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Cover photo: Timothy H. O'Sullivan, *Port Royal*, *South Carolina*. *Slaves quarters*, April 1862. Digital positive from stereograph negative (right half). Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., LC-DIG-cwpb-00805.

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This article reconsiders Timothy H. O'Sullivan's 1862 stereographs of the Sea Islands of South Carolina by centering the surviving glass-plate collodion negatives as objects of analysis. Made in the earliest days of Reconstruction, these stereographs were likely intended as visual evidence of the condition of the freedpeople of Port Royal, Beaufort, and the surrounding islands. Their depictions of homes, families, and labor reflect broader relations of power and enforced visibility that persisted into the era of emancipation. Yet the links between image and history run deeper than mere depiction, for the chemical substrate of the negatives—collodion, a cotton-derived chemical—reveals the profound imbrication of the history of photography and the plantation. The materiality of the negatives complicates their status as historical documents and provides a starting point for their reinterpretation. Drawing from critical race theory and the material history of photography, this article situates the negatives within a wider temporal frame and within the geographies of racial capitalism in the United States South.

An Elephant in the Ruin: Coloniality and Masculinity in the Postwar Painting of Karl Schmidt-Rottluff – *byTobias Rosen*

The central question of this essay is: what politics, morality, and understandings of masculinity are recuperated by nostalgia for childhood play during postwar reconstruction in Germany? Looking at the oil painting *Spielzeug* [Toys] by German Expressionist Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, I argue that seemingly innocent, but faintly exotic objects, like the Noah's Ark toys depicted in the artwork, harbor colonial views of nature. The work is inseparable from a complex colonial practice of collecting, conservation, and regeneration. I support this discussion by placing Schmidt-Rottluff's views of nature and collecting into a constellation with those of critical theorist Theodor W. Adorno and the zoologist Bernhard Grzimek, whose popular television programs not only broadcasted images of African nature to German living rooms, but also shaped international environmental policy. This essay shifts its focus from the way that European artists engaged with the material culture of societies subject to colonial rule (i.e. cultural appropriation) to the ecological concern of how

European society constructed and managed nature. I argue that the primitivist imaginary outlived the factual end of German colonialism at the time of World War I, becoming a nearly imperceptible commonplace solidified within memories of childhood.

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Paintings of female musicians abound in seventeenth-century Dutch art, but few interpretations incorporate the multisensory elements of performance that original audiences likely recognized. These paintings encompass more than visual splendor because they include music and therefore would have activated an embodied experience. Artists like Johannes Vermeer *A Young Woman Seated at a Virginal l* (c. 1670–1675) represented female musicians playing instruments associated with the 'feminine,' such as the virginal, in domestic settings. By doing so, these artists engaged what I have termed the 'feminine ear,' tuning music paintings to the aural sensibilities of upper-class women. This attunement occurred during a time when, in the Dutch Republic, public and private spaces were becoming more defined. Breaking these boundaries invited social scrutiny and depictions of 'immoral' female musicians overtly communicated cultural anxieties surrounding secular music. At the same time, specific forms of musical practice and instruction were encouraged within the homes of middle and upper-class women. By exploring the multi-sensory and gendered associations evoked through paintings of virginal players in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, this paper argues that within the domestic space, music became a medium through which women controlled their environment, and considers the ability of feminine musicians, specifically, to embody these painted performances. By focusing on the musical knowledge cultivated by Dutch women, resulting in a distinctly different viewing experience, I aim to complicate previous notions of feminine consumption and reception in the Early Modern period.

The Limits of Consumption: Sawasa Ware In and Out of the Dutch East Indies – *Vanessa Gillette Wyland*

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"Distance of Ambivalence" in Persona Performance: How Tseng Kwong Chi Appropriates the Mao Suit – *Jacob Zhicheng Zhang*

Born in Hong Kong to Chinese Nationalist (Kuomintang) parents emigrating from post–civil war China, raised in suburban Vancouver, and trained in Montréal and Paris before moving to New York in 1978, artist Tseng Kwong Chi experienced a cosmopolitan upbringing far away from China, where the Mao suit—a monotone, high-collared, multi-pocket attire favored by party cadres and citizens alike—was popular. Yet Tseng chose to change his name from "Joseph" to "Kwong Chi" and adopt the Mao suit, extensively using it in his performative-photographic work to assume the persona of a traveling Chinese Communist until his passing in 1990. Despite revealing political and personal incongruences with the persona, Tseng and his work are rarely analyzed through interpretations that account for the felt distance between the artist and the fictional identity. Existing criticisms often overlook the contradictions, favoring the perception of a queer Asian American artist who champions disidentificatory politics and for whom the Mao suit represents a parodied "Oriental other" awaiting subversive deconstruction.

Attending to the distance of ambivalence and queer bourgeois inclinations in Tseng's life and work, this paper argues that Tseng appropriates the cultural sign of the Mao suit to destabilize its meaning rather than deconstructing it from a minority position. By highlighting how Tseng's adoption of the outfit remains heterogeneous to the minoritarian image hosted by him, this paper shifts focus to the geopolitical and autobiographical commentaries the artist injects into the costume. It introduces transnational realities into the reading of art made in the United States and challenges fast assumptions about a queer diasporic artist of color.

Negative Evidence: Timothy H. O'Sullivan's Photographs of the Sea Islands

by Elizabeth Keto

Figure 1. Timothy H. O'Sullivan, *Port Royal, South Carolina. Slaves quarters,* April 1862. Digital positive from stereograph negative (right half). Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., LC-DIG-cwpb-00805.

Consider a photograph taken by Timothy H. O'Sullivan in 1862 (*fig*. 1). In that corner of a cotton plantation apportioned to the homes of those who were forced to labor on it, the photographer set up his camera and portable darkroom, and exposed a collodion-coated glass plate to the light. O'Sullivan (ca. 1840-1882) arrived in Port Royal, South Carolina, in April, some five months after the Union Navy bombarded Port Royal Sound and prompted the surrounding Sea Islands' white inhabitants, among the wealthiest cotton planters in the country, to flee.[1] The people those planters had enslaved—the people in this photograph—stayed where they were, setting their emancipation in motion by refusing to move. Their

I am grateful to Micah Messenheimer, Curator of Photography at the Library of Congress, for their generosity with their time and expertise. Without their assistance in viewing the glass negatives, this essay could not have been written. My thanks to Jessica Williams Stark for her insightful and generative reading of the piece. I also extend my gratitude to Jennifer Raab, Tim Barringer, Siobhan Angus, Michelle Donnelly, Alex Fialho, Caterina Franciosi, Manon Gaudet, Michaela Haffner, Kevin Hong, Nathalie Miraval, and Marina Molarsky-Beck, who read drafts of this article and whose comments strengthened it immeasurably. Finally, my thanks to the organizers of the 2023 Rutgers Art History Graduate Symposium and the editors of the *Rutgers Art Review*.

steady gazes toward the camera make clear that they knew the photographer was there, but the distant view suggests that he entered their living space, or stood at its edge, without their permission or encouragement. On the image's right margin, someone hovers in a doorway, the glint of light on a forehead just barely discernable—the person in the house captured in the act of not being seen. The light reflected off their body left only the slightest shadow on the collodion emulsion coating O'Sullivan's glass-plate negative (*fig*. 2). When O'Sullivan's employer, Mathew Brady, printed the image for sale on card later that same year, it was cropped to give a tighter view of the central figures, erasing this moment of refusal and collapsing the uneasy distance between photographer and subjects (*fig*. 3). The negative retains evidence of a more complicated encounter.

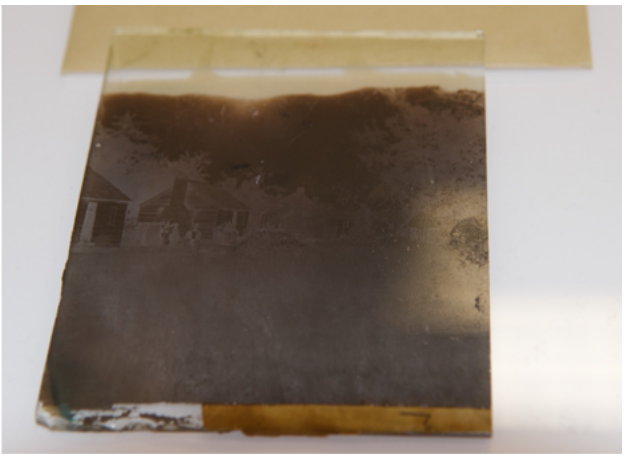

Figure 2. Timothy H. O'Sullivan, *Port Royal, South Carolina. Slaves quarters,* April 1862. Glass-plate wet collodion stereograph negative (right half). Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Photograph by author.

Figure 3. Timothy H. O'Sullivan, [*Slave quarters on a plantation, Port Royal, South Carolina*], 1862. Printed by Mathew Brady. Albumen photographic print on carte-de-visite card, 2 3/8 x 3 15/16 in. (6 x 10 cm). Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., LOT 14022, no. 53 [P&P].

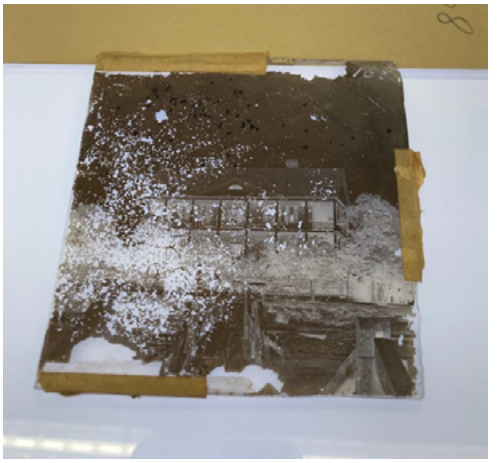

Figure 4. Timothy H. O'Sullivan, *Beaufort, South Carolina. Fuller's House*, 1862. Glass-plate wet collodion stereograph negative (one extant half). Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Photograph by author.

Figure 5. Timothy H. O'Sullivan, *Beaufort, South Carolina. Fuller's House*, 1862. Digital positive from stereograph negative (one extant half). Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., LC-DIG-cwpb-00760.

Among the first enslaved people in the South to be liberated by Union soldiers, Black residents of Port Royal, Beaufort, and the surrounding Sea Islands became, in the eyes of white Northern observers, ciphers for the possibilities conjured by the end of bondage.[2] At the time when O'Sullivan took his photographs, prior to the Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863, the formerly enslaved in Union-occupied territory existed in the nebulous legal position of "contraband of war," a status still rooted in enslavement's commodification of their personhood.[3] Photographs of the Sea Islands, though a small subset of the vast corpus of Civil War photography, constitute perhaps the most extensive surviving visual record of wartime emancipation in the South. Even after the war's end and the abolition of slavery throughout the former Confederacy, the Sea Islands retained their importance as case studies in the unfolding experiment of emancipation. In January 1870, for instance, J.W. Alvord, an abolitionist minister then working for the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (Freedmen's Bureau), wrote to his superiors in Washington: "On Sea Island plantations I had excellent opportunity of seeing the Freedmen's condition."[4] His phrasing—"*seeing* the Freedmen's condition"—reflects the critical importance of the visual in this project of social assessment.

Yet whatever information O'Sullivan's Sea Islands stereographs may have conveyed to viewers in 1862, the condition in which they appear today is one of near illegibility. Aside from the 1862 card, none of the images I discuss here are,

in fact, printed photographs. They are glass-plate collodion negatives, from which positive prints do not survive or were made long after the war (*fig.* 4). The negatives were scanned to make digital positives by the Library of Congress, which holds much of O'Sullivan's wartime work (*fig.* 5). (I reproduce some of these digital positives for ease of viewing.) To see the images on the actual negatives requires a curator's manipulation of the objects on a light table, and even then, they are difficult to decipher (*fig.* 6). From most angles, the surface of the negative presents only a graphite-colored sheen, sometimes mottled by chemicals or pocked by particles and fingerprints. The passage of time has left marks: abraded collodion surfaces, chipped and broken glass plates. This damage also reflects the objects' long sojourn outside of archival care. Most of O'Sullivan's wartime negatives belonged to his employer, Brady, who found himself in debt after the war and sold most of his inventory to the publisher E. & H.T. Anthony. The negatives then passed through the hands of multiple publishers and collectors, before being placed in storage in Washington in 1916.[5] Not until 1943 were the boxes of some 7,500 original glass negatives and 2,500 copy negatives uncovered and purchased by the Library.[6]

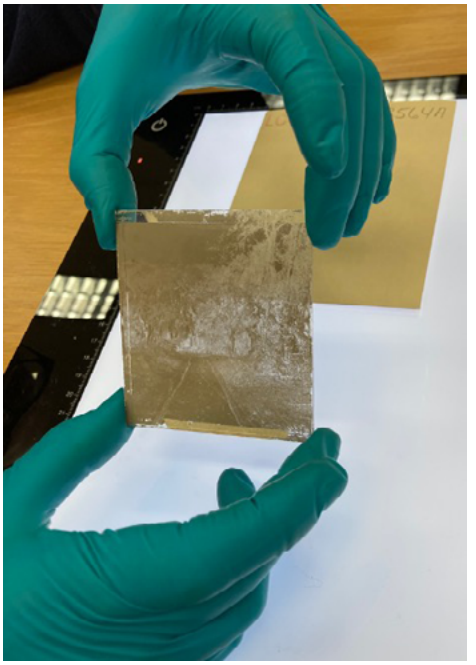

Figure 6. A glass negative over a light table, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Photograph by author.

The literal disappearance of these objects underscores the negative's status as the "repressed, dark side of photography," unvalued and inconsistently acknowledged in the history and theory of the medium.[7] The embodied experience of looking at glass-plate negatives—contending with their age, their fragility, their opacity, their obdurate thingness—is markedly different from the experience of looking at positive prints or digital images. Tina M. Campt writes that viewing a negative requires attunement to a "spectral photographic presence," to "shadow in the darkness of the emulsion."[8] If photographic positives confirm the visual facticity of the world, negatives capture a world that is evanescent, alien, and otherwise. Formed by the action of light reflected from the represented object onto photosensitive chemicals, negatives are, in a

truer sense than photographic positives, materially indexical to their referents.[9] Yet they lack the appearance of truth to nature usually presumed to accompany indexical representation. (Stereographic negatives literally offer two slightly different versions of the same scene, further straining the idea of truthfulness.) Thus, as Campt writes, "The materiality of the photo secures neither its indexical accuracy nor transparency; it leads us to question it instead. It exposes our own investments in the visual as evidence."[10] At least for the moment of encounter, the negative cleaves seeing from knowing.

Contemporary theorists have wrestled with the negative's strangeness, but so too did nineteenth-century writers on photography, as negative-positive processes succeeded the daguerreotype in the middle of the century. As Jennifer Raab argues, the post-Civil War period in the United States saw the embrace of the cultural, even legal, validity of photographs as witnesses, testimony, and evidence.[11] Yet if the photographic positive increasingly bore the imprimatur of truth, the photographic negative retained the capacity to obscure it. Writing in the *Atlantic* in 1859, doctor and essayist Oliver Wendell Holmes described the negative as "perverse and totally depraved…where the light of the eye was darkness, and the deepest blackness was gilded with the brightest glare."[12] Illegible, even immoral in its flagrant distortion of the truth, the negative disturbed some of the nineteenth century's basic assumptions about photography.[13]

In the particular context of wartime Reconstruction, investment in the evidentiary capacities of the photographic intersected with the white public's investment in "seeing the…condition" of the freed Black subject. O'Sullivan's photographs of the Sea Islands document families, homes, land use, and labor: aspects of emancipated life that were of profound interest to Northern officials, teachers, missionaries, reformers, and businessmen during this period. But the negatives that gave rise to those images—which are the photographic objects that survive in the archive—solicit a different kind of looking and perform a different kind of work. Contending with the negative's refusal to be evidentiary, to offer "accuracy" or "transparency," is a condition of viewing the photographs now: a problem that opens an aperture of possibility, a way of seeing otherwise.

Both in terms of its role in the photographic process and its interpretive possibilities, the negative is a generative rather than conclusive object. It is almost impossible to ascribe to any of these negatives a single intention or reception. O'Sullivan never wrote about his visit to the Sea Islands and the photographs he made there; I have found no record of viewers' responses to them, nor any sitter's recollection of the experience of being photographed. Much about these images—the sitters' names, for instance—is unknown and now, perhaps, unknowable.

In this article, I seek to remain with, rather than resolve, this instability and uncertainty; to dispense with any claim to read these images exhaustively. The article moves outward in space and time: from the photographed bodies, families, and homes of the freed in 1862 to the land on which they stood, its history, and its future. I conclude by turning to the chemical substrate of the negatives and their material links to cotton and chemical industry in the post-Reconstruction life of the Sea Islands. In writing these histories, I have thought of performing an oscillation, as if shifting the negative so that it flickers back and forth, between past and future, between the elusive image and the darkened slick of chemicals that coats the glass surface. If the stereographs were intended to provide evidence of their subjects' "condition," I ask: what conditions do these negatives materialize?

Evidence and Burden

Photographs of emancipated people on the Sea Islands may have circulated among the Northern public both during and after the Civil War. Thirty-five of O'Sullivan's stereographs were offered for sale by Mathew Brady in 1862 as "Plantation and Camp Scenes, Beaufort, S.C.," "Port Royal Island Scenes," and "Scenes at Hilton Head, S.C." A nearly identical set was sold by Alexander Gardner in 1863 as "Illustrations of Sherman's Expedition to South Carolina."[14] Alongside O'Sullivan, the white photographers Henry P. Moore, Samuel A.

Figure 7. Samuel A. Cooley, *Sam. A. Cooley, Photographer Tenth Army Corps*, 1861-5. Stereograph, 2 15/16 x 6 in. (7.5 x 15.2 cm). Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., PH - Cooley, no. 1 (AA size) [P&P].

Cooley, and Hubbard & Mix all produced images of the Sea Islands in the 1860s.[15] We cannot know to what degree the freedpeople felt themselves free to dictate the terms of their appearance in such photographs or to refuse to be photographed at all. Imbalances of power riddled these encounters in the visual field, imbalances rooted in race, war, and history, but also in the basic distinction between photographer and photographed. A stereograph made sometime between 1861 and 1865 by one of these photographers, Samuel A. Cooley, offers a vivid performance of the unequal distribution of labor, agency, and visibility in photographic practices of the Civil War period (*fig*. 7). Cooley's name appears twice, prominently advertised in the banners decking his equipment wagons, as a group of white men, presumably including Cooley himself, pose with leisured confidence around a camera. The two Black men who appear in the image are unnamed figures, consigned to the left margin and the background, their manual labor driving the photographer's wagons essential to, but separated from, the creative work of making photographs.

The status of the newly emancipated as what Nicholas Mirzoeff has termed "visual subjects" was thus fraught with as many ambivalences as was their status as civil and political subjects.[16] As Mirzoeff argues, "visual subjects" are participants in complex, historically conditioned dynamics of seing and being seen—surveilling and being surveilled, observing and being observed, knowing and being known—that are enmeshed within the operations of social power.[17] Enslavement had long involved the exercise of power in the visual field and enabled some of nineteenth-century photography's most coercive practices.[18] The era of emancipation brought different, though still powerful, imperatives to the depiction of Black sitters. As Saidiya V. Hartman has argued, freedom placed upon the freedpeople's own shoulders the burden of earning civic, political, and social participation, of proving their right to have rights—a proof that could take the form of visual evidence.[19] This visibility constituted one facet of what Hartman terms the "burdened individuality" of the newly freed, their "duty to prove their worthiness for freedom rather than the nation's duty to guarantee, at minimum, the exercise of liberty and equality."[20]

We might, then, speak of a burdened visibility. The figures in the photograph with which this article began, though apparently doing nothing except standing before a camera, carried this burden of proof (see *fig*. 1). Even after slavery's end, the bodies, families, homes, lands, and labor of those living on the Sea Islands were not entirely their own; all these things were charged with displaying the legacy of enslavement, the effects of emancipation, and the conduct and character of Black life. An 1886 chromolithograph celebrating the "Progress of Liberty" since emancipation literalizes this ocular scrutiny, placing vignettes of Black colleges and churches, commerce and Congressional

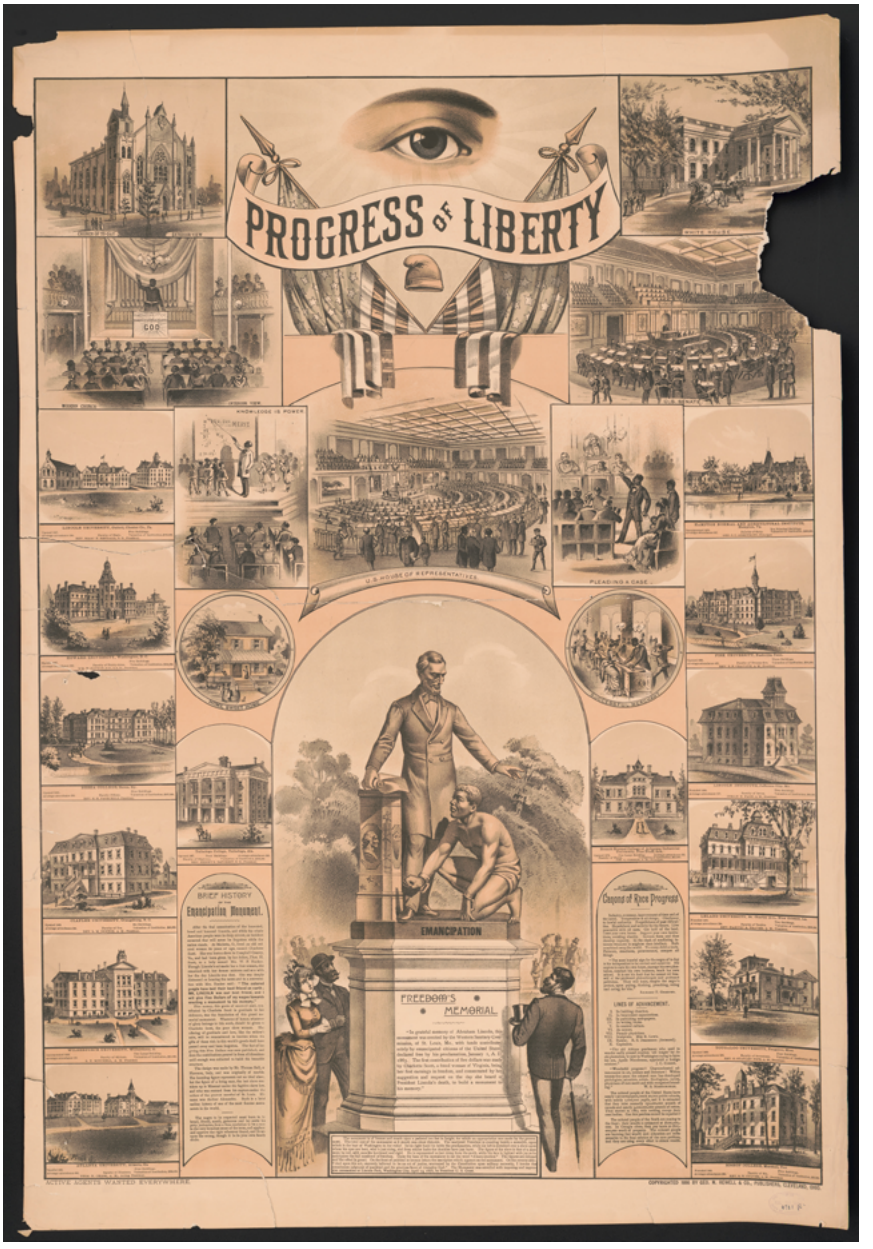

Figure 8. Geo. M. Rewell & Co., *Progress of Liberty*, 1862. Chromolithograph, 36 ¼ x 48 in. (92 x 122 cm). Published Cincinnati, Ohio. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., PAGA 7, no. 2618 (E size) [P&P].

representation, under the all-seeing Eye of Providence (*fig.* 8).[21] The eye, though a religious and civic symbol, here takes on a human, eerily anatomical form as, unmistakably, a white person's eye. And as the vignette of "Home, Sweet Home" on the left side of the chromolithograph suggests, the private spaces constituted by the freedpeople's families and households were among the sites at which they were most insistently subjected to observation. Alvord, for instance, assumed his right to oversee the private, indeed the interior, lives of the freedpeople of the Sea Islands when he wrote that they "compare favorably with other laboring classes in moral conduct, temperance, chastity, and especially in a desire for quiet home-life."[22]

With similar presumptions of access, O'Sullivan hauled his stereograph camera, bottles of liquid collodion, glass plates, and portable darkroom to the freedpeople's doorsteps in 1862. Since the eighteenth century, the quarters allotted to enslaved people on South Carolina plantations had been geographically separated from the enslaver's house, their cabins often clustered together along a street. These spaces, subject to both surveillance and neglect during the era of slavery, now suffered examination in the softer guise of humanitarian concern.[23] O'Sullivan's visit was likely only one of many endured by those who lived there, as Northern missionaries and teachers made it their business to inspect the homes of the freedpeople and instruct them in domesticity. Laura M. Towne, a teacher who arrived in 1862, described the freedpeople's houses as dirty and disordered, disregarding the fact that the straitened living conditions of the enslaved represented the exploitative calculations of their enslavers.[24] The physical plan of the enslaved household—here, what appear to be one- or two-room, single-story frame houses with gable-end brick chimneys, unglazed windows, clapboard siding, and shingled roofs—followed standard types on each plantation.[25] On the Sea Islands, these structures usually housed two families in a space of around fourteen by twenty feet.[26]

Figure 9. W.H. Cowell, *Family Record*, 1880. Chromolithograph. Published by Krebs Lithographing Company, Cincinnati, Ohio. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., PGA - Krebs Litho. Co.—Family record (D size) [P&P].

Not only the house, but the family within it was subject to a

burdened visibility. Inconceivable as it might seem, given the efforts made by enslaved people to keep their kin together under bondage and reunite them after, a central anxiety of white officials and reformers in this period was enslavement's undermining of the Black family. Much of this anxiety stemmed from these observers' refusal to legitimate the non-nuclear structures of kinship that enslaved people had developed in response to "a long cycle of forced disruptions and reconstitutions of marriage and family life" by the sale of family members, violence both physical and sexual, and the upheavals of war.[27] Efforts to impose the template of the nuclear family upon Black communities are evident in visual culture throughout the Reconstruction period. A chromolithograph "Family Record" published in 1880 and "designed for the Colored people of America," for instance, shows a well-dressed husband and wife with two children in a snug parlor, with surrounding blank spaces to write in vital dates (*fig*. 9). An ornate column elevates this vision of genteel domesticity above contrasting vignettes of life "Before the War" and "Since the War" (both of which, despite the putative opposition, seem to involve agricultural labor), exalting the middle-class family as the embodiment of liberation.

Figure 10. Timothy H. O'Sullivan, *Five generations on Smith's Plantation, Beaufort, South Carolina*, 1862. Digital positive from stereograph negative (left half). Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., LC-DIG-cwpb-00737.

The O'Sullivan stereograph marketed to the public in 1862 under the title "Negro Family, Representing five generations, all born on the plantation of J.J. Smith, Beaufort, S.C." offers a photographic instantiation of the family record (*fig*. 10). The seated man in the center grasps his right wrist in his left, a gesture of bodily comportment and self-possession; the slightly outstretched arms of the central, standing man and the clasp of the seated woman on the elbow of the small child

before her suggest familial bonds of care and responsibility. Yet both photograph and chromolithgraph are strange mixtures of the particularized and the generic. Where the chromolithograph family record is particularized in its text—intended for use by a family to record their own names and history—the photograph is generic, identifying the sitters only as a "Negro family" and giving the name of their former enslaver. Yet while the chromolithograph depicts a generic family scene, the photograph shows particular individuals, their embodied specificity at odds with the photograph's caption. The title makes clear that this photograph was representative and typological, intended to demonstrate the condition of the Black family as a general category rather than to serve as a portrait of an identifiable group of related individuals.[28] The photograph might have been made *of* this family, but the caption suggests it was not made *for* them. Still, O'Sullivan's images of newly freed families arrayed in front of their homes implicitly refuse what Lisa Lowe describes as enslavement's imposition of "exile" from "domesticity" and lay claim to the privileged kinds of legal and social personhood that such a possession conferred.[29] Such complex dynamics reflect the family photograph's importance as a highly contested, profoundly racialized site of postbellum politics.[30]

Like many family photographs, O'Sullivan's "Negro family" reveals the household as a site wherein society's racialized, classed, and gendered dynamics intersect in ways both obvious and unmarked.[31] Though most of the people in the photograph are women and children, the figure at the apex of the composition is identifiably male. We cannot know whether the sitters, or photographer, or both, determined its arrangement, but the photograph signals the accession of Black men to leadership of family and community, a message that would have been reassuring to Northern officials and reformers who fretted that enslavement had weakened patriarchy within Black households.[32] And though the family was a crucial site of "solidarity between African American men and women" in the face of white violence in this period, the status and protection it afforded to Black women did not guarantee their own civil rights.[33] Federal officials in the emancipation era were constantly preoccupied with solemnizing formerly enslaved people's marital relations, and thus, as Stephanie McCurry writes, with "transform[ing] enslaved women into wives."[34] Freed Black women were no longer subject to the power of enslavers, but as wives, subject to the laws of marriage, neither were they "endowed with the quality of self-possession."[35] While Black women advocated for their liberation and labored for the Union war effort, lawmakers did not view their freedom "as a human and natural right" earned by their service to the nation, as was true for enslaved men who served as soldiers.[36]

This complex interplay between gender, family, and freedom is visible everywhere in Reconstruction visual culture, not only in photography, but

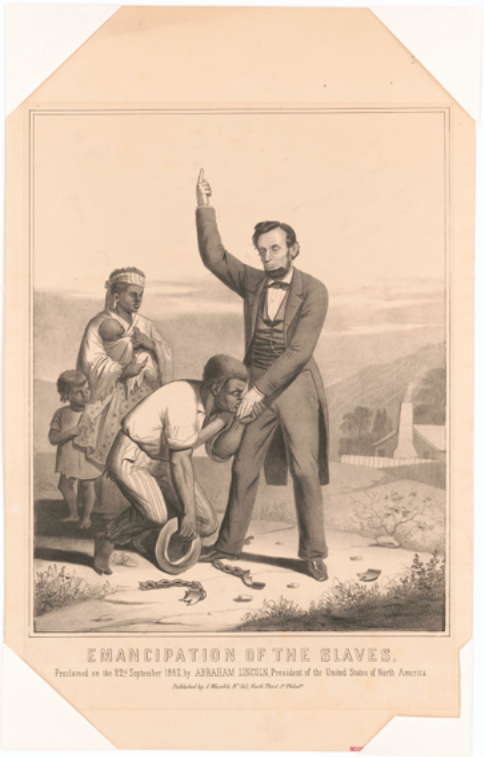

Figure 11. *Emancipation of the Slaves*, 1862. Lithograph. Published by J. Waeshle, Philadelphia. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., PGA - Waeshle, J.—Emancipation of... (B size) [P&P].

also in popular prints such as the lithograph "Emancipation of the Slaves," published the same year O'Sullivan visited Port Royal (*fig.* 11). The print might almost have been intended as a diagram of the interlocking hierarchies of race and gender in the nineteenth-century United States. The Black male figure serves as the compositional link between Lincoln's liberating gesture and the Black woman and children, the conduit through which their freedom is realized. As Amy Dru Stanley has observed of the divergent meanings of emancipation for Black women and men: "Her freedom represented something owed to him."[37] Smoke drifting from the chimney in the background suggests the hearth tended within, reinscribing the domestic as the site where freedom would be most properly enjoyed—but in which, as we have seen, freedom would be experienced in profoundly different ways by various members of the family.

As this image of a salvific Lincoln suggests, even those white Americans who celebrated emancipation often conceived of it in deeply paternalistic terms. General T.W. Sherman, whose troops had driven the Confederate defenders from the Sea Islands, wrote in January 1862 about the freedpeople in his theater: "[B]efore they can be left entirely to their own government they must be trained and instructed into a knowledge of personal responsibility" and "civilization."[38] We see such assumptions at work in one of the more disquieting images from O'Sullivan's Sea Islands visit: a strange scene of martial domesticity (*fig.* 12). Seven white men sit around a table laden with wine bottles, a dish of bread, a soup tureen, and a silver coffee pot: the epitome of a certain kind of refinement, of "civilization" in the wilderness. Two of the men wear Union Army uniforms with officers' shoulder straps; the others are in dark suits. Two young Black men, one in a Union cap and coat, the other in a plain jacket, stand to either side of the table; a young Black woman in a lacy dress or blouse stands behind it. The

Figure 12. Timothy H. O'Sullivan, *Beaufort, South Carolina, "Our Mess,"* 1862. Digital positive from stereograph negative (left half). Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., LC-DIG-cwpb-00800.

three young adults appear to be waiting on the seated diners. Captioned "Our Mess" by Brady in 1862 and Gardner in 1863, apparently referring facetiously to a soldiers' mess hall, the image crystallizes the hierarchies that remained within the nation's house. To contemporary eyes, the photograph makes clear a relation of dependence, but not the one that white Northerners imagined in 1862. The photograph shows how much of what Sherman might have meant by "civilization"—dining room and parlor, fine clothes and elegant objects, ease and comfort—depended, and continued to depend, on the exploited labor of Black men, women, and children. O'Sullivan's "Negro Family" and "Our Mess," then, stand not as clear evidence of the "Freedmen's condition," but as ambivalent, even contradictory reflections on what freedom as a condition meant in the Sea Islands in 1862.

Histories, Geographies, and Grounds

Brady and Gardner marketed "Negro Family" and "Our Mess" as "Groups," suggesting that the subject matter of the images was the human figures

within them.[39] But compositionally, both photographs direct the viewer's gaze to the land itself. The deictic gesture of the child touching the earth in the foreground of the family portrait and the claustrophobic crowding of grass and leaves around the dinner table turn the viewer's eyes away from the figures. The images invite the viewer to consider the freedpeople's "condition" from the ground up, from the land and its history. Whether by design or accident, the images open themselves to what Sarah Elizabeth Lewis has called "groundwork."[40] Lewis poses a central question for examining any kind of landscape representation: "What happens when we interrogate the idea of ground not as a notional plane to which all have access, or as part of an earthen foundation beneath our feet, but as a diasporic site of struggle on stolen indigenous land?"[41] O'Sullivan's photographs make visible competing claims to the literal ground of the Sea Islands, claims rooted in histories of racialized conquest, extraction, and labor, their interweaving patterns as complex as those the tidal creeks cut through the land. These images manifest what Leslie A. Schwalm has termed the "situatedness of subjection," the modes of power and disempowerment that operate in and through specific geographies.[42] And as Dana E. Byrd has argued, Reconstruction in the Sea Islands was above all a radical "transformation of space," an attempted remaking of enslavement's geography through the founding of new towns, construction of military infrastructure, and partition and sale of plantations.[43]

In 1862, emancipation had barely dawned, while the geography of enslavement on the Sea Islands had been shaped by over three hundred years of history. Before the sixteenth century, the land was home to the chieftaincies of the Guale and Cofitachequi and their allies, who lived in coastal towns and were related to the Southeastern nations later known to settlers as the Creek, Chickasaw, and Cherokee.[44] Spanish colonists arrived in the area in 1525 and soon brought with them kidnapped and enslaved Africans, who were present in what would become South Carolina by 1526.[45] British settlers followed in the seventeenth century, the most powerful and highly capitalized of them immigrating from the Caribbean, where a brutally extractive plantation economy was hungry for more land. The colony of "Carolina" was chartered in 1663 to a Barbadian planter and his aristocratic associates, who set about converting land into commodities: first, through the harvesting of timber, tar, and turpentine for naval stores, and later through the cultivation of indigo.[46]

To return to the image advertised by Brady and Gardner as "[r]epresenting five generations" born on a Beaufort plantation (see *fig.* 10), this caption suggests the arrival of an enslaved ancestor in South Carolina sometime before 1800. The forebears, perhaps even the oldest members, of the family that O'Sullivan photographed in 1862 would have witnessed a profound change in

the islands' economy in the late eighteenth century: the coming of cotton. Seeds of long-staple cotton were imported from the Bahamas, first grown on Hilton Head Island in 1790, and thrived in the salt-licked, sandy soil found along the Georgia and South Carolina coast.[47] Soon known as "sea island cotton," this variety possessed "long, strong, and silky" fibers suited to the weaving of expensive muslins and laces.[48] The profits to be made from the crop and the extremely labor-intensive nature of its cultivation meant that by 1860, enslaved people in the Beaufort District outnumbered whites by two to one.[49] The vast Sea Island plantations were the "quintessence of large scale plantation economy": dependent on the labor, skills, and knowledge of entire communities of enslaved people, for the benefit of a few powerful white families.[50]

O'Sullivan in 1862 trained his lens on the formerly enslaved, but he also documented the generational wealth and power of the men and women who had enslaved them. When taking the photograph captioned by Brady and Gardner as "Moss-covered tomb, over 150 years old, on Rhett's plantation, Port Royal Island, S.C." (*fig.* 13), O'Sullivan stood on land that had once belonged to Robert Barnwell Rhett, a vitriolically proslavery secessionist and descendant of a planter dynasty built on rice and cotton.[51] The burial place of an enslaver, settler, and planter family ties land to inheritance, to property relations structured by genealogy. Freedpeople understood and contested the role that burial played in claiming ground: at some plantations in South Carolina, the newly emancipated dug up the enslaving family's graveyard and scattered the bones interred there.[52] In this photograph, the tomb itself is almost invisible, lying in the shadow of a massive tree that dominates the composition. The moss-draped limbs and tomb together suggest a gothic vision of mortality, of the rot and decay that had struck down slavery's aristocracy.

