signifiers: the physical point of view that is constructed by the work for viewers—the viewer as creator of the brushstrokes—and the combined signifier of experience with and memories of
painting. Each signifier initiates a separate sub-vehicle in the construction of the vehicle of the embodiment of viewers.

In the first sub-vehicle, the orientation of the brushstroke panels or their angles in space and their scale figure heavily in the construction of the physical point of view from which the work is seen. In many works of art, the perspective or angle of presentation for the objects depicted in the work is one of a disembodied viewer—the viewing position is idealized, outside of the reality constructed by the work, and one from which objects are seen in their entirety as if from a distance. Objects seen from an idealized position generally are foreshortened and are portrayed from a one- or two-point perspective that indicates the object's recession into space and its distance from the viewer.

The viewing position constructed in *Brushstrokes*, however, situates viewers not as abstract and disembodied viewers but as persons who could have made the marks. The brushstroke marks appear at an angle that insinuates an intimacy and closeness with the viewer. Finished works of art are always viewed from a distance that allows a view of the complete work; works of art are not viewed from distances that are so close as to allow only a few brushstrokes to be in focus. One reason why such a stance
might be taken is to be near enough to reach the canvas with the paint. To view *Brushstrokes* from the front or back is to occupy the position that the artist might have taken to apply the painted strokes. (When viewed from the sides, the sculpture merely presents a flowing black line, so the side view is abandoned in favor of a front or back view, in which the brushstroke marks can be seen.) The unforshortened angle of each panel in space, in other words, indicates the perspective of their creator.

Scale is another factor in the construction of point of view as a sub-vehicle that generates a sense of embodiment. At 25 feet, the overall size of *Brushstrokes* is not unusual for a work of public art; however, the scale is uncommon for what is being represented—individual brushstrokes. The perspective or physical point of view suggested in works of art usually constructs an ideal viewing position for viewers as mentioned above. In this ideal position, the perspective presented for viewers situates them to see the images and reality from a specific viewpoint—they are embodied as an eye and often as an eye that sees in ways not possible in the real world. In looking at a traditional landscape painting, for example, viewers see the horizon and the other elements of the scene from a perspective that often floats above the ground from a distance that allows them to
perceive simultaneously many details clearly at the same time. In real life, these details are in the periphery of their vision, and they would have to turn their heads to see them as clearly. In Brushstrokes, however, this distant eye position is abandoned in favor of one that incorporates the viewer as part of the scene.

The scale of the brushstrokes indicates a close-up view of the marks, not an idealized view. Objects appear smaller when observed in the distance and larger when seen at more intimate distances. The large size of the brushstroke marks in Brushstrokes, then, indicates that viewers are very close to them. This closeness is reinforced by the even clarity of the shapes and details of the image. Objects or parts of images that are distant appear to have softer contours or boundaries between forms, and details often seem blurred or non-existent. Every contour of Brushstrokes, however, is explicitly outlined in black line, boundaries between forms are sharply delineated by the same lines, and details--such as bristle marks--are clearly visible. Thus, the scale of Brushstrokes contributes to a position for viewers in which the brushstroke marks seem less than an arm's reach away--a position that is too close for any explanation other than that the viewer is the creator in the act of applying the paint.
The scale and spatial orientation of the brushstroke marks in *Brushstrokes*--the first sub-vehicle in the vehicle of embodiment--evoke the signifier of objects seen from a close-up view and a position in relation to the marks from which they may have been applied to the canvas. Both the signifier of objects seen close up and the application perspective that results from the spatial orientation of the brushstroke marks suggest that viewers may be the creators of the brushstroke marks (see Figure 11).

A second sub-vehicle involved in the embodiment of viewers is the sense of movement experienced in looking at the work of art. Movement and recognition of the forms of the sculpture as brushstroke marks are the data for this sub-vehicle. The sense of movement and upward pull evoked by the directional arrows, uneasy balance, and rhythmic succession, as explicated in the vehicle concerned with movement, are felt by viewers as movement. Experience with brushes and knowledge of how the application of paint feels and what the results of that application look like are suggested by the brushstroke marks that are recognized--as explained in the vehicle on creation--from the sculpture's shapes, lines, colors, and spatial orientation.
The brushstroke marks and the sense of movement evoke memories and experiences with paint. Through the visual evidence of a series of brushstrokes--one panel balanced on another--a sense is suggested of the feeling of the upward swing of the arm as it would move to make the marks. Through the visual evidence of a brushstroke--presented by the curved, linear shapes of the brushstroke marks and the graphic, black lines that indicate bristle marks and contour--the feeling of the drag of the paint-laden brush over a wall or canvas and the soft thickness and malleability of the paint itself are suggested. The visual evidence of the brushstroke thus evokes a tactile sense of applying the paint; the visual memory of what painting looks like and the tactile sense of painting is strong--as one is experienced, the other is invoked.

In *Brushstrokes*, then, viewers see what painting feels like and, in seeing, they feel the act of painting. The physiological reactions evoked by movement combined with knowledge of how making brushstroke marks feels and the scale and orientation of the brushstroke panels are experienced by viewers as perceptions of executing an action. A second sub-vehicle in the vehicle of embodiment, then, begins with movement and recognition of brushstroke marks that summon memories and experiences of painting. The memories and experiences of painting evoke
a tactile sense of applying paint that combines with the sense of movement felt in the arm in the act of painting (see Figure 12).

The sense of time suggested by **Brushstrokes** provides a third sub-vehicle that leads to the embodiment of viewers and is relevant to the construction of a rhetorical response to **Brushstrokes** as the rewriting of creation by a male artist. In this response to **Brushstrokes**, the sculpture is interpreted as happening right now—as being about the process of creation or the activity itself rather than about a product of artistic activity. Two threads lead to this sub-vehicle—the implications of creation as content and qualities of movement.

Implications of creation as content are the first thread of this sub-vehicle. As explicated in discussion of the vehicle concerned with creation, the design elements of **Brushstrokes**—the physical characteristics of shape, line, color, and spatial orientation; the conventions of representation used; and the work's title evoke the signifier of an artist's brushstrokes. An artist's brushstrokes signify the act of creating a painting; images—the typical subject matter of paintings—are created from various types and kinds of brushstrokes. In **Brushstrokes**, however, the subject matter of the work is an artist's brushstrokes--
foregrounding the process of creation. Only four brushstroke marks are presented in Brushstrokes, further highlighting the process of creation by presenting an uncompleted image in the midst of its production. To present an act in process is to suggest immediacy. The signifier of an artist's brushstrokes, then, suggests creation—a process that then evokes a sense of nowness.

Movement provides a second thread in this sub-vehicle of the vehicle of embodiment. As explained in the vehicle concerned with movement, the rhythmic succession of the brushstroke panels and the work's colors suggest tension and change. The experience of a progression of physiological sensations—the experience of change elicited from the rhythms of Brushstrokes—evokes an awareness of time. The tensions and changes evoked by the directional arrows, uneasy balance, and rhythmic succession that constitute the signifiers of movement suggest changes and patterns that are experienced by viewers as felt time or immediacy (see Figure 13).

Langer (1957) contends that the experience of change is indicative of the passing of time. She argues that the direct experience of time, or felt time, is the result of the passage of vital physical functions and lived events felt inwardly as tensions that have characteristic patterns. The waxing and waning of these tensions and the
patterns with which they change provide a sense of time. The tensions and patterns to which Langer refers may be experienced physically, mentally, or emotionally and can be generated by any number of mental, emotional, or physical events. In each form of tension, the process of experiencing the attendant patterns involves sensing or feeling a succession of changes so that, in each case, the tension is felt as a progression or movement.

In *Brushstrokes*, optical perception of the repetitive placement of similar shapes and colors constructs a visual pattern that is felt somatically as a rhythm. The variations in pattern that constitute the rhythm convey a sense of time by evoking a somatic awareness of change and tension. The repetition of colors and shapes in *Brushstrokes* thus creates a sense of repeating and changing visual notes that suggest the passing of time.

Embodiment is suggested in *Brushstrokes*--the viewer positioned as its creator--by three sub-vehicles. In the first, the scale and spatial orientation of the sculpture evoke a close-up view of the brushstroke marks and a physical position in relation to them such that viewers are positioned where they would have to be if they painted the marks; there is no other reason for them to be in this location in respect to the marks. In another sub-vehicle, the experience of movement combines with the recognition
of the sculpture's forms as brushstroke marks to evoke experiences with and memories of painting. These then suggest a tactile sense of applying the paint and culminate in a sense of movement felt in the viewer's arm. The tensions and change evoked by the signifier of movement provide the last route by which the viewer comes to be embodied as the creator in Brushstrokes. From the change and tensions signified by movement, a felt time is experienced that generates a sense of immediacy.

Conclusions

The seven vehicles of 1) artistic creation as the subject of the work; 2) recreation of the world; 3) a larger-than-human creator; 4) transcendence of human limitations through technology and industry; 5) movement; 6) masculine viewership; and 7) embodiment function to contribute to an interpretation of Brushstrokes as the rewriting of creation from a male point of view.

In this interpretation of Brushstrokes, the work is recognized as an artist's brushstrokes, which facilitate the conceptualization of the work as art and, consequently, the claim that the work is about the process of creation. The signifier of the world as a completed project or creation of God is essential as the foundation for the concept of recreation. The overlay of the subject of the work as the process of creation—signified by the
brushstroke marks of Brushstrokes—on God's completed project or creation—signified by the sky—accounts for the attribution of a rewriting of creation. The vehicles of a larger-than-human creator and transcendence of human limitations contribute and reinforce the concept of rewriting; human limitations must be overcome to rewrite God's creation. The vehicle of movement organizes a signifier that contributes to the phallic nature of Brushstrokes, which, in combination with the attributions of a male creator and the resemblance of the sculpture's shape to a phallus, presents a claim in the interpretation for masculine viewership. Movement also creates the ground for the viewer's embodiment as the work's creator. The meaning of Brushstrokes for viewers created by the interrelation of the seven vehicles is of a rewriting of the process of creation by a male artist.
CHAPTER IV

BRUSHSTROKES IN FLIGHT AS A SIGN FOR THE CITY

A second reading of or rhetorical response to Brushstrokes in Flight is one in which the work is constructed as a potential sign for the city of Columbus, Ohio. In this response, viewers interpret Brushstrokes as symbolizing the character of Columbus somewhat as the arch symbolizes St. Louis, the Golden Gate Bridge symbolizes San Francisco, and the apple symbolizes New York City. In this reading, particular qualities or associations attributed to the sculpture are thought to reflect the nature of the city and its residents. The data of the sculpture, in other words, suggest concepts or qualities that are transferred to or matched with those of the city. The concepts generated may suggest the qualities to be transferred to the city from the work of art directly, or the concepts may combine with others to form complex chains of notions that suggest qualities to transfer to the city or that may be used to create the desired result for the city.
The potential for *Brushstrokes* to be interpreted as a sign for the city derived from the adoption of the sculpture as the city's logo by the Central Ohio Marketing Council in January, 1985. Its image then appeared on bumper stickers, cups, stationery, city street signs, and other marketing paraphernalia, along with the expression, "Discover Columbus." Multiple readings of *Brushstrokes* are possible within this response, with different qualities attributed to the work as representative of the city and different qualities of the city proposed.

For the vehicles, I explicate the sequence of attribution for the qualities and associations ascribed to the sculpture, beginning with the primary data of the vehicle and moving to the final concept or signified, which results in a claim of a specific quality or qualities to the sculpture. In each vehicle, signifiers are developed from data inherent in the work that evoke a signified or concept which, in turn, becomes a signifier for other signifieds or complex chains of concepts and eventually results in the attribution being discussed.

Analysis

Analysis of this reading of *Brushstrokes* reveals one primary vehicle or route that allows for an interpretation of the sculpture as a sign for the city. In this vehicle, particular qualities are attributed to the sculpture,
which then are matched with or transferred to Columbus. Central to this vehicle is whether the character of the sculpture reflects the character of the city. The vehicle operates in this way: From a perception of data, a feature of the work is recognized that suggests a concept or complex chain of concepts that evokes the attribution of specific qualities or associations to the sculpture. In other words, perception of data reveals a signifier that evokes a concept or series of concepts that, when taken together, suggest a final concept or quality. Because the sculpture is in a public location in Columbus and was used in the city's marketing promotions, it represents the city. The sculpture's qualities, then, transfer to or match the qualities and character of the city and its residents. Twenty-two examples of this vehicle are explicated in this chapter.

The Sculpture Represents the City

In one example of a response to Brushstrokes as a sign for Columbus that interprets the sculpture as possessing qualities that do represent the city, the work is read as inspiring and dynamic. This construction attributes sophistication, culture, and fame to the work and surmises that the city's future will soar as the sculpture does.
The qualities attributed to the work in this reading can be organized into two groups or categories, each grounded in a common primary notion that serves as a signifier for the concept or chains of concepts constructed that result in claims for the work. The first group of qualities—dynamic, inspiring, and soaring—centers around a core signifier of movement, while the second group—sophisticated, cultured, and famous—centers around a common signifier of art.

Within the first group or category—qualities that share grounding in the signifier of movement—attributions are evoked by certain physical features of the sculpture. The arrangement of some of the sculpture's design elements—in this case, shape, color, and orientation in space of the work's shapes—constitutes features of the work that then evoke the signifier of movement from which the qualities of dynamism, inspiration, and soaring are generated. Although these qualities may be evoked by other factors as well (for example, inspiration also is evoked by the title of the work and its site), movement is the primary means by which these qualities are suggested.

Dynamism refers to the forces that produce motion and action. To be dynamic is to be continuously changing, moving, forceful, and full of vigour and energy. To attribute a dynamic quality to Brushstrokes, then, is to
ascribe movement, change, energy, or action to the work. Four examples of vehicles illustrate how a dynamic quality can be attributed to Brushstrokes, each comprised by a different set of data that evokes the signifier of movement.

The first example of attributions of a dynamic quality begins with the arrangement of the shapes and colors of the sculpture. The shapes and colors constitute the primary data for the vehicle, and their arrangement results in the signifier of a directional arrow or visual vector. A directional arrow or visual vector is created in Brushstrokes through the shape and the vertical arrangement of the four panels that comprise the brushstroke marks of the sculpture. Each panel is a rectangular form, convex at its upper edge and convex at its lower edge—a shape similar to that commonly used in our culture as a directional marker. Each brushstroke form is placed on the top of another in a simple progression also indicative of a directional marker or arrow.

The placement of color within the panels—from the bottom band of blue to the top band of yellow to the stroke of a more visually arousing red at the upper edge of the top panel—contributes to the structuring of the work as a visual vector or a directional arrow that points
upward. The shape of the bands of color within the panels—also convex at their tops and concave at the lower edges—echoes and reinforces the upward directional associations of the larger forms.

