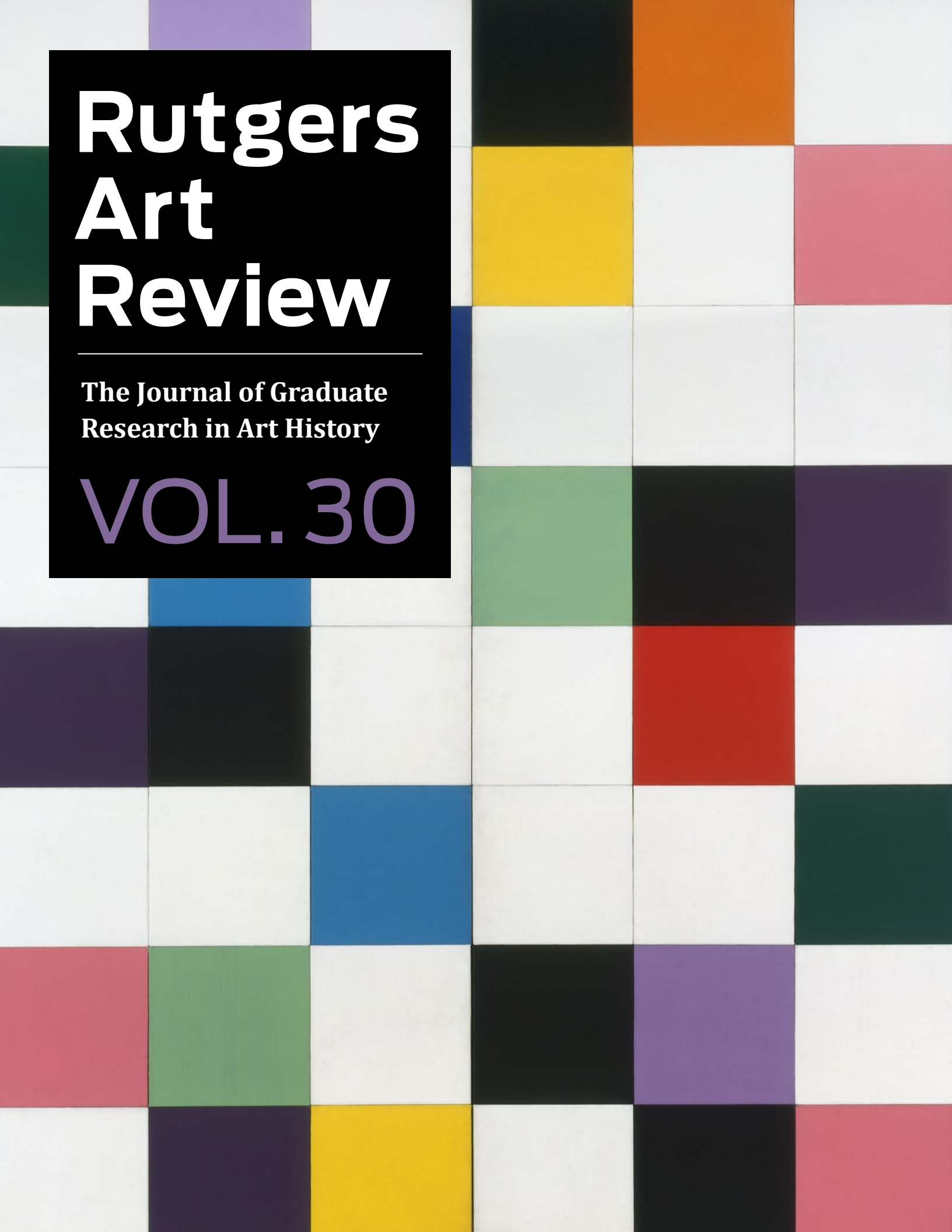


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Degas's Portrait of Mademoiselle Fiocre and the Orientalism of Modern Life

MARY MANNING

Orientalist harem and bath interiors, Eastern landscapes, and legends of alluring *femme fatales* and violent warriors exist prolifically within the course of nineteenth-century painting. Seemingly decoupled from constraints of modern time, these images embrace tropes and stories with which a large number of artists, both the unabashedly clichéd and the highly respected, would engage. When younger painters began to grapple with modernizing old genres and styles in the second half of the nineteenth century, any attempts to update Orientalism to keep pace with the changing metropolitan audiences may have seemed to defeat the nostalgic, idyllic *raison d'être* of the style. However, for Edgar Degas (1834-1917), who experimented intensely with academically sanctioned genres, such as history painting, early in his career, finding an "Orientalism of modern life"¹ was perhaps a challenge that could not be ignored. In formulating such a category, the visual demands of the subject matter and the difficulty of capturing contemporary feeling would require substantial negotiation.

By 1866, Degas had begun to trade his early experiments in history and genre painting for modern life scenes. He increasingly painted portraits of his friends and family, as well as images of horse races and other leisure activities, and by 1868, he had registered for the last time as a copyist at the Louvre.² By that same year,

he had also completed the *Portrait of Mlle Fiocre in the Ballet "La Source"* (**Fig. 1**), a rather curious depiction of one of the Paris Opéra's star dancers, Eugénie Fiocre, wearing a Georgian costume in a landscape neither clearly onstage nor objectively real. The *Portrait of Mademoiselle Fiocre*, now in the Brooklyn Museum, was one of Degas's first attempts at portraiture outside of his immediate family and social circle,³ as well as his first painting of a scene related to the ballet, and yet this painting cannot be sufficiently addressed as either of these subjects. It is, however, the closest Degas would ever come to the kind of Orientalist harem fantasy that held favor in the Salons of the period. Thus, I argue that the *Portrait of Mademoiselle Fiocre* may be best interpreted not as a meaningful first step of Degas into the world of portraying the ballet, but as a depiction of "the Orientalism of modern life." Prior to portraying Fiocre, Degas explored other, more traditional Orientalist subjects and dealt with perceptions of his own heritage as he traveled to Italy and New Orleans. I contend that these two processes of discovery motivated his construction of the *Portrait of Mademoiselle Fiocre* as an overt display of the puzzling contradictions between artifice and reality embodied in modernity.

In the *Portrait of Mlle Fiocre in the Ballet "La Source,"* three women rest on the shore of a reflecting pool of water in the middle of a rocky landscape. The woman to the far left, wearing an orange dress, plays a musical instrument and looks to her left as her hair falls into her face. At the far right, the woman in red sits at the waterfront and gazes into the pool. A live horse stands in the center and bows its head to drink the water, looking down and away from the viewer's gaze like the peripheral women. In the center sits the eponymous Mademoiselle Fiocre, who gazes up and out of the canvas as she leans melancholically on a stack of luxurious pillows. She wears a blue and white striped robe, fastened at the waist by an ornate red



Fig. 1 Edgar Degas, *Portrait of Mlle Fiocre in the Ballet "La Source"* (*Portrait de Mlle...E[ugénie] F[iocre]: à propos du ballet "La Source"*), ca. 1867–1868, oil on canvas, 51 1/2 x 57 1/8 inches (130.8 x 145.1 cm), Brooklyn Museum, gift of James H. Post, A. Augustus Healy, and John T. Underwood, 21.111, image courtesy of the Brooklyn Museum.

sash that matches the rectangular headdress on her head and the flowers that droop from her left hand. There is a startling disparity between the clarity of the figures and the dreamlike uncertainty of their surroundings,⁴ but between the horse's legs, near the shoulder of the woman in red, one extraordinary clue remains: a pair of discarded ballet shoes. Whether the *Portrait of Mademoiselle Fiocre* actually portrays a break in

the ballet's rehearsals or is meant as something of a painted fantasy, the lack of clarity in Degas's representational choices demands further analysis.

The 1866 premiere of the ballet *La Source* occasioned a grand celebration that was attended by no less than the Orientalist academic master Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres.⁵ Indeed, the ballet was a fairytale pretext to stage an ornately

exotic production. It told the story of the Georgian princess,⁶ Nouredda (danced by Fiocre), who travels veiled in a caravan of women to meet her future husband, the Khan. The caravan stops at a spring, where Nouredda meets a young hunter, Djemil, who falls immediately in love with her. Though Nouredda rejects him, he vows to marry her, and Naila, the spirit of *La Source* or “the spring,” agrees to help Djemil by foiling Nouredda’s plans to marry the Khan. Naila and Djemil go together to the Khan’s palace, where Naila appears and dances for the Khan, convincing him to take her as his wife instead. She thereby frees Nouredda to return the love of the hunter and provides the lovers with a happy ending. Although Fiocre received second billing, after the Italian dancer playing Naila, critics paid Fiocre a disproportionate amount of attention.⁷

In his review of the ballet, Théophile Gautier called Fiocre, “the prettiest blond *hourri* ever to have worn the bonnet and corset of pearls in the Mohammedan paradise.”⁸ Similarly, the critic for *Le Gazette des Étrangers* exclaimed, “This living statue with naturally rhythmic movements like the strophes of a poem is delightful to see in the alternatives of languor and tenderness which this Oriental dance expresses.”⁹ These critics and others raved on, and most paid more attention to the physical attributes of Fiocre than her apparently negligible talent as a ballerina.¹⁰ She became a Second Empire celebrity, prized for being the rare French ballet star in an insular world increasingly dominated by Italian and Russian dancers,¹¹ and an imperial jewel ripe for celebration as French nationalism grew to its most ebullient level as Napoleon III’s regime waned during the 1860s. Her image was circulated to her friends and fans through numerous Disdéri *carte-de-visite* photographs of her posed in her stage costumes. In one Disdéri photograph of her as a fairy in *Giselle* (**Fig. 2**), she displays an appropriate level of mischievousness, poised to steal away into the surrounding garden

scene that perhaps mimics the forest setting of *Giselle* while it also exposes the standard backdrop of the photographic studio. In another image, posed as Cupid, the role in *Némea* that originally made her famous, she assumes a variant of the *pudica* pose — an indication of modesty that likely signifies more about the complicated, sexualized expectations of Fiocre as a cultural figure than those for her role as a playful Cupid. Even so, these images markedly show Fiocre exhibiting dramatic aspects of the characters she danced but in entirely and obviously artificial settings — an environment Degas would retain in his portrait of the dancer and one which no doubt contributed to the fetishization of Fiocre by Parisian audiences.

Yet, before he painted the *Portrait of Mademoiselle Fiocre*, Degas attempted two other Near Eastern subjects, *Semiramis Building Babylon* from 1861 and *Young Woman with Ibis* from 1860-62. These works betray an artistic project-in-process, but they also point to issues of artistic tradition and personal identity that would influence Degas throughout his career. In *Tradition and Desire*, Norman Bryson describes the challenge of artists looking back to the successes of their predecessors as multifaceted:

positive, in that it supplies the painter with an indispensable repertoire of instruments with which to confront the visual field; delimited, in that once the painter scans the world of appearances through the instruments the past supplies, he will see beyond the old gridwork to those phenomena which emerge precisely in the gaps or shortcomings of past formulae: tradition presents of itself the means of its own undoing.¹²

Throughout his academic training, his trip to Italy in the 1850s, and his studies in the Louvre and other museums, Degas approached tradition as an entity from which he could excavate forms and configurations that could constitute his personal visual vocabulary. In addressing *Semiramis Building Babylon*, *Young Woman with Ibis*, and

Portrait of Mademoiselle Fiocre together, I come to Degas in the midst of his never-ending struggle to reconcile what Theodore Reff has called the “opposed yet equally attractive modes of vision” that Degas saw in his idols, Delacroix and Ingres.¹³ These modes of vision and style, expressed in their differing priorities of color and line, that Delacroix and Ingres represented to young artists like Degas are important, though the veritable plethora of Orientalist paintings in the oeuvres of both artists could not have escaped an artist as visually astute as Degas.



Fig. 2 Andre-Adolphe-Eugène Disdéri, Eugénie Fiocre in *Giselle*, carte-de-visite photograph, ca. 1873, image courtesy of The Library of Nineteenth-Century Photography.

Semiramis Building Babylon (**Fig. 3**), one of Degas's early attempts to formulate a modern idiom of history painting and the first of his Near Eastern subjects, presents a story likely drawn from the 1851 French translation of the Greek historian Diodorus Siculus's *Bibliotheca historica*.¹⁴ Semiramis was an Assyrian queen known for her beauty, her ability to give wise advice to her husband, and the building of Babylon, a project that she oversaw after her husband's death.¹⁵ As Degas portrays her, Semiramis is a strong, dignified monarch — far from the Semiramis of Gioachino Rossini's dramatic opera *Semiramide* that played in Paris in July of 1860. Rossini's version of Semiramis remains preoccupied with the feminine pursuit of finding a proper consort, which devolves into an Oedipal disaster far from the positive city-building depicted in Degas's painting. Beyond the opera's deliberately sensationalized plot, its sets and costumes were lavish Orientalist constructions that propagated visions of the East as a site of murder, unleashed sexuality, and political intrigue.¹⁶ Art historians have suggested Rossini's opera as a possible source, and while little substantial proof for this assertion exists,¹⁷ a comparison of the opera's style to the painting proves illuminating. In looking at Degas's painting, it is clear that he has effaced the drama of the opera. His Semiramis is stoic, and she represents a stunning departure from the way Middle Eastern women were usually portrayed as sexual objects for voyeuristic pleasures in the baths and harems of Orientalist paintings, especially those by his idols Delacroix and Ingres.

It may also be noted then that the greatest success at the Salon while Degas struggled to envision *Semiramis* was Jean-Léon Gérôme's *Phryne Before the Tribunal*, also known as *Phryne Before the Areopagus* (**Fig. 4**), a scene of a famous Greek courtesan and artists' model being tried for impiety before the elders of Athens.¹⁸ Though Gérôme was a critical darling, he found no



Fig. 3 Edgar Degas, *Semiramis Building Babylon*, 1861, oil on canvas, 151 x 258 cm, RF2207.
Photo: Hervé Lewandowski, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France. © RMN-Grand Palais/ Art Resource, NY.



Fig. 4 Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Phryne Before the Tribunal*, 1861, oil on canvas, 80 x 128 cm, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg, Germany, photo courtesy of bpk, Berlin/Hamburger Kunsthalle/Elke Walford/Art Resource, NY.

love from Degas, especially where Phryne was concerned. Many years later, when asked for his thoughts on the painting, Degas declared:

Listen, I'm going to talk to you about the idea — not how it was painted — the idea....They honored [Phryne] in Greece, as only they knew how when it came to honoring beauty.... What can we say about a painter who makes out of *Phryne Before the Areopagus* a poor, embarrassed wench who covers herself?Gérôme didn't understand this [story], and made his painting, because of his lack of understanding, a pornographic picture.¹⁹

This issue of understanding, as Degas conceived its meaning, is crucial: what Gérôme fails at is what Degas pursues in choosing Semiramis for his subject.

As a means of seeking the historically specific understanding necessary for *Semiramis Building Babylon*, Degas studied the Assyrian and Egyptian collections in the Louvre, giving the figures in *Semiramis* an odd two-dimensional quality that recalls figures from the Louvre's Assyrian relief sculptures excavated at Khorsabad.²⁰ However, with its lack of overt detail, *Semiramis* becomes an almost deliberate eschewal of pretensions to an Orientalist realism held by artists like the Salon star, Gérôme. Degas provides the possibility of nostalgia for a lost Near Eastern past, a hallmark of Orientalist genre scenes, by including these direct references to ancient art, but he suppresses the exoticism of the setting and provides a more introspective view of his Assyrian queen.²¹ He incorporates relief sculpture-like motifs as elements of construction — perhaps in reference to Semiramis's historical identity as the builder of Babylon — not crumbling buildings that were often included as a topos of Eastern idleness.²² In *Semiramis Building Babylon*, Degas seems to have sorted through the available components of history painting and Salon Orientalism and combined those that fit his own pictorial goals, as far as we may ascertain them. In doing so, *Semiramis* manages to communicate a version of truth about the emotional and cultural content

of the source story that would be legible to modern audiences, a strategy that would serve him well in the *Portrait of Mademoiselle Fiocre*.

Where Degas sought this measure of understanding with *Semiramis*, he struggled with *Young Woman with Ibis* (**Fig. 5**), which began as a permutation of a now-lost dreaming woman by Hippolyte Flandrin²³ and was then heavily influenced by Degas's recent acquaintance and subsequent friendship with the Symbolist historical painter Gustave Moreau.²⁴ *Young Woman with Ibis* most importantly indicates, first, Degas's almost anthropological interest in Egyptian culture and, second, his veiled attempts to grapple with his own "other"-ed identity in his art.

The painting's most prominent feature is the addition of the ibis to what was previously only a scene of a young Egyptian girl standing in front of an Oriental (or pseudo-Oriental) cityscape. The ibis held religious significance in ancient Egyptian culture, a fact that Degas, an amateur Egyptologist of sorts,²⁵ would have surely known. Edwin Longsden Long's 1888 painting *Alethe, Attendant of the Sacred Ibis* (**Fig. 6**) indicates exactly how the bird might be used as an instrument of Oriental fantasy, even as the ibis was also a sacred symbol of the god Thoth, who was often depicted as having the head of an ibis. However, these birds are black and white, indicating a particular kind of sacred ibis.²⁶ The scarlet ibis, which Degas includes, is indigenous to South America and its nearby islands,²⁷ and thus, Degas could have only seen these birds in captivity in Paris. Where Degas downplays the exoticism of *Semiramis*, he emphasizes the otherness of the *Young Woman with Ibis* by highlighting her face with these extraordinarily peculiar birds. Perhaps influenced by the highly constructed mythological and historical paintings of his friend Moreau, Degas likely added the ibises to test the effect that these flat passages of dramatic red, broken only by the need to render the form of the bird's wings,

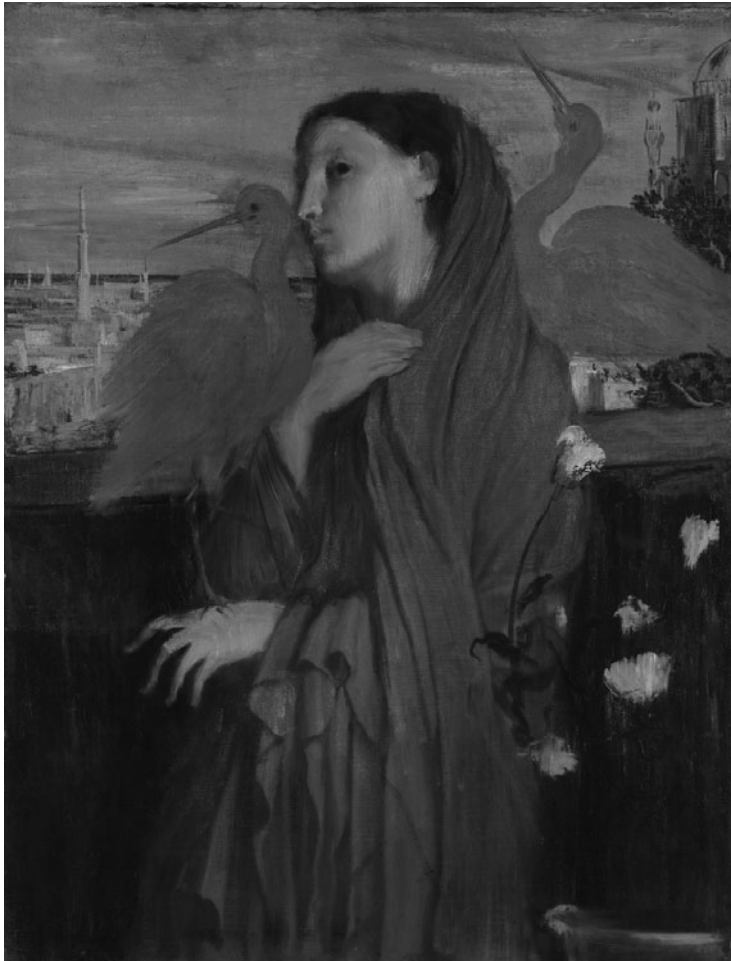


Fig. 5 (Left) Edgar Degas, *Young Woman with Ibis*, 1860–62, oil on canvas, 100 x 74.9 cm, gift of Stephen Mazoh and Purchase, bequest of Gioconda King, by exchange, 2008 (2008.277), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY, image courtesy of Art Resource, NY. © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. **Fig. 6 (Right)** Edwin Longsdon Long, *Alethe, Attendant of the Sacred Ibis*, 1888, oil on canvas. © Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum, Bournemouth, UK / The Bridgeman Art Library.

would have on viewing the young woman's olive-toned classical profile.²⁸ As a result, the ibises suggest the overt formal experimentation that characterized much of Degas's work at this still early stage in his career.

Of these three Near Eastern works, *Young Woman with Ibis* also comes the closest to expressing Degas's own uncomfortable view of himself as "other." In addition to being a visible derivative of the lost Flandrin dreamer, the composition of *Young Woman with Ibis* resembles two paintings of Roman women Degas did while he was still in Italy. Both depict elderly women wrapped in shawls and grizzled from their long, hard

lives; yet 1857's *Roman Beggar Woman* (**Fig. 7**) is even turned to the left in a pose similar to *Young Woman with Ibis*. Similarly monumental and isolated,²⁹ these women are confined in the space of the painting by architectural structures. Whether or not he began to paint *Young Woman with Ibis* in Rome, Degas's notebooks from 1857-58 and the formal similarities between the images indicate that he began to compose it around the time he painted the old women.³⁰

Scholars have read Degas's trip to Italy, despite its virtual necessity for academic art training, as a particularly personal journey since Degas's background was not commonplace



Fig. 7 Edgar Degas, *A Roman Beggar Woman*, 1857, oil on canvas, Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery / The Bridgeman Art Library.

for a Frenchman.³¹ He was a quarter Italian on his father's side, with numerous cousins still living in Italy,³² and his mother was a French Creole from New Orleans with a European education. As Christopher Benfey has argued with regard to Degas's 1872-73 trip to New Orleans, Degas appears to have felt unease at incorporating elements of the exotic into his work that too closely related to his real life.³³ In both *Semiramis* and *Young Woman with Ibis*, Degas's exoticism leans heavily on his conceptions of Italy, as both a site of his family heritage and the birthplace of so many of the masterworks that he copied and added to his visual vocabulary. Indeed, his masterpiece from this period, *The Bellelli Family*, on which he worked from 1858 to 1867, captures his fondness for his aunt Laure, who had married

an Italian baron, Gennaro Bellelli.³⁴ Though Degas felt a certain familiarity with Italy and its people, to much of his French audience, paintings like *Roman Beggar Woman* and 1857's *The Old Italian Woman* would instantly communicate the alterity of their subjects by drawing on popular tropes of genre scenes of Italy and other obviously non-Parisian locales, and these painting would likely have been grouped with the various kinds of unseemly street people Manet portrayed during this period.³⁵

If *Young Woman with Ibis* was originally conceived as a younger version of the elderly Italian women, Degas may have feared misinterpretation. Consequently, his transformation of the girl, by way of the indisputably foreign birds and distinctive Orientalized architecture, could have been his way of maintaining distance from his subjects and attempting a genre scene that would go unnoticed among the similar examples that populated the Salons during this period. Yet, in his avoidance of his own conflicted heritage, Degas yields his most picturesque painting. Even as he took steps toward painting modern life and portraying the ballet, Degas could not yet leave the Orientalist idioms of his idols behind.

Turning back to the *Portrait of Mademoiselle Fiocre*, in relation to the question of influence, it is important to note that some have speculated that the ballet *La Source* was conceived from the idea of Ingres's rather oblique allegory painting completed in 1856 that was also called *La Source*, a reference that likely would have appealed to Degas.³⁶ Though Degas now chooses a subject from a contemporary Orientalist spectacle, he still employs compositional techniques similar to those used in his earlier paintings. Perhaps, potential allusions to Ingres also explain the most curious Oriental element of the painting — the musical instrument held by the girl standing next to Fiocre. The dance that punctuated the first act of *La Source* and was Fiocre's solo was called

the *pas de guzla* (the dance of the guzla) of which Gautier claimed, "Her charming body shaded by light gauze speckled with gold was displayed with an exquisite grace in the *pas de guzla*, one of the prettiest in the ballet."³⁷ The *pas de guzla* was a dance of repetitive spinning movements that caused Fiocre's skirt to rise and reveal the sheer pantaloons she wore underneath, rendering her a caricature with a fiery Oriental temperament and unrepressed sexuality.³⁸

However, the guzla does not appear to be the instrument that Degas has chosen to include. The guzla, potentially familiar to French readers from the frontispiece from Prosper Merimee's 1827 collection of mystical ballads called

La Guzla, is usually of a shorter length and played by a bow.³⁹ The instrument carried by Mademoiselle Fiocre's attendant, though, is more like a lute, and in the preparatory sketches, it is apparent that Degas originally envisioned a slightly longer instrument and considered having the woman face front.⁴⁰ Perhaps, then, the source that Degas turned to in his infinite visual vocabulary was Ingres's 1839-40 painting *Odalisque with a Slave* (**Fig. 8**),⁴¹ where the slave, whose face is visible despite her coyly turned head, plays a strange, elongated string instrument. By quoting this particular painting, Degas may have intended to appropriate both compositional and subjective context, hoping to lead the viewer to interpret the boredom



Fig. 8 Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, *Odalisque with a Slave*, 1839–1840, oil on canvas, 72.07 x 100.33 cm, bequest of Grenville L. Winthrop, 1943.251, Fogg Art Museum, Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge, Massachusetts, photo by Katya Kallsen. © Harvard Art Museum/ Art Resource, NY.

of Mlle Fiocre and her attendants through the disinterested female figures that populated harem scenes such as 1834's *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* by Delacroix.

Through this conflation of the Oriental with modern life, Degas's artistic project progresses further than it could in either *Semiramis*, with its devotion to restructuring the content and function of history painting, or in *Young Woman with Ibis*, where experimentation with color and genre obscures meaning and intention. The *Portrait of Mademoiselle Fiocre* was successful enough that it was displayed in the Salon of 1868, yet it passed mostly without comment, save for a caricature and a few satisfactory words from Emile Zola.⁴² Though it makes the most sense looking back on the course of Degas's career, it seems that it was just as confusing in 1868 as Degas's other forays into exoticism.

In addressing *Mademoiselle Fiocre* as a proposed transition from historical to modern life subjects, "the Orientalism of modern life" suggests a meaningful interpretive frame. In her book *Paris in Despair*, Hollis Clayson writes that Cézanne's painting *A Modern Olympia* (**Fig. 9**) generates, through its repression of harem sexuality, "a novel category of the imagination and of iconography: the Orientalism of modern life."⁴³ Jack Spector similarly notes that Cézanne incorporated certain figures from Delacroix's *Death of Sardanapalus* into his *Modern Olympia*, suggesting a sinister Orientalist fantasy behind the painting's contemporary veneer.⁴⁴ Yet these scholars do not pursue the implications of this construction further — what is the Orientalism of modern life? Should it be defined in relation to the incorporation of Eastern elements, or merely the feeling of otherness communicated by the isolation of the figure?

This formulation might be considered in tandem with a passage from Linda Nochlin's landmark



Fig. 9 Paul Cézanne, *A Modern Olympia*, 1873–1874, oil on canvas, 46 x 55.5 cm, R.F. 1951–31, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France. © Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY.

article "The Imaginary Orient," in which she uses Manet's *Masked Ball at the Opera* (**Fig 10**) as a foil for her argument about Gérôme's *Slave Market* paintings. Nochlin reads the Manet painting as a thematic response to Gérôme, suggesting that *Masked Ball at the Opera*'s "rejection of the myth of stylistic transparency" through its candid exposure of the erotic transactions occurring calls into question the authenticity of Gérôme's depictions of women being sold in Eastern markets.⁴⁵ Though both Manet and Cézanne present scenes entrenched in commentary on modern society, André Dombrowski has recently explored Cézanne's view of the relationship between self-portraiture and modern subject matter in the later version of *A Modern Olympia*. Dombrowski writes that Cézanne's self emerged, through his self-portrait as Olympia's gazing client, as one "deeply split at its core — present yet absent, subject yet object."⁴⁶ I would argue that a similar dynamic governs Degas's engagement in painting his *Portrait of Mademoiselle Fiocre*. Degas's painting holds a certain amount of his own subjectivity — his "other"ed identity and his personal artistic goals, both disguised in *Mademoiselle Fiocre*'s association with the artifice



Fig. 10 Édouard Manet, *Masked Ball at the Opera*, 1873, oil on canvas, 59.1 x 72.5 cm, gift of Mrs. Horace Havemeyer in memory of her mother-in-law, Louisine W. Havemeyer, 1982.75.1., National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, image courtesy of the National Gallery of Art.

of the stage. Thus, the “Orientalism of modern life” might be seen as an artistic strategy that utilizes hallmarks of the exoticism of the East in order to equate the isolation and judgment inherent in being labeled “other” with the alienation that one experiences as an inhabitant of urban modernity.

Degas's *Portrait of Mademoiselle Fiocre* embraces this hybrid “Orientalism of modern life” in a much more direct, psychologically affective way than the examples offered by Clayson and Nochlin.

Like the usually veiled artifice that pervades Orientalist painting, the artifice of the Parisian ballet allows Degas to present Eugénie Fiocre enacting escape. She is both a Parisian society figure and a woman celebrated for her ability to create an Oriental spectacle, displayed here in her Georgian headdress with its long diaphanous veil. The feelings of isolation and repression that Clayson cites as a hallmark of the Orientalism of modern life are increased by the indecipherable moment that Degas chooses to depict. Whether this is a break in rehearsal or a now uncertain

scene from the original production, it is certain that this is the least characteristic moment of a lead dancer's life.

