The

RUTGERS ART REVIEW

Published by the Graduate Students of the Department of Art History

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Volume 21
2005

ISSN 0194-049X

Rutgers Art Review
Volume 21

Rutgers Art Review is an annual journal published by graduate students in the Department of Art History at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. *RAR* is dedicated to presenting original, scholarly research by current graduate students in the history of art and architecture, art criticism, and related fields. For each volume, the editors convene an editorial board made up of graduate students from the department and review all new submissions. The strongest papers are then sent to established scholars in order to confirm originality of research and soundness of argument. Articles appearing in *RAR* are abstracted and indexed online in *America: History and Life*, *ARTbibliographies Modern*, the *Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals*, *BHA (Bibliography of the History of Art)*, *Historical Abstracts*, and the *Wilson Art Index*. The journal is distributed by subscription to over ninety of the finest academic, museum, and public libraries in North America and Europe. For annual rates and more information about *RAR*, please consult the subscription form at the back of this volume or visit our website at http://arthistory.rutgers.edu/rar/rar.htm

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NOTE TO SUBSCRIBERS: In order to maintain accurate dating of its contents, with this volume *Rutgers Art Review* has amended the correlation between its volume number and publication year.

Acknowledgments

Benefactors
Allen & Company
The Office of the Associate Vice President for Academic and Public Partnerships in the Arts and Humanities, Rutgers
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The editors of *Rutgers Art Review* extend their special appreciation to Allen & Company as well as the Office of the Associate Vice President for Academic and Public Partnerships in the Arts and Humanities of Rutgers University for their generous financial support of the journal. We are also grateful to the Graduate Student Association/Graduate Publications Committee of Rutgers University. Its continued support has been vital to the success of *RAR*.

We are especially grateful to Julia Kameron and Heather Nolin for their fundraising efforts on behalf of *RAR*. We would also like to thank Suzy Ford and Lisandra Estevez for their assistance during the final stages of production and Eric Tuvel, without whose design expertise this issue could not have been published.

On behalf of the entire *RAR* staff, the editors wish to thank Catherine Puglisi for her guidance and advice throughout the preparation of this volume.

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Géricault: *The Times of Day*

Frédérique Baumgartner

When considering Théodore Géricault's brief life (1791-1824), the year 1818 is inevitably associated with the inception of the painter's most ambitious project, the *Raft of the Medusa*, which, according to Charles Clément, the painter's first biographer, occupied him from spring of 1818 until the opening of the Salon in summer of 1819. In fact, this period is described by Clément as one of complete seclusion for the young painter, fully committed to achieving a great history painting.[1] However, while Géricault was tirelessly gathering documents on the tragic and scandalous affair of the raft of the Medusa and working on his first studies for the painting during the summer and autumn of 1818, he also executed a series of large landscapes,[2] identified as depicting the times of day. Although the depiction of the times of day, a popular eighteenth-century landscape painting topic, traditionally included four panels, Géricault limited his series to three paintings, known today as *Morning: Landscape with Fishermen* (Munich, Neue Pinakothek, fig. 1), *Noon: Landscape with a Roman Tomb* (Paris, Musée du Petit Palais, fig. 2), and *Evening: Landscape with an Aqueduct* (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, fig. 3). Approximately 98 1/2 x 86 1/4 inches each, the works that make up the *Times of Day* series constitute Géricault's largest paintings after his three Salon entries, the *Charging Chasseur* (Salon of 1812), the *Wounded Cuirassier* (Salon of 1814) and the *Raft of the Medusa* (all three in Paris, Musée du Louvre).

While an abundant literature exists on the *Raft of the Medusa*, including several monographs, the *Times of Day* have been the object of little critical attention. Admittedly, when the three landscapes were first exhibited together at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1990-91,[3] Gary Tinterow published the result of his recent research on the series,[4] including speculations on the provenance of the cycle and a thorough examination of the possible existence of a fourth panel (*Night*).[5] But none of the lectures delivered in 1991 at the conference on Géricault,[6] which was largely responsible for introducing new models of understanding for a wide range of Géricault's paintings, mentioned the *Times of Day*. In fact, landscape painting was hardly discussed in the conference, probably for the simple reason that Géricault was never much preoccupied with its practice, as indicated by the limited number of landscape paintings and drawings listed by Germain Bazin in his catalogue raisonné of Géricault's work.[7]

However, the conference on Géricault could serve as a starting point for the elaboration of an explanatory model of Géricault's practice of landscape painting, based on the study of the *Times of Day*. Régis Michel's preface and essay "Le nom de Géricault,"[8] both published in the *Actes du Colloque*, give a powerful insight into the dramatic redefinition to which Géricault's paintings have been subjected since 1991. In these essays, the author proposes the rupture of Géricault's work with classicism and with academic painting as a model through which to evaluate the shift produced by the painter's art practice. This rupture, he argues, is embodied in elements such as the end of a linear form of narrative in history painting and the emergence of an unstable and fragmented form of subjectivity in figure painting: "*Le Radeau de la Méduse*, tableau divisé, fracturé, disloqué, que travaille crûment la figure béante du hiatus, est une œuvre indicible."[9] Unlike Michel, Tinterow, whose essay focuses on the *Times of Day*, locates Géricault's large landscapes within a range of landscape painting

Fig. 1 Théodore Géricault, *Morning: Landscape with Fishermen*, 1818, oil on canvas, 98 5/8 x 86 3/4 in. (250.5 x 220.4 cm). Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Neue Pinakothek, Munich.

traditions, without addressing Géricault's practice of this genre outside its inscription within a lineage of prior practices. Indeed, Géricault's *Times of Day* seem, at first, hardly reconcilable with the painter's overall production: *Morning*, *Noon* and *Evening* differ from a wide range of Géricault's paintings in terms of sources and iconography. This is especially evident if one considers that Géricault introduced to painting elements such as biological death and madness as well as elements contrasting drastically with the painter's choice to depict nature.

Thus, this paper will first position Géricault's *Times of Day* within the existing field of landscape painting, in order to evaluate the degree to which they participate in his systematic transgression of academic standards. I will therefore examine *Morning*, *Noon* and *Evening* from a formal and thematic standpoint, in the context of an analysis of the status and goals of landscape painting from its emergence in the seventeenth century until its early nineteenth-century developments. In the second part of this paper, I will explore the specificity of Géricault's practice of landscape painting, which, I will argue, is at odds with his practice in other projects. Indeed, if the intrusion of the real in painting (i.e., the representation of the actuality of the contemporary world) is often credited to Géricault's art practice, it does not seem to apply to the *Times of Day*. In fact, Géricault's large landscapes seem precisely detached from the real, for a strange, oneiric and even proto-surreal dimension is inherent to *Morning*, *Noon* and *Evening*. This is notably evident in the painter's depiction of natural elements that evoke physiognomic forms, the inter-penetration of nature and architecture, and the lack of temporal specificity. Based on their appeal to the world of dreams, I will argue that the *Times of Day* can be positioned within an entirely new field of artistic practice, characterized by its negation of reality and serving as a means of escape into timelessness. To some extent, Rousseau's definition of the process of reverie as a free association of thoughts can serve as a lens through which to understand Géricault's relation to the practice of landscape painting,[10] while the act of reverie as defined by Rousseau strongly resonates with some strategies adopted by the Surrealist artists. I will interpret the narratives unfolding in *Morning*, *Noon* and *Evening* on the basis of this explanatory approach to Géricault's practice of landscape painting.

* * *

To specify Géricault's position within the existing field of landscape painting presupposes an examination of the *Times of Day* in relation to the notion of genre, which, in the early nineteenth century, persisted as the primary parameter according to which the Academy would evaluate painting. For the legibility of painting, crucial to the Academy, was first and foremost determined by its adherence to the theoretical and formal principles defining a genre. Ultimately, this was the condition for the legitimacy of painting. Beyond the case of the *Times of Day*, the question of genre extends to Géricault's work as a whole, the artist having maintained a deeply ambiguous relation to the Academy during his entire career: on the one hand, Géricault was looking for institutional recognition, through his ongoing commitment to execute large narrative paintings to be exhibited at the Salon; on the other hand, Géricault was almost systematically transgressing the Academy's rigid categorization of genres (beginning early in his career when he painted the *Charging Chasseur*), choosing subject matter incompatible with the goal to be achieved by history painting, namely, the viewer's edification.

The *Times of Day* stand as an unusual but vivid example of the equivocal status of Géricault's work with respect to the principles of the Academy. On the impulse of

Fig. 2 Théodore Géricault, *Noon: Landscape with a Roman Tomb*, 1818, oil on canvas, 98 1/2 x 86 1/4 in. (250.2 x 220 cm). Musée du Petit Palais, Paris. (Copyright: Photothèque des musées de la ville de Paris / Cliché: Pierrain.)

Fig. 3 Théodore Géricault, *Evening: Landscape with an Aqueduct*, 1818, oil on canvas, 98 1/2 x 86 1/2 in. (250.2 x 220 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. (Purchase, Gift of James A. Moffett II in memory of George M. Moffett, by exchange, 1989. 1989.183).

landscapist and theorist Pierre Henri Valenciennes, the institution created in 1817 a Prix de Rome in the category of historic landscape[11] (the genre with which *Morning, Noon* and *Evening* are traditionally associated), relying on the representation of an edifying narrative within an ideal nature. Since Géricault painted his three large landscapes in 1818, it is tempting, at first, to think that the painter was closely following the Academy's debates and was seeking to fulfill institutional demands. The publication of Jean-Baptiste Deperthes' treatise *Théorie du paysage* in 1818,[12] which discusses the genre of historic landscape, strengthens this standpoint, as it testifies to the popularity of this genre in the academic milieu at the time, while supporting the perception of Géricault as an artist preoccupied with topicality. However, having just returned from a one-year stay in Italy, "une année de tristesse et d'ennui,"[13] when undertaking the series of the *Times of Day*, Géricault was certainly not planning to compete for a Prix de Rome. Furthermore, *Morning, Noon* and *Evening* were never exhibited at the Salon. Thus, if historic landscape was the object of discussions in the academic circle, of which Géricault must have been aware, his decision to paint the *Times of Day* seems to exceed the sphere of the Academy, while still, somehow, being shaped by its debates.

If designating *Morning, Noon* and *Evening* as historic landscapes virtually normalizes them,[14] the way in which the three large landscapes actually relate to the genre of historic landscape seems highly questionable. In fact, Tinterow alludes to the ambivalence of Géricault's *Times of Day* in terms of their adherence to one specific genre. After stating that *Morning, Noon* and *Evening* "conformed to the contemporary definition of the heroic [i.e., historic] landscape," he asserts that "Géricault reached back to the dramatic, animated *paysages à effet* of Joseph Vernet."[15] Through this statement, Tinterow suggests Géricault's *Times of Day* exemplify an overlap between genres. This overlap contradicts the essence of the concept of genre in its academic understanding, formulated by Jacques Derrida (though in a larger context) at the beginning of his essay "The Law of Genre."[16] In this essay, Derrida points out how, supposedly, genres are not to be mixed, as mixing them is incompatible with their very nature, consisting of a norm that all the elements of the genre must meet. This definition exactly corresponds to the Academy's views and consequently calls into question the status of Géricault's *Times of Day*. Indeed, according to Tinterow, the three landscapes precisely tend towards the inevitable contamination between genres, defined by Derrida as the law of the law of genre. In order to clarify the ambiguous, contaminated status of the *Times of Day* underlined by Tinterow, I will now briefly recapitulate the diverse practices constituting the genre of landscape painting, in order to evaluate the possible relation between Géricault's *Times of Day* and such models.

The genre of landscape painting, characterized by an increasing fragmentation since its emergence in seventeenth-century French painting, was the object of many theoretical treatises and debates from the early eighteenth century onwards. Roger de Piles' *Cours de peinture par principes* (1708) was an important milestone in the history of landscape painting theory,[17] for the distinction it set up between heroic landscape and rural landscape constituted the basis for all further theorization of academic landscape painting. The genre of heroic landscape, de Piles argued, was best practiced by Poussin; it relied on the representation of an ideal landscape, animated by a historical, religious or mythological scene endowed with a moral dimension, testifying to the literary knowledge of its practitioner. Claude, on the other hand, was designated as the master of rural landscape, in which the depiction of natural effects (light, atmosphere) were privileged over the representation of a morally edifying subject-matter. During the

eighteenth century, the duality of the genre of landscape painting was enriched by the emergence of the so-called *paysage à effet*, notably practiced by Joseph Vernet (1714-89), and characterized by the depiction of spectacular natural phenomena such as snow scenes or stormy coasts in a highly dramatized fashion. In addition to *paysage à effet*, Valenciennes, who formulated the theoretical principles of nineteenth-century academic landscape painting in *Eléments de perspective pratique à l'usage des artistes, suivis de réflexions et de conseils à l'élève sur la peinture et particulièrement sur le genre du paysage,*[18] also introduced a new category of landscape painting, the *paysage portrait*. Its specificity lay in its commitment to truth to nature through a proliferation of realistic details. Valenciennes reiterated the distinction between Poussin and Claude, while emphasizing the similarity between landscapes by Claude and Gaspar Dughet (or Guaspre), to whom Clément refers in his mention of *Morning*.[19] Evidently, among all the genres, it was historic landscape that Valenciennes praised the most, as its depiction of episodes drawn from history, religion or classical poetry served the legitimization of a genre still considered significantly inferior to history painting. In alignment with Tinterow's statement, it is historic landscape and *paysage à effet* that will concern us here, Géricault's *Times of Day* obviously rejecting any naturalistic attempt.

As mentioned above, historic landscape was discussed by theorist Jean-Baptiste Deperthes. He defined it thus:

> the art of composing scenes by selecting from among the finest and greatest natural features and presenting characters whose actions, by recalling a historical event or conjuring up an ideal subject, is such as to excite lively interest in the spectator, evoke noble sentiments or spur his imagination.[20]

According to this definition (which reiterates de Piles' and Valenciennes' views), Géricault's *Times of Day*, through the depiction of narratives devoid of historical or literary subjects, obviously depart from the genre of historic landscape. In fact, the scenes unfolding in *Morning, Noon* and *Evening* convey a strong sense of hopelessness, significantly antagonistic to the goals to be achieved by the highest type of landscape painting. This is most evident in Géricault's depiction of human figures in a dissonant relation to the natural environment. In *Morning*, five fishermen are laboring over the launch of a small boat, which obviously could not accommodate the five of them. The navigation of the boat on the river, very narrow in comparison to the men's proportions, seems somehow absurd. In *Noon*, a man and a woman accompanied by their child are trapped on the river's bank, the bridge joining the two banks having partially collapsed. Threatened by an approaching storm and frightened by some human remains tied to a wooden post planted below the enormous tomb dominating them, the family implores two fishermen to embark them in their small craft. The presence of human remains, suggesting a recent crime,[21] endows the scene with a thoroughly macabre dimension. *Noon* evidently rejects the noble sentiments evoked by historic landscape: fear, panic, urgency and chaos dominate here, to the detriment of rationalistic values. *Evening*, finally, is supposed to evoke a pleasant bathing scene. Accordingly, the river is narrow and calm, and yet, the bather seen frontally seems terrified, while the man on the far right is struggling to get himself out of the water.

However, the *Times of Day* participate in the genre of historic landscape in the sense that *Morning, Noon* and *Evening* are all composed according to a process of selection

of motifs offered by the Italian countryside (hills, pine trees, cypresses) while mixing freely actual architectural elements.[22] Through this process, Géricault creates entirely imaginary sites.[23] But this mode of composition was adopted by painters of historic landscape in order to depict an ideal and timeless nature, a classical nature aligned with the universal values transmitted by the scene unfolding in the landscape. Poussin's landscapes were actually called classical before being designated as heroic by de Piles. This term applied not only to the subject matter, but to Poussin's type of compositions (essentially relying on balance and traditional perspective) and depiction of nature itself — that is, a domesticated, ennobled and peaceful nature bathed in a clear and sweet light, appearing as the perfect setting for man's meditation. Such features are thoroughly absent in Géricault's *Times of Day*. Basic rules of classical composition are transgressed: the horizon line in *Noon* and *Evening* is located too high, and the perspective of the bridge in *Noon* is inaccurate. The vertical compositions, dominated by imposing mountains in *Morning* and *Evening* and a huge tomb in *Noon*, convey a sense of oppression contrasting drastically with Poussin's airy compositions. In *Noon* and *Evening*, the accumulation of rocks and architectural structures in restricted spaces overwhelms the figures. This is particularly obvious in *Evening*, where the succession of heavy masses of rocks and soil from the foreground into the horizon seems to crush the small bathers represented at the bottom of the composition. The tomb in *Noon*, out of proportion, slightly crooked and weakly supported by ruins, gradually overcome by vegetation, could well collapse soon. This impression is reinforced by the muddy aspect of the hill where the edifices stand. It is as though the ruined columns were about to slide down the hill and complete the destruction of the bridge joined to the bank by a fragile beam.

In all three landscapes, the environment is hostile and aggressive. The dead branches and the tree stumps in *Morning* and *Evening* resonate with the broken bridge and the ruins of *Noon*. Nature in *Noon* is particularly repulsive; mud, moss and small bushes swept by the wind are depicted in the foreground, while an inhospitable village is represented on the other bank of the river. The inter-penetration of the mountain and the architecture in the background of *Evening* indicates a clear break with Poussin's representation of nature, where all components, including the smallest details such as leaves, are sharply differentiated. Lastly, Géricault's overall treatment of light in the *Times of Day* is diametrically opposed to Claude's or Dughet's. Of the former, Valenciennes noted: "Claude Lorrain a rendu, avec la plus exacte vérité et même avec intérêt, le lever tranquille et le brûlant déclin de l'astre du jour. Il a peint admirablement l'air atmosphérique; personne n'a mieux fait sentir que lui, cette belle vapeur, ce vague et cette indécision qui fait le charme de la Nature."[24] On the contrary, the palette of *Evening*, dominated by greens and ochres tinted by an artificial orange light, conveys the sentiment of a sick nature. The hideous yellowish light enveloping *Noon* even evokes death. Thus, Géricault's choices in terms of narrative, composition and depiction of nature in the *Times of Day* significantly disrupt expectations of historic landscape. On a larger scale, this implies a departure from classicism, as historic landscape was deeply rooted in the principles of the latter.

Some of the claims made about the relation between Géricault's *Times of Day* and historic landscape can be reiterated in the discussion of *paysage à effet*. Tinterow points out that this genre was notably practiced by Joseph Vernet, whose painting was greatly admired by Diderot. Eager to elevate Vernet's scenes of shipwrecks to a greater status than that of mere landscape painting, Diderot invoked Vernet's ability to lead him to

the sublime experience through his landscape paintings. His argument was actually inscribed within larger debates on the sublime aesthetic, which gained great currency during the eighteenth century and was widely exploited by contemporary landscape painters.[25] As Tinterow indicates, they pictorially translated the notions of the terrible and the dramatic, crucial to the sublime, through such motifs as the craggy mountain, the precipice, and the storm. These dramatic effects were reinforced through disproportion. Noting the presence of such elements in Géricault's *Times of Day*, Tinterow locates the three large landscapes within the tradition of the sublime. However, it is important to note that if Diderot praised Vernet's landscapes so much and perceived them as sublime, it was for their ability to communicate ideas as valuable as those transmitted by history paintings: "Les marines de Vernet, qui m'offrent toutes sortes d'incidents et de scènes, sont autant pour moi des tableaux d'histoire, que les *Sept Sacrements* de Poussin."[26] As the discussion of the narratives of the *Times of Day* demonstrated, the promotion of moral values does not appear to have been part of Géricault's ambition, whereas it stands as the foundational condition for great painting according to Diderot. On a formal level as well, Vernet's landscapes, by using variations of light to suggest different moments of the day, testify to an acute sense of observation of nature. In this respect, they differ from Géricault's *Times of Day*, which are characterized by a renunciation of empirical observation in favor of an assemblage of varied generic elements. Finally, the overall balance of Vernet's rigorous compositions, his delicate touch and his figures' elegance, beyond turning his landscapes into objects of delectation, stand as evidence for Vernet's claim of classical legacy for his painting.

The discussion of historic landscape and *paysage à effet* demonstrates that they share a related ambition. Accordingly, the departure of Géricault's *Times of Day* from both genres exemplifies a larger rupture extending to classicism. In this respect, Géricault's large landscapes can be reconciled with the painter's overall production; the ambiguity of genre and the absence of heroism in *Morning*, *Noon* and *Evening* resonate with some of the anti-classical strategies that also characterize the *Charging Chasseur* and the *Raft of the Medusa*, to mention only Géricault's Salon entries. Thus, Michel's designation of Géricault as "grand fossoyeur du classicisme"[27] extends to the *Times of Day*. In fact, this statement finds a pictorial match in the narrative unfolding in *Evening*, which uses as a starting point the popular eighteenth-century theme of the evening bath. This theme was appreciated for its ludic dimension, taking place in an attractive, peaceful nature. Moreover, it provided a painter with the opportunity to demonstrate his ability to depict male nudes in a classical style recalling the *académie*. Vernet's *Bathers* (Stockholm, Nationalmuseum), which, as Tinterow has underlined, influenced the composition of Géricault's *Evening*,[28] exemplifies this type of nude treatment (see particularly the foreground figure represented in a *chiasmus* position). The ways in which Géricault appropriates this theme encompasses formal and narrative distortions, allowing a reading of *Evening* as an allegory of the imminent death of classicism. In terms of narrative, the bathing scene in *Evening* actually evokes the drowning scene from Géricault's *Deluge*; the attitude of the swimming bather, tipping his head back, resonates with that of the drowned woman towed by a man holding onto a horse in the *Deluge* (far right of the painting), and their skin carnation, yellowish, is identical. Similarly, the far right bather in *Evening*, exerting great effort to extract himself from the water, duplicates the attitude of the man trying to climb on the rocks in the *Deluge* (foreground); his contortions also recall the shapes of the trunk and few remaining branches of the half-dead tree standing slightly above him (lower right corner of

Evening). But the bathing/drowning scene of *Evening* takes on an additional meaning when the bodies' formal treatment is considered: overly muscular, ungracious, and ultimately deceptively classical,[29] they reflect Serge Guilbaut's statement that "in the hands of Géricault, the classical body cracks, bursts and opens up, revealing the feared 'alien' that had always hidden inside."[30] Thus, the bodies, whose classicism is formally attacked through distortion, combined with the figures' struggle in the water, offer a powerful image of the critical threshold on which classicism stands according to Géricault. A similar meaning can be extracted from the combination of the palette, the depiction of nature and the composition of *Evening*. The colors, as mentioned earlier, evoke a sick nature; accordingly, dead branches and tree stumps have started to invade the landscape. Its mode of composition, however, is aligned with that of heroic landscape; in a sense, it is the image of a sick heroic landscape we are confronted with when looking at *Evening*. The dislocation of classicism is yet visually embodied in the detail of the ankle and heel floating on the surface of the river: although this body part most likely belongs to the classical swimming man, it is oddly detached from him.[31] The dismembering of classicism is therefore complete, exceeding the level of irony Michel perceives as emblematic of Géricault's relation to Antiquity.[32]

* * *

It would seem reductive, however, to perceive Géricault's *Times of Day* as solely exemplifying a process of discontinuity with artistic models. For the three large landscapes could also be considered, through their oneiric quality, as initiating a specific type of practice, differentiating *Morning*, *Noon* and *Evening* from the rest of Géricault's oeuvre. As suggested earlier, Géricault's depiction of nature in the *Times of Day* is characterized by its lack of naturalism. In this sense, it contradicts the approach to nature that was about to be adopted by an entire generation of landscape painters,[33] who would execute outdoor sketches, eventually to be used as models for parts of a larger work. However, Géricault's anti-realistic representation of nature seems to operate in a more profound way than solely differing from contemporary practice. Indeed, it contradicts the argument formulated in the 1990s according to which the real constitutes a model through which Géricault's painting can be understood. Moreover, beyond the formal contradiction, one can argue that it is the painter's choice to depict nature that is opposed to his understanding of the real and, accordingly, to the type of reality for which his painting serves as a vehicle.

The *Raft of the Medusa*, among a number of projects, exemplifies Géricault's preoccupation with the intrusion of the real in painting and his conception of this notion; depicting a contemporary event that engaged with a range of political and social issues, the artist sought to reveal in this picture the world as it is. In the case of the *Raft of the Medusa*, this meant the representation of an actual event deprived of any heroic dimension and unveiling, in a context of extreme struggle, the darkest aspects of human nature: "le réel revu par le drame" as Michel puts it. [34] Examples of the presence of the real in Géricault's work can be multiplied. Eloquent instances are the lithographs the artist executed during his 1820-21 trip to London, focusing on the representation of the social, economic and technological changes England experienced at the time, and emphasizing the shifts caused by modernization.

However, the example of the *Raft of the Medusa* is particularly relevant here, as its execution coincides with that of the *Times of Day*. As a result, it calls into question the usual perception of Géricault as being entirely devoted to the project of the *Raft*

of the Medusa in the years 1818-19. More importantly, it raises the problem of how to understand the simultaneity of these two projects. For on the one hand, the *Raft of the Medusa* testifies to Géricault's commitment to portraying the reality of the contemporary world and addressing current issues, while on the other, the *Times of Day* are thoroughly disconnected from reality, as though embodying a dissociation between painting and everyday life. This dissociation can be primarily located in the imaginary sites Géricault created, which can be defined as intrinsically strange, thus resonating with the viewpoint of Abigail Solomon-Godeau as expressed in her essay, "Genre, Gender and Géricault"; she writes, "The singularity of the overall effect of Géricault's corpus resides in its very strangeness."[35] According to the author, the strangeness of Géricault's painting lies in the "anomalousness of the motifs" the artist chose to depict,[36] combined with their "*generic* violence."[37] As examples of this intersection, Solomon-Godeau notably mentions the painting of the *Severed Heads* (ca. 1818, Stockholm, Nationalmuseum) and the cycle of the *Times of Day*. However, the way in which strangeness and violence coexist in such paintings seems specific rather than general. For instance, Stefan Germer notes about the *Severed Heads*: "That the mouths and eyes are open is 'uncanny', so that the heads seem to speak to us, to stare. These heads are thus possibly — even though apparently separated from their bodies — not dead but rather still living."[38] The strangeness of the *Times of Day*, I argue, lies in their overall surreal dimension, conjuring up an imaginary world resonating with the realm of dreams, thereby denying the actual world and, by extension, the real in its *gericaldian* sense.

Thus, in addition to the absence of the real in the *Times of Day*, it is worth emphasizing the irrationality and uncanniness of certain natural elements, such as the large mountain dominating the composition of *Morning*. The enormous rock rising from an unknown terrain and oddly deprived of vegetation despite the low altitude does not seem totally inert; in fact, its muscular aspect suggests a body form rather than a mineral one. Indeed, the plasticity of the rock (i.e., its vigorous sculptural treatment), bringing out strong contrasts of light and shadow, resonates with the formal treatment characterizing most of Géricault's masculine nudes. The contours of the mountain evoke, for instance, the satyr's back in the drawing referred to as *The Embrace* (ca. 1818, Paris, Musée du Louvre), exhaling an identical force and aggressiveness. The mountain in the watercolor study for *Morning* (1818, Cambridge, The Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University), less angular and standing out more smoothly against the sky, appears less aggressive than in the final painting; but, similarly, it relates to the body more than to the rock, its overall shape evoking a monumental woman's breast. The trees of *Morning* strengthen the overall disconcerting effect of the painting. The thin, sharp and brittle branches of the enormous pine tree, evoking Friedrich's dead trees, contrast with the dense cloud-like mass of leaves they support. As for the palm tree, it is as though thick tufts of hair were emanating from its trunk. The way in which both trees and the mountain in *Morning*, main features of the painting, stand out sharply against the pale, flat sky through color contrasts, combined with a somehow three dimensional treatment of their surfaces (note how the foliage of the palm tree almost comes out of the flat surface of the canvas), provides the overall impression of looking at a stage set, at something intrinsically artificial, compared to the experience of a simulated encounter with nature. But at the same time, this stage is animated by anthropomorphic, living forms such as the mountain, endowing the painting with a surreal dimension similar to that found in Yves Tanguy's landscapes, where contorted, stereoscopic and seemingly living cartilaginous shapes inhabit deserted lands. (See,

among many other possible examples, the disquieting shape painted by Tanguy in the lower right corner of *Hidden Thoughts* (*My Hidden Thoughts*), 1939, San Francisco, Museum of Modern Art.)

Similarly, life seems to have been breathed into the tree located at the lower right corner of *Evening*: its sinuous branches, splitting in two at their extremities and snaking in opposite directions, do not seem inert but in movement. The same observation applies to the delicate and vibrant foliage tumbling down over the foreground architecture (at the left side of the painting). At the bottom of this architecture, to the left of the seated bather and the man wearing a Phrygian cap, lies a massive pile of soil (or maybe rock) which, once again, evokes a body part. In fact, its shape and contours resonate with the way in which Géricault depicts the arm in the *Severed Limbs* painting (ca. 1818, Montpellier, Musée Fabre), which, as Germer argues about the *Severed Heads*, seems alive rather than dead.

The big mountain rising in the background of *Evening* significantly contributes to the oneiric sentiment emanating from the imaginary setting. It is as though the aggregation of its soft and mellow rocks, possibly inclined to change shapes (particularly in the left half of the mountain), were melting into the sky and merging with the clouds. Géricault's treatment of the mountain is actually closely related to the way in which Salvador Dali depicted enormous downy-like malleable clouds in paintings such as the *Spectre and the Phantom* (1934). As a result, the distinction between ground and sky in *Evening* is uncertain. The lack of separation between ground and sky is reinforced by the confusion of the horizon line: there is a discrepancy between the mountain slope coming all the way down to the river (showing through the arcades of the aqueduct) and the succession of overhanging rocks above the aqueduct. The large pine tree, oddly emerging from the foreground architecture, seems to be suspended in the air rather than planted in the ground. The way in which architecture interpenetrates with nature in both *Morning* and *Evening* provides a sort of hallucinatory vision: in *Morning*, the columns standing against the lower rocks in the middle ground are barely distinguishable, their outlines hesitant and the actual nature of the architecture hard to identify; in *Evening*, a square structure emerges from the background mountain and reaches out to the sky, or is being snapped up by the unsteady rock.

Finally, the treatment of light in *Morning* and *Evening* indicates an absence of temporal specificity, reinforcing the surreal aspect of both paintings. In this respect, it is paradoxical that the three large landscapes are referred to as the *Times of Day*, as it is problematic to match each panel precisely with a specific moment of the day.[39] The silvery, cool sky of *Morning*, resonating with Tanguy's cold, almost neutral backgrounds, contrasts with the deep tones of the nature and the figures, whose darkness is only slightly counterbalanced by the reflection in the river of the colors of the sky. It is as though a lunar light was reflecting on its surface. This coexistence of darkness and whiteness, something rare to witness in nature, testifies to Géricault's treatment of light as a phenomenon detached from nature. The gray and green surface of the main mountain, inferring its lighting by non-natural light, contributes to the artificiality of the setting, while the horizon's pastel colors add a dreamy quality to the whole. In *Evening*, the way in which the luminous orange horizon coexists with the opaque dark gray tones of the upper part of the sky is, again, something one does not actually see in nature, making the identification of the time of day rather uncertain. A similar temporal derangement characterizes Géricault's late watercolors and oils depicting horses harnessed to wagons. In the *Coal Wagon* (1821, London, British Museum) the

alternatively bright and dark light enveloping the scene suggests simultaneously — and artificially — both day and night, as is the case in *Morning*. As for the light in *Evening*, its orange and gray tonalities are closely related to those dominating in *The Wagon* (1823, Providence, Rhode Island, Museum of Art). Both paintings oscillate between day and night. The sky in *Noon*, on the contrary, is relatively naturalistic. The approaching storm, the transient state of the weather, and the wind sweeping across the landscape as well as the lack of finish in the foreground provide the painting with a level of present actuality that resonates with the concerns of some contemporary English landscape painters with respect to temporality in painting.[40] Furthermore, the presence of human remains tied to the post brings an anecdotal dimension into the scene, as it infers the occurrence of a recent crime followed by the bandit's execution and now causing the family's fright. In other words, *Noon* unveils an awareness of the continuous flow of time, whereas *Morning* and *Evening* challenge time through light derangement.

When considering Géricault's oeuvre as a whole, the surreal dimension seems to be confined to his landscapes and other pictures engaging primarily with nature. Indeed, works executed during the London trip depicting horse races (events taking place outdoors and disconnected from the city and its recent industrialization)[41] are endowed with a similar oneiric quality. The *Epsom Derby* (1821, Paris, Musée du Louvre) exemplifies this aspect of Géricault's work during the London period. Admittedly, the painter's representation of horses according to the so-called *ventre à terre* position is inscribed within contemporary beliefs regarding the position of a horse's legs when galloping; but, as Jonathan Crary notes about the *Epsom Derby* in the chapter "Illuminations of Disenchantment" in *Suspensions of Perception*, "The point is less that Géricault represented his horses erroneously than that his work is one of the earliest dreams of an impossible and inhuman vision, of a desire for perceptual ubiquity exceeding the spatial and temporal limits of human faculties."[42] The recurrence of the unreal in Géricault's paintings focusing on the depiction of nature leads to the conclusion that it was the process of this depiction which precisely triggered the presence of the unreal in his work. In other words, the practice of landscape painting stood for the artist as a means of dismissing reality. Furthermore, it is worth noting that Géricault executed these paintings in a moment of acute preoccupation with the relation between painting and the notion of the real; as mentioned earlier, the *Times of Day* are contemporary with the *Raft of the Medusa*, while the works of the London period (except for the horse races) are entirely shaped by the concept of the real. Therefore, Géricault's unreal representation of nature overlaps with his depiction of the reality of the contemporary world, revealing two distinctive apprehensions of painting, existing in an antagonistic relation and balancing each other.

* * *

What are the implications of stating that Géricault's *Times of Day* appeal to the world of dreams? What does it indicate in terms of the process of painting a landscape? Specific elements from Rousseau's *Rêveries du promeneur solitaire* (1776) can provide a foundation for possible answers to these questions. At first, using Rousseau in the context of an exploration of Géricault's relation to nature, and by extension to his relation to landscape painting, can appear unjustified. Indeed, Rousseau's *Rêveries du promeneur solitaire* were based on the writer's direct, physical encounter with a comforting nature and a deep appreciation of the spectacles it offers. Géricault, on the other hand, remained in his studio, where he painted unrealistic and disturbing

landscapes, in which nature is depicted, to some degree, as a threatening entity. However, nature as a realm engendering reverie, as Rousseau experienced and argued, can be compared, on the basis of the oneiric quality, lack of temporal specificity and absence of linear narrative in the *Times of Day*,[43] to Géricault's apprehension and experience of the landscape painting process. Considering their appeal to the world of dreams, Géricault's *Times of Day* unveil, similarly to Rousseau's *Rêveries du promeneur solitaire*, a yearning for an extraction of the self from time and reality. Their achievement seems to lie in the practice of landscape painting in Géricault's case, and in the encounter with nature in Rousseau's case, as it manifests specifically in these contexts.

On some level, Rousseau's and Géricault's shared experience of escape from reality and encounter with a timeless space, by means of their respective practice — an experience translated formally in their work — can be perceived through the acute crises they experienced at the time of the completion of their work. In the 1770s, Rousseau's writings came under severe attack, deeply affecting him;[44] as for Géricault, he was experiencing major personal torment in 1818,[45] while at the same time he was undertaking the long and draining project of the *Raft of the Medusa*.

But while Rousseau and Géricault, possibly against a similar background of upheaval, were seeking through one aspect of their work a withdrawal from the flow of worldly events, the way in which they conceived their projects seems quite different. Rousseau was consciously willing to escape social structures; therefore, he turned to nature, with the precise goal of providing a complete picture of himself in the context of nature, a neutral environment: "Mais moi, détaché d'eux et de tout, que suis-je moi-même? Voilà ce qui me reste à chercher."[46] Nothing allows us to prove a similarly conscious withdrawal on the part of Géricault, whose ambitions were quite remote from Rousseau's introspection. At the same time, Rousseau's mode of composition for the *Rêveries du promeneur solitaire*, based on the process of reverie, resonates strongly with that of Géricault's for the *Times of Day*. In the *Confessions*, Rousseau defines the reverie as follows: "Dans le rêverie, on est point actif . . . Les images se tracent dans le cerveau, s'y combinent comme dans le sommeil, sans le secours de la volonté."[47] Furthermore, he presents his project of the *Rêveries du promeneur solitaire* as: "Tenir un registre fidèle de mes promenades solitaires et des rêveries qui les remplissent quand je laisse ma tête entièrement libre, et mes idées suivre leur pente sans résistance et sans gêne,"[48] which will eventually give birth to what he designates as his "journal informe."[49] Géricault's oneiric and unexpected compositions (in *Morning*, the juxtaposition of a muscular mountain, columns arising from the rock, and huge trees; and in *Evening*, the juxtaposition of a tower emerging from a mountain, a tree floating in the sky, and soil suggesting the shape of a massive arm), can be perceived as visual embodiments of reverie according to Rousseau's understanding of this term,[50] especially with respect to its formal and structural aspect, relying on a lack of logic and linearity. In fact, Rousseau's definition of reverie closely relates to a practice many Surrealist artists exploited, the *écriture automatique*, based on the process of the free association of thoughts.[51] Initially a writing process, the *écriture automatique* was soon extended to the visual arts by André Masson and Max Ernst, among others. Ernst's *Lesson in Automatic Writing (The Lover is Undoubtedly Nearby)*, ca. 1923, (Paris, Galerie André François Petit), juxtaposing visual images arising from dream stories (a hand rising from the ground, mountains, conical shapes, etc.), can be perceived as a counterpart, admittedly more radical and systematic, to Géricault's *Morning* and *Evening*. And as David Williams notes in his study of Rousseau's *Rêveries du promeneur solitaire*:

> Rousseau stressed at length the unmediated and unpremeditated nature of his "thought recordings." They would be set down spontaneously, unartfully, unreflectively, without dissimulation, perhaps even shuffled like the pack of cards upon which he found it fitting to jot down his notes.[52]

Thus, a similar approach, based on a free mode of thinking, itself achieved through the absorbed state of reverie, characterizes Rousseau's *Rêveries du promeneur solitaire* and Géricault's *Times of Day*, while both works resonate as well with the process of *écriture automatique*.