Such directional arrows function as simple signs that indicate direction. Direction, in turn, suggests someone is going somewhere and, consequently, indicates the force of movement and energy that are the signifiers that suggest a sense of dynamics. The data provided by the arrangement of shape and color thus create a visual vector or directional arrow that evokes a sense of movement and energy that culminates in the attribution of a dynamic quality to Brushstrokes. A directional arrow, then, is one feature evoked by the arrangement of design elements that leads to the concept of movement and culminates in attributions of a dynamic quality to Brushstrokes. Dynamism, then, is representative of Columbus and Columbus thus is dynamic (see Figure 14).

In the second vehicle, unstable balance is the signifier evoked by the arrangement of design elements that results in attributions of a dynamic quality to Brushstrokes and to Columbus. This lack of stability is evoked by the placement of shape and color within the sculpture. Each brushstroke mark in the sculpture appears precariously balanced on the edge of the one below it; the
long, rectangular shape of each mark seems to need a more central support than such a positioning offers. This uneasy dependence of each shape on the one below creates an asymmetrical, unsure balance—a leaning stance—that implies movement and indicates a force that is impelling the shapes upward.

Color also contributes to an uneasy sense of balance; the more visually arousing and, hence, heavier red is positioned at the tip of the extended and unsupported top panel or brushstroke mark, making the work appear even more top heavy and impelled by force. The sense that the work is under the influence of a force creates a tension between the stillness of the work and its instability that, in turn, suggests the energy of change and motion and thus creates a sense of dynamics. In the second vehicle, then, the data—the arrangement of shape and color—suggest the signifier of an uneasy balance that then evokes the signified concepts of an implied movement and tension, which culminate in the attribution of a dynamic quality to the sculpture (see Figure 15).

Rhythmic succession of shapes is another signifier of the arrangement of design elements that evokes the signified concept of movement and results in the attribution of a dynamic quality to Brushstrokes; rhythmic succession is the feature operative in the third
sub-vehicle in this reading. Langer (1957) contends that the repetitive placement of similar shapes constructs a visual rhythm that conveys a sense of motion—a periodic or rhythmic succession that also provides a sense of time and movement. The repetitive placement of the brushstroke shapes of the sculpture creates such a rhythm and constitutes an essential aspect of the arrangement of the sculpture's physical elements. The repetition of colors—first yellow, then yellow repeated, then blue, and then yellow again but tipped with red—also provides a rhythm that moves upward with the movement of the shapes. The repetitive placement of shapes and colors evokes a recognition of rhythm similar to that of repeating and changing musical notes. Just as a succession of notes heard can be felt, a succession of "notes" seen also can be felt. The movement sensed through the rhythm of the repeating and changing shapes and colors summons a sense of dynamics by the change and movement they imply. In the third example of this vehicle, then, the data of repetitive placement of shape and color create the signifier of rhythmic succession that evokes the concepts of movement and change, which culminate in a dynamic quality (see Figure 16).
A fourth example that conveys dynamics in *Brushstrokes* relies on the signifier of obliqueness. Obliqueness is formed by the arrangement of the sculpture's design elements—in this case, the orientation of the sculpture's shapes or panels in space. The panels are positioned in a three-dimensional space at an oblique angle—on a diagonal axis to the horizontal axis of the ground. Visual scholars have recognized that "almost any obliquely oriented shape creates tension" (Dondis, 1973, p. 419) and that humans have a "felt axis of balance"—a sense of equilibrium based on a horizontal and vertical construct—that provides an important psychological and physical influence on human perception (Dondis, 1973, p. 22). Although all visual directions potentially have strong associative meanings, "obliqueness is spontaneously perceived as a dynamic straining toward or away from the basic spatial frame work of the horizontal and vertical" (Dondis, 1973, p. 419). Obliqueness commonly is used as a device for distinguishing between rest and action—between a running figure, for example, and one standing still. The slanting, oblique orientation of both the panels and the work in its entirety functions to evoke a sense of movement and energy and thus of dynamism. One route to a reading of dynamism, then, originates with the orientation in space of the sculpture's panels, proceeds to the
feature of obliqueness that evokes a sense of straining toward or away from a felt axis, and culminates with the quality of dynamism (see Figure 17).

Attributions of dynamism to Brushstrokes, then, are evoked by the discovery of a visual vector, uneasy balance, rhythmic succession of shapes and colors, and an oblique angle. Four different signifiers of the arrangement of design elements provide routes by which attributions of a dynamic quality for Brushstrokes may be developed. Each is a sequence of concepts that begins with the data provided by the arrangement of color and shape within the sculpture but results in the creation of different signifiers, all of which culminate in attributions of a dynamic quality to the sculpture. In the first example, the data create a directional arrow that signifies movement and action. In the second example, the data create an uneasy balance that implies movement and culminate in the attribution of a dynamic quality to Brushstrokes. The data create a rhythmic succession in the third example that evokes movement and results in attributions of a dynamic quality. The final example that may generate an attribution of dynamics from the arrangement of design elements involves the spatial orientation of the shapes within the sculpture. The oblique orientation of the sculpture's shapes creates a
straining toward or away from an axis that implies movement and so results in a dynamic quality. The sculpture, then, is dynamic, and as the sculpture represents the city, its qualities transfer to or match those of the city, which is also dynamic. The quality of dynamism, then, represents the city through the sculpture.

A second quality in the group defined by movement is that of inspiration. Attributions of an inspirational quality to Brushstrokes also are suggested by the arrangement of design elements of the work of art and their evocation of movement. Although movement is a primary means for the development of attributions of inspiration, its location at the airport and the content of the work provide additional examples by which an inspirational quality is suggested in Brushstrokes.

Inspiration is an arousal to higher levels of intellect or emotion; to be inspired is to believe that new heights of thinking, feeling, or action are obtainable. Associations with these intense and elevated levels of feeling and acting and the upward movement experienced in viewing Brushstrokes and the notions expressed by its title and content suggest attributions of inspiration to the sculpture. Claims of inspiration can be traced in six examples of this basic vehicle.
The arrangement of the elements of *Brushstrokes*—the work's shape and color—provides the data for the first three examples. In one example, the arrangement of the shapes and colors of the sculpture results in the feature of a directional arrow or visual vector. The shape of each rectangular panel—convex at the top and concave at the bottom—creates a shape similar to the form commonly used in our culture as a directional marker. The placement of bands of color within the panels echoes the directional associations of the larger forms. In our culture, such directional arrows function as simple signs that indicate direction. Direction, in turn, suggests movement in that direction. In *Brushstrokes*, the arrows indicate an upward movement—a signification of going or moving upward—which is a sign for inspiration as well as for dynamics, as explained in the previous discussion of dynamism. The concept of an upward movement suggests the notion of reaching higher levels of feeling, thinking, and action and culminates in the attribution of the quality of inspiration to the sculpture.

Because *Brushstrokes* is in the city, inspiration becomes representative of Columbus. Knowledge about the qualities of Columbus as an inspiring place to live then enters into the example as data that is in agreement or disagreement with the qualities attributed to the
sculpture. In this case, Columbus is thought to be a place that has many churches, libraries, and community organizations and provides many opportunities for higher education—all things that often are credited with providing inspiration for its citizens. Thus, knowledge of Columbus provides a concordance with the concept of inspiration as representative of Columbus, and the city is seen as inspiring (see Figure 18).

The first example, then, begins with the data of arrangement of shapes and colors as a visual vector, which creates the signifier of an upward, directional arrow. The arrow suggests the concepts of movement to higher levels, which then culminate in attributions of inspirational qualities to Brushstrokes.

In a second example that results in attribution of the quality of inspiration to Brushstrokes, the arrangement of the shapes and colors of the sculpture creates an uneasy balance that similarly results in the evocation of movement. The precarious rest of each brushstroke shape on the edge of the one below it creates an uneasy equilibrium, an improbable balance that implies, because of the directional indications of the shapes, a rising movement and suggests an impelling upward force. Color is also a factor in the creation of an uneasy balance as the placement of a visually arousing red adds the suggestion
of pressure to the tip of the unsupported top brushstroke mark, increasing the suggestion of an object moving rapidly upward under the stress of an energy force; the result is attribution of an inspirational quality to the sculpture.

In the second example, then, the data—the arrangement of shape and color—form the feature of an uneasy balance. This feature evokes the concepts of an upward movement and a tension that suggests an energy impelling an upward movement and culminates in the attribution of an inspirational quality to the sculpture (see Figure 19).

Rhythmic succession of shapes is another signifier of the arrangement of design elements that evokes the concept of movement and results in a third example of attributions of a quality of inspiration to Brushstrokes. The repetitive placement of the similarly shaped brushstroke panels constructs a visual rhythm that conveys a sense of motion or rhythmic succession that also provides a sense of movement. The repetition of colors within the sculpture intensifies and reinforces the rhythm created by the shapes and suggests an upward direction to the movement that evokes the concept of rising to new levels or heights. Rising to new heights evokes attributions of inspiration. In the third example, then, the data of repetitive placement of shape and color create the feature
of rhythmic succession that evokes the concept of upward movement to new levels and culminates in the attribution of an inspirational quality (see Figure 20).

Three examples exist, then, by which viewers may come to attributions of inspiration to *Brushstrokes*. Each example begins with the arrangement of design elements that form the signifiers of a directional arrow, uneasy balance, or rhythmic succession. The three signifiers evoke concepts of an upward movement that suggest reaching higher levels of feeling, thinking, and action and culminate in the concept of inspiration.

The sculpture's site at the Columbus airport provides still another means by which viewers may come to attributions of an inspirational quality to *Brushstrokes*. Situated at the edge of the long-term parking lot, the sculpture is in the midst of airplanes approaching and departing from the airport. When airplanes fly, they overcome the restrictions of gravity and leave the earth. Seeing planes fly as the background of the sculpture suggests the notion of moving to a higher level, of overcoming the bounds of the ordinary and experiencing a flight to a higher level.

The work's title, *Brushstrokes in Flight*, is another route by which viewers may come to attribute inspiration to the sculpture; this constitutes a fourth example
organized around movement. Words influence the ways in which viewers perceive the physical characteristics of works of art and attribute meaning to them. When the title, *Brushstrokes in Flight*, intrudes on perception of the work of art, the work comes to be seen as what the title implies, an artist's brushstrokes in flight. The notion of brushstrokes flying suggests the freedom of the artist's marks to leave the page and be active on their own. The notion of freedom from restraint implies an agency that stimulates arousal and action--characteristics of inspiration. Combined with the concepts of flying and movement suggested by the work's title, the notions suggested by the site evoke a more complex concept of the brushstrokes rising to new levels above the ordinary and thus result in attributions of an inspirational quality to *Brushstrokes*.

From the data of the site of the work, then, a fifth example of attribution proceeds to the signifier of planes overcoming gravity which, when associated with the concepts of upward movement and flying evoked by the work's title, leads to a more complex concept of the brushstrokes reaching new heights. The example, then, culminates with the concept of inspiration (see Figure 21).
The content of the work is a fifth means by which Brushstrokes may come to be seen as inspiring. The content of the sculpture is the process of creation and is suggested to viewers through the recognition of the subject matter of the work as an artist's brushstrokes. Viewers come to the recognition of the sculpture as an artist's brushstrokes through the design elements of the work's physical characteristics and information given in its title.

The design elements of the sculpture central to a recognition of brushstrokes are shape, line, color, and spatial orientation. The shapes--four simple, somewhat linear, flat panels--closely resemble the rectangular marks that are made by chisel-shaped artists' brushes. The sides of each panel are not straight and at right angles to the tops and bottoms of the panel but gently curve and bend, indicating the flow of a paint-laden brushstroke.

Line is a second design element that contributes to a recognition of the panels as brushstrokes. The heavy black lines delineate the brushstroke marks of the sculpture. The black line that defines the contour of each panel shapes a ragged edge similar to that left by the individual bristles of a brush stroking on paint. The black contour lines also function within the smooth
interior of each panel to indicate the textures that brush bristles inscribe in thick paint. When a paint brush spreads thick oil paint across the surface of a canvas or a wall, each paint-laden bristle leaves a mark on the surface. A brushstroke, then, is a series of lines made by individual bristles; it only appears as a wide, smooth, and uninterrupted mark as a result of an overlap of individual bristle marks.

The particular arrangement of colors in the sculpture functions as a third design element to indicate that the panels are brushstrokes. The arrangement and position of the colors of the brushmarks provide the modeling or definition of surface changes within the panels. In Brushstrokes, there is no change in surface that would indicate depth, and the colors of the panels lack the subtle gradations of tint and hue that also are an indication of depth of form. The textural quality of the brushstrokes—the bristle imprints and the changing thickness of the stroked-on paint—is indicated only by flat areas of color. Indications of depth are made through the use of two different colors that provide emphasis for the textural quality of brush work on the panels' surfaces.
The spatial orientation of the panels further serves to indicate their nature as brushstrokes and is a fourth design element active in this example. Each brushstroke mark follows another in an order that indicates its application to the canvas. The overlap of each panel on the one above it indicates the top mark was applied first, followed by the others in descending order. A black half-circle forming the base of the four brushstroke panels reads as the tip of the brush from which they were painted.

As a complete form, the panels seem contained in a two-dimensional plane indicative of painting—a genre of art characterized by a flat, two-dimensional nature—rather than of sculpture, which traditionally projects mass in three directions, is in the round, and does not consist only of flattened shapes. Because the work is seen as a painting instead of as a sculpture, the forms can be read as brushstrokes.

The title of the sculpture, too, contributes to a recognition of the subject of the work of art as brushstrokes. From information in the title, Brushstrokes in Flight, the major shapes of the sculpture as brushstrokes can be determined even without attention to shape, line, color, and spatial orientation. As explicated in the previous discussion of attributions of a
quality of inspiration, when the title, *Brushstrokes in Flight*, intrudes on perception of the work of art, the work comes to be seen as what the title implies, an artist's brushstrokes.

The design elements of *Brushstrokes*--the physical characteristics of shape, line, color, and spatial orientation--and the work's title are the primary data by which viewers come to recognize the forms of the sculpture as brushstrokes in this example.

The recognition of the forms of the sculpture as an artist's brushstrokes suggests the content of the work is the process of creation. As the only forms of the work, the brushstrokes become the subject matter of the work rather than the means to creating a subject matter. As subject matter, they call to mind the purpose of their existence--the creation of other forms and ideas. Apprehension of the forms of the sculpture as brushstrokes, then, suggests brushstrokes presented as art and, consequently, creation as the content of the work.

The concept of creation suggests the concept of inspiration. Inspiration is acknowledged by many to be integral to the process of creation, especially in the arts. To create is to free the spirit, to rise above the constraints of daily life, limiting beliefs, and inhibitions and to release and empower the artist within.
A creation is known as the product of imagination and inspiration. By implication of its content, then, 
*Brushstrokes* both is a result of and concerned with inspiration.