This Eugénie Fiocre is not the vibrant fairy or mythological creature of the Disdéri photographs, but another, more private — and therefore more human — iteration of the dancer. Where the Disdéri photographs of Fiocre in costume displayed the falsehood of the represented scenes, Degas, likely conscious of painting as creation of artifice,⁴⁷ has rendered an expansive landscape background more naturalistic than one would imagine possible for a nineteenth-century stage play. Instead of depicting Fiocre performing the characteristics of the characters she danced, Degas portrays Fiocre as the princess Nouredde, but allows the projection of her embodied, modern self — a fact highlighted by the inclusion of Fiocre's own name in the painting's title, as opposed to the name of the character she danced.⁴⁸ In Degas's painting, she is not the gleeful sprite of the Disdéri photographs, but a melancholy nineteenth-century Frenchwoman momentarily garbed in Oriental dress. Furthermore, her mostly opaque costume seems to purposely obscure her body, thereby erasing the significant physical form that had set all of Paris aflutter. With this shift from affected performance to respectful voyeurism, Degas foreshadows how his future images of dancers would portray their startling humanity and choose backstage revelations over the managed spectacles seen by the audience.⁴⁹

This portrait's hybrid status is similarly illustrated by the visual references that art historians have seen in the painting. Beyond the references to Ingres and Delacroix that I have made in this paper, others have argued for the influence of Whistler's 1865-67 painting *Symphony in White, No. III*⁵⁰ and the numerous avenues from which Courbet's influence might be seen.⁵¹ In this, *Mademoiselle Fiocre* is both

timeless in its lack of spatial specificity and utterly contemporary in its ability to reference painters as bold as Whistler and Courbet. When Zola reviewed the Salon of 1868 for *L'Événement Illustré*, he saw yet another influence. He declared of the *Portrait of Mademoiselle Fiocre*, "As I looked at this painting, which is a little thin and has strange embellishments, I was reminded of Japanese prints, so artistic in the simplicity of their handling of color."⁵² Zola evokes *japonisme*, another kind of Orientalist cultural appropriation that would guide the work of many of the Impressionists, but this strategy's formal relevance seems minimal in comparison to others in *Mademoiselle Fiocre*.

Zola's confusion, however, is indicative of this moment when Degas's strategic plundering of Salon Orientalism and his desire to depict modern life begin to clash, and where, for someone like Degas, a visual idiom like Orientalism had to be left behind in order to seek the visual and emotional truths that he found lacking in the work of artists like Gérôme. Because Eugénie Fiocre is an identifiable person even now, the *Portrait of Mademoiselle Fiocre* can never be abstract enough to be deemed entirely exotic. Mademoiselle Fiocre, as Degas depicts her, becomes a model for this "Orientalism of modern life." Isolated in the imaginary mountain landscape that Degas has created for her, she becomes an overtly artificial construction, a painted fantasy plucked from the stage of the Paris Opera.

Mary Manning received her B.A. in Art History and French from Case Western Reserve University in 2008 and her M.A. in Art History from Rutgers University in 2012. She is at work on a dissertation that examines intimacy and vulnerability in the early Impressionist Frédéric Bazille's figure paintings in relation to nineteenth-century medical doctrines, masculinities, and

social divisions between Paris and the provincial south of France. Some of her research on Bazille was recently published in the *Journal of Men's Studies*, and she is currently a fellow at the PreDoctoral Leadership Development Institute at Rutgers University.

Endnotes

1. This formulation, which will be discussed in more detail below, was suggested by Hollis Clayson in *Paris in Despair: Art and Everyday Life under Siege (1870-71)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002). In her discussion of the large format watercolors that Henri Regnault produced during the leaner years of the Franco-Prussian War, she refers to Cézanne's *Modern Olympia*, in comparison to Regnault's harem scenes, as a more psychological expression of "the Orientalism of modern life."
2. Richard Thomson, *The Private Degas* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1987), 13.
3. Jill DeVonyar and Richard Kendall, *Degas and the Dance* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2002), 197.
4. Henri Loyrette, catalogue entry for *Mlle Fiocre in the Ballet "La Source,"* in Jean Sutherland Boggs et al. *Degas* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1988), 134; Loyrette describes how Degas had varnished his painting and had been unsatisfied with the results. Degas apparently hired someone to remove the varnish, and this process, poorly done, damaged much of the painting. Thus, there is some uncertainty about how the painting we know today compares to how the painting looked when Degas submitted it to the Salon jury in 1868.
5. Ibid, 133; Loyrette also notes that the composer Giuseppe Verdi was a distinguished guest at the premier of *La Source*.
6. Georgian here refers, of course, to the ethnic group indigenous to the Caucasus region of Western Asia.
7. Ann Dumas, *Degas's Mlle. Fiocre in Context: A Study of Portrait of Mlle. E.F. ...; à propos du ballet "La Source"* (New York: Brooklyn Museum, 1988), 15; Dumas also notes that Guglielmina Salvoni, who played Naila, was paid 1500 francs more than Fiocre.
8. Quoted in Dumas, 13.
9. Quoted in Ibid, 14.
10. Felix Baumann and Marianne Karabelnik, eds. *Degas. Portraits*. exh. cat. (London: Merrell Holberton, 1994): 50; Dumas, 18; Werner Hofman, *Degas: A Dialogue of Difference*, trans. David H. Wilson (London: Thames and Hudson, 2007): 28. Hofman goes so far as to suggest Fiocre was a courtesan, and while that would have been entirely possible within the social milieu of star ballerinas during this period, no one else has endeavored to prove one way or the other. Not much is known about Eugénie Fiocre outside of the ballets in which she danced.
11. DeVonyar and Kendall, *Degas and the Dance*, 25.
12. Norman Bryson, *Tradition and Desire: From David to Delacroix* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 13.
13. Theodore Reff, *Degas: The Artist's Mind* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 60-61.
14. Henri Loyrette, catalogue entry for *Semiramis Building Babylon*, in Jean Sutherland Boggs et al. *Degas* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1988): 90.
15. Diodorus Siculus, *The Historical Library of Diodorus Siculus*, vol. 1 (London: W. McDowell, 1814): 105-106.
16. DeVonyar and Kendall, *Degas and the Dance*, 46.
17. This possibility, and the possibility that *Semiramis* may derive from a subsequent French translation of the Rossini opera staged in 1860, is discussed (and for the most part dismissed) in nearly every text that mentions the *Semiramis* painting at all. These dismissals include Norma Broude, "Degas's Misogyny," *Art Bulletin* 59, no. 1 [Mar. 1977]: 101, citing an unpublished masters' thesis on Degas's Near Eastern history paintings by J. Kunin, Columbia University, 1965.
18. Gerald M. Ackerman, *The Life and Work of Jean-Léon Gérôme, With a Catalogue Raisonné* (London: Sotheby's Publishers, 1986), 54.
19. Qtd. in Ackerman, 55; Reff, *The Artist's Mind*, 71, also mentions an occurrence in which Gérôme, upon hearing of Degas's love of Daumier, sent him several lithographs by the caricaturist. Degas responded with a pithy note that Reff believes indicates that Degas hoped Gérôme would meditate on Daumier's style long enough to learn something about authentic realism.

20. Frederick Bohrer, "Inventing Assyria: Exoticism and Reception in Nineteenth-Century England and France," *Art Bulletin* 80, no. 2 [June 1998]: 347-348; Theodore Reff, *The Notebooks of Edgar Degas*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976): 19; the implications for this interest on his later career are further discussed by Richard Kendall et al. *Degas and the Little Dancer* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 66-67; Reff, *Notebooks*, vol. 1, 99, describes page 197 of Notebook 18 as containing a "tracing of a reproduction of the Persian mural *Lady and Her Maid* (Palace of the Chihil Sutun, Isfahan)" above a quickly made sketch for *Semiramis*.
21. Eunice Lipton, *Looking into Degas: Uneasy Images of Women and Modern Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986): 32; Lipton refers to Degas's early racing pictures as utilizing the frieze structure, but I believe her conclusions are equally valid, if not more so, for his history paintings.
22. Linda Nochlin, "The Imaginary Orient," *Art in America* 71 [May 1983]: 123.
23. Henri Loyrette, *Degas e l'Italia* (Rome: Fratelli Palombi, 1984), 20-21. Flandrin's painting, which dates from around 1855, depicts a dark-haired woman in dress similar to that of the *Young Woman with Ibis*. The woman leans forward onto a parapet, looking to the right with her eyelids closed or cast downward. Degas's teacher Lamothe had been a follower of Flandrin's.
24. Phoebe Pool, "Degas and Moreau," *Burlington Magazine* 105, no. 723 [June 1963]: 251-256; Pool discusses the artistic interchange between Degas and Moreau during these early years of their careers when they met in Rome and worked and traveled together throughout Italy. Due to the dearth of scholarship on the early careers of both Degas and Moreau, Pool's article, despite its age, remains useful commentary on the activities of these artists and the power dynamics of both their personal relationship and their artistic interchange.
25. Kendall, *Degas and the Little Dancer*, 66.
26. Lee Beletsky and David Nurney, *Birds of the World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 59; William Nicholson, *The British Encyclopedia, or Dictionary of arts and sciences comprising an accurate and popular view of the present improved state of human knowledge*, Vol. 6 (London: G. Whittingham, 1809): n.p. (column headings "TAN" and "TAN"). Nicholson notes (as of 1809) that the Egyptian ibises subsist on large numbers of insects and frogs, and I imagine that, because of the plague significations of those animals, that would have a great impact on the currency of the bird's sacred reputation in Christian countries.
27. Nicholson, n.p.
28. Loyrette, catalogue entry for *Woman on a Terrace*, also called *Young Woman and Ibis*, in Jean Sutherland Boggs et al., *Degas* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1988), 97.
29. Loyrette, *Degas e l'Italia*, 118.
30. Reff, *Notebooks*, vol. 2, Notebook 11, page 39.
31. Hofmann, 25; Loyrette, *Degas e l'Italia*, 19-20.
32. Loyrette, *Degas e l'Italia*, 19-20.
33. Christopher Benfey, "Degas and New Orleans: Exorcising the Exotic," in *Degas and New Orleans: A French Impressionist in America* (Exh cat. New Orleans: New Orleans Museum of Art, 1999): 24.
34. For more on *The Bellelli Family*, now in the Musée d'Orsay, see: Jean Sutherland Boggs, "Degas as a Portraitist," in *Degas. Portraits*, eds. Felix Baumann and Marianne Karabelnik, eds. (London: Merrell Holberton, 1994), 17-85. See also Boggs's much earlier essay: "Degas and the Bellellis," *Art Bulletin* 36 (1955): 127-140.
35. Theodore Reff, *Manet and Modern Paris: One Hundred Paintings, Drawings, Prints, and Photographs by Manet and His Contemporaries* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 171.
36. DeVonyar and Kendall, *Degas and the Dance*, 90.
37. Quoted in Dumas, *Degas's Mlle Fiocre*, 13.
38. Dumas, *Degas's Mlle Fiocre*, 12.
39. Prosper Mérimée, *La Guzla, ou choix de poésies illyriques recueillies dans la Dalmatie, la Bosnie, la Croatie et l'Herzégovine* (Paris, F.G. Levrault, 1827). This image depicts Mérimée's fictional guzla-playing balladeer Hyacinthe Maglanovich seated, propping the guzla up on his knee and positioning himself to play it as one might play a small cello.
40. I refer here to two pencil sketches, each known as *Young Woman Playing a Guzla: Study for "Mlle Fiocre."*

One, dated from 1866-68, is in the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago, and the other, dated from 1867-68, remains in a private collection.

41. Dumas, *Degas's Mlle Fiocre*, 37, mentions this painting and, in declaring that *Mlle Fiocre* and *Semiramis* come from a long tradition of piquant Oriental scenes, she comes the closest of anyone to the argument I construct in this article. However, she only summarily notes the similarities and draws no conclusions from the resemblance about Degas's painting practice.
42. Ibid, 40. Zola wrote: "En regardant cette peinture, qui est un peu mince et qui a des élégances étranges, je songeais à ces gravures japonaises, si artistiques, dans la simplicité de leurs tons." I discuss the implications of Zola's commentary below.
43. Clayson, *Paris in Despair*, 251.
44. Jack Spector, *Delacroix: The Death of Sardanapalus* (New York: Viking Press, 1974), 56-58.
45. Nochlin, "The Imaginary Orient," 125-126.
46. André Dombrowski, *Cézanne, Murder, and Modern Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 69.
47. Thomson, *The Private Degas*, 39. Thomson, especially, argues that *Mademoiselle Fiocre* is a matter of layers of artifice piled on one another — that Degas stresses that his painting is a painted re-creation of what was originally only a performance.
48. For this observation, I am indebted to my outside reader.
49. For these insights, I am indebted to Jeanne Zarucchi's response to an iteration of this material presented in the Nineteenth-Century European Art session at the 2011 Midwest Art History Society Conference in Grand Rapids, Michigan.
50. Dumas, *Degas's Mlle Fiocre*, 26; Charles F. Stuckey, "Degas as an Artist; Revised and Still Unfinished," in *Degas: Form and Space*, exh. cat., Centre Culturel du Marais (Paris: Marais-Guillaud Éditions, 1984), 20-21, argues for the uncanny similarities between *Mlle. Fiocre* and Whistler's 1864 *Variations in Flesh Colour and Green (The Balcony)*, though he admits that there is no way Degas could ever have seen this painting. However, Degas definitely saw *Symphony in White III* because he sketched the pose of the leaning redheaded woman in one of his notebooks. Dumas cites Reff's suggest of Whistler as a source for *Mlle Fiocre* and calls the link "tenuous," but I submit that she is rather quick to judge.
51. Dumas, *Degas's Mlle Fiocre*, 33, and Stuckey, "Degas as an Artist," 21, both suggest Courbet's *Hunter's Horse* as a source for the position of the horse, while Stuckey also comments on the similarities between *Mlle Fiocre's* landscape and Courbet's Franche-Comté landscapes and the resemblance of *Mlle Fiocre's* pose to that of Proudhon in his portrait by Courbet. I have chosen not to include these in the text because I do not find any of their evidence particularly compelling.
52. Loyrette, catalogue entry for *Mlle Fiocre in the Ballet "La Source"*, 134.

Ellsworth Kelly's Ornamental Space

CHRISTOPHER KETCHAM

In defense of *Untitled (Black Bar)*, a work installed on the facade of the Matthew Marks Gallery in Los Angeles in 2011, Ellsworth Kelly (b. 1923) refuses the possibility of a decorative reading. “This isn’t an ornament,” he insists, “It’s part of the architecture.”¹ *Untitled (Black Bar)* is a five thousand pound aluminum rectangle, painted black, suspended ten inches from the surface of the wall, and crowning the front of an otherwise pure white building (**Fig. 1**). Kelly produced it in collaboration with the gallery’s architect Peter Zellner; however, the artist and architect articulate fundamental differences about the status and boundaries of the work. Zellner’s building self-consciously references the white cube as modernism’s ideal space of aesthetic experience — a space isolated from and opposed to urban space.² At the same time, Kelly’s work is something of a violation of Zellner’s monolithic design, signaling the artist’s critical engagement with the ideality of the white cube even while his work occupies the place of a signpost for the gallery. Kelly, furthermore, claims the whole facade as the work of art and positions his painting *Black Over White* of 1966 as a clear precedent for his authorship of the white ground (**Fig. 2**).³ Zellner’s firm, on the other hand, describes the front of the building as “a facade embellished with an Ellsworth Kelly sculpture.”⁴ This discrepancy and Kelly’s disclaimer recite modernist tropes against ornament while simultaneously providing the



Fig. 1 Building: *Matthew Marks Gallery*, West Hollywood, California, 2011, designed by Zellnerplus, Peter Zellner, Principal. Artwork: Ellsworth Kelly, *Untitled (Black Bar)*, 2011, painted aluminum, 96 x 473 x 6 inches (243.8 x 1201.4 x 15.2 cm), Matthew Marks Gallery, Los Angeles, artist commission, photo © Joshua White, courtesy of Matthew Marks Gallery. Artwork © Ellsworth Kelly.

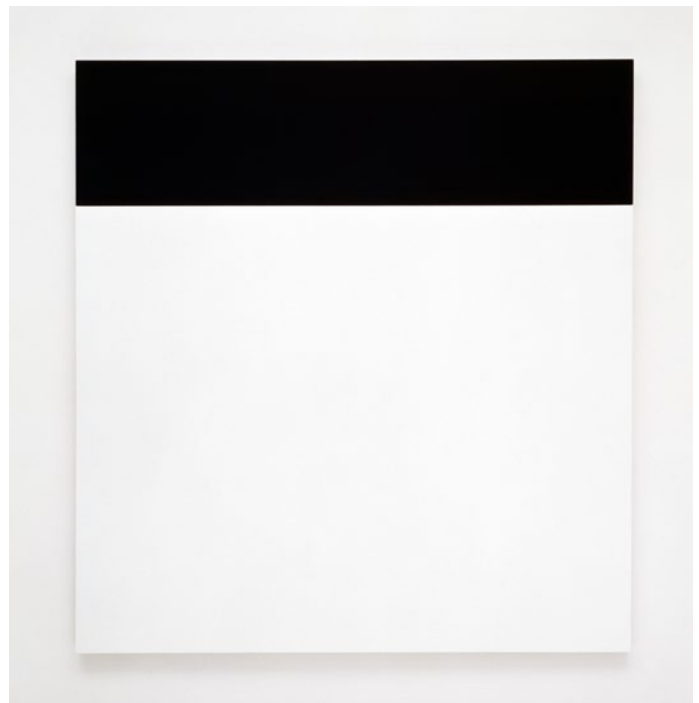


Fig. 2 Ellsworth Kelly, *Black Over White*, 1966, painted aluminum, 96 x 473 x 6 inches (243.8 x 1201.4 x 15.2 cm), Matthew Marks Gallery, Los Angeles, artist commission, photo © Joshua White, courtesy of Matthew Marks Gallery. Artwork © Ellsworth Kelly.

terms to consider *Untitled (Black Bar)*, and Kelly's work more broadly, as such.

It is precisely because Kelly's work converges with architecture that it should be read through theories of ornament. His paintings and reliefs occupy a liminal space between art and architecture, thereby transgressing the boundaries between the work of art, the wall, the viewer, and the space of aesthetic experience. While Kelly's credentials as a quintessential late modernist painter remain intact, his work threatens some of modernism's most cherished values: opticality, aesthetic autonomy, medium specificity, and genre hierarchies. Moreover, by aspiring to a direct address of the body, his paintings probe the indulgent appeal of the sensual that lies at the heart of the modernist fear of ornament. The carefully demarcated and static space of the white cube — the disciplined space of modernism — is reconstituted by the work of Ellsworth Kelly as a fundamentally active and social space. In other words, modernist space is transformed into ornamental space.

This is not the first study to consider the relation of Kelly's work to the history of ornament. The decorative aspect of his line and its basis in the abstraction of plant forms is often linked to Henri Matisse and occasionally to Owen Jones and Christopher Dresser.⁵ These claims follow Kelly's own assertions that plant drawings such as *Briar* (1961) are the foundation for all of his later work (**Fig. 3**). One can also point to the derivation of an idea of beauty from the laws of nature at work in all of these artists and theorists, as does Rémi Labrusse.⁶ These are valid and valuable arguments; however, the conflation of Matisse and Kelly with Jones and Dresser — the conflation of abstract art and ornament — elides the specific architectural function and spatial effect of the latter. A plant study on paper in a sketchbook is substantially different from an abstract plant design applied directly to a

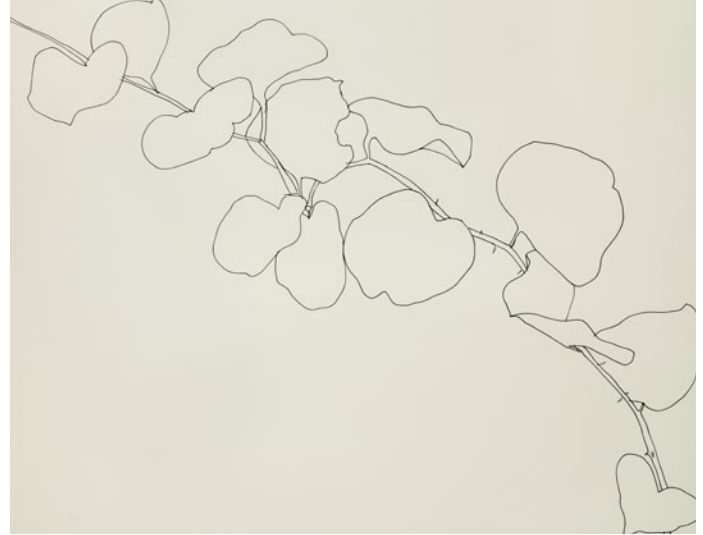


Fig. 3 Ellsworth Kelly, *Briar*, 1961, ink, 22 1/2 x 28 1/2 inches (57.2 x 72.4 cm), The Wadsworth Atheneum, gift of Mr. Samuel J. Wagstaff, Jr. in memory of Elva McCormick, 1980, photo courtesy of Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art. © Ellsworth Kelly.

wall, and this difference is not accounted for. The following paper is not concerned with the common origins of ornament and abstraction, nor about the debt owed by the latter to the former. Rather, it considers how Kelly's objects embrace the function and effect of ornament: how Kelly isolates the supplement from his experience of the city and everyday life and deploys it as the basis for form, how his work aspires to the wall, and how it addresses the body of the viewer while transforming the spaces that it occupies.

Form/Supplement

Kelly established the supplement as a primary point of departure and the organizing principle of his work from the outset of his career. Working in France between 1948 and 1954, he was introduced to the most advanced developments of European modern art and architecture; however, his sketchbooks are populated by drawings and collages of forms isolated from his experience of the city and its environs. Yve-Alain Bois has convincingly argued that, in these early studies, Kelly was developing a variety of non-

compositional strategies in pursuit of anonymous painting, the artist's stated objective.⁷ As Bois suggests, Kelly located "already-made" objects and motifs that were essentially flat, therefore conforming to the condition of his medium, and simply copied them to paper or canvas.⁸ This indexical strategy limited the compositional responsibility to choice and transfer. By copying something from the world that conformed to the condition of painting — something, moreover, that already looked like a modernist composition — Kelly effectively disclaimed his own agency and effaced his presence as author.⁹

While Bois' argument is compelling, and in fact develops directly from Kelly's own statements

about his work and working methods, it neglects the content of the forms that were transferred by the artist. What Kelly isolates in almost all of his sketches and paintings from the early 1950s is not the found object but the found supplement. When he studied buildings, for example, he ignored the facades and instead sketched their backs, focusing on exposed chimneys and masonry repairs. When he sketched posters on the Paris Métro, he drew their frames rather than the poster design or any aspect of the Métro (**Fig. 4**). When he studied cabanas at the beach, he attended closely to their stripes and the irregular patterns produced by patchwork repairs, rather than their overall form or anything that would betray context (**Fig. 5**). He sketched the grill on the street rather than the

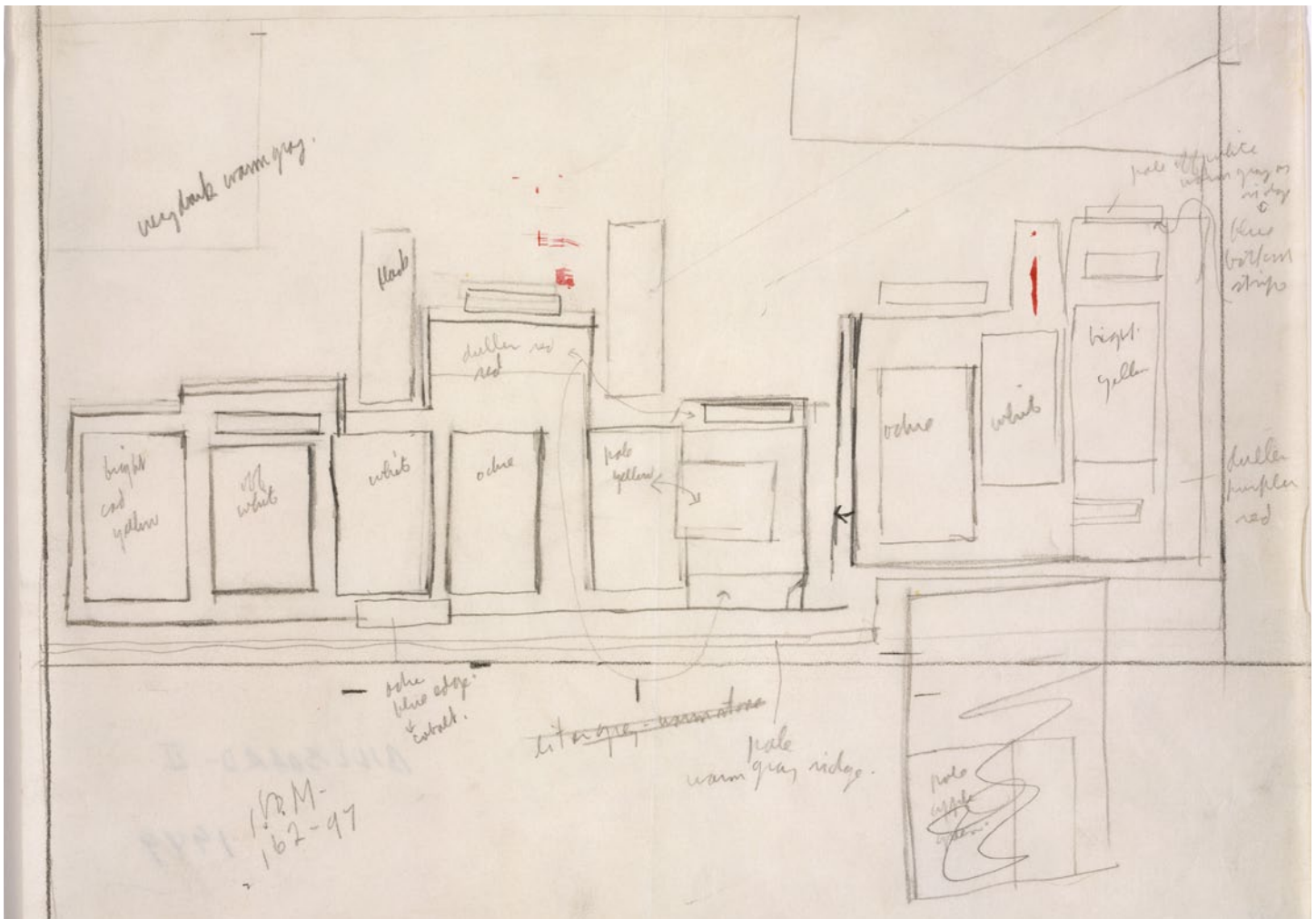


Fig. 4 Ellsworth Kelly, *Métro Posters*, 1949, pencil, 9 3/4 x 13 1/4 inches (24.8 x 33.7 cm), private collection, photo courtesy of the artist. © Ellsworth Kelly.

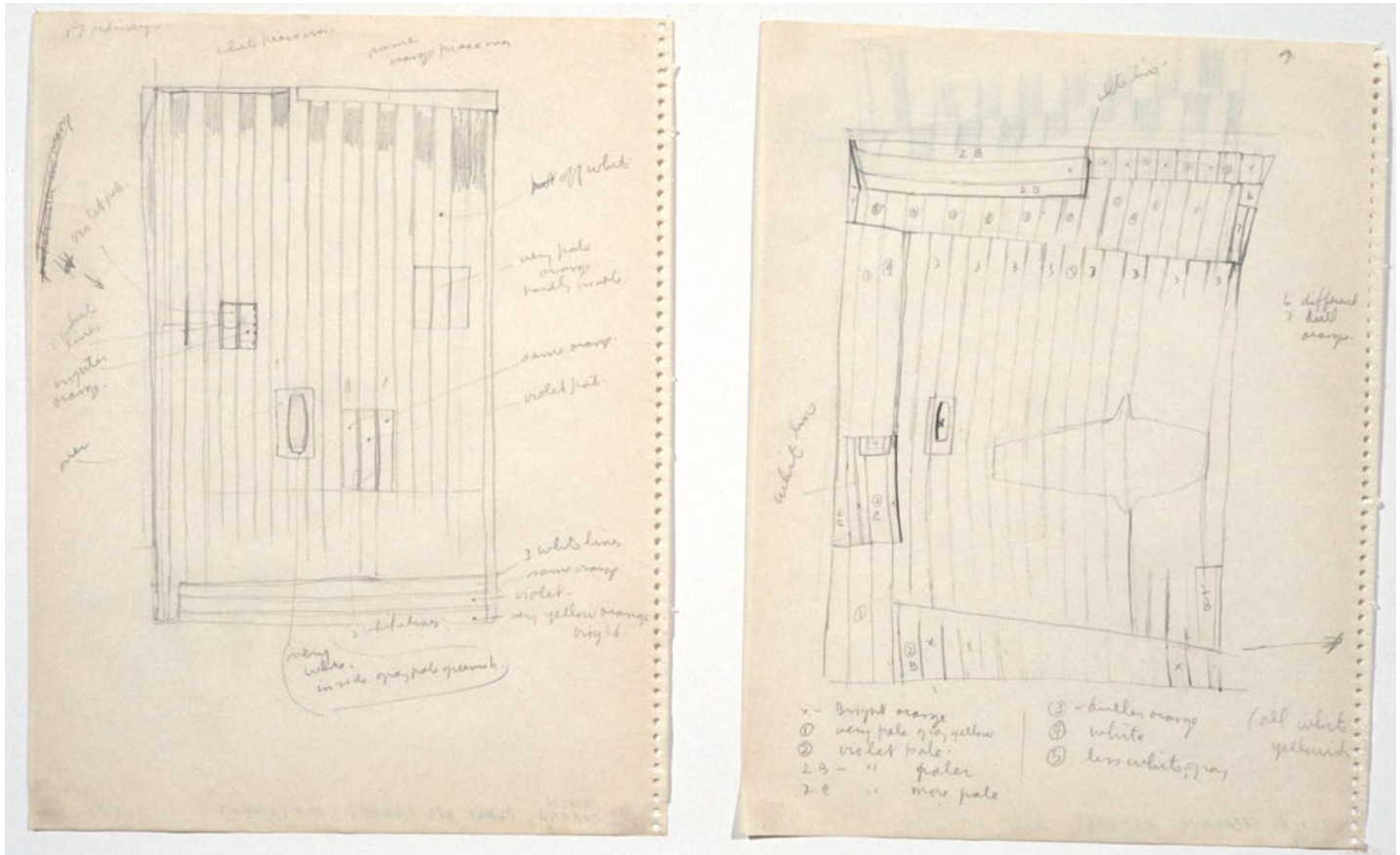


Fig. 5 Left: Ellsworth Kelly, *Sketch of a Beach Cabana III*, 1950, pencil, 10 5/8 x 8 1/4 inches (27.0 x 21.0 cm), Harvard University Art Museums, gift of the artist and purchase from the Margaret Fisher Fund and through the generosity of Kenyon C. Bolton III, Agnes Gund and Daniel Shapiro, Richard E. Oldenburg, and Emily Rauh Pulitzer in honor of Neil and Angelica Rudenstine, 2001.32 © Ellsworth Kelly. **Right:** Ellsworth Kelly, *Sketch of a Beach Cabana IV*, 1950, pencil on paper, 10 5/8 x 8 1/4 inches (27.0 x 21.0 cm), Harvard University Art Museums, gift of the artist and purchase from the Margaret Fisher Fund and through the generosity of Kenyon C. Bolton III, Agnes Gund and Daniel Shapiro, Richard E. Oldenburg, and Emily Rauh Pulitzer in honor of Neil and Angelica Rudenstine, 2001.32. © Ellsworth Kelly.

street itself (**Fig. 6**). Finally, when he studied the human figure, he outlined its dress, effectively positioning the person outside the frame of interest (**Fig. 7**). In all of these examples, Kelly's interest is in something added or peripheral to the object — a mediating edge that limits and determines the object but is not proper to it. His isolation of the supplement empties the object of mass, content, and context. What remains is the framing edge, the contour, and the thin skin of the surface that mediates subject, object, and environment, or interior and exterior.

