# The RUTGERS ART REVIEW

*Published by the Graduate Students of the Department of Art History*

*Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey*

*Volume 28*
*2012*

*Manufactured in the United States of America*
*ISSN 0194-049X*

**Rutgers Art Review**
Volume 28



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## Acknowledgements

The completion of Volume 28 of the *Rutgers Art Review* would not have been possible without the dedicated help of many individuals. Foremost among those to whom we owe special thanks are the graduate students who contributed their essays for publication: Leslie Anderson-Perkins, Sarah Archino, John F. Lopez, and Kathleen Sullivan. We are also indebted to the supervision of our faculty advisor Professor Tanya Sheehan and to the stewardship of many past and present *RAR* editors. Many thanks to our editorial board for carefully reading, selecting and proofreading these papers for publication: Sara Berkowitz, Seraphina Ferara, Natalie Fleming, Allison Harbin, Lauren Henning, Stephen Mandravelis, Mary Manning, Robyn Radway, and Tashima Thomas. In addition to the hard work of these graduate students, many anonymous outside readers also graciously offered their time and expertise in reviewing these papers and enhancing the quality of the journal, and to them we extend our sincere appreciation. Assistance with pre-press preparation of the manuscript came from Catherine Kupiec.

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# Picturing Artistic Practice at the Royal Danish Academy, 1822-48*

*Leslie Anne Anderson-Perkins*

Until the appointments of Professors Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg (1783-1853) and Johan Ludvig Lund (1777-1867) in 1818, the ossified curriculum of the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts officially consisted of sketching plaster casts of antique statuary, *écorché* sculptures, and artificially-illuminated male models assuming heroic poses.[1] During their tenure at the Academy, however, the two professors introduced supplementary coursework in painting from life under natural light, a practice assimilated by Eckersberg and Lund in their time spent in Jacques-Louis David's Paris studio.[2] In addition, private instruction under Eckersberg inaugurated *plein air* sketching excursions and specialized tutorials in the science of linear perspective. Thus, Eckersberg's years at the Academy represent a distinct pedagogical shift that privileged the direct observation of nature over the imitation of antiquity.[3]

Coinciding with Eckersberg's curricular expansion, students of the mid-1820s and 1830s depicted artistic labor in sketchbooks, intimate portraits called *Freundschaftsbilder* (or "friendship pictures"), and large-scale paintings intended for public exhibition.[4] Interestingly, scenes of artistic labor were most popular among the first generation of students enrolled in the Davidian life classes, particularly Wilhem Bendz (1804-32), Christen Christensen (1806-45), Albert Küchler (1803-86), Martinus Rørbye (1803-48), and Jørgen Sonne (1801-90).[5] In addition, Eckersberg's private pupils, including Constantin Hansen (1804-80), Christen Købke (1810-48), Wilhelm Marstrand (1810-73), Adam Müller (1811-44), Jørgen Roed (1808-88), and Frederik Sødring (1809-62), made significant contributions to this genre as both painters and subjects.[6] Shown at work or posed in the studio, these artists are often surrounded by a carefully selected sampling of tools and instructional aids. This paper argues that such artistic accoutrements reference the respective methodologies of the sitters, who typically subscribed to Eckersberg's innovative artistic program. More specifically, it demonstrates that these objects often allude to and celebrate the Academy's new auxiliary instruction.

The absence of primary documentation and relevant historical context limits the few existing studies devoted to this subject matter.[7] For example, Mogens Nykjær's *Pictures of Knowledge: Motifs in Danish Art from Eckersberg to Hammershøi* traces common motifs in Danish nineteenth-century painting to their proposed source, namely the contemporary intellectual milieu. The author suggests that studio portraits by Bendz and Købke reflect the artists' proficiency in the Neo-Platonic writings of Dane Adolph Wilhelm Schack von Staffeldt (1769-1826), particularly his poem "In Canova's Workshop."[8] Yet, Staffeldt's name remained obscure even after the publication of his collected poems in 1804, and Bendz's surviving letters bear no mention of the poet nearly three decades later.[9] While Nykjær appropriately conveys the profundity of these paintings, a more convincing theoretical analysis of Bendz's and Købke's imagery would require sufficient evidence of their personal alignment with such ideas.

Jens Peter Munk's article "Artist Portrait – Self Portrait: The Golden Age Artists' Social and Cultural Self-Understanding, When Portraying Themselves and Each Other" posits that Danish studio pictures reveal artistic self-awareness, although this thesis must be expanded.[10] The meritorious feature of the article is the establishment of the genre's key typological divisions. Examining a broad sampling of works, Munk identifies the various settings and some of the basic components depicted in these images, such as the folding stool and the drawing board.[11]

However, he does not define the significance of recurring motifs in relation to the changing climate of the Academy.

This study aims to situate Danish scenes of artistic labor within the environment that was typically portrayed, namely the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts at Charlottenborg Palace in Copenhagen. In addition to pictorial evidence, primary source material sheds light on the chief events and academic techniques employed during this decisive period in the institution's history. Of particular utility are Eckersberg's dry, but methodically maintained *dagbøger*, or diaries, which chronicle the fulfillment of his professorial duties. In addition, a biographical sketch, penned by his daughter Julie (b. 1831), describes the practices and enumerates the contents of his atelier.

Figure 1. Wilhelm Bendz, *The Painter Niels Peter Holbech*, ca. 1824, oil on canvas, 31 3/4 x 27 in. (80.65 x 68.58 cm). Fuglsang Kunstmuseum, Toreby.

Drawings and paintings depict casually posed models bathed in natural light, folding stools, and portable paint boxes, all of which function as signifiers of Eckersberg's pedagogical introductions. Of course, studies of nature served only as the basis for final, idealized compositions. Thus, the history painter's maulstick becomes the signature tool of the professor's students because this implement facilitates the final stage in Eckersberg's artistic process, the transformation of the real into the ideal. This paper explores the depiction of these objects. At times, they commemorate shared artistic ideology. However, at other times, the imposing scale and intended audience of the paintings suggest that they honor the Academy's new pedagogical inclusiveness.

In April 1822, Lund and Eckersberg lobbied on behalf of their students' education at the meeting of the Academy Assembly.[12] Citing insufficient access to models and their pupils' general lack of technical proficiency, the professors proposed an elective course in painting from life.[13] The purpose of the course was twofold. First, it aimed to expose students to the nuances of natural light on the human form. Second, it offered instruction in the application of color. Initially, the supplementary tuition was held regularly during the mornings of the summer holidays. Six months later, following the official approval of Prince Christian Frederik (later King Christian VIII, r. 1839-48), the classes took place outside the regular academic schedule.[14] Nine enthusiastic students from the Life Studies and Plaster Schools registered for the debut session, which occurred regularly in the years that followed. Unfortunately, a paucity of documentation on this extracurricular program hinders a complete understanding of its content and the exercises employed.[15] However, we know that the Academy ensured the students' access to natural light, because a "painting window" was installed in the program's provisional home, the School of Life Studies and the Plaster School.[16] Additionally, Eckersberg often administered instruction from his personal studio, which boasted three sizeable bay windows overlooking Kongens Nytorv, the largest square in Copenhagen.

Early studio portraits of J. Sonne, his younger brother Carl Edvard Sonne (1804-78), and Niels Peter Holbech (1804-89) reveal the impact of this new emphasis on natural light, as

Figure 2. Ditlev Conrad Blunck, *The Copperplate Engraver Carl Edvard Sonne*, ca. 1826, oil on canvas, 27 3/8 x 22 in. (69.5 x 56 cm). Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen (photograph taken by Leslie Anne Anderson).

Figure 3. Ditlev Conrad Blunck, *Battle Painter Jørgen Sonne*, ca. 1826, oil on canvas, 47 7/8 x 39 3/4 in. (121.5 x 101 cm). Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen

well as other studio practices recommended by Eckersberg.[17] Bendz presents a sunlit Holbech (fig. 1) leaning on a drawing board. Although direct light on an artist's face is often interpreted as reflecting the Romantic notion of divinely ordained creativity, an examination of this portrait's setting points to its topical significance at the Academy.[18] While scholars note the prevalence of sunlit rooms in the Golden Age of Danish painting, no attempt has been made to tie its frequency with Eckersberg's initiatives.

On Holbech's left stands an accessible anatomical model, which one recognizes as a plaster cast of Andreas Weidenhaupt's *écorché* sculpture of 1772. The *écorché* was an established instructional tool of the Academy's curriculum. J. L. L. Whiteley notes that plaster casts were typically studied by artificial light under the classical paradigm.[19] Here, Bendz, as portraitist, rejects the traditional practice by depicting Holbech working under natural light. In addition, the relationship between nature, as represented by the sunlight, and the ideal, as embodied in the *écorché*, references a pedagogical dialectic that may also be noted in Ditlev Conrad Blunck's (1799-1853) *The Copperplate Engraver Carl Edvard Sonne* (fig. 2).[20]

Facing an open window, C. E. Sonne executes trial prints of Gerard ter Borch's *Seated Girl in Peasant Costume*, which is visible to the left of the sitter.[21] Prints of paintings by the Danish Neoclassicists Nicolai Abildgaard (1743-1809) and Christian August Lorentzen (1746-1828) hang opposite the window, counterbalancing the new practice with representations of works faithful to the Academic tradition.[22] Similarly, Blunck juxtaposes the window and a tabletop *écorché* in his portrait of J. Sonne (fig. 3), the older brother of the aforementioned printmaker.

Blunck shows J. Sonne, an aspiring battle painter and one of the original enrollees of the auxiliary program, studying the drapery of a military uniform on a lay figure. In an 1822 letter to Prince Christian Frederik, Lund emphasized the need for instruction in rendering drapery,

Figure 4. Wilhelm Bendz, *The Life Class at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts*, 1826, oil on canvas, 22 3/4 x 32 1/2 in. (57.7 x 82.5 cm). Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen (photograph taken by Leslie Anne Anderson).

which was likely addressed in the professors' programs.[23] Scholars have overlooked the figure's function as a homemade *Gliedermann*, a traditional studio prop used since the Renaissance and here fashioned out of some cloth and a musket.[24] This point bears significance in relation to Eckersberg's method, as Julie Eckersberg states that her father's studio contained a "big *Gliedermann* that stood in the corner near the door."[25] Thus, this early portrait suggests that J. Sonne, like his younger brother and Holbech, assimilated the instructor's methods soon after the supplementary instruction commenced. By ubstituting an *écorché* and a makeshift *Gliedermann* for hired models, Holbech and J. Sonne tailored the professors' recommendations to suit their personal studio practices.

After the conclusion of the first extracurricular course, two participants from the Plaster School, Bendz and Rørbye, graduated to the traditional model school. To the students, the transition from the supplementary Davidian life classes to those in the official curriculum must have seemed regressive. Turning a critical eye toward the tuition of the Academy's life class, Bendz and Rørbye portrayed their experiences in public and private formats, respectively.

Nykjær and Kasper Monrad have interpreted Bendz's *Life Class at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts* (fig. 4) as a commentary on the ascendancy of ordinary subject matter over the genre of history painting.[26] Noting the servant standing on a ladder at center, who has captured the attention of "several of the pupils," Monrad's analysis, for example, demonstrates a keen understanding of the Danes' waning interest in history painting as a result of the country's political circumstances and changing artistic climate, namely its grave financial situation following the Napoleonic Wars (1803-15) and the concurrent establishment of the Copenhagen Art Association in 1825.[27] Undoubtedly, Eckersberg's instrumental role in the development of this alterna-

Figure 5. Martinus Rørbye, *Artists Drawing a Model (from a sketchbook)*, ca. 1825-1826, pencil, pen, black ink, brush, brown wash, 4 1/2 in. x 7 1/8 in. (115 x 182 mm). Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen (photograph taken by Leslie Anne Anderson).

tive exhibition venue facilitated a leveling of the genres at the Academy. I agree with Nykjær and Monrad on this point. However, it should also be noted that only one student cranes his neck to observe the servant's routine maintenance, and he is not sketching.[28]

Seen within the context of the artist's dissatisfaction with the life classes, Bendz's image may be understood as a comment on the artificiality of the practice.[29] The central figure draws our attention to an unnatural light source in the form of a row of oil lamps. In addition, his stance mirrors the awkwardly contorted model who assumes the professor's prescribed pose for the week.[30] A preparatory sketch for the painting reveals a more pointed take on this contrived arrangement. In the sketch, the shadow cast by the model on the white screen behind him seems to dangle from a noose, signifying the imagined death of classical pedagogy.

Similarly, *Artists Drawing a Model* (fig. 5), from Rørbye's 1825-26 sketchbook, depicts the model in an unnatural position which recalls the pose of Abildgaard's *Wounded Philoctetes*.[31] However, instead of paying homage to the canonical Danish painting, Rørbye questions its veracity. His model does not exhibit the bodily tension of the wounded hero, but instead is shown with a drawing implement in hand to alleviate his boredom. In addition, Rørbye, like Bendz, challenges the Academy's dependence on Weidenhaupt's *écorché* sculpture. Used as a standard of ideal anatomy since the eighteenth century, the small plaster *écorché* is relegated to the background in both of their works. Bendz suggests the tool's uselessness by its distant perch, while a lack of functional fixedness permits Rørbye to use it as a visor stand.

After its display at the Academy's annual exhibition in 1826, art historian Niels Laurits Høyen (1798-1870) famously attributed the discussion elicited by Bendz's painting to the recognizable figures in the composition.[32] As an official statement of ideological emancipation, Bendz inserts a self-portrait with his back turned to the model, in the left foreground of the composition. On the right, another figure engages the viewer with direct eye contact. Students converse and a few sketch fervently, embracing the classical method. Based on the identified figures in *Life Class at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts*, this paper suggests that Rørbye's sketch depicts Christian Holm (1803-46) working assiduously at center, Bendz posed defiantly to the left of center, and the artist himself holding a sketchbook at the left.[33] These works were likely inspired by Eckersberg's own *Satire of the Model School at the Academy*, which caricatures Nicolai Dajon (1748-1823) admonishing a student.[34] All three pictures challenge the institutionalized methodology and anticipate each artist's increasingly aggressive promotion of new techniques.

For Bendz and Rørbye, tuition in the Academy's Model School reaffirmed their dedication to Eckersberg's pedagogy. In an entry dated May 5, 1827, the professor's *dagbøger* tersely notes that Bendz entered his atelier.[35] Rørbye sought additional private instruction from him

Figure 6. Adam Müller, copy after Martinus Rørbye, *C. A. Lorentzen in His Studio*, 1827, oil on canvas, 27 3/4 x 22 1/2 in. (70.4 x 57.1 cm). Private Collection

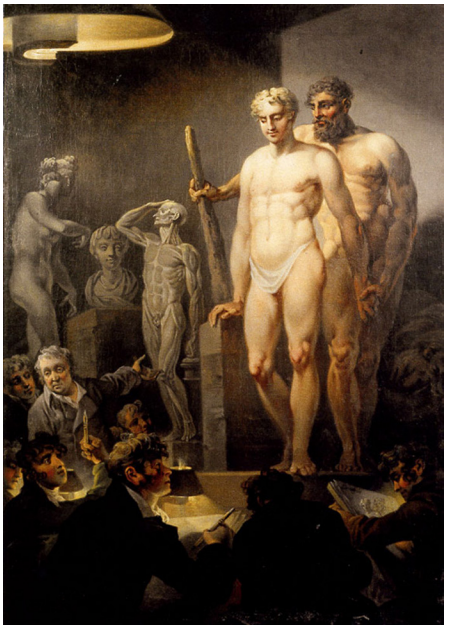

Figure 7. C. A. Lorentzen, *Model School at the Academy*, 1825, oil on canvas, 34 1/4 x 24 in. (87 x 61 cm). The Museum of National History at Frederiksborg Castle, Hillerød.

Figure. 8. Albert Küchler, *A Girl from Amager Selling Fruit in a Painter's Studio,* 1828, oil on canvas, 28 x 23 7/8 in. (71.5 x 60.5 cm). Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen.

Figure 9. Wilhelm Bendz, *The Sculptor Christen Christensen Working from Life in His Studio*, 1827, oil on canvas, 74 3/4 x 62 in. (190 x 158 cm). Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen (photograph taken by Leslie Anne Anderson).

two years prior, and another member of the inaugural life class, Küchler, became a pupil in 1826. Coinciding with their return to Eckersberg, Bendz, Rørbye, and Küchler executed studio portraits that examine the relationship between the instructional aids of the classical method and the live model. In paintings of Eckersberg's protégés, the representation of natural light remains important, but traditional props, namely the ubiquitous *écorché* and plaster casts of antique statuary, are now marginalized in favor of the live model.

Rørbye's *Portrait of C. A. Lorentzen* (fig. 6) is, however, an important exception to this rule.[36] Painted under the tutelage of Eckersberg, Rørbye situates his former professor in the studio, pausing mid-composition. Antique statuary, which comprises the majority of the contents of his studio, alludes to his old-fashioned artistic emphases. Two years earlier, Lorentzen's *Model School at the Academy* (fig. 7) had clearly distilled his methodology into three equal facets: the study of antique statuary, as represented by the *Medici Venus*; the use of anatomical models, as seen in the *écorché*; and the practice of painting from life, as indicated by the two idealized nude models. Lorentzen upholds tradition, gesturing to the live models illuminated by artificial light. Perhaps as a result of his conservative outlook, the senior professor acquired the nickname Gamle Lorentzen, or "Old Lorentzen," in contemporary correspondence between faculty members and in Eckersberg's private *dagbøger* entries.[37] The ageist moniker may be interpreted as a barb directed at practices that Eckersberg and others deemed *passé*. Thus, by showing Lorentzen among the classical statuary, Rørbye's portrait offers a critical view of his former professor and his outmoded teaching method, which is consistent with the sentiments of Eckersberg.

Eckersberg's private tuition included visits to the Academy's Plaster Cast Collection; however, according to Julie Eckersberg, it was only by torchlight.[38] She recounts that her father delighted in the spectacular effects of the flickering light source.[39] However, conventional usage of these models did not figure prominently, if at all, in his artistic teachings. In fact, Julie's inventory, the accompanying plan of the family's apartment, and surviving sketches of his studio provide no record of plaster casts in his possession.[40]

Paintings by Bendz and Küchler question the instructional merit of antique statuary. Küchler's *A Girl from Amager Selling Fruit in a Painter's Studio* (fig. 8) depicts a produce vendor being escorted into Bendz's studio by fellow painter Holm. The subject is anecdotal and likely refers to the rising popularity of genre painting. However, the activities of this working studio should not be overlooked. Situated next to the window, Bendz paints from life, while the head of the *Laocoön* on the table at the far right seems to react with horror to the incoming sunlight, suggesting the reaction of the artistic tradition to the new methods of practice. The prominence of the anti-classical semi-nude model at the left relative to the peripheral placement of the *écorché* on the shelf at the back further underscores Bendz's breach of traditional methodology.

Similarly, in *The Sculptor Christen Christensen Working from Life in His Studio* (fig. 9), the artist's approval of Eckersberg's method is coded in the language of art history. Here, Christensen employs a hired model to assume a pugilist's pose. A cast of *The Borghese Fighter* rests on a shelf within his line of sight, but he purposefully avoids the figure and sculpts from life instead.[41] A comparison between a preparatory sketch and the final painting reveals that the sculpture was added after the picture's initial conception.[42] In addition, casts of traditional apotropaic figures, including a Medusa head and a lioness behind *The Borghese Fighter*, try to safeguard their primacy in the Academy's curriculum by attempting to ward off the incoming sunlight in the final composition. Against the far wall, the *Medici Venus* averts her gaze from the modern practice.[43] Not surprisingly, Christensen participated in the first session of the daytime life classes, and thus, his artistic ideology was aligned with that of Eckersberg.

By the 1830s and the early 1840s, the supplementary Life Class's methods were folded into the official curriculum. For instance, the Academy soon employed clothed male and female

Figure 10. Martinus Rørbye, *Academy Interior with Young Artists Drawing (from a sketchbook)*, ca. 1825-1826, pencil, pen, black ink, brush, brown wash, 4 1/2 x 7 1/8 in. (182 x 115 mm). Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen (photograph taken by Leslie Anne Anderson).

models of all ages and instituted painting classes.[44] Works by Ferdinand Richardt (1819-95) and Heinrich Nickelsen (1819-ca. 1845) suggest that new, unidealized figures supplanted antique statuary and *écorché* casts as the preferred models in the official classes of the Life School, as well as the private studios of Eckersberg's pupils.[45]

Personal notation of nature's ephemeral effects ultimately led to Eckersberg's establishment of *plein-air* studies at the Academy in the mid-1820s. Owing its genesis to the pioneering work of Pierre-Henri de Valenciennes (1750-1819) and Thomas Jones (1742-1803) at the end of the eighteenth century, *plein-air* painting was widely practiced at this time. However, practical tuition was rare, particularly under the auspices of an academic institution.[46]

Eckersberg's interest in *plein-air* studies may be traced to various sources, including the German translation of Pierre-Henri de Valenciennes's treatise on painting, *Éléments de perspective pratique* (1799), Luke Howard's *Essay on the Modification of Clouds* (1803), Danish scholar J. F. Schouw's *Description of the State of the Weather in Denmark* (1826), and a friendly visit from Eckersberg's Dresden-based colleague Johan Christian Dahl (1788-1857) in 1826.[47] However, it should be noted that Eckersberg exhibited a general proclivity for science throughout his lifetime. He kept a detailed meteorological diary and counted scientific instruments, such as a pocket telescope from Hans Christian Ørsted (1777-1851), among his prized possessions.[48] In addition, he made significant contributions to pictorial science, designing a perspective octant for use on *plein-air* excursions and penning two treatises on the subject, *Attempt at a Guide for the Application of the Theory of Perspective for Young Painters* in 1833 and *Linear Perspective Applied to Painting* in 1841.[49]

During his Grand Tour (1810-16), Eckersberg painted the deceptively titled *skizzer*, or "sketches," of Rome. Prefiguring his *plein-air* studies of the Danish landscape, the *skizzer* were produced by means different from those that he encouraged of his students. The meticulously finished pictures were initially drawn on the spot, primed and painted in the studio, and then finished at the original location.[50] In contrast, he instructed his students to paint from the motif, creating a study that might be consulted for final compositions in the studio.[51] At first, his pupils depicted urban scenes viewed from the windows of Charlottenborg Palace. Rørbye's sketch *Academy Interior with Young Artists Drawing* (fig. 10) documents this practice, as a student peers out of a window presumably deriving artistic inspiration from the square below. Bendz's *View of Nyhavn* and Købke's *View from a Window in Eckersberg's Studio* represent its output.[52] In addition, Rørbye's *An Artist Painting by a Bulwark* depicts a local sketching excursion somewhere in Copenhagen.[53] Outfitted in silk top hats and long overcoats, the artist and his companion emulate the dress and activities of Eckersberg, who, according to his daughter Julie, took long

Figure 11. Christen Købke, *Eckersberg and Marstrand on a Study Excursion,* 1832, pencil on paper, 5 3/4 x 7 1/4 in. (147 x 184 mm). Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen.

walks around the city in search of subject matter wearing the same types of garments.[54] Thus, as an analysis of these works suggests, Eckersberg's pupils emulated their teacher in life as well as in art, adopting his revolutionary techniques and even dressing like him.

> Eventually, Eckersberg organized day-long sketching excursions around the island of Zealand, which are chronicled in his diary. His July 4, 1832, entry reads:
> …Went on an excursion to the forest – Købke came with his carriage, he, Erling, and Marstrand got into it and drove to Fortunen [about eight miles north of Copenhagen], where we stayed to draw and paint…from there to the knife works [the Raadvad knife factory, two miles north of Fortunen], where we painted a view – and then to Dyrehaven, where a lot of people had gathered as the weather was particularly beautiful, and to Charlottenlund [five miles from Copenhagen] – and then home, where we arrived at four o'clock.[55]

Købke's *Eckersberg and Marstrand on a Study Excursion* (fig. 11) commemorates the outing.[56] In this depiction of the event, the professor is at work on a small canvas, which is fitted securely into his paint box. Standing over his shoulder, Marstrand observes a painting lesson. Presumably, he will follow suit, making use of the folded perspective octant held at his side.[57] Roed's *An Artist Resting by the Roadside* also references Eckersberg's *plein air* trips.[58] Though the tone of the painting is uncharacteristically moody, it nevertheless portrays one of Eckersberg's students equipped with a knapsack and collapsible stool, resting on the outskirts of the central Zealand town of Ringsted.[59]

During the course of his career, Eckersberg exhibited only one complete *plein air* painting, *View of the Tile Works at Renbjærg on Flensborg Fjord*.[60] The remainder of his sketches served as a repository of imagery from which to draw in the creation of final, idealized landscapes. Købke's *Portrait of Frederik Sødring* (fig. 12) attests to the younger generation's absorption of this process.[61] Prints of individual motifs, such as livestock and ruins, are pinned against the wall of the painter's studio.[62] These images provide the raw motifs, along with *plein air* sketches, for his Romantic landscapes. Sødring's three-legged camp stool in the lower right hand corner of the painting indicates his consultation of nature. It is instructive to consider this portrait in relation to a portrait of fellow Romantic, Georg Heinrich Crola (1804-79), by Bendz (fig. 13). Painted on the German leg of his ill-fated Grand Tour to Italy, Bendz's portrait of Crola evokes Albrecht

Figure 12. Christen Købke, *Portrait of Frederik Sødring*, 1832, oil on canvas, 16 5/8 x 15 in. (42.23 x 38.1 cm). The Hirschsprung Collection, Copenhagen (photograph taken by Leslie Anne Anderson).

Figure 13. Wilhelm Bendz, P*ortrait of Georg Heinrich Crola in His Studio*, 1832, oil on canvas, 10 1/2 x 10 1/4 in. (26.67 x 26.04 cm). Alte Nationalgalerie, Berlin (photograph taken by Leslie Anne Anderson).

Figure 14. Christen Købke, *Portrait of Wilhelm Bendz*, ca. 1830, oil on canvas, 8 3/4 x 7 ¼ in. (22.23 x 18.42 cm). The Hirschsprung Collection, Copenhagen (photograph taken by Leslie Anne Anderson).

Dürer's *Melancholia* from 1514.[63] The artist's barren studio reveals no other source material for the adjacent composition than the artist's thought-laden head. In contrast, Købke pays tribute to Eckersberg's teachings by way of Sødring's artistic process.

