

KELLY TROGDON AND PAISLEY LIVINGSTON

---

## The Complete Work

---

### ABSTRACT

What is it for a work of art to be complete? In this article, we argue that an artwork is complete just in case the artist has acquired a *completion disposition* with respect to her work—a disposition grounded in certain cognitive mechanisms to refrain from making significant changes to the work. We begin by explaining why the complete/incomplete distinction with respect to artworks is both practically and philosophically significant. Then we consider and reject two approaches to artwork completion. Finally, we set out and defend our own account.

---

### I. INTRODUCTION

This article is about the complete/incomplete distinction with respect to works of art. Why care about the distinction? First of all, the distinction has practical significance in the world of art. It figures, for example, within intellectual property legislation in many national jurisdictions.<sup>1</sup> The legal category of “derivative” works depends on the category of previously completed works, those works on which derivative works are based. In ordinary circumstances, a work is to be displayed or distributed in its completed condition, and doing otherwise can constitute a violation of the artist’s rights. What is more, testimony indicates that many (but not all) artists are strongly interested in the distinction between complete and incomplete works. They report that they are trying to finish a work, for example, or proudly declare that they have done so. To eliminate the distinction would require a radical revision of entrenched legal, curatorial, and other art-related practices.

The distinction is philosophically significant as well, in part because it connects with other issues of interest in aesthetics, particularly that of artistic appreciation. Briefly, artistic appreciation is the contemplation or careful examination of a work, where the appreciator’s primary interest is the work’s artistic value. A key desider-

atum of artistic appreciation is the contemplative and evaluative grasp of the organization of the parts within the artwork, or what, following Alberti, may be called the work’s *design*.<sup>2</sup> Such traditional aesthetic and artistic norms as proportion, harmony, and unity-in-multiplicity clearly involve part-whole relations. These are relations that depend upon the artist’s determination of a unit of analysis, parts of which have some kind of aesthetic or artistic role within the work as a whole. There can be no experience of the artwork as a discrete and intended, appreciable whole unless the work is complete. Hence, it is constitutive of artistic appreciation that its overall aim is the appreciation of complete artworks. It follows that to clarify the nature of artwork completion is to further clarify the nature and object of artistic appreciation.<sup>3</sup>

Granted that the complete/incomplete distinction with respect to artworks is important, how should we draw it? In this article, we argue that an artwork is complete just in case the artist has acquired a *completion disposition* with respect to her work—a disposition to refrain from making significant changes to the work that is grounded in certain cognitive mechanisms. The plan for the article is as follows. First, we consider and reject two approaches to artwork completion, one that appeals to observable properties and the other

completion judgments. Then we set forth our conception of completion dispositions, consider the application of our account to paradigmatic cases of complete and incomplete artworks, and offer a general diagnosis of putative counterexamples to our account. We conclude by addressing various questions about and potential problems for our account.

## II. HOW NOT TO THINK ABOUT ARTWORK COMPLETION

In this section, we set out and criticize two approaches to artwork completion. These approaches attempt to identify substantive necessary and sufficient conditions for an artwork to be complete. The first understands artwork completion in terms of observable properties of artworks, and the second does so in terms of certain judgments made by artists. This discussion sets the stage for our view, which we present in the next section.

### II.A. *Observable Properties*

Consider the thesis that an artwork is complete just in case it possesses observable properties that meet certain artistic or aesthetic standards. Here is a counterexample to the claim that having such observable properties is sufficient for an artwork to be complete. Imagine two configurations of old stones that are indiscernible with respect to their observable properties. The first is the well-preserved remains of a Romanesque chapel, the construction of which was interrupted and never finished. The second is a well-preserved Romantic ruin or fragment, erected in the eighteenth century in order to lend an antique *je ne sais quoi* to the patron's garden. Given that the artworks in these cases share their observable properties, it is a trivial matter that their observable properties meet the same artistic or aesthetic standards. Yet these artworks differ in whether they are complete; the first pile of stones is an incomplete work, while the second is a complete work, one designed to look like it is damaged.<sup>4</sup>