A sixth example by which viewers come to attributions of inspiration for *Brushstrokes*, then, begins with recognition of the subject matter of the work as brushstrokes. This route is complicated by the two sets of data from which the forms of the sculpture may be recognized as brushstroke marks--design elements and the work's title. This example of the vehicle proceeds from the recognition of the forms as brushstrokes to the concept of the process of creation as the content of the work. From content as creation, the vehicle moves to include inspiration as a part of the creation process and culminates in the attribution of the quality of inspiration to the work (see Figure 22).

A sense of upward movement, the title of the work, its location at the airport, and the content of the work are four examples by which an inspirational quality may be suggested in *Brushstrokes*. *Brushstrokes*, then, is inspiring and, when used to represent Columbus, suggests that Columbus is an inspiring city.
The attribution of soaring, the last quality in this category of the examples of the basic vehicle of the sculpture as representative of the city, presents a more complex chain of concepts. To soar is to glide high with little effort or to ascend above normal levels. To attribute soaring to *Brushstrokes* is to ascribe a feeling of floating or flying upward. Four examples illustrate the process by which attributions of soaring are made to *Brushstrokes*; the first is contingent on the concept of movement, the second on the appearance of brushstrokes in the sky, the third on the work's site, and the fourth on the work's title.

In the first vehicle, the up-sweeping movement experienced in viewing *Brushstrokes* evokes the quality of soaring. As discussed in attributions of a dynamic quality and an inspirational quality, attributions of soaring are dependent on the arrangement of the design elements that lead to the features of a directional arrow, oblique angle, uneasy balance, and the rhythmic succession of shapes and colors. These features suggest an up-sweeping movement characteristic of soaring; the attribution of soaring can be made to the sculpture (see Figure 23).
The appearance of brushstroke marks on the sky is another datum that initiates an example that contributes to the notion of soaring. The vehicle for this attribution begins with the data of the appearance of the brushstrokes in the sky and proceeds to the signifier of the unframed brushstroke marks on the sky as a canvas. The brushstrokes are unframed and, therefore, unbounded, floating in the horizon over viewers' heads. The unbounded brushstrokes evoke the concept of floating effortlessly to new heights and culminate in the attribution of soaring to the sculpture (see Figure 11).

The site of the sculpture also contributes to the attribution of soaring. In this example of the basic vehicle, the site of Brushstrokes—the airport—brings into view planes flying. Viewers see the planes transcend the pull of gravity and rise to new levels, where they glide with little apparent effort, evoking the concept of flying and gliding. The associations and concepts of soaring developed for the planes then are attributed to the sculpture. This route begins with the site of the sculpture, proceeds to the signifier of planes flying, which evokes the concepts of flying and gliding and overcoming gravity, and culminates in attributions of soaring to the sculpture and to Columbus (see Figure 25).
The title of the sculpture, *Brushstrokes in Flight*, provides the data for a fourth example in which soaring is attributed to the sculpture. As explicated in the discussion of attributions of an inspirational quality to *Brushstrokes*, words greatly influence visual perceptions. The title of the sculpture provides viewers with the idea of flying as a feature of the work; it officially names the work. The feature of being "in flight" evokes the concepts of gliding and soaring to higher altitudes and culminates in attributions of soaring for the work (see Figure 26).

The sculpture, then, may be read as soaring through signifiers or arrows that indicate direction and movement and through a complex sequence of significations by other qualities attributed to the work--its site, the appearance of the brushstroke marks on the sky, and the work's title. The sculpture soars and the sculpture is in the city; thus, the quality of soaring transfers to the city so that it also soars. The qualities of dynamism, inspiration, and soaring attributed to the sculpture are qualities that viewers see as representing the city.

A second category or group of qualities that is attributed to *Brushstrokes* and transferred to Columbus in this reading of the work--culture, sophistication, and fame--are derived from a shared conception of the
sculpture as art. As in the first group of qualities --dynamism, inspiration, and soaring--the concepts and the sub-vehicles by which they are evoked differ for each quality in this category. Attributions for this group of qualities are evoked primarily by the signifier of art.

The attribution of culture to *Brushstrokes* begins with recognition that the sculpture is art, proceeds to the concept of art as a mark of civilization and culture, suggests that a city with art is cultured, and culminates with the concept that Columbus has art--*Brushstrokes*--and so is cultured; therefore, *Brushstrokes* is an appropriate sign for Columbus. Certain physical characteristics of *Brushstrokes* may be read as suggesting that the object is a work of art. The base or pedestal on which *Brushstrokes* rests is one such cue--cultural conventions for displaying works of art include raising them on pedestals. The pedestal of *Brushstrokes*, then, functions as a cue that calls attention to the work and indicates it is something at which to look. The inscriptions of title, artist's name, dedication data, and text on the base of the work further serve to provide evidence of the "artness" of the object.

The materials and form of *Brushstrokes* also serve as cues that the sculpture is a work of art. As a free-standing, three-dimensional, non-utilitarian object of
painted and shaped metal placed on a pedestal,

Brushstrokes follows the conventions of form for the genre of art known as sculpture. The organization of the sculpture's forms—the repetition and placement of color and shape and resulting asymmetrical balance—indicates attention to aesthetics, another indicator of art. Brushstrokes' materials—metal and enamel—are standard for works of art. The data of Brushstrokes' pedestal, materials, form, and organization of forms are cues that Brushstrokes is a work of art.

Once Brushstrokes is recognized as art, it is granted special significance. Recognition of the sculpture as art evokes cultural knowledge and expectations that affect perceptions of the work and influence attributions. Art is believed to be a thing precious and valuable and the mark of culture and civilization within a society. Art is treasured as a valuable and important remnant and marker of a civilization. According Brushstrokes the status of art, then, confers importance and significance; the sculpture is perceived as more than a mere decorative ornament and is expected to provide evidence of cultural and societal values.

Recognition of Brushstrokes as an art object that represents culture and hence has value suggests a trained sensitivity to and appreciation of artistic expression.
To have a high degree of taste and refinement—to appreciate art—is to be cultured. A city with art thus is a cultured city. Columbus has art—possesses and displays *Brushstrokes*—and thus is cultured. *Brushstrokes*, then, is an appropriate sign for Columbus.

One route by which viewers may come to attributions of culture for *Brushstrokes* and Columbus starts with the data of the sculpture's pedestal, its inscription, sculptural materials and forms, and organization of forms. These physical characteristics of the work suggest that the object is a work of art. The construction of art as a feature of the work evokes the signifier of art as a mark of culture and civilization. A city that displays a work of art such as *Brushstrokes* is cultured, Columbus displays *Brushstrokes*, thus Columbus is cultured (see Figure 27).

A second quality in the group defined by the notion of art is sophistication. To be sophisticated is to be complex, complicated, progressive, exclusive, and refined. The quality of sophistication also develops as an attribution for *Brushstrokes* from the notion of art evoked by the sculpture's physical characteristics. From art, two routes lead to the quality of sophistication: the mixing of genres of art and the process of creation as subject matter for a work of art.
In the first route, the data for this example of the basic vehicle are the sculpture's pedestal, inscription on the pedestal, sculptural materials and forms, and organization of forms. *Brushstrokes* is a free-standing, three-dimensional work of metal, placed on a pedestal; it follows the conventions of sculpture. Yet, the work also displays the characteristics of painting, a two-dimensional art form--*Brushstrokes* is composed of flat forms, has a very narrow width, and depicts the means by which paint is manipulated on canvas. Both forms are recognizable in the sculpture, so *Brushstrokes* crosses the borders of two genres of art--sculpture and painting. This crossing of borders and the use of one form to depict the action or creative aspect of the other results in a complex work that challenges traditional boundaries and categories of art. By so doing, the sculpture creates a complicated new form that suggests sophistication in viewing and dealing with art.

The quality of sophistication, then, is evoked by the physical characteristics of *Brushstrokes* of its pedestal, inscription, sculptural materials and forms, and forms of organization, which then engender the notion of art as a feature of the work. As art, the work evokes knowledge about art and the recognition of the sculptural and painterly qualities of the work. This concept then
suggests the concept of mixed genres of art combined in one form and finally culminates in attributions of sophistication (see Figure 28).

The process of creation as a subject matter for a work of art also suggests the quality of sophistication. As explicated in the discussion of the quality of inspiration, viewers come to recognize the process of creation as subject matter through recognition of the work's forms as an artist's brushstrokes. The brushstrokes are the subject matter of the work and, as such, foreground the creation of other forms and ideas. Viewers who recognize the brushstrokes, then, perceive creation as the content of the work. The process of creation is presented for viewing; the work of art is made of the making of art. The reflexivity suggested when process and product are one, the means are the ends, is a complex, intellectually sophisticated notion. It signifies a quality of sophistication for Brushstrokes, which then is transferred to Columbus.

The attributions of sophistication that are developed in this example begin with recognition of the subject matter of the work as brushstrokes from the data of the design elements, spatial orientation, and title of the sculpture. Recognition of brushstrokes as a feature of the work suggests the content of the work is the process
of creation. From content, the sub-vehicle proceeds to the complex, progressive idea that art is being made from making art and ends with the attribution of sophistication to the sculpture (see Figure 29).

In summary, then, attributions of sophistication to Brushstrokes are illustrated in two examples. Sophistication is evoked by the concepts of mixed genres in art and the complexity of the reflexivity evidenced in the work. The attribution of sophistication to Brushstrokes results in the transference of sophistication to Columbus because the sculpture is in the city.

Not all routes by which attributions to the sculpture can be made, however, originate in the work of art itself. Another route by which viewers may come to a reading of Brushstrokes as an appropriate sign for the city is through the published actions of Dana Rinehart, who was mayor of Columbus from 1984 to 1991. Although a staunch defender of the art work, Rinehart did not like the controversy that surrounded Brushstrokes and, at one point, attempted to give the sculpture to Genoa, Italy.

The vehicle for this route to an attribution of sophistication begins with publicity about the mayor's proposal to give Brushstrokes to Genoa as its primary data. Local news media reported extensively on the mayor's actions and comments regarding the sculpture.
Some residents of the city who see the mayor as having a history of making misguided, odd, and kooky statements and proposals found the mayor embarrassing, uncouth, and an unreliable source for judging the city and its residents; they thus determined that his ideas and judgments should be ignored. Ignoring and discounting the mayor's statements means that Brushstrokes should remain in the city because it is appropriate as a sign of the city; Brushstrokes, then, is appropriate as a sign for Columbus.

Another route by which viewers may come to attributions of sophistication for Brushstrokes, then, is grounded in the data of the mayor's proposal to give Brushstrokes away and viewers' perceptions of the qualities of the mayor. If the mayor is constructed as uncouth, uncultured, and showing bad judgment, viewers can move to the concept of ignoring the mayor's judgments and proposals. The concept that Brushstrokes should remain in the city as a sign for the city follows and culminates in the claim that Brushstrokes is an appropriate sign for Columbus (see Figure 30).

In summary, then, attributions of appropriateness of Brushstrokes as a sign for the city may derive from reaction to the comments and actions of a particular public figure. The attribution of Brushstrokes as
appropriate as a sign for Columbus results from the reverse transference of qualities attributed to the mayor and then attributed to the sculpture and the city.

The attribution of fame is the last quality in the group defined by the notion of art. In this example, the association of the sculpture with the city results in a specific desired image for the city--usually that the city will become famous. The datum that initiates this vehicle is the artist's name. The creator of *Brushstrokes*, Roy Lichtenstein, is a renowned artist whose work has been exhibited in such top galleries and museums as the Guggenheim Museum in New York City, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, and the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. He has been featured in trade and popular press magazines such as *ARTnews* and *Newsweek*. His work is discussed in respected texts of art history such as H. H. Arnason's *History of Modern Art* and Feldman's *Varieties of Visual Experience*. The market value of his work is considerable. Lichtenstein is, in short, famous. Lichtenstein's fame makes *Brushstrokes* a famous work of art.

With *Brushstrokes* representing Columbus, this reading suggests that the fame of the work will result in the development of fame for the city. Just as other cities use art as landmarks and symbols--St. Louis is known for
its arch, for example, and Chicago for its Picasso—the fame of the art object will be transferred to its possessor.

The sequence of attributions for this vehicle, then, begins with the fame of the artist’s name, which confers fame on Brushstrokes and Lichtenstein's other creations. The fame of the sculpture evokes the concept of cities known for their art work and culminates in the attribution of fame for Columbus (see Figure 31).

In this reading of Brushstrokes as a sign for the city, certain qualities or concepts attributed to the sculpture are transferred to the city through complex chains of concepts and associations. Two groups of qualities are attributed to the sculpture and, hence, to the city, depending on the signifier evoked by the work's data. The qualities of dynamism, inspiration, and soaring are generated from data that suggest the signifier of movement. The appearance of the brushstroke marks on the sky, the sculpture's site, and the title of the work are other data that serve to signify inspiration and dynamism. The qualities of a cultured sensibility and sophistication are suggested by complex sequences of concepts resulting from the signifier of art that also is evoked by the physical characteristics of the sculpture.

Appropriateness of Brushstrokes as a sign for the city is
evoked by reactions to Columbus' mayor's actions and discourse. Fame is evoked through associations with the fame of the artist's name, which transfers to the work of art and then to the city.

The Sculpture Does Not Represent the City

Controversy surrounded the sculpture as a sign for the city when qualities were attributed to the work that were not seen as representing the city. Two examples of such interpretations of the sculpture are explored here. In one example, not all attributions for the sculpture are positive qualities; hence, it should not be used to represent the city. If ugliness and cheapness are attributed to the sculpture, for example, those qualities are not seen as appropriate descriptors for Columbus. In a second example, attributions are made to the sculpture of qualities that, while not negative, are not perceived as matching or representing the nature of the city. In this reading, associations to fine arts and aviation evoked by the sculpture are seen as irrelevant to Columbus; thus, the sculpture does not represent the city well.

Within the first interpretation, attributions of ugliness and cheapness share grounding in notions of mass production evoked by the sculpture's physical characteristics. The materials that comprise Brushstrokes
are aluminum and enamel, materials that are refined and produced in foundries and factories. Both the metal and the paint are similar to those used for such mass-produced items as airplanes and cars. The sculpture's flat forms appear to be stamped and cut by machinery, not hand made. At close inspection, welds and other signs of industrial assembly-line techniques are visible. The materials and manufacturing signs of the sculpture, then, become data that confer an industrial nature on the work. The industrial nature of the sculpture evokes the concept of mass production, a typical industrial practice.

While not everyone would agree that all factory-produced items are without attractiveness--there are many, for example, who find cars and planes aesthetically pleasing--most objects that have a mass-produced, factory look are perceived to be lacking in the aesthetic qualities that constitute beauty. Rather, such objects tend to be seen as standardized, lacking the details of fine craftsmanship, and disagreeable aesthetically--in short, they are ugly. The qualities of industry and the factory are ascribed to the material components of the work and then attributed to the work as art.

