

2012

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### Recommended Citation

Korolainen, Kari (2012) "Artification and the Drawing of Distinctions: an Analysis of Categories and Their Uses," *Contemporary Aesthetics (Journal Archive)*: Vol. 0, Article 14.

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## Artification and the Drawing of Distinctions: an Analysis of Categories and Their Uses

*Kari Korolainen*

### Abstract

The aim of the article is to examine how we distinguish between art, decoration, and furnishing within a research interview. The interview specimens here are examined by adapting the ethnomethodologically oriented method of Membership Categorization Analysis. The results indicate that the speakers rely, for example, on the context of the interview situation and also use flexible logical means, such as conditioning and comparison, to make the discussed issues more comprehensive. The results of the analysis are interpreted in the context of artification, emphasizing in particular the notion of the situated process of categorical resiliency.

### Key Words

artification, categories, distinctions, ethnomethodology, interview conversation, membership categorization analysis

### 1. Introduction

Artification, understood here broadly as a transition of categories, from non-art to art, raises questions such as how transformations and ambiguities in meaning make sense to us. How do we proceed if categorical transition as artification or, more generally speaking, aestheticization,<sup>[1]</sup> or any other similar transition occurs? If certain aspects change, or even if there is merely the suggestion that aspects transform into something they had not been, presumably creating considerable confusion in the process, then how can artification be recognized in the first place? The focus of the present study is on conversational situations where the definitions and distinctive categories of art, decoration, furnishing, and so on have been discussed in the form of interviews.

The discussion in this article is based on the assumption that in order to comprehend artification there should be at least some kind of distinction or difference between categories in the first place.<sup>[2]</sup> Thus, the aim is to promote discussion of artification by analyzing the process of drawing distinctions.

The following analysis will demonstrate how various adaptable conversational states are created so as to render the issue of definitions of art and decoration and the differences between art, decoration, furnishing, and so on more comprehensible in the context of the research interview conversation. I must stress here that the aim of this article is not to argue that the conversational resources introduced here comprise an exhaustive presentation of what takes place in discussions of differences in art, decoration, and furnishing. Nor is it the purpose here to enumerate the countless categories and their features involved in this topic.

First, I will show how reference to the interview situation is

one of the resources frequently used in justifying and defining a discussion. I will then suggest that the actual interview content changes shape in the course of an interview. This might be summarized as *a process of embedding and adjusting the conversation by means of contextualization*.

Second, I will illustrate how the discussed topic is defined by using the methods of conditioning and comparison. These methods will also provide a flexible framework for the topic under discussion. I will refer to this as the *means of flexible argumentation in conversations*.

## 2. Methodological framework

My research material draws on interviews dealing with topics such as home and furnishing, home decoration (seasonal and commercial decoration), ideas and influences (advertisements, magazines, and so on), and art and artification. The material is based on nineteen research interviews conducted in 2009 in Eastern Finland as a part of a larger study concerned with decoration and art from the viewpoint of artification. Most of the interviewees were contacted after they responded to a newspaper announcement headlined, "How do you decorate?" Some of the interviewees were also contacted after the preliminary inquiries through other research projects and friends. Subsequently, interviews were generally conducted in a loosely structured manner in the interviewees' homes. It should also be noted that the author served both as the interviewer and the recorder and transcriber of the interviews. In sum, the primary interview material consists of sixteen specimens of conversation predefined to specify items in the interview talk where distinction was explicitly discussed.<sup>[3]</sup> In other words, the material consists of short conversations dealing with making the distinctions between art, decoration and furnishing, and other related topics.

While there are numerous concepts of category, in this investigation I am using the concept of category in the practical sense and on a concrete level as a component of conversation.<sup>[4]</sup> The categories of "art" and "decoration" will, consequently, be used as a concrete starting point for the investigation, while the analysis itself expands from the initial delineation of the categories to an examination of the potential uses of these categories.

In addition, I should emphasize that interviews are understood here in terms of the conversational process of the interview situation or, as Carolyn Baker has argued, as "conversational interaction."<sup>[5]</sup> The idea of conversational interaction stands here for comprehension of the interview as a fixed part of the method *per se*. One way of understanding this perspective is to notice, as Peter Eglin and Stephen Hester did, that "If there is analysis to be done, it is analysis of, and grounded in, members' analysis."<sup>[6]</sup> Thus, at this point the question raised in this article can be formulated in terms of the methods that may be used when things are said to be art or not-art.

