The

RUTGERS ART REVIEW

Published Annually by
the Students of the
Graduate Program in Art History at
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

1991-1992
Volume XII-XIII

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The following persons generously donated funds to Volume 11 of the Rutgers Art Review. Their names were regrettably omitted from the list of contributors at the beginning of Volume 11, and we gratefully acknowledge their support of the journal:

Barbara and Roger C. Heath (Supporter)
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ISSN 0194-049X

Typeset by Aloysius A. Bauer

Printed by
Roland Offset

Articles appearing in the Rutgers Art Review *are indexed/abstracted in America:* History and Life, Artbibliographies Modern, Historical Abstracts, Répertoire d' Art et d'Archéologie, RILA, Ulrich's International Periodical Directory, *and* Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte.

The Editors of the Rutgers Art Review gratefully acknowledge the sound advise and expertise of the professional readers of papers submitted for this issue: Joan Marter and Thia Prebus.

We also thank the following individuals whose kind help has made possible the publication of Volume 12/13: M. B. Barrett, Aloysius A. Bauer, Adrienne DeAnjelis, Jenifer Farquhar, Carol Guttzeit, Doris Gynn, Connie Larezzo, Alison LiCalsi, Richard Paley, Marice Rose, Halina Rusak, Zbynek Smetana, Beryl Smith, Claire Sommer, Catherine Stimpson, Mary Torbinski, and James Zemaitis.

The Rutgers Art Review would like to extend special appreciation and gratitude to the following members of the Graduate Student Association/Graduate Publications Committee, Rutgers University: Harold Conolly, Donald Fallon, and Richard Lee. Their continued financial assistance and professional support have been crucial to the ongoing success of the RAR.

We would like to thank Andrew S. Arbury, Nancy J. Siegel, M. Elizabeth Boone, Leon Golub, Shelly F. Adams, Justin Carlino, Donald Posner, Gail Alterman, and Arnold Victor Coonin for their patience during the lengthy process of preparing this volume for publication.

Finally, our thanks go the folowing individuals, whose support and expertise have been vital to the continued publication of the RAR: Our faculty advisors, Matthew Baigell and Archer St. Clair Harvey; Rona Goffen, Chair of the Art History Department, Rutgers University; and our consulting editors, Priscilla Schwarz and Caroline Goeser.

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ARTICLES

INTERVIEWS

Spanish Catafalques in the Golden Age[1]

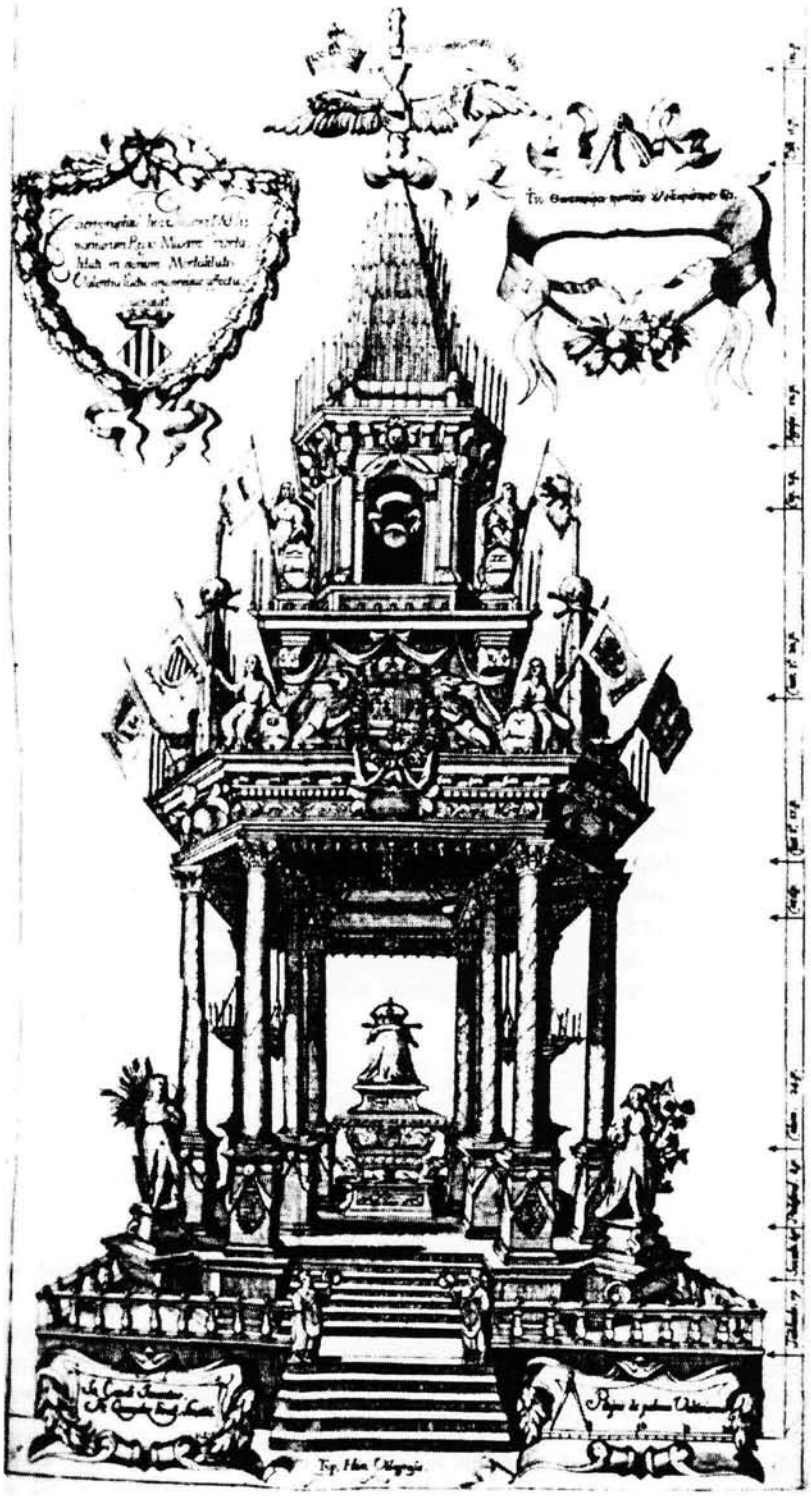
Andrew S. Arbury

By the seventeenth century it had become common to erect large sophisticated structures to commemorate the death of an important person (fig. 1). Designed to display a symbolic coffin for the deceased, these catafalques were the visual and theological focal point of elaborate obsequies involving prayers, orations, a requiem mass, and absolution rites. Their architectural forms and profuse decoration permitted complex iconographic programs that glorified the deceased person. Although they were monumental in size and took weeks or even months to construct, catafalques were temporary structures. They were completely dismantled after the memorial services. Catafalques were usually built in the crossing of a church (fig. 2), but in Spain catafalques were sometimes also erected in municipal buildings and outside in open courtyards and public squares.[2] Made primarily of wood, stucco, and canvas, these ephemeral monuments gave the impression of permanence since they were painted to simulate marble, bronze, silver, and gold. Although catafalques could be erected for any illustrious person, royal catafalques were the most spectacular and the best documented. At the peak of their development in Spain, these catafalques were large towering edifices of several storeys, sometimes reaching a total height of over 120 feet.

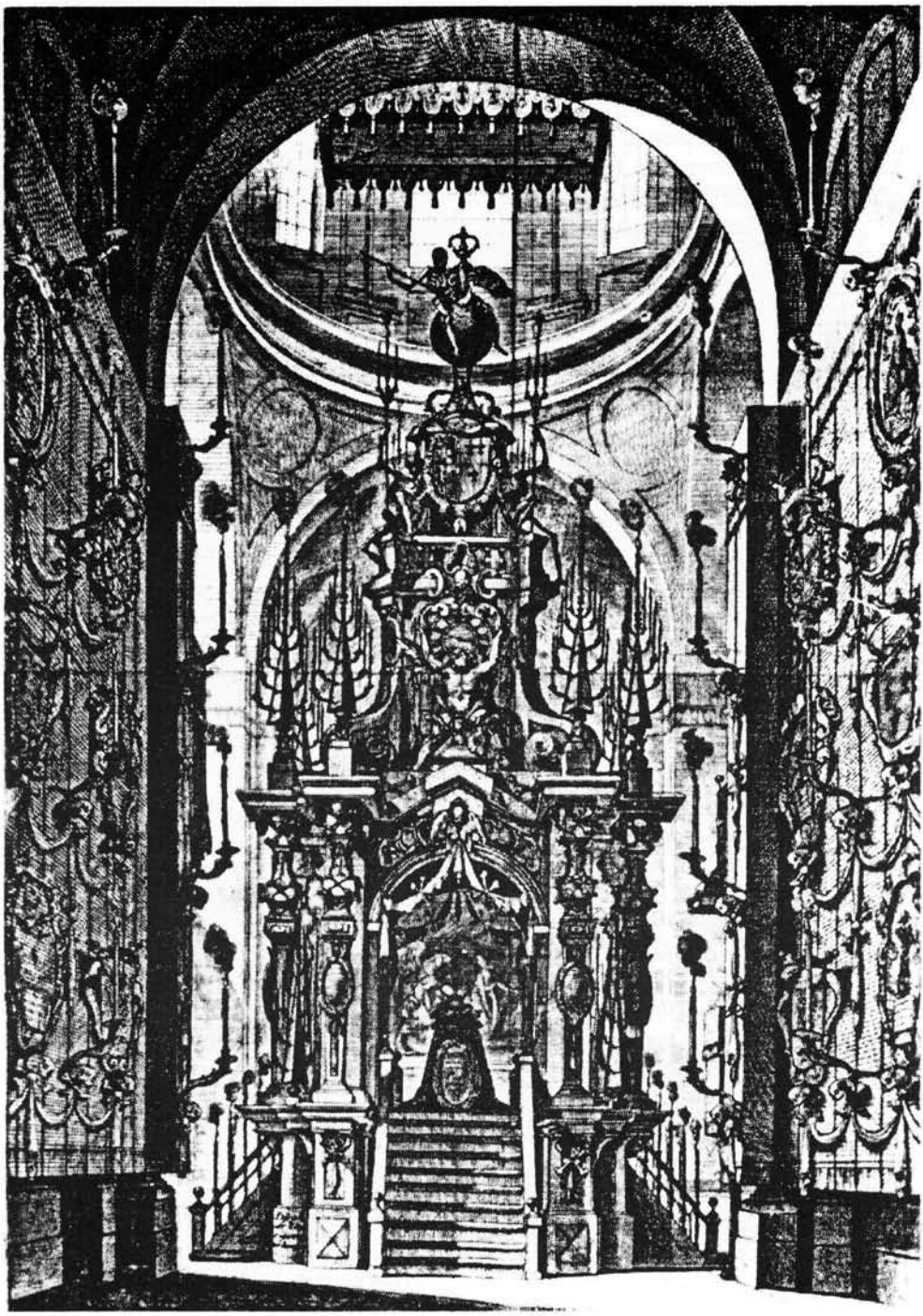
Spanish catafalques were richly decorated with painted and sculpted coats of arms, allegorical figures, portraits, and even acrostics. Banners, epitaphs, and hieroglyphs were also found in abundance. Spanish catafalques were especially noted for their extensive use of hieroglyphs, which consisted of an erudite visual emblem with a Latin lemma and an accompanying verse. For example, one such hieroglyph for the exequies of Maria of Austria used the pagan myth of the burning phoenix, the monogram of Christ, and a Biblical reference to allude to the resurrection and salvation

[1] This article derives from the research for my doctoral thesis, "Spanish Catafalques of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," now being completed for the Graduate Program in Art History at Rutgers University under the direction of Dr. Olga Berendsen. My research was generously supported by a Fulbright Scholarship and Spanish Government Grant. First and foremost, I wish to express my deep gratitude to Dr. Berendsen for her guidance and infinite patience. I would also like to thank Pat Zahniser of the Fulbright Commission in Spain for facilitating my research whenever it was possible to do so, and Antonio Bonet Correa for serving as my advisor in Spain during my tenure with the Fulbright Program.

[2] For example, the city catafalques for royalty in Saragossa were erected in the Market Square and the royal catafalques built by the University of Salamanca were erected in an open courtyard of the university.



1. Catafalque for Philip IV, Valencia, 1665 (photo: Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid)



2. Catafalque for Maria Luisa of Bourbon, Madrid, 1689
(photo: Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid)

of the soul of the deceased (fig. 3).[3] All of the catafalque's decoration served to glorify the deceased and his or her family.

Perhaps the most spectacular of the catafalque's adornment was the multitude of candles that illuminated it (fig. 4). These could number anywhere from several hundred to several thousand and varied in size from a few ounces to many pounds. Any catafalque illustration, however, had to omit most of the candles so as not to obscure the image of the catafalque itself.

In addition to the bier, sculpture, and other decoration, catafalques also housed living people. Kings-of-arms and macebearers often flanked the bier, and in many cases there was seating on the first tier for the officiating clergy. And hidden within the catafalques' enclosed spaces were men ready with buckets of water in case of fire, an ever-present danger with so many burning candles.

Because they no longer exist, the primary sources for Spanish catafalques are descriptions contained in contemporary funeral books published shortly after the exequies. These books sometimes also contain an engraving of the catafalque. Unfortunately, such visual imagery is much rarer in Spain than in other countries.[4] Furthermore, the authors of the funeral books were usually not architects and their descriptions often leave much to be desired. Not infrequently, a catafalque description is ambiguous, incomplete, or incorrect. And even if both a description and an engraving survive, they may contradict each other.

[3] These exequies took place in Madrid in 1603. The Latin motto above the image of the sun reads, "Sic ut dies phaenicis dies mei." [As are the days of the phoenix so are my days.] The motto refers to Job 29:18, "...I shall die in my nest, and I shall multiply my days as the sands." The Spanish verse below reads,

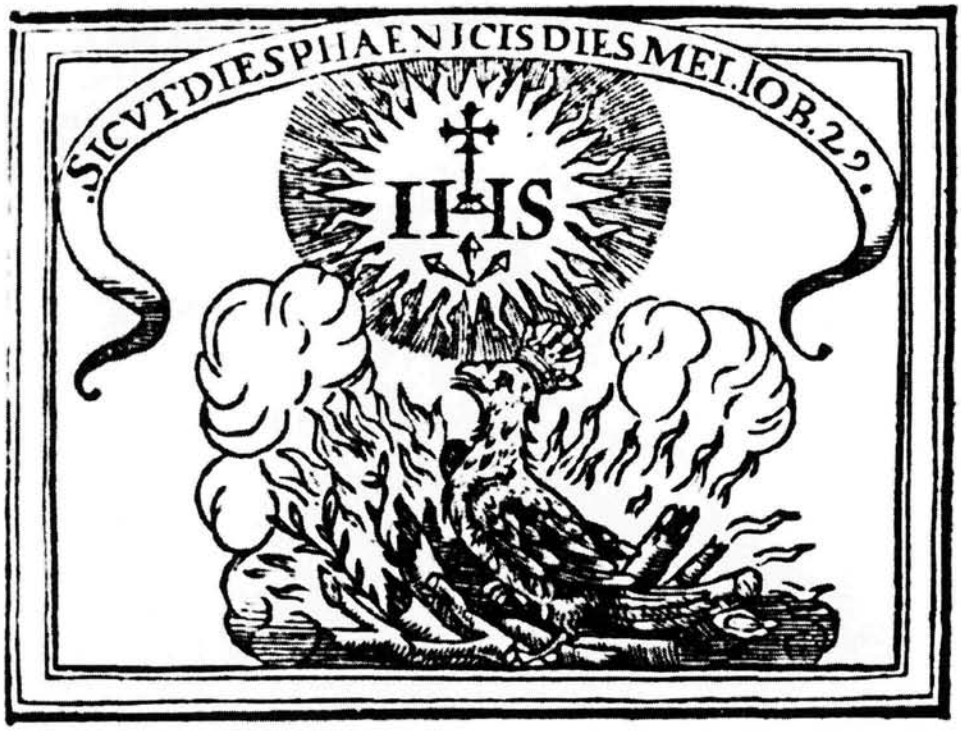
Con essos hermosos rayos,
Que rayan en tus cenizas
Te renuevas y eternizas

[With these beautiful rays
That shine upon your ashes
You will be renewed and become eternal]

This and the other 35 hieroglyphs were printed in the funeral book: Libro de las honras qve hizo el Colegio de la Cõpañia de Iesvs de Madrid, à la M.C. de la Emperatriz doña María de Austria, fundadora del dicho Colegio, que se celebraron a 21. de Abril de 1603 (Madrid, 1603). The fact that the hieroglyphs were engraved rather than the catafalque indicates the importance attached to them.

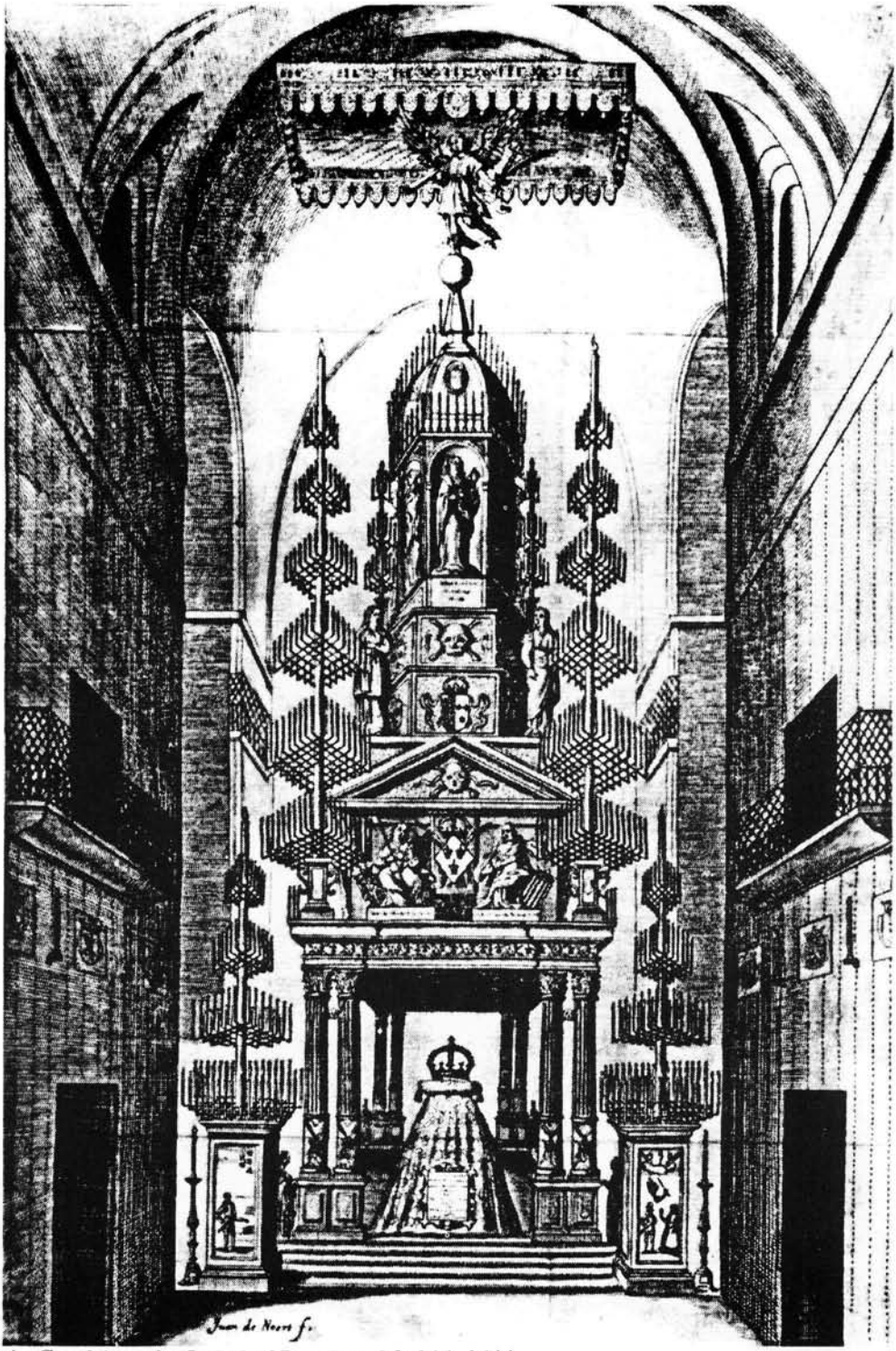
[4] This is probably in part because there was no national school of quality engravers in Spain and because often there were not enough funds to commission an engraving. Also, the high cost of paper in Spain tended to inhibit printmaking.

De la Emperatriz. 49



Con essos hermosos rayos,
Que rayan en tus cenizas,
Te renueuas y eternizas.

3. Hieroglyph for the catafalque for Maria of Austria, Madrid, 1603 (photo: Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid)



4. Catafalque for Isabel of Bourbon, Madrid, 1644
(photo: Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid)

A few art historians have discussed the catafalques of other countries, first and most notably Olga Berendsen with her research on Italian catafalques.[5] And Spanish catafalques have also received a growing amount of attention, two of the more recent publications being John Beldon Scott's article on the Saragossan catafalques for Philip II[6] and Steven Orso's study of the exequies for Philip IV in Madrid.[7] But research on Spanish catafalques has been limited to studies of a single catafalque, or a single group of catafalques.[8] My own research encompasses all the known catafalques of the entire Hapsburg era in Spain.

Precisely when or how the catafalque developed is not clear, although the form and symbolism of other structures, both ephemeral and permanent, contributed to its conception. Closest in religious function to the catafalque was its medieval predecessor, the capella ardente, a hearse-like scaffolding of burning candles over a bier (fig. 5). But catafalques consciously evoked other architectural forms such as funeral monuments, baldacchinos, altar tabernacles (fig. 6), and triumphal arches, and embodied their respective symbolic connotations of death, honor, salvation, and triumph. Two other structures found especially in Spain that have long been associated with catafalque design are custodias (fig. 7) and Easter monuments (fig. 8), both of which temporarily housed the Host during certain religious occasions.

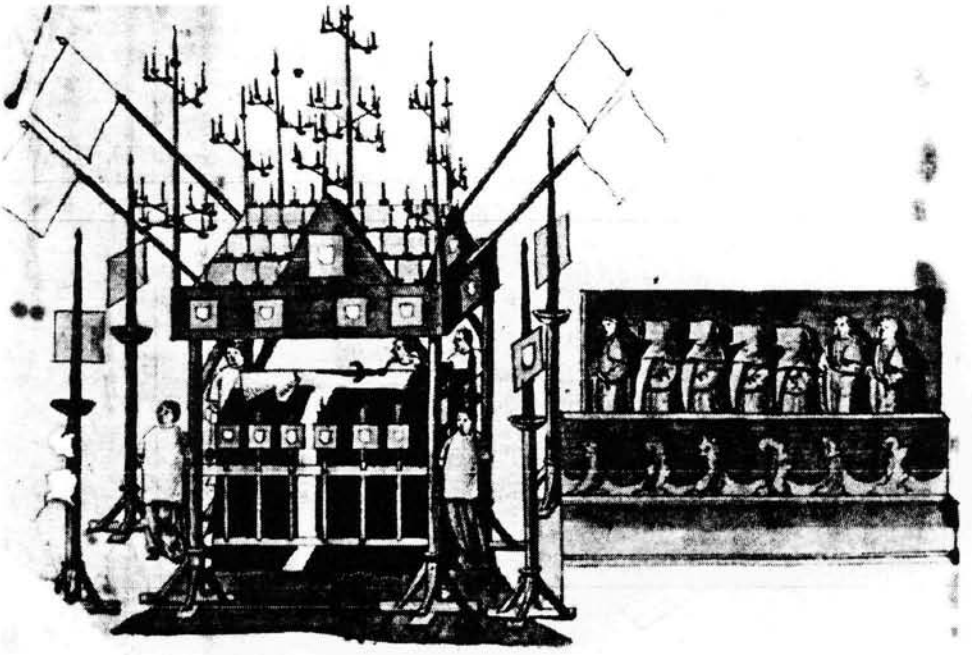
Another source is the ancient Roman funeral pyre known from literary

[5] O. Berendsen, "The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Italian Catafalques" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1961). Literature about catafalques in general is practically non-existent prior to the mid-twentieth century. The only two seventeenth-century books dealing with contemporary exequies are A. Meerbeeck, Théâtre Funèbre, en sont representéez les funérailles de plusieurs princes (Brussels, 1622) and C. F. Menestrier, Des décorations funèbres... (Paris, 1684). Twentieth-century literature on catafalques is too extensive to list here. In addition to Berendsen, some of the other important studies are: M. Brix, "Trauergerüste für die Habsburger in Wien," Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte, 26 (1973), 208-265; B. Chabrowe, 'Catafalques,' in "Baroque Temporary Structures Built for the Austrian Habsburgs" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1970); J. Chroscicki, Pompa funebris (Warsaw, 1974); J. Helfertová, "Castra doloris doby barokní v Cechách," Umení, 22 (1974), 290-308; F. Maza, Las piras funerarias en la historia y en el arte de México (Mexico, 1946); and L. Pouncey, "Túmulos of Colonial Perú," Art Bulletin, 67 (1985), 18-32.

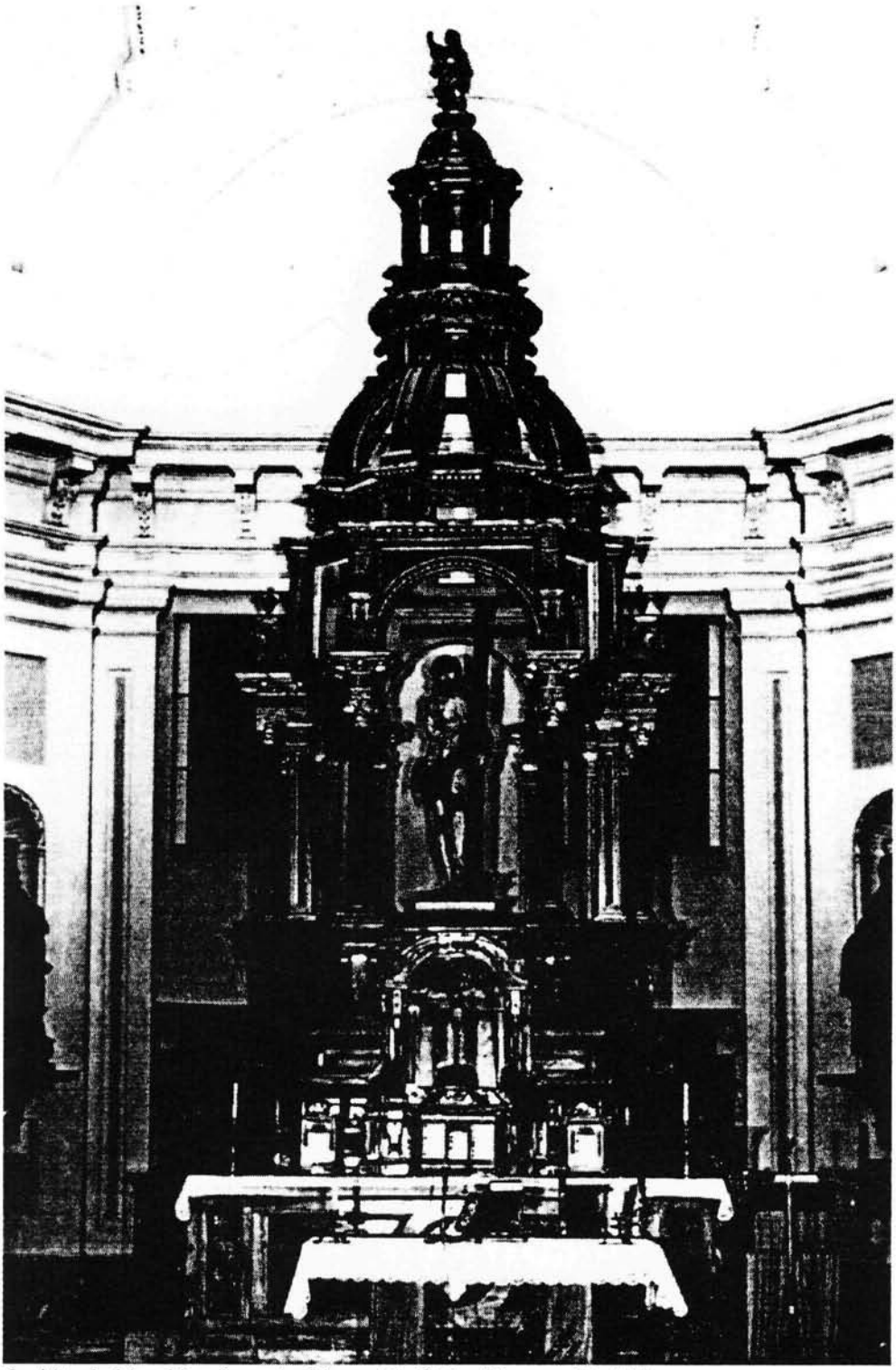
[6] J. B. Scott, "The Catafalques of Philip II in Saragossa," Studies in Iconography, 5 (1979), 107-134.

[7] S. Orso, Art and Death at the Spanish Habsburg Court. The Royal Exequies for Philip IV (Columbia, MO, 1989).

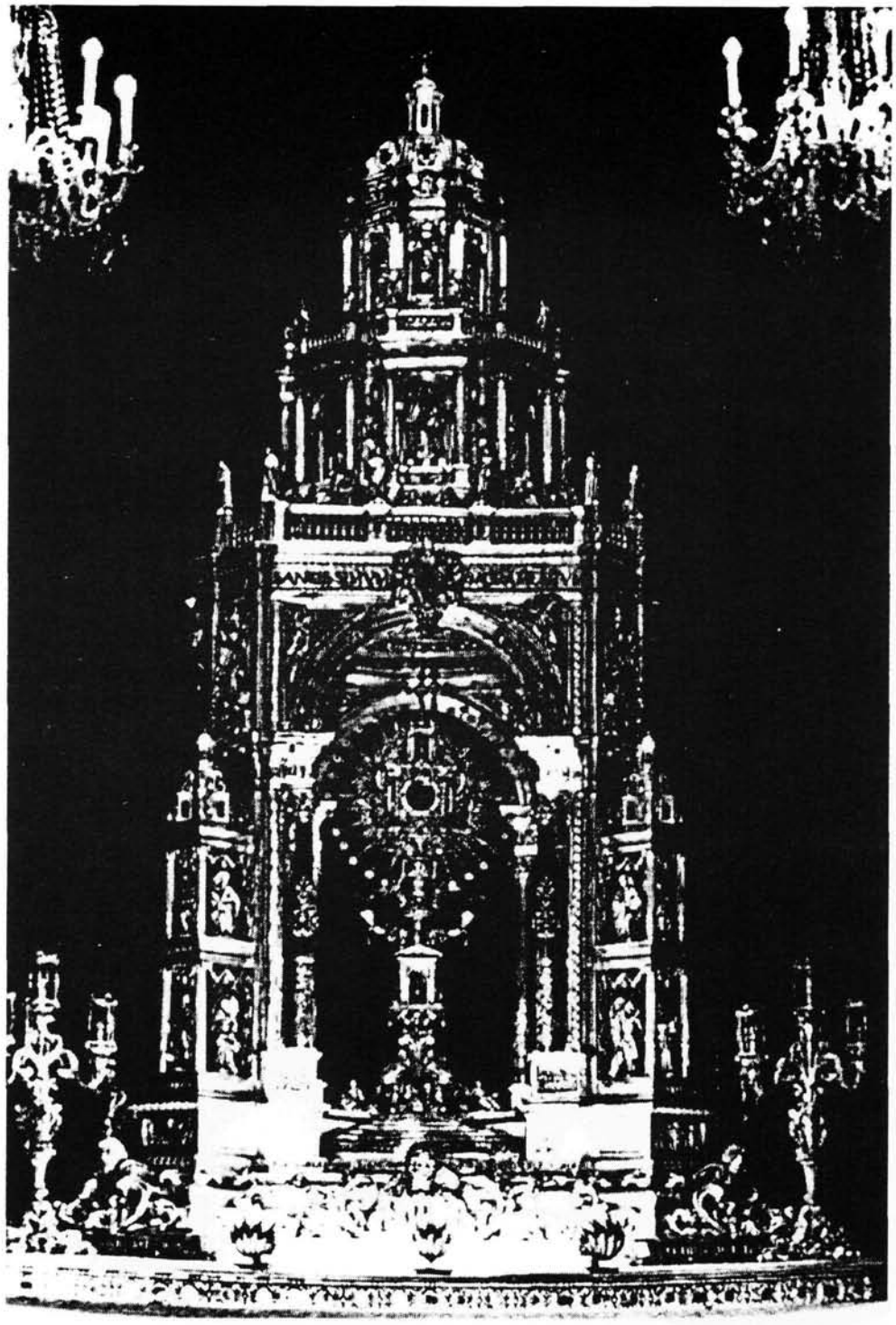
[8] A complete bibliography for Spanish catafalques is too large to list here. A few of the other notable publications are: J. J. Abella Rubio, "El túmulo de Carlos V en Valladolid," Boletín del Seminario de Estudios de Arte y Arqueología, 44 (1978), 177-200; A. Allo Manero, "Honras fúnebres de Felipe IV en Salamanca," Cuadernos de Investigación Historia, 8 (1982), 33-47; A. Bonet Correa, "Túmulos del emperador Carlos V," Archivo Español de Arte, 33 (1960), 55-66; V. Lleó Cañal, "Los túmulos reales," in Nueva Roma: Mitología y humanismo en el renacimiento sevillano (Seville, 1979); L. Pérez del Campo, "Arquitectura funeraria efímera en Málaga (1550-1650)," Boletín de Arte, nos. 4-5 (1984), 157-178; V. Pérez Escolano, "Los túmulos de Felipe II y de Margarita de Austria en la catedral de Sevilla," Archivo Hispalense,60 (1977), 149-176; and C. Saenz de Miera, "Túmulos madrileños del siglo XVII," Anales del Instituto de Estudios Madrileños, 21 (1984), 37-43.