In an attempt to interpret the narratives unfolding in the *Times of Day*, it is worth referring at this point to the commitment of the Surrealists to reveal through their art practice "le fonctionnement réel de la pensée . . . en l'absence de tout contrôle exercée par la raison,"[53] intertwined with their interest in the act of dreaming, perceived as the domain where reality is disclosed: "Pourquoi n'accorderais-je pas au rêve ce que je refuse parfois à la réalité, soit cette valeur de certitude en elle-même, qui, dans son temps, n'est point exposée à mon désaveu?"[54] Accordingly, Beate Wolf notes in her discussion of works based on the process of *écriture automatique*: "They are like notations from deeper levels of consciousness."[55] This remark not only applies to the *Rêveries du promeneur solitaire*, aiming at Rousseau's self-discovery and self-liberation through his encounter with nature, but hints at Géricault's aspiration through the execution of the *Times of Day*. In fact, in alignment with Rousseau's purpose through the writing of the *Rêveries du promeneur solitaire*, Michel notes about Géricault's three large landscapes: "La vocation première de ces toiles mystérieuses pourrait bien être libératoire: confession latente aux vertus émétiques."[56] This statement is particularly relevant in the case of *Noon*. At the time of its execution, Géricault was carrying on an illicit affair with his uncle's wife, Alexandrine-Modeste Caruel de Saint-Martin. Their relationship reached a truly unmanageable point with the birth of their illegitimate son, Georges-Hippolyte, on August 21, 1818. The latter was not raised by Géricault or Alexandrine, whom he actually never met, but placed under the responsibility of a guardian; Georges-Hippolyte ended up destitute, leading a cloistered life, while his mother devoted herself to religion. This major event in Géricault's personal life, combined with the impulse of self-liberation by means of unrepressed thinking, or rousseauist reverie, characterizing the landscape painting process in Géricault's work, inevitably leads to a reading of the narrative unfolding in *Noon* as a projection of Géricault's own critical situation at that time. Indeed, the context of fear, despair and lack of control over the situation within which Géricault depicts the family in *Noon* mirrors the painter's sense of insolubility in face of his own situation.

At the same time, the narrative of *Noon* can be perceived as exceeding mere biographical content. The representation of this desperate family, as well as the dissonances characterizing the narratives of *Morning* and *Evening*, call into question man's compatibility with the world that surrounds him, a theme actually reflecting the collective sentiment of disillusionment of an entire male generation after the collapse of the First Empire, beyond Géricault's isolated experience. The depiction of man's action and condition in *Morning*, *Noon* and *Evening* conveys a strong sense of hopelessness. The motif of the human figure wishing to sail on or cross a river, common to the three landscapes, heightens this sentiment. In *Morning*, the static river is narrowing down in

the middle distance, compromising the fishermen's navigation of the boat, while the men's tremendous effort to launch their small craft betrays their exhaustion. In *Noon*, the family, in a state of panic, wishes to cross the river, but it would do so only to arrive in a deserted village.[57] In *Evening*, the swimmers, as though trapped in the gorge of the river, could well drown before reaching the bank. Moreover, the swimmer's expression of distress and the tense smile of the bather splashing the swimmers both contrast with the enjoyment normally associated with bathing. In other words, imprisonment, isolation and death are suggested throughout *Morning*, *Noon* and *Evening*, without any possible escape for the figures. The narrative and compositional inconsistencies of the *Times of Day*, revealing an absence of harmony between man and the external world, or even, in the bathers' case, the figures' inner fragmentation,[58] resonate with elements characterizing some of Géricault's early works such as the *Wounded Cuirassier*. In his essay "Géricault and 'Masculinity'," Norman Bryson describes Géricault's 1814 Salon entry as follows:

> This image of masculine power and panache is unable to produce, or live up to, its own signs of strength. The position of each leg conveys instability; the sword, sign of aggression, is now used as a staff, simply for physical support. And the figure is wounded, at least in the painting's title. But wounded where? The eye, guided by the title, finds no actual wound, only perhaps wounded*ness*, a general sense of hurt and fear. What remains unstated in the figure is projected through the mount, with its burning ember eyes and expression of panic.[59]

Based on similar remarks about the *Charging Chasseur*, bringing to light the painting's inherent dissonances, Bryson argues that Géricault's early pictures of soldiers stand as images of a "wounded or failed masculinity,"[60] where the political — namely, the national trauma of the failure of the Napoleonic adventure — intersects with Géricault's reflection on this trauma: "One is dealing with an "outer-world" phenomenon — the collapse of Napoleonic militarism — and an "inner-world" phenomenon — Géricault's investigation of a certain masculinity, in its crisis of simultaneous exacerbation and failure."[61] Bryson's statement relates to the larger crisis in masculinity alluded to in Solomon-Godeau's essay "Genre, Gender and Géricault." Referring to characters from works by Chateaubriand, de Musset, Sénancour and Stendhal, whom she compares to Géricault himself, she writes: "The inability of their male protagonists to find their worldly place, marry and procreate are familiar tropes in Romantic literature."[62] The narrative of *Noon*, focusing on the instability of the man seeking to cross the river with his wife and child, can be perceived through the male subject's crisis pointed out by Solomon-Godeau.[63] Similarly, *Morning* and *Evening*, on the basis of their narratives conveying a sentiment of disillusion, combined with their overall reversal of reality, indicate an underlying melancholia and disenchantment with the world, possibly intertwined, as Bryson argues with respect to the *Charging Chasseur* and the *Wounded Cuirassier*, with the aftermath of the Napoleonic disaster. Indeed, all these pictures reveal similar formal and narrative inconsistencies. Moreover, beyond their respective arguments about Géricault's painting in relation to the crisis in masculinity in the early nineteenth century in France, Bryson and Solomon-Godeau both suggest their adherence to the larger argument according to which artistic production is necessarily located within existing historical and social discourses.[64] Accordingly, one can argue

that the *Times of Day* are shaped by the overall contemporary context, itself ultimately responsible for Géricault's attraction towards landscape painting and its exploitation as a means of escape.

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Thus, my discussion of Géricault's *Times of Day* stresses that identifying *Morning, Noon* and *Evening* through a specific genre and iconography tends to dissimulate Géricault's originality. These pictures, I argue, exceed mere challenge to the Academy's classical ideals, as they initiate a new form of practice, relating to Rousseau's definition of the process of reverie, and, by extension, to the practices of Surrealists. While it is unlikely that Géricault would have been familiar with Rousseau's writings,[65] whether or not the Surrealists ever referred to Rousseau and Géricault requires further investigation. My last point, emphasizing that the *Times of Day* are bound up in a historically and socially constructed space, has significant implications for the notion of reverie because the essence of reverie, according to Rousseau, is entirely individual. In fact, its individual quality stands at the core of Rousseau's entire enterprise throughout the writing of the *Rêveries du promeneur solitaire*. Through the process of reverie, the writer seeks, as utopian as it may seem, to discover his own essence, separated from any social construction.[66] The *Times of Day*, on the other hand, can be perceived, as I have suggested, as mapping out aspects of the collective experience of a generation having lived through the Napoleonic period to face the Restoration of the Bourbons. In spite of their appeal to the world of dreams, the three landscapes ultimately fail to dissimulate a thorough disillusionment; in fact, the oneirism in the *Times of Day*, endowing the landscapes with deeply disturbing sentiments, precisely facilitates the appearance of a state of crisis in Géricault's generation. In this sense, the *Times of Day* stand as the embodiment of a sinister collective reverie.

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1. Charles Clément, *Géricault. Etude biographique et critique, avec le catalogue raisonné de l'oeuvre du maître* (Paris: Didier, 1868), 129 and 136-37.
2. Art historians have debated at length the date of execution of the *Times of Day*. For an account of the different arguments on this issue, see Joanna Szczepinska-Tramer, "Recherches sur les paysages de Géricault," *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de l'Art Français* (March 1973): 299-300. According to Szczepinska-Tramer, the three landscapes were painted by Géricault after his Italian trip (September 1816-September 1817). This hypothesis was confirmed by the discovery of a bill from Rey (Géricault's art supplier) to the painter, indicating that three canvases, the dimensions of which correspond to *Morning, Noon* and *Evening*, were delivered to Géricault's studio on July 10, August 4 and August 14, 1818. Germain Bazin still questions 1818 as the year of execution of the three landscapes. See Germain Bazin, *Théodore Géricault. Etude critique, documents et catalogue raisonné* (Paris: Bibliothèque des Arts, 1987-97), 5, 7-14.
3. For a complete exhibition history of the *Times of Day* (individually and as a series), as well as historic accounts of the three panels, see Régis Michel, ed., *Géricault* (catalogue of an exhibition held in Paris: Grand Palais, October 10, 1991-January 6, 1992), Cat. No. 159, 160 and 161.
4. Gary Tinterow, "Géricault's Heroic Landscapes. *The Times of Day*," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 48/3 (Winter 1990-91).
5. Both of these questions remain open.

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6. The lectures from the conference on Géricault have been published in: Régis Michel, ed., *Actes du Colloque "Géricault" 14-17 novembre 1991* (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1996).
7. Bazin's catalogue raisonné makes clear that, apart from the cycle of the *Times of Day* and the *Deluge* (ca. 1818, Paris, Musée du Louvre), landscape in Géricault's production essentially consists of a few decorative panels and views of Italy and Montmartre executed early in his career (all works on paper), as well as a couple of seascapes and scenes of tempest painted after the London trip, shortly before his death.
8. Michel, "Préface. L'histoire de l'art est bien finie. Court traité d'eschatologie militante à l'usage des post-historiens d'art," *Actes du Colloque*: XV-XXXV; and "Le nom de Géricault, ou l'art n'a pas de sexe mais ne parle que de ça," *Actes du Colloque*: 1-37.
9. Michel, "Préface," *Actes du Colloque*: XXIX.
10. In Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire* (1776; repr., Paris: Bordas, 1985).
11. The creation of a Prix de Rome in the category of historic landscape in 1817 was actually the outcome of a series of efforts towards the legitimization of the practice of landscape painting, going back to 1791. In that year, secretary of the Academy Quatremère de Quincy recommended in *Suite aux Considérations sur les Arts du Dessin en France* that the Academy's pupils receive regular instruction in landscape painting and suggested the creation of a Prix de Rome for this genre. The first Prix de Rome in the category of historic landscape was won by Michallon (a pupil of Valenciennes) with *Démocrite et les Abdéritains*, and the prize was offered, as of 1818, every four years. The contest was abolished in 1863. For more on this topic, see Philip Conisbee, "Tombs in eighteenth and early nineteenth-century landscape painting," *Neoclassicismo. Atti del convegno internazionale promosso dal Comité International d'histoire de l'art, Londra, Settembre 1971* (Genova: Istituto di storia dell'arte dell'Universita degli studi, 1973): 22-30; and Albert Boime, *The Academy and French Painting in the nineteenth century* (London: Phaidon, 1971), 133-46.
12. Jean-Baptiste Deperthes, *Théorie du paysage* (Paris: Lenormant, 1818). Deperthes, a pupil of Valenciennes, reiterates in this treatise the precepts established by Valenciennes regarding landscape painting in *Eléments de perspective pratique à l'usage des artistes, suivis de réflexions et de conseils à l'élève sur la peinture et particulièrement sur le genre du paysage* (Paris, 1800; repr., Genève: Minkoff Reprint, 1973). Deperthes also published a *Histoire de l'art du paysage* (Paris: Lenormant, 1822).
13. This is how Géricault described his Italian stay in a letter addressed to his friend Dedreux-Dorcy, dated September 21, 1817, i.e., written shortly before his return to France. See Pierre Courthion, ed., *Géricault raconté par lui-même et par ses amis* (Geneva: Pierre Cailler, 1947), 93.
14. Eitner and Tinterow both identify the *Times of Day* with the genre of historic landscape. See Lorenz Eitner, "Two rediscovered landscapes by Géricault and chronology of his early work," *The Art Bulletin* 36/2 (June 1954): 141 and Tinterow, "Géricault's Heroic Landscapes": 14.
15. Tinterow, "Géricault's Heroic Landscapes": 14.
16. Jacques Derrida, "The Law of Genre," *Glyph* 7 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 176-232.
17. Roger de Piles, *Cours de peinture par principes* (Paris: Jacques Estienne, 1708).
18. See note 12.
19. Clément described Géricault's *Morning* in his catalogue as follows: "Grand paysage en hauteur. Dans le genre de Guaspre. Au second plan des pêcheurs mettent à l'eau une barque." See Clément, *Géricault. Etude biographique et critique*: Cat. No. 16, 280.
20. Quoted in Boime, *The Academy and French Painting*, 140.
21. It was the custom in Italy at the time to expose the remains of the criminal at the site of the crime after his execution. For more on this custom and Géricault's knowledge of it, see Szczepinska-Tramer, "Recherches sur les paysages de Géricault": 300-03.
22. If architecture occupies a limited space and is hardly identifiable in *Morning*, *Noon* and *Evening* include well-known monuments often depicted by painters. The large tomb dominating the composition of *Noon* has been identified as the tomb of Caecillia Metella on the Via Appia; the medieval door juxtaposed to it would be that of the Castello Gaetani. In *Evening*, the aqueduct and its adjacent architecture stand as a faithful representation of the monument of Spoleto. For further details on the identification of architectural elements in the *Times of Day* and their representation by painters prior to Géricault, see: Szczepinska- Tramer, "Recherches sur les paysages de Géricault": 307-08 and 311-13.
23. This mode of composition applied as well to rural landscape, which could explain why Clément noted *Morning* was executed "in the manner of Guaspre," eminent practitioner of rural landscape (see note 19).
24. Valenciennes, 376. (See note 12.)
25. See notably Edmund Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, 1st ed. (London: Robert and James Dodsley, 1757). This book provided Diderot with all the sublime aesthetic theoretical vocabulary necessary to his criticism of Vernet's painting.
26. Denis Diderot, *Essais sur la peinture* (1765; repr., Paris: Hermann, 1984), 66-67.
27. Régis Michel, *Géricault. L'invention du réel* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992).

28. Tinterow, "Géricault's Heroic Landscapes": Cat. No. 11, 54.
29. Eitner argues that the nude raising himself from the water is adapted from a figure in Michelangelo's *Battle of Cascina* cartoon. See Eitner, "Two rediscovered landscapes by Géricault": 136. If one admits Géricault's borrowing from Michelangelo, it remains that Géricault's nude is all distorted. In fact, the comparison of the two emphasizes Géricault's departure from his presumed model.
30. Serge Guilbaut, "Théodore Géricault: The Hoarse Voice of History," *Théodore Géricault, The Alien Body: Tradition in Chaos* (Catalogue of an exhibition held in Vancouver: Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of Bristish Columbia, August 15-October 19, 1997), 9.
31. The representation of this body fragment recalls the foot in the *Severed Limbs* painting (ca. 1818, Montpellier, Musée Fabre)
32. Michel, ed., Grand Palais catalogue, 72.
33. The practice of sketching outdoors started to spread at the end of the eighteenth century. Valenciennes himself, while encouraging landscape painters to depict an ideal and arcadian nature, adopted this practice. His studies executed outdoor reveal a realistic representation of nature, contrasting with his historic landscapes.
34. Michel, *Géricault. L'invention.*
35. Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Genre, Gender and Géricault," University of British Columbia catalogue, 98.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. Stefan Germer, "Pleasurable Fear: Géricault and the Uncanny trends at the opening of the nineteenth century," *Art History* 22/2 (June 1999): 159.
39. Early articles on the *Times of Day* testify to the confusion regarding which panel corresponded to which moment of the day. For instance, the Petit Palais landscape was catalogued in the exhibition De David à Delacroix as: "*Grand Paysage d'Italie par temps d'orage*, dit aussi *Paysage classique: matin.*" See Antoine Schnapper, ed., *De David à Delacroix. La peinture française de 1774 à 1830* (catalogue of an exhibition held in Paris: Grand Palais, November 16, 1974-January 3, 1975): Cat. No. 75. Then, in the exhibition *French Painting: the Revolutionary Decades 1760-1830*, the Petit Palais landscape was instead catalogued as "*Grand paysage, le soir.*" See Hélène Toussaint, ed., *French Painting: the Revolutionary Decades 1760-1830* (catalogue of an exhibition held in Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, October 17-November 23, 1980): Cat. No. 49. Today, this same landscape is known as *Noon*, as its depiction of an approaching storm corresponds, in terms of traditional iconography of the times of day, to midday.
40. It is probable that by 1818 Géricault would have seen works by English painters, such as John Crome and John Sell Cotman, practicing the genre of landscape and preoccupied with the notion of temporality in painting. Such works could be seen in Paris at the shop Arrowsmith.
41. While Géricault's pictures of horses harnessed to wagons participate in the unreal, it is essentially through light derangement. In the *Coal Wagon* (executed in London), for instance, the depiction of the city and of the tall smoky chimney in the background, as well as the coal wagon and the workers in the foreground, infuse the painting with the reality of everyday life. In this sense, this watercolor does not attain the oneiric quality of the *Epsom Derby*.
42. Jonathan Crary, "Illuminations of Disenchantment," *Suspensions of Perception. Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), 276-77 n.283.
43. Regarding the question of whether the *Times of Day* have a continuous narrative, Eitner notes: "The panels are linked by the suggestion of advancing time that runs through them, like the river in their foregrounds. A first hint of this progressive continuity is given by the first panel, that of the fishermen, in which the voyage about to be taken is foretold: in the middle distance appears the broken bridge that will be the main feature of the second panel, and in its far distance the aqueduct that will dominate the third . . . But no very clear thread of meaning seems to connect the compositions." See Lorenz Eitner, *Géricault. His Life and Work* (London: Orbis, 1983), 144-45.
44. Rousseau's first promenade in the *Rêveries du promeneur solitaire* testifies to his deep sense of betrayal and attack by his contemporaries, those he refers to as his "persécuteurs." Rousseau, *Rêveries*, 22 and following.
45. Indeed, in a letter marked by great distress, Géricault wrote in 1818 to his dear friend Dedreux-Dorcy: "Maintenant j'erre et je m'égare toujours. Je cherche vainement à m'appuyer, rien n'est solide, tout m'échappe, tout me trompe. Nos espérances et nos désirs ne sont ici bas que vaines chimères, et nos succès, des fantômes que nous croyons saisir. S'il est pour nous sur terre quelque chose de certain, ce sont nos peines. La souffrance est réelle, les plaisirs ne sont qu'imaginaires." In: Michel, *Géricault. L'invention*: 131-32.
46. Rousseau, *Rêveries* (première promenade), 21. "But I, detached from them and everything, what am I"? Translation from Jean-Jacque Rousseau, *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, trans. Charles E. Butterworth (New York: New York University Press, 1979), 1.

47. Quoted in David Williams, *Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire* (London: Grant & Cutler, 1984), 55.
48. Rousseau, *Rêveries* (deuxième promenade), 31. "Keep a faithful record of my solitary walks and of the reveries which fill them when I leave my head entirely free and let my ideas follow their bent without resistance or constraint." Translation from Jean-Jacque Rousseau, *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, trans. Charles E. Butterworth (New York: New York University Press, 1979), 12.
49. Rousseau, *Rêveries* (première promenade), 27. "Shapeless diary." Translation from Jean-Jacque Rousseau, *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, trans. Charles E. Butterworth (New York: New York University Press, 1979), 6.
50. In fact, different modes of reveries can be distinguished in Rousseau's *Rêveries du promeneur solitaire*; however, as Bernex notes, all modes of reveries exclude reasoning. For a discussion of the different types of reveries, see Marcel Raymond, "Rêver à la suisse," *Jean-Jacques Rousseau. La Quête de Soi et la Rêverie* (Paris: José Corti, 1962), 157-85.
51. Based on Crary's discussion of the process of reverie in the second half of the nineteenth century, it can be deduced that the Surrealists' definition of *écriture automatique* resonates with a set of arguments from the 1880s regarding the state of reverie. Crary notably discusses neurologist John Hughlings Jackson's definition of reverie: "A state of "temporary normal dissolution" [is] synonymous for Jackson with "reverie." For him, dissolution meant disintegration of the highest and most complex operations of the nervous system and the activation of a lower, more automatic functioning. Even though Jacksonian dissolution was a regression to simple and more elementary patterns of behavior, it was nonetheless a breakdown of the arrangements that bound a subjective world together into a unified milieu as a bulwark against dissociation." Crary, "Unbinding Vision," *Suspensions*: 101-02.
52. Williams: 25. Rousseau got used to writing down his thoughts as they occurred during his promenades on playing-cards (twenty seven in all, today at the Bibliothèque publique in Neuchâtel), standing as the outline for the book.
53. André Breton, *Manifeste du Surréalisme*, 1924, in: *André Breton. Les Manifestes du Surréalisme* (Paris: Sagittaire, 1946), 45.
54. Breton, *Manifeste du Surréalisme*, 26.
55. Beate Wolf, "Genesis of a New World. The Graphic Art of Yves Tanguy," *Yves Tanguy and Surrealism*, Karin von Maur, ed. (catalogue of an exhibition held in Stuttgart: Staatsgalerie, December 9, 2000-April 29, 2001), 151.
56. Michel, *Géricault. L'invention*, 70.
57. A number of art historians have compared the fisherman's figure standing in his bark to the character of Charon. See for instance Michel, ed., Grand Palais catalogue, 122.
58. An early example of the presence of a fragmented form of subjectivity in Géricault's paintings of figures is the *Charging Chasseur*, whose meditative expression is hardly reconcilable with the context of battle within which the figure is depicted. As Michelet famously put it: "Il [Dieudonné] se tourne vers nous et pense." In: Jules Michelet, *Journal* (1828-1848) (Paris: P. Viallaneix, 1959): Vol. 1, 131.
59. Norman Bryson, "Géricault and 'Masculinity'," in *Visual Culture: images and interpretations*, Bryson, Michael Ann Holly, Keith Moxey, eds., (London: University Press of New England, 1994), 239-40.
60. Bryson, 241.
61. Bryson, 243.
62. Solomon-Godeau, "Genre, Gender and Géricault": 109.
63. For a study of the crisis in masculinity in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, see Solomon-Godeau, *Male Trouble: A Crisis in Representation* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997).
64. For a discussion of this argument, see Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: essays on art and literature* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993). In alignment with Bourdieu's overall argument, Solomon-Godeau writes: "Once it is acknowledged that the characteristic subjectivities (if not pathologies) of the generation of 1820 and their artistic alter egos are precisely aspects of their masculinity, and that the nature and terms of masculinity may be said to have been in crisis, their lives and their work can be opened up to somewhat different kinds of interpretation." Solomon-Godeau: 109.
65. Géricault was not highly literate, and his very limited writings do not reveal any interest in the notion of dream.
66. "Tout ce qui m'est extérieur m'est étranger désormais. Je n'ai plus en ce monde ni prochain, ni semblables, ni frères. Je suis sur la terre comme dans une planète étrangère où je serais tombé de celle que j'habitais." Rousseau, *Rêveries* (première promenade): 26. "Everything external is henceforth foreign to me. I no longer have neighbors, fellow creatures, or brothers in this world. I am on earth as though on a foreign planet onto which I have fallen from the one I inhabited." Translation from Jean-Jacque Rousseau, *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, trans. Charles E. Butterworth (New York: New York University Press, 1979), 5.

Vuillard's *Album* series: A *Mise-en-scène* for Misia Natanson

Debra J. Gibney

The focus of my discussion will be a five-panel series by the Symbolist artist Édouard Vuillard,[1] as it exemplifies an ongoing collaboration between the artist and the patrons of this work. Thadée and Misia Natanson commissioned the decorative cycle, collectively called the *Album*, in 1895. While Thadée's activities as co-owner of the avant-garde Symbolist journal *La Revue Blanche* focused on the public arena of the journal and its offices, Misia's creative domain was the salon in their home, in which Vuillard's decorative cycle was placed. Artists such as Pierre Bonnard, Toulouse-Lautrec, and Maurice Denis were part of the Symbolist circle of Vuillard and the Natansons. *La Revue Blanche* reflected the theories and aesthetics of the group with articles on Charles Baudelaire, Stéphane Mallarmé, and Richard Wagner. Thadée and Misia Natanson were a driving force in the progression of Vuillard's career as an artist during this period, and in return Vuillard and the other artists patronized by the Natansons enhanced the couple's social position by including their likenesses, particularly that of Misia, within works of art.[2]

I will address the Natansons' home, a place where Misia flourished as a muse for the artistic and literary circle of *La Revue Blanche*, within the context of fin-de-siècle theories of female creativity, and will argue that the *Album* was choreographed to reflect the ideals of the Symbolist circle and the inspiration which flowed from Misia. The *Album* scenes (three of which are illustrated in figs. 1-3) are filled with flowers and several feminine figures engaged in activities associated with common late nineteenth-century domestic practices. The large panels are a variety of shapes and sizes, but each one is dominated by a deep red and composed of women dressed in clothing made up of textural patterns that blend with the flowers surrounding them.

Gloria Groom's contribution to Vuillard studies has been invaluable as she brought to the forefront his large scale *décorations*. Specifically, Groom's work on Vuillard offers the most dense and compelling discussion of the *Album* panels to date.[3] In her discussion of the *Album*, Groom calls attention to the feminine quality of the panels. This paper builds on Groom's discussion of the *Album* panels as a generalized representation of women and domesticity to make a case that the panels were actually an extension of Misia's feminine aura, which was directed toward the nurturing of the *La Revue Blanche* milieu. Annette Leduc Beaulieu and Brooks Beaulieu focus on the *Album* series in the venue of Siegfried Bing's exhibition, Maison de l'Art Nouveau Bing, an exhibition of furniture, paintings, and decorative arts in which the *Album* was displayed while on loan from the Natansons.[4] Their argument that the panels fit the walls of the small side salon within Bing's show and the hypothesis that Vuillard blocked the actual windows in the room so that the window within *The Embroidery* panel (fig. 3) created the illusion that it was letting in light to shine on the other panels is intriguing. However, while this suggests that Vuillard considered the Bing gallery as a setting for the *décorations*, it does not preclude that the Natanson home was to be the long term repository of the series. In fact, as the Beaulieus point out, Vuillard himself refers to the *Album* in his journal as "Panels for Thadée."[5]

The largest panel in the *Album* series, also entitled *The Album* (65cm x 306 cm)

depicts a central group of women looking through a book.[6] Two smaller horizontal panels within the series (not illustrated) have almost the same dimensions (65 x 116cm), and both are named after a central object in the scene: *The Stoneware Vase* and *The Vanity Table*. The two vertical scenes are similar in that they both focus on a single figure engaged in a feminine activity. *Woman in a Striped Dress* (65 x 58cm; fig. 2) depicts a woman smelling a bouquet of sweet carnations, and *The Embroidery* (176 x 65 cm; fig. 3) depicts a woman involved in her needlework.[7] It is striking how often Vuillard portrayed panels from the *Album* in other photographs and paintings. Two examples which will be discussed later in more detail are represented here (figs. 7 and 8).[8] This inclusion of the *Album* within the setting of the Natansons home evidences its integral role as part of the aura which surrounds Misia in her salon.

Visual Sources for the *Album*

The notions discussed in *La Revue Blanche* can by seen in Vuillard's design of the *Album*, and the visual sources he chose. The Nabis, the Symbolist circle in which Vuillard and the Natansons were integral participants, maintained a strong interest in the medieval period and the artwork it produced.[9] The excitement surrounding the acquisition of *La Dame à la Licorne* by the Musée de Cluny in 1882 would have made these tapestries a particular subject of conversation for Vuillard and the Natansons.[10] In the July 16, 1894 entry of his journal, Vuillard emphasized his consideration of the Cluny tapestries:

> Visited *Cluny* yesterday. Tapestries and missal illuminations. Calendars. Contemplating the tapestries, I think that by enlarging it, pure and simple, my little panel can be the subject of decoration. The humble subjects of these decorations at *Cluny*! Expressions of an intimate feeling on a bigger surface, that's all![11]

It seems Vuillard was realizing the similarities in the decorative patterning in his earlier *intimiste* scenes (referred to as such because of their small size and the intimate subject matter of women in the home) and the medieval tapestries at Cluny. This visit took place a little over a year before Vuillard's completion of the *Album*, and I propose it was his view of the famous Cluny tapestries, *La Dame à la Licorne*, that planted the seed of inspiration for the *Album* panels. On the same day Vuillard commented on the Cluny tapestries in his journal; he wrote, "When I want to imagine a composition for the Natansons . . . I can only think of feminine objects."[12] This journal entry suggests that Vuillard was contemplating the *Album* commission on the same day that he remarked on his reaction to the Cluny tapestries.

Each tapestry panel in the Cluny series contains a central scene with an exquisitely dressed woman situated on an island of blue (one panel is shown as fig. 4). While much of the overall design remains consistent throughout the scenes, the intricate costume of the central figure varies from panel to panel as she is dressed in a succession of rich brocades, damasks, moirés or silks and expensive jewels. The merlot colored scenes are densely filled with various types of flowers; and a handmaiden is shown in some of the scenes, while the central woman is surrounded by various animals such as rabbits, foxes, birds, monkeys and always a lion and a unicorn.

Groom and Morowitz have suggested that a four-panel painted series completed for Dr. Louis-Henri Vaquez one year later than the *Album*, may have been influenced

Fig. 1 Édouard Vuillard, *The Album* from *Album* series, 1895, oil on canvas, 25 1/2 x 120 1/2 in. (65 x 306 cm). (By permission: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; © 2005 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.)

by the Cluny tapestries.[13] However, neither scholar makes the direct link between the Cluny tapestries and the *Album* that I am proposing. The Vaquez series is made up of four vertical panels depicting women surrounded by busy floral-patterned wallpaper in a study that is visually similar to Dr. Vaquez' actual library. The *mille-fleurs* tapestry-like ornamentation of the Vaquez panels as well as the bordering of the panels and the effects of distemper on the canvas lend credence to comparisons with medieval tapestries. Groom suggests that Vuillard's inspiration for the Vaquez panels may have been the tapestries owned by the Natansons. I propose instead that a viewing of the *Album* panels by Dr. Vaquez at the artist's studio may have instigated the imitation of its tapestry-like design, either simply for aesthetic appeal or to imply an association with the Natansons.[14]

Strikingly, the emphasis on the female figure as well as the subdued red tones establishes a closer similarity between the tapestries and the *Album*. In their functionality as well, the *Album* panels were more like tapestries than the Vaquez panels, as tapestries were frequently moved around and hung in various arrangements. Evidence of the movement of the *Album* panels throughout the Natansons' apartment and to their other homes can be seen in paintings and photos produced by Vuillard in which the *Album* panels are shown.[15] However, the suite of paintings designed for Dr. Vaquez was intended for the specific location within his library. The two small panels

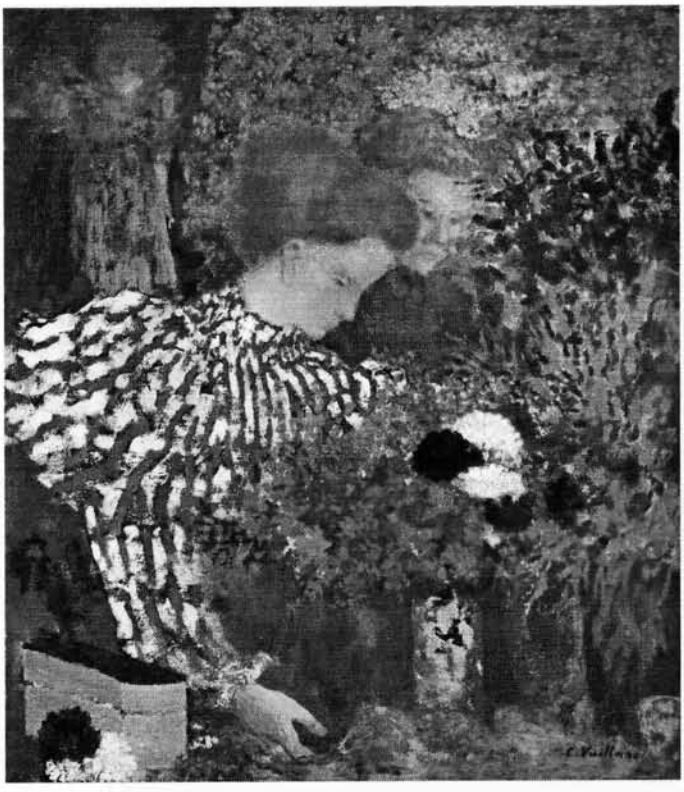

Fig. 2 Édouard Vuillard, *Woman in a Striped Dress* from *Album* series, 1895, oil on canvas, 25 1/2 x 22 3/4 in. (65 x 58 cm). (By permission: Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; ©2005 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.)

are linked together by horizontal library shelves; similarly, a plaid border at the top of each scene links all four panels. I will explore below why the *Album* is somewhat more complex in its three-dimensionality, with less delineation than paintings like the Vaquez panels. Most noticeably, however, the *Album* and *La Dame à la Licorne* both evoke a similar harmony as the viewer is carried rhythmically through each scene and from one panel to the next.

During Vuillard's time the *La Dame à la Licorne* tapestries were exhibited as a unit, as they are today, in a single room at the Cluny museum. It was not until 1921 that A. L. Kendrick first named the individual tapestries after the five senses: *Sight*, *Hearing*, *Smell*, *Taste*, and *Touch*.[16] The first scene, *Sight*, takes its title from the solemn woman who holds up a mirror that frames the reflection of the unicorn resting on her lap. *Hearing* (fig. 4) is clearly titled so because the lady assisted by her servant is playing an organ. *Smell* is represented by a woman who pulls together a ring of fragrant flowers;

Fig. 3 Édouard Vuillard, *The Embroidery* from *Album* series, 1895, oil on canvas, 69 1/4 x 25 1/2 in. (176 x 65 cm). (By permission: Estate of John Hay Whitney; © The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY. © 2005 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris)

this is more clearly signified by the monkey next to the lady clearly smelling a large bloom. In *Taste* a parakeet standing on the woman's hand holds an item between its claws that is believed to be some type of candy, and the human is reaching for some of it herself. The monkey directly below the lady is about to pop red meat or candy into his mouth as well. Lastly, *Touch* is depicted as the woman grasps onto the flagpole and the horn of the unicorn. The sixth tapestry shows the royal lady surrounded by a tent upon which are printed the words which give the panel its title, *A Mon Seul Désir*. Kendrick suggested this scene was a sort of introduction, conclusion or remark upon the rest of the series, perhaps an emblem of love.

The many flowers, or *milles-fleurs*, in the background suggest associations with a Garden of Love. Vuillard may have associated the scenes with the Natansons as they were newlyweds at the time of his visit. A large decorative commission such as the *Album* may have even been a wedding gift from Thadée to Misia, just as the Cluny tapestries are thought to have been.[17] Additionally, the tapestry set was clearly produced for a wealthy family as seen in the silk and extraordinarily high quality of weaving. In a similar vein, the Natansons saw themselves as purveyors of style, and also would have wanted to commission high quality works of art.