Figure 13. Timothy O'Sullivan, *Port Royal Island, Beaufort, South Carolina. Moss covered tomb over 150 years old on R.B. Rhett's plantation*, 1862. Digital positive from stereograph negative (left half). Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., LC-DIG-cwpb-00744.

But the photograph is also capable of bearing a different interpretation in the context of

Reconstruction-era contests over land ownership in the Sea Islands. When war and emancipation threatened the sacrality of property rights, white Southerners turned to a sentimental economy of ownership—a rhetoric given visual incarnation, whether or not he intended it, in O'Sullivan's photograph. As one white South Carolinian lamented in 1870, the Sea Island planter families had been "so broken down by want and oppression as to be willing to abandon their homes and the homes of their ancestors; the tombs and sepulchres [sic] of those who have preceded them in life."[53] These claims, of course, rested on a highly selective reading of the words "home" and "ancestor." A report sent from the Sea Islands to the Freedmen's Bureau by Brevet Brigadier General William E. Strong in March 1866 noted that the freedpeople, too, "seem very much attached to the islands where they were born and raised, and it is useless to attempt to hire them to leave and work other plantations."[54] He added: "They very much prefer to remain at their old homes," even when "they are unable to cultivate more than one quarter of an acre of land."[55] The families whom planters sought to dispossess had often inhabited the Sea Islands as long as their enslavers; their kin, too, were buried there.[56] As one freedman remarked: "What's [the] use of being free if you don't own land enough to be buried in?"[57]

The Sea Islands and the adjacent South Carolina and Georgia coast experienced perhaps the most complicated, "intense and bitter" struggles over land to take place anywhere in the former Confederacy.[58] After the Union Army occupied the area, the federal government deemed Sea Island plantations "abandoned lands" and confiscated them. When the government put the properties up for public auction in June 1863, many of the plantations were bought by Northern entrepreneurs eager to try cotton planting with so-called free labor.[59] In January 1865, however, General William Tecumseh Sherman issued Special Field Order No. 15, which designated much of the islands and coast for "the sole and exclusive management" of their emancipated inhabitants and Black refugees from elsewhere in the South. Sherman's order, however, granted only "vouchers" and "possessory titles" to land, and to the fury of the freedpeople, President Andrew Johnson later rescinded the order and refused to recognize many of these claims. Some Sea Island land which the government had been using for military purposes was sold in plots to freedpeople between 1863 and 1870.[60] But, as Strong's 1866 report from the islands noted, since enslavement had denied them any opportunity to accumulate capital, it was almost impossible for the freedpeople to succeed as independent farmers, even where they did manage to acquire land. Strong wrote with frustration: "I do not think the freedmen will make very much of a crop this year…[I]f they were only provided with the means to [purchase] cotton seeds, mules, and farming implements, very

many of them would do exceedingly well."[61] Thus in 1862 and the years that followed, the Sea Islands were a site of struggle over the rights of property, the claims of sentiment and memory, and the power of labor and capital.

Material History

Intimately tied to debates over land ownership on the Sea Islands were debates over the form and conditions of labor that ought to replace enslavement—a debate which pitted freedpeople against the Northern capitalists and federal officials who controlled most of the lands on the islands in the 1860s and the white Southerners who would eventually return. After the Confederate defeat in November 1861, Black workers burned many of the islands' cotton gins and refused, to the ire of federal officials, to continue harvesting that autumn's cotton, choosing instead to bring in their own subsistence crops to ensure their families would be fed through the winter.[62] A December 1861 issue of *Harper's Weekly* reflected this official displeasure in a page of racist illustrations entitled "Work's Over," which purported to show Beaufort freedpeople trading, gossiping, and dancing.[63]

What, under such conditions, did images of Black labor in the Sea Islands signify? O'Sullivan took only one photograph of freedpeople at agricultural work (*fig.* 14). He showed them processing cotton, despite the near-universal testimony of those who visited the islands that the freedpeople preferred to cultivate any crop other than that which had marked their enslavement. As Laura Towne remarked in 1862, the freedpeople "can see clearly enough that the proceeds of the cotton will never get into black pockets."[64] O'Sullivan's image shows women seated amid a dense cloud of cotton, preparing it for the gin. As Anna Arabindan-Kesson has observed in an eloquent reading of this image, the cotton piled up to their waists

Figure 14. Timothy H. O'Sullivan, [*Port Royal Island, S.C. African Americans preparing cotton for the gin on Smith's plantation*], 1862. Digital positive from stereograph negative (right half). Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., LC-DIG-cwpb-00747.

seems to cling to the women, to weigh down their bodies and bind them to the ground. They are, she writes, "submerged in cotton."[65] What has gone unremarked about this photograph is the fact that, if we follow Sarah Lewis's call to dig into the ground of representation, we find that the material basis of the image is, in part, cotton.[66] While most histories of the plantation South focus on the importance of cotton textiles in driving enslavement and industry, O'Sullivan's negative contains cotton in the form of a chemical product: guncotton. The substance that sticks so tenaciously to the bodies of the women in the photograph is also the chemical substrate that fixes their image to the glass plate (*fig.* 15).

The method by which O'Sullivan made these negatives is known as the wet-plate collodion process, the most widely used photographic process between its invention in 1851 and the introduction of gelatin dry plate in 1871.[67] Making a wet-plate negative involved coating a glass surface in light-sensitive liquid collodion and exposing the plate while the collodion remained wet, hence the name.[68] Collodion is formed by dissolving nitrocellulose, also known as guncotton, in ether and alcohol. Guncotton, a fluffy white substance as explosive as dynamite, results from the exposure of cotton—in the nineteenth century, this was usually a by-product of cotton textile production known as "weaver's waste"—to nitric and sulfuric acids.[69] The syrupy collodion ground which fixed these evanescent images to the glass plate is composed of cotton fibers, chemically dissolved and transformed. The consumption of cotton in the manufacture of photographic chemicals was small compared to the overall market for textiles, and the cotton used in industrial chemicals would not have been the high-priced long staple produced on the Sea Islands. But the cotton plantation and the history of photography are nevertheless bound together, laminated to each other like collodion to a glass plate. The white heap of cotton in the O'Sullivan negative registers as a dark blotch, an occlusion in the visual field, but it was the chemistry of cotton that allowed the image to become visible at all.

Figure 15. Timothy H. O'Sullivan, [*Port Royal Island, S.C. African Americans preparing cotton for the gin on Smith's plantation*], 1862. Glass-plate stereograph negative (right half). Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Photograph by author.

We understand the photographic image as capturing the past, yet the chemical materiality of these negatives calls us to engage in a different kind of historical analysis, akin to what might be termed "excavating the future."[70] Where history leaves its trace in the image, the future might be discernible in it as a kind of latency. Such excavations require close attention to the photograph not only as an image but also as an object, not only a visual but also a material, chemical thing.[71] Despite many developments in photographic technology, cotton-derived chemicals remained crucial to the industry into the twentieth century and continued to shape the economic geography of the South.[72] In 1920, the *Kodak Magazine*, Eastman Kodak's corporate monthly, described the key materials for manufacturing photographic film: in addition to silver to form light-sensitive silver halides, the process required "bales and bales of cotton" for roll film's celluloid backing (*fig.* 16).[73] As the corporation's anonymous writer concluded, "A darky in the cotton field today may be…pulling the cotton for his next season's shirt, or for a motion picture film he will later see produced when he goes to town."[74] Kodak's text makes clear that photographs and films depended upon the racialized land and labor exploitation that subtended cotton production in the South long after Reconstruction. Though headquartered in Rochester, New York, Kodak located much of its chemical production in the South, at Tennessee Eastman in Kingsport, Tennessee, where cheap labor and ready access to cotton and timber supplied the photographic giant with cellulose-based chemicals.

The post-Reconstruction history of the Sea Islands reveals a different but related entanglement of cotton and chemical industry. As Siobhan Angus has written, many antebellum plantations later became sites of chemical

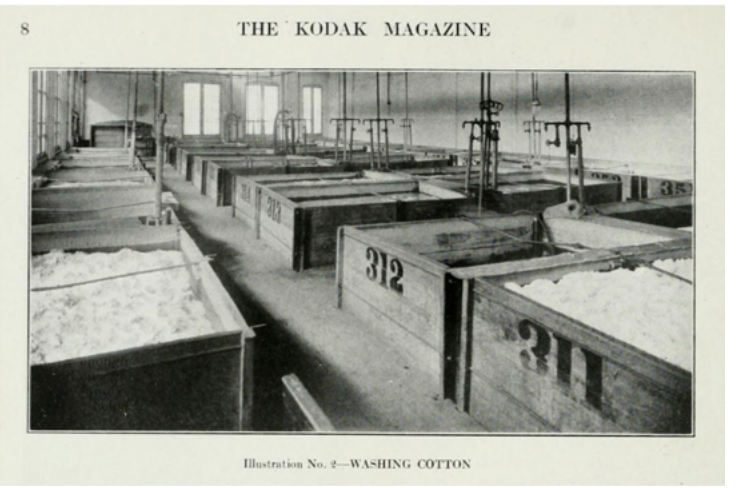

Figure 16. "Washing Cotton," illustration in "How Kodak Film Is Made," *Kodak Magazine* 1, no. 5 (October 1920), page 8. Fine Arts Library, Harvard University.

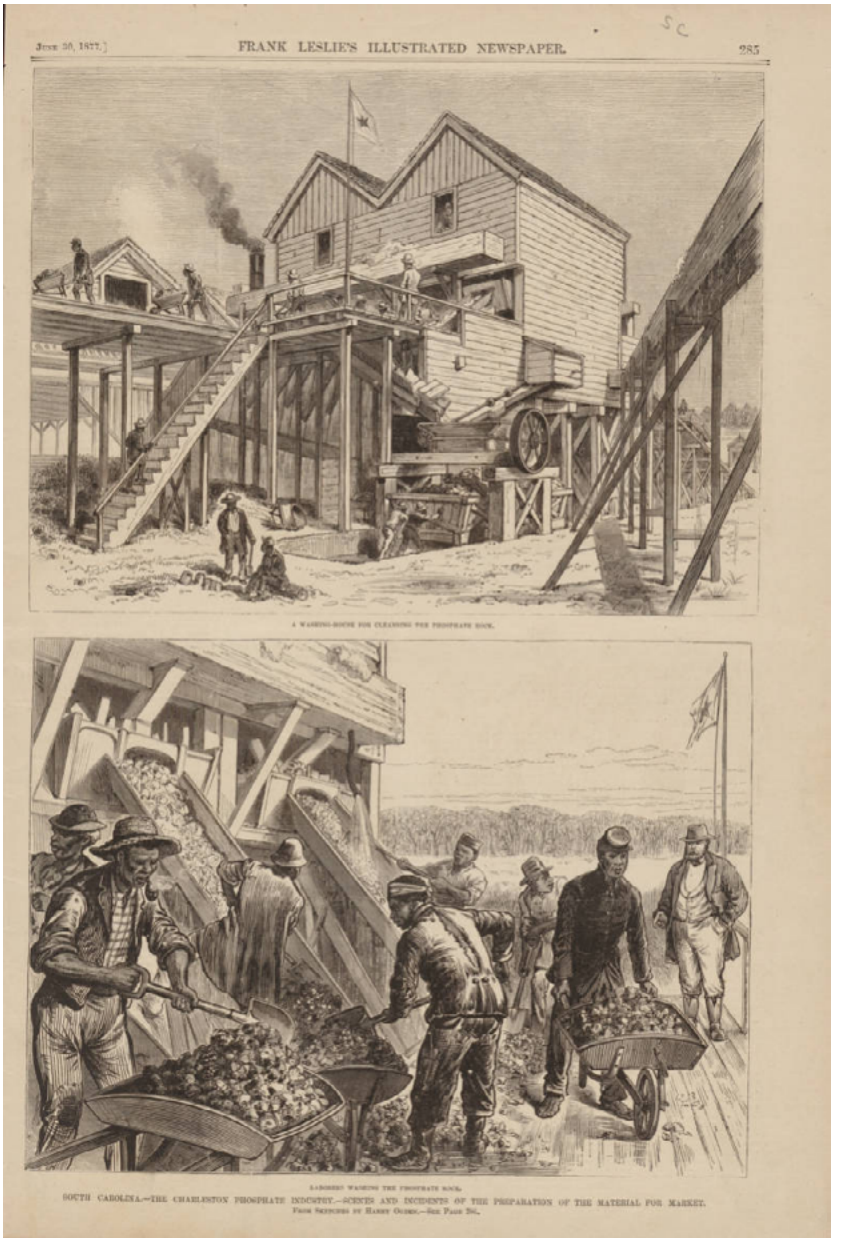

Figure 17. "South Carolina—The Charleston Phosphate Industry—Scenes and Incidents of the Preparation of the Material for Market," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* 44 (June 30, 1877), page 285. South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, University Libraries Digital Collections.

manufacturing, reproducing and intensifying patterns of harm to the Black communities around them.[75] In the Sea Islands, the 1868 discovery of deposits of phosphate-rich marl, a chalky, carbonate clay used to manufacture fertilizer, led to the opening of the country's first large-scale phosphate mines in Beaufort County.[76] By 1885, South Carolina produced half of the world's phosphate.[77] Hastily assembled corporations solicited Northern capital to buy or lease land from the district's planters, who themselves depended on fertilizers to sustain cotton production, which exhausted the soil more quickly than did almost any other commodity crop.[78] Industry boosters promised that phosphate would revitalize Southern agriculture.[79] And indeed, large-scale agriculture's need for fertilizer sources such as marl and guano drove imperial projects throughout the nineteenth century.[80]

Thus timber and turpentine had given way to indigo, indigo to cotton, and now cotton to phosphate. Almost all the workers in the phosphate mines and processing plants were Black, many of them born into enslavement or the descendants of slaves. The phosphate mines leased incarcerated people, most of whom were also Black, from the state penitentiary, a form of forced labor that has been termed "slavery by another name."[81] The mines were largely unmechanized, and phosphate processing exposed workers to a variety of toxins, in addition to radioactivity from uranium present in the marl.[82] When Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper carried an article on South Carolina phosphate mining in 1877—the year following the violent overthrow of the state's integrated Reconstruction government by white supremacists—the accompanying illustration depicted a Black laborer bent over a barrow of phosphate rock, wearing a Union forage cap and uniform jacket, as if to mock the war's broken promise of emancipation from such toil (*fig*. 17). Though the phosphate industry collapsed in the 1890s and the profitability of sea island cotton continued to decline throughout the late nineteenth century, the extractive land and labor relations that had subtended the region's plantations persisted.

The phosphate industry brought another wave of outsiders to the Sea Islands, long after most of the reformers, missionaries, and teachers of the Reconstruction era had departed. Conrad Munro Donner, a white engineer for the Pacific Guano Company, which opened phosphate mines and a processing plant on Chisolm Island, just north of Beaufort, made a series of photographs of the region between 1889 and 1895.[83] Unlike O'Sullivan, Donner was an amateur, his use of photography made possible by the rapid expansion of the photographic industry in the late nineteenth century. Among the engineer's many images of workers, families, and homes in the Sea Islands is a photograph of two men and a child seated on the steps of a house, taken, like the O'Sullivan photograph with which this article began, from a distance

Figure 18. Conrad Munro Donner, [*Cabin with African Americans Sitting on Steps*], ca. 1889-95. Photographic print, 7 x 8 ½ in. (17.9 x 21.8 cm). Phosphate, Farms & Family: The Donner Collection, Beaufort County Library. Digital image. © 2008, Beaufort County Library.

(*fig*. 18). Donner's photograph, made some thirty years later, is marked by the same uneasy combination of white gaze and Black subjects, of domesticity and instrusion, set in a landscape contoured by the afterlife of slavery. The shadows of photographer and camera at the bottom of the scene register the same preoccupation with seeing the condition of Black Southerners, with subjecting their everyday world to ocular inspection and visual documentation. The ground seems to swallow up much of the image: an expanse of sandy soil bearing the layered histories of plantation, homestead, mine, and factory, of cotton and chemicals. While O'Sullivan's photograph was made at a moment of historical possibility—a moment in which the new terms of social, political, and economic life after emancipation had not yet been firmly established—the later image suggests the persistence of racial capitalism and its attendant ways of seeing both land and people.

Conclusion

What would it mean to narrate history in the negative? To accord as much weight to those things that did not happen, as to those that did? Such an inquiry

would challenge many histories of the Reconstruction era, for it might lead us away from narratives of progress or failure to a more ambivalent consideration of abrogated freedoms, foreclosed futures, revolutions turned back, and apertures of possibility closed. In their visual indeterminacy, political ambivalence, and material complexity, O'Sullivan's photographs of the Sea Islands invite such a perspective. These images both document the dawn of freedom and reflect relations of power and visibility that endured past the end of slavery. And in a material sense, the cotton-derived chemical substrate of the negatives links the history of photography, the plantation, and its afterlives.

Notes

1. The erratic captioning practices of Civil War photographers and publishers mean that we do not know whether O'Sullivan, Mathew Brady, Alexander Gardner, or E. & H.T. Anthony titled this photograph. Based on the surviving information on the negative sleeve, this image may have been offered for sale to the public by Brady and Anthony in 1862 under the title "View on Mills' Plantation, Port Royal Island." However, in 1863, Gardner listed an O'Sullivan stereograph from this set for sale titled "Negro Quarters, Smith's Plantation, Port Royal Island, South Carolina," which seems to correspond more closely to the subject. The negative's Library of Congress title, "Port Royal, South Carolina. Slaves quarters," reflects this uncertainty about the precise location. See "Brady's Photographic Views of the War," in *Catalogue of Card Photographs Published and Sold by E. & H.T. Anthony, 501 Broadway* ([New York: E. & H.T. Anthony,] 1862), 13-14, and Alexander Gardner, *Catalogue of Photographic Incidents of the War, From the Gallery of Alexander Gardner, Photographer to the Army of the Potomac* (Washington, D.C.: H. Polkinhorn, 1863), 10.

2. A note on capitalization: in recent years, scholars have taken a variety of approaches to the capitalization of the terms black/Black and white/White. I have chosen here to capitalize Black, a term that acknowledges a group of people of diverse ethnic, cultural, and kinship backgrounds, many of whom were brought to the Americas through enslavement and other forms of racialized violence. I have left white uncapitalized. Blackness represents a shared culture, identity, and community in which many take pride. Whiteness, when mobilized in similar ways, risks underwriting white supremacist and white nationalist ideologies. However, this debate is ongoing in the field of art history and in public discourse more broadly.

3. The term "contraband of war" was first used to provide a legal justification for refusing to return enslaved people to their former owners by General Benjamin F. Butler, when these self-emancipating people began crossing to Union lines at Fort Monroe, Virginia, in 1861. As Kate Masur has noted, "contraband" followed enslavement's principles in treating people as property—here, property that could be confiscated and put to use in the Union war effort—but such a designation constituted the first tentative step toward emancipation. See Masur, "'A Rare Phenomenon of Philological Vegetation': The Word 'Contraband' and the Meanings of Emancipation in the United States," *Journal of American History* 93, no. 4 (March 2007): 1050-84.

4. J.W. Alvord, *Letters from the South, Relating to the Condition of Freedmen, Addressed to Major General O.O. Howard* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1870), 8. The Freedmen's Bureau was the federal agency charged with providing food, clothing, medical care, schools, and other necessities to the formerly enslaved.

5. Library of Congress, "Civil War Glass Negatives and Related Prints," https://www.loc.gov/collections/civil-war-glass-negatives/about-this-collection/.

6. Ibid.

7. Geoffrey Batchen, *Negative/Positive* (London: Routledge, 2020), 3.

8. Tina M. Campt, *Image Matters: Archive, Photography, and the African Diaspora in Europe* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 122.

9. Batchen, *Negative/Positive*, 3.

10. Campt, *Image Matters*, 127.

11. Jennifer Raab, *Relics of War: The History of a Photograph* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2024).

12. Oliver Wendell Holmes, "The Stereoscope and the Stereograph," *The Atlantic* (June 1859), https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1859/06/the-stereoscope-and-the-stereograph/303361/.

13. On Holmes, race, and the negative, see Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby, "Negative-Positive Truths," *Representations* 113, no. 1 (Winter 2011): 16-38.

14. *Catalogue of Card Photographs Published and Sold by E. & H.T. Anthony*, 13-14, and Gardner, *Catalogue of Photographic Incidents of the War*, 10. The "Sherman" in Gardner's catalogue refers to Union General T.W. Sherman, not the better known General William Tecumseh Sherman.

15. For an analysis of the Moore photographs, see Dana E. Byrd, with Tyler DeAngelis, "Tracing Transformations: Hilton Head Island's Journey to Freedom, 1860-1865," *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 14, no. 3 (Autumn 2015): https://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/autumn15/byrd-hilton-head-island-journey-to-freedom-1860-1865.

16. Nicholas Mirzoeff, "The Subject of Visual Culture," in *The Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Mirzoeff, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2001), 10.

17. Ibid. Mirzoeff elsewhere describes the surveillance exercised on the plantation as the foundational exercise of "visuality," or the assumption of the "exclusive claim to be able to look." Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 2.

18. Ilisa Barbash, Molly Rogers, and Deborah Willis, eds., *To Make Their Own Way in the World: The Enduring Legacy of the Zealy Daguerreotypes* (Cambridge, MA: Peabody Museum Press, and New York: Aperture, 2020), and Brian Wallis, "Black Bodies, White Science: Louis Agassiz's Slave Daguerreotypes," *American Art* 9, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 38-61.

19. Photography's evidentiary capacities were also cited as the key to its potentially anti-racist politics, most famously by Frederick Douglass in his 1861 "Lecture on Pictures" in Boston's Tremont Temple. See Maurice O. Wallace and Shawn Michelle Smith, eds., *Pictures and Progress: Early Photography and the Making of African American Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

20. Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*, rev. ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2022), 205-6.

21. Jasmine Nichole Cobb has described slavery itself as an "ocular" institution. See Cobb, "A Peculiarly 'Ocular' Institution," in *Picture Freedom: Remaking Black Visuality in the Early Nineteenth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 28-65.

22. Alvord, *Letters from the South*, 14.

23. John Michael Vlach, *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 155. For analysis of the specific organization of the Sea Island plantation, see Byrd, with DeAngelis, "Tracing Transformations."

24. Laura M. Towne, *Letters and Diary of Laura M. Towne, Written from the Sea Islands of South Carolina*, 1862-1884, ed. Rupert Sargent Holland (Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1912), 5.

25. Vlach, *Back of the Big House*, 160.

26. Byrd, with DeAngelis, "Tracing Transformations."

27. Stephanie McCurry, *Women's War: Fighting and Surviving the American Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019), 85.

28. For the distinction between portrait and type, see Brian Wallis, "Black Bodies, White Science: Louis Agassiz's Slave Daguerreotypes," *American Art* 9, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 38-61.

29. Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 18.

30. Sarah Parsons, "Domesticating Jefferson Davis: Family Photography and Postwar Confederate Visual Culture," *American Art* 37, no. 1 (Spring 2023): 82-105; Shawn Michelle Smith, "'Baby's Picture is Always Treasured': Eugenics and the Reproduction of Whiteness in the Family Photograph Album," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 11, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 197–220; Laura Wexler, *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); and Deborah Willis, ed., *Picturing Us: African American Identity in Photography* (New York: New Press, 1994).

31. Wexler, *Tender Violence*, 6.

32. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 215.

33. Kirsten Pai Buick, *Child of the Fire: Mary Edmonia Lewis and the Problem of Art History's Black and Indian Subject* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 55. See also Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), Tera W. Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors After the Civil War (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), and Martha S. Jones, All Bound Up Together: The Woman Question in African American Public Culture, 1830-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

34. McCurry, *Women's War*, 118.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.

37. Amy Dru Stanley, "Instead of Waiting for the Thirteenth Amendment: The War Power, Slave Marriage, and Inviolate Human Rights," *American Historical Review* 115, no. 3 (June 2010): 760.

38. *The War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, series I, volume VI, no. 6 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1899), 128.

39. *Catalogue of Card Photographs Published and Sold by E. & H.T. Anthony*, 13-14, and Gardner, *Catalogue of Photographic Incidents of the War*, 10.

40. Sarah Elizabeth Lewis, "The Arena of Suspension: Carrie Mae Weems, Bryan Stevenson, and the 'Ground' in the Stand Your Ground Law Era," *Law & Literature* 33, no. 3 (2021): 487-518, and Lewis, "Groundwork: Race and Aesthetics in the Era of Stand Your Ground Law," *Art Journal* 79, no. 4 (October 2020): 92-113.

41. Lewis, "The Arena of Suspension," 488.

42. Leslie A. Schwalm, E*mancipation's Diaspora: Race and Reconstruction in the Upper Midwest* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 1.

43. Byrd, with DeAngelis, "Tracing Transformations."

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An Elephant in the Ruin: Coloniality and Masculinity in the Postwar Painting of Karl Schmidt-Rottluff

by Tobias Rosen

Introduction

The painting *Spielzeug* (Toys) depicts two toy elephants and two toy calves ordered head-to-toe in a line (*fig.* 1). A meandering stream of orange below the animals endows the static picture with a sense of motion. If the figurines were to become animate, a much longer procession would pass across the picture's tightly cropped frame. With brush and oil paint, the elderly artist returned to a popular childhood pastime: Noah's Ark. In this imaginative game of make-believe, a pair of all species on earth line up to board a cavernous ship, where they will be protected from the impending great deluge.

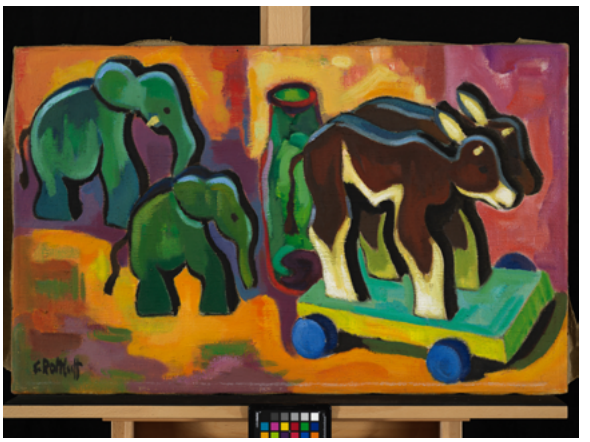

Figure 1. Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, *Spielzeug* [Toys], 1947, oil on canvas, 55 × 87,9 cm. Brücke-Museum, Photo: Nick Ash, Berlin.

The German expressionist Karl Schmidt-Rottluff (1884-1974) painted *Spielzeug* in 1947, just two years after World War II (WWII). In the same year, Schmidt-Rottluff produced fifteen other oil paintings, a medium barely practiced since the 1930s. The painter's yearning for childhood, a period of life experienced by the artist during the German colonial empire (1884-1914), coincided with the end of his wartime artistic hiatus and renewed creative tenacity. The central question of this essay is what politics, morality, and understandings of the subject, specifically, of boyhood and manhood, are recuperated for this pivotal historical moment by the artist's nostalgia for innocence and play?

Schmidt-Rottluff's postwar paintings have received scant art historical attention compared to artwork from his youth when the artist group Die Brücke (1905-1913) was still active, the movement for which Schmidt-Rottluff is known.

Rather than sideline works from his late oeuvre as superfluous iterations of old artistic formulas, this essay argues that his works from the immediate postwar period regenerated anachronistic colonial values. Through comparison with his contemporaries, I will show how Schmidt-Rottluff's personal rediscovery participated in a larger resurgence of colonial ambitions in postwar German society. By examining German colonialism within an expanded temporality, this paper implicitly rallies against two common mistaken assumptions: that the historical significance of German colonialism and the German colonial imaginary are restricted to the period before World War I (pre-1914) and their impact is less severe than those of the British and French empires.[1]

Schmidt-Rottluff's fame dates to his student years at the Dresden University of Technology (1905-7), where he studied with Erich Haeckel, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, and Fritz Bleyl, other founders of Die Brücke. Inspired by the boisterous spirit of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), especially his philosophical novel *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883), the four students channeled the revolutionary energy of youth, seeking spiritual rejuvenation and rejecting what they saw as a moral contemptuous and stultified society. They also sought to break free of tedious academic conventions and schooling. Traditionally, Die Brücke is known for intense colors, the distortion and exaggeration of figures, and experimentation across mediums. Many of the artists also pursued the complete integration of art and life, transforming their living quarters into loud bohemian interiors. The movement is remembered today, alongside Der Blaue Reiter, as one of the main progenitors of German Expressionism.[2]

However, this so-called renewal relied on primitivism, a reactionary impulse towards people subject to colonial rule outside of Europe.[3] Primitivism denied the coevalness of indigenous society, projecting its material culture into the past, while simultaneously romanticizing it as uninhibited, expressive, and formally innovative. In 2021-2, following many decades of academic reckoning with the movement's unsettling ambivalence, the Brücke-Museum in Berlin assembled the exhibition *Whose Expression? The Brücke Artists and Colonialism* in 2021-2 to further interrogate questions of cultural appropriation and the movement's entanglement in the colonial apparatus of power.[4] This important exhibition participated in recent efforts to decolonize Germany's ethnographic museums, which has involved the restitution of the Benin Bronzes, the repatriation of human remains, and significant institutional rebranding. The show investigated how Die Brücke artists directly and indirectly benefited from the German empire. It recounted visits of the artists to ethnographic museums, so-called "human zoos," and their travels to German colonies. The exhibition pointed out explicit instances of formal appropriation from looted objects, while also critiquing those of

dehumanization and eroticization. Although not immediately obvious in the exhibition itself, this critique has been mounted by a long cast of critical dissenters. The Marxist critic György Lukács (1885-1971), for instance, took issue with the movement in the 1930s.[5] In 1968, the German-born art historian L. D. Ettlinger (1913-1989) further researched the specific visits of Die Brücke artists to ethnographic museums, unpacking links between primitivism and Nazi race ideology.[6] In the 1990s, modernist art historian Jill Lloyd (1955-) elaborated this research by tracing Die Brücke artworks to specific objects from various parts of the colonial empire.[7] Die Brücke has counted – perhaps since the movement's inception – as one of modernism's most questionable chapters.

These previous studies all critiqued the complicity of Die Brücke with German colonialism during the lifetime of both entities, focusing on history predating World War I. Extending these trans-generational critiques of Die Brücke, this essay focuses on Schmidt-Rottluff's late oeuvre, which presents the opportunity to understand how postwar German society juggled two horrifying legacies, colonialism and Nazism. I argue that Schmidt-Rottluff's paintings and the household objects depicted within them became the resting ground for latent colonial ideology, which became reactivated in German international environmental policy of the 1960s.

In the first section, I contrast *Spielzeug* with fragments from *Minima Moralia: Reflections from a Damaged Life* (1951), an unrelenting, pulverized account of the end of European morality by the German critical theorist Theodor W. Adorno (1903-1969). The comparison shows how the destruction wrought WWII gave rise to widely divergent opinions about rejuvenation, colonialism, and collecting. In contrast, section two discusses the similarity between Schmidt-Rottluff and a different contemporary, Bernhard Grzimek (1909-1987), the longtime director of the Frankfurt Zoo. Grzimek's experience of rebuilding the bombed-out facility heralded his conservation work in Africa decades later. Moving from the collection of living animals to objects, section three contextualizes Schmidt-Rottluff's habit of lining up his collections within a genealogy of such practices at ethnographic museums dating to the German colonial era. The fourth section of this essay analyzes the immediate postwar reception of Schmidt-Rottluff. Critics habitually returned to the artist's strength and imposing physical presence, despite his art being conspicuously small and intimate. After the war, there was a need to salvage a piece of German cultural heritage, one that wasn't complicit with National Socialism, but also not completely humiliated and emasculated by defeat. Schmidt-Rottluff's considerable size made him a convenient target for attributions of endurance and integrity, the alleged qualities needed to rebound from the depletion of the past.

I. Two Different Views of Catastrophe: *Minima Moralia* and *Spielzeug*

Chemnitz, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff's birthplace, is a medium-sized town in Saxony located along one of the main trading axes for wooden toys, ornaments, and decorations produced in the region's Iron Mountains. Until the Great Depression, Noah's Ark sets were among the most popular and widely exported goods (*fig.* 2).[8] Although toy historians agree the popularity of Noah's Ark toy sets peaked in the 19th century, they were still widely available in Germany after 1945. Many of these sets were produced in a cluster of small mountain villages, just southeast of Chemnitz, before traveling to Nuremberg for international

Figure 2. Illustration from Dr. Heinrich Hoffmann, *King Nutcracker or The Dream of Poor Reinhold* (Leipzig: Friedrich Volckmar, 1846). Public Domain, Metropolitan Museum of Art. In a black-and-white reproduction of the image from 1965, the poem is replaced by the sentence, "We can often penetrate into the past more easily through the small things than through the great ones."

distribution. Unlike so many other African masks or ritual objects in Schmidt-Rottluff's paintings, the specific toys depicted do not belong to the Karl and Emy Schmidt-Rottluff Foundation today. Perhaps they were omitted from the collection precisely because they seem unexotic and ordinary.[9]

Before painting *Spielzeug* in 1947, Schmidtt-Rottluff lived between 1943 and 1946 in his childhood home, a respite from constant aerial bombardment in the city. Back in the province, Schmidt-Rottluff gained renewed intimacy with his past, encountering former habits, feelings, and memories. Instead of devoting his time to teaching and making art, he tended the garden just like his father before him who was a miller. After the war's end, he eventually returned to the city, obtaining a professorship in 1946 at the *Hochschule für Bildende Kunst* in Berlin. Nonetheless, Schmidt-Rottluff called on objects retaining the aura of his childhood and the cottage industry of the mountains to reinvigorate his career. The age-old biblical story of Noah, proffering a new beginning after catastrophe, became an allegory repairing his artistic practice and the larger restoration of German society.

While some may be sympathetic to this hopeful message, I caution that use of the biblical story at this juncture reactivated ideologies of German colonialism. Other people who witnessed the war's horrors, renounced regeneration once and for all. Theodor W. Adorno's fragment "Mammoth" from *Minima Moralia* contains a sharply contrasting, staggeringly pessimistic argument about Noah's Ark.[10] For Adorno, humanity was blind to own wrongdoings and evils, but nonetheless had a deeply troubled conscious, seeking redemption on a subconscious level. Modern sensations and fantastical characters served the crucial function of reconciliation. Adorno points to the examples of King Kong, who takes revenge on a metropolis, or the discovery of a new Woolly Mammoth fossil that vastly upsets the previous date of the specie's extinction, as evidence of a widespread desire for nature to survive the negative effects of civilization, such as environmental destruction, the systematization of death, and the totalitarian state. These modern sensations, just like the zoo, go back, according to Adorno, to the Judeo-Christian story of Noah's Ark, which promises that after the earth is washed of sin, the next generation will be able to live with all the same animals, even more peacefully than before.

Referring to animals on the Ark, as well as those captive in zoos, Adorno writes, "[t]hey are allegories that the specimen or the pair defy the disaster that befalls the species *qua* species."[11] The peculiar wording of this sentence echoes an ambiguity in *Spielzeug*, which might otherwise clash with the common understandings of Noah's Ark. In contrast to the elephants, who clearly resolve into two distinct animals and are even gendered male and female by the respective presence and absence of tusks, the two nearly identical calf

bodies might be the left and right profiles of a single animal.[12] Despite how a heteronormative world view may lead to the belief that binary gendered pairs from every species boarded the ship, there is little scholarly consensus about the actual number of animals specified in the Torah.[13] Adorno's ease in sliding from "the specimen" to "the pair" shows that the story's function is not dependent on the exact number of animals. Rather, the story's lesson introduces the miraculous possibilities of metonymic substitution, a fundamental logic of thinking and communication.[14] The few creatures selected for Noah's Ark ensure the survival of a whole species, typically comprised of innumerable individuals. Playing with the toy animals, which entails preconceptual thought processes of scaling something unfathomably large down to something small and manipulable, as well as rescaling it to something large again, develops the child's use of metonymy. For Schmidt-Rottluff, the process entailed regenerating his adult life and artistic practice from isolated fragments of childhood.