From Jacques Derrida, we learn something of the identity and operation of the supplement.

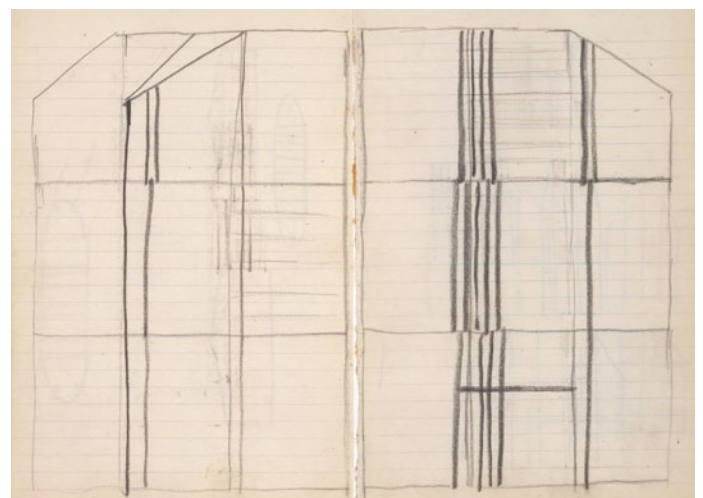


Fig. 6 Ellsworth Kell, *Sidewalk Grill, Place Maubert I*, 1949, pencil, 7 3/4 x 10 1/8 inches (19.7 x 25.7 cm), private collection, photo courtesy of the artist. © Ellsworth Kelly.

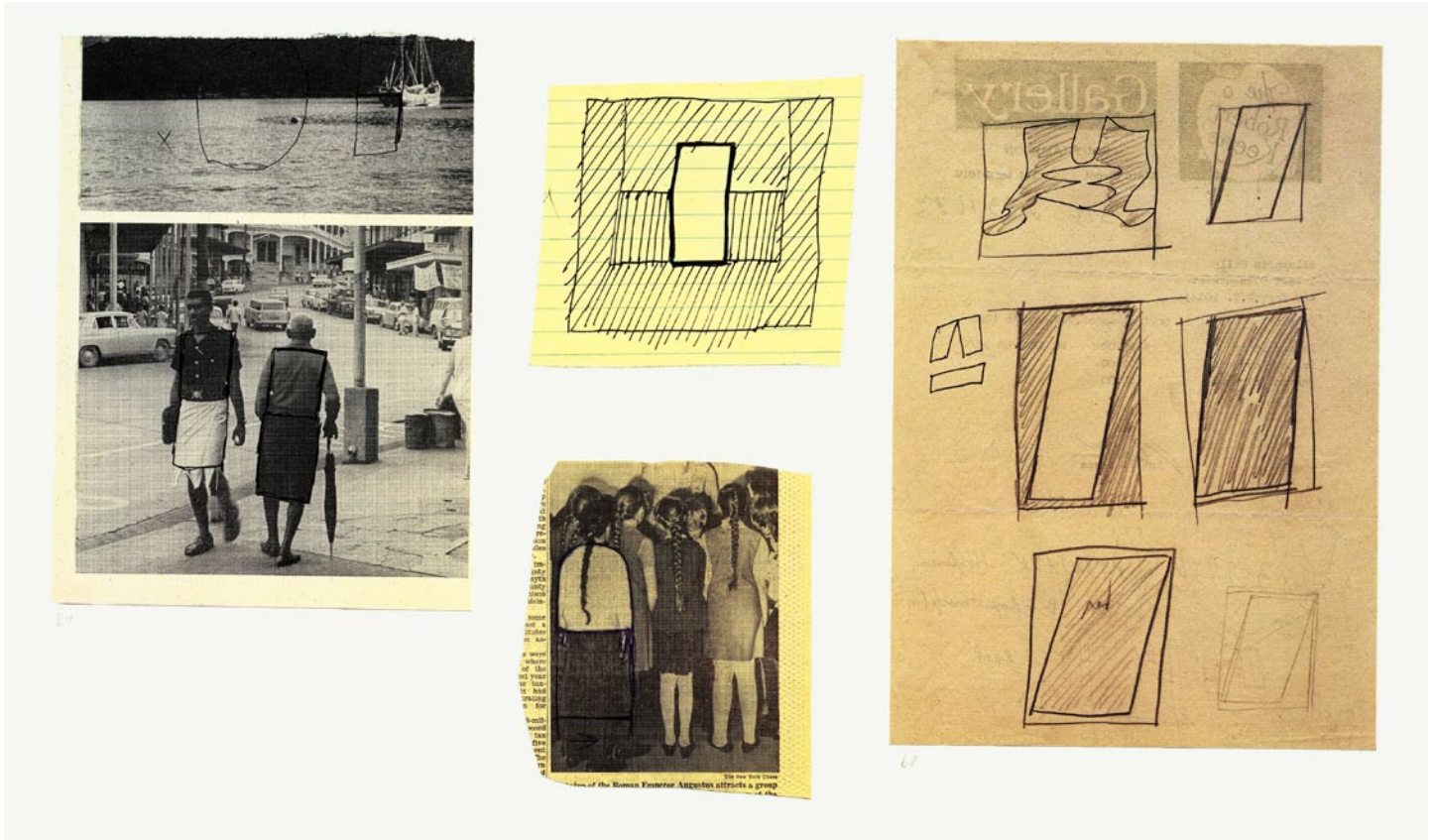


Fig. 7 Ellsworth Kelly, *Tablet #54*, 1960s, ink and pencil, 15 1/2 x 21 inches (39.4 x 53.3 cm), The Menil Collection, Houston, gift of Louisa S. Sarofim in honor of James A. Elkins, Jr., photo courtesy of the artist. © Ellsworth Kelly.

It is first a surplus that is added to something ostensibly full, but the supplement is also always a threatening addition that adds only to replace.¹⁰ It is neither interior nor exterior; rather, the supplement is the site of mediation, a line drawn between oppositional terms that is both constitutive of those terms and allows for their mutual transgression.¹¹ In *Of Grammatology* Derrida argues that writing, throughout metaphysics, plays a supplemental role to speech. The latter is privileged in philosophies from Plato to Rousseau to Husserl as the guarantor of self-presence, while the former is a mark of absence that threatens the purity of the spoken word.¹² Derrida's aim, of course, is to demonstrate the place of writing at the heart of speech and to thereby complicate the enduring place of presence as the foundational pillar of Western thought. "The outside," he writes, "bears with the

inside a relationship that is, as usual, anything but simple exteriority. The meaning of the outside was always present within the inside, imprisoned outside the outside, and vice versa."¹³ The economy of the supplement, according to Derrida, describes the movement that the supplement instigates between interior and exterior — the constitutive exchange that delivers the opposite to the heart of the privileged term and that is rigorously repressed by interested parties.¹⁴

Derrida extends his theory of the supplement to the edge of art in *The Truth of Painting*, although his target is ultimately not painting but the role of aesthetic judgment for Kant's philosophical system.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the frame and the ornament are mobilized to locate the supplement, as both share a hybrid identity that is neither inside nor outside the work. The frame and the

ornament are, strictly speaking, exterior to the work but, according to Derrida, they press against it, limit the work and intervene within it.¹⁶ “What constitutes them as *parerga*,” writes Derrida, “is not simply their exteriority as a surplus, it is the internal structural link which rivets them to the lack in the interior of the *ergon*. And this lack would be constitutive of the very unity of the *ergon*.”¹⁷ This simultaneously mediating, constitutive, and transgressive operation of the supplement or *parergon* is, moreover, fundamentally critical.¹⁸ When Kelly produces work that delivers the supplement drawn from the streets of the city to the walls of the gallery and museum, it effects precisely this type of transgressive and threatening critique described by Derrida.

By all accounts, *Window, Museum of Modern Art, Paris* (1949) was a breakthrough for Kelly (**Fig. 8**). It is the earliest example of a work that Kelly formulated from the found supplement and conceived in direct relation to architectural space. He described the epiphany that led to its creation as follows:

In October of 1949 at the Museum of Modern Art in Paris I noticed large windows between the paintings interested me more than the art exhibited. I made a drawing of the window and later in my studio I made what I considered my first object, *Window, Museum of Modern Art, Paris*. From then on, painting as I had known it was finished for me. The new works were to be painting/objects, unsigned, anonymous. Everywhere I looked, everything I saw became something to be made, and it had to be made exactly as it was, with nothing added. It was a new freedom: there was no longer the need to compose.¹⁹

The work is made of two stretched canvases, both painted white with a thin black border. The bottom panel is turned to the wall, exposing a grey surface and stretcher bars that are painted black and arranged to echo the form of the museum's windows. The work is clearly intended as a gesture to evoke and then cancel the history of illusionistic painting, instead affirming



Fig. 8 Ellsworth Kelly, *Window, Museum of Modern Art, Paris*, 1949, oil on wood and canvas, two joined panels, 50 1/2 x 19 1/2 inches (128.3 x 49.5 cm), private collection, photo by Hulya Kolabas, courtesy of the artist. © Ellsworth Kelly.

painting's status as an autonomous object. Kelly achieves this gesture by effacing the view through the window by rendering the glass opaque, while simultaneously dismissing any previous attempts at this negation offered by the collection of early modernist paintings hanging on the walls around him. Only the frame of the window is transferred directly to the surface and structure of the work. Its shape is derived from the edge of architecture, the line that mediates interior and exterior space. The logic of the supplement, developed in Kelly's sketches and collages, becomes the organizing principle of his painting. As an object that now denies illusionistic space, Kelly's painting retains the function of mediation derived from the window frame and aspires to configure the experience of real space in the same way that the edge of architecture does. "Fragmentation and the focus on a single form," Kelly writes, "have been two solutions in my work for emptying shape of representational content and projecting it into a new space."²⁰

In shifting from representation to presentation, Kelly retains only the embodied experience of the forms that he isolated and reduced to their edges. This strategy effectively cuts off the virtual space of painting. However, Kelly opens the medium out to the possibility of shaping actual space by encoding the framing edge of his work with contours derived from architecture, bodies, and the street, thereby transferring the experience of this content to the walls of the museum. This strategy is essentially transgressive when directed towards the pure, ideal modernist gallery space. Kelly delivers to the heart of this privileged space the very terms that constitute it as privileged through their exclusion.

Desire for the Wall

Much of Kelly's work after *Window*, *Museum of Modern Art, Paris* can be divided into two broad categories: multi-panel paintings and

shaped monochromes. In different ways, both types of paintings betray an intrinsic desire for the wall. Inspired by his study of Le Corbusier and medieval architecture, Kelly believed that artists should build like architects and that painting should engage directly with the wall, appropriating it as ground and assuming its function.²¹ A painting was no longer something to put on the wall but aspired to become the wall itself. In a letter to John Cage of 1950, Kelly wrote: "I am not interested in painting as it has been accepted for so long — to hang on walls of houses as pictures. To hell with pictures — they should be the wall — even better — on the outside wall of large buildings."²² As the wall — or *as if* the wall — painting assumes responsibility for the shape and experience of real space.

In *Colors for a Large Wall* of 1951, one of the first of his multi-panel paintings, Kelly assembled sixty-four individual canvases into a single square (**Fig. 9**). The white panels scattered throughout



Fig. 9 Ellsworth Kelly, *Colors for a Large Wall*, 1951, oil on canvas, sixty-four joined panels, 94 1/2 x 94 1/2 inches (240 x 240 cm), The Museum of Modern Art, New York, gift of the artist, 1969, photo courtesy of Museum of Modern Art, New York. © Ellsworth Kelly.



Fig. 10 Ellsworth Kelly, *Sculpture for a Large Wall*, 1956–1957, anodized aluminum, one hundred four panels, 11' 6" x 65' 5" x 1' 1" (350.5 x 1993.9 x 33 cm); installed 15" off the wall, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, gift of Jo Carole and Ronald S. Lauder, 1998, photo courtesy of Matthew Marks Gallery, New York. © Ellsworth Kelly.

the work function as the visual equivalent of the wall, symbolically introducing it within the frame of painting.²³ Moreover, the strategy of composition — arranging row after row of colored squares — echoes the construction of a brick wall, a process that Kelly has admired repeatedly in writings and interviews and sought to use as a model for his anonymous mode of production.²⁴ He comes even closer to the anonymity that he admires in buildings with his first architectural commission: *Sculpture for a Large Wall*, created for the lobby of the Transportation Building in Philadelphia in 1957 (**Fig. 10**). The work is composed of 104 anodized aluminum panels arranged in four rows and reaching ten feet in height spanning seventy feet in width. About a quarter of the panels are painted in a variety of bright colors as well as black and white; all are four-sided, either curved or quadrilateral shapes and interspersed with spaces that reveal the wall behind. The compositional strategy is similar to *Colors for a Large Wall*, echoing the form of a brick wall although now incorporating the actual wall into the space of the sculpture. However, there is a specific architectural pedigree with *Sculpture for a Large Wall*. The form approximates Le Corbusier's *Unité d'Habitation* (1947–52) in Marseilles, which Kelly visited in 1951. He specifically recalls his experience of the colored

panels on Le Corbusier's facade and counts them as an important precedent for his work.²⁵ Moreover, the collective production of *Sculpture for a Large Wall* approaches Kelly's desire to work like an architect. He produced the design for the work but gave it to Edison Price, a lighting designer working for Philip Johnson, to generate a blueprint. The work was then fabricated in a factory after Kelly had drawn the shapes on the aluminum panels and selected the colors.²⁶ This collective mode of production, which Kelly continues to use for his aluminum wall panels, and the untouched, industrial facture produced by the factory serves to efface his presence as author. It is not only a strategy of negation but also a mode of production that is modeled on architectural design and therefore invests the work with an intrinsic architectural content.

Like *Sculpture for a Large Wall*, Kelly's shaped monochromes incorporate the wall into the space of painting literally rather than symbolically, by appropriating it as ground to the figure of the panel. He first arrived at this strategy in the early 1950s with *White Plaque: Bridge Arch and Reflection* and has pursued the shaped monochrome throughout his career (**Fig. 11**). The repression of internal form or any trace of visual incident within the frame of the shaped monochromes — like *Sculpture for a Large Wall*,

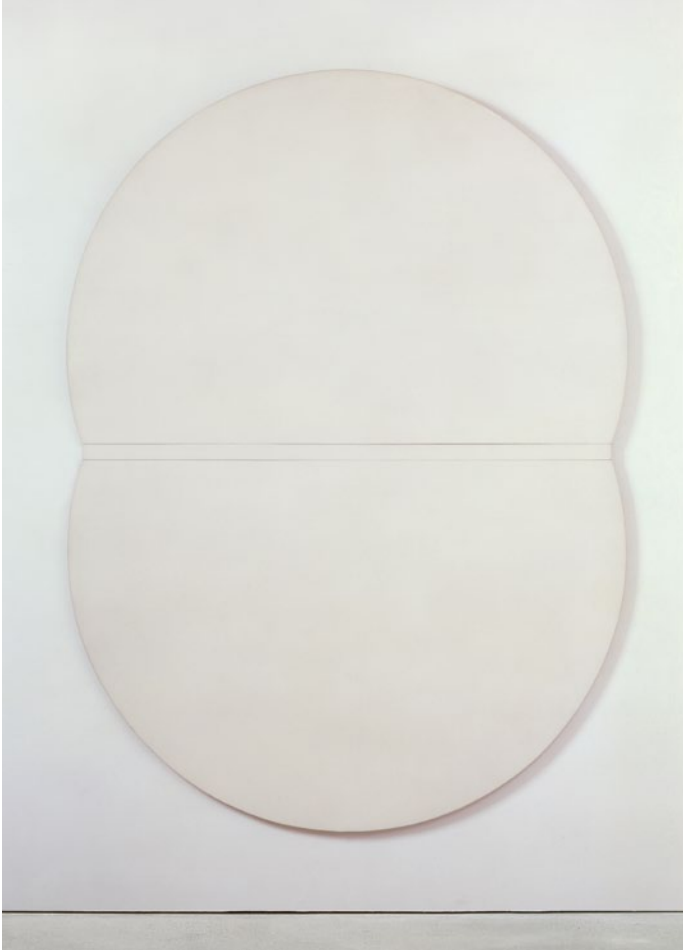


Fig. 11 Ellsworth Kelly, *White Plaque: Bridge Arch and Reflection*, 1955, oil on wood, two panels separated by a wood strip, 64 x 48 x 1/2 inches (162.6 x 121.9 x 1.3 cm), The Museum of Modern Art, New York, promised gift of Emily Rauh Pulitzer; Vincent D'Aquila and Harry Soviak Bequest Fund, and Enid A. Haupt Fund, 1996, photo courtesy of Matthew Marks Gallery, New York. © Ellsworth Kelly.

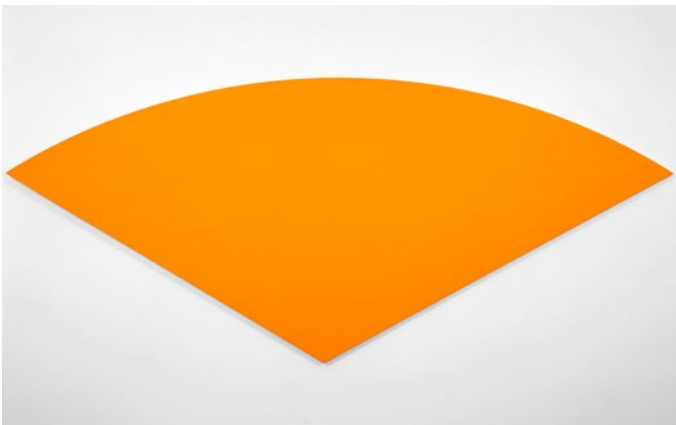


Fig. 12 Ellsworth Kelly, *Orange Curve I*, 1982, oil on canvas, 64 x 150 inches (162.6 x 381.0 cm), private collection, photo courtesy of Matthew Marks Gallery, New York. © Ellsworth Kelly.

the shaped monochromes have meticulously uniform surfaces — is not only designed as a strategy to efface authorship but also as a way to create paintings with new relations of scale. In works like *White Plaque*, and even more so in later shaped monochromes like *Orange Curve I* of 1982 (**Fig. 12**), scale no longer describes the size of marks and figures relative to the size of the canvas; rather, the scale is measured by size of the panel relative to the size of the room. “The color, shape, and scale of my paintings is not self referential,” Kelly writes, “but relates to the walls, floor, ceiling, to everything outside itself.”²⁷

Neither the shaped monochromes, nor the multi-panel paintings ever *become* the wall, as Kelly suggests that they should.²⁸ They always remain objects on the wall and in relation to it, even as they appropriate the wall for painting. Kelly’s works retain the logic of the supplement that he developed in his early Paris sketchbooks, which complicates their classification as murals. The mural is defined by the essential unity and inseparability of painting and its architectural support, not a relationship of attachment as Michael Plante has suggested.²⁹ By incorporating the wall into the space of painting, Kelly’s work approximates the mural but never achieves its material integration. Only the laws of perception organize the integration of the painting and the wall.

Nevertheless, Kelly’s monochromes *require* modernist architecture; they need the white wall in order to function effectively and are designed explicitly in response to it. After showing Le Corbusier some of his work in the 1950s, the architect told Kelly: “You young painters need a new architecture, but the trouble is, there isn’t any.”³⁰ A few years later, Kelly reversed the terms of absence and described the inadequacy and smallness of painting in relation to modernist architecture. The new white spaces demanded color and paintings with an appropriate sense of

scale.³¹ The forms of Kelly's shaped monochromes were designed precisely to *function* within the new spaces of modernist architecture.

Kelly, in fact, described his motive precisely in terms of a possible utility: "My work is a different way of seeing and making something and which has a different *use*."³² The shaped monochromes are rigorously non-representational; nevertheless, they continue to communicate the dynamic experience of forms in the world through an abstract fragment transposed to the gallery. As the title suggests, the form of *White Plaque: Bridge Arch and Reflection* is derived from an arched bridge in Paris and its reflection in the Seine. The scraps of newspaper and other found materials that Kelly collected and drew on indicate the source of the forms that are developed in the shaped monochromes.³³ The sources of the monochromes are unrecognizable without descriptive titles; nevertheless they integrate the experience of the world into the spaces of modernist architecture, thereby fundamentally *reshaping* those spaces. This fragmented experience of the world is projected into the white cube and is intended to operate in the space between the work of art and the body of the viewer, like so many Minimalist works claimed a decade later.³⁴

Ornamental Space

The facade of the Matthew Marks Gallery in Los Angeles is only the latest example of a shaped monochrome that Kelly designed in direct relation to its white wall. The architect Peter Zellner seems to contest Mark Wigley's argument that the white paint on modernist architecture is already a supplemental layer or form of clothing when Zellner suggests that the building seemed naked to him before the sculpture was installed.³⁵ Zellner's comments provide the terms to link Kelly's monochromes to Gottfried Semper's theory of the origins of the wall in clothing and



Fig. 13 Ellsworth Kelly, *Meschers*, 1951, oil on canvas, 59 x 59 inches (149.9 x 149.9 cm), The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Fractional and promised gift of Jo Carole and Ronald S. Lauder, 1999, photo courtesy of the artist. © Ellsworth Kelly.

the basis of ornament in the adornment of the body. Zellner further allows us to point both Semper and Kelly back to Derrida who also proposes the supplemental function of clothing.³⁶

The use of painting to adorn the body appears as something of an unconscious impulse in Kelly's work. While still in France, for example, Kelly was commissioned to design fabric patterns for a Swiss textile company after the owner of the company saw an exhibition of works like *Meschers* of 1951 (**Fig. 13**). Kelly has subsequently repressed all associations with the decorative; however, it is reported that he quit his job at the time and enthusiastically accepted this new assignment.³⁷ The distance between his painting and clothing was even smaller in 1952 when Kelly designed a dress that was made and modeled by his friend Anne Weber (**Fig. 14**). For Weber's dress, Kelly chose the same pre-dyed, ready-made fabric that he used to construct his polyptych



Fig. 14 Ellsworth Kelly, *Original Design for Dress (for Anne Weber)*, 1952/1996, Dyed cotton, 37 7/8 x 20 3/4 inches (96.2 x 52.7 cm), destroyed, photo courtesy of the artist. © Ellsworth Kelly



Fig. 15 Ellsworth Kelly with “Brooklyn Bridge II”, *Coenties Slip, New York*, 1958, photo courtesy of the artist. © Ellsworth Kelly.

Red Yellow Blue White.³⁸ By 1958, the distance collapses altogether in a photograph of the artist in his studio, in which painting becomes a literal means of clothing the nude body (**Fig. 15**).

If these examples are not enough to stoke modernist fears of the decorative, Kelly seems to embrace its most degenerate sources, at least by Adolf Loos’s standards, in a work created for Carter Foster, curator at the Whitney:

Some fellow recently had taken one of my plant drawings with a whole bunch of leaves and made a tattoo out of it. He came to me and said, “Here.” I said, “It’s great, but you did it without me, so I can’t number it among my paintings.” But do you know Carter Foster? He’s the curator of drawings at the Whitney. I created a tattoo for him, four panels — red, blue, black, green — going up his arm. At the dinner at Indochine after my last opening at Matthew Marks Gallery, I asked Carter to stand up and roll up his sleeve to show his new tattoo to everyone. I made him get in the light so they could really see it. It’s even got a number, so it’s just like a painting.³⁹

This is exactly what Loos and Clement Greenberg were afraid of: the body lurking beneath the ornament, the sensual address of ornament directed to those bodies, and the use of abstract painting for anything other and especially less than its lofty aesthetic function. Loos, of course, positions the tattoo as the origin of ornament and all plastic art and locates his fear in their essential degeneracy and erotics.⁴⁰ Greenberg, on the other hand, derides the “mereness” of the decorative relative to high art and worries over abstract painting that approaches the former.⁴¹

Kelly seems to recapitulate the hierarchies established by Loos, Greenberg, and other polemical modernists when he defends his works against charges of ornament and the decorative. At the same time, he courts this critique gleefully when he poses for a photograph clothed only with his own painting or when he designs a tattoo and allows for the possibility of its classification *like* a painting. Kelly’s work provokes precisely because

it confronts the hierarchies of abstraction and decoration and collapses the boundaries between art, architecture, and the body and between real and aesthetic space. Ornament is equally provocative as a theory not because of its fixity or clarity but because it operates in a liminal and unstable domain, both literal and theoretical, that threatens the same hierarchies and boundaries that Kelly's work transgresses.

Perhaps it is now safe to return to some of the lofty aspirations of abstract painting without continuing to sublimate ornament and its carnal address. We have encountered a few of the ways that Kelly's work embodies the logic of the supplement as the basis for form and aspired to the wall — to operate as architecture or in direct relation to it. However, these ideas do not sufficiently support an unambiguous association of this body of work with ornament, nor do they go far enough in developing the claim that it *functions* as ornament. What I mean by this, following Henri Focillon, is that Kelly's painting establishes *ornamental space*. A common thread of theories of ornament authored by Focillon, Ernst Gombrich, and Oleg Grabar is that ornament has a transformative effect on space, fundamentally changing the human encounter with architecture.⁴² This urge to transform space is the precise motive underlying Kelly's work. Focillon comes closest to Ellsworth Kelly when he writes that "[Ornamental space] is always the question of a space constructed or destroyed by form, animated by it, molded by it."⁴³ A work of art, Focillon suggests, is situated in space. It *treats* the space of representation. The three dimensions, on the other hand, are the material of architecture, which "exerts itself in *true space*."⁴⁴ Ornament engages the actual space formed by architecture and reconfigures it. Focillon writes:

Even before it becomes formal rhythm and combination, the simplest ornamental theme such as a curve or *rincau*...has already given accent to the void in which it occurs and has conferred on it a new and original existence. Even if reduced

merely to a slender and sinuous line, it is already a frontier, a highway. Ornament shapes, straightens and stabilizes the bare and arid field on which it is inscribed. Not only does it exist in and of itself, but it also shapes its own environment — to which it imparts form.⁴⁵

This aspiration to shape or transform existing architectural space is a fundamental aspect of a definition of ornament and, ultimately, points to the significance of Kelly's work. When Kelly positions the supplement as the organizing principle of his work, when he incorporates the wall into painting, and when he claims to activate the space between the viewer and the work, the gap between abstract painting and ornament — the gap policed by theorists like Loos and Greenberg — collapses. It is precisely at this moment that abstraction and ornament begin to function in the same way. Whether derived from nature or the street, Kelly's curved panels reconfigure the architectural environments that they occupy. It should be stated that Kelly's objects are only effective as ornament when they are given a space of their own. When they are installed with other works of art, one might reverse the terms of Greenberg's degrading critique of the decorative, and suggest that Kelly's work exists *merely* as painting.

The stakes of Kelly's work *as* ornament are not simply in its capacity to embellish or transform. Rather, his work remakes a formerly static, empty space into a dynamic, active, and social space. In letter to Hilla Rebay at the Guggenheim in 1952, Kelly expressed this inclination to society explicitly:

The future artists must work directly with society. I believe that the days of the 'easel' painting are fading, and that the future art will be something more than just 'personality paintings' for walls of apartments and museums. The future art must go to the wall itself. And this is what I have been trying to do in my work.⁴⁶

When Kelly uses the framing edge to shape and activate the space between the work and the viewer, when he appropriates the white wall

and incorporates it into the space of painting, when he derives his form from the supplement that mediates subject, object and environment, he delivers the experience of the social into modernist space.

