

IKONO THEKA

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Introduction

As the new editors of the *Ikonotheke*, we are delighted to present to the reader the issue of the journal dedicated to the senses. Through the centuries, connoisseurs, critics, art historians, and art institutions favoured sight and the ocularcentric approach to art. This perspective has shaped our understanding of the singular role of the sense of sight in appreciating artworks of the past and it continues to affect the way we engage with contemporary art.

In this volume we focus on the role all the senses play in creating, handling, displaying, collecting, and exhibiting art. We are indebted to the course *The Sensory Renaissance* offered by the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (CRASSH, Cambridge, 2014) and the recent studies into the importance of multisensory engagement with art and its history, including the research and publications of the Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions funded by the Australian Research Council.

The essays included in this publication range from discussion of medieval and early modern representations of the robes of Christ and the Virgin, through analysis of engaging sixteenth-century *tabulae scalate*, the significance of tobacco in early modern still lifes, to the category of blindness in works by Marcel Duchamp and Dan Sterup-Hansen, and the sensory challenges of exhibiting modern and contemporary art. These focused case studies are complemented by texts of a broader methodological scope, which seek to provide a theoretical framework for dealing with the senses, most notably in contemporary artistic practice.

Apart from the contributions selected through the open call, we have invited several participants to provide statements about the role of the senses in artistic, art historical, and curatorial practices. We are very grateful to Marietta Cambareri (Museum of Fine Arts in Boston), Capucine Gros (artist), Deborah Howard (University of Cambridge), and Mary Sherman (artist) for their fascinating insights. Their statements open the volume and demonstrate a wide range of perspectives on the senses in their work.

The volume includes contributions focused on Central European art and works by artists from outside the mainstream of art historical discourse. The essays address the problem of senses in cultural, religious, philosophical, sociological, and political contexts. They attempt to historicize the sensorium and discuss ways of recreating the sensory experience in a museum space. Furthermore, authors include

artworks that can be discussed from a multi-sensory perspective. We hope that this multifaceted approach will be of interest to a wider audience.

We would like to thank our reviewers for providing invaluable feedback to individual contributors and our advisory board for their academic guidance.

Zuzanna Sarnecka, Editor of the volume
Wojciech Szymański, Editor-in-Chief

STATEMENTS

Marietta Cambareri

SENIOR CURATOR OF EUROPEAN SCULPTURE
AND JETSKALINA H. PHILLIPS CURATOR OF JUDAICA
MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON

Multi-Sensory Approaches to Art in Museum Settings: A Curator's View

As a curator of European sculpture, decorative arts and Judaica, and someone interested in the way works of art supported devotional experience in medieval and Renaissance Europe, I always have in my mind the question of bringing objects to life through sensory activation. Museum practice has traditionally worked against this impulse, leaving curators to rely almost entirely on the visual experience of the objects. "Please Don't Touch" signs abound in museum galleries, often along with explanations that touching objects can damage the works, eroding fine details and leaving the oil and dirt from fingers to accumulate over time, creating stains. Paintings are framed, their surfaces sometimes covered with protective glass. Sculptures are presented on pedestals or roped off to discourage visitors from getting too close. More fragile and smaller works are placed in cases with glass or plexiglass bonnets, to protect them from theft as well as the touch of curious hands. At the same time, museums today are prioritizing visitors' experiences of the works of art in our galleries. Creating a visitor-centered approach is the work of teams of curators, conservators, educators, interpretation specialists, museum designers, and architects. All contribute to the potential for multi-sensory experience of works in a museum setting.¹

Privileging sight over other experiences is no longer enough. As a museum curator, I am excited to try to bring audiences into close contact with objects I oversee, and I often select works exactly because they engage the senses. Many pieces require interaction through handling to function properly. Whenever possible, I write labels that encourage the viewer to imagine the sensory aspects of the works, in the hope of calling forth a response or a memory that can enliven the experience. Even if the visitor cannot actually touch them, looking closely to understand the objects, along with descriptions, guides, and additional visual images, can suggest what it might be like to use them. The objects themselves often reveal the ways they might have once engaged the sense of smell (open work on pomanders and spice containers

1 C. Classen, *The Museum of the Senses*, London and New York, 2017; G. Black, *The Engaging Museum. Developing Museums for Visitor Involvement*, New York, 2012.

allowed the scents to permeate the air), touch (jewels, small bronze sculptures, and books were meant to be worn, held, carried, opened and closed), and even taste (describing the contents of a chocolate pot or a honey jar can help to bring the memory of tastes to the viewers' consciousness). Display of objects can also set a scene: a table set for dining, for example, can enliven the experience of looking at plates, serving vessels and utensils, candlesticks, and decorative objects like small porcelain sculptures, creating a sense of immediacy even if the visitor cannot actually touch the objects (Fig. 1). All of these activations seek to provide a visitor with a more complete experience of an object that may be behind a barrier.



Fig. 1. Angelica Lloyd Russell Gallery (Europe 1700–1800), Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (November 2010)

Museums sometimes include soundscapes, music, and audio-guides to provide shared or individual access to sounds appropriate for works in gallery spaces. At the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA), for example, the musical instruments collection is frequently used in the galleries, so that the instruments can be played and so that visitors can hear their music. Recordings using these instruments are available on the MFA's website, and YouTube videos record them being played in the galleries. At the same time, setting music into appropriate gallery installations enhances the visitors' experience of the surrounding artworks, creating an environment for them. Sound is so central to the meaning of these objects that it is almost unthinkable not to use them in this way

It is harder to activate objects in the collection that once relied on sensory experiences beyond sight and sound. Objects that can be touched are so labeled,

reproductions are sometimes introduced that can be handled, examples of materials are presented to provide a sense of the “feel” of works in that medium. Aromas can be filtered into the air to convey, for example, the incense that accompanies ritual practices, and to help animate censers, spice containers, and perfume bottles. On certain occasions, taste can be introduced into installations with the controlled presentation of food or drink. Such interventions happen rarely and sometimes only for small groups, partly because of the challenges they present, including visitor sensitivities to such powerful stimuli. Special exhibitions can provide opportunities to convey sensory aspects as well. The Walters Art Museum, for example, presented an exemplary show *A Feast for the Senses. Art and Experience in Medieval Europe*, with objects selected specifically because they called for the engagement of the senses. The installation sought to evoke all the senses, including smell, taste, and touch, and the show was shaped by current scholarship on the history of the senses, presented in the catalogue.²

Artworks, especially figural art, allow for another kind of sensory experience that can help the beholder experience the work: the kinesthetic response to art, the feeling that when you see another body performing an action, you can sense it in your own body, almost as if you too were performing that motion or gesture. Audiences, sitting still in their seats watching dancers dance, can experience a muscular response, an empathetic sense of the motion they see. The same is true when watching sporting events. When viewers look at a sculpture like *Eternal Springtime* by Auguste Rodin (Fig. 2), an artist who deeply explored expressive postures and movements of the body, they may respond on this visceral, elemental level. They can feel the motion and the emotion in their own bodies. A similar sense of motion can also be seen and felt in abstract art, when one can feel the directional, spatial, and emotional cues of a piece. Recognition of this sense also supports including performance in gallery spaces: if you encourage visitors to watch real people dancing and moving in close proximity to works of art, the kinesthetic responses to actual movement may translate into similar responses when looking at works of art. Dance, yoga, life drawing, as well as other activities inspired by objects in a museum setting, like poetry and creative writing or story-telling, are popular programs, and can engage many senses, ideas, emotions, and stimulate creativity in the visitor.

Once you consider a viewer's somatic, kinesthetic, interior responses, it becomes clear that many different kinds of art can elicit these feelings. The human mind allows a person to imagine that they are in the same posture of a figure in a painting, projecting oneself into that scene. This mirroring is embedded in the human brain from infancy, as a baby learns through emulation and through touch.³ Religious

² *A Feast for the Senses. Art and Experience in Medieval Europe*, ed. M. Bagnoli, The Walters Museum of Art, New Haven and New York, 2016, with further bibliography.

³ M. Paterson, “Movement for Movement's Sake? On the Relationship Between Kinaesthesia and Aesthetics”, *Essays Philos*, 2012, 13, pp. 471–497; C. Noland, *Agency and Embodiment: Performing Gestures/Producing Culture*, Cambridge, 2009; B. Montero “Proprioception as an Aesthetic Sense”, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 2006, 64, no. 2, pp. 231–42.



Fig. 2. Auguste Rodin, French, 1840–1917, *Eternal Springtime*, modeled about 1881, cast about 1916–17, bronze, 62 cm (24 3/4 in.). Bequest of William A. Coolidge, 1993.50



Fig. 3. *Saint Francis receiving the Stigmata*, Italian (possibly Urbino), 16th century, tin-glazed earthenware (maiolica), 36.8 x 33 x 22.9 cm (14 1/2 x 13 x 9 in.). Gift of Charles B. Barnes and W. D. Gooch, Executors of the Estate of George R. White, 53.2912

art often relies on the senses to activate the emotions and inspire spiritual experience.⁴ Medieval and Renaissance prayer manuals, for example, urged the devotee to imagine the he or she was present at a sacred event, which created pious sentiments, leading to a sense of empathy and closeness to the divine. Works of art symbiotically encouraged similar interaction, for the same purposes, and relied on the kinesthetic responses of devotees looking at and emulating the figures in the scenes. This sense would have been encouraged through actual touching of objects. We read about Renaissance parents encouraging their children to perform acts that might be described as “holy play”. They might arrange objects into little scenes, including dolls representing the infant Jesus swaddled and placed in a crib, they could place flowers and candles before these figures, and say prayers before makeshift altars. This kind of interaction with objects surely continued into adulthood, as suggested by objects like a 16th century maiolica *Saint Francis receiving the Stigmata* (Fig. 3) in the MFA’s



Fig. 4. *The Last Supper*; Italian (Faenza), 16th century, tin-glazed earthenware (maiolica), 21.6 x 32.6 x 58.1 cm (8 1/2 x 12 13/16 x 22 7/8 in.). Bequest of R. Thornton Wilson in memory of Florence Ellsworth Wilson, 1983.61

4 A. E. Sanger, S. T. Kulbrandstad eds., *Sense and the Senses in Early Modern Art and Cultural Practice*, Farnham, 2017; E. E. Benay, L. Rafanelli eds., *Faith, Gender and the Senses in Italian Renaissance and Baroque Art*, Burlington, 2015; A. Randolph, *Touching Objects. Intimate Experiences of Italian Fifteenth-Century Art*, New Haven and London, 2014; P. Dent ed., *Sculpture and Touch*, Farnham and Burlington, 2014.

collection, which has little channels to receive flowers, and a small fountain that could have held water, or this *Last Supper* (Fig.4), where the figures and stools were once moveable.⁵ Pointing out these functions and the intimate histories of objects may help the viewer feel a sense of personal engagement with objects that are centuries old. Another way to engage a sense of touch in the viewer is to focus on the technical aspects of works of art, providing explanations of how an object was made, possibly opening up the experience of creation to the viewer, who conceptually becomes one with the artist or craftsperson who made the work.

Visitors come to museums hoping for meaningful experiences, and museum professionals hope to fulfill these hopes. Museum-goers can be encouraged to “sense” the collection in the fullest possible way and we should never forget that there are many ways to apprehend a work of art. This multi-sensory approach also allows visitors who are blind or have limited vision to experience works of art through their other senses, especially touch and the somatic sense. At its best, a museum visit will create new sensations, new ideas, new emotions, new memories, and stimulate creativity, providing experiences that may stay with the visitor long beyond the time spent in the museum.

5 Z. Sarnecka, “Experiencing La Verna at Home: Italian Sixteenth-Century Maiolica Sanctuaries and Shrines”, *Religions* 2020, 11, 6, doi:10.3390/rel11010006.

Capucine Gros
www.capucinegros.com

From Art-Viewing to Art-Experiencing: Perspectives of an Artist

One of the greatest ironies of art-making may be that art should involve so many senses for the maker during its creation process while so often relying on the *viewer's* sole sight to be experienced. Be it the smell of paint, the temperature of the marble, the weight of the camera or even the click of a keyboard or the taste of coffee, the process by which we make art is for every artist wholesome and multi-sensorial. In general, it is during this process that artists feel the most alive, the most complete and the most harmonious not only with themselves but with the rest of the world. With this in mind, it is not hard to understand a certain despair when the product of our labor is shared incompletely or isolatedly, for example behind glass in a museum or only encountered as small flattened pixels on a cold screen.

The very fact that we have yet to standardize a better word than *viewer* to describe those experiencing art points to the depth of the issue. Even the words *audience* or *public*, presumably more open and involved, imply a very passive reception of art. Centuries of art history and intellectual progress have proven time and time again that art is not an object but rather a phenomenon happening inside the maker first, followed by the *art-experiencers* (to avoid saying *viewers*) later. The art objects (be them painting, sculpture, video, text, performance, action...) are vehicles for the meaning, but not the meaning itself. The meaning itself can only happen inside the conscious mind(s) who add(s) context to the object. Art is therefore an action, a verb, an engaged process.

Many artists and curators have addressed this issue by widening their practice into multi-sensory works and "exhibitions" including workshops, crowd-sourced research, audience-participation, community-based projects and so on. The ideal of the *gesamtkunstwerk* – integrating all art forms into a complete and total work of art – still looms over the studio. In my own practice and for lack of ever finding the one form that could encompass all forms, I find it essential to allow projects to take multiple formats to permeate multiple senses over time. For example, *Approximately 199* started as a series of handmade sketchbooks with one page per country in the world and expanded into a performance wearing one shirt per country



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

(for sight and touch) (Fig. 1 and Fig. 2) as well as long term projects collecting one recipe per country (for taste and smell), one song (for hearing), and even reading one autobiography per century in the world.¹

¹ Visit www.capucinegros.com for more details and follow @thestudiothatnever sleeps for updates.

As a final proposition for further thinking, I would suggest that there might exist one focus point, one medium, where all senses collide. One language that is most universal and which anchors all other perception processes. This is the beautiful language of time. The one material which cannot be purchased, cannot be cheated, cannot be recreated and which everyone on the planet can relate to, not without cultural and social nuances, of course, but certainly with less taboos than senses such as touch and smell. Touch and smell, along with sight, taste and hearing, are all relatively easy to trick, especially in isolation: reprinted photos, reproduced paintings, recorded sounds, artificial smells... It is indeed amusing that our artworld, so obsessed with countering reproducibility with limited editions and authenticity certificates, still privileges sight as the main vector of truth. Combine two or three senses, and things become much harder to replicate. Factor in time, and they become near-impossible. You cannot fake the age of paint nor can you really recreate a performance from the 60s.

Time is therefore indissociable from authenticity. It is already ingrained in all works of art, both in a practical sense (how long paint takes to dry, how long a performance or a video lasts, how long it takes to master a skill etc.) as well as a conceptual one (as seen in our obsession of dating works to comprehend their context and meaning). Yet beyond this, there are also works that utilize time itself as their medium and their form. My grand heroes of time are Tehching Hsieh with his one year performances, On Kawara with his date paintings and life-long projects, and Roman Opalka with his infinity series. They have laid the ground for the most all-encompassing of projects, which in essence use all senses because they involve the artists' entire bodies over days, years, decades, lifetimes. Tehching Hsieh spent one year in a cage without distractions nor interactions. Everything he (didn't) touch, hear, smell, eat or read gave his work all its depth and meaning. On Kawara marked days through the physical limitations of his body: if he had time to finish the painting, it would exist. If not, it was destroyed. Roman Opalka painted numbers, seemingly repetitive, yet infinitely varied by means of his own body (witnessed through portraits) and senses (via the touch of his brush) aging over the years. I would argue that when one works with time, the work becomes, by default, multi-sensory.

Definitely, we ought to improve our methodologies to display, discuss and experience art with our entire bodies rather than just our eyes, if we hope to honor anything close to what artists ever hoped to share or investigate. Yet it might also help to step away from the categories of senses altogether and consider focusing on a more fulfilling common denominator, such as time. If we put time at the center of our processes and make time the main vector of truth, then we will inevitably engage all senses, reach art-experiencers more universally, and perhaps earn more authenticity in the process.

Deborah Howard

PROFESSOR EMERITA OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY
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The Role of the Five Senses in Cultural Transmission

In his *De Anima* Aristotle associated senses with objects rather than with the perceiver of the sensation.¹ Similarly, even today, works of art are usually described in terms of the visual characteristics that strike the viewer, as if the sense of sight originates in the object. But there is a difference between seeing and observing, for observation involves an active engagement with what is seen. The sensory impact has to enter the brain as well as the eye in order to gain emotional affect.

The experience of viewing a work of art depends on the overall sensory landscape of the surroundings. An altarpiece viewed in a cool, dimly lit church, in which the setting is enhanced by flickering candles, the ritual movements of devotees, the smell of incense and the sound of a priest's chant, makes a deeper impact on the viewer than the same work would do in a bustling, noisy, crowded, stuffy art gallery. The richer sensory stimulation transforms the way the viewer perceives the image because the five senses work together rather than separately. In the case of a work designed for the specific location, the context is not often enough considered by scholars as an integral property of the work itself.

An infant uses all five senses to discover the world round about: looking, licking, touching, smelling, and listening. Gradually, through education, the child then learns to describe objects, people and places through text and image – the media through which travellers commit to posterity their memories of strange lands.

All the same, it is important to remember that the five senses are not recalled or transmitted in the same way. Memories of smells, tastes, and tactile qualities can be described in words, but they are harder to recreate in the mind than sights and sounds. By closing the eyes and concentrating on a recollection, a returning traveller can see in the mind's eye a remembered place or thing, or replay a tune silently through mental effort. On the other hand, although one can easily recognise a familiar taste or smell, it is almost impossible to recreate these in the imagination in the absence of the source. Yet scents and odours are some of the most potent triggers of memory, as if they penetrate more deeply into the cognitive experience.

1 R. Sorabji, "Aristotle on Demarcating the Five Senses", *The Philosophical Review*, 1971, 80, no. 1, pp. 55–79.

In the early modern period, returning pilgrims communicated to friends and family the direct experience of far-away holy sites. During transmission, however, the processing of information became entwined with the content of biblical narratives. Before the journey, the believer had already acquired a mental picture of the destination through sacred reading, and therefore, on arrival, viewed the place itself through a process of mental comparison with earlier expectations.

Returning home, the pilgrim could relay memories to others, but the narratives were always deformed both by the traveller's subjectivity and by the expectations of the listener. Unless the words were deliberately copied from another source, accounts differed widely in their descriptions of the same holy places. Writers of travel accounts often tried to guarantee the authenticity of their information ('as I saw with my own eyes'), but the selectivity of the author and the fallibility of memory coloured every traveller's tale.

Physical objects such as relics and souvenirs were just as likely to be inauthentic, but were less easily deformed in transit. Metrical records of the sizes of things, such as ropes with measurements of the Holy Sepulchre, helped to suggest exactitude and tactile encounter. Indeed, the five senses were more vividly evoked by transmitted things than by verbal accounts, for as every infant knows, an object has a sensual potency that goes far beyond the visual aspects of size, shape, and colour.

Mary Sherman
(with contributions by Florian Grond)

In Praise of Frozen Sound: Audifying Painting

Despite repeated cries of its death, painting endures. It is one of civilization's most resilient media, continuing to evolve and fascinate, informed and responding to the advances of its age. However, the study of painting most often focuses on its visual qualities: the things that one can see, its subject matter, form or compositional elements. From there, analysis typically extends to the context in which the work was made, the era in which it was created, the technical advances of the time, biographical quirks of its creator, etc.

I propose, however, that something more fundamental is being overlooked – that the enduring charm of a Cézanne painting of apples, for instance, is not due to its representation of a familiar subject. Nor is it because of its pioneering depiction of space and the aftermath of that breakthrough. Instead, it continues to attract its viewers due to its tactile, physical structure, its embodiment of process, its transcendent orchestration of surface incidents: some short, some long, some smooth, some rough, some delicate, some brutal, but all exquisitely composed, scored, and re-lived with each viewing.¹

This frozen record of the act of painting – which, in the best of examples, is a masterful one – is what I believe makes painting so compelling. Beyond the dazzling ordering of colours and shapes, the enjoyment of visually surfing along a painting's structural incidents while at the same time that one cannot touch them, instantaneously creates desire. And that desire doesn't stop there. It is compounded by a similar tickling of the ear, the sense that complements the eye in our experience of time and space.² In this way, I argue that painting stimulates three senses: most

1 Interestingly, this alternative and multisensory way of engaging with paintings – reaching beyond visually recognizing objects and space and appreciating rhythm and process – bears many similarities to the way some people with macular degeneration (which can render them legally blind) or other forms of low-vision describe their experience of viewing paintings, as, for instance, Georgina Kleege notes in a number of her writings, see G. Kleege, *Sight Unseen*, New Haven, 1999.

2 The complementary potential of the sense of hearing to reveal structures in digital data has also received attention from the field of auditory display, where techniques such as sonification and audification have been developed and refined over the last 20 years. For reference textbooks see

overtly, the visual, more covertly and, perhaps, more indelibly, the aural and tactile. And it is this tease – this suggestion and refusal to be explicit – that allows the viewer’s mind the pleasure of possible closure, while that possibility always slips beyond one’s certain grasp... like any love.

Of course, many disciplines have studied how the senses complement, augment, and interact with each other.³ Together – as sound in film so brilliantly exploits – they can be more efficient than alone, which neuropsychologists Dubois, Poeppel, and Pelli also note.⁴ However, for my work, what is perhaps most thrilling is how the interplay between the senses can seem to resemble those between people. Like some of our interactions, they can at times complement each other, and at other times, deceive each other when integrating conflicting input.⁵ Or, as Michel Chion notes, “we never see the same thing when we also hear; we don’t hear the same thing when we see as well”.⁶ However, in many cases the senses are in mutual exchange, which Chion goes on to define as “trans-sensory perceptions”.⁷

It was this multi-faceted and poignant exchange between the senses that fuelled my and my collaborator’s, the sound artist and researcher Florian Grond’s, work *Delay*: to exploit the senses’ relational interactions, to make concrete painting’s latent “music”, to make tangible its touch through the audible, to bring painting into the twenty-first century, into the realm of time with sound.

G. Kramer ed., *Auditory Display: Sonification, Audification, and Auditory Interfaces*, Boulder, 1994; T. Hermann, A. Hunt, J. Neuhoff eds., *The Sonification Handbook*, Berlin, 2011.

3 For an overview that integrates perceptual and phenomenological perspectives on the interplay between sound and sight see G. Daurer, “Audiovisual Perception”, in: *Audiovisiology Compendium: See This Sound – An Interdisciplinary Survey of Audiovisual Culture*, eds. D. Daniels, S. Naumann, Cologne, 2010, pp. 329–337; M. Chion, *Film, a Sound Art*, trans. C. Gorbman, New York, 2009; as well as H. Beller, “Between the Poles of Mickey Mousing and Counterpoint”, in: *Audiovisiology 2 Essays*, eds. D. Daniels, S. Naumann, Cologne, 2011, pp. 102–119. For an historic overview of the relation of painting and music, and the predominance of the discussion of shape and form in relation to sound, see A. Gott dang, “Painting in Music”, in: *Audiovisiology Compendium...*, pp. 247–257.

4 M. DuBois, D. Poeppel, D. G. Pelli, “Seeing and Hearing a Word: Combining Eye and Ear Is More Efficient than Combining the Parts of a Word”, *PLOS ONE* (2013), DOI:10.1371/journal.pone.0064803.

5 H. McGurk, J. MacDonald, “Hearing Lips and Seeing Voices”, *Nature*, 1976, 264, pp. 746–748.

6 M. Chion, *Audio Vision: Sound on Screen*, trans. C. Gorbman, New York, 1994.

7 Trans-sensory perceptions, as coined by Chion, are “perceptions that belong to no one particular sense but that may travel via one sensory channel or another without their content or their effect being limited to this one sense[...] Everything involving rhythm may serve as an example. But other cases involve spatial perceptions as well as the verbal dimension. A word that is read or spoken belongs to the same sphere of language, even if the modes of its transmission [hand-writing, vocal timbre] run in parallel sensory channels. Rhythm is the essential trans-sensory dimension, since we experience it before we are born. The fetus encounters rhythm in the form of variations in pressure on the body wall, parsed with the combined beats of the mother’s heart and its own[...] Texture and grain are another category of trans-sensory perception”. M. Chion, *Film, a Sound Art...*, p. 496.

First Step: Audifying a Painting: *Delay*

Working in collaboration with Grond, our collaborative piece *Delay* primarily uses sound as a direct exploration of the structural similarities between the auditory, visual, and tactile senses. *Delay* asks: What if you could hear a painting? What if, for instance, you could hear the fragment of this painting?



Fig. 1. A magnified detail of one of the 5 sections of my painting that was scanned using Fourier-domain Optical Coherence Tomography. Photo by Stewart Clements © Stewart Clements, 2014. Used with permission.

It would sound like this: (Sound file is available at: <https://soundcloud.com/florian-grond197239776/fourth-shutter-binaural>).

Such scanning of surface structures and topographic data along trajectories to be turned into sound is not new. This idea can be traced back to the writer Rainer Maria Rilke: he speculated about the sound of the sutures on the human skull, which reminded him of the grooves in gramophone records.⁸ Later, in the early 1990s, Scot Gresham-Lancaster extensively explored the digital terrain of x/y/z

8 R. M. Rilke, "Ur-Geräusch", *Soglio, am Tage Mariae Himmelfahrt*, 1919.



Fig. 2. The painting that was used as the basis for the first investigation into the sonification of painting. Photo by Stewart Clements © Stewart Clements, 2014. Used with permission.



Fig. 3. The 5 areas of the same painting, shown in Fig. 2, with the 5 areas masked off that were scanned using Fourier-domain Optical Coherence Tomography. Photo by Yao Xiao © Yao Xiao, 2012. Used with permission.

values and how they can be translated into sound.⁹ Paul DeMarinis translated the indentations on the surface of ancient pottery into sound for his work *The Edison Effect*; more recently, Jens Brand has translated the earth's topographic data along the paths of satellites into sounds.¹⁰

Likewise, to take advantage of the capacities of the auditory sense to bring about a deeper understanding of visual works, five one-inch sections of one of my paintings were scanned by the scientist Brett Bouma's assistant Martin Villiger, using Fourier-domain Optical Coherence Tomography, a rich imaging technique.¹¹

This resulted in 5 sets of numerical data and corresponding black and white contour images of the same information, as for instance, seen below:

date

2010-06-07 00:00:00

sample rate

50000

latitude

-10 10

longitude

5

title

time	channel 1		channel 2						
1024	643	696	696	696	610	609	626	626	626
637	637	639	624	639	611	718	718	718	702
638	638	610	610	644	646	646	644	627	619
619	609	609	610	610	610	603	605	609	609
608	436	436	436	606	606	606	608	608	608
436	436	435	434	434	434	...			

As opposed to ascribing a sound to each number, starting at the upper right corner and proceeding line-by-line through the rows of numbers, Grond, instead, extracted surface profiles from the data, following predefined paths that are reminiscent of both drawing and the way the eye scans a painting.

9 B. Thibault, S. Gresham-Lancaster, "Experiences in Digital Terrain: Using Digital Elevation Models for Music and Interactive Multimedia", *Leonardo Music Journal*, 1997, 7, pp. 11–17.

10 P. DeMarinis, J. Brand, *BOOK*, Heidelberg, 2009.

11 B. J. Vakoc, R. M. Lanning, J. A. Tyrrell, T. P. Padera, L. A. Bartlett, T. Stylianopoulos, L. L. Munn, G. J. Tearney, D. Fukumura, R. K. Jain, B. E. Bouma, "Three-dimensional microscopy of the tumor microenvironment in vivo using optical frequency domain imaging", *Nature Medicine*, 2009, 15, pp. 1219–1223. DOI:10.1038/nm.1971.

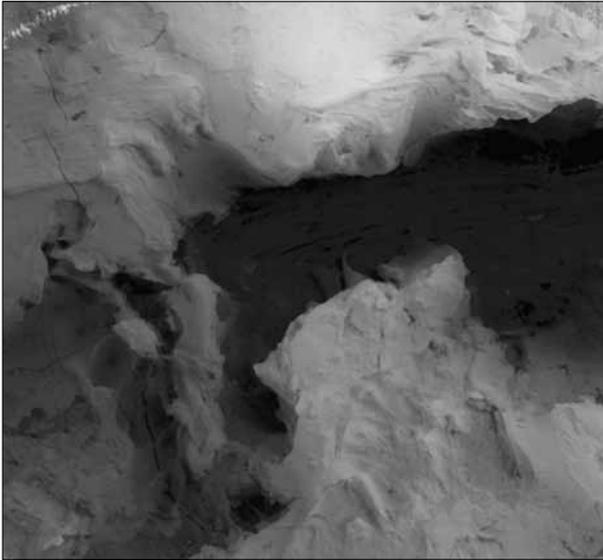


Fig. 4. The visual mapping of the scientific data derived from the masked square, labelled number 1 in Fig. 3. Scan image by Martin Villiger © Martin Villiger, 2011. Used with permission.



Fig. 5. The visual mapping of the scientific data derived from the masked square, labelled number 1 in Fig. 3, which is laid over the actual area of the painting from which the data was derived. Scan image by Martin Villiger © Martin Villiger, 2011. Used with permission. Photo by Stewart Clements © Stewart Clements, 2014. Used with permission. Composite Image by Florian Grond © Grond, 2014. Used with permission.

The first graph shows the contour of the painting's surface – its hills and valleys. The second graph is derived from the first and shows the rate of change on the painting's surface regardless of whether the change is in a so-called hill or valley. The third graph represents how sharp the edges of this change are on the painting's surface and provides the signal from which the audification is made. Thus, for each

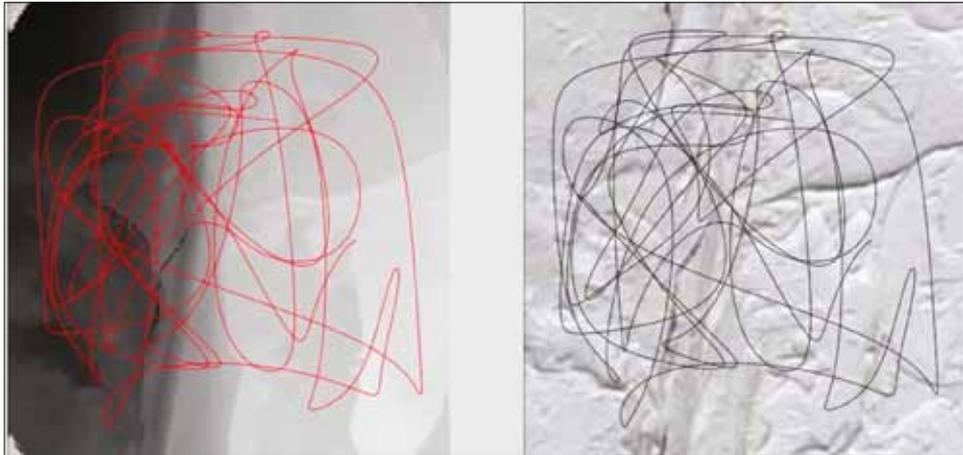


Fig. 6. The trajectory of the path through the scientific data Grond used as the basis for sonification of the masked square, labelled number 4 in Fig. 3. Image/Photo by Florian Grond © Florian Grond, 2012. Used with permission.

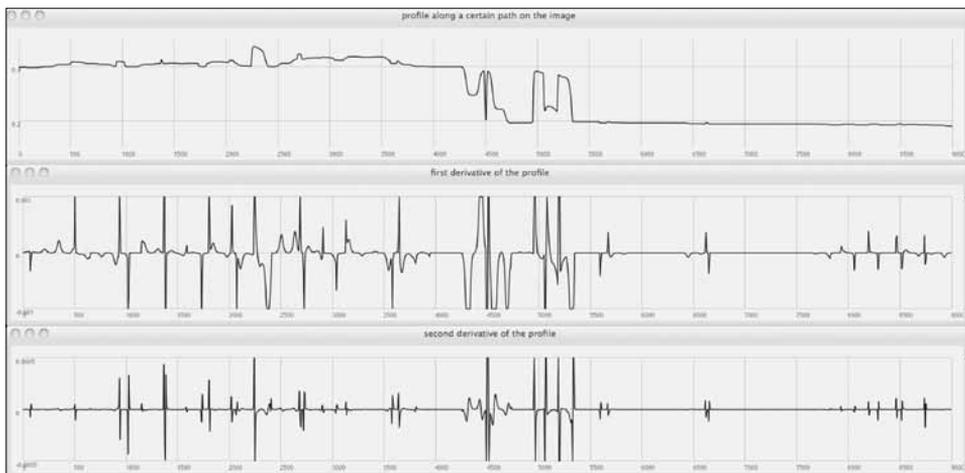


Fig. 7. The contours of the scanned painting along the trajectories of Fig. 6 and the derivatives of the scanned painting as described in the text. Image/Photo by Florian Grond © Florian Grond, 2012. Used with permission.

point that corresponds to a structural event on the painting (caused by the way it was painted, scored, and relieved and, also, indicated in the data), a click with a distinct sonic timbre was created.

Grond then took the clicks derived from the painting and manipulated them further. To give a sense of whether the click “resides” in the hills or valleys of the

paint surface, reverb was added; the reverberant clicks would now be rather dry in the areas closer to the viewer (the hills) or wet and resonant when further away (in the valleys). Next, to connect these sounds of the surface structure to the colours in the painting (mostly white), the painting's RGB/colour frequencies were mapped to spectral envelopes that would be close to human vowel-like sounds. This made the initial clicks a bit less harsh and less immediately bound to an identifiable sonic source. Finally, to make the sounds even less source-binding, they were stretched out a bit more (through granular re-synthesis), which made them even more curious and suited to so many aspects of *Delay*, the title and content of the piece inspired by this research.

The sounds then are not directly identifiable as something concrete. Nonetheless, in their creation, they allude to the idea of the painting's "voice". Or, to directly quote Grond, "The irregular occurrence of surface incidents now became repeated articulations of various forms and lengths – all of them at the brink of speaking out, without saying something, but asking for further exploration of the perceived".

As previously mentioned, there is a long history of artists working with extra-sonorous data as a source and inspiration for their compositions and performances (e.g., John Cage, Alvin Lucier, and Sol LeWitt). As noted in the *Oxford Handbook of Sound Studies*: "Works like these brought natural and artificial systems to the fore by putting a process or phenomenon ahead of the artists' ostensibly personal 'vision'. What these works also implicitly proposed was that phenomena beyond the perception of the human senses might somehow be represented or reified".¹²

With *Delay*, the aim was to translate the scientific data of the painting in such a way that both revealed a relationship between the structure of the painting and the resulting sound, *and* such that experiencing them together would augment and complement (in the broadest sense of the word) the experience of both. The sound and visuals in this case are meant to be inexorably linked to the audience's experience of the work. On their own they may have their merits, but Grond and I were after something different – that their sum would be significantly enhanced by the coming together of the parts. This is supported by personal observation of viewings of my own works: the connections between sound and visuals is crucial to the works' success in engaging audiences.

In *Delay* there was also a conscious attempt, then, made to play with the notion of a "tease" – in this case specifically, which is the paper's argument – that a painting "teases" our aural and tactile senses, as revealed in the video for the piece, which can be seen at <https://vimeo.com/118346045>. Thus, when one enters the installation, the painting is presented as an artifact, spot lit, and suspended in the middle of a darkened room. When someone enters, a motorized aluminum plate with 5 small shutters swings in front of the painting, causing the shutters to slowly open

12 T. Pinch, K. Bijsterveld eds, *The Oxford Handbook of Sound Studies*, Oxford, 2012, p. 552. Another example is Andrea Polli's *Atmospherics/Weather Works*, which uses a 15-channel sound system to recreate significant storms in the New York/Long Island area, etc. For more information see <http://www.andreapolli.com/studio/atmospherics/>.

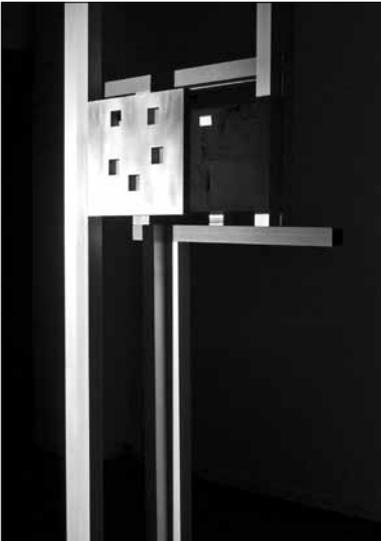


Fig. 8 and 9. Details of *Delay*. They depict the light shining through one of the shutters, slowly revealing one of the one-inch square patches of painting that was scanned, generating one of the sets of sounds heard on the speakers, arranged throughout the space. Photo by Florian Grond © Florian Grond, 2014. Used with permission.



Fig. 10. An installation shot of *Delay*. Photograph by Florian Grond © Florian Grond, 2014. Used with permission.

and close (one after another), revealing the areas that were scanned, a bit the way eclipses work. At the same time the sounds directly created from the corresponding scans are played on five speakers, placed around the room. (These are built as white boxes to visually disappear – e.g. to appear to be structural elements of the room’s architecture.) The staging of speakers and the spatial orchestration of the sonic movements invite the audience to recompose the painting’s surface texture through the sense of listening.

Thus, as the project started, so it ends: the piece is about love, the overwhelming desire to know everything about something (or someone) – in this case painting – and the impossibility to do so, but the nevertheless all too human quest to try. Hearing a painting does not take away from its mystery: it simply provides another point of entrée, fascination, and association. *Delay*, then, is meant to be a lure: to be seen, heard, and experienced, to delay people, as love does.

To see a video of the installation (combining the work’s visuals, audio and haptic components), see <http://transculturalexchange.org/marysberman/works/current/delay/vd.html>.

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ARTICLES

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The Robe of Corporeality: Sensual Aspects of Medieval Representations of Crucified Christ in the *Tunica Manicata*

Abstract

This paper explores the iconography of the *Volto Santo* – a crucifix worshiped at the cathedral of Lucca, Italy, and the reception of this iconographic type in the medieval art. The aim is to investigate the role of robes covering the body of crucified Christ in the scenes of the Passion.

First of all, the origins and meaning of different Christ's garments are discussed in relation to the debates on the nature of Christ and around the Eucharist. Still, as the *Volto Santo* is usually dated to the 12th century and it presents Christ in the *tunica manicata* with the *cingulum*, which can be identified as a clerical costume, the meaning of Christ's garments in the context of the Gregorian Reform, celibacy, and the concept of the third gender is also presented. Afterwards the practices of dressing the *Volto Santo* in the ceremonial vestments as a manifestation of its worship are analyzed. These vestments along with the altar, where the *Volto Santo* was presented to the faithful, are the most important elements of the iconography of the representations of the *Volto Santo* in the mural paintings. What draws attention in these images is the ambiguous position of Christ nailed to the cross and standing on the altar at the same time. That produces ambivalent sensual experience: the impression of uncourting Christ turns into a recognition of the particular cult object and vice versa. Moreover, the robe covering the body contributes to a fluid gender identity of the figure.

It may be concluded that the robes of the crucified Christ play several roles: they cover the suffered body, they are an attribute of the ruler or priest, but above all, they manifest Christ's corporality. The faithful confronted with these images found his or her somatic identity with Christ.

Keywords: Crucifixion, crucifix, the *Volto Santo*, colobium, *tunica manicata*, *cingulum*, body, human nature, Eucharist, gender

For the last thousand years the iconography of the Crucifixion has been dominated by the image of Jesus Christ in the *perizoma*. Christ's naked body at the time

of his death is interpreted as a manifestation of the reality of Incarnation and of Christ's truly human nature that embraced also the sensual aspect of his life and death. It also illustrates the Biblical text about Christ's being stripped of his garments (John 19:23–24).

However, between the years 600 and 800 – in the early period when the iconography of the Passion of Christ was being formed – Byzantine, insular, Frankish, and Merovingian art was dominated by images of Christ crucified in his robes. From then on, these images gradually became less popular, yet the tradition of presenting Christ robed was preserved throughout the Middle Ages.¹ This tradition resonated powerfully in Ottonian miniature painting, and subsequently in monumental sculpture of the 12th and 13th century. The most interesting examples of sculpted crucifixes from this period representing a robed Christ come from today's Germany, Catalonia, and Italy. One of the most famous ones is a crucifix conserved at the cathedral of San Martino in Lucca, called the *Volto Santo*. Venerated in the Middle Ages, it inspired pilgrims to visit this Tuscan town. Its fame reached remote parts of Europe, so replicas of this image are now identified in locations spanning from Rome to Rostock. Most often, those are mural paintings dating from the 14th and 15th century. Their iconography and composition suggest an uncommon kind of ambivalent sensual experience of the faithful confronted with this cult image. It is the aim of this paper to discuss the role of robes covering the body of Christ in building this effect.

The starting point for this analysis is to examine the origin and symbolic meaning of the representation of the robed crucified Christ in the early Middle Ages. It is significant to include the study of dress. It is equally relevant to consider the relationship between the robe and Christ's body: Does it serve to cover or to hide his body? Does it work to intensify the viewer's empathy or to form a distance between the viewer and God Incarnate? Answers to this question will bring us closer to understanding the phenomenon of the *Volto Santo* as a figure and relic in one, they will help us better define the iconography of the painted replicas of the *Volto Santo* and to shed new light on the reception of this iconographic type in the culture of the late Middle Ages.

The image of the robed Crucified Christ – origin and iconographical content

The oldest known representation of a robed Christ is a miniature from the *Rabbula Gospels* dated c. 586 (Florence, Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana, f. 13r). It is also one of the oldest known images of the Crucifixion. Jesus is shown here alive, dressed in a purple *colobium* – a simple sleeveless tunic made from a piece of fabric folded in

1 E. Coatsworth, "The 'robed Christ' in pre-Conquest sculptures of the Crucifixion", *Anglo-Saxon England*, 2000, 29, pp. 153–155.

half and sewn together, which loosely covers his torso and legs, and falls in vertical folds. The robe is decorated with golden *clavi* – two vertical stripes. Christ seems to be standing rather than hanging on the cross: his body is straight, and his head is raised. His eyes are open and the wounds in his feet and hands are marked only symbolically.

The Crucifixion type represented in the Rabbula Gospels is defined as the *Christus triumphans* and, according to the scholars, it emphasizes Christ's triumph over death and his divine nature.² Christ's robe plays an important role in constructing the meaning of these images. The *colobium* was a type of garment commonly worn in the Roman Empire. In the early Christian period, it was used as a liturgical vestment and for that reason in the early and middle Byzantine iconography it served as an attribute of priesthood.³ Purple, on the other hand, was considered an imperial colour. Dressed in a purple *colobium*, the crucified Christ is shown as a ruler and the highest priest. Moreover, the robe covering the body pushed the corporeal aspect of Christ's Passion into the background. However, the function of the *colobium* might have been more complex. Kathleen Corrigan may be right in suggesting that this robe could be linked with the Nestorian metaphors that described the Incarnation as Christ "being clothed in the flesh". She also observes that the colour purple had similar connotations, for Incarnation was often compared to "being clothed in royal purple".⁴ The *colobium* symbolises both the nobility of the ruler and Christ's human nature, and works, due to the lack of physical markings of suffering, as an equivalent of the body. This is confirmed by Sinai icon B.36, which Weitzmann dated to 7th century. It shows Christ dressed in the *colobium*, yet his eyes are closed, a crown of thorns sits on his head and streams of blood pour from his wounds – the Crucifixion is not shown here as a triumph over death, but in its human aspect: as an end to physical suffering.⁵ The red *colobium*, construed as the "robe" of corporeality, corresponds with this meaning.⁶

The robed Christ is a recurrent motif on Byzantine pectoral crosses and *staurotheke*s from the 6th to the 12th century.⁷ In these objects, it is sometimes difficult to classify the type of garment with certainty, since the images are intensely stylized and geometrical. In some of the compositions, the body and dress, being intercon-

2 D. Adams, "Crucifix", in: *The Dictionary of Art*, vol. 8, ed. J. Turner, New York, 1996, p. 211.

3 J. Bingham, *Origines Ecclesiasticæ. The Antiquities of the Christian Church. With Two Sermons and Two Letters on the Nature and Necessity of Absolution*, London, 1856, pp. 231–232.

4 K. Corrigan, "Text and Image on an Icon of the Crucifixion at Mount Sinai", in: *The Sacred Image East and West*, eds. R. Ousterhout, L. Brubaker, Chicago, 1995, pp. 53–56.

5 K. Weitzmann, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine At Mount Sinai, The Icons*, vol. 1, *From the Sixth to the Tenth Century*, New Jersey, 1976, p. 63.

6 On different shades of purple see J. L. Sebesta, "Tunica Ralla, Tunica Spissa: The Colours and Textiles of Roman Costume", in: *The World of Roman Costume*, eds. J. L. Sebesta, L. Bonfante, Madison, 1994, pp. 70–71; B. V. Pantcheva, *The Sensual Icon. Space, Ritual, and the Senses in Byzantium*, University Park, PA, 2010, p. 110.

7 For a representative selection see *Kreuz und Kruzifix. Zeichen und Bild*, eds. S. Hahn, C. Roll, P. B. Steiner, Freising, 2005, pp. 172–176.

nected, become impossible to distinguish from each other due to the flatness of the carved decoration. However, most often Christ is shown clothed in the *colobium* in accordance with the accepted canon of the Byzantine iconography of the Crucifixion. Still, there are also images of Christ in a toga or long-sleeved tunic, sometimes with a *pallium*. Elizabeth Coatsworth observes that these vestments feature in Byzantine representations of the living Christ. Therefore, the aforementioned examples should be interpreted as representing the Parousia.⁸ Particularly so, since often Christ's hands show merely holes left by nails, while nails as such are absent, as for instance in a scene on a cross from the Dumbarton Oaks Collection,⁹ where additionally the figure of Christ is placed on a cloud.

Representations on pectoral crosses and other mobile objects that reached Western Europe from the Holy Land brought by the pilgrims could have shaped the earliest iconography of the Crucifixion in insular and Frankish art, since Eastern art constituted the main source of inspiration in this respect.¹⁰ In these images Christ was shown in robes styled according to the local notion of classical dress. In a famous miniature from the Durham Gospels from the end of the 7th century, the robe forms a complex and decorative pattern of folds and covers the body of Christ completely. Every detail of this garment seems carefully planned and linked with the symbolic meaning of the scene. A richly draped chasuble is seen covering an ankle-length simple alba or *colobium*. The use of red and golden-yellow¹¹ colours corresponds with the intent of the scene to, as the inscription suggests,¹² present the resurrected Christ. Hence, Christ is shown alive, standing straight, and the nails are barely visible. His arms are stretched along the body and the forearms placed perpendicularly to the sides, which is uncommon, but an analogy may be found on Palestinian ampullae from the 6th and 7th century from the Cleveland Museum of Art and from Monza (No. 13),¹³ where the scene of the Crucifixion is complemented by the motif of an empty grave.¹⁴ Therefore their meaning is similar to that of the Durham Gospel image: they combine the themes of death and Parousia. It explains the position of arms used sometimes in representations of Christ as a Judge and the robes that were reserved in Byzantine art for scenes from his life. In the Durham Gospels, these robes should be interpreted according to the then functioning exegesis of the Book of Revelation (Revelation 1:13). For instance, the Venerable Bede argued that Christ's long garment confirms his priesthood manifested by his sacrifice

8 E. Coatsworth, op. cit., p. 156.

9 <http://museum.doaks.org/Obj30330?sid=2657&x=25650&port=2620> [accessed 30.03.2018].

10 E. Coatsworth, op. cit., p. 155.

11 R. Gameson, A. Beeby, A. Duckworth, C. Nicholson, "Pigments of the Earliest Northumbrian Manuscripts", *Scriptorium*, 2015, 69, p. 46.

12 J. O'Reilly "Early medieval text and image: the wounded and exalted Christ", *Peritia. Journal of the Medieval Academy of Ireland*, 1987–88, 7–8, pp. 89–91.

13 <http://www.clevelandart.org/art/1999.46.a> [accessed 15.05.19].

14 G. Schiller, *Ikongraphie der Christlichen Kunst. Band. 2: Die Passion Jesu Christi*, Gütersloh, Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn 1968, fig. 325.

on the altar of the cross.¹⁵ A slightly different version of this dress can be found in an image from the St. Gall Gospel Book made half a century later. Christ's shoulders and legs are left uncovered and decorative folds are reminiscent of the shroud that enveloped his body. The purple colour of the fabric corresponds with this form that exposes Christ's corporeality. This iconography finds no analogy in Byzantine art.¹⁶

A model example of Irish iconography of the Crucifixion is a bronze plaque from Dublin,¹⁷ commonly dated to the 8th or 9th century.¹⁸ It shows Christ dressed in a long-sleeved tunic that nearly reaches his feet, decorated on the torso part with six paired spiral shields, an ornate border underneath, and a vertical stripe in the centre. Scholars link the spirals with pagan art where they symbolised solar energy and fertility. For this reason, this Crucifixion should be interpreted as a prediction of Resurrection.¹⁹ Similar iconography, which includes a schematic, simplified body and a long garment with motifs composed of discs and plaits, may be found on the stone slab from the Calf of Man, carved probably in the 8th century (currently in the Manx Museum, Douglas).²⁰

Examples discussed above demonstrate that despite the patristic tradition suggesting that Christ was crucified naked,²¹ in the iconography of the 6th up to 8th century his wounded body was not exposed because his agony on the cross was not the central issue of theology of that time. However, it must be noted that this iconography did not controvert Christ's corporeality. The authenticity of his human nature and actual death on the cross is confirmed by the presence of Longinus and Stephaton in the majority of discussed Byzantine and insular works. Still, the tools they carry, a lance and a sponge on a stick, do not serve here as tools of his suffering – instead, they emphasize corporeality as an instrument of victory. This kind of understanding of death on the cross and the attendant cult of the body of Christ are confirmed by a late 8th or early 9th-century poem written by Blathmac:

15 Cf. E. Coatsworth, op. cit., pp. 156–157.

16 However, Weitzmann suggests a link with the Byzantine tradition of presenting Christ in the *colobium*. K. Weitzmann, "Various Aspects of Byzantine Influence on the Latin Countries from the Sixth to the Twelfth Century", *Dumbarion Oaks Papers*, 1966, 20, p. 5.

17 Cf. other Irish plaques and some of the Irish High Crosses. For example: the Clonmacnoise plaque, the Mayo plaques, the Lismore plaque, the Killaloe plaque, the Academy plaque, the Tynan plaque, the Anketell plaque, the Kells plaque, the Cross of Muirdeach. In all these works Christ is flanked by Stephaton with the sponge, Longinus with the lance, and two angels. Moreover, in the three first examples Christ "wears a full-length garment and hold his arms straight from his shoulders". G. Murray, "Irish crucifixion plaques: a reassessment", in: *Envisioning Christ on the cross. Ireland and the early medieval West*, eds. J. Mullins, J. Ní Ghrádaigh, R. Hawtree, Dublin, 2013, pp. 295–299; J. Ní Ghrádaigh, "Changing depiction of the Crucifixion on the Irish High Cross", *ibid.*, pp. 262–285.

18 P. Harbison, "The Bronze Plaque said to be from S. John's", *The Journal of Irish Archeology*, 1987, no. 2, pp. 13–16.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

20 Basil R. S. Megaw, "The Calf of Man Crucifixion", *The Journal of the Manx Museum*, 1958, no. 6, p. 57.

21 G. Schiller, op.cit., p. 101.

“His crucified body was his victory; he suffered the shedding of wine-like blood; no corruption or worm came to him at the time of his burial”.²²

In the 9th century an important change occurs in the iconography of the Crucifixion. Images of Christ in the perizoma are now much more common. In the East, this was linked with iconoclastic and Christological debates around the dogma of hypostatic union of two natures in Christ. In the Crucifixion scenes, the perizoma worked as an evidence of the fact of Incarnation and therefore partially justified the production of the images of God. In the West, the new iconography was inspired by the Carolingian debates around the Eucharist. Images of the crucified Christ were now more commonly used during the liturgy. In this context showing the exposed body, and blood pouring from the wounds often straight to a mass chalice, was a way to visualise the dogma of Transubstantiation.²³

This iconography found continuity in Ottonian art. Interestingly, it is the perizoma that dominates in the oldest preserved (usually dated to the 10th century) life-size crucifixes sculpted in the round: from the church of San Michele Maggiore in Padua,²⁴ from Sant’Eusebio in Vercelli,²⁵ and on the most famous Ottonian crucifix from Cologne Cathedral, where Christ is shown in the second basic type of the Crucifixion, that is, the *Christus patiens*.²⁶ In the following centuries, such images became more popular, coinciding with the changing theological interpretation of the Passion of Christ. This change is manifested in full in the writings of St. Anselm. According to him, it is Christ’s suffering and death, effected through the act of Incarnation, that made Salvation possible. Resurrection merely confirmed Christ’s divine nature. This perspective favoured the development of the Passion piety concentrated on Christ’s life that ended with death as a sacrifice for the sins of humanity. Later on, Bernard of Clairvaux initiated a new model of religiosity, recommending personal reflection on the Gospel. However, he still situated it in the liturgical context, and he did not single out the Passion from among other evangelical events. It was St. Francis who subsequently underlined the necessity of a direct relationship with the suffering Christ. Following these principles, St. Bonaventure postulated an active compassion for Christ’s suffering along with an attempt to imitate him.²⁷

22 S. Ryan, “The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Ireland”, in: *The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture*, eds. L. H. Cooper, A. Denny-Brown, Farnham, 2014, p. 244.

23 C. Chazelle, “Crucifixes and the Liturgy in the Ninth-Century Carolingian Church”, in: *Il Volto Santo in Europa. Atti del convegno* (Engelberg 2000), eds. M. C. Ferrari, A. Meyer, Lucca, 2003, pp. 67–93. Cf. eadem, *The Crucified God in the Carolingian Era: Theology and Art of Christ’s Passion*, Cambridge, 2001, passim, esp. pp. 156–159, 209–238.

24 <http://www.lombardiabeniculturali.it/opere-arte/schede/20300-00002/> [accessed 20.06.2019].

25 Most recent research outcomes in: S. Lomartire ed., *Il Crocifisso ottoniano di Vercelli: indagini tecnologiche, diagnostiche, restauri*, Vercelli, 2016.

26 Cf. D. Adams, op. cit., p. 212.

27 J. J. Kopeć, *Męka Pańska w religijnej kulturze polskiego średniowiecza. Studium nad pasyjnymi motywami i tekstami liturgicznymi*, Warsaw, 1975, pp. 79–82, 88–91, 94–99, 101 ff. (esp. 107); Idem,

The *Tunica manicata* in representations of the crucified Christ

The changes in theology help explain the growing popularity of images that exposed Christ's body in Romanesque art. However, there can also be observed a parallel renewed occurrence of the motif of the crucified Christ whose body is covered by a long garment. Initially, this iconography features in Ottonian miniature painting, and ivory reliefs, where Christ usually is shown alive, but other elements of the scene allude to blood spilled on the cross. Those are: Longinus who pierces Christ's body and a chalice for the blood of Eucharist. However, there are exceptions as well. For instance, the image in the Aachen Gospels shows Christ already passed away.