To Eckersberg, sketching from life under natural light and *plein-air* studies were fundamental artistic tools. The works yielded from these exercises allowed the artist to execute a more ideal conception of nature in his final paintings. Omitting perceived imperfections and rendering the final composition with exactitude permitted the realization of what Eckersberg dubbed the "primal picture."[64] Consequently, the expected finish of each composition may account for the prevalence of maulsticks in these images. Often associated with history painting, the maulstick generally serves as an emblem of technical virtuosity, as in two portraits of the genre painter Bendz by Küchler and Købke (figs. 8 and 14).[65]

In addition, the maulstick also assumes meaning within a broader historical context. Denmark entered a period of great fiscal uncertainty following the Napoleonic Wars. The monetary promise of a professional career in art was particularly bleak due to diminished court patronage, fewer institutional travel grants, and the smaller number of independent buyers. The genre of history painting was perhaps the most greatly affected of all the disciplines. From Eckersberg's receipt of the Great Gold Medal in 1809 until Blunck's award in 1827, the prestigious travel stipend that afforded continued study in Rome was not conferred.[66] Undoubtedly, students perceived the waning viability of a career in this genre.

Eckersberg's progressive methods and affiliation with the Copenhagen Art Association, an organization that promoted and supported young artists, attracted many students who demonstrated their commitment to his ideology through the production of intimate *Freundschaftsbilder*. At times, these students emphasized the legitimacy of their efforts by appropriating the history painter's maulstick and monumentalizing their artistic labor as in Bendz's *The Sculptor Christen Christensen Working from Life in His Studio*. Encouraging the efforts of the young artists, the Royal Collection acquired many Danish studio portraits during this period.[67] By the late 1830s and early 1840s, however, the Danish economy rebounded and the need to promote alternative instruction was no longer a pressing concern. Nonetheless, the paintings of these years bear witness to the transformations in pedagogy introduced by Eckersberg and Lund, which, although they were controversial at the time, were gradually incorporated into standard practice by subsequent generations of Danish artists.

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**Endnotes**

*This is an expanded and revised version of an article titled "Painting Instruction: C. W. Eckersberg and Artistic Labor in the Danish Golden Age," which was published in *Athanor XXIX* (2011). Portions of this material were presented at the annual meeting of the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study and the Frick – Institute of Fine Arts Symposium on the History of Art. I gratefully acknowledge funding support from The American-Scandinavian Foundation, CUNY Graduate Center, The Danish-American Fulbright Commission, and the Text and Academic Authors Association. Several scholars, including Patricia Mainardi, Kasper Monrad, Kevin Murphy, Richard Shiff, and Martina Droth, provided valuable feedback on my research.

[1]Before graduating to the Academy's Plaster School, students demonstrated competency by copying prints. For an outline of the Academy's curriculum, see Emma Salling, "Modelstudiet i Eckersbergs professortid," in *Den nøgne guldalder: Modelbilleder – C. W. Eckersberg og hans elever*, exh. cat., ed. by Annette Johansen, Emma Salling, and Marianne Saabye (Copenhagen: Hirschsprung Collection, 1994), 27-45.

[2] Lund studied under David from September 16, 1800 until April 1802. Eckersberg spent about one year in the studio, from September 9, 1811 until October 20, 1812.

[3] Preceding the faculty's interest in nature at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, the Munich Academy adopted a new maxim to 'study from nature' as opposed to 'imitating antiquity' in 1809. See Nikolaus Pevsner, *Academies of Art, Past and Present* (New York: De Capo Press, 1973), 211-12.

[4] In his essay "Ordinariness and Light: Danish Painting of the Golden Age," Phillip Conisbee defines *Freundschaftsbilder* as "friendship pictures, usually mutual portraits exchanged as gifts." However, many similar works were not exchanged as gifts. Instead, they were intended for public display at the Academy's annual exhibition and, thereafter, purchased by the Royal Picture Gallery (now Statens Museum for Kunst). Thus, this term is problematic and I will approach it with caution, using it in the strictest sense. See Phillip Conisbee, "Ordinariness and Light: Danish Painting of the Golden Age," in *The Golden Age of Danish Painting*, exh. cat., ed. by Kasper Monrad and Philip Conisbee (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1993), 38.

[5] Salling lists the names of the first nine students to sign up for the daytime classes in 1822/23. They are as follows: H. F. Møller, A. Küchler, C. Goos, J. Sonne, J. Nordhoff, J. G. Wichmann, C. Christensen, M. Rørbye, and W. Bendz. See Salling, "Modelstudiet i Eckersbergs professortid," 32.

[6] Bendz, Küchler, and Rørbye also received private instruction in Eckersberg's studio.

[7] Here, I refer to broad studies of the genre of paintings in which artists depict themselves and each other at work. Though exhibition catalogue entries discuss these images, the works are typically examined in isolation, or more precisely, through the lens of the exhibition's overarching theme. On rare occasions, catalogue entries reference similar works and note the popularity of this subject matter during the Danish Golden Age. Yet, they do not account for the emergence of the genre in this region. Klaus Lankheit's pioneering study of *Freundschaftsbilder* omits any discussion of Danish studio portraits, focusing solely on German examples. Kasper Monrad's *Hverdagsbilleder* addresses Danish scenes of artistic labor briefly, relating the shift in patronage following the Napoleonic Wars to the rising popularity of scenes of everyday life. Petra Gördüren, too, provides an overview of the topic in a 2005 exhibition catalogue. See Klaus Lankheit, *Das Freundschaftsbild der Romantik* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1952); Kasper Monrad, *Hverdagsbilleder: Dansk Guldalder – kunstnerne og deres vilkår* (Copenhagen: Christian Ejlers, 1989), 141-46; and Petra Gördüren, "Akademie, Atelier und Alltag," in *Die Kopenhagener Schule: Meisterwerke dänischer und deutscher Malerei von 1770 bis 1850*, exh. cat., ed. by Dirk Luckow and Dörte Zbikowski (Kiel: Kunsthalle zu Kiel; Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2005), 64-71.

[8] He specifically proposes that the works of the two artists function as demonstration pieces for Staffeldt's conception of the 'fundamental dualism' of nature and art. See Mogens Nykjær, *Kundskabens billeder: Motiver i dansk kunst fra Eckersberg til Hammershøi* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1991), 75-105. A similar theoretical interpretation of Bendz's work has also been offered by Henrik Wivel; however, he does not establish a convincing link between German Romantic philosophy and the artists under consideration. Similarly, Alena Marchwinski examines these paintings through the lens of Emmanuel Lévinas' philosophical writings on the encounter with the Other. See Henrik Wivel, "Professor of the Undiscovered Sciences: On Wilhelm Bendz' Portraits of Artists and the Thoughts on Them at the Time," in *Wilhelm Bendz, 1804-1832: A Young Painter of the Danish Golden Age*, exh. cat., ed. by Marianne Saabye (Copenhagen: Hirschsprung Collection, 1996), 21-30 and Alena Marchwinski, *Mødet med den Anden: Et motiv i dansk kunst fra Wilhelm Bendz til L. A. Schou* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Forlag, 2009).

[9] Inspired by the German Romantics Ludwig Tieck (1773-1853) and Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder (1773-98), Staffeldt's poetry was rediscovered at the end of the nineteenth century. During his own time, however, Staffeldt's name was eclipsed by the popularity of Adam Oehlenschläger. Writer, librarian, and art historian Just Mathias Thiele (1795-1874) corresponded with Staffeldt and the letters were published in *Af mit Livs Aarbøger. 1795-1826*. However, Thiele and Staffeldt had moved in the same social circle. See Svend Birke Espegård, review of *Digte*, by Adolph Wilhelm Schack von Staffeldt, *Books Abroad* 43, no. 2 (Spring 1969), 271; Just Mathias Thiele, *Af mit Livs Aarbøger. 1795-1826*. (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzels, 1873).

[10] Jens Peter Munk, "Kunstnerportræt – Selvportræt: Om guldalderkunstnernes socielle og kulturelle selvforståelse, når de portrætterer sig selv og hinanden," *Meddelelser fra Thorvaldsens Museum* (1994): 103-13.

[11] Munk divides his article into short sections. Under the heading of "Artists' Attibutes," he states: "It is common to portray the artist through his work tools. Bendz's solution is clever. [In *Interior from Amaliegade with the Artist's Brothers* (ca. 1829)], he is not present with his two brothers in their parents' living room in Amaliegade, but his tools are – paper posted on a drawing board and a stool, which reference his outdoor studies." Munk does not expound on that observation or site the source of such accoutrements, but, instead, transitions to another category of depiction – the portrayal of the artist's bohemian lifestyle. See *Ibid.*, 108.

[12] Salling, "Modelstudiet i Eckersbergs professortid," 31. Though Lund drafted the official letter to the president, Salling suggests that the proposal was a joint endeavor, as Eckersberg wrote a note in support of the request. The two artists shared the responsibility of leading the elective courses and, beginning in 1824, they received annual bonuses as compensation for their additional workload.

[13] *Ibid.* Lund's letter underscores the lack of preparation that the Academy's students received in painting and other evaluation criteria for the gold medal competitions.

[14] *Ibid*. Prince Christian Frederik served as president of the Academy.

[15] *Ibid*., 32.

[16] *Ibid*.

[17] It is not stated in the Academy's records whether Holbech joined the official or auxiliary life schools; however, we know that he trained under Eckersberg from 1824. See Kirsten Nannestad, "N. P. Holbech," *Kunstindeks Danmark & Weilbachs Kunstnerleksikon*, http://www.kulturarv.dk/kid/VisWeilbach.do?kunstnerId=544&wsektion=uddannelse [accessed May 5, 2010].

[18] Kasper Monrad interprets the light on Holm's face as a reference to the source of his artistic inspiration. See Kasper Monrad, "Portrait of the Painter Christian Holm, 1826," in *The Golden Age of Danish Painting*, 55.

[19] According to Whiteley, "…the cast was studied by artificial light to give the student a mastery of chiaroscuro but it also ensured that pupils, before working from the life were capable of seeing the living model through the experience of antique sculpture so that sculptural figures and groups provided a repertory of forms which recur throughout the period." J. J. L. Whiteley, "Light and Shade in French Neo-Classicism," *Burlington Magazine* 117 (December 1975), 771.

[20] Carl Edvard Sonne and Blunck were pupils of Johan Ludvig Lund. Thus, both artists were exposed to his views on the importance of natural light in an artist's workspace.

[21] C. E. Sonne is known to have created a print of Gerard ter Borch's *Seated Girl in Peasant Costume* (ca. 1650; Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam). See Lene Bøgh Rønberg, "The Copperplate Engraver C. E. Sonne, c. 1826," in *Two Golden Ages: Masterpieces of Dutch and Danish Painting*, exh. cat., ed. by Lene Bøgh Rønberg, Kasper Monrad, and Ragni Linnet (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 2001), 159.

[22] The prints are attributed to Johan Frederik Clemens (1748-1832). See Kasper Monrad, "Portrait of the Copperplate Engraver Carl Edvard Sonne, ca. 1826," in *The Golden Age of Danish Painting*, 68.

[23] Salling, "Modelstudiet i Eckersbergs professortid," 31.

[24] Conisbee identifies this object as "a grotesque dummy" and "a scarecrow." See Conisbee, "Ordinariness and Light," 38.

[25] Julie Eckersberg and Emil Hannover, *Julie Eckersbergs optegnelser om hendes fader C.W. Eckersberg med en indledning af Emil Hannover* (Copenhagen: Fagskolen for boghaandvaerk, 1917), 26. Peter Michael Hornung and Monrad speculate that Eckersberg's *Gliedermann* (no longer extant) was an upholstered doll, in the French style. See Peter Michael Hornung and Kasper Monrad, *C. W. Eckersberg – dansk malerkunsts fader* (Copenhagen: Forlaget Palle Fogtdal, 2005), 288.

[26] Monrad, "The Life Class at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, 1826," in *The Golden Age of Danish Painting*, 58.

[27] *Ibid*.

[28] This student is seated to the right of the ladder, in the first row.

[29] *Ibid*. Monrad suggests Bendz's dissatisfaction with the Life Class.

[30] Professors took turns selecting the model's pose. See Salling, "Modelstudiet i Eckersbergs professortid," 29.

[31] This sketchbook contains twenty-three drawings, many of which depict studio life at the Academy. According to the Statens Museum for Kunst, this particular sketch has never been published. Abildgaard's *Wounded Philoctetes* (1775; Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen) is in the collection of the Statens Museum for Kunst.

[32] This painting was also exhibited at the 1826 exhibition. See Monrad, "The Life Class at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts," 58.

[33] The proposed identities of these figures are based on the physical likenesses previously identified in Bendz's painting. In *Life Class at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts*, Holm is depicted in the right foreground, wearing a visor. See *Ibid.*

[34] Munk suggests that Eckersberg's Satire of the Model School at the Academy (1805; Statens Museum for Kunst) was a model for Bendz's painting. Of course, one can also see the influence of Eckersberg's work on Rørbye's sketch, which probably predates Bendz's composition. See Munk, "Kunstnerportræt – Selvportræt," 105 and Erik Fischer, Tegninger af C. W. Eckersberg (Copenhagen: Den Kongelige Kobberstiksamling, Statens Museum for Kunst,

1983), 153. Based on an inscription found on Eckersberg's drawing, some art historians have identified the instructor as Abildgaard. However, I believe that the professor more closely resembles Dajon, a student of the Academy's first director J.-F.-J. Saly (1717-1776) and disciple of sculptor Johannes Wiedewelt (1731-1802), whose lectures upheld the classical paradigm championed by his mentors. Now largely forgotten, Dajon taught at the Academy from 1803 to 1823. It is instructive to compare Eckersberg's caricature of the Professor to Hans Hansen's Portrait of Nicolai Dajon (1809), which hangs at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts.

[35] C. W. Eckersberg, *C. W. Eckersbergs dagbøger, 1810-1853*, ed. by Villads Villadsen, vol. 1 (Copenhagen: Nyt Nordisk Forlag Arnold Busck, 2009), 250.

[36] Kasper Monrad has informed me that the current location of Martinus Rørbye's painting is unknown. It was included in a 1981 monographic exhibition organized by Thorvaldsens Museum. The illustrated image by Adam Müller is a copy after the original held in a private collection. This identity of the copyist was discovered after art historian Jesper Svenningsen noted a discrepancy in the dimensions of the original included in the exhibition catalogue and the work in question. Müller was also one of Eckersberg's private pupils. Monrad, conversation with the author, December 7, 2012. See Dyveke Helsted, ed., *Martinus Rørbye, 1803-1848*, exh. cat. (Copenhagen: Thorvaldsens Museum, 1981).

[37] The entry is dated February 12, 1826. See *Ibid*. The popularity of the nickname "Gamle Lorentzen" may also be noted in a letter to Bertel Thorvaldsen sent from Christian Horneman in Copenhagen. Christian Horneman to Bertel Thorvaldsen, Copenhagen, May 4, 1829, no. 2944 of 4845, The Thorvaldsen Letter Archives, Thorvaldsens Museum, Copenhagen, Denmark. Very little has been written about Horneman (1765-1844), but it is known that he lived at Charlottenborg and worked as a miniaturist.

[38] Eckersberg was required to fulfill his professorial duties, which included more conventional trips to the Plaster Cast Collection. However, Julie suggests that he performed this work with little zeal. In contrast, his private lectures (e.g., torchlight visits to the Antique Hall during the winter) were delivered with enthusiasm. See Eckersberg and Hannover, *Julie Eckersbergs optegnelser om hendes fader C.W. Eckersberg...*, 40.

[39] *Ibid*.

[40] Julie states that Eckersberg possessed a *Gliedermann* and a portrait bust by Bertel Thorvaldsen, and that he displayed many of his own paintings in the Gule Stue ("Yellow Room"), so it stands to reason that classical statuary would be similarly documented, if present. *Ibid.*, 26 and 28.

[41] For a discussion of this work, see Ejner Johansson, "The Sculptor Christen Christensen Working from Life in His Studio" in *Wilhelm Bendz, 1804-1832*, 90.

[42] An oil sketch for *The Sculptor Christen Christensen Working from Life in His Studio* (1827) is held in the Hirschsprung Collection, Copenhagen.

[43] The repositioning of the *Medici Venus* is noted in the monographic exhibition catalogue devoted to Bendz. See Johansson, "The Sculptor Christen Christensen Working from Life in His Studio," 90.

[44] Salling, "Modelstudiet i Eckersbergs professortid," 41. In addition, Eckersberg hired nude female models for his private lessons on three occasions in the 1830s and 1840s.

[45] See Ferdinand Richardt's *A Painting Studio at Charlottenborg* (ca. 1839; Thorvaldsens Museum, Copenhagen) and Heinrich Nickelsen's *The Academy's Painting School* (1841; Private Collection).

[46] Underscoring Eckersberg's formative role in the development of nineteenth-century Nordic landscape painting, Torsten Gunnarsson noted the comparatively late introduction of such courses at the Stockholm Academy in 1858. Torsten Gunnarsson, *Nordic Landscape Painting in the Nineteenth Century*, translated by Nancy Adler (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 14.

[47] Monrad states that Abildgaard owned a German translation of Valenciennes's treatise, but it is more likely that Eckersberg encountered it in Rome, while residing in Thorvaldsen's house. See Kasper Monrad, "Eckersberg and Open-Air Painting," in *Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg, 1783-1853*, exh. cat., ed. by Philip Conisbee, Kasper Monrad, and Lene Bøgh Rønberg (Washington, D. C.: National Gallery of Art, 2003), 16 and Gunnarsson, *Nordic Landscape Painting*, 20.

[48] Ørsted gave Eckersberg the telescope as payment for a portrait in 1822. Julie recounts that the composer Christoph Ernst Friedrich Weyse (1774-1842) encouraged Eckersberg to trade Ørsted's telescope for one of lesser quality. Eckersberg agreed, reluctantly. See Eckersberg and Hannover, *Julie Eckersbergs optegnelser om hendes fader C.W. Eckersberg...*, 32.

[49] C. W. Eckersberg, *Forsög til en veiledning i anvendelsen af perspektivlaeren for unge malere*, reprint of the 1833 ed. (Copenhagen: Skolen for Kunstpædagogik,1973) and C. W. Eckersberg, *Linearperspektiven anvendt paa malerkunsten,* text by G. F. Ursin, reprint of the 1841 ed. (Copenhagen: Forum, 1978).

[50] Monrad, "Eckersberg and Open-Air Painting," 14.

[51] *Ibid.*, 20-21.

[52] Bendz's *View of Nyhavn* (ca. 1822) belongs to the Hirschsprung Collection, Copenhagen, and Købke's *View from a Window in Eckersberg's Studio* (ca. 1829) is located at the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen.

[53] Rørbye's *An Artist Painting by a Bulwark* (1826) is held at the Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen.

[54] Eckersberg and Hannover, *Julie Eckersbergs optegnelser om hendes fader C.W. Eckersberg...*, 22.

[55] Monrad, "Eckersberg and Open-Air Painting," 22. For the original passage in Danish, see Eckersberg, *C. W. Eckersbergs dagbøger*, vol. 1, 507.

[56] Monrad, "Eckersberg and Open-Air Painting," 22.

[57] It is possible that Marstrand is holding a folding stool rather than the perspective octant. The object is rendered cursorily; however, Julie states that her father often used the perspective octant on his *plein-air* excursions. See Eckersberg and Hannover, ***Julie Eckersbergs optegnelser om hendes fader C.W. Eckersberg***..., 32.

[58] Roed's *An Artist Resting by the Roadside* (1832) is in the collection of the Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen. |

[59] Miss's catalogue entry notes the strong influence of German Romanticism on this painting, which was exhibited alongside contemporary German landscape paintings in a 1999 exhibition. Stig Miss, "An Artist Resting by the Roadside," in *Baltic Light: Early Open-Air Painting in Denmark and North Germany*, exh. cat., ed. by Catherine Johnston, Helmut R. Leippen, and Kasper Monrad (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 190.

[60] Monrad states that *View of the Tile Works at Renbjærg on Flensborg Fjord* (1830; Statens Museum for Kunst) was completed "primarily in the open air." See Monrad, "Eckersberg and Open-Air Painting," 19.

[61] Beginning in 1835, Sødring was an official pupil of Eckersberg. However, prior to that date, he attended the Model School, where he undoubtedly received Eckersberg's instruction. Also, he shared a studio with Eckersberg's protégé, Købke, at the time this *Freundschaftsbild* was painted. See Patricia G. Berman, *In Another Light: Danish Painting in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Vendome Press, 2007), 60; For more information on Købke's and Sødring studio, see Munk, *Købke, Sødring og atelieret på Toldbodvejen* (Copenhagen: Hirschsprung Collection, 1985).

[62] Berman notes the tension conveyed by prints of the natural world and representations of classical monuments. Berman, *In Another Light*, 60.

[63] Bendz died of typhoid fever en route to Rome.

[64] Marianne Saabye, "Mellem ideal og virkelighed: C. W. Eckersberg og modelstudiet," in *Den Nøgne Guldalder*, 18.

[65] Købke's *Portrait of Wilhelm Bendz* was extremely popular among Eckersberg's students. Købke gave one of three versions to Eckersberg. Marstrand and Roed later copied the image. See Ejner Johansson, "Christen Købke's *Portrait of Wilhelm Bendz*" in *Wilhelm Bendz, 1804-1832*, 203-06.

[66] Monrad, "Ditlev Conrad Blunck," in *The Golden Age of Danish Painting*, 66.

[67] At the Academy's annual exhibition in 1826, the Royal Collection purchased Blunck's *The Copperplate Engraver Carl Edvard Sonne* and *The Battle Painter Jørgen Sonne*. They also acquired Bendz's *A Young Artist Examining a Sketch in a Mirror* (1826; Statens Museum for Kunst) and *Life Class at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts*. In addition, they purchased Bendz's *The Sculptor Christen Christensen Working from Life in His Studio* in 1827, and Küchler's *A Girl from Amager Selling Fruit in a Painter's Studio* in 1828.

# Unpacking the White Box: *Aspen* 5+6

*Sarah Archino*

A compendium of prose, poetry, music, visual production, and performance, the Fall-Winter 1967 issue of *Aspen Magazine*, number 5+6, was the editorial vision of artist and critic Brian O'Doherty (fig. 1). *Aspen* (1965-71) was a multi-media magazine, designed to move beyond the traditional print format to include audio, film, and unbound visual materials.[1] The brainchild of publisher Phyllis Johnson, a former editor of *Women's Wear Daily* and *Advertising Age*, the magazine was originally conceived of as a cultural publication for those with ties to the Colorado resort community. An early advertisement described the city as "a citadel of the exuberant, individualistic life we want our magazine to reflect… a point of departure for our free-wheeling, eclectic approach to modern life."[2] A guest editor compiled each issue. The first two issues were historically unremarkable, mostly comprised of articles on skiing and jazz. Things took a more interesting turn with the third issue as Andy Warhol and rock critic David Dalton compiled a Pop number. Arriving in a bright Fab-inspired box, the contents were a survey of the Pop movement and the current music scene in New York. The fourth issue followed suit, examining the media-made society and including a large poster of Marshall McLuhan's "The Medium is the Message."

Despite these more artistic compilations, it was not until the double issue, edited by O'Doherty and designed with graphic designer Dalton, artist Lynn Letterman, and (the uncredited) Sol LeWitt, that the greater potential of the unbound format was explored. Under O'Doherty's supervision, this issue was the most unconventional in media, including a sculptural model, five records, and a reel of Super-8 film (fig. 2). Rather than using the box as a simple repository for a range of materials, O'Doherty employed it with a deeper purpose. At a time when Minimalism was being cemented in the public eye, he used the considerable circulation of *Aspen* to advance his perspective on the movement, challenging the emergent canon of Minimalism as shaped by the writing of fellow theorist, artist, and critic, Donald Judd.[3] In Judd's canonical essay, "Specific Objects" of 1965, he argued that recent artistic production, "the new three-dimensional work," was best conceived of as the negation of principles and conventions of earlier painting and sculpture, especially illusionism and literal space. The resultant work was formally derived and autonomous.[4] In *Aspen* 5+6, O'Doherty rejected this isolationism and encouraged the reader to discover connections within recent art work and a wide network of disparate sources, contemporary and historical, American and European. At a time when critics such as Barbara Rose were emphasizing the impersonal and reductive nature of "Minimal art," *Aspen* demonstrated the complex web of cross-pollinating philosophies that informed the period.[5]

Known as the Minimalism issue, *Aspen* 5+6 arrived in a white box, measuring 8¼ in. x 8¼ in. x 2 in. Unlike the proportions of the previous editions, which were flatter, more shippable boxes, these dimensions created a relatively substantial structure, which was labeled as the first component of the issue's twenty-eight contents (fig. 3).[6] Not only was the size necessary to contain the multimedia components, but the form of the box and its stark white exterior also recalled the stereotypical minimalist object (as defined by Judd or Rose). The box served as an oblique nod to the sort of production that would not be replicated inside. Remaining true to the working methods of the artists included, *Aspen* did not include miniature reproductions of

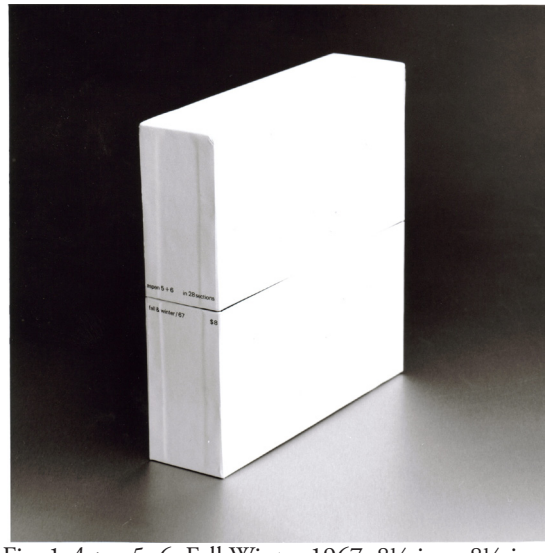

Fig. 1 *Aspen* 5+6, Fall-Winter 1967, 8¼ in. x 8¼ in. x 2 in. (20.96 x 20.96 x 5.08 cm). Photo arranged and composed by Mary-Ruth Walsh, photo by Fionn McCann.

Fig. 2 *Aspen* 5+6 with the contents in one half. Photo arranged and composed by Mary-Ruth Walsh, photo by Fionn McCann.

Fig. 3. *Aspen* 5+6, 28 sections randomly arranged. Photo arranged and composed by Mary-Ruth Walsh, photo by Fionn McCann.

projects. Instead, O'Doherty chose works that were originally conceived through scale models or as conceptual projects that could viably exist as written narratives. Maintaining the integrity of the selected art work, O'Doherty limited his inclusions to objects that could be reproduced without distortion. Thus, for example, Tony Smith's *Maze* remained truthful to his method of using models, and Sol LeWitt's *Serial Project* functioned as a written and illustrated document; in contrast, to reproduce a miniature Frank Stella painting would have altered a fundamental condition of the work, namely its scale.