This case suggests that a better account of artwork completion would take into account certain facts concerning the artist. For it seems crucial to the status of the first pile of stones as an incomplete work that something prevented the workers from finishing their task (that of implementing the

artist's plan), and crucial to the status of the second pile of stones as a complete work is the fact that the workers finished their task (that of implementing a different artistic plan). If observable properties are intrinsic properties, the upshot of the discussion so far is this: we are not to understand what it is for an artwork to be complete in terms of that work having certain intrinsic properties. Instead, we must appeal to how the artwork is related to wholly distinct objects.<sup>5</sup>

### II.B. *Completion Judgments*

You might think that, if the status of an artwork as complete is not ultimately a matter of the work's intrinsic nature, it must be a matter of the artist judging that the work is complete. Proposal: an artwork is complete just in case the artist has judged that the work is complete. Here is a simple counterexample to the sufficiency of the condition identified by this view. Suppose that a film director, cowed by a dictator's deadly threats, allows that her work is done. But years later when the director manages to gain control of the work, she finishes it. A natural reading of this case is that the work was not complete when the coerced artist initially decided that it was complete. Similar considerations apply to completion judgments arrived at via nonrational belief forming processes (for example, bumps on the head).

With this counterexample in mind, you might propose to modify the completion judgment view, claiming that an artwork is complete just in case the artist has made a certain type of completion judgment—a reflective and uncoerced decision to the effect that her work is complete.<sup>6</sup> A potential counterexample to the sufficiency of the condition identified by the modified completion judgment view is as follows. Having decided that *The Raft of the Medusa* was done, Géricault had the enormous canvas removed from his studio and delivered to the foyer of the building where it was to be exhibited. Yet shortly thereafter, he took another look at the canvas, went back on his decision, and made significant changes to the composition. A natural interpretation of this case is that the work was not complete when Géricault made his initial completion judgment, despite the fact that his decision was reflective and uncoerced.<sup>7</sup>

You might respond to this potential counterexample by further modifying the completion

judgment view: an artwork is complete just in case the artist makes a reflective and uncoerced decision to the effect that the work is complete, and the artist does not subsequently override the decision and make or authorize artistic changes incompatible with that prior decision.<sup>8</sup> While the condition identified by this view may work as a sufficient condition for artwork completion, it does not seem to work as a necessary condition. Here are three cases to consider. First, suppose that an artist, untrammelled by any general conception of work completion, generates a drawing, finds it to her liking, and moves on to something else, effectively refraining from making any further changes to the picture, but without having consciously thought that the work was finished. It is natural to say in such cases that the artist produces a complete artwork. Second, apparently Picasso said with regard to *Guernica* that he did not know whether it was finished or not, but that it could be taken away to be exhibited at the World's Fair in Paris. It seems that the work really was complete, even if Picasso's remark was sincere. Third, suppose that an artist stops working on a piece but she does not have any settled belief about whether her work is finished due to uncertainty about whether she is capable of improving it or of bringing it to some desired level of perfection. The artist believes that unforeseeable motivational shifts might take place, and this belief leads to uncertainty with regard to her own future actions and decisions. It seems that the artwork might be complete in this case, despite the absence of a reflective and uncoerced completion judgment.

### III. HOW TO THINK ABOUT ARTWORK COMPLETION

If the two approaches to artwork completion discussed above are not on the right track, what does artwork completion come down to?<sup>9</sup> Our view is that an artwork is complete just in case the artist has acquired a disposition to refrain from making significant changes to her work grounded in certain cognitive mechanisms. Our goal in this section is to develop and clarify our account.

#### III.A. Completion Dispositions

Suppose painters A and B share a studio, and A says, "I've gotten the necklace right—I'm finally done with this painting!" in reference to a por-

trait she has been working on for some time. B studies the picture and, pointing to the right-hand side of the necklace, responds, "But maybe the shadow could be a bit darker here?" Or suppose that a sculptor notices that the nose of her marble sculpture is slightly larger than she initially thought. In each of these cases, a particular possibility becomes salient to the artist, namely, that she could make significant changes to her work. Call such a case a *revision invitation scenario*. Let an artist have a *refrainment disposition* with respect to her work just in case the artist is disposed to refrain from making significant changes to her work in revision invitation scenarios. Let a *completion disposition* be a refraining disposition that is grounded in certain cognitive mechanisms.