While Kendrick's theory that the tapestries represent the five senses post-dates the time of Vuillard's visit, the references to the senses in the tapestry series would have been evident to the Symbolist artist. The Nabis were students of Baudelaire's

Fig. 4 Anonymous 15th-century tapestry, *Hearing* from *La Dame à la Licorne* series, 145 3/4 x 114 1/4 in. (370 x 290 cm). (By permission: Musée du Moyen Age (Cluny), Paris, France. © Reunion des Musees Nationaux / Art Resource, NY.)

theory of correspondences which metaphorically associated various stimuli from the five senses (sounds, odors, colors) with specific emotions.[18] Thus, Baudelaire enabled artists, writers, and musicians to symbolize emotions. Vuillard and the other Nabis were also well-versed on Wagner's ideal of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, A Total Work of Art in which the different arts (music, dance, painting, poetry) work together harmoniously. In both the theater and in painted works of art, the term *Gesamtkunstwerk* became popularized to represent such evocations of multiple senses, and a fusion of these separate senses into one harmonious whole.[19]

The dense coverage and variety of flowers in these medieval tapestries call to mind the touch, fragrance, and beauty of holding, smelling, and seeing the actual blooms. I propose that Vuillard integrated the various senses shown in *La Dame à la Licorne* into a synaesthetic orchestration in which each scene combines various sensory elements. In *The Embroidery* (fig. 3), for example, the smell of flowers surrounds the women shown in the scene. The needleworker feels the needle and yarn in her hand as her sight responds to the sunlight streaming onto her work while another woman lifts the drapery to the side. Scenes throughout the *Album* series stimulate the senses: the smelling and touching of blooms, the flipping through a book, and a vanity mirror.[20] And Vuillard's brushstrokes themselves enliven the texture of the various objects in the room, particularly the blooms and the various dress materials, instigating an urge in the viewer to touch the canvas itself. Vuillard had a particular interest in textiles, and often incorporated into his paintings patterns of fabrics and the women he observed working in his mother's dressmaking business. Vuillard scholars Henri-Claude Cosseau and Anneth Deepak highlight the association of Vuillard's brushstrokes with the texture of fabric:

> ... we should see the pair of scissors as an instrument which is literally in the process of cutting the cloth, which can therefore be identified with the canvas of the picture. In paintings where there is a proliferation of meticulous touches (inevitably associated by the critics with woven tapestry) the ambivalent theme of sewing-painting, that is to say painting assimilated into sewing (and vice-versa) takes on its full meaning. It is as if the split introduced into the structure of the seamstresses were closed up, resewn and incorporated into the weft of the pigment![21]

In addition to the Cluny tapestries, Vuillard's experience designing sets and programs for the theater also informed his vision for the *Album*. As shown in the top register of a 1910 drawing from a series in which Pierre Bonnard reflects on his life as a painter (fig. 5), several artists were involved in theater set design. Vuillard designed stage sets for several theaters and later collaborated with Lugné-Poe, actor, and Camille Mauclair, a young poet and critic, to launch the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre, Paris' foremost experimental theater in the 1890s. Vuillard's responsibilities for creating an appropriate *mise-en-scène* required consideration of the interrelationship between the sets, props, lighting, and costumes. Vuillard's construction of space within his paintings derives in many ways from his participation in Symbolist theater.[22] Vuillard's stage sets created an effect that blended with, rather than distracted from, their settings. The *Album* panels were designed to be unframed; in this way they resembled the theatrical backdrops Vuillard had designed in previous years. They were intended,

I believe, as a backdrop or a *mise-en-scène* for Misia Natanson. Misia was a lover of the theater and, according to Lugné-Poe, was herself much of the attraction for the audience at Théâtre de l'Oeuvre. Misia's involvement with and support of the theater is highlighted in a lithograph by Toulouse-Lautrec for the cover of the *L'Estampe Originale*. Misia is shown in her theater box enthralled with the performance; yet, the other half of the scene shows the activity behind the stage in which artists like Vuillard are manipulating stage scenery. Misia is portrayed simultaneously as viewing subject and decorative object.

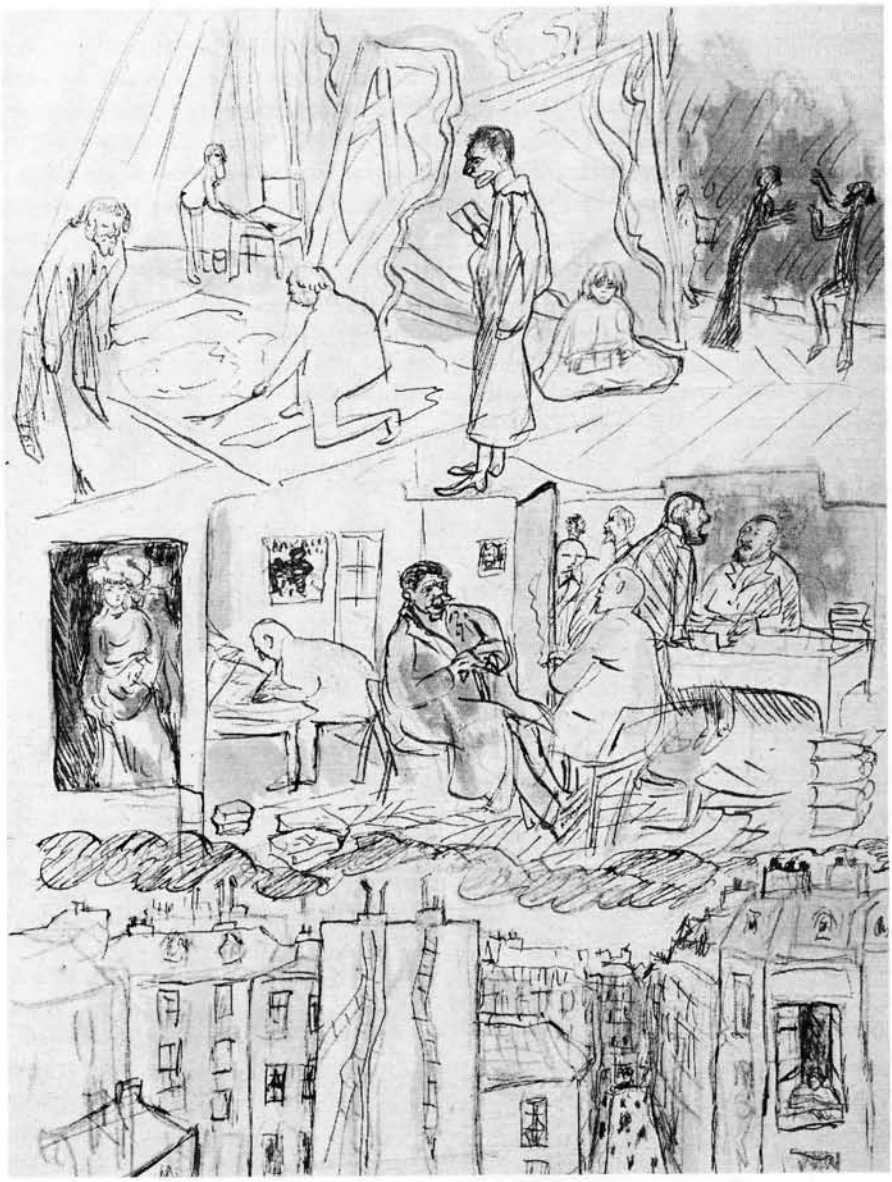

Fig. 5 Pierre Bonnard, *Scene from La Vie du Peintre*, 1910, pencil and ink, 12 1/2 x 9 1/2 in. (31.5 x 24 cm). Private Collection (formerly in the collection of Charles Terrasse, Paris). (© 2005 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.)

Misia's Salon and Her Aura of Influence

During the fin-de-siècle the Central Union of the Decorative Arts, an organization formed by the government to respond to France's diminishing role in the international craft industry, called for women to act as patrons as well as cultivators of artistic inspiration. The Central Union determined that the decorative arts depended on women as the "artificers of interior spaces."[23] In an article from 1894 asserting the views of the Central Union, Gustave Larroumet wrote,

> The decorative arts exert their power in our homes and on our persons. While man spends a great deal of time outside the home, the most expansive woman remains much of the time at home. The arrangement of the home depends on her; it is what she makes of it, either agreeable or sullen, elegant or vulgar. An interior tells nothing of the man who inhabits it; it always reveals the character and taste of the woman who assembled it.[24]

A woman was expected to maintain her position as decorative object, to fashion herself in order to enhance her environment just as the decoration of her home was to reflect her individual style. Decorating and fashion magazines promoted these ideas by encouraging women to, "use your rugs and curtains to dress yourself" and to consider one's home, "the extension of [one's] personality."[25]

That Misia embraced personal expression through wardrobe is supported by the impressions of her sense of fashion from members of the *Revue Blanche* circle. Vuillard remarked in a letter to fellow artist Félix Vallotton, for example, that her "violent colors . . . delight," and Stéphane Mallarmé spoke of Misia's "beautiful" clothes in several letters to his family.[26] Mallarmé and the Natansons were close friends during the 1890s and became neighbors in Valvins. Mallarmé wrote a series of articles for *La Revue Blanche* and, earlier in his career, had published a journal on fashion, *La Dernière Mode*. Interesting to the discussion at hand, Mallarmé's journal considered the relationship between theater and decoration. As Rayna Coller notes in her study of this journal, Mallarmé's concepts of décor (which can denote either fashion or theater) and dress (denoting either fashion or costume) suggests his association of fashion with a theatrical presentation of self.[27] Such a reading supports the notion that it was not only Misia's fashion sense Mallarmé found compelling but her theatrical self-presentation as well.

Such associations between women and the objects which surround them can be seen in Vuillard's paintings. In the *Album*'s title panel (fig. 1) the large bouquet centered on the left half of the scene contains luscious, contrasting white and burgundy blooms. As one concentrates on the bouquet, the woman holding the *Album* becomes an outgrowth of the floral arrangement; the heads of the two women to the left of the bouquet seem to be blooms themselves. Through this fracturing of two- and three-dimensional space the artist has suggested the equal value of the floral blooms and the women as decorative objects. Another example of the artist's intentional correlation between flowers and women is *Woman in a Striped Dress* (fig. 2); a pulsing rhythm is created as the stripes race upwards as if to strangle the woman. The barely distinguishable vases are all extremely tall, straight containers which similarly strangle the flower stems. The woman is constrained by her blouse just as the flowers are contained within their vases.

In subtle yet definitive ways, the *Album* interacted with its intended setting to construct a feminine space in which the Symbolist notions of the theatre, medievalism, or music could be discussed and expressed. While Thadée Natanson's activities focused on his Symbolist journal, *La Revue Blanche*, and its offices, Misia's creative domain was the salon in their home, the site where Vuillard's *Album* cycle was displayed. Their centers of influence were not separate, however, as the Natanson home, named the "annex" by Misia, became an alternate meeting place for the circle of *La Revue Blanche*.[28]

In fin-de-siècle Paris, soirées held by cultured hostesses from the wealthy echelons of society were key places to generate contacts. Successful writers, painters, and musicians, guided by their hostess, would exchange intellectual and artistic views. Misia expressly designed an artistic milieu to stimulate conversation as she surrounded herself with the Symbolist artists and writers associated with her husband's journal. Gold and Fizdale, biographers of Misia, emphasize her role as mistress of *La Revue Blanche*:

> . . . she was [a] born iconoclast, a highly valued commodity on the Parisian intellectual market. It was in her nature to lay down the law, quickly and with authority. As the wife of a rising editor, Misia was toadied to, fawned over, and flattered by writers and artists who hoped to be included in this magazine. It was her first taste of power, a weapon she used with skill and enthusiasm. She fought generously for the artists whose work she loved. As for the others, she shrugged them off, muttering, "*C'est la barbe.*" And her shrug of boredom carried weight . . . . Her position, combined with her unique style, her seductive charm, and her almost physical need to be constantly surrounded by people, was to make her the magnetic center, the feminine touchstone for one of the most gifted circles of artists Paris has ever known.[29]

Décorations designed for such a home enjoyed a public consumption during salon gatherings, rather than being solely objects for private enjoyment. For example, two other series by Vuillard, Alexandre Natanson's *Public Gardens* and Jean Schopfer's *Luncheon at Vasouy*, were both announced and shown to guests at special viewing parties. Although there is no evidence of a specific party thrown in honor of the *Album*, the paintings and photographs of the Natanson salon in which it appears underscore its importance within the Natanson milieu.

Misia's social activities, particularly the soirées held at the Natanson home, supported and extended the artistic notions of *La Revue Blanche*. Even in her later years, when she was writing her memoirs, Misia saw herself as a patron of artists with a special ability to find and intimately know talent:

> I always believed that artists were more in need of love than of respect. I loved them, their pleasures, their work, their troubles and their joy in life, which I shared with them. Today the museums of the world are filled with the works of my friends and there is no longer any risk in worshipping them now that they are part of the world's treasures. I prefer to have the privilege of having loved them in my own way and as persons. It is with a slightly amused smile that I

> evoke the image of the carefree and tremulous young woman that I was at that time, hung as I am now on the walls of the Hermitage at St. Petersburg, or appearing in the catalogue of the Barnes Collection in Philadelphia.[30]

Misia's influence on the circle of *La Revue Blanche* is further highlighted in the central scene of a drawing from Bonnard's series *La Vie du Peintre* that recalls the atmosphere of the offices of *La Revue Blanche* (fig. 5).[31] On the right, two of the Natanson brothers are conversing on a project. Alexandre, in charge of the financial aspects of the journal, is standing while Thadée, in his role as art critic, is seated at his desk.[32] On the far left of the scene is an image of the sensuous Misia in high fashion, her hat full of plumes. This may be interpreted as Misia either stepping into the room through a doorway, or as an *object d'art* (a painting or print within the drawn scene), framed for her admirers. When considering either interpretation, one must acknowledge the prominent placement of Misia in the center of the male world of the offices of *La Revue Blanche*. "She personifies *La Revue Blanche*," wrote Annette Vaillant, Misia's niece, "this elegant, self-confident creature, daringly yet meticulously dressed . . . everyone's muse."[33] Indeed, the importance of her presence at the offices of *La Revue Blanche* was quite distinct in the memory of Bonnard more than seven years after the journal ceased publication.

It is the synaesthetic quality of the *Album* that best highlights its role as an extension of Misia and resonates with the feminine musicality of the scenes in *La Dame à la Licorne*. In the Cluny tapestries, a *hortus conclusus*, or medieval enclosed garden, is suggested by the botanically correct floral depictions. A protective enclosure such as this denoted a space for meditation, analogous to the Virgin's body, in medieval religious imagery.[34] I suggest that the Natanson's salon, surrounded by the densely flowered *Album* panels, further functioned as a modern, secular space of contemplation for the *Revue Blanche* circle, a space protected and nourished by Misia Natanson.

Such ties between the offices of *La Revue Blanche* and Misia's annex are supported by Groom's suggestion that the title of the *Album* series refers to a special publication of *La Revue Blanche* produced in 1895, in which a collection of original lithographs from previous issues were brought together in a single album as a special edition.[35] The implicit intent of this project was to promote the journal and the artists it supported. Prints of women demonstrating the act of looking through a portfolio, sometimes the very one of which the print itself is a part, were a common theme in late-nineteenth century print-media. As Groom points out, within the largest *Album* panel, women are in fact flipping through a book of prints. Considering the print projects funded by Thadée, a reference to an album of prints within a painting hanging in the Natanson home underscores the blending of these spaces as locations of both private and public consumption. Furthermore, as women are often shown as browsers of prints, cultivation of an aesthetic appreciation was conveyed as a feminine notion.

To better frame another example of Misia's performative presentation of herself, we must first consider the other venue for the *Album*. According to Vuillard's journal, the *Album* was placed in Siegfried Bing's Maison de L'Art Nouveau one month after the series was completed for the Natansons.[36] While the commission was designed primarily for the Natansons' home, the *Album* was also chosen by both painter and patrons to be placed in a small waiting room in Bing's gallery.[37] Maison de L'Art Nouveau was designed to imitate domestic space; Henry Van de Velde's work for

Fig. 6 Henry van de Velde, *Maria Sèthe (Maria van de Velde) at Bloemenwerf*, 1897. (By permission: Archives et Musee de la Litterature, Brussels.)

Bing's show dominated the gallery and best represents Bing's vision for the project. The Belgian artist, inspired by William Morris, received international acclaim for his adherence to the principle of the Total Work of Art in which each element within the home worked together to create a unified whole.

A photograph choreographed by Van de Velde of his wife, Maria, inside their home, which he designed, offers an example of Van de Velde's integrated environment, and the importance of the human female presence within it (fig. 6). In this image, Maria is posed wearing a dress designed by her husband and made of William Morris decorative wall fabric that she brought back from a trip to England.[38] Dressed in this way, Maria herself becomes another element of the interior, draped and decorated much like any other object. Van de Velde's photographs of his wife in this environment, wearing clothing he designed for her, suggest the centrality of the female's form as a key element in a harmonious decorative environment.

Similarly, in a photograph taken by Vuillard in the late 1890s, Misia is presented as an integral part of her environment (fig. 7). The bold paisley-like floral fabric on the walls, in English Morris style, highlights the analogy between the dressed walls and the dressed Misia. One immediately notices her distinctive costume: a vertically striped dress, polka-dotted tie, and a lacework collar that appears contrived to echo the carving in the porcelain on the cabinet beside her.[39] One of these vessels, in fact, wears the same vertical stripes as Misia herself. Interestingly, within this posed arrangement, Misia tilts her head slightly to her right, acknowledging the vertical painted panel from the *Album* beside her, *The Embroidery* (fig. 3). The unframed panel is not attached to the wall, but rests on a large wood baseboard; this evidences that its current placement is only temporary and highlights the portable nature of the series. The photograph suggests the efforts of both Vuillard and Misia, using the *Album*, to create backdrops before which Misia could pose and perform.

Misia and the Sensations of Music

Misia had a gift for music even as a child, and her skills were honed when she was trained by the great composer Gabriel Fauré to be a classical pianist. Misia claimed that it was her devotion to Thadée and his world of *La Revue Blanche* that sealed her

Fig 7 Édouard Vuillard, *Misia Natanson with The Embroidery*, ca. 1897, 9 x 9 in. (22.9 x 22.9 cm). (By permission: Salomon Archives, Paris; © 2005 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.)

decision not to play professionally, but rather for friends within their social circle.[40] Elizabeth Easton focused on the images of Misia in Vuillard's work in a book entitled *The Music of Painting*. In this fascinating discussion, Easton highlights the prominent role of Misia as a musician: "In Vuillard's images of Misia in her salon, music is not physically depicted but psychologically evoked in the Symbolist manner, and all the parts of the canvas work together to create a sense of harmony."[41] The musicality emanating from Misia's piano playing is often referred to in depictions of the Natanson home and is, in fact, what one finds most in remembrances of her. Mallarmé, for example, wrote a verse dedicated to her, on a delicate fan that eloquently describes his impressions:

> Unfolding wing of paper
> Flutter fully, if not long ago
> You were initiated by Misia
> To the storm and the joy of her piano[42]

Misia's husband, Thadée, described the *Album* panels in musical terms as well, "A muted symphony, where relationships never seen before harmonize and vibrate deeper and deeper as they are contemplated."[43] Through a comparison between the Vaquez panels and the *Album*, a few distinct differences highlight this musicality of the *Album*, and therefore a link between the series and the persona of Misia. First, unlike the *Album*, one male figure is seen in the Vaquez panels, probably the doctor himself, wearing a robe and surrounded by books. When studying the *Album*, one must consider why Vuillard chose not to place Misia or Thadée within the scene. Secondly, a piano is the central subject in one of the Vaquez panels. However, a piano (a common feature in a salon such as that of the Natansons) is not the subject in any of the *Album* panels. I propose that Vuillard excluded that popular theme from the panels because the *Album* was designed as a background for Misia's actual piano performances, creating a total synaesthetic experience. The *Album* was intended as a backdrop for, rather than a representation of, Misia.

Fig. 8 Édouard Vuillard, *Misia at the Piano with Cipa*, 1897, oil on cardboard, 25 x 22 in. (63.5 x 56 cm). (By permission: Kunsthalle Karlsruhe, Germany; © 2005 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.)

This harmonious orchestration, the references to the senses, the multiple panels, and the color and subject matter of the *Album* all link this series to the *La Dame à la Licorne* tapestries that Vuillard so admired in his journals. The musicality and rhythm Vuillard conveyed in the *Album* also echoes the impression the Cluny tapestries had on the poet Rilke, a contemporary of Vuillard. Upon observing *Hearing*, the poet remarked,

> Shouldn't music come into this silence? Isn't it already there? Gravely and silently adorned, she has walked (how slowly — do you see??) to see the portable organ and is standing there, playing it, separated by the row of pipes from the handmaid, who is working the bellows on the other side. She has never been so beautiful.[44]

In the Natansons' home, the *Album* paintings set the stage for the exotic Misia to play the part of muse for the circle of painters, poets and other artists within the circle of *La Revue Blanche*. As Misia was the central attraction for the company in their home, she developed that space as an extension of the personality she wished to project. Thus, the *Album* panels created a stage set, or a *mise-en-scène*, for the very essence, the musicality, Misia projected onto the space around her. In this way, the *Album* not only supported a decorative aesthetic, but supported a milieu for the circle of *La Revue Blanche*.

The satisfaction with the *Album* commission, for both painter and patrons, is supported by the repeated quotation of the panels in other works by the artist.[45] In *Misia at the Piano with Cipa*, 1897, the largest panel from the *Album* series is hung above Misia who is absorbed in her music while her brother, Cipa, stands entranced as a solid form behind the musician, singing her melody (fig. 8). As Easton notes, "Vuillard's portrayals of Misia are orchestrated so that all elements play a supporting role to her."[46] In this scene, the solid figure of Cipa is pushed forward by yellow curtains and looks in the direction of Misia, continually bringing the viewer's attention back to her as well. This painting insists on the viewer's silence for the musicality of the scene to show itself. The red of Misia's dress is echoed in *The Album* panel (fig. 1) visible above her, which is at once interrupted and emphasized by the light from the tall lamp standing on the piano. Light does not cast itself on the painting nor on Misia below. Instead, the lamp loses its three-dimensionality as it appears to become part of *The Album* panel behind it. Its base blends so well into the yellow wallpaper that it is difficult to determine to which plane it belongs. The lamp is thus a bridge between *The Album* panel and Misia's world; as such, Misia and the painting are on the same plane in both the artist's and the viewer's mind. Cipa, the lamp, the painting, the wallpaper, all harmonize in concert as if to play Misia's song.

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1. For an assessment of Vuillard's oeuvre see the catalogue raisonné of the artist's paintings by Antoine Salomon and Guy Cogeval (Milan: Skira/Wildenstein, 2003); and the international exhibition catalogue, Guy Cogeval et al., *Édouard Vuillard* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).
2. In preparation for this project I have found over sixty artworks of Misia by artists such as Vuillard, Pierre Bonnard, Toulouse-Lautrec, and Auguste Renoir in a variety of media including oil, distemper, charcoal, and lithography. In addition, at least thirty photographs of Misia by Vuillard exist, and over a hundred photos by others. It has been shown that Vuillard frequently used the camera to choreograph the compositions in his paintings. See in particular Elizabeth Easton, "The International Snapshot," in Cogeval et al., *Édouard Vuillard*, (Yale University Press, 2003), 423-38; and Easton, "Édouard Vuillard's Photographs: Artistry and Accident," *Apollo*, no. 388 (June 1994): 9-17.
3. Gloria Groom, *Édouard Vuillard: Painter-Decorator: painters and projects, 1892-1912* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 67-90; and Groom, *Beyond the Easel: Decorative Paintings by Bonnard, Vuillard, Denis, and Roussel, 1890-1930* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 126-31.
4. Annette Leduc Beaulieu, and Brooks Beaulieu, "The Thadée Natanson Panels: A Vuillard Decoration for S. Bing's Maison de l'Art Nouveau," *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 1, issue 1 (Autumn 2002), http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/autumn_02/articles/beau.html
5. Vuillard wrote in thirty-seven *carnets* (or notebooks) which I studied at the Institut de France in Paris. MS 5396 covers Volume 1, years 1887-1890, and volume 2, 1890-1905; MS 5397 contains nine *carnets* covering 1907-16; MS 5398 contains eleven *carnets* from 1924-6; and MS 5399 contains thirteen *carnets* covering 1929-40. This specific reference was dated 1896. Édouard Vuillard, Journal, MS 5396, p. 78, Institut de France. Translations provided here are those of the author. They were compared with translations by Groom and Easton whenever possible.
6. I will address the series as a whole as *Album* and the individual panel as *The Album*. The first record of titles for the individual panels appears in the catalogue accompanying the sale of Thadée's collection on June 13, 1908.
7. Or, as the Beaulieus suggest, the woman is "embroidering a stretched canvas employing needles and dyed-wool yarns in a kind of imitation tapestry, much as Vuillard himself used brushes and oil paints to

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imitate woven tapestry on the stretched canvases of the *Album* panels." Beaulieu and Beaulieu, "The Thadée Natanson Panels."

8. For further analysis of Vuillard's tendency to use the *Album* panels in other works, see Debra Jean Gibney, "Vuillard's *Album*: A Collaboration Between Painter and Patron" (Southern Methodist University, 2002), figs. 25, 29, 31, 37, and 38.

9. See Laura Morowitz, "Consuming the Past: The Nabis and French Medieval Art," Ph.D. Dissertation. (New York University, 1996).

10. Several Nabi artists, such as Emile Bernard and Paul Ranson, were interested both in medieval tapestry designs as sources for paintings, and in tapestry-making itself. One artist in particular, Aristide Maillol, was a passionate promoter of the technique of tapestry-making. Maillol, in fact, credited the tapestries at the Musée de Cluny with initiating his interest in designing and producing tapestries. Judith Cladel, *Aristide Maillol: Sa Vie - Son Œuvre - Ses Idées* (Paris: Éditions Bernard Grasset, 1937), 46. Vuillard would have been familiar with Maillol's study of tapestries as well as the studies in tapestry design being undertaken by Bernard, Ranson, Gauguin, and the Belgian, Van de Velde. In fact, Vuillard later introduced Maillol to Princess Bibesco who commissioned Maillol to create two large tapestries, *Concert of Women* and *Music for a Bored Princess*.

11. Vuillard, Journal, MS 5396, 44v (July 16, 1894): "Visite hier à *Cluny*. Les tapisseries et les enluminures de missals. Calendriers. Dans les tapisseries je pense qu'en aggrandissant purement et simplement mon petit panneau cela ferait le sujet d'une décoration. Sujets humble des ces décorations de *Cluny*! Expression d'un *sentiment intime* sur une plus grande surface, voilá tout !"

12. Vuillard, Journal, MS 5396, 44v (July 16, 1894).

13. Groom, *Édouard Vuillard: Painter-Decorator*, 93; Laura Morowitz, "Consuming the Past" (1996); Groom also comments that the influence of the Cluny as well as mille-fleurs tapestries in general may have been an influence on Vuillard's later works such as that made for Dr. Vaquez. Groom, *Édouard Vuillard: Painter-Decorator*, 219 n. 96.

14. During the period Vuillard was working on the large *Album* paintings, he records waiting in his studio for the heart doctor on August 5, 1895: "Août Visite att. Vaquez. Paresse complète" (Vuillard, Journal, MS 5396, 49r); Groom's suggestion is found in Groom, *Édouard Vuillard: Painter-Decorator*, 94.

15. Groom, *Édouard Vuillard: Painter-Decorator*, 89, fig. 149.

16. A. L. Kendrick "Quelques remarques sur la 'Dame à la Licorne à la Licorne' du *Musée de Cluny*," *Actes du congrès d'histoire de l'art*, Paris, 1921, T.III, 1924, 662-666. Cited in Gourlay, "La Dame a La Licorne: A Reinterpretation," 69, n. 4.

17. The coat of arms, the prominence of the woman in each scene, and the unicorn, often signifying in medieval representations that the woman near the animal is a virgin, has led medieval scholars to suggest that the Cluny tapestries work may have been a wedding gift or at least in some way referenced courtly love. For an in-depth discussion of the interpretations related to love and marriage in the Cluny tapestries see Kristina Gourlay, "La Dame a la Licorne: A Reinterpretation," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 130 (Sept. 1997): 47-72.

18. George Mauner, *The Nabis, Their History and Their Art, 1888-1896* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1978), 22-3. In his journal, Vuillard also remarked on such sensations in relation to his artistic study of the medieval tapestries. Vuillard, Journal, MS 5396, 44r (July 16, 1894): "Il y a deux occupations en moi: l'étude de la perception extérieure remplie d'expériences pénibles et dangereuses pour mon humeur et mes nerfs. L'étude de la décoration picturale rarement possible du reste bien plus bornée mais qui devrait me donner la tranquillité d'un ouvrier — repenser souvent aux tapisseries de *Cluny*."

19. For an introduction to the complexities of *Gesamtkunstwerk* in late nineteenth-century France, see Claire I. R. O'Mahony, "Gesamtkunstwerk: Interdisciplinarity and fin-de-siècle Visual Culture" *Art History* 28, Issue 4 (Sept. 2005): 562-556.

20. The vanity mirror is in *The Vanity Table*, an image of which can be seen in Groom, 71.

21. Henry Claude Cosseau and Anneth Deepak, "Les Ruses de l'intisme," *Vuillard*, 1990. Cited in Salomon and Cogeval, 56.

22. For discussions of how Vuillard's involvement in the theatre can be seen in his painted works, see Cogeval, *Vuillard: Post-Impressionist Master*; and Nancy Forgione, "Édouard Vuillard in the 1890s: Intimism, Theater, and Decoration" (Ph.D. diss., The Johns Hopkins University, 1993).

23. Quote by Madame Pégard in Debora Silverman, *Art Nouveau in Fin-De-Siècle France: Politics, Psychology, and Style* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 194-7.

24. Gustave Larroumet, "L'Art décoratif et les femmes," *Revue des arts décoratifs* 16 (1896): 101, cited in Silverman, *Art Nouveau in Fin-De-Siècle France*, 201.

25. As quoted in Lisa Tierston, "The Chic & the Feminine Modern: Home Decorating as High Art in Turn of the Century Paris," in Christopher Reed, *Not at Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1996), 25. Marcelle Tinayre writes, "When an unknown visitor awaits us alone in our salon, he first meets our objects, the witnesses and confidants of our lives." in "L'Art de parer son foyer," *Feminia*, no. 221, 189 (April 1, 1910 cited in Ibid, 31).

26. Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale, *Misia: The Life of Misia Sert*, 70; Stéphane Mallarmé's letters are found in *Stéphane Mallarmé, Correspondence*, trans. and ed. Henri Mondor and Lloyd James Austin (Paris: Gallimard, 1983), VIII: Nobember 5, 1896 and November 6, 1896.
27. Rayna Cristina Coller, "The Decorative Mode: Rhetorical Strategies in Mallarmé's Writing on Fashion" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1986), 104.
28. Gold and Fizdale, *Misia* (1980), 51.
29. Arthur and Fizdale, *Misia* (1980), 38.
30. Taken from Misia's self-aggrandizing autobiography. Misia Natanson, *Misia and the Muses*, trans. Moura Budberg (New York: John Day Company, 1953), 44.
31. The top drawing is a scene in which a theater set is in the process of being deconstructed, while on the right section of the drawing actors are engaged in practice. The central register shows the offices of *La Revue Blanche*. The bottom scene shows the streets of Paris from the artist's studio.
32. Félix Fénéon, depicted here bent over his desk and writing intently; Octave Mirbeau, in his coat and infamous mustache, is discussing a project with a colleague.
33. Annette Vaillant, "Les amités de la *Revue Blanche*," *Derrière le miroir* (Paris) no. 158-9 (April-May 1966) cited in Waller and Seiberling, *Artists of La Revue Blanche: Bonnard, Toulouse-Lautrec, Vallotton, Vuillard* (Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester, January 22-April 15, 1984, Rochester, New York).
34. For a detailed discussion of the religious symbolism of the plants in medieval gardens, see Compton Reeves, *Pleasures and Pastimes in Medieval England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).
35. Groom, *Édouard Vuillard: Painter-Decorator*, 69. Alternatively, perhaps the *Album* series may be remarking on the collection of lithographs entitled *La Petite Suite* made up of Nabis works that had appeared in the journal in 1895. This *Album* was made up of five illustrations with the unplanned commonality of women or flowers; Vuillard's inclusion was entitled *Intérieur*.
36. Vuillard, Journal, MS 5397, 12.
37. Also in Bing's show was a porcelain service for which Vuillard designed eight settings, each portraying a central female figure surrounded by a floral and striped border. Each plate contains a central scene with a single female figure dressed in contemporary clothing bordered by abstract ornamentation. Here too the women are not individualized but symbolic of the modern Parisian woman as Jean Schopfer, the owner of the plate setting pointed out, the "character of contemporary society." Jean Schopfer, "Modern Decoration," *The Architectural Record* 6 (January-March 1897): 246.
38. It should be noted that many designers and architects in this period and into the twentieth century, such as William Morris and Frank Lloyd Wright, would design textiles and clothing and often pose their wives or mistresses in their designs.
39. The comparison between the porcelain and Misia's collar was remarked upon by Groom, *Édouard Vuillard: Painter-Decorator*, 85.
40. Fauré, according to Misia, was saddened when the young Misia was engaged to Thadée: "Fauré, who had by then become a celebrity, burst into tears when he heard of my engagement. He wanted to build up for me the career of virtuoso, and begged me to give up for ever the idea of marriage. 'You can't do this to me,' he told me, his face bathed in tears. 'Besides, if you do marry, you'll never be happy.'" Natanson, *Misia and the Muses*, 31.
41. Elizabeth Wayne Easton, *The Intimate Interiors of Édouard Vuillard* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989), 105.
42. Gold and Fizdale, *Misia: The Life of Misia Sert*, 60.
43. Thadée Natanson, "Peinture: A propos de M. M. Charles Cottet, Gauguin, Édouard Vuillard et d'Edouard Manet," *La Revue Blanche* 11 (February 1897): 518, trans. in Groom, *Édouard Vuillard: Painter-Decorator*. As mentioned previously, the correspondences of the senses, or synaesthesia, was a concept being considered within Symbolist circles during the fin-de-siecle. For example, in *Théâtre d'Art*'s production of *La Cantique des Cantiques*, when music was played, the audience was sprayed with perfume in an effort to stimulate the various senses. See Forgione, "Édouard Vuillard in the 1890s: Intimism, Theater, and Decoration": 206. Such discussion helps to explain the tremendous admiration of the Symbolists for the composer Wagner; Wagner's theory *Gesamtkunstwerk* was an effort to fuse music and poetry to evoke multiple senses in the listener.
44. Rainer Maria Rilke, *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, 1910, trans. Stephen Mitchell, 1st ed. (New York: Random House, 1982), 129.
45. For further analysis of Vuillard's tendency to use the *Album* panels in other works, see Gibney, "Vuillard's *Album*: A Collaboration Between Painter and Patron" (Southern Methodist University, 2002).
46. Easton, *Intimate Interiors*, 109.

Visual Objectivity and the Impossible Objects of Hannah Höch

Thomas O. Haakenson

In Theory the Whole Problem Was Solved

In a short satire written around 1920 titled "Der Maler" [The painter], the Berlin artist Anna Therese Johanne (Hannah) Höch provides a humorous indictment of modern art, German politics, scientific representations, and male privilege. Much like the protagonist of her story, Höch was primarily a visual artist. Thus, it may seem somewhat misdirected to begin a discussion of her work with an analysis of one of the few written texts she produced. "The Painter" is, however, a very curious document. It shows that Höch's work during the period was more critical, more sophisticated, and more far-reaching than many scholars have suggested. Not only does Höch's story present a covert attack against the sexism that underlay the supposed radicalism of the European avant-garde. It also demonstrates the artist's early concern with the complicitousness of visual representation and scientific objectification. In the following essay, I examine the criticisms of science in Höch's short tale as well as in her photomontage series of the 1920s and early 1930s, *Aus einem ethnographischen Museum* [From an ethnographic museum]. The use of scientific referents, I suggest, is not simply a feminist critique of gender inequality but part of a much larger project of criticizing the marginalization of racial and sexual minorities as well.

In "The Painter," Höch describes the plight of an aspiring artist with the unusual name of Gotthold Himmelreich [God-beloved heavenly-kingdom]. Forced to wash dishes by his wife, Himmelreich "felt degraded as a man and as a painter" and "suffered under the problematic female soul in the totality of his manhood."[1] As a result, he attempts to overcome through his art the humiliation suffered at the hands of his female companion:

> Now one day he began to paint a picture. A dark force moved him, because he was full of dark forces. He wanted to represent, to cube really, the essential likeness between the nature of chives and the female soul. In theory the whole problem was solved. He saw the emptiness that fills both these objects precisely and with total intellectual clarity.[2]

Invoking psychoanalytic explanations for his wife's behavior and cubist techniques for his artwork, Himmelreich decides to produce as if "scientifically dissected" a painted likeness of his two subjects with the presumptuous title *Das Schnittlauch und die Seele des Weibes (ein Vergleich)* [The chive and the female soul (a comparison)].[3] The effort, however, causes much frustration and self-doubt for Himmelreich, and Höch uses the scene to parody the attempts and failures of the male-dominated arts and sciences to adequately represent — and thereby control — the "essence" of woman.

While "The Painter" is on the surface a simple criticism of gender inequality, there is much more to this provocative tale. Situated in the context of Höch's other work during the Weimar and early Nazi periods, the story appears to echo some of the same themes. The story and the series *Aus einem ethnographischen Museum* reveal a general concern with science's emphasis on the visual. As scholars have increasingly demonstrated, the German anthropological sciences in particular struggled to achieve

a sense of visual objectivity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[4] While "The Painter" reveals the intersection of artistic and scientific visions in a literary context, one of Höch's most complex engagements with the mutual imbrication of the optics of art and science occurs in her use of photomontage and in her engagement with the ethnological museum.