O'Doherty created an open-ended publication with individual components as objects to be manipulated into permutations and arrangements by a deciphering viewer. Truly, *Aspen* 5+6 existed in multiple registers. Yet an underlying structure exists. The reader is provided some guidance in a small book containing three essays: George Kubler's "Style and Representation of Historical Time," Susan Sontag's "The Aesthetics of Silence," and Roland Barthes's "The Death of the Author." Following these signposts, some general statements can be made about the structure of the box and its contents, even though few things about this issue were fully determined or fixed by its creators. This article provides one interpretation among the many possible configurations of *Aspen*, looking at how O'Doherty's chosen texts can be grouped around these central three essays. Examining these texts and demonstrating one way of arranging the twenty-eight components of *Aspen* 5+6 to form constellations around these orbital points, this interpretation suggests an alternative and interdisciplinary definition of Minimalism with concerns quite different from those entailed in Judd's "specific object."[7]

In extending an alternative to contemporary definitions of Minimalism, dominated by Judd, and in excluding from *Aspen* 5+6 works by the artists most closely associated with the movement, O'Doherty compiled an unusual assortment of entries from his friends and colleagues, which fundamentally redefined Minimalism. In fact, *Aspen* 5+6 makes no mention of Judd, Stella, Dan Flavin, or Carl Andre, even though O'Doherty had previously discussed the work of these leading Minimalist artists in a critical context.[8] Indeed, of the canonical Minimalists, only Robert Morris's work appears in the issue and then only in a film of his performance piece *Site* from 1964.

One key tool for deciphering O'Doherty's approach to *Aspen* 5+6 is the issue's dedication to the nineteenth-century French Symbolist poet and critic Stéphane Mallarmé.[9] His abandonment of traditional narrative structures made him influential to artists of the 1960s who were then investigating questions of authorship and authority. In fact, his name appears repeatedly in the pages of *Aspen*, pointing to the modern interest in exploring the anonymity of the author as well as the evocative power of silence and blank space. For O'Doherty, Mallarmé's plans for the ultimate book, or *le livre idéal*, were particularly important. Composed of individual units, the book was a conceptual text that would extend infinitely as the reader assembled its parts together and created meaning in the process. While O'Doherty's interest in Mallarmé's work stemmed from his own investigations of French Symbolist poetry, there was also a great deal of contemporary interest in *le livre*.[10] The book was the subject of Jacques Scherer's *Le livre de Mallarmé*, which had been compiled from Mallarmé's fragmentary notes and published in 1957.[11] However, Mallarmé's concept was more popularly known in America through Hans Rudolf Zeller's 1964 English translation of an article from the German arts journal, *Die Reihe*, in which a comprehensive analysis of the notes had appeared.[12]

Zeller's article examined the mathematical construct of *le livre* and diagrammed the careful formulations found among Mallarmé's notes. According to Zeller, Mallermé conceived of *livre idéal* as a geometric box with regular dimensions. A series of ratios governed these dimensions as well as the shape, size, and layout of the box's contents. These contents consisted of individual units whose typography and layout were designed to optimize the reader's

participatory experience. Randomly unpacking the box, he or she would read aloud its contents as part of a performative group, led by an omniscient "Operator" who oversaw but did not direct the process.[13] Thus, as Zeller showed, Mallarmé designed his ideal book so that it could be read in a large number of configurations, with each configuration leading to a different interpretation and the whole process involving the reader in the compilation of an ultimate understanding.[14] The construction of *Aspen* contributed to Mallarmé's twentieth-century legacy.

Mallarmé's book was also a source of inspiration to a number of artists included in *Aspen* 5+6, including Sol LeWitt, Mel Bochner, and Dan Graham.[15] The French author Michel Butor, a Mallarmé scholar whose poem "Conditionnement" was included in *Aspen* 5+6, served as another major conduit for the interest in Mallarmé among American artists. Butor's essay "The Book as Object" had recently been published in the *Partisan Review*, an influential literary quarterly. He outlined the potential for the flexible novel, using terms drawn extensively from Mallarmé's theories.[16]

As Mallarmé was exceedingly detailed in the construction of *le livre idéal*, so was O'Doherty similarly concerned with the manner of production of his issue of *Aspen*. Through the layout of the written materials, O'Doherty explored a geometric system: the configurations of a rectangular booklet. He designed each section individually, including a range of single cards, accordion-style sheets, stapled booklets, and tri-fold pamphlets, and allowed the reader to process them in different ways. This Mallarméan multiplicity then poses a challenge to the deconstruction of the many components of O'Doherty's issue of Aspen. A nearly infinite number of combinations present themselves to the reader/viewer. Each meaning opens a variety of possibilities to the reader and, as Zeller noted, brings the reader into "the enigmatic state where he *feels* solutions, but does not draw them prematurely, and indeed may think of possible interpretations of the book which may never have been in the poet's plan."[17] Mallarmé's interest in the generation of multiple understandings by the creative actions of the reader connects *le livre idéal* to *Aspen* 5+6. In both compilations, there could be no singular, fixed interpretation of a work. Yet while Mallarmé created individual, mobile units, he grouped them into themes. Like Mallarmé, O'Doherty provided some structure to *Aspen* 5+6, both in the three central essays and in the organization of the issue, which demonstrates the deliberation with which individual components were selected.

Playful mathematical notations run throughout the issue, including the repeated use of the mathematical phrase B=L U F U R U B U D, which first appears in the table of contents. This equation can be translated as the Box is the union of Literature and Film and Records and Boards and Data, employing a common operation used in combinatorics, a branch of mathematics that studies combinations and permutations. The notation underscores the flexibility of the box's components. In another mathematical puzzle, O'Doherty repeatedly emphasizes the twenty-eight components of the issue on the box's exterior and in the table of contents. Twenty-eight is defined as a mathematically perfect number because its value is equal to the sum of its factors. Reflecting the mathematical games and systems explored by O'Doherty, the issue's twenty-eight components are further listed as six types: box, book, films, records, boards, and printed data. Six is yet another perfect number. The number play continues, as the introduction to this issue of *Aspen* was excerpted from a "book" published by O'Doherty's alter-ego, Sigmund Bode: the "book's" publication date and the year of O'Doherty's birth was 1928.[18]

The other structure to *Aspen* 5+6 stems from the aforementioned three theoretical texts, which are bound together as the third component of the box (after the box itself and the table of contents). An examination of these essays by Kubler, Sontag, and Barthes, reveals three central themes, which then allow permutations of the other components to be grouped, analyzed, and better understood.

**George Kubler's "Style and the Representation of Time"**

One of the themes traced throughout *Aspen* 5+6 is time, both the time of an artwork (duration) and historical time. Historical time is addressed in one of the issue's three central essays, Kubler's "Style and the Representation of Time," which refines the consideration of historical style first presented in his influential 1962 book, *The Shape of Time*. It is necessary to first consider this larger text before addressing the essay published in *Aspen*.[19] Central to Kubler's philosophy was the idea that style categories were insufficient to understanding historical changes and continuities. By examining history as a series of sequences of open themes, he believed that the historian could create informative links between historical developments previously kept separate and thus incomplete. Therefore, history could be read in multiple directions. According to Kubler, one's understanding of Auguste Rodin could not help but inform one's understanding of Michelangelo.[20] In addition, the work of a historical figure could take on new, amplified importance when revisited in the future. As Kubler argued: "A work of art transmits a kind of behavior by the artist, and it also serves, like a relay, as the point of departure for impulses that often attain extraordinary magnitudes in later transmissions."[21]

While Kubler's theories could be read as a dismissal of teleological or evolutionary readings of artistic change in a manner akin to Judd's vision for art of the 1960s, which praised the recent artists for breaking with past styles and forms, Kubler also reintroduced an element of historicity. While he acknowledged the existence of moments of originality, which he termed "prime objects," he argued that a finite number of new discoveries remained to be made and wrote of "the approaching exhaustion of new discoveries in art."[22] Therefore, the contemporary artist had to face that "it is possibly true that all the potentials of form and meaning in human communication have all been sketched out at one time or place or another, in more or less complete projections. We and our descendents may choose to resume such ancient incomplete forms whenever we need them."[23] While Judd's "specific objects" were seen to break with artistic precedents, Kubler questioned the validity of these claims to originality. Instead, Kubler encouraged the reader to think beyond artistic evolution or teleology to a broader possible network of influences.

In the essay Kubler published in *Aspen* 5+6, he set the stage for the web of disparate periods that O'Doherty compiled, including Russian Constructivism, Abstract Expressionism, Minimalism, and Conceptual Art. This complex essay revised his earlier rejection of style in *The Shape of Time*: while style remains a convenient way to classify art, Kubler considers it a subjective determination that contains a number of paradoxes. Style can refer either to qualities shared among objects or to the systematic changes contained in a history of forms in the way that "weather" refers to the ever-changing atmosphere conditions, to repeat Kubler's example.[24] Style implies a connection between continuity and change. Styles constantly change, yet they presuppose some level of internal stability. Every style possesses an element of time, yet no style is restricted to a set time period. Every action has style, yet every object belongs to more than one style. Thus, Kubler concludes that style is a categorization best used in static situations rather than in relation to time-based studies.

Kubler's skillful discrediting of the notion of fixed period styles supported O'Doherty's juxtaposition of a wide range of images and items that he viewed as similar and his understanding of Minimalism unencumbered by chronological or national boundaries. Drawing from a range of conventionally separated "movements," *Aspen* 5+6 established a new continuum of art, unbound by evolution or revolution. This view of history led to a version of Minimalism strikingly different from Judd's systematic rejection of "European" principles and traditional

artistic convention.[25] Instead, O'Doherty explored the common ground between Minimalism and its historical precedents and contemporaries in Europe and the United States.

History was also an important consideration for O'Doherty. In his own work and writings, he referred to the artists and writers who influenced him as "ancestors," utilizing a vocabulary that closely mirrored Kubler's broad historical view.[26] One primary "ancestor" for O'Doherty's compilation was Marcel Duchamp, who was also a friend and recent collaborator.[27] Duchamp's influence was particularly vital in the mid-1960s, as he was enjoying a critical resurgence in the wake of his 1963 Pasadena retrospective, the revelation of his *Étant Donnés* in 1966, and the publication of his notes in the *White Box* in the same year. The *White Box* compilation of the artist's notes was published in a deluxe edition of 150 copies by the Cordier & Ekstrom Gallery in New York.[28] Unlike Duchamp's other compilations, this box contained no works of art or readymades. Instead, it was a loose assortment of notes, written in the early 1910s. In relation to the *Aspen* project, Duchamp's *White Box* takes on particular interest; both are unbound collections of sources, left for the reader to organize.

One of these sources, Russian Constructivist Naum Gabo's "Realistic Manifesto," introduces an historical precedent for Minimalism to O'Doherty's project. Written in Russia in 1920 by Gabo and his brother Anton Pevsner, the essay proclaimed a Constructivist break with the traditions of Western art, not unlike Judd's claim for the "specific object." Gabo's interest in the activation of the spectator in the understanding of the physical totality of the combined components of a work of art ties him to Minimalist interests in phenomenology, to be discussed in greater detail below. Furthermore, Gabo was one of the few links between Russian Constructivism and the West as he was living in Connecticut at the time of *Aspen*'s publication and continued to write extensively on Constructivism. Gabo's manifesto was one of the few documents of the Constructivist movement available in the West in the 1960s, as he had translated the text into English in 1957.[29]

Douglas MacAgy's essay, "The Russian Desert: A Note on our State of Knowledge," also published in *Aspen* 5+6, outlined some of the difficulties facing scholars of Russian art and promoted Gabo's statement as one of the few available for study. He wrote the article while curating an exhibition of Russian Constructivists at the Albright-Knox Gallery in Buffalo, New York.[30] Like O'Doherty, MacAgy was acutely sensitive to the effects of framing an exhibition and to the manner in which presentation influenced the reaction of the spectator.[31] His exhibition was to be accompanied by a number of theatrical, poetic, and musical events to help situate the Constructivists within their cultural milieu.[32] He was also interested in exploring the connections between the Constructivists and contemporary sculpture, commissioning Tony Smith to erect works on the gallery's grounds during the exhibition. MacAgy had studied the changing interpretations of art. For example, his work on the historical reception of Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* led him to believe that the meaning of art changed from generation to generation, much like Kubler's discussion of the flexibility and openness of history.[33]

Kubler's essay and these historical ancestors not only disputed the claim for Minimalism as a break from conventions of the part, but they also helped to justify the broad range of sources brought together in *Aspen*. Rejecting style as a chronological evolution, O'Doherty was free to define an interdisciplinary mixture of sources that inspired himself and his contemporaries. The connection to the Russian Constructivists, with their formal similarities to Minimalist sculpture, also broadened the possibility for Minimalist production beyond the confines of painting or sculpture, into theater, music, film, and literature.

**Susan Sontag's "The Aesthetics of Silence"**

A second point of entry to O'Doherty's white box is an essay commissioned from Susan Sontag, "The Aesthetics of Silence." In this work, Sontag argued that silence is a form of speech, a statement that enables the artist to assert his power by divorcing himself from the audience. In her essay, Sontag addressed non-literal silence, or the silence produced when a text remains impenetrable to a reader despite its words and sounds. For some artists of *Aspen*, silence was not a tool of disengagement, but an important element in this communication between artist and viewer. John Cage saw silence as a vital structural component. Having become involved with Eastern music and philosophy, he adopted an interest in using silence to "quiet the mind thus making it susceptible to divine influences."[34] In less mystical terms, silence became for Cage a way of focusing the audience's attention and providing a weighty counterpart to sound components. Similarly, as dancer and choreographer Merce Cunningham claimed in a recording for *Aspen*, "the moving becomes more clear if the space and time around the moving are one of its opposites – stillness."[35] Thus silence could be a constructive element, not simply a destructive element, or a tool of withholding.

This artistic silence exists in multiple forms and serves different purposes, including the denial of meaning and the refusal of authorial control. Both a lack of information and a surfeit of data could produce silence. O'Doherty's "ancestor," Duchamp, is again important in this endeavor as the notes of Duchamp's *White Box* offer a historical example of this withholding. At the request of O'Doherty, Duchamp recorded an entry from a section of the *White Box* notes entitled "Dictionaries and Atlases," dated from 1914, in which he proposed the creation of a new dictionary. Included in *Aspen*, this passage inverts the traditional function of the dictionary as a locus of information and definition, proposing the creation of a text that would suggest meaning but ultimately deny it, creating silence not through the withholding of sound, but the withholding of information.[36]

Included in *Aspen* 5+6 was a recording of Dada artist Richard Huelsenbeck reciting (in the original German) four poems from his anthology, *Phantastiche Gebete* (1916). Although full of sounds, words, and phrases, Huelsenbeck's poems pursued multiple tactics of silence comparable to those discussed by Sontag. The written versions of these poems are undecipherable, and the poet's rejection of comprehension continues in his reading of the poems. Even if the listener were able to interpret the spoken German or to read a translation, he would be presented with a dense, indecipherable text with no translations provided to aid the subscriber.

Other artists, such as LeWitt, echoed this silence by refusing to communicate through their work, relinquishing control over the viewer's interpretation. Thus, the information presented was often secondary to the system created by the artist. In the text of *Serial Project #1, 1966*, published in *Aspen*, LeWitt wrote: "The aim of the artist would not be to instruct the viewer but to give him information. Whether the viewer understands this information is incidental to the artist; he cannot foresee the understanding of all his viewers."[37] As LeWitt acknowledged, the viewer does not always understand the information provided by the artist: "many of these sets would be operating simultaneously, making comprehension difficult." His interest as an artist was not in transmitting meaning, but in the construction of a system that generated data that could be passed to the viewer. Furthermore, the information provided was not always meaningful, as is clearly evident in Graham's *Schema*, a poem comprised solely by a set of data determined by the work's physical placement within a publication.[38] The formula provided asked for quantifiable information about the pages where the poem was published.

Despite the straightforward nature of the listing, however, the information provided to the reader is entirely uninformative as it merely reflected the physical facts of the surroundings. In *Aspen* 5+6, Graham's format is not even a truthful statement since the poem is not situated in the conventional magazine format necessary to provide the requested data. Both works imply that the viewer's understanding is of minimal consequence to the artist and the success of his or her project.

Similarly, despite an abundance of information (or, more accurately, because of it), the excerpt from Robbe-Grillet's novel *Jealousy* is equally silent. For this entry, O'Doherty included a recording of the author reading a section of the novel in its original French and an English translation of the same text on a printed card. Like Huelsenbeck's poetry, the reader faces multiple barriers to comprehension, partly as a result of language and partly by the author's explicit intention to circumvent meaning. In the selection chosen for *Aspen* 5+6, Robbe-Grillet painstakingly describes the patterns created as the sun shines upon the veranda of the house – a play on the French word for a venetian blind, "jalousie," and the infidelities of the narrator's wife. Throughout the text, however, this narrator refrains from using "I," or from distinguishing between trivial and critical details. Everything is presented in an endless monologue of excessive information. Even with the translation, the reader is barred from entering the text by the convoluted writing style itself: although the author offers copious (even overwhelming) details about the house's architecture and the landscape surrounding it, he gives little to help fix the time or location.[39] In addition to the minute description of every physical detail of the setting, the lack of a narrator prevents the reader from formulating a relationship to the characters. The narrative itself disintegrates into these details, ultimately rendering the narrator and the text silent.

Similar acts of denial, through operations of sensorial overload or deprivation, are provided by the recorded excerpts of writing by William S. Burroughs and Samuel Beckett. Indeed, they are juxtaposed on opposite sides of a record, in the same way that contemporary critics positioned them as opposites.[40] In *Texts for Nothing*, Beckett refrains from traditional narrative, providing us only with glimpses of a character whose identity we cannot determine. The work is divided into thirteen sections, numbered to provide some sort of structure, but there is nothing inherent to the text that requires a specific order.

The eighth section of Beckett's *Texts for Nothing*, recorded for *Aspen* by the Irish actor Jack MacGowan, concerns itself explicitly with juxtapositions of sound and silence. This particular section highlights this opposition and interchangeability, beginning, "Only the words break the silence, all other sounds have ceased. If I were silent I'd hear nothing. But if I were silent the other sounds would start again…"[41] As an author, Beckett sought to find a method of writing that would express his belief that there was nothing to express, constructing his prose in a circular, futile, and, in a sense, inexpressive manner.[42]

Burroughs maintained a similar lack of trajectory in *Nova Express*, part of the Nova Trilogy. All three books in the series interpenetrate and repeat each other so that any chronological unfolding of events is difficult to establish. The result, read in the author's own booming voice, is an assault on the senses. The listener is challenged to compile meaning from the barrage of words that seem to avoid any semblance of meaning. Rather than the sparse, compact nature of Beckett's prose, Burroughs's words spiral outwards, out of control and out of the range of logic.[43] His language is dangerous and wild, not unlike what takes place in the excerpted novel, when a word virus threatens the planet.

The four film excerpts included on a roll of Super-8 film in *Aspen* 5+6 can be likewise examined as two pairs of opposing approaches to silence through impenetrability. In these literally silent film excerpts, the viewer must rely solely on the visual information presented

in his or her attempts to construct meaning. These sets of nearly contemporary works, which juxtapose Hans Richter's *Rhythm 21* (1921) with Laszlo Moholy-Nagy's *Lightplay* (1930) and Robert Morris's *Site* (1964) with Robert Rauschenberg's *Linoleum* (1967), echo strategies of silence as either an act of withholding or overstimulation.

Richter's *Rhythm 21* was the artist's first experiment with film.[44] In it, a series of growing and shrinking black and white rectangles fills the screen in quiet, steady progression. The intention was to create a complicated rhythmic sequence from simple rectilinear elements.[45] Like *Rhythm 21*, Moholy-Nagy's *Lightplay* studied the movement of forms, yet the results were strikingly different as Moholy-Nagy created a complex series of overlays, shadows, and transparencies in filming the rotation of his kinetic sculpture, *Light-Space Modulator*. O'Doherty sets up a contrast between the quiet motion of Richter's geometric shapes and tonal divides in his structuralist film and the dizzying spirals and reflections of light created in Moholy-Nagy's *Lightplay*. Neither film abides by the conventions of narrative or linearity commonly associated with film, but they avoid making meaning through understimulation and overstimulation, respectively.

The performance films of Robert Morris and Robert Rauschenberg extend these dichotomous strategies of silence to more recent work. The included excerpt was from Morris's 1964 performance of *Site*. It reflects Morris's involvement in theater more than his sculptural production, associating Morris with the trajectory of modern dance that rejected narrative or emotive choreography in favor of the performance of mundane tasks.[46] The continuous actions of Morris in *Site*, as he moves and relocates a series of white plywood sheets on stage, create an analog to the hypnotic motion of Richter's geometric forms. Despite hints of a narrative, especially Carolee Schneemann's appearance as a live version of Manet's *Olympia*, Morris's performance is, as Maurice Berger has argued, "one of negation."[47] This negation, the refusal to clarify a meaning or message, is then an operation of silence.

The sparseness conveyed by Morris's workman-like movement stands in contrast to the chaotic impact of Rauschenberg's *Linoleum*. Where the action in *Site* is organized around a coherent, but unremarkable, activity – the deconstruction and construction of a white box – there is no such singular narrative that can be retrieved from *Linoleum*. Rauschenberg came to dance through the Merce Cunningham Company, and like Cunningham he abandoned progression and narration in his choreography in favor of a multiplicity of actions. As Jill Johnston noted in a *Village Voice* review, "his theater pieces are live collages."[48] This is made even more evident in the film treatment of each performance, as Rauschenberg literally overlaid multiple scenes of the filmed dancers to create a truly collaged film montage. Rather than provide a clear path through the performance, the film confounds attempts to decipher the action, collapsing time and location into a series of challenging images. O'Doherty himself pointed to this performance as "one of the most consummate" of Rauschenberg's achievements, noting that the film "glides and stumbles across temporal conventions; it attempts to escape them by inventing delays, speed-ups, lapses in process, but always ends up defining itself. Most but by no means all of Rauschenberg's confusions disappear when one realizes that mediumizing leaves the work open to the future – indeed, depends on it, not for completion so much as for energy."[49] While the overall effect is quite different from that of Morris's *Site*, both films fail to communicate with the viewer by either over-stimulating the senses or under-stimulating them. Despite the visual information presented, the work remains silent as the viewer is unable to discern an intended meaning.

Thus in *Aspen* 5+6, O'Doherty presents multiple interpretations of artistic silence, with equally disparate artistic intentions. Ultimately, he allows for two possibilities to emerge from this silence: the confounded viewer and the activated viewer. Throughout *Aspen* 5+6, O'Doherty

presents a range of possibilities for the author to remain quiet and allow the spectator to act.

**Roland Barthes's "The Death of the Author"**

Ultimately, it is the Roland Barthes text which provides the most powerful key to understanding this compilation, as the surrender of authorial control weaves a common thread throughout the texts. "The Death of the Author" was first published in this issue; indeed it was after O'Doherty explained his project that Barthes offered the text for inclusion.[50] The men shared an admiration for Mallarmé, who Barthes credited as the first for whom "it is language which speaks, not the author."[51] By "suppressing the author… to restore the status of the reader," Barthes argued that Mallarmé revolutionized the modern text, transferring the responsibility of making meaning from the writer to the reader. The act of writing is transformed from one of representation and recording to a performative act, endlessly repeated. No singular interpretation can be claimed for this modern work, each text is understood anew by the unique background and context of the present reader.

The transference of control from the author to the reader is implicit throughout *Aspen* 5+6 and is imbedded into the structure of the issue itself as well as in the nature of the various components themselves. Starting from the unbound format of the magazine, which subverts O'Doherty's control over its contents, the contributors used a number of approaches to subvert an authorial voice.[52] Across a wide swath of disciplines, the conventional creative role is deemphasized in favor of either systematized or random compositional strategies. This creative subjugation is reinforced in the voice of Marcel Duchamp, literally present in a recording of his lecture, "The Creative Act." In this text, first presented at the 1957 Convention of the American Federation of the Arts, Duchamp transferred the creative responsibility of a work of art from the artist to the spectator, or from being the sole responsibility of the artist to one shared between the artist and spectator.[53] The artist, acting alone in a "mediumistic role," is perpetually unable to bring his vision to fruition. Thus, Duchamp posited an intrinsic gap between the intention of the artist and the ultimate realization of a work. The creative act comes with the activation of the work by a spectator, who "brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualification and thus adds his contribution." In "The Creative Act," Duchamp prefigured Barthes's "Death of the Author." Like Barthes, Duchamp envisioned an empowered spectator (reader) as a critical component to compensate for the reduced authority of the artist (author).

Following this example, several *Aspen* contributors subverted the authority of the author by sharing the creative act with an intermediary; the composers John Cage and Morton Feldman required the performing musician to complete a considerable number of adaptations, alterations, and decisions within a provided framework. Like O'Doherty's design of *Aspen* 5+6, both of these composers merely erected structures, within which there were nearly endless varieties of possible results. For example, Feldman was the first composer to abandon conventional musical notation, adopting the grid in 1950. His graph compositions offer an outline based on time divisions, within which numerals dictate the numbers of sounds to be played, but not the instruments themselves. The grid allowed him to find a balance between authorial control and performative freedom, creating a structure within which the musicians were free to experiment.[54] It was also a way to avoid traditional composition and the rhythms and passages that comprised a (cons)trained approach to music. This was the same year as Cage's "Lecture on Nothing," where he also rejected artistic subjectivity. 1950 thus represents a watershed year in the musical rejection of compositional genius in favor of the engaged reception of the listener.[55]

In creating *Fontana Mix*, Cage produced a compositional tool, not simply a single score. Although the version included in *Aspen* 5+6 is actually nonfunctional (one of the sheets designed to be a transparency is printed on cardstock), the original version of *Fontana Mix* was comprised of ten sets of two transparent overlays which were to be superimposed upon another card printed with a series of curved lines, of which there were ten variations. There were therefore one thousand possible compositions comprised of the curved lines, the graph transparency, and the straight line transparency; each one of these combinations could produce any number of graphs, which would then be used to compose the piece.

The choreography of Merce Cunningham similarly rejected the narrative function of dance, replacing it with a compilation of individual parts that remain irretrievably separate and unique. *Aspen* included a recording of Cunningham reading from his "Space, Time and Dance," and an interview in which he spoke of "obliterating" the linear temporality and spatial progressions thought intrinsic to dance through the separation of these "formal" elements.[56] He also created an elaborate system of chance operations, devising graphs for different components such as tempo, movement, etc and then tossing coins to determine the order of the performance. It was then up to the spectator to interpret the final result.[57] Unlike the Surrealists, Cunningham and other *Aspen* artists employed chance in an attempt to plumb the deeper recesses of the subconscious mind and as a way of moving beyond the personal.[58] Even in collaborative efforts with composers like Cage, there was an element of spontaneity, with the score and choreography often coming together only at the first performance or last rehearsal.[59]

In Cage's *Fontana Mix* and similar compositions, however, it fell upon the performer (here Max Neuhaus) to carry out the processes of chance, decide how to interpret the results, determine the instruments to be used, and then complete the composition. This strategy represented a revolution in chance operations as previously employed by artists. Unlike other methods where the final composition was fixed, albeit dependent on operations of randomness and chance that were completed by the composer, Cage's output – his transparencies – provided no fixed or completed score, merely a system that allowed the interpreter to create performance notes. Thus, it was Neuhaus's actions, interpretations, and decisions which determined the version of Cage's composition that *Aspen* included in a sound recording.[60] The author relinquished at least portions of the creative act to an intermediary, destabilizing his authority.