Five initial questions about refrainment and completion dispositions are as follows. First, when we ascribe a refrainment disposition to an artist, are we claiming that there are no revision invitation scenarios in which she would make significant changes to her work? Second, what is it to manifest a refrainment disposition? Third, why do we make the qualification to *significant* changes in our characterization of refrainment dispositions? Fourth, what sorts of cognitive mechanisms ground refrainment dispositions when they are completion dispositions? Fifth, why does it matter how an artist's refrainment disposition is grounded—why is having a refrainment disposition not enough for her work to be complete, whether or not it is a completion disposition? We consider each question in turn.

Suppose we claim that something  $x$  has the disposition to give response  $r$  to stimulus  $s$ . Following C. B. Martin, ascriptions of dispositions are always understood to carry a saving clause—in particular, a *ceteris paribus* condition—the full details of which normally are not known.<sup>10</sup> So when we say that  $x$  has the disposition to give response  $r$  to stimulus  $s$ , we are not claiming that  $x$  would give response  $r$  in any situation whatsoever in which  $s$  obtains. Example: when we say that  $x$  is disposed to break when struck—when we say that  $x$  is fragile—we are not claiming that  $x$  would break when struck in situations in which  $x$ , for example, is surrounded by packing material. When  $x$  is surrounded by packing material, all other things *are not equal*.<sup>11</sup>

Supposing that we ascribe a refrainment disposition to artist A, we are not claiming that she would not make significant changes to her work in any revision invitation scenario. We are not, for

example, saying that A would refrain from making significant changes to the work in revision invitation scenarios in which she believes that, were she not to make significant changes, there would be serious negative consequences (we will bomb the Louvre if you do not change that awful painting!). And we are not saying that A would refrain from making significant changes to her work in revision invitation scenarios in which she intends to create a new *version* of her work.<sup>12</sup> So, just as in the fragility case all other things are not equal when the vase is surrounded by packing material, in the case of refrainment dispositions all other things are not equal when the artist faces extreme pressure to continue making significant changes to her work or she intends to create a new version of her work.

Let us turn to the issue of manifesting refrainment dispositions. What we would like to point out here is that refraining from making significant changes to an artwork is not a mysterious “negative action.” To refrain is intentionally to do something that precludes the undertaking of the action from which one intends to refrain.<sup>13</sup> The intention to refrain is successfully realized when one performs actions that preclude any intentional accomplishment of the refrained-from action. For example, to refrain from revising a picture, the painter sends it to the dealer and goes on holiday or takes up some other projects that will stand in the way of further thinking about how to improve the picture. These actions have the overall result of the artist’s not making any further changes to the picture. In contrast, the artist whose progress was definitively interrupted by a heart attack or an aneurysm has not, by the same stroke, refrained from making additional changes to the work.

Why the qualification concerning *significant* changes in our characterization of refrainment dispositions? Well, it seems that a novel can be complete even if the author is disposed to correct typographical errors or inconsistent spellings in her work in the event that she discovers them. And it seems that a painting can be complete even if the painter is disposed to sign her name on the painting in the event that she discovers that she forgot to do so. The sorts of changes at issue here are artistically insignificant changes. Hence, we should allow that it is possible for an artwork to be complete even if the artist is disposed to correct artistically insignificant errors and oversights in the event that she discovers them. We do not think

that there is a sharp boundary between artistically significant and insignificant changes. But we take it that the examples above are clear cases of artistically insignificant changes. And there are clear cases of artistically significant changes as well, such as when the novelist changes the overall plot of her novel. (Henceforth, when we talk about changes to an artwork, understand these to be significant changes to the work.)

Now we turn to the cognitive mechanisms that ground refrainment dispositions when they are completion dispositions. In §43 of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant (in keeping with received ideas about *art*) distinguishes the product of art—an *opus*—from the effects of nature, his example of the latter being the honeycombs produced by bees.<sup>14</sup> The basis of Kant’s distinction between natural effects and human works is the artist’s capacity for choice (what Kant calls *eine Willkür*); it is this capacity, he says, that grounds the artist’s actions in reason and qualifies the result as a work. A slogan for Kant’s idea here could be “no reasons, no work.”