I will develop the investigation further by means of Membership Categorization Analysis (MCA), which is ethnomethodologically oriented. Harvey Sacks, who originally established the ethnomethodologically oriented Conversation Analysis (CA) and MCA, has summarized the basic methods

as: "So just let the materials fall as they may. Look to see how it is that persons go about producing what they do produce."<sup>[7]</sup> Of course this is coarse-grained advice, but nevertheless it sufficiently condenses the underlying idea and application of the method. It is worth mentioning, however, that the details and the applications of ethnomethodology are diverse; so are the concepts pertaining to its tradition. In addition, these methods have been used in a variety of contexts.<sup>[8]</sup>

### **3. Analysis of categories**

Extracting categories such as art or decoration serves as a concrete starting point for the present analysis.<sup>[9]</sup> Naturally, a variety of categorizations will appear in the interviews subjected to analysis. When, for example, I ask whether there are any similarities between art, furnishing, and decoration, I am using the categories of "art," "furnishing," and "decoration." Generally speaking, the categories deployed in my questions inevitably reverberate in the interviewees' replies. Frequently, however, the relationship is asymmetrical, since the categories that the interviewees use fluctuate in comparison to the questions. In one specific example, the interviewee used the categories of "art," "decoration," and "junk." In this case, I had not mentioned the category of 'junk.' Hence, the group of categories that the interviewee used is rather different from what I used in my question, or at least the ambience of the group is of a different style. This is, of course, a simple example of the asymmetry in the use of categories. The essential observation is, however, that it is possible to talk about junk, for example, in the context of making differences in art. Therefore, in no case can the variety of aspects for discussion be necessarily foreseen, at least in a very strict sense, when using art or decoration or furnishing. In the context of artification, this might be taken further by considering whether one can also take for granted the direction of categorical transition: the kind of transition it might be in the first place, and the direction it might indicate.

One reason for the variety of categories, and the fact that they do not necessarily match in the strictest sense of the word, is that the categories I elicit in my conversation may appear to be ambiguous and confused, at least when the period of talk is extended, as, for instance, when I attempt to discover the correct wording when stammering or re-phrasing the question. It is possible, for example, that an interviewee will address particularly those categories that I elicited in the final part of the question while ignoring the categories appearing at the beginning.

### **4. Analysis of category levels**

Analyzing the levels of the categories used comprises the second phase of the analysis. To begin, let me take an illustrative example. In one interview, I use the category of 'visual-material-world' when asking about the differences and similarities contained in furnishing, decoration, and art. This "visual-material-world" serves here as a superordinate level category,<sup>[10]</sup> since the question itself includes the categories of 'furnishing,' 'decoration,' and 'art,' which could be considered basic level categories. In addition, when the interviewee provided a response to this question, she utilized

the category of 'painting,' which could be regarded as a subordinate level category in this context. Moreover, the 'visual-material-world' is used here to describe my definition of the question at hand; hence, it also operates as a justification of the subject-matter in general. The specification of the level of categorization suggests, then, that the abstractness of a question is often manipulated, broadly speaking, with concretization. In other words, superordinate or basic level categories are frequently met with subordinate level categories, both by the interviewee and by the interviewer.

This raises the question, in what sense do we presuppose that business or education or every-day life as a subject of artification can exist at the same categorical level as art when considering the notion of artification in general? Do non-art categories need to be on the same level as art in the first place so that "proper" artification can occur? As the analysis seems to suggest, it is quite conventional to talk about differences on a concrete rather than an abstract level. How specific, then, can a transition between categories be? The question, however, of whether artification should occur at a consistent categorical level will remain open at this point, since I plan to resume this discussion later. The central point at this stage is to emphasize the notion of the similarity or non-similarity of the various category levels in the context of the differentiating categories.

#### **5. Features and activities connected with categories**

The third stage of the present study is based on an analysis of the features and activities connected with each of the categories.<sup>[11]</sup> For example, in one of the interviews the features of 'fineness' and 'expensiveness' were attached to the category of a 'work of art.' Similarly, the feature of 'pleasure' was attached to 'art' in another interview. In addition, the activity of 'displaying' was attached to the category of 'decorative piece' (ornament) in one of the interviews, while the category of 'souvenir' embodied the activity of 'traveling' in another interview, and the list could be longer.

When thinking of artification and the features and activities bound or attached to categories, we should also be aware of the variety of the category of art. For example, the category of 'souvenir' itself contains the idea of traveling. In contrast, the category of 'art' contains either so many or so few ideas that the category itself becomes blurred. Hence, various features and activities are essential in any construction of differences. This is also why I have emphasized and sketched out the idea of the situated character of artification.

#### **6. References to the interview situation**

First, I will present a few examples of how contextualization in the interviews makes a difference. For example, I could talk about the general division of the interview themes (home, furnishing, decoration, and ideas) or, in another interview, I may mention that I consider transition to be a highly interesting subject of inquiry. Alternatively, I may consider the ways in which the questions raised in an interview might be difficult. Or I can mention that in my study I am concentrating on the material world rather than on music. In

addition, on several occasions in the interviews I discuss the possibility that these boundaries or distinctions may appear as a consequence of the process of research *per se*, that is, in devising the questions, themselves.