The route by which viewers come to attribute ugliness to the sculpture, then, starts with the materials, visible signs of manufacture, and design elements of Brushstrokes
that evoke associations of mass production, and absence of aesthetic features, which suggest industry. These associations evoke ugliness. If the sculpture is ugly and represents the city, then the city is ugly. But viewers want the city to be perceived as beautiful and, therefore, do not see the sculpture as a good sign for the city. The qualities of Brushstrokes, then, do not represent the city (see Figure 32).

The attribution of cheapness also begins with the construction of an association with mass production. The colors and use of line in Brushstrokes evoke a sense of the fast-food industry, which in turn leads to attributions of cheapness and bad taste. The colors of the sculpture are bright, primary, and without the subtle gradations of tint or hue that indicate a hand-colored or hand-made object; rather, the colors are those used in fast-food restaurants such as Burger King and McDonalds. The shiny surfaces of the sculpture also are the same as those observed in the decor of fast-food restaurants.

Fast-food restaurants are characterized by quickly produced, standardized food; the items offered at such establishments are mass produced, often partially assembled and prepared in factories, ready to be cooked and wrapped for serving at their final destinations. Fast-food items hold connotations within our society for
their cardboard taste—they are only compared to more valued gourmet foods in satire or jest—and their quick satisfaction of basic needs—fast foods are eaten to satisfy hunger and not to quell a desire for a culinary or aesthetic experience. They connote a consumerism based on the creation of desire for objects that never vary from one item of the product to another.

Fast-food products, then, are inexpensive and often shoddily made and lack the characteristics for which art is valued—individuality, fine craftsmanship, unique vision, and aesthetic pleasure. Fast food is valued because it is standardized, is fast and cheap, and is reproducible in a short amount of time. The qualities attributed to the sculpture from these elements include cheapness, reproducibility, lack of individuality, lack of craftsmanship, the satisfaction of desires at the lowest level, and (literally and figuratively) lack of taste.

The route by which viewers come to attributions of cheapness to Brushstrokes, then, begins with the design elements of color and use of line. Brushstrokes' color and lines evoke notions of fast-food products and establishments, which suggest mass-produced, tasteless, and cheap products. These concepts culminate in attributions of cheapness and bad taste to the sculpture (see Figure 33).
If the sculpture represents the qualities of bad taste and the sculpture is in the city, these qualities get transferred to the city, and the city is seen as cheap, reproducible, and lacking in individuality and culture. For viewers who see the city as a unique environment with charm and an aesthetic, cultured, and sophisticated population, the sculpture is deemed a poor match for the city and is rejected as an appropriate sign for the city. In this reading of *Brushstrokes* as a sign for the city, viewers do not contest the qualities attributed to the sculpture, but they do contest the appropriateness of the qualities as representative of Columbus. *Brushstrokes* is interpreted in this reading as cheap and ugly, qualities that are rejected as appropriate descriptors for Columbus.

In a second example of a reading of *Brushstrokes* as a sign for the city, in which viewers perceive the sculpture as not representing the city, the sculpture is interpreted as connecting Columbus with the fine arts or aviation. In this sample vehicle, attributions of an involvement with the arts or the industry of flight are derived from the work's physical data and are seen as representing the same involvement on the part of the city.

Associations with the field of fine arts are evoked by the city's display of *Brushstrokes* in a public place and on land owned by the city. The display and location of
Brushstrokes evoke the signifier that Columbus appreciates and supports the arts and thus is an arty city. But the city is not arty, and knowledge of the lack of arts activity in Columbus constitutes additional data in this example. Columbus does not have a major outlet for exhibiting works of art. There is only one major gallery within the city that displays innovative or valuable works of art, the Wexner Center for Contemporary Art on the campus of Ohio State University. The Wexner is a young gallery and, as yet, does not have the reputation of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Guggenheim Museum, or the Museum of Modern Art. Furthermore, no famous artists reside in the city, and there are no masterpiece works of art about Columbus or the surrounding area, as there are depicting Arles, Paris, or the American West. Columbus does not enjoy the reputation of an arts center or environment. The city is not arty and, in fact, has little to do with the arts, which barely survive in the city due to the lack of viewers, funding, and professional outlets. The qualities attributed to the sculpture, then, are not an accurate match with such knowledge about Columbus, and in this reading, something other than a work of art is seen as a more appropriate representation of the city.
In summary, a sample vehicle for associations with the field of fine arts attributed to Brushstrokes begins with the data of the work's display and presentation in a public location on a publicly owned site, which evoke the signifier of Columbus as a city that appreciates and supports the arts and suggests Columbus is an arty city. Dissonance occurs when knowledge about the lack of arts activities in Columbus contradicts the concept of Columbus as an arty city. Brushstrokes thus is not seen as an appropriate sign for Columbus (see Figure 34).

A similar process takes place with the notion of flight representing the city. As explicated earlier, the upward movement of the sculpture and its site contribute to the attribution of associations with the field of aviation to the sculpture, and the work's title, Brushstrokes in Flight, also is key to attributions of associations with flight.

The sequence of attributions for flight within this example begins with the data of the title of the work, the work's site at the airport, and its suggested movement. These data evoke the concept of flight as an industry and science. Because the work has been designated the official sign of the city, the sculpture transfers associations with flight as an industry and science to Columbus (see Figure 35).
But Columbus has nothing to do with flight, and knowledge of this fact serves as additional data in this sample vehicle. There are no major aviation industries, heroes, or historical events or developments connected to Columbus. The city does not enjoy the reputation of an aviation center. The qualities attributed to the sculpture thus are not an accurate match with Columbus, resulting in the claim, again, that another symbol should be used to represent the city.

In this reading of *Brushstrokes* as a sign for the city, viewers do not contest the qualities attributed to the sculpture, but they do contest the accuracy of the qualities as representative of Columbus. *Brushstrokes* is interpreted in this reading as holding associations with the arts and with flight, but these characteristics and qualities are rejected as appropriate descriptors for Columbus.

Conclusions

One major vehicle constitutes the route by which viewers come to a reading of *Brushstrokes* as a sign for the city. From a perception of data of the sculpture, viewers discern a signifier, which evokes the attribution of certain qualities to the sculpture. These qualities
are transferred to the city as a result of the sculpture's location in the city and its use as a marketing tool by the city.

Key to this vehicle and the catalyst for differing readings of the sculpture within it are determinations of whether the qualities suggested accurately reflect and represent the city's character and nature. In readings of *Brushstrokes* in which qualities of the sculpture are seen as representing the city, the vehicle can be organized into two groups or categories of claims--those centering around a signifier of movement and those centering around a signifier of art.

Claims centering around a signifier of movement include dynamism, inspiration, and soaring. Attributions of dynamism begin with the physical data of *Brushstrokes'* shape, line, color, and spatial orientation of form, which lead to four signifiers--a directional arrow, uneasy or unstable balance, rhythmic secession, and obliqueness. These then proceed to the signifier, movement, which suggests tension and culminates in attributions of dynamism to *Brushstrokes* and to Columbus. The process by which inspiration is evoked is illustrated in five sample vehicles that variously begin with *Brushstrokes'* color, shapes, title, and site. From these data, signifiers of movement are developed that then evoke more complex
concepts of higher or new levels of action and thought and result in claims of inspiration for *Brushstrokes* and thus Columbus. Soaring similarly depends on a signifier of movement, which is developed from *Brushstrokes'* color, shapes, and spatial orientation; the work's appearance of brushstrokes on the sky; its site; and its title. From the signifier of movement, the concepts of floating, up-sweeping movement, flying, and gliding are suggested and result in the claim of soaring for the sculpture and, consequently, for the city.

The second category evident in the interpretation of *Brushstrokes* as possessing qualities that do represent the city consists of culture, sophistication, and fame. Culture, sophistication, and, to some extent, fame are dependent on the signifier of art. Attribution of culture begins with *Brushstrokes'* pedestal, pedestal inscription, sculptural materials and forms, and forms of organization and proceeds to the signifier of art, which summons knowledge about art that evokes the concept of art as a mark of culture and civilization and, therefore, transfers culture to those who possess and display the sculpture—the residents of Columbus. Attributions of a quality of sophistication begin with *Brushstrokes'* pedestal, pedestal inscription, sculptural materials and forms, and forms of organization and proceeds to the development of the
signifier, art. The concept of art evokes attributions of sophistication. A reaction to the mayor's actions regarding the sculpture results in attributions of appropriateness of *Brushstrokes* as a sign for Columbus. Attributions of fame result from the signifier of the fame of the artist and then are transferred to the city as a result of its possession and display of the work.

In readings of *Brushstrokes* as a sign for the city in which the qualities attributed to the sculpture do not represent Columbus, the attributions to the sculpture are seen as inaccurate, inappropriate, or undesirable. In one reading, for example, ugliness and bad taste are attributed to *Brushstrokes* as a result of an industrial signifier developed from the sculpture's materials, absence of aesthetic features, an apparent means of production, and a fast-food signifier evoked by the sculpture's bright, primary colors and shiny surfaces. Because residents of Columbus see their city as beautiful and themselves as tasteful and discriminating, however, a fact that serves as additional data that contradicts the qualities transferred to the city from the sculpture, *Brushstrokes* is not seen as an appropriate sign for Columbus.
In another reading in which qualities and characteristics attributed to *Brushstrokes* as a sign for the city are rejected, the attributions of associations with the arts and aviation are seen as inappropriate and inaccurate for Columbus. Attributions of associations with art begin with *Brushstrokes*’ pedestal, pedestal inscription, sculptural materials and forms, and forms of organization and develop into a signifier of art, which evokes the concept of art as representative of Columbus. Columbus, thus, is seen as an arty city. Columbus is not associated with the arts, however, so *Brushstrokes* is not an appropriate sign for the city. Similarly, from the sculpture’s title, site, and the signifier of movement developed from some of its physical characteristics, *Brushstrokes* evokes a more complex signifier of flight, which then is seen as representative of Columbus. Columbus is not a city connected to flight or aviation, however, so *Brushstrokes* is not viewed as an appropriate or accurate sign for the city.

Differences within the vehicle of transference of qualities from *Brushstrokes* to Columbus, then, are a result of viewers’ perceptions of qualities of the sculpture and whether they accurately and appropriately reflect the qualities and characteristics of the city. In some possible routes in this vehicle, qualities attributed
are seen as desirable for or already representative of Columbus; in others, undesirable or irrelevant qualities or the sculpture make it irrelevant or inappropriate as a sign for the city.
CHAPTER V

BRUSHSTROKES IN FLIGHT AS A TRICK OR HOAX

A third reading of or rhetorical response to Brushstrokes in Flight constructs the work as a hoax perpetrated on the general public by an artistic elite. In this interpretation, the work does not make sense and is seen as a joke. The reading is one of trickery and ignorance in that the work's shapes and meaning are unrecognizable. This response includes the sense that there is a concept here, but viewers are not able to discern what it is upon reflection on or investigation of the work of art. In this chapter, I identify a primary vehicle that comprises the interpretation of Brushstrokes as a trick or hoax. To explicate this vehicle, I identify the main signifier and concepts that constitute it to account for this reading.

Analysis

The interpretation of Brushstrokes as a hoax perpetrated on the general public by an artistic elite begins with a recognition that the sculpture is art,
proceeds to expectations about art, and ends with a comparison of the sculpture to the criteria suggested by the expectations about art.

Two kinds of data suggest that the sculpture is a work of art--the sculpture itself and the publicity that surrounded the work during its 11-year history. Certain physical characteristics of *Brushstrokes* serve as cues that may be read as suggesting that the object is a work of art. The base or pedestal on which *Brushstrokes* rests is one such cue--cultural conventions for displaying works of art include raising them on pedestals; the pedestal of *Brushstrokes* calls attention to the work and indicates it is something at which to look. The inscriptions of title, artist's name, dedication data, and text on the base of the work further serve to provide evidence of the "artness" of the object.

The materials and form of *Brushstrokes* also serve as cues that the sculpture is a work of art. As a free-standing, three-dimensional, non-utilitarian object of painted and shaped metal placed on a pedestal, *Brushstrokes* follows the conventions of form for the genre of art known as sculpture. The obvious organization of the sculpture's forms--evidenced by the repetition and placement of color and shape and the asymmetrical balance resulting from the spatial orientation of the panels--
indicates attention to aesthetics, another indicator of art. *Brushstrokes*’ materials—the metal comprising the panels and the enamel that colors them—are standard materials for works of art. The physical characteristics of *Brushstrokes*, then, suggest that the object is a work of art.

The nature and amount of attention that *Brushstrokes* received from the news media constitute a second type of physical data that may be read as suggesting that the object is a work of art. The news coverage contributed to a definition of the work as art in three ways: 1) The media named the work art, putting its definitional power behind the label; 2) they helped to establish the credibility of those who commissioned and selected the work to define art; and 3) they emphasized the high monetary value of the work.

The news media function as an institution with the power to name and define objects and concepts; in this case, the press were granted authority to define the object as art. Foucault’s (1972) notion of the discursive formation suggests that certain institutional bodies are granted the authority to create objects of discourse and to name and distinguish between one object and another. These institutional bodies then become the major authority or expert on the objects under their purview. McQuail
(1987) summarizes the role of the media in society as that of a knowledge institution and a mediator of social relations. As a knowledge institution, the media shape our perceptions and enable us to make sense of information while contributing to our store of knowledge. The media have a "general carrier function for knowledge of all kinds" (p. 51)—they thus constitute a window, an interpreter, a link, and a carrier of information, opinion, and societal norms.

Through their coverage of the commissioning of a work of art for the airport and other events surrounding Brushstrokes, the news media defined and sanctioned Brushstrokes as a work of art. Newspaper accounts of Brushstrokes—even those that criticized or ridiculed the work—described and referred to the sculpture as a work of art. In a news article reporting on Brushstrokes' increased monetary value, the work was referred to as "the city's most important art work" (Johnson, 1985), while coverage of the mayor's give-away attempt referred to the work as "the $150,000 pop art sculpture Columbus was never sure it wanted" (Johnson, 1988).

The media also contributed to the definition of Brushstrokes as art by establishing and reinforcing the credentials of those who selected the sculpture to decide what is art. They thus accorded the Civic Art Advisory
Committee's authority to confer the status of "art object"—to signify which objects have an aesthetic value. In numerous articles, beginning with a report on the formation of the committee to choose artworks for the airport via a major competition, the media established the individual committee members' credentials as experts in the arts and in city planning and thus sanctioned the committee as an appropriate institution to define and choose art. An editorial in the Columbus-Citizen Journal, for example, declared, "People knowledgeable about modern art selected the winning pieces" (Airport art, 1982); an article in the Columbus Dispatch quoted the chair of the committee, Budd Bishop—also at the time also the director of the Columbus Museum of Art—about the finalists selected for the competition. By winning the competition, *Brushstrokes* was defined as a work of art because it was chosen from a group of other objects defined as works of art. The news media thus established and sanctioned both the committee's right to decide what was art and the sculpture's definition as art.