Taking a page from Kant, completion dispositions are refrainment dispositions that are grounded in certain cognitive mechanisms, specifically, rational capacities of artists consisting of various beliefs, desires, and further cognitive dispositions. The general idea is that when an artist has a completion disposition, she is disposed to refrain from making further changes to the work in virtue of having exercised her capacity to reason about art and its production in a certain way. The artist’s rational capacity in this case includes, for example, beliefs about which configurations of observable properties have artistic or aesthetic value, the disposition to cease working on projects once certain artistic or aesthetic standards are met or a certain amount of time has passed (in the case of a deadline), the desire to work within a certain budget, the belief that one is working within a certain genre or canon, and so on.

Finally, why does it matter how an artist’s refrainment disposition is grounded—why is having a refrainment disposition regardless of whether it is a completion disposition not enough for her work to count as complete? The basic idea is that there are possible psychological bases for refrainment dispositions that seem incompatible with a work being complete. One obvious and practically very important example is the belief that the work is to be abandoned as incomplete. If the artist’s

refrainment disposition is grounded in this belief, her work is incomplete. Another example involves extreme coercion. Suppose that an artist has a refrainment disposition because she believes that there will be serious negative consequences if she makes significant changes (we will bomb the Louvre if you change that wonderful painting!). Cognitive mechanisms that have such beliefs as components interfere with the artist's reasons; the belief that awful things will happen if she changes her work eclipses her reasons concerning, for example, which artistic projects are valuable and how to properly carry them out.

Recall the extreme coercion case we considered earlier: the film director, cowed by a dictator's deadly threats, judged that her work is done at a time  $t_1$ , but later the director managed to gain control of her work and finished it at  $t_2$ . While the director had a refrainment disposition at  $t_1$ , this disposition was grounded in her belief that making changes to the film would have serious negative consequences, so it was not a completion disposition then. By contrast, at  $t_2$  the director's refrainment disposition was grounded in the appropriate way, so her disposition was a completion disposition then. So our account says that the film was incomplete at  $t_1$  and complete at  $t_2$ , as it should.<sup>15</sup>

### III.B. *Paradigmatic Cases of Complete and Incomplete Artworks*

Let us now consider cases in which informed appreciators take it as uncontroversial that certain artworks are incomplete and cases in which informed appreciators take it as uncontroversial that certain artworks are complete. Our account of artwork completion handles these cases correctly, and this shows that it is worth taking seriously.

No one doubts that Bruce Lee failed to finish the film he had provisionally entitled "Game of Death" since during its making he died of cerebral edema (at the age of 32) and so was not around to bring about its completion. Orson Welles never finished his *Don Quixote* adaptation, not only because he encountered financial obstacles but also because he kept changing his mind about what sort of film he wanted to make. First conceived in 1955, Welles worked on the project on and off for decades, and it remained "in progress" when Welles died in 1985. This case illustrates how a

habit of revision precludes settling firmly on a plan, working consistently to realize that plan, and eventually becoming satisfied with one's results and acquiring the disposition to refrain from making any more changes. So here we have two paradigmatic cases of incomplete works. Since neither artist acquired a completion disposition, our account classifies each of them as incomplete works, as it should.

In contrast to these cases of incompleteness, we have Ingmar Bergman's expression of certainty regarding the successful completion of his 1980 film, *From the Life of the Marionettes*. In December of 1979, the director proudly wrote in his personal copy of the shooting script that he had "made a disgusting, distressing, unpleasant, strange and grey film" and that he was "glad" to have done so. Bergman's declaration is best explained by the hypothesis that he had acquired a completion disposition with regard to his work. Such an inference finds additional support in various other relevant actions of his and, most notably, his leaving the work unchanged, his agreeing to its public distribution, and his pursuit of other projects, including *Fanny and Alexander* and a Munich staging of *Hedda Gabler*. So here we have a paradigmatic case of a complete work. And it seems that our account classifies *From the Life of the Marionettes* as a complete work, for it seems that Bergman acquired a completion disposition in 1979.