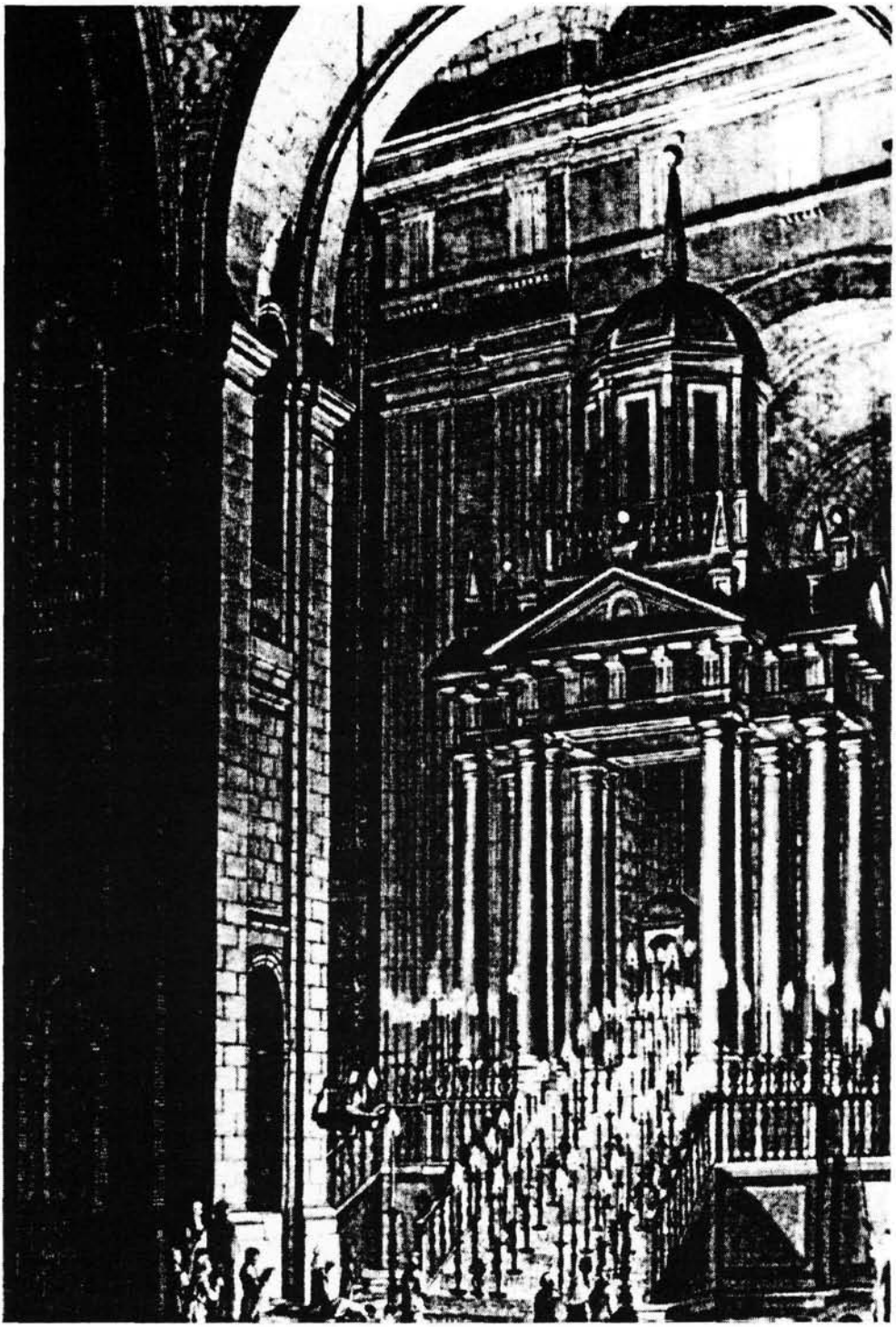
5. Capella ardente (photo: Bibliotheque Royale, Brussels)



6. Altar baldacchino from the Venerable Orden Tercera, Madrid



7. Custodia from the Valencia cathedral



8. Spanish Easter monument for Holy Week (photo: Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid)

descriptions by early historians such as Dio Cassius[9] and Herodian,[10] and from visual sources such as Roman coins[11] and ivory diptychs.[12] Furthermore, these pyres were illustrated in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century treatises on ancient funeral rites (fig. 9).[13] The pyre displayed an effigy of the Roman emperor and was the symbolic vehicle of his apotheosis as it burned.[14]

Traditionally, the first catafalques were thought to have been those erected throughout the empire for Charles V in 1558. Spanish scholarship dates the appearance of catafalques to the late 1530s in Spain,[15] but I have found evidence of catafalques being erected even earlier.[16] In any event, the introduction of the catafalque structure is surely connected with the Hapsburgs, their Burgundian court etiquette, and their political desire to emulate the august funeral practices of antiquity.

[9] Dio Cassius The Roman History bk. 56, secs. 34, 42, and bk. 75, secs. 4-5.

[10] Herodian History of the Roman Empire bk. IV, chap. II. See also Polybius The Histories bk. VI, secs. 53-54; Tacitus The Annals bk. I, sec. 8; Suetonius The Twelve Caesars bk. I, sec. 84, and bk. II, sec. 100; Appian Roman History "The Civil Wars" bk. I, sec. 106, and bk. II, secs. 144-147. For an in-depth discussion of Roman funerary rites see J.M.C. Toynbee, Death and Burial in the Roman World (Ithaca, 1971), chap. III; J.-C. Richard, "Researches sur certains aspects du culte impérial: Les funérailles de empereurs Romains aux deux premiers siècles de notre ère," Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt,2 (1978), 1121-1134; and J. Arce, Funus Imperatorum: los funerales de los emperadores romanos (Madrid, 1988).

[11] For example, funeral pyres are shown on the reverses of two sesterce coins now in the British Museum, London. They are illustrated in Toynbee, figs. 15 and 16.

[12] An example is a 5th-century ivory diptych showing the apotheosis of a Roman emperor (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York). It is illustrated in K. Weitzman, et al., The Age of Spirituality (New York, 1978), 70.

[13] The first to write about ancient funeral ceremonies was L. G. Giraldi, De Sepulchris et vario sepeliendi ritu Libellus (Basel, 1539). Later authors include C. Guichard, Funérailles et diverses manières d'ensevelier de Romains, Grecs, et autres nations, tant anciennes que modernes (Lyon, 1581); O. Panvinio, De Ritu sepeliendi Mortuos Apud Veteres Christianes (Frankfurt, 1581); T. Porcacchi, Funerali Antichi Di diuersi Populi et Nationi... (Venice, 1591); G. Porrò, Funerali sepolture et pompa degli antichi Romani et vestali et imperatori (Venice, 1591); J. van Meurs, De funere Liber Singularis In Quo Graeci et Romani Ritus (The Hague, 1604); J. Kirchmann, De Funeribus Romanorum (Hamburg, 1605); F. Perucci, Pompe funebri di tutte le nationi del mondo (Verona, 1639); G. Giovanni de Rossi, Libro de catafalchi, tabernacoli... (Rome, 1670); and P. Muret, Cérémonies funèbres de toutes les nations (Paris, 1679).

[14] For a discussion of the catafalque as a revival of the ancient Roman funeral pyre see Berendsen, 15-18.

[15] These would be the catafalques in Granada and Seville for Empress Isabel in 1539. See Bonet Correa, 57-58, and Lleó Cañal, 132, 180.

[16] One of the earliest appears to be that for Cardinal Pedro González de Mendoza in the Toledo Cathedral in 1495. See Relación svmaria de la manera que se celebraron el enterramiento, y honras de el Illustríssimo señor don Pedro Gonçalez de Mendoça, gran Cardenal de España (N.p., n.d.).

9. Ancient Roman funeral pyre (photo: Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid)

With this general background, I would like to discuss the catafalque constructed for Philip III in Saragossa in 1621 (fig. 10).[17] It is important to note that Saragossa is located in the Spanish kingdom of Aragon (fig. 11), where Philip III of Castile was known as Philip II of Aragon.[18] The catafalque was erected outside in the market square and it was large, nearly 90 feet tall.[19] Its base was adorned with some two dozen hieroglyphs and numerous epitaphs. At the corners were four obelisks topped with balls. Flanking the stairs stood large statues of Caesar Augustus and Numa Pompilius. On the back side were statues of Janus and Alexander the Great. The trabeated first tier was an open structure defined by eight Tuscan pillars. They were arranged in the form of a Greek cross and supported an entablature topped with a candle-bearing balustrade.

Inside this tier was a Doric baldacchino that housed the bier with a royal crown and sceptre on it. Four kings-of-arms and four macebearers attended the bier. Surrounding the baldacchino were four allegorical figures dressed in mourning.

Atop the cornice directly over the pillars below were tall pedestals that supported numerous candles. The pedestals themselves were decorated with the arms of the various realms of Aragon. These included the Spanish kingdoms of Valencia and Mallorca, and the principality of Catalonia; the Italian possessions of Naples, Sicily, and Sardinia; and the nominal kingdom of Jerusalem.[20] Between the pedestals on the lateral sides stood four figures of Death, portrayed as crowned skeletons carrying scythes and banners.

The second tier was also trabeated. Octagonal in plan, it was defined by eight Ionic pillars. Allegorical figures occupied the open spaces between pillars. They were: the three theological virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity (which are seen in the engraving); the four cardinal virtues of Fortitude, Justice, Temperance, and Prudence; plus Religion. Eight obelisks with balls were situated atop the cornice at points directly over the pillars below. This tier was capped by a small dome and an obelisk.

The overall color scheme was black with certain figures and details picked out in white. Few of the many candles and none of the 24 hieroglyphs that adorned the base of the catafalque are seen in the engraving.

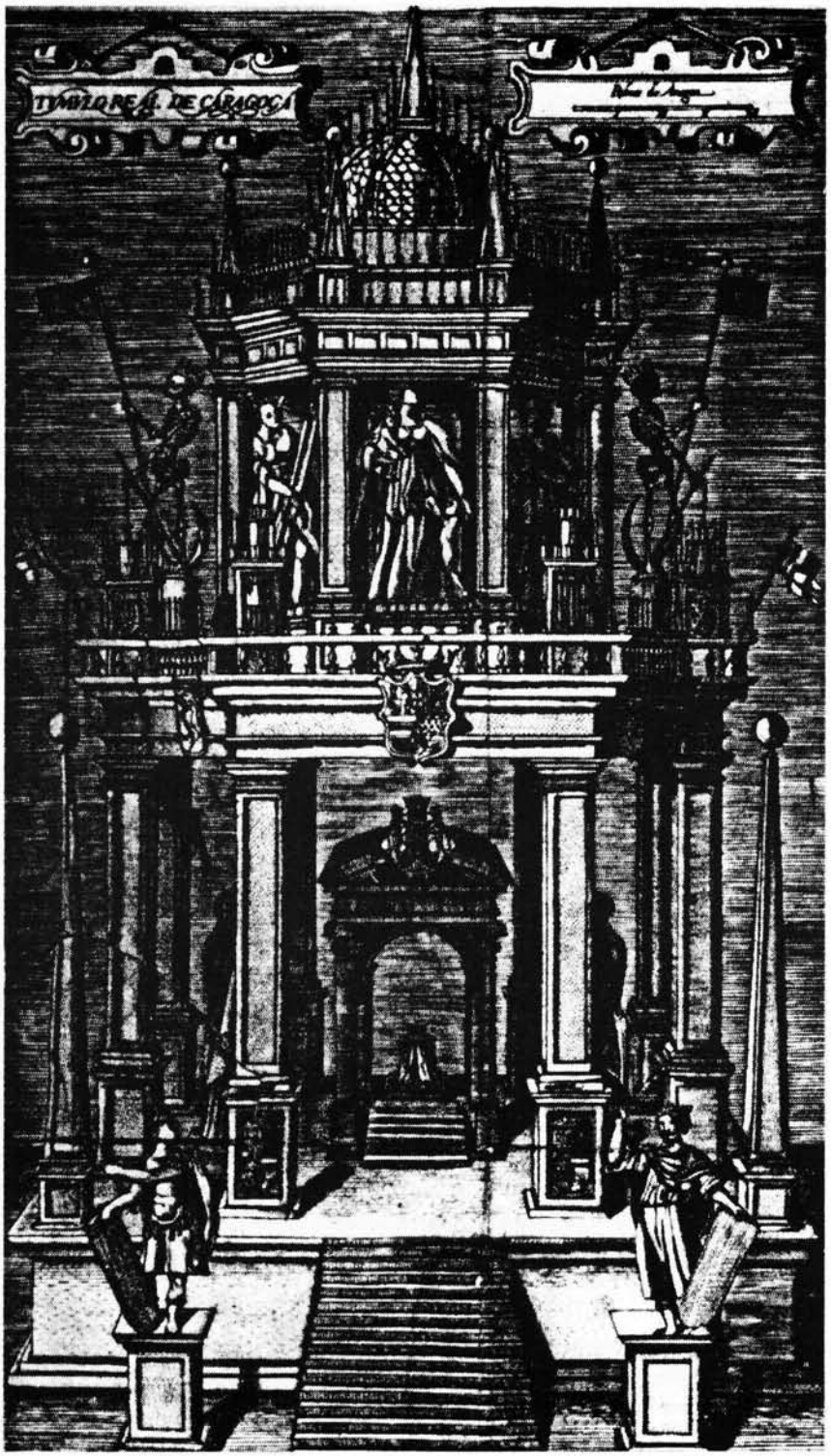
Although the basic symbolism of architectural forms eventually gave way to mere convention by the eighteenth century, it was still relevant in the early seventeenth century. As with most catafalques, the structure was a symbolic sepulchre. And with

[17] This catafalque is briefly discussed in J. F. Esteban Llorente, "Una aportación al arte provisional del barroco zaragozano: Los capelardentes reales," in Francisco Abbad: a su memoria (Zaragoza, 1973), 40-42; in J. F. Esteban Llorente, "Mensaje simbólico de las exequias reales realizadas en Zaragoza en la época del barroco," Seminario de Arte Aragonés, 34 (1981), 123 passim; and it is mentioned in S. Sebastián, Contrarreforma y barroco (Madrid, 1981), 107.

[18] Philip I of Castile (Philip III's great-grandfather) died before he inherited the Aragonese throne. Therefore, the first king Philip of Aragón was Philip II of Castile. Hence, Philip III of Castile was Philip II of Aragón.

[19] All details are taken from P. Rajas, Lágrimas de Ç aragoça en la mverte de Filipo, Rey II. de Aragón deste apellido, y exeqvias, que, con aparato Real a su memoria celebró (Zaragoza: Juan de Lanaja y Quartenet, 1621), 50-109, and from L. Ybañez de Aoyz, "Ceremonial y brebe Relación de todos los Cargos y Cosas ordinarias de la Diputación del Reyno de Aragón," Ms. 199, Biblioteca de la Universidad, Zaragoza, fols. 294v-298r.

[20] The Latin kingdom of Jerusalem was taken from the Christian Crusaders by the Muslims in 1187, but its kingship remained a nominal title until the twentieth century.



10. Catafalque for Philip III, Saragossa, 1621 (photo: Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid)

11. Map of Spain showing Aragón

its hundreds of burning candles it clearly alluded to the ancient Roman funeral pyre and its connotations of apotheosis. The progression from square base to octagonal upper tier and circular dome can be seen as the transit from the earthly domain to the heavenly one; that is, the path Philip III's soul was to take after death. Quaternity is associated with the terrestrial and the human condition.[21] At the square base and cruciform first tier levels were the four statues of ancient earthly leaders, the four allegorical mourners, the four kings-of-arms, and the symbolic mortal remains of Philip III. Eight is the number of resurrection and rebirth.[22] Thus, the octagonal second tier represents the ultimate resurrection and eternal salvation of Philip's worthy soul -- worthy because of his many virtues, which were clearly indicated on this tier in the guise of allegorical figures. The dome, of course, represents the dome of heaven,[23] appropriately crowned by an obelisk.

Obelisks were rich in meaning and have both Christian and pagan sources. In the first book of Maccabees they were funeral monuments erected by Simon for his relatives.[24] They were also general testimonies to fame and glory as stated by Ripa in his Iconologia.[25] Here they were more directly associated with the immortality of the ancient pharaohs and thus symbolized the eternal life of Philip's soul.[26] In addition, they probably also alluded to Philip's just rule. This is the meaning of an emblem from a contemporary Spanish emblem book.[27] The presence of the balls atop the obelisks goes back to ancient Rome.[28] Their original purpose is not clear, but by the Middle Ages they were thought to contain the ashes of the caesars.[29] This idea persisted even after it was discovered to be false in 1586,[30] and in general, the balls on catafalque

[21] C. Butler, Number Symbolism (New York, 1970), 11ff.; J. C. J. Metford, Dictionary of Christian Lore and Legend (London, 1983), 183; J. L. Morales y Marín, Diccionario de iconología y simbología (Madrid, 1984), 111-112; and C. Ripa, Iconologia (Rome, 1603), 423. The symbolism can be traced back to Plato's Timaeus and St. Augustine's De Civitas Dei.

[22] G. Ferguson, Signs and Symbols in Christian Art (Oxford, 1954), 154; Metford, 90; and Morales y Marín, 242.

[23] K. Lehman, "The Dome of Heaven," Art Bulletin, 27 (1945), 1-27, and E. Smith, The Dome: A Study in the History of Ideas (Princeton, 1950).

[24] I Maccabees 13:28.

[25] Ripa, 189-192.

[26] Rajas, 52.

[27] S. de Covarrubias, Emblemas morales (Madrid, 1610), Centuria II, emblem #49. The verse accompanying the emblem compares a person who is just to a stable obelisk.

[28] The use of balls on obelisks seems to be a Roman invention stemming from a tradition begun in 10 B.C. with the erection in the Circus Maximus in Rome of an Egyptian obelisk dedicated to the sun. See E. Iversen, Obelisks in Exile (Copenhagen, 1968), 65.

[29] This was due to a misunderstanding of Suetonius' De vita Caesarum.

[30] In 1586 the ball was removed from the Egyptian obelisk being erected in the Piazza S. Pietro in Rome and examined. It was found to contain only dust and earth which had seeped in through musket holes made during the sack of Rome in 1527. Filipo Pigafetta did the laboratory tests and published his results in 1586. See P. Tompkins, The Magic of Obelisks (New York, 1981). 26, and Iversen, 32.

obelisks were symbolic receptacles for the ashes of the deceased.[31] This meaning ties in well with the idea of the catafalque as funeral pyre.

The state of the local economy and local politics are often evident from a catafalque and that is the case here. The Jesuit author of the funeral book, Paulo Rajas, tells us that the first tier was very open not only for aesthetic reasons, but also because there simply was not enough wood available.[32] Local propaganda and the politics between the Crown of Aragon and the Hapsburg monarchy were subtly indicated in the catafalque's decoration and in the text of the funeral book. Aragon was a separate and proud kingdom within the Hapsburg domains. It had its own laws and customs and this sometimes caused friction with Castile. In fact, there had been an uprising of the Aragonese nobility in 1591, during the previous reign of Philip II. It was quickly crushed by Philip II's Castilian troops.[33] Thus, Philip II was not the most beloved of Aragonese kings. Philip III, however, was much more respected. This was because Philip III tried to create goodwill towards Aragon at the very beginning of his reign. In 1599 he personally visited Saragossa where he granted a general pardon and confirmed the rights and privileges of the Crown of Aragon.[34] He also chose an Aragonese as his personal confessor.[35]

The greater affection for Philip III is indicated both in the catafalque and in the funeral book. The latter is effusive in its almost endless praise of Philip III. The king is continually referred to as "father" and the people of Aragon as his "children." His respect for their laws is lauded and contrasted with the suspicion and threats of earlier kings. His father, Philip II, is largely ignored and does not receive the usual praise given to a king's predecessors. Philip II also suffers ill comparison in one of the catafalque hieroglyphs that illustrates the tale of Phaeton. The imagery of Phaeton falling from his father's sun chariot was taken from Alciati's Emblemata (fig. 12). The explanation given blames not so much Phaeton for taking on more than he could handle, but the father, Helios, for allowing it to happen.[36] Since Helios-Apollo imagery was clearly associated with Philip II, as evinced by his personal impresa (fig. 13), the unstated message seems evident.

Because of Aragon's political autonomy, statues of former Castilian kings or of figures representing the kingdoms of Castile were not seen as they often were on other Spanish catafalques. Instead, there were the four more neutral statues of the ancient rulers Augustus, Numa, Janus, and Alexander. The statues maintained a thematic unity with the catafalque's hieroglyphs, which also dealt with figures from antiquity. Rajas states that they were a new idea for a catafalque and he justifies their pagan presence by

[31] For example, the balls on the four obelisks of Philip II's catafalque in Seville represented the containers for the ashes of his four wives. See F. G. Collado, Descripción del túmulo y relación de las exequias que hizo la ciudad de Sevilla en la muerte del rey don Felipe segundo (Seville, 1869), 117.

[32] Rajas, 51.

[33] J. Lynch, Spain under the Habsburgs, 2d ed. (New York, 1984), 357-364, and J. H. Elliott, Imperial Spain 1469-1714 (Harmondsworth, 1963), 277-284.

[34] Rajas, 10, 14-15.

[35] The man selected was Luis de Aliaga (1560-1630). He was later appointed Inquisitor General of the Spanish Inquisition. See "Aliaga (Luis)," Enciclopedia universal ilustrada (Madrid, 1958).

[36] Rajas, 189-192.

12. Emblem # LVI from Alciati's Emblemata

13. Impresa of Philip II (photo: Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid)

the virtues they represent.[37] And for the wary Catholic purist, Rajas also cunningly notes that the pagan statues were not actually on the catafalque, but around it.[38] These four figures not only glorify Philip III as having their virtuous qualities, but one also promotes Saragossa as well. Augustus was famed for promoting peace in the Roman empire, just as Philip III had done in Aragon. The comparison is all the more forceful because Caesar Augustus was considered the founder of Saragossa and the city bears his name.[39] Numa Pompilius was the second king of ancient Rome, just as Philip III (whose Aragonese title was Philip II) was the second King Philip to rule Aragon. Numa was also known for maintaining peace during his reign. Furthermore, he established the rites of religion which were ultimately transmitted to the Christian era and upheld by the most Catholic king, Philip III. Janus, yet another arbiter of peace, was shown with two faces — one looking back, one looking forward, as Philip had done with his Aragonese policy. Like these great rulers from antiquity, Philip III had the reconciliation of his subjects at heart and managed to keep the symbolic doors of Janus' temple closed in peace. In return for Philip's fair treatment of the Aragonese, Saragossa erected a catafalque that made this manifest, and by so doing, demonstrated that kingdom's loyalty to the Hapsburg crown. And like Alexander, Philip III also deserved the apellation, "Great," for his Spanish empire was even greater in extent than Alexander's.

Theologically, the catafalque for Philip III can be compared to monumental receptacles for the Host (fig. 8). It is remarkably similar in form to the huge Easter monuments, or monumentos, that were erected in Spain to house the Host during Holy Week. The similarities between these structures and catafalques are obvious and were first noted in the sixteenth century.[40] In fact, Spanish catafalques were often called monumentos. Both the Easter monument and the catafalque were large, ephemeral structures that displayed a symbolic representation of a dead person. Since the Easter monument housed the Host during the celebration of Christ's entombment and resurrection, it was considered a temporary sepulchre for Christ's body, just as the catafalque was a temporary symbolic sepulchre for Philip III. The comparison is particularly appropriate for a Spanish king of Aragon who was considered a vigorous defender of the Catholic faith and the nominal king of Jerusalem, one of the kingdoms of Aragon whose arms were seen on the catafalque. Furthermore, it was from a tomb that Christ was resurrected to everlasting life, just as the catafalque served as a symbol of the ultimate resurrection and eternal salvation of Philip's soul.[41]

[37] Rajas, 110-114.

[38] Rajas, 112.

[39] The name, Saragossa, is derived from its ancient name, Caesaraugusta.

[40] Collado, 3.

[41] See Scott, 126, for an iconographic comparison of catafalques and custodias.

From this brief example, we can see that as a revival of ancient forms and rituals; as political propaganda; and as religious monuments signifying the eternal salvation of the deceased; catafalques are valuable historical, political, and religious documents for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This is particularly true in Spain where catafalques differed significantly in architectural form, decorative ornamentation, and symbolic content from those erected in other countries. Spanish catafalques exhibited a unique synthesis of pagan iconography, Hapsburg politics, and Catholic theology. Despite their physical ephemerality, Spanish catafalques will have a permanent influence on our further understanding of Spanish society during the Hapsburg era.

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An Artist Patronized - The Abstract Paintings of Katherine S. Dreier[1]

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A dichotomy is present in the placement of Katherine Dreier within the modernist movement in American art. While her position within the art world has been validated as a patron of the arts and as a collector, her efforts as a painter have been pushed aside in the existing literature and there is no comprehensive visual analysis of her development as an artist. It would appear that an active/passive set of criteria has been established by writers, scholars and critics for the inclusion of this woman within the roll-call of modernist participants. Such a dichotomy of characterization, patron versus artist, is a divisive approach to an assessment of Katherine Dreier's contribution. Noted as the founder of the education-oriented Société Anonyme, her strong will and almost missionary approach to bringing an understanding of modern art to an American audience in the 1920's appears to dominate the literature about her. However, the more aggressive act of being included as an abstract painter within an essentially male dominated territory has been subverted and she has been relegated to the role of mother or caretaker of the modernists. A curious note seems to be the apparent lack of friction between this strong-minded, assertive, American woman within a circle of strong-minded, assertive, European men. Thus, it would appear that this woman's role in modern art was to proselytize but not to practice. However, Katherine Dreier crossed the established boundaries through her actions and her art. One must remember too that Dreier's participation as a patron of modernism took place during its earliest phases of introduction to the American public after the Armory Show of 1913 while her own painting did not mature until 1929.

Katherine Sophie Dreier was born in 1877 into a German-American family in Brooklyn, New York. Her father became a wealthy iron merchant and, having immigrated to America with his wife in 1848 from Bremen, Germany, a strong sense of German nationalism was infused throughout the household. Ingrained within the family history and encouraged by their status as immigrants who achieved wealth in America, the Dreiers were strongly committed to the betterment of society through humanitarian and philanthropic endeavors. As adherents to the Progressive Movement which attempted to relieve the poor of poverty, social injustice and political manipulation by big business, the Dreiers were one of a number of upper-middle class families to come

[1] An earlier version of this paper served as my Master's Thesis at Rutger's University. I wish to thank my advisors Professor Joan Marter and Professor Matthew Baigell. Additional gratitude is due to Phillip Earenfight.

to the aid of the less fortunate.[2] For Katherine Dreier's social conscience, implementing art as a didactic force became her tool for social reform under the aegis of the Société Anonyme.

Dreier's artistic development began in 1889 with private lessons, following in the footsteps of older sister, Dorothea, also an artist. From 1895 to 1897 Katherine studied at the Brooklyn Art School. In 1900 she attended the Pratt Institute with Dorothea but became increasingly dissatisfied by the narrow curriculum that began and ended with Renaissance principles of composition.[3] In 1890, the Dreier sisters were introduced to the work of painter, Walter Shirlaw at an exhibition of the Society of American Artists.[4] Having previously studied with Shirlaw at the Brooklyn School of Art, Katherine and Dorothea became his private pupils in 1903 until his death in 1909. Most encouraging for Katherine was Shirlaw's emphasis on the overall rhythm and color scheme of a painting versus the "approved" academic style. Shirlaw's own style is most closely aligned with the Munich School of painting and his portraits resemble the work of Frank Duveneck and William Merritt Chase in terms of highly representational painting but with a more modernist sensibility for languid, energetic brushstrokes. Katherine Dreier later commented, "People wonder at my love for the beauty I find in Shirlaw's work associating me as they do only with the Abstract in Art- but without the training which Shirlaw gave me in Beauty- Vitality- Rhythm- and Design or Organization- I could never have taken the step or leap into this new great expression in art, based as it is fundamentally on these manifestations."[5]

Shirlaw was influential in the promotion of art in America and would appear to have been a pivotal force for Dreier, not only in his encouragement of her abstract leanings in art but for increasing her devotion to social and humanitarian acts related to art. Perhaps in part "to continue the battle for art" in America as Shirlaw expounded, Dreier dedicated the rest of her life to organizing, funding and supporting the advancement of modern art in America. Dreier's desire to change, educate and elevate others found its way into art between 1914 and 1916 as founder and President of the Cooperative Mural Workshops. By 1914, Dreier had already painted a commissioned mural and had exhibited at the Armory Show in 1913, although the literature fails to explore the importance of such endeavors. These Workshops produced murals and decorated household items under Dreier's theory that, "man cannot under the influence and stimulus of art act with the same brutality as he can without it."[6] Dreier wanted to use the Workshops as a means to successfully integrate art into American life. Her desire to make art a household necessity was the impetus behind the largest exhibition

[2] Full biographical information can be found in, Ruth L. Bohan, The Société Anonyme's Brooklyn Exhibition- Katherine Dreier and Modernism in America (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1982), 1-2.

[3] Bohan, The Société Anonyme's Brooklyn Exhibition, 4.

[4] Robert L. Herbert; Eleanor S. Apter; Elise K. Kenney, co-eds, Société Anonyme and the Dreier Bequest at Yale University- A Catalogue Raisonné (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), 618.

[5] Herbert, 618.

[6] Ruth L. Bohan, "Katherine Sophie Dreier and New York Dada," Arts Magazine, 51 (May 1977), 97.

of the Société Anonyme, held at the Brooklyn Museum in 1926.[7] The Workshops were based philosophically on the theories of John Ruskin and William Morris both of whom believed in the potential for art to function as an educational and socially uplifting force. Dreier became familiar with the work of Ruskin and Morris while in England from 1910 to 1911. Additionally, she became interested in Roger Fry's association with the Omega Workshops.[8] It is no coincidence that the Cooperative Mural Workshops and the Omega Workshops resemble one another as both rely on Ruskin's and Morris' theories of moral and social reform as they relate to art. Although the Workshops were not a great success in terms of formal design, they exemplified Dreier's need for art to function within society and the potential message that could be carried by such a medium. Her ultimate founding of the Société Anonyme in 1920 with Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray proved to be the perfect outlet for Dreier's educational and artistic devotions. She combined her commitment to social action with her belief in the enlightening powers of art and allowed the larger implications of instituting the first museum of modern art to overshadow her personal artistic output, especially during the height of the Société's activity from 1920 to 1929.