Frequent reporting of the cost of *Brushstrokes*—$150,000—was a third way in which the media contributed to the definition of *Brushstrokes* as a work of art. Rarely did an article about the sculpture neglect to mention the cost of the work. A caption under a front-
page photo of the sculpture, for example, identified the work as "Pop artist Roy Lichtenstein’s $150,000 commissioned outdoor sculpture" (Brush Strokes in Flight, 1982), while another article announcing Lichtenstein as the competition winner stated, "Lichtenstein, an Ohio State University graduate known for his comic-strip paintings in bold colors, has been picked by the Civic Art Advisory Committee to receive the $150,000 commission, the artist said Monday" (Pop sculpture, 1982). Even later articles, such as one detailing the work’s arrival in Columbus two years after the competition and resulting commission, stated, "The $150,000 sculpture, titled Brushstrokes in Flight, was headed for a terraced courtyard between the airport’s short-term parking garage and the terminal" and quoted a cab driver watching the work’s arrival, "You mean that piece of junk cost $150,000" (Brushstrokes takes its place, 1984)?

Objects may be assigned or carry a value unrelated to their utility if they provide aesthetic experiences. Art often provides such experiences and, therefore, is one of those categories of non-utilitarian objects with high monetary value. By reinforcing the high cost of the work, the media helped to establish its significance as an aesthetic object; non-utilitarian objects that are not art typically do not come with such high price tags.
A second type of data that suggests that Brushstrokes is a work of art, then, is coverage by the news media. The media directly suggested the object was art by naming it as such in their articles. Information published in the media provided data that suggested the work was art through articles detailing the credentials of the Civic Art Advisory Committee and its selection of Brushstrokes, the competition, and the work's high cost.

Once Brushstrokes is recognized as art, it evokes cultural expectations about art that then affect perceptions of the work and influence the reading of the work. The concept of art thus becomes the signifier for expectations that art objects are to fulfill if they are to function and be defined as art. Three primary expectations about art are generated by participation in this reading: Art is expected to give aesthetic pleasure, hold significant meaning, or be the sophisticated product of a talented individual.

To function as art, the expectation suggests, objects must be aesthetically pleasing--viewers must experience pleasure in their apprehension of the object. The formal qualities of works of art are expected to provide rewarding sensory experiences--colors, textures, spatial relationships, and visual balance or rhythms are presented
to be contemplated and enjoyed for their own sake because they are beautiful and give delight and aesthetic satisfaction.

Objects defined as art also may be expected to have significant meaning. Significant meaning is achieved in two ways—through the recognizable depiction of significant individuals, objects, events, and experiences or through the evocation of significant feelings, ideas, or concepts. The creation of significant meaning by the depiction of individuals, objects, events, and experiences is accomplished through realistic or representational images that have models in a physical reality and are recognizable as real things that are deemed important or relevant to viewers' lives. A painting, for example, has significant meaning if it depicts a scene of great beauty, a person of importance, or an event that has affected or changed lives.

A work of art also can have significant meaning if it depicts or presents concepts, ideas, or subjective states that are judged to be of importance or value and so also deserve the appellation of significant meaning. In such cases, the feelings, ideas, and concepts may be presented through the depiction of recognizable (i.e., realistic) objects, individuals, and events or may be conveyed through the use of symbols or signs that are less
conventionalized and perhaps abstract or nonrepresentational. Robert Motherwell's *Elegy to the Spanish Republic* is such a painting. In the background of Motherwell's painting are the bright, primary colors associated with Spain--reds, blues, and yellows--contrasted against broad white stripes. In the foreground are large, black, threatening forms that cover and eclipse the brightness of the background. The painting has been interpreted by many as speaking of "death, of a maddened animal who will kill or be killed" (Feldman, 1987, p. 173). Significant meaning, then, is an expectation for art and may be expressed through realistic depiction or the presentation of feelings and concepts seen as valuable.

A third expectation for art active in a reading of *Brushstrokes* as a hoax or trick is that works of art meet certain standards of craftsmanship or sophistication. Viewers participating in this reading expect works of art to be objects or products that they could not create themselves; they expect them to surpass the skill of ordinary individuals in realistically depicting objects, persons, and scenes or in crafting and forming materials. Works that resemble children's drawings or creations or that appear to be less than faithful to a physical reality are deemed simple and not art. The viewer who suggests
about a work of art that "my kid could do that" is making a judgment of ridicule and disdain because the work viewed does not fulfill the expectation of technical sophistication. In applying culturally held values to objects, then, viewers expect that those who make them have exceptional talents and vision and that the objects produced are special and extraordinary.

Once Brushstrokes is accorded the status of art, then, three expectations are generated for the work. The sculpture is expected to provide rewarding aesthetic or sensory experiences; it is expected to display or express a significant meaning through the realistic depiction of an object, experience, event, or person or through the evocation of significant feelings, concepts, or ideas; and it is expected to exhibit a certain technical sophistication or complexity. The evocation of such expectations about art necessitates a return to the sculpture as data and thus results in three potential routes to the development of a reading of Brushstrokes as a hoax perpetrated on viewers by an artistic elite. The cultural expectations are applied to the work in an effort to confirm its participation in the genre of art.

The data of the sculpture, then, are viewed with the expectation of beauty and pleasure. The materials that comprise Brushstrokes and the visual evidence of the
sculpture's manufacture evoke attributions of ugliness, however, rather than beauty. The materials that comprise *Brushstrokes* are aluminum and enamel--materials that are refined and produced in foundries and factories. Both the metal and the paint are similar to those used for such mass-produced items as airplanes and cars. The industrial nature of the sculpture evokes the concept of mass production, a typical industrial practice. The sculpture's flat forms appear to be stamped and cut by machinery rather than being hand made. At close inspection, welds and other signs of industrial assembly-line techniques are visible. The materials and manufacturing signs of the sculpture, then, become data that confer an industrial nature on the work.

Although not everyone would agree that all factory-produced items are unattractive, most objects that have a mass-produced, factory look are perceived to be lacking in the aesthetic qualities that constitute beauty. Such objects tend to be seen as standardized, lacking the details of fine craftsmanship, and disagreeable aesthetically--in short, they are ugly.

The route by which viewers come to attribute ugliness to the sculpture, then, starts with the materials and visible signs of manufacture of *Brushstrokes*, which evoke associations with industry, mass production, and an
absence of aesthetic features--associations that suggest ugliness. If the sculpture is ugly, it does not meet the first expectation that viewers hold for objects defined or named as art--that art should be beautiful and evoke pleasure.

A second route by which viewers come to a reading of a hoax for Brushstrokes is grounded in the expectation that the subject matter of the work will engender significant meaning either through the depiction of real individuals, objects, and events or through the presentation of ideas, concepts, and feelings of significance. The data of the sculpture, however, suggest neither of these options to viewers who participate in this reading.

The design elements of Brushstrokes--the work's line, shape, color, and spatial orientation--may evoke attributions of objects that have models in a physical reality, but these objects do not engender significant meaning. Numerous representational forms can be developed from a reading of Brushstrokes--brushstrokes in the sky, a boy peeing off a bridge, a bunch of bananas, or a drunken sailor, to name a few. I will discuss two of these, the drunken sailor and the bananas, to suggest how the reading of a hoax plays out via the attribution of lack of significant meaning.
The form of a drunken sailor emerges from the data of Brushstrokes' shapes and their orientation in space, the balance invoked by the shapes' arrangement, and the work's site. The shapes of the four brushstroke panels seem to be an abstract rendering of a man holding a bottle to his mouth. The curved, leaning stance—the orientation in space—of the two bottom, vertical panels form the body of the sailor, indicating the backward slant his body would take if he held an upturned bottle to his mouth to drink. The blue and white horizontal panel represents his backward-tipped head, and the top, red-tipped, yellow panel represents the upturned bottle.

The arrangement of the four panels, each precariously balanced on the one below it, creates an uneasy balance that suggests the teetering stance of an inebriated man—someone reeling and swaying and about to fall over. The contour lines, colors, interior-color changes, and lines of the sculpture are ignored and do not play a role in this reading. The title, likewise, is unimportant. The site—an airport named Port Columbus—may figure slightly in viewers' attribution of a sailor in this reading; the notions of a port and of transportation suggest sailors. Sailors often are portrayed as men who indulge in drunkenness and bawdy and irresponsible behavior when on
shore after long periods of time at sea. Thus, the site may reinforce suggestions evoked by the work's other physical characteristics.

Although determination of the shapes of *Brushstrokes* as a drunken sailor is indicative of a discovered meaning, it is not a meaning that is seen as significant. A drunken sailor usually has no connection with the residents of the port in which he has leave; a sailor is in a port for a brief time and is unconnected with the community. The concept of a drunken sailor also suggests someone out for fun who has no investment in the city but uses its resources for pleasure without concern for the cost or debris left for permanent residents. If the sculpture is a drunken sailor, the qualities of anonymity, drunkenness, lack of concern, and a location to be used without regard for its future or the results of the sailor's action are attributed to the work, attributions without attraction or significance for residents of Columbus.

A second image *Brushstrokes* may suggest that also results in a judgment of insignificant meaning for the work is a bunch of bananas. Conventions of representation, or culturally shared ways of exemplifying or illustrating that which is considered real by a
culture, also suggest to viewers that *Brushstrokes* depicts an object that has a model in a physical reality—in this case, a bunch of bananas.

The conventions of representation used in *Brushstrokes* are those of commercial or advertising art. The graphic qualities usually associated with advertising art include simplicity of form; bold shapes; and flatly applied, primary colors with little variation of hue or tint—characteristics or qualities that can be seen in *Brushstrokes*. The brushmark panels are flat without much three-dimensional definition; in fact, the sculpture as a whole is less than a foot wide at any spot. The work's colors are unmodulated or flatly applied primary yellows, blues, reds, and whites. The shapes are large and simply defined by thick black lines. Because they mimic the essential characteristics and qualities of bananas—elongated rectangular shapes rounded at the ends; heavy black lines depicting the segments of a banana skin; and an intense, flat yellow color—the conventions of representation suggest bananas. The design elements of *Brushstrokes*, then, exemplify the characteristics of bananas and use an easily recognized system of representation to create their forms.
Once again, attribution of a real object as the subject matter of *Brushstrokes* results when the work is seen as a bunch of bananas, but this form, too, is seen to lack significant meaning. While there are some instances where a particular type of fruit or other flora holds significant meaning—as an apple, for example, might in a Flemish altar painting where it represents the sin of knowledge that resulted in Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden—in our culture, bananas only represent a bland, easily digested, popular, and easily obtainable food. If the sculpture is a bunch of bananas, the qualities of a prosaic food item and effortless digestion are attributed to the sculpture, attributions without significance for residents of Columbus.

Certain physical characteristics of *Brushstrokes*, then, may suggest the depiction of objects that are real for viewers. The depiction of an object with a model in a physical reality, however, is not enough to evoke a significant meaning for viewers. *Brushstrokes* thus does not meet this option for fulfilling expectations for art suggested by the concept of art that was earlier evoked by the work's physical characteristics and the publicity surrounding the sculpture.
Another option for seeing a work as having significant meaning is through the abstract presentation of ideas, concepts, and feelings. The data of Brushstrokes, however, do not evoke such feelings or suggest such concepts or ideas in this reading. Instead, the lines, shapes, colors, and orientation of shapes in space remain individual elements and do not combine in ways that suggest ideas or concepts or evoke emotions. In this construction of the sculpture, the viewing experience of Brushstrokes results in feelings of confusion and failure. There is a sense that a concept or idea is being presented, but recognition of that concept is unobtainable. Feelings of failure result from the inability to discover the presentation of something significant.

A third way in which Brushstrokes fails to meet viewers' expectations is through the perceived sophistication of the work. An expectation of technical sophistication and complexity is generated for a work of art, an expectation not met in Brushstrokes. Because Brushstrokes utilizes the conventions of representation common in commercial and advertising art, as explicated in the discussion of attributions of a bunch of bananas, viewers tend to see the work as simplistic and uncomplicated. The simple forms, primary colors, and
outlines of *Brushstrokes* also suggest coloring books and children's art. Work that could be produced by advertisers or done by children does not fulfill the criterion of sophistication that is held as one of the expectations for art by viewers participating in this reading of *Brushstrokes*.

*Brushstrokes* thus fails to meet any of the three primary criteria or expectations viewers in this reading hold for works of art. It does not provide viewers with aesthetic pleasure, significant meaning, or evidence that it is technically sophisticated and complex. The failure of the sculpture to meet expectations contradicts the information on which the original recognition of the work as art was based—the sculpture's adherence to conventions of displaying works of art and the authority of the news media and the Civic Art Advisory Committee to define art. The earlier data suggested that the work was an art object; yet, viewing of the work does not fulfill expectations for works of art.

The sense of contradiction—that the work is art but does not do what art does—evokes a feeling of trickery and hoax. Viewers who construct this interpretation or response to the sculpture must reconcile the contradictory information they have received. They are presented with information that *Brushstrokes* is physically presented as
art, that experts name the work as art, and that the city paid a great deal of money for it as art. An initial or a second viewing of the sculpture, however, suggests that the work is a failure by their expectations. Resolution of the contradiction comes in the construction of the work as a hoax perpetrated on them and others like them by an aesthetic elite.

In this reading, then, viewers experience a dissonance or contradiction between two culturally learned notions of art. In the first, art is believed to be defined and sanctioned by certain societal institutions and to be indicated as a named and sanctioned object by the conventions of presentation for the object. In the second, certain expectations of function and nature are held for the object. When these two sets of criteria conflict, viewers feel the object is a hoax and ascribe trickery to the situation (see Figure 36).