In many cases, of course, the available evidence relevant to an author's actual dispositions does not line up so neatly. Critics have long disagreed, for example, over the completion status of Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*. Wayne C. Booth allows that some of the writer's early proclamations suggest that he had the intention of adding indefinitely to this sprawling, multivolume project. Yet Booth points to evidence to the effect that in writing the ninth and last published volume of *Tristram Shandy*, Sterne grew tired of the work and made the decision to bring it to a close. Unlike the other previously published installments, this final volume included no new elements of suspense that might incite readers to buy and read further installments. Various other features of the final published volume also support the conclusion that it was intended as the concluding part of the work. That Sterne stopped working on the comic novel and turned his mind to the writing of four volumes of *A Sentimental Journey* suggests that he had acquired a completion disposition

with regard to *Tristram Shandy*. Other critics (for example, R. F. Brissenden) reject Booth's conclusion, however, defending the idea that the author had committed himself to an endlessly expandable project.<sup>16</sup> This hypothesis is, however, hard to square with the fact that the author effectively refrained from writing any further volumes for this work. So we think that considerations on balance suggest that *Tristram Shandy* is a complete work, and it seems that our account of artwork completion classifies it as such.<sup>17</sup>

### III.C. A General Diagnosis of Putative Counterexamples

We have considered clear cases of complete and incomplete artworks that our account seems to get right, but are there cases that it seems to get wrong? Well, suppose you think that you have a case in which an artist has a completion disposition yet the work is incomplete. Such cases pose a challenge to the idea that the condition identified by our account is sufficient for artwork completion. We suspect that such cases will normally fall into one of two innocuous categories. First, such cases may be ones in which the artist's refrainment disposition lacks the appropriate cognitive sustaining mechanisms, so it does not count as a completion disposition. Perhaps the disposition is grounded in beliefs that are tied to extreme coercion, the belief that the work is hopeless and to be abandoned as incomplete, or some nonrational neurological disposition-forming mechanism. In such cases, the sufficient condition identified by our account is not met, first impressions aside.

Second, such cases may be ones in which the artist really has a completion disposition, yet the work does not satisfy some artistic or aesthetic norm imposed by a critic or an appreciator. In such cases, it seems that the work is incomplete because we are conflating the category of artworks of which we disapprove with the category of works that the artist never finished (as when Ruskin, for example, derisively said paintings exhibited by Whistler were "unfinished"). Critics and editors who think of completion as depending upon the satisfaction of their own artistic desiderata get the order of determination backwards. So our take on these cases is that the sufficient condition identified by our account is indeed satisfied, the artworks in question are complete, and the appear-

ance that they are incomplete can be explained away.

Suppose you think that you have found a case in which the artist lacks a completion disposition yet the work is complete. Such cases pose a challenge to the idea that the condition identified by our account is necessary for artwork completion. We suspect that these cases are normally ones in which it seems that the artwork is complete because we are conflating the category of works of which we approve with the category of complete works. That the two completed movements of Schubert's "Unfinished Symphony" are very *complete*, for example, does not guarantee that the artist was really finished with the work.<sup>18</sup> To think of an incomplete artwork or fragment thereof "as if" it had been completed or were part of a complete work can be viable and rewarding (see note 3), but this must be kept distinct from whether the work is actually complete. So our take on these cases is that the necessary condition identified by our account is not met, and the appearance that the relevant works are nonetheless complete can be explained away.

### IV. QUESTIONS AND POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

In this penultimate section, we aim to further clarify our account of artwork completion. We have organized our discussion around six questions. First, we have seen how the account deals with cases of extreme coercion, but how does it deal with cases in which the artist's work is complete but she does not make a completion judgment? The answer here is straightforward: in such cases the artist has a completion disposition, for having a completion disposition does not require that you make a completion judgment.

Second, supposing that an artist has a completion disposition, can she later lose it? Just as the manifestations of dispositions have a duration, so too do dispositions themselves—dispositions, like their manifestations, come and go. That this is so with respect to cognitive dispositions is easy to appreciate. For suppose that you once acquired the disposition to assent to the proposition that there are western black rhinoceros, but, having recently learned that this species is officially extinct, you no longer have this disposition. Completion dispositions as well as mere refrainment dispositions

are no exception. So an artist may acquire a completion disposition only later to lose it.

Third, supposing that an artist has a completion disposition and later loses it, what does this mean for the completeness of her work? In our view, once an artist acquires a completion disposition, the artwork is complete, and if the artist later loses this disposition, the artwork is still complete assuming that the artwork still exists. So we think that once a work shifts from being incomplete to complete there is no going back. We take no stand here on the conditions under which artworks are destroyed—our topic is artwork completion rather than the persistence conditions for artworks—so we likewise take no stand on whether it is possible for artworks to survive significant post-completion changes.