Perhaps the antipode to the adoption of chance was the equally powerful adoption of systemization and seriality as a means to remove the authorial voice. The traditional notions of creativity and genius could be subverted in a system that, as the performer Max Neuhaus explained in his notes, "removes my taste and musical judgment and allows the … phenomenon of that particular situation to produce the piece."[61] This strategy was also employed by the artists of *Aspen* as a means of reducing or mitigating the authorial voice. For example, Sol LeWitt's *Serial Piece #1* had first been exhibited at the Dwan Gallery, Los Angeles in 1966 and was reproduced in his *Aspen* booklet through a series of texts, drawings, and photographs. These documents traced out the configurations possible through a set of rules – the opening and closing of space comprised of two modular cubes. Transforming the piece for publication, LeWitt outlined in detail the specifications that would govern fabrication into a booklet which comprises his contribution, the first of his artist books. By subscribing to a system, the artist or author was able to proceed by mapping out pursuant permutations, behaving as Sol LeWitt explained, "as a clerk cataloguing the results of his premise."[62] In this scenario, LeWitt consciously absents himself from the process, reducing his authorial control to that of a collaborator: the reader is left to envision the final project.

This collaborative approach admitted the potential for the empowered intermediary to interpret instructions at will. The results were not merely an execution of the artist's intentions.

So while *Aspen* included a series of eight shaped boards that required the physical interaction of the viewer to assemble a sculptural model, *Maze*, and although Tony Smith included instructions which led to one outcome, the construction was literally left to the reader who could follow (or ignore) these directions at will. Smith had recently erected a large-scale version of this piece for the *Schemata 7* show at Finch College in New York City, an exhibition in which O'Doherty had also participated. Since Smith used models as part of his regular studio practice, it was feasible to reduce the dimensions of the *Schemata 7* model and include a set of pieces to be assembled by the subscriber. If completed according to the instructions, the labyrinthine form of the sculpture was designed further to invoke the participation of the viewer – a labyrinth or maze implies a puzzle to be solved by the viewer. Both Smith and O'Doherty were fascinated with the labyrinth; however, they viewed the form not as a complicated, threatening structure, but in more positive terms of viewer interaction. As Smith explained in the accompanying instructions, "[I]n a certain sense it is a labyrinth of the mind. You can see that it becomes quite complex, but at the same time everything falls in very, very simply."[63]

Another approach to the rejection of authorial control was the phenomenological reinforcement of the role of the spectator. Many artists during the 1960s found the writings of the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty influential, especially his work on phenomenology and the role of viewer perception in one's conception of the world.[64] He considered the experiences of the body not to be universal, but to be based on individual perception and interaction with the external world. One's bodily sense of self was derived through this process and was ultimately more informative than consciousness or instruction. Artists who adopted this phenomenological approach relinquished interpretation of their work to the individualistic experiences of the spectator, regardless of whether a physical object was present. Thus, the rigid and overly-descriptive approach of Robbe-Grillet's fiction, such as the excerpt from *Jealousy* included in *Aspen* 5+6, has often been linked with the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty in view of its shared obsession with describing things and objects in such detail that the reader can picture them.[65] While Robbe-Grillet's style of writing is highly descriptive, it still remains to the reader to sift through the oft-repeated events, to sort the flashbacks from the present action, all from the purportedly objective clues provided and without the assistance of a traditional narrator, to find a path through a verbal labyrinth of sorts. Left alone with these facts, the reader must reconstruct the fictional universe according to his or her own perceptions, each resulting in a unique experience with the text. While the text was a fixed entity, the results were variable and individual. The scholar John Sturrock has linked the entire *nouveau roman* genre with phenomenology as this style of writing forces the viewer to construct the work.[66]

The work of Mallarmé scholar Michel Butor has similarly been connected with Merleau-Ponty, with whom he studied.[67] As discussed earlier, Butor was interested in Mallarmé's concept of the "open" work of literature, which requires the reader to act as collaborator, and in his own fiction he sought to combine philosophy and poetry in this manner. Michael Spencer has remarked on this self-consciousness of Butor's literature, where the writing reflects the process of its own creation and is left incomplete for the reader to finish.[68] In his poem, "Conditionnement," included in *Aspen*, Butor creates a web, devoid of narrator or viewpoint, which instead surrounds the reader, forcing him to work his way out by wrestling with the circular text. The chaotic language and the interjection of random letters that seem to form a pattern only to reject systemization, both challenge the reader to form a linear trajectory from the raw material and clues provided by an absent author.

The relationship between the viewer and the system could often be complicated, particularly when artists sought to exploit the hermetic nature of mathematics. Richard Field has noted that Mel Bochner was less interested in using mathematical models as a means of

constructing a work than in the space created between "visual and intellectual structure."[69] Bochner's *Seven Translucent Tiers*, reproduced in *Aspen* 5+6, was a project related to a series of block setups, based on a 7 x 7 grid, which he had been privately exploring in his studio. When invited to show them at Dwan Gallery, Bochner realized that one single configuration would not represent the series, so he began photographing them from multiple angles. These photographs and drawn diagrams then composed the show. *Seven Translucent Tiers* translated the concept into a set of mathematical diagrams, with the pluses and minuses representing the presence or absence of cubes but holding no deeper meaning or significance.[70] Once the system was constructed, the work executed itself, independent of the artist's control. Bochner described such projects as a situation where "[t]he composer is freed from individual note-to-note decisions which are self generating within the system he devises.[71]"

Similarly, in reducing poetry to a format or system, a *Schema*, Dan Graham's contribution to *Aspen* was able to reduce the operations of the author to a list, compiled and completed by O'Doherty through the reproduction of the poem in its pages. The writer is therefore a composite, formed through the collaboration between Graham's original format, the editor who must supply the information, and the reader who must attempt to synthesize the given information into some useful format. Furthermore, in an accompanying text, Graham demonstrated that the final compilation of these figures is nearly impossible, as each entry changes others. He suggested that a computer, able to grasp the entire entity at one glance, might be able to list the correct data, pointing out the relative fallibility of the human process of perception. Graham spoke about this tension, saying "I saw Minimalism as a crisis in the subjectivity of the spectator – of his or her consciousness in relation to the intention of the artist. That often became the content of the work."[72] The scholar Lucy Lippard has deemed this sort of abnegation a rejection of perceptual order in favor of conceptual order.[73] This kind of serial production displaced the physical art object with a series of bare instructions and specifications.

Others sought to devalue the position of the author by questioning the value of language itself. In his own contribution to *Aspen* 5+6, O'Doherty submitted his *Structural Play #3*, a work that undermined the system of language itself. A series of instructions for a dramatic event, the introduction dictated that all the elements of the work should be neutralized: the lighting is "preferably indirect, doing away with shadows and drama," the performers are dressed and masked to hide their identities, the words are spoken in monotone and carefully timed.[74] All that varies is the emphasis on the spoken word, as the actors recite a dialogue that repeats itself, only changing the volume one word at a time. The exercise demonstrates the inability of language to affix meaning and the necessary interpretation and intervention of the reader in determining meaning. O'Doherty's script provides a juncture for the central themes of the entire issue: in this piece, he reasserts his vision for *Aspen* as an open work, a Mallarméan text that refuses to speak for the spectator. By neutralizing the context, he demonstrated how a network of external cues influence interpretation, recalling elements of Kubler's essay. In the utter simplicity of the dialogue and choreographed movement, he created one version of Sontag's non-literal silence. Instead of promoting authorial control, O'Doherty demonstrated the vulnerability of language to interpretation.

This article presents merely one out of many possible ways to unpack *Aspen*, based on the included texts by Kubler, Sontag, and Barthes and pairing their arguments with examples that support and expand upon their theses. One could easily rearrange the unbound components of the issue. Other possible combinations could focus on the use of language and metaphor, or on the exploration of duration and space-time. Indeed, there is no end to the configurations, the connections that can be drawn between the elements of this constellation, which is precisely the

point. Thus, in *Aspen* 5+6, O'Doherty accomplished his expansion of the Minimalist movement, demonstrating how the primary interests of its practitioners spanned disciplines and history and were more rich and complex than a mere rejection of traditional artistic conventions. In the pages of *Aspen*, O'Doherty recast Minimalism as an interdisciplinary exploration within a web of contemporary and historical ancestors, contextualizing the movement in a way that countered dominant critical voices such as Donald Judd. His exploration of these artistic networks, strategies of silence, and alternatives of authorial control paved the way for Conceptualist practices of the 1970s. As Irving Sandler once noted, *Aspen* 5+6 "summed up the sensibility of the decade and foretold much of what would influence artists subsequently."[75]

*Sarah Archino received her PhD from the Graduate Center, City University of New York; her dissertation, "Reframing the Narrative of Dada in New York, 1910-1926" examined the development of an American Dada aesthetic based on anarcho-individualism and the vernacular, dismissing Eurocentric definitions of Dada in favor of a native, anti-institutional spirit that emerged in New York. Her next project will expand on these themes of anarchy and the vernacular in a broader examination of early-twentieth-century American modernism. Beginning in fall 2013, she will serve as the Terra Foundation/INHA Postdoctoral Teaching Fellow in American Art. She has previously taught at Franklin & Marshall College in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, Millsaps College in Jackson, Mississippi, and on the Hunter College and Queens College campuses of the City University of New York.*

**Endnotes**

[1] For an overview of *Aspen*'s entire run and more information on issue 5+6, see Gwen Allen, "The Magazine as a Medium: *Aspen*, 1965-1971," in *Artists' Magazines: An Alternative Space for Art* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2011); Mary-Ruth Walsh, "A Labyrinth in a Box: *Aspen* 5+6," *Circa* 104 (Summer 2003): 42-46; and Alexander Alberro, "Inside the White Box," *Artforum* (September 2001): 170-74.

[2] [Advertisement for *Aspen*], *New York Times* (October 1967); reprinted in "The Magazine in a Box," *New York Times* (July 24, 2007).

[3] The circulation of *Aspen* was approximately 15,000 to 20,000, as reported by Matthew Mirapaul, in "3-Dimensional Magazine Lives Again in 2 Dimensions," *New York Times* (December 9, 2002).

[4] Donald Judd had previously set forth guidelines for understanding artistic production of the mid-1960s. What scholars refer to as Minimalism, Judd called "specific objects," a grouping that did not "constitute a movement, school, or style." Judd posited that these objects avoided such conventions as composition, subject matter, allusion to the external world, and illusionism. He considered this a break from all previous production: it was "neither painting nor sculpture." Donald Judd, "Specific Objects," *Arts Yearbook* 8 (1965): 74-82. See also James Meyer, ed., *Minimalism* (New York: Phaidon Press, 2000); Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001); Edward Strickland, *Minimalism – Origins* (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 1993); and Gregory Battcock, *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc, 1968).

[5] Barbara Rose, "ABC Art," *Art in America* 53 (October-November 1965): 58-64.

[6] *Aspen* 5+6 included a book with essays by Roland Barthes, George Kubler, and Susan Sontag; audio recordings of Samuel Beckett's "Text for Nothing #5" (read by the actor Jack MacGowan), William Burroughs reading from his *Nova Express*, and Alain Robbe-Grillet reading "Now the shadow of the southwest column" from his *Jealousy*; and recordings of Max Neuhaus playing compositions by John Cage and Morton Feldman. The box also contained printed scores for Cage's *Fontana Mix-Feed* and Feldman's *The King of Denmark*, along with a translated English transcript of Robbe-Grillet's writing. Other records included an interview with Merce Cunningham as well as his reading of his text, "Space, Time, and Dance"; Marcel Duchamp reading his "The Creative Act" and excerpts from "A l'Infinitif"; Naum Gabo reading his "The Realistic Manifesto" and Richard Huelsenbeck reading four poems from his *Phantastiche Gebete*. A reel of Super-8 film included clips from Hans Richter's *Rhythm 21*, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy's *Lightplay*, Robert Morris and Stan VanDerBeek's *Site*, and Robert Rauschenberg's *Linoleum*. Eight components for Tony Smith's *Maze* were accompanied by written assembly instructions. Printed components included curator Douglas McAgy's essay on Russian art, "The Russian Desert: A Note on the State of Our Knowledge"; Michel Butor's poem, "Conditionnement"; Dan Graham's work, "Poem, March 1966"; as well as documentation for Sol LeWitt's *Serial Projct #1*, Mel Bochner's *Seven Translucent Tiers*, and O'Doherty's own *Structural Play #3*. New York Public Library owns a complete copy of *Aspen* 5+6. The contents have also been digitized and are available on www.ubu.com/aspen.

[7] With *Aspen* 5+6, O'Doherty also distanced himself from Robert Morris's writings on Minimalism and *gestalt* theory, which emphasized the wholeness and totality of an object upon perception. O'Doherty was not interested in pursuing the concept of *gestalt* in his own work. In discussing his piece in *Schemata 7*, for example, he said he wanted his work to be better understood in memory than in perception, so if the pieces were "understood as a dialogue between a whole and its parts, or as a system of relationships, or as a perceptual proposition or gestalt, the work (and the viewer) fails." From Elayne Varian, "Schemata 7 Exhibition Catalogue," in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. by Gregory Battcock (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc, 1968), 373-74.

[8] O'Doherty, an Irish-born artist and critic, had been working in New York since 1957. A collection of his reviews were published in Brian O'Doherty, *Object and Idea: An Art Critic's Journal, 1961-1967* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967).

[9] Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-98) experimented with unconventional structure and subjects. Among his most famous works is the poem "Un Coup de Dés," which incorporated unusual typography and large expanses of blank space. It was published posthumously in 1914.

[10] Brian O'Doherty, interview by Sarah Archino, February 15, 2011.

[11] Jacques Scherer, *Le Livre de Mallarmé* (Paris: Gallimard, 1957).

[12] Hans Rudolf Zeller, "Mallarmé and Serialist Thought," *Die Reihe* 6, ed. by Herbert Eimert and Karlheinz Stockhausen, trans. by Margaret Shenfield (Bryn Mawr, PA: Theodore Presser Company, 1964). German edition published in 1960.

[13] Ibid., 16-17.

[14] Roland Barthes's influential essay "The Death of the Author" will be addressed shortly, however, his "readerly text" was paralleled by contemporary investigations such as Umberto Eco's "open work." Eco's *Opera aperta*, first published in Italian in 1962, provided a semiological approach to individual interpretation, arguing that meaning was determined by the contemporary world, since signs and language were not fixed certainties. As Eco's book was not translated into English until 1989, it is likely that Zeller and Barthes were more directly influential to the artists of *Aspen*. See Umberto Eco, *The Open Work* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989); Peter Bondanella, *Umberto*

*Eco and The Open Text: Semiotics, Fiction, Popular Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[15] Indeed, it was Graham who suggested to O'Doherty that the box should be dedicated to Mallarmé. Brian O'Doherty, interview by Sarah Archino, February 15, 2011.

[16] Indeed, *Aspen* contributor Dan Graham was obviously aware of Michel Butor. His interest in Mallarmé's book is evidenced by his notes on the subject which were published in the Summer 1967 issue of *Arts Magazine*, which directly quoted (without citing) Butor's essay. See Dan Graham, "The Book as Object," *Arts Magazine* (Summer 1967).

[17] Zeller, "Mallarmé and Serialist Thought,"14.

[18] The personal importance of the number twenty-eight was confirmed by O'Doherty. Brian O'Doherty, interview by Sarah Archino, February 15, 2011. A combination of Sigmund Freud and German curator Wilhelm Bode, Sigmund Bode was an early and authoritative persona created by O'Doherty. The fictitious text cited in the introduction is *Placement as Language*, a title which further asserts the flexiblility of the unbound format and its components as a conscious statement.

[19] George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1962).

[20] Ibid., 21.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid., 11.

[23] Ibid., 124.

[24] Kubler, "Style and the Representation of Time," *Aspen* 5+6 (Fall-Winter 1967): np.

[25] This conception was based heavily on Judd's writing and echoed in other major writers of the mid-1960s. For example, in her canonical text on Minimalism, "ABC Art," Barbara Rose admitted that parallels existed between the *nouveau roman* of Alain Robbe-Grillet and Michel Butor and the works of the Minimalists. She acknowledged that both groups were suppressing or withdrawing content, yet she ultimately suggested that these similarities were mere coincidence. See Rose, "ABC Art."

[26] While working on *Aspen* 5+6, O'Doherty was particularly engaged with historical lineage, as he had just accepted an advance to write a text, *Art Since 1945*. He would eventually abandon this project, unable to compile a single historical narrative that could be published in a bound format. After several years of deferring the project, O'Doherty "hired" his alter-ego, Patrick Ireland, as a subcontractor to complete the work. In turn, Ireland commissioned a carpenter to create a wooden block, carved like a textbook, onto which he then carefully stenciled a cover. He presented it as an art book, but it was rejected by the publisher, and O'Doherty was forced to return the advance he had received. See Irving Sandler, "Book: Art since 1945" in *Patrick Ireland: Gestures Instead of an Autobiography* (Youngstown, OH: The Butler Institute of American Art, 1994).

[27] In 1966, O'Doherty completed *Portrait of Marcel Duchamp*, an electrocardiogram which the medically-trained O'Doherty recorded himself. The two men were linked through this project, but were also connected in their theoretical interests, especially the taking of alter-egos. In the course of his career, O'Doherty adopted a number of personae, even a female character by the name of Mary Josephson who published critical writings during this period. As is well-documented, he would later adopt the pseudonym of Patrick Ireland for his artistic production. However, *Aspen* 5+6 featured a text written by one of his lesser known alter-egos, Sigmund Bode, falsely dated to appear as a historical text.

[28] Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson, eds., *Salt Seller: The Writings of Marcel Duchamp* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), viii.

[29] Martin Hammer and Christine Lodder, *Constructing Modernity: The Art and Career of Naum Gabo* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 62. The manifesto was published in *Gabo: Constructions, Sculpture, Paintings, Drawings, Engravings*, ed. by Herbert Read and Leslie Martin (London: Lund Humphries, 1957), 151-52.

[30] Douglas MacAgy, "The Russian Desert: A Note on our State of Knowledge," *Aspen* 5+6 (Fall-Winter 1967): np.

[31] Brian O'Doherty's seminal text, "Inside the White Cube," originally published in *Artforum* in 1976 and later published as *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (Santa Monica, CA: Lapis Press, 1986) explores these issues at length.

[32] David Beasley, *Douglas MacAgy and the Foundations of Modern Art Curatorship* (Buffalo, NY: Darus Publishing, 1998), 120.

[33] See ibid., 134.

[34] Quoted in Christopher Shultis, *Silencing the Sounded Self: John Cage and the American Experimental Tradition* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), 90.

[35] Merce Cunningham, "Space, Time and Dance," reprinted in *Merce Cunningham: Dancing in Space and Time*, ed. by Richard Kostelanetz (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 1992), 37.

[36] This refusal to make meaning would be achieved by such means as creating an unfixed set of definitions on individual cards, selecting words at random from a conventional dictionary, or using films of objects in close-focus as a new alphabet for a kind of writing without letters. Marcel Duchamp, "Some texts from *A l'Infinitive*," excerpts read by

the author (November 1967), phonograph recording.

[37] Sol LeWitt, "Serial Project #1, 1966," *Aspen* 5+6 (Fall-Winter 1967): np.

[38] Dan Graham, "Schema," *Aspen* 5+6 (Fall-Winter 1967): np..

[39] Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Jealousy* (New York: Grove Press, 1987). See also Roch C. Smith, *Understanding Robbe-Grillet* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2000), 46. As the literary scholar Arthur Babcock has noted, the English translation of the novel, published in 1959, included a floor plan of the house, as described in the text. Yet, even this attempt to help the reader decipher and enter the story is incomplete, as the author frequently refers to a door to a room but never describes the room and thus leaves an empty space in the logical layout of the house. Arthur E. Babcock, *The New Novel in France: Theory and Practice of the nouveau roman* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1997), 43.

[40] Even Burroughs acknowledged their polarity. See William S. Burroughs, "Beckett and Proust," in *The Adding Machine: Collected Essays* (London: John Calder Publishers, 1985), 183.

[41] Reprinted in Samuel Beckett, *The Complete Short Prose, 1929-1985*, ed. by S. E. Gontarski (New York: Grove Press, 1995), 131-35.

[42] Susan Sontag, "The Aesthetics of Silence," *Aspen* 5+6 (Fall-Winter 1967): np.

[43] Ann Douglas, "Punching a Hole in the Big Lie: The Achievement of William S. Burroughs" in *Word Virus: The William S. Burroughs Reader*, ed. by James Grauerholz and Ira Silverberg (New York: Grove Press, 1998), xx.

[44] O'Doherty was quite interested in Richter's film. In 1968, he wrote the catalogue essay for an exhibition at Finch College. *Hans Richter, Art 1905-1968* (New York: Finch College Museum of Art, 1968).

[45] Werner Haftman, "Postscript," in *Dada Art and Anti-Art*, by Hans Richter, trans. by David Britt (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 220-21.

[46] Nena Tsouti-Schillinger, *Robert Morris and Angst* (New York: George Braziller, 2001), 95.

[47] Maurice Berger, *Labyryinths: Robert Morris, Minimalism and the 1960s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 3.

[48] Jill Johnston, "Dance Journal: RR" *The Village Voice* (June 13, 1968): 34-35.

[49] Brian O'Doherty, *American Masters: The Voice and the Myth* (New York: Random House, 1973), 275-76.

[50] Pepe Karmel, "The Death and Rebirth of the Author: Brian O'Doherty and Roland Barthes" (lecture, sponsored by the Grey Art Gallery, New York University, April 30, 2007). This was confirmed by O'Doherty. Brian O'Doherty, interview by Sarah Archino, February 15, 2011.

[51] Roland Barthes, "The Death of Author," *Aspen* 5+6 (Fall-Winter 1967): np.

[52] It is important to note that, in practice, none of the contributors was willing to completely abandon authorship and even O'Doherty retained an editorial voice through his employment of three major themes: time, "silence and reduction," and language. Yet, his voice is also compromised: the unbound format reinforced the nature of each entry as an individual component or object to be manipulated into permutations and arrangements. O'Doherty further destabilizes his editorial power, using one of his alter-egos, the fictitious historian Bode, as the author of the introduction. Bode's presence allowed O'Doherty to remove himself from the text while still inserting a key, the introduction, into the compilation. This passage, rather than asserting the authoritarian power of the editor, becomes transformed into merely another object in the assemblage to be manipulated and evaluated by the subscriber.

[53] Marcel Duchamp, "The Creative Act," excerpts read by the author (November 1967), phonograph recording.

[54] John Holzaepfal, "Painting by Numbers: The Intersections of Morton Feldman and David Tudor," in *The New York Schools of Music and Visual Arts: John Cage, Morton Feldman, Edgar Valèse, Willem de Kooning, Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg*, ed. Stephen Johnson (New York: Routledge, 2002), 160.

[55] David W. Bernstein, "John Cage and the *Aesthetic of Indifference*," in *The New York Schools of Music and Visual Arts*, ed. by Steven Johnson (New York: Routledge, 2002), 120-21.

[56] Merce Cunningham, "Space, Time and Dance" and "Further Thoughts," read by the author, November 1967, phonograph recording.

[57] Calvin Tomkins, *The Bride and the Bachelors: Five Masters of the Avant-Garde* (New York: Penguin Books 1976), 247.

[58] As another example, William Burroughs employed a certain level of chance in his process. In writing the Nova trilogy, he employed a technique which he called "the cut-up," writing pages, combining his words with found texts, and then cutting and scrambling the scraps to determine the final, fixed order. Richard Kostelanetz, "From Nightmare to Serendipity: A Retrospective Look at William Burroughs," *Twentieth Century Literature* 11 (October 1965), 129.

[59] Tomkins, *The Bride and the Bachelor.* 120-21.

[60] Indeed, Neuhaus transformed the piece by introducing feedback into the performance, a practice which fascinated him but was not part of Cage's original intention. My thanks to Pepe Karmel for pointing this out.

[61] Max Neuhaus, "Performer's Notes for *Fontana Mix-Feed* as recorded Nov. 9, 1967 by Aspen," *Aspen* 5+6 (Fall-Winter 1967): np.

[62] LeWitt, "Serial Project #1, 1966," *Aspen* 5+6 (Fall-Winter 1967): np.

[63] Tony Smith, "The Maze," *Aspen* 5+6 (Fall-Winter 1967): np.

[64] First written in 1945, Merleau-Ponty's influential *Phenomenology of Perception* was translated into English in 1962. See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (New York: Humanities Press, 1962). For further reading on Merleau-Ponty, see his *The World of Perception* (*Causeries*, 1948) (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), the first English translation of a series of seven lectures given in 1948 that provide an overview to his philosophy. See also Taylor Carman, *Merleau-Ponty* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008); Paul Crowther, "Merleau-Ponty: Perception into Art," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 22, no. 2 (1982): 138-49; Christopher Macann, *Four Phenomenological Philosophers: Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993).

[65] Marjorie H. Hellerstein, *Inventing the Real World: The Art of Alain Robbe-Grillet* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Press, 1998), 10.

[66] John Sturrock, *The French New Novel* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 5.

[67] Arthur E. Babcock, *The New Novel in France: Theory and Practice of the nouveau roman* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1997), 73.

[68] Michael C. Spencer, *Michel Butor* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1974), 28.

69 Richard S. Field, ed., *Mel Bochner: Thought Made Visible* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Art Gallery, 1995), 21.

[70] Cited in Field, *Mel Bochner*, 27.

[71] Mel Bochner, "The Serial Attitude," *Artforum* 6 (December 1967), 30.

[72] Dan Graham, "Legacies of Critical Practice in the 1980s," panel discussion at Dia Art Foundation, March 3, 1987, published in *Discussions in Contemporary Culture*, ed. by Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1987).

[73] Lucy Lippard, "The Structures, The Structures and the Wall Drawings, The Structures and the Wall Drawings and the Books," from *Sol LeWitt: The Museum of Modern Art*, ed. by Alicia Legg (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1978), 25-26.

[74] Brian O'Doherty, "Structural Play #3," *Aspen* 5+6 (Fall-Winter 1967): np

[75] Irving, "Book: Art Since 1945," 35.