Dreier saw herself in large measure as a disciple of an abstract notion of spirituality. She felt that the production of art would lead to greater spiritual health – a process she felt was already underway in Europe which increased her fervor to encourage modernism in America. An aspect of Dreier's philosophical agenda that will prove essential for understanding her paintings, centers around the tenets of theosophy. Theosophy is an Eastern philosophy that combines Buddhist principles with the view of Karma and reincarnation which seek to unite the divergent material realms of humankind toward a greater spiritual truth. This is a holistic philosophy that concentrates on the inner-self while encouraging humanitarianism. The creative premise of theosophy realizes the importance of spiritual feeling or intuition versus a confining degree of intellect in addition to a spiritual reality transcending a material world. Dreier saw theosophy as a means to, "investigate the unexplored laws of nature and the power latent in man."[9] Sight, as an inner visionary component, is incorporated into this quest for a higher truth in the form of "thought pictures."[10] Thought pictures are the reduction of visual codes to color and form as the purest elements in which to

[7] Dreier exhibited 300 paintings from the Société's holding, representative of 106 artists from 19 countries. The majority of these paintings were executed between 1920 and 1926. The international movements, little known to an American audience were representative of Futurism, Russian Suprematism and Constructivism in addition to more generic forms of abstraction. This was Dreier's most enthusiastic attempt to convince the public that modern art could be integrated easily into a domestic interior. She had the exhibition space arranged as interior household rooms with paintings from the Société Anonyme hung on the walls. This was to show the versatility of modern art with any decor and encourage the public to place modern art along side their sofas. Over 53,000 people saw the six week exhibition. See, Susan Grace Galassi. "Crusader for Modernism," Art News, 83 (September 1984), 97; see also, Robert J. Levy, "Katherine Dreier: Patron of Modern Art," Apollo, 113 (May 1981), 316.

[8] Bohan, The Société Anonyme's Brooklyn Exhibition, 7-8.

[9] Katherine S. Dreier, "Intrinsic Significance in Modern Art, " in Three Lectures on Modern Art (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949; reprint ed., Port Washington, NY: Kennicat Press, 1971), 8.

[10] Defined by Rudolf Steiner, spokesman for the German Theosophical Society in 1913. Bohan, The Société Anonyme's Brooklyn Exhibition, 17.

locate the emotional expression of an artist's inner vision. This visual component drew the attention of many painters, poets and composers of the early twentieth century. In fact, for an artist like Wassily Kandinsky, himself an avid theosophist, color and form were equated with spiritual knowledge. Dreier's involvement with theosophy is evident in much of her writing and painting. During a speech on the "intrinsic significance" of modern art given at Yale University in 1948 (the eventual home for the collection of the Société Anonyme), Dreier made reference to such principles. She explained, "It is not only the physical eye which sees, but the mind or inner-eye."[11] This idea of the inner-eye is a recurrent theme in Dreier's own painting and is a constant reinforcement of her adherence to theosophy. She elaborated further, "Why condemn artists who respond to the magic of beauty or are deeply interested in philosophy or the brotherhood of man?"[12] Seen as a quest for unity and knowledge, Dreier's passion for personal enlightenment and the enlightenment of others proved to be a strong attraction to theosophy particularly for implementing art as a tool for social reform.

In addition to theosophy, Dreier was familiar with the writings, aesthetic theories, and paintings of Kandinsky. Dreier, who is credited with being responsible (on behalf of the Société Anonyme) for giving Kandinsky his first one-man exhibition in the United States, claimed that his writings helped to solidify her own formulations on the spiritual content of her paintings while staying in Munich from 1911 to 1912.[13] Both Dreier and Kandinsky pursued an interest in the potential societal benefit of an abstract and spiritual art. For Kandinsky, this meant devising a new visual language with which to impart a non-representational vision of reality. This language, as interpreted by Dreier is displayed prominently in her paintings as well. Art, or more specifically painting, for Dreier, served as the visual component by which to inform society. Her fervor for educating Americans about modern abstraction is best understood when seen in conjunction with her driving social conscience. Two factors, humanitarianism and theosophy, ultimately coalesce throughout her art and her involvement with proselytizing the modern aesthetic. Dreier's emphasis on educating the public to understand the value of modern art, in terms of its essence if not its form, reflects her desire to motivate people to examine the complexities of abstract art and to develop an inner-eye.

After the Armory Show, interest and opportunities were rising to allow modernists to show their work in other nonjuried exhibitions. Dreier herself briefly participated in the Society of Independent Artists in 1917.[14] This served to ignite her strong determination to educate and uplift. She then forged ahead to form her own exhibiting group in 1920, the Société Anonyme, with herself as its chief motivating and

[11] Dreier, "Intrinsic Significance in Modern Art," 2.

[12] Dreier, "Intrinsic Significance in Modern Art," 10.

[13] Selected Publications Société Anonyme (The First Museum of Modern Art: 1920-1944), 3 Vols. (New York: Arno Press, 1972), vol. 2, Dreier's pamphlet on Kandinsky, 3.

[14] In 1916, through the introduction of artist John Covert, Dreier entered into the Arensberg circle and proved to be an important sponsor for their first exhibition in March of 1917 at the Grand Central Palace. See Aline B. Saarinen, The Proud Possessors (New York: Random House, 1958), 243. Within this circle, Dreier began a lifelong friendship with Marcel Duchamp and it was at this first exhibition that Duchamp showed his ready-made urinal entitled, *Fountain* by R. Mutt, to which Katherine Dreier responded negatively, "that piece of plumbing." See Bohan, The Société Anonyme's Brooklyn Exhibition, 11.

financial force. The first exhibition space originated as two rented rooms on the third floor of a house on East Forty-Seventh Street in New York City.[15] She was aided and advised by Marcel Duchamp, who in turn brought in Man Ray as part of a tripartite leadership. Man Ray devised the title Société Anonyme, which is French for "incorporated" and suggests an air of anonymity. However, when filing papers for incorporation in 1920, the New York Secretary of State inadvertently added the abbreviation, Inc.[16] Officially "Incorporated, Incorporated" the title became a Dada joke for the Société.[17] Much has been made of the relationship between Dreier and Duchamp. Her admiration of Duchamp has been described, "...like an admiring gawky girl trying clumsily to follow the lead of an exquisite tango partner..."[18] However, one must keep in mind that there existed a strong and constant camaraderie between the two. Dreier assisted Duchamp financially through commissions (such as Tu m') and cash gifts. Their relationship was one of mutual support, perhaps more emotionally for Dreier than for Duchamp but with regard to the Société Anonyme, she led a strong one-woman campaign. The Société Anonyme operated on Dreier's enthusiasm and funds in addition to membership fees while Duchamp's position was honorary in essence, as his activity was limited to artistic advisor for purchases made by Dreier for the collection of the Société. In addition to educating the public, the purpose of exhibitions on behalf of the Société Anonyme was to give unbiased exposure to modern artists. In its collective history there were 83 exhibitions comprised of artists from a multitude of nations in addition to the generous lending policy and educational programs instituted by Dreier.[19] She was a staunch believer in the visual experience of looking at the actual works of art, which explains in part the establishment of the Société Anonyme. "...Marcel Duchamp, Man Ray and I decided in 1920 to establish a modest center with a reference library, where people could come and study seriously good examples of this new form in art. Thus, the Société Anonyme Museum of Modern Art was born."[20]

Dreier's endeavor for the success of modernism in a post-Armory Show era was not a simple achievement. For example, the majority of criticism from the first exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists in 1917 is evidence of hostility toward modernism. Perhaps in part, critics did not believe that European modernism would progress in America after the Armory Show. Additionally, with a World War I mentality, critics certainly were hoping to find an "American" style to develop in total

[15] Saarinen, 244.

[16] Galassi, 95.

[17] In the years prior to the Société Anonyme, Dreier was politically active and travelled extensively. Before America's involvement in World War I, she began a war relief fund for German children overseas. She wrote to other German-Americans for monetary support, including Alfred Stieglitz. Dreier's professional relationship with Stieglitz remained limited. She admired his promotion of modern art and he, in turn, while not mutually in agreement with her philosophical infusions, lectured in 1926 on behalf of the Société Anonyme. See Herbert,749, 774. America's entrance into the war in 1918 halted Dreier's war efforts and she left for Argentina to conduct her study on the condition of women in South America.

[18] Saarinen, 242.

[19] Levy, 316.

[20] Dreier, "Intrinsic Significance in Modern Art," 5.

rejection of European art.[21] These two examples of critical thought regarding modernism in and around 1917 help to reinforce the overall importance of Dreier's efforts to give the American viewing public continued access to modern art through the Société Anonyme, which was founded on a European premise of modernism with an international scope of artistic theories by such artists as Kandinsky and Duchamp. Dreier held fast to her belief in the foreign philosophy of theosophy during a period of anti-European sentiment. So too the collection of the Société Anonyme was weighted heavily with paintings and sculpture by European artists, especially German and Eastern European, another example of her independence as a leading champion of modern art in the 1920's for having recognized the essential role played by European artists (other than those in Paris) for the spread of abstraction in America.

Dreier's affinity for German artists, including Heinrick Campendonk and Franz Marc, (who coined the motto for the Société Anonyme in 1920, "[T]raditions are beautiful – but to create – not to follow.")[22] was coupled with support for prominent artists such as David Burliuk, Naum Gabo, Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Fernand Léger, Piet Mondrian, Antoine Pevsner and Kurt Schwitters. However, at the time of Dreier's involvement, these artists were virtually unknown to an American audience. Duchamp's advice also led her to purchase works by Constantin Brancusi, Joan Miró, Raymond Duchamp-Villon and Jacques Villon. Dreier is credited with giving Alexander Archipenko, Villon, Kandinsky and Léger their first one-artist shows in America. Additionally, Dreier brought the work of such modern Russian artists as Gabo, Kasimir Malevich and Liubov Popova to America in 1922.[23] Her massive collecting policy functioned mainly to serve the Société Anonyme as extensive examples of modern art for the public to view and to attain a greater insight into the function of abstract art in society. It is no misnomer that this organization was coined the first museum of modern art despite the lack of a permanent exhibition space for the collection. From this artistic stronghold, Dreier based her extensive series of lectures to the public and other educational programs on modern art throughout the 1920's as a proselytizer of modernism. One aspect that makes Dreier's accomplishments so individual and important was the lack of existing galleries or museums to exhibit abstract art in the early 1920's in New York. Aside from the Armory show, abstract artists, American and European, had limited exposure to the public.[24] Meanwhile, it does not suffice to see Katherine Dreier's name simply as one in a list of American collectors like Havemeyer, Stein, Rockefeller or Guggenheim. Dreier's influence extended far beyond the realm of organizer, patron and collector. Her greatest achievement of continued public awareness of modernism exemplified itself by the end of the Société Anonyme's active phase.

[21] Francis Naumann, "The Big Show: The First Exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists. Part I," Artforum, 17 (February 1979); "Part II. The Critical Response, " Artforum, 17 (April 1979), 51.

[22] "In Memory of Katherine S. Dreier 1877-1952. Her Own Collection of Modern Art," Bulletin of the Associates in Fine Arts at Yale University, 20 no.1 December 1952 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Art Gallery, 15 December 1952- 1 February 1953), 2.

[23] Galassi, 95.

[24] The Brooklyn Museum and a limited number of galleries such as Anderson Galleries and Macbeth Galleries stand out as early supporters of modern abstraction.

The year 1929 was a pivotal one for the Société Anonyme and for Katherine Dreier. First, the Museum of Modern Art was founded in 1929. Not only did this mean a permanent home for modern art, but it was well-endowed by Rockefeller money, a commodity somewhat diminished for Katherine Dreier. A second and more personally devastating event for Dreier in 1929 was the Depression. As Duchamp recalls, "she was a victim of the 1929 crash, and she didn't have the money for buying pictures anymore."[25] For a woman so heavily entrenched in the battle against social and educational poverty, the long-term effects of this nationwide disaster must have had a pronounced impact on her life, although there is no discussion of such in the existing literature on Dreier. In support of this theory, by 1929 Dreier retreated to her home in West Redding, Connecticut from which she continued to collect art sporadically. She remained quite active in the realm of modernism, however, in addition to the continuation of her own abstract painting through the 1930's and 1940's. In 1930, she organized an exhibition from the collection of the Société Anonyme to celebrate the opening of the New School for Social Research, and throughout the decade she devoted much of her time to lecturing and associating herself with international avant-garde artists. Dreier belonged to the Paris-based group Abstraction Création Art Nonfiguratif in 1932 and was included in their exhibitions.[26] During the 1930's however, a noticeable shift in her priorities occurred. Dreier allowed herself a return to her early pursuit of conveying universal concepts through her own painting. "At last I will do something within my own special gift, which had to be put aside because of my mission in life."[27] This transference of emphasis to her own production of art is even more pronounced in 1941 when Katherine Dreier decided to offer the collection of the Société Anonyme to Yale University in an attempt to keep the holdings of the Société Anonyme intact. Dreier continued to lecture, such as the "Intrinsic Significance in Modern Art" from a series of 1948 lectures at Yale, undoubtedly her most mature and coherent discourse. The Société Anonyme officially disbanded in 1951, and Katherine Dreier died in March of 1952.

Major attention has been given to the writings and lectures of Katherine Dreier. Her early writings tend to be sentimental if not effusive accounts of art history. Although devoted to the process of education, and under the guise of passion and enthusiasm, Dreier's writing style, specifically her 1923 publication Western Art and the New Era, is too often long-winded and is sometimes misleading. However, her visual discourses (i.e. paintings) are far more engaging. Her visual language connotes a succinctness of message that her rambling lectures often lack. Her use of strong, aggressive lines and dominating colors interplay spatially in her mature work. These highly activated canvases impart Dreier's commitment to modern abstraction and encompass her philosophical ideologies of modernism as well. Her art is an effective learning tool and conveyor of a synthesized modern aesthetic.

The paintings of Katherine Dreier can be divided into three distinct formal periods: her early period of 1905 to 1915, a transitional or middle period of 1918 to 1928 in which the Société Anonyme was most active, and a later, prolific period of

[25] Pierre Cabanne, Dialogues With Marcel Duchamp (Editions Pierre Belfond, 1967. English translation, New York: Viking Press, 1971), 58.

[26] Sidney Janis, Abstract & Surrealist Art in America (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1944), 48.

[27] Levy, 317.

1929 to just prior to her death in 1952. Her earliest known public work was a 1905 commissioned mural for the chapel of the St. Paul's School in Garden City, Long Island. Religious in nature and representational in form, this composition, a semi-circular oil painting, with a radius of seven feet, depicts a life-sized image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd. "It differs from similar pictures [of Christ as shepherd]," says one reviewer, "in that it is more than a gentle shepherd...it is a valiant, strong shepherd, subduing the wolf and actively protecting his sheep from evil... ."[28] One might say that such a characterization is also befitting of Dreier's persona in the years to come, subduing the critics of modernism while actively supporting and protecting her flock of abstract painters in the Société Anonyme throughout the 1920's. This same reviewer from the Brooklyn Eagle of January 28, 1905, summarizes Dreier's technique. "The picture is remarkably strong and satisfactory in the beauty of its colors, in the reverent delineation of Christ and the harmonious blending of the details."[29] Dreier's early commitment to social reform is infused in her paintings from the beginning, as is revealed in a 1905 letter from the chairman of a church committee at St. Paul's, "...it will prove a great power for good in the uplifting and upbuilding of character in the school."[30]

There exists one other known religious painting by Dreier. Although the actual completion of this work is unknown, sketches exist from 1907 for a reredos, or painted panels to be placed on the reverse side of an altar. Once again she depicts scenes from the good works of Christ for a specific religious context. It should be noted that there is a strange mythological painting entitled, Sea Horses of 1910, which appears to convey a higher degree of movement and a more activated canvas through energetic line and a loosening of control over form and probably over color as well. Aside from these works, her early success as an artist shown in galleries and exhibitions occurred in Europe. Her first artistic introduction to Europe was in 1902 and 1903, while under the tutelage of Walter Shirlaw. Dreier spent time in Italy, studying the works of the Old Masters and returned to Europe again in the winter between 1907 and 1908, but this time she went to Paris. Most important to the formulation of her later style, and early formulation of an appreciation for modernism, must have been her frequent visits on Saturday evenings to the Steins at 27, Rue de Fleurus. Here she was introduced by Edward Steichen to the work of Matisse, Picasso and an avant-garde aesthetic.[31] Dreier admits she was not prepared for the bold and arbitrary placement of colors of the Fauves. She recalls the work of Matisse as an, "[a]esthetic shock, like a douche of cold water left one gasping."[32] In order to maintain a connection to European artistic trends, between 1909 and 1911 she took up residence in London with her sister-in-law.[33]

[28] Academy of Allied Arts, Katherine S. Dreier (New York: Academy of Allied Arts, 1933), 17.

[29] Academy of Allied Arts, 17.

[30] Academy of Allied Arts, 17.

[31] Herbert, 748.

[32] Bohan, The Société Anonyme's Brooklyn Exhibition, 6.

[33] A curious biographical interjection occurred in 1911. On August 8 of that year, Dreier returned home to Brooklyn for the event of her marriage to fellow American artist, Edward Trumbull, whom she had met in London. Unfortunately, later that same day Dreier learned that Trumbull was already married with a wife and children in London. Her marriage was annulled quickly and she returned to London to continue her studies with Gustav Britsch. See Herbert, 748.

One of Dreier's earliest European exhibitions was in 1911 at the Salon des Beaux Arts in Paris, an interesting environment given her dramatic break with the academic style over the next four years. However, at this juncture in Dreier's career, she was still under the influence of her earlier academic training, although progressively changing under the guidance of Shirlaw's encouragement to seek abstraction. The European avant-garde was having a slow but profound impact on her own artistic theories. By 1910, a spiritual or mystical component becomes more apparent, specifically in her painting entitled Moonlight on the Thames, London in which a visual relationship to Whistler's style is relevant. It is at this time that Katherine Dreier was exhibiting successfully in England and Germany as supported by reviews of her work. In a cable dispatch from The New York Times, May 19, 1912, one critic said, "in Moonlight, London is admirably composed and suggests the mystery of night and of London with no less strength than poetry."[34] Another review of her work from The New York Tribune, October 3, 1912 entitled, "Katherine Dreier, Artist, Wins Honor in Europe," concurs not only with Dreier's success as an artist, but as an American woman gaining renown abroad:

> "Americans and especially American women are held in such low esteem abroad that it comes as an agreeable surprise to hear of the success in Leipzig of an American artist, Miss Katherine S. Dreier. The pathetic tales told by some of her sisters in art, of discrimination against them, because of sex and nationality fade from the memory in the hour of this woman's success. Can it be that those pictures were refused for other reasons than sex and nationality?"[35]

It is ironic how this American journalist criticizes Europeans for discriminating against women at a time in America when women did not have the right to vote. However, the most interesting aspect of the early criticism of her work is found in the articles that make note of Dreier's humanitarian endeavors in addition to her art, prefiguring Dreier's eventual intermingling of the two in the foundation of the Société Anonyme. "German art critics are saying complimentary things about the exhibition of the young New York painter, Katherine S. Dreier... who is not only well known in New York artistic circles but also in settlement work..."[36] Another critic writes, "Miss Dreier is not unknown in New York even to those beyond the exclusive circles in art, because for years she was active in social work. It may be that the same type of mind which sees New York in fairy mist is necessary to inspire workers for social uplift."[37] What this critic fails to realize is that there was anything but naive vision in Dreier's commitment to liberal causes.

In 1912, while living in Munich, Dreier saw a comprehensive exhibition of European avant-garde art including works by the Fauves and German Expressionists at the Cologne Sonderbund. The Sonderbund exhibition in particular had a tremendous

[34] Academy of Allied Arts, 18.

[35] Academy of Allied Arts, 19.

[36] Academy of Allied Arts, 18.

[37] Academy of Allied Arts, 19.

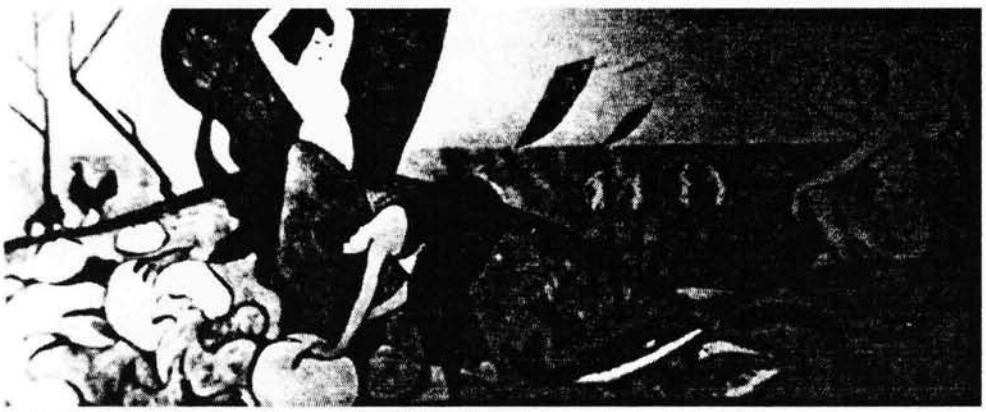
impact on Dreier as an art collector and 1912 marked the beginning of recurrent trips to Europe with the intention of purchasing European modern art, specifically by German Expressionists and works representative of Eastern Europe. There were also works by Paul Cézanne, Paul Gauguin, Edvard Munch, Pablo Picasso and Paul Signac.[38] Dreier was impressed greatly as an artist by this international exhibition which she tried to assimilate formally into the following works from her early period, as in a composition entitled, The Avenue, Noordivijk-Binnen c.1911-12 (which was exhibited at the Armory Show in 1913). Having brought a European avant-garde style back to America with her, Dreier's paintings begins to reveal the influence of the German Expressionists. On the one hand it recounts her early training with Shirlaw, whose style of portraiture is reminiscent of Frank Duveneck's and relates to the emotionally based brushstrokes of the Munich School. However, Dreier's use of line and strong contrasts in the placement of light and dark pigments suggest a relationship to the Fauves. Hers are not truly progressive works when compared to the Expressionists and the Fauves who fully immersed themselves in the commitment to abstraction. Dreier's early period was spent absorbing a myriad of potential influences in her quest for a personal vision of modern abstraction.

The Sonderbund exhibition of 1912, the Armory Show of 1913 and Kandinsky's theories on art as published in On the Art of Spiritual Harmony, proved to be influential in the movement toward abstraction in her own painting. Such a movement, although a slow progression, is more evident still in one of the murals from the Cooperative Mural Workshops of c.1915 (fig.1). Again, the Workshops were Dreier's first attempt to combine her own principles with those of Morris and Ruskin in implementing art as an instrument of social advancement. Although the murals themselves were not terribly successful, this mural for a restaurant was a collaborative effort on Dreier's part and ultimately demonstrates her desire to commit to abstraction in her artistic career. The influence, especially by Matisse, is most apparent in the depiction of the female figures through the use of linear contours and what one would surmise to be bold colors placed arbitrarily. The figures have become linear and abstract. Interest in depth is still apparent due to the placement of smaller nudes in what we perceive to be a background. The landscape in the foreground is highly stylized and the abstracted forms of color recall the imagery of Gauguin and the Post-Impressionists. This was a formal advance for Dreier but hardly progressive in 1915.

Approximately two years earlier, Dreier was given her first one-woman exhibition at the Macbeth Galleries in New York with the assistance of Arthur B. Davies.[39] The apparent success of this exhibition helped her acclaim in America, however the critical attention that Dreier received during her early period of artistic productivity waned considerably during the middle phase of her career roughly 1918 to 1928. Although her personal artistic output level fell, it came as a conscious decision on Dreier's part, while her direct involvement with the modernist movement was on the rise. This ten year period was a flurry of activity for Dreier as her philanthropic endeavors became highly activated even if her canvases did not. The active operating years of the Société Anonyme, 1920 to 1929, proved to be busy ones for Dreier as a supporter, teacher and patron, while her own endeavors as an artist were consciously

[38] Bohan, The Société Anonyme's Brooklyn Exhibition, 6.

[39] Academy of Allied Arts, 3.



1. Katherine S. Dreier, Cooperative Mural Workshops, Mural for a Restaurant, c. 1915 (photo: Current Opinion vol. 58 [March 1915])

subverted. However, there are a few paintings by Dreier from this middle period which shed light on her own slow movement away from representational art.

Two portraits from this period, both painted in 1918, just after resigning from the Society of Independent Artists, closely resemble the end of her early period with the mural for a restaurant. Her work is still representational although the titles suggest studies in forms: Curves- Portrait of Bibi Lola and Triangles- Portrait of Marcel Duchamp. These two stylized portraits begin, for Dreier, an exploration into the interrelationship between curving and angular forms. What is even more striking is her nonobjective Abstract Portrait of Marcel Duchamp (fig. 2) also painted in 1918 where her visual language alters dramatically. This is an obvious change in Dreier's artistic philosophy, most notably from Kandinsky and an increasingly important connection to theosophy. Dreier discussed this portrait using the language of non-representational art.

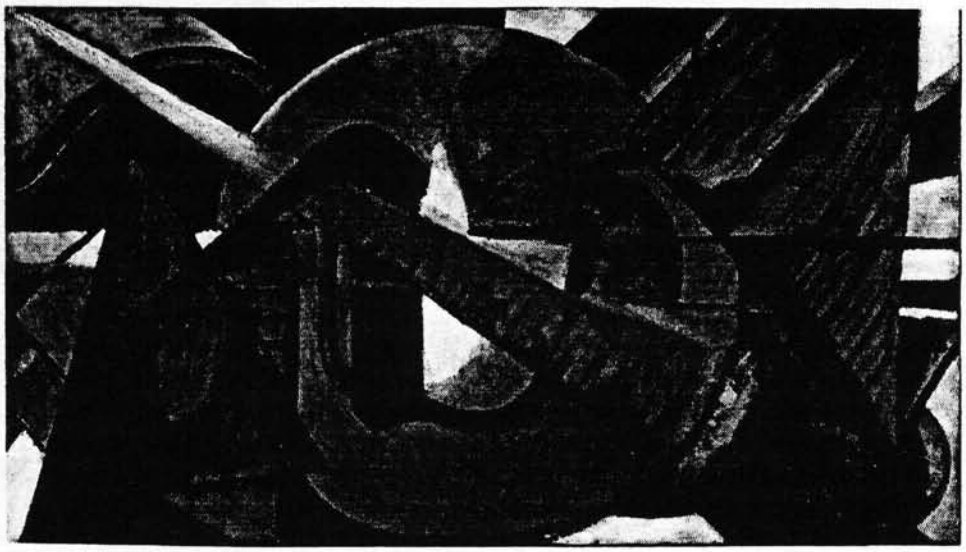
> Thus, through the balance of curves, angles and squares, through broken or straight lines, or harmoniously flowing ones, through color harmony or discord, through vibrant or subdued tones, cold or warm, there arises a representation of the character which suggests clearly the person in question, and brings more pleasure to those who understand, than would an ordinary portrait representing only figure and face.[40]

Dreier's infusion of an inner psychology to her portrait reveals an advancement in her own artistic agenda, moving away from her earlier representational images. The theosophical concept that abstract patterns possess spiritual forces coincides neatly with this transitional work between Dreier's middle and late artistic periods. The intersection of forms, especially the junction between the circular form and the triangle, and the interpenetration of shapes deny a rational advancement or recession into space. These elements reappear in her later paintings. Color, too, would hold a key to this abstraction, in line with Kandinsky's theory concerning the emotive properties of color.

Completed before the Société Anonyme was organized, the activated canvas of this portrait of Duchamp reveals Dreier's artistic struggle in the adoption of a completely abstract style. Other paintings by Dreier during the early operative years of the Société revert back to representational imagery. One painting entitled, Stonington Harbor of 1923, depicts a harbor scene at sunset. It borders on abstraction with the inclusion of Futurist rays which for Dreier represent sunlight. However, the stylized emphasis on a dock in the right-hand corner and on a centered sailboat ground this work in the representational as emphasized by the title which further reinforces the subject matter. And what of those dynamic lines? They serve as borders to frame the subject matter at hand as opposed to indicating a source of energy or spirit. The emphasis here is similar again to the geometric studies done in 1918 in the form of portraits of Bibi Lola and Marcel Duchamp. Although the forms have become patterned placements of shapes and colors, the subject matter is recognized easily, displaying Dreier's continual theosophical confrontation with the material object vying for prominence over its conceptualized spirit.

By 1929, however, Dreier's style changes drastically. In this final mature phase of her work the impact of the Depression and her decision to devote more time to

[40] Katherine S. Dreier, Western Art and the New Era (New York: Brentano's, 1923), 112.

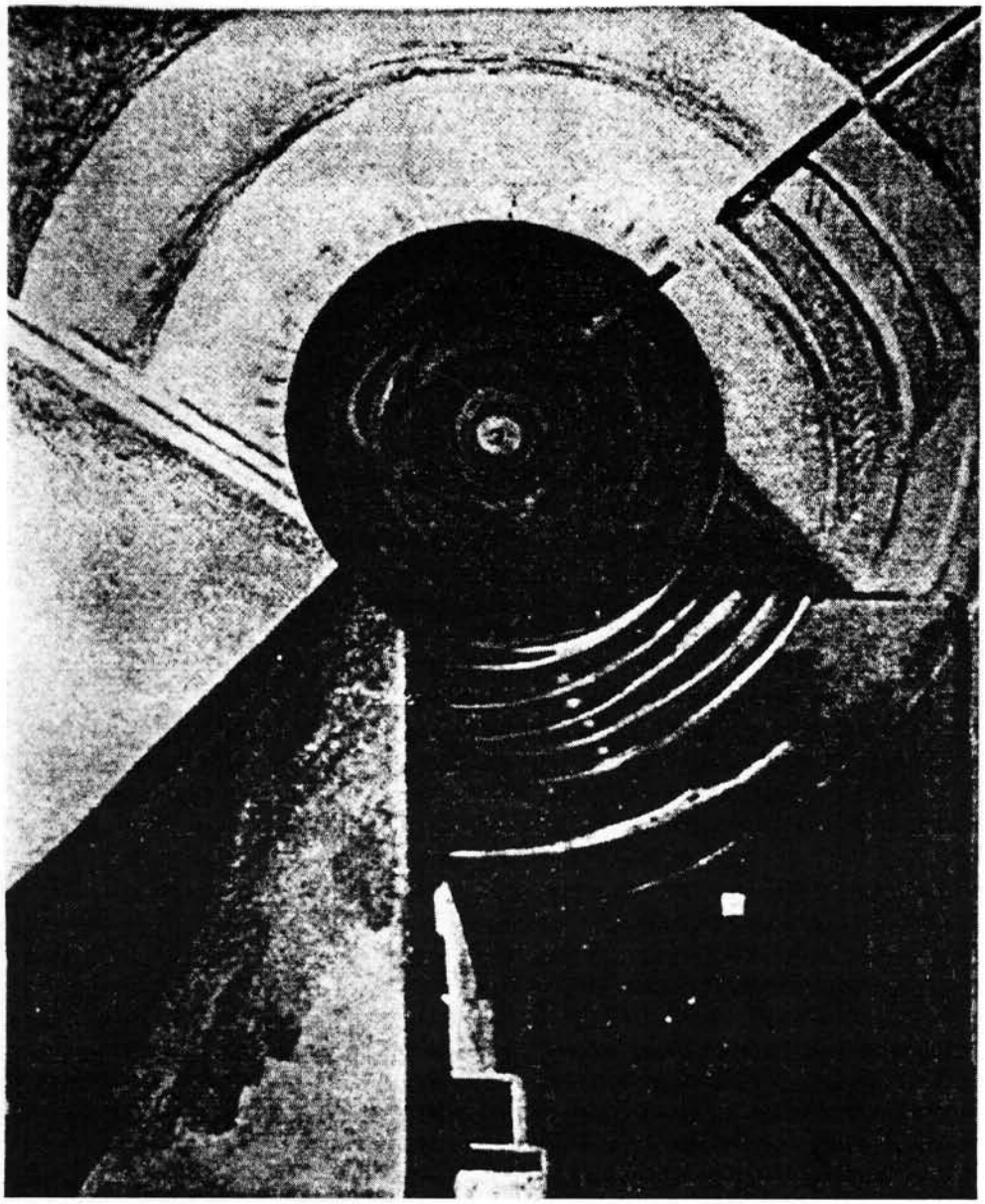


2. Katherine S. Dreier, *Abstract Portrait of Marcel Duchamp*, 1918, Oil on canvas, 45 x 80 cm (photo: Collection, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Funds)

painting reveal themselves upon her art. Not so much in terms of subject matter, although there is a 1929 painting entitled, Futile Activity, but economic implications had their effect on Dreier's ability to continue collecting art for the Société Anonyme at the same level that she had during the 1920's. Her personal emphasis shifts to a large degree and although she remains a patron and supporter of modern art and artists until her death, this transference of activity allows for the solidification of her own commitment to abstraction in art. In her mature painting style Dreier is a nonfigurative artist who allies herself with European artistic trends in order to break with her conceptual ties to representational art. What is found in these later works is actually an amalgamation of abstract styles employed by modern artists in the 1920's. Dreier's works are not highly innovative in terms of their technical execution. However, she amassed this visual language to infuse her works with philosophical and theosophical components unlike other abstract artists in the 1930's. In an attempt to find some of the possible visible sources that encouraged Dreier to explore and include modernism in her painting, two variables or controls have been implemented to regulate the choice of artistic comparisons. There exists a virtual multitude of abstract art that potentially may have impacted Dreier formally, given her own collecting policy and her involvement with the most prominent European modern artists of the time. But this search is confined to artists whose works were part of the collection of the Société Anonyme and to only those paintings that were completed and in Dreier's possession at the time of execution of her own work. Such stringent restrictions are necessary because her art as a developmental process toward abstraction, has not been looked at in terms of her choice of imagery in individual paintings.