Kelly's work is an effective critique of the white cube as the ideal modernist space because it looks so convincingly like modernist painting. In its uncompromising flatness, a work like *Orange Curve I* appears to be something of a telos of Greenberg's history of medium specificity and opticality, and it is. At the same time, at its edge, Kelly's work delivers high modernism's other — its repressed but constitutive body as well as the carnal address and appeal of ornament to the heart of modernism's ideal space. As Brian O'Doherty suggests, the white cube is constructed as a space essentially different from the outside world, purged of anything that would interfere art's evaluation of itself. The pure space of modernism defines itself, according to O'Doherty, through its exclusion of the world and even the body of the viewer. Everything but the eye and mind of the viewer and the work of art are exterior to this ideal space.⁴⁷ The experience that it encloses is essentially private, individual, and always only interior. Peter Zellner confirms this constitutive impulse towards exclusion when he describes the Matthew Marks Gallery as a "...monolithic...white stucco box...intended to provide a direct transition from the highly trafficked commercial strip along Santa Monica Boulevard to the residential district to its south..."⁴⁸

Kelly strives to establish an ornamental space at the margin of the pure interior of the white cube and everything exterior to it. In an extension of O'Doherty's essay, Roasalind Krauss writes, "As the modern gallery space, the white cube is itself a readymade, to be filled be filled with other readymades that will...instigate a 'critical reading' of the nature of the space itself, exposing

its underlying dirt, manifesting the contradictions secreted within it."⁴⁹ Kelly treats the white cube in precisely this way, as a necessary and readymade condition for his found supplements, which he mobilizes as a critical tool of mediation and transgression. He deploys these supplements as ornaments within the ideal, modern gallery space in order to re-surface the city street and the human body that are repressed by its white walls and, ultimately, to reshape the space that he engages. Zellner's white cube becomes Kelly's *Black Over White* when the building is embellished with *Untitled (Black Bar)*. What could be more threatening to the ideal space of modernism than such an imposing ornament?

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Endnotes

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1. Ellsworth Kelly, interview by Gwyneth Paltrow, *Interview Magazine*, July 2011, http://www.interviewmagazine.com/art/ellsworth-kelly/#_ (accessed April 15, 2012).
2. Peter Zellner, "Matthew Marks Gallery Los Angeles," *Zellnerplus*, <http://zellnerplus.com/Matthew-Marks-Gallery->

- Los-Angeles (accessed May 8, 2012). The meaning of the white cube as modernism's ideal, purified space of aesthetic experience is articulated by artist and critic Brian O'Doherty. See Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (Santa Monica & San Francisco: The Lapis Press, 1986). The chapters in this book are revised versions of four essays originally published in *Artforum* in 1976 and 1981. See also Rosalind E. Krauss, *Under Blue Cup* (Cambridge, MA & London: The MIT Press, 2011), 55-59.
3. Carol Vogel, "That Gallery Facade Sure Looks Familiar," in *The New York Times*, September 29, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/30/arts/design/an-ellsworth-kelly-facade-and-a-george-bellows-retrospective.html> (accessed May 8, 2012).
 4. Peter Zellner, "Matthew Marks Gallery Los Angeles," *Zellnerplus*, <http://zellnerplus.com/Matthew-Marks-Gallery-Los-Angeles> (accessed May 8, 2012). (My italics.)
 5. See for example, Rémi Labrusse, "The desire of the line," in *Henri Matisse — Ellsworth Kelly: Plant Drawings*, trans. Trista Selous (Berkeley, CA: Gingko Press, 2002), 19-49. Labrusse's essay is the most fully developed argument that draws connections between Kelly, Matisse, Jones, and Dresser. Benjamin Buchloh offers a different connection between Kelly and the history of ornament, linking his wood sculptures and reliefs to the "chance ornament" of early modernist architects like Mies van der Rohe. However, Buchloh's argument rests almost entirely on resemblance and he does not contend with the stakes of this possible resemblance, either for Kelly's work or early modernist ornament. See Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Kelly's Matrix: Administering Abstraction, Industrializing Color," in *Ellsworth Kelly: Matrix* (New York: Matthew Marks Gallery, 2003), 26.
 6. Labrusse, "The desire of the line," 37-42.
 7. Bois first develops this argument in: Yve-Alain Bois, "Ellsworth Kelly in France: Anti-Composition in Its Many Guises," in *Ellsworth Kelly: The Years in France, 1948-1954*, trans. Gregory Sims (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1992), 9-36; see also Yve-Alain Bois, "Kelly's *Trouvailles*: Findings in France," in *Ellsworth Kelly: The Early Drawings, 1948-1955* (Cambridge, MA and Winterthur, Switzerland: Harvard University Art Museum and Kunstmuseum Winterthur, 1999), 12-35. For Kelly's reference to the intention to create an anonymous painting, see Ellsworth Kelly, "Notes on Sculpture," in *Ellsworth Kelly: In-Between Spaces, Works 1956-2002*, ed. Fondation Beyeler (Ostfildern-Ruit, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2002), 47; see also Ellsworth Kelly, "Project for a Book: Line, Form and Color," in *Line Form Color* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Art Museums, 1999), unpaginated.
 8. Bois describes Kelly's motifs as "already-made" in order to simultaneously associate the artist's strategy with Duchamp's ready-made and to distinguish it by insisting that only the object or motif is found and Kelly continues to make the work of art by hand. Bois, "Kelly's *Trouvailles*," 14-17; see also Bois "Ellsworth Kelly in France: Anti-Composition in Its Many Guises," 15-18.
 9. Bois, "Kelly's *Trouvailles*," 15, 17.
 10. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Corrected Edition (Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 144-5.
 11. *Ibid.*, 149-50, 155, 157, 313.
 12. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 144-5.
 13. *Ibid.*, 35.
 14. *Ibid.*, 156.
 15. My turn here to *The Truth in Painting* runs the risk of literalizing Derrida's figurative use of painting. To turn his argument back to painting, when Derrida is after reason seems beside the point, but hopefully it is productively so. Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987).
 16. *Ibid.*, 54-6.
 17. Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, 59.
 18. *Ibid.*, 56. See also Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 270.
 19. Quoted in John Coplans, *Ellsworth Kelly* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1971), 28-30.
 20. Ellsworth Kelly, *Artist's Choice: Fragmentation and the Single Form* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1990), unpaginated.
 21. Kelly, "Project for a Book: Line, Form and Color," unpaginated; for more on Kelly's study of Le Corbusier, see Michael Plante, "'Things to Cover Walls': Ellsworth Kelly's Paris Paintings and the Tradition of Mural Decoration," *American Art* 9, No. 1 (Spring 1995): 40-43.
 22. Quoted in Buchloh, "Kelly's Matrix: Administering Abstraction, Industrializing Color," 5.

23. Several scholars have discussed this strategy. See Plante, "'Things to Cover Walls': Ellsworth Kelly's Paris Paintings and the Tradition of Mural Decoration," 43; and Bois, "Ellsworth Kelly in France: Anti-Composition in Its Many Guises," 26-27.
24. For a few examples of Kelly's statements on his turn to stonework as a model for anonymous painting, see: Coplans, *Ellsworth Kelly*, 30; Kelly, "Notes on Sculpture," 92; and Ellsworth Kelly, *Thumbing through the Folder: A Dialogue on Art and Architecture with Hans Ulrich Obrist* (New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 2010), 9. Yve-Alain Bois has made a similar connection between the method of construction in *Colors for a Large Wall* and brickwork. However, he concludes that this is one more non-compositional strategy employed by the artist to limit decision-making. I would suggest, on the other hand, that the arrangement of panels to mimic a brick wall is already a critical decision, particularly given the artist's intention to work like an architect. See Bois, "Ellsworth Kelly in France: Anti-Composition in Its Many Guises," 27.
25. Kelly, *Thumbing through the Folder*, 11.
26. Ellsworth Kelly and Robert Storr, "Interview with Ellsworth Kelly," in *MoMA 2*, No. 5 (June 1999): 4-5.
27. Ellsworth Kelly in Harvey Stein, *Artists Observed* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1986), unpaginated.
28. See note 11 above.
29. Plante, "'Things to Cover Walls': Ellsworth Kelly's Paris Paintings and the Tradition of Mural Decoration," 43. Kelly is, perhaps closest to Jackson's Pollock's desire for the wall and his intent to create "moveable murals." While apparently unaware of Pollock's emergence as the leading American painter during his years in France, both of their paintings could be considered as stages in a hypothetical teleology of the depoliticization of the mural and the projection of painting into real space. For an excellent essay on Pollock's architectural imagination and the spatial projection of painting, see William Kaizen, "Framed Space: Allan Kaprow and the Spread of Painting," *Grey Room* 13 (Fall 2003): 80-107.
30. Kelly, *Thumbing through the Folder*, 11.
31. Plante, "'Things to Cover Walls': Ellsworth Kelly's Paris Paintings and the Tradition of Mural Decoration," 50-1.
32. Kelly, "Notes of 1969," 93. (My italics.)
33. Kelly's sketches on newspaper and other found pictorial sources betrays a similar strategy of fragmentation and isolation that he associates with some modern artists. He considered this way of isolating and communicating the random perceptions of the visual world as one of the most important developments in the history of abstraction. Kelly, *Artist's Choice: Fragmentation and the Single Form*, unpaginated.
34. Kelly explicitly claims to activate the space between the viewer and the work in: Kelly, "Notes on Sculpture," 47.
35. Zellner suggests this in Laura Raskin, "No Shades of Grey," *Architectural Record*, January 23, 2012, <http://archrecord.construction.com/news/2012/01/Matthew-Marks-Gallery.asp> (accessed May 7, 2012). See Mark Wigley, "White Out: Fashioning the Modern," in *Architecture: In Fashion*, ed. Deborah Fausch, et al. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 172-3.
36. Gottfried Semper, *Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts; or, Practical Aesthetics*, trans. Harry Malgrave and Michael Robinson (Santa Monica: Getty Research Institute, 2004), 247-50; see also Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 35; and Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, 57.
37. Bois, "Ellsworth Kelly in France: Anti-Composition in Its Many Guises," 25; see also Nathalie Brunet, "Chronology," in *Ellsworth Kelly: The Years in France, 1948-1954*, 192.
38. Bois, "Ellsworth Kelly in France: Anti-Composition in Its Many Guises," 27.
39. Kelly, interview by Gwyneth Paltrow, 2011.
40. Adolf Loos, "Ornament und Verbrechen" (1910), in *Ornament & Verbrechen*, ed. Peter Stuijver (Vienna, AT: Metroverlag, 2012), 94-5.
41. On the "mereness" of the decorative, see: Clement Greenberg, "Detached Observations" (1976), in *Clement Greenberg: Late Writings*, ed. Robert C. Morgan (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 68-70. For Greenberg's worrying over the status of Modernist painting and its proximity to the decorative, see: Clement Greenberg, "Milton Avery" (1957), in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 4: Modernism with a Vengeance, 1957-1969*, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 40, 43. See also the amended version of "American-Type Painting" in: Clement Greenberg, *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), 226. For an excellent historical account of the status of the decorative

in post-war art, see Elissa Auther, "The Decorative, Abstraction, and the Hierarchy of Art and Craft in the Art Criticism of Clement Greenberg," *Oxford Art Journal* 27/3 (2004): 339-364.

42. Henri Focillon, *The Life of Forms in Art*, trans. Charles B. Hogan and George Kubler (New York: Zone Books, 1989), 68; see also Ernst Gombrich, *The Sense of Order: A study in the psychology of decorative art* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1979), 166; Oleg Grabar, *The Mediation of Ornament* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 41.
43. Focillon, *The Life of Forms in Art*, 68.
44. *Ibid.*, 70.
45. *Ibid.*, 65-6.
46. Plante, "'Things to Cover Walls': Ellsworth Kelly's Paris Paintings and the Tradition of Mural Decoration," 43.
47. O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube*, 14-5.
48. Peter Zellner, "Matthew Marks Gallery Los Angeles," *Zellnerplus*, <http://zellnerplus.com/Matthew-Marks-Gallery-Los-Angeles> (accessed June 28, 2013). (My italics.)
49. Krauss, *Under Blue Cup*, 59.

Food, Alchemy, and Transformation in Jan Brueghel's *The Allegory of Taste**

ELIZABETH McFADDEN

"Now hear this, young man, follow swiftly the road of work, because at the end lies a pleasant result.... Well-cooked turnips make good soup." – Karel van Mander from *The Foundation of the Noble Art of Painting*¹

The five-part series *Allegory of the Five Senses* (**Fig. 1-5**), currently housed in the Museo Nacional Del Prado, was completed in 1618 at the height of Jan Brueghel the Elder's (1568-1625) artistic career.² At the age of forty-nine, the Flemish painter Brueghel was one of Antwerp's preeminent artists and held the position of "painter to their Royal Highnesses," the Archdukes Albert and Isabella, governors of the Spanish Netherlands since 1598.³ Brueghel designed the *Five Senses* during a two-year period beginning in 1617, working with his longtime friend and frequent collaborator Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640), official court painter to the Archdukes.⁴ Brueghel enlisted the efforts of Rubens, renowned as a painter of *historia*, to execute the allegorical figures in each work, undertaking the rest of the compositions himself.⁵ The presence of Brueghel's signature (BRVEGHEL FEC) in three of the five panels and the absence of a signature by Rubens suggest Brueghel's dominating influence in the conception and execution of the series.

Each measuring approximately 64 by 115 centimeters, the five panels are filled with

an overflowing multitude of objects that allude to the particular sense each painting represents. The paintings place each sense within the context of a princely collection that exhibits the various products of nature and of man's ingenuity. The sense of sight is set in a picture gallery or *Kunstkamer*, touch in an imperial armory, hearing in a music chamber with a collection of musical instruments and mechanical clocks, taste in a banqueting hall located on royal hunting grounds, and smell in a court garden.⁶ The series reveals Brueghel's own familiarity with royal encyclopedic collections, particularly those of the Archdukes, Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II, and Cardinals Frederico Borromeo and Francisco Maria del Monte.⁷ Traversing the terrains of art, science, and nature, the series attempts to add a method of order to this microcosm of sensory experience, and its categorization and encyclopedic representation of *naturalia* and *artificialia* paralleled seventeenth-century studies in the natural sciences and empiricism.⁸

The complex iconography of the *Five Senses*, if ambiguous to a modern viewer, conveyed specific meaning to a sophisticated and elite audience steeped in both the visual language of the archducal court and the artistic heritage of early seventeenth-century Antwerp.⁹ Albert and Isabella had endeavored to impress a new era of peaceful and prosperous rule upon the Low Countries, which were left impoverished in the aftermath of the Thirty Years' War. The series' associations with the Archdukes and their court in Brussels are undeniable. The *Allegory of Sight* (**Fig. 1**) reproduces a double portrait of the couple and an equestrian portrait of Albert painted by Rubens. Several other works of art reproduced throughout the series are also known to have been in the Archdukes' personal collection. *Allegory of Touch* (**Fig. 2**) represents items of historical armor belonging to the Habsburg armory, some of which bear the symbols of the Burgundian Order of the Golden Fleece, referencing Albert's familial ties to the Holy



Fig. 1 Jan Brueghel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens, *Allegory of Taste*, 1618, oil on panel, 64 x 109 cm, Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado. © Museo Nacional del Prado.



Fig. 2 Jan Brueghel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens, *Allegory of Sight*, 1617, oil on panel, 64.7 x 109.5 cm, Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado. © Museo Nacional del Prado.



Fig. 3 Jan Brueghel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens, *Allegory of Touch*, 1617–18, oil on panel, 64 x 111 cm, Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado. © Museo Nacional del Prado.



Fig. 4 Jan Brueghel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens, *Allegory of Hearing*, 1617–18, oil on panel, 64 x 109.5 cm, Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado. © Museo Nacional del Prado.



Fig. 5 Jan Brueghel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens, *Allegory of Smell*, 1617–18, oil on panel, 65 x 111 cm, Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado. © Museo Nacional del Prado.

Roman Empire.¹⁰ The hunting horns in *Allegory of Hearing* (**Fig. 3**) and the spoils of the hunt in *Allegory of Taste* (**Fig. 4**) not only allude to the privileged context in which such game could be hunted and eaten but also to Isabella's passion for the hunt.¹¹ Furthermore, the landscape in *Sight* depicts the archducal residence of Coudenberg in Brussels, while *Taste* and *Hearing* depict the archducal palace in Tervuren and hunting lodge in Mariemont, respectively. The series as a whole acts as a declaration of the self-sufficiency of the archducal court whose accumulation of *naturalia* and man's fruits emphasized the peaceful and artistically fertile period of the archdukes' reign. The precise rendering of such accumulated goods in each composition also asserts the artist's potential to transform and cultivate nature in the service of the court through his labor.

While the paintings deploy tropes of human ingenuity and the manipulation of nature, I believe that these tropes can also be read in terms of artistic self-reflexivity. The *Five Senses* is the ultimate statement of the artist's manipulation of nature into crafted artifice and beauty. Furthermore, the medium of painting is extolled as the art form most capable of rendering this transformation from the raw and uncultivated into the refined and tasteful. Focusing specifically on the *Allegory of Taste*, I will discuss how the transformative act of cooking is an appropriate metaphor for the metamorphic properties of painting to render the raw and primitive materials of the world consumable in an artistic context. This paper also explores the painting's articulation of elite tastes specific to the archducal court, tastes that exemplify noble splendor and moral restraint. Brueghel appeals to the appetites

of a courtly audience whose tastes he, in a reversal of power, ultimately controls and defines through his representation.

Framing the Archducal Court

Upon the ratification of the Twelve Years' Truce in 1609, which halted hostilities between the Habsburg Netherlands in the south and the recently formed Dutch Republic in the north, Albert and Isabella sought to consolidate their power and to stabilize the tattered economy.¹² Through a series of projects involving the renovation of the hunting castles of Tervuren and Mariemont and the strategic manipulation of their public image at peasant fêtes, the archdukes emphasized both their historical and familial ties to the local region.¹³ A rise in the production of peace allegories and pictorial representations of Cornucopias, the Garden of Eden, the Four Elements, and the Senses followed the Truce thus promoting the renewed prosperity of the archducal reign.¹⁴ Part of this program to conjure the bounty and virtue of the archducal court called for the employment of Antwerp's finest artists and engineers to transform the archducal palaces into settings where Albert and Isabella's princely collections of art, *naturalia*, and curiosities could be housed in splendor.¹⁵ Brueghel and Rubens' *Five Senses* celebrates the elegance of the Brussels court and its moral rectitude through its display of an ideal pictorial catalogue that promotes the artistic and technologically advanced goods produced in the Spanish Netherlands.

In the allegory, Taste sits at a table covered with a Turkish carpet, laden with a variety of delicacies, bird pies, and sweets served on ornate dinnerware. Taste lifts a morsel of food to her mouth, most likely an oyster, as her other hand grips a gold kylix that a grinning satyr fills with wine. On the back of Taste's chair sits a tamarin monkey nibbling on food. The scene is located

in a banqueting house whose exterior opens to the royal hunting grounds of Tervuren castle, the massive hunting lodge of the Archdukes seen in the distance. Grape clusters dangle from vines wreathed above the portico. Deer, boars, and wildfowl roam the idyllic landscape. On the bank of the river Voer, a kissing couple partakes in the delights of love. A plethora of game and the fruits of the land and sea frame the lower edge of the canvas, forming the painting's foreground. This accumulation of goods is reiterated in the assortment of gold, silver, and glass drinking vessels, plates, and bowls displayed on the tiered *beaufet* standing against the left wall.¹⁶

The *Allegory of Taste's* accumulation of raw goods represents the bounteous and wide-ranging yields of the archducal estates.¹⁷ The open structure of banqueting houses such as the one represented in the painting allowed its diners to eat *al fresco* and view the fruit, vegetables, and game gathered from the grounds in their original state of freshness.¹⁸ Such display of an estate's resources was a source of pride for landowners. The self-sufficiency of the archducal estates adds new meaning to the *Five Senses*, if the objects and goods portrayed in the series, from foodstuff to animals, are insisted upon as potentially coming directly from the archdukes' abundant resources. In addition to the main kitchens, the archducal palace on the Coudenberg in Brussels, their urban residence, housed a saltery where meat and fish were preserved, a cellar for wine and other drinks, a *paneteria* that supplied bread and cheese, and a *fruteria* that provided fruit, preserves, and spices.¹⁹ The bird pies depicted in *Taste* would have expressed to an early modern viewer the wealth of a household that could afford to possess and staff a large oven and other baking technologies required for the production of such advanced foodstuffs.²⁰

In conjunction with nature's fruits, the diverse fruits of Antwerp's artistic community, again

stemming from the patronage and reign of the Archdukes, are displayed in the form of paintings, secular and biblical, of both high and low culture, lining the walls of the feasting hall: an image of what appears to be Eve offering the forbidden fruit to Adam, a painted version of Pieter Bruegel's (1525-1569) print *The Rich Kitchen* (**Fig. 6**), and a *Marriage at Cana* done in the style of Frans Francken the Younger (1581-1642).²¹ As a biblical *historia*, a genre typically given precedence over other painted subject matter, the *Marriage at Cana* occupies the central space of the allegory. Placed to the left foreground of the composition is a recent product of Brueghel's collaborative partnership with Hendrick van Balen: a garland painting of 1617 depicting Ceres, the goddess of agriculture and fertility, receiving gifts from the four seasons (**Fig. 7**). The picture is an allegory of the abundance of the nation under the archducal reign and complements the notion of plenty represented in the painting as a whole.²²

The placement of *Garland of Fruit* in the foreground of the composition renders it the most visible of the paintings displayed and one of the first objects that draws the gaze of the viewer when looking from left to right. Positioned at the very edge of the allegory, *Garland of Fruit* threatens to rupture the very frame of the larger composition that it echoes. The naturalistic garland framing the inset of Ceres mimics the "frame" composed of raw foodstuffs and foliage bordering the lower and upper right sections in *Allegory of Taste*. The black frame surrounding this picture separates it from the three paintings hanging in the background, which are grouped together by the same gilded frame. *Garland of Fruit* stands out as an image that not only reiterates the abundant surplus of the larger painting as a whole, but also allegorizes the art of painting itself through this pictorial trope of an image set within a painting within a larger painting.²³ The "real" space of *Allegory of Taste* collides with the fictive and imaginary spaces



Fig. 6 Pieter van der Heyden after Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *The Rich Kitchen*, 1563, engraving on paper, 22.1 x 28.8 cm, London, British Museum. © Trustees of the British Museum.



Fig. 7 Jan Brueghel the Elder and Hendrick van Balen, *Garland of Fruit Around a Depiction of Ceres*, 1617, oil on panel, 106 x 75 cm, Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado. © Museo Nacional del Prado.

of the painted images, allowing various levels of reality to interact with one another. This elision of reality is exacerbated by the kitchen scene to the far left that could either inhabit the “real” space of the larger composition or act as another painting within a painting. Because the frame of the kitchen door lies on the same plane as the paintings hanging on the wall, the kitchen scene can be read as a *tromp l’oeil* painting. The kitchen scene also parallels the *Rich Kitchen* painting hanging directly above it. But unlike the genre painting, the kitchen (door)frame is draped with a green curtain like the protective curtains used to cover precious or extremely private works of art. The kitchen scene takes on the appearance and functions of a *historia* that has been unveiled for the viewer, and thus competes with the *Marriage of Cana*, a paradigmatic history painting, which lacks a covering. The particular manner in which the kitchen scene is framed draws attention to its centrality within the larger composition of the painting. The doorframe also resembles the simple black frame of *Garland with Fruit*, linking the two “images” visually.

Visible in that distant yet near kitchen are tall windows, counters for the preparation of food, shelves lined with dinnerware, spice jars and sauce jugs, a chopping block, and a large blazing hearth fitted with several turnspits and a dripping pan to catch the fat and juices from the roasting meat. A cook stands to the left of the room, his back turned so that his actions are hidden from view. Cabbage, raw fish, and a basket of plucked game lie just beyond the threshold and a dog, standing alert, looks from the doorway at the grinning satyr. The kitchen calls attention to and explicates the transformative potentiality of cooking and the labor implicit in such transformation by depicting figures in the act of producing foodstuffs. Cooking alters the raw ingredients in such a way as to create a new and at times processed product. In this respect, this scene

of the kitchen forms an allegory of painting much as *Garland of Fruit* acts as a self-reflexive pictorial pun on painting.

A Metamorphic Art

The *Five Senses* is a series about transformation. Each panel displays the potentiality of man’s ingenuity to transform the raw and the natural into the cultivated. *Sight* depicts the culmination of man’s skill and genius as the creation of art, specifically painting, and its intellectual reception and appreciation. In *Touch*, metal has been formed into indestructible armor with the utilization and control of fire, an element long associated with man’s progression to civilization. Human craft and manipulation fosters the science of music, the measurement of time and its instruments in *Hearing*. Roses are distilled to create perfume in *Smell*, a sense whose evanescence and permeability would seem to resist regulation. In *Taste* culinary art transforms fowl and game, the fruits of the earth and sea, into aesthetic concoctions. However, I want to emphasize that the sense of taste becomes secondary or masked in this transformation of raw goods into spectacular and visually aesthetic objects. Furthermore, the stratification of raw goods and their processed outcome in the painting’s composition as well as the juxtaposition of these two different chemical states emphasize the process of metamorphosis and make the act of transformation that much more startling.

The steps involved in procuring and preparing food for consumption are arranged sequentially in the composition of *Allegory of Taste*. The process begins to the right of the painting in the hunting grounds where game, fish, fruit, and vegetables are gathered. In the central foreground, these raw foodstuffs are organized by class and species. Next, the goods are then processed in the kitchen to the left. The transformed products then are brought back to the center of the composition

where they are judged by Taste. The processes involved in cooking are repeated on a smaller scale within the kitchen space itself, where the larger structure of the painting's composition is miniaturized. A still life of wildfowl, fish, and vegetables litter the floor in the "foreground" of this space, whereas the transformation of these raw goods into cooked delights occurs in the background as a later step in the cooking process. The cooked foodstuffs on the banqueting table act as miniature works of art that produce an artifice or spectacle for the eyes which is the final result of the activity in the kitchen.

Bird pies, the ultimate culinary transformation, figure prominently in the painting as elaborate and technically challenging creations that required time and patience. A peacock pie also appears in the reproduction of the *Marriage at Cana*. The bird pie, particularly the "peacocke in his hakell," was the paramount showpiece in the medieval and Renaissance banquet.²⁴ The gaminess and toughness of peacock or swan's flesh required its metamorphic transformation into a pie heavily flavored with spices. As a peacock's flesh was said to be tasteless, its use as an ingredient implies that its purpose was purely visual and aesthetic. Recipes for bird pies instructed cooks to reassemble the preserved head and plumage onto the pie to give the impression that the creature was still alive.²⁵ The bird pie is an appropriate metaphor for painting in that the raw is transformed into a cooked product, which then is presented as alive — a double metamorphosis. Similarly, with the use of pigments and water, raw elements of the earth, the painter depicts the materials of the world, and through his technique and mastery transforms nature into an idealized and refined cultural statement. In *Allegory of Sight*, the raw materials of the painter are what we see in the world. In *Allegory of Taste*, the process of translating what we see in the world into a visually aesthetic product that is now

removed from its original state, as seen in the peacock pie, is made literal.

Lévi-Strauss argued in *The Raw and the Cooked* that the role of cooking constituted a crucial cultural marker, defining the transition from "nature" to "culture," from the natural to the more sophisticated.²⁶ In *Taste*, the clear division between the raw goods of nature and the products of the kitchen calls attention to the transformation of these foodstuffs into visual delights. The kitchen scene also emphasizes the labor implicit in such transformation through the figure of the cook, who is the creative mastermind behind the metamorphosis. His back is turned to the viewer, hiding his actions and casting a sense of mystery and magic to his activity.²⁷ The act of transformation is portrayed as effortless, a sleight of hand, much as Brueghel's finely detailed depiction of nature's gifts appears almost effortless in its attempt to function as an illusionistic "mirror" of a certain type of world. The metamorphic potentiality of cooking to transform the raw and inedible into the cooked and consumable (both in the digestive and aesthetic sense) alludes to the same artistic potentiality of the painter to reproduce an extraordinary range of *naturalia* and man-made objects. Like the cook, the painter also manipulates raw materials, *i.e.* pigment, into a cultivated object for the delectation of its viewers and, ultimately, surpasses nature through such artifice.

In this sense painting, much like cooking, is akin to alchemy, a science that seeks to transform crude earth and stone into something more valuable.²⁸ Like alchemy, painting utilizes base elemental matter and processes it in such a way that its original properties are physically and visually altered. Brueghel's interests in the alchemical arts can be seen in his many allegories of the element of fire. In the lower right corner of one early version a multitude of alchemical glass



Fig. 8 Willem van Haecht, *The Gallery of Cornelis van der Geest*, 1628, oil on panel, 100 x 130 cm, Antwerp, Rubenshuis. © Rubenshuis.

distillers, earthenware furnaces, and laboratory bottles are strewn among armor and decorative metal objects outside of a forge.²⁹ In *Fire*, Brueghel visualizes alchemical transformation much as he evokes alchemical metamorphosis in *Taste*. Within the *Five Senses* series itself, *Smell* too makes a specific reference to the transformative properties of alchemy in its depiction of the distillation processes used to make perfume. The viewer can follow each step: behind the distillery two women gather roses, while the distillation process begins to the far left at the furnace and then proceeds along the various bottles arranged on the wooden table, ending with the glass distiller from which the essence is collected. In the foreground, in front of the allegorical figure

of Smell, lie goods concentrated with scent: bottles of perfume, cosmetics, solid perfume, and scented leather gloves. Thus, the *Allegory of Smell* joins *Taste* in depicting complex technical processes that recraft the raw material of nature into goods of pure artifice. Brueghel's doubled representation of these processes implicates painting's role as a medium through which the visible world undergoes the same transformative changes as foodstuffs or roses.

Members of Brueghel's artistic circle were familiar with the renowned Renaissance alchemist Paracelsus whose writings broadly conceptualized alchemy as any transformative process, including the practice of medicine,

cooking or painting. Rubens' famed copy of Quentin Metsys' portrait of the alchemist (1617-18)³⁰ is depicted in Willem van Haecht's portrayal of Cornelis van der Geest's *kunstkamer* (**Fig. 8**), suggesting that the Antwerp art collectors in whose milieu Brueghel and Rubens were working were equally familiar with the type of alchemical, Paracelsian discourse featured in Brueghel's allegories. Paracelsus' own claim that his work as an alchemist was akin to that of a painter neatly reverses the claims made in Brueghel's works, which thematize the painter's own alchemy through representations of substantive transformations.³¹ As the finished painting is greater than the sum of its physical parts, so too culinary feats and the fruits of alchemy were more valuable than their raw ingredients precisely because of the process of transformation and the labor implied in it. This range of transformative processes therefore became conceptually interchangeable modes of creation for early modern humanists and artisans.