# In the Midst of Floodwaters: Mapping Viceregal Mexico City's Urban Transformation, 1524-c.1690*

*John F. López*

Like many colonial Latin American cities, Mexico City was founded on Renaissance theories of urban planning, as evidenced by its orthogonal city plan, central plaza, and sumptuous buildings lining rectilinear streets. These urban planning principles, first proposed by Vitruvius in antiquity and later codified by Spanish authorities in 1573 as the *Ordenanzas de descubrimiento, nueva población y pacificación de las Indias*, were the guiding force behind the design of Spanish cities in the New World.[1] Yet Mexico City is strikingly different from other colonial cities in at least one respect: it was founded on an island that was prone to flooding. Although other settlements in Spanish America were not without hydraulic structures such as canals, aqueducts, and dams, these paled in comparison to the flood control network built to combat inundations in Mexico City.[2]

Mexico City is a special case in urban history because the measures taken by the Spanish to avoid flooding fundamentally changed the city's character. In 1521 it was an island, but by the end of viceregal rule in 1821, it rested on a reclaimed mainland. The Spanish sought to end the city's flood problems primarily by relying on drainage, referred to as the *desagüe*, a project begun in 1607 by Enrico Martínez (1550/60-1632) to drain the lakes from the Basin of Mexico into the Gulf of Mexico. Despite the scholarly attention devoted to the *desagüe*, the images describing Mexico City's relationship to the lakes and its transformation from island to mainland city have received considerably less consideration.[3] Underpinning this study of hydraulics and urban form is a series of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century maps and paintings made by native artists (*tlacuilos)* and Europeans that describe Mexico City's relationship to its surrounding lacustrine environment.

The first part of this essay examines three sixteenth-century images. The *Nuremberg Map* (fig. 2), folio 2r of the *Codex Mendoza* (fig. 3), and the *Uppsala Map* (fig. 4) highlight how water was part of the city since it was founded in 1325 by the Aztecs and demonstrate how water shaped the settlement's spatial organization and urban fabric. Moreover, they illuminate how the city incorporated the Aztec method of controlling and regulating the lakes via a network of causeways, dikes, floodgates, and canals. This paper then discusses how a series of floods in the second half of the sixteenth century prompted the Spanish to consider an alternative method to the pre-Hispanic water management practices, namely, the *desagüe*. It describes how drainage plans were studied in the aftermath of the floods of 1555, 1580, and 1604, only to be abandoned when their costs overshadowed those of repairing the existing hydraulic network or when the floodwaters receded.

The second part of this essay examines four seventeenth-century images. These images—*Descripción de la comarca de México i obra del desagüe de la laguna* (fig. 5), *Forma y levantado de la Ciudad de México* (fig. 6), *Ciudad de México anegada* (fig. 7), and *La mui noble y leal Ciudad de México* (figs. 8-9)—reveal a shift from the Aztec-inspired practice of regulation to drainage. Of particular interest is Enrico Martínez's *Descripción de la comarca de México i obra del desagüe de la laguna* and how it reimagines the city's relationship to the lakes in its description of how the *desagüe* would end the age-old battle against flooding. *Forma y levantado de la Ciudad de México* and *Ciudad de México anegada* identify a utopian vision of the city on the one hand and show how a disaster could level the capital on the other. *La mui noble y leal Ciudad de México*

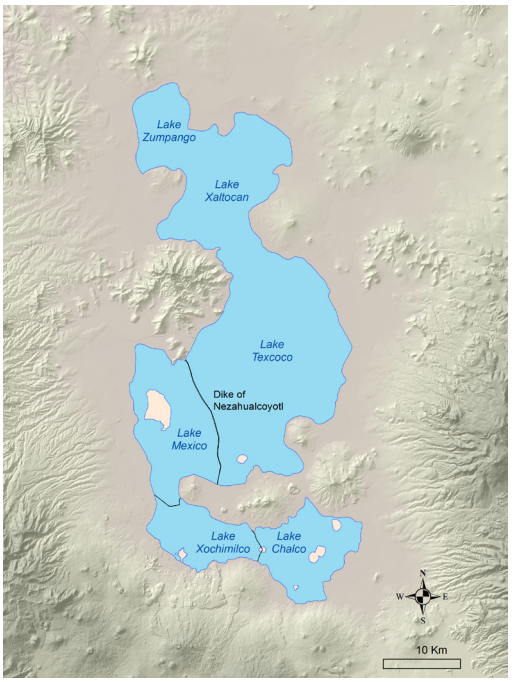


Figure 1. Basin of Mexico. (Image provided by Greg Luna Golya.)

portrays the capital as a mainland city. It is a significant departure from earlier representations of the city in that it suggests that the *desagüe* finally overcame the challenges posed by natural forces and the city's historical path of development, two points that underscore the city's allegiance to the Spanish Crown. By examining these seven images, this paper shows how the visual representation of the city's water management systems contributes to a clearer understanding of Mexico City's relationship to its surrounding lacustrine environment, and how Spanish water management practices in the form of the *desagüe* were part of a colonial epistemological shift that put the city at odds with its natural setting.

**Mexico City's Natural Setting**

Mexico City is located at the bottom of the Basin of Mexico, an enclosed hydrographic unit with no natural outlet for water, despite its elevation of 2,240 meters above sea level.[4] The basin is the result of fifty million years of tectonic and volcanic activity, forming the Transmexican Volcanic Belt.[5] Until about 700,000 years ago, the basin was actually a valley with two natural outlets for water on its southern flank, but volcanic activity from the Chichinautzin Volcano closed these channels.[6] Without natural drainage, the basin quickly became a receptacle for summer rains and snowmelt, as well as water from streams, springs, and rivers that descended from the surrounding hills, mountains, and volcanoes. The basin eventually comprised six interconnected fresh- and salt-water lakes, running in a continuous chain from north to south and making up at least twenty percent of the "valley" floor with an area of more than 1,000 km$^2$ (fig. 1).[7] Lakes Xaltocan and Zumpango were located in the northern region of this aquatic zone, while lakes Texcoco and Mexico sat in the center and lakes Xochimilco and Chalco in the southern portion of the lacustrine environment.[8] During the rainy season from June through September, the Cuautitlán River altered the lakes' levels by depositing its rain-engorged waters into Lake Zumpango. The surplus water would then trigger a chain reaction that caused the northern lakes to overflow into the centrally positioned Lake Texcoco, spilling its waters into Lake Mexico and flooding viceregal Mexico City.[9]

**An Aquatic City**

After the Spanish defeated the Aztecs in 1521, Hernán Cortés (ca. 1484-1547) founded Mexico City over the ruins of Tenochtitlan, the capital city of the Aztecs. In doing so, the newcomers not only inherited the island site, but also its shortcomings with respect to flooding.[10] Lacking a flood control approach of their own, the Spanish adopted the Aztec water management method, a practice founded on controlling and regulating the lakes via an extensive hydraulic network composed of dikes, causeways, and floodgates, among other structures. To understand the aquatic character of the early Spanish city, it is helpful to examine how the *Nuremberg Map*, the *Codex Mendoza*, and the *Uppsala Map* describe the city's relationship to the


Figure 2. Hernán Cortés (attributed to), *Nuremberg Map*, 1524, ink and watercolor on paper, 18 5/8 in. x 11 7/8 in. (47.30 x 30.16 cm). The Newberry Library, Chicago. (Photo courtesy of The Newberry Library, Chicago. Collection No. Ayer 655.51.C8.1524d.)

lake.

The *Nuremberg Map* provides the earliest understanding of Mexico City's aquatic character (fig. 2).[11] Published in 1524 in the German city of Nuremberg, the map is based on a drawing that accompanied Cortés's *Second Letter* to Charles V (1500-1558).[12] The map is based on a "fish-eye" perspective, giving it the impression of a nucleated center extending outward in the form of loosely organized concentric rings. One notes the ring-shaped organization of the man-made islands known as *chinampas*, the rounded frame of Lake Mexico, the spherical articulation of water with thin black lines, the paddler and canoe encircling the city, and the roundness of the mainland.[13]

Water framed Mexico City's urban fabric. Hundreds of *chinampas* with white walls and red-hued roofs encircle a centrally positioned temple precinct in white. A series of tan-colored bridges connect an alternating pattern of man-made islands and canals to each other and to the island. At the outer fringes of the lake, a series of nondescript paddlers in one-, two- or three-person dugout canoes go about their daily task of ferrying goods and people to the island. From the city center, three cream-colored causeways stretch across the lake to the mainland.[14] These causeways not only allowed for foot traffic between the island and mainland, but also aided in regulating the water levels of the lake. A fourth causeway fails to reach dry land. Instead, it leads the viewer's eye to the lower half of the map, as if pointing to the pre-Columbian dike of Nezahualcóyotl. This dike, portrayed as a reed-like structure with three openings indicating floodgates, was built in 1449 to protect the city from inundations, and it stretched for sixteen kilometers from the mainland towns of Iztapalapa in the south to Atzacoalco in the north.[15] The message of the *Nuremberg Map* is clear: Tenochtitlan, later to become Mexico City, with its man-made islands, bridges, causeways, floodgates, and dike was a settlement made entirely with


Figure 3. Anonymous, Folio 2r of the *Codex Mendoza*, ca. 1533, water color on paper, 8 3/4 in. x 12 3/8 in. (22.3 x 31.5 cm). Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, Oxford. Shelfmark: MS. Arch. Selden. A. 1, fol. 2r. (Photograph provided by the Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.)

water in mind.

A second image that illustrates the city's hydrographic nature is folio 2r of the *Codex Mendoza* (fig. 3). The codex is a post-conquest manuscript that provides pictorial and textual accounts of Mexico City's predecessor, Tenochtitlan, as well as conquered towns and tribute and Aztec daily life. It is believed that Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza (ca. 1492-1552) commissioned the codex around 1533.[16] Destined for Spain, it was captured by French privateers, eventually ending up in the hands of the French cosmographer André Thevet (1516-1592), whose name appears at the top of the folio.[17] Illustrated on European paper, the folio was made by an anonymous *tlacuilo* and represents the city's founding in 1325.[18] Noticeably absent is an architectural description of the city like that in the *Nuremberg Map*. Instead, the folio is a mythical account of the city, its organization, and aquatic condition.

At the center of the folio, an eagle perches on a prickly pear cactus that grows from the pre-Columbian toponym for a rock, symbolizing the founding of Tenochtitlan.[19] The folio identifies ten male figures, the city's founders.[20] They wear the traditional white cloak (*tilmatli*). Nine are seated on bundles of green reeds. The largest figure, Tenoch (?-ca.1363), is seated on a yellow woven mat, wearing black body paint with a smear of blood on his right temple.[21] His loosely tied hair and glyph for speech signify his elevated status as a priest and spokesperson for the other nine founders of Tenochtitlan.[22] A square blue frame, suggestive of Lake Texcoco, bounds the eagle and founders on the island.[23] From the corners of this aquatic frame, two waterways run diagonally across the island to make the shape of an "X." Intersecting at the point where the eagle rests atop the cactus, the waterways divide the island city into quadrants, delineating the

Figure 4. Anonymous, *Uppsala Map*, ca. 1550, watercolor on parchment, 44 7/8 in. x 29 1/2 in. (114 x 75 cm). Uppsala University Library, Uppsala. (Photograph provided by the Uppsala University Library, Sweden.)

four original sectors of the settlement: Cuepopan, Atzaqualco, Moyotlan, and Teopan.[24] Like the *Nuremberg Map*, the folio speaks to the aquatic condition of the city. However, it describes the city's relationship to the lakes metaphorically, primarily as a function of the city's founding and its quadripartite spatial organization.

A third image that conveys the city's watery nature is the *Uppsala Map* of ca. 1550 (fig. 4). Located in the Uppsala University Library, this map, comprising a double sheet of parchment, was the work of an anonymous *tlacuilo*. It is a geographical description of the basin, identifying mountains, forests, towns, and roads, as well as Mexico City. Although the map is not proportionately accurate, given the size of the settlement in relation to the countryside, it makes the city's relationship to the lacustrine environment intelligible.

A vast network of rivers, illustrated in blue, feed into the lakes. Two dikes lay to the east of the city. The easternmost is the dike of Nezahualcóyotl, previously mentioned in relation to the *Nuremberg Map*. The second, the dike of San Lázaro, was built after that of Nezahualcóyotl to protect the city from any potential floodwaters when the former proved ineffective.[25] On the map, San Lázaro carefully follows the island's eastern undulating shoreline, thus shielding the city from rising waters. Although not described in any great detail, save for a single opening located at the center of the dike, seven floodgates corresponded to an equal number of canals. These waterways crossed the city from west to east. To prevent significant fluctuations in water levels, the floodgates were opened in the mornings, allowing any water that had been deposited into Lake Mexico by rivers and streams from the mainland hills west of the city to make its way through the canals and eventually exit through the openings at San Lázaro. In the afternoons, these gates were closed, preventing Lake Mexico's waters from being blown back into the city by afternoon winds.[26] Although selective in detail, the *Uppsala Map* allows us to understand how

floodgates and canals worked together to ensure that water levels within the island city did not rise substantially, putting the capital in danger of inundation.

Together, the *Nuremberg Map*, folio 2r of the *Codex Mendoza*, and the *Uppsala Map* show Mexico City's aquatic condition. Although the three differ in their cartographic depictions of the city's relationship to the lakes, they all identify how water shaped the character of the city. The images conceive of the lakes as part of the city's urban fabric and, by extension, imagine any risk of disaster as part of the city's everyday life. It was a reality that the Spanish were not prepared to understand.

**A New City, a New Setting**

The island setting posed a new set of conditions for which the Spaniards were ill prepared. In *Irrigation and Hydraulic Technology: Medieval Spain and its Legacy*, Thomas F. Glick demonstrates that Spain had a long and rich history of water management practices in the Iberian Peninsula. However, the experience of irrigation canals, noria pots, and water mills, among other hydraulic structures, provided limited opportunities for understanding the magnitude of Mexico City's aquatic challenges.[27] Indeed, the city's lacustrine environment was unlike anything the Spanish had encountered in Spain.[28]

A study of Mexico City's municipal decrees (*actas de cabildo*) prior to 1550 reveals very few ordinances concerning the island's hydraulic structures.[29] Such lack of concern from the city council for these structures, especially for their maintenance, suggests ambivalence as to their purpose and, by extension, a disregard for the safety of the island's inhabitants. Even when the Aztecs maintained this network of hydraulic structures, it did not always protect the city from flooding. In the early colonial period when it garnered little attention, it was a proverbial disaster waiting to happen. This lack of foresight proved to be a significant error in judgment when in the 1550s the city entered a four-year period of flooding.

With the floods of 1552, 1553, and 1555, the Spanish quickly began to realize the consequences of Cortés's decision to settle the island. Notably, Viceroy Enrique Velasco the Elder (1511-1564) was highly critical of the conquistador's selection.[30] At the same time, the colonial authorities started to question the effectiveness of the Aztec-inspired hydraulic network. Doubting the ability of the causeways, dikes, and floodgates to safeguard the city meant that a new approach would have to be considered. Although the floods of 1552 and 1553 were relatively minor, the inundation of 1555 was not. In the midst of devastation, the idea of the *desagüe* was born.

In hopes of salvaging the city, Francisco Gudiel presented a drainage plan.[31] He identified the Cuautitlán River as the principal cause of flooding and called for a canal to be dug from Lake Zumpango to Huehuetoca, where water would exist the basin through natural crevices. With the water on the exterior side of the basin, according to the scheme, it would follow the natural terrain downward to the Tepexeque, a tributary of the Tula River, which eventually made its way to the Gulf of Mexico.[32] The proposal marked the first time a drainage proposal was considered. However, it was ultimately rejected as too costly.

Although cast aside in 1555, the idea of drainage managed to resurface amid the inundations of 1580 and 1604. In 1580, Viceroy Martín Enríquez (ca. 1510-1583) attacked the deluge by ordering the fortification of dikes, the raising of causeways, and the dredging of rivers. He also resurrected the idea of the *desagüe* by calling for a committee to devise a plan for implementing the project.[33] The magistrates (*corregidores*) Antonio Carvajal and Balthasar Mejía Salmerón were ordered to inspect the canals of the city and to report to the city council on the origins of the flood.[34] On February 5, they provided the city council with their findings, but on April 11, the municipal body closed the inquiry since the waters had subsided.[35]

In August 1604, Mexico City was once again inundated. Like his predecessors, Viceroy Juan de Mendoza y Luna, Marqués de Montesclaros (1571-1628), ordered many of the hydrau-lic structures repaired. Franciscan friars Juan de Torquemada (ca. 1557-1624) and Gerónimo de Zárate de Salmerón supervised the rebuilding of the causeways of Guadalupe and San Cristóbal, respectively.[36] Montesclaros also rekindled hopes for building a *desagüe* by calling for proposals.[37] In this instance, Antonio Pérez de Toledo and Alonso Pérez Rebelto offered a plan to drain the waters from Mexico City via the Tequisquiac River.[38] However, their plan met the same fate as previous proposals. It was rejected, owing to its costs.[39]

As this brief survey of Spanish water management efforts suggests, during the latter half of the sixteenth century, proposals were repeatedly called for and studied, but ultimately abandoned when their costs overshadowed those of repairing the existing hydraulic network or when the floodwaters receded. Unwilling to implement a drainage plan, the Spanish returned to the Aztec hydraulic network after each flood. However, a shift in water management practices was near.

**At Wits' End**

In 1607, Mexico City was once again underwater. This time the Spanish were truly at their wits' end. With the flood following on the heels of the inundation of 1604, the Spanish lost all hope of the Aztec flood control method protecting the city. They were now determined to implement the *desagüe*. Viceroy Enrique Velasco the Younger (1539-1617) called for drainage proposals and specifically requested that architects Alonso Arias and Juan de Peraleda and cartographer Enrico Martínez submit plans for the project.[40] On September 17, Martínez's proposal was presented to the city council. It called for building a canal and tunnel to discharge waters from Lake Zumpango into the Gulf of Mexico.[41] The discussion that ensued reveals a changing mindset regarding drainage.

The city treasurer Diego de Ochandiano viewed Martínez's plan as indispensable for saving Mexico City because its cost would be "no greater than the [value of the] buildings saved."[42] It was a point favored by city council members Francisco de Trejo Carvajal, Francisco de Yrrazabal, and Pedro Núñez de Córdoba.[43] It is important to remember that prior *desagüe* proposals were rejected, in part, because their respective costs surpassed those of repairing and improving the existing hydraulic network. However, with the value of the city's buildings now counted in the assessment of the financial loss associated with a disaster, the *desagüe* became an attractive flood control solution.

On October 1, 1607, Viceroy Velasco, Alonso Arias, Enrico Martínez, and others set out to survey possible sites for the *desagüe*.[44] On October 4, Martínez's plan was studied *in situ*, and on the next day, hearings were held to discuss its merits and those of other proposals.[45] After several meetings, Martínez's plan was formally accepted on October 23.[46] In addition to his proposal, Martínez produced a map of his plan for the *desagüe*.

**Mapping Drainage**

A significant difference between Martínez's *desagüe* plan and other drainage proposals was the production of a map. In *Descripción de la comarca de México i obra del desagüe de la laguna*, Martínez described how he would end Mexico City's centuries-old battle against flooding (fig. 5). Most importantly, it is the first map made by a professional cartographer to examine flood control in Mexico City.[47] In it, Martínez correctly identifies how mountains enclosed Mexico City and how a network of rivers and streams descending from these ranges flowed into the lakes. Yet, Martínez was primarily concerned with the Cuautitlán River, the source of the capital's flood problems. This waterway is situated in the lower portion of the map, just to the


Figure 5. Enrico Martínez, *Descripción de la comarca de México i obra del desagüe de la laguna,* 1608, quill and ink on paper, 16 1/8 in. x 21 1/4 in. (41 x 54 cm.) Archivo General de Indias, Seville. AGI-MP-México 54. (Photograph provided by the Archivo General de Indias.)

right of the legend in the left-hand corner. Perhaps as an indication of the power of its turbulent currents, Martínez shows the Cuautitlán splitting a mountain range into a V-shaped crevasse. The cartographer carefully depicts the river's undulating form as it descends from this mountain to the basin floor and continues its path northward to Lake Zumpango.

Despite its accurate portrayal of the basin's topography, Martínez's map does not depict the city's relationship to the lakes correctly. Mainland settlements exist as a series of buildings clustered together in elevation, often with a church at center. In a similar fashion, Martínez employed this architectural vocabulary to illustrate the island city. He describes Mexico City as a collection of building façades. The centrally positioned cathedral with its steeple pointing to the "I" in "Mexico" is flanked by less prominent buildings also shown in elevation. Besides the causeway upon which the capital rests, Martínez offers no commentary on the hydraulic nature of the city. In short, the map reveals that Martínez conceived of the island settlement in terms similar to those of land-based towns. Unlike the *Nuremberg Map*, the *Codex Mendoza*, and the *Uppsala Map*, Martínez's map does not show how the city and lakes intersected. Its cartographer had a different objective in mind: drainage.

Martínez's plan to achieve drainage was dependent on his cartographic abilities. In a richly decorated frame adorned with volutes and pinnacles in the lower right-hand corner of the map, Martínez presents the viewer with a dividing compass. The two arms of this cartographic instrument, connected by a circular hinge, open over a scale bar measuring ten thousand *varas*.[48] Opposite the compass, in the lower left-hand corner, is a legend, entitled *Obra del Desagüe*. Unlike the compass, the legend lacks any adornment or architecturally defined space. Instead, it occupies a location created by the map's border on two sides, a mountain range to the right, and the path of the *desagüe* above its title. Together, the legend and compass offer the keys to understanding Martínez's plan for drainage.

As the map indicates, the mouth of the *desagüe* canal, which is identified with the letter "A," sits directly opposite the point at which the Cuautitlán River flowed into Zumpango. From this point, Martínez's plan called for a canal to extend northwest for 7,500 *varas* to the town of Huehuetoca, which is labeled as point "C." The canal would then meet a tunnel of 7,670 *varas* that would travel to the Gulch of Nochistongo, or point "E" on the map. From there, a second canal measuring 780 *varas* in length would take any potential floodwaters to the Tula River and thence to the Gulf of Mexico.

On November 28, 1607, Viceroy Velasco broke ground on the *desagüe*.[49] By early 1608, construction of the tunnel was underway.[50] In mid-March, Martínez's canal received a satisfactory review, but the tunnel was found to require improvements.[51] On May 20, the canal passed its first test by draining waters from Lake Zumpango to the mouth of the tunnel, where a temporary earthen dam held them at bay.[52] Work continued on the tunnel, and on September


Figure 6. Juan Gómez de Trasmonte (after), *Forma y levantado de la Ciudad de México*, c. 1628. Chromolithograph, 16 9/16 in. x 21 11/16 in. (42 x 55 cm). Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Mexico City. Studio of A. Ruffoni, Florence (1907), after Johannes Vingboons. (Photograph provided by the Colección de acervo del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas.)

19, Viceroy Velasco observed Lake Zumpango's waters exiting at Nochistongo.[53] With surprising speed, Martínez had completed his *desagüe* in only ten months.[54] Unfortunately, his success was short-lived, for in 1614, the Dutch hydraulic engineer Adrian Boot (?-ca. 1648) arrived in Mexico City to assist Martínez with the *desagüe*. However, Boot dismissed drainage altogether, igniting a professional disagreement between the two men.[55] Two decades later, viceregal authorities were still in search of a flood control solution.

**A Bird's-Eye View**

Between 1624 and 1639, Mexico City officials frequently turned to the Spanish architect Juan Gómez de Trasmonte (?-ca. 1647) for his professional services. As part of his many duties, he inspected the trench and tunnel of the *desagüe*, the city's causeways, canals, floodgates, and the dike of San Lázaro and supervised any repairs they required.[56] Trasmonte was also part of a group of experts on flood control that included Martínez, Boot, Arias, and Juan Serrano (ca. 1592- ca.1652), among several others.[57]

In 1628, the Spanish architect produced a bird's-eye view of Mexico City entitled *Forma y levantado de la Ciudad de México* (fig. 6).[58] Historian Richard L. Kagan has argued that the map-view and its accompanying plan of the city (not discussed here) were administrative documents, prepared as part of a larger study of Boot's flood control proposal.[59] However, neither the bird's-eye view nor the plan show any of Boot's proposed remedies.[60] On the other hand,


Figure 7. Anonymous, *La Ciudad de México anegada*, ca. 1629. Mapoteca Manuel Orozco y Berra, Mexico City. (Photograph provided by the Mapoteca Manuel Orozco y Berra, Servicio de Información Agroalimentaria y Pesquera, SAGARPA.)

Roberto L. Mayer has suggested that these maps were made to levy a tax on the city's buildings to help pay for the *desagüe,* a use that was not without precedent.[61] In 1607, Andrés de la Concha (ca.1554-ca.1612) produced a map of the city depicting its most important buildings, including churches, convents, monasteries, and hospitals, that was used in assessing a tax to fund the *desagüe*.[62] Regardless of its intended use, the view fulfills a most important function in that it offers a description of the city and lakes.

*Forma y levantado de la Ciudad de México* portrays Mexico City from a bird's vantage point, as if flying west of the city and looking in an easterly direction.[63] The bird's-eye view provides direct sightlines to the most important buildings of the city, which the architect has identified with a legend in the lower left-hand corner of the view. With their blue roofs, these structures tower over the nondescript low-lying buildings surrounding them. Trasmonte presents the Spanish city as an ordered settlement. City blocks and streets adhere to an orthogonal plan. On the city's eastern side, the dike of San Lázaro follows the contours of the island's shoreline. Noticeably absent in the bird's-eye view is the dike of Nezahualcóyotl. By offering a picture of the capital's buildings, plazas, streets, outlying Indian barrios, and hydrographic structure, the map-view illustrates the architectural fabric of the city.

In addition, it presents a tranquil image of Mexico City to the viewer. The rising sun crests over the eastern horizon as the day is set to begin. Volcanoes and mountains tower thousands of feet above the basin's floor, but do not overwhelm the city. In fact, Mexico City, its outlying districts, and its hydrographic elements, which are quietly nestled among groves of trees within the blue waters of Lake Mexico, command the viewer's attention. However, the idyllic portrayal of Mexico City in its natural setting is deceptive. The stillness of the lake's waters, with their varying hues of blue, conceals the risks of flooding. Mesmerized by the seductive image of the capital, one easily forgets about the dangers of a deluge. In reality, on any given day during the rainy season, the city was at the mercy of its natural setting. Instead of capturing how the city was susceptible to flooding, Trasmonte quite skillfully offers a utopian vision of the city's

relationship to nature. However appealing, it was a perspective that would come to an end only a year later.