Fourth, is the Géricault case one in which the artist has a completion disposition and then loses it? We do not think so. Suppose that Géricault made his initial completion judgment about his work at  $t_1$ . Shortly thereafter he hired people to move his canvas out of his studio. After making this judgment, he went on to change the painting—suppose he completed these changes at  $t_2$ . We think that, while Géricault judged that the painting was complete at  $t_1$ , he lacked a refrainment disposition (let alone a completion disposition) with respect to his work at that time; that this is so is supported by the fact he went on to change the work shortly after  $t_1$ . So our view is that, while Géricault made artistically significant changes to his work after  $t_1$ , the changes he made were not post-completion changes. It is of course possible that Géricault did have a completion disposition with respect to his work at  $t_1$  only to lose it shortly thereafter—our claim is just that the way he acted in this case provides defeasible evidence that he lacked such a disposition at  $t_1$ . This take on the case comports with the natural idea that the painting was not actually complete when Géricault made his initial completion judgment.

Fifth, our account says that an artwork is complete only if *the* artist has acquired a completion disposition with respect to her work—but what about cases in which two or more artists working in collaboration complete a work? What we should say is that an artwork is complete just in case any artist who created the work has acquired a completion disposition with respect to that work, where a necessary condition for artists to count as collaborating on an artwork is that they take themselves to be engaging in a common project consti-

tuted by shared and mutually recognized plans or intentions. In typical cases, the completion dispositions of collaborating artists are grounded in cognitive mechanisms that include mental states produced by their communicating about the status of the work. In less usual cases, collaborators merely settle on procedures the successful execution of which eventuates in the acquisition of completion dispositions (for example, when the last artist in a predetermined series makes her final contributions to the sketch or poem).<sup>19</sup>

Sixth, does not the revised proposal still face a problem with an important type of artistic collaboration—*de facto collaboration*—in which an artist A begins a work, fails to finish it, and another artist B comes along and undertakes to finish it, despite the fact that A does not take herself to be engaging in a common project constituted by shared and mutually recognized plans or intentions? We do not think so. You might claim that certain types of posthumous collaboration are examples of *de facto* collaboration, such as Anthony Payne's putative completion of Elgar's Symphony No. 3. Cast in terms of this example, the objection to our account is that it wrongly classifies this complete work as incomplete, for Elgar never acquired a completion disposition with respect to the work. But given the necessary condition for artistic collaboration we proposed above, our response is straightforward: 'de facto collaboration' is a misnomer—it is not genuine artistic collaboration. Returning to the Elgar and Payne example, Payne and Elgar did not collaborate in any literal sense, for Elgar did not take himself to be engaged in a common project with Payne consisting of shared and mutually recognized plans or intentions. Payne recruited Elgar's fragment of a symphony to make something that is, qua completed work, entirely Payne's doing. Payne is the sole author of his work, where Elgar functioned not as a collaborator but as a source. Our diagnosis of this case is that Elgar left us an incomplete work, and Payne went on to complete a new derivative artwork. Elgar's work is incomplete because he did not acquire a completion disposition, and Payne's derivative work is complete because he did acquire a completion disposition.

## V. CONCLUSION

What is it for a work of art to be complete? We have argued that the complete/incomplete

distinction with respect to artworks is important, considered and rejected various accounts of artwork completion, and provided our own account. A final thought: we have focused on artworks, but what about the completion of other types of works, such as philosophical ones? We think that the complete/incomplete distinction with respect to other types of works is also important and that our account of artwork completion can be extended to cover certain types of works that are not artworks. We leave this issue, however, for another day.<sup>20</sup>

KELLY TROGDON

Department of Philosophy  
Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

INTERNET: trogdon@vt.edu

PAISLEY LIVINGSTON

Department of Philosophy  
Lingnan University, Hong Kong

INTERNET: pl@ln.edu.hk

1. For a broad survey, see Elizabeth Adeney, *The Moral Rights of Authors and Performers: An International and Comparative Analysis* (Oxford University Press, 2006).

2. Leon Battista Alberti, *De Re Aedificatoria* (Florence: Niccolò di Lorenzo Alamani, 1486); *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, trans. Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach, and Robert Tavernor (MIT Press, 1988); Francis Sparshott, *The Theory of the Arts* (Princeton University Press, 1982).

