

Art Lovers

Celebrating
Elisabeth de Bièvre
and John Onians
in Words and
Pictures



Edited by
Gyöngyvér Horváth
and Isabelle Onians





Figure 0.1. Graham Johnston, *Lost Picasso No. 1, Short-haired*, 2022. Acrylic on primed paper, 23x16cm. Norwich, private collection.



Figure 0.2. Graham Johnston, *Lost Picasso No. 2, Long-haired*, 2022. Acrylic on primed paper, 24x17cm. Norwich, private collection.



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Editors' introduction

This double Festschrift honours the distinguished careers and academic accomplishment of art historians Elisabeth de Bièvre and John Onians, as well as their shared life as a married couple on the occasion of their 55th wedding anniversary. Their intellectual paths together and individually have led to unexplored territories extending their discipline and leaving a profound impact on those who have encountered them. As editors we embody the professional and private aspects of this celebration, one of us the last former doctoral student of John and the other the child of them both.

Following the authoritative album amicorum which Elisabeth abetted Lauren Golden in conjuring up for John more than 20 years ago, *Raising the Eyebrow: John Onians and World Art Studies* (2001), we have chosen to felicitate Elisabeth and John together in a book that is more personal, creative, and visually engaging. This book offers a platform for the many people who have accompanied them on their journeys, whether for brief moments or across decades. Their impact is honoured here by contributors from diverse fields, including practising artists, fellow art historians and former students, colleagues from other professions, as well as friends. We have welcomed both learned and less formal pieces, and since this is a volume for a married couple, some chapters are in pairs or jointly authored.



Fig 0.5. Lauren Golden, *An Architecture of Love*, 2024. Ink and gouache, 21x29.7cm. Private collection.



Figure 0.6. Elisabeth de Bièvre and John Onians on their wedding day, 27 July 1968. Oud-Wassenaar Kasteel, The Hague.

The book is organized into three sections, based on the type of contributions:

Part I features artworks – verbal or visual – that resonate with the lives and work of Elisabeth and John. These include paintings, drawings, photography, poetry, fiction and travel writing.

Part II presents personal and professional accounts of the roles of Elisabeth and John as teachers, colleagues, scholars, and friends. Some recall first encounters, others collaborations, memorable events, visits, travels and conversations. Several explore Elisabeth and John’s unique relationship, their hospitality, and the warmth of their home.

Part III compiles scholarly articles of traditional *Festschrift* fare. Here are saluted the theoretical approaches Elisabeth and John have innovated and applied in their scholarly writing and teaching, and their influence: their World Art Studies so closely connected to the University of East Anglia, Elisabeth’s geography of art and Green Art Studies, and John’s neuroarthistory. While some chapters are tributes, others bear witness to their scholarly activities from further afar.

The book’s pair of cover pictures are by two contemporary artists. Gyöngyvér came across the image for John by accident and the evocation of the young man whom neither editor could have known, was immediate (see cover). The classical face peers into the past that is no longer available directly, only through many frames; the painting reflects his introspective nature. The second image, for Elisabeth, a drawing entitled *Omphale*, engages the viewer directly (see back cover). As a queen, adorned with the Nemean lionskin, she embodies pride and strength, and possesses the strongest of the heroes as her lover.

Among the featured artworks, Graham Johnston’s playful pair of portraits of Elisabeth and John are presented in the front inner cover (Figure 0.1 and Figure 0.2), while two photographic works by Charles Onians, the son of Elisabeth and John, also grace the book as the back inner cover (Figure 0.3 and Figure 0.4).

Finally, we publish Lauren Golden’s visual celebration of our honorees’ wedding anniversary (Figure 0.5). Her stated aspiration was to tell the art history love story of John Onians and Elisabeth de Bièvre through the marvellous architectures of their life together, emphasising their union of Italian and Netherlandish Renaissance environment and expertise. The central wedding portrait, after the 1968 photo (Figure 0.6) follows the traditional papal portraits surrounded by images of their architectural patronage, especially that of the *Portrait of Sixtus V* of 1589 by the Flemish engraver Nicolaus van Aelst, a resident in Rome. The lefthand corners are for John and

the right for Elisabeth, representing their youths before they met. John was a child in Chalfont St Giles where he jumped for joy ringing the bells of the church, while Trinity College, Cambridge was his university. Elisabeth's schooling was in The Hague before she went on to the University of Utrecht. The two centre top images show where they met in 1966 at the American Academy, Rome and then where they married in 1968 at the Raadhuis De Paauw, Wassenaar. Their wedding reception was held at the Oud-Wassenaar Kasteel, the architecture of the central portrait. Whilst both travelling as academics to all parts of the world throughout their lives, their home in Norwich, the location for so many enlightening dinners for students and colleagues, is depicted in the centre of the lower register, beside their fantastically modern workplace, the Sainsbury Centre of UEA. The centre right image depicts the steps to their medieval home in the Italian hilltop town of Bomarzo, chosen by them for Vicino Orsini's mysterious Renaissance garden, the Sacro Bosco created as a love homage to his wife, Giulia Farnese. Centre left is the Chiosstro del Bramante in Rome, a quintessential architecture of Renaissance thought and meanings as brought together in John's work.

Instead of looking into the past, Elisabeth and John themselves announce the call to action constituted by a Festschrift at least as much as ours is a treasury of sweet souvenirs: 'This collection illustrates the diverse understanding of art manifested through the lives of two people. It offers a possible beginning for a subsequent volume.'

We express our gratitude to everyone involved.

The Editors
Gyöngyvér Horváth and Isabelle Onians
31 August 2024

Part I



1.

A visual homage to the clay stoves in *drokpa* black tents in Tibet

Diane Barker

Tibet is well known as the ‘land of snows,’ having the youngest and therefore some of the highest mountains on earth. In a landscape of awesome beauty the average altitude is 14,000 feet and its climate is savage and extreme. It takes a tough and resilient people to flourish in these conditions. Many of these people are the *drokpa* or nomads, who for millennia have lived in harmony with their environment, moving their herds of yak from pasture to pasture with the seasons.

Until very recently nomads have lived year-round in black tents, woven from yak wool, and they would move two to four times a year to fresh pastures at varying altitudes. They have traditionally kept warm using stoves built mainly from large stones and locally dug earth mixed with yak dung. Some stoves would be built anew at each site where the nomads settled—others would be sustained for several years, with some repairs. The black tent was then erected over the stove when it was complete.

This may seem to be rather primitive technology but the stoves (known as *geipu*) are actually a sophisticated design perfectly adapted to burn their only fuel, yak dung, with minimal smoke. They are highly ecological and sustainable, for when the nomads move to fresh pastures the stove gradually dissolves back into the earth leaving nothing behind.

The stoves are practical and very efficient, keeping the tent warm day and night. I’ve been told by nomad friends that just left alone a clay stove can hold heat for up to two days, unlike the metal stoves now favoured

by many nomads due to their portability. They are also sculptural forms of great beauty which are highly respected by nomad families.

‘Tibetan nomads would offer the first spoon of freshly boiled milk to the stove itself, since they believe that there is a deity (*lha*) of the stove and they identify it with the Konchok—the Three Jewels of Buddhism. In the past you wouldn’t see many cups on the stove. The nomads would show the stove a lot of respect, as they believed a *lha* inhabited it. The stove was seen like the mother of the household, as all the food comes from it, so there is a lot of devotion to the stove’ (Gebchak Wangdrak Rinpoche).¹

The *drokpa* are also traditionally very careful about what they burn in the stove—there would be no bones, skin or flesh, in order not to offend the *lha* with unpleasant smoke.

The *geipu* are the centre of tent life, providing warmth, for cooking meals, heating *dri* (female yak) milk for butter, cheese and yogurt and a focus for family and visitors to meet around. Sadly, in most nomad *rukor* encampments there are fewer and fewer beautiful and practical clay and stone stoves as metal ones replace them.

Bibliography

Barker, D. 2022. *Portraits of Tibet*. Cardiff: Graffeg, Bird Eye Books.

¹ Barker 2022: 115.



Figure 1.1. Sengko and his mum stand behind the magnificent clay stove (or *geipu*) in the family black tent. It was created by his friend Gyaltsso (foreground) using large stones and mud mixed with dried yak dung. Sershul/Dzachuka nomadic area, Kham, 2018. Photograph by Diane Barker.



Figure 1.2. A simple stove in a black tent in a nomad *rukor* (encampment of a group of nomad families) in Ramashong Valley, near Manigengo, Kham. Above the stove is the *kung* (meaning sky), the opening through which the smoke can escape. *Kung* are generally closed only, and then partially, in very bad weather. Kham, 2015. Photograph by Diane Barker.



Figure 1.3. Demtso makes tea in the family black tent at a nomad camp of the Dong Tsang clan. Lalung Valley, Nangchen, Kham, 2014. Photograph by Diane Barker.



Figure 1.4. Yulha shows us the stove in the very traditionally set up tent of his newly married friends, Wangchen Gonpo and his wife. Many nomads prefer metal stoves these days since they are lightweight and can be moved from camp to camp. Yulha told us that, however, they do not hold the heat like a clay stove, cooling down very quickly. Clay and stone stoves can hold heat for up to two days, are warmer and use less fuel (dry or frozen yak dung.) Dzagaly, Sershul/Dzachuka nomadic area, Kham, 2018. Photograph by Diane Barker.



Figure 1.5. Palsang's mum puts more dried yak dung into the stove in the family tent. Three sided, open topped stoves seem to be traditional in parts of Amdo. The family also have a metal stove. Ma Chu (Yellow River) nomadic area, Amdo, 2017. Photograph by Diane Barker.



Figure 1.6. Sengko and Dawa relax by the clay stove created by his friend Gyaltsso. Sengko wove the panels for the black tent himself and was proud that his tent was very traditionally furnished. It stood out as the only black tent in his *rukur*—the rest are made of white canvas. Sershul/Dzachuka nomadic area, Kham, 2018. Photograph by Diane Barker.



Figure 1.7. Gebchak Wangdrak Rinpoche sits by the stove in his brother Rabten's black tent, at a nomad camp of the Dong Tsang clan. Lalung Valley, Nangchen, Kham, 2014. Photograph by Diane Barker.



Figure 1.8. Tea being prepared for the visitors at a nomad tent in grasslands between Rongpatsa and Yilhung, Kham, 2015. Photograph by Diane Barker.



Figure 1.9. Dawa makes himself at home by the stove in a nomad black tent in grasslands between Rongpatsa and Yilhung, Kham, 2015. Photograph by Diane Barker.



Figure 1.10. An old clay and stone stove biodegrades back into the grasslands in Ramashong Valley, near Manigengo, Kham, 2017. Photograph by Diane Barker.

2.

An evening with John Onians and Elisabeth de Bièvre at the Tchorek-Bentall Studio, Smolna 36, Warszawa, May 2011

Katy Bentall

As part of the installation that I made in the studio for Warsaw's Night of the Museums in May 2011, 'The Death of Kolekcja Karol Tchorek,' I hung out across the space on a piece of black wool, as if it was pegged to a washing line, an original copy of Gallery Foksal's founding manifesto *The Theory of Place*, written by Mariusz Tchorek in 1966. Why I positioned it there I'm not entirely sure. On reflection, as I write this

all these years later, I see that it was a gesture, an attempt to give Mariusz's thought, and his writings a more prominent role in the studio which was of course dominated by his father's work; as many as 80 Socialist Realist sculptures, mainly in plaster form. My urge to wrap all these sculptures up was prompted by a desire to declare their death, and to finally give life to both Mariusz, his words and also myself, with my



Figure 2.1. Magda, Katy, Elisabeth, Samuel and John in the studio. Warsaw, 2011.
Photograph by John Onians.

flimsy dolls, spidery drawings and cloth books with no spines. Did this installation achieve this? I'm not sure. Wrapping the sculptures up in black silky fabric and making them into big, dark abstract forms seemed to transform them into uncanny ghostly presences more powerful perhaps than the sculptures themselves.

So this is the scene that John and Elisabeth encountered on first entering the studio.

I had invited them to stay in the studio for a few days and to give a talk – the title of which was simply *A*

Duet and then to lead the unwrapping ceremony and celebrate the finissage of this museum night installation. I asked them to make the first cut in the black wool that was bound around the fabric covering all the sculptures. The other guests could then join in and continue the process of uncovering, until quite quickly a large pile of black cloth lay in the middle of the studio room and all the sculptures were once again visible; John and Elisabeth had not seen them in real life before. I know this all happened 12 years ago, but I'd still love to ask if they remember how that moment felt.



Figure 2.2. John and Elisabeth cutting the wool. Warsaw, 2011. Photograph by Katy Bentall.



Figure 2.3. A wrapped Karol Tchorek sculpture. Fragment of installation 'The Death of Kolekcja Karol Tchorek.' Warsaw, 2011. Photograph by Katy Bentall.

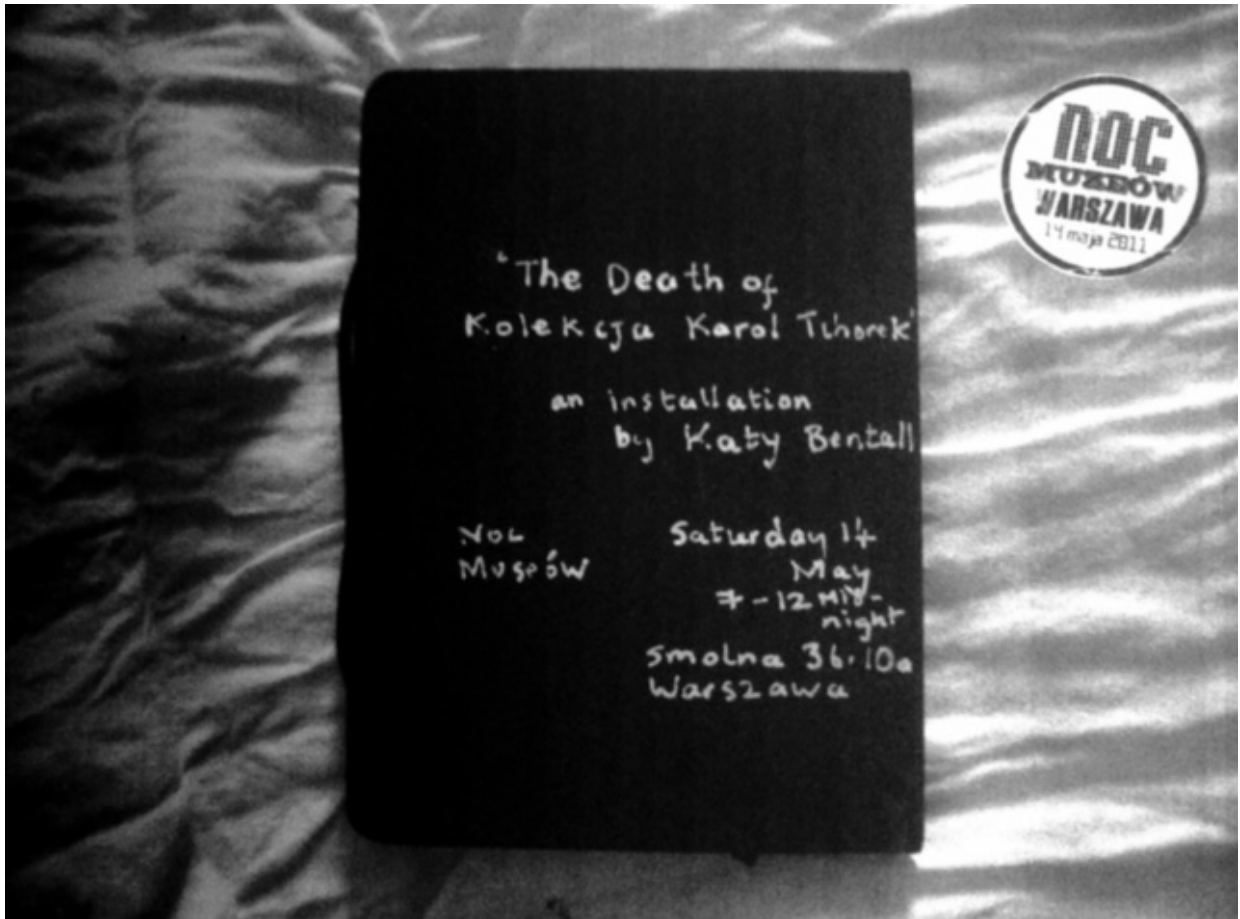


Figure 2.4. Invitation to the Warsaw Night of the Museums. Warsaw, 2011. Photograph by Katy Bentall.



Figure 2.5. Charcoal drawings by Katy Bentall in the studio of the studio interior 2011 to 2014.
Photograph by Katy Bentall.

3.

Elisabeth de Bièvre and John Onians

Eric Fernie and Lorraine Fernie

One was born Dutch.
One was born English.
They both loved to use their eyes to look at the world
around them.
So they were drawn to studying art history.

Elisabeth could still see the world depicted in the
golden age of Dutch painting around her.
Dutch art is somehow anchored round the pride and
romance of plain weaving, whose beauty can be
highlighted by light itself. Light shows up the subtle
surface pattern made by weaving finely spun threads
consistently and over a large area.
And white woven linen can be washed.
Washing brings back its beauty.

Washing and ironing once again gives pride in its
attainment, usefulness, domestic comfort and the skill
of its making and maintaining.

In England Henry the 8th broke any native grown
traditions when he allowed the smashing of monastic
and Catholic churches and so breaking the link between
religion and art in English culture.

Subsequently dreams of art in England became dreams
of Italy.

Dreams that emerged from studying ancient Greek
civilisation with its important battles, myths and ways
of thinking, which, when re-imagined in Renaissance
Italy, led to the creation of something entirely new and
wonderful.

And you could travel to Italy.



Figure 3.1. Lorraine Fernie in her studio. Old Couldston, London, 2022. Photography by Matthew Hollow.



Figure 3.2. Lorraine Fernie, *Wait*, 2022. Pastel on paper, 70x100cm. Private collection.

And when you got there it was still beautiful.
There were still areas where the buildings enhanced
the hilly surrounding landscape.
And inside these buildings were filled with art.

Figures are dominant in this art.
Figures that express human emotions of course.
But figures dressed in patterns.
In patterns created in ways so rich and rare that they
cannot be washed.
Rich silks, brocades and velvets are to be admired,

Not to be subjected to the relentless demands of
everyday living.

Modern art fought to glory in the independent
emotions of its greatest exponents.
Elisabeth de Bièvre in her book
Dutch Art and Urban Cultures (2015)
Put forward a different theory about creativity. She
went back to look at how the particular environment
created within each individual Dutch city formed

a large part of both the subject matter and what is conveyed by a work of art.

This view of the importance of social context has since gained wider and wider traction in both scholarly and public perception.

John Onians is also interested in widening the boundaries that our society was placing on what was looked at, and perceived to be, 'important,' 'meaningful' and 'high art.' He enthusiastically worked towards making the art history department at UEA into a place known for World Art Studies.

And more recently he has become interested in how science's view on the plasticity of the human brain can challenge us to look afresh at how and why human beings make art.

Both Elisabeth and John are interested in what artists are making now.

If you care about what things look like why would you not look at contemporary art.

However their home in Norwich is not a place where they proudly display their taste in art.

As you come in through the front door

There is a large study on either side of the passageway.

Each is identical in size and relative location.

One is filled with John's books and scholarly possessions.

One is filled with Elisabeth's books and personal possessions.

As a visitor to their home you walk right past the study doors drawn down the passage by a painting hung at the end. There are contemporary modernist prints on the staircase; a cast of the tiny Venus of Willendorf on a sideboard and works of art by artists they know.

But these do not catch any more of your attention than an inherited elaborately carved chair, odd views into unexpected architectural spaces, or a well visible under the kitchen floor. A vase filled with fresh flowers stands next to a Renaissance tapestry and carefully chosen curtains, and you eat off plates decorated by hand in Italy with an image of the most boastful bird ever.

I feel that John and Elisabeth's dreams are still in Italy.

Italy where you can walk in golden sunshine

Through streets and piazzas

That are beautiful, and filled with beautifully dressed people,

And then walk into beautiful buildings

And churches covered in art.

It is a world where you can still dream that how you create beauty matters.

4. The road to the south

Barbara Hyde

I had been fascinated by the name of the town of Saranda (Sarande), in the south of Albania, since first hearing it. I was also attracted by its position, so near to Corfu and the border with mainland Greece: after three or more months in Albania one begins to get infected by an escapist mentality. However, it turned out to be mysteriously difficult to get definite information about it. 'Yes, it is a beautiful place,' some said, 'The most beautiful town in Albania.' Others looked shocked and alarmed at my proposal to go there. 'Don't go by yourself' they said. 'There are wild people there. It's not safe. You'll be robbed. The hotel (there was only one) is full of people drinking and fighting.' This last fact was corroborated by those who informed me, plausibly, that the people there earned dollars from the tourist trade and drank them all in the hotel.

There was nothing to do there—it was full of tourists—how would I get food? This was a natural preoccupation for Albanians, restricted to one local shop for the 8 or 9 food items which were then still state-subsidised, and unable to afford the high prices of food in the 'free market.'

If it was hard to get an accurate picture of Saranda itself, reliable information about the ferry between Saranda and Corfu was even more elusive. Yes, there were daily ferries, some said offhandedly. Others said there was only a Greek one, on some days of the week. One of my would-be informants had been repeatedly to a transport office in Tirana and drawn a blank. Some students in the English department who were from Saranda were winkled out—classes were over and it was now the examination period—and told me ferries did run on particular days, but on their second appearance their breath smelt strongly of beer and they were clearly more interested in the dollars I might pay their friends for accommodation. There were rumours that all services had been disrupted by the threat of a large-scale illegal exodus of Albanians to Greece. I finally put my trust in an English teacher who had come all the way from Saranda to attend the in-service teacher-training course, and who was also, it turned out later, an experienced tourist guide.

'There is a Greek ferry on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays,' he said with authority. 'And an Albanian one on some other days,' he went on, perhaps sensing the value of this further disclosure. 'Tuesday?' I asked, in suspense, as this was the day I needed to travel in order to meet a plane from England arriving at Corfu. 'Yes,' he said, surprisingly. This was wonderful. However, it left early in the morning, so I would have to spend Monday night in Saranda. The teacher promised to arrange this.

After these protracted enquiries, the final task was to arrange transport from Tirana to Saranda: the bus didn't seem to be a good idea, not only because of the length and discomfort of the journey, but also because of the apparently random nature of its departure time, more or less whenever the driver felt like it: I didn't share the bush telegraphic powers of Albanians, who by waiting around long enough just seem to sense when something is going to happen. Warnings about car travel to this distant place, too, were not lacking: it should be a good car, the roads were bad, and the driver would need to be very reliable. How would he get petrol? (petrol was indeed in short supply at that time). You would have to go early because the driver wouldn't be able to find affordable accommodation in Saranda overnight. You really need to travel with an Albanian, as a foreigner you could get stopped by armed men and robbed. Finally, it would be very expensive, \$50 or more.

My teacher friend, Vasil, solved all these difficulties at a stroke. I proposed that he put off his departure for home from Saturday to Monday and travel with me, and the next day he said he had good news: a driver with a good white Mercedes, who was from Saranda, would take us both, for a reasonable price, and the departure was agreed to be 1pm on Monday. I was also pleased to discover, prior to Monday, that the teacher was an old classmate and friend of many years of one of my colleagues in the department, a man I liked and trusted.

So, on Monday, departing finally at 2pm rather than 1pm because the driver needed to call on a friend, we

set off in the dusty heat of a Tirana afternoon. I was offered the choice of front or back seat and chose the front, regretting it slightly when I found the seat belt lacked a catch so was unusable. But there is no requirement to use seat belts in Albania and few use them.

The first part of the route was not unfamiliar to me. There are not many roads leading south or coastwards from Tirana: one can go to Durres, or Berat, or Vlora, but the first part is the same and I had been to these towns before. There are several industrial towns through which the road passes, in most cases with abandoned and derelict factories such as those for glass and paper. In this flat and almost treeless landscape there was little protection from the fierce sun, though tree-stumps along the side of the road in many places testified to where rows of trees, poplars in particular, had lined the roads as in France but had been sacrificed to the urgent demand for winter heating. One explanation I had been given, by more than one Albanian, was that these trees had been felled because they had reached the end of their healthy life. By this theory, it was hard to account for so many being lost in one place, or for the wounds at the base of many trunks where sawing had begun but been discontinued.

Many different farm animals were being herded in fields or along the side of the road: sheep, goats, cattle. Donkeys were usually ridden, by old or young men, or boys, sometimes astride but more often side-saddle, when the rider looked quite relaxed and nonchalant but must have had strong back muscles and a good sense of balance. The old men commonly wore the white woollen fez (straight-topped) or 'qeleshe' (with a rounded top). The old peasant women wore the traditional black, baggy trousers, blouse with high neck up to the throat and long sleeves, and a white headscarf. In villages, groups of people sat on the ground at the side of the road, in the shade when there was any, and watched the world go by; or individuals, often young children, guarded a box displaying some goods for sale: perhaps some tomatoes or garlic, cigarettes or bars of chocolate. I often wondered how the chocolate retained its shape and did not melt in the heat. In this first part of the journey there was a fair amount of traffic. The road was just wide enough for two cars abreast, but the space was decreased of course by the lines of animals or trudging people, and drivers tended to favour the middle of the road and to overtake frequently, returning only fractionally to their side of the road when approaching an oncoming vehicle, so that near-collisions, averted in the nick of time, seemed from the passenger's seat to occur regularly.

Much of the traffic on Albanian roads, however, is still slow and traditional, in the form of horsedrawn carts or the donkeys already described. Animals, in fact, represent the greatest hazard on these roads: cows panic and charge in the wrong direction, donkeys stand obstinately in the path of motor vehicles. On a narrow mountain road, further south, a calf once darted in front of us and then in front of a huge lorry toiling in the opposite direction, which stopped only just in time. The calf then dithered pathetically, keeping both vehicles stationary for a minute or two. The most pleasing of these incidents was when Albert, my driver, slowed up enough to allow a turtle to cross sedately in front of us.

As we drove further south, the tendency people clearly had to regard the road as theirs, not for cars, increased, and they had to be frequently hooted out of the way, at which times they moved just as slowly as before, staring at us angrily or cheekily. In the smaller places, it was common for men waiting at the roadside to step out and gesticulate as we approached, even speak, indicating they would like us to give them a lift, and as we passed to continue this dumb show, expressively indicating annoyance, indignation, a dramatized refusal to understand why we hadn't stopped, shoulders raised, hands open and apart. Albanians have a wide range of very eloquent body language. Albert, however, did not react, other than by a slight possibly patronising smile. Another reaction to an approaching car, from very small children, might be to stoop and pick up stones to throw at it. Slightly older children would hold up their goods or point vigorously at the container on the ground, waving to try and make us stop. Women were not frequent among the roadside groups of people, and rarely exhibited this active interest in a passing car.

Among the groups of men passing the time of day we would often see a policeman, in smart cap and grey or blue shirt, relaxing on the ground or at a cafe table. I commented on this friendly and laid-back image of the police in Albania, so different from their more formal and solitary British counterparts. Yes, agreed Vasil, the teacher, they were as much a member of their community as they were of the police-force, and this did not make for very good policing, he added, grinning ironically. It soon became clear that some of them were doing their job, as we were waved to the side to stop by one roadside patrol after another. Usually this was for a routine checking of the driver's licence. The final one, just outside Gjirokaster, proved to be a lengthier and more difficult stop. The conversation between Albert and the young policeman went on for some time,

gradually turning into an argument. The gist, I was told afterwards, was as follows:

Policeman: You are not registered as a taxi but as a private car (after looking at the papers).

Berti: Yes.

Policeman: But you are carrying a foreigner, so you must be a taxi.

Berti: But why can't I take a foreigner as a friend?

Policeman: No, as a private car you can take members of your family, sister, mother etc.—not a foreigner.

And so on. Somehow the ingenious Albert, never losing his cool, managed to win the argument and we drove on. In principle Albert was right—he should be free to take a foreigner free of charge in his car, but in fact he was not doing so, so the policeman was right too. This was not the first of many occasions in Albania when I was made to feel strongly that as a foreigner I belonged to a different species from Albanians, one that was only questionably human but had the chief function of producing dollars, whether in exchange for services or not. On this occasion I was puzzled by the fact that I was so readily identifiable as a foreigner, and more so when my travelling companions said 'We told him you were one.'

From Fier, a town where we stopped for coffee, the countryside began to get hillier and greener. We went through an oil-producing area, where the derricks were scattered oddly over the agricultural land and a sulphurous smell hung in the air. Gradually there were more trees and fewer buildings and not so many people, the hills turning imperceptibly into the lower slopes of mountains, the road beginning to wind up and round the mountain-sides. We stopped, hungry and tired, at an oasis like place aptly called Uj i Ftohte (Cold Water), where spring water gushed down the steep hillside, under the road and on down to the broad river Vjosa. The spot was shady with huge maples and was in itself a refreshing stopping place, quite apart from the restaurant that had been built between road and river, under the maples and walnut trees. I took out my bag of sandwiches and peaches, and Berti asked the waitress if we could eat our own food. Not really, she answered, but added, dryly, there is an exception to every rule.

We passed Tepelena, driving beneath the wall of a fortress that had been the seat of war-like Ali Pasha, the late eighteenth-century commander who fought the Turks. Vasil, who was a mine of information about industry, agriculture and population figures, couldn't

find much more to tell me about Ali Pasha, saying he hadn't studied history.

As we drove on, in the late afternoon sunlight the increasing wildness and beauty of the mountainous landscape, great shoulders of rock rising above the deep green fertile gorges and fast currents hidden beyond the thick foliage of maples and chestnuts, easily brought to mind the scenery of Gothic novels, haunts of bandits and adventurers. In these areas villages were built far from the road, high up and inaccessible on the mountain side. The final stretch of our journey offered great diversity of vegetation: olive groves were still to be seen, as further north, but there were also hazels, cherry trees and almonds, and nearer Saranda, orange and lemon groves. We passed Greek minority villages—white, square, single storey stone houses ranged up the hillside, with the occasional dark cypress among them. Greek inscriptions could be seen on buildings. Vasil knew a lot about the Greek minorities, being a Greek speaker himself. They were well-treated, with Greek schools for the young children, and Greek language continuing as an option in secondary school. We stopped in one of these villages, and went up a small street where a friend of Albert's lived; in the clean mountain air there was the scent of herbs, something like thyme or perhaps oregano. A young woman sat in the street with a distaff, winding the yellowish wool and called out to us, recognising Bertie, that his friend was not at home. From both men there was a strong sense of returning to much-loved home territory—only a couple of hours now, they said. The steep narrow road had a breathtaking drop on one side, and they were amused at my evident unease.

As evening drew on we started to leave the austere regions of bare eroded rock and descend towards the coastal plain and the sea. We passed two hydro-electric power stations, and then drove along a straight road with an orchard of what Vasil called date trees on our left. I peered in vain through the dusk but could not identify date palms. After some discussion, Bertie slowed up and called over a small boy on a bike to go and get a twig with a hurm (date) on it to show me, although it would still be unripe, they said. The leaves were broad and deciduous, the round firm green fruit rather like a tomato. It was only much later that I discovered this was a persimmon, the Albanian word hurm referring to both this and the fruit we call date.

We finally drove into Saranda in deep dusk, lights in houses twinkling, the smell of the sea. The car lights shone briefly on a mass of vivid cerise blossom,

bougainvillea. Saranda is the only place in Albania it grows, Vasil told me, and I believed him.

A brief stop for Vasil to call on someone to check up about the morning boat, and then on to his flat, where his wife and small son were waiting and where I too was to sleep. I had finally arrived, thanks to Vasil and Berti, and there was a boat for me next morning. I was prepared to believe anything the optimists had told me about Saranda.

However, I was to leave for Corfu early the next morning. Only from a chance comment of Vasil's on our way down to the quay next the blue Ionian sea stretched out before us, did I learn that the name of Saranda is from the Greek word for forty: that's why, for me with my rusty smattering of Greek, it had had a familiar ring about it. But why should a town be called forty? For the forty saints, up in the monastery, Vasil said. Which saints? Why was the town named after them? But Vasil was vague about it. History, after all, was not his strong point.

5. Holland v England / Things you learn at UEA

Will Kemp

Holland v England

'You are up late,' she glared while dusting the grand piano, the voice accentless, the activity at odds with her grey skirt, bouffant hair and pearls. 'I suppose you want a cooked breakfast.'

'It's OK, Mrs Sondberg, thank you—'

'No, it is no trouble. You English always say no when you mean yes.'

We were back to the day before, when she'd ridiculed my feeling that Sventje should leave home then flicked a switch-blade finger to command, *Do not plan your life around my daughter—you think you know her but you don't*. Sventje had walked in then, for the mother to ask softly if she'd like some strawberries in the garden. But today there was no Sventje to walk in any minute. I had a whole day of this to get through.

I helped myself to some orange juice on the table and sat by the framed poster of some pretty boy giving Sventje a rose. I'd never liked it.

'I enjoyed debating the third world with Isaac last night,' I lied, to make some conversation.

I pictured him the evening before, scoffing at my attempt to learn Dutch, disrupting everything I said.

'You are an idealist, Scott,' she proclaimed without looking up. 'When you are older, you will think differently because you will have had experience. What will you do in life? Work in Africa?'

I looked away, cut down. If only I'd gone into Breda with Sventje.

'No, I don't think so. I'm—'

'See what you think in a few years. People become less idealistic with time.'

She returned to keeping the house just so. Perhaps I should try another angle.

'Actually,' I confided, starting to clear the table for her, 'it's quite nice to have a day off from Sventje.'

'That's funny,' she sneered. 'She said the same thing this morning.'

She scrutinised the floor with a dark smile, showing her true colours again.

Oh sod it. I made for the door to walk round the block in the September sun. And get some air.

I'd met Sventje earlier that year at Cambridge. She was beautiful, cultured and Dutch. Seemed strong and independent, like my former sweetheart Kathelijne. I invited her to the May ball and she came, even hinting that partners one day got married. We visited Oxford and Stratford. Watched *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*. Went punting and cycling. And made love in a wheat field by the Cam. It was her first time, aged twenty-five.

I went to stay with her family in Ede in July and she came to meet mine in August. I'd never known such happiness, believed she was the one and that she felt the same, often telling me *ik hou van jou*. And thought her father was great, in spite of Sventje sending a poem beforehand in which the speaker has *infanticidde* dreams of his daughter's future suitor.

Though shortly after our first kiss, she broke down about her brother Andre. He'd slashed his wrists the week before, after a family meal to celebrate his twenty-ninth birthday, and was now looking for a place to live. No one seemed to know why, so I vowed to find out—to help him, and save her.

This proved impossible the moment I agreed to the mother's request never to discuss it with him. Which made me think it was linked to her plea, *What will I do*, when bemoaning the possibility of her *children* leaving home. And the fact that she'd run away from home aged fifteen, never to contact her own mother again.

I returned to the tiny back garden enclosed by its tall hedge, sat down at the table and opened the Dutch text-book Sventje had given me. I'd show the father. The mother came out to sit opposite, face hardened, then rolled up her sleeves and leant forward, studying me. I pretended to read, heart punching out of my chest, breaths faltering.

'Scott, are you still angry with me?' She prickled, mouth simmering with derision.

'Still? I'm not angry with you, Mrs Sondberg. Upset a little perhaps, but not angry.'

My face swarmed with heat.

‘Yes, you are, I can see it,’ she goaded, shifting in her chair. ‘But why? What have I done? Was it something I said?’

‘Well, you dismissed my view on something earlier without hearing me out.’

The reason sounded so trivial now it was out in the open.

‘So?’ She mocked. ‘What I think is not so important!’

‘Yes, it is. It’s very important.’

‘Phhh!’ she whinnied, as if I’d just suggested the world was flat. ‘Rubbish, Scott!’

My eyes sank towards the book. What had I done to deserve this?

‘No,’ I refuted. ‘What you think is very important to me. Mr Sondberg and Andre too.’

Her powdered face straightened, eyes welling. A tear ran down her left cheek to cling to the base of her jaw, a diamond above pearls, then fell, dotting her black top like a raindrop.

‘But why?’ She snuffled.

‘Because of Sven, of course. What her family thinks affects the way she sees me.’

‘No!’ she spat, tears flowing freely. ‘I do not say, *Sventje, he is bad*, so Sventje thinks that! She has her own mind—I am not her Mummy who tells her, *do this, do that!*’

‘Oh come on,’ I remonstrated. ‘We are all affected by what our parents think. I know if my mother—’

‘Shhh,’ she quashed, nodding towards the house next door. ‘But why is it so important what Sventje thinks of you?’

I looked down again, stranded. If only this was being filmed—Sventje might not believe it otherwise.

‘Why, Scott? Why do you like her so much?’

Her tone was emotionless, face gun-barrel straight. Any semblance of niceties was gone—there was no need to play the polite hostess with her daughter gone for the day.

‘What do you think of her, Scott?’

Perhaps she thought I wanted Sventje just for sex.

‘Well, I think the world of her. Why else take her to the May ball? I mean, a ticket costs over—’

‘Money?’ She shouted, face distorted in disgust. ‘What is this talk of money? You think you can buy her, do you?’

I stood up.

‘Right,’ I asserted, pointing at her, Dutch-style. ‘That’s enough.’

‘So you think my daughter is rubbish,’ she recoiled, ‘is that it?’

‘How dare you?’ I repulsed, eyes narrowed. ‘I’ve never been so insulted in my life.’

I turned to leave, muttering *Good God* within earshot. But feeling I’d done what needed to be done.

I went upstairs to Sventje’s room and sat on the bed, head in my hands, chest heaving. Outside, the blue sky was just as I’d left it, a bird chirping in the same way as a few minutes before. And yet within those few minutes, everything had changed.

Why hadn’t I gone into Breda? Right now I could be sitting at a café watching the girls go by while Sventje did her viva at the university. None of this would have happened. And there was probably more to come.

I remembered how we’d returned the evening before, after making love in the woods—the odd way the mother had looked up from a clandestine conversation with the father at the table then slid away to the kitchen without a word. Clearly I’d been the subject of debate. And wasn’t good enough for her. But why not? What more could I have done?

I looked at the pile of ironing she’d put on the wicker chair, the camp-bed she’d inserted between bed and window. I was sick of the sight of it. Sick too of waiting for her to switch on the dishwasher before Sventje and I could make love. Her entering immediately afterwards for our washing. Her fussing over Sventje like a pampered doll in Sugarland. Her arranging photo shoots for Sventje when I only had a few days left. Her pooh-poohing my belief that Sventje should leave the mothership. Her emotional blackmail to ensure Sventje never did. Her ban on any discussion of the attempt with Andre. Her order not to plan my life around Sventje. And now this.

I rose to chuck the ironing on the bed, then grabbed my orange rucksack and sat it upright in the chair. There were some footsteps on the stairs then a knock on the door.

‘Scott, can I have a moment, please?’ She requested.

The honeyed tone could not have been more different to that only minutes before.

‘No,’ I smarted, twisting a pressed shirt from the pile as if wringing it dry. ‘You cannot.’

She came in anyway, face stained with mascara like a witch in an amateur performance of *Macbeth*. I took aim then hurled the shirt into the rucksack.

‘What are you doing?’ She gasped, right hand clasped across her chest. ‘You are leaving?’

‘Take a wild guess.’

She sank back against the wall as I strode towards the landing.

'But why, Scott? What have I said? You put thoughts in my mouth that do not exist—'

'Bullshit!' I blazed by the bathroom door. 'So why all the questions then—about Sventje?'

She shied away from me, eyes shut.

'Why?' She thrust, as I came out with my toothbrush. 'What is wrong with that?'

'Wrong? It's none of your bloody business, that's what's wrong.'

I returned to the bedroom and threw the toothbrush at the rucksack but missed.

'Please,' she fretted, half-entering, half-biting her bottom lip. 'Don't leave. I shall make some coffee. Come downstairs and talk.'

The door shut. I sat down on the bed, staring at the rucksack. I didn't want to leave Sventje, or risk her thinking badly of me. And shouldn't have sworn. And this was her mother. She'd had a hard childhood, but had taken action to make something out of her life. Besides, what she was doing now? Making coffee? Calling the father at the office? Or reaching for Andre's knife?

She was standing near the piano, a dark figure in a darkened room, cheeks streaked with tears. There was a noble but bitter defiance about her, like a captured queen. I went out the back door to collect my book from the table.

'Please, Scott,' she started as I stepped back inside the house. 'Can we talk? Please.'

She was wringing her hands, bottom lip quivering.

'I don't understand you,' she went on, mouth contorting. 'Or why Sventje is so special to you.'

She pulled out a handkerchief from a sleeve and buried her face in it with both hands, crying.

'*It is so sad, so sad!*' she splurged, shaking her head. '*You and she are so in love!*'

The words jolted through me, making no sense.

'Sorry?'

'Sventje,' she hoarsened, 'she is so young, so inexperienced!'

I stared at the floor, trying to absorb the remark, as a curtain in my mind began to be drawn against the sky.

'If Isaac goes with another woman, I know he will come back!'

Oh no. She didn't deserve this. But why tell me, here, now?

'Yes,' I struggled, thrown. 'That's why I've said if Sven wants to go with another... But what is so sad?'

She shook her head vehemently from side to side, eyes closed. Poor woman. I stepped forward to hug her, placing a hand on her right shoulder—but she shrank back, as if I was a killer. I advanced again with opened hands—but she shielded her face with hers, digging my grave deeper.

'Look, Mrs Sondberg,' I ventured, stepping away. 'I think we should have that coffee, don't you?'

At last she lifted a pouting face from the handkerchief, and nodded.

We reconvened in the cool of the main room. She brought a coffee in the best china, with a butter biscuit on the saucer, then tucked her skirt behind before perching on the edge of the squelchy black sofa.

'You must understand Scott,' she opened. 'Sventje is so special. So special to me. Not just because she is so beautiful. All our friends say she is special. Even at school, she was more special than all the other children.'

She dabbed her face with the handkerchief, eyes glistening.

'And please understand another thing,' she added. 'When Andre was born, it was the best thing that happened in my life. To have a little boy, it was so wonderful. And then when Sventje came, well, it was even better. Two little children—my life was complete...'

She talked about Sventje growing up. Sventje at school. Boys who liked Sventje (including a besotted teacher she'd *had to* have a talk with). Sventje's degree. Sventje's part-time job. Sventje's modelling.

I mentioned I found the self-orientation of her modelling unhealthy. Her still living at home too.

'But what will happen if Sventje goes to England,' she blurted, missing the point, breaking down again, 'and gets married, has babies, and then there is a divorce?'

It was hard not to smile at the triple-jump of unlikely events.

'But Mrs S, that's not the case,' I reassured. 'Sven has said she could never live in England. And there are plenty of English and American companies in Holland. Maybe I can work for one—'

'Really, Scott? Really? Oh please—please, please, please!'

She burst into tears again, this time whooping with joy between the sobs. Eventually she puffed out her cheeks and lolled her tongue like a panting dog. It had been quite a morning. But the storm had broken.

‘But Scott,’ she resumed, regaining her composure. ‘Why is Sventje so important to you?’

‘Well,’ I relented, ‘she is everything...’

I listed her qualities, mentioning beauty last. It wasn’t so bad sharing my feelings. Even so, the mother now knew more about them than Sventje. And could relay these to the father, who might not welcome them quite as much, given his acidic performance the night before.

The telephone rang. It was Sventje. The mother spoke gently, her voice back to the candyfloss of the day before, as if nothing untoward had happened. She said Sventje had passed her viva and wanted me to come and celebrate in Utrecht, then passed the receiver, raising a finger to her lips. I nodded, yet it didn’t feel right. Sventje was my girl, there were no secrets between us. And hostess or not, who was the mother to tell me what to do?

The train was hot and airless inside. I sat down, hands on knees, staring into space like an astronaut ready for take-off, my destination in someone else’s hands. Outside, people stood about the platform, then drifted past while standing still. Gradually sun-drenched orchards flitted by in regimental rows, like war graves, before giving way to flat field after flat field of grazing cows.

I did not look for woods where we might make love, but returned the blank stares, each cow unperturbed by the hot flash of yellow thundering past. For them it was no different from the one ten minutes ago, or in ten minutes’ time, all part of the man-made landscape at the point where their field met the sky. Occasionally a tail would swish away a fly, or arch like an old-style pump to dispense dollops of shit; a head would look up at nothing in particular, or rotate like a prop-forward settling into a scrum. And that was it. That was their day.

If only I was a cow or calf. I wouldn’t have to think, or deal with a girl’s parents. I could grow into a bull without the bullshit I’d just come through. Leave my mother when it was time. At least know where I stood.

Hell, what had happened back there? I’d never felt comfortable with her profusion of cooked breakfasts, had sensed something was up the moment she stated I wanted one—as if compiling a dossier on her largesse as a hostess and my ingratitude as a guest. And then the inquisition itself, how she’d not listened to a word, then protested just a little too much. It was so two-faced. And now such a no-win situation. After all I’d done—or tried to do—for Sventje. But had the mother been prying—or setting me up to fall, like a baited bear?

Either way, I couldn’t have gone on as things were—the mother sniping behind Sventje’s back, telling me what to do, trying to nip things in the bud. And maybe it was better this way, with things out in the open, forcing Sventje to leave her child state behind.

But what jarred was the mother weeping, *It is so sad...* The way she shook her head too, as if in bitter disagreement with *It*. What was *It*, exactly? That we would end? If so, who had determined that? Not her, evidently. Or Sventje either. That meant it could only have been the father.

But this was not possible. He was my friend. The father I’d never had. Only the previous evening, he’d declared, *Englischman, I like you—you make me think*, after I’d tried to impress him with my Law and Economics. Though he’d switched tack at dinner, during a debate on Europe, turning to joke to the others in Dutch, his furtive eyes darting back at me to gauge my reaction at being left out in the cold.

Had he taken umbrage at being beaten in a debate by a student? Or had I simply got him wrong? Certainly it was strange how Sventje became another person before him. Red-faced. Silent. Uptight. Said he was *always right*. Had sent me that poem about prejudice.

And that Andre had once called him an *ass-hole* at dinner, with *one woman here, another there*. Significant surely the attempt had taken place after a family meal. Had the father taken a swipe at Andre for flunking university and becoming a car salesman? Or Andre found out about his infidelities and no longer saw him as such a great god?

I shut my eyes at the many-headed monster before me, the gradual collision of tectonic plates groaning in my ears.

I’d never felt more alone. Thank God I was going to see Sventje. Sweet, beautiful Sventje. My soul-mate, the love of my life. How much I wanted to hold her, and be held by her, forget today had ever happened.

Should I tell her, though? I’d promised not to, yet would the mother refrain from telling the father? Some chance. At least Sventje would see I’d had no motive to start the argument. Wouldn’t she?

But what should I tell her? And what about the father’s other women? Did she know about them already, or was I going to have to break that to her as well? How would she take it, what would she make of it all?

And what would the mother say? Tell the truth or down-play some things, exaggerate others—lie, even—to milk the situation and poison her daughter’s mind against me? And if there was a discrepancy in accounts,

who would Sventje believe? A strange relative or a relative stranger?

The train slowed into the station, and there she was, brimming with excitement among friends, searching for me in the carriage windows. But I drew back, wanting to carry on to the coast and into the sea—to submerge under the waves, and return to England. I needed to cool down and work things out, not a party.

I met the friends, then walked with her to a Thai restaurant by the canal. The green water drizzled with reflections of beer lights; trees smothered the buildings above, leaves already rimmed with brown.

‘You know,’ she intimated, squeezing my hand, ‘I always wanted to come here with someone special.’

I told her about both the earlier interrogation and the damning the day before, and suggested Sventje talk with the mother to get a balanced view. She listened in silence, eyes open wide.

‘She had no right to,’ she concluded at length, agreeing with everything I’d said.

Back at the house, the mother coolly acted as normal. I went to sit by the father reading *De Telegraaf* by the piano, still looking immaculate in his blazer, flannels and tie. At the kitchen table nearby, the mother began cooing to Sventje, the magic of their fairy club still intact.

‘And how goes it vid you?’ He stated in a matter-of-fact way, with a cashier’s cursory glance over his gold half-moons.

‘OK,’ I replied, unsure if my vow of silence extended to him as well.

‘You want a drink?’ He demanded, eyes giving nothing away. ‘Beer, wine, something else?’

‘Yes,’ I hesitated, uneasy with the clinical hospitality. ‘White wine please. Thank you.’

He flapped the broadsheet shut, tossed it on his chair and went to the fridge, slippers shishing across the wooden herring-bone floor. Was he too now gearing up to take me down on a charge of insubordination?

‘Did you hear about what happened here earlier?’ I prodded on his return, in need of an objective view.

‘Yes, yes,’ he responded dismissively, before handing me the glass then sitting down to rustle the paper open. ‘My wife and I have had a discussion.’

So she hadn’t kept her word either. But what had she told him? Did he now think I knew too much?

‘Well,’ I writhed. ‘Every story has two sides, you know.’

‘Yes,’ he snapped, holding the paper wide open, screening me from view. ‘But she is your hostess, and

you are our guest. Therefore we must give you a second chance.’

Hold on. That meant I’d done something wrong—but she hadn’t.

‘Well, I’m not sure you’ve got the ethos of the situation right—’

‘Edos is a padetic vord!’ he retorted, his voice a super-power crushing a third world state.

I paused. It seemed whatever I said would only provide proof of some fault for use at a later date. And that his finality was closing out more sky.

‘Well maybe I should write down my version of events.’

‘Yes, yes,’ he trailed off, flicking the drooping paper straight. ‘I would be interested to see dat.’

His tone and manner showed he’d have no interest whatsoever in such a transcript.

There was a shriek of dismay from the table. The mother dashed out, followed by Sventje, face flushed. I looked on aghast. The father held the paper to one side and peered towards the door as footsteps clomped upstairs. He then looked back at me and squelched forward a little.

‘Look, don’t worry,’ he imparted, my friend again. ‘I dink maybe it vas all a misunderstanding.’

Thank God. Such clashes must be commonplace. But at least he was on my side. Wasn’t he?

The light was out in Sventje’s room when I entered. There was a muffled snuffle in the darkness.

‘Sven,’ I whispered, sliding onto the bed to lie behind her, ‘you OK?’

She didn’t stir. I reached for her right shoulder.

‘Fuck you!’ she blasted, jerking her elbow backwards into my jaw.

I reeled from the blow, my bottom lip numb.

‘What was that for?’ I gawked. ‘What’s wrong?’

‘What’s wrong? Huh!’

All that lovely love of our perfect courtship was draining away.

‘Why? What did she say?’

‘It’s not what she said that matters,’ she rebutted. ‘It’s that I left her crying. That’s what matters.’

Who cries wins, then. It was as simple as that in Sventje’s little world. How absurd. I’d lost the girl—to her mother—but if I could turn on the waterworks, I’d be home and dry.

What a pity we hadn’t met Kathelijne in Leiden on Tuesday. Kathelijne wouldn’t be tethered to a parental home, living at the beck and call of elders who always

knew best. Nor would she have such a naïve, inflated view of her parents and career, or stand for any of this nonsense. She'd establish the facts, work things out then tell the mother this was the man she loved, finger wagging. And ask Andre outright why he'd tried what he had—and to hell with any directives that the question was out of the question.

It was no good thinking about Kathelijne now, though. I had to do something.

Or did I? This was Sventje's home. Sventje's mother. Sventje's father. Sventje's decision to live here, a passenger in her own life. This was Sventje's problem, then.

'What have you done, Scott,' she implored, 'to my poor, sweet mother?'

Indeed. What had I *done* to her? And would Sventje have described her as *poor* and *sweet* if she'd seen her in action earlier, or the day before? And what about *us*—didn't that come in to this at all?

'Well, perhaps it'd be better if I left then.'

I moved onto one knee to get up, but was immediately knocked sideways in an earth-shattering tackle.

'No, don't go, Scott,' she gushed, arms clasped around me. 'Please!'

The reversal was astounding. Which way would she sway tomorrow, or when I'd left for England—once the parents had honed their narratives, got their hooks into her and passed sentence on me? *Look how he shouted and swore, after all we did for him—after all we've done for you. It is your choice, but he has no interest in your independence, career. And the English speak one language only, and are not committed to Europe; he could never work in Holland. Where would he live, what would he do? It is only first love; you will meet someone better. We only want what's best for you.*

'You must stay,' she maintained, 'I need you. Nobody has ever been as kind to me as you.'

An exaggeration, surely. But right now I'd take it.

She knelt over me, planting kisses around my neck.

Oh God. *I love you, Sventje.* Say it, you fool, say it.

But somehow, now, I couldn't.

Things you learn at UEA

How to tell Roman from Romanesque,
Romantic from Neoclassical.
That women *go mad for it* after dinner.

That it was not the artist *per se* but patronage
which determined artistic production.
How to ensure bed was warm in winter.

That views on what comprised Art
were largely set by the second century.
To avoid a job frying burgers at the Wimpy.

How much is owed to the word *landschap*.
Not to blame bad grades on your tutor.
That it all happens in the last hour at Ritzy's.

That Turner strove for a striking effect.
How to use the pace and spin of the ball.
That keeping clothes in an old fridge was cool.

That Constable wanted only the truth.
How you have to master the material.
That life, like Art, was entirely up to you.

6.

The ballad of John and Diccon

Diccon Masterman

In the parish of St Giles, set apart by just four miles, our houses could be reached by bike and that is what we used to like, to bicycle across to see, oh! anyone who's at the Weo. And if they yearned for Misbourne Cottage to play or share a mess of pottage then they could always come again before returning to Cokes Lane.

And thus it was that my first day at prep school, not so far away, near Gerrards Cross reached easily on double-decker 353, was scary – Daniel with the lions – until I spotted John Onians. Hurray! At last! A friendly face who is familiar with this place.

I finished school and took the chance to spend a year to teach in France where every day at work, by gosh, I rode across the town of Loches. My first term there was dank and so the town was never mine to know. At Christmas I returned to home where John revealed from a tome of photos, taken where I'd been, the church at Loches I'd never seen!

Time goes by so prettily until at last in Italy where John, despatched from Syracuse (the uni, not the town you goose), to art historians' Mecca – where? In Florence! and we meet him there to take a trip to Rome and back, so quickly there's no time to slack. In just one day it was quite far to have an art school seminar.

John doesn't stay because his dream is Norwich, marriage, academe, but Italy just never palls, it has a charm that calls and calls. (I do recall, lest you forget, that also at my house we met in QIC where, truth to tell, he turned up once with Isabelle.)

Bomarzo's charm cannot be fought and soon their chosen house is bought. And all too briefly yesteryear we welcomed the long married pair: Elisabeth and John came down to Pietrasanta's art-filled town.

So come back both for more such parties because you know home's where the (he)art is.

August 2022, in celebration of John's 80th and our friendship going back to when we were sentient.

7.
I'd love... / Only a few steps

Robert Short

I'd love

I'd love
To stretch myself across the whole meadow
To burrow into every mossy bank
I'd love
To swing from tree to tree around the world
And drink the cellar dry of old Bordeaux
I'd love
To have my fortune read among the stars
And see a bright light coming at the end.

Only a Few Steps

My first step is into light
Across the room and out the door.
My second step is quick and free
The kind of step it's best to be.
My third step wafts me to the shore
Aloft a cliff, above the sea.
There I pause and stand and gaze
Down at the swathe of dawdling waves.
Outstretched upon the stony beach
No turning back, no urge to swim,
My final step is into sleep.



Figure 7.1. Stephanie Morin, *Tutto intorno*, 2013. Acrylic and pumice on canvas, 120x170cm. Lebanon, private collection.

8. Wheels

Juliet Wimhurst

For Elisabeth

I tried drawing this before, but stalled
defeated by wheels—and wheels were important,
bikes and their wheels seemed part of the delight
of that unexpected meeting when
I cycled out of Little Bethel Street
and caught sight of you who at that time
I thought to be abroad, but there you were
riding down the road by Chapelfield.

It was that moment after we had alighted
and had shifted our bikes to the side,
into a kind of corner as I remember
and were excitedly chatting
about families, politics, philosophy,
all the diverse and many topics
which spiral between us—that
was what the picture needed to capture.

And now I am looking back to an occasion
you have probably forgotten, I see
the wheels, always keeping their still centres,
are multiplying and circling out and away
to create intersections, interstices,
flying tangents, fiery chariots,
depicting the whole gamut and variety
of our long friendship.



Figure 8.1. Juliet Wimhurst, *Juliet for Elisabeth*, 2022. Ink, black and sepia, 24x34cm. Private collection.

9.
Towards the art of writing about art

Nazneen Zafar

You know Brancusi's bird?
It reminds me
of
something.

And the crows flying
right now, across
Kathmandu Valley?
Ditto.

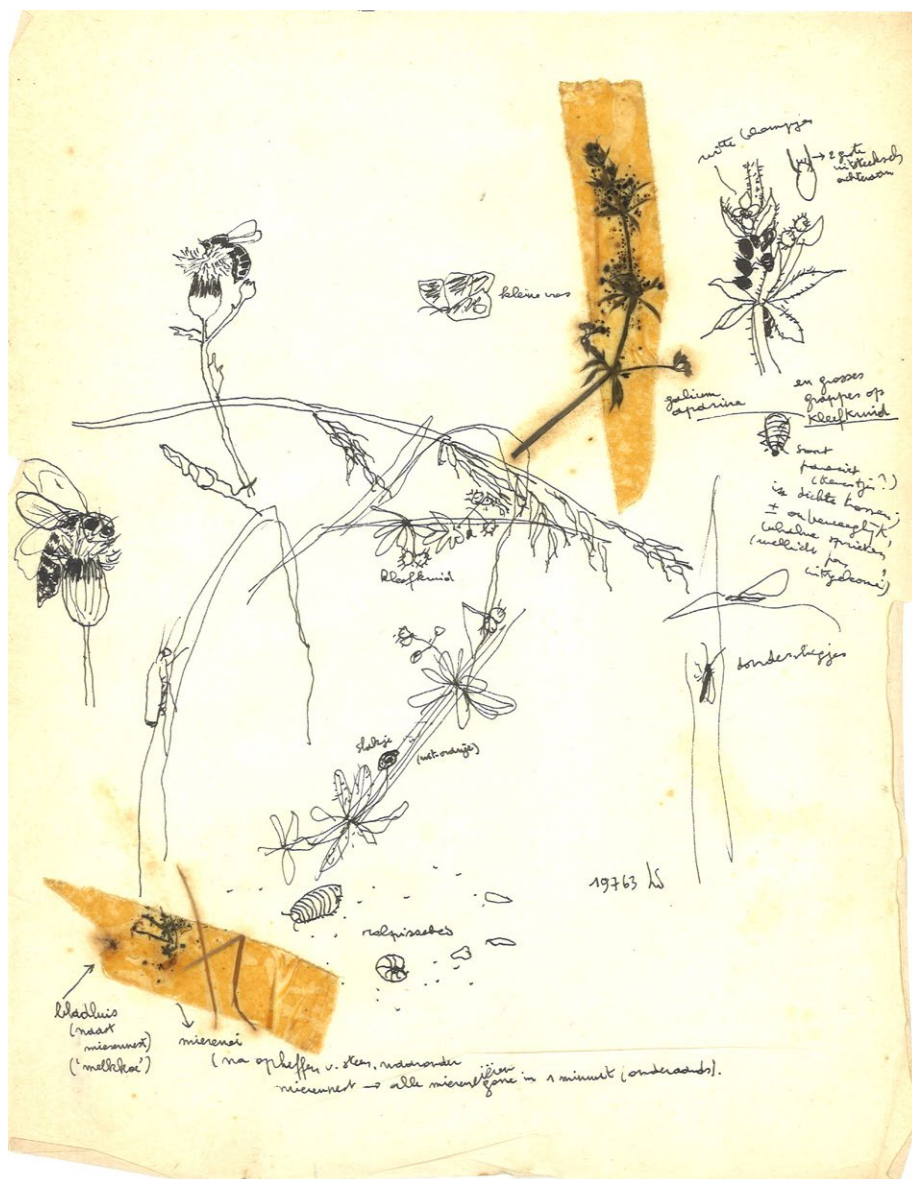


Figure 9.1. Hubert Decler, *Untitled Collage [The Bees and Buds]*, c. 1960–70s. Ink and paper, dried stems, cello tape, 28x20.3cm. Kathmandu, private collection.

Part II

2

Tea in Bowthorpe or Mariusz' architecture¹

Elisabeth de Bièvre

Was it spring 1983 that I met Mariusz? Even if I cannot be precise about the when, the where is still crystal clear. It was in Wood Street around the dinner table of Barbara and George Hyde, who after a prolonged immersion in Polish life in Lublin had resettled in Norwich and had become closely involved with Mariusz. With just the four of us present, we, the two foreign guests, ignored our surroundings and even our lovely hosts to full-heartedly engage in this unexpected encounter, which seemed specially choreographed for just us. We could not stop talking, transported as we were into an exclusive, continental dance of signs, metaphors, symbols and dreams.

In order to find more of Mariusz and now in his own world, his own place, I cycled the following week to the newly built suburb of Bowthorpe, beyond the city limits, *terra incognita*. In spite of the poetic-sounding address, Clover Hill, the street was barren, each new brick house identical to its neighbour. But wait! When entering Mariusz' one's preconceptions vanished. What from the outside had looked like a predictable, English, seventies semi-detached, had inside been transformed into an unrecognizable space, created by an unfamiliar juxtaposition of unidentifiable masses. No light source stood out, only a large, empty, gothic window-frame introducing a dramatically different time zone.

Nevertheless a chair appeared, maybe even two, and the tea ceremony began. The major actors were precious, gilded, porcelain teacups, probably dating from the eighteenth century; they made the actual tea redundant allowing the cup shape to be filled by wisps of cosmic fantasy. Meanwhile the room took the opportunity to disclose some of its secrets, both solid and floating. It seemed as if one whole wall was covered with shelves, not carrying books, but instead an inconceivable array of objects and things – including other tea cups – all of them made more unworldly and untouchable by the spider webs veiling them. The

spiders were not the only sentient housemates around. Up the stairs lived Rabbit... in the bath, apparently now and then coming down to convert the narrow back garden into a mini dune landscape.

Our next meeting was at a small gathering of friends in his house. Besides the host, present were a passionate young Polish visitor, an emotional lecturer in English, myself and a few bystanders. Half-way into the evening a happening spontaneously developed. The four major actors burst out of the house in tight union and danced like followers of the Roman god Bacchus beyond the back garden to take possession of the wild marshlands bordering the river Wensum. There, Mariusz later explained, he could during the day-time relive his younger days in Poland by catching fish in sweet water streams with his bare hands, re-entering a treasured world of liquid immateriality.

In the Wensum's aqueous meadows he also experienced the mixed attractions of the ubiquitous stinging nettles, which anybody who could not deal with their initial prickle should avoid, but which when fully experienced could lead to a unique awakening. Even simply imagining rolling around in them could produce a shock effect, a formula Mariusz was fond of recommending to some of his clients once he turned to counseling. Empathy with other people became as important as freely addressing cultural and natural subtleties. He had reached the point in search of which he had many years earlier left Warsaw, where he could not liberate art from its imprisonment in the irrelevant gallery environment and where he himself got trapped in the town's communist *cul-de-sacs*.

The death in 1985 of Mariusz' father, the sculptor Karol Tchorek, seems to have coincided with the son's readiness to take a new, more assertive place in Norwich society. He now could buy a big house in an area of town filled with university and art-school people, aptly called College Road, parallel to Recreation Road. The house itself – this time only sparsely furnished – preserved its clearly defined, historical spaces and instead of hoarding the former curious 'things,' it displayed many, more recognisable art works retrieved

¹ This essay was first published in Polish in 2018 (Herbata w Bowthorpe albo architektura Mariusza, in the special issue 'The Archive of K. and M. Tchorek' in *Konteksty* 323: 223–224), viewed 25 April 2023, <<http://www.konteksty.pl/summaries/85,323>>. Mariusz Tchorek (1939–2004), art critic and psychotherapist.

from his father's collection. These were not just appreciated for their market value or for representing a certain life-style, but were analysed and studied with the same concentration, and often humour, that he would dedicate to his therapy clients. Both art-work and client had to be unearthed and liberated from their own captivity into unquestioned acceptance.

The same still had to be realised by the artist-*in-spe-cum* therapist, Mariusz himself. Having been denied entrance to the art academy as a teenager in Warsaw because his right hand had been disabled in an accident, he needed to emancipate art from the tyranny of the physical hand. Conceptual art was the bridge to accepting life in real place and present time as the ultimate liberal art. Having entered Norfolk as a 1970s hippy, at the end of the 1980s Mariusz seemed to have captured and tamed enough inhibiting obstacles to metamorphose into an eccentric, 'gentle man.'

His eccentricity was his art form. He was the work of art. Every part of his body was used – separately and together – to express strong intuitive convictions. Language performed only a secondary role in his communication with the world. Sudden ideas or experiences were communicated *ad hoc*. Who in Norwich wanted to discuss over morning coffee Torquato Tasso, and his struggle with the dilemmas between heart and duty, passion and honour, love and violence? To my daughter Isabelle mysteries of Tibetan culture and language were communicated by giving her his monumental Tibetan/English dictionary, when he heard that she was studying the language. The timbre of his voice and the multiplicity of his semi-permanent, soft chuckle suggested epics of their own. His inimitable style was the content.

His style and content developed with his own growth and were profoundly intensified by Katy's appearance on the stage. They not only instantly recognized in each other their mythical muse, but possibly also realised that they were made of the same sculptural material as that out of which Karol had made his social realist gods and goddesses. Mariusz and Katy generated a miraculous harmony between abundant physical presence and delicate, mobile art forms, while each preserved their own instinctive styles of expression.

This came out most fully when they together chose the Old Tin School in Deopham as their home to create space for their new family after the birth of their daughter, Magda, and son, Sammy. Space there was. Outside, the only neighbours to be seen were flat Norfolk sugar beet- and mustard-fields supporting

wide open skies over low horizons. Inside, too, there was a reversal of the atmosphere in both Clover Hill and College Road. The nineteenth-century classroom rose about four metres high with an open roof structure. Its wooden floor stretched over the complete width of the house. A few selected 'things' tried hard not to drown in the almost limitless space, while a grand piano and a large old settee evoked genteel associations with a Great Hall.

A door in the back wall gave access to the private and semi-private quarters, which were deliciously unorthodox in their architectural determination. A scullery kitchen was centrally positioned, seemingly half in a corridor and half in an office area, surrounded by some other wavering spaces. A pokey stairwell led to a few cozy bedrooms under the roof, all overlooking fruit trees and chicken-runs in the garden: the ideal setting for many fantasy trips and magic happenings. The most impressive happening was enacted when many of Mariusz' and Katy's friends, coming from different wind directions, were invited to appropriate the land around the school and its hidden water sources by walking over it in a ritualized and purposeful manner. The preparation for this event involved a long correspondence with the local council to convince them to close the road for a week. A little pump had to be constructed so that water could be extracted from buried sources. It was then led through newly dug French drains filled with gravel, so that the ground water could reach the reed-bed purified. We, the human chorus, with beating hearts, were sipping lovage soup in reversed process. An atmosphere filled with secrecy and expectation developed, until we all returned home feeling that we had been enriched by a significant new sensibility to Place.

Neither Mariusz nor Katy needed an audience. Both intensely private, they concentrated on answering their own questions, never head-on, always approaching from an unexpected angle. Mariusz would not recognise accepted oppositions such as the differences between dream and reality or the sublime and the ridiculous. But there were costs. By ignoring such received contrasts over a long period of time his moral confidence, so bravely built and maintained in the pragmatic English Elysian Fields, started to dwindle and became more esoteric. Was it time to change place again and return to Poland?

An important magnet was his father's former studio in Warsaw in Smolna Street. In order to keep it in the hands of the family, it had been registered as Karol Tchorek's Collection with Mariusz as curator. Was

it pure coincidence that the architectural character of the Old Tin School in Deopham seemed to have so much in common with the paternal studio, as became even more obvious once Katy restored it after Mariusz' death? Instead of a mausoleum it became the theatre

in which Katy could revive and direct Mariusz' most secret dreams, (re)storing and employing the rich archives of his existence. In doing so she is prolonging his life. After all he is the work of art and she the artist.



Figure 10.1. Elisabeth de Bièvre and Mariusz Tchorek in the 1980s, Norwich.

11.

Our first encounter with the Onians

Shareen Blair Brysac

Berlin, Germany, October 1994. Forty-three fellows representing Germany, the United States, Great Britain, India, Japan, Australia, Austria, Switzerland, Morocco, France, Syria, Egypt, Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic gather on the campus of the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin (Wiko), Germany's Institute for Advanced Study modeled on Princeton's Institute for Advanced Studies accounting for its local moniker 'Princeton on the Spree.'

Among the fellows are the micro-historian Hans Medick, medievalist Caroline Bynum, musicologist Carolyn Abbate, Nicolas Boyle, the Cambridge biographer of Goethe, Harvard philosopher Hillary Putnam, pianist and composer György Kurtág and Márta his pianist wife. Victor Osiatynski was engaged writing a new Polish constitution, the Russian historian Irina Scherbakowa on sabbatical from her work in the KGB archives, will become one of the leading members of Memorial, the Russian human rights group that won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2022. My late husband Karl Meyer, a political scientist, historian and member of New York Times Editorial Board and myself are starting research on a book that will be entitled *Tournament of Shadows: The Great Game and the Race for Empire in Central Asia*. And, our subject, John Onians is meanwhile morphing into a neuroarthistorian. Elisabeth will Saab in at a later date. Karine Chemla, our youngest fellow, a French expert in Chinese mathematics, is elected our spokesperson, the go-between engaged in the thankless task of conveying our complaints to the long-suffering staff and reporting back on their reactions.

The Wiko campus at this time occupied four buildings and a garden on Wallotstrasse in elegant, tree-lined Grunewald. The main building, dating from the days when Bismarck busied himself with uniting Germany, housed the offices, public rooms, and dining hall. A few times each week we went to the White Villa to pick up books gleaned from both German and international libraries by an amazing group of librarians. Books appeared as if by magic on our designated shelf, which saved us from having to experience the inefficiencies and Byzantine system of the Staatsbibliothek. Especially memorable was Gesine Bottomley whom we

continued to see with her ever-changing hair color at Fellows reunions.

Here, perhaps, is the place to give thanks to our great German tutor, Eva Hund (now von Kügelgen). The Onians and I were enrolled in her weekly advanced German class—John and Elisabeth fitted the criterion of advanced; the rest of us were merely the class. One week we read Karl Jung – burned into my brain is the noun *das Bewusstsein* (consciousness). In a subsequent class, we listened and transcribed the lyrics to the hit tunes of Zarah Leander, the Third Reich Diva—*Er heist Waldemar*, and *Ich bin eine Frau mit Vergangenheit*.

The Onians and Meyers were among the partnered fellows housed in the Villa Walther. Commissioned just before World War I reputedly by a Russian nobleman who subsequently lost his fortune in the Revolution. By default, its next owner, Wilhelm Walther, went bankrupt and the building was 60% destroyed by a bomb during World War II. Revamped and repurposed by Wiko in the Eighties, its original façade was left but the rear was turned into lovely apartments. Ours, one of the largest, had three bedrooms two of which we converted into offices. As I recall the Onians' apartment also overlooked a beautiful lake and, on the other side, the former Mendelssohn villa.

The campus had a convenient bus stop on the Königsallee and the Grunewald U-Bahn station was a fifteen minute walk through a pleasant wood but ending in a memorial to 50,000 deported Berliners many of whom left from this spot for their final journey to various concentration camps.

The only requirement besides full-time residency—a midday lunch in the dining room. The food was not as expected, institutional, but both ample and delicious, the wines also of excellent quality prompting an off-repeated remark by the Rektor, Professor Doctor Wolf Lepenies that 'whenever one fellow comes, two fellows leave.'

As I was researching a book on the German resistance, early on, Lepenies arranged a luncheon where we

met one of the permanent fellows, economist Albert Hirschman and his wife Sara. In 1936, Hirschman had volunteered to fight for the Republicans during the Spanish Civil War. Subsequently, as a young German refugee in France, under the auspices of Varian Fry and the Emergency Rescue Committee, he brought many German exiles safely across the Pyrenees including such luminaries as Hannah Arendt, Marc Chagall and Marcel Duchamp. We found this real hero to be an engaging, modest man.

Chance meetings at lunch often ended in a trip to some place of mutual interest. One memorable outing with the Harvard philosopher, Hilary Putnam, took us to Weissensee, the large Jewish cemetery in former East Germany. Inhabiting a lovely setting, in 1994 it remained in a neglected, derelict state with broken headstones.

Aside from these informal visits with friends, there were planned trips. Two of the most memorable were an evening visit to the Tegel Schloss where the brothers Alexander and Wilhelm von Humboldt grew up and which contains Wilhelm's collection of Greek and Roman casts in a splendid neo-classical setting designed by the Prussian architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel.

Many of us joined a visit to the Stasi archives where we met with Commissioner Joachim Gauck, who later (2012–17) became the President of Germany. The archives had recently been opened to the public and we heard all about the evil deeds of the security services. Some of us, who had spent time in the East before 1989, were also eager to find out how to get our own files. (We also once discovered the former Lutheran pastor playing a mean game of ping-pong in the basement of the main Wiko building. His opponent, Wolf Lepenies.

Tuesday mornings were devoted to colloquia featuring lectures in one of the three commonly spoken languages: German, French and English. Many of the topics seemed quite arcane—the term 'ivory tower' was tossed about in three languages (Elfenbein Turm, tour d'ivoire). Ramachandra Guha, the Indian author, probably gave the most popular lecture, on cricket and imperialism, entitled 'The Empire Plays Back.' Traditionally, the British played cricket against the locals—rulers against the ruled. Guha stressed the great importance the captains enjoyed and the value the game has for teaching leadership. (The lecture took place just a few years after 1992, when the Pakistani team, led by the future prime minister, bowler Imran Khan, thrashed the English team in the World Cup.)

These weekly meetings served to supply us with a reservoir of factoids with which to astonish our American friends. From our geologist colleague, Rushdi Said, we heard of the ecological disaster in ancient Egypt when, during the Iron Age, they axed all their trees for firewood because of the high temperatures required in smelting iron weapons. Onians also contributed to our fund of esoterica explaining that the inspiration for the layout of columns in Greek temples might have been the phalanx where a block of warriors assembled side by side to face the enemy. He also stated that Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian leader, always wore his keffiyeh in the shape of the state of Palestine. At the time, Karl was doubtful but subsequently confirmed this.

The lively post-lecture Tuesday luncheon discussions carried over into convivial trips. Hans Belting, along with John, the other art historian, led a group of us through the Dahlem museums. Situated in a group near the Free University, among the buildings were the painting museum (Gemäldegalerie) and the Ethnological Museum. This trip sparked an event with a discussion between Belting and the Mali scholar, Mamadou Diawara on why museums made a distinction between ethnographic objects and art. Wouldn't it be interesting if things were displayed thematically (a 14th-century French Madonna and child next to a Congolese mother and child) instead of the art arranged by country of origin and eras as displayed in most Western museums? This argument was revived when Belting arranged a preview for a few of us to peek at the new Gemäldegalerie before it was open to the public in 1998. Belting pointed out that it was destined to become a very traditional museum—all the Dutch art is displayed together, etc. It seems that the powerful early director of the Prussian museums, Wilhelm von Bode's ideas and taste still prevail today. The Gemäldegalerie is now part of the Kultur Forum, while Dahlem's ethnological collections, or what is left of them since restitution became *de rigueur*, are now housed in the Humboldt Forum.

Thursday evenings were a time to gather with invited guests, for drinks and dinner. One memorable attendee that we met was Marion Countess von Dönhoff, journalist, editor, and later publisher of the weekly *Die Zeit*. She had known members of the July 14 resistance group and we proceeded to have a fascinating discussion. Another was Nicolaus Sombart, a fixture of the Berlin social scene and a 1982 Wiko Fellow. He used his stay to write a charming memoir, *Jugend in Berlin*. I had happened to read it as it was shelved in the wood-paneled club room along with books penned by other

scholars from that year. My enthusiasm for the book produced prized standing invitations to his salon.

1995 was the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II and we spent many hours watching documentaries on German television. One night would feature the Germans as victims with footage of the destruction of Dresden or the expulsion of Germans from the East. The next would show Germans as perpetrators in the form of a discussion between our ghost Fellow, the-almost-appearing-but-never-arriving, Jorge Semprún comparing his incarceration at Buchenwald with the other discussant Elie Wiesel's at Auschwitz.

Other nights were spent experiencing the delights of Berlin—those posed by three opera companies, a particular favourite of ours was the Komische Oper, then, of course, the Berlin Philharmonic in its golden days conducted by Claudio Abbado and for the German speakers, the theatre. In spite of all these distractions, we still managed to get our writing done. *Tournament of Shadows: the Great Game and the Race for Empire in Central Asia* was published in 1999. My book *Resisting Hitler: Mildred Fish Harnack and the Red Orchestra* appeared in 2000. Elisabeth de Bièvre's *Dutch Art and Urban Cultures, 1200-1700* came out in 2015 and John Onians' magnum opus, *European Art: A Neuroarthistory* appeared in 2016.

Berlin was a bonding experience. The Onians and Meyers continued to meet on two continents. During the years John was professor in the art history department at East Anglia, they attended the annual conference of the College Art Association where he recruited faculty and were our houseguests. Then they served as consultants to the Clark Institute in Williamstown, Massachusetts and we traveled up to see them where we found their digs had the additional benefit of being near to both Mass MoCA and the Armani outlet store lest we should tire of culture.

Ultimately, we met their two impressive children. First, Isabelle when she was a PhD candidate at Oxford in Tibetan and Sanskrit. She became one of the dedicatees of our book *Kingmakers: The Invention of the Modern Middle East*. Then we visited Charles and Isabelle when he was the Agence France Press Bureau Chief in Cairo. In his spare time, he contributed articles to the *World Policy Journal* when Karl was the editor. Over the years, we also had frequent sleepovers in their parents' art-filled flat in King's Cross while we visited our granddaughters in London. We particularly enjoyed gossiping with their live-in concierge and BBC reporter, Manuel Toledo. While we were at Oxford in the 1990s, we made a detour to Norwich and finally, in 2012, we made it to their remarkable pad in Bomarzo.

12.

D'une génération à l'autre, une amitié de plus de 60 ans!

Blandine Brill

50 ans séparent ces deux photos (Figure 12.1 and Figure 12.2). Vers 1960–61 sur les bords du Lac de Pont (en Bourgogne) Elisabeth, mon frère Louis Victor, ma sœur Marie-Faustine et moi, Blandine. En 2010 dans l'extraordinaire Jardin des monstres de Bomarzo, Elisabeth, John et moi lors d'un merveilleux séjour italien au cours duquel nous avons, Daniel et moi agréablement profité de votre maison si joliment située, perchée au sommet du village.

Plus de 60 ans se sont écoulées depuis qu'Elisabeth, pour parfaire ton français, tu demeurais quelques mois comme 'jeune fille au pair' dans une famille française de cinq enfants (Figure 12.3). Ainsi tu as partagé notre vie un long moment entre Saint-Jean de Maurienne, ville industrielle de Savoie où notre père était ingénieur, et Hauteroche petit village de Bourgogne où nous passions le plus clair de nos vacances. J'avais donc une dizaine d'années. Peu de souvenirs me restent de cette époque mais il est clair qu'alors se soient nouées une sympathie et amitié profondes et durables entre notre mère Colette et toi, Elisabeth. Plus encore, une année plus tard, lorsque notre mère fut victime d'un grave accident de voiture, alitée durant de nombreuses semaines, tu n'hésitas pas à revenir t'occuper des enfants. Colette t'en garda une profonde reconnaissance. Ce fut le début d'une longue amitié à laquelle se sont associées les générations suivantes!

Quelques années plus tard je revois votre visite à Hauteroche, lorsque jeune mariée Elisabeth tu venais présenter John à la famille. John, parfait gentleman dont je retrouve l'image quasiment exacte lorsque tu nous accueilles sur le seuil de votre maison de Norwich. Ces liens d'amitié ne se sont jamais démentis avec le temps. L'aventure recommença donc avec les générations suivantes, ma sœur Isabelle a passé quelque temps à Norwich lorsque Isabelle & Charles étaient petits, puis après quelques années encore, c'est Isabelle qui s'est occupée de nos trois enfants un été à Hauteroche.

Là encore se créa une amitié entre les jeunes de cette 'troisième génération,' amitié marquée par des rencontres à Paris, Norwich, Delhi ou Katmandou. Mais

aussi en Savoie où vous marquiez un arrêt sur le chemin vers l'Italie lors de notre fête de 30 ans de mariage. A nouveau quelques années plus tard lors du mariage de notre fille Clara, une belle occasion pour la génération suivante, Ishtar et Emil—arrière-petit-fils de Colette—de faire connaissance!

En repensant à toutes ces années j'ai pris plaisir à me remémorer nos rencontres qui au gré des événements de la vie furent nombreuses et toujours chaleureuses. Votre connaissance et amour du monde des arts m'ont toujours impressionnée. Une anecdote: lorsque nous étions en plein travaux après avoir acquis un 'local' inhabitable en plein centre de Paris, et que nous rencontrions une réelle incompréhension envers ce plan immobilier, Elisabeth, l'œil aiguisé et averti, tu déclaras que cela était un projet certes insolite, mais qu'il en sortirait un endroit unique et agréable. Après quelques mois de travaux il était clair que tu avais eu raison, tout en ménageant cependant une petite réserve, d'après toi il manquait une touche de 'doré'! Mais à l'époque Daniel préférait admirer le faste des dorures sur leurs lieux d'origine!

Rien lors de nos premières rencontres ne pouvait présager que nous nous retrouverions aussi dans le monde universitaire d'autant plus que nos intérêts scientifiques semblaient somme toute assez éloignés. Mais le monde universitaire, européen de surcroit, est un petit monde, et les hasards institutionnels ont fait le reste. Alors que nos domaines de rattachement étaient aussi divers que les arts et les neurosciences, la psychologie et l'anthropologie ou encore l'informatique et l'intelligence artificielle, ce cocktail disciplinaire permis de se retrouver autour de quelques discussions où les avis pouvaient diverger, mais une chose était claire, on ne pouvait plus rester enfermé dans sa discipline. Ainsi l'idée que tu développes Elisabeth dans ton ouvrage *Dutch Art* dont l'érudition impressionne, du rôle essentiel des circonstances historiques et environnementales, de la culture visuelle sur l'œuvre du peintre rejoint dans une certaine mesure mon approche des apprentissages en partie préparés, modelés par l'histoire propre à chaque personne, et par les contextes culturels, environnementaux,



Figure 12.1. Elisabeth, 'jeune fille au pair' dans la famille de mes parents accompagnée de trois des enfants de la famille (de gauche à droite) Blandine, Louis-Victor et Isabelle. Lac de Pont, Bourgogne en 1959 ou 1960.



Figure 12.2. Accueillis par Elisabeth et John dans cet extraordinaire jardin de Bomarzo, John, Elisabeth, Blandine. Mon mari Daniel prenait la photo, 6 août 2010.



Figure 12.3. Ma famille où Elisabeth passa donc plusieurs mois en 1960 et 1961, Colette Bril-Kieffer, Jacques Bril et quatre des six enfants (Marie-Faustine, Blandine, Louis-Victor et Isabelle) devant les Aiguilles d'Arves. Maurienne, Savoie, France.

philosophique particuliers dans lesquels ils prennent corps. Peu après la mort de Daniel c'est dans le calme d'une salle du siècle d'or hollandais du Musée du Louvre désertée de ses visiteurs que nous avons longuement à nouveau échangé sur les expériences de la vie et ses

nombreux mystères, sans nous rendre compte qu'il était temps d'aller retrouver John!

Chère Elisabeth, Cher John, merci pour cette longue et fidèle amitié!

13. Embracing diversity: Elisabeth de Bièvre and John Onians in China

Yiqiang Cao

It has been a wonderful experience to have known John and Elisabeth for more than thirty years. They have become my bosom friends, as the old Chinese proverb puts it, who know my heart, and with whom, no matter how far apart we are, I always feel so close in spirit.

I first met this remarkable couple in Norwich in 1992, when John organised a conference on Western and Chinese painting. Since then I have been fortunate to participate in many of the academic activities in

the UK and US initiated by John, from which I have not only gained much personally, but also witnessed the important steps they have taken to advance their inventive idea of World Art Studies – now practised worldwide – and John’s even more controversial adventure in neuroarthistory.

These achievements will, I gather, be much addressed by many of the contributors to this volume. I would like to sketch out very quickly their activities in China with



Figure 13.1. John and Elisabeth gave the 4th Gombrich Memorial Lectures. John, Elisabeth and Yiqiang Cao. Hangzhou, 2015.



Figure 13.2. John and Elisabeth at the conference Art Mind Value. Hangzhou, 2019.

some illustrations, which might not be as well known in the English world.

John and Elisabeth were among the first English delegates to visit China in the early 1980s as the country began to open up to the world. It must have been an extraordinary and strange experience for them to see the conditions of the country at that time, which are now barely imaginable for new generations. Since the late 1990s, Elisabeth and John have visited China frequently, where they have passionately engaged in the fabric of academic life and contributed significantly to teaching art history. When I returned to China after studying in Oxford in 1995, art history there was still not considered a discipline in its own right. In our efforts to establish it as a distinct humanistic pursuit I am extremely grateful that John and Elisabeth have never faltered in their active and creative participation in our teaching and other programmes.

China offers Elisabeth and John a testing ground for their hypothesis. The term Chinese painting was coined in the 1920s to counter that of Western art. To this day, it is still widely believed in my country that Chinese painting and Greek art represent the

opposite foundations of the two systems of world art; the former being the father of Asian art, with its free and spontaneous expression of nature, the other being the progenitor of Western art, with its realistic or even photographic portrayal of objects. It goes without saying that the differences between these two artistic traditions are too obvious, but no one has ever attempted to explain how and why these two systems are different and why they have become the respective sources of the two art systems. Each of them is taken for granted as natural and hereditary products of their own civilization.

In retrospect, the 1992 Norwich Conference on Western and Chinese Painting reflects a spontaneous response to this problem. Although its organiser, John, was unaware at the time of the Chinese claims regarding the two distinct sources of art in the world, his conference, where Euro-American Art historians and Chinese scholars and painters were brought together to address the diverse nature of their art, is still perhaps the first attempt ever made in this respect. In 1997 in Beijing, I organised a conference on 20th century Chinese painting. It was held at the Diaoyutain grand state house and was attended by



Figure 13.3. Yang Zhenyu, Elisabeth and John in the park by the West Lake. Hangzhou, 2016.

nearly three hundred scholars and artists from around the world. John and Elisabeth came and gave a keynote speech. I now realise that this conference was in some ways a variation of the 1992 Norwich Symposium in its attempt to overcome oversimplified claims about sharp demarcations between Chinese and Western painting.

In October 2019 I organised in Hangzhou a conference to celebrate Ernst Gombrich's 110th birth anniversary. Without John and Elisabeth's support it would have been impossible or at least very different. The conference was called 'Art Mind Value' and it took place in a uniquely Chinese setting. John and I and other editors have agreed to publish the conference proceedings as *Art Mind World*; we are preparing it to be published by Intellect in the UK. 'Art' would imply the greatest possible variety of things humans have made in the past, present or future that are considered visually interesting. 'Mind' would suggest the widest possible variety of conceptions of mental activity. And 'World' would invite contemplation of the widest

possible record of humans' varied engagement with their terrestrial environment.

It is interesting to recall in this connection that at the 1992 Norwich conference John invited Gombrich and Michael Sullivan to give an opening in a form of a discussion. It was on this occasion John and I met through Gombrich's introduction. Gombrich later told me that John was his former student: 'You know, he can take different ideas and bring them together to raise bold questions, he is very intelligent but sometimes he's a bit eccentric.' Even Gombrich, who had a lifelong interest in the biological basis of art, felt John's neurological approach too bold, akin to eccentricity. For John, the makers of visual objects are themselves part of nature, as he would say, 'we are animals, too.' Therefore, art is certainly connected to the firing of neurons in animal brains. Like Gombrich, John feels a strong need to probe the depths of mental activities and ask questions about the factors behind their global spread. These are the lines of research that Elisabeth

and John have pursued and expanded upon from their different perspectives. In their joint annual Gombrich Memorial Lectures, established in 2011, the same year they joined the Faculty as Visiting Professor and Lecturer in Art History at the China Academy of Art, Elisabeth gave a moving introduction that, with her usual serene delicacy, defines their shared thoughts and their different approaches:

Ever since John and I, he an Englishman from Great Britain and I, a Dutch woman from the Netherlands, met as foreigners in Rome, we have been trying to understand cultural difference... What struck us was that, although everyone recognized that there were big differences between artistic traditions, these were never explained. Each tradition was treated as somehow natural in its own context. People were used to recognizing that Dutch art was different from English art, European from Chinese, but they rarely asked how or why. We did, because we had long been asking similar questions about ourselves. And over time we came to recognize that the main element missing from the study of culture

was nature. People were so sure that culture was constructed consciously and socially, that they had forgotten that underlying that construction was nature, the nature of the environment and the nature of the human brain. I concentrated more on the nature of the environment and John more on the nature of the brain, but we both agreed they were interconnected. I developed the notion of the 'urban subconscious,' John the notion of 'neuroarthistory'... After all of which we will leave you with the challenging question: 'Do you think our approaches can be applied to China?'

Certainly their approaches are inspiring in a country that has become one of their intellectual homes. Speaking personally of my friendship with them, two well-known Chinese proverbs would come to mind: one says gold is easy to come by but a close friend is harder to find; the other says that old friends are like old wine, holding the best in our lives. Let's toast John and Elisabeth with our finest old wine and wish them long and healthy lives in their ever-green and all-embracing world!

14.

On John Onians's 80th birthday. Remembering his contribution to the Clark Art Institute as founding Director of its Research and Academic Program 1997–99

Michael Conforti

I arrived at the Clark in late 1994 as its fourth Director. During my interviews I was told by the Board of Trustees that my first priority should be to develop programs to better utilize the Institute's art history library. It was an extraordinary asset and had served the Williams College community and its Graduate Program in the History of Art, the catalyst for the library's creation, very well. It was underused, however, a view the trustees had determined during a strategic planning process they oversaw a few years earlier.

I floundered at first as I focused my own interest and commitment on energizing the Clark's public programs. During the next process of staff as well as trustee strategic planning, however, begun in early 1995, two initiatives were identified that could change the Clark significantly by the Institute developing a dual mission, not only as an art museum but as a centre for research and the exchange of ideas in the history of art. That planning process, completed in late 1996, expressed a hope to 'create a detailed plan to define and administer a Visiting Scholars Program' as well as 'organize symposia, colloquia, conferences and seminars that explore a wide range of museum issues and art-historical subjects, especially those that represent contemporary critical and art-historical perspectives.'

This was a significant ambition for an institution whose only link to academic community at that point was through the acquisition and service-oriented Clark Librarian. In addition, many colleagues in the field at the time wondered why urban-oriented art historians would ever want to spend time in a rural New England college community in spite of Williams College's reputation as a centre for the early training of curators and art historians (when I proposed the visiting scholars' initiative to the scholar in Italian baroque sculpture, Jennifer Montagu, who visited in 1995, she quickly replied 'give me the money and I'll go to Paris'). Undeterred we were, however.

A few months after my arrival I had encouraged one of my former professors, Henry Millon, also known to some members of our Board, to join the Clark as a new trustee. In 1979 'Hank' Millon had been recruited by the then Director of Washington's National Gallery, Carter Brown, to be the founding Dean of the Gallery's Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts (CASVA), a research centre the space for which had been provided in the Gallery's newly opened I.M. Pei designed East Wing. Hank was instrumental in imagining the program we would eventually create at the Clark both in advising on the number of scholars who could represent a 'community' as well as the leadership that would be necessary to achieve our goals. He felt we needed not only an accomplished scholar but a creative, indeed, entrepreneurial thinker who both understood the traditions of the art historical field but someone who was not limited by them. At the same time I was determined to see whether a separate research program within an art museum could be intellectually independent of the curatorial focus of museum staff while maintaining cordial relations to that staff. It was a time of deep distrust of museum values and practices in academia and I had experienced the conflicts such distrust could foster at the still young and evolving Getty where I had been a member of its Museum's Visiting Committee for a number of years. I did not want such divisions at the Clark. Could we accomplish something an art museum with a separate research centre had not yet achieved i.e. collegial relations but separate intellectual directions under the common umbrella of one institution?

I began interviewing potential candidates to head our research and academic initiative in late 1996. No candidate emerged until Hank encouraged me to contact John Onians, whom he had known when John was a fellow at CASVA. The idea was also endorsed by my friend, Charles Saumarez Smith, at the time Director of Britain's National Portrait Gallery. John and I met over a drink in London on June 30 1997, and that informal encounter, filled as it was with mutual agreement on

the opportunity embedded in this nascent idea, led to a very quick engagement. John came to Williamstown to give a talk and meet staff two months later and he began his directorship in mid-October taking a leave from the University of East Anglia for this purpose. He and his wonderful wife, Elisabeth, quickly made Williamstown their temporary home establishing friendly connections with everyone they encountered as he began to visualize a program and test its possibilities.

John's idea, supported by Clark leadership, was to ensure that scholars were first and foremost comfortable in their new surroundings. He encouraged us to buy an old Victorian house next to our campus, with plans to eventually renovate it and expand it to six spacious and well-serviced apartments. Rather than announcing a Visiting Scholars' program immediately, he understood the need to have our environment 'tested' by scholars. He did this by inviting some to stay and to have them comment on what they would need to function successfully. The first such guests arrived in the summer of 1998: the Chinese scholar of western art history, Cao Yiqiang, along with the then Harvard based historian, philosopher and curator Ivan Gaskell, who came with his wife Jane Whitehead and six-year old son, Leo. British born and Cambridge educated, Ivan and Jane were patient with the house's facilities at the time, seeming to love the rambling yet unrestored facility and the then extent 'hot tub' off the kitchen. They fulfilled their responsibility by not only reporting on the positive access to bibliographical resources in the Clark library (as Ivan says, 'I got books that would've taken a long time to get to most places. And they just came very quickly. It was very, very efficient!'), they regularly communicated to the able staff liaison, Judith Ensign, on what families need to be happy in a Williamstown environment from kitchen appliances to transportation. With others staying during this test period, including Laure de Margerie and Olivier Meslay, who would later become Director of the Clark, the 'Scholars' House' began to be transformed through renovation and expansion into the ample and well-used structure it is today.

John was not only responsible for overseeing this test and planning period. Indeed, his greatest contribution was in establishing the character of intellectual engagement that the Clark would be noted for in the years to come. While some had wondered whether art historians might ever be comfortable in such a country environment, few except John fully appreciated at first that the Clark would be unique among art museums with a separate research centre by being linked not only to a significant library but next to a partnering institution of higher

education. Such an environment would be familiar to future visiting scholars, an academic community small enough to welcome short term guests and their families with easily accessed schools for children and casual social connections. This level of physical and social comfort allowed for John's ultimate vision for the scholars' program to be possible. As Ivan Gaskell recently recalls that vision: 'I remember talking with John and his saying that he wanted to create an atmosphere in which people would be able to explore ideas completely freely and not have any expectations on what the visiting scholars or fellows might do, but just give space and the opportunity to exchange ideas. John was all for this introduction of intellectual risk taking.'

My own recollection of John's vision expressed definitively is one deeply embedded in my mind. John spoke of the program he imagined in an after-dinner toast at a trustee dinner at my house in the summer of 1999 as he was completing his two-year engagement. With his usual enthusiastic oratory, he referenced the goal he had for the program and one that had already begun to form, of scholar's coming to the Clark and western Massachusetts where (like the mid-nineteenth century Transcendentalists who regularly stayed in this area of rural New England a century before) they would be free to think unencumbered by apparatus of tradition. He articulated this image by flailing his arms for added effect, this 'removal of "academic armour"' expressed to trustees who may not have understood his meaning or its importance to contributing to new, possibly risky, ideas.

This was John's special contribution to the Clark and its ongoing programs: setting the path for the years of productive and creative work to come from the now hundreds of Visiting Scholars and other symposia and conference participants who have collectively contributed to changing the direction of the field through their participation in Clark programs throughout the early 2000s. Under the directorship of Michael Ann Holly, who succeeded John as the permanent and later 'Starr Director of the Research and Academic Program,' the Clark established itself as a centre for research and exchange of ideas in the arts and its history, a research centre that could exist within a museum context, but not be driven by that context. It has been a program that fostered ideas in the discipline by bringing scholars together in unexpected and, what would turn out to be, transformative ways. We have much to thank John Onians for in setting the course and the contribution that the Clark's Research and Academic Program has made to the field of art and its history and criticism.

15.
Jumping the frame:
Eco-stylistics from Norwich

Wilfried van Damme

That mild spring morning in 2000 I could not possibly have envisaged that I was in for a highly enjoyable evening with a spirited husband-and-wife team in art history. I had made a somewhat impromptu appearance in Norwich, having received an invitation to present a paper at UEA only a few days before. I had not notified John, if only since I thought he was still in Williamstown, Mass., where we had met a few weeks before, at the first ever conference on World Art Studies, organized by John at The Clark Art Institute. While we were having a break during the paper presentations at UEA, John and I spotted each other across the room. I saw him scribbling something on a piece of paper, which he slipped to me when somewhat later he was leaving the room rather in a hurry. 'Here's my telephone number. Maybe we can arrange something tonight, perhaps have supper at our place? Elisabeth would love to meet you.' From our previous conversations—John and I had communicated by mail and phone before first meeting in person at The Clark—I knew that John's spouse was also an art historian, and that she was Dutch, like me.

And so it was that later that evening we drove up to the Unthank Road, where the lady of the house was ready to receive tonight's unexpected guest. Elisabeth's welcome was in one word *hartelijk*: warm, cheerful, and with visors up. With little ice needing breaking, we were instantly off to a most pleasurable, and as far as I am concerned, most memorable evening, laying the foundation for a friendship that lasts to this day.

One thing that struck me during our lively conversations that night, revolving mostly around the idea of World Art Studies, was the remarkable degree to which John and Elisabeth operated in unison in presenting, with palpable enthusiasm, their views on the study of the visual arts. Clearly, here were two scholars who had developed their ideas in close interaction with one another. I was already familiar with John's insistence on the importance of artists' exposure to the visual features of the local physical environment for the development of artistic style; I now learned that Elisabeth had for many years been developing her own ecological analyses and arguments in relation to

art, illustrating her ideas with reference to historical Dutch painting especially (I seem to remember that the microclimate of the island of Walcheren, not far from where I was born and raised, was mentioned that evening).

Underlying and bolstering John and Elisabeth's physical-environmental approach to art, it seemed to me, was a passionate commitment to humans as biological beings who engage the world around them through their senses, and vision in particular. My generous hosts seemed in fact to relish the conception of humans as sensorial, indeed sensuous, creatures who interact not only with the visual features but with the sounds, smells, tastes and textures of the physical environments into which they are integrated. While trained in a highly culturalist fashion, I had myself become enthusiastic about naturalist approaches to art and culture a few years prior. But my own entry into biological perspectives on humanistic topics had been via ethology and especially evolutionary psychology, an approach that stresses the evolved neurobiology of our species' mental and social behaviour rather than the physical environments in which the human nervous system operates. I therefore still found John and Elisabeth's 'visual ecology' approach to artistic style to be fresh and thought-provoking.

The invitation to contribute to this Festschrift suggested one might invoke a piece of art in order to make one's points. This immediately reminded me of a work that I had seen only a few weeks before, created by my brother, Walter van Damme, for his graduation exhibition at the Art Academy of Antwerp. The work consisted of three videos, the last of which being the one that came to mind when reading the invitation. Like the other two videos, the third shows a looped action in an otherwise stilled outdoor environment. A person, appearing from the left of the screen, fly-jumps through a rectangular frame hovering above a field, safely lands on a country road via a head roll, gets up, and looks at the frame. This image, as I remembered it, now captured for me a major feature of the scholarly careers we are here celebrating. By their persistent

ecological approach, it seems to me, John and Elisabeth have long ago jumped the frame of conventional art history. But they have by no means walked away from the discipline. Rather, they look at it afresh, suggesting we enlarge the range of analytical perspectives by an approach not usually considered by the discipline's practitioners. Indeed, via their imaginative 'ecostylistic' approach, or what Elisabeth calls Green Art Studies, John and Elisabeth emphatically want to contribute to answering one of the most enduring

questions of art history: why do works of art from a given place and time look the way they do. Amidst longstanding competing perspectives stressing artists' and audiences' enculturation into local worldviews and values, in addressing that lasting question they have insistently alerted their colleagues to the role of an ecologically informed type of 'envisualization.' The discipline of art history is all the richer for their stimulating suggestions, as was I at the end of that exciting evening *chez* John and Elisabeth.

16. Loyalty

David Freedberg

I have learned much from the scholarship and erudition of John and Elisabeth. Here I want to write about a different quality of theirs: their loyalty in friendship. By this I don't just mean friendship—or even constancy in friendship. I mean the loyalty that sustains itself across the long term, however much that amity and affinity may be attenuated or tried by time, distance, and difference. Although there are many sixteenth and seventeenth century emblems for friendship, I can think of no particular one for this kind of loyalty. Perhaps it's because an emblem is by its very nature limited to what the image shows, and is therefore limited to one episode alone. The loyalty of which I speak reaches across time and endures many stages and many episodes. In this respect it partakes more of the nature of poetry (at least as Lessing would have it) rather than that of a picture. It unfolds across time. For this reason, I will offer no particular anecdote to illustrate this kind of loyalty either, though many will no doubt have examples to offer. I should add that it is also not the same as loyalty to a country, say, though it could well contain loyalty to a cause—as we who knew the Courtauld Institute in its earlier incarnation know too well. I will therefore discuss the meaning of loyalty in our friendship, across the long term, both in its personal context and in its broader moral and intellectual one.

Elisabeth came to write her dissertation with me at the Courtauld in the early 1980s. She had already settled on a topic: it was, she said, to be on the architecture and decoration of Dutch Town Halls in their local social contexts. Too much, I thought! Why not focus on just one of them, Haarlem or Den Haag, or perhaps Delft or Leiden? But Elisabeth was undeterred. She took on all of them. She wanted the big picture as well as the small detail—a Dutch enough preoccupation, at least in the seventeenth century—and perhaps still today.

Of course there were several existing studies of individual town halls, whether in terms of their decorative and architectural elements, their socio-economic contexts, or both combined; but nothing could even remotely match the scope and ambition of the dissertation she planned and eventually wrote.

This was even more the case when it came to her magnificent 2015 volume, *Dutch Art and Urban Cultures, 1200–1700*. Here she emphasized the impact of the distinctive local cultures and economies that shaped the art and architecture not only of her original four cities but of Amsterdam, Utrecht and Dordrecht as well. The many ways in which Elisabeth characterized the individual identity of each of those cities in the broader context of the new republic made for an incomparably rich book. It will last not only as a brilliant history of civic art and architecture, but—perhaps even more importantly—as a pioneering example of a notably well-attuned ethnographic history of art history.

As Elisabeth was aware, *Dutch Art and Urban Cultures* offers a more fine-grained portrayal than Svetlana Alpers's, Simon Schama's and Bob Haak's more general assessments of what they considered to be the essential characteristics of the Dutch Republic as a whole. It stands at the forefront of the turn to local difference as antidote to the longstanding colonial biases of art history, and to the dominance of hegemonic national labels that have for so long tended to flatten out what is distinctive and significantly granular about individual local cultures. Few books offer a better demonstration of the ways in which the frictional granularities of local culture drive productive creative and artistic change (as Aby Warburg argued throughout his life and writing).

John and Elisabeth were both true pioneers. Many of their friends would say that their approaches to art history changed the face of British art history; others might argue that even if it didn't change much, it should have. Certainly their intellectual commitments, from which they've never wavered, radically disturbed the once quiet scene. Just as Elisabeth went local, so John went global—early on, in each case, long before those words became as fashionable as they are now. Now, of course, it's become much less so. In just a few years, globalism has rightly become a word viewed with high scepticism, especially in the light of the predictably negative consequences first of global capitalism and then of mass digitization, social media, VR and AI. No doubt John will be adding just such matters to the

next stages of his long wrestle with what he has called neuroarthistory.

But first: It was John who started the now influential journal *Art History*, he who helped set the global program of the Sainsbury Centre on its feet, and he who realized that if you want to understand the particularities of individual cultures and individual artists, indeed of any individual, you had to begin with their basic behaviours and responses; and for this he sought both the neural roots of human behaviours and the fundamental elements of human creativity. Hence John's interest in psychology and cognitive neuroscience. And in this area he moved with his characteristic speed and infectious enthusiasm, rousing the ire of great regiments of art historical reactionaries.

I knew John fairly well before Elisabeth came to work with me. Already when I first arrived as a graduate student at the Warburg Institute in late 1969 (to which I escaped a couple of years later from Oxford), John was a fixture at the Warburg, one of the rare students to be supervised by Ernst Gombrich. The year previously, he had completed his dissertation on the ancient theories of appropriateness and decorum in architecture, as articulated by Serlio and exemplified by Jacopo Sansovino (particularly in his stupendous architectural works in Venice). He also, I remember, had a reputation for being an expert on *tituli*, those ancient inscriptions describing the purpose and subjects of the monuments beside, over and above them. No wonder that already in those days John was known for his knowledge of ancient art, for his work on Hellenistic art, and for the early stages of the book on the classical orders that would later become his study of their use—and visual power—during the Middle Ages and Renaissance. And he was already on track to become one of the leaders of the World Art program at the University of East Anglia.

That was important, both for the world of British Art History and for John. We always had our intellectual differences, but we were joined by our commitment to what we saw as important for the further development of art history. In those days, there was much scepticism about the Sainsbury Centre for World Art (as I always thought it was called, though I now see that it's simply named the Sainsbury Center for Visual Arts, attached to the School of World Art Studies and Museology). Was it too ambitious, incapable of dealing with more than a smattering of world art? Would it end as something patronizingly colonialist, itself still hegemonic in the end?

And then there were the reactionary complainants, who felt that British art history, even if it chose not to remain true to the great traditions of European art history, should be aware of the ever-present risk of superficiality in fields which the protagonists of world art knew very little about. Anyone who knows John also knows that he would not have been deterred by such arguments.

I was flattered when John came to me in the late 1970s and asked me to be on the Board of the new journal he was planning, which he wanted to call simply *Art History*. In fact, I felt rather honoured, but in a typically self-defeating gesture of detachment from a project that I thought was overreaching, I declined. I certainly did not predict (though I could and should have) the almost immediate success it would enjoy, even before it became one of the most influential and interesting journals of art history in the world.

Quite a few years later, round 1990 or 1991, John asked me to contribute to the great Festschrift he was preparing for Ernst Gombrich, appropriately entitled *Sight and Insight*. The company was stellar and again I was honoured. There could be doubt of the value of the project, especially since until then Sir Ernst had always declined a Festschrift, a form which he had always disdained, on the grounds that there were already too many of them, and that in any case, its materials were often more difficult to access than other sources (just as remains the case, even in these digital times). As always John determinedly pushed forward and produced one of the liveliest and most notable volumes of this generally rather staid genre. And then, finally, following the completion of his book on classical art and culture at the very end of the century, he could dedicate his time to his most precious project, that on neuroarthistory.

These, in fact, were the very years in which two great scientists were preparing their own books on a neuroscientific approach to the history of art, Jean-Pierre Changeux in Paris, and Semir Zeki in London. These were two distinguished researchers who loved art, and knew a great deal about it. Both wished to bring their own knowledge of the operations of the brain to bear on the objects of visual cognition, on vision itself, on creativity and the arts more generally. They were certainly interesting books, but the slight flavor of elitism (never present in Gombrich) and their lack of a sophisticated grasp of art history revealed themselves over and over again, whatever the merits of their intuitions about the relationship between neural processing and the objects of art (and of ordinary

human responses to them). Both Changeux and Zeki were also driven by a relatively naïve sentimentality about art itself, and both desired, as did the great V.S. Ramachandran a few years later, to see if they could propose some kind of neural substrate for the understanding of art itself, *grosso modo* one might say. Within a decade, the field of study which Zeki named neuroaesthetics became pretty well established. Even so, it was largely populated by neuroscientists (and remains so), with a very much smaller number of historians of art and music involved.

John, for one, was able to avoid the trap of sentimentality about art into which this trio of grand experts fell, as well as the high cortical and sub-cortical parcellation which they applied to it (by this I here mean the emphasis on localising specific functional areas of the brain dedicated to specific tasks, an approach which has led the critics of neuroaesthetics to compare it disdainfully to phrenology). He avoided these pitfalls by inventing a discipline that was perhaps even newer than he thought. ‘Even newer’ though rooted in the past.

John, realising that he was neither a neuroscientist nor an experimental scientist of any kind, decided, in his first book on the subject entitled *Neuroarthistory: From Aristotle and Pliny to Baxandall and Zeki* (2007) took a very different approach than that of the neuroscientists. He sought to make clear some of the ways in which (in his reading) modern neurobiology was anticipated not just by his mentor, Gombrich, but by writers on biology and on art from Aristotle onwards. He realised, too, how much contemporary cognitive neuroscience had already contributed to the understanding of vision, empathy, embodiment and affect, issues which themselves inevitably ran through the entire history of art (despite the neglect which into which they had fallen in the decades between Gombrich’s *Art and Illusion* and John’s own book). And so he set out, in suggestive detail, how the work of critics, philosophers, and artists themselves, anticipated and sometimes embodied the newest understandings of how the brain works, how artists create, and how people respond to their works. With brief chapters on writers from al-Haytham through Leonardo, Alberti, Winckelmann, Kant and many others on to his own mentors Gombrich, Baxandall and Zeki, he offered an extraordinary panorama of thinkers who link past and present in the transdisciplinary field he has been setting out to create.

In the second and larger book, *European Art: A Neuroarthistory* (2016), John explored the ways in which

the objects of European art illustrated and embodied critical elements of current neurobiological thinking not just about vision but about the human body. The parallels he found were used to extraordinary effect as a mode of accounting for how artists worked with their materials, and how they intuitively knew how most effectively to impact their beholders. He showed how personal experiences—especially youthful ones—were unconsciously incorporated into their creations, and how they transformed both training and cultural circumstances into art, and, therefore into making it accessible to its publics. This, for him, means that our best historians of art—like our best critics—are basically neuroarthistorians themselves. The period eye was in the end a biological eye as well.

One could hardly disagree. But many did, and still do. Whether Baxandall himself would have agreed with how John argued his positions is unlikely, since Baxandall would almost certainly have argued for the priority of period and Onians will argue for that of biology. The further issue of whether the actual practice of history can be reconciled with the entirely different epistemological field in which neuroscientists operate is also moot. Most art historians are now strongly against the very idea. Many argue for its impossibility. It’s testimony to John’s intellectual boldness that he dared to articulate its possibility—even to utter it—so clearly.

In the end, John’s position was unequivocal. His long commitment to the importance of understanding world art, of coming closer, that is, to acknowledging the possibility of understanding the art of all cultures, and not just one’s own, could not be clearer. In furtherance of this aim, which grew out of his studies of the remains of ancient art in our own time, he turned to cognitive neuroscience and to its psychological and ethnographic implications. Whether or not one agrees with his strategies in achieving this aim will long be discussed. He would be the first to acknowledge that those within the cultures from which a particular art or a particular work is embedded begin with a massive hermeneutic advantage over those who do not; but in the end he remains committed, as do I, to the view that one can never exclude the possibility of an access that begins via the basic biological processes with which the human species is endowed—and, I would add, with which our closest animal species are too. These are not fashionable ideas at the time of the writing, when the ecumenical ideals of the Enlightenment depart woefully from the academic scene—but they are deeply present in the fundamental and courageous principles that underlie all of John’s work.

And so I turn back to the loyalty of which I wrote at the beginning of this tribute. What stands out in the course of my long friendship with John (almost fifty years by now) and with Elisabeth (forty years by now) has been the unremitting loyalty they have shown to me throughout a long career, from almost the beginning right until the unforgettable evening when I last saw them at their home behind Kings Cross in 2016. We spoke of what Britain stood to lose if it severed itself from Europe and the very sources of inspiration that lay behind the foundation of the Warburg Institute to which we were both so dedicated. We had been amongst the fortunate still to have known Gombrich, Momigliano, Yates and Baxandall, as well as the stupendous group of emigré scholars around them, like Kurz, Rubinstein and many others, including the mysterious figure of A.A. Barb, keeper of the magic secrets of Babylon, Greece, and Rome and who seemed to embody the most arcane and remote researches of Warburg himself. It was just a few weeks before I declared my resignation from the Directorship of the Warburg Institute in London in the immediate wake of the vote that began the dolorous process of severance from the continent that had enriched Britain's culture for so long.

There were many reasons for John's and Elisabeth's loyalty to me to have become attenuated, whether in terms of the inattentiveness that sometimes arises

from personal upheavals and preoccupations (here I refer only to my own) or of the inevitable intellectual disagreements that occur amongst fellow academics. Nevertheless, throughout these years they remained loyal to the principles of friendship that transcend difference by making clear not just the fondness that binds, but the basic unity of purpose that joined us. It was a commitment to understanding not only the art of our own cultures, but those of others, a belief in the fundamental accessibility, not the inaccessibility, of the creations of others outside our cultural milieu and the masterpieces they create. Their loyalty springs from an attitude that is to be found in all their work and in all their writing. It's predicated on a notion of the good that may arise from patience with others and with their works. It offers solidarity in times of upheaval, warmth in times of strain, hope when all seems hopeless, inspiration when inspiration dwindles or is simply lacking. And it's predicated on a commitment that animates all their own work: the possibilities of communication and inspiration that we learn to find in works of art across all difference and in every culture. To the fullest extent possible it makes good-faith allowances for the aims and actions of others that may seem to diverge from our own, or from what they might have been. This, then, is the loyalty that has animated John and Elisabeth from the very beginning, and which this volume celebrates. May it stand as an example for the future.

17. Calmes blocs

Daniela Gallo and Philippe Sénéchal

‘Calme bloc ici-bas chu d’un désastre obscur’ chantait Mallarmé en l’honneur d’Edgar Poe. Dans la cour du palais de la Chancellerie à Rome, un fragment de colonne de porphyre gît, au milieu d’autres glorieux débris antiques, au pied de la colonnade dorique célébrée par John dans *Bearers of Meaning*. La dent du temps l’a rongée et le tambour n’a plus un plan de coupe net mais l’arrondi parfait demeure, fruit d’un travail patient et d’un savoir qui ne devait renaître qu’à la fin du XVI^e siècle à Florence. De la lointaine Égypte le bloc avait gagné Rome, où il avait été réemployé dans un bâtiment impérial prestigieux, désormais démantelé. Il ne sert plus à rien, ou plutôt si, il est là comme un témoin de la résistance silencieuse et têtue des choses aux folies des hommes.

C’est dans la Ville éternelle qu’Elisabeth et John se sont rencontrés, venus d’horizons lointains. Ils ne se sont plus quittés.

Les Anciens ont chanté Philémon et Baucis
Survivant aux typhons que les dieux jaloux sèment.
Aujourd’hui, pour trouver de bons hôtes qui
s’aiment

Mercure et Jupiter feraient halte à Norwich.

Qu’ils viennent d’Albion ou de la verte Frise,
Sur les cœurs amoureux le Temps n’a pas de prise.



Figure 17.1. Fragments dans la cour du palais de la Chancellerie.
Rome, avril 2022. Photographie de Daniela Gallo.

18. The enlightened house

Derek Gillman and Yael Hirsch

In Jewish custom, a 'house of learning' is attached to a synagogue, and thus in Norwich one would think of the city end of Earlham Road. But not so, for two reasons: firstly, because the Norwich synagogue doesn't have such an attachment, and secondly because the real house of learning is a third of a mile away, on Unthank Road.

Elisabeth and John's house has been a place of beauty and scholarship for decades. A home for them and a place of delight for visitors. In a secluded terrace, served by a gravel drive, one enters into another world, greeted in the hall by a painted angel, and dining under the luxurious tapestry. Television spends hundreds of millions of pounds creating fantastic palaces that aren't close to the warmth and richness of their house and garden. But architectural elegance, and subtle colours and furnishings aside, the heart is of course the people.

John is the more public figure, the travelling prophet, journeying from LA to Hangzhou, Athens to Philadelphia. He's challenged all of us over the years, with passion, fearlessness and profundity. Derek was recently engaged in an exhibition, one of the most enjoyable of his career, on the history of rock concerts in Philadelphia, including Live Aid, a section of which was on the brain and music. This of course chimes with the neuroarthistory project, about which we first learned when staying with the Onians in Berlin. Thus a further happy connection with John—through Hendrix and Clapton!

Radiant Elisabeth, a remarkable and renowned scholar, is a light in herself: truthful, gracious, loving, and very funny when prompted (not hard to do). She sees things very clearly, intellectually and visually (we remember



Figure 18.1. Elisabeth de Bièvre with Derek and Yael Gillman's daughter Aviva. Berlin, Grünewald, summer of 1995.

her suggesting that the street-facing corners of our garden would benefit from curving beds, and so it came to be). Friendship is one of the basic values of human life, and Elisabeth and John are the best friends one could have.

Outstanding analyses of architecture: *Bearers of Meaning*, 1988

Maria Fabricius Hansen

Within the discipline of architectural history, scholars tend to approach the fabric of buildings in factual, descriptive and technical ways, focusing on formal qualities and building histories. It is probably congenial to the field that it attracts personalities who are keen on design and technological issues, and who favour the functional aspect of buildings. These tendencies are heightened by the fact that many architectural historians are educated in schools of architecture and technology, enhancing these sober approaches to research on buildings. The consequence is, however, a certain distrust of the kinds of speculative architectural history carried out by art historians trained in analyses of images.

Instances of what could be called an iconography of architecture have been and continue to be rare, particularly when it comes to surveys of larger spans of history. Back in the 1942 volume of the *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Richard Krautheimer wrote an 'Introduction' to the topic. But an insightful contribution to the perception of architecture such as Heinrich Wölfflin's *Prolegomena zu einer Psychologie der Architektur* from 1886 was not republished until 2019, and only quite recently published in an English translation (*Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture*, 2017); Alois Riegl's brilliant *Spätromische Kunstindustrie* from 1901/1927 was not published in English until 1985 and has only sporadically been made accessible again in German editions (in 1964, 1973, and 2016). These historiographical dispositions witness a certain reluctance within the modern discipline of architectural history for broader interpretations of the meaning of buildings.

The project that John Onians undertook with his *Bearers of Meaning*, published by Princeton University Press in 1988, was thus not only highly original in its idea of surveying a couple of millennia of European architectural history through a focus on the columns and capitals developed by the ancient Greeks to subsequently become a standard idiom in the Western world until the modern era. Also the general approach in the book was singular within the discipline: to

present an analysis of the meaning of architecture by highlighting the particular choices made in specific buildings and offering articulate arguments for the reasons why these choices were made, all in a comprehensive and admirably well-written manner. In *Bearers of Meaning* formal descriptions are important, but as means to an interpretation of the significances embedded in buildings rather than as goals in their own right, just as the book refrains from mere mappings of chronologies or from the chasing of revivals of antiquity which otherwise are so prominent within the art historical discipline.

Onians' close readings of the buildings' compositions was augmented by the classicist's grasp of the ancient sources and the art historian's predilection for analysis. In a way, Onians looked at buildings as if they were images. The analyses were rooted in the buildings' functional aspects and their embeddedness in the lived lives of people, yet he included the imaginary by grounding his interpretations in these people's mental habits. Rather than building on secondary literature, he consistently employed the ancient sources. His analyses were informed by his familiarity with these sources, his linguistic proficiency in reading them, and his extensive knowledge of the field of rhetoric, both in its ancient origins and its continuous transmittance and transformation through the medieval and renaissance periods.

With the urge to offer specific explanation for the choices made within each building analysed, the book is characteristic of a British tradition within the art historical discipline, which favours facts and rejects broader notions of an indistinct zeitgeist conditioning a given period. The explanations offered in *Bearers of Meaning* are typically anchored in the particular circumstances in which specific individuals had buildings made. Onians focuses on what the people involved in building read or knew, what could be asserted about their priorities, their understanding or perception of the world, and their religious convictions. Throughout the book, each new building is approached from a curiosity regarding the specific

circumstances on which its erection were based. There are no generic explanations offered here. A column does not have simply one meaning. *Bearers of Meaning* demonstrates how the art historian can allow for the material to contribute to forming the questions asked, and Onians ventured into the daring project of even trying to answer.

Other scholars might contest some of the explanations offered in *Bearers of Meaning*, but the reader remains grateful, not only that the questions were posed at all, but that the book even offers answers, inviting further reflections on how and why buildings are made and broadening the scope of architectural interpretation in general.

The advancement of such questions remains infrequent within the discipline. In sum, *Bearers of Meaning* is not only original in its approach and delineation of its subject and exemplary in its succinct, eloquent condensations of general developments based on the examination of individual cases. It is singular as well in its highly original suggestions of how to establish meaning in formal qualities—such as a particular use of a column or a capital. With this daring project, *Bearers of Meaning* remains an outstanding model for future iconographies of architecture.

20. The indefinite object

Edward S. Harwood and Joanne Pillsbury

A ceramic effigy of an animated root vegetable, which also served as a bottle some 30 centimeters in height, appears to lumber toward the viewer. The human head emerging from the manioc-stem neck is crowned by a crescent headdress, an indicator of high status, and yet he bares jaguar fangs in a menacing way. The roots of the tuber seem ready to burst forth like legs that would enable it/him (how should we characterize this composite entity?) to pounce on a victim. What is the correct visual response to this creature? Do we fight it or do we eat it?

How do you understand works made thousands of years ago, by artists of communities that left no written records to illuminate their meaning? Elisabeth de Bièvre and John Onians, in lectures, in publications, and perhaps most especially, over lively dinner-table conversations, have explored how we experience objects, both as testaments and active agents of the cultural beliefs of a specific time and place, but also how we seek to understand the unfamiliar and the new.

Following the introduction of ceramics some four thousand years ago, artists in the Andean region of South America began transforming clay into elaborate ritual vessels, which also functioned as the primary canvas for the expression and circulation of ideas. Bottles with stirrup-shaped spouts in particular, became the focus of some of the most creative and inventive imagery known from the ancient Americas. The most striking examples were produced by potters of Peru's Moche culture over the course of some six centuries in the first millennium AD, hundreds of years before the rise of the Inca Empire. In the 3rd through 5th centuries, Moche potters on Peru's North Coast shaped the bottles' bodies into effigies of a single animal, vegetable, or human with considerable fidelity. In later centuries, the compositions became more complex, sometimes amalgamating species to create inventive beings, such as a bird with the carapace of a mollusk, or an owl with the arms and armor of a human warrior.

Whereas owl warriors are perhaps easier to understand – the predatory speed and cunning of



Figure 20.1. Moche artist(s), Stirrup-spout bottle with manioc form. North Coast, Peru, 600–800 AD. Ceramic, slip, 31.8x21.6x31.8cm. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Nathan Cummings, 1964. Accession Number: 64.228.57.

the owl representing desired traits for a class of warrior, perhaps – the animated vegetables resist easy interpretations. As Lisa Trever has noted, some of these later composite creations could at once be animal, vegetable, and mineral. Such compositions provoke a perceptual uncertainty: how are we to understand these inventive compositions? Was the cognitive dissonance provoked by the blurring of boundaries intended to prompt anxiety, humor, cosmic conceptual play, or some combinations of responses?

These composite creatures largely ceased to be depicted after the 9th century. Mould-making technology, already deployed in Moche times, became more prevalent in the centuries to follow, as compositions became more standardized, with the result that the iconographic repertoire was vastly reduced. Vegetable effigies continued to be made, but they largely stayed in their lane: the inter-species mashups of the late Moche were left behind. The era of violent tubers was over, but their existence could offer a delicious topic for a wide-ranging discussion at a certain Norwich dinner table!

21.

'Neither trendy nor traditional': John Onians at the Clark

Charles 'Mark' W. Haxthausen

Within John Onians's long, distinguished career his two years at the Clark Art Institute might seem a mere blip, yet his time here had a profound impact on the institution and its place in the intellectual culture of the United States. The Clark's Research and Academic Program (RAP), which John established and of which he was the founding director, elevated the international profile of the institution, which joined the Getty Research Institute and the National Gallery of Art's Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts (CASVA) as a major North American centre supporting art-historical scholarship.