An important painting from 1929 is Abstract Portrait of Shawn (fig.3), painted at Dreier's home in West Redding, Connecticut, and refers to dancer and choreographer Ted Shawn. In reference to her painting, Shawn said, "Katherine S. Dreier is able to open our vision to new forms of beauty- thus enlarging and enriching our aesthetic life experience."[41] Here the repeated forms of triangles and circles appear to be a culminating feature of her earlier studies of curves and triangle from 1918, yet her visual language has become more complex. The universality of space or cosmos, unrelated to time encompasses her theosophical knowledge in her use of concentric circles telescoping through space. Dreier's theosophical beliefs are a factor in this composition in addition to her own artistic agenda, which included visions of the cosmos and a spiritual interconnectedness of all matter. When comparing this work to Merz 1003 (Peacock's Tail) by Kurt Schwitters from 1924, the use of repeated and intersecting circular forms is not an uncommon motif. This painting was in the collection of the Société Anonyme in 1926 to which Dreier may have been intrigued. A major ideological difference between the works is that Schwitters employed his disks in relation to mechanical movement, similar to the Constructivists, while Dreier used the circle to signify the unity of the form and its repetition speaks to a sense of infinity. That same concept of circular forms evoking continuity is evident in Duchamp's Rotary Glass Plates of 1920, and purchased by Dreier in 1925. Duchamp created the optical illusion of concentric circles, seemingly on one plane. He relied on the viewer's perception (an external experience) to sustain the illusion whereas Dreier relied on the inner spirit of her subject (an internal experience) to create an illusion. What becomes

[41] Academy of Allied Arts, 13.



3. Katherine S. Dreier, *Abstract Portrait of Shawn*, 1929 (photo: reproduced from, Academy of Allied Arts, Reflections on the Art of Katherine S. Dreier,1933, 13)

apparent when comparing the work of Katherine Dreier to other abstract artists is that while a visual comparison may prove to be salient, her philosophical infusion is complicated and multilayered. As Shawn said of her style, "there is no traceable influence of any one painter, nor the impress of any one school or group of painters."[42]

In 1930 Dreier painted Zwei Welten or Beyond. The reference here most certainly is to the cosmos and to the major contention of theosophy in which the spiritual world is in constant competition with the material world, shown by Dreier as two overlapping cylinders. While a tubular form on the left side of the composition shows the viewer a recession into darkness, or perhaps infinity, a conical shape on the right reveals a three-dimensional sphere suggestive of a material world. The cone is the three-dimensional effect of combining a triangle and a circle. Here, for the first time the artist employs an interconnected triangle and circle, two forms usually at odds with one another. This symbolism of theosophical quandary is a dominant visual component in Dreier's paintings. Even the title suggests taking the viewer beyond the recognizable and into an area of pure abstraction. Dreier's attempt to visualize infinity defies and transcends the language of representational art. The artist and friend of Dreier, David Burliuk, concurs, "Katherine Dreier is truly a painter, saying things on canvas that could not possibly be conveyed by any other means."[43]

Composer and musician, Vassily Savadsky once noted, "[T]he art of Katherine Dreier, more than that of any other abstract painter, is free from things, objects and facts."[44] How adequate a statement this is especially in view of Dreier's Abstract Portrait of Dr. Savadsky from 1931. This portrait is comprised of telescoping circles penetrated at various angles by attenuated triangular forms. Superimposed are snake-like lines that interweave the curvilinear with the angular. The canvas recalls once more the words of Katherine Dreier when she said, "Instead of painting the sitter as seen in ordinary life, the modern artist tries to express the character as represented through abstract form and color."[45] Perhaps then this purely abstract portrait has little to do with the person or material shell of Dr. Savadsky as opposed to his spirit. By attempting to capture that which is nonrepresentational, Dreier is developing her own visual language, similar to Kandinsky. Here the presence of the concentric circles have earlier precedents, but Savadsky speaks of Dreier's forms perhaps in relation to his own portrait, "... those gigantic telescopes that reveal to us the new and unimaginable immensities of space and distance. The luminous bands of light in our night sky consisting of hundred billion suns is in itself as nothing... ."[46] The presence of squiggly lines and intersecting triangles are curious in their potential meaning but relate to Dreier's continued use of circular forms versus triangular forms. Undoubtedly this reference recalls the spiritual/material duality that vies for prominence in the universe. It is the task of the theosophist, or in this case Dreier herself, to determine if a superiority exists or if an interconnected coexistence will result. "[O]f how many units does our cosmos consist?" asks Savadsky, "This we are unable to determine."[47]

[42] Academy of Allied Arts, 13.

[43] Academy of Allied Arts, 7.

[44] Academy of Allied Arts, 5.

[45] Dreier, Western Art and the New Era, 112.

[46] Academy of Allied Arts, 5.

[47] Academy of Allied Arts, 5.

Another interesting component found in Dreier's mature work is the near surreal aspect of the floating eye in Cruel Prying of 1932 (fig. 4). While the eye drifts within an amoeba-like form, reminiscent of the biomorphism of Jean Arp or Joan Miró, it is framed by conforming lines above and below. At the left are floating balloons and the strange shapes are placed within a variety of intersecting planes of colors. However, it is the eye which draws our attention because it is the most representational form in the painting. However, this signifier is dysfunctional and does not impart a meaning associated with the rest of the composition. Looking once again to theosophy and the concept of an artistic vision discussed in terms of an "inner eye" makes this imagery more comprehensible to some extent. David Burliuk's The Eye of God of 1923-25, and given to Katherine Dreier in 1928, relates in part to this same idea. Although there are a multitude of layers of meaning in Burliuk's work, Dreier believed that he too possessed this inner, seeing eye.[48] Visually, Burliuk also employs the circle and the triangle, however, he is making overt reference to the Trinity of Christ. It is interesting to see how two artists aligned artistically (Dreier also wrote a biography of Burliuk) make the association of the eye as an inner visionary component that imparts a level of spirituality. Katherine Dreier's imagery confounded many who, even though they admired her work, often found it difficult to explain.

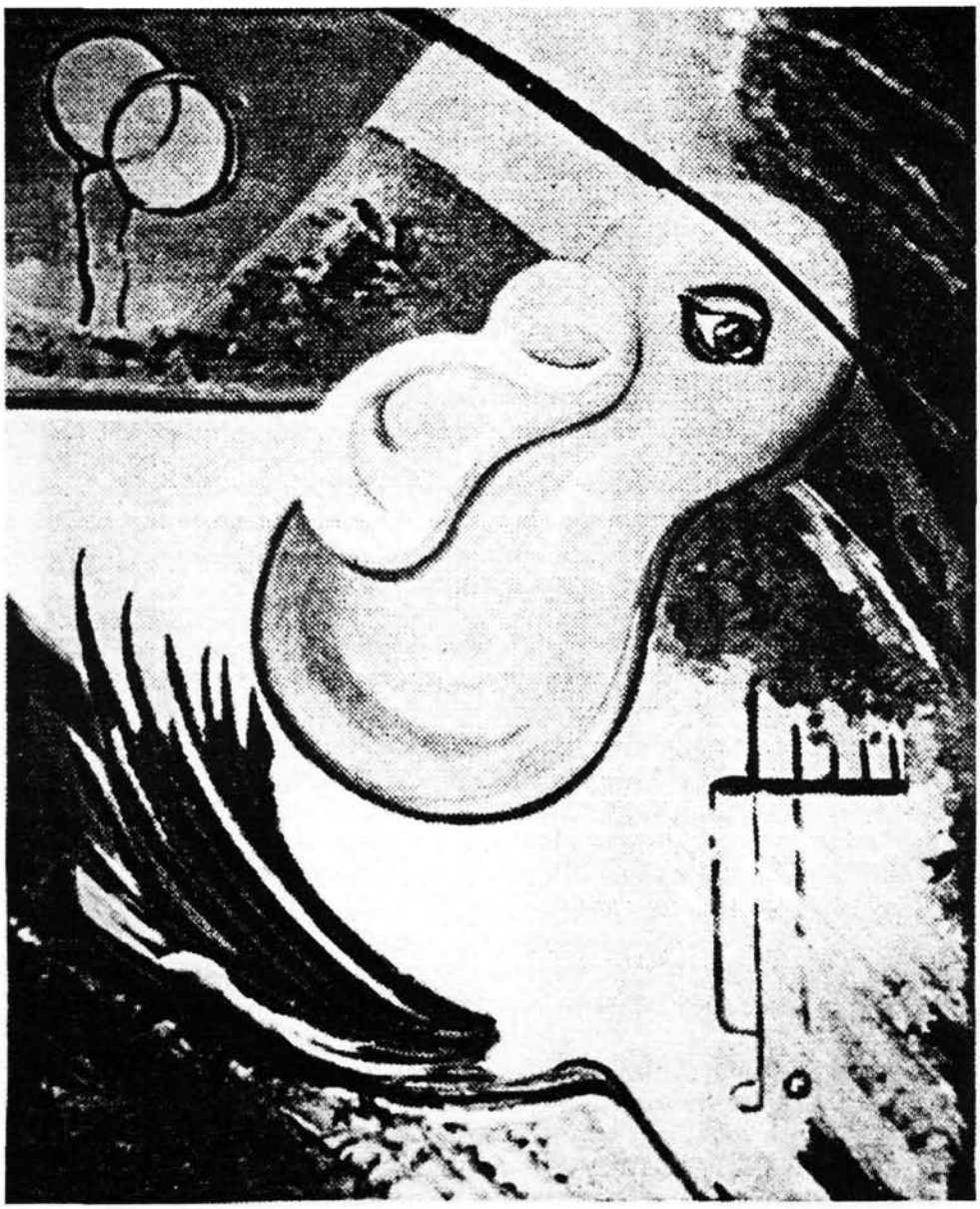
This is exactly the issue with three of Dreier's paintings from 1933, Echoes of Bach, Advent, and Chemistry (figs. 5, 6, 7). One writer ultimately stated with honesty, "its power to express feelings and shapes [that] have not yet found definite form in words."[49] The difficulty with Dreier's visual language is that it speaks in terms of universals while the visual language of representational art addresses the particulars. Of these three paintings, the Echoes of Bach displays most forcefully the continuing interplay between warring triangular and curvilinear forms through the interpenetration of circular shapes with harder edged triangular forms. Here as in Zwei Welten, the two forms combine to form a cylinder. Thus, seemingly disparate forms merge peacefully. Both Advent and Echoes of Bach assert images of highly charged fields of energy in accordance with Dreier's philosophy that abstract shapes possess spiritual forces and all three compositions speak of the artist's concern for motion in space through the use of a preconceived vocabulary of images. Dreier constantly addressed the theosophical question of the coexistence of spirit and matter in the universe, which takes place in her paintings within the conical form of infinity. Important is the seemingly widespread interest among artists within the Société Anonyme to find underlying mystical and spiritual elements in material objects. Dreier incorporated this issue visually in the dueling circular and triangular forms and her later images increasingly become more activated as this issue reaches heightened proportions.

In 1934, Katherine Dreier had numerous copies of the same lithograph produced and called them 40 Variations, a series of watercolors which she ultimately combined into a formal collection published in 1937.[50] Although familiar motifs from Dreier's artistic past are included, the forms become more energized as they interact in a more unified way. Dreier also employs a greater amount of negative space on the paper than she has in past canvases. This series resembles Kandinsky's output during

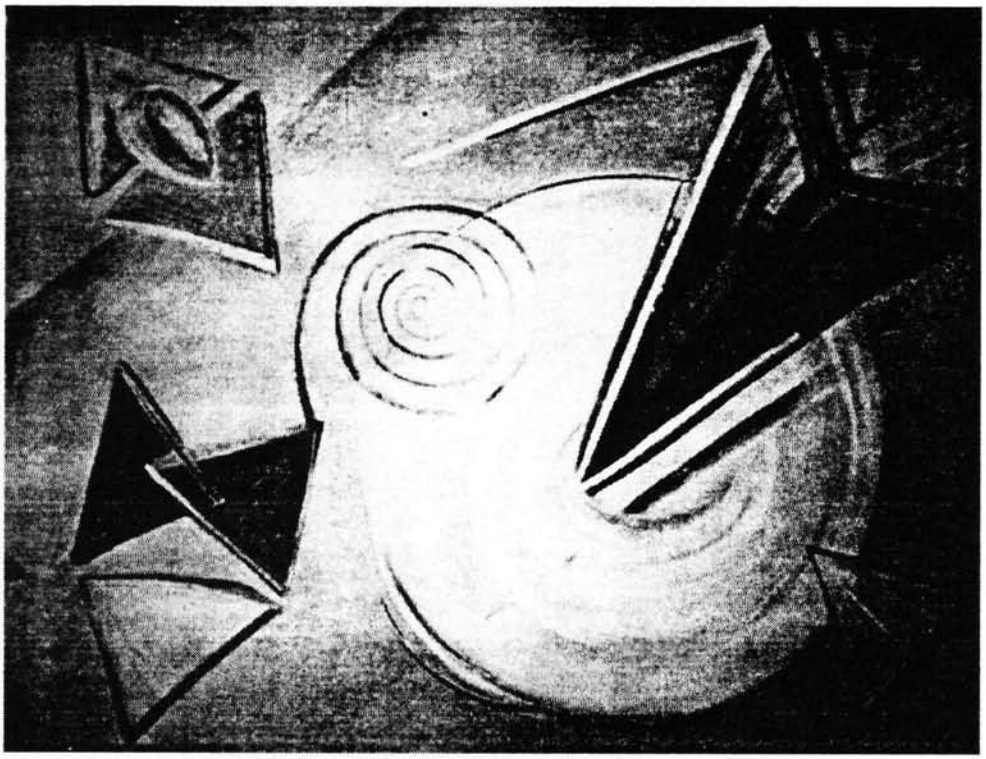
[48] Herbert, 121.

[49] Academy of Allied Arts, 9.

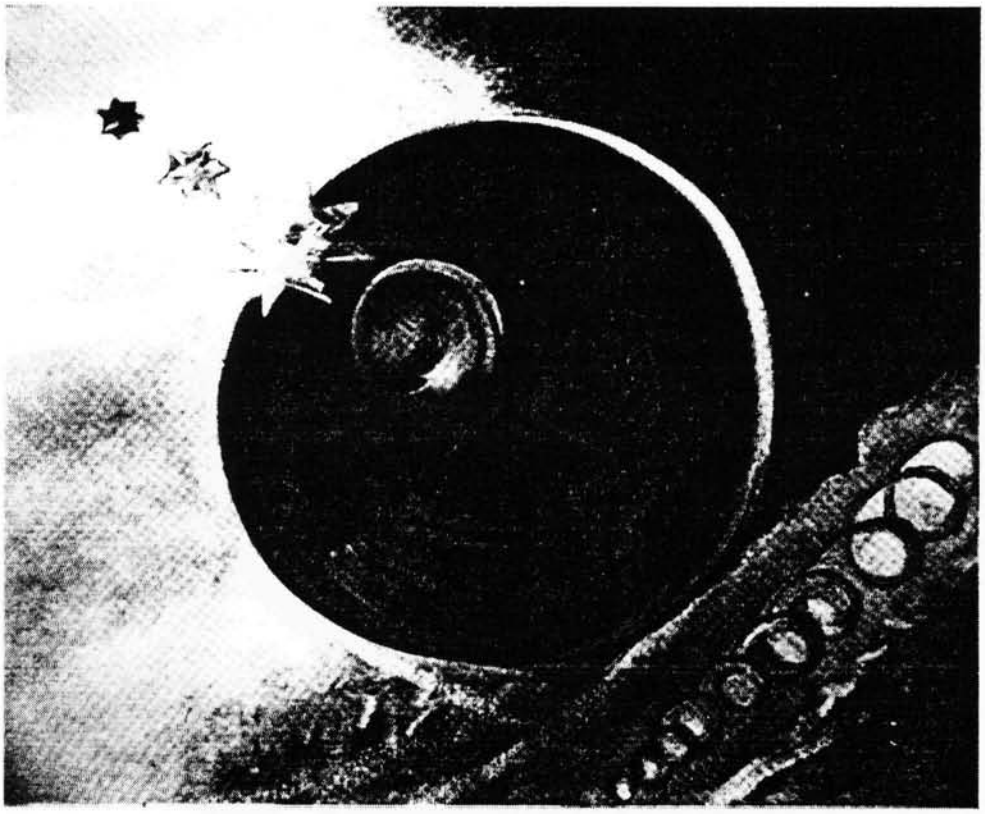
[50] Herbert, 216.



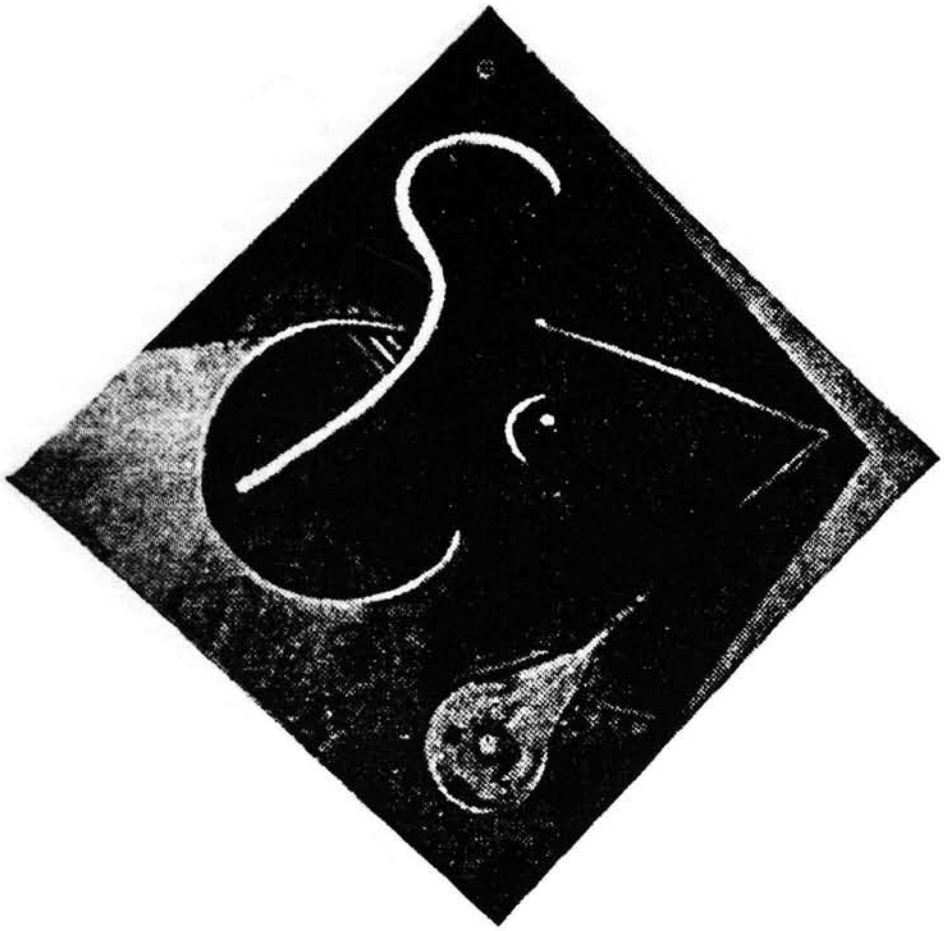
4. Katherine S. Dreier, *Cruel Prying*, 1932 (photo: Academy of Allied Arts, 9)



5. Katherine S. Dreier, *Echoes of Bach*, 1933 (photo: Academy of Allied Arts, 12)



6. Katherine S. Dreier, *Advent*, 1933 (photo: Academy of Allied Arts, 15)



7. Katherine S. Dreier, *Chemistry*, 1933 (photo: Academy of Allied Arts, 14)

the 1920's such as in his Abstract Variations of 1925, which was in Dreier's possession in 1926. Both artists hold a similar interest in variations on an abstract theme, although Dreier's variations do not relate to the architectonic and mechanical imagery of the Bauhaus, as in Kandinsky's work. Thus, while the thematic interpretations of their variations may be different, they do employ a similar abstract visual language. These forms and those from a series of abstract forms by El Lissitzky, like Zankstifter (Troublemaker), from the early 1920's also serve to widen the spectrum of possible visual references for Dreier's art. Although Dreier was influenced by the devices of European modernism, she imparted her own meaning to her images thus setting them apart from her artistic counterparts.

In one of her lectures, Katherine Dreier said about art, "Its real purpose is to stimulate our energies and increase our vision of Life. And because we are all so different it takes many various forms of Art to achieve this."[51] This statement rings true when we see the way her 40 Variations transmogrify into the human form. In 1936, dancer and choreographer, Ted Shawn choreographed one of the Variations, as performed by Ted Shawn's Group of Men Dancers appropriately entitled, A Dreier Lithograph:1935. While Shawn choreographed the image, by transforming the human form into abstract configurations, American composer Jess Meeker set it to music. The piece was performed again in 1939 by the Carol Lynn Ballet, using one of the lithographs as both a backdrop and a diagram of the figures.[52] Dreier must have been pleased by the versatility seen in her art as it entered other art forms and thus carried the potential to reach a wider public audience. This is not to imply that by the 1930's modern art was fully understood and accepted. In December of 1936, Dreier removed her work and those from the Société Anonyme that were being shown as part of an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art entitled, "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism." The reason being that these works, in conjunction with others were exhibited with images by children and the insane. In defense of the exhibition, Director, Alfred Barr commented, ".... the fundamental difference between some of the art of children and psychopaths and the art of some of the surrealists is that the latter are perfectly conscious of the difference between the worlds of fantasy and reality, whereas the former are not. Otherwise their art is often analogous."[53] Such a statement makes all the more important Dreier's efforts throughout the 1920's towards a greater public awareness and appreciation of modern art in America.[54]

One of Dreier's last finished paintings is entitled Explosion which she worked on from 1940 until its completion in 1947. This highly energized work was the culmination of Dreier's continual development as an abstract artist. Her progression into pure abstraction was slow, hindered by her work for others in the Société Anonyme. But Dreier used those years to amass a wealth of visual knowledge in order to compose her own distinct visual language, designed to impart a message concerning

[51] Dreier, "Intrinsic Significance in Modern Art," 12.

[52] Herbert, 216.

[53] "Bad Companions.", Art Digest, 11 (February 1, 1937), 12.

[54] It should be noted that Dreier participated in a four-artist exhibition at the Delphic Studios in New York, November 23- December 5, 1936 in which six of her other paintings were shown from her late period of production: Irritation (1935), The Circus (1935), Madrigal (1935), Joy and Sorrow (1936), The Children's Park (1936), and Twilight (1936).

the potential that art has to educate and elevate. Her themes of spiritual and material realities reveal themselves in this final painting and do indeed suggest an impending explosion. Her use of opposing forms appear to be equally as strong as Kandinsky's Multicolored Circle of 1921, purchased by Dreier in 1923.[55] Both artists set up continuous dichotomies: color against color, small forms compete with larger forms, and hard edged regions of the canvas intersect with circular or curving images complete with projecting radii. Dreier achieved her most complex painting in terms of its imagery and the constant reference to theosophical spirituality within a universal context.

The most important paintings by Katherine Dreier are based on her involvement with modern aesthetics, her own artistic background and the everpresent concerns of theosophy throughout her life. As friend and artist, David Burliuk, commented in 1933, "Historians of modern art now have a really serious task to attempt to analyze the value of the works of Katherine Dreier because her art is one of the most prominent examples of the Modern American Spirit."[56] However, Katherine Dreier has remained in subsequent literature as a patron of the arts and not as an abstract painter who also contributed to the changing image of modernism in America. While Dreier's most significant contribution to modernism was her passionate involvement with the Société Anonyme, it is important holistically to understand how American artists digested a European-based abstraction and imposed their own artistic philosophies on transposed visual motifs. This extremely independent, strong-willed woman once said that the reason for founding the Société Anonyme was, "To create some order out of this confusion... ."[57] What remains to be created is some order out of the confusion surrounding this artist's place in the larger realm of modern abstraction.

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[55] Herbert, 359.

[56] Academy of Allied Arts, 7.

[57] Selected Publications Société Anonyme, vol.1, chapter 1.

Gilded Age Values and a Golden Age Painter: American Perceptions of Jan Vermeer[1]

M. Elizabeth Boone

When Théophile Thoré, writing in 1866 under the pseudonym of William Bürger, announced the rediscovery of an artist named Jan Vermeer and attributed a corpus of approximately 70 paintings to this almost forgotten Dutch painter, all of Vermeer's works could be found in the public and private collections of Europe.[2] Some forty years later, the situation had changed dramatically; in 1911, an English art critic writing for an American audience reported that while scholars had reduced the number of accepted Vermeers to thirty-five, seven were already in America. Four of these had been purchased during the preceding ten years. With the acquisition of an eighth painting by yet another American art collector, the writer was lamenting the exportation of so many of the Dutch master's works to the United States. "And now, as I say, [the painting] hangs on Messrs. Colnaghi's wall until the time comes to pack it up and send it to the new El Dorado, to which all the most beautiful treasures of art now automatically go, ... You already have seven Vermeers out of the thirty-five. This will make eight; and by Heaven, I envy you!"[3] This trend continued until the mid-1920s, when a writer for International Studio began his article on Vermeer with an estimate that thirteen, or nearly one-third, of the total known paintings by this artist could be seen in American collections.[4]

[1] This paper was initially prepared for a seminar on the Gilded Age in America taught by Dr. H. Barbara Weinberg at the Graduate Center, City University of New York. I wish to thank Dr. Weinberg, Curator of American Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, for her continued guidance and enthusiastic support of my work. I also want to acknowledge the assistance of three seventeenth-century Dutch painting scholars--Dr. Lisa Vergara, Hunter College; Dr. Arthur Wheelock, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; and Dr. Walter Liedtke, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York--all of whom read earlier versions of the text.

[2] W. Bürger, "Van der Meer de Delft," Gazette des Beaux-Arts, 21 (1866), 279-330, 458-70, 542-75. Thoré-Bürger also wrote on Vermeer in his earlier work, Les Musées de la Hollande (Paris: Veuve Jules Renouard, 1860).

[3] E.V. Lucas, "A New Vermeer," Outlook: A Weekly Newspaper, 97 (January 28, 1911), 184-5.

[4] David Lloyd, "The Vermeers in America," International Studio, 82, no. 342 (1925), 123. On the history of collecting Dutch art in America, see especially Walter Liedtke, "Dutch Paintings in America: The Collectors and Their Ideals," Great Dutch Paintings from America, exh. cat. (The Hague, Mauritshuis, 1990); Ann Jensen Adams, "Dutch Art and New York Collectors," Dutch and Flemish Paintings from New York Private Collections (New York, National Academy of Design, 1988); and Peter C. Sutton, "The Collecting of Dutch Art in the United States," A Guide to Dutch Art in America (The Netherlands-American Amity Trust, Inc., 1986).

Since that time, the number of Vermeer paintings in the United States has remained relatively constant.[5] Two works listed in the International Studio article are no longer considered authentic, while only two others were brought over after the article's publication.[6] Undeniably, the years between 1890 and 1925 marked a high-point in the acquisition of Vermeer paintings by American collectors (See Appendix A for the acquisition dates of the thirteen works in American collections).

Certainly the scholarly interest in Vermeer's art occasioned by Thoré-Bürger's pioneering research, and the rediscovery of Vermeer's "lost" paintings, coincides with a period of great collecting activity by Americans, accounting at least in part for these figures. Americans of the Gilded Age--an ironic label for the second half of the nineteenth century coined by Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner--were eager to acquire the work of the old masters, and Vermeer's paintings were among the most prized.[7] When Lucas referred to the United States as the "new El Dorado," his epithet possessed more resonance than he probably imagined. The aesthetic concerns of turn-of-the-century Americans are intimately tied to their desire to rival Europe with the creation in this country of a new cultural center. Examination of the American critical response to Vermeer -- and his elevation to greatest painter of the Dutch Golden Age -- will offer a vivid example of how a painter's reception can reveal some of the values and aspirations of American collectors and, by extension, their time.

Vermeer's "rediscovery" by the French art critic, Thoré-Bürger, has been explored extensively in art historical literature.[8] As Petra Ten Doesschate Chu has noted, the French taste for seventeenth-century Dutch painting fluctuated considerably during the two hundred years that followed its creation. This fluctuation, Chu determined, was based upon the current favor of either idealist or realist art. After a period of relatively low interest in Dutch painting during the Neoclassical period, the early-nineteenth century saw an increased appreciation for boisterous peasant scenes and tavern interiors. Eventually, the modest, middle class interiors of De Hooch, Dou, Metsu, Netscher, and Ter Borch rose in popularity, culminating in Thoré-Bürger's mid-century articles on Vermeer of Delft.[9]

[5] Albert Blankert, in his 1988 catalogue raisonné, states that thirteen of thirty-five paintings are in American collections. See Albert Blankert, et al, Vermeer (New York: Rizzoli, 1988).

[6] Portrait of a Youth, brought to New York by Duveen Brothers in 1925, for example, is no longer part of the canon. And the Lady with a Guitar, from the John G. Johnson Collection is now considered an old copy after Vermeer's Lady with a Guitar (Kenwood House, London). Johnson acquired his "Vermeer" before 1909, when it was exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum as part of the Hudson-Fulton celebration.

[7] Twain and Warner published The Gilded Age in 1873. In their novel, they defined this period as the decades after the Civil War, and the term is most commonly associated with the late nineteenth century. The "get-rich" schemes and acquisitive aspirations that these authors so effectively parody, however, appear as part of the American persona well into the twentieth.

[8] See especially Stanley Meltzoff, "The Rediscovery of Vermeer," Marsyas, 1 (1941-42), 145-66; André Blum, Vermeer et Thoré-Bürger (Geneva: Les éditions du Mont-Blanc, 1945), and Frances Suzman Jowell, Thoré-Bürger and the Art of the Past (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1977).

[9] See Petra Ten Doesschate Chu, French Realism and the Dutch Masters (Utrecht: Haentjens Dekker & Gumbert, 1974), 9-17.