Both *Minima Moralia* and *Spielzeug* were made between 1944 and 1947. Each is a stance on the possibility or impossibility of upholding old values in the postwar era.[15] Similar to how aerial bombing reduced countless buildings to rubble, both works operate in piecemeal. While *Minima Moralia* is composed of 153 self-sufficient thoughts without the sinews of a larger argument, Schmidt-Rottluff focuses on a fragment of a much longer procession. When compared with toys, Adorno's aphorisms possibly begin to look like cute quips for children, rather than weighty ruminations. Adorno's resolute negativity, though, throws Schmidt-Rottluff's peculiar optimism into sharp relief. In the next section, I will discuss at length the moment when Schmidt-Rottluff found artwork and collections in his old cellar, all of which he thought had perished in the war. The survival of these objects raised the possibility of amassing new 'exotic' things from distant places.[16] Adorno, by contrast, believed that collecting and preservation after the war would only assure the bankruptcy of European morality:

> Only in the irrationality of civilization itself, in the nooks and crannies of the cities, to which the walls, towers and bastions of the zoos wedged among them are merely an addition, can nature be conserved. The rationality of culture, in opening its doors to nature, thereby completely absorbs it, and eliminates with difference the principle of culture, the possibility of reconciliation.[17]

Adorno pushes the reader towards the wild, uncontrolled forces abounding within the very structures (including physical ones, like border walls or cages, and abstract ones, such as laws and moral lessons) designed to enclose the

supposed fragments of imported nature and culture. To continue extracting and collecting the nature 'out there,' that is beyond society, forestalls reckoning with society's own breakdown inherent to the Second World War. Instead, Adorno urges reflection on the forces of containment and the violence splintering the task. His negativity pushes one to consider the unrealized potential of rebuilding European society after WWII without the structures of domination that simultaneously project nature beyond civilization and sequester the former within the latter's bounds. Schmidt-Rottluff neither shares Adorno's despair nor his radical vision of a future without containment. Rather, fragments are supposed to remultiply Schmidt-Rottluff's old collection, like a pair of animals, the species after the flood.

II. War Rubble, Imperial Ruins, and Colonial Returns

In 1943, Karl and Emy Schmidt-Rottluff's apartment in Berlin was flattened by an allied bombing raid. They fled to Chemnitz, where they found relative calm, before Karl Schmidt-Rottluff's family home was plundered by the Red Army in 1945. When they returned to Berlin in 1946, they believed their former belongings stored in the basement had perished or were stolen in the intervening period.[18] Given the circumstances, it must have been a great relief to find everything beneath the rubble. Karl writes to his brother Kurt about the unbelievable discovery:

> Rugs, blankets and painting canvases, strangely all there—Marie defended the basement like a lioness. Several kitchen dishes that M. saved have turned up—even the vacuum cleaner—only the cable burned…The watercolors were also there, even though some have mold on them, which can however be removed. Paintings are also partly moldy…3 wooden sculptures survived and were not burned for heating and some exotic things. One Samoan shell unfortunately broke—I will send it to you, maybe you can try to glue it, if you have time—it is an old piece.[19]

Even though still vulnerable to mold damage, collectibles were protected underground from the greater catastrophe unfolding above the surface, just like goods in the damp hull of a ship. The vacuum cleaner and Samoan shell—a difficult item to preserve whole—are arresting details of a domestic setting recently lost. Tropical objects in the Wunderkammer were supposed to sparkle, dust-free. In the same letter, we learn that a stray shard from this primordial atmosphere had become the chassis for the calf in *Spielzeug*. "[T]he rock slab

is *Solnhofer* [a type of limestone from the eponymous town in Bavaria]—and picked up here out of the rubble—I used it as a base for the *Kälbchen* [small calf]—it stands very nicely on it."[20] Beginning with this act of mending, we can recount Schmidt-Rottluff's engagement with the calf: first he picked up the lamed animal and positioned it upright on a shard of some lost tile.[21] Later, he wrote to his brother to tell the tale, and shortly thereafter, he made an oil painting of the calf. Finally, in December 1948 he painted the calf again as a watercolor Christmas card for Kurt (*fig.* 3).

The sculptures that were not burned are the well-known works *Blauroter Kopf*, *Grünroter Kopf*, and *Trauernder*.[22] While Schmidt-Rottluff carved the wooden faces himself, he based their form on masks and objects from the East Zaire and the Belgian Congo.[23] The shells are from Micronesia, where the German colonial empire ruled several islands. Observing that the presence of these objects in WWII rubble depended on colonial extraction and imperial trade networks earlier in the century suddenly changes the tenor of Schmidt-Rottluff's rediscovery. Like countless collecting expeditions in the 19th century, the scene is charged with the excitement of obtaining riches and encountering the other. Considering this, Schmidt-Rottluff's simile for Marie's fierceness, how she "defended the basement like a lioness," becomes more conspicuous. The elephant toys in *Spielzeug* are not just innocent childhood symbols, they must be seen as widespread signifiers of the colonial empire. Their seeming normality and everydayness, how the toys become a German pastime, results from the widespread diffusion of the colonial imagination and fantasies of the exotic.

Figure 3. Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, *Stillleben mit Kälbchen* [Still Life with Young Calf], 1948, watercolor and ink (brush) on paper, 37,4 x 50,3 cm. Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz, Leihgabe aus Privatbesitz Inv.-Nr. DL-KS/R-11.

Some readers might object that attention on such small objects sidelines more urgent concerns of postwar reconstruction. However, the toys are an opportunity to test hypotheses of historical continuity, whereas routine attention on the destruction and rubble (a focus of popular media and cinema: *Germany, Year Zero* [1948]) stresses a narrative of rupture and new beginnings.[24] Against the narrative of the so-called 'Stunde Null,' (hour zero), historians now recognize that postwar culture anchored on the Weimar era. In terms of artistic authority, Meike Hoffman writes, "from May 1945, no break, no new beginning, no 'Stunde Null,' rather continuity since, at the latest the 1920s."[25] Schmidt-Rottluff and Max Pechstein's postwar professorships in Berlin belonged to the initiative to rehabilitate the reputation of older artistic movements. Did re-institutionalization also rekindle primitivist fantasies?[26]

My focus on the toys, rather than the destroyed urban fabric, follows from Ann Laura Stoler's discussion of "imperial ruins," which are racialized representations and ongoing forms of subjugation that persist in zones of former colonial rulership.[27] She defines the concept in explicit contrast to W. G. Sebald's nightmarish descriptions of German cities at the end of WWII.[28] "Here we are not talking about an event of bombardment and the fast-acting decomposition that follows. The ruins of the empire may have none of the immediacy of a freeze frame."[29] To consider the imperial ruin amidst the smoldering rubble of the war is an attempt to locate the continuity of colonialist ideology in the very instant in which it was supposedly severed.[30] While it may be true that Germany's division and occupation after the war meant that immediate postwar politics focused more on local affairs, the exaggeration of destruction, rupture, and victimhood produces a false sense of severance in the larger historical picture, between the German colonial empire and postwar West Germany of the 1950s and 1960s. The break enabled postwar political actors to posture as "neutral defenders" of nature in debates about habitat conservation in former African colonies.[31]

To better understand the politics of postwar conservation, it is instructive to revisit the dynamics between nature and colonial society at the turn of the 20th century. In German East Africa, the imposition of hunting permits and a new system of ivory taxes became pretexts to strip local populations of landholding rights and disrupt long-standing networks of political authority.[32] As the ivory trade dwindled during the first decade of the twentieth century, vociferous debates about whether German East Africa was "a colony or a zoo" divided the white ruling class into opposing factions: settlers wanted to extinguish wild animals to make space for crops and livestock, whereas foreign nationals (of largely noble descent) demanded land conservation for scientific study and safari hunting.[33] In this context, the animals in *Spielzeug* cannot

Figure 4. Bernhard Grzimek and his son Michael repair the zebra-painted airplane in the Serengeti. Still from *Serengeti Shall Not Die* (1959).

simply be considered amicable companions, belonging together on the ark. German colonialists would have seen their relationship as one of mutual threat.

Cows were seen by conservationists to disturb so-called natural habitats, while elephants were feared by farmers because they spread sickness to livestock and trampled crops.[34] The end of German colonial rule in Africa put a preliminary end to this conflict between wild and domestic animals, dubious categories in themselves. It was reanimated, though, in the late 1950s when controversy arose over the enlargement of Serengeti National Park. The part of Serengeti already under ecological protection had been sequestered by the German colonial government before WWI. In the postwar era, German conservationists lobbied to expand the park's border to encompass the entire trajectory of the great migration of zebras, wildebeests, and gazelles. This led to further limitations of pasturelands for the Masai, which had been curtailed half a century before.

When Bernhard Grzimek, the main German proponent of conservation in the Serengeti, set off to Tanganyika to save the animals from the encroachments of civilization, he reinstalled the same opposition between nature and culture that had been brought there by the German colonial elite generations before him (*fig.* 4).[35] Grzimek's confidence to determine what was best for Africa—an anachronistic assumption of colonial power—came from his success in regenerating the Frankfurt Zoo's animal collection immediately after the war:[36]

> The gradual recovery of animal populations in Frankfurt and other zoological gardens symbolized not just municipal reconstruction, but also the possibilities for redemption after the destruction of so much human life in a senseless war. Grzimek's faith in nature's unique regenerative capacity, which was forged in these troubled postwar years and then globalized as he began collecting expeditions to Africa would soon lead the zookeeper to fashion himself as a second Noah, leading the animals to safety among the rising tide of humanity.[37]

While the toys in *Spielzeug* do not explicitly represent the wild and domestic animals in Tanganyika, Bernhard Grzimek's journey from the Frankfurt Zoo to the Serengeti parallels the growth of Schmidt-Rottluff's collection in the postwar era. Initially starting with just a few exotic objects in the rubble, like the odd surviving monkey or snake in Berlin's Zoo, the collection grew rapidly to a considerable size, housed today at the Brücke-Museum.[38]

This section raises the questions: what did objects with inconspicuous colonial heritages, like toy elephants or seashells, smuggle into the home at a time when Germany was supposedly no longer a major colonial power?[39] What perceptions do these objects help cultivate of nature in faraway places? Reflecting on primitivism as a widespread cultural practice in the 1920s, the German art historian Charlotte Klonk observes that European collectors and artists brought non-European objects and animals into the home as sources of "spiritual and emotional...renewal" within their private lives.[40] In addition to spiritual renewal, I argue that inconspicuous exotic objects disseminated a view of nature as something external from culture and society, but also, crucially, manageable from a distance. This is a colonial relationship to ecology exceeding the timeframe of historical colonialism. The elephants and calves in *Spielzeug* are not simply toys, but vestiges of imperial ruins. They stored earlier colonial outlooks on nature, making them available for redeployment in global environmental politics of postwar Germany.

III. Collecting, Organizing, and Researching at the Ethnographic Museum

For Schmidt-Rottluff, tidying-up was a means of mourning, processing, and moving on. In this section, I turn away from disorder resulting from warfare to investigate how clutter was a deliberate relation of force imposed upon natural and cultural objects stolen from the colonies. Until the curatorial strategy of Berlin's Royal Museum for Ethnology was changed in 1926, the collection was presented in teeming masses irrespective of individual objects. More than learning about the use value or artistic merits of any given thing, visitors to the museum were baffled by an overwhelming sense of copiousness.[41] In *Berliner Museumskrieg,* a polemic case made in favor of the museum's reorganization, Karl Scheffler describes the dizzying atmosphere:

> It could not be less overseeable, more like a stockroom and stuffier in the largest toy warehouses, in the most colorful antique shops, in the tightly filled vitrines of food stuffs. Enormous riches, things worth millions, expensive rarities are lined up next to and behind, over and under one another such that

> one almost begins to hate them. One cannot see any single object, the ruling throng is so extreme that only experts do not lose composure. Many objects are in hundreds there...according to a plan, but actually thrown carelessly amongst each other, one sees instruments of sacrifice, maps, casts from reliefs (up to a hundred meters long), dolls, musical instruments, Fayence ware and tiles, picture books, children's toys…[42]

The list extends quite a bit farther, but this second mention of toys makes the similarities with Schmidt-Rottluff's bombed-out cellar vivid enough. Colonial objects and European crafts sloshed around in the belly of the Völkerkunde Museum, as if being tossed by surges of the great flood. However, neglect or insufficient space for storage were not responsible for the disorder.[43] Chaos was the primary step in the scientific method dominant at the time, the *komparitv-genetischen Methode*, in which objects of all different kinds, shapes, and uses, arriving from many different geographic regions of the world, were scrambled together to reveal novel similarities. These observations would then form the basis of longer inquiries. Since scholars have been unable to find a methodical, step-by-step account of the technique by its creator Adolf Bastian, historian of ethnography Sigrid Westphal-Hellbusch turns to Albert Voß, the first director of the Ethnographic Museum's prehistoric department, for a sketch of the process:[44]

> The appearances to be researched will be lined up amongst similar ones next to those that show the most relatedness. Won in this way, the lines of related appearances will then be grouped according to the degree of their relatedness and then compared again, in order to see if, and to what extent, they shared a place of origin, which influences were responsible for their differences and if one row possibly developed out of another...The more often these observations are made and the more all-encompassing and extensive the material for comparison becomes, the more conclusions it is that can be drawn out of the material. And the more frequent the same observations become, the safer it is to assume that they are correct.[45]

The *komparativ-genetischen Methode*, along with the complimentary curatorial strategy, has long lost popularity. After the Museum War, ethnographic museums around the world began to succinctly place singular objects in larger compositions of historical, geographic, and cultural unity. Individual works were then regarded for their unique qualities, no longer meant to stand-in metonymically as "mere evidence" of a much larger class of similar objects.[46] Nonetheless, mixing widely variant things together, observing their similarities and lining them up, shuffling the results, only to line them up again, is a cultural habit that remains deeply

ingrained beyond the museum. Children at play often sort and line up animal toys. As any child caretaker knows well, chaos erupts spontaneously throughout the game. With this oscillation between order and disorder in mind, we can think of the *komparativ-genetischen Methode* as the grown-up counterpart to child's play. Schmidt-Rottluff participated in this long tradition of ordering chaos when he painted the calves, a green vase and two elephants in tow, and again, when he rotated the calves 180º and painted them again in the watercolor. This mode of tactile modeling is signature of his postwar oeuvre, where he repeatedly painted the same objects in different orders and new combinations.

While the creation of disorder was an intentional step of the *komparativ-genetischen Methode*, one should not assume that the process was overseen by collected and detached judgment. Regardless of whether objects were stolen, purchased, or received under questionable gift-giving circumstances, acquisition had to be rapid, according to the Völkerkunde Museum's founder, Adolf Bastian.[47] For him, rapid collection kept up with the ever-accelerating destruction of cultural heritage:

> A time, like ours, in which countless roots are destroyed with crude hands and the surface of the earth flows in all directions, owes it to the next generation, to save as much as possible from that which is leftover from the period of humanity's childhood and youth for the understanding of the development of humanity's spirit.[48]

Here, the founding principle of the ethnographic collection approaches the motive for building the Ark, only the apocalypse being prepared for was already unfolding. The fervent pace of collecting was not only driven by unbounded curiosity and the progress of scientific knowledge, it was also accelerated by panic about the loss of childhood. Brücke artists who visited the ethnographic museums throughout Germany were fascinated by the collected objects and recreated their forms in their own artistic work. In addition to pointing out that this was a form of appropriation, I argue that Brücke fulfilled a resuscitative role: it was a way of reinvesting the youth, supposedly stored in ethnographic museums, into aged, habituated, and stifling modes of social relatedness.

In addition to the primitivism directed towards indigenous societies living outside Europe, a second type of primitivism focused on the European child.[49] It gained strength in turn-of-the-century Vienna, where Sigmund Freud's theories of psychoanalysis inspired the artistic climate.[50] Through the production of their own toys, artists sought to access "the dark recesses of beginnings from which something like a proto-culture arises."[51] Marie von Uchatius, for instance, even produced her own Noah's Ark set. Ultimately, their goal was to cure modern

psychological ailments in adults by reconnecting with childhood. *Spielzeug* is a rare case in which the first form of primitivism teeters towards the second. Symmetrical to Bastian, who tasked himself with the responsibility of saving childhood from the destruction of modernity, Schmidt-Rottluff turned to the child to save man from the destruction of WWII. The toys conjured up a nature unplagued by old habits and trauma.

IV. Soft Masc after WWII

Schmidt-Rottluff wasn't known for being childish. Rather, he was often described as large, manly, laconic, and discerning. The mixture of qualities yielded an air of mystery, which, depending on whom he encountered, was inspiring or intimidating. In this respect, he took after the midcentury "strong, silent" archetype, exemplified by Ernest Hemingway's protagonists or those of Max Frisch.[52] At the end of this section, I will challenge this image of Schmidt-Rottluff, arguing that slightness and reticence are blind spots in his traditional masculine reception.

Commentators often understood the tectonic and precise quality of Schmidt-Rottluff's work to stem directly from his physical strength and silence respectively. Erika von Hornstein, who studied under Schmidt-Rottluff both before and after WWII, demonstrates this conflation of affect and composition in her earliest recollection of the artist:

> He wore his mustard-colored beret deep over his brow and seemed to me large and powerful in his dark coat. His short-shaven mustache, his horn-rimmed glasses, his Slavic-shaped face with those high cheekbones—everything made me uneasy.
>
> Even though his apartment was in the next neighborhood, he seemed to come far out of the distance. After his entry, the atmosphere in the studio quickly changed. A short round of greetings to all those who stood quietly by their easels. Schmidt-Rottluff went to the next closest student, gave him his hand, positioned himself in front of the image and looked. A while of nothing other than keeping silent and looking. At the same time, I saw how he rubbed both his thumbs against his other fingers and then raised his hands and built the composition by stroking his woven-together fingers through the air like a thick brush on canvas. What the teacher had to say was thereby said; even if words did follow, short and exact like the gestures.[53]

A photograph from 1962, found in the collection of Museum Wiesbaden, confirms that tensile strength and concentration were still central to the artist's identity after the war.[54] He hunches his shoulders, his brow, and focuses his attention. Due to the slight compression of his back and neck, the shot has the semblance of action—perhaps, the decisive pedagogical moment described by von Hornstein—but it is unmistakably highly staged. There are clear signs of careful preparation: his hair is neatly combed, his beard is freshly trimmed, and his shirt is tucked in. Suspense is built by how the camera peaks out coyly from behind the curtain, just like the cufflink from behind his sleeve. Formidable presence depends on self-presentation and how the image is framed, not just physical size.

Schmidt-Rottluff reentered public life after the war upon exhibiting fifty watercolors at the Schlossberg-Museum in Chemnitz (1946).[55] It was his first show since his *Berufsverbot* [career prohibition] in 1942. The landscapes and still lifes, published in the exhibition catalogue *Aquarelle aus den Jahren 1943-1946,* give us an idea of how he spent the intervening years. There were many landscapes from the areas around his parents' house, including the woods, mountains, and snow, as well as countless vegetables grown by Schmidt-Rottluff (*fig.* 5).[56] The countryside attests to the artist's isolation, and the need to garden testifies to wartime food shortages. Gardening was an important means of supplementing meager rations.[57]

Adolf Behne, who had criticized Die Brücke in the 1920s,[58] but fought to rehabilitate the old avant-garde after WWII,[59] praised Schmidt-Rottluff's manliness in the catalog. "What has captivated me for almost 40 years about Schmidt-Rottluff's art, is its pure elemental draw to largeness/greatness, its inner most manly pride that hates everything small and small-minded, its human nobility that can only regard the truthful, the whole."[60] The heroic description would be better suited to a soldier in conflict rather than to a cultivator of root vegetables finding respite at his agrarian residence. Behne's choice of the words *pure* and *manly pride* infelicitously echoes nationalist rhetoric.

Figure 5. Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, *Still Life with Cucumbers and Tomatoes,* 1943, Watercolor and brush and black ink over black crayon on cream wove paper, 49.2 × 65.7 cm. Detroit Institute of Arts, Bequest of John S. Newberry, 65.232.

His argument posits a categorical distinction between Schmidt-Rottluff's breed of manliness and anything small. This type of man hates the small so much that he can *only* see the large. This form of blindness misses the potential of metonymy, i.e. the small's ability to stand in for the large. Such a claim is irreconcilable with the content of the watercolors: baby carrots, like small candy-corns, nestle together cutely in a bunch.[61] Fresh crudité passed, somehow, for manly.

Other critics of the exhibition shared Behne's judgments. Schmidt-Rottluff had become so automatically associated with the adjective *groß* (meaning both large and great) that it appeared in the titles of two more reviews: "A great (*groß*) artist and a courageous fighter for life" and "Chemnitz honors its great (*groß*) artist."[62] The hinge between the two meanings established Behne's critical judgment: size was a sure path to success; presence—taking up more space—was privileged over absence. Despite the word's imprecise meaning, Franz Karnoll applies it liberally throughout his review. For example, Schmidt-Rottluff's "paintings, watercolors and woodcuts have been pulsating with a large (*groß*), manly feeling of strength since the beginning."[63]

Karnoll tracks a series of identifications between the artist's body and his work that build strength, like exercises. This notion of straining and releasing force differs from the sudden explosion, a common understanding of the energy in expressionism.[64] In other words, he conceives of art as a domain where man's virility can be stored and intensified. His argument becomes most alarming in the article's last sentence: "here lies the largeness (Größe) of Schmidt-Rottluff's art: she always searches for new paths and finds them and never lets herself be raped by any doctrine."[65] The callous compliment is even more offensive than Behne's description: the reader is forced to think of Schmidt-Rottluff"s size as his natural defense against sexual assault.[66] Both writers demonstrate psychic preoccupations with the war's horrors. Try as they might to put the war behind them, they are incapable of employing nonviolent language. The inability of small motifs to demand a different language testifies to art's limited autonomy and the constricted set of appropriate qualities (hypermasculine, aggressive, strong, proud, and laconic) at the time.

Claus Theweleit has identified sexual domination and wholeness to be constitutive factors of wartime male subjectivity.[67] Behne and Karnoll's violent terms of praise may have been acceptable during the war, but its further deployment afterwards risks writing over nondominant subjectivities thereafter. Objects and motifs from catalogue, such as ink bottles, miscellaneous shells, an odd book, sinuous cucumbers, and a twig from a chestnut tree, greatly deviate from their descriptions. These motifs are unmistakably small and perhaps weak. They are not heroic and virile, also not shattered or violated. They are, rather, resolutely ordinary.

In a letter from Spring 1946, Schmidt-Rottluff explained how he had become visually preoccupied with small things: "because God made all things with the same love, God can also be recognized in the smallest and slightest thing. Insofar is the How of the painted cabbage head of importance. Maybe the small things must bring us back belief and piety after the large ones have lost their symbolic strength."[68] The phrase, "the How of the painted cabbage head," is Schmidt-Rottluff's poetic counter to Behne. While Behne gives credit to the artist, Schmidt-Rottluff reverses the order of agency: the vegetables gave him tender strength. In the postwar era, since the large had lost its power, Schmidt-Rottluff decided to make himself vulnerable to the small. For the artist, this was due to God's impartial love, whereas, for the critic, hatred of the small was art's condition of possibility.

While the word "How" directs attention to form rather than content, the choice of cabbage is important, a vegetable renowned for its resilience, not assertiveness.[69] Due to its tough outer layers, cabbage can readily withstand Germany's unfavorable growing conditions; its crip texture and low sugar content also make it ideal for long-term pickling, a suited metaphor for laying low and waiting out the war's hazardous conditions. It is precisely the need for a strong heroic figure, produced by the high tragedy of warfare, that occludes Schmidt-Rottluff's soft reserve. These latter characteristics become visual in an untitled watercolor of cauliflower, found in the catalogue.[70] Thick black contours safely mark out cute white faces from the gloom clouding around the lunch service. A small, localized region becomes a strategy for surviving the war.[71] Just like how toy animals of Noah's Ark toys counterbalance disheartening themes, i.e. human foibles and God's wrath, a set of cheery, yet durable vegetables provide an alternative to the grave political climate.

Hearty vegetables are the not-to-be-forgotten context for *Spielzeug*. They firmly establish Schmidt-Rottluff's turn towards childhood toys within a diversified practice of searching for and staking out small unaffected territories hidden within the large, damaged regions of German society. Whereas Bastian's collecting project was deeply paternalistic, in which (the white European) man preserved endangered objects from humanity's childhood, Schmidt-Rottluff searched for microcosms of innocence. In these places, his faith and unique form of soft masculinity could reticently live on.

Conclusion: Timelessness

Schmidt-Rottluff's turn to childlike imagery occurred against the backdrop of a much larger public discourse, in which challenges of the *Wiederaufbau*

concerning "guilt, German militarism, humanism, the concept of the nation, and postwar gender relations," were metabolized in terms of youth and childhood.[72] Jaimey Fisher, scholar of postwar education, identifies Ernst Weichert's today little-known "Speech to the German Young" as one of the most popular addresses of the time.[73] In contrast to other widespread public opinions that held youth accountable for active participation in Nazism, Weichert sanctioned youth off as a "constitutive alterity" that could become the "core of a regenerated, healthier society" after the war's end.[74] Schmidt-Rottluff's interest in toys must be seen in the light of this debate on the guilt and innocence of youth.

Like many other commentators of the 1940s, Weichert repurposes the physical act of rebuilding the city as a metaphor for moral renewal: "And from the dust of your difficult path, you should dig up the truth and the justice and the freedom and erect before the eyes of the children the images, to whom the best of all times have looked up to."[75] Tactile verbs, like *ausgraben* [to dig] and *aufrichten* [to erect] evoke concrete images, grounding this lofty appeal to pathos. While Weichert sees humanist ideals, such as truth, justice, and freedom strewn amongst the rubble, Schmidt-Rottluff finds his old belongings. Just a few lines later, Weichert reconfigures chaos a new beginning, relying on the familiar biblical reference: "Noah's Ark drifts towards the mountain out of every flood, the dove flies out of every ark and returns again with the olive leaf… We want to create a purer form, a purer image, and maybe once more bless the destiny, because it shattered a nation, so that a new crown can be forged."[76] Even though Schmidt-Rottluff's rhetoric is subtler and humbler than Weichert's grandiosity—a few toys and a small flower pot is far cry from a crown and destiny—the speech shows one potential danger of deploying Noah's Ark as an allegory for the war: by calling for a purer future, Weichert risks reframing large-scale destruction and genocide as a process of cultural purification, an idea oddly aligned with the very Nazi ideology it seeks to oppose. Such a pitfall of the silver-lining is a good reason for Adorno's resolute negativity. Perhaps there should have been nothing to look forward to.

In the fourth section of this essay, I reviewed Schmidt-Rottluff's reception immediately before the moment when he excavated his old basement. This was a moment in history when art criticism mistook devotion to the non-dominant side of masculinity (small, unskilled, innocent, and weak) as exactly the opposite (large, masterful, virile, and strong). Critics extolled Schmidt-Rottluff's toughness, braveness, and innate ability to see large universal forces, meanwhile he observed and described a world bereft of that very strength. Their conviction writes over his waxing infirmity, effectively drowning out his reticence.

Timelessness occurs most when the gradient reaches a null point across a swiftly moving perceptual terrain: when the collection dissolves into

disorder. This can occur exclusively within the mind of the collector, when an individual object suddenly seems out of place, or the entire organizing logic no longer seems to make sense. Timelessness also occurs at the beginning of the *komparativ-genetischen Methode*, when a mess suddenly begins to look like a collection. After a brief period of looking, an observation is made, similarities and patterns are recognized, and some structured organization takes hold. These are the inklings after which man chases down his childhood.

As a 63-year-old man, Schmidt-Rottluff plunged headlong into timelessness when he decided to make a painting of children's toys. In the historical moment beyond the painting, the physical elements of *Spielzeug* were picked out rubble and placed back into the collection. But the transition is captured within the picture itself in the way that two elephants and an atrophied third toy (that represents simultaneously one calf and two calves) make up only a very short, inconclusive line of pairs. Their stance head-to-toe is only a small and weak prelude of a greater organizational force yet to come.

Notes

1. Edward Said, nearly fifty years ago, critiqued similar assumptions about German orientalism, part of the German colonial imaginary, nearly fifty years ago: "There was nothing in Germany to correspond to the Anglo-French presence in India, the Levant, North Africa…Yet what German Orientalism had in common with Anglo-French and later American Orientalism was a kind of intellectual *authority* over the Orient within Western culture." Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1979) 42.

2. Christian Weikop, "The 'Savages' of Germany: A Reassessment of the Relationship between Der Blaue Reiter and Die Brücke," in *German Expressionism: Der Blaue Reiter and Its Legacies*, ed. DOROTHY PRICE, (Manchester University Press, 2020), 75–104.

3. Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

4. Tobias Rosen, "The Brücke-Museum is on Fire!" *Texte zur Kunst*, March 4, 2022, https://www.textezurkunst.de/articles/tobias-rosen-the-bruecke-museum-is-on-fire/.

5. Georg Lukács, "*Größe und Verfall des Expressionismus," Internationale Literatur*, no. 1 (1934), 153-73.

6. Ettlinger, L. D. "German Expressionism and Primitive Art." *The Burlington Magazine* 110, no. 781 (1968): 191–201. http://www.jstor.org/stable/875584.

7. Jill Lloyd, *German Expressionism: Primitivism and Modernity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991).

8. Karl Ewald Fritzsch and Manfred Bachmann, *Deutsches Spielzeug* (Leipzig: Verl. für Kunst und Wiss., 1965), 50-56. Manfred Bachmann and Hans Reichelt, *Holzspielzeug aus dem Erzgebirge* (Dresden: Verlag Deutsch Kunst, 1984).

9. Christiane Remm, curator at the Brücke-Museum, speculates, "that the toys were found in his brother's house in Chemnitz, Schmidt-Rottluff stayed there regularly. He had a niece, who was a kid in the 40s—as far as I know. It is also possible that he had acquired the toys as a gift for his niece. Or that he saw them in another family's home, like I said, the figurines were very popular." Christiane Remm, email to the author, January 19, 2021.

10. Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2018), 115.

11. "Sie sind Allegorien dessen, dass ein Exemplar oder ein Paar dem Verhängnis trotze, das die Gattung als Gattung ereilt." Ibid. Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, trans. Jephcott E. F. N. (New York: Verso, 1978), 150-52.

12. While both female and male African elephants have tusks, only male Asian elephants have tusks. Nonetheless, tusks are often considered markers of male gender in the popular imagination. It is impossible to determine if the toys in the painting are African or Asian elephants. Bernhard Blasskiewitz, *Elefanten in Berlin* (Berlin: Lehmanns Media, 2008), 8-9.

13. In one passage of Genesis, God specifies a pair of every animal, elsewhere, seven pairs of every animal. Mosche Blidstein, "How Many Pigs Were on Noah's Ark?," *The Harvard Theological Review* 108, no. No. 3 (2015): 448-70.

14. Roman Jakobson, *Fundamentals of Language*, trans. Moris Halle (The Hague: Mouton de Gruyter, 2002).

15. Martin Seel, "Minima Moralia. Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben," in *Schlüsseltexte der Kritischen Theorie herausgegeben*, ed. Axel Honneth (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2006), 34-37.

16. Jill Lloyd dates the beginning of Schmidt-Rottluff's collecting of African masks to the time when Einstein's book was first published in 1914. Although she does not explicitly argue that his collecting halted during the war, her research in the Brücke-Museum's archive did reveal that almost all objects still in the collection today were acquired after 1945. Jill Lloyd, *German Expressionism: Primitivism and Modernity* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1991), 380-85.

17. "Nur in der Irrationalität der Kultur selber, dem Winkel und Gemäuer, dem auch die Wälle, Türme, und Bastionen der in die Städte versprengten zoologischen Gärten zuzählen, vermag Natur sich zu erhalten. Die Rationalisierung der Kultur, welche der Natur die Fenster aufmacht, saugt sie dadurch vollends auf und beseitigt mit der Differenz auch das Prinzip von Kultur, die Möglichkeit zur Versöhnung." W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*; W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*.

18. Aya Soika and Meike Hoffmann, *Flucht in die Bilder? Die Künstler der Brücke im Nationalsozialismus* (Berlin: Hirmer Verlag, 2019), 220

19. All translations are those of the author, unless otherwise noted. "Teppiche, Decken u. Malleinen, seltsamerweise alles noch vorhanden—Marie hat den Keller wie eine Löwin verteidigt. Küchengeschirr hat sich auch etliches angefunden, das M. gerettet hat—auch der Staubsauger—nur das Kabel ist mit verbrannt…Die Aquarelle waren noch vorhanden, wenn auch z. T. angeschimmelt, was aber noch zu entfernen war. Bilder sind ein Teil verschimmelt…3 Holzplastiken sind ebenfalls geblieben u. nicht verfeuert worden u. ein paar exotische Sachen. Leider ging eine Samoaschale kaputt—ich schicke sie Dir einmal, vielleicht kannst Du wenn Du mal Zeit hast, versuchen, sie zu leimen—es ist ein altes Stück." Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, *Briefe nach Chemnitz*, ed. Ralf W. Müller (Chemnitz: Chemnitzer Verlag, 2017), 76.

20. "Die Steinplatte ist Solnhofer—u. hier aus den Trümmern aufgeklaubt—ich hatte sie als Sockel für das Kälbchen verwendet—es stand ganz nett darauf." Schmidt-Rottluff, *Briefe nach Chemnitz*, 75.

21. Solnhofer is a yellow-tan floor tiling used widely throughout Germany. Because the material is abundant in Bavaria, it was strongly promoted by the Nazis and liberally used in fascist architecture. Angela Schönberger discusses the material's ruin value [*Ruinenwert*] in Abert Speer's philosophy. Angela Schönberger, "The Thousand-Year Reich's State Buildings as Predestined Ruins?," in *Tumbling Ruins*, ed. Matthias Klieford (Berlin: Distanz, 2021).

22. Ralf W. Müller in Schmidt-Rottluff, *Briefe nach Chemnitz*, 76.

23. Lloyd, *German Expressionism*, 71 and fn. 24, 242.

24. In the late 1940s, a large number of films were made in the Trümmerfilm [rubble film] genre. Jaimey Fisher, "Who's Watching the Rubble-Kids? Youth, Pedagogy, and Politics in Early DEFA Films," *New German Critique*, no. 82 (2001): 91-124.

25. "[A]b Mai 1945 kein Bruch, kein Neuanfang, keine 'Stunde Null', sondern Kontinuität seit spätestens den 1920er Jahren." Hoffman, *Flucht in die Bilder*, 237-240.

26. Kea Wienand poses this question for postwar artists, but does not discuss how primitivism was also sustained by the older generation who taught after the

war. Kea Wienand, *Nach dem Primitivismus? Künstlerische Verhandlungen kultureller Differenz in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1960-1990. Eine postkoloniale Relektüre*, ed. Sigrid Schade and Silke Wenk, Studien zur visuellen Kultur, (Bielfeld: transcript Verlag, 2015).

27. Ann Laura Stoler, "Imperial Debris: Reflection on Ruins and Ruination," *Cultural Anthropology* 23, no. 2 (2008): 191-219.

28. W. G. Sebald, *Luftkrieg und Literatur* (Berlin: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1999).

29. Stoler, "Imperial Debris," 206.

30. Patricia Purtschert's also discusses 'human zoo' as an imperial ruin. Patricia Purtschert, "The return of the native: racialised space, colonial debris, and the human zoo," *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 22, no. 4 (2014): 508-23.

31. Thomas M. Lekan writes, "colonial nostalgia transformed West Germans from the "good colonizers" of 1900 into the globally minded conservationists of 1960 without confronting the imperialist legacies that had shaped their longings for wild Africa in the first place." Thomas M. Lekan, Our gigantic zoo: a German quest to save the Serengeti (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020).

32. Bernhard Gissibl, *The nature of German imperialism: conservation and the politics of wildlife in colonial East Africa* (New York & London: Berghahn Books, 2016).

33. Hans Paasche, "Kolonie oder Zoologischer Garten," *Deutsch-Ostafrikanische Zeitung* March 3, 1907, 3.

34. Fear of elephants is widespread in colonial literature, for example: George Orwell, "Shooting an Elephant," 1936, accessed March 20, 2021, https://www.orwellfoundation.com/the-orwell-foundation/orwell/essays-and-other-works/shooting-an-elephant/.

35. Grzimek won an Oscar for his documentary on the Serengeti. *Serengeti darf nicht sterben,* directed by Prof. Dr. Berhard Grzimek (1959, Berlin: Family Entertainment, 2009), DVD.

36. Bernhard Grzimek, "Der Wiederaufbau des Frankfurter Zoos," in *Auf den Mensch gekommen* (Munich: Bertelsmann Verlag, 1974), 179-215.

37. Lekan, *Our Gigantic Zoo*, 41.

38. In 2001, the Brücke-Museum made the approximately 100 objects in Schmidt-Rottluff's collection available for inline viewing and research: "Karl Schmidt-Rottluff's Collection of Objects from Colonial Contexts in the Brücke-Museum Berlin," Wikimedia Commons, las accessed March 10, 2024, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=Category:Karl_Schmidt-Rottluff%27s_Collection_of_Objects_from_Colonial_Contexts_in_the_Brücke-Museum_Berlin&oldid=730425970&uselang=de.

39. This question is aimed at seemingly innocent objects, ones that *cannot* be restituted or considered 'touristy,' collected at "markets or from living artists who specialized in the production of copies of African pieces corresponding to the tastes of Europeans." Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy, *The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage. Toward a New Relational Ethics* (Paris: Ministère de la Culture, 2018), 27-41, 58.

40. Charlotte Klonk, "Non-European Artifacts and the Art Interior of the Late 1920s and Early 1930s," in *Interiors and Interiority*, ed. Ewa Lajer-Burcharth and Beate Söntgen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 211-25.