Located in the small western Massachusetts community of Williamstown, population 7500, the Clark might seem an odd choice for such an enterprise. Established in 1955, it owes its bucolic location to the anxieties of the cold war. Robert Sterling Clark, a Singer Sewing Machine heir, and his wife Francine moved to Williamstown from Manhattan to protect their precious art and silver collection from possible nuclear attack. The museum is renowned above all for its holdings of nineteenth-century French painting, but it also houses one of this country's outstanding art history libraries for Western art from the Renaissance to the present. There had long been a sense among the institution's trustees that such a rich resource should serve not merely as a reference library for museum staff, local faculty, and students but as an international research centre for scholars. Previously known only for its collection, RAP made the Clark into a beacon for scholars from across the world.

I preceded John to Williamstown by four years. In 1993 I moved from the University of Minnesota to assume the directorship of the two-year master's program in art history housed at the Clark. When I arrived, discussions about the creation of a residential program for visiting scholars were already underway, although still very much at an exploratory stage. When Michael Conforti moved from the Minneapolis Institute of Art to succeed David Brooke as Director of the Clark in November 1994 he made the creation of such a program the highest priority. After a prolonged

international search for a scholar to set up the program Conforti settled on John. He was hired by the Clark on a two-year contract, extending from 1997 to 1999, with the charge of developing a plan for the program and launching it as its founding director. I suspect that one factor in this choice was John's creation of the British scholarly journal *Art History*, for which he served as founding editor from 1978 to 1988. Representative of new developments in the discipline, it brought fresh intellectual energy to the staid landscape of scholarly Anglophone journals in the field.

Fundamental to John's concept for RAP was the creation of conditions conducive to fostering an intellectual community among the visiting fellows. A large house across South Street from the Clark was acquired, expanded, and thoroughly renovated, creating six commodious apartments, a number corresponding to the number of fellows in residence at a given time. For RAP John developed a concept comprising different types of scholarly events: public lectures; public conversations with resident fellows or invited scholars; and colloquia for small groups of scholars from other institutions for the purpose of exploring topics over two days in a workshop format. Finally, each year the Clark would organise a conference on a topic that, as John memorably put it, was 'neither trendy nor traditional.' He was strongly committed to the idea that the Clark should be a place for the critical examination of issues that were beneath the radar, having not yet become a focus of public discussion and debate. The edited papers presented at each conference were to appear in a newly launched series, 'Clark Studies in the Visual Arts,' jointly published with Yale University Press.

I had the honour of organising the first of these conferences, 'The Two Art Histories: The Museum and the University,' held over two days in April 1999.¹ The topic grew out of my own earlier experience at Harvard, where I had a joint appointment as professor and curator of the Busch-Reisinger Museum. Inhabiting

¹ A selection of papers from the conference was subsequently published: Haxthausen 2002.

both spheres, I soon became aware of a widespread sense among museum-based art historians that they were viewed by their academic counterparts as their intellectual inferiors. On the other side, curators I met from other museums, considering me one of them, often spoke resentfully of the arrogance of academics, who in their view had little interest in an intimate knowledge of the actual physical art objects they presumed to write on. I thus experienced this roiling tension first-hand, yet no one was addressing it publicly. Obviously the topic touched a nerve—the event drew over 275 registrants, overwhelmingly from the museum community, for whom the conference seemed to have a cathartic effect (I recall that the first question from the audience came from John Walsh, then the director of the Getty Museum). Discussions following the papers were exceptionally intense; curators and academics who rarely spoke to one another now sat side by side on stage, engaging in lively, often contentious exchanges.²

The following year John organised the second Clark Conference, 'Compression vs. Expression: Containing and Explaining the World's Art.'³ His interest in the topic was certainly shaped by his experience as a faculty member in the art history department at the University of East Anglia. As the result of a gift of their collection of world art by Sir Robert and Lady Lisa Sainsbury, by 1992 it had redefined its mission as a centre of world art studies offering a doctoral degree in the field, the first program of its kind anywhere. At the time of the conference the issue of world art studies and how they might reconfigure the discipline beyond its eurocentrism had not yet become a hot topic. As John had earlier written of this emerging field, 'The greatest single advantage of the concept of World Art Studies is that since no one knows what it is, everyone can contribute to its definition.'⁴ John's conference was shaped by that idea: he invited speakers from Asia, Africa, Australia, Europe, and the United States, including representatives of the World Bank and UNESCO. If the 'Two Art Histories' touched on a long-standing issue simmering beneath the surface, the papers and free-ranging discussions of 'Compression vs. Expression' opened up stimulating new vistas for radically rethinking the discipline.

These conferences, their ensuing publication, and a growing list of fellows from around the world succeeded

in rapidly increasing the international visibility of the Clark as a centre of research and debate on emerging disciplinary issues. One thing that distinguished RAP from the Getty Research Institute and CASVA was its association with an art history graduate program. Throughout the history of RAP graduate students have served as research assistants for fellows, and fellows have in turn often served as informal advisers to students on their research projects. A significant number went on to pursue doctoral degrees working with professors they met through RAP.

The impact of John's presence at the Clark was not only institutional. The subjects of his scholarship had a significant impact on my teaching. Virtually every year I taught a methods course to our undergraduate art history majors. My goal was to acquaint them with the history of the discipline and its major figures as well as to introduce them to new approaches. For a topic entitled 'art history and its objects' I included John's article 'World Art Studies and the Need for a New Natural History of Art.' Published in *The Art Bulletin*, it was in effect a manifesto. 'The principal challenge,' he wrote, 'is the need to create a larger disciplinary frame that reflects less the accidental constraints of institutional formation and more the essential complexity of art as a worldwide phenomenon. (...) We need to write a history of art that is also a history of seeing.'⁵ Such a study, he argued, would reveal our Western tradition, 'so predictable in its development and even boring,' as 'unknown and puzzling. Europe becomes in effect a continent every bit as "dark" as Africa.'⁶ This was heady, exciting stuff for my undergraduates, enrolled at a college with a student body that was rapidly growing more culturally and internationally diverse. When, at the end of the semester, I polled the members of the class on their favourite readings among the forty or so texts that we had studied, John's was in the top two or three. I assigned a second text by John, excerpts from his ground-breaking book, *Neuroarthistory*, for a course module on 'art, cognition, and the brain.'⁷ That volume was also a sort of manifesto, surveying writers since Aristotle who dealt with issues of what is now called 'the visual brain,' most of them concerned with issues that made them forerunners of contemporary neuroscience *avant la lettre*.

² From its beginnings RAP has hosted scholars from the museum community as well as academics. For a complete list of fellows and their institutional affiliation, viewed 11 March 2023, <https://clarkartkentico.blob.core.windows.net/clarkart-kentico-media-prod/clarkart/media/pdfs/2022/clark-rap-past-fellows_9-22.pdf>.

³ A selection of papers was subsequently published: Onians 2006.

⁴ Onians 1996: 206.

⁵ More than a century ago Heinrich Wölfflin framed the history of art as a history of seeing: 'Seeing as such has its own history, and uncovering these "optical strata" has to be considered the most elementary task of art history.' Wölfflin 2015: 93. Of course, Wölfflin's history of seeing was limited to the art of the West.

⁶ Onians 1996: 206–07.

⁷ Onians 2007.

Both issues, world art studies and the emerging neuroscience of the visual brain, also dovetailed with my own research on the German art historian and critic Carl Einstein, on whom I was writing a book at the time. Widely recognised for his short, pathbreaking monographs on African sculpture (1915 and 1921), Einstein remains to this day largely undiscovered as a pioneer of world art studies. Little has been written on his final, unfinished project, the 'Handbuch der Kunst,' projected to be a five-volume manual on world art aimed at a general readership, even as it radically redefined the premises and parameters of art history. Dating from the 1930s and left unfinished at Einstein's death by suicide in 1940, the project's astonishing scope was to be radically global, easily surpassing anything written or conceived up to that time.⁸ Beyond the known arts of the five continents, it would also encompass 'the gaps of art history,' the 'unrecognised and maligned peoples.' The making of images, Einstein declared, should be studied as 'an ability common to all humans.' Art history should be 'not only a history of objects, but a history of a human action, that of representing.'⁹ In its ambition and unprecedented universalism, in its critical questioning of the Eurocentric assumptions and methods of Western art history, this regrettably unrealised project anticipated John's landmark *Atlas of World Art*.¹⁰

Through John's *Neuroarthistory* I became familiar with the work of the neurobiologist Semir Zeki, whose pathbreaking book *Inner Vision: An Exploration of Art and the Brain* (1999), was a pioneering attempt to apply the recent discoveries of neuroscience on the visual brain to art. Zeki offered an account of the functioning of the visual system, the parts of the brain engaged in processing data from the retina and producing our images of the world, that has certain striking affinities with Einstein's account of cubist perception. In short, neuroscience had established that seeing is an active rather than a passive process, a claim made by Einstein more than half a century earlier.¹¹ While he anticipated current understanding of the visual brain, his writing also offers an important corrective to efforts by neuroscientists to apply their knowledge to art. Through John's book I developed a deeper appreciation of the prescient insight of Einstein's profoundly original interpretation of cubism, and a realisation that art-historical writing on visuality had much to offer to neuroscience.

Finally, a precious consequence of John's years in Williamstown was the friendship my wife Linda and I forged with him and Elisabeth. Though Elisabeth had no official position at the Clark, she was an accomplished scholar of seventeenth-century Dutch art who became an active member of our art history community and adviser to some of our graduate students. In the intervening years, despite the distance and all too infrequent times spent in each other's company, that friendship has endured.

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⁸ An extensive selection from Einstein's notes and fragments for the project is published in Einstein 1992: 301–447.

⁹ See Einstein 2018.

¹⁰ Onians 2004.

¹¹ Haxthausen 2011.

22.

Hakuju or White Age Celebration

Harume Hayashi

Tea shop in Ueno Park, Tokyo, c. 2002

John, Mahori, former UEA (University of East Anglia) art history student, and I got together in a small tea shop and ordered tea and some of the shop's specialties, Japanese-style sweets: sweet red bean paste with *shiratama* [white ball] or rice flour dumpling; diced fruit and agar served with molasses syrup; grilled *mochi* [rice cake], and so on. Mahori and I wondered whether John could swallow the Japanese sweet stuff without too much suffering. At the same time, we were expecting his unusual if not strange comments.

Our topic pleasantly and quite naturally floated towards Japanese food such as tofu, rice, *mochi*, red beans, and John raised a question.

John: 'I... I wonder... I wonder if white colour has been regarded as something very special in Japan... appreciated in particular?'

Mahori and I: (Silent with our mouth open)

John: 'What would you say white colour signifies?'

Mahori: 'Like many other cultures, white represents virginity, pureness, newness, innocence... In that respect, white has been important.'

Me: 'The new and clean are even virtues in Japan.'

John: (Grinning) 'Right, maybe you are right... but your explanation sounds too sophisticated. Maybe, maybe... because rice is white, and that might be the reason why white colour has been important in Japanese culture. What would you say? Does white colour have a special association with rice?'

Me: 'Well, the fair complexion is called *shirohada* or "white skin" and it has been one of the most important elements for female beauty. An old saying goes "white skin hides all flaws." Also, a smooth skin is called "*mochi* skin." All this was of course before healthy tanned skin became fashionable.'

John grins again. Mahori and I try to add something more, but say nothing. White rice, white tofu, white *mochi*--a lot of white food indeed, but...

Dear John,

Since our small talk some twenty years ago in Ueno Park, I never forgot this question of 'white colour' and Japanese obsession with rice. I always remember that you were not easily satisfied with 'sophisticated explanations' or rationale. You always forced us to dig the real dirt and watch real things. I am always trying to do that... not always successful, though.

Anyway, when I was given an opportunity of contributing to this book for you and Elisabeth and learned that your birthday would be coming, I remembered once again this old talk, and white age celebration in Japan came to my mind. It is absolutely not a sophisticated celebration but rather a kind of childish, silly 'name play' in Japan. I will try to write something about white age celebration and white colour in the following pages. But have you ever heard of white age celebration or *hakuju*?

I. Long Life Celebration in Japan

Japan shares a long-life celebrating tradition with other East Asian countries, China and Korea among others. The most important and widely celebrated birthday is the sixtieth birthday, which marks the completion of a cycle of sixty years: twelve zodiac signs and ten heavenly stems make a circuit every sixty years. The two kanji or Chinese characters for this sixtieth birthday, *kanreki* 還暦, mean the 'return (to the birth).'

Then we celebrate the seventieth birthday, *koki* 古希, as in China and Korea. Those two kanji mean 'old' and 'rare,' coming from a verse by a Tang-dynasty poet, Du Fu: 'Rare is the mortal who reaches threescore and ten.'

After passing *koki*, birthday celebration in Japan sets off on its own way; its names are no longer rooted in the ancient zodiac signs or classic literature. Special names are given to birthdays such as 77, 80, 88, 90, 99, 100... and the list goes on. The eightieth birthday is called *sanju* or umbrella age, 傘寿: the first kanji means 'umbrella' and the second 'age, luck.' Why umbrella? Because... eighty is written 八十 in kanji, and a simplified-form

kanji for 傘, 傘 looks just like a combination of 八 (eight) + (ten). I am not making this up. As you see, kanji is treated as a simple visual form, irrespective of its meaning.

Hakuju 白寿 is another interesting example. Let us start with a comparison of the two kanji: 百 and 白. The first one is *hyaku*, meaning ‘one hundred,’ and the second *haku/shiro* ‘white.’ Accordingly, the hundredth birthday has a name 百寿--*hyakuju* --while the ninety-ninth birthday is called 白寿--*hakuju*--meaning ‘white’ age. Why? Because ‘白 [white]’ is formed removing the bar (‘一’ or ‘one’) at the top of ‘百 [hundred],’ thus number 99 is applied to ‘白 [white]’--100 minus 1--and the ninety-ninth birthday is called 白寿 or white age celebration. Here again the kanji are used as a pictorial form cut off from the meaning.

The fact that the ninety-ninth birthday celebration is as important as the hundredth reminds me of an attitude which I find now and then in Japanese culture and aesthetics: shying away from perfection or fullness, failing to enjoy them. One feels uncomfortable with symmetry or completion, and then compelled to disturb the perfection a little by finding a less perfect or asymmetrical and irregular form, while trying to find a valuable quality in the less perfect form: the ninety-ninth birthday is as important as the one hundredth, or appreciation of the waxing moon of the thirteenth night (from the new moon) almost equals that of the full moon of the fifteenth night, etc.

Instead of going further on this subject, let me present a haiku by the seventeenth-century haiku master, Basho. He composed a number of haiku celebrating the moon of every phase, and here he calls for clouds to hide the full moon:

雲おりおり人をやすめる月見かな

Clouds now and then
Giving men relief
From moon-viewing

II. White, Colour of Rice?

Since our small talk in that Ueno Park tea shop, the question of white colour has often come back to me and I have been tossing it around for all these years. Has white colour been of any particular importance in Japanese culture? If important, is it because it’s the colour of rice? Your unusual out-of-the-way question has stayed with me.

I never tried, however, a thorough investigation into this question, which usually comes back to me and after a while evaporates into my fond memory and thoughts of you and Elisabeth. I am therefore unable to come up with any tentative theory or new bold interpretation. I am sorry, but at least I would like to try to verbalise some ideas about white colour that have been lingering in my head.

What comes to my mind when hearing ‘white’ are those images such as: snow, rice, tofu, mochi, or baby wrappers, shrouds for the dead, Shinto priests’ costumes, Emperor’s ritual gowns, and so on. White colour also represents some values and qualities, as Mahori stated years ago: to be clean, new, innocent, empty, blank, beginning or birth...

As for the original glyph resulting in the kanji of 白 [white], some scholars suggest it represents an acorn, some suggest a skull: gatherers’ food for life and bleached cranial bone, in other words, life and death. And this is the moment when I suddenly remembered one type of Japanese Pure Land Buddhist paintings, *Niga Byakudo*, 二河白道 [two rivers and white path] and those seminar sessions with Elisabeth at UEA. Now I have to turn to Elisabeth and talk to her.

III. ‘White Path between Two Rivers’

Niga Byakudo 二河白道 [two rivers and white path] is a parable preached by Shan-dao, a seventh-century Chinese Buddhist priest, and its visual presentation becomes one type of the Pure Land Buddhist painting in Japan from the late thirteenth century onwards.

To reach the Pure Land in the West, you have to walk this narrow path where the two rivers meet: the river of fire to the south and the river of water to the north. The former represents anger and hatred, and the latter greed and endless desire.

The *niga byakudo* painting is usually composed of three parts: humans’ real world at the bottom and the Pure Land at the top, and in the middle are the two rivers and a white path. If the white path is a passage from this world to a new life in the Pure Land, its white colour seems appropriate, given that white can suggest both new life and death, acorn and skull.

Dear Elisabeth,

I was going to analyse this type of Pure Land paintings, as I did or at least tried to do with you many years ago at UEA. But I asked myself if this would be what I really like to do right now. The answer is rather negative. So, I am going to write something more relaxed and personal instead, allowing my thoughts to travel back and forth between this world and reveries, just like we often do in our email exchanges.

I will start by writing about the depiction of this world in those *niga byakudo* paintings, which for me is the most interesting part of these paintings. It is really striking to find a lot of stories of creatures in this world: humans, rich and poor, good and bad, cattle, wild animals, trees, flowers, etc. Often there is even a flowering cherry tree standing by the riverbank! And then I ask myself a second question: do I really care to be reborn in the Pure Land, leaving all those realities behind right now? Even if I could be free from all the sufferings?

Before figuring out how I would reply to this question, I should think hard about our realities. You recently told me that ‘in principle all realities are good’ even though some may be disturbing. I agree, but what matters is always how you perceive them. The problem is that I am often unable to decide whether this reality or that reality is good or bad, because realities are almost always both good and bad, or in an indefinite gradation in between.

I would like to imagine you and I sitting together by a riverbank--any river will do, including those of

human desires. We are always floating and our life is like a river after all--and talking about realities, white path, and many other things with you, a sensitive and compassionate person and a serious observer with stern eyes.

Before closing, let me present another haiku by Basho:

ゆく春や鳥なき魚の目は泪

Spring is passing
Birds cry and in the eyes of fish,
Tears

I wondered about the realities in this haiku, when trying to translate it into English. Are you going to miss the end of spring? Do birds also mourn the passing of spring, and fish as well? In Japanese language, nothing is definitely clear. Every reality seems possible: birds may be just chirping, or crying with joy, and fish may be weeping tears of joy, and they certainly always have water in their eyes.

Most of us, on many occasions, stay undecided and not fully convinced of anything, only with our thoughts going back and forth. In other words, we never reach perfection or a complete conviction, but stay at the ‘almost there’--‘白 [white]’--phase. I am going to stay for now in our uncertain and imperfect ‘白’ realities together with our loved ones, birds, fish and flowering trees. Instead of hurrying up to the white path, why don’t we calmly wait for our *hakuju*, almost perfect but not really perfect age celebration?

23.

John and Elisabeth

Mary Hollingsworth

When I think back over the years I have known John and Elisabeth, it is the dining tables we have shared that stand out in my memory. I first met John almost fifty years ago – 6 July 1975, according to my diary, when he interviewed me for a place on his MA course at UEA – and in retrospect that was one of the very few occasions, apart from the course itself, that did not involve some combination of food and wine. I owe the two of them more than I can ever say for the massive contribution they have made to my intellectual development but, revealingly, the backdrop to this is not John's rather bleak, impersonal offices at the university where he conducted his seminars and tutorials but the aromas of the kitchen and the sound of the chopping board heralding the arrival of food. And not just eating; it was while I was doing the washing up after a meal in my house in London that John memorably fulfilled my academic dreams by offering to supervise me as a PhD student.

We have tasted some very memorable meals together. I remember a delicious lunch in the early days with John and Charles Jencks in a rather dubious Greek taverna somewhere near the Warburg, feeling exactly like a rabbit unable to move in the headlights of their dazzling conversation. On another occasion, equally glittering in intellectual exchange, we were all at a conference in Tours and went out to dinner in a restaurant, where John gave his dish the full three-star Michelin response: his characteristic, anticipatory 'Mmmmmmm,' his eyes gazing up to heaven and his fork raised in homage to the Food God as he sampled the *porc aux pruneaux* he had astutely chosen from the menu. I once managed to achieve this response for some courgette flowers I had cooked, which were so fresh that it was impossible to ruin them (garden to plate via frying pan in a matter of minutes). On that occasion John and Elisabeth got on so well, and so noisily, with the other guests, good friends of mine, that all I had to do was to sit back, listen and enjoy the laughter. Unlike the time in Italy when I sat John next to a rather dull (but very good-looking) Italian who was engaged on translating one of my books: 'but Mary, he has no soul,' he anguished.

On another occasion, Elisabeth was away and John asked me to be his guest at the Royal Institution in London where he was giving a lecture. It was followed by a dinner party hosted by the director of the institute, the neuroscientist Susan Greenfield: I have often wondered what she made of the contrast between the two men she had chosen for her own conversation that evening: on one side of her was John and on the other was Jeffrey Archer, a person about as far removed from John as it is possible to be. Fortunately I was at the other end of the table, enjoying a delightful conversation with another neuroscientist whose real love was playing in his string quartet. And there was the weekend we spent in Beckermet, a rather unprepossessing village in Cumberland where we celebrated the 60th birthday of a mutual friend with a very wet walk in his beautiful wood, a recital of operatic arias and several more memorable meals, not least the lavish breakfast in the local pub.

However, easily the most wonderful meals I have eaten with John and Elisabeth, lovingly created by them working in tandem at Unthank Road – maybe also at Cecil Road, though I have only the haziest memories of that house. At one of my first dinners with them I saw to my horror that we were starting with mushrooms on toast (cooked by Elisabeth). My first reaction was terror: I had hated mushrooms since I was a child, certain they were instant death, ever since reading *The Story of Babar* in which the elderly king of the Elephants dies from eating a bright red toadstool. I was far too shy to refuse them; fortunately, as it happens, and I am now fully converted. I am still wondering about another first course, a vegetable I think, but it remains unidentified because I was too embarrassed to ask what it was, but it was delicious nonetheless.

The devotion of John and Elisabeth to civilised eating is awesome – plenty of courses, all small and delicious, often exotic, always with cheese before pudding and always accompanied by wonderful wines, sitting in their lovely dining room with its views equally of worktop and of garden. Among my best memories are

Elisabeth's exquisite roast chicken stuffed with lovage and cottage cheese and the steaks that John prepared as a real treat to celebrate the success of my PhD viva. Or John teaching me how to dice garlic without the need for a garlic press, or even a chopping board. Last time I ate with them there were some succulent little black olives that John had found in a deli in Unthank Road during lockdown; on that occasion I had to refuse the wine, to John's evident disappointment, but I had to drive home.

And invariably the meals, wherever they have taken place, have been accompanied by conversation sparkling with wit and intellect, almost more magical

than convivial and certainly never mundane. If I had been asked to name a place that summed up their erudition, intellect and humour as well as their delight in food, I would have picked Bomarzo, a small town in the hills north of Rome, where Vicino Orsini a sixteenth-century soldier built himself a fantastic garden for his enjoyment. Inspired by the ancient world, he filled it with marvellous statues, astonishing, amusing and extraordinary by turn. Easily the most extraordinary is the monstrous stone mouth, a gigantic, gaping hole, the entrance to an interior chamber intended as Orsini's al fresco dining room, with his tongue acting as the dining table. I was not surprised to hear that they had bought a house there, though I have yet to visit it.

The story of my PhD with John and Elisabeth¹

Gyöngyvér Horváth

First meeting in Munich

I woke up in a 12-bed dormitory near the central station in Munich on an early Sunday morning in September 2003 and was heading to Hotel Marienbad to meet Professor John Onians. I had contacted him about a month earlier and we exchanged a few emails but I had never met him before. I worried less about how would I recognise him than how would I run a conversation with an English professor and overcome our very different social status. I was an Eastern European graduate student planning to go abroad to pursue my PhD studies and was in search for a supervisor and a university. I wanted to examine how storytelling works in pictures; I was trained to approach this problem on a historical basis with the traditional methods of art history, but I realised that this was a cross-cultural phenomenon and was ready to explore it as such. Narrative techniques concerned the immanent properties of visuality and that quickly led our email conversation to evolutionary theories and neuroscience. He suggested we should meet up in Munich where he would be attending a conference. There was a smell of adventure in the air, so I said yes.

Professor Onians welcomed me with a smile and that cleared my worries. We had a nice conversation while enjoying our breakfast cake with coffee and tea in the intimate atmosphere of the hotel's foyer. We quickly discovered that the six degrees of separation theory in our case meant only three steps in the chain of connections. We talked about various things, he being colour-blind and me teaching blind kids; the great Parmigianino exhibition I saw two days earlier in Vienna; my favourite art historian, Ernst H. Gombrich and he being Gombrich's student and his daughter of Gombrich's son; the art of the Far East; the similarity of narrative structures in the art of Europe and India and their possible relation to Indo-European languages; me asking whether it is true that in England secret service agents were recruited from Oxford, he telling me the story of Sir Anthony Blunt, the art historian and Russian spy. We both naturally opened up in the

conversation, he was friendly, informal, and curious and his trust made me comfortable. That time I did not realise that this was an interview.

Then we went to the CIHA conference in the Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte and were walking through Königsplatz. He was telling me that this area was once occupied by the Nazis who held parade there, and I mentioned that the day before I visited the Lenbachhaus just off the corner, the former residence of Franz von Lenbach, Andy Warhol's favourite painter, whose family portrait is the weirdest I have ever seen. The 2003 CIHA congress was entitled *Nation, Style, and Modernism* and there were debates about the relation of modernism and architecture to national identity. When I saw a high-ranking academic there representing Hungary, I asked John to keep our meeting confidential. 'Oh, Mr. Art Historian?' he turned to me, 'does he have plans with you?' That was sharp.

After a few lectures, a quick visit to the newly opened Pinakothek der Moderne and to my favourite Rubens, the *Daughters of Leucippus* at the Alte Pinakothek, we had another meeting in the evening. 'Obviously, you can come to Norwich,' he said, 'we are a bit further from London.' He encouraged me to follow my own path and took off the pressure of accepting the offer by generously suggesting he would write me a reference letter in case I would like to apply somewhere else.

How I got there

At the time I met John in Munich I was about to graduate in a five-year masters course in art history at Eötvös Loránd (ELTE) University in Budapest and earlier that year I had spent two months in Rome with Erasmus. The curriculum at the university followed a rather typical scheme of small countries, traditional and nationalistic. The courses covered art from late Roman and Early Christian era to Modernism in chronological order of which half addressed Hungarian and the other half Western European art balancing between architecture and the rest, painting, sculpture, graphic art and decorative art. The program also aimed to be comprehensive in methodology. In order to

¹ I owe my thanks to Tamás Kálmán and all the supportive friends in Budapest, London, and Norwich.

develop an eye of a connoisseur, it put a lot of emphasis on memorizing thousands of artworks, artists' names and dates; to become a modern scholar, it trained us to be familiar with basic historical research and the two fundamental art historical methods, Vienna School stylistic analysis and Panofsky's iconography. This was all very useful and gave us a sense of historicity, but we students had little or no choice in selecting our courses and in time we accepted that art history is information and practising this discipline is slightly boring.

Rome was, however, exciting and extraordinary. No other city has that richness in the variety of art forms: from the masterpieces in stone in the Musei Capitolini, the Pantheon which from above looks like a bunker from a sci-fi movie, the desperate endurance of sign language in the catacombs, the historical layers in San Clemente, the astonishing attractiveness of sensual skin in Bernini and Caravaggio, the microclimate of the Villa d'Este garden in Tivoli, to contemporary art in Zaha Hadid's MAXXI. Pure visual pleasure. Rome for an art historian is like a sausage factory for a *clochard*, a friend said once.

The university courses taught very little about the new concepts, methods and trends that shaped the recent decades of art history, so when I heard in 2001 that the Central European University (CEU) was organizing a summer school on visual culture, I immediately applied. I wanted to be familiar not just with the past of the discipline but with its present. Then I spent three summers studying art theory. In the first year I did not get a place, but the course director, Margaret Dikovitskaya allowed me to attend the lectures; second year I was accepted as a student and became her assistant. Margaret invited art historians and curators, big names from book covers at an unreachable distance, who would otherwise have never come to Budapest, like Mieke Bal, Ernst van Alphen, Lisa Cartwright or Piotr Piotrowski, and that meant not just rethinking art history and new topics such as contemporary art, media studies, image science, postmodernism, postcolonial studies or feminism and different teaching methods, like reading groups and discussions, but the feeling of being part of something bigger, global, up-to-date and alive. I felt empowered.

It was there at the CEU summer course that I asked one of the visiting scholars, Mark A. Cheetham, professor of art history from Toronto, which university he would recommend for my doctoral studies and who as my future supervisor. 'Ask John Onians,' he said, 'he knows everyone.'

Doctoral studies postponed

In these years I had purposefully searched for a research topic that would fit my interest, mind, and personality. I arrived to art history through surrealism; Kandinsky, Klee, and Max Ernst resonated most with my young self. It seemed obvious that my career would focus on modernism, but that has slowly changed. I adored these artists but hadn't seen a problem there. So what would I write about? Renaissance and baroque painting, however, required effort and knowledge of history, religion, mythology and philosophy which I didn't possess initially. New theories that I had come to know at CEU were helpful, but I was not sure how they could be applied to old masters. I knew that my abstract sense was stronger than the historical, which is not ideal for art historians who specialise in one era. I also preferred writings that opened up the horizon rather than focusing on narrow or undecidable issues. Before studying art history I obtained an MSc in mathematics, so I had the dilemma of going for a topic in which these two fields converge but, being aware of Martin Kemp's *The Science of Art* (1990), I dismissed this option because I didn't see how I could find a new topic there.

And there were things I liked. One such was Gombrich's *Moment and Movement in Art* (1964) which deliberately compared images made centuries and cultures apart, along a phenomenon that puzzled artists whenever they wanted to depict an action. One day I came across a paper on visual narration and the element of time in Western European painting. The topic fascinated me, but I found the article inaccurate and simplistic – perhaps the author, a literary historian did not have that mental database of thousands of images that art historians own – illustrations, for example, which bring an impressive variety in storytelling, were completely left out. I wanted to correct it and do justice for images. Next I found Wolfgang Kemp's research and I discovered that this topic has a rich history and huge gaps. So I chose this topic for my further research.

But where and how to make my contribution was another question. I always knew I wanted to study abroad and not just for the obvious purposes students usually do so. There were a few solid reasons why I chose the UK: of all the languages I learnt, English was what I understood most and could write, at least to some extent; PhD themes in Hungary were mostly limited to Hungarian-related topics and mine was not; the PhD program at ELTE aimed at periods, so art historians had to choose between medieval, early modern and modern art; and that such programs in the UK were more reasonable and research-oriented

than in Hungary or in the US and gave students more support and freedom. And there was one minus: prices, including the tuition fees.

So I submitted my application to the University of East Anglia (UEA) to what was at that time called the School of World Art Studies and Museology (WAM) with a vague promise of some kind of funding that later did not materialize. I got an offer in March 2004 to an MPhil program for two years that would be extended by one further year after a successful upgrading to a PhD course under the condition of a 'Financial Guarantee,' that is, 'proof of ability to pay tuition fees,' which was over £3000/year. The letter made clear the obvious: this will cost me a lot of money.

Since 2003 I spent a lot of time digging the funding industry for grants and scholarships: talked to people, searched databases and checked all kinds of opportunities. I was aware that there were no full funding scholarships from the Hungarian state and I had to realise there is no such from the UK side either. There were, though, smaller grants for short term research given by associations, federations, councils, or charities, and if I was eligible, I applied to all. I just wanted to make sure there was not one possibility I did not explore.

Despite my best efforts, I was unable to secure sufficient funding that year, and to some extent this was due to the historical constellation in which we lived. When I applied and received a place in the UEA program, Hungary already had held a referendum on joining the European Union but was not yet a member. By the time I should have begun my studies, September 2004, Hungary was in the EU along with other Eastern-European countries. The UK immediately opened up its labour market for the newly joined members, and it meant that I could not only study and live but work there legally. In theory, the university treated me as a European student from the start, but the bureaucracy was not entirely prepared for the transition. UEA administration should have forwarded my application to the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), which was the only body offering funding for fees to EU students, but they simply forgot and for this reason I was not counted for the university scholarship either. The school offered me a one-time David Brown bursary of £1500, but when I balanced this with the fees plus living costs, the amount scared me, so I postponed my studies. Soon it became clear that the new possibilities coming with the EU-membership did not mean better funding or affordable education.

The summer of 2005 brought a chance to meet John again. The Courtauld Institute of Art organized a conference, *Illuminating Narrative: Visual Storytelling in Gothic Manuscripts* in Somerset House. That was my topic, although it addressed an earlier period than I was working on. My airplane ticket was for 8 July, but the day before my mobile was suddenly flooded with text messages. The news was all about London, the Islamist terrorist attacks on the transport system, the confusion and chaos that prevailed in the city, and the fear and damage it has caused. I was hesitating to travel, but the conference was not cancelled. I remember the participants sitting on the steps in the courtyard sharing their stories and talking about how the events scared them and how the closures affected their daily routines. At the conference I met Professor Wolfgang Kemp from Germany, who was and still is the top scholar in my field, visual narration. I brought with me his freshly translated book *Die Räume der Maler: Zur Bilderzählung seit Giotto* in Hungarian which he hadn't seen before and we could discuss some issues related to our work. Next day afternoon I met John in a small café in one of the narrow streets leading to the British Museum, and to my surprise, he was not alone (Figure 24.1). I was introduced to Elisabeth who came with kindness and curiosity (Figure 24.2).² Just a few days later AHRC informed me that I won the grant for the fees. Even though there was no funding for my living expenses, I decided to take this step and start the program anyway.

Moving to Norwich, being a student

I vividly remember the day I arrived to Norwich. It was late September 2005, almost exactly two years after I met John for the first time. I gave up and emptied my rented room for nine years in Budapest, packed all my stuff and moved it to my mum's small apartment. The previous year UEA had offered me accommodation, but not this year; I tried to find accommodation on the internet to no avail. I left Budapest very early morning with not knowing where would I sleep that night. It was before the strict weight limit on airplanes, so I took the maximum I could lift at once: a 20kg backpack, a 10kg side bag and a 5kg laptop bag; I packed everything from a hair-dryer to a winter coat. I flew to Stansted then took a train to Norwich where John was waiting to pick me up. But the train broke down at Cambridge and was about an hour late, and we missed each other.

² I chose the works of Franciska Szabó and Ágnes Uray-Szépfolvi to present here, because for me they capture the essence of John and Elisabeth's character.



Figure 24.1. Franciska Szabó, *Memories of the Others No.8 - Antiquity No.2*, 2018. Plextol and pigment on board, 40x40cm. Private collection.



Figure 24.2. Ágnes Uray-Szépfalvi, *Omphale*, 2022. Paper, Chinese ink, 29.7x21cm. Private collection.

So I took the bus 25 to the campus with all my luggage, landed at the far end and climbed the last hundred metres to the green portacabins in which the school was relocated during the refurbishment of Norman Foster's 1978 glass box, the Sainsbury Centre; there was mud all around and a few bunnies. And there was John at the entrance and Beverley Youngman, with whom I had already exchanged a few emails, and a bunch of other people, all smiling faces. The next few hours were very busy: I registered at the university, became student 3030636 admitted to a full-time postgraduate research course, got a student card, picked up the envelope that was waiting for me with my email address and password, learnt that council tax is a thing, and managed to get a room in one of the university's student accommodation blocks in the city centre. In the evening, four flatmates greeted me at Mary Chapman Court and my cell comforted me with its narrow iron bed and unplastered bare concrete walls graffitied with a fragment from a Joy Division song.

Being a research student I had no obligations to attend courses except that I wanted to do so. In the first semester I went to Margit Thøfner's MA core course *Culture and the Past: Ownership and Interpretation* which focused on research methodology and academic writing through various topics in museology and heritage. John's *Art and the Brain* seminar was about neuroscience and its application to humanities. The courses covered a variety of topics because the scholars' background in the School was also diverse: apart from art historians, there were anthropologists, archaeologists, Egyptologists, etc. and the fluctuation was high. I also joined the Dialogues discussion group and other reading groups. My favourites were the weekly research seminars: the World Art Research Seminar on Wednesdays and the SRU Seminar on Thursdays. These were excellent presentations given by scholars from the school or by invited speakers on amazingly various topics showing world art in practice. I remember lectures about art in Peru, agriculture in Vanuatu, or James Elkins's lecture on art historical

methodology. I was happy when I could understand half of the jokes, and I especially remember one, John Mack's 'hare and rabbit'.³ There was wine and toast, and John the entertainer gave funny introductions spiced with personal remarks. I learned a lot from these lectures and also from seeing other academics navigating their international careers. I also enjoyed being exposed to new experiences and knowledge in a very different educational system.

The better facilities for research and the luxury of availability was also amazing: I could access JSTOR and other online databases remotely from my computer, the library was great and interlibrary loan was super speedy: if I could not find an article, within three days a hard copy from the British Library landed in my box. This first period was about finding the direction of my research, looking into the history of my topic, producing a proper bibliography and drafting a chapter on historiography.

The AHRC and the UEA offered various research trainings for postgraduate students, these were the opportunities when research students could actually interact with each other. I attended some of the Transitions Programme on campus and also participated in one intensive training under Grad School Program in 2007 in Brighton, which was about research transferable skills; we learnt, for example, quick reading, were tested for Myers-Briggs types and had mock interviews.

I was lucky to have two very different supervisors who were complementing each other. They both were supportive, flexible and offered their supervisory expertise. With John, it was more about ideas and discussions on general topics; he thought that I could manage the practicalities myself. I was privileged to be John's last formal doctoral student and I am grateful for that. I was assigned a strict and more pragmatic second supervisor, Margit Thøfner, an early modern period expert with whom I had more formal meetings. She ensured that it was a feasible research project that would result in a completed thesis in the required time period. Once, though, there was an incident: when she first requested a draft chapter from me, I turned to her and asked if she was going to read it. She raised her eyebrows and replied very seriously, 'This is my job, that's what I am getting paid for.' Oh, that was a mistake. My question really came unintentionally, recalling an unpleasant past situation when my former supervisor in Hungary forgot that I was writing my thesis with him; I am not sure he ever ended up reading it.

Daily life in the UK

Beyond the university, I had to organize my daily life: find food at the nearby Tesco, get a mobile phone, a table lamp, register with the NHS, get a bank account. Apart from enjoying the company of new friends and temporary friends, my most memorable experiences from Norwich were architectural and spatial. This certainly included the unique buildings in the city: the medieval Elm Hill and the Britons Arms, the Cathedral and its surroundings, Norwich Guildhall, the freshly renovated Dragon Hall, the numerous smaller churches and wooden-framed medieval houses. Every September the Heritage Open Days gave an opportunity to enter buildings otherwise not open to the public and learn about their history, like the Norfolk Freemason's Lodge on St Giles street and its Rosicrucian past.

One major characteristic of Norwich is the exceptional use of flintstone in medieval architecture and the adjacent presence of brutalist concrete buildings and huge glass walls in postmodern architecture. The way these materials live side by side may result in a special spectacle, like the glass facade of the Forum public library which opens up the view to St Peter Mancroft, or the well-known glass and steel structures of the Sainsbury Centre. There was a particular detail in the latter, the shiny white corridor leading to the toilets, which every time reminded me of an immersive contemporary art installation I had seen in Prague a few years earlier, similar to Doug Wheeler's disorienting works, an empty, soundproof tube with shining white surfaces thematizing the void – one of the few private spots in the huge open-air building.

There were things I liked: the sculpture garden and the geometry of ziggurats on the campus; the big H-sign where Norman Foster landed with his helicopter, that the university was reusing envelopes for interior communication; that tea and a walk was regarded as remedy; the dinner invitations (many of which I could not return); the irony that the walkway to the new shopping mall in the city ran through an old cemetery; that British people had more harmonious relations to the past and this was reflected in their homes; that interior design was aimed at keeping and preserving the former grandeur of the houses (I had a chance to see some beautiful art-filled houses with maximalist interiors); postcard-culture; the idea of free museums and free contraception in the UK; my favourite shops, the half-museum Country & Eastern in the building of the former skate ground, The Pier, the furniture shop that closed down in the 2008 financial crisis and the dark Hotel Chocolate; testing my English with

³ Also in this volume, see Chapter 51.

Shakespeare on stage; or seeing Salman Rushdie in a literary festival at the Lecture Theatre and visiting the Lotus Car's design studio.

Some things surprised me: how UK tried to be decentralised; the different type of bureaucracy; that British people trusted institutions, which was unimaginable for someone coming from a post-communist country; that Norfolk dialect was very different from BBC English and speaking on the phone was sometimes confusing because I did not see the mouth spelling the words; that except HSBC all English banks refused to open an account and it took them two months to give me a debit card; British humour, like when a nurse in the ER said 'we will chop it off' when I got an infection from an elbow inflammation.

Obviously, there were things I did not like in my new life: the freezing rooms in cold winters without proper heating while the snow was falling outside; that spring arrived in June and stayed for two days; black mould on windows; mince pie; that food, except curry, had not much taste but was high in calories; that there was not a single washing machine at the dorm, even though about a hundred students lived there; the inevitable difficulties my name caused: sometimes I was called Ginger, Ginny or just G, and once someone told me 'let me call you Mary;' certain feeling of prejudice towards Eastern Europeans, which was not without reason because most Hungarians living in Norwich were not working for the university but for a chicken factory – some would have seen the lack of influential Hungarian art historians on the international scene as a proper indicator of the level of teaching; that London was closer from Norwich than from Budapest but still far away.

The financial burden and scholarship hunt

It was clear from the very beginning that in my PhD program financial difficulties would be more challenging than the intellectual. I did not have family support that students usually have: I was raised by a single mother, was the first to graduate in the family and was on my own since I finished secondary school. The financial burden was real. I applied to all sorts of scholarships while I also had plans in my back pocket how to make money.

I trusted myself and my two degrees and with this mixture of confidence and naivety, and the £500 I could save previously, I jumped into a financial void. This much would have covered a three-month stay in Budapest, but the difference between Hungarian and

UK salaries was huge and it was barely enough for a month in the UK. I already postponed the program for a year and I knew that the conditions would never be perfect. £500 became my new unit, the minimum costs of a one-month stay in the UK. The AHRC maintenance grant for UK students was around £1000/month, I tried to manage on half.

One part of the confidence came from the fact that I was involved in an ongoing contemporary art project from which I occasionally earned a little sum. I was working for the cultural department of the Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs as an assistant curator touring an exhibition of almost eighty contemporary artists in Central Europe. On each occasion I had about a two-week job on site instructing the installation and the packing. But four cities, Zagreb, Bucharest, Prague and Warsaw, were over and only one more was left for 2006, Budapest.

A more realistic plan for making money was private tutoring in maths which had already helped me finance my art history degree. I thought I could build on this because maths skills are needed everywhere. I taught children of all ages, but mostly 14–18 year-olds, and sometimes university students and adults, too. So I wrote a good ad, had it checked by a fellow student, left out my name and posted it everywhere in the city. Throughout the year I had only four students who came for a few occasions. This meant £10 or £20 here and there, but this was all uncertain and unpredictable. I thought my advertising channel needed an upgrade, so I registered with an intermediary company in Cambridge so that they connect me with students but they only took the registration fee and could not find a single kid. In the meantime I apprehended that this is a different environment with different school system and there was not much demand for private teaching.

The next step was to have my degrees recognised in the UK. Both my degrees were the result of five-year master's courses before the Bologna system was introduced, however, UK authorities recognised them only as equivalent with UK Bachelor degrees with which I could continue my doctoral studies. Did not seem fair. When I told Elisabeth about it, she recalled her similar experiences when she was asked to prove that the Sorbonne is a university good enough to get a doctorate from. Then I went to obtain my Qualified Teacher Status which turned out to be expensive but useful. With QTS I could register with the Norfolk city government as a supply teacher, but again, I was never called.

In this first semester I spent more time at the UEA Career Office than in the School producing countless versions of my CV and cover letters and having them checked with an assistant there. I applied to all sorts of part-time jobs at and around the university and the library and I got none. There were also two restrictions: I was legally bound by my AHRC scholarship which did not allow to work more than 20 hours per week. And although I could work legally in the UK, I did not yet have a National Insurance Number (NIN) which was requested at most jobs but was issued only for those who already had a job. I registered with the Norwich Job Centre at Pottergate, but they could offer only low-profile jobs like cleaning for minimum wage. Once I saw a job there that paid £15/hour which was an exceptionally high rate. When a man called me back, I could barely understand his accent; he explained that this is an evening job, which was fine, and repeated the words bunny ears, bunny ears. It did not make sense at first and it took me a few seconds to understand what kind of job they wanted me to do while entertaining clients in bunny costume.

Then one day I ran into the Perfect Job Ad. It was a part-time job as assistant curator for the Norwich Castle Museum. I already had some experience in applied arts, the area they were looking for. My dream was to use my art history degree to work in a museum or gallery or as a research assistant. I did not take into consideration that the job market is a social construct. I applied with a proper cover letter checked by the Career Office then waited and waited and got no answer at all. It just did not feel right, so I decided to figure out what was the problem. Calls to the museum did not lead to any answer. I went further, did some search and got the number of the curator who needed that assistant. Norwich is, after all, not a big city. 'Why wasn't I invited for a job interview,' I asked, 'I met all the requirements that was needed for this position.' Finally, there was an answer: 'We wanted a local,' the voice said.

Once I got the AHRC grant for the fees, back in August, I could apply to Soros Open Society Supplement grant where those were eligible who already had some funding. There was an additional condition, it was only for post-socialist countries outside the EU. I was born and raised in the former Yugoslavia and still held a Serbian citizenship, so I was eligible as a Serbian. I had to get a new passport and for the application I also needed a student visa. One summer day I took my two passports and walked into the British Embassy in Budapest, all the way through the metal detector doors to an officer to whom I explained this absurd situation that while, as a Hungarian, I can be legally in the UK, I

am not able to do that as a Serbian, but I really need a visa for this grant. They did not care as long as I paid. When the amount arrived in the winter, my three units of money, it was life-saving. This Soros grant also put me on the illustrious (black)list of those privileged who were, at least partly, funded by the great philanthrope.

A bit earlier, I had a surreal incident at the university that reminded me of growing up in a socialist dictatorship. Early November I was running out of my little savings and decided to turn to the university for help. UEA offered a so-called Student Hardship Fund for those who found themselves in the worst financial scenario. This fund still exists, and according to their statement they 'feel very strongly that no student should be in the position of having to contemplate giving up their studies because of temporary financial hardship.' Mine was not temporary but I thought I would fit that description. I filled out the forms but the lady at the counter refused to accept my application. Instead, she led me into a room, closed the door and started yelling at me. 'You should not be here! Why did you come here? You should not expect the UK to fund your education!' and so on. As if we were still in the Cold War era, fifty years ago. I pointed out that as an EU citizen I have every right to be here but was told that this fund helps students, for example, who have enough funding but lose some of the money due to bad exchange rates.

It seemed that my maths knowledge would bring me more chance. With a little help, I got a temporary job as an associate tutor to Professor Graham Everest's MTH-2C14 course for the spring semester at the School of Mathematics. It was just for one course and three groups, and the payment was accordingly. The course was on ring theory in abstract algebra, so the preparation was very time-consuming. But at least I could solve the catch-22 and I got my NIN card.

There was one last grant for which I could apply: the Hungarian State Eötvös Scholarship. One of the controversies of this scholarship was that it was for research but, as I was warned by a colleague, it should not be used for studies toward a doctoral degree. So I did not mention the PhD. I won funding for three months to work on neuroarthistory with John at the UEA. It was for the 2006/07 academic year, but I claimed it earlier, and that saved my life for the rest of the spring semester. Around this time, good news came from the Chileans: the project would continue with three more exhibitions in Istanbul in spring, Athens in summer, and later in Stockholm. I had a new contract and could even save a little extra on accommodation.

Looking for funding required open eyes and constant alertness, it was like sport. I tried to keep my head above water, to survive the next day, the next week, the next month. The list of grants that I did not get is long; on average, I could win 1 in 5 grants, which, I was told, was not bad at all. Except that these were all one-time, small sums. John was always there to write me a reference letter. Also the school tried to help me in every way: each year I got small amounts from the David Brown Bursary, the Sarah Adeane or the Nicholas Green Studentships; these allowed me to go back to Norwich and have a few weeks of research in the library. At UEA, students were generally supported by their own families or their countries: a Swede received a grant from the Swedish government, a Greek from Greece, an American from the US, but no such support existed for Hungarians. However, these struggles did not happen only to me, the core problem was the lack of funding in humanities. Being on a very tight budget had effects not just on my private but on my professional life. From the mouldy rented room, cheap processed food and weight gain to giving up my German classes and the lack of social life and isolation. It was not easy to live constantly in survival mode while I was expected to produce creative research at the school.

The intellectual milieu at the School

The financial difficulties meant I could devote less time to my studies, however, the years I spent at the School had long lasting benefits on both personal and intellectual levels. Soon the School moved back to Foster's building and the Sainsbury Centre was a place in itself to discover. It was an open museum housing a university department; its exhibitions gave an unmediated, direct experience of art that was available at any time and this was stimulating. There were two major concepts I was introduced to at the School which could not have been understood without that collection; it also provided a theoretical framework for the majority of the research practices run there.

One of the concepts was world art, an appealing idea that extended the subject of art history and regarded it as a cultural practice from a global perspective and in a non-hierarchical way. The Sainsbury collection called attention to this concept in a very visual and unusual way: the mostly little, monochrome, white-grey figurines and objects from all around the world were displayed individually on dark grey postaments that were arranged in waving lines. No distinctions were made between pieces of modern art and objects that would have been otherwise found in ethnography museums. These were apparently very similar items

but they were not identical. And this small difference led me to ask what factors are behind the regional characteristics of these objects. Easier to ask than to answer. Hans Belting regarded this display as an 'aesthetic appropriation of objects as pure "form" or as proof of individual creativity on a universal scale' when he analysed the troubled relation of the notions world art and global art.⁴ John Mack examined not just the perspectives of world art but the pitfalls of such an approach when 'we ascend to a level of generalisation that verges on the simplistic.'⁵ And this is what I faced when I began to study the different types or modes of visual narration: there were also very similar examples in Early Christian art and in the art of India, but only on the level of form. I embraced the idea that visual narration is a global phenomenon and thus, with Gombrich and Onians behind me, had an inclination for comparing works of art from different regions and periods, but the concept of world art made me more careful in these interdisciplinary approaches, and alert that the historicity of an object is of primary importance and its original context should not be disregarded.

The other concept was neuroarthistory, an approach that in the examination and interpretation of artworks relies on recent discoveries of neuroscience. The term was introduced by John in the 2000s. Two key principles played a crucial role in his arguments, mirror neurons that would mean learning through imitation, and neuroplasticity that ensured uniqueness based on individual experiences. These two principles helped him get closer to the source of artistic creativity in general and certain artistic practices in particular. These principles were formulating at the time and we, students on his *Art and the Brain* course, were part of it. Kajsa Berg organized a reading group that I also attended. We were introduced to the work of Semir Zeki, Ramachandran, Vittorio Gallese, and others.

That time I did not share John's enthusiasm for neuroarthistory. Unlike many scholars in humanities, I was not against nor had reservations about applying science to art or using interdisciplinary or scientific methods in art history. I do believe in the relevance of science in studying art, just as relying on artistic creativity in scientific thinking. Fields of study are separated, but knowledge is not; and an equation in mathematics can be as beautiful as an artwork. I just did not see how neuroscience would help me understanding visual narration better when this topic in itself was huge and complicated. There was though

⁴ Belting 2013.

⁵ Also in this volume, see Chapter 51.

another, more personal reason for my refrain. I came from science and taking up art history was one of the few big decisions in my life. Going back to science seemed like returning to a path I wanted to leave. It was too early. John might have been disappointed but he never mentioned this to me.

Conversations with John

The most memorable moments with John as my supervisor were our conversations; these informal discussions took the pressure off but activated and challenged my knowledge on art and the world. I got some simple but profound advice from him, often in the form of a question.

‘What do you think about it?’ was the first and most demanding one. It was directed at my personal opinion and knowledge and urged me to form a core theoretical standpoint in formulating my arguments and finding my own voice. I did not get the depth of the question until a few years after I had finished my thesis. It was about what I can bring to the field. Sometimes I had no opinion at all. In my previous studies so much emphasis was given to the history of research, that the admiration of those who came before me overshadowed not just the past but also the present. It was not easy to change my mindset. I was trained to reliably use the already existing toolkit of art history and not to renew it or articulate personal interpretations. And to avoid the word ‘beautiful.’ If only we could ever achieve this objectivity! Although in my thesis I think I could not reach that level of individuality John was seeking for, his question still echoes in me every time I face a new problem.

John’s second advice was that if you have something to say, you can say it simply; or ‘less is often more’ as Lauren Golden put it.⁶ Before I came to the UK my writing style in Hungarian was embellished with unnecessarily long and complicated sentences, subordinate clauses, slowly unfolding narratives, and was more descriptive than argumentative. This was perhaps because the professional language there was greatly influenced by German aesthetics that prefers this kind of poetic complexity in written language. The simplicity John advised concerned the overall structure and rhetoric. I also learnt that a readable text is not necessarily a finished version, you have to create a flow in the text. ‘Push forward!’ was the third advice and it was about being intellectually more ambitious and braver and make my arguments stronger.

After John retired, he no longer had an office on campus, so our meetings took place in their art-filled house and flower garden. Elisabeth and John created a perfect atmosphere for such conversations and regularly invited students for dinner. For Sokratis, a fellow student, Unthank Road represented a personal oasis in a Norwich desert,⁷ and it was mine as well. When I first visited their home, I was shown a small painting depicting the healing of the blind man and I also learned the English name of the iconographic type the brazen serpent. Once John showed me their oldest book in the house and I had to guess the date when it was published: some lines were crossed out in red so I learnt that it was from the pre-reformation era.

John believed that childhood visual inputs are crucial for later life – just as he showed in the analysis of Gerard Caris’ art –, and he made me think deeply about my own visual experiences from my early childhood. My first two memories were about perspective foreshortening: first, looking at my feet and my little yellow plastic bunny further beyond on a hospital bed at around age two, and later two adults were holding my hand while we were walking at the seaside on a road which I saw narrowing and from a very low viewpoint. I also remember an episode when my visual memory was active: I was watching a TV show in which the contestant could not recognise a painting from a small detail but I knew that it is the tree trunk in Tivadar Csontváry-Kosztka’s *Lonely Cedar* that looks like a swan’s neck.

But it was my story about the wallpaper that really resonated with John’s ideas about early childhood influences. I was checked by an ophthalmologist at around age 4–5 because there was a chance I might have inherited some eye problems. Only a minor issue, a mild strabismus was found, that is, the two axes of my eyes were not aligned. I got a simple exercise to improve this condition and make my eye muscles stronger: I had to focus on my pointed index finger at arm’s length and keep the focus while trying to bring my finger closer to my nose. Once I was familiar with the exercise I started playing with focus and stereo vision to create optical illusions. I looked at the repeating pattern of the wallpaper in my room, which consisted of horizontal rows of squares rotated 45 degrees and set on edge; the squares were made of a grid of orange and beige flowers. I found out that if I focused in front of (or behind) the plane of the wall and moved the patterns in such a way that they match again, the patterns would emerge in clear form just one step smaller and closer and as

⁶ Also in this volume, see Chapter 43.

⁷ Also in this volume, see Chapter 48.



Figure 24.3. Dinner at Unthank Road: John Onians, Gyöngyvér Horváth, Sokratis Kioussis, Marco Musillo, Asao Sarukawa, Laura Williams, Helen Anderson. 2006. Photograph by Elisabeth de Bièvre.

three dimensional. I could do five or six of these steps bringing the pattern closer and closer. This is basically the technique one uses for autostereograms, except that there the repeated patterns are often slightly manipulated in order to perceive a hidden 3D image. The technique is called cross-eyed vergence.⁸ Another focusing game was dividing the view in front of me into parallel picture planes standing one behind the other and jumping my focus step by step; for example, when travelling on a train, I focused first on my hand, then on the book in my hand, then on the window, then the near landscape and the distant landscape. Sometimes I made it harder by adding solfège I learnt in music school, assigning a pitch for each layer and going up and down along the C major scale. ‘This is why you are an art historian today, because of these experiences,’ said John listening to my story. Entertaining myself this way must have been strange to outside viewers. I have to admit that when I, as an adult, told my mum about these focusing plays, she replied, surprised, that now she knew why I was staring at the wallpaper.

⁸ Only now, when I am writing this essay have I found out that in experimental psychology this is called the wallpaper-effect and was discovered by David Brewster in 1844 while also staring at wallpaper. See for more in Pinker 2009: 224–27 and Tyler 2014.

I had less frequent encounters with Elisabeth, but I remember a conversation when she dismissed the idea of centre and periphery, a core concept in world art, arguing that every place can be a centre, because it has something unique in it, its atmosphere, location, or urbanism. I agreed with the uniqueness but still, I had reservations because I came from the verge of Central Europe and from an ethnic minority group where exclusion was real. She must have had in mind the cities of the Netherlands the characteristics of which she could so well capture in her book. Elisabeth was an avid listener and a smart advisor, and I am also grateful that she reassured my less than standard approach to life, in and beyond academia.

There were funny moments, too. One postgraduate students dinner party (Figure 24.3) showed our cultural differences: the English were on time, I was some 10 minutes late and the Greek arrived 40 minutes after. John often had unusual questions: once he asked about the weirdest jobs we ever had, and shared his, when he was agitating people in bars for some social issues. Mine was gluing green felt to the bottom of chess pieces in a small carpentry workshop for three weeks during the summer when I was 14. Another evening we were all enjoying the wine around the big dining table and John was telling stories about their heyday in

Italy with Elisabeth but she thought it was too private to share. She just looked at him saying ‘daarling’ with a playful but very serious look – the tone is still in my ears – which also expressed the dynamics of their complex relationship. Elisabeth and John were always good company with their stories, personalities, authenticity and curiosity (being in good company was captured well by John’s selfie with Katy Bentall’s family (Figure 2.1), which imitates the atmosphere and composition of Lucian Freud’s *Large Interior*). And slowly, from Professor Onians and wife they became John and Elisabeth.

Different approaches to art history

I take the opportunity here to address some of the differences in attitude and in education of art history in these two countries as I have experienced it; to explain I need to set the scene retrospectively. Getting into an art history course in Hungary was a memorization marathon. At the time only one university was offering such a course and the entering exam was very competitive and also completely incoherent with the level of secondary education. Students not only had to recognise styles, periods, and artists and know the terminology in detail, but had to properly identify about four thousand works of art with full details from some fifteen books on the reading list, all in the pre-internet era. Only about 10% got an offer and it was a heroic achievement for each of us. It was the time when first private galleries opened in Hungary, the idea of white cube emerged, museums were wishing for blockbuster exhibitions and people began to call themselves ‘curators.’ It was the simple law of supply and demand of economics in effect. But the message was clear: being an art historian was a privilege and one must suffer for it. It did not make much sense and seemed exaggerated when compared to the elitism, nepotism, and exclusiveness that has ruled the profession. There were no job advertisements on the market for art historians just underpaid jobs for the few with excellent connections. We students had some concerns but were happy to be in.

For the next five years this Prussian-style memorizing marathon went to the extreme. Students were turned into living encyclopaedias with a virtual database embedded deep inside their brain. In the name of *Kunstwissenschaft* and connoisseurship, the course prepared everyone to be that old-styled art historian that came into fashion a hundred years earlier in Germany and Austria and for which there was no demand anymore. Therefore, a great emphasis was given to the history of research. The most difficult

courses were on Medieval art taught by the twin towers of the department who shared an office and hated each other – and that set the tone. There was also a compulsory intermediate level Latin exam. Obviously, there were advantages: the course gave us a really good foundation, an excellent historical sense and trained eyes, maybe not proper connoisseurs but good experts with an ability to see geographical and regional differences, to distinguish, for example a 15th-century Italian painting from a 16th-century German or a 17th-century Dutch, or draw the ground plan of the Hagia Sophia by heart.

But where did this rigorous study of art history lead us? We soon had to realise that this was not going to be revealed. We had memorized hundreds of Renaissance altarpieces with all the saints and their attributes, but had not learnt how such an altarpiece was commissioned, prepared, painted, installed, used and venerated, or how it was stolen, forged or entered a museum. The bigger context was missing. Despite the fact that Arnold Hauser was of a Hungarian origin and thus source of great pride, there was very little about social art history or cultural history. Neither structuralism, nor semiotics; psychoanalysis and feminism were considered as taboo words. My wallpaper experiments went in vain because there was no word about visual perception, the eye and the senses. No contemporary art, no museology, no cultural heritage studies, and no curatorial studies. Practical methodology did not go much further than iconography and it was possible to pass the course with top grades without reading Baxandall or WJT Mitchell.⁹

The major shortcoming of this program was, however, the lack of ambition. We weren’t prepared to win a fellowship at the Warburg Institute, be a curator for Ars Electronica or a professor at Rutgers. Our teachers did not do that either. We were prepared to do what other art historians in the country were already doing. This approach was laid down by one of the twin towers, Ernő Marosi, the naughty doyen of the discipline and the head of the department, in his 1999 study *How to Make an Art Historian*. The title was telling and the vehemence was intentional: we were not educated but made – the same word that is used in vulgar for making babies. It suggested that knowledge is imposed on students by elder generations, a small, privileged elite of the profession, and students should receive it passively. It is as if we were being made to fit into previously addressed forms, like moldings. Although I enjoyed almost every minute of the course, the

⁹ This training process later changed due to the introduction of the Bologna-system in 2005 and drop of interest.

thought that I am made by others, regardless of my own efforts, passion, merit – or entering test results –, was disturbing. ‘They probably won’t have to handle a Michelangelo sculpture or a painting by Leonardo da Vinci,’ he said, but, ‘despite the circumstances, someone can become a good art historian.’¹⁰ This was the reason that during those five years we never had a lecture on Leonardo or Michelangelo.

The doctoral education in the department went further in this direction with the same professors, same methodology, akin themes and more telephone books to memorize – but I wanted something new, experimental, and unpredictable which was worth the risk. A full-time doctoral program in Hungary is more like its American counterpart, consisting usually of 4+3 years of study: the first period is about taking part in compulsory taught courses and exams, in extensive coursework with a summative assessment closing this period; then there is a three-year time-slot for submitting the final thesis. However, for a research postgraduate student the PhD program in the UK is shorter, only 3+1 years, because the doctoral research is launched at the very beginning of the studies. I had already spent twice a five-year slot at a university so I thought that would be enough. It is also less controlled and less bureaucratic and did not assign mandatory elements except the upgrade and the viva. It is more about independent study towards the completion, so it was my own responsibility to get exposed to various experiences and ideas in form of books, courses, conversations, conferences, or exhibitions. I got personalised tutoring and there was John for discussions.

One specific episode may draw a sharp contrast in the attitudes of these two communities: what was a disadvantage in Hungary became my strength in the UK. Once I presented the same material in Norwich and Budapest, a formative chapter on Ovid’s illustrations which included some statistics. At UEA, both my supervisors saw a possibility in it and encouraged me to experiment with paths less travelled: ‘Do it because no one else will do that.’ Instead in Budapest the response was: ‘Are you crazy? This is not art history.’

There was, however, a crucial phase between my masters in Hungary and the PhD in the UK, a gap that must be bridged and I was left to do it alone. I had to reach the level of knowledge English students might already have had from their previous education: I had to learn how to write university applications, scholarship applications, research plans, conference abstracts

and write in different genres from art criticism to conference presentations and scholarly articles, all in English. I got zero support and mentoring from my former professors, not even a good piece of advice, except for signing a few reference letters that I wrote for myself – which was not uncommon in my field.

My second year

My second year at UEA started with absence: I began teaching mathematics full-time at the Heartsease High School in Norwich on a four-month contract; it was so much work that I rarely showed up at UEA during the semester. By the end of my first year it was clear that I couldn’t go on with random funding and I needed a more stable source of money. I ran out of options so I had to overcome my aversion and turn to something I have always tried to avoid, being a maths teacher in a school. So in spring 2006 I began to apply for fixed-term maths teacher positions, got a few interviews and was hired for four months from September. In the summer I had to move out from Mary Chapman Court and find a rented room in a traditional detached house at the end of Alexandra Road, which I shared with four other students. My short summer holiday was about preparing myself for teaching: going through the National Curriculum, getting to know more about the school system and the grading system, learning what Key Stages meant and what level of knowledge were attached to these stages; I figured out that maths curriculums can be organized very differently: in the UK it was circular as opposed to the linear way in Hungary.

It was the hardest 76 working days of my life and there was none after when I did not want to quit. I was teaching teenagers aged 13–16, below the age range I used to teach. I got four classes, three of the usual size and one, to my surprise, of only nine kids and there was also Nicky, a teaching assistant. It turned out that this group had special educational needs, the fact I was not shared with and obviously not prepared to handle. Apart from teenagers problems, there were all sorts of issues including learning disabilities, developmental delay, ADHD, autism, uncontrolled emotions and anxiety disorder. I still remember little Luke who, when he got angry, slammed the door and ran out to the meadow next to the school. Another time a girl hit the glass with her fist and when I apologized to the repairman, he said ‘It’s my third time this week.’

The other three groups were also challenging. I tried different teaching strategies and took advantage of all the fancy interactive digital technologies. It was often

¹⁰ Marosi 1999: 51.

less about maths and more about giving a supervision and finding an activity to engage them. I used all kinds of tricks to get and keep their attention while we prepared for a GCSE, but it didn't always work out. I am not good at controlling people, so I ran out of options that the behavioural management book offered after two weeks. I had to be creative: sometimes I used different learning styles, sometimes I learnt to swear in English and in exchange they would learn some maths concepts and do the exercises. There were also tough situations: some kids repeatedly hissed from the last row, 'fucken foreign bitch,' and that was the point I felt I need to take action. I learnt that in that context only the word 'foreign' was problematic and was suggested to file a report because it was racial. I did not. I was definitely not the best match for this job; teaching in a college would have worked better but that time I did not exactly see my possibilities.

From January 2007 I was on track: my four-month salary and an unexpected tax return gave me a budget to live on until summer. It was a calm and productive period, finally I had had enough time to prepare for my upgrade. I read many of John's papers when I was working on the index for his *Art, Culture and Nature* volume for Pindar Press; my favourites were his argument on the source of linear perspective in Quattrocento painting in Florence and his later Tate interview. Taking advantage of the relative proximity of London, I used all the benefits the city could offer: the newly refurbished British Library, the labyrinths of the Courtauld Institute, but mostly the cosy Warburg Institute. Because of the tight budget I carefully planned all the trips weeks before to secure the early bird tickets for the National Express.

My typical one-day trip started off at the Norwich bus station around 7am, arriving to London Victoria Coach Station around 11am depending on the traffic. If the weather permitted, I walked to the Warburg Institute following a 4km route through The Mall, Trafalgar Square and the Tottenham Court Road; it was a nice walk after sitting for hours. Sometimes I took a bus but never the subway – I only had daily bus tickets – and enjoyed the view from the upper front seat of a double-decker. I often popped into a museum or gallery, the Institute of Contemporary Art on The Mall, The National Gallery on Trafalgar Square, walked through The British Museum, entering at the main gate and leaving through the back door, or took a small detour to the V&A or the Barbican. I enjoyed the luxury of accessibility without the urge to look for everything, just guided by my curiosity, senses and taste. I particularly liked the National Gallery's

collection, the tiny perfect Jan Van Eyck's *Arnolfini couple*, Gentile Bellini's beautifully rigorous *Doge Loredan*, the staircase to nowhere in Pontormo's *Story of Joseph*, or Crivelli's visual puns like the cucumber placed between the viewers' and the picture's reality in his *Annunciation*. The afternoon was devoted to research: reading, taking notes, photocopying and searching the Photographic Collection. I usually came Tuesdays or Thursdays, when the Institute had extended hours. At closing, I walked back to Victoria Coach Station but now on a different route, often via the busy Oxford Street or the touristy Piccadilly Circus, to catch the last 9:30pm bus to Norwich which arrived around 1am. I had another 15-minute walk across the empty, foggy and dimly lit streets of the city centre to reach the end of Alexandra Rd. Once I stayed for a week in London at Isabelle's place while she was away and was sleeping in her bed which she generously let me have – but we still hadn't met.

By June I was ready for the upgrade: I handed in one full chapter and the outlines of another two, a draft introduction, table of contents, a full bibliography, the appendix and the image database. I got two pairs of expert eyes, John Mitchell and Sandy Heslop, and a constructive commentary on how to contextualize my position, push further my argument and improve my conclusion. The upgrade closed a period of study. I ran out of my money and it seemed I depleted all the options: I was afraid to sign another one-year lease without seeing how I could afford it. I also had a medical problem that needed a treatment. I travelled home and two days later I had a surgery and later another one. Some of my stuff stayed in my former rental, some in my supervisor's office till early December when I could return.

Studying from a distance

Things changed: I was still present in Norwich but I was just not there anymore. I travelled back few times a year, these were short but intensive periods of research. I began to prepare for a life after JSTOR and was systematically collecting scholarly literature on the few topics I wanted to publish in the future. I downloaded masses of articles and photographed entire books that were otherwise not available. With the thesis, I usually sent a draft of a new chapter a week before my arrival to my supervisors then we would discuss it in person. On the way to Norwich I often stopped in London for a day or two in the Warburg or to visit exhibitions of which the most memorable was *The Sacred Made Real* in the National Gallery; on some occasions I timed the trip around conferences and gave

a talk in Manchester, Birmingham, and in London. In Norwich I stayed in a tiny room at Brenda's house or with Elisabeth and John.

In 2008 I got a chance to bring my research topic forward and introduce to the School: I organized a conference *Visual Aspects of Narrativity, Narrative Aspects of Visuality* with international speakers and it was a good occasion to give and receive feedback from fellow researchers.¹¹ I got a lot of professional help from the postgraduate community and other members of the school. The same year I applied and got an eight-month extension from AHRC due to medical and other issues; my new deadline was end of June 2010. Time moved quickly and this period was more about hard work than exploration. John was off to the US for a year and my second supervisor was on maternity leave, so I got Sandy as interim supervisor. In the meantime, I took advantage of some professional opportunities: I curated a section of the Biennial of Illustration in Zagreb introducing ten young Hungarian illustrators, then showed this exhibition in Helsinki. In 2009 I took up an assistant professor position at the Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design in Budapest, first part-time then full-time, teaching art history from late Roman to contemporary art, some introductory courses and one on the methodology of art history. I had to build courses from scratch, prepare various topics for discussions and edit hundreds of images for ppt presentations. I should have published papers but teaching left no time for it.

Meanwhile, chapter by chapter, I was working the way up to a dissertation. I was writing all the time: in the evenings, during the nights, over the weekends, in exam periods, in school breaks, and during holidays. All I remember from these months is sleep-deprivation; I was exhausted. The writing up period demanded energy, endurance and focus; I should have learnt to leave behind the shadow of all the professionals who came before me and be brave enough to create my own version of the story I wanted to present – but this freedom only came years later. There was always the fear that someone else had already written it all and better than I could. This actually happened: in the last phase I had to rewrite a chapter because of a paper which had seemed insignificant and had been only mentioned in a footnote. I had to let go of some ideas due to lack of time, one of which was the aspect offered by world art. After a tumultuous period, and a little late, I finally handed in my thesis. I had no time for a PhD burnout because love came to my life and

was meant to stay. For a while I lived my life in the Budapest-Norwich-Glasgow triangle.

Viva in the UK is like a papal election: the student and the examiners are locked behind closed doors and nobody can leave before the judgement is made about the thesis. This examination is done discreetly as opposed to Hungary, where defending a thesis is a public event, more like a theatre performance or a rhetorical act, where first the opponents then the candidate read out loudly their previously written opinions and response. In December 2010 I spent about two and a half hours with professors David Peters Corbett and Laura Jacobus, my examiners, who asked me to explain, justify and defend all the definitions, concepts and ideas in my thesis, paragraph by paragraph and chapter by chapter. It all went smoothly. I took it as a last chance to officially get an honest and relevant criticism on my work. Instead of smoke there was champagne when we emerged from the room and in the evening Elisabeth and John took me to a fancy restaurant on St Giles street to celebrate our success.

John and Elisabeth

Looking back, the story of my PhD with John and Elisabeth strangely coincided with that short period of time in history when both Hungary and the United Kingdom were part of the European Union. I met John first in 2003, the year Hungary decided to join the EU and I got accepted to UEA when it became a member. The last time I was in the UK was in 2016, just before the country voted for Brexit. I was invited to present a talk in *The Eye's Mind. Visual Imagination, Neuroscience and the Humanities* conference at the Sainsbury Centre. Next morning I was sitting at Unthank Road at the big dining table with Elisabeth, John, Charles, and Isabelle discussing politics and the possible aftermath of the Brexit referendum – I agreed with Charles that it would be a disaster.

I regret that apart from this conference and the special issue that followed it in the journal *Cortex* in 2018, in which we both published, I have never had a chance to work with John on a project: he was into neuroarthistory and I was into visual narratives, but the two did not cross roads until I got in close contact with neurology in practice because of my malfunctioning body. Since then I have found quite a few concepts in neuroscience which help me giving better explanations on how – consciously or unconsciously – visual narration works in humans and that would add to or even close century-old debates.

¹¹ The Seventh Annual World Art Postgraduate Symposium on 24 May 2008, viewed 8 Aug 2024 <<https://artist.net/archive/30415>>.



Figure 24.4. Elisabeth de Bièvre lecturing at ELTE University in Budapest, 2017. Photograph by Gyöngyvér Horváth.



Figure 24.5. Poster for Elisabeth de Bièvre's public lecture *Dutch Art and the Urban Subconscious. The Netherlands 1200-1700* at ELTE University, Budapest, 21 September 2017.

When Elisabeth and John visited me in Budapest in September 2017 they both had newly published books, so I organized public lectures and book launches to introduce their work to the art community. Elisabeth spoke at the Department of Dutch Studies at ELTE University (Figure 24.4 and 24.5) and John at The Cultural Heritage Studies program at CEU (Figure 24.6 and 24.7). Both lectures embarked on a challenging journey by asking questions that are fundamental to the history of art since the very beginning, that is, why does art change? These why-questions are the hardest ones. I admire their professional work because they are giving smart and surprising explanations with vision and courage. Even art history can be boring if there is no vision behind the historical facts. In their interpretation the history of art becomes exciting again.

Since we met, John has witnessed all kinds of storms in my life and always had a good piece of advice to encourage me and elevate my spirit. There was this fundamental trust from both him and Elisabeth

and I tried to live up to it. Being in the UK was an intensive period of my life that carried both positive and negative experiences; these challenges now form an important part of my identity. Many of the nice memories are related to them: they guided me with competence through the long journey from being a student to becoming an academic and I cherish these memories just as the books they gave me. My family was dysfunctional on many levels, Elisabeth and John as a couple showed me an example how to maintain a long, loving, healthy and fulfilling relationship – to have a strong alliance but still be individuals. I am grateful that they welcomed my partner so kindly and naturally.

There are stories behind every academic work that we rarely hear about. Personal experiences, motivations and struggles mostly remain hidden because not considered publishable. I was hesitant over this type of writing and had to overcome my aversion to tell personal stories; after all, it won't be less mine if I share it. My experience in the UK and the inspiration of



Figure 24.6. John Onians' lecture at CEU Budapest, 2017. Photograph by Gyöngyvér Horváth.



The Cultural Heritage Studies Program of Central European University cordially invites you to the public lecture and book launch of

European Art. A Neuroarthistory

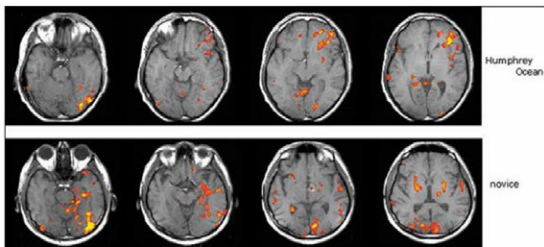
by

John Onians

Emeritus Professor, School of Art History and World Art Studies, University of East Anglia, Norwich

at 17:30 on Monday, September 18, 2017

in Gellner Room (103), CEU, 9 Nádor Street, Budapest.



Each of the new assumptions adopted by successive generations of art historians, has illuminated some previously under-appreciated aspect of the production and consumption of art. Often those assumptions have included an explicit acknowledgement of the relevance of the principles governing the operation of the brain. Sometimes acknowledgement of such principles has only been implicit, as in earlier Positivist analyses of 'influence' or the more recent identification of recurrent patterns of mental behaviour by Freudians, Structuralists and Post-Structuralists. However, now that the structure of the brain and the principles governing its operation have been revealed with a new clarity by the latest technologies, all those earlier assumptions are in need of reassessment. That is what this lecture offers for challenge and discussion.



John Onians taught at the University of East Anglia from 1971 to 2007 after study at the University of Cambridge and at the Courtauld and Warburg Institutes, London. His interests range from the close analysis of Italian Renaissance Architecture and Greek and Roman Art to experimentation with broad approaches to art as a worldwide phenomenon. His books include *Bearers of Meaning. The Classical Orders in Antiquity, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (1988) and *Classical Art and the Cultures of Greece and Rome* (1999). His most recent book, *European Art. A Neuroarthistory* published in 2016 by Yale University Press celebrates the value of recent neuroscientific discoveries as tools for art-historical analysis through case studies ranging across the whole history of European art.

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Elisabeth and John's personality and work have changed my point of view, which was not necessarily regarded as an advantage back home; the distance between cultures is not a question of geography. I appreciate the twist that my research into visual storytelling ended up as a written story about an important phase of my life – but this story is interwoven with amazing people who became an essential part of the story of my PhD.

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Figure 24.7. Poster for John Onians' public lecture *European Art. A Neuroarthistory* at CEU, Budapest, 18 September 2017.

25.

Elisabeth de Bièvre

Maura Kehoe Collins

Dearest Elisabeth, Happy Birthday! What a surprise and great joy to receive an invitation to participate in a Festschrift on the occasion of your 80th. How can it be? You are forever imprinted on my mind as the beautiful and timeless woman I met in the autumn of 1982, half a lifetime ago at Mount Holyoke College. Regrettably I was never your student – not in a classroom setting anyway – so my submission is not scholarly since academia was not my path. Instead, I offer a reflection on a conversation we had over 40 years ago. Even if I did not fully understand what you were saying at the time, its meaning has unfolded over the years and subtly shaped my life and choices since. I am eternally grateful for your guidance and hold the memory dear.

It is no secret that I was a bit of a lost soul at Mt Holyoke. Sometimes I wonder what my return to college for senior year after 14 months in China would have been like had I not the good fortune to be introduced to the Onians Family by Wendy Watson. You needed childcare and I needed connection. Becoming the childminder for Isabelle and Charles was simply the best thing that could have happened to me. In addition to watching over the children while you and John travelled, you also included me in family Sunday luncheons when you were in town. It was on one of those visits that we wound up talking about *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Unbeknownst to me, I had stumbled upon an essential work of first-wave feminism for my extra-curricular reading! OK, not a complete surprise at Mt Holyoke, but still, not light reading. At that time in my life I found it so disturbing I must have spoken to you about it. And there, sitting on the floor in a sun dappled room at Professor Senechal's house, you enlightened me to the challenges women face if they chose to have a family and yet still wish to pursue meaningful work of their own.

Our discussion 40 years ago remains the central question in the lives of women to this day, long after the second and third waves of feminism have come and gone, and well into the 21st century. The patriarchy is a strong opposing force, but it was a woman who

fired me when I was 4 months pregnant, throwing up but showing up for work every day in 1991. She said I would no longer be reliable, that my child would come first. She got that right, but nobody ever said that to a man. Lucky for me I come from entrepreneurial DNA, plus had strong role models in women like you, women who kept their career as a permanent and personal calling no matter where their partner's work would take them, or how many children they would have. It is difficult but rewarding, a completely singular path. We have to make it up as we go along. You may not have realized that other, younger women were watching your ways? I know your ideas and observations about how climate, culture, and commerce influence the arts of a region have impacted the work of your closest colleagues. Seeing it all come together in your exceptional publication *Dutch Art and Urban Cultures 1200–1700* was such an achievement for you, and so inspiring for me and I am sure many other working mothers and academics. It is no small victory to produce such an important piece of scholarship while also managing a household, maintaining a marriage, and raising children. You always encouraged me, but never led me down the garden path that it would be easy. Thankfully we both have supportive partners – but without our conversations maybe I would not have made the right choices?

Elisabeth, I consider myself blessed to have met you as a fledgling 21-year old, on the brink of graduating into the world with no idea what I would do with my life. Your friendship and perspective about everything was a revelation. Your approach to art history and life were completely original and helped me feel less crazy. I'll never forget when you brought artichokes to my dorm room, just for their beauty, I had no way to cook them. Simple gestures that left a lifelong impression. It has been too many years between visits, but now that my children are adults, my business is still busy but manageable, the new house is built and a worldwide pandemic winds down, I can only hope we will have the opportunity to visit again soon. Until then I send you my thanks, lots of love, and best wishes for a spectacular birthday celebration!

26.

Woman Descending the Staircase: Synchronicity, chance and mystery

Jetty Keuning and Jan Eric Visser

On Friday, 10 March 2017 Elisabeth de Bièvre descended the staircase at GroundWork Gallery in King's Lynn and was noticed by Dutch sculptor Jan Eric Visser. They both attended the opening of a solo exhibition of herman de vries¹ titled 'On the Stony Path.' John Onians joined them and they had a wonderful conversation. This first meeting together with some follow up emails prompted Elisabeth to invite Jan Eric and Jetty to come over to Bomarzo, where Elisabeth and John spent part of spring and early summer. Unfortunately, Jan Eric and Jetty could not make it. This first meeting and following correspondence also induced Jan Eric to ask Elisabeth to write a text about his oeuvre of 30 years for a new monograph to be published by Verbeke Foundation later that year. Elisabeth instantly accepted.

Woman Descending the Staircase (1965)² is the title of a famous photo painting of German artist Gerhard Richter (Figure 26.1). The image on canvas is hovering between reality and illusion as Richter slightly blurred the paint with a dry brush. It reminds Jan Eric of the magic nature of his chance encounter with Elisabeth and John as described above, but was it mere chance? Many people went by those stairs that late afternoon. Why did he notice Elisabeth in particular? Jan Eric moved between floors. Why was he at the foot of the stairs when she came down? What incited him to invite Elisabeth to write a text about his oeuvre that she had not yet seen in real life? Was it indeed chance (so often referred to by herman de vries), perhaps synchronicity or something else?

The concept of synchronicity may be used to describe meaningful coincidences that lack a causal connection. It was introduced by analytical psychologist Carl G. Jung between 1928 and 1930 as a principle of explanation to provide meaningful understanding of acausal events. The concept makes perfect sense to Visser who learned



Figure 26.1. Gerhard Richter, *Frau die Treppe herabgehend* (*Woman Descending the Staircase*), 1965. Oil on canvas, 128x19cm. Chicago Art Institute, Roy J. and Frances R. Friedman Endowment, gift of Lannan Foundation. Reference Number 1997.176. © Gerhard Richter 2023 (17042023).

about synchronicity for the first time after he visited the International Solid Waste Association's World Congress in 2017 in Amsterdam. On his way to the congress hall he studied the list of 600 participants and was struck by the name of a German environmental engineer Oliver Heidrich teaching at Newcastle University. The first person he met at the congress was

¹ herman de vries typically stylizes his name and writes his poetry in lower case to avoid hierarchy.

² Gerhard Richter, *Frau die Treppe herabgehend*, 1965. Chicago Art Institute. Viewed on 14 April 2023, <<https://www.artic.edu/artworks/147003/woman-descending-the-staircase-frau-die-treppe-herabgehend>>.

the same German scientist who was going to present an innovative recycling material the following day. The extraordinary product named Aquadyne turned out to be a perfect material for outdoor sculptures. After the congress they kept in touch and Visser was invited to explore the material artistically, which led to several (permanent) outdoor sculptures in Rotterdam and Gorinchem.

The concept of synchronicity however is also a matter of dispute. Researchers have had difficulty in providing empirical evidence of its operation. Thus, it has often been discarded as pseudoscience largely depending on human interpretation. To provide validation Jung liked to refer to Chinese philosophical writings like *I Ching*: ‘the East bases much of its science on this irregularity and considers coincidences as the reliable basis of the world rather than causality.’³ Causal connections form the basis of Western worldviews. Connections that lack causal reasoning are looked upon as chance, which is more of an objective principle.

It so happens that chance is a major theme in the work of Dutch artist herman de vries, who was trained as a horticulturalist and used to work as a natural scientist. The artist often showcases objects from nature such as grasses, stones, soils, leaves, rosebuds without changing or manipulating them, embracing their mere presence. He recognizes randomness as one of the formative principles of the natural world next to change. He also acknowledges the beauty thereof: ‘the world is chance. it changes me every day. my chance is my poetry.’⁴

As an artist Jan Eric Visser also fully embraces chance. He also expresses an urge for meaning however: ‘The inevitability of the all-present life cycle (birth, life, death) evokes in me a desire for explanation. It is as if the answer/the essence is wordlessly enclosed within the “language” of the material/matter.’⁵ At the same time, the artist acknowledges human limitation: looking for causal connections to understand the omnipresent life cycle does not make any sense. His oeuvre arises from this realization of human limitation, transforming his personal inorganic waste items into sculpture. (Figure 26.2.) Thus, he showcases the poetry of matter: its presence, its transformation and its mystery.

Dear Elisabeth and John, thank you for your presence in this world and being at the right time at the right place.



Figure 26.2. Jan Eric Visser, *Untitled*, 2017. Newspaper, reused printer paper, inorganic household waste, votive candle residue, 124x74x76cm (including crate of retrieved wood as a pedestal). Photograph by W. Vermaase. Private collection.

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³ Jung 1984: 44.

⁴ Final stanza of *my poetry is the world*, poem written by herman de vries in 1972 as published in Huizing and de Boer 2015: 13.

⁵ van der Beek 1995: 1.

On John Onians, with thanks

Matthew MacKisack

One of the key principles of John Onians's 'neuroarthistory' is the rejection of the belief, commonly held among traditional art historians as he sees it, that words are the primary tools of the mind, language the currency of thought. Not so, says John. What underlies thought, the medium in which thoughts are formed, is the nervous system. It is the human brain and its capacities that decide how art is made, and in order to understand art-making one needs to appreciate that art-makers are biological organisms before they are language-users, and that culture is directly tethered to that biology, not something that floats free, cloud-like. Social or political explanations don't cut it either, for the same reason: what underpins social behaviour, the relationships between people, is their neurology.

The prehistoric cave paintings of Chauvet make a neat case study for this approach. The 'artists' didn't have language, there are no historical records, and their social arrangements can be guessed at, at best. The only way we can understand how and why those paintings of myriad animals were made, in John's view, is by recognising that those people – as well as every one of their fellow animals – are essentially nervous systems, shaped by the individual's own unique history, and in a real, biological relationship with their environment.

Those animals, John emphasizes, were vitally important to the people who drew them, as both life-threatening adversaries and livelihoods. The stimulus of watching the animals, tracking them, intensely focusing on them, would have generated a neurochemical reaction – a hit of dopamine. The early humans would have experienced a similar reward when they found themselves, consumed by thoughts of the animals, making them visible again, via lines and marks, on the cave wall. Although without conscious intention, making the drawings in effect re-enacted the experience of looking.

I am excusing through John's approach and an example of its application because, in the context of this book, of celebrating the work alongside the person, something of a contradiction arises: that although John's neuroarthistory sets itself against

both sociopolitical and language-based approaches, it is exactly his words and his sociality – his gregarious encouragement and support – that define him as a colleague. So the brief account of my relationship with John that follows should also serve as a playful challenge to his art-historical approach, by someone who is very much a co-conspirator.

In 2014, quite soon after I had finished my PhD, I saw an ad for a research fellowship at University of Exeter Medical School, working with neurologists, a philosopher, an artist, and John, on the history of the scientific study of imagination. I remember the thrill of possibility as I read through the ad. This was perfect, exactly what my PhD had led to. And to work with luminaries like John Onians – although in Goldsmiths Art department, where I had come from, his name was associated with a kind of scientism in art history, and because 'science' *tout court* was seen to collude in social and economic oppression, we were expected to take a stance against it.

But I emailed John, as the ad invited me to, who suggested we speak on the phone. As we spoke, he was – to my Goldsmiths-wearied surprise – excited by and interested in what I was doing. I said, needlessly self-deprecating, that although I include psychology in my work, 'I don't do the experiments myself.' 'Of course not, neither do I,' John said, cutting through it, before adding, 'That's what scientists are for.' I ended the phone call enthused, as I always would after talking to John – some of which must have come across in the interview, since a few weeks later, I got the job.

The research group – philosopher Fiona Macpherson, artist Susan Aldworth, John and I – would travel down to join the Exeter-based members, neurologists Adam Zeman and Crawford Winlove. For my part, I found the train journeys back to London, where it seemed we would talk for the whole journey, speeding through the darkness, while the rest of the carriage dozed, almost as rewarding as the meetings themselves.

That year concluded with a conference at the University of East Anglia. John proudly gave delegates

tours of the Sainsbury Centre. After the conference dinner he delivered a speech which included the story of him having his PhD examined by Anthony Blunt, accompanied by his supervisor, Ernst Gombrich. It was 1968, and Czechoslovakia had just been invaded. John was asked to find a radio ('Onians, fetch a radio,' in a deft Viennese accent) to hear the latest news announcement. But when he returned with one, somehow, neither of the two former intelligence operatives – Blunt for the KGB, Gombrich monitoring German broadcasts for the British – could operate it.

We have met regularly since that conference at UEA, most often in London, at the British Library. We discovered a shared proclivity for a cake with our coffee, while discussing what each other had read or written. John would always want to know the status of the field, of thinking about art with science, want to know who is working on this kind of thing. We often voiced frustrations with the way that disciplines, both between each other and among themselves, put up arbitrary barriers and defended themselves from supposed contamination. I would update him on my children (my son was born just as I had begun the Exeter fellowship); I remember expressing my defeated realisation that what you tell them makes absolutely no difference, it's how you are, your being in the world, that they soak up – which of course John leapt upon in agreement, as a case in point.

John introduced me to people, like the formidable Francois Quiviger of the Warburg Institute (who talked about the role of imagination in Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*), wrote references for funding proposals, and put me forward for projects. John had taken a professorship in China, and when funding came available for a conference and conference proceedings there, he and Elisabeth suggested my name as editor. Very soon I was at the Chinese embassy getting a visa, soon after that I was on a plane to Hangzhou, and then in the wood-paneled Gombrich Memorial Library of China Academy of Art.

I began editing the conference texts on return to London. Reading John's, there was that contradiction: the disavowal of language as motivation and medium of human life, and yet the propulsive delivery, an intellectual adventure in an almost conversational mode, John's voice ringing through it. That doesn't, of course, discredit his argument, and I'm half-serious in even claiming there is a contradiction. But what is serious is the effect his words and companionship have had. 'You do have an empire,' his email reassured me, after a recent career-wobble, 'even if it feels as if you are its only citizen! I would love to talk about where you are now. So do give me a call, almost any time other than this evening – or tell me when I should call you.' I will be sure to do so.

Gillian Malpass

I met John for the first time in the late 1990s. I don't remember precisely when or precisely where, but it almost certainly wouldn't have been in my office at Yale University Press in London, which he would probably, at that point, have refused to enter. Several years before, Yale (though not I) had turned down his book *Bearers of Meaning: The Classical Orders in Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance*. It had been published instead by Princeton University Press, in 1990, and had gone on to win both acclaim and the Sir Bannister Fletcher prize. At our initial meeting, John was what might be described as politely prickly: 'Hah! So much for Yale's judgement,' were his words – or something to that effect... That was the single awkward moment in the whole of our subsequent, happy (for me) collaboration

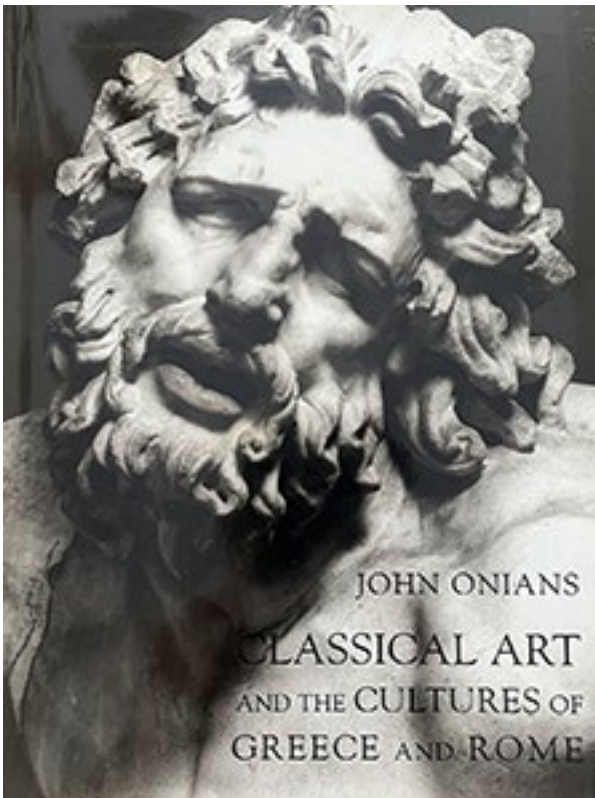


Figure 28.1. *Classical Art and the Cultures of Greece and Rome*, 1999. Book cover. London and New Haven: Yale University Press.

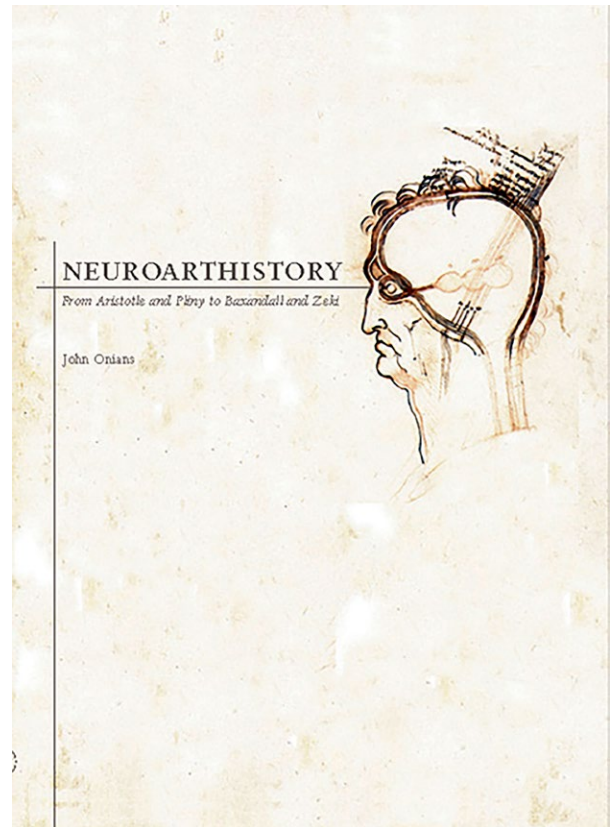


Figure 28.2. *Neuroarthistory: From Aristotle and Pliny to Baxandall and Zeki*, 2007. Book cover. New Haven: Yale University Press.

and friendship. Although I sometimes felt overawed by the astonishing range of John's intellect, his brilliance always went hand in hand with great kindness, wit and a good supply of humorous anecdotes. Together, between our tricky first encounter and 2016, we published at Yale three of his books – *Classical Art and the Cultures of Greece and Rome* (1999, Figure 28.1), *Neuroarthistory: From Aristotle and Pliny to Baxandall and Zeki* (2007, Figure 28.2) and *European Art: A Neuroarthistory* (2016, Figure 28.3), the last two forming a lucid introduction to and account of the development of neuroarthistory, John's personal 'discovery', and establishing the fundamental contribution that neuroscience has made to the history of art.

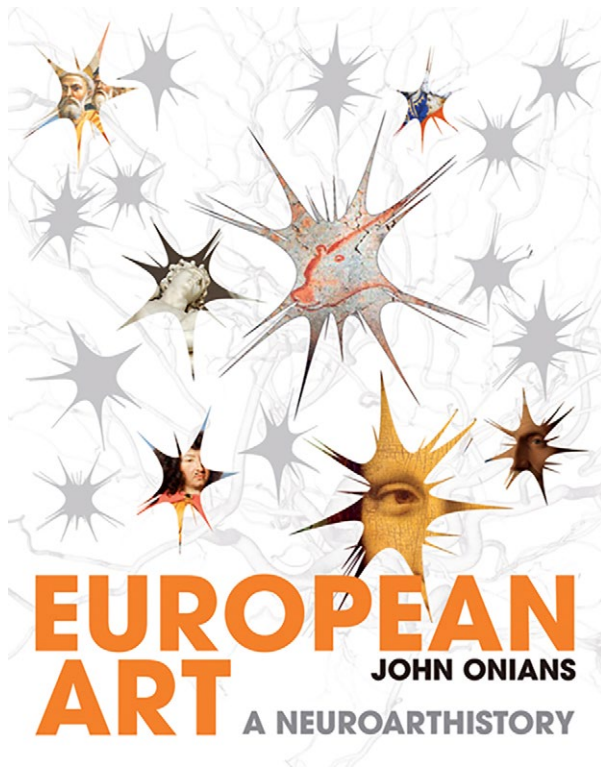


Figure 28.3. *European Art: a Neuroarthistory*, 2016. Book cover. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Through John, I was fortunate enough to meet Elisabeth, by whose warmth and vitality I was immediately struck. In 2009, we began discussing the publication of *Dutch Art and Urban Cultures, 1200–1700*. This ambitious book appeared in 2015 (Figure 28.4). Like John, Elisabeth is a bold and original thinker, not afraid to challenge the accepted view or to be controversial. The excellent reviews of the book recognised the novelty and force of her argument that Dutch art cannot properly be understood without reference to the geographical origins of the different centres and their consequent social and economic histories. We celebrated the book’s arrival with a wonderful party at John Sandoe Books.

I was honoured and proud to be the publisher of Elisabeth’s and John’s enlightened and independently minded books; even more special was to have been befriended by this stimulating, convivial and humane couple.

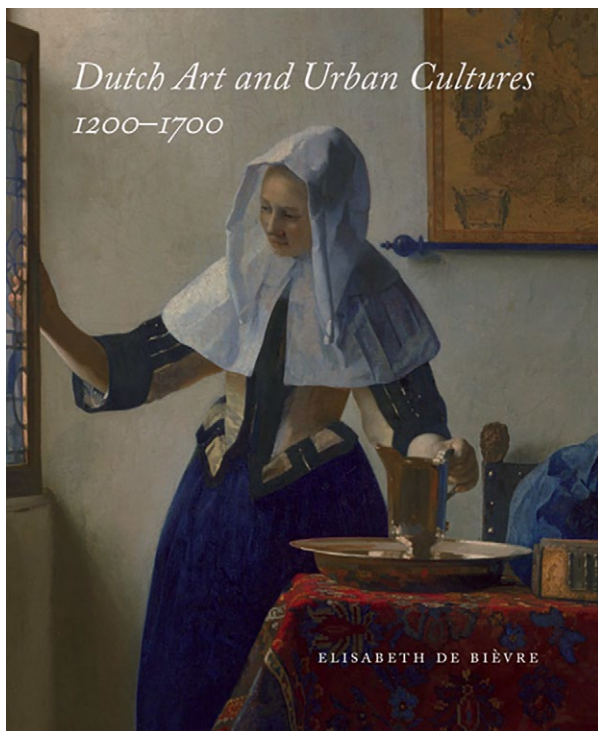


Figure 28.4. *Dutch Art and Urban Cultures, 1200–1700*, 2015. Book cover. New Haven: Yale University Press.

29. Elisabeth and John

Marie-Anne van der Marck

September 1961: ik begon aan een studie kunstgeschiedenis in Utrecht en trof daar Elisabeth de Bièvre. Zij kritisch, ik kritisch, het klikte. Drie jaar later was ik alweer weg: getrouwd, met Hein Coebergh. Elisabeth deed waarvoor ze was gekomen, zij behaalde haar doctoraal. Gelukkig zocht ze ons op. Mijn studie mocht dan zijn afgebroken, onze vriendschap hield stand. Kort hierop, in Rome, vond zij John Onians die binnen de kortste keren Nederlands sprak, bravo.

Hoe vaak hebben wij sindsdien niet samen aan tafel gezeten – in Aerdenhout, in Utrecht, in Wassenaar, in Amsterdam, in Swalmen, in Norwich, in Den Haag, in Londen, in Rome, in Bomarzo, in Leiden... Wat wij deelden was niet alleen brood en wijn, het was ook verbazing, vaak was het lachen en nog vaker empathie. Bij mijn promotie in de literatuurwetenschap, in 2012, was John een van de opponenten. Hij speelde die rol alsof we samen aan tafel zaten.

30. The Groves of Norwich – 43 Grove Terrace

Stefan Muthesius

For Elisabeth de Bièvre and John Onians

‘Groves of academe,’ Plato, Horace...: for the Classical and humanist scholars John and Elisabeth there is no need to provide an introduction. But what we are normally not aware of is the influence which the cherished saying had on the formation of our towns in the nineteenth century—and that includes our very own residences. To begin with it is the sylvan lure of the first word that will be considered, the notion of staying under a group of trees that conjures up so many comforts and pleasures. The academic component has to be put aside for the moment, but it will be returned to at the end.

Thus far the most basic meaning. To understand the impact on nineteenth-century modes of living it is vital to stress the notion of limited size of a grove, which could then lead to its wide availability. The history of town dwellers seeking comfortable as well as prestigious residences outside the towns begins with some of the richest families creating quasi-country houses at some distance. Another pointer into a new direction was the notion of escaping deeper into rurality, but this was taken strictly as a temporary experience. The key phenomenon developing from the early nineteenth century onwards was of course suburbanisation with its corollary, the medium-sized detached or quasi-detached house. These now served as permanent residences. A grove could thus be understood as a small number of trees and shrubs adjacent to these residences, to each of them.

In Norwich suburbanisation started right outside the city walls, on their southern and southwestern side, from where it spread quite rapidly into the wider countryside. Norwich excelled with adapting and creating a grandiose avenue, of an enormous width, with roughly the same-sized houses embedded each into its ample grove. One should rather see this mighty greenery of Newmarket Road and adjacent streets as a gigantic co-operative private park, while the term suburbanisation would apply more primarily to the



Figure 30.1. Inscription, Grove Terrace, 41–47 Unthank Road. Norwich, 2024. Photography by Ishtar Onians.

mixed developments, combining large with small, of Unthank Road. The second half of the nineteenth century brought what one may call the streamlining of suburban house sizes, large, medium, small, very small, with a corresponding scaling down of the greenery. Highly adaptable, the ‘grove’ concept continued throughout.

As such, ‘Grove’ had nothing to do with architecture, in fact it signified anything but buildings. But from the start there was the challenge to create an architecture that suited the new kinds of environments. And here Norwich lagged far behind similar towns, say Ipswich, not to mention the new seaside towns. From the beginning to almost the end of the nineteenth century the great majority of the larger houses stuck to the same formula, to the by then well over a century old Georgian type of plan: a central door, flanked by a window each side. Rarely did the houses exceed two storeys. There is a distinct lack in Norwich, both inside and outside the centre, of the long and high late Georgian and Regency terrace, the row of houses. One way of putting it: Norwich housing was builder’s architecture. In broadest terms, it was the total lack of stone that could never be compensated for. The Corinthian splendour Newmarket Road Terrace is just so much carved and painted timber. Some Norwich bricklayers excelled with complex gaged work, but this



Figure 30.2. 41–47 Unthank Road, Norwich, 2019–22. Photography by Stefan Muthesius.



Figure 30.3. Inscription, Grove Place, 33–39 Earlham Road, Norwich, 2019–22. Photography by Stefan Muthesius.

must be seen as an accomplishment in crafts, rather than architecture in the strictest sense of the word.

And yet, how could it all become ‘architecture?’ Very plainly: through nomenclature, through using a set of seemingly simple words. A row of houses became a ‘terrace’ and a detached house became a ‘villa.’ Not any row, not any small domestic building; in fact these terms initially, in their origins, belonged to the noblest spheres of undertakings. The pedigree of ‘villa,’ signifying noble, yet informal living in the country goes back to Roman Antiquity; while the term ‘terrace’ was specially coined only in the late eighteenth century in London for a row of substantial urban houses. Alongside, ‘cottage’ was also used, conveying informality.

The astonishing phenomenon that rapidly emerged from the 1820s was to actually write these words on plaques and fix them onto the front of the house. The broader history of traditional house names and then of creating street addresses is a complex one. Houses of some substance always had a name, almost akin to a place name. What happened now in the new suburbs was the marrying of two elements which is very simple to grasp: a house could not be called just ‘terrace’ or ‘villa.’ There had to be a prefix, another word, any noun, that is; and there should be many different



Figure 30.4. Lime Grove, 6 Lime Tree Road. Norwich, 2019–22. Photography by Stefan Muthesius.



Figure 30.5. 59–61 The Grove, Bracondale. Norwich, 2019–22. Photography by Stefan Muthesius.



Figure 30.6. Inscription, Grove Cottages, Grosvenor Road. Norwich, 2019–22. Photography by Stefan Muthesius.



Figure 30.7. Inscription, University Terrace, Cambridge Street. Norwich, 2019–22. Photography by Stefan Muthesius.

words or names to serve as basically a new kind of street entertainment. Taking it into the early twentieth century, a survey of southeast England (in the broadest sense of that term) counted over 5000 house names; with over 400 in Norwich alone.

There were of course frequent repetitions. With its five surviving ‘Groves’ Norwich was exceptional. Was there, is there an academe to be found in each of them? Hopes could raise, additionally, and uniquely, as Norwich also sports a University Terrace. In any case, there is no doubt as to the real academic grove feeling at home at Number 43 Grove Terrace.

31. An inquisitive irreverence

Keith Roberts

I knew it was back in the 1970s, but I was trying to remember exactly how and when I first met John. I failed. My memory is waning! Was it through my friend Robert Short? Or maybe with Eric Fernie? I found a lovely photo I took of those two in the late 1970s at an event in Cinema City, so maybe that was it (Figure 31.1). To be truthful we inhabited different worlds. I was a research scientist at the John Innes Centre and John was teaching at UEA, in what I seem to remember was then called Fine Art and Music. We comfortably ran along in parallel for decades, exchanging occasional but always stimulating thoughts about art and science at parties, on the street or at UEA.

But it was through the regular Norwich town/gown discussion group, The Peripatetics, that I really began to appreciate John's energizing and inquisitive irreverence. The group, started by Martin and Patricia Hollis and Malcolm Bradbury, held monthly meetings, moving around members' houses and listening to a paper presented by one of the members. John's papers

covered a plethora of topics from the deep weirdness of family histories to Greek temples, and his global idea of World Art rather than the art-historical silos he saw in his academic life. More recent were John's provocative trial-runs for his emerging ideas about the neurological basis of how we see and make artworks. Although they aroused the most antipathy that I have ever seen in the group, it was these latter talks that I found really stimulating, and they made me look more deeply into the trendy new subject areas of neuroaesthetics and neuroarthistory.

His brave encounters with the key scientists in the field, like Semir Zeki and Eric Kandel, and his unabashed enthusiasm were infectious, and although I did not always agree with his diagnoses, I was certain that there was sufficient germ there for an additional way of understanding artistic creation. The idea that the accumulated and recorded visual experience of an artist's life over time (a resource I have called in subsequent articles their 'neural archive') was a



Figure 31.1. Eric Fernie and John Onians in Cinema City. Norwich, late 1970s.
Photograph by Keith Roberts.



Figure 31.2. The back garden from a party at Unthank Road. Norwich, 2017.
Photograph by Keith Roberts.

brain-located resource that would always be there, consciously or unconsciously, to influence the forms and shapes of their subsequent creations, seemed credible. From a scientific perspective, I suspect the problems with the hypothesis may revolve around two key issues. One is the degree or extent of that neuronal influence, as opposed to more obvious conscious vision and intent. The second is the idea's predictive value. Such problems are currently inaccessible to experimental approaches, but someday may be. But neither of these theoretical objections mean that John's insights are without value—indeed I continue to find them immensely helpful in thinking and writing about art, which I do much more now I have been retired for several years. I look forward to John's next written instalment, and also to more random flaneur-like encounters on the sidewalk to have our brief but stimulating pick me ups!

Fewer social encounters meant that I know Elisabeth less well, although her calm and elegant presence at parties has always impressed me. As has their beautiful house and garden! (Figure 31.2) But having recently read her magnificent tome on Dutch art, I am as impressed with her erudition and ideas as I am with John's. Her examination of how local city geography and culture in the Netherlands had a profound influence on the style and nature of the works that emerged from each unique urban development, brought together extensive historical research and radical new ideas about the influence of environment on artistic production. I find this an interesting parallel to the vital importance of both nature and nurture to human behaviours. I suspect the intersection of John's and Elisabeth's thinking has mutually enriched each other's productions! We are lucky to have such interesting and irreverent minds just around the corner here in Norwich.

32.

'The Ubiquity of Aesthetics,' ALCS Postgraduate Colloquium

Adam Sammut

I invited Elisabeth de Bièvre to be the keynote for the Association for Low Countries Studies Postgraduate Colloquium, 'City Lights,' which was held over Zoom 8–9 July 2021 (Figure 32.1). The colloquium brought together young scholars from the UK and internationally, to explore urban space and civic identity in Benelux from an interdisciplinary perspective (Figure 32.2).

The Low Countries is one of the world's most urbanised regions. Since the Middle Ages, advances in mercantilism, industry and land reclamation had spurred Bruges, Antwerp and Amsterdam toward exponential growth. Meanwhile, claims to political autonomy and religious freedom caused tension with the powers that were, erupting most violently during the Eighty Years' War (1568–1648). Today, many Netherlandish cities retain a unique sense of identity, manifested in dialects, local legends and civic buildings.

The diverse and wide-ranging programme featured panels on sense and the city, the early modern book trade, the built environment, urban politics and modern times. Day two included a virtual 'show and tell' event, showcasing Dutch language collections in the Universal Short Title Catalogue and the British Library.

Elisabeth's paper, 'The Ubiquity of Aesthetics,' was about the cultural differences between cities, expressed

in local preferences and preoccupations which are the foundations for their distinctive aesthetics, aesthetics referring not in the first place to the domain of beauty and art but to that of everyday sensory experience, as foregrounded by the Greek historian, Herodotus. She argued:

It is the sensory perception of the environment, both visible and invisible, which was a major element affecting the cultures of Dutch towns, the source of their citizens' hopes and fears, their pleasures and their annoyances. These perceptions were not only expressed in their art, but in the practices of their educational and legal systems, their medical and penal habits, the regulations of their militia and other guild organisations, even their treatment of refuse. It was this resonance between art and the lived environment that constituted the principal 'feel-good' factor in people's lives. Aesthetics was, and is, ubiquitous in societies.

Elisabeth's paper not only brought two days of exciting new scholarship to a fine conclusion, but provided fresh insights into Dutch urban culture during the seventeenth century, which was particularly welcome after months of lockdowns and other pandemic restrictions. It was only a pity that the conference could not have gone ahead in person!



Figure 32.1. Elisabeth de Bièvre, *The Ubiquity of Urban Aesthetics*. Zoom meeting, 2021.



Figure 32.2. Caesar van Everdingen, *Diogenes Looking for an Honest Man (Portrait Historié of the Steyn Family)*, 1652. Oil on canvas, 75.9x103.6cm. The Hague, Mauritshuis

33.

De wijk en de wereld: A marriage for the universe

Gary Schwartz and Loekie Schwartz

They could not have known it when John met Elisabeth and began courting her, but theirs was to be a union joining much more than two souls and their attendant bodies. Obviously, they enacted a joining of two countries and two languages. This is something about which we happen to know a lot, and we can say with authority that it is merely a banal *bijkomstigheid*. Does anyone think that couples born and bred in the same place, speaking the same dialect, and never even thinking about the issue, understand each other better than people who have to make a concerted effort, with years of study, to do so? Hah, there!

No, we are talking about a far more profound union. As their minds developed and their intellectual pursuits began to take their course, their efforts began to gel, implicitly, barely discernibly, into a dialectic that, built into a marriage, carries significance of a profundity that even the protagonists might not fully recognize. Starting from the center—the center they established in their marital and scholarly conjunction—and without ever losing contact with it or with each other, John and Elisabeth began to build intellectual remits encompassing us all. While the rest of us were languishing in our comfort zones, in total obliviousness of what was happening to us, this household in Norfolk was founding a conceptual empire of which we could only hope to be mere inhabitants, perhaps subjects, with luck, some day, citizens.

It went like this. Elisabeth began closing inward on the properties of place that shape societies and individuals. She delved deeper and deeper, from the scale of countries down to cities, then to localities, becoming a virtual block monitor of the kind we read about in Cuba. Benign, of course, but still. She knows better than we do what distinguishes one of us from another. At the same time, from the same center, John spread further and further outward, in time and scope. Taking flight towards a stratosphere in which boundaries are invisible and inconsequential, in which individual differences cease to matter, he enveloped the globe. While Elisabeth was pulling us apart, John was lumping us together. Something like what a home baker does making a sourdough loaf. In seemingly separate endeavors, they have taken us in a joint pincer action from which there is no escape.

But who would want to escape? Being with John and Elisabeth is the most fun you can have in company. We relish and cherish their friendship and the far too little time we have been able to spend with them. Looking forward to whatever more hours and days we can share in the future, we sign off wishing them rewards as ample and fulfilling as those they have bestowed, in person and in *onvolprezen* print, on so very many loving, admiring and thankful friends.

34. Visiting with John and Elisabeth

John Thoburn and June Thoburn

This short appreciation recalls four enjoyable and productive visits.

Hong Kong 1988

In the spring of 1988 John and Elisabeth stayed with John Thoburn (hereinafter 'I') in his flat in Hong Kong. John and Elisabeth were on their way to visiting China while I was working in Hong Kong at a college attempting, successfully, to retain UK academic accreditation for its degrees, and ultimately becoming a university. On the strength of being married – even though June only came for short visits while continuing to work in the UK – I had been given a roomy two-storey flat in Fo Tan in a university-owned complex in the north of Hong Kong, complete with three bedrooms and a fourth, much smaller, one for a servant (not employed!). This was in the days before people thought much about the forthcoming handover to China in 1997, there were not yet large numbers of visitors from mainland China,

languages were still predominantly Cantonese and English, and little on the surface had changed from years before. John and Elisabeth were great guests, their innate self-sufficiency helped by the spaciousness of the flat (Figure 34.1). Their adventurousness in exploring Hong Kong included a trip (with another UEA person also working in Hong Kong) to the old walled city, considered too dangerous by guidebooks for foreigners to visit. They survived, though very hungover the next morning for some reason... I remember providing them with flash cards with practical phrases written in Chinese, and off they went to China.

Berlin 1995

I visited while June was away on some other project. They were living in a flat near the Wannsee, a beautiful and popular lake for visitors, though during the time of the Third Reich it had been the setting for the infamous Wannsee Conference. John was attached to



Figure 34.1. John and Elisabeth on balcony of John Thoburn's flat. Hong Kong, 1988.



Figure 34.2. Elisabeth with June Thoburn. Williamstown, 1999.

the Institute of Advanced Studies in Berlin, modelled on its namesake in Princeton, and I was able to attend some meeting on the agreement that visitors would not participate. I recall my surprise at seeing among the participants an economist, Albert Hirschman, who was prominent even in my long-past student days, and who I had assumed was no longer living. John and Elisabeth in their flat provided wonderful, long, conversational breakfasts – no question of just hiding behind a newspaper. We made many visits in Berlin, including to the remains of the Wall. We each discovered that we all could speak German, including a young relative of theirs who was there at the time. I also was introduced to the German system of the highly ecological sorting of garbage into various coloured containers.

Williamstown, in upstate New York, 1999

We visited while John was attached to the Clark Art Institute near Williamstown, a place noted for its undergraduate college and its extraordinarily well-barbered lawns (Figure 34.2). The Institute’s art collection had been located there apparently to be safer from harm in a nuclear war. We had driven in a car hired in Boston, and this visit was the culmination of a trip visiting other friends in Lexington, MA. We were introduced to Chinese friends of John and Elisabeth in the art world, who had their super-bright teenage daughter with them. One memorable, though hardly



Figure 34.3. On top of the world in Bomarzo: John with John Thoburn, 2016.

art-educational, trip was to Manchester, Vermont, where an assortment of shops sold remaindered designer clothes at bargain prices.

Bomarzo village, near Rome, 2016

In August we visited John and Elisabeth in their beautifully restored flat in this mountain village in Lazio (Figure 34.3). Elisabeth had rented a small flat for us near their own and had persuaded us not to be put off by an overnight stay en route from France, originally Milan, but our enthusiasm returned when we found we could overnight in Florence. In Bomarzo we were

re-introduced to John's open-top Saab sports car, first encountered in Williamstown, which we gather is a car also favoured by London gangsters – so stylish indeed! Highlights of the visit were the nearby exhibition of monsters, grotesque but compelling statues in a park of their own, dating from the 16th century. Also, the lovely Villa Lante, a place apparently of some personal significance to John and Elisabeth, and a lunch with Charles, Roanne and Isabelle who were staying nearby with their children. And we completed our stay before an earthquake later in the year, which happily did not do very much damage in the village.

35.

Arboreal concatenations.

A *Quercus cerris* for John and Elisabeth in Little Mesopotamia

Thomas Tuohy

John and Elisabeth visited West Cumberland in September 2011 to join in the 60th birthday celebrations of Thomas Tuohy. They stayed for two nights at The White Mare in Beckermet, together with Mary Hollingsworth, who had introduced them to Thomas. The main events were on 3 September with an afternoon visit to the arboretum, Little Mesopotamia, followed by a musical performance and supper at Rosehill Theatre. On the previous evening Elisabeth and John came to dinner¹ with Thomas at Ingleberg, Beckermet, a late Victorian villa where he had grown up. John was interested to see a tree planted for Ernst Gombrich, whose family he knew very well, so on the morning of 3 September they had a preview—just as well as there was continuous heavy rain in the afternoon—followed by lunch at The White Mare, where the party included friends from Modena, Carla Ghirardini and Viller Raisi.

Inspired by Max Egremont's biography, Thomas had commissioned settings of poems by Siegfried Sassoon, *Teach me through your Trees*, for baritone, viola and piano by Simon Rowland Jones, a viola player, teacher and composer, co-founder, with Barry Cheeseman, of the North Norfolk Music Festival in South Creake. This festival had previously taken place in August, but this year had been moved to September, which meant that the piece could not be performed at Rosehill on September 3rd. Instead, it had its premiere in Norfolk on 10 September performed by Ronan Collet, Simon Rowland Jones and Huw Watkins. John and Elisabeth were able to come to that performance, and were amongst the very few people who came to both of the musical performances that Thomas organized. In subsequent years Thomas has visited John and Elisabeth when he was visiting North Norfolk, and came to their wedding anniversary celebration in Norwich in 2018.

Thomas has written about Ingleberg, which was included in the 2010 Pevsner for Cumbria. Alterations made by his parents have been reversed; original decoration and features have been restored and Ingleberg was recognized as a Grade II listed building in 2021 (Figure 35.1).²

He has also written about the arboretum in an essay published in 2018, and in 2019 when Biographical Arboretum Little Mesopotamia (BALM) was recognized as a charity: a website was set up, which offers a more anodyne account.³ In the following contribution to celebrate John's 80th birthday Thomas focuses on some biographical aspects of the project. John was at the Courtauld and the Warburg, 1963–68, and Thomas at the same Institutes 1970–82, so they have many mutual acquaintances. John Shearman (1931–2003) was the most sympathetic influence on Thomas, who also studied the architecture of Bernini, Borromini and Pietro da Cortona with Anthony Blunt (1907–83).

Seascale was just a hamlet until 1849 when a halt for the railway along the West Cumberland coast was built there, and the Scawfell Hotel was opened to provide accommodation for visitors making excursions to Wasdale. In 1864 the situation along this stretch of coast was described as 'ever with the dark blue mountain boundary behind, and the wide fathomless sea with its teeming life and its gorgeous sunsets, its power and its unrest.'⁴ With views to the Isle of Man and to the Scafell range, and a long sandy beach, plans were drawn up in 1879 to create a seaside resort to rival Grange over Sands on the Lancashire Riviera. These were never fully realized—the 'power and unrest' of the 1864 description probably referred to the gales, and there are still no trees along the seafront—but the situation and bracing climate appealed to the founders of Calder

¹ The musicians who were staying at Ingleberg were also present at this dinner. Anando Mukerjee, an operatic tenor from Delhi, Pavel Timofejevski, a pianist from Moscow, and his girlfriend Nafis Umerhulova from Tashkent, also a pianist, who was the page turner at the performance. Other guests included Mary Hollingsworth, Erica Davies and Anna Somers Cocks.

² Tuohy 2009: 93–109. Ingleberg is not a beautiful house, but it has recently been suggested that sentiment should be one of the criteria for architectural judgement; see my 2020c review; Hyde and Pevsner 2010: 696; and Historic England Grade II, List Entry Number 1473399, 1 July 2021.

³ Tuohy 2018b.

⁴ Linton 1864.

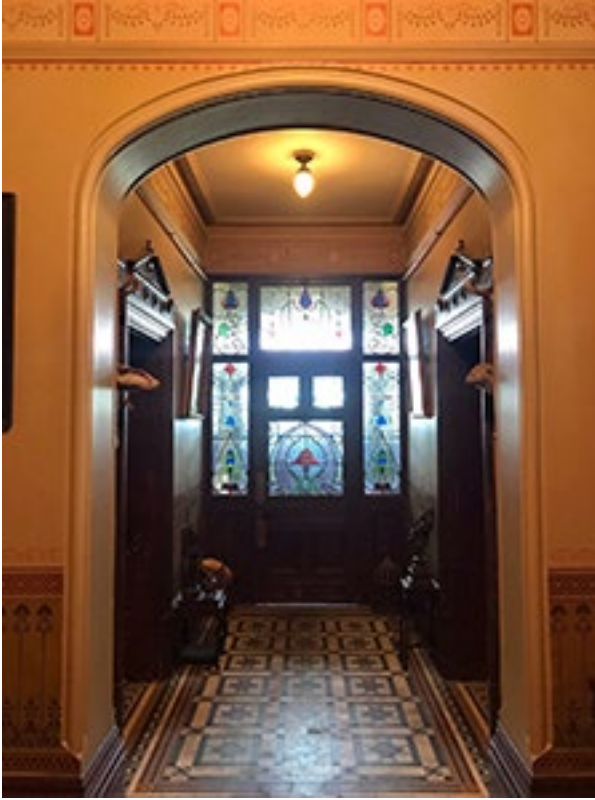


Figure 35.1. Ingleberg vestibule. Ingleberg, 2023.
Photograph by Thomas Tuohy.

Girls School in 1882 and Seascale Preparatory School in 1897. Ruskin stayed in Seascale in 1889, adding to the popularity of the village as a holiday resort.

*

I was born in Seascale in 1951, in one of the houses built by the Ministry of Supply to provide accommodation for the scientists and technicians employed by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority to build and operate the nuclear facilities at Sellafield-Windscale to produce plutonium for Britain's atom bomb and Calder Hall to generate electricity. My father, Tom Tuohy (1917–2008), was deputy works manager there when a fire broke out in one of the piles at Windscale in 1957. He took charge of putting out the fire, but never received any official recognition for his bravery as Harold Macmillan's government was in the delicate process of negotiating a deal with the United States for secret information about making atom bombs.⁵ Our family lived in three different 'authority houses,' since his work took him to manage Springfields in Lancashire for a while, but the houses were all of the same design,

⁵ Fishlock 2008. See also Aspinall 2007.

and the circle of friends, many from London, Wales and Scotland, married to men brought in by the UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA), remained a constant for my mother after we moved out of Seascale to a nearby village, Beckermet.