Contemporary critics extended the polarity between the ideal and the real to explain the differences perceived in Italian and Dutch art. Italian art was considered allegorical and aristocratic, while Dutch painting was praised for its truth and humbleness.[10] Typical of the French attitude toward Dutch art is the following passage by Proudhon from Du Principe de l'art:

> Républicaine et rationaliste, n'ayant à s'occuper ni des dieux, ni des grands, ni des pontifes, ni des moines, forcée de se replier sur la vie séculière, [la Hollande] peignit modestement de modestes personnages, de simples mortels, tels qu'ils se montraient chez eux, sans façon, à la brasserie ou sur la place publique, voilà tout.[11]

Thoré-Bürger, an ardent republican who earned years of exile for his political activity, found the Dutch characteristics particularly in tune with his aspirations of art for the common people. Dutch art inspired Thoré-Bürger's slogan of "l'art pour l'homme," and Vermeer's paintings in particular, with their intimate views of Dutch life, were thought to possess the everyday, middle-class qualities that he championed. Of Vermeer's work, Thoré-Bürger wrote:

> De quoi se compose son oeuvre? D'abord, de scènes familières, représentant les moeurs de son époque et de son pays; ensuite, de vues prises dans l'intérieur des villes, simples fragments de rues, parfois un simple portrait de maison; enfin, de paysages où l'air et la lumière circulent comme dans la nature.[12]

It took almost a generation for Thoré-Bürger's appreciation of Vermeer to attract a wider audience. The second substantial evaluation of Vermeer was published a full twenty years later, when Henri Havard completed his study of the Delft archives.[13] When American writers began to include Vermeer in the canon of old masters, however, a fascinating inversion took place. Some of the characteristics formerly attributed to the "ideal" arts of Italy – refinement, an aristocratic manner, and an elite audience, in particular – began appearing in discussions of this Dutch painter. Moreover, the realism of Thoré-Bürger gave way to a different use of the term, one devoid of political implication and dominated by aesthetic concern. Writers continued

[10] See Chu, 12.

[11] Proudhon, Du Principe de l'art et de sa destination sociale (Paris: Garnier, 1865), 91. Quoted in Chu, 15. Republican and rationalist, not having to occupy itself with gods, greats, pontiffs, or monks, forced to respond to secular life, [Holland] modestly painted modest people, simple mortals; her artists portrayed themselves honestly, in the taverns or in the public squares, that is all; (author's translation).

[12] W. Bürger, "Van der Meer de Delft," 459. What is his work composed of? First, of familiar scenes, representing the mores of his epoque and of his country; then, of town views, simple fragments of streets, occasionally a simple portrait of a house; finally, landscapes where the air and the light circulate like in nature; (author's translation).

[13] See Henri Havard, Van der Meer de Delft (Paris, 1888).

to praise Vermeer's work for its truth to nature, but Thoré-Bürger's slogan of "l'art pour l'homme" essentially became transformed into a new refrain: "l'art pour l'art."[14]

The American perception of Vermeer's art became most clearly articulated around the year 1910, when exhibitions and publications proudly announced the number of paintings that had been brought to the new country. Consideration of Vermeer's reception in the United States from before the awareness that followed these events, however, illustrates the beginnings of these changes. Often these early reviews display a fascinating mixture of early and later attitudes.

One of the earliest American periodical articles appeared in the October 1895 issue of Century Magazine.[15] A reproduction by Timothy Cole of Vermeer's Lady Standing at a Spinet, the most recent acquisition by the National Gallery in London, adorned the frontispiece of this issue (fig. 1), and an appreciation of Vermeer's work completed the review. The Vermeer article formed part of a series on Dutch and Flemish masters; the magazine had commissioned a series on the Italians earlier.

In this essay, Italian and Dutch painting were seen again within the contrasting confines of the real and ideal. Cole, the wood engraver, was praised for being able to "render not only the ideality and spiritual grace of the Italian schools, but also the truthful and tender simplicity of the Lowlands painters."[16] Cole's engraving, and Vermeer's painting, were firmly embedded in this latter sensibility.

> It is in Vermeer's small works that he appears as an independent master, and we become acquainted with an artist whose genius is akin to that of De Hooch and Metsu -- a master of robust and refined intellect. I shall never forget the "Milkmaid" of the Six collection at Amsterdam, which is extraordinary in its naturalness, truth, breadth, and reality, without excess, and is notable for its brilliancy of tone, harmony, and solidity of touch.[17]

Diverging slightly from this formula, however, is the analysis of Lady Standing at a Spinet.

> In coloring it is softer and more refined than many of Vermeer's works that I have seen. The wall, suffused by the warm radiance from without, is a neutral gray of great delicacy of tone, and the gold frame of the little picture sparkles upon this background with piquant realism.[18]

Cole seems almost surprised to perceive refinement and delicacy in the work of a Dutch artist, but Vermeer's oeuvre was not yet well known in the United States. The only

[14] It is worth noting that the current preoccupation by scholars in discovering the hidden symbolism in Vermeer's painting did not exist during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

[15] Timothy Cole, "Jan Vermeer of Delft (1632-75)", Century Magazine, 50, no 6 (October 1895), 802, 952-3, 956-7.

[16] Cole, 952.

[17] Cole, 957.

[18] Cole, 957.

1. Timothy Cole, Wood Engraving of Jan Vermeer's *Lady Standing at a Spinet* from Century Magazine, October 1895. Courtesy Columbia University Libraries.

work in a public collection was the Metropolitan's Woman With a Water Jug (fig. 2), a subject closer to the domestic servant in The Milkmaid (fig. 3) than the elegant Lady Standing at a Spinet. Future publications and exhibitions would alter this condition. Vermeer's images of leisured and cultured women would become better known, and refinement in style and subject would not continue to be perceived as a fortunate anomaly.

The Bates and Guild Company of Boston published the first American monograph on Vermeer in 1904.[19] This publication, part of a series titled Masters in Art, is typical of much writing on Vermeer; it began with a narrative account of the events surrounding Vermeer's fall into anonymity and his subsequent rediscovery, followed by a recital of the few known facts about his life. Vermeer's relative obscurity both during his life and in the two centuries after his death provided a fine dramatic hook on which to catch readers.

Following the biographical outline, Philip Leslie Hale, the editor of the monograph, included a number of critical excerpts, most of which were published originally in French or German.[20] A passage from Thoré-Bürger's 1866 article began the section, followed by quotations from Carl Lemke, A. Bredius, Arsène Alexandre, Frederick Wedmore, John Van Dyke, Alfred Woltmann and Karl Woermann, and Alfred Peltzer. The literature spans a period of almost forty years and, not surprisingly, is eclectic in flavor.[21] Several writers did, however, make particular note of Vermeer's feel for sunlight, color (especially blue and yellow), and careful technique.

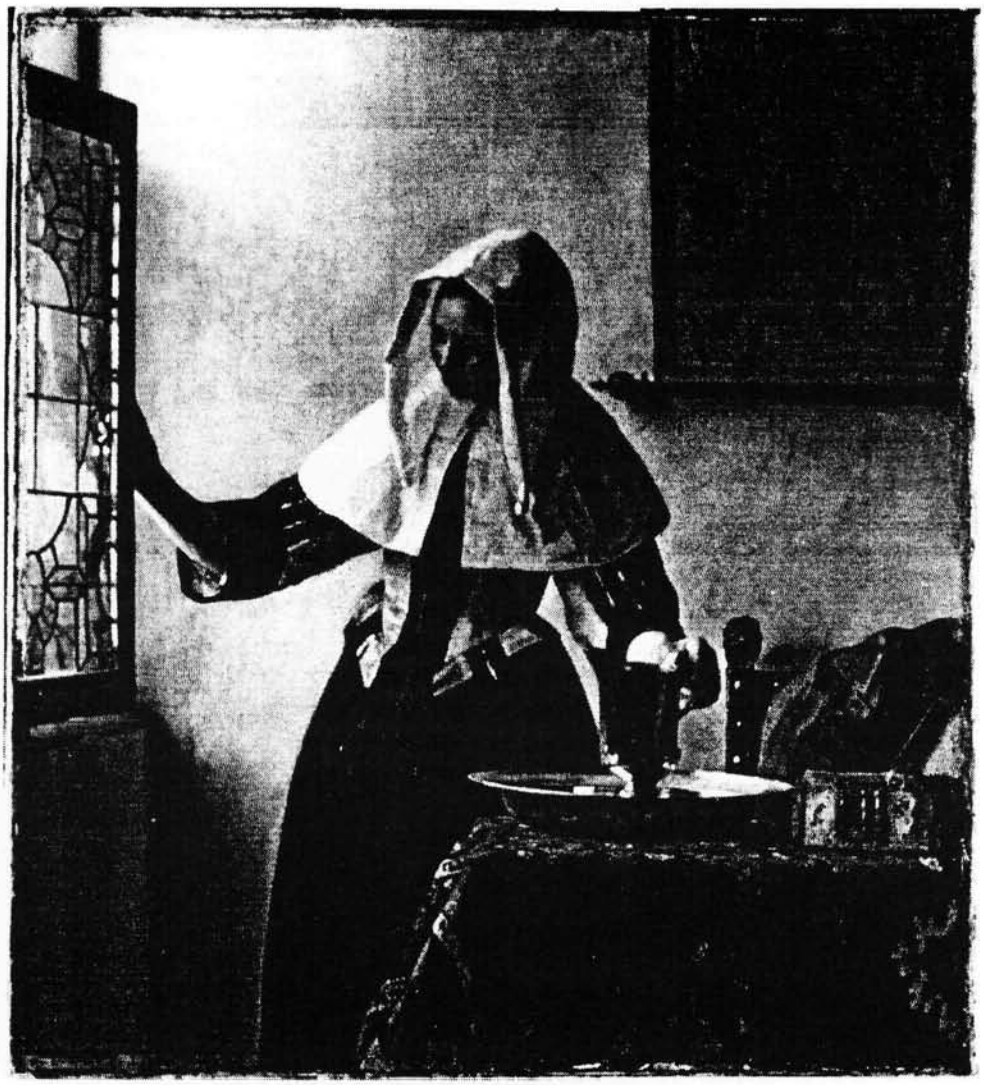
There are also a number of comparisons between the work of Vermeer and De Hooch, among them an 1895 excerpt from the American John Van Dyke. Van Dyke's description of Vermeer, contemporary with the article published in Century Magazine, displays a similar mixture of mid-nineteenth and turn-of-the-century attitudes. In his review, Van Dyke assumed a rather circumspect approach to his subject; he felt no need to elevate Vermeer above other Dutch painters. "Vermeer was not so extensive or elaborate in composition as De Hooch, and possibly could not handle a complicated scene so well."[22] Van Dyke also praised Vermeer's technical facility in rendering light and color -- the material rather than conceptual elements of art. He affirmed the artist's preference for the former component in his discussion of De Hooch and Vermeer.

[19] "Vermeer," Masters in Art: A Series of Illustrated Monographs, V (Boston: Bates & Guild Company, 1904), 211-52. For a discussion of this monograph, see Bernice Kramer Leader, "The Boston Lady as a Work of Art: Paintings by the Boston School at the Turn of the Century," PhD. diss, Columbia University, 1980, 297-300.

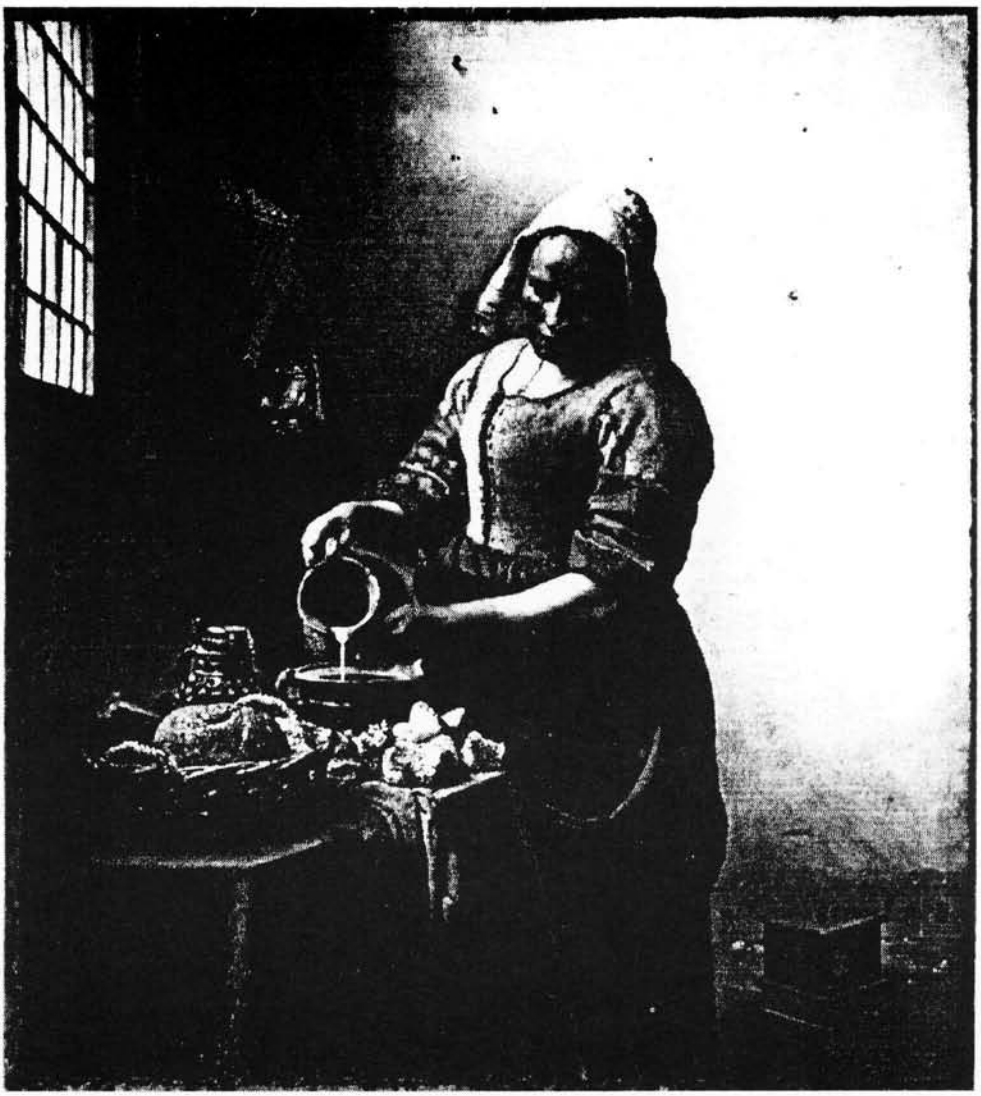
[20] Although the editor's name is not included in the 1904 publication, Frederick Coburn gave credit to Hale at a later date. See Frederick Coburn, "Philip L. Hale, An Appreciation," in Philip Hale, Vermeer, completed by Frederick W. Coburn and Ralph T. Hale, (Boston and New York, 1937), xxi.

[21] See Leader, "The Boston Lady as a Work of Art," 297-300 for a discussion of the selections.

[22] John Van Dyke, Old Dutch and Flemish Masters (New York, 1895), quoted in Masters in Art, 242.



2. Jan Vermeer, *Woman with a Water Jug*. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Marquand Collection



3. Jan Vermeer, *The Milkmaid.* Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

> In subject both De Hooch and Vermeer ... were chiefly devoted to the interior, with light coming in at the windows and illuminating a few figures. ... [Vermeer's] arrangement was simpler, but the mental point of view was not essentially different from that of De Hooch. His concern was for the material and the picturesque more than for the psychological or the intellectual.[23]

Van Dyke declared that "[Vermeer] is a poet, but, again, like almost all of the Dutchmen, he is so only in the poetry of materials, such as light, color, atmosphere, and values."[24] While Van Dyke's point of view privileges conceptual over technical concerns in art, later critics will find Vermeer's interest in surface and material to be one of his most appealing features.

The selection of writings in the Bates & Guild monograph provided American readers with the first extensive introduction to Vermeer and his painting. Previously, this critical literature was available only to the reader interested in and willing enough to tackle the untranslated originals. Without doubt, the inclusion of Vermeer in the Masters in Art series helped to increase public awareness of Vermeer and his paintings.

Five years later, the 1909 Hudson-Fulton Celebration provided Vermeer with his second major source of American publicity; at this time, six of his paintings were included in a Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibition that commemorated the 300th anniversary of Henry Hudson's exploration of the Hudson River and the 100th anniversary of Robert Fulton's introduction of steam power to the river.

The festivities surrounding these dual events, combined to form the Hudson-Fulton Celebration, were accompanied by exhibitions and publications sponsored by the major cultural institutions of the city.[25] The Metropolitan Museum of Art undertook two large exhibitions -- a survey of seventeenth-century Dutch paintings and an exhaustive presentation of colonial American paintings and industrial arts.

Organizers of the Metropolitan Museum exhibition provided a rationale for the presentation of Dutch paintings by loosely associating Holland's golden age with the Dutch explorer's (slightly earlier) exploration of the New York harbor. The exhibition differed from earlier events by featuring work borrowed exclusively from American sources.[26] The ten illustrations accompanying the Masters in Art monograph, in contrast, had been selected almost entirely from European holdings. Previous to this moment, curator William R. Valentiner recalled, Americans had not realized the

[23] Van Dyke, 242.

[24] John Van Dyke, quoted in Masters in Art, 243.

[25] The New-York Historical Society, for example, held an exhibition commemorating Robert Fulton and his steamship, and the American Museum of Natural History sponsored a display of original objects showing the life of Native Americans on the island of Manhattan and in the Hudson River Valley.

[26] The exhibition contained 149 Dutch paintings, among them 37 by Rembrandt, 20 by Frans Hals, and 6 by Vermeer. See W.R. Valentiner, "Preface," The Hudson-Fulton Celebration: Catalogue of an Exhibition Held in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, vol. 1 (New York: The Metropolitan Museums of Art, 1909).

richness of American collections.[27] Six of the estimated seven Vermeers in the country were included, and over 300,000 visitors viewed the works on display.[28]

The noted American artist and art critic, Kenyon Cox, made no attempt to hide his excitement over American collecting success when he informed European readers that the Hudson-Fulton exhibition was "a somewhat astonishing revelation of America's recently acquired wealth of masterpieces." Further along in the article, Cox continued, "However Europeans may incline to regard this transfer of historic works of art to our country, an American may be pardoned for rejoicing at it."[29]

One result of such publicity was that more and more writers were prompted to pay attention to Vermeer. What ensued in the years following the Hudson-Fulton Celebration, in fact, was a virtual wave of laudatory reviews. In these commentaries, it became particularly common to remove Vermeer from the ranks of Dutch painters, elevating him above the others as one of the few truly great artists.

As Vermeer's reputation began to climb, the price of his paintings followed. American audiences were particularly interested in knowing the amount of money needed to acquire one of these masterpieces. The New York periodical Outlook eagerly provided an answer, recording with awe how much the Rijksmuseum recently had paid for The Milkmaid.

> ... at a cost of 500,000 florins (approximately $200,000, or at nearly $775 a square inch), [the painting] has passed to the Ryks. The price sounds beyond reason, but it is not. Granted that a kind and portly Dutchwoman at work in her kitchen is a subject for a painter, here it is done with such mastery, sympathy, and beauty as not only to hold one spellbound but to be beyond appraisement. No sum is too much for the possession of this unique work.[30]

Collectors of the old masters were apparently in agreement. As Vermeer's prices skyrocketed, gallery dealers feverishly worked to provide Americans with more opportunities to view and purchase paintings by this artist. M. Knoedler & Company, who together with Duveen Brothers served as a key intermediary between old European collections and newly rich Americans, promoted Vermeer through a number of special exhibitions. The years between 1912 and 1928, when Knoedler featured Vermeer paintings in four of their exhibitions, marked the peak of their activity.[31]

[27] Margaret Sterne, The Passionate Eye: The Life of William R. Valentiner (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1980), 97-98. According to Valentiner, the loans were procured primarily through the influential support of J.P. Morgan.

[28] Winifred E. Howe, A History of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, 1913), 298. Isabella Stewart Gardner's Vermeer, The Concert, was not included in the exhibition.

[29] Kenyon Cox, "Dutch Paintings in the Hudson-Fulton Exhibition, Part I", The Burlington Magazine, vol. 16 (December 1909), 178.

[30] Lucas, "Vermeer of Delft," Outlook: A Weekly Newspaper, vol. 94 (February 26, 1910), 481-2.

[31] Vermeer paintings were included in exhibitions which occurred in 1912, 1915, 1925, and 1928. The accompanying catalogues serve as an important source of information about the importation of Vermeer's work to America.

For those not able to afford the luxury of a real Vermeer, Ladies' Home Journal, among other popular magazines, published large color reproductions of Woman Holding a Balance and A Lady Writing a Letter, for interested subscribers (figs. 4 and 5).[32] The prints were part of a series of reproductions based on old masters in private American collections. Each print came complete with framing instructions, facilitating the task of hanging a Vermeer in every home.

The most extensive piece of gilded age criticism to follow the Hudson-Fulton Celebration was Philip Leslie Hale's monograph of 1913, a more extensive publication than his 1904 production. In this book, Hale called Vermeer "the greatest painter who has ever lived," and assured readers that "till Vermeer painted no one had tried to paint at all."[33]

Hale's viewpoint is inextricably tied to his conviction that Vermeer's paintings were similar in key ways to those produced by certain contemporary painters, an opinion which he freely admitted in his text.

> As we have hinted before, one of the things that interests us in Vermeer, apart from his many perfections, is his intensely modern attitude, his point of view about painting -- about composition, colour values, "edges" and many of the other things in which modern artists particularly concern themselves.[34]

In fact, the paintings produced by Hale's Boston colleagues were strongly influenced by the rediscovery of Vermeer. Employing careful drawing and a diffused light source, artists such as Joseph DeCamp, Edmund Tarbell, and Frank Benson had begun depicting intimate views of women in interiors following Hale's earlier publication of 1904.[35] DeCamp's The Guitar Player (fig. 6), for example, inspired one Boston critic to assert that "If a Dutch Little Master of the calibre of Vermeer or Metsu could be imagined enlarged to the lifesize scale, it would look not unlike this modern masterwork."[36]

Hale felt, in addition, that Vermeer anticipated those modern tendencies in art which were infused with the art for art's sake aesthetic to which he subscribed. "Vermeer was a precursor in many things, and in none more than in the way in which he anticipated the modern point of view. If ever a man believed in art for art's sake it was he."[37] Hale carefully described the technical aspects of Vermeer's art, giving

[32] See Harrison S. Morris, "The Four Great Paintings in the Number: Vermeer's Woman Weighing Pearls," Ladies' Home Journal, vol. 33 (June 1916), 16 and W.A. Coffin, "The Two Great Paintings in the Number: Vermeer's A Lady Writing," Ladies' Home Journal, vol. 35 (February 1917), 53.

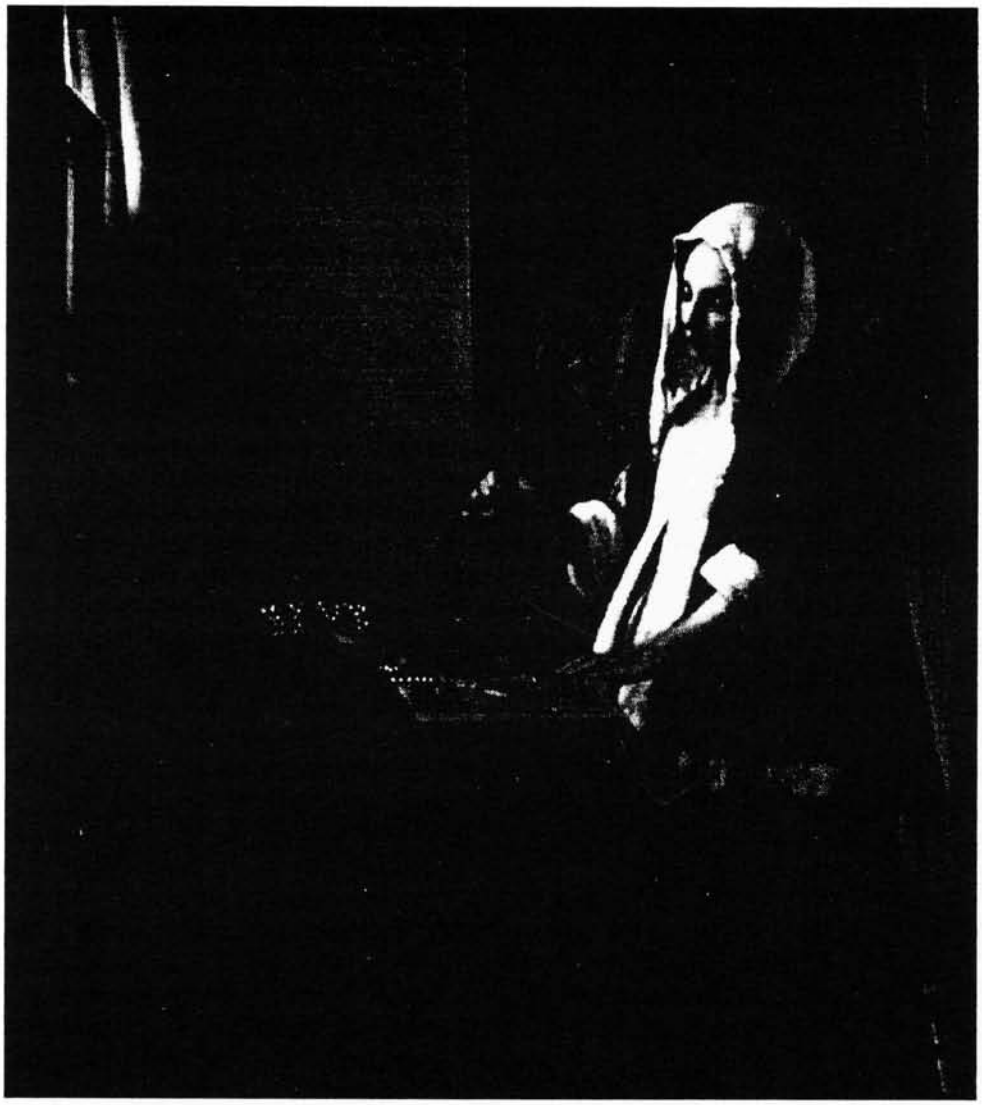
[33] Philip Hale, Jan Vermeer of Delft (Boston: Small, Maynard and Company, 1913), 3.

[34] Hale, 218.

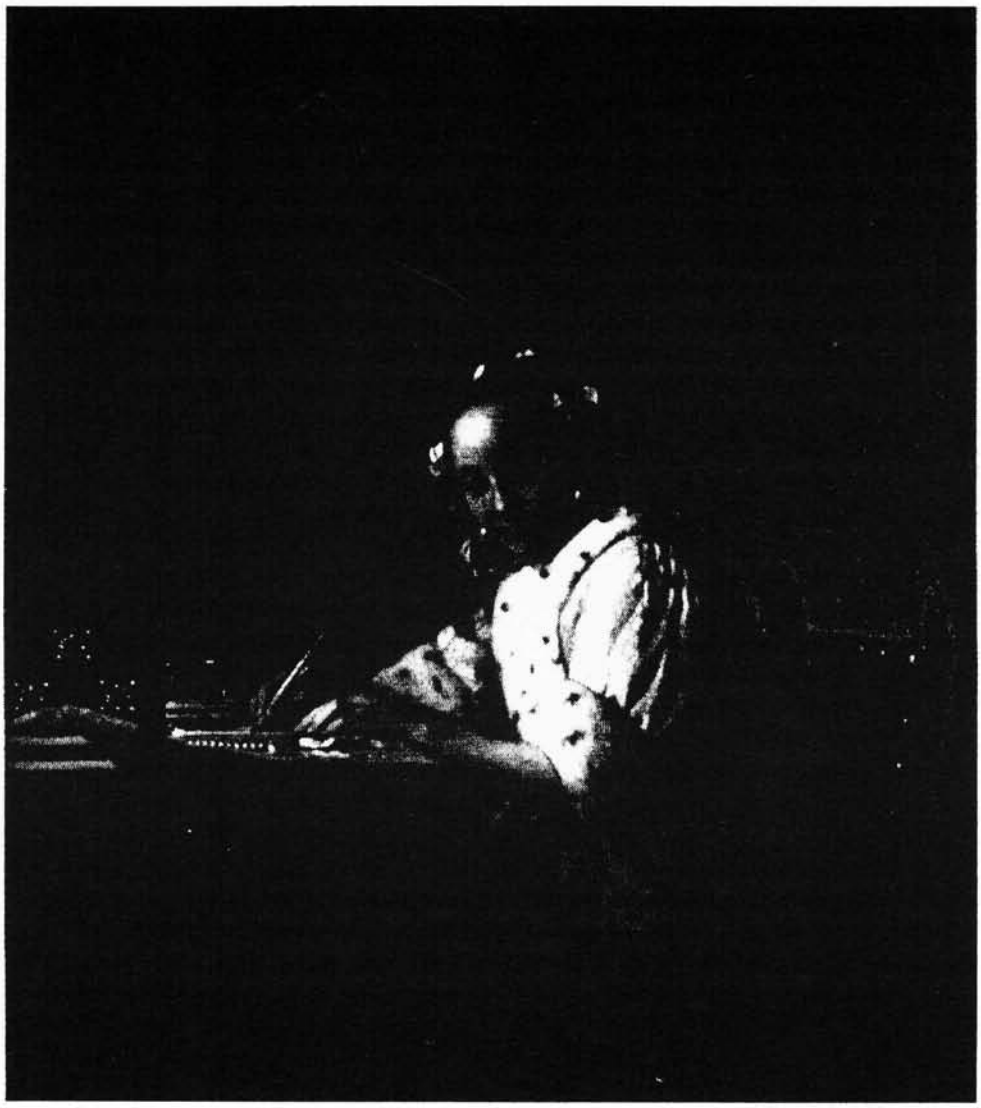
[35] Vermeer's importance as source of compositional inspiration for the artists associated with Hale, as well as for the nineteenth-century American artists James Abbott McNeill Whistler and Thomas Wilmer Dewing, has been frequently observed.

[36] "Boston Artists' Works at the St. Botolph Club," Boston Evening Transcript, January 30, 1908, 11, col. 2. I wish to thank Laurene Buckley, who is writing a dissertation on Joseph DeCamp, for providing me with this citation.

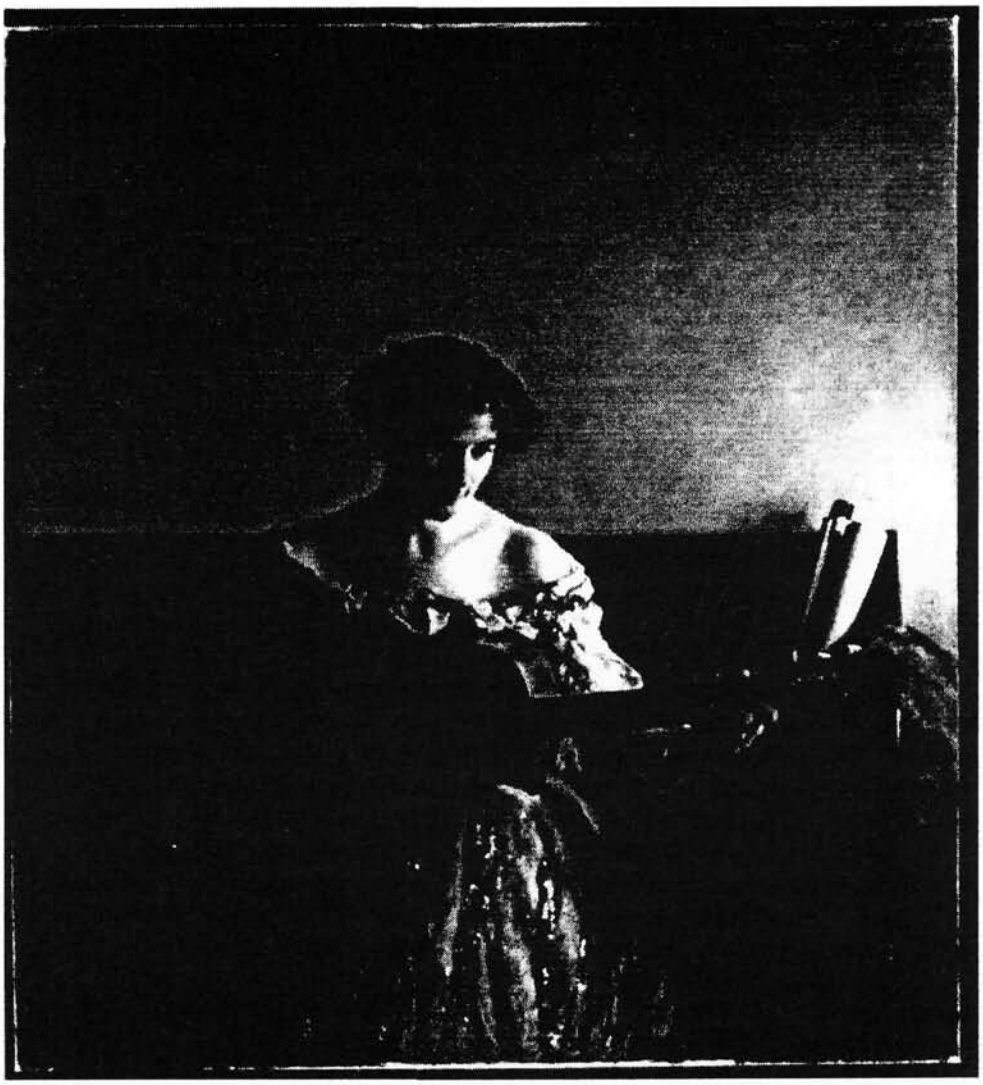
[37] Hale, 220.