An interpretation of or response to Brushstrokes as a hoax or trick, then, begins with two sets of data—the sculpture's pedestal, the inscription on the pedestal, the work's materials and forms, and the publicity that was instrumental in the assignment of authority to the media and the Civic Art Advisory Committee as experts on art. From the data, a signifier of a concept of art is constructed, which then suggests certain expectations for
art. Expectations for art lead to three routes by which the sculpture contradicts the earlier construction of the work as art: aesthetic pleasure, significant meaning, and technical sophistication or craftsmanship. Brushstrokes is industrial and ugly; the sculpture does not provide viewers with viewing pleasure. The work's shapes, colors, lines, site, and spatial orientation evoke images such as bananas or a drunken sailor, neither of which evokes significant meaning. Likewise, the physical characteristics of the sculpture fail to evoke feelings, concepts, or ideas that hold significant meaning or value. Finally, the work does not present evidence of technical sophistication or complexity. The contradiction between the two equally strong attributions--Brushstrokes is art and Brushstrokes is an art object that does not do what art is supposed to do--culminates in a reading of a hoax or trick for the work of art.
CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to discover how a rhetorical response to visual art is constructed and, in particular, how the process of viewership by which a rhetorical response to nonrepresentational art is developed from a lay position. A rhetorical response is defined in this study as an interpretation of or meaning ascribed to a work of art. Viewership, a concept adapted from the notion of spectatorship, refers to the process by which a rhetorical response is constructed, a process that culminates in the product of a rhetorical response to a work of art. For this study, nonrepresentational art refers to works of art whose images have no obvious models in physical reality, while lay position is a position from which a response to art is developed not from formal art frameworks but from individual experiences and cultural knowledge--from living and looking in the world.

Three interpretations or rhetorical responses to Brushstrokes in Flight, a public art work created by Roy Lichtenstein and commissioned by the city of Columbus, Ohio, were developed: 1) Brushstrokes as the rewriting of
creation by a male artist; 2) *Brushstrokes* as a sign for the city of Columbus, Ohio; and 3) *Brushstrokes* as a trick or hoax perpetrated on the residents of Columbus, Ohio, by an artistic elite.

In each reading, vehicles were discovered that enable that reading to be developed. In each vehicle, data suggested signifiers that then evoked a concept which, in turn, became a signifier for other concepts and eventually resulted in the claim or attribution being discussed.

**Rewriting of Creation.** In a response to *Brushstrokes* as the transcendence of human limitations and the rewriting of creation by a male artist, the sculpture is seen as the four brushstrokes of a painter on a canvas of the sky and the surrounding landscape. In this reading, *Brushstrokes* does not paint an interpretation of the world; rather, it paints over the world, foregrounding the process of artistic creation. It also is an act of creation by someone with powers that extend beyond usual human limitations.

In my analysis of *Brushstrokes* as the rewriting of creation by a male artist, I developed seven vehicles that are key to the construction of this rhetorical response: 1) artistic creation as the subject of the work; 2) re-creation of the world; 3) a larger-than-human creator;
4) transcendence of human limitations; 5) movement; 
6) male viewership; and 7) the embodiment of the viewer as creator of the brushstrokes.

In the vehicle of artistic creation, two sub-vehicles were discovered. The first sub-vehicle begins with the data of shape, line, color, and spatial orientation; develops a signifier of an artist's brushstrokes; includes as a primary concept brushstrokes as a component of artistic creation; and culminates in the claim of creation. The second sub-vehicle begins with the data of Brushstrokes' pedestal, inscription on the pedestal, materials, and forms of organization; suggests a signifier of a work of art; suggests the concept of art as a creation; and culminates in the claim of creation.

In the vehicle of recreation of the world, the data are the appearance of brushstrokes on the sky; the signifier is the sky as a canvas; the concepts include the sky as a potential site for a new creation, the sky as an already finished creation that is being painted over, the creation myth, the artist as creator of a new work, and God as creator of the world; and the claim is God's creation usurped by an artist or recreation.

The vehicle of a larger-than-human creator begins with the data of the scale of the brushstroke marks and the sky as their canvas, develops a signifier of large brushmarks,
includes concepts of the large size of the brush instrumental in the creation of the marks, and culminates in a claim of a larger-than-human creator.

In the fifth vehicle, concerned with transcendence, the site of the sculpture constitutes the data; the signifier is cars and planes; and the concepts include the transportation of humans at fast speed, the brushstrokes flying, and the creation of both through technology and industry. The claim, then, is the transcendence of human limitations.

In the vehicle of movement, four sub-vehicles were discovered. The first begins with the data of shape and arrangement of panels and colors, develops a signifier of a directional arrow, includes as concepts indication of direction and progress toward that direction, and culminates in a claim of movement. A second sub-vehicle of movement begins with the data of the precarious arrangement of shapes and colors, evokes a signifier of uneasy balance, suggests a concept of change, and culminates with a claim of movement. A third sub-vehicle of movement begins with the repetitive placement of shapes and colors as data, develops a signifier of rhythmic succession, suggests a concept of change over time, and ends with a claim of movement. A fourth sub-vehicle of movement commences with the data of the panels'
orientation in space, evokes a signifier of obliqueness, suggests a concept of straining toward or away from a spatial framework, and ends with a claim of movement.

The vehicle of masculine viewership begins with four different data and their respective signifiers. The data are: the site of the sculpture; brushstrokes as art; brushstrokes on the sky and the world as God's creation; and the long, thin, shape of the sculpture. Their respective signifiers are: cars and planes, most famous artists are men, a creation myth, and a phallus. The four signifiers evoke a concept of a male creator and culminate in the claim of male viewership.

The vehicle of embodiment includes three sub-vehicles. In the first sub-vehicle, the data are the spatial orientation of the planes and the large size of the brushstrokes; the signifier is a close-up view of the brushstroke marks; a concept suggested is the close point of view of the viewer, and the claim is the viewer as creator of the brushstrokes. A second sub-vehicle of embodiment begins with the data of shape, line, color, and spatial orientation; conventions of representation; title; and the precarious arrangement and repetitive placement of shapes and colors. The signifier of a tactile sense of applying paint is evoked, which then culminates in a claim of a sense of movement felt in the viewer's arm. Two
threads constitute the third sub-vehicle of embodiment. The first thread begins with the data of shape, line, color, and spatial orientation; develops the signifier of an artist's brushstrokes; suggests the concepts of creating an image and being in the midst of a process; and culminates in a claim of "nowness." The second thread of this sub-vehicle of embodiment begins with the data of the repetitive placement of shapes and colors, develops a signifier of rhythmic succession and patterns felt somatically, suggests as concepts change and the passing of time, and culminates in a claim of "nowness."

**Brushstrokes as a Sign for Columbus.** In a response to *Brushstrokes* as a sign for the city, the second reading constructed, the sculpture is interpreted as symbolizing the character of Columbus. Particular qualities or associations attributed to *Brushstrokes* are thought to reflect the nature of the city and its residents. Analysis of this reading of *Brushstrokes* suggested two primary vehicles. One is concordance, in which viewers' knowledge of Columbus is in agreement with the qualities attributed to the sculpture; *Brushstrokes* thus is seen as an appropriate sign for the city. The second vehicle is one of dissonance, in which viewers' knowledge of the city
is not in alignment with the qualities attributed to the sculpture, so **Brushstrokes** is seen as an inappropriate sign for the city.

In the vehicle of concordance, seven qualities or associations are attributed to **Brushstrokes**, providing seven examples of the vehicle: dynamism, inspiration, soaring, culture, sophistication, appropriateness, and fame. In the example of dynamism, four sub-vehicles were developed that lead to attributions of dynamism to **Brushstrokes**. The first begins with the data of arrangement of shapes and colors; develops a signifier of a directional arrow; and includes the concepts of upward movement, energy, **Brushstrokes** as dynamic, and dynamism as representative of Columbus. In the second sub-vehicle in the example of dynamism, the data are precariously balanced shapes and colors; the signifier is an uneasy balance; and the concepts include movement, dynamism, and dynamism as representative of Columbus. The third sub-vehicle of dynamism begins with the data of repetitive placement of shapes and colors, develops a signifier of rhythmic succession, and suggests concepts of movement, dynamism, and dynamism as representative of Columbus. A fourth sub-vehicle of dynamism begins with the data of diagonal orientation of shapes; develops a signifier of obliqueness; and includes concepts of straining, movement,
dynamism, and dynamism as representative of Columbus. Each sub-vehicle of dynamism finds concordance between dynamism as representative of Columbus and knowledge of Columbus as dynamic--Brushstrokes thus is seen as an appropriate sign for the city in each sub-vehicle.

In the example of inspiration as a vehicle of concordance, five sub-vehicles were developed. One sub-vehicle begins with the data of shapes and colors; develops a signifier of a directional arrow; and suggests the concepts of higher levels, inspiration, and inspiration as representative of Columbus. A second sub-vehicle of inspiration begins with the data of precarious rest of shapes and colors; evokes a signifier of uneasy balance; and suggests concepts of upward movement, inspiration, and inspiration as representative of Columbus. A third sub-vehicle of inspiration commences with the data of repetitive placement of shapes; evokes a signifier of rhythmic succession; and suggests concepts of upward movement, higher levels, inspiration, and inspiration as representative of Columbus. A fourth sub-vehicle of the example of inspiration features two kinds of data. From the datum of the Brushstrokes' site, a signifier of overcoming gravity is developed, while from the datum of the work's title, signifiers of flying and movement are developed. Both signifiers combine to
suggest concepts of a higher plane, inspiration, and inspiration as representative of Columbus. In a fifth sub-vehicle, data of the sculpture's title and its line, shape, color, and spatial orientation develop a signifier of brushstrokes that suggests the concepts of artistic creation as content, inspiration, and inspiration as representative of Columbus. Each sub-vehicle finds agreement with knowledge of Columbus as inspiring and culminates in the claim of Brushstrokes as an appropriate sign for the city.

In the example of soaring as a vehicle of concordance, four sub-vehicles were constructed. In the first sub-vehicle, four signifiers are developed from four different data: Line and color result in a directional arrow, diagonal orientation of panels in obliqueness, precariously balanced shapes and colors in an uneasy balance, and repetitive placement of shape and color in rhythmic succession. These four signifiers combine to suggest the concepts of up-sweeping movement, soaring, and soaring as representative of Columbus. In the second sub-vehicle of soaring, the data are the brushstrokes on the sky; the signifier is brushstrokes unbounded; and the concepts include floating, soaring, and soaring as representative of Columbus. Site constitutes the data in the third sub-vehicle of soaring; evoking a signifier of
planes; and suggesting the concepts of flying, gliding, overcoming gravity, soaring, and soaring as representative of Columbus. In the fourth sub-vehicle of soaring, the data of the sculpture's title construct a signifier of flying, which suggests the concepts of soaring and soaring as representative of Columbus. Each sub-vehicle features agreement with knowledge of Columbus as soaring and culminates in a claim of Brushstrokes as an appropriate sign for the city.

In the example of culture as a vehicle of concordance, Brushstrokes' pedestal, inscription on the pedestal, and sculptural materials and forms are the data for a signifier of art. The concepts include art as a mark of civilization and culture and the notion that a city with art is cultured. The data of Columbus as a city with art --Brushstrokes--find concordance with the attributions and result in a concept that Columbus is cultured and a claim that Brushstrokes is an appropriate sign for the city.

In the example of sophistication as a vehicle of concordance, two sub-vehicles were constructed. In one, the data of the pedestal and its inscription and the work's sculptural materials and forms evoke a signifier of art, which suggests the concepts of two genres of art--sculpture and painting, recognition of two genres in one form in Brushstrokes, sophistication, and sophistication
as representative of Columbus. In a second sub-vehicle, shape, line, color, spatial orientation, conventions of representation, and title are the data; the signifier is brushstrokes; and the concepts include creation as content of art, reflexivity, sophistication, and sophistication as representative of Columbus. Both sub-vehicles feature agreement with knowledge of Columbus as sophisticated and thus suggest a claim of *Brushstrokes* as an appropriate sign for Columbus.

In the example of appropriateness as a vehicle of concordance, the data are publicity about the mayor's attempt to give *Brushstrokes* away and the mayor's perceived history of making poor judgments and odd statements. The signifier is the concept of the mayor as embarrassing and as exhibiting poor judgment. Concepts include the idea that the mayor's proposals and ideas should be ignored and that *Brushstrokes* should remain as a sign for the city. The claim thus is *Brushstrokes* as an appropriate sign for the city.

The last example of a vehicle of concordance is that of fame. That Lichtenstein's name and works are mentioned in many places constitutes the data for this vehicle, and the signifier is the fame of Lichtenstein's name and works. The concepts include *Brushstrokes* was created by Lichtenstein and is famous and fame will be had by the
possessor of a famous work of art. That Columbus owns a Lichtenstein—a famous work of art—constitutes a secondary datum, which then is in agreement with the attributions and develops the concept of Brushstrokes as a sign for the city and the claim that Columbus thus will be famous.

A second vehicle in the interpretation of Brushstrokes as a sign for Columbus is grounded in the dissonance that occurs when knowledge of the city is not in agreement with the attributions made to the sculpture, and Brushstrokes is not perceived as an appropriate sign for the city. Four qualities or associations are attributed to Brushstrokes that do not agree with knowledge about Columbus, providing four examples of the vehicle: ugliness, bad taste, associations with art, and associations with flight and aviation.

In the example of ugliness as a vehicle of dissonance, the data are the aluminum and enamel materials of the sculpture, the absence of aesthetic features, and evidence of the manufacturing production of the work. The signifier evoked is industry; and the concepts suggested are mass production without aesthetics, ugliness, and ugliness as representative of Columbus. Agreement is not found with knowledge of Columbus, which is seen as
beautiful by viewers. The dissonance that occurs then culminates in a claim that *Brushstrokes* is not an appropriate sign for Columbus.

The example of bad taste as a vehicle of dissonance begins with the data of bright, primary colors and shiny surfaces and develops a signifier of fast food. The signifier suggests the concepts of cheap, standardized, reproducible products; bad taste; and bad taste as representative of Columbus. Agreement is not found with knowledge of Columbus, which is seen as having good taste. The dissonance that occurs then culminates in a claim that *Brushstrokes* is not an appropriate sign for Columbus.

The example of artiness as a vehicle of dissonance begins with the datum of sculpture in a public place in Columbus, situated on public land; develops a signifier of Columbus as a city that appreciates and supports the arts; and includes the concept of Columbus as an arty city. Agreement is not found with knowledge of Columbus, which is seen as lacking in art activity in this vehicle. The dissonance that occurs culminates in a claim that *Brushstrokes* is not an appropriate sign for Columbus.

The example of flight as a vehicle of dissonance commences with the data of the sculpture's title, site, and sense of movement; develops a signifier of flight; and suggests the concept of flight as representative of
Columbus. Agreement is not found with knowledge of Columbus, which is not recognized as having associations or connections with aviation or flight. The dissonance that occurs then culminates in a claim that *Brushstrokes* is not an appropriate sign for Columbus.

**Brushstrokes as a Trick.** A third reading of or rhetorical response to *Brushstrokes in Flight* interprets the sculpture as a hoax perpetrated on the general public by an artistic elite. In this interpretation, the work does not make sense and is seen as a joke. One primary vehicle was featured in my construction of a reading of *Brushstrokes* as a trick or hoax. This vehicle begins with the data of the sculpture's pedestal, materials, and forms of organization and with the publicity surrounding the sculpture; develops a signifier of *Brushstrokes* as art; and suggests the concepts of expectations about art (beauty, significant meaning, and technical sophistication). In this reading, there is a return to the datum of the sculpture for fulfillment of the expectations, resulting in the discovery of contradictory evidence (instead of beauty, an industrial nature is found; no significant meaning is found; and a lack of technical sophistication is found. The lack of evidence
for the sculpture as art suggests the concept that
Brushstrokes is not art and culminates in the claim that
the sculpture is a trick.