Ingleberg is a suburban villa, built on the edge of Beckermet in 1900 for Thomas Robley (1833–1902), a farmer who inherited a fortune from his uncle in Manchester. The house was untouched when my father bought it in 1955. I was fascinated by the large spaces, and especially by the details of the stencil work in the staircase hall. I was very disappointed when all of the decoration was painted over. Family albums and glass negatives were left in the loft, and as I grew up, I came to know the people who had previously lived in the house, I learned a lot about the family history and saw some of the original furnishings, including glum family portraits and hunting trophies. The house exerted such an influence on me that Roger Took (1944–2011) who came to stay with me a few times in the early 1970s said I spoke of the family as if it were my own.

Originally surrounded by farmland, to which a wicket gate from the Ingleberg garden gave access, my sister Kate and I could roam freely, but land was sold in several stages by members of the Robley family, and, after the early death of my mother, Lilian Leyland Barnes (1924–71) my father sold land too. I had happy memories of the house and the land, and of my grandparents' house in Co Clare, with a walled garden and a demesne of 14 acres. We used to spend two weeks in Eire each year until the early 1970s, and my mother remarked that we spent more time with my paternal grandparents, than with her family in Cumberland—her father was from Ulpha and her mother grew up in Kentmere. A friend living in Beckermet, James Jacques, who had been at prep school with me in Seascale, told me about some land that can be seen from Ingleberg coming up for sale, and I bought it in 2001. James also introduced me to a local farmer who did forestry work for the National Trust in Wasdale and Eskdale, Phil Braithwaite. I designed the arboretum and chose all of the plants, but it was Phil who fenced off plantations to protect trees from livestock, and did most of the planting. He continues to assist with the maintenance, and management, so the site is the result of our collaboration and we are both trustees of the BALM charity (Figure 35.2).

There were several motives for creating the arboretum: to compensate for the destruction of habitat for wildlife caused by local housing developments and suburban gardening methods, and to prevent any building on the site; to provide environmental benefit by planting



Figure 35.2. Phil Braithwaite and Thomas Tuohy. Yew Barrow, Wasdale, 4 September 2011. Photograph by Timothy Pinder.

trees, and to create a garden landscape. This involved planting shelter belts and hedges. Beckermat is not as exposed as Seascale, but protection from the wind is essential, especially for more delicate plants. Although there are many trees commonly found in a British landscape, I also wanted to experiment by planting non-native trees which may adapt to future global warming and climate change. Asian trees have fared better than American trees, which I have found to be too brittle in the wind. *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*, *Cryptomeria japonica* and a variety of oriental pines and oaks are establishing well. The site is managed to encourage biodiversity, so tidiness is not a priority. Public visits are limited, and nature is largely left undisturbed.

It was also my intention to provide a memorial to friends and colleagues. Many had died young. My mother was only 46 when she died; I was 19, in my first year at the Courtauld. Other significant personal losses for me were Tomi de Gara (1914–76), cousins, including Paulette Tuohy killed in a car crash in 1985, Ronald Dickinson (1916–85), Roger Jones (1947–86), Jessica Cox (1950–87), James Brister (1929–91), Geoffrey Ashton (1951–91), Nicholas Cann (1950–91), Nicholas

John (1952–96), Michael Dillon (1946–98). I am writing biographies of the dedicatees, so that BALM may serve as a memorial to a disparate group of people who were alive in the second half of the 20th century.

There were two other families in Beckermat with children who went to the same pre-prep school in Seascale, ‘Singing Surf.’ Kate and I grew up together with Keith and Marie Cameron, and Michael (1949–2005) and Carole de Gara. Tomi de Gara (1914–76), from Budapest, established West Cumberland Silk Mills with his fellow Hungarian business partner Miki Sekers (1910–72) in 1938.⁶ It was thanks to Tomi that I was regularly invited to musical performances of the highest international quality at Rosehill Theatre, established by Miki in 1959. Tomi’s wife Bobbie (1917–2007) and my mother were the best of friends; I was frequently in Croft Lodge, the house in the centre of Beckermat, opposite the White Mare, where they entertained a great deal. Even after Tomi died, at the early age of 62, Bobbie, a model hostess, maintained a local social focus, and continued giving lunch parties, without the help of servants, doing the cooking herself, until she moved to Cockermouth in 1996. Whenever I was in Beckermat I was included in these. On Fridays Mihály Friedlander (1901–1982) and his wife Dr Blanka Manzoni (1899–1991) from Zagreb were always invited, and I came to know them very well. Like most of the emigrés they spoke little about their past, but my recent researches have revealed that Mihály studied structural engineering in Vienna and silk weaving technology in Zurich, built and managed silk mills in Croatia and Hungary, and had close family connections with the Madarász family which provided much of the initial capital for establishing West Cumberland Silk Mills.⁷

The Austro-Hungarian Empire, and Vienna in particular informed my imaginative life from a young age. My father was well known in Cumberland after 1957 and was taken up by Frank Schon (1912–95), later Baron Schon⁸ an émigré from Vienna who set up a large chemical factory outside Whitehaven, Marchon. They played golf together at Seascale or St Bees, as well as bridge. My parents were frequently invited for dinner, and my mother told me of such delights as Wienerschnitzel (the veal had to be brought from London), Apfelstrudel, Gugelhupf, and a particularly rich Kastanientorte, which I later tasted myself. Frank and his wife Gertude Secher (1911–93) lived at Seacroft,

⁶ Blackadder 2009. Lobel 1978. Tuohy 2016 and 2022. See also Sekers 2023.

⁷ Tuohy 2024, viewed 24 August 2024, <www.cumbrianlives.org.uk>.

⁸ Dalzell 1995; also *The Times*, obituary 19 Jan 1995; *Who’s Who* 1995.

a well-designed modern house, that replaced the decaying house of the Kenworthy family, set in a few acres. Knowing of my interest in art Frank invited me to look at his collection of art books when he was playing golf one morning, although he was dismissive of *The Story of Art* by Gombrich, when I told him I had a copy—perhaps he didn't like the black and white illustrations. My Scottish godfather Johnnie Boyle (1916–94) worked at the International Atomic Agency in Vienna, my *Kleinbahn* trainset expanded with gifts from Vienna, and on my first visit to the city, in August 1964, we stayed at his apartment, just beyond the Volksooper, across the Gürtel, in Hans Sachs Gasse, which had a *Herrenzimmer*, an interior with dark panelling, figured stained glass and a wrought iron grille dividing the spaces of the main reception room, although nothing of the original collection was left apart from what looked like a Romanesque Aquamanile.

A more pervasive Viennese influence was provided by Ernst R Philipp (1916–96) a piano playing polymath with a very strong accent, who taught Mathematics, History, French and Art at Seascale Preparatory School (Figure 35.3). Phil, as he was always called, introduced 'gramophone recitals' with short explanations; talks with the epidiascope on subjects including Giotto, Brueghel, Rembrandt and English cathedrals, and there was a strong emphasis on 'general knowledge.'⁹ He chose a selection of reproductions of works by old masters ('from this school, sir?' piped up Stanger-Leathes minor) to be hung in the art room, and in the dining room, of which I remember Stefan Lochner's *The Virgin in the Rose bower*, in Cologne, Giovanni Bellini's *Pietà*, in Venice, Albrecht Altdorfer's *Susanna and the Elders*, with its remarkable architecture, from Munich, and *The Man with the Golden Helmet*, by 'Rembrandt' from Berlin. He looked after the library. I particularly enjoyed novels by G.A. Henty, retained from the foundation of the school, and was amused, years later, when John Shearman was appalled that I had been exposed to such imperialistic literature. Phil guided the more bookish off these to the classics, and my copy of *The Iliad*, in the Rieu translation, was bought in 1960. Phil's French lessons were the most memorable—I was known as M. le Taupe, which I presumed at the time to be a reference to the diffident Mole in *The Wind in the Willows*, of which I had a copy. There was a curious prescience about this name as my later academic research, probably influenced by studying sciences, was essentially empirical, burrowing through archives and turning up spoil heaps which provided material for my writing on a variety of subjects (Figure 35.4).



Figure 35.3. Dr Ernst Rudolf Philipp. Vienna, 1938. Collection of Coralie Evison.

It was only recently that I discovered what a remarkable man Phil was. He studied under Professor Sexl, at the Institute for Theoretical Physics, had this thesis, about the angle dependence on the scattering of neutrons by protons, published in 1937,¹⁰ and was awarded his Vienna University PhD on Mathematical Physics, with distinction, on 19 October 1938. He was just short of his 22nd birthday. He was then sent to Dachau, from which he was released, together with his two brothers, thanks to the provision of British immigration visas in 1939. He was in the British army for seven years, seeing action in Arnhem and Palestine.¹¹ After he was de-mobbed in London in 1947 he sought employment, without success because of lack of testimonials, but responded to a letter which came out of the blue from Roger Burnett (1913–84), Head Master of Seascale Preparatory School, where Phil taught from 1947 until 1972. After a few unsatisfactory years at other schools he retired to Seascale, buying a flat in the former prep school building, and in his final decade lived as a melancholy recluse, writing and translating poetry into German.

⁹ *The Seagull* 1961: 18.

¹⁰ Philipp 1937. Thanks to Coralie Evison, granddaughter of Walter Philipp, for providing documents.

¹¹ Philipp had a guard of honour organised by the Parachute Regiment Association at his funeral in Egremont. For his military career see Bretjens 2023.

and Ercole, arranged in order of cost may help to illustrate

	£
Monastery of S. Catelina	46,000
Una diamante notabilissima	30,000
5 embroidered coltrine	25,000
Giorgio Allegretti's silver service	21,000
Borso's Bible	5,500
Cradle given to Beatrice d'Este	4,000
Intarsia studio, Belfiore	3,400
Theatrical production	3,000
Camere Dorate	2,600
Painting of Sala dei Mesi	2,300
Robe of cloth of gold for Borso	1,660
A large bucintoro	1,200
Tura's chapel at Belriguardo	1,060
A triumphal arch	900
Formimento da cavallo, for King of England	800
Tapestry, appartamento da letto	700
Triumphal carriage	600
Baldachino, for 1473 wedding	550
Equipping a knight	550
Palio S. Zorzo	420
Tura's organ shutters	111
Tura's portrait of Isabella d'Este	11

As prices depended upon the cost and amount of material the amount and quality of workmanship, it is of course impos

Figure 35.4. Thomas Tuohy PhD Thesis extract, 1982: 239.

He wrote journals in English from 1946–75, reverting to German from 1975–96, and these were given by the Burnett family to the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies, at Senate House, London, where I have been transcribing extracts. He regularly refers to his depression—his mother and sister perished in the Holocaust—but he provides acute critical appraisals of books, musical performances, and of art and architecture seen on his frequent travels. One of his first purchases when he arrived in Cumberland was a wireless and he escaped from the cultural desert of West Cumberland at every opportunity. These journals merit serious study for their remarkably literate and informed observations, bearing comparison with those of Bernard Berenson,¹² but with the more wide-ranging scope reflecting his *Bildungsburgertum* origins.

Phil could be quite a severe critic, writing of a performance at Rosehill Theatre, where the audience was encouraged to wear evening dress, and rarely talked about music in the interval:

'Last Wednesday (4 January 1961) At a concert in the "Cumbrian Glyndebourne," Rosehill—rather a snob

¹² Berenson 1960.

affair, where it seems to me, music is only a pretence for a superior social meeting. Programme was mediocre and the piano playing was decidedly poor.'¹³

An earlier journal refers to a great Austrian tenor heard on the wireless:

'Sat 27 Sept 1947... in evening listened to the 2nd part of Don Giovanni from Covent Garden (*Wiener Staatsoper* season) at moments with almost painful emotion. Fine singing and orchestra... my mind wandered back to the best Don Giovanni I ever heard, the first time my mother took me to the Staatsoper, about 20 years ago... Incidentally, the same Richard Tauber, then in his prime singing Don Ottavio was here tonight as a guest and he can still sing Mozart, even after years of degradation in opera there.'

Phil gave up thoughts of pursuing a scientific career in 1947, but a later journal entry refers to his earlier work. 'May 29 1961 Interesting discussion on Quantum mechanics on the wireless: some of the ideas coming close to my long cherished critical theories.'

Philipp only came to academic notice because of his cousin Adolf Placzek, who enjoyed a distinguished career as an architectural historian in New York, and was married to Jan Struther, the author of *Mrs Miniver*.¹⁴ Placzek described the difficulties imposed by the *numerus clausus* policy for Jews wanting to pursue further education in a short story *Astronom*, and in *Traumfahrt mit der Familie* describes the family history and fate. The cousins travelled together, in America, Greece and Turkey, as described in some detail in the later journals in 1967, 1975 and 1982.

Since writing this in 2022 I have been able to consult additional material that belonged to Ernst Philipp. I have made an abstract of typed letters sent by Placzek to Philipp, translated from the German, which reveal the closeness of the bond between the cousins. I have also identified a group of family letters written in Vienna in

¹³ The pianists were Jani Strasser and Martin Isepp, accompanists rather than concert pianists. Their Schubert Piano Duets may not have been up to scratch, and the programme, put together by Strasser, Head of Music Staff at Glyndebourne, was rather scrappy, with solo songs by Schubert and Schumann interspersed with songs for four voices. Elsie Morrison, Janet Baker, Richard Lewis, and Derick Davies were the soloists, although Philipp does not mention them. Thanks to Robert Baxter and Barbara Clark, Whitehaven Record Office, for sending a copy of the programme.

¹⁴ Ives 2005. Maxtone Graham 2001. I am grateful to Ridley Burnett, who provided this information and gave Phil's diaries, together with his typewritten poems and those of his cousin to the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies (EXILE) University of London, Senate House. Thanks also to the librarian there, Clare George, the archivist Kat Hubschmann and to Anthony Grenville.

1939 detailing the escape of most of the family to safety in England, America and Australia. Material from these sources has been incorporated in my entry for Ernst Philipp in cumbrianlives.org.uk in 2024.¹⁵ In July 2024 I contacted Bill Sherman at the Warburg to suggest this material might be of interest for a research student, particularly the travel diaries.

In 1962 I visited London for the first time, and because my father had shown people around Calder Hall he was able to call in favours which gave us access to places such as the Cabinet War Rooms, the Royal Mint, and most significantly St Paul's Cathedral. We did not meet Lord Mottistone¹⁶ but had an excellent introduction from a young architect, called Rushton I seem to remember, who explained the construction of the dome, before taking us up the spiral staircase in the south tower and showing us the areas above the domed aisles, with the wooden model. We were later taken to the restaurant of the recently built Mermaid Theatre at Puddle Dock, sitting with a view onto the Thames. In April 1963, during my first visit to Italy, aged 11, I saw the buildings, galleries and museums in Pisa, Florence and Rome, together with the antiquities near Naples, Paestum, Taormina and Syracuse. We also visited Venice, Paris, Versailles and Fontainebleau. I wanted to be an architect, and for Christmas 1963 I asked my father to buy me *World Architecture, An Illustrated History*, published by Paul Hamlyn (from Hamburg not Vienna), offered at the price of 4gns if bought before 30 December, after which it rose to 5gns! Although travel in Europe awakened my interest in the visual arts, and my requests for art books were indulged, my father's mantra was 'you have to do sciences in order to afford the arts.' He was beguiled by a school report (not by Phil) in 1962, describing me as 'a very intelligent and an equally lazy potential mathematician.' I was later pushed into the Sciences rather than the Arts, struggling with Double Maths, Physics and Chemistry, to A level, before deciding that I really did not want to follow my father in reading Chemistry at University. The art master at prep school, Herbert Creswell Foley, who shared my taste for Edward Lear's *Book of Nonsense*, recommended *The Story of Art* by Ernst Gombrich. I understood at the time that Phil had met Gombrich (1909–2001) as his brother had been at the same college

with him in Vienna, and he said he was very ugly. But I have subsequently found that his brother Franz Philipp (1914–70) was an art historian, who was a research fellow at the Warburg 1955–56,¹⁷ and Ernst Philipp would have met Gombrich in London then. I remember no particular comment about *The Story of Art*, but in his journals found references to *Art and Illusion* (1960), Feb 2 1965: 'a remarkable if difficult book, brilliant in details, though one could wish for a firmer thread through the fascinating maze of the author's reflections,' and *Meditations on a Hobby Horse* (1963), 28 July 1967 'which I liked less than his other book.'

When I came to plant trees for these men I took cuttings from yews outside the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, where Gombrich had worked. Two other directors of the Warburg have trees in Little Mesopotamia—Joe Trapp (1925–2005), whom I came to know, together with his wife Elayne, thanks to the hospitality of Alice and Helmut Wohl (1928–2018) when we were all at I Tatti; and Charles Hope, with whom I shared an interest in the *Via Coperta* section of the Ducal Palace of Ferrara, where we attended a *convegno* in 2002.¹⁸ I met Gombrich a few times at the Warburg, but I found him rather terrifying, witnessing his impatience with slide projectionists, and the last time I attended one of his lectures he berated an American student for his rudeness in sitting in the front row and falling asleep. I suspect John would have seen him in a very different way. However shortly after I registered at the Warburg, when he was still director, he did ask about my research, and I later asked him if he was concerned about popular culture swamping the classical tradition. He replied 'Only very few people have ever been interested in these things.' Perhaps, nearly fifty years on he might have been dismayed by the current extent of educational impoverishment. Much of what would have been considered 'general knowledge' is largely unknown.

Michael Baxandall (1933–2008) had a more profound impact on my work. I remember the seminar at the Warburg in which he defended his most influential book, at one point saying he wished he had never written it.¹⁹ I had written an optional report about the court of Quattrocento Ferrara as part of my Courtauld

¹⁵ Letters from Adolf Placzek written in German to Ernst Philipp, which had been sent by Ridley Burnett to Placzek's nephew Peter Stern in New York were kindly lent to me in January 2023. I translated and made an abstract of these and negotiated their deposit with the EXILE archive at Senate House in London in June 2024. Similarly the letters sent by Ridley to Coralie Evison, granddaughter of Ernst's eldest brother Walter, relating to members of the Philipp and Placzek written in Vienna in 1939, were deposited in that archive.

¹⁶ 1899–1963. Surveyor of the Fabric of St Paul's Cathedral. *Who's Who* 2007.

¹⁷ Anderson 2000. From 1933 Franz Philipp studied Art History under Julius von Schlosser at the University of Vienna, began a doctoral thesis on Mannerist Portraits in Northern Italy, but was expelled in March 1938. After Dachau, he arrived in England in 1939. He was deported to Australia as an enemy alien, enrolled to study history of art at the University of Melbourne in 1942, where he subsequently taught. He was a senior research fellow at the Warburg Institute in London 1955–56. He died of a heart attack in London in 1970.

¹⁸ Tuohy 2002.

¹⁹ Baxandall 1972.



Figure 35.5. Jessica Cox, Thomas Tuohy, Peter Clements. Eskdale, 1983.
Photograph by Kate Tuohy.

BA, and in 1974 John Shearman arranged for me to be interviewed for a post graduate place at the Warburg. David Chambers interviewed me first, and on the same day I had to repeat the process with Baxandall, who was stretched out on a low chair sitting by an open window, so I could not see his face and barely hear his deep lugubrious voice against the noise of the traffic outside. I was accepted at the Warburg, with Chambers as tutor, a sensible choice given our shared emphasis on archival research. The last time I saw Baxandall was just as disconcerting. I was leading a small group for Martin Randall's Prospect Art Tours in Florence Autumn 1986 or 87. In those early days I had to carry a slide projector in my luggage to give lectures in the hotel before supper. While I was talking in front of Orcagna's tabernacle in Orsanmichele I noticed Baxandall sitting alone, quite close by. I carried on, although feeling rather self-conscious, and we did not acknowledge one another, beyond a glance of recognition. When I told Jennifer Fletcher about this at Jo Trapp's commemoration in Senate House she assured me that talking in such a public space was something Baxandall could not have done himself anyway!

In my PhD thesis I used the detailed evidence provided by account books from the d'Este court to recreate the sense of contemporary monetary values, demonstrated most clearly in a list of different forms of expenditure (see Figure 35.4).

I was pleased that Mary Hollingsworth also made use of the *Archivio Estense* for her book on Cardinal Ippolito d'Este.²⁰ In her contribution to John's Festschrift she wrote: 'Account books are surprisingly revealing documents. They may lack the personal touch of a letter, or the intellectual subtleties of a literary text, but they do allow us to put a precise financial value to the theoretical concept of magnificence and liberality, two virtues much admired in the Renaissance' (Figure 35.5).²¹

I first heard of John Onians through a friend of Carole de Gara, Jessica Machell Cox (1950–87) an undergraduate at UEA from 1970. The girls had been together at school, Hatherop Castle, then Beech Lawn in Oxford. I met Jessica in Knightsbridge where she shared a flat with Carole, and in Beckermet. She went out with Keith Cameron for a while. I often stayed in Oxfordshire with Jessica and her parents at the Old Vicarage, Kirtlington. Her father David was a history don at University College, and also a climber, who ascended almost to the summit of the sacred mountain Machhapuchchhre, and was active in the preparation of Sir John Hunt's Everest expedition in 1953.²² Jessica walked with me several times in the Lake District, we climbed Coniston Old Man in 1983, and Haystacks in 1985. More adventurously she hiked up Mount Kilimanjaro. Before going to the Courtauld my interests

²⁰ Hollingsworth 2005.

²¹ Golden 2001:129.

²² David Cox obituary, *Daily Telegraph* 3 November 1994.

were in Georgian architecture, the Romantics and their reaction to Gothic architecture and landscape. Together Jessica and I visited Blenheim, Rousham and Chastleton. She was friends with the Budgets at Kirtlington Park and I was impressed by the house from the outside, but, as the family had only recently sold it, I never saw the rare Monkey Room. I visited Jessica a few times in Norwich, visiting churches in 1972—Acle, Ranworth, South Walsham. In 1974 I asked Peter Kidson (1925–2019) about doing research on fifteenth-century church furnishings, but he sensibly dissuaded me on the grounds that little survives—ironic perhaps, given that my researches led me to buildings in Ferrara that are lost, but at least ample documentation for these has survived. John Shearman’s lectures on Reconstruction, which I attended three times, had a profound influence, but unfortunately I cannot find any notes that I would have taken at the time.

Jessica was on the UEA term in Venice in 1972. She did not pursue art history, but worked in personnel with Reckitts and lived in Twickenham, where she bought a house in Wick Rd from Phyllida Spicer, a childhood friend who read Fine Art in Edinburgh under David Talbot Rice, then Graham (Bellini) Robertson. Jessica married a financier Peter Clements, whom she had met through the Huntley family with whom she lodged in Egerton Gardens. Peter’s first job had been at a boys’ school where he met Alex Warre Cornish who had been at school with Andrew Huntley. Jessica and Peter married in Oxford in June 1984 and they had a son David, but Jessica died of a brain tumour when he was only two. As an infant he lived in Kirtlington before being sent to the Dragon School and Radley, and followed his father in a financial career. I used to visit Peter in Oxford for reeling, in which he was very proficient and we visited Scotland together in 2001, when I had a kilt made in my grandmother’s Robertson tartan in Edinburgh. Peter preferred to sit in his Ferrari following his investments while I looked inside country houses. But he did come into Gosford House on 11 September 2001 where we had a private tour with Sheila Wemyss. This was not long after a storm had blown a grand piano across the room from which the Botticelli canvas of *The Virgin Adoring the Sleeping Christ Child*, now in Edinburgh, had been removed. We heard the sound of a television in a room off the entrance hall, but it was only on returning to the car when Peter checked his messages that we learned of the destruction of the towers in New York. We climbed a few hills together over the years, when he visited with the Huntleys—Scafell Pike, Helvellyn, Haystacks. But he was inert domestically, and allowed himself to be ‘managed’ by an American woman whom

I disliked. Regrettably I lost touch with Peter after they moved to Bristol.

I first met John Onians when he was editor of *Art History*, at a conference of the Association of Art Historians which had I joined as a Life Member in 1976 for the sum of £30! The first volume of *Art History* appeared in March 1978, so it must have been around that date, but it was only in December 2000 that I met him properly, together with Elisabeth, in Venice, at a party given by Mary Hollingsworth at the Danieli, to celebrate her 50th birthday. I was at the same table with them, together with Joanna and Robin Simon, whose first wife was a cousin of Mary, who had been introduced to me by Robin in the early 1980s. Richard Schofield and Christine Morley, whom, like Robin, I knew from the Courtauld in the early 1970s were at the same table. I met John and Elisabeth again in Venice in April 2002, joining the Schofields for a pizza in Corso Garibaldi one evening, and by chance as I was descending the grand staircase of the Ala Napoleonica, leading to the Museo Correr. There was an exhibition of *vedute* by the elder Vanvitelli. John and I also coincided at the Ca d’Oro, where I pointed out the failings of some of the Franchetti pictures—dismissing a ‘Botticini’ as a 19th century fake, and rejecting a ‘Titian’—prompting John to ask: ‘Is connoisseurship one of your things?’ ‘Just something I have developed by looking at pictures over 30 years’ was my reply. I was writing a book about British picture collections at the time, and thanks to Nick Penny had been funded to do research on the Ellis Waterhouse archive at the Getty in 2000.²³ In February 2020 when John and I were having lunch in the Athenaeum I was telling him my ‘connoisseur’s’ opinion of a Poussin’s *Sack of the Temple of Jerusalem*, which I had seen in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem in November 2018. He told me the story of his family connection with that picture, which had belonged to the collection of his uncle Ernest, and been sold by Sotheby’s at the Bayham Mill sale (18 October 1995) when it was misattributed to Pietro Testa, before being identified as a Poussin by Denis Mahon.

Mary Hollingsworth and I were both living near Florence when I had a fellowship at Villa I Tatti, 1990–91, and we saw a lot of one another. She did some of her research at the villa, and I invited her to join me for lunch—too frequently for Walter Kaiser who was the director at the time. Mary and I met a number of interesting people at I Tatti, some of these have

²³ The book, *A Taste for Pictures*, has never been published, Tuohy 2004, but has informed many articles and reviews: Tuohy 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003a, 2004b, 2011, 2013a, 2013b, 2014, 2017b, 2018a, 2019a, 2019b, 2020a, 2020b, 2022a.



Figure 35.6. Mary Hollingsworth's Medlar in I Tatti Grove. Little Mesopotamia, October 2022.
Photograph by Thomas Tuohy.

trees dedicated to them in the circular space in the arboretum named after the place (Figure 35.6).

In the centre of this grove is the first tree to be planted, dedicated to Mary, a medlar, *Mespilus germanica*. The last time I met John Shearman was at a supper given at Mary's on 22 June 1991, with Joanna Woods Marsden, and Freddie and Dario, who had a flat with a terrace overlooking the Carmine. Mary and I kept in touch over many years through the Society for Court Studies, which I joined at its foundation in 1995. Robert Oresko (1947–2010), to whom I owe an enormous debt for the publication of my book *Herculean Ferrara* with Cambridge University Press,²⁴ and Philp Mansel, whom I had met through Nicholas Cann in 1982, were both founder members. Philip was the founding editor of *The Court Historian*, for which I wrote several articles and reviews, including books by Mary, and by Elisabeth.²⁵ Mary generously provided supper in her flat in Warwick Square after Court History seminars.

These are only a few of the many mutual connections shared by John and Elisabeth and me. A Turkey Oak, *Quercus cerris* is dedicated to them in the Platonic

Academy, close to the trees for Gombrich, Baxandall, Trapp and Shearman.

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²⁴ Tuohy 1996.

²⁵ Tuohy 2019 and Tuohy 2017. I wrote reviews of earlier books by Mary.

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Art history with an art historian couple: John Onians and Elisabeth de Bièvre

Mohsen Veysi

The First Interview (2019)

In the autumn of 2019, while I was working on the last parts of my PhD dissertation, I realised that I still had so many unanswered questions (Figure 36.1). My dissertation addressed the issue of global art and art history by studying the effects of globalization on contemporary art and culture after 1989, using the framework of Alois Riegl's theory of *Kunstwollen*. Thus, I decided to interview scholars whose research centered around global and world art history studies for another chapter of my dissertation. One of the art historians I contacted was John Onians, Professor Emeritus of World Art at the University of East Anglia, Norwich, whose *Atlas of World Art* fascinated me a lot. I emailed him and asked for a possible online interview. John's answer was kind, professional, and encouraging:

Dear Mohsen,

Thank you for your intriguing message. I am so glad that you are engaging with such big and important issues. I would be delighted to answer your questions.

Best wishes, John

In this interview, Onians talked about the limitations of the linguistic element in the study of art history and the advantage of a scientific approach. He argued, "To my mind, the first thing we have to do is to free ourselves from the idea that the best way to get access to the human mind is through language. Since there are too many languages and too many documents for anyone to master, this is simply not a viable way to conceive of a global art history. The advantage of a neuroscience-based approach is that, because it requires only an understanding of the universally accepted principles governing neural formation of the individual, it can be applied to any place and time."¹ The interview piqued my curiosity about studying neuroscientific approach to art. After finishing my studies, I started with his

Neuroarthistory: From Aristotle and Pliny to Baxandall and Zeki (2007) and continued reading other scholars, such as Semir Zeki, David Freedberg, Vittorio Gallese, and Eric Kandel (amongst others), whose work links art to neuroscience. All that opened up to me new doors to understanding art and viewers' response to art, leading me to my recent focus on neuropoetics.

Onians' attempt to bridge neuroscience and art is different from other scholars who have mostly focused on studying the aesthetic experience and the viewer's response to works of art. Through the lens of neuroscience, he explores art history. Consequently, he is pioneering neuroarthistory. One of the most important reasons for the transformation of neuroscience during the last decades, he thinks, is the advent of brain scanning technologies. As he writes, "Techniques such as Computed Tomography (CT), Position Emission Tomography (PET) and Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), allowed an increasingly fine-grained study of the brain in the 1970s and 1980s. By the 1990s, functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) was monitoring neural activity in "real time." These techniques allowed a totally new type of direct access to the extraordinary complexity, flexibility, and vitality of our mental resources."²

In the 1990s, the neurobiologist Semir Zeki used fMRI to understand the brain's mechanism during an aesthetic experience and how the brain processes images and responds to them. Zeki introduced the term neuroaesthetics 'for an understanding of the biological basis of aesthetic experience.'³ He argues that, "The function of art and the function of the visual brain are one and the same (...) hence by knowing more about the workings of the brain in general and of the visual brain in particular, one might be able to develop the outlines of a theory of aesthetics that is biologically based."⁴ In his book, he describes how different areas of the visual cortex (V1) respond to the visual elements:

² Onians 2007b: 3.

³ Zeki 1999: 2.

⁴ Zeki 1999: 1.

¹ Veysi 2016: 146.



Figure 36.1. Elena Nesi, *The Art Historian Couple*, 2022. Graphite on paper, 21x29.7cm. Private collection.

V2 and V3 respond to lines and borders, V4 to colour, and V5 to motion. That means when we look at a line drawing, blood flows to the cells of V2 and V3; when we look at a colourful painting, blood goes to the cells in V4; and that is common in all humans. Elsewhere, Zeki also explored the neuromechanisms engaged when experiencing beauty.⁵ He notes that there is a common region in all humans' brains which responds to beauty during an aesthetic experience. Therefore, the aesthetic experience is based on the activity of the beholder's brain regardless of their nationality, cultural, and linguistic background.

The discovery of 'mirror neurons' during the 1990s at the University of Parma was another step that revolutionized neuroscience. Mirror neurons reflect the actions, emotions, and sensations of other people that we perceive. Mirror mechanism activates the same areas in the brain when we perceive someone doing something, or experiencing particular emotions and sensations as we perform that action, or experience those emotions and sensations. One of the discoverers of mirror neurons, Vittorio Gallese argues that the process of perceiving the world is more complex than the activation of the visual brain, therefore he introduces a new perception model called 'embodied

simulation.' He states that through the activation of mirror mechanism we simulate other people's actions, emotions, and sensations not only in our brains, but also in our bodies. Gallese writes: 'Human brains – like those of other non-human primates – are capable of making nonverbal sensorimotor representations of the space surrounding the body, objects, and other individuals. When observing someone performing an action, expressing an emotion, or undergoing a somatosensory stimulation, mirror mechanisms are activated and trigger an embodied simulation of that experience. Embodied simulation also occurs when we imagine seeing or doing something.'⁶ The same happens also when we are watching movies and/or looking at paintings or photographs.

Gallese has collaborated with several scholars in humanities for years. On studying aesthetic experience, he collaborated with the art historian David Freedberg, who is known for his research on viewers' psychological and emotional responses to art. In their research *Motion, emotion, and empathy in esthetic experience* (2007) they studied the spectators' corporeal and empathetic responses to both figurative and abstract works of art. They realized that 'When beholders contemplate artistic images depicting acting bodies and the expression of

⁵ See for example Ishizu and Zeki 2022.

⁶ Gallese et al. 2022: 88.

emotions and sensations, beholders' brains and bodies react by simulating those same actions, emotions, and sensations. Before the explicit cognitive-linguistic aspects guiding our experience of art, implicit embodied simulation may physiologically ground the fundamental role of empathy in aesthetic experience.⁷ According to their study, embodied simulation is not limited to observing representational images; they studied the viewer's response to abstract works of art, such as Lucio Fontana's cuts, arguing that 'When beholding a work of art, the artist's creative gestures are simulated within beholders' brain-body.'⁸ Hence, aesthetic experience goes beyond the activation of the visual brain.

Apart from the visual brain and mirror neurons, John Onians' application of neuroscience includes another discovery named neural plasticity, which is the brain's ability to reshape neural networks in response to a certain experience:

Neural plasticity is the key to understanding why we differ from each other at another level than the genetic. The basic principle of neuroplasticity is that our brain changes its configuration in response to changes in the individual's experience and actions. We are all born with 100 billion neurons, each capable of having up to 100,000 connections to other neurons. What makes us different from each other is the way those connections form and fall away in response to our experiences. Thus, if we repeat an experience, such as an action or a sensory exposure, the particular neurons involved in the motor or sensory cortex develop more connections, so improving our success in those actions or perceptions (...) In terms of vision, the more often we look at something the more connections will form between the neurons involved, so strengthening our preference for looking at that thing.⁹

On the one hand, mirror neurons help us understand others and tell us about our similarities. Neuroplasticity, on the other hand, reveals our differences shaped by our personal experiences. According to Onians, they both play a crucial role in understanding art. The more we know about what an artist has been looking at, the better we know about the neural formation of their visual preferences, and consequently, their art. As Onians writes:

To the extent that an individual has been exposed to a different environment, he or she will have

a differentiated neural apparatus. Depending on what plants or animals they have looked at, what bodily movements etc. they have witnessed, what emotions they have shared and what attention they have given them, their neural apparatus will be different, and to the extent that those differences affect vision and movement, their visual and motor preferences will be different. To the extent that all individuals in a group have had a similar exposure, they are liable to share those preferences. This allows us to potentially explain any aspect of an individual's or a group's behaviour, from artmaking or toolmaking to ways of thinking and feeling in relation to such exposure. The better we can reconstruct that exposure, the more accurate our explanation is likely to be.¹⁰

The neuroscientific findings helped Onians to look for the genesis of art. As he states, it helped him answer questions such as, 'Why did this particular person in this particular place at this particular time make, use, display, or otherwise respond to a work of this form and in this material in this particular way?''¹¹ In his *European Art: A Neuroarthistory* (2016), Onians applied his neuroarthistorical method to study European art history from the early cave paintings to the 20th century.¹² The book, which is divided into nine parts and 21 chapters, begins with the 'Origins of Two-Dimensional Representation.' In this chapter, Onians starts his neuroarthistorical search for the roots of European painting by analysing the paintings and engravings in the Chauvet cave in Southern France.

He mentions two main reasons for the activation of the cave dwellers' mirror neurons and shaping the plasticity of their neural visual networks, both related to the site. For the first one, he argues, seeing the marks of the bears' claw on the cave walls activated their mirror neurons, leading them to make both engraved and coloured marks on the walls of the cave. 'Such mirroring response can only have been encouraged by the natural empathy that human beings would have felt with bears, who, like them, also spent much time in caves and were omnivores, frequently stood erect on two legs and whose claws were enviable equivalents to human tools.'¹³ For the second one, he mentions the visual experience of intense looking at real animals. According to Onians, the natural rock arch of Vallon Pont d'Arc over the Ardèche river, which links west to east, was the only way for migrating herds to cross the

⁷ Gallese *et al.* 2022: 89.

⁸ Gallese *et al.* 2022: 89.

⁹ Onians 2007a: 309.

¹⁰ Onians 2007a: 310.

¹¹ Onians 2017: 16.

¹² For more information, see Maddox-Harle 2022.

¹³ Onians 2017: 27–28.

river and was also an excellent spot for their predatory humans. This enabled humans to observe animals, and the result was the visual exposure that ended in reproducing images of animals on cave walls. 'It was watching animals who were looking intently that activated their mirror neurons, so teaching them to look intently too, and it was this intense looking that affected the plasticity of their neural networks in such ways that they projected lifelike images on the cave walls,'¹⁴ he writes.

In the first chapter, he investigates the dawn of prehistorical art through the reconstruction of the neural processes of cave dwellers; in the last chapter entitled 'Caris and Sculpture' he tries to find the early visual exposures that shaped the neural networks of the contemporary Dutch artist Gerard Caris. In this chapter, he explains how, by going through the artist's CV and biography, he found out what the artist might have been looking at that affected his neural formation. After sharing his neuroarthistorical findings with the artist, he received Caris' surprising reaction through email:

Almost to this day, I have had to fight with museum directors to correct the misconception that my work is not an exercise of applied mathematics, nor a mere utility (sic) of five-fold symmetry... I was under an intuitive impression that I was obediently following some natural drive... And now, with your beautifully written neuroarthistorical view, I am beginning to understand more clearly the origins of the preferences behind my visual expression, through the knowledge of neural plasticity, which you so clearly and powerfully explained.¹⁵

The main difference between chapter 21 and the rest of the book is that the last chapter is about a living artist who can confirm or deny Onians' neuroarthistorical findings, while for the deceased artists of the previous chapters no such possibility exists. Like it or not, there is no better proof than the artist's confirmation of the explanations provided by the neuroarthistorian.¹⁶

Although neuroarthistory has been criticized by some art historians as 'reductive materialism,'¹⁷ which doesn't add anything special to art history, I believe that this interdisciplinary approach is the most valuable aspect of John Onians' work. As a specialist in Italian Renaissance and Greek and Roman art, he

could have just continued contributing to art history through traditional art historical methods. But he courageously left his comfort zone to find the genesis of art, based on the discoveries of neuroscience, aiming at developing a scientific method that could be applied to any art at any place and time. During recent years, there have been talks and discussions on both 'neuromania' and 'neurophobia.' Regardless of what is right or wrong, in my opinion, learning about the biology of art in general, and neuroarthistory and neuroaesthetics in particular, can ease the process of creativity, learning, and teaching.

Talking through my personal experience as an artist-researcher-teacher, I would say as an artist that the neuroscientific approaches helped me to get a better understanding of the resources of my artistic expression. Consequently, I have been able to express them better both verbally and visually. As a researcher who comes from a non-Western background, I acquired a better understanding of Western art history and aesthetics. I believe that neuroarthistory can help in exploring the art of places for which no written historical documents exist. This, of course, doesn't mean discarding traditional art historical methods and theories, but using them in favour of enhancing our knowledge in order to expand art history in a more inclusive manner. As a teacher, learning about mirror neurons, neuroplasticity, empathy, and the viewers' biological and psychological response helped me to grasp a better understanding of my students' works and their needs to develop their creativity. By knowing about their early visual exposures based on their personal life experiences and background, it is easier to treat them as different individuals within the same group and facilitate their learning process, resulting in promoting diversity and inclusion in the classroom.

The Second Interview (2022)

After studying different scholars' works on art and neuroscience, I decided to interview them for the Italian journal *Artribune*. So, as my first attempt, I emailed John asking for the possibility of a short online interview on neuroarthistory, an offer he kindly accepted. The interview was published in Italian in *Artribune* on 10 May 2022.¹⁸ In this interview, which can be read in English in the following pages, Onians answers some questions on neuroarthistory.

¹⁴ Onians 2017: 43.

¹⁵ Onians 2017: 348–49.

¹⁶ Watch also LadderMAN SDA 2020: 20:27.

¹⁷ See for example Rampley 2016.

¹⁸ Onians 2022.

What is Neuroarthistory: An Interview with the pioneer John Onians

By Mohsen Veysi

The British art historian John Onians is a Professor Emeritus of World Art at the University of East Anglia, Norwich. His interests range from the close analysis of Italian Renaissance architecture and Greek and Roman art to experimentation with broad approaches to art as a worldwide phenomenon, such as art geography. Onians is the pioneer of neuroarthistory and the author of *Neuroarthistory: From Aristotle and Pliny to Baxandall and Zeki* (2007) and *European Art: A Neuroarthistory* (2016). In the interview to follow, John Onians gives us his thoughts on neuroarthistory.

Mohsen Veysi (MV): What is neuroarthistory?

John Onians (JO): Neuroarthistory is art history that exploits the discoveries of neuroscience. It has long been known that making art and responding to art both require intensive use of our neural resources, especially those serving the eye and the hand. Only recently, though, have technologies, such as brain scanning, made it possible to analyse and understand the complex processes involved. The result has been that we can now improve our answers to old art-historical questions and engage with new ones. Building on the work of earlier thinkers, from Aristotle to Gombrich, neuroarthistory uses the latest knowledge of the brain's structure and the principles governing its operation, to explicate the processes involved in the making, viewing, use and interpretation of all types of art, from all places and periods.¹⁹

Neuroarthistory can take many forms, from the modest to the ambitious. It may only involve using an aspect of neuroscience to supplement existing approaches to the study of a particular object, such as a painting like the Mona Lisa.²⁰ Or it may be more ambitious, requiring a completely fresh consideration of all human mental activity, as by the recognition that the reason why we possess a brain and nervous system is not, as has often been assumed, to enable us to think, but, as with all other animals, to help us to physically move in ways that successfully ensure the transmission of our genetic material.

Art-making, like all the other actions that are facilitated by our nervous system, is thus in some way viscerally important to us, being more relevant to our physical

survival than we have realized previously. This new-found role of our neural make-up in promoting our physical survival helps to explain why it possesses some remarkable properties that have been selected for by evolution. One is neural plasticity, the property that ensures that the connections in our neural networks are not, as used to be assumed, fixed, but mutable and liable to constantly change in response to variations in our experiences, so ensuring, among other things, that they are always adapted to our particular circumstances. Another property is neural mirroring. This ensures, among other things, that we are liable, unconsciously, to imitate and understand the actions of those around us, so rendering our behaviours more compatible with our specific environment.

Knowing the neural principles on which these properties are founded yields fresh insights into many art-related behaviours. For example, because these environmentally driven neural processes are biological and to some extent predictable, we can say that the more we know of someone's material and social environment the more we will know of their mental activity. Given what we know of the principles governing neural formation we can now reconstruct salient aspects of the neural resources that allow individuals and groups to adapt to their context. A knowledge of the principles of neuroscience thus provides us with new access to the mental life of individuals without us needing either to talk to them or to put them in a scanner.

MV: How did you become interested in neuroarthistory?

JO: As a graduate student in the 1960's my supervisor, E.H. Gombrich, introduced me to the psychology of art, and then, in the 1970's, the neuroscientist, Colin Blakemore, alerted me to the potential role of neuroscience in that psychology. The importance of this role was then thrown into relief in the 1980's by my search for a tool that would give me equal access to the art of all peoples everywhere in the world from prehistory to the present and free me from the constraints traditional in the humanities. No longer requiring me to give primacy to words and to think in terms of consciousness and rationality, the use of neuroscience allows me to understand the importance of mental activity that is expressed in bodily actions that are driven by needs that are vital, being registered in the viscera.

MV: What are the main differences between neuroarthistory and other art historical methods and theories?

¹⁹ Onians 2007b.

²⁰ Onians 2019: 353–75.

JO: Other art historical methods and theories, following a tradition that goes back to ancient Greece, tend to treat words as the best expression of the human mind. Most have yet to take on board the insights yielded by the latest neuroscience. They thus have little awareness of the importance of the nervous system for all human mental activity. Neuroarthistory, by contrast, because it recognises that the nervous system links the mind's higher functions to all parts of the body, the limbs, the viscera and the senses, attends to aspects of experience disregarded by other approaches, for example physical movement, sensations, emotions, and memory. Neuroarthistory fully acknowledges the role of the physical in the mental.

It also more fully acknowledges the role of individuality. Other approaches treat art as primarily a cultural manifestation, shaped by rational thought and verbal exchanges, concentrating on explanations that are social and group-related. Neuroarthistory by contrast acknowledges that neural formation is individual, being a product of the interaction between a person's genetic neural inheritance at birth and changes in their personal experiences.

MV: Some scholars criticised neuroarthistory as being a purely scientific method that does not consider cultural influences on the brain in shaping art. What do you think about that?

JO: This view is based on a misunderstanding of neuroarthistory. Neuroarthistory is not 'purely scientific,' but makes use of scientific knowledge as an aid to the understanding of such familiar cultural processes as the formation and transmission of preferences, values, and ideologies. In my case, science tells me that I am colour-blind because of my genetic inheritance. It also clarifies the cultural strategies I can adopt to compensate for that deficit.

MV: After 1989 contemporary art broke through Western borders and became global. Therefore, global art necessitated a new approach towards art history. To help develop art history as a global discipline and avoid Eurocentrism many universities tried to adapt a more inclusive curriculum by adding more non-Western art history courses. Can neuroarthistory help ease the process?

JO: Absolutely! Indeed a prime motivation behind the development of neuroarthistory was the desire to find an approach that was equally applicable to all peoples, places, and periods. One of the problems with all earlier approaches to art, including those adopted

in many of the new non-Western art history courses, is that they typically still perpetuate Eurocentric biases. For example, by still assuming that the best way to approach a culture is through language and the study of verbal expressions in general, they bolster the snobbery that sustains European and Western dominance in the first place. Also, by emphasizing the importance of languages, of which no-one can master more than a few, they make it much more difficult to develop an approach that relates to the totality of artistic production. The biological principles that sustain neuroscience are universal. By applying them we treat all people and all periods with equality.

MV: What are your suggestions for those who are interested in neuroarthistory?

JO: One of the best ways to get a full benefit from neuroarthistory is to become aware of your own neural history, that is the extent to which your individual mental formation is the product of your particular experiences. Once you have done that you will more easily follow the neural histories of the particular individuals who made and used the art you are studying. The more you can reconstruct the neural formation of each of them the more you will understand their particular relationship to art.

In Florence and Rome (2022)

After the interview, John emailed me and said he would be in Italy for about a month from 16 May and he will pass through Florence and Rome (Figure 36.2). He was invited to help with the launch of a new book on the history of architecture entitled *Rome: An Architectural History* by Maria Fabricius and Lars Horneman at the Danish Academy in Rome. We met in Florence on 19 May on a sunny day in a restaurant in the Piazza Santa Croce. It was a pleasure meeting him soon after our interview. We had a cafe and a wonderful conversation in which we touched on many ideas (Figure 36.3).

On 26 May I went to Rome to attend the book launch. There I met John's wife Elisabeth de Bièvre and their daughter Isabelle Onians for the first time. It was a memorable day in Rome with amazing people. We talked about different things while having food after the event. Elisabeth discussed her research and her book *Dutch Art and Urban Cultures, 1200-1700* (2015). She explained how she explored Dutch art in seven cities in the Netherlands and described their differences that were based on various historical and geographical circumstances. I told her I was familiar with Dutch art through my studies on Alois Riegl, who explored



Figure 36.2. Elena Nesi, *John Onians in Florence*, 2022. Graphite on paper, 21x29.7cm. Private collection.



Figure 36.3. Elena Nesi, *Elisabeth de Bièvre in Rome*, 2022. Graphite on paper, 21x29.7cm. Private collection.

the similarities and differences between the group portraits in Amsterdam and Haarlem in his *The Group Portraiture of Holland* (1902).

After our meeting in Rome, I read Elisabeth's book to get a better understanding of her scholarship. In this hardcover 492-page book, consisting of seven chapters and each dedicated to a different Dutch city's art, she describes the subject of the book as the 'active conscious reflection' on diverse 'environments and cultures' she passively experienced during her life in different places. She explains how through her PhD thesis for London University she explored 'the architecture and decoration of four town halls in Holland (...) between 1560 and 1660, when, through competition, negotiation, and military proficiency, out of feudal dependency, a self-determining federal republic was born.'²¹ She continues:

I had expected the shared response of the Provinces to the Revolt to result in many similarities in the

public buildings and the art commissioned to fill them. What I found instead were four completely different visual cultures, each manifesting local preoccupations that went back hundreds of years and continued, and even intensified, in the seventeenth century, as the cities jockeyed for position in the new state, looking to their past for the roots of their present individual achievements. By going back to the time of the cities' foundation, I realized that their differences were ultimately shaped – to some degree determined – by their diverse geographical origins and the social and economic histories that those engendered and sustained.²²

The thesis became the foundation of the book. In it, she explores the art of four town halls of Delft, Haarlem, Leiden, and The Hague, and three cities including Amsterdam, Dordrecht, and Utrecht, based on their geology, geography, and history. Each chapter begins by introducing 'an urban "ambassador" in the form

²¹ De Bièvre 2015: X.

²² De Bièvre 2015: X–XI.

of a well-known 17th-century painting produced by an artist who was either a native of or lived and worked for the majority of his life in the city under discussion.²³ For example, she chooses Frans Hals' *Isaac Abrahamsz Massa and Beatrix van der Laen* (c. 1622) as an urban ambassador painting of Haarlem, and Rembrandt's *Night Watch* (1642) for Amsterdam. After analyzing the painting, explaining 'why it can represent the community in which it was made'²⁴ she explores the geological, geographical, and historical factors that influenced the local circumstances and shaped each city's art and visual culture.

De Bièvre's book challenges the idea of Dutch art as a uniform phenomenon by emphasising the differences between each Dutch city's art in both formal and informal aspects in various categories. As an example, she describes how in each city the artists displayed specific objects in their 'vanitas still life' works. 'In Utrecht and Delft one finds (at different periods) mainly flowers in their still lifes, while in Leiden, the predominant features are skulls or books, and in Haarlem, one sees cheese and beer tankards displayed on high-quality white linen.'²⁵ All formal and informal artistic preferences, according to the author, 'are pointers to a particular urban culture, revealing priorities, beliefs, needs, dreams, and apprehensions that might otherwise be hidden. Ideas and feelings that are hardly articulated in words find their expression visually, often selected on a subconscious level.'²⁶

By referring to neuroscience, she describes how our visual experiences, beginning with our exposure to the external world, remain in our brains and influence us. In the case of artists and art lovers, she writes, 'Visual, subconscious impressions from the natural and cultural environment contribute decisively to shaping both the production and the patronage of art and architecture.'²⁷ She also points out the changes in particular genes as a result of environmental exposure, and based on these neuroscientific findings, de Bièvre introduces the concept of 'urban or local subconscious' as the heart of her art historiography. She defines her theory 'as a sense of priorities shared by a majority of inhabitants in one community and built up over a long period of time. It is formed by the sum of physical circumstances and historical events, experienced collectively by people living for several generations in the same environment (...) The

values and expectations, the hopes and the fears of the citizens of one community are shaped by similar exposures, and in their turn shape similar images.'²⁸ Based on this theory, the art, architecture, and visual culture of each place are the results of the urban subconscious, which influence the artists, but at the same time do not limit their individuality and personal artistic expression. Elisabeth de Bièvre's goal in this long book is not only studying Dutch art from 1200 to 1700 and exploring the differences between the art of seven cities in the Netherlands, but as she writes, her aim is to provide 'a model for the study of the art of any type of community from any period and any area of the globe.'²⁹

Despite their differences, a comparison between John Onians and Elisabeth de Bièvre's approach to art history reveals interesting similarities and correlations. They both ambitiously attempt to introduce a method that could be applied to any art form at any location and era. For this purpose, Onians pioneered neuroarthistory and de Bièvre introduced urban subconscious, which are both based on the study of the visual exposure to the surrounding world. By referring to neuroscience in order to explain the urban subconscious, de Bièvre's approach gets closer to that of Onians; at the same time, Onians mentions her study of Dutch art as his source of inspiration: 'Most inspiring was the opportunity to learn daily from Elisabeth de Bièvre's studies of the role of exposure to the natural, material, and social environment in shaping Dutch art, as exemplified in her *Dutch Art and Urban Cultures, 1200–1700* (2015). Her insights often guided me in the development of this neuroarthistory,' states Onians.³⁰ All that shows an interconnection between their research, which seems to empower their art historical methodologies as an art historian couple.

Regardless of all compliments, appreciations, judgments, and criticism that every scholar's work may receive, and apart from the weaknesses and points of strength of each theory and method, what is significant and obvious is this art historian couple's monumental contribution to art history. No doubt their impact on art history and world art studies, both as art historians and teachers, is undeniable. For me, it has been a pleasure knowing them and learning from them, and I'm glad that I have had the opportunity to contribute to this book.

²³ De Bièvre 2015: 2.

²⁴ De Bièvre 2015: 2.

²⁵ De Bièvre 2015: XII.

²⁶ De Bièvre 2015: XII.

²⁷ De Bièvre 2015: XII.

²⁸ De Bièvre 2015: XII.

²⁹ De Bièvre 2015: XIII.

³⁰ Onians 2017: X.

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37.

John the encourager

Adam Zeman

I remember meeting John for the first time, just over a decade ago. I had given a ‘new talk’ – academics, like other performers, become familiar with their old numbers, but once in a while we have to break new ground. My theme was ‘The Imaginative Brain:’ this was a congenial challenge but one that had led me into some unfamiliar territory. The talk passed the first couple of key tests – there were no major glitches in delivery, and it provoked some interesting questions which I was just about able to answer. I was gathering my wits on the stage at the end of the session when I was accosted enthusiastically by, as it turned out, John. He made me feel that I had done something special, filled a gap in the intellectual firmament – welcome news to any speaker. He lingered long enough to make it clear that he would like to join forces somehow. My initial impressions of John were distinctive: great warmth, tremendous energy, a certain neatness of dress, those horn-rimmed specs – with something of Merlin in the mix. I was delighted by this slightly magical encounter. He slipped away after our conversation, but over coffee my mind was filled with jostling memories and impressions: there was a kind of simultaneously disturbing and refreshing mental breeze, the sense of a new direction.

As it turned out, we were indeed able to join forces. I provided the foil for a star turn John gave at Goldsmith’s College in 2013 – discovering, over a snack of humous and olives *en route*, that John is an intellectual equipped with that salutary knowledge that the body is often in need of sustenance at least as much as the mind. Later that year I was invited to give a version of the now not-so-new talk at John’s Neuroarthistory Summer School in Norwich. This was a triple pleasure: I encountered John in his natural habitat, his welcoming home; revisited the Sainsbury Centre which I had come to love in the mid-1990s when weekends as a junior neurologist on-call kept me in Norwich; had a chance to contribute to a fascinating course.

We went on to apply for and secure a grant together in 2014, which allowed us to create a small interdisciplinary group – The Eye’s Mind team – to study aspects of visual imagery. With our colleagues – the artist,

Susan Aldworth; philosopher, Fiona Macpherson; neuroscientist, Crawford Winlove; cultural historian, Matthew MacKisack – we had great fun in doing so. Unusually, in my experience, we achieved every one of the aims we had spelt out in our necessarily over-ambitious grant proposal. The first phase of the project culminated in a conference in 2016, again at the Sainsbury Centre, which led in turn to a special – and truly interdisciplinary – issue of the journal *Cortex*.¹ In a second phase, focussed on people with ‘aphantasia’ and ‘hyperphantasia’ – who lack a mind’s eye or have imagery in abundance – we organised an exhibition of work by aphantasic and hyperphantasic artists, accompanied by an innovative catalogue with essays by members of the team.² This exhibition travelled from Glasgow to Exeter, where its launch coincided with our other objective in phase two: the first ever conference, in 2019, organised for people with extreme imagery. At every stage in this journey John was on hand with good and wise advice and lashings of enthusiasm.

Two aspects of John’s intellectual and moral nature were much in evidence. His special, intellectual contribution was to keep reminding us about the importance of brain and body: I have never met a neuroscientist who thinks as persistently and doggedly as John about the implications of the – undeniable but very easily forgotten – facts that we are embodied and embrained. His moral contribution was to be unfailingly encouraging. The world needs encouragers – I have only met a handful who are in John’s league.

The diagram that follows (Table 37.1) is a tentative and speculative sketch of the psychological significance or ramifications of the complex contrast between rich sensory imagery, as occurs in hyperphantasia, and thin or absent sensory imagery, as in aphantasia (‘ventral’ and ‘dorsal’ stream refer to the two major pathways taken by visual processing within the brain, the former relating to object identity, the latter to motion, location and the visual control of action; Daniel Dennett’s 1996 concepts of ‘intentional’ and ‘physical’ stance contrast

¹ Zeman, MacKisack and Onians 2018.

² Aldworth and MacKisack 2018.

explanation in terms of mental state with explanation in terms of physical mechanisms).

I first drew this mind-map five years ago after reading the rather good book put together by someone with aphantasia – Alan Kendle (2017) – together with an enterprising psychologist-publisher. Alan’s ideas and impressions echoed mine, based on testimony from many thousands of people with extreme imagery. I have been too shy to show this sketch so far in scientific company – perhaps I will now pluck up courage. But I thought that John might enjoy unpicking and pondering it. I hope he – and any other readers – will share their thoughts about it. It comes with heartfelt thanks for John’s encouragement.

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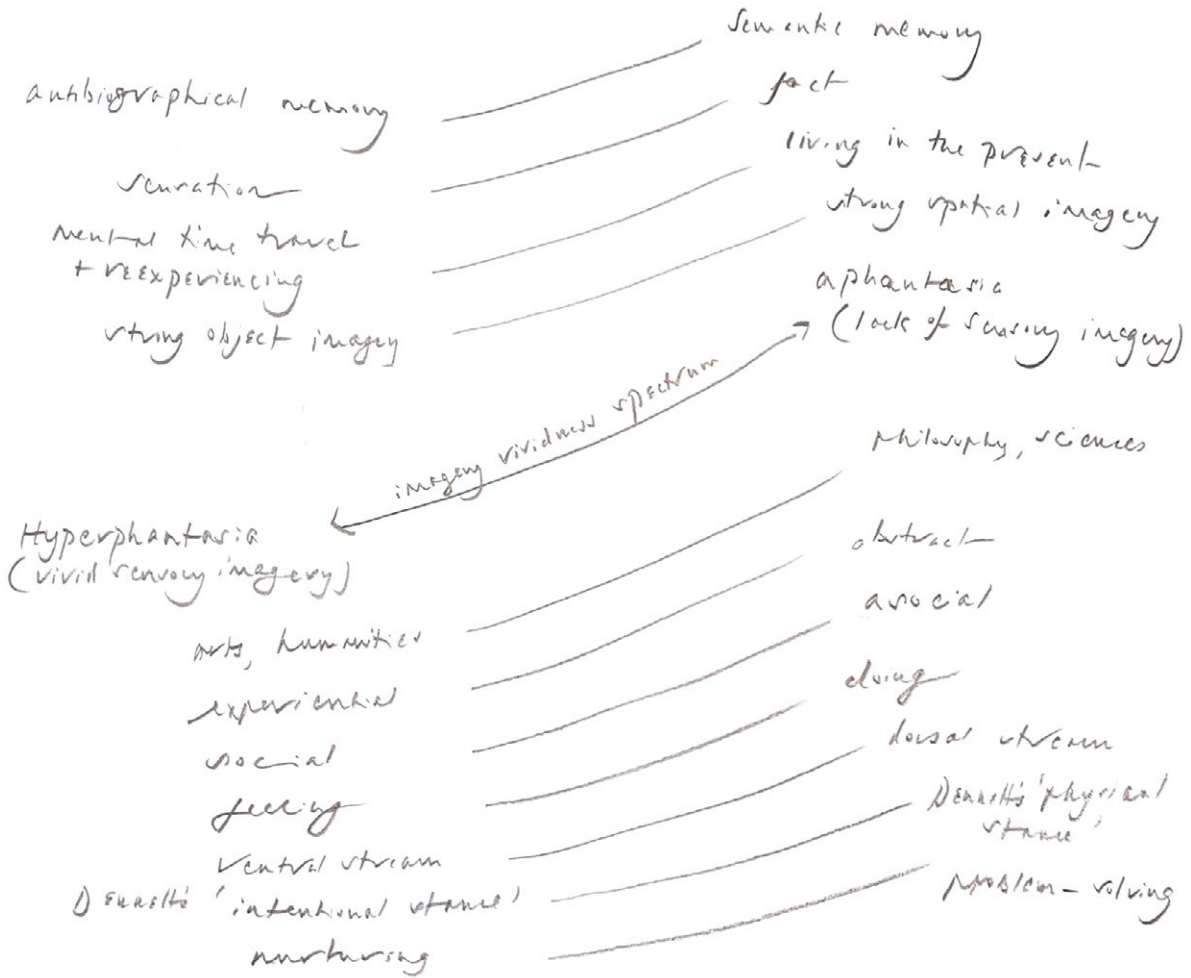
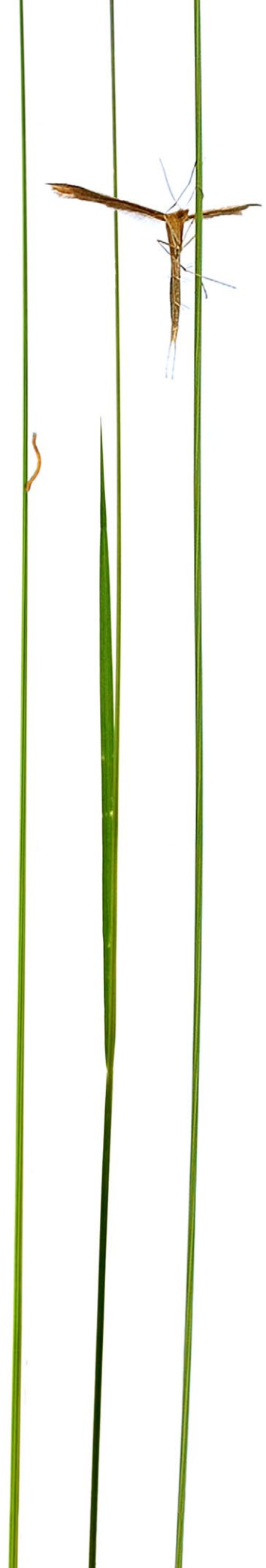


Figure 37.1. Adam Zeman, Aphantasia vs. hyperphantasia, 2023.

Part III



Variations on a theme of phantasia: A tribute to John Onians

Michael A. Arbib

Preamble

I first met John Onians in 2009 when he visited the University of Southern California where I was then a professor, and we talked about his seminal work *Neuroarthistory: From Aristotle and Pliny to Baxandall and Zeki* (2007), playing variations of cultural evolution on various themes of neuroscience in relation to art, and my own analysis of the role of mirror neurons within the larger interplay of biological and cultural evolution whereby ‘the brain got language’ (later brought together in *How the Brain Got Language*, 2012). In 2010, I became intrigued with the implications of neuroscience for architecture and, as part of my initiation into that field, read Harry Mallgrave’s book *The Architect’s Brain: Neuroscience, Creativity, and Architecture* (2009). In this book, Mallgrave acknowledges the interest of John Onians in ‘the biological foundations of artistic perception, following the lead of one of his mentors, Ernst Gombrich.’ Mallgrave then declares that his interest is in bringing neuroscience and architecture together through a study of ‘the creative process itself... [seeing] neuroscience offering designers today... a sketch of our intellectual and sensory-emotive experience.’¹ This reinforced an interest for me in the parallels and differences between what John called neuroarthistory and what Mallgrave did not call neuroarchitecturehistory.

When John returned to Southern California in late 2017, I was able to invite him to give a talk ‘Towards a Historical Neuroaesthetics of Architecture,’ based in part on his then new book *European Art: A Neuroarthistory* (2016), at the New School in Architecture and Design in San Diego (Figure 38.1).

A key theme of the 2007 and 2009 books is the way in which art (for John) and architecture (for Mallgrave) have changed across the last two millennia or so, while the last century has led to an ever deepening understanding of human (and other) brains. Yet, just as different people have different faces, and these faces

¹ Mallgrave 2009: 2–3.

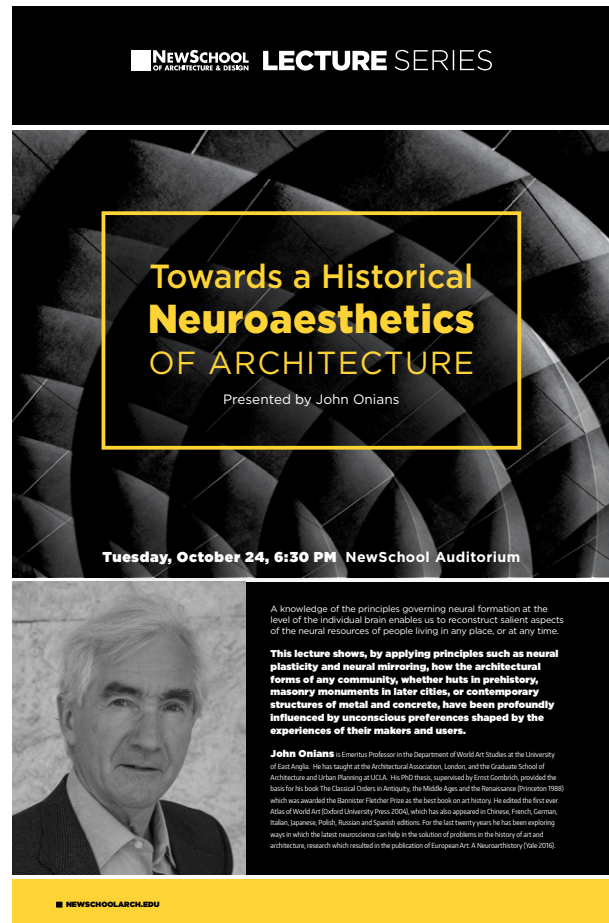


Figure 38.1. Poster for a talk Towards a Historical Neuroaesthetics of Architecture, given by John Onians at the New School in Architecture and Design, San Diego, 24 October 2017.

change with age and experience, so are people endowed with different genomes that undergird the growth and development of their brains. However, brains change far more than faces do across the lifespan, and while the choice of haircut or clothes may vary across time and cultures, the changes that culture makes in our brains are even more dramatic. Thus, without doubting that different artists or different architects across the centuries have indeed had different brains, both

authors pay scant attention to the genetic variation among those brains and focus rather on the variation of culture and experience that shapes each one of them.

Intriguingly, then, in their 2022 article ‘Plural Imagination: Diversity in Mind and Making,’ John Onians and his colleagues, Matthew MacKisack, Susan Aldworth, Fiona Macpherson, Crawford Winlove, and Adam Zeman, have taken up the issue of ‘neurodiversity,’ exploring the difference between artists who have ‘hyperphantasia,’ the ability to have exceptionally vivid visual mental images, and those who have ‘aphantasia,’ the inability to form visual images.² My initial idea for this tribute to John when writing in the year he turned 80, was to explore the interplay between his neuroarthistory and Mallgrave’s neuroarchitecturehistory and relate this to some ideas I have developed in my 2021 book *When Brains Meet Buildings: A Conversation between Neuroscience and Architecture*. However, it seemed a better tribute to John’s ongoing vitality to focus on this current work and offer suggestions, complementing the interest for neuroarthistory, for how to explore the cognitive science of art production as challenged by ‘aphantasics.’

Visual imagery and the production of art: aphantasia versus hyperphantasia

The primary focus for MacKisack *et al.* is the relation of visual mental imagery to the production of paintings as a source of data for neuroarthistory, with the study of aphantasia supporting rejection of a classic model of artistic subjectivity in which artists impose their vivid internal vision on a passive world, with the act of painting serving only to realise what had been preconceived.³

The model persists into the late eighteenth-century academy. The painter, says Joshua Reynolds in his inaugural Royal Academy lectures,⁴ should take their subject from ‘Greek and Roman fable’ or ‘Scripture history.’ The stories will cause the artist to ‘form... a picture in his mind of the action and the expression of the persons employed.’ The artist’s task is then to transfer the picture in his mind to the canvas directly: ‘The power of representing this mental picture on canvass [sic] is what we call invention in a painter.’⁵

² The word ‘phantasia’ does occur in Onians 2007: 22, 36, but only as Aristotle’s term for visual imagination.

³ In what follows, although I write only of ‘painting,’ I invite the reader to assess when the considerations apply also to ‘drawing’ or other related creative practices.

⁴ Reprinted in Reynolds 1975.

⁵ MacKisack *et al.* 2022: 72.

The Vividness of Visual Imagery Questionnaire (VVIQ) gives subjects prompts to imagine scenes and objects and quantifies the vividness of the reported imagery along a scale from ‘no image’ to ‘an image as vivid as perception.’ The result is a bell curve across the population: most people report some degree of imagery, with minorities at the two ends of the curve experiencing a complete lack of imagery or a perception-like vividness.⁶ These extremes were given the respective names ‘aphantasia’ and ‘hyperphantasia,’ respectively.⁷ Various studies have investigated the neural correlates of imagery vividness and associated questionnaire ratings with variations in brain activity.⁸

In 2019, Susan Aldworth and Matthew MacKisack curated an exhibition, *Extreme Imagination - Inside the Mind’s Eye*, of the artwork of six hyperphantasics and twelve aphantasics.⁹ Intriguingly,

there seemed to be little connection between imagery vividness and the nature of the artworks themselves... What was distinctive, however, was how [the artists] described the processes they employed to produce an artwork... For ... aphantasic participants there was an externality to the composition process... Where some start with preexisting [i.e. external] images, others start by making a mark or marks on the blank surface, which will serve as a stimulus or a material to [the] work... [The patient identified as SB] described how she applies the material ‘blindly’ (i.e. without an intended final image) to the surface and ‘gradually, shapes, and colors evoke essences of meaning.’ Only in the process of making the picture did she recognize it as an image: a depiction of ‘distressing events’ that she had been preoccupied with but unable to visualize. She concludes that ‘a figurative representation of them emerged unintentionally.’ The collages were then accordingly titled.¹⁰

For me, the most interesting description is that of the aphantasic Michael Chance. MacKisack *et al.*¹¹ provide not only a photograph of a complete and very

⁶ Faw 2009.

⁷ Yeman, Dewar and Della Sala 2015.

⁸ Lee, Kravit and Baker 2012; Winlove *et al.* 2018; Dijkstra, Bosch and van Gerven 2017.

⁹ The exhibition was in 2019, see MacKisack *et al.* 2022: 78, footnote 47. The University of Glasgow’s Centre for the Study of Perceptual Experience has produced a digital counterpart of the exhibition, viewed 13 December 2022, <<https://www.gla.ac.uk/research/az/cspe/engagement/extreme-imagination/>>. The online exhibition component not only shows the variety of styles of these artists but also pairs each photograph of a work with an intriguing statement of how the artist uses or circumvents visual imagery.

¹⁰ MacKisack *et al.* 2022: 79–80.

¹¹ MacKisack *et al.* 2022: 81.

complicated scene (a montage of diverse nude human figures, many in provocative poses, but with no global integration into a single scene) but also two stills from a digital video *Improv painting from imagination—timelapse* – showing that a foreshortened prone figure in the second still was suggested by the negative space between two profiles in the first. These demonstrate that, at least for Chance, reflection (whether conscious or not) on the current state of the piece affects what comes next – though in his case, this may expand on a local theme of the emerging painting or adding a new topic defined by the space circumscribed so far. Here, each new component is well structured in terms of the actions of painting required to yield a satisfactory figure or subscene.

[J]udging from our artists, the level of realism in representational work has nothing to do with vividness of internal imagery and everything to do with artistic intention and the learned ability to realize it. This works in both directions. A detailed and ‘realistic’ depiction does not mean the artist images vividly, and ‘seeing’ a scene vividly in one’s mind eye is independent of the ability or desire to render it graphically. The same goes for the style of a period or group as for that of an individual: we cannot say the work is a certain way because of the artists’ experience of imagery.¹²

MacKisack *et al.* also discuss the work of artists with hyperphantasia who form a vivid and detailed visual image prior to execution without emendation of the finished work – the result matches perfectly the previously imagined image. Only these meet the above criteria adumbrated by Joshua Reynolds. It is the existence of artists who succeed despite aphantasia that offer new support for the neuroarthistorical rejection of the classic model of artistic subjectivity of artists imposing their vivid internal vision on a passive world.¹³ However, the key observation when our concern turns to ‘how do artists do it?’ is that even geniuses of imagery rarely go directly from mental image to completed work:¹⁴

¹² MacKisack *et al.* 2022: 85.

¹³ As discussed by MacKisack *et al.* 2022: 72.

¹⁴ I would argue that the brain mechanisms involved in making art are shared by almost all humans and can be developed by learning, but that nonetheless the brains of some people seem innately better structured than others to benefit from such experience and to develop further than would be possible no matter how extensive the training. However, I do not know what determines this propensity for excellence. In part, it must persist through well-tuned receptivity to the relevant patterns of stimuli, to mastering the necessary motor skills to close the loop between performance and imagination, and to possessing the motivation to not only find such stimuli intriguing but also to wish to express them as a ‘performer’ rather than as a ‘connoisseur.’

Vasari notes in his life of Titian that to ‘adjust his inventions,’ the artist must ‘first draw them in different ways on paper so as to see how it all goes together’ – the reason being that ‘the mind can [not] perfectly imagine such inventions within itself unless it opens up and shows its conceptions to the corporeal eyes which aid it to arrive at good judgement...’¹⁵ Vivid imagers can compose internally first before externally recomposing – but that recomposition is inflected by the contingencies of manual action and the material they are working with.¹⁶

In what follows, I offer a framework that includes Gombrich’s ideas as a special case, and is broad enough to frame studies of the bringing together of action and perception in art, architecture and, especially, the everyday lives of humans and other animals.

From action-oriented perception to the work of art

As noted by MacKisack *et al.*,¹⁷ the art historian Ernst Gombrich also cited a passage from Leon Battista Alberti’s *De Statua* (1464) speculating on the origins of drawing – an origin rooted in the sculpting of an observed object that we may extrapolate to the placing of contour and colour in painting:

I believe that the arts which aim at imitating the creations of nature originated in the following way: [if] in a tree trunk, a lump of earth, or in some other thing were accidentally discovered one day certain contours that needed only a very slight change to look strikingly like some natural object. Noticing this, people tried to see if it were not possible by addition or subtraction to complete what still was lacking for a perfect likeness. Thus by adjusting and removing outlines and planes in the way demanded by the object itself, men achieved what they wanted, and not without pleasure. From that day, man’s capacity to create images grew apace until he was able to create any likeness, even when there was no vague outline in the material to aid him.¹⁸

This should not be read as an argument for or against the doctrine that the artist fully conceives a new artwork before attacking the canvas, since such exercises are part of many modern artists’ development of the motor skills for painting a wide variety of objects – with natural instances of these objects supplemented

¹⁵ Giorgio Vasari, *Life of Titian*, quoted in Gombrich 1982: 227.

¹⁶ MacKisack *et al.* 2022: 85, footnote 57.

¹⁷ MacKisack *et al.* 2022: 73.

¹⁸ Gombrich 1960: 90.

by depictions in prior paintings. However, the skill does not reside in setting down the contours that match the appearance of a single object – rather, it consists in the ability to capture observed variations so as to open the way to future practice in which novel variations can be imagined that best contribute to the composition of a novel artwork. MacKisack *et al.* note that Gombrich presents Alberti's theory as a forerunner of his own theory of 'making and matching' – that the artist progressively modifies the image or object to make it match some specified criteria.¹⁹ I return to this below, but for now let's focus on the difference between tracing contours and composing an assemblage of forms related to distinct objects.

A number of autistic children may appear to be very skillful at drawing, but the skill is based on contour-by-contour copying uninfected by ideas about the nature of the objects involved. In 1978, Wendy Wapner, Tedd Judd, and Howard Gardner studied visual agnosia in a left-handed artist, JR, who was 73 years old when he had a stroke that affected primary visual cortex and nearby regions that transform the visual input in various ways. Despite little or no impairment in language or cognition, JR was generally unable to identify single objects on visual presentation and showed great difficulty in interpreting complex objects.²⁰ Nonetheless, he retained various techniques (perspective, shading, indication of texture) which allowed him to copy the display in an 'apparently' faithful fashion. In one example, in which he sought to reproduce a drawing of a very long-tailed rooster sitting on top of a stove, he produced a drawing that at first glance appears accurate. However, rather than recognizing the rooster with a long tail, he drew the tail separated from the body, and also separated the lower part of the tail, intermingling its contours with those for the feet of the stove. He had retained the ability to follow contours and shading, but not the 'perceptual schemas' that characterised what objects are represented in the picture. All of this is not to deny that in later art forms, abstraction from the constraints of reality can constitute a valid piece of art.²¹

With this let me explain what I mean by perceptual schemas and how I understand their relation to motor

schemas. The starting point is to emphasise the notion of 'action-oriented perception:' the evolutionarily basic role of perception is to support actions related to the observed objects. If we see an apple then, as highly evolved creatures, we may name it or draw it, but I emphasise the varied demands made on perception of the apple depending on what we intend to do with it. If we run a market stall, then we may view each apple in terms of how to grasp it and then place it on a mounting pile of apples on a stand. If we are a customer, then we may examine a number of those apples until we find ones whose shape and coloring seems to us to indicate that the apple would be a pleasure to eat; then we may grasp it and place it in our shopping basket. If we have an apple that we are ready to eat, we may examine its shape in sufficient detail to guide our knife as we peel it and cut it into pieces; we coordinate hand and mouth if we take an apple to bite a piece from it. If we see that an apple has been kept too long, we may judge whether to cut out a piece that is spoiled and then eat the rest, or we may grasp the apple only to throw it into the rubbish bin. In the jargon of my version of schema theory, then, there is no single 'perceptual schema' for recognizing apples. Rather, there is a variety of perceptual schemas (some apple-specific; some highly general) that allow us to extract (often nonconsciously) properties of the apple that are relevant to our current intentions that 'set the parameters' for the various 'motor schemas' whereby our brain controls the relevant actions. Note, moreover, that the course of action in general relates not only to the apple itself but also its relation to the objects around it – our actions are affected by the context and our intentions.

In general we take diverse aspects of the scene into account, motivated in part by our prior behaviour and current goals within an ongoing 'action-perception cycle,' and may learn from aspects of the scene that do not guide our action as well as those that do. And each time we act, there is the potential to learn more, in terms both of memorable episodes and the increasing mastery of a variety of skills (themselves implying the mastery of possibly novel perceptual and motor schemas, and their coordination).

In architecture we are concerned not only with the imagination that guides the actions in the design of a building and its subsequent construction, but also for providing support for a whole range of actions that will be conducted within a building of a given type, whether it be a home, a factory, a school, or a hospital, etcetera. However, rather than considering design for systems that will support practical behaviours in the future, I will focus here on some implications of 'schema theory'

¹⁹ MacKisack *et al.* 2022: 73, footnote 14.

²⁰ While his case is relevant to our discussion, note that JR is not an aphantasic.

²¹ When talking of the origins of painting, the relative placement of representations of objects in a natural scene takes primacy. Note, however, how readily what is discussed here extends to imaginative art and abstract art where the elements of the painting need not correspond to objects of the natural world, but the artist must nonetheless determine their shape, colour, position, pose, and relation to the other portions of the overall artwork.

for complementing (I have already complimented) the earlier discussion of aphantasia as it affects (or not) painting.²²

With this, we can relate this notion of schema to Ernst Gombrich's notion of 'schema' relevant to 'pictorial representation' in his book *Art and Illusion*:

...it is certainly possible to look at a portrait as a schema of a head modified by the distinctive features about which we wish to convey information. The American police sometimes employ draughtsmen to aid witnesses in the identification of criminals. They may draw any vague face, a random schema, and let witnesses guide their modifications of selected features simply by saying 'yes' or 'no' to various suggested standard alterations until the face is sufficiently individualized for a search in the files to be profitable... [A]s a parable... [this] reminds us that the starting point of a visual record is not knowledge but a guess conditioned by habit and tradition.²³

Here, the schema is a specific representation of a specific face; where Gombrich speaks of a schema, I would speak of a 'schema instance.' For me, a visual schema is a 'general' process for not only recognising a certain type of entity but also, crucially, setting parameters to yield an 'instance' of the schema that accommodates particularities of a currently observed entity of that kind. In some sense, the draughtsman or the (representational) artist has mastered a 'motor schema for drawing faces' that 'inverts' vision – given the parameters, 'run the schema backwards' to achieve a drawing that can be recognised as being faithful to the parameters of the described face. In some ways, then, the police draughtsman is like the aphantasic artist, producing a desired picture without recourse to his own visual image.

The brain does not really 'run vision backwards.' I don't want to overdo the technicalities, but can briefly (and somewhat misleadingly) say that the perceptual schemas run 'forward' from input to mental representation whereas the motor schema is an 'inverse model' of this process involving premotor and

other areas of the brain that proceed from a visual goal to a behaviour that satisfies it.²⁴

Here are some further observations that might be expanded into a more rigorous account that presents hypotheses in a form that could be tested against behavioural and neuropsychological studies:

Perception (and not just visual perception) of a scene or episode proceeds both 'bottom up,' depending on current sensory data, and 'top down,' as high-level intentions and partial understandings shape the unfolding representation – combining consciously noted aspects with many supporting details that are nonconsciously registered and may then go unnoticed unless relevant to our current (praxic or contemplative) behaviour.²⁵ Thus, we might notice a bruise on an apple if we are considering whether to choose it at the store, but note the extent of that bruise consciously only if we wish to cut it out of the apple before eating it. Turning from current action-oriented experience of a scene to memory of it, some may remember many details of the shapes and colours within the scene, whereas others may remember at most a vague general impression (when, where, and gist, perhaps) and yet be able to accompany it by a 'verbal' (non-visual) description of some of the key objects, actions, relations, and, perhaps, emotional shadings.

Let's consider the exercise of drawing 'a man drinking coffee.' There are many details that can be worked out verbally without necessary recourse to visual imagination. Is the man standing or sitting? Where will the cup be? Will a bar or a table, a stool or a chair be included in the scene? Once the basic layout is conceived (at least provisionally), will one start with a preliminary sketch to establish the overall composition, or proceed directly to drawing one object at a time? And so on. As one proceeds, earlier decisions may prove mistaken, and contingent replanning of the drawing may be needed. The tentatively completed drawing may then provide the occasion for further effort, either erasing and/or modifying parts of the sketch, or by putting the drawing to one side and then repeating the process but now using the first sketch as a model for the second, the second sketch as a model for the third, but each time changing elements in the process.

A 1989 study by Peter van Sommers of *A System for Drawing and Drawing-related Neuropsychology* offers relevant insight. Subjects (undergraduates, rather than

²² Much of what follows (such as my approach to schema theory) has been in development ever since *The Metaphorical Brain: An Introduction to Cybernetics as Artificial Intelligence and Brain Theory* (Arbib 1972) but most of it can be found in extended form in *When Brains Meet Buildings: A Conversation between Neuroscience and Architecture* (Arbib 2021, especially in Sections 1.1, 3.6, 4.4, 8.5, and 10.3).

²³ Gombrich 1960: 72.

²⁴ Arbib and Rizzolatti 1997, Wolpert and Kawato 1998.

²⁵ Arbib 2021, section 3.4.

artists) were asked to draw a bicycle from memory. Many of the students failed to produce veridical drawings. One drew bicycle pedals with no chain to make use of them, others drew a chain with no pedals, or a chain that joined the two wheels. Looking at their drawings, we might conclude that the students lacked even basic knowledge about bicycles. However, van Sommers showed that the drawings were, in general, impoverished reflections of what the students knew. When he instructed the students to look at their sketches and try again (though offering no critique of these drawings) while reflecting about what they knew or could work out about bicycles, they showed progress (and some regressions) as typified in the drawings from a single subject shown in Figure 38.2. Each sketch shows external memory serving not necessarily as an end in itself, but also as a stimulus to further feats of (internal) memory or visualization.

I apologize to John that what follows is based on my general appreciation of art, uninformed by any expertise in art history, but I hope this will be enough to offer a helpful perspective on (a)phantasia:

The history of art can be seen, in part, as providing ways in which styles of representation have been mastered and in turn varied, with some variations becoming accepted within a school or community to provide new norms on which further variation can play. Abstract art follows as the play of line and colour sets new standards that depart from earlier approaches to naturalistic depiction – the crucial point being that once any slight departure from representation of ‘natural’ scenes takes place, then portions of paintings that employ them become themselves part of the external world that aspiring artists can learn to ‘represent,’ so that further variation can yield ever greater abstraction. Moreover, ‘abstraction’ has deep roots in our experience of the natural world, as in our appreciation of the beauty of a sunset, the play of waves and clouds on a stormy day, or an enjoyment of the pattern of colouration on an apple or a bird that is separate from any intended practical action. In our cultural evolution as humans, our overt actions become embedded more and more in a virtual world of aesthetic appreciation. Moreover, the deep evolutionary roots of our action-oriented perception are intertwined with the emotions that underlie both our personal behaviour and social interactions.²⁶ Thus, the work of the artist comes to combine, in various proportions, representation, symbolism and the evocation of emotions, using schemas that may characterise some school of art.

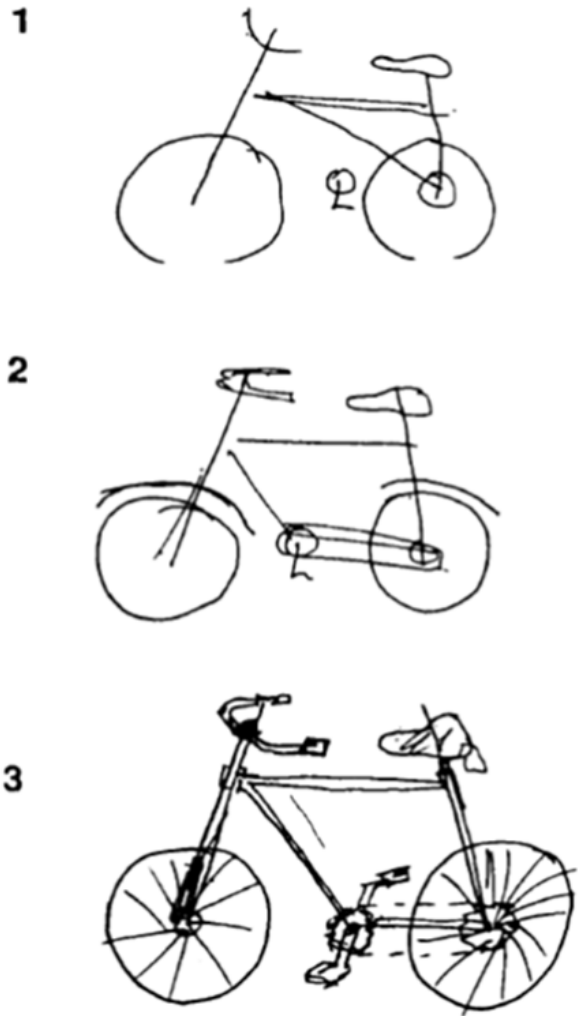


Figure 38.2. An Australian undergraduate student's three consecutive drawing of a bicycle from memory (Figure 15, Van Sommers, 1989).

Given this background, we can see that the successful artist masters not only the ability to represent different objects, relationships, or the descendant abstractions of geometric and colourful forms, but also something of a connoisseurship of scenes that might inspire a new work – not by copying them, but by learning from multiple works a range of elements that can be transformed and combined in novel ways. Inspiration may come as much from other works of art as from natural scenes, and between them these foster mastery of a range of perceptual and motor schemas that provide the building blocks from which the perception of a scene and the creation of a scene can develop.

Let us return to Joshua Reynolds. Despite the above-quoted stricture that artists should take their subject

²⁶ Rolls 2005.

from Greek and Roman fable or scripture history, his fame rests on his portraiture, albeit with his success resting in part on an idealization of the imperfect. For him (and here I speculate), the starting points for a portrait would be twofold: determining the pose and clothing of the subject, to be painted from life, and the setting against which the subjects are placed which may be actual or imagined. But Reynolds has asserted that painting should tell stories, and here a very interesting process may come into play. This is the process that starts from a story told in language, whether spoken or written, and leads the artist to evaluate that story in terms of what seems to be the most telling episode within that story and then must imagine (with or without the aid of intermediate sketches) how to present that episode so as to give some sense of what came before and what will follow after, even though this the painting shows a static scene.²⁷

Aphantasics can (but need not) start from such a story and – as in the man drinking coffee example – make the necessary choices without needing to visualise in advance how the resulting painting will appear. They have mastered the necessary ingredients: they can examine a visual scene and choose elements of interest and extract something of a story about the relationships between them, and, crucially, they have mastered the motor schemas for the various components of such a work. As they develop the work, they have at their disposal the tools of language that allow them to proceed. Then, as the work emerges, they can deploy these skills to further move the work in a way that they find satisfying by the criteria they have developed as an observer and as an artist, rather than criteria of veridicality in representing a fragment of the external world or the powers of prior visual imagination.

Note again the importance of ‘emotion’ or what has been called ‘atmosphere.’²⁸ A scheme of colouring and placement of elements and employment of motor parameters that will yield the shape, form, disposition, and pose of the various elements of the scene can be subjected to criteria of visual appreciation (as distinct from visual imagery) and adjusted in light of the artist’s feeling for visual beauty or emotional impact. We are reminded that our visual perception and its linkage to action is not just a matter of objectively recognizing all the elements there, but in terms of the aspects of the

scene that can affect our emotional experience that in turn can shape our choice of action. Such choices may be as much nonconscious as conscious, and thus the artist’s ‘tuning’ of the painting may rest on many ‘feelings’ for the work that the artist cannot express in language.

To conclude, we may align the framework of this section with the examples from MacKisack *et al.* as follows: when we turn to acts of imagination, we do not so much recall a specific episode as somehow begin to combine aspects of various such episodes in ways that meet our current intentions. In painting, then, the hyperphantasic may be able to imagine how each region of a scene will appear in form, colour, and so on as well as its relationship with other portions of the image as the basis for deploying the necessary motor schemas to produce the painting. For the aphantasic, it may require a verbal plan or simply opportunistic response to initial fragments, rather than prior visual imagination, to begin to place items on the canvas, and then the imagination can continue its work on a local basis to associate new patterns with those already placed on the canvas. For most artists, the truth lies in between, as we saw in Gombrich’s quote from Vasari’s life of Titian.

I had the pleasure of discussing some of these issues with John in late 2022 and have factored parts of what I learned into this tribute. I thank him again for the ways in which his lively approach to neuroarthistory has offered varied stimuli for the way I think about schema theory and brain theory in relation to action-oriented perception and the ways in which the arts of painting and architecture inform each other, while each offers separate challenges to both the historian and the scientist.

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²⁷ In some cases (anticipating the modern notion of the comic strip) a sequence of such episodes could be combined to present an overall narrative in one painting or in a series of paintings, as described by Horváth 2018. It is not my wish to conflate portraiture and narrative art, but I am suggesting that a portrait may be designed to convey, in static and idealised form, something of the ‘story’ of the sitter.

²⁸ Tidwell 2014.

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Margins in foreign guise: Thoughts on some ornamentation in British Library Add. 27261

Barbara Brend

The Persian *Anthology*—or *Miscellany*—Add. 27261 of the British Library was made for Iskandar, a grandson of Timur, when he was governor of Shiraz, its latest colophon dated Jumada II 814/September–October 1411.¹ The manuscript has columns round three sides of its central text field in the manner often used in Shiraz. These columns are normally intended for text written on the diagonal, and indeed for the greater part of our manuscript are used for such. It may be more appropriate to speak of diagonal columns, when text is used, but marginal columns at other moments. Occasionally they are left empty or, for a space, decorated with various styles of abstract illumination. In the ten folios (fols 533–42) that precede the last original folio (fol. 543), in the course of a treatise on astronomy, this space is filled with figures: angels and humans, animals and birds, with landscape elements or with finely drawn scrolls. The figures may be single or in pairs, and occasionally in scenes of recognisable literary origin, but they appear mainly to operate as discrete vignettes without relation—or with a relation yet to be discovered—to other units in the margin or to the topic of the central field.

On the first page in this mode the central field contains an account of the constellation Eridanus (Figure 39.1). Its marginal space offers us a mounted combat in small scale, an angel of larger size in a sitting posture, and a partial view of a man who has tethered his horse and is aiming an arrow at a dragon. The angel, drawn with confident flowing lines and rather more strongly coloured, commands attention more insistently than the other figures. His form and costume are, as was usual for angelic beings, distantly derived from Buddhist art. In a bluish robe, his face framed by his folded purplish wings, he sits with left knee lowered, and right knee possibly raised.² While his left hand



Figure 39.1. *Anthology*, Add. 27261, 533b, British Library, London. Permission by The British Library Board.

holds a narrow flowing girdle, his right is raised with the palm presented to the viewer, three fingers curled but index and thumb apart. It seems clear that the artist is sufficiently interested in the detail of an exotic subject to include an approximation to a Buddhist mudra.³

¹ In tribute to John, who donned costume to play the hero in an amateur film of a Medieval French romance—and of course married a beautiful lady.

Digitised, viewed 19 January 2024 <http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_27261>; Rieu repr 1966: 868–71; Titley 1977: 39.

² The posture is similar to that of another figure, Shirin, fol. 538b.

³ Perhaps the Buddhist mudra Abhaya, in which the fully open hand conveys protection.

Drawing had been used in the margins of an earlier work, the *Divān* of poems of Sultan Ahmad Jalayir, who ruled with vicissitudes 1382–1410, but these scenes are consistent over the page.⁴ The diverse mixture of elements in the *Anthology* margin suggests that some further influence might be at work. Purely by way of example, I should like to cite the ornamentation of the Macclesfield Psalter, which was produced in East Anglia in the second quarter of the fourteenth century, and has very lively margins indeed (Figure 39.2).⁵ Not only does folio 43b offer us an alarming creature, a wyvern, issuing from the bottom left corner, in much the same way as the dragon would on the Eridanus page, but it also has a strange and seemingly unrelated creature in the top left, a duck-bodied sage. If a Persian painter were to see a page in this tradition he would in all probability not be able to read the text, but he might well derive the message that marginal ornaments do not need to be related to the centre, nor to each other.

The decorative margins of the Macclesfield Psalter incline to the comic. Some of its humour is quite gentle, like the expression of the lion that looks rather nonplussed by the wyvern that confronts him, or satirical like the duck-bodied sage, and some on other pages might seem unseemly if it were not drawn with such skill and wit. Possibly some stimulus such as this encouraged our Persian artist to make a little joke in the lower right of his page, where the archer's rather self-satisfied horse appears to have been tethered to the dragon's tail. Another feature of the decoration in the Macclesfield Psalter is that the structural elements, on which creatures and persons stand or in which they lurk or disport themselves, though entirely bizarre in design, convey a very strong impression of solidity. In the margins of the *Anthology* also there is a feeling that a setting has to be established, whether by scrolls, floating ribbons, areas of rock, or watery swirls: the figures have not simply been lifted from a copybook, they exist in a place, or a number of places.

Five folios further on in the *Anthology*, where the central field concerns Aries and Taurus, the marginal space is largely filled with a delicate and ornate scroll, but also contains the figure of a man (Figure 39.3). It seems clear that it is by the same hand as the angel: the red lips, straight nose, even the fabric of the costume. Here the figure is standing, and the lines are less rounded, the effect less assured. This difference in quality might derive from an original model or might result from the figure's being more novel. The man has no head-covering, and has plentiful shoulder-length hair. As the



Figure 39.2. 'Macclesfield' Psalter, MS 1-2005, 43b, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. Permission by The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

pigment is dense above the shoulders it seems possible that the hair was originally shown in two knots—like those of the Buddhist angel—as often seen in pictures at the period, but that the artist changed his mind in favour of something a little more exotic. Around the neck is a collar, seemingly of a rather stiff material, which may or may not be textile; it has segments that end in points, alternating in blue and a grey that might once have been silver. The costume is in two parts, a shirt-like garment whose sleeves and hem are edged with slit segments that are lightly particoloured, and a skirt similarly treated, the segments of all three registers being evidently softer in texture than is the collar. As in the angel figure, the hands are important: with fingers nervously clenched, they draw particular attention to the sleeves. The shirt is held at the waist by a red girdle tied in a bow, and red boots are seen below the skirt. The flowing belt is again of distant Buddhist

⁴ Schroeder 1942: 57–62; Klimburg-Salter 1976–77: 43–83.

⁵ Panayotova 2008.



Figure 39.3. *Anthology*, Add. 27261, 538a, British Library, London. Permission by The British Library Board.

origin, but it is clear that the costume is mainly European. European costume had been copied earlier, as discussed by Necipoğlu in relation to fourteenth- to early fifteen-century drawings in the *Diez and Topkapı Albums*,⁶ but in the present example the model appears to have been remarkably up-to-date.

The most striking feature of this costume, the use of slit segments, is more properly known as dagging, a word derived from the Middle English verb *dag* ‘to pierce,’ whence we also have *dagger*.⁷ Dagging was used in European costume over some two centuries. Early instances are seen in two illustrations to a Bible,

⁶ Necipoğlu 2016: 531–91.

⁷ I thank Penelope Woolfitt, expert on costume, for providing me with the word. I believe that in the present day it survives only to describe the removal of knotted portions of wool from the posterior of a sheep.

probably made for Louis IX of France, and of about 1240s (Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M. 638).⁸ In both pictures particoloured garments with deeply dagged hems are worn by the musicians. These two features distinguish the costumes from those of other figures and it seems likely that they were considered eccentric and suitable only for entertainers. Dagging seems to have gained a more general currency in later decades of the century, being seen quite frequently on the lower edge of the hoods, where it may have had a practical purpose in allowing the garment to adjust to the shoulders of a particular wearer. By the period of a manuscript of the *Roman d’Alexandre* (Bodleian Library, MS. 264),⁹ datable 1338–44, dagging and particoloured clothing was evidently acceptable in high society. Red stockings may also be worn and may indicate a further influence on our picture, since boots in previous Persian pictures are usually shown as black, though red is not unknown in Muzaffarid painting.¹⁰ Red boots may have been particularly favoured by Iskandar since the hero Khusrau is shown wearing them in the *Anthology* of 813/1411 in Lisbon (Gulbenkian Foundation, LA 161),¹¹ while in the present *Anthology* a man prostrates himself to kiss the red boots of a youthful prince (fol. 537a). The element that does not seem to derive from European style is the man’s collar. This has a degree of similarity to that worn by the Buraq, the mount that carries Muhammad into the heavens, a subject depicted in the *Anthology* itself (fol. 6a). The collar, which is already discernible in earlier pictures, is thus strange to human use.¹²

Though much in evidence in the mid-fourteenth century, it seems that dags may have reached a peak of fashion in the early years of the fifteenth. In *La Prinse et Mort du roy Richart* (British Library, Harley 1319, 2a; Figure 39.4), a manuscript of 1401 recounting the death of Richard II of England in the previous year, we see dagging applied to the trumpet sleeves of the nobility. At a different level of society in *Le Livre de la chasse* of Gaston Phébus of about 1407 (Bibliothèque nationale de France, F 616) we see a huntsman with the skirts of his shortish garment dagged but with plain sleeves, which would evidently be more practical for his work.¹³ While in the *Les Très Riches Heures* of the duc de Berry

⁸ M. 638, fols 17a and 29a, see <<https://www.themorgan.org/collection/Crusader-Bible/thumbs>> viewed 19 January 2024. The manuscript was given to Shah ‘Abbas in 1608, but had not previously been in Iran.

⁹ Stoneman 2022: 236–38.

¹⁰ Brend and Melville 2010: 35.

¹¹ Wright 2012: 100–01.

¹² A late fourteenth-century example, Topkapı Sarayı, H. 2152, 68b, has short segments, see Ettinghausen 1984: fig. 10. Segments are longer in Topkapı Sarayı, H. 796, 4b, see Brend 2003: pl. 7.

¹³ Thomas, Avril and Schlag 1998: facsimile fol. 66a.



Figure 39.4. *La prinse et mort du roy Richart*, Harley 1319, 2a. British Library, London. Permission by The British Library Board.

(Musée Condé, 65), whose possible dates 1410–16 cover the period of our manuscript, the fashion for dagging was positively raging.¹⁴ In the picture for the month of August,¹⁵ two riders have very long dagged sleeves, while a third at the rear has a dagged and particoloured over-garment; even the harness of the horses suggests dagging. Like the huntsman in the *Livre de la chasse*, the hawker on foot has simple sleeves.

If we consider the sleeves of the man in the *Anthology* margin, it is notable that the dags fall oddly in bundles over the forearms. It is clear that our man is wearing wide sleeves comparable to those of the French nobility, but he is not wearing them in the French manner; instead they are wrapped round his forearms for convenience—not least the convenience of fitting into the marginal column. That is to say the artist has not made a clumsy error; he is aware of the structure of the long trumpet sleeve, and is perhaps even joking about the manner in which it could be worn. This degree of familiarity may suggest that the artist had seen more

than one model. Quite how this would come about is not clear, though transmission by a manuscript seems a more likely connection than the acquisition of a suit of clothing, or the sight of a traveller in his very finest dress.

Given that European influence is evident in the figure of the man, I think that we may also interrogate the mode of drawing of the scrolls that accompany him—which is perhaps a more debatable topic. The scrolls of fol. 536a are in a very fine ink line, and have numerous minor branches that scroll away from the main stem. Golden palmettes are split into two or three points, and are decorated with petals in thin red or blue; interspersed with these are some motifs of a lotus or peony form. The floral elements are Chinese in origin. The scrolls resemble those that might have been drawn under the legends of Persian cartouches, except that they are a little more wayward in their occasional reverse movement. I suggest that they, together with the palmettes, have been affected by European, and probably French, design. The very idea of using this form of ornament in a margin also seems to be new. Precisely how new may not be clear: Topkapı Sarayı possesses a page of marginal designs of similar character that bears an attribution to the artist Daulatyar, which, if correct, might place the page in the third quarter of the fourteenth century;¹⁶ however, the *Anthologies* L.A. 161 and Add. 27261 may exhibit the earliest instances among surviving Islamic manuscripts.¹⁷ Among European manuscripts, the use of scrolling ornament in the margin was well established by the late fourteenth century. Seen in *La Prinse et Mort du roy Richart* and the *Livre de la chasse*, it has become very insistent in the *Les Belles Heures* of the duc de Berry, which is datable about 1408–9 (Metropolitan Museum of Art, Cloisters Collection, 1954.1.1).¹⁸ Though elaborated with Chinese elements in Add. 27261, fol. 536a, the French scroll type is followed more closely on fol. 540a, where gold leaves have three major points and two minor ones by the stalk. The scrolls of the Islamic work are more disciplined than the French ones, but some leaflets do terminate in little wavering tendrils.

These passages of ornamentation in the margins of the *Anthology* show an awareness of European work that appears to be up to the minute, and its deployment in a manner not seen before or since.

¹⁴ Dufournet 1995: 6.

¹⁵ Dufournet 1995, 46–49.

¹⁶ Topkapı Sarayı Museum, H. 2160, 68a, not published to my knowledge.

¹⁷ For L.A. 161 see Soucek 1992: figs 7 and 8.

¹⁸ Meiss and Beatson 1974: 11–12.

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The 'Solomonic windows' of Stirling Chapel Royal: Connections between Scotland and the Netherlands

Ian Campbell

In 2011, I published an article with another scholar demonstrating that the Chapel Royal at Stirling Castle, the first completely new church building in Britain in the Renaissance style, was intended as a simulacrum of Solomon's Temple. Not only do its overall dimensions match those given in the Bible, but also, we argued, the paired columns flanking its doorway, and the round-arched biforate windows were both charged with Solomonic associations (Figure 40.1). Finally, corroborating our circumstantial evidence, we had the clinching testimony from a spy's report to the English court referring to the chapel as the 'Great Temple.'¹

The chapel was built in only seven months, following the birth of Prince Henry, the first child of James VI of Scotland and his wife Anna of Denmark in February 1594. The earlier pre-Reformation Chapel Royal had already been reported as beyond repair a decade earlier and was demolished to make way for a new chapel suitable to celebrate the first Protestant royal baptism in Scotland. The ceremony and accompanying celebrations were intended to show James off on the European stage as the heir presumptive to the throne of England, occupied by the last of the Tudors the 'Virgin Queen' Elizabeth to whose throne he duly ascended after her death in 1603. The poet and courtier William Fowler (c.1560–1612) wrote the *True Reportarie*, the official record of the occasion published in Edinburgh and an anglicised version in London recording the events in great detail. Fowler played a large part in devising the secular entertainments along with Patrick Leslie, Lord Lindores (<1569–1608) accompanying the baptism, but an extraordinary feature is how hardly any attention was paid to the new chapel: it only says that it was resolved that the new chapel 'shuld be more large, long and glorious' and that the finished building was 'richelie hung, with costly tapestries.'² In

2011 we speculated that this neglect might partly be down to some professional jealousy between Fowler and William Schaw (c.1550–1602), royal Master of Works and according to the epitaph on his tomb in Dunfermline Abbey, Master of Ceremonies.³ We do not know when he acquired the latter office but he is certainly given no credit in the *Reportarie* for any of the baptismal ceremonies or for the chapel, for the design and building of which it is reasonable to assume he had the overall responsibility. However, jealousy cannot be the whole reason since the *Reportarie* is an official account and, if the king wanted it to be publicly known that the chapel was a copy of Solomon's Temple, it would surely have been announced there. We therefore concluded that the silence was deliberate and sought to explain it in the light of Freemasonry which in its modern form was founded by Schaw four years later in 1598 and in which secrecy plays an integral part.⁴ A recent discovery, however, has suggested that some input from Fowler may have contributed to the design off the windows for the chapel.

The 2011 article linked the form of the windows to the *Postilla super totam Bibliam* of Nicholas of Lyra (c.1270–1349), the earliest manuscripts and early printed editions of which often show the Temple and Palace of Solomon with biforates with pointed Gothic arches, but by the 16th century these were 'modernised' and shown as round-arched, like those at Stirling (Figure 40.2).⁵ The ultimate source we suggested was a passage in the Septuagint describing Solomon's palace which can be interpreted as referring to paired openings.⁶ I later explored the use of paired windows, round- and pointed-arched as well as lintelled, pointing out that in

¹ Acknowledgments: I am indebted to Robin Usher for most generously sharing his discovery of the Alciati emblem with me and for other valuable suggestions. I am also very grateful to Michael Bath, Tom Bree, Krista De Jonge, Nick Mols, Charles Robertson and Pieter Vlaardingerbroek for filling glaring gaps in my knowledge. Campbell and MacKechnie 2011.

² *True Reportarie* 1594, fols 2v and 6r.

³ Campbell and MacKechnie 2011: 94–95.

⁴ Campbell and MacKechnie 2011: 110–11.

⁵ Campbell and MacKechnie 2011: 105. The *Postilla* remained popular throughout the early modern period, both in standalone editions and integrated within Bibles: see Gosselin 1970. The Folger database on book ownership in Renaissance England has 23 entries for just the *Postilla* (viewed 18 August 2024, <<https://plre.folger.edu/books.php>>) while Durkan and Ross 1961 has twenty entries for Scots owning it either separately or in Bibles.

⁶ On the reception of the Septuagint in the Renaissance, see Mandelbrote 2021.



Figure 40.1 William Schaw, Chapel Royal, Stirling Castle, 1594. Photography by Ian Campbell.

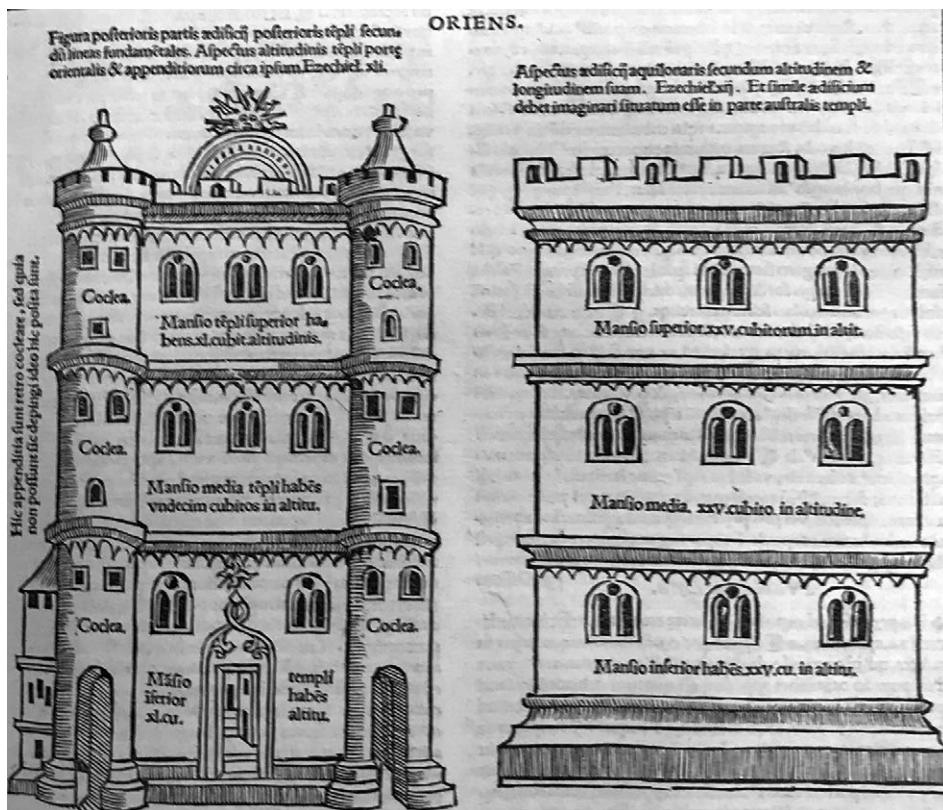


Figure 40.2 Anonymous, Solomon's Temple and Palace, 1545. Woodcut from *Biblia Sacra* 1545, vol. 4, fol. 275r. Glasgow University Library.



Figure 40.3 Anonymous, *Vigilantia et Custodia*. Woodcut from Alciati 1584, fol. 23v. Glasgow University Library.

the *Westwerk* at Corvey Abbey in Germany which dates from 885, biforates are accompanied by an inscription referring to the Heavenly Jerusalem.⁷ A recently published book also makes the intriguing suggestion that the late Byzantine Golden Gate into the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, which has a blind roundel over its two arches, was the model for biforate Gothic west doors such as that at Wells Cathedral because of its medieval association with Christ's entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.⁸ Whether this idea also influenced window forms deserves further investigation.

The *Postilla* may be the direct source for the Stirling windows but the idea for their use may have been prompted by another source brought to my attention by Robin Usher, namely a woodcut from an edition

of Andrea Alciati's *Emblemata*, with the popular commentaries of Claude Mignault, published in Paris by Jean Richer in 1584 (Figure 40.3).⁹ The woodcut, illustrating Emblem XV, 'Vigilantia et Custodia' (Vigilance and Protection) shows a seated lion guarding the entrance to a circular building, the lower stage of which has pilasters alternating with round-biforates, while the entrance door is framed by a pediment supported by two spiral columns. Above rises the drum of a dome on which perches a weathercock. Alciati's text refers to lions being placed at the door of temples as symbolising the pastor's duty to protect his flock, while the cockerel is there to keep us vigilant. Mignault translates temples as 'churches.' On the 'French emblems at Glasgow' website, Alison Adams describes the building as a 'Renaissance classical

⁷ Campbell 2015.

⁸ Bree 2023: 55–57. See also Murphy-O'Connor 2008: 100–02.

⁹ Alciati 1584: fols 23v–24v. Listed in the standard bibliography of *Emblemata*, Green 1872: 217–18, no. 107.

temple,' which is reasonable enough since it is clearly inspired by Bramante's Tempietto.¹⁰ However, all the other editions of Alciati I have checked, except one, illustrate the emblem using more conventional representations of a Greco-Roman classical temple with a façade of columns and a pediment.¹¹ However, the presence in this case of the spiral or 'Solomonic' columns, coupled with the biforate windows, strongly suggest that the reader is meant to identify it as the Temple of Solomon.

The woodcut in Richer's edition is a recut copy from the Plantin Press's second version of Alciati's *Emblemata*, which was published first in Antwerp in 1577 and reprinted there in 1581 and then in Plantin's Leyden press in 1584 and 1591.¹² The same woodcut was also borrowed for use in the first English emblem book, Christopher Whitney's *Choice of Emblemes* (1586).¹³ Any of these books could have been known to William Fowler, and both Michael Bath and Allison Steenson have identified Alciato as the source of some of the *imprese* or tableaux devised for the entertainments at the baptism.¹⁴ However, among the manuscript drafts listing them is a reference to an Alciato emblem with a number corresponding to those in the Plantin editions, with Steenson thinking the 1591 edition being the most likely.¹⁵

Some of the woodcuts for the Plantin editions bear a monogram 'A' for the artist, who remains unidentified, and in any case we cannot be certain that one artist executed them all.¹⁶ Whoever it was they may have taken their inspiration for the round temple with biforate windows from earlier Netherlandish paintings, where the Temple of Jerusalem is often so depicted, as in the backgrounds of the *Crucifixion* by Jan van Eyck and assistants (c.1430), and the anonymous *Christ carrying the Cross* (1470–99), both in the Metropolitan Museum in New York.¹⁷ The genesis of the notion that the Jerusalem Temple was round has long been recognised as confusion in popular imagination with the octagonal

Dome of the Rock, the Muslim shrine on the Temple Mount, as can be seen in references to some of the first reformed churches erected in Flanders, including Antwerp and Ghent, in the mid-1560s which were octagonal or round and were not only likened to the Temple of Solomon in contemporary sources, but also called 'temples,' suggesting that Plantin's illustrator may have implicitly chosen to illustrate a Protestant church.¹⁸ We lack evidence of the window forms of these Flemish 'temples,' because religious toleration came to an end in 1567 and they were destroyed. However, round-headed biforates appear on churches in Italy from the mid-fifteenth century, most notably the cathedral at Pienza and Sistine Chapel, itself a copy of Solomon's Temple. John Onians, however, points out that at Pienza the apse has triforate Gothic windows with pointed arches, while round-headed biforates are confined to the nave and are modified by Gothicising tracery, so that while they echo the biforates of the adjacent Palazzo Piccolomini, they still proclaim their Christian character.¹⁹ It is tempting to suggest that the juxtaposition of the cathedral and the palace at Pienza, both with biforates, reflects that of the Temple of Solomon and his palace.

The absence of round-headed biforates in churches in northern Europe for another century probably reflects the convention in Netherlandish painting that the Romanesque style was used to indicate non-Christian buildings while the Gothic style was closely associated with Christianity.²⁰ They are, however, found on secular buildings such as the extension to the Stadhuis (Town Hall) of Mechelen (begun 1526), designed by Rombout II Keldermans (c.1460–1531), who was not only architect of the city of Mechelen but also court architect to the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V (Figure 40.4).²¹ In the latter capacity he was responsible for building the Maison du Roi/Koningshuis (King's House) in Brussels, begun in 1515, left unfinished in 1547, and almost completely destroyed by French bombardment in 1695, so that today only substructures remain.²² Krista de Jonge has suggested that a drawing on vellum in the Soane Museum's Chinnery Album, misattributed to Jacques

¹⁰ 'French emblems at Glasgow.' 2006, Alciato 1584 'Emblema XV' viewed 19 August 2024 <<https://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/french/emblem.php?id=FALc015>>.

¹¹ 'Alciato at Glasgow.' 2007. The one exception is Alciati 1583 (Green 1872: 214–15, no. 104) where the illustration on p. 76 is clearly intended to be recognised as a church, resembling the Sainte Chapelle, albeit with round-headed biforates.

¹² Alciati 1577: 78 (Green 1872: 197–201, nos 84–87).

¹³ Whitney 1586: 120.

¹⁴ Bath 2012 also available in a revised version, Bath 2018; Steenson 2020: 158–61.

¹⁵ Steenson 2020: 79.

¹⁶ Manning 1989: 127–76. Green 1872: 84–85, discusses Adam van Oort and Ahasuerus van Londerseel as possible candidates but concludes the dates don't work for either.

¹⁷ Berger 2012: 181–84, figs 9.11a and 9.12a.

¹⁸ Spicer 2000: 275–87 at 276–77; see also Spicer, 2007: 84–85.

¹⁹ Onians 1988: 194–95, fig 107, and also an earlier discussion: 128–29. Round-headed biforates abound in late Quattrocento Rome, sometimes with Gothic tracery as if to baptize them: see Golzio and Zander 1968: 48–51.

²⁰ On the meaning of Romanesque and Gothic forms in Northern art and architecture see Panofsky 1966: I.133–34 and 138; and Hoppe 2003: 91–103.

²¹ Agentschap Onroerend Erfgoed 2022: 'Stadhuis van Mechelen met Lakenhal' viewed 12 December 2022, <<https://id.erfgoed.net/erfgoedobjecten/3717>>.

²² De Jonge 2010: 57–61.



Figure 40.4 Rombout II Keldermans, Mechelen Stadhuis, begun 1526.
Photograph from Wikimedia Commons.

Androuet du Cerceau, may be related to a design for the gable elevation of the Koningshuis, linking it to two anonymous late sixteenth-century prints.²³ The Chinnery drawing shows a four-bay façade with two main storeys, plus two in the gable (Figure 40.5).²⁴ The ground floor has a round-arched entrance framed by a pediment and two pairs of columns, each pair on a shared pedestal. The first floor has four cross windows but under a round-arched hood, containing within it two round-arches and a roundel, so that they read as a round-arched biforates. The inner two windows on the floor above, are true round-arched biforates. The façade is articulated by columns, single at either end and in the centre, and paired between the inner and outer bays. One of the related prints has a five-bay façade, that at the centre slightly wider, and is three stories high.²⁵ The whole façade is articulated with paired columns, with round-arched biforates on the first floor like those on the Chinnery drawing (and a triforate in the wider central bay, while on the floor above, each light of the biforates and central triforate is arched but under a horizontal lintel. The other print shows again shows a five-bay façade, three storeys high plus attic dormers. It is articulated entirely by

single columns, with pairs of round-arched biforates to each bay on the second floor, while the dormers above have biforates with each light round-arched under a horizontal lintel.²⁶

As the 2011 article argued, both the biforates and the paired-column arched entrance at Stirling allude to Solomon's Temple. Subsequently, in an essay published in 2020, focusing on the entrance to the royal palace of Holyroodhouse in Edinburgh, built in the 1670s, I argued that paired columns themselves had a Solomonic significance, which made them particularly popular for royal palaces in western Europe²⁷. It would make perfect sense, then for these features to appear on a palace for the Emperor Charles V, and they would have been understood for some of those seeing the palace as references to his emulation of Solomon, the exemplar of a good monarch.²⁸

Returning to ecclesiastical architecture, the first appearance in an architectural treatise of round-headed biforates is in two half-elevations for two Renaissance-style church facades in Vredeman de

²³ London, Sir John Soane's Museum, vol. 114, fol. 55, drawing 74, published in Fairbairn 1998: I.262, no. 369; De Jonge 2010: 51–55.

²⁴ De Jonge 2010: 37–39, Figure 1.

²⁵ De Jonge 2010: 15, Figure 9.

²⁶ De Jonge 2010: 16, Figure 10.

²⁷ Campbell 2020.

²⁸ For the use of biforates, possibly alluding to Solomon, in royal residences, see Campbell 2015, and Campbell 2021: 128–29.

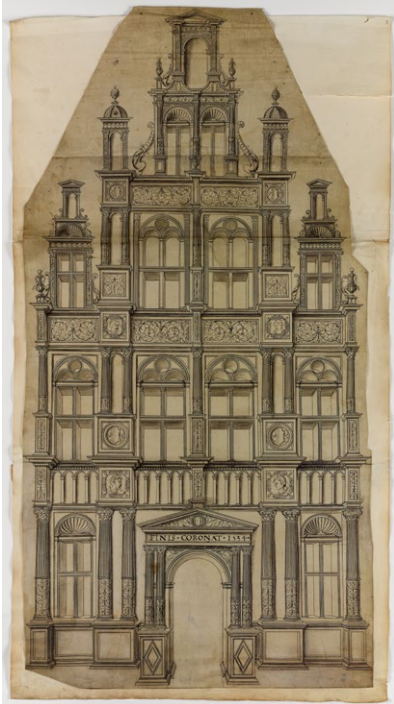


Figure 40.5 Anonymous of Madrid, *Finis Coronat* 1534, vol. 114, fol. 55, drawing 74, c.1534. Drawing on vellum, 92x47cm. London, Sir John Soane's Museum.

Vries's *Architectura* (1577).²⁹ The accompanying text refers to the predominantly Gothic abbey of St Jacques in Liège, which has a Renaissance façade added to the north porch around 1558–60, designed by Lambert Lombard (c.1505–66) but it has no windows.³⁰ Biforates, however, did feature on the abbey's Romanesque west front. De Vries's engravings of grotesques were certainly circulating in Scotland by the 1580s, although we have yet to find definitive evidence of when *Architectura* was known there.³¹ We also find types of biforate in the extraordinary design for a large Protestant 'temple' in Jacques Perret's treatise on fortifications and perspective first published in 1601.³² The overall design bears such an uncanny resemblance to the Elizabethan prodigy house, Wollaton Hall near Nottingham, built 1580–88, that as Mark Girouard pointed out it is hard to believe Perret didn't know it, although no visit to England by him is recorded.³³ The central tower of Wollaton was clearly inspired by Nicholas of Lyra's Temple, both in its use of

the corner bartisans and the biforate windows lighting its two long sides.

By 1601, however, the chapel at Stirling had been built, and, given that several of the foreign guests were from Northern European Protestant states, one might have expected to see its influence abroad. Disappointingly, however, there is little evidence to suggest it had any. The lengthy report of the two ambassadors from the United Provinces to the baptism, Walraven III van Brederode (1547–1614) and Jacob Valcke (c.1540–1623) to the States General, fails to mention the chapel except to say that they had to ask the Scots to change the coats of arms over their seats.³⁴ In the same year, 1594, (and so probably too late for Stirling to have influenced it) the first purpose-built Protestant church in the United Provinces was commissioned by Maurice of Nassau and the civic magistrates of Willemstad, the new town founded by William of Orange in 1583 in north west Brabant. Its octagonal plan clearly looks back to Flemish models of the 1560s, while the round-headed windows are divided into three lights by vertical mullions.³⁵ However, it is worth noting that a close parallel to the Willemstad church, an octagonal church, built for refugee French-speaking Walloons in Hanau in Germany between 1600 and 1608, has round-headed biforate windows.³⁶ By the time of its completion, the first new Protestant church Amsterdam was under construction.

The Zuiderkerk was built between 1603 and 1611, with the bell tower added in 1614, to the designs of Hendrik de Keyser (1565–1621).³⁷ It has a rectangular plan like the Stirling chapel but that is the only point of similarity: the proportions do not match and the interior consists of a nave and side aisles.³⁸ It does, however, have a simple round-headed biforate with louvres rather than glass to the belfry, and the main windows of the church itself are meant to be read as round-headed biforates: in the two end walls of the nave the windows have six vertical lights but the central mullion is thicker and rises to spring into two round arches over three lights each, with a central roundel above set into the single arch (Figure 40.6). Those at the ends of the aisles and two along each side, under pediments have a similar design but with only four lights rather than six.³⁹ De Keyser subsequently

²⁹ Vredeman de Vries 1577: fol. 21r.

³⁰ Vredeman de Vries 1577: fol. 16v; Vandevivere and Perier-d'Ieteren 1973: 32, Plate 67.

³¹ Vredeman de Vries 1565–71. See Bath 2003: 4. 4.

³² Perret 1601. On Perret, see Ng 2015.

³³ Girouard 1992.

³⁴ Ferguson, J. 1899: I.154–74 at 164–65.

³⁵ Spicer 2007: 34–35, Figure 3.5.

³⁶ Hitchcock 1981: 330–31, Plate 422.

³⁷ Vlaardingerbroek 2019: 1–14.