4. Jan Vermeer, *Woman Holding a Balance*. National Gallery of Art, Washington; Widener Collection



5. Jan Vermeer, *A Lady Writing a Letter.* National Gallery of Art, Washington; Gift of Harry Waldron Havemeyer and Horace Havemeyer, Jr., in memory of their father



6. Joseph DeCamp, *The Guitar Player*, 1908. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Charles Henry Hayden Fund

almost no consideration to subject. Aesthetic issues, Hale felt, concerned the artist most deeply.

> One particularly modern thing about Vermeer's art is his avoidance of storytelling,... One easily sees that it did not particularly interest him and that the design, the colour scheme and the rendering were the elements that most engaged his attention.[38]

Hale's stance, and the motivations for his appropriation of Vermeer as a model, are grounded, it seems, in a conservative reaction to modernism (as opposed to modern painting) and its advocates. Although it is probably coincidental that Hale published his book in 1913, the same year that the Armory Show was presented in New York, the simultaneous occurrence of these two events is provocative. Hale himself referred in his book to the recent emergence of two approaches to nature; the one represented by Vermeer and his disciples was, in his opinion, the "correct attitude."[39]

> Still, it seems evident that [Vermeer's] influence will increase, and the reasons for this belief are these: at present there are two markedly different schools or modes of thought in painting. One gives itself to expression of quaint conceit or fancies done in a fashion more or less vaguely suggestive of nature; the other is interested in giving the exact appearance of nature – making it like, in short. For these last Vermeer is a master, – his name a rallying-cry. To them his work seems in many ways the nearest approach to truth that has been made.[40]

The conservatism of the Boston School's politics, particularly in relation to their opposition to the women's suffrage movement, has been argued by Bernice Leader.[41] These painters, according to Leader, appropriated Vermeer's quiet views of women engaged in domestic tasks in order to provide an alternate model to aggressive reformers. Hale's aesthetic ideals were similarly conservative, and with Vermeer as the standard for great art, his "art for art's sake" agenda stood as a time-proven philosophy.

Few who devoted their researches specifically to Vermeer found the dramatic elevation of the artist's status by American writers extreme. And none, save Charles Henry Caffin, in his book, The Story of Dutch Painting, attempted to explain the motivations for such hyperbolic prose.

> The value of the criticism [that Vermeer is the greatest painter that ever lived] depends upon the acceptance of the major premise, respecting which this individual had no doubt. On the

[38] Hale, 219.

[39] Hale, 216.

[40] Hale, 216.

[41] Bernice Kramer Leader, "Antifeminism in the Paintings of the Boston School," Arts Magazine, vol 5 (January 1982), 112-19.

> other hand, one may beg to doubt it, without depreciating Vermeer. For it comes dangerously near the position that the whole art of painting consists in its technique; it is an echo, in fact of that old shibboleth of our youth, "art for art's sake." It lays undue stress on the purely sensuous appeal of painting, upon the "mint and cummin," and neglects the "weightier matter" of possible appeal to the higher faculties of the imagination.[42]

Caffin also noted that "these extreme admirers are, as a rule, painters, who find in Vermeer's technique and point of view precisely what they value most highly in painting."[43] These words, published two years before the publication of the Hale monograph, attest to both the prevalence and conservatism of Hale's point of view.

Artistic predilections do not completely account for Vermeer's rapid elevation in status, however, and the advocacy for a particular aesthetic philosophy is just one of the concepts at issue. The reasons for Hale's infusion of gilded age values into the art of a seventeenth-century painter extended to societal aspirations as well. "Refinement," Hale wrote, "is a quality which marks almost everything that Vermeer made,"[44] and in his reserve and impersonality, he was "plus Royaliste que le Roi."[45] In the gilded age, an era of unbounded confidence marked by rapid economic growth, elegance of presentation and an aristocratic manner were highly valued qualities. Such attitudes were directed to the public in general and extended beyond the limited confines of artistic discussion.

As early as 1907, Kenyon Cox referred to Vermeer as the most refined artist of seventeenth-century Holland.

> There is no swagger or brilliancy about [the Dutch] painters -- their art is reticent and discreet, exquisitely neat and clean and finished, fond of half tones and the quiet light of interiors shut away from the street, mysterious in its processes and inimitably refined in its observation, above all, absolutely truthful and honest. Vermeer of Delft is the most delicate and sensitive of them -- an artist of infinite distinction who saw subtle shades of sentiment and subtle effects of light and air never rendered by any other.[46]

While Cox considered Vermeer to be "truthful and honest," the meaning of these words must be seen within the context of the other adjectives: reticent, discreet, exquisite, quiet, mysterious, and subtle. Unlike Thoré-Bürger and his contemporaries, the truth and honesty of peasant or middle class manners held little interest for Cox and his readers.

[42] Caffin, 134.

[43] Caffin, 133.

[44] Hale, 17.

[45] Hale, 221.

[46] Kenyon Cox, "Painters of the Mode," Painters and Sculptors: A Second Series of Old Masters and New (New York: Duffield & Company, 1907), 54.

Cox wrote the above commentary in the context of an article conceived as an apologia for the work of Alfred Stevens, a Belgian artist known for his elegant images of well-dressed women. In order to rescue Stevens from recent criticism for his elite choice of subject, Cox examined chronologically the portrayal of beautiful women throughout the history of art. Dutch artists, Cox felt, usually preferred scenes of strident, lower class women; Vermeer, however, provided proof of refinement in seventeenth-century Holland.

In another article, his review of the Hudson-Fulton exhibition, Cox moved from a perusal of subject to one of style. In this analysis, his language again merits attention; here it is marked by a curious aloofness.

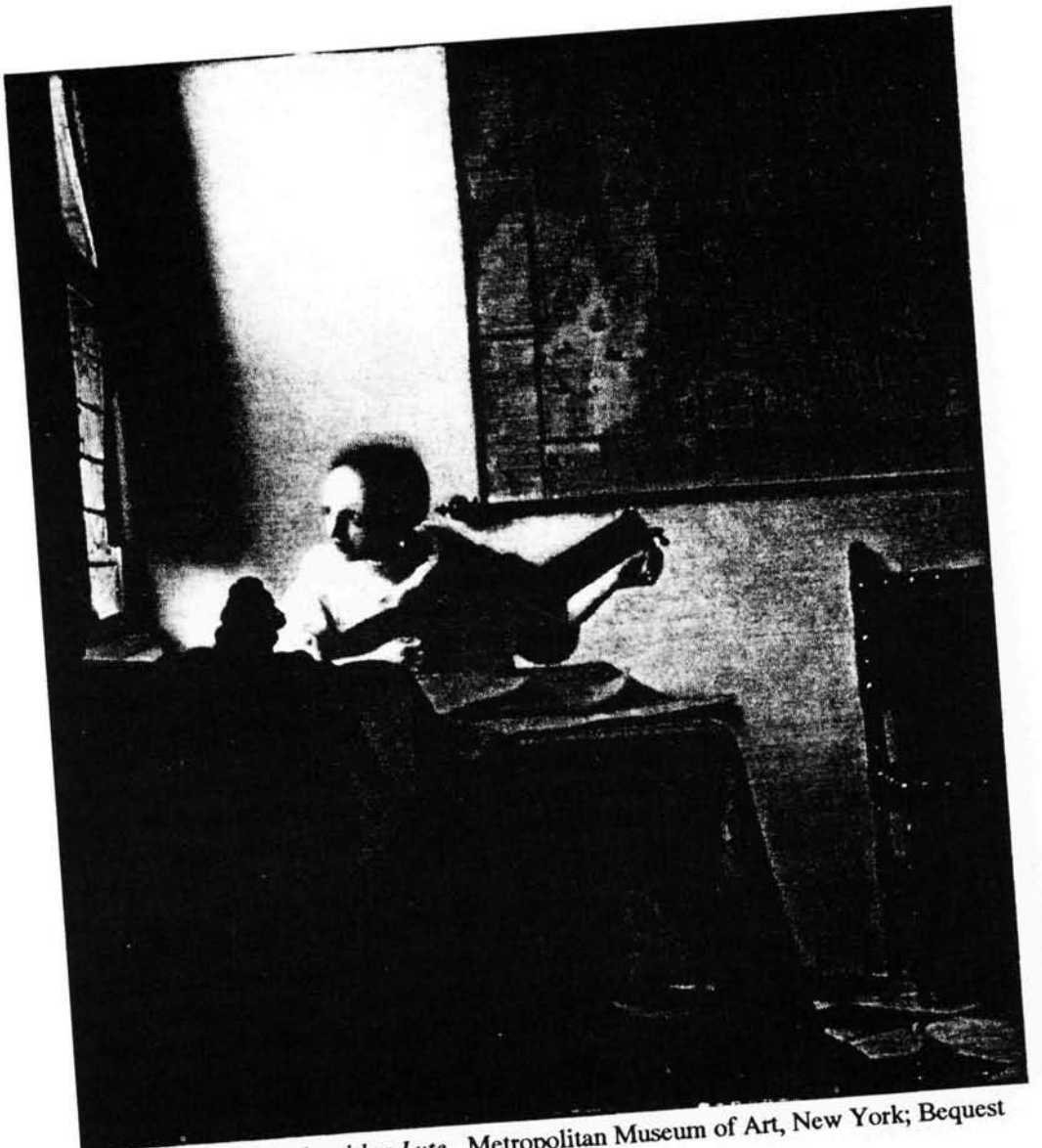
> The most original and personal elements of Vermeer's style, in which his art differs from all that preceded it, are his consummate treatment of light and his habit of lighting his picture from a source well back within it; his coldness of tone inclining to blue; and his inimitable flat modelling. Hardly less characteristic, though he shares these qualities with others, are his elegance of spacing and composition, and his impeccable draughtsmanship.[47]

Describing Vermeer's Woman with a Water Jug, in particular, Cox praised this painting for "the perfection of line and spacing, the absolute rightness of the forms, [and] the cool harmony of blue and white and pale yellow."[48] Missing from Cox's descriptions are any suggestion of warmth and imperfection that might mark human presence. The paintings seem untouchable and self-contained, as if they exist without reference to the outside world. The full impact of this reserve becomes particularly palpable in the hermetic description of Lady with a Lute, from the Collis P. Huntington collection (fig. 7).

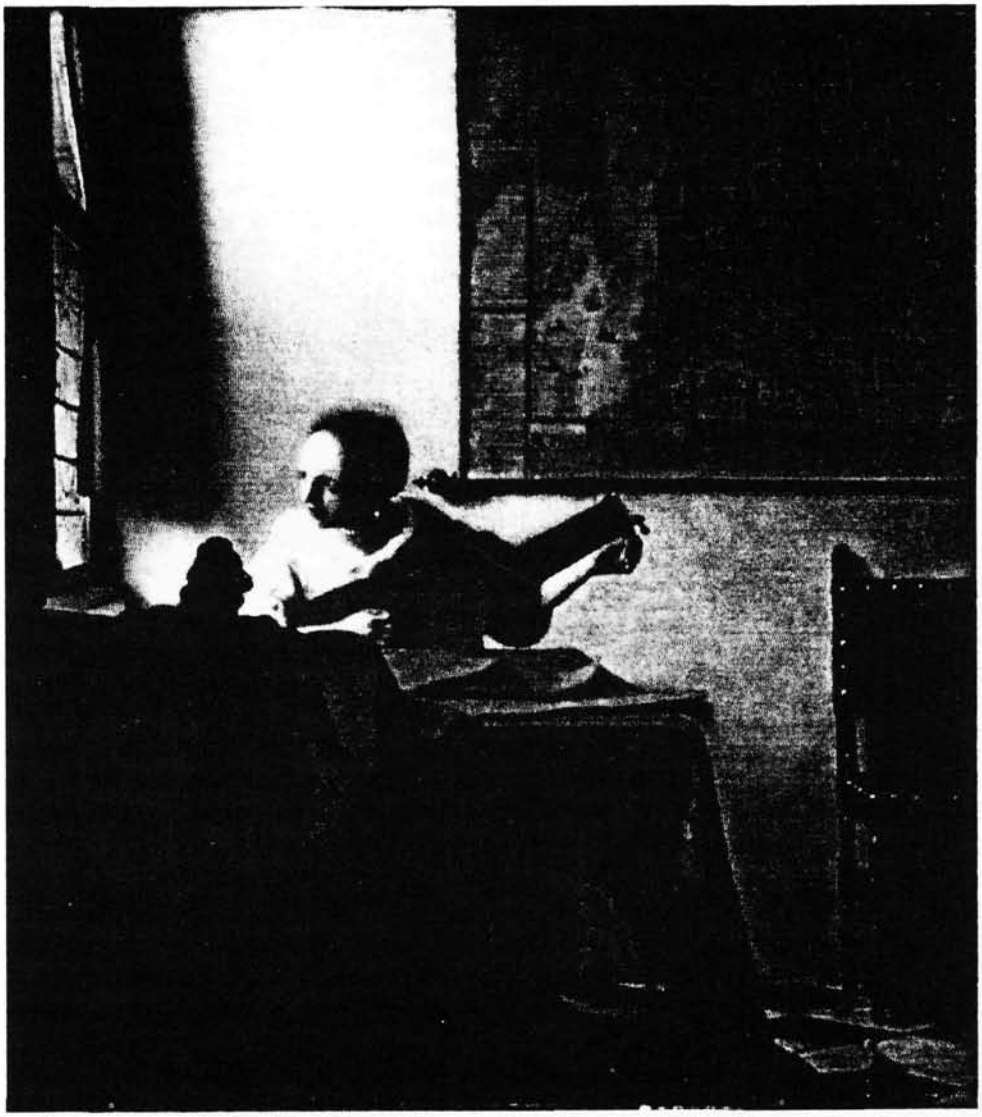
> It is this picture, without provenance and without history, until now uncatalogued and undescribed, which is the pearl of price, a perfect work in perfect condition of the most perfect painter that ever lived.[49]

Other critics extended the impression of coolness to Vermeer's subjects as well as the painter himself. Charles Caffin, mentioned above as the author of a book on Dutch painting, referred to the fact that only in three Vermeer paintings do the figures look out from their surroundings. "It is rather a characteristic of Vermeer," Caffin concluded from this observation, "that the people in his pictures seem immersed in themselves. The scene is wrapped in privacy, undisturbed by the suggestion of an outsider."[50] More than once, moreover, Americans were told that the painter seated in

[47] Cox, "Dutch Paintings in the Hudson-Fulton Exhibition," Part II, Burlington Magazine, vol. 41, no. 82 (January 1910), 246.
[48] Cox, (1910) 246.
[49] Cox, (1910) 246.
[50] Caffin, 140.



7. Jan Vermeer, *Lady with a Lute*. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Bequest of Collis P. Huntington



7. Jan Vermeer, *Lady with a Lute*. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Bequest of Collis P. Huntington

The Allegory of Painting was a representation of Vermeer, "seated at his ease, with his back to the world"[51] (fig. 8).

The sense of extreme refinement and distance from everyday life were qualities that apparently appealed to Vermeer's American audience. They spoke to genteel and elitist sensibilities quite alien, however, to those perceived by Thoré-Bürger in his first evaluation of the artist. The two-part review penned by Frank Jewett Mather for The Nation is particularly surprising when examined with the earlier ideals of Dutch art in mind. In its objections to Hale's decided emphasis on aesthetic issues, and its idealistic approach to Vermeer's subjects, this commentary sums up many aspects of Vermeer's gilded age reception.

Mather published his articles in 1914, responding directly to Philip Leslie Hale's monograph of the year before. While Hale's book formed an elaborate and convincing analysis of Vermeer's technique, Mather argued, it failed to account for the artist's elevated attitude toward the women he portrayed.

> Shall we then conclude with Mr. Hale that for the charm of a Vermeer we must look merely to its consummate technique? A little study of the four or five women who grace the finest pictures will suggest that we must look to some rare lyrical sentiment in the artist's soul of which the technique, marvelous as it is, is merely a secondary evocation.[52]

Vermeer, Mather felt, invested his women with glamour, and his attitude toward them was one of adoration. According to Mather, "he observed them not merely with a remarkable attention, but with a special tenderness and reverence." His emotional attitude, moreover, was "chivalric, implying merely a respectful cult of womanhood and of beauty."[53]

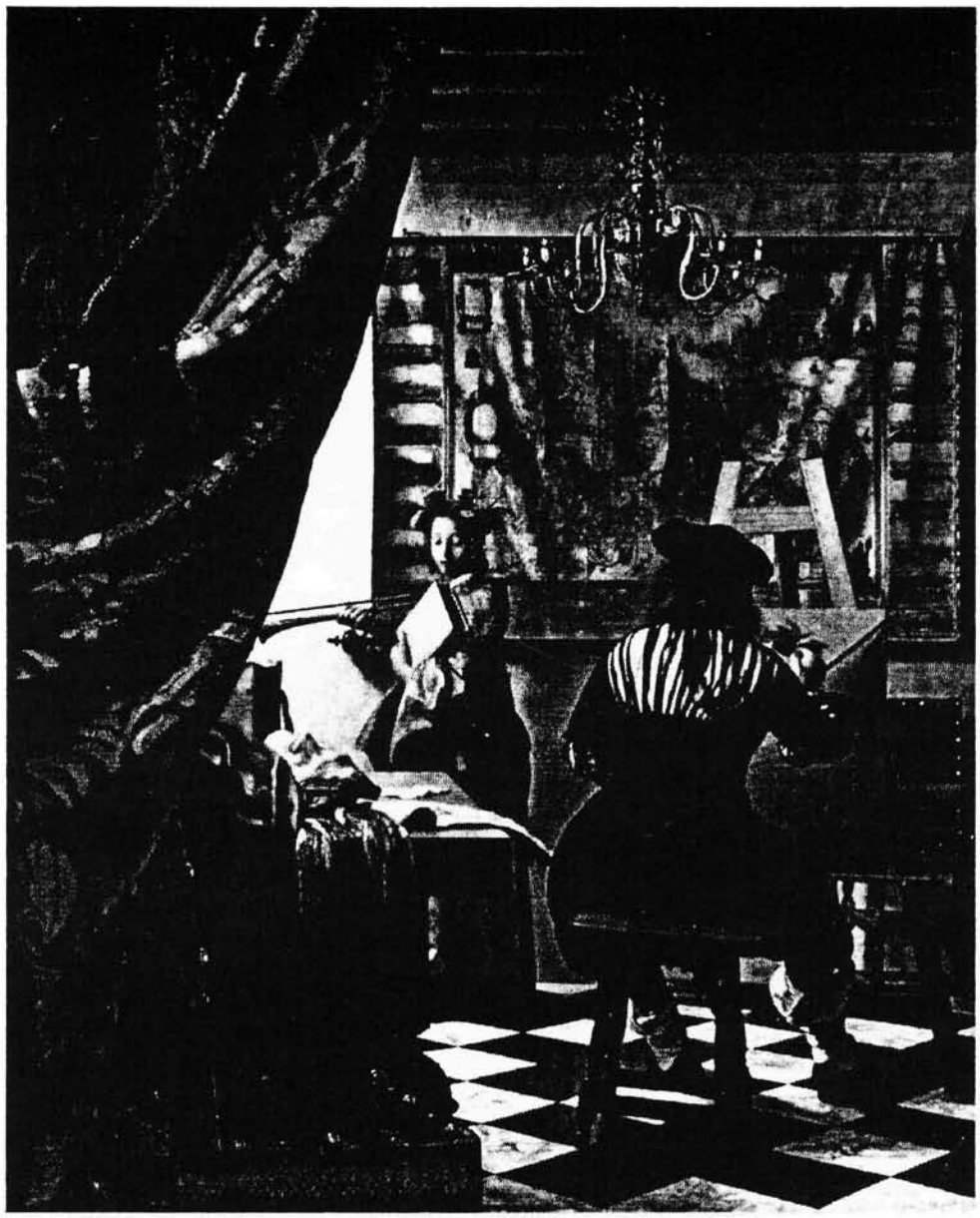
Ironically enough by today's standards, Mather attributed such idolization to a gallant form of feminism.

> If I am right in seeing, ... a painter of feminist type in Vermeer, the reader already knows a good deal what sort of person the artist was. But the reader must divest from the idea of feminism

[51] Edward Verrall Lucas, "Vermeer of Delft," 479. Lucas, a British art critic, was writing for a New York magazine. Royal Cortissoz repeated this statement almost verbatim six years later. "In the beautiful painting of an artist at work in his studio, which is one of the gems of the Czernin collection at Vienna, Vermeer -- if it indeed be he who sits at the easel --turns his back upon the world." Royal Cortissoz, "The Magic of Mere Paint," Art and Common Sense (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916), 71.

[52] Frank Jewett Mather, "Vermeer of Delft," Part 1, The Nation, vol. 99, no. 2563 (August 14, 1914), 203.

[53] Mather, 203.



8. Jan Vermeer, *The Allegory of Painting*. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

> certain morbid features which it has acquired in recent time, and think instead of a cult of woman inspired only by a normal sensuousness and by a fine chivalry. It is the gentleman's attitude to-day.[54]

Mather's feminism, and the type he perceived in Vermeer's paintings, was based on elevation rather than equality. Like the conservatism manifested in Hale's artistic agenda of art for art's sake, in fact, it was neither radical nor threatening to the status quo.

The elevation of Vermeer's subjects from the middle-class housewife championed by Thoré-Bürger to the spiritual icon of womanhood in Mather's prose, gains added irony when the nineteenth-century notions of Dutch painting are recalled. French writers, as discussed above, had polarized Italian and Dutch painting, criticizing the former for being aristocratic and allegorical, while praising the latter for its truth and humbleness. In the twentieth century, these oppositions were subverted; "ideal" and "real" had new meanings, and Vermeer's paintings acquired just those elitist and idolatory associations from which earlier critics thought it free. This transformation -- from a modest art created by an unassuming Dutchman into an art that had its roots in a supremely refined artistic temperament -- precluded the paradoxical situation of America's new aristocracy collecting art that was middle class in spirit.

The reasons for Vermeer's popularity, and the sources of his elevation, derived from a complex combination of gilded age values, and the issues discussed above offer some possibilities for consideration. The reception given to Vermeer in America just after the turn of the century understandably differed from his reception in France fifty years earlier. Artistic and political conditions had changed. Thoré-Bürger, moreover, looked at Vermeer with the eye of a reformer; his liberal social outlook precluded the perception of aristocratic values in his favored artist. The United States, on the other hand, was busily creating its own aristocracy -- an aristocracy potentially attainable, and certainly aspired to, by all. The American collectors who chose to buy paintings by Vermeer were part of this newly moneyed class; they had acquired their wealth through business acumen as opposed to noble forebears. Through their collecting, they adorned their palatial homes, seeking to validate their position as well as their taste. And to acquire the work of Jan Vermeer displayed the refinement of a truly aristocratic sensibility.

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[54] MatherMather, "Vermeer of Delft," Part 2, The Nation, vol. 99, no. 2564 (August 20, 1914), 232.

Appendix

Vermeer Paintings in the United States

There are thirteen Vermeer paintings in American collections. The following is a chronological summary of their arrival in the United States.

1887 Henry Marquand acquires Woman with a Water Jug (Metropolitan Museum, New York) from Charles Pillet, Paris, as a painting by Pieter de Hooch.

1892 Isabella Steward Gardner acquires The Concert (Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston) from the sale of Thoré-Bürger's estate, Drouot, Paris.

ca. 1897 Collis P. Huntington acquires Lady with a Lute (Metropolitan Museum, New York) from an unknown English source.

1901 Henry Clay Frick acquires Girl Interrupted at Her Music (Frick Collection, New York) from Knoedler Galleries.

1907 John Pierpont Morgan acquires Girl Writing a Letter (National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.) from J. & A. LeRoy, Brussels.

1907-9 Benjamin Alton acquires A Girl Asleep (Metropolitan Museum, New York) from Duveen Brothers.

1911 Henry Clay Frick acquires Soldier and Laughing Girl (Frick Collection, New York) from Knoedler Galleries.

1911 A.B. Widener acquires Woman Holding a Balance (National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.) from P. & D. Colnaghi and Knoedler Galleries.

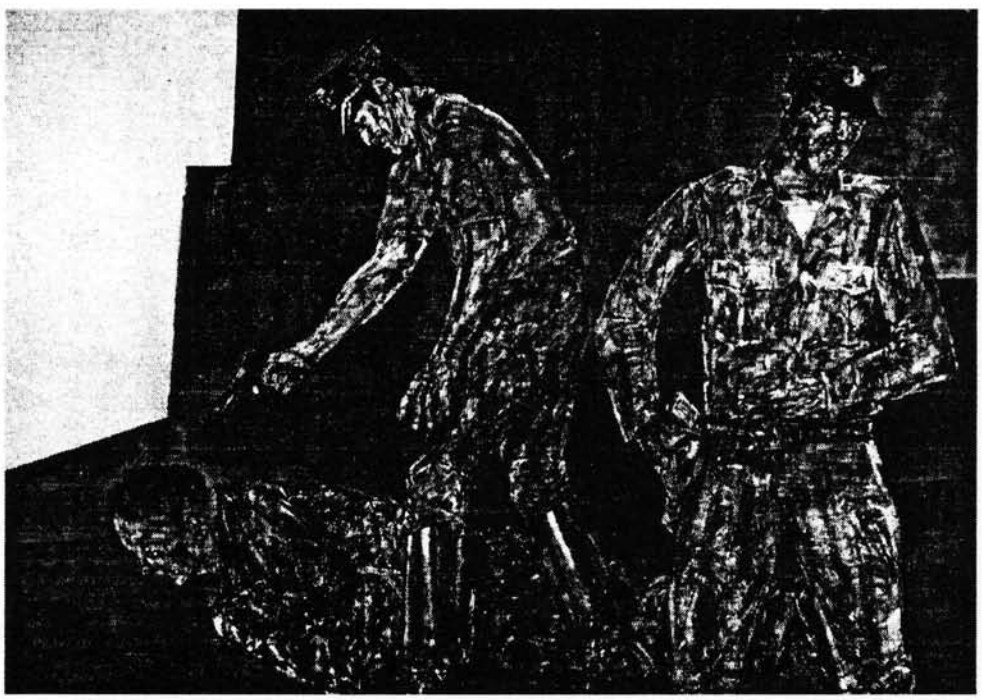
1919 Henry Clay Frick acquires Lady with Maidservant (Frick Collection, New York) from Duveen Brothers.

1922 Joseph E. Widener acquires Girl with a Flute (Circle of Jan Vermeer, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.) from Knoedler Galleries.

1925 Andrew W. Mellon acquires Girl with a Red Hat (National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.) from Knoedler Galleries.

1928 Michael Friedsam acquires Allegory of the Faith (Metropolitan Museum, New York) from Galerie F. Kleinberger.

1955 Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wrightsman acquires Head of a Girl (Metropolitan Museum, New York) from Seligman.



Leon Golub. "White Squad" III, 1982, 120" x 172"
(photo: Courtesy of Josh Baer Gellery, NY)

An Interview with Leon Golub

Shelley F. Adams and Justin Carlino

This interview took place at the New York City studio and home of Leon Golub and Nancy Spero on March 16, 1992. Born in Chicago in 1922, Mr. Golub graduated from the University of Chicago in 1942 with a degree in art history. After beginning graduate courses in this field, he suspended his studies to serve in the Army Corps of Engineers as an aerial reconnaissance cartographer during World War II. Returning from Europe at the end of his service, Mr. Golub was determined to follow his first inclination, the creation of art rather than just its analyses. Enrolling in the studio art program at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, he completed his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 1949 and his Master of Fine Arts the following year. Despite setting painting as his priority, Mr. Golub never left behind his training in art history which is evident in both his art and his teaching. Since 1950, he has held a number of faculty positions culminating in his appointment as the John C. Van Dyck Professor of Visual Art at Rutgers University in 1983. He retired from this position in 1991, but continues to be vitally interested in the progress and significance of art history and criticism.

The beginning of his artistic career in 1950 coincided with the predominating force of the Abstract Expressionists and the New York School, and developed against the environment of Post-Painterly Abstraction, Pop Art, and Conceptualism in the 1960's and 70's. As can be construed from his discussion below, Mr. Golub's interests lie outside of the mainstream and the fashionable. His art began as (and continues to be) referential and figurative with a deep concern for social and political issues centering on the violence perpetrated by both society at large, and by individuals shaped by that society.

Gregarious, outspoken, and superbly informed in a far-ranging variety of topics, Mr. Golub generously set aside a number of hours for both the interview itself and its preparation for publication. The Rutgers Art Review is pleased to have Leon Golub as the subject of its first ever interview with a practicing artist.

INTERVIEWERS: We thought we would start with the last question first and ask you about your current work.

LEON GOLUB: The exhibition I had recently (Josh Baer Gallery, January 1992) had several paintings with male figures whose tee-shirts sport Language. The shirts voice various kinds of macho and aggressive patriotic sloganeering. For instance, one shirt carries "Try Burning This One...Asshole." A second shirt declares, "These Colors Never Run." This type of slogan is worn by those who stand up for the "American Way" against those effete types who would be likely to burn the American flag.

It represents an American claim on the world as exemplified by its most vulgar exponents. This flows from the highest levels of government policy-making to street levels of popular expression. I try to enter at street level. I collect slogans and tattoos that express such beliefs and postures.

INT: These slogans and tattoos are statements that you observe on real people in the streets?

LG: Yes, although these specific instances were appropriated from biker magazines. In one instance, the painted shirt is tight enough and of a color that virtually approximates skin. In the latest work, this guy has an American Eagle tatooed on his chest and the words "Born Free" on his stomach. Several of my figures from the early 80's wore tattoos, for example Mercenaries III sported an African Eagle and a woman's bare bust. I will continue this kind of thing, but I also want to do more representations dealing with prisoners and generalized violence. So I haven't deviated that much from my past concerns.

INT: When did these concerns surface?

LG: Mostly in the 1980's when I stressed realistic representations in which I tried to examine various psychic states.

INT: These images seem to evoke a sense of terror.[1] Was that the kind of psychic nuance to which you referred?

LG: Sometimes terror, but not always. Sometimes sexual tensions or fun and games. Mostly tensions and gestures acted out between men.

INT: But hasn't most art in one way or another sought to do that? What is your goal in this, and how do you believe your art differs?

LG: I don't know how much agreement you would get from the "art world" with this statement, but I believe that I am setting out an historical record of what the 20th century looks like. This is not the only record, nor is it the definitive record because there is no definitive record. In our time everything is built up of (and knocked down to) pieces of experience. No individual summarizes in his or her art what our epoch is about. I doubt that is possible.

I depict in a forceful manner how men (most of my characters are male) look and act in respect to real issues and events of today. I depict aggressions and the posturings whereby power and domination are exerted. And not just power and domination in the political and social scheme of things, but equally in our psychic lives. One could compare the gestures and postures of men today as against other [art]

[1] For a source of a variety of well reproduced images evoking strong emotions including terror see; Donald Kuspit, Leon Golub: Existential/Activist Painter (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1985) (Cloth edition).

historical epochs. For example as we compare how my figures sit, glance and gesture with the way that say the Renaissance figures sit, glance and gesture, we would find major differences. But not simply because much has transpired historically, but because of how people visualize themselves and occupy the spaces in which they perform and act out.

I construct a partial gestural record of the 20th century. And I claim that what I record is substantiated by the events of the world. That's a big claim. I try to record what seems germane. Much of what I observe denotes and connotes unequal or coercive relationships.

INT: Are we meant to read these expressions, postures and gestures as a set, or as a kind of vocabulary with specific meanings and symbolism?

LG: That's an interesting question. I would have to say that I stereotype, conventionalize, even ritualize those gestures which are commonplace in male behaviors. Granted such generalities, nevertheless I try to individualize and particularize. At the same time, there is no question that I stereotype.

INT: Society itself has created a set of conventions and stereotypes which are part of what you are trying to depict.