41. Emil Nolde, for example, observed the frenzy of objects both in painting and writing. Jill Lloyd, "Emil Nolde's Drawings from the Museum für Völkerkunde," *The Burlington Magazine* 127, no. 987 (1985): 380-5

42. "Im größten Spielzeugwarenlager, im buntesten Antiquitätengewölbe, im dicht gestellten Naturalienkabinett kann es nicht unübersichtlicher, magazinartiger und muffiger sein. Unerhörte Reichtümer, Milliardenwerte, kostbare Seltenheiten sind so neben- und hinter-, vor- und übereinander aufgestellt, daß man sie fast zu hassen beginnt. Man kann nichts einzeln sehen, es herrscht ein solches Gedränge, daß nur Fachgelehrte die Fassung nicht verlieren. Viele Gegenstände sind gleich zu Hunderten da…planmäßig geordnet, und dennoch scheinbar wirr durcheinander geworfen erblickt man Opfergeräte, Landkarte, Abgüsse von Reliefs (gleich hundert Meter lang), Kleiderpuppen, Musikinstrumente, Fayencen und Kacheln, Bilderbücher, Kinderspielzeug…" The book's title refers to the intense debate inside the museum about its antiquated exhibition strategy and has no direct relation to the World Wars. Karl Scheffler, *Berliner Museumskrieg* (Berlin: Cassirer, 1921), 20.

43. "The hardly overseeable and densely packed fill of the Völkerkunde Museums are due – in Paris as in Berlin – not in the first place to the limited space of the individual museum buildings, but date back more so to the contemporary methodological principles of ethnographic and ethnological presentation." Uwe Fleckner, *Carl Einstein und sein Jahrhundert. Fragmente einer intellektuellen Biographie* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2006).

44. Under Voß's leadership from 1874 to 1906, the museum acquired over 84,000 items. Tobias Gärtner, "Begründer einer international vergleichenden Forschung—Adolf Bastian und Albert Voß," *Praehistorica et Archaeologica* 36/37 (2004/2005): 88.

45. "Die zu untersuchenden Erscheinungen werden innerhalb der ihnen ähnlichen bei denen eingereiht, mit welchen sie die meiste Verwandtschaft zeigen. Die auf solche Weise gewonnen Reihen verwandter Erscheinungen werden dann nach dem Grade ihrer Verwandtschaft gruppiert und wieder unter sich verglichen, um zu ersehen, ob und inwieweit sie gemeinsamen Ursprungs sind, welchen Einflüssen sie ihre Verschiedenheiten verdanken und ob sich die eine Reihe vielleicht aus der anderen entwickelt hat…Je größer nun die Zahl dieser Beobachtungen wird und je umfassender und ausgedehnter das Material das zur Vergleichung herangezogen werden kann, um so mehr Schlüsse lassen sich aus demselben ziehen und, je öfter sich gleichartige Beobachtungen wiederholen, desto sicherer wird die Annahme ihrer Richtigkeit." Albert Voß in Sigrid Westphal-Hellbusch, "Hundert Jahre Museum für Völkerkunde Berlin. Zur Geschichte des Museums," https://www.digi-hub.de/viewer/image/1499062302477/ (Baessler-Archiv, 1973), 3.

46. "Das Ergebnis dieser Neugestaltung ist, daß die einzelnen Sammlungsstücke nun als eigenständige Objekte wahrgenommen werden, und der Betrachter ist nicht länger dazu angehalten, die Artefakte als bloße Belege in eine lange Reihe von Vergleichswerken einzugliedern." Fleckner, *Carl Einstein und sein Jahrhundert. Fragmente einer intellektuellen Biographie*, 300.

47. Hicks Dan, "Necrology," in *The British Museums*: The Benin Bronzes, Colonial Violence and Restitution (Pluto Press, 2020, 152-165.

48. Eine Zeit, wie die unsrige, welche mit rauher Hand zahlreiche Urstämme vernichtet und die Oberfläche der Erde in allen Richtungen durchfurcht, ist es

den nachkommenden Generationen schuldig, so viel wie möglich von dem zu erhalten, was für das Verständnis der Entwicklung des Menschengeistes noch aus der Periode der Kindheit und der Jugend der Menschheit übrig geblieben ist. Was jetzt zerstört wird, ist für die Nachwelt unrettbar verloren." Westphal-Hellbusch, "Hundert Jahre Museum für Völkerkunde Berlin. Zur Geschichte des Museums," 3-4.

49. Jo Alice Leeds, "The History of Attitudes toward Children's Art," *Studies in Art Education* 30, no. 2 (1989): 93-103.

50. Megan Brandow-Faller, "'An Artist in Every Child—A Child in Every Artist': Atistic Toys and Art for the Child at the Kunstschau 1908," *West 86: A Journal of Decorative Arts, Design History, and Material Culture* 20, no. 2 (2013): 195-225.

51. Ibid., 198.

52. Frank Sitotich et al., "Yearning to Break Silence: Reflections on the Functions of Male Silence," in *Troubled Masculinities*, ed. Ken Moffatt (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2012); Teodóra Dömötör, "Anxious Masculinity and Silencing in Ernest Hemingway's 'Mr. and Mrs. Elliot'," *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies* 19, no. 1 (2013): 34-38; Max Frisch, *Homo faber* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977).

53. "Er trug eine senffarbene Baskenmütze in die Stirn gezogen und erschien mir in seinem dunklen Mantel groß und kraftvoll. Sein kurzgestutzter Bart, seine Hornbrille, sein slawisch modelliertes Gesicht mit den hohen Wangenknochen, alles machte mich beklommen. ¶ Obwohl seine Wohnung im nächsten Stadtviertel lag, schien er aus weiter Ferne zu kommen. Mit seinem Eintritt veränderte sich augenblicklich die Atmosphäre im Atelier. Ein knapper Gruß an alle ringsum, die verstummt an ihren Staffeleien standen. Schmidt-Rottluff trat zum Nächststehenden, gab ihm die Hand, stellte sich vor das Bild und schaute. Lange nichts als Schweigen und Schauen. Dabei sah ich, wie er beide Daumen mit den übrigen Fingern aneinanderrieb, dann die Hand hob und mit zusammengelegten Fingern wie mit einem Borstenpinsel vor der Leinwand in der Luft die Fläche hinstrich, die Komposition zurechtbaute. Was der Lehrer zu sagen hatte, war damit gesagt, auch wenn noch Worte folgten, knapp und genau wie die Gesten." Erika von Hornstein, *So blau ist der Himmel. Meine Erinnerung an Karl Schmidt-Rottluff und Carl Hofer* (Berlin: Nicolaische Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1999), 9.

54. The photograph can be at the following website: https://sammlungziegler.de/portfolio/karl-schmidt-rottluff/.

55. Despite his Berufsverbot, which restricted his sale and instruction of painting, Schmidt-Rottluff did, in fact, paint during the war and even sold some of the works in private. Yet, aside from painting one small still life and a self-portrait in oil, he painted almost exclusively in watercolors at this time. Soika and Hoffmann, *Flucht in die Bilder? Die Künstler der Brücke im Nationalsozialismus*, 165-7.

56. "Karl Schmidt-Rottluff: Aquarelle aus den Jahren 1943-1946," ed. Schloßberg-Museum Städtische Kunstsammlung zu Chemnitz (Chemnitz: Lederbogen, 1946).

57. Karl and Kurt Schmidt-Rottluff wrote about the availability and prices of staples, like butter or milk, in addition to their success or failure with certain crops. Schmidt-Rottluff, *Briefe nach Chemnitz*; Schmidt-Rottluff, *Briefe nach Chemnitz*.

58. Adolf Behne, *Moderne Zweckbau* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1998), 34-38.

59. Behne's postwar support for die Brücke artists was a complete reversal of his earlier disapproval during the height of his critical prowess Adolf Behne, "Entartete Kunst," in *Schriften zur Kunst* (Berlin: Mann Verlag, 1998), 179-221. John-Paul Stonard discusses the greater political reasons for these shifts: John-Paul Stonard, *Fault Lines: Art in Germany 1945-1955* (London: Ridinghouse, 2007), 177-81.

60. "Was mich seit bald 40 Jahren an die Kunst Schmidt-Rottluffs fesselt, das ist ihr reiner elementarer Zug zur Größe, ihr innerster männlicher Stolz, der alles Kleinliche, Kleine tief verachtet, ihr menschlicher Adel, der nur das Wahrhaftige, das ganze achten kann." "Karl Schmidt-Rottluff: Aquarelle aus den Jahren 1943-1946," 8.

61. Sianne Ngai raises the possibility that hatred might be the rejection of a threat posed by the small and cute. "[I]t is possible for cute objects to be helpless and aggressive at the same time. Given the powerful affective demands that the cute object makes on us, one could argue that this paradoxical doubleness is embedded in the concept of the cute from the start." Sianne Ngai, *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 85.

62. Franz Karnoll, "Professor Schmidt-Rottluff: Ein großer Künstler und ein tapferer Lebenskämpfer"; H. Sch. [author's full name unknown], "Chemnitz ehrt seinen großen Maler: Eröffnung der Ausstellung Karl Schmidt-Rottluff im Schloßbergmuseum." Both In: Unknown, SMB-ZA, Künstlerdokumentation, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff.

63. "Seine Gemälde, Aquarelle und Holzschnitte sind von Anfang an von einem großen männlichen Kraftgefühl durchpulst." Karnoll, "Ein großer Künstler." Karnoll, "Professor Schmidt-Rottluff: Ein großer Künstler und ein tapferer Lebenskämpfer."

64. Wilhelm Worringer, *Abstraktion und Einfühlung* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2007).

65. "Darin liegt die Größe der Kunst Schmidt-Rottluffs, daß sie immer neue Wege sucht und findet und sich von keiner Doktrin vergewaltigen läßt." Karnoll, "Ein großer Künstler." Karnoll, „Professor Schmidt-Rottluff: Ein großer Künstler und ein tapferer Lebenskämpfer."

66. Karnoll published a second small article about the exhibition, which also intermixed sexual and violent metaphors. With reference to a drab winter landscape, he describes how the earth's inner juices seek liberation and ruin their surroundings in the process. "Wir meinen, alle Kräfte und Säfte der Erde dampften und strömten aus dem innersten Kern heraus und Energien suchten Befreiung, die dabei ein anderes Stück Leben zerstören und vernichten müssen." Franz Karnoll, "Die Bilder von Schmidt-Rottluff."In: Unknown, SMB-ZA, Künstlerdokumentation, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff.

67. Claus Theweleit, "'Through the body…," in *Male Phantasies Volume 1: Women, Floods, Bodies, History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 107; Claus Theweleit, "The Whole," in *Male Phantasies: Psychoanalyzing the White Terror* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 389

68. "Da Gott alle Dinge mit gleicher Liebe gemacht hat, kann auch im kleinsten und geringsten Ding Gott erkannt werden. Insofern wird das Wie des gemalten Kohlkopfes von Belang. Vielleicht müssen uns die kleinen Dinge den Glauben und das Frommsein wiederbringen, nachdem die großen ihre Symbolkraft verloren haben." Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, *'Ungemalte Bilder' von 1934 bis 1944*

und Briefe an einen jungen Freund, ed. Gunther Thiem (München: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2002), 138.

69. Frederic Jameson reminds us that in some cases "content seems to somehow contaminate form." Here, he refers to Naturalism: "the Germans used to say that it 'stank of cabbage'; that is, it exuded the misery and boredom of its subject matter, poverty itself." While Jameson disparages both Naturalism and the vegetable, Schmidt-Rottluff reappraises the latter as humble and noble..

70. Both cabbage and cauliflower belong to the *Brassica Olecacea* family, a relatedness made visible by their German names: *Kohl* and *Blumenkohl*.

71. Other commentators understand the domestic settings of his postwar paintings, especially those produced during the Berlin Blockade, as expressions of loneliness, isolation, and recession away from society. *Karl Schmidt-Rottluff: die Berliner Jahre 1946-1976*, ed. Magdalena M. Moeller (München: Hirmer Verlag, 2005), 86-87.

72. Jaimey Fisher, *Disciplining Germany: Youth, Reeductation, and Reconstruction After the Second World War* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2007), 4-5.

73. Ernst Weichert, *Rede an die deutsche Jugend 1945* (München: Zinnen-Verlag, 1945).

74. Fisher, *Disciplining Germany: Youth, Reeductation, and Reconstruction After the Second World War*, 167.

75. "Und ihr sollt die Wahrheit wieder ausgraben und das Recht und die Freiheit und vor den Augen der Kinder die Bilder wider aufrichten, zu denen die Besten aller Zeiten emporgeblickt haben aus dem Staub ihres schweren Weges." "Weichert, *Rede an die deutsche Jugend 1945*, 39.

76. Aus jeder Sintflut treibt die Arche dem Berge zu, aus jeder Arche fliegt die Taube und kehrt mit dem Ölblatt wieder…Eine reinere Form wollen wir schaffen, ein reineres Bild, und einmal vielleicht werden wir das Schicksal segnen, weil es ein Volk zerbrach, damit aus den Trümmern eine neue Krone geglüht werde." Ibid., 4

Virginal Spaces: Feminine Music and Space in Dutch Seventeenth-Century Painting

by Jessica Sternbach

Introduction

The trills of the virginal are vibrant, strong, and not easily forgotten. A virginal is a small, rectangular box-shaped plucked string keyboard instrument with a forty-five-note, C/E to c^3, compass, and strings made of wound brass or iron.[1] It is distinguished from other keyboard instruments of the time because the strings run on the horizontal axis, meaning they are oriented perpendicular to the keys.[2] The virginal became popular throughout the low countries during the late sixteenth century. Traditionally, the body of the instrument was often decorated with painted scenes (often featuring a landscape) or repetitive motifs, while the interior had colorful flowers and songbirds floating beneath the strings. The painted wood or bone keyboards were placed in the center or far right of the soundbox, and their placement determined the plucking point of the instrument's jacks which in turn affected their sound. In an obvious majority of seventeenth-century Dutch paintings portraying virginals, they are being played by women. While paintings cannot be assumed to exactly replicate life, this extraordinarily high percentage leads one to assume that the overwhelming number of female virginal players in the visual record corresponds to some degree to the musical practice.[3] The instruments portrayed are not only visually impactful, they also represent musical potential which could be most readily accessed by trained, feminine audiences.

There are two primary models of virginals produced in the seventeenth century. A spinet virginal (not to be confused with a spinet, a portable keyboard instrument), has the keyboard positioned on the left of the soundbox. This construction places the plucking close to the end of the strings creating a sound that musicologist Grant O'Brien (b.1940) describes as "pointed and insistent."[4] When the keyboard is located towards the right-hand end of the case, the instrument is referred to as muselar virginal, and the timbre of this model is developed and enriched by the deep chest-like soundbox.[5] The position of the keyboard and jacks makes the plucking point of the strings closer to the center, giving muselar virginals a discernibly different sound that can be described as flute-like.[6] When a note is struck, the tone is rich which allows for beautiful melodic layering. As the sound hangs in the air there is a distinct hum of the string's metallic vibrations rippling out.[7]

The acoustic relevance of these instruments has not yet received much focus from art historical scholarship where female musicians tend to be interpreted as iconographic objects, rather than music-making subjects. In her entry for the 1994 Hoogsteder exhibition, "Music and Painting in the Golden Age," art historian Magda Kyrova interprets female musicians as symbols of marital harmony, temperance, and allegorical representations of 'hearing'; however, the acoustic space and the musical accomplishments of women in them are absent from her analyses.[8] In the later 2017 "Vermeer and the Masters of Genre" exhibition, art historian Marjorie Weisman acknowledges the musical skill of young musicians in "Inviting Duets," but her interpretation primarily discusses the young women's role as flirtatious sirens, harkening to an assumed male audience for a duet.[9] On the other hand, in the discipline of musicology, the visual record is not considered a source. The Introduction of *Cultural History of Noise, Sound, and Listening* (2017) lists literature, treatises, scientific writings, newspapers, letters, diaries, account books, legislative documents, musical scores, civic records, and parish registers as primary sources for recovering historical music but paintings, indeed any pictorial record, is absent.[10] The intersection of music and visual culture within the musicology field is referred to as "Musical Iconography," which faces many of the issues addressed in iconographically-focused art history in regards to a lack of multisensory analysis.[11] By examining how both womanhood and music were understood in the Dutch seventeenth century, this article explores how female viewers may have embodied these painted performances by virtue of their musical training.[12]

Music and noise were fundamental to the organization of one's day in the early modern period, and women of the middle and upper classes would have inhabited a separate soundscape from their male counterparts.[13] Women were not barred from or unaware of the public soundscape, but they did not have the same level of agency beyond the threshold of their homes. In public settings, their virtues would have been considered under threat by music and other stimuli that were perceived as being beyond their control. In the domestic setting, women had the authority to cultivate an atmosphere that satisfied every one of their senses while adhering to the cultural compulsion for "safety." Art historian Elizabeth Honig suggested in her essay, "The Space of Gender in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting," that artists recognized a market for female buyers and composed domestic scenes to appeal to their gaze.[14] It stands to reason that sight was not the only sense an artist could call upon to connect with a feminine audience.

Johannes Vermeer's (1632-1675) *A Young Woman Seated at a Virginal* (1670-72, *fig.* 1) demonstrates a majority of the stylistic components, as well as the phenomenological and sociocultural elements, of what I propose

Figure 1. Johannes Vermeer, *A Young Woman Seated at a Virginal*, ca. 1670-1672. Oil on canvas, 20.3 x 18 in(51.5 × 45.5 cm), National Gallery, London (Salting Bequest, inv. NG2568, 2022 © The National Gallery, London).

were paintings that spoke to the "feminine ear." Vermeer offers his viewers a glimpse into a domestic and deeply private space. There are no visible cues from the public world. The doors and windows are either out of the frame or hidden in the shadowy recesses of the space, enhancing the sense of intimacy between viewer and performer. To enter the space, the viewer must pull back a curtain, which allows a golden light to catch the planes of a picture frame and fall like a theatrical spotlight onto the central figure, a young musician in an opulent dress engaged in playing a colorful and elaborately decorated virginal. The musician beckons us in not only with a glance but also with the tune unfolding beneath her fingers. Her hands appear in a luxurious haze over the keyboard, perhaps a visible embodiment of the ephemeral notes she releases into the soundscape. The highly decorated instrument resembles those of the Rucker's Family, a famed Antwerp family of instrument builders. A virginal by Johannes Rucker's (1578-1642), currently the Metropolitan Museum of Art's collection (1622, *fig.* 2), is exemplary of their typical construction. In the shallow encasement beneath the lid, the virginal's strings, now memorialized in score marks on the wood, run parallel to the wooden frame. The frame is decorated with intricate damask motifs, which weave around the exterior like tangled vines. Smaller designs rise above the lip of the soundbox, leading the eye to the moralizing Latin inscription emblazoned on the open lid. At the far right of the instrument are wooden pegs to which the ends of the strings were attached and could be tuned.

As depictions of musical instruments and musicians expanded in the Dutch Republic during the second half of the seventeenth century, musical

Figure 2. Johannes Ruckers, Muselar Virginal, 1622. Wood, paint, bone, metal, beech, leather, 9 7/16 x 67 1/4 x 19 3/16 in (24 x 170.8 x 48.8 cm), Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (Gift of Bernardus Boekelman, 1911, inv. 11.176.1).

performance continued to operate within tenuous social regulations that had been established in the previous centuries. On the one hand, it appears to have been an accepted exercise in the praise of the Lord, further extolled by the mottoes on painted and physical instruments. At the same time, it was viewed as an instrument of vanity and the *vita voluptuosa* (voluptuous life) feared by Calvinist writers and moralists.[15] These teachings emphasize the sovereignty of the Lord and the authority of the Bible. Original musical compositions from the Netherlands pale in comparison to neighboring countries during this period, primarily due to the Calvinist belief that music was a worldly pleasure and should be regarded warily.[16] Despite these hindrances, the genre of musical painting flourished. The 1994 Hoogsteder exhibition demonstrated that ten percent of all seventeenth-century Dutch paintings included music in some form.[17] Within a limited oeuvre, the popularity of the genre becomes strikingly clear. Johannes Vermeer painted seven music-making scenes within his total of thirty-four identified works. Vermeer's composition participates in a trend that enraptured artists from all seven provinces of the Dutch Republic. Comparatively, twenty percent of Frans van Mieris'(1635-1681), twenty-five percent of Pieter de Hooch's (1629-1684), and almost half of Jacob Ochtervelt's (1634-1682) paintings show music making in some capacity.[18]

Music in the Dutch Republic

Dutch artists of the seventeenth century often created and participated in visual trends, such as smoking soldiers and window niche scenes, that were distinguished from the religious-centric trends of neighboring European countries. They utilized these trends partially to adapt to the open market and also to ensnare the thoughtful eyes of *liefhebbers* (connoisseurs).[19] Representations of female musicians were a visual trend that was especially prominent in Dutch art in the second half of the seventeenth century. The

Figure 3. Dirck van Baburen, *The Procuress*, 1622. Oil on canvas, 40 x 42 3/8 in (101.6 x 107.6 cm). Museum ofFine Arts, Boston. (M. Theresa B. Hopkins Fund, inv. 50.2721. Photograph © 2024 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston).

popularity of the subject could be linked to a growing female audience, who were drawn to musical works because the subject resonated with their lived experiences[20] Of all the instruments depicted in the seventeenth century, the virginal has the most overt feminine associations.[21] Vermeer's young virginal player (*fig.*1) portrays the societal role of an upper-class woman. Sitting on a stage of sorts, bathed in the soft haze of an unseen light, she regards her audience with a tender, if somewhat hesitant, gaze. Adorning the soundboard of her virginal are the soft cascading hills of a landscape, while, on the exterior, strokes of vivid blue paint visually link the instrument to the gown of the musician. Her solitary performance is seemingly interrupted by the viewer who has entered her space. Her fingers still linger on the white keys, indicating some sweet notes that may be rippling out around her. Behind the virginal player hangs a copy of a Dirck van Baburen (1595-1624) painting titled *The Procuress* (1622, *fig.* 3), owned by Vermeer's mother-in-law, Maria Thins (c. 1593 -1680). Pictured against a backdrop of darkness, the lutenist cradles the instrument close to her voluminous and nearly bare breasts. A man leans in, captivated by the sensual offerings of the musician, only to encounter the wrinkled hand of a matron demanding payment for the performance and perhaps a private reprise.

The juxtaposition of elegant virtuosity and provocative performance in Vermeer's work profoundly encapsulates the perceived duality of music in the Dutch Republic. Calvin cautioned that music:

> [….] should not be the occasion of our giving free rein to dissoluteness or of making ourselves effeminate with disordered pleasures and that it should not become the instrument of lasciviousness or of any shamefulness… Wherefore [one] must be the more diligent in ruling it in such a manner that it might be useful […]and in no way pernicious.[22]

At the Synod of Dordrecht in 1574, an assembled council of Calvinist leaders preserved this sentiment into law. Among other regulations, the Synod outlawed the instrumental, typically organ, accompaniment of congregational singing in churches. The sound of unaccompanied singing was commented on by the statesman, writer, and lay musician Constantijn Huygens (1596-1687), who wrote of unaided voices: "Among us this more often sounds like wailing or screaming than human singing. The tones sound dissonantly through each other like birds of different beaks."[23] The Synod's edict greatly impacted the character of Dutch music because, like art, it required pivoting toward secular expression.

City-employed organists, one of many salaried positions available for musicians in Dutch cities, were often contracted to give weekly secular concerts.[24] While organs no longer served a religious function, they remained in most of the major churches. One can see a particularly excellent example in Emanuel De Witte's (1617–1692) *Interior of the Nieuwe Kerk, Amsterdam, during a Service* (1660, *fig.* 4). While the rest of the Nieuwe Kerk has been stripped of excessive decoration, in adherence to staunch Calvinist standards, the gold embellishments and silver pipes of the large organ still gleam from the back wall above the austerely dressed congregation.[25] The contract for Leiden's city organist states that organ concerts were a respectable diversion to keep people out of inns, taverns, and pleasure gardens where they might encounter more corrupting melodies.[26] Establishments called *muziekherbergen* (Music Inns) and *danskamers* (Dance Rooms) often hosted traveling musicians and customers who were cajoled into performing for their drink.[27] In cities with no public musical venues, these spaces were centers for music life for patrons of all backgrounds.[28] The owner of the famed *Os in de Bruiloft* (Ox in the Wedding), also known as *Huis te Sinnelust* (House of Pleasure), welcomed awed visitors into a musical paradise filled with instruments, music boxes, fountains, and mechanical waterworks.[29] Artists like Jan Steen (1626- 1679) captured the chaotic and

Figure 4. Emanuel de Witte, *Interior of the Nieuwe Kerk, Amsterdam, during a Service*, ca. 1658. Oil on canvas,22.5 x 25.7 in (57.2 x 65.5 cm). Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid, Spain. (Carmen Thyssen Collection, inv. CTB.1995.25, ©Carmen Thyssen Collection)

Figure 5. Jan Steen, *The Egg Dance*, c. 1674. Oil on canvas, 43.3 x 53.1 in (110 x 135 cm). Wellington Museum, Apsley House, London (management transferred from the Victoria and Albert Museum to English Heritage, 2004, inv. WM.1507-1948, © Historic England Archive).

lascivious atmosphere of these festive places in his composition *The Egg Dance* (ca. 1670, *fig*. 5). Music appears to be the artery of the *Egg Dance* venue, pulling people in through the wide-open doors, as it would have done for many such establishments in the seventeenth century. Public music was typically dominated by bagpipes and viols, both visible in Steen's jubilant bar, as well as *rommelpots* (clutter pot), and hurdy-gurdies.[30] The latter instruments have a long history of ties to lower peasant classes.[31]

Women encountering music in these public places are typically depicted as vulnerable, pulled by music towards other vices. Some establishments employed, among other things, water jets hidden in the floor to purposefully spray unexpecting guests, often women, from below and wash away their stoic defenses.[32] The abundant alcohol in the *Egg Dance* appears to serve a similar purpose. The foremost woman reaches for a drinking vessel, which is within eyesight of the bagpipe player whose cheeks flush red as he looks knowingly at the viewer. Standing above them, the viol player looks into the assembled crowd, admiring the work of his music as a woman loses herself in the dance; nearby, two couples have retreated to the stairs for romantic rendezvous. The women in these paintings represent the temptations lurking in public spaces that could be further inflamed by music. The reception and representation of public music have intrinsic connections to issues of social performance.[33] When Dutch women conducted musical affairs in public spaces, testing the boundaries of their gender, they were met with fears of promiscuity. These social fears were then exacerbated by artists and moralist writers to shore up the boundary. *The*

Procuress (*fig*. 2), whose replica lurks behind Vermeer's virginal player, is a stock character often seen in these musical venues. She is armed with a lute, which has a visual history as a tool for seduction.[34] By placing the instrument in the arms of a woman, this power has also apparently been ceded. Van Baburen and many of his contemporaries who took on this subject may have seen fit to enhance the lutes' more seductive association by having the instrument nestled closely to the women's breasts, drawing the male figures' eyes with a flash of pale skin. With the senses of their prey overstimulated, the lutenist, often with the assistance of a wrinkled matron, can upturn social norms and dominate the man in his sphere. The procuress type is a widely recognized female caricature of the early modern period. She embodies the cultural beliefs about seduction and music – emphasizing the immoral undertones that played out in the many public venues springing up across the rapidly urbanizing Republic.

Across the Threshold: The Soundscape of Domestic Spaces

Morality was the imperative behind the separation of space and regulation of behavior in Dutch society. Seventeenth-century theoretical writings on architecture and urban planning advocated separate zones within cities for different types of commercial enterprise and the division of trade and residential areas. Architectural practice showed the same stratification within the domestic environment.[35] Philips Vingboons (1607-1678) was a sought-after architect of the upper classes of the Dutch Republic.[36] The "typical" arrangement of a Vingboons home filtered the public world through the front room, a *salon* or *zaal,* where visitors would enter and be entertained. The back house, or *achterhuis* in Dutch, would contain more private spaces, such as the *keukenhuis*, room(s) where food is prepared, and the private rooms used only by the family and servants employed by the household. A later 1681 treatise by Willem Goeree (1635-1711) continued Vingboons' classification of rooms by function with an emphasis on gendered division.[37] As Goeree's treaties states:

> In almost all cases the foremost part of a house must be reserved for the man or house father, in order to house his shop, his office, his salet or consultation room, and his storage cellar etc. The woman or house mother has her quarters in and around the rear rooms where are also situated the cooking and living quarters, wash-house, and the rest of the things necessary for housekeeping. [38]

Domestic spaces in the seventeenth century, both in visual and historical records, were perceived as an orderly microcosm of the Dutch world.[39] Because of this social construct, the appearance, organization, and function of the household carried substantial cultural weight. In Emanuel de Witte's *Interior with a Woman Playing a Virginal* (ca. 1660-67, *fig.* 6), the countenance of "appropriate" Dutch womanhood within the domestic space is visible. The two women are occupied by two equally industrious and feminine tasks, keeping the home clean and playing the virginal. A man is present but incapacitated and shrouded in the recesses of the four-poster bed. Feminine dominion over domestic space is substantiated by period travel documents. One such record, by Sir William Temple (1628-1699), describes Dutch women as tyrants of a sort, commanding the running of their households in ways that were foreign to his sensibilities.[40] Honig offers visual evidence of this observation in her chapter, wherein she explains that in the typical domestic scene or genre image, men are absent, sometimes alluded to with a piece of masculine clothing or scene of the outdoor world to which they belonged.[41] While men's dominant economic and legal roles were codified in legislation, women were expected to maintain the domestic microcosm and therefore seemed to exert certain powers within the walls. In the left corner of De Witt's painting, the silver handle of a sword catches a faint glint of sunlight, perhaps a nod to the unseen man's profession. The sword represents rank and status in the masculine world; however, in the domestic realm, it serves a secondary function, as a meager audience to the women's performance. In this way, visual and archival records substantiate that this internal sphere was understood as being in the purview of women.[42]

Figure 6. Emanuel de Witte, *Interior with a Woman playing the Virginal*, between 1665 and 1670. Oil on canvas,30.5 x 41.1 in (77.5 x 104.5 cm). Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam (Purchase, John W. Tempest Fund, inv. 1894.41).

The extent of Dutch women's independence is significant, especially considering the status of women in other European cities at the time. Women's literacy levels in the Dutch Republic were comparatively high in the seventeenth century, as young women were encouraged to cultivate the skills necessary to

maintain an efficient household.[43] Evidence of this gendered expectation can be found in literature and art of the Dutch seventeenth century. One satirical poem, Hieronymus Sweerts, *De tien vermakelikheden des huwelyks* (*The Ten Delights of Marriage*, 1678), describes a new groom becoming exasperated by his bride's expensive choice of furnishings for their new home; in the end, she is victorious.[44] While the truth behind satire is difficult to gauge, there are instances of domestic power struggles in court records. In one instance, a husband was horrified at the expense of the textiles his wife had purchased for their home and refused to pay.[45] When he was brought to court the judge commented that his wife knew what was best for the home and ordered his payment to the merchant.[46]

Recent research by art historian Dr. Judith Noorman and her team has revealed the extraordinary extent of women's influence in the seventeenth-century domestic economy. Noorman and colleague Robbert Jan van der Maal recently rediscovered the memory book of Maria van Nesse (1588-1650), who resided in Alkmaar in the province of North Holland. This memory book provides evidence of the lady of the house taking the lead in furnishing and purchasing household goods, including paintings.[47] The likely patronage of women like van Nesse gave artists all the more reason to intentionally hone in on objects that appealed to women's senses and experiences.

Since music was a movable art, it permeated the domestic environment freely in the hands of guests and family members, who brought musical instruments over the threshold as easily as the chimes of bells sailed through

Figure 7. Joost Corneliszoon Droogsloot, *Interior with a Musical Company*, 1645. Oil on panel, 38.5 x 50 in (97.7 x 126.8 cm). Centraal Museum, Utrecht (© Centraal Museum, Utrecht, inv. 15950)

open windows. Musical performance and practice often accompanied social gatherings. Among the public duties of the city organists discussed earlier, they functioned in the private sphere as directors of local *collegium musicum*.[48] A *collegium* was a small group, usually of no more than fifteen upper-class men who met with a master once or twice a week.[49] One can see such a lofty gathering portrayed by Joost Corneliszoon Droogsloot's (1586-1666) *Interior with a Musical Company* (1645, *fig.* 7). Inside a bright and inviting interior, the assembled crowd gathers around a fantastical music stand. The instruments at play from left to right are a cittern, a lute (with a second lute abandoned on the table), a violin, a viola da gamba, and a second violin, whose player faces one of the three well-attired women. While this painting shows a mixed company, positions in *collegia* were generally reserved for men. *Collegia* likely originated in casual family performances, but when the gatherings moved from the domestic to the public space, they excluded women (and men from the lower classes).[50] Women were invited to public performances to add a social dimension to the audience, which may account for those present in Droogsloot's painting.[51] With their laps unoccupied by instruments, the women assembled for the performance hold open music books. In the right corner, a woman stands, her lips parted, and hand raised, perhaps indicating a solo performance or her role in keeping time.[52]

Figure 8. Jan Miense Molenaer, *Self-Portrait with the Artist's Family*, 1635. Oil on panel, 24.5 x 32 in (62.3 × 81.3 cm). Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands, Amersfoort. (inv. NK3048). *The NK collection includes objects that were returned from Germany to the Netherlands after the Second World War and were taken into the custody of the Dutch State with the express instruction to return them – if possible – to the original owners or their heirs.*

Civic musicians and other professionals who led *collegia* also found employment opportunities in theaters and in providing private lessons. In the seventeenth century, music lessons were considered a standard facet of the education of middle- and upper-class youth roughly between the ages of eight to fifteen.[53] The instruments most often utilized in the domestic setting appear

Figure 9. Abraham van den Tempel, *David Leeuw with his Family*, 1671. Oil on canvas, 74.8 x 78.7 in (190cm × 200cm). Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (Gift of J.H. Willink van Bennebroek, Oegstgeest, inv. SK-A-1972)

in Jan Miense Molenaer (1610-1668), *Self-Portrait with the Artist's Family* (1635, *fig.* 8). A cloth has been pulled back on the ideal Dutch interior, with rich wood panels and the visually striking black and white tiled floor upon which the harmonious family plays. In use are a variety of string instruments as well as a songbook held by the eldest young woman. The youngest children stand off to the side, still occupied with their toys, indicating that they had not crossed the age threshold for musical instruction. In the Molenaer painting, a virginal is open and on display as a decorative element, but in another example of a musical portrait of *David Leeuw and his family* (1671, *fig.* 9), a young woman is occupied playing the stunning keyboard instrument alongside her brother's viola da gamba. The young woman, dressed in a periwinkle silk dress, plays the keys confidently while meeting the gaze of the audience. The confidence likely comes from rigorous training, as contracts from this period suggest that music lessons would occur daily.[54] Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck (1562- 1621), the composer and organist for the city of Amsterdam, led a *collegium* and had tutoring contracts with several prominent households in Amsterdam, many of his pupils being young women.[55] In a contract dated June 1640, Johannes Hartough, another professional musician and organist in Amsterdam, was employed by Hans Pieters to instruct his two daughters. According to the contract Hartough "will come to their house every day to teach and instruct them [the daughters] in playing the *clavecimbel*…for a period of one and a half consecutive years."[56] The wording of the Hartough contract stipulated that, by the end of one and a half years, the pupils would have perfected their performances.[57]

While young men and boys actively engaged in musical practice, they were not encouraged to participate in virginal lessons, as evident in the aforesaid contracts and writings of Constantijn Huygens.[58] In a letter describing his son's musical education, Huygens references the virginal directly, explaining that while his sons had access to the instrument it was "more suitable for daughters."[59] The sons in both musical family portraits,

Figure 15. Gabriël Metsu, *Man and a Woman Seated at a Virginal*, cs. 1665. Oil on oak 15.12 x 12.68 in (38.4 x32.2 cm), NG839, National Gallery, London.

discussed above, appear to be following this program of instruction. In Molenaer's musical portrait, where the virginal is unused, the young boys are employed with a lute and a viola da gamba, underpinning a visual gendering of instruments. When the virginal players have company, it is more likely for their masculine companions to distract them from their chords rather than appreciate their technically precise fingering. In Gabriel Metsu's *Man and Woman Seated at a Virginal* (1664-1666, *fig.* 15) the metaphor plays out quite literally, as the young woman is about to exchange her musical notation for a tempting glass of wine. Behind them, the virginal itself comments on the transaction. The inscription on the lid refers to a biblical passage "In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; never let me be put to confusion," while the lower lid echoes, "Omnis Spiritus/Laudet Dominium." The texts speak directly to the burden of morality and propriety the virginal players were expected to carry.