³⁸ In fact, the plan is remarkably similar, even down to the number of bays, to that of Greyfriars Kirk, the earliest purpose built Protestant church in Edinburgh. See Gifford et al. 1984: 152–55.

³⁹ De Bray 1631: pls I–III.



Figure 40.6 Hendrik de Keyser, Zuiderkerk, Amsterdam, 1605–11. Engraving from Salomon de Bray, *Architectura Moderna*, 1631, pl. 1. Getty Research Institute.

used similar window types in his designs for two more Amsterdam churches, the Noorderkerk (1620–23) and Westerkerk (1620–33), completed after his death in 1621 by his son, Pieter.

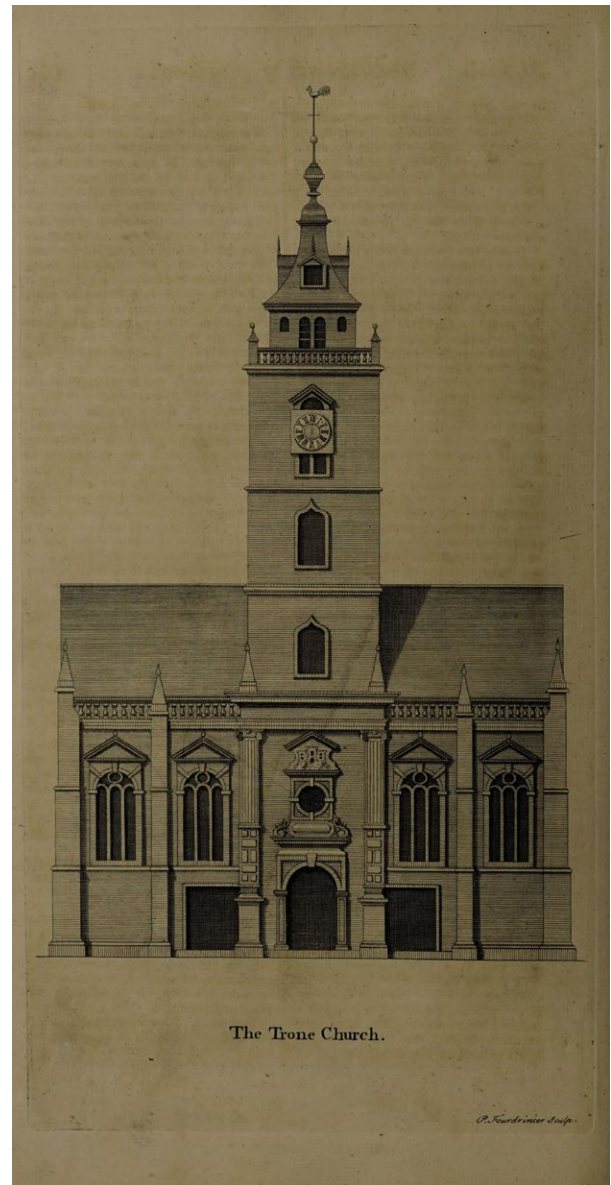


Figure 40.7 John Mylne III, Tron Kirk, Edinburgh, 1636–57. Engraving by Paul Fourdrinier in Maitland 1753. Wellcome Collection.

All three churches are illustrated in Salomon (!) de Bray's *Architectura Moderna* in 1631, the introduction to which, while referring to some ancient Greek and Roman precedents, concentrates far more on the archetypes of Noah's Ark, the Ark of the Covenant and Solomon's Temple, making it clear that the reader is meant to see the churches in this light.⁴⁰ *Architectura moderna* is acknowledged as the inspiration for

⁴⁰ De Bray 1631: 1–5. See Taverne 1971: 1–2 especially. For the influence of the Temple on later seventeenth-century churches, see Schwartz. 2017.

Edinburgh's Tron Kirk, built 1636–57 by John Mylne III (1611–67), principal Master Mason the Crown (Figure 40.7).⁴¹ It was built to house a congregation which had occupied the chancel of St Giles since the Scottish Reformation in 1560, but was evicted following King Charles I's ill-fated decision to make St Giles a cathedral. Somewhat disappointingly for our argument, only the original tower had a round-headed biforate aperture for the belfry, while the windows lighting the church, though round-headed and containing a roundel were triforate so that if our story ended here it would be rather anti-climactic.

Fortunately, there is one other case of a round-headed biforate in a church in Edinburgh, built half a century later, namely the Canongate Kirk.⁴² In 1687, in what is almost a repeat of the circumstances surrounding the origin of the Tron Kirk, Charles I's son, King James VII (II of England) in 1687, decided that the nave of the former Holyrood Abbey, which had served as the parish church of the burgh of Canongate for centuries, should be converted into a Catholic Chapel Royal to serve the rebuilt adjacent palace. The following year, James Smith (c.1645–1731), Surveyor of the Royal Works in Scotland, was commissioned to build a new church on the north side of the Canongate to accommodate the displaced congregation. Its unusual Latin-cross plan has raised suspicions that it was intended ultimately for Catholic liturgies, but what is of interest to us is that the apse at the liturgical east end is lighted by a round-headed biforate, which distinguishes it from all the other windows in the church which are single lights (Figure 40.8), although one might also wonder if the three windows in front, an oculus over two round-arched single lights, were intended to be read as a biforate writ large (Figure 40.9). As a mason, Smith, I would argue, would have known of the Temple associations of the biforate and it is tempting to connect it with the already-mentioned entrance to the palace of Holyroodhouse with its paired columns, on which he had worked in the 1670s.⁴³

This above exploration of biforates in the Netherlands and Scotland is speculative but shows that the windows at Stirling are part of a contemporary wider interest in the type in contexts which repeatedly have a Solomonic connection. Working on Solomonic architectural symbolism is always frustrating as one so rarely finds explicit proof that the use of a particular motif is intentional, and there is an ever-present danger of succumbing to the wishful thinking which

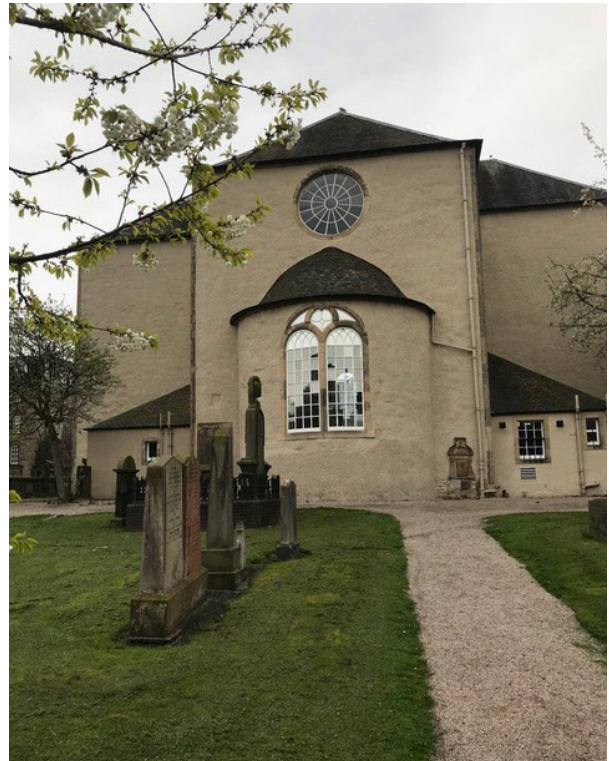


Figure 40.8 James Smith, Canongate Kirk, Edinburgh apse window, 1687–91. Photography by Ian Campbell.



Figure 40.9 James Smith, Canongate Kirk, Edinburgh, entrance façade, 1687–91. Photography by Ian Campbell.

⁴¹ Gifford et al. 1984: 172–75.

⁴² Gifford et al. 1984: 149–50.

⁴³ See note 23 above. On Smith, see Colvin 1995: 892–96.

surrounds the subject. So much of traditional masonic lore was transmitted orally that, while always seeking the sort of indisputable documentary evidence as published in the original 2011 article, all one can do is to assemble piece by piece possible examples in the hope of making a cumulatively circumstantial case large enough not to be ignored.⁴⁴

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⁴⁴ One notes that Sir Philip Sidney (1554–86) argued in his *Defence of Poesy* that poets need not be explicit in their works since the words they use will inevitably evoke allusions and images which are common currency in educated society: see Engel et al. 2016: 124–25.

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41.

The groundline: A brief phenomenology

Whitney Davis

I hope these brief and necessarily compressed meditations will interest two scholars, Elisabeth de Bièvre and John Onians, who have done so much to explore the relations between, on the one hand, human beings and bodies – and their depicted avatars – and, on the other hand, the patches of ground and stretches of earth that these figures occupy (explicitly or implicitly) when they have been represented pictorially to belong to a spatial world. Elisabeth has shown that the local peculiarities of such ground and earth – its particular geology, hydrology, topography, and so on – reappear, whether consciously or not, in the characteristic configurations, the patternings, of pictorial style, even when the pictures in questions aren't specifically 'depicting' the features of the earth, almost as if a painting were an uncanny manifestation of the soil from which its artist and beholders have sprung. And John has shown that the proximate environment – especially the particular challenges it poses for human life within it – is not only a continuing source of metaphors for pictorial artists, and especially for their representations of human life and action, but also the place in which the artist's perceptual habits, choices, and preferences in making such representations are unconsciously formed in the very first place. My meditations will perhaps be more abstract than these very concrete proposals. But I hope they will interest the dedicatees of this book, who've explored how world and art feed off one another and act upon one another: how art, really, 'continues' the world around it.

Four major organizational structures have often been identified in Western pictorial art since the later Middle Ages: the groundline, the grid, the horizon line, and the vanishing point. The first two – groundline and grid – might provisionally be said to operate on the 'plane of the format,' that is, on the surface of the artifact, such as panel, canvas, parchment, or sheet of paper. The other two – horizon line and vanishing point – operate in the 'virtual' pictorial space notionally 'behind' or 'inside' the plane of the format. A fifth organizational structure – the border or frame – strictly speaking doesn't exist 'on' or 'in' the plane of the format, but instead 'outside' and 'around' it and in part constituting

it. Still, it has powerful spatialising consequences for the depiction into which it sometimes encroaches, as Meyer Schapiro pointed out in his famous essay *On Some Problems in the Semiotics of Visual Art: Field and Vehicle in Image-Signs* (1969), using the examples, among others, of the Matthew page in the *Echternach Gospels* (Paris Bib. Nat. MS. lat. 9389, fol. 18v) and Edvard Munch's 1892 portrait of his sister (National Gallery, Oslo).

In her trenchant essay *A Short History of the Picture as Box in Representations* (2018), the art historian Amy Powell has put these elements together in an elegant fashion, pointing to their stability and consistency since the later Middle Ages despite many changing 'styles' of pictorial representation. (In part Powell herself intends to disclose an overlooked continuity between pictorial representation and absolute abstraction in Western art, nondepictive and arguably nonrepresentational. But I cite her here for her contribution to a formal and structural understanding of specifically 'pictorial' representation.) Indeed, in the case of conventional linear perspective projection, the 'box' of what has been called 'virtual coordinate space' – the depicted space which pictorially 'succeeds' from the plane of the format into the virtual or third dimension – can be considered to 'be' the coordination of groundline, grid, horizon line, and vanishing point, which lies on a 'line of coincidence' with the 'eyepoint' of the virtual space, that is, the virtual or fictive place where the beholder is situated (Figure 41.1a and 41.1b). (In my diagram, the line of coincidence manifests on the plane as one of the 'verticals' of the grid, intersecting the groundline at right angles, though it virtualises pictorially as a vector into depth. But this rectilinear configuration is a function of my arbitrary decision to locate the eyepoint as if the beholder is looking 'straight ahead' and such that the line of coincidence bisects the groundline. These are mere conveniences of the diagram and do not speak to the essential noetic structure of virtual coordinate space.)

In metrically unified perspective space, theoretically the 'distance' between the groundline and the horizon line – between forward and back planes of the 'box'

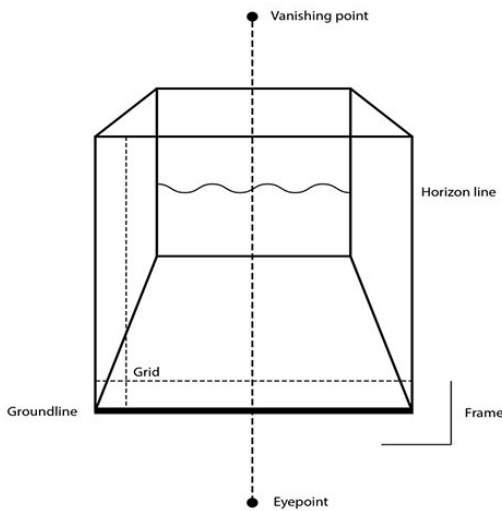


Figure 41.1a. The 'box' of virtual pictorial space in Western pictorial art, when the 'plane of the format' is viewed frontally.

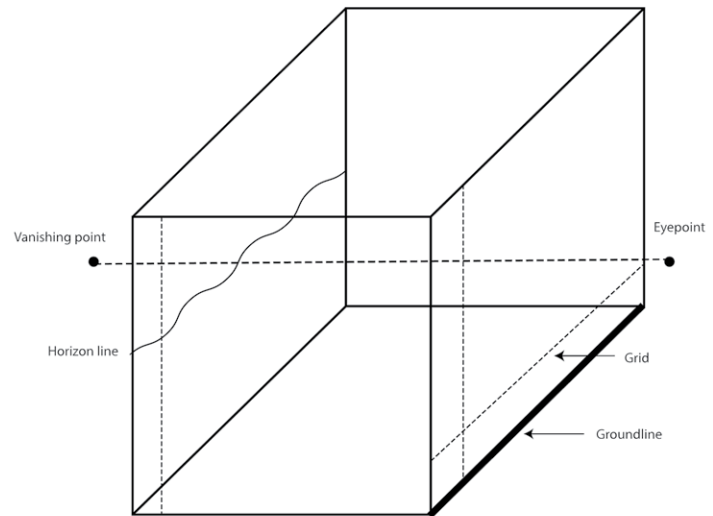


Figure 41.1b. Axonometric diagram of the 'box' of virtual pictorial space. Not all five elements (frame, grid, groundline, eyepoint, and vanishing point) appear in every pictorial style.

– is known and measurable. (The distance to the 'vanishing point' can, of course, be notionally infinite.) Nonetheless the groundline has spatial complexities and ambiguities—spatiality despite the fact that notionally a line, like a point, has no width and height. The groundline has pulsations and expansions, such as the common reiteration in which each depicted figure in the pictorial space can seem to have its 'own' groundline regardless of location and scale in virtual coordinate space, thereby sectioning the space three-dimensionally. Indeed, this segmentation – wholly virtual – can be powerful enough to 'override' our apprehension of the actual or literal segmentation on the upright plane of the format, namely, the grid. Lorenzo Ghiberti marked out this involution beautifully – I imagine self-consciously – when his forwardmost groundline at the bottom edge of the well-known relief of Isaac, Jacob, and Esau on the *Gates of Paradise* (Baptistry, Florence) iterates 'upward' on the plane of the format, obeying the module of proportion in which the height of each floor tile is one-quarter of its 'depth,' and then iteratively 'turns' into the depth of virtual space, as it were burying the grid in the floor and there enabling 'further' iterations of groundline – each underwriting the real size and virtual scale of the individual figures. He is so successful that one quite literally 'overlooks' the fact that the real material depth of the sculptural relief – the plane of the format – is only about one centimetre at most.

What is the engine of this spatialisation, in which 'groundline' becomes 'ground'? A spatialisation which

is all that's needed to create a virtual pictorial space with sufficient emergent volume to hold not just a 'figure' (as in 'figure/ground') but a virtual 'body'? The answer lies in the question: groundline spatialises when it supports a 'figure;' at the same time, phenomenally a 'figure' becomes a 'body' when it gets a groundline.

To see how this might work, I turn to what David Summers (in his magisterial 2003 book *Real Spaces: World Art History and the Rise of Western Modernism*) has called the 'origins of Western metric naturalism' in the canonical pictorial art of pharaonic Egypt, consolidated as a system of interacting procedures (notably groundline and grid) by about 2800 BC and replicated for thirty centuries thereafter. (I won't pursue Summers's history of the *longue durée* of this naturalism, nor defend his idea of ancient Egyptian art as one of its origins; it is sufficient simply to take ancient Egyptian pictorial representation on its own terms, regardless of any historical after-effects. I have given my own account of the structure of ancient Egyptian depiction – an account building on but also departing from Summers's – in *Visuality and Virtuality: Images and Pictures from Prehistory to Perspective*, 2017.) Egyptian master scribe-draftsmen – the artisans who laid out the plan and preliminary sketches for a painting or painted relief, then finished by specialists and apprentices – began work by dividing the plane of the format, such as a wall in a tomb, into horizontal registers, the baseline of each of which serves as a groundline for the figures and objects arrayed along it – arrayed so as to minimise occlusions, enforce

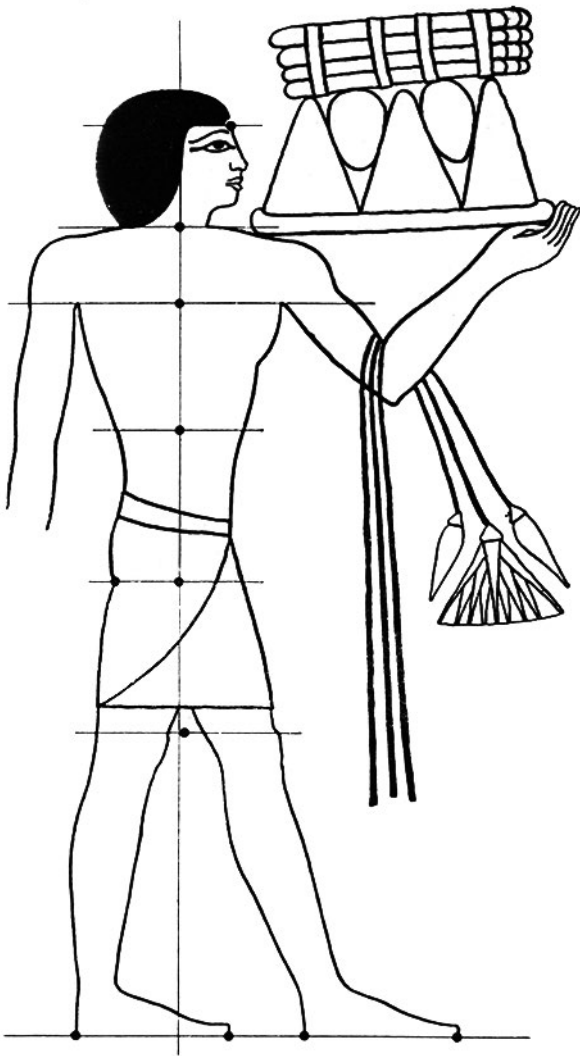


Figure 41.2. Diagram of guiding vertical and horizontal preparatory reference marks on the unfinished painted relief of the Egyptian official Manufer, Fifth Dynasty, c. 2450 BC.

‘isocephaly’ (heads of figures mostly at the same height), and obey a canon of proportions (Figure 41.2). (In the oldest version of the canon of proportions, the module – the breadth of a clenched fist – establishes a grid of eighteen squares from the feet to the hairline of the standing human figure. For my purposes here, the number of the units – let alone the ‘meaning’ of the module, if any – isn’t strictly relevant.) But the full grid didn’t need to be laid out, and usually it wasn’t; and occasionally a virtuoso would work freehand, though this was risky. The master draftsman could construct the figure simply using a single central vertical drawn perpendicular to the groundline. The vertical could be marked at appropriate intervals to set the heights and

breadths – the proportions – of the major parts of the figure. In the unfinished painted reliefs in the tomb of Perneb from the Fifth Dynasty, now re-installed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (Figure 41.3), you can see – in red in the helpful diagram published by Caroline Ransom Williams – the vertical and horizontal guiding lines laid out by the master draftsman, building up a partial grid in each register. The verticals have sometimes been described as ‘dropped,’ and technically they might have been laid out using a plumb line. But we can sense, I think, that they were probably perceived and understood at a phenomenal level as ‘run up through’ the figure – like a skewer – from the groundline. Notably, the verticals (often) stop short of reaching the next register up. They seem, then, to have to do as much with visualising the emergent virtual space of the register and volume of the body as with composition of the figures on the overall plane of the format.

The figure itself, as well as other objects, is constructed in a mode sometimes called ‘frontal,’ which isn’t quite right; it is better called ‘aspective’ (that is, presenting each important aspect of the object or figure, regardless of its visibility at a single unified perceptual standpoint); and it is best called *geradvorstellig-ansichtig* (roughly, ‘represented-as-if-head-on’), to use the neologism of the Egyptologist Heinrich Schäfer in his foundational book *Von Ägyptischer Kunst* of 1919. What Summers calls the ‘axis of direct observation,’ the head-on or ‘frontalising’ view, seems to jump from ‘frontal’ to ‘profile’ views of the object – or vice versa – which are presented simultaneously presented on the plane of the format, an arrangement sometimes called ‘paratactic.’ (This is a ubiquitous mode of pictorial representation in world art, especially in the monumental arts of ancient state-level civilizations but also including indigenous traditions in smaller-scale societies. In this respect, the ancient Egyptian example has often been used as a paradigm of a more global possibility; it was so used, for example, by E.H. Gombrich in his well-known contrast between what he called ‘schematic’ pictorial arts and more rare ‘naturalistic’ pictorial arts.) In English, the depicted human figure constructed in this way is often called ‘frontal-profile,’ with both frontal aspects and profile aspects oriented as if notionally parallel to the plane of the format (even when the object, such as the human body, has curved surfaces). In this way the groundline and the vertical median line of the figure establish a right-angled ‘cross’ on which parts of the body seem to be hung.

This, at least, is the received wisdom that descends from nineteenth-century studies of the working methods of

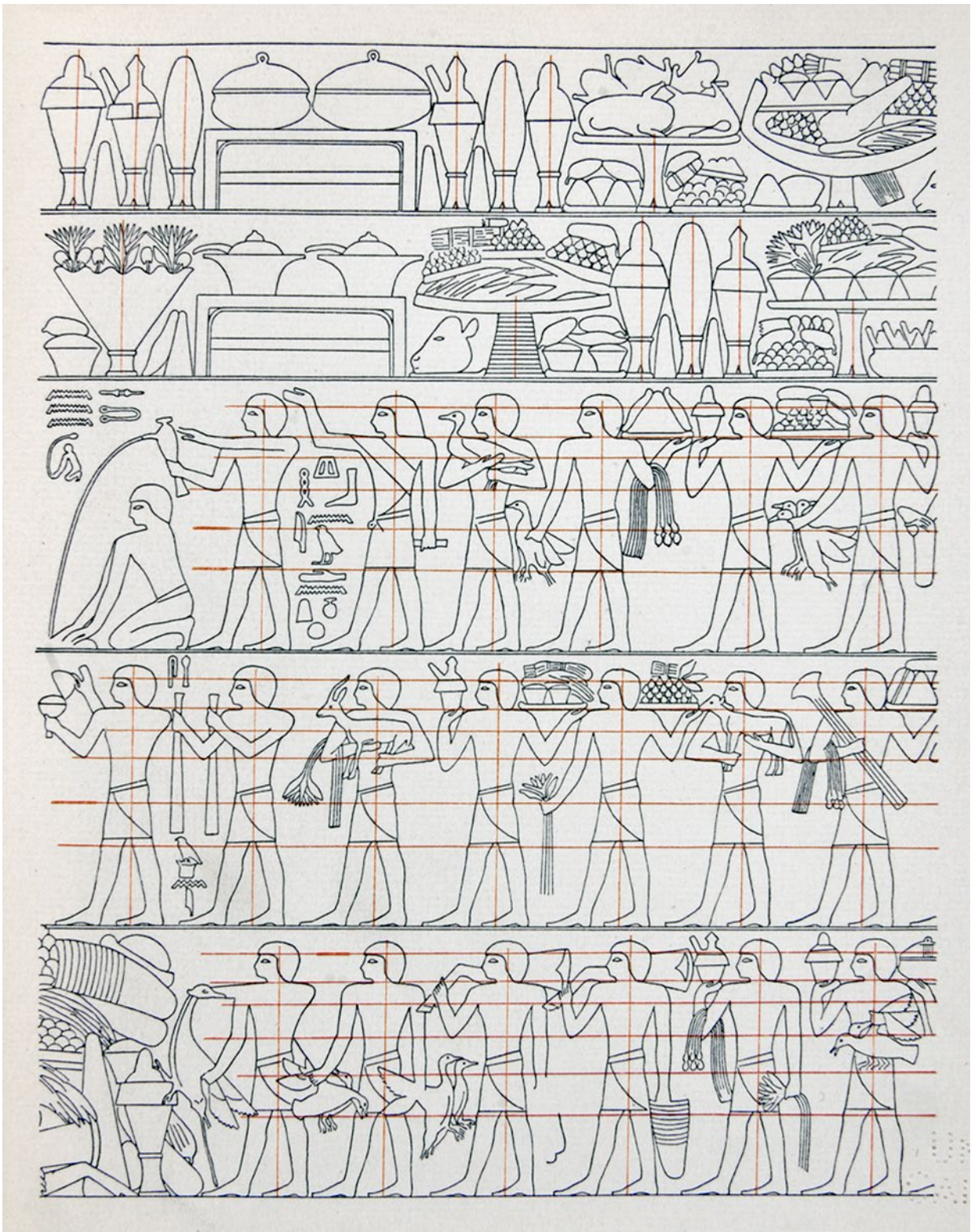


Figure 41.3. Diagram of guiding preparatory horizontal and vertical reference marks on the unfinished painted reliefs of the official Perneb, Fifth Dynasty, c. 2450 BC. Reconstruction by Caroline Ransom Williams.

Egyptian draftsmen, painters, and sculptors through Schäfer to Gombrich and onward to Summers. The general idea is that the pictorial ‘space’ is maximally ‘a-perspectival,’ ‘flat,’ and, to repeat, ‘frontal,’ operating chiefly on the plane of the format on which the groundline and the correlated grid dominate throughout.

But not so fast. Taking a closer look, you can see, I hope, that in rendering the standing or walking human figure (Figure 41.4) the ‘profile’ construction of the thighs, lower legs, and feet (attached to the groundline as if walking a tightrope on which only a super-flat cut-out figure could manage to stay upright), on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the ‘frontal’ construction of the chest at the level of the shoulders had to be integrated in the area between the breast (the swelling of the breast and the nipple are shown in profile) and the midriff around the belly and hip joints. In this region, the pictorialisation has sometimes been said to be ‘foreshortened,’ though supposedly there’s no foreshortening in canonical Egyptian depiction. That is to say, it seemingly rendered the abdominal area between the sternum and the pelvis on an ‘oblique’ visual axis – what Schäfer’s teacher Adolf Erman called a ‘three-quarter view,’ rendering the belly as if sitting at forty-five-degree angles to both the profile and the frontal planes below and above it. In a seeming torsion, it ‘blends into’ frontal chest and profile thighs rather than breaks up the trunk area with an intermediate facet. Erman said that this construction was simply ‘confused.’ In turn, Schäfer found Erman’s analysis confusing – impossible, and held fast to his concept of pure *geradvorstellig* rendering. According to him, the shoulders rendered frontally are followed immediately by a fully profile view of the trunk from breast (or slightly above) to thigh (or slightly below), maintaining the strict intersection of planes at ninety degrees to one another which defines *Geradvorstelligkeit*. As the architectural theorist Sigfried Giedion noted in ‘his’ turn, however, Schäfer’s interpretation (just like Erman’s) ‘puts the entire method of portrayal in question... a sudden jump from one plane to the other at this point [in the anatomy of the body as rendered by the figure] is inconceivable.’ (Fuller discussion of and references to this debate are given in my *Visuality and Virtuality*.)

Still, we might suspect that the abdominal ‘foreshortening’ was a by-product of the pictorialising procedure without being a fully ‘visible’ aspect of the resulting depiction; it was felt or sensed as much as ‘seen.’ It’s rare to see substantial lateral displacement on any horizontal that intersects the median vertical in

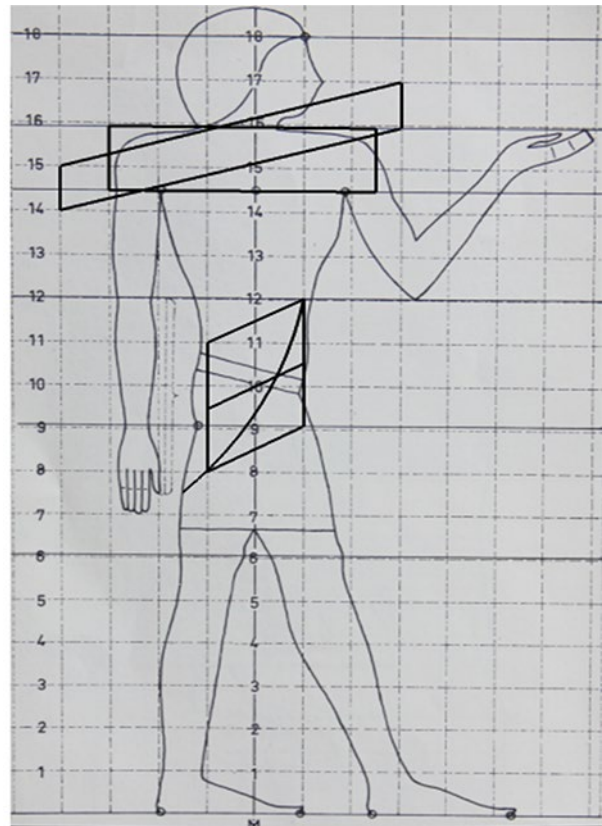


Figure 41.4. Diagram of the ancient Egyptian canon of proportions (eighteen-square grid), indicating area of ‘three-quarter’ view of the abdomen, the slight lateral displacement of the shoulders, and the appearance of a possible ‘foreshortening’ in the upper torso area. From Whitney Davis, *Visuality and Virtuality* (drawing by Justin H. Underhill).

this region of the body. This is not because it isn’t there metrically – it ‘is’ there. (In my diagram, it’s visible, for example, to the viewer’s left or ‘near’ side of the foreshortened rectangular plane.) It’s partly because the actual breadth of the abdomen is too narrow for us really to notice any lateral displacement relative to the vertical, though the larger the figure becomes in visual perspective (or the closer one’s standpoint) the more any displacement will tend to ‘become’ visible.

A second phenomenon is also instructive. Canonical draftsmen often conformed the shoulders and upper chest of the figure in relation to the postures of the arms such that sometimes the figure’s left-hand shoulder and alternately sometimes its right-hand shoulder is nearer to the perpendicular – an important observation due to Williams, the scholar who published the tomb of Perneb. This could be seen as a foreshortening in depth: in a slight quasi-*contrapposto* twist in the upper

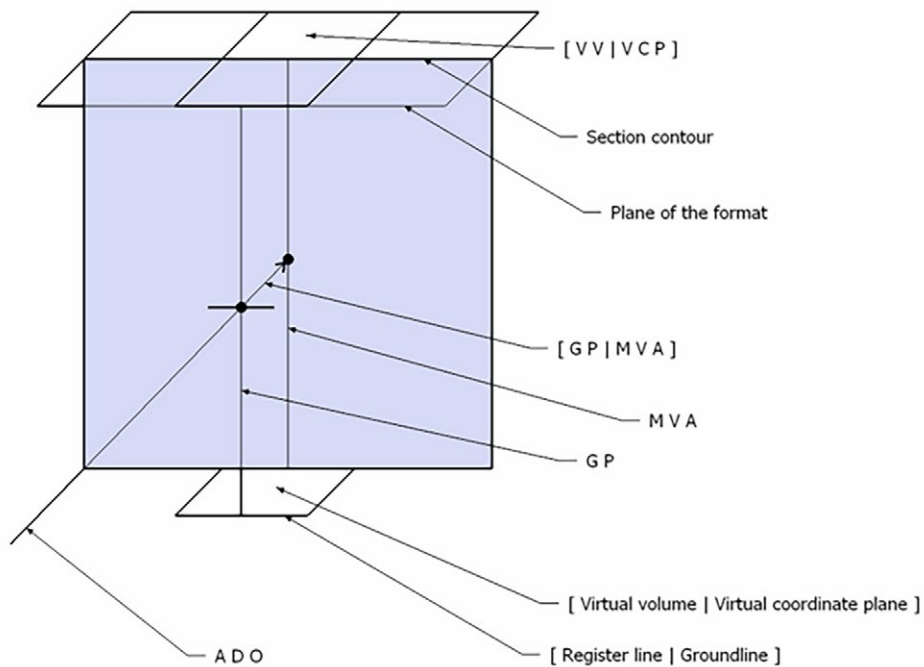


Figure 41.5. Diagram of the 'box' of virtual pictorial space in ancient Egyptian depiction. GP = 'guiding perpendicular' on the plane of the format for the human figure (see Figures 41.2, 41.3, and 41.4); MVA = 'median vertical axis' virtualised 'within' the figure, succeeding from the perpendicular on the plane of the format ([GP | MVA]); ADO = 'axis of direct observation' in *geradvorstellig* pictoriality. For further explanations, see Davis, *Visuality & Virtuality*, chapters Six and Seven.

part of the figure, the slightly greater lateral breadth of one shoulder seems to lie in a plane in 'front' of the main plane and the slightly lesser lateral breadth of the other shoulder seems to lie in a plane 'behind' it. (I try to indicate this in my diagram, Figure 41.4) Creating an optical flicker, these inequalities would seem to be fortuitous – difficult to avoid. Perhaps they were tolerated, even set up, to impart greater visual liveliness to a row of figures that might otherwise seem repetitively inert. They too inject 'bodiliness' into the figure.

As I've argued in *Visuality & Virtuality*, the median vertical is not 'just' a preparatory or guiding line – a straight line on the plane of the format that is perpendicular to the 'groundline,' the place of the path of forward movement of the figure. It also visualises a median vertical axis 'within' the figure (neither ventral nor dorsal) as having three-dimensional volume and spatial extension. In turn, this phenomenally transmutes the groundline which it intersects into a 'groundplane' – the stretch of earth or floor beneath the body-volume, and the kernel of what can then

emerge as a 'virtual coordinate plane' extending into depth (Figure 41.5).

The founder of modern phenomenology, Edmund Husserl, whose thought deeply influenced Maurice Merleau-Ponty and (in different ways) Jacques Lacan, used the term *Standpunkt* – 'standpoint' – to denote the physical location, the centre of feeling and awareness, of the human body. At *Standpunkt*, the body – what Lacan called *Je* or 'I' – apprehends (perspectively) the aspects of things oriented spatially in such a way as to be visible to the body there; it apprehends what Husserl called the 'profile' (*Profil*) or 'adumbration' (*Abschattung*) of the things. For Husserl, then, the body (the 'ultimate central here') is the 'zero point' (*Nullpunkt*) of this orientation: one can think of it quite literally as the origin with coordinates (0, 0, 0) in three-dimensional coordinate space (X, Y, Z) or 'Cartesian space'. In his 1907 lectures on 'thing and space,' Husserl suggested that the 'zero point' is 'in the head, in or behind the eyes,' privileging its optical identity and operation. But elsewhere he described it as the 'core body' (*Kernleib*), presumably the trunk or thorax, to which movements

of the head, hands, legs, and feet are felt – sometimes ‘seen’ – as relative. Either way, the ‘zero point’ is somewhere ‘above’ the groundplane, to which it is responsive in the body’s vegetative nervous (plantar) system – the literal earthly place of its standing, sitting, and lying down. And ‘between’ that plane in three-dimensional coordinate space and the ‘zero point’ of the bodily apprehending, including its apprehending of aspects of ‘itself’ (such as hands reaching out and feet setting forth), there is an indefinite ‘invisible’ zone: one ‘cannot’ see that stretch of body and that patch of earth occluded by the seeing body itself.

Embodying this self-disjunction, the seeing or apprehending body – in looking at a ‘depiction’ of a human figure acquiring and conferring full bodiliness on itself in the spatialisation of a groundline as a ‘groundplane’ – empathetically endows the figure on the plane (the ‘mere’ figure) with ‘body,’ that is, volume and spatial extension like its own, and (I venture to say) endows it with ‘subjectivity,’ that is, the notional identity of having a ‘zero point’ like its own. (The Prussian philosopher G. W. F. Hegel took ‘Romantic art,’ that is, the modern painting of his own time, to be the only world art that confers full *Innerlichkeit*, ‘innerness,’ and *Gemütlichkeit*, ‘soulfulness,’ on the depicted human body. But if my analysis is correct this has to be wrong, though I will grant that there could be various ‘kinds’ and ‘degrees’ of the representation of human subjectivity, some of them quite unfamiliar to Western beholders accustomed to ‘Romantic’ depictions.) At the same time, the transformation of the mere figure (as in ‘figure/ground’) into a ‘body’ helps reconstitute – make whole – the ‘apprehending body,’ grounding ‘its’

zero point and self-revealing its standpoint. In turn, in the final recursion this is the ground from which the virtual space of these attachments is apprehended – indeed ‘constituted’ virtually for the real body to which they are otherwise foreclosed.

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42.

Neolithic New York: A brief speculation

Simon Dell

What follows is a rather loose series of observations about an assemblage of images which, although in some respects diverse, seem to refer to a shared set of visual phenomena. As my title indicates, my observations are speculative and indeed somewhat playful; yet I feel this is appropriate insofar as it accords with the tenor of conversations I have enjoyed with John and Elisabeth over the last two decades.

The assemblage in question is a group of postcards and photographs pinned to the kitchen wall of a small farmhouse in Orkney. I recently stayed in this house and was sufficiently intrigued by the assemblage to take a few photographs of it. I will not reproduce these as I have not been able to contact the owner of the property, however, since many of the displayed images will be familiar, a description will suffice.

The display comprises 54 images and two American license plates, for the states of Arizona and Colorado. It is mounted a little haphazardly on a wall at right angles to an east-facing window offering an extensive view across the island; the result is that some of the images are now faded, although not all are equally effected and this suggests that the display was added to over quite a considerable period of time. The majority of the images are postcards, with a much smaller number of personal photographs; what these two categories share is an urban imagery, predominantly of New York, so that a postcard of Brooklyn Bridge might be juxtaposed with a photograph of family members standing on that bridge. In other photographs the location cannot be specified but the city is signalled by the architecture, an example being an image of family members on the stoop of a Brownstone. However, most postcards show famous landmarks or the distinctive Manhattan skyline. There are numerous images of the Empire State Building, the Flatiron, and the twin towers of the World Trade Center. Of the landmarks, the aforementioned Brooklyn Bridge recurs most frequently, being present in 14 images. There are other types of urban scenes, such as a dynamically blurred photograph of a Line 5 Subway train bound for Dyre

Avenue, and a reproduction of Norman Parkinson's photograph of a couple running on East River Drive. A few anomalies disturb the homogeneity: an image of a fully rigged sailing ship and a postcard of Lady Elliott Island at the southernmost point of the Great Barrier Reef. Yet that the display is an urban panorama is clear enough.

On first seating myself in the kitchen my response was that the images were assembled to establish the cosmopolitan status of the owner of the house. We had travelled to Scotland on the Caledonian Sleeper from Euston to Inverness and had hired a car to drive three hours to Scrabster in order to catch the ferry to Stromness and from there we had driven northwards again to the farmhouse. My first impression of my temporary home was that it was a long way from London and from this I reached the conclusion that its owner must feel the same way. Hence the display. Whilst such an inference is perhaps understandable it is hardly legitimate; the most it achieves is a demonstration of my own parochialism. The display requires further explication and here one may appeal to the work of both John and Elisabeth.

Rather than measuring the distance between Orkney and cities such as New York and London one might begin to think about features these locations share. This might seem at first glance rather difficult to do and I shall approach the problem obliquely. I shall consider the kitchen display a work of art and take as a starting point Elisabeth's approach to artworks 'that requires us to consider the influence of the local geographical environment' on makers and viewers and to acknowledge conditions such as 'geology, hydrology, and climate.'¹

The environment of Orkney is distinctive. The rock of the mainland is mostly Old Red Sandstone of the Middle Devonian age. Marine incursions in the Devonian shaped the island resulting in a ring of hills around a shallow basin and a significant marine

¹ de Bièvre 2008: 183.

transgression of this basin created the large lochs of Stennes and Harray. The narrow isthmus dividing the lochs is particularly striking and became a site of very important Neolithic activity. This remains in evidence with the elliptical arrangement of the Stones of Stennes and the large circle of thirty-six surviving stones known as the Ring of Brodgar. Deforestation in the Neolithic was extensive and the island remains almost treeless, with the result that these standing stones are particularly prominent on the exposed isthmus. The stones were quarried from sites around Sandwick, perhaps two miles south of the farmhouse we were staying in. The most important quarry was probably the one at Vestra Fiold, where narrow beds of Old Red Sandstone were exposed with faultlines which meant that the quarrying was quite straightforward and required comparatively little effort. The faultlines produced stones with angled tops and such stones feature prominently on the isthmus.

Having established as much I may advance further by following one of John's lines of enquiry and considering what responses this particular 'material and social environment' might elicit in a maker.² The maker of the kitchen display was certainly responding to the built environment of New York yet seems to have been attracted to specific features of that architecture. The Flatiron is a case in point. This famous building occupies a triangular site with the apex formed by the intersection of Fifth Avenue and Broadway. The manner in which the building occupies the site has been exploited by a number of photographers who have positioned their cameras angled obliquely and upwards so as to present the skyscraper as almost impossibly thin and with an angled roofline; such images are prominent in the display. Thus the maker of this display was responding to images which presented the building as a thin megalith with an angled top. A similar observation may be made in connection with the Brooklyn Bridge. The two massive towers of the bridge are pierced with twin Gothic arches; such is the depth of the arches that when viewed – or photographed – obliquely their symmetry is obscured and the arches appear to describe the arc of a flying buttress. This configuration presents a space with an outline recalling that of an Orcadian megalith. And, again, a number of postcards in the display show such views of the bridge. These views are displayed alongside those of the Manhattan skyline, which in this context resembles a collection of standing stones.



Figure 42.1. Graffiti in Lower Manhattan. New York, 1970s.
Photography by Allan Ludwig.

There are of course a number of ways of interpreting this. I discern a response to both the environment of Orkney and that of New York. What might be the reward for this response, or combination of responses? Postcards and photographs were added to the display over quite a long period of time, indicating a sustained traffic across the Atlantic. In such a traffic, friends and quite possibly family members would be separated. Yet the display bridges the Atlantic as the maker has found Orkney in New York in the act of recreating something of New York in Orkney. The far away is brought near. It seems the maker may have found some comfort in Neolithic New York.

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² Onians 2016: 7.

Homo Imaginativus

Lauren Golden

Vision itself has history, and the revelation of these visual strata must be regarded as the primary task of art history.¹

Prologue

Originally this paper was to be published in 2011–12 but during the contributor and editor process too much that was crucial to the logic of the argument was to be cut again and again and so I withdrew from the publication, much to the frustration of John Onians. In many ways my decision was due to John's influence but also that of Elisabeth de Bièvre – very much a power team. John had taught me through my years as his 'eternal student' to read, reread, edit and edit again and Elisabeth continued this learning process when I turned to her for my own paper (in secret) for John's Festschrift – *Raising the Eyebrow*.² From both of them I learnt clarity in writing and the concept that 'less is often more' but they also taught me resolution and bravery – staying true to your ideas however unacceptable they may be – because the 'debate' was all. There could be no true debate if the theory did not stand up due to overediting...

In terms of my focus on the importance of visual cognition for the evolution of the human mind, both then and now, generally new theories of evolutionary cognitive archaeology have been reworked taking into consideration the new hominin species discoveries with language still the primary accolade of what made humans human.³ Thomas Wynn's assessment of this situation is that, 'it is now long past the point where quasi-cognitive abilities such as 'symbolism' or 'planning' can stand as informative concepts. Formal

cognitive models have become essential.'⁴ What has developed is an explosion of neuroscience studies on the role of visual imagery for cognition, developed from Stephen Kosslyn's pioneering research regarding the 'imagery debate' that was so crucial for my thesis.⁵ Thus, many interdisciplinary papers that have explored neuroscience, art and aesthetics followed⁶ resulting in the discipline of neuroaesthetics.⁷ Undeniably influential to this interdisciplinary approach was John's 30 years of revolutionary research and invention of the term and new discipline – neuroarthistory,⁸ which when published as a book⁹ placed the 'cat amongst the art history pigeons!'

As I look back on my intellectual journey it becomes increasingly difficult to separate both their influences on my developing theory. I remember one particularly intellectually stimulating and radical lecture by Elisabeth on Dutch still life, flowers and their inclusion in images of the Virgin Mary as visual representations of the 'survival' environment of the Dutch landscape and economy. I now see with hindsight just how critical Elisabeth's revolutionary geographical and neurobiological approach to art history, brought together in her dynamic book challenging the 'Tradition' on Dutch 'Landscapes',¹⁰ was to my

¹ Wölfflin 1950: 11.

² Golden 2001a.

³ A recent example: Henshilwood and d'Errico 2011. As a challenge to these approaches in the same volume see: Dubreuil 2011: 185–203. See also, Tomlinson 2018, who employs 'niche construction' theory and the fairly new over-arching and all-inclusive term 'taskscape' stating vaguely: 'In this view, the novelties of early sapient cognition amounted to tweaks in the hominin "computational phenotype," perhaps *subtle alterations* in kinds of memory and in the capacity for its storage, which rearranged the relations of cortex to deep-brain processing' 136, my italics. However, Tomlinson does endeavour to challenge linguocentrism: 146–48. On 'Taskscapes' see Gruppuso and Whitehouse 2020: 388–597.

⁴ Wynn and Coolidge 2015: 219.

⁵ See below. In a 2001 paper (after my thesis submission) Kosslyn stated: 'Neuroimaging studies, combined with other methods (such as studies of brain-damaged patients and of the effects of transcranial magnetic stimulation), are revealing the ways in which imagery draws on mechanisms used in other activities, such as perception and motor control. Because of its close relation to these basic processes, imagery is now becoming one of the best understood 'higher' cognitive functions.' See Kosslyn, Ganis and Thompson 2001: 635–42, 635.

⁶ Too many to cite but, for example, see Vartanian and Goel 2004: 893–97; Yaman and Yaman 2019: 9–14.

⁷ Term first coined by Zeki 1999: 2.

⁸ Onians 2003: 125–38.

⁹ Onians 2007b. His lecture Neuroarthistory: First Principles. Neuroaesthetics Conference, Goldsmiths College, London, 20–21 May 2005, viewed 23 November 2023, <<https://rhizome.org/community/5568/>>.

¹⁰ De Bièvre 2015.

subconscious mind while I walked through the human evolutionary environment.

*

The Origin of Species published by Charles Darwin in 1859,¹¹ for the first time placed the human being in the same category as animals – an organism – that evolved through ‘natural selection,’¹² ‘by descent with modification,’¹³ a process that as in any other species affected both physiology and behaviour.¹⁴ Later Darwin concluded, ‘Man still bears in his bodily frame the indelible stamp of his lowly origin.’¹⁵ One of the most defining adaptations and a critical determinant of the capacities of *Homo sapiens sapiens* was the enlargement of the prefrontal cortex. Serving the highest mental functions and known to be neurologically connected to all other areas of the brain and thus to the whole body, this adaptation powerfully demonstrates the error of the Cartesian dualism of body and mind.¹⁶ Interpreted through the perspective of ‘neural Darwinism’ brain size testifies to the selective advantage it gave to the human species, which here is argued as an adaptation for an increased imagination, not just as a minor ‘faculty,’ or as a ‘mediator’ of other brain faculties but rather as – I propose with the designation – a ‘supra-imagination.’ This cognitive resource, with its built-in grasp of both time and space, is described by Immanuel Kant in his account of an *a priori* transcendental imagination in the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*¹⁷ as the basis for all higher cognition. In agreement Darwin stated:

The Imagination is one of the highest prerogatives of man. By this faculty he unites former images, independently of the will, and thus creates brilliant and novel results.¹⁸

This paper presents the ‘supra-imagination’ as a specific product of our hominid ancestors’ adaptation to particular environmental conditions, which had important implications for the evolution of the human brain and mind and, ultimately, art. Therefore, a biological approach to the behaviour of art¹⁹ can provide a greater understanding of aesthetics where:

‘An aesthetic experience is one that allows the beholder “to perceive-feel-sense” an artwork (from the Greek *aisth-ese-aisthanomai*), which in turn implies the activation of sensorimotor, emotional and cognitive mechanisms.’²⁰ Antonio Damasio states:

The lower levels in the neural edifice of reason are the same ones that regulate the processing of emotions and feelings, along with the bodily functions necessary for an organism’s survival. In turn, these lower levels maintain direct and mutual relationships with virtually every bodily organ, thus placing the body directly within the chain of operations that generate the highest reaches of reasoning, decision making, and, by extension, social behaviours and creativity. Emotion, feeling and biological regulation all play a role in human reason. The lowly orders of our organism are in the loop of high reason.²¹

Human evolution c. 7.5 million years BP²² began in the new environments between the edge of the forest and the savannah/mosaic landscape (Figure 43.1), involving new food sources²³ and strange predators.²⁴ Adaptation to this survival environment was essential in providing the spur to the evolution of the human brain. Developing a memory of the landscape, where to find food, the ability to run²⁵ and tool use²⁶ all assisted survival. Manipulation of mental imagery in the brain including visual, motor and spatial awareness of the environment, which promoted working (acquisition/short term) and long-term (retrieval) memory, was crucial.²⁷

So, mental imagery can engage the motor system. This finding could help to explain why ‘mental practise’ can improve actual performance. In this case, imagining making movements might not only exercise the relevant brain areas, but also build associations among processes implemented in different areas, which in turn facilitate complex performance.²⁸

A popular theory for brain development is evidence of tool-making,²⁹ but this does not explain why the

¹¹ John Murray, London.

¹² Darwin 1985: 130–72.

¹³ Select bibliography for the purposes of this paper; for extensive research references: Golden 2001b; Foley 1997; Mellars 1990; Mellars and Stringer 1989.

¹⁴ Darwin 1985: 71–76.

¹⁵ Darwin 1906: 380–97, 947.

¹⁶ Damasio 1996.

¹⁷ Kant 1787.

¹⁸ Darwin 1906: 113.

¹⁹ Onians and Collins 1978: 1–26; Onians 1998: 2–27; Onians 2000: 27–33.

²⁰ Di Dio and Gallese 2009: 682.

²¹ Damasio 1996: xv.

²² Balter 2001: 1460–61; Gamble 1996: 48–50, 79–80.

²³ Sept 1992.

²⁴ Gamble 1996: 81–91; Foley 1997: 139–141, 157.

²⁵ Hunt 1994: 183–202.

²⁶ Susman 1991: 129–51.

²⁷ Kosslyn 1983: 57–58.

²⁸ Kosslyn, Ganis and Thompson 2001: 639. Interestingly, Alex Honnold, in the film *Free Solo*, describes imagining physically each ‘hold’ for hundreds of hours as preparation before his climb on El Capitan.

²⁹ Schick and Toth 1994: 77–107.



Figure 43.1. African Mosaic/Savannah Landscape, Tarangire National Park, Tanzania, 2005, viewed 6 January 2024, <<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tarangire-Natpark800600.jpg>>.

cognitive abilities arose for hominids to be able to think in this way; it is the observation of an effect and not the cause – a Catch-22 theory. To see a rock/stick lying on the ground as something – a tool – that can be thrown and used to hit something else³⁰ is a sophisticated way of thinking and does not just suddenly ‘appear.’ The use of natural containers for carrying is more likely to have been a first stage in tool making/use.³¹ The obsession with tool-making as evidence for symbolic cognitions and the prioritization of language – ‘modern’ behaviours – however far recent research and theories push back the date, fails to consider that technological development and tool diversity does not necessarily indicate a new brain development.³² Does this mean that the technologies and tools/machines of the Industrial Revolution is evidence of a new human species endowed with superior cognitive complexity and ‘behaviours?’

Prevailing theories that relate brain size to ‘intelligence’ include perceiving the brain as a general-purpose

mechanism,³³ or composed of separate modules or domains that have separate specialised functions³⁴ or a combination of both, as demonstrated in Anette Karmiloff-Smith’s theory of ‘mapping across domains,’³⁵ and they all inevitably fall foul of a Cartesian approach to the brain/body.³⁶ How such ‘mapping’ achieves complex thought is not explained. It is not the mappings *per se* that engenders sophisticated cognition, intelligence and behaviour but rather the underlying mechanism that facilitates these ‘mappings.’ A mechanism needs to have been developed in the earliest hominid brain in order for brain structure to achieve such cognitive sophistication that it develops ‘beyond the special purpose goals.’³⁷

Steven Mithen³⁸ proposes that the ‘cognitive fluidity’³⁹ of the *Homo sapiens sapiens* brain can be perceived as a Gothic cathedral (which lets in more light, i.e. allows interaction between cognitive domains/chapels) whose structural evolution can then be traced

³⁰ Kibunjia 1994.

³¹ Tanner and Zihlman 1976: 600; Blumenschine and Cavallo 1992.

³² See a very good ‘questioning’ paper that, however, still prioritizes language (see ‘Title’) as the foundation of ‘Modern’ human symbolic behaviour: d’Errico and Henshilwood 2003.

³³ Wynn 1982.

³⁴ Fodor 1983; Mithen 1998: 8–9.

³⁵ Karmiloff-Smith 1994.

³⁶ In agreement: Barkow *et al.* 1992: 113.

³⁷ Karmiloff-Smith, 1994: 701, 706.

³⁸ Mithen 1996.

³⁹ Mithen 1996: 70. Hereafter, the use of ‘cognitive fluidity’ should be considered as Mithen’s terminology not mine.

backwards to a Romanesque structure, where due to the thick walls knowledge between the ‘chapels’ cannot be exchanged.⁴⁰ The notion of a visual origin for increased cognition and brain expansion is virtually never considered but Mithen came close to identifying the importance of imagining when he stated that:

The mind doesn’t just accumulate information and then regurgitate it. And nor is it indiscriminate in the knowledge it soaks up... Nor does the mind simply solve problems in the way a computer does. The mind is something else: it creates. It thinks of things which are not out there in the world. The mind thinks, it creates, it imagines.⁴¹

The imagination has been mistakenly perceived as a consequence of brain evolution: ‘when thoughts originating in different domains can engage together, the result is almost a limitless capacity for imagination.’⁴² However, the new survival demands of the Plio-Pleistocene required an increased awareness of the unfamiliar. The recognition of the ‘unfamiliar’ relies on the ability to perceive something as being ‘different.’ This visual thinking required a heightened ability to compare mental imagery. Gradually being forced to make excursions further from the familiar forest edge into the unfamiliar and varied mosaic environment would have stimulated the development of an increased power of analytical visual cognition.⁴³ Equipped with a chimpanzee’s ability for mental mapping,⁴⁴ measuring distances between locations⁴⁵ and group co-operation,⁴⁶ the hominid species had the basics for survival. How long this hominid spent looking at and thinking about the ‘undiscovered country’ we cannot know, but perhaps it was during this ‘watching’ that the most fundamental brain development occurred.

Observing animals moving across grasslands involved viewing from a far greater distance than that experienced by primates in the tropical forest.⁴⁷ Extremely important was the increase in size as an animal in the distance moved closer and *vice versa*. Eventually animals would disappear from sight over the horizon. The hominid would then have had to make sense of their disappearance. This visual stimulation and the need to exploit a new environment for food

required increased imaginative power. As Darwin remarked, ‘Vision is the most important of all the senses, and during primeval times the closest attention must have been incessantly directed towards distant objects for the sake of obtaining prey and avoiding danger.’⁴⁸

Such a visual experience created a spatial and kinaesthetic awareness of greater distance.⁴⁹ Further, in moving into the mosaic landscape, looking back to the forest edge where they had been, with a view ahead, would stimulate perceptions of time and space produced from bodily awareness,⁵⁰ increased by observing their own tracks and those of animals in such movements. Continual exposure to such phenomena would have helped to establish a cognitive connection between these visual signs and the animal/self. Such cognition necessitated the use of the imagination, a visual presentation of two seemingly unrelated images and this is a form of symbolization. Moving away to a point where the forest edge could no longer be seen, may have produced feelings of panic in relation to the unfamiliar. Turning back on their tracks until the forest came into view again would have facilitated a recognition that just because you couldn’t see something didn’t mean it wasn’t there. Repetition of this experience would establish such a notion. When presented with the view of beasts disappearing over the horizon the hominid could imagine where they had gone; that they had moved out of sight.⁵¹ Such cognition required the use of an enhanced matrix of time and space.⁵² A recent study on motion imagery and perception concluded:

...mental imagery is not a general trait-like ability, but has a multi-feature structure for different imagery modalities and content. We also report the functional interaction between the effects of motion imagery and perception when performed simultaneously.⁵³

This crucial evolutionary adaptation required the experience of seeing further in order to see ahead, both in time and space, in your brain, and that requires the

⁴⁰ Mithen 1996: 65–72.

⁴¹ Mithen 1996: 35.

⁴² Mithen 1996: 71. Mithen’s later publications have not differed, see Mithen 2000 and Mithen 2001.

⁴³ Byrne 1998.

⁴⁴ Milton 1988.

⁴⁵ Boesch and Boesch 1984.

⁴⁶ Byrne 1995: 124–40.

⁴⁷ Byrne 1995: 93–99, 154–55, 184–87.

⁴⁸ Darwin 1998: 222.

⁴⁹ Kosslyn 1994: 68–172, 345–53.

⁵⁰ Kosslyn 1994: 127–36, 149–50. Further, tracking moving stimuli involves motor processing areas of the brain, which in turn assist spatial awareness and location information. See Kosslyn 1994: 157.

⁵¹ ‘Motor programs are also executed when one reconstructs a memory of a moving object in an image.’ See Kosslyn 1994: 250.

⁵² Kosslyn 1994: 377.

⁵³ Chang and Pearson 2018: 84. Significantly, almost all studies on visual imagery observe activation of the motor cortex. Too numerous to cite here but see, for example, Kawabata and Zeki 2004.

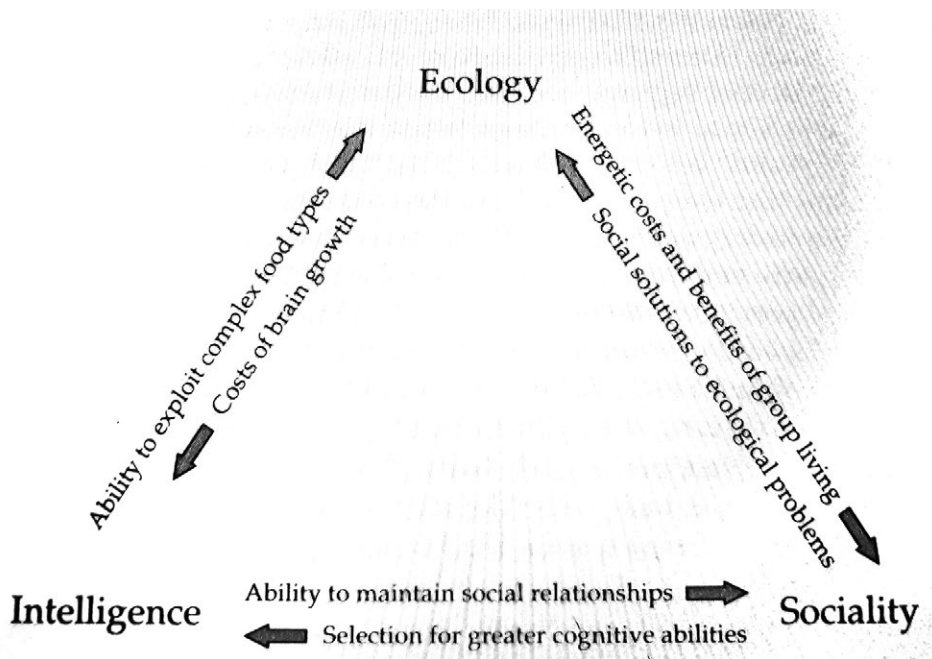


Figure 43.2. Foley's Triangle of relationships between sociality, intelligence and ecology (Foley 1997: 181).

imagination.⁵⁴ For the hominid observing what appears to be a tiny speck on the horizon eventually become a huge animal as it came closer, must have been a revelation, or at least a source of cognitive amazement and surprise. Colin Turnbull illustrates this cognitive 'miracle,' in the reaction of a pygmy leaving the forest for the first time and experiencing the view from a mountain where:

...grazing lazily some several miles away, far down below. He turned to me and said, 'What insects are those?' ... At first I hardly understood, then I realized that in the forest vision is so limited that there is no great need to make an automatic allowance for distance when judging size. Out here in the plains, Kenge was looking for the first time over apparently unending miles of unfamiliar grasslands, with not a tree worth the name to give him any basis for comparison... When I told Kenge that the insects were buffalo, he roared with laughter and told me not to tell such stupid lies...⁵⁵

A major theory of brain expansion and therefore 'intelligence' is proposed as the result of an increase in meat eating through scavenging but, how did these hominids manage to exploit the environment in the

first place, without a bigger brain?⁵⁶ To a certain extent, Robert Foley anticipates the resolution proposed here:

What is unique among humans as an evolutionary event is not the selective pressures leading to greater social complexity and more and more elaborate intelligence, *but the occurrence somewhere in their evolutionary history of the ecological conditions that relaxed the constraints operating on other species and allowed the benefits of greater intelligence to greatly outweigh the cost.*⁵⁷

Foley's answer to this problem is that larger groups resulted in three connected factors of ecology, sociality and intelligence represented in a looping feedback triangle that unwittingly is a visual representation of the Catch-22 nature of these arguments (Figure 43.2).⁵⁸ This triangle is reliant on the acquisition and exploitation of meat as a food source and Foley suggests that this was achieved because larger groups mean bigger brains, which means more intelligence,

⁵⁴ Results suggest 'that the brain actually computes geometric distances in mental images' and that this is an 'unconscious' cognition. See LeDoux 1999: 31.

⁵⁵ Turnbull 1961: 227-28.

⁵⁶ To scavenge required an elevated awareness of the behaviour of predators and the ability to know how and where to find carcasses and then what to do with them. Hominid diet would probably have included root vegetables, worms, rodents, reptiles, honey and eggs, see Vincent 1984. Such a varied diet indicates a mental flexibility that is both opportunistic and planned and, further, requires a high degree of visual perception of the environment and all its inhabitants.

⁵⁷ Foley 1997: 171. (My italics.)

⁵⁸ Foley has a section titled 'The Evolutionary Catch-22,' but unfortunately does not recognise his own Catch-22 theory: Foley 1997: 46-48.

which in turn means the ability to acquire more meat.⁵⁹ However, these larger brains needed the meat to increase the brain for more intelligence to be able to acquire the meat in the first place... and so it goes on. Many theorists focus on brain size as an indicator of intelligence,⁶⁰ often ignoring the evolutionary costs of brain expansion,⁶¹ and so argue for very late dates in human evolution for higher cognitions. Considering brain construction, as represented by the gradual increase in prefrontal cortex, a more coherent theory emerges. Significantly, there is evidence of prefrontal cortex expansion in areas related to motion and visual space in both australopithecine and *Homo habilis* brain endocasts⁶² that would indicate both increased awareness of time/space and secondary visual references, so equipping the hominid with a cognition that led to more nutrition,⁶³ which then would have resulted in increased brain size. If visual imagery/imagination is incorporated into often conflicting theories concerning brain expansion, then there is potential for clarification.

Locating the imagination: ‘When found, make a note of.’⁶⁴

The brain is not just a bigger learning device⁶⁵ where increased encephalization equals greater intelligence,⁶⁶ but crucially involves ‘neural Darwinism.’⁶⁷ Thus, the larger prefrontal cortex was associated with a growing competition for synaptic connections to other parts of the working brain.⁶⁸ That vision was an important factor is demonstrated in that the V4 lobe of the visual cortex is also connected to every other area of the brain.⁶⁹ A reliance on both vision and the imagination thus heightened the integration of sensory, motor and arousal processes.⁷⁰ Indeed, MRI scans show that imagining activates more areas of the brain; whether imagining an object or imagining saying a word.⁷¹

The prefrontal cortex, therefore, could be seen as the product of the adaptation and selection for imaginative

thinking, a form of visual cognition that facilitated the making of connections between disparate phenomena and an expanded awareness of time and space. This proposal offers a view of the construction of the brain as an imagining system that gathers information from other areas of the brain and the body via the midbrain.⁷² The increase in prefrontal cognitive processing enables the inhibition of decisions made on indexical stimulus-response information⁷³ (a process based on visual images) and so allows the emergence of ‘thinking’ imaginatively, i.e. the ability to make symbolic associations.

Terrence Deacon describes the maturation of this ability as the integration of various levels of interpretative response within a cognitive structure of: ‘iconic’ (recognition); ‘indexical’ (correlation between icons – the ability to predict that one icon points to another); and ‘symbolic’ (ability for indirect correlation and referential transference).⁷⁴ Thus the acquisition of symbolic thinking can be applied to early hominid evolution: to watch an animal disappear over the horizon and imagine going there involves indirect correlation and referential transference; the animal can move; the animal can move far; the animal can move so far it cannot be seen; the animal is somewhere else; I can move; I can move far; I can move so far I cannot be seen; I can go somewhere else, therefore I am like the animal. Although a simple form of symbolism, it is a significant cognitive advancement. Thus, a heightened kinaesthetic awareness of time and space facilitated by an increased power of imagination⁷⁵ was an adaptation to the environmental pressures of the Plio-Pleistocene.⁷⁶ The hominid equipped with a capacity for visual symbolic association prepared the way for the evolution of *Homo sapiens sapiens*: a creature capable of imagining anything.

⁵⁹ Foley 1997: 179–82. For a variation on this theory regarding the cognitive development of Modern Humans, see Greenbaum *et al.* 2019.

⁶⁰ Deacon 1997: 145–64.

⁶¹ Aiello and Wheeler 1995.

⁶² Holloway 1974.

⁶³ Coppens 1995: 104–12.

⁶⁴ Dickens 1848: 149.

⁶⁵ Deacon 1997: 161–84.

⁶⁶ Deacon 1990.

⁶⁷ Deacon 1997: 202–06.

⁶⁸ Deacon 1997: 255–59; Holloway 1995: 42. Holloway notes the reduction of the visual striate cortex from pongid to hominid brain, but at the same time there is an increase in the frontal lobes.

⁶⁹ Pani 1999.

⁷⁰ Knauff *et al.* 2000.

⁷¹ Coveney and Highfield 1995: 351.

⁷² Deacon 1997: 256–57.

⁷³ Deacon 1997: 69–72, 264–71.

⁷⁴ Deacon 1997: 73–83.

⁷⁵ ‘I suggest that a species newly adapting to a growing Savannah-like environment and utilizing a relatively recent adaptation (i.e. bipedal striding gait), benefited from some neural reorganization that enhanced an appreciation of visuospatial integration, at least with regard to its patchy distribution of food and water resources.’ See Holloway 1995: 45. An interesting approach to the importance of the awareness of time and space that leads to ‘ordinal sequencing’ is proposed by Wynn *et al.* 2015. However, this development is connected to bead-making in the Late Pleistocene and so is extremely ‘late’ in terms of human brain evolution and cognition.

⁷⁶ Neuroimaging has revealed a strong connection between the intraparietal sulcus (IPS), which appears to be the locus of ordinal representation in children and adults, and areas involved in spatial cognition. See Kaufmann *et al.* 2009. Functionally, the cortical regions of the intraparietal sulcus play important roles in the visuomotor coordination of eye and hand movement and in visual memory.

The act of ‘seeing’ is not specifically localized within the brain; it is a multi-stage parallel processing involving the whole brain/body.⁷⁷ All information is communicated *via* neuronal connections involving a constant reciprocal flow between this immense and complex network in the prefrontal cortex.⁷⁸ Damasio describes ‘perceptual images’ that stimulate association to previous ‘perceptual images,’ as ‘recalled images’ and, when the perceptual and recalled images converge, future planning is made possible.⁷⁹ These ‘images’ are continually modified and updated creating new knowledge.⁸⁰

Aunt Maggie as a complete person does not exist in one single site of your brain. She is distributed all over it, in the form of many dispositional representations, for this and that. And when you conjure up remembrances of things Maggie, and she surfaces in various early cortices (visual, auditory, and so on) in topographic representation, she is still present only in separate views during the time window in which you construct *some* meaning of her person.⁸¹

The morphological trend of the human skull throughout human evolution⁸² does not explain how the different domains of the brain suddenly start to work together in sophisticated cognitive fluidity, but rather the effect of the increasing use and reliance on mental imagery for symbolic association in survival that produced an expansion of the prefrontal cortex.⁸³ John Eccles describes the process thus:

In the great human achievements in the plastic arts there was more effective use of what had been developed in the cerebral areas of the hominoids before the hominid evolution (...) What appears to have happened is that the evolutionary development of the prefrontal cortex and perhaps areas of the parietal and frontal lobes gave more effective use of what had been evolved in the hominoid visual-motor system.⁸⁴

Experiences are simultaneously perceptual, kinaesthetic, cognitive and operational comprising

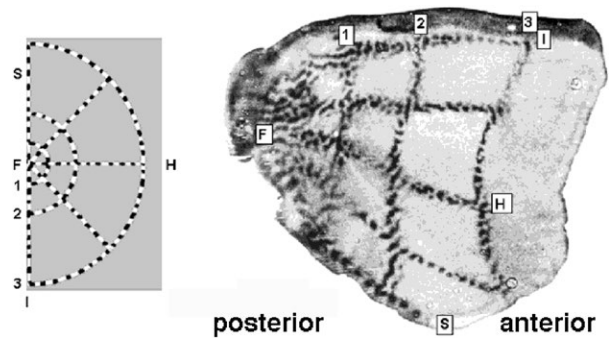


Figure 43.3. Retino-cortical mapping of macaque monkey. (Left) Retina with spoke-wheel stimulus. (Right) Stimulus image retinotopically mapped onto the posterior part of (hemifield) striate cortex, a.k.a. calcarine sulcus (visual cortex, V1, layer 4C) (Figure 3, Florack 2014).

bodily reactions that prepare for ‘fight or flight’⁸⁵ and include emotions, such as fear, pleasure and pain.⁸⁶ Increased imaginative power integrated all these different aspects of the brain/mind as a body/brain adaptation manifested in the expansion of the human prefrontal cortex⁸⁷ where, ‘a feeling depends on the juxtaposition of an image of the body proper to an image of something else, such as the visual image of a face or the auditory image of a melody.’⁸⁸ This process is a state of continual monitoring and revision as the brain/body accumulates new experiences and information,⁸⁹ which affect behaviour and decision-making producing what Damasio terms ‘somatic markers.’⁹⁰ This ‘thinking’ is enabled by ‘complex processes operating behind the scenes,’⁹¹ which can only be achieved by imagining⁹² and further, research on monkeys has demonstrated that there is a correspondence between what is actually seen and how that is represented in the visual cortex (Figure 43.3).⁹³ There are pictures in the brain.

⁷⁷ Milner and Goodale 1993.

⁷⁸ Tononi *et al.* 1991.

⁷⁹ Damasio 1996: 96–99.

⁸⁰ Damasio 1996: 100–05.

⁸¹ Damasio 1996: 102–03.

⁸² Smith 1984.

⁸³ LeDoux 1999: 280–301; Kosslyn 1994: 312–20. Research on imagination demonstrates activation is apparent throughout the cerebral cortex but particularly in the prefrontal cortex. See Eccles 1991: 169–71, 231.

⁸⁴ Eccles 1991: 138.

⁸⁵ Damasio 1996: 114–15; LeDoux 1999: 161–67.

⁸⁶ Kolb and Whishaw 1996: 57; Damasio 1996: 109–33.

⁸⁷ Expansion of the neocortex in demanding environment of fruit-eating monkeys, see Allman *et al.* 1993; Thorpe and Fabre-Thorpe 2001: 261.

⁸⁸ Damasio 1996: 134.

⁸⁹ Damasio 1996: 143–64.

⁹⁰ Damasio 1996: 173–201.

⁹¹ Damasio 1996: 94–99.

⁹² Kosslyn describes how mental imagery is used in abstract thought processes, which involves symbolic association. See Kosslyn 1983: 177–93.

⁹³ Tootell *et al.* 1988; Kosslyn *et al.* 1993; Borst and Kosslyn 2008.

One picture is worth a thousand words⁹⁴

The major Catch-22 theory of the evolution of the human brain is the acquisition of language. Robin Dunbar proposes the theory that hominids were living in larger groups⁹⁵ (archaeological evidence indicates that early humans, were, in fact, living in very small groups⁹⁶) and that complex social relationships⁹⁷ result in language.⁹⁸ This fails to explain the cause of this brain expansion, since the cognitive complexity and conceptual awareness needed for Dunbar's sociality, which is proposed as being the spur for such a development – 'the cause' (the ability for) needs to have been in place already in order to facilitate such a development in social communication in the first place. The appearance of Broca's and Wernicke's areas in hominid brain casts are cited as evidence for language. However, these areas are connected with motor analysis in the neocortex and particularly the cerebellum⁹⁹ and, Wernicke's area is located in the left temporal lobe, which is the major area for auditory, visual and verbal memory. The development of Broca's and Wernicke's areas support an increased kinaesthetic cognition of time and space, movement and sequence, and therefore temporal sequential ordering that was adapted in language evolution.¹⁰⁰ As Deacon states, these areas:

...were selected during language evolution because what they were already doing offered the best fit for the new problem posed by language. Thus we should stop thinking about Broca's and Wernicke's areas as 'language areas.'¹⁰¹

Steven Pinker prioritizes language over the imagination due to the latter's inability to produce photographic representations¹⁰² and that images are only capable of indexical association:¹⁰³

How would one represent abstract ideas, even something as simple as the concept of a triangle? A triangle is any three-sided polygon. But any image of a triangle must be isosceles, scalene, or equilateral.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁴ Origin attributed to F.R. Barnard, *Printer's Ink*, 10 March 1927, who used for an advertisement 'One look is worth a thousand words.'

⁹⁵ Dunbar 1996: 22–28.

⁹⁶ Potts 1994.

⁹⁷ Dunbar 1996: 35–36, 62–68.

⁹⁸ Dunbar 1996: 111–15, 192.

⁹⁹ Deacon 1997: 275–78, 284–300.

¹⁰⁰ Kimura and Watson 1989.

¹⁰¹ Deacon 1997: 287.

¹⁰² Pinker 1998: 294.

¹⁰³ Pinker 1998: 289–96.

¹⁰⁴ Pinker 1998: 296.

This proposition is based on a bias towards language and specifically linear sentence-construction, which actually is a method for separating and conveying the complicated conflation of concepts as embodied in the complexity of visual thinking, rather as John Locke suggested when he 'made the enigmatic claim that our image of a triangle is "all and none of these at once."¹⁰⁵ Edward Titchner, who Pinker goes on to deride, describes the conflation of visual cognition:

I can quite well get Locke's picture, the triangle that is no triangle and all triangles at one and the same time. It is a flashy thing, come and gone from moment to moment; it hints two or three red angles, with the red lines deepening into black, seen on a dark green ground. It is not there long enough for me to say whether the angles join to form the complete figure, or even whether all three of the necessary angles are given.¹⁰⁶

Titchner's description of this visual thinking demonstrates the integration of the brain/body: vision, experience of colour, spatial and kinaesthetic recognition, touch and texture, temporality, all of which are conflated into images that do not operate under linguistic rules of extrapolation. Images are not constrained by linear progression. Visual thinking is inherently multifarious and the associations of a particular image – be they 'indexical' or 'symbolic,' exist in a dynamic relationship with one another. Titchner's approach is one of cognition, of abstraction, of symbolic thinking, which does not depend on simplistic indexical association. Interestingly Pinker states: 'The imagination, of course, is not chained to one place at one time, and paintings without true perspective may, strangely enough, be evocative renditions of our mental imagery.'¹⁰⁷

Pinker resorts to a *précis* of the 'Catch-22' evolutionary theories¹⁰⁸ and avoids any explanation for the origin of language concluding that 'no one really knows whether these four habits [group living, brain size, tools/bipedalism and meat eating] formed the base camp for the ascent of human intelligence,¹⁰⁹ but as Darwin stated, 'The mental powers in some early progenitor of man must have been more highly developed than in any existing ape, before even the most imperfect form of speech could have come into use.'¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ Cited in Pinker 1998: 296.

¹⁰⁶ Pinker 1998: 296–97, from Titchner 1909: 22.

¹⁰⁷ Pinker 1998: 294.

¹⁰⁸ Pinker 1998: 191–97.

¹⁰⁹ Pinker 1998: 197.

¹¹⁰ Darwin 1906: 134.

Noam Chomsky¹¹¹ really only tells us what we already know, that language involves grammar and that this is something that the workings of the human brain produce.¹¹² The explanation of how a ‘universal grammar’¹¹³ came to be or how it works is not explained.¹¹⁴ In fact, Chomsky gives up on the origin and evolution of his ‘language organ,’¹¹⁵ relying instead on the ‘hopeful monster’ hypothesis of evolution,¹¹⁶ where a freak mutation instantly produces an adaptation in an organism.¹¹⁷ Such a logocentric paradigm seems incapable of realising that the foundation for any language system includes the ‘common everyday miracle of word meaning and reference:’¹¹⁸ the cognitive capacity to make secondary references from displaced information. Without the imagination, the ability to make secondary references from visual information,¹¹⁹ language could not have evolved. Language and grammar are formed upon the hierarchical structure of symbolic thinking.¹²⁰ The imagination is the means to sign and symbol formation and understanding, of which language is another form. Symbolic association is an essential building block for language, as the basic problem of language acquisition involves decoding symbolic reference and imagining associations between disparate icons, especially as spoken and written words are, respectively, one and two steps removed from whatever is to be communicated.¹²¹

Most of the words we use in our inner speech, before speaking or writing a sentence, exist as some form of image/representation in the brain/mind and this is largely an unconscious process.¹²² If we think of a telephone, we visualize a telephone mentally. If we ask someone to do something, as we verbalize the request, we imagine that request and what it involves. When we read we mentally visualise what we are reading, however much the images are fleeting, indistinct and/

or amalgamated.¹²³ Thus visual cognition of mental imagery is predominantly non-linear and imagination facilitates cognition of the iconic, to the indexical and then to the symbolic and abstract thought. As Kosslyn states:

Words have a serious drawback as the main ingredient of thought (...) if all meanings are stored in terms of words, how do you learn the first word? What do you use to store *its* meaning? There is a paradox here. Something else must be stored in memory to begin with that can be used to learn the meanings of the first words. Because images spring from perception, and hence need not be arbitrarily paired with the things they represent, they are a good candidate for the ‘bedrock’ of representation. This and the related lines of reasoning led many thinkers to conclude that the basic elements of thought must be imaginal, not verbal.¹²⁴

As Gombrich stated, ‘we might do a little better to talk of seeing and noticing,’¹²⁵ when trying to understand the unique qualities of the human brain and mind rather than prioritizing the ability for language.

Walking towards art

Discovering the original cognitive moment that led to a purposeful material manifestation, i.e. the deliberate making of marks, is impossible. Hands covered in the blood of animals would have transferred marks, as indeed would the blood of menstruation, which may have led to an early form of body and tool decoration.¹²⁶ The simple picking of a flower/feather and then used as a form of decoration; carrying bags – made out of animal skin or woven, materials with potential aesthetic and symbolic meaning – would have perished.¹²⁷ The recognition of footprints or animal tracks may have led to the use of earth/sand to make marks, explaining something that helped to generate a topographical mental map for survival. Importantly, scavenging or hunting, necessitated the ability to anthropomorphise¹²⁸ and empathy, a projecting of the self into the ‘being’ of something else, which can be employed in surviving or socializing. Such experiences would challenge Mithen’s Cartesian claim that hunting

¹¹¹ Chomsky 1980: 222; Chomsky 1988: 169–83.

¹¹² Chomsky 1976: 13, 29; Chomsky 1980: 60–62, 187–88; Pinker 1994: 110–12, 236–40, 285–88.

¹¹³ Chomsky 1972: 27, 90; Chomsky 1976: 29; Chomsky 1980: 60–62, 187–88.

¹¹⁴ Chomsky 1972: 98; Chomsky 1976: 29, 43; Chomsky 1980: 214; Chomsky 1988: 167–69.

¹¹⁵ Chomsky 1972: 97–98. See also Deacon 1997: 35–39, 102–05.

¹¹⁶ Gould 1982.

¹¹⁷ Chomsky 1976: 29, 43; Chomsky 1980: 187–88, 214, 222; Chomsky 2000: 4, 9.

¹¹⁸ Deacon 1997: 42–43.

¹¹⁹ Deacon 1997: 92–93.

¹²⁰ Deacon 1997: 94–101, 116–19, 120–28.

¹²¹ Research has shown that subjects could identify pictures much faster by generating mental imagery than with word/sentence identification, see Kosslyn 1994: 288–89; LeCron Foster 1990: 519. Visual imagery also is observed in both bottom-up and top-down brain processing. V1 is also activated when the eyes are closed. See Winlove *et al.* 2018: 18–19.

¹²² Damasio 1996: 106; Kosslyn 1994: 271–76. For a review of the present research, see Dijkstra *et al.* 2019.

¹²³ Kosslyn 1994: 308–10. A new neuroscientific research focus (since 2015) on aphantasia is yielding fascinating results, which it is not possible to incorporate in this paper. However, preliminary studies and findings appear to support visual imagery and a connection with spatial imagery and metacognition, see Keogh and Pearson 2018.

¹²⁴ Kosslyn 1983: 5–6.

¹²⁵ Gombrich 1972: 148.

¹²⁶ Knight 1991: 38–39, 282.

¹²⁷ Rolland 1990: 357.

¹²⁸ Marshack 1990.

and socialisation modules were separate and isolated cognitive domains.¹²⁹

The prefrontal cortex where all the information regarding the bodily functions and in particular learning and working memory converge,¹³⁰ would have expanded exponentially with the long-distance travelling of *Homo erectus* and archaic *Homo sapiens*.¹³¹ Stimulation by new experiences would be incorporated with knowledge already obtained in order to successfully meet different survival challenges faced in new environments,¹³² which were varied,¹³³ unpredictable and unfamiliar,¹³⁴ thus increasing bodily kinaesthetic spatial and temporal awareness.¹³⁵ Therefore in these new survival landscapes we find the development of Acheulean tools that provided an edge in terms of ecological competition¹³⁶ and, significantly, the collection of *objets trouvés*,¹³⁷ as evidence of cognitive fluidity and a form of aesthetics in *Homo Erectus*.

Mithen's statement that 'there is nothing gradual about the evolution of the capacity for art' and that language is the cause¹³⁸ is predicated on the idea of a 'creative explosion' – c. 30,000 BP, inaugurated by the appearance of *Homo sapiens sapiens*.¹³⁹ The prime evidence for this cognitive fluidity is considered to be the advanced tool-making of the Upper Palaeolithic,¹⁴⁰ but the excavation of wooden spears in Germany, c. 400,000 BP,¹⁴¹ indicates a much earlier sophisticated cognition for tool construction. Evidence for aesthetics and potential symbolism have also been discovered in Acheulean hand axes c. 250,000 BP, shaped deliberately to centralise a fossil that was naturally embedded in the flint.¹⁴² From the Middle Palaeolithic there is evidence for an earlier employment of blade technology,¹⁴³ bone and antler artifacts,¹⁴⁴ decorated implements and minerals, which had been transported from hundreds



Figure 43.4. Berekhat Ram Figurine, Berekhat Ram, Golan Heights, Israel, 233,000 BP. Scoria (volcanic rock), 3.5x2.5x2.1cm. Jerusalem, Israel Museum. Israel Antiquities Authority, IAA:1993-492.

of miles away,¹⁴⁵ symbolic burial artefacts,¹⁴⁶ notched bone fragments and incised ostrich shells,¹⁴⁷ use of pigment¹⁴⁸ and the discovery at Blombos of perforated shells with pigment are dated to c. 82,000 BP¹⁴⁹ and at Skhul c. 135,000 BP.¹⁵⁰ A sculpture from Berekhat Ram c. 230,000 BP¹⁵¹ (Figure 43.4) demonstrates a very early surviving example of the transference of the human form to an inanimate object. All point not only to cognitive fluidity in early humans and archaic *Homo sapiens* but to an aesthetic behaviour.¹⁵² Alexander

¹²⁹ Mithen 1996: 129–32, 164–67.

¹³⁰ Tanji and Hoshi 2001; Rees 2001.

¹³¹ Rees 2001: 153: 'areas of the frontal and parietal cortex are activated when subjects become consciously aware of the presence of a change in a visual scene.' Shreeve 1994.

¹³² Foley 1989.

¹³³ Gamble 1996: 40–41, 134–43 and 188–202; Rolland 1990: 358, 366–73.

¹³⁴ Gamble 1996: 88–89, 117–18, 121–23 and 139–43. Rolland 1990: 374–75.

¹³⁵ Vrba 1985.

¹³⁶ Dennell 1988.

¹³⁷ Oakley 1973. Recent research suggests evidence of such behaviour c. 800,000 BP. See Chatterjee 2014: 155.

¹³⁸ Mithen 1996: 162, 209.

¹³⁹ Pfeiffer 1982.

¹⁴⁰ Peterkin 1993.

¹⁴¹ Thieme 1997; Dennell 1997.

¹⁴² Oakley 1971.

¹⁴³ Clark 1989.

¹⁴⁴ Bednarik 1992 and Bednarik 1995.

¹⁴⁵ Yellen *et al.* 1995.

¹⁴⁶ Clark 1989: 577–78.

¹⁴⁷ Clark 1989; Rolland 1990: 373–74; Marshack 1990: 460–67.

¹⁴⁸ Clark 1989: 578.

¹⁴⁹ Bouzouggar 2007.

¹⁵⁰ Vanhaeren *et al.* 2006.

¹⁵¹ Goren-Inbar 1986; Marshack 1997a and Marshack 1997b.

¹⁵² Marshack 1990: 457–98.

Marshack argues for a ‘visual mediation’¹⁵³ that forms the basis for higher cognitions:

The capacity for language not only involves a capacity for vocalization and acoustic decoding, but is dependent as well on the capacity for visual categorization of objects and processes, the generalized capacity to map and model or ‘think’ in time and space, and the capacity to solve a wide range of cognitive problems in different modes.¹⁵⁴

As the climate became more stable from the Middle Palaeolithic to c. 10,000 BP,¹⁵⁵ a regular and predictable food supply allowed more time to engage in activities that were not essential for survival, such as social leisure, decoration, and technical improvement of tools.¹⁵⁶ The development of complex language and art,¹⁵⁷ especially that of the complex cave paintings of the much later Upper Palaeolithic, demonstrates a kinaesthetic aesthetic, where the natural form of the wall is used as a template for the depiction of a specific animal,¹⁵⁸ which was made possible by a body/brain/mind that had previously adapted for a ‘supra-imagination.’

Art is only Nature operating with the aid of the instruments she has made¹⁵⁹

‘Evolution is not about progression, but about diversification’¹⁶⁰ and it is the individual, through survival and reproduction, which ensures the success of the species. The individual organism is subjected to a continual variation, from the small to the large scale, of experiences that affect adaptation, capability, and behaviour.¹⁶¹ This is a continuous ‘feedback loop’ that is the antithesis of linear progression but rather is cyclical.¹⁶²

Thus, behaviour is a phenotypic expression designed to ensure survival and reproduction of the organism that, for example, causes ‘a male bower bird to paint his bower with pigment crushed in his bill out of blue berries.’¹⁶³ Richard Dawkins has termed this the ‘extended phenotype,’ which can be represented by

external constructions, e.g. a bird’s nest,¹⁶⁴ which can then be considered artefacts.¹⁶⁵ Therefore, a behaviour of art can be considered an extension of the body/brain phenotype but manifests external to the organism that has at its very base in a body/brain cognition of the awareness of difference as noted by Darwin.¹⁶⁶

This ability to notice difference, in any species, is crucial for survival. In the human species this ability has been expanded via imagination to include a sophisticated comprehension of time and space, resulting from a coevolution of a body/brain/mind imaginative power. Should this crucial and essential survival ability not be exercised, particularly if survival conditions are easily met, I believe the body/brain/mind will find a way to keep this primary mechanism intact: through the exercise of the imagination.¹⁶⁷ This exercise could involve anything, from carving a figure from stone or bone, to doodling, to painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel; all of which require sophisticated imaginative cognition. All mammals practise survival techniques, where trial and error for a survival situation can be explored in relative safety, which can involve observation and imitation of an actual survival act. A cat practising predation with a twig must be using the imagination because making the unfamiliar familiar (an indexical operation) is only possible by imagination and this behaviour is often described as play. Humans actively seek such stimulation through the experience of fear¹⁶⁸ or amazement. Identified by Darwin,¹⁶⁹ the experience of wonderment contributes to the functioning of human sensory perceptions, questioning and curiosity,¹⁷⁰ which ultimately assist the brain/body to decide what action, if any, is necessary for survival.

The intimate relationship between the environment landscapes and the evolution of the human body/brain formed the foundation for human creative perceptions, conceptions and aesthetic responses. These ‘emotional’ responses that we give names to, such as feeling good, bad, sad, angry, and so on, are body/brain adaptations activated by experiences that are either advantageous or disadvantageous to survival, where ‘ontology

¹⁵³ Marshack 1990: 459.

¹⁵⁴ Marshack 1990: 458–59.

¹⁵⁵ Gamble 1996: 118–23.

¹⁵⁶ Straus 1990.

¹⁵⁷ Gamble 1991.

¹⁵⁸ Bahn 1994.

¹⁵⁹ Baron d’Holbach, Paul Henri, *Système de la Nature* (1780), Part I, chapter 1.

¹⁶⁰ Foley 1997: 10.

¹⁶¹ Darwin 1906: 70–73.

¹⁶² Dawkins 1990: 13, 93–94.

¹⁶³ Dawkins 1990: 199.

¹⁶⁴ Dawkins 1990: 109–17.

¹⁶⁵ Dawkins 1990: 195–208.

¹⁶⁶ Darwin 1906: 755–56.

¹⁶⁷ Once an unfamiliar object has been categorised it is quickly incorporated and accessed by the brain/mind in later identification, see Kosslyn 1994: 275–76. This suggests that body/brain processes for recognising the unfamiliar have a long evolutionary history, which is, therefore, a crucial survival operation.

¹⁶⁸ White 1961: 302.

¹⁶⁹ Darwin 1998: 278–309.

¹⁷⁰ Onians 1994: 11.



Figure 43.5. Domenichino, *Landscape with Saint John Baptising*, c.1610–20. Oil on canvas, 112.3x156.2cm. Cambridge, The Fitzwilliam Museum. Under a Creative Commons License (BY-NC-ND).

recapitulates phylogeny.¹⁷¹ Like Damasio's 'somatic markers' James J. Gibson has named these evaluations 'affordances'¹⁷² where the whole body/brain is involved in a continuous act of perceiving.¹⁷³ He states that 'one sees the environment not just with the eyes but with the eyes in the head on the shoulders of a body that gets about'¹⁷⁴ – a visual and kinaesthetic perception and body/brain ability for symbolic cognition¹⁷⁵ that provides the foundation for an empathetic aesthetic preference. Some research has explored such a biological aesthetic¹⁷⁶ but offers no origin for such a preference. Interestingly John D. Barrow¹⁷⁷ theorizes that early adaptation to a mosaic environment explains the human aesthetic preference for 'representations and recreations of natural landscapes'¹⁷⁸ (for example, Figure 43.5) and neuroscience demonstrates that empathetic responses to artworks involve the body/brain¹⁷⁹ and that neural synchrony across the prefrontal

cortex is increased with mental imagery.¹⁸⁰ Onians' neurological hypothesis that applies the role of mirror neurons to the paintings of the Chauvet Cave suggests such landscape cognitive affinities.¹⁸¹

Therefore, neuroaesthetics needs to consider both rural and urban environments¹⁸² and embrace the body/brain visual connectivity to understand the human behaviour of art, particularly regarding the research on 'mirror neurons,'¹⁸³ which is based in visual imaging. While there is a genetic basis of body/brain structure that is the product of human evolution, there is no reductionism: 'Neither our brains nor our minds are tabulae rasae when we are born. Yet neither are they fully determined genetically.'¹⁸⁴

Traditionally, imagination has been perceived and defined as a 'mediator' of other brain faculties and mental operations, but this demands re-examination. The centrality of imagination for these other 'faculties' to operate is stated by Kant with his Ockhamean point: 'But a logical maxim commands us at the outset to

¹⁷¹ Gould 1977, especially 352–404.

¹⁷² Gibson 1979: 140.

¹⁷³ Gibson 1979: 238–250.

¹⁷⁴ Gibson 1979: 182–88, 203–22.

¹⁷⁵ Gibson 1979: 183, 226, 249–50.

¹⁷⁶ Orians and Heerwagen 1992; Kaplan 1987 and Kaplan 1992.

¹⁷⁷ Barrow 1997.

¹⁷⁸ Barrow 1997: 101, 94–101. On the 17th-century popularity of walking and landscape paintings, see Gage 2008.

¹⁷⁹ Di Dio *et al.* 2007; Chatterjee 2014: 48–54. See for example Pieter Bruegel the Elder's *Hunters in the Snow (Winter)*, 1565 in Wien, Kunsthistorisches Museum.

¹⁸⁰ Bhattacharya and Petsche 2002; Bhattacharya 2009; Cupchik *et al.* 2009.

¹⁸¹ Onians 2016: 314–15. See also Onians 2007a.

¹⁸² For such an approach to Art History, see Fernie 1994; de Bièvre 2008.

¹⁸³ Freedberg and Gallese 2007; Ramachandran 2000; Onians 2007a.

¹⁸⁴ Damasio 1996: 111.

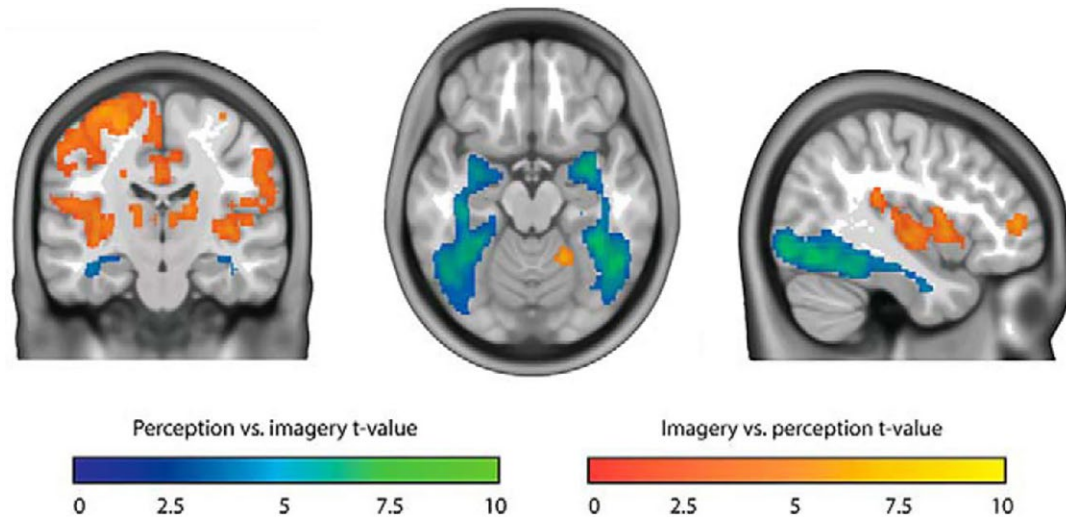


Figure 43.6. Perception versus imagery. Blue-green represents t values for perception versus imagery. Red-yellow represents t values for imagery versus perception. Shown t values were significant on the group level, FDR corrected for multiple comparisons (Dijkstra *et al.* 2017: 1370).

diminish as much as possible this seeming diversity by comparing [these powers] and thereby discovering their hidden identity, and by examining whether imagination combined with consciousness is not [the same as] memory, ingenuity, discrimination, or perhaps even [the same as] understanding and reason.¹⁸⁵ The ‘supra-imagination’ thus became the foundation for the evolution of the human brain and mind and parallels Kant’s notion of *a priori* transcendental imagination, as the basis of all cognition. Wölfflin concurred: ‘The historian has to reckon with the stages of the imagination. And this involves the “history of the mind.”’¹⁸⁶

In conclusion, the ‘supra-imagination’¹⁸⁷ is the prefrontal cortex and this is why as a ‘faculty’ it is not localisable. The body/brain/mind adaptation for a ‘supra-imagination’ by descent with modification resulted in the *Homo sapiens sapiens* prefrontal cortex. Regarding neuroscientific research studies on brain damage and dementing diseases in artists Dahlia W. Zaidel concluded:

¹⁸⁵ Kant 1996: A 649/B 677, 622–23.

¹⁸⁶ Wölfflin 1950: vii.

¹⁸⁷ Various terms have been used that attempt to qualify cognitive fluidity, as evidenced throughout this paper, but deliberately steer clear of an association with visual cognition, and one recent example is ‘metaplasticity’ (see Roberts 2016). While my appellation is more specific to the theory proposed here, nomenclature in neuroscience is highly problematic and what is needed are new nomenclatures that can release approaches to the body, brain, mind and behaviours of the human species from the Cartesian paradigm.

Art and language share a reliance on symbolic cognition but they could have developed and been selected through staggered and separate evolutionary paths. With the available data, no single brain region, pathway or cerebral hemisphere can explain the brain/art relationship. By contrast, it has been possible to ascertain language localization in the left hemisphere. This is partly due to the fact that art is a complex system where single definable units are not amenable to formulation, unlike those of language.¹⁸⁸

A recent study on visual imaging using fMRI offers support for the hypothesis of a ‘supra-imagination’ where although ‘perception’ and visual imagery ‘overlap:’ ‘in contrast, imagery led to stronger activity in more anterior areas, including insula, left dorsal lateral prefrontal cortex, and medial frontal cortex’¹⁸⁹ (Figure 43.6). Kosslyn and Joel Pearson have been at the forefront of neuroscientific studies that suggest the importance of the role of mental imagery for brain functions and cognitions that is not just epiphenomenal.¹⁹⁰ Pearson presents a diagram of the cognitive processes related to mental imagery (placed at the centre) that just as unwittingly as Foley’s *Catch-22*

¹⁸⁸ Zaidel 2010: 183. See also: ‘The weight of the evidence therefore favours art as a multi-process activity, one that depends on several brain regions and on redundancy of art-related functional representation rather than on a single cerebral hemisphere, region or pathway.’ Zaidel 2010: 178.

¹⁸⁹ Dijkstra *et al.* 2017: 1370. It is interesting to note that all recent neuroscientific studies state that further research is necessary.

¹⁹⁰ Pearson and Kosslyn 2015. See also Koenig-Robert and Pearson 2019.

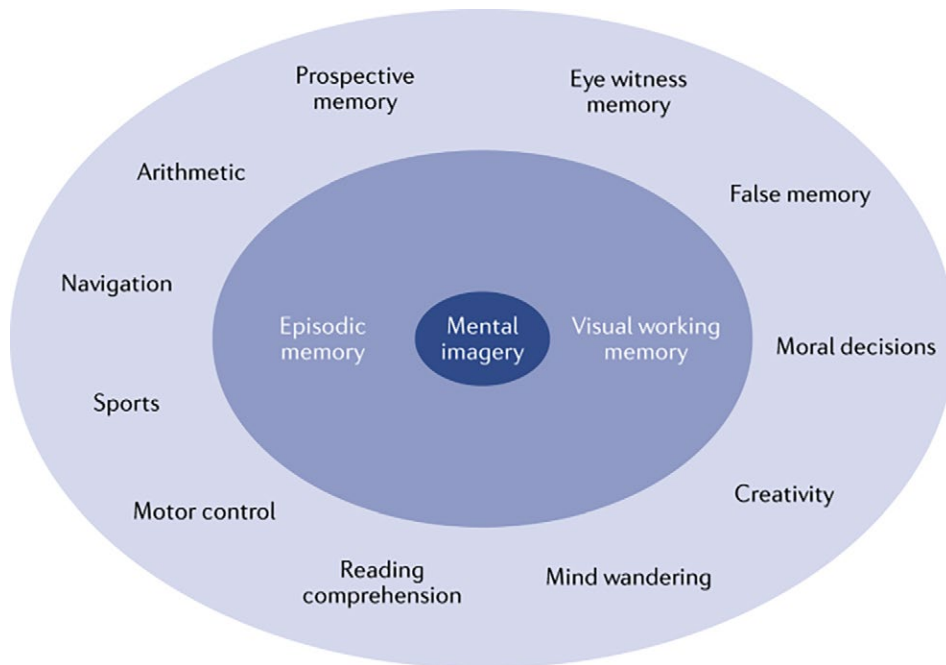


Figure 43.7. Graphical depiction of the cognitive processes related to mental imagery (Figure 5, Pearson 2019).

diagram, here demonstrates my theory of the ‘supra-imagination’ (Figure 43.7). Since my thesis of 2001 neuroscientific research appears to be moving in the direction of confirming my hypothesis. Pearson states: ‘Accordingly, understanding imagery and measuring it accurately holds the potential key to unlocking the mysteries of multiple cognitive processes.’¹⁹¹

Therefore, the ‘supra-imagination’ is proposed as an evolutionary foundational cognitive operation that utilizes all body/brain information and makes possible what we recognise as unique to the human being: the ability for symbolization, creativity, language, and the powers of reasoning, and thus, is the gateway to an art making behaviour.

Epilogue

John Onians was the first art historian to set sail on a journey to explore the *terra incognita* of the neuroscience of the human brain (as neuroscientists will testify) and its relationship with the human behaviour of ‘art.’ Art historians, rather than seeing neuroaesthetics as a reductionist approach¹⁹² that destroys the subjective ‘mystery’ of art, should climb aboard to see the view in

all its glorious expanse and experience the swells of the high seas along the way.

In many ways it comes as no surprise that the Dutch Elisabeth de Bièvre should apply the neuroscience of the ‘landscapes of the mind’ to art. The Dutch invented the term ‘landscape’ – *Landskap/Landschap* – in art, which seems particularly apt given the etymological origins that include ‘land’ and ‘creation’ and a people who responded to their environment by generating land – the analogies with the evolution of the human brain are legion.

Both John and Elisabeth’s research has demonstrated the fruitfulness of applying neuroscience to ‘art’ – that culture can be considered a human behavioural adaptation that facilitates survival. As survival conditions change, so too will the type of human behaviour that adapts to those changes, so causing ‘variation’ in cultural expression. Thus, together they have intellectually inspired generations of *Homo sapiens sapiens* ‘thinkers’ that are now walking more upright in the new environment of neuroarthistory.

¹⁹¹ Pearson 2019.

¹⁹² For example, see: Salah and Salah 2008; Zeki 2001.

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44.

The custom of the country: Latin culture in a provincial landscape

Martin Henig

In borrowing the title of Edith Wharton's brilliant and stylish satire on New York in the age of the Robber Barons, I will suggest that all societies are fundamentally local. Even today, Oxford, where I have lived for decades, and Norwich where Elisabeth and John have made their home are very different in character, and that was even more the case in an age before rapid communications. The factors which created such divergence include, not only differences in population and beliefs, but above all the form of the local landscape, underlying geology, and the flow of rivers and streams but also variations in climate.

While, as John has shown, such divergence is especially marked between nations, the same mechanisms operate at a more intimate scale as Elisabeth demonstrates in her superb analysis of Netherlandish culture. Much of my own work has centred on Roman Britain; surveying its religion and art I have increasingly come to the view that there really was no single Romano-British culture, and moreover that the members of the literate elite in the province often subverted the mainstream *Romanitas* which they espoused, to suit the countryside, the *pays*—fields and woods, pastures and watercourses—where they lived.

*

Both of my dear friends John and Elisabeth have long been aware that art is profoundly affected by the place in which it was created, by topography and by climate. For John, I suspect that the roots of this fascination lay in his schooldays, wondering why a church in one place differed in form and materials from a church elsewhere. I remember looking at photos of medieval churches with John in the school archaeological museum and we certainly explored a range of medieval and later buildings while we were at Cambridge, in East Anglia, the Welsh Marches and the borderland between Scotland and England. The honey-coloured stone of the great Cotswold churches, differ markedly in form and character from the dour, chunky, heaviness of the sandstones and dark igneous rocks of Northern Britain, in either case reflective of the landscape. As a

classicist, this pursuit of what makes buildings of the same date and purpose different, clearly inspired him to try to understand why Greek art and architecture differed from that of Rome, contrasting the rocky landscape and tough masculinity of the former with the more varied and gentler landscapes of Italy which to his former Cambridge tutor Dr Hugh Plommer, he 'perversely' admired more.¹ Of course, in one sense, this is a generalisation and the functionalism and uniformity of Roman military architecture and much else and the brutality of the Roman arena often leads me to side with Dr Plommer. However there was another Rome, lyrically expounded by Gilbert Highet in his evocative *Poets in a Landscape* (1959), and it is this pastoral idyll which I will explore, transplanted to Rome's most westerly province. John went on to survey with a Jovian sweep the art of the entire globe, in the pursuit of which, at least in the amazing atlas which he edited, I was honoured to assist.² The danger inherent in such a generalised approach, which John recognised both here and in the department he so largely founded at UEA (University of East Anglia), is that there are always exceptions; thus it is important that some of us employ the microscope as well as the telescope to the study as Elisabeth has done so triumphantly in her great book.

Divergent cultures frequently occur within a tiny area, and here I frequently recall the Late Alasdair Cooke's splendid put down to a sweeping generalisation about a country, 'But not in the south I think.' This analytical approach is one which Elisabeth has very much taken to heart in studying the diverse cultures of the Netherlands.³ If there are numerous points in common between Dutch artists of the seventeenth century, who after all moved around between cities, there were key differences, resulting from topography and geology as much as religion. The art of Utrecht, for instance, is florid, baroque and Italianate compared with what most people have come to understand by Dutch art,

¹ Onians 1999.

² Onians 2004.

³ De Bièvre 2015.



Figure 44.1. Relief depicting the goddess Cuda. Sculpted in local oolitic limestone. From Stratton near Cirencester, Gloucestershire. 15.5cmx24cm. In Corinium Museum. Photograph by Penny Coombe.

a prime case of ‘not in the south I think,’ and indeed even before publishing her great work, I wondered whether any survey of historic Netherlandish cultures would be the same again, after Elisabeth’s brilliant essay about Utrecht in the fine volume of the British Archaeological Association transactions on Utrecht, largely an archaeological survey, which she edited.⁴

I am going to cross back over the North Sea from the Netherlands to Britain and back a millennium and a half earlier in the Roman period, where merchants voyaged into the North Sea from the mouth of the river Scheldt where a large number of carved altars of Rhenish limestone (now in the National Museum at Leiden) have been found, many of them dedicated by merchants, some of whom certainly trading with Britain and all dedicated to a goddess called Neheleunia who is almost always accompanied by a hound.⁵ She is certainly not a standard Roman goddess, nor a reflection of Roman military might. Rather, she reflects the local faith of those setting out on a perilous journey and hoping to return.

There were similar unique deities attached to particular landscapes on the other side of the North Sea in Britain, including a Pan-like horned deity. A hoard of gold jewellery and inscribed silver spoons dating from

the later fourth century attests his worship under the name of Faunus inscribed on many of the spoons. Here was a most surprising name, for Faunus was a Latian deity, well known from early Roman pastoral verse. At Thetford he was provided with a number of epithets, mainly of Brythonic derivation, amongst them Ausecus, Medugenus, Cranus and Narius but the most important point is that the south Norfolk countryside was being pastoralised by his elite votaries, into an imaginary version of Virgilian idyll.⁶ Those who met at his shrine in order to venerate the god clearly appreciated the gently, rolling landscape of Norfolk. For much of the year, Britain tended to be lusher, greener, and inevitably wetter than central Italy but just as the eighteenth-century creators of noble parks were able to imagine themselves sharing the rustic delights of Horace’s farm, so did these ancient East Anglians. In many ways the Mildenhall Treasure breathes the same pagan joy, especially in the Bacchic frenzy of the Great dish and of the two smaller platters portraying a dancing satyr and dancing maenad... We might think of the rhythmic beat of the *Pervigilium Veneris* here.⁷ Further south, at Ashwell in North Hertfordshire, a treasure of gold and silver votive leaves attests the cult of Dea Senuna. She is portrayed on most of the leaves as Minerva, but a silver figurine shows her as the goddess of the crops,

⁴ De Bièvre 1996.

⁵ Stuart and Bogaers 2001.

⁶ Johns and Potter 1983.

⁷ Henig 2002; 2010: ch.6.

Ceres. Most probably she was a local spring goddess presiding over the local River Rhee.⁸

These are but two of such local landscape deities from Britain. In the West country, more famous than Senuna and much longer known was Sulis, the goddess of the hot springs at Bath which bore her name, *Aquae Sulis*, who like Senuna was portrayed as Minerva.⁹ Evidence here includes many prayers and imprecations scratched on pewter tablets by local people asking the goddess to recover stolen property. In the same region but a little further north there was another goddess named Cuda (Figure 44.1), known from a number of limestone reliefs which show her holding a large fruit, one of which from Daglingworth, Gloucestershire, was inscribed with her name, proclaiming her to be the presiding deity of the Cotswolds.¹⁰ We will meet other discrete deities as we further examine the art and culture of the province.

Differences between the art of different regions are brought out in sculpture, wherever it survives, and also in mosaics. It has always been easy to write of Roman art, or even Roman provincial art or Romano-British art as a uniform entity only to be judged against the yardstick of a classical ideal and against which what was found in Gaul and the Western provinces was inevitably deficient. When viewed in detail there was no such thing as a 'Romano-British' art, any more than there was a definitive Dutch Art of its Golden Age or any other age. I tried to make that clear in my own survey of the subject.¹¹ Different peoples, living and operating in different landscapes produced their own versions, and like plants taken from one habitat to another, some flourished while others spectacularly failed.

Most people in Roman Britain, would never have seen the familiar, great monuments which fill the pages of books on Roman art and architecture, the arches and palaces, amphitheatres and circuses, marble statuary and even the standard forms of Roman temples. That did not mean that they lacked the amenities of Roman culture, but rather that they were selective in what they took from it. Moreover, regionalism such as this is apparent throughout the Empire from Palmyra to Egypt and from Athens and old Greece to Gaul. Moreover, within every province there were divergences from community to community, in which physical landscape, geology, tribal differences and custom all played a part. Influences flowed not only from Rome but especially from contiguous provinces, in the case of Britain from

Gaul, mainly but not exclusively from Belgica, and from the Rhineland provinces of Germany.

Provincial societies quite often subverted institutions introduced by the supposed authority of the ruling power. I sometimes cite the (totally unfair) quip about the Northern British working class that if you gave them a bath they would keep coal in it. That most certainly was not true of the British elite, if one can for once trust Tacitus, but it may well be true that if you gave a Romano-British community an amphitheatre for example, as used in major cities and fortresses for gladiatorial or wild-beast displays of a highly sanguinary nature, they would instead have used it for an Eisteddfod. If therefore the theatre-amphitheatre at Marcham-Frilford, Oxfordshire or even the amphitheatre at Silchester, Hampshire was flooded or in the case of the vesica-shaped amphitheatre at Carmarthen, Carmarthenshire, looks unsuitable for the expected uses of an arena, these were no problem if the real purpose was to sing or to hear recitations of heroic epic. Of course the theatral area of seventh-century Yeavering, Northumberland, Bede's *Ad Gefrin*, would have served just that purpose. Here popular culture would have fed into elite culture, myth and epic, of which traces exist in the Brythonic *Mabinogion*, the Gaelic *Tain* and especially the Anglo-Saxon *Beowulf*. Romanitas infiltrated two 'Celtic' cultures and Germanic culture but maybe the pure Classical Latin of Virgil and even the pure Greek of Homer were sung on windy, rain-swept banks and hillside places of meeting in the British countryside.¹² Yet none of this was exactly organised at least certainly not by the military or administrative power of Rome. These initiatives, if initiatives they were, were local and regional, each community making what it liked of the legacy which often underwent metamorphosis in the process. As we will see this process of change and subversion was true of the reception of religion, even the 'new' oriental cult, Christianity, which took a different pattern in lands which lacked a tradition of church-building and where it was often more convenient to baptise converts in a river or in the gushing stream from a spring or broken aqueduct,¹³ than in a built baptistery 'in more Romanorum.'

It is exceedingly hard to characterise Romano-British art and culture, or indeed Gallo-Roman art and culture, precisely because of this variety. In my own attempts to do so, I have concentrated on Southern Britain,¹⁴ for good reason because it is here that the majority of

⁸ Jackson and Burleigh 2018.

⁹ Cunliffe and Davenport 1985; Cunliffe 1988.

¹⁰ RIB I, no.129; Yeates 2004.

¹¹ Henig 1995.

¹² Henig and Nash Briggs 2022.

¹³ Henig 2004a: 13–14.

¹⁴ Henig 1995; 2002; 2010.

towns and villas with their mosaic floors, and refined sculpture mainly of limestone is to be found. Here are showpieces like the palatial villa at Fishbourne, West Sussex, and the great spa at Bath in Somerset probably both created by the same client king, Tiberius Claudius Togidubnus. But the North had its own vibrant cultures, influenced by the Roman army, mainly auxiliary troops from varied backgrounds, and Romanitas is symbolised in much more in the way of surviving sculpture in vigorous local style.¹⁵

The primary area of administration in southern Britain was the *civitas*, its area based on traditional tribal boundaries, with its administrative centre replacing the tribal *oppidum* but sometimes, especially in the Atrebatian realms south of the Thames founded on the same site for example at Silchester (*Calleva Atrebatum*). Here the grander houses would often have been those of the heirs and descendants of the Iron Age tribal elite, while a forum for a market and a basilica for administration were constructed, performing functions which would have been required earlier, but employing open spaces and vernacular style huts. Temples were of native form on the whole but now constructed of stone and provided with porticos as on Hayling Island, Hampshire.¹⁶ In terms of amenity the greatest innovations, apart from improved housing, and fashionable dining would have been the provision of baths and bathing culture, and the spread of Latin, literacy and knowledge of the classics, as mentioned by Tacitus (*Agricola* 21), although such cultural changes were not necessarily owing to Agricola or any other governor. None of this countered the continuing influence of local mannerisms in art as is shown especially in the finest bronze figurines and statuettes which are in continuity with the 'La Tene' tradition of insular Iron Age art.¹⁷ Amongst the best was a superb bronze hound which may have accompanied a quarter length statue of Diana, evidently buried as scrap from a temple at or near Gloucester after the cult was discontinued late in the fourth century.¹⁸

With the completion of a corpus of Roman period sculpture from Britain, *Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani Great Britain* (CSIR) we can now more easily divide the material into regional groups or schools. Inscriptions published in *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain* (RIB I and III) attest similar regionality. In the Cotswold region, especially in the south in the ambit of Bath and Cirencester (CSIR, fasc. 2 and 7) where fine-



Figure 44.2. Bust of a Romano-British woman. Carved in high quality South Cotswolds oolitic limestone. From a mausoleum excavated at Stoke Mandeville, Buckinghamshire. 60cm. HS2 Railway Project. Photograph by Penny Coombe.

grained oolitic limestones allowed for the production of sculpture of high quality there was a distinctive sculptural tradition in the late first and second centuries. Sculptors from the south Cotswolds appear to have set up workshops in London, where they employed stone from this region, and they were certainly responsible for the portrait busts recently recovered from a Roman mausoleum at Stoke Mandeville, Buckinghamshire (Figure 44.2).¹⁹ The limestone belt in Britain is quite extensive and further north and east in the Peterborough area of Cambridgeshire, in Northamptonshire and Lincolnshire (CSIR 8), the limestone sculptures can be readily distinguished by nature of both stone and style. In addition native deities with discrete iconographies are recognisable.

¹⁵ Ferris 2021.

¹⁶ King and Soffe 2013.

¹⁷ Henig 1995: 36–40, 93–98; Durham 2014.

¹⁸ Coombe and Henig 2020: 226–29.

¹⁹ Hayward, Henig and Coombe 2022.

In the Cotswold region there was Cuda, the territorial goddess of the Cotswold hills (Figure 44.1), and Sulis Minerva at Bath both mentioned above, and also a hunter god, generally accompanied by a hound (Figure 44.3), most probably on the basis of an inscription from the temple at Nettleton Scrub near Bath called Apollo Cunomaglos, whose cult was taken east to London (RIB III, 3053; CSIR fasc. 2, nos 110–114; and CSIR fasc. 10, nos 73–75). There were clearly many other native deities in southern Britain, amongst them Minerva Rudupiae whose name is inscribed on a recently found inscription incised on a bronze plate in Oxfordshire.

Figures of Mars mounted upon a horse and spearing a giant are especially to be found in Eastern Britain though there are also two reliefs from the Cotswold region. The finest representation on stone is from Stragglethorpe, Lincolnshire (CSIR, fasc. 8, no. 29) and eastern Britain has yielded the bulk of the bronze figurines depicting him, one of which, from Martlesham, Suffolk provides the name Mars Corotiacus (RIB I, 213). In style this, and other depictions of deities from Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Lincolnshire are quite distinct from those of the Cotswold region. The name, Mars Rigonemetis inscribed on the dedicatory plaque of an arch at Nettleham, Lincolnshire (RIB III, no. 3180) implies a deity, also identified with Mars, who guarded a sacred grove, a *nemet*.

Stone sculpture north of the limestone belt was mainly sandstone which required different techniques of working. Much of Northern Britain had a strong military presence and this attracted a class of archaeologists and epigraphers whose main interest was the Roman Imperial army. As most of the surviving work, produced for private clients there, was coarser in quality this led, in the past, to these same scholars pronouncing a blanket condemnation of Romano-British art in general as inferior, though even so first-rate work was possible even in this region as is shown, perhaps most clearly, by some remarkably refined sculpture from Wroxeter and from Carlisle, two of the few urban centres in the North (CSIR I, fasc. 9; CSIR I, fasc. 6). Much of the sculpture of Roman Britain as a whole was of a religious nature and invites one to speculate as to whether the gods of the Province had their own insular traditions alongside the well-known Graeco-Roman myths of the Olympian gods. What stories might Pausanias have gleaned travelling around the temples of Roman Britain, both north and south. if he had visited the province as he had visited Greece?

Mosaics have been studied in a sympathetic manner for far longer, and by the fourth century there were



Figure 44.3. Relief depicting the Cotswolds hunter god, Apollo Cunomaglos. Sculpted in local oolitic limestone. From Chedworth, Gloucestershire. 45.5cm. In Chedworth site museum. Photograph by Martin Henig.

traditions in the South West, Somerset and Dorset (RMB II), in the Cotswold region (RMB IV), in Eastern Britain (RMB I and III) and in the North East (RMB I). Mosaics have long been considered a quintessentially Roman art, and the mosaics of Roman Britain have too often been compared disparagingly with mosaics from Rome, Sicily, North Africa and the East, on the grounds that they fail to reach the same standard of photographic realism as say the mosaics of Piazza Armerina in Sicily or that they are technically coarser in most instances. Like the sculpture they seldom seem to represent the 'Grandeur that was Rome.' However they are distinctive in several respects and ultimately produced an unexpected testimony to Romanitas that either Imperial Baths or overbearing triumphal arches could ever do.

First, in terms of composition, and the diversity of form especially in the case of the swirling acanthus scrollwork especially of the Cotswold school they attest the resilience of the curvilinear La Tene tradition going back to the Iron Age. Secondly it is apparent that most of the subject matter is mythological, some of it fairly

straightforward, the Bacchic and the marine thiasos, Cupids, Seasons, Wind-gods, but more importantly there is a penchant for mythological scenes. Unlike most such scenes elsewhere the figures are not labelled except for an oblique allusion to the *Aeneid* on an inscription commenting on a representation of Europa and the bull figured on a mosaic from Lullingstone, Kent, an outlier in the south-western tradition, a scene recalling the *Metamorphoses* and the inscription in a metre recalling Ovid.²⁰ Two mosaics in Britain have a sequence of scenes from Epic: one from Low Ham, Somerset depicting the story of Dido and Aeneas from Books One and Four of the *Aeneid*; the other from Ketton, Rutland (another work surely by mosaicists from the south-west) the fateful contest between Achilles and Hector and the dragging and ransoming of the latter's body, episodes related to the climax of the *Iliad*, whether known to the patron in the original Greek or in a Latin redaction. The source of these, and many other myths, often drawn from Ovid's work, especially the *Metamorphoses*, lies in *deluxe* manuscripts, perhaps at this date in the mid- fourth-century codices, owned by villa proprietors, in most cases living in villas of local type. These were the houses of members of the local gentry, descended from the Iron Age chieftain class. They loved myths and needed no labels to identify episodes from familiar stories. They had absorbed more deeply Rome's cultural contribution than the superficialities of Roman infrastructure; any conception of the 'grandeur that was Rome' existed for them in the world of ideas.

The nature of Roman culture shifted, as did the manuscript tradition, to embrace Christianity; it is more than likely that some of the villa owners whose floors exhibited literary themes were already Christians. The extensive series of mythological scenes at Frampton, Dorset includes a Chi-Rho, while at Hinton St Mary, a unique portrayal of Christ on one section of the floor (perhaps derived from an 'author portrait' from a Gospel manuscript) is accompanied on another by a representation of Bellerophon on Pegasus slaying the Chimaera, a scene also to be found at Frampton and far away in Kent at Lullingstone where paintings survive from the house-church, while the inscription on the mosaic, already mentioned, encodes not only the owner's name, Avitus, but the sacred name of Jesus. The problem was that villa owners were not keen to place sacred imagery on the floor, so the Hinton St Mary Christ remains, for the moment, a unique exception. Such scenes may well have appeared on the walls and did occur on metalwork, of which a few examples

survive from Britain, notably a fragment of bronze sheeting from Uley, Gloucestershire, probably from a *scrinium* containing writing equipment for producing sacred texts. It portrays from the Hebrew Bible: Jonah under his gourd and the sacrifice of Isaac and from the New Testament, Christ with the centurion, and Christ healing a blind man. As the fragment had been folded up and given as an offering at a temple of Mercury, it suggests the conflicted religious climate of the time.²¹

The regional culture of south-west Britain continued, but although some of the villas may have functioned well into the fifth century, mosaic workshops did not survive the economic dislocation of the withdrawal of Roman administration and the slow cessation of coin use. However there are strong reasons for believing that the *deluxe* Virgil manuscript, the *Virgilius Romanus*, now in the Vatican, which was produced in Western Gaul or most probably Britain dates as late as AD 500, and this suggests the survival of secular culture. St Patrick appears in history, probably early in the fifth century, slave-raided most probably from a villa in the Severn Estuary, in the vicinity of Caerwent, and taken to Ireland as a slave—or possibly more correctly as a hostage—a fateful move, partly instrumental in creating a cultural revolution in Ireland which might be described a Rome's last conquest, albeit an entirely cultural one.

Manuscript production doubtless continued in western Britain. But apart from the probable exception of the *Virgilius Romanus*, there is no other surviving codex here. However, Patrick in the fifth century and Gildas in the sixth century had books and St Illtud's famous school at Llantwit Major, amongst other places, maintained the tradition of Latinity, physically attested by the early Christian inscribed stones from south-west Britain and Wales, the former, and perhaps still surviving Roman province of *Britannia Prima*. As already mentioned, the culture of the book was taken to Ireland by missionaries where it flourished and ultimately transformed society. Rome came, as already stated, simply with the book. It did not bring with it anything much in the way of buildings, certainly no towns, no currency or civil administration and no army. It invigorated the culture of Ireland to produce one of the greatest cultures of early Medieval Europe, in the quality of its book production, scholarship and breeding ground for saints. It infused the west coast of Scotland, Pictland, Northern England and then Continental Europe.

²⁰ Henig 2022a.

²¹ Henig 2022b.