The metamorphic and alchemical properties of cooking to transform raw and natural substances into the tasteful and visually pleasing also made it an appropriate metaphor for English and Netherlandish poets who compared their own labors to culinary creation. Hugh Plat praises cooking as a form of art capable of preserving nature's gifts into beautiful objects in his recipe book *Delights for Ladies* (1602): "Each bird and foule, so moulded from the life, / And after cast in sweete compounds of arte, / As if the flesh and forme which nature gave, / Did still remaine in every lim and part."³² Ben Jonson makes the link, albeit disparagingly, between cook and artist more apparent when he declares, "A master cook!... / He designs, he draws, / He paints, he carves, he builds, he fortifies, / Makes citadels of curious fowl and fish."³³ Another parallel between cook and painter is that the cook inhabits a space akin to the artist's studio where raw goods are recrafted into aesthetically pleasing objects. The

kitchen scene depicted in *Taste* is a self-reflexive trick, alluding to the kitchen, much like the studio, as a locus of transformation.

Visual connections between artists and bakers also abounded in Dutch popular culture of the seventeenth century. Artists and bakers were metaphorically akin in the authorial pride they displayed in the products of their *hantwerk* (hand work). Both Christiaen van Couwenbergh and Job Berckheyde appropriated the visual idiom of the baker in their self-portraits, now located in Antwerp and Ulm respectively (1650; 1681), depicting themselves with baskets of fresh rolls and pastries, their arms raised to blow the baker's horn that announced the first batch of fresh loaves in the early hours of the morning.³⁴ Similarly, Jan Steen painted his own son blowing the baker's horn in the portrait of *Baker Oostwaard and his Wife* (**Fig. 9**) as an



Fig. 9 Jan Steen, *Baker Oostwaard and his Wife*, 1658, oil on panel, 37.7 x 31.5 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, courtesy of Rijksmuseum.

announcement not only of the baker's mastery of the tasty goods he displays before his shop but that of the painter whose own skill in replicating those goods transforms raw pigment into a consumable commodity.³⁵ The trumpeting horn in these paintings acts as a self-referential and almost laudatory call of attention to the artist's skill, which like that of the baker is offered up for consumption. While Brueghel also advertises his virtuoso skill in rendering a multitude of objects for the delectation of the viewer, he appeals to a specifically elite audience whose courtly tastes he must define, distinguishing him from the bourgeois artists of the Dutch Republic who could define themselves as baker-craftsmen.

In defining the elite tastes of his audience, Brueghel also displays his powers of illusion and imitation in rendering the varied styles of the master painters he reproduces, nature being one of those masters. Karel van Mander's seminal treatise *The Foundation of the Noble Free Art of Painting* (1604) emphasized long-held Netherlandish notions that the painter's role was to transcribe nature in all its truth. In his section on the training of young artists, van Mander urges painters to diligently study at their art, stealing "arms, legs, bodies, hands, and feet" from their predecessors and from nature.³⁶ Comparing the act of painting to the process of cooking itself, van Mander assures his students that a well practiced and seasoned art will, like "well-cooked turnips[,] make good soup."³⁷ The phrase "well-cooked turnips" encourages painters to utilize the visual language already developed by more experienced artists, while also implying the necessity of recrafting raw materials with human ingenuity in order to render them into a finer product. *Taste* is a testimony to Brueghel's intensive study of both nature and art. The painting of *Rich Kitchen*, recreates a print by Brueghel's father, the famed Pieter the Elder, and refers to the artistic legacy of the Brueghel family. Brueghel the son touts his artistic heritage as the product of one of

Antwerp's greatest artists, Pieter, who in the words of van Mander could upon merely looking at scenes from nature, "spit them forth upon his canvas and panels; so remarkably was he able to follow these and other works of nature."³⁸ Jan demonstrates his abilities as a Proteus of sorts, capable of emulating the style not only of his father, Frans Francken the Younger, and van Balen but also, most importantly, nature or seen reality in all its complexity.

Resources on the archducal estates gave painters like Brueghel the opportunity to work from life and imitate nature. The royal orangery and menagerie famously housed exotic specimens and provided artists with the opportunity to study rare plants and animals from life.³⁹ In a letter to Cardinal Borromeo in 1606, Brueghel wrote that he has traveled to Brussels to study the exotic flowers in the Archdukes' collection.⁴⁰ In 1621, he wrote again to the Cardinal to say that his depiction of the animals in *Madonna and Child in a Garland* were aided by his studies of animals in the archducal menagerie.⁴¹ Among the animals housed in the royal menagerie were two South American tamarin monkeys like the ones depicted in *Allegory of Taste*. These monkeys had been gifts from Isabella's brother Philip III of Spain and became her favorite pets.⁴²

The tamarin monkey crouched on the back of the chair not only demonstrates Brueghel's familiarity with such exotic specimens but also symbolizes painting's role as an imitative and illusionistic art. The monkey's significance in the painting is twofold, alluding to the vices associated with taste but also to the imitative properties of painting as *simiae naturae*.⁴³ As the ape of truth and nature, painting sought to deceive the viewer into believing its illusionistic depiction of the world on a two dimensional surface. Giovanni Bellini's 1510 *Madonna and Child* includes a monkey in the left background perched on a pedestal bearing the artist's signature and date, linking

the monkey directly with the hand and *ingenio* of the artist who strives to come closer to reality through the study of nature.⁴⁴ It is no coincidence that this mark of the artist as imitator of nature in Brueghel's allegory is placed in close proximity to the kitchen, a locus of transformation where other raw goods from nature are “recrafted” into an idealized form of nature — art.

Whereas art, and in particular, painting is elevated as an idealized construction of the world, the courtly environment in which *Taste* is set also functions as an appropriate setting for didactic instruction though its portrayal of courtly tests and restraint. The monkey is greedily hunched over its food in imitation of Taste whose own gestures are challenged by the comparison. Ancient and medieval lore also associated apes with the devil, since like the *simia Dei*, the monkey was an unworthy imitator and trickster.⁴⁵ The depiction of the five senses in sixteenth-century Netherlandish prints such as Abraham de Bruyn's *Gustus* (**Fig. 10**) typically portrayed the sense of taste as a female personification accompanied by several attributes, usually a basket of fruit and a monkey.⁴⁶ Artists commonly depicted the sense of taste as a monkey savoring fruit as a warning against vice and medieval bestiaries associated the ape with evil and heresy because of their predilection for apples linking them to the Fall.⁴⁷ The multi-faceted meanings of the monkey in *Taste* demonstrates how Brueghel vastly expands the iconography of the five senses as it was treated by earlier artists by alluding to both the transformative potential of the senses and the alchemical properties of cooking as an index for the act of painting. The painting's compositional program depicts the good and bad uses of taste and what bodily and spiritual changes can be enabled by such sensory experience. The metamorphosis inherent in the processes of cooking illustrated in *Taste* is also implicit in the transformation of the individual from raw, uncouth, and immoderate being into one



Fig. 10 Abraham de Bruyn, *Gustus* from *The Five Senses*, 1569, engraving on paper, 3.8 x 5.3 cm, London, British Museum. © Trustees of the British Museum.

that is refined through the self-conscious act of consumption, whether gastronomical or aesthetic.

Courtly Tastes

The *Five Senses* engages with the intellectual dialogue of humanist writings and early modern discourse concerning the good and bad use of the senses. In their commissions for the archdukes both Brueghel and Rubens developed a sophisticated and innovative iconographical language that opened up a micro and macro experience of the sensory world through the conglomeration of Christian and pagan themes and high and low cultures. As one of the baser of the senses, taste required conscious restraint and moderation. The Platonic tradition ranked sight as the noblest of the senses whereas the contact senses — taste, touch, and smell — were relegated to the lowliest level.⁴⁸ As a sense shared with all animals and hence linked to primal needs, taste required bodily contact in order to be experienced. Early modern moralizing tracts and poetry warned that indulgence in the senses would lead to acts of lust and sin, and beginning in the 1500s, the tradition of representing the five senses as seductive women emerged parallel to discourse associating womanhood with sensuality

and voluptuousness.⁴⁹ Brueghel and Rubens' portrayal of the five senses thus aptly imagines them as female personifications. Rubens's representation of Taste highlights her voluptuous form and draws attention to the flesh of her breasts and arms. Whereas the other allegorical figures in the series are depicted without any attempt to hide their nudity, Taste is draped from the shoulders down in a heavy cloth that emphasizes the bare parts of her body. In spite of this classicizing garb, Taste's disheveled state and lack of conformity with her classically nude counterparts in the rest of the series bespeak her lascivious character. She is depicted in the act of eating: her sleeves rolled up in an uncouth manner, her napkin thrown over her arm, and her hands eagerly lifting food to her mouth and clutching a cup of wine at the same moment. Taste appears to be eating an oyster, which lends the image erotic overtones as oysters were a food believed to be an aphrodisiac and associated with Venus's birth.⁵⁰ The satyr, who stands for unbridled and insatiable desires, further alludes to the negative connotation of taste as a base sense.

The consequences of such sensory excess are also dire. Beside a bowl of sugared candies and a cup of nectar lies a hummingbird that has gorged itself to death. As a sense linked to primal and animalistic needs, taste, if not controlled, leads to gluttony, one of the seven deadly sins. Erasmus directly linked food, as a stimulant of physical appetite, with sexual desire and exhorted readers to practice *temperantia* (moderation) in eating.⁵¹ Uncontrolled desire for sensory experience also led to temptation itself, the primal example being of course the Fall of Man, a representation of which is to the left behind the allegorical figure of Taste.⁵² The image hanging on the wall behind the *beaufet* portrays Eve offering Adam the forbidden fruit. The act of tasting the forbidden fruit sets in motion mankind's transformation from innocent to experienced and damned. Taste can therefore

lead to a negative kind of transformation, a transformation that will lead one into vice. Unlike the other paintings reproduced in the allegory, the image of the Fall is difficult to discern and requires attentive looking. The viewer must struggle to make out its subject matter, which when deciphered, takes on new meaning as a didactic message. It is no coincidence that Taste sits with her back to this image of the Fall for she does not heed its warning. From the selection of cooked delights presented before her, Taste eats the one raw foodstuff — oysters. The uncooked state of the oyster suggests Taste's own lack of cultivation or refinement. Both she and the satyr exemplify taste in its unchecked state.

But the *Allegory of Taste* also makes claims about its ability to inspire positive transformation in its viewer through the contemplation of the sense of taste. Although the behavioral model exemplified by Taste is not ideal and demonstrates the perils of excessive indulgence, the painting provides a frame through which the raw, uncultivated form of man has the potential to be corrected. While portraying the pleasures of the senses and the courtly environs in which sensory experience is heightened, the series, and in particular the *Allegory of Taste*, exhorts the court that restraint and control are necessary for personal refinement. Control is maintained through the viewer's visual and non-gastronomic consumption of the overabundant foodstuffs displayed in the painting. Sociologist Norbert Elias was the first to argue that manners arose from the self-conscious effort to restrain and isolate oneself bodily for fear of impropriety.⁵³ More recently, Patricia Fumerton has expanded upon the civilizing power of self-awareness in her discussion of the Jacobean banquet and its self-annihilating tendency towards complete isolation and privatization of the body and self. In Fumerton's opinion, the highest form of *haute cuisine* was activated through the eyes, which she terms "the most fastidious — the most precise

and immaculate — of all serving utensils.”⁵⁴ Without fear of contaminating the body, the viewer’s eyes could indulge in and consume a banquet in perfect isolation away from public inspection, enacting a sort of inner communion with the self.⁵⁵ In Brueghel’s evocation of courtly refinement, he aestheticizes the sense of taste and makes it part of the visual culture of the court. The painter’s detailed portrayal of various foodstuffs act as visual rather than edible stimuli. Writing in 1570, Bartolomeo Scappi articulated the importance of “edible spectacle” in his requisites for a Master Cook by advising that, “Dishes should be tasty and agreeable to the palate as well as pleasant and delightful to the eye with their pretty colours (*bel colore*) and appetizing appearance (*vaga prospettiva*).”⁵⁶

Sight, a higher and more civilized sense that denotes the viewer’s distance and therefore control from the object of his gaze, becomes the sense necessary for experiencing this allegory of taste and therefore is the preferred method to consume the painting. As a consumable commodity, the allegory, when viewed, will impart knowledge about the transformative potential of taste as a sense. In *Taste* the transformation of the raw into the cooked not only implies culinary processes but also civilizing processes of the human body and soul through the consumption of art. Art provides its viewer with a frame through which to properly engage with the senses, and as the painter of the composition, Brueghel defines that model of civility. Furthermore, the moralizing commentary provided by the paintings hanging on the chamber’s walls asserts the potential of art to instruct.

The specific placement and order of the three paintings lining the walls lead the viewer through a didactic journey from the Fall to a scene of disordered mayhem and finally to spiritual revelation. The wildness of the Garden of Eden explodes into the chaos of jostling, eating bodies

in *Rich Kitchen*, and then evolves into the ordered stillness of the *Marriage of Cana*. The placement of *Rich Kitchen* and *Marriage at Cana* on the back wall is strategic, as they also act as direct contrasts to the activities taking place beneath them. The rowdiness, disorder, and slovenly nature of the peasants’ kitchen in *Rich Kitchen* act as a striking contrast to the order and neatness of the palace kitchen directly below it. The cooking apparatuses in *Rich Kitchen* are crude in comparison to those of the palace kitchen, where fresh vegetables and meat are in the process of being transformed into delectable cuisine. The peasants in *Rich Kitchen* gorge themselves to obesity, their clothes ripping at the seams. Their actions parallel those of the hungry dog in the right foreground of the image who bites into a bone with savage force. The consequence of unchecked desires perpetuated by original sin finds its humorous realization in a secular scene from peasant culture. In contrast, the dog in the doorway to the palace kitchen illustrates the restraint of animalistic urges. Obedient, it stands watch by the door and is not tempted by the succulent meat. Its eyes are fixed on the satyr, a mythological creature whose animal half gets the better of his human half.

The potential of taste to lead to negative transformation is countered by the positive transformation depicted in the *Marriage of Cana*. The story of the Marriage at Cana in the Gospel of John recounts Christ’s first “public” miracle in a series of miracles to come, several of which (Supper at Emmaus, and, most importantly, the Last Supper) are associated with dining. The story of Cana is also the only narrative in the Bible that describes the miraculous transformation of food by the will of God. The biblical image looms appropriately above the pagan satyr as an example of a superior and virtuous mode of life. The same bird pies and plates of food on the banqueting table appear on the tables in the *Marriage*, indicating that these

sacred and secular banquets are to be viewed in relation to one another. Also, the representation of Christ in the act of transforming the jugs of water into wine is juxtaposed with the satyr pouring wine into Taste's cup. Christ's act of transformation as revelatory proof of Christianity as the true faith reinforces the allegory's theme of painting's potential to transmit knowledge or even the divine truth, i.e. the truer nature of things.⁵⁷

The Fall from the Old Testament is countered by the presence of mankind's salvation, in the figure of Christ, from the New Testament. Christ's presence also has the power to invert or counter the negative properties of wine. Whereas wine's association with lasciviousness made it an appropriate attribute for the personifications of adultery and debauchery in Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*, its Christian associations linked it to the blood and sacrifice of Christ. The wine the satyr pours into Taste's cup is clear, referring to the untransformed state of the water in the story of the Marriage of Cana, which in turn reiterates the raw, uncultivated state of the personification of taste. As the viewer wrestles with the pagan and the Christian — the salacious and the chaste — the potential for metamorphosis from one state to another is made known.⁵⁸ Any unchaste thoughts provoked by the licentious nature of Taste, the satyr, and the kissing couple are hastened away by the sanctified presence of Christ which teases the viewer with the thought that they could "miss the Lord altogether" if their eyes succumbed to *voluptas oculorum* provoked by the rest of the composition.⁵⁹

While it is true that *Allegory of Taste* stages a system of dichotomies and juxtapositions — the spiritual and the worldly and the high and the low — the visual language of the series is more complex than acknowledged by previous studies.⁶⁰ The viewer is shown the positive and negative aspects of each sense and is exhorted to choose

the virtuous way of experiencing the world. *Taste*, in particular, refers back to its courtly audience who through their comprehension of the painting's allusions can take pleasure in being above the examples of baseness shown in the allegory. The painting expresses an understanding that its audience would have possessed the refinement to distance themselves from the negative inclinations associated with taste.

The practice of etiquette and the display of decorum at the table were one means of bringing order to the rituals of daily life. These "civilizing" practices paralleled the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century penchant for order and reason in all aspects of the quotidian. Erasmus's handbook on etiquette, *De civilitate morum puerillum* (1530), became an important component of secondary education in the Netherlands.⁶¹ His discussion of table manners and how to correct uncouth behavior while eating promoted the northern concept of *Levenskunst*, or the art of good living, first articulated by Coornhert in *Zedekunst dat is Wellevenskunst* (1586).⁶² The practice of *Levenskunst* implied the artistry or *const* (*Kunst*) of the well-mannered person who, with the aid of wisdom and common sense, fashioned disorderly behavior into a virtuous life. Ken Albala notes that courtly dining habits denoted a "conscious way of behaving, in this case eating, intended both to set the individual or group apart from others but also as a dietary program that promises a kind of transformation of the self."⁶³

A courtly audience would have recognized the tempting aspects of taste and its perilous associations with the grotesque body alluded to in *Allegory of Taste*. It would have reminded courtiers of their own successful manipulation of the self into a self-regulated and controlled body. A popular saying claimed that gentlemen or those used to abundance at the table possessed moderate diets whereas their poorer neighbors,



Fig. 11 Jan Brueghel, *Wedding Banquet Presided over by the Archdukes*, 1612–1613, oil on canvas, 84 x 126 cm, Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado. © Museo Nacional del Prado.

unused to plenty were more tempted to over-indulge themselves.⁶⁴ *Rich Kitchen* affirms this folk saying, as do depictions of the archdukes at peasant weddings that clearly differentiate the sober and dignified nobility from the eating and carousing peasants.⁶⁵ Take for instance Brueghel's *Wedding Banquet Presided Over by the Archdukes* (Fig. 11), in which courtiers are physically separated from the dining and gesturing peasants by their restraint and lack of appetite. Albert and Isabella are the only nobles to sit at the banqueting table and, unlike their neighbors, they stare out the canvas with a stiffness and rigidity that emphasize their bodily control.

The particular foodstuffs displayed in *Taste* also allude to the transformative properties of food to

mold a specific type of individual of a certain class and demeanor. Poultry and fish, foods deemed suitable for the delicate and sophisticated palate of the upper classes, fill the composition and line the banqueting table, implying that this feast is specifically catered to an elite audience that can actually digest (visually) and benefit from such nutritious goods. Bartolomeo Pisanelli's *Trattato della natura de' cibi et del bere* (*Treatise on the Nature of Food and Drink*; 1585–1619) ascribes dietary significance to various types of food and reinforces social hierarchies by allotting light and airy foods such as *animali volatiti* (birds that can fly) to the leisure and contemplative classes whereas foods deemed crude such as beans, cheese, scallions, and dark bread were suitable for the laboring classes or *villani*.⁶⁶ It should come

as little surprise that the meats that Pisanelli lists as the noblest (turkey, peacock, quails, pheasants, partridges) bedeck the banqueting table in *Allegory of Taste*. If the type of food an individual ingested could thus temper their humoral makeup and in the process determine their mental and bodily facilities, then the ingestion of food not only perpetuated a body's current state of being but also sustained its transformation into either a more refined or ignoble creature. The conscious consumption of certain foods, like art, therefore maintained and facilitated a certain kind of being.

Bourdieu's theories on social stratification posit that elite classes promote particular aesthetic criteria in food and culture to maintain differences in social fractions.⁶⁷ Taste in the Bourdieuan sense denotes the viewer's ability to digest, comprehend, and enjoy this processed work of art. *Allegory of Taste* reiterates taste's role as an index of refinement and civility through the self-conscious consumption of art since collecting art in seventeenth-century Europe was a socially acceptable way of acquiring and expressing an individual's *bon goût*.⁶⁸ If the viewer's virtue and completed transformation from uncivilized to refined courtier is implied in *Allegory of Taste* then so too is the virtue and *const* of the painter who adds order to the world by transforming the "amorphous and nondescript into meaningful artifacts."⁶⁹ Brueghel exhibits his skill in recreating the diverse textures and copious variety so vital to the visual splendor of the seventeenth-century banquet just as a skilled cook exhibited his culinary talents with the broadest range of ingredients.⁷⁰ The painter also makes a claim about his abilities to frame a positive model of taste for a courtly audience. What is digestible here is the artificial presentation of the artist who caters to the refined tastes of the Brussels court. This artificial representation requires both the transformation of the viewer, who through its consumption becomes more learned, and the transformation of the raw into art or the "prosaic into the poetic."⁷¹

Conclusion: The "Velvet" Proteus

In 1613, the humanist Thomas Sagittarius accompanied Johann-Ernest of Saxony on a tour of Antwerp's finest artists studios. Of Brueghel he wrote, "You would say that he made these with lines which even a spider could not have made, so do the ultra-thin lines, drawn with such subtlety, trace their web, to such a degree that they are barely present before your two wide-open eyes."⁷² The *Fives Senses* is the ultimate realization of Brueghel's fine and seemingly effortless touch. Such skill denoted a well practiced and studied craft, one that borrowed features from earlier works and nature itself to create a new whole, like "well-cooked turnips."⁷³ Unlike his older brother Pieter the Younger who is described by van Mander as a mere copier and imitator of the works by their father, Jan exhibited his versatility in easily emulating the style of his father and other Dutch masters, while also showing his ability to compose original works.⁷⁴ The unique language of the *Five Senses* demonstrates the artist's *const* or *techne*. Painting as Brueghel's medium *par excellence* is exalted as a noble art whose transformative potential or *meraviglia* is more illusionistic than other forms of art.⁷⁵ The painter acts as interlocutor for his elite audience by translating the raw and crude materials of the visual world into a cultivated and refined work of art.

The *Allegory of Taste* is a metaphor for the metamorphic product of the artist who prepares his work to be presented, consumed, and judged by a viewer.⁷⁶ Working in the service of the Archdukes and other nobles, Brueghel and Rubens had much in common with the cook and servants depicted working behind-the-scenes, all of who strove to create a pleasing sensory experience for their elite audience. However, whereas the cook's product is ephemeral, the work of the painter immortalizes the products of nature and man for posterity. Art is the

ultimate and final product of the technological and alchemical processes alluded to in *Allegory of Taste*. Art transforms the base, elemental materials of nature into a high form of artifice that has the potential to recraft not only its raw ingredients into an object of more worth and beauty but its audience through their communion with the painting.

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Endnotes

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1. Karel van Mander, *The Foundation of the Noble Free Art of Painting*, trans. Elizabeth A. Honig (N.p.: n.p., 1985), 11.
2. *The Five Senses* by Jan Brueghel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens (1617-1618) are on view at the Prado at the time of writing.
3. The original Dutch title is "Constschilder Harer Hoogheden." Anne Woollett and Ariane van Suchtelen, eds.,

Rubens and Brueghel: A Working Friendship (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2006), 15.

4. Although neither Brueghel nor Rubens took up residence at the archducal court, both enjoyed varying privileges from the archdukes. Albert Miraeus's biography of Albert, published immediately following his death in 1621, affirms the Archduke's personal and sincere interest in the artistic culture of his principality and the development of its artists. Miraeus informs his readers that, "among the painters alive today, in addition to Coebergher, [Albert] particularly esteemed Otto van Veen, Pieter Paul Rubens, and Jan Brueghel. In the hours when he was free from the business of ruling, he not infrequently summoned them to himself and listened to them with honest pleasure, but in private." Albert Miraeus, *De vita Alberti pii Belgarum principis* (Antwerp, 1622), doc. 184: "Inter Pictores porro viventes hodie, praeter Cobergium, aestimavit carosque habuit Othonem Vaenium, Petrum Paulum Rubenium, et Joannem Breugelum, quos horis, ut dixi, [...] Reipublicae vacatione liberis non raro euocabat, et ad honestam oblectationem libenter sed secreto audiebat."
5. Klaus Ertz, *Jan Brueghel der Ältere (1568-1625): Kritischer Katalog der Gemälde*, vol. 3 (Lingen: Luca Verlag, 2008-2010), 1110. An x-ray analysis of the painting reveals Brueghel's working process. Brueghel created an underdrawing for the composition leaving the spaces for the allegorical figure and satyr blank. Brueghel painted his area of the composition first, then Rubens filled in the figures. Brueghel then made final adjustments to the entire canvas. Brueghel's desire to collaborate with a master of equal rank to produce a series which would display a synthesis of their particular areas of speciality was strategic; such collaboration endowed the series with great value since it could be appreciated as the product of not one but two master artists. See Elizabeth Alice Honig, *Painting and the Market in Early Modern Antwerp* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 177-186. Honig also notes that 41% of Brueghel's surviving oeuvre was collaborative. Approximately two-dozen of these paintings were in collaboration with Rubens.
6. Barbara Welzel, "Armoury and Archducal Image: The Sense of Touch from the Five Senses of Jan Brueghel and Peter Paul Rubens," in *Albert and Isabella (1598-1621)*, eds. Werner Thomas and Luc Duerloo (Leuven: Brepols, 1998), 99.
7. Woollett and Suchtelen, eds., *Rubens and Brueghel*, 13. Brueghel visited the court of Rudolf II in 1604. His first visit to Italy in 1589 proved to be fruitful; the artist garnered

- various commissions from several cardinals, including Cardinals del Monte and Borromeo. Brueghel eventually became part of Borromeo's household in Milan.
8. Arianne Faber Kolb, *The Entry of the Animals into Noah's Ark: Jan Brueghel the Elder* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2005), 61.
 9. Palais des beaux-arts, *Brueghel: une dynastie de peintres: 18 septembre-18 novembre 1980* (Brussels: Palais des beaux-arts, 1980), 177.
 10. For an analysis of Brueghel and Rubens' *Allegory of Touch*, see Welzel, "Armoury and Archducal Image," 99-106.
 11. A law enacted in the Spanish Netherlands in 1613 prohibited hunting by non-nobles, indicating that by the seventeenth century, hunting was a privileged sport restricted to the nobility. Woollett and van Suchtelen, eds., *Rubens and Brueghel*, 98. Isabella's connection to the hunt is further emphasized in a dual portrait of the Archdukes (1615) by Otto van Veen (ca. 1556-1629) in which the Archduchess wears a gold hair piece modeled as the Imperial eagle, its claws clutching an unstrung bow from which dangle miniature crossbows, a detail which has surprisingly escaped attention in the scholarship. From the medallion of Isabella's livery chain (chain of office) hang three more gold crossbows, the farthest right of which the archduchess fondles with his finger. The delicate and smooth whiteness of her hand is oddly paired with a weapon that the same hand would have wielded in life.
 12. David Maland, *Europe at War, 1600-1650* (London: Macmillan, 1980), 27-8.
 13. Isabella's participation in the Zavel shooting contest hosted by the Great Crossbow Archer Guild in 1615 increased the sovereign's popularity among the people. Cordula Schumann, "Court, City and Countryside: Jan Brueghel's Peasant Weddings as Images of Social Unity under Archducal Sovereignty," in *Albert and Isabella (1598-1621)*, eds. Werner Thomas and Luc Duerloo (Leuven: Brepols, 1998), 151.
 14. Werner Thomas, "Andromeda Unbound: The Reign of Albert & Isabella in the Southern Netherlands, 1598-1621," in *Albert and Isabella (1598-1621)*, eds. Werner Thomas and Luc Duerloo (Leuven: Brepols, 1998), 8.
 15. The Archdukes began their reign with a series of appointments that gathered civil and military technicians into their circle. Engineers like Salomon de Caus built and designed artificial grottoes and court gardens complete with automata and other mechanical arts. The display of such technological feats reinforced the prestige of the archducal court and displayed the royal couple's ability to manipulate and aestheticize nature. Philippe Bragard, "The Archducal Engineers," in *Albert and Isabella (1598-1621)*, eds. Werner Thomas and Luc Duerloo (Leuven: Brepols, 1998), 215 and Birgit Franke, "Salomon de Caus (1576-1626) and the Grotto Phenomenon in Court Art," in *Albert and Isabella (1598-1621)*, eds. Werner Thomas and Luc Duerloo (Leuven: Brepols, 1998), 203.
 16. Sara Patson-Williams, *The Art of Dining: A History of Cooking & Eating* (London: National Trust, 1993), 187. A *beaufet* (English: buffet) usually consisted of an open alcove fitted with shelves placed to the side of an early modern dining room. It was used to display the precious serving ware of the family of the house.
 17. Woollett and van Suchtelen, eds., *Rubens and Brueghel*, 98.
 18. Kate Felus, "Eating al fresco: the use of garden buildings for dining in the eighteenth-century English pleasure ground," in *Consuming Passions: Dining from Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Maureen Carroll et al. (Gloucestershire: Tempus, 2005), 164-5, 174-5.
 19. Diederik Lanoye, "Structure and Composition of the Household of the Archdukes," in *Albert and Isabella (1598-1621)*, eds. Werner Thomas and Luc Duerloo (Leuven: Brepols, 1998), 112.
 20. Patson-Williams, *The Art of Dining*, 114-115.
 21. Woollett and van Suchtelen, eds., *Rubens and Brueghel*, 98. Also, the Archdukes owned several paintings by Frans Francken the Younger and would have recognized the *Marriage at Cana* in Brueghel's *Allegory of Taste* as an imitation of Francken's style and a composite of his *Cana* paintings.
 22. The thematic celebration of peace under the Archdukes as allegorized in *Garland of Fruit* was so popular that Brueghel produced a nearly identical copy a few years later. *Ibid.*, 163.
 23. See Victor Stoichita's discussion of the *mise en abyme* in representations of the *Kunstskammer* and issues of framing and intertextuality: *The Self-Aware Image: An Insight into Early Modern Meta-Painting* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
 24. Patson-Williams, *The Art of Dining*, 48.
 25. Bartolomeo Scappi, writing in the late sixteenth century,

- recommended that cooked birds should be reassembled with their feathers *come se fosse vivo*, “as if it were still alive.” *The Opera of Bartolomeo Scappi* (1570), trans., Terence Scully (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 207.
26. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked*, trans., J. and D. Weightman (London: Jonathan Cape, 1981), 103.
 27. Seventeenth-century depictions of alchemists working in their laboratory, such as those painted by Thomas Wyck also add an aura of mystery to alchemy through the portrayal of a disorderly and fantastical chamber unveiled by a large green or red curtain. Wyck’s paintings usually portray the alchemist and his assistant in the process of concocting or transforming raw materials into an unknown substance.
 28. James Elkins, *What Painting Is* (New York: Routledge, 1999).
 29. Jan Brueghel the Elder, *Allegory of Fire*, 1608-1610, oil on copper, 46 x 66 cm, De Agostini Picture Library. (Inv. 68).
 30. Peter Paul Rubens after Quentin Metsys, *Paracelsus*, 1617-18, oil on panel, 77.5 x 54.5 cm, Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels. (Inv. 3425).
 31. Charles Webster, “Matter and Magic,” in *Paracelsus: Medicine, Magic and Mission at the End of Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 167.
 32. Wendy Wall, “Distillation: Transformations in and out of the Kitchen,” in *Renaissance Food from Rabelais to Shakespeare: Culinary Readings and Culinary Histories*, ed. Joan Fitzpatrick (Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), 95.
 33. Ben Jonson, “The Staple of News (1621),” in *The Complete Plays of Ben Johnson*, ed. G. A. Wilkes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981-82), 19-22.
 34. Couwenbergh’s *Self-Portrait as a Baker* is currently housed in Antwerp at the Museum Mayer Van den Bergh and Berckheyde’s *Self-Portrait as a Baker* is located in Ulm at the Deutsches Brotmuseum. Both paintings are illustrated in Elizabeth Honig’s “Looking in(to) Jacob Vrel,” *Yale Journal of Criticism* 3, no. 1 (1990): 37-56.
 35. Ibid. See Honig’s discussion of Vrel’s depiction of a baker in his street views and for an in-depth investigation of the artist as baker in Dutch painting.
 36. van Mander, *The Foundation*, 11.
 37. Ibid.
 38. Karel van Mander, *Dutch and Flemish Painters*, trans. Constant van de Wall (New York: McFarlane, 1936), 153.
 39. Kolb, *The Entry of the Animals*, 13-14.
 40. Woollett and van Suchtelen, *Rubens and Brueghel*, 97.
 41. Kolb, *The Entry of the Animals*, 13-14.
 42. Ibid., 16-17.
 43. H.W. Janson, *Apes and Ape Lore: In the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (London: Warburg Institute, University of London, 1952) *Apes*, 240.
 44. Giovanni Bellini, *Madonna and Child*, 1510, oil on panel, 85 x 118 cm, Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan.
 45. Janson, *Apes*, 19.
 46. Kolb, *The Entry of the Animals*, 62.
 47. Lucia Impelluso, *Nature and Its Symbols* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2004), 198 and Janson, *Apes*, 240.
 48. Aristotle, *De Anima*, trans. R. D. Hicks (New York: Cosimo, 2008).
 49. Carl Nordenfalk, “The Five Senses in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 48 (1985): 7.
 50. Ken Albala, *The Banquet: Dining in the Great Courts of Late Renaissance Europe* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 10.
 51. John Varriano, *Tastes and Temptations: Food and Art in Renaissance Italy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 126.
 52. Although the angle and blurriness of this particular image make it difficult to decipher its subject matter, it is highly likely that the man and woman portray Adam and Eve before the Fall as they are completely nude without any gesture to cover their bodies and are placed in a densely foliated setting. The woman’s hand is raised up to the man in a gesture reminiscent of Eve offering Adam the forbidden fruit. It has not been doubted in the scholarship that this image depicts the Fall.
 53. Norbert Elias, *The History of Manners*, vol. 1 of *The Civilizing Process*, 2 vols., trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Urizen, 1978), 78, 104-8.
 54. Patricia Fumerton, *Cultural Aesthetics: Renaissance Literature and the Practice of Social Ornament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 126.
 55. Ibid.