LG: Right. The way men act and visualize themselves devolves into set themes. A "man" doesn't back down, etc. More importantly is that what I imply in figural gesture can be extrapolated to society or aspects of society, for example the current "patriotic" or "national interest paintings." The art world, insular as it can be, is not immune to such cravings or gestures.

INT: Speaking of the art world, historians and critics have documented the various influences that have conditioned your work. One thing that always comes up in the literature is the overriding significance of past art historical models.[2] Do you agree with their perceptions?

LG: I'm not always sure how others perceive me, but I do know how I perceive myself and what has been influential. I have always been open to taking what I need wherever I can find it. In the earliest period through the 1950's, so-called Primitive and Expressionist art were important. Northwest coast American Indian art, PreColumbian, Oceanic, Insane & Outsider Art, Hittite, Archaic Greek, German Expressionism, etc., etc. – an eclectic brew!

Throughout the 1960's I was strongly taken with Greek sculpture and what is left of Greek painting. Perhaps the single most important monument for my work has

[2] See Kuspit (1985). Also Gerald Marzorati, A Painter of Darkness Leon Golub and Our Times: An Essay on Art and Politics (New York: Penguin Books, 1990); Matthew Baigell, "The Mercenaries: An Interview with Leon Golub," Arts Magazine, 55/10 (May 1981), 167-9; and Joshua Kind, "Terror and Tactics: The Journey of Leon Golub," New Art Examiner, 12/8 (May 1985), 33-5.

been the Great Altar of Zeus at Pergamon which I finally actually saw two years ago in East Berlin.[3]

INT: Why this particular monument?

LG: In classical art I look toward the early and late periods of Greek and Roman. I have great respect for the Classical period [c. 480-323 BC], but I respond in a virtually physical tactile way to early and late periods. The earlier examples because of their archaic qualities: stylization, roughness, simplicity and heroization. Conversely, the later epochs attract for opposing reasons: bloated, distorted and misshapen, overdone and overstressed. The Great Altar of Zeus is overripe, grandiose in its exuberance, pathos and bravado. I like its conflicted drama. There's excess, but not the point of decadence.

INT: The same kind of conflict that is found in your paintings?

LG: Conflict certainly, but it's not only that that interests me. Tension, stress, awkwardness, masculine gesture and vulnerability are also present. Even the aggressors are vulnerable. I try to get under their skins to the extent possible when one is an observer. I see them as monsters in conflict, but they are monsters on a human scale and therefore within our grasp. Perhaps we all are monsters at one level or another.

INT: Are you saying that society creates these conditions?

LG: Continually and naturally. Perhaps I overdo this stuff about domination and control, but I think that most situations have to do with control. Relationships are hierarchical and the power distribution is unequal. We are continuously on guard in power situations, on alert!

INT: You may say that you overdo this imaging of control. But isn't exaggeration or at least embellishment necessary to make the point?

LG: Yes, but I say that somewhat rhetorically. In many ways, I don't believe I could be explicit enough, gross enough in my paintings to show how power really works. We are clothed with our conventions, our training, and limitations. Subjected to power, we turn around and subject others to similar pressures. But some situations are more ferocious than others. Individuals and groups continuously test parameters of power to see how much they can get away with. But our training and socialization at the same time makes us aware of the rules of the games in which we engage, what our chances are to intercept, interrupt, subvert or abrogate.

[3] The Great Altar of Zeus at Pergamon, c.175 AD, Reconstruction from fragments at Staatliche Museum, Antiken-Sammlung, East Berlin. Illustrations of this major Hellenistic monument can be found in most survey of art history texts. For details of the decorative program, see J.J. Pollitt, Art in the Hellenistic Age (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1980 [reprinted]).

INT: Given your feelings on the pernicious nature of control and its manifestations in your art, would you characterize yourself as other have[4] as a political artist, or is there a larger focus of concern?

LG: It depends on what one means by political. I want my work to operate in the wider world in which events occur. I have made certain kinds of choices through which I define myself and my work in politcal terms. At the same time, I don't ordinarily set out with the idea that I am going to paint about a specific political event. I have done a couple of paintings with specific references, for example, the Vietnam paintings (I, II & III) or White Squad IV (El Salvador) which is a reinterpretation of a photo from El Salvador. But the setting could be Argentina or Brazil, etc. I may try to create figures that imply Latin America, but not necessarily, let's say, El Salvador. The scenario could occur virtually anywhere. It could just as easily have been New York City because the conditions that make such situations viable in Latin America function nearly everwhere. It doesn't take much for conditions to change in a locale that is seemingly quiescent and peaceful.[5]

Recently I did an installation at the Brooklyn Museum called WorldWide.[6] As part of the installation, I put up a listing of places in the world where this kind of violence is going on. Seeing such a listing, one realizes how extraordinarily pervasive these conflicts are. In order to limit shock and horror, we as individuals, and collectively as nations, pick our focus, our loyalties, our interests. Frequently the media determine that. And we ignore other conflicts.

INT: Are we then making these political or social crises interchangeable?

LG: They are not interchangable because we have preferences and act supposedly in our own interests. I have more at stake in one situation than in another. But what is significant here is that the violence is virtually interchangeable. Situations of control and power are interchangeable as older men who claim to understand the stakes unleash younger men who engage in the violence. These men, full of bravado and macho indignation are not that different from those who perpetrate violence or manifest "patriotic" gestures in the US. Some sport the tee-shirt slogans and the tattoos I like to play with, even though they might not fully appreciate the source, or the intent, or the effects of such posturing.

[4] See Mazorati (1990).

[5] As this article was being prepared for publication, South Central Los Angeles erupted in riots after police officers accused of severely beating the motorist Rodney King were acquitted despite video tape evidence of the actual abuse. In New York City, Mr. Golub's own Greenwich Village neighborhood was the scene of a small, but vocal and marginally destructive demonstration in protest of this acquittal. Several weeks later, the Washington Heights section of New York was the scene of nearly a week of rioting and looting on the heels of the death of a young Dominican man for which a police officer was alleged to be responsible.

[6] Brooke Kamin Rapaport et al., Worldwide: An Installation by Leon Golub (Brooklyn, NY: The Brooklyn Museum, 1991). See essay by Mr. Golub concerning the conception and significance of this work, as well as photographs and reproduction of the "list".

INT: Is this mere posturing or is there an underlying ideology?

LG: It's probably both. It's posturing because that's what men do, but it's political and ideological because it is based on current events and historical, racial, and ethnic struggles and conditioning.

INT: We would all prefer however to believe that we only fight for higher purpose, for ideology. Is this the mask which your figures assume in your paintings?[7]

LG: Absolutely. Ideologies are typically simplistic. Belief systems and role playing are taken for granted. We all know that what WE stand for is right. Error must be eradicated and truth prevail!

INT: Your art then could be described as political in the general sense with some forays into commentary on specific conditions or events. But what about Leon Golub the citizen? You have been quoted as characterizing yourself as "a liberal with some views that from time to time might be considered radical."[8] Is that acurate?

LG: That's just my way of defining or redefining myself! But it depends on what is perceived as liberal or radical, but a left liberal label would be OK.

I have occasionally been asked if I have had any particular political group affiliations. I have been active in a spectrum of art/political causes – often for months, or even years, working on projects, demonstrations and fundraising, to affect the art/political landscape. This has often meant doing little or no painting for long periods of time. I have never participated in non-art world political organizations. I have been active in groups, such as the Artists & Writers Protest Against the War in Vietnam, Art Workers Coalition, the NY Strike, Artists Meeting for Cultural Change, and Artists Call Against US Intervention in Latin America. I have also, on a shorter term basis, joined actions or exhibitions or fund raising efforts relating to anti-apartheid, civil liberties, etc. from the mid 60's to the late 80's.

INT: You have been quoted as believing that "politics and art are separate."[9] What did you mean by that?

LG: I have spoken publicly and published all kinds of comments and there may be all kinds of inconsistencies in such material. Politics and art are separate from one perspective but not necessarily from other perspectives.

Art and politics are independent of one another, but equally interdependent. Art can never be divorced from the world or global concerns. I believe this in respect to aesthetics, form, etc. It is equally true in decisions as to art choice or use.

[7] See Marzorati (1990) pages 131 and 246-50 for a discussion of "masks" of power in the Interrogation, Mercenaries and Portrait series. For illustrations of these paintings see Kuspit (1985).

[8] Marzorati (1990), 17 and 256.

[9] Marzorati (1990), 31.

Descision making in the art world is often political. It often comes down to a decision – I call it political – as to how and where an artist shows his or her work, even when its content is not in any way "political". I think that a lot of what goes on in the art world is determined by the biases and customary ideologies, tastes and prejudices of museum trustees, personnel, collectors, critics, as well as artists. Or perhaps the real driving force is simply caution and art choice, aesthetics, art for art's sake, is disguised political conservatism.

I don't believe in art for art's sake. Attempts to isolate art are enfeebling. Enshrinement can also be castration.

INT: But art itself can be abused for political purpose. The current debate over censorship by the National Endowment for the Arts has become both a stalking horse for political conservatives and rallying cry for liberals.[10] One wonders how closely either camp has been looking at the actual works in question.

LG: There is a long history of this kind of activity in this country, beginning in the 1920's, again in the 50's and now once more in the 90's. But, I have to say that a lot of the people who are publicly sanctimonious about censorship are privately cautious about what they will and will not permit in their institutions.

INT: So what you are saying is that even the more open and liberal institutions will err on the side of caution at the expense of unbiased representation if the works in question are controversial.

LG: Conservative, cautious and watchful. You can't always blame them. Along with the funding sources, they have trustees to deal with who are frequently supportive

[10] The Friday prior to this interview, President George Bush had dismissed John Frohnmayer, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts. Chairman Frohnmayer, intrinsically more conservative than many of the applicants for grants, was nonetheless too liberal in his approvals during a political campaign that included jibes by the Republican candidate Patrick Buchanan. Buchanan, with the backing of such conservative lawmakers as Senator Jesse Helms had threatened to make Federal support for "offensive" art into a serious campaign issue. Frohnmayer when announcing his "resignation" defended the arts against "the lunacy that sees artists as enemies and ideas as demons." President Bush upon "acceptance of the resignation" chided Mr. Frohnmayer by noting that "Some of the art funded by the NEA does not have my aesthetic approval." See New York Times, Friday 13 March 1992 and Wednesday, 18 March 1992 for details of these events and editorial comment. As early as June 1990, John Frohnmayer's position on censorship and limitations on artistic freedom had been well articulated. In an interview (Derek Guthrie, "Frohnmayer in the Fray", New Art Examiner, 17/10 (June 1990), 30-9) he clearly states his dismay with both censorship as well as its use for purely political gain. On 1 July 1992, Anne-Imelda Rice, acting Chair (and President Bush's handpicked replacement) approved "without exception" all 1,167 grants recommended by her advisory council for a total of $63 million. Her action did not efffectively reverse her veto of several proposals with sexual content. Rice's action was in opposition to the actual and threatened resignations of committee members as well as pending and threatened lawsuits by artists whose grants had been rescinded, or whose applications had been refused without explanation. See New York Times, Thursday, 2 July 1992. President Bush dropped the NEA as a campaign issue when Buchanan ceased to be a viable candidate.

of contemporary art but are politically conservative. When a museum is faced with an acquisition, decision is based on curatorial judgement, but it may face a dilemma in terms of its institutional suitability. The art work in question may be politically vexing or sexually explicit, or in some manner apparently offensive to trustee expectations or to one highly agitated group or another. Obviously the museum is reluctant to acknowledge this.

So how does this sophisticated group of individuals handle the problem? Speaking in coded language to one another, they determine they haven't seen enough to make a decision – that the art in question is not the best example of the artists work; or that they should hold off until a superior, more representative item surfaces. And just as likely, the artist's name never surfaces for consideration. That goes on all the time. Is that censorship, or merely enlightened leadership?

INT: By this process then difficult art becomes marginalized while more palatable material becomes mainstream. Of course, elapsed time has a way of leveling this problem. Any student of Modernism knows that as Robert Hughes has stated "the shock of the new" is mitigated temporally as well as institutionally.[11] We have already noted, as you readily admit that your art can be difficult. Despite this, you have become something of a mainstream contemporary painter. Your art is discussed in a major survey text used by a fair number of instructors in their introductory undergraduate courses.[12] How do you account for this?

LG: How does one view one's location and position in the general scheme of things? As one measure, my bibliography is extensive. I doubt that there are many living American or European artists who have had more written about them. As a result, I am very well known. Despite this and all of the exhibitions[13] I have had, I have been marginalized in other ways. For example, up until a few weeks ago, no New York museum has owned a major painting of mine. Now the Brooklyn Museum has just been given Riot IV (1985), a tough, ugly item! So now I have to say that no Manhattan museum owns one.

There will be differing institutional reasons for this, but it has to boil down to one of two conditions: either the political or ideological content and perception of the work, or they are just plain lousy works of art. To me, the second alternative seems a bit far-fetched!

I specify content in two senses; first based on the overt subject matter and second on its psychic content. Both are raw. Rawness is not desirable. Although extreme situations are acceptable in novels, on television and in the movies, it is not welcome in the sanctified and protected enclaves of the visual arts. Artists who explore

[11] Robert Hughes, The Shock of the New (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981).

[12] Horst De La Croix, Richard G Tansey, and Diane Kirkpatrick, Gardner's Art Through the Ages Ninth Edition (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Javanovich, Publishers, 1991).

[13] Since the early 1960's there are over 200 citations. Mr. Golub is himself a prolific author on social, political and artistic issues. Source: ABM (ART bibliographus Modern) vol 1-26 (Oxford: Clio Press) 1969-1992. Since 1950, Mr. Golub's painting has been shown in an estimated 300 solo and group exhibitions in the United States, Canada, and Europe. Source: Kuspit (1985), 201-5 and ABM.

these subject matters are generally kept at the margins. So while I am represented in half a dozen American museums, there remains reluctance and refusal.

To point up the irony, the typical collector, a financially successful individual, doesn't necessarily want to come home at the end of the day and have a cocktail in front of one of my paintings! It is one thing to view a painting and move on. It is something else to have it continuously in one's face. Nor should I bitch about this. You go public, you make certain claims, don't be suprised if others – who have different stakes and play a different hand – resist you.

The point here is that in certain worlds, mostly money and power worlds, there is a certain fault line that I do not cross, and it has everything to do with the nature of my work. There is nothing terrible about that and I don't really mind, even as I do mind! I've had some joy out of this as it puts an edge on the art. It is pleasurable to feel at my age that I am still an issue for some institutions or art world types.

INT: Then you are pleased that you remain difficult if not controversial?

LG: Yes, that's really great! I have at this point enough approbation critically and financially so that I do not feel isolated. Nancy Spero and I live quite well and even though on a market scale our prices are on the lower end of the scheme, from other perspectives we are widely successful and the prices are plenty high![14] Most artists are in a terrible situation of isolation. Only a tiny fraction ever break through in any real way critically or financially. I have been very lucky, as has Nancy. She has had a terrific career.[15] This talking about recognition, success, money, is like walking a tightrope.

INT: Being marginalized then provides you with the opportunity to remain controversial. Would mainstreaming in the form of a major museum acquisition vitiate that?

LG: I am in major public collections, and in one way or another I'm in the mainstream. What I'm speaking of is a long range problem and its consequences can only be constructed in a more global or totalizing evaluation. But I can't pretend that I don't play the game. I'm playing the game right now in this interview. You represent a

[14] For a means of comparison, Marzorati quotes prices in the mid to high five figure range for a Golub painting in the late 1980's. This coincides with markets prices for "Old Master" Impressionists in the tens of millions and those of "hot" contemporary artists in the mid to high six figure range. Marzorati (1990), 76. See, for example the sale of a photo collage by Mike and Doug Starn to the Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art at a low six figure price in 1990. For a discussion of the market value of the Starn Twins work see: Paolo Bianchi and Andy Grunberg, "Mike and Doug Starn," Kunstforum International, 107 (April-May 1990), 222-4.

[15] For recent discussion of the career of Nancy Spero see Dominiques Nahas et al., Nancy Spero: Works Since 1950 Catalog of an exhibition held at Everson Museum of Art 18 December 1987-31 January 1988. Also, Nancy Spero, "Sky Goddess: Egyptian Acrobat, "Art Forum, 26/7 (March 1988), 103-5. "Freedom of Movement: Nancy Spero's Site Paintings," Art Magazine, 16/2 (October 1990), 54-8. For a joint interview with Leon Golub and Nancy Spero see: John Hutchinson, "Nancy Spero and Leon Golub in Conversation," Circa, 36 (Sept-Oct 1987), 29-33.

reputable publication. You are respectable interviewers and I am a respectable artist. So, we are having this nice conversation. All of us will thusly receive another publication which is important to our careers. I have dealers who are also respectable, seven or eight in various parts of the world. Most can't sell very much, but they support my work. I get a lot of good things out of the art world. So what am I bitching about? I am highly visible. I play the game! I try to be oppositional! I am success oriented! I am hostile to much of the art world!

INT: Might it not however change the way people perceive your art? In other words, because this body of controversial work has become acceptable to the overtly establishment art world, it can no longer be controversial even if you and it remain precisely the same?

LG: Perhaps. But I'm not in control of that. To some young artists, I probably sold out long ago. Perhaps to others, I remain peripheral, irrelevant.

INT: Let us change the focus a bit from the politics of the art world to the process of making (for want of a better term) political art. We quote a statement by Gerald Marzorati that we find hard to reconcile with our view of folks who have abiding political or social concerns. He says, "To pull off a political painting requires a particularly fierce detachment in order to get the details correct and for the statement to be conveyed."[16] Does this reflect in your working practice? Do you at some point in the process of creating a painting have to step back from your purpose and disentangle yourself from the message in order that the medium itself efficiently conveys your thinking?

LG: Yes, but it is hard to say how all of this takes place and to what extent emotion, anger, resentment and a sense of justice must remain. One is fueled by desire, obsession, a good head of steam. But there is everyday practice which is the framework for whatever else is going on. You have an intention based on a particular history and point of view. You also have to focus through intentional rational purpose. You hope through rationality and control that strong, emotive, subjective desires will be stated coherently and in sufficient force and range so that the result is not superficial.

Everyday working practice simply means that here I am working on a painting whether it be Prisoners or Interrogation or whatever, and a damned shoe doesn't look right. It's not a matter of injustice in the world, it's that the shoe is not working, it is out of shape. The job is to work on that shoe and it may take half a day to get it right. Forget about what is happening in the rest of the world. If the guy has the wrong expression on his face you're in trouble. And that's all together a different kind of trouble than what's going on in Yugoslavia. You job is to master your means. You must put the components together in a way that makes sense.

And then something else has to occur, a certain kind of magic, tapping the inexplicable? The irrational? There has to be something which in the end is not totally analyzable. But this can't happen if the shoe is wrong.

[16] Marzorati (1990), 31.

INT: What kinds of sources do you use to get the shoes and expressions right and to help you organize for the inexplicable?

LG: For the last fifteen or twenty years, I have been interested in images from the media. By this I mean the kinds of things you glean from photography, films or television. I am particularly dependent on photography and have a very extensive photo collection. We travel a fair amount usually in connection with exhibitions. So what do I do when I go to Paris? Do I spend my first day in the Louvre? No. I go to a bookstore where I pick up the kinds of stuff that I tear apart for the images I want.

INT: On this photographic quest, are you after specific things or whatever strikes you at the moment?

LG: I am looking for provocative or informative photos. That doesn't necessarily mean images of war or torture, although I have quite a collection of these as well. It simply means interesting photos. For example, one year I picked up a half a dozen books on Japanese photography. I liked the use of light and shadow and the drama of their visualizations rather than the specifics of the images themselves.

I like the idea of the flow of images. Continuous, an uninterrupted, overwhelming of our perception. We live in a much more visual world than ever before, inundated with visual stimuli in very different manners than previous epochs. Today we complain that we don't know what is going on despite the pervasivness and ubiquity of media information.

Our worlds have opened up tremendously and the technologies of visual and print media have made this possible. The very discontinuity and extent of visual sources has made control problematic in the 20th century. Thus we experience what appear to be extreme efforts to retain control. Those who fear visual images are justified in that fear. It is often a threat to their world view. I read recently about an effort by the Massachusetts legislature to pass a new anti-pornography law.[17] In the past they had tried legislation that included both literary and visual pornography whatever that is! Writers and publishers are organized and were ready to protest. In this instance, on the heels of current discussion about objectionable visual images, legal emphasis is put on visual images. The biggest fear lies with the visual. How many people actually read controversial books? Visual images – film and TV, even museums – are easier to encounter and entail less effort. Visual media are certainly more blatant than print. Censors attempt to place limits here. He who controls images has the power to maintain control generally.

INT: Defining pornography is of course one of the most difficult issues we currently have to grapple with. As an artist, you have not escaped such discussion. Interrogation III has been described as the "greatest feminist painting ever made by a man" and as

[17] As of the publication date, Massachusetts has not passed this or any similar legislation.

"pornography, his greatest failure."[18] These observations are widely diverse. What is your reaction to such criticism?

LG: Well, they certainly are different opinions. I don't agree with either comment. I don't believe that it's a feminist painting, but I don't believe that it's pornographic either. I did, however, take the pose of the women being tortured from a sadomasochistic publication. My argument here is very simple. I've done four paintings in the Interrogation series. Three are male victims, one is of a female victim.[19] In these situations women are also tortured. There can be the added pleasure for the torturer of having the women sexually available.[20] My record of this adds to its validity. That I am a man doing this does not make it pornography. My gender should not prevent my recording this. A women who wanted to do such a painting should not be blocked. Nancy has done images of this kind. The Ballad of Marie Sanders, The Jew's Whore, based on Bertolt Brecht's poem, uses a photograph of a nude bound women that was found in the pocket of a captured Nazi officer.

I don't think that Nancy takes pleasure in these images, but they are part of the imagistic and experiential world of women she is demarcating. A related issue: What right do I as a white, middle class artist have in portraying situations outside my direct experience, for example mercenaries or views of African-Americans. I claim the "right" to delve into any situation and to take it from whatever angle I can. If society doesn't like that, then society will have to do something about it. Under restrictive conditions, I'll only be able to portray older, bald-headed white men or New York style artists or intellectuals! This doesn't imply I can't be criticized. Artists go public, they can expect that various publics will react.

There are continuous conflictual intersections between artists and various publics, between modernism, post-modernism and various interest groups.

INT: As you yourself have pointed out, it is fortunate that we so far live in a society tolerant enough to accept many view points. Our government to date has not broken down the door of the artist's studio in an attempt to squelch freedom of artistic expression.[21]

LG: Everybody, I exaggerate I hope, is trying to get into the act these days – to control ideas and information.

[18] Kuspit (1985), 77; Marzorati (1990), 61.

[19] Reproduced in Kuspit (1990) 176-7.

[20] Testimony before Congressional commitees in June and July 1992 on the issues of women in combat roles and on the captives held by Iraq during the Operation Desert Storm disclosed that both women captured in that conflict were abused sexually. In one case, a senior flight surgeon taken prisoner during a search and rescue mission was abused while she suffered for two days with untreated compound fractures of both arms. There have been no reports of similar sexual contact between male prisoners and their Iraqi captors. Further disclosures detailed the sexual harassment of women stationed in the Gulf by their own superior officers. These recent disclosures underscore the unfortunate validity of Mr. Golub's depiction of torture in Interrogation III.

[21] Marzorati (1990), 258.

INTS: Could you share with us how you apply the media images and photography to your paintings? Perhaps we could focus on the Vietnam series which contains details of costume and weapons that appear frighteningly accurate.[22]

LG: For the Vietnam paintings, I purchased photo books and publications documenting the war. There were no images that played a particularly determining or crucial role. I took from the generality, the mass pervasiveness of public imagery. I combined images from various sources. But at the time, I wasn't as sophisticated in my applications as now. I would take a photo and try to reproduce the actual figure relatively exactly although in a more raw version.

In the early 1980's, when I had begun the Mercenaries series,[23] Scott Burton gave me a copy of Soldier of Fortune magazine. I subscribed for a year, but it was of little use because of the limited and poor quality of the photography. I hated their reactionary ideas. I found better imagistic sources elsewhere even though Soldier of Fortune supposedly depicted the real thing.

I piece together all kinds of fragmented images. I search out or create discordant images. I rarely rely on a single figural image. It's a syncratic, awkward process which helps provide an awkward contingent's disjunctive presence.

INT: Do you create the displacement in your mind's eye or do you cut-up and reconfigure your photographic sources?

LG: I do both. Typically I make a relatively careful drawing on the canvas – the large scale helps set up an evasive yet straight forward realism and discordant, subtle disproportions. The painting process is variably careful and rough.

Over the years, I have tended to shift from one type of informational source to another. I've read, in irregular fashion, literary criticism and deconstructionist journals, science fiction and political and news journals, pop culture items, etc. I scavenge ideas like I do images. I am more a cultural scavenger than a scholar, although I take theoretical stands and can be very polemic.

As a scavenger, I go through the garbage heaps of our culture, including high-class literary heaps. I pick and choose and apply what I can to theory or to images. I try to move and slip and slide through things, to go after this point of view, but at the same time, to slip in a differing twist. I try to exploit contingent or random aspects or surfaces.

[22] See for example Vietnam I (1972) and Vietnam III (1973), reproduced in Kuspit, (1985), 144-151 with details.

[23] See for example Mercenaries (1976) and Mercenaries I - IV (1979-81), reproduced in Kuspit (1985), 152-169 with details.

INT: Is that what you meant when you said that as you paint you are inside and outside simultaneously?[24]

LG: Yes. I'm trying to move in and out of things, to sidle around, to poke at things and to generally irritate the situation. I don't want anyone to get their hands on me or try to figure me out, cut and dried. I don't want you to claim that you've got me!

INT: But that is the job of the art historian!

LG: Well, you can try. And it's true that you've got me for now, but it's always more complex than a summary disposition of facts and conditions. In the future someone moves in with a largely different perspective. It may support or discredit you, in whole or in part. No artist, no one, wants to be pinned down, so that you know just who and what they are. A little mobility! Questionable situations and actions... surprise you because the life/work isn't just located in the summary here and now.

INT: You started your professional life as an art historian. You have taught courses in criticism at the graduate student level that entailed art historical methods. Your paintings incorporate art historical references. Yet as an artist, you understandably shun the kind of theoretical pigeonholing that art historians are tempted to pursue. From your experience and perspective, has art history exhausted its options as some believe,[25] or is there still a valid role to be played?

LG: It's valid all right, but like all intellectual activity, it is a terrain that is open to challenge. The greatest gain for the art historian, as it is for any other historian or scholar, is not simply a process of matching up all the details. That's okay. That's your everyday work, just like getting the shoe right is my everyday practice. Your challenge is to renew the viewing process, to match the work with the new intellectual terrain – terrain that opens up and recontextualizes time-honored assumptions.

INT: Ultimately then our first responsibility is to provide the kinds of data and theories that will make the viewers' experience of art more informed and perhaps more approachable. Which brings us around to the topic of viewer response to your paintings. In your Interrogation and Mercenaries series, you position your protagonists in a way in which the victims look away, while the person in control engages the

[24] Several passages in Marzaroti (1985) document his observation of Leon Golub at work. See chapters entitled "Golub's Studio", especially pages 77-78. The quote "So when I paint, I am both outside working, and iside", found on page 87, provides a concise description of Mr. Golub's working methods as well as his philosphical and intellectual approach to his painting and his subject matter.

[25] The "revisionist" literature on art historical practice has burgeoned. Some useful material with divergent opinions may be found in: Hans Belting, The End of Art History? (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) and Donald Preziosi, Rethinking Art History: Meditations on a Coy Science (New Haven Yale University Press, 1989). See also W.McAllister Johnson, Art History: Its Uses and Abuses (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988).

spectator who in turn becomes something of a voyeur. What are your expectations about the roles of all three participants?

LG: The victim has no choice. He is bound or a gun is held to his head. Victims become relatively inert in terms of the dynamic that is being played out. The guy holding the gun and the viewer outside of the painting still have options as to how they will respond/participate. I am interested in the aggressor and the viewer since the psychic dynamics take place with them.[26]

INT: In terms of your fundemental artistic goal, creating a record of the 20th century, both you and subsequently the folks who look at your work function as witnesses.

LG: Sure. But certainly I am not in a position to change society. How do artists affect real action? Not necessarily in their art but occasionally through direct public actions. For example in 1984, as a result of revelations about US policies and the killings and torture in Latin America, Artists' Call Against American Intervention in Latin America was formed in New York and a number of cities across the country. Many of us participated in a major nationwide drive to call attention to what was occuring, to effect policy. The hypocrisy or corruption of government and by extension the passivity of the nation is extraordinarily difficult to affect.

But as I stated earlier in my egotistical claim be to the maker or a recorder of the twentieth century, to be a witness is important. Our century has to be recorded just as other societies and times have been recorded in art. We have tremendous capacity to do this through photography, film and television. I continue to believe that this can be successfully reported in paint as well. Much of the art world doesn't think that it is worthwhile, or even possible today. I disagree!

INT: So if an artist has a good grasp of his or her intention and is in control of his or her craft and everyday practice, then that artist should be capable of creating a record that will be of more permanent value than the ephemera in other media.

LG: We who paint hope so! I try to get under the skin enough to make a record not just of individual or specific events, but of today. What do people of the 20th century look like and how do they appear under extreme pressure and dislocation?

The three of us are sitting here engaged in a polite discourse. We are aware of what this process calls for. This is not an extreme situation. I wouldn't be able to make

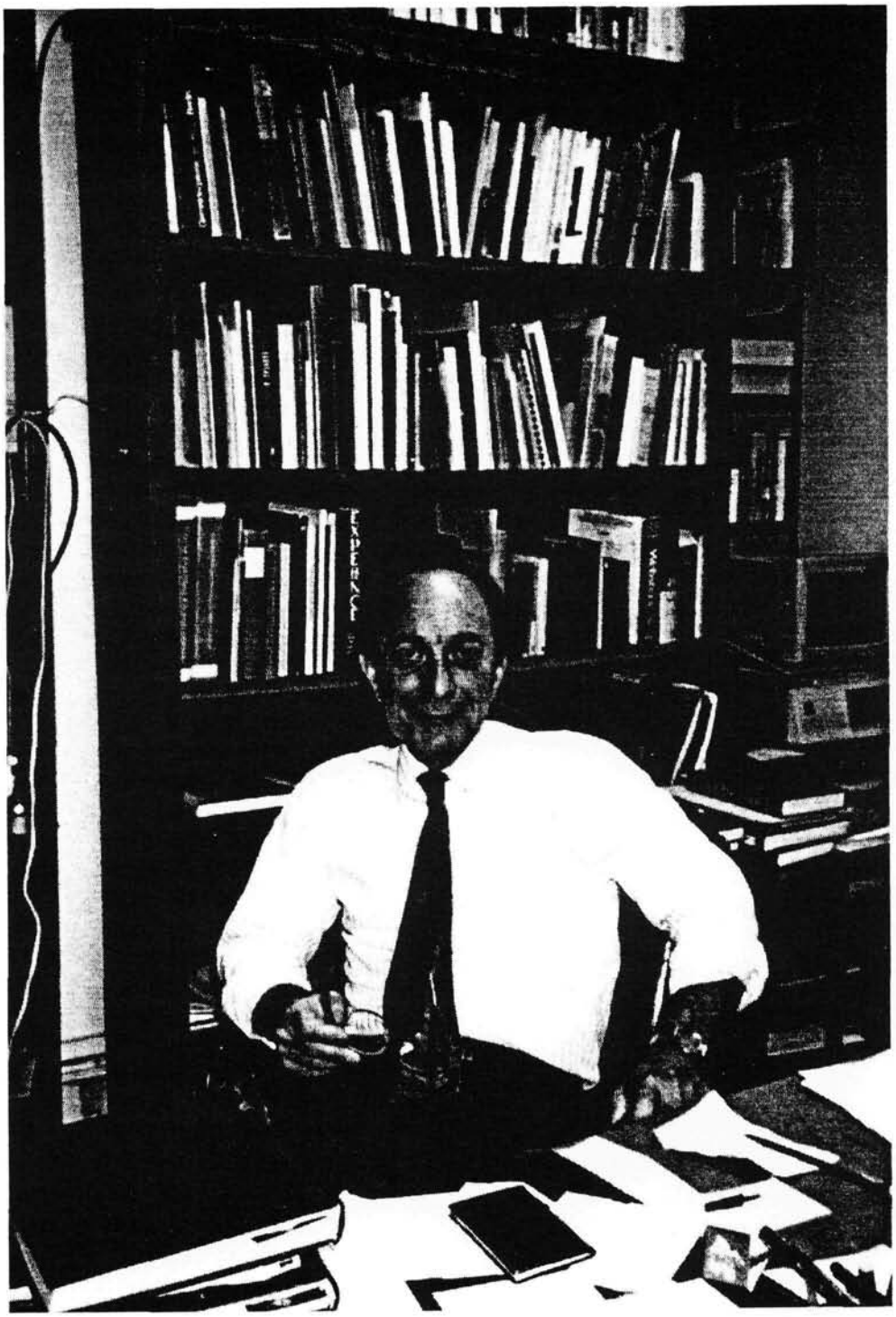
[26] Leon Golub's installation Worldwide provided a unique instance of viewer participation with his use of large, transparent sheets in place of opaque canvas. Brooke Kamin Rapaport offers the following description;

> Worldwide... continutes the tradition-established in his large paintings-of representing victims and victimizers: assassins, mercenaries, interrogators, or death squads. Worldwide is the first three dimensional installation the artist has created... and the first time the viewer can walk amid Golub's soldiers of fortune and their prey. ...Unlike prime-time coverage, where the viewer is separated from the primary activity, Golub mandates that we participate in or be implicated as part of the event. The figures occupy our space (or we occupy theirs).

a painting of this. The circumstances are too civilized. I might be able to make the figures look like us, but it would be a mediocre representation. To record such a civilized discourse requires the bravura and elan of John Singer Sargent. He could intuit the situation. I could only produce a superficial or grotesque version.

