

A Selective Framework for Hermeneutics

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November 25, 2021

The predominant conception of art is as a *creative* phenomenon; a process whereby some novel *artistic object* is introduced into the world, such that the novelty¹ is captured by the object's *form*². We term the procedure by which the object is formed "*the creative process*" and conclude that, by observing the object from different perspectives, we can be versatile in our interpretation of its *form*.

According to this view, Adele *created* a series of sounds which describe the *form* of her music. These sounds were recorded as the LP 30 - the *artistic object* - then distributed to fans, who could observe 30 through auditory perception. Finally, they could vary their perspective by shuffling, among other things.

This discussion is centered on the following question: can the existence of a canonical perspective form part of the artistic object itself?

Let us begin by considering a *selective* conception of art, whereby the *artistic object* is a product of a *selective process*. Within this process, nothing new is introduced into the world. Instead, the artist forms the *artistic object* by selecting a narrow range of experiences from the set of possible experiences which the artists' materials allow for. Examples of selection within audiovisual art include selecting colours, sounds and arrangement. Here we can call colour, sound and arrangement the *targets of selection*³.

The question then arises, which experiences should the artist select? This we can think of as the artistic question - a question which is unique to the artist, and whose answer is embodied by *the selective process*. Some *targets of selection* are necessarily within the artists' control, while others may not be⁴. We can now recognise that 30 cannot alone

¹By novelty, I mean something like the essence of the art. You could think of this as the set of meanings represented by the art, among other things.

²Form of representation. For example, the series of bumps of a vinyl record representing the Fleetwood Mac album Rumors.

³Notice that all of these *targets of selection* influence our perception.

⁴For example, the lighting in each scene in a film is necessarily in the filmmaker's control, whereas the song order of 30 is not in Adele's.

comprise the *artistic object*, as it does not capture all the of *targets of selection*. On the other hand, the *selective process* does, thereby giving us a more complete description of the *artistic object*. In other words, the novelty is captured in the *selective process*.

In the *creative* conception, novelty is in the *form*. In the *selective* conception, novelty is in the (*selective*) *process*.

In the *creative* conception ignores that, by recording 30, Adele is selecting for us at every step. It places an arbitrary boundary between what is convenient for the artist to select and what is convenient for the observer to select. While it can be noted that the artist often allows the observer to select and, in doing so, adds an element of versatility to their *artistic object*, this doesn't occur to me to be strictly necessary, nor should it be expected.

Choosing whether to allow the observer the choice is itself part of the *selective process*. By forcing the artist to cede this choice, we juxtapose the artist's want of selection with the observer's selection, and thus end with a less cohesive *selective process* and, ultimately, *artistic object*⁵.

On the other hand, allowing the artist to select a canonical perspective (if they wish) protects against this. As this violates the *creative* conception of art, it is easy to see why adherents would oppose this move. I have adopted the *selective* conception and so have no qualms about accepting this conclusion.

⁵It should be noted that the *selective process* requires skill, so it is possible that an artist which lacks it may select in a manner which doesn't produce a compelling *artistic object*. In these cases, it may actually be in the artist's interest to allow the observer more selective agency, instead of risking a poor selection themselves.