Ottonian miniatures almost consistently show Christ in a long-sleeved tunic with sleeves reaching the elbows or wrists. Moreover, in contrast to the stiffly hanging *colobium*, the tunic is shown here tied or belted at the waist. Another notable element is the use of multiple, often asymmetrically draped folds. The casual lines of the fabric emphasize the anatomy and expose the natural position of the body, which becomes increasingly common in Ottonian art. Despite the differences in their details, most of these robes can be identified as liturgical vestments. Sometimes it is the chasuble with the alba showing from underneath. Sometimes the liturgical function is suggested by the stole. In most of these miniature paintings, the robes are purple or red with gold accessories. However, this is not the rule: for instance, in Sacramentary of Bishop Abraham (Munich, BSB, CLM. 6421, f. 33v) Christ is shown clothed in white, which can be interpreted as a symbol of an innocent sacrifice made on the altar of the cross of a Lamb Without Blemish.

Images from the Ottonian codices inspired sculptural representations of the crucified Christ in the following centuries. Christ is shown in richly draped asymmetrical robes with long sleeves that resemble priests' dress on an 11th-century crucifix from Uznach, and another 12th-century crucifix from Erp.²⁸

Meanwhile, in the sculpture from Central and Southern Europe spreads an image of Christ in a long-sleeved tunic, simple in shape and tied at the waist with a narrow belt. Among notable examples are those of the 12th and 13th century from Switzerland, Germany, France, Catalonia and Italy e.g. the crucifixes from: Alpnach, Switzerland (currently in the Museum in Engelberg); the cathedral of Braunschweig; the church of St. Martini in Emmerich, North Rhine-Westphalia; the chapel of Saint-Sauve in the cathedral of Amiens; the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona (so called the Majestat Batlló, probably from a church in the comarca of Garrotxa, Catalonia); the church of Sant Cristòfol in Beget, Catalonia; the monastery of Sant Joan les Fonts, Catalonia (currently in the Museu d'Art, Girona);

"Przemiany ideowe w pasyjnej pobożności średniowiecza", in: *Studia z dziejów liturgii*, vol. 2, eds. M. Rechowicz, W. Schenk, Lublin, 1976, pp. 485–498.

28 M. Armandi, "Regnavit a ligno Deus. Il Crocifisso tunicato di proporzioni monumentali", in: *Il Volto Santo di Sansepolcro. Un grande capolavoro medievale rivelato dal restauro*, ed. A. M. Maetzke, Milan, 1994, pp. 154–155.

the church of Sant Boi de Lluçanès, Catalonia (currently Museu Episcopal, Vic); the cathedral of Sansepolcro, Tuscany; the church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Sondalo, Lombardy; the monastery of Santa Croce del Corvo in Bocca di Magra, Liguria; the Romanesque Italian crucifix currently in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York and the crucifix in the Museo d'Arte Sacra in San Gimignano, Tuscany.²⁹

These works show Christ alive, with wide open eyes and with no signs of suffering. His body is generally shown very symmetrically: the figure stands straight, the arms are horizontally stretched to the sides, the head is either stiffly bent forward or gently reclined to the right.

The cut, the vertical folds, the lack of draping and a belt at the waist help identify the garment in most of these images as the *tunica manicata*. Much like the *colobium*, the *tunica manicata* has its roots in antiquity and was used by the Christians as a priest's attire – in this function it was most often belted with a narrow *cingulum* with long ends.³⁰ The *cingulum* is almost always highly distinct in the crucifixes: on the level of the navel it forms a decorative knot, while its ends hang freely highlighting the symmetrical pose of the body.

The use of clerical vestments and the image of Christ alive brings associations with the early Byzantine iconography of the Crucifixion with Christ in the *colobium*, yet it seems that the direct inspiration came from Ottonian works and the main goal was to emphasize priesthood rather than the triumph of Christ. The *tunica manicata*, which accentuates the role of Christ as a priest, works to highlight the supremacy of spiritual over secular power. The popularity of this iconography can be linked with the Gregorian Reform, the goal of which was to secure the independence of the church from the state.³¹

However, the aforementioned images of Christ dressed in the *tunica manicata* with a *cingulum* carry a more important meaning, which is suggested by this characteristic belt. Since patristic times, the *cingulum* was considered one of the most important symbols of persistence in the struggle against carnal temptations. For instance, for John Cassian, “the monk's warrior status was symbolized by his clothing, understood as a spiritual armor capable of deflecting sin, the most important component of which was the ‘double belt’ (*cingulum duplisc*) with which he girded his loins for battle”. This belt represented, above all, the wearer's determination to extinguish the burning darts of lust with “the frost of abstinence”.³² This tradition

29 E. Panofsky, “Krucyfiks w katedrze w Brunszwiku i ‘Volto Santo’ w Lukce”, in: Idem, *Średniowiecze*, trans. G. Jurkowlaniec, Warsaw, 2001, p. 70; J. Camps i Soria, “The Romanesque Majesty at the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum”, *Boletín del Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao*, 2012, 6, pp. 15–38; Armandi, op. cit., pp. 148–155; P. Refice, “Riflessioni sul Volto Santo di Sansepolcro”, in: *Arte in terra d'Arezzo. Il Medioevo*, eds. M. Collareta, P. Refice, Florence, 2010, pp. 83–89; A. M. Maetzke, “Il Volto Santo di Sansepolcro”, in: *Il Volto Santo in Europa...*, pp. 193–207; G. de Francovich, “A Romanesque School of Wood Carvers”, *The Art Bulletin*, 1937, 19, no. 1, p. 49.

30 J. Bingham, op. cit., pp. 231–232.

31 M. Burger, *The Shaping of Western Civilization: From Antiquity to the Present*, Toronto, 2013, pp. 191–192.

32 K. A. Smith, *War and the Making of Medieval Monastic Culture*, Woodbridge, 2011, p. 91.

was still much alive in the late Middle Ages. For instance, in his biography of St. Thomas Aquinas, William of Tocco writes that when the saint prayed to God to help him preserve his virtue, he asked for the “belt (*cingulum*) of perpetual virginity”.³³ For this reason, Christ’s robes described above should be linked with the new vision of priesthood defined by celibacy, which developed during the Gregorian Reform. At the time celibacy was legally sanctioned, and life in virtue, that dated back to the beginnings of monastic life, fortified a particular vision of manhood. By some scholars it is interpreted as a sexless “third gender”, by others as “extreme masculinity” that demonstrates the superiority of priests over secular people, and, above all, of men over women.³⁴

The Volto Santo of Lucca

The Volto Santo of Lucca is the most famous image of Christ that shows him dressed in the *tunica manicata* with a *cingulum*. It is a wooden crucifix with a larger than life-sized Christ figure placed on the cross, more than two and a half metres high and wide.³⁵ Christ is shown with his arms stretched wide, in a straight, symmetrical pose with his head slightly turned to the right. The tunic that covers his figure creates rhythmical folds – diagonal on the sleeves, vertical on the torso – emphasising the symmetry of the body. The ends of the *cingulum* that ties the tunic reach almost as low as the bottom edge of the robe that hangs asymmetrically – elongated on the left it offers a compositional correspondence to the head turned to the other side. These slight deviations from the overall symmetrical composition make an impression that the figure is in motion. The feet protruding from the tunic, directed towards the ground, turn freely to the sides. Their arrangement and the lack of a *suppendaneum* are in contradiction to the pose of the body – even though there is no support to the feet, the body does not seem to be hanging. Christ is shown levitating in front of the cross. There are no signs of physical suffering either. Nevertheless, the figure exudes a melancholy sadness. The face is calm, resigned. The wide-open eyes are turned downwards.

Although the Volto Santo epitomises the iconography typical for the 12th and 13th century, there have been controversies around its dating.

Archival materials suggest that already in the third quarter of the 11th century an artefact called the *Crux Vetus* was venerated in the cathedral of Lucca and the

33 R. M. Karras, “Thomas Aquinas’s Chastity Belt: Clerical Masculinity in Medieval Europe”, in: *Gender and Christianity in Medieval Europe: New Perspectives*, eds. L. M. Bitel, F. Lifshitz, Philadelphia, 2013, p. 62.

34 See M. C. Miller, “Masculinity, Reform, and Clerical Culture: Narratives of Episcopal Holiness in the Gregorian Era”, *Church History*, 2003, 72, no. 1, pp. 27–28; Cf. J. Murray, “One Flesh, Two Sexes, Three Genders?”, in: *Gender and Christianity in Medieval Europe: New Perspectives*, eds. L. M. Bitel, F. Lifshitz, Philadelphia, 2013, pp. 34–51.

35 A. Guerra, *Storia del Volto Santo*, Lucca, 1881, reprinted by Whitefish, 2010, p. 28.

cathedral's inventory of 1109 records an altar *ante Vultum*.³⁶ For this reason, some scholars claim that over the course of the 12th century an older cross was replaced with the present crucifix. It has even been suggested that the original cross was a Syriac crucifix from the 8th century. The hypothesis of the existence of two crucifixes in Lucca was questioned by Clara Baracchini and Antonio Caleca, among others, who based their claims around an earlier dating of the sculpture presently stored in Lucca. For example, Erwin Panofsky dated the present crucifix to early 11th century, indicating the links between its iconography and the Syriac-Palestinian tradition; a similar dating is proposed by Mario Salmi, who linked the artefact with the French workshops influenced by the Byzantine tradition.³⁷

In the light of the contradictory theories that do not cover the entirety of iconographic material, it seems impossible to determine the exact date when the Lucca crucifix was made. With the present state of research, it is also difficult to conclusively identify the place of origin of the sculpture. However, there is no evidence of direct links with the Syriac-Palestinian type traditionally defined as *Christus triumphans* in *colobium*, nor any evidence supporting the hypotheses on the Byzantine origin of the sculpture since, as was stated above, there are numerous analogies for this type in Ottonian and later art.

Nevertheless, the theses suggesting an Eastern origin of the Lucca crucifix are noteworthy. Among their authors are not only art historians but also medieval hagiographers who claimed that the Volto Santo was a work made by St. Nicodemus – the witness of Christ's Passion and his burial.³⁸ He was assumed to have been inspired by God to carve the crucifix modelled on the imprint on the shroud. According to the legend the sculpture was made from the tree pointed by God and completed by angels.³⁹ Convictions about the crucifix's "Eastern origin" and "miraculous etiology" have shaped the process of sensual perception and the reception

36 R. Silva, "La datazione del Volto Santo di Lucca", in: *La Santa Croce di Lucca. Storia, tradizioni, immagini. Atti del Convegno* (Lucca 2001), ed. M. Zingoni, Empoli, 2003, p. 78.

37 See *ibid.* p. 78; G. de Francovich, "Il Volto Santo di Lucca", *Bollettino Storico Lucchese*, 1936, 8, pp. 3–28; R. Haussherr, "Das Imervardkreuz un der Volto-Santo-Typ", *Zeitschrift für Kunstwissenschaft*, 1962, 16, pp. 129–170; C. Baracchini, A. Caleca, *Il Duomo di Lucca*, Lucca, 1973, pp. 14–15; A. Caleca, "Il Volto Santo, un problema critico", in: *Il Volto Santo storia e culto. Catalogo della mostra* (Lucca 1982), eds. C. Baracchini, M. T. Filieri, Lucca, 1982, pp. 59–75; E. Panofsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 71–75; M. Salmi, *La scultura romanica in Toscana*, Florence, 1928, p. 72.

38 The notion about Nicodemus's authorship was a typical element of medieval legends about venerated crucifixes especially in Spain, see C. Schleif, "Nicodemus and Sculpotors: Self-Reflexivity in Works by Adam Kraft and Tilman Riemenschneider", *The Art Bulletin*, 1993, 75, no. 4, p. 610. For example, Nicodemus was mentioned as an author of the crucifix in the Cathedral of Burgos. "Burgos and Its Cathedral", *The Illustrated Magazine of Art*, 1853, 1, no. 5, p. 270. The same was said about the Santa Majestat de Caldes de Montbui and the Santa Majestat de la Pabla de Lillet. Jordi Camps i Soria, "The Romansque Majesty at the Bilbao Fine Art Museum", *Buletina: Bilboko Arte Eder Museoa*, 2012, no. 6, p. 9.

39 J.-C. Schmitt, "Les images d'une image. La figuration du Volto Santo de Lucca dans les manuscrits enluminés du moyen âge", in: *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation*, eds. H. L. Kessler, G. Wolf, Bologna, 1998, pp. 210–12; C. Schleif, "Nicodemus and Sculptors: Self-

of the work throughout its history and have contributed to the veneration of the Volto Santo, which continues to this day.⁴⁰

The moment of most intensive expansion of the cult of the Volto Santo in Italy, as well as in Central and Northern Europe, was observed in the 14th and 15th centuries. Scenes of the Crucifixion had already been dominated by this time by the *Christus patiens* in perizoma type. The Lucca Christ, evoking tranquillity and peace, dressed in a simple robe, was certainly an exception among other crucifixes produced in central Italy and was identified by its contemporary viewers as archaic and exotic, which fired their imaginations and supported the legends of its Eastern origin. These legends, together with the late-medieval demand for miraculous images whose cult was gradually replacing the cult of relics, contributed to the growing popularity of the Volto Santo. This is confirmed by numerous preserved manuscripts⁴¹ that describe the legendary history of the Volto Santo and the miracles performed by the crucifix, and by representations of the Volto Santo in mural painting.

The belief in the exceptional nature of the Volto Santo found its expression in the decoration of the figure and the cross with additional applications, some of which have been preserved to this day in the cathedral treasury; while the appearance of others and their arrangement can be deduced on the basis of numerous iconographic sources from the period such as: pilgrim signs produced in Lucca, local coins and medals, and documents from the municipal archives.

The most characteristic element of this set is a metal rim in the shape of an incomplete circle. Until today it works as a kind of frame for the figure of the Crucified: it envelops the arms of the cross and the top part of the vertical wooden beam, while its two ends, directed towards Christ's feet, are decorated with the *fleur-de-lis* motif. Probably the oldest representation documenting the presence of the rim comes from a parchment stored at the Archivio Arcivescovile in Lucca titled *Capitoli della compagnia del Volto Santo* from 1306.⁴² This drawing shows that the crucifix was exhibited on the altar, which is also confirmed by other manuscripts. Moreover, documents from the 12th and 13th century suggest that the altar was placed in a separate chapel built in the Lucca cathedral for the venerated image.⁴³

The figure of Christ itself was also adorned. Notably, the entire sculpted tunic was covered with the textile robe. As evidenced by a drawing from 1306 and the abovementioned murals and miniatures, this was possibly a dark, long-sleeved gar-

Reflexivity in Works by Adam Kraft and Tilman Riemenschneider", *The Art Bulletin*, 1993, 75, no. 4, pp. 608–609; J. Ross, N. Erichsen, *The Story of Lucca*, London, 1912, p. 6.

40 Cf. J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Obraz osobliwy. Hermeneutyczna lektura źródeł ikonograficznych*, vol. 1, *Wielkie opowieści*, Cracow, 2000, pp. 303–314.

41 For a discussion of selected images see J.-C. Schmitt, op. cit., pp. 218–227; H. Madocks, "The Rapondi, The Volto Santo di Lucca, and Manuscript Illumination in Paris ca. 1400", in: *Patrons, Authors And Workshops: Books And Book Production in Paris Around 1400*, eds. G. Croenen, P. F. Ainsworth, Leuven, 2006, pp. 109–110.

42 I. Sabbatini, "ARVO: Digital Archive of the Volto Santo. An ancient archive in the digital age", *Almatourism. Special Issue*, 2018, 8, p. 207, fig. 6.

43 A. Guerra, op. cit., p. 83.

ment with a simple cut decorated with golden ornaments at the edges of sleeves, at the waist, along the vertical axis under the waist, and along the bottom edge. Golden applications are preserved to this day and are dated to the 14th century. This attire was completed with a crown and golden or silver shoes. The crown on Christ's head is shown on coins issued in Lucca in the 13th century and the shoes are documented in the above-discussed iconographic sources from the 14th century.⁴⁴

Decorative applications on the Lucca crucifix represent a typical way of distinguishing cult images. Most often, contrary to common belief, these are not extraordinary works, hence the need to individualize their appearance. Covered with precious robes, embellished with gold and decorated, they seemed more attractive to the faithful. Moreover, the figure dressed in an actual robe gains the status of a living body and facilitates the identification of the image with the prototype in the cult practice. As David Freedberg writes: "People do not garland, wash, or crown images just out of habit; they do so because all such acts are symptoms of a relationship between image and respondent that is clearly predicated on the attribution of powers which transcend the purely material aspect of the object".⁴⁵

A similar process is at work in case of the *Volto Santo*. As shown above, in Southern and Central Europe, crucifixes of this type were not uncommon. Moreover, the late medieval religious communities might have viewed the simple sculptural form and the modest dress of the *Volto Santo* as primitive, even though these features substantiated their belief in the work's origin in the East. This is why the figure was dressed and decorated with sumptuous accessories. This way, the original vestment and iconography that inspired the legend of St. Nicodemus ceased to be visible. This is confirmed by painted replicas – they do not document such important elements as the *tunica manicata* with the *cingulum*, the bare feet, or the melancholy sadness emanating from the delicately carved face. Instead, they show Christ dressed in a robe with golden applications, with a crown and shoes.

The symbolical meaning of ceremonial, richly decorated robes is twofold. On the one hand, it is a reference to the vision from the Book of Revelation: "I saw [...] someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest" (Revelation 1:12–13), on the other hand, it accentuates Christ's humanity because the ritual of dressing the figure is a confirmation of his sensual corporeality. However, both the dress that covers the figure of Christ and the robes put on the sculpture make not effort to emphasize the anatomy of the Crucified. Therefore, the senses of the faithful-pilgrim-viewer are subjected to contradictory stimuli – they stand in front of a figure whose dress affords it the status of a genuine body, yet it also emphasizes its status as an artefact. This effect culminates with decorative applications and the placing of the crucifix on the altar, which stresses the sculpture as an object. This dualism is concurrent with the

44 C. Barachini, A. Caleca, op. cit., pp. 143–145; M. Seidel, R. Silva, *The Power of Images, the Images of Power. Lucca as an Imperial City: Political Iconography*, Berlin, 2007, pp. 251–255.

45 D. Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response*, Chicago, 1989, p. 91.

etiological legend whose essence is the enduring relationship of the image with both the body and the medium that represents it. This allows the viewer to emphatically identify with Christ and, at the same time, builds a distance towards the sculpture-relic made by Nicodemus himself.

These contradictory sensations experienced by the faithful produce a particular kind of ambivalence which is well illustrated by mural paintings that show the Lucca crucifix. In these images Christ's robe is usually highly geometrical, to emphasize the stiffness and majesty of the figure and therefore its presence as a "statue" rather than its "reality". This stands in contrast with the other elements resulting in the lively appearance of Christ's facial expression: the wide-open eyes and the gaze of Christ directed towards the adoring figure represented usually at his feet. In the other examples Christ looks straight at the viewer, what even more enhances the impression of him being alive.

Painted replicas of the Volto Santo

To this day nearly seventy mural paintings or fragments have been preserved that are identified as representations of the Volto Santo of Lucca. They were produced from the third quarter of the 14th century until the end of the 15th century.⁴⁶ A large number of examples allows us to distinguish these paintings as a separate iconographic type – a Volto Santo type of Crucifixion. What distinguishes them are the rim around the arms of the cross and Christ's ceremonial dress. Most commonly, the latter is a dark long-sleeved tunic of simple cut that falls either stiffly or in vertical folds onto Christ's feet. It has a wide golden belt at the waist. A similar stripe goes from the waist vertically down towards the bottom edge decorated with a golden border. The cuffs and the collar are also decorated. Recurrent are also a sumptuous necklace on Christ's chest, and a crown on his head. Shoes are among the most important attributes. They can be linked with a 12th-century legend about a poor minstrel who offered the miraculous image his music instead of a votive. Christ rewarded him by taking off his precious shoe⁴⁷. This became an element of the iconography of the Volto Santo. Among other recurrent attributes are the chalice commonly placed under Christ's foot and the setting: an altar on which the crucifix was presented and a fabric hanging behind it – usually a red curtain decorated with golden circles, stars, dots, lilies or foliate ornaments. Occasionally, the composition would also include a chapel or elements of architecture such as balustrades, arcades or columns, which was to allude to the way the crucifix was displayed in Lucca.

What all the images in the Volto Santo type share is the way the figure of Christ is presented. He is always shown alive, with open eyes, he makes direct eye contact

46 For a complete catalogue of works see S. Martinelli, *L'immagine del Volto Santo di Lucca: il successo europeo di un'iconografia medievale*, Pisa, 2016, pp. 145–184.

47 G. Schnürer, J. M. Ritz, *St. Kümmeris und Volto Santo*, Düsseldorf, 1934, pp. 159–178; V. Bertolucci Pizzorusso, *La Vergine e il Volto Santo. Il miracolo del Giulare*, Lucca, 2009, pp. 23–25.

with the viewer or the figure kneeling at the foot of the crucifix – the legendary minstrel, an anonymous pilgrim or a donor – who works as the figuration of the viewer inside the pictorial space. Moreover, the painted replicas fully express the ambiguity of the position of Christ on the cross. Although his arms are nailed to the horizontal beam, nothing indicates that he is hanging on it. His body seems to stand stable and straight. This impression is emphasized by the position of the feet that seem to be supported by the altar. Curiously, most images do not show the bottom part of the vertical beam of the cross. This way Christ is almost standing on the altar stone. This intensifies the effect of liveliness of the figure and lends it the status of an image of a person rather than of sculpture. Nevertheless, although shown alive, Christ is disembodied: there are no signs of physical suffering, and the wounds in his feet and hands are barely visible, the robe – always rendered flatly and synthetically – deprives the figure of any sensual aspect.

At the same time, elements that reconstruct the setting of the Lucca crucifix – the rim and the fabric in the background, as well as occasionally elements of architecture that suggest the chapel – emphasize the relationship of the image with the sculpture-relic from Lucca. When the viewer's attention is directed at these details of the image, the impression of encountering a living Christ turns into a recognition of a particular cult object. The moment of transformation is elusive, while the status of the image is intentionally fluid. The power of painting reveals itself here, offering the possibility of ambiguous spatial relations and the forming of contradictory sensations.

In mural painting, the *Volto Santo* type displays relative unity. However, its iconography is so complex that there are no identical images. The robe, although usually dark, can be in red, blue or even white, the applications along the edges, the cuffs and the collar always differ in some details; the belt at the waist comes in various shapes, with one or three crosses placed above it. The rim around the upper arms of the cross commonly replicates the form of an incomplete circle, but it can also be found as a part of a curve, a semicircle, an oval, a closed circle or an elaborate polyfoil shape. Still, its two ends are consistently adorned with a *fleur-de-lis* or a similar flower. Notably, the rim itself was relatively often eliminated from the image. Apparently, it was not as important for identification as the ceremonial dress. The latter played a significant role in the reception of the replicas of the *Volto Santo* in religious centres remote from Lucca.

The robed body on the cross

As mentioned above, the late medieval art was dominated by the scenes of the Passion showing a tortured Christ covered only with the perizoma. Those express most fully the late medieval mentality and religiosity. At the same time, it is a period when corporeality was primarily considered a source of sin. In this context, Christ's body stands as corporeality *à rebours* – on the cross it loses its sinful aspect and becomes the medium of salvation. Such images were particularly useful for the

ascetic practices of *compassio* that referred to the instructions of the Church Fathers, e.g. the story about the hermit who “took off his clothes, and put a girdle about his loins and stretched out his hands and said ‘Thus ought the monk to be: stripped naked of everything worldly and crucify himself against temptation and the world’s struggles’”.⁴⁸

When compared to these images, the “robed” body of the Crucified might have been perceived as a hidden body – a body that is subject to desire and inspires it. In the late Middle Ages, a woman’s body was seen as such.⁴⁹ This is why the 15th-century representations of the Volto Santo have been linked to the cult of a legendary bearded woman saint, venerated in the Netherlands and the German-speaking countries, who died as a martyr on the cross.⁵⁰ The connection between the two cults in the North of Europe is suggested by murals from St. Nicholas’ church in Rostock, among others. A 1450 cycle that covers the walls of this church presents the scenes from the legend of the Volto Santo and, placed in the vicinity, an image of a crucified bearded woman. She is identified with an inscription as Ontkommer, which in Flemish means the saviour of the unfortunates.⁵¹ The saint was also named Wilgefortis, which was originally a male name. In German she was called Kümmeris – a name that connoted concern or worry.⁵² In a print from 1507 (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Inv.-Nr. VII/19q), which presents the legend of her martyrdom, this name is used in the masculine form: Sankt Kümernuß.⁵³ It is illustrated by a woodcut by Hans Burgkmair which shows, as the inscription informs, “Die Bildnus zu Luca”. This juxtaposition of the legend about the crucified bearded woman and the image of the Volto Santo confirms the connection between the two cults. Moreover, the bearded female saint was often referred to as the Hulfe, Hülpe, Hulpe, Hölpe, Gehülfe.⁵⁴ These names point to the images of Christ the Helper (*Christus adiutor*), whose name in the late medieval German functioned as Sankt Hulpe, helige Helper, Helfer, Gehilfe. It seems that the same name was used to refer to the replicas of the Volto Santo or other Romanesque crucifixes that showed a robed Christ. Those were different from the images of *Christus patiens* and were believed to exert a strong power in comforting the miserable. It is also worth adding that the cult of Christ the Helper was sporadically combined with the cult

48 M. R. Miles, *Carnal Knowing. Female, Nakedness and Religious Meaning in the Christian West*, Wellwood, 1989, p. 63.

49 Ibidem, pp. 81–82.

50 Cf. J. Zänker, *Crucifixae. Frauen am Kreuz*, Berlin, 1998, pp. 46–48.

51 D. A. King, “The Cult of St. Wilgefortis in Flanders, Holland, England and France”, in: *Am Kreuz – eine Frau: Anfänge – Abhängigkeiten – Aktualisierungen*, eds. S. Glockzin-Bever, M. Kraatz, Münster, 2003, p. 57.

52 Ibidem, pp. 78–79; G. Schnürer, J.M. Ritz, op. cit., pp. 34–35, 54–76.

53 Ibidem, pp. 34–35.

54 S. Tomkowicz, “Legendaria św. Wilgefortis albo Frasobliwa i obraz na Zwierzyńcu w Krakowie”, *Rocznik Krakowski*, 1913, 15, p. 4; G. Schnürer, J. M. Ritz, op. cit., p. 77 and following, esp. 108; J. Zänker, op. cit., p. 46.

of the legendary Saint Hulpe, sometimes identified with Saint Ulpius, one of the 48 martyrs of Lyon.⁵⁵

These circumstances contributed to the fluid identity of the Volto Santo figure which can be seen as an expression of the belief in the union of all mankind possible by the Incarnation and Redemption. It is concurrent with St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, whose teachings were influential for late medieval theology⁵⁶: "For all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:27–28). Particularly significant in this text seems the idea of gender equality built upon the doctrine of the Incarnation.

In this context, it is paramount to verify the interpretation of Christ's robes in late medieval scenes of the Crucifixion. It seems that the tunic is not merely an attribute of the ruler and priest, but above all, it plays the function similar to that of the *colobium* in early medieval representations, namely that of manifesting Christ's human nature. It was not only in the physical suffering but also in corporeality as a potential source of sin that the faithful found his or her somatic identity with God the Saviour. The act of overcoming sexuality, symbolised by the robe and the belt, "took human beings [viewers] back to the prelapsarian one flesh that was created in God's image".⁵⁷

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⁵⁵ G. Schnürer, J. M. Ritz, *St. Kummernis...*, pp. 78–79, 99–102, 108.

⁵⁶ C. C. Anderson, "St. Paul and Reform Rhetoric in the High Middle Ages", in: *A Companion to St. Paul in the Middle Ages*, ed. S. Cartwright, Leiden, Boston, 2012, p. 334.

⁵⁷ Cf. J. Murray, op. cit., p. 50.

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Healing Touch: Clothed Images of the Virgin in Early Modern Portugal

Abstract

Over the last decades there was a growing interest in religious materiality, miraculous images, votive practices, and how the faithful engaged with devotional art, as well as a renewed impetus to discuss the long-recognized association between sculpture and touch, after the predominance of the visuality approach. Additionally, the neglected phenomenon of clothing statues has also been increasingly explored. Based on the reading of *Santuário Mariano* (1707–1723), written by Friar Agostinho de Santa Maria (1642–1728), this paper will closely examine those topics. Besides producing a monumental catalogue of Marian shrines and pilgrimage sites, this source offers a unique insight into the religious experience and the reciprocal relationship between image and devotee in Early Modern Portugal, and is a particularly rich source when describing the believers' pursuit of physical contact with sculptures. This yearning for proximity is partly explained by the belief in the healing power of Marian sculptures, which in turn seemed to be conveniently transferred to a myriad of objects. When contact with the images themselves was not possible, devotees sought out their clothes, crowns, rosary beads, metric relics, and so forth. Items of clothing such as mantles and veils were particularly used and so it seems obvious they were not mere adornments or donations, but also mediums and extensions of the sculptures' presence and power. By focusing on the thaumaturgic role of the statues' clothes and jewels, I will argue how the practice of dressing sculptures was due to much more than stylistic desires or processional needs and draw attention to the many ways believers engaged with religious art in Early Modern Portugal.

Keywords: Marian devotion, miraculous images, clothed sculptures, holy matter, *ex-votos*

Introduction

In 1991, Richard Trexler deemed the practice of clothing sculptures as one of the most neglected subjects in Art History.¹ Even though it remains significantly vital in the Catholic world, this late medieval tradition has never been fully accepted by the Church. In fact, the prescriptions issued from Trent's Council and the consecutive synodal constitutions tried unsuccessfully to regulate and weaken the custom from the 16th century onward, most often in response to the use of profane attire that failed to respect the saints' lives and decorum.² Usually considered a feature of "excessive devotion", this practice was the subject of derogatory remarks by 19th and 20th-century intellectuals which prevailed until recently.³ In 1950, for instance, art historian Elizabeth Weismann claimed in her work about Mexican art, that the dressed images represented "the death of sculpture".⁴ It was not until the 1990s that systematic studies on this issue first emerged mainly through anthropologists such as Antonio Cea Gutiérrez,⁵ Riccarda Pagnozzato,⁶ and Marlène Albert-Llorca,⁷ to name a few.

In Portugal, the custom of clothing sculptures seems to have slowly spread from the 15th century onwards. For instance, a mid-15th-century inventory of Guimarães' Collegiate of *Nossa Senhora da Oliveira*, reveals the sculpture of Our Lady (Figs. 1, 2) was adorned with veils and mantles,⁸ and around 1488, when Brites de Noronha (daughter of the II Count of Abrantes, D. João de Almeida) professed in Aveiro's Convent of Jesus, she offered a dress and a coif to Our Lady.⁹ In 1508, the inventory from the Order of Christ's visitation to the church of *Nossa Senhora da Conceição* in

1 R. Trexler, "Habiller et Déshabiller les Images: Esquisse d'une Analyse", in: *L'Image et la production du sacré: actes du colloque de Strasbourg, 20-21 janvier 1988*, eds. F. Dunand, J. Spieser, J. Wirth, Paris, 1991, p. 195.

2 C. Saravia, "Repercusion en España del Decreto del Concilio de Trento sobre las Imágenes", *Boletín del Seminario de Estudios de Arte y Arqueología*, 1960, XXVI, pp. 129-143; P. Martínez-Burgos García, "Las constituciones sinodales y la imagen procesional. Normas para la fiesta del siglo XVI", *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma*, 1989, s. VII, no. 2, pp. 81-92; "La imagen de vestir: el origen de una devoción barroca", in: Pedro de Mena y su Época, ed. J. M. Morales Folguera, Sevilla, 1990, pp. 149-159; M. Rocha, "Dirigismo na produção da imaginária religiosa nos séculos XVI-XVIII: as Constituições Sinodais, *MVSEV*, 1996, s. IV, 5, pp. 187-202; A. R. G. de Ceballos, "Image and Counter-Reformation in Spain and Spanish America", in: *Sacred Spain. Art and Belief in the Spanish World*, ed. R. Kasl, New Haven, London, 2009, pp. 15-35.

3 J. Fuentes y Ponte, *Memoria sobre Indumentaria de las Imágenes de la Santísima Virgen en las Diferentes Épocas de la Historia*, Lérida, 1893; F. Solá I Moreta, *Las Imágenes Marianas de talla y los vestidos postizos*, Lérida, 1917.

4 E. W. Weismann, *Mexico in Sculpture, 1521-1821*, Cambridge MA, 1950, p. 178.

5 A. Cea Gutiérrez, *Religiosidad popular, imágenes vestideras*, Zamora, 1992.

6 R. Pagnozzato, *Madonna della Laguna. Simulacri 'da vestire' dei secoli XIV-XIX*, Rome, 1993.

7 M. Albert-Llorca, *Les Vierges Miraculeuses. Légendes et Rituels*, Paris, 2002.

8 E. Almeida, "Os Cónegos da Oliveira: Tesouro da Colegiada", *Revista de Guimarães*, 1926, no. 34, 4, pp. 164-173.

9 D. M. G. Santos, *O Mosteiro de Jesus de Aveiro*, vol. II/2, Lisbon, 1967, p. 496.



Fig. 1. *Santa Maria de Guimarães* or *Nossa Senhora da Oliveira*, att. 13th century, wooden sculpture, Museu de Alberto Sampaio, Guimarães. Photo by Diana Pereira



Fig. 2. “De N. S. da Oliveira de Guimarães, o Retrato Verdadeiro Anno 1649” [True portrait of *Nossa Senhora da Oliveira* from Guimarães], att. José de Avelar Rebelo, oil on canvas, Irmandade de *Nossa Senhora da Quietação*, Lisbon. Photo by Diana Pereira

Lisbon, revealed the image had four frocks, two gowns, eight shirts, and a vestment to clothe the Infant Jesus.¹⁰ In 1510, *Nossa Senhora de Tróia* had three bliauts, two frocks, one of which was already old, two robes, eight wimples, and three hoods and a vestment for the Infant Jesus.¹¹ At Alcobaça’s Cistercian Monastery, the inventory from that same year included five gowns belonging to Our Lady, three of which were

10 P. Dias, *Visitações da Ordem de Cristo de 1507 a 1510. Aspectos artísticos*, Coimbra, 1979, p. 71–78.

11 V. P. Santos, R. Lino, L. Silveira, *Documentos para a História da Arte em Portugal, 7 – Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo: Visitações de Alvalade, Casével, Aljustrel e Setúbal (Ordem de São Tiago)*, Lisbon, 1969, p. 107–114.

already old, a bodice, ten old wimples, three veils, four robes, and a cap for the Infant Jesus, besides a few caps belonging to Saint Bernard, Saint Benedict, and an angel.¹²

The importance of this practice, as well as of Marian devotion, in Early Modern Portugal, is confirmed through the ten volumes of *Santuário Mariano, e Historia das Imagens milagrosas de Nossa Senhora, e das milagrosamente apparecidas* (Marian Sanctuary, and history of the miraculous Images of Our Lady, and of the miraculously appeared), written by the Augustinian Friar Agostinho de Santa Maria (1642–1728), published between 1707 and 1723, and my primary source for this paper. As the title suggests, it concerned only the miracle-working images of the Virgin Mary existing in Portugal and the former overseas territories under its influence, which comprised Angola, Brazil, Ceuta, China, Gulf of Guinea, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Malaysia, Morocco, Mozambique, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, and Zimbabwe. The author also included the Canary Islands and the Philippines, at the time under the Spanish Crown. Following the global enterprise of Wilhelm Gumpfenberg's *Atlas Marianus* (1672), *Santuário Mariano* describes almost two thousand images of Our Lady, belonging to urban and rural shrines, parish churches, cathedrals, convents, monasteries, and even a few private chapels.

Driven by an intense devotion towards Our Lady, the author states his goal was to compile the histories and origins of her miraculous images in order to thank for the favors she had granted him and help increase her cult,¹³ which meant the correct veneration of her representations, whose utility he clearly defended. He states it was “a known thing”, that their use heightened devotion and, because they represented God and Our Lady who granted many benefits through them, the faithful should thus dutifully employ themselves to their cult.¹⁴ In the beginning of his second volume, however, Fr. Agostinho interestingly says that, although Our Lady's images are inanimate, they “have life to distribute favors”.¹⁵

It is not my ambition to thoroughly discuss if or how devotees understood images as being inhabited by divine presence or generating power themselves.¹⁶ My aim with this paper is merely to explore how believers relied on a myriad of objects

12 S. A. Gomes, *Visitações a Mosteiros Cistercienses em Portugal. Séculos XV e XVI*, Lisbon, 1998, p. 69–70. Inventories from this time reveal it was also common to clothe sculptures of other religious figures, but there seems to be a bigger predominance regarding images of Our Lady and the Infant Jesus. On the theme of clothed Baby Jesus see C. Klapisch-Zuber, *Women, Family and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*, Chicago, London, 1985, pp. 310–329.

13 A. S. Maria, *Santuário Mariano*, Lisbon, 1707a, pp. IIII–IIIIV.

14 A. S. Maria, *Santuário Mariano*, Lisbon, 1720, pp. 2–4.

15 A. S. Maria, *Santuário Mariano*, Lisbon, 1707b, pp. 1–3.

16 On discussions about this matter see, by way of example, R. Trexler, “Florentine Religious Experience: the Sacred Image”, *Studies in the Renaissance*, 1972, 19, pp. 7–41; D. Freedberg, *The Power of Images. Studies in the History and Theory of Response*, Chicago, London, 1989; H. Belting, *Like-ness and Presence: History of the Image Before the Era of Art*, Chicago, London, 1996; A. Gell, *Art and Agency. An Anthropological Theory*, Oxford, 1998; W. A. Christian, Jr., “Images as Beings in Early Modern Spain”, in: *Sacred Spain. Art and Belief in the Spanish World*, ed. R. Kasl, New Haven, London, 2009, pp. 75–99; C. van Eck, *Art, Agency and the Living Presence. From the Animated Image to the Excessive Object*, Boston, Berlin, Munich, 2015; for an in-depth analysis of the theological

and practices that connected them to the sacred on their daily lives, and through which they experienced and manifested their belief. As David Morgan stated, forms of materiality, comprising sensations, things, spaces, performances, emotions and memories, mediate, enable, and enact belief,¹⁷ and ritual, as Richard Trexler so eloquently put it, “is at the base of religion, after all”.¹⁸ It is through ritual that the power and presence of statues is confirmed.¹⁹

In this context, *Santuario Mariano* is especially rich for its many accounts of devotional practices and the reciprocal relationship between images and believers, and is of key importance for the study of clothed saints as it differentiates whether a sculpture was dressed with textiles or not. The clothing took various forms. The majority of dressed sculptures only had perfectly carved heads and hands, being completed with a pyramidal “roca” structure instead of legs, meaning they were fully clothed (Fig. 3). These were common in Portugal at least since the 16th century. There are also numerous references to images “*de vestidos*”, meaning they had also been deliberately created to be fully dressed, probably had articulated limbs, but did not have a “roca” structure (Fig. 4). Additionally, there were statues which, although not initially meant to be dressed, were either fully clothed or only partially adorned with a mantle or a wimple. In fact, many were even mutilated to better accommodate clothing (Figs. 1, 8).²⁰

In order to debate the incomplete notion that the practice of dressing statues resulted from mere aesthetic desires, stylistic renewals, processional and liturgical needs or to make them more lifelike,²¹ I will argue how clothes acted not only as

discussion happening in the late Middle Ages see C. W. Bynum, *Christian Materiality. An essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe*, New York, 2015.

17 D. Morgan, “Introduction. The matter of belief”, in: *Religion and Material Culture. The Matter of Belief*, ed. D. Morgan, London, New York, 2010, pp. 8–12.

18 R. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, New York, London, 1980, p. xviii.

19 J. P. Mitchell, “Performing statues”, in: *Religion and Material Culture...*, p. 266.

20 D. Pereira, “«Un extravío de la piedad»: consecuencias e leituras da prática de vestir a Virgem em Portugal e Espanha”, in: *Dinâmicas do Património Artístico. Circulação, Transformações e Diálogos*, eds. C. M. Soares, V. Mariz, Lisbon, pp. 145–151.

21 For instance, in 1950 Elizabeth Weismann justified the survival of the custom of clothing saints with the possibility of adapting them to the liturgical calendar: “But there was something very appealing about a saint with a rich wardrobe. In Lent the Virgin must wear mourning; satin, tinsel, and jewels were hardly enough to bedeck her for Easter or Christmas; but immediately after the Nativity, when at Holy Innocents she must flee with the Child into Egypt, she must be equipped with traveling cape, pilgrim’s hat, lunch basket, and water gourd”. Later, regarding the changes imposed on the image of Our Lady of Health in Pátzcuaro, which “had been made according to the antique manner and usage”, the author states that it was also a matter of taste. E. W. Weismann, op. cit., p. 178. Susan Webster explains the popularized production of lifelike “roca”, “candelerero” or articulated sculptures in 16th century Spain, with their reduced cost and weight and their versatility and “affective or experiential advantages” since their actual garments and movement contributed to a more effective persuasiveness. Regarding the 13th-century *Virgen de los Reyes* from the Cathedral of Seville, the author equally implies the medieval statues were clothed “to accommodate changing tastes”, S. V. Webster, “Shameless Beauty and worldly splendor on the Spanish Practice of Adorning the Virgin”, in: *The Miraculous Image in*



Fig. 3. *Nossa Senhora da Conceição*, 17th century (?), “roca” image with articulated arms, Museu de Aveiro. Photo by Diana Pereira



Fig. 4. Unidentified saints, 18th century, articulated sculptures, Museu Nacional Frei Manuel do Cenáulo, Évora. Photo by DRCA

embellishments, but also as testimonies of the images’ miraculous power since they were often offered as *ex-votos*. As Luke Syson noted, while sometimes the practice of dressing sculpted figures “was simply intended to increase a sculpture’s credibility; unlike carved draperies, textiles move freely with the breeze”, on other occasions the rich clothes were “understood as ostentatious signals of the honor and reverence” rendered to the holy figure.²²

Most importantly, I will argue that clothes were also agents of the images’ prodigious miracles, as well as extensions of their powerful presence. While focusing on

the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance, eds. E. Thunø, G. Wolf, Rome, 2004, pp. 254, 265. Finally, Luísa Alcalá states the following: “Typically, images were altered for two main reasons: in preparation for taking them out of their churches for processions and in order to dress them in luxurious clothes donated by devout followers, especially women. The alterations in both cases were meant to make the images more lifelike, more efficient instruments of devotion”. L. E. Alcalá, “The Image and Its Maker. The Problem of Authorship in Relation to Miraculous Images in Spanish America”, in: *Sacred Spain. Art and Belief in the Spanish World*, ed. R. Kasl, New Haven, London, 2009, p. 59.

²² L. Syson, “Polychrome and its Discontents: a History”, in: *Like Life: Sculpture, Color, and the Body*, eds. L. Syson et al., New Haven, London, 2018, p. 24.

the role clothes and jewelry had in healing the sick and dying devotees, I will approach this subject through the believers' constant search for bodily contact with the divine.

Embellishments and enablers

As Garnett and Rosser recognized, once rich clothing or jewelry were attached to an image, they assured the object's potency, as they were usually offered as *ex-votos*.²³

Many of the images described in *Santuário Mariano*, as I mentioned above, were sculptures that, despite not requiring any clothing, were fully or partially dressed. Friar Agostinho gives a number of reasons for this phenomenon. Besides occasional references to images dressed to hide damage or deterioration – in some cases mutilations caused by devotees to ease their weight in processions, as it happened with Mourão's *Nossa Senhora das Candeias*²⁴ and Monsaraz's *Nossa Senhora da Orada*²⁵ – many of his descriptions concern sculptures adorned with clothes due to the faithful's desire to show devotion and reverence. Regarding Guarda's *Nossa Senhora dos Remédios*, "barely visible beneath the rich dress", he said the statue was clothed by devotees for greater veneration and respect.²⁶ Covilhã's *Nossa Senhora do Fastio* was dressed in order to "increase reverence and devotion towards her".²⁷ In rarer situations the faithful were not satisfied with the sculptures' appearance as, according to the author, seemed to be the case of *Nossa Senhora do Azinhozo* (Mogadouro, Bragança).²⁸

Finally, the author gives several examples of images that were dressed with offerings to either thank for the received graces or attempt to compel the Virgin into answering petitions.

São Sebastião da Pedreira's *Senhora da Saúde*, for instance, was frequently promised a dress in exchange for help in some distress.²⁹ Many of *Nossa Senhora do Parto*'s robes were given by women whom she had helped in dangerous child-births.³⁰ Although the image of Ribatejo's *Nossa Senhora da Atalaia* was perfectly sculpted, the author says "it was necessary to dress her in order to signal the exchanges provided by the many great miracles which the Lord had worked through her" (Fig. 5).³¹ In 1512, *Senhora da Atalaia* owned already fourteen gowns as well as shirts and wimples. In a curious resolution, that year's visitation ordered that the silver bourse that had belonged to Leonor of Portugal (1434–1467), Empress of

23 J. Garnett, G. Rosser, *Spectacular Miracles. Transforming Images in Italy from the Renaissance to the Present*, London, 2013, p. 126.

24 A. S. Maria, *Santuário Mariano*, Lisbon, 1718, p. 237.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 230.

26 A. S. Maria, *Santuário Mariano*, Lisbon, 1711, pp. 35–40.

27 *Ibid.*, pp. 117–118.

28 A. S. Maria, *Santuário Mariano*, Lisbon, 1716, pp. 638–642.

29 A. S. Maria, *Santuário Mariano*, 1707a, pp. 447–448.

30 *Ibid.*, pp. 346–347.

31 *Ibid.*, 1707b, pp. 407–411.



Fig. 5. “N. S.ª da Atalaia”, 1725–1890 (c), engraving, R.S. 2076, Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, Lisbon

the Holy-Roman Empire, and was offered to Our Lady by Lady Catarina Lopes, should be kept and displayed in the image especially during the main festivities.³²

All of these descriptions strengthen Thomas Golsenne’s theory that the adornments are what truly enables the belief in miraculous images. Golsenne suggests that the establishment of worship towards a miracle-working image is oriented by two main poles: firstly, by the build-up of the hagiographic collections containing all miracle testimonies and authentication procedures – in his words the miracle needs to be authenticated and repeated in order to exist – and secondly, by the votive cult that includes all material aspects of worship and tangible proofs of the effectiveness of the image.³³

According to Golsenne, when the devotee enters a shrine to venerate an image, he already believes in its powers because he heard the miracle reports. But it is what he sees that reinforces his beliefs: meaning, the staging of the image, and the entire decorative device that surrounds and enhances it, including the *ex-votos* by the altar. Meghan Holmes attributes the same role to *ex-votos*, recognizing these were “critical signs of the initial activation and the continued efficacy

32 M. B. Dias, *Visitações e Provimentos da Ordem de Sant’Iago em Aldeia Galega de Ribatejo, Volume I 1486–1537*, Montijo, 2005, pp. 51–52.

33 T. Golsenne, “Parure et Culte”, in: *La Performance des Images*, eds. A. Dierkens, G. Bartholeyns, T. Golsenne, Brussels, 2010, pp. 80–81.

of a miraculous image” and consequently “more attention was given to their visibility and legibility within sanctuary display”.³⁴ In fact, she notes how unwitting and unapproved miracles were mainly documented through their exhibition.

Influenced by Freedberg, Belting and Gell’s contributions,³⁵ and based on Jean-Claude Schmitt’s conception of the reliquary as the institutional and visual proof of the relic’s authenticity,³⁶ Golsenne concludes that, without adornments, the image is merely a representation. In his view, the ornamentation does not make the miracle, but it enables the belief that a miracle was accomplished through that image.³⁷

Richard Trexler had already hinted at this when he explained that Florentines sensed “there were certain forms that, if incorporated into images, were known to have particularly fruitful impacts upon the attitudes of devotees”. So, in 1397, a group of citizens discussed with the *opera* of Florence’s cathedral on how to adorn and where to place a painting of the Virgin, deciding to move it, retouch it, and surround the new altar with scepters, in order to increase its impact upon the viewers and sustain its devotion.³⁸ As Ronda Kasl put it, the image was transformed into “an instrument of religious propaganda” whose meaning and power depended on its “extrinsic elaboration and embellishment.”³⁹ Additionally, concerning how objects acquire value, Daniel Miller identified the “framing mechanisms” as central to the animation of the statue, through which it is set aside as special.⁴⁰ Finally, more recently Garnett and Rosser equally noted how ornamentation, specifically clothes and jewels, not only attested, but activated the images’ power:

To embellish a sacred image with jewelry or clothing has since ancient and medieval times been understood as an act of supernatural empowerment. Cases are recorded in which the image, as soon as it is finely dressed, begins to work miracles: ornamentation in such instances is not the acknowledgement but the catalyst of the supernatural presence.⁴¹

34 M. Holmes, *The Miraculous Image in Renaissance Florence*, New Haven, London, 2013, p. 51.

35 D. Freedberg, *op. cit.*; H. Belting, *op. cit.*, A. Gell, *op. cit.*

36 J. C. Schmitt, *Le Corps des Images. Essais sur la culture visuelle au Moyen Âge*, Paris, 2002, p. 284. On this subject see C. Hahn, “What do Reliquaries do for Relics?”, *Numen*, 2010, vol. 57, no. 3/4, pp. 284–316.

37 T. Golsenne, *op. cit.*, pp. 81–83.

38 R. Trexler, *Public life...*, pp. 113–114.

39 R. Kasl, “Delightful Adornments and Pious Recreation”, in: *Sacred Spain. Art and Belief in the Spanish World*, ed. R. Kasl, New Haven, London, 2009, p. 149.

40 D. Miller, *Material Culture and Mass Consumption*, Oxford, 1987, cited in J. P. Mitchell, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

41 J. Garnett, G. Rosser, *op. cit.*, p. 125. Marina Warner reached a similar conclusion: “Adornment is central and a prime way of glorifying and consecrating; ingenious and lavish accretions magnify the object of the decoration – a person, a statue, or an icon – enhancing the power of its presence and infusing it with magical efficacy. The difference between a painting of the Madonna by Fra Angelico or Leonardo, and a miraculous icon of the Virgin, such as her cult statues in Seville and Guadalupe, lies in the layers of ornament the statues have accrued. [...] The need to adorn stretches beyond the sacred icon to the chapel where it stands: the greater the sunbursts of gold, silver, jewels, and flowers around these images, the greater their thau-

Significantly, in Ovid's Myth of Pygmalion, the statue comes alive under the artist's insistent touch, but an important step towards the climax of divinely granted graces was its adornment with clothes and jewels.⁴² Identified by Stoichita as an "animation strategy", the clothing was, also in his words, a "warming" strategy, since the fabrics provided color and warmth to the cold and pale sculpture.⁴³ Furthermore, they provided a second texture, defining intimacy and conveying identity.⁴⁴

Besides being important contributors to testify, authenticate or even activate the power of holy images, clothes and other adornments, as we will see, shared, multiplied and conveyed that same power when the direct contact with the primary object was not possible.

Searching for contact

It is worth noting that the majority of the miraculous images described in *Santuário Mariano* were sculptures. In fact, of the almost two thousand cases catalogued, less than a hundred were paintings. The author himself provides his interpretation of that predominance. When referring to Borba's miraculous painting of *Nossa Senhora do Soveral*, he says the church priest commissioned a sculpture of the same title, because the "ignorant" people were more easily moved by three dimensional images than with paintings.⁴⁵

The appeal probably resides in the fact that, as Hagi Kenaan summed up, sculpture explores the hope of "finding life in formed matter", carrying the possibility that it will come alive in our reality,⁴⁶ because while "our bodies can never actually inhabit a pictorial space", they share the same world with the sculpted figures.⁴⁷

When reading *Santuário Mariano*'s texts one cannot help thinking its contemporaries were probably unsurprised with statues coming alive either by bleeding, crying, sweating, moving, and even returning to the place they had miraculously appeared on. Just as Pygmalion vivified his statue through touch and Venus' divine intervention,⁴⁸ the images described by Friar Agostinho often showed living

maturgic powers". M. Warner, "No Dead Matter", in: *Like Life. Sculpture, Color, and the Body*, ed. L. Syson et al., New Haven, London, 2018, pp. 51–52.

42 "He decks her limbs with robes and on her fingers/ Sets splendid rings, a necklace round her neck,/ Pearls in her ears, a pendant on her breast". Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. A. D. Melville, Oxford, 2008, pp. 232–234.

43 V. Stoichita, *O Efeito Pigmalião: Para uma Antropologia Histórica dos Simulacros* (The Pygmalion Effect. From Ovid to Hitchcock), Lisbon, 2011, pp. 51–57.

44 On the identity conferred by clothes to statues see D. Freedberg, op. cit., pp. 113–119 and R. Trexler, "Habiller"...

45 A. S. Maria, *Santuário Mariano*, op. cit., 1718, pp. 161–165.

46 H. Kenaan, "Touching Sculpture", in: *Sculpture and Touch*, ed. P. Dent, Surrey, 2014, p. 54.

47 Ibid., p. 53.

48 M. Paraskos, "Bringing into being: vivifying sculpture through touch", in: *Sculpture and Touch*, ed. P. Dent, Surrey, 2014, p. 64. On the basilar predominance of the tactile over the visual in the Myth of Pygmalion see the in-depth study by V. Stoichita, op. cit.

attributes in response to people's actions of either veneration or offence and, most significantly, because of their miraculous identity,⁴⁹ an issue I will return to below.

