

Tom Huhn
The Enigma of Experience; Art and Truth Content

School of Visual Arts, New York
United States
e-mail: thuhn@sva.edu

Enigma and truth content are two of the most prominent terms in Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*. This essay explores the relation between enigma and truth content by considering the peculiar character of the experience that occurs in response to works of modern art. The enigma of modern art is also constitutive of it. The character of this self-contradicting existence is what makes the work of art into the occasion for a baffling and befuddling encounter. The complement to enigma in the work of art is its truth content. Key to engaging the work of art's enigma and truth content will be the mimetic quality of the relation between experience and the work of art. So too is the misalignment between the work of art and experience an opportunity for encountering what exists as objective contradiction. The ongoing mimetic misalignments of object and subject, expressed in and through the blockages that come to be named artwork and experience, is where we find how much more snarled and entangled the artwork and experience become in order, according to Adorno, to thwart the continuing demands for clarity and meaning. The essay also includes abbreviated attempts to locate in Kant and Schiller's aesthetics the first stirrings of what will later figure in Adorno's elucidations of modernist art.