Figure 10. Andreas Ruckers, Virginal, 1620, wood, paint, metal, 40 in x 45 3/4 in x 19 in (101.6 cm x 116.205 cm x48.26 cm). Smithsonian National Museum of American History, Washington D.C. This instrument was restored to playing condition by William Dowd in 1959 (Gift of Hugo Worch, inv. MI.303543)

The Virginal and Its Players

The virginals' most ubiquitous purpose in the Dutch Republic was as instruments for house music and in the employ of young ladies in music lessons.[60] By their very name, virginals evoke a sense of virtuous comportment deemed most suitable for womanhood. The name, in fact, is thought to derive from the Latin term *virga,* meaning rod, likely in reference to the wooden mechanisms that pluck the strings.[61] Virginals' decorations reflect the moral weight of femininity, as well as the cultural fear of idleness and immorality. Artists and artisans of this period often utilized the virginal soundboard as a surface for landscapes; however, another popular form of decoration was Latin mottoes addressing matters of piety and service to the Lord. These mottoes were popularized by the Rucker's family of instrument makers based in Antwerp, the mottoes were printed on thin sheets of paper that could quickly be applied to the instrument.[62] Using pre-printed paper designs allowed for a quicker and (slightly) more economical means of production. Mottoes related to a wide range of topics including classical Greek literature and contemporary Dutch riddles, but in Thomas McGeary's inventory of early modern instruments, moralizing mottoes were the most abundant.[63] These moral phrases upon the most visible parts of the virginal often dedicated its musical performance to a higher power:

> SIC TRANSIT GLORIA MVNDI (Thus Passes The Glory of the World.) (*fig*. 10)
> OMNIS SPIRITUS/LAUDET DOMINUM (Let every spirit praise the Lord) (*fig*. 2)

The exterior decoration amplified the music's attachment to strict Calvinist morals and thus made its music the product of a lady's worthwhile time and devotion.

The time spent developing the virginal skillset cultivated deft hands, beautifully captured in Molenaer's *Woman at the Virginal* (1630, *fig*. 11). A lady

Figure 11. Jan Miense Molenaer, *Woman at the Virginal*, c. 1630–1640. Oil on panel, 15.2 x 11.7 in (38.6 × 29.6cm), Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. (SK-C-140)

Figure 12. Anonymous, Clavichord, c. 1650. Ebony, spruce, ivory, copper, iron; cover: oil on panel,3.9 × 32.6 × 11 in (10.0 × 83.0 × 28.0cm), BK-NM-9487, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

in a rich, lace-trimmed garment is seated at a distinctive virginal. While the bird cage and chained monkey are signs of docility, the interior of the instrument's lid opens to reveal a pastoral escape.[64] The underside surface is decorated with a couple strolling through a landscape, a similar scene is depicted on the interior lid of a clavichord in the Rijksmuseum collection (1650, *fig*. 12). This subject is possibly an homage to the amorously-themed songs found in many secular songbooks of the time.[65] As one's eyes drift from the rolling hills of the landscape, they will find the source of the scene's accompaniment. The musician's hands (*fig*. 11, detail), reveal specific musical cues. The relatively firm placement of her left hand hints at the sounds of a chord. Her right wrist's delicate, outward turn suggests a downward run with the melody.[66] One did not use all fingers while playing the virginal; their thumbs were often unengaged, which caused the player to turn their wrist while playing runs of notes.[67] The knowledge of the techniques and their ensuing sounds described above would not be accessible to every viewer. Only those trained in the virginal could connect the movement of the fingers to the sound, resulting in a private concert for those visually and aurally astute to attend. In the Dutch seventeenth century this special audience would have been significantly populated by women.

Preserved records of high-ranking Dutch women, Béatrix de Cusance, the Duchess of Lorraine (1614-1663), and Anna Roemer Visscher (1583-1651), reference the respect commended by their musical proficiency. Anna's family homes, both in Amsterdam and a castle in Muiden, were often the setting of cultural get-togethers hosted by her father, merchant and poet Roemer Visscher (1547 – 1620).[68] Anna is known to have played the flute, lute, and viola da

Figure 13. Gerrit Dou, *A Woman Playing a Clavichord*, c.1665. Oil on oak panel, 37.7 x 29.9 cm, DPG56. Dulwich Picture Gallery, London

gamba, and composed music. Regarding Béatrix de Cusance , Constantijn Huygens corresponded at length with her, and music was often included in their repartee. In one letter in 1659, she asked for a duet with her on the keyboard and him on strings.[69] In many virginal paintings, such as Gerrit Dou's *A Woman Playing a Clavichord* (ca. 1665, *fig.* 13), a viola da gamba appears as if to suggest such a duet could occur within the space. Notice the formulaic structure of a music painting, with all elements arranged around the young woman echoing the visual trend throughout the paintings in this article. In this intimate portrayal, Dou's palpable textures draw the viewer's eye to a viola da gamba abandoned in the right corner of the frame. The gamba's intentional silence stirs something in the viewer to step into her world, a cavernous yet intimate domestic stage where many of the aforementioned female amateurs would feel at home. Due to the circumstances outlined in this paper, the audience should no longer be assumed to be masculine, tempted to woo the musician by her beckoning gaze.

Figure 14. Gabriël Metsu, *Lady at a Virginal*, c. 1660 – 1667. Oil on canvas, 32.4 x 33.4 in (82.5 x 85 cm), VdV 49, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam.

A feminine viewer would have been equally moved by this subject, and perhaps felt a deeper connection given the domestic setting.

The domestic venue for these musical performances carries social significance, particularly as the sphere of feminine influence in the seventeenth century. In paintings, female musicians are seated, or standing, in lusciously decorated rooms. Gabriël Metsu (1629–1667), likewise, places his player in *Lady at a Virginal* (ca. 1660-67, *fig.* 14) on the second story of a home, tucked away from the window-lined front room where another woman, possibly the maid, is resting. Once more, the music room is darker to give a sense of separateness, which was common for houses at this time. While the rooms in paintings reveal very little of the reality of a seventeenth-century floor plan, some archival records fill in the gaps in our knowledge. In the 1651 inventory of a medical educator and Doctor from Leiden, Johan van Beverwijck (1594-1647), there is a record of a *Kelder Kamer* (Cellar Room), a subterranean living space or a room on the ground floor where there was an entrance to the basement, which functioned as a boudoir or a private room for women of the house.[70] The inventory reveals that this room contained a harpsichord "with a pedestal for 'daughters' and 'a lady's chair' upholstered in blue damask."[71] The furniture in the inventory suggests a limited monochromatic blue palette to coordinate with the blue-ground gilt leather walls; this careful color coordination originates in the French adaptation of Renaissance notions of architectural harmony.[72] The setting of Vermeer's virginal player (*fig.* 1) is reminiscent of this description, with the dim lighting and heavy curtains adding to a subterranean and separated feeling. These private spaces would have determined the soundscapes of different members of the household. As referenced earlier in this paper, the front of the Dutch home was considered a more public space, a place for visitors and conducting business, while the recessed areas of the home acted as intimate spaces for family and close

friends.[73] While not dark, many compositions featuring female musicians – including the ones just discussed - have a sense of interiority, as though the viewer has walked through the home to attend a concert.

Conclusion

The ideal of Dutch womanhood was being crafted in the seventeenth century, and no small part of that identity included their ties to appropriate music. Anxieties of modesty and morality were translated through paintings of women and music. Women dancing to the public tunes of the bagpipe were depicted as lost and prone to sin. At the same time, domestic music fended off voluptuous associations with quiet rooms and decorative mottoes dedicating the work of song to the Lord. A virtuous woman would not have sought out the voluptuous urban soundscape but would have most likely made music in the privacy of their homes, on virginals.

Therefore, the choice to include virginals in paintings must have been a conscious one to attract women for whom the instrument was part of childhood training or daily routine. Due to insufficient training, the appreciation of upper-class men in the Dutch Republic for imagery of virginal players remained primarily on an aesthetic level. Limited access is perhaps a reason why so many male painters deliberately hide or obscure the fingering of their virginal players. These artists likely had no trained family member to observe and it would not have been proper to study a young woman to whom they were not related.[74] Upper and middle-class women in the Dutch Republic at this time would have enjoyed virginal paintings at a different level than their male counterparts. Those who spent the majority of their time within the household interior would have become used to muted civic noise and heightened domestic noise, and, for many young women, this would have included the sounds of the virginal.

While the overwhelmingly female musicians featured in Dutch musical paintings have often been minimized in the field of art history, they represent a class of high-ranking amateurs who exercised control over the domestic realm to which they had been relegated. By depicting expensive and highly decorated instruments, such as the virginal, early modern Dutch artists were appealing to the sounds familiar to wealthy female patrons and viewers who may have been drawn to these musical paintings which embodied their lived experience.

Notes

1. Edward L. Kottick, *A History of the Harpsichord* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2016), 108.

2. Timothy de Paepe et al., *Antwerp, City of Harpsichords: Two Centuries of Exceptional Musical Instruments from the Museum Vleeshuis, Sound of the City* (Wommelgem, Belgium: BAI, 2018), 15

3. Helen H. Metzelaar, *From Private to Public Spheres: Exploring Women's Role in Dutch Musical Life from c. 1700 to c. 1800 and Three Case Studies*, Muziekhistorische Monografieën 16 (Utrecht: Koninklijke Verenigung voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis, 1999). 35.

4. Grant O'Brien, *Ruckers: A Harpsichord and Virginal Building Tradition*, Cambridge Musical Texts and Monographs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 72 -74.

5. Alec Hodsdon and Cecil Clutton, "Defining the Virginal," *The Musical Times* 88, no. 1251 (May 1947), 154.

6. Hodsdon and Clutton, "Defining the Virginal," 153-154.

7. Most Virginal keyboards have been enlarged from the original compass of C/E-c3 (45-keys) range to a 45-note range; Hodsdon and Clutton, "Defining the Virginal,"154; O'Brien, *Ruckers*, 72; To fully convey the sound produced by this instrument, a brief recording of a muselar virginal from the Brussels Musical Instruments Museum, updated to playing condition: Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck, "Capriccio a1, SwWV 281" performed by Bob van Asperen, from the album *Virginaal*, published by the Musical Instruments Museum of Brussels in 2001. https://on.soundcloud.com/VfJj

8. Magda Kyrova, "Music in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting," in *The Hoogsteder Exhibition of Music & Painting in the Golden Age*, by Edwin Buijsen et al. (Hague : Zwolle: Hoogsteder & Hoogsteder ; Waanders, 1994), 31–61.

9. Marjorie E. Wieseman, "Inviting Duets," in *Vermeer and the Masters of Genre Painting: Inspiration and Rivalry*, ed. Adriaan E. Waiboer et al. (Dublin : Washington : National Gallery of Art ; Paris : Musée du Louvre:

National Gallery of Ireland, 2017), 135–39. Deborah Howard and Laura Moretti have made significant strides in examining the interaction of sound and space in Renaissance Venice see *Sound and Space in Renaissance Venice: Architecture, Music, Acoustics.* Yale University Press, 2009.

10. Ian D. Biddle and Kirsten Gibson, eds., *Cultural Histories of Noise, Sound and Listening in Europe, 1300-1918* (London New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2017), 1;

11. The historiography and state of the field in "musical iconography" is fully explored in the 2023 publication by Antonio Baldassarre, "Navigating the Maze: Challenges to Current Music Iconography Research," wherein he claims "music iconography has not relieved musicology of specialisation but – ironically – has rather developed itself into a highly specialised (sic) field of research…" 28.

12. For my purposes 'gender' is examined as a performative social construction. My definition best aligns with that of Judith Butler, wherein gender identity consists of a stylized repetition of acts, rather than a seamless identity. The gender identities in this article are products of gendered actions Dutch seventeenth century people were compelled to perform. Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (1988): 520.

13. For my purposes, music refers to composed and controlled notes made by instrument or voices. Noise refers to unintentional byproducts of activity (cartwheels, footsteps, doors opening and closing, etc.). Sound is the general term for the aural elements of the surrounding environment.

14. Elizabeth A. Honig, "The Space of Gender in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting," in *Looking at Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art: Realism Reconsidered*, ed. Wayne Franits (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 245-61.

15. Calvinism is a branch of Protestantism based on the teachings of John Calvin (1509-1564), the theologian and Reformation pastor.; Pieter Fischer, *Music in Paintings of the Low Countries in the 16th and 17th Centuries* (Amsterdam: Swets & Zeitlinger, 1975), 65; Natascha Veldhorst, "Pharmacy for the Body and Soul: Dutch Songbooks in the Seventeenth Century," *Early Music History* 27 (October 2008), 220.

16. Magda Kyrova, "The Public and the Private Space in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth- Century Amsterdam," in *The Public and Private in Dutch Culture of the Golden Age*, ed. Arthur K. Wheelock, Adele F. Seeff, and R.E. Kitemaker (Newark [Del.]: London: University of Delaware Press; Associated University Presses, 2000). 39, 44.

17. Edwin Buijsen, "Music in the Age of Vermeer," in *Dutch Society in the Age of Vermeer*, ed. Donald Haks, Marie Christine van der Sman, and Haags Historisch Museum ([The Hague] : Zwolle: Hague Historical Museum ; Waanders Publishers, 1996), 106.

18. Ibid., 106.

19. Adriaan E. Waiboer, "A Clean Competition: Some Hypotheses on Vermeer's Lost 'Gentleman Washing His Hands,'" in Aemulatio: Imitation, Emulation and Invention in Netherlandish Art from 1500 to 1800: Essays in Honor of Eric Jan Sluijter, ed. Anton W. A. Boschloo et al. (Zwolle: Waanders, 2011), 407.

20. Buijsen, "Music in the Age of Vermeer," 119.

21. This essay is based on a presentation given at the Renaissance Society of America Conference in Dublin, 2022. The research is based on my ongoing dissertation, "*Through the Ears to the Soul:* Female musicians in Dutch Seventeenth-Century Paintings."

22. Thomas McGeary, "Harpsichord Mottoes," *Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society 7*, 1981, 12 – 13.

23. When complimented on his performance, Huygens was noted to have commented "…in the country of the blind, the one-eyed man is King."; Grijp, "Dutch Music of the Golden Age." 63; Kyrova, "The Public and the Private Space in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam." 32.

24. Many cities in the Netherlands and in centers across Europe employed multiple civic musicians including an organist, a carillonneur (the player of a carillon, bells in a tower played with a keyboard), tower- guard trumpeters, and horn players). In a large city such as Amsterdam, the civic musicians would provide daily musical interludes; in most cities of the Dutch Republic, these musicians would play at processions, fairs, and provide table music for official

dinners; Price, *Culture and Society in the Dutch Republic during the 17th Century*, 112; Kyrova, "The Public and the Private Space in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth- Century Amsterdam," 32, 33.

25. Mia M. Mochizuki, *The Netherlandish Image after Iconoclasm, 1566-1672: Material Religion in the Dutch Golden Age* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008).

26. Kyrova, "The Public and the Private Space in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam," 32, 35.

27. Maarten Hell, *De Amsterdamse herberg 1450-1800: geestrijk centrum van het openbare leven*
(Nijmegen: Uitgeverij Vantilt, 2017), 246; Buijsen "Music in the Age of Vermeer," 110.

28. Hell, *De Amsterdamse herberg 1450-1800,* 244.

29. Ibid., 244.

30. The viol belongs to the violin family but is larger and requires more pressure on the bow; a *rommelpots*(or thunder pot) is a ceramic pot fitted with a skin and a stick in the center which a player would move about to create sound; A hurdy gurdy is a hand-cranked keyboard instrument.

31. Buijsen, "Music in the Age of Vermeer," 110.

32. Vanhaelen, Angela, *The Moving Statues of Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam: Automata, Waxworks, Fountains, Labyrinths*, University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2022, 47-48.

33. Niall Atkinson, "Thinking through Noise, Building toward Silence: Creating a Sound Mind and Sound Architecture in the Premodern City," *Grey Room* 60 (July 1, 2015), 30.

34. Richard Leppert, *The Sight of Sound: Music, Representation, and the History of the Body*, 1995, 80.

35. Flora Dennis, "Sound and Domestic Space in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Italy," *Studies in the Decorative Arts* 16, no. 1 (2008), 19.

36. John Loughman and John Michael Montias, *Public and Private Spaces:*

Works of Art in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Houses (Zwolle: Waanders, 2000), 27.

37. Loughman and Montias, *Public and Private Spaces*, 29.

38. Willem Goeree, *D'Algemeene Bouwkunde,* 1681, pp. 135–136.

39. Michelle Moseley-Christian, "Seventeenth-Century Pronk Poppenhuisen: Domestic Space and the Ritual Function of Dutch Dollhouses for Women," *Home Cultures* 7, no. 3 (November 1, 2010): 352-3.

40. William Temple, *The Works of Sir William Temple, Bart. In Two Volumes to Which Is Prefix'd Some Account of the Life and Writings of the Author. Of 2; Volume 2* (Creative Media Partners, LLC, 2018), 472- 73.

41. Honig, "The Space of Gender in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting," 258.

42. Ibid., 245–68.

43. An estimated 30-40% of the Republic's inhabitants were literate, data … showed that in 1650, 50.8% of the Amsterdam-born brides were able to write their name; Wayne E. Franits, *Paragons of Virtue: Women and Domesticity in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art*, 1, (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1995), 19; In an interview Jan Six X, a descendant of Amsterdam cultural figure and *burgermeester* (mayor) Jan Six (1618-1700), recalled when people called in the 1970s they referred to it as the home of Madame Six.

44. Judith Noorman and Frans Grijzenhout, "Lady of the House. The Household, Art and Memoria in the Dutch Republic," in *Everything Begins at Home: The Early Modern Household I: Materiality*, 2018.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid.

47. Pieter Roelofs, "Johannes Vermeer (Delft 1632-1675) Modestly Masterful," in *Vermeer*, ed. Gregor J. M. Weber, Pieter Roelofs, and Taco Dibbits (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2023), 33; Judith Noorman and Robbert Jan van der Maal, *Het unieke memorieboek van Maria van Nesse (1588-1650)*, 2022, 129-147.

48. Kyrova, "The Public and the Private," 32.

49. Collegia formed all across the Netherlands in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Arnhem (1591) Utrecht (1631) Groningen (1638) and Hoorn (1684) they varied in size, funding, and stamina (some lasted decades other weeks); Kyrova, "The Public and the Private," 32, 34.

50. Class is a significant factor to consider in the experience of music, noise and sound. Women and men from lower classes would have been exposed to a very different soundscape than the upper-classes;Metzelaar, *From Private to Public Spheres*, 45-46.

51. Ibid.,, 46.

52. The St. Caecillia collegium in Arnhem had three female members, but their invitation and roles were thought to be symbolic: Metzelaar, *From Private to Public Spheres*, 46-46.

53. J. W. J. Burgers, Helene Reid, and Susan Pond, *The Lute in the Dutch Golden Age: Musical Culture in the Netherlands 1580-1670*, Amsterdam Studies in the Dutch Golden Age (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013), 46.

54. Ibid., 46.

55. Buijsen, "Music in the Age of Vermeer," 112-113.

56. In seventeenth-century Dutch, both harpsichords and virginals were referred to as "clavecijn", "clavesigngl" or "clavecimbel" therefore it is difficult to identify the exact instrument used in this case Voorbericht van H.E. van Gelder, Nederlandsch Muziekleven 1600-1800, accessed August 13, 2023, 15; Metzelaar, *From Private to Public Spheres*, 34.

57. GAA notarial archive 731, fol 640, Pieter Carelsz, 4 June 1640, Voorbericht van H.E. van Gelder, *Nederlandsch Muziekleven* 1600-1800, accessed August 13, 2023, 15.

58. The musical education of upper-class men occurred within the home as well with hired music masters, but more often centered around string instruments such as the lute or viola da gamba. Huygens also purchased a Ruckers

harpsichord later in his life; Rudolf Rasch, ed., *Driehonderd brieven over muziek van, aan en rond Constantijn Huygens* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2007), 989 – 990; Marjorie E. Wieseman, *Vermeer and Music: The Art of Love and Leisure* (London: National Gallery Company, 2013,) 15.

59. Burgers, *The Lute in the Golden Age*, 42.

60. O'Brien, *Ruckers*, 72.

61. de Paepe et al., *Antwerp, City of Harpsichords*, 16.

62. Leppert, *The Theme of Music in Flemish Paintings of the Seventeenth Century*, 132.

63. Thomas McGeary, "Harpsichord Mottoes," *Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society 7*, 1981, 5–35.

64. Jessica Sternbach, "The Pastoral Paradox: Encountering the Pastoral in Seventeenth-century Dutch Interiors," Seminar Sessions at Renaissance Society of America Virtual Conference, April 20, 2021.

65. Many songbooks were printed for the purposes of courtship, and amorous themes prevailed, *Die Niewen Lust Ho*f's (1607) first page includes a dedication poem with a blank space for the intended recipient. Songbooks often had a mix of Religious material and even Emblem texts. Songs are often *contrafacta*, meaning song texts written to pre-existing tunes. For Dutch songbooks, these tunes are often French, sometimes Italian. Louis Peter Grijp, "Apollo's Gifts: Dutch Songbooks for the Urban Youth of the 18th Century," in *Music and the City: Musical Cultures and Urban Societies in the Southern Netherlands and Beyond, c. 1650-1800*, ed. Stefanie Beghein, B. Blondé, and Eugeen Schreurs (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2013), 162; Natascha Veldhorst, "Pharmacy for the Body and Soul: Dutch Songbooks in the Seventeenth Century," *Early Music History* 27 (October 2008), 227.

66. Most of my knowledge of keyboard techniques derives from conversations with Tamar Hestrin Grader, a trained musician and researcher from Amsterdam. Renowned harpsichord builder Allan Winkler provided additional information during my time as a visiting scholar at the Center for Netherlandish Art, made possible by the Brenninkmeyer Family.

67. Timothy de Paepe et al., *Antwerp, City of Harpsichords: Two Centuries of Exceptional Musical Instruments from the Museum Vleeshuis, Sound of the City* (Wommelgem, Belgium: BAI, 2018), 16.

68. Metzelaar, *From Private to Public Spheres*, 32.

69. Buijsen, "Music in the Age of Vermeer" 119.

70. John Loughman and John Michael Montias, *Public and Private Spaces*, 78.

71. Ibid., 78.

72. Loughman and Montias, *Public and Private Spaces*, 78.

73. Ibid., 78.

74. Ironically these barriers are similar to those women faced trying to become professional painters.

The Limits of Consumption: Sawasa Ware In and Out of the Dutch East Indies

by Vanessa Gillette Wyland

This article is a story of failure: the failure of the archival record to reveal stable identifiers and categories and the failure of an early modern export product to attain an eager, or even interested, consumer base. Sawasa ware is a little-known class of East Asian metalware produced between 1650-1800 as a result of seventeenth-century trade between the Dutch East Trading Company (VOC) and Japan. Studying less desired products of any provenance carries an opportunity to better understand why and to what degree foreign goods were desired by those with purchasing power. Sawasa's sparse object examples, infrequent mention in the archive, and the inconsistent language used to denote it make investigations into its history difficult. In contrast to popular commodities of the period like porcelain and lacquerware, Sawasa ware struggled to find a substantial consumer base in Europe in spite of its unique material composition and aesthetic appeal. Despite longstanding assumptions, European desire for Asian manufactured goods was not self-evident. This article offers a tempered view of global exchange using Sawasa ware as a case study and asking: Why were certain goods, such as porcelain and lacquerware, commonly desired in early modern Europe while others were not? What were the conditions necessary to create a European market for novel Asian manufactured goods? And, in sum, what were the limits and difficulties of consumption in this period? Using VOC archives, estate inventories, and material comparison, I propose a set of factors contributed to Sawasa ware's limited European consumption, including its enclosure within private trade networks, the prohibitive cost of its materials, its apparent failure to appeal to European taste, and its unstable nomenclature.

Figure 1. "Suassa" tobacco box, Sawasa ware, *shakudō* alloy (fire-gilded and black-lacquered), ca. 1700-1800, 3.8 cm x 12.1 cm x 6.4 cm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands. http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.352177

In 1695, Dirck Graswinckel opened his mail to find a "very peculiar copper gilded enameled Japanese *souatsche* Tobacco box."[1]

The item had been sent to Amsterdam by his relative Willem van Outhoorn, Governor-General of Batavia, the Dutch East India Company's colony-capital in modern day Indonesia. Shifting the solid metal box in his hands, Graswinckel might have noted its heaviness, the texture of its relief decorations against his thumb, and perhaps wondered about the origins of his new gift. It is likely that Graswinkel's box looked similar to a tobacco box currently held by the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam (fig. 1). Its blackened, elongated quatrefoil body is edged with warm golden tones. Inside its concentric cartouches is an array of East Asian motifs, primarily cherry tree branches dotted with blossoms and pagodas. To Graswinkel's curious but untrained eyes, the box appeared to have a black enameled surface with a shiny copper inlay. What Graswinckel held was a composite object, a reflection of the cross-cultural mediation of technique, style, and taste characteristic of the burgeoning global trade of novel foreign commodities in the early modern world.

In actuality, Graswinckel's tobacco box was not enameled, but crafted from a chemically treated copper alloy called *shakudō* and coated with a thin layer of black lacquer, the key characteristics of Sawasa ware. The alloy *shakudō* had long been used in Japanese sword-making. However, Sawasa ware, the specific class of East Asian black-and-gold metalware with which this study is concerned, traces its origins to the Dutch presence in Nagasaki, specifically to their trading outpost on the manmade island of Dejima. There, Japanese and, later, Chinese craftsmen produced Sawasa objects from approximately 1650-1800. Japan is the earliest manufacturer of Sawasa, but scholars speculate that this metalware was imitated in Canton, Tonkin, and possibly the Dutch colony-capital of Batavia.[2] Beyond this biographical sketch, the study of Sawasa ware is challenging. Few examples classified as such survive today, the objects are rarely mentioned in the archives, and, when they are, the range of descriptors is so irregular as to make it nearly impossible to draw connections with certainty. The present article therefore embraces failure: the failure of the archival record to reveal stable identifiers and categories, and the failure of Sawasa ware to attain an eager, or even interested, consumer base.

Amid art history's global turn, it is worthwhile to pause and consider those commodities that stubbornly resisted mass market appeal. It is true that an enormous volume of material commodities was crisscrossing the early modern world.[3] The torrent of porcelain, silk, comestibles, and raw materials entering European ports make it appear as if there was no halt to ravenous consumerism in the "globalizing" early modern world. [4] Counterintuitive as it may seem, studying less desired products of any provenance carries an opportunity to better understand why and to what degree foreign goods were desired by those with purchasing power. This paper grapples with the following questions: Why were

certain goods, such as porcelain and lacquerware, commonly desired in early modern Europe while others were not? What were the conditions necessary to create a European market for novel Asian manufactured goods? And, in sum, what were the limits and difficulties of consumption in this period? An incomplete Sawasa coffee service in the Rijksmuseum provides a locus for these questions (fig. 2). Although the service does not represent the dominant type of the surviving Sawasa corpus, it is a prime example of Sawasa's material characteristics and relevance to the popular coinciding rituals of consuming coffee, tea, and chocolate.

Figure 2. *Tonkinservies*, Sawasa ware, *shakudō* alloy (fire-gilded and black-lacquered), ca. 1700-1800. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands. http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.316034

Sawasa's sparse object examples, infrequent mention in the archive, and unstable denotation make investigations into its history difficult. Therefore, in order to elucidate Sawasa's trajectory of limited consumption, I first compare *shakudō* export ware with objects designed for Japan's domestic market. I then consider Sawasa's potential pathways to Europe through private trade and aristocratic patronage. Due to its obscurity, I employ a comparative analysis of Sawasa and two successful, well-studied Asian commodities, porcelain, and lacquerware. As I demonstrate, Sawasa catered to European taste through a program of attributes recognizable to the early modern consumer: a pan-Asian aesthetic, vessel shapes that coincided with trending foodstuffs, and an objectively valuable material composition. Using VOC archives, estate inventories, and material comparison, I propose that a number of factors ultimately contributed to Sawasa ware's limited European consumer audience, including its enclosure within private trade networks, the prohibitive cost of its materials, its apparent failure to appeal to European taste, and its shifting nomenclature.

Sawasa: Japanese Export Art in Black and Gold 1650-1800

In 1998, Bas Kist (1933-2003), former curator at the Rijksmuseum, collaborated with private collectors and institutions to bring together dozens of black-and-gold metal objects with an East or Southeast Asian provenance for the first time. The only exhibition ever dedicated to Sawasa ware featured

135 individual objects. Notably, all but ten of these came from private collections. This fact speaks to the continued difficulty of studying Sawasa ware as much as it does to the role such wares played as curiosities. The exhibition catalog lists twenty-one swords and related accessories, nine objects of fashion (buttons, cane handles, and buckles), eighteen incense containers, eight pots or ewers, and a handful of mismatched cups, saucers, and serving vessels. Of all the Sawasa objects compiled for the exhibition, around twenty percent were dining related. On the other hand, tobacco boxes, spittoons, and pipe cases account for approximately half of the total exhibition. Fifty-eight pieces are tobacco boxes. The assortment of tobacco boxes can be roughly grouped based on the nine different stock shapes. Graswinckel's box was therefore probably not a unique specimen, but one of a common mold of tobacco boxes commissioned by the Dutch East India Company (hereafter VOC or Company) in the second half of the seventeenth century.[5]

Graswinckel's description of his "peculiar" tobacco box captures the paradoxical place Sawasa ware occupied: precious and rare, yet unknown and, perhaps, not desired. While Graswinckel was at least minimally familiar with the name of the material (*souatsche*), it is clear that he did not exactly understand what he possessed. The known corpus of Sawasa ware consists of tobacco accessories, jewelry and buttons, and accessories for consuming tea, coffee, and chocolate. The tobacco box gifted to Graswinckel was in step with the European-inspired shapes marketed by Japanese and Chinese traders at Dejima, whether those shapes be Sawasa, porcelain, or lacquerware. Until recently, the European demand for Asian goods has been explained by the unsatisfactory assumption that they were wanted simply because of their exotic origin.[6] However, European desire for Asian manufactured goods was not self-evident. This study offers a tempered view of global exchange in which the notion that early modern European consumers desired Asian goods solely because of their provenance is called into question.

The present article is indebted to the Rijksmuseum's 1998 exhibition and its accompanying catalog, *Sawasa: Japanese export art in black and gold, 1650-1800*.[7] To date, this text is the only publication dedicated to Sawasa ware. De Bruijn and Kist define the little-known class of black-and-gold East Asian metalware as products intended for European export, naming the group "Sawasa." The authors chart Sawasa's connections to the VOC through Japanese production, unofficial trade, and private European collections. Importantly, De Bruijn and Kist trace the numerous misspellings, mispronunciations, and descriptions in trade documents and personal records by which Sawasa was denoted. Sawasa's unstable denomination in the archive over time supports my argument that a reliable signifier is one prerequisite to commercial success.[8]

Although he was not the first to make the connection between Sawasa ware and its Japanese origins, Kist's curatorial work constitutes an invaluable contribution to the study of Sawasa ware. To my knowledge, no inquiries into Sawasa's history have been conducted prior to or since the Rijksmuseum's exhibition.

Trade documents and estate inventories, the only sources in which Sawasa is mentioned at least sporadically, were often unclear as to the specific site of a particular Sawasa object's production. While a Japanese provenance was sometimes assigned, Tonkinese and Chinese origins are suggested nearly as often. Peter Hallebeek's essay in the Rijksmuseum catalog summarizes results of scientific analyses conducted on a selection of the wares in the 1998 exhibition. The results confirm Sawasa's material kinship with the Japanese copper-gold alloy *shakudō*, thus validating the historical link between Sawasa export ware and its Japanese roots. Although curators hoped analysis could help to differentiate between objects of Japanese, Chinese, and Tonkinese origin, Hallebeek's team concluded that the technologies were available in all three regions and thus could not verify the place of manufacture.

While I acknowledge the question of origin, I shift the inquiry to the potential routes Sawasa followed out of Asian ports and the difficulties encountered along the way, focusing attention on two key elements. First, Sawasa occupied a space outside of official VOC trade in private networks and, second, the sparse records of Sawasa's movement are obfuscated by the slipperiness of the language used to describe and name it. For questions regarding VOC trade practices, especially the private trade networks in which Sawasa was almost certainly involved, I rely on the research of Dutch economic historians Jan de Vries, Stoyan V. Sgourev, and Wim van Lent. Reflecting on past scholarship of early modern Eurasian trade, De Vries asserts that widespread consumer acceptance of novel commodities was not as self-evident as it was once posed. Separately, he suggests that private trade, long assumed to have been detrimental to VOC profitability, was more complementary than competitive. Through analysis of Company legislation and provisions over a century and a half, Sgourev and Van Lent corroborate De Vries and upend the long-held negative view of unofficial trade. Rather, top-down control over trade activity was more flexible than previously assumed and private trade permissions tended to be financially motivated. Together, these three historians confirm that Sawasa's absence in trade documents, despite its continued manufacture, points to its position as a privately traded commodity. This fact partially explains the obscurity of Sawasa during the era of the trading companies as well as why the metalware has bypassed art historical study. However, far from hindering the proliferation of imported goods, analyses of VOC records confirm that many successful commodities were implicated in private trade.

Porcelain and lacquerware offer a comparative framework for evaluating the limited consumption of Sawasa due to their mode of trade and the concrete names by which they were anchored. Scholars now argue that the trade of dizzying quantities of porcelain was largely conducted outside of official VOC trade.[9] Although I make clear the many differences between the manufacture and trade of Sawasa and porcelain, this argument demonstrates that even the most well-known and desired Asian commodity was subject to private dealings. As a slowly manufactured product, lacquerware perhaps offers a more comparable model to the specialized techniques involved in Sawasa production. Despite these similarities, porcelain and lacquerware possessed something Sawasa ware seemed to lack: a stable name. Resigned to transactions invisible to the official record, various phrases denoting Sawasa ware surfaced in bequests and inventories of elite households. Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic theory signals the importance of fixed nomenclature when studying material culture that traversed space, time, and culture. The slippage in its denotation impeded the process of its wider recognition and appreciation. As a result, Sawasa ware is a case study of obscurity, an export product few people today could recognize and name.

Sawasa, Shakudō: Export Wares and Domestic Taste

The *Tonkinservies* set held by the Rijksmuseum is a classic example of Sawasa ware (fig. 2). The set includes an urn, two spittoons, two cups, three saucers, and a sugar bowl. I conclude the set to be both mismatched and incomplete. The two cups are different in their design, there are a mismatched number of saucers and cups, and some standard accessories such as the milk pitcher, tray, and additional cups for serving guests, are missing. All well-preserved with minor surface wear, each of the nine individual pieces exhibit the defining characteristics of Sawasa: fire-gilded and black-lacquered *shakudō* alloy, pan-Asian motifs in relief, and vessel shapes based on European models. All the vessels in the set are decorated with cartouches filled with embossed and repoussé nature motifs.[10] The three saucers echo these designs in contrasting bands of black and gold. The central object of the Rijksmuseum's set, the urn, measures 37 centimeters tall and consists of a minimum of seven separate parts soldered together, as each of the three legs and taps were cast individually (fig. 3). The tapered, pear-like body of the urn was designed to hold larger volumes and to allow easy dispensation of hot liquids.

Tonkinservies presents a binary division between its "Eastern" motifs and its definitively "Western" decorative program, shape, and intended use. Conformity

Figure 3. Urn from *Tonkinservies*, Sawasa ware, *shakudō* alloy (fire-gilded and black-lacquered), ca. 1700-1800, 37.1 cm x 15.5 cm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands. http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.458760

to European taste is immediately clear in the shape of the urn itself, as this novel shape first appeared in France in the seventeenth century in relation to the growing popularity of coffee, tea, and chocolate. Additionally, Japanese and Chinese teacups lacked handles, whereas the *Tonkinservies* teacups possess elaborate gilded handles. The urn stands on three slender, curved golden legs that each emerge from the mouth of a *karashishi,* or Chinese lion. It has three dispensing spouts, one topped with a fish or dolphin, and two rounded handles attached to opposing sides. Its belly and lid are black-lacquered *shakudō* while its golden legs, taps, neck, handles, and the lid's knob are fire-gilded *shakudō*. Flowers, a *karashishi,* branches, leaves, and the occasional pagoda fill the urn's five cartouches. The reliefs inside the cartouches are black-lacquered *shakudō* set against a golden background and appear to have been achieved by a combination of chased and *repoussé* techniques. In between the belly cartouches, the artist has incised floral scrolls and a geometric band. Many of these motifs are typical of Asian manufactured goods intended for a European market in the early modern period.[11] While each ornament is known to hold specific meanings in Chinese and Japanese cultural vocabularies, it is unlikely that these carried the same symbolic weight for European buyers. Furthermore, the motifs appear as abstracted stock designs. There is no scene or narrative to make sense of the assortment. A pagoda perches on a tree branch, a *karashishi* prowls in a corner, and repetitive flora fills every space to the degree of horror vacui. The aggregate effect of these motifs is that of a pattern, an aesthetic miscellany of elements by which the exoticized East could be invoked in European consciousness.[12] The shape, decoration, and treatment of *shakudō* objects designed for Japan's domestic market contrast with that of Sawasa objects, further suggesting that Sawasa was a product made exclusively for the European export market.

Two sword mountings in the Rijksmuseum, a sword hand guard (*tsuba*) and a sword handle (*kozuka*), represent the traditional Japanese application of *shakudō. Shakudō*—the copper alloy containing gold, silver, and arsenic from

which Sawasa ware is made—literally means "black gold" in Japanese.[13] The highly specialized metalworking process involved in making *shakudō* dates to the Edo period (1603-1867). *Shakudō* was first used in Japanese sword-making, a culturally significant and sacred art form. The metalworking process was a trade secret kept secure within a finite number of family workshops until around 1700.[14] The first explanation of *shakudō* production appears in a Japanese technical metalworking text transcribed in 1781.[15] Once the ores were smelt and mixed, metalworkers converted the finished *shakudō* alloy into workable sheets or plates. Hallebeek's analysis revealed that most Sawasa objects are constructed of many separate parts soldered together and often made using different techniques.[16] The golden sections of the sword mountings and Sawasa objects are both fire-gilded, but the shiny black surfaces were achieved through different methods. Traditional Japanese domestic wares have black surfaces resulting from a scrupulous patination process. After cleaning and polishing the cast object, the long, intricate surface treatment process began. If undesired effects appeared at any stage, the smiths restarted the surface treatment and repeated until the desired look was achieved. The final appearance of *shakudō* surfaces varied depending on the content of gold, as well as the unique properties realized by the patination process.[17] Despite many similarities in the metalworking process, the differences are equally important to the discussion of cross-cultural objects and the audiences for which they were intended.