Santuário Mariano repeatedly portrays the believers' relentless search for some kind of physical proximity with images of the Virgin. While touch is an undeniable part of the beholder's interaction with sculptures, the quest persistently described in this source was obviously cemented by the belief in their healing properties, which in many cases were the only solution after the use of various hopeless remedies. For example, in the former Convent of St. Clare in Caminha (Viana do Castelo), nuns usually resorted to an image of *Nossa Senhora da Conceição*. Friar Agostinho tells how Mariana de Santo António suffered a deathly fever and a suffocating nose and mouth bleeding that did not stop with the various remedies, relics and stones that were applied to her. On the verge of losing her senses, she asked for *Nossa Senhora da Conceição* and when the sculpture was brought to her, the nun embraced it, promising inwardly to serve Our Lady. Both acts, the gesture and the vow, immediately stopped the bleeding and diminished the fever.⁵⁰

Jean-Marie Sansterre noted that stories such as these were repeated since the late Middle Ages. For instance, song 256 from the 13th-century *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, traditionally attributed to Alfonso X the Wise (1221–1284), tells how Queen Beatrice of Swabia (1205–1235) survived a high fever after kissing the hands and feet of a statue of the Virgin that had been brought to her.⁵¹

This kind of direct contact, however, was often restricted, and the mere visual access frequently regulated since the images were generally inaccessible in high niches, encased in glass, concealed with curtains or behind grids. According to Meghan Holmes, these were distancing mechanisms implemented to restrain the familiarity with the figures, contributing "to the yearning for the image".⁵² Fr. Agostinho de Santa Maria recurrently describes such apparatus, pointing to the draperies, window panes and grids that were favourable to greater decency in presenting the miraculous objects. *Nossa Senhora dos Remédios* from the former Convent of Salvador

49 The animation of images, relics, and hosts was often a response to the need to renovate their forgotten or neglected cults, and to iconoclastic or heretic attacks and offences by Muslims, the Jewish, or misbehaving Christians, see R. Trexler, "Florentine"..., pp. 19–28; D. Freedberg, op. cit. pp. 283–316; C. W. Bynum, "The Blood of Christ in the Later Middle Ages", *Church History*, 2002, vol. 71, no. 4, pp. 685–714; C. W. Bynum, *Christian Materiality*..., pp. 22, 34–35, 108, 256–25. Bynum argues the changeability of the objects showed their transcendancy as "locus of a God revealed": by bleeding or weeping, they disclosed a power that lies beyond, revealing God through matter; W. A. Christian, Jr., "Images as Beings"..., on the images' "will" to be venerated in a specific place see *Religiosidad local en la España de Felipe II* (Local Religion in Sixteenth Century Spain), Madrid, 1991, pp. 98–104. Furthermore, in some cases, the sculptures' articulated limbs could imitate autonomous movement, see C. Swift, "Robot Saints", *Preternature: Critical and Historical Studies on the Preternatural*, 2015, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 52–77.

50 A. S. Maria, *Santuário Mariano*, Lisbon, 1712, pp. 181–186.

51 Cited in J. Sansterre, "Sacralité et pouvoir thaumaturgique des statues mariales (Xe siècle–première moitié du XIIIe siècle)", *Revue Mabillon*, 2011, t. 22, p. 75.

52 M. Holmes, op. cit., p. 207.

(Lisbon) was closed in a windowed niche which was only opened for celebrations or to answer special requests,⁵³ the curtain covering *Nossa Senhora do Rosário* from the Convent of St. Mónica (Lisbon) was only removed on holy days and Sundays,⁵⁴ and some images such as Vila Viçosa's *Nossa Senhora da Conceição*, were guarded by silver grids (Fig. 6). Note how the Royal Brotherhood of *Nossa Senhora da Conceição*, seeking the protection of its Treasurer's privileges, stated in a 1794 letter to Vila Viçosa's bailiff that the former was the sole possessor of the key to the niche of Our Lady and that only he could open it on celebrations or to allow the Royal family to kiss the image.⁵⁵



Fig. 6. The closed silver grids on the main altar of the Sanctuary of Nossa Senhora da Conceição, Vila Viçosa, 1950s (?), Coleção Passaporte “Loty”

This 15th century limestone statue was, in fact, surrounded by various distancing mechanisms as, besides the silver grids, it was fully clothed at least since the early 17th century (Fig. 7, 8).⁵⁶ In 1679, the trousseau of *Nossa Senhora da Conceição* comprised ten robes and seven mantles, including, by way of example, a blue

53 A. S. Maria, *Santuário Mariano*, op. cit. 1707a, pp. 44–50.

54 Ibid., pp. 340–342.

55 Arquivo Histórico da Casa de Bragança, NG. 731, fl. 5.

56 Holmes also considers the “ceremonial dressing-up” of images as a distancing mechanism. M. Holmes, op. cit., p. 207; F. Pardal, *Uma Devoção de Grandes e Pequenos: Nossa Senhora da Conceição de Vila Viçosa nos séculos XVII e XVIII*, Master Thesis, FLUL, Lisbon, 2018, p. 48.



Fig. 7. Nossa Senhora da Conceição fully clothed with 18th-century garments, Sanctuary of Nossa Senhora da Conceição, Vila Viçosa. Photo by Diana Pereira



Fig. 8. Nossa Senhora da Conceição without textile clothes, att. 15th century, limestone polychrome sculpture, Sanctuary of Nossa Senhora da Conceição, Vila Viçosa. Photo by DGPC/LJF

camlet⁵⁷ dress with Milan gold trimmings and lined with yellow taffeta, another made of golden and white camlet decorated with golden lace, and a golden and crimson one, lined with blue taffeta and decorated with nine golden galloons.⁵⁸

Beyond the sumptuous appearance, this meant the exact form and material in which the image was sculpted were known only to the people who clothed it until the 20th century. In the early 18th century, it was wrapped in a “shirt made of a white cloth” that was never removed and over which it was dressed “with rich clothes of precious fabrics, and mantles according to the festivities”. At the time, “the person who used to dress the sculpture stated that it had never been possible for him or her to take away the cloth and learn its substance; but it seemed to be

57 Camlet or chamlet (in Portuguese “chamalote”): a woven fabric thought to have been initially made with camel hair (and often of Angora goat hair in the 16th and 17th centuries) and later with mixtures of wool and silk. It could also incorporate metal thread. It was associated with rich fabrics of Eastern provenance, see *The Lexis of Cloth and Clothing Project*, The University of Manchester, 2018 <<http://lexissearch.arts.manchester.ac.uk/entry.aspx?id=768>> [accessed 15 January 2020]; V. Cumming, C. W. Cunnington, P. E. Cunnington, *The Dictionary of Fashion History*, London, 2017, p. 237.

58 F. Pardal, op. cit., pp. 312–314.

made of stone.”⁵⁹ Nobody dared to examine the object. Fr. Agostinho explains this fear resulted from a tragic episode that had happened many years before him. According to an account by a Treasurer serving in the shrine, a Bishop from Elvas had wanted to know if Our Lady was indeed made of stone, as it was said, and so he pricked the statue with a pin. Blood immediately came pouring and so the experience was never repeated.⁶⁰ We may consider that legends such as this equally worked as distancing mechanisms.

Even today, the cloth is not removed and the layers of undergarments (white chemises and underskirts) are rarely changed, meaning only a few people ever saw the sculpture’s true appearance in person.

Discussing the application of textile curtains covering miniatures of an early 15th century Book of Hours made in Bruges, Kathryn Rudy suggests that “having to lift the curtain before contemplating the image would have added a layer of physicality and ritual to the process of reading and looking”, engaging the reader in a “specific haptic relationship with the manuscript”.⁶¹ On the other hand, discussing the practice of wrapping relics with precious fabrics, Martina Bagnoli explains that “as with all sacred things, relics were not to be touched by human hands”, so they should be shielded in due veneration. Furthermore, Bagnoli argues that the protective cloths “proclaimed the intangible nature of the divine”.⁶²

The secrecy surrounding statues such as the one from Vila Viçosa and their ritual re-dressings, is often explained with the necessity to protect and respect the Virgin’s “nakedness”, thus justifying the predominance of women in charge of clothing them.⁶³ The previous views, however, strengthen the suggestion that the

59 A. S. Maria, *Santuário Mariano*, op. cit., 1718, p. 200.

60 Ibid. Nowadays, this sculpture is still surrounded in secrecy and its appearance without clothing is a mystery to most inhabitants of Vila Viçosa, despite having been subjected to a restoration in 1989. Three women are in charge of re-dressing it and the statue is still wrapped with a white cloth, followed by several layers of white undergarments and finally the rich robes assembled by dozens of pins.

61 K. M. Rudy, “Kissing images, unfurling rolls, measuring wounds, sewing badges and carrying talismans: considering some Harley Manuscripts through the physical rituals they reveal”, *eBLJ – The Electronic British Library Journal*, 2011, article 5, p. 10. On this subject read C. Sciacca, “Raising the curtain on the use of textiles in manuscripts”, in: *Weaving, Veiling, and Dressing. Textiles and their Metaphors in the Late Middle Ages*, eds. K. M. Rudy, B. Baert, Turnhout, 2007, pp. 161–190.

62 M. Bagnoli, “Dressing the Relics. Some Thoughts on the Custom of Relic Wrapping in Medieval Christianity”, in: *Matter of Faith: An Interdisciplinary Study of Relics and Relic Veneration in the Medieval Period*, eds. J. Robinson, L. de Beer, A. Harnden, London, 2014, pp. 102–104.

63 Regarding the Virgen de las Nieves de Santa Cruz de la Palma (Canary Islands), Friar Diego Henríquez tells how the image of Our Lady once turned her head when being clothed because there were men watching: “[...] in the midst of astonishment, it occurred to them that this gesture seemed to be consequence or sign of the virginal modesty, and that [the Virgin] did not like its image to be stripped in the presence of men [...]”, quoted after: J. Pérez Morera, “Imperial Señora Nuestra: el vestuario y el joyero de la Virgen de las Nieves”, in: *María. y es la Nieve de su Nieve Favor, Esmalte y Matiz*, eds. J. Pérez Morera, C. Rodrigues Morales et al., Santa Cruz de la Palma, 2010, p. 42. On this subject see M. Albert Llorca, op. cit.

clothing layers and silver grids exist to emphasize the special status of this miraculous image and, by consequence, the privilege of a few elected to touch and clothe it, while, paradoxically, implementing “ritual layers” that enriched the interactive experience.

Furthermore, the tale of its animation through bleeding after the attempt to know the material in which it is made, reinforces its celestial origin. In fact, Fr. Agostinho states the statue must have been made by the hands of angels and appeared to Nuno Álvares Pereira (1360–1431), its supposed true commissioner, as a recognition for his devotion.⁶⁴ The animation through blood, tears, sweat or movement, recurrent throughout *Santuário Mariano*, testifies the sacredness of the objects, warns against the devotees’ misbehavior and punishes it, but at the same time highlights the value of proximity and how that honor was granted to just a few.

Throughout Friar Agostinho’s volumes, the distancing tools are not always as perceptible or effective. In fact, considering the numerous accounts of images leaving their churches to comfort and heal devotees in their homes through their presence and touch, the author often seems to neglect the need to control their access, privileging the propaganda of their miraculous powers instead. For instance, he narrates how in case of illness the citizens from Faro used to take *Nossa Senhora do Repouso* to their households, restoring her to her chapel when free from the evils that afflicted them.⁶⁵ Additionally, it was also usual to take parts of sculptures to believers in need. The hand of *Nossa Senhora da Paz*, from Lisbon’s Convent de *Nossa Senhora da Quietação*, was said to have cured Mother Superior Maria de Jesus when she lost her voice, in the very moment it was placed over her mouth. The same hand used to be sent to sick people outside the convent.⁶⁶ A broken finger of *Nossa Senhora do Paraíso* from the Dominican Convent in Évora was taken to the devotees who needed it, but was so frequently borrowed that it disappeared.⁶⁷ There were also several examples in which only the images of the Baby Jesus were detached and taken to the sick, as was the case with the aforementioned *Nossa Senhora do Soveral* (Borba). Fr. Agostinho mentions the dresses and golden earrings adorning this Infant Jesus witnessed his many favors.⁶⁸

The practice of taking images to private homes, however, was not unanimously accepted among the clergy. The same author narrates how in 1681, the priest Ambrosio da Conceição, from the former Convent of St. Eloy in Lisbon, opposed taking the sculpture of *Nossa Senhora do Vale* (Fig. 9) to Lady Archangela’s house, where it would be clothed, deeming it “indecent”.⁶⁹ As a matter of fact, Ambrosio was acting in accordance with Synod’s constitutions such as the ones from Cádiz (1591) and Bahia

64 A. S. Maria, *Santuário Mariano*, 1718, p. 200.

65 *Ibid.*, pp. 466–467.

66 A. S. Maria, *Santuário Mariano*, 1707a, pp. 398–399.

67 A. S. Maria, *Santuário Mariano*, 1718, pp. 21–23.

68 *Ibid.*, pp. 161–165.

69 A. S. Maria, *Santuário Mariano*, 1707a, pp. 186–194.



Fig. 9. “N. Sr.ª do Valle do Conv.º de S.º Eloy”, Carpineti, Lisbon, 1760, engraving, R.S. 3247, Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, Lisbon

(1707), which forbade the images’ removal from the church to be clothed in private homes.⁷⁰

In a meaningful account, the author of *Santuário Mariano* himself, at one point advised the priests of Almada’s *Nossa Senhora do Castelo*, to avoid such removals because “for the devotion of the sick, a mantle or a crown of the same Lady will suffice”.⁷¹

A few descriptions from the same author justify his worries on this matter. Believers were said to recklessly scratch the stone sculpture of Messejana’s *Nossa Senhora da Conceição* (Torres Vedras), in order to drink infusions made with the resulting powder, apparently a quite effective remedy,⁷² or remove pieces from the wooden sculpture of *Nossa Senhora das Areias* (Santiago de Anha) to keep “some relic of that miraculous image”.⁷³

As we will see, throughout this source and others of its genre, the term “relic” was often used to name fragments of images, or objects in contact with them.

70 J. M. Palomero Paramo, *Las virgenes de la Semana Santa de Sevilla*, Sevilla, 1983, pp. 19–20; *Constituições Primeyras do Arcebispado da Bahia Feitas e ordenadas pelo Illustrissimo e Reverendissimo Senhor D. Sebastião Monteiro da Vide [...] e aceytas em o Sinodo Diecesano que o dito Senhor celebrou em 12 de Junho do anno de 1707*, Lisbon, 1719, p. 269.

71 A. S. Maria, *Santuário Mariano*, 1707b, pp. 437–442.

72 A. S. Maria, *Santuário Mariano*, 1707b, pp. 97–105.

73 A. S. Maria, *Santuário Mariano*, 1712, pp. 234–238.

The other “relics”

As Jane Garnett and Gervase Rosser put it, “the miracle-working image should be understood as a form of extension of the relics of the saints”⁷⁴, and in the case of Marian devotion, images readily filled the void left by the Virgin’s Assumption. According to this dogma, Mary’s bodily withdrawal into Heaven meant that the only available relics of the Virgin were objects associated with her, the so-called contact relics.⁷⁵

In his recent study based on the miracle stories assembled by the lawyer Giuliano Guizzelmi in the 15th century, Robert Maniura explores the use of objects that mediated the power of the Virgin’s holy girdle and the image of *Santa Maria delle Carceri* from Prato (Tuscany). The inaccessibility of both objects to most devotees, resulted in the multiplication of the contact-related tokens that facilitated the miracles and took on the role of *brandea*.⁷⁶ Items such as pieces of cloth, threads, and replicas of the girdle, when in contact with the relic would absorb its power and extend it, taking it to devotees that could not be in the presence of the primary object.⁷⁷ A similar process happened with the miraculous painting of *Santa Maria delle Carceri*. In the majority of the stories, the miracles happened remotely, away from the shrine and even from Prato, through the mediation of prints and lead badges with the figure of *Santa Maria* on them, that is, the mass-produced souvenirs, which had touched the painting and would then touch the devotees’ bodies, relieving their ailments.⁷⁸

As stated by Garnett and Rosser, the images’ “ability to reproduce themselves”, determined the dissemination and survival of their devotions.⁷⁹ Furthermore, as Marco Faini noted, the otherworldly nature of miracles turned into a much more domestic phenomenon, as a variety of talismanic objects capable of such intercession, invaded people’s households.⁸⁰

Objects such as these, which escape easy categorization, were part of the religious experience since the Middle Ages. In her book on Christian materiality, Caroline Walker Bynum thoroughly explores their presence, arguing that there was a conscious predominance of the theme of materiality not only in devotional and

74 J. Garnett, G. Rosser, op. cit., pp. 47–48.

75 M. Holmes, op. cit., p. 33; R. Maniura, *Art and Miracle in Renaissance Tuscany*, Cambridge, 2018, p. 74.

76 D. Freedberg, op. cit., p. 129; C. W. Bynum, *Christian Materiality...*, pp. 136–137.

77 R. Maniura, op. cit., pp. 81–82.

78 Ibid., pp. 121–129.

79 J. Garnett, G. Rosser, op. cit., p. 191. On the issue of reproduction see W. Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”, in: *Walter Benjamin Illuminations. Essays and Reflections*, ed. H. Arendt, New York, 2007, pp. 217–251; H. Belting, op. cit.; A. Nagel, C. Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, New York, 2010, pp. 21–27. On this subject and the power derived from contact see D. Freedberg, op. cit., pp. 99–160.

80 M. Faini, “Everyday Miracles and Supernatural Agency in Sixteenth-Century Italy. The Case of the Marche”, in: *Saints, Miracles and the Image: Healing Saints and Miraculous Images in the Renaissance*, eds. Sandra Cardarelli, Laura Fenelli, Turnhout, 2017, p. 183.

theological texts produced in the Late Middle Ages, but also in the way objects were created in that specific period, showing how they literally were asked to be seen, touched, and used. According to her, around 1100 the enthusiasm surrounding several forms of holy matter was renovated not only because of the Crusades that granted access to new relics, but because of the intense proliferation of accounts mentioning bleeding crucifixes and hosts, animated paintings and statues, visions and relic metamorphosis.⁸¹

Bynum includes under the category of “holy matter” a wide variety of objects such as body, contact, effluvial and metric relics, objects and materials used in Mass and the sacraments (hosts, wine, oil, holy water), sacramentals (materials that gained their power through blessing or contact with other sacred objects,⁸² such as candles, rosaries, ribbons, prints, pilgrim badges), *Dauerwunder* (miraculous transformations that last in time), and devotional images.⁸³ The author admits such objects are not always easy to organize under a specific typology. For instance, images sometimes contain relics and, as we have seen, miraculous images or objects in contact with them appear to earn the status of relics or, at least, were thought of as such.⁸⁴

On this issue, Friar Agostinho de Santa Maria tells how Lady Ines de Bayros Quinteyro, “*aia*” or lady-in-waiting of Almada’s *Nossa Senhora de Monte Sião*, accidentally broke a sculpture’s finger when changing its clothes and saved it with the intention of fixing it. Later, she found out the sculpture had miraculously fixed itself and that no finger was missing. She then kept the broken one as a valuable jewel “placing it in a reliquary and thus enriching her home”.⁸⁵ Obviously, descriptions such as these were rare as they could excite the devotees to continue their most reckless practices.

Most believers relied on more accessible things instead. Devotees of Argoncilhe’s *Nossa Senhora do Campo* used to take dirt from her shrine to drink at home, or remove powder from the sculpture’s stone pedestal.⁸⁶ Other common “relics” were the images’ rosary beads, their measures and ribbons that adorned or touched them. All of these, when applied on the sick bodies or pregnant women, guaranteed relief and successful childbirths. The oil from the altar’s lamps was equally fruitful. Friar Agostinho describes its effects on himself when he lived in Évora’s Convent of *Nossa Senhora das Mercês*. In 1677, two tumors appeared in one of his knees. After he was told by a surgeon that the healing would take long and he would need to stay in bed for three months, he went to the altar of *Nossa Senhora das Mercês* (Fig. 10)

81 C. W. Bynum, *Christian Materiality...*, pp. 18–21.

82 On such objects see W. A. Christian, Jr., *Apariciones en Castilla y Cataluña (Siglos XIV–XVI)* (Apparitions in Late Medieval and Renaissance Spain), Madrid, 1990, pp. 125–128, 146–148, 225–226, 260–262 and idem, *Religiosidad local...*, pp. 124–127, 160–162.

83 C. W. Bynum, *Christian Materiality...*, pp. 25–28.

84 Ibid., p. 29.

85 A. S. Maria, *Santuário Mariano*, 1707b, pp. 443–450.

86 A. S. Maria, *Santuário Mariano*, Lisbon, 1721, p. 509.

and using oil from her lamp he drew two crosses on both tumors. Next morning, they were gone.⁸⁷

The desire to collect such objects is present in other sources such as the news from *Gazeta de Lisboa* (Lisbon's Gazette). In an account from 8 April 1728, we are told that during the procession of St. Sebastian in Vila de Rei (Castelo Branco) that went out to the streets to stop the heavy rains, the martyr's sculpture started to sweat copiously "as it was made of snow and was exposed to the sun". Everyone present received the sweat with their handkerchiefs and took the ribbons and flowers adorning the image, dividing them in many parts, "to keep them as witnesses of such a prodigious accident".⁸⁸



Fig. 10. *Nossa Senhora das Mercês*, former Convent of *Nossa Senhora das Mercês* (Évora), 17th or 18th century (?), processional banner, oil on wood, Museu Nacional Frei Manuel do Cenáulo, Évora. Photo Teresa Crespo

87 A. S. Maria, *Santuário Mariano*, 1718, pp. 35–39.

88 *Gazeta de Lisboa*, 1728, no. 15, Quinta-feira, 8 April, p. 120.

These stories clearly demonstrate the intense desire to convey the image's presence and power to the faithful, particularly the sick and dying. In this context, as Friar Agostinho advised when describing the aforementioned *Nossa Senhora do Castelo* (Almada), the crowns and clothes were the perfect solution not only for their portability, but because they echoed the sculpture's visual presence. Additionally, most images owned several of each.

Therefore, although the dressing-up of sculptures was often a distancing mechanism because it allowed only a limited group of people to be part of it and it concealed the true appearance of many statues, the clothes could, in fact, contribute to a greater proximity and interaction between the holy objects and the devotees. As Bynum stated, "adorning an image is a reciprocal and processual gesture; it gives agency to both the one doing the clothing and the one clothed".⁸⁹ Here, I would like to add that "the one doing the clothing" should not be understood as only the one participating in the dressing ritual per se, but every devotee contributing to that practice, namely, the ones who offered gowns or jewels to the images.

The statues' clothes: reminders and mediators

According to Friar Agostinho's accounts, the images' crowns, mantles, and other clothing items were recurrently petitioned by sick believers who quickly recovered as soon as they touched them.⁹⁰

As reported by the testimony of Lady Luiza Maria de Sá, in the 1660s her father Francisco Bahia suffered from a serious crisis of gout. He was examined by the best doctors from the University of Coimbra, and no one could find any remedy for him. He then turned to Vilarinho's *Nossa Senhora da Piedade* and asked for her crown. When it was brought to him, he vowed to the Virgin and Christ and placed the crown on his head and then touched his entire body with it, immediately recovering from the intense pain he felt.⁹¹

The sculptures' mantles were amongst the most frequently borrowed items. In 1658, Queen Luísa de Gusmão (1613–1666) took the cloak of *Nossa Senhora do Bom Despacho* from the College of St. Agostinho in Lisbon to her son and future King Afonso VI (1643–1683), who was severely sick. He recovered as soon as the garment

89 C. W. Bynum, "'Crowned with many crowns': nuns and their statues in late-medieval Wienhausen", *The Catholic Historical Review*, 2015, volume 101, no. 1, p. 27.

90 On the miraculous and symbolic power of textiles and the Virgin's clothing, particularly the mantle and the girdle, see E. Silvestrini, "Abiti e Simulacri. Itinerario attraverso mitologie, narrazioni e riti. II. Le Vesti", in: *Donne, Madonne, Dee. Abito sacro e riti di vestizione, gioiello votivo, "vestitrici": un itinerario antropologico in area lagunare veneta*, ed. R. Pagnozzato, Padova, 2003, pp. 32–54; K. M. Rudy, "Introduction: Miraculous Textiles in *Exempla* and Images from the Low Countries", in: *Weaving, Veiling, and Dressing. Textiles and their Metaphors in the Late Middle Ages*, eds. K. M. Rudy, B. Baert, Turnhout, 2007, pp. 1–36.

91 A. S. Maria, *Santuário Mariano*, 1712, pp. 560–562.

was applied to his body.⁹² The mantles of *Nossa Senhora do Pranto* from Salto⁹³ and *Nossa Senhora da Piedade* from Ponte de Lima,⁹⁴ were especially asked for in cases of hazardous childbirths.

The coif of *Nossa Senhora das Necessidades* from the Convent of S. Francisco in Guarda was held as a valuable jewel for its thaumaturgic powers and was often taken to sick devotees who would immediately be healed when placing the cap on their heads.⁹⁵ In the case of Carocedo's *Nossa Senhora da Assunção* (Bragança), it was one of her girdles that was held as miraculous and useful in dangerous childbirths or when mothers lacked milk to feed their babies.⁹⁶

These examples from *Santuário Mariano* are corroborated by other sources that show these were conventional practices across the Catholic world, testifying the faith in such apotropaic objects. Ceballos, for instance, confirms this longstanding practice in Spain, informing that when the sculptures were renovated, their garments were often divided amongst devotees, "functioning as relics that transmitted something of their miraculous power."⁹⁷

The story of Carnide's *Nossa Senhora da Luz* (Lisbon), published in 1610 by Friar Roque do Soveral, records several miracles performed through the sculpture's crown, mantles, and belt, which are clearly associated with relics by the author.⁹⁸

Similar to Vila Viçosa's *Nossa Senhora da Conceição*, this fully sculpted image of the standing Virgin with the Baby Jesus on her left arm, was of unknown matter for both Friar Roque and Friar Agostinho. According to the first, the image was found wearing a white satin vest that still existed at the time and no one dared examine the sculpture's material.⁹⁹ Both authors state the ones who tried were attacked by fever¹⁰⁰ and blindness.¹⁰¹ Following the orientations from Trent and the ensuing Synods, Friar Roque condemned the ones who clothed the images of the Virgin as if these were courtesans' portraits, but explained it was common and acceptable to adorn miraculous images with a tunic and mantle of modest shape.¹⁰² Furthermore, the author excused the use of rich fabrics on such images stating the following:

The celestial queen agrees that she is dressed here with brocades and fabrics for two reasons: firstly, because she only receives them in her Image, not [...] in herself, and thus

92 A. S. Maria, *Santuário Mariano*, 1707a, pp. 297–300.

93 A. S. Maria, *Santuário Mariano*, 1712, pp. 150–154.

94 *Ibid.*, pp. 173–175.

95 A. S. Maria, *Santuário Mariano*, Lisbon, 1711, pp. 22–28.

96 A. S. Maria, *Santuário Mariano*, Lisbon, 1716, pp. 591–594.

97 A. R. G. de Ceballos, *op. cit.*, p. 28. Nowadays in Andalusia it is still possible to buy pieces of sculptures' cloaks as souvenirs, usually named as "relics".

98 R. Soveral, *Historia do Insigne Aparecimento de N. Senhora da Luz & suas obras maravilhosas*, Lisbon, 1610.

99 *Ibid.*, fls. 16v–17.

100 *Ibid.*

101 A. S. Maria, *Santuário Mariano*, 1707a, p. 105.

102 R. Soveral, *op. cit.*, fl. 105v.

accepts the richness and preciousness of the dresses as a thing of the Image [...], secondly, so as not to contradict the devotion of those who want to make her rich offerings[...]¹⁰³

Nossa Senhora da Luz's remaining attires date from the 18th to the 21st centuries.¹⁰⁴ Because the sculpture was not meant to be clothed, the garments that adorn the figures of Our Lady and the Baby Jesus are shaped more like bibs rather than full dresses, but this feature is imperceptible because the mantles wrap most of the sculpture, giving it its triangular outline. The sets of clothing do not vary much in color or materials, privileging the white and blue silk satin, usually embroidered with golden or silver thread garlands and stars, and topped off with golden or silver thread galloons (Figs. 11, 12).



Fig. 11. Dress of Nossa Senhora da Luz, late 18th century or 19th century (?), silk, golden thread embroidery with coloured metallic foil and golden thread galloon, Church of Nossa Senhora da Luz, Carnide. Photo by Diana Pereira



Fig. 12. Mantle of Nossa Senhora da Luz, late 18th or 19th century (?), silk, silver thread embroidery with coloured metallic foil and silver thread galloon, Church of Nossa Senhora da Luz, Carnide. Photo by Diana Pereira

As mentioned above, Friar Roque often referred to the image's crown, mantles, and belt as relics. In an especially enlightening account, the author witnesses the perks of such objects which allowed the image's power to reach distant parts of the empire. According to Soveral, the Archbishop of Goa, Friar Mateus de Medina (1588–1593), took a mantle with him when he went to India, lending it to several people in need. The success was such that Diogo Pereira from Baçaim (Vasai), hoping to help a friend in distress, asked the Archbishop for the mantle. The prelate, fearing that this could be lost during the trip, sent him a piece he cut from it instead.¹⁰⁵ Friar Roque takes advantage of this episode to talk at length about how the part is the same as the whole, making a clear association between the piece of the image's mantle and a relic. Illustrating how "Saint Paul's belt and shroud healed the

¹⁰³ Ibid., fl. 106.

¹⁰⁴ It is a growing collection because dresses continue to be offered to the image nowadays.

¹⁰⁵ R. Soveral, op. cit., fls. 117v–118.

sick” and “Saint Bibiana’s ashes resurrected a young boy”, he explains that things such as the threads from Christ’s clothes or Saint Francis girdle were “celebrated and placed on reliquaries”, “as if each of these things were the whole from which they were taken”.¹⁰⁶

The fragmentation, reproduction and extension of images shown in all these stories, either through the detachment of their fingers, hands or Baby Jesus, the lending of their crowns, mantles, girdles or even small pieces cut from these, provided access to the primary object and their power, spreading its reach beyond the church and promoting its cult. This was possible because, as in the case of relics (body fragments that were also larger wholes), these objects indicated, evoked and transmitted a power that lied elsewhere, not in the image, but in God himself.¹⁰⁷

By now it should be clear that clothes were not just adornments used according to the different colors of liturgical celebrations and, as stated by Trexler, “the motivations for dressing sculptures exceeded the desire for visual realism”.¹⁰⁸ They were, in fact, mediating layers which played a vital role in the reciprocal communication between image and devotee, becoming portable extensions of the former’s presence and power.

Concerning St. Hedwig’s iconography, Jacqueline E. Jung, suggests that shoes, and clothing in general, have, besides their symbolic, aesthetic, and practical value, a “presence value” as “material indices of human lives” and the “presence of the absent body” as they remind the people who wear or wore them.¹⁰⁹

106 Ibid., fls. 118–119v. Soveral also describes many miracles made through a belt whose origin was unknown. Some believed it had belonged to Pero Martinz, who found the image, others that it belonged to the sculpture being one of its relics. The leather belt, lined with blue velvet and golden thread and featuring “antique and foreign looking” silver clasps, was associated with several healing miracles both in men and women, but Friar Roque informed it was especially effective for childbirths such as the abovementioned girdle from Carocedo. Being especially useful to Pero Furtado de Mendonça, before dying the devotee asked his brother-in-law, Martim de Castro dos Rios, to “garnish the holy girdle”. The piece was then wrapped inside another belt made of crimson velvet designed to allow devotees to see the worn out girdle. The “holy relic”, said Soveral, was then a “beautiful jewel, wrapped up in a crimson taffeta inside a curious box”, its reliquary. Ibid., fls. 120v–128v. Concerning the proliferation of miraculous belts or girdles belonging to Our Lady, such as the one supposedly offered by the Virgin to a clergyman in 1178 and kept in Tortosa’s Cathedral, and which was used by women during childbirths, W. Christian suggests these were possibly “mides” or measures, metric-relics the pilgrims used to bring from the Holy Land. W. A. Christian, Jr., *Apariciones...*, p. 72. Roque do Soveral does not associate the belt with the Virgin herself or, for instance, Prato or Tortosa’s holy girdles. However, this proliferation noted by W. Christian hints, firstly, at the wide diffusion of such legends in Europe, and, secondly, at a common use and association of image-related objects with relics of saints.

107 On the fragmentation as the whole see C. Hahn, “The Voices of the Saints: Speaking Reliquaries”, *Gesta*, 1997, vol. 36, no. 1, pp. 20–31; C. W. Bynum, *Christian Materiality...*, pp. 192–193, 208–210.

108 R. Trexler, “Habiller”..., p. 195. On the issue of colors and the liturgical calendar read note 21.

109 J. E. Jung, “The Boots of Saint Hedwig. Thoughts on the Limits of the Agency of Things”, in: *The Agency of Things in Medieval and Early Modern Art. Materials, Power and Manipulation*,

Fr. Agostinho's description of martyr Thecla Ignacia's burial (1656) is particularly interesting for this argument:

Her sweet memory was not buried with her body; because it is kept in the hearts of the residents of that republic; everyone [...] cherishes her images, rosaries, medals and cilices as precious treasures and outstanding relics; and even her poor and old clothes were divided to satisfy the devotion of everyone who insisted in having even if just a thread.¹¹⁰

According to the author, before dying the nun had asked her family to burn her clothes because she feared they would be venerated as relics, but God had awarded her with that veneration because of her humility.¹¹¹

In several societies, clothing and cloths are believed to connect and mediate the human and spiritual worlds, the natural and supernatural, besides protecting against evil and disease.¹¹²

The tradition of covering the Kaaba with the *kiswah*, for instance, dates back to the earliest Muslim leaders who are recorded to adorn it with textiles of several colors and materials.¹¹³ The *kiswah* is understood to offer safety and protection. According to Richard McGregor, every year a new one was sent from Cairo to Mecca during the Hajj and it paraded through the Egyptian capital at least since 1263. An account from 1679 informs that the *kiswah* circulated "in pieces, mounted on wooden frames, and being touched by the crowds as a source of blessing". When on display at the shrine-mosque of Husayn, people could visit it, touch it and cut small pieces from it as blessings or *baraka*.¹¹⁴ McGregor suggests the *kiswah* made it possible for the faithful to be closer to the Kaaba, although they could not make the mandatory Hajj. According to him the Kaaba was not a "distant idealized and imagined goal" that few would ever reach, for it was attained through the "seeing, touching, parading, and viewing" of such object,¹¹⁵ which draws parallels to how the sculptures, clothes or "relics" replicated the originals' presence and power away from their shrines.

Conclusion

I would like to conclude by stressing the fact that clothes and jewels played multiple roles in the cyclical material relationship between miraculous images and devotees.

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- eds. G. Jurkowlanec, I. Matyjaszkiewicz, Z. Sarnecka, New York, London, 2018, pp. 175–176.
- 110 A. S. Maria, *Rosas do Japam, Candidas Açucenas, e Ramallete de fragrantas, & peregrinas flores, colhidas no Jardim da Igreja do Japão [...]*, Lisbon, 1709, p. 147.
- 111 *Ibid.*, p. 147.
- 112 A. Hermkens, "Clothing as embodied experience of belief", in: *Religion and Material Culture. The Matter of Belief*, ed. D. Morgan, London, New York, 2010, p. 231.
- 113 R. McGregor, "Dressing the Ka'ba from Cairo: the aesthetics of pilgrimage to Mecca", in: *Religion and Material Culture. The Matter of Belief*, ed. D. Morgan, London, New York, 2010, pp. 247–261.
- 114 *Ibid.*, pp. 256–260.
- 115 *Ibid.*, p. 261.

More than mere embellishments or lifelike prosthetics, clothes were extensions of their sculptures' presence and consequently their power, behaving as "contact relics". They were often *ex-votos* and therefore testimonies of such power and, lastly, according to Golsenne's suggestion, they were activators of the devotees' belief in that very power.

Being an essential aspect for the study of sculpture, the practice of dressing and adorning images of saints is equally fundamental to understanding the sensorial experience of devotees.

In the collective imagination, they became strong and unavoidable features of the miraculous images' visual and textural identities, as we can see when comparing the appearance of sculptures such as *Nossa Senhora da Conceição* from Vila Viçosa, with and without the dresses (Fig. 7, 8). The stone-cold and stiff statue was replaced by a majestic token wrapped in rich fabrics with golden trimmings and shiny gemstones – multiple layers of devotional meaning, secrecy, ritual, and privilege that require handling and have a tremendous impact on the senses.

Beneath the layers of rich robes, undergarments and the curly wig, hides a bald head that resulted from its adaptation to the crown, natural hair and mantle. The arms are not articulated and the eyes are not made of glass. Statues such as this were not flesh or lifelike, but when clothed as humans, frequently in similar fashions as the ones worn by devotees, they could certainly provide a sense of familiarity and proximity. Despite the lingering archaism and estrangement, their adornments invited and offered tactile engagement. The people who clothed them could not avoid touching or embracing them during that process. In turn, their cloaks and belts were wrapped around people's bodies and their caps and crowns placed on their heads in times of distress.

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Reflections of the Hidden Duchess and the Moon King: The Tabula Scalata and the Engaged Beholder in Sixteenth-Century Italy

Abstract

A *tabula scalata* consists of triangular slats painted on two sides and attached to a panel, creating a “double image”. Sometimes, a mirror was placed at straight angles of the upper frame, allowing the beholder to see both painted sides at the same time – but only when standing in the right position. This contribution analyses how these scarcely studied devices relied on the beholder’s active participation to convey intertwined layers of artistic, scientific, political, and poetic meanings. To do so, it discusses two sixteenth-century case studies.

The first is a lost painting created in French royal court circles around 1550 and subsequently making its way to Rome as a diplomatic gift. The device combined a portrait of Henry II of France, a moon symbol, and a puzzle-ridden poem to convey interrelated political and poetic meanings. The second painting is Ludovico Buti’s *Portrait of Charles III of Lorraine and Christina de’ Medici*. It was commissioned by the Medici, and originally hung in a room filled with maps and geographical devices. This article considers three aspects central to the paintings’ reception: motion, sensory perception, and ideology.

Operating in an intellectual culture fuelled by curiosity and designed to evoke wonder, these devices aimed to prolong the beholders’ attention by establishing thresholds within the artistic experience. As such, they straddled the vague boundaries between painting, scientific instrument, and poem to stimulate the beholders’ senses and involve them in an interactive game of meaning-making.

Keywords: renaissance studies, visual puzzles, corporality, court culture, interaction, liminality

When Giorgio Vasari visited the palace of Cardinal Innocenzo Ciocchi del Monte (c. 1531–1577), he saw a painting that appeared to change as he moved, showing an image of the king of France slowly emerging out of that of the waxing moon. This “*quadro di pittura capricciosissimo*”, as Vasari called it, was a *tabula scalata* (ladder painting), a device both difficult to produce and puzzling to behold.¹ By painting triangular slats on two sides and attaching them to a flat panel, a double image was created. Beholders could switch between two images by moving their bodies or by rotating the painting. Like many other variations of anamorphic imagery, these paintings were popular throughout early modern Europe, and are exemplary of the sixteenth-century tendency to engage paintings kinetically and physically.² Within the elite culture of the sixteenth-century Italian *palazzo*, these interactions took on a distinctively social and intellectual character.³ Designed to evoke wonder and part of a culture of curiosity, many paintings presented visual and textual enigmas to stimulate the beholder’s sensorium and activate both mind and body.⁴

Some *tabulae scalatae* had vertical slats and a tilted mirror mounted on the upper frame (Fig. 1). This enabled the spectator to see the two sides at the same time – but only when standing in the right position. By moving, beholders could make the mirror image emerge or disappear, prompting a layered artistic experience that went through consecutive phases. The devices thus had what John Shearman famously called a “slow fuse”, being “structurally complex in self-reference, and wide-ranging, memory-challenging in external reference and imitation”.⁵

1 Academic attention for the *tabula scalata* has been scarce, not in the least because just a few artifacts have survived. For exceptions, see A. de Rosa, “Jean François Nicéron: Perspective and artificial magic”, *FME Transaction*, 2017, 45, pp. 215–226; J. L. Hunt and J. Sharp, “The Mathematics of the Channel Anamorphosis”, *Journal of Mathematics and the Arts*, 2009, 3, no. 1., pp. 19–31; Y. Hersant, “Giochi di specchi: La macchina convertitrice di Ludovico Buti”, in: *Il ritratto*, ed. A. Castoldi, Milan, 2004, pp. 55–65B; M. Stafford and F. Terpak, *Devices of Wonders: From the world in a box to images on a screen*, Los Angeles, 2001, p. 29; and S. Zanieri, “Un gioco ottico di Ludovico Buti al Museo di Storia della Scienza a Firenze”, *Nuncius*, 2000, 15, no. 2, pp. 665–670.

2 For in-depth studies on the correlation between visual, corporal, and kinetic interaction in early modern art, see A. Beyer, G. Cassegrain eds., *Mouvement. Bewegung. Über die dynamischen Potenziale der Kunst*, Berlin, 2015; S. Blick and L. D. Gelfand eds., *Push Me, Pull You: Imaginative and Emotional Interaction in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art*, Leiden, Boston, 2011 (two volumes); D. Ganz, S. Neuner eds., *Mobile Eyes. Peripatetisches Sehen in den Bildkulturen der Vormoderne*, Munich, 2013; and S. Leyssen, P. Rathgeber eds., *Bilder animierter Bewegung/Images of Animate Movement*, Munich, 2013.

3 This contribution is part of a larger project on sixteenth-century paintings with mobile parts (e.g. doors, sliding covers, veils) that lured the spectator into a prolonged interaction that was both physical and intellectual.

4 C. Strunck, “*Concettismo* and the Aesthetics of Display: the Interior Decoration of Roman Galleries and *Quadrerie*”, in: *Display of Art in the Roman Palace 1550–1750*, ed. G. Feigenbaum, Los Angeles, 2014, p. 219. For an overview of early modern curiosity, see B. M. Benedict, *Curiosity: A Cultural History of Early Modern Inquiry*, Chicago, London, 2001; and R. Evans, A. Marr eds., *Curiosity and Wonder from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, Aldershot, Burlington, VT, 2006.

5 J. Shearman, *Only Connect – Art and the Spectator in the Italian Renaissance*, Princeton, 1992, p. 259.



Fig. 1. Ignazio Danti, *Schematic representation of a tabula scalata depicting Gregory XIII.* From: I. Danti, *Le due regole della prospettiva pratica di M. Iacomo Barozzi da Vignola con i comitarij del R. P. M. Egnazio Danti dell'ordine de Predicatori matematico dello studio di Bologna,* Rome, 1583, p. 95

This article argues that the *tabula scalata* constructed and conveyed interrelated layers of artistic, poetic, and ideological meaning through movement, inviting the beholder to participate in an interactive process of meaning-making that involved the body as well as the mind. I focus on two *tabulae scalatae* with mirrors: a Medici commission in the Museo Galileo in Florence (Fig. 2), and the painting that once belonged to Ciocchi del Monte, but is now lost (Fig. 3). Both works are seminal; the former is, to the best of my knowledge, the only surviving early modern *tabula scalata* with a mirror, while contemporary writers considered the latter to be one



Fig. 2. Ludovico Buti, *Tabula Scalata* with Charles III of Lorraine and Christina de' Medici, 1593, oil on panel and paper, glass, 112 x 815 x 500 cm, Museo Galileo, Florence, inv. 3197 © Museo Galileo, Florence



Fig. 3. Possible reconstruction according to Vasari's description of: Unknown French artist, *Tabula Scalata* with Henry II of France, between 1547–1559, c. 150 cm in length © L. G. Modderkolk / C. Wijnands

of the first of its kind. This contribution gives a brief overview of early modern writings on the *tabula scalata* and then proceeds to consider the patronage and reception of the two case studies. The second half of this contribution examines three themes recurring in both devices: motion, multisensory perception, and ideology.

The *Tabula Scalata* in the Sources

Vasari was not alone in his fascination for the *tabula scalata*.⁶ In 1583, the Medici court cartographer and mathematician Ignazio Danti published his commentaries on Vignola's *Due Regole della Prospettiva Pratica*.⁷ This book was the first to elaborate on the optical and technical foundations of the *tabula scalata*, providing detailed instructions on how to manufacture one, and mentioning several paintings Danti had seen or heard of.⁸ These are the only two texts on *tabulae scalatae* contemporary to our two devices, and both will be discussed in more detail later. The *tabula scalata* saw renewed interest in the seventeenth century, and detailed instructions on how to make one can be found in Jean François Nicéron's influential optical treatise *La Perspective Curieuse* (1638).⁹ Very similar instructions appear in Mario Bettini's mathematical encyclopaedia *Apiaria* (1642, Fig. 4.), and in Gaspar Schott's *Magia Universalis* (1674–1677), another work on optics and mathematics.¹⁰ Their fellow Jesuit Athanasius Kircher has been credited with coining the term *tabula scalata*, but although he writes about the devices in his *Ars Magna Lucis et Umbrae* (1645–1646), he calls them *tabula scalaria*, which means exactly the same: ladder-painting.¹¹ Nevertheless, I keep the term *tabula scalata*, if only because it has become the standard nomenclature. All of these authors – except Vasari – include the devices in their works on optics and/or mathematics, and are primarily concerned with technical aspects. Therefore, they teach us little of how the people who interacted with these works perceived them. This remarkable literary reception could suggest that the *tabula scalata* was solely seen as an optical game, but closer inspection of the two case studies will reveal that, at least in the sixteenth century, they carried a myriad of artistic, political, philosophical, and poetic connotations as well.

6 G. Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori, e architettori*, 1568, ed. G. Milanesi, Florence, 1878–1885, vol. 7, pp. 131–133.

7 For more information on this edition, see F. Fiorani, “Danti Edits Vignola: The Formation of a Modern Classic on Perspective”, in: *The Treatise on Perspective: Published and Unpublished*, ed. L. Massey, New Haven, London, 2003, pp. 127–160.

8 I. Danti, G. B. Vignola, *Le due regole della prospettiva pratica di M. Iacomo Barozzi da Vignola con i comitarii del R. P. M. Ignazio Danti dell'ordine de Predicatori matematico dello studio di Bologna*, Rome, 1583, pp. 94–96.

9 J. F. Nicéron, *La perspective curieuse*, Paris, 1638, pp. 78–79.

10 M. Bettini, *Apiaria universae philosophiae mathematicae*, Bologna, 1642, vol. 1, pp. 28–30; and G. Schott, *Magia universalis natura et artis*, Bamberg, 1674–1677, vol. 1, pp. 143–153. For an overview of seventeenth-century Jesuit endeavours in natural sciences, see M. A. Waddell, *Jesuit Science and the End of Nature's Secrets*, Farnham, Burlington, 2015.

11 A. Kircher, *Ars Magna Lucis et Umbrae*, Rome, 1645–1646, pp. 903–904.

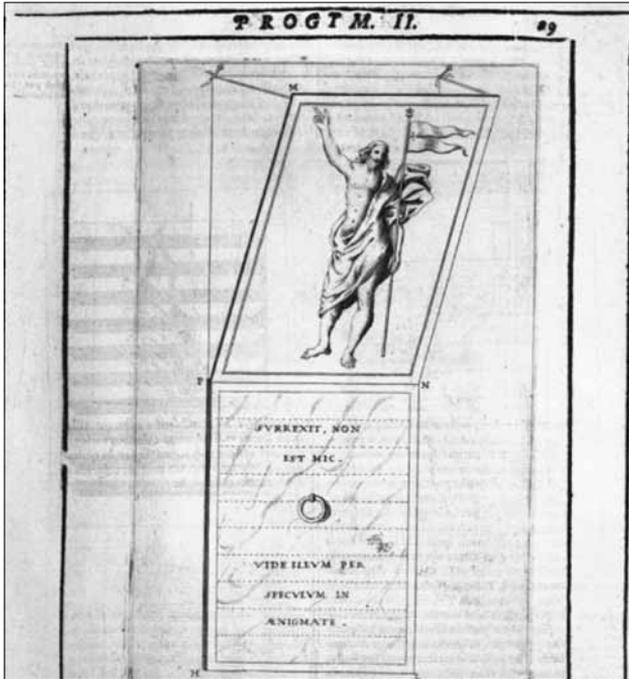


Fig. 4. Lost or fictitious *Tabula scalata* with *Resurrection*. From: M. Bettini, *Apiaria universae philosophiae mathematicae*, Bologna, 1642, vol. 1, part 5, p. 29

The Medici Device

An entry in the *Guardaroba Medicea* dated February 27, 1593 records a payment to the Florentine painter Ludovico Buti (c. 1560 – after 1611) for “having painted in oil the head of Grand Duchess Christina Lorena copied from the gallery on the heads of 37 wooden slats to attach them to a panel of $1\frac{1}{2}$ braccia in total length and reduce it to a width of $1\frac{1}{8}$ in width, and for the head of the duke of Lorraine painted in oil on paper and attached to the aforementioned slats, which are as long and wide as mentioned before, one can be seen with the eye up front, the grand duchess by means of a sphere [mirror] which is above the panel of our wood: all of this prepared and sent to Giaches [Jacques Bijlevelt], who had the aforementioned object placed in a room in service of His Serene Highness [Grand Duke Ferdinand I], the timber and the slats were made in Cristoforo Tedesco’s workshop”.¹²

¹² Archivio di Stato di Firenze, *Guardaroba Medicea* 169, c. 188v. Original text: “aver ritratto a olio la testa della Granduchessa Cristina Lorena copiata dalla galleria sulla testata di 37 regoli di legname per attacharli su’ un quadro di lunghezza braccia $1\frac{1}{2}$ in tutto e ridurlo a larghezza braccia $1\frac{1}{8}$ e per la testa del Duca di Lorena dipinta a olio sul foglio e attachata in faccia a detti regoli lunga e larga come il suddetto, una si vede con l’occhio in faccia, la Granduchessa per via di sfera che sta sopra detto quadro, nostro legname: fatto e consegnato tutto a Giaches, fatto il detto attachare in una camera per servizio di S. A. S., qual legname e regoli fatti in bottega di Cristoforo Tedesco”.

As we can read, the painting now in the Museo Galileo is a double portrait of Grand Duchess Christina (1565–1636) and her father, Duke Charles III of Lorraine (1543–1608). The portrait of the daughter is only visible in the mirror attached to the upper frame.¹³ Still seen as a luxury product in the late sixteenth-century, the plane glass mirror performs a seminal task in the meaning-making of our devices. In *cinquecento* paradigm, the mirror was charged with revelatory potency that extended beyond its practical function.¹⁴ Brunelleschi famously used a mirror in his experiments to codify linear perspective. Alberti and Leonardo hailed the mirror as the painter's master, but were at the same time aware that it reflected illusions as well as truth.¹⁵ In our devices the mirror appears in a dialectical relation with painting, inviting the beholder to compare the reflected image with the painted one. However, the tilted mirror does not reflect the image in front of the beholder, but a different one – one that is furthermore *only* visible through the mirror. Rather than transforming from one fixed state to another, the two images alternate when the beholder moves to a different position. Buti's looking glass thus facilitates a chameleonic shape-shifting between father and daughter, painted and reflected image, and illusion and truth.¹⁶

The Medici document attests that Jacques Bijlevelt, the director of the *galleria* in the Uffizi, had the device placed in an unspecified room. A 1670 travel report by the English priest Richard Lassels confirms that it was displayed in a (now empty) niche above the door of the *stanza delle carte geografiche*.¹⁷ This room, refurbished by Ferdinand in 1589, mostly contained geographical instruments and its walls were decorated by Buti with painted maps. Lassels writes that the room contained two great globes, which must have been Antonio Santucci's armillary sphere (1588–1593), and a terrestrial globe designed by the aforementioned court cartographer Ignazio

13 Y. Hersant, op. cit., p. 65. Hersant reads the device as a machine turning an *eikon* (Charles) into an *eidolon* (Christina). Although his interpretation (or as he himself humbly calls it "*la mia fantasticheria*") is interesting, it is not supported by argumentation.

14 S. Melchior-Bonnet, *The Mirror: A History*, New York, London, 2001, p. 101.

15 Ibid, pp. 128–129.

16 P. Findlen, *Possessing Nature: Museums, Collecting, and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1994, pp. 299–301. Findlen notes the strong correlations between mirrors and chameleons in early modern collections, reading both as testaments to the shifting features of nature and the adaptability of human nature.

17 R. Lassels, *The Voyage of Italy*, Paris, 1670, vol. 1, pp. 168–169. "In the second cabinet I saw two great globes, which were made in this room, being too great to be ever carried out, or brought into it by the door. I saw also here a polished table of polished stones representing a town in Bohemia, with divers pictures of men, horses, and landskips: where there is a tree represented most naturally, because it is represented by the very wood of a tree petrified into stone, and looking like wood as it was; and shining like polish'd stone, as it now is. The statues, or busto's of three or four of the Great Dukes, in porphyry. A curious looking glass over the inside of the door, which placed directly over the picture of a man, contracts into the picture of a woman (that means wife) which you see plainly in it: drawing thus Eve out of Adam again by a curious reflexion."

Danti, which are known to have been displayed in the *stanza*.¹⁸ As Lassels notes, the globes were too large to carry through the door (Santucci's may have been made in the room, while Danti's globe could have been transferred from the *guardaroba nuova* before Ferdinando ordered the former terrace to be walled up in 1589), making it unlikely that the globes were located in a different room before his 1670 publication. Other objects Lassels saw in the room were a table in *pietre dure*, and "three or four" porphyry busts of the grand dukes. Lastly, he describes "A curious looking glass over the inside of the door, which placed directly over the picture of a man, contracts into the picture of a woman (that means wife) which you see plainly in it: drawing thus Eve out of Adam again by a curious reflexion."¹⁹ Although Lassels is clearly unaware whose portraits he was looking at, his description of the *tabula scalata* as a man and a woman make it extremely likely that he saw the portraits of Charles of Lorraine and his daughter above the door, as there are no known records of other Medici *tabulae scalatae* depicting a man and a woman. Its position above the only door in the room – a site of connection, separation, and transformation – underlines the painting's importance as a threshold marker.²⁰ Staging metamorphosis in a liminal zone 'betwixt and between', Buti's painting was well-suited to the space it occupied, captivating the imagination of visitors like Lassels.²¹

Its position in the Room of maps, surrounded by instruments designed by the Medici's leading scientists, also placed Buti's portrait at the core of a scientific discourse, and we know from Galileo's often-cited letter to Christina that the grand duchess was interested in astronomy.²² In fact, the combination of artworks and scientific instruments was nothing unheard of in sixteenth-century collections in which the realms of knowledge and art often overlapped and served similar goals: the cultivation of curiosity and wonder.²³ Like the *tabula scalata*, the detailed maps and the three-dimensional globe and armillary sphere sent the engaged spectator moving across the room to study their different aspects more closely, while the porphyry busts and *pietre dure* table must have enticed wonder by virtue of their costly

18 F. Fioriani, *The Marvel of Maps: Art, Cartography and Politics in Renaissance Italy*, New Haven, London, 2005, pp. 134–135; and D. Heikamp, "L'antica sistemazione degli strumenti scientifici nelle collezioni Fiorentine", *Antichità Viva*, 1970, 9, no. 6, p. 5. See <https://brunelleschi.imss.fi.it/mediciscienze/imed.asp?c=36200> [accessed 3 January 2020] for a digital reconstruction of the room made by the Museo Galileo.

19 R. Lassels, op. cit., p. 169.

20 For a liminal reading of sixteenth-century paintings on and near doors, see S. Rutherglen, "Painting at the Threshold: Pictures for Doors in Renaissance Venice", *The Art Bulletin*, 2016, 98, no. 4, pp. 438–465.

21 For other examples of how the notion of liminality is employed to understand the reception of mobile early modern paintings, see L. Jacobs, *Opening Doors: Reinterpreting the Early Netherlandish Triptych*, University Park, 2012, and eadem, *Thresholds and Boundaries: Liminality in Netherlandish Art (1385–1530)*, London–New York, 2018.