Photomontage is a hybrid technique combining visual and textual materials, and often was used by Berlin Dadaists for its shock value or for propagandistic purposes. For Höch, the art form, associated with the German word *montieren* (to assemble or mount), entailed primarily the "piecing together of photographic and typographic sources, usually cut from the printed mass media." Unlike other early practitioners, however, she never re-photographed her creations or manipulated negatives in the darkroom. Refusing to engage in such "photographic artifice," she preferred "the evidence of hand cutting to the creation of a seamless image or the mass-production of images."[5] By acknowledging the material limitations of the art form, Höch thus could make explicit photomontage's incorporation of different source materials into an arbitrarily constructed new unity.[6] As such, her understanding of the medium was quite different from most art historical descriptions. As her short story and her photomontage series suggest, Höch refused to *represent* objects. Rather, she sought to invoke artistic strategies that *criticized* the illusory nature of representations themselves. Her criticism, as I will suggest in the following essay, was directed not only at the exclusionary bastions of male avant-garde privilege but also at the anthropological sciences that sought to place the white, heterosexual, European male at the pinnacle of civilization.

Photomontage as Visual Critique

It was during the formation of the Berlin Dada group that Höch became aware of the potential for photomontage as conscious artistic critique. Shortly after moving from her hometown of Gotha in Thüringen, Höch began a relationship in 1915 with the artist Raoul Hausmann, although he was already married and had a daughter. At that time, Hausmann was engaged in the debates over *der neue Mensch* (the new [hu]man) and *die neue Gemeinschaft* (the new community), and through her assistance as a secretary and correspondence partner, Höch became indirectly involved in these issues as well. It was during a vacation together in 1917 that Höch and Hausmann would supposedly discover the medium of photomontage when they noticed an image on a wall of a soldier whose head had been cut out from another photograph and pasted in place.[7] The Berlin Dadaists subsequently conceived of photomontage as one of the most exemplary means by which they could achieve their artistic goals. Through the use of contemporary materials and everyday objects, Dadaists such as Höch sought to envision how a new human(ity) and a new form of community might be realized using the visual (and other) cultural objects of the period.

As the *Aus einem ethnographischen Museum* series demonstrates, Höch directed much of her critical artistic energy during the 1920s and 1930s at the visual strategies employed in the representation of supposedly inferior evolutionary others, using the medium of photomontage to encourage an optical reorientation.[8] Indeed, in addition to the provocative new material experimentations that the medium enabled, the Berlin Dadaists as a group focused on photomontage's artistic-political uniqueness. Maria Makela and Peter Boswell indicate, for example, that Höch and the other Dadaists attempted to distance their work from Cubist collages and to emphasize the "mechanical — and proletarian — connotations associated with the term" in using the

Fig. 1 Hannah Höch, *Mutter* [Mother], 1930, photomontage, 16 1/8 x 13 3/4 in. (41 x 35 cm). Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. (© 2005 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.)

word photomontage.[9] Unlike her Dada colleagues, however, Höch would explore an additional potential for the new medium.

A particularly potent example of Höch's unique use of photomontage from the *Aus einem ethnographischen Museum* series is her 1930 work *Mutter* [Mother]. The image shows not only a concern with gender but also with visual objectification. The photomontage, combining at least three separate photographs or illustrated prints, resembles the style of traditional portraiture (fig. 1).[10] That is, a figure is posed facing the camera and looks directly at the viewer. Höch's image, like most portrait style photographs, shows the seated figure's face and the top of the body from slightly below the shoulders. The face and the head are the central foci of the image. The upper body of the figure, whose slumped shoulders make her appear exhausted, is placed on a rather vibrant, watercolor background of reds, yellows, and browns. These colors not only emphasize the body's shadows and slovenly appearance, but also highlight the dark and foreboding nature of the tribal mask that has been substituted or, more accurately, placed atop the woman's face.[11] The lips of the original figure are still visible, however, because Höch has cut

Fig. 2 John Heartfield, *Zwangslieferantin von Menschenmaterial Nur Mut! Der Staat brauch Arbeitslose und Soldaten* [Female forced supplier of human-material take courage! The state needs unemployed and soldiers!], ca. 1925, photomontage. Reproduced from *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung* 9, no. 10 (1930), p. 183. (© 2005 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.)

out the mouth of the mask. In addition, she has also removed the left eye of the tribal mask and replaced it with a photograph or photo-illustrated reproduction of an eye that is slightly larger than what would seem appropriate for the size of the figure in the image. The right eye of the mask, in contrast, has been left intact, and appears as a slight oval carved into the surface of the mask itself. Just below the mask's right eye, Höch has cut out a section of the upper cheek, giving the two extremely different eyes of the mask — the photograph of the female eye on the left and the original carved one on the right — a formal balance. The eyes themselves appear equal in stature in the context of the image, suggesting that the figure "sees" the world from the perspective of both the woman and the "primitive" other.

The source of the materials used and their historical significance provide an important context within which to understand Höch's artistic goals, as (Gertrud) Jula Dech, Karoline Hille, Ellen Maurer, Kristin Makholm, and others have demonstrated. For *Mutter*, Höch actually had taken the body and face of the female figure in her photomontage from a work produced by one of her former Dada colleagues, John Heartfield. Höch nevertheless used the image in a significantly different way than her interlocutor. Heartfield's photomontage appeared in the February 1925 issue of the *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung* [Workers' illustrated newspaper] and was titled *Zwangslieferantin von Menschenmaterial Nur Mut! Der Staat brauch Arbeitslose und Soldaten* [Female forced supplier of human-material take courage! The state needs unemployed and soldiers!] (fig. 2). With regard to the representation of the female body, Heartfield's goals were quite different from Höch's. For one, he had photographed a pregnant proletarian woman in the style of traditional portraiture, but shot the image such that the woman's swollen belly comprises roughly the lower half of the montage. Second, he had placed at the top of the image, just behind the woman's head, a picture of a wounded (probably dead) soldier. Some scholars have indicated that Heartfield's work

was an explicit attempt to appeal to female citizens who were somehow affiliated with the working class. Lavin, for example, has suggested that Heartfield's emphasis on the pregnancy of the woman demonstrates that he (and others) felt that the only contribution women could make to the political cause was in the context of reproductive sexuality. Indeed, such a bias was unfortunately commonplace at the time despite the fact that German women had earned the right to participate in political gatherings in 1908 and the right to vote in 1918.

It is the mask in Höch's photomontage that indicates a particularly insightful comparison between Heartfield's objectification of women and the objectification of ethnographic others by German anthropologists. Makela has suggested that the image of the mask that Höch used was probably from the February 1925 issue of *Der Querschnitt* [The cross-section]; that image, Makela notes, was a photographic reproduction of a dance mask made by the Kwakiutl Indians and was part of the collection of the Museum für Völkerkunde (Museum for Ethnology) in Berlin. It was the scientist Franz Boas, whose primary ethnographic interest was the Kwakiutl Indians and who had acquired "seventy well-documented Kwakiutl pieces, including 'all the ornaments belonging to one dance'," who had undoubtedly brought the artifact back to Berlin after one of his expeditions.[12] Höch's use of the Kwakiutl mask thus suggests a connection, in fact a certain allegiance, to one side of a debate within German anthropology at the fin-de-siècle between physicalists and cosmologists or, in more contemporary terms, between physical anthropology (for some, associated with developmental pathology) and cultural anthropology (which, before the 1920s, had been synonymous with ethnology, defined as "the cultural history of humanity," and the division with which Boas is often associated).[13] Physical anthropologists increasingly felt that, because the mechanism of evolution was at least in part biological, the elimination of difference or its isolation was the only way to ensure racial-evolutionary purity. Like the cultural anthropologists, Höch was more concerned with preserving and comparing these incommensurabilities than eliminating them; invoking some of the philosophical ideas at the heart of Berlin Dada, she focused on suggesting the foundations for a new form of community based on a simultaneous recognition and transcendence of difference.

As the result of her appreciation of difference, Höch became increasingly concerned with the attempt to scientifically re-inscribe otherness through photographic representation. Her connection of the ethnographic other and the German woman in the *Aus einem ethnographischen Museum* photomontage series allowed her to utilize and, at the same time, call into question the photographic representations of supposedly objective gender, racial, and sexual truths. Photographs, as Höch's photomontages demonstrated, were subjective constructions and delineations of objects; these technologically produced representations did not render reality in an objective way, but only reinforced and legitimized existing perceived differences.[14] Photographs thus re-inscribed visual signifiers in service of a scientifically justifiable elimination of difference (for certain physical anthropologists, in particular). In contrast, photomontage, in the hands of someone like Höch, could preserve visual differences and simultaneously challenge the biases and assumptions that enabled the use these markers of a supposed otherness as objective, scientific proof in service of eliminating difference. These issues would become increasingly important during the tumultuous later years of the Weimer Republic.

Seeing Difference Differently

The rise to power of Adolf Hitler and the National Socialists in Germany in the 1930s is often explained in terms of the increased social and political obsessions with racial, sexual, and gender differences. These obsessions, however, had their origins in an earlier milieu.[15] The crises that mark the Weimar Republic not only helped foster these concerns, but also created an environment that had personal and professional repercussions for Höch.[16] It was during this earlier era that she began to explore the question of Western evolutionary biases in her work.

Höch's use of what Fatimah Tobing Rony has called a "third eye" is key to understanding the artist's late Weimar photomontage series. Rony's concept, although deployed in the context of very different U. S. and British anthropological traditions, is also relevant for an analysis of Höch's series and its German context.[17] Much like the ethnographic others in Rony's filmic texts, Höch's photomontages indicate a form of resistance to the objectification of non-whites and German women in the visual culture of the period, a historical and social era dominated by racist, patriarchal heterosexuality.[18] Rony notes that some performers in scientific ethnographic films used a "third eye" to disrupt the "chain of looks" between the implied Western spectator and the ethnographic other. She explains that the "third eye" is the glance that

> . . . can induce one to see the very process which creates the internal splitting, to witness the condition which gives rise to [a] double consciousness . . . [It is] the veil [that] allows for clarity of vision even as it marks the site of socially mediated self-alienation.[19]

Rony's concern with identifying a form of resistance inscribed within visual texts themselves, a resistance to the objectification (re)produced by and within the supposed technically-mediated objectivity of filmic representation, finds a paradigmatic photographic parallel in Höch's photomontage treatment of difference.

Höch's critique of racial, sexual, and gender marginalization is exemplified in *Die Süße* [The sweet one], a photomontage she made around 1926 (fig. 3). In the image, Höch combined a mask from the former French Congo and the body of an idol figure from the Bushongo tribe with an eye, lips, and the legs of a distinctly modern European woman. The obvious incommensurability of the figure's right eye with its mask-face indicates a critical strategy of optical disruption: the image literally looks at the viewer with two different eyes. The two-dimensional view, a view reproduced through photography's dependence on a linear perspective, was, as Andrew Zimmerman has shown, initially a problem for the early German anthropological use of photography. While he and others have described how that view was in fact eventually legitimized as objective, Höch's photomontage figure, in contrast, challenges such linear perspective, suggesting it is far from the only legitimate view possible.[20]

One particularly intriguing aspect of *Die Süße* is the gender of the figure in the image. In fact, the separate source materials used for the image suggest that the figure's gender is ambiguous. Nevertheless, in the final image, it is impossible not to conclude, based upon the presence of apparently feminine legs clad in high heels, shapely and painted lips, a nervous human hand, and an eye that looks upwards and to the right of the image, that the figure is female. Given the posture and the direction of the figure's gaze, it would appear that the photomontage in its totality is a depiction of a stereotypical European female reaction to a male gaze. By separating the corporeal unity of gender

from the fetishistic use of gendered parts, however, Höch suggests that sexuality cannot be defined as male desire for the female body (in its totality), or as female desire for the male body.[21] Indeed, the torso in Höch's seemingly female creation is actually a male statue that has had its penis cut out (or, cut off)![22] More than mere castration anxiety, however, the artist's objectification of the sexualized other mocks the viewer's acculturated ideas of gender polarities as well as her or his conflation of sex and gender.[23] The construction of gender is made explicit by the use of distinctly female fetish-objects such as long legs in high heels; full, painted lips; and a playful, innocent disinterestedness expressed by the eyes. That is, the figure in Höch's *Die Süße* is neither male nor female, but a series of disparate artifacts and objects that are assembled together to appear as if they are — in their totality — female. The illusionary wholeness of gender and the supposedly gendered nature of sexual object-choice (and heterosexuality's claim to definitive and natural authority) are entirely subjective; thus, sexuality and gender find a provocative object-partner in the ethnographic other in Höch's creation. As *Die Süße* demonstrates, the artist's style and use of various techniques of juxtaposition suggest that her work should be read as a protest against a racist, heterosexist patriarchy which sought to objectify and control sexual expression, the Western female body, and the so-called primitive other during the highly charged eugenic environment of the 1920s.[24]

Fig. 3 Hannah Höch, *Die Süße* [The sweet one], ca. 1926, photomontage, 11 13/16 x 6 1/8 in. (30 x 15.5 cm). Photography Collection, Folkwang Essen. (© 2005 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.)

Much like *Die Süße*, in the other approximately eighteen to twenty photomontages comprising the *Aus einem ethnographischen Museum* series, Höch juxtaposed images of African sculpture, so-called primitive peoples, and images of the New Woman found in German photo-illustrated magazines.[25] In such images as *Fremde Schönheit* [Strange beauty], created in 1929, Höch again used several tactics to destabilize the belief in scientific objectivity associated with the ethnographic photographs and artifacts she employed (fig. 4). First, Höch used contrasting shapes and colors or shades of black and

white to make evident the fact that the primary figure or figures in the photomontage had been assembled. Second, she posed the object as if it were on a pedestal solely for the display of the viewer. That is, she over-emphasized the staged nature of the figures in her photomontage in order to highlight the often fabricated, never objective images in her source materials. Third, beginning as early as 1919 but taking increasing importance in her work around 1925 — just prior to and during her lesbian relationship with Til Brugman — Höch repeatedly pasted an eye or a pair of glasses onto the primary figure in the photomontage.

The emphasis on the eyes in the *Aus einem ethnographischen Museum* series, perhaps the most significant strategy Höch used, is meant to draw attention to the fact that photographs and images in photo-illustrated magazines themselves were structured in advance of the viewer's engagement. The eyes in Höch's creations function similarly to Rony's concept of the "third eye" in that the ocular incongruousness was meant to make the spectator aware of the specific context within which the images were produced and of the conventions that continued to limit the receptive possibilities of the finished work. In other words, the scientist, the photographer, or, in Höch's case, the artist, already had limited the field of representation and circumscribed for the viewer what was depicted. The technique suggests the impossibility of creating an objective photograph or photo-illustrated image.

In the photomontage *Denkmal I* [Monument I], made sometime after 1928 and also part of the series, Höch used several of the same techniques (fig. 5). She connected the photograph of a stone statue of a Theban goddess and a mask from Gabon she found in the magazine *Der Querschnitt* with parts of a photograph that showed actress Lilian Harvey

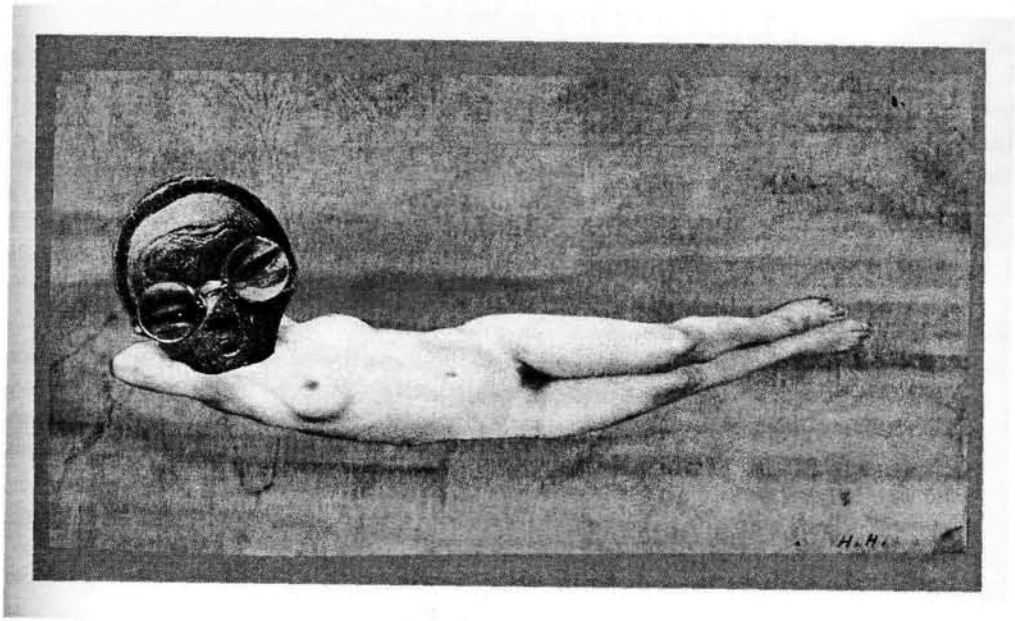

Fig. 4 Hannah Höch, *Fremde Schönheit* [Strange beauty], 1929, photomontage, 4 7/16 x 8 in. (11.3 x 20.3 cm). Collection Jean-Paul Kahn, Paris. (© 2005 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.)

and friends at the beach that appeared in a 1928 issue of *Berlin Illustrirte Zeitung* (*BIZ*). Höch's use of racialized and gendered fragments revealed the interconnectedness of the racialized other and the objectified woman as images that, the work suggests, had a very particular purpose in the photo-illustrated press. In fact, in magazines such as *BIZ* and *Der Querschnitt*, from which Höch used many images of so-called primitives and tribal sculpture for the series, numerous such articles and photographs appeared. The work of Colin Ross, who would later become actively involved with the National Socialists, is of particular note here, as Lavin has suggested.[26] In two essays, in particular, Ross's patriarchal racism is obvious. The first, appearing in a December 5, 1926 issue of *BIZ*, was titled "Die Schwarze Köchin 'Unsere Emilie' bei uns . . . und zu Hause" [The black female cook 'our Emily' with us . . . and at home]. The text was accompanied by two photos: the first was of the Ross family cook clothed in a maid's uniform in the Ross kitchen, and the second showed the woman, nearly naked, in her own kitchen. The second example, appearing in a 1927 issue of *BIZ* under the title "Der Schwarze an der Maschine: Ein afrikanisches Problem" [The black at the machine: an African problem], conveyed the same belief in evolutionary superiority. That is, the cook lacked modern machinery in her own kitchen because she was incapable of operating the equipment; her incompetence was a mark of a distinctly "African problem" — evolutionary developmental inferiority. Ross's texts indicate that the relationship between heterosexism and racism was not always easy to delimit. To be sure, however, women as well as sexual minorities and racialized others did not always passively accept such objectifying representations uncritically, and often instead challenged these representations through artistic or visual strategies of resistance.

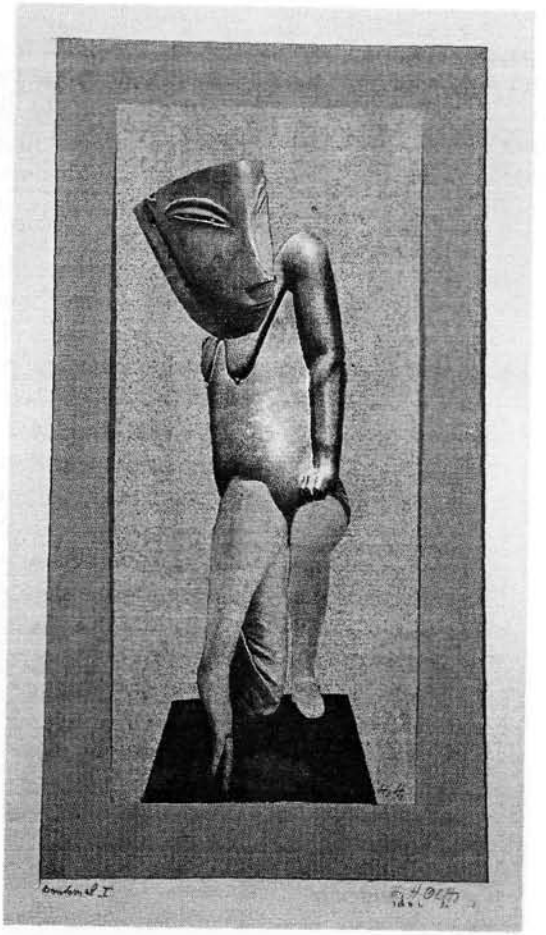

Fig. 5 Hannah Höch, *Denkmal I* [Monument I], after 1928, photomontage, 7 11/16 x 6 1/8 in. (19.3 x 15.5 cm). (© 2005 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.)

Science and the (Visual) Other

In *Joyless Streets: Women and Melodramatic Representation in Weimar Germany* Princeton, 1989), Patrice Petro has demonstrated the importance of visual culture and its use by various sectors of the population for sometimes antithetical purposes during the early twentieth century. According to Petro's analysis, while the material production of visual

culture and the material field of reception limited the spectator's choices — what visual representations are available, where he or she can find the images, whether he or she can afford to buy a movie ticket or photo-illustrated newspaper — the spectator also experienced some degree of agency in how he or she chose to understand and use available representations. For artists and spectators like Höch, such limits and the fantasy of transcending the perceived incommensurable racial, sexual, and gender differences were key to efforts to change social prejudice.

Part of Höch's concern was "the firm boundaries that we human beings so self-assuredly are inclined to erect around everything that is accessible to us . . ."[27] In this respect, Höch's 1924 photomontage *Mischling* [Mixed-race] (fig. 6) and her 1925 *Liebe im Busch* [Love in the bush] (fig. 7) can be seen as responses to the racist propaganda disseminated in the popular press in regard to the occupation of the Rheinland by black and mixed-race French soldiers in 1923.[28] Höch used available representations found in the illustrated press to create photomontages that proposed a different way of understanding supposedly visible racial differences. No longer "black savages" who were "roaming the Rhineland at will, raping the women, infecting the population with all manner of tropical and venereal diseases," the African and South American peoples and artifacts represented in Höch's photomontages attest to the misplaced emphasis on visual markers of difference as indicative of behavior or evolutionary stages of development (i.e. the black "savage," the "roaming" hoard, etc.).[29]

Typical of such scientific inscriptions of racial difference are two pairs of photographs from the 1913 issue of *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* [Journal for ethnology]. In one set of images, there are frontal and side views of an Aoaquis named Shiriana from Brazil's Uraricapara River region (from Köch-Grünberg, 456) (fig. 8). In the other set of pictures, there is a naked, ten year old identified as an "Ayumara girl" and photographed from the front and from the side, but this time standing next to a one meter high pole for height comparison ("Sitzung," 276) (fig. 9). Both sets of photographs are accompanied by text that provides detailed physical measurements. The description adds narrative and statistical data to supplement the supposed truth of the physical differences evidenced in the photographs themselves. The images show "objectively" that not only could racial inferiority be indicated by skin color but, with the aid of photographic inscriptions and measuring poles, supposedly could be identified by the shape and the size of the bodies themselves.

Höch challenged the validity of such photographic inscriptions of difference. Her combination of images of such so-called primitives and the German New Woman in her photomontages was radically provocative in a society that increasingly viewed visual appearance as proof of evolutionary development and civilization.[30] Even President Friedrich Ebert himself was quick to conflate physical appearance with evolutionary development: the presence of black and mixed-race soldiers on German soil was "an injury to the laws of European civilization."[31] Too often, however, statements such as these in histories of Germany in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries become part of a proto-fascist narrative of national self-destruction rather than evidence of claims that were readily reinforced through supposedly unbiased scientific research, and hence used to understand the construction and experience of science's visual objectivity during the period. Recent scholarship, however, has increasingly attempted to situate attitudes such as Ebert's in the context of a more accurate history of scientific objectivity in Weimar Germany.

In *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany* (New York,

Fig. 6 Hannah Höch, *Mischling* [Mixed-race], 1924, photomontage, 4 5/16 x 3 1/4 in. (11 x 8.2 cm). Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, Stuttgart. (© 2005 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.)

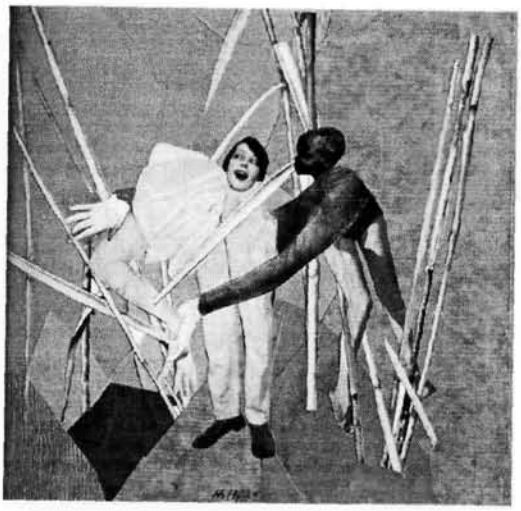

Fig. 7 Hannah Höch, *Liebe im Busch* [Love in the bush], 1925, photomontage, 9 x 8 1/2 in. (22.8 x 21.6 cm). Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth. (Museum Purchase, The Benjamin J. Tillar Memorial Trust; © 2005 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.)

1984), Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossman, Marion Kaplan, and others have traced some of the historical continuities in the social and even political attitudes of the Weimar Republic and of National Socialism:[32]

> Nazism did not arrive full blown, with promises of war and gas chambers. It came slowly, step by step, draped in the protective coloring of love for country, strong medicine to combat unemployment, and, most importantly . . . a pledge to restore the traditional family and relieve women of their "double burden" [as housewives and wage-earners].[33]

The continuity between the two German political eras is evident in the fact that the family and the concomitant (heterosexually defined) gender roles of man and woman as reproductive agents became increasingly important scientific and, eventually, political objects of concern. As Gisela Bock notes in her article in the volume, family planning advocates, using the arguments made tenable by eugenics, extolled the importance of what she calls "scientific racism," as opposed to the more traditional and more overt "gut racism":

> Based on a polarity between "progress" and "degeneration," [scientific racism's] criteria of inferiority had at their centers concepts of "value"

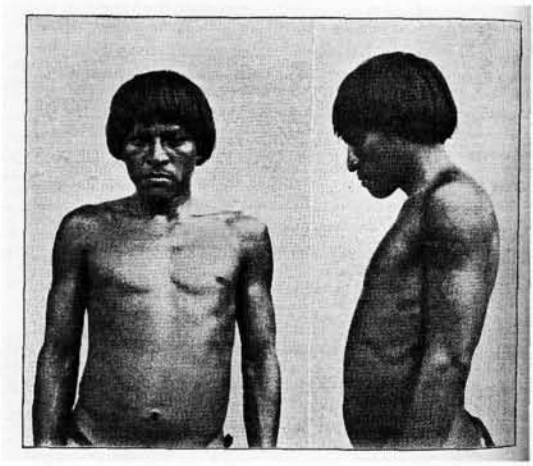

Fig. 8 Frontal and side views of an Aoaquis named Shiriana from Brazil's Uraricapara River region. Reproduced from *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 45 (1913): 456.

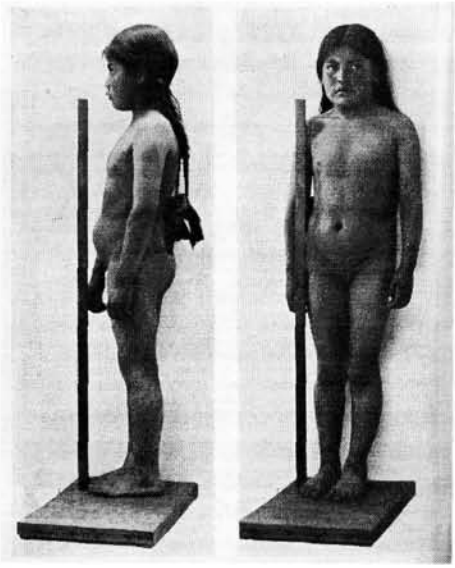

Fig. 9. Frontal and side views of a ten year old identified as an "Ayumara girl." Reproduced from *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 45 (1913): 276.

> and "worthlessness" (Wert und Unwert, Minderwertigkeit and Höherwertigkeit) that were related to the social or racial "body" and its productivity.... In 1929, a widely known book, *Sterilization on Social and Race Hygienic Grounds*, suggested that "the number of degenerate individuals born depends mainly on the number of degenerate women capable of procreation. Thus the sterilization of degenerate women is, for reasons of racial hygiene, more important than the sterilization of men."[34]

The criteria of value and worthlessness were linked specifically to women's bodies under the guise of scientific racism. While not institutionalized in the late Weimar years to the degree that it would be in Nazi Germany, scientific racism increasingly was used as justification for state intervention into women's personal lives in particular and the sexual lives of men and women in general. Discussions about reproductive sexuality and evolutionary development, and the threat of a supposed racial degeneration, were not confined to the political press, however, but also made their way into artistic and scientific texts during the period.

Such issues no doubt led Höch to create *Trauer* [Sadness] in 1925 (fig. 10). The image, part of the *Aus einem ethnographischen Museum* series, combined the photograph of a naked woman from Borneo, a carved-ivory head from the Congo, and the picture of a wooden stool carved in the shape of a woman's body and located at the Museum fur Völkerkunde in Berlin. The photograph appeared in a January 1925 edition of *Der Querschnitt* with the title "Borneo Beauty." The absence of background imagery in the original Borneo image suggests that the woman was photographed in an enclosed space,

possibly even an ethnographic museum or photographer's studio, a common practice during the period.[35] Because the woman was photographed in a less than natural setting, the "Borneo Beauty" appeared more as a sexual than a scientific object. Naked, she is photographed out of her geographical and social context and thus used to create an image that erased the cultural appropriateness of her (lack of) attire. She remained completely exposed — photographically and culturally — for Western sexual exploitation.

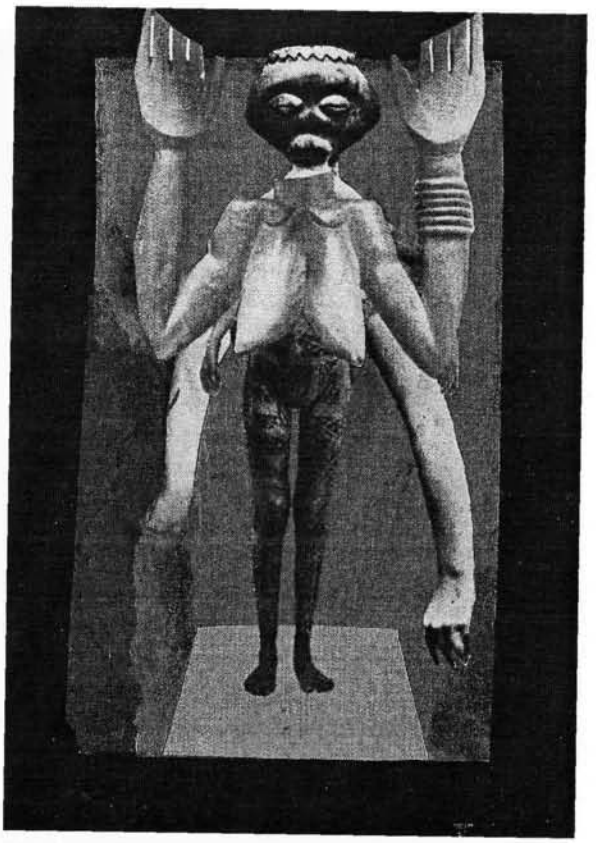

Fig. 10 Hannah Höch, *Trauer* [Sadness], 1925, photomontage, 6 15/16 x 4 1/2 in. (17.6 x 11.5 cm). Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett. (© 2005 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.)

In response to such overt objectification, Höch hid the real Borneo woman through photomontage overlays in *Trauer*. By adding material on top of the Borneo woman's body, Höch suggested that the "sadness" in the title of the photomontage refers to the isolation and the objectification of real people. Höch placed the woman and the other source materials together in an effort to call attention to the mediated nature of gender and racial objectification, as well as the way in which these forms of difference often intersected in the name of "science," sometimes due to obvious sexual motivations. Höch used the pendulous breasts of the stool's primary figure for the upper torso in her photomontage. Höch replaced the real breasts of the woman from Borneo, signifiers of racialized sexual availability and impropriety, with the pendulous breasts from the stool's carved figure.[36] Despite the addition of four arms and the sculpted breasts (which appear like strange armor), the body of the Borneo woman and her two (real) arms are still visible behind the photomontage additions. The objectification of women, in this case a woman of color who served as a sexual object of interest, requires a constant defense according to Höch, one that perhaps necessitated the photomontage figure having at least six arms to ward off any would-be aggressors. In short, Höch demonstrated sadness with anthropological science itself: it can often disguise racialized, sexualized objectification under the auspices of insightful research. She thereby also questioned those scientists who supposedly demonstrated artists' degenerate states objectively. She indicated that little can be proven through photographic isolation, including racial inferiority or artistic sanity, except perhaps the fantasies of the scientists themselves. Höch's "sadness" is thus

a critical mourning in light of anthropology's ocular-centric emphasis and her own supposedly degenerate artistic world-view.

Science in general, and anthropology in particular, increasingly turned toward visual images to validate research or to serve as legitimate evidence.[37] Indeed, the conflation of the work of art and the hereditary, biological condition of the producer of that work of art was identical to certain aspects of Western anthropology during the period, what Johannes Fabian has called a "double visual fixation" on the object of analysis.[38] He has suggested that the dual purpose of visualism in anthropology required the creation of a perceptual image — an object to be viewed — and also the *use* of that image to illustrate a kind of knowledge about the person or persons being studied. In Fabian's analysis, the anthropologist produced an image (i.e., a representation) and then proceeded to use that image in place of the actual person or people being studied (i.e., non-representationally).

Ironically, scientists often blamed unbelievers for failing to see the obvious truths their photographic evidence provided. Perceptual failure was indicative of a number of developmental pathologies in the early twentieth century, and not only in Germany. Julian Carter, for example, has discussed the intersection of racial evolution and sexual degeneration in scientific texts of the period. Carter suggests that in both the psychoanalytic oedipal narrative of sexual development and in the anthropological narrative of evolutionary development disruptions supposedly result in "perceptual failures of differentiation and organization."[39] For Carter, analyzing in particular the work of sexologist Havelock Ellis, the link between evolutionary regression and Western homosexuality is, in fact, pervasive in scientific texts. Sexologists often depended upon specific rhetorical techniques to connect evolution and homosexuality and the resultant "perceptual failures":

> [Sexologists equated homosexuality with] an inability to conform to conventional gender expectations, but more interestingly, they describe homosexuality as a problem of perception and interpretation of reality. Like the illiterate savages against whom Ellis defined modern sexological writers, homosexuals were too "entangled in the felted textures" of undifferentiation to recognize their own perceptual limitations. Their deviance from the master narrative of racial and sexual development, their failure to organize bodies and ideas into rationally distinct categories, disqualified them simultaneously from the status of normality and from authorship. . . . Primitive lack of differentiation, in some sexological texts, slides into a charge of intellectual unconcern with the difference between homosexuality and heterosexuality: "the evidence shows that among lower races homosexual practices are regarded with considerable indifference. . . In this matter, as folklore shows in so many other matters, the uncultured man of civilization is linked to the savage."[40]

The identification of a developmental analogy between homosexuality and the so-called primitive was, therefore, one of evolutionary importance. Both entities represented a "lower race" in evolutionary development. In Germany, these concerns acted to reinforce the public's perception that the Aryan heterosexual was the ideal, the most civilized racial *and* sexual type.

The result of these concerns with art, and the concomitant anxiety regarding the influence of homosexuals, primitives, and other "degenerates" on German national development, was a series of widely publicized, heavily attended exhibits in the 1930s. Already by 1933 a number of small, defamatory events had taken place, as Stephanie Barron has noted:

> In 1933 the earliest exhibitions of "degenerate" art were organized to show the German people the products of the "cultural collapse" that would be purged from the Third Reich. Confiscated works were assembled in *Schreckenskammern der Kunst* (Chambers of Art Horrors) whose organizers decried the fact that public monies had been wasted on these modern "horrors" . . .[41]

The most famous of these events was undoubtedly the 1937 exhibit in Munich titled *Entartete "Kunst"* (Degenerate "Art"). The event attracted over three million visitors, and on August 2, 1937 alone over 36,000 people visited the event.[42] Intriguingly, Höch's photomontage critiques of such supposed visual objectivity preceded these gatherings, sometimes by a decade or more.

Theory and Practice Don't Coincide

While I have outlined Höch's complex engagement with European male privilege and the questionable practices, visual and otherwise, of German science, I want to now turn by way of an ending to a beginning. In the preface to the catalog for her first solo exhibition in 1929 at the Kunstzaal De Bron in The Hague, Höch described her artistic mission for the public:

> I would like to do away with the firm boundaries we human beings so self-assuredly are inclined to erect around everything that is accessible to us. . . . Most of all I would like to depict the world as a bee sees it, then tomorrow as the moon sees it, and then, as many other creatures may see it. I am, however, a human being, and can use my fantasy, bound as I am, as a bridge.[43]

Höch's artistic mission is provocative not only because of the diversity of her list of possible subject positions — a bee, the moon, other creatures — nor because of the emphasis she places on her inevitable failure as a human being to be able to "depict the world" according to the perspective of these other positions. What is also particularly interesting in the description of her artistic mission is Höch's implicit suggestion that the "firm boundaries" between these subjects depended upon — and could be transcended by — vision.