Figure 4. Tsuba with cherry tree and pheasants, Ishiguro Masatsune, *shakudō* and *shibuichi* (patinated and fire-gilded) alloys, ca. 1800-1850, 8.2 cm × 7.5cm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands. http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.1054

Next to the *Tonkinservies*, the sword mountings illustrate striking differences in the applications of *shakudō* for Sawasa ware versus objects made for Japan's domestic market. Aesthetic applications of *shakudō* in Japanese sword mountings are nuanced and delicate in comparison to Sawasa decoration. The artist of the *tsuba* (fig. 4) took great care in detailing the blossoming cherry tree and two pheasants; every stamen on individual flowers and every feather on the two birds' bodies is articulated. Only a small amount of patinated *shakudō* is present on the pheasants' black bodies. The *kozuka* (fig. 5) is asymmetrically decorated with no fewer than five species of plants, including a

Figure 5. Kozuka, Iwamoto Konkan, *shakudō* and *shibuichi* (patinated and fire-gilded) alloys, ca. 1800-1850, 10 cm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands. http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.1005

long-stemmed hydrangea and daffodils. While the flora on the Sawasa coffee urn is rather generic and approximated, the flora and fauna on the sword mountings are precise and highly legible. The Japanese smith emphasized the blackened *shakudō* and placed less importance on the gilded alloy. In contrast, the Rijksmuseum's coffee service features ample gilt finishes, as do most Sawasa vessels, perhaps indicating a European preference for the gilded effect. Unlike the patinated surface treatment of traditional *shakudō* objects, Sawasa ware features black surfaces realized by a coat of black lacquer applied to the metal surface. De Bruijn and Kist confirm this distinction is ubiquitous in objects they classify as Sawasa.[18] The authors speculate whether the lacquered Sawasa implies the reduced quality of wares intended for export. As I later discuss, lacquering is itself a laborious technique requiring care and precision. Regardless of the rationale, the existence of this dissimilarity promotes a more defined profile of Sawasa against a wide variety of Asian export wares. Considering the differences between domestic and export wares made of *shakudō*, we can productively think of Sawasa as an export brand rather than merely a material qualifier. In other words, when I refer to Sawasa, I refer not only to its copper-gold alloy material, but also the constellation of visual and functional properties discussed thus far. This proposal is supported by its limited acquisition by Dutch citizens living abroad in the colonized East Indies.

Pathways of Patronage: Dutch Ex-Pats, Private Trade, and Trial Markets

The *Tonkinservies*' pan-Asian aesthetic, distinct craftsmanship, and European-inspired shapes all point to the likelihood that a Dutch patron commissioned

it. Although Sawasa never attained broad European market success, it was known and used by the Dutch elite in the East Indies, mostly procured through private trade from the late seventeenth century until Sawasa manufacture ceased sometime before 1850. A sustained colonial Dutch demand for these objects began around 1690, a demand associated with the fashion and taste of the Batavian aristocracy.[19] The elite class, consisting of government officers and high-ranking merchants, enjoyed privileged access to Asian merchant ships transporting commodities to Batavia and the financial means to commission Sawasa ware.[20] The limited number of Sawasa objects that surfaced in European household inventories and royal armories can be traced to VOC personnel, who either sent curios back to Europe as gifts or brought them back home once their contracts ended. In addition to Graswinckel's Sawasa tobacco box with which this essay began, Willem van Outhoorn (1635-1720) sent gifts regularly to his beloved and only granddaughter back in Amsterdam. Such gifts included luxury textiles, custom porcelains and lacquerware, and "suasse" tableware.[21] It may be presumed that Van Outhoorn was not alone and that other VOC employees sent gifts back to their home country, too.

The VOC was engaged directly with the trade of Sawasa at first but then its travel seemed to have been limited to the kind private collecting and gifting exhibited by Van Outhoorn. The Sawasa objects that did arrive in Europe were treated as rare curiosities, but their descriptions reveal that collectors had no precise ideas regarding provenance or materiality.[22] Importantly, the European written record never referred to these black and gold metalwares as "Sawasa." Presently, I propose that Sawasa's limited consumption was exacerbated by the disappearance of its name and its many subversions from official VOC records after 1697, a fact that suggests that Sawasa was, by that time, confined to unofficial, private transactions.

Official Company trade was rarely, if ever, the only mercantile activity carried out within VOC trade networks. Merchants ordered and sold Asian manufactured goods, including Sawasa, porcelain, and lacquerware, through private transactions. Private trade was an important but long-contested accessory to official Company commercial activity. According to De Bruijn and Kist, Sawasa's continued production despite its absence in VOC trade logs could be reasonably explained by private trade.[23] Independent dealing among Company personnel was a practice nearly as old as the VOC itself.[24] One Company decree from 1634 forbade ship commanders or merchants from carrying back merchandise that exceeded one hundred guilders.[25] However, the enforcement of this policy and its many future revisions was variable, even nonexistent, and inspections were rarely carried out. Consider the case of Van Outhoorn's son-in-law, Joan van Hoorn. When Van Hoorn was relieved of his post in Batavia, he

brought back thousands of pieces of porcelain and textiles on his own accord. Novel goods like Sawasa often slipped through ports by way of such carriages with little regard. The combined sale value of Van Hoorn's haul was more than double the annual salary he received as Governor-General and represented one-fifth the total value of the commercial cargo on board the ship he sailed.[26] Yet he was permitted entry and paid the standard import tax based on the contents' total weight. As Van Hoorn would later remark, the chief concern of VOC directors "remained their own affairs," and that their official positions in the VOC were considered "a profitable sideline."[27]

Although the VOC did not permit employees to conduct their own commercial ventures, there is substantial evidence demonstrating that not only did private dealings occur often, but that they were not viewed as negative. Until recently, historians interpreted private trade as unambiguously malfeasant; the VOC prohibited private dealings which, when combined with low wages and high-risk working conditions, led to corruption among employees of all ranks. However, archival analyses executed by Sgourev and Van Lent reveal that VOC Governor-Generals willingly relaxed regulations on private trade. Furthermore, rather than harming the VOC, this arm of mercantile activity was typically beneficial to the Company. [28] Especially throughout Japan's Sakoku period (1603-1868), during which foreign trade was severely restricted, the movement of Japanese goods depended upon Chinese intermediaries and, to a lesser degree, Dutch merchants stationed in Dejima. Chinese merchants worked out of a large outpost in Dejima and tripled the volume of trade the Dutch conducted out of Japan over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[29] The benefits of private trade, all grounded by the aspiration of profit, also extended to the realms of commercial information and product experimentation.

The structure of Asian trade networks meant that the VOC did not have direct access to either Asian producers of manufactured goods or the European consumers who desired those goods. Therefore, the facilitation of trade and market awareness depended upon local intermediaries who held intimate knowledge of consumer tastes and behaviors. The VOC purchased goods via private merchants at Asian ports, and then sold their entire cargoes via auction in Dutch ports, again engaging with independent dealers. To use Jan de Vries' phrase, this "network of gatekeepers" is now understood as integral to Company trade in Asian territories rather than as nefarious agents undermining profits. Because these individuals were often engaged in lines of trade differing from Company specializations, De Vries proposes that private merchants were more complementary than competitive to the campaigns of the VOC.[30]

Revolutionary changes in European taste and consumer behavior, in addition to increased competition with the British East India Company (EIC),

compelled the VOC to increase trade volume and diversify their offerings in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[31] However, doing so further exposed the corporation to highly competitive markets and hinged profitability upon efficient shipping operations. Long-distance trade between the eastern regions of Asia and Europe was hazardous, expensive, and time-consuming. The goods that traveled this route had to carry generous profit margins and, ideally, anticipate a high-demand market. One way to hedge the VOC from volatile markets was to establish demand before novel items entered the wider commercial sphere. As the more experimental and dynamic mercantile force, private trade allowed novelties to enter narrow markets on a trial basis. Meike von Brescius has convincingly argued that, within the context of trial markets, the Company seemed to pick up certain products only after they were 'tested' in private trade networks and thus promised reliable returns.[32]

Applying Von Brescius's theory, I advance the possibility that the Sawasa brand was sampled in private trade circles, starting with commissions of wealthy patrons, but did not attain the necessary footing to gain a wider consumer base. VOC officers regularly reminded their supercargoes to seek out new and original patterns, color combinations, and materials for merchandise, and Sawasa was unlike anything else the VOC was trading. Not long after the VOC began working in Asian territories, Company agents provided their mercantile intermediaries with sketches and wooden models of shapes desired by European consumers.[33] The *Tonkinservies* vessels are definitively European. The urn shape was a seventeenth century European invention. Spittoons, regardless of the material, were direct requests from European consumers. Tea, coffee, and dinner services that cost some ten times the price of the same objects purchased à la carte further increased the repertoire of shapes manufactured by artisans in Japan, China, and other Asian regions.[34] While these sets were produced in large numbers in porcelain, the Rijksmuseum's *Tonkinservies* is evidence that Asian craftsmen adapted European shapes in different materials. However, Sawasa trickled into stately homes of Dutch expats in small numbers while porcelain surged into Europe.

Material Comparisons: Sawasa, Porcelain, and Lacquerware

Contemporaneous to Sawasa production, Chinese porcelain was spilling into Europe in tremendous quantities. Scholars working on the early modern porcelain trade cannot overstate its mutual economic and cultural impact on Europe and the Asian countries from which the product came. Dutch and Chinese merchants collaborated in order to meet the demand for the utensils

Figure 6. Octagonal coffee pot with hunting and mythological scenes, porcelain, China, ca. 1700, 29.6 cm x 8.1 cm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands. http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.3182

that accompany the coinciding consumption practices of coffee, tea, and chocolate. The popularity of those tropical comestibles and the porcelain pieces used to consume them rose in tandem. Porcelain, the ultimate representation of the "East" in European consciousness, was desired for its delicacy, heat resistance, and unique aesthetics and craftsmanship. Such qualities are visible in an eighteenth-century coffee pot (fig. 6) in the Rijksmuseum, exemplifying the iconic blue-and-white porcelain produced in Jingdezhen, China. Pan-Asian decorative schemes enhanced the exoticism of porcelain pieces, a trait shared with Sawasa.

While porcelain can be accounted for in Company trade logs, scholars agree that the scope of private trade in porcelain during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries has been underestimated.[35] It is possible that porcelain was initially incidental to the trade of tea, spices, and silk, the VOC's staple commodities, as porcelain could protect teas and fragile silks from water damage during transit. Porcelain had the added virtue of heaviness, which made it useful as ballast in the lower cargo hold to improve the ship's stability. Privately, however, supercargoes imported one third as much porcelain on their own accounts as they did in official Company trade.[36]

Indeed, the millions of porcelain objects exported to Europe during this period was only achievable due to a highly efficient production model. Anticipating modern assembly lines, China's major porcelain manufacturing center, Jingdezhen, utilized over one thousand kilns and seventy thousand workers by 1700. The increasing capacity of multi-chambered kilns soon allowed porcelain workers to fire up to fifty thousand pieces at one time.[37] The massive porcelain enterprise in Jingdezhen was flexible and adaptive enough to meet the increasing demand and diversifying preferences of European consumers. Porcelain's functionality as shipping ballast and its mass production model contributed to its relatively low cost and appreciable profit margins, which translated to middle-class affordability. Unlike porcelain, Sawasa was not a viable candidate for mass manufacture due to the complexity of the metalworking processes and the high value of its raw materials. As made-to-order products excluded from mass production, Sawasa objects were not attractive commodities for wholesale trade.

Yet, mass manufacture was not the only route to commercial success in Europe, as witnessed with the labor-intensive Japanese lacquerware. Lacquerware was a novel Asian manufactured commodity that, despite its allure in Europe, remained relatively rare and inaccessible to the middling classes. Asian lacquerwares, like Sawasa objects, were known for their quality craftsmanship and visual beauty. Pieces arrived in Europe in limited numbers primarily via private transactions and as gifts. Asian lacquering of surfaces is an ancient

process, and fine lacquered objects were appreciated throughout Asia. What was recognized as "lacquerware" in the early modern period can be identified by its Japanese or Chinese provenance, glossy surface, wooden substrate, pan-Asian decorative schemes, and, more often than not, a limited, high-contrast color palette. The contrasting color combination of gold against a black-lacquered background is visually analogous to that of Sawasa (fig. 8 and 9). The chief difference lies in their base materials: lacquerware has a wooden substrate while Sawasa consists of precious and semi-precious metals. However, the substrate itself does not alter the lacquering process. Like *shakudō* production, lacquering is a highly specific, precise, and manual endeavor, thus disqualifying lacquerware from mass manufacture. Once the toxic sap is harvested from a specific species of tree, itself a painstaking process, each of the several layers of lacquer took many days to dry before artists could begin their intricate designs.[38] Sawasa objects were coated in at least two coats of lacquer as a finishing. Although Sawasa was a class of export products, the argument that their lacquered finish is a marker of lesser quality does not fit as neatly as De Bruijn and Kist suggest.

Despite its time-consuming production, Europe imported Japanese lacquerwares in respectable numbers throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, although almost exclusively through private transactions. Many of these objects survive in museum collections today. Although lacquerware was officially traded by the VOC in the seventeenth century, it was struck from the list of approved Japanese goods when manufacturers raised their prices around 1700.[39] From this point forward, lacquerware was only privately traded. Lacquered objects, like Sawasa ware, also appeared in gift registers as tribute to powerful Asian sovereigns and in household inventories of Dutch statesmen.[40] Two such lacquered objects are branded with Dutch coats of arms belonging to Company officials: a lacquered box (fig. 7) owned by Governor-General Joan van Hoorn (1653-1711) and a decorative dish (fig. 8) belonging to VOC Director and six-time mayor of Amsterdam Joan Huydecoper van Maarsseveen (1599-1661). A small number of Japanese workshops specialized in fulfilling orders like these and devising new designs for foreign clientele. Special orders from Europe and the Dutch elite in the East Indies requested certain colors of lacquer, design motifs, and coats of arms. On the VOC's annual trip to the capital of Japan, lacquer artisans presented Dutch agents with sample pieces from which the merchants could select for serial production. Long lapses of time often passed between orders, production, and the final sale of the lacquered object.[41] Dutch merchants and the Japanese shogunate established this commercial framework for lacquerware as early as the 1650s. I posit this same framework was a workable, but unrealized, solution for the Sawasa trade.

Figure 7. Box with Joan van Hoorn's coat of arms, wood and lacquer, Japan, ca. 1700-1710, 13 cm x 7.5 cm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands. http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.337483

Figure 8. Decorative dish with Joan Huydecoper van Maarseveen I's coat of arms, wood and lacquer, Japan, ca. 1650-1660, 34.4cm x 3 cm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands. http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.262979

Lacquerware and Sawasa were aesthetically kindred Asian luxury goods that fulfilled the tastes and expectations of European consumers. However, lacquerware entered Europe at rates exponentially greater than Sawasa. The resounding difference is the two commodities' material composition. Due to the unequal values of wood and precious metals, I deduce that at least one factor contributing to Sawasa's stunted consumption, perhaps the most obvious, was its prohibitive cost.

Questions of Difficulties: Price, Fashion, and Luxury

No discussion of global consumption and trade would be complete without engaging price points and the relative attainability for the general consumer, especially as luxury commodities possessed the ability to affect fashion and taste. Set against Chinese porcelain and Japanese lacquerware, Sawasa's comparative rarity and lack of market success point to the plausibility of a cost that was simply inaccessible to the vast majority of consumers. Unlike the former material commodities, whose respective statuses as luxury goods remain debatable, one can safely assume the luxury designation of Sawasa.[42] Arjun Appadurai explains that the "luxury register" of commodities, that boundary that separates the mundane from the sumptuous, is shifting and subjective.[43] However, the solid semi-precious and precious metals from which Sawasa ware was made carry a

historically stable luxury register. Indeed, the ancient use of copper, silver, and gold as coinage—literal, physical capital—validates the enduring tandem of market value and (semi)precious metals.

Sawasa, porcelain, and lacquerware were all embraced by the elite first, not for their exchange value alone, but as objects that carried associations of a civilized lifestyle and the ritualistic ingestion of trending comestibles. Robert Dunn argues that the act of consumption links market value with "the satisfaction of material need and want to the production of meaning, identity, and a sense of place and social membership."[44] The elite class wanted to dine and sip their tea, coffee, and chocolate in luxury, stay ahead of the fashion curve, and be seen doing so. These early-adopting elite consumers are what Grant McCracken calls "cultural influencers."[45] Holding privileged power to affect taste, these influencers transferred meaning from the constituted, cultural world to the material object, and through acts of ritual, exchange, and possession, meaning transferred from the object to the consumer. What meaning, then, did Sawasa gain or lack that caused it to remain a rarity? The answer might have to do with its lofty price tag, which outweighed its desired qualities of craftsmanship, durability, Asian origin, European shapes, and in-fashion decoration.

Willem van Outhoorn again provides insight into the issue of European taste. When his granddaughter, Pieternella, failed to comment on two treasured Japanese folding screens he sent her, the rather cross letter that followed expressed two concerns. First, there was the risk of loss or damage on the long sea voyage, and sometimes precious cargo was subject to confiscation or high clearance costs upon arrival in the Dutch Republic, so his granddaughter's silence on the matter induced some anxiety. Intriguingly, his second concern related to current trends in the Dutch Republic:

> [Van Outhoorn] wanted to know whether these screens were still valued by friends in the fatherland and if they were considered beautiful and special. Tastes and fashions change, and this was the reason that he had refrained from sending her a pair of Japanese lacquer chests. He had been told they were less appreciated nowadays.[46]

Van Outhoorn's attentiveness to changing tastes speaks to more than his earnest commitment to his granddaughter keeping up with latest fashion. It demonstrates that consumers, both those in the colonies and in the Dutch Republic, were sensitive to the commodities currently trending in a rapidly globalizing market economy. Objects of fashion, like Pieternella's new Japanese screens, were initially imbued with signs that indicated elite status. Many

people that Pieternella came in contact with probably could not afford such an item, nor did they have the necessary connections to acquire it. Once desire was initiated and established by elite tastemakers, fashionable commodities in seventeenth-century Europe often accrued a broader consumer audience.

Foreign imports first entering Europe were expensive and difficult to procure, but the processes of import-substitution soon developed for Asian commodities and contributed to overall affordability. Using estate inventories from the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, particularly in the Dutch Republic and England, scholars suggest dominant trends in consumer behavior: the desire for greater comfort and the desire for less durable, 'made-to-last' products.[47] Maxine Berg clarifies this paradigm as a shift away from household self-sufficiency and toward a dependency on market-supplied goods, especially at the level of modest income.[48] Berg argues that porcelain and lacquerware be deemed "semi-luxuries;" those objects that possessed the merits of usefulness, civility, and fineness, but were affordable enough to be obtainable to non-elite classes, even if these commodities required saving up for.[49] Affordability was soon achieved on a much wider scale as the increasing demand for porcelain and lacquer inspired imitative industries in Europe.[50] Indeed, almost instantly upon the first arrival of Chinese porcelain in Europe, producers began the quest to devise and supply an affordable domestic alternative.[51] Based on the scant number of known Sawasa objects and its highly specialized production process, it is clear no such industry developed around Sawasa in Europe.

Paramount to price, McCracken reminds that consumer goods carry significance that exceeds their utility and commercial value, a significance that rests primarily in the commodity's ability to convey cultural meaning.[52] Although cost was undoubtedly a hurdle that prevented Sawasa's wider market success, price alone could not prevent the European desire and fanaticism for certain Asian manufactured goods. Porcelain and lacquerware testify to this. What are we to make of Sawasa ware, then? It is clear that while Sawasa ware had many attributes desired by European consumers, its fate was sealed by its lack of a 'brand name.'

What's in a name? "Sawasa" and Its Many Subversions

Considering these particular factors involved in early modern global trade and consumption, it seems Sawasa demonstrates the importance of a simple feature it lacked: a fixed name. The shifting nomenclature of Sawasa warrants a deliberation on the effect and power of an object's name, especially within the domain of early modern global trade. The name "Sawasa" itself was not a stable

term until this export product gained attention from and was thus named by the Rijksmuseum in the late twentieth century. The Japanese copper-gold alloy *shakudō* from which Sawasa ware was forged contributed to the etymological confusion. The word "Sawasa" exhibits dual origins in Dutch and Japanese, and the various spellings that appear in the archive (*souatsche, sowaas, savas, savats, sawas, souassa, suassa, siowassa, souasse*) derive from the Japanese verb *sawasu*, meaning "to apply a thin coat of black lacquer to prevent the surface from becoming shiny."[53] Hearing the foreign terms shakudō and *sawasu* at various Asian trade outposts, Dutch agents likely attempted to phonetically reproduce what they heard, and subsequently misspelled and combined them in a century of "babel-like confusion," to use De Bruijn and Kist's phrase.[54]

Confined to private trade, the many versions of the term "Sawasa" are only found in personal documents and in household inventories of wealthy estates in Batavia and abroad. To name just three of these inventories, those of Governors-General Gustaaf Willem Baron van Imhoff (1705-1750), Joan van Hoorn, and Willem van Outhoorn, all list discrete quantities of Sawasa. Although their estate documents attempt to sort and name these objects accurately, the spellings of "Sawasa" are inconsistent. In fact, discrepancies often occur within a single document. Van Imhoff's estate mentions "savas" as a standalone noun, and "savasse" or "souasse" swords, sword mounts, jewelry, and buttons.[55] Van Hoorn's inventory uses the same terms with the added denotation of "sawas." All of these related terms are listed under the category "Jewellery and small items."[56] Furthermore, Van Hoorn's Sawasa objects are separately categorized by Tonkin and Japanese provenances with the Japanese pieces carrying a higher monetary value. Also sorted according to Tonkinese or Japanese origin, Van Outhoorn's estate lists the following under "Silverwork": "a Japanese trouser-lace…with souas mounting," "a chints coat with tonkinese buttons," and "four tonkinese boxes."[57]

"Sawasa" and its many variations are absent in European inventories, but De Bruijn and Kist convincingly argue that Sawasa ware was likely demarcated by a wider range of terms exclusively filed under "Curiosities." As a rule, these objects are signified by their provenance or appearance. Sawasa ware in the Dutch Republic was typically referred to as "Tonkinese chisel work" or "Cochin China work."[58] The estate auction catalog of VOC Director of Bengal, Jan Albert Sichterman (1692-1764), lists twenty-nine objects "artfully worked black with gold and with raised chiseled relief" under the heading "Beautifully worked Japanese composition"."[59] These wares appear under a range of categories in additional estate auction catalogs of former VOC employees: "Japanese metalwork," "Gold and fancy goods," "Curiosities," "Silverwork," and "Chinese copper and other curiosities."[60] Due to collectors' ignorance of these objects and

wide-ranging descriptions, it is possible that Sawasa ware was also categorized as lacquered, enameled, or gilt objects in inventories. In fact, the Rijksmuseum's catalog entry for its *Tonkinservies* states that it is "partly black enameled."[61] For these reasons, I align with De Bruijn and Kist's supposition that the slippery and fragmented denotation of this commodity is a key explanation as to why these objects and knowledge about them did not spread far outside of Batavian circles.[62] The fact of the denotive inconsistencies supports my argument that a reliable signifier was at least one of the prerequisites to commercial success during this period. In fact, the first appearance in the written record of a word similar to "Sawasa" was in Graswinckel's letter with which this paper began. The lack of standard naming is also a result of the lack of demand. Sawasa's unstable nomenclature was therefore both cause and effect of its limited consumer base. On the contrary, the widespread and coveted Chinese porcelain came to be literally conflated with its site of production: porcelain became "China." Likewise, later European copies of Japanese lacquerware became "Japanware," and the associated process used by artisans as "japanning." No matter Sawasa's luxury status or price tag, its lack of a stable signifier stifled its market potential.

Although the precise conditions in Europe with which Sawasa was met cannot be known with certainty, the great variance in its denomination indicates a semiotic slippage that further stunted its opportunity to gain a consumer base. The Dutch elite expats and VOC employees brought or sent Sawasa ware back to Europe in slow, irregular rivulets. It can be surmised that a fixed name would have been necessary to discuss this novel materiality, incorporate it consumer lifestyles, and foster domestic demand. A brief engagement with Saussurean semiotics tells us that the linguistic sign does not effectively link a thing and a name. Rather, the sign links an abstract concept, the signification, with a sound pattern, the signifier.[63] A linguistic sign then achieves its goal if, when uttered aloud, its signification is roused in the listener upon hearing the signifier. Although Saussure claims that a sign itself is arbitrary, it is nevertheless useless in its ability to signify if its associated sound pattern is persistently in flux. Because Sawasa ware was a foreign export commodity crafted using foreign processes, its significance required an articulation and translation in Europe that, on the one hand, did not occur and, on the other, could not occur in its denotative condition. That is, a name in constant linguistic variation pushed Sawasa ware to the margins.

Starting with the Japanese verb *sawasu*, Dutch listeners ignorant of the eastern tonal language attempted to designate a term which failed to attain the consistency required to turn general unconsciousness into general awareness. Neither its various disordered spellings nor its inexact compound-word descriptions succeeded as linguistic signs throughout the Sawasa's tangled

history. Without the repetition and circulation of a sound pattern that carried a stable meaning, Sawasa's intricate production process, unique material properties, and cultural significance could not be known, let alone desired. The failure of Sawasa to attract a consumer audience attests to the necessity of a name, a sign which acts as an anchor in a sea of linguistic fragmentation, cultural fluidity, and global commercialism.

Sawasa ware, rare both in its own period of manufacture as well as the present day, eventually fell out of favor in the Dutch colonies and its production dwindled in the mid-eighteenth century. References to "Sawasa," "Tonkinware," and the like disappeared from written sources around that time. Without the investigative work of Rudolph Cederstrom, the first person to suggest the link between these striking black and gold objects with a Japanese provenance, our current awareness of Sawasa, rudimentary as it may be, would not be possible.[64] I have explored a variety of threads which contributed to the fabric of early modern consumption and international trade: the logistics of maritime shipping, private trade networks and trial markets, cost and profitability, domestic imitation industries, associations of status, fashion, and taste, mass manufacturing, and, finally, a fixed name. Beyond the scope of the present paper, but fertile ground for supplementary research, are deeper deliberations on consumer demand and the semiotic relationship between nomenclature and material culture. Echoing De Bruijn and Kist, the perturbing question of specific Sawasa production centers outside of Japan remains unsolved. Even the designation of *Tonkinservies,* or "Tonkin crockery," is a mystery. To date, only circumstantial evidence suggests that Sawasa manufacture occurred in Tonkin (North Vietnam), Cochin China (South Vietnam), or Canton. Future research might also envelop Sawasa more deeply in scholarly conversations of early modern European taste.

Due to factors that remain speculative, Sawasa was not a product of official VOC trade. These wares may have been tested in private trade networks, as many Asian commodities were, but failed to achieve demand outside of elite Dutch circles in the East Indies. Whether it was primarily its slow production, failure to appeal to European taste, or high cost, Sawasa ware did not enjoy the same level of consumer awareness and desire as porcelain and lacquerware. Limited to private transactions and lacking a name to which a wider consumer market could relate and attach meaning, Sawasa was destined to obscurity. This unique product negates the notion that all Asian manufactured goods had an inevitable market in early modern Europe. Sawasa ware therefore complicates the process of globalization. For globalization has never been monolithic, but the compounded effect of uneven and complex cultural interactions, materialities, practices of taste-making,

and consumer behavior. As demonstrated through this investigation of Sawasa ware, analyzing less desired trade goods holds the potential to enrich our understanding of why and to what degree foreign commodities were wanted by early modern consumers. Tracing the pathways of unpopular trade goods has the power to illuminate the difficulties they experienced along the way. To embrace the difficulties of historical analysis is to embrace failure, and Sawasa ware is a case study of failure. Sawasa is one example of an unsuccessful commodity that enjoyed brief moments of attention amid the tumult of novel commodities traversing the globe. There must be more.

Notes

1. Municipal archives Delft, Family records of van der Burch Inv. 141, last will of Dirk Graswinckel (1631-1697). 12 December 1695.

2. Guangzhou, China, northern Vietnam, and Jakarta, Indonesia, respectively.

3. Rodrigue, Jean-Paul. "Dutch East India Compnay, Trade Network, 18th Century." Source: www.transportgeography.org/contents/chapter1/emergence-of-mechanized-transportation-systems/dutch-east-india-company-trade-network/

4. Here I use the term "globalizing" with caution in observance of Jan de Vries' delineation of "soft" globalization (which he theorizes characterized the early modern period) from "hard" globalization. See Jan de Vries, "The limits of globalization in the early modern world," *The Economic History Review* 63, no. 3 (2010): 713-715.

5. I choose to reference the Dutch East India Company by its more common abbreviation, VOC, an acronym of Vereenigde Oost Indische Compagnie.

6. For an extended critique of this view as it relates to Chinese porcelain, see Stacey Pierson, "The Movement of Chinese Ceramics: Appropriation in Global History," *Journal of World History* 23, no. 1 (2012): 9–39.

7. Max de Bruijn and Bas Kist, *Sawasa: Japanese export art in black and gold, 1650-1800*. (Amsterdam; Zwolle: Waanders Publishers, 1998). The exhibition was curated by Bas Kist while he and Max de Bruijn co-edited the accompanying catalog.

8. In the archive, Sawasa is referred to by several different spellings based on the Japanese verb, *sawasu*, as well as by many compound-word descriptions: souatsche, sowaas, savas, sawas, souassa, suassa, Tonkinese chisel work, Japanese metalwork, and so on.

9. The changing view of private trade and how it operated in practice has been extensively discussed in the last two decades. For example, see Meike von Brescius, *Private Enterprise and the China Trade: Merchants and Markets in Europe, 1700–1750* (Leiden: Brill, 2022), especially chapter three; Jan van Campen and Titus Eliëns (eds), *Chinese and Japanese Porcelain for the Dutch Golden Age* (Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers, 2014); Maxine Berg, et. al (eds), *Goods from the East 1600-1800: Trading Eurasia* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Tamara

H. Bentley (ed), *Picturing Commerce in and from the East Asian Maritime Circuits, 1550-1800* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019).

10. Repoussé is the process of creating a low-relief design by hammering the reverse side of a metal object. A related technique, embossing, accomplishes a similar effect by hammering the front side and sinking the metal. Chasing and repoussé are often used in conjunction on the same piece.

11. For example, see porcelain jug (fig. 6) and lacquered box (fig. 7) in this essay. Cherry blossoms and trees, pagodas, dragons, cranes, and women wearing kimonos are especially common in the decorative schemes of Chinese export wares of all kinds, particularly porcelain and lacquerware. Idyllic landscapes, mountainscapes, and riverscapes became increasingly formulaic as centuries of trade unfolded. In 1635 and again in 1637, the VOC insisted on ornament that was explicitly Chinese in character, observing that makers should omit Dutch-style decoration entirely, because it is "not considered strange or rare." Christiaan J.A. Jörg, "Chinese Porcelain for the Dutch in the Seventeenth Century," *The Porcelains of Jingdezhen: Colloquies on Art & Archaeology in Asia No. 16*, ed. Rosemary E. Scott, 183-205 (London: Percival David Foundation, 1993), 186, 188n13.

12. The homogenization of the "East" in the early modern European imagination has become somewhat of a truism in scholarship from the last three decades. For some interesting discussions in more recent publications, see Anne Gerritson and Stephen McDowall, "Material Culture and the Other: European Encounters with Chinese Porcelain, ca. 1650-1800," *Journal of World History* 23, no. 1 (2012): 87-113; Ellen C. Huang, "From the Imperial Court to the International Art Market: Jingdezhen Porcelain Production as Global Visual Culture." *Journal of World History* 23, no. 1 (2012): 115-45; and Berg, et al, eds. *Goods from the East, 1600–1800: Trading Eurasia*, 2015.

13. Hachiro Oguchi, "Japanese *Shakudō*, Its History, Properties and Production from Gold-Containing Alloys," *GoldBull* 16, no. 4 (1983): 125.

14. Assuming De Bruijn and Kist are correct in their hypothesis that concurrent centers of Sawasa manufacture existed, this means such centers would have arisen after 1700.

15. This text is titled *Soken Kishoi* (1781); Oguchi, "Japanese *Shakudō*," 125. A deliberation on the private, privileged knowledge of *shakudō* production is worthy of consideration, but beyond the scope of the present paper.

16. Hallebeek identified pieces created using lost wax techniques as well as appliqué. The outward effect is nearly indiscernible. Peter Hallebeek, "Scientific analysis of metal alloys and surface layers of *Sawasa objects," Sawasa: Japanese export art in black and gold, 1650-1800*, ed. Max De Bruijn and Bas Kist (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; Zwolle: Waanders Publishers, 1998): 34.

17. Oguchi, "Japanese *Shakudō*," 126, 128-29.

18. For a lengthier discussion, see De Bruijn and Kist, *Sawasa*, 21. Oddly, the Rijksmuseum's website currently attributes the surface treatment of *Tonkinservies* incorrectly as enameling, much as Graswinckel did with his new tobacco box.

19. De Bruijn and Kist, *Sawasa*, 9, 30.

20. Bea Brommer, *To my dear Pieternelletje: Grandfather and granddaughter in VOC time, 1710-1720*, Leiden: Brill, 2015: 81; When merchant ships, especially Chinese junks, arrived in Batavia with new merchandise, nearly half the colony's population turned out to admire and purchase, but Company employees, particularly high-ranking officials like van Outhoorn, always had first pick from the lot.

21. Brommer, *To my dear Pieternelletje*, 96-97, fig. 89 & 90.

22. Brommer, *To my dear Pieternelletje*, 28.

23. De Bruijn and Kist also suggest that Japanese trade caps and exclusions on certain commodities may have also played a part, although no official documentation mentions this in relation to Sawasa; *Sawasa*, 26.

24. Leonard Blussé, "The Batavia connection: the *Chinese junks and their merchants." In Chinese and Japanese Porcelain for the Dutch Golden Age*, ed. by Jan van Campen and Eliëns, Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers, 2014: 104.

25. T. Volker, *Porcelain and the Dutch East India Company as recorded in the dagh-registers of Batavia Castle, those of Hirado and Deshima, and other contemporary papers 1602-1682* (Leiden: Brill, 1971): 16.

26. Brommer, *To my dear Pieternelletje*, 71.

27. Brommer, *To my dear Pieternelletje*, 13.

28. Sgourev and Van Lent offer a detailed analysis of VOC records demonstrating that the VOC maintained a remarkably even-keeled approach to private trade in the eighteenth century, and these provisions were financially motivated based on the profits in Asian trade; see Stoyan V. Sgourev and Wim van Lent, "Balancing Permission and Prohibition: Private Trade and Adaptation at the VOC," *Social Forces* 93, no. 3 (2014): 944-948.

29. De Bruijn and Kist, Sawasa, 26.

30. Jan De Vries, "Understanding Eurasian Trade in the Era of the Trading Companies," *Goods from the East, 1600-1800: Trading Eurasia*, ed. Maxine Berg, et. al (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015): 15-16.

31. Sgourev and Van Lent, "Balancing Permission and Prohibition," 936-937.

32. Meike von Brescius, "Worlds Apart? Merchants, Mariners, and the Organization of the Private Trade in Chinese Export Wares in Eighteenth-Century Europe," *Goods from the East, 1600-1800: Trading Asia*, ed. Maxine Berg, et. al (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015): 173-74; Von Brescius, *Private Enterprise*, 92-94. Although Von Brescius focuses on trade between Britain and Canton, she specifically cites the VOC in her discussions of private trade 'testing.'

33. Volker, *Porcelain and the Dutch East India Company*, 37; Robert Finlay, "The Pilgrim Art: The Culture of Porcelain in World History." *Journal of World History* 9, no. 2 (1998): 171. Starting in the 1630s, new shapes were requested nearly every trading season, which testifies to the Chinese manufacturers' adaptability and sensitivity to consumer needs.

34. Pierson, "Chinese porcelain," 282; Maxine Berg, "Asian Luxuries and the Making of the European Consumer Revolution," *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires, and Delectable Goods*, ed. Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002): 239.

35. For example, see Jan van Campen and Titus Eliëns (eds), *Chinese and Japanese Porcelain for the Dutch Golden Age* (Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers, 2014); Maxine Berg, et. al (eds), *Goods from the East 1600-1800: Trading Eurasia* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Tamara H. Bentley (ed), *Picturing Commerce in and from the East Asian Maritime Circuits, 1550-1800* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019).