22 Galileo, *Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina* (1615).

23 C. Volpi: "The Display of Knowledge: *Studioli*, *Camerini*, and Libraries", in: *Display of Art in the Roman Palace 1550–1750*, ed. G. Feigenbaum, Los Angeles, 2014, p. 257.

materials.²⁴ The Medici Room of Maps should thus be seen as part of a tradition of curiosity that had its roots in the fifteenth-century *studiolo*, a space aimed towards evoking wonder and visualising knowledge.²⁵ Like *tabulae scalatae*, works in the *studiolo* were often multivalent and intertextual, engaging with other objects and presenting visual puzzles to its beholders.²⁶ The most eccentric works, painted on unusual supports or depicting arcane subjects, were often displayed in the *studiolo*²⁷, and anamorphoses like Buti's painting were also common, as can most famously be seen in the woodwork of Federico da Montefeltro's *studiolo* in Urbino.²⁸ The Medici's enthusiastic participation in these practices of collecting and displaying is demonstrated by Cosimo I's *guardaroba* and Francesco's *studiolo* in the Palazzo Vecchio, and Ferdinand's display of natural and man-made wonders in the Uffizi *tribuna*, armoury, and map room.²⁹

Both the *tabula scalata* and the room were also part of a political discourse. The maps Buti painted on the walls depicted the territories ruled by the grand duke: Florence, Siena (conquered by Ferdinand's father Cosimo in 1555), and the island of Elba. The Uffizi room can be seen as heir to a tradition of map cycles that included projects like Cosimo's *guardaroba* (commissioned in 1563) and Pope Gregory XIII's *galleria delle carte geografiche* (1580–1583). These cycles were testament to a widely shared curiosity for (recently explored) foreign lands, but were also politically charged.³⁰ As Mark Rosen notes, maps of local territories in particular had “an explicit element of control”, and served to showcase the ruler's power of the depicted lands.³¹ The material presence of the grand dukes in the form of the porphyry busts described by Lassels must only have underlined this message, although these sculptures are probably the busts Tommaso Fedeli sculpted in the early seventeenth

24 At the same time, the table employed a polyfocality of vision similar to the *tabula scalata*, maps, and instruments. Paola Squellati Brizio argues that painting on stone requires a double exercise of sight in which the artistic representation and the natural forms of the stone overlap, and Lassels's marvel at the inclusion of a fossilised piece of wood to represent a tree is testament to this dictionomy. P. Squellati Brizio, “Natura Sollecitata”, in: *Bizzarrie di pietre dipinte dalle collezioni dei Medici*, eds. M. Chiarini, C. Acidini Luchinat, Milan, 2000, pp. 32–38.

25 R. Kirkbride, *Architecture and Memory. The Renaissance Studioli of Federico de Montefeltro*, New York, 2008, 1, 4–5. <http://www.gutenberg-e.org/kirkbride/index.html> (accessed 6 January 2020). For more information on Renaissance *studioli*, see L. Clark, *Collecting Art in the Italian Renaissance Court: Objects and Exchanges*, Cambridge, 2018; and C. Volpi, op. cit., pp. 250–263.

26 Kirkbride, op. cit., 4, 14.

27 Volpi, op. cit., p. 257.

28 See Kirkbride, op. cit. for more information on the Montefeltro *studioli*.

29 For an in-depth discussion of the Medici collection of curiosities, see A. Turpin, “The New World collections of Duke Cosimo I de' Medici and their role in the creation of a *Kunst-* and *Wunderkammer* in the Palazzo Vecchio”, in: R. Evans, A. Marr, op. cit., pp. 63–86.

30 For more information on early modern painted map cycles, see M. Rosen, *The Mapping of Power in Renaissance Italy: Painted Cartographic Cycles in Social and Intellectual Context*, Cambridge, 2015; and F. Fiorani, *The Marvel of Maps: Art, Cartography and Politics in Renaissance Italy*, New Haven, London, 2005.

31 M. Rosen, op. cit., p. 5.

century, and were therefore not part of the original decorative programme.³² We know from contemporary accounts such as Francesco Bocchi's 1591 *Bellezze della Città di Fiorenza* that the Medici galleries were open to (upper-class) public, at least on request, and Ferdinand's political propaganda must therefore have impressed Florentine citizens, foreign dignitaries, and well-to-do travellers alike.³³ As shall be discussed in detail later on, Buti's portrait of the grand duchess and her father harnessed the forces of wonder and curiosity for similar political purposes as his maps, and was thus fully integrated in the room's visual discourse.

It is very likely that Buti relied on Ignazio Danti's instructions to produce a *tabula scalata*.³⁴ As mentioned earlier, the cartographer described the best method of making one in his commentaries on *Vignola's Due Regole*. Although Danti himself had died six years before Buti's payment record, there are several reasons to assume that Buti had known Danti and was familiar with his work. They were both affiliated to the Medici court and Buti had previously worked on decorations of the convent of Santa Maria Novella, where Danti lived.³⁵ Additionally, Buti collaborated with Stefano Buonsignori, Danti's successor as court cartographer, to paint the maps in the *stanza*, and also must have known Ignazio's brother Vincenzo, who taught at the Florentine *Accademia*.³⁶ Yet, Buti did not follow Danti's instructions to the letter. As the "mirror image" was usually painted first, the other side of the triangular slats had to be painted when the latter were already attached to the panel. Aware of this inconvenience, Danti recommends decorating this side with an inscription rather than a portrait.³⁷ Later authors offered the same advice, and Buti seems to have been the only painter not to have followed it. His solution for painting two portraits was deceptively simple. As mentioned in the payment record, he painted Christina's portrait directly on the slats, and then did Charles's on paper, cut the sheet in 37 strips, and glued the paper strips to the unpainted side of the wooden triangles.

Danti mentions a *tabula scalata* depicting Cosimo I de' Medici, which – if it was (still) in Florence – must have served as Buti's prototype.³⁸ Neither Cosimo's nor Christina's painting were the first of their kind, however. In fact, Danti writes

32 Fedeli's porphyry busts of Ferdinand I (inv. 1914, n. 48) and Cosimo II (inv. 1914, n. 47) are still in the Uffizi. The latter had been paid for in 1624.

33 F. Bocchi, *Le Bellezze della città di Fiorenza*, Florence, 1591, trans. by T. Frangenberg, R. Williams, Turnhout, 2006, p. 71.

34 Zanieri, op. cit., p. 668.

35 Ibid., p. 670.

36 For more information on the network of the Danti brothers, see A. Proctor, "A Family Network: The Danti Brothers at Work for the Medici in Late Renaissance Florence", in: *Encountering the Renaissance: Celebrating Gary M. Radke and 50 Years of the Syracuse University Graduate Program in Renaissance Art*, eds. M. Bourne, A. V. Coonin, Ramsey, 2016, pp. 41–50

37 Danti, op. cit., p. 55. "d veramente in esse faccie GHI, si scriveranno le lettere in lode di colui, il cui ritratto si mira nello specchio, si come si vede fatto nel prenominato ritratto del Re Enrico, il che è molto piu à proposito di fare, che il dipignerui qual si voglia altra soca: atteso che le righe che sono fra una tavolette & l'altra, sempre si veggone, & meno disdicono tra un verso di lettere, & l'altro, che non fanno nell'attraversare l'altre pitture."

38 S. Zanieri, op. cit., p. 669.

that the first devices known in Italy were two French paintings depicting Francis I and his son Henry II, respectively.³⁹ These two artefacts were doubtlessly seminal works, and although little is known about the former, Vasari describes the latter in great detail.

The Valois Device

Both Danti and Vasari elaborate on the provenance of the French device: King Henry II (1519–1559) presented it as a gift to Cardinal Carlo Carafa (1517–1561), who later donated the painting to his fellow cardinal Innocenzo Ciochi del Monte. The latter had gained notoriety as Pope Julius III's lover and prominence as his cardinal-nephew.⁴⁰ If Vasari and Danti are to be taken on their word, the painting must have been executed between Henry's ascension to the French throne in 1547 and his death in 1559.

Vasari underlines that the author of the device is unknown, but as Del Monte's *guardaroba* also contained several paintings by Taddeo Zuccari, Vasari includes the device in Zuccari's *vita*.⁴¹ Although we know far less about this *guardaroba* than about the Medici gallery, it must have functioned in similar contexts of wonder and curiosity, containing, in Vasari's words, "a vast number of things ancient and modern, all truly of the rarest [...]"⁴² The author was so impressed that he includes a lengthy description of the *tabula scalata*. He writes that his attention was drawn towards the device by his "*amicissimo*" Silvano Razzi (1527–1611), but his description is so detailed that it suggests that the writer has seen the painting with his own eyes. Vasari's description goes as follows:

In this picture, which is about two *braccia* and a half in height, there is nothing to be seen by him who looks at it from the ordinary point of view, from the front, save some letters on a flesh-coloured ground, and in the centre the moon, which goes gradually increasing or diminishing according to the lines of the writing. And yet, if you go below the picture and look in a sphere or mirror that is placed over the picture in the manner of a little baldachin, you see in that mirror, which receives the image from the picture, a most lifelike portrait in painting of King Henry II of France, somewhat larger than life, with these words about it – HENRY II, ROY DE FRANCE. [...] it is painted on twenty-eight ridges, too low to be perceived, which are between the lines of the words given below [...].⁴³

39 J. Danti, op. cit., p. 55.

40 G. Vasari, op. cit., p. 132, and Danti, op. cit., p. 55. The Valois provenance brings this device tantalizingly close to the Medici painting. Christina of Lorraine was the granddaughter of Catherine de' Medici, wife of Henry II, and was raised at the Queen's court. If the *tabula scalata* was indeed a French invention, it is likely that Christina was familiar with it before moving to Florence.

41 G. Vasari, op. cit., p. 132.

42 Translation by G. du C. de Vere, London, 1912–1915, v. 8, p. 259. Original text in: G. Vasari, op. cit., p. 131: "una infinità di cose antiche e moderne, veramente rarissime [...]"

43 Translation by G. du C. de Vere, op. cit., pp. 259–260. Original text in: G. Vasari, op. cit., p. 132. "*In questo quadro, dico, che è alto circa due braccia e mezzo, non si vede, da chi lo guarda in prospet-*

Vasari's account allows for the following reconstruction: a *tabula scalata* of approximately 150 cm in length, consisting of 28 triangular slats, with a mirror attached to the upper part of the frame "like a baldachin". Like the Florentine device, it was displayed in a high position. The normally visible side showed nothing but a waxing moon against a flesh-coloured ground, and a Latin poem.⁴⁴ When looking in the mirror from below, one would see in its reflection the portrait of Henry II of France along with an inscription identifying him. Figure 3 is my proposal for a schematic visual reconstruction, although it should be noted that this reconstruction does not claim to be definitive and should mostly be seen as one possible way the device could have looked like.

Vasari took special care to record the exact structure of the inscription (Fig. 5). Translated in English, it reads:

Hey you, what do you see? Nothing, I think, except the waxing moon that is placed outside the area. As the moon grows steadily, it invites us, you as well as me, to grow in one hope, one faith and one love, enlightened by the word of God, until the light shines ever so bright in us thanks to his grace, he who is the eternal giver of light: if us mortals hope to receive light in him and from him, we shall not be hoping in vain.⁴⁵

The poem is a triple acrostic, which means that the first, middle, and last letters of each verse form a sentence: HENRICUS VALEIUS DEI GRATIA GALLORUM REX INVICTISSIMUS ("Henry Valois, by the grace of God, most invincible king of the French"). This acrostic further activates spectators to interact with the painting, as only an engaged beholder is able to deduce the king's "presence" by solving the textual puzzle before even seeing the portrait reflected in the mirror. As noted by Leah Clark, "the relationship between images and words was a fraught one within both humanist and religious circles [...]", and this *paragone* was debated by early modern writers, painters, and viewers.⁴⁶ Likewise, *studioli* were filled with objects combining image with text, like illuminated books, and double-sided medals or coins (all of which have a distinctively sequenced narrative structure), challenging the engaged beholder to decipher meaning from multiple sources.⁴⁷

tiva et alla sua veduta ordinaria, altro che alcune lettere in campo incarnato, e nel mezzo la luna, che secondo le righe dello scritto va di mano in mano crescendo e diminuendo, e nondimeno, andando sotto il quadro e guardando in una sfera, o vero specchio, che sta sopra il quadro a uso d'un picciol baldacchino, si vede di pittura e naturalissimo in detto specchio, che lo riceve dal quadro, il ritratto del re Enrico Secondo di Francia, alquanto maggiore del naturale, con queste lettere intorno: HENRY II ROY DE FRANCE. [...] è dipinto sopra ventotto gradini sottilissimi, che non si veggiono, i quali sono fra riga e riga dell'infrascritte parole [...]".

44 As the poem cited by Vasari consists of 14 verses, and the painting was made up of 28 slats, the inscription must have filled half of the pictorial field. The other half (either above or below the poem) must have been occupied by the moon symbol.

45 G. Vasari, op. cit., p. 133. Translation by Tommaso Suaria.

46 L. Clark, op. cit., p. 14.

47 See C. Nygren: "Titian's Christ with the Coin: Recovering the Spiritual Currency of Numismatics in Renaissance Ferrara", *Renaissance Quarterly* 69, 2016, 2, pp. 449–488 for an elaboration on the engagement with coins and medals in the *studiolo* of Alfonso d'Este in Ferrara.

love poetry.⁵¹ In these poems, a recurring motif was the comparison between the lady and the changeable yet beautiful moon. In Maurice Scève's influential *Délie* (1544), for example, the poet constantly likens his lady to the moon. As such, she is less divine than the usually employed trope of the radiant sun, and yet provides access to it.⁵² The anonymous creator of Henry's device responded and contributed to these topoi, integrating the work in textual as well as visual discourses.

Moving bodies, mobile images

Clearly, the *tabula scalata* requires a more engaged beholder than most paintings to transfer meaning. The remainder of this article analyses three facets of the *tabula scalata's* meaning-making: motion, multisensory perception, and ideology.

Through movement, the devices' beholder could alternate between images. However, Vasari stresses that there is only one "perfect" viewpoint. He also writes that it was possible to take the panel down from its high position, turn it around, and look at the side normally seen in the mirror. However, as the author stresses, this will result in an upside-down image, and render the other side invisible.⁵³ The latter mode of viewing was evidently seen as undesirable. *Cinquecento* thought envisioned a stable world order, in which every component had its fixed place. This belief, as Vincent Robert-Nicoud recently argued, made the *mundus inversus* a powerful metaphor, as "the topos of the world upside-down often highlights transgressions or anomalies by comparing them with the proper order of the world. In doing so, it swaps elements within the chain of beings but without reference to the other elements."⁵⁴ Small wonder that Vasari insists that there is only one correct way of viewing the devices. Yet, the fact that the *tabula scalata* at least offers the beholder the opportunity to invert the rulers' portrait – and thus the cosmic order of things – bestows a significant degree of agency on the viewer. While the right movements confirmed the beholder's and the depicted rulers' proper place in the cosmos, the moving beholder could just as well compromise this cosmic order by making the "wrong" movements.⁵⁵

This intricate stop-motion game was therefore vital for the artistic experience, underlining that physical movement and the beholder's agency were more impor-

51 K. Banks, *Cosmos and Image in the Renaissance: French Love Lyric and Natural-Philosophical Poetry*, London, 2008, p. 1.

52 Ibid, p. 184.

53 G. Vasari, op. cit., p. 132.

54 V. Robert-Nicoud, *The World Upside-Down in 16th-Century French Literature and Visual Culture*, Leiden, 2018, p. 8.

55 This element of play and the intertwinement of spectator and artwork is central to Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the *carnavalesque* (on which Robert-Nicoud builds) as a recurrent subversive theme in early modern art and literature. Carnival, Bakhtin maintains, "does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators". M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, trans. H. Iwolsky, Bloomington, 1984, p. 7.

tant for the *cinquecento* reception of painting than is often reckoned. We need only think of the many “mobile” or polyfrontal types of painting that flourished in the curiosity-driven *studiolo* culture of Renaissance Italy, like diptychs, triptychs, paintings with sliding covers, and *bifronti* painted on two sides. These objects all featured hidden images that the curious beholder could only unveil by physical manipulation through opening, closing, rotating, and so on.⁵⁶ Even in the perception of monofrontal paintings that are now seen as static, the beholder’s motion and touch was often considered vital. Paintings were stored away and taken out of bags, cupboards and boxes, or covered by curtains.⁵⁷ Even if this was not the case, many paintings demanded motion through their stylistic or material qualities. One only has to think of Vasari’s often-cited remark that Titian’s free handling of his paint resulted in paintings with two distinctive viewpoints: up close, where all one would see were blobs of paint, and from a distance, where the Venetian’s bold strokes blended into an intelligible *storia*.⁵⁸ Likewise, the devices in Ferdinand’s *stanza* and Del Monte’s *guardaroba* only betrayed their secrets over time, and if the moving body was the engine driving this sequenced artistic experience, curiosity was its fuel.

Sensory hierarchy

Embodying sixteenth-century notions of sensory perception, the *tabula scalata* relied on a collaboration between the beholder’s mental and sensory capacities to transfer meaning.⁵⁹ Following Aristotle, Galen, and the scholastics, *cinquecento* thinkers like Leonardo da Vinci believed in the existence of a *sensus communis*; a place within the

56 L. Clark, op. cit., pp. 123–127; See also D. Ganz, M. Rimmel eds., *Klappeneffekte: Faltbare Bildträger in der Vormoderne*, Berlin, 2016.

57 See A. W. B. Randolph, *Touching Objects: Intimate Experiences of Italian Fifteenth-century Art*, New Haven, London, 2014 for an in-depth discussion of these kinds of interactions with paintings, chests, trays, and more.

58 G. Vasari, op. cit., VI, p. 166.

59 The “sensory turn” in the humanities has encouraged scholars to adopt a cultural approach to study the sensorium and a sensory approach to study culture. The work of David Howes and Constance Classen in particular has set the tone for later researchers (see, for example: C. Classen, *Worlds of Sense: Exploring the Senses in History and Across Cultures*, London, 1993; C. Classen, D. Howes and A. Synnott, *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell*, London, 1994; C. Classen, *The Deepest Sense: A Cultural History of Touch*, Champaign, 2012; D. Howes, *The Varieties of Sensory Experience*, Toronto, 1991; and D. Howes, *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader*, Oxford, 2005). For discussions on the entanglement of the senses in late medieval and early modern art and culture, see F. Quiviger, *The Sensory World of Italian Renaissance Art*, London, 2010; A. E. Sanger, S. T. K. Walker eds., *Sense and the Senses in Early Modern Art and Cultural Practice*, Farnham, Burlington, 2012; T. L. Hedrick, N. Ergin, “A Shared Culture of Heavenly Fragrance: A Comparison of Late Byzantine and Ottoman Incense Burners and Censing Practices in Religious Contexts”, *Dunbarton Oaks Papers*, 2015, 69, pp. 331–354; Exh. Cat. Baltimore 2016, *A Feast for the Senses: Art and Experience in Medieval Europe*, ed. M. Bagnoli, New Haven, London, 2016; and S. Blick, L. Gelfand, op. cit.

brain that not only housed the soul, but also functioned as convergence point of the five classical senses.⁶⁰ While the senses were interpreted as distinctive yet cooperating methods to perceive reality, a pervasive tradition presupposed a hierarchy within the sensorium. Sight enjoyed the highest theological and epistemological value, and was especially lauded for its ability to perceive the truth. Hearing came next, smell hovered somewhere in the middle, while taste and especially touch were seen as base senses, involving the body rather than the intellect.⁶¹ This distinction is illustrated by Vasari's account:

You can see the same [Henry's] portrait by lowering the picture, placing your brow on the upper part of the frame, and looking down; but it is true that whoever looks at it in that manner, sees it turned the other way from what it is in the mirror. That portrait, I say, cannot be seen save by looking at it as described above.⁶²

Vasari maintains that the *only* correct way of observing the device is by *looking* at through the mirror. However, despite his insistence on the primacy of sight, it seems that Vasari, too, lowered the painting, and turned it around (ergo: touched it) to understand how the device "worked".⁶³ This physical interaction corresponds to a trend in early modern art, which often contained references to the operations of senses other than sight, and moreover relied on a cooperation between the senses for its reception.⁶⁴ Indeed, sight may have been the most noble of the senses, but was not necessarily seen as the most trustworthy.⁶⁵ Thus, in our devices at least, touch was something of a last resort to know the truth, an effective yet morally undesirable instrument of verification.

While Renaissance Aristotelians clung to Thomas Aquinas's famous dictum that "there is nothing in the mind that was not previously in the senses", Neoplatonists and Augustinians held that, at least when it comes to higher truths, the intellect was more reliable than the sensorium.⁶⁶ Marsilio Ficino, who was widely read in Medici Florence as well as Valois France, argued that reason was the sixth and highest sense, as it was unhindered by spatial or temporal boundaries.⁶⁷ The epistemological hierarchy established by the Valois painting adheres to this notion.

60 F. Quiviger, op. cit., p. 15.

61 Idem, p. 8; A. Sanger, S. Walker, op. cit., pp. 6–7; S. Blick and L. Gelfand, op. cit., p. xli.

62 G. Vasari, op. cit., p. 132. "*Il medesimo ritratto si vede, calando il quadro abbasso e posta la fronte in sulla cornice di sopra, guardando in giù, ma è ben vero che chi lo mira a questo modo lo vede volto a contrario di quello che è nello specchio, il quale ritratto, dico, non si vede, se non mirandolo come di sopra.*" . Translation by G. du C. de Vere, op. cit., p. 260.

63 It should be noted that the ridges were probably very hard to discern in the devices' high position.

64 A. Sanger, S. Walker, op. cit., p. 1.

65 Idem, p. 3.

66 B. Copenhaver, C. Schmitt, *Renaissance Philosophy*, Oxford, New York, 1992, p. 40.

67 A. Sanger, S. Walker, op. cit., p. 3. For Ficinian influences on French literature, see K. Banks, "Space and Light: Ficinian Neoplatonism and Jacques Peletier Du Mans's *Amour des Amours*", *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, 2007, 69, no.1, pp. 83–101.

Unlike in the Florentine device, the beholder can deduce the presence of a second – more important – image before looking in the mirror by solving the acrostic puzzle. The device erects epistemological thresholds between the spectator and the truth, and it is through movement and physical interaction that these thresholds are overcome. The presence of the king is first deduced by solving the acrostic, which can be done from any point within reading distance of the poem. However, the presence can only be confirmed by looking in the mirror, which has to be done by moving to a specific standpoint. Lastly, by taking down, touching, and rotating the painting, the beholder learns *how* the “illusion” in the mirror is generated. Thus, the unknown artist established a liminality within the artistic experience, stretching Shearman’s *slow fuse* and leading the beholder through a metaphorical *rite de passage* from absence to presence, deception to truth, and ignorance to knowledge.

Political transformations

The two devices depict rulers, and are therefore irrevocably charged with ideological meaning. Given their similarities with anamorphic painting, which was often infused with political undertones and functioned in a similar private context, it can be productive to compare the two.⁶⁸ Using visual distortions and sophisticated perspectival systems, anamorphic art presents seemingly random shapes that only make sense when the beholder occupies a predetermined point within its perspectival construct. Our devices, as Yves Hersant noted, are no pure anamorphoses. Although the “perfect” viewpoint is fixed, they are intelligible from multiple positions and are no distortions.⁶⁹ Yet, they were perceived as such; in his 1647 *Apiaria*, Bettini referred to *tabulae scalatae* as “*distortiones*.”⁷⁰ Anamorphosis was often employed in royal portraiture, as “the drastic decentring and subsequent correction of perspectival vision occasioned by anamorphosis would seem to have the effect of making the invisible *Dignitas* visible in the king’s likeness. If the former cannot actually be seen, its presence is implied by the sudden manifestation of a hidden image.”⁷¹ One of these images (Fig. 6) is a woodcut by Erhard Schön (c. 1491–1542). Essentially a “who’s who” of Europe’s most important rulers, it shows nothing but chaotic landscapes at first glance, but when seen from the right, the portraits of Emperor Charles V, his brother Ferdinand, Pope Paul III, and the French King Francis I emerge. Images like this *Vexierbild* propagate the omnipresence of the sovereign, whose body emerges from and consists of the hills, trees, and meadows he rules over.⁷²

68 J. Baltrušaitis, *Anamorphic art*, Cambridge, 1977, p. 26.

69 Y. Hersant, op. cit., p. 62.

70 M. Bettini, op. cit., p. 28.

71 D. C. Sherer, *Anamorphosis and the Hermeneutics of Perspective from Leonardo to Hans Holbein the Younger: 1490–1533*, Cambridge MA, 2000, p. 145.

72 D. R. Castello, *(A)wry Views: Anamorphosis, Cervantes, and the early Picaresque*, West Lafayette, 2001, p. 11.

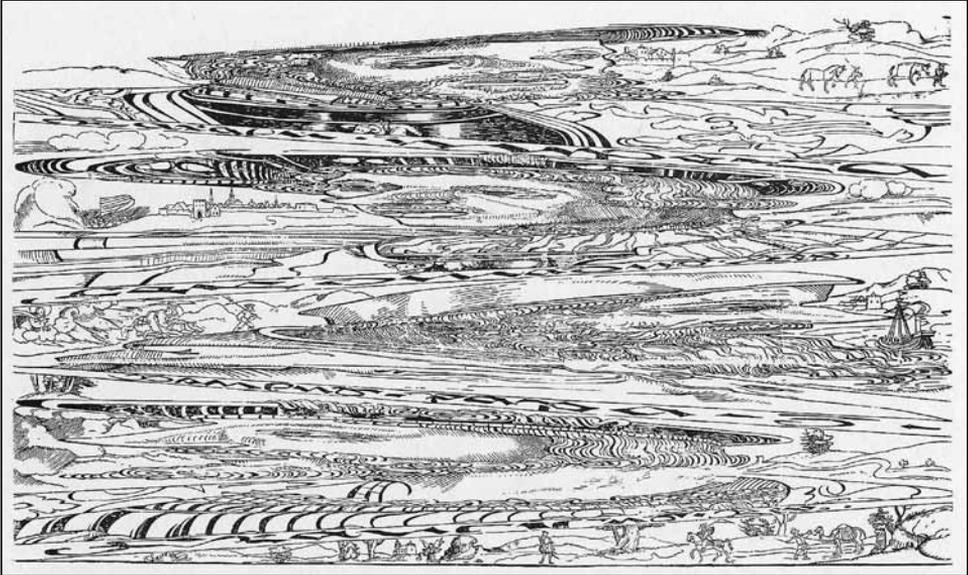


Fig. 6. Erhard Schön, *Vexierbild with Charles V, Ferdinand I, Pope Paul III, and Francis I of France*, c. 1535, woodcut. Public Domain

If the function of ideology is to veil power structures to make them “appear to be part of the natural, eternal law of things”, anamorphosis is certainly up to the task.⁷³

The same idea is expressed in the French *tabula scalata*, which makes the king grow out of the moon.⁷⁴ Using the moon as a metaphor for Henry (and his mistress), the beholder is meant to understand that the king, like the moon, is a celestial body that is not only eternal, but also vigilantly observing what happens on earth.⁷⁵ In the Florentine device, Christina does not grow from a celestial entity, but from her

73 W. Chadwick, *Women, Art and Society*, London, 1990, preface. “The important function of ideology is to veil overt power relations obtaining in society, by making them appear to be part of the natural, eternal law of things. Power can only be exercised with the complicity of those who fail to realize that they submit to it [...] Ideology is successful precisely to the degree that its views were shared by those who exercise power and those who submit to it”.

74 France, too, had a strong anamorphic tradition. One only has to think of Holbein’s *Ambassadors* (National Gallery, London), commissioned by French patron, or of Leonardo’s anamorphic images for Francis I, described in G. P. Lomazzo, *Trattato dell’arte della pittura, scoltura et architettura*, Milan, 1590, pp. 335–336.

75 The French king was often connected to mirrors. The inventory of objects Christina inherited from Henry’s widow Catherine de’ Medici (1589) lists as many as five different objects that in some way combined a portrait of the king with a crystal mirror (n. 213, 255, 260, 261, 266). *Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Guardaroba Medici, 152, Inventari di Cristina di Loreno, Robe stateli lasciate per testamento*, pp. 14v–29v.

own father, and it is implied her power grows from him as well.⁷⁶ Yet, in the Renaissance paradigm of the truth as something that lies hidden and must be revealed and unveiled, the initially invisible daughter clearly takes precedence over her father.⁷⁷ Likewise, sacred images were shrouded with painted curtains and portraits of loved ones protected with decorative covers.⁷⁸ The *granduchessa's* sudden revelation thus indicated her prestige and must have been a central facet of the work's narrative structure that added to the beholder's interactive experience and agency.

The political messages transmitted by the devices become all the more relevant when considering that Henry II presented his painting as a diplomatic gift to Cardinal Carafa.⁷⁹ Gift-giving to notable guests or foreign rulers was a well-established practice in sixteenth-century Europe, and portraits of the giver were among the most commonly donated commodities.⁸⁰ Gifts were given for diplomatic reasons or to express respect towards the recipient, but also increased the giver's prestige by underlining his or her wealth and magnanimity.⁸¹ In Valois France, elaborate gift-giving rituals were guided by considerations of courtesy, mutual reciprocity, and friendship.⁸² Rare and thought-provoking gifts like the enigmatic *tabula scalata* would not only have indicated the giver's magnificence, but also his/her wit and erudition, and perhaps this was the reason why Carafa (according to Vasari) gave the work to Ciochi del Monte. As Stefania Zanieri notes, we cannot exclude that the Florentine painting was meant as a gift to the duke of Lorraine, but for some reason never left Florence.⁸³ Her suggestion is in line with the well-known Medici practice to donate dynastic portraits to nearly every person of note, and also resonates with Ferdinand's excessive gift-giving.⁸⁴ This hypothesis is especially interesting because it would imbue Christina's portrait with additional memorative meaning. The mirror, then, would show spectators what Charles is thinking of: his

76 Y. Hersant, op. cit., p. 58. Hersant notes that the Medici were unlikely to commission a work asserting the Duke's power over his daughter, as Lorraine and Tuscany were backing different candidates for the French throne in 1593. He reads the work, that at his time of writing was still displayed in an anachronistic rotating framework, as a conversion (in the original sense of the word *convertere*) of Charles into his daughter.

77 P. Simons, "The Visual Dynamics of (Un)Veiling in Early Modern Culture", in: *Visual Cultures of Secrecy in Early Modern Europe*, eds. T. McCall, S. Roberts, G. Fiorenza, Kirksville, MO, 2013, pp. 24–53.

78 P. Hills, *The Renaissance Image Unveiled: From Madonna to Venus*. The Watson Gordon Lecture 2009, Edinburgh, 2010.

79 Neither Vasari nor Danti tell us, however, if the painting was created with this function in mind, or had a "life" of its own at the French court before it was given to Carafa.

80 F. Kieffer, "Ferdinand I de Médicis (1587–1609) et le don d'oeuvres d'art: etiquette et représentation", *Seizième siècle*, 2017, 13, pp. 141–162, 144.

81 Ibid, p. 141.

82 N. Zermon Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France*, Madison WI, London, 2000, p. 131.

83 S. Zanieri, op. cit., p. 667. For more background on the practices of gift-giving at Ferdinando's court, see S. Butter, "The Uses and Abuses of Gifts in the World of Ferdinando de' Medici (1549–1609)", *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, 2007, 11, pp. 243–354

84 F. Kieffer, op. cit., pp. 142–143.

far-away daughter.⁸⁵ Yet, the aforementioned payment record states that the director of the Medici gallery had the device placed in a room within the gallery after completion. If Buti's painting was initially intended as a gift to Lorraine, its purpose must have changed before or immediately after it was finished.

The paintings also carry philosophical and theological connotations that go beyond the political domain. The anamorphic shape-shifting that the mirror stages between father and daughter or moon and king gives visual testimony to Pico della Mirandola's exaltation of man as "chameleon", created by God as "a creature of indeterminate image" that possesses a "changing and metamorphous nature."⁸⁶ By interacting with the devices, the engaged beholder thus initiates and maintains a pendular shifting between two distinct yet interdependent forms, underlining the humanist notion of a chameleonic man with endless possibilities. As we have seen, this interaction even mirrors the divine act of creation in Richard Lassels's seventeenth-century description of the Florentine device, "drawing thus Eve out of Adam again by a curious reflexion."⁸⁷ The *tabula scalata* can therefore be seen as a shape-shifting device that used the beholders' moving bodies not only to transmit political messages, but also to encourage them to reflect on human nature itself.

Conclusion

Much more can be said about the *tabula scalata* than I have done in this article. It would be interesting, for example, to delve deeper into its seventeenth-century reception, its position in the nascent field of optics and mathematics, or to examine with more scrutiny the French context in which the devices had their genesis. My goal, however, was not to be exhaustive, but merely to take two artefacts as testing grounds to come to a deeper understanding of how the *tabula scalata* constructed meaning.

In the 16th century, the boundaries between art and science were still vague, and the two devices examined in this study drew upon optics and mathematics as much as painting and poetry to create and convey meaning. Cardinal Del Monte may have been intrigued by his device's technical ingenuity, amused by its riddle-game, and wary of its political message. These multiple layers of scientific, poetic, and political meanings were neither mutually exclusive nor relevant to every beholder, and it depended on this beholder and his or her level of mental and physical interaction whether these layers were all fully explored. Significantly, both devices functioned within spaces that were meant to *show*: the Medici *galleria* and the Del Monte *guardaroba* respectively. As such, whether through art, science, or both, their

⁸⁵ I am grateful to Tristan Weddigen for suggesting this possible reading.

⁸⁶ G. Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, ed. and trans. F. Borgherini, M. Papio, M. Riva, Cambridge, 2012, pp. 123, 117, 125. See P. Findlen, *op. cit.*, pp. 299–301 for a discussion of the humanist conflation between man, mirror, and chameleon.

⁸⁷ R. Lassels, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

primary goal was to stupefy their beholders by tapping into their imagination as well as their bodies. The objects, the spaces they occupied, the artists who made them, the patrons who ordered them, and the spectators who marvelled at them were all actors in a system of cultivated curiosity that emerged out of Renaissance *studiolo* culture and developed in many different forms throughout the early modern period. Ludovico Buti and the unknown creator of Del Monte's device intensified this sense of wonder by erecting thresholds within the artistic experience, luring the spectator into a prolonged game in which puzzles were solved, transformations were witnessed, paintings were touched, and meanings were forged.

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The Changing Perception of the Five Senses

Abstract

This article examines the changing approach towards the representation of the senses in 17th-century Flemish painting. These changes are related to the cultural politics and courtly culture of the Spanish sovereigns of the Southern Netherlands, the Archdukes Albert and Isabella. The 1617–18 painting-series of the *Five Senses* by Jan Brueghel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens as well as the pendant paintings on the subject are analyzed in relation to the iconography of the five senses, and in regard to Flemish genre themes. In this context, the excess of objects, paintings, scientific instruments, animals, and plants in the *Five Senses* are read as an expansion of the iconography of the senses as well as a reference to the courtly material culture of the Archdukes. Framing the senses as part of a cultural web of artifacts, Brueghel and Rubens refer both to elite lived experience and traditional iconography. The article examines the continuity between the iconography of the senses from 1600 onwards, as developed by Georg Pencz, Frans Floris, and Maerten de Vos, and the representation of the senses in the series. In addition, the article shows how certain elements in the paintings are influenced by genre paintings of the courtly company and collector's cabinet, by Frans Francken, Lucas van Valckenborch and Louis de Caullery. Through the synthesis of these two traditions the subject of the five senses is reinvented in a courtly context.

Keywords: Jan Brueghel the Elder, Peter Paul Rubens, Flanders, 17th century, five senses, courtly company, collector's cabinet, archdukes, early-modern

In 1617 the Antwerp based artists Jan Brueghel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens worked on a series of the five senses. The series was signed by Jan Brueghel the Elder, who was also responsible for the design; Rubens painted the figures in each of the paintings.¹ A few years after this series, the two collaborated again, along with ten

¹ It is unclear whether the series was commissioned by the Archdukes Albert and Isabella, or another patron. For the different theories on the subject see J. Müller Hofstede, "Non Saturatur Oculus Visu' – Zur 'Allegorie des Gesichts von Peter Paul Rubens und Jan Brueghel d. Ä'",

other Antwerp masters, to create the pendant paintings of *Sight and Smell* and *Taste, Hearing and Touch*, which were commissioned by the Archdukes of the Netherlands, Albert and Isabella.

Both series of the senses show personifications of Sight, Smell, Touch, Taste and Hearing, portrayed in courtly settings, surrounded by paintings, sculptures, luxury objects of different sorts, as well as symbolic animals. Relying on the Flemish iconography of the senses, on the one hand, and on new genre subjects which developed at the time, on the other, the paintings show an appreciation of courtly life, and of the peaceful times that were achieved during the reign of the Archdukes Albert and Isabella.

Flanders, the “Spanish Netherlands”, knew times of prosperity alongside political instability and conflict. Between 1550 and 1584 Antwerp was an economic center of trade and scientific development.² With the Sack of Antwerp in 1576, its prominent role began to decline, and finally came to an end in 1584–85 with its fall to Spanish rule.³ From then on, The Spanish crown appointed a governor to rule over the Flemish territories. In 1599 the Archduke of Austria, Albert, and his wife, Isabella Clara Eugenia, the daughter of Philip II, were made sovereigns of Flanders. They aspired to rebuild Flanders after many years of wars, allocating funds towards the replacement of churches and altarpieces destroyed or damaged during the preceding years of war and iconoclasm. They also participated in common festivities, weddings and celebrations, promoting a vision of unity and prosperity.⁴ In addition, the signing of the Twelve Years Truce in 1609 between the Hapsburg rulers of Spain and Southern Netherlands, and the Northern provinces, brought about renewed hopes for financial and cultural flourishing during the time of peace. In this context,

in: *Wort und Bild in der niederländischen Kunst und Literatur des 16. Und 17. Jh.*, eds. H. Bekeman, J. Müller Hofstede, Erfstadt, 1984, pp. 243–245; K. Ertz, *Jan Brueghel der Ältere (1568–1625). Die Gemälde mit kritischem Oeuvrekatalog*, Köln, 1979, pp. 336–337; A. T. Woollett, A. van Suchtelen, *Rubens and Brueghel: A Working Friendship*, Los Angeles, 2006, p. 94.

- 2 Regarding luxury trade see A. K. L. Thijs, “De Antwerpse luxenijverheid: winstbejag en kunstzin”, in: *Antwerpen. Verhaal van een metropool*, ed. J. van der Stock, Ghent, 1993. On the growing middle-class clientele see B. Timmermans, “The Elite as Collectors and Middlemen in the Antwerp Art World of the Seventeenth Century,” in: *Munuscula Amicorum*, ed. K. van der Stighelen, Turnhout, 2006, vol. 2, pp. 343–362. Regarding the scientific advancement see G. Vanpaemel, “Science for Sale: The Metropolitan Stimulus for Scientific Achievements in Sixteenth-century Antwerp”, in: *Urban Achievement in Early Modern Europe*, ed. P. O’Brien, Cambridge, 2001, p. 292.
- 3 In 1575 the Spanish Crown declared bankruptcy and was unable to pay the Spanish soldiers in Flanders. The soldiers consequently sacked Antwerp, killing citizens and destroying parts of the city. This is described in a report by the Council of State, see J. Cowans ed., *Early Modern Spain. A Documentary History*, Philadelphia, 2003, pp. 110–111; For Spain’s battles in the Netherlands and Flanders see G. Parker, *Spain and the Netherlands*, Glasgow, 1979, pp. 44–63.
- 4 J. I. Israel, *Conflicts of Empires. Spain, the Low Countries and the Struggle for World Supremacy 1585–1713*, London, 1997, pp. 7–12. All over Europe, peace allowed for expenditure previously used for military aims, to be spent on courtly banquets, festivities, clothing, and food, see J. H. Elliott, *Spain, Europe and the Wider World 1500–1800*, New Haven, 2009, pp. 264–265.

Albert and Isabella practiced cultural politics, in which peace and prosperity were seen as an ideal goal and the arts were considered a useful tool that helped to demonstrate the power and flourishing of the Southern Netherlands.⁵

The paintings of the five senses are very much an outcome of this vision, visually expressing the prosperity of Flanders under a peaceful reign. In what follows I will analyze the paintings of the five senses in relation to the iconography of the subject, on the one hand, and in regard to the arising genre themes, on the other. This analysis will highlight the changing approach towards the senses in 17th century Flanders, as an outcome of the Archdukes' cultural politics and courtly culture.⁶

The *Sense of Sight* shows a nude personification of the sense of sight sitting beside a table (Fig. 1). She is looking at a painting of Christ healing the blind man (John 9:1–7), held up by a winged putto. She gestures towards the painting, and leans her head on her other arm, contemplating it. Jewelry made of precious stones, as well as medals and a magnifying glass are laid out on the table before her. The room she is sitting in is a collector's cabinet, a *Kunstkammer*. It is full of magnificent objects: paintings are hung on the walls, propped up on stands and on each other; antique busts of famous rulers such as Alexander the Great and Augustus stand on shelves in the rear of the room; replicas of statues by Michelangelo stand above the busts; optical instruments such as the telescope, lay scattered at the personification's feet, along with measuring instruments, tapestries, and more. The room is so full it is hard to account for all that is in it. Through an arched doorway we see a terrace with a fountain, and beyond that the Archdukes' residence on the Coudenberg, the palace from which the sovereigns of Flanders ruled since the 11th century.⁷

The fullness and variety of objects is characteristic of the five paintings in the series. In *Sense of Hearing* the nude female personification is busy playing the lute and singing (Fig. 2). She is accompanied by the putto, as in the *Sense of Sight*, and her symbolic animal, the stag. In the left foreground a variety of musical instruments and notes can be seen, while on the right there are clocks, identified with hearing

5 J. H. Elliott, op. cit., pp. 269–270.

6 The tradition of the five senses in the Christian West is a long one, spanning from early Christianity and into the modern age. While the early Church fathers and medieval theologians viewed the senses in a moralizing light, as a gateway to sin, changes to this approach can be traced back to the beginning of the 16th century. The Flemish visual tradition of the senses referred to throughout this article is already influenced by this change of appreciation, and thus views the senses in a more positive light. For the history of the senses and the medieval tradition see C. Nordenfalk, "The Five Senses in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 1985, 48, pp. 1–22. For the history of the senses in the Flemish Renaissance see C. Nordenfalk, "The Five Senses in Flemish Art before 1600", in: *Netherlandish Mannerism: Papers Given at a Symposium in the Nationalmuseum Stockholm, Sept. 21–22, 1984*, ed. G. Cavalli-Björkman, Stockholm, 1985, pp. 135–154.

7 A. T. Woollett, A. van Suchtelen, op. cit., p. 96.



Fig. 1. Jan Brueghel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens, *The Sense of Sight*, 1617, oil on panel, 64.7x109.5 cm, Prado, Madrid. Photo: Public Domain



Fig. 2. Jan Brueghel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens, *The Sense of Hearing*, 1617–1618, oil on panel, 64x109.5 cm, Prado, Madrid. Photo: Public Domain

due to the sounds they make. To the left of the triple-arched opening hangs a painting of the *Concert of the Muses*,⁸ which stood as an antithesis to war.⁹ In the left rear room, a company of men and women play music. The opening in the center shows a far-reaching landscape with the castle of Mariemoont, the summer castle of the Archdukes.¹⁰

The *Sense of Smell* (1617–1618, Prado, Madrid) shows the female personification and her putto in a garden full of beautiful flowers. The *Sense of Taste* shows the personification, dressed, by a laden table. A satyr pours wine into her glass (Fig. 3). In the *Sense of Touch* (1618, Prado, Madrid) the personification kisses the putto beside her. The armor on the left and the paintings on the right allude to the collection of the Archdukes. The forge in the left background shows the making of armor.



Fig. 3. Jan Brueghel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens, *The Sense of Taste*, 1618, oil on panel, 64x109 cm, Prado, Madrid. Photo: Public Domain

8 *Ibid.*, p. 97.

9 In a painting of *Apollo and the Muses* by Maerten de Vos, one of the muses plays a virginal with a battle scene on it. On the side of the virginal are the words “Musae Loco Belli”, meaning the muses stand instead of war, see A. P. de Mirimonde, “Les Concerts des Muses chez les Maitres du Nord”, *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 1964, 63, pp. 144–145 and Fig. 14. The production of art was perceived as an inclination towards peace, rather than war. Such a view was clearly stated by Karel van Mander who said that despite Mars’s constant threat and presence in the Netherlands, so many great men are still to be found applying themselves to the culture of the peaceful art of painting, see K. van Mander, *Het Schilderboek*, (Facsimile from the first edition, Haarlem, 1604), Utrecht, 1969, 299v.

10 A. T. Woollett, A. van Suchtelen, *op.cit.*, pp. 96–97.

Associating the senses with courtly life and values of the Archdukes Albert and Isabella, these paintings are ground-breaking. However, when examined closely, in regard to the visual history of the senses, it becomes clear that many elements have been adopted and developed from earlier iconography of the subject.

The use of nude female figures for the personification of the senses, and their accompaniment by symbolic animals, stems from the first prints dedicated to the five senses, by the German artist Georg Pencz.¹¹ In Pencz's engravings the senses sit in front of an opaque window, on which the Latin name of the sense is written. Thus, for example, Sight is a female personification looking up to the heavens, symbolized as the sun, stars, and moon. She is accompanied by a lynx, an animal which can see well at night (Fig. 4).¹² In *Tactus* (*Touch*, 1500–1550, Metropolitan Museum, New York) the personification sits in front of the window on which the Latin word *Tactus* is written. She is busy with the loom, a handicraft related to touch since it is done with the hands. The symbolic animal, the spider, is seen in the left corner, weaving its web, which is compared to the work done by the personification.

The 16th century prints by Pencz were a novelty at the time, associating the senses with positive symbols contrary to a long medieval tradition associating them with sin. There was no formal formula for this association, rather the five senses were conceived as stemming from lust, or from the Seven Deadly sins, and condemned as sinful.¹³ Pencz's novelty was thus not only in the portrayal of the senses as a subject in its own right, but also in the composition he proposed, which showed nude female personifications accompanied by symbolic animals.

These modest beginnings of the theme were developed in 16th century Antwerp by artists who added noble characteristics to the female allegories and their symbolic attendants and scenery. First among the Antwerp artists to do this was Frans Floris, who ennobled the senses, and made them to look like goddesses. In this first depiction of the subject in the Antwerp School, known from a print after his design, Floris added elements associating the senses with abundance and prosperity. In *Sense of Sight* the personification sits next to a column, peering into a mirror (1561, Harvard Museum). The blaring sun in the background testifies to

11 One of the earliest representations of the allegorical figure of the senses as a female is found in the medieval tapestry *Lady with the Unicorn* from 1500, today in the Musée national du Moyen Âge, Paris. In this tapestry the senses are related to the notion of love and pleasure, paving the way towards a more positive depiction of the senses. Another early positive example of the female allegorical figures of the senses is found in Francesco Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* from 1499. An additional prominent example showing the personifications of the five senses as women is found in Jodocus Badius's *Stultiferae naves*, published as a supplement to Sebastian Brant's *Narren-Scheyff* of 1494. However, as opposed to the former two examples, Badius presents the senses as sinful, thus adhering to a traditional medieval view. The earliest examples relating the senses to five different animals are found in an early Gothic encyclopedia by Thomas de Cantimpré, *Liber de naturis rerum*, and following that in the *Bestiaire d'amours* of Richard de Fournival. Pencz was the first artist to unite these two representations, see C. Nordenfalk, "The Five Senses...", pp. 1–4, 7–15.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 19.

13 *Ibid.*, pp. 1–22 for this history.

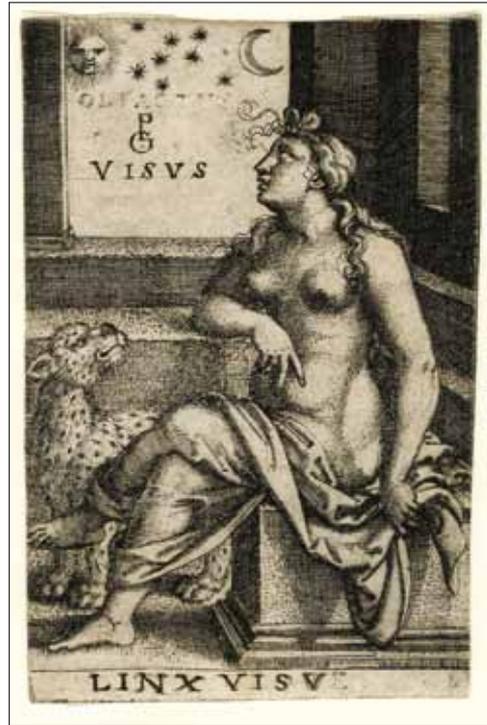


Fig. 4. Georg Pencz, *Visus (Sight)*, 1544, engraving, 78x51 mm, British Museum, London. Photo © The Trustees of the British Museum

the truthfulness of vision. Also the eagle, the mythological attribute of Jupiter, shows the nobility of the sight, and replaces Pencz's lynx. While a woman peering into a mirror was previously associated with the sin of vanity (*vanitas*), here it is an instrument aiding the senses to better view the world. Another addition by Floris is the perspectival landscape, showing a castle far out in the distant left side of the engraving. Thus, the sense of sight is characterized as a noble lady, examining herself in broad daylight, with the Jovial eagle and an aristocratic castle in the background. The column, seen at half-length, was commonly used in portraits of nobility, thus adding another touch of esteem to the depiction of the sense of sight. The caption accompanying the engraving is taken from Juan Luis Vives's *De anima et vita* (Of the Soul and Life), and is quite literal. It reads: "The outer organs of Sight are the eyes, the inner ones are two nerves leading from the brain to the eyes".¹⁴

In a similar manner Floris's *Sense of Touch* sits in front of a sea landscape (Fig. 5). While the symbolic spider, known from Pencz, is seen in the upper left corner, Floris gives more prominence to the bird, perched on the personification's left hand, which is seen biting her finger. The bite draws attention to the hand, associated with the sense of touch, but also suggests pain. Relying on medieval iconography in which a bird perched on a hand was symbolic of sexual relations, Floris relates touch to

¹⁴ Translated by C. Nordenfalk, C. Nordenfalk, "The Five Senses...", p. 138.



Fig. 5. Cornelis Cort after Frans Floris, *Tactus* (Touch), 1561, engraving, 20.8x27 cm, Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Gift of Robert Bradford Wheaton and Barbara Ketcham Wheaton in honour of Mrs. Arthur K. Solomon, Cambridge, MA. Photo: Harvard Art Museums

pain and love.¹⁵ Alongside the bird and the spider, Floris also adds the tortoise, relating to the sea landscape in the background, and symbolizing the love of a faithful wife.¹⁶ While Pencz had used only one symbolic animal and action, Floris multiplied the number of attributes, enriching the symbolic meaning of his designs.

The augmentation of objects and symbolic attributes related to the senses can be seen in relation to the other senses as well. Whereas Pencz's *Sense of Hearing* sat with a lute hanging on the wall in back of her, and only three other musical instruments on the ground in front of her,¹⁷ Floris's personification sits amidst ten musical instruments. She is busy tuning her lute, while leaning on a drum (1561, Harvard Museum). An organ stands behind her, while on the ground there are a variety of string and wind instruments. The boar, standing beside *Hearing* in Pencz's print, has been replaced by the stag, showing, again, Floris's aim to ennoble the depiction

15 Ibid. For the symbolism of the bird perched on a hand see E. de Jongh, "Erotica en vogelperspectief", *Simiolus*, 1968–69, 3, p. 26.

16 C. Nordenfalk, "The Five Senses...", p. 137.

17 For Pencz's engraving see *ibid.*, plate 8b.

of the senses.¹⁸ The setting in which the senses pose has also changed: as opposed to Pencz's figure which sits in front of an opaque window, Floris's figure sits in a landscape stretching into the distance.

In the later design of *Sense of Taste* by the Flemish artist Maerten de Vos, engraved by Raphael Sadeler I, the scene is even more elaborate (Fig. 6). While Pencz had previously shown Taste eating alongside a nibbling monkey, De Vos's print shows the personification sitting beside a basket of fruit, to the left is a wine jug and a wine cup, and to the right is another basket of fruit, with a nibbling monkey next to it. In back of the figure, on the left, there is a field of wheat, and an apple tree. On the right is an orchard, drawn in perspective, in which a labourer climbs up a ladder to pick the fruit. While Floris had expanded on Pencz's design, showing two baskets of fruit and a wine cup and adding the landscape, De Vos has added the wine jug, and the comparison of "naturally" growing plants – such as the wheat and apples on the left, and the artificially planned orchard on the right.



Fig. 6. Raphael Sadeler after Maerten de Vos, *Taste*, 1600, engraving, 101x133 millimeters, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Photo: Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 136–137.

In another series of the senses by De Vos, engraved by Peter Cool, he adds a lavish background to each, paving the way for the Brueghel and Rubens compositions. Moreover, the scenes in the background are taken from the Old and New Testaments.¹⁹ Thus, the religious exemplum is added to the landscapes developed by Floris and the earlier designs by De Vos.

In Brueghel and Rubens's allegories of the senses the artists have multiplied the number of objects associated with each sense, expanding even more the setting in which they are to be contemplated. Not only do the paintings refer to the symbolic animals, the landscape, and the biblical sources, but they also allude to the abundance of objects usually found in princely collections. These objects expand the depiction of the senses. In *Sense of Sight* the personification sits in front of a painting showing *Christ Curing the Blind Man* (John 9: 1–7; Mark 10:46–52).²⁰ While De Vos had introduced the New Testament scene into the iconography of sight, he had kept it in the background. Here, Brueghel foregrounds the religious example of sight, but changes its placement and context: it is no longer shown in the background, and it is represented in a painting. The artists create a comparison between Sight's figure and that of Christ as they are both wearing blue mantles.²¹ In the right background, diagonally positioned to the painting she is looking at, we see a version of the *Blind Leading the Blind*, a known composition by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, the father of Jan Brueghel, which exemplifies the dire outcome of shutting one's eyes. The subject was based on Matthew 15:14 "And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the pit," but was also part of Netherlandish lore.²² The positive portrayal of sight, as by example of Christ's miracle, is thus highlighted by the negative depiction of not-seeing shown in the painting behind.²³ Both these examples are given through paintings, drawing attention to its varied subject matter, and making the viewer question whether what he is seeing is a good or a bad example. While the abundance of objects in *Sense of Sight* has been interpreted as a reflection of anxiety over the new forms of knowledge and science,²⁴ it seems that the personification's attention to the positive exemplum of the sense of sight, through the image of Christ, highlights the valuation of the sense, in this context.

19 Ibid., pp. 142–143.

20 This scene was first added to the sense of sight by Maerten de Vos, see H. Kauffmann, "Die Fünfsinne in der Niederländischen Malerei des 17. Jahrhunderts", in: *Kunstgeschichtliche Studien für Dagobert Frey*, Wrocław, 1943, p. 137; J. Müller Hofstede, op. cit., p. 248.