**Nature's Wrath**

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the city was again underwater in 1629. However, this deluge was no ordinary flood. In neither the pre-Columbian nor the colonial period had a flood lasted as long or had such a disastrous effect upon the city.[64] Many men, women, and children did not survive the onslaught of the rushing waters, which also destroyed many of the city's buildings. Yet the magnitude of the flood was only truly felt when the floodwaters did not recede, leaving many parts of the city submerged through 1634.[65] No image better reveals the destructive forces of the flood than the anonymously authored *Ciudad de México anegada* (fig. 7).[66]

At the center of the image, one finds a devastated Mexico City. At the perimeter of the capital, paddlers in canoes make their way over the now submerged low-lying areas of the city. Signaling the cataclysmic effects of the flood, the author has labeled these areas *arrabales perdidos*, Spanish for "lost districts." Likewise, the author has noted the disaster's magnitude by writing "dike of San Lázaro covered by water" over this hydraulic structure. This dike, which gracefully meandered along the city's eastern shoreline in Trasmonte's *Forma y levantado de la Ciudad de México*, was the city's last line of defense against surging waters. However, with the dike completely submerged, the capital, lacking any protection, was now at the mercy of its natural setting.

The flood's fury is nowhere more evident than in the depiction of the city's spatial organization. The few colonial buildings that remain are shown as if they had scurried away from the surging waters, and by doing so, become chaotically arranged on higher ground. In marked contrast to Trasmonte's portrayal of Mexico City's orderly urban layout, where city block after city block was arranged in sequential uniformity, *Ciudad de México anegada* reveals the destructive nature of flooding, showing us how it disfigured the city by stripping it of any spatial order. If *Forma y levantado de la Ciudad de México* was an idyllic portrayal of the city within its natural environment, then *Ciudad de México anegada* is its opposite, a portrayal of nature's wrath unleashed upon the capital.

**A New Strategy**

The flood of 1629 had made it abundantly clear that the *desagüe* failed to protect Mexico City. This fact concerned the Spanish monarch when by royal decree, of May 19, 1631, Philip IV (1605-1665) suggested the city be moved to the mainland.[67] To consider the king's proposal as well as a host of related issues, including who would pay for a new city and how to obtain the Indian labor needed to build it, the city council convened to discuss relocating the city.[68] The greatest concern with building a new capital city centered on who would incur the financial loss of walking away from Mexico City, valued at fifty million *pesos*.[69] One only need glance at Trasmonte's bird's-eye view to appreciate the difficulty of the choice that the city council faced. Perhaps unwilling to abandon the city without exhausting all other options first, the council also considered improving the *desagüe*. After weighing the possibility of abandoning the island city and building a new one from scratch on the mainland, or upgrading the *desagüe* at the cost of "only" four million *pesos*, the panel overruled Philip IV.[70] The city would remain in its aquatic location, but not without undertaking one significant change to the *desagüe*.

On July 20, 1637, Viceroy Cadereyta (1575-ca. 1640) appointed Franciscan friar Luis Flores superintendent of the *desagüe*.[71] His selection of Flores ushered in a period of Franciscan supervision known as the "Golden Age of the *Desagüe*."[72] The Franciscans were charged with the task of saving Mexico City by converting Martínez's *desagüe* tunnel into a canal.[73] The reason for

Figure 8. Anonymous, *La mui noble y leal Ciudad de México* (recto), ca. 1690, oil on canvas, 18 ft. 5 in. x 6 ft. 10 in. x 3/4 in. (5.63 x 2.13 x 2 m). Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City. (Photograph by Michel Zabé. Photograph provided by the Museo Franz Mayer.)

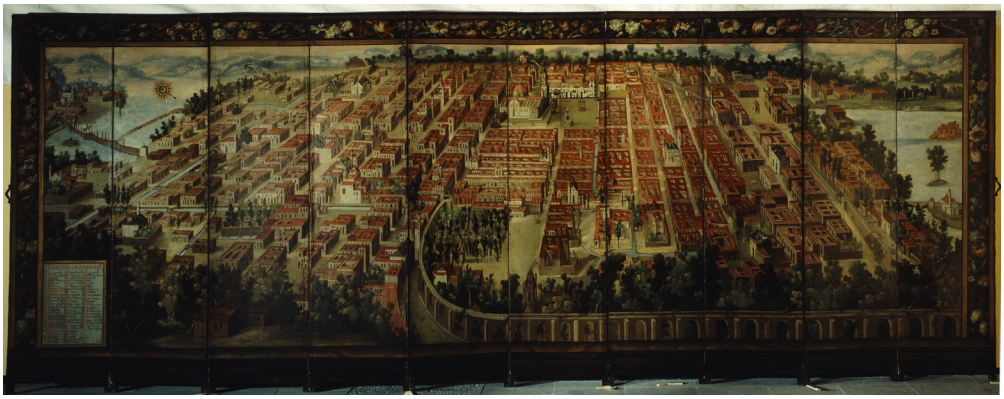

Figure 9. Anonymous, *La mui noble y leal Ciudad de México* (verso), ca. 1690, oil on canvas, 18 ft. 5 in. x 6 ft. 10 in. x 3/4 in. (5.63 x 2.13 x 2 m). Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City. (Photograph by Michel Zabé. Photograph provided by the Museo Franz Mayer.)

the conversion was simple. The tunnel suffered from frequent cave-ins, thus blocking the passage of water. By transforming the tunnel into a canal, it was believed that collapses would be eliminated altogether, thereby allowing the waters to flow freely.

On August 20, 1637, only a month into his superintendence, Flores began the conversion.[74] In his twenty-two years as supervisor, he transformed 3,587 *varas* of the tunnel to canal and deepened 18,000 *varas* of the tunnel by two *varas*.[75] In the years that followed, other Franciscan friars led the *desagüe* to continue the conversion, such as Bernardino de la Concepción, from 1659 to 1665, and Manuel Cabrera, between 1665 and 1675 and again from 1687 to 1691.[76] Finally, in 1691, with the end of Juan Romero's short tenure, the Franciscans ceded control of the *desagüe*.[77]

**A New Vision of Mexico City**

While we cannot be sure to what extent the Franciscans altered the lacustrine environment, no late seventeenth-century image is more indicative of their goal than *La mui noble y leal Ciudad de México* (figs. 8-9), an anonymously authored painting from ca. 1690. Located in the

Museo Franz Mayer in Mexico City, it is painted on a *biombo*, a Japanese folding screen, consisting of ten panels and measuring a total of 563 x 213 centimeters.[78] A freestanding screen, it is one of four known *biombos* describing Mexico City. Each depicts the Spanish conquest of Tenochtitlan in 1521 on one side and late seventeenth-century Mexico City on the other.

In *The Art of Allegiance: Visual Culture and Imperial Power in Baroque New Spain*, art historian Michael Schreffler argues that the Franz Mayer *biombo*'s later rendition of Mexico City demonstrates its loyalty to the Spanish king.[79] He identifies the place from which the city is seen by offering that the viceroy and, by extension, the Spanish monarch, survey the city from the mainland palace at Chapultepec.[80] An architectural detail in the *biombo* further supports Schreffler's argument. In the folding screen, a tripartite border runs along three sides of the image. It consists of a wide and lavishly adorned border at the center flanked by two narrow and plain borders on either side. However, the lower edge of the painting is treated distinctively. What appears to be the top of a handrail extends from one end of the painting to the other. The handrail functions symbolically, likely representing a balcony. Furthermore, it posits that Mexico City was no longer to be observed from a bird's viewpoint, as in Trasmonte's *Forma y levantado de la Ciudad de México*, but rather from the perspective of a discriminating eye. Trasmonte's bird's-eye view provided a nondescript picture of the city's buildings, save for its most important structures, as an indication that one was meant to see the capital city from a great distance. In marked contrast, the biombo presents a legible view of architectural details, such as the merlons of crenellated parapets, doors, windows, and courtyards, suggesting a discerning viewer.

*La mui noble y leal Ciudad de México* employs many of the visual cues used in *Forma y levantado de la Ciudad de México*. Both views originate from an elevated westerly position and look eastward across the city. Both incorporate a legend in the lower left-hand corner, and each highlights the city's urban grid and architectural fabric. And yet, the bird's-eye view and the *biombo* are notably different. In *Forma y levantado de la Ciudad de México*, one reads the city as part of a larger geographical expanse of lakes, mountains, and volcanoes. However, in the folding screen, the city occupies nearly every inch of the canvas. Topographical features receive little attention. By inverting the relationship between the city and its natural surroundings, the author of the Franz Mayer *biombo* demands that one focus one's undivided attention on the city. In doing so, the *biombo* impresses upon the viewer the notion that the capital is no longer an island, but rather a mainland settlement.

Lake Texcoco is nowhere to be found. The vast lacustrine environment that overwhelmed the city for centuries has been reduced to two harmless bodies of water flanking the settlement.[81] Historically, floodwaters came from an easterly direction, originating in Lake Zumpango and eventually making their way to Lake Texcoco before inundating the city. By giving the impression that Texcoco is no more, the *biombo* simply wishes away any threat of flooding. With this illusory safety, there was no need to describe the extensive hydraulic network of dikes, canals, and causeways that helped safeguard the city. As a result, the dike of San Lázaro garnered no attention, and the causeways and canals of the city received minimal consideration from the *biombo's* author.

The relationship between city and monarch is clear. Schreffler, like Alejandro Cañeque in *The King's Living Image: The Culture and Politics of Viceregal Power in Colonial Mexico*, argues that the viceroy embodied the king in New Spain.[82] In *La mui noble y leal Ciudad de México*, the personification of the monarch occurs at the palace at Chapultepec from where Mexico City is seen. However, this is not the city offered in Trasmonte's *Forma y levantado de la Ciudad de México*. The *biombo*'s pictorial narrative offers a new image of late seventeenth-century Mexico City. It frames its allegiance to the monarch through the portrayal of the capital's new environmental condition brought about by the *desagüe*. The attention devoted to describing the city, the

area it occupies in the *biombo* at the detriment of topographical features, such as Lake Texcoco, and thus the illusion of safety it offers, suggest that the *desagüe* had finally liberated Spain's New World capital from its age-old battle against flooding, transforming the island city into a secure mainland settlement.

**Conclusion**

The *desagüe* inaugurated a new stage in flood control efforts in viceregal Mexico City. Such an approach required new comprehension of the hydrographic condition of the basin, a perspective that the *Nuremberg Map*, the *Codex Mendoza*, and the *Uppsala Map* could not provide. These three images demonstrate how water was an important component of the city from its inception and how it shaped the city's spatial organization and architectural character. However, as striking as these images may be, they would have been of little value to Martínez and the others that followed him, for they offer only tangential information about flooding and provide no knowledge for implementing the *desagüe*. Thus, Martínez's *Descripción de la comarca de México i obra del desagüe de la laguna* signified an epistemological shift in the water management practices of Mexico City. After 1607, cartographical analysis would be employed in the service of flood control. Ultimately, Martínez's *desagüe* map reveals a colonial ideology that pitted Mexico City against its natural setting in its search for a solution to flooding.

With a colonial ideology in mind, one can recognize that *La mui noble y leal Ciudad de México* offered a new vision of Mexico City and its relationship to the lakes. This view departs radically from that of earlier representations of the city, as it described the capital not as an island but as a mainland settlement. Read together with the conquest of Tenochtitlan on its reverse, the *biombo's* portrayal of the city underscores the wresting of the Aztec city from pagan hands and its transformation into the locus of Spanish viceregal society. Historian Kevin Terraciano has argued that the *biombo's* two sides represent the "dawning of a new age."[83] This paper has argued that this "new age" was dependent on solving an age-old problem, namely the city's propensity for flooding. When viewed in this light, *La mui noble y leal Ciudad de México* presents a picture of environmental change as part of its description of allegiance, change in which the *desagüe* had overcome the challenges posed by Mexico City's natural setting and its historical path of development.

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## Endnotes

* I would like to thank the editors of the *Rutgers Art Review,* Lauren Kane, Melissa Yuen, and Kira Maye, for their guidance and advice on the many iterations of this essay. I am indebted to the anonymous reviewer for the many insightful comments offered to improve this work, especially for highlighting the importance of these images to a colonial ideology about water management. I am also grateful to Greg Luna Golya for producing Figure 1. This essay is part of a dissertation project, whose research and writing would not be possible without the generous support of a Dissertation Completion Fellowship from the Mellon/ACLS, an International Dissertation Research Fellowship from the Social Science Research Council, a Summer Fellowship for Pre-Columbian Studies from Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, a Fulbright-García Robles Fellowship, an Edilia and François-Auguste de Montêquin Fellowship from the Society of Architectural Historians, a Short-Term Fellowship for Individual Research from the Newberry Library, a Carter Manny Award from the Graham Foundation, and the C. C. Royal Fund at MIT.

[1] For an understanding of the Spanish planning ordinances, see "Ordenanzas de descubrimiento, nueva población y pacificación de las Indias," in *Recopilación de leyes de los reynos de las Indias: Estudios Histórico-Jurídicos*, ed. by Francisco de Icaza Dufour, vol. 5 (Mexico City: Miguel Ángel Porrúa, 1987), 257-312.

[2] Examples of hydraulic projects in colonial Latin America can be found in Ignacio González Tascón, et al., *Obras hidráulicas en América colonial* (Madrid: Ministerio de Obras Públicas, Transportes y Medio Ambiente de Estudios y Experimentación de Obras Públicas, and Centro de Estudios Históricos de Obras Públicas y Urbanismo, 1993).

[3] For two studies that have examined images related to water management in viceregal Mexico City, see Vera Silvina Candiani, "Bourbons and Water," in *Mapping Latin America: A Cartographic Reader*, ed. by Jordana Dym and Karl Offen (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 70-73 and John F. López, "'In the Art of My Profession': Adrian Boot and Dutch Water Management in Colonial Mexico City," *Journal of Latin American Geography* 11 (Special 2012), 35-60.

[4] Exequiel Ezcurra, *De las Chinampas a la Megalópolis: el medio ambiente en la cuenca de México* (Mexico City: Secretaría de Educación Pública, Fondo de Cultura Económica, and Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, 2003), 11-12.

[5] Margarita Carballal Staedtler and María Flores Hernández, "Elemento hidráulicos en el lago de México-Texcoco en el Posclásico," *Arqueología Mexicana* 13, no. 68 (July-Aug. 2004), 28.

[6] *Ibid*. These outlets drained southeast towards the city of Cuautla and southwest to the city of Cuernavaca, respectively.

[7] Tesesa Rojas Rabiela, "Las cuencas lacustres del Altiplano Central," *Arqueología Mexicana* 13, no. 68 (July-Aug. 2004), 23-26 and Guadalupe de la Lanza Espino and José Luis García Calderón, "La cuenca de México," in *Lagos y presas de México*, ed. by Guadalupe de la Lanza Espino and José Luis García Calderón (Mexico City: Centro de Ecología y Desarollo, 1995), 28.

[8] William T. Sanders, "The Natural Environment of the Basin of Mexico," in *The Valley of Mexico: Studies in Prehispanic Ecology and Society*, ed. by Eric R. Wolf (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1976), 60 and Sanders, Jeffrey R. Parsons, and Robert S. Santley, *The Basin of Mexico: Ecological Processes in the Evolution of a Civilization* (New York: Academic Press, 1979), 84.

[9] Josefina García Quintana and José Rubén Romero Galván, *México Tenochtitlan y su problemática lacustre* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1978), 66.

[10] George Kubler, *Mexican Architecture of the Sixteenth Century*, vol. 1, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1948), 69.

[11] To the left of Mexico City is a depiction of the Gulf of Mexico coastline with Cuba. For an understanding of the coastal map, see Elizabeth Hill Boone, "This new world now revealed: Hernán Cortés and the presentation of Mexico to Europe," *Word & Image* 27, no. 1 (Jan-Mar. 2011), 38-41. With respect to the map of the city, only three of the six lakes are depicted. Lake Mexico is the largest. Texcoco is shown towards the bottom, and Xochimilco as having a bulbous shape to the left. Omitted are the lakes of Zumpango, Xaltocan, and Chalco.

[12] Hernán Cortés, *Praeclara de Nova maris Oceani Hyspania Narratio…* (Nuremberg: F. Peypus, 1524).

[13] Boone has also noted the radiating concentric rings in "This new world now revealed," 32-33.

[14] Starting from the left-hand side of the map and going clockwise, these causeways are the *calzada de Iztapalapa*, the *calzada de Tacuba*, and the *calzada de Tepeyac*. For a schematic interpretation of the *Nuremberg Map*, see Justino Fernández's diagram in Manuel Toussaint, Federico Gómez de Orozco, and Justino Fernández, *Planos de la Ciudad de México, siglos XVI y XVII: estudios histórico, urbanistico, y bibliográfico* (Mexico City: Congreso Internacional de Planificación y de la Habitación, 1990), 97.

[15] José Luis Martínez, "Nezahualcóyotl 'Coyote Hambriento' (1402-1472)," *Arqueología Mexicana* 10, no. 58 (Nov.-Dec. 2002), 26.

[16] Francis F. Berdan and Patricia Rieff Anawalt, eds, *The Essential Codex Mendoza* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), xii.

[17] *Ibid*.

[18] *Ibid*., 3.

[19] *Ibid*., 3-4.

[20] *Ibid.*, 4.
[21] *Ibid.*
[22] *Ibid.*
[23] *Ibid.*
[24] *Ibid.*
[25] One of the great mysteries of the dike of San Lázaro that has yet to be explained with any certainty is its date of construction. It is generally assumed that it was built sometime after the flood of 1555; however, city council ordinances make no mention of this hydraulic structure, or the requisitioning of funds, Indian labor, or building materials for its construction during this time. Instead, key evidence shows that Viceroy Enrique Velasco the Elder required repairs made to the dike after the flood of 1555. See Fernando de Cepeda, Fernando Alonso Carrillo, and Juan de Alvarez Serrano, *Relación universal, legítima, verdadera, del sitio en que está fundada la muy noble, insigne, y muy leal Ciudad de México, cabeza de las provincias de toda la Nueva España...*, in *Obras Públicas en México: Documentos para su historia*, ed. by Francisco González de Cosío, vol. 1, 3rd ed. (Mexico City: Secretaría de Obras Públicas, 1976), 46-47.
[26] Cepeda, Carrillo, and Serrano, *Relación universal*, 40-41.
[27] Thomas F. Glick, *Irrigation and Hydraulic Technology: Medieval Spain and its Legacy* (Aldershot, England: Variorum, 1996).
[28] When the Spanish first set their eyes on Tenochtitlan, the comparisons to the island city of Venice immediately began. For a study that examines images of both cities, see David Y. Kim, "Uneasy Reflections: Images of Venice and Tenochtitlan in Benedetto Bordone's 'Isolario,'" *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* no. 49/50 (Spring – Autumn 2006): 80-91.
[29] *Actas de Cabildo de la Ciudad de Mexico*, ed. by Ignacio Bejarano (Mexico City: Imprenta y Libreria de Aguilar e hijos, 1889).
[30] Cepeda, Carrillo, and Serrano, *Relación universal*, 45-46.
[31] For the proposal, see Francisco Gudiel, "Memoria de Francisco Gudiel, año de 1555," in *Obras Públicas en México*, vol. 3, 13-19.
[32] Gudiel, "Memoria de Francisco Gudiel," 17. See also Michael W. Mathes, "To Save a City: The Desagüe of Mexico-Huehuetoca, 1607," *The Americas* 26, no. 4 (Apr. 1970), 426 and Louisa Schell Hoberman, "City Planning in Spanish Colonial Government: The Response of Mexico City to the Problems of Floods, 1607-1637" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1972), 51.
[33] Cepeda, Carrillo, and Serrano, *Relación universal*, 47.
[34] *Actas de Cabildo de la Ciudad de México*, January 18, 1580.
[35] Mathes, "To Save a City," 427.
[36] *Ibid.*, 428.
[37] Cepeda, Carrillo, and Serrano, *Relación universal*, 48.
[38] *Ibid.*, 50.
[39] *Ibid.*, 50-54.
[40] Every Wednesday during the months of August and September, Velasco met with *oidores* (judges) Licenciado Pedro de Otalora, Diego Núñez Morquecho, and Doctor Juan Quesada de Figueroa to review proposals. See Mathes, "To Save a City," 430. Ironically, fifty-two years earlier Velasco's father was the first city administrator to examine the idea of drainage. For Martínez's report on the d*esagüe* in manuscript form, see Archivo General de la Nación, Desagüe, vol. 3, exp. 1. For its published format, consult Enrico Martínez, "Relación de Enrico Martínez, año de 1628," in *Obras Públicas en México*, vol. 3, 27-39.
[41] Mathes, "To Save a City," 430.
[42] *Ibid.*
[43] *Ibid.*
[44] *Ibid.*, 431. See also Hoberman, "City Planning in Spanish Colonial Government," 62.
[45] Mathes, "To Save a City," 431.
[46] *Ibid.*, 432.
[47] López, "In the Art of My Profession," 54, n. 5.
[48] The *vara* was the Spanish unit of distance. It was equal to 83.8 centimeters.
[49] Mathes, "To Save a City," 433.
[50] *Ibid.*
[51] *Ibid.*, 434.
[52] *Ibid.*, 435.
[53] *Ibid.*, 436.
[54] *Ibid.*, 437.
[55] For an understanding of why Boot rejected drainage, see "In the Art of My Profession."
[56] It is interesting to note that although the *desagüe* was the preferred method for combating inundations by the Spanish, the Aztec model was still in use at this time.
[57] Richard Everett Boyer, "La Ciudad de México en 1628: la visión de Juan Gómez de Trasmonte," *Historia Mexicana* 29, no. 3 (enero-marzo 1980), 452-53.
[58] *Forma y levantado de la Ciudad de México* is a copy made by Johannes Vingboons of Gómez de Trasmonte's

now-lost bird's-eye view. For an understanding of the map-view's provenance, see Roberto L. Mayer, "Trasmonte y Boot: sus vistas de tres ciudades mexicanas en el siglo XVII," *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas* 27, no. 87 (2005), 177-98 and Priscilla Connolly and Mayer, "Vingboons, Trasmonte and Boot: European Cartography of Mexican Cities in the Early Seventeenth Century," *Imago Mundi* 61 (2009), 47-66.

[59] Richard L. Kagan, *Urban Images of the Hispanic World, 1493-1793*, with Fernando Marías (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 152-53.

[60] "In the Art of My Profession" examines Boot's proposal and the devices he offered to use in flood control.

[61] Mayer, "Trasmonte y Boot," 185-86 and Mayer, *Poblaciones Mexicanas, planos y panoramas, siglos XVI al XIX = Mexican Towns, Plans and Panoramas, 16th to 19th Centuries* (Mexico City: Smurfit Cartón y Papel de México, 1998), 105.

[62] Mayer, "Trasmonte y Boot," 185.

[63] Toussaint, Gómez de Orozco, and Fernández, *Planos de la Ciudad de México,* 175 and Boyer, "La Ciudad de México en 1628," 448.

[64] On June 20, 1629, the waters of the Cuautitlán River broke through the dike of Coyotepec. By October 12, the low-lying areas of the city were a *vara* underwater, and by October 27, the floodwaters had reached the island's high ground to inundate the city's public square, Plaza Mayor. See Carlos Chanfón Olmos, ed., *Historia de la arquitectura y el urbanismo Mexicanos*, vol. 2, bk 3 (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1997), 338.

[65] Boyer, "Mexico City and the Great Flood: Aspects of Life and Society, 1629-1635" (Ph.D. diss., University of Connecticut, 1973). For the Spanish translation of Boyer's dissertation, see *La gran inundación: vida y sociedad en México, 1629-1638*, trans. by Antonieta Sánchez Mejorada (Mexico City: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1975).

[66] My study of *Ciudad de México anegada* is based on a published version of the original. Unfortunately, the location of the original is unknown. The image published in this essay was provided by the Mapoteca Orozco y Berra, located in Mexico City. It was taken from *Memoria de las obras del sistema de drenaje profundo del Distrito Federal*, vol. 4 (Mexico City: Departamento del Distrito Federal, 1975), tomo 11-7.

[67] Specifically, Philip IV suggested the city be moved to the area between the towns of Tacuba and Tacubaya. See Hoberman, "City Planning in Spanish Colonial Government," 220; José Fernando Ramírez, *Memoria acerca de las obras e inundaciones en la ciudad de México* (Mexico City: Centro de Investigaciones Superiores and Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1976), 215-16; Jorge Gurría Lacroix, *El desagüe del valle de México durante la* época *novohispana* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1978), 115.

[68] The Indian population was in decline during this period, making the relocation of the capital city ever less feasible. For an understanding of the population decline, see the diagram on page 379 in Charles Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule: A History of the Indians of the Valley of Mexico, 1519-1810* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999).

[69] Hoberman, "City Planning in Spanish Colonial Government," 224.

[70] *Ibid*., 224-25.

[71] Candiani, "Draining the Basin of Mexico: Science, Technology, and Society, 1608-1808" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2004), 51.

[72] For an understanding of this period, see Alain Musset's chapter, "El siglo de Oro del Desagüe de México, 1607-1691," in *Obras hidráulicas en América colonial* (Madrid: Ministerio de Obras Públicas, Transportes y Medio Ambiente de Estudios y Experimentación de Obras Públicas, and Centro de Estudios Históricos de Obras Públicas y Urbanismo, 1993), 53-65. Flores's report on the *desagüe* can be found in Luis Flores, "Memorial del Padre Fray Luis Flores, año de 1653," in *Obras Públicas en México*, vol. 3, 75-129.

[73] To assist in his efforts to convert the tunnel, Flores recruited twenty-three members from his Order. See Candiani, "Draining the Basin of Mexico," 56.

[74] Gurría Lacroix, *El desagüe de valle de México*, 133.

[75] *Ibid*., 134.

[76] The notable exception to Franciscan supervision was the superintendence of Martín Solis. Solis gained control of the *desagüe* in 1675 by complaining of the Franciscans' lack of progress, but lost it to the Order in 1687, when his shortcomings as an engineer caused cave-ins. See Candiani, "Draining the Basin of Mexico," 51. In the case of Cabrera, he converted 2,196 *varas* of the tunnel. See Gurría Lacroix, *El desagüe de valle de México*, 134.

[77] Candiani, "Draining the Basin of Mexico," 51.

[78] *Biombos* are Japanese folding screens that arrived in New Spain via trade routes with the Philippine Islands. The Japanese *shōgun* Takugawa Ieyasu sent the first documented *biombo* to New Spain in 1610 and later shipped up to ten more to the viceroy in 1614. These folding screens varied in length, ranging from four to twenty panels and in height from one and one-half meters to two. They could be found in various places in a home, such as parlors (*biombos rodastrados*) and bedrooms (*biombos de cama*). See Kelly Donahue-Wallace, *Art and Architecture of Viceregal Latin America, 1521 1821* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 211-17. For a discussion of *biombos*, refer to Sofía Sanabrais, "The *Biombo* or Folding Screen: Examining the Impact of Japan on Artistic Production and the Globalization of Taste in Seventeenth-Century New Spain" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2005).

[79] Michael Schreffler, *The Art of Allegiance: Visual Culture and Imperial Power in Baroque New Spain* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), 25.

[80] *Ibid*.