56. Scappi, *Opera*, 99.
57. The painting's Christian overtones should come as little surprise. The archdukes were appointed sovereigns of the newly independent Low Countries by Isabella's father and Albert's uncle, Philip II, Habsburg King of Spain, who hoped that their reign would one day fully restore Catholicism to the Netherlands. Rigorous supporters of the Counter Reformation, Albert and Isabella funded Catholic educational institutions and offered Catholic minorities at home and abroad financial and legal support; another form of their support was the patronage of Catholic artists such as Rubens. See Paul Arblaster, "The Archdukes and the Northern Counter-Reformation," in *Albert and Isabella (1598-1621)*, eds. Werner Thomas and Luc Duerloo (Leuven: Brepols, 1998), 88-91.
58. Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia*, 1603.
59. Varriano, *Tastes and Temptations*, 128.
60. Müller-Hofstede, "Non saturatur oculus visi." Also Padrón and Royo-Villanova, *David Teniers*.
61. Roland Baetens, "La relance d'une dynamique culturelle sous le règne des archiducs," in *Albert and Isabella (1598-1621)*, eds. Werner Thomas and Luc Duerloo (Leuven: Brepols, 1998), 149.
62. Prosperetti, *Landscape and Philosophy*, 31-37.
63. Albala, *The Banquet*, 2.
64. Patson-Williams, *The Art of Dining*, 123.
65. Cordula Schumann, *Humble Wife, Charitable Mother and Chaste Widow: Representing the Virtues of the Infanta Isabella Clara Eugenia (1599-1633)* (PhD dissertation, University of London, Courtauld Institute of Art, 2000), 119.
66. Sheila McTighe, "Foods and the Body in Italian Genre Paintings, about 1580: Campi, Passarotti, Carracci," *The Art Bulletin* 86, no. 2 (2004): 307-310.
67. Pierre Bourdieu, "Taste of Luxury, Taste of Necessity," in *Taste Culture Reader*, ed. Caroline Korsmeyer (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 72-78.
68. Michael Moriarty, *Taste and Ideology in Seventeenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988), 75-82. Several of the paintings reproduced in the *Five Senses* are documented to have been in the personal collection of the Archdukes, whose recognition of and familiarity with the various artists and genres of these works, whether they were in their collection or not, spoke to their own knowledge and cultivation as *liefhebbers* (connoisseurs). The *Five Senses* as well as other paintings of the *const-camer* not only promoted Antwerp's prominence as a city of master artists and the diverse genres of Dutch art available on the Antwerp art market, but also acknowledged the visual compendium of knowledge possessed by an elite audience steeped in such a culture.
69. Prosperetti, *Landscape and Philosophy*, 37.
70. Albala, *The Banquet*, 28.
71. Chris Meads, "Narrative and Dramatic Sauces: Reflections upon Creativity, Cookery, and Culinary Metaphor in Some Early Seventeenth-Century Dramatic Prologues," in *Renaissance Food from Rabelais to Shakespeare: Culinary Readings and Culinary Histories*, ed. Joan Fitzpatrick (Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), 149.
72. "Hic parvas tabulis inseribit ubiq. Figuras/ plura quibus torno facile super addita regna/ et regionis opes faciesqu. patentior orbis / dices hos nunquam fecisset aranea ductus/ tam bene subtili currunt subtilia tractu/ fila tuis & vix oculis bipatentibus extant." Quoted in Prosperetti, *Landscape and Philosophy*, xv.
73. Mander, *The Foundation*, 11.
74. Mander, *Dutch and Flemish Painters*, 431 and Honig, *Painting and the Market*, 204.
75. Andrea Bolland, "Desiderio and Diletto: Vision, Touch, and the Poetics of Bernini's *Apollo and Daphne*," *Art Bulletin* 82, no. 2 (2000): 320.
76. Meads compares cooking to the labors of a playwright. Like the dramatist, the cook must prepare meals for the judgment of his audience. "Narrative and Dramatic Sauces," 160.

Amateur Painting: Honoré Daumier's 'Homage to Fragonard' and the Rococo

ELIZABETH SAARI BROWNE

Though prolific in many media, Honoré Daumier's (1808–1879) small oil paintings remained virtually unknown to the public until the end of his life, when a retrospective exhibition of his work was mounted at the Paris art gallery Durand-Ruel from April 15 to June 15, 1878.¹ Of the numerous works included in the show, most were loaned to the exhibition from outside sources.² Quietly collected by fellow artists, amateurs, and gallerists for decades, the sketch-like style, intimate scale, and absorptive themes of the rarely-seen paintings came as a shock to those only familiar with Daumier's more critical lithographs. The Durand-Ruel show, therefore, marked a moment of public "discovery" of new genres and themes of work by Daumier. In light of this revelation of his multi-dimensional talents, art critics and writers began to reconceive Daumier's position as an artist in relation to other painters. Reviewers of the show focused on the particular aesthetics of brushwork and draftsmanship rather than explicit social content or narrative, comparing Daumier's paintings to the works of artists such as Michelangelo (1475–1564), Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640), Francisco Goya (1746–1828), and Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863).³ Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, Daumier also was likened to a significant number of courtly eighteenth-century artists. In Edmond Duranty's article, "Daumier: son point de depart, sa vie, son talent," published in *Les Beaux-Arts Illustrés* shortly

after Daumier's death in 1879, Duranty cites Quentin de la Tour (1704–1788), Gabriel de Saint-Aubin (1724–1780), and Charles Nicolas Cochin (1750–1790) as models and artistic equals of Daumier. However, none of these artists have sustained as much comparison with Daumier as Jean-Honoré Fragonard (1732–1806), an affinity, which this paper will address, based on more than just stylistic similarities.

In "Daumier and Art History: Aesthetic Judgment/Political Judgment," a 1988 state of the field paper which explores the 1878 Durand-Ruel exhibition as the impetus for studying Daumier in art history, Michel Melot argues that the conflation between aesthetic and political judgments conferred on Daumier's works by his contemporaries has led to divisive and reductive scholarship. Scrutinizing the many essays written in wake of the 1878 exhibition and of Daumier's 1879 death as well as more recent scholarship, Melot considers the implications of the "sudden discovery" of Daumier's paintings. For Melot, the organizers of the 1878 show sought to raise Daumier to the level of fine artist — a painter. Public acknowledgment of Daumier's paintings, and particularly writers' comparisons with other painters such as Michelangelo and Rubens, allowed for his canonization into a logical art-historical lineage and narrative, and given Daumier's political leanings, one that they hoped could reconstitute their Republican ideals.⁴

Framing his own scholarship in contrast to more recent studies, Melot argues that historians dismissing this critical moment of the origin of interpretation of Daumier's oeuvre have split Daumier scholarship into connoisseurial and political camps.⁵ Melot considers the connoisseurial scholarship to be that of the collectors whose interests lie in provenance and rarity rather than in historical analysis. The political scholarship is almost equally uncritical. According to Melot, these scholars tend to apply received dogma based on Daumier's caricatures

to his paintings, rather than reconstituting the original ideological and historical construction of the works themselves. In the political model, instead of considering Daumier's complete painted oeuvre, particular works are selected not necessarily for their individual value but rather to prove Daumier's political ties. Thus Daumier's paintings are most often used to illustrate socio-historical art history arguments, solidifying his status as a through-and-through politically motivated Realist artist. These include the works *The Republic* (1848, Musée d'Orsay), *The Fugitives* (1849–1852, Private collection on permanent loan to the National Gallery, London), and *Third Class Carriage* (1860–1865, Metropolitan Museum of Art).⁶ However, such works comprise a very minor portion of Daumier's paintings. The majority of Daumier's painted subjects include familial scenes, illustrations of Don Quixote, theater scenes focused as much on the audience as on the stage characters, and images depicting chess players, singers, readers, and subjects examining print collections of their own and in shops.⁷ With their intimate and banal iconography, loose brushwork, and private nature, Daumier's paintings have often been dismissed by art historians as mere sketches, and have therefore received less critical reception than his "finished" and widely published lithographic works.

Striving for more rigorous scholarship, Melot seeks to dissolve the division between the aesthetic and political camps by reconsidering Daumier's works of art on their own, rather than in preconceived terms. To look closely at them individually and to attend formally to the comparisons with other artists and styles they invoke still demands a careful examination of the context in which the works were created and also received. While it is imperative as an art historian studying Daumier to heed Melot's warning and "go beyond the contemplative or proselytizing tone of the amateur,"⁸ it is, ironically,

exactly this context in which a study of Daumier's oil paintings must be reconceived. Examining the significance and meaning imbued in Daumier's painted surfaces for which they were originally — but mostly uncritically — praised reveals formal and historical ties, not only to particular histories of art and ideologies, but also to a particular audience: the audience for whom Daumier painted prior to the 1878 Durand-Ruel exhibition and his subsequent canonization.⁹ This paper will argue that for Daumier, the loose brushwork and free paint handling associated with the sketch was part of an eighteenth-century tradition that appealed to the amateur, whose appreciation and judgments were inspired by works in which contemplation, imagination, and intimacy were of great importance. More specifically, this paper will consider Daumier in relation to Fragonard, not just in terms of thematic and stylistic similarities, but as a model for understanding the context in which Daumier worked.

Honoré Daumier's small, late painting *The Studio* (**Fig. 1**) depicts a scene that explores the compound relationships between figures in an artist's studio. Absorbed in his composition, the artist is relegated to the background of the painting, obscured in darkness and a palette of muted browns and ochres. Though the artist's composition (the painting within the painting) is indiscernible, a young woman in the foreground presumably acts as his model, despite the fact that the artist appears more interested in his work than in her. The young woman's luminous skin, her sensuality, and the shimmering materials of her dress with reflective bright whites and oranges captivate not only the viewer, but another man as well, stealing into the scene from behind the warming studio furnace. Gripping the stove pipe to lean in closer, he listens intently as the model gesticulates with her left hand to emphasize her point in conversation, turning her body from the viewer toward her suitor, as the painter in the background remains oblivious or unconcerned with this meeting.¹⁰

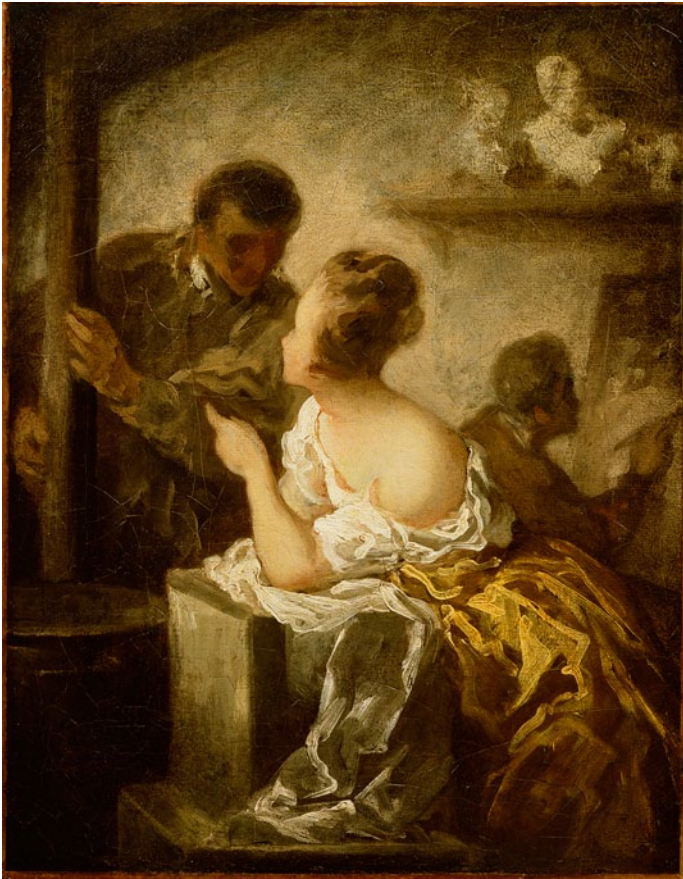


Fig. 1 Honoré Daumier, *The Studio*, ca. 1870, oil on canvas, 16 x 12 1/2 in (40.6 x 31.8 cm), The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.

Suggestively, this painting is also referred to by the alternative title, *Homage à Fragonard*.¹¹ In this work, Daumier is at his most “Fragonardian” as he translates “Fragonard” into his own idiom by evoking the Rococo master’s brushwork and style and by transforming his thematics. Nevertheless, it is operatively in Fragonardian terms. The soft, gallant humor in the juxtaposition between the two figures engaged in conversation versus the artist distracted by his work echoes certain Rococo compositions of eighteenth-century artists, including those by Fragonard.

More erotic than Daumier’s conversation piece in its suggestions of the studio as a site of sexual promiscuity between artist and model, Fragonard’s *The New Model* (**Fig. 2**) depicts similar playfully humorous relationships

between three figures. Lifting her skirt with his mahl stick, the artist here attempts to undress the model, while her female companion likewise grabs at the revealing garments. Leaning over and revealing her own décolletage, the companion’s ambiguous frozen gesture could be read as either helping the artist by exposing the model’s breasts or protecting her friend’s modesty by covering her back up and even perhaps seeking the attention of the artist herself. While one of the model’s hands grips her skirt where the artist is trying to reveal more skin, it is impossible to determine whether her hand is weighting down or pulling up the fabric and the erotic tensions as to who is interested in whom remains unresolved. In *The Studio*, Daumier displaces this overt eroticism, though similar ambiguous relationships are produced in the triad. For instance, is the painter absorbed in work ignorant of, or merely unconcerned with, the potential amorous relationship between the young woman and the other man who seems to hang on her every word as he hangs on the chimney post? And is the model, whose conversational gesture seems quite casual, even interested in his advances? Based on compositional ambiguities, like Fragonard’s *New Model*, such questions cannot be unequivocally answered.

The Studio’s “Homage to Fragonard” further imitates the Rococo master and his time by emulating figures and conventions. With her hair upswept into a loose chignon and her scintillating warm-hued orange-yellow dress lined in white, the texture and movement of the fabric defined by a few thick strokes of the brush, the young woman in *The Studio* even looks to be a citation of Fragonard’s *New Model*. It is as if Fragonard’s young girl has covered herself back up and adjusted her pose for a new painting. Though depicted in casual conversation, her turned head explicitly imitates the *profil perdu*. In this eighteenth-century convention, the specific facial



Fig. 2 Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *The Debut of the Model* (The New Model), ca. 1770, oil on canvas, 19.7 x 24.8 inches (50 x 63 cm), Musée Jacquemart-André, Paris, photo by Jean Schormans. © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource.

features are lost to the viewer as the figure is turned inward toward the painting. With such pointed eighteenth-century allusions, one wonders what the artist in the background renders. Is he just any painter, a necessary component of studio scenes as popularized during the eighteenth century, painting objects arranged before him or from his imagination? Could the painter be a self-portrait, a meta-representation of Daumier as artist, painting a canvas as the actual Daumier colors *The Studio*? Or since *The Studio* represents Daumier at his most Fragonardian, might the painter in the background be Fragonard himself? Perhaps Daumier depicts him, in “homage,” applying the finishing touches to *The New Model*.

Daumier's focus on gazing and conversation instills the scene with an emphasis on sensual pleasure as well as accentuating elements of ambiguity and intimacy, other tropes common to Rococo painting.¹² Here the woman is turned such that the viewer cannot see her eyes as she looks toward the middle-ground man. The artist stares at his painting, the creamy white stokes indistinguishable as form to us; and though we can see the other man's eyes, the paint handling renders them blank and inarticulate. The inaudible conversation between the two foreground figures and the indistinct gazes allow the viewer to “complete” the scene by imagining what those eyes could see or what those mouths

might say, a function originating with the aesthetics of the amateur and the eighteenth century.¹³ With this effect, the intimacy of the painting exists not only between the model and her probable suitor engaged in close conversation and between the artist and his work, but also between the beholder and this painting in which these compositional elements demand viewer participation. Measuring only thirty-one by twenty-five centimeters, the small oil on canvas invites the viewer to a physical closeness with the painting, a viewing position that beckons slow contemplation and attention to the relationships within the scene, where potentials for multiple narratives may be discerned.

While compositional similarities might be substantial enough to consider this particular painting an homage to Fragonard, it does not fully explain why Daumier's other paintings are so often compared with this eighteenth-century artist. Of his almost five hundred oil paintings, few deal so explicitly with such "typical" Rococo imagery. In fact, rather than theme or motif, more often stylistic comparisons are made between the two artists. In their 2007 book *Fragonard: Regards/Croisés*, Jean-Pierre Cuzin and Dimitri Salmon explore the many revivals and re-interpretations of Fragonard's work from the eighteenth century to the twenty-first, the "analogies, transpositions, homages, and winks which [artists use to] renew the view we take of [Fragonard]."¹⁴ Dedicating a small two-page chapter to the stylistic similarities between Daumier and Fragonard, Cuzin and Salmon state,

There exist strong similarities between the two painters: the tireless reprisals of certain images at several points during their careers, the practice of leaving a painting in a sketch-like state and starting on another canvas. The love of chiaroscuro, the monochrome, and the taste of the simplification of forms exist in the one as in the other, as does a common fascination with Rembrandt: a taste of *contre-jours*, stormy effects, bursts of light in the darkness.¹⁵

However, Cuzin and Salmon point out that despite these striking links, they lack contemporary accounts to substantiate any closer, more explicit connection.¹⁶ While all of these attributes certainly may be found in works by both artists, in order to ground these claims art historically and move beyond vague assertions and simple stylistic appreciation, it is necessary to consider these formal effects in relation to their broader historical contexts. In doing so, the formal connections that scholars and viewers see between Daumier and Fragonard are understood more fully. That Daumier's paintings are most consistently characterized as "sketches" (*esquisses*, *études*, and *ébauches*) and that such loose brushwork and "simplification of forms" relates to the work of Fragonard, requires that consideration be given to the historical and revived meaning of the sketch, not just for the artist (since contemporary accounts are lacking), but for the specific audience who purchased and cherished the works in such an "unfinished" state.

The making of *esquisses*, or compositional sketches in oil, emerged in Venice in the sixteenth century and spread throughout Europe by artists who studied in Italy such as Rubens and Charles Le Brun (1619–1690).¹⁷ Considered to be the artist's "first thought" (*première pensée*) for an inventive composition, the *esquisse* was often privileged over the *étude* (a study from nature, usually of a detail or a landscape) and the *ébauche* (the sketched stage of the finished painting). Though all types of sketches were collected and prized before the eighteenth century (as were *croquis*, or "first thoughts" in pencil, pen, or chalk on paper), the freedom of handling associated with the *esquisse* came to be seen in and as completed works only in the eighteenth century.¹⁸ Notable among these "finished sketches" were Fragonard's *figures de fantaisie*, individual portraits (though not necessarily identity-specific), which exhibit some of Fragonard's most fluid and abstract brushwork.

Though in the nineteenth century the sketch came to public prominence as it appeared on a larger scale in the Salons and was often connected to social or avant-gardist purposes,¹⁹ the process and imagination associated with the *esquisse* initially attracted a particular, more private audience of amateurs. This was both the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century audience for Fragonard's *figures de fantaisie*. As Mary D. Sheriff has argued,

Although we do not, in every case, know the individual patron who owned Fragonard's *portraits de fantaisie*, we do know that he often worked for a specific kind of clientele: the *amateurs*. Like the Abbé de Saint-Non, they were men well versed in the history of art, well read in aesthetic theory, and thoroughly familiar with the academic conventions of picture making. They formed a sophisticated audience interested in the fashionable issues of art and fully capable of appreciating the cleverness of painting that commented upon itself.²⁰

The "cleverness" Sheriff alludes to in these paintings, which found their audience "among the connoisseurs, the amateurs, and artists who made, bought, sold, and wrote about painting,"²¹ is embedded in the surface quality of the paint itself. These amateurs were more interested in the artist's witty painterly self-reflexivity and not necessarily in illusionistic representation. Rather than viewing paint as a signifier of the "genius" of the artist (the inborn talent evident of the artist's creative process made clear in the spontaneous facility of the brush), the amateur was attracted to the way that the colors, lines, and brushwork were instituted signs of the artist's perspective made visible, made apparent for the viewer to participate and to take delight in.²²

Sheriff argues that the early model for virtuosic sketch-like execution was an aristocratic one, which "[bound] together courtier and artist in the ideal of seeming to do naturally and easily a thing that requires art and effort."²³ The "spontaneous," "sketch-like" effect is actually practiced artifice, concealing the vast amount of training and practice

required to carry off such "ease." Slyly hiding the true skill and talent of the creator, a knowledgeable viewer might take pleasure in this artistic conceit. Additionally, the "unfinished" state of such canvases leaves its completion to the viewer's imagination. As Sheriff argues, from the point of view of the artist, "by avoiding a detailed and distasteful repetition, he lets the sophisticated imagine for themselves what he has only suggested."²⁴ Mentally filling in the details, refining the contours, even embellishing what was left "undone," the work engages the viewer and allows him or her to participate, to step into the artist's role and creatively imagine and finish the painting where it has been left off.

Fragonard's *figures de fantaisie* are also the paintings most often cited as influencing Daumier.²⁵ Like *The Studio*, Fragonard's *fantaisie* "portraits" depict figures engaged in quiet contemplation or artistic practice: they may be seen playing music, reading, and writing (**Fig. 3**), among other imaginative pursuits.²⁶ However, this emphasis on the senses is at one remove. Here the viewer can neither "hear" the music nor "read" the texts, just as in Daumier's *Studio*, the viewer cannot discern what the artist depicts or listen to the model's words. Instead, the viewer's imagination is called upon to provide the words and sounds which cannot be fully expressed in paint, adding a degree of personal subjectivity to the painting. Additionally, the "enthused" touch of the artist, as signified by the sketch-like handling, accords with the figure depicted; both subject depicted and signifying style emphasize artistic, imaginative, and/or contemplative activities and processes.

In this sense, works by Daumier like *Pierrot Playing the Mandolin* (**Fig. 4**) and *The Painter* (**Fig. 5**) seem to be nineteenth-century *figures de fantaisie* in that they emphasize the senses through their painterly tactility and call upon the viewer's sensual imagination. In *Pierrot Playing the Mandolin*, the loose brushwork barely defines Pierrot's form, engulfed as he is in the energy of the entangling



Fig. 3 (Top Left) Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *Inspiration*, 1769, oil on canvas, 31.5 x 25.2 inches (80 x 64 cm), Musée du Louvre, Paris, photo by Daniel Arnaudet. © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource.

Fig. 4 (Bottom Left) Honoré Daumier, *Pierrot Playing the Mandolin*, ca. 1873, oil on panel, 13.8 x 10.6 inches (35 x 27 cm), collection Oskar Reinhart "Am Römerholz," Winterthur, Switzerland.

Fig. 5 (Top Right) Honoré Daumier, *The Painter*, ca. 1865, oil on panel, 11.4 x 7.5 inches (29 x 19 cm), National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh.



lines of brushwork. Mouth open in mid-song, the blue streaks appearing to radiate from his mouth conflate sound and sight. As in Fragonard's *figures de fantaisie*, the viewer decides what he "hears." Likewise, the far-away gaze of the artist depicted in *The Painter*, as well as the light highlighting his countenance and his brushes, recalls Fragonard's *Inspiration*. Just as the "Fantaisie Figure" clutches his quill inspired to write, the brushes of Daumier's painter are loaded for action, the blank canvas in the background poised to receive the spontaneous sketch of his *première pensée*. Incomplete, it is not the painter's inspiration that provides the image to be painted, or "finished," on the blank background

canvas but rather the viewer's own imagination, fired by intimate engagement in reflecting on this *esquisse*.

Even works by Daumier that feature multiple figures, such as *A Box at the Theater* (**Fig. 6**) or *The Connoisseurs* (ca. 1860, Armand Hammer Daumier and Contemporaries Collection, Los Angeles) emphasize viewer participation and "seeing beyond" what is immediately perceived. In *A Box at the Theater*, the viewer "sits" among the audience. Two figures vaporously appear on the stage as a blur of yellows and greens, though no formal or iconographic qualities provide a



Fig. 6 Honoré Daumier, *A Box at the Theater*, ca. 1865, oil on wood, 10.4 x 13.8 inches (26.5 x 35 cm), Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg, Germany, photo courtesy of bpk, Berlin / Hamburger Kunsthalle / Elke Walford / Art Resource, NY.

discernible narrative—that remains for the viewer to determine. Similarly, in *The Connoisseurs*, three gentlemen stand in a room full of paintings, casually contemplating the artwork surrounding them, their viewing action mirroring the owner of the painting contemplating this work. As the men's gazes supersede the boundaries of Daumier's oil, the viewer is able to mentally "create" the work upon which the figures are focused. He perhaps imagines the figures looking at the same painting he contemplates (in a meta-representative fashion) or even another painting from his own collection. Like Fragonard's paintings, these images blur the distinctions between the artist representing and the figure represented, between imagination and reality, and between the senses expressed in subject matter with the viewer's visual sense. As such, these "sketches" demand the same particular, cultivated audience — not necessarily one of a certain financial or economic class (as is often misleadingly associated with the Rococo) but rather an intellectual, cerebral one, who takes pleasure in the interplay of representation evoked in Rococo paintings.