Other regions of Britain experienced Rome differently. In the north the army was evident in the many forts dotting the roads and along the frontier. Here the visual language of Roman triumph was to be seen in word and symbol, Mars as god of war, Victories on globes, defeated barbarians on gates and arches though more often than not the work of local sculptors. Work produced for the Roman army, such as the commemorative plaques set up along the Antonine Wall is often very well crafted, with considerable feeling for modelling and texture, considering the coarseness of sandstone. Most of the troops were auxiliaries, initially from other parts of the Empire but mingling with natives to produce a mixed culture, not just soldiers but others such as traders, like Hermes of Commagene who died aged sixteen commemorated in Greek verse on a tombstone from Brough under Stainmore (RIB I, no. 758) or Barates of Palmyra who commemorated his south British Catuvellaunian wife, Regina, whom he buried at South Shields in Palmyrene Aramaic (RIB I, no. 1065). There is indeed evidence for Latinity in the remarkably preserved archive from the Batavian officers stationed at *Vindolanda*, whose sons read Virgil and wives went to birthday parties; the elite however much they might live in sumptuous villas with mosaic floors when they went home, had to be content with more restrained domestic circumstances. Doubtless the philosophy of Stoicism helped, and from the far western fort of Maryport on the Cumbrian coast a ring setting featuring Zeno of Kition founder of Stoicism (Figure 44.4), was likely a gift from the Emperor Hadrian himself to Maenius Agrippa, first commander of the *I Cohors Hispaniorum*, the first regiment stationed there and a friend and later host of the emperor at his villa in Picenum, published in the decent obscurity of an excavation report.²²

As further south, many deities were local, Silvanus Cocidius at *Fanum Cocidi*, Bewcastle (RIB I, nos 985–989, 993), the nymph-goddess Coventina at Carrawburgh (RIB I, nos 1523–1535) and Vinotonus at Scargill Moor near Bowes in North Yorkshire (RIB I, nos 732 and 733) for example. Such sacred sanctuaries and their accompanying inscriptions betray a feeling for landscape and local sacred space, which outlasted in some cases the physical presence of Rome. The Bewcastle cross which now stands proud beside the church at Bewcastle simply Christianises a *temenos*, for long centuries considered sacred.²³

What about East Anglia? Every time I visit Elisabeth and John, I arrive in Norwich by train and a few



Figure 44.4. Ring-setting depicting Zeno of Kition. Moulded in clear glass, with an enamel (?) filling. Excavated in the Hadrianic fort at Maryport, Cumbria. 1.3cmx1.1cm. In the Senhouse Museum, Maryport. Photograph by Claudia Wagner, Beazley Archive.

minutes before arrival I look out of the window on the right to see the unmistakable rectangular outline of the now deserted Roman town of *Venta Icenorum* (Caistor St Edmund often known as Caistor by Norwich). Although empty or almost empty of occupation today, like a number of other former Roman towns, *Calleva* (Silchester), *Verulamium*, and *Viroconium* (Wroxeter), abandonment is the wrong word in all these cases: in the post-Roman centuries there were shifts to new sites, Reading, St Albans (just outside Verulamium), and Shrewsbury. In the case of Caistor, that new site was, of course Norwich.

East Anglian identity was strongly marked from prehistory when the dominant tribe was the Icenii, striking a very extensive, distinctive coinage. Ethnically mixed and probably speaking both Low German and Brythonic dialects, they veered between being early allies of Rome to becoming insurgents under Boudicca. In that early period there was a highly distinctive sacred shrine at Thetford, perhaps their central

²² Henig 2020.

²³ Henig 2004a: 22–23, Figure 11.

holy place. In the fourth century that extraordinary treasure of silver spoons and gold jewellery was found there, dedicated as stated above to a Latian god Faunus, whom the worshippers could only have encountered through reading classic early Roman verse. Daphne Nash Briggs has demonstrated how this East Anglian culture transformed itself in the fifth century and later, down to the time we associate with Sutton Hoo, and the only surviving English epic *Beowulf*, which ends with the disposal of treasure.²⁴ The act of burying treasure in the ground ‘as useless to men as it was before’ does not sound very much like the usual conception of the dominant culture of Imperial Rome, with its oppressive materialism, but perhaps it agrees more with the elegiac mood of Horace and other Latin poets, as well as with the asceticism of insular saints living on lonely headlands and islands, laboriously writing and illuminating in faultless Late Latin, the text of the Vulgate translated by Jerome from Hellenistic Greek.

I have learned from both Elisabeth and John, that nothing is quite what it seems to be, and never to fail to question what everyone proclaims to be the truth. Dr Plommer, at whose feet both John and I sat with some amusement, in Cambridge—John for longer than me—described John as being obtuse, but then so was Dr Plommer. For him, the excellence of Roman architecture was at least in my memory achieved only by the little round temple by the Tiber. Perhaps, for the inhabitants of southern Britain, Plommer may after all have had a point. That is, if he allowed that the elegance of Latin verse goes best with such modest conceits.

Finally I have been aware from studying the careers of both Elisabeth and John, as well as my own that there is a cost in pursuing the liminal, crossing between cultures, not least academic cultures. It is far easier simply to restate what everyone knows; thus Classical archaeologists should not be diverted into contrasting the art and culture of Greece and Rome and then further casting a ranging eye on World Art, a prey to specialists guarding their own corners. The well-researched and popular paintings of the Dutch golden age are the preserve of connoisseurs, collectors and the art market, but to view the distinctive art of particular provinces and towns in an archaeological light, where geology, topography and past history created such differences and which impinged not unnaturally on the work of the masters of the Dutch school or rather schools, was a courageous undertaking resulting in Elisabeth’s masterpiece, and especially remarkable because I know in my own life what it is like to work on the edges of

Academia, where in Elisabeth’s case as John’s consort she was expected to entertain post-holding lecturers and professors with academic position, while quietly creating a more important book than most of them will ever write.

In my own case,²⁵ the Classical art historians in Oxford regarded the art of Roman Britain as having such minimal interest and quality even though they had never devoted time to even examine extraordinary mosaics, bronzes and jewellery which would inevitably have interested them if they had known of them. The Romano-British archaeologists doubtless thought the Roman forts, postholes, bones and potshards, fashionable subjects, were of far greater interest than intaglios and Roman art in general. Ignorance and fashion have always been reassuring masters in Academia, enervating the mind and decaying understanding! Friends at least keep one going in the desert, and amongst them Elisabeth and John have been shining lights, and hence I am delighted to write this little tribute in their honour.

Abbreviations

CSIR *Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani Great Britain Volume 1. Fascicules I–XI*
 RIB *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain. Vols I–III*
 RMB *Roman Mosaics of Britain. Vols I–IV.*

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²⁴ Nash Briggs 2020.

²⁵ Henig 2004b.

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45.

Six men in two boats: Raphael's tapestry cartoons for the Sistine Chapel and their precedents

Sandy Heslop

In one of his last publications, our mutual friend, colleague, pastor and champion Andrew Martindale traced the antecedents of the main cycle of paintings on the walls of the Great Council chamber in the Doge's Palace in Venice. He demonstrated how it was made and remade at least three times, each campaign renewing crucial elements of an important political message about the place of Venice in the world.¹ Andrew was one of several art historians at the University of East Anglia who worked on art in Venice partly as a consequence of John Onians' decision to make it a primary focus of study for our second-year undergraduates. Richard Cocke's research on Veronese and Alastair Grieve's on Whistler in Venice are other examples. But Venice apart, both Elisabeth and John have devoted volumes to the enduring artistic legacy of places and traditions as bearers of meaning, or residual resources across time in the construction of architectural vocabulary and civic identity. I hope that this offering to them is an appropriately provocative excavation of an underexplored seam adjacent to theirs. It is a suggestion about the back story of the contents and compositions of the tapestry cycle devised for the Sistine Chapel by Raphael and his collaborators in 1515–16.

By about 1500, some artists prepared for major commissions by making compositional sketches and more detailed life drawings of models in the requisite poses.² Raphael was in the vanguard here, as in other respects. The survival of his own preliminary graphics, or copies after them, convey the inescapable impression of *inventione* in practice. Invention there certainly was but there was also precedent – indeed, no composition or iconography can emerge entirely out of the blue. It would be trying to communicate in a new language when no one had the means to understand it. Although attempts have been made to trace some of Raphael's pictorial sources for the Sistine Tapestries, no very coherent model has emerged of when, where and how these were selected. One consequence is that

it is difficult to reconstruct and evaluate Raphael's editorial method – how he put his personal stamp on reframing the imagery and to what end.

As a test case, I begin with perhaps the earliest cartoon in his cycle, the *Miraculous Draught of Fishes* (Figure 45.1). One compositional sketch suggests that he first thought of setting the main subject in the middle distance, saving the foreground for the crowds of people who had come to hear Jesus preach. In the event the crowds were relegated to the distant sidelines of the picture and the two fishing boats and their occupants brought up much closer to the viewer. As regards the figures themselves, only minor adjustments of pose and organisation are evident in the graphic record. St Andrew first appears with a long pole (a quant or oar) and in the finished cartoon the six men are enlarged and brought closer together.

Depictions of the Miraculous Draught as narrated in Luke's gospel are surprisingly rare. In the account, Christ was standing by the lake (the Sea of Galilee at Gennesaret) when he caught sight of two boats at the water's edge. He got into one of the boats, belonging to Simon, and taught the crowds from the boat. Then he asked Simon to put into deep water and cast his nets. Simon replied that they had fished all night without luck but he obeyed none the less. The resulting catch was so great they had to summon the other boat to help bring in the fish, and the nets broke under their weight. Then Simon Peter fell to his knees saying 'Leave me Lord, for I am a sinful man.' His companions were awestruck too: his brother Andrew and James and John, who were Simon's partners. Christ then prophesied 'I will make you fishers of people.' They all duly left their first calling and followed him. Luke's version was sometimes blended with other gospel narratives. Matthew's and Mark's are similar to each other and can be treated as one. Christ is walking by the Lake and sees Simon and his brother Andrew casting their nets and he says to them 'follow me and I will make you fishers of people.' Going on from there he saw another pair of

¹ Martindale 1993.

² Ames-Lewis 1986: 126–36; Debenedetti 2020: 32–38.



Figure 45.1. Thomas Holloway, *The Miraculous Draught of Fishes*, after Raphael, 1824. Engraving with etching, 53.1x74.3cm. The Royal Collections, RCIN 853014.

brothers, James and John the sons of Zebedee, mending their nets. He called them and they followed him, too. Elements of this story are depicted quite frequently but there is no miraculous draught, only men, boats and Christ walking on the shore. This 'subject' is therefore known by a different name: the Calling of the Disciples. No miracle is necessary to persuade the fishermen to follow Jesus. In Mark's account, James and John abandoned their father and those he employed and obeyed Jesus. This reference to hired hands probably explains why some images show many men in one of the boats. The presence of (presumably) Zebedee in Raphael's second boat is surprising, but not unique.

As regards the overall schema, perhaps the closest composition is in the early 13th-century Apostles window at Chartres (Figure 45.2). Peter kneels before Christ, Andrew is in the prow of the boat looking and gesturing towards James and John, who are in a second

boat with an older man at the helm. Except for this last feature, the Chartres panels are quite like glass made at Canterbury around 1180 (Figure 45.3), especially in that Andrew turns to face James and John.³ But at Canterbury the boats overlap and have masts and furled sails. These differences can be explained by the scene being set in a single circle, whereas at Chartres the episode is spread across two panes. As a consequence, the English version adds height (masts and sails) and subtracts width (Zebedee and the gap between the boats). Perhaps for the same reason Peter is shown standing at Canterbury rather than on his knees.

The connections are such, in my view, that the three versions could stem from a single archetype. It is highly unlikely that Raphael knew anything about the images at either Canterbury or Chartres, let alone both. More likely his source was available in Italy. There is no

³ Caviness 1981: 111.



Figure 45.2. *The Miraculous Draught of Fishes*, Chartres cathedral, Apostles' window, c.1220. Stained glass, detail, 85x170cm. Photography by Sandy Heslop.



Figure 45.3. *The Miraculous Draught of Fishes*, Canterbury cathedral, from the fourth typological window, c.1180. Stained glass, diameter 80cm. Photography by Sandy Heslop.

certain way of establishing its form, but one procedure is to suppose that any feature common to two of the three compositions was found in the putative earlier version. If so, then Peter was kneeling (as Raphael and Chartres), the boats were overlapping (Raphael and Canterbury), Zebedee was included (Raphael and Chartres) and men in both boats held different parts of the same net (Chartres and Canterbury). As already noted, the differences between Chartres and Canterbury can be attributed to the proportions of their frames. As for Raphael's version, it can be seen that Peter and Andrew have already filled their boat and both turn to Christ in wonder and submission; James and John are still at work. The picture captures the two main aspects of the story – catching the fish and turning to Christ.

For all that Canterbury and Chartres offer some crucial points of similarity, there are many aspects of Raphael's conception which would have been unthinkable in the 12th and early 13th centuries, perhaps especially the classicising figures in Zebedee's boat. James and John visibly flex their impressive muscles, there is no obvious age difference between them and they have similar costumes, faces and hairstyles. It is as though they were twins. That may be significant, for Christ called them the sons of thunder (Boanerges, Mark's Gospel), and perhaps the most obvious brothers who were sons of Zeus the Thunder God were the Dioscuri, the twins Castor and Pollux. The classical sculptures of the two 'horse tamers' in Rome, now generally identified as the Castor and Pollux, would have provided Raphael with appropriate physical types for his athletic young apostles. The inclusion of two swans in the distance on the Sea of Galilee clearly refers to this outcome of Zeus's seduction of Leda in the guise of a swan. But there are two potential difficulties. The first is that firm written identification of his likeliest source, the statues on the Quirinal in Rome, as the Dioscuri is over a century later. The second is that Zebedee has the pose and physiognomy of a river god; his profile, hair and beard are out of keeping with depictions of Zeus. Neither problem is insurmountable. For centuries the 'horse tamers' had been displayed on the Quirinal alongside sculptures of two river gods, one of which bears a close resemblance to Raphael's Zebedee.⁴ His inclusion I take to be a pictorial statement, along with the swans, that as far as Raphael was concerned the Quirinal 'horse tamers' were already identified as Castor and Pollux, to whom there was a temple dedicated in the Roman Forum. Affirmation of the subject matter depends

⁴ Bober and Rubinstein 1986: 174 list the Horse Tamers in drawings, etc., by Raphael and his circle. Cocks 1993: 102 recognises the depiction of Zebedee as deriving from a river god.

on the twins appearing occasionally as horse tamers on coins from the late 2nd century BC to the late 3rd AD. The latter were produced under the emperor Maxentius. It is not inconceivable that someone in the papal court and/or Raphael's circle of antiquarian friends was already aware of the iconography. On one of the Maxentius coins, Romulus and Remus appear suckled by the wolf between the Dioscuri. A key indicator on the coins is the star above each twin's head, for they were immortalised in the constellation Gemini. The identification of Castor as a horse trainer goes back to the *Iliad*, and Ovid writes in *Metamorphoses* that the brothers appeared on two horses as white as snow. The identity of the Quirinal sculptures as Castor and Pollux was thus available to anyone sufficiently learned long before it first appeared in print.⁵

While there is wit in Raphael's assimilation of the Boanerges and the Dioscuri, the elision also has a serious side. In his sermons, St Augustine of Hippo identified the two fishing boats as the churches of the Jews and the Gentiles, St Peter's vessel being the former that of the Boanerges the latter. For the conversion of the pagan Romans the turning point was the arrival in Rome of St Paul, who embarked at Malta on a ship which, according to Acts 28.11, had the Dioscuri as its figurehead (*insigne castorum* in Jerome's Vulgate). Such a detail would only be mentioned if it was thought to matter; so it seems reasonable to deduce that the association of the heavenly twins with the mission to Christianise the heart of the Empire was as ancient as c.70 AD, the date of Acts.

As the earliest conversions to the new faith were among the Jews, not least the apostles themselves, it is appropriate that in Raphael's picture fish have already been hauled aboard Peter's boat, whereas James and John have yet to harvest their catch. Is that perhaps why Peter and Andrew look to Christ, while James and John turn their backs on their father but look down to see their potential converts? There are no hints of any of this in the compositions at Chartres or Canterbury; these subtleties were presumably contributed by Raphael and his advisers to make the point about the sequence of Christianisation and the people who benefitted.

While the Miraculous Draught at Chartres is shown in the context of an extended narrative of the calling of the apostles, at Canterbury, by contrast, the subject was placed in a typological setting. It is third in a sequence in the first ministry window (n.XIII) following the

⁵ Cocks 1993: 95–105, for classical learning in Leo's *curia*. MacDonald 2000: 24–32 identifies Castor and Pollux as models for James and John.



Figure 45.4. Pieter van Aelst, *Christ's Instruction to Peter 'Feed my Sheep'*, after Raphael, c.1519. Tapestry, 335x540cm. Vatican Museums. Photography by Richard Cocks, University of East Anglia.

Calling of Nathaniel and the Marriage at Cana. In this cycle as a whole, each Gospel narrative subject is given two parallels, usually from the Old Testament, but the Draught of Fishes is treated as prophetic. Either side of it were panels showing Paul teaching the Gentiles and Peter instructing the Church of the Jews (the latter survives).⁶ So, the inclusion of the Miraculous Draught occasioned or responded to a desire on the part of the designer of the Canterbury programme to project into the future beyond Christ's ministry to the creation of the universal Church of Jews and Gentiles. This is unmistakably ideological stuff and makes sense in the historical context of the early crusades. Given the date of the Canterbury glass (as it survives c.1180), that would have to be either the first or second crusade. The first was summoned by Pope Urban II in 1095, when the large-scale conversion of the Jews to the church of Christ was briefly envisaged. Given the focus on Peter and Paul elsewhere in the Canterbury cycle, it is plausible that the stimulus was an expression of papal authority.⁷ However, arguing for a possible origin for Raphael's composition in papal Rome in the lead up

to the first crusade c.1095–97 requires other pictorial evidence from that time that has features in common with Raphael's designs for his other tapestry subjects.

Other Medieval Precursors for Raphael's Imagery

The subject intended to follow the Miraculous Draught in the Petrine sequence on the walls of the Sistine Chapel was Christ's injunction to Peter: 'Feed my Sheep' (Figure 45.4). A connection between the two is stressed by the continuation of the landscape from one picture into the other.⁸ In the Gospels the injunction occurs between the resurrected Christ's appearance to the apostles and his Ascension, but in the tapestry cartoon it is associated with a much earlier event, the Donation of the Keys (Matt. 16). These separate metaphorical episodes are often mentioned together in the context of the *Primatus Petri*: the popes' claim to have inherited Peter's role as Christ's vicar on earth.⁹ Their conflation in one visual image is much more unusual but two examples accompany St Anselm's prayer to St Peter

⁶ Caviness 1981: 111–12.

⁷ Heslop 2011.

⁸ Shearman 1972: 34–35.

⁹ Shearman 1972: 65.

in 12th-century manuscripts (Figure 45.5).¹⁰ The compositions are substantially the same, except that the positions of Christ and Peter are reversed in one, left and right, with some knock-on effects regarding which hand is doing what, and in the Oxford book Christ is shown seated. In the Verdun version, Christ points to the sheep while handing the keys to Peter as though the two events were simultaneous, whereas Raphael's composition suggests rather that Peter has brought with him the key(s) of which he is already custodian. In a preliminary sketch Raphael first thought of showing Christ pointing heavenwards but later created a pose in which Christ's two arms form a visual bridge between key(s) and sheep.

The appearance of the image in the two Anselm manuscripts is potentially important in that the author was in Italy twice during his period as archbishop of Canterbury, visiting Rome on both journeys. A description of his advent in 1098 is worth quoting.

When the arrival of the Father was announced to the pope he joyfully ordered him to be lodged in part of his palace [at the Lateran]. The next morning the Roman nobility flocked to the pope and the talk turned on the arrival of the new guest. He was conducted into the assembly with marks of respect, and a chair was placed for him in which he could conveniently sit facing the pope. (...) He sat down and the successor of the apostles said that he and the whole Roman *curia* rejoiced at his arrival. At this the court (*curia*) applauded. (...) [T]he pope said many things in his praise (...) 'we justly regard him as one to be venerated almost as our equal – for he is the apostolic patriarch of that other world – nevertheless so excellent a humility and constancy rules his mind that he could not be frightened away by the perils of the sea or by the vast expanses of foreign soil from presenting himself at the feet of St Peter for the service of our humble selves.'¹¹

The phrase 'at the feet of St Peter' may be more than a conventional expression, for if the organisation of the audience space in which Anselm was received was like that proposed for the Sistine Chapel, the papal throne would have been placed to face the tapestry of 'Feed my Sheep' and the archbishop would have been seated beneath the figure of the apostle.¹² It is important to note that the account of this reception comes from an eyewitness; Eadmer was a monk of Canterbury

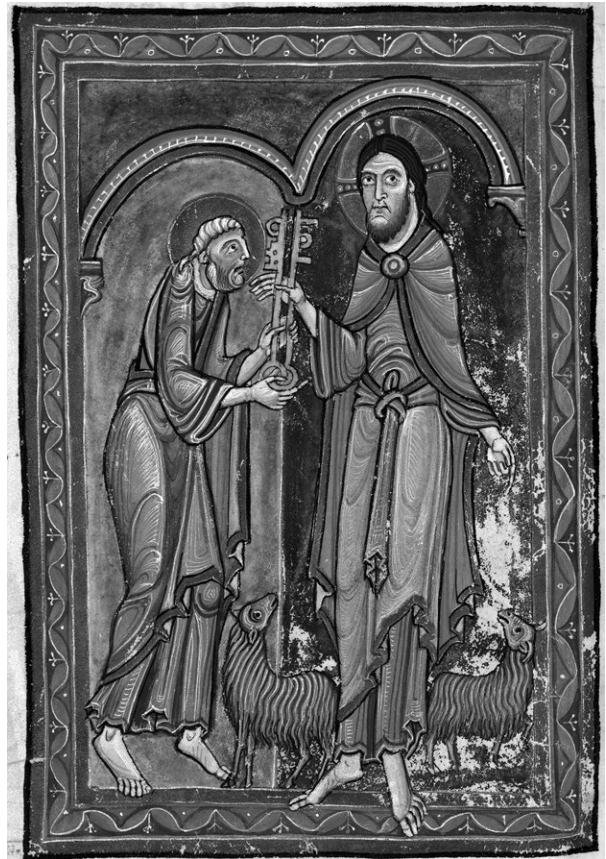


Figure 45.5. The Alexis Master, *The Presentation of the Keys and Feed my Sheep*, from St Anselm's Prayers and Meditations, England, c.1130. Manuscript illumination, 19x13cm. Verdun, Bibliothèque de la codecom de Verdun, MS 70, fol. 68v. Photography by C. R. Dodwell, Conway Library.

travelling as part of Anselm's entourage. He had a keen interest in contemporary history and was an intelligent observer who would have understood the political nuances. Although he records that Urban acknowledged Anselm as 'a man of high religion and virtue' and 'a master steeped in all branches of the liberal arts,' he was still the servant of the servant of the servants of God. If the 11th-century audience chamber or chapel was decked out with imagery reinforcing this message, so that the feet of St Peter with the keys were above the venerable visitor's head, then the chain of command would have been all the clearer. Anselm was however an 'apostolic patriarch' in the sense that one of the very greatest popes, St Gregory, had sent the mission which created the primate see of England at Canterbury where Anselm was now archbishop. The pecking order was evident. Anselm was at the feet of Peter, who established the papacy, which in a later initiative effectively created his position in the

¹⁰ Pächt 1956: 75, plates 18a and b (Verdun Bibl. mun. MS 70 and Oxford, Bodley MS Auct D 2.6).

¹¹ Eadmer 1962 104–05.

¹² Accepting Shearman's account of the intended layout of the tapestries in the Chapel.

hierarchy. As the direct successor of St Peter, Pope Urban was one step closer in the line of the descent of authority from Christ, whereas Anselm was dependent on an intermediary pope, Gregory I, and so was one degree further removed from Christ the 'God man' in the power structure of the Church. Eadmer's awareness of the niceties is reinforced by his singling out the pope as 'the successor of the apostles,' though whether the plural denotes just Peter and Paul or all of his first disciples is not explicit.

In the context of a papal space at this period, the keys had another point as the subject of contention in contemporary debate. Hugh Candidus (writing between 1095–98) argued that the powers to loose and bind were granted to Peter as head of the Church (*ad institutionem*) not to the successive popes as individuals (*ad personam*). It was one reason Hugh gave for transferring his allegiance from the papal to the 'imperial' cause. It is evident in the two 'Anselm' pictures that Peter personally receives both keys from Christ. In Raphael's version the apostle cradles one of the keys while the other dangles inconspicuously below. If Raphael's minders had wanted to show the two keys as of equal significance presumably the earlier formula would have been adopted.

So far as can be judged, Anselm's stay at the Lateran lasted some six months during his year in Italy: in late April 1098 and from November 1098 to April 1099. One objective of his journey (I have argued) was to record imagery for reuse in the glazing scheme in the presbytery of Canterbury cathedral.¹³ A subject representing the origins of papal authority would have suited the archbishop's own political agenda in combating the rival claim to his allegiance of the king of England, William Rufus. Choosing to record the composition for redeployment would have been an obvious move. Albeit the subject is not known to have been used in the Canterbury glass, its appearance in a cycle of illustrations devised for his Prayers – in which Anselm himself is strongly implicated – ensured its subsequent distribution among the archbishop's adherents.

The Oxford manuscript contains, or once contained, two other subjects found in Raphael's Sistine tapestry cycle: the Conversion of Saul and the Stoning of Stephen (Figure 45.6). Neither subject is remotely as rare in the visual arts as those discussed thus far, and so they are much more likely to reflect standard formulae. Furthermore, Stephen's martyrdom was

removed from the Oxford codex and its design is not known. However, the version in another manuscript of Anselm's Prayers, now in Admont (Figure 45.7), does survive and has its points of similarity with Raphael's design.¹⁴ Above are Christ and two angels, below the saint on his knees, arms raised with three men stoning him and a figure with a spear sitting by a pile of cloth. The identity of the latter is clear for 'the witnesses put down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul' (Acts 7.59), and the artist of Admont has also shown the bald head and long pointed beard that so often characterise St Paul, as Saul became in later life. The inclusion of Saul at Stephen's martyrdom is neither common nor especially rare, though he more often stands. So, the best that can be said is simply that both Raphael and Anselm included him seated with the clothes of the executioners. That Saul holds a spear is significant, for in the vocabulary of Romanesque art a seated person holding a weapon or staff of office, as here, and supervising the persecution of a saint, is not merely a bystander. The role is active not passive. In Raphael's image Saul's gesture can be read as directing the tormentors in their role of stoning Stephen.

While there is no single element so rare as to necessitate a connection between Raphael's picture and Anselm's, the characteristics they share are striking. There are two angels with Christ, Saul is seated with the garments, and the martyr is in three-quarter's profile and spreads his arms – he is usually shown with hands together in prayer and with his body or face in profile. But there are differences too. Raphael's executioners have to pick up stones, they do not already carry them; and, as the Bible directs, Christ appears 'at the right hand of God,' or near enough. Perhaps the most important psychological distinction is the proximity of Saul and Stephen in Raphael's version, suggesting direct engagement, whereas in the Admont picture Saul is positioned behind the saint.

The next Pauline episode, the Conversion of Saul, survives in the Oxford recension of Anselm's Prayers (Figure 45.8) and, although Raphael's cartoon is lost, its composition is extant in the tapestries based on it (Figure 45.9). Again, there are features of Raphael's image that are not found in the illumination of Anselm's Prayer: Saul's reeling pose and the fact he wears armour, the riderless horse and the running soldier, to name the most obvious. There are however unexplained elements that are found on the tapestry. One is the very prominent sheathed sword in the foreground. The presence of this signifier is hard to

¹³ Heslop 2017: 10–26.

¹⁴ Pächt 1956: 77, plate 20e. Admont, Stiftsbibliothek MS 289.



Figure 45.6. Pieter van Aelst, *The Stoning of St Stephen*, after Raphael, c.1519. Tapestry, 305x365cm. Vatican Museums. Photography by Richard Cocke, University of East Anglia.

explain, not least because despite Saul's appearance as though he were a Roman legionary the sword shown is of the long, tapering medieval kind. Perhaps it is intended to indicate that the persecutor has become the victim and foreshadows Paul's later triumph through martyrdom, being beheaded with a sword. In Anselm's picture it is still being worn. It might be an indicator of Saul's status, but it could play on the word persecute and persecutor used in the Bible on various occasions of Saul, suggesting that he is a *secutor*, a gladiator who fought with a sword. According to Isidore of Seville (*Etymologies*, XVIII.55) the *secutor* was so called because he pursued (*sequor*) the *retiarius*,

who fought with a net and trident. This would make explicit Saul's persecution of those who harvest souls in the form of fish, hunting them down and supervising their deaths in the period before his conversion. In both pictures considerable attention is devoted to the elaborate strapwork around the sword sheath. The Oxford Anselm shows a neat reticular pattern, but it appears that Saul's hands are caught up in the belt. Raphael's version is much more disorderly, but the straps also effectively bind the sword in its sheath. In the tapestry this understanding of the event is further implied by the tangle of the strips of skirt (*pteruges*) around Saul's hips. One way of understanding the



Figure 45.7. *The Stoning of St Stephen*, from St Anselm's Prayers and Meditations, Austria c.1125. Manuscript illumination, 10x11.5cm. Admont, Benediktinerstift, MS 289, fol. 66. Admont, Benediktinerstift.

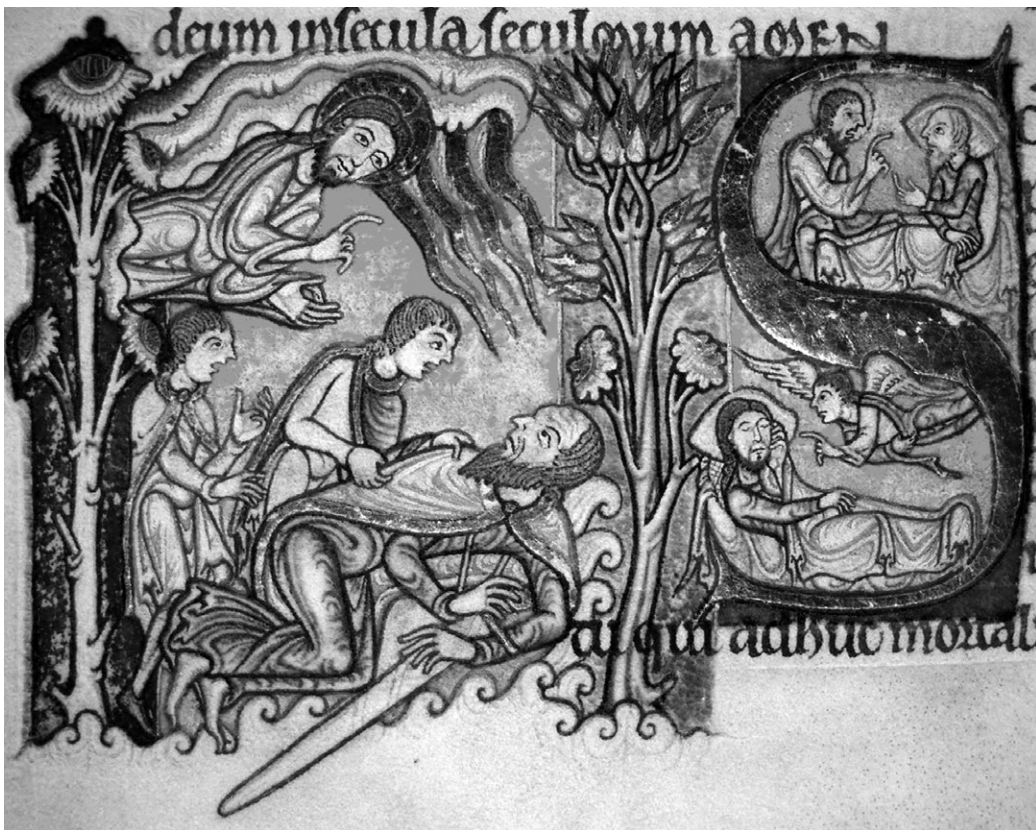


Figure 45.8. *The Conversion of Saul*, England, c. 1150. Manuscript illumination, 6x7.8cm. Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Auct. D.2.6. fol. 170v. The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.



Figure 45.9. Pieter van Aelst, *The Conversion of Saul*, after Raphael, c.1519. Tapestry, 340x530cm. Vatican Museums. Photography by Richard Cocks, University of East Anglia.

design effort that must have been expended on these details is that Saul and his weapon are trapped in a metaphorical net; thus the fishermen's equipment has triumphed. Such an allusive presentation of the bound sword is likely to have been contrived only for a context where adjacent imagery encouraged the idea that netting secured souls.

The other point of similarity between Raphael's image and Anselm's is the dramatic appearance of the swooping Christ and the intensity of the surrounding light blinding Saul. The point is far more than a purely formal one. In the ongoing debates about whether Peter or Paul should be depicted on the dexter side of Christ, for example in compositions such as *Traditio legis*, one of the arguments favouring Paul was that he had been appointed by Christ in the spirit. This point was made by Peter Damian in a letter on the subject written to Desiderius, abbot of Monte Cassino in 1069.¹⁵ In both Raphael's and Anselm's depictions this calling from the heavens is given emphatic visual expression. It can thus be suggested – but no more – that the

composition derives from a context in which it was important to stress Paul's spiritual calling in contrast to Christ's more earthbound, proselytising 'Charge to Peter.'

A case can thus be made that anticipations of the first two pairs of subjects of Raphael's compositions were extant in imagery made before 1180. That all of them have parallels with works at Canterbury and/or made for Archbishop Anselm would push their putative origin back before 1109 – when he died – and probably to 1099, when he left Rome and journeyed gradually through France to England, where his stained glass cycle was being created, and when the first recension of pictures for his Prayers began to circulate. In my view this was created for presentation to Edith/Matilda, who was married to King Henry I and crowned queen by Anselm in November 1100, and the extant English versions (Oxford and Verdun) derive from it. But what of the remainder of Raphael's pictorial scheme; might that too have had precursors in the late eleventh century?

¹⁵ Damian 2005: no. 159.

Did the Whole Sistine Tapestry Cycle have a Single Earlier Prototype?

Throughout Raphael's preliminary drawings for the cartoons we see his mind working, adjusting poses and compositions. As already noted, his first conception for the Miraculous Draught showed it as happening in the middle distance, the foreground filled with the people Christ had been speaking to before he instructed Peter to venture out to sea. This pictorial idea fell victim to Raphael's sense of a need 'for increasing [the] scale of figures.'¹⁶ It also allowed his creativity to focus on just a few figures even in a crowded composition. A preliminary sketch for Paul Preaching at Athens shows just six main actors, the others who appear in the finished cartoon are, as one might say, more generalised staffage appropriate to the work.¹⁷ His focus on the invention of poses for the principal participants in the drama suggests a developing sense of how to manage the priorities of the subject matter or perhaps (and these are not mutually excluding explanations) an impending deadline. The focus on six figures is fairly characteristic of several of the compositions from the outset, the Miraculous Draught for obvious reasons, but the Martyrdom of Stephen and Conversion of Saul might also be invoked. If there had been an earlier cycle with similar subject matter, it could have had that characteristic as a unifying factor.

One possible candidate of c.1100 survives from a chamber adjacent to the Lateran (now detached from its setting): the Death of Ananias.¹⁸ The subject is not often represented, but the Lateran painting follows the most usual format. There are six figures: St Peter to the left confronting Ananias and Sapphira for their failure to surrender some money they had acquired to the Church and to the right the burial of Ananias by two men. Raphael's composition bears very little relation to this wall painting. He turns a left to right confrontation into one where the principal actors are in the background and foreground. This allows him to focus on the death agony of a writhing Ananias even though it means pushing the apostles into the middle distance. It is immediately apparent that his arrangement does not depend on a medieval model but on the desire to make the most of a reworking of the antique sculpture of the Dying Gaul.¹⁹ The only notable connection between the Lateran painting and Raphael's is the rather stagey background adorned with a central

swag of drapery and architectural extensions to either side.

The Death of Ananias was used in the 8th typological window at Canterbury to parallel the unprepared wedding guest being condemned to outer darkness.²⁰ The chances are that it broadly followed the Lateran pattern: Raphael's conception of the disposition of the figures would have been unthinkable c.1100. However, the fact remains that this rare subject is included at all and it is worth considering whether this and the other episodes depicted by Raphael would have had particular resonance at the time of Pope Urban II. Urban, a nobleman from Champagne and a Cluniac monk, is remembered principally for launching the First Crusade, as it was later termed. This initiative was prompted by several aims of which the most important were 'rescuing' the Holy Land from Islam and reuniting or at least reconciling the Latin and Orthodox Churches. That schism had been precipitated by events in 1053–54: the closing of Latin churches in Constantinople and the pope's representative publicly issuing a bull in Hagia Sophia excommunicating the patriarch. Peace negotiations were begun by Pope Gregory VII with the Byzantines to heal the religious rift and present a united front against the Turks. But it was only under Urban II that substantial progress was made. His preaching of the crusade was followed in 1098 by the Council of Bari in the hope of solving doctrinal differences. Anselm was present and appointed by the pope to speak for the Latin Church in the presence of Orthodox ecclesiastics and theologians on the procession of the Holy Spirit from both Father and Son, which was a major point of contention.

Several aspects of Raphael's Pauline series seem pertinent here. Paul Preaching at Athens is a clear reminder of the role of rhetoric and debate in forging the common origins of the Roman and Greek Churches. So, Paul in Athens addresses listeners of various persuasions – Stoics and Epicurians – and converts Dionysius and Damaris by his oratory (with all that implies). But as important as theological persuasion was aligning the secular authority of the Byzantine Empire with the one true church. The closest the New Testament offers as an exemplum is the conversion of Sergius Paulus, the Proconsul of Asia. Also known as the Blinding of Elymas, this manifestation of apostolic power occurred at Paphos on Cyprus on St Paul's first journey and was deemed of such significance that he adopted the name Paulus. Next to be offered salvation are the simple-minded and idolatrously inclined at

¹⁶ Shearman 1972: 107.

¹⁷ Ames-Lewis 1986: 127 discusses Raphael's 'policy of investing much less effort in producing the detailed figure studies' for the Tapestries, and 134 for comments on the drawing for Paul at Athens.

¹⁸ Romano 2006: 188–89.

¹⁹ Cocke 1985.

²⁰ Caviness 1981: 137.

Lystra in Asia Minor. From soon after the disastrous defeat at Manzikurt in 1071 this area was under the control of Moslem Turks rather than Orthodox Christians. The overall message of the reunification of the Church following the schism of 1054 and the desire to reconquer land with 1000 years of Christian history would have made clear sense in the late 1090s.

The focus of the Petrine sequence is the cradle of Christianity in the Holy Land. The first two in effect bracket Christ's ministry and the transmission of his authority to Peter and the other apostles. The next two exemplify apostolic power in Jerusalem. The Healing of the Lame Man at the Temple gate can be read in relation to the promise of the remission of sins to those who went on Crusade. The Death of Ananias could pertain to Urban II's reform of provisions for securing papal income and the dire consequences for those who refuse to give the Church its due. The 1090s was a period when the papacy was, as they say, strapped for cash. Although less famous now than his summoning of the crusade, Urban initiated a reform of papal administration and the formation of a *curia* on the model of contemporary royal courts north of the Alps. Among the new positions was that of chamberlain or *camerarius* whose job was to put papal finances on a firm footing.²¹ This was especially necessary as the existence of an antipope, Clement III, had split the loyalties and funding of the Roman church and undermined the sources of the pope's income. This choice of subject would offer an appropriate and timely reminder to those attending the papal court of the fate of Ananias and Sapphira. The pair of 'Jerusalem' pictures has been plausibly interpreted as showing the power of the two keys in practice: the first demonstrating the power to loose, that is cleansing of sin, and the second the power to bind, which is to say judgement.²² Overall we may suppose that the 'audience' for the putative picture cycle was wide and its location chosen to engage the consciences of churchmen and laity alike. It is worth noting that it was at precisely this period that papal bulls, the lead seals which validated documents issued on the pope's behalf, began to carry portraits of the apostles Peter and Paul, in the form that has remained familiar.

None of this can or should be supposed to demonstrate that an earlier arrangement of pictorial subject matter at the Lateran directly anticipated what Raphael created for Leo X at the Vatican. But it would be neat and apposite were it so. Much depends on whether the similarities between the pictorial compositions used

by Anselm to illustrate his Prayers and in the glass at Canterbury are deemed sufficiently close to imply a fairly direct connection between them and Raphael's tapestry designs, perhaps via one or two intermediary versions. That involves assessing the chances that some quite rare subject configurations (conflating the Keys and Feed my Sheep, the Miraculous Draught representing the church of the Jews and the church of the Gentiles, the Death of Ananias, Paul at Athens) would appear alongside some rare iconographic motifs: the seated Saul, and that curious epee in the foreground of Saul's conversion. The relevance of such a cycle in late 11th-century Rome requires an assessment of its 'ideological' content, what is included and what is excluded. It is striking, for example, that the choice of subjects relates to the unity and authority of the Church rather than to Rome; it is outward looking.

Where the putative late 11th-century cycle would have been located is not known, but the likeliest building is an audience hall at the Lateran, perhaps even the upper room, on the south side of the presbytery, in which the Ananias painting was discovered.²³ The room in Jerusalem that was shown to 12th century pilgrims to Jerusalem as the site of the descent of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost) was at an upper level adjacent to the church of St Mary on Mount Sion.²⁴ However, a papal chapel or audience chamber within the palace seems a more likely site. The two functions did not necessarily require separate spaces, even as late as the 16th century. The choice of subject matter would have been the brainchild of an accomplished scholar who could see how the chosen pictures reinforced each other's messages in order to enhance their argument (an unusual talent). That subtle thinker and his artistic workforce could have come from the era of Urban II; further work may identify an actual candidate. The era of Leo X and Raphael suggests no obvious author either, nor (in my opinion) a more compelling justification for the choice of subjects, so that is not a decisive issue regarding the date of the ideology implied by the tapestry cycle. However, many of the political issues facing the reforming papacy of late 11th century also faced Raphael's patron, Leo X: the continuing occupation by the Turks of the holy places and territory evangelised by St Paul, and Church reunification in the face of doctrinal schism between eastern and western Christianity being the most obvious. Perhaps this was recognised at the time

²¹ Robinson 1990: 93, 248–62.

²² Shearman 1972: 65–67.

²³ De Blaauw 1990.

²⁴ Theoderic 1986: 36 notes that next to the church of St Mary on Mount Sion 'In the same upper chamber [as the table of the Last Supper] at a distance of more than 30 feet to the south... there stands an altar in the place where the Holy Ghost descended on the Apostles.'

and Raphael and his advisers realised that selective borrowing from and revisions of an earlier cycle was an appropriate reaffirmation of long-standing papal objectives.

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Armenian lessons with George Borrow

George Hyde

Looking again at Ann Ridler's study of *George Borrow as a Linguist* (1996) in search of an answer to the question: how many languages did George Borrow (1803–1881) know? (between twenty and forty-seven seems to be the answer, depending on what you mean by 'know'),¹ I was struck by the peculiar (not very extensive, but strangely significant) attention Borrow accords, via his *alter ego*, Lavengro, to the Armenian language. Arguably there is a kind of self-explanatory appropriateness in this. The very Protestant Borrow may well have been attracted to the language of an oppressed Christian people with strong Biblical connections, whose history reveals a series of embattled relationships (climaxing in what might justly be described as martyrdom) with their neighbours.² Lord Byron seems to have had a comparable kind of motivation for learning Armenian,³ at least as far as the oppression goes, if not the Christianity. And Ridler does make this point about Borrow more or less.⁴ What is more, the Armenian language offered Borrow, Ridler says, the kind of 'antiquarian study,' 'exoticism' and 'mystery' that he relished.⁵

Borrow seems to have begun studying Armenian in the 1820's, and he attended the Armenian church in St. Petersburg during his sojourn there on behalf of the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS), even expressing a wish to edit the Armenian scriptures (also for the BFBS). This real-life experience was the starting-point for Borrow's fanciful account of how Lavengro had acquired Armenian books from a clergyman's widow, who said that he (Borrow/Lavengro) reminded her of Alfieri's (mad) King Saul.⁶ There is, therefore a typically Borrowian lateral association, or dream displacement,

thematically linking the study of Armenian with his bipolar disorder (a sort of 'madness'). This tantalisingly fleeting invocation of the eminent eighteenth-century Italian dramatist imitated by Byron⁷ leaves only the slightest trace behind; but the Armenian language crops up again in a fascinating guise in the haunted woodland landscape of Mumpers' Dingle, the magical retreat of the 'mumpers' or tribal outcasts⁸ where a complex battle between good and evil is acted out in the dramatic guise of the strange and somehow illicit courtship of Isopel and Lavengro. Here, the element of dream or fantasy connoted by Armenian grows even stronger.

As Ann Ridler again says, the references to Armenian and Armenia in ch. 89 of *Lavengro*, which will form the basis of my argument, hark back to an earlier episode (ch. 47) in which Lavengro meets an Armenian merchant who is astonished by Borrow's knowledge (actually pretty scanty, judging by the small amount of hard evidence he offers) of his exotic and little studied language. Borrow/Lavengro, with a characteristically disarming disingenuousness, 'explains' his startling proficiency in Armenian by saying that the present age (i.e. his version of Victorian England) is a 'philological age,' and that sooner or later, the way things are going as regards language-study, 'every unmarried miss' will study Armenian. The relevance of this baffling allusion to nubile womanhood will emerge later. Armenian, then, as a language, has its place in Borrow's fascination (typical of his 'philological' age) with the workings of language, and with the archetypal philological patterns and relationships that, properly reconstituted, would, in the view of many Victorian philologists, lead us back to the 'original' language, and the prelapsarian identification of the signifier with the signified.⁹

¹ He had some speaking competence in twenty languages and translated from forty-seven (Ridler 1996:427).

² Armenia was the first Christian State, and suffered at the hands of the Ottoman Empire.

³ Byron helped with the compilation of an Armenian dictionary (1821) for which he wrote the Preface, stressing the conflicts with Turkish pashas.

⁴ Ridler 1996: 32.

⁵ Ridler 1996: 31.

⁶ The context of this narrative episode (Borrow, *Lavengro*, ch. 27) is relevant. Borrow/Lavengro is talking to his father, who is impatient and angry with his son's philological extravagances, and invokes scripture against him.

⁷ Vittorio Alfieri (1749–1803), the so-called 'founder of Italian tragedy,' has been described as having an 'impetuous and ungovernable' temperament. His life was a succession of scandals.

⁸ The origin of the word 'mumpe' is in an obscure sixteenth-century allusion to an ignorant priest who replaced the word *sumpsimus* (in the Eucharist) with the meaningless *mumpsimus*, which he refused to give up.

⁹ A fascinating study of this is in Olender 1992.

In a characteristic bit of magical thinking, while walking with his chance Armenian companion over London Bridge Borrow/Lavengro performs for the exotic stranger's benefit a set of dream-displacement variations upon the English words 'tide' and 'sea,' together with the Armenian equivalents for them (which he does not actually supply for the reader) in order to 'prove' an unsuspected (and probably imaginary?) affinity between Armenian and English words.¹⁰ With the expertise of the thimble-rigger, or fairground illusionist, whose art he describes with such loving enthusiasm elsewhere in *Lavengro*¹¹ he distracts the Armenian's attention from the improbability of his philology by a neat bit of contextual focalisation or sleight of hand typical of the illusionist's art. Descriptions of the bridge they are crossing, its arches, the river Thames, the noise, and the foam on the water, are all enlisted by his ingenious patter, in the same way that a conjuror can make a grand piano on stage 'disappear' simply by distracting his audience with his verbal inventiveness and making them focus on some other object in a different context while the unobserved scene-shifters do their job.¹² The swiftness of the hand and the tongue deceive the eye. Borrow compliments the merchant on his fortune in speaking such a 'bold and expressive' language, but compares it unfavourably with Romany (which of course he really did know well), which has an incomparable 'mystery' and is (in his memorable phrase) 'doomed to solve a great philological problem' (the old Victorian chestnut already mentioned). When they are ensconced together the Armenian, noticing Lavengro's agitation as he warms to a favourite topic, offers him a second glass of wine to steady his nerves. Borrow, however, who was more of a beer man, declines the Armenian's offer, likewise his invitation to translate into English a classic writer he refers to as 'the Armenian Aesop,' an offer which revives in Borrow/Lavengro the melancholy memory of a desperate fit of depression when he strove, totally unqualified, to translate his employer's home-made philosophical text into German.¹³ The languages referred to here (Armenian and Romany) both connote mystery, reinforcing the weird power to which Lavengro the language-man aspires. In this way Borrow lays bare the relationship between language, knowledge, and power, a pervasive theme in his work.¹⁴

¹⁰ Armenian is an independent branch of the Indo-European language family.

¹¹ Borrow, *Lavengro*, ch. 53.

¹² The Russian for 'conjuror' is *forkusnik*, a fact which delighted Nabokov.

¹³ Borrow, *Lavengro*, ch. 36.

¹⁴ I am often reminded of the young James Joyce, in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, reflecting on the ways in which the 'powerful' English language becomes something altogether different in the Irish context.

As opposed to the languages from which Borrow translated with professional expertise,¹⁵ therefore, Armenian, which he clearly did not 'really' know, served more devious purposes. These emerge via the displaced meanings which occur in the punning dialogues of ch. 89, the next episode in what we might call the 'seduction' (endlessly deferred by foreplay) of Isopel Berners in the Dingle chapters of *Lavengro* and *The Romany Rye*, where Lavengro, incongruously, and apparently out of the blue, suddenly announces: 'Belle, I have determined to give you lessons in Armenian.'¹⁶ What was there, in the dream-logic that controls Borrow's narrative, that might possibly have put this bizarre idea into his head? We have to make an imaginative leap to register that the Armenian theme allows Lavengro and Belle, two strangers and outsiders, to meet on some common cultural ground. Armenia means for Belle, when prompted by Lavengro ('Did you ever hear of Ararat?'), the place where the ark came to rest, in the Genesis narrative of the shared hopes (for Noah and his wife) and God's promise of deliverance after the flood. It connotes marriage and family, as it did for D.H. Lawrence,¹⁷ or indeed for all Christians. Could Lavengro and Belle imagine themselves embarking on such a journey? And then reaching a safe haven at the end of it? Lawrence, in *The Rainbow*, and again in *Kangaroo*, makes Noah's Ark the symbol of his protagonists' sense of a future, a sheltering sky and a divine dispensation, in the sacrament of marriage. But by the time Lavengro gets to the point of proposing to Belle that they should leave not for Armenia but for America, a different kind of promised land, the crucial epiphanic moment of commitment has passed, never to return.

But why has Lavengro not made any amorous overtures to Belle, and/or openly proposed marriage, or at least a continuing relationship, as a gentleman should? Certainly, something significant is not getting said. Belle intuits (and says) that Lavengro wants to teach her this hard language in order to 'To prevent—something. What?' 'Ay, ay,' he quickly interjects, 'to prevent our occasionally feeling uncomfortable together.' Uncomfortable? What is being censored here, and at what level, in the name of 'comfort?' It was Belle who originally introduced the word 'uncomfortable,' a little earlier, and Lavengro then echoed it. The 'heated' Lavengro, who (uncharacteristically) here prefers a cup of tea to a glass of ale, for fear of getting more heated,

¹⁵ Foremost among these was surely Welsh.

¹⁶ Belle, like others who cross Lavengro's path, may be forgiven for not making the kinds of connections between unrelated ideas peculiar to the language-master.

¹⁷ Lawrence, *The Rainbow*, ch. 6, and *passim*.

has fallen silent, taking refuge from his embarrassment and inhibition in a fairly innocent, but extraordinarily protracted, act of denial. One feels uncomfortable (he says) in the presence of a person one is with and thinking about (which can only mean excessive or inappropriate 'repressed' thoughts). Ale might inflame these, denial repressed them, but to be on the safe side, Lavengro also displaced them with the aid of a little fib ('I was not thinking of my companion, but certain company with whom I had been,' his companions in the alehouse where he was previously, and where there certainly were issues he preferred not to think about).

During the conversation in the pub with the 'company' he refers to here, the discussion had veered towards the merits or otherwise of America as a place to emigrate to, in order to find work. It is the echo of the word 'America' from the pub that suggested to Lavengro the otherwise unmotivated word 'Armenia,' and the two countries are now imaginatively linked as a sort of minimal pair connoting diametrically opposite things. Belle is full of admiration for what she has heard of America, and has 'frequently thought of going there.' 'Armenia,' by contrast, functions textually as a land of righteousness whose language Lavengro commands. The ambivalent Lavengro, who is as afraid of losing Belle as he is of holding on to her, suppresses the anxiety that this information fills him with, but unconsciously he embarks upon a defensive strategy to deflect her thoughts elsewhere and reassert his power over her. To discredit 'America' as such, and counter her positive view of that country, he links pro-American sentiment with the views of a certain Radical he had just met in the pub, whom he knows Belle will not approve of, but who (he says) might be willing to accompany her there. Belle says that if she goes she will go alone, adding pregnantly, 'unless—unless that should happen which is not likely,' and then 'I am not fond of Radicals' (i.e. the man in the pub) 'no more than I am of scoffers and mockers' (surely an allusion to the all-too-clever Lavengro?). The plot has thickened almost without the reader being aware of it. The two propositions, taken together as a displaced or allusive discourse, are rather plaintively saying: 'don't make fun of me or take advantage of me, with your criticism and scepticism. Don't you care for me at all?' This thickening of the plot is accompanied by a series of associations which link America, by means of a curious allusion to Lavengro/Borrow's military father,¹⁸ with George Washington, and thereby with revolution, distinctly negative images for Lavengro/Borrow by the

1840's, when he had largely thrown off the influence of the radical Taylor.¹⁹

Americans, according to the old soldier, Borrow's/Lavengro's father, remembering the War of Independence, are sure-shot marksmen: which is to say that, unlike Lavengro, his younger son, they go straight to the point, and always bag their kill. This unmistakably phallic combined image of male power (father/marksmen) activates Lavengro's latent Oedipal fears, something that seems frequently to have occurred both in Borrow's life and in his works. The image of murderous power is reinforced a page later by the reference to George Washington, who 'sent the English to the right-about in double-quick time,' as Lavengro ruefully tells us. America is therefore a dangerous country in which Belle would surely come to harm: and the 'uncomfortable' silence referred to above ensues, with all its power of displacement. A truly startling image follows: to fill the silence, says Borrow, 'it would be as well to have a standing subject on which to employ our tongues.' The sexual connotations of this image of foreplay and/or thwarted desire are unmistakable. The 'standing subject' is primarily of course Lavengro himself, and the 'stand' referred to has phallic as well as military connotations. 'Tongue' has the same displaced connotation as in the passage of *Wild Wales* where a knowing Welsh barmaid expresses surprise at hearing George speak Welsh, saying that she thought that Englishmen's tongues are not long enough, or in other words Englishmen of Borrow's kind are not virile enough to satisfy a Welsh girl.²⁰ He and she (the coded message says) should be engaging in oral sex, one of the safer kinds at the time, instead of rabbiting on about philology: but the shadow of the soldier father, who thought George not a real man, falls upon them.

Armenian, therefore, is invoked 'to prevent our occasionally feeling uncomfortable together' by sublimating desire. But it has also become caught up (via America) with the question of the nature of masculinity, and compensation for the castration of the (younger) son (George) by the simple means of shifting the sure-shot power of the 'knower' elsewhere, from sex to language, by means of the ambivalent word 'tongue,' which works both ways. This is a strategy characteristic of the wily language-master, and with any luck Lavengro will get off scot-free. But by that time, hopefully, Belle will have lost her urge to escape

¹⁸ Borrow wrote in his summer house at Oulton Broad with his father's uniform and sword at his side.

¹⁹ It was the eminent Norwich Germanist and free-thinker, William Taylor, who fostered Borrow's love of languages and comparative literary studies.

²⁰ Borrow, *Wild Wales*, ch. 15.

to America, and choose instead the symbolic Armenia, that philological promised land of wedded bliss where Lavengro reigns (very nearly) supreme. 'Don't run off to the US, stay here and listen closely to me' is the gist of it. So much for the Ark of the Covenant, or the sacrament of marriage, which came to rest for the best of reasons in Lavengro's promised land. Lavengro's Armenian lessons begin in the latter part of *Lavengro* and continue into the earlier part of *The Romany Rye*, thus encompassing in a very suggestive way the wondrous narrative of the postillion 'struck by a fireball' who has taken his place in the timeless mythology of language learning.²¹ These lessons in a language Lavengro virtually admits he does not really know thus acquire a complex set of existential and experiential functions which engage with the psychology of language learning in illuminating Borrowian ways. Belle knows instinctively from the outset that this unsolicited language learning process is a test of personal commitment (his and hers) which is almost certain to be overtaken by time and by life events as so many attempts to learn languages in fact are. Being the 'knower' allows Lavengro to confidently re-assume his dominant erotic position *vis-à-vis* Belle, who nevertheless keeps querying or subverting the passive roles imposed on her. The symbolic codes of the Armenian language, rendered peculiarly personal by *double entendre*, draw a veil in front of the eyes of the idly curious. Those who are excited at the idea of a young man and a young woman 'living together' outside the law are thrown a few suggestive scraps whose 'real' function is not to titillate but to code the complex fluctuating relations of Lavengro and Belle, which mimic (veiled in 'Armenian') the give-and-take of any couple drawing close and moving apart in their relationship. But the sexual politics of the process are extreme, as Lavengro consolidates his Protestant position of denial and repression *vis-à-vis* his attraction to Belle and his sexual frustration.

The ironies and ambiguities of the language-learning process begin with Lavengro's introduction of the obscure term 'Haik' to refer to the Armenian language. Actually 'haik' properly refers not so much to the language as to the nation, whose founding epic casts a certain Haik, a semi-mythological figure, in the role of the supreme tribal chieftain.²² It is not without interest in this context that Haik's greatest victory was won over the Babylonian leader Bel. Lavengro's Belle cannot

know this, of course, but she is astute enough to see that the pun on the word 'haik/hake' (the latter spelling referring to a kind of pot-hook) has a directly interpersonal application ('on the hake of my memory I will hang your haik,' she says, realising that the old erotic charade of who-hooks-whom is being played out). Of the Armenian numerals (which Lavengro does not give actual utterance to in the text) she has remembered only the word for 'one,' *me*, because that is precisely where she wishes to take her stand, on the first person singular. She is indeed asking, in different ways, and with good reason, what about me?—challenging Lavengro's egotism. Lavengro again repeats the first three numerals (again not transcribed for the reader, which reinforces our sense of his detached power) and she garbles them as *Me jergo earache*—as if to say, 'listening to all this jargon is giving me an earache.' She has seen through Lavengro's fearful charade. It is a relief for Belle to switch to Romany when the Man in Black appears, and get back on to some secure ground. However, the rather desperate note of domination re-enters the discourse in a new form with Lavengro's account of his 'triumphs... over unbroken mares,' a pretty commonplace, not to say vulgar, metaphor for masculine power over young women. Horse-dealing and related arts are one of Lavengro's singular 'romani' accomplishments.²³ Armenian numerals are explicitly aligned with mare-breaking, and the theme of the mare/female is developed further, as the dialogue continues in *The Romany Rye*, understandably giving great offence to Belle. So that we are not so much surprised as shocked at the proposal of the dissolute publican, who has lost money on cock-fighting, to recoup his losses with a new kind of prize-fight, one between a man and a woman, Even Hardy, with his delight in rustic degeneracy, does not mention such things, although of course they existed (all prize fighting was illegal, so man-on-woman fighting would perhaps have been no more or less so). The publican has the outcome of the fight all worked out: it will be a 'cross' (fixed) fight in which Belle is defeated. In this way the publican's role in the story serves to counterpoint those of Lavengro and Belle, just as the Man in Black's role 'counterpoints' Rome with Armenia.²⁴

Belle's Armenian lessons run through a number of *doubles entendres*, playing suggestively on words in order to supply inter-texts of great poignancy, all of which serve to reinforce her subject position (which Lavengro persistently tries to over-ride). The lessons

²¹ The phrase 'My postillion has been struck by lightning' the oft-cited example of fatuously decontextualised language learning, has been variously attributed to Portuguese and Hungarian handbooks of English but maybe Borrow thought of it first?

²² Borrow's struggle with himself is therefore linked allusively with his Christianity.

²³ Including the tinker's trade which links him (as so much else) with John Bunyan.

²⁴ The Man in Black is a paranoid projection of the Popish threat to decent Protestant values.

may be said to have two points of crisis, one in *Lavengro* and one in *The Romany Rye*, the first focusing on the Armenian noun, and the second, more important, on the verb. Although he rebukes Belle for ‘catching at words,’ indulging in ‘vulgar,’ ‘workhouse’ wordplay, it is Lavengro himself who leads her knowingly down this road, which constructs a parallel world of implied meanings.²⁵ On being told that there are ten declensions of nouns in Armenian, Belle, who wants none of this, says, ‘I decline the noun.’ The noun Lavengro chooses, appropriately, is the Armenian for ‘master,’ singular and plural: ‘you shall now go through masters in Armenian,’ a proposition which does not in the least appeal to her. Appropriately enough, a storm breaks, which Lavengro obligingly provides with a number of Scriptural contexts. There are no floods, however, but instead another beguiling contrapuntal narrative, that of the postillion struck by a fireball. The true climax, however, is reserved for a point early in *The Romany Rye*: ‘this evening I intend to make you conjugate an Armenian verb.’²⁶ Belle agrees on this occasion to let Lavengro take the lead (‘for this evening you shall command’) but she is far from pleased with the result. ‘To command is *hramahyel*,’ said I. ‘Ram her ill, indeed,’ said Belle, ‘I do not wish to begin with that.’ Belle has no wish to be subjected to the naked sexual assault which lurks within or behind Lavengro’s alienated discourse. Once again the ‘catching at words’ suggests a meaning which some might consider improper. Why should she ‘rejoice’ indeed (an Armenian verb he seeks to teach her): ‘I am sure I don’t rejoice, whatever you may do,’ said Belle. She cannot participate in his linguistic *jouissance*. As he conjugates the verb, we are struck by the phonetic similarities between the Armenian words and the transcriptions, in Swift’s *Gulliver*, of the language of the Houyhnhnms, horse-speak as an Edenic language, remote from humanity. Phonologically, it also seems to be somewhat akin to Welsh.

This leads her to think that he is calling her a mare, whereupon he disarmingly tells her that ‘mare’ is simply Old English for ‘woman;’ ‘when we call a female an evil mare, the strict meaning of the term is merely a bad woman.’ The misogynist insult is startling, upon which Lavengro, by informing Belle that ‘in Armenian woman is *ghin*, the same word, by the by, as our queen,’ lurches to the familiar opposite extreme, from denigration to idealisation. Lavengro’s difficulty with Belle is evidently a very familiar one: what Freud saw, indeed, as the commonest cause of ‘degradation

in sexual life,’ the Oedipal to-and-fro (cf. Hamlet) between the virgin and the whore, the Janus face of the compromised Mother. Belle then passes judgement in a sentence of astonishing accuracy: ‘You never loved any one but yourself.’ But the conjugating business has not yet come to an end. After trying to make Belle say ‘I love you’ in Armenian, Lavengro goes further, inviting her to America, to ‘settle down in some further forest and conjugate the verb *siriel* (to love) conjugally.’ The bizarre conclusion to all this is that Lavengro responds to her refusal by telling her that ‘I am ready to try a fall with you this moment upon the grass,’ an echo of the dissolute landlord’s scheme for a mixed sex boxing match. By a further process of displacement she is no longer Belle but becomes Brünnhilde, and he is the heroic Siguard or Siegfried, the serpent-killer, in an epic re-enactment. She tells him ‘you are beginning to look rather wild,’ to which he replies, disarmingly, ‘I every now and then do.’ Belle leaves him never to return. He entertains preposterous thoughts of following her, a fate from which Petulengro saves him, happily.

The ‘Dingle episode’ is typical of Borrow’s work in the way it combines surface simplicity with recondite allusiveness. An amorous encounter is loaded with moral significance and incorporated into the complex Pilgrim’s Progress of his ‘imaginary’ autobiography. One might have thought that (as Dr Johnson said of Donne’s love poetry) in such circumstances ‘nature alone should rule;’ yet as we all know life is not like that. The courtship of Belle seems to have lingered in D.H. Lawrence’s memory from his young manhood, when Jessie Chambers commented on how close he felt to Borrow’s oscillation between autobiography and fiction. That other famous woodland courtship, of Mellors and Lady Chatterley, is similarly full of linguistic displacements and strange riddles masquerading as a new kind of directness. There, too, male potency and its linguistic displacements are the real issue.

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²⁵ Cf. Lawrence’s seducer Mellors, who sacramentally offers Connie her own body by means of a peculiarly ‘rooted’ discourse (Anglo-Saxon and Celtic roots enact a peculiar authenticity).

²⁶ It has been said that the best place to learn a language is in bed.

47.

Picasso: *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. Version O)*

A chapter from the forthcoming book *Firing the Canon: an Iconoclastic Look at Famed Works of Art*

Martin Kemp

The *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. Version O)* ('The Young Women of Avignon Street') is a mess. A very large mess (243.9cmx233.7cm, Figure 47.1). It more-or-less 'portrays' four prostitutes who are more-or-less naked, and more-or-less life size. They were more-or-less remembered by Pablo Picasso from the notorious Carrer d'Avinyó in Barcelona, the haunt of whores; Picasso preferred to call his painting the 'Brothel of Avignon.' It was painted in Paris in 1906–7. He only released it for public scrutiny at an exhibition in 1916. It drew appalled criticism from even his most avant-garde colleagues. His older pioneer, Henri Matisse, regarded it with considerable distaste, and suspected that it was deliberately satirizing modern art as manifested in his hugely innovative yet lyrical *Le Bonheur de vivre* ('The Joy of Life'). Looking at Picasso's five women, 'hideous whores' came to Matisse's mind.

It is not hard to see why his friends were shocked. The composition violates all the traditional rules that European painters has striven to perfect over six centuries. There is no defined space, no defined direction for the light, no clearly defined anatomy, no apparent narrative and no clear content. It violates stylistic consistency. The two figures on the right are endowed with angular masks reminiscent of African art, while their companions recall very early Spanish sculptures. The still-life of fruit, the best thing in the painting, seems to come from a different visual world.

A rambling series of sketches for the parts and the whole bear witness to Picasso's agonised struggle with his *Desmoiselles*. Two customers appear and disappear: a 'student' with what has been seen as an ominous skull, and a sailor, a stereotypical customer. He cast his net wide as if he sought legitimacy at the same time as violating it. El Greco's *Opening of the Fifth Seal* (from the *Book of Revelations*) spewed a manic fragmentation across Picasso's canvas. Painted by a 'Greek' artist (actually from Crete), who is now regarded as 'Spanish,' the alien status of both painters is consciously evident. We can trundle out the litany of 'influences,' including

'primitive' sculpture, Paul Cézanne obviously, Paul Gauguin's cosmetic primitivism, and further back the truly extraordinary *Turkish Bath* by Jean-August-Dominique Ingres, the constipated classicist. Closer to home was Édouard Manet, whose shocking *Olympia* turns her confrontational glaze on the passing spectator. It is as if Picasso was deliberately setting up his picture for critical reviews and art-historical debate.

Why has such an incoherent mess come to be revered in the world's greatest museum of modern art? We will see that a powerful teleology has been at work. It is defined through an evolutionary pathway that is mapped as series of powerful strides towards the goal that violates previous assumptions about what rational art should look like. This teleology became manifested when the *Desmoiselles* was purchased in 1937 by the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Teleology tells us that the giraffe's neck grows as longer so that it takes its due place in the evolutionary scheme of the early 20th century. An evolutionary map or chart for modern art was provided by the omniscient Alfred H. Barr Jr, the founding director of the Museum of Modern Art. The gospel according to Barr runs as follows. At the start of the 20th century, modern art (above all abstract art) was a goal that remained as yet some arduous steps away. But the *Desmoiselles* was taking multiple strides along what Barr decreed as 'the' evolutionary path. As Barr said, 'Picasso's *Desmoiselles d'Avignon* is one of the very few paintings in the history of modern art which can justly be called epoch-making.'¹ It was an 'important' painting. It may be good. It may be bad. But above all it is 'important.'

In his magnificent four-volume biography of Picasso, John Richardson underscores the role of the *Desmoiselles*

¹ Alfred H. Barr in a Press Release, 20 January 1939, viewed 7 January 2024, <https://www.moma.org/momaorg/shared/pdfs/docs/press_archives/471/releases/MOMA_1939_0002_1939-01-20_39120-2.pdf?2010>.



Figure 47.1. Pablo Picasso, *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J.)*, 1911-12. Oil on canvas, 243.9x233.7cm. New York, Museum of Modern Art. © 2024 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

as the 'missing link' between what had gone before and Cubism:

It is essentially a beginning: the most innovative painting since Giotto. As we will see in the next volume, it established a new pictorial syntax; it enabled people to perceive things with new eyes, new minds, new awareness. *Les Femmes d'Alger* is the first unequivocally twentieth-century masterpiece, a principal detonator of the modern movement, the cornerstone of twentieth-century art...² one penetrates right into the core of Picasso's laboratory and because it is the crux of the drama, the center of all the conflicts that Picasso has given rise to and that will last forever... It is a work which

to my mind transcends painting; it is the theater of everything that has happened in the last 50 years.³

I wonder if any work of art could ever do all that – even allowing for the mixed metaphors.

Picasso's magisterial position in the evolutionary progress of Cubism was defined in one of Barr's influential charts that were to serve as key navigational tools as the museum visitor strove to locate the various '...isms' in relation to each other, under the overarching banners of Cubism and Abstraction (Figure 47.2). The 20th century was the era of '...isms,' which stood as the key taxonomic categories in the irresistible march of Modernism. It helped that other arts seemed to

² Richardson 1991: 475.

³ Richardson 2007: 244.

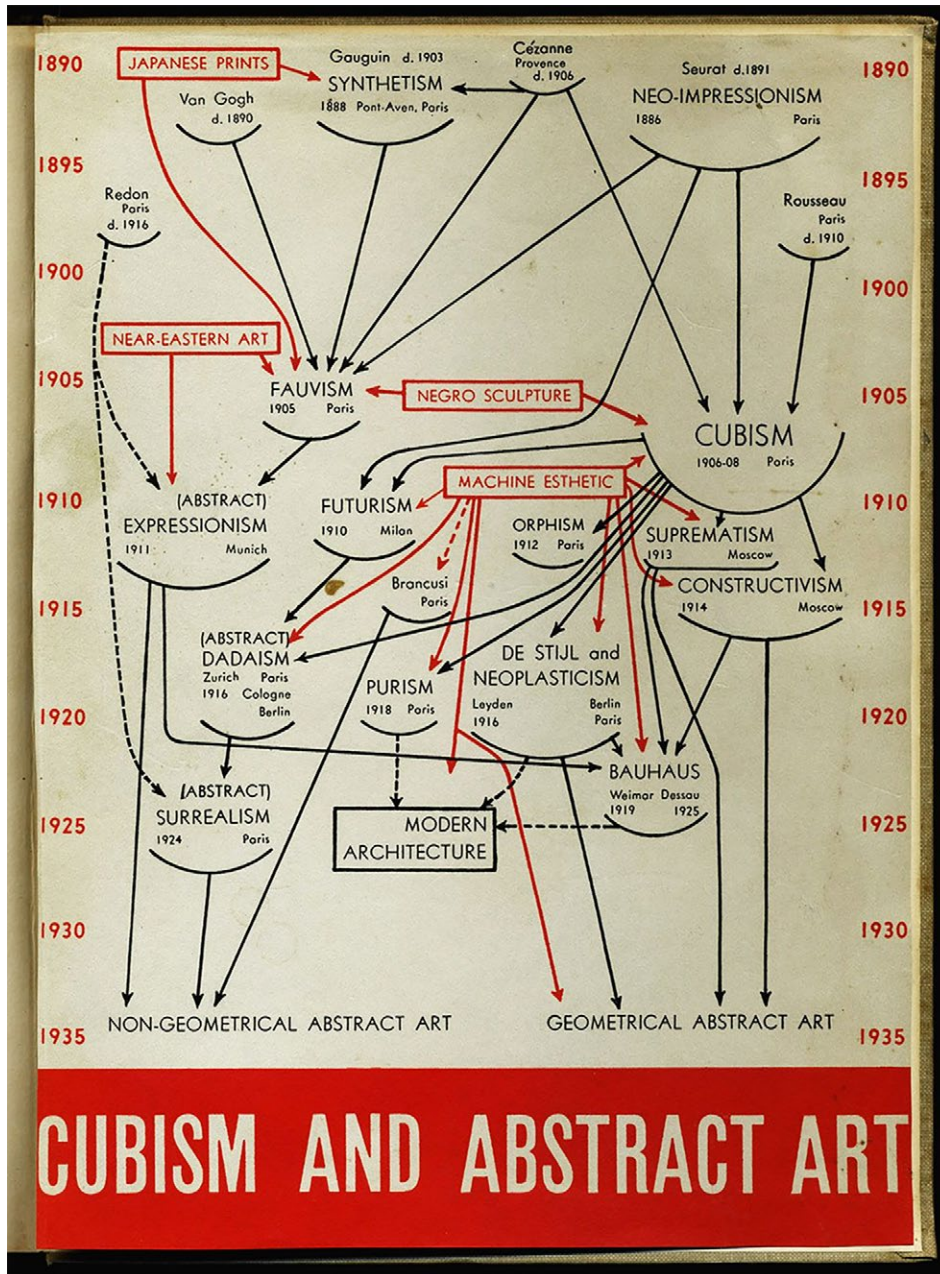


Figure 47.2. Alfred Barr, Chart of 'Influences' in the catalogue for *Cubism and Abstract Art* exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art, 1936. © The Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, New York.

manifest comparable progress towards the anarchic new world: Arnold Schoenberg's *Erwartung* in 1909; Igor Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* in 1910; and James Joyce had embarked on *Ulysses* in 1914 (a bit late!). The art wars were to be trumped by the real First World War. Science arrived at its modern moment earlier with the two crucial publications by Albert Einstein in 1905. Theatre fits less readily in the schema.

One of Barr's navigational aids for the visitor evoked naval warfare: 'the permanent collection may be thought of graphically as a torpedo moving through time, its nose the ever advancing present, its tail the ever-receding past of fifty to a hundred years ago.'⁴

⁴ Starting (a Collection) From Scratch. MoMA through Time, viewed 7 January 2024, <https://www.moma.org/interactives/moma_through_time/1920/starting-a-collection-from-scratch/>.

For Barr, whose final goal was Abstract Art, formal matters necessarily stood at the centre of critical judgements. More recently, content, meaning and psychology have come to the fore. The *Desmoiselles* are an obvious sitting duck for gender theorists. What are we to make of the gimlet glare of the whores' eyes? Do they exact a feminine revenge for their sexual availability? Do they express Picasso's fear and disgust – his fear of venereal disease and/or his guilty disgust about resorting to brothels. Or are they an exercise in misogyny? Picasso's exploitation of the succession of devoted women who served his needs unabatedly throughout his adult life is richly documented. That an aggression runs throughout the image cannot be doubted. The choice facing the interpreter is inevitably dictated by the interpreter's stance on psycho-sexual matters. The unresolved nature of the figure group serves to feed the partiality of different observers. Picasso's mess sanctions arbitrary readings none of which are capable of being proved or disproved. The *Desmoiselles* supports whatever we want it to. It provides boundless scope for eager doctoral theses.

With little encouragement, Picasso's fractured figures can be made to support some pseudo-Freudian ideas. This is Leo Steinberg in his massively thorough essay on the picture:

Few works of art impose the kind of aesthetic experience which the young Nietzsche called 'a confrontation with stark reality.' And this, surely, is why Picasso strove to make his creation a piece of 'wild naked nature with the bold face of truth.' He wanted the orgiastic immersion and the Dionysian release.⁵

Faced with this interpretative morass, it is worth trying some counterfactuals. Let's say that the climax

of artistic 'progress' is actually Surrealism, and that Cubism is a false start. Picasso's painting becomes isolated as a kind of irrelevance. It becomes a failed endeavour. If we define a different goal, a different set of steps move into the foreground.

Let's look at a particular element in the painting. The squatting woman towards the bottom right regards us with a hideously shattered glance. She has survived major changes elsewhere in the painting. Her legs are wide apart, particularly in earlier versions. I could say that she is laying herself open for inspection, for the detection of the sores associated with genital disease. Or I could say that she is sitting on a potty and defecating. This would open up a new area of potential meaning. We may feel instinctively that neither alternative is strong, but they are not different in 'type' from more standard interpretations. They cannot be proven or disproven. This is an unsatisfactory state of affairs that clings to a deeply unsatisfactory work of art.

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⁵ Steinberg 1988: 46.

In search of the museum / in search of a desert: A frieze and a 'zoophorus'¹

Sokratis Kioussis

'Desert' and 'Oasis'

The Greek term for a barren, waterless area, the equivalent of the English word 'desert,' is έρημος [έρimos]. We encounter the term in the *Odyssey* when we learn the fate of the man to whom Agamemnon 'had given strict orders on setting out for Troy, that he was to keep guard over his wife.'² Clytemnestra's soon-to-be lover, Aegisthus, eventually leads him off to an isolated island (νήσον έρήμην).³ He leaves Agamemnon there 'for crows and seagulls to batter upon.'⁴ Aristophanes provides us with another use of the term, while engaging us with the setting of the earliest of his eleven surviving plays: Pnyx, the rocky hill usually crowded with Athenians, the material embodiment of the principle of 'equal speech,' is also described as έρημος, meaning 'empty,' or 'devoid of men.'⁵ A person, however, who has been abandoned by his or her friends or who lives in solitude, is also described in modern Greek as έρημος. 'Foreign lands' are likewise referred to in Greek folk poesy and rebetiko songs as έρημα [έρima], not so much distant places, but environments where one can only live with sorrow, separated from beloved family and home. Similarly, the word έρμος [έρmos] is a commonly used poetic term to describe someone as 'unhappy' or 'unfortunate.' Derived from έρημος, it can be used either for a man or an inanimate object.⁶

One of the editors of this volume, once asked by the author about the ideal place to escape to, spoke eloquently of the desert. The wish to escape to an infertile land was not exactly the response I had been expecting to receive. It wasn't even close. Florence, for instance, would have been a more plausible answer. The truth is, I had not yet dwelt on the concept of 'desert' (nor that of 'oasis'). More importantly, I had not yet encountered the challenges of producing a thesis. It was only towards the completion of my doctorate that I would come to embrace Gyöngyvér Horváth's understanding, and desert would develop into my own *topos*.

A Greek saying has it, 'many are the benefits [καλά] in the desert, since no one is there [to enjoy them].'⁷ This, according to Aravantinos, a 19th-century Greek scholar who first written documented the proverb, tells that the scantiness of humans translates into an abundance of goods. A profusion of edible forms of life may thus occur in a land inhabited by the very few. A waterless area, however, is not commonly known to display a variety of plants and flowers. The choice of 'desert' may, therefore, instead serve here to showcase the human attribute of avarice, the wish to possess and to consume, our love of commodities. Yet the ancient Greek term 'good' [καλό, kalo] can be used to describe a virtue or a state of being, as well as a commodity. Devoid of people, the desert also represents a reality which is free from all that humanity's nature entails. Inner peace is a quality amongst other 'goods' only to be attained outside of society and society's products.

Desert, accordingly, transforms into a 'promising land,' bearing the elusive 'goods' of peace and serenity. Without necessarily imagining Irina, the youngest sister in the Prozorov family, longing to return to a desert instead of to Moscow – as she beautifully repeatedly does in Chekhov's masterpiece – a barren infertile land can indeed be linked to the idea of

¹ I would like to express my sincere thanks to Maria Chatziadoniou, Richard Barnes and Panayotis Papadimitropoulos for trusting me with their meaningful works; to Niki Goulandris, Marinika Babanazarova, Penelope Price, Tchavdar Georgiev and Hoda Zohrob, for assisting my research. Special thanks go to Emilie Vince who gave her time generously to give this piece editorial support. This paper is dedicated to the memory of Greg Vamvakas, the curator and once fellow-researcher who first introduced me to John Onians and without whom this journey would have never begun.

² Homer 1900: Book III (*Telemachus visits Nestor at Pylos*).

³ Homer 2009: 3.253–3.328.

⁴ Homer 1900: Book III.

⁵ Aristophanes 2010: 20.

⁶ See Solomos' use of the term in the second fragment of his epic unfinished work, *The Free Besieged* (Οι Ελεύθεροι Πολιορκημένοι, 1828–1851) where an armed defender of the city of Missolonghi refers to his rifle as dark and wretched [έρμο].

⁷ Aravantinos 1863: 107.

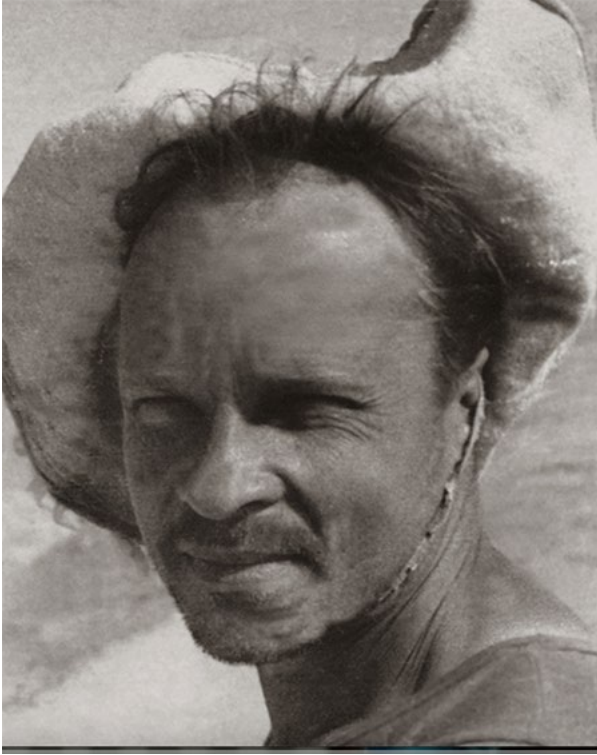


Figure 48.1. Igor Savitsky in the desert of *Khorezm*, 1950s. Photography by Militsa Zemskaya. Image reproduced by kind permission of Marinika Babanazarova.

salvation (and hope).⁸ Tchavdar Georgiev and Amanda Pope's fascinating documentary *The Desert of Forbidden Art* provides a somewhat similar reading of a setting that we often conceive of as desert and desolate,⁹ telling how archaeologist artist Igor Savitsky (Figure 48.1), during Soviet rule, rescued over 40,000 forbidden artworks, creating a museum in the Uzbekistan desert: an isolated impoverished region may serve as a 'vessel of redemption.'¹⁰

Savitsky's unique project reveals how art survives in times of oppression, but also highlights an often-overlooked quality of the museum itself. Having for so long glorified the accomplishments of nations, museums as instruments of the state continue to derive much of their status from what seems to be their main social function, providing access to their treasures. Without denying the educational role of museums, remember that their mission also lies in protection of

works. As self-contained versions of larger universes, they have served and continue to serve as arks to rescue natural and manmade objects from the tides of history, destruction or neglect.¹¹ Likewise, a desert, no matter how infertile or impoverished, can embrace a museum's role, acting as a refuge for what would otherwise be swept away, out of keeping with the current regime.

Objects do not necessarily require a large audience to prove meaningful, or a well-designed or elaborate setting to tell their story; they seem to somehow retain much of their intrinsic value. Unlike museum objects whose inherent meaning must be somewhat disassembled in order to fit into a museum narrative, an assemblage of art such as one amassed to remain far from the public eye, exists (rather) *per se*. Whether behind glass, enjoying a marble pedestal or hung on the wall, an object that is an exhibit, no matter how elegantly displayed, is presented to the visitor within a specific context that often conveys very few aspects of the object's past life.

The objective authoritative role of museums and museum analysts, has been brilliantly explored by artists such as Mark Dion, Fred Wilson and Alison Knowles, and curators like Hans Ulrich Obrist.¹² Projects such as the *Tate Thames Dig*¹³ and the *Take Me, I'm Yours* series¹⁴ question the institutional role of the museum and how we classify and display knowledge and art.¹⁵ Richard Barnes' poignant *Giraffe* (Figure 48.2) shows us a partially wrapped animal suspended in midair in the process of being removed from an exhibition hall. We can't tell what is happening. We are not even certain it is a museum that we see. Exposed at a late stage to the ingredients of a spectacle we come to realise that 'meaning is never as fixed as we might think it is,' as the *Classified* exhibition at the Tate Britain also demonstrates.¹⁶ Like Dion, Barnes draws attention to the transformation that exhibited *artificialia* and *naturalia* undergo. Invited to look differently into a framed space, we revisit the intrinsic qualities of the object and its past.

¹¹ Mack 2007: 64–66.

¹² M. Dion, 1999, *Tate Thames Dig*, project and installation, Tate Gallery, London (see further below); F. Wilson, 1992–93, *Mining the Museum*, exhibition, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore; A. Knowles, April 2012, *Make a Salad*, performance, High Line, New York.

¹³ M. Dion, *Tate Thames Dig*, first shown at the Tate Gallery as an *Art Now* installation, October 1999–January 2000, and again on display as part of the *Classified: Contemporary Art at Tate Britain* exhibition, 22 June – 23 August 2009 (curated by C. Wallis and A. Wilson), London, The Tate Britain.

¹⁴ H. U. Obrist, 2015, *Take Me (I'm Yours)* installation (co-curated by C. Boltanski, H. U. Obrist, and C. Parisi), Paris, Monnaie de Paris.

¹⁵ See Blazwick 2001, Adamopoulou and Solomon 2016.

¹⁶ Wallis and Wilson 2009.

⁸ *Three Sisters* (Три сестры), written in 1900 and first performed in 1901 at the Moscow Art Theatre.

⁹ *The Desert of Forbidden Art*, 2010, film written, produced and directed by A. Pope and C. Georgiev, (producer: S. Fromkin), <<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1536458/>>.

¹⁰ Mack 2007: 64–66.



Figure 48.2. Richard Barnes, *Giraffe* ('Animal Logic' Project), 2005. Digital color print. Image reproduced by kind permission of the artist.

Free from a rigorous classification system, or accompanying – more powerful if not misleading – texts, rescued artworks escape exposure at rest in the so-called desert of forbidden art, and do not risk their truth. Instead, they at least initially lead a private life that may be deemed enviable by the misinterpreted treasures trapped in the confines of a museum that dictates and presupposes, assumes and erases. They are, however, 'mute' as David Lowenthal has it, speaking of relics, from which 'feelings and beliefs can only be conjectured.'¹⁷ Had they a voice, they would perhaps claim their past and seek their freedom. They would abandon labels and constructed totalities, reminding us in this respect of a man or a woman, who in seeking or welcoming the shelter of a desert, hopes to find themselves free from any pain or social enforcement. Savitsky himself, who first visited the region of Uzbekistan in 1950 to take part in the *Khorezm* archaeological expedition and subsequently became an inhabitant until the end of his life, speaks in his memoirs of a 'deep sense of freedom' that he

experienced in a land that did not represent an enviable destination.¹⁸

Travelling all over the country chasing masterpieces that modern history had 'condemned to obscurity,' Savitsky eventually assembled the world's second largest avant-garde art collection.¹⁹ This otherwise inhospitable land thereby welcomed works otherwise doomed to destruction, reinforcing the desert as a land of salvation. However, living in desolation does not equate with happiness. A solitary life like a solitary reign seems purposeless, since humans function and recognise value within specific contexts. Although objects carry or return to their inherent meaning if removed from a gallery to storage, and stop acting as 'semiophores,'²⁰ a life outside one's society is not easy

¹⁸ Savitsky, cited in *Eurasia's* review of the *Treasures of Nukus* exhibition (Uzbekistan: Moscow Show Brings Avant-Garde Collection to Wider Audience, viewed 20 November 2022, <<https://eurasianet.org/uzbekistan-moscow-show-brings-avant-garde-collection-to-wider-audience>>).

¹⁹ Savitsky, cited in *The Desert of Forbidden Art*, 2010, Press Kit: 4 ('Soundbytes and Subjects from the film').

²⁰ The term originally introduced by Pomian to describe the 'exchanging' value of objects within a collection or a museum, 'semiophores,' objects 'valuable for their ability to represent abstract

¹⁷ Lowenthal 2015: 397.

or viable. Solitary life is the exception, not the rule, and as such is described in Greek as being like the desert. The infertile land which may well represent a life free of necessities, predominantly stands for loneliness and a life unshared.

Outliving his son and his son's only son in Euripides' least understood play (*Andromache*), Pileus is self-proclaimed and described by the chorus as erimos ('desert' and 'desolate').²¹ Andromache – remembered for her beautiful lamentation in the *Iliad*, here dressed as a suppliant – stands before the temple of Thetis to deliver the play's prologue, mourning her losses, past and approaching. Descending from the 'glory of Asia,' the city of Thebes, 'whence on a day [she] came to Priam's princely home with many a rich and costly thing in [her] dower', she now has no possessions whatsoever.²² She clings to the altar, seeking for help. Standing barefoot and praying, void of any indication of her sovereign roots or past wealth, she has reached the most sacred grounds of Thessaly, where we see her kneeling in respect as in Maria Chatziadoniou's beautiful work in collage, *Before the Temple*. Originally an architect, the Ioannina-based artist represents the first episode of the play without including any manifestation of a built environment. It is, instead, the figure of a drained woman that captures her imagination, occupying literately and metaphorically the greater part of the setting it stands for (Figure 48.3).

The share of Neoptolemus, the son of Andromache's beloved husband's known killer, she bears him the son she is about to lose, this time not in battle but to the fear and hatred of a woman who wrongly identifies herself as her rival. King Pileus – her new master's grandfather and Thetis' husband – is her only hope. He comes to her assistance and eventually she and her child escape. However, he receives the news of the death of his offspring in great detail and develops into the play's most tragic figure. Soon after he learns the fate of his loved ones, the land he once reigned over immediately 'vanishes' for him, transforming into a 'desert,' where his sceptre is no longer necessary or valid and is thus 'cast to the ground.'²³ 'Childless' and 'deserted,' he has no purpose.²⁴ Providing us with a figure of a kneeling man who does not look up like Andromache, his head intentionally left white, devoid of colour and substance, almost like the rest of the painting, Chatziadoniou communicates the state of



Figure 48.3. Maria Chatziadoniou, *Before the Temple of Thetis*, 2022. Collage and mixed media, 70x100cm. Private collection. Image reproduced by kind permission of the artist.



Figure 48.4. Maria Chatziadoniou, *Entering the Desert or Pileus*, 2022. Collage and mixed media, 70x100cm. Private collection. Image reproduced by kind permission of the artist.

a man who has lost everything and entered his own inner world, his own desert. (Figure 48.4).

Without ignoring the significance of humility as a virtue that Khalil Gibran's metaphor of 'a king without a kingdom and a poor man who does not know how to beg' so beautifully renders,²⁵ Euripides' character reveals the way that the desert has been associated in ancient and modern thought with pain and absence of life. The depiction of a king as a 'lonely dweller in a lonely palace' or who 'does not have a homeland,' comes to signify the ultimate pain.²⁶ For Pileus living alone is living in a desert, by definition at the mercy

or invisible entities,' Pomian, 1990, *Entre l' invisible et le visible: la collection* [1978].

²¹ Euripides 1994: 1216, 1221.

²² Euripides 1910: 1-41: 1.

²³ Euripides 1994: 1222-23, translated by the author.

²⁴ Euripides 1994: 1221, translated by the author.

²⁵ Gibran 1946: 60.

²⁶ Euripides 1994: 1221; 1222.

of adversity and misfortune. It is therefore no accident that a man's singular path, a solitary life or the man himself, all come to be known and referred to in Greek as 'of the desert.' 'Desert' exceeds its geographical dimension and signifies pain and the number of sacrifices and hardships one has to endure, especially when living alone.

The path to the doctorate

Completing a doctorate is not an easy feat. It can be lonely, multiplying its difficulty. Candidates often extract themselves from their social circle to remain faithful to their main principle, to spend their waking hours inside lab or library or to settle far from home. A doctorate can take precedence, for a while depriving someone of their family and loved ones. At least this was the case for me. Aiming to pursue something which, at times, seemed more of a Sisyphean task than an educational project, as my dear friend, now lecturer in Creative Writing, Ágnes Lehóczky once said, I learned to live solitary. Absorbing my energy, my thesis won and kept me far from the other activities I had been accustomed to pursuing. Dividing my life between my desk in the Postgraduate Office at the University of East Anglia and my room in Valentine Street in Norwich, I saw myself largely managing without the company of others, a reality I had not previously experienced.

Central, however, to this path was the immense support I was given by my dearest parents, Elias and Athanassia. As John Onians rightly recognized shortly after the completion of my thesis, my achievement would have not been realized without my parents' help. I remember asking if he meant financially, since we had been talking about the lack of doctoral funding in humanities. John's response to my naïve question reminded me of the obvious. It was the moral support, conversations, faith and love that he meant. Without denying the significance of the financial backing I was given by my family, as well as the scholarship I had received from the Basil and Elise Goulandris Foundation, or the sophisticated mentoring from John Mack, my primary supervisor, what allowed me survive and endure the process of my PhD was parental love and generosity. Knowing that someone believes in you and the ideas you introduce, allows you to overcome any *Laestrygonians* or *Cyclopes*.²⁷ Whether striving to swim in an angry sea or cope with water scarcity or the heat of the desert, you will find your way.

Strangely, someone can lead a solitary life, be deserted, and still long for (a) desert as a reality that can absorb

their anxiety. Living a lonely life as I did does not diminish the desert's capacity to accept one's thoughts as a land of promise, returning to the question that permeates this paper. Just as Gyöngyvér Horváth had so vividly put it, desert represents a land devoid of pain, of troubles and worries, a refuge as much as a vessel of redemption for one who sees nothing but a series of tasks that need to be completed in a diminishing amount of time. Unlike other geographical zones, deserts exemplify a constant climate, at least in one's imagination. Time is apparently frozen there and so are our challenges and, perhaps, our aspirations. This changelessness enables one to associate desert with a land free of obligations and necessities, a form of a *ninemía* (νηνεμία) [lack of wind] that may not be real, but exists as such in our imagination of the desert. Unlike a sailing ship that in dead calm cannot make any progress, windless weather also translates to a quiet life that in some cases represents one's sole desideratum. While great expectations cannot grow here, tranquility is established. An infertile unbroken land of considerable extent appears capable of fully absorbing if not dissolving worries. The elusive 'good' (αγαθό/καλό) of inner peace seems easier to attain in a desert rather in the confines of a modern city full of commodities and nonetheless troubled.

Without wishing to depict the beautiful city of Norwich as an East-Anglian desert, or to identify the challenging journey of writing a thesis as a perennial passage through heat and pain, I must say it was full of the adversities to be encountered in a desolate and deserted are. Without doubt, it was Elisabeth de Bièvre and John Onians who represented my oasis and who reminded me of the resources I had forgotten I possessed. The first time I met John in person was in September 2005 at the UEA portacabins temporarily housing the School of World Art Studies and Museology. I had just been accepted as a master's student for a program that brought together the two seemingly opposing realms of neurobiology and art history. A young graduate of biology at the time, it was my first institutional acquaintance with art history and it didn't take long for me to realise how blessed I was to be initiated into an endlessly magical world of images by a scholar as bright and prolific as John.

It was Elisabeth who first embraced me when I barely knew anyone in Norwich. I arrived while John was away, and a series of wrong estimations had me reach Norwich much earlier than planned and without any accommodation booked. I still remember the luminous inscription of 'no vacancy' outside every bed-and-breakfast. I remember contacting my parents to share

²⁷ Cavafy 2007.

my catastrophe and my mother insisting I call anyone who may be expecting my arrival in Norwich. John was the only one and it was not easy for a young Greek graduate to overcome the status barrier and telephone his professor. Feeling sad, I was finally convinced. Elisabeth answered the phone, although it was late in the evening. She immediately offered to come and collect me and had not been for her generosity, I would almost certainly have returned to my faraway hometown where another academic program was waiting. Luckily for me, I didn't.

I still remember my first impression of John and Elisabeth's beautiful house. Filled with art and books, it immediately provided me with another reason to stay. Coming from a scientific background, I was not convinced about pursuing this course of studies, rather than a graduate program focusing on genetics or bioethics. Not to mention the language barrier. However, the Onianses' embrace was enough to wipe out any second thoughts. The first museum I visited was not the Sainsbury Centre but this first morning in Norwich at John and Elisabeth's house. Elisabeth kindly showed me around her home, and I was rewarded with my first glimpse of an acquaintance that would alter my life.

I knew that I was here to stay. After following a very intense taught masters program, I returned to UEA to pursue my doctorate. The first program introduced me to a unique set of fundamental as well as innovative art theories that were designed to provide a new and more profound notion of art, challenging dominant views. I vividly recall John Onians introducing us to a variety of historians and thinkers covering a very wide period of time, always encouraging us to revisit earlier theories and intellectuals, to read between the lines and trace emergent truths in their work. Through John's guidance I began to see and analyse images and my response to them in an entirely new way. An immense world of images suddenly opened up and, endowed with the craving of the amateur, I was there to enjoy.

My PhD focused on the controlled and confined environment of the museum; not the art or the treasures contained within. Whether focusing on the work that is exhibited or the environment created for it, the response to an exhibit is what generates knowledge. John Mack's comprehensive understanding of the museum shaped my understanding of an institution's ability to recreate the world or suggest totalities wider than its collections. For the multiple readings of an art object and the different layers of meaning that an artwork can acquire, I must thank

John Onians. John's meticulous, innovative approach to classical art provided me with the material to validate my arguments, regarding the methodologies utilized by a private Greek museum to obtain a public profile and to engage visitors with environmental issues.

Museums have a role in the creation and maintenance of a nature/culture configuration. Representing the world, they have erected boundaries between nature and culture in the very act of focusing attention on each and increasing understanding in both domains.²⁸ Drawing on different museological traditions and responding to contemporary issues, the project of creating The Goulandris Museum has brought 'nature' and 'culture' together, positioning antiquities and other evocations of the ancient world to explain the natural world.²⁹ My thesis explored the background to such practices and the ideas they embody. It also considered the history of other European museums, whose practices and development over time have contributed to the distinctive schema realised in Athens in recent decades. Aiming to unveil the Museum's scheme and to 'arrive' at its *topos*, I have also had to traverse my own personal desert; be socially withdrawn, anchored in the confined space of a library and managing a series of difficulties and emotional drawbacks that seemed never-ending.

My obstacles do not decorate this volume, nor am I worthy of speaking of Elisabeth and John's academic contributions, which I cherish. In particular John's thorough, inimitable, historical as much as poetic interpretation of the Pergamum Altar³⁰ has provided me with all my reasoning to explain its implementation in a museum focusing on nature.³¹

Pergamum Altar

The altar was an allusive commemoration of the Pergamene rulers' victory over marauding Gauls depicting in a long series of confrontations how the gods punished the giants for their arrogant assault on Olympus. Just as Athenians had first attempted to glorify their achievements in the Persian Wars through the depiction of Amazonomachy and Gigantomachy on the Parthenon metopes, the Pergamenes later exploited the same conflict to contextualise their own

²⁸ The paper contains material from the author's doctoral thesis (Kioussis 2011), here published for the first time.

²⁹ Kioussis 2011.

³⁰ A reconstruction of the original Pergamum Altar ('Βωμός τῆς Περγάμου') can be viewed at the Antikensammlung of the Pergamonmuseum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.

³¹ See Onians 1999.



Figure 48.5. Athena in conflict with giants (scene from Gigantomachy), 2009. Sculptural marble copy of the right half of eastern frieze of the Zeus Altar of Pergamum, Asia Minor, ca. 168–65 BC. Athens, Goulandris Museum of Natural History, vestibule of ‘Angelos Goulandris’ conference hall. Photography by Sokratis Kioussis. Image reproduced by kind permission of the director of the Goulandris Museum, Niki Goulandris.

victory over the Gauls.³² The gods punish the giants, sons of the earthly mother Ge, personifications of chaos, exemplifying the divine forces of law and cosmic order.³³ Victory is on the side of the gods, while giants are ordained to destruction. Punishment is a common theme in Greek art. What is however new in the Pergamum Altar, as Onians argues, is that for the first time not the experience of the punisher is stressed but that of the punished.³⁴ The contrast with earlier Greek art, as he writes, is ‘striking.’ While fifth-century reliefs concentrate attention on the victor, representing embodiments of excellence with whom the viewer was invited to identify, here attention is instead given to the defeated. The situation is intentionally ‘reversed’ as the only figures with whom the viewer could identify are the defeated.

A four-metre relief cast of a detail from the monumental frieze stands in the Goulandris Museum, between the Museum’s library and its lecture theatre (Figure 48.5). Athena is in conflict with Earth’s beloved son the giant. With her right hand the goddess drags Alcyoneus by

the hair in order to pull him up from the ground. He is perfectly human except for large wings. From below, his mother Ge also participates in the episode. Half-emerging from the ground, she watches the battle. As Alcyoneus tries in vain to tear Athena’s hand away from his hair, he stretches out his left arm in a gesture of supplication. We cannot but feel for him and identify with him. Onians argues that however much one’s mind would have preferred an alliance with the gods, the sufferings of the punished involve the viewer’s body in an involuntary psychological identification with the giants.³⁵

Central in determining the viewer’s relation to the battle is the placing of Ge, mother of the gods’ enemies. Next to Athena and close to the point at which the axis of approach meets the frieze, she is the only figure in the scene who, like us, is also a spectator, her position corresponding closely to the viewer’s own. Onians writes that we share her maternal distress, and looking up, ‘join in her prayer to Athena to spare the life of her beloved son.’³⁶ Her pleading is in vain.³⁷ Nike

³² Onians 1979: 81.

³³ Schmidt 1962: 10.

³⁴ Onians 1999: 131.

³⁵ Onians 1999: 134.

³⁶ Onians 1999: 134.

³⁷ Bieber 1961: 116.

has arrived to give Athena the crown of victory, and Alcyoneus, already ‘groaning with pain will be torn away from the protective earth.’³⁸ As Nike is about to crown the daughter of Zeus with the ‘band-encircled wreath,’ the otherwise gracious well-formed mother of living beings, Ge, ultimately develops into a tragic figure with whom we cannot but identify.

The relationship in space between spectator and monument, as Onians argues, has been carefully considered by the architect of the Zeus Altar in Pergamum.³⁹ Anyone approaching the monument and walking round the steps at the base would have found that the giants were his closest companions. He would share with them the experience of looking up at the divine forces of law and order. For the first time in the history of classical art, as Onians writes, the viewer is made to identify not with the noble heroes who fought on his behalf but with enemies and inferiors.⁴⁰

Schmidt argues that the resonances between the struggle with the giants and the recent past of Pergamum would have been more intelligible to the visitor to the altar in antiquity than to present spectators.⁴¹ This representation was enlisted by Pergamum’s rulers to ‘confirm their quasi-divine authority’ and to ‘increase the moral and social distance between them and those who governed.’⁴² Drawn by the unique analogy of the original relief cast that Onians’ analysis first highlighted, Chatziadoniou produced a work in collage specifically for the purposes of the volume. In her work, mother Ge becomes the sole protagonist both emerging from and somewhat still haunted by the soil. Her collage signifies and reinforces the complex affinities explored in the original synthesis (Figure 48.6).

The work, nevertheless, remains powerful and engaging whether viewed in relation to its complementary syntheses in its original context or detached from it as a separate fragment. Exhibited at the Goulandris Museum, the scene’s initial symbolism and art now develop within the Museum’s schema into another conduit of meaning to convey other ends.

As we feel for the naked suffering Alcyoneus, we identify with his mother Ge. Rising from her element, she is the only figure who gives her beloved son strength to resist; despite just watching the scene, she still somehow



Figure 48.6. Maria Chatziadoniou, *Gaia*, 2022. Collage and mixed media, 70x100cm. Private collection. Image reproduced by kind permission of the artist.

‘provides’ as Earth does for Man. A tragic heroine, she is the lone spectator, paralleling the experience of the visitors. Spectators are therefore invited to identify with the Earth itself, to see themselves within the natural world as they engage with her pain, realising the measure of destruction that has been inflicted upon the planet and accepting their responsibilities for the natural world.

The Museum’s openly environmental orientation denotes all these associations and bestows the artwork with further resonance and application. According to legend, Alcyoneus was mortal only when separated from the ground. Pulling him up from the earth, ruthless Athena overpowers him. The image of a son cut off from his maternal protection as Alcyoneus is from the ground is a metaphor for the way we have ourselves been cut off from nature. This is what we were first invited to see: to identify with Mother Nature itself in order to realise her destruction, and then to revisit this relationship, seeing ourselves through her. The synthesis brings man and nature into one unavoidable configuration.⁴³

The Goulandris Museum and the exploration of the oasis

It is not difficult to imagine how pleased I feel revisiting John Onians’ analysis. An object, as Susan Pearce writes, is always richer than any of its realisations.⁴⁴ To provide a good account of an artifact or to ascribe meaning to it, one must be familiar with all the interpretations it has received. This, as I tell my students at the School of Fine Arts at the University of Ioannina, is the best

³⁸ Schmidt 1962: 12.

³⁹ Onians 1979: 153.

⁴⁰ Onians 1999: 134.

⁴¹ Schmidt 1962: 10.

⁴² Onians 1999: 136.

⁴³ See further Kioussis 2011.

⁴⁴ Cited in Arnold 2006: 91.

way to ensure a good result and engage visitors. John Onians' analysis of the frieze reproduced in marble for the Goulandris Museum was not merely a reference: it complemented and validated my hypothesis. The allusion to the classical world in order to explain the natural world was already clear to me. Several gracious images of the goddess are displayed by the Museum. Here, however, I had to interpret a representation of mother Earth totally unlike the rest. John's highly original interpretation bestowed my analysis with strength.

It was during my master's studies that I was first enthralled by his understanding. According to John, early Greeks saw themselves as made of stone and metal and represented themselves in statues of marble and bronze. Being Greek and growing up in a country where the past is still somewhat omnipresent and in various ways exploited, I had my own ideas. John encouraged me after an assignment hadn't gone that well: 'Sokratis, you've got perception of Greek art.' Though trained as a biologist, I was familiar with ancient literature and thought, predominantly with Aristotelian principles and texts. The philosopher's zoological works had been my main area of interest.⁴⁵ Depicting Aristotle as the father of marine biology had been a long personal project before crossing over into the arts.

Being the son of a general, I was exposed to the classical past in modern Greece.⁴⁶ Anything written or achieved by the ancients took its place in our library, often in several translations, especially drama. The Charioteer of Delphi, a model of the Severe style of the early classical period, is among the most prized Hellenic works. Buried under a rock-fall, it was found in 1896 near the temple of Apollo, not far from the region of my father's birth. The bronze votive offering never left its original area, considered by locals to be the most beautiful and palpable reminder of the classical past. Though I grew up miles away, its image accompanied me throughout my childhood and still remains a reflection of the parental love I received.

Getting to know more about one's culture of origin in another language or through artefacts situated in another country may demythologise what one has learned to cherish. That was not the case for me as I felt that the knowledge I received from John filled gaps. Instead of dwelling on the much-celebrated ideas of Elisabeth and John, I would better here describe an incident during the last stages of writing my thesis,

and almost in a Homeric manner, better celebrate their work than a strictly academic analysis.

Earlier here I reflected on the agonies that the process of completing a doctorate may entail. I compared the process to life in a desert. Someone may be experiencing a hard time striving to be productive, removed from his social circuit and living a solitary life as though in the desert, and still be dreaming of a desertlike state: a land void of both necessities and challenge, conceived of as a refuge for the candidate who may doubt himself and his hypothesis. No matter how dry or infertile it may seem, desert could also provide salvation and act as a vessel of redemption. Savitsky's case reminds us how



Figure 48.7. Panayotis Papadimitropoulos, *Paris, Un homme dans le metro*, 1986. Analogical black and white print, 30x40 cm. Private collection. Image reproduced by kind permission of the artist.

⁴⁵ Aristotle 1965.

⁴⁶ See Hamilakis 2007; Gazi 2008; Hamilakis and Yalouri 1996; Lowenthal 1985.



Figure 48.8. View of the Malacological Gallery, 2009. Athens, Goulandris Museum of Natural History. Photography by Sokratis Kioussis. Image reproduced by kind permission of the director of the Goulandris Museum, Niki Goulandris.

concepts, almost like museum objects, may acquire other meanings and serve in different ways.

Whether an actual area, an imagined topos or an imagined interior world, a desert always contains the possibility of an oasis. For someone who has entered his or her own personal desert, as I have, the expectancy of encountering an oasis is rather minute. Like the young man in the black and white photograph (Figure 48.7), who seems to have no desire of social interaction and is lost in his own train of thought, anything that happens outside of his inner world remains almost irrelevant to him. He may not be invisible to passengers but they certainly are invisible to him, a state beautifully explored by the artist Panayotis Papadimitropoulos in his photo *Un homme dans le metro*. It is, therefore, more difficult for a stimulus to pass through their 'membrane' and make them come out of the protective and often hard-to-see 'shell' and experience what life brings to them. The possibility of coming across an oasis is becoming more and more elusive. When striving to explain the use of an enlarged representation of a microscopic frieze for the introductory and main panels of the Goulandris Museum's first travelling exhibition, this author dwelt on the concept of the oasis. John Onians and Elisabeth de Bièvre's 'oasis' of

generosity and erudition, of inspiration, confidence and care, on the other hand, is more than palpable.

Doubting your work, underestimating your argument, and having second thoughts about the ideas you are proposing and how this answers your main research question is all part of the process, at which point a writer is in need of a 'bastion,' a source that will somehow supply them with courage or make them believe in the truth of what they suggest.

My final master's assignment was on miniature art. Once again, Gyöngyvér was instrumental in my choice of specific theme. Naïve and fresh to the arts, I believed I could take on the broad subject of animal representation. I still remember announcing to John my the ambitious topic. He was naturally furious and insisted on choosing something easier to frame. Gyöngyvér convinced me to work on what would eventually serve as the precursor of my dissertation, the representations of aquatic animals in Byzantine Manuscripts, tracing the realistic manner in which they were depicted.

Zoltán Kádár's exploration of Greek zoological illuminations in Byzantine Manuscripts became



Figure 48.9. Maria Chatziadoniou, *Untitled*, 2022. Aquarelle, 20.5x14cm. Private collection. Image reproduced by kind permission of the artist.

my bible.⁴⁷ The archetypes for these illuminations, according to Kádár, were the diagrams Aristotle used to illustrate his lectures, an anatomical atlas most artists of the day would consult.⁴⁸ An excellent opportunity to make use of my previous knowledge on these treatises and, I believed, to innovate. Unfortunately, this was not to be the case. However, I would find an axiom that I would always re-visit, long before I found myself working on museum representation and the life of objects.

Most of the images in the codices did not depict real life, even if they adopted a realistic manner. Their association with the text was often unclear. It was the first time I observed that a scientific illustration is never an end in itself, but rather is subordinated to the textual scientific information, as Kádár beautifully highlighted.⁴⁹ For an art historian, inconsistencies between text and image may not have appeared as striking. I began to consider questions such as, if this is the case between an image and a text, what about the same juxtaposition within a museum that seeks to recreate nature and engage visitors in its various aspects? What sort of balance should the curator achieve? Which is more important: the text or the

image? The object or the accompanying text? The examination of these relationships ultimately allowed me to prove how the idea of a 'common' past exploited by the museum could break boundaries between what we have conventionally regarded as opposing categories such as nature and culture. Employing artefacts and evocations of the past to endorse a reading of nature as heritage, the Goulandris Museum brought the two into one configuration (Figure 48.8).

To explain the imaginative journey into the past and nature of a visit to the Goulandris Museum, I dedicated one chapter to 'cabinets of curiosity,' the late-Renaissance private collections of natural and artificial objects. John Onians noted that this added elegance to my argument, signifying how several practices currently adopted by museums derive from these first settings that bring nature 'indoors,' as Findlen suggested.⁵⁰ John E. Murdoch elucidates how the contemporary idea that observation and experiment are essential ingredients of a discipline called science, carried out in laboratories or other specialized locales, is not properly applicable to antiquity and the Middle Ages.⁵¹ Science was not recorded in books; rather in books was where it was largely carried out.⁵²

⁴⁷ Kádár 1978.

⁴⁸ See also Walter 1979; Jackson 1920.

⁴⁹ Kádár 1978: 11.

⁵⁰ Findlen 1994.

⁵¹ Murdoch 1984: 3.

⁵² Murdoch 1984: 3.

Private displays of natural specimens came to represent man's dominance over nature, signifying power and wealth. Through the knowledge produced in such collections and the discourses they endorsed, the museum, per Findlen, enabled a 'scientific culture' 'formerly confined to scholastic discourse' to be publicised.⁵³ The language of collecting provided a significant mechanism for the transition of natural philosophy from a principally 'textual,' 'bookish' and difficult to access culture, to a 'tactile' and 'theatrical' one that could embrace multiple different audiences.⁵⁴ Initially 'livresque,' science could now be carried out and articulated differently, granting to objects the unique privilege to generate knowledge and signify order.⁵⁵

I explored the relationship that the curator built between image and text in order to understand what else was introduced in museological terms. This was the Museum's first international travelling exhibition. Not the only classical allusion so far attempted by the curator, it was the only indirect one, open to interpretation. Long before the emergence in the 1990s of the Museum's research and educational centre that would portray nature as heritage, titled 'Gaia,' it bore elements of a program that had not yet been fully realised. The author proposed that natural history had to be subsumed within art and history to fit into heritage discourses. Initially featured at the Naturemax Theater of the American Museum of Natural History in New York (11 May–12 August 1984), the exhibition was finally hosted at London's Natural History Museum in 1988 (24 February–17 April).

Peonies of Greece: Myth, Science and Art centred around portrayals of the plant, a collection of lithographs and watercolours, with information panels about the earliest accounts and depictions of the peony. A reproduction of the so-called 'Nilotic' landscape complemented two watercolour paintings, original portrayals of the plant by the Museum's co-founder and director, Niki Goulandris. The upper frieze of the east wall of the fifth room of the West House in Akrotiri belongs to what has been described as the largest and best-preserved artistic assemblage known in the Aegean from any period.⁵⁶ Unusually, the room's compositions are executed in miniature style. The six-metre frieze depicts a major overseas voyage, with the fleet visiting five harbours and cities in all.

The Goulandris *Peonies* exhibition detail of the landscape may depict the third town visited by the fleet. Interrupting the narration of seashore episodes with a scene located in a meandering river, the prehistoric artist has 'much in the manner of the Homeric poems' inserted the hinterland in great detail.⁵⁷ A wild cat stalks waterfowl, and a griffin in flight hurtles along the blue river. Chatziadoniou's lighthearted study amuses the viewer who is invited to take a closer look at the scene and enjoy the flight of the feline (Figure 48.9).

A riparian landscape with palm trees and wild beasts, this composition is commonly known in Greek scholarship as 'the wall-painting of the subtropical landscape.'⁵⁸ Spyridon Marinatos, the archaeologist who was in charge of the excavation of Akrotiri on the Greek island of Santorini, interpreted this riparian, not very reminiscent of an Aegean setting or a Greek environment, as an exotic riverine flora and fauna, recognising a North African landscape.⁵⁹ Lyvia Morgan, on the other hand, who has provided the most detailed analysis of these works believes that the scene is within the Aegean and not a purely 'natural' environment.⁶⁰ If the action suggests life in the wild, the environment, she stresses, is domestic.⁶¹ Animals naturalize a rather domestic scene, which in Morgan's opinion represents not a wild landscape but an orchard, garden or park.

Whether the frieze is a representation of a wild setting in which animals are depicted in the eternal struggle for survival,⁶² or of a domestic environment that delightfully echoes nature despite being essentially man-made,⁶³ is not the focus of this paper. The painting cannot be a scene recalling a woodland habitat or a mountainous terrain in which peonies naturally grow. Without clear connection to the exhibition's main theme and in a museum that principally displayed science, it attracted my attention and received a series of readings including these that consider its relationship to Homeric poems. If we follow Sarah P. Morris's analytical account and accept the frieze as an early document in the prehistory of the Greek epic tradition, the enlisted scene could be seen as an

⁵³ Findlen 1994: 8.

⁵⁴ Findlen 1994: 9. See also Yanni 2005; Arnold 2006; Foucault 1970.

⁵⁵ Murdoch 1984: 3. See also Bennett 2006; Yanni 2005; Arnold 2006.

⁵⁶ Doulmas 1983: 74–55.

⁵⁷ Doulmas 1983: 48.

⁵⁸ Originally described by Spyridon Marinatos as the 'Subtropical landscape with stream, palms, fauna and a flying griffin' (Υποτροπικόν τοπίον μετά ποταμού, φοινίκων, πανίδος και ιπταμένου γρηπός). See Marinatos, 1974, *Colour Plates and Plans: Colour Plate 8*. Also cited in Televantou 1994: 59, 196, and others.

⁵⁹ Cited in Doulmas 1983: 74–55, 105.

⁶⁰ Morgan 1988.

⁶¹ Morgan 1988: 150.

⁶² Doulmas 1983: 48.

⁶³ Morgan 1988: 150.

Aegean fantasy of Egypt.⁶⁴ It would still remain unclear why this image rather than a depiction of the actual plant or another of the many classical representations of flowers. How were visitors meant to read this deployment.

I still remember how lost I felt at the time. Here is only a glimpse of the interpretations I considered to comprehend the above juxtaposition. *Paeonia* is the Latin of the Greek term *παιώνια*. Likely derived from the verb *παίω* ['to strike,' 'to touch forcibly,' 'to touch so as to heal'], Paeon was the 'Healer' and the original name of the healer of the gods in Homer. The term came to suggest salvation and rescue, and as such, possibly in allusion to its medicinal properties, the flower was named. Egypt in Homer's works is portrayed as a fertile land of great prosperity, but also one in which every man is a physician, 'the heirs of Paeon, the healing god.'⁶⁵ Is this the reason for the inclusion of a representation of a fertile and riparian environment such as that of the so-called 'Nilotic' landscape at the entry of the exhibition? Or did the curator choose an Aegean phantasy of Egypt, metaphorically the land of the man after whom the plant was named.

Jorge Luis Borges' 1946 short story refers to a territory in which the 'Art of Cartography' developed such precision that only 'a Map of the Empire whose size was that of the Empire' could please the ones who had ordered its creation.⁶⁶ Seen by following generations as 'Useless,' the vast map was delivered up to the 'Inclemencies of Sun and Winters.'⁶⁷ Just like Borges' 'Deserts of the West,' which may receive the 'tattered Ruins of the Map,' Egypt is a recipient of the damaged, wounded and lost. It is there, as Homer tells us, that Menelaus' five dark-prowed ships were 'taken by winds and seas,' finally rewarding him with 'much gold and substance' as he wanders 'among men of strange speech.'⁶⁸ Chased by the gods, he and his crew eventually find their way to shelter in Egypt, just as the Map's ruins are 'sheltering an occasional Beast or beggar.'⁶⁹ Known for its deserts as well as its abundance of goods, Egypt never ceased be an oasis.

I am not certain why the riparian land appeared to me then as an oasis. Quite possibly because the joyful depiction could have served as a beautiful metaphor, an image of Paeon's land. The image signified for me more an oasis than a riverine scene. Experiencing my own

personal agony, shortly before the final submission of my work, I began to treat the work as an oasis instead of a fertile land or an Aegean phantasy. However, this was an interpretation I was struggling to incorporate into my thesis. As my fellow researcher had earlier warned me, I was beginning to doubt my work and my hypothesis. I had reached my personal desert yet still, like that editor of this volume, I dreamt of another one; a land devoid of the strictures that dominated my life.

The encounter with a zoophorus and an oasis

Most of my chapters were there. To trace the last images that would embellish my thesis and allow readers to follow my train of thoughts, I visited a room in the University library where manuscripts and old books were kept. I needed images of higher resolution of details from the microscopic frieze that had long troubled my mind. Unforgettably I came across a large volume, protruding from the shelf. I was holding a portfolio of watercolour drawings of the Parthenon. Whether it was Jacques Carrey's drawings of the sculptures doesn't matter. I immediately thought of John Onians and Elisabeth de Bièvre. I knew the lavish edition had been there through John's provision. My anxiety began to dissolve.

Encountering drawings of a celebrated *zoophorus*, a frieze that bore some of the most beautiful scenes I knew in art, brought me closer to what I had identified as an oasis but which also was part of a *zoophorus*; a microscopic one. The Greek word means 'bearing [representation of] life.' Suddenly my argument was strong. John, almost in a metaphysical way, was confirming the truth of my story, reminding me not to quit. Seven years after I had been received by Elisabeth so generously responding to my late night call, a second 'oasis' revealed itself to me. The library contained more than I could have expected. I found my 'oasis' and this again from the embrace I had felt from John and Elisabeth.

Thank you, Elisabeth de Bièvre and John Onians.

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⁶⁴ Morris 1989.

⁶⁵ Homer 1961: 4, 232.

⁶⁶ Borges 1999: 325.

⁶⁷ Borges 1999: 325.

⁶⁸ Homer 1900, Book III; Homer 1965, Book III.

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Zerstreute Zitate und Gedanken über 'Vulgarität'

Siegfried Kohlhammer

...la vulgarité, portée à un certain degré, fait éprouver à celui qui en est le témoin ou l'objet, un sentiment d'embarras, de honte même, tout-à-fait insupportable.

Madame de Staël

Das Thema Vulgarität bemächtigte sich meiner mit dem Amtsantritt des US-Präsidenten Donald Trump, und so sehr ich wünschte, davon befreit zu werden—es hält mich weiter im Griff. Die Vulgarität Donald Trumps ist unverkennbar, ist offensichtlich, sie springt einen an—und so geht es ja nicht nur mir: die Begriffe 'vulgär' und 'Vulgarität' werden immer wieder benutzt, um diese beklagenswerte Gestalt zu charakterisieren, und oft ist es die erste, die bestimmende Charakterisierung.

Bertrand Buffon beginnt sein Buch über *Vulgarité et Modernité* (2019) mit dem Fall Donald Trump: 'Narcissisme, ignorance, grossièreté, brutalité: il coche toutes les cases. Un mot revient en boucle pour qualifier le personnage: vulgarité.'

'It matters that Donald Trump is very vulgar' erklärte Josh Barro schon 2016 (18 July) in *Insider*—und demonstriert, warum Donald Trumps Vulgarität, auch seine geschmackliche, relevant für seine Politik (oder den Mangel daran) ist. Windsor Mann schreibt in *The Week* (19 November 2018) über 'The vulgarity and violence of Donald Trump.' Rosie DiManno meint, 'Donald Trump is the living embodiment of vulgarity and naked self-interest. To 67 million American voters that looked pretty good.' (*Toronto Star*, 4 November 2020)

'The most striking aspect of the rise and reign of Donald Trump has been his unabashed display of vulgarity and the ease (so far) with which he gets away with it,' schreibt Harvey Mansfield (*Commentary Magazine*, September 2017)—man beachte das 'unabashed display'—dazu später mehr unter 'ostentative Vulgarität.'

Und Marco Rubio, mittlerweile Trumps Außenminister, erklärte einst, Trump sei 'the most vulgar person to ever aspire to the presidency' (zitiert bei Josh Barro).

Der französische Präsident François Hollande meinte, dass das, was Donald Trump antreibe, 'c'est la vulgarité, c'est un être je trouve, dans tous les sens du terme, vulgaire.'¹

Nils Markwardt verweist in ZEIT ONLINE (8. März 2017) auf 'diese ostentative Vulgarität, die für das Prinzip Trump charakteristisch ist.'

Ich kann mich auch nicht an einen führenden Politiker in den letzten 50 Jahren erinnern, auf den das so ausschließlich zugetroffen hätte—Berlusconi? Duterte? Hugo Chávez? da besteht doch noch eine erhebliche Kluft.

Seine Vulgarität scheint Trump aber bei seinen Anhängern nicht geschadet zu haben. Im Gegenteil: 'Curiously, Trump's social autism is the source of his appeal. A Pew survey found that what Trump supporters like most about him is his personality, not his politics. ... vulgarity is the point,' erfahren wir von Windsor Mann in *The Week* (19 November 2018).

