

ural and filled with love. Cornell's work stands as a crystalline refuge from a world of frustrated hopes and increasing complexity, from an impersonal world that has forgotten the magic and mystery of poetry. Lost illusions are sheltered along with pristine innocence and the pure naïveté of childhood. . . .

His poetry of recollection and desire transcends eccentric nostalgia or excessive romanticism. Realizing what is present we are also aware of the infinity of what is absent. The emptiness of some boxes, some with uncoiled clock springs, perches which some rare bird has deserted, glass neatly fractured by a bullet, or the sands of the sea and of Time, becomes a grave and desperate warning. Cornell's assertion of purity and of paradox is basic and human. His art is as enduring as it is ephemeral, as sophisticated and imaginative as it is innocent and simple, as universal and real as it is mysterious and personal, as wise and serious as it is witty and ironic.

It is easy to fall under the spell of such a magician and seer.

Meret Oppenheim

Object, 1936

Illustrated on page 295

Jenny Holzer, in *Contemporary Art in Context*, 1990, pages 55, 56

[This is] an everyday object but it's also an otherworldly thing. It could come from another civilization—maybe it did—and I think it's fair to say that this is a mundane object rendered sublime, absurdly sublime.

One reason I have continued to . . . enjoy it is because it was made by a woman. . . . I suppose, too, it was just handy to know that this piece was made relatively early in modern art, and was made successfully. As a woman artist, it does give you courage to go on to see that someone else has pulled it off before.

Another thing I like about this is the fact that it's very concise. . . . The scale, I think, in this case helps it. It's a nonart material: basic fur and teacup. . . . I think that women tend to be drawn to nonart materials . . . because women often deal with what I would call real-world subject matter—things that happen in the world—and so nonart materials are appropriate for these kinds of concerns. It's a generalization to say that all women work that way, but I think it's enough of a trend that it's interesting to note it. Still, Oppenheim is not as well known as she should be, I suspect. I think she got confined to the lower tier because of her sex.

The piece is sinister. It seems like a cup that could fight back. I suppose fur implies teeth, and so the cup

could bite you. I also like that it's repulsive. That's always a good quality in art. I won't even say one reason for its repulsiveness, but I was thinking that when you're eating, there is nothing more disgusting than when you get a hair in your mouth. This is really an in-depth study in repulsion. . . . I like that the fur would be a way to muffle sound. It's like she killed off the chit-chat part of the tea ceremony. I like also that it would be insulated by the fur—the thermos effect.

I think that [confounding expectations] is a rich vein for artists to work in. . . . But I think it's also fine to make things that are genuinely shocking and that are about serious subjects. And I think if you use contradiction in the form or in the language itself, or in the placement of the work, that this is conducive to dealing with hard subjects and making good art. . . .

This is a latter-day projection onto the object, but I think this could be an early example of Conceptual art because . . . the thing can live in your mind once you've seen it. Although it is wonderful to see, you can carry it in your mind without actually looking at it. It's also a nice piece of art because you can make it yourself at home. That goes back to the nonart materials. . . .

Finally, what I like about this object is its quality of aggressiveness. . . . It certainly would throw a wrench into things if you brought this cup to afternoon tea; it wouldn't be the polite ceremony that tea parties are supposed to be. . . . I think that this piece tells you that life is not what it seems.