Hence, these examples indicate quite clearly that relying on the theme of the interview seems to be one of the methods frequently used by an interviewer. It must be emphasized, however, that the point here is simply to illustrate briefly the character of the interview conversation. In other words, I do not present my questions mechanically, although I do follow the lines of the main themes while conducting an interview. In contrast, the discussion of distinctions between art, decoration and furnishing results from a variety of conversations.

It should be observed that the interviewees also rely on the perceived process of interview. Relying on the interview context occurs, for example, when interviewees present counter-questions, such as whether displaying decorations might be considered as a form of furnishing. Similarly, an interviewee's requests for clarification of the questions posed might be seen as a means of referring to the situation, for example, when focusing on the topic of distinctions, as in the following:

K: Does this kind of distinction make any difference to you?

H: Oh, what kind of distinction do you mean?[\[12\]](#)

In addition, sometimes it is possible that, in the course of discussion, an interviewee will forget the original question and will, in consequence, re-define the question itself: "So, like, I got confused already. What was the question you were asking? I don't remember it anymore."

It is also worth emphasizing here that a presumed relationship exists between art, decoration, and furnishing in my study because of the themes (home, furnishing, seasonal decoration, decoration in general, influences on furnishing, art, and artification) that have actually been chosen. The result may then be that this presumed relationship might have some influence on the matters under discussion. In other words, if there were some emphasis on, for example, art, business, and politics, then both the themes and the questions, and supposedly the conversation, would all have been different. The aim here, however, is not to commit oneself to every conceivable context for artification. Thus, the resolution of these problems of influence and limited scope consists of explicating the uniqueness of each interview conversation. Furthermore, the essential aim is observing the kind of ideas that emerge in the context of the analysis of drawing distinctions between art, decoration, and furnishing that are capable of inspiring more general viewpoints in the discussion of artification.

## **7. The room and the surrounding objects**

In the following section I am addressing further the contextual elements contained within the uses of categories. At this stage it should be emphasized that the interview conversation quite frequently consists of reference to matters previously

mentioned in interview conversations, such as when I mention that some particular objects or decorative pieces (*e.g.* food arrangements, flowers, or teabags) have already been discussed in the interview. The list could be extended, of course. The aim is, however, to observe that the context of an interview is, among other things, a temporal factor. Thus the issues considered in interviews may sometimes be constructed on the basis of events that have occurred only a few moments previously.

In addition to its temporality, the context of an interview creates the material circumstances of the interview. I might point out certain objects such as some decorative pieces on a top shelf, a piece of stone, and a paper resting on a table. Thus, the analysis implies that the relationship between the accounts and the levels of the categories becomes apparent when I ask questions such as, Do you talk about decoration with anyone? The interviewee might answer at a concrete level by pointing to things rather than talking about possible conversations involving decoration, as can be seen in the following example: "Well, I don't know much, but there is something new over there, those frogs on top of that chest of drawers." There is brief hesitation at the beginning of the interviewee's turn, which seems to suggest that the interviewee is seeking or formulating the answer. The emphasis is, however, on the concrete, subordinate level category, and from this point on, the talk continues with the frogs. Thus, the general process of consideration of the topic is overcome by the material and the temporal situation.

Let me take another example taken from the same interview:

K: So, how about the boundaries between art and handicraft, then?

H: Well....

K: Do you ever think about them or do they...?

H: Well, yeah, always, I reckon they blend in here quite smoothly.

K: In what way?

H: Yes, well like this bronze thing is mostly kept on the table and....

The categories of 'art' and 'handicraft' that I use here in my question are basic level categories. However, the interviewee's notion of "they" serves as an intermediate resource, since it functions as the mediator of different categories and possible features attached to them. The category of 'bronze thing,' which is a subordinate category, possesses the activity of "keeping on the table." Furthermore, these concrete categorizations become an example of the art- and handicraft-bound activity of "blending in smoothly." Additionally, all of this functions as a counter-argument to my notion of 'boundary.' In the following, the question of boundary is overcome by explaining about the present situation of the smooth mixture of items in the room. Thus, the bronze thing remains oscillating between art and handicraft, albeit one kept on a table.