INT: Perhaps if our discussion were to erupt in an ideological donnybrook, your painting would then be successful.

LG: Maybe... if you decide to go rampaging down the street!



An Interview with Donald Posner

Gail Alterman and Arnold Coonin

The following interview took place on February 24, 1992 in Donald Posner's book-lined office at the Institute of Fine Arts where he has taught since 1962. Professor Posner is equally at home with Italian and French Art of the 17th and 18th centuries, and has published widely in these areas. He is the author of monographs on Annibale Carracci and Antoine Watteau, and co-authored with Julius Held a textbook on 17th and 18th Century Art. Professor Posner has also served as editor of the Art Bulletin and is currently Chairperson of the Art Bulletin Editorial Board.

INTERVIEWERS: Why don't we begin with your training, your background.

DONALD POSNER: Well, like many other art historians, I originally wanted to be a painter. In fact, I studied briefly at the Brooklyn Museum Art School. But then, while at Queens College, I became terribly interested in history and philosophy, and I found that I was devoting less and less time to my painting. I then discovered the art history department of Queens College, which was very special. Among others, Robert Goldwater and Edith Porada were teaching there, and Frances Godwin, a wonderful woman, a medievalist, who never published very much, but who was certainly a great, inspiring teacher. She made art seem the key to an understanding of human culture. So I found myself doing art history.

I took a course with Robert Goldwater on French painting from Poussin to Picasso, or something like that, and at first I didn't much like Poussin, who seemed to me just a boring, academic artist. I was irritated at not being able to understand exactly why Goldwater admired him so much. So I wrote a term paper on Poussin, and when I finished I had become a devoted Poussiniste. By the time I left college, I was determined to work on seventeenth century painting, French painting primarily. I went to Harvard for a year and took my master's degree there. At Harvard I was much influenced by Sydney Freedberg, but at that time neither he, nor anyone else there, was much interested in French or Italian baroque art, so I transferred to the Institute of Fine Arts [New York University] to work with [Walter] Friedlaender. When I decided to go to the Institute Friedlaender had just celebrated his 85th birthday. A lot of people said I must be mad, because he wouldn't be around to see me through my dissertation. But he was, and in fact some other students finished their dissertations with Friedlaender even after I did. So that's my background.

INT: What was the atmosphere like in New York those days when you had people like Professors Friedlaender at NYU, Wittkower at Columbia...

DP: First of all, when I came here as a student in 1958, we (the Institute) were in a little house on 81st street. It was a very much smaller place and I don't think there could have been more than 50 students around. We all knew each other and the faculty knew all of us. The teachers I knew best or worked with most closely were Friedlaender, Karl Lehmann, Richard Krautheimer, Craig Smyth, Richard Offner, Harry Bober and Bates Lowry. The Institute then had a very intimate character, maybe one that you experience at Rutgers. We now have about 250 students.

INT: What kind of relationships did that intimacy foster?

DP: Well, I really shouldn't speak for others. Walter Friedlaender was a man who did his real teaching sitting in his office, just talking to his students, who invariably became close friends. I would say for me it was a kind of apprenticeship. I became his assistant and worked with him on his research and his preparations for lectures and seminars. I don't really remember his classes very well, except that they weren't especially good. He wasn't a very inspiring classroom teacher. But just sitting and talking with him was something special. He would ask questions and force one to examine one's ideas. "Why are you taking that direction, what do you want to find? Did it ever occur to you that...". He was also a remarkable person who tried to match the scholarly problems one worked on to what he saw as one's personal temperament. He would say, "This is not a good subject for you. You're too impatient for such work," or " You need something to make moral lessons with ..."

INT: That's a very interesting approach.

DP: Well, he was that kind of person. As a human being, he tried to understand people, his students, at a deep, intimate level. He was a wonderfully engaging man. People genuinely fascinated him, and his responses to people were instinctively empathetic.

INT: How did that affect your work then and the way you approach your work now?

DP: I think that the one thing I learned from Friedlaender that is most important to me, is that one's work as an art historian is ultimately based on one's personal perception of the work of art, and on one's emotional response to it. I try to follow his example. He wasn't shy about saying of a work of art, "This I like," or playfully, "It's not good, not bad, just lousy." But then he would try to explain to us, and to himself as well, why he liked or didn't like it and what meaning that has. Not only the meaning of a Renaissance work for a Renaissance viewer, that's one level, but also on the level of what meaning it has for us. That was connected to his ability to match people with subjects. In other words, he examined the fact that individuals and societies respond in different ways to certain kinds of ideas, certain kinds of forms, certain modes of communication.

INT: Was it Professor Friedlaender who led you to study Annibale Carracci?[1]

DP: Well, when I arrived at the Institute I wanted to work on Poussin, but Friedlaender was then writing a book on him, and you can't, or at least I think you shouldn't, do a dissertation on a subject that your advisor is actively studying. So when I came here, I began by making a study of the Triumphs of Alexander series by Poussin's follower, Charles Le Brun, which became the first article I published.[2] Then I became interested in Poussin's sources, so I moved backwards in time. I thought of doing a dissertation on Domenichino-- Friedlaender convinced me that Domenichino wasn't right for me-- and then I moved back a little bit further to Annibale Carracci. In those days, we were very much interested, of course, in problems like the nature of "classicism." So the idea of stylistic continuities loomed very large for us, and Carracci seemed to be a subject ultimately involving Poussin.

INT: Are those problems still problems in current scholarship, or do you think that the whole nature of the field has changed?

DP: I think the essential problems are still there, but we tend to formulate them differently. In other words, around 1960, when I was beginning my work, a major part of my concern involved specific formal and stylistic characteristics-- where they came from, how they were generated, altered, etc. Today, there's perhaps more discussion about various theoretical positions of the time and how they were related. We also now give more prominence to larger questions of cultural mileu, continuities and changes in patronage, iconographical usages, and so on. But we are still trying to understand the connection between Carracci and Poussin. Mainly there have been changes, or really, an expansion, in the ways we approach that connection.

INT: Does this apply to your work on the eighteenth century as well?

DP: I became interested in eighteenth century art at end of the 1960's, and my view of the seventeenth century has certainly been affected by what I've learned from the eighteenth century. I think that's another large change that's come about. When I was a student, there weren't many courses given anywhere on eighteenth century art - none at Harvard or here at the Institute. It was thought frivolous and basically inconsequential. But as we've come to reassess it we've gained new insights into some of our old notions about art. Style, for example. eighteenth century artists exhibited a good deal of stylistic freedom, which was, I think, always available to artists. Maybe to a lesser extent, but it is possible now to look back at some areas of seventeenth century art and see parallels to developments we've come to understand first from eighteenth century art.

INT: Are stylistic problems still in the forefront of seventeenth and eighteenth century French studies? Or have stylistic concerns fundamentally changed?

[1] Professor Posner's dissertation was entitled The Roman Style of Annibale Carracci and his School, 1962.

[2] "Charles Le Brun's Triumphs of Alexander," Art Bulletin, 41 (1959), 237-48.

DP: Well, it depends on how you define "stylistic." In the narrow sense, stylistic problems as connoisseurship problems, they are not so fundamental today. This is partly because so many major figures have been reconstructed. When I began working, there were still no monographs on many major artists and what we had was very dated. There still are some important artists for whom we don't have a monograph, but in general there's less need for that type of scholarship. But of course, it's mostly modern political and cultural issues which have led us, understandably, to ask somewhat different questions of the past.

INT: Then what do you think is the future of the monographic treatment? Has it become less important, or do you think the major figures will still be in need of monographs?

DP: Well, as I said, I think it has become less important than when I was a student. Back then, for many students looking for dissertation subjects, you simply took Thieme-Becker[3] and you looked for an artist who hadn't yet been monographed. That was kind of an easy way of finding a subject. I don't think that people tend to do that very much anymore. On the other hand, for the major figures, every generation needs a new monograph because, in fact, we are asking new kinds of questions about artists, their work, and about the period they were a part of. We are always reinterpreting. And even if we can't say very much more than has been said, it is necessary to keep saying it, because that's what our business is basically about in all the humanistic disciplines. Our task is essentially to transmit the body of culture we've received to the next generation. In order to do that, we have to talk about it and write about it.

INT: In this regard, has the nature of the Doctoral dissertation changed much in recent years?

DP: I don't really think so. Of course, there tend to be fewer monographic studies and more studies dealing with larger cultural or interdisciplinary issues, but that reflects changes in the field rather than a change in what we think a dissertation, as a demonstration of scholarly expertise, ought to be. Our personal needs and interests have changed, and naturally the subjects we choose to investigate change accordingly.

INT: Let me ask you a little bit about the techniques that we bring to bear on our new treatments and reinterpretations. Recently, there has been much more interest in technical research: X-rays, infrared analysis, pigment analysis...

DP: That's certainly true. A development of the last twenty years, which seems to be having a considerable impact, is technical investigation.

INT: Do you think the impact on our field has been positive?

[3] Ulrich Thieme and Felix Becker, Allgemeines Lexikon der Bildenden künstlen von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart, (Leipzig: E.A. Seemann, 1907-1950).

DP: Oh yes. In so far as it produces new material and new knowledge about the object that we are studying. I suspect that its merits have been a little bit exaggerated in terms of what this material can do for us. The mere fact that an x-ray shows a pentimento, for example, does not necessarily mean that the painting is the original work. Copyists make mistakes too, and there are other reasons for pentimenti. Obviously, if you make a pigment analysis and you discover that this is a pigment which was only created in 1850, it can't be a picture of 1750. On the other hand, merely to analyze pigments... well, obviously much technical investigation is really directed towards the conservation or preservation of works of art. That's why the chemistry is genuinely necessary, so you know how to treat something. And it's not clear just how much can be used by the art historian.

INT: What about scholarly techniques such as iconography, which really had its heyday under Panofsky?

DP: Well, you know, we are still doing it. We are simply not doing it quite the same way as Panofsky, nor are we limited to that kind of thing. If you consider modern interpretations of, say, Manet's Olympia, they tend to bring in a much wider range of cultural material than Panofsky's generation might have considered relevant. But, nonetheless, it's iconography, in so far as it's the study of the meaning of the image. In fact, I think one of the errors made in many of today's discussions about the "new" art history is the assumption that it is displacing the "old" art history. What we are basically doing is expanding upon and giving new emphases to our studies. But you must always do iconography in the narrow sense, and connoisseurship too, because you still have to know what the object is, what it comes from. You can't make any kind of statements about the historical situation unless you feel some security about that.

INT: So, in effect then, the new art history and the old art history are not incompatible.

DP: No, I don't think so at all. They only become incompatible when individual practitioners refuse to consider historical questions from another point of view, regardless of which side that's on.

INT: What about the question of documentation and literary sources? Do you feel that we can or should rely on these sources for interpretation?

DP: If you find a literary source for a particular image, that adds to our knowledge about the image. Of course, you ought to go further and try to see the image in as multidimensional a view as you can. But the scholar who doesn't go further has still gone some distance. And that's useful. There is one more thing, in terms of the new art history, that I'd like to add. The interdisciplinary work that much of new art history involves is very attractive, because it seems to expand our horizons, our field of vision. But interdisciplinary work is very hard to do because you have to know two disciplines, or three disciplines, depending. Too many people seem to think that reading the secondary literature in another discipline will suffice. Unhappily, most of us do not command the special expertise to make a critical assessment of that literature. Too

often I've discovered, perhaps when reading the London Times Literary Supplement, that theories or conclusions widely accepted by, say, anthropologists only a few years ago, and used now by some art historian as a cornerstone for an "interdisciplinary" study, are being challenged or even rejected in anthropological circles --maybe not yet in print, but in their classrooms and professional meetings. It's naive to think that without special training and real knowledge of current developments in a field that we can grasp its complexities. This is not to say we shouldn't do interdisciplinary work, but that it ought to be approached with a lot more caution than many people show.

Another thing about the new art history, which to my mind often affects neo-marxist and feminist studies, is that sometimes the questions that are asked, although perfectly good ones, involve large cultural or social or political issues, in which art may be only a minimal component, and which are not best answered by means of art history. So there is a danger that by focusing on imagery, and not recognizing its limitations, we may reach historical conclusions that are very imperfect or even misleading.

INT: So, you run the risk of art as illustrating what's happening in other aspects of culture?

DP: Yes, at best in some cases.

INT: What do you see as some of the causes for this? How should the discipline define what it is that we are supposed to be studying?

DP: The discipline doesn't define anything. The discipline is just a lot of people studying what interests them about art, and that changes from person to person, institution to institution and from year to year. I don't think any one historian or institution can claim to define what we should be studying.

INT: In comparison to your early training in a predominantly Germanic art historical tradition, would you say that there's any kind of specifically American art history? Is there any kind of an "American School?"

DP: I think it may be possible to say that, even today, Italian scholars tend to focus on certain kinds of problems, and French scholars on certain others. In the case of America, partly because it's so big, I suppose, its harder to generalize. Back in my student years, there were really only a few major graduate schools, mostly on the east coast. And many of the leading people teaching in those institutions had had the same kind of training. So, there was perhaps more internal coherence in the field then.

INT: In America does it depend more upon the particular institution where one studies, as to what type of art historical training one receives?

DP: Well, yes and no. It's still true today that there are some institutions which tend to focus on certain kinds of art history, usually because they have a small faculty and all the people on that faculty, for some reason or another, are interested in the same kinds of things. But I think the majority of our institutions still are places where there is considerable diversity. Certainly, with large faculties, like the Institute's, but even with

smaller faculties, there are almost always people who do quite different things, and who approach questions and literature differently.

INT: With this in mind, do you find that art history, as it is being practiced in America, is alive and well and prospering?

DP: Oh, it's certainly alive and it's certainly well. I don't know about prospering. I mean, I don't know how you judge that. Art history, like all the humanities, is not applied science. We are not going any place special. We're not trying to build better bridges or make more powerful computers. We are just keeping our interests, a piece of our culture, alive, and if we can, enriching them, nourishing them, as we pass them on for pleasure and for knowledge to the next generation. I don't know if there's any real way to say that we are doing the right or wrong thing by approaching art historical problems in one way or another. I do think we are always doing the wrong thing if we try to narrow our options in looking at the past. But beyond that, I myself don't have any real worries about what's going to happen to art history. It certainly is true that it no longer has the kind of genuine excitement that it did when it was kind of a novel field. In the late 19th century, one was creating art history and it seemed a wonderful new tool for understanding the past. It's still a fine tool but, of course, it's not new anymore, and we now have a better understanding of its limits and of its range. Obviously, part of the passion for the new art history is the attempt to extend its range and to re-awaken that sense of novelty. But how successful that attempt will be is an open question.

INT: In the same context, what would you think are some of the new limits that we've discovered?

DP: Well, as I said before, art history is limited in the kind of questions it can usefully study. One of the things that disturbs me a little bit is that a great many people in our profession, I think, tend to exaggerate the historical importance of art. And it is understandable, because it's our life. So we like to think it had the same importance for people in the past. Now, of course, there weren't really art historians until fairly recently. So few people, non-artists, cared about art with the same passion and sense of involvement that we bring to it. Many kings and cardinals, warriors and businessmen loved art and it served some of their needs. But it was rarely the most important thing in their lives, and if we don't recognize that we run the risk of seeing history, and art as well, through distorting lenses. I don't want to suggest, however, that art is just a commodity, like any other. It is a commodity, but a special one, and another of the dangers of certain aspects of the new art historical thinking is a devaluation of what we used to call the aesthetic character of the object. There is a tendency to lump together bicycle sheds and cathedrals, shop signs and palatial ceiling decorations, as equivalent cultural manifestations. Of course, many of the problems we are having in defining the "canon," establishing criteria for criticism and so on, comes from a problem now in dealing with aesthetic issues. Is there such a thing as aesthetics anymore?

INT: You obviously feel there is.

DP: Well, I feel very much so, but maybe not in the classical sense of beauty as a form of knowledge. A problem for us is to explain to our larger audience-- not other historians, but everyday, intelligent people-- why it is worth looking at works of art. We are today very uncertain about the qualitative criteria we used to be so sure about.

INT: Speaking of people and how they look at paintings, in the past ten to fifteen years we have witnessed "blockbuster" exhibitions. How do you feel they have affected scholarship and the way we look at pictures? How do they serve or should they serve the various art communities and the public?

DP: Well, that's a problem that many museum people, as well as academics who participate in these enterprises, have long been concerned about. It's true that some blockbuster exhibitions have no real purpose except to bring crowds into the museum or to make some kind of political statement. They have a certain public usefulness in the broadest sense of popular education and public political effectiveness. But, to some extent, they have made important contributions to our field. The catalogues of some blockbuster exhibitions have been serious scholarly works, and by and large the monographic shows and their catalogues have tended to be more useful than the period or theme shows. But one of the unfortunate aspects of it is that the catalogues are filled with material that no ordinary man or woman would possibly find useful or readable-- or affordable. So the public, the largest part of the museum constituency, is in a way being left out.

INT: Do you think this fosters an attitude of elitism?

DP: Well, in practice it doesn't seem so, because the public has been coming in droves. When Carter Brown went to the National Gallery it had a million visitors a year. Now, upon his retirement, it has seven or eight million. Obviously, the public enjoys looking at pictures. The reason I focus on the catalogue, and on what the public takes home from the museum, is that most of us believe that art is useful in a way that most TV programs are not. There ought to be something of meaning and permanence, and I have a suspicion that for the general public, the shows are a little like television's "Masterpiece Theatre", a pleasant, classy entertainment that makes no lasting impression.

INT: Can the catalogue for the exhibition really serve both the general public and the specialist?

DP: You see, this is the problem. We want both and I think this is a concern for the entire art historical community. For financial and other reasons, the age of the blockbusters is probably over. It may be that the museums, in designing smaller shows, could target them more specifically. There are shows which really should be aimed for the public, and have a sensible didactic apparatus, and others primarily for scholars and outfitted with a proper catalogue, and a symposium or whatever. Actually, this sort of thing is beginning to happen.

INT: The Watteau show was for the tercentenary of the artist's birth.[4] There was a lot of material that was published that year including your book, which in contrast to some of the other publications is something that is accessible and easy to read.[5]

DP: Well, I'm delighted that you say that. I like to think that everything I write is accessible, and I didn't write that book differently from the way I write articles for professional journals.

INT: Did you gear that book, or any of your books, for a particular audience?

DP: Certainly for my colleagues who are specialists in terms of content, but also for the general audience. I think that anybody with a reasonable education, who is not an art historian, can read most of what I write and understand it. I don't take too much for granted, in terms of presenting the material. Of course, some subjects involve technical matters that cannot be easily explained to the layman. But most of what the art historian writes about, even if it requires close attention from the reader, can be made comprehensible and rewarding to the non-specialist.

INT: You also did a book for the "Art in Context" series. What led you to write on The Lady at her Toilet instead of one of the more well-known works of Watteau?[6]

DP: It's rather a long story that I'll try to abbreviate. By a funny accident-- I was in the right place at the right time-- I was asked by Peter (H.W.) Janson, who was general editor of a Time-Life series, to serve as consultant on the volume devoted to The World of Watteau.[7] I really didn't know much about Watteau, and to learn about him I decided to teach a seminar on him. Naturally, I fell in love with his work. Some years later, after I had finished the manuscript of my Carracci monograph,[8] I met Hugh Honour and John Fleming in Rome. They were the editors of the "Art in Context" books, and hearing that I'd just finished a study of Annibale Carracci they suggested I do a book in their series on the Farnese Gallery. I refused, precisely because I had just said everything I had to say about the gallery in my monograph. So they asked me what I would like to write about, and I said playfully, not seriously really, "maybe something light and sweet after all that heavy Bolognese fare, like Watteau." To my astonishment they took me seriously and suggested a book on the Pilgrimage to Cythera, or the Gersaint Signboard. Still joking, I said, "No, they're too profound. How about The Lady at her Toilet." They thought it a great idea and I was stuck. I couldn't imagine how I was going to write a whole book on that little picture. But it became a challenge. And of course it set me on the way to years of wonderfully rewarding research and writing.

You know, my story is related to questions you asked earlier: where is our field going? and what needs to be done in the field? We do a lot of things by sheer accident,

[4] Watteau: 1684-1721, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., June 17 - September 23, 1984.

[5] Antoine Watteau, (London/Ithaca/Berlin, 1984).

[6] Watteau: A Lady at her Toilet, (London/New York, 1973).

[7] Pierre Schneider, The World of Watteau: 1684-1721, (New York, 1967).

[8] Annibale Carracci: A Study in the Reform of Italian Painting around 1590, 2 vols., (London, 1971).

not because the field needs something. I don't think I ever would have done anything on 18th century art, had it not been for these oddball situations, Janson needing somebody to read a Watteau manuscript and a joking conversation that ended with a book contract. I know there are people who kind of organize their work and their students' work like a military exercise, planning strategies and tactics-- three people are going to do this, and then we will be ready to mount an attack on that. But I don't think that's the way most of us work in any of the humanistic disciplines. Scholarship is mostly done by one person alone at his or her desk. And what we produce is not so much truth about the past as the record of our personal confrontation with the work of art, or with a historical moment. In one sense, anything we do is true, in so far is as it is a true record of that confrontation. Depending on the qualities of the scholar, that record means more or less to other people. And the confrontation itself, it's as likely as not to be the result of coming across a work of art by chance.

INT: Then, more or less, it's by accident that you crossed the Alps?

DP: Yes, around 1970. But since my student days I was interested in French art, although originally only 17th-century art.

INT: Figuratively speaking though, just how high are the Alps? There don't seem to be many scholars who cross them.

DP: No, and it surprises me a little, because it's not very hard really to cross many geographic or chronological boundaries. My feeling is that in the history of art from say, 1500 to recent times, there's no problem at all for a scholar moving from country to country and century to century. Studying them involves basically the same methods, the same kinds of questions -- so you know generally what they are about and it's easy to learn what you need. But my feelings about this may also be the result of my training at the Institute with a group of German scholars who were accustomed to range widely. For example, Richard Krautheimer is a great Byzantinist and Early Christian scholar, but he also did a book on Ghiberti, and taught Baroque Architecture. Janson was a Donatello specialist who one day got interested in Rodin and 19th century sculpture. These moves from field to field seemed very natural.

INT: But they are mostly exceptions to the rule. I am curious as to why it is that today we seem to have more specialization.

DP: I think it's largely a function of the way we organize academic departments. I'm thinking primarily of undergraduate departments. Somebody's got to teach the standard courses on the Renaissance. So, you hire a specialist and that's his or her field, from Giotto to Michelangelo, or whatever. And then you have your medievalist, and so on. So, people get compartmentalized at early stages, and then they are hesitant to explore other fields, partly so as not to step on a colleague's toes, and partly so as not to give the impression that they are not truly committed to their specialty.

INT: Let me ask you about how individual scholarship and teaching have complimented each other, at least in your career, and perhaps, how that works for scholarship in general?

DP: Well again, I don't think there's any possibility of making a generalization. I know there are people who really do find the only times that they're happy is when they are on leave from teaching. Then they get their work done. One of my former colleagues used to say, "my job interferes with my work." Of course, during a full semester of teaching it is pretty hard to do to very much research, and leave time is essential. But all my real work, my ideas, come out of my teaching, and I would be quite lost without it. I find that the act of explaining what it is that I think I see in something is what generates observations and ideas.

INT: In terms of working with problems, how did you get involved in working with the theme of eroticism such as in Watteau or Caravaggio?

DP: I didn't start by choosing to investigate eroticism in art. In the case of Watteau, it was the accident of proposing to work on The Lady at her Toilet, which happens to be an erotic picture, that got me into it.[9] As for Caravaggio, well, I've lectured on him since I began teaching, and when I discussed his early works it seemed important to talk about the erotic air they have.[10] I wasn't the first to notice it, but I was one of the first to develop the implications of that observation, and I did it mostly in the course of my teaching.

INT: You have also written about two dozen book reviews. We've talked about keeping up with literature in our own and other fields. How do you see the book review as a scholarly vehicle and contribution to the profession?

DP: I think it's a contribution and also an obligation, and I am sorry that some people don't do their share. Obviously, book reviews have an important function beyond informing us about current research. They can advance discussion of individual questions and problems. But I think their primary function is, or should be, informative. With or without reviews we tend to know what's happening in our own special areas, but it's on the margins of our fields, and in distant areas, that we need information from our colleagues about new developments. I'm not likely to read much in medieval or modern studies, but I feel I need to know something about them if I'm to work intelligently in my own little corner of art history.

INT: You were once an editor of the Art Bulletin.[11] How have you seen the Art Bulletin change from the time when you were the editor? And what would you do differently as an editor now?

[9] The first of a number of articles dealing with this theme appeared as "Watteau's Reclining Nude and the 'Remedy Theme'," Art Bulletin, 54 (1972), 383-89.

[10] The resulting article became "Caravaggio's Homo-Erotic Early Works," Art Quarterly, 34 (1971), 301-24.

[11] Professor Posner served as editor of the Art Bulletin from 1968-71.

DP: Well, you know the Art Bulletin is changing as the profession changes. Some people think it is changing too slowly, but the kind of articles that are being published, the kinds of submissions that it is getting, reflect the new interests in our field. I don't think I'd do anything very differently now. In general terms, the editor of the Art Bulletin is basically an intelligent recipient of submissions, who facilitates publication. He or she is not there to impart a particular personality to the journal, or to try to shape the future of art history. The editor has only a three year term. And it's a service job more than anything else.

INT: Do you think journals need more "personalities?"

DP: Well, obviously, a journal like the Burlington Magazine has a distinct personality because its editor usually serves for a long period. For various reasons, other journals, such as the British Art History, have fairly clear personalities. The Art Bulletin's personality comes from a certain lack of personality (if you know what I mean). It is supported by the membership of the C.A.A., and that's a very large and diverse group, with a variety of needs and interests. So it aims to advance scholarship, but without favoring any field, any particular kinds of questions or approach.

INT: What about the sheer quantity of journals that are out there? How are young scholars today really supposed to deal with the vast quantity of material out there that we are expected to know and that we feel we should know.

DP: Of course, there's no way of going through the hundreds of periodicals that are published every year. There are half a dozen, maybe a few more, journals that I make a point of looking at when they appear. They are the ones where the most important material of interest to me tends to be published. I don't necessarily read everything, but I look. That way one keeps up with the main developments in the field. The advice I give to students is to find out from their advisers what seem to be the essential journals in a given field. The other stuff we tend to find out about by word of mouth or through footnote references and other bibliographic tools. But we've always worked that way. I don't think there is any special problem now.

INT: Besides your written scholarship, how else do you feel that you have affected the discipline? Through your own relationship with your students as you had with Friedlaender?

DP: Well, I do try to know my students fairly well and to understand the nature of their interests. One thing I've tried, certainly, to instill in my students is my belief that they will serve the "discipline" if they allow their own curiosity, whatever it's based on, to lead them wherever. That is, not to worry about somebody's notion of what needs doing in the field. Nothing in our field "needs" doing. Nothing is going to happen to the world or humanity if we don't catalogue all the works of artist "X" or figure out why some Pope ordered this or that statue. I encourage students to come up with their own dissertation topics and, insofar as possible, even their own seminar subjects. What I feel

is that the student has to say, "This is something that interests me and that I'm going to have fun doing."

INT: As to future work, what can we look forward to?

DP: I tend to work on several things at the same time, and I often interrupt them because I'm suddenly taken by an object or idea, maybe totally unrelated to what I'm doing, and can't wait to pursue it. So I never know exactly what the future has in store. Right now I'm working on some problems that have to do with taste and the marketing and collection of art in seventeenth-century France. And I've also been trying to think through a stylistic question in Roman painting around 1630. That's related to a seminar I'll be teaching next term, but I may try to develop it as an article.

INT: I am curious as to how you advise your graduate students today, perhaps regarding what they should be looking at and studying besides their specific chosen topic in art history. Should they be looking out more towards other fields, or should they be following their own sort of inclinations?

DP: The short answer would be that they should follow their own inclinations, because I don't think there's any way to give a general prescription about what may be needed as they pursue their work. Ideally, one wants to keep up with everything, and at some level I think it's essential for one's intellectual health to have some understanding of the wider world of learning. On a superficial level reading the London Times Literary Supplement and some of the other general reviews of scholarly literature can keep you informed of intellectual developments in our time. The other thing available at a college or university are the lectures offered in different departments. That's a way to become informed and to meet people in other fields. And if you become really intrigued by some other discipline-- and that depends on your personality and interests-- then you are likely to pursue it to some depth, and it is bound to affect your work as an art historian.

INT: Let me ask the flip side to the question. Are there any warnings you would give to one your graduate students?

DP: Well, yes, I do give one warning to almost everybody, in so far as there seems to be an appropriate moment for it. And that is that not everybody is really cut out to be a scholar, and not everybody is really cut out to be a scholar dealing with visual material. Few people are totally unsatisfactory as scholars, and we all have eyes that work to some extent. So that you can get good grades and reasonable encouragement from your teachers and still be doing only a humdrum job. You know, in a sense scholarship is a craft, and there comes a moment when you feel that you've got the facility for it, that you can handle with ease and confidence whatever problems it presents. That feeling should really come early in graduate school. And if it doesn't, if you are like a tailor who needs to push six times to get the thread through the eye of the needle, then you are in the wrong business. I find it sad that there are people in our profession who spend thirty or forty years doing a job which they don't feel awfully proud of. That's wrong. There aren't all that many rewards in the field.

INT: What would you say would be the potential rewards of the field, to somebody who did have the aptitude, inclination and the love of the discipline, yet who does not yet know what the eventual rewards they might find?

DP: Well, the rewards are several. First, there's the reward of knowing that one is doing something useful. I mean one's function as a teacher or writer or as a museum person is socially meaningful, and most of us find that fulfilling. Then there's the reward of living daily with the kinds of objects -- or reproductions of objects -- that fill one with pleasure. But also there is a reward related to one's ability to do the job well, which picks up on your last question. If you're endowed with a gift for art historical scholarship and able to develop it, there is a sense of self-realization, which is a very wonderful thing. That's what I would wish on everybody. And everybody should be able to have it; but not everybody can have it in art history.

INT: And have you found some of those rewards? Have your personal and professional lives gone hand in hand?

DP: Well, yes, to some extent. My personality has surely shaped my work as a scholar and teacher, and my work in turn has made me into a person who acts in a certain way, who looks at the world with a certain kind of perspective. I like to think the view from here is an especially good and clear one, but I'm naturally biased. Anyway, I'm happy in my life. Of course, I've been very lucky too, perhaps most of all for the chance to spend my working life at the Institute of Fine Arts. I can't know for sure, but I think anywhere else I'd be a different kind of art historian and a different kind of person.