21 Ibid., p. 247.

22 On Bruegel the Elder's painting and its precedents see W. Gibson, *Figures of Speech. Picturing Proverbs in Renaissance Netherlands*, Berkeley, 2010, pp. 88–90.

23 Müller Hofstede has interpreted this as a positioning of faith, seen in the *Christ healing the blind man*, and blindness, in *Blind leading the blind*. In this light the whole painting is interpreted as good and bad examples of seeing. J. Müller Hofstede, op. cit., p. 249.

24 This interpretation was first offered by Müller Hofstede, who recognized the posture of Sight as an expression of melancholy, based on Dürer's known print of the subject, see *ibid.*, p. 247; O. Gal, R. Chen-Morris, *Baroque Science*, Chicago, 2013, pp. 2–4.

The antique busts on the wall in the center of the composition, are juxtaposed with the contemporary painting of the Archdukes Albert and Isabella, seen on the left of the allegory, thus showing past and present portrayal of rulers. In the right foreground, Rubens's painting *Bacchanal* is propped up against a painting of the Madonna and Child in a garland of flowers, by Brueghel. The *Bacchanal*, which was part of the Archduke's collection,²⁵ is diagonally positioned to the painting above the arched doorway, showing Bacchus, Venus, and Ceres, assumed to be after Titian.²⁶ The comparison raises questions of precedence and influence, again challenging the viewer to look well and question what he sees.

Brueghel's *Madonna and Child in a Garland of Flowers*, a novel genre, is juxtaposed with the real flowers in a blue vase, before the arched doorway on the left, referring to the contest between art and nature, in which art wins.²⁷ A terrestrial globe in the mid-right ground is negated with an astrolabe, showing the heavenly spheres, standing on the cupboard on the left, thus alluding to vision of the earthly and heavenly. The instruments for such vision are laid out on the ground at the personification's feet. These different comparisons define "seeing" as varied and changing.

The same can be said of the other paintings in the series, though the parallels drawn are fewer. In *The Sense of Taste* the two paintings in the left background show the *Wedding at Cana*, on the right, and the *Fat Kitchen*, after Pieter Bruegel the Elder, on the left. While the *Wedding at Cana* shows Christ's miraculous changing of water into wine, alluding to the traditional association of the sense of taste with wine,²⁸ the *Fat Kitchen* is an expression of gluttony.²⁹ The personification of Taste is purposely placed under the figure of Christ in the *Wedding at Cana*, thus visually associating the courtly taste depicted with Christ's miracle.

Another comparison is made between the *Wedding at Cana*, and the painting of *Fruit Garland with Offering to Ceres* by Jan Brueghel the Elder and Hendrik van Balen, leaning on the wall in the left foreground. While the former relies on the New Testament, the latter relies on Pagan mythology. Ceres, the Roman goddess of agriculture and fertility, symbolically stands for the fruit of the earth, thus alluding to taste.³⁰ The still life of hunted game and birds in the foreground is positioned in comparison

25 M. Diaz Padrón, M. Royo-Villanova, *David Teniers, Jan Brueghel y los Gabinetes de Pinturas*, Madrid, 1992, p. 124.

26 Díaz Padrón and Royo-Villanova identify the painting as *Venus and Psyche* by Titian. *Ibid.*, p. 117. However, it is more likely that the subject is *Bacchus, Venus and Ceres*, known from a copy after Titian in the Munich Alte Pinakothek.

27 B. Welzel, "Wettstreit zwischen Kunst und Natur. Die Blumenstilleben von Jan Brueghel d. Ä. als Triumph des Bildes", *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 2002, 65, no. 2, p. 332. Welzel explains that in the rivalry between art and nature, art always wins.

28 A wine cup appears in all the engravings of taste by Floris and De Vos.

29 The *Fat Kitchen* is a pendant piece to the *Thin Kitchen*, both designed by Bruegel. For these engravings see M. Sellink, *Bruegel. The Complete Paintings, Drawing and Prints*, Ghent, 2007, cat. nos. 121–122.

30 A. T. Woollett, A. van Suchtelen, op. cit., cat. no. 21

to the cooked, baked, and stylized food on the table. The natural source of the food is compared to the artisanal preparation of it. Moreover, the two forms of still life refer to genre paintings of the time: the pile of hunted game in the foreground reminds the viewer of paintings by Frans Snyders, and of the produce presented in the market scene paintings by Joachim Bueckelaer and Pieter Aertsen. The food on the table is reminiscent of the still life paintings of meals, a genre developed in the Netherlands. As in *Sense of Sight*, the many connotations alluded to in *Sense of Taste*, show it to be a varied and cultured subject.

Sense of Touch is set in an armory, and some of the pieces of armor on the left have been recognized as belonging to the princely collection of the Archdukes.³¹ The allusion to pain, previously represented by a bird biting the personification's finger, is here represented through the many pieces of armor, recalling the pains of war and conflict. Some of the paintings hanging on the right reference previous historic and religious wars and moments of pain, such as the *Martyrdom of St. Lawrence*, which refers to an altarpiece in the Escorial collection, and *The Defeat of Sennacherib*, above it, which was in the Archducal collection.³² Above this, the largest painting on the wall, shows a *Last Judgment*, emphasizing the tortures of the damned, on the right, as opposed to the quiet of the blessed. Different kinds of earthly tortures are referenced by the many medical instruments set out on the table to the right, reminding one of the pains of this life as opposed to those of the afterlife, shown in the painting above. However, touch, in this case, is not conceived only as associated with pain. Brueghel adds new, positive meanings to the portrayal of the sense. The figure of touch is caught at the moment of kissing the putto beside her, thus reviving the medieval relation between touch and love relations.³³ However, there is no condemnation in this association, contrary to medieval tradition. The allegorical figure of touch sits below a painting of the *Flagellation of Christ*, which, again, creates a comparison between Christ and the personification of Touch, similarly to that drawn between the personification of Sight and Christ healing the blind man, discussed above.

The series thus positions the senses as part of a complex web of cultural artifacts. The inherence of this web to the elite experience can be learned from other paintings of courtly companies and gallery cabinets, which were two popular genre subjects in Flanders at the time.

In *Banquet in the House of Nicolaas Rockox* by Frans Francken the Younger we see an interior with the collection of the many times mayor of Antwerp, Rockox (Fig. 7). In a similar manner to *Sense of Sight* we see a room hung with paintings, antique busts on the wall to the left, and a table in the left foreground with various precious sculptures and curiosities. Some of the paintings have been identified as paintings which were part of Rockox's collection, such as the large *Samson and*

31 B. Welzel, "Armoury and Archducal Image: The Sense of Touch from the Five Senses of Jan Brueghel and Peter Rubens", in: *Albert and Isabella*, eds. W. Thomas, L. Duerloo, Turnhout, 1998, pp. 99–106.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 103.

33 Examples of this are found in Badius's illustrations to the *Ship of Fools*, which depicts the senses as sinful, see Nordenfalk, "The Five Senses...", pp. 13–15.



Fig. 7. Frans Francken the Younger, *Banquet in the House of Nicolaas Rockox*, 1630–1635, oil on panel, 62.3x96.7 cm, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Alte Pinakothek, Munich. Photo: BPK, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen

Delilah over the fireplace, or the *Doubting Thomas*, partially seen through the back door, both painted by Rubens. However, this interior of a collector's home is also an allegory of the five senses. The company seated around the table to the left is dining and drinking, showing the sense of taste. The figures by the fireplace demonstrate the sense of touch, referring to the threat of pain. To the right of the fireplace two men play musical instruments, showing the sense of hearing, while the woman seated between them smells a flower. The only sense not demonstrated is the sense of sight, which, I would propose, is manifest by the viewer him/herself, looking at the painting.³⁴

Such a synthesis of the collector's cabinet genre with the five senses iconography is also seen in another painting by Francken the Younger, *Two Connoisseurs Eating in a Gallery* (Private Collection, Brussels).³⁵ The front room of the gallery shows a variety of paintings, sculptures and luxury objects. In the room to the right, two men are seated at a laden table. One of them holds up a panel and points to it, while the other looks at it over the table. The parallel between the appreciation

34 H. Vlieghe, *Flemish Art and Architecture 1585–1700*, New Haven, 1998, p. 203. According to Vlieghe the senses are shown as positive and negative. Vlieghe does not mention the missing sense of sight.

35 U. Härting, *Frans Francken der Jüngere (1581–1642): die Gemälde mit kritischem Oeuvrekatalog*, Freren, 1989, no. 646.

of food and the appreciation of art is drawn by the positioning of the table in the gallery, and by the actions of the two men. While sitting beside the table, the one holds a panel and points to it, while the other leans in to get a closer look.

These men are the contemporary connoisseurs, the *liefhebbers*, who gained a formal status in the St. Luke guild, which traditionally housed painters and artists of other sorts.³⁶ The Dutch historian and painter, Karel van Mander, refers to them in his 1604 *Schilderboeck* as lovers of knowledge, supporters, and promoters of art.³⁷ Thus, their portrayal as eating and drinking while discussing a painted panel cannot be viewed as a condemnation of the pleasures of taste.

This positive conception of the senses as part of the pastime of nobility is clearly seen in another emerging genre of 17th century Flemish painting, the courtly company. In paintings of this genre noble ladies and gentlemen are shown dancing or conversing, with references to sensuality.³⁸

An early example is found by the hands of Lucas van Valckenborch, a follower of Pieter Bruegel the Elder.³⁹ In *Landscape in Spring* a company of nobles is seen on a hilltop overlooking the Brussels Palace of Coudenberg (Fig. 8). This same palace appears in the later *Sense of Sight*, discussed earlier. The social interactions of the noble company on the right refer to the five senses. The couple walking on the grass are holding hands, exemplifying the sense of touch. The ladies sitting on the ground on the right are wreathing flowers, as common for the sense of smell. In the left background a cloth is set with plates and food, showing the sense of taste. Behind that, music is played by a band of four men, as typical for the sense of hearing. In the right background, a couple of peasants behind the tree watches the scene, while a group of nobles converses and watches the happenings as well, expressing the sense of sight. The view on the left of the painting shows the noble residence of the Flemish sovereigns, as well as many courtly pastimes, such as walking in a planned garden, right below, or courting, seen in the gentleman kissing the hand of woman on the left, at the entrance to the palace grounds.

In Louis de Caullery's *Five Senses* such a courtly company also references the allegory of the five senses (Fig. 9). In the right background a group sits by the table, exemplifying the sense of taste. A couple sitting in the left background, by the bed,

36 Z. Zaremba Filipczak, *Picturing Art in Antwerp 1550–1700*, New Jersey, 1987, p. 51. On the diverse identities of the *Liefhebbers* see M. Jan Bok, "Art-Lovers and their Paintings", in: *Dawn of the Golden Age*, ed. G. Luijten, Amsterdam, 1993, pp. 136–166.

37 Van Mander refers to the *Liefhebbers* as having knowledge: "Hier is te sien, in wat weerde de Schilderconst by den Ouden, oft by desen haren Liefhebber is gheweest". Van Mander, *Het Schilderboek*, 76r. Van Mander refers to the *Liefhebbers* as promoters of art, much like patrons: "Alsoo men bevindt, dat de Schilderconst van langer handt is opgheclommen tot der volcomenheyt, opghebeurt en verheven door vlijtighe Liefhebbers en oeffenaers der selver.", K. van Mander, op. cit., 105r. The *Liefhebber* was connected to a culture of knowledge and love of wisdom, see L. Prosperetti, *Landscape and Philosophy in the Art of Jan Brueghel the Elder*, England, 2009, pp. 29–33.

38 H. Vlieghe, op. cit., pp. 150–151.

39 Ibid., p. 175.



Fig. 8. Lucas van Valckenborch, *Landscape in Spring*, 1587, oil on canvas, 116x198 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. Photo: KHM



Fig. 9. Louis de Caullery, *The Five Senses*, 1620, oil on panel, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Cambrai. Photo: Public Domain

is looking into a mirror the woman holds, as in the first depiction of the sense of sight by Pencz. The foreground shows the sense of smell, touch and hearing, exemplified by a woman offering a flower to her beloved's nose, an embracing couple, and a man playing a lute. In the center background, on the cupboard, is a painting of Venus, who seems to preside over the scene. Thus, the five senses are clearly linked to love and courtship in a courtly setting.

That the pleasures of the senses were viewed positively is understood from their incorporation into depictions of the Archdukes themselves. In the *Ball at the Court of the Archdukes Albert and Isabella* by Frans Francken the Younger and Paul Vredeman de Vries, the courtly company is gathered for a dance (Fig. 10). Albert and Isabella sit on a raised stage, under a canopy, in the left side of the painting. They are watching a noble couple dance. On the right side, on a balcony, is a company dining. Thus, allusion to the senses of taste, hearing and touch is made as part of the festive moment hosted by the Archdukes. This moment of festivity is symbolic of the peaceful time enjoyed by the Flemish territories under the Archdukes.⁴⁰

The Archdukes' involvement in the elevation of the senses to a courtly context is also expressed in two pendant paintings on the subject commissioned by them. These two paintings, painted by twelve different masters, were lost, and are known



Fig. 10. Frans Francken the Younger and Paul Vredeman de Vries, *A Ball at the Court of the Archdukes Albert and Isabella*, 1610, oil on panel, 68.6x113.3 cm, Mauritshuis, The Hague. Photo: Mauritshuis, The Hague

40 C. Schumann, "Court, City and Countryside: Jan Brueghel's Peasant Weddings as Images of Social Unity under Archducal Sovereignty", in: *Albert and Isabella*, eds. W. Thomas, L. Duerloo, Turnhout, 1998, p. 151.

through Brueghel's copies of the originals.⁴¹ In *Taste, Hearing and Touch* the personifications are seated by a table: Taste, on the right, holds a glass of wine and picks up an oyster from the plate before her, Hearing plays the lute, and Touch holds a mink (Fig. 11). Musical instruments lay around on the floor and lean against the furniture on the left part of the painting, alluding to hearing. The sense of touch is referred to through the painting of the Dentist, above the personification of Touch. The laden table, along with the still life of birds, game, and fruit allude to the sense of taste, as do the paintings of the *Wedding at Cana* on the right and *The Torments of the Rich Man* on the left, above the arched doorway.⁴² The senses form a courtly company, in the manner of van Valckenborch and De Caullery, and are served by the boys on the right.



Fig. 11. Jan Brueghel the Elder, *Taste, Hearing and Touch*, 1620, oil on canvas, 176x264 cm, Prado, Madrid. Photo: Prado Museum

In *Sight and Smell* the personification of Sight is seated at the table looking into a mirror, as was depicted by Floris and De Vos (Fig. 12). Her symbolic animal is the lynx, which first appeared in Pencz's rendition of the sense of

41 These works were destroyed by a fire at Coudenberg palace in 1731 and are known through Jan Brueghel's replicas. A. T. Woollett, A. van Suchtelen, op. cit., pp. 94–96; W. Thomas, L. Duerloo, eds., *Albert and Isabella*, Turnhout, 1998, cat. no. 60.

42 M. Diaz Padrón, M. Royo-Villanova, op. cit., p. 173. The scene depicts the torments of the rich man who feasted sumptuously every day, while Lazarus begged for the crumbs from his table, as told in Luke 16: 19–25.



Fig. 12. Jan Brueghel the Elder, Hendrick van Balen and Frans Francken the Younger, *Sight and Smell*, 1620, oil on canvas, 176x264 cm, Prado, Madrid. Photo: Prado, Madrid

sight, seen in the left corner of the room. The figure of Smell is accompanied by a putto who hands her flowers, and by the dog. The New Testament references, first introduced by De Vos, are also incorporated, with Christ healing the blind man on the upper right of the painting, just below a Frans Snyders still life, and Mary Magdalene anointing Christ's feet, symbolic of the sense of smell, on the left side, behind the column. However, alongside the New Testament scenes, clearly alluding to the positive examples of the senses of sight and smell, there are no Old Testament scenes, as in De Vos's engravings. Rather, the Old Testament scenes have been replaced by mythological scenes by Rubens. Rubens's *Judgment of Paris* appears to the side of Christ healing the blind man, expressing a positive evaluation of the sense of sight and its use. On the left of the painting, alongside *Mary Magdalene Anointing the Feet of Christ* is a painting of *Flora*, in which a bare-breasted female holds a vase of flowers.⁴³ The emphasis is thus shifted from the comparison of the good and bad examples of the senses, to a display of their positive uses.

To conclude, the two series of the five senses synthesize the local iconography of the senses, with the genres of the picture gallery and the courtly company. Relying on the tradition of the five senses developed in prints by Pencz, Floris, and De Vos,

⁴³ This may be *Flora*, as can be seen in a number of paintings from the circle of Floris, from the second half of the 16th century. For other similar paintings see Christie's (London, England), 07-07-2006, lot no. 134; Christie's (London, England), 29-10-2010, lot no. 13.

the senses are represented as female personifications, accompanied by a symbolic animal. The addition of a courtly gallery setting as well as a landscape with a princely castle in the background, draws on the Flemish genre paintings by Francken, Van Valckenborch, and De Caullery. Merging these two traditions, Brueghel and his associates reinvented the five senses in a courtly context, in which each sense is experienced through many luxurious objects and provokes contemplation of the different facets of the sense.

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Tobacco's Appeal to the Senses and the Early Modern Smoker's Still Life

Abstract

Smell and taste – of the five senses these are the two most strongly stimulated by smoking tobacco. The article presents an in-depth analysis of the reflection of both these forms of sensory perception in textual and visual sources concerning the early consumption of the herb. In a first step, tobacco's changing reception, first as medicine and then as stimulant, is traced through the years of its increasing distribution in Europe, starting in the middle of the 16th century. As this overview reveals, at that time the still little known substance gave rise to new forms of sense perception. Following recent studies on smell and gustation, which have stressed the need to take into account the interactions between these senses, the article probes the manifold stimulation of the senses by tobacco with reference to allegorical representations and genre scenes addressing the five senses. The smoking of tobacco was thematized in both of these art forms as a means of visualizing either smell or taste. Yet, these depictions show no indication of any deliberate engagement with the exchange of sense data between mouth and nose. The question posed at the end of this paper is whether this holds true also for early smoker's still lifes. In the so-called *toebakjes* or *rookertjes*, a subgenre of still-life painting that, like tobacco, was still a novelty at the beginning of the 17th century, various smoking paraphernalia – such as rolled or cut tobacco, pipes and tins – are arrayed with various kinds of foods and drinks. Finally, the article addresses a selection of such smoker's still lifes, using the *toebakje* by Pieter Claesz., probably the first of its kind, as a starting point and the work by Georg Flegel as a comparative example. Through their selection of objects, both offer a complex image of how tobacco engages different senses.

Keywords: (history of) tobacco, (history of) tobacco smoking, smoker's still life (*toebakje*), smell, taste, sensory interaction, allegories of the senses

Not long after its appearance in Europe, the “mighty Emperor Tobacco” also took the realm of the arts by storm. One aspect central to its quick artistic reception was the specific smell associated with the new substance when consumed in the most widespread manner: smoking.¹ As early as 1607, the English playwright Thomas Tomkis cast tobacco in his comedy *Lingua, or the Combat of the Tongue and the Five Senses for Superiority*, a verbal duel in which the personification of sight in the end prevails over her companions, i.e. the senses of touch, taste, smell, and hearing.² Crowned by tobacco leaves and pipes and constantly emitting smoke from his mouth, the “mighty Emperor Tobacco” is introduced by Tomkis as an attendant of Olfactus.³

In the Netherlands, where tobacco became popular particularly among students and artists in the first half of the 17th century, its consumption became a common subject in genre and still-life painting. A subgenre of the latter art form, the smoker’s still life (*toebakje* or *rookertje*) – in which smoking paraphernalia, such as rolled or cut tobacco, pipes and tins, are brought together with different kinds of foods and drinks – grew in popularity. A striking example – for reasons that will be expounded on in greater detail at the end of this text – is the small panel by Georg Flegel (Fig. 1). The painting, executed between 1626 and 1628, forms an unusual arrangement in a niche, composed of a clay pipe with flowers on its bowl and on the adjacent part of the stem, a roll of tobacco leaves, two strawberries, and a still-glowing lunt hanging over the mouth of a rummer (a popular drinking vessel at the time) filled with liquid.⁴ In view of this surprising combination of bitter tobacco and sweet fruits, the question arises whether it is sufficient, as in Tomkis, to consider only the sense of smell as receptive to the new fashion of smoking tobacco.

Thus far, the smoker’s still life has been analysed primarily as a moralistic comment upon the newly imported substance that was praised by some as medicine but more often condemned as superfluous and unhealthy;⁵ or in light of its changing status as a commodity of increasing value.⁶ Only occasionally the appeal of smoking tobacco to the human senses, and particularly to the sense of smell, has been equally taken into account, for instance, with regard to Flegel’s above-mentioned still life or to works by Pieter Claesz., who allegedly created the first *toebakjes* in the 1620s.⁷

1 Cf. M. S. R. Jenner, “Follow Your Nose? Smell, Smelling and Their Histories”, *The American Historical Review*, 2011, 116, no. 2, pp. 335–351, here p. 342.

2 Cf. R. Jütte, *Geschichte der Sinne. Von der Antike bis zum Cyberspace*, Munich, 2000, p. 73. For an earlier adoption of tobacco in Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* (1590) see J. Knapp, “Elizabethan Tobacco”, *Representations*, 1988, no. 21, pp. 26–66.

3 T. Tomkis, *Lingua or the Combat of the Tongue and the Five Senses for Superiority*, London, 1607, act 4, scene 4.

4 For the dating see *Meisterstücke: Vom Handwerk der Maler*, eds. W. P. Cilleßen, A. Tacke, exhib. cat. Frankfurt, Frankfurt, 2019, no. 5.3, p. 197.

5 Cf. S. Ebert-Schifferer, *Die Geschichte des Stillebens*, Munich, 1998, pp. 129–130.

6 Cf. J. Berger Hochstrasser, *Still Life and Trade in the Dutch Golden Age*, New Haven, London, 2007, pp. 174–177.

7 Cf. C. Grimm, “Flandern, Holland, Deutschland”, in: *Stilleben. Die große Zeit des europäischen Stillebens*, Stuttgart, Zurich, 1979, pp. 37–82, here p. 57; M. Brunner-Bulst, *Pieter Claesz., der*

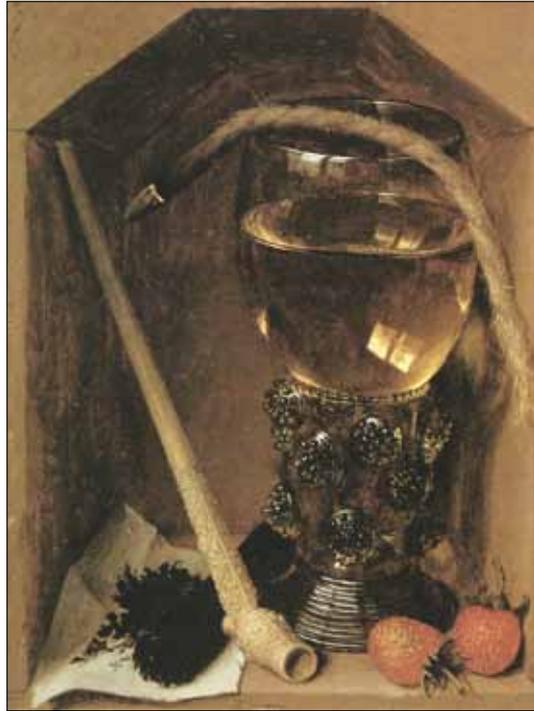


Fig. 1. Georg Flegel, *Smoker's Still Life*, c. 1626–28, Frankfurt, Historisches Museum. From: *Georg Flegel, 1566–1638: Stilleben*, ed. K. Wettengl, exhib. cat. Frankfurt, Stuttgart, new edition, 1999, p. 127

Following these interpretative approaches to the early modern smoker's still life, this article seeks to examine the many-faceted connection between tobacco and the senses. It begins with a short overview of tobacco's varying estimation within the European context and, more precisely, in England and the Netherlands. As becomes clear already in the first textual and visual sources dealing with tobacco, leisure smoking was not only thought to stimulate the sense of smell, but also the sense of taste. Probing this manifold stimulation of the senses, the text takes up recent studies of smell and taste that have stressed the need to investigate the interaction between these senses.⁸ Any attempt to define the working exchange of sense data between mouth and nose in the first decades of the 17th century must, however, proceed cautiously. As will be shown in the second part of this paper, tobacco's equal appeal to the senses of smell and taste was usually not seized upon in allegorical representations and genre scenes addressing the five senses. Whether this

Hauptmeister des Haarlemer Stillebens im 17. Jahrhundert. Kritischer Œuvrekatlog, Lingen, 2004, pp. 146–151, 156.

8 Cf. J. Reinartz, *Past Scents: Historical Perspectives on Smell*, Urbana, 2014, p. 6; V. von Hoffmann, *From Gluttony to Enlightenment: The World of Taste in Early Modern Europe*, Baltimore, 2016, pp. 73, 83–86. Such an approach has likewise become central to the broader field of a cultural history of the senses. Cf. H. Roodenburg, "Introduction: Entering the Sensory World of the Renaissance", in: *A Cultural History of the Senses in the Renaissance*, ed. idem, London, 2019, pp. 1–17, esp. pp. 6–10.

holds true also for the early smoker's still lifes by Claesz. and Flegel is the central question posed at the end of this article.

From medicine to stimulant: Tobacco's early European history

A few years before Tomkis's comedy *Lingua* was published, the consumption of tobacco had become a major topic of dispute in England. In 1602, an anonymous doctor writing under the pseudonym "Philaretus" published the treatise *Work for Chimney-sweepers or A Warning for Tobacconists* in which he elaborates upon the health risks arising from the use of the substance.⁹ He enlists eight reasons that leisure smoking is harmful to a person's health, and is not willing to condone the medical use of tobacco.¹⁰ Weight loss, sterility, indigestion as well as melancholy are only some of the consequences the author discusses. In addition, he believed tobacco to contain various toxins that shorten a human life¹¹ – as Anne Charlton rightly states, with his critical assessment of tobacco and its use Philaretus was quite ahead of his time.¹²

With his explicit warning against tobacco, Philaretus objected to its appraisal – prevailing on the European continent in the 16th century – as a remedy. Christopher Columbus had already reported on rites, including the smoking of tobacco, that he had observed in the "New World" during his first voyage of 1492,¹³ however, the plant itself did not spread to Europe until the middle of the 16th century.¹⁴ Jean Nicot, the French ambassador to the Portuguese court, was the first to cultivate tobacco and to use it for medical purposes.¹⁵ The central agent within tobacco, nicotine, was later named after him. Giles Everard testifies to this naming in his work *De herba panacea* (The universal medicine), published in Antwerp in 1587.¹⁶ Among

9 Cf. M. C. Enke, *Über die Bedeutung des Tabaks in der europäischen Medizin vom 16. bis ins 20. Jahrhundert*, Berlin, 1998, p. 87.

10 Cf. A. Charlton, "Tobacco or Health 1602: An Elizabethan Doctor Speaks", *Health Education Research. Theory & Practice*, 2005, 20, no. 1, doi:10.1093/her/cyg097 [accessed 1 October 2019], pp. 101–111, here p. 102.

11 *Work for Chimney-sweepers or A Warning for Tobacconists*, ed. S. H. Atkins, London, 1936, reasons 2, 4, 5 and 8.

12 A. Charlton, op. cit., p. 108.

13 *The Diario of Christopher Columbus's First Voyage to America, 1492–1493. Abstracted by Fray Bartolomé de las Casas*, trans. and ed. O. Dunn, J. E. Kelley, Jr., Norman, London, 1989, p. 139 (6 November 1492). Cf. S. L. Gilman, Z. Xun, "Introduction", in: *Smoke: A Global History of Smoking*, eds. idem, London, 2004, pp. 9–28, here p. 9. While the *Diario* was not published until 1825, the described use of tobacco was transmitted by Ramon Pane, who took part in the second voyage, in his *De insularium ritibus* (1497). Cf. R. Augustin, *Der Geschmack des Neuen. Das Motiv des Tabakrauchens und seine Modernität in der niederländischen Kunst*, Frankfurt, 1998, p. 15.

14 Cf. I. Gately, *La Diva Nicotina. The Story of How Tobacco Seduced the World*, London, 2001, pp. 20–64.

15 Cf. M. C. Enke, op. cit., pp. 36–37.

16 G. Everard, *De herba panacea, quam alii tabacum, alii petum, aut nicotianam vocant, brevis commentariolus*, Antwerp, 1587, p. 12. The term "tobacco", on the contrary, can be traced back

various writings dealing with the medical use of tobacco in the 16th century, this was the first dedicated solely to the new substance and its potency.¹⁷ Even if Everard chiefly combined knowledge gained by other authors – such as the Spanish physician Nicolás Monardes, who in 1571 had included an entire chapter on the herb's merits in the second volume of his *Historia medicinal* – it is generally noted that *De herba panacea* was one of the most read books on tobacco in the 17th century.¹⁸ In 1659, an English translation of the work was published in London.¹⁹

While the discussion of tobacco's medical use was initiated in continental Europe, decisive impulses towards leisure smoking came from England.²⁰ By the time Philaretus prepared his *Work for Chimney-sweepers*, smoking a pipe of tobacco was not only common practice among sailors and explorers like Sir Walter Raleigh – the most prominent of the first English smokers – but, thanks to the latter, had also entered the courtly context; even Queen Elizabeth I, his patroness, supposedly tried the new custom under his guidance.²¹ Elizabeth's successor, James I, however, would never have even touched a pipe. In fact, shortly after his enthronement in 1603 he launched the polemic pamphlet *A Counterblaste to Tobacco* (1604), in which smoking is condemned as a “vile and stinking” custom and is denied any medical application.²² This royal damnation of tobacco would provoke a controversy in which many books for and against smoking were published, and which was only settled in 1665.²³

to the military governor of Hispaniola, Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, who for his part had supposedly learned it from the natives. Cf. J. E. Brooks, *Tobacco: Its History Illustrated by Books, Manuscripts and Engravings in the Collection of George Arents Jr.*, 5 vols., New York, 1937–1952, vol. 1, p. 202.

- 17 Cf. P. C. Mancall, “Tales Tobacco Told in Sixteenth-Century Europe”, *Environmental History*, 2004, 9, no. 4, pp. 648–678, here p. 659. According to the author's general assumption, books like the one by Everard played a decisive role in the positive assessment of tobacco in Europe. For an overview of the main sources dealing with the medicinal effect of tobacco: S. A. Dickson, *Panacea or Precious Bane?: Tobacco in Sixteenth Century Literature*, New York, 1954; G. G. Stewart, “A History of the Medicinal Use of Tobacco 1492–1860”, *Medical History*, 1967, 11, pp. 228–268; M. C. Enke, op. cit., pp. 47–74.
- 18 Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 63–65.
- 19 G. Everard, *Panacea; or The Universal Medicine, Being a Discovery of the Wonderfull Vertues of Tobacco Taken in a Pipe, with Its Operation and Use both in Physicke and Chyrurgery*, London, 1659.
- 20 For a general overview see T. Pollard, “The Pleasures and Perils of Smoking in Early Modern England”, in: *Smoke: A Global History of Smoking*, op. cit., pp. 38–45.
- 21 Cf. M. C. Enke, op. cit., pp. 75–107; I. Gately, op. cit., pp. 44–47. According to T. Pollard, op. cit., p. 38, tobacco entered England already in the 1560s, followed by first descriptions of pipes and their use in 1573 and 1595 (note 6).
- 22 James I., *A Counterblaste to Tobacco*, London, 1604, p. B1v.
- 23 For detailed discussions of the so called tobacco war see D. Harley, “The Beginnings of the Tobacco Controversy: Puritanism, James I, and the Royal Physicians”, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 1993, 67, no. 1, pp. 28–50; S. Campbell Anderson, “A Matter of Authority: James I and the Tobacco War”, *COMITATUS. A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 1998, 29, no. 1, pp. 136–163. G. G. Stewart, op. cit., enlists all writings resulting from the dispute (p. 263).

The tense atmosphere in England at the beginning of the 17th century also had an impact on the northern Netherlands.²⁴ To be sure, smoking tobacco was widespread there, already since the late 16th century. In a letter to Johann Neander, the Delft physician Willem Willemsz. van der Meer reports on student smokers in Leiden, where he himself studied from 1588 onwards.²⁵ All the same, the fabrication of clay pipes, starting in Amsterdam around 1609, but more famously taken up in Gouda starting in 1617, is commonly ascribed to English emigrants.²⁶ As Don H. Duco has shown, many Dutch terms associated with the craft are closely linked to English words, and the names of the first experts within the field – such as William Baer-nelts or Barends and Willem Hoppe or Hop – likewise attest to an English origin.²⁷ It was between Barends and Hop that a dispute over the trademark of a crowned rose – the Tudor rose – broke out and was resolved in favour of the former. The choice of this symbol, applied to pipes in slightly different forms also by other pipe-makers, again points to England and more particularly to the reign of Elizabeth I, during which smoking was not rejected, as it would be in the years following her death in 1603.²⁸

Despite the rapid spread of pipe production, which was only initially opposed by general smoking bans such as the one in Gouda,²⁹ many authors were divided on the social benefits of tobacco. The Amsterdam corn dealer and poet Roemer Visscher incorporated the herb and its consumption into his *Sinnepoppen*, a collection of emblems published in 1614. Underneath the motto “Veeltijds wat nieuws, selden wat goets” (Often something new, rarely something good), a middle-aged man is shown sitting at a table, smoking an enormous pipe (Fig. 2). With his left hand he grasps the object’s long stem, which runs at a slight angle from his mouth (at left) to the right margin of the image field. Both from the man’s nostrils and from the pipe’s bowl issues dense smoke. Seen together, motto and image result in a clear criticism of smoking, but in the accompanying text a more scrutinizing assessment is made. Here, the consumption of tobacco is associated with curiosity. When it comes

24 The situation was tense not only with regard to smoking, but above all with regard to questions of faith. Cf. G. A. Brongers, *Nicotiana Tabacum: The History of Tobacco and Tobacco Smoking in the Netherlands*, Amsterdam, 1964, p. 31.

25 The letter was later published in Neander’s *Tabacologia. Hoc est, Tabaci, seu Nicotinae descriptio Medico-Chirurgico-Pharmaceutica*, Leiden, 1622, pp. 211–221. Cf. G. A. Brongers, op. cit., pp. 17–20; R. Augustin, op. cit., pp. 18–19; B. B. Roberts, *Sex and Drugs before Rock ‘n’ Roll. Youth Culture and Masculinity during Holland’s Golden Age*, Amsterdam, 2012, pp. 176–177.

26 Cf. A. Brongers, op. cit., pp. 31–42. The cultivation of tobacco was initiated around the same time in the provinces of Zeeland and Utrecht. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 71–78; H. K. Roessingh, *Inlandse Tabak. Expansie en contractie van een handelsgewas in de 17de en 18de eeuw in Nederland*, Wageningen, 1976, pp. 186–194.

27 Cf. D. H. Duco, *Goudse pijpen. De geschiedenis van de pijpmakerij te Gouda vanaf haar ontstaan tot heden, met een bijlage van de merken van het Goudse gilde en hun eigenaren*, Amsterdam, 1978, p. 5.

28 Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 5–6. Besides the Tudor rose, portraits of the Oranje rulers were favored as decor of pipes. Cf. *idem*, *De tabakspijp als Oranje propaganda*, Leiden, 1992.

29 Cf. *idem*, *Goudse pijpen*, p. 7.

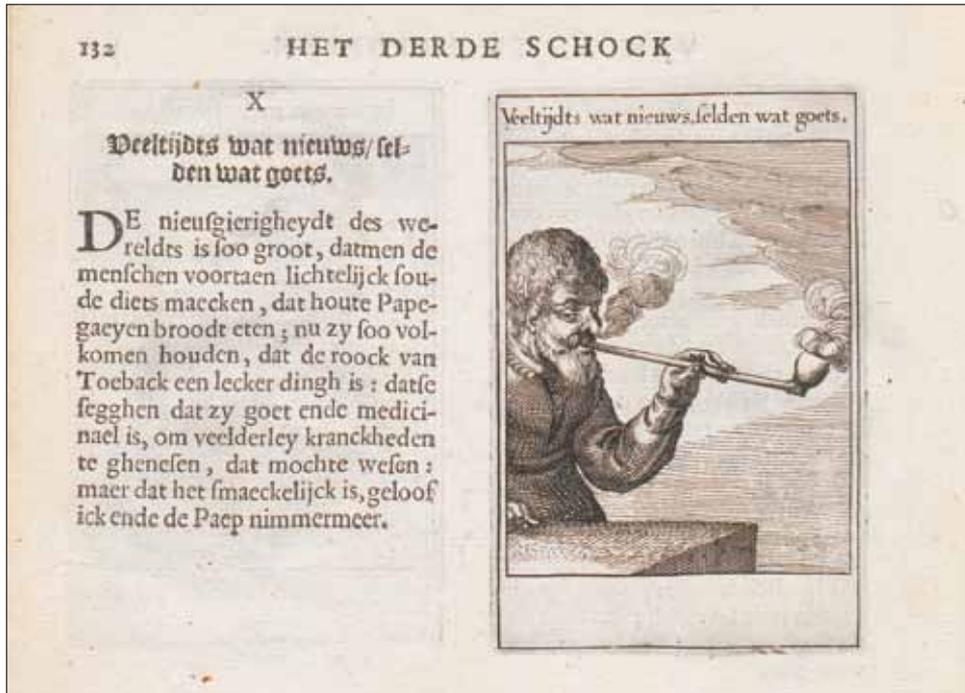


Fig. 2. Roemer Visscher, *Sinnepoppen*, Amsterdam, 1614, *Veeltijds wat nieuws, selden wat goets*, p. 132 © Utrecht University Library

to the various uses of the substance, the author (in this case Visscher's wife Anna) abstains from denying the herb's medicinal effect, only questioning its tastiness.³⁰

Indeed, the matter of tastiness or, more broadly speaking, tobacco's appeal to the senses remained an open question, while the herb's medical use, frequently challenged in England, became, by 1622, thoroughly confirmed in the Netherlands by the Bremen physician Neander.³¹ When the first reports of American natives inhaling the smoke of a weed through pipes arrived in Europe, no comparable examples of such a form of consumption were at hand, as Wolfgang Schivelbusch points out.³² One of the first to compare the smoking of tobacco to the drinking of

³⁰ R. Visscher, *Sinnepoppen*, Amsterdam, 1614, p. 132. Cf. R. Augustin, op. cit., pp. 21, 26.

³¹ In his *Tabacologia* he praises tobacco, administered in various forms, as a remedy for such diverse diseases as headaches, cataracts, and siphylis. J. Neander, op. cit., pp. 74–75, 85, 151–152. Cf. R. Augustin, op. cit., pp. 19–20, and for a more general view on this treatise central to the Netherlandish perception of tobacco as remedy: M. C. Enke, op. cit., pp. 128–130.

³² W. Schivelbusch, *Das Paradies, der Geschmack und die Vernunft. Eine Geschichte der Genussmittel*, Munich, Vienna, 1980, p. 108. For the further development and tobacco's fast rise to a popular stimulant: A. Menninger, *Genuss im kulturellen Wandel. Tabak, Kaffee, Tee und Schokolade in Europa (16.–19. Jahrhundert)*, Stuttgart, 2008, pp. 277–371.

wine, based on a kind of intoxication he had observed during a smoking ritual in Brazil, was the French explorer and cosmographer André Thevet.³³ Both in English as well as in Dutch, “to drink” became the standard verb to describe the inhalation of tobacco smoke by using a pipe (like a straw).³⁴ The Amsterdam-born poet Jan Jansz. Starter composed a poem on the origin of “tobacco-drinking”, *Den Oorsprong van Toback-drincken*, printed only in the fourth edition of his book *Friesche Lusthof*, which appeared in 1627, one year after his death.³⁵ In the German language, too, the smoking of tobacco was termed “drinking”, as becomes particularly apparent in Sigmund von Birken’s treatise *Die Truckene Trunkenheit* (The dry drunkenness) of 1658.³⁶ At the same time, however, one can detect first attempts at differentiating terminology, for already in the course of Starter’s poem the verb “smoken” is used alongside “drinken”.³⁷

In line with the conceptual assimilation of smoking into drinking, authors writing in favour of the new “vice” were eager to establish tobacco’s point of origin with recourse to Bacchus, the ancient god of wine. The English physician Raphael Thorius already drew on Bacchus in his *Hymnus Tabaci* (Hymn on tobacco), written before 1610 but not published until 1625, in Leiden.³⁸ No human, so the Latin text starts, could have possibly desecrated tobacco, but only a god like Bacchus.³⁹ In what follows, Thorius recounts the story of tobacco’s diffusion among men, starting with a campaign led by Bacchus in the New World, in which the plant itself as well as the possibility of smoking it are discovered and tried by the god and his corps

33 A. Thevet, *Les singularitez de la France antarctique*, Paris, 1558, pp. 60r-v. Cf. R. Augustin, op. cit., p. 16.

34 *Work for Chimny-sweepers*, op. cit., “To the Reader”. Only Petrus Sriverius later wondered whether smoking a pipe should be analogized to drinking at all, or if it should rather be conceived of as a form of eating. P. Sriverius, *Saturnalia, ofte Poëtisch Vasten-avond spel. Vervatende het gebruyk ende misbruyk van den Taback*, Haarlem, 1630, p. 31. Cf. R. Augustin, op. cit., p. 109. By posing the question of how to name the way tobacco is consumed, Sriverius does not describe the chewing of tobacco, which became a common practice only later.

35 J. Jansz. Starter, *Friesche lust-hof, beplant met verscheyden stichtelijcke minne-liedekens, gedichten, ende boertighe kluchten*, Amsterdam, 1627, pp. 34–36.

36 As the author unveils in the title of his book, its content is based on Jakob Balde’s *Satyra Contra Abusum Tabaci*, published only one year earlier. For more information on both texts: D. Niefanger, “In ‘Plutons Hof-Capelle’. Tabakrausch in Sigmund von Birkens ‘Die Truckene Trunkenheit’ (1658)”, in: *Trunkenheit. Kulturen des Rausches*, eds. T. Strässle, S. Zumsteg, Amsterdam, New York, 2008, pp. 225–239.

37 J. Jansz. Starter, op. cit., p. 38: “Strackx hiel *Vulcanus* op, en liet het smoken blyven”. A similar wording can be observed in Birken’s treatise, in which “schmäuchen” is used. S. von Birken, *Die Truckene Trunkenheit. Mit Jakob Baldes ‘Satyra Contra Abusum Tabaci’*, ed. K. Pörnbacher, Munich, 1967, p. 25, § 17, p. 54, § 43.

38 Cf. J. E. Brooks, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 108–112; R. Augustin, op. cit., pp. 92–93; C. Harrauer, “Wer entdeckte tatsächlich den Tabak? Mythisches Erzählen bei Raphael Thorius und Jakob Balde”, in: *Antiker Mythos erzählt und angewandt bis in die Gegenwart*, eds. eadem, J. Dalfen, Vienna, 2004, pp. 157–180.

39 R. Thorius, *Hymnus tabaci*, Leiden, 1625, p. 1.

of satyrs.⁴⁰ The frontispiece to the Leiden edition displays this story of origination on the fictitious tapestry placed above the central cartouche containing the book's title and the author's name (Fig. 3). Bacchus, crowned with vines, is depicted in a carriage drawn by two leopards. To his right, his companion Silenus, his face turned down thoughtfully, rides a mole. A group of mounted satyrs follows them toward the left margin. Bacchus and this entourage, carrying long tobacco pipes instead of lances, have already successfully disseminated the new custom, so the frontispiece implies.



Fig. 3. Raphael Thorius, *Hymnus Tabaci*, Leiden, 1625, title page © Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library

By contrast, the connection between alcohol and tobacco consumption is discussed with a clearly negative undertone in Dirck Pietersz. Pers's *Bacchus Wonderwerken* (Bacchus's miracle works) of 1628. In his satirical analysis of the (im)proper handling of wine,⁴¹ the author does not miss the opportunity to also comment upon the "miraculous herb" (*wonder kruid*), alleging that it was first discovered and smoked by apes before being brought to the shores of the Netherlands, where

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 1–14.

⁴¹ Cf. A. Roberts, *op. cit.*, pp. 82–83.

it would come to affect kings and other noblemen, as well as seamen, peasants, and even cookmaids and schoolboys.⁴² The engraving included in the paragraph on *smooken* – as the practice is termed by Pers, avoiding the verb “to drink” – shows the outcome of this widespread use of tobacco (Fig. 4). In a room with paintings on the wall matching the subject of tobacco – including a smoker’s still life on the right – men and women gather around two tables, where they smoke or prepare long pipes. Alluding to the text, a monkey is also depicted holding two pipes to his mouth and accompanying an adolescent boy towards another youngster in the bottom left corner. The negative consequences of early and superfluous consumption of tobacco are literally in the foreground. At the bottom right of the image, a grown man is shown vomiting. The main conclusion is: Whether smoked by young or old, when consumed excessively tobacco has an effect similar to that of alcohol.⁴³

As Roland Augustin has demonstrated in his comprehensive study of the motif of tobacco smoking in Netherlandish art since the 17th century, the dog shown licking up vomit can be traced back to earlier depictions of the deadly sin of



Fig. 4. Dirck Pietersz. Pers, *Bacchus Wonder-wercken*, Amsterdam, 1628, p. 69 © Allard Pierson, University of Amsterdam, O 61-617

⁴² D. Pietersz. Pers, *Bacchus Wonder-wercken*, Amsterdam, 1628, pp. 67–68.

⁴³ Cf. A. Roberts, op. cit., p. 182.

gluttony.⁴⁴ As this detail indicates, the smoking of tobacco became loosely linked to the sense of taste in the 17th century through its comparison with the drinking of wine. In contemporary moral writings, taste too was often considered a close neighbour of the vice of gluttony.⁴⁵

However, the smell of tobacco smoke, which James I had already perceived as a nuisance to his nose and to the noses of others, also led to a close association between the new stimulant and the sense of smell. On this account, Starter did not choose Bacchus, but Vulcan, the god of fire, as the appropriate mythological forefather of smokers. In his poem *Den Oorsprong van Toback-drincken*, already mentioned, he recounts how Jupiter once invited all the other Olympian gods and goddesses to a banquet, at which the beer brewed by Ceres quickly went to the guests' heads. Vulcan, preferring some tobacco to go with the drink, suddenly took his pipe and started smoking. The other gods and goddesses, first surprised by this unusual custom, soon turned angry, as the smoke issuing from Vulcan's pipe increasingly obscured their view.



Fig. 5. Jan van de Velde after David Vinckboons, *Den Oorsprong van Toback-drincken*, in: Jan Jansz. Starter, *Friesche lust-hof*, Amsterdam, 1627, p. 35 © University Library Ghent, BIB.ACC.009100

44 R. Augustin, op. cit., p. 105.

45 Cf. V. von Hoffmann, op. cit., pp. 39–43.

The etching executed by Jan van de Velde after a design by David Vinckboons gives in its upper part a view of the further progress of the story (Fig. 5). Venus, who covers her nose in disgust, criticizes her husband Vulcan for causing the pungent odour and thick smoke that impairs the other guests in various ways. Even Bacchus, placed in front of the table, turns away from Vulcan with his nose covered. Following Jupiter's demand to leave tobacco smoking to Pluto, Mercury is finally shown throwing pipes and tobacco rolls down to earth. Here, the herb's worldly story of success is indicated by two groups of figures that in stereotypical terms reaffirm its way from the Americas to Europe.⁴⁶

From mouth to nose: Smoking in depictions of the five senses

Whether set into relation with smell or taste, the smoking of tobacco circulated within the lower register of the hierarchy of the senses. The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle was the first to establish such a ranking among the five bodily organs of perception, and this would become the model for later scholars until the 17th century.⁴⁷ Like Plato before him, he gave priority to the sense of sight, which he described extensively in the second book of his treatise *De anima* (On the soul), followed by similarly detailed considerations of the senses of hearing, smell, taste, and touch.⁴⁸ Later authors who broached the subject endorsed the Aristotelian hierarchy by further highlighting the differences among the respective sensory organs, with an emphasis largely on each sense's ability to perceive an object either in close contact or from a distance.⁴⁹ In yet another interpretative approach, the importance of the senses was deduced from their locus within the human body.⁵⁰ This very mode of classification likewise helped to establish sight's preeminence over the other senses.⁵¹

The nose and the olfactory sense, in turn, were usually conceived of as an intermediary between the senses of sight, hearing, taste, and touch. While one can trace this ranking again back to Aristotle's *De anima*,⁵² the French physician Théophraste Renaudot testifies to its persisting significance in the 17th century, when he writes:

46 J. Jansz. Starter, op. cit., pp. 34–38. Cf. R. Augustin, op. cit., pp. 93–94.

47 Cf. R. Jütte, op. cit., pp. 46–54, 73. For general information on the Aristotelian system of the senses: G. Romeyer Dherbey, "La construction de la théorie aristotélicienne du sentir", in: *Corps et âme. Sur le De Anima d'Aristote*, ed. idem, Paris, 1996, pp. 127–147.

48 Aristotle, *De anima*, 418a27–424a16. Plato had already elaborated upon the bodily senses in his *Timaios*, but had only differentiated between four of them, excluding touch: *Timaios*, 65b–69a. Cf. R. Jütte, op. cit., p. 45.

49 Aristotle, *De anima*, 423b1–3.

50 Cf. R. Jütte, op. cit., pp. 69–72.

51 Cf. V. von Hoffmann, op. cit., pp. 73, 75. A late example for the continuing discourse on the sense's hierarchy is Tomkis's comedy *Lingua*, treated briefly at the beginning of this article.

52 Cf. G. Romeyer Dherbey, op. cit., p. 138; R. Jütte, op. cit., p. 79.

“As the nose, the instrument of smell, is situated in the middle of all others: so is this sense of average nature between the other senses, because it is more material than hearing and sight, but more subtle than touch and taste; although it has a big rapport with the latter”.⁵³

The close connection between the olfactory and the gustatory senses, mentioned by Renaudot rather incidentally, was discussed over the centuries again and again. Already Aristotle had hinted at their similarities when adopting adjectives from the realm of gustation to describe different odours.⁵⁴ The ancient Greek physician Galen of Pergamon further affirmed their strong relation,⁵⁵ and in the 17th century authors such as Cureau de la Chambre attributed their synergy in discerning good and bad food to the close position of mouth and nose on the human face.⁵⁶ Thanks to new insights into the tongue and the taste buds, today the interaction of smell and taste seems beyond question.⁵⁷

Although the rapport between the senses of smell and gustation was challenged in a striking way by the practice of smoking tobacco, in personifications of the five senses the new habit was usually divided between the two. First attempts to visualize the five senses are known from the 9th century. Already then, the sensory organs were depicted allegorically, by allotting a male figure to each one of them.⁵⁸ Shortly before 1500, these were substituted with female figures in the famous Flemish tapestry series *The Lady and the Unicorn*, kept in the Musée Cluny in Paris.⁵⁹ Here, the sensorial perceptions are for the first time illustrated using attributes that in the following years would become central components of the iconography of the senses – namely, aromatic flowers for smell and selected sweets for taste. Both in Georg Pencz's copper engravings of the five senses, a widely received depiction of them combining female personifications with animals stemming from an older

53 Th. Renaudot, *Recueil général des questions traitées és Conférences du Bureau d'Adresse és années 1633–34–35 iusques à present, sur toutes sortes de matières, par les plus beaux esprits de ce temps*, vol. 2, Paris, 1655, 56th conference held on 11 December 1634, pp. 97–104 (1. *De l'Odorat*), here p. 101, trans. V. von Hoffmann, op. cit., p. 77.

54 Aristotle, *De anima*, 421a26–421b4. Cf. Reinartz, op. cit., p. 8; V. von Hoffmann, op. cit., p. 86.

55 C. Galeni, *De simplicium medicamentorum facultatibus, libri XI*, Lyon 1561, IV, 22 (pp. 268–271). Cf. G. Harig, *Bestimmung der Intensität im medizinischen System Galens. Ein Beitrag zur theoretischen Pharmakologie, Nosologie und Therapie in der Galenischen Medizin*, Berlin, 1974, pp. 80–81; R. Jütte, op. cit., p. 55.

56 C. de la Chambre, *Le système de l'âme*, Paris, 1664, pp. 69–70. Cf. V. von Hoffmann, op. cit., pp. 84–85.

57 Cf. C. Korsmeyer, *Making Sense of Taste: Food & Philosophy*, Ithaca, London, 1999, pp. 79–84; S. Veitinger, “The Secret Power of Fragrances”, in: *Belle Haleine – The Scent of Art. Interdisciplinary Symposium*, ed. Museum Tinguely, Heidelberg, Berlin, 2015, pp. 27–34, here pp. 27–28.

58 Cf. C. Nordenfalk, “The Five Senses in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art”, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 1986, 48, pp. 1–22, here pp. 1, 7.

59 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 7. See also A.-M. De Gendt, “Du masculin au féminin: le changement de sexe des cinq sens aus seuil de la Renaissance”, in: *Les cinq sens entre Moyen Âge et Renaissance. Enjeux épistémologiques et esthétiques*, eds. O. A. Duhl, J.-M. Fritz, Dijon, 2016, pp. 71–93.

pictorial tradition,⁶⁰ and in Frans Floris's series, which initiated an intense involvement with the topic in the Netherlands,⁶¹ flowers and food such as fruits remain the prime props.

By taking up these attributes, the artists clearly placed special emphasis on the pleasant aspect of the two sensory perceptions.⁶² Only in one series of copper engravings, designed by Maerten de Vos and engraved by Raphael Sadeler I, is the rather unpleasant effect of stench on the nose touched upon, and still only in the caption underneath the image that is itself dedicated entirely to its opposite, aroma.⁶³ The short inscription reads "GRATVS ODOR RECREAT NARES. OFFENDIT ACERBVS" (Pleasant odour refreshes the nose. Pungent [smell] offends it).⁶⁴ In a later depiction of the sense of smell by Crispijn de Passe I, however, stench takes centre stage (Fig. 6).⁶⁵ Following Hendrik Goltzius, De Passe visualized the sense of smell by representing a couple⁶⁶ – a male and a female figure who no longer approach one another to smell a bunch of flowers.⁶⁷ On the contrary, while the male figure – sitting at a table in the foreground and well equipped with various pipes, tobacco leaves and a small coal pan – smokes a long pipe with relish, his female companion remains in the background and covers her nose with a handkerchief in disgust.⁶⁸ De Passe plainly accentuates the nuisance caused by the new habit by letting the smoke encircle the woman's face. A dog entering the image field from the lower left corner points to an earlier iconographic tradition in which the animal, due to its keen nose, was chosen to accompany the personification of smell.⁶⁹ Besides the dog, the inscription underneath the whole scene clarifies the connection to *OLFACTUS* while also advising a moderate use of tobacco: "Est modus in rebus, certus sit et usus ODORIS / Omnia nam prosunt tempore sumpta Suo"

60 Cf. C. Nordenfalk, "The Five Senses in Late Medieval"..., pp. 19–21; K. Dyballa, "Die Fünf Sinne (um 1544) von Georg Pencz", in: *Zwischen Dürer und Raffael. Graphikserien Nürnberger Kleinmeister*, ed. K. Möseneder, Petersberg, 2010, pp. 161–178.