The analysis seems to suggest here that the talk is anchored to the surrounding room or surrounding objects. I have referred to this resource of talk as a "yonder-method," which appears to be one of the central ways of constructing interview talk, since it is used by both interviewer and interviewee. The crucial point here is that the concrete surroundings and objects are used as points of reference amidst the general talk. This method possesses various forms. The common denominator, however, is the notion of 'yonder' (here, this, that, there). To mention a few more examples: in the middle of the general pondering, the interviewee continues, "and this place [an apartment], I don't have anything. . . ." Similarly, in the other interview, "Yeah, well, there is, for example, a painting bought in Egypt . . . ." The following example summarizes the idea of the yonder-method:

K: Does this kind of distinction make any difference to you

H: Oh, what kind of distinctions do you mean?

K: Well, that you think about something as a decoration, or as something like art or, well, that kind of thing. And do you think that they have anything in common?

H: Well, it is, let's say that, well, art, like this painting here is art, for example, that painting there . . . .

Here, after contemplating for a while, the interviewee points out a painting that is hanging in the room where the interview was held. The category of 'painting' is a subordinate level category when compared to 'art' and 'decoration.' This example summarizes not only the notion of the yonder-method but also other observations that I have discussed above, for example, the asymmetry of the talk, the complexity of the questions, and also the resources of referring to the interview situation.

Interviewees are on their home ground in these specimens since the interviews are realized mainly in their own homes. This indicates that the objects surrounding the interview situation are quite often familiar to the interviewees. Accordingly, these things frequently possess many memories and stories, which are then addressed in the conversations. This is worth remembering when thinking about the production of sense in the context of material objects. It could be speculated that if the interviews were conducted in some other place such as a public library or university campus, the conversations might have been slightly different. In addition, vis-à-vis artification, the point is that, in the context of home and its material surroundings, objects possess meanings not only in a particular functional sense but also a certain personal narrative aspect that may be ready and waiting to come to light. Hence, more generally speaking, if artification finds one of its directions in the home and its material surroundings, then it needs to confront this kind of narrative entanglement. This consideration generates many questions: How does art become personal or a part of a personal narrative? Do memories come before art? Are these aspects somehow exclusionary?



## 8. Conditioning and comparison

In light of these considerations, it is now my intention to concentrate on *conditioning* and *comparison* as a means of talk since, as the analysis suggests, they appear to recur repeatedly in the interviews. Furthermore, they seem to contribute to the comprehension of drawing distinctions between art, decoration, and furnishing. For example, an interviewee might consider, "That kind of decorative piece—it just feels so unnecessary; a thing without purpose, unless it is a painting or, something...." The method of *conditioning* emerges when the notion of "unless" is used. In addition, this is an interesting instance in light of the analysis that I have outlined above. The basic-level category of 'decorative piece,' in this instance, has gained the qualities of "unnecessary" and "purposeless." In contrast, however, the subordinate-level category of 'painting' is excluded from these qualities. On the other hand, this specimen also seems to suggest that a painting could serve as a decorative piece.

Another, similar example may illuminate this further. In one interview I ask a long question about whether there appear to be any differences and similarities between art, decoration, and furnishing. The interviewee picked up the notion of similarities from the latter part of my question. In her response, the notion of "bringing delight to the furnishing" was attached to the basic-level categories of 'decoration' and 'art.'

Once again, the emphasis has been placed on the similarities rather than the differences. The talk of the interviewee continues with the interviewee's notion that the quality of "delight" and also that of "comfort" should exist in the home and at work. Consequently, the quality of "causing delight," together with "comfort," assumes the form of a condition, *i.e.* the home or workplace should be comfortable. In short, this seems to suggest that it does not matter whether something is art or decoration as long as it provides delight and comfort in its particular context.

A few brief examples of conditioning follow. The interviewee might say, "There is no need for me to make it clear to myself whether it is decoration or a purely utilitarian article. As long as it's pretty, it's all right." Immediately following this statement in the same interview, there appears another example of conditioning when the interviewee said that a coffeemaker could be a decoration if it has an interesting design. In addition, one of the interviewees defined the conditions of "interesting art" as, "...and then, like at the Retretti [art museum], if there is something interesting, nothing abstract, though, but something that represents something real, that's the kind of thing I like."

In addition, the condition can be based on very concrete matters, as the following examples suggest. An interviewee may point out the technique, "I think that everything that's kind of hand-made, well, I appreciate it or it is...." Similarly, another interviewee may say that "I think it is art, although it is just a print."

Thus, the resource of setting a condition implies that numerous features and activities are used in order to define the categories at hand and to draw distinctions. The essential

point does not lie so much in the variety of the terms of conditions. Rather, the crucial point appears to consist in the actual use of the conditioning as a conversational means attached to the categories and also of the question of drawing a distinction. In a manner of speaking, the conditioning disconnects the bond between the categories and their features. Thus, in the process of conditioning, the space of the possible categorization is widened. This would suggest, then, that remote or even contradictory categories and qualities could be combined in terms of the conditions.