However, painterly finish was not just restricted to intellectual and witty readings. In his erotic scenes, Fragonard used a similar painterly style of handling in which the textured surface arrests the viewer's attention on the sensuous nude bodies or even the water or cloth which "revealingly" conceal their nudity.²⁷ Following the obvious movement of the brush in the visible skeins of paint, the viewer's eye strokes the flesh in the same way the paintbrush does and the painter's/viewer's "enthusiasm" is read as sexual desire.²⁸ In addition to such erotic interpretations, the sketch was frequently equated with political subversion. Since the Renaissance, the debate between color ("painterliness") and line has served political ideologies, sometimes notwithstanding artistic intention. For example, the revival of the classicism of Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665) reigned in, or "disciplined," Rubens's coloristic mannerism, just as politically the "excess"

of the Valois-Angoulême Kings was curbed by the Bourbons.²⁹ Similarly, Romantic artists such as Théodore Géricault (1791–1824) and Delacroix rebelled against the restriction and oppression of the self-effacing Davidian "line" as the mandated style of the politically controlled Academies. Referring back to Rococo painterly effects, loose finish and color could be utilized as a marker of freedom and originality, artistically and politically during the monarchical restorations.³⁰

Even though painterly finish could be co-opted for sexual and political purposes, the relationship between the amateur and the taste for the *esquisse* continued in the works of early nineteenth-century *petit-mâtres*, Romantic painters, Realist artists, and Impressionists. In *The Persistence of Rococo*, Carol Duncan argues that the taste for sensuous brushwork associated with particular Rococo artists was never truly eliminated by the sharper, more clearly defined line of Jacques-Louis David's Neoclassicism. Describing the "finesse of [Louis-Léopold Boilly's] brush"³¹ or the number of amateurs collecting paintings featuring the "suavity of [Pierre-Paul Prud'hon's] brush,"³² Duncan highlights the pleasure that painterly media affected. To Duncan, this continued use of sketch-like style allowed for the depiction of scenes "to be grasped through sense experience and feeling... such sense experience [being] valuable and pleasurable in itself."³³ Like Fragonard's *figures de fantaisie*, these modest early nineteenth-century works dedicated to the senses, emotions, and the imagination, were likewise purchased by the cultivated amateur, collector, and artist.³⁴

In her dissertation, "Aspiring to La Vie Galante: Reincarnations of Rococo in Second Empire France," Allison Unruh builds on Duncan's groundbreaking study to explore the revival of interest in eighteenth-century art in later years, between 1852 and 1870.³⁵ Politically, this renewed interest represented a historicizing moment during the reign of Napoleon III in which the remnants of

the glorious French past were reincorporated into the present. To some, the revived taste for the art, fashion, and fêtes of the *ancien régime* during the Second Empire aligned with a revitalized aristocracy and indicated an allegiance to monarchical rule. To others, these tastes could also denote a more self-conscious middle and upper-middle class interest in politically progressive ideals inherited from the Enlightenment.³⁶

Examining the collections and writings of prominent nineteenth-century collectors and amateurs reveals a taste for eighteenth-century art in which the formal properties of line, brush, and more modest scale were valued for a variety of political, financial, and aesthetic reasons. In addition to paintings, prints and drawings were also prized items to be collected by the amateur. For Edmond and Jules de Goncourt (1822–1896 and 1830–1870, respectively), who thought of themselves as eighteenth-century aristocrats *manqués*, collecting Rococo works socially associated them with elite *ancien régime* society. Likewise, purchasing drawings by eighteenth-century masters constituted a way to collect more liberally within financial restraints. Nevertheless, their writings on these works reveal the same passion and interest in the formal qualities of the “sketched” painting, such as an emphasis on intimacy and cultivated, imaginative viewing. As Unruh points out, Edmond and Jules de Goncourt “particularly appreciated the special intimacy of the drawn image, for its ability to reveal the hand of the artist, and his process of working through an image [...] Sketches were as valuable if not more intriguing than fully finished compositions for the brothers.”³⁷

This interest is more specifically revealed in the brothers’ series of essays on French eighteenth-century painters. These serially-published essays were composed in a poetic, literary fashion, based in biography and meticulous historical and archival research, though much embellished and fictionalized. Despite this, their descriptions of select works reveal their taste for seemingly speedily executed works,

loose brushwork, evocative line, and sketches. Watteau’s drawings are “rapidly executed,” and display an “inexpressible quality.”³⁸ Ignoring conventional academic *fini*, Quentin de La Tour is intentionally “oblivious of all rules and regulations, forgetting all he has learnt for the sake of what he sees,” delighting instead in a “confection of little touches,” “marks,” and “effects.”³⁹ Boucher’s drawings are “sketches from nature, the germ of an idea, a line, the inspiration of a moment thrown boldly on to the paper by a hand in haste”⁴⁰ and his paintings are likewise “lively, facile sketches produced by the painter without effort.”⁴¹ Rather than taking the “trouble to compose his picture, [Chardin] simply flings upon [the canvas] the bare truth that he finds around him,”⁴² the unfinished, “buttery quality of his touch,” a genius impasto rather than a conventionalized oil.⁴³

Of all the artists about whom the Goncourt brothers wrote, Fragonard appears to be the artist who best exemplifies their aesthetic taste. As Robin Ironside points out in his translation of the Goncourt’s *French Eighteenth-Century Painters*, the brothers required that “painting should, in the first place, delight the eyes, that it should not aspire to effect much more than the recreation of the optic nerve, that the pleasures it provides are, in the main, sensuous in a materialistic sense.”⁴⁴ Such a conception of art’s function dates to Roger de Piles (1635–1709), a French art critic who championed Rubens’ painterly effects and the general use of color to provide a sensory, rather than strictly narrative, experience of art, and whose writings and ideas were of great importance to many Rococo painters.⁴⁵ With Fragonard, the brothers’ emphasis is completely on the cognitive evocations induced by the sketch through their “unique charm of partial revelation,”⁴⁶ “suggestions” and “hints” induced by the brush or pencil more than by the subject matter.⁴⁷ The Goncourt brothers crowned Fragonard the “sketcher of genius,”⁴⁸ his cultivated *esquisses* not merely a stage of painting but instead “it’s ideal.”⁴⁹

Though the Goncourts' emphasis on the sketch privileges "genius" and "originality" rather than an instantiated system of meaning, or as Sheriff characterizes it, a "performance" whose sketch-like "improvisation depends on a prior mastery of technique [and] a learned command of aesthetic principles,"⁵⁰ other nineteenth-century amateurs were equally enamored by this style of handling. According to Unruh, for physician and avid art collector Louis La Caze (1798–1869), the sketch "represented the aesthetic principles to which he was dedicated in his collection of other schools, particularly a sensual handling of paint, modestly scaled pictures and intimately treated subjects."⁵¹ Collecting *esquisses* distinguished La Caze as a knowledgeable collector/amateur.⁵² Most exemplary of this is his ownership of Fragonard's *L'Abbé de Saint-Non* (1769, Musée de Louvre), one of the *figures de fantaisie*, in which the freedom of handling associated with the sketch appears in a highly finished work. In addition to appreciating Fragonard's aesthetics, collecting Fragonard might also symbolize upward class mobility for the nouveau-riche La Caze. For Hippolyte Walferdin (1795–1880), collecting Fragonard was expressly political. Donating Fragonard's *The Music Lesson* (1769, Musée du Louvre) to the Louvre during the early days of the Second Republic, Walferdin stipulated that, "to the Republic I make this gift."⁵³ Richard Rand argues that the appeal of free paint handling in this painting and others like it collected by Walferdin was its signification for liberty and Enlightenment.⁵⁴

While the Goncourt brothers, La Caze, and Walferdin represent more affluent amateurs, the rise of the middle class in the Second Empire produced a new population of collector-amateurs.⁵⁵ Though their wealth might not have been extensive enough to purchase paintings by the eighteenth-century masters, collecting more modest works by nineteenth-century artists allowed these new amateurs to participate in the culture of collecting as well as to indulge their own aesthetic appreciation. Regardless of finances,

the consumers of Daumier's oil paintings during this time period analyzed by Unruh represent the same type of audience discussed by Sheriff for Fragonard's painting: "connoisseurs, amateurs and artists who made, bought sold and wrote about painting," albeit in the nineteenth century.

In his introduction to Gabriel Mandel's *catalogue raisonnée* of Daumier's paintings, Pierre Georgel focuses on Daumier's painterly finish in accordance with how the paintings should be viewed. According to Georgel, Daumier's paintings are personal, private images for reflection.⁵⁶ Unlike the social and political epoch depicted in his lithographs for *Charivari*, Daumier's paintings are of "poetic and contemplative times," speaking to a private audience rather than the public.⁵⁷ Combined with the sketch-like brushwork, the peopled landscapes, lawyers, artists at their easels, children, singers, and readers become objects of poetry for reflection and reverie.⁵⁸ Daumier achieves this end of personal aesthetic meditation through the "spontaneous" and "intimate" brushwork, the unfinished surface space as the place "where ones' self seeks, frees himself, pours himself, secretly, passionately."⁵⁹ According to Georgel,

In the painting (like in many drawings), the graphic quality, instead of defining a form at first, goes on an adventure. It searches for space, raises trembling lines, confuses a tangle of strokes, of masses, that the imagination sometimes likes to clarify, sometimes to conserve in its suggestive ambiguity. It spreads and is reabsorbed in a play of brush, of touch, of spots, in deep mysteries of perspective, of chiaroscuro, of color, in a delectable thickness of the material picture... One understands the attractions that Fragonard's *Figures de Fantaisie* very probably exercised on our painter; a triumph of spontaneity joined to the supreme possession of craft.⁶⁰

This description of Daumier's paintings agrees with the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century amateurs' interest in the *esquisse*. Intimate, somewhat ambiguous, and relying on the beholder's imagination, like Fragonard's paintings Daumier's images appear impulsive but are "joined to the supreme possession of craft." They are carefully constructed with the



Fig. 7 Honoré Daumier, *The Print Collector*, ca. 1860–62, oil on canvas, 16.1 x 13.2 inches (41 x 33.5 cm), Musée du Petit Palais, Paris, photo by Bulloz. © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource,

“spontaneous” line intentionally articulated in alignment with the “simple” subject matter for deliberate contemplative purpose.

Though Georgel argues that Daumier painted these images for himself rather than for an audience, investigating the provenance of these paintings reveals their connection to the collector and artist-amateur. As mentioned earlier in this paper, while Daumier’s paintings may have been discovered by the broader public at the 1878 Durand-Ruel exhibition, most were loaned from private owners who had been quietly purchasing these never-exhibited works years before they were widely revealed. These owners included prominent collectors who also purchased eighteenth-century art and Impressionist paintings (similarly connected to eighteenth-

century “amateur art” with their sensual and material brushwork⁶¹), other artists who used loose paint handling, attentive to such formal and metaphysical purposes, and critics and writers sympathetic to the poetic, inward-looking qualities evoked and the wit of representation commenting on itself.

For example, Dr. Georges de Bellio (1828–1894), a physician and art collector, owned *The Studio*. De Bellio’s collection of Impressionist works formed the foundation of the Musée Marmottan Monet in Paris. Isaac de Camondo, a member of the wealthy Parisian Camondo family whose home and eighteenth-century art collection is preserved in Paris as the Musée Nissim de Camondo, owned Daumier’s *Connoisseurs*. This work clearly speaks to the collector by depicting three amateurs casually considering the work that surround them. As for the appreciation of painterly brushwork, Isaac de Camonodo, like his family, also collected eighteenth-century Rococo art. However, Isaac’s reputation as a collector lies in his amassing of nineteenth-century work including *The Fifer* by Edouard Manet (1865, Musée d’Orsay), *Rouen Cathedral* by Monet (1894, Musée d’Orsay), and *The Tub* by Edgar Degas (1886, Musée d’Orsay), artists renowned for the sensuous paint handling who have recently also been connected to eighteenth-century influences.⁶²

Close friend Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot (1796–1875) owned several versions of *The Print Collector*, including the one now housed in Paris at the Petit Palais (**Fig. 7**). Like *The Connoisseurs*, this painting thematizes attentive looking. As this casually elegant connoisseur sifts through a folio of works on paper, his attention is arrested by a work hanging on the wall in front of him, whose form and subject we can only imaginatively contemplate. As a landscape painter of the Barbizon school, Corot’s own paintings are often referred to as *études*, exhibiting similar

fluid brushwork to Daumier, and Corot would have been attuned to, and appreciative of, such plays on visual representation. Daumier's painting found favor among other artists as well: Barbizon landscapist Charles-François Daubigny (1817–1878) owned *Pierrot Playing the Mandolin* and *A Box at the Theater*; sculptor and goldsmith Adolphe-Victor Geoffroy-Dechaume (1816–1892) purchased *Woman Holding a Child* (1873, Private collection, Zurich), as well as *The Painter*; wood engraver and painter Hippolyte Augustin Lavoignat (1813–1896) owned *The Reader* (n.d., Private collection, USA), balloonist and photographer Nadar had in his collection *Don Quixote and Sancho Panza* (after 1850, Itami City Museum of Art), and Degas owned an early version of Daumier's *Don Quixote Reading* (1860–65, National Museum of Wales, Cardiff). Art critics and writers Octave Mirbeau (1848–1917) and Roger Marx (1859–1913) each also owned oils by Daumier; Marx owned a version of *Don Quixote and Sancho Panza under a Tree* (1865, Abegg Foundation, Switzerland) and Mirbeau owned *Woman with a Blue Ribbon* (1860, Dumbarton Oaks Foundation, Washington D.C.). Paintings not sold directly to these collectors, artists, and writers were purchased by dealers, such as Ambroise Vollard (1866–1939), Gaston-Alexandre Camentron (1862–1919), Alexander Bernheim Jeune (1839–1915), and Paul Durand-Ruel (1831–1922), who sold similar style paintings to private collectors and amateurs.

Though working almost a century apart, it is inarguable that Daumier would have had access to Fragonard's works through a series of exhibitions mounted in the 1860s and the 1870s, if not earlier. Held in 1860 at Louis Martinet's gallery, the *Ancienne École Française* exhibition featured eighteenth-century paintings and drawings from the collections of amateurs and collectors such as La Caze, the Goncourt brothers, François Marcille (1790–1856), and the Marquesse of Hertford (1800–1870).⁶³ In 1867, a Rococo exhibition was

held at Petit Trianon, and on Sundays during the Universal Exposition, La Caze opened his home to the public, which was filled with eighteenth-century masterpieces.⁶⁴ After his death, La Caze donated his entire collection to the Louvre, and the Salle de La Caze opened on March 15, 1870. It included over 600 paintings by artists such as Antoine Watteau (1684–1721), Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin (1699–1779), and Fragonard, making it even more likely that Daumier was exposed to Fragonard's work.

Confining Daumier's involvement with and influence by the Rococo to this later period of his artistic output, however, neglects significant earlier works in which he obviously engaged with traditional eighteenth-century themes and motifs. Just two years after Daumier submitted *The Republic* to the competition for an official image of the State, he entered less overtly politically motivated works to the Salon of 1850–51. This Salon is most often noted for the Realist political and class controversies that works such as Gustave Courbet's *Burial at Ornans* (1849–1850, Musée d'Orsay) and Jean-François Millet's *The Sower* (1850, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston) were thought to embody and with which Daumier is often associated. However, Daumier's entries to the 1850–51 Salon have nothing immediately in common with such sociopolitical works. Bruce Laughton points out how the white chalk highlights and spiraling composition of *The Drunkenness of Silenus* (ca. 1850, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Calais), a mixed media watercolor, is reminiscent of Rococo sculptor Claude "Clodion" Michel's reliefs; likewise, its iconography refers to an engraving made by Nicholas Delaunay the Elder after Rubens' *Triumph of Silenus*.⁶⁵ Laughton also characterizes Daumier's other entry to the Salon, *Women Pursued by Satyrs* (**Fig. 8**), as rococo-esque, focusing particularly on the brilliant colors of the composition and the paint handling as reminiscent of Fragonard, while the heavier physical proportions of the women are Rubensian.

Ignoring Daumier's emphasis on materiality and looking disregards the depth of his work and his influences. In addition to the biting satire for which he is known, Laughton correctly points to the contradiction that during Daumier's lengthy career, the "lightness of French Rococo comes to form one distinct strand in Daumier's development as an artist."⁶⁶ This is true not only of his early paintings whose nymphs and satyrs recall Rococo mythologies, or his later "Figures of Fantaisie" such as *Pierrot Playing the Mandolin* and *The Painter* that seem to reply directly to Fragonard, but even extends to scenes "of their time": of bourgeois subjects examining prints in shops, of theater goers intently gazing at the staged theater performance, of readers pondering the written word. Engaging in a

continuation of Rococo visual and aesthetic ideals, Daumier appears as a more complex artist whose reputation as a witness to the nineteenth-century extends beyond the political and social and accounts for aesthetic considerations as well.

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Endnotes

1. For a detailed account of this exhibition and its role in understanding Daumier's place in art history, see Michel Melot, "Daumier and Art History: Aesthetic Judgment/Political Judgment," *Oxford Art Journal*, 11:1 (1988): 3–24.
2. Richard Thomson tallies that seventy-seven of the ninety-four oils were from private collections rather than from the artist's studio. See "The Drinkers of Daumier, Raffaelli, and Toulouse-Lautrec: Preliminary Observations on a Motif," *Oxford Art Journal*, 2 (April, 1979): 29.
3. Melot, "Daumier and Art History," 21. Here Melot explores a range of comparisons that arose in the wake of the exhibition. In Henri Beraldi's remarks alone, taken from his *Les graveurs du XIX^e*, Melot cites the following artists as listed in reference to Daumier's style: Jacob Jordaens (1593–1678), Pierre Paul Puget (1620–1694), François Marius Granet (1777–1849), the Flemish masters, Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640), Thomas Rowlandson (1756–1827), Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–1669), Jacques-Louis David (1748–1825), Michelangelo (1475–1564), Camille Corot (1796–1875), Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788), Théodule Ribot (1823–1891), Alexandre-Gabriel Decamps (1803–1860), William Hogarth (1697–1764), Narcisse Virgilio Diaz (1807–1876), Tintoretto (1518–1594), Salvator Rosa (1615–1673), and Jean-François Millet (1814–1875). Another particularly striking example of a comparison between the "formal" properties of Daumier's paintings with that of other artists is Paul Foucher writing for *Le National* on the 1878 Daumier exhibition: "Il a tout:

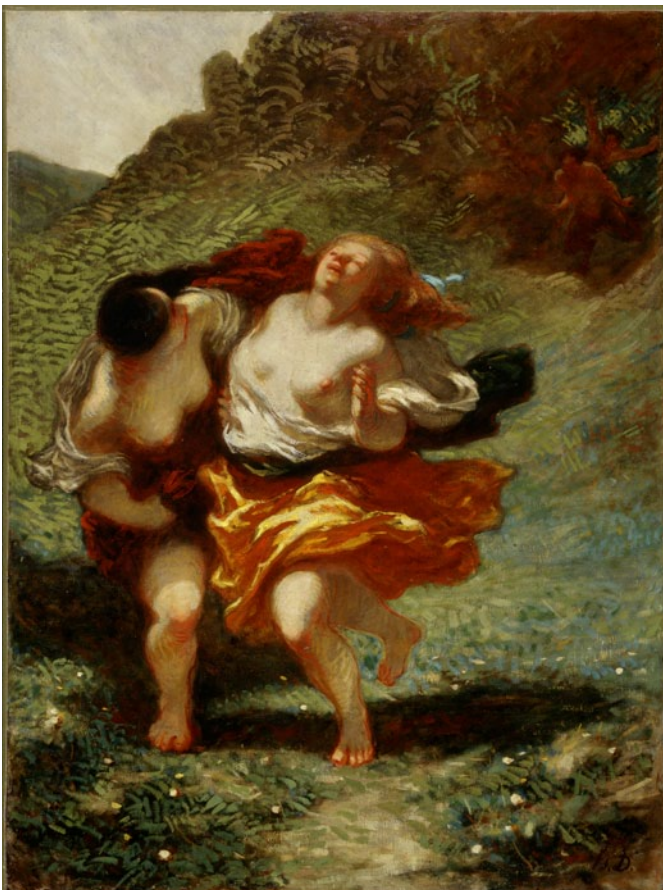


Fig. 2 Honoré Daumier, *Women Pursued by Satyrs*, 1850 (later additions made by the artist), oil on canvas, 51.9 x 38.5 inches (131.8 x 97.8 cm), The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Adaline Van Horne Bequest, photo by Brian Merrett, courtesy of The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

- la largeur de la touché, le dessin, la couleur, le pensée. Telle toile semble dessinée par Michel-Ange et peinte par Delacroix” (It has everything: the breadth of paintbrush, drawing, color, thought. This canvas seems drawn by Michelangelo and painted by Delacroix). While some resemblances may seem stretched, others are justified. For example, while stylistic comparisons to Rubens are not necessarily fully articulated, Daumier did copy Ruben’s *La Kermesse* (1630–35), then hanging at the Louvre. For a photograph of the painting (which was destroyed by a fire in 1950), see Jean Adhémar, *Honoré Daumier* (Paris: P. Tisné, 1954): plate 27. The only critical (though brief) discussion of this painting that I have come across can be found in Svetlana Alpers, *The Making of Rubens* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995): 45.
4. *Ibid.*, 3–24.
 5. *Ibid.*, 16. Melot characterizes the Daumier literature into three categories: studies by collectors, studies by social historians, and very few brief pieces by “fully fledged art historians.”
 6. Though the New York version of “Third Class Carriage” is the most reproduced, there are other versions in existence as well as renditions of “Second Class Carriage” (*Un Wagon de Deuxième Classe*, 1863, oil on canvas; present location unknown) as well as “First Class Carriage” (*Un Wagon de Première Classe*, 1863, oil on canvas; present location unknown). For images and provenance of the first and second class carriages as well as for other versions of *The Third Class Carriage* see *The Daumier Register Digital Work Catalog* managed and kept up to date by Dieter and Lilian Noack. For a discussion of Daumier’s watercolors of first- and second class carriage, see Bruce Laughton, *Honoré Daumier* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996): 110–111.
 7. Examples of such diverse scenes include *Au bord de l’eau* (ca. 1850, Troyes: Musée d’Art moderne), *Don Quichotte et Sancho Pansa* (after 1850, Itami, Japan: Itami City Museum of Art), *The Loge* (ca. 1856–57, Baltimore: The Walters Art Museum), *Les joueurs d’échecs* (ca. 1865, Paris: Musée de Petit Palais), *Chanteur* (n.d., Baltimore: The Walters Art Museum), *La lecture* (ca. 1855–1860, Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum), and *The Print Collector* (ca. 1860, Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art).
 8. *Ibid.*, 19.
 9. *Ibid.*, 16.
 10. While the Daumier literature is extensive (over 1,750 titles according to the Daumier Register), it is necessary to be careful about how scholars read the life of the artist versus how they read the actual artwork. For instance, in a description of *L’atelier*, Roger Passeron states that “This important painting was undeniably influenced by Fragonard, not only in its style, but in its feeling. Apart from this unique occasion, Daumier, like Picasso, always treated the subject of painter and model by showing the painter interested exclusively in his work, even if he is looking at the model. The painter is more absorbed in the beauty of the model than in his work.” See Roger Passeron, *Daumier* (New York: Rizzoli, 1981): 240.
 11. See Jean-Pierre Cuzin and Dimitri Salmon. “Daumier et Monticelli, ‘Baroques Provençaux.’” In *Fragonard: Regards/Croisés* (Paris: Mengès, 2007): 135.
 12. For a discussion on the role of conversation in rococo paintings, see Mary Vidal, “Style as Subject in Watteau’s Images of Conversation,” in *Antoine Watteau: Perspectives on the Artist and the Culture of his Time*, ed. Mary Sheriff (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2006): 76–93.
 13. Vidal, “Style as Subject in Watteau’s Images of Conversation,” 76–93.
 14. Unless otherwise stated, all translations from the French are my own. Cuzin and Salmon, *Fragonard: Regards/Croisés*, back cover: “analogies, transpositions, hommages, et clins d’œil qui renouvellent le regard que l’on porte sur artiste.”
 15. Cuzin and Salmon, *Fragonard: Regards/Croisés*, 135: “Il existe des analogies fortes entre les deux peintres: les reprises inlassables des mêmes tableaux à plusieurs moments de la carrière, la pratique d’une peinture laissée à l’état d’esquisse et recommence sur une autre toile. L’amour du clair-obscur, de la monochromie, et le gout de la simplification des formes existent chez l’un comme chez l’autre, dans une commune fascination pour Rembrandt: gout des contre-jours, des effets orageux, des éclats de lumière la pénombre.”
 16. *Ibid.*, 135: “Ils dépassent largement un gout pour le XVIII^e siècle propre aux années 1830–1840 que nous venons de noter, mais doivent être appréciées, faute de témoignages contemporains, avec prudence.”
 17. For a history of the sketch in nineteenth century art history, see Albert Boime, *The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Phaidon Press, 1971), and John Minor Wisdom. *French Nineteenth Century Oil Sketches, David to Degas* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The William

- Hayes Ackland Memorial Art Center at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1978). For overviews of the sketch in earlier history, see Rudolph Wittkower, *Masters of the Loaded Brush: Oil Sketches from Rubens to Tiepolo*, (New York: Columbia University, 1967).
18. See Wisdom, *French Nineteenth Century Oil Sketches, David to Degas* and Wittkower, *Masters of the Loaded Brush: Oil Sketches from Rubens to Tiepolo*.
 19. See Boime, *The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century* and Boime, *Art in an Age of Civil Struggle, 1848–1871* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).
 20. Mary D. Sheriff, *Fragonard: Art and Eroticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 183.
 21. Sheriff, *Fragonard: Art and Eroticism*, 124.
 22. *Ibid.*, 146.
 23. *Ibid.*, 122.
 24. *Ibid.*, 126.
 25. Georgel, in Mandel, *Tout l'œuvre peint de Daumier*, 6: "On comprend l'attraction qu'ont très probablement exercée sur notre peintre les "figures de fantaisie" de Fragonard, triomphe de la spontanéité jointe à la possession suprême du métier." For Fragonard's audience see Guillaume Faroult and Sophie Eloy, eds., *La collection La Caze: chefs-d'œuvre des peintures des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 2007).
 26. Other examples of Fragonard's *Figures de fantaisie* include *Music* (1769) and *St. Jerome Reading* (1765).
 27. Sheriff, *Fragonard: Art and Eroticism*, 149–152.
 28. *Ibid.*
 29. Rebecca Zorach, *Blood, Milk, Ink, Gold: Abundance and Excess in the French Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).
 30. See Chapter 1 of Carol Duncan, "The Persistence of Rococo" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1970), as well as Boime, *The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century*. While Daumier's paintings may not read as explicitly iconographically political, an argument can be made for a political embeddedness in this painterly tradition, although this is not the intention of this current paper.
 31. Duncan, *The Persistence of Rococo*, 30.
 32. *Ibid.*, 32.
 33. *Ibid.*, 34.
 34. *Ibid.*, 216.
 35. For writing about and collecting eighteenth-century art during the nineteenth century, see particularly chapters one and four of Unruh's dissertation.
 36. For instance, according to Dominique Jacquot, for wealthy amateurs like Francois Hippolyte Walferdin (1795–1880) and Henri Rochefort (1832–1913) who collected Rococo art but who as leftists opposed the politics of the Second Empire, "the eighteenth-century was the era of philosophers, hence of freedom." See Dominique Jacquot, "Cette fraîcheur de l'esquisse qui est la beauté du diable de la peinture," in *L'apothéose du geste: L'esquisse peinte au siècle de Boucher et Fragonard*, edited by Philippe Le Leyzour and Fabrice Hergott (Paris: Éditions Hazan, Paris, 2003), 61–63.
 37. Duncan, *The Persistence of Rococo*, 231–232.
 38. Jules and Edmond de Goncourt, *French Eighteenth Century Painters*, Translated with an introduction by Robin Ironside (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 43.
 39. Goncourt, *French Eighteenth Century Painters*, 188–189.
 40. *Ibid.*, 69.
 41. *Ibid.*
 42. *Ibid.*, 116.
 43. *Ibid.*, 126.
 44. Robin Ironside, "Introduction" to *French Eighteenth Century Painters* by Jules and Edmond de Goncourt, vii–viii.
 45. See Thomas Puttfarken, *Roger de Piles' Theory of Art* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985).
 46. Goncourt, *French Eighteenth Century Painters*, 286.
 47. *Ibid.*, 287.
 48. *Ibid.*, 288.
 49. *Ibid.*
 50. Sheriff, *Fragonard: Art and Eroticism*, 184.
 51. Unruh, "Aspiring to La Vie Galante," 265. Unruh also notes how La Caze's collection included artists such as

- Rembrandt, Frans Hals, and Chardin, all known for their “loose” handling of paint and/or drawn sketches. These artists have also been connected to Daumier; see Melot, note 2 above.
52. *Ibid.*, 265. “The quality that perhaps most united his eclectic array of works was their resistance to conventional classicism, and their emphasis on a sensuously tactile handling of paint. Far from the staid character of neo-classical formulas that favored cold clarity of line and didactic themes, La Caze’s painting cabinet was suffused by rich coloration, a distinct suppleness of paint, and a vivid sense of touch. He favored the spontaneity of *esquisses*, an interest which distinguished him as a collector of paintings at the time, yet harmonized with the Goncourt’s priorities in their privileging of drawings. Fragonard’s *L’Abbé de Saint-Non*, one of his legendary swiftly-executed portraits, is paradigmatic of this taste for the sketch.”
 53. As quoted in Richard Rand, “Painted in an Hour: Impressionism and Eighteenth-Century French Art,” in *Inspiring Impressionism: The Impressionists and the Art of the Past*, edited by Ann Dumas (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 137.
 54. Rand, “Painted in an Hour,” 137.
 55. Unruh, “Aspiring to La Vie Galante,” 223.
 56. Aaron Scharf also considers this line of interpretation, suggesting that Daumier’s paintings represent more contemplative images. As Scharf says: “The good-natured disdain and sometimes the indignation with which Daumier executed his lithographs and water-colours is seldom to be found in his paintings. His painted world is a private world.” With his “preference for softer, more fluid forms, [which break] the rigid barriers of enclosed contours,” Scharf suggests the images are “highly personal.” See Aaron Scharf, “Daumier the Painter,” *The Burlington Magazine*, 103: 701 (August 1961): 356–359.
 57. Georgel, *Tout l’œuvre peint de Daumier*, 5: “Temps poétique et contemplative: l’artiste, las de suivre la minute qui passe, se retrace, prend son temps... Que cet art n’ait pas rencontré, du vivant de Daumier, l’approbation de la multitude, il n’y a pas de quoi s’étonner. En fait, il ne lui était pas destiné. Au caricaturiste de s’adresser au plus grand nombre; le peintre, lui, se parle d’abord à lui-même.”
 58. *Ibid.*, 7: “Il trouve dans la banalité moderne un objet de poésie, qu’il pénètre de réflexion et de rêverie, qu’il charge de signification intime, inconsciente peut-être,”
 59. *Ibid.*, 8: “...espaces où le moi se cherche, se délivre, s’épanche, secrètement, passionnément.”
 60. *Ibid.*, 6: “Dans la peinture (comme dans beaucoup de dessins), le graphisme, au lieu de définir une forme a priori, part à l’aventure. Il fouille l’espace, suscite de tremblants linéaments, embrouille un écheveau de traits, de masses, que l’imagination se plait tantôt à préciser, tantôt à conserver dans leur ambiguïté suggestive. Il s’étale et se résorbe dans le jeu de pinceau, de la touche, de la tâche, dans les profondeurs mystérieuses de la perspective, du clair-obscur, de la couleur, dans la délectable épaisseur de la matière picturale.... On comprend l’attraction qu’ont très probablement exercée sur notre peintre les ‘figures de fantaisie’ de Fragonard, triomphe de la spontanéité jointe à la possession suprême du métier.”
 61. See Rand, “Painted in an Hour,” 135–155.
 62. For information on Isaac de Camonodo, see: <http://www.lesartsdecoratifs.fr/francais/nissim-de-camondo/la-famille-de-camondo/la-genealogie/isaac-de-camondo-1851-1911>. For Monet, Manet, and Degas’ connection to eighteenth-century work see *Inspiring Impressionism*, edited by Ann Dumas.
 63. See Allison Unruh, *Aspiring to la Vie Galante: Reincarnations of Rococo in Second Empire France* (PhD diss., New York University, 2008), particularly, “L’École Française ancienne on the Boulevard des Italiens,” 244–253.
 64. For the Petit Trianon exhibition see “Marie Antoinette returns to the Petit Trianon,” 253–261 and for Louis La Caze, see “Gilles arrives at the Louvre: the legacy of Louis La Caze,” 262–270 in Unruh, “Aspiring to la Vie Galante.”
 65. Bruce Laughton, *Honoré Daumier* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 29–31.
 66. Laughton, *Honoré Daumier*, 31.