Höch's preface indicates her concern with the pervasive assumption of several of her Dada colleagues and German scientists during the period: to see was to know. For Höch, the ability to occupy the subject positions of a bee or the moon was impossible; people were physically "bound" by their status as human beings and thus she could never adequately "depict the world" the way a bee or the moon might see it. While she recognized the impossibility of eliminating these material limits, her call to transcend these "firm boundaries" through fantasy was, intriguingly, a desire to think epistemologically within *and* beyond the visible. That is, Höch's artistic mission shows

her willingness to question the importance of vision as constitutive of knowledge, a resistant practice that she called using "fantasy . . . as a bridge." For Höch, if the truth was reducible simply to the visible, then the "truth" or "essence" of an object could be taken to be coterminous with a mediated optical representation. The cultural, historical, and social factors that helped produce the representation would not be acknowledged. Rather than accept such an uncritical mode of visual reductivism, however, Höch favored an alternative approach that suggested a particular, nuanced understanding of the role of visual culture during the period. Both in the *Aus einem ethnographischen Museum* series and in her story "The Painter," Höch made clear that the representations made possible through the creation of supposedly objective images were, in fact, not objective at all.

In the final paragraphs of Höch's story "The Painter," the male protagonist Himmelreich determines that both the female soul and the chive are "filled with emptiness." His various representational solutions to these puzzling enigmas prove to be inadequate. Indeed, after two years and two days at work on his painting, the artist realizes that "theory and praxis don't coincide": although he felt he had had no problem depicting chives, the essence of the female soul remained inexplicably elusive.[44] As a result, Himmelreich resigns himself to the impossibility of objectifying the latter and devotes himself strictly to depicting the former.[45]

In spite of its aesthetic shortcomings, Himmelreich's painting nevertheless earns accolades from colleagues as well as the Republic's president. A male friend inadvertently reveals his true impression: the picture "had a kind of power that liberated itself in an overwhelming sense of bore." Höch's narrator corrects the utterance in the form of a backhanded compliment that further undermines its sincerity: " . . . No, that's not what he said. He said, liberates itself in sameness."[46] Despite such tepid reception, the Republic's president praises Himmelreich's picture and demands that it be purchased by the state and hung in the National Gallery. Ironically, the Gallery determines that the painting does not refer at all to chives. Instead, the image is exhibited under a new title: *Die Seele des Weibes* [The soul of woman].

Höch's story "The Painter" and her *Aus einem ethnographischen Museum* series demonstrate a concern with the relationship between patriarchy's social expectations and science's visual objectivity. Her comic narrative shows her skill in using literature as a form of coded criticism to challenge such relationships. The *Aus einem ethnographischen Museum* series suggests, furthermore, that Höch saw an artistic solution. Not only did she want to take her objects out of the context of scientific evaluation (i.e., the museum), but also to question the very idea of the visual objectivity of scientific representation. Indeed, her story and her series both suggest that "impossible objects" may be the only representations worth producing.

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1. Hannah Höch, "The Painter," in Maud Lavin, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife: The Weimar Photographs of Hannah Hoch* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), 216. Unless otherwise indicated, the English translations from "Der Maler" are from the text as it appears in Maud Lavin's *Cut with the Kitchen Knife*. Due to space considerations, and by way of comparative verification, I place quotations from the original German (i.e., Hannah Höch, "Der Maler," in *Hannah Höch: Eine Lebenscollage*, ed. Berlinishen Galerie (Berlin: Argon, 1989) in the notes. Here, the original text of the story is as follows: "kamm sich als Mann, aber auch

als Maler, degradiert vor" (746) and "litt also mit der gesammten Mannheit unter der problematischen Seele der Frau" (748).

2. Höch, "Painter," 216. The German reads as follows: "Eines Tages nun, begann er, aus irgend einem dunklen Drang heraus, naemlich er war voll von dunklen Drängen, im Bild zu malen, indem er die Wesensgemeinschaft des Schnittlauchs mit der Seele des Weibes vergleichend auf der Leinwand dar . . . kuben wollen. In der Theorie war bereits alles geloest. Er hatte mit präzisester geistiger Schärfe die Hohlheit entdeckt, die diese beiden Objekte bis obenhin anfüllt" (Höch, "Der Maler," 747-48; ellipsis in original).

3. The German reads as follows: "wissenschaftlich seziert" (Höch, "Der Maler," 748).

4. Andrew Zimmerman has written eloquently of the fixation of German anthropologists on a static concept of nature even as these same figures attempted to come to grips with the empirical evidence for historical change. Zimmerman has suggested that German anthropologists, in particular, situated the belief in the ability to isolate and to represent the "essence" of human beings and their cultures as a contest between classificatory systematizations of a static concept of nature (under the influence of Immanuel Kant) and attention to the empirically evident (under the influence of Friedrich Schelling). Zimmerman situates this contest in light of the humanist ideals of German *Bildung* and the emergence of evolutionary theories in the late nineteenth century. See, in particular, Zimmerman, *Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 62-85.

5. Peter Boswell and Maria Makela, *The Photomontages of Hannah Höch* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1996), 2.

6. The most explicit dimensions of Höch's material disruption of an objectivity made possible by an assumed visual unity of the image is unfortunately eliminated in the photographed and cataloged reproductions of her works. That is, the technical reproduction of Höch's works has obscured the explicit material dimension of critique that the medium enabled (i.e., uneven edges, obviously different sources for the various pieces of the image often glued or taped together, the explicit disharmony of paper textures and shades, etc.). The photographic and cataloged reproductions nevertheless still demonstrate Höch's efforts to disrupt the subjective assumption of the objective unity of the image, an assumption which underlies many claims to the scientific legitimacy of representation.

7. For a discussion of the debates over who invented photomontage, see: Timothy O. Benson, *Raoul Hausmann and Berlin Dada* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Research Press, 1987); Boswell and Makela, *The Photomontages of Hannah Höch* ; and Lavin, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife*.

8. The text is my translation of the following: "Fotomontagen sind ganz oder zum überwiegenden Teil aus Ausschitten von Fotografien und anderen Reproduktionen bestehende bildliche Kompositionen. Von der technischen Seite her ist die Grenze zur Fotocollage fließend. Diese wird . . . durch historische und ästhetische Gründe gezogen" (n. pag.).

9. Boswell and Makela, *The Photomontages of Hannah Höch*, 2.

10. See Jennings's discussion of the work of August Sander for a full explanation of traditional portraiture in Michael Jennings, "Agriculture, Industry, and the Birth of the Photo-Essay in the Early Weimar Republic," *October* 93 (Summer 2000): 23-56.

11. Zimmerman has provided an extremely provocative account of anthropologists' concerns in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with shadows and other optical disturbances, disturbances that testified to the technical limits of photography. Zimmerman notes that anthropologists felt these disturbances might threaten the objectivity of their investigations. See Andrew Zimmerman, "Looking beyond History: the Optics of German Anthropology and the Critique of Humanism," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Bilogical and Biochemical Sciences* 32, c.3 (September 2001): 385-411.

12. Berman, in particular, discusses Boaz's relationship to the Kwakiutl Indians and describes the problematic use of the term "Kwakiutl" by the ethnographer in his writings, whereby he conflated what were more than twenty political divisions of the native peoples of coastal British Columbia, Canada, with the four distinct tribes that might properly be grouped under that name. Judith Berman, "'The Culture as it Appears to the Indian Himself': Boas, George Hunt and the Methods of Ethnography" in George W. Stocking Jr., ed., *Volkgeist as Method and Ethnic Essays on Boasian Ethnography and the German Anthropological Tradition* (Madison; University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 215-16. On Boas's ethnology see also Ira Jacknis, "The Ethnographic Object and the Object of Ethnology in the Early Career of Franz Boas," also in Stocking, ed., *Volkgeist as Method*.

13. For a full discussion of the differences between physicalists and cosmologists, see Robert Proctor, "From Antropologie to Rassenkunde in the German Anthropological Tradition," in George W. Stocking Jr., ed., *Bones, Bodies, Behavior: Essays on Biological Anthropology* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), especially page 147.

14. In her own work on the history of objectivity, and in an article coauthored with Peter Galison, Lorraine Daston has outlined the ways in which various interventions, mechanical and otherwise, have been employed in an effort to make the optical representations of science objective. See Lorraine Daston, "Objectivity and the Escape from Perspective," in Marioi Bagioli, ed., *The Science Studies Reader* (New York and London:

Routledge, 1999), 110-123; and Lorraine Daston and Peter Gallison, "The Image of Objectivity," Seeing Science, Spec. issue of *Representation* 0.40 (Autumn 1992): 81-128.

15. For further clarification of the way in which attitudes in Weimar set the stage for the National Socialist seizure of power in 1933, see Gisela Bock, Renate Bridenthal et al., *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984); and, in particular, Detlev J. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity*, trans. Richard Deveson (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989).

16. On Höch's lesbian relationship to the Dutch writer Til Brugman during the 1920s and 1930s, see Myriam Everard, "'Man lebt nur einmal in Patchamatac': Die groteske Welt von Til Brugman, Lebensgefährtin von Hannah Höch," in Jula Dech and Ellen Maurer, eds., *Da-Da Zwischen Rede zu Hannah Höch* (Berlin: Orlanda Frauenverlag, 1991), 190-97; Maud Lavin, "'Aus einem ethnographischen Museum': Allegorien moderner Weiblichkeit," in Dech and Maurer, ed., *Da-Da*, 115-126; Maria Makela, "Grotesque Bodies: Weimar-era Medicine and the Photomontage," unpublished essay, 2001; Ruther Greter Nobes, "Dada im Spannungsfeld patriarchalischer Denkstrukturen," in Dech and Maurer, ed., *Da-Da*, 190-97; and Ute Scheub, *Verrückt nach Leben: Berliner Szenen in den zwanziger Jahren* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 2000).

17. Sabine Jell-Bahlsen and Robert Proctor have provided accounts of the distinctly German (and Austrian) engagement with various tendencies in anthropology that are not equivalent to U.S. or British developments in the field. See Sabine Jell-Bahlsen, "Ethnology and Fascism in Germany," *Dialectical Anthropology* 9 (1985): 313-35; and Proctor, "From Antropologie to Rassenkunde." In addition, Fritz W. Kramer has documented the interesting role of "empathy" in German anthropology, a concept that he suggests had its origin in the works of J. G. Herder and that has not played as significant a role in anthropological developments in either Britain or the U.S. Fritz W. Kramer, "*Empathy* - Reflections on the History of Ethnology in Pre-Fascist Germany: Herder, Creuzer, Bastian, Bachofen, and Frobenius," *Dialectical Anthropology* 9 (1985): 337-47.

18. See Lavin, "'Aus einem ethnographischen Museum'"; Maria Makela, "The Misogynist Machine: Images of Technology in the Work of Hannah Höch," in Katharina von Ankum, ed., *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 106-127; and Nobes, "Dada im Spannungsfeld."

19. Fatimah Tobing Rony, *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema, and Ethnographic Spectacle* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 4.

20. See Crary for an aesthetic-philosophical treatment of the role of perspective in modernity. Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1992). See Daston, "Objectivity and the Escape," for a discussion of the function of perspective in modern understandings of objectivity.

21. For a Lacanian psychoanalytic attempt to articulate a similar theory of sexuality see Tim Dean, *Beyond Sexuality* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

22. I would like to thank Arlene Teraoka, Pat McGurk, Jürgen Laun, and Mirko Hall for noticing the absence of the penis.

23. Makela has argued in "Grotesque Bodies" that these same issues might also be considered in light of sex-reassignment surgery.

24. For discussions of eugenics during the period and with respect to women in particular, see Bock, Bridenthal et al., *When Biology Becomes Destiny*; and Claudia Schoppmann, "The Position of Lesbian Women in the Nazi Period," *Hidden Holocaust: Gay and Lesbian Persecution in Germany 1933-1945*, trans. Patrick Camiller (New York: Cassell, 1995), 8-15. for discussions of eugenics during the period and with respect to women, in particular.

25. See Petro's discussion of the use of photo-illustrated magazines for the empowerment of women in the Weimar Republic. Patrice Petro, *Joyless Streets: Women and Melodramatic Representation in Weimar Germany* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989).

26. Lavin, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife*, 235, n. 63.

27. Kristen Makholm, "Chronology," in *The Photomontages of Hannah Höch*, Peter Boswell and Maria Makela, ed., (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1996), 194.

28. For a short historical and political account of the occupation of the Ruhr by French soldiers, see Peukert, *The Weimar Republic*, 59-60. For a reading of Höch's work in relation to the controversy see Makela's problematic explanation in "Hannah Höch," *Three Berlin Artists of the Weimar Era: Hannah Höch, Käthe Kollwitz, Jeanne Mammen*, Louise R. Noun, ed., (Des Moines, Iowa: Des Moines Art Center, 1994), 12-50. She writes, "men of color . . . were more exotic . . better-behaved, gentler," p. 20). Also see her excellent paragraph accompanying a reproduction of the photomontage *Mischling* in the Walker Art Center catalog (84).

29. Boswell and Makela, *The Photomontages of Hannah Höch*, 84.

30. See Sander D. Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985).

31. Boswell and Makela, *The Photomontages of Hannah Höch*, 84.

32. For purposes of clarity I have designated March 23, 1933, the date when the posts of Reich Chancellor and Reich President were amalgamated in the person of the Führer, Adolf Hitler, as the political turning point dividing the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich. There is, needless to say, a protracted debate over exactly when — or even whether — such a clear turning point occurred. For a brief discussion of the debate over the beginning and the end of the Weimar Republic and the official start of the Third Reich see Peukert, *The Weimar Republic*, especially 3-6.

33. Bridenthal et al., *When Biology Became Destiny*, "Introduction" xii.

34. Gisela Bock, "Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany: Motherhood, Compulsory Sterilization, and the State," in Bridenthal et al., *When Biology Became Destiny*, 274-75.

35. See Zimmerman, *Anthropology and Antihumanism*, and also the numerous photographs in the Rudolf-Virchow-Nachlaß at the Berlin-Brandenburg Akademie der Wissenschaft. Zimmerman reproduces many of the portrait studies of individuals with developmental pathologies in his text.

36. See Gilman, *Difference and Pathology*, for a discussion of images of pendulous breasts and women of color.

37. Part of my research for this essay involved an exploration of the archives of the Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie, and Urgeschichte ("Berlin Society for Anthropology, Ethnology, and Early History"), an important group in the history of anthropological activity in Germany. Of particular note here is the fact that the photographic collection of the Society had been (unofficially) archived since as early as 1886, although there was still serious debate internal and external to the organization as to whether or not photographic representations could serve as legitimate scientific evidence. The fact that individuals began to archive the collection as early as they did indicates, however, that anthropologists resisted but eventually submitted to the visualist orientations indicated by Johannes Fabian and critiqued, as I suggest here, by Höch. Unfortunately, no history of the photographic archives of the Society has yet been written, a historical gap I hope to correct in the near future.

38. Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 121.

39. Julian Carter, "Normality, Whiteness, Authorship: Evolutionary Sexology and the Primitive Pervert," in *Science and Homosexualities*, Vernon A. Rosario, ed. (New York: Routledge, 1997), 167.

40. Ibid., 165, 167.

41. Stephanie Barron, *"Degenerate Art": The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1995), 15.

42. Ibid., 9.

43. Makholm, "Chronology," 194.

44. Höch, "Der Maler," 748. The German reads as follows: "Theorie und Praxis sind zweierlei."

45. Ibid., 749. The German reads as follows: ". . . nunmehr nur an das Schittlauch zu halten."

46. Ibid. The German reads as follows: ". . . enthalte eine Staerke, das sich in einer ueberschwenglichen Langweilig . . ., nein, dies hat er nicht gesagt, Ebenmaessigkeit Luft mache . . ."

Asger Jorn and the Avant-Garde, From Helhesten to the Situationist International

Karen Kurczynski

Danish artist Asger Jorn (1914-73) continues to receive scant attention in American art history, despite the international reputation he developed in the mid-1950s for his innovative approach to abstract painting as well as his central role in organizing several successive artistic collectivities, most famously Cobra (1948–51) and the Situationist International (1957–72). Yet Jorn's approach to artmaking raises central issues of painting's materiality and expressive potential in the 1950s, and his theoretical and collective work provides a pointed contrast to the better-known American approaches of the Abstract Expressionists. Jorn threw himself into group activity from his student years, beginning not with art, but with Communist Party organizing in the 1930s. Through the several phases of collective work in his lifetime, he developed a theory of art which asserts, among other things, that subjectivity itself is never entirely individual. "Purely individual desires do not exist," he wrote in *Pour la forme*, one of the most significant of his prolific theoretical writings.[1] He sought to introduce into Danish and international cultural life both collectivity and an activist approach to combining art and politics, in order to surpass their professional separation. This investigation will provide a historiographic reevaluation of Jorn's work, meaning not only his artmaking, but also his methodology of artistic creation, and not least his groundbreaking and thought-provoking theoretical writing, in light of the interdisciplinary artistic and political concerns of the twentieth-century avant-gardes. To study Jorn's work in the context of avant-garde theory is to understand how notions of collectivity, critique of the institutions of art, and broader social critique were central to Jorn's production from the beginning, despite what at times has been a sort of blind spot to these concerns in the art criticism of his work.[2] Jorn's theory ultimately brings us past the multiple limitations of the dominant avant-garde theories and toward a more contemporary understanding of art as politically meaningful in its innovative, disruptive, fascinating physical forms,[3] rather than merely its claims or status as avant-garde.

The question of defining the avant-garde, such a central topic in art of the interwar period and the art of the 1960s, becomes quite difficult in relationship to the 1950s, yet this mid-century period was the turning point between at least two quite different understandings of the term. Literary historian Peter Bürger's groundbreaking analysis identifies the historical avant-garde as the groups who made use of various practices that he calls montage before World War II, in order to reconnect art and life in rejection of the symbolist period's aesthetic autonomy.[4] His discussion, focusing on the institutional analysis of bourgeois art while virtually neglecting to discuss specific formal innovations, arose from the context of institutional critique that concerned what he himself disparaged as the "neo-avant-garde." Bürger's account, for all its problems and simplifications,[5] remains highly relevant in understanding Jorn's politics and attempts to destroy the institutional boundaries of art. Yet between Bürger's "historical" and "neo-" avant-garde was the 1950s, a decade in which Clement Greenberg's alternate, apolitical account came to prominence along with the American artists he supported. Greenberg redefined the avant-garde as not a politically progressive force, but rather a formal radicalism focused on medium specificity as a guardian of its "purity."[6] His

paradigm continues in large part to define the Abstract Expressionist generation in the United States, although it fails to account for either the political histories of American Abstract Expressionists or the continued political engagement of their European counterparts after World War II.[7]

Asger Jorn and his colleagues in Helhesten, Cobra, the Mouvement international pour un bauhaus imaginiste (MIBI), and the Situationist International (SI) understood the avant-garde as politically engaged in Bürger's as well as Renato Poggioli's sense of a collective organization attempting a social critique outside the accepted political discourses.[8] Yet, as I will explain, he also approached Greenberg and, particularly, American art critic Meyer Schapiro as well as Frankfurt School theorist Theodor Adorno, in his continuing interest in a form of aesthetic autonomy that allows art to develop the most radical explorations conceivable within an existing historical framework. Jorn's work describes a not only critical, but *self*-critical model of the avant-garde. If, as Bürger suggests, the historical avant-garde did indeed introduce self-criticism of this institution into the meaning of the work, the postwar avant-garde developed this critique into a critique of the ideal of technological and social progress and the vanity (meaning both self-importance and futility) inherent in the avant-garde concept itself. In fact, it developed a critique of the very institutionalization of the avant-garde.

Jorn's Avant-Garde: Autonomous Collective Innovation

For Jorn, avant-garde referred to a collective activity of a group of artists working in activist and critical relationship to the conditions of modernity. Jorn describesd his work as "avant-garde" when it was convenient to summarize a group project,[9] but occupied its position critically. He rejected its implied conception of a vanguard leading the rest of society to a better life, because he understood art as something made by the people, for the people. In his writings, he repeatedly critiqued its inherent ideology of progress.[10] As a whole, Jorn's two main contributions to the avant-garde discussion were (1) the notion that the avant-garde should not be considered a socio-aesthetic elite guiding the rest of society toward utopia, and (2) that art and politics cannot be considered separate domains because art is by nature socially disruptive. It is time to reconsider his unique contribution to the meaning of the avant-garde and how it relates to the primary understandings of the topic in contemporary theory as either politically engaged or formally radical, described by Bürger and Greenberg respectively.[11] Jorn's theory ultimately develops an understanding of art as politically activist through physical forms that are obstructive, disruptive, and anti-progressive. Anti-progressive, in this sense, does not mean conservative, but rather a refusal of the binary continuum of progress and regression inherited in part from nineteenth-century evolutionary theory.

Interestingly, Jorn's critique of the avant-garde actually corresponds in all counts to that of Marxist scholar Nicos Hadjinicolaou. Hadjinicolaou argued that the designation should be avoided in contemporary discourse because of the political conservatism inherent in the term itself. The five main problems of the "avant-garde ideology" as he described it are its (1) linear conception of history, (2) historical determinism, (3) evolutionist/revolutionist conception of history, (4) criterion of sheer novelty as main evaluator of the work of art, and (5) inherent conception of the avant-garde as an elite. His critiques, despite their polemical delivery in the context of neo-Marxist art history, remain quite relevant today, for the very reasons that Jorn's own, earlier elaboration of them needs to be recovered. They participate in postmodernism's rejection of the

master narrative and the singular genius, terms Jorn's project already attempted to problematize. In fact, contemporary artists and theorists must decide for themselves which aspects are fundamental, and which contrary to the projects of the twenty-first-century avant-garde, whatever we choose to call it.

The task of artists according to Jorn is to introduce the new into culture, and it remains for future populations to decide what to retain of this raw potentiality — as long as society supports this process of renewal itself. His 1956 speech at Alba described two defining conditions of an avant-garde:

> First, it must find itself isolated and without direct influence on the established forces, abandoned to an apparently impossible and useless struggle.... Subsequently, it is necessary that the struggle of this group be of fundamental importance for the forces they are fighting for (in our case human society and artistic evolution), and that the position gained by this avant-garde be later verified by a general evolution. It is only in the future that we will be able to find precise justification of this last condition.[12]

He maintained that the value of avant-garde production can only be validated by society's later acceptance of it, by a "general evolution" rather than a revolution instigated by the vanguard. He is virtually unique among avant-garde theorists in his insistence that the avant-garde cannot and should not force change onto society, but society must change in sympathy to the group's innovations in order for them to endure. Jorn's definition also contains no mention of art, but instead assumes that avant-garde means political, social, or economic struggle. In the unpublished end of his speech, Jorn insisted that he was not trying to validate his group's own avant-garde status, but rather to examine the position of all avant-gardes in society. He specified, too, that "the artistic avant-garde, unlike that of war, can never be destroyed because its force remains in its completed works."[13] His view would later become a major aspect of his break with the Situationists. In his understanding, the avant-garde must not be reduced to pure experience, but leaves traces of its activity in its works. These works can later not only inspire further avant-gardes, but can become part of new critical engagements. This understanding of avant-garde as positioned within a temporal progression and in some sense "ahead" of its contemporaries in awareness does not, however, imply the standard military- and scientifically-derived idea of progress. It simply identifies the historical specificity of any avant-garde, which as an activist project necessarily engages its own historical moment. Since for Jorn art implie investigating the unknown, the artist by his definition will come to discoveries and realizations first, ahead of all other groups in society. He viewed this prescience not as an elite function of talent or education, but as something available to everyone.

Jorn's conception is crucial not simply because of personal innovation — his work is anti-individualist in theory and developed collectively in practice — but because of his unique historical engagement spanning two generations of artists: that of the informal or Abstract Expressionist artists with their devotion to painting as a relatively formalist avant-garde, and that of the Situationists and conceptual art, with their stated rejection of painting as a reified and socially compromised activity. Jorn was one of the only artists to become actively involved with the artistic projects of these generations often considered politically opposed to each other. His theoretical and artistic work could

be read as a *détournement*, so to speak, first of the ideas of spontaneous abstraction, tachisme, and Abstract Expressionism, and secondly of *situationism* itself, insofar as it is nearly always reduced to Guy Debord's theories. In short, from our own historical position it becomes apparent that Jorn critiqued Cobra and Abstract Expressionism for being apolitically artistic and the SI for being anasthetically or nihilistically political, each neglecting an essential element not of art or politics, but of human existence preceding or beyond these institutions.

A New Look at Helhesten and Cobra

Jorn's avant-garde activity began with his earliest work in the 1940s, with Helhesten and Cobra. The journal *Helhesten* was Jorn's first politically-engaged cross-disciplinary artistic collective. Jorn's idea for the name was a Scandinavian symbol chosen in defiance of the Nazi occupiers who had tried to use Nordic mythological discourse to assert a common heritage. The *Helhesten* or "Hell-Horse" was a figure of terror whose appearance announced its victims' impending death. It became a totem for the artists consciously flaunting so-called degenerate art under the noses of the Germans. *Helhesten* was very different from the previous decade's projects in Denmark, such as expressionist poet Rudolph Broby-Johansen's socialist journal *Frem* [Forward] or the surrealist-inspired art journal *Linien* [The line], a reference to Kandinsky's Bauhaus writings. As the publications' titles alone indicate, *Helhesten* rejected the progressivism of *Frem* as well as the formalist abstraction of *Linien* in favor of a folk legend evoking medieval and romantic traditions. It continued the primtivist critique of the early avant-garde and specifically the mythic antirationalism of surrealism.[14]

As painter Egill Jacobsen recalls, the young and idealistic artists regarded Helhesten's activities as a direct intervention in social life, rather than simply an art movement.[15] The already distant possibilities of acting directly on the nonartistic public were of course circumscribed by the German occupation of Denmark. The situation polarized society into collaborators, survivors, and resistors — but perhaps this fragmentation in the end simply made more apparent the ordinary complexity of bourgeois society in its highly variable, factional and historically-specific relationship to different artistic avant-gardes. Like the surrealist publications, *Helhesten* functioned as an avant-garde journal. It combined articles and illustrations of children's and folk art, tribal artwork, ancient Scandinavian art, cinema, cartoons, modern art and poetry. Many articles functioned as manifestoes, expressly critiquing the individualist institution of art as well as bourgeois society itself. Jorn's "Intimate Banalities" article in the second issue famously described kitsch pictures as "the best art today."[16] He supported the work of Sunday painters and children who appropriate reproductions in their personal albums as unrecognized, non-institutionalized forms of art. Other articles critiqued the ideas of skill, style, taste, beauty, monumentality, and genius, denounced the lack of innovation in the academies, embraced mystery, fantasy, and mythmaking in art, and call for everyone to be an artist spontaneously.[17] These attacks critiqued abstraction as a once-radical painting method that had become another form of classical cultural tradition. Yet abstraction remained important, not to be discarded altogether, perhaps because, as an intervention into the symbolic field so inundated by competing ideologies of the 1930s, it already symbolized a possibility of political liberty for the war generations.

Jorn's support for kitsch art in "Intimate Banalities" appeared just two years after Clement Greenberg's 1939 reassessment of the avant-garde in "Avant-Garde and Kitsch." Unknown to Jorn at the time, Greenberg had declared that the uneducated

masses find satisfaction in mass-produced clichés watered down from the true avant-garde art. For Greenberg, avant-garde meant work made to satisfy a small intellectual elite tied by "an umbilical cord of gold"[18] to the economic dominance of the bourgeoisie. He canonized the first American avant-garde as a formally rather than politically radical group, a selection of individual innovators "purifying" painting into an authentic literalness, formulated ultimately in "Modernist Painting" of 1960.[19] Jorn, on the other hand, embraced folk creativity as precisely impure, cutting across fields of specialization, inherently socially-oriented, defying artistic taste, and rejecting individual talent. The Helhesten and Cobra understanding of folk creativity embraced the idea that if everyone acquires the means of artistic production and experience, originality and genius will disappear as relics of bourgeois society's outmoded understanding of art.[20] But like Greenberg, Jorn regarded the autonomy of art to be something historically specific to modern life, and a necessary situation.[21] Such an autonomous condition, what would later become the Situationist "experimental laboratory" of art, presented, according to Jorn, the best conditions to develop the most effective politico-artistic engagements.

Cobra, the alliance of artists from Copenhagen, Brussels, and Amsterdam formed in Paris in 1948, in large part developed an international interdisciplinary creative network for the ideas already developed in Helhesten. The collective grew out of the rich postwar climate of conscious attempts to create a new avant-garde, and thus it seems rather strange that, as is the case with Helhesten, the major historians of Jorn and Cobra's predecessors in Denmark do not consider it in the context of international avant-garde history and theory. These accounts situate the artists in the modernist art historical tradition, primarily praising their pictorial qualities. As I will explain, these formal qualities themselves draw out and expand the politicized interests of the artists. Only the non-Scandinavian historical accounts succeed at situating the artwork and collaborations of Cobra in the context of the group's broad politico-aesthetic engagement.[22] Yet Jorn actively attempted to connect Scandinavian artists to the more radical, critical, and incendiary international artistic developments. Cobra and Helhesten, in addition to Jorn's later projects of the MIBI and SI, represent avant-gardes equally engaged in the differing possibilities of their historical circumstances.

Disrupting Painting, Painting Disruption

Helhesten and Cobra would explore the idea that painting, more primarily than montage for the postwar generation, can negate the institutional artistic notions of unity of composition, finish, skill, the reified art object, or the passive viewing subject.[23] As Egill Jacobsen explains, "Our perception of art was not confined to painting. We had a great deal of contact with people from other kinds of art . . . psychologists and ethnographers too. But painting was the vanguard. Partly because it was cheaper to experiment with painting than with a film or book."[24] These artists began collectively to consider painting as an experimental medium, one not necessarily more important or innovative than others, but perhaps simply more available, or more *basic* in its materials, its accessibility, the very familiarity, intimacy, indeed the "banality" of its long tradition. Jorn would maintain this view of painting's situation consistently throughout a long career of vandalizing it, leaving it behind for other media and returning periodically to begin the destruction again.

For Jorn, the precedents of Max Ernst, Joan Miró, Wassily Kandinsky, and Paul Klee led to the breakthrough into a spontaneous art which negated the idea of the complete,

unified work and thematized the creative act itself, which he considered inherently linked to an ideological critique and ideas of social freedom.[25] In other words, like his colleagues in Europe and America, he attempted in the 1940s to develop a form of painting that defined itself as a verb rather than a noun: an active experience — or as Harold Rosenberg would later claim, an action — rather than an object. These artists attempted to radicalize the medium of painting, by then associated with institutionalized modernism. Both American and Danish artists introduced the avant-garde conception of surrealist automatism that had been used in literature and the initial stage of drawing *into* painting itself for the very reason that modernist painting had become institutionalized. Art critics by and large have inserted this development of automatic painting into the formalist history of the medium in the 1940s; yet this view directly opposes the social and political dimension intended by Jorn and his colleagues. Jorn's individual work of this period, for example *Trolden og fuglene* [The troll and the birds] (fig. 1), experimented with using totally automatic composition and use of color to maximal saturation, frequently resulting in a garishness and incompleteness that arguably prevents the picture from resolving into a balanced or unified composition. The work deliberately combines garish complementary colors to create an active rhythm across the surface, in a manic send-up of Kandinsky's theories of the emotional effects of individual colors (well studied by Jorn). The accumulation of simplistic forms painted quickly and without academic skill disrupts artful composition and unity. Graphite automatic lines and white canvas show through the paint, making it look like a work in progress. The picture suspends figuration and abstraction as images — a troll's face, animals, trees, a little girl at lower left — must be sought out within the design. The seemingly unfinished result was thought to have, and has in comparison to the dominant painting methods of the time (think Picasso and Matisse), an actively physiological effect on the viewer. Only a few brave collectors embraced such work when it was made. At the same time, collective projects like the Hjortøgade kindergarten and Bregnerød cottage, architectural spaces in Denmark filled with painted murals by the Helhesten and Cobra artists in 1944 and 1949, embodied the group's goals of collective work, joy of creation, and the festive atmosphere of both the painting process and the resulting scene.

Evolution Not Revolution

The Cobra period coincided with Jorn's first intense theoretical activity, in which he developed several ideas that were critical of the standard avant-garde understanding of art as either progressive or reactionary. Aside from untold articles for Danish newspapers and journals, he wrote in the late 1940s a 600-page manuscript which synthesized his materialist ideas of art's role in society. In it, Jorn wrote that popular art means not creating an art *for* the people (an idea he would later criticize as the use of kitsch in Pop art), but the creation of art *by* the people themselves, the untrained and the ordinary. This folk art, according to Jorn, has nothing to do with official art history's categories of the revolutionary and the reactionary, which are nothing but meaningless and false judgments.[26] His interest in folk art's connection to natural cycles also relates to his celebration of cyclical transformations in both biological and social life, the latter echoing the natural processes of the former. Jorn disagreed with colleagues like Christian Dotremont in Cobra and Debord in the SI who supported the idea of revolution, because he argued that society was constantly evolving, not toward any specific end but in no particular direction. Artists, Jorn maintained, should create

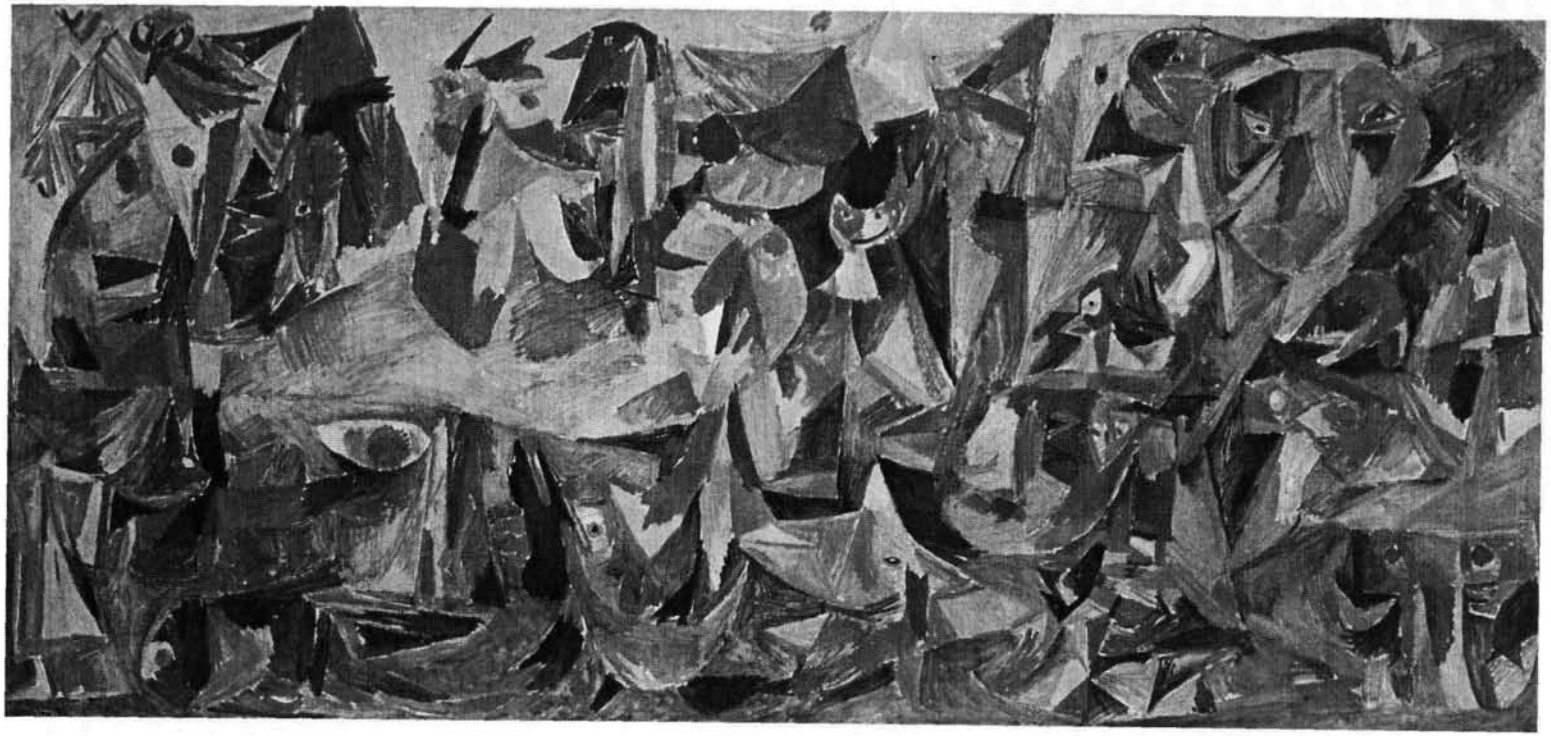

Fig. 1 Asger Jorn, *Trolden og fuglene* [The troll and the birds], 1944, oil on masonite, 48 x 102 in. (122 x 260 cm). (©Silkeborg Kunstmuseum, Denmark. Photo Lars Bay.)

new possibilities for that evolution — but not attempt to direct it.