61 Cf. C. Nordenfalk, "The Five Senses in Flemish Art before 1600", in: *Netherlandish Mannerism*, ed. G. Cavalli-Björkman, Stockholm, 1985, pp. 135–154, here p. 135.

62 Cf. F. Quiviger, *The Sensory World of Italian Renaissance Art*, London, 2010, pp. 126–131.

63 Cf. C. Nordenfalk, "The Five Senses in Flemish Art"..., pp. 141–142.

64 By contrast, the epigraph to go with the allegory of taste only refers to flavour: "IVCVNDO QVIDNAM QVIT AMOENIVS ESSE SAPORE?"

65 For general information on the print: I. Veldman, *Crispijn de Passe and his Progeny (1564–1670): A Century of Print Production*, Rotterdam, 2001, p. 225.

66 Goltzius was the first to embed the objects and animals associated with the five senses into an erotic encounter between two figures. Cf. I. Veldman, "Goltzius' Zintuigen, Seizoenen, Elementen, Planeten en Vier tijden van de dag: van allegorie naar genre-voorstelling", *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, 1991–92, 42/43, pp. 307–336, here p. 308.

67 De Passe carried on this iconographic tradition in his earlier series on the allegories of the senses. Cf. I. Veldman, *Crispijn de Passe...*, p. 224.

68 This gesture extends the previous iconography of stench. For further information on this: F. Quiviger, op. cit., pp. 132–136.

69 Cf. M. Pastoureau, "Le bestiaire des cinq sens (XII^e–XVI^e siècle)", in: *I cinque sensi / The Five Senses (Micrologus, 2002, X)*, pp. 133–145, here p. 141.



Fig. 6. Crispijn de Passe, *Smell*, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale. From: I. Veldman, *Crispijn de Passe and his Progeny (1564–1670): A Century of Print Production*, Rotterdam, 2001, p. 225

(There is moderation in things; so let smell too be used purposefully. For everything does good that is employed in its season).⁷⁰

In allegorical depictions of the five senses, the habit of smoking tobacco remained one among many ways to represent olfaction, and was usually selected to draw special attention to the negative side of smell. A similar focus can be discerned in genre painting. Here too, the sense of smell was often depicted with reference to its stimulation by stench, and again tobacco smoking was a popular means by which to visualize this.⁷¹ The Haarlem artist Jan Miense Molenaer, for instance, ironically contrasted pipe smoking with the cleaning of a child's bottom in a painting of 1637 devoted to the olfactory sense (Fig. 7). Although the gesture of the male figure on the left is primarily related to the action on the right, where a well-dressed and neatly coiffed mother attends to her child, the overall composition

⁷⁰ I. Veldman trans., "Elements of Continuity: A Finger Raised in Warning", *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly of the History of Art*, 1990–91, 20, no. 2/3, pp. 124–141, here p. 137.

⁷¹ The first to address the significance of the five senses for genre painting was H. Kauffmann, "Die Fünfsinne in der niederländischen Malerei des 17. Jahrhunderts", in: *Kunstgeschichtliche Studien*, ed. H. Tintelnot, Breslau, 1943, pp. 133–157, esp. pp. 143–145. For further information on this alliance: *Over het genot van de zintuigen in de schilderkunst*, eds. A. De Gendt, S. Aps, exhib. cat. Sint-Niklaas, Sint-Niklaas, 2012, pp. 11–30.



Fig. 7. Jan Miense Molenaer, *Smell*, 1637, The Hague, Mauritshuis © Mauritshuis, The Hague

of the panel suggests that the artist did not intend to differentiate between the two odour sources in the painting. He rather made explicit how one stench can be surpassed by another.

While there are many tavern scenes dating to the first half of the 17th century that likewise thematize the sense of smell by referencing leisure smoking,⁷² the consumption of tobacco was also associated with the sense of taste within this genre.

72 Cf. M. Rath, “Tavern Odors in the Works of David Teniers the Younger (1610–1690) or Notes on a History of Art as a History of Scents”, in: *Belle Haleine – The Scent of Art. Interdisciplinary Symposium*, ed. Museum Tinguely, Heidelberg, Berlin, 2015, pp. 105–114. For investigations into the moral implications of smokers in genre scenes see I. Gaskell, “Tobacco, Social Deviance, and Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century”, in: *Holländische Genremalerei im 17. Jahrhundert*, eds. H. Bock, T. W. Gaehtgens, Berlin, 1987, pp. 117–137; R. Augustin, op. cit., pp. 101–128; D. Harley, “The Moral Symbolism of Tobacco in Dutch Genre Painting”, in: *Ashes to Ashes. The History of Smoking and Health*, eds. S. Lock, L. Reynolds, E. M. Tansey, Amsterdam, Atlanta, 1998, pp. 78–88; B. Tempel, “Symbol and Image: Smoking in Art since the Seventeenth Century”, in: *Smoke: A Global History of Smoking*, op. cit., pp. 206–217.

Besides Molenaer, who addressed taste through a boy with a pipe and a rummer,⁷³ the Flemish painter Adriaen Brouwer highlighted the gustatory aspect of smoking tobacco in several of his genre scenes. According to Konrad Renger, Brouwer staged tobacco's effects on the human body like none other of his contemporaries.⁷⁴ One striking example is the small panel painting in Munich that shows three men occupied with different stages of the smoking process in a tavern-like interior (Fig. 8).



Fig. 8. Adriaen Brouwer, *Smokers (Taste)*, 1625–38, Munich, Alte Pinakothek. From: *Adriaen Brouwer – Master of Emotions: Between Rubens and Rembrandt*, ed. K. Lichtert, exhib. cat. Oudenaarde, Amsterdam, 2018, p. 80

⁷³ *The Sense of Taste*, c. 1628–1629, Amsterdam, Kremer Collection. Cf. *Adriaen Brouwer – Master of Emotions: Between Rubens and Rembrandt*, ed. K. Lichtert, exhib. cat. Oudenaarde, Amsterdam, 2018, p. 198.

⁷⁴ K. Renger, *Adriaen Brouwer und das niederländische Bauerngenre 1600–1660*, Munich, 1986, pp. 35–38.

The main figure on a chair in the foreground is lighting his pipe, his lips constricted and his eyes focused as he strongly sucks at the stem. The other two exemplify the moments shortly before and after: the senses of the male in the middleground seem to be already blurred by the nicotine, whereas the man in the background still concentrates on stuffing his pipe. As part of a whole series of images depicting each one of the senses, this panel must be construed as a representation of taste due to the artist's clear focus on the occupation of the mouth while smoking – at least with regard to the figures in the fore- and middleground.⁷⁵

A comparable incorporation of tobacco smoking into an allegory of gustation can be found in the series of the five senses designed by Dirck Hals and executed by Cornelis van Kittensteyn in 1623.⁷⁶ Following the lead of Goltzius, Hals depicts each sense as a couple, dressed in the latest fashion, sporting ruffs of different dimensions (Fig. 9). These protagonists of *GUSTUS* are positioned on a terrace that opens onto a garden with a tall monument among trees of various heights. While the gentleman sitting on a chair and turning his head towards the observer smokes a long and thin pipe, the lady elegantly holds a drinking vessel at its base. The monkey situated on the parapet of a fountain on the left leaves no room for doubt as to the couple's relation to gustation; it references the older iconographic tradition.⁷⁷ In the inscription beneath the image field, the consumption of tobacco is not taken into consideration. Instead, *GUSTUS* is characterized as an ability to perceive all flavours that demands a certain modesty in order to avoid diseases and pains caused by too much food and drink.⁷⁸

Among Netherlandish allegories of the sense of taste in the first decades of the 17th century, this engraving remains unique. For further allegorical representations of gustation including tobacco smoking one must turn to English prints. Around 1623, the London-based Dutch artist Johan Bara, for example, envisaged taste as a lavishly dressed lady in a three-quarter view, smoking a long pipe.⁷⁹

When smoking is assigned to the realm of smell, as in the etching by De Passe (Fig. 6), what comes to the fore is the olfactory nuisance caused by the smoke. This does not chiefly affect the smoker, but rather those nearby who react to it with clear gestures of dislike. The sense of smell is thus conceived of as a distant sense, carrying on the distinction made by Aristotle. But when smoking is attributed to

75 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 39. See also K. Lichtert, "Adriaen Brouwer: Master of Emotions", in: *Adriaen Brouwer*, op. cit., pp. 79–95, esp. p. 81.

76 Cf. *Immagini del sentire. I cinque sensi nell'arte*, ed. S. Ferino-Pagden, exhib. cat. Cremona, Milan 1996, no. VIII.7, pp. 228–231.

77 Since the 13th century, apes belonged to the iconographic repertory of allegories of taste. Cf. M. Pastoureau, op. cit., p. 142.

78 "Olfactus sequitur GUSTUS, quo lingua sapores / Percipit omnigenos, à curvo adjuta pallato. // Sit modus in Gustu, ne morbos atque dolores / Afferat immodicus Gustus potusque cibique".

79 For more information on Bara's and similar depictions of taste by George Glover: R. Augustin, op. cit., pp. 77–78; M. Jones, *The Print in Early Modern England: A Historical Oversight*, New Haven, London, 2010, pp. 34–38; E. Welch, "The Senses in the Marketplace: Sensory Knowledge in a Material World", in: *A Cultural History of the Senses*, op. cit., pp. 61–86, esp. pp. 82–84.



Fig. 9. Cornelis van Kittensteyn after Dirck Hals, *Taste*, 1623, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum
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taste, as in the print by Hals, tobacco's immediate appeal to the smoker comes into view. Neither the countenance nor the posture of the lady accompanying the young gentleman provides any indication of disgust or rejection. In line with this is the Aristotelian conception of gustation as one of the contact senses: While the male figure smokes, the female figure is about to drink, devoting herself to another intimate sense impression.

Conclusion: The senses in the first smoker's still lifes

If, in the end, we turn our attention to the smoker's still lifes that were created in the first years of tobacco's circulation in taverns and artists' studios, it is not body language that is transferred to the picture plane, but a selection of objects that

convey the herb's appeal to the senses. The first to create a smoker's still life was Pieter Claesz., born in Berchem close to Antwerp, but active especially in Haarlem (Fig. 10).⁸⁰ Thanks to an inscription on the white paper in which the cut tobacco was wrapped and which is shown in the painting now unfolded on the greyish table,⁸¹ we can be certain about the attribution and dating of this early specimen.⁸² Executed in 1622, the small panel arrays everything that is needed for leisure smoking: a plain white clay pipe with a long stem, the tobacco already mentioned, a pan with glowing coals and a bunch of unlit fuses. The smoker's utensils are spread over the table and alternated with other items to drink, eat, and play with, such as a brass pot, a wine and a beer glass, a piece of bread and a knife, dice and a pack of cards. Martina Brunner-Bulst, who has studied the artist and his oeuvre in depth, construes these objects as an allegory of vanitas, each symbolizing the quickly elapsing pleasure in life.⁸³ Yet, taking into account another still life by Claesz., dedicated mainly to fruits and possibly conceived as a counterpart to the *toebakje*, she further proposes that the latter be regarded as a representation of the sense of smell.⁸⁴

Until his death in 1661, Claesz. occupied himself extensively with smoking paraphernalia, creating no fewer than 29 paintings in which they are either treated autonomously or combined with objects stemming from other spheres of activity.⁸⁵ Of these, the still life painted on canvas in 1623 is particularly interesting, since it has been convincingly interpreted as an allegory of all five senses (Fig. 11). It shows various dishes on silver plates – a bread roll, a selection of sweets, and a pie sliced open – placed on a table that is partially covered with a white cloth. To the right of this arrangement, different musical instruments are assembled, and on the left edge of the painting one can detect the familiar smoking equipment. A flute glass filled with red wine, a mirror in a black frame, a golden pocket watch, two bellied bottles of diverse size and a turtle occupy the remaining areas of the visual field. Comparing this ensemble to a vanitas still life by Dirck Matham, printed in 1622, and with recourse also to contemporary allegorical depictions of the senses, Brunner-Bulst identifies Claesz.'s work as a representation of the five modes of sense perception.⁸⁶

80 Cf. M. Brunner-Bulst, *Kritischer Œuvrekatalog...*, p. 155; eadem, "Pieter Claesz. Die Wiederentdeckung eines Malers und seiner Herkunft", in: *Pieter Claesz. Stilleben*, eds. eadem, P. Biesboer, H. D. Gregory, C. Klemm, exhib. cat. Haarlem-Zürich, Stuttgart 2004, pp. 36–60, here p. 42.

81 This particular placement deserves further analysis, for it may be related to a research approach that traces tobacco's sensory appeal to artistic creativity. Cf. R. Augustin, op. cit., pp. 53–74; A. Thum, "Rauchende Künstler", in: *Tabak und Gesellschaft. Vom 'braunen Gold' zum sozialen Stigma*, eds. F. Jacob, G. Dworok, Baden-Baden, 2015, pp. 313–345.

82 For an overview on this subgenre: S. Ebert-Schifferer, op. cit., pp. 129–132; J. Berger Hochstrasser, op. cit., pp. 171–187.

83 M. Brunner-Bulst, *Kritischer Œuvrekatalog...*, p. 155.

84 *Ibid.*, p. 156.

85 Cf. M. Brunner-Bulst, *Kritischer Œuvrekatalog...*, no. 7–9, 12, 15–17, 28–30, 35, 57, 59, 65, 86, 95–96, 105, 130–132, 142, 152–154, 184, 227, 231–232.

86 *Ibid.*, pp. 146–148.



Fig. 10. Pieter Claesz., *Smoker's Still Life*, 1622, private collection. From: M. Brunner-Bulst, *Pieter Claesz., der Hauptmeister des Haarlemer Stillebens im 17. Jahrhundert. Kritischer Œuvre-katalog*, Lingen, 2004, p. 13

According to this reading, the mirror refers to the sense of sight, the food to taste, the smoker's utensils to smell, the instruments to hearing, and the turtle, in line with an earlier iconographic tradition, to the tactile sense.⁸⁷

As these two examples demonstrate, the recreational use of tobacco was allocated to the realm of smell also in *toebakjes*. While this applies to Claesz's *Still Life with Musical Instruments*, the earlier panel containing the artist's signature brings up the question of whether such a division can be upheld in a broader perspective. The pairing of clay pipe and beer glass, taken up in many smoker's still lifes to follow,⁸⁸ not only points to the conceptual conjunction of drinking and smoking in the early 17th century, but, when compared to the allegories and genre scenes depicting taste (Fig. 8 and Fig. 9), also challenges the *toebakje's* sole engagement with the realm of smell.

87 Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 149–150. For more information on the animal and its relation to touch: M. Pastoureau, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

88 Cf. J. Berger Hochstrasser, *op. cit.*, p. 173.



Fig. 11. Pieter Claesz., *Still Life with Musical Instruments*, 1623, Paris, Musée du Louvre. From: *Pieter Claesz. Stilleben*, eds. M. Brunner-Bulst, P. Biesboer, H. D. Gregory, C. Klemm, exhib. cat. Haarlem–Zürich, Stuttgart, 2004, p. 19

This objection is strengthened if we finally turn our attention to the still life by Flegel, touched on in the introductory paragraph of this article (Fig. 1). Flegel was born around 1566 in Olomouc, but is identifiable as a painter only following his relocation to Frankfurt on the Main, sometime before 1594.⁸⁹ He is best known for his banquet pieces and is regarded as a pioneer of still lifes.⁹⁰ Unlike Claesz., Flegel produced very few *toebakjes*, however – only two of them have survived.⁹¹ The way in which he became acquainted with this subgenre of still-life painting is not quite clear. It is generally supposed that Frankfurt and its surroundings, Hanau

89 Cf. K. Wettengl, “Georg Flegel in Frankfurt am Main”, in: *Georg Flegel, 1566–1638: Stilleben*, ed. idem, exhib. cat. Frankfurt, Stuttgart, 1993, pp. 16–28, here p. 16.

90 Cf. W. J. Müller, *Der Maler Georg Flegel und die Anfänge des Stillebens*, Frankfurt, 1956; P. Biesboer, “Pieter Claesz. in Haarlem”, in: *Pieter Claesz. Stilleben*, op. cit., pp. 10–26, esp. pp. 10–11; S. Ebert-Schifferer, review to A.-D. Ketelsen-Volkhardt (see below), *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen*, 2004, 256, pp. 217–234, esp. pp. 226–227; J. Sander, “Die frühe Stillebenmalerei am Main. Die flämischen Emigranten, Georg Flegel und Sebastian Stoskopff”, in: *Das ‘neue’ Frankfurt. Innovationen in der Frankfurter Kunst vom Mittelalter bis heute*, eds. C. Freigang, M. Daus, E. Brockhoff, Frankfurt, Wiesbaden, 2010, pp. 22–34, esp. p. 27. For a catalogue raisonné see H. Seifertová, *Georg Flegel*, Prague, 1991; *Georg Flegel, 1566–1638: Stilleben*, ed. K. Wettengl, exhib. cat. Frankfurt, Stuttgart, new edition, 1999, pp. 296–312; A.-D. Ketelsen-Volkhardt, *Georg Flegel, 1566–1638*, Munich, Berlin, 2003.

91 The second *toebakje*, singular due to the inclusion of a candle, was made in 1631 and is preserved in the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum in Cologne. For further information on the panel see K. Wettengl, cat. 45, in: *Georg Flegel, 1566–1638...*, pp. 133–135.

in particular, were vibrant concentration points for new artistic tendencies, due to a thriving fair and the many immigrants from the southern Netherlands who came in search of a religiously liberal living environment.⁹² In addition, both cities rank among the first places in Germany in which tobacco was traded and soon grown as well.⁹³ On that account, Birken also refers to Hanau and Frankfurt in his *Die Truckene Trunkenheit*, discussed above.⁹⁴

In an article of 1979, Claus Grimm proposed that Flegel's *toebakje* be construed as an allegorical depiction of all five senses. According to this reading, the smoker's utensils arrayed in the painting should pertain to the sense of touch (the rolling of the tobacco leaves), of smell (the pipe), and of hearing (the fuse).⁹⁵ This rather far-fetched interpretation has since been eclipsed by Kurt Wettengl's more convincing approach taking into account the strawberries' link to humoral pathology.⁹⁶ Ascribing them the elemental qualities of "cold" and "moist", Johann Dryander advised already in 1557 that strawberries be eaten before other dishes to aid digestion.⁹⁷ Again due to their great moistness, Max Rumpolt later included them in one of his recipes, mixing them with wine and grated bread, a mixture that he considered particularly tasty.⁹⁸ Eventually, Johann Heinrich Zedler more explicitly stated, in his *Universal-Lexikon* (1732–1754), that the elemental qualities of strawberries could be balanced with wine.⁹⁹

As Wettengl suggests, the combination of fruits and wine in Flegel's painting, emphasized by the formal analogy between the strawberries and the rummer's berry-like decoration, could refer to humoral pathological associations such as these. He furthermore adds tobacco, usually conceived of as "warm" and "dry",¹⁰⁰ to this interpretative scheme, considering it a counterpart to the strawberry's elemental

92 Cf. G. Bott, "Niederländer bringen die Stillebenmalerei an den Main", in: *Die Magie der Dinge. Stillebenmalerei 1500–1800*, ed. J. Sander, exhib. cat. Frankfurt, Ostfildern, 2008, pp. 85–92; J. Sander, op. cit.

93 Cf. G. Schnapper-Arndt, *Studien zur Geschichte der Lebenshaltung in Frankfurt a. M. während des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts*, ed. K. Bräuer, vol. 1, Frankfurt, 1915, pp. 105–107; *Brücke zwischen den Völkern. Ausstellung zur Geschichte der Frankfurter Messe*, eds. P. Stahl, R. Hoede, D. Skala, Frankfurt, 1991, pp. 184–189; *Blauer Dunst und flinke Finger. Der Tabak und die Zigarrenmenschen an Main und Kinzig*, ed. Archiv Frauenleben im Main-Kinzig-Kreis e. V., Hanau, 2009, pp. 28–35.

94 S. von Birken, op. cit., p. 108.

95 C. Grimm, op. cit., p. 57. Furthermore, the sense of taste is associated with the two strawberries and the sense of sight with the light reflections off of the rummer.

96 K. Wettengl, *Die Mahlzeitenstilleben von Georg Flegel*, Osnabrück, 1983, pp. 107–108, 130–134; idem, "Die 'gedeckten Tische' des Georg Flegel", in: *Georg Flegel, 1566–1638*, op. cit., pp. 71–90, esp. pp. 81–82; *ibid.*, cat. 40, p. 126.

97 J. Dryander, *Artzenei Spiegel*, Frankfurt, 1557, fol. 34r.

98 M. Rumpolt, *Ein new Kochbuch*, Frankfurt, 1581, p. CXLIIIIV.

99 J. H. Zedler, *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon aller Wissenschaften und Künste*, vol. 8, Halle–Leipzig, 1734, col. 1529.

100 S. von Birken, op. cit., p. 97. Birken here refers to Monardes and others to determine tobacco's "temperament".

qualities.¹⁰¹ It was precisely these qualities that made the herb a remedy for phlegmatic people in the eyes of some authors, and the inhalation of its odorous smoke an appropriate medical treatment.¹⁰²

Against this backdrop, Flegel's smoker's still life appears as a witty recourse to the medical appreciation of tobacco as a medicine. At the same time, the sense of taste comes to the fore in this work, for the humoral pathological associations noted by Wettengl go hand in hand with references to the particular appeal of the sense of taste or, as a continuation of the same, to the digestive process. However, the sense of smell is not necessarily excluded in this context. On the contrary, the *toebakjes* by Claesz. and Flegel assemble objects that are used equally in the allegories of the senses and in the genre scenes discussed above, to visualize the interconnection between smell and taste. Without clearly assigning the objects to any one of the senses by means of bodily gestures, symbolic companions from the animal world or even captions, the smoker's still lifes exhibit a certain interpretative openness. This vagueness allows them to be related both to the sense of smell and taste – and ultimately, of course, to the sense of sight, which is engaged in the pictorial differentiation of various materials and surfaces.

Later smoker's still lifes often include precious tobacco tins or references to tobacco brands that by then were well known. They thus attest to the changing attitudes towards tobacco – in the course of the 17th century, smoking became more and more socially acceptable, the worldwide trade of the herb expanded and tobacco came to be not only smoked, but also sniffed and chewed. The early *toebakjes*, however, first and foremost testify to the new sensory stimuli that came from tobacco at the start of its triumphal march through Europe.

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101 K. Wettengl, *Mahlzeitenstilleben...*, p. 134.

102 S. von Birken, op. cit., pp. 138–139. Cf. K. Wettengl, *Mahlzeitenstilleben...*, pp. 132–133. The curative effect of tobacco smoke was also the subject of a dissertation completed in Gießen as early as 1628. Cf. M. C. Enke, op. cit., p. 127.

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Smell and Taste in Art: Suggestions towards a Systematic Approach

Abstract

The reflections outlined in this paper on smell and taste in modern and contemporary art are divided into three larger chapters: an introductory literature review is followed by a general discussion of sense perception in terms of philosophy, physiology, and intellectual history; and this forms the backdrop for the main body, in which eight different approaches to olfactory and gustatory art are proposed. These categories take different levels as their starting point: for instance, they illuminate the significance of smell and taste as materialities, they address aspects of the process of perception, they posit questions concerning the affect of smell and taste, they consider spatial and temporal aspects, and they discuss the relation between perception and knowledge. The main body of the paper is concerned with these categories and their respective theoretical background, also providing concrete examples of relevant works of art.

Keywords: senses, synesthetic, smell, taste, perception, perception spatial aspect, perception – bodily aspect, perception – temporal aspect, presence, senses, physiology of the senses

Introduction

Until recently, art based on the senses of smell or taste was an art-historical blind spot. In the wake of the discipline's intense engagement with seeing, and subsequently also tactile perception and hearing, however, the phenomena of smell and taste seem now to receive an equal surge of interest.

This contribution attempts, on the one hand, to draw together and abstract the insights found to this point, while on the other hand, it proposes a set of methodologies for investigating a disparate field of heterogeneous artworks and therefore hopes to serve as a base for further study and research. Eight largely interdiscipli-

nary approaches are presented, each concerning specific aspects of art-making and contemporary debates in research. These categories, combined with especially striking examples and short background explanations, structure the main body of this essay. Only those artworks are considered that explicitly and purposefully integrate smell and taste as components, that is, that ask the recipient to actually smell or taste something. Hence representatives of Eat Art are excluded, as they are mainly concerned with reflections on an expanded concept of art and the transience of the corresponding artworks.¹ Similarly, works such as Tiravanija's *Pad Thais*, in which the artist prepares and serves food to gallery visitors, follow Beuys' *Social Sculpture* without explicit political claims; as relational settings, they are more interested in interrogating the social structures of the gallery and museum sector than in the actual perception of taste.² Consciously excluded, too, have been the cinematic examples, even though overlapping concerns should certainly be acknowledged.³

State of research

An engagement with sense perception as such in art studies is still relatively recent. It begins in the early 1990s, initially focusing on vision.⁴ With the iconic turn and its interest in the image, seeing was renegotiated in all its facets: it came to be

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- 1 On Eat Art and the use of food in art, see D. Kimmich, S. Schahadat eds., "Essen", *Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften*, 2012, 1; H. Holzhey, E. Evers eds., *Eating the Universe. Vom Essen in der Kunst*, Köln, 2009; H. Lemke, *Die Kunst des Essens: Eine Ästhetik des kulinarischen Geschmacks*, Bielefeld, 2007; D. Spoerri, *Eat Art. Daniel Spoerri's Gastronomoptikum*, Hamburg, 2006; C. Korsmeyer ed., *The Taste Culture Reader. Experiencing Food and Drink*, Oxford, New York, 2005; G. Neumann, H. J. Teuteberg, A. Wierlacher eds., *Essen und kulturelle Identität. Europäische Perspektiven*, Berlin, 1997.
 - 2 See J. Rebentisch, *Theorien der Gegenwartskunst zur Einführung*, Hamburg, 2013, v.a. pp. 58–91; S. Feldhoff, *Partizipative Kunst. Genese, Typologie und Kritik einer Kunstform zwischen Spiel und Politik*, Bielefeld, 2013, pp. 136–139, as well as catalogue entries K101/K102.
 - 3 The reception of scholarship from film studies is highly relevant due to the degree of theoretical overlap, in particular the study by V. Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts. Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*, Berkeley, 2004. On the question of sense perception in the cinema, see also S. Marschall, F. Liptay eds., *Mit allen Sinnen. Gefühl und Empfindung im Kino*, Marburg, 2006; A. Autelitano, V. Innocenti, V. Re eds., *I cinque sensi del cinema*, Udine, 2005.
 - 4 There is, by now, a significant body of literature on vision in the field of art history. An overview may be found in S. Wenk, S. Schade eds., *Studien zur visuellen Kultur. Einführung in ein transdisziplinäres Forschungsfeld*, Berlin, 2011; R. Konersmann, C. Wilson, A. v. Lühe, "Sehen", in: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 9, eds. J. Ritter, K. Gründer, Basel, 1995, column 121–161, is foundational. The following engage with select aspects of vision as a phenomenon of perception and with contexts from social history and the humanities: M. F. Zimmermann, "Seeing", in: *Vision in Motion. Streams of Sensation and Configurations of Time*, ed. M. F. Zimmermann, Berlin, 2016, pp. 69–108; S. Horstkotte, K. Leonhard eds., *Seeing Perception*, Cambridge, 2007; B. Stafford, *Echo Objects: The Cognitive Work of Images*, Chicago, 2007; N. Bryson, *Das Sehen und die Malerei: die Logik des Blickes*, Munich, 2001; R. Kondersmann ed., *Kritik des Sehens*, Leipzig, 1997; J. Elkins, *The Object Stares Back: On the Nature of Seeing*, San Diego, 1996; M. Jay, *Downcast*

understood as a conscious activity influenced by upbringing and cultural practices, processes, and rules, by media and exhibitions, that is, as more than a passive process of data reception. As part of this wave, the phenomena of hearing and the tactile sense subsequently also came to be analyzed in their respective contexts and discourses.⁵

Finally, in the 2000s, research also turned to the previously neglected senses of smell and taste, at first by including them in the larger, interdisciplinary studies of the senses or in the framework of tightly demarcated considerations from the fields of cultural history, history or sociology.⁶ Over the past ten years, there has been a striking increase of research on the subject.⁷ While it would exceed the scope of this paper to engage in detail with every title in the field, some overarching observations may be made. The field of investigation has been widened, methodological approaches have become increasingly differentiated. We have seen the emergence and sharpening of particular questions and topics. There are broadly conceived studies that provide an overview of artworks working with smell and taste, situating them in an art-historical context. Often, they span both visual representations of smell and taste and the actual use of these stimuli. These studies stand juxtaposed to those interested in a particular historical period or a tightly framed subject matter, for example surrealist exhibition practices, the use of smell in performance work or

Eyes. The denigration of vision in twentieth-century French thought, Berkeley, 1994; J. Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge, 1992.

- 5 C. Cox, *Sonic Flux. Sound, art, and metaphysics*, Chicago, 2018; J. Gerlach, P. Weibl eds., *Sound Art. Klang als Medium der Kunst*, Karlsruhe, 2012; R. Cosima, M. Ammer eds., *See this Sound. Versprechungen von Bild und Ton*, Köln, 2010; J. Moshenska, *Feeling Pleasures. The Sense of touch in Renaissance England*, Oxford, 2014; M. Rath, J. Trempler, I. Wenderholm eds., *Das haptische Bild. Körperhafte Bilderfahrung in der Neuzeit*, Berlin, 2013; U. Zeuch, *Umkehr der Sinneshierarchie. Herder und die Aufwertung des Tastsinns seit der frühen Neuzeit*, Tübingen, 2000; U. Brandes ed., *Tasten*, Göttingen, 1996.
- 6 P. Di Bello, G. Koureas eds., *Art, history and the senses*, Burlington, 2010; J. Drobnick, *The Smell Culture Reader*, Oxford, 2006; N. Blancardi ed., *I cinque sensi. The five senses*, Florence, 2002; C. Classen, *The Color of Angels: Cosmology, gender and the aesthetic imagination*, London, 1998; C. Neumann ed., *Der Sinn der Sinne*, Göttingen, 1998; U. Brandes, C. Neumann eds., *Geschmackssache*, Göttingen, 1996; C. Classen, *Worlds of Sense: Exploring the senses in history and across cultures*, London, 1993; A. Corbin, *Pesthauch und Blütenduft. Eine Geschichte des Geruchs*, Frankfurt a. M., 1992; D. Ackermann, *Die schöne Macht der Sinne*, Munich, 1991.
- 7 V. Henshaw, K. McLean, D. Medway et al. eds., *Designing with Smell*, London, 2017; R. Fleck, *Von allen Sinnen. Wahrnehmung in der Kunst*, Vienna, 2016; D. King, *Kunst riechen. Duftproben zur Vermittlung olfaktorisch bildender Werke*, Oberhausen, 2016; C. Jaquet ed., *L'art olfactif contemporain*, Paris, 2015; L. Ahlers, F. Bacci, M. Diaconu eds., *Belle Haleine – Der Duft der Kunst*, Basel, 2015; C. Classen ed., *A Cultural History of the Senses in the Age of Empire*, London, 2014; V. Henshaw, *Urban Smellscapes: Understanding and Designing with Smell in the City*, London, 2014; S. Banes, A. Lepecki eds., *The Senses in Performance*, Hoboken, 2012; Ch. Burr ed., *The Art of Scent*, New York Museum of Arts and Design, New York, 2012; F. Bacci, D. Melcher eds., *Art and the Senses*, Oxford, 2011; R. Curtis, M. Glöde, G. Koch eds., *Synästhesie-Effekte*, Munich, 2010; A. Gott dang, R. Wohlfahrt eds., *Mit allen Sinnen. Sehen, Hören, Schmecken, Riechen und Fühlen in der Kunst*, Leipzig, 2010; F. Quiviger, *The Sensory World of Italian Renaissance Art*, London, 2010.

the aspect of synesthesia. Finally, there are texts from inside the art world: texts by curators on the practicalities of handling the ephemeral works, and texts by artists on their pieces, the theoretical background, and the practical difficulties involved.

In terms of methodology, the studies established thus far differ greatly, ranging from image analyses to reception theories, to practical instructions for dealing with ephemeral media. Nevertheless, some narratives have emerged as central (e.g. smell and memory), and certain terminologies have been established (e.g. *smellscapes*⁸).

Furthermore, there are studies from other disciplines that provide valuable resources. In 2006, Diaconu dedicated to the secondary senses of smelling, touching, and tasting a foundational study conducted from a phenomenological perspective.⁹ McHugh's cultural-historical study *Sandalwood and Carrion* deals with the role of smell in India, opening view to some differences and peculiarities, and Reinarz' *Past Scents* presents multi-layered historical and sociological perspectives on the use and codification of smells.¹⁰ Kügler's handbook *Die Macht der Nase* (The Power of the Nose) takes a similar direction, but is grounded in the aesthetics of religion.¹¹

To be able to comprehend this ephemeral and subjective form of art in all its breadth and depth, it seems necessary at this point to consolidate the following approaches:

- increased reflection on gustatory and olfactory perception in art and their aesthetic significance, not least in relation to the other senses,
- further differentiation of the content and the development of overarching research questions,
- systematization of methodologies that would make it possible to assess all artworks working with smell or taste according to an established scheme,
- standardization and stronger contextualization of various approaches with view to making visible art-immanent discourses include the whole contemporary art and the history of art.

8 This is a neologism linking together "smell" and "landscape" to suggest that we move in environments co-determined by smells. First established in C. Classen, D. Howes, A. Synnott eds., *Aroma. The cultural history of smell*, London, 1994, p. 97.

9 M. Diaconu, *Tasten-Riechen-Schmecken. Eine Ästhetik der anästhesierten Sinne*, Würzburg, 2005; She continued to contribute to discussions, most recently with a large-scale study on sensory landscapes in public urban space using the example of Vienna: M. Diaconu, G. Buchbauer, J. Skone, K.-G. Bernhardt, E. Menasse-Wiesbauer eds., *Sensorisches Labor Wien. Urbane Haptik- und Geruchsforschung*, Vienna, 2011.

10 J. McHugh, *Sandalwood and Carrion. Smell in Indian religion and culture*, Oxford, 2012; J. Reinarz, *Past Scents. Historical perspectives on smell*, Urbana/Illinois, 2014.

11 J. Kügler ed., *Die Macht der Nase. Zur religiösen Bedeutung des Duftes. Religionsgeschichte – Bibel – Liturgie*, Stuttgart, 2000.

Smell and taste – foundational reflections

Smelling and Tasting in the Hierarchies of the Senses – Philosophical Approaches

The problems of integrating impressions of the secondary senses – whether tactile or, as in our case, olfactory or gustatory – into a coherent system are only addressed by a look into the history of philosophy. Indeed, the given epistemological hierarchy of the senses that posits seeing, followed by hearing, at the top, stems from antiquity. The senses were always considered in relation to knowledge, and studied accordingly.

In terms of this hierarchy of the senses, the advent of aesthetics in the 18th century brought little change. As a philosophical discipline, aesthetics is concerned with the meaning of sense perception and the knowledge gained from it. Baumgarten (1714–1762) defined it as a science based on the senses.¹² He perceived aesthetics – its knowledge acquired through the senses – as an extension of the philosophical system in which logic and purely rational knowledge were ranked as primary. Baumgarten’s conception, however, was too comprehensive and broad to be transformed into a coherent system. While he understood aesthetic taste comprehensively as the “judgment of the senses”, Kant (1724–1804) defined it more narrowly, emphasizing the “ability to judge the beautiful”.¹³ With Hegel (1770–1831), focus shifted to a scrutiny of art theory and the beauty of art in its various aspects. Aesthetics, then, through a conceptual shortening, understood itself as the philosophy of art and as the theory of the beautiful. The senses as physical transmitters of impressions and reliable, attendant companions of knowledge were reduced to seeing and hearing. Attentiveness to active perception and actual tasting, prevalent in Baumgarten’s writings, was lost. According to Hegel, taste (as one of the senses) is only concerned “with the material as such and the immediate sensuous qualities thereof”.¹⁴ The intellectual features of an artwork remain inaccessible to it.¹⁵ Therefore, taste is less suited to pass aesthetic judgments. This devaluation within the hierarchy of the senses has a long philosophical tradition.

Can taste contribute to knowledge?

Reflecting on perception and knowledge (and setting the course for later discussions), Plato and Aristotle had already contributed to a devaluation of the gustatory sense.¹⁶

12 A. Baumgarten, *Texte zur Grundlegung der Ästhetik*, Hamburg, 1983, p. 79.

13 I. Kant, *Critique of pure reason*, New York, 1965, §1.

14 G. W. Hegel, *Aesthetics. Lectures on fine art*, Oxford, 1988, vol. 1, p. 36.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 38–39: “Consequently the sensuous aspect of art is related only to the two theoretical senses of sight and hearing, while smell, taste and touch have to do with matter as such and its immediately sensible qualities – smell with material volatility in air, taste with material liquidification of objects, touch with warmth, cold, smoothness, etc. For this reason, art cannot have to do with artistic objects, which are meant to maintain themselves in their real independence and allow of no purely sensuous relationship”.

16 Plato, *The Dialogues of Plato*, Oxford, 1968, vol. II *Republic*, p. 75. See also *ibid.*, vol. III *Timaios*, p. 648.

Kant, too, considers the sense of sight as the most elevated one. It is the one which remains furthest removed from physical proximity to the object and which directly contributes to knowledge, morals, and art.¹⁷ Taste, by contrast, is dismissed as follows: “To what organic sense do we owe the least and which seems to be the most dispensable? The sense of smell”, writes Kant. “It does not pay us to cultivate it or to refine it in order to gain enjoyment; this sense can pick up more objects of aversion than of pleasure (especially in crowded places) and, besides, the pleasure coming from the sense of smell cannot be other than fleeting and transitory”.¹⁸ Hegel, in his aesthetics, follows Kant in this respect and puts emphasis on the senses of sight and hearing due to their being able to deliver undistorted sense data through a “purely theoretical process”.¹⁹

Through the bodily senses the subject experiences the object in immediate proximity. This lack of physical distance is interpreted as a deficiency, since it needs the necessary reflexive distance. They are too closely associated with life-sustaining functions like eating or smelling, pleasure or pain, to be considered as channels of aesthetic experience.²⁰ Kant accordingly states that the sense of taste is basic and subjective, its experience serves “more for pleasure, than for the knowledge of the outer object”.²¹ With only few exceptions, this devaluation of smell and taste continued far into the 20th century. In *Visual Thinking* Arnheim writes: “One can indulge in smells and tastes, but one can hardly think in them”.²²

The problem of the ephemeral and synesthesia

What complicates matters is the peculiar nature of scents and flavours in and as objects: the stimuli offered are of an ephemeral kind, they cannot really be recorded and they are received impurely, synesthetically. No favourable premise can be found for the western value system, which prefers that which can be recorded, which is constant. Art is defined as something that stands above the flux of the ephemeral and that, as a result of its permanent nature, lays claim to objectivity and its portion of being.²³ Only in the course of the 20th century, stimulated by Baudelaire’s connection of the fleeting with the idea of *modernité*, did this attitude toward the ephemeral – and with it the system of aesthetic value – undergo fundamental changes. Incessantly, the artists of the 20th century pushed back the boundaries of art and widened the understanding of art with novel means of expression. Limitations in form and content came to be questioned, as were traditional genres, perceived now as too narrow. The human body, everyday objects, rubbish, light, sound, and movement: all of these became materials for artistic contemplation. This development

17 I. Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, Carbondale, IL, 1978, §17 and § 18.

18 Ibid., p. 46.

19 G. W. Hegel, op. cit., p.36

20 Cf. Plato, op. cit., vol. III *Timaios*, 70, p. 657.

21 Kant, op. cit., § 14.

22 R. Arnheim, *Visual Thinking*, Berkeley, 1969, p. 19.

23 Cf. Th. W. Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 7, Frankfurt a. M., 1970, p. 48–49.

also involved art practices shifting toward a focus on the sense perception and the human sense apparatus.

The physiology of the senses

Taste

Smell and taste are complex physiological phenomena: stimuli trigger chemical processes to send information to the brain. More than 400 taste papillae on the tongue provide the brain with information on what is being eaten, with the range of taste perceptions including salty, bitter, sweet, sour, and umami, the Japanese description for a savoury taste mainly evoked by amino acids found in meat. This range is further complemented by qualities such as piercing, spicy, tart, zesty, hot, and cold. When we chew food, fragrances reach the olfactory epithelium, which is significantly involved in receiving the sense impression and thus in forming our judgment of the a . Via afferent cranial nerves, the taste buds are connected to the medulla oblongata and the hypothalamus. This connection to the hypothalamus shared by taste and smell plays a fundamental role in the emotional impact of gustatory and olfactory sense impressions.²⁴

Smell

The perceptual process of smelling is structured similarly. Olfactory cells are found in the so-called cilia in the nasal mucosa. Via the fila olfactoria, information on smell first reaches the bulbus olfactorius, then the diencephalon, and the cerebral cortex. This is the location of the so-called limbic system, which is extremely interesting in this context as it is one of the early parts of the brain to have evolved and is closely tied to memory, emotions, and affect.²⁵ Smell-related information directly reaches this area, triggering reactions such as disgust, excitement or memories in an immediate way not rationally filtered.²⁶ Recent studies have found that the human nose may be able to recognize up to one trillion smells – which would mean that smell is the most receptive of all the senses.²⁷

Yet precisely this sense is met with a lack of sensitivity for breadth as well as with a striking conceptual poverty when it comes to verbalizing the transient sense impressions provided. What is lacking is a terminology for expressing the phenom-

24 H. Hatt, „Geschmack und Geruch“, in: *Physiologie des Menschen*, eds. R. Schmidt, F. Lang, G. Thews, Berlin, 2017, p. 318.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 318.

26 S. Chu, J. J. Downes, “Odour-evoked autobiographical memories: Psychological investigations of Proustian phenomena”, *Chemical Senses*, 2000, 25, no. 1, pp. 111–116; D. Press, S. C. Mintz, “The Smell of Nature: Olfaction, knowledge and the environment”, *Ethics, Place & Environment*, 2000, 3, no. 3, pp. 173–186.

27 C. Bushdid, M. O. Magnasco, L. B. Vosshall, A. Keller, “Humans can Discriminate more than 1 Trillion Olfactory Stimuli”, *Science*, 2014, 343, no. 6177, pp. 1370–72.

ena of smell and taste as adequately as those of seeing or hearing, a language that would be able to record nuances, to describe these phenomena in a differentiated way, and thus, finally, to make judgments. This linguistic lacuna ultimately has effects regarding possible aesthetic theorizations: where there are no words, it is difficult to formulate a theory.

Preliminary conclusions

Several of the points made so far can form a base for the reflections to follow. Firstly, as a philosophical discipline, traditional aesthetics is primarily concerned with the theory of art and the beautiful in art. The classical hierarchy of the senses has never been questioned. Only the “theoretical senses” of seeing and hearing have been considered as imbued with aesthetic potential, and have consequently been ascribed their own artistic genres (visual arts and music). Secondly, the secondary senses have been neglected for a variety of reasons: they are thought of as unreliable, bound to the body’s vital functions, their stimuli are transient, synesthetic, and they work through affect.

Smell and taste in art

In art, we can distinguish between two foundational forms of engagement with smell and taste as phenomena: mediated representation and immediate presentation.

Smell and taste in a mediated representation

Iconographic Patterns

In the course of the centuries, certain iconographic citations and patterns have emerged for the visual representation of smell and taste (and reactions to smell and taste). In the depiction of the raising of Lazarus, for instance, the witnesses of the miraculous awakening put their hands to their nose as the deceased already “stinketh”,²⁸ as Martha says to Jesus. This is a universal gesture found in works ranging from early frescoes to Giotto, to Marcantonio Raimondi, and even to Gros’ *Bonaparte visits the Plague Stricken in Jaffa* (1804).

Allegories and personifications

Allegories, personifications, and representations of the five senses in the form of genre scenes were also highly popular.²⁹ In Botticelli’s *Birth of Venus* (1482), rose petals

28 John 11:39 (KJV).

29 B. Welzel has engaged with the *Five Senses* by Jan Brueghel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens in numerous publications treating aspects such as iconographic traditions, the rivalry between

surround the approaching Zephyr, filling the air with pleasant smells, while Titian's *Venus of Urbino* (1538) is resting on a mattress embroidered with roses, her right hand sensually playing with a bouquet of roses.³⁰ Louis Finson's *The Five Senses* (1600) assembles the allegories of the five senses in the form of a joyous table company. The painting certainly implies moralizing qualities, as sensual pleasure and moral decline are seen as going hand in hand. Again, we encounter philosophy's low appreciation of the more immediate senses. In these genre depictions, smell and taste appear in the form of everyday objects or attributes, and point to an allegorical reading.

Still lifes

Other image themes such as still lifes refrain from these references and enrich the representation, as it were, by means of metonymic evocations and associations. Examples of the Dutch paintings from the celebrated, unprecedented realist period impressively prompt the observer to imagine smell and taste, indeed render this process part of the image concept. Thus Cardinal Borromeo (1564–1631) praised a flower still life by Jan Brueghel the Elder (1568–1625) saying that in their splendor and richness, the painted flowers stood in competition with nature, halting the seasons. In his autobiographical notes, the patron emphasizes how much the bouquet's opulence and its colours mean to him especially in winter: "Then when winter encumbers and restricts everything with ice, I have enjoyed from sight – and even imagined odour, if not real – fake flowers [...] expressed in painting [...] and in these flowers I have wanted to see the variety of colors, not fleeting, as some of the flowers that are found (in nature), but stable and very enduring".³¹ The simulation trumps the original; in this case, the painting wins the paragone between art and nature. Significantly, Borromeo as part of his topical praise emphasizes the painter's achievement by giving the visual impression an olfactory double: the flowers are represented so convincingly that it is possible to smell them. The imagined smell of the flowers co-constitutes the quality of the still life, reinforcing the illusion. In this sense, still lifes are, not least, painted "apparatuses of knowledge"³² prompting us to reflect on sense perception and the interrelation between the senses.

art and nature, the knowledge of the senses, perception across the media, and the question of body memory. One of her final essays on the subject is, significantly, called "Sehen mit allen Sinnen" (Seeing with All Senses); summarizing many of the aspects mentioned, it also provides extensive bibliographical references: B. Welzel, "Sehen mit allen Sinnen. Die Fünf Sinne am erzherzoglichen Hof von Isabella und Albrecht in Brüssel am Beginn des 17. Jahrhunderts", in: eds. A. Gott dang, R. Wohlfahrt, op. cit., pp. 11–30.

30 F. Quiviger, op. cit., pp. 125–136.

31 This is the English translation of the unpublished Italian original from P. M. Jones, "Federico Borromeo as a Patron of Landscapes and Still Lifes: Christian Optimism in Italy ca. 1600", *The Art Bulletin*, 1988, no. 70, pp. 261–272, here 269; B. Brenninkmeijer-de Rooij, *Roots of seventeenth-century flower painting. Miniatures, plant books, paintings*, Leiden, 1996, pp. 47–71 treats Brueghel's painting, its art-historical context, and its reception extensively.

32 B. Gockel ed., *Vom Objekt zum Bild*, Berlin, 2012, p. 13.

Digression: Image perception as synesthetic experience

Painting and sculpture primarily address the eye – yet, taste and smell are often implicitly included. This ambition was boosted by the discovery of the central perspective in the Renaissance. While furthering a certain rationalization and calculability, and hence the primacy of the eye, the discovery led to a shift in the status of the image as medium on the other. The illusionary space evoked now accorded with the observer's psycho-physical space. An implied claim of authenticity was extended to all aspects of what was represented, paintings being experienced synesthetically. That is to say, via the optical approach all other senses were addressed, too, just as seeing takes place in a synesthetic context in our everyday lives. Seeing stimulates the imagination in its passive (receiving an impression) and active dimension (producing images).³³ Correspondingly, the art historian Hans Belting responds to the question of whether image perception is always a synesthetic experience with a clear and unambiguous "yes".³⁴ Mieke Bal, too, emphasizes the concurrence of visual and other sense perceptions when stating that "vision is itself inherently synaesthetic"³⁵.

Smell and taste as immediate aesthetic experience

The examples given so far have presented smell and taste as mediated phenomena in the form of sense-activation or body memory. The actual use of fragrance and flavour in artistic practice, however, could only occur once certain preconditions were fulfilled.

Les Nabis and the idea of the synthesis of the arts

The first time viewers were actually provided with smells in an art context was during the theater performances of the symbolists and Les Nabis, who specifically used smells to accompany actions or images.³⁶ In this respect, symbolist theater mirrors a more fundamental paradigm shift in late-nineteenth-century literature and art.³⁷

33 This thought is borrowed from H. Wenzel's remarks on reading (in the medieval context): H. Wenzel, *Hören und Sehen. Schrift und Bild. Kultur und Gedächtnis im Mittelalter*, Munich, 1995, p. 329.

34 K. Sachs-Hombach, *Wege zur Bildwissenschaft*, Köln, 2004, p. 146.

35 M. Bal, "Visual Essentialism and the Object of Visual Culture", *Journal of Visual Culture*, 2003, 2, no. 1, pp. 5–32, here 9.

36 M. Fleischer, "Incense & Decadents. Symbolist theatre's use of scent", in: S. Banes, A. Lepecki eds., op. cit., pp. 105–114; G. Aitken, "Die Nabis im Bannkreis des Theaters", in: *Die Nabis. Propheten der Moderne*, eds. C. Frèches-Thory, U. Perucchi-Petri, Munich, 1998, pp. 399–406.

37 "[I]n the time from about 1880 to 1910, significant shifts take place in olfactory perception. [...] [Smells] are no longer mere object smell, but they enter into an interactive perceptual relation with that vibratory organism the modern human has become, breaking down borders of subject and object, transgressing present and past, linking immediacy and memory".

In the stage directions for Wagner's operas, we can recognize one of the roots of the fin-de-siècle's predilection for synesthesia and the interweaving of the arts.³⁸ The idea of the synthesis of the arts, of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, finds its perhaps clearest crystallization in the Wagnerian *Klangbild* (sound-image), an amalgamate of music and visual art formed in the space and time of a performance. The individual arts are coupled to one another, sense impressions multiplied, organs expanded. Influenced by Wagner, Baudelaire only little later formulates his synesthetic concept of "correspondences": "Like prolonged echoes mingling far away, in a unity tenebrous and profound, vast as the night and as the limpid day, perfumes, sounds, and colors respond".³⁹

The expanded concept of art in the 20th century

In the course of the 20th century, the boundary lines were further shifted. The concept of art expands, genre divisions dissolve – processes which lead to an entanglement of media that Adorno described, with negative connotations, as a "fraying".⁴⁰ In further developments, we see the use of new materials, the interpenetration of art and non-art, and a shift from "image space" to "experiential space" in terms of an aesthetics of reception. The "work" and the terminologies tied to it (form, originality, autonomy, aura, duration, self-sufficiency) become obsolete. Instead, art begins to propagate the event, aspects of the performative. It seeks to trigger thought processes, to emerge in performance, to work on a sensory level, to actively include the observer, and ultimately to replace the traditional notion of a closed work by the dialogic "art experience". As P. Weibel puts it, "the object was replaced by open events, actions, processes, games, instructions, concepts. The passive observer became a co-creator, a player involved, a participant. The boundary lines between the various social actors on the field of art and between aesthetic and non-aesthetic objects and events became partly permeable and invisible".⁴¹ In line with Reben-tisch, one might add that such an aesthetic experience does not negate the object, rather, the experience only solidifies in the process between subject and object, both undergoing a process of transformation.⁴²

H. Rindisbacher, *The Smell of Books. A Cultural Study of Olfactory Perception in Literature*, Ann Arbor, 1992, p. 147.

38 See, for instance, the directions for Tannhäuser or the later treatise *Religion und Kunst* (1880). On the definition of the term "Gesamtkunstwerk" and Wagner's own use of the term, see D. Borchmeyer, *Das Theater Richard Wagners. Idee – Dichtung – Wirkung*, Stuttgart, 2013.

39 C. Baudelaire, *Selected poems*, Harmondsworth, 1975, p.43.

40 Th. W. Adorno, „Die Kunst und die Künste“, in: idem, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 10, 1: *Prismen: Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft*, Frankfurt a. M., 1977, pp. 432–453, here, concerning the term of "Verfransung", p. 433.

41 P. Weibel: „Kunst als offenes Handlungsfeld“, in: ed. P. Weibel, *Offene Handlungsfelder*, Köln, 1999, pp. 9–21, here p. 12.

42 J. Reben-tisch, „Die anti-objektivistische Wende – Kunst nach 1960“, in: *Werke im Wandel & Zeit-genössische Kunst zwischen Werk und Wirkung*, ed. L. Blunck, Munich, 2005, pp. 23–38.

After the symbolist beginnings, smell and taste appeared more and more frequently in art, but still remained rare phenomena far into the 20th century. The futurists hosted unusual dinners, Duchamp developed a perfume, the surrealists enhanced their exhibitions through smells. Only in the 1960s, smell is increasingly used as an artistic medium, showing its olfactory presence in ephemeral objects and performance art.

Preliminary conclusions

Several relevant aspects the scholarship of smell and taste needs to take into account ensue from the developments and artworks highlighted up to this point.

Materials

On the level of materiality, these include the physical characteristics of scent and flavour: to a large extent, they are bound to a carrier; they appear impurely, that is, often in nuanced combination with further scents and flavours; and they are fleeting and ephemeral. Their reception takes place via direct physical contact: it is necessary to either incorporate them (taste) or to be relatively close to the source (smell). Taste refers to a particular object. Scent, disembodied, has spatial qualities, as it expands.

Smell and taste impressions are strongly subject-dependent: it is difficult, this at least the prejudice, to objectify them. What is more, it is difficult to create artificially the non-discursive entities of taste and smell. It is hard to reproduce them identically and to limit them spatially, and they are bound to materialities.⁴³

The Recipient

Smell and taste belong to the so-called secondary senses. For them, unlike with seeing and hearing, neither is our sensory apparatus trained to perceive nuances, nor do we have a mature conceptual apparatus. The process of perception always takes place in direct contact with the object, bound to space and time. Perceptions of taste and smell are directly forwarded into the limbic system via the nerve tracts, where they can trigger physical reactions, affects, and unfiltered memories.