Aber sollte ich nicht zunächst 'Vulgarität' definieren? Zu Beginn seines Essays über *Vulgarity in Literature* (1930) geht Aldous Huxley auf die Schwierigkeit der Definition von 'words of appraisal' ein. 'Then why, if it is so hard, make any attempt to know? Would it not be wiser to follow the example of that Geneva Conference convened, not long ago, to consider means for the suppression of the traffic in obscene publications? For when the Greek delegate (too Socratic by half) suggested that it might be a good thing to establish a preliminary definition of the word "obscene," Sir Archibald Bodkin sprang to his feet with a protest. "There is no definition of indecent or obscene in English Statute Law." The law of other countries being, apparently, no more explicit, it was unanimously decided that no definition was

¹ Zitiert in Davet und Lhomme 2016.

possible. After which, having triumphantly asserted that they did not know what they were talking about, the members of the Congress settled down to their discussion.’ Deutlich gewandter umging 1964 Potter Stewart, Richter des US-Supreme Court, die Frage nach seiner Definition von ‘obscenity’: ‘I know it when I see it.’²

Diesem Vorgehen könnte man sich anschließen—nun steht es aber in der Frage der Definition von ‘vulgär’ und ‘Vulgarität’ sehr viel besser, die einschlägigen Auskunftsorte wie Wikipedia, Duden, Littré etc. und mehrere Publikationen geben Auskunft, verfehlen aber doch, wie ich meine, einen entscheidenden Punkt—und der hat mit dem oben erwähnten ‘ostentativ’ / *unabashed* zu tun.

Zunächst aber ein wenig Begriffsgeschichte. ‘J’ai employé la première un mot nouveau, “la vulgarité,” trouvant qu’il n’existait pas encore assez de termes pour proscrire à jamais toutes les formes qui supposent peu d’élégance dans les images et peu de délicatesse dans l’expression,’ schreibt Madame de Staël nicht ohne Stolz 1802 in ihrem *De la littérature considérée dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales*. Der Begriff ist hier ganz über die Literatur, den *vrais préceptes du goût* definiert, ansonsten wäre eine derartige Untertreibung nicht möglich—wenn Donald Trump nur *peu d’élégance dans les images et peu de délicatesse dans l’expression* vorzuwerfen wären, könnte ich mir die heftigen Reaktionen, den Abscheu (auch meinen) ihm gegenüber nicht erklären.

Madame de Staël äußert sich aber an anderer Stelle sehr viel klarer: Die Vulgarität, der sie als erste einen Namen gibt, ist Resultat der Revolution, die sie zwar im Namen der Freiheit und politischen Gleichheit begrüßt, deren Wirkungen aber ‘*sont au détriment des moeurs, des lettres et de la philosophie.*’ Zwar erhofft sie sich von der Revolution ‘*de très-grands progrès pour les lumières et la civilisation,*’ aber ‘*L’introduction d’une nouvelle classe dans le gouvernement de France*’ heißt auch ‘*la vulgarité du langage, des manières, des opinions, doit faire rétrograder, à beaucoup d’égards, le goût et la raison.*’

Vor allem beklagt sie ‘*la perte de l’urbanité des moeurs*’—ein Schlüsselbegriff, von dem später noch die Rede sein wird.

Die umfassende radikale Veränderung der gesellschaftlichen und politischen Ordnung fand ihre

Entsprechung in der Veränderung der Umgangsformen und Sprechweisen oder diese waren Folgen davon.

Wie sehr auch der frühere Despotismus der Aristokratie zu kritisieren sei, es gelte doch auch ‘*de montrer ensuite avec d’autant plus de force, quels ont été les détestables effets, littéraires et politiques, de l’audace sans mesure, de la gaîté sans grace, et de la vulgarité avilissante qu’on a voulu introduire dans quelques époques de la révolution.*’

‘*Depuis la révolution, une vulgarité révoltante dans les manières, s’est trouvée souvent réunie à l’exercice d’une autorité quelconque. Or les défauts de la puissance sont contagieux.*’ Auch hier kann Donald Trump wieder als Exempel dienen—welche vulgären Schreckensgestalten haben sich unter ihm im Weißen Haus versammelt, welche unsäglichen Beispiele praktizierter Vulgarität kamen dort und in seinem Umkreis zusammen! (Steve Bannon, Roger Stone, Sarah Huckabee Sanders ... fallen mir gerade ein.)

Denn ‘*Le mauvais goût, tel qu’on l’a vu dominer pendant quelques années de la révolution, n’est pas nuisible seulement aux relations de la société et à la littérature; il porte atteinte à la morale. ... Les paroles grossières ou cruelles que des hommes en pouvoir se sont souvent permises dans la conversation, devoient, à la longue, dépraver leur ame, en même temps qu’elles agissoient sur la morale de ceux qui les écoutoient.*’

Diesen Zusammenhang von Revolution und Vulgarität³ hat auch Edmund Burke konstatiert. In seinen *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) heißt es: ‘*Already there appears a poverty of conception, a coarseness and vulgarity in all the proceedings of the assembly and of all their instructors. ... Their humanity is savage and brutal.*’ Die Revolution war für ihn auch ‘*a revolution in sentiments, manners, and moral opinions*’ geworden.⁴

‘*Appalled by their lack of deference to Louis XVI and his queen, Edmund Burke remarked sardonically of the French revolutionaries that there had been “a considerable revolution in their ideas of politeness.”*’⁵

Keith Thomas weist in dem zitierten Werk auf Parallelen zum Englische Bürgerkrieg des 17. Jahrhunderts hin: ‘*With the heightening of political and religious tensions in the years 1640–42, there was much local disorder*

² Es ging um Louis Malles Film *Les Amants* (1958), und zu Potter Stewarts Ehre sei gesagt: ‘*he didn’t see it.*’

³ Siehe dazu Lotterie 2002.

⁴ Edmund Burke benutzte also den Begriff *vulgarity*—und im selben historischen Kontext—etliche Jahre vor Madame de Staëls *vulgarité*.

⁵ Thomas 2018: 245.

and a near breakdown of the normal courtesies... A contemporary ballad expressed the mood of the time:

Good manners have an evil report,
And turns to pride we see.
We'll therefore cry good manners down,
And hey! Then up go we.⁶

Der reale oder behauptete Zusammenhang von Französischer Revolution und Vulgarität findet seinen theoretischen Ausdruck in Bertrand Buffons *Vulgarité et Modernité*, einem einflussreichen Werk zum Thema 'Vulgarität.' Für ihn beruht das Phänomen der Vulgarität auf drei Grundpfeilern der Moderne: dem Individualismus, dem Utilitarismus und dem Konsumismus, intensiviert heute noch vom Triumph *de l'idéologie néolibérale*.

Wie schon Tocqueville⁷—und viele andere nach ihm—sieht Buffon auch in der Demokratie eine mögliche Ursache der Vulgarität (wie er generell Vulgarität nicht als eine notwendige Folge der Moderne betrachtet, sondern nur als mögliche); zugleich biete die Moderne auch die Mittel zur Kritik und Bekämpfung der Vulgarität—schon Madame de Staël habe den Begriff nicht nur deskriptiv benutzt, sondern kritisch-agonal. 'La démocratie fondée sur l'égalité et le semblable ne se contente pas de généraliser des manières médiocres; elle suscite des comportements contraires aux bonnes manières en favorisant la familiarité, l'indiscrétion, l'impudeur et la prétention.'⁸

Bei solchen Gelegenheiten—und generell bei der Diskussion von Vulgarität—wird oft der Vorwurf von Klassenvorurteilen erhoben, wird Bourdieus 'Die feinen Unterschiede' / *La distinction* zur Abwehr und Denunziation von Kritik missbraucht. Buffon sieht solche Vorwürfe schon dadurch widerlegt, dass Vulgarität heute kein Spezifikum einer bestimmten ('niederen') Klasse mehr sei, sondern alle Gesellschaftsbereiche und Klassen durchdringe. (Donald Trump wird man ja auch nicht als Vertreter der Unterschichten in Schutz nehmen wollen.)

⁶ Thomas 2018: 237. Zu überlegen wäre, wieweit der Umstand, dass nahezu die Hälfte der US-Wähler Trump zweimal ihre Stimme gaben, ebenfalls auf relevante gesellschaftliche, kulturelle, politische Veränderungen hinweist, die den Folgen revolutionärer Umwälzungen gleichkommen oder ähneln.

⁷ 'Dans les pays démocratiques les manières ont d'ordinaire peu de grandeur, parce que la vie privée y est fort petite. Elles sont souvent vulgaires...' *De la démocratie en Amérique*, zit. nach Buffon 2019: 188.

⁸ Buffon 2019: 11, 205–06, und 193.

Der Gegenbegriff zur *vulgarité* ist nicht nur bei Mme de Staël *la politesse*—die Höflichkeit. (Im Englischen dürfte *civility* der entsprechende Begriff sein.)

Als *the small morals* taucht sie beispielsweise bei Hobbes auf, Hume sprach davon als 'a kind of lesser morality'—überhaupt ist es für den Laien erstaunlich, in welchem Maße sich die Großen der europäischen Philosophie von Francis Bacon und Locke bis Kant und Schopenhauer mit diesem Thema der *small morals* befassten. Wohl nicht nur weil sie deren Bedeutung für das Funktionieren der europäischen Gesellschaften ihrer Zeit erkannten, sondern auch weil sie deren Zusammenhang mit den *big morals* sahen.

Schopenhauer wird in diesem Zusammenhang vor allem wegen seiner Parabel von den Stachelschweinen erinnert, die 'an einem kalten Wintertage' zusammenrücken wollen, um sich gegenseitig zu wärmen; man kann sich leicht vorstellen, zu welchen Schwierigkeiten das führt. 'Die mittlere Entfernung, die sie endlich herausfinden, und bei welcher ein Beisammenseyn bestehen kann, ist die Höflichkeit und feine Sitte.'

Unter den Französischen Moralisten geht auch La Bruyère wiederholt auf das Thema ein. Die Fähigkeit zu einem gesellig-freundlichen, höflichen Umgang mit anderen Menschen gilt ihm als Ausweis und notwendige Bedingung des Mensch-Seins. Die Menschen 'devraient comprendre qu'il ne leur suffit pas d'être bons, mais qu'ils doivent encore paraître tels, du moins s'ils tendent à être sociables, capables d'union et de commerce, c'est à dire à être des hommes.' Geradezu rührend fand ich folgende seiner Worte: 'il me semble que l'esprit de politesse est une certaine attention à faire que par nos paroles et par nos manières les autres soient contents de nous et d'eux-mêmes.' Nichts könnte dem Ungeist der Vulgarität mehr widersprechen!

Die stets schon geäußerte Kritik an der Höflichkeit als Äußerlichem, dem die wahren inneren Werte entgegengestellt werden, findet in ihm keinen Fürsprecher. 'La politesse n'inspire pas toujours la bonté, l'équité, la complaisance, la gratitude; elle en donne du moins les apparences, et fait paraître l'homme au dehors comme il devrait être intérieurement.'⁹

⁹ Madame de Staël geht folgendermaßen auf diese Frage ein: 'L'on dira peut-être que la politesse est un avantage si léger, qu'on peut en être privé sans que ce défaut porte la moindre atteinte aux grandes et véritables qualités qui constituent la force et l'élévation du caractère... Mais si la politesse est la juste mesure des relations des hommes entre eux, si elle indique ce qu'on croit être et ce qu'on est; si elle apprend aux autres ce qu'ils sont ou ce qu'on les suppose, un grand nombre de sentiments et de pensées se rallient à la politesse.'

Die Popularität des Groben, Vulgären als Ausweis unverstellter Aufrichtigkeit ist heute so stark wie seit Jahrhunderten—Keith Thomas hat dies Phänomen für das frühmoderne England geschildert. Die meisten Engländer jener Zeit ‘preferred to think of themselves as blunt, plainspoken, and devoid of foreign “craft and subtlety;” and they talked a great deal about their “frankness” and “sincerity.” ... “True English gentry” might lack “that flattering and complimentary gaiety” so natural to their neighbours the French; but theirs was the “true English genius,” which was “plain, hospitable and debonair, without much ceremony and dissimulation,” yet vastly preferable to “modish hypocrisy accompanied with cringes and grimaces.”’ Eng verbunden mit diesen quasi nationalistischen Ressentiments, meint Thomas, ‘was a strong current of provincial resistance to the affectations of metropolitan society.’ An anderer Stelle zitiert er folgende Äußerung ‘that a few “words of real English truths from the heart” were better received than “ten thousand compliments and grimaces”’.¹⁰ Es könnte sich lohnen, diese Einstellungen einmal bei den Trump-Anhängern zu untersuchen. Als sich Deutschland im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert von der kulturellen Dominanz vor allem der Franzosen zu befreien versuchte, waren ganz ähnliche Formulierungen zu hören.

Die Unhöflichkeit (*incivilité*) sei die Folge mehrerer Laster, heißt es bei La Bruyère (und das Folgende liest sich wie eine Charakterisierung Donald Trumps): ‘de la sottise vanité, de l’ignorance de ses devoirs, de la paresse, de la stupidité, de la distraction, du mépris des autres, de la jalousie.’ Entscheidend im Zusammenhang der Erörterung der Vulgarität scheint mir der *mépris des autres*, die Verachtung der anderen, zu sein—sie ist mit ihrem Komplement, der narzisstischen Eigenliebe (*la sottise vanité*), die Grundlage der Vulgarität als einer Extremform der *incivilité*.

Die ‘ostentative’ Vulgarität ist deshalb auch keine (besonders abstoßende) Sonderform der Vulgarität, sie gehört zu ihrem Wesen, ‘ostentative Vulgarität’ ist ein Pleonasmus.

Vulgarität ist—auch—die Absolutsetzung der eigenen Person und ihrer Interessen, die Negation aller Regeln des gesitteten Umgangs, der Achtung der anderen.

‘...A certain thrusting and pretentious vanity is... one of the essential elements of vulgarity. Vulgarity is a lowness that proclaims itself—and the self-

¹⁰ Thomas 2018: 221–23. Zu der Frage siehe Feldman u.a. 2017 und *psychologue.net* 2017. Siehe auch zu dieser Frage das generell höchst lesenswerte Buch von Wolfgang Sofsky (2009: 38–41).

proclamation is also intrinsically a lowness,’ heißt es bei Aldous Huxley.

Was den Amerikanern laut Buffon von Europäern vorgeworfen wurde, ihre *intention d’impolitesse*, scheint mir übernationales Merkmal von Vulgarität zu sein. ‘Est donc vulgaire, ici, non pas seulement l’absence de politesse, mais son absence voulue, revendiquée.’ ‘La vulgarité est une attaque frontale,’ zitiert Buffon zwei andere Autoren zum Thema.¹¹

Für Madame de Staël ist die Höflichkeit die unerläßliche Grundlage einer urbanen Zivilisation, die die Überwindung der wechselseitigen Anonymität erfordert: ‘La politesse est le lien que la société a établi entre les hommes étrangers les uns aux autres. Il y a des vertus qui vous attachent à votre famille, à vos amis, aux malheureux; mais dans tous les rapports qui n’ont point pris encore le caractère d’un devoir, l’urbanité des moeurs prépare les affections, rend la conviction plus facile, et conserve à chaque homme le rang que son mérite doit lui obtenir dans le monde.’

Der Begriff der *urbanité (des moeurs)* ist entscheidend für ihre Konzeption der *politesse*:

‘L’urbanité des moeurs peut seule adoucir les aspérités de l’esprit de parti; elle permet de se voir long-temps avant de s’aimer, de se parler long-temps avant qu’on soit d’accord; et par degrés, cette aversion profonde qu’on ressentait pour l’homme que l’on avoit jamais abordé, cette aversion s’affoiblit par les rapports de conversation, d’égards, de prévenance, qui raniment la sympathie, et font trouver enfin son semblable dans celui qu’on regardait comme son ennemi.’

Die Vulgarität als der bewusste, willentliche Angriff auf die *small morals* und die *urbanité des moeurs*, die Vulgarität als deren Missachtung und Verachtung ist die Aufkündigung des (kleinen) Gesellschaftsvertrags, der unser zivilisiertes alltägliches Zusammenleben möglich macht, und das erklärt auch unsere heftige, empörte Reaktion auf sie, unseren Abscheu: Vulgarität—das sind *the barbarians inside the gate*.

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¹¹ Buffon 2019: 20 und 25.

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- (Nicht unmittelbar zum Thema gehörend, aber gleichwohl von Interesse und Bedeutung dafür ist das gerade erschienene *Politesse et Politique* von Rouvillois, F. 2024. Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf.)

The prefix and the semantic drift of Russian verbs

Michael A. Korovkin

I

The main goal of this work is to raise an old issue and to further highlight some of the more complex aspects of what in Russian philology is known as *konkurentzia vidov glagola*.¹ Nominally, the expression may be rendered as ‘the verb-aspects competition.’ However, the entire paradigm is so complex it certainly transcends the ‘merely’ linguistic and spills over into the cultural, affecting even the definition of the issue itself and making it necessary to look for a broader rendering, such as for example ‘the concurrence of verbal aspects,’ etc. Hopefully, this examination would offer some methodological advantages both in the didactic process and in the process of gleaning, no matter how implicitly, a more profound mindset—hence the cultural gestalt—of the native Russian speaker.

‘Traditionally,’ this concurrence is analysed² through confronting—in fact, making ‘compete’—two verbal tenses: the perfect (Perf.) and the base infinitive (Inf.). Such confrontation is doubtless most useful both grammatically and from the viewpoint of the contextual analysis. However, it operates in the same area of signification designated by, and restricted to, a given couple of base Inf./Perf., without touching upon the semantic drift profoundly characteristic of the Russian verb, especially whenever the verb is perceived not merely as an isolated term but as a semantic field with rather nebulous ‘relativistic’ boundaries.

Thus, touching upon a relatively loosely regulated and yet surprisingly revealing ‘cloud of meanings,’ this work may be considered consistent with my continuous endeavour to introduce in the analysis of socio-cultural processes what I call ‘the quantum mechanics of communication and symbolic expression,’ particularly the idea of the Heisenbergian principle of indetermination.³

As far as the regulation is concerned, it is the prefix rather than the base that acquires the determinant role

not only in the governing and correlative function of the Russian verb both in the grammar and morphology,⁴ but also concerning its semantic characteristics. Conversely, both the suffix and the flexion are determinant above all for the form rather than for the meaning. In other words, the differences revealed by confronting the base Inf. and Perf. are more often than not subtle and contextual rather than terminological. For example, Shvedova⁵ presents in this regard such matching pairs as *citat’/prohitat’* (to read/to have read), *obedat’/otobedat’* (to dine/to have dined), *uchit’/vyuhit* (to learn [memorize]/to have learned) and so forth. As far as the didactic implications are concerned, such an approach has two flaws.

First. It appears to be taken for granted that the non-native speaker should be able to generate with equal facility the verbs, either in Perf. or in Inf.; and therefore, also the Inf. of the ‘new’ verb (i.e. *prochityvat’*, *otobedyvat’*, *vyuhivat’*) is not included in the match obtained from the base Inf. through the addition of a prefix (and there are a multitude of them) allowed and indeed required for further use in the formation of ‘new,’ as it were ‘derivative’ Inf. And yet the didactic experience shows that in neo-Latin and Romano-Germanic linguistic environments, given a minimum of choice even the advanced students prefer to use the base Inf. In fact, in her survey Shvedova comes to this conclusion.⁶ I would tend to attribute such preference not as much or at least not only to insufficient knowledge of morphology or grammar, as to the issue of semantics: not being sufficiently sure of the total implicit signification of the semantic field either of a certain verb or of a certain prefix, let alone their combination, foreign speakers prefer to rely on a more ‘vague,’ more ‘permissive’ base Inf. Apart from that there always remains an uncertainty as to the way of forming a particular Perf. Generally, non-native—and not only non-native—speakers perceive the entire field described by a particular verb, as Inf.®Perf., where base Inf. is very often confused with the real base and vice-versa. As we’ll see later, such perception creates many

¹ Bondarko 1969, 1971a, 1971b; Rassudova 1968, 1969.

² Maslov 2004; Lomov 2021.

³ Korovkin 1993, 2011.

⁴ See Grigorjan 1984 and Ilyina 1980, respectively.

⁵ Shvedova 1984.

⁶ Shvedova 1984: 56–57, 103–07.

problems. At this point it should suffice to state that, in a non-specialist perception, the juxtaposition of base Inf./Perf. is far from being sufficiently balanced.

Second. It is important to emphasise that the literature on the subject (including the authors cited above) does not venture far enough into the vast field of a given verb's signification caused by semantic drift. Let us consider for example one of the most commonly used—and differently from, say, the verbs of movement, relatively simple—verb *est'* ('to eat'). Table I shows the prefixes usable with this base, 'floating' in its own semantic field.

The table gives an example of a process whereby the prefix opens an almost probabilistic cloud of meanings of the base verb. It also shows that whilst most of the 'new' verbs are still more or less in orbit around the basic signification of the base verb 'to eat,' some drift so far away from their semantic nucleus as to appear to have completely left their principal semantic field.

Here, a non-native speaker, and quite a few native ones, encounters a problem, which is both complex and difficult. Firstly, one confronts the base verb. One is aware of its meaning and of its form (Inf.). One also knows that by adding to this verb a series of 'standard' prefixes, one would be able to generate a semantic field containing a number of terms—each with its own sub-field—most of which (but not all!) would make sense in Russian language. Moreover, I reiterate, the process is so flexible that while some of those 'standard' verbs may not make any sense, some neologisms deliberately or accidentally generated through applying prefixes to the base verb, may make perfect sense albeit requiring 'poetic license.' Be it as it may, one is confronted with a multitude of 'new' terms, many of which have little or nothing to do semantically the base verb. Besides, the verbs thus obtained are all in Perf., which may be seen as a paradox in itself: having selected a verb in Inf., rather straightforward semantically, and having prefixed it, the speaker has generated a number of new terms in Perf., most of which have completely new meanings—some totally unknown to the speaker who has just generated them. Since the 'natural tendency' mentioned above is Inf.→Perf., a sudden emergence of an entire group of verbs in Perf. and without an idea of their Inf., may be truly upsetting to non-native and many native speakers.

⁷ Just as an example of expressive complexity here, there is a popular Russian quip including a neologism *nedopereest'*: *nedopereest' znachit s'est' ne stol'ko, skol'ko khochesh', a tol'ko, skol'ko mozhesh'* (underovereat means to have eaten not as much as you want but only as much as you can).

Table I

Perf. (prefix+base Inf)	Meaning	'new' Inf. (prefix+base Inf.+suffix)
1. <i>Vyest'</i>	to have consumed a part inside smth, to have corrupted smth	<i>Vyedat'</i>
2. <i>Doest'</i>	to have finished up smth (eating), to have eaten all food in object	<i>Doedat'</i>
3. <i>Zaest'</i>	a) to have eaten smth as a 'chaser' of smth else (e.g., alcohol/ medicine...) b) to have oppressed, preoccupied, bored, damaged smbd c) something mechanical to have become blocked/stuck	<i>Zaedat'</i>
4. <i>Naest'</i>	a) to have accrued smth thanks to eating/'eating' (e.g. the paunch/ capital) b) + reflexive s'a: to have eaten enough (to be full)	<i>Naedat'</i>
5. <i>Ob'est'</i>	a) to have consumed/eaten/ gnawed around smth b) to have been a weight for smbd/to have ruined smbd/ smth by having consumed smbd's resources c) + reflexive s'a: to have overeaten	<i>Ob'edat'</i>
6. <i>Ot'est'</i>	a) to have eaten up a part of smth b) + reflexive s'a: to have fattened up/restored oneself, eating	<i>Ob'edat'</i>
7. <i>Poest'</i>	a) to have eaten smth (not all of it) b) to have been involved in the process of eating for a certain period of time	<i>Poedat'</i>
8. <i>S'est'</i>	to have eaten smth (completely)	<i>S'edat'</i>
9. <i>Pod'est'</i>	a) see 2: to have finished eating smth (up to the last crumb) c) to have 'gotten' sabotaged/ subverted smbd—usually with a caustic or sarcastic observation	<i>Pod'edat'</i>
10. <i>Pereest'</i>	a) to have eaten too much ⁷ b) to have eaten more than someone else c) to have consumed/corroded smth from side to side	<i>Pereedat'</i>
11. <i>Proest'</i>	a) to have completely consumed/ spent a resource (e.g. money) b) to have perforated smth through by gnawing on/corroding it (e.g. acid/moth respectively)	<i>Proedat'</i>
12. <i>Raz'est'</i>	a) + reflexive s'a: to have fattened oneself up b) to have corroded smth (e.g. with acid, etc.)	<i>Raz'edat'</i>
13. <i>Uest'</i>	to have subverted/embarrassed smbd (verbally or in writing)	<i>Uedat'</i>

At this point we are back to the issue of the confusion between what I have referred to as ‘the base verb’ and the true base. To wit, as in the case of the base verb *est*’, the true base is *edat*’. One must know it in order to form the Inf. of the ‘new’ Perf. And yet it derives from an archaic latinogenic *ed*’ and does not represent an independent term in modern Russian. We must therefore consider not the patently unbalanced couple *est*’...↔...[*vyest*’ / *doest*’ / *zaest*’ / *naest*’(s’a) / *ob’est*’(s’a) / *ot’est*’(s’a) / *poest*’ / *s’est*’ / *pod’est*’ / *pereest*’ / *proest*’ / *raz’est*’(s’a) / *uest*’] but a symmetrical *trio*, with the base placed, as it were, in the middle:

Perf.

[*vyest*’ / *doest*’ / *zaest*’ / *naest*’(s’a) / *ob’est*’(s’a) / *ot’est*’(s’a) / *poest*’ / *s’est*’ / *pod’est*’ / *pereest*’ / *proest*’ / *raz’est*’(s’a) / *uest*’]

Base verb EST’ / true base ED+at’

The ‘new’ Inf.

[*vyedat*’ / *doedat*’ / *zaedat*’ / *naedat*’(s’a) / *ob’edat*’(s’a) / *ot’edat*’(s’a) / *poedat*’ / *s’edat*’ / *pod’edat*’ / *pereedat*’ / *proedat*’ / *raz’edat*’(s’a) / *uedat*’]

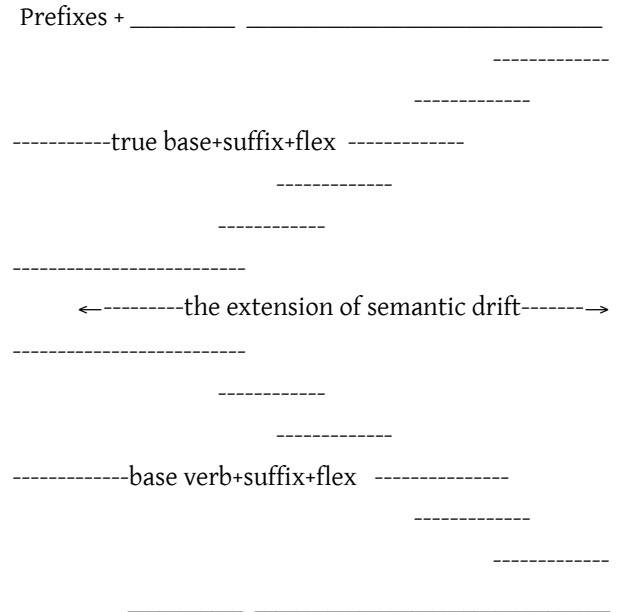
This way, we have a panorama of the verb’s entire semantic field with a cloud of meanings attached to each individual prefixal form.

II

This brief elucidation brings us to at least two conclusions, both theoretical and methodological.

First. Dealing merely with the pair Base Inf./Perf. does not seem to be methodologically fruitful, because the morphogrammatic etymology of such a pair often remains relatively obscure in terms of the range of its potential meanings. It appears much more methodologically productive to acquire a deeper familiarity with the ‘nucleus,’ i.e., with both the base verb and the true base should the latter be different from the former. Subsequently, it would be possible to freely experience the process of word-forming with both by prefixing and suffixing them at will and thus generating two parallel semantic sub-fields that would differ from each other practically only in terms of their tense:

Prefixal series



Such an approach is recognizably different from the simple comparison of isolated base Inf. and Perf., that in a verbal couple often may appear to have a rather tenuous connection. Apart from that, the approach indicated above allows one to observe the entire semantic field of any given verb, thus providing an opportunity to grasp its significance on a much more profound and implicit level.

Second. The expression ‘word-forming properties of prefixal terms’ used by many authors⁸ appears to be rather unfortunate at least as far as the semantic aspect of the paradigm is concerned. It may be claimed with a reasonable degree of reliability that most Russian verbs are or may be rendered as prefixal, thus making the term itself somewhat redundant. As for the generative (i.e., word-forming or better still derivational) qualities of those verbs, they are due not to the verbal nucleus per se, but almost entirely to the affixes, especially to the prefix—to a large measure morphologically and almost entirely semantically. Moreover, I hope to have been able to show that prefix is responsible for the semantic drift within the signification field to such an extent that it may be claimed to be the semantic space of a given verbal family. Therefore, it appears more productive to accentuate further studies of the generative properties of verbal **prefixes** rather than of prefixal **verbs** per se.

⁸ E.g., Grigorjan 1984, Sova 1970.

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Microcosms, museums and the miniature: What might a 'World Art' perspective be?

John Mack

Preamble

I first met John in, I think, 1978 when he came to the Museum of Mankind (then a separate part of the British Museum) where I worked. He asked if I would be interested in developing and teaching a term-long undergraduate module on African art at the University of East Anglia. A secondment one day a week was arranged, a course of lectures and seminars designed and delivered in the Sainsbury Centre which was in the final stages of completion. Apart from a similar offering at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, it was the only such course in the UK. Subsequently John invited me onto the board of *Art History* of which he was then the editor. As a social anthropologist and curator, I was aware that something innovative was happening in the world of art history and John was in the vanguard of the thinking behind it.

Fast forward to 2004 and Sandy Heslop phones to ask if I would consider being on the appointments board for a newly created Professorship in World Art Studies in the School, now renamed to highlight that title. It is hard not to see John's major influence in these developments. I was still working at the British Museum. I said 'no' to the appointments board. But only so I could myself apply and, if successful, join a project come – in my eyes – to fruition during the intervening decades.

The text printed here is an adapted version of the speaking notes of my inaugural lecture given in March 2006. It was followed by a very agreeable and memorable dinner for many friends and colleagues which John and Elisabeth hosted at their house in Unthank Road, Norwich. I am grateful to them both for their intellectual stimulation and hospitality, then and since. The lecture has not been published before, though it does rehearse some themes which informed a subsequent book *The Art of Small Things* (2007). However, that book – though an example of what a World Art perspective might be – does not explore the ramifications of the project itself. The lecture incorporates my own enthusiasm for, and particular

take on, a project which – for me – is associated with John and his original inspiration going back well over 40 years.

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I remember, when I was first appointed to the Chair here, mentioning it to a close colleague in my former institution. His response was 'Professor of World Art Studies: is that all?' In fact, we had already worked together in the imposingly titled Museum of Mankind. So, I am not unfamiliar with the role of the ill-equipped in pursuit of the unachievable. But the Chair here had, of course, been newly created where Museums of Mankind have been around in one guise or another since the first Museums für Völkerkunde were created in the mid-19th century, and arguably something like it has been around since the first so-called universal museums opened a century earlier than that.

But if the School and the Professorship are of relatively recent introduction, the question of a world art perspective is nonetheless one with a certain pedigree – or perhaps since we are in a School which addresses the fields of both art and museology, it is a question with a certain 'patination.' There is an argument – and perhaps a danger – that World Art Studies can readily become an eclectic, indulgent activity which ignores the local context of any particular artistic tradition in favour of bold but potentially banal narrative. It threatens to make contingent what is central to art historical analysis, namely history itself, and it subverts ethnographic precision and detail in search of wider anthropological theory. And in endorsing inter-disciplinarity – as it implicitly does – it ends up as neither fish nor fowl. We risk forfeiting disciplinary rigour and replacing it with dilettantism. To find an appropriate level at which different artistic and cultural phenomena can be compared we ascend to a level of generalisation that verges on the simplistic. To see enough of the landscape to take in its overall shape and characteristic features we have to take a ride way up into the blue skies where we lose contact with what people actually do and how they live their lives. So,

is World Art a waste of time? Well, having accepted a chair in it – within a School named after it – it would be not just ungrateful, but distinctly disingenuous of me to suggest it is ultimately a pointless exercise. And I will have two hooks on its utility to explore this evening, one methodological and the second, the source of the more tentative language of my subtitle, is the possible implications for theory – which I will come to at the end.

So, in this lecture I want to explore what World Art is about – or perhaps, in the less assertive style of my subtitle, what it ‘might’ be about, with the implication that this is by no means entirely clear. Indeed, the mission of World Art may not be about establishing clarity: it may be more about raising new questions than answering old ones. And I will come on to tackle the issue through a concrete example – the idea of microcosms (in which I include museums) and the miniature.

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A worldwide perspective is actually a fashionable enough concept in some quarters – after all, there are Museums of World Cultures popping up all over the place from Gothenberg to, most recently, Liverpool. But none the less we have to acknowledge that there are very few, if any, positions with this World Art or World Cultures brief anywhere else in the university system in the UK, or internationally – though I understand Leiden in Holland also has such a post. Indeed, arguably the most consistent global perspective on this issue is the widely expressed view that ‘world’ in relation to ‘art’ is a problem. It is a problem of vocabulary with an underlying ideological implication – world music largely means non-western music, or western music which has been most eclectic in its references and influences. Wikipedia does include Irish pub songs, but it certainly doesn’t stretch to opera: so, it isn’t about all music. World cinema is cinema in a foreign tongue – cinema that emanates from studios beyond Hollywood or Shepperton. World cuisine is often cooking which involves exotic spices. But World Art is supposed to take account of what happened or is happening in Papua New Guinea or the forests of the Congo as much as the art practice of the Classical world, or Renaissance Italy. Even so, there is still a tendency to speak – in the refined world of art studies – of Western and non-Western art, making ‘the west’ the point of departure and the standard of comparative thinking.

It’s also a problem of cultural perception. ‘Art’ itself is a notoriously slippery concept – one person’s art object

is another person’s ritual mechanism is a third person’s junk. As one example, Jeff Koon’s large reflective sculptures depicting everyday objects explore these kinds of category shift, by taking the ephemeral and the kitsch and rendering them in durable steel images. Taking this wider, we can see that what art ‘is,’ in a cross-cultural context, is frankly insoluble, and we might as well say so straightaway. The aesthetic approach which predominates in the European tradition is inapplicable in many – even, arguably, most – cultures elsewhere. And clearly, even if we are able to ‘appreciate’ objects created in other places and other times when they are all put together in a museum setting, this is not to identify ‘art’ itself as a universal phenomenon, even if the practice of placing objects out of context in glass cases for public viewing has become a more or less universal phenomenon.

And the idea of World Art is also an academic problem. We are encouraged to think in an interdisciplinary context, not least by the various Research Boards. In the case of world art, we are potentially looking at a major series of intersections between art studies, history, archaeology, ethnography, anthropology, philosophy, cultural studies, geography and perhaps others. Yet most universities retain the presiding disciplines as their structuring device – even if grouped together in faculties of one sort or another; in UEA we are rather unique in having a School which is a bit more promiscuous – well: promiscuous at least in its intellectual agendas. For the School of World Art and Museology has recruited anthropologists and archaeologists in addition to art and architectural historians. However, this is not the general state of affairs: some of the most insightful of recent contributions in the field nonetheless retain a clear and singular disciplinary focus. James Elkins’ *Stories of Art* (2002) or Hans Belting’s *Art History after Modernism* (2003) are both concerned to find a continuing role for art history in any globalised perspective, which they characterise as otherwise under threat. Many of the instances and examples we might want to bring together will have no points of chronological intersection, and even if they do coincide in point of time, they may be happening in different parts of the world with no substantive contact. We can try and mollify the situation by talking of art ‘histories’ instead of art history, but that only forestalls the underlying reality that we lack a coherent structure for thinking about these issues. In the end the bold move might be to let the bath drain and see what is left in the sieve. Alfred Gell set out to do something like that jettisoning chronology and the idea of the art object in writing his influential, posthumously published

book *Art and Agency: an Anthropological theory* (1998); yet, as with the art historians, his declared aim was to bolster a disciplinary perspective: the credentials of an anthropological approach to art. Gell was not seeking to forgo his discipline – though, of course, anthropology has a more consistent pedigree in searching for a cross-cultural perspective.

And I might just point out that the questions we are looking at here are also matters with a wider public dimension. In the light of the events in New York on 9/11 and its subsequent international outcome, or of July 2005 in London, and the civil disorders in Holland and France, there are also political dimensions to these issues. Many countries have been set on a trajectory that seemed to be leading towards realising the ambition of integrated multi-cultural societies. Yet the politics oscillate. The ambition in the UK has sometimes seemed to be to celebrate and engender tolerance for different traditions, sometimes to produce a common hybrid culture. Cross-cultural understanding can either produce meat or soup, something which acknowledges distinctiveness, or something which deliberately seeks to merge traditions and heritage.

Two weeks ago Professor Lisa Jardine lectured here on the place of museums in the national life and argued for an enlarged recognition of their role. Well, I am sure few of us would disagree; but I would add – and I would be by no means alone in this – that helping get issues of cross-cultural perception on track is a major contribution which museums can achieve, to be places not just of display, which was almost entirely her focus, but – much more dynamically – of performance, of creative interactions, of seeing the juxta-positioning of objects not as a passive act of curation but as an opportunity to excite engaged reflection. As an example, the so-called *Throne of Weapons* which the British Museum toured to different venues in the UK using it as the focus of debate. It is the work of the artist Kester who has used decommissioned weapons from the Mozambican war to create a functional object, a modern equivalent of swords into ploughshares. As he explained the barrels of the guns point harmlessly into the ground, whilst the rifle butts at the top of the throne suggest both a face and church architecture. It travelled to museums, but was also shown in the Palace of Westminster, even in Pentonville prison. In south London it stimulated an electrifying public debate around the subject of local gun crime; in Belfast the subject was peace and reconciliation. That is just one object – one object created in Africa which has been used to explore critical social problems in Britain. Few museum displays would claim to achieve that degree of

penetration of local issues. But, even so, there are clearly wider implications to be explored about the very act of bringing objects from different cultures together in the same space – a kind of parallel within the gallery to the cosmopolitan character of the contemporary nation state. And the standing of World Art studies – since it implies bringing different arenas of art practice into some kind of conjunction, as museums do by bringing objects together in cases – is potentially in this domain also: complementary to the treatment of problems of social and cultural diversity.

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So, if there is here a mix of problems and of opportunities, what could – indeed what should – something called World Art Studies be about? Let me start from a position which might broadly be characterised as: ‘World Art Studies is good for you.’ Artists have long found inspiration in exploring works from other cultures, most notably in Paris in the early decades of the century. In the views of some exploration can shade into exploitation. However, the practice of exposing the familiar to the exigencies of the unfamiliar is often instructive in itself. It’s what I have called, in the title of a postgraduate course we teach, the principle of ‘Adjacency.’ That course is intended precisely to develop comparative antennae. We may be, or want to become, classicists or medievalists, or maybe specialists in Polynesia or Peru: there is no obligation to become a generalist, to eschew precise scholarship in favour of wider speculation. But in putting together different examples round an apparently common theme, we come to question material of which we felt certain, and question inevitably the viability of the theme we had identified in the first place. Likewise, art historians debate these points alongside anthropologists and others. There is also an adjacency of discipline. Of course, we might argue that Picasso and others, like other European artists before and since, took the art of Africa and the Pacific as they found it. They weren’t looking to ransack the existing ethnographies and travellers’ accounts to find out what the makers of such objects had in mind; and, with the notable exception of Paul Gauguin, they largely didn’t go there for themselves.

The argument I would make is that Adjacency, conceived as a methodological device, is a radical perspective. Jean Jacques Rousseau’s famous 18th-century dictum invites us to see what is different before we try and understand what is in common. Of course, difference and similarity are not absolute conditions but questions of scale and interpretation. In language small slips can produce complete reversals of meaning. When I moved

to UEA I became familiar with the university guest rooms and the immensely diverse range of visitors who nightly might be your neighbours. Some are here to learn English. I recall meeting one such outside early one morning puzzling over the furry animals rushing about all over the campus: 'Ah' he said, 'is that rare or is it a habit.'

And such things also work visually. My own research in Madagascar reveals one minor example. Southern Madagascar is an arid area of baobab trees, tombs the size of battle ships, and cattle keepers. Rather than fields, the animals are kept in stock pens surrounded by prickly succulents. In some areas, though, spiny creepers run along the ground so that people who live in such regions have adopted the practice of shuffling along to avoid putting their feet directly down on the prickles and can thus be instantly identified even at a distance despite being otherwise indistinguishable from other pastoralists. This might not matter in many circumstances. But, where there are instances of cattle-raiding happening, then to be able to identify potential foes by these minor aspects of deportment could be highly significant. Shuffling is an indicator of identity. Whether a difference is significant or not – indeed whether it is a difference at all – is a matter of context.

The Surrealist *Map of the World* was first published in a Belgian magazine in 1929. It recasts the familiar projections of Mercator in demographic terms with those places with small or virtually no populations rendered on significantly larger scale than those which are densely inhabited. Alaska and, by implication, its inhabitants assume a larger part of the picture than we are used to. Easter Island, Île de Pâques, looms large off the coast of South America. Paris has been relocated in Germany. And, as someone brought up in Ireland, the relative dispositions of size of the British Isles accords well with my understanding of things when I was at school. The map is a reminder that to see the world from other points of view reconfigures understanding. It is as if the kaleidoscope has swivelled a few frames sufficient to dislodge geographical certainties and provide a different view. The chemist-turned-philosopher Michael Polanyi wrote persuasively about the priority of doubt in the formulation of methodology (1958). A World Art perspective potentially achieves this: it allows us to problematise what seemed secure, to make the familiar strange.

At a recent meeting on universal museums, a colleague asserted that the Money gallery in the British Museum was the only truly universal gallery in a UK museum. But for me that misses the point completely, for it

assumes that money itself is always and everywhere the same thing, that it is always a stable and consistent category, and that what is being exchanged can always be conceived in monetary or materialist terms. It does not end up by challenging the very category which is its subject. In short, conceived as a comparative discipline, a World Art approach is a way of raising new and fundamental questions. It is not perhaps a theory – but it is a method with the potential to generate theory.

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So, let me move to a concrete example of my own to see what questions can be asked of a particular body of cross-cultural material. The topic of the miniature and of small things more generally is, despite its subject, a vast one. My purpose is only to use it as a means to think through some of the parameters of a world art perspective, not to explore what is the subject of a much larger project. I won't have time to talk about Indian and Persian miniatures, Japanese *netsuke*, Javiro shrunken heads, Asante goldweights or many other of the categories of objects that might otherwise fall within the topic. Firstly, then, the language used of the world of small is almost always such as to set miniature things apart, to emphasise their distinctiveness as a phenomenon. The anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss remarked in an apparent aside that 'all miniatures seem to have an intrinsic aesthetic quality.'¹ He had in mind the miniature painting of Elisabeth of Austria by François Clouet, and in particular the lace – the portrayal of lace looms large in discussion of 17th- and 18th-century miniature painting. In Western aesthetic vocabulary the terms for smallness often endorse these perceptions. It is hard to imagine an English word like 'exquisite' being used of the gigantic. Small is, by convention, understood to be 'beautifully formed.' Even Classical tastes with their propensity for the colossal concur. Although Aristotle regarded large proportions as essential to express greatness, he conceded that smallness in people brought with it qualities of proportion and elegance. Relatives relating to newly born babies find the experience of having their immense sausage-like fingers gripped by minute hands riveting. In literature, as much as in lived experience, the hand is in fact often at once the measure and the container of the miniature. Things that 'would fit in the palm of your hands' are, by definition, small. In the case of the child's grasp, it is surely not just some unworthy instinct of dominance that is at work – a physical expression of dependency. More charitably, it is also a perception that differentials of scale have what

¹ Lévi-Strauss 1966: 23.

– for the minute – we might call an ‘aesthetic’ aspect. As Gulliver observes to the giant king of Brobdingnag, the smaller ‘animals, bees and ants had the reputation of more industry, art and sagacity, than many of the larger kinds.’² Edmund Burke in his treatise *On the Sublime and Beautiful* notes that objects of affection are very often spoken of in the diminutive in many languages – such as by the use of the participle ‘-ling’ in English, as in ‘darling.’ He extends the observation into the animal kingdom: ‘In the animal creation, out of our own species, it is the small we are inclined to be fond of; little birds, and some of the smaller kind of beasts. A great beautiful thing is a manner of expression scarcely ever used; but that of a great ugly thing, is very common.’³ The diminutive, then, is in many languages the suffix – or indeed the prefix – of choice for describing children and pets, and a resource in the vocabulary of the patronising remark.

And, if we think not just of small objects, but of small worlds of one kind or another, we find a related vocabulary in operation. Cabinets of Curiosity and the early museums that developed out of them were described at the time as contained microcosmic worlds in their own right. Jean de Renou talked of a museum’s holdings of natural history as a ‘Magazine of the Globe’s Treasures a Store-house of Nature’s Arcana.’ The Harveian Museum set up in 1654 for the College of Physicians was dubbed “‘Solomon’s House’ in reality.’ However, of all the images invoked in such descriptions, the image of the vessel of redemption, and of the creators of such diverse collections as later-day Noahs, is the one which most frequently recurs in contemporaneous accounts of early museums. The most notable, of course, was the collection which the Tradescant family – naturalists, travellers and royal gardeners – brought together. This had been placed on public display at the Tradescant house in Lambeth in what was affectionately dubbed ‘The Ark.’ The Museum Tradescantium was a place where, as one 17th-century visitor reported, ‘a Man might in one day behold collected into one place more Curiosities than he should see if he spent all his life in Travell.’ It was in the words of the time ‘A world of wonders in one closet shut;’ it was ‘as Homer’s Iliad in a nut.’ At the British Museum Neil MacGregor has taken to talking of the Museum as a ‘world under one roof.’

The objects contained and clustered within them, as many of you will be aware, ran from unicorn horns to petrified walnuts to amber with insects entombed within. And arguably, their very oddity was precisely

their purpose. The common and the mundane excite no curiosity: they have no meaning beyond themselves; they are not evidential of the wider intentions of God and of man. The peculiar, by contrast, bears a semantic content which is much greater than itself, a hidden meaning awaiting discovery. As fragmentary archaeological remains are the material trace from which whole cultural universes in antiquity are constructed, so the cabinet with its storehouse of curiosities is itself a world in microcosm. And, as such the language used of them is remarkably uniform, indeed almost deadeningly uninventive in its repetition: we read constantly of a response of awe and wonder – and of course of ‘curiosity’ itself, the intellectual passion that drove Enlightenment philosophy and provided the intellectual background for the great voyages of exploration of the period. We are clearly in the world of what Gell, and others subsequently, have described as one of ‘enchantment.’

So – connecting this up – there is almost a mathematical equation to be discovered which links the degree of reduction in scale to the sense of artistic achievement: the smaller, the more efficacious. To represent ordinary things on an ever-reducing scale is, arguably, to render them more intriguing in visual and conceptual terms. So, the proposition to be discussed is that visual and cultural efficacy is enhanced by processes of miniaturisation. I have not said ‘beautiful’ – that ‘small is beautiful’ in Ernst Schumacher’s words – because even though to this point I am speaking of western examples, that vocabulary may prove to be too restrictively western. The question that arises is wider: how do small things come to be conceived as aesthetically charged, magically empowered, amuletic, prophylactic, divinatory, obsessive, amatory and so forth? How, in sum, do they achieve efficacy?

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Gell has encouraged us to look to what he called ‘agency,’ to substitute the locus of creation and response, that is ‘people’ – or what he calls social agents – for the ‘art object’ itself. Let us look then at the artist or the creator of the miniature. I have written elsewhere about some sculptures created by a shadowy artist called Fesira who was working amongst the Tanosy people in Madagascar in the 1930s creating funerary sculpture.⁴ I say ‘shadowy’ only because we don’t have any documentation about his life, other than what is recorded from older people living there whom I was speaking to 50 years later in the 1980s.

² Swift 2003: 119.

³ Burke 1826: 237.

⁴ Mack 1986: 90–92.

When he received commissions Fesira would move into the village of the deceased and listen to recollections about the deceased, who of course he may never have met or known personally. He would then carve what in effect would be a kind of obituary – the owner of the first motor car in the area, a colonial employee, the first catechist in a family or a group of villagers drowned in a canoeing accident. Although of reduced scale these are not true miniatures, of course, but my focus is on the process of their creation in a part of the world where representational carving is not common. The consistent local account of Fesira's working methods is that he carved in secret, at night and naked. The work was only seen when it had been completed.

Compare that with the working practice that the most prominent of Elizabethan miniaturists, Nicholas Hilliard, recommends in his *Treatise of Limning*, written sometime between 1597 and 1603. 'Limning' comes from 'illumination' and refers to one source of the practice of producing small private, personal portraits – the illuminated manuscript: which, like the miniature, demands an intensity and accuracy of execution. The limnist should in Hilliard's words 'sleep not much, watch not much, eat not much, sit not long, use not violent exercise in sports' – only a little dancing, and perhaps the odd game of bowls. 'Discreet talk or reading, quiet mirth or music, offendeth not, but shorteneth the time and quickeneth the spirit, both in the drawer and he which is drawn.' And, at all costs, the limner must 'avoid anger, shut out questioners or busy fingers.'

Those disciplines having been observed, the physical circumstances in which the limning is produced are no less exacting. Firstly, as to the medium to be used, Hilliard recommends vellum. But not just any old vellum. It must be 'virgin parchment, such as never bore hair, but young things found in the dam's belly.' It must be 'most finely dressed, as smooth as any satin, and pasted, with starch well strained, on pasteboard well burnished, that it may be pure, very smooth and white.' The pigments to be used might be got from the apothecary but needed to be stored in a small box of ivory or of shell. It was mixed with water and gum arabic, but the water should be 'distilled from the water of some clear spring, or from black cherries, which is the cleanest that ever I could find and keepeth longest sweet and clear.' The palette should be mother of pearl; the brush, the hairs from a squirrel's tail. The studio should face north or east to exclude direct sunlight. Finally, the limner himself must prepare for his work meticulously. Hilliard suggests he should preferably wear the finest silk 'such as sheddeth least dust or

hairs.' He must take the greatest care never to touch his work with his fingers, nor even to breathe on it in cold weather.

There are also those, of course, who work at levels of visibility much reduced from this. If it is hard to imagine a gifted miniaturist with dandruff or with dirt under the fingernails, how much more is this required of microminiaturists. Modern practitioners are rare. However, a contemporary British artist, Willard Wigan, has exhibited such technical triumphs as the creation of an image of the Statue of Liberty in the eye of a needle, a work which has been exhibited inside its gigantic subject for the benefit of visitors, and the successful representation of a herd of elephants on a pinhead. He uses diamond tipped tools to affect such micro-sculpture which he paints with, amongst other things, eyelashes. In discussing the technical requirements of working at such a scale, he has pointed to two features: one is patience, an ability to work more calmly and slowly than an artist working on a grander scale. There is simply not enough base material to rapidly prepare the intended work in rough, as a sculptor would in blocking out a larger work in less fragile materials and circumstances. The other observation, again, concerns the physical discipline required. Wigan has talked of the need to control the nervous system and to work directly on the materials being formed in the middle of a heartbeat. However expressed – whether in terms of the control of breathing or of the activity of the nervous system – the ability to perform concentrated physical acts in the execution of supremely precise incisions has a whole bodily context which is exactly analogous to the skills described as requisite to the surgeon.

Microminiatures are not creations forged in a ferment of artistic inspiration; they are, rather, intense acts of precision, produced against this almost fetishistic backdrop of order and tidiness. One slip of the carving instrument, a lapse of concentration, and the whole work is destroyed. For these reasons it is often asserted that it requires a more disciplined approach to conception and a great deal more skill in execution to work in smaller scales. Miniatures and microminiatures are the product of sustained sacrificing effort produced in almost monastic circumstances.

Hilliard talked of the art of limning as producing jewel-like results, something so enriched that it seemed to be the 'work of God not of man.' So, the lustre and luminosity of the miniature seemed divinely inspired. The Elizabethan miniaturist was making and doing things which until then seemed beyond human capacity to create. Gell makes a similar point about

his response to looking at Vermeer's *The Lacemaker*. 'I must,' he writes, 'accept that Vermeer's painting is part of "my" world – for here it is physically before me – while at the same time it cannot belong to this world through my experience of being an agent within it, and I cannot achieve the necessary congruence between my experience of agency and the agency (Vermeer's) which originated the painting.'⁵

So, this approach to the experience of objects leads us to fundamentally revise the phrase 'small is beautiful' with its passive, descriptive air; we need to spell out its more dynamic implications. In exploring the world of small I have before my own eyes evidence of intricacy executed at the limits of visibility; it hardly seems possible that these are created things. Miniatures are especially potent examples for they make me aware that I live in a world which, if I had to create these aspects of it for myself, would defeat me. It is a wondrous place. I can possess aspects of it – I can wear a micromosaic – a miniature of Pliny's mosaic doves, to give one example, as a finger ring. But I am not in control of it; I live in a world which has been created 'for' me, but not 'by' me. In that sense I experience the world of small as a place at the edge; it is also potentially an unsafe place. There are things within it which are thrilling to contemplate, but part of the thrill is the awareness that, despite its reduced scale, it possesses dimensions which escape me.

So, we can make some progress in describing the fascination, the obsessiveness which is part of the world of small – and we can do so without subjecting it to an exclusively aesthetic vocabulary.

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A second area to consider is the agency that is the viewer. There is, first of all, the obvious issue of the intimacy of viewing. One consistent theme in the world of small things is that they are experienced in a very personal way. Clearly this is at root a matter of scale itself. Only one set of eyes can focus on the miniature at any one time. People can't crowd round to look these tiny pictures. And so there is something of the peep show about it. Charles Baudelaire talked in another context of 'greedy eyes (...) glued to the peephole of the stereoscope, as though they were skylights of the infinite.' There is about this description something of the sense of a teasing, illicit pleasure. The experience of focussing on the miniature detaches the viewer from the awareness of surrounding space and gives that

feeling of a privileged and personalised perspective on a world which is paradoxically expanded to take up the whole of the visual field. The miniature is a visual world which, for the viewer, contains no redundancy.

And from this derives much of what might seem to us the frankly juvenile amatory practice of the Elizabethan court described by, for example, the two Sirs Roy Strong (1983) and John Pope-Hennessy (1949). The miniature images were part of the transactions of the game of courtly dalliance and as such had many and complex layers of allusion. And in that context the Elizabethan miniature also contains its measure of secret references. The poses are often allegorical: a hand placed suggestively against the heart or raised in enigmatic gesture, hair tousled, clothes slightly ruffled. The colours used, the choice of garment in which to be portrayed, the inscriptions sometimes added, or the choice of other jewellery and costume accessories to be portrayed, may all have had personal meanings for the sitter and for any recipient of the miniature on whom it might be benefacted.

How different all this is from the experience of the colossal. The massive is overtly declaratory, made for display in public contexts, confected to impress, and often to repress. It is impossible to relate to the colossal in an individual way: in the context of the rise of fascism in Europe, the commission of massive sculpture to be displayed in architectural contexts – in relation to buildings which were themselves of massive conception – effectively reduces the individual to mere instrumentality. It is only as one in a massed grouping of humanity that the object and its setting attain a scale of mutual dimension, such as the displays of disciplined human behaviour on the Zeppelin fields and at other Nazi demonstrations. Yet this is hardly a human scale, let alone an appeal to the individual. Enlarged representation challenges the function of art as an elevating medium. Rather art or architecture emerges as the servant of social control. The point is made effectively by the architect Colin St John Wilson who noted that when we approach a monumental building across open space, we are compelled to stand off to take it all in – and, he says, 'in that intuitive act of deference, we are made to feel vulnerable.'

So, how did the Elizabethan court use the miniature? In 1564, as Mary Queen of Scots' envoy was admitted to the inner sanctum where he saw within the royal cabinet 'divers little pictures wrapt within paper, and their names written with her own hand upon the papers.' Another visitor admitted to the royal bedchamber of Elizabeth I talks of 'a little chest ornamented all over

⁵ Gell 1998: 69

with pearls, in which the Queen keeps her bracelets, ear-rings and other things of especial value.' Many were also kept in grand bejewelled boxes. Miniature portraits were to be contemplated; and they were, of course, worn as well. The images might be of the sovereign herself (or later himself), or of a suitor. They might be hung or pinned to clothing. A favourite device was the so-called 'picture-box,' a kind of locket containing a miniature portrait, and which itself needed to be opened for the contents to be viewed. Thus set in its box or its jewelled surround, the limning was meant to be viewed 'in hand near unto the eye' as the greatest of Elizabethan miniaturists, Nicholas Hilliard put it. And we have descriptions of ladies of the court in intense contemplation of such miniature images.

So, apart from the Elizabethan miniature as an amatory gift of the court – which is as far as the analysis conventionally goes – we have a number of other leads that are emerging: about secrecy, about looking and about sightedness, about intimacy including issues about proximity to the body. And if we widen discussion, these are qualities that emerge in different ways in the uses of the miniature more generally.

Of course, not all secret things have to be small to be hidden, just as not all small things are secret and private; but the analysis of miniature objects and of secrecy converge round questions of what can be seen, by whom, and in what circumstances. An ability to see small things, hidden things, can indicate esoteric insight, an ability to visualise in the mind's eye other-worldly influence; but it may also manifest itself in the form of what is conceived as exceptional sightedness, literally. And the issue is frequently articulated around the question of 'seeing' or 'not seeing.' Those practised in the arts of magic are sometimes said to have special 'eyes.' They are able to see into blackness and there locate the essence of things. Diviners are talked of as having a 'third eye' which enables them to look into the domain of spirits and ancestors.

In Central Africa the Kongo peoples practice a form of medicine, magic, witchcraft and oath-taking in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and in which an emphasis on the eyes is characteristic. The operators of these objects (*nganga*) are often pictured with white lines round their eyes. The tools of their trade are figures known generically as *minkisi* (sing. *nkisi*) which are empowered by the addition of medicines, and which are encrusted with the nails and blades by which their powers are activated. They also have whitened eyes, sometimes painted, sometimes accented with inserted glass or ceramics. Many *nkisi* are also furnished with

mirrors usually set into the belly of the object. They act as a kind of divinatory device and are likewise thought of as eyes – 'figurines have mirrors on them' says one indigenous commentator, 'in order to tell who is a witch; they are eyes for seeing.' The *nganga* and the *nkisi* share the facility to see the otherwise unseen, the hidden sources of illness and evil doing. The emphasis on the eyes – 'the eyes of understanding' as they have been called⁶ – establishes that they can see things, both physically and intellectually, that ordinary people cannot. Ordinary people are, by comparison, considered 'empty.'

The confrontation with the miniature – these intense acts of looking, of contemplation of which the Elizabethans speak – replicate in the viewer the same intensity and concentration which is characteristic of the creation of the miniature in the first place. In Kongo terms the viewer is no longer an ordinary empty person.

What then on the image itself? If the miniature possesses dimensions that escape me then it clearly possesses qualities that I cannot be sure of. Enchantment has a double sense – enchantment as fascination and enchantment as magical entrapment. One can slip into the other. The charming can become the charm, the talisman. Furthermore, the reduction in scale is not a reduction in significance. In fact, it can imply the very opposite, an exaggeration in content. A boiled down version can in some conceptions – and not merely that of western chemists – be seen as a reduction to essence. Boiling down has two potential results: one is the removal of impurity, so that it ends up free of corrupted material, the removal of visual redundancy as I suggested earlier; the other is a concentration of active substances. Reduction can be purification and it can be intensification. The ephemeral is departed; the true, powerful centre remains. Less is more.

We can think of medieval relics in these terms. And we can also think of many forms of magical device. Miniature masks are carved for particular contexts in the Ivory Coast in West Africa. Full size masks perform in a number of different public contexts: they adjudicate in disputes, they collect debts, they protect against clandestine activity, they police public events and so forth. The miniature mask, by contrast, possesses a similar range of versatility, but it is directed towards personal ends rather than public means. In reduced form it becomes a privately owned thing: and as secret protective devices the powers of miniature

⁶ MacGaffey 1993.

masks are directed and intimate. Thus, they may be taken on journeys or carried if some hazardous venture is intended; the tiniest of masks may be hung in a small concealing bag on a baby's body to protect it from adversity; and when women move to their husband's compound, although they may not otherwise have contact with masks, they may take a small mask with them which, like a trousseau, will be kept amongst her most private possessions.

Well perhaps I have said enough to show that World Art Studies has about it this double inflection. On the one hand it has practical utility: it may raise new questions and suggest new ways of configuring what we thought we knew already. On the other it invites us to see our own preoccupations as small things: as routes into larger narratives. Clearly the most important thing about the miniature is not going to be its definition – what is or is not a miniature is of lesser importance; more to the point we have come to think of creating, viewing and using as a complex of responses derived from an engagement with questions of scale and scaled worlds. We have moved from thinking about categories of things, to reflecting on categories of experience, which for me is the shift that lies at the heart of the World Art approach.

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That might be enough; nonetheless is it, maybe, somewhat lazy to stop there? We live in an era when there is increasing focus on the ever more local. The passion for grand narrative which informed so many of the ground-breaking enterprises that led to the creation of Denis Diderot's and Chambers's *Encyclopaediae*, the spirit that lay behind the 17th and 18th century cabinets and ultimately universal museums has had its day. Its fate is linked to that of the veracity of World Art as a viable subject of study. Truth, it now seems to some, resides in experience of the village, or of the urban street. It will no longer do to talk of what the British think, or the Japanese think. What's the view of the world in Great Snoring, Norfolk – what's the noise in Little Snoring nearby? And in the process, the 18th century obsession with laying out the parameters of human nature as a whole has been forfeited.

In a stimulating recent essay the social anthropologist, Maurice Bloch has reflected trenchantly: 'On the one hand when the question "is there a common human nature?" is asked, most people, although they will consider it rather silly, will answer without hesitation in the affirmative, but, on the other hand, anthropologists will want to answer no, but won't dare to, so they will

want to go into hiding.⁷ And they won't dare to, of course, because if the answer was unequivocally 'no' – there is no common human nature – what then would be the point of anthropology? Where, Bloch has asked, did anthropology go? Not, you'll notice, 'where did it go wrong,' just 'where did it go?' Into an understandable but unhelpful hibernation, it seems, a retreat from the bigger picture. The large questions, which are still of abiding public interest, are being answered by others: well-known and widely read Oxford zoologists discuss the basis of kinship, or Cambridge classicists discourse on television on the origin of art – not Greek art, but all art – or, most recently, ennobled gynaecologists do documentaries on the nature of religious belief.

How then do we construct a viable comparative approach to get at the bigger picture in an inter-disciplinary context? One approach which some have envisaged is to strip out the specificities and contingencies, to forgo accounts which depend upon historical explanation of how phenomena come to be, or they put to one side the social aspects. The idea seems to be to render artistic phenomena in what in computer language might be termed Rich Text Format, to drain the bath as I suggested at the start. Yet, to render it so that it can be picked up and compared without fear that the specificity which makes it what it is as a distinctive phenomenon corrupts the comparison. In so doing we have robbed it of the very agencies which created it in the first place.

It seems to me that theory is always theory 'of' or 'about' something: it starts from a defined problem or observation. And if we begin at that end, surely we can construct interdisciplinary accounts of visual phenomena which draw on the most useful and insightful observations to explain and to formulate approaches. Bloch certainly doesn't argue that anthropology has any unique contribution to make to analysing the human condition – distinctive yes, but not unique. What is implied is a grand alliance of disciplines in which the role of anthropology with its insistence on the specifics of people living out their lives in particular circumstances and in specific places helps connect up points of view.

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So, let me end not with the global, but on a more local plane by introducing the immediate institutional setting for these observations. It seems to me we have – uniquely in the UK – a constellation of interests

⁷ Bloch 2005: 12.

within the Sainsbury Centre building, a constellation with which to test, explore, experiment with answers to the question with which I started. We currently have a clustering of activities that occur on campus and to an extent in Norwich itself. And they go by a variety of titles. We have a School, we have a Centre, we have a Unit and an Institute. We have the School of World Art and Museology itself, the Sainsbury Centre for the Visual Arts, the Sainsbury Research Unit into the Arts of Africa, the Pacific and the Americas; and – in town, rather than on campus – the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Art and Culture. Together it makes a very compelling combination. Surely, assembled as one integrated entity with a commonly expressed purpose, it has a reach even our peers in this field could not match: The Courtauld Institute lacks non-western art; the School of Oriental and African studies lacks Europe and the Americas and Oceania. The School together with the Sainsbury Research Unit and our Japanese institute has academic skills which may – or may not – be surpassed, but are unequalled in their assemblage. Elsewhere art historians, anthropologists, and archaeologists are in different departments or schools and don't have the opportunity of regular interaction and teaching together that we have here. And, most other universities don't generally have the opportunity to afford their students the integrated range of interests and inquiry that is possible here. We, as an institution, could take the opportunity and the fact of 'our' adjacency, to move one step forward. The risk is that if we only do our own thing, the potential that comes with this focusing of interests will be dissipated. Surely, we need to see ourselves as a microcosm, a concentration of energies with a wide range of reference, made all the more imposing in this act of being assembled together – weblike – in one locality.

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Rembrandt and the emperor

John Mitchell

For Elisabeth and John—*eer voor goet, vryheit voor eer*

Rembrandt's late painting of himself, now in the Wallraf-Richartz Museum in Cologne, is one of the most dramatic of his great tally of self-portraits but has also proved to be one of the most enigmatic (Figure 52.1).¹ In effect it is a double portrait, with a primary and a secondary participant, as is often the case with the category. Centre-canvas is the painter himself, easily engaging with the viewer, wearing a heavy enveloping coat with a wide shawl, gold-glowing, hanging down his front, an emblematic artist's cap on his head, and holding out what is usually taken to be his malstick, his painting-hand wrist-rest. The second presence in the picture is a looming immobile figure, half cut by the left-hand edge of the canvas, extending the full height of the composition. Partly immersed in a surrounding deep olive-brown gloom, its quarter-profile faces impassively out past the painter's head, with massive hiped Roman nose, sunken pursed lips and emphatically projecting globular chin. The eyes are indistinct and seemingly deep sunk. The brow rising over the eyes as it appears now is a subsequent replacement, where the original upper corner of the canvas has at some point been turned over and torn away.² The clothed body of the figure is summarily defined with a few strokes, a brown ground with elements pointed up in black and lighted in ochre; but the nature and cut of the costume is indeterminate. The malstick in the hands of the artist, perhaps resting against the lateral figure, would appear to point to this as being a painted image—indistinct vertical divides and a change in colour from a deeper olive-brown to a somewhat lighter tone, one midway between the two figures, the other rising up from the head of the artist, have been taken as representing the edge of the depicted canvas.³

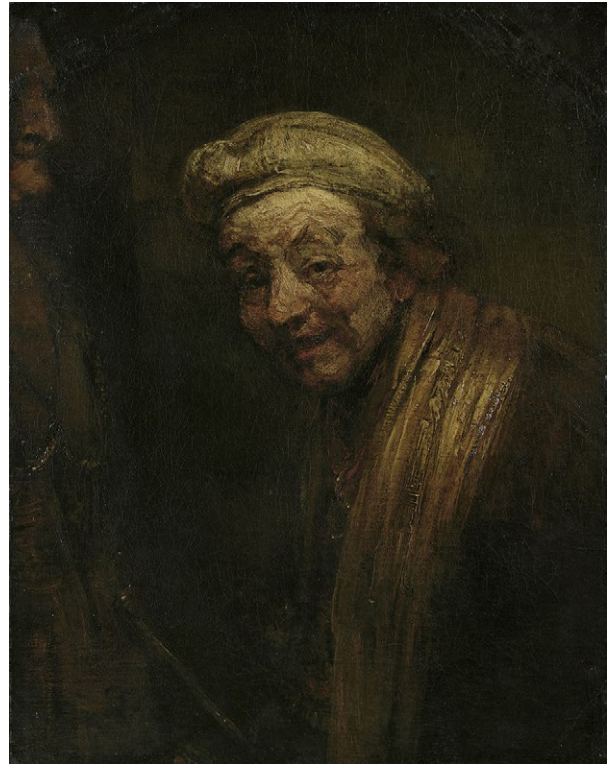


Figure 52.1. Rembrandt, *Self-portrait*, early or late 1660s. Oil on canvas, 82.5x65cm. Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum. Photography by Rheinisches Bildarchiv Köln, Inventory Number WRM 2526.

Two things here capture the attention. First the contrast between the hunched figure of the artist and the impassive obscure individual confronting him. The former leans out of the picture to the viewer, eyebrows raised, with a word and the hint of an engaging smile on his open mouth; the latter seems to be on another plane, composed, mistily distant, upright, also maybe with the trace of a restrained smile on his compressed lips. A second arresting feature of the pair are the pendants displayed hanging from their necks; for Rembrandt, a single large gold medallion on a red cord, for his

¹ Schwartz 1985: 354–57; Chapman 1990: 101–04; White and Buvelot 1999: no. 82, 216–19; Wetering 2005: 551–61; Schaefer, Pilz and von Saint-George 2011: 285–323; Wieseman, Bikker, Hinterding and Schapelhouman 2014: 17–18.

² Vey and Kesting 1967: 89; Wetering: 2005: 551; Schaefer, Pilz and von Saint-George 2011: 290–92.

³ Chapman 1990: 101–02; Wetering 2005: 554; Schaefer, Pilz and von Saint-George 2011: 294, 306, 310.

opposite a more complex confection of a double-looped gold chain on the breast suspended from a dipping cord. Who is this figure and what is the drift of the words on Rembrandt's lips?

The painting has been identified with one which was in England in the mid 18th century, when it passed from the London collection of Sir Luke Schaub, in 1758, into that of Samson Gideon in Belvedere house, near Erith. In both the Schaub sale catalogue and in the catalogue of Gideon's possessions, the item is described as depicting Rembrandt painting an old woman.⁴ In the Gideon catalogue the dimensions are given as 2ft 10 inches high and 2ft wide (86.5 x 61cm). This is not far off the size of the Cologne picture, 82.5 x 65cm.

In the early 20th century the picture was usually described simply as a self-portrait with an indeterminable bust,⁵ until Wolfgang Steckow, following a suggestion of Frederik Schmidt-Degener, argued that Rembrandt here is depicting himself as the laughing philosopher Democritus coupled with his weeping counterpart Heraclitus, a standard trope of contemporary imagery.⁶ Steckow's reading found some acceptance and still has adherents.⁷ Some two decades later, Jan Białostocki came up with a counter proposal, recognising the cut-off figure emerging from the gloom in quarter profile as Terminus, the Roman divinity presiding over boundaries, traditionally represented as a plain stone shaft terminating in a head. He saw the subject of the painting as the artist laughing at his own mortality, at the prospect of death.⁸ This identification similarly found advocates but subsequently has generally been dropped in favour of another, advocated with detailed supporting apparatus and compelling argument by Albert Blankert (1973). Blankert proposed that Rembrandt is here depicting himself as Zeuxis, the Greek artist from the 5th century BC, who famously drew features from a range of models to confect a composite image of Helen of Troy as the exemplar of ideal beauty, and who was reputed to have died laughing as he painted the portrait of an old woman—the episode Blankert saw as depicted here. This was a story recorded by the ancient Roman grammarian, Sextus Pompeius Festus, which was picked up by Dutch authors in the 17th century, by Karel van Mander in 1604 and by Rembrandt's pupil, Samuel van Hoogstraten in

1678.⁹ Blankert brought into the discussion a strange painting by Aert de Gelder, a narrative self-portrait in which the painter is shown turning to the viewer and chuckling as he paints a formally dressed older woman holding out an apple—there is general agreement that de Gelder is here depicting himself as the Zeuxis of the story (Figure 52.2).¹⁰ Blankert understood de Gelder's picture as a response to Rembrandt's Cologne self-portrait, as essentially picking up on and expanding the same composition. De Gelder had worked as a pupil and assistant of Rembrandt in the early 1660s, the years in which some critics believe the Cologne portrait was executed.¹¹ Blankert develops a persuasive line, describing the painting, with the artist identifying with Zeuxis, as a droll and laughing critique by Rembrandt of a fashionable idealising, classicizing, highly-finished aesthetic, so-called *fijnschilderij*, which was gaining favour in high cultural circles at the time and would become dominant in Holland in the second half of the century. Blankert's identification has been accepted more or less uncritically in the generality of subsequent scholarship.¹²

Crucial to any reading of the painting is the gender of the figure in emerging profile on the left-hand edge of the canvas; female or male. The designation of the facial features of an indistinctly painted figure as one or the other can be very difficult; clothing can be a surer index of gender. Here, however, the design and cut of the dress is indistinct. All is in deep shades of brown, an upright profile gently advancing lower down, apparently plain on the upper breast and with indications of some kind of panelling about the lower breast and midriff, with articulations in black and ochre. There is no immediately telling index of gender here.

At the heart of the composition is a jewellery face-off, a silent exchange between the two protagonists, the elaborate double-looped gold chain suspended from a cord which arches down from the neck of the figure in the murk and the golden medallion on a gold ring hanging from a red cord around the painter's neck. Gold chains and pendant medallions are a recurring feature in portraits of the period. Chains of high value were granted in particular by princes to artists as a recognition of excellence and to supplement recompense for the

⁴ Blankert 1973: 32–41, at 33–34; Wetering 2005: 554–56; Crenshaw 2006; Wieseman *et al.* 2014: 17; Schaefer, Pilz and von Saint George 2011: 287, 310–11, 317, 320.

⁵ So Bredius 1935: no. 1; Bauch 1966: 18, no. 341.

⁶ Schmidt-Degener 1932: 50, no. 38; Steckow 1944: 232–38; Vey and Kesting 1967: 90–91.

⁷ Tümpel 2008: 278–81.

⁸ Białostocki 1966.

⁹ Sexti Pompei Festi 1913: 228, para 209, ll. 10–11, sv. *Pictor Zeuxis*; Mander 1604: fol. 301r; Hoogstraten 1678: 78 and 110; Blankert 1973: 35; White and Buvelot 1999: 216; Wetering 2005: 556.

¹⁰ Blankert 1974: 34–35; Schwartz 1985: fig. 423; White and Buvelot 1999: fig. 82a; Mai 2002: pl. III; Wetering 2005: 556–60.

¹¹ White and Buvelot 1999: 216, 219; Wetering 2005: 558; but see Golahny 2003: 216.

¹² Schwartz 1985: 354–57; Chapman 1990: 101–04; White and Buvelot 1999: cat. 82, 216–19; Mai 2002; Golahny 2003: 199–205; Wetering 2005: 556–61; Pericolo 2014.



Figure 52.2. Aert de Gelder, *Self-portrait as Zeuxis*, 1685. Oil on canvas, 142x169cm. Frankfurt, Städtisches Kunstinstitut. Photography by Wikimedia Commons.

execution of formal portraits and other commissions. Fashionable court painters of the period are commonly depicted with their chains more or less prominently displayed – Titian, Bartholomeus Spranger, Anthony van Dyck, Deodat del Monte and Davit Beck, Gerard Seghers, Gerard Honthorst and others; and golden chains were similarly accorded to other categories of court servants, usually for intellectual pursuits, humanists, scholars and poets (Figure 52.3).¹³ Van Hoogstraten tells us that ‘(the gift of a golden chain) remains the custom among magnanimous princes when they see any artists surpassing others.’¹⁴ Sometimes chains carried a medallion bearing the image of the giver. In this context, they were worn not only as a mark of the wearer’s excellence and distinction but also of the allegiance owed to an exalted patron. Indeed, Lorenzo Pericolo has argued that this is the chief sense of the medallion worn by Rembrandt in the painting in Cologne.¹⁵

However, Rembrandt makes very free use of gold chains in his portraits—so he painted them worn by a young official of the Dutch East India Company, Philips Lucaszoon (Figure 52.4),¹⁶ by Aristotle as he contemplates the bust of Homer,¹⁷ and by his own son, Titus.¹⁸ The authors of the catalogue of the 1999 exhibition, *Rembrandt by Himself*, call his chains ‘probably nothing more than attributes intended to emphasise that a picture was not a depiction of everyday life,’¹⁹ while Marieke de Winkel sees them as little more than studio props lending a degree of social status to an image.²⁰ Rembrandt also regularly bedecks himself with gold chains and pendant medallions in his self-portraits, although he is known to have avoided

¹³ Brusati 1984: 145–52; Alpers 1988: 67–68; Chapman 1990: 50–54; Peacock 2006: 177–89.

¹⁴ Hoogstraten 1678: 356; Hoogstraten 2021: 372; Pericolo 2014: 13.

¹⁵ Pericolo 2014: 14.

¹⁶ London, National Gallery. Schwartz 1985: fig. 162; Wetering 1989: 175–82; Wetering 2015: 216, 544, no. 132a.

¹⁷ New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art. Held 1969: 3–44, at 32–41, frontispiece, fig. 1; Schwartz 1985: fig. 334; Wetering 2015: 351, 618, no. 228.

¹⁸ London, Wallace Collection, c. 1657. Schwartz 1985: fig. 330; Wetering 2015: 387, 640 no. 257.

¹⁹ White and Buvelot 1999: 104.

²⁰ Winkel 2006: 169. See also Alpers 1988: 68.



Figure 52.3. Deodat del Monte, *Self-portrait*, c. 1630–40. Engraved by Lucas Vorsterman the Elder. Engraving, 23.4x14.9. San Francisco, Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco. Photography by Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 52.4. Rembrandt, *Portrait of Philips Lucaszoon*, 1635. Oil on oak, 79.5x58.9cm. London, National Gallery. Photography by Wikimedia Commons.

any reliance on or service to exalted patrons, and as far as is known he was never gifted a golden chain for his work (Figure 52.5).²¹ However, following Julius Held and Svetlana Alpers, Perry Chapman has observed that gold chains were understood by Karel van Mander and his contemporaries as a symbol of honour and she argues that Rembrandt deploys them in his portraits and self-portraits as marks of a professional ideal of artistic honour.²² Given the common elite patronal practice of bestowing chains and the unusual, possibly unparalleled, pairing of neck ornaments in the Cologne picture, the confrontation between the double chain of the lateral figure and the golden medallion on Rembrandt's breast could indicate that they should be understood here as being something more than mere embellishments—as tangible tokens of a particular relationship between the two figures.

Another aspect of the relationship lies in the disjunction between the two; the artist depicted as very much present, turning to the viewer in direct conversation and confidence, while the lateral figure, a painted image within the picture, while also powerfully present is at the same time immobile, impassive and distant, on another plane of existence, extending the full height of the left-hand edge of the composition, like nothing so much as a stiffly formal sculpture in stone—this may have contributed to Jan Białostocki's identification as Terminus, the god who took the form of a stone herm. This figure, detached, facing out over the artist's head and unresponsive to his presence, and yet powerfully in the picture in bodily definition and spirit, is an analogue to the absent interlocutors from Greek and Roman antiquity, which were sometimes included in portraits of the period, to intimate the mental presence of an ancient master, the bygone mentor of the individual portrayed. Rubens included such ancient sculpted presences in his portrait of the philologist and

²¹ Held 1969: 32–44; Alpers 1988: 90–93 and ch. 4 *passim*.

²² Held 1969: 32–44; Alpers 1988: 105–06; Chapman 1990: 51–54.



Figure 52.5. Liverpool Rembrandt 12572-WAG 1011.jpg



Figure 52.6. Rubens Jan Gaspar Gevartius .jpg

poet, Jan Gaspar Gevaerts, who converses with a bust of the emperor, Marcus Aurelius (Figure 52.6),²³ and in two of his portraits of distinguished medical physicians, Ludovicus Nonnius with a bust of Hippocrates,²⁴ and Theodore de Mayerne, the principal physician to James I and Charles I of England and one of the most revered doctors of his age, with a full-length statue of the Greek god of healing, Aesculapius. In his celebration of the circle of antiquaries around Justus Lipsius (the so-called four philosophers, Lipsius, Philip Rubens, Jan van der Wouwer and Peter Paul Rubens himself), a bust of Seneca, the Roman writer whose stoic philosophy set the compass of their thinking and fellowship, sits in a niche above, in pale lithic grisaille, and yet as vitally alive and present as any of the four below.²⁵ Rembrandt's composition of 1653 with Aristotle addressing a stone portrait bust of Homer is a variation on the same trope, projected back in historical time.²⁶

²³ Antwerp, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, c. 1628. Vlieghe 1987: 113–6, no. 106, fig. 122; White 1987: pl. 54; Jaffé 1989: 57.

²⁴ Luis Núñez, London, National Gallery, c. 1630–35. Vlieghe 1987: 137–39, no. 124, fig. 152; White 1987: pl. 74; Jaffé 1989: 307, cat. 923.

²⁵ Florence, Palazzo Pitti, c. 1611–12. Vlieghe 1987: 128–32, no. 117, fig. 40; White 1987: fig. 93; Jaffé 1989: 59, p. 177, cat. 153.

²⁶ New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art. Held 1969: fig. 1; Schwartz 1985: frontispiece, fig. 334; Wetering 2015: 351, 618, no. 228.

If the statuesque lateral figure in the painting is to be identified with an exemplary ancient interlocutor of this kind, who could it be? The candidate which visually immediately comes to eye and mind is the Roman emperor, Vespasian, whose realistically constructed portrait visage—presumably a conflation of his own physiognomic appearance with a brutally veristic type associated with an ideal of old Republican Roman virtue—is uncannily similar in its features.²⁷ It should be kept in mind that individualizing portrait types were created for each of the Roman emperors at their accession, so that the portrait image of a particular emperor can immediately be recognised. As we have seen, the forehead of the figure in the painting must be discounted; it is a relatively modern replacement. However, the surviving elements, the prominent angled 'Roman' nose, cavernous sunken eyes, the contracted mouth with pursed lips, and the projecting chin with its bulbous point are features characterised in the images of Vespasian on coins and also on carved stone portraits. The profile likenesses on sestertii of 70 and 71 AD provide some of the most telling comparisons—coins which were well known and sought after by antiquaries and

²⁷ Roman veristic portraiture: Fejfer 2008; Wood 2015: 260–75.



Figure 52.7. Sestertius of Vespasian, *Salus Augusta*, 71 AD. Photography by Gorny and Mosch, Gießener Münzhandlung GmbH, Munich.

collectors in the period (Figure 52.7 and Figure 52.8).²⁸ These facial features were picked up, usually somewhat exaggerated, in the representations of these coins in contemporary publications, both in works devoted specifically to numismatics and in the illustrations to the texts of Roman historians and contemporary works on Roman history.²⁹ It should be noted that the inventory of Rembrandt's possessions made at the time of his bankruptcy in 1656 includes a series of sculpted images of the first twelve Roman emperors, Augustus to Domitian and also Marcus Aurelius, in stone or plaster, among which is a Vespasian, *een dito Vesspasianes*.³⁰ He would have been aware of the physiognomy of the emperor from this and almost certainly from Roman coins, of which he may have had his own collection, in the *een Kassie met medalien*, also itemized in the 1656 inventory.³¹

If the identification holds, and the lateral figure is indeed an image of Vespasian, what could have been the grounds for Rembrandt's selection of this Roman emperor as his ghostly interlocutor? In his own time, Vespasian stood out from his predecessors and immediate successors; it was he who had steadied the Empire in the tumultuous year of 69, and who by clear practical measures and

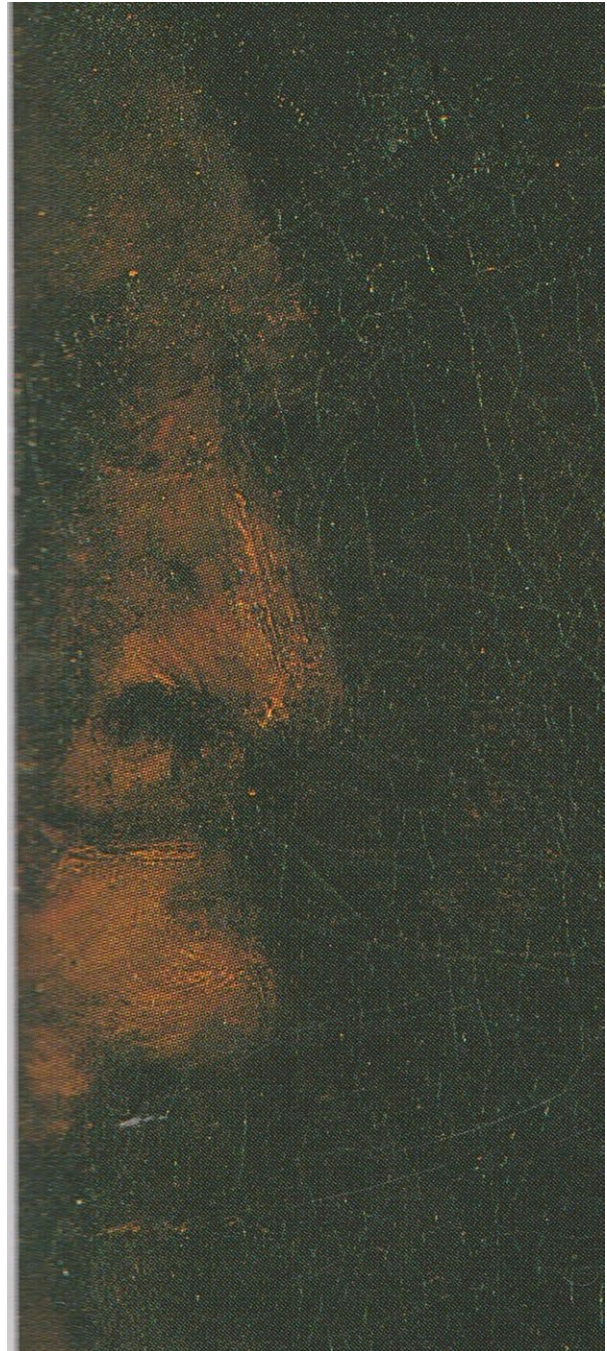


Figure 52.8. Rembrandt, *Self-portrait*, detail of Figure 52.1. on left, early or late 1660s.

to no mean degree by sheer force of personality and example had restored the Roman political system and set it on a course that would endure through much of the following century.³² A consummately effective commander and administrator, essentially resistant

²⁸ Kent and Hirmer 1978: no. 226, pl. 65; Carradice and Buttrey 2007: p. 72, no. 168.

²⁹ For example, Goltzius 1645: 21.

³⁰ Schwartz 1985: 290; Boogert 1999: 149.

³¹ Schwartz 1985: 290; Boogert 1999: 149.

³² Levick 1999: 207.

to illusions of grandeur and personal transcendence, marked by firmness in decision and action, tempered by restraint, he was remembered for his no-nonsense, down-to-earth practicality, his common touch, for his straight talking, his conviviality, his realism about himself and others, his salty humour often bordering on the obscene, his love of a humorous put-down, his parsimony, reputedly meanness, and a care even verging on a fixation for money.³³

The most expansive and detailed account of Vespasian's person and character is preserved in the life by Suetonius, a near contemporary of the emperor. Suetonius's *Lives of the Caesars* was an established classical text, known and read in manuscript in the medieval period and widely published in print following the edition princeps of 1470.³⁴ There were two major Dutch editions of the Latin text from the first half of the 17th century, those of Marcus Zuerrius Boxhorn,³⁵ and Johann Schild,³⁶ and a translation into Dutch by Johannes Vennekool, published in Amsterdam and Delft in 1619.³⁷ Suetonius's lives are carefully paced, discursive accounts of the first twelve Roman emperors, designed for easy reading, thin on serious historical analysis but full of incident, anecdote and character.

Now, there are a number of passages in the Life of Vespasian which might have struck a chord with Rembrandt and led him to pick this emperor out as an erstwhile partner and respondent. These describe Vespasian as coming from a moderately affluent family and able to embark on a typical elite public career, or *cursus honorum*. His father was a tax-gatherer and banker, although further back of humble origins; Vespasian's great-grandfather allegedly had been the gang-master of a group of transhumant rural labourers. He was remembered as a man of simple direct ways and straight, sometimes brutally crude speech, no respecter of rank or privilege, at ease with all, with a sharp gruff wit, an inclination to respond in kind to disparagement or slight, a reputation for tightness, indeed appetite, over money but at the same time given to acts of considerable generosity and solicitude, in particular to struggling officials, to the diligently working poor and to the arts. Rembrandt, *ceteris paribus*, was not dissimilar in background, a prosperous miller's son, from a respectable bourgeois family. He was known for the tight control he kept over his working practice and his time, for his reluctance to make concessions to

clients, whatever their social standing, for his concern for his works and their monetary value, as well as for a serial hesitance in honouring his own debts.³⁸ From his movements and the accounts of his contemporaries it also seems that he preferred the company of poor neighbours to that of polite society or to close relations with the leading artists of the city and their professional associations.³⁹

There are a number of anecdotes which Suetonius (some repeated a century later by Dio Cassius), tells of Vespasian, which could have had particular resonance for Rembrandt. One of these is from the time when Vespasian held the office of aedile, the Roman magistracy responsible for public infrastructure, including roads. The emperor Caligula, on catching sight of mud in a street in Rome and angered at what he perceived as a neglect of responsibility, ordered some soldiers to pile the muck into Vespasian's magistral gown—this was interpreted as a favourable omen, foretelling that subsequently when the soil of Italy was trodden down and churned up in civil war Vespasian would come to its rescue and cradle the land to his bosom.⁴⁰ Another tale relates how Vespasian's son, Titus, reproached his father for imposing a tax on the deposits from the city's public urinals, used by fullers in treating raw wool. The emperor showed him a coin from the first tax return and asked whether it smelled foul. When Titus replied, 'no,' Vespasian observed, 'well, it comes from piss!'⁴¹ In a further anecdote Suetonius recounts how Vespasian habitually wore a strained expression on his face and that when he asked a famous wit, who habitually made jokes about people, why he had not made one about him, the man replied that he would when the emperor had finished relieving himself.⁴² So a recurrent theme of mud, urine, shit.

Rembrandt cultivated a knowingly unmannered, impolite and determinedly rough natural idiom in his painting, the antithesis of the *fijnschilderij*, the highly finished manner, which increasingly came to dominate fashionable taste in mid 17th-century Holland. Authors, artists, who had known him directly as young men or indirectly through their masters, writing after his death, in a time in which his own practice had been superseded by smoother more obviously worked and finished stylistic conventions, while in awe of his transcendent qualities as the outstanding artist of his age, at the same time disparaged his painting as

³³ Suetonius-Rolfe 1914: 280–321; Levick 1999: 196–209 and *passim*.

³⁴ Rome: Johannes Philippus de Lignamine.

³⁵ Suetonius-Boxhorn 1632.

³⁶ Suetonius-Schild 1647.

³⁷ Suetonius-Vennekool 1619. See Czech 2002: 138.

³⁸ Alpers 1988: 88–122.

³⁹ Sandrart 1925: 203; Slive 1953: 92–93; Alpers 1988: 89–90, 102, 113–14, 151, n. 34.

⁴⁰ Suetonius, Vespasian, 5; Dio Cassius, 59, 12, 3.

⁴¹ Suetonius, Vespasian, 23; Dio Cassius, 65, 14, 4.

⁴² Suetonius, Vespasian, 20.

uncouth and ugly. Gerard de Lairese, who had known Rembrandt in the mid 1660s, writing in the first years of the 18th century, likened his application of paint to liquid mire, cautioning against his and his colleague Jan Lievens' practice, where the paint runs down the picture like dung—*het sap gelyk drek langs het Stuk neer loope*. And Arnold Houbraken, a pupil of van Hoogstraten who had worked under Rembrandt in the same period, disparaged Rembrandt for his habit of consorting with the common poor, and wrote that his paint was smeared on as if with a rough tar-brush without heed to the drawing, or as if with a brick-layer's trowel, saying that he had painted a picture in which the paint was so thick that you could lift it up by its nose.⁴³ From Rembrandt's own time, in 1662, the playwright Joost van den Vondel, a champion of painting in a smooth classicizing idiom, has been understood as alluding to Rembrandt's great painting of the conspiracy of Claudius Civilis destined for the Amsterdam town-hall, in verses in which he berates 'the crazy painter who pointlessly besmears his mad-house with paint.'⁴⁴ Lairese and Houbraken were writing some time after Rembrandt's death, but the former had known him in his studio and the latter was a pupil of van Hoogstraten who had been an apprentice in the master's workshop in his later years and had subsequently turned away from Rembrandt's rough natural idiom and cultivated a *feijn*, highly-finished manner in the new classicizing taste. It is very possible that they were holding to lines of criticism which had their origins in contemporary reactions to Rembrandt's painting in his later years.

Indeed, the Cologne portrait in which Rembrandt confidentially engages with the old Roman emperor could be taken as a gently rollicking comment on views like those voiced by Lairese in his *Groote Schilderboek* of 1707, *Maar dezen gelieven te weten, dat ik met hen in myne gevoelens hier omtrent zeer verschillende ben; hoewel ik niet wil ontkennen, dat ik voor dezen een byzondere neiginge tot zyne manier gehad heb; maar ik had zo haast niet begonnen te bezeffen de onfeilbaare regelen dezer Konst, of ik vond my genoodzaakt myne dwaalinge te herroepen, en de zyne te verwerpen; als zynde niet anders gegrondest dan op losse en spookachtige inbeeldingen, welke zonder voorbeelden weezende, geen wisse gronden hadden, daar zy op steunden*.⁴⁵

'But these people need to know that my feelings about this matter are very different from theirs, although I don't want to deny that I used to have a particular liking for his (Rembrandt's) manner of painting. However,

I had not yet then begun to become acquainted with the irrefutable rules of this Art; at which point I was constrained to abandon my wanderings and to reject his, founded as they were on mere empty and phantom-like imaginings, with no precedent antecedents and no real foundations to underpin them.'

Vespasian, as an historical pattern, representative of a stubborn and earthy Republican strain, revived in imperial guise, whose qualities were readily visible in the veristic traits of his face, was anything but *gegrondest dan op losse en spookachtige inbeeldingen*—'founded on empty and phantomlike imaginings.' Rather, he represented one of the most stalwart exemplars, precedents, of ancient commitment and solid achievement.

Adverse criticism in this tenor may also have been the target of a satirical drawing now widely believed to be from Rembrandt's hand. Here, on the left, an ass-eared critic passes judgement on a framed painting before an audience of onlookers, confronted in the right foreground by a squatting man who pisses, defecates and wipes his arse in the face of the viewer—the artist or his surrogate giving his response to the asinine critique (Figure 52.9).⁴⁶

There is no direct evidence that Rembrandt had read Suetonius' *Lives of the Caesars*, although, given his collection of portrait busts of the first twelve Roman emperors, it would be strange if he had no knowledge of them; and there is no evidence that the *Lives* formed part of the curriculum of the Latin school at Amsterdam, where Rembrandt had been a pupil.⁴⁷ However some fifteen editions of the Latin text were published and reprinted in Holland during Rembrandt's working lifetime, by Guiljelmus Ianssonius/Willem Janszoon (Amsterdam), Guiljelmus de Blaeuw/Willem Janszoon Blaeu (Amsterdam), Johannes Maire/Johannes le Maire (Leiden), Franciscus Hackius/Frans Hacke (Leiden) and others, as well as two editions of Vennekool's translation into Dutch, which were published in 1619, in Amsterdam (by Cloppenbuch) and in Delft (by Gerritsen).⁴⁸ Clearly the *Lives* were read by a quite numerous Latin-reading public and were accessible in translation to a further literate audience in the United Provinces. The large number of editions may indicate that Suetonius was on the syllabus at the university, if not in the schools

⁴³ Lairese 1707: V, 22; Houbraken 1718: 259, 269; Slive 1953: 163 n. 3, 179, 184–85, 193–94; Alpers 1988: 92, 110, 153, n. 51; Binstock 1999: 140.

⁴⁴ Binstock 1999: 141–42.

⁴⁵ Lairese 1707: 325, Book 5, 22; Slive 1953: 160, 164.

⁴⁶ New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art. Schwartz 1985: 228, fig. 247; Alpers 1988: 91–92, fig. 4.5; Wetering 1995: 264–70; Slive 2009: 222–25, fig. 16.1.

⁴⁷ Bot 1955; Kuiper 1958; Golahny 2003: 55–56.

⁴⁸ Listings from the on-line catalogue of the holdings of the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in The Hague, viewed 13 January 2023, <<https://webgc.oclc.org/cbs/DB=2.37/SET=1/TTL=281/NXT?FRST=271>>.



Figure 52.9. Rembrandt, *Satire on an Art Criticism*, 1644. Drawing, pen and brown ink with white. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Robert Lehman Collection, 1975.1.799. Photography by Wikimedia Commons.

in Amsterdam. Given their wide diffusion, it is likely that Rembrandt would have had at least a mediated if not a first-hand knowledge of the *Lives*—possibly in the libraries of one of his patrician acquaintances, like Constantijn Huygens or Jan Six. Rembrandt had close relations with both, and both possessed copies of the Latin text in Casaubon’s Paris edition of 1620, and Six also in Pulmann’s 1574 Antwerp edition.⁴⁹

The Dutch translation of Suetonius’ *Lives* by Jan Vennekool, published in 1619, in *quarto* size, apparently simultaneously by Cloppenbuch in Amsterdam and Gerritsen in Delft, while not a sumptuous production, is a somewhat grander book than the run of subsequent Dutch editions of the Latin text, which tend to pocket editions in 24mo. It opens with a splendid architectural title-page, surmounted by a double-headed eagle with flanking personifications of War and Peace below. This is followed by an eight-page dedication by Vennekool, addressed to Maurits, Prince of Orange, the all-powerful Stadtholder of the United Provinces. Vennekool’s book

stands out among subsequent Dutch editions of the Latin texts for its imagery. While many of the Latin editions are unillustrated, apart from a more or less ornate title-page, each *Life* in the Dutch language editions is headed by an almost full-page clipeate image of the particular emperor with circling inscription. These are exceptionally well executed, expertly reproducing the Roman coin-portraits which served as their models. Indeed, the portrait of Vespasian here is markedly close to the profile head in the Cologne painting (Figure 52.10).⁵⁰ One wonders if this was not one of the sources from which Rembrandt drew.⁵¹

In reality, the dynamic in the Cologne portrait very much involves a three-way relationship, with Rembrandt the principal protagonist holding centre-stage, looking out to address a word or two to us as we observe and interrogate the painting. He does not depict himself laughing, as is often said, but the line of

⁴⁹ Huygens, viewed 10 January 2023, <<https://web.universiteitleiden.nl/fsw/verduin/constanter/>>; Six 1706: 16, 71; Golahny 2013: 30–31. I am most grateful to Amy Golahny for her extremely generous help here.

⁵⁰ Suetonius-Vennekool 1619: fol. 178v, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The Hague, viewed 13 January 2023, <<https://webggc.oclc.org/cbs/DB=2.37/SET=1/TTL=271/SHW?FRST=276>>.

⁵¹ I am extremely grateful to Eric Geleijens for the care he took in responding to my questions about editions of Suetonius in the collections of the Koninklijke Bibliotheek, at The Hague.

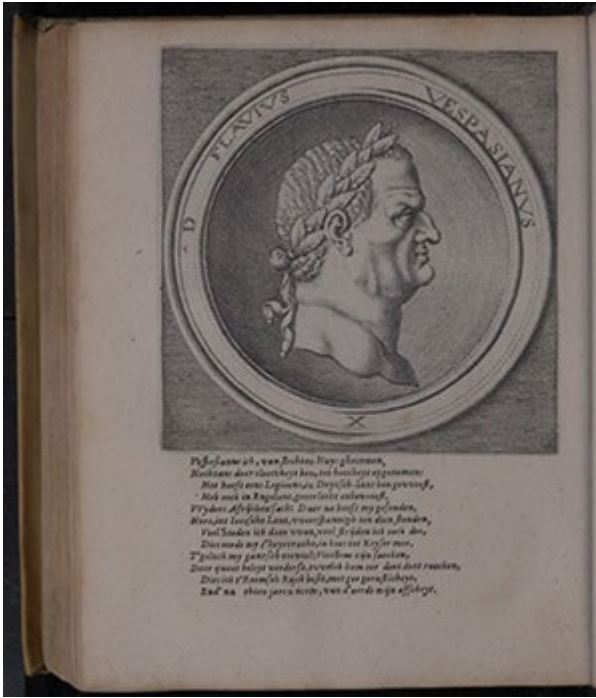


Figure 52.10. Caius Suetonius Tranquillus. *Van het leven ende daden der twaelfeerste Roomsche keyseren: seer nut ende dienstich om lesen, voor alle liefhebberen der outheit*, translated by. Johannes Vennekool, Amsterdam: Jan Evertsen Cloppenburch, f. 178v. The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, KW2211 D13, f. 178v. Photography by KB, National Library of the Netherlands, KW2211 D13.

his mouth and the set of his quizzically raised eyebrows does suggest that he is directing a humorous, maybe an ironic aside at the viewer, referencing the looming presence of the figure in the shadows. Corruscating golden light suffuses his face and cap and pours down the shawl which falls around his shoulders and down over his breast, a glow picked up at a muted distance in the features of the emperor. We have noted that a telling point of the relationship between the two figures is the gold ornaments hanging from their necks, the medallion on a ribbon on the artist's breast and the looping gold chain similarly suspended from a cord round the emperor's neck. The other point of contact between the two is the slender staff which Rembrandt holds out at the bottom of the picture. Identified by all critics as a malstick, the painter's arm-rest, this is no ordinary malstick of wood and fabric—here the golden staff topped by a small gleaming golden sphere and with two smaller round knobs lower down the shaft looks like nothing so much as a costume-box sceptre. In his later self-portraits Rembrandt not infrequently depicts himself with a malstick, but in only one other case is this

shown as a glistening baton topped with a shining nob, in this case silver, in the majestic painting now in the Frick Collection in New York, in which he shows himself seated in curiously noble estate.⁵² Rembrandt's attire in the Cologne painting is hard to make sense of but it could be construed that he is constructing himself as a modern-day equal to his ancient referent, dressed in an enveloping coat and golden-glowing shawl, redolent of ancient regal or sacral dignity, and wearing a similarly glowing artist's cap, indicative of his profession. Here, rather than showing himself basking in the reflected glory of a princely patron's benevolence, like his fellow artists who portrayed themselves in their gifted golden chains, Rembrandt thrusts himself upon us, dressed in his finery and brandishing his golden baton, engaging on at least equal terms with the similarly gold-bedecked emperor.

Indeed, if this is the emperor Vespasian, then Rembrandt is here depicting himself confronting on more than one level the all-pervasive paradigm of Roman antiquity, which suffused cultural thinking, practice and production in the 17th century—albeit in the person of a representative whom he took to be very much of his own way of thinking. That he engaged with classical art is clear from the collection of images of the early emperors he kept in his studio; but he did so obdurately on his own terms, rejecting the idealising visual types and tropes that came to dominate fashionable taste among elite patrons in Holland in the middle decades of the century. When he did address classical mythological subjects, the Rape of Proserpina, Andromeda chained to the rock, the abduction of Ganymede by Jupiter in the guise of an eagle, in each case he did so with scant reference to standard compositions from the ancient Roman repertoire, bringing new life to the old myths, as compelling narratives in which unidealised protagonists, with modern faces and bodies, faced their plights as frightened and defiant individuals.⁵³ Similarly, the Cologne portrait is a statement of Rembrandt's negotiation with the classical tradition, rejecting the common position of formal deference and fashionable contemporary variation; in its place charting a path of naturalising quotidian realism and common address, verging on bantering disrespect. At the same time, he invokes the fellowship of one of the most respected Roman Caesars—famed for his readiness, indeed his seeming delight in grasping the rough realities of rule and governance, and richly associated with anecdotes involving filth and excreta—in answering the critics of

⁵² Schwartz 1985: fig. 416; White and Buvelot:1999: cat. 71, 198; Wetering 2005: 460–68.

⁵³ Schwartz 1985: figs. 114, 111, 121.

his own unidealized, unadorned and rough textured pictorial idiom.

A further passage from Suetonius's *Life* that may have caught Rembrandt's attention relates that Vespasian was not only extremely generous in his gifts of money to performing artists who pleased him, actors and musicians, but that also he gave out many golden crowns.⁵⁴ These could have been understood by a 17th-century reader as correlates to the chains and medallions gifted by contemporary elite patrons to favoured artists. In this optic, Rembrandt sporting his gold medallion can be seen as teasingly casting himself as a recipient of Vespasian's favour, of course with the rider that the Emperor himself is wearing a golden chain—Roman emperors were not imaged wearing gold chains—and Rembrandt holds out a malstick that is not a simple wooden painter's hand-rest but a golden sceptre. The mutual gifting of medallion and chain is a hilarious charade of reciprocal transtemporal accolade-bestowal that gives a bewildering spin to the traditional protocol of patron and client. The artist acknowledges, acclaims and rewards with gold a preeminent, pragmatic, wryly jocular yet sceptically-minded representative of the ancient world and classical tradition, just as the emperor gifts a medallion and suffuses with a golden aura of approbation a like-tempered and similarly rough-hewn opposite from a future age; two robust and pragmatic old men, joined in their chuckling dismissal of deferential cant. But it is Rembrandt who has the last laugh; the emperor is but a painted image within the picture, called into existence out of the brown monochrome murk by the hand and grace of the artist.

Rembrandt's enigmatic painting in the Wallraf-Richartz Museum—in turn, the artist laughing at an old woman, the laughing Democritus and the weeping Heraclitus, Terminus the old Roman god of the boundary, the celebrated Greek painter Zeuxis in his death-laugh—is a self-portrait that breaks the rules. One in which the artist shares the stage with another, absent, impassive yet kindred spirit; a self-representation where, rather than searching his own soul or vaunting his personal status, the painter looks out and turns to us as his confidants and with a quizzical aside invites us to consider the ridiculousness of unthinking fealty paid to an exalted external power or to a time-honoured and time-worn cultural ideal and formal paradigm; a visual celebration of a classic relationship in which the tables are turned and it is the artist who bestows recognition, favour, even presence on his companion. The painting is Rembrandt's wry and witty testament to the principles

on which he worked – an unyielding insistence on his honour for his art and for himself and a clear surety in his personal compass, the freedom on which this honour was predicated: the *eer voor goet* ('honour before goods'), words which Rembrandt inscribed in the album amicorum of Burchard Grossman in 1634, on the eve of his marriage to his beloved wife, Saskia, and the *als ik myn geest uitspanninge wil geven, dan is het niet eer die ik zoek, maar vryheit* ('if I want to give my mind diversion, then it is not honour that I seek, but liberty'), recorded by Roger de Piles and Arnold Houbraken.⁵⁵

For all manner of help, my grateful thanks, especially to Eric Geleijens and to Amy Golahny, and also to Jane Chick, Zirka Filipczak, Susan Haskins, Bea Leal, Richard Maguire, Victoria Mitchell, Sam Moorhead, Elizabeth McGrath, Nicholas Pickwoad, Marcia Pointon, Iris Schaefer, Paul Taylor, Susan Walker, Hiltrud Westermann-Angerhausen, and unbeknownst to them, Elisabeth and John!

Afterword

I had finished this paper when I became aware of the magnificent article by Iris Schaefer, Katrin Pilz and Caroline von Saint-George on the physical condition of the Cologne self-portrait and the issues posed by its conservation.⁵⁶ The authors describe the delicate physical state of the painting and the many interventions it has undergone since its original execution. Repainting, successive varnishings and attempts to clean the paint-surface have resulted in the irreversible intermingling and confusion of layers of varnish with layers of over-painting and with the original paint-surface. This makes the removal of the many layers of varnish impossible without causing lasting damage to the original painting. However, careful examination of the support, canvas and stretcher, and the worked surfaces with the help of X-rays and other non- and minimally invasive techniques have led the authors to the tentative conclusion that the painting may have remained unfinished or possibly badly damaged for over a century before it was extensively reworked and aspects of the composition altered, probably in the second half of the 18th century. The painted surface was originally somewhat wider than it is now at the sides and at the top and there is a more extensive loss, between 16 and 27cm, at the bottom. X-rays suggest that the artist's right arm was extended, his hand maybe holding a brush to the canvas he is working on

⁵⁴ Suetonius, Vespasian, 19.

⁵⁵ Piles 1699: 435; Houbraken 1718: I, 273; Slive 1953: 194; Alpers 1988: 88, 105–06, 114, 118, 152, n. 40. See also Descamps: 1753–64: II, 1760, 90; and Chapman 1990: 51–54.

⁵⁶ Schaefer, Pilz and von Saint-Gorge 2011, referred to by Wieseman *et al.* 2014.

in the composition and that his mouth was not open but closed. The mysterious profile figure on the left, in its present form may be a new creation, replacing a figure with a face in three-quarter view and below what may have been the bust-figure of a man, possibly from two different experiments. The authors, while not insisting on this history for the painting, think that the evidence as far as it can be judged in the current state of our knowledge does seem to point in this direction—a composition in an unfinished or severely damaged state which was cut down and extensively reworked a century or more after Rembrandt's death.

The present paper was written on the supposition that, as Rembrandt left it, the dark profile figure on the left had more or less the same shape as it takes in the painting as it stands today, and the artist's mouth was open. Advances in the techniques available for the technical examination of damaged paint surfaces may make it possible in the future to ascertain whether or not, when the canvas left the hand of Rembrandt, the left-hand figure had the form of the old woman recorded in the painting in the possession of Sir Luke Schaub and Samson Gideon in the late 1750s.

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53.

Sandro Chia: Casual victory.
An interview.

Artist's studio, Montalcino Val d'Orcia, Italy, 18 July 2019.

Stephanie Morin

Our times are very inspiring, anything goes. Cheating is important, when the game leads up to the last round the game is suspended, we are tragically free.

Sandro Chia 2019

Before reaching international recognition as one of the five painters associated with the Italian Transavanguardia, Sandro Chia (*recte* Alessandro Coticchia, 1946) spent his formative years following conceptual trends at the Academia di Belle Arti in his native city of Florence.¹ Intent on gaining prominence as an artist he moved to Rome in 1971, shedding the traces of his past exhibitions and nine letters from his birth name (*Viva* 2018). When he talks of his arriving in Rome he characterizes himself as an outsider, testing unknown territory. Renting a small flat in the Trastevere quarter, he dedicated himself to drawing and wandering the city making casual encounters: 'I wanted to be an artist. I didn't know what that entailed, painting was unthinkable, it was prohibited, a sin, you had to keep it to yourself like a secret vice.'²

Allen Ginsberg's photograph of Chia holding an impressive premium edition shotgun was taken in 1985 when the artist was living in New York revelling in the height of his success as a Transavanguardia painter (Figure 53.1). As Chia's eyes target the viewer his expression, hovering between a scowl and a smirk, projects the swagger and mischief that characterizes the creative verve of the Transavanguardia artists – nicknamed in New York's Upper East Side circles as 'The famous Five' or 'the three Cs' – Chia, Enzo Cucchi and Francesco Clemente.³

'I cinque Cavalieri della Transavanguardia' Cinzia Albertoni calls them, in a somewhat sarcastically romanticized depiction of these artists as bold invaders

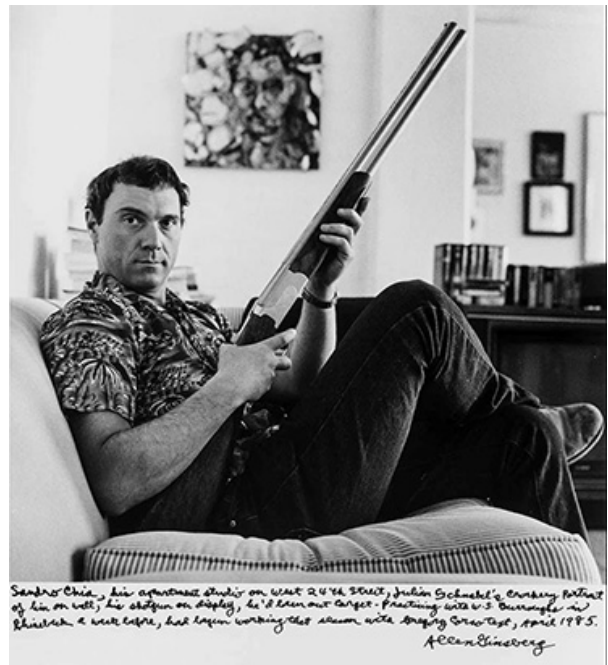


Figure 53.1. Sandro Chia with a gun. New York, April 1985. Photograph by Allen Ginsberg. University of Toronto Collection, Courtesy Rossy Family Foundation and Allen Ginsberg Estate. viewed 29 February 2022, <<https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.142171.html>>.

of the international art scene, joining their American and German counterparts in wielding paint brushes loaded with colour to overtake the minimalist/conceptual establishment.⁴ A similar image was evoked

¹ Sandro Chia, Francesco Clemente, Enzo Cucchi, Nicola De Maria and Mimmo Paladino. The five were promoted by Achille Bonito Oliva under the label 'Transavanguardia.' See: Bonito Oliva 1980.

² Chia 2019.

³ Tully 1984: para 4.

⁴ Covering the grand Transavanguardia retrospective (Milan, Palazzo Reale 2012) Cinzia Albertoni (2012) attempts to capture the disruption created by the Transavanguardiaists: 'Les enfants terribles are on show at Milan's Palazzo Reale, a poker of aces, rather of artists. The five horsemen of the Transavanguardia are reunited in an exhibition curated by Achille Bonito Oliva... restaging that all-Italian

by Judd Tully, who described the European painters entering upon the 1980s New York art scene as ‘a band of norm breaking rascals:’

A cultural blitzkrieg has hit these shores bearing the stretched-canvas flags of Germany and Italy. America, precisely the New York art world, has embraced the phenomenon generically tagged ‘new expressionism.’ The paintings are big, the colours are brash, and the images are wild with hubris.⁵

The effrontery of unapologetic material success enjoyed by Chia and his coevals – taking over the market with artwork that Benjamin Buchloh famously described as ‘ciphers of regression’⁶ – seems to intrigue Ginsberg: ‘Big guy, big atelier, those painters make a lot of money.’⁷

Since those charismatic times, Chia has successfully maneuvered through the international art system on his own terms for over 40 years, protecting his niche within that system. Here he provides a glimpse of himself as someone with no illusions who is convinced that everything is an illusion. He tells me, ‘You don’t study art as history unless as a dream, the artist’s dream. All art is a self-portrait.’

Making Contact

I make intermittent attempts to reach Chia for several months before he finally answers his cell phone. ‘Yes?’ ‘Good afternoon, am I speaking with Sandro Chia?’ ‘In person.’ I introduce myself, quick to mention my affiliation with the University of Amsterdam and that I was given his number by Brunella Antomarini, Enzo Cucchi’s ex-wife. ‘I see,’ replies Chia. I ask if he would be willing to be interviewed. ‘Yes, I’m more than willing, why don’t you come up this weekend for lunch, but could we talk again in a couple of days? I need to sort out my schedule.’

The next day I receive a phone call from Chia’s assistant Francesco who tells me that Chia is not available at the weekend as he is busy tending to affairs concerning

movement, which galloped through past artistic currents proposing a mix of styles and themes... That swirl of deformation, rupture, signs, writing, monsters, skulls, ogres, audacity, can bewilder the eye and befuddle the mind.’

⁵ Tully 1984: para 1.

⁶ Buchloh 1981: 39.

⁷ Full caption: ‘Sandro Chia had been shooting in Rhinebeck with William Burroughs a week before – here with shotgun in’s [sic] studio-apartment New York, April 1985. Julian Schnabel’s portrait of him on the wall – I like the magic romantic surreal tricks in his canvases that year much like G. Corso’s poetry he illustrated in a rare large book. Big guy, big atelier, those painters make a lot of money. A Rhinebeck estate!’ – Allen Ginsberg.

his wine-making estate, Castello Romitorio.⁸ The meeting is re-arranged for the following Tuesday. I call on Monday to confirm, ‘It’s not the best moment,’ Francesco explains, ‘I won’t be there, and the cook is away.’ I assure him that I don’t want to put anyone to any trouble, I’m just interested in chatting with ‘il Maestro’ a bit about his experiences in the artworld. ‘I understand but he’d rather I be there, the truth is he rarely feels like giving interviews these days, it’s not easy to catch him in a mood when he’s willing. Let’s try for the beginning of next week.’ The meeting is moved to the following Monday, this is also cancelled and tentatively rescheduled for the end of the week. I send a message Thursday morning, ‘Hi Francesco, any chance of doing the interview this week?’ ‘Could you come by today, after lunch?’

The 130km drive to Montalcino from my home in Bomarzo takes just under an hour. I meet Francesco at a roundabout near the city’s medieval Fort where a monument by Chia sits: a colourful mosaic of two robust figures surrounded by grape vines celebrating the area’s renown as producer of luxury wine brands. Francesco leads the way to a solitary converted warehouse below Montalcino. Passing through the sliding metal door I enter a space that makes me recall an interview where Chia describes the first time he stepped into Gian Tomaso Liverani’s Roman gallery La Salita in 1971: ‘The gallery really impressed me, it was a cement grey cube that I tried to imitate in the houses and studios that I’ve owned.’⁹

The resemblance is there though Chia’s studio is many times larger. Numerous canvases lean against all four walls, most turned face in. There are works in progress: several studies of Chia’s leit motif, ‘the wanderer’ have been painted on unstretched canvas and consecutively lined up, conjuring Bergson: ‘think the mobile by means of the immobile.’¹⁰ Chia is seated at a small table near the entrance working on his laptop. When he looks up I catch a flickering hint of the gaze that

⁸ Chia purchased the castle in a state of ruin in 1984 from Baron Giorgio Franchetti. It is situated in Val D’Orcia, prime land for the cultivation of Italy’s prized Brunello di Montalcino grape. Wine making appears not to be a diversion for Chia, rather he merges his identity and experience as visual artist with the artisanal tradition of wine making: ‘I never wanted a country house but rather a place where to work and live. I like a laboratory and I need my instruments: I deal with the theme of wine as I do that of painting.’ Chia designs the bottle labels apparently unperturbed by the possible effects of mechanical reproduction, viewed 10 August 2019, <<https://www.castelloromitorio.com/origins.aspx>>.

⁹ Chia 2018. La Salita was founded by Gian Tomaso Liverani in 1957 and ranked among the most prestigious Roman contemporary art galleries alongside Fabio Sargentini’s L’Attico and Plinio De Martiis’ La Tartaruga. See: Lancioni 1998 and 2002.

¹⁰ Bergson 1911: 273.

Ginsburg captured in 1985. Introductions are made and I'm offered a seat and coffee, a gesture I don't take for granted having read *Flash Art* editor Giancarlo Politi's article titled *A standing interview*.¹¹

'So, you're Dutch?' he asks. 'I'm doing my doctoral research at the University of Amsterdam, but I'm Canadian.' 'Ah, my wife is Canadian, she was born in Montreal.' 'Yes, Marella Caracciolo.'¹² 'That's right.' 'Thanks very much for agreeing to this interview, maybe we could start at the beginning.' 'Or at the end,' he suggests (Figure 53.2).

*

SM: I'm curious about the facts surrounding your apparent transition from conceptual art to neo figurative painting. I'm thinking of what you have identified as your debut exhibition, *L'Ombra e il suo Doppio* at Liverani's La Salita gallery in 1971. From what I understand, you had originally planned an installation that consisted of projecting shadows of a series of objects on the gallery wall, but then you decided instead to use large canvases as the projection background and outline the shadows in pencil.

SC: We decided on the canvases because we wanted something tangible to remain after the installation was removed. Liverani wanted to sell them separately, thinking that they could eventually be recomposed.

SM: It seems that what we could call traditional approaches, painting and drawing, were always insistently seeping into your research, even in the beginning when you were following conceptual trends.

SC: That's true, but more than painting, it was the idea of painting.¹³

¹¹ Politi recounts (2018): 'In those days, well maybe always, Sandro was full of himself, he was well aware of his means and abilities. I remember when he received us, he was sitting at a small table in his studio and for the entire duration of our chat he didn't even invite us to sit down.'

¹² Chia, of solid middle-class origin, has been married twice, both times to women descended from Italian aristocracy. His first marriage was to Paola Iglioni (m. 1980–86) whom he met in Rome and with whom he moved to New York in 1980. His second, current wife, is Marella Caracciolo, daughter of the historian Nicola Caracciolo, founder of the Italian periodical *L'Espresso* and daily newspaper *La Repubblica*, and niece of Donna Marella Caracciolo di Castagneto, wife of FIAT chairman Gianni Agnelli.

¹³ During his guest speaker intervention at Rome's Temple University (2000) Chia gave a more detailed narrative of the so-called Italian 'painting revival': 'It's not true that it was a return to painting, nothing returned: rather, it was a story told by gagsters: why should we search for truth? We used paintings to scandalize, as simulation to proffer all the paintings or all the history of painting. You want a masterpiece? Here's your masterpiece, I did it. It's not a reproduction it contains all the experience all the intensity necessary to be a



Figure 53.2. Sandro Chia. Artist's studio. Montalcino, 18 July 2019. Photograph by Stephanie Morin.

SM: You do often refer to your work as meta painting, by which I believe you mean focusing on the techniques and thought processes behind painting rather than on the painting itself. Why this deflection?

SC: Let's look at the Liverani show. There were four canvases, after I had drawn the outlines, I mixed them up and so these fragments lost coherence, became unrecognizable. I went to Via della Scrofa and bought a rubber stamp from a shop that I had often walked past thinking I should do something with rubber stamps, so this was the occasion. I ordered a stamp with the phrase 'Frammento d'ombra.' The shop owner gave it to me on credit, I'm positive I never paid him. It's a homage to Artaud, *The Theatre and its Double*. Overall, it was a stratagem, a mechanism to enter the game. You must understand that the show reflects the heterogenous approach to art surfacing at that time. For example, I would read a page in a book and felt that I understood it then I would go to another book and another, making connections. It was like a battle ground where everything collided. The remains were collected from the battleground. Some things stayed, some receded, but there was no rationale behind these arbitrary connections.

masterpiece but it's not the real thing because it's no longer the time to make a real thing' (Antomarini 2000: 95).

SM: Mario Diacono was another influential figure among the Roman gallerists, although he wouldn't call himself a gallerist. How was your encounter with him?

SC: We did a magazine together *e/o* [and/or]. I invented the title.¹⁴ I met him by chance. He had just come back from America, dressed like Allen Ginsberg. Diacono worked with Sanguinetti and Vittorio Conci. He taught in America, so he brought an international flair with him and inspired us to go beyond the borders of Italy. *Manierismo*, alienated art comes to the fore, it becomes the subject of the artist who is free to choose his subject, free yet abandoned. The manual gesture, from that came 'the decapitated hand.' The distinguishing gesture.¹⁵

SM: The fact that neo figurative painting flourished in what for example art critic Jerry Saltz has defined as the 'profligate, well-fed, anything-goes, politically incorrect '80s' is linked by critics and cultural analysts to its being supported by the neo liberal privatized art system, a market that demanded objects that were easier to promote and sell than conceptual art. What do you make of this analysis?

SC: In the '80s we began to ask ourselves, 'why don't we just go directly back to painting?' but, for us, and I insist on this fact, it wasn't painting for painting's sake, it was painting for the painter's sake, painting as an expressive means, like in the Caves of Lascaux, stylized representation that served to pass on notions of forms and cultural events. The idea was to create a new image of the artist. A new operator that made art through procedures and ideology that was different from those who had founded the previous generation of conceptual artists.

SM: Going back to the end of the 1970s, just before Transavanguardia was about to explode onto the international art scene after the 1980 Venice Biennale, if one looks at shows such as *Le Stanze* (Genazzano, 1979–80), *Arte Cifra* (Cologne, 1979), *Opere fatte ad Arte* (Acireale, 1979), other artists were there exhibiting with what would soon become known in America as 'the famous five:' you, Clemente, Cucchi, De Maria and Paladino. The other artists were established but they didn't acquire the same quality of spectacular international fame as the five members of Transavanguardia did.

SC: We did exhibit with many other artists, their work was interesting, original, but if we had had to rely on those shows things wouldn't have developed for us as they did. Things stopped short for the many ambitious, intense artists, many established 'groups' that we exhibited with. They didn't make history. We did make history, but due to incidental factors.