Even as his artworks disrupt and critique painting, Jorn's writings and book projects celebrate the folk motifs that he incorporated in painting and the methods of folk creativity he wanted to emulate. *Guldhorn og lykkehjul* [The golden horns and the wheel of fortune], a book Jorn wrote and richly illustrated with appropriated images in the late 1940s, investigates mythic symbols appearing throughout human history from ancient to modern times (fig. 2).[27] Jorn published it in 1957, just as he began his involvement with Situationist activities and a media critique that engaged montage and media technologies directly. His simultaneous interest in the singularity of folk art and the reproducible effects of the mass media may seem contradictory, but Jorn embraced such paradoxical experiments. Jorn's approach in this book was to identify how symbolic icons from many different world cultures embody humanity's participation in the natural cycle. Human time was not linear, for Jorn, but cyclic, marked by periodic popular festivals from time immemorial. He identified how many current Christian holidays and mystical disciplines like astrology originally marked the changing of the seasons. He reinterpreted symbols like the serpent, the twins, and the solar chariot as evidence of human culture's harmony with nature.[28] In *Guldhorn*, as in the numerous

Fig. 2 Asger Jorn, page from *Guldhorn og lykkehjul* [The golden horns and the wheel of fortune] depicting representations of twins (Copenhagen: Selandia, 1957, n.p.)

investigations of folk art in *Helhesten, Cobra,* and his later work of the 1960s, Jorn was not interested in the forms of the future but rather those of the past: the eternal forms that recur through history, that inspire people in all fields. This enthusiasm for folk art, important not for its visual forms but for its symbolic ones, and folk tradition signified his major disagreement with the avant-garde as a progressive force, precisely because it was too related to modernity. Jorn sought something more universal.

The Critique of Technology at Mid-century

Coinciding with his book and journal projects, Jorn consistently surpassed most contemporary painters in his vandalism of the medium of painting. But his project of critical painting participated in a widespread renewal of interest in the medium of painting, a renewal that I consider part of a broader critique of technology in the 1950s. Rather than a regression to previously tried and failed avant-garde tactics (as Bürger or Benjamin Buchloh would have us believe), the return to painting was, first of all, less a return than a continuation of prewar practices; and second, part of a theorization of the increasing intrusions of technology and mass media into everyday life. The singularity of artworks and the irreducibility of aesthetic experience became newly important to these discussions, which encompassed not only Jorn and his circle, but critics like Meyer Schapiro in America and Theodor Adorno in Europe. Jorn valued painting for its indexical link to the artist's gesture — though not the gesture of a unique, specially-talented artist as in Abstract Expressionism and tachisme. He participated in a critique of the technological progress that prewar artists believed in so strongly, having witnessed the disastrous culmination of fascism. Arguably, it was the very concentration of postwar media technology in the visual spheres of advertising, film, and television — what the SI would famously call the "spectacle" — that made the two-dimensional visual plane of painting take primacy once again in critical projects like Jorn's as well as more liberal or deliberately apolitical schools, such as American Abstract Expressionism. In his writings of the 1950s, Jorn developed a critique of the instrumental reason of bourgeois society by celebrating art as the unique, the handmade, the useless, the irrational, the illegible, and even the impossible.[29] He celebrated art's potential for disruption and its utter rejection of dominant codes of quality and legibility. As opposed to Greenberg's avant-garde-modernism, Jorn's concerns are much closer to those of Adorno and Schapiro as well as the artists themselves in America.[30]

Meyer Schapiro began arguing for abstract art's materialist character in opposition to Alfred Barr's formalist account of abstraction in the 1930s. In the postwar period he upheld the critical potential of painting and sculpture for their unique material qualities, their handmade singularity. He praised painting's difference in particular from the "arts of communication," the impersonal media arts which focus on maximum efficiency in getting a message across. Abstract art resists coding, he argued, and aims not to communicate (it is more akin to "noise") but to open the viewer's mind.[31] For Schapiro, art is the only remaining sphere of unmediated or immediate experience. Adorno, although rejecting the possibility of unmediated experience, shared certain basic premises with Schapiro. He wrote of art in dialectical opposition to the operations of the media and its production of artificial authenticities: "art is hostile to what the jargon of authenticity calls the 'message'."[32] Adorno's complex aesthetic theory builds on his and Horkheimer's 1940s critique of enlightenment rationalism to a view of art as inherently critical, due to its very autonomy from instrumental reason. For both Adorno and Schapiro, art is critical of the bourgeois subject's alienation by technology.[33] Adorno's

understanding of autonomy, of course, removes art further from direct social action than would either Schapiro or Jorn, who were more politically engaged in conventional terms. Jorn's celebratory view of art also contrasts strongly with Adorno's pessimistic characterization of art as mourning. Yet these views of art's status as the ultimate site of critique parallel Jorn's avant-garde concept of aesthetic experience.

The pictorial transformation from Helhesten-era interests in rhythm and "improvisation"[34] to something akin to Schapiro's more critical "noise" culminated in Jorn's painting of the mid-1950s, and his aesthetic theory based on disruption. Jorn wrote in 1958, "The Ugly (in other words that which shocks) is the basis of our genuine aesthetic.[35] A work like *Attention, Danger* (fig. 3) of 1957 exemplifies this shift. The colors, still glaringly bright and clashing, no longer provide a rhythm distributed across the surface of the picture to create a pictorial balance. Instead, the colors manifest in large planar areas that appear thoughtlessly applied in thick flat parallel strokes, as if finger-painted. The picture depicts a large monster, which seems to partially materialize out of the paint, dwarfing a smaller one, looming over it in a manner reminiscent of science fiction or pulp comics (sources referenced in the title). The humor of the childlike monster scenario mocks the pretension of the high-art medium, while the low-art subject is shown distorted or personalized through the hand of an individual producer. Not a gestural signature, though, the brushstrokes criticize painterly skill in their refusal of pictorial depth and their crude application. The work's patently obvious and one-dimensional content also refuses psychological depth. Shallowness, obviousness, and immediacy are signified as well by the heavily material surface, which gives the appearance of paint poured from the tube and smeared over the support. The work refuses contemplation. Its humor and vivid immediacy (which seem so incongruous in the context of the hushed museum) encourage the viewer to interpret the title as a visceral metaphor of a topical political situation — we might think of the Cold War, the precarious situation of the Left in postwar Europe and especially America, or more pointedly, the embattled position of the avant-garde itself.

The SI: What We've All Been Waiting For?

The Situationist period, unlike Helhesten and Cobra, has never been under question as avant-garde despite its absence in Bürger's account. This is due in part to the Situationists' own polemical embrace of the term in their writings. Yet the SI literature consistently reduces its understanding of the avant-garde to something very different, and in a way less unique than Jorn's understanding. In order to comprehend the movement more fully Jorn's position and internal dissent must be taken into account. In recent discussions of Situationist history, focused mainly on architecture and critical theory, Jorn's role in it has been overlooked, and the origin of his architectural and political critiques in the 1940s remains undiscussed.[36] Situationist theory has been collapsed into the writing of Guy Debord, particularly *The Society of the Spectacle*, written ten years after the formation of the group. Debord and Jorn disagreed fundamentally about the nature and value of art, supporting mutually exclusive positions on painting, although their notions of the role and function of the avant-garde were developed collaboratively.

Debord clearly viewed the SI as the next phase in the avant-garde lineage from Dada to Lettrism, as he summarized in "Rapport sur la construction des situations."[37] He wrote that the avant-garde tendencies in culture are limited by the social forces that have the power of supporting them. The bourgeoisie accords success on artists to the precise degree that they renounce their group concerns and their politics, and

for this reason the common usage of the avant-garde label has become suspect. In other words, the avant-garde has become institutionalized. Although he recognized the historicity of his position, observing how artistic accomplishment can only occur within the specific limits of historical possibility, Debord, unlike Jorn, continued to believe in a "revolutionary avant-garde."[38] The primary actions of the avant-garde for Debord would be the construction of new ambiances and new desires as well as the elaboration of an appropriate political critique. Debord denied that the material traces of such work have any value, whereas Jorn gave these physical manifestations primacy as direct interventions in the social environment.

Jorn and Debord's collaboration is best exemplified in the two books they produced together in 1957–58, *Fin de Copenhague* (fig. 4) and *Mémoires*. They constitute Jorn's only use of montage, collecting fragments of text from popular ads and stories, plus critical socialist texts, architectural diagrams, cartoons, and so on, overlaid with

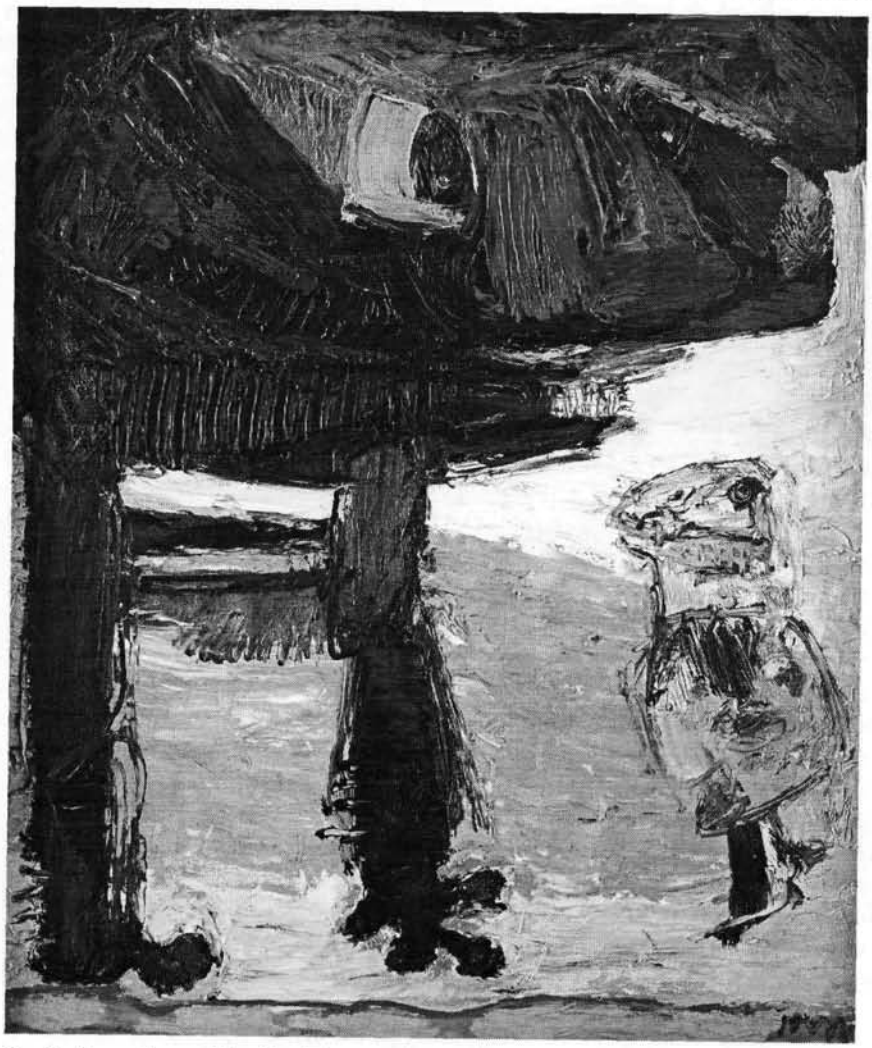

Fig. 3. Asger Jorn, *Attention, Danger*, 1957, oil on canvas, 39 1/2 x 40 in. (100 x 81 cm). (Copyright: Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, Oslo.)

Jorn's colorful printed splotches, a parody of Pollock-style paint drips. Made with literal fragments of what the SI defined as a spectacular society, where all subjective emotions are predefined by the media as clichés, the books literally reduce the media's messages to meaninglessness. Messages like "...et voilà votre vie transformée!" or, "votre action est efficace," become simultaneously ridiculous and, on a more implicit level, potentially re-applicable to the struggle of artists envisioning a different society. The decontextualized fragments literally communicate nothing but their prefabricated nature, and create a powerful effect of nostalgia for the loss of personal, unmediated desires and memories. The artists' critique of media kitsch, unlike Greenberg's attitude of kitsch as taboo, operates through a direct engagement with its materials that brings out their pleasure in pop culture. They created new and entertaining parodies of kitsch through the manipulation of texts and images. And unlike Greenberg's embrace of avant-garde as the pure vision that would save us from kitsch, Jorn and Debord critiqued the avant-garde pretensions of drip painting in equal measure through Jorn's printed parodies. The SI called for the creation of new desires through a reclamation and *détournement* of media kitsch.[39] They identified, quite effectively, the tendency of the media or "spectacular culture" to disguise its rear-guard promotion of the status quo in a rhetoric of progress and the New. Yet while Jorn echoed this rejection of progress in his writings and anthropological investigations, Debord increasingly coordinated the SI's position at the forefront of the avant-garde.

The Situationists are famous for their assertion that the fundamental oeuvre of an avant-garde should be not material works, but "an attempt at a general critique of the present moment." In Göteborg, 1961, the exclusion of artists was complete, and Raoul Vaneigem declared that there was no such thing as a Situationist work of art.[40] The Situationists have recently been claimed as the only true postwar avant-garde because their critique went further than any other, to the point, seemingly beyond even Dada, of discarding art altogether as a useful activity.[41] The Situationists, though, cannot be exempted from the classic avant-garde problematic of declaring art dead while continuing to produce works.[42] The group's polemical claim that the ultimate artwork is a critique has directly resulted in its acclaim in critical theory circles. Yet SI objects in the form of films, journals, books, collages, and paintings remain central in mediating our understanding of what the collective did and was. Some of these aesthetic objects were made after the supposed rejection of art, as in the works by Bernstein, Debord, Viénet, and Martin presented in the "Destruktion Af RSG-6" exhibition of 1963 and the follow-up show in 1967. These works included Debord's "Directives" on canvas and Bernstein and Martin's "anti-abstract" paintings.[43] In fact, the continual creation of works that supercede their own reified status requires a redefinition of the concept and function of artwork as defined institutionally by the art world, even as it necessitates an intervention in the non-art world by physical and aesthetic means, in other words the coordination of practice and theory consistently demanded by the SI in its pre- and post-artistic periods.[44] My point here is not to downplay the incredible prescience and impact of the Situationist critique of media and of art, but simply to recognize their bind within a social economy that defines art — from the physical work to the art of living — institutionally and contextually. Moreover, the total critique combined with active intervention demanded by the SI was equivalent to the unitary project of the avant-garde which, in its political rather than formalist definition, always involves coordination across artistic disciplines, across political movements and groups, and across occupational specializations of the existing society.

Fig. 4. Asger Jorn and Guy Debord, page from *Fin de Copenhague*, n.p. Copenhagen: Permild & Rosengreen, 1957. (Silkeborg Kunstmuseum, Denmark.)

The SI in the end was inheriting — rather than transcending — the institution of the avant-garde. Its rejection of art for experiential critical activity became, in the context of Happenings, Performance, and the Nouvelle vague, immediately and inevitably subsumed as art — just as Debord's films must be acknowledged as new and creative interventions, not pure critique or *détournement*, despite his own intentions.[45] His films, which he avowed were not Situationist works,[46] nevertheless bear distinct traces of his interests: military conquests, strategies, and maps; romantic adventures among a band of outsiders; excesses of drinking and lovemaking. Their deliberately enervated dialogue becomes a distinct expression of Debord's negativity. His refusal of the gesture resulted in works as equally personal as Jorn's painting. Jorn, on the other hand, engaged painting deconstructively, in order to empty the gesture of reified meaning. Jorn never denied that any artistic creation bears the mark of the personal, but he shifted the focus of artistic meaning away from the private interests of the artist's intentions or the viewer's interpretation, to the political importance of the conditions of its creation.

In the Situationist period, the issue of painting returns as a central problematic. The central question remains: do we need to continue viewing collective groups as avant-garde to the extent that they reject this medium? Does this not mirror the very reification that leads so many artists to reject it? In other words, to single out painting as a tabooed site incapable of critique perpetuates its special status. Jorn's project attempted to destroy that status. His series of "Modifications" and "Disfigurations," painting on top of old thrift-store images, embody Jorn's version of *détournement* (fig. 5).[47] Rather than destroying the prefabricated elements of the spectacle, they recover its outmoded forms, lampooning the pretension and sentimentality of old pictures while simultaneously preserving certain passages and "renewing" the images, according to Jorn, through the addition of shockingly vulgar and clashingly disruptive splashes of paint.[48] Far from a simple rejection of traditional painting, the works celebrate anonymous creativity, appropriation of academic methods by the untrained, and artistic collaboration across time. They accept the found works as legitimate anti-cultural products of the past and establish their presentness in a new historic situation. The "Modifications" critique the institution of painting, not the old paintings they take as a point of departure. They reject the newness of the commodity for the chance encounter with a devalued folk expression, and thus engage Jorn's cyclical understanding of action and value rather than Debord's maximum self-consciousness in regard to avant-garde advancement. Such projects place painting in a newly modest relationship to other experimental media, precisely by vandalizing it with both violence and humor. Jorn's Duchampian beard added to the face of a girl in a confirmation dress directly inserts the Modification into the lineage of the historical avant-garde. "The avant-garde doesn't give up," Jorn's graffiti-like scrawl over the girl's head, faces Debord's pessimism with cheerful confidence, even as it asserts that the avant-garde's fugitive disruptions will be necessary, cyclically, for a long time to come.

What's an Avant-Garde to Do?

Jorn warned that the worst mistake in combining art and politics is the reification of the avant-garde itself. He reflected that Cobra's demise was due to this very self-aggrandizement, criticizing the continuing use of the Cobra name to benefit individual artists like Appel and Corneille.[49] Developing jointly with Debord the Situationist theory that any disruptive movement will ultimately become recuperated, Jorn chose a

potlatch of continual creation without concern for recuperation,[50] acknowledging that critical moments, realizations, expressions, or communications can occur at all stages of the process. Debord, by contrast, developed increasingly pessimistic theoretical critiques, which become problematic in their refusal to admit any possibility of a critical subjectivity.[51] Jorn continued to believe in the critical and subversive potential of the subject despite the injustice of the power structures that organize society. He turns to the continual development of experiments to test the limits of historical conditions. His "Intimate Banalities" article of 1941 closes with the line, "The spectator does not exist and cannot exist in our time." His statement implies that everyone has a responsibility to be aware of their effect on the world, in other words the individual agency that Debord's situationist theory denies.

By the mid-1960s, exhausted by Situationist polemics, Jorn deliberately dropped the term avant-garde, returning to the Cobra-period "experimental art."[52] He retained the concept of collective investigations but abandoned the avant-garde, which in the French SI had become a distracting, polemicized sign of cachet. Jorn's concept clashes with art-

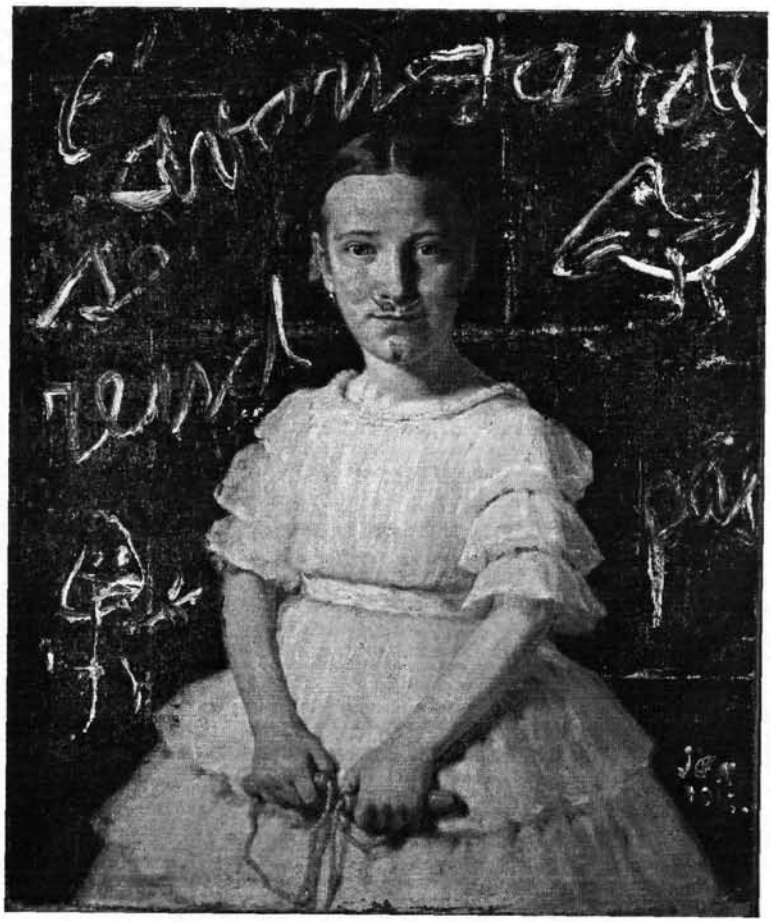

Fig. 5. Asger Jorn, *L'avant-garde se rend pas*, 1962, oil on found painting on canvas, 28 3/4 x 23 1/2 in. (73 x 60 cm). Collection Pierre and Micky Alechinsky.

historical theories of the avant-garde to the extent that they often do not accommodate the celebration of outmoded folk art and cyclical time, elements that inform not only Jorn's project but also those of the historical avant-gardes from Gauguin to Surrealism. Like the work of most of the major artistic groups and individuals working at mid-century, his "experimental art" does not fall into Bürger's (and Greenberg's) reductive paradigm of modern art as either a doomed attempt at self-sublation by attacking artistic institutions, or a completely asocial, self-contained work.[52] It creates a new model more akin to Adorno's dialectical critique, but necessitating activist engagement as well as pleasure. The concept of the avant-garde played an important role for Jorn's work, nevertheless, and the intertextuality of its theorization by Jorn and contemporary writers illuminates the continuities of his project in new ways. It incorporated collective creation and acknowledged collective subjectivity itself. It rejected the institutionalized concepts of style, genius, monuments, purity, high seriousness, and specialization. It celebrated folk culture as neither forward- nor backward-looking, but the fundamental potential of all people. It attacked the passivity of artistic experience, and it understood art as a celebration of the joy of life, and thus inherently a critique of modernity.

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1. Asger Jorn, *Pour la forme: ébauche d'une méthodologie des arts* [1958], reprinted in *Documents relatifs à la fondation de l'Internationale Situationniste*, ed. Gerard Berreby (Paris: Allia, 1985), 427. Translations from French, as here, and Danish are mine unless otherwise noted.

2. I refer here to the formalist or painting-centered art criticism of Jorn's work since the 1960s, by Jorn's cataloguer Guy Atkins among others. While all of this criticism has contributed valuable insights into Jorn's painting methods and aesthetic meanings, it has overlooked the political and social dimension of his work. See Lawrence Alloway, "Background to Action 5: Cobra Notes," *Art News and Review* 9, no. 25 (January 4, 1958): 2; Alloway, "Danish Art and Primitivism," *Living Arts* 1 (1963): 44-52; Guy Atkins and Troels Andersen, *Jorn in Scandinavia, 1930-1953*, 1st ed. (New York,: G. Wittenborn, 1968); *Asger Jorn, The Crucial Years, 1954-1964* (London: Lund Humphries, 1977); and *Asger Jorn: The Final Years, 1965-1973*, 1st ed. (London: Lund Humphries, 1980); Werner Haftmann, "Asger Jorn," *Quadrum* 12 (1962); Per Hovdenakk, "Cobra in Time," in *Cobra 50 År* (Ishøj: Arken Museum for Moderne Kunst, 1998); Per Hovdenakk, "Time for New Perspectives," in Christian Gether et al., *Asger Jorn* (Ishøj: Arken Museum for Moderne Kunst, 2002); Sven Nommensen, *Asger Jorn: Das Frühwerk und die spontane Methode der malersichen Entfaltung* (Berlin: Tenea, 2002), Michel Ragon, *Vingt-cing ans d'art vivant* (Paris: Casterman, 1969). Tom McDonough, for one, addresses the social radicalism of Jorn's Situationist-period ideas, but unfortunately attributes most of them to Guy Debord rather than accounting for their development in Jorn's thinking since Helhesten as well. Tom McDonough, "The Many Lives of Asger Jorn," *Art in America* 90, no. 7 (July 2002): 56-61. Laurent Gervereau's recent work approaches Jorn along more contemporary and interesting lines than the art critics, though he unfortunately neglects Jorn's works in favor of his life history. Laurent Gervereau, *Critique de l'image quotidienne: Asger Jorn* (Paris: Cercle d'Art, 2001).

3. Jorn describes in his 1952 aesthetic manifesto *Held og Hasard* his idea of the "extreme aesthetic." Such an aesthetic involves upheaval, surprise, wonder, "immediate interest," luxury, experiment, the unknown, the playful, the provisional, the absolutely subjective, the seemingly absurd. Asger Jorn, *Held og hasard. Dolk og guitar* [Risk and chance. Dagger and guitar], 2nd ed., vol. 3, *Meddelelse fra Skandinavisk Institut for Sammenlignende Vandalisme* (Copenhagen: Borgen, 1963), 20-24. He develops these ideas in Jorn, "Tegn og underlige gerninger eller magi og de skønne kunster [Signs and strange actions or magic and the fine arts]" (Silkeborg Kunstmuseum Archives: 1954); as well as *Pour la forme*.

4. Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* [1974], trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

5. These have been amply discussed by others. The most significant defense of the critical engagements of the postwar avant-gardes, albeit the generation after Jorn's, is Hal Foster's critique, "Who's Afraid of the Neo-Avant-Garde?" in Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996).

6. Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting [1960]," in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism,*

ed. John O'Brian, vol. 4 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 86–93. While Greenberg avowed in 1978 that he regarded "purity" as only a useful illusion (94), his language incorporates the term in phrases like the "purely and literally optical" (89) and his central idea of the importance of guarding artistic "standards of excellence" (93). On his theory of the avant-garde, see also Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch [1939]," in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 1, 5–22. Greenberg uses "avant-garde" and "modernist" interchangeably in his later essays. For an example, see Clement Greenberg, "The Crisis of Abstract Art [1964]," in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 4, 177.

7. American art history is only beginning to address this problem. The groundbreaking scholarship of Max Kozloff, Eva Cockroft, David Schapiro, and Serge Guilbaut reintroduced politics into the historiography of Abstract Expressionism, but largely in terms of the U.S. promotion of the style as a Cold War emblem of freedom. The investigation of Abstract Expressionism as an avant-garde from the point of view of politically critical artistic production and alternative receptions began very recently with the work of David Craven, and in a more broadly philosophical vein, Nancy Jachec. David Craven, *Abstract Expressionism as Cultural Critique: Dissent During the McCarthy Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Nancy Jachec, *The Philosophy and Politics of Abstract Expressionism* (Cambridge: Cambrige University Press, 2000).

8. While Bürger identifies the critique as a rejection of art as a social institution, Poggioli describes the avant-garde as consistently identifying with the most "antipolitical" politics from anarchism to libertarianism, in a generalized account that describes the avant-garde as a series of critical artistic movements originating in the romantic period. Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde* [1962], trans. Gerald Fitzgerald (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 97. Jorn, a lifelong supporter of the outsider's approach to communism introduced to him by Christian Christiansen, did not consistently follow any established ideology in his political activism. He identified anarchism as a destructive political ideology, but an attitude basic to art. See Jorn, *Pour la forme*, 453.

9. He began using the term in the mid-1940s, and thereafter he uses it rather infrequently. The first reference I find in Jorn's writings to the "avant-garde" is in the collective manifesto sent in English to the Museum of Modern Art by the Helhesten artists in 1945, "Den ny realisme," *Høstudstillingen* (Copenhagen, 1945), reprinted in Per Hovdenakk, *Danish Art 1930–50* (Copenhagen: Borgen, 1999), 182.

10. In *The Natural Order* (1962) among many other places, he ridicules the very idea of progress as completely inapplicable to anything more theoretical than *walking*. Asger Jorn, *The Natural Order and Other Texts*, trans. Peter Shield (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), 54–55.

11. Nicos Hadjinicolaou, "On the Ideology of Avant-Gardism," *Praxis* 6 (1982): 39-70.

12. "Discours d'ouverture du premier congrès mondial des artistes libres," Jorn, *Pour la forme*, 430.

13. Asger Jorn, "Indlæg på kongres i Alba," (Silkeborg Kunstmuseum Archives, 1956), 8–9.

14. This argument cannot be fully developed here, but generally speaking, the primitivism of virtually all avant-garde movements of the first half of the twentieth century — from the spiritual universalism of Gauguin to the *africanisme* of cubism, the African rhythms in dada sound poetry, the surrealist interest in ethnography, or the futurist evocations of a "primitive" identity — constitutes a major anti-progressive current that contradicts the dominant understanding of avant-garde as progressivist.

15. "Our point of departure when we issued the magazine . . . was much more revolutionary than has currently been allowed to appear. We . . . expected . . . to release all the creative forces. If everyone was allowed to develop their own abilities, it could release an incredible force into society." Jacobsen, in Per Hovdenakk, *Egill Jacobsen*, trans. Peter Shield, (Copenhagen: Borgen, 1980), vol. 2, 89.

16. Asger Jorn, "Intime Banaliteter," *Helhesten* 1, no. 2 (1941), 34; reprinted in Hovdenakk, *Danish Art* 1930–50, 148.

17. Ejler Bille, "Om Nutidens Grundlag for En Skabende Kunst," *Helhesten* 2, no. 1 (1942): 6-13; Egill Jacobsen, "Saglighed Og Mystik," *Helhesten* 1, no. 1 (1941): 21-24; Niels Lergaard, "Myten," *Helhesten* 1, no. 3 (1941); 65; Egon Mathiesen, "Hvad Moderne Kunst Er," *Helhesten* 1, no. 3 (1941): 82-86; Carl Henning Pedersen, "Abstrakt Kunst Eller Fantasikunst," *Helhesten* 2, no. 4 (1943): 92-93.

18. Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," 11.

19. Greenberg himself set the words "pure" and "purity" in quotation marks (see note 6 above).

20. This critique developed ultimately in postmodernism, but merely as a critique without the emphasis on folk creativity as a method of reintroducing unoriginal creativity. I would argue that the contemporary interest in subcultures picks up where Cobra's interest in folk cultures left off.

21. He wrote, "Our cultural situation precludes any possibility for a searching, forward-looking art of a less isolated character than abstract art, just as science and other cultural figures must remain isolated until the causes of their missing connection are removed." Jorn, "Ole Sarvig opruller et skævt Billede af Kunstens Stilling i Dag," *Samleren* 21, no. 1 (January 1944): 168. Jorn's answer to a questionnaire on the isolation of abstract art in society was of course written in a period when he regarded abstraction as the primary form of avant-garde art; later he would make similar comments regarding the autonomy of "experimental art."

22. See Troels Andersen, *Asger Jorn: En Biografi*, 2 vols. (Copenhagen: Borgen, 1994); Graham Birtwistle, *Living*

Art: Asger Jorn's Comprehensive Theory of Art between Helhesten and Cobra, 1946-1949 (Utrecht: Reflex, 1986); Gunnar Jespersen, *De Abstrakte: Historien Om En Kunstnergeneration*, 2nd ed. (Copenhagen: Palle Fogtdal, 1991); Gunnar Jespersen, *Cobra*, ed. Peter Michael Hornung, vol. 8, *Ny Dansk Kunsthistorie* (Copenhagen: Palle Fogtdal, 1995); Hovdenakk, "Cobra in Time"; Peter Shield, "Spontaneous Abstraction in Denmark and Its Aftermath in Cobra, 1931–1951" (Ph.D. Diss., Open University, 1984); Shield, *Comparative Vandalism: Asger Jorn and the Artistic Attitude to Life* (Brookfield, VT.: Ashgate, 1998). The non-Scandinavian accounts that do address avant-garde practice or theory include Mirella Bandini, *L'esthétique, Le Politique: De Cobra à L'internationale Situationniste (1948–1957)* (Arles: Sullivan; Via Valeriano, 1998); Jean-Clarence Lambert, *Cobra*, trans. Roberta Bailey (New York: Abbeville, 1983); Willemijn Stokvis, *Cobra: An International Movement in Art after the Second World War* (New York: Rizzoli, 1987); and Willemijn Stokvis, *Cobra: Spontanitetens veje*, trans. Hanne Sørensen and Jette Skovbjerg (Copenhagen: Søren Fogtdal, 2001).

23. Although Bürger's study of literature and montage does not address the possibility of avant-garde painting, both Poggioli's earlier study and recent reconsiderations of Bürger's account do. See, for example, Dietrich Scheunemann, "On Photography and Painting: Prolegomena to a New Theory of the Avant-Garde," in *European Avant-Garde: New Perspectives*, ed. Dietrich Scheunemann, *Avant Garde: Critical Studies* 15 (Atlanta, GA: Rudopi, 2000), 16–17.

24. Hovdenakk, *Egill Jacobsen*, 2:89.

25. Jorn sounds distinctly Marcusian when he writes, "*Bacchos, Dionysos, Liber* and our Nordic *Frø* personify this intoxication or the natural aesthetic's age-old principle, yes, the sacred origin of the concept of freedom itself." Emphasis in original. *Held og Hasard*, 63.

26. Asger Jorn, *Magi og de skønne kunstner* [Magic and the fine arts] (Copenhagen: Borgens Forlag, 1971), 128–29. The book is the revised second section of Jorn's unpublished work, *Blade af kunstens bog* [Pages from the book of art], Silkeborg Kunstmuseum Archives, 1947.

27. Ibid.

28. His conceptions of nature and harmony were somewhat romantic in the 1940s, but they were shared widely by his generation, and in later periods his investigations shift to the more straightforward investigation of the evolutions of specific motifs.

29. Jorn writes in 1954 that, as Storm Petersen expressed, art is what can't be done, otherwise it wouldn't be art. The aesthetic equals the impossible, the chaotic, and the unknown. Asger Jorn, "Tegn og underlige gerninger," n.p.

30. For this reason, David Craven rightly proposes in relation to Abstract Expressionism that Meyer Schapiro's more socialist understanding of art's autonomy, an autonomy that is necessary for critique, provides a needed counterweight to the still-dominant paradigm of Greenberg, with his conception of autonomy for its own sake. Schapiro's conception of autonomy was in fact linked to the views of the Frankfurt School then in exile in America. My discussion of Schapiro and Adorno is indebted to Craven, *Abstract Expressionism as Cultural Critique*.

31. Meyer Schapiro, "Recent Abstract Painting [1957]," in *Modern Art: 19th and 20th Centuries* (New York: Braziller, 1994). For his view in the 1930s, see Meyer Schapiro, "The Nature of Abstract Art [1937]," in *Modern Art: 19th and 20th Centuries*.

32. Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 32.

33. Ibid., 259.

34. For the Helhesten group, art meant the human ability for variation, improvisation through colors the way jazz uses sound. See Egon Mathiesen, *Maleriets Vej* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1946), 204–5.

35. Jorn, *Pour la forme*, 447.

36. Libero Andreotti and Xavier Costa, eds., *Situacionistas: Arte, Politica, Urbanismo* (Barcelona: Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, 1996); Stewart Home, *The Assault on Culture: Utopian Currents from Lettrism to the Class War* (London: Aporia Press, 1988); Tom McDonough, ed., *Guy Debord and the Situationist International: Texts and Documents* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002); Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); Roberto Ohrt, *Phantom Avant-Garde: Eine Geschichte Der Situationistischen International Und Der Modernen Kunst* (Hamburg: Nautilus, 1990); Sadie Plant, *The Most Radical Gesture: The Situationist International in a Postmodern Age* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Simon Sadler, *The Situationist City* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998); Elizabeth Sussmann, ed., *On the Passage of a Few People through a Rather Brief Moment in Time: The Situationist International, 1957–1972* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989); and Jean-Louis Violeau, *Situations Construites* (Paris: Sens and Tonka, 1998).

37. Guy Debord, "Rapport sur la construction des situations et sur les conditions de l'organisation et de l'action de la tendance Situationniste Internationale [1957]," in *L'esthétique, le politique: De Cobra à l'Internationale Situationniste (1948–1957)*, ed. Mirella Bandini (Arles: Sullivan; Via Valeriano, 1998).

38. Ibid., 266.

39. *Détournement* was originally defined as "Intégration de productions actuelles ou passées des arts dans

une construction supérieure du milieu." "Définitions," *Internationale situationniste* 1 (June 1958), 13.

40. See "Le sens du dépérissement de l'art," *Internationale situationniste* [hereafter IS] 3 (December 1959), 4; and "Le cinquième conférence de l'I.S. à Göteborg," IS 7 (April 1962): 25–31.

41. See Benjamin Buchloh, *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000); Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen, "Organiseret pessimisme: Situationisterne og surrealisterne mellem Chaplin og Trotsky," *Passepartout* (*Århus*) 19 (2002); Laurence Debecque-Michel, "Situationism and Avant-Garde," *Critique d'art* 14 (Automne 1999): 15-16; Sadie Plant, *The Most Radical Gesture: The Situationist International in a Postmodern Age* (New York: Routledge, 1992); and Peter Wollen, "Bitter Victory: The Art and Politics of the Situationist International," in Elizabeth Sussmann, ed., *On the Passage...*, 20–61. Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen writes that "The Situationists were the avant-garde distilled down to an ultra-extreme claim to be the only real movement to reach the level of historical necessity" (57). Buchloh acknowledges that Debord's antiart viewpoint is "prohibitive . . . about even the slightest historical possibility of any cultural production whatsoever," but nevertheless considers his views "theoretically superior" to those of the Nouvelle réalistes and other working artists in postwar Europe (257–59). Wollen's excellent account of the SI's theoretical development expresses regret at its inevitable incorporation into the history of the avant-garde, but does not acknowledge the continuing struggles of contemporary artists' groups that continue the avant-garde critical practice (27). A notable exception to the recent overestimation of the SI that directly addresses the avant-garde question is the more critical account of Tom McDonough: "Introduction: Ideology and the Situationist Utopia," in *Guy Debord and the Situationist International*. McDonough acknowledges, following Manfredo Tafuri, the inherent link and ongoing role of the avant-garde in bourgeois capitalism and thus avoids praising the SI for "succeeding" where others have "failed."