Aesthetic Experience

By implication, the process of reception takes place bound to space and time, the sense perception appearing not in isolation, but coupled to others. Frequently, visual, acoustic or tactile impressions accompany the process of smelling or tasting and form a network of association. The aesthetic experience unfolds in the form of

⁴³ See also Mersch on perception and technology: D. Mersch, *Ereignis und Aura*, Frankfurt a. M., 2002, pp. 90–97.

directly perceived sense experience. It can be reflected on and evaluated only after its occurrence. Artists purposefully work with scents and flavours that trigger certain affects, that are coded (religiously, socio-culturally) or that trigger certain behavioral patterns.

On the mental level, fragrances and flavours can invoke memories, inner images, and associations. On the physical level, there is a triggering of affect and physical reactions.

Scents and flavours can generate moods and atmospheres. They can open (olfactory) spaces. They can illustrate words, characters, places, and actions. They work to complement or provide a contrast to visual, acoustic or tactile information, and endow an artwork with presence. They are coded multiply, inviting semantic readings.

Eight approaches to smell- and taste-based art: A toolbox

For my engagement with scent and flavour, smelling and tasting in art, I have formulated eight different methodological approaches that will be further elucidated in the remainder of this essay:

- 1) Material and presence: scent and flavour as sensory qualities on a material level,
- 2) Illustration and representation,
- 3) Memories, inner images, association, the past present (temporal aspect),
- 4) Spaces and atmospheres (spatial aspect),
- 5) Affect and physical reactions (bodily aspect),
- 6) Synesthesias and the senses as network,
- 7) Metaphor, code, and semantics: perceiving and knowing,
- 8) Cooking and art.

These categories correspond to certain characteristics on the level of the material, the recipient or the aesthetic experience, and open a comprehensive approach to olfactory and gustatory art by covering a range of aspects. At the same time, they are not rigid but fluid categories – just like the individual works, installations, and performances cannot be assigned to precisely one category, but rather seen as setting different points of emphasis. Consequently the categories are not there to impose limitations, but, on the contrary, to open view on the wealth of aesthetic experiences in the field. They offer an apparatus for representing such experiences and opening it to scholarly investigation.

Ad 1) Material and presence: Scent and flavour as sensory qualities on a material level

This first category takes the materiality of the artwork as its starting point, examining how scent and flavour become apparent as qualities and are bound to

objects.⁴⁴ The presence of the artwork in space and the appearance of its aesthetic form is especially significant in this respect. According to Mersch, art expresses its symbolics only through sensory embodiment.⁴⁵ The material aspect that makes significance possible cannot be subtracted from the work. This is also the case for pieces working with smell and taste. What is centrally at issue in this respect is the question concerning the material form of the apparently immaterial or *invisible* phenomenon of scent (and often flavour, too) – or, to put it differently, the question of how certain things give off smell or taste. More often than not, corresponding artworks, marked by a certain literalness, are solely concentrated on the sensory aspect, staging the act of perception as a non-semantic, non-hermeneutic event.⁴⁶ In the corporeo-physical encounter with the material, the sense perception as such is emphasized; bound to material, scent and flavour are treated as sensory qualities.⁴⁷ The materials used are often everyday objects aesthetically refunctionalized.

This is especially true of the non-representational works by Dieter Roth, Wolfgang Laib, and Ernesto Neto, artists exhibiting everyday materials emitting intense smells. In 1970, Roth filled the rooms of the Butler Gallery in Los Angeles with different varieties of German cheese, which quickly began to smell bad in the California heat.⁴⁸ Around the same time, Laib began with the production of his *Milkstones*, pouring fresh milk onto prepared stones and rubbing it across until a scented layer would cover the stone. The initially fresh, sweet smell of milk would gradually turn into a sour, pungent odour.⁴⁹ Neto, thirdly, creates gigantic installations whereby strong nylon tubes and sacks filled with strongly fragrant herbs, such as cloves or

44 H. Henning, *Der Geruch*, Leipzig, 1916, pp. 29–34, distinguishes between “object smell” and “situational smell” to suggest that smells are often first perceived in a general way (situational smell) and are only subsequently identified as belonging to particular objects with the aid of other senses. For a critical response, see M. Hauskeller, *Atmosphären erleben. Philosophische Untersuchungen zur Sinneswahrnehmung*, Berlin, 1995, p. 91; W. Welsch, *Aisthesis. Grundzüge und Perspektiven der Aristotelischen Sinneslehre*, Stuttgart, 1987, p. 404.

45 D. Mersch, *Was sich zeigt. Materialität, Präsenz, Ereignis*, Munich, 2002, p. 83.

46 Cf. H. U. Gumbrecht, *Diesseits der Hermeneutik. Die Produktion von Präsenz*, Frankfurt a. M., 2010, pp. 44–46.

47 A special type of this category is constituted by those works that approach it, as it were, along the *via negativa* by presenting materials that, against expectations, do *not* smell or smell *differently* than expected. One might think of Marc Quinn’s odorless flower installations presented in liquid gas tanks or of futurist artist Fedele Azari’s idea of spraying fragrances on artificial flowers. Cf. C. Verbeek, “Inhaling Futurism. On the Use of Olfaction in Futurism and Olfactory (Re)constructions”, in: eds. V. Henshaw, K. McLean, D. Medway et. al., op. cit., pp. 201–210.

48 D. Dobke, D. Roth, T. Vischer, B. Walter, G. Garrels eds., *Roth time: A Dieter Roth retrospective*, New York, 2003, p. 130; B. Söntgen: “Der Rhein, die Schokolade, das Exkrement. Dieter Roths Figuren des Ich“, in: *Ähnlichkeit und Entstellung*, eds. W. Busch, O. Jehle, B. Maaz, S. Slanina, Berlin, 2010, pp. 195–209; D. Dobke, „Von der Schönheit des Zerfalls. Dieter Roths Schimmel-museum in Hamburg“, *Kunst + Architektur in der Schweiz*, 2001, no. 52, pp. 54–57.

49 For an extensive engagement, see N. Sönmez, *Milch, Blütenstaub, Reis und Wachs. Das Werk von Wolfgang Laib*, Frankfurt a. M., 2003.

curcuma, are hung from the ceiling.⁵⁰ The three approaches showcased are markedly different: if they share the olfactory confrontation with materials in order to dissolve the border between art and reality, their work ranges from contemplative reception to immersion. Finally, the spatialization of smell as well as the bodily reaction to smell already point to two categories to be illuminated further.

Ad 2) Illustration and representation

This category engages with the special function of smells and taste as being able to illustrate and re-present words, characters, places, and actions. One example might be the use of scent in the theater of the symbolists and Les Nabis. In the staging of Ronaird's *Song of Songs* (1891), for instance, no less than nine different scents were released into the audience to accompany the story.⁵¹ Later, so-called perfume concerts offered interested viewers theatrical journeys: the places visited were illustrated through their characteristic fragrances.⁵²

Such an illustration-based employment of perfumes (and, less strongly so, flavours) is text-bound. It is found primarily in the theater and in contemporary cinema, where scents accompany and intensify action. What can be observed in this respect is the close – and ideally synchronous – coupling of action and smell.⁵³ Finally, the earlier concept of perfume concerts has evolved into the practice of “smell mapping”, conducted by Kate McLean, among others. This means that olfactory representations of a city, an area in a city or a particular trajectory are represented in an exhibition room via fragrances.

Ad 3 – 6) Aisthesis and the modalities of smell and taste

Categories three to six represent different aspects of a mostly phenomenological approach to smelling and tasting in art. Those modalities of scents and flavours are central as they can be apprehended via the senses. The *neue Ästhetik* – or aisthesis – may serve as a methodological reference and starting point, as it concerns theorizations negotiating issues such as sensuality, perception as bound to the body, and nature. Welsch defines the aesthetic as concerned with “perceptions of

50 On Neto and the aspect of smell, see recently R. Diez, „Forme morbide da esplorare con tutti i sensi“, *Arte*, 2014, no. 488, pp. 78–83.

51 M. Fleischer, “Incense & Decadents. Symbolist theatre’s use of scent”, in: S. Banes, A. Lepecki eds., op. cit., pp. 105–114; K. Kuenzli, “Intimate Modernism: The Nabis, Symbolist Theatre and the *Gesamtkunstwerk*”, in: *Art, History and the Senses. 1830 to the Present*, eds. P. Di Bello, G. Koureas, Farnham, 2010, pp. 67–82; K. Shephard-Barr, “‘Mise en Scent’: the Théâtre d’Arts *Cantique des cantiques* and the use of smell as a theatrical device”, *Theatre Research International*, 1999, 24, no. 2, pp. 152–159.

52 C. Bradstreet, “A trip to Japan in sixteen minutes: Sadakichi Hartmann’s Perfume Concerts and the Aesthetics of Scent”, in: P. Di Bello, G. Koureas eds., op. cit., pp. 51–65.

53 Due to the low availability of sources, the question of the use of incense or the scent of roses in front of respective illustrations in the religious context remains unanswered. What is the relation between the olfactory image space, and real space? Were these seen as connected or is the fragrance used less for purposes of illustration than for showing reverence?

all kinds, sensory and cognitive, quotidian and sublime, in the midst of our lives and artistic⁵⁴. The subjective level that traditional aesthetics had criticized as hard to theorize is now taken into account as an important component of perception. In place of the previous concentration on the aesthetic object, aesthetics posits an interest in the perceiving subject in its corporeal presence and affective involvement. Such a methodological approach is rooted in Husserl's phenomenology and Merleau-Ponty's body theory, according to which corporeality and world condition one another. Thus human existence finds its expression in the body – the body's situated spatiality, its movements, and perceptions. In an aesthetical approach, this does not involve only one's perception of self and the other (subjects and objects) but also the imagination and atmospheres.

All perception refers to an object in space and constitutes a process of a particular duration. Artworks can touch on aesthetic questions in a variety of ways. The categories that follow refer in each case to one selected aspect. There is the temporal and the spatial layer, respectively, that referring to the body, and a synesthetic layer analyzing the relation between the sense impressions.

Ad 3) Memories, inner images, association, the past present (temporal aspect)

There are two different forms of time that can be experienced via olfactory and gustatory works of art.

On the one hand, this is the experience of objectively measured time that may, for instance, find a mirror in incense used in a performance or in the transformation of smells (for instance, if an initially pleasant smell turns disagreeable). In these cases, time is experienced as a period, an interval in which the perception (impression) continually oscillates between primary memory (retention) and expectation (protention).⁵⁵

On the other hand, fragrances and flavours are capable of suddenly evoking memories or associations, of rendering present the past. In literature, this is also called the "Proustian phenomenon" in reference to the author of *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu*.⁵⁶ Specifically, it refers to the passage in which the author describes how the taste of a *madeleine* instantaneously triggers vivid childhood memories.⁵⁷ This is a further aspect of temporality linked to smell and taste. While memories and associations are deeply subjective and differ from recipient to recipient, artists such as Victoria Jones or Gwenn-Ael Lynn make use for their installations of biographically

54 W. Welsch, *Ästhetisches Denken*, Stuttgart 1995, p. 9.

55 Cf. E. Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zweitebewusstseins (1893–1917)*, Den Haag, 1966, p. 38.

56 F. Schab, R. Crowder, *Memory for Odors*, Hoboken, 2014; W. Brewer, D. Castle, C. Pantelis, *Olfaction and the Brain*, Cambridge, 2006; S. Chu, J. J. Downes, „Odour-evoked autobiographical memories. Psychological investigations of Proustian phenomena“, *Chemical Senses*, 2000/1, no. 25, pp. 111–116; S. Chu, „Proust Reinterpreted. Can Proust's Account of Odour-cued Autobiographical Memory Recall Really be Investigated? A Reply to Jellinek“, *Chemical Senses*, 2004/5, no. 29, pp. 459–461.

57 M. Proust, *Swann's Way*, London, 2002, pp. 47–50.

“contaminated” scents, such as the smell of fresh bread, mown grass, laundry, curry spices, etc. These are, as it were, the lowest common denominators that may trigger specific memories in the recipient.

Ad 4) Spaces and atmospheres (spatial aspect)

In addition to the temporal dimension, there is also a spatial dimension to perfumes. They diffuse, occupy a room, define it in an olfactory manner. The olfactory space simultaneously forms part of a site that is seen and markedly differs from the objective, abstract-geometrical space of physics in its dynamism and affective impact. With only few exceptions, phenomenological analyses of space have thus far neglected the olfactory element. Most authors occupy themselves with space experienced visually, in a tactile manner or kinesthetically, with fresh impetus introduced recently through increased engagement with acoustic space.

A space can be experienced as deep not only in a visual, but also in an olfactory or an acoustic sense. Schmitz assigns a non-visual “voluminosity” to the olfactory space.⁵⁸ Olfactory space is anchored in local reality, yet more than visual space it is experienced subjectively and as influencing the emotions. While visual depth goes hand-in-hand with a rational measuring of space, smell in its “unstructured breadth”⁵⁹ directly appeals to the emotions. The intensity of the impression influences the quality of feeling and exerts direct influence on the palpable quality of a space. This corresponds to Böhme’s concept of the emotional atmosphere of spaces, a phenomenon felt corporeally in the encounter between a subject receptive to a particular environment and an object.⁶⁰ What is relevant in our context is that a spatial atmosphere can be affected significantly by scent, so that the emotional aspect is, to an extent, externalized.

Installations working with smell necessarily create olfactory spaces and atmospheres. While in these cases the olfactory space and action space tend to coalesce, there are also aesthetic experiences in which the olfactory space becomes apparent first. Michael Sailstorfer’s works are a good example: long before one can see them, in pieces such as “1:43 – 47” from 2008 one can smell the sweetly smell of fresh popcorn wafting through a gallery space, in “Zeit is keine Autobahn” (Time is Not a Motorway) from 2008 one is repelled by the stink of burnt rubber coming from a spinning, rubbing car tire. Depending on the material used, Sailstorfer’s pieces create a variety of olfactory spaces of different densities and intensities.

Ad 5) Affect and physical reactions (bodily aspect)

As the physiological analysis above has shown, the perception of smell and taste occurs with immediacy – due to the connection with the area of the brain directly responsible for memory and emotion. A physical reaction to smell or taste cannot be controlled by volition, but occurs instantaneously. The Viennese Actionists, Sissel

58 H. Schmitz, *System der Philosophie*, vol. III/1, Bonn, 1967, p. 49.

59 M. Hauskeller, op. cit., p. 89.

60 Cf. G. Böhme, *Atmosphäre*, Berlin, 2013.

Tolas, Bill Viola, Cildo Meireles, and Valeska Soares, among others, have consciously worked with triggering such physical schemata in their performances. The recipient's body and consciousness are to be directly affected, with the body's possible responses spanning a wide range: pleasure, disgust, fear, the feeling of being overwhelmed. In the moment of perception, the reflective level is evaded, the recipients themselves becoming artistic material. Depending on artist, the frame of reference as well as intentions may vary. In Abramovic's performance *Balkan Baroque* (1997), the smell of blood and putrefaction emitted by cattle bones is of existential significance as referring to the Yugoslav Wars. In his large-scale, synesthetic *Orgien-Mysterien-Theater*, on the other hand, Nitsch evokes a Christian frame of reference, and looks to achieve the "immediate perception of certain sensations".⁶¹ The performances that often last several days attempt to create synesthetic situations overwhelming audiences through the sheer volume of sensory input. Accompanied by music, ritualized actions take place: with the slaughtering and evisceration of animals and the subsequent use of flesh and blood as aesthetic materials, the boundaries of disgust are consciously transgressed. Action and perception merge, so that what is happening can no longer be reflected from the safe distances of observation.⁶² Smell and taste work to affect consciousness, with the recipients themselves becoming the artistic materials of aesthetic experience.

Ad 6) Synesthesias and the senses as network

This category emphasizes intermodal links and synesthesias, that is, the question of the relation between individual sense impressions. In art (as in life), smelling and tasting never occur in isolation. Thus, visual stimuli may be purposefully combined with olfactory or gustatory ones, and the information given may either accord with or contradict one another. For the Dutch exhibition *Shelter* (2004), Dexin Gu created a flower installation consisting of a multitude of red flowers. As you approached, however, the idyll the visuals had communicated turned: meat buried underneath the flowers emitted the smell of putrefaction. The flowers themselves were plastic roses sprayed with Dior's perfume *Poison*.⁶³

Olafur Eliasson's *Scent Tunnel* (2004) similarly emphasizes the intermodal links that structure our perception by tying vision to other senses. The installation presents a corridor of several meters' length that connects two promontories. Eliasson has designed an open pipe made of metal, the iron beams of which feature

61 H. Nitsch, „Zum Konzept des O. M. Theaters“, *protokolle*, 1973, no. 2, pp. 98–2125, here p. 98.

62 See esp. O. Jahraus, *Die Aktion des Wiener Aktionismus. Subversion der Kultur und Dispositionierung des Bewußtseins*, Munich, 2001; Cf. M. Karrer ed., *Hermann Nitsch. Das Gesamtkunstwerk des Orgien Mysterien Theaters*, Köln, 2015, v.a. 64–75; H. Nitsch, *Zur Theorie des Orgien Mysterien Theaters. Zweiter Versuch*, Salzburg, 1995.

63 For more extensive notes, see Ch. Sauer, „Dexin Gus 'Shelter'“, in: *Geisteswissenschaftliche Spaziergänge*, eds. T. Hinterholz, R. Sammern, Regensburg, 2019, pp. 110–115, 126; see also K. Smith, *Nine Lives. The Birth of Avant-Garde Art in New China*, Zürich, 2005, pp. 180–219; Ph. Tinari, „Gu Dexin“, in: *Art of Change. New Directions from China*, ed. S. Rosenthal, London, 2012, pp. 40–53.

thousands of plant pots placed at regular intervals. Due to an inbuilt mechanical system, the three parts of the pipe rotate around their own long axis at different speeds. Entering the pipe induces a change in perception. The movement of the flower pots both closes off the view into distance and prohibits the viewer from finding a resting point close by. The intensity of the smell of the flowers rotating around the viewers enveloping them in a cloud of fragrance dominates the senses, at least initially making any other impressions secondary. But this is not all. The *Scent Tunnel* exceeds the mere spatialization of ephemeral phenomena. As in his other works, Eliasson plays with the primacy of vision. In this case, he is concerned with how it can be affected intermodally.

We have known for some time that there are combined cognitive reactions whereby non-visual stimuli affect visual processes.⁶⁴ Studies suggest that strong acoustic or olfactory stimuli lead to a heightening of the visual threshold, while simultaneously there is a drop in the relative perception of brightness. Conversely, bad smells or quiet noise leads to a decrease in the sharpness of vision. Consequently, the *Scent Tunnel* can be seen as a zone of synesthetic experience illustrating the conditions of a form of seeing that is changeable in the intermodal flurry of stimuli.

The actual artwork remains invisible: as an aesthetic experience it finds its site in the body of the observing subject. Its primary interest lies in the visualization of consciousness. "You see something that you normally don't see", Eliasson remarks. "[My interest lies] in how we see and how we sense. [...] Sensing one-self sensing is our [...] ability to see oneself in a situation".⁶⁵ Experiencing a situation *as* situation, however, can only work if seeing is understood as a process that is situated in the body as a whole and that emphasizes and reflects all stages involved in perception. Seeing becomes more than a subject's retinal self-assuring. It emerges in the interplay of all senses and in the conscious focalization of consciousness on the intermodal processes of perception. Eliasson's pieces create space for moving outside of oneself, observing one's own observation.⁶⁶ In this, he can be said to stand representative of most artists emphatically using sense perception in their works.

Ad 7) Metaphor, code and semantics: Perceiving and knowing

This category shifts the emphasis from sense perception as aesthetic experience to the fact that smells and tastes often carry cultural, social or religious meaning, a semantics of their own. Perception is tied to knowledge, knowledge can be communicated through the sense impressions.

64 H. Werner, „Intermodale Qualitäten (Synästhesien)“, in: *Handbuch der Psychologie*, vol. 1, *Allgemeine Psychologie: I. Der Aufbau des Erkennens*, eds. K. Gottschaldt, P. Lersch, W. Metzger, Göttingen, 1965, pp. 283–84; A. Wohler, *Synästhesie als ein strukturbildendes Moment in der Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Münster, 2010, pp. 120–122.

65 Olafur Eliasson: *The mediated motion*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, 2001, pp. 17, 23.

66 "This is why it is so important to see ourselves sensing things or to sense ourselves seeing – to survey our experiences from a sort of third-person point of view – from a double perspective". O. Eliasson, H. U. Obrist: *The Conversation Series*, Köln, 2008, p. 25.

Tolaas' work may serve as an example. In her so-called *City SmellScapes*, the artistic researcher develops olfactory profiles of cities by tracing the local history of smells – on the one hand with the help of highly developed analytical instruments, on the other hand by taking into account the experiences of locals. These data represent a form of knowledge gained through the senses. They record the variability and volatility of *smellscapes* as much as their being bound to a particular place or particular cultural practices. Places are thus endowed with olfactory coordinates that go far beyond a geographical position and form part of their inhabitants' individual personality.⁶⁷

Ad 8) Cooking and art: A culinary aesthetics

If not before, then certainly since Ferran Adrià's much-discussed participation at the *documenta*, however, the relation between cooking and art has come to the forefront. How might this phenomenon be approached without resorting to commonplaces such as emphasizing the aspect of creativity in a search for analogies?

One possible response against the backdrop of aisthesis and with reference to Lemke would involve reference to a culinary aesthetics as an expansion of traditional aesthetics, concerned with the sensual experience of eating and its aesthetic meaning.⁶⁸ Taste is here conceptualized as of heightened significance insofar as it is seen as a cognitive faculty that can be cultivated and become increasingly nuanced.⁶⁹ It is endowed with the capacity for practical judgment, capable of differentiating critically and of reflecting sense perception as bound to the body. The degree to which such considerations are reflected in contemporary cuisine becomes evident not least in Adrià's theorizations, the chef reflecting not only on food and dishes, but also on customers, their capacities in terms of taste, and the meal as a whole – as a sensory experience.⁷⁰ In the framework of culinary aesthetics, later processes of perception are regulated in a fundamental manner – with taste as the linking point. In this respect, Adrià has used the figure of the “mental palate” the chef works to acquire over years as a cognitive database.⁷¹ The ideal customer is described by

67 See also J. Drobnick, “Toposmia: Art, scent, and interrogations of spatiality”, *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, 2010, 7, no. 1, pp. 31–47; V. Henshaw, op. cit.; D. Quercia, L. M. Aiello, K. McLean; R. Schifanella eds., *Smelly Maps: The digital life of urban smellscapes*, Oxford, 2015.

68 H. Lemke, *Die Kunst des Essens. Eine Ästhetik des kulinarischen Geschmacks*, Bielefeld, 2007.

69 Ibid., p. 14: “In that a gastrosophic aesthetics critically reflects one of the central terms of all philosophical aesthetics, that of taste, it presents itself as a necessary self-critique of aesthetic thought. For while the philosophical field of aesthetics frequently speaks of ‘taste’ – aesthetic taste – and while since Kant the theoretical reflection and perception of art has generally been equated with an ‘aesthetic judgment of taste’, actual *culinary questions of taste* – for instance, the question of what makes possible a judgment of taste, and the question of whether gustatory taste is cognitive faculty that can be cultivated – has never really become the object of aesthetic thinking” (Lemke's emphasis).

70 F. Adrià, M. de Ruiz Erenchun, L. Heilig eds., *Ein Tag im elBulli. Einblicke in die Ideenwelt, Methoden und Kreativität von Ferran Adrià*, Berlin, 2009, insert between pp. 320–321.

71 Ibid., p. 72.

Adrià in similar terms: he or she should have gastronomic knowledge of ingredients, meals, restaurants, chefs, and styles, and enjoy the food using all senses. Thus fully attentive to the culinary experience, a sixth sense will ensue that Adrià describes as “the ability to consume food intellectually”⁷². This context allows for the relation between cooking and art to be reassessed – it is more than an overstretched analogy. Art and cooking consider the sensory as central to an aesthetic experience conceived of as uniting physical perception and theoretical reflection.

Conclusion

The eight categories introduced in this article propose different methodological approaches to olfactory and gustatory art. They find a starting point in materials, they are interested in the process of perception, they examine the affect of smell and taste, they take into consideration spatial and temporal aspects, and they posit questions concerning the relation between perceiving and knowing. On the one hand, they can illustrate the wide range of the aesthetics of smell and taste, and, on the other, form a foundation for urgently needed further investigations in the field.

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⁷² Ibid., insert between p. 320–321, insert between pp. 464–465: “The development of dishes, which appeal to the sixth sense, is a process that incorporates various creative methods and builds upon the other five senses, to create a dialogue between the cook and the guest. Here different techniques can be applied, for example irony, recalling childhood memories, playfulness, provocation or the separation of a dish from its original context”.

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Another Form of Blindness – a Symptom of an Artistic Viewpoint: Glossing the Work of Marcel Duchamp

Abstract

Not blindness itself, but blindness as a symptom for an inner seeing and as a counterforce against a one-sided fixation on beauty and taste were the reasons why Marcel Duchamp from 1916 onwards was occupied with the theme of blindness. Two volumes of *The Blind Man* were displayed in 1917 on the exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists in New York. The second volume contained comments about the fact that Duchamp's contribution of a *Fountain*, his now so famous ready-made *Urinoir*, signed "R. Mutt", was rejected by the apparently jury-less committee. This means that the theme of blindness was expressed twice: no one could see the work and so his theoretical opposition against beauty and taste could not be illustrated by the *Urinoir* either. How Duchamp from then on also challenged the other senses, so as to avoid focusing only on the eyes, will be dealt with in this article as well. Arguments from the biography, philosophy, mythology, and iconography will be used to underpin the article's main thesis. In this sense the question may be asked whether Duchamp was inspired in this group of his works by humorous etymological and literary references. In the end it will become clear that the theme of blindness in his work and artistic theory is highly paradoxical.

Keywords: blindness, Medusa, *The Fountain*, a blind soldier, *The Blind Man*, Hegel, *Tu m'*, A. Klang, Smell, Taste, Feeling, Touch

Literally taken, blindness is of course the opposite of seeing: it describes a negative situation, a not-seeing, darkness, when there is light everywhere. The blind lack the possibility to register visible light and to pass it on to the brain where it can be processed and interpreted, i.e. given meaning. The colloquial expression is that the blind have been "robbed" of this ability. But blindness can also improve the other

senses, sometimes even “replace” them by enhanced hearing, taste, smell, and touch. Moreover, blindness can start the imagination, the not-seeing can be experienced in another way, what is absent may turn into a presence.

In short, this was the content of the letter about the blind directed to the seeing, which Denis Diderot published in 1749, entitled *Lettre sur les aveugles à l’usage de ceux qui voient*, emphasizing the other senses as starting points for information, sensation, and imagination. The blind would not need the beauty, which the viewers praise so much. Beauty is monstrous, overestimated, Diderot stated. With the help of the sensibility the other senses invoke, one can renounce the term beauty, because it would transform into some imaginative appearance.¹

Fear of blindness however is still infinite. People’s fear of losing their eyesight goes back a long time. In the Greek myth of Medusa this goddess of revenge had the power to turn any person who looked at her blind and into a stone. In normal usage, blindness is also an Emblem: blind is he who does not recognize the Truth, for example, of Christian religion. The mythical tradition also has something positive to say about blindness. In antiquity a blind person might be called a wise seer, in that he, as Teiresias, would prophesy Oedipus’s tragic future. Not-seeing would imply an inner vision.² As I am talking about Marcel Duchamp here, the question now arises if he also regarded blindness as a positive force, in which he saw alternatives? Did he see himself as a cultural critic? Did he think that blindness was a cultural phenomenon, a sign of an underlying social ailment, as red spots on your skin are an external Symptom of the invisible disease measles?³

Blindness may involve feelings, moods, and sentiments. But in the case of Marcel Duchamp, one would not expect to be redirected to the “Age of Sensibility”, situated long ago, in the late 18th century, when the so called soul would show its great emotions of love or other cultic forms of compassion.⁴ In his life in the first half of the 20th century Duchamp argued definitely in a prosaic, although humorous and ironic manner. He kept to the subject of senses in a rational way and used another form of artistic rhetoric.⁵

Marcel Duchamp had a particular view of art. He deeply disliked all kinds of painting of which the only goal he judged to be pleasing to the retina (the membrane in the eye that collects the light), so that a purely aesthetic feeling is experi-

1 D. Diderot, *Lettre sur les aveugles à l’usage de ceux qui voient*, London, 1749. On its cover Diderot quoted Virgil: *Possunt, nec posse videntur*; S. Lojkiné “Béauté aveugle et monstruosité sensible: Le détournement de la question esthétique chez Diderot (La Lettre sur les aveugles)”, in: *La Beauté et ses monstres dans l’Europe baroque 16^e–18^e siècles*, eds. L. Cottagnies, T. Gheeraert, G. Venet, Paris, 2003, pp. 61–78.

2 G. Baudy, “Blindheit und Wahnsinn. Das Kultbild im poetologischen Diskurs der Antike: Stesichoros und die Homerische Helena”, in: *Die Unvermeidlichkeit der Bilder*, eds. G. von Graevenitz, S. Rieger, F. Thürlemann, Tübingen, 2001, pp. 32–57. The author did not mention Medusa.

3 G. Didi-Huberman, *L’Image sur vivante. Histoire de l’art et temps des fantômes selon Aby Warburg*, Paris, 2002, German edition *Das Nachleben der Bilder*, Frankfurt a. M., 2010, p. 301.

4 R. Krüger, *Das Zeitalter der Empfindsamkeit. Kunst und Kultur des späten 18. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland*, Leipzig, 1972.

5 Th. Steiner, *Duchamps Experiment, Zwischen Wissenschaft und Kunst*, Munich, 2006, pp. 37, 39.

enced that enhances Taste. Still in 1960 he repeated his view: “I consider taste – bad or good – the greatest enemy of art”.⁶ He wanted to think of other things than of retinal art.⁷ Taste was in those days still a sign of belonging to a higher class in society. You only had to school your taste and you would also be part of the elite. Having taste and showing it was a social “must”, which led to call it a kind of tutelage.⁸ In Paris, but also in Western art in general, the goals of recognizing beauty and taste were a measure of cultural achievement since the 19th century. This was sheer horror to Duchamp.⁹ Whenever and wherever this was the only goal of art, he was deeply opposed. And therefore he always invented new forms for his non-art – however not in the sense of anti-art.¹⁰ “Peut-on faire des oeuvres, qui ne soient pas d’art?” (Can one make art, that is none?), he wondered in 1913.¹¹ He was always looking for answers to these questions. Not all of his works that form part of these answers are dealing with some sort of blindness, but many do.

As a blind soldier

Duchamp has never depicted blind persons in his artworks, nor did he ever become blind himself. It may however have made him stop and think, when both his sisters Susanne and Yvonne were treating blind soldiers in hospitals during the World War I, when many had lost their eyesight through gas attacks.¹² He was discharged from serving because of a heart failure,¹³ but there is one more biographical clue.

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- 6 M. Sanouillet, *Marcel Duchamp. Duchamp du signe. Écrits*, Paris, 1957, English edition M. Sanouillet, E. Peterson, *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, Cambridge, New York, 1989, p. 153; K. Kuh, *The Artistic Voice – Talks with Seventeen Artists*, New York, 1962, pp. 81, 83, 88–90, 92 and BBC-programme *Monitor*, 29 March 1961; S. Stauffer, *Marcel Duchamp. Interviews and Statements*, Ostfildern-Ruit 1992 p. 117–121, 125; idem ed., *Marcel Duchamps ready-mades. 180 Aussprüche aus Interviews*, Zürich, 1973 p. 19.
- 7 P. Bexte, *Blinde Seher. Die Wahrnehmung von Wahrnehmung in der Kunst des 17. Jahrhunderts*, Dresden, 1999, p. 3; S. Grüne, *Blinde Anschauung*, Frankfurt a. M., 2009, pp. 77ff.; J. Gough-Cooper, J. Caumont, *Ephemerides on and about Marcel Duchamp and Rose Sélavy 1887–1968*, Venice, 1995 (henceforth *Ephemerides*).
- 8 W. Hofmann, *Tag und Nachträume. Über die Kunst die wir noch nicht haben*, Munich, 1994, p. 43.
- 9 *Ephemerides*, 9 December 1960; B. Marcadé, *Laisser pisser le mérinos. La paresse de Marcel Duchamp*, Paris, 2006, pp. 14, 30; S. Stauffer, *Marcel Duchamp. Interviews...*, p. 81.
- 10 “Je n’aime pas le mot anti” (I do not like the word “anti” Duchamp said”, in: R. Hamilton, *Le Grand Déchiffreur. Sur Marcel Duchamp. Une sélection d’écrits, d’entretiens et de lettres*, Affoltern, 2000, p. 76.
- 11 D. Daniels, *Ready-Made Century*, Leipzig, 2019, p. 25: Note of 1913 in his White Box: *Marcel Duchamp, à l’infiniitif. The typosophic society*. A typotranslation by Richard Hamilton and Ecke Bonk of Marcel Duchamp’s White Box, Cologne, 1999, p. 1; S. Stauffer, *Marcel Duchamp. Die Schriften*, Zürich, 1981, p. 116.
- 12 *Ephemerides*, 12 March 1915, 17 October 16; Presumably Picabia and Duchamp knew a poem of G. Apollinaire *La Méduse* from his book of poems *Le bestiaire ou Cortège d’Orthée*, 1911. The poet meant a jellyfish and compared it with himself, see W. Bohn, *Apollinaire on the Edge. Modern Art, Popular Culture and the Avant-Garde*, New York, 2010.
- 13 *The New York Tribune*, 24 October 1915, IV, pp. 2–3; *Ephemerides*, 1 November 1909, 6 January 1915; P. Cabanne, *Entretiens avec Marcel Duchamp*, Paris, 1967. English edition *Dialogues with*

Immediately after the war, in 1918, Duchamp played a blind soldier in a short film (July 8), and this story has been nearly forgotten. The film is the work of the French director and experimentalist Leonce Joseph Perret (1880–1935), who came to New York in 1917 because of his pacifist stance. In a film entitled *Lafayette we come* the director referred to the arrival in France of the American General John Pershing. Duchamp participated in this film, too.¹⁴ It was only a very short scene, in which a nurse, played by Dolores Casinelli, reads a story to some blind soldiers. The scene must have been up-beat, the situation of the blind soldiers notwithstanding. In a letter to his brother in law Jean Crotti, Duchamp mentioned the scene being shot for only two minutes.¹⁵ Apparently not much else is known about it. Nobody has ever asked him about his playing a blind soldier, although he was interviewed many times, and no critic has ever interpreted this episode. No one thought Duchamp's acting of any great importance.

But still, Duchamp published only a year earlier, when Perret came to New York, a little magazine called *The Blind Man*, of which only two issues were made. His cooperation with the filmmaker, his later willingness to play a blind soldier, may have been connected to the fact of his sisters' caring for blind soldiers and his editing of the magazine *The Blind Man*.

The Blind Man no. 1

With both these two issues of the magazine *The Blind Man* (Fig. 1) we have one of the great enigmas of modern art history. Many scholars have tried to solve it,¹⁶ and more recently feelings again were running high about it. In short, the following questions were debated: Was the upturned urinal that Duchamp had have sent to the *Exhibition of Independent Artists*¹⁷ on 9 April 1917, signed "R. Mutt" and under the mythical title *Fountain*, really his work? What does the signature "R. Mutt" really mean?

Was it meant as a ready-made? And is there a connection with the theme of blindness?

Marcel Duchamp, London, 1971, pp. 19, 52. Duchamp served in the military for a very short time and worked for a French captain in New York in the French mission for some weeks. Mad(eleine) Turban lived with him in 1917 for one month in New York, not being able to find a hotel. At that time she worked for the Red Cross and tried to collect money for the blind soldiers in France. *Ephemerides*, 9 October 1917, 4 December 1917, 24 December 1917, 9 January 1918.

14 *Ephemerides*, 7 July 1918, 8 July 1918

15 Duchamp to Jean Crotti, 8 July 1918, F. M. Naumann, H. Obalk, *Affect Marcel. The Selected Correspondence of Marcel Duchamp*, London, 2000, p. 55.

16 A. Schwarz, *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, New York, 2000, no.345. On 11 April 1917 Duchamp wrote to his sister Suzanne: "One of my female friends under a masculine pseudonyme Richard Mutt, sent a porcelain urinal as a sculpture [...]" ("une pissotière en porcelaine comme sculpture", quoted in: F. M. Naumann, H. Obalk, *Affect Marcel*, 11 April 1917, p. 47. It seems important that Duchamp considers this ready-made as a sculpture. Complete research see W. Camfield, *Marcel Duchamp, Fountain*, Houston, 1989; H. H. Mann, *Marcel Duchamp: 1917*, Munich, 1999.

17 *Ephemerides*, 5 December 1916, 6 April 1917.

The Jury refused to accept this apparent vulgar and a-moral thing as an artwork – thereby proving not to be independent at all. It was put behind a partition wall, where it was again taken away. Duchamp sold it to his friend Walter C. Arensberg, after Alfred Stieglitz photographed it for *The Blind Man* no. 2 (Fig. 2), putting it on a pedestal in front of Marsden Hartley's painting *The Warriors* (1913). By this the *pissotière* resembled a literal pedestal fountain.¹⁸



Fig. 1. Marcel Duchamp, cover for *The Blind Man* no.1, April 1917



Fig. 2. *The Blind Man* no. 2. Alfred Stieglitz's photo of Marcel Duchamp's „Fountain“ of 1917

The mystery surrounding this work has a twist: in Stieglitz' photo one can still see on the label the title of the product as "[Fou]ntain" (meaning crazy?) and the address of the anonymous person who sent the work to the exhibition as 33 West, 67th street.¹⁹ It was that of Duchamp's good friend Louise Norton in New York, where Duchamp's studio was also located at that time, and she was the sender, as one now definitely knows.²⁰ Later on, Duchamp explained that he had seen the porcelain urinal in the windows of the Firm J. L. Mott and bought it. But documents of the

18 Cf. S. Banz, *Marcel Duchamp: Richard Mutt's Fountain*, Cully, 2019, Les Éditions KMD: No 24, pp.180–181.

19 Ibid., Ill. 8

20 At that time, Louise Norton lived normally at 110 West 88th Str. in New York, where also Picabia had his studio on the ground floor. *Ephemerides*, 22 May 1917; B. Bradley, "Duchamp's Fountain: The Baroness Theory debunked", *Burlington Magazine*, 2019, 161, pp. 805–810.

firm made clear that they had never shown this model in their windows and their models were altogether quite different.²¹ So the work's origin remains unclear.

For a number of years now, the scandalous story appears every now and then, suggesting the work *Fountain* is originally a creative choice by the German performer and artist Elsa, Baroness von Freytag-Loringhoven.²² She saw herself as a living work of art. Anyhow, the Baroness has never claimed to be the originator of the urinal and Duchamp has always spoken of "my urinoir" naming it *Fountain*, and later made drawings and etchings of it.²³ Furthermore he already in 1914 wrote a note saying: "On n'a que: pour femelle la pissotière et on en vit." (This is all we have: the urinal in place of the female, and this is how we live), which demonstrates his early interest in the motif.²⁴ The signature "R. Mutt" still points to the Baroness, according to some of her advocates, because of the German word for poverty (Armut) which refers to the indeed very poor artist Elsa. Duchamp always denied this vehemently,²⁵ but he never explained the real origins of the work nor his relationship with her. He only said that he painted the pseudonym on the work and that he meant the word "Richard" with the letter R. Now, that could mean "rich art" (*riche art*) with "Mutt", being a quote of the then very popular cartoon "Mutt and Jeff", as Duchamp explained.

He indeed had this urinal sent in upturned and we can now freely speculate about its meaning. It has no practical use anymore, other than being a fountain for perhaps our imagination, as its title suggests. Louise Norton in the second issue of *The Blind Man* said that it resembled a female "Buddha" ("Le Buddha de la salle de

21 R. Lebel, *Sur Marcel Duchamp*, Paris, 1959, German ed.: R. Lebel, *Duchamp von der Erscheinung zur Konzeption*, Cologne, 1962, revised edition 1972, p. 132; *The Definitely Unfinished Marcel Duchamp*, ed. Th. de Duve, MIT, Boston, 1991, p. 147, ill. 49; J. L. Mott Iron Works 1208 New York. H. H. Mann, op. cit., p. 52; O. Hahn, "Marcel Duchamp interviewed", *L'Express*, Paris, no. 684, July 1964, pp. 22–23; K. Neuburger, *Die amerikanische Erfahrung, oder: Weshalb Marcel Duchamp in New York Werke ausstellen konnte, die keine Kunst sind*, Cologne, 2017, p. 246; S. Banz, *Marcel Duchamp...*, pp. 11, 41–45, 49, 148–149.

22 I. Gammel, *Baroness Elsa: Gender, Dada and Everyday Modernity – a Cultural Biography*. Cambridge, 2002 German edition eadem, *Die DadaBaroness: Das wilde Leben der Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven*, Berlin, 2003; G. Thompson, *Duchamp's Urinal? The facts behind the façade*, Leeds, 2008 (e-book 2001); F. M. Naumann, *Marcel Duchamp. Fountain, an hommage*, ed. F. M. Naumann, New York, 2017; idem, *The Recurrent Hunting Ghost. Essays on Art. Life and Legacy of Marcel Duchamp*, New York, 2012, pp. 70–81; J. F. Houssez, *Marcel Duchamp. Biographie*, Paris, 2006, pp. 134, 175, 187, 190, 193, 194, 219, 226–229, 234, 266ff, 335; D. Daniels, *Marcel Duchamp und die anderen. Der Modellfall einer künstlerischen Wirkungsgeschichte in der Moderne*, Cologne, 2001, p. 181; Th. Paijmans, "Het urinoir is niet van Duchamp", *SeeAllThis. (99 geniale vrouwen in de kunst.)*, 3, vol., 10, 2018, pp. 18–29; S. Banz, *Marcel Duchamp...*, pp. 42–45, 120–123.

23 A. Schwarz, op. cit., no. 593, 594, 606. Duchamp even integrated a miniature urinal into his *Boite-en-Valise*: A. Schwarz, op. cit., no. 462.

24 This note from *La Boîte de 1914* was found by Banz and first published by him in *Marcel Duchamp...*, p. 19, fig. 2.

25 "How Marcel Duchamp declared the signiture R. Mutt", in: M. Amaya, *Art and Artists*, vol. 1, no. 4, July 1966, p. 10; S. Banz, *Marcel Duchamp...*, pp. 48–49, P. Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp*, London, 1971, pp. 53ff, 86.

bain”). Not to our actual eyes, but before our spiritual eye we now can recognize something that is male and female at the same time. Duchamp indeed loved to allude to a unification of the male and female genders as it has already had been proposed as a primordial human principle in alchemistic theory. Two years later he gave the *Mona Lisa* – of course a copy – her now famous moustache that covered her perhaps even more famous smile.²⁶

It may be significant that Duchamp installed another urinoir/fountain – unsigned and with a different set of waterholes – probably already in 1916, hanging it freely in his studio; so that nobody would use it and it no longer could function as a kind of well/source.²⁷ Apparently, he saw it as an object of thought and not as a work of art, a ready-made no doubt that could function as spiritual focal point²⁸ because of its gender reversal and erotic identity. In fact, doesn't the word “ready-made” sound as a “ready maid”, a willing girl, as Thomas Zaunschirm suggested?²⁹ The ready-made was finished but its meaning was still hidden and had yet to be invented by the viewer.

The first issue of the magazine *The Blind Man* of 10 April 1917 had to be on display – as background information – at the *Exhibition of Independent Artists* and to establish the blind man as seer.³⁰ It indeed happened in an unforeseen way but at the end of the exhibition the magazine copies were still untouched, nobody had taken any.³¹ Thus, not having been read, the magazine contributed to the unintended blindness. The articles were, with only one exception, complete products of the imagination. Its three editors Marcel Duchamp, Henri-Pierre Roché, and Beatrice Wood could during the preparation of the exhibition not foresee what eventually would happen. The magazine's title *The Blind Man* could indeed indicate to Duchamp's abhorrence of “retinal” artworks.

The Blind Man no. 2

The second issue of *The Blind Man* (Fig. 3) was published on 25 May 1917, and was edited by P. B. T (Roché, Beatrice Wood and Totor, the name Roché had given Duchamp from then on).³² It is dedicated in large parts to the rejected *Fountain* as the CHOICE. As this word had been stressed now, it seems as if choice should replace taste.³³ All the three editors are justifying the circumstances of the refused exhibition piece as the Richard Mutt case, which is not about the making of the work at

26 A. Schwarz, op. cit., no. 369; *Ephemerides*, 1 July 1912.

27 A. Schwarz, op. cit., no. 351. S. Banz, *Marcel Duchamp...*

28 *Marcel Duchamp, à l'infinif...*, p. 1.

29 Th. Zaunschirm, *Bereites Mädchen Ready-made*, Klagenfurt, 1983.

30 A. Schwarz, op. cit., no. 346; R. Lebel, op. cit., p.169; H. H. Mann, op. cit., p.53.

31 H.-P. Roché, *Victor. Ein Roman*, trans. S. Werle, Munich, 1986, p. 39.

32 *Ephemerides*, 27 April 1917, 5 May 1917.

33 This suggestion is made by Helen Molesworth, M. Gioni ed., *Appearance Stripped Bare. Desire and the Object in the Work of Marcel Duchamp and Jeff Koons, Even*, New York, 2019, p. 23.



Fig. 3. Marcel Duchamp, *The Blind Man* no. 2, cover, 1917

all but about the imaginative act of choosing.³⁴ The exhibition jury's judgement had been that the work was a-moral, vulgar, and a case of plagiarism of an industrial product.³⁵ It was impossible for them to see the every day object, a product used in a bathroom even, in another visual context. They were unable to use a different visual language with which one can freely associate an object's various meanings. The fact that the work had not been exhibited and had been put out of sight behind a partition wall resulted in a situation of not-seeing and not being able to see.³⁶ The work for which the six dollar sending fee had been payed, was not even published in the exhibition catalogue.

This is now a case of "double blindness". The jury had been blind, in that they were interfering with a decision that did not concern them – the artists were independent, weren't they? – and on the other hand they had not recognized that the upturned urinal signed "R. Mutt 1917" contained a potential force of spirituality. "Art is no source for pleasure, it is a source [...]" Duchamp would firmly declare

34 *The Blind Man* no. 2, printed in L. Lippard, *Tzara, Arp, Duchamp and others*, New York, 1971, p. 143.

35 L. Blunck, *Duchamps Readymade*, Munich, 2017, pp. 168–169.

36 P. Cabanne, op. cit., pp. 55–56.

much later, in 1960.³⁷ Louise Norton, the person who possibly delivered the work at the exhibition, declared using the title *The Buddha of the Bathroom*, that the Fountain had been a product of the imagination.³⁸ Other more serious people however, would look further. So can somebody who is blind not discover more hidden meanings? Let us try here.

The so called (crazy) urinoir, with its French title *Fontaine* may refer to the word *font* (meaning “they make”, which reminds us of the ready-made) and the word *aine* (meaning “groin”, where the genital area is); this, principally speaking, is the area of creation – procreation.³⁹ Remember Gustave Courbet’s 1866 painting *L’origine du monde* of a female genital area. Duchamp did always accuse Courbet to be the beginner of only one-dimensional retinal art.⁴⁰ He could have seen Courbet’s painting which in 1913 was presented at the art-gallery of Bernheim in Paris. Maybe this *urinoir* was his answer: In contrast to a picture, this upturned ready-made was able to unify two different and mutually exclusive points of view.

Medusa and her Shadow

An old friend of Duchamp’s since his youth, Francis Picabia, may have been decisive in his contribution to *The Blind Man* no. 2. He gave his poem the title *Medusa* and writes at its beginning about “superior hypocrisy spirits without lights”, referring no doubt to the members of the jury; the poem ends “I am looking for a sun”, so not THE sun.⁴¹ He may be referring to the alchemistic meaning of the sun as a metaphor for Jupiter, the origin of creation. Medusa, on the other hand, who gave the poem its title, had the crazy power to turn people who looked at her into stone and to blind them. This myth is in direct conflict with what an artist does; while creating he has to withstand Medusa’s force.⁴² Peter Paul Rubens has indeed painted her terrible head with snakes as her hair, but this is only a picture, so that has no real influence on the viewer. Duchamp could have been familiar with the painting

37 G. Charbonnier, “Six entretiens avec Marcel Duchamp”, *RTF France-Culture*, 9 December 1960–13 January 1961, here 9 December 1960; S. Stauffer, *Marcel Duchamp. Interviews und Statements*, Ostfildern-Ruit, 1992, p. 88.

38 P. Cabanne, op. cit., pp. 55–56.

39 With this argument the author wants to oppose the interpretation of P. B. Franklin, who is convinced that Duchamp’s *Fountain* transformed the history of art by creating a relation between avantgarde-art and queer sexuality in an exclusively all-male-meaning. P. B. Franklin, “Object Choice: Marcel Duchamp’s Fountain and the Art of Queer Art History”, *Oxford Art Journal*, 2000, vol. 23, 1.

40 D. Ades, N. Cox, D. Hopkins, *Marcel Duchamp*, London, 1999, pp. 202, 203; P. Cabanne, op. cit., p. 43; R. E. Kuenzli, M. Naumann, *Marcel Duchamp. Artist of this Century*, Cambridge, London, 1987, p. 175; S. Banz, *Louis Michel Eilshemius und sein Einfluss auf Marcel Duchamp*, Vienna, 2016, pp. 63–64.

41 F. Picabia, “Medusa”, *Blind Man* no. 2 (n. n.).

42 Th. Albrecht, *The Medusa Effect. Representation and Epistemology in Victorian Aesthetic*, New York, Albany, 2007, pp. 21, 27, about Freud pp. 27ff, 35.

of *Medusa*, as he had visited the Vienna Kunsthistorisches Museum in 1912 where the work is in the collection.⁴³

There are still a few more considerations possible: In his studio in New York, so not a real exhibition space, he had next to the *Fountain* another ready-made, the now famous hat rack (Fig. 4).⁴⁴ "I took the thing away from the floor and then with me onto the planet of aesthetics", he told Harriet Sidney Janis in 1953.⁴⁵ This hat rack with its curved hooks around a centre pole originated from the furniture maker Thonet.⁴⁶ It now was devoid of its original function of hat rack. It resembles somewhat a head with curved snake-hair, so why not a Medusa? For Duchamp, even its shadow seemed important, for he had it photographed, presumably by his friend Henri-Pierre Roché (Fig. 5).⁴⁷ He seemed to have realised his carrying shadow, as he wrote already in 1913 as an *ombre portée* (carrying shadow).⁴⁸ What could they carry other than a meaning and, of course, no hats anymore? Memorizing this early note, he gave to a second photo of many shadows of hanging ready-mades on the wall of his studio in 1918 the same title *Ombres portées*.⁴⁹ Let us stick to the myth: Medusa's shadow would of course not have the avenging power that the real figure would have and would not turn an onlooker blind. Her unbodily, colourless and untouchable shadow is only remotely reminding us of blindness and results in a reversal. It invites us to an imaginative way of seeing. It is all about the dialectics between blindness and inner vision.⁵⁰ And there are more possibilities: Around 1916 Duchamp was a good friend of the three Stettheimer sisters, Ettie, Florine and Carrie, whom he was teaching French. The one called Ettie, he liked most.⁵¹ It was she, who posed for the portrait of Medusa which her sister Florine

43 *Ephemerides*, 26 September 1912.

44 A. Schwarz, op. cit., p. 31, no. 249, 598.

45 Marcel Duchamp, *Notes*, ed. P. Matisse, Boston, 1983, note no. 185; Th. de Duve, *Picturaler Nominalismus. Marcel Duchamp. Die Malerei und die Moderne*, Munich, 1987 p. 223.

46 R. R. Shearer, G. Alvarez eds., "Why the Hatrack is and/or is not a Ready-made", in: *Tout-Fait*, vol. 1, 3 December 2000, http://www.toutfait.com/issues/issue_3/Multimedia/Shearer/Shearer01.html [accessed 18 May 2020].

47 A. Schwarz, op. cit., no. 351, 257; *Ephemerides*, 27 October 1964. Duchamp said that he himself took the photograph, although he can be seen on it sitting next to the door. *Ephemerides*, 8 July 1918, 27 October 1964; R. Lebel, op. cit., pp. 32, 52, 72.

48 M. Sanouillet, op. cit., p. 103; Is it possible that Duchamp thought of Lautréamont's Chant IV, strophe 5 of his *Les Chants de Maldoror*, Paris, 1868? Describing blindness in it he starts with the sentence: "Sur le mur de ma chambre, quelle ombre dessinée, avec une puissance incomparable, avec une fantasmagorique projection de sa silhouette racornie [...]". ("On the wall of my room, what a drawn shadow, with an uncomparable power, with a fantomic projection of his shrivelled silhouette[...]").

49 D. Daniels, op. cit., pp. 26, 27, 106, 107; Duchamp even wrote a note about his consideration if the shadow can be the a figure in 4 dimensions, although it is a cast shadow of an object in 3-dimensions, *Marcel Duchamp, à L' Infinitif...*, p. 81.

50 P. de Man, *Blindness and Insight. Essays in the Rethoric of Contemporary Criticism*. Oxford, 1971, p. 22.

51 *Ephemerides*, 15 January 1916, 24 October 1916, 10 November 1916, 28 July 1918, 9 August 1917, 29 July 1918, 2 August 1918; P. Cabanne, English edition, op. cit., p. 57.



Fig. 4. Henri-Pierre Roché, photo of Marcel Duchamp's studio, 1918, the urinoir and the hat rack hanging next to the door



Fig. 5. Henri-Pierre Roché, photo of shadows on the wall of Duchamp's studio, 1918



Fig. 6. Florine Stettheimer, *Medusa*, painting, 1908

painted in 1908 (Fig. 6). Florine had a show in New York in 1916 at Knoedler Gallery, 556, 5th Avenue, where Duchamp met them.⁵² It is very plausible that he saw there, or at their home, the *Medusa* portrait of his dear friend Ettie.

Parenthese: indifference?