3. The claim that the overall aim of artistic appreciation is the appreciation of complete artworks is compatible with the fact that we can and do appreciate incomplete artworks that we know to be incomplete. One way to appreciate an artwork that you know to be incomplete is to treat the fragment “as if” it were complete (and an artist can invite some audience to experience some work-in-progress in precisely this sort of way). Another way is to imagine how the artist would have completed it or what might have gone wrong with the work.

4. This contrast also clearly illustrates the relevance of the complete/incomplete distinction to artistic appreciation. The appreciator of the fragmentary building has to try to imagine what the overall design of the work would have been had the artist managed to finish it. The appreciator of the finished, “Romantic” fragment pursues other questions, such as how well the configuration of stones mimics the remains of an ancient temple.

5. The observable properties view of artwork completion is a special case of the view according to which a work is complete just in case it has certain artistic or aesthetic properties. The same sort of counterexample described above applies to this more general view well. Monroe C. Beardsley endorses a view similar to the artistic or aesthetic properties view—he claims that a work of art is complete only if the artist judges that the work meets certain artistic or aes-

thetic standards (“The Creation of Art,” in *The Aesthetic Point of View: Selected Essays*, eds. Michael J. Wreen and Donald M. Callen [Cornell University Press, 1982]). And John Dewey also endorses a similar view, claiming, “The making comes to an end when its result is experienced as good—and that experience comes not by mere intellectual and outside judgment but in direct perception” (*Art as Experience* [New York: Minton, Balch & Co., 1934], p. 49; [New York: Penguin, 2005], p. 51). For objections to such views, see Paisley Livingston, “Counting Fragments, and Frenhofer’s Paradox,” *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 39 (1999): 14–23, and *Art and Intention* (Cambridge University Press, 2005).

6. Livingston endorses a version of the completion judgment *sans* extreme coercion view, claiming that, for a wide range of artworks, an artwork is “genetically” complete only if the artist makes a completion decision (understood as a complex retrospective and prospective attitude that includes refraining from making additional changes to her work) in the absence of extreme coercion (“Counting Fragments, and Frenhofer’s Paradox”).

7. See Darren Hudson Hick for additional criticisms of the completion judgment *sans* extreme coercion view (“When Is a Work of Art Finished?” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 66 [2008]: 67–76). And, while we do not have the space to consider his view here, Hick himself proposes a sufficient condition for an artwork to be complete: an artwork is complete if (i) the work is published (where publication is understood broadly as the act of making an artwork available to the public at large) and (ii) the artist does not state that the work is incomplete. For objections to Hick’s view, see Paisley Livingston, “When a Work Is Finished: A Response to Darren Hudson Hick,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 66 (2008): 393–395; for Hick’s response, see “A Reply to Paisley Livingston,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 66 (2008): 395–398.

8. This is the view of Paisley Livingston and Carol Archer, “Artistic Collaboration and the Completion of Works of Art,” *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 50 (2010): 439–455. Livingston proposes a similar view in “When a Work Is Finished: A Response to Darren Hudson Hick.”

9. In searching for a plausible account of artwork completion, it is important to think about what the job description of such an account is supposed to be. Two issues that we do not think an account of artwork completion need address are as follows. First, while it is perfectly normal to say things like “This work is half finished” or “When Aeschylus was struck on the head by a turtle, he had almost finished his next tragedy,” we do not see the job of an account of artwork completion as vindicating or grounding such facts. Talk of partially finished artworks refers to how works-in-progress stand in relation to certain artistic norms, such as an idea in the artist’s mind about the desired final shape of the work. Second, such an account need not take a stand on the completion status of items that are parts of artworks, such as the individual figures in Rodin’s *Gates of Hell*, for it is unclear whether such items count as artworks. If an individual figure in *Gates of Hell* counts as an artwork, then an account of artwork completion should of course apply to it, and, if it does not count as an artwork, such an account need not apply to it. If it does count as an artwork, then it seems that an account of artwork completion should be compatible with the idea that this artwork was completed before the *Gates of Hell* as a whole—the big artwork—was

completed. Thanks to an anonymous referee for suggesting this example.