SM: Incidental in what sense?

SC: In the sense that there occurred a series of coincidences and contingencies, a network suddenly proliferated, someone in coincidence with someone else and someone else again decided that we were the novelty, a group of 'young artists,' which is a contradiction in terms, how can an artist be young? Artists are ancient, you don't 'become' one.

SM: Transavanguardia, if we choose to collect five painters under a term that may be seen as arbitrary...

SC: Yes, totally arbitrary.

SM: The event itself did re-legitimize painting in terms of proposing a tangible object that could be diffused into the then budding art system. For example, Pio Monti has been quoted as saying 'paintings were much easier to sell than ideas' in a conversation.

SC: Yes, but those results were accessories to the event, that which happens when you release an object onto the market, into a system of exchange. The interesting aspect as far as I'm concerned, which distinguishes the 1980s and Transavanguardia is the instrumental, opportunistic use of painting, deprived of any notion of passion or talent, purely technical, fortuitous, that in the end leads one to talk not about painting but about meta painting, as I was saying earlier, painting in terms of something else.¹⁶

SM: These qualities, or lack of qualities, you mention seem definitive, almost dogmatic. Was being associated with the Transavanguardia label a burden, as Cucchi has said?

SC: No... no, not really. All said and done, art in recent history hasn't been significant enough to require a label, a definition. When that happens it always happens for the wrong motives. 'Fauves' are so called because someone decided that they painted like

¹⁴ See Diacono 1972.

¹⁵ *The Decapitated Hand: 100 Italian Drawings* focused on spontaneity within the manual gesture and was the first exhibit showing four of the five Transavanguardia artists together outside of Italy. See Faust *et al.* 1980. See also Belloni 2008.

¹⁶ 'Quotation, homage, camouflage, parody remake and other metalinguistic strategies seemed to have distinguished the contemporary Italian art from international art and to have reinforced the cliché about the inescapable influence of its past splendour.' (Hecker and Sullivan 2020: 37).

beasts. It wasn't the Impressionists who invented Impressionism. Transavanguardia was a term that was grafted on with a touch of irony. The fact that it was derided and sneered at indicates that the event is important, but for frivolous reasons not interesting ones. It's due to this fact that it is highly socially relevant.¹⁷

SM: Your relationship with Achille, was he difficult to contend with?

SC: Achille was like one of us, an artist in his own right, with all his connections, all his, how would you say, political and social contacts, contacts that we didn't have because we didn't give a damn. We were rouges, we had no agenda. We weren't about to go up to the town councillor of Genazzano and say, 'Would you give us an exhibition space?' We needed someone who could do it for us.

SM: A promoter?

SC: He was a trainer, a coach, an agent, and also an artist. Differently from others that were hanging around.

SM: You mean Barilli, Calvesi.

SC: No, that was another generation, academic windbags. Achille was fun, he liked joking around.

SM: Parthenopean?

SC: Right, Parthenopean.

SM: Marc Bagnoli and Remo Salvadori, they were listed as part of the group in Bonito Oliva's Transavanguardia manifesto published in *Flash Art* in 1979.

SC: They were never included; it was a question of Milanese political dealings. In Italy all kinds of things happen, they can tell you that Christ died in his sleep. But it's reductive, misleading, to call it a 'group,' it's not a group. It was a process, involving the same dynamics that I mentioned when creating a painting, you unite people, arbitrarily put elements together within a given frame, red drops down accidentally or you thought to add green and it turns out yellow, there are accidents along the way that are incorporated, the dynamics expand beyond that frame and never stop, even in interpersonal relationships, the same arbitrariness,

fortuity intervenes. So the 'group' consisted of people who shared common goals and interests, it was homogenous in that sense, we would meet and awake a similar curiosity in each other, an exchange of glances was enough to establish a tacit understanding. If you look at the few photographs that exist of us together, there exist maybe three or four, you can see the similar physical conformation, attitude, this astute gaze, a synergy. There is also the fact that the art system needed to celebrate four or five artists, no more. There was an absolute need.

SM: How was this need determined, manifested?

SC: There was a well-developed mechanism for selling art, but the product was lacking. Conceptual art – earlier you mentioned Monti's comment – was difficult to sell. There is the issue of contextualization that regards conceptual art, it is dependent upon context, upon factors external to it if it is to be perceived as art. A Brillo box for example, you have to take it out of the supermarket and put it in a museum for it to be contemplated as art. Conceptual art was ephemeral you could run into it on the street, and it would be there one day and gone the next because the garbage collectors removed it thinking it was trash. Had they found a painting on the street they would likely have taken it home and hung it on the wall. Painting is a world held together by its internal rules, part of a shared aesthetic repertoire. This is why painting doesn't need museums.

SM: The art restorer, Claudio Di Giambattista, he seemed to have been an important figure for the Transavanguardia artists, in a technical sense, even though you yourself come from formal academic training.

SC: Yes, sure, he was instrumental in that sense. What you should realize is that the art academies in Italy did not provide formal artistic training in the traditional sense of the term: anatomy, perspective, painting, drawing. After the events of 1968 they became centres for discussion, political debate, confutation of art, we were by no means standing in front of an easel being taught to paint by a great master. We gathered to discuss revolution, politics.

SM: Nonetheless, your work was disengaged from politics.

SC: No, not necessarily, at night when you were tired, and stoned... should I have said that?... inevitably it all came together. We were coming from a culturally engaged generation, not ludic. They needed to expand

¹⁷ During the abovementioned lecture (Antomarini 2000) Chia gave a somewhat different impression: 'The term "Transavanguardia" was not invented by Achille Bonito Oliva – it's true that it was a burden on us... We were looking for a term that would express the notion of 'crossing' thresholds of experience, as a form of initiation.'

their social conscience, with that came the ensuing theory and rhetoric. But at the end of the day, you understood that though it seemed you had spent the whole time talking about politics actually you had been discussing art, painting. There were those who knew they were painters and those who had yet to realize it.

SM: What role did Di Giambattista play in all this?

SC: Claudio was among those who had understood that there was something, let's not say new, but interesting happening, which was worth investing one's abilities in. They were all very capable people.

SM: Capable in what sense?

SC: I mean people who knew how to move through the system, knew who to contact when it came to setting up an exhibition, publishing a catalogue, a book. A network opened up. There was a group, let's put it this way, of rowdy, undisciplined guys that nevertheless attracted people and followers.

SM: You mean yourself, Cucchi, Clemente, Schnabel, Basquiat etc.

SC: Yes, then at the Biennale we were all together (1980).

SM: At this point the Italy/America connection developed. You moved to New York in the '80s, became a US citizen.

SC: Let's say that then, even today, New York represented the frontier of America. At the time it was conceived of as far away and dangerous, hostile, what with the events in Vietnam etc. Artistically conceptual art dominated, 'white art' done by university educated Anglo-Saxons.

SM: Enemy territory?

SC: That's right, enemy territory. I remember the first time I walked into Sperone Westwater Fischer, it was then the cathedral of conceptual art. Sperone wasn't there, only Westwater and Fischer. My canvases were loose and rolled up so I could transport them cheaply, I certainly didn't have the money to ship them stretched. I unrolled them on the floor and the first thing Fischer and Westwater did was plug their noses and complain how awful the canvases smelled, then they left because they said they were allergic to painting. But it was interesting because finally war had been declared, and so it was a welcome situation.

SM: So Achille has a point then when he talks about a war.

SC: Yes, we were irresponsible. We defied people who were immensely bigger than we were. And we paid for it.

SM: How so?

SC: Well, at a certain point a truce was broken. Let's compare Italian art to German art – putting aside any intrinsic qualities – in an organizational, institutional sense they had a lot of support behind them: The Museum of Modern Art, Kunsthalle. We had no one, nothing.

SM: Wasn't the contact with Bischofberger important?

SC: Yes, but he was an art merchant like Mazzoli, with the difference that Bischofberger borrowed money at 3% and Mazzoli at 25%.

SM: In the late 1970s, early 1980s you seemed to have developed quite a close rapport with Enzo Cucchi.

SC: We were both pretty unruly.

SM: Apart from that what else tied you?

SC: Probably nothing, I found him intriguing. Physically he reminded me of the musician Mascagni, with that wild wavy hair. Everybody was kind of wary him, he could act crazy.

SM: I've read about some of his altercations. I encountered him recently, he was serene, forthcoming.

SC: Well sure, we've grown old you know, his aggressivity has mellowed, or he has sublimated it somehow, but at the beginning of the war he was extremely volatile, during a dinner he could attack the host, speak badly of Jackson Pollock, Rothko, behaviour that can ruin your career.

SM: Not politically correct.

SC: We'd never even heard of the term then.

SM: Can you tell me about 'Tre o quattro artisti secchi,' how you two ended up at Mazzoli's?¹⁸

¹⁸ 'Tre o quattro artisti secchi' (Three or four shrivelled artists), Achille Bonito Oliva as curator, is held at Emilio Mazzoli gallery (Modena, 1978). The event signals the beginning of Transavanguardia. The title, Chia explains, refers to the creative process (Antomarini 2000: 97). Chia describes the artist as driven by the passion of doubt

SC: We were looking for an editor. We had Rostagno in mind, he was supposed to be our editor, but he had been put in jail the night before our appointment, arrested because of his involvement with the Red Brigades.¹⁹ Then I phoned Mazzoli a couple of times and he agreed to see us, we had money for a one-way ticket. We devised a plan to get the money for the return tickets by selling Mazzoli some drawings, so we did them on the train, on the toilet paper of the Italian state railway. He bought them, later he complained that he couldn't frame them because they were disintegrating.

SM: From what I've read you have always had a good business acumen, but there was the incident with Charles Saatchi.

SC: Well, in that instance... he was experimenting as an art dealer, he was very good at it. He had bought works by 'Pattern painters' who were our competitors. Then we arrived: he understood – he knew Bischofberger – that with us there was more 'beef.' But let's say we had become very cocksure, particularly me, it dictated our behaviour. I was convinced that a dealer, no matter how powerful, is always inferior to the artist. The artist is God, and those surrounding him are at best apostles, saints, but not God, we were playing God.

SM: This makes me think of Achille's desire to place himself on the same level as the artists.

SC: Sure, Achille could get away with it, more or less. But a dealer – no matter how powerful, an investor, head of Saatchi and Saatchi the huge advertising agency, instrumental in getting Thatcher elected – always remained inferior. I remember after my first show in London he held a huge party at his home, which was a deconsecrated church. He had this strange wife, she looked albino, a wonderful writer by the way, whom he ended up leaving. Anyway, it was I who was very aggressive, I attacked him verbally in public... he made me pay for it, and justly so.²⁰

SM: By 'offloading' his collection of your works on the market?

SC: No, no, that's just a myth, he claimed he was going to do so but instead he simply sold a relatively

arriving to the essential self through the purifying act of eliminating all that is superfluous.

¹⁹ Mauro Rostagno was a protagonist of 1968 and member of the left-wing activist group Lotta Continua. He was killed in 1988 during an ambush organized by the Sicilian Mafia.

²⁰ Chia refers to his solo exhibition at the Anthony d'Offay Gallery (London, 1980) and to Saatchi's then wife Doris Lockhart Dibley (married 1973–90), an art and design journalist specializing in American art and minimalism (Goldman 1998: 39).

small batch at normal market prices.²¹ The polemics originated from the fact that he had recently sold 36 works by Kiefer and he taunted me by saying 'I'm going to sell all of yours too.' 'Go ahead, do whatever you like,' I replied. I went on tilt, told him to go fuck himself and stop breaking my balls. It could have easily been avoided had I been more astute, as I am now. I've become wiser. But it was the beginning of the 1980s there was this atmosphere of omnipotence. Saatchi said it well in his book, he said that I had successfully entered the artworld, the problem was how to get out.²²

SM: What would you define as the relationships that sustained you the most, or the ones that created the most problems.

SC: Problems?... none really. I consider myself to be very privileged and lucky. I thank God or the Gods, whatever, for what happened and what is. I never craved anything that I have obtained.

SM: Right place right time as Clemente says?

SC: Yes, that's it.

SM: Didn't Warhol play an important role when you first arrived in New York?

SC: Yes, he was this mythical figure in Italy, but in fact he was a very straightforward person. Very polite and respectful, he would listen intently to everything you said. He was funny, intelligent, and sincere. He made you want to be like him, humble. The whole crowd there was like that. You understood why they were famous, they deserved it, they were humble, inquisitive. I was nobody when I met them, but there was an immediate sense of unspoken comradeship as though your rapport had begun long before you met.

SM: How did you get along with Lucrezia De Domizio Durini?

SC: Very capable, very political. She supported Beuys. She was married to Barone Durini, she was the husband he was the wife. They were persons of quality,

²¹ An article in *The Wall Street Journal* (Crow 2006) discusses the effects of early success on artistic careers: 'The last great raid on youthful artists in the 1980s produced names like Keith Haring, Jean-Michel Basquiat and David Salle. But there were cautionary tales even then. In 1984, collector Charles Saatchi sold off seven paintings by Italian artist Sandro Chia, and afterward the artist's market value was depressed for years. "I don't buy art to ingratiate myself to artists," Mr Saatchi told the Art Newspaper. Mr Chia didn't return requests for comment.'

²² Saatchi 2009.

each having different qualities. They had this villa in Abruzzo.

SM: She claims that's where she witnessed Transavanguardia being planned.

SC: No, that's not true. She worked with the preceding generation, including us and De Dominicis, when we were doing conceptual work.

SM: Then everybody headed for Rome.

SC: But the money was in Umbria, Macerata. Mazzoli had Schifano, Tano Festa. Transavanguardia came after. When Durini came to Rome there was a crisis, she was already out of the picture.

SM: Shortly after Transavanguardia was launched everyone set out on different paths, you and Clemente set up your studios in New York.

SC: Yes, it became international, when you talk about Lucrezia, Pio Mont, Mazzoli, they were all local. New York was fun there was music, restaurants... Rome was very limited and dogmatic, and I would say provincial, though it's not very flattering.

SM: Perhaps also masculinist. Why were woman not included in Transavanguardia?

SC: Well, had there been one around... there was Susan Rothenberg, but it wasn't in the books unfortunately, for motives regarding upbringing, inculcated behaviour. It's the fault of Italian mothers who bring up their sons telling them they're the most handsome, the most intelligent. The daughter was raised as a household accessory. Women artists have proven themselves throughout history, look at Artemisia Gentileschi, Camille Claudel to name just two. But it's a socio-cultural challenge and for that reason very interesting. It presents a situation where there is art that has been done and art that has not been done.

SM: Do you agree with Deleuze's statement that art contains no information, that it communicates nothing beyond being an act of resistance?

SC: More than communicating it exposes; for example, one arbitrarily establishes the confines of a territory – the canvas – within that territory you make things happen, things that can be intentional others unintentional, the artist moves arbitrarily believing that he controls the dynamics within this territory, but it's a battle ground, again the metaphor of war. That's

where the mythological aspect comes in. Theseus who enters the labyrinth in search of the Minotaur, kills him and comes back out with the Minotaur's head as a trophy. Painting is like that, you go to hell and back, returning with the painting.

SM: There seems to be an air of romanticism in what you describe. Yet, the qualities of lightness and irony that define Transavanguardia, through its promotional rhetoric at least, seem not to coincide with notions of romanticism.

SC: It's ludic, the irony lies in toying with death, comedy, paraphrasing tragedy. But it does not reflect a Christian world, sin, forgiveness and redemption. The future is death there is no escape. During the Renaissance there was this tacit neo-platonic notion that is by no means uplifting, there's the Conradian horror, or the acceptance of the transient nature of all things as expressed by Rilke.

SM: How do you perceive painting now? Is it feasible?

SC: Painting is no longer feasible. It is the search of the artwork that finally ends with the artwork itself. Painting occurring now is an exception because it's 'out of time' in all senses. It requires courage and they are unique pieces but it's a closed chapter in history that cannot repeat itself. The match is finished, it's gone overtime, there is the 'golden goal' at stake, it remains to be seen who will win. Our times are very inspiring, anything goes. Cheating is important, when the game leads up to the last round the game is suspended, we are tragically free.

SM: You continue to paint though, both in Italy and the States.

SC: I go wherever I please, I do what I want. I have no definite plans. I go to Miami where I have a studio, there's a swimming pool. It's fun, I enjoy myself.

SM: Could we say that you're in a position now to maintain only the rapports that please you?

SC: Yes, in fact I have almost no rapports.

SM: Did you manage to do what Saatchi said, get out of the art world?

SC: That's right, nobody breaks my balls. I could say that I'm concentrated on my work, but it wouldn't be true. I work better when I'm not concentrated. The work comes out better, but to get to that level is

frustrating, you need to concentrate to arrive to a state of non-concentration.

SM: So now shows, commissions, are they just pretexts for a spontaneous production?

SC: Yes, pretexts, you work, pretend to be busy. There is nothing spontaneous about art, there never has been. I don't think there is anything spontaneous in Giotto, Cimabue. It was always a predetermined production developed within the confines of a very severe and demanding audience, there was someone who did the cartoon, someone mixed the colours etc. If anybody showed spontaneity, they'd kick his ass out on the street.

SM: How do feel about your work now?

SC: Sometimes I'm satisfied, at times disgusted, at times fed up. It's my life but I don't accept it, it's an illusion. I realize now that all that surrounds me is an illusion. The older you become the more pathological this gets. Driving becomes dangerous because the truck that I see coming towards me I perceive as an illusion, like Napoleon heading to Waterloo. 'Look! The Prussians are coming!' 'Pay no heed!' he said, he knew that he was losing the battle but if you don't see something it doesn't exist. That's the artist, all based on seeing, he's condemned in that sense.

SM: I get the impression of a very solitary voyage.

SC: Yes, very much so, alarmingly solitary, I can be alone for months, my voice changes because I talk to myself, but I've never experienced the anxiety of solitude... strange. I never phone anybody.

SM: Not even Enzo?

SC: I consider him a friend, but we meet only by chance, it never occurs to me to phone him.

SM: You were the only one who called him when he was fighting cancer in 2015.

SC: Well... he's immortal, there was really no need for concern.

SM: Transavanguardia?

SC: The story can be told for perhaps another generation, then it will unravel, no one will be around able to tell it. Transavanguardia is hated, it's the most

hated movement there is. That's a good sign. It's not only hated it's despised, like Jesus Christ. Fantastic.

SM: Conspiracy theories?

SC: The motives are rational which renders the argument very dangerous for the one who deals with it, for the one who speaks about it. There is a persecution complex. They'll probably poke your tyres.

End

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'Ridentem pingere verum, quid vetat?'

Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius

No other art form has been subjected to as dramatic shifts in reputation as caricature.¹ From the time of its introduction in Italy at the dawn of the seicento, *caricatura* was welcomed as an experiment, an alternative way of achieving likeness through deformation, attracting top Italian artists, collectors, and connoisseurs alike, its appreciation confirmed by inclusion into the first dictionary of art published by Filippo Baldinucci.² Outside Italy, however, its reception differed considerably, ranging from amusement to a veritable frenzy, and to an outward disapproval. Although condemned on aesthetic and ethical grounds in Britain and Germany,³ caricature kept invading all types of arts, to be acclaimed an essential art form of modernity by Baudelaire a century later.⁴ Its intense scrutiny from 1900 onwards by social sciences, history, literature, media studies, and art history, generated a plethora of diverse assessments of caricature's mechanisms, and of its volatile relations to power.⁵ This text focuses on one episode in those controversies, when the connoisseur Charles Rogers rose in defence of Pier Leone Ghezzi.

Cavaliere Ghezzi

Pier Leone Ghezzi (1674–1755) was the first artist whose international reputation was both prompted by, and to a surprising extent overshadowed, by caricature. By no means was this the only art form he practiced. Son of the well-established artist Giuseppe Ghezzi, who held the post of permanent secretary of the Accademia di San Luca, the grandson and protégé of Carlo Maratti, Pier Leone grew up in a house full of art books (Figure 54.1),⁶ and did not miss any opportunity to further his illustrious career. He became Academy member in 1705, took over his father's position as secretary, to be appointed by Pope Clement XI as the painter of Camera



Figure 54.1. Niccolò Billy after Giovanni Domenico Campiglia after Pier Leone Ghezzi, *Self-portrait*, 1762. Engraving. Florence, Uffizi. In Moücke 1752–1762: Vol. IV. In the Public Domain.

Apostolica in 1708. He landed at the top of the Roman art world when still in his forties, as affirmed by his self-portrait which displays proudly the cross of a knight he received in 1710 (Figure 54.2).⁷ An impressive list of papal offices entrusted to Ghezzi over the years included

¹ I would like to thank Katrin Bellinger and Anita Sganzerla for their help in preparing this text.

² Baldinucci 1681: 29. For the historiography of Italian caricature, see Cheng 2008.

³ Rebmann 2013.

⁴ Baudelaire 1995.

⁵ For an overview, see Murawska-Muthesius 2021: 130–33.

⁶ As shown on his early self-portrait in Katrin Bellinger's collection, reproduced in Damm *et al.* 2013: 29–42.

⁷ Da Empoli 2008: 11–12. This self-portrait, painted by Ghezzi c. 1719, was included in the Uffizi Gallery of self-portraits by the celebrated artists. Engraved by Giovanni Domenico Campiglia, and transferred by Niccolò Billy, it was published next to the entry on Ghezzi in vol. IV of a large album compiled by Francesco Moücke (Moücke 1762: 218).



Figure 54.2. Pier Leone Ghezzi, *Self-portrait at the age of 15*, c. 1689. Drawing, pen and brown ink, 18.8x15.3cm. Katrin Bellinger collection. Courtesy of Katrin Bellinger.

that of art collections, the manufacture of tapestries and mosaics, supervision of festive decorations and fireworks, as well as architectural sites. He was also known for his musical talents and social skills which secured him patronage of the Roman nobility and high churchmen, including the powerful cardinals, Annibale Albani and Alessandro Falconieri.⁸

Ghezzi could not complain about the lack of commissions for altarpieces, portraits, or illusionistic murals in private residences in the Roman campagna,

but he was always engaged in what Anthony Clark called 'peripheral occupations,' that of gem engraver, antiquarian, anatomist, book-designer, or restorer.⁹ Especially prominent among them was caricature drawing which he practiced all his life, and increasingly so in his later years. Using his ability to sum up the body, gestures, and personality of the sitters in a few lines, he portrayed his noble patrons, their courtiers and guests, famous artists and musicians at work, as well as countless members of staff in papal households, from priests, chaplains, and monks of different status,

⁸ Da Empoli 2008: 9–32.

⁹ Clark 1981: 12.

as well physicians, gardeners and cooks to minor servants going about their daily routines. He excelled in presenting all of them as individuals, characterised by their body language and dress, down to the type of shoes they were wearing, as well as by the meticulously recorded surroundings, interiors, and props. Their professional status was always explained additionally in long captions at the bottom, which invariably included his signature 'Cav[aliere] Ghezzi.' He also kept representing himself, at all stages of his life, and in all kinds of media, oil, chalk, ink, and plaster. Unlike the ceremonial portraits, it is the caricature drawings that preserved the record of the artist's aging body and face, his slumped posture, and the receding upper jaw (Figure 54.3).¹⁰ Ghezzi left over 4000 caricatures, many of them assembled in albums, such as the eight volumes he compiled himself and presented to Pope Benedict XIV, entitling them appropriately *Il Mondo Novo*.¹¹

Despite the undeniable *doctus artifex* credentials, Ghezzi came to be known in Britain almost exclusively in his capacity as caricaturist, and this is how he is largely remembered outside Italy.¹² Unlike Bernini, who a century earlier advertised his caricature skills while sculpting the marble portrait of Louis XVI in front of the king and courtiers,¹³ Ghezzi did not travel outside Italy to demonstrate his talents as a mainstream artist. Thus, his reputation in Britain had to rest only on the fame of the 'witty caricatures' he made of English Grand Tourists in Rome. Many of those drawings were subsequently engraved by one of Ghezzi's Roman friends Arthur Pond and circulated with the second set of Pond's publishing project *Prints in Imitation of Drawings* (1637–42), which was devoted solely to caricatures in British collections, most of them by Ghezzi.¹⁴ Appealing to artists, amateurs and the public alike, Ghezzi's caricatures are widely regarded as the first heralds of the caricature boom, soon to erupt in mid-Georgian London.¹⁵

'Characters and Caricaturas'

By the 1840s, however, there was no consensus in the British art world as to the value of caricature as an art form. One of the staunchest opponents was William Hogarth (1697–1764), whose steadfast aversion to caricature, pronounced repeatedly during his career right until the end, seems to welcome some further



Figure 54.3. Pier Leone Ghezzi, *Self-Portrait while sitting at the table and drawing*, c. 1747. Drawing, brown ink on paper, 27x18.5cm. Vienna, Albertina, inv. 1210. In the Public Domain.

research, built upon what has already been established by Paulson, West and others.¹⁶ Clearly, Hogarth's hostility to this new art form was grounded in his well-known distrust of Italian art in general, and of connoisseurs and dealers in foreign 'old masters' in particular, held by him responsible for thwarting the development of the English school of art. What merits attention are the ways in which all strands of Hogarth's animosity converged on Ghezzi. He grappled with Ghezzi's drawings over the years, debunking and investigating the phenomenon of caricature at the same time. Concerned by the affinity between satire and caricature, Hogarth was doing all he could to distance himself from the latter. In order to strengthen his position, he joined ranks with contemporary authors supporting his views, sought help in aesthetic treatises, studied the caricature mechanism, and even tried to emulate it, endlessly reformulating his arguments

¹⁰ Another version of this portrait is in Biblioteca civica di Fossombrone, Pier Leone Ghezzi, *Self-Portrait at the Age of 73*, 1747. On Ghezzi's self-portraits, see Dania 2015: 26–28.

¹¹ Bodart 1976; Olszewski 1983; Rostirolla 2001; Rodinò 2014.

¹² See Wittkower 1999: 98–99.

¹³ Chantelou 1985: 187–88.

¹⁴ Hake 1922.

¹⁵ Lippincott 1983.

¹⁶ Paulson 1991 and 1993; West 1999.

against the medium. In the end, he was almost consumed by the desire to demonstrate, once and for all, caricature's shallowness, repulsiveness, and crudity, both by the force of his stylus and his pen. Typically for his work strategies, Hogarth articulated his views in the form of elaborate prints which incorporated both visual and textual counterparts, resembling the rhetoric of manifestos. They include the celebrated subscription ticket of 1843, his *Analysis of Beauty* (1853), and *The Bench*

(1864). Ghezzi, reduced by Hogarth to the *caricaturer*, constitutes the prime target of the first two.

Indeed, it was the success of Pond's prints mentioned above, which provoked Hogarth's first pamphlet against Ghezzi (Figure 54.4). Rather cunningly, he presented it under the guise of an announcement of his own series of prints *Marriage à la mode* (1843). The stratagem behind the design was conveniently supplied by Henry

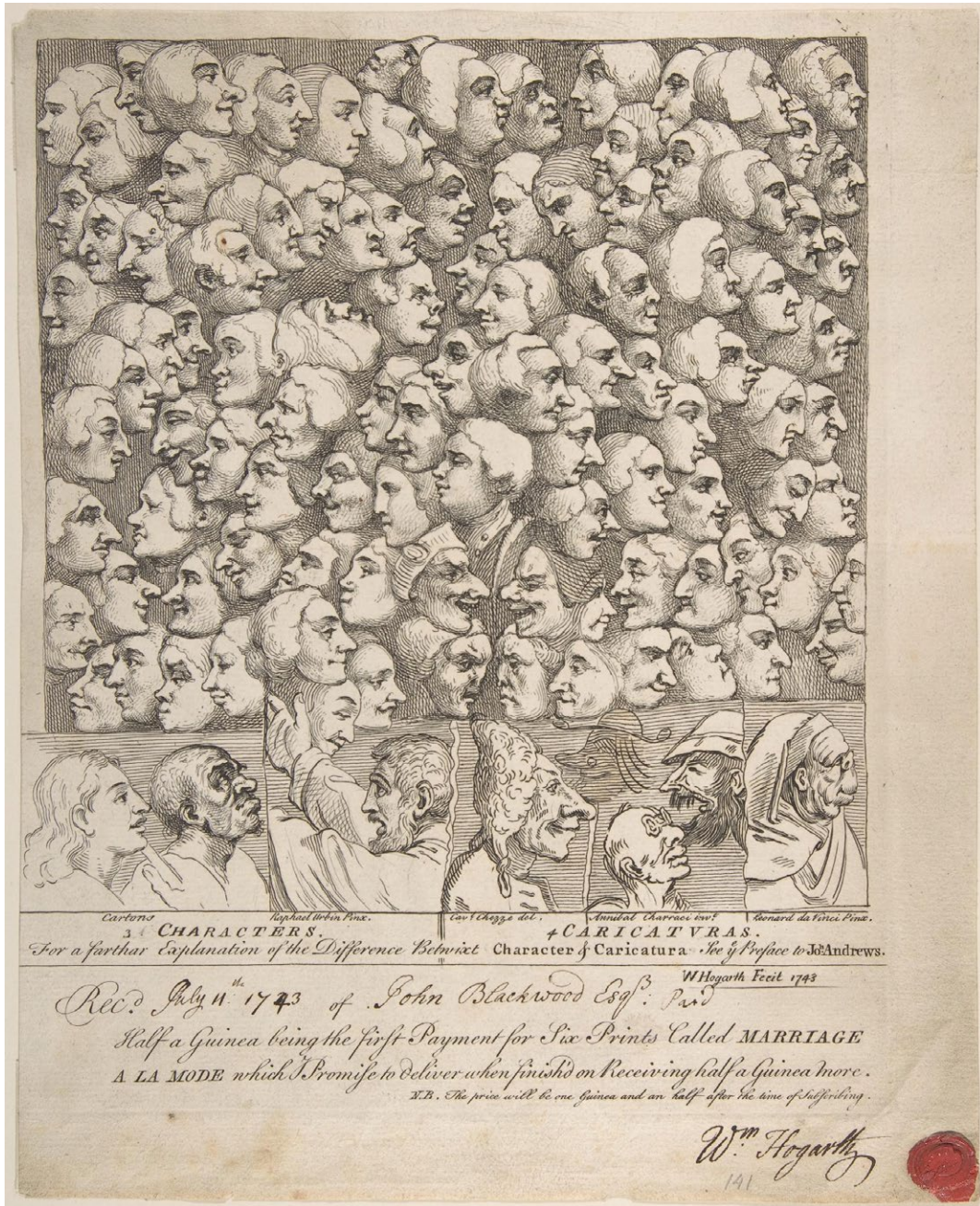


Figure 54.4. William Hogarth, *Characters and Caricaturas*, 1743. Engraving. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art. 91.1.55. In the Public Domain.

Fielding, the author of popular farces and pamphlets, who had just reinvented himself as novelist.¹⁷ In the Preface to his *Joseph Andrews* (1842), Fielding came up with a neat formula of distinguishing between the merits of the comic novel from the burlesque kind of writing. While the first is truthful to life, he argued, the other exhibits only 'what is monstrous and unnatural.' To explain the distinction better, he called on Hogarth, comparing the difference between Hogarth's comic history paintings, to 'those performances which Italians call *caricatura* (...) its aim is to exhibit monsters, not men; and all distortions and exaggerations whatever are within its proper province.'¹⁸ Fielding's plea could not have come at a better time for Hogarth. Not only did it clear the artist of any associations with the burlesque, but also handed him a shrewd theoretical argument on caricature's unsuitability for the task of revealing character. When translating those words into an image, with a prompt reference to Fielding, Hogarth showed his genius by summing them up as a distinction between *Characters and Caricaturas*, the leading terms of his subscription ticket.¹⁹ He designed the ticket as a won-in-advance battle between himself, the creator of *Characters* who 'appear to think,' and what he showed as a mixed bag of figures produced by the Italians since the Renaissance. An immense collection of heads from his own works is towering above the row of the 'monstrous' caricatures, squeezed at the bottom right. Raphael is spared as citations from his cartoons are classified as *Characters* and juxtaposed to the section of *Caricaturas* on the right. The latter, unsurprisingly, includes reproductions of the two prints from the Pond series. It opens with a grinning profile of Thomas Bentley by Ghezzi, followed by two bizarre faces, attributed to Annibale Carracci,²⁰ with a child-like scrawl between them to seal the verdict on caricature's artlessness. Hollar's print after Leonardo's grotesque head, daringly, closes this pageant of the corrupt and despicable. On closer investigation, the print reveals further jabs at Ghezzi: his name in the caption is misspelled as 'Chezze' while the *cavaliere* title is accompanied by a question mark instead of the usual abbreviation sign.

Ghezzi was also cast as enemy number one in Hogarth's treatise *Analysis of Beauty*, of 1753. Its text of many chapters develops one of the classical *topoi* on nature as the true source of beauty and is accompanied by two elaborate plates visualising his claims to help the readers to 'see with [their] own eyes.'²¹ Both are composed of a great many images, differing in scale, and assembled, not unlike a game-board, as a complex mixture of allegories, pictorial riddles, and diagrams. While the text does not call caricature by its name, the *Plate I* (Figure 54.5) more than affirms Hogarth's contempt towards the medium. A minuscule copy of yet another caricature by Ghezzi printed by Pond, *Dr James Hay as a bear leader*, placed towards top left, clearly stands out among all other images that reproduce famous works of art. To emphasise its difference, it is not marked with Arabic numerals like all others but described as 'Figure I' in conspicuously large letters. Although this swipe at Ghezzi did not seem to attract attention in literature, it is difficult to dispel a suspicion that the 'Figure I,'²² encapsulated the prime reason to begin this inquiry into the rules of beauty, becoming the very rationale for Hogarth's book. For those who could see with their eyes, it declared caricature a capital offence against beauty, and Ghezzi—its archenemy.²³

Hogarth was unable to free himself from the distress caused by his being mistaken for a caricaturist until the end of his life.²⁴ *The Bench* print (1758–64), on which he worked for several years, correcting it still on his deathbed, targets caricature for the final time. Its unusually long text attempts to sum up his views, but it appears today somewhat ambiguous, inconclusive, perhaps simply unfinished. It returns to the 'characters vs caricaturas' argument and to the scrawl comparison, but it also describes, not without a spark of interest, a 'caracatura' of an Italian singer, reduced to a 'straight perpendicular stroke with a dot over it.'²⁵ This time, Ghezzi is missing from Hogarth's diatribe whose anger turned now onto one of his followers, the British

¹⁷ Battestin *et al.* 1989.

¹⁸ Fielding 1967: 6–7.

¹⁹ Paulson 1991: 206–08; Hogarth 1833: 60.

²⁰ The problematic attribution of the caricature of two philosophers to Annibale Carracci stems from its location on the verso of Annibale's drawing *St Cecilia and St Valerian crowned by an Angel*, today in the British Museum, see Robertson *et al.* 1997: 118; cat. 70. The Ghezzi volumes in Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (see note 10) contain an almost identical drawing of the two philosophers, viewed 28 July 2024 <http://digi.vatlib.it/view/MMS_Ott.lat.3113/0251>. It is possible that both of the philosophers' drawings were made by Ghezzi, which is suggested by the visual analysis, as well as made probable by the provenance of Carracci's *St Cecilia* from the collection of Arthur Pond, a close companion of Ghezzi's during his stay in Rome (Hake 1922: 346).

²¹ Hogarth 1753: Introduction, 2.

²² 'Figure I' is mentioned just once at the beginning of Hogarth's Introduction as a 'burlesque representation... taken from a print publish'd by Mr. Pond, design'd by Cav.r Ghezzi at Rome.' (Hogarth 1753: Introduction, 3).

²³ Only Ephraim Gothold Lessing, the Prussian bard of the classical beauty in Rome, was to match the vehemence of Hogarth's disdain towards Ghezzi, when in his *Laocoon* (1764), he named Pyreicus, the painter of 'barbers' rooms and dirty workshops'—the 'Greek Ghezzi.' He went as far as to claim that the ancient Greeks condemned 'the unworthy artifice of obtaining a likeness by exaggerating deformities of the model,' and that this 'was, in fact, a law against caricature.' Lessing 1957: 8–10.

²⁴ Paulson 1993: 236–40.

²⁵ *The Bench*. Of the different meaning of the Words Character, Caracatura and Outrè in Painting and Drawing, engraving, first state, 1758, published after Hogarth's date, 1764. British Museum, inv. S.2.139.



Figure 54.5. William Hogarth, *Analysis of Beauty*, Plate I, 1753. Engraving. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art. 32.35(22). In the Public Domain.

amateur caricaturist George Townshend, featuring in the original dedication of the print.

'Ridentem pingere verum, quid vetat?'

Much to Hogarth's distress, his unresolved vendetta against caricature did not meet understanding among the collectors and connoisseurs, who, more familiar with the art worlds beyond the British Isles, would not turn their back to a caricature sketch by Ghezzi. One of them was Charles Rogers (1711–84). Like Hogarth, he was born into a middle-class family. He earned his living as a Customs official, spending his spare time on learning modern languages, and collecting prints, drawings, as well as art books. Rogers rose to become member of an international coterie of connoisseurs, so much despised by Hogarth. He never left England, buying art through his agents, and corresponding with Pierre-Jean Mariette, Robert Strange, Charles Townley,

Horace Walpole, as well as Arthur Pond. His letter, sent to Horatio Paul in January 1754, joins the mockery with which Hogarth's opinions were met in this milieu. Informing his friend about the publication of the *Analysis of Beauty*, he sneered 'The town is not I think divided in its opinion concerning [Hogarth's] performance: the Unlearned confess they are not instructed, and the Learned declare they are not improved by it.'²⁶

Rogers's stunning collection, partly preserved in the Cottonian Library, in Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery, testifies to his particular interest in artists' imagery which did not shun away from caricature.²⁷ He was buying in bulk in the auctions of the large collections of artists portraits, such as those of Nicola

²⁶ Letter to Horatio Paul from Charles Rogers, 21 January 1754, The Cottonian Collection, Correspondence of Charles Rogers: D22. On Hogarth's reception of the *Analysis of Beauty*, see Paulson 1993: 140–51 and McNamara 1996.

²⁷ See Murawska-Muthesius 2020.



Figure 54.6. Pier Leone Ghezzi, *Self-Portrait with a Jesuit procession at the background*, c. 1720. Drawing, pen and brown ink, 24.1x17.8cm. Katrin Bellinger collection. Courtesy of Katrin Bellinger.



Figure 54.7. William Wynne Ryland after Pier Leone Ghezzi, *Self-Portrait*, 1762. Engraving. In Rogers 1778: Vol. 1. n.pag. In the Public Domain.

Pio in Rome and Niccolò Gabburri in Florence, and this is how he came into possession of two self-portraits by Pier Leone Ghezzi.²⁸ He included one of them (Figure 54.6) into his magnum opus, *A Collection of Prints in Imitation of Drawings* (1778) in two volumes, prepared over at least twenty years, and described by Antony Griffiths as 'one of the most impressive art-historical writings of eighteenth-century England, running to no less than 463 pages of text accompanying facsimiles of 112 drawings.'²⁹ Although sharing the title used by Pond, Rogers' publication was of an entirely different kind, following a new model of art book, which had been established by Pierre-Jean Mariette, Pierre Crozat and Comte de Caylus when cataloguing the French top collections in 1729. Its novelty was the pairing of high-quality reproductive engravings with their analytical descriptions.³⁰ Like Mariette, Rogers employed the best engravers, and prepared 'vastly learned' entries³¹ with

detailed biographical information, as well as contextual analysis of the drawings themselves. Ghezzi's drawing received a special treatment. Rogers entrusted its reproduction to Wynne Ryland (Figure 54.7), came up with an intriguing caption and an insightful analysis, while turning the entry into an unprecedented discussion of the historiography of Italian caricature, based on the primary sources, from Lomazzo to Baldinucci, and to Hogarth, which he kept on the shelves of his own library.

The self-image of Ghezzi, drawn in red ink and mounted in an oval frame, had been commissioned directly from the artist by Gabburri, a diplomat to the Grand Duke Cosimo III Medici, whose collection of painter's self-portraits was to accompany his intended publication *Vite de' Pittori*.³² It must have been made when Ghezzi was in his fifties, c. 1620.³³ It differs from others by

²⁸ Turner 1993; Turner 2015.

²⁹ Griffiths 1993: 21.

³⁰ Haskell 2016: esp. 56–69.

³¹ Griffiths 1993: 21.

³² Turner 1993: 185, 209; Turner confirms that the Ghezzi self-portrait is today in the private collection of Katrin Bellinger in London (Turner 2015: 490 (ill.)).

³³ By comparison to two red chalk self-portraits by Ghezzi. One, probably also from the Gabburri collection, today in Hamburg Kunsthalle, dated to 1717, see Klemm 2009: cat. 242, 188–189;

combining a standard formula of the self-portrait with caricature. Ghezzi presents himself in the studio working on an image of the Virgin that stands on the easel, with a bunch of brushes in his left hand. He turns his body in an elegant *contrapposto* to look intently at the viewer, while pointing his right hand to a window. Considering that the first viewer would be Gabburri, all the body details are carefully executed, showing off the artist's skills in handling the parallel lines in the folds of his apron and the turban covering his head. A draped curtain, and an elaborate frame with a description confirming Ghezzi's authorship complete the requirements of *decorum*.³⁴ But, as implied by his pose, his index finger, and the interactive gaze, what Ghezzi really wanted the viewer to see was the scene behind the window. It shows a procession of monks, probably Jesuits, carrying a large cross on their way to a church or a cemetery.³⁵ The window might well have been used as a reference to the Albertian window, to advertise Ghezzi's representational abilities. What seems to matter more, however, are both the ordinariness of the scene outside, unlikely to become the proper subject of a painting, and the mode of its execution. The monks' bodies and long robes are simplified, the *chiaroscuro* displays gone, and Ghezzi's attention is focused on their heads, bent in a pious reverence, raised to heaven, or staring ahead. The feature visible best from the distance are their noses, the standard earmark for the caricaturist, small and insignificant, enlarged and lumpy, or sharply elongated, as in the figure at the back. By squeezing several diverse images into one, the drawing becomes an inquiry into the conventions of imaging. It juxtaposes three different art genres, and at least two modes of representation, just to draw attention to the lowest of them, caricature. If inappropriate for a religious topic, or a decorous self-portrait, the drawing seems to argue, it is suitable for depicting what is seen through the window. It suggests a dilemma and presents Ghezzi in the process of weighing up his artistic options, as a painter virtually standing on the crossroads between *storia* and *mondo nuovo*, between grand manner and caricature.

This is precisely the reading provided by Rogers, who begins his entry going straight to the point:

accessible online, viewed 28 July 2024 <<https://www.hamburger-kunsthalle.de/sammlung-online/pier-leone-ghezzi/selbstbildnis>>. The other, from Nicola Pio collection, today in Stockholm-Bjurström 1995: cat. 52; Shoaf Turner 2015: 490 (ill.), accessible online, viewed 28 July 2024 <<https://collection.nationalmuseum.se/443/eMP/eMuseumPlus?service=ExternalInterface&module=collection&objectId=177834&viewType=detailView>>. Masson n.d., suggests the dating to mid 1620s.

³⁴ The frame is most likely added later, see Turner 1993.

³⁵ A comparable caricature of the Jesuits' Procession by Ghezzi is in Chatsworth, see Jaffé 1994: cat. 193, 76.

The artist seems in this drawing uncertain whether he should pursue history-painting, or design caricatures; as young Hercules was once undetermined whether he should attend to the precepts of virtue, or regard the allurements of pleasure: therefore this may be, not improperly, entitled 'The Choice of Ghezzi.'³⁶

He adds later with the same acumen, 'In his own portrait, which is here given, Ghezzi is better pleased with a droll procession of Jesuits, than with the heroic subject of a Madonna.'³⁷

The rest of the entry provides an outline of the origins of caricature and its historiography which cannot be given proper attention here. For the argument of this article, it is important to stress that Rogers, more than conversant with the discourse on caricature, past and present, approaches it as a legitimate mode of artistic expression which not only attracted the major artists, beginning from Leonardo (as claimed by Baldinucci), but was the subject of serious investigation by the top art writers of the seicento, as well as at least of an inquiry from the contemporary connoisseurs, including Mariette and Richardson.³⁸ Fully aware of Hogarth's crusade against Ghezzi, Rogers responded directly to his attempts to deny the powers of characterisation to caricature, by emphasising precisely the lasting value of Ghezzi's caricature portraits. He writes:

No one, however, has succeeded better in them than cav. Ghezzi; and his performances in this kind were so much admired by all travellers, that gentlemen as regularly requested their own caricatures of him, as their portraits of other painters. Some influences we have seen in his drawings, which although they were caricatures when first done, have, after some years, become very good, and even very favourable portraits; as he had the judgement never to deviate from nature, but only to exaggerate her strong markings.³⁹

Rogers' spirited defence of the cognitive value of caricature is most conclusively conveyed in the caption 'Ridentem pingere verum, quid vetat?' (What prevents a laughing person from painting the truth?), which he had engraved underneath the frame of Ghezzi's self-portrait. Although Rogers, occasionally, provided subtitles under the reproductions of drawings, almost all of them were

³⁶ Rogers 1778: 173.

³⁷ Rogers 1778: 176.

³⁸ Rogers does not forget about Hogarth and, referring to *The Bench*, which he owned (Cotton 1836, cat. 196–97, 104) remarks that in this print 'he has exhibited caricatures perfectly ridiculous' (1778: 174).

³⁹ Rogers 1778: 176.

taken either from the Bible or poetry just to explain the subject matter. Given that Ghezzi's is the only portrait which was granted an inscription, this already indicates that Rogers's interest was focused not only on the topic of representation, but also on the medium and, above all, on the relation between caricature and satire. The caption paraphrases the much-quoted line from a Horace satire 'Ridentem dicere verum, quid vetat?' (What prevents a laughing person from saying the truth?).⁴⁰ It was interpreted in eighteenth-century England as exemplifying the spirit of Horatian satire that, in contrast to Juvenile, satire operates by wit and a knowing smile rather than roaring laughter.⁴¹ The phrase circulated widely among the British *literati*, but it functioned also as a popular adage, and was quoted in all kinds of writings, including pamphlets and farces.⁴² Henry Fielding used it several times in his articles about laughter published in *The Craftsman*.⁴³ Rogers must have been familiar with it as well, as he had the first Italian edition of Horace's works in his library.⁴⁴ By exchanging just one word, 'dicere' into 'pingere,' Rogers adopted the phrase to the field of visual arts. By inserting the line 'What prevents a laughing person from painting the truth?' under Ghezzi's self-portrait which posits caricature-making as the painter's choice, Rogers vindicated caricature as an art form, acknowledging its aesthetic and cognitive values. In one stroke of the pen, as if emulating the medium's *modus operandi*, Rogers abolished the frontier between the ancient world of satire and the modern world of caricature, the boundary which had been defended by Hogarth, so vehemently, and ultimately, so unsuccessfully.

When his *Collection of Prints* was finally published in 1778, caricature, liberated from the connoisseurs' portfolios and aristocratic salons, has already been well established in Britain, making room for itself in the streets of London, and addressing widely diverse audiences. It was now eagerly awaited by the public gathered in front of the print shop windows to watch the new works by the rising party of caricaturists, soon to be joined by Gillray, Rowlandson and others. Entering the public sphere, caricature became not only the harbinger of public opinion, but also the enabler of the modern self. The body was to become the locus of meaning, precisely because it was imperfect and deformed, and even monstrous. It was to be marked by

class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and all other pointers of social difference, both for the tasks of subverting and maintaining the social order. Both Hogarth, the painter of the modern moral subject, and Ghezzi, the draftsman of the *mondo nuovo*, had their share in this process.

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⁴⁰ Horace, *Satires*, Book One, Satire 1, 24–25, see 1753: 6–7.

⁴¹ Horace 1753: Preface, i–xi.

⁴² Such as the play by Thomas Baker, *Tunbridge-Walks, or the Yeoman of Kent: A Comedy* (1703), which includes Horace's phrase in Latin used as motto on its cover.

⁴³ Battestin 2008.

⁴⁴ Quintus Horatius Flaccus 1559. The book is listed in Clark 1836: 160.

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Natural and artistic *Capricci* and *Bizzarríe*

Rodney Palmer

This is an appetiser. Joachim Dethlefs has over the decades increasingly become the expert on *Capriccio*;¹ I have researched *Bizzarría* since the 1990s. Having separately identified *capriccio* and *bizzarría* as specific terms in writing on visual culture from sixteenth-century Italy to nineteenth-century France, we have decided to co-author *A Caprice and Bizarre Reader: Terms for Artistic Innovation from Serlio to Baudelaire*. Our book will reveal connections between Italian *capriccio* and Goya's *Caprichos*, between 1500s *bizzarría* and Baudelairean *bizarrierie*. This essay will focus on vegetable and animal stimuli for bizarre and capricious aesthetics. The point of arrival here is the enigmatic Jesuit Filippo Buonanni's *Ricreatione dell'occhio e della mente, nell'osservation' delle chiocciole* (Rome 1681).

Italianate ideas mutated in their *Wanderstraßen* to and fro between France, Spain, Germany, the Low Countries, England and elsewhere. For example, once in Fontainebleau the methodical Sebastiano Serlio's talent diversified. Serlio's logical sequence of *Libri* on architecture was well in progress when in the 1540s he went off piste in his *Estraordinario Libro*. John Onians drew attention to Serlio's own emphasis on the environmental cause—human solitude in Fontainebleau forest—for the fantastic 'rustic' portals in his *Estraordinario Libro*.²

The fourth rustic portal in the *Estraordinario Libro* is a product of 'capriccio' and 'bizzarría'.³ Serlio's intended audience was 'bizarre people who seek after novelty'.⁴ Serlio reflected that he had been free to 'give vent to *bizarria* in mixed and licentious things'.⁵ Serlio gave himself licence to break architraves, friezes and



Figure 55.1. S. Serlio, *Estraordinario Libro*, Venice 1558: rustic portal IV.

cornices.⁶ Interrupting horizontals characterized 'bizarre' and 'capricious' architecture from Michelangelo Buonarroti to Andrea Pozzo. 'Capricious' and 'bizarre' architecture *per se* is another chapter of our *Reader*: one which, typical of the convincing weave of the *bizzarría* and *capriccio*, features many of the same protagonists as here (Figure 55.1).

While Italian *capriccio* gathered momentum in 1500s and 1600s semantics, its etymology and thus its precise meaning remained uncertain. The principal agent in

¹ Dethlefs 2018.

² Onians 1988: 280. Serlio 1558, 'Al... Re Enrico,' 'in questa solitudine di Fontanableo, dove sono più siere, che huomini... mi cadde nel animo de voler formare... alcune porte alla Rustica.'

³ Serlio 1558. Serlio 1619/1964, VI, 4v: 'La presente porta è tutta Dorica, mista col Rustico, et col tenero per Capriccio. Tenero è quel cuscino sopra i capitelli fatto per una bizzaria.'

⁴ Serlio 1558. Serlio 1619/1964, VI 16v: 'sempre furono, & sono, & saranno poi quanto io credo, delli huomini bizzari, che cercano novità.'

⁵ Serlio 1558. Serlio 1619/1964, VI, 18r: 'ho sfogato la bizzaria nelle cose miste, & licentiose.'

⁶ Serlio 1558: 'A gli lettori: 'licentie, rompendo... uno Architrave, il Fregio, & anchora parte della Cornice.'

the transfer of ‘caprice’ as an art term from Italian into Spanish art literature was Vicente Carducho (Florence 1576–Madrid 1638). Born Vincenzo Carduccio, as painter at Philip IV of Spain’s court he authored his *Dialogos on painting* as ‘Vincencio Carducho of the Illustrious Academy of the most noble city of Florence.’⁷ Carducho took the etymology of *capricho* to be from *capra* (goat) and connected it with artistic originality. The best painters are compared to goats ‘because they take difficult roads, inventing new concepts, and thinking freely beyond the tried and commonplace; at the cost of much work, along new paths in the mountains and valleys, they seek fresh pastures on which to nourish themselves; which sheep-like copyists do not, always following the leader. Thence arose the term of calling a painter’s novel thought *Capricho*.’⁸

Hence, *capricho* became a mark of artistic originality in subsequent Spanish art literature. Elsewhere, Carducho listed a dozen architectural activities; these lead into a dozen epithets of the ‘great architect,’ including both *bizzarría* and *capricho*.⁹

‘Bizarre’ and ‘caprice’ were amenable to suggesting nature’s artistry. Lorenzo Legati, in his catalogue of Ferdinando Cospi’s museum in Bologna, identified an arboreal prototype for the Solomonic column:

‘A pear branch naturally shaped like a spiral column of five twists ... The reason for this *bizzarría* being the shoot of a particularly tenacious type of ivy having entwined itself tightly around said branch when the latter was still tender, and tightly squeezed the parts to which it clung ..., only allowing the parts that it didn’t touch to grow’ (Figure 55.2).¹⁰

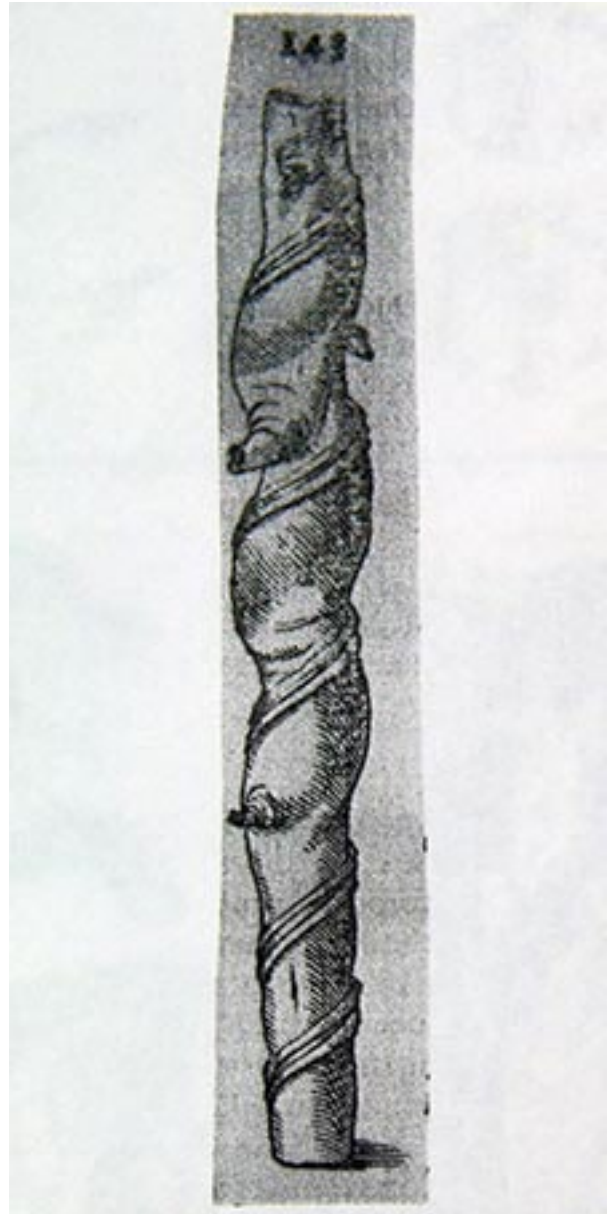


Figure 55.2. L. Legati, *Museo Cospiano*, Bologna 1677: 143
detail: wild pear branch entwined by ivy.

⁷ Carducho 1633: title page: ‘*Dialogos de la pintura por Vincencio Carducho, de la ilustre Academia de la nobilísima ciudad de Florencia.*’

⁸ Carducho 1633: fols 38r–45v: ‘*Dialogo Tercero, de la difinicion y esencia de la pintura, y sus diferencias*’: 41 r–v: ‘Los tales son comparados a las cabras, porque van por los caminos de la dificultad, inventando nuevos conceptos, y pensando altamente, fuera de los usados y comunes, por sendas nuevas, buscan por montañas y valles, a costo / de mucho trabajo, nuevo pasto con que alimentarse; lo que no hace la oveja, que siempre sigue el manso, a quien son comparados los copiadores. De ahí se tomó el frasis, de llamar al pensamiento nuevo del Pintor, *Capricho*.’

⁹ Carducho 1633: ‘*Dialogo Octavo: de lo practico del arte*’ 131r–161v: 138r (Carducho 1966, p. 58): ‘*NOMBRES Y VOCES DEL ARQUITECTO. El Arquitecto estudia, medita, discurre, raciocina, traza: rasguña, esquicia, dibuja, mueve, copia, delinea, de que toma nombre de grande Arquitecto, tracista, inventor, cortista, plantista, delineador, práctico, atentado, bizarro, cuerdo, prudente, noble, animoso, y caprichoso.*’

¹⁰ Legati 1677: Lib. II, Cap. XXVI, para. 8, 142–3: ‘*Ramo... il quale tiene la figura naturale d’una COLONNA COCLIDE di cinque volute... Fù cagione di questa bizzarría un tralcio di Periclemenio (erba nemorale, che come l’Ellera... ma più tenacemente s’avviluppa intorno alle Piante vicine) avviticchiatoseli strettamente all’intorno, quando questo Ramuscello era tenero, nè cedendo all’aumentarsi*

del legno, mentre fortemente comprimeva le parti, ch’egli cingeva, lasciò crescere speditamente solo quelle ch’ei non venne a toccare.’

Daniello Bartoli IHS put the case for spontaneous generation in his *La ricreatione del savio in discorso con la natura e con Dio*. He focussed in part on ‘animalucci’—flies, ants and other insects.¹¹ Francesco Redi’s *Esperienze intorno alla generazione degl’ insetti* responded to Bartoli’s discussion of the same topic. *Bizzarría*’s overtone of novelty plays its part in Redi’s refutation of the idea of spontaneous generation, by demonstrating generational evolution, to wit: ‘certain bizarre flies, entirely different from the two preceding generations in size and in shape.’¹²

Spiral shells were the most visually interesting vehicle for the concept of spontaneous generation, and of all topics of later 1600s observational science it is conchology that yields the most aesthetic vocabulary: notably *bizzarría* and *capriccio*.

Bartoli’s chapter on spiral snail shells ‘portable and mobile abodes’ is replete with architectural and artistic analogies.¹³ As part of his wider conceit of divine creativity, Bartoli compared ‘architects who struggle so to design volutes by rule’ with snails, ‘born mistresses in an art.’¹⁴ Bartoli’s passage on nature’s marvellous snail shells lists criteria, including ‘bizarre invention’ and ‘capricious shapes,’ associated with human artistry.¹⁵ His metaphor of the divine creation of shells preceding the techniques of visual media of his epoch includes ‘bizarrely ordered shells marvellously worked in the manner of inlay’ and of others ‘painted according to *capriccio*.’¹⁶

The spontaneous generation debate and its demonstrations culminate in Filippo Buonanni’s *Ricreatione dell’occhio e della mente, nell’osservation’ delle chiocciolle* (Figure 55.3). To dispose first of this sometimes startling and often beautiful book’s main defect: the hundreds of engravings from the original drawings are all back-to-front. The destrial spirals being in reverse did not overly concern Buonanni and



Figure 55.3. F. Buonanni, *Ricreatione dell’occhio e della mente, nell’osservation’ delle chiocciolle*, Rome 1681, Part IV, frontispiece.

his publishers: three years later the same engravings were reprinted in the Latin edition. The error was later undone in the otherwise inferior engravings to the *Musaeum Kircherianum* (Figure 55.3).

Buonanni is ambiguous. As a Jesuit he echoes the conservative Daniello Bartoli. The title *Ricreatione dell’occhio e della mente* reads as though a continuation of Bartoli’s *Ricreatione del savio*. Buonanni cites Bartoli word-for-word on shells’ ‘bizzarría dell’ inventioni... capricciose forme.’¹⁷ Buonanni’s chapter on sea shells’ variety develops the ‘bizarre’ and ‘capricious’ architectural analogy: Buonanni puts the rhetorical question of which is more beautiful: a bizarre volute or a capricious moulding.¹⁸ Buonanni elsewhere furthers Bartoli’s suggestion of natural artistry: crediting ‘Nature for her bizarre invention—before Art was

¹¹ Bartoli 1659: Cap. XIII: ‘Animalucci’: 205–23, l’Artificio ammirabile degli animali più piccoli,’ including flies.

¹² Redi 1668: 19. Redi 1809–11, VI (1810): 1–201, 19: ‘certe bizzarre mosche in tutto dalle due prime generazioni differenti e nella grandezza, e nella figura.’

¹³ Bartoli 1659: Cap. XI, 161–80: ‘La portatile, e viva habitacion delle Chiocciolle.’

¹⁴ Bartoli 1659: 173: ‘Architetti, che tanto penano a disegnar con regola le Volute... chi ne ha infusa la regola alle chiocciolle nate maestre in un arte.’

¹⁵ Bartoli 1659: 173: ‘non è il poter bastevolmente descrivere cio che han di maraviglioso le chiocciolle ne’ lor gusci: la bizzarría delle inventioni, la varietà de gli avvolgimenti, la vaghezza de gli ornamenti, la disposizione de’ colori, le capricciose forme.’

¹⁶ Bartoli 1659: 176: ‘certe, in vero maravigliose, lavorate in modo d’intarsiatura, con minuzzoli di più colori bizzarra[m]e[n]te ordinati... Le più sono dipinte a capriccio.’

¹⁷ Buonanni 1681: Cap. VIII ‘Varietà’ 84–93: 85, cites Bartoli 1659: 173: ‘La bizzarría dell’ inventioni ... le capricciose forme.’

¹⁸ Buonanni 1681: 91: ‘qual giudicarne la più bella... dove una bizzarría di volute, dove una capricciosa cucitura.’

capable of such embellishment... in decorating soft testaceans' strong armatures so playfully.¹⁹

Buonanni concludes his description of the shells illustrated in his work to the effect that their capricious shapes and bizarre inventions were joke products of the tacitly divine 'architectonic Mind.'²⁰

But Buonanni also airs ancient and modern atomist ideas. Even while as a Jesuit Buonanni was obliged to present them as foils to his argument, he raises the atomist views of Democritus, Epicurus and Lucretius; and of their successors Francesco Redi and Agostino Scilla. Purportedly disagreeing with it, Buonanni also quotes Francesco Redi's 'meticulous observation' on how flies lay their eggs.²¹ He recognizes the sharp and observant qualities of Agostino Scilla's *lettera risponsiva*.²² Buonanni holds back from giving the full title of Scilla's *La vana speculazione disingannata dal senso, lettera risponsiva circa i corpi marini, che petrificati si trovano in varij luoghi terrestri*: a title that denigrated Bartoli's *speculazione*;²³ and indexed Lucretian *sensus*. In his text Scilla quoted twice from Lucretius's key passage on *sensus*;²⁴ and Buonanni also cited Lucretius.²⁵ In this light, Buonanni's title *Ricreazione dell'occhio e della mente* aligns itself less with Bartoli and more with Scilla.

Passing it by as an example of 'philosophers' confusion,' Buonanni glosses the 'mad Democritus's' perception that chance collisions of 'indivisible particles' account for reality's 'great variety of both forms and of colours, distributed and composed in advance with a *bizzarría* of capricious work, that seems beyond any architect or engineer's artistry.'²⁶ *Bizzarría* is here identified with divine artistry. Nonetheless 'bizarre' atomism was a later 1600s option. Anton Maria Salvini in his *Discorsi*, a work dedicated to Francesco Redi, would have

¹⁹ Buonanni 1681: 321: 'di si bizzarra invenzione lode ne sia alla Natura, che prima tanto dell'Arte seppe tanto abbellire... con ischerzi ad animali si fiacchi armature si forti.'

²⁰ Buonanni 1681: 248: 'capricciose... le forme, e bizzarre oltremodo le invenzioni, con cui... abbiamo veduta scherzare... la Mente architetonica.' See Findlen 1990 on *scherzi*.

²¹ Buonanni 1681: 55: on the 'osservatione diligentissima' of Redi 1668: 146.

²² Buonanni 1681: 131: 'erudita lettera responsiva [sic.] piena di acutissime, a bellissime osservazioni.'

²³ Bartoli 1659: 195: Maravigliose sono le speculazioni, che da' savj in natura si fanno.

²⁴ Scilla 1670: 130 cites Lucretius IV, 478-79; Scilla 154, Lucretius IV, 482-83.

²⁵ Buonanni 1681: 90: cites Lucretius II, 374-76 on the variety of shells to be found on the seashore.

²⁶ Buonanni 1681: Cap. III, 28-37, 31-32: 'confusione dei filosofi': 'Così direbbe il pazzo Democrito in vederne la gran varietà sí per le forme, sí per i colori, compresa dalla già fatta divisione con tal bizzarría di capriccioso lavoro, onde sembra niun' arte di Architetto, nè d'Ingegniere esservi potuta... fabbricarle.'

Democritus posit the 'world as created by chance from infinite little bodies gliding bizarrely in an immense space for infinite time; recognizing chance as the worker of marvels.'²⁷

Part of his ideological elusiveness, Buonanni's recurrent usages of 'bizarre' and 'capricious' are ambivalent: while on the face of it they evidence divine artistry they also suggest evolutionary generation and unbiblical enormity.

As for what Buonanni's *bizzarría* and *capriccio* look like: *Bizzarría* without *capriccio* is sometimes ugly, deformed, monstrous. In the ugly vein: the evocatively named *Distorsio anus* of the Indo-Pacific: 'bizarre... for the hump that protrudes from one side of each volute, and its twists so adulterated, that it seems an unshaped monster, not a perfect product of nature.'²⁸ The *Distorsio anus* does not suggest divinely spontaneous creation.

Bizzarría with *capriccio* is always attractive. Buonanni uses the phrase *capricciosa bizzarría* of the 'pentadactyl murex, so called for its appendages which extend outwards with capricious *bizzarría* in such a way that they resemble limbs, indescribably delightful to behold'.²⁹ The subsequent translation of *capricciosa bizzarría* into Latin, *praeclaro artificio concinnati*,³⁰ further reveals the positive connotation of our buzz words when combined.

In 1681, the year Buonanni's *Ricreatione* was published in Rome, the Jesuit painter and architect Andrea Pozzo arrived there. It is highly probable that Pozzo will have been pervious to Buonanni's passages on nature's capricious and bizarre artistry (Figure 55.4).

Natural *capricciosa bizzarría* informed artistic and architectural shapes. But it is not just a case of nature informing art. Parallels between natural and human inventiveness have broader implications.

Redi's 'bizarre flies' made spontaneous generation untenable; and shells evolved over millions of years. Human creativity also evolves; and capricious novelty

²⁷ Salvini 1695: Discorso XXIII, 84-87: 'Qual Fusse piu ragionevole o il riso di Democrito o il pianto d'Eraclito:' 85: 'ponendo il mondo fatto a caso dall'accozzamento fortuito d'infiniti corpicelli in un immenso vano per infinito tempo bizzarramente scorrenti; riconoscendo il caso per operatore di meraviglie.'

²⁸ Buonanni 1681: 237, Tav. 279-80: 'bizzarra ... per la gobba con cui resalta in un lato d'ogni voluta, è sì alterata ne' suoi giri, che sembra Mostro informe, non perfetto Parto della Natura.'

²⁹ Buonanni 1681: 246, Tav. 311: 'Murice pendillato, così detto per gli appendici que per largo con capricciosa bizzarría si prolungono in modo, che sembrano branche più dilettevoli à vedersi, che facili à descriversi.'

³⁰ Buonanni 1684: 157, Tav. 311.



Figure 55.4. F. Buonanni, *Ricreatione dell'occhio e della mente, nell'osservation' delle chioccioline*, Rome 1681: Tav. 311, 'pentadactyl murex' (*Lambis millepeda*).

does not arise out of thin air, on a whim. Carducho's goats might aspire to *capricho nuevo*—but only 'at the cost of much work.'

Unconditioned artistic spontaneity may be as untenable as spontaneous generation. Can humanity deny nature the potential for spontaneity, imitate her, and then be so sure about our own spontaneity? Throughout history there have been and will be bizarre individuals who seek after novelty; and brilliant architects and artists to cater for them: with fully-evolved, well-worked inventions.

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Not the protestant ethic and not the spirit of capitalism: Ex Ghana, randomly

Cesare Poppi

I

The three-wheeler sways dangerously as it dives into a huge, deep pothole. Filled to the brim with last night's heavy rain, the puddle's depth was unguessable... 'This time we go over'—I think as a small tsunami of thick, muddy water blinds the windscreen and fills my shoes as it spills into the open sides of the vehicle... While I wonder whether to dive before I am pushed—no alternative—Master Ali, my *factotum* friend and driver turns round and shouts, laughing: 'You not worry, Prof! De *kambo* be strong like a turtle, *paa!*'

Wonderful invention the *kambo*. The three-wheeler gets its name from the leading campaign slogan of former President of Ghana John Mahama Dramani: 'Mahama can do' became in popular *pidgin* 'Mahama *kambo*' and baptized the by now ubiquitous, sturdy, immortal vehicle. Best are those of Chinese make. Their Indian counterparts are cheaper but also less durable. So you want to be seen sitting in a Chinese specimen of the contraption, smartly zigzagging in the traffic with your driver vying with his fellow adventurers to get ahead of the pack before the next traffic light. These have also made a triumphal appearance in the main cities: the main crossroad in Tamale, the principal city of Northern Ghana which boasts the fastest demographic growth rate of the entire continent, features a mighty barrage of red-yellow-greens: so complicated and apparently haphazard and messy that seen from afar as one approaches in the haze of the *harmattan* season it looks like a permanent christmas tree. The result being that more often than not traffic-light governed crossroads turn into gigantic *kambo*-jams. Hence the urge to get there first and dive across before the tides of traffic from all sides collide and crash as in a cavalry charge—and chaos ensues.

*Kambo*s have put cars off the road. Gone are four-wheeled taxis in all conditions of disrepair which once patrolled the roads looking for customers packed inside five or six at a time. Agile, relatively cheap and democratic, the *kambo* drives everywhere. It is the new ant of Afrikaa: its numbers are legion, its potentials

still not tested to the outer limits... Not least it has restored hierarchy on Ghanaian roads: now cars are cars, stuff for rich people. Those you see on the road you can be reassured carry VIP. Where twenty years ago Toyota *Pajeros* reigned unchallenged now SUVs the tonnage of caterpillars dictate the pecking order on the roads, in towns and beyond. Social hierarchies are thus restored in the New Ghana beginning from the number of wheels one travels upon: four wheels for Bigmen (and Women). Two wheels for peasants who need to travel from the village to the farms. These are getting evermore distant from the villages since the soil gets exhausted, the price of fertilizers goes up and the output of subsistence farming makes it ever less economically rational to grow 'home food' against the low prices of imported maize and rice. Farms being far away implies rarefying the presence of the farmer, left to their own devices while the crops grow. Children cannot be sent to sleep on the farm and weed and scare off birds and other scavengers because of the distance from the village and the pressure to send them to school. This entails that the park of bicycles in the country gets older and older while replacement is hampered by relatively high prices: there are now in town more stores selling light, all-weather-use motorbikes than bicycles. The domino effect adds another keynote to the demise of 'traditional' subsistence farming. One sees more and more older, very old men walking long distances to the farm on rural roads. Twenty years ago they would be riding a bicycle. Nowadays they are footed because either the bicycle is so rotten and needs replacement the farmer cannot afford, or because the young members of the consumption family unit plainly refuse to go by any means, or because they are too frail to ride a bicycle, because they never learnt to ride when farms were nearer the village or, finally, because—all things considered—after birds and monkeys have taken their share there is not much for the farmer left to dish out on his table. Thus: while two wheels are forcibly reverting to the two legs reports multiply of elderly famers found dead on the path to/from the family farm. And so, while the poorer rural classes forcibly dismount their bicycles and revert to ever-harder modes of production and the rich hide and watch

unseen (a privilege hitherto granted to witches and wizards) behind glass-*fumée*, the urban masses ride on three wheels. Alas, brave Ghana! Three wheels for the masses who can afford fiercely competitive fares since at slack time during the day there are more *kamboos* on the road than punters in need of their services: then you see them darting along the road to gain positions in the endless row of *kamboos* curbing the roadside in pursuit of passengers. This is the time when *obronis*—‘whites’, who are notorious for leaving generous tips, run the risk of being kindly kidnapped for a negotiable price and a ride. *Caveat*.

As we climb out of the pothole Master Ali pulls the brakes of the *kamboo* and climbs out with a rag to wipe the screen free of mud. ‘What are you doing for ... sake?!?’ I swear, still shaken by the ordeal: ‘In less than a minute it will be the same again!’ ‘I hired the *kamboo* and promised to bring it back as it was.’ Bless you, Master Ali, if only for less than a minute.

II

The electricity line stops at Loggo, about 25 miles from the regional capital. The line of poles carrying the cable relay one after the other up to the village center. Then stop. I recall that some forty years ago, as I was attending a funeral at a village along the line a deranged old lady broke into the dancing grounds shouting that she had seen a *boroni baal* (white man) on top of an iron tree doing something or other... On checking, it turned out that she had—in fact—seen an engineer of the Italian firm laying the main trellises for carrying the electrical cables then slowly finding their way to the North. When I went back to the village and tried to calm spirits down—no, the lady was not herself a witch; no—on top of the iron tree there was neither a witch nor a *tinnaanchogge*—a bad Bush Spirit—but a man from my country doing... doing...—doing what, then?!—pushed an impatient, unconvinced elder. I cannot recall how precisely I tried to explain—under mounting pressure—what electricity is pleading that I did not precisely know myself the -ins and -outs of the palaver. I seem to remember that, half panicking, I argued that there was nothing bad or dangerous in the thing itself, for news of spectacular cases of electrocution, then rather common in the towns had obviously already reached the village on the savannah tam-tam. The issue was settled by sheer, slowly waning attention and interest—thank God there were then more serious issues to take care of in a village—and finally archived when it was warranted (by me) that the coming of electricity would put an end to kerosene (at the time hoarded and extremely expensive) and batteries to inaugurate an era of sempiternal light—

oh yes day and night, and oh yes also for goats. The achievement, at the time, earned me a number of spaghetti dinners at the canteen set at the camp of the Italian firm. Then The Line moved on and away—going towards where only God knows the final destiny of lines compels them to go—and I lost my spaghetti.

It took at least twenty years for The Line to progress forty miles. It goes—as I worked out—by instalments. Instalments that coincide with national elections. In that candidates promise—among other measures for the development of their constituencies—to bring electricity to all households: ‘to All and Sundry’ in solemn political jargon. And so The Line creeps, hostage to the vagaries of political fortunes—a relay-baton which drops at any governmental Budget Review only to be picked up from the mud of unfulfilled commitments, polished up clean and bright—and carried through the next hurdles. All this with the proviso that I have never-ever seen any private household in the villages enjoying the benefits of everlasting light. East of Wa, in the range of outer villages I know, I have never seen a single bulb lit from the National Electricity Grid. ‘Nobody wants to pay’: thus, trenchantly, a desk officer of the Ghana Electricity Board, rather annoyedly, after the third 76cc beer. ‘We invest more resources tracing abusive suckers and cutting lines than we get revenues.’ Then there is the problem of backhanders dished out to keep sucking—but *that* was matter I did not consider wise raising under the circumstances, for the beer was good.

III

All that occurred in Ghana in recent history, until somewhere somebody came up with the brilliant idea. ‘Electricity from the national grid will not work because people can’t pay/won’t pay? No problem: electrical power will be delivered free of charge.’ Enter Solar Panel Technology. Funds from international donors became available spurred by the New Millennium, environmentalist NGOs, numberless Global Save Africa Schemes and whatnot, negotiated, agreed and undersigned by eager national authorities and international donors eager to sell. Now local candidates for the National Parliament could add solar panel powered public lighting magnificent schemes to their electoral cornucopia. The result being that some villages—some malignant gossipers suggesting it happened only where people voted for the ‘right’ party—have now acquired gigantic light-poles more fit for World Cup football stadiums than for a tiny village where they look out of proportions. With the new technology also came another benefit. Gigantic sound systems double the size of a *kamboo*

were left somehow and somewhat behind at the end of the election campaign when they were used for party rallies, speeches and propaganda village dances. They are now transported from village to village to boost events—funerals and other festivities. Together, that is, with a certain memory stick packed full of Afrotechno music. This will be blown at full gigabits throughout the night with the effect of scaring off to death the few hyenas surviving in the adjacent national park. A terrifying experience. At *Jimbente*—a sort of Thanksgiving festival mixing Islamic and ‘*Kafir/Pagan*’ rituals—at the remotest village of Belle the blasters kept bombarding techno music into the hilly savannah till dawn. Gone were the all-together now, free-for-all dances whereby youngsters showed their skills drumming since the early afternoon—cover band prior to their older, established brothers taking over to lead dancing till daybreak. Girls donned their best and elders showed up for a free local beer—and more. The classroom portrait of sociality at its best. This year (2022) the main *Jimbente* fire-centered ritual was reduced to a hurried, rather confused event where nobody seemed to know the Order of Procedure besides throwing lit torches into the still too dry bush too close to the village—it nearly set a section on fire... live drumming and dancing was carried out hastily for no more than an hour or so. Then, the *Jimbente* King for next year having been selected and presented to the audience, the show moved down to the main village square, lit by the sun-powered, football stadium size solar panel. A ghostly light spread onto the square. In tune with the techno music now being delivered by the oversize ghetto-blaster set—a subsidized 2001 Space Odyssey Totem—at the center of the action.

I was by then trying to get some sleep. Outdoors, in spite of the cold, rainy season night. I had decided I would not sleep inside the Chinese-style cement blocks now replacing everywhere in Northern Ghana the traditional mud houses: stiffly, unhealthy, ridden with mice for reasons unknown to me and yet preferred by villagers because they require less collective labor maintenance than mud houses when relatives and youngsters are less and less prepared to work for no cash, rather preferring to hazard their lives on the (under)ground superficial gold mines run by the Nigerian mafia on behalf of Chinese entrepreneurs—the same who then finance cement house blocks deducted from their miners’ salaries. Indentured labour at its historical zenith.

At three o’clock in the morning I had had enough and decided to go and see. The musical theme had been for the last twenty minutes a choir of motorbike engines being sparked up, *Vrooom, vroooooom, vroooooommm* went

the all-time, all weather warning delivered the world over by over-hormonised males.

In the ghostly light of the overpowered solar plant a few corpses of drunken youngsters were laying on the ground. Some were still staggering to keep up with the rhythm, drinking *peteshi* (a locally imported palm wine distilled drink as deadly as it is cheap) before they too would collapse. Twenty years ago young men in the villages were high on marijuana. It was extensively cultivated in large plantations secluded far away into the bush to be sold for cash to merchants—and widely smoked by the farmers themselves. Then the Government put the boot in with money from international bodies to stop the flow of the stuff to the civilized world. The police first and then the army located the plantations, accused one another of cutting a deal with the farmers for backhanders and when the ensuing mess got out of hands the plantations were somehow finally set on fire. When cash from a somewhat revived economy finally trickled to the North, *peteshi* became available by the gallon at ridiculous prices. A surreally extremely successful campaign against smoking, the thoroughness and toughness of which can only equal a wave of witch-hunt, did the rest. Forty years ago selling cigarettes was a pillar of the informal economy. Nowadays you are told off if seen smoking in the streets and one thinks he is in Switzerland. ‘Smoking is bad for you and *peteshi* costs less than *marijuana*’—I was told with a smile. *Kyrie eleison*.

Next I noticed that women—let alone girls—were gone—invisible, secluded. Forty years ago women provided the choir intercalating men’s drumming during all-night long vigils. I recollected then having seen some *hijab*-clad women watching the traditional dances early on: ‘Oh, they keep all inside the houses, now’—the would-be DJ told me with a smile. Islam is working its way into the remotest villages, hitherto screened off because they used to be the reservoir of *kafirs* (and therefore potential slaves) during the *jihads* of the late nineteenth century, the same which prompted France and Britain to expand their coastal colonies to the interior. Back inside the mosquito net I resorted to ear-plugs meant to help during all-night long decibel ridden discos in town. I fell into a restless slumber. The night was cold, almost chilly. At dawn my sleeping bag was soaked with dew. I guess it was the night when I contracted pneumonia.

IV

The village of Kandiao is famous for its *Chilæ* shrine. Morphologically it must be one of the most archaic

in the region. There are no manufacts associated with it. No pots, no calabashes containing medicine to be drunk by devotees as usually seen elsewhere. Chilé is—simply—a grove of gigantic *kapok* trees set at a short walking distance from the village by a small lake. Nestling between the huge, rib-like roots of the mightiest tree are hundreds of empty bottles of schnapps. Schnapps is the original *peteshi* first shipped to Ghana by Dutch merchants at the end of the XV century when it was (wrongly) believed that the coastal landing spot of Elmina—‘The Mine’ in Portuguese—was the source of gold on what became known as Gold Coast—present day Ghana. Schnapps is, in fact, lower-quality gin which is still marketed in eighteenth century-replica glass bottles with roughly printed label, copies of the historical ones. To entice buyers, the Dutch sold the brew as *apoteke* (pharmacy—hence medicine). Ghanaians happily took to it, and very soon came up with the indigenous *apoteke*—ops *peteshi*. Distilleries were set up in the bush near palm groves whence palm wine was tapped. It was the first European technological input which met with immediate success. Once established on the market, improvements were introduced to boost the rather nondescript taste of the original recipe. Nowadays Omo-flavoured *peteshi* is very popular in lower grade roadside bars, though rusty nails and—more recently—carbide also encounter popular favor. The concoction is transported from the South to the North in fifty-gallon plastic barrels and then distributed in smaller tanks. It is the standard stuff libated at funerals. One hears from time to time of hecatombs of mourners sharing the fate of the deceased having consumed cheap *peteshi* with an excessive content of methylene... Beware of the concoction.

I often wondered why ‘spirit’ has become automatically attached to ‘alcohol,’ but sure when you go to visit a shrine in Ghana you are bound to ask why spirits like spirit... At the grove of Chilé archaeologists could run a stratigraphy of glass evolution. Overgrown with vegetation, lifted in the air by climbers of all sorts, embedded with roots and other forms of botanical growth, they recount the story of the shrine, its popularity, successes and resilience to the now prevailing winds of Christianity and Islam. Then one notices that at the bottom of the grove, where the light struggles to dissipate moist and dump, lays an array of bones at various stages of rot and decay. Bones of goats, that is, the standard sacrificial animal for such shrines. For Chilé is a *malokundi*-brand shrine. The title can be translated as ‘you will not eat the meat:’ indeed the sacrificial meat is not shared out to the shrine attendants and the devotees as it is customary. Rather, once the sacrificial blood has been allowed to drip

over the roots of the main tree, the carcass is rather unceremoniously thrown to the back of the grove and left to rot there. This is odd. Up to now I have conceived a theory that blood sacrifices are aimed at justifying the killing and slaughtering necessary to enable the consumption of animal proteins. Why, otherwise, would the spells of consecration whispered by the main priest (who is never the same person who actually puts the knife to the throat of the victim) always entail some sort of plea for forgiveness? The gist of the argument being that the scapegoat accomplishes the mission of enticing the benevolence of the beneficiary Spirit—or whatever—according to the *do ut des* sacrificial deal, the spelling rationale of its overall logic ought to sound something like: ‘Ok, we need to kill to get meat to eat. We consecrate the victim and give its life to the gods in exchange for wellness. They take the blood (the bones in classic Semitic/Indoeuropean liturgies) and we keep the meat.’ So far so good—but this clever escamotage runs into the exception of the *malokundi* type: the anthropologist’s self-confidence is in trouble.

V

‘We keep the money, though.’ The shrine attendant smiles at me and then adds ‘Muslims too come here plenty...’ Finally the penny drops. *Malokundi* is a cunning trick to allow the vast number of Muslims also to enjoy the benefits of ‘pagan’ shrines. The prohibition to eat the sacrificial meat of idols—a widespread taboo of the Religions of the Book—is bypassed by making of the abomination/interdiction the very peculiarity of the shrine. You give up a good meal but you entice a larger number of customers. Considered that all leave behind an offering with the proviso that they will come back for a ceremony of thanksgiving in case their pledges to the shrine are fulfilled, the odds are all in favor of the croupier—as it were. Thinking under the circumstances has always been hard for me. The novelty of the situation, the urge to take in what seems or appears to be obvious—and more often than not irrelevant to the actors of the event, the need to test your understanding by collecting as many contextual data as you can in always too short a time while stumbling and slipping on the muddy terrain is by no means conducive to orderly thinking and rational connections. Besides, in this very instance, the doubt that one is interpreting the situation in far too pragmatic, ‘rational’ guise creeps into the back of the anthropologist’s mind: ‘patronizing,’ ‘politically incorrect’... in my ear. Back at the village, while we exchange pleasantries with our hosts prior to departure, I try to gain some more insight in the hope to clarify—even debunk—my unholy innuendos. ‘I cannot answer all your questions’ the shrine attendant says—with a smile. He then embarks

on an extremely complex, confused as it is confusing, explanation that he is not the official, canonic, licensed shrine priest. He is only a would-be priest and hopefully the in-charge still under training. For there are (it turns out) two Chilɛ shrines at Kandiao. The one who took our sacrifice is the Male shrine, while the Female shrine—which is apparently senior and even more powerful than her husband—is set at a long distance from the village making it difficult and dangerous to walk there and... I then ask what does this have to do with the fact of his junior, underqualified position. I become lost when a complex, ever more winding, long-winded story about the passage of rights (and, above all, the delivery of secret, esoteric knowledge) between senior priests unwilling to let go of their power in the hands of the younger generations and the ensuing complications concerning the continuity of 'tradition' come to my mind. I think of Frazer and the priest of the sacred grove in Nemi peering worriedly into the night lest a younger, stronger challenger would ambush and kill him to take his place at the shrine... There are, I am told, many more *Malokundi* shrines in the area, all apparently in good health also due to the recent revival of the demand for 'authentic,' genuinely 'African' healing-*cum*-prosperity powers (in that they do, nowadays, the same all-round job) while their market expands with sites offering their services on the net. Under the present, prevailing circumstances, 'traditional,' 'pagan,' 'kafir'—call them what you wish—shrines will never die out. Possibly they will multiply. For the genius of 'paganism' is that it always offers a next option to a disgruntled devotee. Where a shrine fails, another will come forth with its own *promise de bonheur* to relay the torch of hope further on. There where an Only God, an exclusive God, a There-is-no-Other God fails in the long historical run to satiate its devotees, inevitably the rot of atheism will start creeping in. With practices based upon a variety of options vested in shrines, this will never happen: one god is dead? Long live the gods! My teacher and mentor, Sir Jack Goody, who knew these both cultural and geographic latitudes well, used to tell me that religion will never die because it constantly fails to deliver the goods. At Kandiao I learnt that—unlike with the God of monotheisms—with *Malokundi* and other such Shrines it will indeed never be so. For they always ring twice at the gates of affliction.

'One last question, my friend!' I wake up from a sort of slumber where deeply confused thoughts mix with unanswerable, contradictory questions as the excessive consumption of sacrificial *peteshi* takes its toll. 'One last question, please!' I *must* have him cornered, finally, nailed to some sort of no-nonsense,

no quibbles reply. 'All those bones at the Chilɛ shrine... you know... why are they all still there? Don't dogs, hyenas... the crocodiles from the lake... come and take the meat away?!' A gentle smile: 'You see... animals too carry respect for *Malokundi*...' On staggering out of the compound I realise that I am not feeling well.

VI

The room is out of proportions. It is too long with respect to its width and height. It looks odd. And painted bottle green. The place is very quiet, as if soundproofed. Only the irregular ticking with occasional beeping of some invisible machine tells me that I can still hear. I then realize that I am laying in a bed, stretched out on my back. I cannot see properly because I wear no glasses. I check and my hand runs into a plastic muzzle covering my mouth and nose. A hand—a black hand—gently pulls my hand off the mask. Then, softly 'No. Not now. Don't do that now.'

How I got here—wherever I am—I do not immediately recall. Then I start coming back from God knows where. The last thing I can remember is that I was standing in the guest room of my host Luca in Accra, the capital city of Ghana. A young, very slick, elegant Cuban doctor—Juan, I recall—was listening through the stethoscope as he tapped my back. I was shivering with fever. 'You might have contracted pneumonia'—he sentenced. 'You ought to go to hospital.' 'How much of an idiot one has got to be to come to Ghana and get pneumonia?! Or is it perhaps that the doctor is an idiot?!' Did I only think it? Did I spell it out loud? Don't know—hope not. But here I was, in some hospital or other, in an empty room out of proportions, and wearing an oxygen mask.

It had all started back at Gurumbelle. The village in the furthest bush at the end of the line and likely at the end of the world. Returning there after fifteen years of absence had turned into a triumph, a messy, sticky and confused set of fears, doubts, worries and other unknowable and—sure—unmentionable odds (How will they take my return? Will anybody who knew me be still alive? Will they recognise me? Will they believe that *this* is me? Will the witch doctor who wished to poison me be still alive? Was the warning I had received ever true?). Not only was I welcomed as a matter of fact, as somebody who had just left a few days before ('It has been two days' is the standard greeting between friends though they have not seen one another for years) thus reminding me of how different is the perception of time passing at those latitudes to my anthropological shame. The elders had congregated to greet me and bless my sacrifice to the shrine of

the *Sigma* society which had been swiftly accepted by *Daaban*, the shrine agency. ‘You are welcome, *Garabunga!*’ Thus Amoah, the de facto leader, greeting me with the title of the senior initiates, while younger members clapped and answered the mandatory ‘Yaoh! Yaoh!’ I had been immediately thrown at the center of the action as the oldest classificatory brother of the team of elders now leading the Sigma secret society of the time. It was coming up to *Jimbente*, a time of the year particularly dense with rituals in that it is meant to thank the ancestors for their benevolence in the past agricultural season—and harness their support for the next. The activities of shrines are then at their most intense. Visitors came to *Gurumbelle* to make sacrifices to *Daaban*. It started at dawn and ended in the evening. A stressful routine. At the end of the day one felt weary of seeing sacrificial blood squirting everywhere in the confined, stuffy shrine receptacle overcrowded with elders claiming their share of ‘hot’—the often substandard, ubiquitous *peteshi*. Worn out, crinkled cash changed hands swiftly, often soaked in blood misdirected from the sacrifice: the order of procedure was hurried to the point of becoming indecorous due to the pressure of devotees eager to hasten back to the main road. In the course of a few days, besides the usual crowd of lay punters, we ministered to two MPs from the Capital—one from the ruling—and another from the opposition party, pleading for their political careers. One day a pastor from a newborn, obscure evangelical church showed up seeking the shrine’s support for his enterprise. The fact that *Yelembelewura* (‘The Lord of Books,’ my initiation name) was back leading the sacrifices worked as an extra attraction... At some point that sort of *noblesse oblige* became too much to bear. I felt weary, stressed out. Too much greeting, too much blood... sacrificial procedures carried out far too hastily, undignified... too much *peteshi* to swallow... Then the night of *Jimbente*, Afrotechno till dawn... the dew...

VII

A few days later, when things at the shrine had somewhat calmed down, I woke up with a temperature. Malaria—I thought. I immediately swallowed a double dose of a miracle (or so I had been reassured) new antimalarial drug. Fifteen years ago I had to be adventurously rescued—essentially kidnapped—from the ward of a dilapidated hospital in the North where I was laying with an as yet undetected new mutation of the malarial bug. ‘Viral infection of unknown origins’ read the final hospital report back in Italy. Ten years later I was told that the cause of my now carrying a pacemaker might have been an undetected, low-intensity, chronic

pericardial infection induced by malaria. In recalling the ordeal—fifteen days in the isolation ward and a hefty emergency rescue bill to be paid to the Italian government—I decided to take no chances and go be *kamboo*-ed back to the regional capital—*Wa*—where I had rented a room in the diocesan hostel for retired priests. Then depression set in. Three or four nights of sleep marred by nightmares. In waking up a sense of weariness and desperation about never being able to see Italy again. My brother and sister. Nephews and nieces. No, it was not, never it was—fear of dying in Africa. I had written in my will of my desire to be buried in Africa, if ever I was to die there. It was something subtler: the fear of never being able to get out of that room, of that wrecked old villa and its neglected, overgrown garden—once the best mansion in town built by a Lebanese contractor who built missions for the Roman Catholics. I longed for good food—I had lost three stones in weight in two months: as I watched the daily plane flying overhead from the nearby airport I knew I would never be able to climb aboard and take off: tickets were booked months in advance, possibly hoarded and sold on the black market. Cornered, stuck. The end of an old elephant. A last-minute cancellation proved that Providence provides. I staggered out of the plane in Accra and collapsed into Luca’s car.

‘Your depression is possibly the side effect of the antimalarial drug you took possibly in excessive quantities.’ Dr Kwasi Addoh, the physician taking care of my case, solemnly opined one morning as he was checking my breathing. Unlike Ghanaian public hospitals the clinic was new, clean, polished, pristine. And, unlike overcrowded public hospitals, empty. In two weeks I became aware of the presence of other patients outside the intensive care ward which hosted me only once. It happened at night. I broke suddenly awake out of the tail-end of my depression cycle, as the amorous ministrations of Charity—an angel turned nurse (‘I am sorry Charity. I cannot marry you. I am too old. Besides you would suffer too much in my country’). A woman was shrieking in the maternity ward next door. It went on intermittently throughout the night, then suddenly stopped. In the morning, as Charity was changing my bedsheets, I asked whether the delivery was successful. ‘There was no delivery’—she said sternly. ‘There was no delivery,’ she insisted in a tone of professional lese-majesty. ‘It turned out that she was imagining to be pregnant. But—really—she had the *jins*. We dispatched her to the public hospital.’ ‘The Clinic is a serious clinic—she explained, patiently—not a place for *jins*.’ Chinese-owned and perhaps—who knows? Who has ever spotted a Chinese in Ghana in spite of the fact that they own by now a good slice of the country?—

Chinese-managed, being able to employ top quality, yet low-cost Ghanaian personnel, it caters for the elites in town. No place for *jins*—the fairies of spirit possession which have infiltrated African cultures from Islamic folklore: those shalt be cast out into the cold, where there are public hospitals.

‘You see, we are serious here. In public hospitals they chuck you out as soon as possible, before you are fully healed. So people die, their relatives learn to mistrust hospitals, and the health service eases the pressure. Therefore we strongly advise you to stay with us for another week, to make sure you have fully recovered from pneumonia and are fit to travel back to Italy.’ So Dr Addoh the day I told him that I had been able to buy a flight back to Italy (at full, latecoming and inflated price) after a long, painstakingly angst-ridden search (God bless the cellphone), and I intended to leave in a few days. There followed close negotiations. I felt if not at my best at least well enough to fly back. The date on my ticket was as non-negotiable as a milestone on a Roman-constructed road. Covid had thrown international flight schedules into an utter mess: fly when you chance or die. On thinking of the cost of staying at the clinic, and fearing (it had never been disclosed to me ‘...you now just think about your recovery then we shall see...’) what turned out to be 1,000 dollars a week—all included—I nearly decided to resort to a self-made *jins* etiology of my illness. To be or not to be? Are they trying to keep me here because I am at risk, or are they trying to keep me here because I am at the moment the only source of income for the serious business? ‘I will run away next week, right on the day I told you, by all means. Whether you like it or not, Doc. Bring the bill and may Samson die with all the Philistines.’

VIII

The plane from Lisbon comes in from SW and veers as it approaches Venice airport. I am sitting in the right, far-back seat, by the window. A constricted, very uncomfortable bumpy ‘foot and teeth—and pneumonia’ flight. Usually reserved for emergencies, was told the seat had recently been put on the market to ease pressure on overbooked flights: number yourself amongst the saved. It was sixteen hours ago that I embarked on the journey and got stuck in Lisbon airport by a late landing which caused me missing the connection. Back at the Accra airport—I now recall—a security officer in plain clothes, a young, seriously beautiful lady, surely and sadly among the last of a people—Ghanaians at large—master in being ever so sensitive in spotting their fellow human beings’ bodily

language, had approached me as I was staggering to push and pull my luggage at the check-in.

‘You are not well, *Woffa*’ (uncle in *twi* language, today spread throughout Ghana—by extension ‘elder, old man’)—she tells me, confidently. Here is where cultural difference comes into the equation. The last thing an *Obroni* (White Man) wants to let out about himself is ‘not to be well.’ *Hic sunt* vultures—recite the mantras of centuries of Stanley’s and Bottego’s African exploration reports. Show your weak spots and they will finish you. Then comes the Occidental, USA franchised version: Woe the Weaker. Enter the *jins* of being always healthy, always in control, always trim and fit and solvent and whatnot. Only up to the *redde rationem* when, as pathetically as impotently, mass culture begins to call upon Super Heroes, Super This-and-That, improbable Saviors of infantilized global audiences. Thank you for spotting my weakness, you Nameless Young Plainclothes Security Officer. Your humanity, unadulterated, feminine plain-clothes/plain empathy saved my day. Like Charity back at the clinic, you deserve to be married, properly, honestly and justly, to your and your people’s content. *Ex Africa semper aliquid sempiternal*.

‘Just pretend you are gaga,’ a veteran pusher whispers as I hand him a tenner of the local currency: a fifty-cents pass to heavens. In less than no time my rescuer had summoned a steward. I am harnessed to a wheelchair, enjoying the privilege of bypassing armageddonish custom, security and border checks as I wave past my Disabled Passenger Sacred Wand card, thinking of Arthur and Excalibur.

‘You are not well, Sir.’ The otherwise professionally icy European hostess mandatorily and kindly taps me lightly on the wrist as I peer out of the window. Slumbering, I become aware that the craft is about to land at Marco Polo Airport. I can see the Venetian *campanili* fast reaching to the descending plane. That is Sant’ Alvise... Sant’ Isepo... San Zaccaria... Sant’ Elena... Elena, my deceased wife... I realise that I was crying: ‘Thank you Madame. I am, in fact, crying with happiness. Venezia means home.’

IX

La Maina, 19 December 2022

Dear Elisabeth and John,

When I was asked to contribute to a collection celebrating you two jointly, I immediately thought

it had to be on Africa. My Africa, your Africa, our Africa. For I recall with fondness and some nostalgia the conversations at your house with Alexandra and Germain—with Elena taking it all in, later to ask me to expand on this or that other point under discussion. It was a happy, productive, useful decade. Your beautiful house became the center of convivial gatherings of friends from near and from afar. Sociality flowed, easy and unpretentious. Elegant, at ease. Elena loved it. I recall the details—the *arazzo* on the kitchen wall, the curious lesbian *bronzetto* on the table of the sitting room, the cheeky print celebrating the defeat of the Dutch fleet, the incongruous cemetery angel at the bottom of the ever so well trimmed garden... and then the succulent roasted pheasants and the cream strawberries in the spring... and ... and...

I fondly recall when I first introduced Elena to you in my flat at the end of the Edwardian terrace in Huntingdon Road. How Elisabeth succeeded in persuading a rather perplexed John to take Elena on as his student even though she could hardly say ‘thank you’... We had courage and *sprezzatura*, then. Disagreements over academic matters were pretexts to throw ideas and arguments around, test alternatives, find new ways—ART was beating The Courtauld, WAM was causing trouble and disconcert in the old orthodoxy. I loved in particular the freedom I enjoyed (was it perhaps too much?) in being able to discuss the Renaissance and the Dutch *paesaggisti* while taking a walk on the wild side of the Middle Ages and the Lombards with the Abbot and Johnny. I loved sneaking out of The Other End (others did not) to enter the space between the aquariums at ART for a chat on Serlio or Epiphanius: ‘If Italians can read Italian, anybody can’—thus John once to a student complaining he could not read texts in Renaissance Italian. I still laugh at the thought and recount the story at dinners—brilliant! Or the other time as I was watching from the mezzanine and—I think it was Richard (was he jealous perhaps?) who erupted, on spotting John relaxing outside his fish tank: ‘I have never seen anybody being able to do f...k all with such nonchalance!’ Memorable.

You two were an *exemplum* of what it means to be a couple. Elena loved you both as much as I admired you and loved her. Then, one day, all that came to an end.

One day, perhaps, I will be able to open the door you know and let fresh air in to clear the clouds hanging uneasily over, by now, my last quarter of a century. The pages I now dedicate to you both are in their own way

also and again the random chronicle of a defeat. Last summer I had to cut short my research in Ghana. Of the four months I had programmed to stay in the field I only spent two. It was not only illness or the excessive, inflated costs that I realized on arrival, with dismay, I could not foot with my pension, having no research grant. It was a for me unknown, novel feeling—a sort of uneasiness which first crept in without me noticing in a matter of weeks becoming melancholy and then despair. *O forse accidia*, that peculiar, mysterious cultural affliction—a Capital Sin—which was the stumbling stone of monks in the Middle Ages... A weariness mixed with fear which I now discount up here, in the solitude of a deserted hamlet in the Lesser Dolomites.

In the UK I have learnt never to give up. My mentor, Jack Goody, and you two—Elisabeth and John—have added a touch of purpose and resilience—*sprezzatura*, a term I learnt from John *Lo Sprezzatore*, to a character and a personality, mine, perhaps always all too ready to concede defeat and attend to something else. I do not know if I will ever go back to Ghana. What I know is that no sooner had I unlocked the door of my longed-for home I felt the urge to go back. But Ghana—I now know—is Another Dream, a dream of Otherness, that is. The longing for a Difference which is no longer there, if it ever was. Ghana has changed dramatically in the last twenty years. Fast, unstoppable, most probably unchecked and ultimately ungovernable. This is not change, for change is inevitable. This is, instead, the terminal spinning out of control of one of the oldest civilizations on earth.

If I have succeeded in conveying the sense of an ending in the pages I now deliver to you, it must not be confused with the nostalgia of an old-age dreamer. In the towns of Northern Ghana I could not any longer see and hear bats, butterflies, lizards. Frogs are gone too—and they all used to be legion: pesticides to keep mosquitoes under control. The nights are still. Utterly silent. Deaf, dumb and blind. It IS like that. It is not *my* Africa, *our* Africa which is being assimilated, averaged out, tarred by Globalization. It is *their* Africa, *their* heirloom, *their* hope: the horror, the horror.

Back here, outside, the snow is slowly silencing life on earth. Last night I heard wolves howling in the far distance. This morning all was quiet.

Un abbraccio,
Cesare

The penumbra and the shadow

Martin Powers

Prologue

I recall one day, decades ago, walking along with John, divulging to him my puzzlement over the dominance of martial imagery in so much classical sculpture. John seemed surprised that I should be surprised. Coming to an abrupt halt he rejoined 'Marty! The Greeks were a bunch of thugs!' and continued to elaborate with examples. I confess that I had never previously heard a classicist speak with such refreshing candor.

On another occasion I attended John's lecture at the Getty Center for Art History and the Humanities. This was in the early years, when the Classical collections at the Getty Museum still coloured that institution's public image. John's topic was Medieval architecture, and after listing some of the innovations of that era, John commented that this was one of the last times in European history that architects would create original styles. Most every jaw in the room hit the ground, but John continued to explain that post-Medieval European architecture more often reshuffled classical motifs than it managed to invent new styles. Of course, he had a point, but prior to that night, the weight of *decorum* prevented polite company from ever vocalising that simple fact.

We should not underestimate the mettle required to say such things in what some then viewed as a temple to the Classical tradition. Ever since the 19th century, that tradition has been linked to such sacred slogans as 'Western Civilization' and 'Democracy,' though Enlightenment intellectuals knew better. What John did indirectly was to challenge the catechism linking Western Civilization with the endless pursuit of novelty and innovation, hence the dull reverberation of jaws hitting the floor at the same time.

Being somewhat younger than John, I was very much inspired by his example. I've never come close to matching his pluck, but I have managed on occasion to provoke shock simply by noting the most ordinary facts of Chinese history. John's aim of course was not so much to shock as to enlighten, but that required setting aside pious dogmas in favour of more mundane truths. The latter invariably turn out to be more interesting.

In his early work John sought especially to uncover the secret mechanisms linking visual choices with cognition. His first book on *Art and Thought in the Hellenistic Age* anticipated, in my view, later work by Lakoff and Johnson, finding in metaphor a language common to both art and thought. More recently he's moved on to explore the neurological architecture that makes possible such processes.

As a tribute to John's scholarship let me offer a short meditation on Zhuangzi's parable of the shadow and the penumbra. Arguing for the independence of every individual's agency, the philosophy of Zhuangzi and Guo Xiang runs counter to some of the most common China stereotypes. At the same time, it offers insights into cognitive dimensions of early Chinese art.¹

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Zhuangzi's parable of the penumbra and the shadow

罔两问景曰：曩子行，今子止；曩子坐，今子起。何其无特操与？

Zhuangzi: The penumbra said to the shadow, 'First you were walking; then you stood still; then you sat down; and then you stood upright. Why can't you decide on what you will do?'

景曰：吾有待而然者邪？吾所待又有待而然者邪？吾待蛇蚺蝮翼邪？恶识所以然？恶识所以不然？

The shadow replied: 'Do I depend on something to make me as I am? And does that depend on something else to make it as it is? Or is it more like the snake's depending on its skin, and the cicada depending on its shell? How should I know how it is that I became as I am; how should I know how I am not otherwise?' (translation adapted from Brook Ziporyn)

¹ Apart from references to Guo Xiang's text and related arguments, most of the evidence and arguments in this essay are drawn from books and essays listed as sources at the end.

Reading this passage, not a few will be reminded of Plato's Cave, Aristotle's argument for a Prime Mover, or later European variations on those arguments. The shadows on the walls of Plato's cave possessed no agency in themselves. They were merely bad copies of something more important, something more real. According to Stephen Toulmin, 18th-century thinkers presumed likewise that 'Matter is in itself inert: it cannot set itself in motion and it can generate physical effects, only if set in motion by a higher agency.'

What counted as 'higher' was informed by Classical notions about the Great Chain of Being, with God at the top, the aristocracy not far below, and commoners well below that. Toulmin observed that these assumptions about the nature of Nature were informed by a hidden agenda: 'Behind the inertness of matter, they saw in Nature, as in Society, that the actions of "lower" things depended on, and were subordinate to, oversight and command by "higher" creatures, [the nobility,] and ultimately by the Creator.'

Considering that these European thinkers knew nothing of Zhuangzi, and *vice versa*, it is remarkable that Zhuangzi was in fact questioning the notion that the agency for human actions can be traced back to a Prime Mover (主宰). This becomes clear as soon as we read Guo Xiang's (252–312) commentary on that passage:

世或谓罔两待景，景待形，形待造物者。请问夫造物者有邪？无邪？无也则胡能造物哉！有也则不足以物众形。故明众形之自物，而后始可与言造物耳！

Some say that the penumbra is dependent on the shadow; the shadow is dependent on the physical form; and the form is dependent on the creator. But I ask, as for this creator, is it existent, or non-existent? If it is non-existent, how can it create anything? If it exists, then it is not qualified to create all the various creatures (because it is just another creature within the same universe).

Guo takes for granted a monist universe, one in which a Creator would of necessity be part of Nature rather than situated outside of it. This is based on an argument that Zhuangzi presented in the second chapter where he considered whether that there might be a God who causes things in the world to be as they are.

Ultimately, he rejected that possibility because any being that 'caused' creatures to be as they are, would have to be situated outside the universe ('cause' in Chinese, as in English, being a transitive verb), God

would have to act on us from outside the system. Under those circumstances, there could be no physical evidence of its existence in our universe, and indeed we find none. That forced Zhuangzi to conclude that the natural world, and all the creatures in it, create themselves according to internal but hidden principles.

This enabled Zhuangzi to pull the rug out from under traditional justifications for the feudal order. Those theories presupposed that some lineages were intrinsically nobler than others, but as an interested party the nobility could hardly make that claim for themselves. Their claim could be justified only on the assumption that something outside the system, something higher than them, had made that determination. But Zhuangzi had demonstrated that there was no credible reason to believe that an Ultimate Master (主宰), or Prime Mover, had ever arranged for society to be structured as it was.

This explains why Guo began his analysis of the Penumbra parable by taking the death of God as a given:

是以涉有物之域，虽复罔两，未有不独化于玄冥者也。故造物者无主，而物各自造。物各自造而无所待焉，此天地之正也。

Now if we consider things that exist, even including the penumbra and the shadow, there are none that do not transform themselves mysteriously (within nature's endless flux). Therefore, the creator (the mechanism that informs all creation) is without any master, and every creature and thing individually self-creates. Each thing separately creates itself and does not depend upon anything else to make it as it is. This is what (Zhuangzi) called the rightness of natural process. (translation adapted from Brook Ziporyn)

This argument is not immediately convincing, seeing as the causal dependency of shadows on physical objects is hard to deny. Fortunately, Brook Ziporyn has written an insightful analysis of the parable that explains the subtle insights informing Guo's remarks. For Ziporyn, the key lies in the snake and cicada metaphors:

When unshed, the skin and shell are so dependent on the snake and cicada, moving exactly as those bodies move, that they are parts of one entity. But as such they are essential to its movement, so much so that the movement of the snake and cicada on which the notion of the skin and shell depend also depends on the skin and the shell. Similarly, 'this' depends on 'that,' and *vice versa*—which depends

on which? Either can be seen as depending on the other, precisely because of how closely and inseparably they are dependent on one another, and thus either can be seen as the real cause of what the other does, on which the other depends.

Zhuangzi's argument for the mutual generation of 'this' and 'that' has been examined by a good many Zhuangzi scholars, but Ziporyn's analysis explains graphically the logic informing the work of both philosophers. Still, it is rarely noticed that this logic may derive from a visual metaphor that was a common feature of the visual environment in classical China. Guo Xiang had referred to that image earlier in the passage just cited:

今罔两之因景，犹云俱生而非待也，则万物虽聚，而共成乎天，而皆历然莫不独见矣。

Returning to the image of the penumbra being dependent on the shadow, (in reality) the two arise together as we see in collections of clouds, where neither depends upon the other. It follows that all things arise together, all one by one contributing to the formation of the natural (system) such that there are none who do not arise independently of the others.

Clouds in fact offer an apt illustration of Zhuangzi's and Guo's conception of identity, but this may not be obvious to everyone.

Judging from the way clouds have been rendered in pictures for centuries, Europeans and Americans seem to imagine the generic cloud somewhat as we find them in Dutch landscape paintings—large, cumulous in shape and sharply outlined against the sky. In this view, a cloud is a distinct object with a fixed identity, separate from that which surrounds it.

But if we have the patience to observe a cloud for more than a few seconds we will realize that this is not altogether true. Rather, the cloud is constantly changing, with swirling wisps forming curls and spirals around its edges. Chinese artists and philosophers apparently took note of this, suggesting that the clouds they contemplated might have looked more like those in Figure 57.1.

In this photograph the overall disposition of the clouds reveals unmistakably that they are in motion. We can discern large scale C-shaped forms and tighter swirls marking the flow of air. Among these, one can find smaller C-forms and swirls, and among those, one can make out still smaller ones. This reveals unmistakably

the fractal character of cloud structure, a feature found also in Chinese images of clouds dating from the fourth century BC through the sixth century AD.

Another feature that those images share with clouds in nature is the absence of a clear ground such as we find in Dutch paintings. Consider the many white nodules visible in Figure 57.1. They appear as distinct because they are surrounded by darker regions comprised of limpid air. Each of the nodules may be thought of as a 'cloud,' except that they change shape constantly. As the white nodules change, the darker regions change with them. In fact, we would have no way of knowing that the white nodules had changed were it not that the darker regions had changed as well.

Under these circumstances there is no general, universal ground, only the local ground which owes its existence to the local figure, so in the end, which one alters the other's shape? There is no way to tell because each shape depends equally upon the other. The two are engaged in a cosmic dance wherein each decides for itself how to adapt to the other as well as to surrounding conditions.

The interdependency of figure and ground, along with the fractal structure of fluids in motion, are features of clouds in nature that were recorded faithfully in most early images of clouds in China. This is visible in the cloud designs on a rubbing from a mirror back dating to the third or second century BCE (Figure 57.2). Like the clouds in Figure 57.1, these have a clear trajectory marked by C curves and spirals which appear at different scales. Also as in the natural clouds, those shapes we identify as 'clouds' on the mirror emerge interdependently together with the local ground.

Note that for every C curve that we interpret as a 'figure,' there is another shape that fits into it like the pieces of a puzzle. Because the width of the cloud scrolls is roughly equal to the distance between them, figure and ground alternate freely. Should we change our focus, what had been the ground suddenly becomes the figure and *vice versa*. This is the visual counterpart of Zhuangzi and Guo Xiang's conception of identity. The two shapes come into being together; neither is a dependent of the other.

Figure 57.3 is a detail from the black lacquer casket of the Countess of Dai dating to the early 2nd century BC. In this piece the analysis of fluid structure is more detailed. As in the rubbing of the mirror back, the cloud's trajectory can be traced along smooth, curving, bands, but now we find two to four bands moving in



Figure 57.1. Evening clouds over Vancouver, October 2022. Photograph by Martin Powers.



Figure 57.2. Rubbing of a Warring States or early Han mirror back. In Martin Powers' collection.

parallel. After flowing smoothly for a while, the bands billow into multiple cusps that expand, slowing the headlong rush of air.

Though sometimes dismissed as merely decorative, these cloud patterns capture accurately the two possible physical states of moving fluids, namely, laminar and turbulent. Clouds in nature sometimes assume these forms in a jet stream as photographed in Figure 57.4. In this image we can see how long, curving, stable streams of air eventually break into billowing cusps, exactly as the Han period artists had portrayed them.



Figure 57.3. Spirit with antlers riding on a cloud. Detail of the left side of the black-ground lacquer casket from Mawangdui tomb 1, near Changsha, Hunan. 2nd century BC. Courtesy of the Hunan Provincial Museum. Photograph by Martin Powers.



Figure 57.4. Jet stream clouds over Lakeview in Chicago, October 2022. Photograph by Martin Powers.

Han period artists producing funerary art imagined that spirits, like all creatures, were made up of fluid matter that followed the same patterns as found in clouds. Sometimes, as in Figure 57.3, they were depicted as arising from among the clouds. Being made of cloud stuff, their bodies, tails, hair, and horns conform to the same rules of motion as the clouds. To anyone looking at the casket, they are invisible at a distance, for they look just like cloud designs. Their identities emerge only when we bring our gaze close to the object's surface. This illustrates graphically what scholars call Zhuangzi's perspectivalism: what we encounter in the world is unique to the perspective available to us at any particular moment.

Figure 57.5 is a detail from a lacquer tray dating to the late first century BC. Again, we find examples of laminar and turbulent flow, alternating in a regular rhythm. This artist has increased the distance between the cloud scrolls, creating a kind of local 'ground' such that some of the C curves emerge clearly as birds when viewed up close. From a distance, however, the black ground assumes the shape of C curves again, at which moment what had formerly appeared as birds gradually disappears from sight.

This manner of depicting clouds persisted in countless variations for centuries. The stone casket in Figure 57.6 was carved almost three centuries after Guo Xiang wrote his commentary, yet there we still encounter cloud scrolls in mutual interaction with a 'ground' such that the two arise together as one. In the midsection of this side of the casket, the upper left in the photo, we see as well jet stream clouds of the type just described, with laminar flow ultimately breaking into turbulent nodules.

The persistent reference to the reality exposed in the shapes of clouds remained significant for centuries because cloud patterns referred to an ultimate reality, the reality of physical transformation and change made visible in nature through the motions of fluids. When Guo Xiang spoke of graphic relations visible in 'clouds,' he would have had in mind this sort of cloud. For Guo, the reality referenced in those clouds held transformative implications for society and government.

As visible symptoms of natural process, the graphic relations visible in clouds attested to a conception of creation that undermined the hierarchical structure required by the Prime Mover (主宰) model. Guo himself laid out clearly the social consequences of the dialectical model in his comments on the Penumbra parable:



Figure 57.5. Detail from a lacquer tray excavated at Xutai near Yangzhou, 1981. Photograph by Martin Powers.

明斯理也，将使万物各反所宗于体中，而不待乎外。外无所谢，而内无所矜，是以诱然皆生而不知所以生，同焉皆得而不知所以得也。

Following this logic, it requires us to see that all creatures each find their source (of agency) within themselves and are not dependent on anything outside themselves. (Therefore) with respect to things outside themselves, there is no deference, and within there is no arrogance. In this way each creature comes to life as if following its natural inclinations and so has no notion of how it is that this is so. In the same way each creature acquires what it needs and doesn't know how it is that this comes about.

Ziporyn's translation, like mine, recognizes that relations of deference and dependence arise as a function of the way that personhood is conceptualized:

If we trace the nearby causal links and thereby forget that they are ultimately self-so, and posit the sources of things outside themselves, thus depriving them of having their master within themselves, then preference and esteem will be born. Even if we want to push this aside and level things, once this esteem has lodged in their breasts, how could peace and evenness ever be attained again?

Whether we use 'deference' or 'esteem,' Guo has exposed the essence of feudal, aristocratic, or what I prefer to call 'privilege' social systems. Agency in these societies is understood in terms of levels of esteem based—not on ability or service—but on group membership. Power generally is not exercised as a function of law; it comes instead from the ability to instill feelings of deference in social inferiors.



Figure 57.6. Stone sarcophagus with engravings of filial piety stories. Northern Wei, 522–30. Kansas City, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. Photograph by Katherine Tsiang.

Guo Xiang grew up in just such a society, but the ‘Nine Ranks’ system had only been installed decades earlier. The ‘Nine Ranks’ essentially replaced the merit-based system of the Han empire with an aristocracy. Guo and others of his generation could still recall how, prior to that, officials were recruited from a wide range of social classes. By exposing the radical implications of Zhuangzi’s philosophy, Guo Xiang undermined the Neo-feudal system of his own time by offering an alternative conception of personhood, one freed from those feelings of deference and arrogance that have powered privilege systems of control throughout history.

In Guo’s analysis, feelings of deference arise from the mistaken assumption that people of lower ranking lineages are the natural dependents of those born into a higher-ranking lineage. That error can be corrected by comprehending the true nature of personal identity.

In one of the later chapters of the *Zhuangzi* collection, the author returned to the image of form and shadow, construing the relationship between governor and governed in a manner consistent with what we found in images of clouds earlier:

大人之教，若形之於影，聲之於響，有問而應之，盡其所懷，為天下配。處乎無響，行乎無方。

The teaching of a great leader is like the relation of form to shadow or the emission of sound to its echo. When asked a question, (a wise governor) simply responds to the situation, so that each person’s concerns are fully expressed. (In this way) he can serve as the complement to the entire world. He resides where there is no echo and moves where there is no boundary.

The political theory informing this passage is Han period bureaucratic theory. In that theory, the chief executive should not actively interfere with government because the state is not his personal possession. Guo Xiang therefore interprets ‘form’ and ‘emitted sound’ as metaphors for the will of the people: ‘The will of the people is what is meant by “form” and “sound”.’ 百姓之心，形聲也。It follows that a great leader’s teaching should be ‘as shadow to form or echo to sound,’ 大人之教，影響也, something that arises mutually together with the people’s concerns.

It follows that, to respond properly to the people’s wishes, a leader should not willfully hold to his opinion but must instead be open to what others have to say. The *Zhuangzi* sees this as permitting each person to express his or her own concerns. The use of *huai* here, ‘to harbor in one’s heart,’ underscores the individual

character of the concerns being expressed. Guo Xiang explains: '(a leader) allows the inner concerns/*huai* of each thing (person) to be fully expressed.' 使物之所懷各得自盡。

It should be clear that, for this author as well as for Guo, neither officers nor the people are regarded as lowly subjects. Neither the people nor the state can be understood as a monarch's property. Instead, every person is presumed to have a valid point of view, as becomes clear when the writer explores further his line of thought:

挈汝適復之撓撓，以游無端，出入無旁，與日無始；頌論形軀，合乎大同，大同而無己。無己，惡乎得有有！

He, [the governor,] takes you and helps you to return to a state of self-initiation. (In this way he) can roam endlessly, coming and going without peer, like the sun without beginning or end. He praises (the strong points) of each person, being united with the great commonality. Being thus united, he is without self(ishness). Being 'without self,' how should he need to 'possess' what he already possesses?

The key term in the first line is *naonao* 撓撓. Guo Xiang explains: '*Naonao* means "self-initiated." (A leader) supports all things and allows them to return to their original nature of self-initiation. This is the acme of governance by non-interference (*wuwei*): 撓撓，自動也。提挈萬物，使復歸自動之性，即無為之至也。

In classical bureaucratic theory in China, officers and the people acquire agency because they are no longer understood as possessions, dependents, or subjects of a monarch. The chief executive doesn't personally direct either the government or the people. He encourages officers and the people to make full use of their talents so that national challenges can be solved efficiently by those most qualified to take charge of them. This is what is called being *wusi* 无私, or 'without self.'

That term has been much distorted by stereotypes about conformist Orientals. It does not mean that there was no concept of individual, as should be obvious by now. Rather, it was a technical term in bureaucratic theory referring to a necessary feature of all rational administrations, namely, the rule that an officer cannot exercise authority for personal benefit. A proper officer must act in service of the common interest, what Guo here refers to as the

'Great Commonality.' Ironically to accomplish this, an officer must exercise his own agency; he cannot simply be a conduit for a monarch's will. Even so, like the chief executive, he does not own his office.

The author of this chapter in *Zhuangzi* winds it up by contrasting the idea of self-initiation with the old feudal system rooted in the concept of possession:

睹有者，昔之君子；睹無者，天地之友。

Treating (the empire as a) possession was the manner of the nobility of ancient times. He who can treat it as unpossessed is the friend of the entire world.

In feudal systems the monarch treats the kingdom as his or her personal possession. The aristocracy treat those who live on their lands as their personal dependents, and all of it, as Guo's note attests, is to increase the lord's esteem.

In a properly functioning bureaucratic state the chief executive governs rather than rules. He has an obligation to the people which can be fulfilled best by enabling them to exercise their talents fully. Guo doesn't mention it but in mainstream Han political theory that would have meant providing national security, encouraging a flourishing economy, and providing a public infrastructure (postal services, Grievance Offices, etc.) that could support individual initiative.

Guo's vision for a proper government was explicitly anti-feudal. He rejects the notion of political authority conceived as esteem, or power conceived as deference. He takes for granted a conception of government in which, as the philosopher Shenzi put it, 'When one sets up an emperor, it is for the benefit of the world, it is not that the world is set up to benefit the emperor.'

Shenzi's sentiment, like *Zhuangzi's* and Guo's, is clearly post-feudal. That conception of government rejects the idea of fixed social ranks and personhood has been disengaged from group membership. If a third-century Roman philosopher had embraced these ideas, we can be certain that historians would recognize its radical significance for its time.

Of course, we might ask if Guo's philosophy had any impact in his own time. Guo was born at the beginning of China's Neo-feudal period, so his influence was limited to elite intellectual circles. However, by the ninth century, towards the end of China's medieval



Figure 57.7. Detail of a Warring States mirror back with cloud and dragon designs. Washington, DC, Freer-Sackler Museums of Art. Photograph by Martin Powers.

period, Liu Zongyuan (773–819) and Bai Juyi (772–846) among others resumed the attack on the intellectual vacuity of the feudal system. Both statesmen were thoroughly familiar with Zhuangzi’s text and therefore Guo’s commentary. Liu Zongyuan called for an end to the system of inherited esteem and its replacement with a merit-based administration. Bai Juyi argued that every taxpayer by nature possessed an individual viewpoint, and that government should not interfere with it:

故一人一心，万人万心，若不以令一之，则人人之心个异矣。 . . . 盖谨于始，慢于终，则不一也。 . . . 其可二三而行者乎？

One person, one point of view; a thousand persons, a thousand points of view. If you don’t unite them with law, then each person’s mind will differ entirely from every other [with respect to the law]... If laws are applied strictly to the poor but loosely to the rich, then they are not uniform... Do you think they can be carried out successfully if they are not applied uniformly?

People’s viewpoints should remain diverse; instead it is the law should be made uniform in application.

These critiques didn’t bring down the feudal system either, but they did lay the intellectual foundation for its overthrow. Looking back from a post-feudal moment in the eleventh century, the polymath Shen Kuo (1031–95) explained the collapse of feudalism in China as the replacement of esteem-based authority with a meritocracy:

士人以氏族相高，虽从古有之，然未尝著盛。 . . . 唯四夷则全以氏族为贵贱。 . . . 国主，大臣都有种姓，苟非贵种，国人莫肯归之。庶姓虽有劳能，亦自甘居大姓之下。 . . . （在中国南北朝与唐有类似的制度）其俗至唐末方渐衰息。

Scholars like to rate one another’s status according to family. Although this practice has existed since ancient times (in China), it has never been dominant... It is only the non-Chinese people in all directions who rely entirely on lineage to determine status, noble or common... The monarch and ranking ministers are all the same kind of lineage. If a man is not of noble descent, the people will not obey him, while among the commoners, even if one should have talent or merit, he is perfectly happy to remain subordinate to the nobility!... In China this custom was practiced (from Wei times, 4th century) until the end of the Tang when the system gradually collapsed.