If artification is reconsidered at this stage, then the substantial notion is that the resource of conditioning addresses a space where features of categories can exchange places and move back and forth between distinctive categories. This space appears to be very similar to the space that the idea of artification itself suggests. The difference, if there is any, lies in the actual role played by the category. This is the case, for example, in the "art-print" specimen mentioned above, where the print as an object does not necessarily belong to art, but in this particular situation it does. In other words, when the speaker uses conditioning as a mean of defining the issue at hand, the scope of issue expands. Accordingly, the print, as a category, has some quality in this context that could also belong to art or something else. However, the categories of 'art' and 'print' remain unsettled. The point here is not to specify art and non-art (in the present case, a print) *per se* but to specify features that are mutual. Whether this is a sufficient basis for proper artification is yet another thing, since the category of art itself does not necessarily shift to the different sphere or domain of the category of non-art. On the other hand, it is not the aim of this article to seek final definitions of artification as such. What, however, is interesting here is the co-existence of differences and similarities in the features of the categories. Furthermore, it is worth observing that the interviews appear to progress satisfactorily despite the co-existence of such features.

At this point in the discussion, however, I will move on to another type of conversational resource, *comparison*, which may be reminiscent of conditioning but which in fact constitutes a different method of talk. The comparison, for example, between a speaker and "someone else" is very common. It should be emphasized, however, that in some cases conditioning and comparison as resources of talk may be intertwined.

The following specimen has been taken from the larger context of a conversation where the issue of the specific theme of artification is used to justify the questions. The interviewee continues:

Well, somehow it seems that, say, if we talk exactly about art, then it makes me think that it is something on a higher level. So I don't do any art. If you wanted to take an interest in art, you would have to understand how to buy works of art at, say, Bukowski's auction.  
Ha-ha!

At first, after pondering for a while, the interviewee attaches the quality of "highness" to the basic-level category of 'art.' It is worth observing here that this is done by means of the

condition of “talking exactly about art.” Then follows a comment where the speaker compares herself to “someone else” who “does art.” This is justified in the last part of this extract, where the notion of “understanding the art business” is attached to the category of ‘someone else.’ This ‘someone else,’ *i.e.*, an imaginary other, serves here as a point of comparison. Thus, the qualities and the categories are constructed by means of the construction of comparisons. In addition, the institution of the art business emerges as a possible aspect of the speaker’s comprehension of the social world, although not necessarily as an actually experienced one. At this point, however, we can naturally question whether the notion of “if we talk exactly about art” draws a line between the kind of art that could be seen as a source of artification and the kind of art that is unsuitable as a source of artification. Is it in fact necessary that, in order to speak about artification, we need first to speak about some specific instance of art?

The following example shows, however, how defining art can be a troublesome task. The other remarkable fact is that, despite the difficulty recognized and articulated by the interviewee, the situated explication of art is, in any case, formulated with due consideration:

H: The fact is that it is really hard for me to draw a line between what is art and what is not art. In my opinion these all are—this little *New Testament* is very—or this is art. [Here the interviewee points her finger to small objects, such as pieces of stones and a book (*i.e.*, *New Testament*) on the table.] And all these are art, although they aren’t valuable in that way.

The method of comparison is used when the interviewee compares the category of ‘the valuable art’ in the “*New Testament* and other things as art.” The point of reference is the value: the value of the art is what makes the difference. Otherwise, as the interviewee points out, the line is obscure. The explication of art is not definite here, but it tells enough about differences: the difference lies in the opposed features of not-valuable and valuable.

In another interview we were talking about prettiness, and the interviewee argues: “I may have various conceptions of it [prettiness]. I guess this must be the case for many other people, too.” Here, too, the situation is one where the interviewee compares herself with other people. Similarly, the following example of comparison also deals with identities: “I consider myself to be—that I do it as a hobby, willingly. Thus, I do design it myself and make it myself, so I think it is more like—craftspeople produce it in enormous quantities....” The point of comparison here is the craftspeople. In addition, the qualities and activities are attached to categories by comparing the categories.

Similarly, in the following example the comparison of identities is the central feature of the talk:

K: Art and furnishing and decoration—do you think that they are separate from each other or are they similar?

H: Well, I don't think that they are separated really, if you think of them in the home. They belong to the furnishing, or at least I think they do. Of course there are also that kind of people who collect art for the sake of possessing collected art, but....