I acknowledge that these are not the only possible
readings that can be developed in response to Brushstrokes
in Flight; in addition, within each of the readings, other
routes for arriving at the readings are possible. My
readings and the vehicles I identify as instrumental in
their construction are hypotheses of how rhetorical
responses are constructed. Elements or threads from the
various vehicles and sub-vehicles I suggest also may be
combined in different ways to culminate in the same or
similar readings, or some elements or threads may be
dropped to construct different sub-vehicles, vehicles, and
readings. I do not presume, in other words, that my
findings constitute all possible rhetorical responses to
Brushstrokes in Flight.

The Construction of a Rhetorical Response to Art

In my construction of the three readings of
Brushstrokes in Flight, I discovered that the development
of a rhetorical response generally involves multiple
vehicles or referential chains or sequences, with each
vehicle contributing a portion of the meaning of the
reading. The process involved in each vehicle involves
four basic steps: processing data, development of a
meaningful signifier, construction of a referential chain or sequence of concepts, and development of an assertion or claim. Although I am presenting these steps sequentially--and the visual diagrams that serve as illustrations of the processes in the appendices also assume a linear character--the steps of the process probably happen virtually simultaneously or in a less ordered fashion.

Step one in the process of a rhetorical response involves the processing of data. By *processing*, I am referring to the attending to, perceiving, and organizing of data. The data involved in this step of the construction of a rhetorical response are of two types: 1) the physical dimensions or characteristics of the work of art and its environment--such as dots, lines, colors, shapes, and position or orientation in space; and 2) informational data, consisting of ideas or information relating to the art object.

In the step of apprehending data, viewers apprehend or perceive the elements or characteristics of the art object and organize them in some way or recognize them as a basic form or unit of some kind. When the data are the physical characteristics of an art object, certain visual elements are organized into an aggregate of variables that constitute a form by virtue of their relationship to one
another. Certain perceptually selected shapes and colors of an art object may be organized or apprehended into a structure or pattern through the complex mental processes of perception. Stimuli that are in proximity to each other or similar in lightness, size, or spatial orientation, for example, may be grouped together as a perceptual unit. Figures or shapes are likely to be constructed from elements that are close to each other—a line that curves back onto itself, for example, may be organized or recognized as a circle or other such shape. Sekuler and Blake's (1985) assertion that "simple sensations constitute the building blocks of perceived form" (p. 139) seems to summarize the process of the first step.

Step one of the process I discovered was suggested as part of the process of interpretation of images by some of the scholars I referenced in my literature review. The Gestalt processes of perception by which visual stimuli are organized and perceived discussed by Sekuler and Blake (1985) and Arnheim (1974), for example, support this step. Kanengieter's (1990) proposition that the presented elements of an architectural structure are the means through which the viewer moves from the major physical
elements of a building to a message also supports the apprehension of physical data as an initial step in the development of a rhetorical response to art.

When the data with which a rhetorical response begins consist of ideas or information about a work of art, they also are organized in relationships that form units of meaning. Information about the site of a work of art—that the site is one owned by a city or that a work is paid for by tax revenues, for example—may be organized in relation to the work of art into the idea of public land or site. Similarly, titles or text that accompany images also constitute this second type of data. The ideas presented in the text or title evoke concepts or perceptions that then are organized in some way in relation to the visual characteristics or other data of the work of art. This component of step one also was suggested by scholars referenced in my literature review. Berger (1972) and Grombrich (1960), for example, each contend that words that accompany images and the context in which a visual image is presented influence interpretations of images and, in fact, totally may change the meaning of images from ones developed without the addition or intrusion of these sorts of data.
Step one in the construction of a rhetorical response to a work of nonrepresentational art, then, is the apprehension or perception and processing of visual variables (variables such as dot, line, shape, direction, tone, color, texture, dimension, and scale) or informational variables (ideas and knowledge) organized according to their relationships into fundamental structures or units of perception.

The second step of the construction of a rhetorical response to a nonrepresentational work of art consists of the development of a meaningful signifier from the apprehended data. In this step of the process, the fragments of the data are organized into a basic object, quality, or concept that is meaningful to the viewer. From the data of the work of art, some sort of basic "thing" is seen; a form is grasped that has some significance. Perceptually selected shapes and colors in an art object, for example, may be organized or apprehended as having a kind of balance, direction, spatial orientation, rhythm, or physical resemblance to a particular form or object. Principles of Gestalt organization confirm this human tendency to integrate fragments and even vague pieces of visual information into meaningful patterns and units. This meaningful pattern or
unit is perceived as form and is, according to Burke (1968), not only the appeal of the work but also "a way of experiencing" the work (p. 143).

When the apprehended data are organized into a meaningful form, that form becomes a signifier that is crucial to the remainder of the process of the construction of a rhetorical response to a work of art. Recognition of the data as something, the second step of the process, provides the starting point from which a chain of signified concepts is developed. The signifier is assigned a meaning, which suggests a concept, which then suggests other concepts, with each functioning both as a signified for the previous concept and as the signifier for the next concept in the chain. The signifier, in a sense, suggests how to chain out the interpretation and generates or evokes other concepts or referents that, in turn, act as both signified and signifier for still other concepts that eventually culminate in an assertion or claim for the work of art.

Step three in the process of the construction of a rhetorical response to nonrepresentational art is the construction of referential chains of concepts from the signifier. The way in which these chains of concepts are constructed—the nature of the concepts selected as meaning for the initial signifier and the signifiers that
follow in the form of additional concepts--are determined by the codes or systems selected as the framework for interpretation. I am using the terms code and system here as they are used in semiotics. A code or system is a learned or enculturated way of "interpreting the meanings of various kinds of communication in which the meanings are not obvious or evident" (Berger, 1955, p. 82). A basic premise of semiotics is that symbols, icons, and signs are identified with and carry meanings for other things and are used by members of a culture to explain and make sense of the values, mythologies, and ideologies of their culture. Signs are made of two parts: a signifier—the sound, object, or image that stands for something—and the signified—the concept or notion for which the sign stands. Sense is made of images by determining what the object or image stands for or resembles according to the learned system of perception of the viewer's culture.

The process of the construction of the chain of concepts is, as Goodman (1976) and Audigier (1991) suggest, dependent on the systems or codes the viewer uses to make sense of the image. The signifier, then, acts as a catalyst and calls into play particular codes or systems by which to construct the concepts developed from the signifier.
The imposition of a code or system at this stage of the process is necessary because images do not function like language, which has referential meaning. Whereas the letter a or the word the, for example, have generally agreed-upon meanings in language, a line or color in a work of art do not. As Goodman (1976) suggests, the components of visual images, including those of art, are without the articulation and differentiation that characterizes language; thus, none of the elements of an art object has a determinant meaning:

Nonlinguistic systems differ from languages, depiction from description, the representational from the verbal, painting from poems, primarily through lack of differentiation—indeed through density (and consequent total absence of articulation)—of the symbol system. (p. 226)

As a result, every variation of a physical dimension of a visual image—line, shape, lightness, or position, for example—has tremendous semantic potential and makes a difference in an interpretation of a work of art. Meaning thus occurs through the application of interpretive codes that the viewer brings to bear in the interpretive process.

Step four is the discovery of a claim or assertion for the image. The claim is the refinement or elaboration of the signifier; it seems to be an enactment or an explanation of the signifier that initiated the vehicle. The claim, then, is determined by the signifier and, in a
sense, justified by the chain of references that lead to it from the signifier. In many instances, several chains or vehicles are integrated to create a reading; in others, the response develops from one such chain or vehicle. Often, the development of an assertion or claim for the sculpture results in an evaluation of the work of art that is consistent with the claim. Development of a reading that a work is a trick or hoax perpetrated by an artistic elite, for example, suggests a negative evaluation of the work. The nature of the meaning attributed to works of art seem instrumental in the constitution of evaluations or at least in determinations of whether evaluations will be positive or negative.

A rhetorical response to visual art, then, begins with the perception and organization of visual stimuli and other data into a recognizable form or unit of some kind. From these data, a signifier is developed that suggests a referential chain of concepts, dependent on the interpretive codes or systems selected, that elaborate on the signifier and culminate in an assertion or claim of the work of art.

**Accounting for Differences in Responses**

Differences in readings or interpretations of works of art frequently occur. Three different readings easily were constructed for *Brushstrokes in Flight*, and numerous
other readings are possible. In this section, I identify possible sites and processes in the previous theory that are responsible for such differences. The differences seem to arise from two sources—the form imposed on the perceptual data to create the signifier and the systems selected for application in the interpretation of the concepts.

The choice of form or unit to impose on perception to create a signifier was crucial to differences in the readings I constructed. In several of the vehicles instrumental to the readings, the same data were developed into different signifiers and culminated in different assertions or claims for the work. Shapes and colors, for example, were developed into a signifier of a directional arrow and culminated in an assertion of inspiration in one vehicle, while in another, they were developed into a signifier of industry and culminated in an assertion of ugliness. Metal and enamel were developed into a signifier of forms of art and culminated in creation in one reading but were developed into a signifier of fast food in another, culminating in an assertion of bad taste.

Studies of processes of perception indicate that humans generally perceive in similar ways; all humans have a tendency to group like or closely positioned elements together, for example, or to construct various fragments
into relationships of balance and shape. The particular units that are ascribed to the fragments of perception, however, are dependent on the many different factors that affect perception in general and, likewise, affect the signifier developed in the construction of a rhetorical response to art. The amount of time spent looking at an image, for example, may affect the signifier that is developed. The amount of involvement with and interest in an image on the part of a viewer also may influence the nature of the signifier developed. Viewers who are interested in art or who are part of a marketing council charged with finding a suitable logo for the city may spend more time looking at the image and choosing a signifier for a work than those walking quickly by the work of art on their way to catch a plane. The need to understand the work of art also may play a role in the construction of a response. When a work of art is imposed on a culture or a group of individuals as a sign for the culture or group, the image may generate an exigence that guides the development of a signifier in a particular direction. The process of the development of the signifier, then, is affected by such factors as amount of time viewers spend viewing a work, interest in or reason for viewing the work, and the impact of the work on viewers' lives.
The particular system or systems employed to provide meaning to concepts in an interpretation is a second factor that affects the nature of the interpretation. Many systems or codes are available to a viewer at any time, and often more than one is used in the construction of an interpretation. Five systems I discovered that can be applied in the development of readings for *Brushstrokes* are the generic, somatic, metaphorical, historical, and axiological systems. Generic systems are those that are suggested by the perceived genre or category of the work of art or visual object itself—examples are maps, photographs, paintings, and advertising. A generic system includes or depends on the technical knowledge a viewer possesses about the nature of objects in that genre, how those objects are made, and how they are used. A somatic system is a kinesthetic or bodily code that encourages an interpretation in terms of perceived and felt rhythms, balances, and movement. A metaphorical system is one that focuses on resemblance; application of such a system directs interpretation to ways in which an object resembles another object or exemplifies the qualities of another object or quality. A historical system is based on knowledge of history and its events, people, and documents; the application of a historical system in interpretations of *Brushstrokes* included myths of
creation, how gender roles function in a particular society, and the history of aviation. An axiological system is one in which values and ideologies constitute the defining schema of interpretation. The axiological system applied in interpretations of *Brushstrokes* included values about appreciating and supporting the arts, ideas about representation of Columbus and its residents, political leanings and beliefs about the city, and judgments about the actions of a political personage--the mayor of Columbus.

Interpretive systems are selected according to two factors. One is the focus of the perceptual process itself, which suggests dimensions of the image on which to focus. A focus on line in a work of art may evoke the Gestalt principle of closure, which will connect fragments of a line curling back on itself so that a circle is perceived, while a focus on color may lead a viewer to miss the circle altogether. If, for example, in the process of perception, a viewer focuses on the elongated shape of the work, that focus is more likely to call up a system of interpretation concerned with metaphor--it looks like a penis. In contrast, a focus on the thin, flat surface of the work is more likely to call up a system of interpretation concerned with genre--in particular, with the genre of painting.
The personal experiences of the viewer constitute a second factor that affects the particular systems selected for use in interpreting the concepts that chain out in a response to a work of art. Viewers must be aware of various systems, first of all, in order to employ them. A viewer who knows little about the Christian religion and its myths and tenets, for example, will not have access to that particular historical system as an option for interpretation. Similarly, someone who knows nothing about the mayor's past performance also will not have access to the system of interpretation concerned with his political history. To cite another example, someone who never has painted and has not felt the movement in the arm that results during this activity would not have access to the somatic system of interpretation that would be available to another. Personal experience, then, plays a large part in the selection of the particular systems that are applied in the interpretation of a work of art.

Some scholars have suggested that variables such as taste, visual literacy, critical-thinking skills, socio-economic factors, or art experience are the most important variables that affect differences in the construction of interpretations of works of art. What all of these proposed factors have in common is that they constitute implicit judgments and evaluations about a person's
capacity to make an interpretation of a work of art. All of these are factors that can be used by "those in the know" to make judgments about whether individuals have the proper credentials for constructing readings about works of art. This is the perspective taken, as I suggested in chapter one, by those who employ art protocols for interpreting works of art and believe that only those who know a great deal about art may construct interpretations for works of art.

What my study has shown, in contrast, is that the variables that affect the differences in readings to a work of art are not differences in degrees of competence in interpretation but rather differences in choices—equally valid and legitimate—made at two primary points in the process of constructing a response. One juncture is the choice the viewer makes in naming a signifier from fragments of perception. There is no one right form or unit to impose on these fragments; the one selected depends on influences on the process of perception in general and on factors such as interest and experience. Factors such as education or class can affect this process, but not in the way that art historians and critics usually suggest. Class or a lack of education do not invalidate the unit or form selected by a person to create a signifier; what they do is limit the options
available to that person in formulating that signifier. A person with limited experiences in the world and a lack of education, for example, may not have encountered the name of Lichtenstein; thus, that is not likely to constitute one of the options for selection of a signifier available to that individual.