[81] Schreffler also noted these two lateral bodies of water in his analysis of the *biombo*. See *The Art of Allegiance*, 23.

[82] Alejandro Cañeque, *The King's Living Image: The Culture and Politics of Viceregal Power in Colonial Mexico* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

[83] Kevin Terraciano, "Competing Memories of the Conquest of Mexico," in *Contested Visions in the Spanish Colonial World*, ed. by Ilona Katzew (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2011), 74.

# Picturing Contemplation: Titian's *St. Nicholas* Altarpiece and the Franciscans in Venice

*Kathleen Sullivan*

Early sources such as Giorgio Vasari and Lodovico Dolce praised Titian's (ca. 1485-1576) *Saint Nicholas* altarpiece (fig. 1), with both admiring the artist's masterful depiction of the saints. [1] However, more recently, scholars have cited problems with the painting, including its poor execution and a disjunction between the upper and lower zones. [2] While recognizing the significance of these concerns, this paper will move away from a discussion of the painting's artistic merit to a consideration of the fundamental themes of the altarpiece and their ties to contemporary historical events. Titian's iconographic and compositional choices forcefully express a sense of religious contemplation, as well as a struggle between worldly and spiritual concerns. These issues also marked the contemporary religious conflict between the Conventual and Observant factions of the Franciscan Order, a dispute that was centered on differing interpretations of the vow of poverty, as outlined in the Rule of St. Francis. I suggest that this disagreement strongly informed the iconography and composition of the altarpiece, which was made for the Conventual Franciscan friars of Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari in Venice. The altarpiece served as a means by which they could assert the importance of their doctrines, while also suggesting reconciliation with their Observant adversaries. Recognizing the manifestation of this situation in the painting also allows for a further contribution to the discussion regarding the dating of the altarpiece, which has remained in dispute.

In the middle of the fourteenth century, Nicolò Leon, a procurator of San Marco, endowed the oratory of San Nicolò ai Frari (also known as San Nicolò della Lattuga due to its origins) in thanksgiving to the monks at Venice's Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari. Leon's generosity was in response to the kindness of the friars, who had provided him in the middle of the night with lettuce, which had been prescribed to Leon for the treatment of a serious gastric problem.[3] The decoration of the oratory remained relatively simple during much of the sixteenth century, with Titian's *Saint Nicholas* altarpiece for the high altar as the most important work of note.[4] The altarpiece was likely commissioned by the Procuratori di San Marco de Ultra, who had *ius patronatus* (a right of patronage) for the high altar at San Nicolò ai Frari.[5] Unfortunately, nothing remains of the building, as it was destroyed in the nineteenth century.

Despite the demolition of the oratory, Titian's altarpiece still exists, albeit in an altered state. Six saints occupy the lower zone of the *Saint Nicholas* altarpiece. Saint Catherine stands at the far left, indicating her status as a martyr by holding a palm frond and resting her foot on a portion of a wheel, the instrument of her torture. Next to her is Saint Nicholas of Bari, prominently dressed in his bishop's robes. Half-hidden behind him stands Saint Peter, identifiable by his keys. Saint Anthony of Padua, recognizable by the lily he holds, is situated with his back to the viewer, while the figure of Saint Francis stands in profile to Anthony's right. Finally, Saint Sebastian is bathed in a bright light on the far right of the image. The figures occupy an apsidal architectural space, which is partially unfinished on the right. On the left, there is a finished upper story, barely visible behind clouds and pierced by a window.[6] On a plaque in the center of the curved wall, Titian has signed the work, 'TITIANVS FACIEBAT.'

Above the saints, the Virgin sits on a mass of clouds, holding the squirming Christ Child, who grasps a wreath in his hand. Two *putti*, also holding wreaths, flank the Virgin and Child. At the top of the altarpiece, the original composition contained the dove of the Holy


Fig. 1 Titian. Madonna and Child with Saints Sebastian, Francis of Assisi, Anthony of Padua, Peter, Nicholas, and Catherine of Alexandria, ca. 1520-25, panel transferred to canvas, 12 ft. 7 in. x 8 ft. 8 in. (3.84 x 2.64 m). Pinacoteca, Vatican Museums, Vatican State. Photo Credit: Scala / Art Resource, NY.

Spirit surrounded by a hemisphere of light, as seen in a print based on the painting (fig. 2), but after the painting was transferred to the Quirinal Palace in Rome around 1770, the altarpiece's arched top was cut off in order to match the shape of and create a pendant to Raphael's *Transfiguration* (ca. 1519-20; Pinacoteca, Vatican).[7]

When the painting was moved from panel to canvas during conservation efforts in the 1960s, an earlier, uncompleted version was uncovered underneath when the back of the paint was temporarily revealed during the transfer. [8] Scholars have continued to engage in debate regarding the dating of this original version, as well as the final version. In their 1977 article, "Titian's Vatican Altarpiece and the Pictures Underneath," William Hood and Charles Hope date the first incomplete version to 1518 based mainly on stylistic analysis. In addition, they cite evidence that suggests that, beneath this initial version, there is a composition of a *Bagno* (bathing scene), which they argue is the same as one referred to in a letter from 1518 between Alfonso d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, and Titian.[9]

However, Peter Humfrey, writing almost twenty years later, argues for an earlier date of 1514, due to the work's similarities to Titian's *Saint Mark* altarpiece (ca. 1511/12; Santa Maria della Salute, Venice). Furthermore, he refers to an eighteenth-century document discovered and published by Gastone Vio that gives the date as 1514.[10] Humfrey also notes that it seems unlikely that Titian would have been given the commission for the *Assunta* (ca. 1515-18; Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice), the high altarpiece of the Frari, without having formed contacts with the friars of the church and having proven himself as an altarpiece painter. Furthermore, Humfrey views the greater dynamism and heightened gestures of the saints in the second version of the *Saint Nicholas* altarpiece as being the result of Titian's experience in painting the *Assunta*. Thus, Humfrey suggests that Titian must have painted the first version of the *Saint Nicholas* altarpiece in 1514, prior to receiving the commission for the *Assunta*.[11] Finally, Mauro Lucco offers a refutation of the argument by Hood and Hope regarding the *Bagno* scene that is underneath Titian's first version.[12] Given both the documentary evidence and the argument with regards to the chronology of Titian's career, this paper accepts Peter Humfrey's proposal of the date of 1514 for the original version.[13]

The second and last version of the painting has also elicited much debate regarding its dating. William Hood and Charles Hope assign a date of 1533-35 to the final altarpiece. They base this partially upon the signature, arguing that in the majority of his works through 1530, Titian signed his name *Ticianus,* not *Titianus*.[14] They further argue for their dating by suggesting that Titian's work was influenced by Raphael's altarpiece of *Saint Cecilia* (ca. 1513-15; Pinacoteca, Bologna), which he would have seen during a visit to Bologna in 1532-33, suggesting that Titian would have worked on the second version of his *Saint Nicholas* altarpiece between 1533 and 1535.[15] Hood and Hope's analysis in this case is based primarily on compositional similarities between the two paintings. The third element of their argument for the dating is a proposal that the painting should be understood through the lens of religious currents circulating at the time, specifically the development in the late 1520s and early 1530s of reform-minded movements in Venice that emphasized inner devotion.[16] With regards to the *Saint Nicholas* altarpiece, they observe that it reflects a general sense of inner spirituality, but they do not elaborate on the idea in relationship to this particular altarpiece. Instead, they apply their understanding of these historical circumstances to Titian's *Magdalen* (early 1530s; Palazzo Pitti, Florence), suggesting that the saint shows the outward effects of an inner spiritual experience, much like the figures in Titian's altarpiece.[17]

Hood and Hope's argument is unconvincing due to its lack of specificity and the failure to apply more closely to Titian's painting the religious ideas they see as particularly influential. Furthermore, their argument for the dating is also undermined by subsequent scholarship.


Fig. 2 Valentin Lefebvre (after Titian), Virgin and Six Saints (An illustration to 'Opera selectiora, quae Titianus Vecellius Cadubriensis…'), print on paper, first published 1680, Victoria and Albert Museum, London (©Victoria and Albert Museum, London).

Mauro Lucco convincingly refutes their argument with a discussion of two versions of a painting by Rocco Marconi (Alte Pinakothek, Munich and Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice). He believes the motifs clearly derive from Titian's *Saint Nicholas* altarpiece, specifically with regards to their imitation of the crumbling, semicircular exedra, which Lucco states is a *unicum* not only for Titian, but also in almost all sixteenth-century Venetian painting. As Marconi died in 1529, Lucco argues that Titian's altarpiece cannot date to the 1530s, as proposed by Hood and Hope.[18] In addition, a publication by Gastone Vio of the altar's inscription, which includes the date of 1522, further undermines Hood and Hope's argument.[19] This paper will further contribute to the evidence suggesting a date between 1520 and 1525 by carefully analyzing how the painting reflects contemporary events related to conflict in the Franciscan Order.

In his creation of the *Saint Nicholas* altarpiece, Titian looked to important Venetian precedents, but he altered them in order to emphasize more clearly the intended message of his painting, which is focused on communicating a sense of contemplative spirituality, as well as a compromise between the worldly and earthly realms. As scholars have noted, Titian was most likely looking to such precedents as Giovanni Bellini's *San Zaccaria* (ca. 1505; San Zaccaria, Venice) and *San Giobbe* altarpieces (ca. 1478; Galleria dell'Accademia, Venice).[20] These paintings are fairly typical examples of the *sacra conversazione* type, which usually consists of an enthroned Virgin and Child, or other holy figure, flanked on each side by relatively symmetrical groups of saints or angels. These figures are usually facing either the viewer or the central figure, and they often occupy some sort of architectural space. With this typology in mind, it is evident that Titian's painting, while clearly deriving from the *sacra convsersazione* type, altered the precedents to suit the needs of his patrons. Focusing first on the architecture, in comparison with Giovanni Bellini's earlier altarpieces, Titian removed the superfluous decorative elements and simplified the architecture. He eliminated the vaulted architectural spaces above the saints and drastically reduced the architectural decoration, resulting in a much more severe, unfinished semicircular wall with only a cornice as ornamentation. Beyond simplifying the lower structure, Titian successfully dissolved the architectural half domes of earlier altarpieces into a burst of heavenly light, thus making tangible the otherworldly radiance that the mosaic domes of Bellini's altarpieces only refer to abstractly.

Titian's alterations of his artistic precedents were intended to enhance the sense of spirituality expressed in the altarpiece. He created an enclosed space for the saints by positioning the semicircular architectural structure close to the picture plane, with the walls of the structure practically flush with the sides of the altarpiece. The saints are effectively cut off from the outside world. This austere, enclosed space is devoid of distraction and secluded from the world beyond the wall, creating an atmosphere ideal for calm spiritual reflection. The confined nature of the space contrasts markedly with the compositions of other roughly contemporaneous altarpieces by Titian. In the *Saint Mark* altarpiece, *Pesaro Madonna* (1519-26; Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice), and *Ancona* altarpiece (ca. 1515-18; Pinacoteca, Ancona), the surrounding architecture, if it even exists, is less confining, and the space behind the figures is not so dramatically cut off from view. The clouds in the *Saint Nicholas* altarpiece further enclose the saints, effectively surrounding and separating them from the sky above. The only major potential connection with a space outside the composition is with the sacred space of the oratory in front of the altarpiece. As a Franciscan oratory, San Nicolò ai Frari was likely relatively austere, especially given that the extensive decoration of the interior space by Veronese did not occur until almost sixty years later.[21] Thus, the oratory could be seen as a further extension of the space of the altarpiece, a space that is intended for introspective, prayerful thought.[22] Certainly other *sacre conversazioni* represent saints as involved in their own inner contemplation, but Titian furthered this effect by making the place the saints occupy particularly appropriate for their actions.

While the confining wall creates an enclosed contemplative and spiritual space, it also gives a glimpse of the outside world. The fact that the edges of the semicircle are visible suggests that these walls do not continue indefinitely, but that there is a space to either side that could be accessed if one were to walk around the edges. Furthermore, the upper portion of the apsidal structure is incomplete and pierced by a window, allowing for a glimpse of the outside world. These subtle hints at a world beyond the enclosed space of the saints set up a contrast between their quiet, contemplative, spiritual realm and another more worldly space. However, although there is this hint of the outside world, it is nevertheless the spiritual space that is given precedence.

A second element also solidifies the *Saint Nicholas* altarpiece's emphasis on prayerful contemplation and the spiritual life. Farthest from the viewer, Saint Anthony of Padua stands with his back turned toward the picture plane, an unprecedented pose in a non-narrative altarpiece.[23] Anthony's pose completely denies the presence of the viewer, which allowed Titian to suggest that Anthony is so preoccupied with his own spiritual concerns that he ignores the viewer, and, in doing so, Anthony reflects the overarching emphasis of the altarpiece on prayer and contemplation.[24]

Titian continued to suggest this theme in his arrangement of the other saints. The grouping of saints in an architectural setting recalls other *sacre conversazioni*. However, Titian's saints are not symmetrically divided on either side of a central figure or lined up in an orderly fashion, as one finds in examples of the type by Giovanni Bellini. Rather, their arrangement is lopsided, with Saint Nicholas's large figure dominating the left side. Titian's earlier version of this altarpiece also had the figures arranged less strictly than one finds in earlier precedents. However, there was more of a sense of balance between the two edges. Titian made the figures in the final version of the *Saint Nicholas* altarpiece appear as if they have absentmindedly and arbitrarily chosen a place to stand, with little regard for their surroundings. They are not concerned with the others in their immediate vicinity, as they look neither at the viewer nor at each other. By making these saints appear too engrossed in their own devotion to properly arrange themselves, Titian provided a nice compliment to the contemplative obliviousness of Saint Anthony.

The absorption of the saints in their own inner lives contributes to the apparent disjunction between the levels noted by Peter Humfrey.[25] Unlike in the *Ancona* altarpiece or the *Assunta*, in which figures provide clear connections through overt gesture between the vertical levels of the work, the *Saint Nicholas* altarpiece depicts the saints in their own distinct realm, separated from the heavenly space above. However, in spite of this lack of gestural interaction between the earthly and heavenly spaces, Titian created a subtle connection between the saints in the lower zone and the Virgin and Child above. The two distinct halves engage with one another through an exchange of intersecting glances. Saints Nicholas, Francis, and Anthony all look up towards the Madonna. In return, the Virgin gazes down at them, thereby acknowledging their devotion.[26] In this exchange of gazes, there is an element of activity, yet, particularly on the part of the saints, it is subdued and subtle, reflecting the contemplative nature of the altarpiece.

The position of the Virgin and Child also sets this painting apart from other *sacre conversazioni* in a way that further emphasizes devotion and contemplation. In many thematically similar paintings, where the Virgin and Child are enthroned and surrounded by saints, all of the holy figures occupy a unified celestial space.[27] For example, in Giovanni Bellini's *San Giobbe* altarpiece, the saints surround the enthroned Virgin, who sits solidly in her place and exudes a sense of permanence. Unlike Bellini's *sacra conversazione,* where the saints have come to attend to the Virgin and Child in a heavenly court, the saints occupy a plain, more earthly space into which the Virgin has appeared in Titian's painting. In Bellini's altarpiece the saints have entered into the Virgin's heavenly realm. In Titian's painting, it is the Virgin who is the active figure,

hovering above the saints below. This characterization of the Virgin is furthered by the fact that she sits on a dynamic, billowing bed of clouds, her means of conveyance into the scene. The sense of the Virgin's active arrival is coupled in Titian's altarpiece with the contemplative nature of the saints and the space they occupy, which suggests that the Virgin is the object of their contemplation. However, their devotional relationship to the Virgin goes beyond that. Given that she appears to be arriving on the scene, the implication is not only that the saints are contemplating her, but that their contemplation is also the impetus behind her presence. The physical manifestation of the Virgin in the earthly space of the saints is contingent upon their meditation upon her. The Virgin's appearance on the scene is most logical if she is the object of the saints' prayers. Otherwise, the purpose of her presence in the scene would be unclear. Thus, the Virgin's appearance is dependent on the saints continued contemplation of her, which heightens the emphasis on prayerful thought that is so crucial to the message of the altarpiece.

Placed slightly below the center of this scene of devotion is Titian's signature, which originally formed a vertical axis with the Madonna and Child and the dove of the Holy Spirit. The location on a central axis of the painting draws attention to the signature and gives it a place of prominence. In signing this work, Titian chose to use the imperfect Latin *faciebat* (was making), as opposed to the perfect *fecit* (made). Titian more often used *fecit*; thus, with this deliberate choice, he was looking back to an ancient tradition that Pliny outlines, namely the notion that signing a work in the imperfect is a sign of modesty.[28] Furthermore, the use of the imperfect, which gives the sense of an ongoing activity, is also echoed by the unfinished nature of the wall. This mirroring of meaning in the incomplete architecture heightens the significance of the use of *faciebat* in the signature, and the unfinished nature of both suggests a degree of modesty.

In the context of an altarpiece interested in contemplation and devotion, it is fitting that Titian chose to use a signature that implies modesty. Just as one should be humble in his devotion and spiritual contemplation, so too is Titian humble in the way that he signs his painting. Yet, it is difficult to deny that there is an element of pride in the way that Titian has signed. He has placed his signature on a plaque directly on axis with the Virgin and Child, and, in doing so, has created a signature that is somewhat contradictory. It is modest in the wording, yet ostentatious in its placement. Titian was able to give himself a worldly recognition through the prominence of the signature, while also acknowledging the religious nature of the work through the modesty of the signature and its connection with the humble, unfinished architecture.[29]

Bearing in mind that the *Saint Nicholas* altarpiece was created for a Franciscan oratory, it seems appropriate to look to the history of the order for potential influences upon the painting. In the early sixteenth century, a divide existed in the Franciscan Order that centered on the issue of how best to follow the example of Saint Francis, specifically the vow of poverty he espoused. The friars were split between two camps, the Observants and the Conventuals. The Observants claimed to live more closely to the Rule of St. Francis, generally following his model of a life of humility and poverty, whereas the Conventuals tended to take a looser interpretation of the Rule.[30] The major point of contention in this debate was the ownership of property. Because of their role as preachers, the Franciscans were faced with the issue of ownership of such things as churches, convents, and schools. This responsibility conflicted with the strict ideal of poverty promulgated by Saint Francis and was at the core of the conflict between the Observants, who refused to own property, and the Conventuals, who took no issue with it.[31]

During the fifteenth century, the Conventuals faced a decline in popularity as the Observants grew in numbers and strength.[32] The tension between the two groups, stemming from their different approaches to the Rule of St. Francis, continued to grow, eventually embroiling the laity and various heads of state in the conflict. Finally, in 1516, Pope Leo X decided to create a commission to address the problem. The papal commission ruled in favor of a meeting

between the opposing factions.[33] The pope summoned the Franciscans to Rome in 1517, specifically referring in his summons to the complaints he had received from various secular and ecclesiastical rulers regarding the issue.[34] Although the original purpose of the meeting had been to resolve the conflict between the two factions and reunite them, the two sides were unable to reach a compromise, and the pope ultimately decided to exclude the Conventuals from the Franciscan Order.[35] However, Leo X also announced that the Conventuals could continue to exist as a separate order.[36]

Approximately a month after the pope's decision, the Conventuals and Observants in Venice reached their own agreement. As recorded in the *Diarii*, a chronicle of Venetian life by Marin Sanuto, it was decided that all the Franciscans, both the Conventuals and the Observants, would go under the cross of the Conventuals. However, this was most likely a symbolic accord and did not reflect the reality of the situation, as the Conventuals seem still to have maintained an inferior position. This is best evidenced by the changed order of the Observants and the Conventuals in processions. Public processions were an important part of Venetian public life, and typically the less important religious figures came first. Prior to this accord between the Venetian Conventuals and Observants, the Conventuals had usually come after the Observants, suggesting their greater importance. However, with this new accord, the Conventuals went before the Observants. This suggests that, despite the agreement between the two factions, the Conventuals were still in a disadvantaged position due to the decision of the pope.[37] Furthermore, although the Frari, a Conventual church, was the largest community of Franciscan friars in Venice, it had to compete with at least three other important Franciscan churches, all of which were part of the Observant faction.[38] With the Frari as the only important Conventual church in Venice and given that Titian was working for these Conventual Franciscans at San Nicolò, he certainly would have been aware of this division within the order and of the fact that the Frari was associated with the less powerful Conventual faction. [39]

Throughout this division in the Franciscan Order, the major focus of conflict between the Observants and Conventuals was the ownership of property. Their diverging views on the subject can be characterized as a division between a more worldly point of view, represented by the Conventuals and their willingness to possess property, and a more spiritual one, represented by the Observants and their avoidance of possessions. Whether the difference was as great as their eventual split made it seem, the Observants used their refusal to own property as a sign of their strict adherence to the Rule of the Franciscan Order. They asserted that they followed the spiritual life advocated by Saint Francis more closely than the Conventuals.[40] This assertion, along with the affirmation of the Observants by the pope, placed the Conventuals at a disadvantage. Although a compromise had been reached in Venice, the Conventuals, including the friars at Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, would have continued to be cognizant of the diminished position of their faction. Thus, Titian's altarpiece presented a means by which the Conventuals could counter the Observants' claim about their lax adherence to the Rule of St. Francis. Specifically, it presented the possibility of asserting the Conventuals' adherence to an existence focused on the spiritual life and not hindered by the ownership of property. Thus, the emphasis on contemplation and spirituality in Titian's altarpiece was meant to be a statement by the Conventuals that, despite the claims of the Observants, they too followed the life of humble devotion promoted by Saint Francis and had reached an acceptable compromise between a spiritual and worldly existence.

This desire on the part of the Conventuals manifests itself in both the iconographic and compositional choices made by the artist. The modest and unfinished architecture conjures up both the accusations of worldliness against the Conventuals, as well as their efforts in this altarpiece to demonstrate their spirituality in response to these criticisms. The simple nature of

the architecture suggests the idea that owning property did not preclude the Conventual friars from still leading a humble, spiritual life in accordance with the principles of Saint Francis. It was a reminder that the Conventuals continued to adhere to the basic tenets of the Franciscan Order, despite their differences with the Observant faction. It was also a way of suggesting a potential common ground with their adversary. While the Conventuals owned property, the architecture in Titian's painting suggests that their buildings were not grand and ostentatious, but followed the humble and simple lifestyle espoused by Saint Francis. Simultaneously, the architecture acknowledges the conflict over what is the appropriate lifestyle for Franciscan friars, and it suggests that Conventuals could accommodate aspects of both a spiritual and a worldly existence. As mentioned earlier, although the spiritual aspect is given precedence, there is also a suggestion of an outside world beyond the space of the altarpiece. This visual dichotomy mirrors the tension between the more spiritual, contemplative life of the Observants and the more worldly life of the Conventuals. It suggests both a degree of reconciliation between the opposing ideologies, as well as the idea that the Conventuals had found a satisfactory balance between the two.

The architecture also relates to the concerns of the Franciscan Order more broadly, as exemplified by Saint Francis himself. Saint Bonaventure's *Life of Saint Francis*, written around 1260, includes passages that relate to the rebuilding of the Church. Bonaventure recounts that Saint Francis had a vision in which a crucifix in the crumbling church of San Damiano told him to repair the Lord's house that was falling into ruin. Saint Francis interpreted this literally and repaired not only San Damiano, but three other churches as well.[41] The vision and church renovations took place at the beginning of Saint Francis's life and coincided with the beginnings of the Franciscan Order. Saint Bonaventure notes that, while Saint Francis initially was concerned with rebuilding only the physical structures of the Church, he subsequently helped renew the spiritual fabric of the Church through his preaching and exemplary life of piety.[42]

The altarpiece's unfinished architectural background thus recalls Saint Francis's mission of rebuilding the Church. The space suggests that in the sixteenth century the Franciscans continued to attempt to rebuild the Church, both physically and spiritually. As the story in Saint Bonaventure's *Life* makes apparent, there was a need for both the renovation of the physical spaces of the Church, as well as the intangible spirit of the Church. This was particularly relevant for the Conventuals, as their willingness to own property meant that they were responsible for buildings that constituted the literal fabric of the Church. In the same way that Saint Francis cared for both the concrete material and the more abstract spiritual institution of the Church, the Conventuals were also concerned with finding a compromise between the earthly, material world and the otherworldly, spiritual realm. Thus, the architectural space in Titian's panel declares that the Conventuals were continuing the work of Saint Francis by evoking a story that was a key moment in his life and aligning themselves with it.

Turning to the iconography of the altarpiece, the inclusion of the two greatest Franciscan saints, Saint Francis and Saint Anthony of Padua, was a way for the Conventuals to demonstrate that they were still tied to the beliefs of their founder and one of their most important saints, despite the Observants' belief that the Conventuals had strayed from what was originally prescribed. Furthermore, these saints, along with Saint Nicholas, the titular saint of the oratory, are given the privileged position of looking up at the Madonna. These saints are not only generally tied to the Franciscan Order, but Saint Anthony had a particular importance for the friars at the Conventual Frari. Saint Anthony had his own altar in the Frari and was the titular saint of a confraternity associated with the church. In addition, for the Conventuals, Saint Anthony stood as an exemplar, due to his role as a renowned preacher and teacher. Anthony engaged with the public through these activities and, thus, embodied the ideals of the Conventuals through

interaction with the population of the faithful. However, his significance to the Conventuals goes even further, with Francis's approval of Anthony's actions suggesting his approval of the Conventual way of life. There was a well-known letter from Francis to Anthony in which the founder of the Franciscan Order gave Anthony permission to teach theology, which was interpreted as authorization for the engagement with the public that was a part of Conventual practice.[43]

Some of the other saints were also probably chosen for inclusion by the Conventual patrons because of their special significance. For example, the presence of Saint Catherine is likely due to the fact that the Frari had a relic consisting of some unidentified bones of the martyr, and there was an altar in the church dedicated to her. Furthermore, Saint Catherine's dedication to learning, which is best exemplified by her miraculous victory over the scholars at Alexandria, made her an important saint for the Conventuals, who were similarly devoted to the pursuit of knowledge.[44] It has also been suggested that Saint Catherine, who was not present in the first version, was added to the second version because Fra Germano da Casale, the prior of San Nicolò, had a special devotion to the saint because of her erudition.[45] Saint Peter's presence also probably had special significance for the Conventual patrons. The keys so prominently displayed on his belt reference the papacy in general, as well as, possibly, the papal dispensations regarding poverty that had been granted to the Order by earlier popes and permitted the more worldly lifestyle of the Conventuals.[46] By recalling these dispensations, the Conventual friars were pointing to the legitimacy of their chosen mode of life. Thus, the iconography of the saints served the larger goal of this altarpiece, which was to justify the Conventual lifestyle, while also pointing to the faction's continued similarities to the Observants and their respect for the teachings of Saint Francis.