Here there appears yet again the notion of others in contrast to the speaker, herself. The idea of differentiating as articulated practice seems not to play an important role, according to the speaker. The difference between art, furnishing and decoration is, however, actually made by comparing home and other people. 'Other people' as a category possesses the activity of "collecting art" and "possessing art." Furthermore, the quality of "collectability" is attached to the category of 'art.' In this case the essential notion of separation or drawing a distinction is overtaken by concentrating on similarities. Further analysis suggests that, under the conditions of "personal opinion" and the "home," the categories of 'art,' 'furnishing,' and 'decoration' are summed up under the notion of furnishing. In other words, this could be interpreted by suggesting that furnishing appears here as a superordinate-level category. Hence, this is good example of the discussion introduced above, namely that of noting the levels of the categories in the context of artification.

In this example, the 'furnishing' of the home as a superordinate-level category subordinates art as well as other aspects to furnishing in the home. The notion of level is constructed here from a personal perspective when the interviewee says, "Or at least I think so." This personal notion of "art subordinate to furnishing in the home" is not in contradiction to other conceptions of art. The levels of the categories are, however, unclear. People may collect "art for art's sake," as the interviewee says, but it is not clear whether this collecting happens as a subordinate to furnishing, or whether it happens amidst spheres of other kinds. Thus, in this particular context the interviewee presents two different kinds of systems (of art): art that is subordinate to furnishing and art as collectable. The question, especially in reference to the perspective of artification, does not consist of border-crossing between the systems. Rather, the point is that the different systems are articulated in the first place. Consequently, when there exists an articulated plurality of (art-)systems, the plurality of artifications should also be taken into consideration.

It is worth observing here that the specimens dealt with above indicate that the social categories or identities are essential when comparison is used in any account of the use of talk in the context of drawing distinctions. This is not, however, the case on every occasion. The resource of comparison can also be used to highlight differences between material categories. Hence, the final example below will serve to clarify the notion of material comparison:

K: Does it make any difference whether they are art or-

H: Well, ha ha.

K: -or does it emerge largely because I am asking about it right now?

H: Maybe I think just how (they?) fit into places.

K: Yeah.

H: It does not matter whether something is a gracious or expensive work of art, or whether it's considered purely as handicraft, or whether is it a handmade thing with a practical function.

K: Yeah.

It should be observed at first that the quality of "fitting into places" serves as a sort of super-quality here, which takes over the categories. In other words, it could be said that the idea of "fitting" functions here as a condition. On the other hand, the comparison emerges when the interviewee enumerates various categories at the end of the section. These categories stand as a point of comparison and, in addition, the qualities attached to the categories are specified: "graciousness" and "expensiveness" are attached to the category of 'art,' and the qualities of "practical function" and "handmade" to the category of 'handmade thing.' These qualities could be defined as "possible qualities," since they also indicate that the condition of fitting "predominates" in this particular case. This example is very similar to the previous one, since a system of "fitting" and a system of "expensiveness" occur, both of which concern the category of 'art.' Further, it is not clear whether these systems concerning art are on the same categorical level.

The point is that within these kinds of systems as "fitting" and "furnishing" as they occur in these preceding examples, the idea of artification would not be relevant because the differences between categories ('art' and 'decoration' in the first example and a 'work of art,' 'handicraft,' and a 'handmade thing' in the latter example) do not matter in the first place. Hence, it could be contemplated whether artification occurs only in-between different systems of art and non-art, and whether this may have consequences for the process of artification as a whole. In this case, the confused features would find expression sooner in some sphere other than artification, perhaps in that of aestheticization? Be that as it may, the dimensions of such questions cannot be determined conclusively within the limited framework of this article.

## **9. Concluding remarks**

In brief, the process of embedding and adjusting the conversation by means of contextualization and the flexibility of the argumentation in conversations by means of conditioning or comparison suggest that the adaptable state of locally situated sense is based on active achievements. This would, then, indicate, roughly speaking, that the categories are to a greater or lesser extent loose, and also that the processes bound to them need not lead to a definite answer.

At the start of this inquiry, especially in the context of the analysis of categories, it was suggested that it might be difficult to foresee what it is that some categories address. It might then be considered whether the direction of articulation appears to be predetermined or not. In the context of the

analysis of the levels of the categories, it has been argued that the level of the categories needs to be noticed when artification is being taken into consideration. Accordingly, it might also be asked how artification could take place if the categories do not exist on a similar level. In addition, when attention is focused on analysis of the features of the categories, the idea of situated artification will be emphasized. The question is then one of how the context of the articulation of artification has an effect on comprehending the process of artification.

The latter part of this article has dealt with the resources for using the categories. It was suggested that, especially in the context of the home and its material surroundings, the state of personal narration might also be taken into consideration, at least when the home is proposed as a potential direction for the process of artification. Thus, it could be speculated whether art (or artification) could, or should, overcome personal memories. Furthermore, in the context of an analysis of conditioning and comparison, it was emphasized that there appear to be flexible spaces of the features of categories that extend across the range of categories. In consequence, it was suggested that not only the level of the categories but also the system where these categories are articulated need to be taken into account in the context of articulation. It is clear, however, that most of the questions raised here remain unsettled. This is so because the main purpose of this article has been to shed light on artification based on empirical discussion.