36. Berg, "Asian Luxuries," 237. European trade bans in China meant that no direct (legal) trade occurred between the Dutch Republic and China during the seventeenth century. Thus, it is nearly inconceivable how so much Chinese porcelain traveled back to Amsterdam under these circumstances. These quantities, despite the lack of sanctioned trade, speak to the enormous commercial volume of illicit trade during this period. See Martine Gosselink, "The Dutch East India Company in Asia," *Asia in Amsterdam: The Culture of Luxury in the Golden Age*, ed. Karina H. Corrigan, et. al (London: Yale University Press, 2015): 24.

37. Berg, "Asian Luxuries," 237.

38. High quality lacquer sometimes required up to thirty or more coats. Patricia Frick, et. al. "Introduction," *Production, Distribution and Appreciation: New Aspects of East Asian Lacquer Ware*, ed. Patricia Frick and Annette Kieser (Leiden: Brill, 2018): 1-3.

39. Brommer, *To my dear Pieternelletje*, 193.

40. Cynthia Viallé, "'To Capture Their Favor:' On Gift-Giving by the VOC," *Mediating Netherlandish Art and Material Culture in Asia*, ed. Michael North, et. al (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014): 293-294.

41. Anton Schweizer, "The Elector's Japan: Reading Export Lacquer in Baroque Germany," *Production, Distribution and Appreciation: New Aspects of East Asian Lacquer Ware*, ed. Patricia Frick, et. al (Leiden: Brill, 2018): 125-26, 134.

42. For an extended discussion on the debates surrounding the term "luxury" in the early modern European mind, see Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger (eds), *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), especially the editors' chapter, "The Rise and Fall of the Luxury Debates," 7-27 and Jan de Vries, "Luxury in the Dutch Golden Age in Theory and Practice," 41-56.

43. Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction: commodities and the politics of value," *The social life of things: commodities in cultural perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013): 40.

44. Robert G. Dunn, *Identifying Consumption: Subjects and Objects in Consumer Society* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008): 2.

45. Grant McCracken, "Culture and Consumption: A Theoretical Account of the Structure and Movement of the Cultural Meaning of Consumer Goods," *Journal of Consumer Research* 13, no. 1 (1986): 78-80.

46. Brommer, *To my dear Pieternelletje*, 82-83.

47. De Vries, *Industrious Revolution*, 126-133.

48. Maxine Berg, "In Pursuit of Luxury: Global History and British Consumer Goods in the Eighteenth Century." *Past and Present* 182 (2004): 92.

49. Maxine Berg, "New commodities, luxuries, and their consumers in eighteenth-century England," *Consumers and luxury: consumer culture in Europe*, 1650-1850, ed. Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 1999): 69.

50. For further reading on European imitation industries of Asian manufactured goods, see Maxine Berg, "From Imitation to Invention: Creating Commodities in Eighteenth-Century Britain," *The Economic History Review* 55, no. 1 (2002): 1–30.

51. Suzanne Lambooy, "Imitation and inspiration: the artistic rivalry between Delft earthenware and Chinese porcelain," *Chinese and Japanese Porcelain for the Dutch Golden Age*, ed. Van Campen and Eliëns, Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers, 2014: 231.

52. McCracken, "Culture and Consumption," 71.

53. Interestingly, although lacquer is associated with a glossy surface, a thin enough layer will produce a matte effect on the surface; De Bruijn and Kist, *Sawasa*, 9.

54. De Bruijn and Kist, Sawasa, 19.

55. Inventory of the estate of Gustaaf Willem Baron van Imhoff, Batavia, November 9, 1750, Inv. Nr. 894, Domeinarchieven, Provincial Archives of Noord-Brabant, Nassause.

56. Inventory of the estate of Joan van Hoorn, Batavia, 1711, Inv. 5006, p.735, Municipal Archives, Amsterdam.

57. Inventory of Willem van Outhoorn, December 1720, Inv. 781, archives Rosendael, Rijksarchief Arnhem.

58. De Bruijn and Kist, *Sawasa*, 28.

59. *Catalogus van een fraay Cabinet konstige en playsante Schilderijen etc. [ ] J.A. Sichterman [to be sold August 20, 1764]*, No. 605-A, Archive Sichterman. Rijksarchief Groningen. Sichterman's estate specifically lists utensils for the consumption of coffee, tea, and tobacco.

60. *Catalogue [ ] of [ ] curiosities [ ] from the inheritance of the gentleman Mr. Wouter Valckenier*, Inv. Unknown, Municipal Archives Amsterdam; Inventory of Roelof Blok, steekarchief Hoorn, notariëel archief Enkhuizen, not. A. van der Willigen, July 10 1776, Inv. 1390; *Catalogue of [ ] precious curiosities such as Tonquinese chiselled, porcelain [ ] of the late [ ] Pieter Cornelis Hasselaar [announced in the Amsterdam Newspaper], November 18*, 1797, 5672, Lugt Repertorium.

61. Rijksmuseum, "Tonkinservies, anonymous, 1700 - 1800," hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.31603. Accessed August 5, 2023.

62. De Bruijn and Kist, *Sawasa*, 30.

63. Ferdinand de Saussure. *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Wade Baskin, ed. Perry Meisel, et. al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011 [1916]): 66.

64. De Bruijn and Kist, *Sawasa*, 9.

"Distance of Ambivalence" in Persona Performance: How Tseng Kwong Chi Appropriates the Mao Suit*

by Jacob Zhicheng Zhang

Contrary to popular belief, the Mao suit did not originate as the de facto communist clothing in China. Its emergence during the Republican era (1912–1949) as the "Zhongshan suit," named after Republican leader Sun Yat-sen, was strongly influenced by Chinese student uniforms and Japanese and Soviet military outfits.[1] The Mao suit, featuring a high and turned-down collar and four buttoned pockets, signifies a cosmopolitan urge to distinguish itself from the side-fastening tradition of late imperial Chinese clothing.[2] From the 1950s, as the Mao suit and its variants increasingly dominated the wardrobes in the People's Republic of China (1949–), its appearance became synonymous with the arrival of a communist cadre.[3]

Born to anti-communist parents in British Hong Kong and working as an artist from Canada in New York in the 1980s, Tseng Kwong Chi (1950–1990) donned the Mao suit to stage and photograph identity performances that blur, and more crucially, question the boundary between perceived reality and staged fiction. His recognized works, including the *East Meets West a.k.a. Expeditionary Self-Portrait Series* (1979–1989) and the *Costumes at the Met Series* (1980), feature the Mao suit prominently.[4] In these works, Tseng "infiltrates" and deconstructs public spaces under the guise of a self-named "ambiguous ambassador" connected with communist China, such as popular tourist destinations and the Met Gala. The role the Mao suit plays in aiding these parodically deconstructive performative acts has received attention from critics.[5]

The deconstructive readings, while indispensable for understanding Tseng's work, often conceal other creative strategies, preferring clarity in militancy to understanding what I call a "distance of ambivalence" between the performance artist and his persona. In an essay that draws on the formal repetition of the Mao suit evident in Tseng's photographs, Asian American studies scholar Warren Liu sharply identifies that the readings of Tseng's work as deconstructive of the "Oriental other" stereotype "have become somewhat *de rigueur*, even if that context has been engagingly reframed under multiple rubrics."[6] Liu then goes on to argue that the multiplied and codified Mao suit can constitute a formal interpretive frame, away from the life narratives mentioned frequently in conjunction with Tseng's work. Within the consideration of this essay, to maintain that Tseng's work can act in defiance of the stereotypical values

ascribed to him and his racialized existence is certainly a justifiable argument. This is because the mark of difference created at the junction of the Mao suit, Western landmarks, and the title of the series "East Meets West" is made hyperbolic and ripe for biographical and disidentificatory analysis.[7] Yet, it is imperative to reengage with the performative-photographic work, acknowledging but working alternatively from the subversive readings of Tseng's practice. Picking up on Liu's divergent interest in Tseng's photographic works allows the spectator to probe beyond the recurrent approach to analysis and locate other creative logics at work.

My argument in this essay is twofold. Firstly, I examine how the subversive interpretation of Tseng's use of the Mao suit shapes the artist's lauded reception. This examination of the reception is pivotal, as it unveils a retrospectively narrowed distance between a minority appearance and a conceptual activist core recognized by an insightful audience. Although this correlation is encouraging, it risks neglecting facets of the artist's identity crucial to his practice. Concurrently, deviating from Liu's argument which sets aside biographical interpretations to emphasize the conceptual repetitiveness of the Mao suit in photographs, my discussion maintains its foundation in Tseng's self-referential performance—the "self" here encompasses Tseng as *both* a transnational artist and a racialized other. I contend that a distance of ambivalence between the identities informs Tseng's appropriation of the Mao suit, shedding light on how Tseng's adoption of the multivalent outfit remains heterogeneous to the minoritarian image he might project. This distance, when compared with other art projects that also construct and deconstruct identities through persona performance, introduces transnational perspectives to the interpretation of art made in the United States, challenging quick judgments about a queer diasporic artist of color.

Beyond the Smooth Infiltration: The Enduring Distance Between Tseng's Rhetorical and Fictional Identities

The *East Meets West Series* consists of self-portraits placing Tseng in the Mao suit against iconic Western tourist locales. Despite the apparent ideological dissonance, tourists observing Tseng's performance accept the communist guise as Tseng's actual identity, which prompts them to interrogate the artist with curious questions.[8] Similar scenarios occur during the production of the *Costumes at the Met Series* (*fig.* 1), where Tseng, donning the Mao suit, gains entry to the Qing dynasty–themed gala hosted by the Costume Institute as a press member of the now-defunct *Soho Weekly News*.[9] In the resultant images, Tseng, alongside New York's cultural, political, and economic luminaries—some

Figure 1. Monique van Vooren, Andy Warhol, his entourage and Tseng Kwong Chi, 1980, *Costumes at the Met* series. Photo by Tseng Kwong Chi © Muna Tseng Dance Projects, New York. www.tsengkwongchi.com

attired in Chinese-inspired or orientalist fashion—joyfully poses with a cassette Dictaphone. In so far as Tseng is mistaken for an emissary or journalist from China, he interacts and poses with gala attendees, as seen in an image where Tseng appears to interview Andy Warhol and his entourage.

In critical narratives that applaud Tseng's performance as forays into normative public spaces, the Mao suit enables Tseng to convincingly present himself as the "ambiguous ambassador." This persona then allows him to disidentify with the role—that is, to operate within yet resist the exclusionary and racist regimes of representation that eagerly orientalize him. Thus, by underlining the initial success and subsequent utility of the "infiltration," such interpretations view the Mao suit as a tacit but potent tool for the artist. However, what is seldom scrutinized is the actual level of conviction and credibility that Tseng is intent on investing in the Maoist emissary/journalist façade. Here, the well-mentioned identification badge—emblazoned with "SlutForArt" and his mirrored-sunglassed headshot—worn with the Mao suit exemplifies Tseng's deliberately flawed mimicry. Sporting this badge, Tseng's presence in spaces typically closed to him, like the Costume Institute Benefit, is likely to attract skepticism or even outright challenges from gatekeepers.

Contrary to first assuming Tseng delivers a credible real-life performance, only to later elaborate on the mimicry's (not so) clandestine insincerity—thereby superimposing and closing the distance between the façade and the conceptual strategy—I suggest that his performance exhibits a divided or internally discordant sense of identity from the onset. On one hand, borrowing from Bill T. Jones, choreographer and Tseng's friend, Tseng lets the "blankness" expected of him to take hold and transforms into a "smooth surface" for others to project their fictional perceptions of his identity without arousing suspicion.[10] On the other hand, Tseng's rhetorical subjectivity as a performance artist, not confined to his assumed persona, occasionally emerges. The fictional and rhetorical identities tend not to be equally legible, as different viewers at different times perceive this performativity variously.[11]

The instances of "confusion" between the identities and their subsequent disentanglement are central to my inquiry into the distance between the artist's identities. When the audience perceives Tseng's performance as more than an attempt to covertly infiltrate social functions, the Mao suit surfaces as an object teeming with meanings, rather than a disguise concealing the artist's rhetorical role and intent. In other words, recognizing the suit as something other than a mere tool for camouflage illuminates the discernible distance between Tseng and the facilitative role of the Mao suit in his infiltration.[12] It was also Bill T. Jones who once characterized Tseng's performance as "Chinese drag."[13] Drawing on the notion of "drag," I propose that Tseng's work is a vivid masquerade of diverse racial, national, and ideological expressions, and I will examine selected images from the *East Meets West* and *Costumes at the Met Series*, as well as a documentary on the *East Meets West Series* and a dance-theater tribute to the late Tseng. By juxtaposing the works with key biographical details that permeate Tseng's self-implicating performance, I explore the insights into considering Tseng's approach to the Mao suit as a case of creative appropriation. The scrutiny of the internal conflicts rattles the superficially stable semantics of the Mao suit and spotlights the act of appropriation as one that teases out the enduring distance between the artist and his chosen signifier, ultimately exposing transnational complexities and tensions beyond multiculturalist confines.

Political Commentaries, Performativity, and the Risk of Irrecognition: *East Meets West Manifesto* and Its Ambivalence

Tseng's adoption of the Mao suit only *ostensibly* and *momentarily* facilitates his passage into a Chinese communist cadre. In 1989, Tseng penned an article titled "Cities" for the Japanese magazine *Inside*, introducing with text and images his

East Meets West Series. He opens with an analytical recounting of his typical interactions with "real" tourists at his chosen sites:

> It is not easy being a Chinese tourist. There are stares: a Red Guard on the loose? Then the questions: "Do you speak English?"; "Why do you wear that suit?"; "Parlez-vous français?"; "Where are you from?"; "Why do you wear that suit?" Should I tell them the truth, that I am actually a New York conceptual performance artist/photographer carrying on my lifetime art project of the East meeting the West. Or shall I really be a tourist from China. It is certainly more fun being a tourist with a camera.[14]

Christine Lombard's 1984 documentary about the *East Meets West Series* confirms the onlookers' intrigue, yet a sense of rehearsed preparation in either Tseng's narration or the filmed interactions is apparent. Tseng, appearing both on-camera and as a voiceover, remarks: "When I work in the streets, people ask me what I do. Sometimes, I invite them to be in the picture with me."[15] Accompanying this commentary is a likely staged short scene: a passerby is drawn to Tseng, who is about to strike a pose before an equestrian statue, and Tseng invites her to join the photograph. Post-photo, they exchange a handshake—there is no further conversation or questioning. Calmness permeates Tseng's voiceover, complementing the short but composed interaction between Tseng and the passerby. One would imagine a compact moment of what could be cultural stereotyping might be filled with frustrating inquiries and perturbation. However, like the calmness suggested by the period punctuation marks following the interrogative sentences in "Cities," in the documentary, Tseng prioritizes a composed demeanor and projects an overly rehearsed act, even though he does not immediately reveal to his onlooking audience that he is, actually, not a traveler from communist China.

Pointing out the rehearsed quality in Tseng's performance is not equivalent to suggesting that Tseng's Maoist identity is merely a swift pretense, as if it is a persona that should appear or disappear easily depending on the presence or absence of the outfit. If there is a readily identifiable purpose with Tseng's decision to delay only so slightly revealing his artist self, it is to poke fun at the rooted misconception of all Chinese as communists and contemporary China as a country definable by surveillance, dictatorship, and subjugation. This interpretation that builds on the temporariness of the credible performance is in line with the fact that Tseng resorts to a conceptualist calmness in explicating his communist camouflage, jointly gesturing towards geopolitically commentative underpinnings of the performance. In Lombard's documentary, Tseng opens his narration by linking the *East Meets West Series* to Nixon's televised 1972 visit

to China, calling relations between the United States and China "official and superficial."[16] By foregrounding political conflicts and the ensuing diplomacy, the latter of which he perceives as empty, Tseng implicitly designates his satirical art to challenge late–Cold War national and international rhetorics.

East Meets West Manifesto (1983; *fig.* 2), an iconic and originary photograph of the *East Meets West Series*, also expresses this geopolitical concern. Wearing the Mao suit, Tseng positions himself at the center and between the US and PRC national flags, appearing physically as the "ambassador" he purports himself to be. Yet, the space depicted is also multilayered, and Tseng is about to draw up the US flag like a curtain, so he could walk from the visually flattened and cramped intermediate space between the PRC and US flags to the very front. His stance is steady and his face unsmiling, evoking the stereotypical stern-faced comrade while revealing a sense of determination because of the very sternness. Tseng might seem as if he is a determined communist cadre, but he is also, physically, and metaphorically, an in-between figure who is about to move, in an almost utopian resolute manner, beyond his intermediary position backed by communism and delimited by democratic capitalism.

Figure 2. *East Meets West Manifesto*, 1983
Photo by Tseng Kwong Chi © Muna Tseng Dance Projects, New York. www.tsengkwongchi.com

Despite Tseng's efforts to unfold geopolitical tensions through appropriating the Mao suit, it remains necessary for me to again acknowledge his temporarily credible performance in public: the likelihood of Tseng being mistaken as a communist Chinese subject is high when he performs in public with the outfit. Asian American and visual culture studies scholar Sean Metzger lays out in detail in his book *Chinese Looks: Fashion, Performance, Race* the development of US perceptions of the Mao suit. Stating that "the Mao suit was never a stable signifier," Metzger traces the history of the perceptions from the suit's initial equivalence to the unsophisticated communist faction in China during the Chinese Civil War (1927–1950), to the suit's later significance as a metonym for both communism and China during the Cold War.[17] By the time Tseng performed in the Mao suit, there had been "a new contextualization

of the Mao suit in American cultural production," which Metzger explains as fueled by increasingly comedic portrayals of Mao as the Cold War dragged on.[18] Nixon's efforts to establish formal ties between the United States and China also contributed to the popularization of Mao paraphernalia, as the diplomatic visit was extensively documented and widely broadcast and reproduced.[19] As one of the kitschy Mao paraphernalia, the Mao suit entered the North American commodity circuit. This entrance resulted in not only Tseng's acquisition of the Mao suit at a Montréal thrift store, but also the onlookers' ready recognition of Tseng as a Chinese communist traveler.[20] However, given the uneven dynamic between the fictional and rhetorical identities, the onlookers' recognition of Tseng as a Chinese communist is tantamount to their disregard for Tseng's other identity: a gay male artist based in North America. To simultaneously recognize multiple identities of the artist, along with the distance of ambivalence between them, is an act that addresses the multifaceted Mao suit.

My analysis finds Tseng in this composite position that embodies political commentaries, performativity, and the risk of irrecognition, but as I have indicated in the section before, the ways in which this position is treated can vary. In that interpretation of this position, Tseng being taken as a Chinese communist traveler appears to exist in a causal relationship with the recognition of Tseng as a politically active gay male artist based in New York during the Reagan years and AIDS crisis. In other words, the initial dismissive irrecognition of Tseng—the incognito artist in the streets—has fed into a belated and somewhat vindicative understanding of him as a queer artist. This transformative interpretation that shrinks the distance between the seemingly norm-conforming performance and the activist figure can be observed in the analysis of Tseng's performance as infiltration. Partly focusing on Tseng's *Costumes at the Met Series* and premising his writing on José Esteban Muñoz's theory of disidentification, Asian American and performance studies scholar Joshua Chambers-Letson suggests "that Tseng's performance practice was a mode of minoritarian infiltration—a militant tactic geared towards surreptitiously entering into spaces and structures that one struggles to disrupt and even destroy."[21] By entering the Met Gala as an undercover artist pretending to be a communist journalist, only "to reveal the decadence, vulgarity, and shallowness of the elite sphere," Tseng meets the criteria for managing minoritarian subversion.[22] But is militancy truly so overwhelmingly characteristic of Tseng's communist look? If we shift our attention back to the ambivalent but irreducible distance between the identities and further to Tseng's always present rhetorical identity as an artist, we can situate his transnational concerns. Those concerns demonstrate a biographical side as well as the geopolitical side, existing alongside the artist's better-known minoritarian, infiltrating mode.

Some background information about Tseng's ways of life can help address the transnationality that the performance speaks to, as it offers a peek into the significatory distance that Tseng the artist finds between himself and his Maoist persona. Propelled by the communist triumph over Kuomintang in the Chinese Civil War, Tseng's family moved from mainland China to Hong Kong, then a British colony. Tseng Kwong Chi was born Joseph Tseng in Hong Kong in 1950. Fearing the seemingly encroaching tumult of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), the Tseng family moved again by the mid-1960s, this time to the white suburbs of Vancouver for a more stable North American middle-class lifestyle. As a young adult, Tseng moved from Vancouver to Montréal, Paris, and finally, New York. He had his father send him to study art in Paris at the École Supérieure d'Arts Graphiques after attending the University of British Columbia in Vancouver and Sir George Williams University in Montréal.[23] Educated in English and French as well as bourgeois lifestyles and tastes, according to his sister Muna Tseng, "[he] was a snob, an aesthete, an intellectual, a spoiled rotten, first born, number one Chinese son."[24] When Tseng moved to New York to join his sister in 1978 because he could not obtain a French resident visa, he did so as a queer man of color and artist policed by the über-conservative Reagan administration, and simultaneously as a transnational flâneur who was used to sponsored traveling and schooling as a way of living.[25] For the East Meets West a.k.a. *Expeditionary Self-Portrait Series*, Tseng continued to travel across the world, posing for self-portraits of his Mao suit–clad alter ego in Canada, Brazil, Japan, etc.

Within this impressive, almost life-long itinerary, what is frequently unheeded is Tseng's biographical dissociation from the communist figure that his performance and photographs conjure. In a historicist manner that references theater productions, news articles, and other components of the US mediascape, Metzger corresponds Chinese bourgeois subjects to *qipao*, a "traditional" body-hugging dress often rendered hyper-feminine in Anglophone imagination.[26] Despite coming from a background that is highly evocative of *qipao*, Tseng goes for the garment that appears to be the opposite of it: the masculine, sexually oppressive, and communist Mao suit, according to its American codification.[27] Taking into account this iconographic conflict between *qipao* and the Mao suit, one can argue that the determination of Tseng as having convincingly portrayed a traveling Chinese communist (and thus possessing any of that identity's values)—based on the superficial coordination of his race and outfit—has neglected the historical complexity on the other side of the Pacific before and during the Cold War.

Addressing concerns that delving into Tseng's Kuomintang and petite-bourgeoisie family/personal background might unfairly predetermine the

interpretation his work, my argument aligns with Chambers-Letson's nuanced understanding of performance and its documentation. As Chambers-Letson argues, despite his reservations against over-interpreting Tseng's identity as an Asian subject, "Tseng has deployed queer sensibilities alongside his racial difference to achieve a formal and critical effect within his photographs."[28] To infer that Tseng's performance is relatable to his personal and family life is along the line of interpreting Tseng's performance based on his racial difference. After all, the artist's ideological beliefs and racial identification are biographical factors to contemplate when investigating a body of performative-photographic work that chooses identity as its material and names itself "Self-Portraits."

My argument focuses on the dissonance implicit in the relationship between Tseng and what his costume signifies. However, I do not argue to completely distance Tseng from being read as a communist. As mentioned previously, Tseng does ostensibly and momentarily appear as a communist cadre to many onlookers, and this appearance, when received, has its geopolitically critical connotations. It is the near-permanent alignment of the artist with the values that the outfit represents that is worth reexamining. In Asian American and performance studies scholar Vivian L. Huang's book chapter, which pioneeringly focuses on the "distance" manifest in Tseng's performance and photographs, Huang sharply identifies that "Tseng does not need to be a communist to be read as one." This gesture towards recognizing Tseng's work poses a critique of Cold War orthodoxies, where Chineseness is read automatically as communist and antithetical to democratic capitalism.[29]

Huang's recognition of the communist reading of Tseng serves as a preamble to her thesis on Tseng's apparent inscrutability and its sense of queer distance to the American imaginary, but the distance that this essay concentrates on evokes instead a transnational relationality. In her book chapter, Huang focuses on the inscrutable Chinese performed by Tseng and theorizes the figure as a ground for affective, disidentificatory distancing—which works against the antirelational definition of distance to embrace "a queer diasporic practice of relating."[30] Within this framework of distanced-relational practice, Tseng's disaffected performance turns to enact a queer-of-color critique of the white, heteronormative milieus of American society. More importantly to Huang, as Tseng's performance interfaces with American histories, with the aversion of the performance to positive figuration, it peculiarly registers the triangulated racial violence that has been invisiblized under "racial capitalism."[31] Huang's theorization of the queer distance inspires this essay to direct its attention to the distance of ambivalence present in Tseng's work. Ultimately, this essay aims to shift away from a discourse delimited by national borders, not merely for the fact that transnationality is

an under-discussed aspect of Tseng's work. To put it briefly, transnationality also defies the modern logic of always attempting to locate things within a given scheme of geographic, racial, and social configuration, and through this defiance, we can try to conceive knowledge not undergirded by existing hierarchical orders.[32] It allows us to consider Tseng in less romanticizing manners that might overly identify him with US minoritarian identities.

Revisiting the originary *East Meets West Manifesto* can aid us in pondering this transnational distance of ambivalence. As I have demonstrated earlier, Tseng depicts and enters a diplomatic and ideological limbo that he as a conceptual artist in disguise seeks to transcend. However, if one were to let this photograph resonate within the context of Tseng's personal life, the PRC national flag, employed here as the photographic backdrop, then merits focused attention. In front of the smooth PRC flag, which appears to carpet the studio floor by stretching all the way from the back, Tseng stands in a resolute manner that, paradoxically, also betrays an undercurrent of eager anticipation: the Mao suit has been crisply ironed with traveler's creases on the pant legs, but within the dynamic pose, it takes on wrinkles that suggest motion. His stance, with one foot forward, conveys a preparedness to stride, while the shutter release cable is not taut but slightly coiling, hinting at a sense of bounce, movement, and hurry.

Differentiated from an archetypal socialist realist style that thoroughly romanticizes details to elevate quotidian scenes into idealized moments wanting to last indefinitely, Tseng's use of the socialist Chinese ensemble almost betrays an "internal strife." The smoothness of the PRC flag offers a subtle divergence from the Maoist figure trapped in a moment of haste. As he remains in physical contact with the US flag that was clearly in a rumple before being hung, Tseng comes to embody a mental distance situated between him and the unwrinkled national symbol left behind by him. To an extent, this mental distance "performs the proximal/distant affiliation" that Huang writes of the relationship between Tseng and the war history of Puerto Rico latent in one of Tseng's photographs.[33] By giving form to an ambivalent entanglement between Tseng and the communist iconography, *East Meets West Manifesto* unfolds, perhaps inadvertently, the life story of an artist who comes into the diaspora following the Chinese Civil War, a war fought partially at the dawn of the world-dividing Cold War.

Racialization and Its Shadows: *SlutForArt* as an Alternative Strategy

A short comparison between the reception of Tseng's work and that of artist Nikki S. Lee's (b. 1970) early work allows one to contemplate a potential reason

behind the under-exploration of the transnational tensions underlying Tseng's appropriation of the Mao suit. Having been compared with each other from time to time, Tseng and Lee both utilize masquerading techniques and stage identity performances in presumed public spaces.[34] The differential reception of their work can be attributed, in part, to the complexities of representation and the question of its rightful ownership. Generally speaking, in US contexts today, differences in racial experience among a "Black" subject, an "American Indian" subject, and an "Asian" subject exist and are reified by authorities such as the Census Bureau as perceptually relatively stable.[35] This act of reification necessarily essentializes the concept of race "as something fixed, concrete, and objective," when racial meanings are messy, unstable, and vary across generations.[36] Corresponding to the nationally stabilized differences, which could help keep power imbalances rooted in racial history somewhat in check while perpetuating certain established differences, a fine but firm line between transracial empathy and cultural appropriation is established.

An examination of Lee's early art practice and its reception in the United States can shed light on how, sometimes, the insistence on broad-stroke racial and ethnic distinctions can overshadow other interpretive considerations, regardless of the artist's intent. Lee's lighter skin tone endows her privilege in terms of mainstream social acceptance in the US society, and it is associated with a racial heritage different from many of her temporary compatriots'. Yet, in her "Projects" series (1997–2001), where she changes her appearance to fit into various communities, Lee chooses to cross the racial line without much premeditation. This is evident from considering her appearance in some of

Figure 3. Nikki S. Lee. *The Hispanic Project* (1), 1998
Chromogenic print. Artwork © Nikki S. Lee, courtesy of Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York

Figure 4. Nikki S. Lee. *The Schoolgirls Project* (22), 2000. Chromogenic print
Artwork © Nikki S. Lee, courtesy of Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York

the "Projects," such as *The Hispanic Project* (1998; *fig.* 3), in conjunction with the fact that Lee intends to substitute fashion styles for cultural and racial identities.[37] Therefore, to an American audience, her relatively insensitive adoption of Black and Latina identities through blackface and brownface, along with her capitalization of racially informed inequalities, appears problematic regardless of her own reasoning.[38] It is in this condition that critic Eunsong Kim's polemic against Lee's practice of blackface and brownface is justified.[39]

In this milieu that emphasizes racial and ethnic distinctions, Tseng as a Chinese in diaspora self-portraying a Chinese identity is automatically deemed justifiable, even if the nuanced bond between Tseng and the adopted identity of the Maoist cadre requires certain unpacking. This highly racialized reading of Tseng's performance is picked up by multiculturalist purveyors in the US art world during and after the 1980s and 1990s. In Dan Cameron's short article "Alone Again, Naturally," Tseng is understood as "visually focusing on his Chinese-ness."[40] This contrasts with the more transnationally minded understandings of Tseng as, first, focusing on the prevalent US perception of all Chinese as communists and, second, investigating the Cold War frictions between Chinese Kuomintang members and communists. Tseng's *East Meets West Series* provides much more than the figure of the racial other for domestic contemplation, since his Maoist-appearing persona is transnationally meaningful beyond the US multicultural context.

As Tseng fashions his racial identity consistently in his work, Tseng's familial struggle against communism during and after the Chinese Civil War as well as his personal ambivalence to communist values are underacknowledged

behind Tseng's communist façade. In a sense, the performed racial difference takes center stage in the ethical evaluation of identity performances. Its perceived dynamics, whether consistence or conflict, with the rhetorical identity of the artist create the fold where criticisms occur. Contrary to Tseng and his work, as soon as Lee ventures out of the "Asian" characters to which her biography seems to subscribe her, her work becomes susceptible to a critique based on fair representation as it tilts dangerously towards racially exploitative measures. The costume changes that Lee renders hyper-flexible and uses as key to her "immersive experiences" provide the basis for charges of insensitivity and racism.[41] On the flip side of this controversy, when Lee makes Korean and Japanese American identities parts of her work (*fig.* 4), her work is seldom questioned for yellowface or investigated for its negotiation between Asian and Asian American identities.[42] Instead, Lee is understood as "no longer about sticking out like a sore thumb" by some of her critics in those scenarios.[43]

An alternative interpretative strategy, which also happens to be a work of performance art, can help us place racialization in relation to other aspects of Tseng's work, such as those that are transnationally concerned or uninhibitedly queer bourgeois. Ping Chong and Tseng Kwong Chi's sister Muna Tseng's dance-theater piece *SlutForArt* (1999; *fig.* 5) provides an intimate and sorrowful understanding of Tseng Kwong Chi's oeuvre that is also well-rounded in terms of its reading of Tseng's cultural and political leanings. No longer fixated on the figure of the racial other that the Mao suit–clad Tseng might have symbolized, *SlutForArt* is interested in returning Tseng to his multifaceted life in Hong Kong, Canada, Paris, and New York, surrounded by like-minded and daring friends. This is indicative of the title *SlutForArt*, which implies a fearless attitude and camp endearment while referencing the moniker that Tseng gives himself on the badge. "Scene 7: Things-My-Frère-Liked Dance" exemplifies the attempt to illustrate this life of Tseng, which oscillates between the ascetic communist trope and the exuberance of consumerist lifestyles. In this scene, Muna

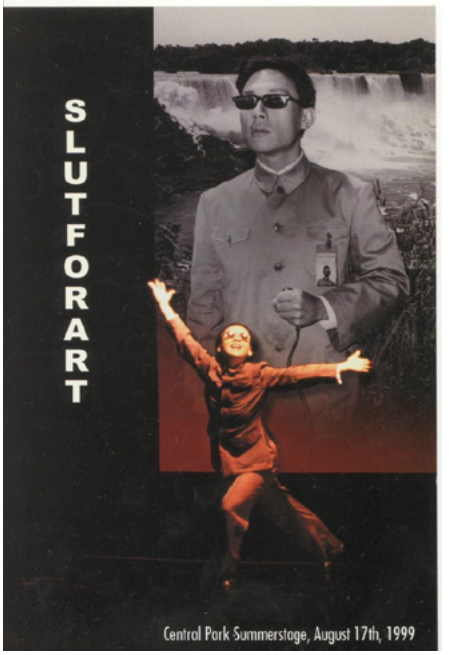

Figure 5. SlutForArt, a.k.a. *Ambiguous Ambassador*, 1999. Choreography by Ping Chong and Muna Tseng. © Muna Tseng Dance Projects, New York. www.munatseng.org

Tseng enters the stage in a black Mao suit, with the slide projection behind her listing things that Tseng Kwong Chi enjoys: "Sole Picasso, Federico Fellini's *La Dolce Vita*… Drunken crabs at Double Happiness, Rita Hayworth's brows, Black truffle omelette, Marilyn Monroe…"[44] The list goes on, referencing popular culture, food, film, music, and dance. Hedonist pleasures particular to Western Europe and North America fill the list, but the dandy details are deliberately absented by the black Mao suit. Before and after "Scene 7," mentions of Tseng's racial difference dot the script; so do those of Tseng's musings on art and photography. Given that this is a commemorative artwork, certain posthumous edits are expected despite its confessed reliance on interviews with Tseng and his friends.[45] Even so, the viewer can still get a taste of the myriad contradictions that make up Tseng's life and art beyond his partial alignment with the queer-artist-of-color critique.

Conclusion

Taking a brief detour into the established discourse of Tseng in landscapes—and within multiple landscape traditions—offers an insightful parallel to the intricate dynamics at play in Tseng's appropriation of the Mao suit. In "Tseng Kwong Chi and the Eugenic Landscape," Asian American studies scholar Iyko Day considers the Mao suit–clad Asian body of Tseng in his *Expeditionary Series* an "alien excess" on North American landscapes. Tseng's reference to early twentieth-century landscape traditions in Canada and the United States brings forth and cracks open the eugenic ideology that builds "race science, white nativism, and settler nationalism… into the landscape."[46] While Day's article emphasizes the queer Asian sensibilities that Tseng has at hand, it also stresses Tseng's acute perception of Western landscape traditions, crediting Tseng for his apt appropriation and adaptation of iconic images.[47] The framework of disidentification is likewise important to Day's interpretation, but Tseng's disidentification is not so militant thanks to his guerilla-style Maoist masquerade; it is rather reliant on the directory of landscape motifs from which it borrows and with which it tacitly contends.[48]

If Tseng's reference to landscape conventions in his *Expeditionary Series* has regenerated the symbolism associated with Canadian and US natural subjects, then in the performance where the Mao suit takes precedence, Tseng has enabled his audience to dwell on the many possible connotations of the outfit, along with their potential contradictions with one another. To gain access to and later critique the social environments that habitually exclude Tseng is undoubtedly a role performed by the suit. However, when the viewer

considers the distance of ambivalence between Tseng the Chinese other and Tseng the conceptual artist manifested in artworks such as *East Meets West Manifesto*, one can look past the instrumentality of the suit and tap into the transnational complexity of the act of appropriating the outfit. This complexity is showcased most strongly in its negotiations with Cold War histories on both politically commentative and intimately personal fronts. In addition, the transnationally meaningful Mao suit can question the dominant role played by racial and ethnic distinctions in evaluations.

Constituting a reality that artists of color grapple with daily in North American societies, racial and ethnic differences are not to be sidelined in favor of a post-racial perspective. This is because boasting a postidentity discourse would mean to succumb to a neoliberal world order hinging on an illusional and often underexamined meritocracy, which is becoming all the more blatant today as the US Supreme Court overturns affirmative action. Nevertheless, given that Tseng Kwong Chi's work conveys themes beyond the racial and sexual identities of his marked by multiculturalism, it is only fair to take up the distance between Tseng and his Maoist persona, perusing it to attend to the transnational and appropriative aspects of Tseng's oeuvre.

Notes

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1. Sean Metzger, "Part III: The Mao Suit," in *Chinese Looks: Fashion, Performance, Race* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2014), 164. For reasons to do with consistency with previous English-language scholarship as well as recognizability, the "Zhongshan suit" is hereafter referred to as the "Mao suit," but it should be noted that *Zhongshan* is an equally accepted name of the attire, if not more so, and the outfit is almost exclusively known as *Zhongshan* in the People's Republic of China (PRC) today, for instance.

2. Vollmer, John E., Verity Wilson, and Kate Lingley, "China: Textiles and Dress," in *Grove Art Online*, October 10, 2023, accessed November 10, 2023, https://doi-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/10.1093/oao/9781884446054.013. 90000371738.

3. Metzger, "Part III," 164–5.
4. The series is hereafter referred to as "the East Meets West series" or "the Expeditionary series," depending on the specific works within the series being invoked for analysis.

5. By "infiltration," I am referring to Joshua Chambers-Letson's catalogue essay titled "On Infiltration," which discusses some of Tseng's works by analyzing their queer militant potential and tactics. Joshua Chambers-Letson, "On Infiltration," in *Tseng Kwong Chi: Performing for the Camera* (Norfolk, VA: Chrysler Museum of Art, 2015), 87–118.