10. C. B. Martin, "Dispositions and Conditionals," *Philosophical Quarterly* 44 (1994): 1–8.

11. As many have noted, if *ceteris paribus* clauses characteristic of dispositions can be spelled out only by appealing to the very dispositions they are characteristic of, *analyses* of dispositions cast partly in terms of such conditions are circular in an objectionable way. But as George Molnar notes, *ascriptions* of dispositions that either explicitly or implicitly appeal to *ceteris paribus* clauses are useful in ordinary life and in the context of scientific investigation, whether or not these clauses can be specified independently from the dispositions they are characteristic of (*Powers: A Study in Metaphysics* [Oxford University Press, 2003], p. 89).

12. We wish to remain neutral on what it is for something to be a version of an artwork. See Stephen Davies for (what we see as) a proposed necessary condition for something to be a version of an artwork ("Versions of Musical Works and Literary Translations," in *Philosophers on Music: Experience, Meaning, and Work*, ed. Kathleen Stock [Oxford University Press, 2007], pp. 79–92).

13. George M. Wilson, *The Intentionality of Human Action*, 2nd ed. (Stanford University Press, 1989).

14. Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, ed. Karl Vorländer (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1959); *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 182.

15. Suppose that an artist, under some pressure by a curator to meet a deadline, acquires a refrainment disposition, though she would have preferred to continue working on her piece longer. We take it that this sort of situation is commonplace in the artworld, and such mild coercion does not preclude artwork completion. We only claim that, when an artist's refrainment disposition is grounded in mental states tied to *extreme* coercion, her disposition does not count as a completion disposition, and her work therefore is incomplete. Thanks to an anonymous referee for reminding us of such cases.

16. Wayne C. Booth, "Did Sterne Complete *Tristram Shandy*?" *Modern Philology* 57 (1951): 172–183; R. F. Brinsenden, "'Trusting to Almighty God': Another Look at the Composition of *Tristram Shandy*," in *The Winged Skull: Essays on Laurence Sterne*, eds. Arthur H. Cash and John M. Stedmond (London: Methuen, 1971), pp. 258–269.

17. Returning to the importance of the complete/incomplete distinction we discussed earlier, critics who line up on either side of this question do not doubt that the answer to the question of completion is of critical significance. It matters to them whether the book is an uncontrolled

"hodge podge," a "salmagundi of odds and ends recklessly compounded," or, on the contrary, a finished work having an overall shape as well as an appropriate resolution or closure (Booth, "Did Sterne Complete *Tristram Shandy*?"). Even more important is the critics' implicit and pervasive convergence with regard to the object of their disagreement. Features of the text (so-called "internal evidence") as well as external evidence such as the author's written statements in letters or diaries are sifted with reference to what they indicate concerning the author's state of mind with regard to the status and design of the project, or what we call the completion disposition.

18. This is the first example of a performance work we have considered. Just as a work for performance is either complete or incomplete, so too are its performances. Our account of artwork completion applies to performance works but not to their performances—we take no stand on what it is for a performance of a work to be complete. This is an especially difficult topic given that a performance can be complete yet marred by significant failures to comply with the instructions provided by the score.

19. Note that the completion dispositions of the artists of a complete collaborative work may have importantly different rational bases. Consider, for example, artistic projects with a "wiki" setup in which the collaborators are anonymous and do not communicate with one another in any detail about their artistic motivations and commitments. It seems plausible to say that the collaborative artworks in such cases can be complete despite the fact that the completion dispositions of the collaborating artists are sustained by cognitive mechanisms constituted by different sorts of beliefs, desires, and cognitive dispositions. But the rational basis for their completion dispositions must have certain similarities as well—if collaborating artists have completion dispositions with respect to their work, the cognitive mechanisms that sustain these dispositions must overlap to some degree; otherwise, the artists would not count as collaborators in the first place. (This is true even in wiki-style cases; in such cases, it is just that the mutual plan or intention is relatively open-ended or general in nature.)

20. We would like to thank the participants at the conference entitled "Art and Metaphysics" held May 16–18, 2012, at Lingnan University, Hong Kong, for their comments and criticisms, especially Derek Baker, Ben Blumson, Ben Caplan, Rafael De Clercq, Louis deRosset, Kathrin Koslicki, Dan Marshall, Roger Pouivet, Guy Rohrbaugh, Darrell Rowbottom, Chris Tillman, Yuijian Zheng, and Lei Zhong. We also wish to thank two anonymous referees as well as the editors of this journal for their help.