Finally, it appears useful to complete this article by proceeding from this empirical discussion on to the theoretical context of art. I have to stress immediately that I am not presenting any exhaustive discussion of related art-philosophical discussions. My intention, rather, is to present some of the various lines of thought that attracted my attention and stimulated my work in the course of the empirical analysis.

My first focus is on the relationship between art and the aesthetic. I am relying here on Arnold Berleant's notion of the aesthetic as the primary condition for art, as Berleant argues:

I have maintained that the aesthetic is a mode of experience that rests on the directness and immediacy of sensuous perception, perception that is deeply influenced by the multitude of factors affecting all experience – cognitive, cultural, historical, personal. Art, on the other hand, denotes the multifarious ways in which people shape that experience. ... Aesthetic perception is thus the foundation of art, and aesthetic theory should deal with both art and perception.<sup>[13]</sup>

As I suggested in my previous discussion, features of categories occur that overlap the categories of 'art,' 'decoration,' 'furnishing,' etc. In other words, there appears to be space for features to move and overlap between categories. Hence, when considering this simultaneity in the context of what Berleant states above, there appears to be a certain resemblance. With this I am attempting to formulate the idea that features of categories may very well resemble the "multifarious ways" of art. Hence, I would suggest that the "ways" of this kind may manifest themselves, at least

partly, in the use of categories.

The second aspect that I would wish to highlight here is the notion of the process of embedding and adjusting a conversation by means of contextualization. Thus, the interview specimens introduced above seem to indicate that the question would not be so much one of defining the categories exactly as it would be a matter of balancing the sensible context and the suggestiveness of categories at hand.

The third point of view worth mentioning here deals more closely with the flexibility of argumentation in talk, or the *contextual sense* in the context of *perceptual aesthetics*, as Berleant argues:

It may seem that, by taking perceptual experience as primary, by affirming the primacy of the aesthetic, we relinquish the very authority of reason. This, however, is not a case of "relinquishing" something but of recognizing that language has no ontological basis and that its authority comes from other, equally non-absolute sources.

For the issue is not about rationality itself but rather about the nature of the rationality we can rightly claim. That rationality is not ontologically grounded is not to say that it has no validity whatsoever but rather that the cognitive claims of what we take to be real vary with who is making them and with the context in which they are made.[\[14\]](#)

The notion here, it would seem, resonates with the idea of the contextual construction of meaning. Thus, it goes together with the idea of the fluency of the conversation, as I have emphasized in the discussion above. In particular, the theme of rationality is of major interest in the context of the flexible logical resources of the argumentation in conversations. Interestingly, this point of view could also be summarized in ethnomethodological terms, as, for example, Randall Collins has argued:

People do not question the truthfulness or pursue the full meaning of most utterances unless severe misunderstandings or conflicts occur, and then they "troubleshoot" by offering retrospective accounts.[\[15\]](#)

This citation seems to represent the backbone of fluency and shared meaning. This also concisely sums up the notion of balancing the sensible context, while the suggestiveness of the categories at hand is an ongoing, situational process. In addition, it is consistently a mutual and active accomplishment. Hence, the intention of the present article has been to attempt to render comprehensible the multidimensional relationship that exists between categories, rationality, and transition.

In brief, conversations do not necessarily fizzle out into nothing, regardless of the fact that categories may sometimes contradict each other, or they may not always come alive as expected. If the categories themselves seem obscure, inappropriate, or far-fetched, the richness of the potential means of circumventing these categories permits practices



where the uniqueness of the conversational situation and shared membership can flourish.

The interview specimens and the analysis that I have presented here demonstrate perspectives on how the differences are dealt with in practice. The intention here has been to represent the fine-grained conversational practices in actual use in order to demonstrate the ongoing and situational processes where meanings, differences, and transitions come to life, flourish, strengthen, or fade, according to the ways in which as we pay attention to them. Eventually, it is suggested, this kind of attitude may be one of the ways in which artification can be discussed fruitfully.

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Published on April 5, 2012.