On a more specific level, through the inclusion of saints that were particularly important to Venice, the Conventuals of the Frari positioned themselves and their conflict with the Observants within a particularly Venetian context.[47] The sea-faring nature of the Venetian state naturally made Saint Nicholas, a patron saint of sailors, an important figure in the republic's religious life. The saint also played an important role in Venetian public life, being invoked in a number of important ducal ceremonies. The Venetians even claimed to have brought back the relics of Saint Nicholas to the city in the twelfth century, although their claim was disputed by their maritime rivals in Bari. The Frari itself claimed to have a relic of the finger of Saint Nicholas, the importance of which was heightened for the Conventual community of the Frari by the fact that the relic was presented in 1500 to the church by a leader within the Conventual faction.[48] Similar to Saint Nicholas, Saint Sebastian was a widely venerated saint in Venice. As a port city that was often subject to outbreaks of the plague, Sebastian gained widespread popularity due to his thaumaturgic powers against the plague. Saint Anthony also held significance for Venice beyond simply his association with the Frari. For example, the Franciscans referred to the province of the Veneto by the name of Saint Anthony, which probably reflected the presence of the saint's miracle-working tomb in the church of Saint Anthony in Padua, a major city in the Veneto and part of the Venetian Empire. In addition, the day of Saint Anthony's birth was believed to be March 25th, the feast day of the Annunciation, which the Venetians believed was the date of the mythical founding of the city.[49]

The inclusion of these saints that were so important to the city connected the altarpiece specifically to the Venetian Republic. As mentioned previously, the Franciscans in Venice had come to their own resolution for the conflict between the two factions in the Order, which resulted in the Conventuals occupying a less prestigious station in the city.[50] Titian's inclusion of these saints gave the altarpiece a particularly Venetian accent, which, along with the altarpiece's emphasis on a balance between worldly and spiritual concerns, suggested the compromise that

the two Franciscan factions had come to in Venice. The altarpiece did not refer to the Franciscan conflict at large, as it developed all over Italy. Rather, these saints grounded the altarpiece in the Venetian Republic and made its statement decidedly more personal for the Conventuals at the Frari.

Titian's use of the imperfect in his signature also emphasizes the Conventuals' larger agenda for the altarpiece. Titian's signature reflects a compromise between worldly and spiritual interests. Its prominent placement and the emphasis placed on it by the intersecting gazes of the saints reflect an interest in the more worldly issue of earthly recognition for one's work. Yet, at the same time, the signature's modest usage of the imperfect form *faciebat* and its position on the modest architecture of the wall suggest a consideration for the spiritual aspect of the altarpiece. Furthermore, much as Titian suggested that his work as a painter was incomplete, the Conventuals, through their evocation of Saint Francis's own rebuilding of the physical and institutional Church, implied that the business of restoring the Church, in all its manifestations, continued. Thus, Titian's signature also reflected the conflict between the Conventuals and the Observants that informed the creation of this altarpiece.

This understanding of the influence of the contemporary Franciscan conflict on the altarpiece also permits for an addition to the debate surrounding the dating of the painting. Given the various arguments, it has already been accepted that a date of 1520-25 seems most likely. However, the evident influence of the Franciscan conflict upon the altarpiece offers further evidence that the date of 1520-25 is more plausible. As I have argued, Titian deviated from the more traditional *sacra conversazione* composition that is seen in the first version in order to emphasize devout contemplation, as well as a balance between the worldly and the spiritual. The attempt to reconcile more worldly Conventual interests with those of the seemingly more spiritual Observants points to the influence of this significant Franciscan conflict. The climactic events of this rivalry occurred around 1517, sometime after the first version of the altarpiece was created, but before the second version. If this altarpiece was indeed influenced by the divide in the Franciscan Order, then it seems most likely that the altarpiece was painted earlier, around 1520-25, as this earlier date points to a moment in which this significant conflict and resolution would have still been fresh in the minds of both the commissioners at the Frari and Titian himself.

A close visual analysis of Titian's *Saint Nicholas* altarpiece illuminates how the painting emphasizes contemplation and devotion, larger ideas that can be related to the contemporary Franciscan conflict between the Observants and the Conventuals. Titian used various elements, including the architecture and the poses of the saints, to reinforce this emphasis on prayerful thought. Yet, at the same time, he also used the architecture, along with his signature, to suggest a compromise between the more worldly ideals of the Conventuals and the more spiritual interests of the Observants. The recognition of these features in the painting and their ties to the contemporary events in the Franciscan Order elucidates the driving forces behind the compositional and iconographic choices of the altarpiece. This is also not the only case in which the patrons at the Frari engaged in this promotion of the Conventual faction. As Rona Goffen argues, atop the frame of Titian's *Assunta* are situated figures of Christ, Saint Francis, and Saint Anthony. She suggests that, because of his strong ties to the Conventual faction, the presence of Saint Anthony proudly proclaims the Conventual affiliation of the Church, while also suggesting the legitimacy of the Conventual way of life. Furthermore, the placement of this figure of Saint Anthony above a scene of the Assumption, which Goffen sees as a scene of triumph, suggests the triumph of the Conventuals.[51] This argument by Goffen affirms the impulse to situate Titian's altarpiece in the context of the Franciscan conflict of the period. The ability to identify the relationship of the iconographic and compositional choices to the larger context also permits a contribution to the debate surrounding the dating of the work. The evidence of the Franciscan conflict, as seen in

the apparent desire for the Conventuals to reassert themselves as close followers of Saint Francis's rule, adds further evidence to the argument that the altarpiece should be dated around 1520-25, given the chronological proximity to the climax and resolution of the conflict in the Franciscan Order. In creating an altarpiece that manipulated the traditional *sacra conversazione* type, Titian encapsulated the fundamental tension between worldly and spiritual that characterized the opposition between the Conventual and Observant factions of the Franciscan Order. However, these opposing worldviews existed in an equilibrium that suggested that the Conventuals have found an appropriate compromise between the two. Simultaneously, the altarpiece emphasized prayer and spirituality, portraying the Conventuals as being equally as pious as their Observant counterparts, who claimed to adhere more closely to Saint Francis's example of humble devotion. Titan thus created, in conjunction with his patrons, a painting that not only served as a locus and model of devotion, the traditional function of an altarpiece, but also contained multiple subtle messages that portrayed the Conventuals and their lifestyle in a positive light.

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## Endnotes

Kathleen would like to thank Dr. Benjamin Paul of Rutgers University for his initial comments on this paper, as well as the anonymous reader, who provided invaluable suggestions. She would also like to thank Dr. Sarah Blake McHam of Rutgers University for her role as the second reader of the master's thesis. Finally, many thanks are due to the Rutgers Art History Department for its continued support of her graduate studies.

[1] Dolce praises the coloring of St. Catherine in a letter to Gasparo Ballini, and, in his *Aretino,* he praises St. Catherine, St. Nicholas, and St. Sebastian. In reference to St. Sebastian, Dolce says that Pordenone had commented, "I believe that on that nude Titian has placed flesh and not colors." Vasari also praises the painting, pointing specifically to the portrayals of St. Nicholas, St. Francis, St. Catherine, and with particular emphasis, St. Sebastian. He also mentions the beautiful rendering of the Madonna and Child. See Lodovico Dolce, *Dialogo della pittura*, in *Trattati d'arte del Cinquecento: fra manierismo e controriforma*, vol. 1, ed. by Paola Barocchi (Bari: Gius. Laterza & Figli, 1960), 203; Mark W. Roskill, *Dolce's "Aretino" and Venetian Art Theory of the Cinquecento* (New York: New York University Press, 1968), 189-91 and 209; and Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architettori*, vol. 7, ed. by Gaetano Milanesi (Florence: G.C. Sansoni, 1881), 436-37.

[2] See William Hood and Charles Hope, "Titian's Vatican Altarpiece and the Pictures Underneath," *Art Bulletin* 59, no. 4 (1977), 541 and Peter Humfrey, *The Altarpiece in Renaissance Venice* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 310. Any criticisms of execution must necessarily take into account the condition of the work, which has been moved from panel to canvas and has had extensive repainting of many of the figures. For a discussion of its condition and restoration issues, see Harold E. Wethey, *The Paintings of Titian: I. The Religious Paintings* (London: Phaidon, 1969), 108 and Hood and Hope, "Titian's Vatican Altarpiece," 541n35. In addition, Hood and Hope suggest that, while the general composition was by Titian, parts of the final version of the altarpiece were painted by Titian's brother Francesco. For a full discussion of which parts they assign to each painter, see Hood and Hope, "Titian's Vatican Altarpiece," 541-43.

[3] Hood and Hope, "Titian's Vatican Altarpiece," 534. A guidebook of 1697, which also recounts the story of the oratory's foundation, describes the oratory as having been created for the support of ten friars. The physical description of the space is minimal, but the guidebook does mention that the oratory had three altars and two bays. See Pier Antonio Pacifico, *Cronica veneta…* (Venice: Per D. Lovisa, 1697), 379-80.

[4] Around 1582 frescoes by Veronese were added to the decoration of the church. See Juergen Schulz, "Veronese's Ceiling at San Nicolò ai Frari," *Burlington Magazine* 103 (1961): 241-45.

[5] The knowledge of the *ius patronatus* of the Procuratori di San Marco de Ultra comes from a document found in the archive of the Procuratori and published by Gastone Vio in an article discussing the eventual removal of Titian's altarpiece from the church. Gastone Vio, "La Pala di Tiziano a S. Nicolò della Lattuga (S. Nicoletto dei Frari)," *Arte Veneta* 34 (1980), 211. Additionally, another figure likely involved in the commission was the prior at San Nicolò, Fra Germano da Casale. It has even been speculated that the addition of St. Catherine of Alexandria in the second version of the painting was due to his special devotion to the martyr. See Peter Humfrey, "The Prehistory of Titian's Assunta" in *Titian 500*, ed. by Joseph Manca (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1993), 229.

[6] There is some ambiguity about this small opening that sits above the cornice in line with the top of St. Nicholas's head. Von Einem identifies it as a window. See Herbert von Einem, "Tizians <<Madonna mit Sechs Heiligen>> im Vatikan," *Wallraf-Richartz Jahrbuch* 33 (1971), 99.

[7] The painting was originally sold to the British Consul, Udini, in 1770. It was then brought to Rome by Clement XIV and put in the Quirinal Palace. Subsequently, Pius VII transferred it to the Vatican. See Wethey, *Religious Paintings,* 108 and Hood and Hope, "Titian's Vatican Altarpiece," 534-36. The print of the altarpiece by Valentin Lefebvre also potentially alters the meaning of the painting through changes in the setting. Lefebvre makes the architecture seem less like an unfinished space and more like a ruin, with the addition of plants sprouting from the wall. Furthermore, in the print, the clouds upon which the Virgin sits do not enclose the space as much as they do in the painting, as more of the upper edge of the semicircular wall is visible. Generally, the alterations of the altarpiece put a greater emphasis on the figures of the saints, as they now occupy a greater portion of the painting than they originally had. However, Titian himself seems to have considered the saints to be particularly important, to the extent that he made a design for a woodcut that included only the saints situated in a modified architectural surrounding. Vasari reports that Titian designed a woodcut based upon the lower section of the *Saint Nicholas* altarpiece. The creation of this print suggests that the saints are imbued with enough meaning to stand on their own. As such, they, along with the architecture, will be the focus of this discussion of the altarpiece's potential significance. David Rosand points out that this focus on the saints made a monumental composition more accessible to the viewer, for both devotional purposes and "aesthetic delectation." Rosand also notes the one major change that Titian made between the painting and the print was in the figure of St. Sebastian. Specifically, Titian made the figure stand erect, with more articulate musculature and an extremely expressive face, likely drawn from one of the dying sons of the Laocoön. See David Rosand, "Titian's Saint Sebastians," *Artibus et Historiae* 15, no. 30 (1994), 23. In a critique of the painting, Wethey argues that the work seems overweighted on the bottom and that there is not a balance between the two zones. I would suggest that this is purposeful, as the saints are the more meaningful part of the altarpiece. Herbert von Einem also argues that the recording of the saints in a print suggests that they were of particular concern. See Wethey, *Religious Paintings*, 107 and Von Einem, "Tizians <<Madonna mit Sechs Heiligen>>," 109.

[8] The author was unable to obtain image rights for the underpainting revealed in the process of the transfer

from panel to canvas. As it was the back of the paint layer that was revealed, the composition of the painting was reversed when viewed by the restorers. However, seen from either orientation, the painting consists of the Virgin and Child on a central pedestal, with descending layers of saints on both sides. The composition is similar to Titian's *Saint Mark* altarpiece (ca. 1511/12, Santa Maria della Salute, Venice), with the figures arranged in a triangular group. However, in the *Saint Nicholas* altarpiece, there is a greater number of saints; they are on different levels; and there is generally a greater degree of dynamism. Six saints are gathered at the foot of the pedestal, on ground level. On the far left, when looking at the painting from the correct orientation, there is a warrior saint who turns his head towards the viewer. Continuing to the right, grouped together are St. Nicholas, who holds open a book, and St. Peter, who looks intently at the book Nicholas holds. The arrangement of these two saints is quite similar to their arrangement in Titian's final composition for the *Saint Nicholas* altarpiece. There are no figures directly in front of the center of the pedestal, but to the right is a pair of Franciscan saints (likely Francis and Anthony of Padua), with one figure kneeling in the direction of the Virgin and Child and the other standing. To the far right is St. Catherine of Alexandria, identifiable by her spiked wheel. Standing on the next level, directly above Catherine, is St. Sebastian, whose body is turned towards the viewer, but whose face looks towards the Virgin and Child. To Sebastian's left, there is another unidentified saint, sitting at the feet of the Virgin. To the left of the Virgin are two more unidentified saints, with one seated near the feet of the Virgin and the other standing slightly farther away. In the background there is a blue sky in the top section and a landscape below. Overall, the altarpiece maintains, to a degree, the traditional symmetrical arrangement of saints in a *sacra conversazione*, but, particularly when comparing it with Titian's earlier *Saint Mark* altarpiece, there is a greater sense of dynamism, conveyed by the twisting motions of the figures and the varied directions of their gazes. According to Vasari, the original altarpiece for San Nicolò ai Frari was commissioned from Paris Bordone; thus, von Einem attributed the unfinished version underneath to him. Von Einem, "Tizians <<Madonna mit Sechs Heiligen>>," 104.

[9] Hood and Hope, "Titian's Vatican Altarpiece," 544-48. According to Vasari, the commission was originally given to Paris Bordone, but then was taken by Titian through dubious means. Hood and Hope do not deny that Bordone may have received the original commission, but unlike previous scholars, they do not accept the attribution of the uncompleted first version to Paris Bordone. See Vasari, *Vite*, vol. 7, 462 and Hood and Hope, "Titian's Vatican Altarpiece," 544.

[10] The document to which Vio refers in his article was found in the archive of the Procuratori di San Marco de Ultra. It reads "La Pala dell'altar di San Nicolò della Lattucca, jus Patronato dell'Eccelentissima Procuratia, sin dall'anno 1514 fu opera dell'immortal Tiziano Vecelli…" See Humfrey, "Titian's Assunta," 226 and Vio, "La Pala di Tiziano," 210-11.

[11] Humfrey, "Titian's Assunta," 223 and 226. Humfrey also notes that the effects of the *Assunta*, specifically greater dynamism and gesticulations, are also visible in the *Ancona* altarpiece (1520) and the *Pesaro Madonna* (1519-26). In addition, he suggests that, having begun painting the *Saint Nicholas* altarpiece, Titian would have been in a favorable position to gain the much more important commission for the *Assunta*. See *ibid*., 226 and 229.

[12] Lucco refers to standard workshop practice at the time, in which it was customary for a panel to be prepared for a specific commission and to be tied to that commission. Thus, it seems unlikely that Titian used a panel lying around in his workshop with a different composition on it (i.e. the *Bagno*) for the *Saint Nicholas* altarpiece. He also notes that, given Vasari's description of the transfer of the commission from Bordone to Titian, there must have been ample time for Bordone to prepare the panel. Thus, it is unlikely that one would find a panel by Titian (i.e. the *Saint Nicholas* altarpiece) with another work by Titian (i.e the *Bagno*) below that was initiated prior to the commission to Bordone. See Mauro Lucco, "Note Sparse sulle Pale Bellunesi di Paris Bordon," in *Paris Bordon e il Suo Tempo* (Treviso: Canova, 1987), 163-65.

[13] Hood and Hope also try to give the *Saint Nicholas* altarpiece a later date by comparing the pyramidal composition with similar ones in Carpaccio altarpieces from 1516 and 1518 for Capdistria and Pirano. However, Humfrey points out that Alvise Vivarini had already used this sort of composition in his *Belluno* altarpiece from ca. 1485. More importantly, Vivarini had used this type of composition in his *Saint Ambrose* altarpiece (ca. 1500-10) in the Milanesi Chapel in the Frari, and the altarpiece would have been the most significant altarpiece in the church at that time, making it a potentially useful model for Titian. See Hood and Hope, "Titian's Vatican Altarpiece," 545n50 and Humfrey, "Titian's Assunta," 226 and 229.

[14] Hood and Hope, "Titian's Vatican Altarpiece," 535.

[15] *Ibid.*, 541.

[16] They note specifically the influence in the late 1520s of the Company of Divine Love and other charitable institutions in Venice, which emphasized a union with God that was created by love. They point out that similar ideas were espoused in the early 1530s by reform-minded figures like Gasparo Contarini. In relating these phenomena to Titian's painting, they state that, "The inner personal conversion typical of pre-Tridentine popular reform in Italy was nowhere so widely felt and manifestly expressed at this period as in Venice. It is therefore not surprising that an awareness of these ideas should have affected Titian's religious art in the early 1530s." See *ibid.*, 539-540.

[17] *Ibid*.

[18] Mauro Lucco's interest in discussing the dating of Titian's altarpiece derives from his desire to more accurately date a work by Paris Bordone that is related to the first version of Titian's altarpiece. Lucco also sees no argument against identifying Titian's altarpiece with a sketched out altarpiece described by Sanudo as being on display in the

cloister of the Frari. Lucco goes on to argue that the *bozzetto* that was on view in the Frari was likely that of the second version of the painting, as there is nothing in Venetian painting afterwards that reflects the first version, but, as Lucco argues, there are at least two that reflect the second version. Hood and Hope also address the problem presented by the paintings by Rocco Marconi. However, they only discuss the painting in Munich and eliminate its bearing on the dating of Titian's work by arguing that it is not by Marconi. Lucco's argument reaffirms the dating suggested earlier by Wethey, who had based his dating on a practical argument. He suggested that Titian would not have had space in his studio to let such a huge panel as the *Saint Nicholas* altarpiece remain for twenty years, which would have occurred were the panel dated later, to around 1535/40. See Lucco, "Note Sparse," 163-65; Hood and Hope, "Titian's Vatican Altarpiece," 541n35; and Wethey, *Religious Paintings*, 108.

[19] Vio, "La Pala di Tiziano," 210. As transcribed by Vio, the inscription reads: *Almae Virgini Mariae, Redemtoris Matri, Hanc Aram Frater Germanus Divi Nicolai Guardianus dicavit MDXXII*. Peter Humfrey suggests that this inscription does not necessarily mean that Titian's altarpiece had been installed, but it does suggest that Fra Germano, Titian's patron for the *Assunta*, was now concerned with finishing the altarpiece for the high altar of San Nicolò ai Frari, which was under the patronage of the Procurators of San Marco de Ultra. He also suggests that this inscription tends to support Lucco's dating of the altarpiece's completion to the first half of the 1520s. See Humfrey, "Titian's Assunta," 239n13.

[20] Humfrey, *Altarpiece,* 310.

[21] Considering the austerity of the interior of Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, it can be assumed that the interior of San Nicolò ai Frari was similarly sparse. Both buildings were erected around the middle of the fourteenth century, suggesting that the oratory would have taken on the similar Gothic style seen in the larger Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari.

[22] It would not be without precedent for Titian to consider the site of a work when conceiving of a composition. In the intervening years between the first and second versions of the *Saint Nicholas* altarpiece, Titian completed the *Assunta* (1515-18; Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice), which has often been discussed in terms of its relationship to the space around it. Contemporaneous with the final version of the *Saint Nicholas* altarpiece, Titian's *Pesaro Madonna* (1519-26; Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice) also takes into account the space around the altarpiece, making adjustments for the viewer's approach from the left side. For a more extensive discussion of this subject see David Rosand, *Painting in Sixteenth-Century Venice: Titian, Veronese, Tintoretto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 38-51.

[23] Humfrey, *Altarpiece,* 310.

[24] Figures with their backs turned to the viewer have sometimes been read as attempts to draw the veiwer in (e.g. Giotto's *Lamentation* in the Scrovegni Chapel, Padua). However, St. Anthony's position so far from the picture plane makes it unlikely that this is Titian's intention for the figure. Additionally, while Anthony could be viewed as being more active in his contemplation, given his turn towards the Madonna and Child, his acknowledgement of something outside himself in no way diminishes the very intimate, individual, and spiritual nature of his contemplation.

[25] Humfrey, *Altarpiece,* 310.

[26] Herbert Von Einem points out that the Virgin is also engaged in an act of revelation of the Christ Child, through her lifting of the cloth, a motif that became familiar through Raphael's *Madonna di Loreto* and the many copies of it. See von Einem, "Tizians <<Madonna mit Sechs Heiligen>>," 107. This action of the Virgin, beyond her simple gaze, suggests a further acknowledgement of the saints, as they seem to be the likely recipients of her revelation of the Christ Child.

[27] I use here Rona Goffen's definition of a *sacra conversazione* ("a celestial reunion of models of piety"), which makes it clear how Titian is deviating from the traditional representation by placing the saints in a clearly mundane, earthly space. See Rona Goffen , "Nostra Conversatio in Caelis Est: Observations on the Sacra Conversazione in the Trecento," *Art Bulletin* 61 (1979), 199-200.

[28] Vladimir Juren, "V. Fecit Faciebat," *Revue de l'Art* 26 (1974), 28.

[29] Rona Goffen also discusses Titian's signature, suggesting that the immodesty of the placement is compensated for by the modesty of the manner in which he signs it. She also notes the way some of the saints' gazes intersect with the signature, but does not elaborate as to a potential meaning. See Rona Goffen, *Renaissance Rivals: Michelangelo, Leonardo, Raphael, Titian* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 292.

[30] The reform movements that led to this split were not concerned with large-scale abuses in the Franciscan Order, but rather, more specifically, with adherence to the vow of poverty. However, as Raphael Huber points out, even for the Observants, who claimed to adhere more closely to the vow of poverty, "an Order as a living organization and resting on a foundation of absolute poverty as intended so ideally by St. Francis, was really an impossibility." See Raphael M. Huber, *A Documented History of the Franciscan Order (1182-1517)* (Milwaukee, WI: Nowiny Publishing Apostolate, Inc., 1944), 255-63 and John Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order: From Its Origins to the Year 1517*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 444.

[31] Saint Francis's fundamental approach to poverty, as outlined in the Sixth Chapter of his Rule, was that friars should have no lasting possesions, including homes or income. This provision applied not only to the individual members of the Order, but to the Franciscan community as a whole. The friars were intended to subsist on donations from the faithful, which could either be voluntarily given, received by request, or given in exchange for labor. See Huber, *Documented History,* 265-66 and Rona Goffen, *Piety and Patronage in Renaissance Venice: Bellini, Titian and the Franciscans* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), 4.

[32] Duncan Nimmo, *Reform and Division in the Franciscan Order (1226-1538)* (Rome: Capuchin Historical Institute, 1987), 638. The origins of the Franciscan Observants dates back to the reform efforts begun around 1368 by Paulo a Trincio. The name of Observants derives from the name given to them by the Council of Costance (1415) of "Regularis Observantiae" or "Strictae Observatiae." Paulo a Trincio was dedictaed to following St. Francis's Rule as closely as possible, without taking advantage of any papal privileges that allowed for the owning of property or other possesions. For a more thorough discussion of Paulo a Trincio and the origins of the Observants see Huber, *Documented History,* 265-85 and 481.

[33] Moorman, *Franciscan Order,* 581-82 and Huber, *Documented History*, 494.

[34] Moorman, *Franciscan Order*, 581-82.

[35] Huber, *Documented History*, 495.

[36] Moorman speculates that Leo X probably hoped that the Conventuals would take up the reforms of the Observants and eventually join them. However, this did not happen. Moorman, *Franciscan Order*, 584-85.

[37] Rona Goffen explains the conflict as it played out in the Venetian context, relying on the *Diarii* of Marin Sanuto as evidence. See Goffen, *Piety and Patronage*, 80-81. It is unsurprising that the Venetian factions reached their own accord, as Venice had a long history of distancing itself from the papacy and its attempts at control as a means of ensuring the autonomy of the Venetian Republic.

[38] The three main Franciscan Observant churches in Venice were San Giobbe, Santa Maria dei Miracoli and San Francesco della Vigna. See *ibid*., 164n5.

[39] *Ibid*., 4. For a fuller discussion of the roots of this conflict and its development throughout the history of the Franciscan Order, see Nimmo, *Reform and Division*; Huber, *Documented History*; and Moorman, *Franciscan Order*.

[40] Moorman, *Franciscan Order*, 580.

[41] Saint Bonaventure, *The Life of Saint Francis*, trans. by Ewert Cousins, in *Bonaventure* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 191-98.

[42] *Ibid*.

[43] For a full discussion of the significance of St. Anthony's importance see Goffen, *Piety and Patronage*, 90-91 and 218nn91-93.

[44] *Ibid.,* 218n93; Louis Reau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien*, vol. 3 (Paris: Presses Universitaires du France, 1955), 264; and Nimmo, *Reform and Division,* 22 and 223.

[45] Humfrey, "Titian's Assunta," 229.

[46] Huber points out that dispensations for the Franciscans to have worldly assets, assume legacies, and generally own property became necessities as the Order grew, and the papacy was willing to accommodate those needs. See Huber, *Documented History*, 267-70 and Nimmo, *Reform and Division*, 640.

[47] This brings up the question of who the intended audience of the painting was. Although located in the oratory of San Nicolò ai Frari, the painting was certainly known by people other than the friars, at least by the end of the sixteenth century. This is evidenced by references to the painting by Vasari and in a letter by Lodovico Dolce. (See note 1 above.) Thus, it seems reasonable to assume that the painting was intended to have a larger audience than just the friars of the Frari. Situating the message in a Venetian context is perhaps intended to make the painting more relevant to the Venetian audience, while also making the message most relevant for the Conventuals in Venice, as opposed to those throughout Italy.

[48] Goffen, *Piety and Patronage,* 218n93. For a more detailed discussion of the role of St. Nicholas in Venetian life, see Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 97-102.

[49] Goffen, *Piety and Patronage*, 90-91.

[50] See notes 33 and 34 above.

[51] Goffen, *Piety and Patronage*, 90-91.