42. As Scheunemann notes, the historical avant-garde cannot be understood to have left art behind or dissolved it into social practice either. He gives the example of the Berlin Dada Fair of 1920, where the artists posted a panel reading "Art is dead. Long live Tatlin's new machine art." Scheunemann, "On Photography and Painting," 29.

43. Debord's text for the 1963 exhibition embraces the SI as an "artistic avant-garde" and praises Martin's work as a combination of action painting and representations of global political reality. It also describes his own "Directives" exhibited on empty canvases or on detourned abstract paintings. Guy Debord, "Les situationnistes et les nouvelles formes d'action dans la politique ou l'art," in *Destruktion Af RSG-6: En Kollektiv Manifestation af Situationistisk Internationale* (Odense: Galerie EXI, 1963). "Ny-irrealisme, Operation Playtime," shown in Aarhus in 1967, presented more paintings by Bernstein and Martin as well as five "Nothing Boxes" by René Viénet. *Operation 'Playtime': En kollektiv manifestation af Situationistisk Internationale; Situationistisk Revolution* 2 (Aarhus, 1967).

44. On the SI's demand for the practice of theory, see Mustafa Khayati, *De la misère en milieu étudiant: considérée sous ses aspects économique, politique, psychologique, sexuel et notamment intellectuel et de quelques moyens pour y remédier* (Strasbourg: Union Nationale des Etudiants de France; Association Fédérative Générale des Etudiants de Strasbourg, 1966), 24–25; or Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (1967; repr., New York: Zone, 1995), 89. One historical intervention of the SI that did in fact intersect the sphere of institutionalized art was the restoration of the statue of Charles Fourier, previously removed from the Boulevard de Clichy by the Nazis, in 1969. The statue replaced by the group of Enragés and Situationists was a replica made by Professor Pierre Lepetit of the École des Beaux-Arts. The city removed the statue a few days later. Andrew Hussey, *The Game of War: The Life and Death of Guy Debord* (London: Random House, 2001), 252–53.

45. For Debord's own description of his filmic processes and of film as the ultimate form of *détournement*, see "A User's Guide to Détournement" (1956) and "Technical Notes on the First Three Films" (1964), reprinted in Ken Knabb, ed., *Guy Debord: Complete Cinematic Works* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2003), 207–13.

46. "Le cinquième conférence de l'I.S. à Göteborg," *IS* 7 (April 1962), 27.

47. Long before the SI theory of *détournement*, however, Jorn had called for artists to "improve" and "preserve" old artworks by painting over them. He began doing this on reproductions of Raphael, Dali, and others in 1949. Letter to Constant, 1949, cited in Andersen, *Asger Jorn: en biografi*, vol. 1, 203. These images are reproduced in Christian Gether, Per Hovdenakk, and Stine Høholt, eds., *Asger Jorn* (Ishøj: Arken Museum for Moderne Kunst, 2002), cat. 56–58; pp. 48 and 121.

48. Asger Jorn, *Peinture Détournée* (Paris: Galerie Rive Gauche, 1959); for a longer discussion of the Modifications, see Claire Gilman, "Asger Jorn's Avant-Garde Archives," *October* 79 (Winter 1997): 33–48.

49. "Ce que sont les amis de 'Cobra' et ce qu'ils representent," unsigned, *IS* 2 (1959), 36–38 [the issue was edited by Jorn, Wyckaert, and Dahou]; and Jorn, "L'évolution de l'art expérimental du fin du deuxième guerre mondiale jusqu'à 1950," reprinted in Jorn and Pierre Alechinsky, *Lettres a Plus Jeune* (Paris: L'Echoppe, 1998), 97.

50. *Potlatch*, of course, refers to Debord and Bernstein's Lettrist International publication that first exposed Jorn to their theories in 1954. The concept of the potlatch interested a long line of French theorists from Marcel Mauss to Georges Bataille and Claude Lefort, as noted by Wollen, "Bitter Victory," 46. Here I mean

the concept to imply an excessively generous gift or a destruction of wealth as an aggressive offering whose useless extravagance carries an inherent critique of capitalist economic exchange — whether of objects, images, or ideas.

51. Guy Debord, *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Malcolm Imrie (New York: Verso, 1990).

52. Asger Jorn, *Alpha og Omega. Second to None* (1963-64; repr., Copenhagen: Borgen, 1980), 151.

53. Bürger, "Aporias of Modern Aesthetics," in *Thinking Art: Beyond Traditional Aesthetics*, ed. Andrew Benjamin and Peter Osborne (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1991): 3-15.

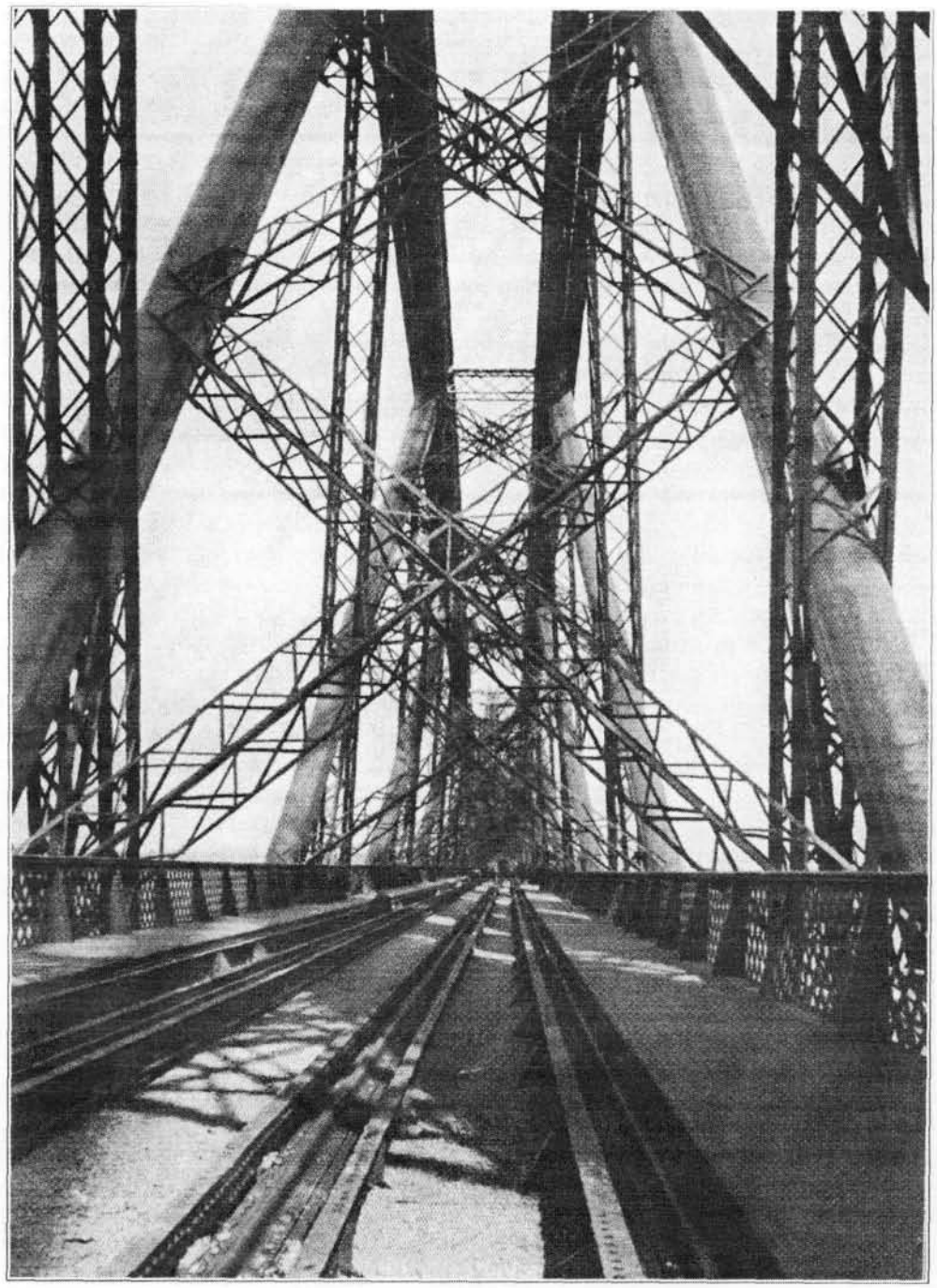
Objective Engineering and Empathic Experience: Iron Construction as German Architectural Paradigm, 1900-1910

Katherine Romba

German theory from the nineteenth century that addresses iron's import for architecture, written primarily by architects, tended to discuss iron from a position of pragmatics. With the exception of such visionaries as Karl Bötticher and Eduard Metzger, architects focused on the pressing issue of what ornamental cladding was suitable for new iron structures and building types like trussed bridges, exhibition halls, train sheds, and markets.[1] By the turn of the twentieth century, however, discussion of iron had shifted its focus, and contributors — including architects as well as art and architectural critics and theorists — began considering iron structure as the conceptual seed of the future architecture. These contributors, including Albert Hofmann, Hermann Muthesius, Alfred Gotthold Meyer, Wilhelm Freiherr von Tettau, and Joseph August Lux, conceived of iron construction not only as a structural support for architectural form but also as the theoretical core of modern building. Images and descriptions of stark iron skeletons now served as illustrations of new design strategies and notions of beauty (fig. 1).[2] But what exactly were those characteristics associated with iron construction that made it such a valuable model for German architecture?

As architectural historians have already recounted, iron bridges, exhibition halls, and train sheds were key elements in the architectural discourse on the modern style, admired by the architectural community for their straightforward (*sachlich*) and purposeful (*zweckmäßig*) character, which was evocative of the progressive, technological "spirit of the time." Iron construction, unlike traditional stone construction or even the emerging use of reinforced concrete, expressed unambiguously in bold, exposed-beam structures the modern scientific thought that underpinned its forms. According to the architects and critics of this period, the engineer used technological expertise, mathematical knowledge, and rational thought to create designs that were functional and practical. The beauty of these new designs stemmed from their organic harmony, from each form contributing to the function of the whole, with no form extraneously applied. Architectural theory discussed how this new design sensibility, no longer concerned with *a priori* visual criteria and traditional systems of ornament, would guide architects away from the ephemera of fashionable architectural embellishment and towards a new style grounded in objective, scientific thought and a drive for practical, straightforward solutions.[3] Such prophecies of stylistic change were not without their ideological foundations, which historians have also recognized. Architectural theorists promoted engineering's *Sachlichkeit* and *Zweckmäßigkeit* not only because these qualities were important for artistic renewal but because they also had the auspicious capacity to represent middle-class values.[4]

In this paper I argue that in German architectural theory on iron from the first decade of the twentieth century — when iron construction became such a valuable model of future design[5] — these characteristics of rational, scientific thought were consciously combined with qualities that were subjective, visceral, and direct. For the architectural community, it was both engineering's objective calculation and subjective experience that would be instrumental to the conceptualization of architecture. Considered as products of objective calculation, iron structures served as models of bourgeois ideals as



Brücke über den Firth of Forth bei Edinburgh

Fig. 1 Bridge over the Firth of Forth, Edinburgh, from A. G. Meyer, *Eisenbauten* (Esslingen, 1907).

well as of novel concepts of beauty grounded in the reality of modern life. Considered as embodiments of subjective experience, these same structures became allied with an influential trend in German artistic thought that reacted against the rise of positivism by reviving the romantic artistic values of creative will, inspiration, and feeling.[6] By presenting engineered structure as emerging from a combination of objective and subjective principles, architectural theorists were able to promote the rational tenets of engineered design while nonetheless yielding to a popular artistic outlook that attempted to resist some significant artistic implications of modern change.

The history of modern architecture has displayed a general resistance to the notion that engineering could have possessed subjective meaning for the German architectural community. Two very basic, related historiographic trends have deterred scholars from recognizing engineering's subjective valency. Although its impact has decreased, the teleological perspective that once dominated much of the history of modern architecture originally led historians to focus on those aspects of prewar German architectural culture that fed ultimately into the "rationalism," "objectivity," and "functionalism" of the 1920s.[7] In addition to this early approach, the concept that architectural thought and practice of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries followed a paradigm shift from subjective frameworks to the objective modalities of modernity has always provided a general guide for the writing of modern architecture's history.[8] Although much scholarship today has problematized the notion of a clear-cut paradigmatic shift, allowing for the contradictions and paradoxes of modern architecture, readings of engineering remain stalwartly unaffected.[9] One may not expect readings of engineering's architectural value to have great consequences for the history of German modernism, yet interpretations of the early models of modern architecture can shape the construction of entire historical narratives.

This paper proceeds from the general contention that German architects and critics often combined their acclaim of modernization with an idealistic rejection of its unsavory implications for the foundations of art. I argue specifically that a discourse on engineering's subjective values emerged in architectural theory to show that some of art's most valued principles could continue to thrive even as the field modernized. While this paper examines several ways in which the principles of subjectivity framed discussions of iron engineering, its main focus is to investigate iron's "subjective" aesthetic, specifically, the predominant use of empathy theory (*Einfühlungstheorie*) to characterize iron's aesthetic effect.[10] I use the terms "subjective" and "subjectivity" to mean the belief that reality and meaning are realized by (rather than independent of) the subject.[11] Using as evidence some of the principal treatments on iron's aesthetic — works by Hofmann, Muthesius, Meyer, Von Tettau, and Lux — I contend that architectural theory on iron engineering used empathy theory to show its accord with the predilections of contemporary art theory.[12] By identifying engineering's beauty as stemming from the viewer's empathy for the vitality and animation that underpinned objective, physical law, architectural theorists promoted architecture's aesthetic renewal through *sachlich* principles while conceding to prevalent protests against modernity's objective epistemological methods.

* * *

The designation of subjectivity as an important basis of artistic meaning was part of a widespread direction taken in artistic thought that began in the second half of the nineteenth century, in which materialist and mechanistic concepts were found to be

objectionable, and the artist's intention, inspiration, and feeling became the dominant characteristics of artistic interpretation. For at least the last three decades of the nineteenth century, German art theorists challenged theories of design and beauty they considered to be based on purely scientific and objective principles, and self-consciously distinguished themselves from these doctrines. Mid-century theorists like Karl Bötticher (1806-1889), Gottfried Semper (1803-1879), and the "Semperians" were singled out and criticized for promoting positivist and materialist historical analyses of the origins and foundations of art.[13] Reflecting the tenor of artistic thought around 1900, critic and theorist Richard Streiter described these earlier interpretations of art as "rigid historical objectivity."[14]

While certain theorists were singled out as the objects of criticism, the general character of artistic and intellectual thought of the time was also implicated. Many in the artistic community decried a basis of knowledge characterized by scientific analysis, which it considered to have encroached upon the field of art, providing a poor foundation for artistic judgment. Science, particularly its association with abstract and rational thought, was deemed to have little significance for art, whose design was considered subjective, intuitive, and creative, as well as direct and physical.[15]

Two art theorists who challenged the principles of materialism and positivism in artistic design were Conrad Fiedler (1841-1895) and Alois Riegl (1858-1905). In *Über die Beurtheilung von Werken der bildenden Kunst* [On judging works of visual art], 1876, Conrad Fiedler defined artistic activity as "free creating," as an "immediate" relation between the artist and the work. Such qualities were a result of the artist's pure and direct sensory experience. In contrast, abstract calculation and scientific analysis, which Fiedler described as "typifying the principal mental activities in our civilization," led to an understanding of art as "essentially nothing but a scientific illustration of conceptual abstraction."[16] Additionally, Alois Riegl, in his book *Stilfragen* [Problems of style], 1893, took a stand against what he considered to be the prevalent threat to art's theoretical foundation, a faith in materialist determinism. Riegl, whose goal was the introduction of new foundations for a history of ornament, contrasted the Semperians' faith in art as determined by materials and techniques with his own notion of art as primarily a result of the "free and creative artistic impulse," or "*Kunstwollen*."[17]

The architectural theory that promoted iron engineering as a source of architectural concepts exhibited a similar antagonism toward artistic principles of a mechanistic and scientific foundation. For example, architect Hermann Muthesius (1861-1927), in his book *Stilarchitektur und Baukunst* [Style-architecture and building-art], 1902, criticized the erstwhile "historical objectivity" found in Karl Bötticher's *Die Tektonik der Hellenen* [The tectonics of the Hellenes] (1844-1852). He attributed the current loss of credibility for this approach to the fact that "in part, one again realized that art was not concerned with explanations but rather with feelings."[18] In addition, art historian Alfred Gotthold Meyer (1864-1904), in his book *Eisenbauten: Ihre Geschichte und Aesthetik* [Iron buildings: their history and aesthetic], 1907, exhibited an antipathy for materialism. While he claimed that a material, iron, directly contributed to the development of nineteenth-century architectural style, he contended that he was in no way promoting a "materialist" view.[19]

While it is clear that architectural theory was sympathetic to art theory's anti-materialist, anti-positivist position, the evidence that this sympathy affected specific design principles and aesthetic ideals is not as straightforward, for unlike Conrad Fiedler and Alois Riegl, many architectural theorists promoted objectivity as a central

aspect of modern design. For example, Hermann Muthesius's early assessment of the symbolic importance of engineering for architectural design methods, which became a prevalent view, proclaimed:

> If we wish to seek a new style — the style of our time — its characteristic features are to be found much more in those modern creations that truly serve our newly established needs: in our railway terminals and exhibition buildings, in very large meeting halls, and further, in the general tectonic realm, in our large bridges, steamships, railway cars, bicycles, and the like. . . . Here we notice a rigorous, one might say scientific objectivity [*Sachlichkeit*], an abstention from all superficial forms of decoration, a design strictly following the purpose that the work should serve.[20]

Yet while many architectural theorists committed themselves to revealing the methodological importance of engineering's scientific character, they also took pains to show that, to some extent, artistic intention, feeling, and vision guided rational calculation and objective analysis. For example, in his 1913 essay "Das Formproblem im Ingenieurbau" [The problem of form in engineering], Muthesius himself contended that engineered structures that made a "good aesthetic impression" were the result of more than mere mathematical calculation, whether the "designer's feeling for beauty has played a subconscious part and exerted an influence beyond the slide rule, or whether this or that particular engineer has consciously striven for and achieved good form."[21]

In *Eisenbauten*, Alfred Gotthold Meyer presented a design theory of vision and inspiration, which he credited as derived from the *Ästhetik* of aesthetician Friedrich Theodor Vischer (1807-1887), who was himself critical of the "mechanization of art."[22] Meyer conceded that some iron constructions were indeed designed exclusively by the calculation of numbers and geometric figures. But those constructions that contributed to a "style-forming force" (*stilbildenden Kraft*) were designed also with a "formative will" (*Formenwille*) and "inner vision" (*innere Anschauung*). When inner vision was part of the design process, "then in each case these great iron constructions represent no longer a 'calculation' but a 'building': no longer the 'cold reason' and the 'empty rules' which science offers, but rather 'inspired' . . . material."[23]

Art critic Joseph August Lux (1871-1947) also argued that the designs of iron constructions were not determined solely by purpose, material, and function. In *Ingenieur-Aesthetik* [Engineer aesthetic], 1910, he claimed that for iron construction (as well as for the arts in general) the "creative idea of form" (*schöpferische Formenahnung*) initiated the design act. He backed this claim by recalling "Paxton, the creator of the Crystal Palace, Dutert, the constructor of the great Paris Machine Hall, and the engineer Eiffel." These "creators" designed their monumental structures with the guidance of a "creative spark" (*schöpferischer Funke*) which preceded any numerical calculation.[24]

The theoretical counterpart to design creation — the aesthetics of the resultant form — was equally treated with a combination of objective and subjective components by architectural theorists. In most theories of iron's aesthetic, the forms of objective calculation and static, mechanical law were the site of aesthetic expression, but it was the subject's response to these forms that made their beauty a reality. For a subjectively based interpretation of iron's beauty, theorists looked specifically to German aesthetics.

Empathy theory, which stemmed originally from Kantian and Romantic notions of subjectivism, became one of the most pervasive aesthetic theories underpinning the subjective character of iron's forms.[25]

Unlike classical theories of beauty, which generally defined beauty as an object's representation of metaphysical truth or universal law, empathy theory proposed that beauty existed only in the subject's own aesthetic response to an object. The main premise of empathy theory was that aesthetic experience was based on the subject's feeling of their own vital energy and animated force in an object's form. Robert Vischer (1847-1933), who coined the term *Einfühlung* (or literally in-feeling) in his 1873 dissertation "Über das optische Formgefühl" [On the optical sense of form], claimed that through empathy, "the static form is . . . felt as if it could move freely."[26] Due to certain psychological factors, our imaginations allow us to "move" with the form (such as contour or pure line), which gives us the impression that the form itself is capable of mobility.[27]

In the work of Theodor Lipps (1851-1914), the most prolific proponent of empathy theory at the turn of the twentieth century, empathy was similarly described as filling "the aesthetic object with various contents. But these contents always have the same source, namely my own self-activity."[28] Although in many ways Lipps' perspective was built on previous empathic philosophies, he wrote more extensively than earlier empathy theorists on the role abstract form played as the site of aesthetic expression. He contended that it was not in the object's concrete materiality that one comprehended active forces, but in its essentially dematerialized (*nicht materialisiert*) abstract forms, in those forms perceived in an object's contours. According to the laws of psychology and physiology, which Lipps considered the foundation of his aesthetic theory, observers followed abstract form with their eyes (and, as it were, their bodies) in a sequential process of experience, renewed in each point and each line, so that, he explained, "we ascribe to the line movement . . . although the line obviously remains in full rest. . . ."[29]

According to Lipps, the forces empathized in abstract form followed mechanical law. He stated, for example, that "the difference in the direction of the horizontal and vertical lines is not so much geometric as it is mechanical. The vertical direction is affected by weight . . . while the horizontal is neutral to this weight."[30] Such a claim does not, however, confine Lipps' theory to the realm of objective science and mechanics. Mechanical law is not rationally appreciated, it is *felt* by the observer; beauty is realized by the subject's empathy for the forms following mechanistic principles. In addition, it is not purely mechanical forces that the observer empathizes with; it is these forces as driven by a vital will, by a life force. Lipps concluded, "For what I empathize with, is total, universal life. And life is force, inner effort, striving, accomplishment."[31]

Lipps claimed that when one looked at architecture, one witnessed the animation of abstract form in the contours of structural elements, both in their directional movement and in their indication of swelling and contraction. He illustrated this using the Doric capital (fig. 2).[32] The contours of the echinus reveal their relationship to a system of forces, so that one senses that the lines rise as part of the column shaft's upward striving, renewed, as it were, "from point to point," until one feels its bending and the echinus's compression from the entablature's weight.

In the early twentieth century, Lipps was indeed the most well-known and accessible empathy theorist, and his ideas may have had a particular appeal in contemporary discussions of iron's architectural importance due to his thorough explication of the aesthetics of "line," which became the touchstone of iron's beauty.[33] Yet Lipps was

not the only source of empathy for the discussion of iron; both Robert Vischer and Heinrich Wölfflin (1864-1945) were named specifically as sources.[34] More often than not, however, theorists on iron neglected to cite their sources of empathy, and empathy theory's presence is evident only by its common hallmarks: a theory of psychology and form, the beauty of mechanics and statics, the observer's feelings of energy and structural force, the movement and animation of abstract form.

One of the first uses of the empathic aesthetic in theories of iron and engineering actually appeared prior to the twentieth century, in an essay published in 1893 by architect Albert Hofmann.[35] Hofmann was also one of the first architects and theorists to recognize the beauty of iron's unclad, engineered forms and to envision the

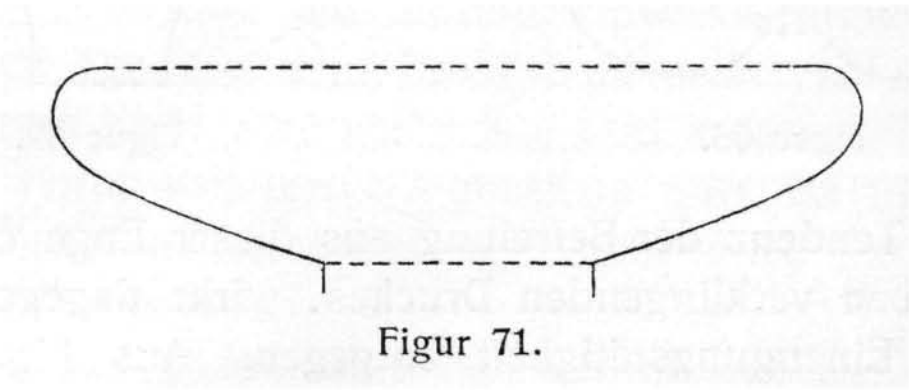


Fig. 2 Lipps' diagram of a Doric echinus, from T. Lipps, *Ästhetik*, vol. 2 (Hamburg and Leipzig, 1906).

immense impact that these forms and their underlying principles would have on the conceptual foundation of architecture.[36] In his essay "Die künstlerischen Beziehungen der Architektur zur Ingenieur-Wissenschaft" [The artistic relationship of architecture to the science of engineering], he declared that "the role that [engineering] has begun to play in the development of architecture is a prominent one."[37] According to Hofmann, engineers had adapted their practices to industrial materials and new technology, just as society and culture in general had adapted to "the scientific boldness of research" and to "industrial and commercial activity." He advised that when architects seek the forms meaningful for the present era, they must look to the engineer. Unlike the architects' designs, which rely primarily on applied ornament for their aesthetic expression, the beauty of an iron bridge or market hall is conveyed not through decorative embellishment but rather through the forms that emerge from the design of the structure. Hofmann concluded that for the modern viewer, iron constructions — a bold, arching bridge, a prominent tower, and a wide-spanning hall — made more of an aesthetic impression than a beautiful palace.[38]

Hofmann claimed that the most beautiful form offered by engineering was "the line," which conveyed a "mechanical beauty." As its name suggests, Hofmann's mechanical beauty expressed mechanical, scientific law. But, as is also the case with empathy theory, its means of communication was not the observer's rational thought but rather his or her feeling for static, structural forces. The elegant arched lines of a bridge, for example, conveyed their aesthetic through the observer's "feeling of stability and certainty." He claimed that when one views the slender lines of iron construction, "our feelings for

statics are satisfied, and we have the sensation of certainty and rest."[39]

In *Die Einheit der Architektur: Betrachtungen über Baukunst, Ingenieurbau und Kunstgewerbe* [The unity of architecture: observations on the building art, engineered construction and the decorative arts], 1908, Muthesius also linked the beauty of iron structure to empathetic perception. The slender, spare forms of engineered structures may have been a product of scientific calculation, but their aesthetic effect was perceived by subjective feeling, by the "static feeling" of the "receptive" observer. He stated, "For him, the forms of construction speak . . . a persuasive language. The bold sweep of a wide-spanned railroad bridge conveys to him pleasure through its refined embodiment of a static principle."[40]

A year prior to Muthesius's concession to empathy theory, in 1907, Alfred Gotthold Meyer's *Eisenbauten* was published, an art historical interpretation of nineteenth-century style which identified iron and its empathic aesthetic as the "fermentation" of recent and future architectural development.[41] Meyer's notion of iron construction's aesthetic was closely related to his concept of design. When one designed iron structure with "inner vision" (*innere Anschauung*), one applied "numerical and technical solutions" to "formally pleasing effects,"[42] effects which conveyed their beauty through empathetic perception.[43] The beauty of the Eiffel Tower (fig. 3), for example, was expressed by the elastic forces of its slender structure, specifically, the aesthetic effect of tension between "the most expressive lines of a rooted stability and a heavenward striving force."[44]

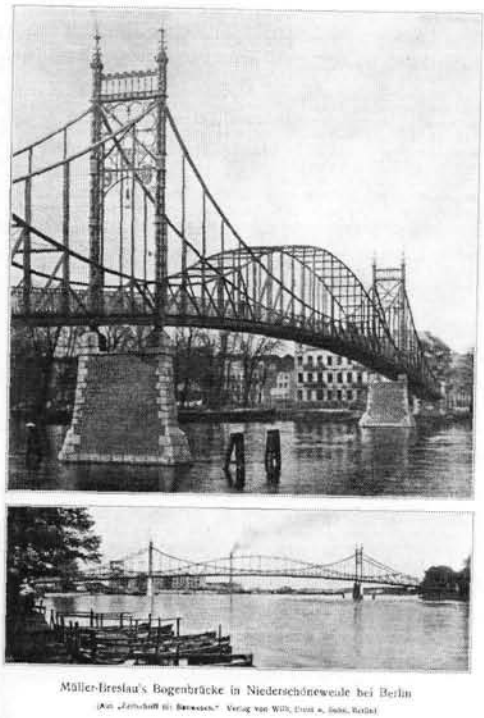
Meyer claimed that it was in the exposed structure of the trusswork bridge, however, that iron made its greatest aesthetic impact (figs. 4 and 5). According to Meyer, the forces operating in a trusswork structure were expressed through the composition of connecting beams, which Meyer called "lines of force" (*Kraftlinien*), the same term that Henry van de Velde used for his empathic ornament.[45] Meyer explained, "Overall, these lines express aesthetically a tempo of movement — from crawling and striding, to hastening, gliding, and springing — and an intensity of work, from gasping exertion to quiet laboring to graceful play."[46]

Wilhelm Freiherr von Tettau (1872-1929), who had completed Meyer's *Eisenbauten* manuscript with a concluding chapter on *Kunstformen* (artistic form) after Meyer's death in 1904, may have developed an appeal for empathy theory from this experience. In an essay that appeared before he engaged in this project, entitled "Aesthetik des Eisens" [Aesthetic of iron], 1904, Von Tettau did not yet show an interest in the empathetic perception of iron's structural forms.[47] While touting the high achievements of the engineer, Von Tettau made quite clear the place of structure, contending, "We should never forget, that this work can well make the claim of technical perfection, but it has nothing to do with art."[48] Beauty, for Von Tettau, was still confined to the realm of decorative embellishment. But if the subjective perception of empathy theory had not yet entered Von Tettau's theoretical outlook, a negative assessment of "scientific" methodologies had. Concerning the embellishment of iron structures, Von Tettau claimed that their design should not be influenced by the "scientific" critic, but rather should follow the "indubitable leadership of a healthy artistic knowledge."[49]

Yet in Von Tettau's "Zur Aesthetik der Eisenarchitektur" [Regarding the aesthetic of iron architecture], an essay from 1908, empathy theory formed the foundation of his aesthetic interpretation. In addition, iron structure — rather than decorative cladding — had become the site of this aesthetic pleasure. Von Tettau stated that the aesthetic of iron structures stemmed from their "psychological" effect. The beauty of iron emerged from both the "purely objective (*sachlich*) factor of constructive certainty" and the

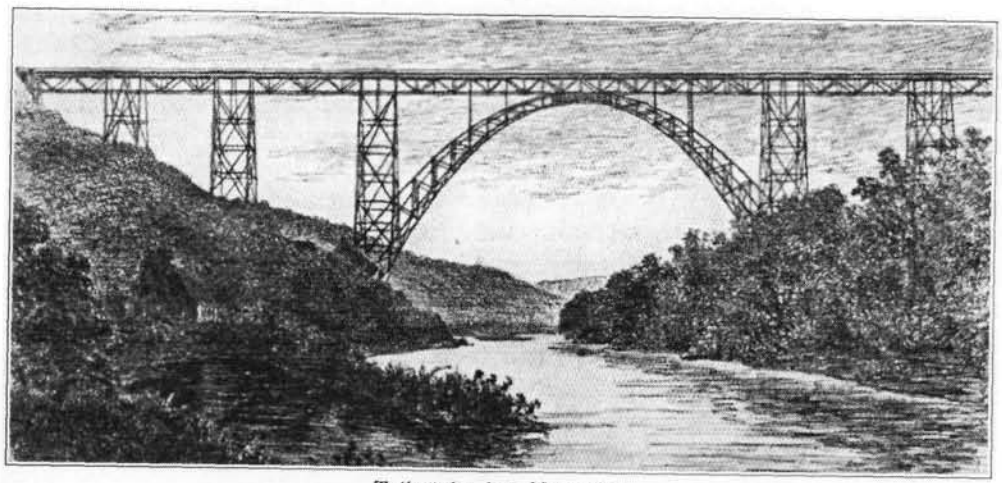
Der Eiffelturm in Paris

Fig. 3 Eiffel Tower, from A. G. Meyer, *Eisenbauten* (Esslingen, 1907).



Müller-Breslau's Bogenbrücke in Niederschöneweide bei Berlin

Fig. 4 Arched bridge, Berlin, from A. G. Meyer, *Eisenbauten* (Esslingen, 1907).



Talbrücke bei Müngsten

Fig. 5 Valley bridge, Müngsten, from A. G. Meyer, *Eisenbauten* (Esslingen, 1907).

"subjective (*subjektiv*) factor of personal perception."[50] The "slender forms" of iron structures like the Eiffel Tower and the Paris Machine Hall conveyed aesthetically the "magnitude of their inner forces." It was not the forms themselves that were beautiful but the "inner tension" that the forms expressed, which the observer "sympathizes with" (*mitfühlen*).[51] Von Tettau concluded that not only for iron construction but for architecture in general, "statics and aesthetics always go hand in hand."[52]

By the time Von Tettau's essay appeared in the journal *Deutsche Bauzeitung*, the popularity of iron structure as a paragon of design and beauty was beginning to wane, as theorists looked to other materials and other structures for the seeds of future architecture. Indeed, iron's decline in favor had already become so pronounced in the pages of *Deutsche Bauzeitung* and its new companion publication, *Mitteilungen über Zement, Beton- und Eisenbetonbau* [Report on cement, concrete and reinforced concrete construction], that the editors attached a disclaimer to Von Tettau's article, declaring that iron's significance for shaping architecture had already experienced a decline and would continue to do so.[53]

Published in 1910, Joseph August Lux's *Ingenieur-Aesthetik* became one of the last major pronouncements on the potency of iron construction for conceptualizing future architecture. Like the other supporters of an empathic iron aesthetic, Lux celebrated the advent of new materials and new technology in architecture. In fact, in his introduction, Lux stressed the importance of such factors in the course of a nation's development:

> It is very important for the spiritual formation, national development, and advance of a people in the face of international competition, that the general population view the work and progress of technology not as an obstruction of culture, but rather as a truly immense bearer of culture . . . .[54]

According to Lux, one important contribution technology had made to contemporary culture was a new sense of architectural beauty in the new heights, spans, and lines "awakened" in engineered construction. He concluded that the present aesthetic was linked to "the rational spirit of objectivity [*Sachlichkeit*], construction, and purpose."[55] However, continuing the thread of subjectivity displayed in previous architectural theory, Lux portrayed this beauty as manifest in the observer's own feelings for the vital energy of this rational structure. Applying empathy theory to iron structures like train sheds, bridges, and exhibition halls (figs. 6, 7, and 8), Lux explained:

> The beauty of the iron structures wants to be understood and illustrated by its unique essence, its essential element, the iron beam, and its lines of force [*Kraftlinien*]. The lines of force communicate living energies and produce a formal harmony, which are grasped from the conditions of stability and the composition of construction.[56]

Adopting a description reminiscent of the writings of Theodor Lipps, Lux proclaimed, "[The iron structure is] reduced to lines, which are made of merely a series of animated points and contain an entirely modern abstract beauty."[57]

After 1910, architectural theory no longer placed such significance on iron engineering as the conceptual seed for new architecture.[58] The notion of objective and subjective principles occupying the foundation of the new architecture continued to

Fig. 6 Train shed, Dresden, from J. A. Lux, *Ingenieur-Aesthetik* (Munich, 1910).

Weichselbrücke zu Fordon

Fig. 7 Bridge over the Vistula River, from J. A. Lux, *Ingenieur-Aesthetik* (Munich, 1910).

Fig. 8 Machine Hall, Universal Exposition of 1889, Paris, from J. A. Lux, *Ingenieur-Aesthetik* (Munich, 1910).

exist, however; its appearance had only shifted to other discourses and other arenas. It was an important element of the emerging architecture of Expressionism in particular, where the industrial materials of iron, glass, and concrete were combined with bold forms of personal vision and symbolic expression. For example, in 1913, Adolf Behne (1885-1948), a member of the Expressionist organization *Arbeitsrat für Kunst*, praised Brunto Taut's steel pavilion in Leipzig of that year as an expression of both *sachlich* design and the artist's own fantasy.[59] Six years later, in a lecture to the *Arbeitsrat für Kunst*, Erich Mendelsohn (1887-1953) — himself an adherent of empathy theory — delineated the foundation of new architecture as a knowledge of the new materials and their constructional logic combined with the imagination of the architect and the formal expression of rhythmic flow and movement.[60] As such examples demonstrate, Expressionism could embody the ideals of the discourse on engineering just as substantially as the architecture of the *Neue Sachlichkeit*. Indeed, when one understands modern engineering's full significance as a model of new architectural principles, in relation not only to the development of *Sachlichkeit* and *Zweckmäßigkeit* but also to the modalities of subjective experience, creativity, and feeling, the narrative of modern architecture emerges along new paths.