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### Endnotes

[1] The idea of artification as a frame of reference in the theoretical interpretation is regarded in relation to various discussions dealing with art and aesthetics. For example, as Ossi Naukkarinen suggests, "it [artification] could be seen as one version of aestheticization and ... postmodernization." Secondly, as Naukkarinen also argues, artification refers to the process "where matters understood as something else than art in other contexts are transforming to art, art-like, or art-inflected." In consequence, this latter idea of transition has, in general, been used as a means of predefining the primary research material in this article. See Ossi Naukkarinen, "Taiteistumisen muodot" in *Taiteistuminen*, eds. Yrjänä Levanto, Ossi Naukkarinen and Susan Vihma, "Taideteollisen korkeakoulun julkaisu" B 79 (Helsinki: University of Art and Design, 2005), pp. 8-38; first ref. on p. 13, second ref. on p. 18. Originally in Finnish, translations by the author. See also Yrjö Sepänmaa, "Tavallisen ihmisen estetiikka—kauneuden ja taiteen kiasma" in *Kansanestetiikka*, eds. Seppo Knuuttila and Ulla Piela, Kalevalaseuran vuosikirja 87 (Helsinki: SKS, 2008), pp. 13-32; especially on p. 28.

[2] See endnote 1.

[3] Defining the occurrence of drawing distinctions between art and decoration could be taken further. For example, it could be argued that talk about art is always based on drawing distinctions. However, the focus here is on explicit sections of talk where drawing distinctions occur.

[4] The topic of categories is discussed further in the context of art philosophy by, for example, Kendall L. Walton. See Kendall L. Walton, "Categories of Art," *The Philosophical*



*Review*, 79, 3 (1970), 334-367. Secondly, the notion of category may consist of the sense of *member's category*, as an element in the active process of talk. See Carolyn Baker, "Membership Categorization and Interview Accounts" in *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*, ed. David Silverman, 2nd ed. (London: Sage, 2004), pp. 162-176; ref. on p. 164. Thirdly, I have also applied, somewhat loosely, a classification from the field of cognitive psychology, following Eleanor Rosch, who discusses *basic level*, *superordinate level*, and *subordinate level* categories. See Eleanor Rosch, "Principles of Categorization" in *Cognition and Categorization*, eds. Barbara B. Lloyd and Eleanor Rosch (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 1978), pp. 27-48; ref. on pp. 30-33.

[5] Carolyn Baker, "Ethnomethodological Analyses of Interview" in *Handbook of Interview Research: Context & Method*, eds. Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein (London: Sage, 2002), pp. 777-795; ref. on p. 778.

[6] Peter Eglin and Stephen Hester, *The Montreal Massacre: a Story of Membership Categorization Analysis* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2003), p. 8.

[7] Harvey Sacks, *Lectures on Conversation*, edited by Gail Jefferson; with an introduction by Emanuel A. Schegloff (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), p. 11. The lectures of Harvey Sacks were originally presented in the 1960s.

[8] For methodological considerations, see, for example, Stephen Hester and Peter Eglin eds., *Culture in Action: Studies in Membership Categorization Analysis. Studies in Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis*, No. 4 (Washington, D.C.: International Institute for Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis & University Press of America, 1997), especially: Chapter I, pp. 1-25 and Chapter II, pp. 25-49.

For ethnomethodology in general, see also: Douglas W. Maynard and Steven E. Clayman, "The Diversity of Ethnomethodology," *Annual Review of Sociology*, 17 (1991), 385-418.

Paul ten Have, *Understanding Qualitative Research and Ethnomethodology* (London: Sage, 2004). Paul Atkinson, "Ethnomethodology: a Critical Review," *Annual Review of Sociology*, 14 (1988), 441-465.

[9] I am adapting the practices of MCD analysis where *categories* and *category bound activities* (*category-bound features*) are examined in detail (see Baker, 2004). For the concept of category-bound feature, see Lena Jayyusi, *Categorization and the Moral Order* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), p. 35. See also: Helmi Järviuoma, Pirkko Moisala and Anni Vilkkö eds., *Gender and Qualitative Methods*, (London: Sage, 2003). Helmi Järviuoma and Irene Roivainen, "Jäsenkategorisoinnin analyysi kulttuurisena metodina," *Sosiologia* 34, 1 (1997), 15-26.

[10] Here, the uses of the notions of *basic level*, *superordinate level*, and *subordinate level* category serve as an example of the adaptation of conceptualization discussed by Rosch. See

endnote 3.

[11] See Baker (2004), pp. 167, 174. See also the publications mentioned in endnote 9.

[12] The interview examples presented in this article have been translated and edited (by the author) in order to illustrate conversational situations. It should be noted that these examples have been extracted from the flow of the ongoing talk and hence some of the small remarks or sounds have been omitted in order to maintain the readability of the text. In the longer examples, H stands for interviewee, K stands for interviewer, *i.e.* the author.

[13] Arnold Berleant, *Sensibility and Sense: the Aesthetic Transformation of the Human World* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2010), p. 195.

[14] Berleant, pp. 79-80.

[15] Randall Collins, "On the Microfoundations of Macrosociology," *American Journal of Sociology*, 86, 5 (1981), 984-1015; ref. on 992.

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