Like Guo Xiang, Shen Kuo recognized that it was feelings of deference that powered feudal systems in China and around the world. He was writing more than a century after the collapse of the Tang, so obviously he regarded his own moment in history as post-feudal. Except for the Mongol period of rule, a feudal system of government did not re-establish itself during the late imperial period. One reason for that may be the widespread influence of Zhuangzi’s philosophy among the educated.

Guo Xiang situated the power of feudalism in human psychology, a tendency for individuals to see themselves as intrinsically superior or inferior depending on circumstances, but this tendency, he held, was in error. Logic showed clearly that there was no factual basis for the idea that any person’s dignity could be a function of some other person’s esteem. One need only look up at the clouds to understand that each person by nature possesses an individual point of view and the agency to pursue it (Figure 57.7).

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Episodes towards a history of art and environment

Veronica Sekules

When I opened my gallery GroundWork in 2016 it was, and still is 7 years later, one of very few, if not the only contemporary art gallery specialising exclusively in the environment. In many ways I regard it as the crowning achievement in my career, but in thinking how I can pay tribute to John and Elisabeth, there is one further crucial step to make. Both of them, in their different ways, have had long interest in the impact of the environment on art, and in the broadening of the role of art history to incorporate different environments. John's outstanding achievements in this regard are his initiation of the journal *Art History* and his fundamental drive in the inauguration of *World Art Studies*. Then Elisabeth de Bièvre's important book *Dutch Art and Urban Cultures, 1200-1700* demonstrated more than any previous work how local topography has an impact culturally and economically on shaping different and specific histories.¹ Inspired by their role models, I would like to dedicate to them these initial thoughts on how their ground-breaking approaches can inform my studies towards a history of art and environment, and hope that in future they can be my interlocutors with this project as it develops.

The inaugural exhibition for GroundWork was called *Sunlight and Gravity* featuring works by Roger Ackling and Richard Long. The two artists had been life-long best friends, but very sadly Roger died before the exhibition was open. However, as a special favour, Richard Long had come to the gallery to make a site-specific work using river mud from the Great Ouse outside the gallery. He threw the mud at the wall in a single dramatic gesture. As it dried, it formed the wonderful branching pattern of the soil structure of the riverbed, as if it knew what it was and had to become. Richard, who had made these mud drawings for over 20 years, claimed little artistic credit, saying that nature had made the work. He added nothing to the mud and in response to my worries that it would deteriorate over time, said no, it would last as long as a cave painting. This work and these comments set a new strain of thought about art and nature. What he had made, and described, was all about sympathy and empathy with

nature – using its forces as an act of co-creation. His reference back to cave art was also significant and not accidental, as it is one of his abiding interests evident in other strands of his work, where, for example, he has used earth to make repeated handprints. This signals a kind of humility in his relationship with nature.

Creating a history of art and environment which both touches on global issues and reaches deep into local ones, chimes with John and Elisabeth's approaches to art, but also with one of the mantras of the environment movement which essentially began campaigns in the early 1970s. 'Think globally, act locally,' also works the other way round, especially in the context of climate change: 'Think locally, act globally.' I propose to use this guiding principle linking local and global to inform a history which is not sequential or hierarchical, but episodic and thematic, reaching back and forth across time and place. I propose to consider a variety of ways in which art and environment interconnect, through extraction of resources, the use of materials, the creating of value, the relationships with land, water and nature.

To what extent has art been created in response to the environment, or in reaction to it? How has art provided new perceptions and new thinking? As our oil-dependent, plastic ridden Anthropocene age of overconsumption and waste has increasingly created environmental problems, how can art help us to address them? Can a history which delves into the many different ways in which art and environment have intersected help to reframe the ways we understand and interpret the physical world? I intend here only to set the scene for a number of approaches, to try out some ideas with a view to adding more and developing a more comprehensive approach as the project develops.

Cave art forms an appropriate beginning, not only as it was one of Richard Long's references, and the subject for John Onians's founding article in *Art History*, but it is intimately connected with an environmental

¹ De Bièvre 2015.

understanding.² Jill Cook in her introductory essays for the British Museum's Ice Age Art exhibition of 2013, makes much of the biological basis for the earliest art, being an expression of the human brain.³ For example, a hand axe represented the ability of man to externalise thought and to invent new aesthetic forms beyond the basic practical necessity the tool required. Her principal reference was to the work of V.S. Ramachandran, but this of course also had become one of John Onians' specialisms.⁴ Even 35 years earlier, in the 1978 article *The Origins of Art*, written with Desmond Collins, assessing the earliest phases of art in the Upper Paleolithic around 32,000–23,000 BC, his consideration of the role of the brain was more sophisticated than this. More than a generic measure of intelligence, he proposed that the types of European figurative art, such as rounded female figurines and various vulva forms, and even more so, the flatter representations of food animals, showed evidence of the brain's capacity for feature detection and recognition. His interpretation of the function and meaning of the figures also went beyond a generic 'fertility figure' assumption. These representations, he suggested, related to the necessity for man – he was assuming the figures were made by young men – to harness the relationships he needed to distinguish his prey and perpetuate his race: women and game animals. Presumably therefore as Onians suggests that these artefacts represent objects of desire, they are also evidence of the human imagination and need for art to create a kind of concreteness, a certainty, fixing the image in physical form.

As Cook also pointed out, as well as brain capacity, skill, and utility, there are other numerous cultural and environmental factors to consider in the making of early art. Not least are the materials and tools which were used, gleaned from the environment and shaped by the body. In the absence of brushes to paint, artists used stones and bones; their mouths to spit and extrude, their hands to make prints. Pigments were created from earth and fire. The terrain and climate throughout Europe was harsh and for comfortable and productive life to be shaped, it required constant hard work making clothes, camps, hunting.⁵ Painted art found in caves seems to reflect ritual and social activity. It is thought that larger caves, such as the Hall of the Bulls at Lascaux, were places of devotion. For David Graeber and David Wengrow those gathering places were likely to be also places for social control, more than devotion, for obedience and establishment of societal justice and

rules.⁶ In such a case, do paintings of animals there represent prey to be conquered or a relationship to be celebrated? Are they companions or adversaries, or possibly both? We shall only ever be able to speculate; however, it appears clear that we are looking at the art of peoples who were intimately connected with their environment and adding elements to their lives which helped them to ensure a more certain future. They were establishing a relationship with nature on their terms from a place that they could control.

Stone extraction

I want to move on now to another era, which sets a whole other series of questions about art, its makers and their relationship with the environment. Medieval stone-masonry in fourteenth-century Lincolnshire was a subject I tackled originally over 30 years ago for my thesis on Heckington Church, the school of masons who built it and its neighbouring churches in the area, and the circle of priests and lay benefactors who created their market.⁷ Looking back at it now, as an extractive industry, it was not necessarily good for the environment, but loss to land was perhaps mitigated by the fact that the skill involved was giving greater value to nature's material.

There are plenty of archival records of economic activity in the stone trade, and many fundamental studies of medieval building operations, such as Louis Francis Salzman's or Douglas Knoop and G.P. Jones' *The Medieval Mason* and *The English Medieval Quarry* and the later John Blair and Nigel Ramsay's *English Medieval Industries*.⁸ More detailed studies of practices, such as the archive of moulding profiles by Richard Morris, have enlightened us about the development of craft skill.⁹ In spite of this, surprisingly little is known about precisely how each category of masons worked, as there are very few examples connecting documents with surviving building examples and almost nothing about who controlled designs and how. However, much can be gleaned from conjecture, looking archaeologically at existing structures, at details of construction methods and styles of mouldings and carvings which can elucidate and support the evidence from other documentary sources. My study, along with other regional surveys, showed just how locally masons tended to work, and how their specialist practices interconnected, for example, providing elements

² Collins and Onians 1978.

³ Cook 2013: 10–25.

⁴ Ramachandran 2003.

⁵ Cook 2013: 55–57.

⁶ Graeber and Wengrow 2021: 1–49, 250–51.

⁷ Sekules 1990.

⁸ Colvin 1971; Salzman 1923; Blair and Ramsay 1991; Knoop and Jones 1933; Knoop and Jones 1938.

⁹ Warwick Mouldings Archive, viewed 28 February 2023, <<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/scapvc/arthistory/staff/morris/maarch/>>.

from a repertoire of potential components which were more or less elaborate depending on the scale of the commission. So the most expensive building, such as Heckington, would be constructed with the maximum detail, such as moulded base profiles, carved doorways, complex window tracery designs, gabled, pinnacled and niched buttresses, cornices decorated with plenty of sculpture to provide a range of imagery; and elaborately decorated liturgical furnishings. Lesser commissions would have some, but not all of these elements, depending on their scale and expense. Visual evidence and individual signature styles shows how masons worked in variable combinations, within a region restricted to around 20 miles radius.¹⁰ Unlike the current masonry trade using stone imported from anywhere in the world, it was in fact a very environmentally sensitive way of working, perhaps because everything was pre-industrial and dependent on hand-cutting and horse or boat transport. It was the masons who travelled more than the materials.

I can look back at this study, in the light of both Elisabeth and John's work to add some further observations and depth to this somewhat practical analysis of the mechanisms of building. Through Elisabeth de Bièvre's researches on the particular, diverse and local urban cultures of the Netherlands, published in her *Dutch Art and Urban Cultures, 1200-1700*, I am struck anew by the importance of locality in forming not only artistic practice and style, but attitudes. To read her descriptions of the distinctiveness of each Dutch city brought about by local politics and governorship, architectural taste, the resident personalities and populations and above all how these interacted with its wider habitat and environment, is inspiring. She tells us in immense and absorbing detail how for example, Albert Cuyp provides the river views and cattle-filled landscapes to satisfy the nostalgic view of their locality by Dordrecht's socially immobile functionaries.¹¹ Or how Vermeer and de Hooch's elegant and sparing interiors and courtyards expressed perfectly the order and restraint of Delft's combination of cleanliness and wealth.¹²

Elisabeth claimed in her introduction that her method of locating her analysis of visual culture in relation to the local geographical and historical circumstances, could be applied to anywhere in the world. Applying this overtly to my own study, which is not urban but rural, nevertheless makes me better realise the importance of close analysis of the interaction between

social and environmental factors in the construction of a society's visual culture. Church building in South Lincolnshire thrived as long as the region was economically buoyant. The market for stone lasted as long as the trade in its wool, a sought-after commodity as far afield as Italy until the middle of the fourteenth century. Looking back at Heckington church, it stands out because of its relative isolation, part of an estate village, its situation at the edge of the Fenlands, an area both fertile and prone to flooding. However much there are elite and international personalities, ideas and references which contributed to its sophisticated religious and social status, the local environmental context has equally if not more so created it with a certain rustic character and certainly embedded it within a wider local artistic milieu.

John's studies of classical architecture and the survival and adaptation of its references and symbolism, is also interesting in relation to this group of Lincolnshire churches. In *Bearers of Meaning*, he traces the development of the column and the pier from classical through medieval architecture. He describes a revolution in architecture from the beginning of the fourteenth century signalled by mounting revolt against the ostentation of the church and essentially, by a new kind of evangelism led by the friars, which undermined the authority of the traditional massive monumentality of church building. The more slender and ethereal forms of Gothic architecture, he suggested, exemplified by the Sainte Chapelle in Paris, were a result of the attempts by church builders to transform them into 'miraculous otherworldly symbols,' 'to create a new style which distanced itself from earthly materialism and evoked the Heavenly Jerusalem.'¹³ At the heart of its chancel, Heckington church has indeed a literal evocation of the heavenly Jerusalem in the form of an Easter Sepulchre, or as I have referred to it in publication, a proto-sacrament shrine which made visible a distinctive and permanent ritual commemoration of Christ's death and resurrection.¹⁴ In response to John's overall point about Gothic architecture having been seen as a virtuous architectural style, rescuing the church from the morally dangerous monumentality of classicism, again, there are parallels at Heckington. He gives the example of Giotto's embellishment of the Arena Chapel in Padua with its important and uplifting narrative cycle, as a means through which the building's architecture facilitates greater opportunity for devotional expression. On the exterior of Heckington, the niched and pinnacled forms of the building itself give opportunity to a large array

¹⁰ Sekules 1983.

¹¹ De Bièvre 2015: 63-101.

¹² De Bièvre 2015: 161-201.

¹³ Onians 1988: 112-29.

¹⁴ Sekules 1986: 118-31.

of figurative corbels exemplifying morally dubious and monstrous behaviour, which make in effect a chorus of judgement and social control. In such a way this local parish church architecture does indeed operate as a focus for virtue and piety.¹⁵

Another way of reflecting back on the subject of stone extraction is through GroundWork's exhibiting programme. Today, stone is a very much more endangered material, in use largely for much more utilitarian purposes as paving slabs, coastal defences, or aggregates for house and road building and needs much greater emphasis as a continuing environmental study about extractivism.¹⁶ There is much more to say about this, but for now I will give just one example of an artist who is having a significant impact on an environmental issue. The Dutch artist herman de vries is a true natural philosopher who lives so close his local environment, he calls the Steigerwald in South Germany his studio. For his exhibition *On the Stony Path* at GroundWork in 2017, his first in England, he showed part of his vast and comprehensive collection of stone rubbings.¹⁷ Most significantly also, he exhibited a formalist geometric pavement made from different types of Steigerwald stone. It transpired that almost all of these stones had subsequently disappeared, been over-quarried or built over, so his was the only record. His aim had not originally been conservation, but he had valued a material which had otherwise been both disregarded and overused.

World Art, land and comparative study

The invention and development of World Art Studies, initially owing so much to John Onians, had a brief spell of glory at the University of East Anglia (UEA). One of its great benefits, but also a drawback which in the end caused it to be largely sidelined, was the fact that it could embrace a plethora of different approaches to the study of art and a multitude of understandings of where art was located and what art is. Responding to the breadth of the global and temporal coverage of the Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection, its initial result was to open students' minds to the diversity of art as they were initiated into its gallery. No longer was it possible to see art dominated by stretched canvases on a wall, or marble statues for grand houses and galleries, but art was for every day, for ritual, for altar, for adornment, from anywhere. The whole idea of luxury

needed to change and it became possible and necessary to see equal value from a shell mask and a stool carved by someone sitting cross-legged in a field, as much as from gilded frames and tapestries.

Now its principal legacy is in the journal, *World Art*.¹⁸ However at the height at UEA there was much world-art oriented teaching. One of these was a project I ran with colleagues called *The Culture of the Countryside*. Funded by what was then the Heritage Lottery Fund, its purpose was to make comparative studies of works of art from different rural parts of the world with a view to better understanding our own within a broader context. It began from a gift to the University of some 150 artefacts from Papua New Guinea by High Paget, a Suffolk Gent who had been formerly a British Council cultural officer in Papua New Guinea and Northern Australia. So for three years we took selections of these objects out on tour to schools and villages in Norfolk and Suffolk and used them as foci for investigation and discussion. As a result, a host of questions and responses were gathered. There were then broadly two directions the project took. One was to build up curiosity about Papua New Guinea, which in effect was a bank of documentation of people's ignorance and desire for more information and knowledge, to which we tried to respond. The other was a comparative understanding of our own localities, informed by the kinds of values we had been observing from a very different part of the world. Thus for example, we would bring food hooks in the form of figures to be hung from the rafters of a Papua New Guinea Long House, which were the equivalent of a fridge or larder of a Western house. Not only were these a revelation about how dull were our domestic arrangements, but more so, how divorced we were by comparison from our environment. For it became apparent, the more we looked at the art of Papua New Guinea, the more we understood that their imagery and pattern-making, their materials and forms, all related to an environment they observed very closely. In order to drive home this kind of understanding and perception, the other important element of our programme was to take children and communities we were working with into the local area outside, to be observant in an equivalent way, and then to work with an artist to make a work of art as a direct response. These works were normally thematically related in some way to the artefacts we had started with, so that the project went full circle from response to understanding to action.¹⁹

¹⁵ Sekules 1995: 37–62.

¹⁶ Extraction: Art on the Edge of the Abyss, viewed 28 February 2023, <<https://www.extractionart.org/>>.

¹⁷ *On the Stony Path*: herman de vries, viewed 28 February 2023, <<https://www.groundworkgallery.com/exhibition/on-the-stony-path-herman-de-vries/>>.

¹⁸ *World Art Journal* established in 2011.

¹⁹ Sekules 2017.

This was absolutely a local-global or global-local project and what it demonstrated was the importance of comparative study between different cultures and how art can lead that in terms of how it can be a filter for environmental connections. The art we started with from Papua New Guinea was mostly made from wood, bark, skins and shells and motivated by strong relationships with the environment. Artefacts were either designed through deep understanding of that environment, with for example, patterns like waves, fish, insect tracks in the earth; or evidenced a need to maintain and develop greater power in environmental control, through such objects as Yam shields to protect precious young fruit.

From our Western perspectives, we had a great deal to learn from the traditional artefacts and the cultural understanding they enabled. It demonstrated to us in some ways how far we were from our connection with land and the forces of nature, but more so, how differently our sensitivity to environment is expressed. However, we were tackling a highly sensitive and contentious subject and there were deeper issues we could not reach without actual contact. Papua New Guinea has its own landownership and exploitation issues which another organisation based in Suffolk did address directly in a different way, working with local Papua New Guinean cultural leaders to save endangered forests. That organisation also had their own equivalent to our creative projects with artists, and returned to Britain inspired by this work to create community forests in the UK. However back in Papua New Guinea, the scale of the potential threat from change continues to be very great. By far the majority of land there is still in customary ownership and passes from generation to generation, however, it is currently going through land-reform legislation which will enable land parcels to be created for leasing, sale and consequent development. This is being portrayed by the government as an advantage, meaning that there can be, as they say, proper investment in the country, but will inevitably mean that the country's assets will continue to be in greater danger.

Travelling the length and breadth of Norfolk and Suffolk, as we did for the Culture of the Countryside project made clear to what extent our land in Britain is constrained, and has long been so, by ownership and management. East Anglian landscape is still dominated by farmland, much of it still being industrially controlled. North Norfolk is still largely owned by the great estates, the National Trust and the Crown. Land ownership has historically been intimately connected with its representation. In her book *Spirit of Place*, Susan

Owens notes that some of the first birds eye views of landscape in England in mid-16th century were made as a result of land-surveying for ownership or defensive purposes.²⁰ Landscape painting in oils, dotted with classical references, became a mark of prestige in the context of grand houses in the seventeenth century, following the Grand Tour by artists and their rich patrons.

One of the criticisms which has been levelled at Graeber and Wengrow's ambitious *New History of Humanity*, is its emphasis on land ownership and the assumptions they make, some of which I summarised above, about the associations of control and obedience that has entailed. Their study made clear that ownership and assignment of land is a western, and especially colonial obsession. Over centuries, they describe the pattern of appropriation of land which was assumed to be unclaimed just because it had not been associated with individuals. They also outline many different kinds of relationships with land, from peoples who live by deep knowledge of the land which they use for foraging as a kind of farming, to those who grow crops, who harvest, who hunt. Their critic, in the context of a live question and answer review of their book in March 2022, to surviving author David Wengrow, was African scholar Akin Ogundiran who reminded him that the model of ownership in Africa was different and not dependent on the individual. Land was not appropriable, and community and land were inextricably connected. That is common in other cultures as is increasingly becoming clear. Winona LaDuke, a member of the Anishinaabeg peoples of north-western Minnesota and interviewed for an essay in *Land Art, A Cultural Ecology Handbook*, speaks of the way they don't own land, but the land owns the peoples.²¹ This similar attitude threads through Robin Wall Kimmerer's very influential *Braiding Sweetgrass*.²² Being an advocate for indigenous languages and traditional knowledge about biodiversity, plants and cultivation, she is spearheading a growing sense that there are ways to live with nature with greater empathy. These writings are becoming more widespread in our urgent environmental crisis. As the world is under increasing pressure from climate change, there is an expanding sense politically and culturally that we need to work collectively and listen to nature, that a return to nurturing biodiversity is an essential pre-requisite for environmental health.

²⁰ Owens 2020: 52.

²¹ Andrews 2006: 62–67.

²² Wall Kimmerer 2020.

Fragments towards a history

In reflecting back on these three areas from my current position owning a contemporary art gallery, I am left with more questions than answers about how to frame an art-environmental study. This beginning has been fragmentary and episodic. The first section above considered how the artist might collaborate with nature to make the work, which requires the artist to understand nature's force and to give it freedom. Then I looked at how Ice Age peoples were thought to be trying through their art to achieve both empathy and mastery over nature as a means of ensuring security over their future. World art provided a framework for comparative study, which has proved to be fruitful and thought-provoking, yet fraught with complexity and many issues which need further unpacking. And then I began to consider landscape where there are equally so many issues over use, ownership, change which shift in each era. I could have talked about water, cloth, metals, paint, weather – the environment potentially encompasses everything.

Art and life no longer connect as they might have done better in pre-industrial societies, but they need to be seen in greater synergy so that a wider public can understand that art can do more than be a focus for appreciation and can stimulate new understanding of the environment which can be helpful. If we think of the complexities of the ways in which the environment is managed, by different owners, responsible to different political systems, over variable terrain, yielding different resources, hosting multitudes of plant and animal life, governed by differing and changing and increasingly dangerous climate, then the scale of the task for art and where its impact may be felt becomes like the environment itself almost unmanageably enormous. But useful connections need to be made as a starting point.

As I work with an expanding number of artists, I am aware that they can bring incredibly sharp scrutiny not only to each subject, but to each individual work they tackle. Yet the art world is relatively isolated and much as one would like it otherwise, stereotypically elitist. I am starting to realise that in the interests of environmental advocacy, there is a huge interpretive job to be done in a wider world, to put episodes of a story together. If collectively we are to get any further in understanding how art can help us in better environmental understanding, we need to be aware not only of geographical and geological contexts but neurological responses, we need to gain greater understanding of the nuances of both representation

and interpretation. John and Elisabeth's works have tackled this helpfully in so many ways, thinking about how art, environment and human needs and desires intersect. Their studies have ranged from the biological to the aesthetic, from the specific to the phenomenological, to consider where, why and how people choose to live and make choices about how their environments are shaped. Their writings opened ways for thinking about global tastes and preferences, as well as regional and economic factors which determine how artistic works are inspired and come into being. For both, in quite different ways, the particularities of place have played a crucial part in figuring how art belongs in human cultures. If we add to these approaches further consideration of how contemporary art and artists globally connect nature and culture, we can come closer to the kind of understanding which can lead to a history of art and environment.

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59.

The agency of a green filing cabinet: From art history to art and back again

Kitty Zijlmans and Rudi Struik

In 2002, a green metal chest arrived at our home to be placed in Rudi's studio. It turned out that its eighty drawers were filled with thousands of old, 10x8.5cm glass slides, used by Henri van de Waal, professor of art history in Leiden 1946–72, for his art history classes before the arrival of celluloid 35mm slides (Figure 59.1). We acquired the cabinet when most of the collection of prints, drawings, photographs, photobooks, cameras, darkroom equipment, books, and archive of the then Leiden Print Room – for decades affiliated with the Art History Institute of Leiden University – had to move from its exquisite location at the Rapenburg to be accommodated at Leiden University Library's Special Collections department. Initially, the then curator of photography, Ingeborg Leijerzapf, tried to find a new home for the cabinet and its contents in an archive or museum somewhere in the Netherlands, but there was no interest whatsoever at that time. The slides would almost certainly have disappeared into the bottle bank if it had not been for Rudi's interest in the chest. He was immediately drawn to it; but it was only when the cabinet, whose heavy drawers had to be moved one by one, was in his studio, that he could take a closer look at its contents. From that moment, he began his voyage of discovery and the production of a whole series of artworks.

In this contribution, the green chest of drawers takes us on a journey; on the one hand, back to Van de Waal's art history classes and the iconographic systematization he developed, and on the other, to the present, to the series of glass slide artworks created by Rudi, unleashing new stories, either because of unfamiliar juxtapositions of the artworks beyond art historical classification, or as a source of inspiration for others. (Figure 59.2).¹ A circular narrative runs from how the slides produced art history, which led to a series of new artworks, which subsequently became reabsorbed into art historical

¹ Inspired by one of Rudi's *Slide Books* containing Dutch seventeenth-century landscapes, quilt maker Angela Struik (Rudi's sister, Pender Islands, BC, Canada) enlarged the slides to fit the 25x25cm format of the squares, printed them on textile, put them in a new order and against a variety of backgrounds, such as newspaper clippings and musical scores.



Figure 59.1. Henri van de Waal's slides cabinet in Rudi Struik's studio in Leiden, 2017. Photography by Rudi Struik.

narratives. This contribution will also demonstrate the cabinet's agency in connecting actants – both people and things – to each other in a dynamic network. Because of their agency, people and things can interact and form new (temporary) relationships. The cabinet has made us 'do' things.

Homo systematicus

Van de Waal, in the first place, used the cabinet to house, but also to systematise his art historical slides and to compose his lectures. The cabinet has eight layers, each with ten drawers into which the glass slides fit perfectly. Each drawer can house up to a



Figure 59.2. Angela Struik, *Quilt* (work in progress), 2023.
Photography by Kitty Zijlmans.

hundred slides. The given shape and composition of the cabinet already encouraged a form of systematization, the owner having to decide how to order and arrange the eighty drawers: by country, era, school, artist, art form, a combination thereof? Apparently, the latter was decided upon, as evidenced by the small filing card in each drawer indicating its general contents, for example, 'Painting, North-Netherlands 17th C. Gherwen - Hals 1.'

On opening the drawers, the first thing one sees is the top of the slides, the black paper tape holding the two sides of the glass slide together, marked with a number of different-coloured dots. Van de Waal used an intricate system of tiny colour dots on the top side of the slides, the exact rationale of which was only known to him. The cabinet also revealed some form of hierarchy: the top was reserved for painting, not surprisingly, the Netherlands (and Rembrandt) on the top rows, architecture and miscellanea (including ads [Sunlight soap for instance], cartoons, diagrams) at the bottom. The colour systematization afforded him the ability to put together lectures series more swiftly and to make cross-references, with either same-colour dotted slides

or various colour combinations alternating to create different paths through the material, shaping the stories he wanted to tell.

Agency and affordance are terms that stem from New Materialism studies; they refer to thinking about the processes occurring between human and non-human, not as dualist structures (subject versus object, acting human versus passive objects or tools, the human in a hierarchical order above the non-human), but rather as processes of becoming, in which the two interact. Whereas in this process the outcome is not predetermined, its required actors can be.² In this case it was the chest, whose arrangement of eighty drawers, aided by the filing cards and the colour-coding system, allowed for both a systematization and the possibility to peruse the slides and organise them into series, narrating a variety of stories. The whole system permitted Van de Waal to navigate through the thousands of slides on itineraries guided by his plans for lectures series, but almost certainly mediated by heuristics as well.

With the odd exception, the glass slides were in black and white and were produced, on request, either by the photography section of the Leiden Print Room, or ordered from institutes such as the Lichtbeelden Instituut [Slides Institute] Amsterdam, photographers specialized in 'projection photography' (e.g. H.J. Kouwenberg, Delft; E. Visser van Weeren, The Hague), or from abroad (Verlag Dr. Franz Stoedtner, Berlin, publisher of scientific projection and stereoscopy; The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York; The Fogg Art Museum of Harvard University). On the front side of each individual slide, small strips of white paper were glued all around the photographed artwork, but in such a way as to not interfere with the image. Here, all sorts of information was added in the most minuscule handwriting imaginable (not Van de Waal's but his assistants') - yet still legible! Next to the artist's name, title and year of the artwork, were its location, references to sources, archives, books the images were taken from, and numbers and codes of which the references are now hard, if not impossible to trace. In this respect, every slide is a source of much information (call it paratext), exceeding the artwork depicted. Moreover, because of all the notes, references, and colour codes, the slides are little artworks themselves.

As the slides show, Van de Waal's interest was vast, covering many centuries of (Western) art and, as mentioned before, vernacular imagery, but also modern art (Paul Cézanne, M.C. Escher, De Stijl artists),

² Barad 2003; Boumeester 2017.

photography (something really exceptional), and architecture. However, the topic that interested him most was 16th- and 17th-century Netherlandish art, and, in particular, the work of Rembrandt.³ As his former students, amongst whom the former museum directors Rudi Fuchs and Hans Locher, and Rudi Ekkart, director of the RKD Netherlands Institute for Art History in The Hague 1990–2012 recall, his way of narrating was fascinating, although he is also remembered as a very strict teacher.

Interestingly, the focus of his research and teaching was not just geared towards discussing the – alleged – meaning of the paintings, prints, and drawings, but also their function. In this respect, Van de Waal stands out in the Netherlands as one of the first to acknowledge the importance of studying art in its cultural context, making him a true iconologist. For him, understanding the way a work of art is connected with the world requires viewing art through the lens of culture. Hence the cabinet also contained glass slides with all kinds of vernacular imagery from the past and (his) present. He considered advertisements, cartoons, and the like as part of the visual-cultural environment in which art could bloom. Another striking aspect was his emphasis on the conflation of the content (meaning), form, and function of a work of art.

Van de Waal was an ardent classifier, and, as recorded by Hans Locher, the above-mentioned former director of the Gemeentemuseum (now Kunstmuseum) in The Hague, Van de Waal would make his approach clear by drawing a triangle on the blackboard as a pedagogical aid. The triangle symbolized the work of art, and each of its three corners was labelled with the aspects of form, content, and function. He drew semi-circles overlapping the corners, their curves towards the middle, to exemplify that each of the three elements is open to a larger environment concerning form, content, and function, and to stress that the work of art was not an isolated unit.⁴ The diagram also indicates that an artwork cannot be reduced to one of the three elements, because, in a non-hierarchical way, each one automatically leads to the other two, and together they shape the perceptions of the beholder. Nor is it possible to determine exactly where they begin, end, or how they overlap. Whereas form and content are more self-evident facets of a work of art – it has a form and it represents something, figurative or not – function is the most difficult of the three. Art has never had just one function; what makes it art is that it is multivocal, layered, and open to new

readings. To stress that art has a function is also to indicate that it circulates through society and plays a role in diverse contexts; that art has a wider context than just other art. In this respect – perhaps an open door now – Van de Waal was quite visionary at the time.

In terms of agency, whereas the cabinet afforded Van de Waal a systematization that culminated in what he called *Iconclass* (see below), the blackboard and the chalk made it possible to visualize the coherence of his thinking, and the diagram to elaborate a workable model. And since Van de Waal never published it, it was passed on via his students. In his inaugural lecture, *Traditie en Bezieling* (1946, ‘Tradition and Inspiration’ – the latter does not entirely cover the Dutch word, which contains the word for ‘soul’) he referred to concepts such as ‘code,’ ‘syntax,’ and ‘semantics,’ which would later play a major role in his lectures and classes on image theory.⁵ Van de Waal’s *beeldleer*,⁶ his image or picture theory, leaned on his slide collection, but equally on the countless filing cards on which he wrote down literally every piece of information that he came across and that triggered his interest. From systematising these cards into categories (and sub-categories) such as ‘general approach,’ ‘seeing,’ ‘form,’ ‘space,’ ‘semantics,’ etc. and furnishing them with an incredibly detailed, intricate numeric system, his *Iconclass* (iconographic classification) image-theory system grew.⁷ As Rudi Fuchs recalls, Van de Waal never wanted to publish his *beeldleer*, because a publication would codify it and turn it into a system beyond control.⁸ Complex cross-references made the filing card indexation ‘talk’ to the glass slides in the green cabinet.

This is the universe in which he operated and to which his publications also attest, most notably his two-volume *magnum opus* entitled *Drie eeuwen vaderlandse geschied-uitbeelding, 1500–1800* (Den Haag 1952). The volumes ‘Three Centuries of Patriotic History Depicted,’ show how the Dutch past, depicted in all kinds of imagery (among the paintings of both great and less talented artists), functioned in the 17th-century present. The scope of the work was only possible because of the astonishing number of images he had collected, systematised, and categorised, in a period when nobody else took any interest in ‘lower’ imagery, such as book illustrations, all

³ To date, the most comprehensive text on Van de Waal is by Eric Jan Sluijter (Sluijter 1998). See also Ekkart *et al.* 2010.

⁴ Locher 2006; Fuchs 1972.

⁵ Van de Waal 1946.

⁶ The Dutch word ‘beeldleer’ is hard to translate because both ‘beeld’ and ‘leer’ have several connotations, *beeld* means image, picture but also the object, and *leer* can be theory but also teaching.

⁷ *Iconclass* has since been digitized and made operational for use online, supporting the study of image content, visual communication, and digital art history, viewed 23 May 2023, <<https://henrivandewaalfoundation.org/>>.

⁸ Fuchs 1972.

kinds of printed materials, ads, cartoons, or the work of lesser known artists. Getting a grip on the sheer scale was only possible by means of his fervent index-based systematization.

Hardware

Van de Waal was a forerunner in another realm, too: he was the first to start collecting photographs for the Leiden Print Room. In 1953, Van de Waal acquired the impressive collection of around 6000 photographs of mainly Dutch photographers assembled by Auguste Grégoire (1888–1971), the first collector of photographs in the Netherlands.⁹ For him it was an obvious addition, a next step into the world of printed imagery: prints, engravings, lithographies, and, since the technical invention of photography, photographs. He valued photos as important objects, collectable in their own right, because of three inherent characteristics: as a representative of one of the many movements and techniques from the history of photography; because of their artistic quality; and because of their documentary value. In addition, he recognised photography as a reproductive medium. Not unimportantly, and according to Grégoire's wishes, the Leiden Print Room's 'Collection Grégoire' could be opened to the public. A curator of photography was appointed. This is noteworthy, because, at that time, collecting photographs was looked upon with much scepticism among museologists. Indeed, Leiden was able to obtain the Collection Grégoire because not a single museum in the Netherlands was interested, a decision many of them came to regret. The acquisition also made it possible to start studying and writing about the history of photography seriously.¹⁰ The collection has grown into one of the largest on Dutch photography in the Netherlands to date and, until today, the history and theory of photography are part of the art historical curriculum.

Studying photography is one thing, but actually making photographs and developing them in the dark room is another. I was one of the fortunate students studying art history in the second half of the 1970s to be ushered into the fascinating universe of photography by Cor van Wanrooij, in those years the photographer attached to the Leiden Print Room of Leiden University. Under his careful supervision, the two years I spent learning how to photograph people, nature, architecture, artworks, objects – big and small, dark or reflecting – using a hand-held, single-lens reflex camera, and then developing and printing the film in a dark room, has been an enduring experience: the hands-on approach to

the materials, learning through trial and error, moulded my understanding of what photography entails. The materials (camera, darkroom equipment, photo paper, chemicals, etc.) shape the environment with which the apprentice interacts and exchanges. My experiences taught me that there is no such thing as bending the materials to your will, they have their own agency. The encounter is relational, implies complementarity, and is both physical and psychical, a mutual interaction of the human and non-human. Van Wanrooij's legacy is extensive, and a number of his students became the first curators of photography in museums in the Netherlands.¹¹

The history of photography is also a history of technical invention and innovation, and, for this reason, cameras, stereoscopes, darkroom equipment, and projectors were collected as well. When the entire collection of the Print Room was relocated to the Leiden University Library in 2002, the hardware travelled along, too. Not every single object, however. The curator of photography, Ingeborg Leijerzapf – also the one trying to give the glass slides collection a new home – was tasked with going through the vast collection of materials and objects, selecting what needed to be kept and what was redundant. It was Ingeborg who wondered whether boxes filled with miscellanea might be of interest to an artist, and Rudi immediately came to mind. Consequently, many objects embarked on their second life.

A new universe

The first object, the metal cabinet, took up residence in its new home, an artist's studio, where it became a source of inspiration for artworks. When the cabinet was placed in his studio, and all the drawers had been put back, one by one, the first thing Rudi did was to inspect the contents. He leafed through the hundreds of glass slides, taking out some to have a closer look, getting a feel for what this collection stored. What struck him was that the slides were of high quality, often extraordinarily sharp, but also that the thousands of glass slides were all of Western European art from the late Middle Ages to the 20th century. Obviously, the slide collection represents what Van de Waal used in his lectures. It formed the basis on which he told the history of art; at the same time, it occurred to Rudi just how much art was not represented in the chest of drawers. Moreover, in the drawers, the slides just sit and do nothing, so, how could he make them speak again? Not directed by the colour dots or numerical systems, nor by art history *per se*, Rudi took out slides randomly and put selections together according to what he considered matching, or

⁹ Leijerzapf 1989; Gierstberg 1994.

¹⁰ Boom 1994.

¹¹ Zijlmans 2008.

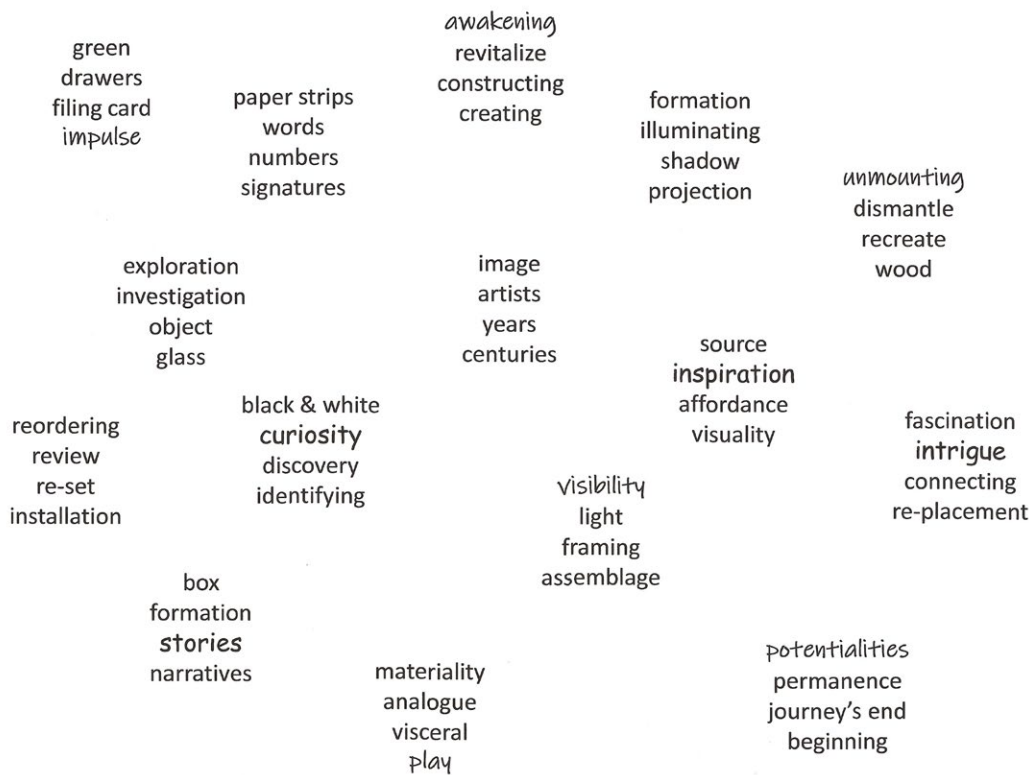


Figure 59.3. Rudi Struik, *The Artist's Materials*, 2003. Word cloud.

purely by chance. The abundance of slides allowed him to assemble spontaneous and arbitrary arrangements, guided by the artist's eye (Figure 59.3).

Importantly, because they are slides, they come to life fully when they are illuminated by a light source, be it natural or artificial light. Both have a different effect; held up to the window, a clear image of the picture is visible, but when illuminated by a light bulb, a soft projection of the image is also created. Rudi started experimenting with both options, creating small rectangular lanterns: two slides above one another on each of the four sides, with a little light on top; and larger installations, an example of which will be elaborated below. A number of slides found a new destination in his two-paged 'Slide Books,' measuring approximately 37x29cm, in which small rectangles were sawn out of a piece of hardboard to match the glass slides. Some of the 'books' could be hung on the wall, illuminated from behind by a tiny light bulb, transforming the slides into little windows. Others reveal their contents when held up to the light, or when stood on a shelf. Apart from being able to see clearly what is on the slides, the 'books' also give ample opportunity to 'read' the images – from left to right (our Western reading direction), from right to left, or from

top to bottom – all the time creating new relationships between the depicted artworks. In this way, a viewer also has access to all the information written in this tiniest of handwriting on the paper slips glued onto the slides. When illuminated, they are even more attractive.

Art frame (Figure 59.4) is one of the first and one of the biggest slides installations, a monumental rectangular wooden frame (216x100x73cm), in which strips of 17 vertically stacked slides alternate with strips of plywood, illuminated by a sturdy lightbulb in the middle. The wooden frame casts a star-shaped shadow pattern on the floor and ceiling, and the slides appear as numerous tiny windows. The dozens of black-and-white, razor-sharp images of the Masters of the past, Hieronymus Bosch, Pieter Brueghel, Rembrandt, and Raphael draw you near, but a faint projection also occurs on the walls, floor, and ceiling of the gallery. The images of the old masters loom up, like ghosts from the past.

Unmounting

The slides offered another possibility, however: to unmake their transparency, rather than illuminating them. In some cases, slides have been mounted in what



Figure 59.4. Rudi Struik, *Art Frame*, 2002. Wood, glass slides, light bulb, 216x100x73cm. Private collection.

Rudi called his 'murals,' plaster casts from (corroded) metal plates, whose texture and colour are not predetermined. The natural colours of the corroded metal sunk into the plaster are permanent and do not fade, and they create unintended, interesting patterns. Here, it is the materials that interact, the outcome of which is in their 'hands.' Interestingly, even robbed of transparency, one can still see clearly what is on the slides; in fact, they attract people for closer inspection. The possibility of projection on the one hand, and the mural procedure on the other, created the following fascinating work, a photo-mural or photo-fresco.

One of the slides bore Paul Cézanne's portrait of his uncle Antoine Dominique Sauveur Aubert as a monk (1866). Situated in one of the lanterns and on show at the 2006 exhibition held at the arts venue Haagweg 4 in Leiden, the projection cast a slightly warped and somewhat vague, but therefore mesmerising image of the monk on the wall of the exhibition space. We took a picture of this projection and, by means of Photoshop, the picture was reversed and then printed, using an inkjet printer, onto special photographic paper, which Rudi knew would release its colours when plaster was



Figure 59.5. Rudi Struik, *Shadow Portrait (after Cézanne)*, 2006. Photo-mural, 29,2x18,5cm. Private collection.

poured over it, thus creating a photo-mural of the image (*Shadow Portrait [After Cézanne]*, 2006, Figure 59.5). It was the photographic paper that allowed the creation of such murals, all roughly in the A4 format of this particular material; unfortunately, the technological advancements of photographic paper mean that this ability has been lost. To our knowledge, no other photographic paper combined with any particular inkjet ink can provide similar effects; the plaster did not absorb the ink. Apart from the fact that the photo-mural puzzles the viewer, who tries to figure out who this person is that is emerging from the dark, plaster photographs do not fade away as photographs tend to do over time. The colour sits in the plaster for once and for all.

Taking the slides apart – that is, removing the black paper tape holding the two sides together – inspired Rudi's work *Diamond of Slides* (2013, Figure 59.6), containing twenty-five cedarwood cigar boxes (donated by our committed cigar-smoking neighbour), each with its own glass



Figure 59.6. Rudi Struik, *Diamond of Slides*, 2013. Cedarwood cigar boxes, 25 glass slides, 117x88x5cm. Private collection.

image. Rudi unmounted the slides, stripping them from the information-bearing labels, to get through to the glass, to the half on which the image sits. Then, another layer of information was revealed. The fingerprints of the person developing the slides became visible on both sides, where the small glass plates were held with fingers and thumb to fish them from their chemical baths. Some slides also reveal the imprint of small clips clamping the two sides, exposing the construction phase of the glass slides. A whole new image appears when the pictures are glued to a tailor-made piece of wood that shimmers through the areas of blank glass and even underneath the image. Surprisingly, they did not lose their visibility, on the contrary, the images invite you to get closer.

There is no hierarchy in the ordering of the images, the top one is a landscape, all the others are portraits, allegories, mythical or biblical scenes from 16th- and 17th-century painting, Hans Holbein's *The Ambassadors* (1553) is clearly visible, as is, for example, Frans Hals' *Malle Babbe* (1630s). It is a sport to see how many images you recognise, without looking at the information that

was written down on the paper strips. Close inspection treats the viewer to, alternately, the element of play and a eureka moment when a picture is identified. To enhance the playfulness of the whole structure, which takes on the form of a diamond, the slides are mounted on small wooden boards and attached to the rear panel of the cigar boxes with little cubes of wood, differing in size, to create a lively rhythm of receding and protruding images. The overall diamond shape, reminiscent of a cross, has a religious connotation. Whereas in this work, the information (paratext) on the slides has disappeared, the cigar boxes have been left with all the print, red and yellow stickers, and seals identifying the cigar brand intact: 'La Paz 50 Cigarros, Tabacos Primeros,' beautiful little boxes held together by tiny copper staples.

From two to three dimensions

How do you bring real depth of field to a glass slide? Some paintings, such as Pieter de Hoogh's (1629–82) famous interiors of quiet domestic scenes, for example the *Interior with a Woman Reading and a Child with a Hoop* (1662–66), offer such perspectival depth. It wasn't just the interiors that fascinated Rudi, but also the spacing of the rooms. The deep view from the living space into a hallway with an arched doorway, probably leading to a garden, incited Rudi to investigate its spatiality. In order to do this, and to 'recreate' the three-dimensional space, he scanned the glass slide, took the different layers (planes) of the image apart and printed the various planes on transparencies. He placed them, one after the other, in a wooden box, in a spatial setting as if on a stage, thus creating a three-dimensional picture. (Figure 59.7). However, separating the picture planes revealed that pieces of the figures, objects, and floor tiles were missing, where they had overlapped. This meant that Rudi had to reconstruct the figure or object on the individual planes of the representation, making it whole again. From a frontal position, the viewer indeed sees the painting but then set in a three-dimensional space. From the side, though, you can peek 'behind' the planes, see the figures and the table, for instance, separated from the background. A small fluorescent tube at the top allows light to enter the performance, creating more depth.

A final work I would like to present is the installation and performance *Selected Histories*, held at The International Festival in the Context of Art/the Differences, 28 September–1 October 2006 in Warsaw, Poland. In addition to art slides of mainly 15th-, 16th-, and 17th-century painting and prints, Rudi was also given a series of old glass lantern-slides from the Museum of Natural History in Leiden, depicting Palaeolithic material. In the



Figure 59.7. Rudi Struik, *Spatial Setting (after Pieter de Hoogh)*, 2009. Wood, transparencies, tube light, 36x35,5x20cm. Private collection.

installation, a selection of 200 slides was hung at random from the ceiling by lengths of white string, enabling the visitor to ‘read’ the works according to the path they choose to take, seeing art and science together (Figure 59.8). These are two fields that do not always converge, but which now had the opportunity to interact, offering the viewer new connections.

In the performance, Rudi moved through the web of hanging slides, laying down a number of black slides on the floor, one by one. They represent what is missing in the collections, and subsequently in the writing of their histories. The black slides epitomise all that has fallen by the wayside of history. The title *Selected Histories* alludes to the selectivity in the writing of history, be it that of art history or natural history. This was one of the aspects that struck him from the start, not so much what was in the slides’ collections, but what was not there. Indeed, there are as many open spaces as there are slides. When the selectivity of what is shown or is on display in museums

and collections becomes clear to the viewer, not only can they fill in these ‘empty’ spaces themselves, but, moreover, an awareness is raised that each presentation, each selection is grounded in decisions about what is included and, consequently, excluded.

Full circle

Over the years, works from these series were sold, entering a new home as an individual piece, or as part of a collection. The works have also featured in numerous group and solo exhibitions, becoming part of new art historical narratives, and turning, full circle, back to where this itinerary started: the production of slides for teaching art history. The last exhibition with slide-works, *Beelden in Meervoud (Images in Plural)*, in the spacious and beautifully articulated hallway of the Oude UB at Rapenburg 70 in Leiden 16 February–16 April 2018, is an important segment in the circle. The Oude UB (the former university library, at present housing



Figure 59.8. Rudi Struik, *Selected Histories*, installation view and performance. Warsaw, 2006. Photography by Kitty Zijlmans.

the Executive Board of Leiden University), is across the Rapenburg canal, only a few houses away from where the Print Room was situated before its removal to the (new) University Library, and just around the corner from the Print Room preceding the one at the Rapenburg, where Van de Waal had his office. The exhibition showed all Rudi's existing and new slide-works, small and monumental ones, arranged either in series or at random, sometimes illuminated by a light bulb or fluorescent tube creating a lovely play of light and shadow and of image and projection. All the wood came from wine- and cigar-boxes, old picture frames, or door panels – used wood that is given a new purpose. Thus, all the materials, the slides included, have a central position, arousing curiosity about their origin, materiality, and former use. But most importantly, the

works bring the lost slide material back to life (Figure 59.9). They do not tell traditional art history, but make all kinds of other, new stories possible.

For this purpose, a small cinema was also built, in which visitors could use the old slide projector, lent from Leiden University's Special Collection, to pick out and project glass slides of their choice, bringing them back to their former function.

Yet one more aspect completes the full circle. Having exhausted the possibilities that the slides had offered for research and new works, Rudi was ready to part with the green cabinet. Fortunately, the RKD had also started to collect the archives and materials from former professors of art history in the Netherlands, and



Figure 59.9. Rudi Struik, *Chandelier*, 2017. Aluminum, lamp. slides, 64x34cm. Private Collection.

welcomed the arrival of the chest. It is now on display in the RKD, for future generations – those keen to examine old analogue photo-techniques and materials – to discover and explore, in our increasingly digitized world.

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Appendices

Contributors' Biographies

Arbib, Michael

Michael Arbib has had an active career in artificial intelligence, brain theory and cognitive science. His concern for the social implications of computer science was given textbook expression in *Computers and the Cybernetic Society*; while in 1983 he and Mary Hesse delivered the Gifford Lectures in Natural Theology at the University of Edinburgh, since published as *The Construction of Reality*, providing a coherent epistemology for both individual and social knowledge. One theme of current research builds on a paper on language evolution published with Giacomo Rizzolatti called 'Language within our Grasp.' This interest has been developed in his book *How the Brain Got Language: The Mirror System Hypothesis* (Oxford University Press 2012) with a follow-up symposium volume *How the Brain Got Language: Towards a New Road Map* (Johns Benjamins 2020). The other theme includes a special interest in neuromorphic architecture in the sense of supplying buildings with 'brains' whose design is informed by cognitive (neuro)science, as well as the neuroscience of the design and experience of architecture. His book on these topics, *When Brains Meet Buildings: A Conversation Between Neuroscience and Architecture*, was published by Oxford University Press in 2021.

Barker, Diane

Diane Barker is a photographer and artist based in a small Worcestershire village. She was born in a pub and still lives in the home of her birth. She studied Art History at the University of East Anglia and went on to do an MA involving a landscape photo project at the University of Central England. Diane's nomadic roots trace back to the 1970s as a hippie living in a camper van in America, and at age 25 she met her first Tibetans, when the 16th Karmapa and his entourage visited Wales. In her 30s she became a painter, exhibiting widely in London and around the UK, and in her 40s photography took over when she began travelling to India. A Buddhist boyfriend, teaching English to Tibetan monks in Sikkim, took her into the heart of the Tibetan community and she began documenting their lives along with those of Indian village people in

the Himalayan foothills. She first encountered Tibetan nomads, or *drokpa*, in 2000 in the Changtang of Ladakh and fell in love with the rawness, beauty and simplicity of their traditional earth-based culture. Ever since then the Tibetan nomads became her photographic obsession and the subject of her heart. She has travelled extensively in eastern Tibet (now part of Sichuan Province, Gansu, Qinghai, Yunnan and TAR, China) documenting nomad life. She has created exhibitions which have toured around the UK, as well as to Mumbai, India. Many of her photos have been exhibited in group shows in the UK, India and New York. Her work has also appeared in many books, publications and on-line platforms. Her solo published works include *Portraits of Tibet* (Graffeg/Bird Eye Books), *Tibetan Prayer Flags* (Connections Book Publishing) and *The Eternal Land* (East West Publications). (<www.dianebarber.net>.)

Bentall, Katy

Katy Bentall is a British artist (1962). She was married to Mariusz Tchorek (1939–2004) Polish art critic and psychotherapist in Norwich, UK. After Mariusz died, she undertook the task of restoring his father's sculpture studio in Warsaw, both using it as her own studio and creating a contemporary place in an historic setting for meetings, happening, exhibitions, archival research projects and many other things. Most recently (2021) she gifted the studio to the City of Warsaw and it is now under the care of the Museum of Warsaw. Her artist's book *Pracownia* was published in 2021 by Salix alba. It is a poetic documentation of her long relationship to the studio. At present she is working with the independent publishers, Bored Wolves, on a new book of poetry and drawings about life in the East Anglian coastal town of Felixstowe.

Bièvre, Elisabeth de

Elisabeth de Bièvre was educated in the Netherlands, France and Italy with a PhD from London University. She has taught freelance at several universities, the longest and most consistently in the School of World Art Studies at the University of East Anglia, as well as at the University of California, Los Angeles, and University

College London, and she has delivered the Baldwin Lectures at Oberlin, Ohio. She now likes to describe her professional status as scholar at large. With several publications to her name, the latest is the launch of her project to explain how we experience the differences in art and art production of one place from another in the world. How can we analyse the influences from the micro-environment wherever art is produced, local embryos which may or may not influence the aesthetic of the place. Differences are observed on many levels where art has no place, or does it, in an unobserved artless aesthetic?

Blair Brysac, Shareen

Born and raised in Denver, Colorado, during her undergraduate years at Barnard College, Columbia University, Brysac toured Latin America with the José Limon Company and in the U.S. with Merce Cunningham. After graduation, she danced with Paul Taylor in Europe and Merce Cunningham in the USA and on a world tour. She then married her first husband and retired from dancing. She worked in publishing for some years at Harcourt Brace Jovanovich and Random House. Then for a decade she produced several hour documentaries for CBS News including *1968* which won a Dupont Citation and two Emmys and *Juilliard: A Life in Music*, winner of several Emmys and a Peabody. When the documentary division was disbanded, she spent two years as the program manager for CUNY TV in New York City and received a Rockefeller Grant to assemble a group of colleges providing similar programming for their stations. After her marriage to Karl Meyer, she became an author or co-author of five books, and a contributing editor for *Archaeology Magazine* and her articles regularly appeared in *Military History Quarterly*, and while she was in Berlin, *The Nation*. From 1992 through 2013, she appeared occasionally in the OpEd pages of the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. In 2012, she spent a semester as a Fellow of St. Antony's College, Oxford.

Brend, Barbara

Read French at Cambridge; later, moved by travel, she took an MPhil and a PhD in Islamic Art and Archaeology at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London. She is an independent scholar who has been associated with the British Museum and British Library. She has taught a course in Islamic Art at the University of East Anglia; on Indian Painting at SOAS; and on both Indian and Islamic painting for Birkbeck College. Her principal research is into form and meaning in Persian and Mughal painting. In 2010 she curated the exhibition

Epic of the Persian Kings at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. Books: *Islamic Art* (British Museum Press); *The Emperor Akbar's Khamsa of Nizāmī* (British Library); *Perspectives on Persian Painting: illustrations to Amir Khusrau's Khamsah* (RoutledgeCurzon); *Muhammad Juki's Shahnamah of Firdausi* (Philip Wilson Publishers); with Charles Melville, *Epic of the Persian Kings* (I.B. Tauris); *Treasures of Herat: Two Timurid Khamsahs of Nizami Manuscripts* (Gingko with British Library).

Bril, Blandine

Seconde d'une fratrie de six enfants, j'ai connu une enfance et jeunesse sans éclat particulier entre Savoie et le Dauphiné, avant de m'installer à Paris où je préparais une thèse d'anthropologie tout en gagnant ma vie dans un Institut d'informatique. C'est là que je rencontrais Daniel Kayser qui devint plus tard mon mari. Son domaine de recherche et d'enseignement, algorithmique et intelligence artificielle, étaient à l'époque des domaines très confidentiels! Je me demande souvent comment il aurait interprété l'évolution de ces 10 dernières années témoins d'un développement tapageur sans limite. De mon côté un poste d'enseignant-chercheur à l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences sociales à Paris, qui m'a permis de poursuivre des travaux en dehors des sentiers battus associant anthropologie et psychologie. Partagée entre psychologie expérimentale de laboratoire et travaux expérimentaux de terrain au Mali et en Inde, j'ai travaillé sur des habiletés aussi diverses que la marche, la taille de la pierre ou même le cassage de noix chez les chimpanzés. Nos trois enfants, Clara, Lucie et Nicolas, ont manifestement pensé que l'université française telle que nous la vivions n'était pas si enviable et choisir des domaines différents tout en s'installant à l'étranger, au Canada, aux États-Unis et à Berlin. J'ai maintenant six petits-enfants, Daniel ayant à peine connu les aînés. Malgré l'éloignement c'est avec beaucoup de plaisir que nous nous retrouvons pour du vélo, des ballades en montagne, en bord de mer ou pour de longs moments à déambuler dans les enfilades de salles de musées dont ils sont à mon grand plaisir tous friands.

Campbell, Ian

After a first degree in the history of art at Essex, Ian moved to UEA in 1975 for his masters on Italian Renaissance Architectural Theory with John, which led on to his doctorate for Oxford. He worked from 1981–86 as an Inspector of Historic Buildings in Scotland, based in Edinburgh, and then for the Census of Antique Works of Art and Architecture Known in the Renaissance, at the Bibliotheca Hertziana, Rome. In 1988 he moved to

Cambridge as Librarian of the Faculty of Architecture and History of Art, and then on to the School of Architecture, Edinburgh College of Art in 1992, to lecture on architectural history. He subsequently became Professor of Architectural History and Theory at the University of Edinburgh until his retirement in 2017. His research, which focuses on Renaissance architectural drawings after the antique, and medieval and early modern architecture in Scotland, has always been inspired and informed by the lessons he learned from John.

Cao Yiqiang

Cao Yiqiang is an art historian and artist. He has been professor of art history since 1996, and, from then till 2019 founding director of the Advanced School of Art and Humanities at the China Academy of Art, and also the chief-editor of *New Arts*. He is Honorary President of the Academy of Chinese Calligraphy in Xian. For the last 20 years he had been in charge of the National Committee of Academic Assessment in the Arts. In this capacity he has helped to establish the arts and art history as an independent discipline of education in China. He has organized many international conferences. He has published numerous essays both in Chinese and English. His books include *Art and History* (2000, now 4th edition, republished), *The Portrait of the Age: Italian Renaissance Art* (2006), *Approaches to Art Histories* (2009), *Perspectives on Theories of Art* (2015), *Artistic Intelligence* (2015), *A History of Chinese and Western Painting* (2019); *Three Essays on the Impact of Art on Creativity in Education and Science and Daily Life* (forthcoming), *Three Eminent Art Historians: Gombrich, Haskell and Baxandall* (in English, forthcoming), *Global Culture after Gombrich: Art, Mind, World* (in English, forthcoming, co-ed.)

Conforti, Michael

Michael Conforti holds an MA and PhD degree from Harvard University and teaches in the Williams College Graduate Program in the History of Art. Director of the Clark Art Institute from 1994–2015, he was President of the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD) from 2008–10. An emeritus trustee of the American Academy in Rome (where he was also a Fellow and Resident), the Menil Collection and the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASSMoCA), he remains on the board of the Amon Carter Museum in Fort Worth, the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal, the (Philip) Guston Foundation and on the Advisory Council for the Hermitage, St. Petersburg, the Scuderie al Quirinale, Rome, the University of Göttingen's Forum

Wissen, and the Aspen Institute's Artist-Endowed Foundation Initiative.

Damme, Wilfried van

Wilfried van Damme studied art history, archaeology, and cultural anthropology, obtaining his PhD from Ghent University in 1993. His scholarly work has been mainly concerned with the aesthetic, which he approaches from an intercultural and interdisciplinary perspective. His interests in applying a similar approach to the study of the visual arts led him to engage in World Art Studies. Van Damme has taught African art history and World Art Studies, most recently at Leiden University (2004–21). Publications include *Beauty in Context: Towards an Anthropological Approach to Aesthetics* (Leiden, 1996), *World Art Studies: Exploring Concepts and Approaches* (co-edited with Kitty Zijlmans, Amsterdam, 2008), and more recently 审美人类学 [*The Anthropology of Aesthetics*] (second enlarged edition, Beijing, 2022).

Davis, Whitney

Whitney Davis is Pardee Distinguished Professor Emeritus of History & Theory of Ancient & Modern Art at the University of California at Berkeley. He is the author of ten monographs on topics in art history from prehistory to the present and on questions of art theory and visual theory. He is currently working on books on the nature of sculptural representation and on the intersection of moral philosophy and artwriting in Victorian Britain.

Decler, Hubert[†]

Hubert Decler (1940–2021), of Belgian nationality, adopted Nepal as his permanent residence some 40 years ago. A true Renaissance man, he directed an education abroad program by day (as it were), and devoted the rest of his time to art, music, writing scholarly articles and, above all, Buddhist meditational practices.

Dell, Simon

Simon Dell taught for more than twenty years in the Department of Art History and World Art Studies at the University of East Anglia. He dislikes autobiography.

Douglas, Helen

Helen Douglas was born and grew up in the Scottish Borders. She graduated from University of East Anglia (where she met John & Elisabeth) with a BA Hons in

Art History and later in the '90s with a PhD from the University of Edinburgh. It was while studying at UEA that she realised the possibilities of the book as a primary place for Art: as a place for contemplation and visual beauty and the intimate reading of the visual. She began publishing Artists' Books in 1974 under the imprint Weproductions. In 1975 she moved to Deuchar Mill in the Borders with her partner Telfer Stokes where they renovated the Mill and set up a Printing Press for the production and publishing of Artists' Books. Douglas' books have been widely exhibited in the UK, Europe and the US—where a retrospective exhibition of all her books was held at Printed Matter Inc, New York in 2018. Her books have won awards and are held in many public collections including SGMA, Edinburgh, V&A, Tate, Yale Centre for British Art and MOMA, NY. In 2006 she was made Life Member of the Museum of Modern Art, NY in recognition of her work in the book. Douglas taught (1978–1997) at the Heriot Watt University, Borders Campus, where she set up the Archive for Historical Textiles, and between 1997–2017 was visiting lecturer in Book Arts at University of the Arts, London. In 2012 she was part of a research group with Tate/UAL in collaboration with the British Museum and V&A looking into the digital Artist Book, which resulted in her digital publication *The Pond* at Deuchar. She is currently researching and making books in response to the 3 billion-year old Lewisian Gneiss complex of rock on North Uist and will exhibit her book works in a joint exhibition with Jake Harvey, sculptor working in stone, entitled *Meeting Point*. For more details about her books, exhibitions, see: www.weproductions.com.

Fernie, Eric

I was born in Scotland in 1939 but grew up in South Africa. I returned to Britain to study at the Courtauld Institute and later, in 1967, to work at UEA, which is where I met John and Elisabeth. I had a very enjoyable and educational time there, years which included the designing and building of the Sainsbury Centre, involving fascinating meetings with Norman Foster over his world beating success and his failures. In 1984 I became Professor of the Department of Fine Art at Edinburgh University, where it was a great pleasure to return to my roots. In 1995 I was appointed Director of the Courtauld Institute, which was a wonderful challenge, not least because there were people who did not recognise that the Gallery was part of the Institute. I retired in 2003. My research centred on the middle centuries of the Middle Ages, leading to books on the Anglo-Saxon and Norman periods in England, one on the Romanesque period across Europe and one on the

character of the discipline of the history of art. Through all of this time from our meeting at East Anglia I enjoyed the friendship and intellectual stimulus of John and Elisabeth, discussions ranging from neuroscience and the artists of Dutch cities to what it means to be human and the form and rights societies have or should have. There was often agreement, but equally often there wasn't, leading to spirited exchanges and increases in knowledge and understanding.

Fernie, Lorraine

Born Pretoria South Africa 1941. BA Fine Arts from the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg 1963. I spent my childhood moving houses in small villages and went on to do a degree in Painting in Johannesburg. The cultural disjunction of moving from South Africa to Norwich was greatly mitigated by the fact that UEA was designed in an unapologetically Modernist style by Denis Lasdun and later the Norman Foster building was added. This is where I met John and Elisabeth. A new university meant an influx of new people and new ideas which helped me to adjust to 'smaller skies' and people seeming to 'live through history.' I met Kathleen MacFarlane who dreamed of bringing more art into people's lives. She set up workshops in Hunworth where I carved in the old stables. I made a documentary for the BBC Schools Education Programme and taught adult education painting classes at Wensum Lodge. Then I moved to Edinburgh. Here followed ten years of bliss as I worked in the Adam Pottery with other potters and completely engaged in making my ceramics for ten hours a day. The light in the sky was beautiful. People were friendly and supportive and culture was considered important. Moving back to London was hard. I set up a workshop in Clerkenwell, but any publicity seemed to result in another break-in. As workshop space became too expensive our daughter found us a beautiful Modernist house in the south London suburbs. There was space to build a studio and I have worked here on my large single female figures in charcoal and pastel for the past twenty years.

Freedberg, David

After leaving South Africa at age 18 David Freedberg studied at Yale, Oxford, and the Warburg Institute in London. He taught at the Courtauld Institute, University of London from 1973 to 1984. In that year he became Professor of the History of Art at Columbia University, New York, and from 2000 has also served as Director of its Italian Academy for Advanced Studies in America. He served as Chair of the Beirat (Academic Board) of the Wissenschaftskolleg in Berlin from 2012–

17, and was Director of the Warburg Institute from 2015–17. In addition to his work in the histories of art and science, Freedberg is best-known for his work on psychological responses to art, and particularly for his studies on iconoclasm and censorship (including his widely translated *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response*, 1989, and *Iconoclasm*, 2020). He has written widely on the history of Dutch, French and Italian art (e.g., *Dutch Landscape Prints of the Seventeenth Century*, 1980; *Rubens: The Life of Christ after the Passion*, 1987), and on the history of early modern science (*The Eye of the Lynx: Galileo, his Friends, and the Beginnings of Modern Natural History*, 2002). He has also written books with contemporary artists such as Kosuth and Kentridge. Throughout his historical researches, Freedberg has continued his work on responses to images of all kinds. His work in this area has been about the neuroscience of empathy and motor, emotional and embodied responses. He retains his commitment to the anthropological core of art history and hopes to return to a project on the architecture and dance of the Pueblo peoples, but now he has set aside time to complete a trilogy on empathy and the possibility of cross-cultural understanding of works of art.

Gallo, Daniela

Daniela Gallo est actuellement professeur d'histoire de l'art moderne à l'Université de Lorraine à Nancy et membre du CRULH. Auparavant, après avoir été chercheur à la Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, elle a enseigné à la Sorbonne (1994–2006) et à l'université de Grenoble (2006–14). Elle a été aussi professeur invité à Campinas (São Paulo) et à Roma Tor Vergata. C'est à la Scuola Normale, dans les séminaires d'Arnaldo Momigliano et de Salvatore Settis, qu'elle s'est familiarisée avec le *Nachleben der Antike*. Après avoir écrit sur l'histoire de l'*antiquaria* florentine et romaine aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles—et, en particulier, sur Filippo Buonarroti et Ennio Quirino Visconti—, elle s'est intéressée à l'histoire des musées de sculpture, à Winckelmann, à Stendhal historien de l'art et à Canova. Depuis quelque temps, elle travaille sur la fonction et la perception du portrait tant à la Renaissance qu'à la période néoclassique et, plus généralement, sur les stratégies de présentation des œuvres d'art dans les contextes publics et privés. À Florence, elle a collaboré avec la Casa Buonarroti et le Museo Nazionale del Bargello; à Rome, avec la Fondazione Primoli; à Paris, avec le musée du Louvre et l'INHA. C'est en Californie, au Getty Research Institute, qu'elle a rencontré John Onians et Elisabeth de Bièvre.

Golden, Lauren

Lauren Golden was the eternal student with John Onians who equipped her with the tool of 'how to think' – higher cognition – in order to survive the academic landscapes of BA, MA and PhD. Eventually her travels took her to live in Rome, a desire created by John's lectures on Italian Renaissance architecture. She lived there for 13 years teaching art history at The American University of Rome and Marymount High School in which her main aim was to create brain expansion in her students. Now having returned to her origins, the UK, she is currently writing a book on being a Tour Guide in Rome. Her publications include: *A Fantasia of Pagan Myth in The Villa Farnesina: Agostino Chigi's Homage To His Lover, Imperia*, in L. Gilmour (ed.) *Pagans and Christians – from Antiquity to the Middle Ages* (2007); *Excavating the Imagination: The Cognitive Archaeology of the Romantics*, in C. Finn & M. Henig (eds) *Outside Archaeology* (2001); *Science, Darwin and Art History*, in L. Golden (ed.) *Raising the Eyebrow: John Onians and World Art Studies* (2011); and *Raising the Eyebrow: John Onians and World Art Studies* (2011) as editor. She got her PhD from the Department of World Art Studies, UEA, with a thesis *An Enquiry concerning the Imagination in Philosophy, Art History and Evolutionary Theory* (2001); her supervisor was Professor John Onians.

Gillman, Derek

Derek Gillman was an undergraduate at Magdalen College, Oxford University, where he read Chinese Studies after which he spent the year 1975–76 at the Beijing Languages Institute. He began his career in 1977 in Christie's Chinese department, before moving in 1981 to the British Museum as Research Assistant for China. Appointed to his first museum directorship in 1985, as Keeper of the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts at the University of East Anglia, he worked closely with architect Norman Foster on the Centre's Crescent Wing extension. He moved with his family to Australia in 1995, to be Deputy Director of the National Gallery of Victoria, and then to the United States, to the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts where as President he repurposed a former car factory for studios and galleries. From 2006 to 2013, he was President of the Barnes Foundation, stewarding the collection to its new home in central Philadelphia. In 2014 he became Distinguished Visiting Professor at Drexel, and then in 2015 joined Christie's, New York, as Chairman of Impressionist and Modern Art. In 2016 he returned to Drexel, where he is presently Distinguished Teaching Professor, Art History and Museum Leadership, and Executive Director, University

Collections and Exhibitions. He is a longstanding member of the Association of Art Museum Directors, and a consulting scholar in the Asian Section of the Penn Museum. In 2013 he was Marina Kellen French Distinguished Visitor at the American Academy in Berlin. Gillman is author of *The Idea of Cultural Heritage* (Cambridge University Press, 2nd ed. 2010) and co-editor, with Claire Finkelstein and Frederik Rosén, of *The Preservation of Art and Culture in Times of War* (Oxford University Press 2022).

Hansen, Maria F.

Maria Fabricius Hansen is Professor in art history at the Department of Arts and Cultural Studies, University of Copenhagen, Denmark. Her primary field of research is Italian art and architecture from late antiquity until c. 1600, but she works on contemporary art and architecture as well.

Harwood, Edward

Edward S. Harwood (PhD, Princeton University) has recently retired after teaching for 42 years at Bates College in Lewiston, Maine. He served as Chair of the Department of Art and Visual Culture for 20 of those years. His teaching coverage ranged from the seventeenth to the mid-twentieth centuries, while his research interests were centered on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with particular attention to landscape painting and landscape architecture. He has published on the British romantic landscape painter, John Constable, and has written extensively about the eighteenth-century English landscape garden. The latter work has included monographic treatment of the garden of Hackfall in West Yorkshire, and essays on the complex cultural contexts out of which gardens such as Hackfall evolved. This focus has led to articles on the idea of the hermit in eighteenth-century Britain, and the Lockean associative psychology that provided the dynamic for understanding the processes through which this conception of landscaping was experienced by visitors. He has served for many years on the editorial board of *Studies in the History of Gardens and Designed Landscapes* (until 1998 *The Journal of Garden History*).

Haxthausen, Charles 'Mark' W.

Charles 'Mark' W. Haxthausen is Robert Sterling Clark Professor of Art History, Emeritus, at Williams College. He is the author of numerous articles on modern and contemporary art and art criticism, with a focus on Germany. His publications include *Berlin: Culture and*

Metropolis (co-editor with Heidrun Suhr; Minnesota 1990); *The Two Art Histories* (editor; Yale 2002); *Sol LeWitt: The Well-Tempered Grid* (editor and curator; Williams College Museum of Art 2012). His translations, accompanied by his own extensive commentary, of selected writings by Carl Einstein, *A Mythology of Forms*, was published by the University of Chicago Press in 2019. He is currently writing a book reassessing Paul Klee's position within the European avant-garde.

Hayashi, Harume

Aspiring traveller/researcher, but arm-chair traveller/translator in reality. Born in Sapporo, Japan. Lived, studied and worked in Tokyo, Lyon, Paris, Changchun, Madrid, Norwich, and currently in Berlin. Did research on the images of the four seasons (1993–94 for MA) and eventually of the Pure Land with Elisabeth and John. Recent translations include Frédérique Martel's *La culture en Amérique, Mainstream, Global gay*; Margaret Atwood's *Maddaddam*.

Henig, Revd Martin

I was a contemporary of John's at Merchant Taylors' School and at Cambridge University where we shared our love of art, and at Cambridge we founded the National Trust society together, visiting houses and churches in the vicinity and enjoying week-long excursions to the Welsh Marches and the Scottish border. We both pursued postgraduate studies in London, I at the Institute of Archaeology, John at the Courtauld. John's immediate future lay in the Renaissance, mine especially in Roman Britain. After working for two years at the Guildhall Museum, I went to Oxford to produce a doctorate on Roman gems from Britain. My research trip to see gems from sites in the Netherlands began very propitiously in Wassenaar at Elisabeth and John's wedding. Over the subsequent half century they, as well as Isabelle and Charles, have inspired me and expanded my intellectual horizons whether I was writing books on the religion, art and culture of Roman Britain, or becoming ever more fascinated by the manner in which my studies led on to comparisons with other provinces in the Roman Empire and well beyond its borders as well as providing connections with earlier and especially later times, the Carolingian period, the 12th century and the Renaissances of both Italy and the North. I stayed with Elisabeth and John in Norwich, taught a few courses in UEA, and that led (via Veronica Sekules and Sandy Heslop) to my being appointed Hon Editor of the British Archaeological Association; at my suggestion Elisabeth edited one of our most ambitious

Transactions volumes on Utrecht where she had been at University. John introduced me to Edgar Wind's *Pagan Mysteries of the Renaissance* and the writings of Frances Yates, absorbing thus Neo-Platonism on top of my Platonic idealism, providing part of the ground which ended up in ordination as an Anglican priest.

Heslop, Sandy

T. A. (Sandy) Heslop studied the history of art at the Courtauld Institute in London, graduating in 1971. From 1976–2019 he taught in the School of World Art Studies at the University of East Anglia. In 1997/8, he was Slade Professor at Cambridge and in 2008 chaired the History and Theory of Art, Architecture and Design panel in the national Research Assessment Exercise. He served as President of the British Archaeological Association from 2016–19. His published research focuses on art and architecture in England between 1000 and 1500. Recurrent concerns have been the role of patrons in art production and the impact of materials in determining forms and aesthetics; an example was the exhibition *Basketry: Making Human Nature* at the Sainsbury Centre. Ongoing projects include the architecture and embellishment of St Anselm's 'glorious choir' at Canterbury cathedral, and the social and material histories of the fifty-seven parish churches of medieval Norwich.

Hirsch, Yael

Yael Hirsch is writing and illustrating a novel about fashion journalists in Weimar Berlin.

Hollingsworth, Mary

Mary Hollingsworth was rescued from a dreary future as a graduate in Business Studies by John Onians who put her to work on Renaissance architectural theory and allowed her to write a PhD on wage rates in the building industry. Later she stumbled across the papers of Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, which enabled her to broaden her horizons and wallow in a treasure trove of detail about what went on inside those buildings, not least in their kitchens and larders, vegetable gardens, orchards and pigstyes, the stuff of everyday life. She is the author of two books on Renaissance patronage as well as *The Cardinal's Hat* (2004), *The Medici* (2017), *Princes of the Renaissance* (2021) and *Conclave 1559* (2021); her biography of Catherine de' Medici, another great builder, was published in 2023. She is currently planning a book on Renaissance food. (<<http://mary-hollingsworth.com>>.)

Horváth, Gyöngyvér

Gyöngyvér Horváth is an art historian and curator residing in Budapest. She first graduated with an MSc in mathematics then an MA in the history of art at Eötvös Loránd University. After obtaining her doctorate degree from the School of World Art Studies and Museology, University of East Anglia, Norwich, she served as an assistant professor and taught courses at the Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design, ELTE, and Pázmány Péter Catholic University in Budapest. She is now an independent researcher, her main research focuses on the phenomenon of visual narration and pictorial storytelling. She has published on various topics related to Renaissance and Early Modern painting and book illustration, Hungarian modernism, and contemporary art. Her never-ending project *Narrative Art History* examines the historiography and methodology of visual narration within the history of art, narratology, and semiotics and incorporates some relevant concepts of neuroscience. This project has been supported by postdoctoral research grants from Dumbarton Oaks, Harvard University, Princeton University, and Collegium Hungaricum Vienna.

Hyde, Barbara

Barbara Hyde studied philosophy and English at Sussex University, then took an MA in the Sociology of Literature at Essex. A little later, she trained to teach English at Secondary level, but switched to English as a Foreign Language after spending three years living and working in Lublin, Poland. This led to a Diploma in EFL, while teaching mainly ESL in Norwich. Then after doing an MA in Linguistics at UEA, she started working abroad for the British Council, training English teachers in the newly emerging democracies in Eastern Europe: Albania, Hungary and Lithuania. Then a long stint in Japan, after which she took up a post at INTO, UEA.

Hyde, George

George Hyde studied English at Cambridge with F.R. Leavis and with Donald Davie at Essex University. He has taught at UEA Norwich, two Polish universities, and Kyoto Women's University Japan. Publications include many translations from Russian and Polish and monographs on Lawrence and Nabokov.

Johnston, Graham

Graham Johnston studied Drawing and Painting at Gray's School of Art, Aberdeen after which he became a theatre set designer before working in television and

film. He has been a freelance creative over the past 30 years and continues to essay in a range of media including video, photography, fine art and writing. Throughout this time he has had various teaching roles and for the past ten years has been based in Wymondham working from a studio that encompasses both digital and traditional analog skills.

Kehoe Collins, Maura

Maura Kehoe Collins is founder and director of *Artiphile*, an independent art advisory firm specializing in art collections management services. Collins graduated from Mount Holyoke College with a BA in Art History and a minor in Asian Studies acquired during 14 months of study in Taiwan and The People's Republic of China. As an undergraduate working at the MHC Art Museum she initiated the project to computerize the Museum's catalogue. In postgraduate studies Collins was the first recipient of the C.V. Starr Fellowship for training in Far Eastern Art Conservation at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, followed by a Kress Foundation grant to intern at the Eastern Pictorial Art Conservation Department of the British Museum, London, which led to a permanent post. Collins continued her interest in computerized documentation by representing her department on a task force to network conservation records in all UK museums. In 1990 Collins switched from the public to the private sector assisting a dealer of contemporary works of art in New York. Collins has since applied her unique background to providing private collectors, artists, institutions and corporations access to tailored museum-quality art collections management counsel. She is an active member of PAIAM, ARCS and Arttable, and enjoys lecturing about stewardship and mentoring young professionals.

Kemp, Martin

Martin Kemp FBA RSA Emeritus Professor in the History of Art at Trinity College, Oxford University. He was trained in Natural Sciences and Art History at Cambridge University and the Courtauld Institute, London. His books include, *The Science of Art. Optical Themes in Western Art from Brunelleschi to Seurat* (Yale), and *The Human Animal in Western Art and Science* (Chicago). He has published and broadcast extensively on Leonardo da Vinci, including the prize-winning *Leonardo da Vinci. The Marvellous Works of Nature and Man* and *Leonardo* (both Oxford). His *Christ to Coke. How Image Becomes Icon* (Oxford) looks at 11 representatives of types of icons across a wide range of public imagery. He wrote regularly for *Nature*, his essays for which have been published as *Visualizations* and developed

in *Seen and Unseen* (both Oxford) in which his concept of 'structural intuitions' is explored. More recently he has published *Art in History* (Profile Books) and *Structural Intuitions. Seeing Shapes in Art and Science* (Virginia). New books are *Heavenly Visions. Dante and the Art of Divine Light*, and *Hockney's Eye*, a volume of essays for the 2022 exhibition in Cambridge. He has been a Trustee of the National Galleries of Scotland, The Victoria and Albert Museum and British Museum. He has curated and co-curated a series of exhibitions on Leonardo and other themes, including *Spectacular Bodies* at the Hayward Gallery in London, *Leonardo da Vinci. Experience, Experiment, Design* at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 2006 and *Seduced. Sex and Art from Antiquity to Now*, Barbican Art Gallery London, 2007. He is now full-time speaking, writing and broadcasting. (<www.martinjemp.com>.)

Kemp, Will

Will Kemp studied Art History and cricket at UEA before doing Land Economy at Cambridge then Environmental Science at London. As this range of subjects suggests, he had many interests but no idea what to do in life other than be a writer. He has won the *Cinnamon Short Story Prize*, *Keats-Shelley Prize*, *Cinnamon Pamphlet Competition*, *Debut Collection Award* and *Envoi International*. He has also been runner-up in the *Keats-Shelley Prize* and the Poetry Society's *Stanza Competition*. He has had three full poetry collections published – *Nocturnes*, *Lowland* and *The Painters Who Studied Clouds* – as well as the award-winning pamphlet, *The Missing Girl*. He has also had works published in *Ambit*, *The Guardian*, *Poetry News*, *The Rialto* and *The Times*. After a career in planning and development, he quit the day-job in 2022 and now teaches creative writing at York University, judges the *Keats-Shelley Prize* and mucks out his wife Sibylle's horse called Johnny. His debut short story collection, *Surviving Larkin and Other Short Stories*, was published by Valley Press in late 2023. Next he hopes to complete various unfinished and unstarted novels. (<www.wkemp.com>.)

Keuning, Jetty

Jetty Keuning (1966) holds a degree in English Language and Literature. She studied at University Groningen and earned a Harting Scholarship to study Contemporary Poetry at Victoria University Manchester, which was taught by Michael Smidt, founder and editor of PN Review. After several years of teaching at a polytechnic and working as a student counselor she went on to study Art and Culture Management, a postgraduate course at Erasmus University Rotterdam. She works

independently for galleries and is on the Board of Foundation Abramsen-Koedam.

Kioussis, Sokratis

Sokratis Kioussis read Biology at the Aristotle University where he obtained his first degree. He was introduced to Art History and the possibilities that it entails by John Onians who generously first gave him the opportunity to complete a Masters at the School of World Art Studies and to realize the biological basis of art. Fascinated by art and the ways museums classify and image the natural world, Sokratis remained at the University of East Anglia and Norwich in order to pursue a PhD in the area of Museum Representation, under the guidance of John Mack and a scholarship from the Basil and Elise Goulandris Foundation. Returning to Greece, he worked in the museum sector, before returning to the Aristotle University and Thessaloniki, this time as a post-doc researcher in Migration Studies and the representation of diaspora in the museum. He has been a lecturer for the past three years teaching museology and curating at the School of Fine Arts at the University of Ioannina and is now a teaching fellow at the Department of Culture, Creative Media and Industries, University of Thessaly.

Kohlhammer, Siegfried

Born 1944 (one of the worst years in European history) in the Bavarian Allgäu – into a childhood paradise, only to be expelled from it seven years later into the real world (it still rankles). After majoring in German studies (too lazy at that time to learn foreign languages) and philosophy, I proceeded to Romance studies and finished in 1978. After that I taught German language and literature, in Japan in particular, but also in Italy and Indonesia. I fondly remember my years at Sheffield University (1993–96) as a Visiting Research Fellow, doing much visiting (England) and little research, during which time I came to know John and Elisabeth: a princely gift from the kingdom of England. After 2004 I worked as a free-lance author and translator (with modest success or none at all). Living in Berlin from 2004 to 2008, and again since 2018 – there are worse places in Central Europe (but not many).

Korovkin, Michael

Michael Korovkin is a socio-cultural anthropologist, novelist and poet. He began as a neuro-physiologist with degrees in biology and medicine. Subsequently he went on to study anthropology in Canada (York University), England (the LSE) and the Netherlands (University

of Amsterdam). He taught at McMaster University, University of British Columbia, Victoria University, Bari, Perugia, and Viterbo. His academic work focuses, among other things, on symbolic expression and political anthropology. His literary work covers a large variety of socio-cultural landscapes and psychological perspectives, extending wide-ranging insights into the human condition. He has lived in Italy since 1989. Currently, he is teaching at USAC (University Studies Abroad Consortium) at the University of Tuscia, Viterbo, Italy.

Ludwig, Allan

Allan I. Ludwig, an historian and photographer, was born in Yonkers, NY, in 1933. Ludwig received his BFA degree, MA and in 1964, his PhD in Art History from Yale University. After founding the scholarly field of gravestone studies, he was involved with the Association for Gravestone Studies beginning with the initial Dublin Seminar for New England Folk life in 1976. He received the AGS Forbes Award in 1980 in recognition of his contributions to the field. Among other institutions, he has been a professor of Art History at Yale University, the Rhode Island School of Design, Dickinson College, and Syracuse University. During the course of his career he won The John Addison Porter Prize at Yale University and held a three year Fellowship from the Bollingen Foundation. His book *Graven Images* on early American gravestones was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize and received favourable reviews from The New York Times and The Times Literary Supplement. Ludwig, a prolific photographer since his youth, continues to exhibit his photographic work at national and international venues. His photographs are in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, the Smithsonian, the Metropolitan Museum of Art Study Collection, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, The Chrysler Museum, and the Kiyosato Museum of Photographic Arts (Japan), The Center For Creative Photography, Tucson, Arizona, and the Library of Congress, Washington, DC. His collection of photographs of Renaissance tomb sculpture has been digitized and is free to use online as 'The Ludwig Collection' at the American Academy in Rome. His work has been shown in galleries and museums nationally and internationally. He was a pioneer in photographing New York street art in the 1970s, and continues to this day.

Mack, John

John Mack is Emeritus Professor of World Art Studies at the University of East Anglia based in the Sainsbury

Research Unit. He was appointed to UEA in 2004 and is a former Head of the School of World Art and Museology. His background is in Social Anthropology and the History of Ideas graduating with degrees from, firstly, the University of Sussex and subsequently at the University of Oxford. Mack was recruited to UEA from the British Museum where he started in 1976 becoming Keeper of the Museum of Mankind (then part of the British Museum) in 1990. From 1997–2003 he was also the Senior Keeper of the British Museum coordinating curatorial work within the wider museum. His research, publications and exhibition work have focussed on Africa, where he has conducted field work in South Sudan, Kenya, Tanzania and Madagascar. He has also worked extensively on historical sources on the Congo area. His interests, however, have included wider thematic studies including books on *The Museum of the Mind, Art and Memory in World Cultures* (2003), *The Art of Small Things* (2007), and *The Sea, A Cultural History* (2011). His most recent book is *The Artfulness of Death in Africa* (2019). Mack is a past President of the British Institute in Eastern Africa (2005–12). He was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 2009.

MacKisack, Matthew

Matthew MacKisack is an historian of art and culture, interested in relationships between artistic practice, modernity, and the mind. After studying English at the University of Oxford, he completed his doctorate at Goldsmiths, University of London and has since held research fellowships at The University of Exeter Medical School and China Academy of Art, Hangzhou. Writing and curatorial work has examined the history of radio, the aesthetics of coma states, and flicker-induced hallucination. He is currently editing a book on Ernst Gombrich's reception in China, and writing a book, in collaboration with psychologists and neurologists, on the implications of cognitive diversity for art-making and imagining.

Malpass, Gillian

Gillian Malpass was formerly the Publisher for Art and Architecture at the London office of Yale University Press.

Marck, Marie-Anne van der

Marie-Anne van der Marck (Roermond, 1940) studied Art History with Liesbeth de Bièvre in Utrecht before she married with Hein Coebergh and settled in Aerdenhout, Noord-Holland. Both Hein and Marie-Anne spent their

professional careers in books. Hein worked mainly on behalf of Elsevier publishing, Marie-Anne translated more than 60 books from English, German and French. She obtained her PhD on how incestuous relations between brother and sister evolved in literature through the ages—with John among the expert panel of professors at the final ceremony. Marie-Anne and Hein have two kids, Piet Hein and Arabella, who both have a career in public relations and live in Amsterdam. Four granddaughters are now spreading their wings.

Masterman, Diccon

Diccon Masterman has distinguished himself throughout his life by not being particularly good at anything and by being constantly dissatisfied with each enterprise which he has undertaken. To his credit he has recognised that when he has failed to achieve mastery of one profession it is necessary to leave it and try another one. Probably his most successful career was six weeks of driving a delivery van for a wine merchant, but later attempts at being a teacher, an RAF officer and pilot, an international congress organiser, an estate agent in Tuscany and then the owner/manager of a Tuscan holiday home for foreigners all eventually ground down to an undistinguished halt. By the same token his erotic novel published in Esperanto a few years ago has, as far as can be determined, not produced any royalties. His principal act of altruism has been to avoid littering the world with his offspring of which he has none, despite three marriages, and to not pursue a career as a perpetrator of humorous doggerel which he would like to have produced in the style of Noel Coward, Flanders and Swann or Tom Lehrer if only he had a fraction of their talent. For the last 20 years he has pursued his most successful vocation by being retired, an inactivity with which he has discovered his real genius.

Mitchell, John

John Mitchell is Professor in the History of Art (emeritus) at the University of East Anglia. (Norwich, UK). He operates between art history and archaeology and his chief interests are in art, architecture and visual culture in all media across the Mediterranean basin, northern Europe and the Islamic Near East in the first Millennium. He has been a major collaborator in excavations at the early medieval monastery of San Vincenzo al Volturno in central-southern Italy and in the Greco-Roman/medieval city of Butrint in south-western Albania. Late medieval church arts in East Anglia are another particular interest.

Morin, Stephanie

Stephanie Morin was born in Vancouver, Canada where after attending high school and the Peter Aspell School of Art simultaneously, she graduated from the University of British Columbia in 1986 with a BA in English Literature. She moved to Italy in 1989 where she attended the European Institute of Design in Rome and started her career in the visual arts specializing in abstract painting. She established a studio in Bomarzo and began showing her work in Italy and abroad. In 2015, she graduated from the University of Tuscia with an MA in Language and Communication, specializing in approaches to communicating contemporary art. In 2017 she became a PhD candidate at the University of Amsterdam's School for Cultural Analysis, focusing her research on the Italian trans-avantgarde. She has taught courses on art practice and cultural analysis of cinema and the plastic arts at the University of Tuscia and the American University Studies Abroad Consortium (USAC) in Italy. She is the author of the upcoming publications: *Goldfish in a Blender: An Essay on Approaches to Communicating Contemporary Art*, *Ulysses c'est moi: Joyce and Paladino's Significant Nonsense* and *Who's afraid of Transavanguardia: Totalization in Art and Politics—Italy 1976–1986*.

Murawska-Muthesius, Katarzyna

Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius is Honorary Research Fellow at Birkbeck College, University of London, where she taught art history for over twenty years. She was also Curator and Deputy Director of The National Museum in Warsaw, as well as Guest Professor at the Humboldt University Berlin. Her publications include *Borders in Art: Revisiting Kunstgeographie* (Polish Academy 2000); *National Museum in Warsaw Guide: Galleries and Study Collections* (National Museum in Warsaw 2001); *Kantor was Here: Tadeusz Kantor in Great Britain* (Black Dog 2011, with Natalia Zarzecka); *From Museum Critique to the Critical Museum* (Ashgate 2015, with Piotr Piotrowski); *Imaging and Mapping Eastern Europe: Sarmatia Europea to the Communist Bloc* (Routledge 2021). Her current research is on caricature, its historiography and agency, and she is working on a Caricature Reader.

Muthesius, Stefan

Stefan Muthesius taught at the University of East Anglia and is Socius Extraneus of the Polska Akademia Umiejętności in Krakow. His recent publications include *The Poetic Home. Designing the 19th Century Domestic Interior* (Thames & Hudson 2009) and (with Miles Glendinning) *Towers for the Welfare State. An architectural*

History of British Multi-storey housing 1945–1970 (Edinburgh University 2017). Work in progress: House names.

Nesi, Elena

Elena Nesi was born in 1991, in Prato, Italy, where she works as an artist, scholar, and poet specializing in Italian art and literature. She started drawing as a kid and studied at the Filippo Brunelleschi Artistic High School (Liceo Artistico) from 2005 to 2010. Then she attended the Accademia di Belle Arti di Firenze (Florence Academy of Fine Arts) to study painting and drawing. But, after a couple of years, when she discovered her passion for poetry, literature, and philosophy, she transferred to the University of Florence (UniFi), where she currently is finishing her studies in Italian Literature. Elena's inspiration comes from music, poetry, art history, and philosophy. In her artworks and research, she tries to work on both visual and literary aspects, showing how these two ways of expression can elevate each other; especially by looking at non-western cultures from Native American songs, and Oriental art and poetry to today's Italy with the songs and music of modern singer-songwriters (*cantautori*). Her particular interest in the Italian *cantautori* is linked to their crucial role in awakening critical conscience. Her poems have been published in journals such as *Poeti e Poesia, rivista internazionale*, and in books such as *Il Parnaso 85* (2014), *I Poeti Contemporanei 141–7 autori* (2013), and *Viaggi di Versi 38* (2013). Elena also wrote and contributed various exhibition reviews to international art journals.

Onians, Charles

Charles first met Elisabeth and John in Norwich in July 1973. They themselves had met just a few years earlier at the American Academy in Rome, at an artists' evening, after which they wandered home together into a Tiber dawn. Shortly after we met, they took me travelling and sent me to school in Venice (slapped about a bit by nuns), the Netherlands (got into trouble for calling a girl I liked a *trut*), a handful of schools in the US including Flagstaff, Arizona where I befriended a Native American who had been taken from his parents on a reservation and given to a white childless couple so that he could be 'civilised.' I then became friends with the perfectly normal son of a German anti-Semite immigrant in Santa Monica, California who appeared to volunteer for a paedophile Scout group. After returning to Norwich for some sanity I escaped again aged 17 and went to Paris, then worked for the Dalai Lama's splittist administration in India, attempted non-violent conflict resolution in Haiti (give it time),

became a journalist, went to the Middle East, got shot at (guns don't kill people, mortars do), did some shooting back (with a camera) and returned to Europe with my pregnant true love Roanne. Together we somehow concocted two boys who continue to amaze us every day with their loveliness and brilliance, Alec and Oliver. I occasionally returned to war zones for work and a bit of adrenaline and then moved to Rome where Alec became best friends with the son of the *direttore* of the American Academy. And so it goes. Charles and his family now live happily in Norwich, close to Elisabeth, John, Isabelle and Ishtar.

Onians, John

John Onians is Professor Emeritus in the School of World Art Studies at the University of East Anglia, Norwich, and Visiting Professor at the China Academy of Art, Hangzhou. He has taught at Syracuse University and UCLA, as well as at Amsterdam and Leiden universities, and at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris, and was first Director of Research and Academic Programs at the Clark Art Institute, Williamstown. He has been a Getty Scholar and a Fellow at the Center for Advanced Studies in the Visual Arts, Washington DC, at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, and at the Clark Art Institute, has held visiting appointments at the EHESS and Institut national d'histoire de l'art (INHA), Paris and has lectured at many universities in Australia, Austria, Brazil, Britain, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Libya, Nepal, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Taiwan, United Arab Emirates and the United States. His interests range from the close analysis of Italian Renaissance Architecture and Greek and Roman Art to experimentation with broad approaches to art as a worldwide phenomenon, such as art geography. Most recently he has explored the use of neuroscience for the study of art-related behaviours, pioneering neuroarthistory, neuroarchaeology, neuroanthropology and neuromuseology. He was the founding Editor of *Art History* (1978–88), and has published several books, including *Art and Thought in the Hellenistic Age. The Greek World View 350–50 BC* (1979), *Bearers of Meaning. The Classical Orders in Antiquity, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (1988), and *Classical Art and the Cultures of Greece and Rome* (1999). He has edited a volume of essays presented to Sir Ernst Gombrich on his 85th birthday, *Sight and Insight. Essays on Art and Culture* (1994) and the first ever *Atlas of World Art* (2004). A collection of his articles and papers appeared as *Art, Culture and Nature. From art history to World Art Studies* (2007). His life work appears to be culminating in the

pair of books, *Neuroarthistory. From Aristotle and Pliny to Baxandall and Zeki* (2007), and its partner volume, *European Art. A Neuroarthistory* (2016).

Onians, Isabelle

I agree with Simon Dell's stated dislike of autobiography in his entry above, no doubt thanks to our shared cultural baggage. Only my trouble is with writing my own, whereas reading the brief own-life stories of others can be a privilege as well as an eye-opener. Isabelle Onians was a founding member of the Clay Sanskrit Library team, preparing bilingual editions and translations of Sanskrit literature. In addition to managing and co-editing the whole series, her own volume is a 7th-century coming-of-age novel (NYUP 2005). Since 2009 she has directed a World Learning SIT Study Abroad learning centre in Kathmandu, Nepal, for graduate and undergraduate students from US universities studying Tibetan and Himalayan civilisations.

Palmer, Rodney

Rodney Palmer was turned on by John's offer of a World Art Fellowship at UEA. When the news came through on 9 May 2000, he rang a Norwich phone number. The call was taken by a friendly, subtle feminine voice which remained nameless while indicating exactly where and when to find John. Elisabeth was from the outset a charming conspirator; and impresario of innumerable dinner parties at Unthank Road. A winter night stay there was enchanted by the Dutch horticultural fragrance of sharing the spare room with geraniums. Meanwhile John had conjured up the dream travel opportunity: a round-the-world 'plane ticket, destinations of choice, as 'World Art Librarian': to send art literature back to him. Light summery clothes were packed for Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Thailand and India. Two stops were rather different. The flight out of LA, sitting in a window seat on the right to enjoy the seamless whiteness of Alaska blending into Siberia, landed in excitingly alien Osaka, to be bullet-trained thence to Kyoto. Nearish to Kyoto's futuristic station, the hotel had a carp pond in the courtyard, a room with sliding rice paper doors and futon. It was only a few days, but putting on every single layer of summer clothing to pad along Kyoto's snowbound streets and through its zen gardens remains indelible. The next stop, Manila, was a comedown. An email to John bemoaned the place's colourlessness. John immediately replied: 'I'll expect a manila envelope then.' John can find the last word in any conversation, but his aim is to start conversations: to provoke uninhibited discussion.

Elisabeth and John go anywhere. John sniffs out how wherever one travels is the most telling place in the world. Northern Chile, under the planet's clearest skies, is Earth's best window on the million million worlds.

Pillsbury, Joanne

Joanne Pillsbury (PhD, Columbia University), Andrall E. Pearson Curator at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, is a specialist in the arts of the ancient Americas. She is the author, editor, or co-editor of numerous volumes, including *Fuentes documentales para los estudios andinos* (3 vols, 2016); *Moche Art and Archaeology in Ancient Peru* (2001); *Palaces of the Ancient New World* (2004); *Design for Eternity: Architectural Models from the Ancient Americas* (2015); and *Ancient Maya Art at Dumbarton Oaks* (2012), recipient of the Alfred H. Barr, Jr, Award. Her 2012 volume, *Past Presented: Archaeological Illustration and the Ancient Americas*, was honoured with the Association for Latin American Art Book Award, and her exhibition catalogue *Golden Kingdoms: Luxury Arts in the Ancient Americas* (2017) was winner of the 2018 PROSE Award for Excellence. She has published extensively on the history of collecting, including, most recently, *Aztecs in the Empire City: The 'People without History' in the Met* (2021). She served previously as associate director of the Getty Research Institute, and prior to that, director of Pre-Columbian Studies at Dumbarton Oaks; she also taught at the University of Maryland and the University of East Anglia. At the Met, she has curated or co-curated numerous exhibitions, including *Lives of the Gods: Divinity in Maya Art* (2022–23).

Poppi, Cesare

Born in Bologna in 1953, CP obtained a Laurea in Filosofia at the University of Bologna with Bernardo Bernardi. Subsequently he was awarded an MPhil and PhD in Social Anthropology at the University of Cambridge, UK, with Sir Jack Goody. CP has conducted research among the Ladins of the Val di Fassa (Dolomites) since 1974. From 1983 he has been engaged in research on masks and secret societies in NW Ghana. An old time colleague of Elisabeth and John at the University of East Anglia, Norwich, he lives and works in a deserted hamlet in the Eastern Dolomites—and sails the Adriatic whenever possible.

Powers, Martin

Martin Powers is Professor Emeritus in the History of Art, University of Michigan, and chaired visiting professor in the School of Arts at Peking University. He was formerly Sally Michelson Davidson Professor

of Chinese Arts and Cultures, and Director of the Center for Chinese Studies in Ann Arbor. Recipient of numerous awards, in 2009 he was a Fellow in the School of Historical Studies at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. His first two books, published by Yale University Press and Harvard University Press East Asian Series respectively, each won the Levenson Prize for Best Book in pre-1900 Chinese Studies (1993 and 2006). His most recent book is *China and England: the preindustrial struggle for justice in word and image* (Routledge 2019). A Chinese translation was published in 2020. Together with Dr Katherine Tsiang, he co-edited *Looking at Asian Art* and the Blackwell *Companion to Chinese Art*. The latter has been translated into Chinese, published in 2024.

Roberts, Keith

Keith Roberts did his PhD in the Biochemistry Department at Cambridge before moving to the John Innes Centre in Norwich, where he was the founding head of the Cell Biology Department and eventually Deputy Director. He published over 150 refereed scientific papers, has written, edited or co-written numerous books, including the best-selling textbook *Molecular Biology of the Cell*, now in its 7th edition, and has founded and edited several scientific journals. He established the science education charity Teacher Scientist Network. He retired in 2006 but remains an Emeritus Professor at the University of East Anglia. Deeply interested in art from his Cambridge days, when he worked in Footlights, exhibited and was art editor of *Granta*, he was, for several years, Chair of Norfolk Contemporary Art Society, and has curated several major exhibitions (two with science links and funding from the Wellcome Trust). He has illustrated numerous science books and has written books on science and art as well as on artists, including John Kiki. He is an elected member of AICA, the International Society of Art Critics.

Sammut, Adam

Adam Sammut is a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow in the Department of History of Art at the University of York, UK, researching 'Rubens and Islam: Global exchange and European identity in early modern Antwerp.' Adam received his PhD from York in 2021, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and supervised by Dr Cordula van Wyhe. His thesis, *Rubens and the Dominican church in Antwerp: Art and Political Economy in an Age of Religious Conflict* was published as part of Brill's Studies on Art, Art History, and Intellectual History (2023). Sammut has held fellowships at the Warburg

Institute, University of London and the Library of Congress, Washington DC. He has previously worked at the Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest, Foster + Partners and The Royal Collection. Adam has published articles on Dutch and Flemish art in *Review of Scottish Culture*, *Dutch Crossing* and *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, and is contributing to the edited volume *Motus Mixti et Compositi* as part of Brill's Intersections series. He is the area studies representative on the executive board of the Association for Low Countries Studies (ALCS) and an Associate Fellow of the Royal Historical Society.

Schwartz, Gary & Loekie

Fittingly, we met Elisabeth and John twice. I, Loekie, met Elisabeth as a fellow worker in the vineyard of the Art History Institute in Utrecht, where I was born, in the early 1960s. And I, Gary, met John twenty years later as an art history colleague in the United States, where I was born.

Sekules, Veronica

Veronica Sekules's formative career was as an environmentalist. She was administrator at Friends of the Earth not long after its establishment in the 1970s and went on to write the *Friends of the Earth Cookbook* (published by Penguin in 1980). Simultaneously while writing both this and finishing her PhD in medieval art, she started working as a curator at the Sainsbury Centre UEA, going on to found and run the Education & Learning department there. Over the next 30 or so years she ran many local and international projects and events, and had periods of working freelance, including a secondment to Tate in 2006 to run 'Visual Dialogues' with partner museums in Manchester, Newcastle, Birmingham and Sheffield. Her publications include *Medieval Art* (Oxford, 2001) and *Culture of the Countryside* (Routledge 2017). Alongside her jobs, she set up house cooked, gardened and co-parented children Clio and Jack with Sandy Heslop. From 2016 she has founded and run GroundWork Gallery in King's Lynn, exclusively dedicated to showing and connecting art and the environment.

Sénéchal, Philippe

Philippe Sénéchal has been a Professor of modern art history at the University of Picardie Jules Verne (Amiens) since 2004. In 1989 he was elected as a lecturer at the University of Paris-Sorbonne-Paris IV. From 1994 onwards, he was part of the team that founded the INHA (Institut national d'histoire de l'art), alongside Michel Laclotte and Alain Schnapp, and became Director of

studies and research in this institution (2010–14). He has been the scientific secretary of CIHA International Committee of Art History (1995–2004) – where he met John – and the president of the Comité français d'histoire de l'art (2010–14). He currently chairs the Comité national de l'estampe. He chaired the scientific council of the Deutsches Forum für Kunstgeschichte, Paris, between 2017 and 2022, and has been a member of the Advisory Board of the Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte in Munich (since 2002), the Getty Research Center in Los Angeles (2008–16) and the Courtauld Institute in London (2012–14). He has been a member of the acquisitions committee of the Louvre Museum since April 2015. His work focuses mainly on the history of Italian Renaissance sculpture (monograph, 2007 and exhibition, 2010 on Giovanfrancesco Rustici), on the history of fashion and clothing (ed. with Damien Delille, *Modes et vêtements. Retour aux textes*, Paris, INHA/MAD, 2020) and on the history of art history (ed. with Claire Barbillon, *Dictionnaire critique des historiens de l'art actifs en France, de la Révolution à la Première Guerre mondiale*, online on the INHA website). He is preparing a book on the history of poor materials in European sculpture from the 15th to the 18th century. He has been a visiting professor at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles – in the same year as Elisabeth and John –, at the National Taiwan University in Taipei and at the Heinrich-Heine Universität in Düsseldorf.

Short, Robert

Robert Short was born on 13 May 1938 in Croydon, Surrey, educated at Sevenoaks School, Trinity Hall, Cambridge (MA) and the University of Sussex (DPhil). He spent five years in the early sixties, on and off, in Paris, reading into Surrealism and frequenting André Breton's surviving group. He taught for two years at the University of Hull, and subsequently from 1967 to 2003, as Senior lecturer and Reader, in the School of European Studies at the University of East Anglia. He is the author of *Surrealism: permanent revelation* (with Roger Cardinal; Studio Vista, 1971); *Paul Klee* (Thames & Hudson, 1979); *Dada and Surrealism* (Octopus, 1980); *Hans Bellmer* (with Peter Webb; Quartet, 1985); *The Age of Gold: surrealist cinema* (Creation Books, 2004), along with some fifty academic articles about and around Surrealism. He was a trustee of the Norfolk Contemporary Art Society from 1967 to 2022 having been Chairman between 1985 and 2003. He was a member of the Council of Management of the Norfolk and Norwich Film Theatre between 1969 and 1998 and one of the founders of both Cinema City and the East Anglian Filmmakers' Coop. He was a founder and committee member of the Norfolk Art in Architecture group in the 1980's/90s. He was President

of the Cromer & Sheringham Arts Festival from 2010–13. From the sixties to the early eighties, Robert Short staged some nine or ten ‘Surrealist evenings’ – elaborate all-night happenings with up to 400 guests, mostly held in the parks and gardens of country houses in Norfolk and Suffolk. They have recently been the subject of a lavishly illustrated book edited by Peter Milne. He was an independent filmmaker in the sixties and seventies. A selection of his films are in the National Film Archive and the East Anglian Film Archive. They are distributed commercially by Lightcone in Paris and Lux Films in London. Most recently, he has been publishing selections of his verse. *The Hooties*, written for children and illustrated by Peter Kent, came out in 2014. *The Least of Things* for grown-ups is due out later this summer. He continues to make collages and boxed assemblages – shadow boxes – which he exhibits widely in Norfolk. With his wife, Anne, he directed the theatre troupe, REBUS, which, annually, put on mixed-media entertainments on surrealist themes until Anne’s death in 2021.

Struik, Rudi

Rudi Struik was born in Amsterdam and emigrated to Canada in 1953 with his parents. From 1969–72 he attended Malespina Art College in Nanaimo, British Columbia, taking painting and sculpting classes with several artists. In 1978 he returned to the Netherlands, where he attended the Free Academy of Visual Arts in The Hague until 1982. In 1981, the Province of South Holland awarded him a scholarship. In the period 1983–85, his work was purchased by the BKR Leiden, a program of the municipality for artists to secure income by purchasing art works. The program stopped in 1986. He has had numerous exhibitions in the Netherlands and abroad. To name the major ones: 2002 group exhibition ‘Artists in the Landscape,’ Cronesteyn Park, Leiden; 2006 ‘The International Festival in the Context of Art/the Differences,’ Warsaw Art Festival; 2009 ‘Stories of Migration,’ Sidac Studio, Leiden; 2010–11 ‘The Unwanted Land,’ Museum Beelden aan Zee, Scheveningen, initiated by Rudi Struik and with invited artists Tiong Ang, David Bade, Dirk de Bruyn, Sonja van Kerkhoff, Renée Ridgway (accompanying book: Kitty Zijlmans *et al.*, *The Unwanted Land*, Zwolle); 2010 ‘Waanders,’ in collab. with Museum Beelden aan Zee (for this show, the museum received an award for best exhibition); 2013 ‘On the road,’ Sidac Studio Leiden; 2018 ‘Beelden in Meervoud’ (Images in Plural), De Oude UB, Leiden; 2020 ‘Af/scheid/ing’ (Partition/Parting), Old School Leiden; 2021 group exhibition ‘De kunst van het kijken’ (The art of Looking), Pennings Foundation, Eindhoven. <www.rudi-struik.com>.

Thoburn, John†

John Thoburn was an Emeritus Reader in Economics in the School of International Development at the University of East Anglia. After retiring from UEA he became Professor of Development Economics at Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University in Japan, and then visiting professor there until 2017. He spent much of his professional life researching on and in Southeast and East Asia. Like June, he valued and enjoyed his contacts with John and Elisabeth, and their families, finding them the most captivatingly ‘European’ of all the people he knows, and admiring their language fluency in Dutch, French, Italian, and German.

Thoburn, June

June Thoburn is an Emeritus Professor of Social Work at UEA, with a particular interest in family welfare policies and practices within and outside the UK. Since the mid-1970s, at various stages in our personal and professional lives and across three continents, she has greatly valued stimulating conversations with John, Elisabeth, Isabelle and Charles, sharing reflections and insights on societies and cultures across national boundaries.

Tuohy, Thomas

Thomas Tuohy studied at the Courtauld and the Warburg, where, after years of archival research in Italy, he presented his PhD thesis about Quattrocento Ferrara in 1982. After further archival research, funded by the British Academy, and a Fellowship at Villa I Tatti, his book about Herculean Ferrara was published by Cambridge University Press in 1996. He lived in London for many years, and after some time in the wine trade (Dip WSET) he led cultural tours for 30 years, mostly in Europe, but he has travelled extensively in the Middle East and Asia, with particular interests in India, Japanese gardens and Islamic Cairo. He has written for *Apollo*, *The British Art Journal*, *The Court Historian*, *The Art Newspaper* and *The Burlington Magazine*. He makes use of archives and is writing short biographies (see <www.cumbrianlives.org.uk>). He retired to his native West Cumberland where he has restored the Victorian house and garden where he grew up, and established an arboretum, which, for appropriate geographical reasons he named Little Mesopotamia. He planted trees dedicated to friends and colleagues and his Biographical Arboretum (<www.littlemesopotamia.co.uk>) was registered as a charity in 2019. Although forays to London and in Europe provide essential diversions he lives, with his libraries, as a hermit in

Beckermet, but he welcomes sympathetic visitors, with due warning. He learnt to cook in Italy.

Veysi, Mohsen

Mohsen Veysi is an artist, researcher, and educator who lives and works between Florence and Vancouver, BC. Mohsen was born in Kermanshah, Iran, and studied fine arts and art history in Italy and the US. He has received an academic diploma in visual arts from the Accademia di Belle Arti di Firenze, and a Master of Fine Arts from the University of Cincinnati, OH. His interests and curiosity led him to study human sciences concentrating on art history and aesthetics as his PhD major at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Italy. In his PhD dissertation titled 'Kunstwollen: A Contemporary View – Local, Global, Transcultural,' he focused on Alois Riegl's theory of *Kunstwollen* (will to art) concerning global art production. His studio practice is mostly based on the interaction of visual and verbal, image and text, and artist and poet. His main source of inspiration in his studio practice is poetry. His works are characterized by his approach to diverse Persian and Latin calligraphic styles to visualize poetry in both original language and their translations. For him, calligraphy works as 'a vehicle that carries poetry and transfers it to the viewers' eyes.' Through his work, each poem becomes an image, and each image becomes a visual poem. Both his artistic practice and his research are influenced by his multicultural, and multilingual experience of living, studying, and teaching in various countries. His work represents a new image of each poem that unifies different styles of calligraphy, and languages, as they are unifying various cultural and artistic traditions perceived by the artist. Just as his artistic practice extends through the media of poetry, calligraphy, painting and drawing; his research focuses on the relations between drawing and poetry, image and text, Persian calligraphy, global art history, neuroaesthetics, neuroarthistory, and the historiography of Alois Riegl.

Visser, Jan Eric

Rotterdam-based sculptor Jan Eric Visser (1962) is known for carefully creating challenging abstract sculptures from his personal everyday inorganic household waste. Visser studied at the art academy Kampen and Willem de Kooning Academy in Rotterdam. His work has been presented by Stedelijk Museum Schiedam (NL), L'étrangère Gallery London, CODA Museum Apeldoorn (NL), GroundWork Gallery King's Lynn, Verbeke Foundation Kemzeke (B), RAM Galerie Rotterdam (NL), Art Affairs Amsterdam (NL),

Museum Artipelag Stockholm (SE), Museo de Casa Brasileira Sao Paulo (BR) and Museum 21_21 Design Sight Tokyo (JP). Visser's work is part of various museum and company collections like Museum Aalst (B), Gorcums Museum (NL), Verbeke Foundation (B), Stedelijk Museum Schiedam, Hogeschool Rotterdam and Aegon Art Collection. In 2017 Verbeke Foundation published a monograph about his work titled *Veritas* for which Elisabeth de Bièvre wrote the text. In 2021 Visser was awarded a four-year stipend for established artists by Mondriaan Fund.

Wimhurst, Juliet

Isabelle is the same age as my daughter Joanna, and Elisabeth and I met at a coffee morning where topics of all kinds were discussed while babies and toddlers provided a lively background. Since then she has been a wonderful friend and support to me through good and bad times. I have appreciated her wisdom on art and many other subjects, and she has always encouraged my painting and other ventures.

Zafar, Nazneen

Nazneen Zafar is a Pakistani national who has been living and working in Nepal for more than 30 years. Her poetry collection *Reading Together and other poems* was published by Erbacce Press in 2017. Her forthcoming collection is tentatively titled *Writing Alone*. Nazneen Zafar writes and lives in Kathmandu. Her late husband, Hubert Decler, whose artwork here accompanies her poem(s), was a Buddhist scholar and education abroad instructor.

Zeman, Adam

I trained in Medicine at Oxford University Medical School, after a first degree in Philosophy and Psychology. I was a consultant neurologist in Edinburgh, from 1996, and have been Professor of Neurology at Exeter University Medical School from 2005. My specialised clinical work is in cognitive and behavioural neurology, including neurological disorders of sleep. My research interests include amnesia associated with epilepsy (<<http://projects.exeter.ac.uk/time/>>) and disorders of visual imagery (<<http://medicine.exeter.ac.uk/research/neuroscience/theeyesmind/>>). I have an active background interest in the science and philosophy of consciousness, publishing several wide-ranging reviews of the field and an accessible introduction to the subject, intended for a general readership (*Consciousness: A User's Guide*, Yale University Press, 2002). I have written a study of the brain for the

general reader, *A Portrait of the Brain* (Yale, 2008), edited *Ethical Dilemmas in Neurology* (W.B.Saunders, 2000) with Linda Emanuel and *Epilepsy and Memory* (OUP, 2012) with Marilyn Jones-Gotman and Narinder Kapur. I was Chairman of the British Neuropsychiatry Association from 2007–11. I have recently moved into a freelance phase of life as an expert witness and independent researcher based in Edinburgh. I am revising a book on the science of imagination to be published by Bloomsbury in 2024, and planning a new wave of work on ‘extreme imagery.’

Zijlmans, Kitty

Kitty Zijlmans studied art history at Leiden University and was Professor of Contemporary Art History and Theory/World Art Studies at Leiden University from 2000–21. She retired in July 2021. From January 2011–September 2014 she was Academic Director of LUCAS, Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society. In 2010 she was appointed a member of the KNAW, the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences. She is, *inter alia*, member of the Supervisory Board of BAK (basis voor actuele kunst) Utrecht and the Bonnefanten Museum Maastricht, and since 2021 member of the Editorial Board of *Stedelijk Studies* (Journal of the

Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam). She is a regular invited speaker and guest teacher, and recently completed a course on ‘Art(history) in a Global Perspective’ for secondary school teachers. Her interests lie in the fields of contemporary art, art theory, methodology, and interdisciplinarity, with a strong interest in the current intercultural debate on inclusion and decolonization of art and education. She often collaborates and exchanges with artists in the field of artistic research, and occasionally co-curates exhibitions, such as e.g. in 2015 the international installation art exhibition ‘Global Imaginations’ in De Meelfabriek/Museum De Lakenhal, Leiden. Recent publications include: Leon Wainwright and Kitty Zijlmans (eds), *Sustainable Art Communities. Contemporary Creativity and Policy in the Transnational Caribbean* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017); ‘Movement of Movements: Resilient Strategies in the “Global South”,’ in: Eliza Steinbock, Bram Ieven, and Marijke de Valck (eds), *Art and Activism in the Age of Systemic Crisis. Aesthetic Resilience*. (New York/London: Routledge, 2021: 62–74); *From Art History to World Art Studies. The World Upside Down, Valedictory Lecture*, Leiden University (delivered on 25 October 2021); Kitty Zijlmans and Helen Westgeest (eds), *Mix & Stir. New Outlooks on Contemporary Art from Global Perspectives* (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2021).

List of Publications

Elisabeth de Bièvre

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John Onians

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Figure 0.3. Ice Cream. Norwich, c. 1987. Photograph by Charles Onians.

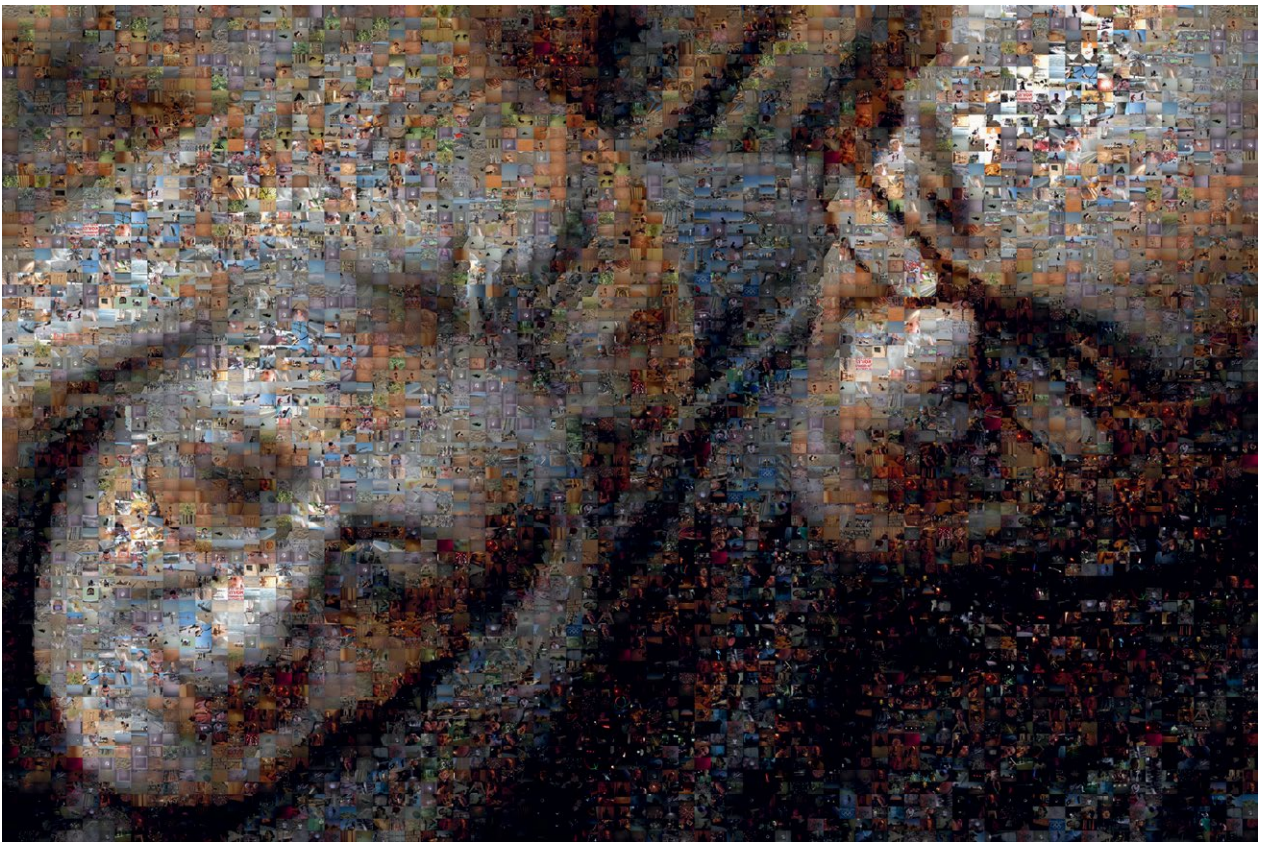


Figure 0.4. First of the East, Last of the West. Cyprus, Ethiopia, Greece, Iraq, Israel, Lebanon, Norwich, Sudan, Pakistan, Palestine, 2004–2007. Photograph by Charles Onians.

Art LoVers is a double Festschrift that honours the distinguished careers and academic accomplishment of art historians Elisabeth de Bièvre and John Onians, as well as their shared life as a married couple on the occasion of their 55th wedding anniversary. Their intellectual paths together and individually have led to unexplored territories extending their discipline and leaving a profound impact on those who have encountered them. We have chosen to felicitate Elisabeth and John together in a book that is personal, creative, and visually engaging. This book offers a platform for the many people who have accompanied them on their journeys, whether for brief moments or across decades and is honoured by contributors from diverse fields, including practising artists, fellow art historians and former students, colleagues from other professions, as well as friends. Since this is a volume for a married couple, some chapters are in pairs or jointly authored.



The first part of the book features artworks that resonate with their lives and work, including paintings, drawings, photography, poetry, fiction and travel writing. The second part presents personal and professional accounts of the roles of Elisabeth and John as teachers, colleagues, scholars, and friends. Some recall first encounters, others collaborations, memorable events, visits, travels and conversations. The third part compiles scholarly articles of traditional Festschrift fare. Here are saluted the theoretical approaches Elisabeth and John have innovated and their influence: the World Art Studies so closely connected to the University of East Anglia, Elisabeth's Green Art Studies and John's neuroarthistory.

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Isabelle Onians was a founding member of the Clay Sanskrit Library team, preparing bilingual editions and translations of Sanskrit literature. In addition to managing and co-editing the whole series, her own volume is a 7th-century coming-of-age novel (NYUP 2005). Since 2009 Isabelle has directed a World Learning SIT Study Abroad experiential learning centre in Kathmandu, Nepal, for graduate and undergraduate students from US universities studying Tibetan and Himalayan civilisations.