6. Warren Liu, "How Not to See (Or, How Not to *Not* See) the Photographs of Tseng Kwong Chi," *Amerasia Journal* 40, no. 2 (2014): 27–8, https://doi.org/10.17953/amer.40.2.90v2256667185611.

7. Here, I use the term "disidentificatory" to refer to analyses that premise their findings on performance theorist José Esteban Muñoz's theorization of "disidentification." Such analyses can be seen, for instance, in Chamber-Letson, "On Infiltration," 102; Iyko Day, "Tseng Kwong Chi and the Eugenic Landscape," *American Quarterly* 65, no. 1 (March 2013): 93, https://www.jstor.org/stable/41809549. In *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*, Muñoz articulates "disidentification" as an artistic process and strategy of resistance that "works within and outside the dominant public sphere simultaneously." José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politic*s (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 5.

8. *Tseng Kwong Chi: East Meets West*, directed by Christine Lombard (1984), https://vimeo.com/58113614.

9. Amy L. Brandt, "Tseng Kwong Chi and the Politics of Performance," in *Tseng Kwong Chi: Performing for the Camera* (Norfolk, VA: Chrysler Museum of Art, 2015), 32. Chambers-Letson, "On Infiltration," 87.

10. Muna Tseng and Ping Chong, "SlutForArt," *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 22, no. 1 (January 2000): 120, https://doi.org/10.2307/3245920. In the commemorative performance work *SlutForArt* (1999), a large textual portion of which is based on interviews with Tseng's colleagues and friends, Muna Tseng and Ping Chong quote Bill T. Jones speaking about the "blankness" expected of Tseng Kwong Chi.

11. My use of "fictional" and "rhetorical" identities is indebted to Cherise Smith's conception of the two personae in her book *Enacting Others*. In this book that approaches the changing discourse of the "politics of identity" through analyzing works of performance art, Smith considers the rhetorical personae performed by artists through interviews and writings to be distinct from the fictional personae assumed by the artists during their performances. Cherise Smith, "Introduction," in *Enacting Others: Politics of Identity in Eleanor Antin, Nikki S. Lee, Adrian Piper, and Anna Deavere Smith* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 22–3, https://doi-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/10.1215/9780822393085.

12. It should be emphasized that I am not arguing that the "infiltration" model observed in Tseng's work is non-existent or ineffective. As Chambers-Letson has demonstrated in "On Infiltration" and later in book chapter "Tseng Kwong Chi and the Party's End," for the *Moral Majority Series* (1981), for instance, Tseng

makes strategic use of his costume (here a seersucker suit befitting an adopted conservative journalist identity) to exercise guerilla tactics and convince Daniel Fore, among other members of the Christian, right-wing political organization Moral Majority, to stand for portraits. My point is rather that there remains distance to be probed between the artist and his adopted costume. Chambers-Letson, "On Infiltration," 109–12. Joshua Chambers-Letson, "Tseng Kwong Chi and the Party's End," in *After the Party: A Manifesto for Queer of Color Life* (New York: New York University Press, 2018), 211–4, 10.18574/9781479882632.

13. John Philip Habib, "A Life in 'Chinese Drag,'" *Advocate: The National Gay and Lesbian Newsmagazine*, April 2, 1984, 72, https://search-ebscohost-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=qth&AN=6394550&site=ehost-live.

14. Brandt, "Tseng Kwong Chi and the Politics of Performance," 38.

15. Tseng *Kwong Chi*, directed by Lombard (1984).

16. *Tseng Kwong Chi*, directed by Lombard (1984). Tseng made an error in the narration, mistakenly asserting that Richard Nixon went to China in 1979, which was instead the year he started his *East Meets West Series*. Nixon visited China in the official capacity of a US president in 1972.

17. Metzger, "Part III," 167.

18. Metzger, "Part III," 221.

19. Metzger, "Part III," 193.

20. Brandt, "Tseng Kwong Chi and the Politics of Performance," 29.

21. Chambers-Letson, "On Infiltration," 97.

22. Chambers-Letson, "On Infiltration," 97.

23. Brandt, "Tseng Kwong Chi and the Politics of Performance," 26.

24. Muna Tseng, "A Tale of Two Siblings: Kwong Chi and Siu Chuk (a.k.a. Joseph and Muna) *Tseng," in Tseng Kwong Chi: Performing for the Camera* (Norfolk, VA: Chrysler Museum of Art, 2015), 141–8.

25. Brandt, "Tseng Kwong Chi and the Politics of Performance," 29.

26. "This discourse attached to the Mao suit in *Time* and other venues diverged significantly from the association of the *qipao* in roughly the same era, when the sheath shaped women as agents and objects of capitalism... These different looks generally situated Chinese bodies in metonymic relationship to Hong Kong and China, which constituted different timescapes of capitalist and socialist modernization." Metzger, "Part III," 162–3. For the Anglophone cultural trope of a Chinese female character dressed in qipao and operating in a capitalist, bourgeois society, see the British stage play *The World of Suzie Wong* (1958) and the eponymous British-American film made in 1960, as well as Hollywood actor Anna May Wong cast in *qipao* and sheath-shaped outfits inspired by qipao.

27. Since the Mao suit worn by Tseng tends to be more iconically donned by male persons than female persons, *qipao* here can be expanded to include its male counterparts, such as the traditional *changshan* or the tailored Kuomintang military outfit, worn by the Kuomintang leader of China, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, in the company of the *qipao*-clad Madame Chiang/Soong Mei-ling. Additionally, it is worth noting that Chiang Kai-shek frequently donned the Zhongshan suit (here, slightly different from the later Mao suit) for photographs and public occasions, given the seminal role of Sun Zhongshan/Sun Yat-sen within the Kuomintang party and founding history of the Republic of China (ROC). In this passage, it is only within the late–Cold War US context—the context with which Tseng's work interacts most immediately—that the Mao suit is contrasted with *qipao*. Ibid., 161–8.

28. Chambers-Letson, "On Infiltration," 99.

29. Vivian L. Huang, "Distance, Negativity, and Slutty Sociality in Tseng Kwong Chi's Performance Photographs," in *Surface Relations: Queer Forms of Asian American Inscrutability* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2022), 144, https://doi-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/10.1215/9781478023623.

30. Huang, "Distance, Negativity, and Slutty Sociality in Tseng Kwong Chi's Performance Photographs," 137.

31. By "triangulated," I refer to both the racial triangulation of Asian Americans, Black Americans, and white Americans and that of Indigenous, settler, and alien positions, both of which Huang discusses in relation to the Asian American

racial position, its relationality, and queer distance. Ibid., 153, 162. The concept of the racial triangulation of Asian Americans is first raised by Claire Jean Kim and has been later taken up or similarly theorized by many other Asian Americanists. Claire Jean Kim, "The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans," *Politics & Society* 27, no. 1 (March 1999): 105–38, https://doi-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/10.1177/0032329299027001005.

32. Naoki Sakai, "The Regime of Separation and the Performativity of Area," *positions* 27, no. 1 (February 2019): 241–279, https://doi-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/10.1215/10679847-7251910.

33. See *Tank, Puerto Rico* (1987) by Tseng Kwong Chi. Huang, "Distance, Negativity, and Slutty Sociality," 160.

34. For examples of existing comparisons between Tseng and Lee, see Brandt, "Tseng Kwong Chi and the Politics of Performance," 62–71; Irene V. Small, "Spectacle of Invisibility: The Photography of Tseng Kwong Chi and Nikki S. Lee," *Dialogue* (Spring–Summer 2000).

35. For the mentioned categories named differentially as "White," "Black or African American," "American Indian or Alaska Native," "Asian," and "Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander," see "About the Topic of Race," United States Census Bureau, March 1, 2022, https://www.census.gov/topics/population/race/about.html.

36. Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), 54.

37. William L. Hamilton, "Shopping with Nikki S. Lee: Dressing the Part Is Her Art," *New York Times*, December 2, 2001, https://www.nytimes.com/2001/12/02/style/shopping-with-nikki-s-lee-dressing-the-part-is-her-art.html.

38. There is contention regarding whether Lee participates in, for instance, the blackface tradition, and this essay acknowledges the ambiguity. This is because Lee's appearance with a darkened skin tone among Black Americans can gesture towards an American urban phenomenon where Asian Americans become acculturated to Black American fashions and tastes. See Smith, "Nikki S. Lee's *Projects* and the Repackaging of the Politics of Identity," in *Enacting Others*, 219.

39. Eunsong Kim, "Nikki S. Lee's 'Projects'—And the Ongoing Circulation of Blackface, Brownface in 'Art'," *Contempt+orary* (blog), May 30, 2016, http://contemptorary.org/nikki-s-lees-projects-and-the-ongoing-circulation-of-blackface-brownface-in-art/.

40. Dan Cameron, "Alone Again, Naturally," in *Tseng Kwong Chi: Ambiguous Ambassador* (Tucson: Nazraeli Press, 2005), 3.

41. By "immersive experiences," I refer to the "weeks or months each project takes," as Lee goes into communities to form temporary relationships with people and produce snapshots of her taken by others. The immersion is visually conveniently reflected by Lee's apparent acculturation, which is facilitated by her sartorial and style choices. Hamilton, "Shopping with Nikki S. Lee."

42. See *The Schoolgirls Project* (2000) and *The Young Japanese (East Village) Project* (1997) by Nikki S. Lee. One account that analyzes Lee's participation in yellowface is Smith's, as Smith heeds the artist's self-transformation from a Korean immigrant to an urban Asian American person occupying a differentially othered position. Smith, "Nikki S. Lee's *Projects*," 219.

43. Gilbert Vicario and Nikki S. Lee, "Conversation with Nikki S. Lee," in *Projects* (Ostfildern-Ruit, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2001), 104. See also Guy Trebay, "Shadow Play," *New York Times*, September 19, 2004, https://www.nytimes.com/2004/09/19/magazine/shadow-play.html for a brief comment on Lee's "immutable… physiognomy and race," which forms the premise for the imperception or hyper-perception of Lee's identity transformations.

44. Tseng and Chong, "SlutForArt," 121.

45. Tseng and Chong, "SlutForArt," 111.

46. Day, "Tseng Kwong Chi and the Eugenic Landscape," 115.

47. Day, "Tseng Kwong Chi and the Eugenic Landscape," 91–118.

48. Day, "Tseng Kwong Chi and the Eugenic Landscape," 93–4, 98, 115–6.

Bridging Art History and Critical Heritage Studies: A Conversation with Ömür Harmanşah

by Trinidad Rico

In 2015, Ömür Harmanşah's article *ISIS, Heritage, and the Spectacles of Destruction in the Global Media*[1] charted an exciting direction for the growth of a critical heritage field. Examining the attention in the media to cultural heritage destruction—smashing of artifacts, iconoclastic bulldozing of archaeological sites, dynamiting of shrines, tombs, and burning of libraries and archives—Harmanşah questioned the "complacent acceptance of ISIS-authored imagery as documentary." This was a timely wake-up call. The study of heritage and preservation has relied excessively, at times exclusively, on visual and textual documentary archives to establish its own priorities and approaches. Yet, traditional training and debates in this field had not engaged critically and meaningfully with the politics and nuances of visual analysis.[2] It took a cross-over scholar like Ömür Harmanşah, fluent in archaeological discourse and heritage ethics, to bring to the foreground the significance of a stronger theoretical and methodological partnership between art history and heritage studies, such as the one driving the Cultural Heritage and Preservation Studies program at Rutgers.

Trinidad Rico is Associate Professor and Director of Cultural Heritage and Preservation Studies in the Department of Art History of Rutgers University. Her ethnographic and archival research on heritage practices has focused on the mobilization of risk in post-disaster heritage in Indonesia, the negotiations between religious and heritage traditions in Qatar, and the role of rumor and secrecy in the emergence of atomic heritage in Argentina. Her latest publications include *Global Heritage, Religion, and Secularism* (2021, Cambridge University Press), *Methods and Methodologies in Heritage Studies* (2024, University College London Press) and the forthcoming volume *The Heritage State: Religion and Preservation in Contemporary Qatar* (Cornell University Press).

Ömür Harmanşah is Director of UIC's School of Art & Art History, and Associate Professor of Art History. His current research focuses on the history of landscapes in the Middle East and the politics of ecology, climate justice, place, and cultural heritage in the age of the Anthropocene. He is the author of *Cities and the Shaping of Memory in the Ancient Near East* (Cambridge UP, 2013), and *Place, Memory, and Healing: An Archaeology of Anatolian Rock Monuments* (Routledge, 2015). Harmansah directed a regional archaeological survey in Turkey titled *Yalburt Yaylası Archaeological Landscape Research Project* (2010-2021). He is working on a monograph titled *Landscapes of the Anthropocene: Archaeology, Fieldwork, and the Politics of Heritage in the Middle East* (under contract with Routledge). He is a co-author of Thames & Hudson's global art history textbook, *The History of Art: A Global View* (2021).

Ömür Harmanşah is Associate Professor of Art History and Director of the School of Art & Art History at the University of Ilinois at Chicago. He is a landscape archaeologist and architectural historian, who writes on ancient West Asian architecture and material culture. He is passionate about fieldwork and cultural heritage through his ongoing field projects in Turkey. Lately, he has been focusing his energies on climate change and the Anthropocene and how the ecological crisis impacts the way we write history. In November of 2023, he was a Distinguished Speaker for the Department of Art History at Rutgers, after which we had a chance to discuss the history of tensions between our fields, current disciplinary intersections, and future directions.

TR: Ömür, it is no secret that your work has been extremely influential for my work to the point of providing a clear rationale and roadmap for taking on the position of Director of CHAPS in 2017 and rethinking its curriculum. Before *Spectacles of Destruction*, I had not given much thought to the uncritical circulation of images and the only time that the term 'art historical' had crossed my anthropological reading lists was to dismiss apolitical interpretations of complex cultural phenomena, naturally denoting an old disciplinary paradigm. Were you similarly alienated from heritage studies -a field largely derived from anthropology and a concern with the politics of the past- in your training? How were you introduced to this field?

ÖH: That's very generous, Trinidad. Likewise, I must say that your *Heritage and the Visual Archive* conference, where I met you for the first time, was

transformative for my thinking on this productive cross-over between critical visual studies and the politics of cultural heritage. That's when I thought, OK, maybe I am not alone in pursuing this. I was actually introduced to heritage through the problematic and highly apolitical field of architectural conservation and heritage preservation in Turkey. The world of architectural restoration and conservation is highly conservative in Turkey (note the irony there), stuck between a narrow and naïve obsession with authenticity and the late capitalist desire to create little islands of nostalgic spaces to bring revenue through excess and touristic consumption. My friends joke about how all old buildings are, in one way or another, restored to become restaurants, regardless of their former function. This culinary takeover of architectural heritage carries the overtones of literal consuming of the material past. Communities and stakeholders are consistently excluded from that process. There is no clear platform for politics to take place. However, I am also a bit frustrated with art history as a discipline and its ways of producing knowledge, which is always performed at a safe distance from public platforms of image politics. In that sense, Christy Gruber's intervention in the public debate around the use of images in Islam, for example, was very interesting and helpful to me.[3]

TR: Of course. I recognize that I am diving into Art History at a very exciting time, at least for debates on Islam. This is not our only thematic overlap. Despite our different trajectories, we met through a shared concern with decolonizing heritage methodologies and epistemologies. But I also learned through our interactions that decolonization can be a challenge in your field. As you were completing your book *The History of Art: A Global View*,[4] you posted a concern on social media: "In response to my little box feature on the cultural biography of Egyptian obelisks (the way they traveled to Rome, Istanbul, Paris etc), one of [the anonymous readers] accused me of writing this "solely for the purpose of parading one's anti-colonialist credentials..." […] Is this how art historians see cultural biography/social life of things?". Your Facebook circle of academics supported you, of course, calling the reviewer 'closet colonialist', a 'non-closeted colonialist', and the field of art history overwhelmingly 'conservative'. Many of these colleagues are themselves art historians. Is an engagement with heritage politics in your work an indicator of decolonization in art history, or are these separate conversations?

ÖH: I am glad you are bringing up social media here, because some of these sharp debates that are carried out on social media, do feed into my writing practice. Actually, [the] ISIS article owes a lot of its fearless argumentation to debates that already happened on Facebook and my responses to certain

colleagues who pushed me to articulate my position. Now, the experience of writing a global art history textbook was an enormous wake-up call for me because I had to respond to dozens of anonymous readers in community colleges and higher learning institutions who teach various iterations of the art history survey. I had to process vast spreadsheets of evaluations for each of my chapters. We are talking about an army of art historians teaching a greater army of students who are offered very conservative and strictly circumscribed narratives. When you are trying to update or upset that narrative with new evidence (think about the impact of the new paradigm-shifting evidence in Graeber and Wengrow,[5] for example), you are fighting an uphill battle because the army occupying the summit is so voluminous and protective of their domain. You can't shift the paradigm in a textbook. That fight has to happen elsewhere. I learned that. Decolonization is not so much happening in the very core of the discipline but on its margins or remote satellites or borderlands, like visual culture and visual literacy, gender and sexuality studies, queer art history, Black studies, interdisciplinary arts, indigenous studies, comparative art history, and so on. These emergent agencies are kept safely at the gates by humanities gatekeepers, who are, however, severely challenged by the demands of the new generation of students, and the dropping enrollments to classes like Renaissance or Baroque Art. Here is my question for you: do you think heritage studies is acting as or can be one of those critical borderland zones on the edge of art history?

TR: Yes and no. The transformations in the field that gave rise to a so-called 'critical turn' over the last 30 years are exemplary, in many cases committing to significant epistemological and ontological shifts that represent strong examples of decolonization. But this epistemological revolution has also stalled in some ways. Structurally speaking, not being given a place to act as a standalone entity in the typical structures of higher learning in the United States and, instead, being relegated to a conversation that happens in the margins of other disciplines means that the future of the field is burdened by the baggage of these other traditional silos (anthropology, architecture, art history). These spaces are not necessarily engaging critically with the propositions of a study of heritage. Conversely, I also fear that in many ways heritage studies gained so much productive territory that is has become complacent and in need of further examination, possibly as a response to being rejected from being incorporated at the center of these same disciplines that host it. An example of this tension is the fact that curricula in heritage studies has not typically included any training in visual analysis, and this has clearly come at a cost. The CHAPS program at Rutgers offers advanced training in critical methods and methodologies but, for

an expert engagement with 'the visual,' it is largely supported by other art history courses and colleagues. So, to return to the subject of many of our exchanges, how does the field grow in that direction? How can heritage and preservation programs retrofit this type of training, especially programs disconnected from art history departments – as they typically are?

ÖH: This is one of my favorite topics to discuss. I am a big advocate of (audio) visual or media literacy training for our students, a training that reaches beyond the humanities and draws students into the social sciences, the medical fields, engineering, science, and law. Just as we teach them critical reading and writing as their basic general education training, we must teach them visual and media literacy. New generations are already super attuned to this kind of training, so they would respond well. Our university's reading and writing program has already mobilized the visual literacy component as part of the curriculum. This is already happening whether we like it or not. There is a massive movement towards slowing down the degrading presentation of images of human remains, regardless of whether they are ancient or contemporary. For a long time, I was really frustrated that my own art history department was not interested in this idea of focusing on visual literacy. Then I realized that it would have to be developed elsewhere, where visual culture is not a taboo, not in the art history context, which is still firmly committed to its humanistic genealogy.

TR: Creating more neutral spaces to incubate new approaches would be ideal. We had a similar challenge during the 'critical turn' in heritage, when calls for more anthropological methods are met with resistance by programs unrelated to anthropological training. In the US, one of the reactions to this call was to add the word 'intangible heritage' to what are essentially historic preservation programs more worried about the standards of documentation than the dynamic and changing social and cultural value of heritage, which includes in no small measure permitting other forms of expertise to emerge. There is very little commitment to considering how methods and methodologies themselves stagnate the field, which is why you are reprising your role of art historical oracle in my forthcoming volume *Methods and Methodologies in Heritage Studies*,[6] re-iterating the problem of visuality in our work. Do you consider yourself a scholar in heritage studies now?

ÖH: Being a heritage studies scholar would be too big of a claim for me, I think. Because I am not sure if I am fully committed to the wide spectrum of heritage methods that people have been using and putting so much labor into. The way I connect to heritage most profoundly is through fieldwork, as opposed to any museum-based, curatorial or artifact-based work. Fieldwork takes me to

decolonial situations of engaging with local communities, to landscapes where heritage is embedded and actively living and flourishing, to the countryside where the extractive practices are undermining the entire institution of heritage, what David Turnbull calls 'knowledge spaces.'[7] Knowledge spaces are spaces in which deep-seated knowledge is built into the fabric of the place. Fieldwork allows me to chronicle the current injustices that are taking place in the late capitalist countryside but also helps with experimental methodologies and creativity flowing. I published a recent chapter on this in a precarious heritage volume.[8] If you read it, it sounds very angry and tiring, but this is the state of affairs, sadly. More hopefully, I am currently teaching a class titled World Architecture, Climate, and Ecology, where I am also grappling with the idea of indigenous architecture as an evolving body of knowledge and material practice.

TR: I certainly consider you a rare scholar in heritage studies and a methodological mentor, together with another cultural historian (of photography and museums) that I collaborate with, Mirjam Brusius, with whom I wrote a very recent piece on visual archives and heritage justice inspired by your work.[9] There should be more of you. Who else should we be looking up to as we continue to build this bridge between our disciplines?

ÖH: You know, I am also interested in those who are engaging with the visuality of the Anthropocene, the landscapes of the Anthropocene, those who problematize visualizing the wounded planet, and the dramatic late capitalist regimes that are radically transforming the countryside. I am fascinated by the forensics of heritage sites and how we can mobilize the techniques of forensic, crime scene investigation but reconcile them with the wisdom of a geologist or an archaeologist reading the layers of slow deposition. Media archaeology or geology of media, for example, emerging out of critical media studies and communication fields, have a lot to offer to heritage studies. I have a feeling there is a future there for our discipline. With your sensible turn to atomic heritage, I am more inspired to think about this more effectively. This is a major area of intersection for our fields of research: sites of contamination as sites of memory. Do you see a potential in that direction?

TR: Certainly. It is interesting that we both, independently, arrived at the intersection of the history of science and environmental history following our particular interests and approaches. I am committed to this next step and hope to teach a Heritage of Science and Technology class next year. Our synchronicity takes me to the next question. I invited you as a speaker to the CHAPS symposium *Heritage and the Visual Archive* in 2018 and, since then, we have

collaborated officially and unofficially, including co-chairing a widely successful Archaeological Institute of America double session sponsored by the Near Eastern Archaeology Interest Group. What is a good venue to continue to grow our partnership and promote further cross-pollination of our fields?

ÖH: Yes, *Heritage and the Visual Archive* was a turning point for me, because it allowed me to gain hope again about mobilizing the visual studies field as a critical platform of research on heritage. It also helped me to link the ongoing critical work on archives meaningfully to what I was doing. I have had several graduate students in recent years engage with this kind of poetical reimagination of the archive through critical fabulation, introducing poetry, essay form writing, and fiction into their work as a way of rethinking the archive and the poetics of historical writing. I see a fruitful way forward there. I feel that there is a lot of potential in heritage studies to engage with something like that, bringing storytelling or film into play. The other thing I love about collaborating with you is that we have a passion for fieldwork, and a belief that sound theories to move us forward can only come from fieldwork. I wonder if there is a way to mobilize that shared passion into something productive. You have an endless appetite. I am imagining experimenting with fieldwork as a creative method that brings effective strategies from archaeology, from heritage studies, from ethnography, from public humanities, and from art and critical visual studies. There is a lot of room to think about fieldwork beyond data gathering and documentation but deeply and politically engages with places. I hope that resonates with you.

TR: You know I am a firm believer in the transformative power of 'the field,' be that a cultural landscape or an archive. I look forward to collaborating with you on that terrain.

Notes

1. Ömur Harmanşah. "ISIS, Heritage, and the Spectacles of Destruction in the Global Media" in *Near Eastern Archaeology*, 78, 3 (September 2015) 170-177.

2. With some notable exceptions, more recently: Colin Sterling, *Heritage, Photography, and the Affective Past* (London: Routledge, 2020); Stanley Wolukau-Wanambwa, ed., *The Lives of Images: Repetition, Reproduction and Circulation* (New York: Aperture, 2021).

3. Christine Gruber, *The Image Debate: Figural Representation in Islam and Across the World* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2019).

4. Jean Robertson, Deborah Hutton, Cynthia Colburn, Ömür Harmansah, Eric Kjellgren, Rex Koontz, De-nin Lee, Henry Luttikhuizen, Allison Lee Palmer, Stacey Sloboda, and Monica Blackmun Visonà, *The History of Art: A Global View: Prehistory to the Present* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2021).

5. David Graeber and David Wengrow, *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021).

6. Rachel King and Trinidad Rico, *Methods and Methodologies in Heritage Studies* (London: University College London Press, 2024).

7. David Turnbull, *Masons, Tricksters and Cartographers: Comparative Studies in the Sociology of Scientific and Indigenous Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 2000).

8. Ömur Harmanşah, "Rural Landscapes, Extraction, and Heritage Violence in the Middle East," in *Rethinking Heritage in Precarious Times: Coloniality, Climate Change, and Covid-19*, edited by Nicholas Shepherd (London: Routledge, 2023).

9. Mirjam Brusius and Trinidad Rico, "Counter-Archives as Heritage Justice: Photography, Invisible Labor, and the People inside Ruins" in J*ournal of Visual Culture* 22,1 (2023): 64-92.

How to Remember the Present? Permanent Exhibition at the Museum of Memory, Montevideo, Uruguay

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Centro Cultural y Museo de la Memoria - MUME (Museum of Memory), Montevideo, Uruguay. https://mume.montevideo.gub.uy/. Permanent exhibition.

Balancing the need to inform and engender an emotional response, the Museum of Memory of Montevideo (MUME) establishes its message and captures the attention of visitors even before they enter the building. Inaugurated in December 2007 as a collaboration between Montevideo's Municipality and several human rights associations, MUME's permanent collection aims to explain the context of the civilian-military dictatorship that took place in Uruguay from 1973 to 1985. Like other dictatorships in South America at the time, these 12 years were marked by authoritarianism and violence, and included the disappearance of 197 people and the imprisonment and torture of 9,000 others.

The five galleries comprising the permanent collection exhibit art and quotidian objects, text, and video to build a thematic discourse that includes the establishment of the dictatorship, the popular resistance, exile, imprisonment, and disappearance. The exhibition emphasizes the multiplicity of experiences during that time and how the dictatorship's repercussions extend to the present time, affecting the lives of thousands of Uruguayans. The museum articulates a compelling and nuanced narrative aiming not only to educate but to provoke current audiences while honoring the memory of those who lived this chapter of the country's history, yet to be closed.

Museums of Memory are framed within the concept of "memory politics", which refers to how the recent past (and present) are thought about, legitimized, and embodied in the context of human rights violations by the state.[1] In Latin American countries, Museums of Memory have been created as a response to the silence in governmental politics in the post-dictatorship and transition period. The first *Museo de la Memoria* [Museum of Memory] in Latin America was founded in 1998 in Rosario, Argentina. More were created in the following decades, including the *Museo Casa de la Memoria in Medellín*, Colombia (2006), the *Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos* in Santiago de Chile, Chile (2007), and the *Museo Sitio de la Memoria* in Buenos Aires, Argentina (2015) among others. These museums share a political discourse focused on "giving voice to victims of state terrorism" and demanding truth and justice.[2]

The Museum of Memory in Montevideo is no exception, highlighting its mission to "create a space to promote human rights and the memory of the fight for freedom, democracy, and social justice."[3] This is explicit both in its writings and in its brochures, website, and social media, as well as in the objects and narrative used in the exhibition space.[4]

Placed next to the main entry door, a life-sized bronze sculpture meets the visitors. Rubens Fernández Tudurí's *Torturados* [Tortured] from 1986-2011, depicts two naked figures leaning in opposite directions and tied together with rope on their wrists and ankles. Their heads are covered with bags, increasing the tension and claustrophobic feeling of the scene. The sculpture represents the over 9000 people who were imprisoned and tortured during Uruguay's dictatorship, serving to announce the tone of the museum's rationale: it is their story that is being told.[5]

Five separate exhibition galleries organized by theme act as connected chapters of life in Uruguay from the 1960s to the present. While aiming to explain at length the complexity of the subject matter, the abundance of objects and extensive wall text in the exhibit clutter the overarching narrative.[6] This is particularly the case in the first gallery, where floor-to-ceiling enlarged photographs, pedestals with newspaper cuttings and various objects, an art installation and TV, and even the remnants of a bicycle, all compete for the attention of the visitor. Aptly called "La instauración de la dictadura" [The establishment of the dictatorship], this gallery introduces the museum and explains the establishment of the dictatorship. It argues, however, that the dictatorship did not begin on June 27, 1973, but rather that it was a long process of escalating violence that the museum traces to 1968 and even earlier.[7] This gallery not only includes mentions of the violence caused by the military but also of that instigated by the leftist guerrilla group Movimiento de Liberación Nacional-Tupamaros (MLN-Tupamaros). This includes, for example, the execution of four people linked with a paramilitary ultra-right-wing group after the group had kidnapped and killed members of the MLN-Tupamaros. The explicit presence of these well-documented facts helps create a more nuanced narrative that enriches and opens debates about causality and correlation.

Likewise, a photograph by Spanish-Uruguayan photographer Aurelio González summarizes the central message of the first gallery. *Tanques militares rodeando el Palacio Legislativo el día del golpe de Estado. 27 de junio de 1973* [Military tanks surrounding the Legislative Palace on the day of the coup d'état. June 27, 1973] sharply depicts a military tank in front of the Uruguayan Legislative Palace on the day of the coup d'état. The slanted angle suggests the immediacy of the snapshot and the urgency of the scene, which opposes the ease of a man in the foreground walking his dog. The uneasiness of the composition

and the calm of the man highlights the variety of reactions to the coup d'état. In doing so, the photograph invites the audience to consider and talk about the experiences of that day in their lives, their families', and their neighbors', ultimately acknowledging the multiplicity of possible memories and reactions surrounding this event.

Similarly, personal responses to the objects displayed are prompted in the next gallery, "La resistencia popular," [The popular resistance] fittingly placed opposite to the first gallery. An installation of a group of battered pans and pots hanging from the ceiling at different heights triggers a memory for those who lived through the dictatorship (or the more recent economic crisis in 2001) and heard the *cacerolazos.* Common in South America, *cacerolazos* or *caceroleadas* is a form of popular protest that consists of banging metal household tools and utensils to make noise. In the context of the dictatorship, where public collective demonstrations were extremely dangerous, this was one way to express anger and discomfort without being seen, therefore remaining safer.

The popular resistance to state control and censorship was carried out with different strategies, for example with the use of metaphors and double meaning in theatre, music, and literature. An opening of the wooden flooring on one side of the room allows the audience to peak through a glass panel and see boxes containing books, magazines, and other documents. This places the visitor in the shoes of many who had to hide their belongings under the floor or buried in the backyard to avoid being connected with a leftist ideology, even if the books were not even closely connected with politics.

Immediately after and connected with "popular resistance" are the galleries dedicated to imprisonment and exile ("Cárceles" and "El exilio"), physically signaling that these were the two destinations for those who openly opposed the regime. The area for "El exilio" [The exile] is placed in opposition to the entrance to the gallery, locating it in the literal periphery of the building and alluding to the physical distance of those who had to escape the country. The visitors are drawn to the area via a silent projection of an impactful documentary featuring the activist work done by exiled Uruguayans, and an audio of heartbeats that engulfs both spaces.

Unlike other regimes in the region, the Uruguayan dictatorship was characterized by long imprisonment. For example, former Uruguayan president José Mujica, who was a key member of MLN-Tupamaros, was imprisoned for over 14 years.[8] "Cárceles" [Prisons] confronts the audience's preconceived ideas of what it meant to be imprisoned in Uruguay during the dictatorship. It is a surprise for most of the visitors to find embroidered handkerchiefs, jewelry, and small sculptures made by prisoners while held against their will. MUME also exhibits a selection of the abundant correspondence between the teacher

Diadaskó Pérez and his young daughters, which includes colorful drawings of roses, clowns, and scenes of birthday parties. Far from diminishing the traumatic experiences of imprisonment and torture, this gallery shows the complexities of their reality and challenges the audience. As in previous galleries, the variety of objects reinforces the multiplicity of memories, even if, as Andrew C. Rajca states, the narrative "articulates a counter-history of the dictatorship and its effects from the perspective of the militant Left."[9]

Four prisoners' uniforms hang from the ceiling at the entrance of the next and final gallery, "Los desaparecidos" [The disappeared]. Of the almost 9000 people incarcerated during the dictatorship in Uruguay, 197 are considered "disappeared."[10] In the context of military dictatorships, "disappeared" is understood as a different category than "missing", given its use as a tool of terror performed by the state.[11] The prisoner's uniforms act as focal point but also physically block the path of the visitor, who is at the same time drawn in and forced to walk through them, finally encountering a collection of cardboard posters with the faces of 197 people hanging from the walls and ceiling. Each poster has a wooden pole that signals its use during protests and marches. Although lightweight, the display draws the visitor into an immersive experience which emphasizes the distress felt by the families of the people depicted. This final gallery is the smallest room, and houses posters by an activist group led by family members of imprisoned and disappeared people as well as an enlarged photograph of a dug-up grave on the floor. The latter subtly alludes to the discovery of human remains and to the incarceration of former president Juan María Bordaberry as well as some of the high-ranking military involved in the crimes.[12] A series of short interviews with survivors highlight the work done by the museum and repeats the slogan of these activist groups: *Nunca más* (never again).

The exhibition ends unresolved and open-ended, just as the lives of the families and friends of those who disappeared. However, it fails to mention crucial events that occurred as part of the transition and post-dictatorial period. This absence could be partially due to an understanding that most visitors are local and aware of the most recent events. These include the release of political prisoners, the activist work done by the families of the disappeared, the campaigns in 1989 and 2009 to annul the law granting impunity for the crimes committed by the state, and the establishment of the "Peace Commission" in 2000. Some of these important events were originally part of the permanent exhibition, but at the time of the visit, that space was used for an upcoming temporary exhibition.[13]

MUME's permanent exhibition surpasses the exclusive archival display and shies away from oversimplified narratives. Instead, it serves as a testament

to the enduring power of memory in shaping identity and advocating for justice. Just like the yearly massive "Marcha del Silencio" (March of Silence) every May 20th, the museum uses a memory politics rhetoric that works to clearly and successfully underline the open wound that the dictatorship has left.[14] Understanding that memory is a powerful identity tool, the museum opportunely reminds viewers that the dictatorship is not over: not until the truth is found out about what happened to those victims of state violence, not until justice is made.

Notes

1. Robin Rodd, "Dossier Introduction: Museums, Art, and the Politics of Memory in Latin America," *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research* 27, no. 2 (May 4, 2021): 191–97, https://doi.org/10.1080/13260219.2021.1994694.

2. Rodd. 192

3. "Centro Cultural Museo de La Memoria | Museo de La Memoria," accessed November 11, 2022, https://mume.montevideo.gub.uy/museo/centro-cultural-museo-de-la-memoria.

4. "Centro Cultural Museo de La Memoria | Museo de La Memoria."

5. Eugenia Allier-Montaño and Camilo Vicente Ovalle, "'As an Unhealed Wound': Memory and Justice in Post-Dictatorship Uruguay," in *The Struggle for Memory in Latin America: Recent History and Political Violence*, ed. Eugenia Allier-Montaño and Emilio Crenzel, Memory Politics and Transitional Justice (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2015), 35–52, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137527349_3. 36

6. Kathleen Franz, "History Unbounded: A Relaunch of the Public History Review Section," ed. Brian Horrigan and Kathleen Franz, *The Journal of American History* 105, no. 1 (2018): 121–25.

7. "Centro Cultural Museo de La Memoria | Museo de La Memoria."

8. Interview. "Pepe Mujica narra su encuentro con un torturador," *CNN* (blog), accessed November 11, 2022, https://cnnespanol.cnn.com/video/torturador-encuentro-jose-pepe-mujica-uruguay-jose-manuel-rodriguez-camilo-cnne/.

9. Andrew C. Rajca, *Dissensual Subjects: Memory, Human Rights, and Postdictatorship in Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2018), https://nupress.northwestern.edu/9780810136366/dissensual-subjects. 105

10. "Desaparecidos," Madres y Familiares de Uruguayos Detenidos Desaparecidos, May 18, 2015, https://desaparecidos.org.uy/desaparecidos/.

11. "What Would You Do If State Authorities Made Your Loved One Disappear?," Amnesty International, accessed November 11, 2022, https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/enforced-disappearances/.

12. Rajca, *Dissensual Subjects: Memory, Human Rights, and Postdictatorship in Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay*. 43

13. The original layout can be found at the museum's website, "Centro Cultural Museo de La Memoria | Museo de La Memoria." Accessed November 11, 2022. https://mume.montevideo.gub.uy/museo/centro-cultural-museo-de-la-memoria.

14. Allier-Montaño and Ovalle, "'As an Unhealed Wound.'"

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