A second site at which difference in the construction of response seems to occur is in the selecting of the codes or systems brought to bear on the interpretive process following the formulation of the signifier. Some readings are rooted in the application of historical systems; others rely on generic or metaphorical systems for the development of their meanings. Again, no system is better than another for interpretation of works of art, and that goes, as well, for the system of formal art discourse—it is just one among many equally valid systems for interpretation. The differences in readings have to do, then, with which systems are selected and, as with the formulation of the signifier, the systems selected can be influenced by factors such as education. Lack of knowledge of a system or the dimensions of it that might be applicable to the interpretation of a work of art will affect the resultant reading. The reading is no less valid, however, for the omission of or reliance on any particular system of interpretation.
To summarize my theory, then, the process by which a rhetorical response to nonrepresentational art is constructed begins with the organization of visual and other data into a unit or form that then is developed into a meaningful signifier. The signifier suggests a referential chain of concepts that elaborate on or enact the signifier and culminate in a claim or assertion of the work of art. The chains of concepts are dependent on five systems or codes that serve as interpretive frameworks for meaning—the generic, somatic, metaphorical, historical, and axiological systems. Differences among readings of the same artifact may be accounted for by the form imposed on the visual and other data to create the signifier and by the systems selected and employed in the interpretation of the concepts.

Assessment of the Literature Review

The theory I have explicated from the constructions of the readings to Brushstrokes both benefits from the literature review with which I began and surpasses the insights it offered. In the literature, I collected sources from a variety of disciplines that seemed relevant to an effort to discover how rhetorical responses to art are constructed from a lay position. I divided the sources into insights from three perspectives—object-centered, audience-centered, and performance-centered
perspectives. Within each category, the insights offered in various studies that seemed like they might have relevance for my research question were summarized. With the completion of my study, I am able to sort through the insights offered in the literature in a more useful way than I was before and to assess the usefulness of the insights offered, using as a guide or criterion the process I constructed for developing a rhetorical response to art.

Of the three categories into which I had grouped the literature initially, the object-centered category, which I initially was inclined to downplay in significance because of my orientation toward meaning as rooted in people rather than objects, turned out to be more important and relevant than I initially had believed. The insights provided in this category are relevant to and largely echo the initial step of the theory developed in this study—perception of the physical data of a work of art and the processing of those data in some way. This is not to suggest that I now believe that meaning resides in the object but that the nature of the physical object constrains, to some degree, the ways in which it is interpreted.
Useful information that helped me develop my ideas about how viewers process the physical dimensions of the work of art at this step was provided by, for example, Bell (1913) and Langer (1953, 1957), who suggested that the elements of works of art are experienced by viewers as significant or arousing forms that play essential roles in the construction of responses to the works of art. Burke (1968) also offered ideas on form as the organizing principle of works of art and the means by which they are experienced. I also found Kanengieter's (1990) insight that viewers' differing responses to visual images may be due to their focus on different data or to viewers' differences in processing elements to be useful in explicating the first step of my theory.

I also discovered that some of the influences or variables proposed by studies in this category were irrelevant to or were not consistent with the initial step of my theory. Dondis (1973), for example, suggested that the elements or components of visual images function as a language, which contradicts my notion that visual data are polysemic and dependent on interpretive systems rather than determinant meanings. Similarly, Saint-Martin (1987) suggested that the fundamental units of visual language--what she calls **coloremes**--function by syntactical rules;
in contrast, in my theory, what happens at this stage of the process is not due to grammatical constructions but to the choices of the signifier formulated by viewers.

I found information useful to the development of step two of my theory in the object-centered literature, as well. Goodman's (1992) notions of density and lack of articulation as a characteristic difference between verbal language and visual images and his notion of a vocabulary of reference--which explicates how structural and design elements of architecture exemplify or express qualities and ideas--provided more insight than others into the process by which a meaningful signifier might be developed from fragments of visual and other data. And Berger's (1972) contention that titles affect and perhaps even change interpretations of images provided useful information about the data from which viewers may develop signifiers.

In my summary of the literature concerned with audience-centered theories, I divided the literature into three categories: those concerned with qualities inherent in the viewer, those asserting that culturally shared visual codes are key to interpretations, and those asserting that both systems of representation and ways of seeing are learned and culturally determined. My theory disproves the relevance of viewers' inherent qualities,
skills, and competences as key to the construction of a rhetorical response, as the first theme of this section of my literature review proposes. Morely (1980, 1981), for example, suggested that such differing cultural factors as socio-economic position, educational level, cultural or interpretive competences, and position within various social discourses determine which referential potentialities are instrumental in the decoding of visual messages and the construction of responses. In my theory, in contrast, the choices that viewers make in the signifier they create and the systems of interpretation they apply are critical in the construction of their responses and in the differences among them.

The second theme of this section of my literature review--culturally shared visual codes--provided useful information helpful in constructing step three of my theory--the construction of referential chains of concepts from the signifier. I found Audigier's (1991) insight on the use of a semiotic system to discover meaning in non-linguistic sign systems of advertising consistent with the notions of systems operating at this third step. Langer's (1957) suggestion that time is experienced somatically through tensions evoked by the work provided support for the somatic system in my theory, for example, while
Audigier's (1991) contention that viewers search for values in the construction of meaning for advertisements supported an axiological system.

I also found Goodman's (1976) notions of mediated reference insightful and relevant to the construction of the referential chains I suggest are constructed in the third step of my theory and also to the last step—the attribution of a claim or assertion to the image. Grombrich's (1982) notion that works of art are meaningless without access to authorial and artistic codes, however, is not consistent with my theory, which suggests that rich and legitimate meanings are found outside of those constructed by the formal art discourse. Shield's (1990) assertion that both culturally learned ways of seeing and systems of representation—the third theme in this section of my literature review—play a role in interpretations of visual images also provides ground for the construction of referential chains that culminate in assertions or claims in my theory.

Performance-centered literature, the third category of my literature review, was not as helpful or useful as I had hoped. The theories offered in that area seem to call for a different kind of study than mine to be useful. Without actual performative actions of real viewers as
data for my analysis, I found few ways to apply the notions of scholars such as Conquergood (1986) or Ward (1994).

Because the construction of meaning turned out to be more a part of the process of construction of a rhetorical response to art than I initially envisioned, literature that deals with meaning and the viewer's role in the attribution of meaning would have been useful to include in my literature review. A great deal of attention has been paid, in the communication field, to the study of meaning--to discovering, for example, the inherent nature of signs and symbols, how various classes of signs and symbols convey the meanings that constitute their messages, the different kinds of meanings possible, the different kinds of sign and symbol systems, and how each distinctive system uses the more general principles of signification to develop its own characteristic mode of creating meaning and conveying messages. As I developed my theory, I had to reacquaint myself with some of the basic ideas concerning meaning, such as Ogden and Richard's semantic triangle and the work on meaning by semiologists such as Eco (1976) and Barthes (1967). Earlier attention to such ideas might have facilitated the development of my theory because what I have developed is very much in line with these ideas.
Application of the Theory of a Rhetorical Response to Art

My interest in this study is not to champion works of art that never cause controversy or evoke negative responses. Rather, I believe that art should provoke lively dialogue and promote insights and changes in how the world is viewed. My interest has been in discovering how various responses to works of art are constructed rather than in judging the appropriateness of particular responses. The information yielded in my study could be helpful to city planners, arts administrators, art educators, artists, and those who commission works of art for public places.

There are several ways in which the theory I developed of how a rhetorical response to art is constructed could be applied. One is in the selection and installation of works of public art. Those who commission works of art for public places could use the theory as one criterion for the selection of works of art in competitions such as the one that selected Brushstrokes in Flight for Columbus. The criterion here would be: Given the primary readings that might be constructed for this work, do those readings contribute to or detract from the function the work is expected to have? Commissions or committees charged with choosing works of art could decide what function they want the work to have. They might decide, for example, that
the work is desired as decoration, as a monument to national values, as a commemoration of a significant cultural event or hero, as a representation of the area and its residents, or as a provocation for discussion and interaction. They then might construct the various physical data on which viewers might focus, signifiers viewers might formulate, and systems and codes viewers might apply in interpreting the work that might be generated by works that are the finalists in the competition. These readings could be constructed on the basis of interviews with members of the community or through focus groups if the jury members felt they were too tied to art discourse to see many of the responses possible to the works. Some works, such a construction would suggest, would tend to encourage lively discussion, questioning, interaction, and exploration; others might generate readings that are divisive, hateful, angry, and that encourage people to stay away from the space—such as Richard Serra's Titled Arc was accused of doing. Juries charged with selecting public works of art might come closer to selecting works that serve the functions they intend using such an approach than by simply choosing works of art based on expert opinions or projected monetary or market value—two of the usual criteria of such juries. Commission juries and committees' choice of
works of art, then, would depend on how they see the space as functioning and the response they want to produce with a work of art in that space.

Another way in which my theory may be applied is by providing useful information by which to broaden interpretive frameworks in relation to chosen works of art. Publicity played a role in the interpretive schema used in the constructions of some responses to *Brushstrokes*. The media repeatedly presented data about cost, possession, and the credentials of the selection committee, information that may have triggered the application of particular interpretive systems for some viewers. In the presentation of such limited data about the work, the interpretive frames suggested for viewers were narrowed considerably. As a result, they probably were more likely to bring to bear generic or historical systems and not even to consider an interpretive system such as the somatic one.

In contrast, publicity covering the works of the artist Christo seems to widen the interpretive possibilities available for his works. Media attention and other forms of publicity that provide information about the processes of planning involved in Christo's works and the materials and actions needed to construct them stimulates interest in looking and understanding and
encourages an investment of time and effort in developing signifiers for the works. By involving volunteers in the execution of his works, Christo provokes viewers to explore and discuss their expectations for the specific work being constructed, art in general, and the space being used. His actions allow and encourage interaction, negotiation, and participation of viewers. The events and publicity surrounding Christo’s works acknowledge rhetorical processes such as publicity as crucial to the construction of responses to works of art, and such processes, whether by the media, an arts institution, or the artist, could be used to widen the range of systems available to viewers in the interpretation of works of art.

A third way in which my theory could be put to use is as a teaching tool by art educators. One concern of art educators is with understanding how people respond to, interpret, and appreciate works of art. My theory provides information about this process and could be used to teach art teachers how to validate and understand the experiences of viewers outside of the formal art discourse. As a result, arts professionals and lay viewers’ expectations for art and its interpretation may be broadened.
I began my research with an interest in understanding how rhetorical responses to works of nonrepresentational art are constructed from a lay position. This study provides only an initial and tentative hypothesis of how such constructions of responses occur. I hope that other scholars in communication will continue to work in this area, refining, elaborating on, clarifying, and perhaps even disproving the theory I have developed. As a result of such further research, our understanding of the nature of visual symbols and how they function will begin to approach the level of the communication field's understanding of discursive symbols.
APPENDIX

FIGURES RELATIVE TO CHAPTERS III, IV, AND V

The following figures serve as illustrations of the processes of the vehicles explicated in the chapters detailing the readings. Although these figures assume a linear character, the steps of the process probably happen in a simultaneous or less ordered fashion.

A brief explanation of the terms used in the figures may clarify the process. The term data is used to indicate that the forms perceived at this point of the process serve a denotative more than a connotative function. I acknowledge that as soon as an object or form is recognized as data it signifies. I have chosen to label the initial component data to emphasize the point at which the viewer engages the object. The term concept is used to simplify the explanations of the process. A concept both is a signified of the previous signifier and a signifier for the signified that follows.
Figure 1. A sub-vehicle of creation rooted in a signifier of an artist's brushstrokes.
Figure 2. A sub-vehicle of creation rooted in a signifier of art.
Figure 3. A vehicle of recreation rooted in a signifier of sky as the canvas for the brushstrokes.
Figure 4. A vehicle of larger-than-human creator rooted in a signifier of large size of brushstrokes.
Figure 5. A vehicle of transcendence rooted in a signifier of planes and cars.
Figure 6. A sub-vehicle of movement rooted in a signifier of a directional arrow.
Figure 7. A sub-vehicle of movement rooted in a signifier of uneasy balance.
Figure 8. A sub-vehicle of movement rooted in a signifier of rhythmic succession.
Figure 9. A sub-vehicle of movement rooted in a signifier of obliqueness.
Figure 10. A vehicle of masculine viewership rooted in a signifier of four threads: cars and planes, most famous artists are men, creation myth, and phallus.
Figure 11. A sub-vehicle of embodiment rooted in a signifier of brushstrokes seen close up.
Figure 12. A sub-vehicle of embodiment rooted in a signifier of the generation of memories and experience of painting from brushstrokes and movement.
Figure 13. A sub-vehicle of embodiment rooted in a signifier of two threads: an artist's brushstrokes and rhythmic succession experienced as change.
Figure 14. Example of a vehicle of dynamism rooted in a signifier of directional arrows.
Figure 15. Example of a vehicle of dynamism rooted in a signifier of uneasy balance.
Figure 16. Example of a vehicle of dynamism rooted in a signifier of rhythmic succession.
Figure 17. Example of a vehicle of dynamism rooted in a signifier of obliqueness.
Figure 18. Example of a vehicle of inspiration rooted in a signifier of a directional arrow.
Figure 19. Example of a vehicle of inspiration rooted in a signifier of uneasy balance.
Figure 20. Example of a vehicle of inspiration rooted in a signifier of rhythmic succession.
Figure 21. Example of a vehicle of inspiration rooted in a signifier of overcoming gravity and flying and movement.
Figure 22. Example of a vehicle of inspiration rooted in a signifier of an artist's brushstrokes.
Figure 23. Example of a vehicle of soaring rooted in a signifier of a directional arrow, obliqueness, uneasy balance, and rhythmic succession.
Figure 24. Example of a vehicle of soaring rooted in a signifier of brushstrokes unbounded.
Figure 25. Example of a vehicle of soaring rooted in a signifier of planes.
Figure 26. Example of a vehicle of soaring rooted in a signifier of flying.
Figure 27. Example of a vehicle of culture rooted in a signifier of art.
Figure 28. Example of a vehicle of sophistication rooted in a signifier of art.
Figure 29. Example of a vehicle of sophistication rooted in a signifier of an artist's brushstrokes.
Figure 30. Example of a vehicle of appropriateness rooted in a signifier of the mayor as embarrassing and with poor judgment.
Figure 31. Example of a vehicle of fame rooted in a signifier of Lichtenstein's name and works as famous.
Figure 32. Example of a vehicle of ugliness rooted in a signifier of industry.
Figure 33. Example of a vehicle of bad taste rooted in a signifier of fast food.
Figure 34. Example of a vehicle of artiness rooted in a signifier of Columbus as a city that appreciates and supports the arts.
Figure 35. Example of a vehicle of flight and aviation as representative of Columbus rooted in a signifier of flight.
Figure 36. A vehicle of trickery rooted in a signifier of Brushstrokes recognized as art.
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Pop sculpture to cast airport in bright color. (1982, August 27). Columbus Dispatch, p. 1A.


FOOTNOTES

1. For a discussion of these controversies, see Senie (1992).

2. This idea has been explored and found to be true, according to anthropologists. For a discussion of findings, see Deregowski, J. B., Muldrow, E. S., & Muldrow, W. F. (1972); and Grombrich (1982).