Reality and Simulcra in Andy Warhol's *Shadows*

JENNIFER WATSON

Andy Warhol's (1928-1987) name became synonymous in the 1960s with Pop Art, as his pictures of 200 Campbell's soup cans, 100 grinning Marylins, or a dozen mundane disasters quickly defined the aesthetic of Pop seriality. These works staked themselves on the familiarity of iconic referents — common products, famous faces, the daily news — and their repetition was in itself a reiteration of the very media imagery and advertising strategies on which they were based. But in the last decade of his life and career, Warhol, while maintaining his slick Pop style, changed course in his subject matter and turned for the first time to abstraction, creating four major series of works that eschewed the familiar imagery that was by then his trademark.¹ In this paper, I argue that one body of work in particular, the 1979 *Shadows* (**Fig. 1**), represents for Warhol an acute reflection not only on the nature of abstraction in art, but on the ambiguities between the nonrepresentational and the figurative, the simulacral and the real.

Partially but not fully divorced from real-world referents, the *Shadows* throw into question the very distinction between abstraction and figuration. Problems of reproduction and representation latent throughout Warhol's oeuvre are brought to the literal and figurative surface, becoming the very subject of the work. In 102 canvases of equal dimensions,² dark amorphous forms repeat on variously colored backgrounds.

As the title of the series suggests, these are pictures of shadows, isolated for the first time in Warhol's oeuvre as autonomous subjects, or anti-subjects. There are thus two aspects of these complex works to consider: the shadow itself as subject matter, and the technique by which Warhol represented that subject matter.

The shadow has its own significance within the history of representation, most notably as a tool for suggesting illusionistic depth in drawing and painting. It also bears its real-world significance as index, as a confirmation of a substantive physical reality. I argue that Warhol's *Shadows* subvert the illusionistic connotation of the shadow in order to explore the nature of the shadow as index and the many implications that its status as such has for the work of art. Through a complex, multi-layered artistic process, Warhol questions at every turn the power of the index to corroborate reality and the very notion of reality in an age increasingly given over to replacing substance with simulacra.

Warhol's *Shadows* are in fact screen prints of photographs of shadows of objects; the print is a trace of the photographic image, which is a trace of the shadow itself, which is a trace of the objects that cast that shadow. Considered in this way, the pictures call to mind Platonic questions of representation, as the final object — the picture on the wall — is multiple-times removed from the original referent, the objects that cast these shadows. In the pages that follow, I examine this complex and layered indexicality of the *Shadows* in several ways. First, I study the index as confirmation of reality, in the Barthesian sense of the photographic index: an entity that "attest[s] that what I see has indeed existed."³ Next, I consider the immateriality of the shadow itself, which leads me to question whether shadows as autonomous subjects, in isolation from their concrete referents, still function as indexes. I then study the paradox of the shadow as at once existence and nothingness, as positive



Fig. 1 Installation view at Heiner Friedrich, New York, 1979. Andy Warhol, *Shadows*, 1978–1979, Dia Art Foundation. © 2013 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

and negative, full and void. These considerations open in turn a discussion of Warhol's process, which creates layers of indexes, thereby radically distancing the final product from the original referent. To conclude, I ask where all this layering and distancing leaves the *Shadows* — as reality or simulacrum — and I reflect on the implications of each possibility. How does Warhol's vision of abstraction speak to the larger ethos of a culture defined by spectacle?

When asked why he chose Campbell's soup cans as the subject matter for his first major series in 1962, Warhol quipped, "I wanted to paint nothing. I was looking for something that was the essence of nothing, and that was it."⁴ It was perhaps this striving for nothingness, for subject

matter that is empty and meaningless, that led Warhol to turn nearly two decades later to the shadow. He had relied on shadows throughout his oeuvre as a means of questioning identity versus mask, information versus obfuscation, meaning versus emptiness.⁵ In earlier works, shadows distort and even make grotesque the visages of movie stars,⁶ and they obscure the features and underlying psychology of the artist himself.⁷ In all cases, they call attention to surface form and color rather than content, often undermining the meaning of the depicted image in the process.⁸ The *Shadows*, as the critic T. Lawson noted in their initial exhibition at the Heiner Friedrich Gallery in 1979, take this effort even further by "using images which are virtually unrecognizable while remaining pregnant with signification."⁹

The original exhibition comprised all 102 canvases, each in one of two compositional formats: “the peak” and “the cap.” The “peak” works contain a black, mountain-like form on the left side of the canvas, while diagonal bands create a black base across the bottom third of the canvas, taking the form, paradoxically, of a shadow cast by the mountainous shape at left. The “cap” works appear almost as a figure-ground reversal of the “peak” version, with a smaller, cap-like form in color on the left side of the canvas, which again appears to cast a black shadow across the colored base area, with the background entirely black. Viewed alongside the “peak” model, the “caps” read like a negative, an “absent shadow,” as Lynne Cooke has called it.¹⁰ In both versions, however, the pictures were made the same way, with color laid down first as ground, either in a flat, matte manner or mopped on broadly by Warhol himself, and then the black forms and non-forms overlaid via silkscreen.¹¹

The *Shadows*, each painted in a single color ranging from the subtle to the strident, were hung like a frieze, edge to edge around the gallery, just a few inches above the floor. “[I]nstalled as if all of one piece,” noted Lawson, “...the work as a whole ha[d] that meditative look of so much formalist abstraction.”¹² This was Warhol’s aim: he had “retired” from painting in 1965 but, a decade later, began to discuss with friends his desire to make art again. As Ernst Beyeler and Georg Frei explain, for an artist who matured during the reign of Abstract Expressionism, “‘serious’ painting for Warhol meant abstraction.”¹³

Of course, Warhol had his own idea of abstraction, which did not necessarily align with the comparisons to which critics immediately leapt upon seeing the *Shadows*. The series was seen as a “monumental homage to the legacy of the New York School;”¹⁴ a response to Robert Rauschenberg’s *White Paintings*, which John Cage had called “landing strips for shadows;”¹⁵

a nod to the sharp, gestural shapes of Franz Kline’s abstractions; a borrowing of the installation devices of Barnett Newman’s *Stations of the Cross*. More compellingly, the *Shadows* seemed to fulfill Harold Rosenberg’s prophecy of abstract art becoming “apocalyptic wallpaper.”¹⁶ Arranged as they were edge-to-edge, the canvases created a sort of decorative environment, which Warhol himself referred to as “disco décor.”¹⁷ This was the artist’s playful way of asserting that his pictures did not require any special attention; they were mere background noise.¹⁸ Reviewing the *Shadows* in 1979, T. McGonigle remarked, “The eye does travel rapidly along the walls as if the paintings were a film strip or just wallpaper.”¹⁹

Despite this dismissal of the quality of or meaning behind the *Shadows*, however, the majority of reviewers could not resist the impulse to identify the content contained within these canvases, or to pinpoint their real-world referent. “They’d be even easier to remember if I knew what they were,” declared one review. “Maybe it’s a picture of a water faucet and maybe it’s a golf cart.”²⁰ “It’s a pilot light,”²¹ suggested another, or “two hundred bunny rabbits.”²² Some viewers saw in these ambiguous images a “play of light in the corner of a room...[or] a flickering candle flame.”²³ Beholders of the *Shadows* sought in vain something concrete, some recognizable emblem; given the title of the works, some tried to ascertain the identities of the original objects that could have cast these enigmatic shadows. There was a sense of an indefinable, but unmistakable, *something* to these pictures of nothing: “There is almost nothing on them,” writes Julian Schnabel, “Yet they seem to be pictures of something and as full of imagery as any of Andy’s other paintings.”²⁴

This is the paradox of Warholian abstraction: it is at once nonobjective and borderline decorative, and tantalizingly referential to concrete, real-world things. Keith Hartley asserts that fully nonobjective abstraction was unattainable for

Warhol, for “he knew that he needed real life as the raw material for his art, but also...he did not believe anyone could ever leave behind the facts of their bodily circumstances.”²⁵ Shadows as subject matter were therefore a compelling solution, as both intangible non-forms and indexes of a concrete reality, abstract and ephemeral in and of themselves, but tied to something actual and physical.

The shadow, for Victor Stoichita, is particularly significant for its capacity, despite its evanescence, to represent “the principle of reality.”²⁶ It is the shadow that confirms the substantiality of a material entity: this thing casts a shadow, therefore it is real and it is present. To compare the shadow to the photograph is slippery but essential here. The photograph serves a similar function as index: it declares, in Roland Barthes’s words, that “*the thing has been there* (italics original).”²⁷ This is photography’s “noeme”, according to Barthes: “that-has-been,” or, “what I see has been here...and yet immediately separated; it has been absolutely, irrefutably present, and yet already deferred.”²⁸ Barthes positions the photograph against painting, which could never, no matter how “true” it seems, compel him to believe that its referent had actually existed.²⁹ The photograph provides “a *certainty* that such a thing had existed: not a question of exactitude, but of reality (italics original).”³⁰

Barthes further clarifies that the *noeme* “that-has-been” became possible only with the scientific discovery that made it feasible to “recover and print directly the luminous rays emitted by a variously lighted object. The photograph is literally an emanation of the referent.”³¹ A shadow, then, is in a sense its ontological opposite: the darkness as opposed to the light, a casting rather than an emanation, but still produced by the physical circumstances of light striking a real entity, and still guaranteeing in the end a certitude

of that entity’s reality. Of course, the shadow’s “noeme” would be something closer to “That-is,” since it exists only in the present-tense presence of its referent.

In the case of Warhol’s *Shadows*, despite their abstract nature, the pictures retain a connection to the physical world; however, this connection is a complex one. The photograph on which the prints are based declares that the shadow has been, and that shadow, in its transitory existence, declared for a moment “that (object) is.” It testified to the presence of an object that, when hit by raking light, cast this shape in darkness. The screen print of the photograph of this shadow is thus an index of an index of an index, which holds on to some of the certainty of reality granted by an index, but gives even less information than Barthes’s “that-has-been.”

Barthes goes on to discuss the way in which the photograph incites the spectator to scrutinize it, to learn more about the thing that it represents. But he cautions,

however hard I look, I discover nothing: if I enlarge, I see nothing but the grain of the paper: I undo the image for the sake of its substance; and if I do not enlarge, if I content myself with scrutinizing, I obtain this sole knowledge, long since possessed at first glance: that this indeed has been...Such is the Photograph: it cannot *say* what it lets us see.³²

A photograph cannot be penetrated, cannot reveal anything more than the fact of its referent’s reality. The shadow, in an even more radical way, denies us information about its referent; it simply and solely attests to its presence. Warhol’s *Shadows* are particularly reticent in this manner: they do not reveal even the most basic identity of their referent, so that we cannot deduce what real-world object has cast this dark trace.³³

The indistinguishability of the shadow’s referent is further complicated by the immateriality of the

shadow itself, this flickering, ephemeral non-entity. Again, this quality is shared in a sense by the photograph as Barthes understands it: "Whatever it grants to vision and whatever its manner, a photograph is always invisible: it is not it that we see."³⁴ What Barthes posits is that when we look at a photograph, we do not see *it* — the material object — we see only the referent, which inheres in the picture. The physical entity of the photograph disintegrates in our perception, in much the same way that a shadow leads us to contemplate not the absence of light but the referent that creates that absence.

Warhol's *Shadows* are particularly difficult to grasp because they, like nearly every subject matter represented by the artist throughout his oeuvre, are extracted from their context and stripped of crucial information that might hint at meaning or, for the shadows, at least the identity of their referent. Instead, that subject matter becomes in Warhol's hands what Rosalind Krauss calls "the signifier emptied of representational meaning,"³⁵ an index that does not and cannot disclose its referential source.

"Where is the what of these paintings?" Lawson asked in 1979.³⁶ For, in all of Warhol's prior work, there had always been a "what." Lawson, like many critics of the original exhibition, resolved to latch onto the title, the only indication of subject, to find this "what." But shadows themselves are "mysterious," he avowed. "[T]hey can virtually suggest anything...but only in context; on their own they remain nothing more than areas hidden from light."³⁷ And so Warhol's autonomous shadows, isolated from all context, take on the quality of nonobjective abstraction: they, like the gestures and conventions of abstract painting, "hold the promise of signification without having the power within themselves to bring it forth."³⁸

By repeating the same shadow motif, in positive and negative, 102 times, Warhol emphasized

the emptiness of the signifier. Donna de Salvo stresses that throughout Warhol's oeuvre, the device of the repeated image complicates his paintings because "we believe that so much information should lead us to know what is going on."³⁹ Instead, the reiteration merely highlights the impossibility of getting beyond meaningless surface. De Salvo calls the *Shadows* "pure effect, nothing but an afterimage."⁴⁰ In fact, Warhol's use of photography throughout his oeuvre has deliberately complicated the medium itself. Describing Warhol's technique in his early works derived from photographs of car accidents and suicides, David Burnett contends:

In the silkscreen technique the image became a kind of residual ghost of a photograph where clarity and sharpness — qualities that underscore the veracity and reliability of photographs — are compromised. They were reduced to raw, anonymous, starkly contrasting remnants, devoid of context — a residue within the painted ground of his canvases.⁴¹

This effort at obfuscation of the photographic sign reaches its apogee in the *Shadows*, where the subject itself of the photograph is immaterial and formless, and the subsequent silk-screening of the picture only serves to underscore the illegibility of the image.

Our inability to pin down the *Shadows* as either abstraction or representation is related, as I have suggested, to the complex process of their creation, which systematically distances the final product from its original referent, all the while suggesting that the referent is essential to — and indeed inherent in — the work. Significantly, within the layered progression from cast shadow of object to photograph of shadow to screen-print of photograph, the depicted subject repeatedly flips from positive to negative and back again multiple times. In the photographic process, the original shadow is first translated into a negative and is then developed into a positive. Next, the image is reversed again onto the silkscreen,

which functions like a fabric negative, producing a positive print.⁴² This interplay, in light of the fundamental nature of shadow as negative — as absence of light — seems to be an intentional convolution of the conventions of representation and of perception.

For Krauss, this process is where Warhol relinquishes the indexicality of the shadow. A shadow on its own is indeed a sign *caused* by its referent, but Krauss avows that the reproduction of a shadow is altogether something else. She argues that the celluloid surface onto which the cast shadow is recast acts as a mediator between the effect and its original cause, separating the two permanently and irrevocably.⁴³ The referent that created the shadow in the first place will thus never inhere in the photographic index. “Endless shadows,” she declares, “yet nothing left to cast them.”⁴⁴

Krauss relies on Walter Benjamin's concept of “aura” to explain the role of photography in destroying a work's link to its own origins. But she finds that what Warhol ends up creating is an “aura-effect”: a sort of “spectacularized and infinitely distanced version of the intensity abstract art wished to compel,” which is the result at once of an attempt to maintain a connection to some sense of the work's origins and of an acknowledgment of the fundamental absence of the “cause” of the *Shadows*.⁴⁵ This formulation feels a bit too limiting, however, for the entire thrust of the index is not its ability to keep its “cause” present, but to substantiate its one-time presence — to confirm its physical reality. Were the *Shadows* painted rather than cast, photographed, and printed, then Krauss's point would be inarguably valid. The fact of the works' repetitive indexing is crucial. It is the means by which Warhol tests both the authority of the index and the ability of a representation to capture or contain reality.

The “quality of realness”⁴⁶ that viewers so fervently identified in the *Shadows*, despite their unrelenting abstractness, is a problematic subject throughout Warhol's oeuvre, and one that stems from the always ambiguous relationship between his paintings and their real-world referents. This is why Benjamin's concept of “aura” is often invoked in discussions of Warhol's work; after all, the artist's entire corpus plays a game of mechanical reproduction, questioning at every turn the notions of copy and original. However, Jean Baudrillard argues that Benjamin's insight is misplaced in the Warhol scholarship. Baudrillard contends that while “Benjamin saw the aura as something unique to the authentic original...the simulacrum or simulation can perfectly well have an aura of its own.”⁴⁷

But do the *Shadows* fall into the category of the authentic or of simulacra? As Keith Hartley notes,

By reversing the usual relationship between shadows and background and creating the odd painting where shadow becomes the light element and the surrounding dark, Warhol questions... the very notion of what reality is. How can we distinguish between shadow and reality?⁴⁸

Hartley goes on to invoke Plato's notion of the perception of reality as akin to seeing shadows on the wall of a cave, whereas true reality lies outside the cave, beyond our perception. In this model, shadows are our reality, the only reality we know, but in fact they are merely a projection — an index — of the actual real.

Warhol plays on this ontological connotation of the shadow by then filtering this already-diluted sense of reality through the processes of photography and silkscreen. What his *Shadows* are, then, are simulations of a simulation. Warhol's paintings, with their combination of mechanical techniques, function as surface and screen, two dimensions that in the 1970s became ubiquitous properties of modern life. David Burnett defines the screen as “the membrane through which perceptions of the real are

constantly filtered, deflected, and modified to construct the world as it passes,"⁴⁹ and Terry Smith notes that in this period, "the ubiquity of mechanically reproduced imagery meant that the vast majority of visual images seen by most people...appeared...on, or better, as screens."⁵⁰ Warhol's *Shadows*, in that they, like most of his work, are derived from photographs, constitute simulations; they "mimic what we perceive to be 'real.'"⁵¹ By Baudrillard's definition, "Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality — a hyperreal."⁵²

This real without origin, without reality — this hyperreal — is precisely what Warhol presents with the *Shadows*. These haunting images of emptied-out signifiers still, by the fact of their indexicality, declare their reality despite their lack of knowable origins. For Warhol, the image is more real than the real itself.⁵³ It is a theme we see again and again in his work and one that is befitting of a keen social observer living in the so-called age of the spectacle. Warhol's *Shadows* play on the shift, previously theorized by Guy Debord, in how we define and perceive reality in an era of mass production, mass media, and mass consumption, where "the real world is changing into simple images, [and] simple images are becoming real beings."⁵⁴ That is, empty, substance-less images were replacing real things, and individuals were losing their ability to distinguish between the two. Describing his *Shadows* exhibition of 1979, Warhol declared: "They change with the light of the colors, with the moment and the state of mind...Isn't life itself a series of images that change all the while repeating?"⁵⁵

The *Shadows* ultimately capture the ambiguity of reality and simulacra in modern life. As Stoichita explains, "Each canvas is the reflection of a shadow, each 'original' is (already) a reproduction; the canvases reflect the world,

and the world itself is the reduplication of an infinite screen."⁵⁶ Warhol thus provides an emblem for what Heidegger called "the age of the world picture," a time when "Being" was perceivable only as representation.⁵⁷ The *Shadows*, with their lack of substantive essence, with their repetitive form and structure, with their denial of any single truth, reflect the experience of living in a world given over to empty spectacle, where "everything is surface and nothing but surface,"⁵⁸ a world in which photography, television, and other technological media had become "arbiter[s] of the real."⁵⁹

"If you want to know all about Andy Warhol," the artist famously announced, "just look at the surface of my paintings and films and me, and there I am. There's nothing behind it."⁶⁰ This oft-quoted rejoinder is more than a coy non-answer or a pithy sound bite; rather, it demonstrates quite succinctly Warhol's understanding of the myriad implications of surface in spectacular culture. Already in his earliest ambitious works, Warhol played with notions of the surface as the new real, the image as the new reality. His portraits of Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor, Jackie Kennedy, and the like are pictures not of individuals but of their images, of their flattened, media-produced masks. "I see everything that way, the surface of things," he declared.⁶¹

Given this way of seeing the real, when Warhol decided to try his hand at abstraction, the shadow presented itself as a compelling subject: ethereal and evanescent yet grounded in a physical reality; pure surface, but with an implied and necessary connection to a third dimension. Detached from its referent, removed from its context, and presented as an autonomous image, the shadow became what Lynne Cooke calls "a purposefully made image of 'nothing.'"⁶²

And so Warhol's *Shadows* turn out to be at once something and nothing — a literal index of a

physical reality — and an empty signifier that exists only as surface image. The importance of Warhol's choice of shadow as subject is intricately related to his method of creating the works: both subject and process play the game of doubling and reversal, of confirmation and rebuttal. Positive becomes negative becomes positive; substance becomes surface becomes substance; the real becomes simulacrum becomes the real. Warhol shows us that the one was always already the other.

Jennifer Watson is a Ph.D. candidate in the history of art at Johns Hopkins University, where her research focuses on the art of postwar Europe and the United States. She became interested in Warhol's late work, especially the *Shadows*, after seeing the exhibition *Andy Warhol: The Last Decade* at the Baltimore Museum of Art in 2010. As luck would have it, the *Shadows* came to the Hirshhorn Museum the following year, and she cemented her ideas about them in the article printed here. Jennifer is currently writing a dissertation on the French artist Arman, exploring the relationship between realism and representation in his early work.

Endnotes

1. These series include the Oxidation paintings, the Rorschachs, the Camouflages, and the Shadows, all produced between 1977 and 1987, the year of Warhol's death. For studies of each, see Joseph D. Ketner, ed., *Andy Warhol: The Last Decade* (New York: Prestel, 2009).
2. Each canvas measures 76 x 56 inches.
3. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 82.
4. Heiner Bastian, "Rituals of Unfulfillable Individuality: The Whereabouts of Emotions," in Heiner Bastian, ed., *Andy Warhol: Retrospective* (London: Tate Publishing, 2001), 26.
5. Benjamin Buchloh has compiled and commented on a substantial collection of Warhol's works that reflect a keen interest in the representational and signifying power of shadows in *Andy Warhol: Shadows and Other Signs of Life* (Koln: Walther Konig, 2008).
6. See, for instance, Warhol's *Silver Liz* of 1963 at the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh, PA.
7. Warhol's *Self-Portrait* of 1967 at the Tate Modern is exemplary of this use of shadow.
8. In the *Hammer and Sickle* series, for instance, as the critic T. Lawson has observed, shadows serve to subvert the symbolism of the emblem by shifting focus to form. T. Lawson, "Andy Warhol: Heiner Friedrich Gallery," *Flash Art* 88 (1979): 23.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Lynne Cooke, "Andy Warhol: Shadows," in *Robert Lehman Lectures on Contemporary Art* (New York: Dia Art Foundation, 2004), 88.
11. Richard Kalina, "New York: Andy Warhol at the Dia Center," *Art in America* 88 (2000): 129.
12. Lawson, "Andy Warhol," 23.
13. Ernst Beyeler and Georg Frei, "Introduction," in *Andy Warhol: Series and Singles* (Basel: Fondation Beyeler, 2000), 18.
14. Jane Bell, "Andy Warhol," *Artnews* 78 (1979): 172.
15. Cited in Rosalind Krauss, "Warhol's Abstract Spectacle," in *Abstraction, Gesture, Ecriture: Paintings from the Daros Collection* (Zurich: Scalo, 1999), 132.
16. Thomas Kellein, "Pleasure in Mechanics: Warhol's Abstract Work," in *Andy Warhol: Abstracts* (New York: Prestel-Verlag, 1993), 20.
17. Warhol, cited in Mark Francis, "Horror Vacui: Andy Warhol's Installations," in *Andy Warhol: The Late Work* (New York: Prestel, 2004), 19.
18. Charles Stuckey reports that when Warhol was asked in 1966 what was the ideal installation space for his paintings, he replied "It makes no difference — it's just decoration." Stuckey adds that Warhol by then conceived of his films "as décor not requiring special attention from

- the viewer." See "Warhol in Context," in *The Work of Andy Warhol* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1989), 18-19.
19. T. McGonigle, "Heiner Friedrich Gallery, New York," *Arts Magazine* 53 (1979): 18.
 20. Jane Kaplowitz, cited in Gregory Battcock, "Heiner Friedrich Gallery, New York," *Domus* 597 (1979): 56.
 21. Philip Johnson, cited in *Ibid.*
 22. Mike Robinson, cited in *Ibid.*
 23. David Bourdon, "The Shadows Lengthen," in *Warhol* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1989), 372.
 24. Julian Schnabel, "Shadow Paintings," in *Andy Warhol: The Last Decade* (New York: Prestel, 2009), 195.
 25. Keith Hartley, "Andy Warhol: Abstraction," in *Andy Warhol: The Last Decade* (New York: Prestel, 2009), 69.
 26. Victor I. Stoichita, "Beyond the Peter Pan Complex: Warhol's Shadows," in *Robert Lehman Lectures on Contemporary Art* (New York: Dia Art Foundation, 2004), 95.
 27. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 76.
 28. *Ibid.*, 77.
 29. *Ibid.*
 30. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 80.
 31. *Ibid.*
 32. *Ibid.*, 100.
 33. In fact, the referent of Warhol's *Shadows* was a crude maquette put together by his studio assistant Ronnie Cutrone in order to create a purposefully ambiguous, meaningless, abstract shadow. Cutrone describes the process: "I just got matte boards and pieces of cardboard..., arranged them and toned them up and photographed them." Cited in Hartley, "Andy Warhol: Abstraction," 65.
 34. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 6.
 35. Krauss, "Warhol's Abstract Spectacle," 125.
 36. Lawson, "Andy Warhol," 23.
 37. *Ibid.*
 38. *Ibid.*
 39. Donna de Salvo, "Afterimage," in Heiner Bastian, ed., *Andy Warhol: Retrospective* (London: Tate Publishing, 2001), 48.
 40. *Ibid.*, 50.
 41. David Burnett, "Mirrorworld: Warhol and Photography," in *Andy Warhol* (Sidney: Queensland Art Gallery, 2007), 33.
 42. David Bourdon describes the silk-screening process: "Silk-screening is a photomechanical stencil process utilizing a fabric screen that has been chemically treated so that certain areas are impervious to pigment, while other areas let the pigment pass thru. The silkscreen functions like a fabric negative: what appears light on the screen comes out dark, and what is dark is not printed at all." Cited in *Ibid.*, 38.
 43. Krauss, "Warhol's Abstract Spectacle," 132.
 44. *Ibid.*
 45. *Ibid.*, 133.
 46. Schnabel, "Shadow Paintings," 197.
 47. Jean Baudrillard, "Absolute Merchandise," in *Andy Warhol: Paintings 1960-86* (Stuttgart: Hatje, 1995), 20.
 48. Hartley, "Andy Warhol: Abstraction," 66.
 49. Burnett, "Mirrorworld," 31.
 50. Cited in *Ibid.*
 51. Burnett, "Mirrorworld," 31.
 52. Jean Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Simulations," in *Selected Writings* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 167.
 53. Stoichita, "Beyond the Peter Pan Complex," 103.
 54. "Là où le monde réel se change en simples images, les simples images deviennent des êtres réels..." Guy Debord, *La Société du spectacle* (Paris: Gallimard-Jeunesse, 2008), 23.
 55. "Elles changent avec la lumière des couleurs, avec le moment et l'état d'esprit...La vie elle-même n'est-elle pas une série d'images qui changent tout en se repentant?" Warhol, quoted in Victor I. Stoichita, "Les ombres de Warhol," *Cahiers du Musée National d'Art Moderne* 65 (1998): 84.

56. "Chaque toile est le reflet d'une ombre, chaque 'original' est (déjà) une reproduction; les toiles réfléchissent le monde, et le monde lui-même est la reduplication d'un écran infini." Victor I. Stoichita, "Les ombres de Warhol," *Cahiers du Musée National d'Art Moderne* 65 (1998): 85.
57. Terry Smith, "Enervation, Viscerality: The Fate of the Image in Modernity," in Terry Smith, ed., *Impossible Presence: Surface and Screen in the Photogenic Era* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 7.
58. De Salvo, "Afterimage," 51.
59. Burnett, "Mirrorworld," 38.
60. Cited in Stoichita, "Beyond the Peter Pan Complex," 104.
61. Cited in *Ibid.*
62. Cooke, "Andy Warhol: Shadows," 89.

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