New York University*

1. By the 1800s, iron had already been used as a building material for centuries in Europe, primarily as dowels and cramps embedded within stone construction. Iron's use as a primary structural material in Germany began in the early nineteenth century and continued in earnest in the second half of the century with increased production of cast and wrought iron and the development of the iron truss system. Iron's increased visibility in buildings and other structures after mid-century prompted the rise in debate on its significance for architecture. For various accounts and perspectives on this debate see Wolfgang Herrmann, ed., *In What Style Should We Build? The German Debate on Architectural Style* (Santa Monica: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1992); Harry Francis Mallgrave, ed., *Otto Wagner: Reflections on the Raiment of Modernity* (Santa Monica: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1993); Sokratis Georgiadis, introduction to *Building in France, Building in Iron, Building in Ferroconcrete*, by Sigfried Giedion (Santa Monica: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1995); and Mitchell Schwarzer, *German Architectural Theory and the Search for Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

2. Of the theorists discussed in this essay, only A. G. Meyer and J. A. Lux illustrated their texts with visual depictions of iron constructions. The other authors relied on both verbal description and references to well-known iron monuments like the Eiffel Tower and the Machine Hall of the 1889 Universal Exposition to illustrate their ideas.

3. Such perspectives on engineering's significance for the conceptualization of modern architecture can be found in the following histories of modern architecture: Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of the Modern Movement from William Morris to Walter Gropius* (London: Faber and Faber, 1936), 123f; and Reyner Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1960), 79ff; see also Stanford Anderson, introduction to *Style-Architecture and Building-Art: Transformations of Architecture in the Nineteenth Century and Its Present Condition*, by Hermann Muthesius (Santa Monica: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1994), 13.

4. See Mark Jarzombek, "The Discourses of a Bourgeois Utopia, 1904-1908, and the Founding of the Werkbund," in *Imagining Modern German Culture: 1889-1910*, ed. Françoise Forster-Hahn (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1996); and Anderson, *Style-Architecture and Building-Art* (see note 3).

5. Although German architectural debates on iron's significance occurred throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, positive views on this topic dominated the discourse only after 1889 — tellingly the year of the famous Universal Exposition in Paris which showcased much iron construction and the year when construction was coming to completion on the iron Firth of Forth Bridge near Edinburgh. By the turn of the

*Since this paper was accepted for publication, the author has completed her doctoral work at New York University, and now teaches at Queen's University, Ontario.

twentieth century, German architects and critics embraced iron engineering in earnest. After 1910, however, the theoretical discussion of iron structure as a model of design and beauty declined significantly, replaced by a growing interest in reinforced concrete.

6. Reactions against positivist thought were not limited to Germany. See H. Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society: The Reorientation of European Social Thought 1890-1930* (New York: Vintage, 1977) for a discussion of the cultural backlash against positivism in France, Germany, and Italy.

7. An early example of such a reading, which set the tone for later interpretations, is Nikolaus Pevsner's *Pioneers of the Modern Movement* (see note 3), in which he identified the pragmatism and rationality of iron bridge design as the seed of later, *sachlich* architecture.

8. A clear example of the impact this outlook has had on interpretations of engineering's meaning is found in Mitchell Schwarzer, *German Architectural Theory and the Search for Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). Schwarzer identifies the theoretical discussion surrounding engineered construction at the turn of the twentieth century as part of a broader shift from a "preoccupation with formalism and subjectivity" to a greater interest in "objective industrial processes." He states, "Inasmuch as industrial activity in Austria and Germany was steadily growing, arguments for unity were increasingly justified on the basis of scientific and technological values. Theorists like Muthesius and Lux even prefaced their advocacy for the reconcilability of art and industry, of the fine and practical arts, with condemnations of *Jugendstil* subjectivity" (247-8).

It should be noted that some scholarship sidesteps the issues of objectivity and subjectivity altogether. An example is the work of Fritz Neumeyer, who, in *The Artless Word: Mies van der Rohe on the Building Art* (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 1991), examines the "primitive" associations that engineered structure held in early twentieth-century German architectural theory. In the writings of such figures as Karl Scheffler, Henry van de Velde, Joseph August Lux, and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, the "naked construction frame" evokes a bold and raw aesthetic which celebrates the notions of "unfinished" form and the "process of becoming."

9. Analyses of the paradoxes of German modernism can be found in Francesco Dal Co, *Figures of Architecture and Thought: German Architecture Culture 1880-1920* (New York: Rizzoli, 1990); Mark Jarzombek, "The Kunstgewerbe, the Werkbund, and the Aesthetics of Culture in the Wilhelmine Period," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 53 (March 1994): 7-19; and Jarzombek, "The Discourses of a Bourgeois Utopia" (see note 4).

10. Empathy theory's role as an aesthetic foundation for iron structural forms has gone virtually unrecognized by historians. An exception is the work of Fedor Roth, which identifies empathy theory's application to iron construction in the theory of Hermann Muthesius (*Hermann Muthesius und die Idee der harmonischen Kultur* [Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 2001]).

11. In subjective theories of artistic creation, direct personal will, inspiration, and imagination are promoted. In subjective aesthetics, beauty is a product of the observer's perception and feeling rather than an attribute of the object itself.

12. I use the term "art theory" to refer to a broad body of philosophical and critical thought applicable to a range of artistic endeavors, including painting, sculpture, and architecture. I use the term "aesthetics" to mean a subset of this theory which concerns specifically the philosophy of beauty.

13. Several historians have pointed out that the reception of Gottfried Semper as a materialist is an inaccurate reading of his theory. See, for example, Wolfgang Herrmann, *Gottfried Semper: In Search of Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1984), 121-123.

14. Richard Streiter, "Architektonische Zeitfragen," 1898, in *Ausgewählte Schriften: zur Aesthetik und Kunst-Geschichte* (Munich: Delphin, 1913), 128.

15. Art theory was not alone in expressing misgivings about a rise in abstract, rational thought. For example, cultural critic Julius Langbehn, in his book *Rembrandt als Erzieher* (Leipzig: C. L. Hirschfeld, 1890), deplored the rootless, alienated society of modern life and the mechanistic science and positivism that gave rise to it. He advocated a restoration of the values and attributes of the traditional German *Volk*, like communal life, artistic creation, and subjectivity. Sociologist Werner Sombart provided another example with works like *Der moderne Kapitalismus* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1902), in which he lamented capitalism's rise in Europe as well as its distinguishing earmarks of abstract, rational thought and a rootless society.

16. Conrad Fiedler, *On Judging Works of Visual Art*, trans. Henry Schaefer-Simmern and Fulmer Mood (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949), xi and 34.

17. Alois Riegl, *Problems of Style: Foundations for a History of Ornament*, trans. Evelyn Kain (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992). The "*Kunstwollen*" is a concept that Riegl introduces in *Stilfragen* and elaborates on in later work, like *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* (Vienna: K. K. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1901).

18. Hermann Muthesius, *Style-Architecture and Building-Art: Transformations of Architecture in the Nineteenth Century and Its Present Condition*, trans. Stanford Anderson (Santa Monica: Getty Center for the History of Art and Humanities, 1994), 55-6.

19. Alfred Gotthold Meyer, *Eisenbauten: Ihre Geschichte und Aesthetik* (Esslingen: Paul Neff Verlag, 1907), 1.

20. Hermann Muthesius, *Style-Architecture and Building-Art*, 79. "Will man daher nach einem neuen Stile, dem Stile unserer Zeit suchen, so wäre den Kennzeichen desselben viel eher in solchen neuartigen Schöpfungen nachzuspüren, die wirklich ganz neu entstandenen Bedürfnissen dienen, wie etwa in unsern Bahnhöfen, Ausstellungsbauten, Riesenversammlungshäusern, ferner auf allgemein-tektonischem Gebiete, in unsern Riesenbrücken, Dampfschiffen, Eisenbahnwagen, Fahrrädern usw. [...] Wir bemerken eine strenge, man möchte sagen, wissenschaftliche Sachlichkeit, eine Enthaltung von allen äussern Schmuckformen, eine Gestaltung genau nach dem Zweck, dem das Werk dienen soll" (Muthesius, Stilarchitektur und Baukunst [Mülheim-Ruhr: K. Schimmelpfeng, 1902], 50).

21. Hermann Muthesius, "The Problem of Form in Engineering," in *Form and Function*, eds. Tim and Charlotte Benton with Dennis Sharp (London: The Open University Press, 1975), 117; I have modified Benton and Sharp's translation. "[ob] das Schönheitsgefühl der Erbauer unbewußt mitgesprochen und sich über den Rechenstab hinaus Geltung verschafft, oder ob der eine oder der andere Ingenieur bewußt um die gute Form gerungen und sie erreicht hat" (Muthesius, "Das Formproblem im Ingenieurbau," *Die Kunst in Industrie und Handel. Jahrbuch des Deutschen Werkbundes 1913* [Jena: E. Diederichs, 1913], 30).

22. On Friedrich Theodor Vischer, see Harry Francis Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikonomou, introduction to *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873-1893*, trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikonomou (Santa Monica: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1994), 18. Meyer also credits the ideas of Guido Hauck, a professor of engineering at the *technische Hochschule* in Berlin, in his discussion of iron's design principles.

23. Meyer, *Eisenbauten*, 46: "denn bedeuten diese eisernen Großkonstruktionen in jedem Falle nicht mehr nur ein 'Rechnen,' sondern ein 'Bauen': nich mehr die 'kalte Einsicht,' die 'leere Regel,' welche die Wissenschaft gibt, sondern: 'begeisteten' und dadurch 'überwundenen' Stoff."

24. Joseph August Lux, *Ingenieur-Aesthetik* (Munich: G. Lammers, 1910), 22.

25. For further discussion of nineteenth-century empathy theory and its origins see *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873-1893* (see note 22).

26. Robert Vischer, "On the Optical Sense of Form," in *Empathy, Form, and Space*, 105.

27. Ibid., 92-105.

28. Theodor Lipps, "Ästhetik," in *Systematische Philosophie*, ed. W. Dilthey (Berlin and Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1908), 357: "Die Einfühlung [...] erfüllt die ästhetischen Objekte mit mannigfachem Inhalt. Immer aber ist dieser Inhalt derselben Quelle, nämlich meiner eigenen Selbstbetätigung entnommen."

29. Theodor Lipps, *Ästhetik: Psychology des Schönen und der Kunst* (Hamburg and Leipzig, 1903), 1:226: "In solchen Wendungen schreiben wir der Linie Bewegungen zu, und statuieren in ihr eine bewegende Tätigkeit. Wir tun dies, obgleich die Linie sichtbar in voller Ruhe verharrt, und wir von keiner Art von Tätigkeit etwas an ihr zu bemerken vermögen."

30. Ibid., 1:228: "Der Unterschied in der Richtung der horizontalen und der vertikalen Linie etwa ist nicht ein geometrischer, sondern ein mechanischer Unterschied. Die vertikale Richtung ist die Richtung, in der die Schwere wirkt, und die unmittelbare Gegenwirkung gegen die Schwere geschieht; die horizontale ist die zu diesem Gegensatze neutrale."

31. Theodor Lipps, "Einfühlung und ästhetischer Genuß," *Die Zukunft* 54 (1906), 100: "Denn was ich einfühle, ist ganz allgemein Leben. Und Leben ist Kraft, inneres Arbeiten, Streben und Vollbringen."

32. Lipps, *Ästhetik*, 2:349-355.

33. Prior to its use in theories of iron's aesthetic form, empathy theory provided an aesthetic foundation for classical (frequently stone) sculptural forms and their contours. Because the contour lines of iron's uniform beams showed little of the "swelling" or "contraction" associated with classical trabeated forms, advocates of empathic iron construction considered each individual iron beam a line unto itself — as each in fact appeared when viewed from a distance. Iron structure expressed its static forces not in the contours of each individual member but in the orientation and rhythm of its composition of lines.

34. Other possible sources of empathic principles are the writings of Karl Groos, Richard Streiter, and Adolf Hildebrand.

35. Albert Hofmann, "Die künstlerischen Beziehungen der Architektur zur Ingenieur-Wissenschaft," *Deutsche Bauzeitung* 27, no. 46 (10 June 1893): 284-87, 289-91, 296-99, 301-3. Hofmann's notion of engineering's beauty is grounded in empathetic perception as well as in Emil Du Bois-Reymond's theory that both natural and man-made design follow mathematical law.

An earlier application of empathy theory to iron structure appeared in Adolf Göller's *Die Entstehung der Architektonischen Stilformen: Eine Geschichte der Baukunst nach dem Werden und Wandern der Formgedanken*, (Stuttgart: K. Wittwer, 1888), where Göller claimed that "new kinds of construction" proclaim "considerable mechanistic achievement" and stir "a clear and lively static feeling" (450). Göller, however, considered stone, not iron, to be the foundation of future architecture.

36. Other late nineteenth-century architects writing on iron, like Richard Lucae and Constantin Lipsius, conceded that new materials and technology had the potential to affect future architectural style, but they

ultimately judged iron's lack of corporeality and sculptural form (as contrasted to stone architecture) an impediment to its impact and importance.

37. Hofmann, "Die künstlerischen Beziehungen," 287: "Die Rolle, die sie beginnen in der Entwicklung der Architektur zu spielen, ist eine hervorragende . . . ."

38. Ibid., 286-87.

39. Ibid., 291. Hofmann also contends that through one's unconscious feelings for statics, one can not only appreciate sound structural form but also create it. The contour of St. Peter's cupola gives "perfect pleasure to the eye" because it satisfies the laws of higher statics and maximum stability. However, at the time it was designed, this could not have been determined by mathematical calculation. "Unconsciously, through certain guiding instincts, Michel-Angelo has thus solved in his model (for the cupola was completed only after his death) a task, which is hardly comprehensible consciously, indeed in his time could not yet be formulated mathematically" (291).

40. Hermann Muthesius, *Die Einheit der Architektur: Betrachtungen über Baukunst, Ingenieurbau and Kunstgewerbe* (Berlin: K. Curtius, 1908), 31: "Für ihn spricht die Konstruktionsform eines aus Stabwerk zusammengesetzten Auslegers eine beredte Sprache. Die kühne Schwingung einer weitgespannten Eisenbahnbrücke übermittelt ihm durch ihre raffinierte Verwirklichung eines statischen Prinzips einen Genuß."

41. Meyer maintains, however, that the iron "*Baukunst*" can never replace monumental stone architecture. Meyer, *Eisenbauten*, 49.

42. Ibid., 47.

43. Meyer acknowledges the theoretical work of Robert Vischer and Heinrich Wölfflin as sources for his discussion of empathy.

44. Meyer, *Eisenbauten*, 89: "und am Eiffelturm spannt es sich zwischen die ausdruckvollsten Linien bodenwüchsiger Standfestigkeit und himmelwärts aufstrebender Kraft."

45. Wilhelm Freiherr von Tettau, who wrote the final chapter of *Eisenbauten*, mentions Henry van de Velde's "*Kraftlinien*" in a statement on the Belgian proclivity for "*Linienornaments*" in cast iron. See Meyer, *Eisenbauten*, 170.

46. Meyer, *Eisenbauten*, 106: "Und überall äußern sich diese Linien ästhetisch als Tempo der Bewegung—vom Schleichen und Schreiten zum Eilen, Gleiten, Springen—und als eine Intensität der Arbeit, von keuchender Anstrengung zu ruhigem Kraftumsatz, bis zum graziösen Spiel."

47. Wilhelm Freiherr von Tettau, "Aesthetik des Eisens," *Deutsche Bauhütte* 8, no. 28 (1904): 190-192.

48. Von Tettau, "Aesthetik des Eisens," 191: "Nur dürfen wir nie vergessen, daß dieses Werk dann wohl den Anspruch auf technische Vollendung machen kann, mit einem Kunstwerk aber gar nichts zu tun hat."

49. Ibid., 190.

50. Wilhelm Freiherr Von Tettau, "Zur Aesthetik der Eisenarchitektur," *Deutsche Bauzeitung* 42, no. 4 (1908), 24.

51. Ibid., 26.

52. Ibid.

53. Editor's comment, Von Tettau, "Zur Aesthetik," 24.

54. Lux, *Ingenieur-Aesthetik*, 2 (see note 24 above): "Es ist für die geistige Bildung, für die nationale Erziehung und für die Erhöhung der Tatkraft im Wettbewerb der Völker sehr wichtig, daß die Allgemeinheit in den Werken und Fortschritten der Technik nicht ein Hemmnis der Kultur, sondern vielmehr einen ganz gewaltigen Kulturträger erblickt und mit dem Verständnis für diese Tatsache die Freude am Leben und Schaffen der heutigen Zeit gewinnt."

55. Ibid., 8.

56. Ibid., 29-30: "Die Schönheit der Großkonstruktionen will aus ihrem eigenen Wesen heraus verstanden und erklärt sein, aus ihrem Element, dem Profileisen, aus den Kraftlinien, an denen sich die lebendigen Energien fortpflanzen and eine formale Harmonie erzeugen, die aus den Bedingen der Stabilität und aus den Bestimmungen der Konstruktion zu begreifen sind."

57. Lux, 24: "Auf Linien vereinfacht, die nur mehr in einer Reihe von lebendigen Punkten bestehen und eine ganz neuartige abstrakte Schönheit enthalten."

58. In the following decade, the discussion of iron was taken up mainly by engineers who promoted iron structures (and their empathic beauty) as already achieving an "engineered" style of a consistent formal character, rather than as portending architecture's future foundation.

59. Adolf Behne, "Bruno Taut," *Pan* 3 (March 7, 1913): 538-540.

60. Erich Mendelsohn, "The Problem of a New Architecture," lecture for the Arbeitsrat für Kunst, Berlin, 1919, trans. Antje Fritsch, in *Erich Mendelsohn: Complete Works of the Architect: Sketches, Designs, Buildings* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992).

An Interview with Edward J. Sullivan

Lisandra Estevez and Patricia Zalamea

Edward Sullivan is currently Dean of the Humanities at New York University and Professor of Art History at the Institute of Fine Arts. He has played a major role in the development of Latin American art as a field of study in North America. He wrote his dissertation on the Spanish Baroque artist Claudio Coello and has published widely on Spanish and Latin American art. He edited Latin-American Art in the Twentieth Century *(Phaidon, 1996) and has most recently published a monograph on the early twentieth-century Argentinian artist Emilio Petorutti. Professor Sullivan was among the founders of the program of Latin American art at the IFA and the program of Latino Studies at NYU.*

This interview was conducted by Patricia Zalamea and Lisandra Estevez on March 31, 2005 in Dr. Sullivan's office at New York University, and later edited by Patricia Zalamea and Francis Fletcher.

Rutgers Art Review: How did you become interested in art history and, more specifically, in Latin American art?

Edward Sullivan: Actually, I find that many people who are interested in the fields of Spanish and Latin American art very often arrive at them through some sort of emotional connection or some sort of connection that is not necessarily a strictly intellectual one tied to one's study at a college or university. In a sense this happened in my case because I was born here in New York City. My family, my mother --who is an artist, a painter and sculptor and still very much involved in the art world-- and I, as well as all my brothers and sisters were always going to look at art, and being a part of art and doing it, and talking about it. It was always very much, in general, a part of my background.

My mother had written a book for children, even before I was born, about a boy's trip to South America, and I was, as a baby, fascinated by the watercolors that she had done for this book. My family's background is Irish, and part of my family is in Ireland. I have no Hispanic connection family-wise whatsoever, but I was fascinated by things of Latin American origin since my earliest memory. When I was 11, my father had a friend who was the director of an exchange program with a school in Mexico City, and they sent me to a school there. And so, I was 11 years old when I went to Mexico. This was of course in the mid sixties, and Mexico was a very different place than it is now. I lived with a Mexican family and attended school there, and learnt Spanish very quickly, as children do. I became completely immersed, almost without realizing. And then when I came back to New York, I was fascinated with anything that had to do with Mexican, Latin American, and Spanish culture. And I would read novels and do reports in school on things that had to do with these parts of the world, and it just sort of went on from there.

So I went to this university [NYU], and I was a major in art history and in Spanish.

When I finished, after my four years, I wasn't quite sure what I wanted to do, but I applied to various Ph.D. programs in Latin American and Spanish literature. I was accepted by a number of them; for example, I got into Yale and ended up getting a full scholarship for my Ph.D. in Spanish, but I wasn't quite sure what it was I wanted to do. So I did an M.A. in Spanish and Latin American literature in this university [NYU] and finished, and then decided I really wanted to do art history. And so, I then did another M.A. and ultimately my Ph.D. at the Institute of Fine Arts. By then I had also spent a year in Madrid at NYU's junior year abroad program and I had traveled throughout Spain and become particularly fascinated by medieval Spanish art. I wanted to work on medieval painting and so, the professor of medieval art at the time, Harry Bober, was very interested in all things French and German and, well, was not interested, let's say, in things Spanish. Fortunately at that time, after I completed my M.A., maybe the second year at the Institute, Jonathan Brown came, as a very young assistant professor, to give a seminar on Ribera. That was very enlightening to me. I wasn't terribly fond of the seventeenth century before that, but I became very interested in it then. And so, that was the area that I worked on and ultimately did a doctoral dissertation on painting in Madrid in the late seventeenth century, focusing particularly on an artist called Claudio Coello. That is basically how I became interested in art of the Hispanic and Spanish world.

Then, my first teaching job, to finish this question, was again at this university. Many people would like to go around to different universities and have different experiences, but since NYU has such a wonderful undergraduate and graduate department of art history, I was very happy to get this job. I was appointed at the undergraduate department (there are two separate faculties of the history of art), and ultimately I began to divide my time between the graduate and undergraduate faculty. I immediately proposed courses on the art of Latin America, because there really were no full-time courses [on Latin American art] in the Northeast in any university at that point (1979-1980), although there had been great interest in the sixties at Yale, and they had done an important exhibition. There had been a certain amount of interest, but there was no real program of Latin American art, and I thought that this was the most logical thing to do for my own interests, as well as for being in New York City, where demographically Latin America was so tremendously important.

I continued teaching the history of Spanish and Latin American art, and I soon realized that my preparation in European art (as a student at the Institute, of course you have to take courses in many fields) was an ideal preparation for me to understand in a much wider — I guess you could call it today in a globalized way — the history of Latin American art and how it intersects the rest of the world. So that is the approach that I have taken, all the time. What I don't like to do is consider Latin American art as some thing off by itself, as some entity that is not connected to the rest of the traditions of the Americas, of Europe, of Africa, and of Asia. All of these areas play a key role in the formation of the many artistic personalities in the Americas. As a matter of fact, I am not really fond of using the term Latin America, because Latin America is really a constructed term, a modern term, a very highly contested term, that, according to some, was born of sociological discourse and really defines, very succinctly, the Europeanization of the Americas. So the term itself is not cordial to me. I am more interested in looking at the links between the traditions that I cited, and I am also

very interested in paying very close attention to cultural specificities of the many, the multiple, art worlds in the Americas. I've actually finished a book that I was given a Guggenheim grant to write last year, which deals with art throughout the Americas, and does not really talk about Latin America per se, although most of the artists that I am interested in are from the Spanish and Portuguese-speaking countries.

RAR: In terms of your background in literature and specifically in Latin American and Spanish literature, how has that shaped or informed, in any way, your training as an art historian?

ES: Oh, it has shaped and informed it tremendously, because [. . .] in every era of history — whether of the Hispanic world or any other place — the written word and the visual description are inextricably linked. We can look, for example, at the era that I was interested in and continue still to be very interested in, the seventeenth century, on both sides of the Atlantic; one cannot understand, to give you just one concrete example, the art of late-seventeenth-century Mexico, for instance, without knowing the position of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz . . . as the subject of very important portraits, as the subject of written descriptions of her works, and of course as someone who intervenes in an extraordinarily important way in the development of literature, theater, poetry, philosophy. The artist that I paid particular attention in my Ph.D. dissertation and in two books that I did afterwards on the subject is Claudio Coello, who was a great friend of Pedro Calderón de la Barca. The writings of Calderón, in which he talks about and refers obliquely and directly to the visual arts, are enormously important. And those are just two examples.

I was just reading, a few moments ago, the essay by Lezama Lima about the painter Amelia Pelaez. You can't understand, for example, what was happening in La Havana in the 1930s, in the 1940s, without understanding how Lezama Lima looked at it, how the concepts of the Baroque, for instance (a very important concept of the Baroque in Cuba is the epic of vanguardia), were defined by people such as Lezama Lima, and later taken up by writers like Severo Sarduy, who was also an art critic, a poet, and had tremendous intersection with artists. I could go on and on, but it has helped, informed, and has been one of the enormous tools of my sensibility. I very much interweave this in my teaching, for instance in my graduate lecture course that I am giving now on Modernism, in four centers of Latin America between the 1920s and 1950s. [For example], you can't understand what people like Tarsila do Amaral are doing in São Paulo in the twenties without knowing what Mario de Andrade is writing about in his work from the late 1920s.

RAR: Before we go on, we would like to ask you if you could define Latin American art as a field of study. As you mentioned earlier, it really emerged as a field of study only relatively recently in North America. It would be helpful if you could tell us how it is related to Colonial and Precolumbian art, and how it might be differentiated, if that is the case, from Hispanic or Iberian art, and what these categories mean.

ES: Well, conventionally, Latin American art has been defined as the art produced principally in Spanish and Portuguese-speaking countries. Some would argue that arts in other countries — for example in some of the islands in the Caribbean

where French or other languages are spoken, the English Caribbean even — is art of Latin America, which just goes to show you that the definition is so elastic. But generally, it has traditionally been thought of as art from just these places [Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking countries]. That in itself is very problematic because, like everywhere else in the world, there was globalization before we even knew that there was such a term. So, if you look at, say the Viceregal period, in Peru or in Mexico, or in a place like Cuba, there is constant back and forth presence and nurturing of these places by people who are coming from Africa. The presence of slaves, which in a place like Brazil, for example, did not end until 1888, and the cultural, social, and artistic heritage of Africa, which is a subject that many people are working on and many people are interested in, is tremendous. And even, for example, in areas such as the Viceregal period in Peru, where one does not necessarily think immediately of the African presence, it is there. Asian art is too; the Manila galleons were coming twice a year for decades and decades during the Colonial era, bringing goods, materials, arts, all manner of visual culture from Manila. Of course these materials were gathered from Asia (all parts of Asia were united in Manila), went over to Acapulco, and then much of this cargo was ultimately destined for Spain. So, the presence of Asian material, the presence of Flemish traders, people from all parts of Europe, and to say nothing of the intersections with indigenous cultures, which is an ongoing conversation, an ongoing dialogue, the continuous presence within the consciousness of certain places in the Americas, like Mexico, like Peru, of Prehispanic or Precolumbian civilizations, many of which continue to live; we talk about the living Maya, for example. So, I am interested in looking at these things in a more holistic way, and I'd rather talk about art of the Americas, rather than art of Latin America.

But to address the question of the development of the field, it is, I think, one of the most quickly and amazingly proliferating fields that is coming up in people's consciousness today. I so often get correspondences from students who are interested in this. And, of course, this is also stimulated by the exhibitions that are being organized. Actually, organizing exhibitions is a very important part of my scholarship and has been for many years. But I am thinking for example of the great impact that a recent show and its catalog, like *Inverted Utopias* [Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 2004]. This catalog is a very important document that stimulated many people. For example, my colleagues at the art division of the New York Public Library tell me that that is one of the most called for books on a daily basis.

There are still relatively few places where there is a specialization in Latin American art. Very happily, I was able to intervene in the establishment of the Ph.D. track at the Institute of Fine Arts. I began to teach there in 1990 and, later in the 1990s, Jonathan Brown, Robert Lubar (who teaches European, namely Spanish nineteenth- and twentieth-century art) and I paid particular attention to this, and we were able to get a grant from the Mellon Foundation. The increased number of applications since this first started is amazing. So I think that it is also a field in which there is a lot of commercial interest; auction houses centered here in New York, Sotheby's and Christies, have for many years had specialized auctions in Latin American arts. That, and the number of commercial galleries that handle artists from the Americas is constantly increasing.

RAR: Just to clarify something for our readers — when discussing Latin American art as a field of study, chronologically, what time period would this cover, say, if a student wants to specialize in Latin American art?

ES: Well, ideally, if a student wanted to specialize in this, he or she would have, at the end of their studies, a detailed knowledge of art in the Americas from Prehispanic art, from Precolumbian times, through contemporary art and its relationship with the art of the rest of the world. But in practical terms, when one does a specialization, you would either choose Precolumbian arts or what has been called Colonial art (I think the tendency really is more to call it Viceregal arts), that is to say from the sixteenth century through the time that it ended. The nineteenth century is one of those very undeveloped fields, but it is a very important one. And then there is modern and contemporary. So, you would tend to specialize in one of those areas.

RAR: The term Latin America itself is a nineteenth-century concept.

ES: Right, and of course it derives from the imposition of European culture, particularly Southern European culture, especially Spanish and Portuguese, in the Americas. So, Latin from Latin languages and Latin-derived cultures.

RAR: You had spoken earlier about your organization of the Latin American program with Professor Brown and Professor Lubar at the IFA. Could you comment on the development of the Colloqium on Iberian and Latin American art and how that took place?

ES: It has been a very important part of our program. And the initial stimulus for its organization is thanks to Jonathan Brown, who has many connections in Madrid, and one of the corporate connections that he has is with a corporation called Afinsa. They very generously gave the money to start this colloquium. The idea of the colloquium is to bring to the Institute six scholars a year; half of the year is dedicated to Spain and the other half to Latin America. And every year we have brought scholars from all parts of the world — Europe, Latin America, the U.S. — who deal with the various subjects that we choose for each year. For instance, this year I urged my colleagues to consider the nineteenth century as a general umbrella term, particularly because I was interested in bringing people to talk about nineteenth-century Latin America, which, of all periods of modern history, may be the least well understood one for students of Latin American art. We had a marvelous series with three lecturers (I am referring just to the Latin American section). We just had the Director of the National Museum of Lima, Natalia Majluf, who was a former student of the Institute. We had Alexandra Kennedy, a great scholar of nineteenth-century art in the Andes, from the University of Cuenca, Ecuador. And then we had Professor Stacie Widdifield from the University of Arizona, who is working on an important book on visual definitions of nationalism in Mexico. The presenters give their talks, and then there are usually very lively conversations between the attendees — there are students, there are people from the museums, and there are independent scholars who are invited — and it's a very lively source of contact between the scholarly audience here and the speaker.

RAR: Jumping to the question about studying Latin American art, what are the major

centers for studying Latin American art? And also, how do you think it is different to study Latin American art say in Latin America as opposed to studying it in North America? Are there differences, and, for example, are there programs in Europe that study Latin American art?

ES: Well, there are relatively few universities that specialize in the art of Latin America. I will tell you only about a few of them, the ones that I think are most important or most interesting: ours, I have to put that the top of the list, not only for the courses we do, but for the colloquium that I just spoke about, and visitors that we bring in. Last year we had a week-long seminar with our students and Serge Kusinski, who was tremendously exciting for them, with a theoretical approach to the art of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. We brought in also Andrea Giunta, professor in Buenos Aires at the university there, who has done very important work on modern art, art of the '50s, '60s and '70s in Argentina. Of course the University of Texas has a very long tradition of interest in Latin American art, in Precolumbian and in modern. Harvard has recently hired Tom Cummins, who is very influential, an important scholar who centers his work on Peru, particularly. Harvard has also been the site of a recent exhibition, of the collection of Gustavo and Patricia Sizneros, who were among the greatest collectors of Modern Latin American art. Other places that are significant are in the west, the Southwest — the University of Arizona and Arizona State University in Phoenix have an agreement for students to go from one place to the other; UCLA; and of course there are important people in places like the Latin American Studies Department in Tulane [. . .] In Europe, the only real large-scale program that I know of is at the University of Essex, England. There are certainly universities in Latin America, in Mexico City, Buenos Aires, São Paulo, etc., that have very important scholars, and obviously it is such a different situation to be immersed and surrounded by the culture that you are interested in. The problem, I think, and it's not a problem, but a different approach, if one goes to do a degree in a university in Latin America, is that it is almost inevitable that one will do work on the art of that country or that city. There has traditionally been a lack of communication, of scholarly communication, between the countries of Latin America, and, for instance, the journals published in one country will not be read in another, because of all sorts of practical difficulties of communication, which are being surmounted, of course, with the internet [. . .] I know this is true because I am beginning to read grants for Latin American research, and I see that some of the Latin American scholars are beginning to look very, very seriously at art all over the place. And so, there are many approaches, but that might answer the question.

RAR: One of the questions that we wanted to ask you in regard to the development of new methodology within Latin American studies is how the new interest in center and periphery studies or new methodologies have generally affected not only the more traditional fields of inquiry but also how this has also affected the study of Latin American art, as in books such as *Reframing the Renaissance: Visual Culture in Europe and Latin America, 1450-1650* [ed. Claire Farago, Yale University Press, 1995].

ES: Well, you mention one of the most interesting compilations that I think is probably going to continue to have reverberations in the scholarship of the Viceregal period. The subject itself of center and periphery has been central to virtually all areas

of scholarly inquiry in the field of the Americas. I might point to a resource that I mentioned earlier on: the project that is really the result of the scholarly work of Mari Carmen Ramírez and Héctor Olea, first in the presentation of their exhibition called Inverted Utopias. That [center and periphery issue] was one of the leitmotifs of their show, but is also [present] in a project that Mari Carmen Ramírez is spearheading at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, where in her capacity as Curator of Latin American Art and Director of the Center for Studies of the Art of the Americas, she is creating a very interesting project that has to do with recovering original documents, particularly from the modern period, from the twentieth century, not only Latin American but also Latino. And this is a theme that I think bears very directly on the questions of center versus periphery, because within the larger framework of the conceptualization of what Latin American art is, the position of Latino art has been shifting and has been refocused.

Now, within the study of Latin America itself, there are centers and there are peripheries. And there are preferences for — if you look at the scholarship in a very large way — studies of certain places; certain places are given pride of place as it were, or are selected more often than others, such as Mexico, where there is a great deal of study on the part of North American and European scholars, whereas places like Central America are not really chosen as research subjects, for a number of reasons. The Gulf of Mexico happens to be very close to the U.S.; there is a huge amount of literature, and traditionally there have been many connections between North Americans and Mexicans. But, let me just say one thing about Latino art, something I've worked on very much and am very dedicated to in my present position as Dean of the Humanities at NYU, which I've become only this year, in addition to my being Professor of Art History; I was very instrumental in founding our Latino studies program, which is now beginning to function as a program within a larger department called the Department of Social and Cultural Analysis. So, Latino issues for me have been very, very important, and this also speaks to the importance of the study of diasporas. For example, you cannot understand Cuban art if you look at Cuban art without understanding what is happening in Miami and New York, and what is happening in Mexico City. So, diasporas are very important; the study of art of Puerto Rico is the study of two islands: Manhattan and Puerto Rico. The constant back and forth of people all the time accounts for this huge diversity, which is not to say that art done in San Juan is just like art done in Manhattan; it is very, very different, but it springs from common origins.

RAR: Art critics such as Damián Bayón and Marta Traba have been very influential of course in Latin America. How do you see their place in the development of Latin American art in North America? Or, the access to writings of Latin American scholars in North America?

ES: Well, anyone who is seriously interested in the art of Latin America is familiar with the fundamental writings from people like Traba, Alfredo Boulton, name any of the principal figures of the Latin American scholarship, as they are familiar with the people writing in other languages [. . .] I think that certainly people like Marta Traba, whose writings are being looked at from a very critical basis on the part of some interesting, younger scholars today, will remain as one of the fundamental

building blocks for understanding Latin American art. Of course her opinions, as well as those of all other people who were writing at other times, are being questioned, reevaluated, but the knowledge of what they wrote and how they thought is of critical importance.

RAR: To finish off, we wanted to ask you how you see the general public response to Latin American art. How do you see the future of the field evolving?

ES: Well, it's a twofold thing; there still is a very folkloric, cliché, stereotyped notion of what Latin American art is all about, given for example the continued interest in say Frida Kahlo, who I think is a brilliant artist and very important historically, but is looked at from a very sexist point of view in terms of the methodology — almost all biography and the sensationalism attached to her persona can only be looked at from the intellectual point of view as a stigma for understanding the place of that particular artist within Mexican Modernism. And it is an indication of the still persistent notion of cliché that surrounds things Latin American, whether it be music or visual arts. Very happily, I think, a younger generation of people and certainly students are getting away from that quite quickly, and are understanding Latin American arts in the function of their larger role in the world of arts and the globalized notion of art. So I think that these stereotypical notions are finally laid to rest. Even though such [an] organization as the Tate Museum in London is doing yet another Frida Kahlo show very soon, we are getting beyond that stage. I think that those of us who are professionally involved work very hard to get beyond that stage, and I feel very positive that an opening up of a much more serious and nonstereotypical view of these cultural phenomena is coming into play from both a popular and scholarly point of view.

RAR: Thank you very much.