Could it be an art historical sacrilege to involve a mythical meaning into Duchamp's work of ready-mades? According to Duchamp's argument of indifference about the meanings of his ready-mades, it seems necessary to look at his attitude here in a more thoughtful way, because: could it be wrong to write about one of his ready-mades in the sense of Medusa, when the artist did never want to involve any meaning with it and if he insisted that he was searching objects which had no meaning in any field of art? On the one hand he might have been right: a "hat rack" remains a "hat rack", although it is hanging from the ceiling (in Duchamp's studio) and cannot be used for the purpose it was made for. One would always stick to its first meaning, especially when it is not altered in form or colour. On the other hand, the artist and with him the viewer might see in it something imaginative, which reminds you of something else, especially if the object is dislocated or is turned upside down. So if the artist sticks to the choice of his given ready-made-(object), which keeps its first meaning, he cannot forbid the viewer to use his phantasy (which the artist also uses in secret). It works as Duchamp remarked himself: He wrote down on a piece of paper that an "analogie" is also an "infra-mince" (a tiny difference – an in-between – between what you see and what you imagine), and he remarked in his *Boîte Verte*: "Arriver à l'impossibilité de transfusion mémoire visuelle suffisante pour transporter d'un point à l'autre semblable à l'autre l'impression en mémoire".⁵³ (Arriving at the impossibility of a transfusion of sufficient visual memories to transport from one point to another while this stays comparable to an impression within the memory). Staying indifferent – and he really wanted that challenge for all lovers of aesthetics⁵⁴ – Duchamp otherwise could not and did not want to get rid of analogies, which would not at all alter the object as such. It is always a question of the grey matter of your mind, which always pleased him a lot. Where we look at in case of already made objects, seems to be neither – nor. The artists lingers, so to speak, in between: indifferent, as he wants to be.⁵⁵ But the truth is that the artist in case of Duchamp made some preparations and decisions beforehand: he made the choice of a special object, put the object upside down or hung it, perhaps gave it a signature

52 *Ephemerides*, 24 October 1916.

53 Marcel Duchamp, *Notes...*, note no. 2; M. Sanouillet, op. cit., p. 67.

54 "I threw the bottlerack and the urinal into their faces to discourage aesthetics and now they admire them for their aesthetic beauty", wrote Duchamp in 1962 in a letter to Hans Richter.

H. Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti-Art*, trans. D. Britt, London, 1965, pp. 207–208.

55 P. Cabanne, op. cit., p. 42.

or a title, let its shadow be photographed, let the print published etc. So without declarations, he intended to give hints, how the object should be imagined, analogical or even allegorical.⁵⁶ His retreat in indifference certainly was not absolute. Actually, it was the philosopher Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel who thought about the problem of perception in conflict: first to see the object, which in his eyes was as evident as the truth and second to imagine something (else) in it and with the medium of the object, which he decided to give the name “also” (*Auch*), because the object then mediates a diversity of qualities.⁵⁷ But Marcel Duchamp denied to have been influenced by Hegel.⁵⁸ He discovered the same philosophy.

Medusa II

In 1918, having seen the hat-rack and its shadow already in his studio, Duchamp again quoted this shadow when he accepted a commission from his patron and friend Katherine S. Dreier. He, who was so much against painting as an art form, was to paint an oblong picture intended for a place above her bookshelves (Fig. 7). It would result in a very enigmatic statement, a painting against all paintings, that would be unifying all of Duchamp's earlier considerations. He gave it the title *Tu m'*.⁵⁹ You could complete this title, for example with “*Tu m'aimes*” (you



Fig. 7. Marcel Duchamp, *Tu m'*, 1918, for his patron, Katherine S. Dreier. Yale Museum

56 Marcel Duchamp, *Notes...*, note no. 8: “L'allegorie (en général) est une application de l'infirmité”.

57 G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807), Frankfurt a. M., 1973, pp. 99–101.

58 L. S. Gold, *A Discussion of Marcel Duchamp's Views on the Nature of Reality and Their Relation to the Course of His Artistic Career*. B. A. Diss., Princeton University, May 1958; S. Stauffer, *Marcel Duchamp, Interview and Statements* p. 68.

59 S. Stauffer, *Marcel Duchamp, Die Schriften...*, pp. 118, 172; Marcel Duchamp, *Brief an/Lettres à/Letters to Marcel Jean*. Munich 1987, pp. 15, 19; *Ephemerides*, 9 January 1918, 8 July 1918, 20 May 1935; A. Schwarz, op. cit., no. 354; P. Cabanne, op. cit., p. 60; Exh. cat. *Marcel Duchamp*, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 1977 p. 265 (text of Herbert Molderings) no. 114. Duchamp wrote in his *la Boîte verte* how he painted the shadows by using a projector. *Marcel Duchamp, abécédaire. Approches critiques*. Musée National d'Art et de Culture Georges Pompidou, Paris, 1977 p. 149.

love me) or “Tu m’émmerdes” (you disturb me).⁶⁰ Any consonant would do, said Duchamp.⁶¹ But it also suggests the signature “R. Mutt” as a palindrome. In the painting, however, the “fountain” does not appear, but the shadow of the hat-rack of 1917 does.⁶² Astonishingly, the many attempts at interpreting this enigmatic work have almost completely neglected this aspect. Because Duchamp painted the shadow so big, and next to the corkscrew on the other side, and above convoluted lines that remind us of his *Trois stoppages d’étalon* of 1913/1914,⁶³ this hat rack shadow must have a particular significance: a meaning that reflects the other meaning of the corkscrew shadow, that metaphorically liberates the ghost from the bottle, which



Fig. 8. The *Goupillon* and the handy hand of the painting *Tu m’*

60 Th. Zaunschirm, op. cit., pp. 77, 78, 79, 83–106.

61 P. Cabanne, op. cit., p. 60.

62 S. Stauffer, *Marcel Duchamp. Die Schriften...*, pp. 118–119. Herbert Molderings has a different interpretation in the light of the Euclidean/non-Euclidean perspective, idem, *Duchamp and the Aesthetics of Chance*, trans. J. Brogden, New York, 2010, p. 98.

63 S. Stauffer, *Marcel Duchamp, Die Schriften...*, p. 116; R. Lebel, op. cit., pl. 78; A. Schwarz, op. cit., no. 282. This work of 1913 represents the three one-metre-measurements by chance in opposition to the Napoleonic one metre-measurement in Musée Sèvres in Paris; *Ephemerides*, 19 May 1914; étalon was a sign for a shop where one was mending socks and stockings. *Ephemerides*, 10 June 1912; H. Molderings, *Kunst als Experiment. Marcel Duchamps "3 Kunststopf-Normalmasse"*, Munich, Berlin, 2006.

equals taste (Fig. 8). As does the real object of the bottlecleaning *Goupillon* that sticks out of the picture towards the viewer as a ready-made.⁶⁴ What does that word *Goupillon* mean, if anything? Is the *gout* (taste) hidden in it, and *pilon* (bottlebrush)? Should this instrument clean the viewer's eyes, and so his vision and understanding? One of course is reminded of Duchamp's bottle-drying rack of 1914 of which the title *Egouttoir* refers to *égoutter* (drip-dry), which again has overtones of the word *gout* or taste, that must be get rid of as Duchamp explained.⁶⁵ If all this makes any sense, would it not be possible that also the hat rack has references to Seeing? And may not Medusa have been intended here? As her own shadow she may no longer have any power, but the image could still be taken as a threat to anyone who looks at her.⁶⁶

According to Duchamp, his titles were always very important: in 1961 he argued in his text *Appropos of "Readymades"* that the purpose was "[...] to carry the mind of the spectator towards other regions more verbal".⁶⁷ ("[...] était destiné à emporter l'esprit du spectateur vers d'autres régions plus verbales").⁶⁸ His aim was, to catch a new dimension with it.⁶⁹ In this perspective on the titles, it is obvious that his "indifference", which was so often mentioned by Duchamp, was not really his attitude. The titles are indeed chosen in a very sophisticated way. Also the French word *porte-chapeau* comes to mind. Let's look at all the double meanings. *Porte* (door, exit) *échappe* (escapes) and *d'eau* (water) could refer to Medusa's story, who was raped by Poseidon in the temple of Athena – who became very angry, because Medusa had offended her, so she was subsequently beheaded by Perseus. Now the random wavy forms of the *Trois Stoppages Étalon* in the background of the *Hat-rack*- shadow can be newly interpreted (Fig. 9).⁷⁰ May these refer to the waves of Poseidon? Or perhaps to Medusa' gushing blood, from which Pegasus is born as her son? Duchamp indeed believed in Literalising art, which he called "pictorial nominalism".⁷¹

64 *Ephemerides*, 8 July 1918

65 *Ibid.*, 18 October 1915 "égoutter is the epitome of non-taste". *Ibid.*, 15 January 1916; P. Hulthen, "The Blind Lottery of Reputation or the Duchamp Effect", in: *Exh. Cat. Marcel Duchamp*, Palazzo Grassi, Venice, 1993, preface.

66 It may be significant, that there was a French gallerist named Goupil (!) who in the 19th century founded his gallery, later called Gallery Knoedler in New York, where Florine Stettheimer had an exhibition in 1916, and might have shown her painting *Medusa*, the portrait of her sister Ettie. This irony Duchamp certainly had discovered.

67 L. R. Lippard ed., op. cit., p. 141; *Exh. Cat. Marcel Duchamp*, ed. D'Harnancourt, McShine, New York, 1973, p. 233.

68 *Marcel Duchamp du signe suivi de Notes*. Écrits réunis et présentés par Michel Sanouillet et Paul Matisse. Nouvelle édition revue et corrigée avec la collaboration de Anne Sanouillet et Paul B. Franklin. Paris 1975/2008 p. 182.

69 L. S. Gold in: Stauffer, *Marcel Duchamp, Interviews...*, p. 69.

70 *Ephemerides*, 19 April 1914, 17 April 1949.

71 H. Belting, *Der Blick hinter Duchamps Tür. Kunst und Perspektive bei Duchamp*, Sugimoto, Jeff Wall, Köln, 2009, p. 19; M. Affron, *The Essential Duchamp*, New Haven, London, 2018, p. 151; Th. de Duve, *Picturaler Nominalismus...*

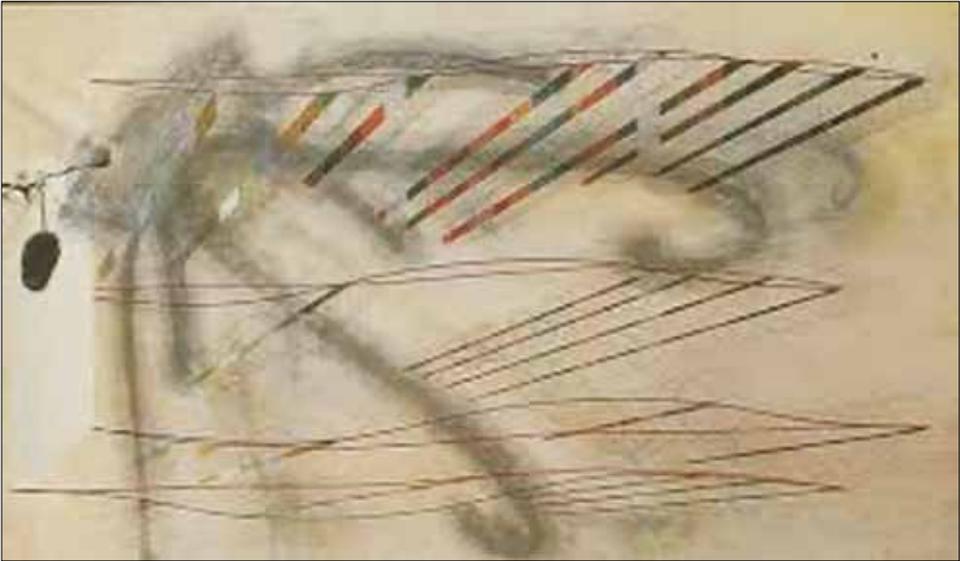


Fig. 9. The shadow of the hat rack on the right side of the painting *Tu m'*

Other motifs in the painting can now also be interpreted. There is the shadow of a big *Bicycle wheel* (*roue de bicyclette*), another of Duchamp's ready-mades.⁷² It does not move at the moment, as if time stands still in the painting. And what to think about the row of coloured squares, painted by his friend Yvonne Chastel⁷³ that according to numerous scholars are an indication of Duchamp's interest in the 4th dimension after he had been reading works by the French mathematician and philosopher Henri Poincaré.⁷⁴ But it seems as if Duchamp has treated the 4th dimension only as a row of differently coloured squares in which the perspective throughout the painting is always changing.⁷⁵ So it is difficult to see that he was referring to time, which he in fact stopped by including in the painting the wheel's shadow. Moreover, he added a painted crack or tear in the image and he

72 A. Schwarz, op. cit., no. 278; *Ephemerides*, 15 January 1916 and 4 June 1964, when he told A. Schwarz that this was his first ready-made.

73 *Ephemerides*, 12 April 1918, 8 July 1918; J. Clair, "Duchamp and the Classical Perspectivists", *Artforum*, March 1978, pp. 40–49, about Jean François Niceron (1638/1646) pp. 47–48.

74 L. Dalrymple Henderson, *Duchamp in Context. Science and Technology in the Large Glass and Related Works*, Princeton, New Jersey, 1998, p. 86; eadem, *The 4th Dimension and Non-Euclidean Geometry in Modern Art* (PhD Thesis, MIT, Boston 1975) 1983; S. Stauffer, *Duchamp, die Schriften...*, no. 119; P. Cabanne, op. cit., pp. 23–24, 60, 72; Th. Zaunschirm, op. cit., pp. 83–105; J. Clair, op. cit., pp. 47–48; R. Lebel, op. cit., p. 52; H. Belting, op. cit., pp. 45, 46–49; *Ephemerides*, 14 April 1919, 20 October 1920; possibly Duchamp knew the book by E. A. Abbott, *Flatland. A Romance of Many Dimension*, London, 2. edition, 1884, chap. 1.

75 Exh. Cat. *100 Fragen – 100 Antworten* (Archiv C. Stauffer. Ed. Staatsgalerie Stuttgart. Susanne M. J. Kaufmann, Munich, New York, 2018, p. 64.

a attached a real bolt nut to the canvas as if this closes off the row of squares. The three real safety pins that virtually close the painted crack in the canvas again, are not helping to suggest the 4th dimension either, they are more or less announcing the oncoming coloured squares. In any case, throughout Duchamp's painting here the act of seeing and the perception of space and movement are fundamentally put to the test. In addition to this, another sensory organ may be used, one that may replace blindness and would make *Tu m'* even more meaningful.

Hearing

When seeing has been robbed of its exclusivity the other senses may be able to take its place. When you only hear something there is a different kind of experience than what the eyes register. There are no colours, and the mind makes its own images. It may be of some significance that Duchamp supposedly asked a thus far unknown sign painter to add a pointing hand – a common sign in France – on the *Tu m'* painting and write next to the sleeve the words "A. Klang".⁷⁶ Probably this is the signature of an anonymous "board painter" as Duchamp used to say (presumably it was also painted by Yvonne Chastel), as a kind of "trick" aimed at emphasizing the meaning of hearing. Which meaning could that have? After Duchamp in 1913 had composed a piece of music with an at random technique – he called it *erratum musicale*⁷⁷ – that consisted in pulling notes from a row of hats, he could later explain the significance of hearing in his painting. In 1912 he had been staying in Munich for a few months and had studied and translated some pages of Wassily Kandinsky's text *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* (The Spiritual in Art), in which painting and sound are declared synesthetic.⁷⁸ Now the half German word "A. Klang" strikes the eye in another way. It indicates the extending *Goupillon*, earlier seen as taste remover. A corkscrew, which has its shadow on the left side of the painting, makes a sound as well, when the cork is removed, but which cannot be the case with a shadow.⁷⁹ Pointing with the finger to "A. Klang" could also mean its negation: a non-sound that is not possible in a painting, and can only be heard in one's imagination – as it is the case in Kandinsky's text.⁸⁰ This interpretation would fit to the other motifs: the stopped

76 Idem, p. 63, in fact not "A. Klein", but "A. Klang".

77 *Erratum musicale* for three voices, the notes for a set of 25 cards, one card for each voice with a single note. They had to be mixed in a row of hats. A. Schwarz, op. cit., no. 256.

78 *Ephemerides*, 7 August 1912, 2 October 1903, 21 July 1903. Duchamp learned German at school. P. Cabanne, op. cit., p. 57; Marcel Duchamp, *Briefe an/Lettres à/Letters to Marcel Jean*, trans. H. Molderings, Munich, 1987, p. 12; H. Molderings, "Relativismus und historischer Sinn". Exh. Cat. *Marcel Duchamp*, Ostfildern-Ruit, 1999, p. 21, F. 13.

79 *Ephemerides*, 8 July 1918, 20 October 1920.

80 Duchamp said he would not only oppose paintings as such, but also music. O. Hahn, op. cit.; Duchamp made a note about Kandinsky in his *l' Infinitif La mariée, étude 2*. See H. Molderings, "Die Entdeckung des geistigen Sehens. Marcel Duchamp in München 1912", in: *Marcel Duchamp in München 1912*, ed. H. Friedel a.o. Lenbachhaus, Munich, 2012, pp. 23–24; R. Herz,

time, the non-movement, the no-longer-seeing of Medusa's blinding power. And one can remember at this point that Duchamp, when he painted *Tu m'*, was acting in those days for Perret's film as a blind soldier. So in this context, it would make sense to argue that Duchamp, being so much against the beauty of painting, meant Baudelaire's *Hymne à la beauté* (one of his poems from his book *Fleurs du mal* of 1857/1868), where you can read: "Tu marches sur des morts, beauté, dont tu te moques". (You march over the dead, beauty, laughing about them).⁸¹ According to the naming of the dead, it makes even sense to listen to the sounds of the words "tu m'" and "tomb", as Duchamp seemed to have thought about in the last year of his life in 1968.⁸² And furthermore: In the same poem, Baudelaire even called beauty a "monstre énorme, effrayant, ingénu!" (huge, fearful, ingenious monster). Could both artists have thought of beauty as a monster, as Medusa, making the viewer dead or blind? The question remains open.

Duchamp stayed attached to the category of hearing: During this time he asked another friend and patron Walter C. Arensberg to hide a sounding object in a ball of twine, then pressed between two metal plates on which a text with large gaps is written. What kind of object it was, in 1916 he called it *With hidden noise* (Fig. 10),⁸³ Duchamp never asked, nor did he ever wanted to know.⁸⁴ This should always remain a faintly audible secret.

His attraction for the sense of hearing has a special history. Already in 1911 at a performance of Raymond Roussel's theatre piece *Impression d'Afrique*,⁸⁵ where

Marcel Duchamp, le Mystère de Munich, Munich, 2012, pp. 182–183. Moldering and Herz did not write about the signature "A. Klang" in relation to Kandinsky. Possibly Duchamp wanted to give a hint to the fact that his patron, Katherine S. Dreier, enthusiastically collected paintings of Kandinsky. Exh. Cat., *In Memory of Katherine S. Dreier 1877–1952. Her Collection of Modern Art*, Yale University Art Gallery, 1953, nos. 33–35; P. Cabanne, op. cit., p. 57; C. Thomkins, *Marcel Duchamp. The Afternoon Interviews*, New York, 1964, repr. edition ed. P. Chan, New York, Cologne 2013, p. 36. But Duchamp was opposed to pure paintings, consequently in his painting *Tu m'*. It was his criticism from within the painting.

81 C. Baudelaire, *Les fleurs du mal* (1861), Paris, 1996, p. 52; Baudelaire also wrote a poem about the Medusa related to the Caravaggio's painting in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence. Cf. M. Praz, *The Romantic Agony*, Oxford, 1970, p. 29; Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal* was one of the books Duchamps presented by their spine in red leather bindings on the staircase for the *Exposition internationale du Surréalisme* in Galerie Maeght, Paris 1947. E.-Ch. Kraus, *L'Exposition internationale du Surréalisme, 1947. Display-Strategien und kuratorisches Präsentation*. (Diss. Uni. für angewandte Kunst, Vienna), Munich, Vienna, 2010, p. 74.

82 D. Shambroom, *Duchamp's Last Day*, New York, 2018, pp. 21, 32.

83 S. Stauffer, *Marcel Duchamp. Die Schriften...*, pp. 100, 205; A. Schwarz, op. cit., no. 340; P. Cabanne, op. cit., p. 54; Duchamp's friend, Walter C. Arensberg, worked as a cryptograph, looking for secret meanings in the work of Shakespeare. Th. Zaunschirm, op. cit., pp. 56–57; F. M. Naumann, *Marcel Duchamp. The Art of Making Art in The Edge of mechanical Reproductions*, New York, 1999, p. 68.

84 J. J. Sweeney, *A Conversation with Marcel Duchamp*. Film of Robert D. Graff, 1955. German trans. S. Stauffer: *Marcel Duchamp. Interviews...*, p. 58.

85 P. Cabanne, op. cit., pp. 33–34. The theatre piece of Roussel, which Duchamp saw in the Théâtre Antoine, was presented one year later than the publication which appeared in Paris in



Fig. 10. Marcel Duchamp, *With hidden noise* (1916)

he experienced that figures, objects and language did not fit together and that the figures seemed to have an underlying communication which was not at all obvious, and a year later, while being a librarian, he discovered Jean-Pierre Brisset's research into languages,⁸⁶ Duchamp learned that written down language can sometimes mean something else than when it is heard. "I like words in a poetic sense. Puns for me are like rhymes [...] Just the sound of these words alone begins a chain reaction", he argued in 1962.⁸⁷ Language thus seemed to contain secret messages that convey a different sense. Ambiguity between one or the other meaning in language will lead to a relinquishing of an experience of a particular sense of truth. In the case of homophones, which one is the right one, the written or the heard? There is loss of identity, or so it seems. You might lose firm ground under your feet and your existence becomes uncertain, when the meaning of both: the written and the spoken language drifts apart completely. What would be right or wrong? Both meanings offer a choice of understanding and in fact do not give any. You can only use your

1911; *Ephemerides*, 5 February 1923, 20 February 1947; J. Vogelaar, "Raymond Roussel – woordspelingen tegen de spelling van het toeval", *Raster* 6, 1978, pp. 54–59.

86 J. P. Brisset, *La science de Dieu ou la création de l'homme*, Paris, 1900; Duchamp admired Brisset, J. J. Sweeney, "Eleven Europeans in America". *The Museum of Modern Art Bulletin*, New York, XIII, 4–5, 1946. German trans. S. Stauffer, *Marcel Duchamp, Interviews...*, p. 38; J.-P. Brisset, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. M. Décimo, Dijon, 2001, Brisset's *Grammaire* was one of the book's spines presented by Duchamp on the staircase on *L'Exposition internationale du Surréalisme*, 1947. E.-Ch. Kraus, op. cit., p. 73.

87 K. Kuh, op. cit., p. 89.

imagination.⁸⁸ Duchamp even declared language to be the “error of mankind”.⁸⁹ He found a solution for homophones in that he mostly looked for a common sense or meaning, although he said to be “indifferent” to every meaning of his work. Duchamp applied anagrams, palindromes or homophones countless times in his art works. There is no need for a first definition, he declared.⁹⁰ Many things have so far been deciphered, but most have not and Duchamp has never offered any help in decoding his work.⁹¹

Smell and taste

The other senses will be mentioned briefly. Duchamp in 1919 brought with him as a souvenir from his hometown for his friend Arensberg a small phial containing the real 50cc of the Parisian air. Paris Air (Air de Paris-tout fait) was meant as a sort of physiological serum.⁹² And in 1921 he produced a perfume bottle labeled *La Belle Halaine – eau de voilette*.⁹³ It bears his initials R. S. (written in mirror image) and a picture of his transvestite alter ego Rose Sélavy (arroser/eros c’est la vie – to spray/watering/Eros is life).

In a text that accompanied a photo collage, Duchamp in 1945 indicated the ability to smell and taste at the same time: “Quand la fumée de tabac sent aussi de la bouche qui exhale, les deux odeurs s’épousent par infra-mince”. (When the tobacco smoke that also smells of the mouth, escapes from it, both these smells unite [or marry] by the ultra-thin (*infra-mince*)”.⁹⁴ On a photograph for the cover of the magazine *VieW* he in 1937 brought together a bottle of wine, where some smell seems to escape and a little tobacco-smoke (Fig. 11).⁹⁵ So smell and taste seem to be mingled. On the back cover you could read the text which explains the image on the front cover.

88 M. Foucault, *Raymond Roussel* (Paris 1963), Frankfurt, 1989, p. 113.

89 S. Stauffer, op. cit., p. 55.

90 H. H. Mann, op. cit., p. 111.

91 F. Cohen, “Le ready-made: à quel titre?”, *Cahiers philosophiques*, 2012, 4, no.131, pp. 37–48. The author offered other possibilities of double meanings in Duchamp’s titles than those, which are named here.

92 A. Schwarz, op. cit., no. 375; P. Cabanne, op. cit., p. 63; *Ephemerides*, 27 December 1919.

93 A. Schwarz, op. cit., no. 388.

94 A. Schwarz, op. cit., no. 508; *infra-mince* no. 33 in: S. Stauffer ed., *Marcel Duchamp, die Schriften...*, p. 210; *Ephemerides*, 26 January 1942, 15 March 1945, 15 Augustus 1945; D. de Rougemont, “Marcel Duchamp, mine de rien”, *Preuves*, XVIII, no. 204, pp. 43–47, 46. (German edition S. Stauffer, *Marcel Duchamp Interviews und Statements*, Ostfildern-Ruit, 1992, p. 33).

95 *Ephemerides*, 22 December 1944, 1 January 1945; A. Schwarz, op. cit., no. 508. Instead of the label of the wine bottle Duchamp put his Livret Militaire (military service record) on it. P. Cabanne, op. cit., p. 85; J. A. Ramirez, *Duchamp. Love and Death, even*, trans. A. R. Tulloch, London, 1998, pp. 193f.; A. von Graevenitz, “Duchamp as a Scientist, Artifex and Semiotic Philosopher, His Notes of the ‘Infra-Mince’”, in: S. Banz ed., *Duchamp and the Forestay Waterfall. Symposium, Concert, Interventions, Exhibitions*, Zürich, 2010, pp. 216–231; U. Berlot, “Duchamp and the Notion of Optical Tactility”, PhD Thesis, University of Lubljana, 2011, in: *Art: Emotion and Value. 5th Mediterranean Congress of Aesthetics*, 2011; J.-M. Rabayé, “Hauchdünnes Betastungsmaterial

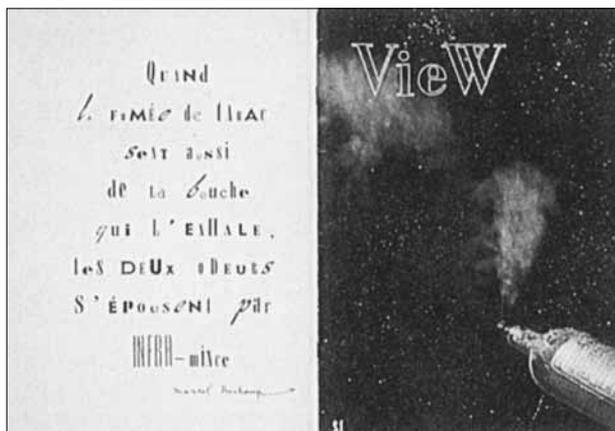


Fig. 11. The cover of the magazine *VieW* with the text about *infra-mince*

Feeling and Touch

In Duchamp's oeuvre indeed not one of our senses can replace blindness as good as touch. In 1943 his design for the back cover of the almanach *V.V.V.* consisting of an outline of a headless female torso in which he inserted chicken wire.⁹⁶ The reader who wanted to touch the female body had to put his fingers into the wire and would then touch a photo of someone with arms and hands raised as if in a prayer. At another time he became clearer: in 1947 he politely asked the public *prière de toucher* (please touch) (Fig. 12).⁹⁷ And when they opened the catalogue of *L'Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme, 1947* (otherwise known as *Le Surréalisme en 1947*), they would see a single breast made from foam. (In this case Enrico Donati helped him to form the breast by foam). "What is the role of eroticism in your work?", Pierre Cabanne asked him. His answer was: "Énorme. Visible ou voyante, ou en tout cas sous-jacente". (Enormous. Visible or demonstrative, or in any case underlying).⁹⁸

The importance of touch led to Duchamp's considering whether this could not be the actual 4th Dimension.⁹⁹ He left it there, a mere consideration, but just

oder die Spur einer Spur. Über Duchamp's faits divers", in: *Just not in Time. Inframedialität und Non-Lineare Zeitlichkeiten in Kunst, Film, Literatur und Philosophie*, eds. I. Becker, Ilka, M. Cuntz and M. Wetzl, Munich, 2011, pp. 99–119.

96 Duchamp worked in this case together with Frederick Kiesler for The Magazin *V.V.V.*, ed. André Breton, 1943; *Ephemerides*, 13 March 1943; A. Schwarz, op. cit., no. 491.

97 *Ibid.*, no. 523; *Ephemerides*, 7 July 1947; G. Parkinson, *The Duchamp Book*, London, 2008, p.77. In 1968 Duchamp made an etching *Morceaux choisis d'après Ingres II*, where a man touches the breast of a woman. A. Schwarz, op. cit., no. 651; E. Filipovic, *The Apparently Marginal Activities of Marcel Duchamp*, Cambridge Mass., London, 2016, p. 190.

98 P. Cabanne, op. cit., 1960, p. 21; *Ephemerides*, 13 November 1959 in: BBC Radio Programm, series *Art-Anti Art*, London, 14 November 1959; M. Décimo ed., *Marcel Duchamp et l'érotisme*, Dijon, 2008.

99 "L'acte érotique" (1961) in: *Marcel Duchamp, à l'infinif...*, p. 1.

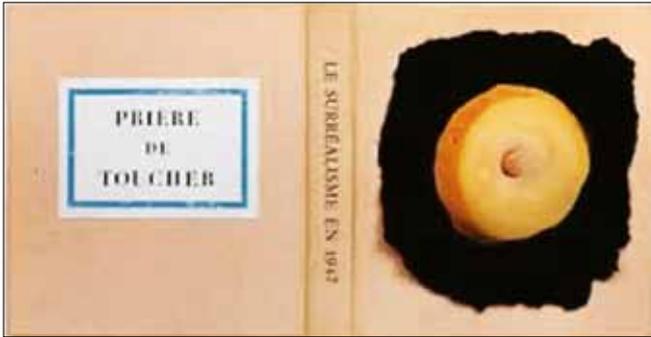


Fig. 12. Marcel Duchamp, *Prière de toucher*. Cover of the catalogue of the 1947, *Exposition internationale du surréalisme*

remarked: “We have three dimensions with the sense of touch. So, I thought that the only sense we have that could help us get a physical notion of a four-dimensional object would be touch again. Because to understand something in four dimensions, conceptually speaking, would amount to seeing around an object without having to move: to feel around it. For example, I noticed that when I hold a knife, a small knife, I get the feeling from all side at once. And this is as close as it can be to the fourth-dimensional feeling. Of course, from there I went to the physical act of love, which is also a feeling all around, either as a woman or as a man. Both have fourth-dimensional feelings. This is why love has been so respected! Anyway, that’s an amusing idea that doesn’t have to be proved or catalogued”.¹⁰⁰ In this light, one may remember the real bolt and the three real safety pins which Duchamp integrated in his painting *Tu m’*, where they indeed were placed at the end of the “upcoming” squares, interpreted as a visual quote of the 4th dimension. They now can be interpreted as his answer to the theory of the 4th dimension as being Time. His answer was: no, it may be Touch instead.

Blindness for Duchamp is apparently meant only as an outward indication, which is a symptom for a physical core,¹⁰¹ in this case it is his opposition against what he called “retinal art”; it is not meant as a challenge, to become really blind. A different kind of blindness is suggested here, one that is part of a complex of aesthetics. “Art is not what one sees. It is in the gaps in between. I like that idea, even when it may be wrong I accept it as truth,” he stated.¹⁰² He looked out for a “Thought-image”.¹⁰³

In reality of course, Duchamp had to admit that the eyes were the most important sense organs for experiencing his art, even when they are not completely reli-

100 C. Thomkins, *Marcel Duchamp, the Afternoon...*, pp. 92–93.

101 G. Didi-Hubermann, op. cit., p. 301.

102 S. Stauffer, *Marcel Duchamp. Schriften...*, p. 215, English edition p. 234.

103 H. Molderings, *Marcel Duchamp. Parawissenschaft, das Ephemere und der Skeptizismus*, Düsseldorf, 3. revised ed., 1997; idem, *Duchamp and the Aesthetics...*, chap. 6 “The Crisis of the Scientific Concept of Truth”, pp. 99ff; idem, “Marcel Duchamps Schnitte durch den 4-dimensionalen Raum. (Fragments of a paper)”, in: *Marcel Duchamp. Respirateur*, ed. K. von Berswordt-Wallrabe, Ostfildern-Ruit, 1995, pp. 119–169.

able, but at least being “visible ou voyante”. And indeed the eyes were for him only a starting point for, as he always explained, “using my grey matter”.¹⁰⁴ The visible was only an indication of thinking. Well known is the expression “blind-date”; it once used to be a “rendez-vous” with an unknown person.¹⁰⁵ It certainly would have struck Duchamp’s eye, enthusiastic eroticist as he was. In fact he called in 1916 four of his postcards to people with some cryptic texts on it his “rendez-vous”¹⁰⁶ The visible in the case of Duchamp indicates at other possible mental associations, be they an apparition as a distortion of the senses, or an everyday object in its alienating context. The associations may occur with the assistance of the other senses, and even these are not sharply defined and open to other possibilities. He himself was “indifferent” in this sense, as he has always explained,¹⁰⁷ and the viewer makes the actual artwork, it is his or her “creative act”, he declared in 1957.¹⁰⁸ The artist’s role in this would only be as “a blind medium”, he stated already earlier in 1949.¹⁰⁹ He also argued about the un-definability that was the result of the objects’ alienation. They always had something “magic” in them that would result in an enigmatic quality.¹¹⁰ Magic plays its part. What we cannot experience with our senses, he often reflected, is tautological, something like metaphysics or religion.¹¹¹ But even more difficult, because paradoxical, is the perception through our senses. The viewer is in an impossible situation, comparable with Duchamp’s 1959/1960 etching *NON*.¹¹² It is an anagram, a tautology, at least that is our first impression. But the word is also an impossibility, because although it may resist its readability through its own negation and refuse everything,¹¹³ it is still being read with our eyes. Blindness as a symptom indicates a paradox.¹¹⁴

Translated from German by Martin Adrichem

104 P. Cabanne, op. cit., p. 19; *Ephemerides*, 16 November 1954.

105 *Ephemerides*, 20 January 1957; U. Paulhans-Bühler, *Gegeben sei: Duchamps Flaschentrockner in der vierten Dimension*, Hamburg, 2009, p. 65.

106 *Ephemerides*, 6 February 1916.

107 P. Cabanne, op. cit., p. 42.

108 M. Duchamp, “The Creative Act”, *Art News*, vol. 56, 4, 1957.; W. Doerstel, *Augenpunkt, Lichtquelle, Scheidewand. Die symbolische Form im Werk Marcel Duchamps*, Cologne, 1989, p. 27.

109 *Ephemerides*, 20 December 1949.

110 H. Th. Flemming, “Immer spielt Magie hinein’. Interview mit Marcel Duchamp”, *Die Welt*, 18 October 1965, p. 7; K. Seligmann, “Magic and the arts”, *View*, October 1945; *Ephemerides*, 1 November 1946. Duchamps integrated the spines of the books of Meister Eckhart and Valentin Andreae into his staircase of *L’Exposition internationale du Surréalisme*, Galerie Maeght, Paris, 1947, photo in: E.-Ch. Kraus, op. cit., p. 75.

111 P. Cabanne, op. cit., p. 163; B. Jansen, “*Chacun son Marcel?*” *Meerduidigheid in het werk van Marcel Duchamp*, (PhD Thesis, Leiden), Amsterdam, 2015, p. 397.

112 S. Stauffer, *Marcel Duchamp, die Schriften...*, p. 212; U. Paulhans-Bühler, op. cit., p. 9.

113 A. Schwarz, op. cit., no. 570; *Ephemerides*, 4 Augustus 1959. Duchamp made the etching in 1959 to illustrate the poem *Première Lumière* by Pierre André Benoit about “In the Beginning was the Word and it was Nothing”, in: *Ephemerides*, 16 January 1952 .

114 He liked paradoxa: “I am in favour of contradictions and particularly without oneself”. *Ephemerides*, 6 January 1961; *Ephemerides*, 4 October 1954. Duchamp told Rean Reboul his opinion about a paradox: “For me there is something other than yes, no, and indifferent – it

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is for example the absence of investigations of this kind. [...] The opposition of quite clear meanings". Did Duchamp Perhaps Duchamp knew a sentence of Lautréamont: "Il y avait du vague dans mon esprit, un je ne sais quoi épais, comme la fumée [...] Il méritait l'épreuve des plus grands supplices; car, il y a du mépris aveugle dans son insouciance ignorante". I. Ducasse, *Les chants de Maldoror* (1869/1874) II.10, ed. G. Toffin, Switch, online publication, 2015, p. 99, <https://www.amazon.com/Chants-Maldoror-Lautr%C3%A9amont-Illustr%C3%A9-Aventure-ebook/dp/B014OE31LW> [accessed 22 May 2020], ("There was a vagueness in my mind, something thick as smoke [...] He would deserve the ordeal of great tortures; for there is blind disdain in his ignorant indifference"). Quoted in English in: A. Hill, *Duchamp passim. A Marcel Duchamp Anthology*. Gordon an Breach Arts International. Asia, Australia, Europe, USA, 1994, p. 182; *Ephemerides*, 8 December 1946. Duchamp loved the book of Lautréamont, which he read in 1912. It was one of the 5–6 books he wanted to keep in his library. Quoted in: L. Lippard, op. cit., p. 142. Duchamp presented the spine of Lautréamont's book on the staircase for the 1947 *L'Exposition internationale du Surréalisme*, see E.-Ch. Kraus, op. cit., p. 74.

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Blindness as Empathy: The Politics of Touch in Works by Dan Sterup-Hansen

Abstract

This article has as its topic the Danish artist Dan Sterup-Hansen (1918–1995) and his paintings and prints on the subject of blind people with canes as well as works related to these. Sterup-Hansen was active as an artist from a young to an old age, but made a significant artistic contribution in the decades following World War II. During this period, he explored a number of themes related to cold war anxiety and the cultural trauma of the World War II. These themes centre on the human body and a phenomenological perception of the world. They are humanitarian in spirit and are related to Sterup-Hansen's left-wing political views of solidarity, humanism, and advocacy for change and reconstruction after the World War II.

Keywords: Danish modernism, Danish Art, Graphic art, Cold war art, Humanism, the body in art, politics of touch, left-wing art, Dan Sterup-Hansen

*You see them and see yourself in all of them
Your love burns like open wounds.*

From a poem by Erik Knudsen to Dan Sterup-Hansen.¹

I am no more compassionate than other people.

Dan Sterup-Hansen.²

1 "Du ser dem og ser dig selv i alle / Din kærlighed brænder som åbne sår" E. Knudsen, *Hvedekorn*, 1954, 7, November. My translation. Unless otherwise stated all translation of quotes from Danish texts are by the author.

2 "Jeg er ikke mere medfølende end andre mennesker". D. Sterup-Hansen, *Kunst*, 1954, 7, p. 149.

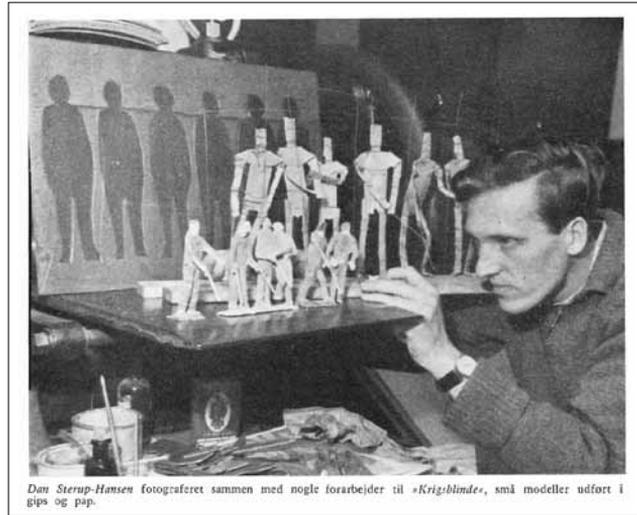
On the Armistice Day, 11 November 1949, Sterup-Hansen encountered a group of blind war veterans and immersed himself in the subject, working on it for years onwards (Fig. 1). *The War Blind*, as the series is called, does not contain images of heroism or grandeur, but images of anonymous people in the streets feeling their way through the world with their canes. Deprived of their sight, they seem to feel their way through the world experiencing and inhabiting it somehow more fully in body and flesh than the sighted. The gentle probing taps of blind men's canes are bodily ways of engaging with the world as subjects – vulnerable and armed at the same time. With their blindness and their probing canes, they have the possibility to both hurt and be hurt on their path through the street. They can choose to be careful and perhaps even caring towards their surroundings – and to choose a gentle path through both city street and life. Sterup-Hansen touches on the theme repeatedly, for instance: “A group of war blind in procession opened my eyes for the possibility that I could visually express an inner undefined attitude to being human in a chaotic post war time – an after-the-atom-bomb-time. This subject, – this ‘blind’ condition, – this sensation of being able to see with the body led in various situations when I met blind people to a feeling of them being ‘the denominator’ for humankind...”³ and “His attitude gave body to my images, now they were not just emotions and symbols, but also flesh and blood”.⁴ While portrayed with empathy, the figures are not subjected to pity by the artist, but created with optimism and perhaps hope. In his works of *The War Blind* Sterup-Hansen ties together blindness and touch with political and humanistic concerns. It is this gentle intersection I wish to explore in my article.

The body Sterup-Hansen thematises in his artworks is a body that in different ways is injured or lacking in its ability to inhabit the world: injured by war, disabled, temporarily deprived of cognition or senses, such as being underwater or asleep.

3 “En gruppe krigsblinde i procession åbnede mine øjne for den mulighed, at jeg synsmæssigt kunne udtrykke en indre udefineret holdning til det at være menneske i en kaotisk efterkrigstid – en efter-atombomben tid. Dette motiv – denne ”blinde”-tilstand – dette at føle, at man kunne se gennem kroppen førte til, at i tilfældige situationer når jeg mødte blinde, følte jeg, at de var ”nævneren” for mennesket...”. D. Sterup-Hansen, *Dan Sterup-Hansen – grafik og tekstfragmenter. En se-bog*. Copenhagen, 1976, p. 26. Sterup-Hansens “Se-bog” (“to see book”), is a collection of short texts related to works or groups of works in his oeuvre. As far as I have been able to find, Sterup-Hansen wrote the texts in 1976 recounting decades of “conversation” with his art works: “It is my job to write the texts for the pictures in this book [...] The pictures are without texts, but when I created them they spoke to me and we still talk when we meet. This is a look backwards, they represent a breath or perhaps a long deep drawing in of air, that fills up so much of my life, that it would not have existed without it”. (“Det er min opgave at tekstlede denne bogs billeder [...] Billederne er tekstløse, men talende har de været, medens jeg lavede dem, og stadig taler vi sammen, når vi mødes. Det er et tilbageblik, de repræsenterer et åndedrag eller måske mere en lang dyb indånding, der fylder så meget i mit liv, at dette ikke havde været foruden”). *Ibid.*, p. 5.

4 “Hans holdning gav krop til mine billeder, nu var de ikke kun følelser og symboler, men kød og blod”, *Ibid.*, p. 29.

Fig. 1. Unknown photographer, Dan Sterup-Hansen photographed with some of his studies for *The War Blind*, small models in plaster and cardboard. Reproduced in *Kunst*, 7, 1954, p. 151 © Unknown photographer/VISDA © Dan Sterup-Hansen



Blindness plays a dominant role in this regard. My argument is that Sterup-Hansen explores how the absence of sight gives space to the sense of touch and works to express this – paradoxically, also to himself – in visual form. The sensuous being in the world is also one of awkwardness and displacement. To be bodily and emotionally in the world means also to *be* on an existential and ethical level. I want to argue that Sterup-Hansen uses the senses of sight and touch to communicate political, humanistic, and existential issues in his art and that the topic of senses and the blind body is presented in a way that seeks to evoke empathy and affection in the viewer.

About Dan Sterup-Hansen

The Danish artist Dan Sterup-Hansen (1918–1995) worked in a constructivistic and figurative style and predominantly chose the human figure as his subject. He is primarily known for his graphic art, but he also contributed a number of large scale public decorations in mosaic and ceramic, as well as works in other media including traditional easel painting. He attended the Royal Danish Academy of Arts in the years 1936–1939 at the school of painting, and in 1943–1944 he was a student at Graphic Art Department at the Royal Academy of Arts, both under the tutelage of professor Aksel Jørgensen. He was influenced by the professor's commitment to socially engaged art and by his formalist-constructive teachings.⁵

⁵ I. Dybbro, *Levende Form. Dan Sterup-Hansen, Rasmus Nellemann, Palle Nielsen, Bent Sørensen*, Copenhagen, 1994, p. 30. Dybbro also notes the friendship with artist Georg Jacobsen as an important formal inspiration.

In the latter part of the 1950s Sterup-Hansen exhibited in the important “Man” exhibitions at Clausen’s Kunsthandel. Three exhibitions (1956, 1958, 1959) centred on the figure of man and on the subject of the human condition. He distanced himself from both the contemporary Danish gestural abstraction – calling the art of infamous Cobra artist Asger Jorn “aga-gaga” – as well as from any excessive formalism of socialist realism.⁶ His own version of a constructivist realism was shaped by his social engagement: “[...] but I live today and the problems I face are the same that all living people face. The facts about the war, the facts about post war times. Who can shake these from their mind and who would want to shake them off?”⁷ He engaged himself in current debates about art and advocated for a clear and understandable pictorial language as well as for making art accessible as graphic art and public commissions at workplaces, schools, etc. He became professor at the Royal Academy of Arts in 1962, first at The School of Mosaics and Murals and in 1974 at The School of Graphic Arts and served there until 1988, including a stint as Director of the Academy in 1984–1985. After the World War II Sterup-Hansen joined the Danish communist party (until 1956, when he left the party following the Soviet intervention in Hungary). He was also active in political study groups and active in the Danish peace movement.⁸

Sterup-Hansen in the Danish Scholarship

The research literature on Dan Sterup-Hansen is very limited. The most recent contributions are Karen Westphal Eriksen’s doctoral dissertation dealing with mid-century debates on abstraction and figuration in Danish art, and the PhD dissertations of Liza Kaaring and Ulrike Brinckmann.⁹ Eriksen focuses on rethinking the aesthetic ideals of mid-century Danish artists across stylistic categories, and discusses Sterup-Hansen’s contributions to the contemporary art debates as well as examples of his visual arts. Kaaring and Brinckmann have both written on the important and now rehabilitated “Man-exhibitions” in Copenhagen in the mid 1950s, in which Sterup-Hansen took part. Kaaring charts the reception and history of the exhibitions, whereas Brinckmann is concerned with the different graphic techniques

6 K. W. Eriksen, *Grus i maskineriet: Abstrakt og figurativ kunst i Danmark efter Anden Verdenskrig*. PhD dissertation, University of Copenhagen, 2015, p. 104.

7 ”[...] men jeg lever i dag, og de problemer jeg står overfor er de samme som alle andre levende mennesker står overfor. Kendsgerningerne om krigen, kendsgerningerne om efterkrigstiden. Hvem kan ryste dem af sig og hvem ønsker at ryste dem af sig”. D. Sterup-Hansen, ”Moderne kunst og socialistisk realisme”, *Dialog*, 1951, no. 5, p. 312.

8 I. Dybbro, *Mennesket i centrum. En undersøgelse af den realistiske strømning i dansk kunst 1950–1960*, konferensspeciale, University of Copenhagen, 1994, p. 45.

9 U. Brinckmann, „Mennesket – Der Mensch”: *Das Menschenbild in der dänischen Graphik nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*, Marburg, 2014; K. W. Eriksen, op. cit.; L. B. Kaaring, *Mennesket i tiden. Menneskeskildrerne i dansk grafik i 1950ernes anden halvdel*, PhD dissertation, University of Copenhagen, 2015.

employed by the Danish artists and a thorough survey of their oeuvres. In 1994 the art historian Inge Dybbro wrote about Sterup-Hansen in a publication based on her masters thesis on realism in Danish art in the 1950s.¹⁰ Dybbro interviewed Sterup-Hansen in 1992, and placed Sterup-Hansen in a cultural and art historical framework of likeminded artists and in connection to a left-wing aesthetic, which had previously only received brief mentions. Former curator at The Royal Collection of Graphic Arts at the National Gallery of Art Jan Garff, and former head of this same collection Erik Fischer have written on Sterup-Hansen as a graphic artist, both in short texts. Fischer, writing in 1957, had a clear eye for the contemporary art scene in the 1950s, and the artists, including Sterup-Hansen, who was creating an art that Fischer termed political by way of its humanitarianism – a view I share, and which is shared by Kaaring, and Dybbro. In surveys on Danish art, Sterup-Hansen is only briefly mentioned as part of the unofficial “Aksel Jørgensen-School” of socially engaged and figurative graphic artists.¹¹ Beyond these contributions, Dan Sterup-Hansen has only short mentions and presentations in literature on Danish graphic art and short exhibition presentations.

Fischer represents the earliest voices in placing Sterup-Hansen in a cultural political narrative. In contrast to this, Jørgensen and Voss are concerned with formal attributes – Voss in a brief, but appraising manner, and Jørgensen with rather derogatory criticism. The majority of the literature sees Sterup-Hansen as a formalistic and realist artist centred on the figure of man, with an emphasis on left wing politics. Except Dybbro and Eriksen, scholars identify isolation and inherent loneliness as central themes in the works of Sterup-Hansen, an understanding this article is in opposition to.

Historiographically, the contemporary positive reception has declined both in quantity and quality, but has re-blossomed in later years with a richer and more nuanced look on Sterup-Hansen. It is worth noting in terms of quantity that besides short texts such as Garff’s in the literature there are no monographic studies devoted purely to the study of Sterup-Hansen, a fact that has methodological advantages, but is a disadvantage in terms of attention paid to the study of Sterup-Hansen’s art. The brevity of this review indicates that there is still much to be said and done in terms of understanding Sterup-Hansen’s art.

Theory and Method

I am inspired by scholars who have in various ways thought about touch, perception, technology, and the body. It is a wide field within philosophy, media theory and art theory, and I in no way do it justice in this text. What I do is I allow myself

10 I. Dybbro, *Levende ...*; I. Dybbro, *Mennesket...*

11 K. Voss, "Fra trediverne til i dag" in: *Dansk Kunsthistorie 5. Vort eget århundrede*, eds. V. Poulsen, E. Lassen, J. Danielsen, Copenhagen, 1975, pp. 275, 279; H. Jørgensen, V. Villadsen, *Ny Dansk Kunsthistorie 7*, Copenhagen, 1995, p. 116.

the freedom to let my experience of Sterup-Hansen's art and my readings inform one another in order to form analysis and discussion.

The way the American philosopher of science Don Ihde writes about technology, the body and the lifeworld has informed my reading of the works of Dan Sterup-Hansen and it is between the art works and my reading that the analysis and my argument have arisen for understanding Sterup-Hansen as a visual artist, working in synesthetic and non-visual ways.¹² How this comes about in Sterup-Hansen's works is akin to the thoughts media theorist Laura U. Marks has formulated around the haptics of video art.¹³ Her concept of "haptic visuality" centres around a reworking of Alois Riegl's concept of the haptic. Haptic visuality works on a sliding scale from optical visuality. This idea of a continuum of the haptic and the optic is interesting in terms of Sterup-Hansen, who worked with a strict formalism comparable to the master of optics, Clement Greenberg's thinking, but in my view, in order to reach a haptic goal of existential visual phenomenology, rather than one of opticality.

My reading of Maurice Merleau-Ponty is more literary than philosophical. It is his famous example of a man walking with a cane, presented in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, that I think Sterup-Hansen through.¹⁴ Sterup-Hansen's series of images of war veterans walking with canes parallels Merleau-Ponty's example in a literal sense. I propose that the correspondence is more than literal, and that there is a sensing of the body in Sterup-Hansen's works that Merleau-Ponty writings can illuminate. In the writing on Sterup-Hansen there is no theorisation of this kind. Kaaring has mentioned phenomenology in connection to the period and the group of artists to which Sterup-Hansen belongs, but her point of reference is the English art historian James Hyman and his characterisation of English modernist realism.¹⁵ She points out that Palle Nielsen, with whom Sterup-Hansen exhibited in the "Man" exhibitions in the 1950s read and was influenced by Merleau-Ponty, but that this did not happen until 1970, when Merleau-Ponty was translated into Danish.¹⁶ However, I am not the first to think suggestively along this line. Although I don't know of any direct theoretical inspiration of Sterup-Hansen by Merleau-Ponty. The contemporaneity of Merleau-Ponty's writings with Sterup-Hansen's art makes them part of and a response to a shared cultural fabric. One is working with concepts and the Western philosophical tradition of phenomenology, the other is working with visual art: point and line to plane to paraphrase Kandinsky. Visuality speaks in many tongues and in its own language. Philosophical theory is not a "corrective" or a check list to understanding works of art. Rather it is a double

12 D. Ihde, *Bodies of Technology*, Minneapolis-London, 2002.

13 L. U. Marks, *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media*, Minneapolis, 2002.

14 M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, New York, 2012, trans. D. A. Landes, originally published as *Phénoménologie de la perception*, Paris, 1945.

15 L. B. Kaaring, op. cit., p. 95; J. Hyman, *The Battle for Realism. Figurative Art in Britain During the Cold War 1945–1960*, New Haven, 2001.

16 Ibid.

movement, a mutual exchange that can help cast light on one another enrich our understanding of both.

The War Blind

It was on a trip to France that Sterup-Hansen encountered a group of blind war veterans in an Armistice Day parade, tapping their way with their canes, and found them to be a “denominator” of humankind, as described above. Over the following years this encounter fostered a series of works on the subject of *The War Blind*, including drawings, lithographs, etchings, and mosaic. The main work is a painting from 1952 (Fig. 2), which he exhibited at *Den Frie* (The Free Exhibition), one of the leading annual exhibitions in Copenhagen. The painting earned him the Eckersberg Medal, a medal awarded by the Royal Academy of Arts to artists, who have made an effort of high artistic quality.



Fig. 2. Dan Sterup-Hansen, *The War Blind (Krigsblinde)*, 1952, oil on canvas, 134,5 x 200 cm. Esbjerg Kunstmuseum © Dan Sterup-Hansen

In the painting Sterup-Hansen has chosen to depict the parade. Although the motif has the form of rows and rows of people shown overlapping in the background, the focus is on the six figures in the foreground. Their dark shapes (all but one) and frontal poses arrest the motion of a parade and the frieze-like composition

creates an impression of calm monumentality. In this way Sterup-Hansen communicates that this image has significance beyond its occasion.

As already mentioned, Sterup-Hansen noted that the blind seemed able to “see with their bodies”. The physicality of this fact is expressed in the variation of poses of the five blind men. The first is leaning on two canes, walking, the second is holding his cane and being aided by a woman in yellow, the third is reaching out with his cane, feeling the space before him. He also has a guide dog, pulling him forward with its leash. The fourth also feels his way with a cane and he has linked his arm with a fifth man, who has slightly differently coloured clothes, and is perhaps not blind as he has no cane. The ambivalence of his status as seeing/unseeing makes a connection between the way the blind and the seeing inhabit the world. This falls into line with Sterup-Hansen’s view on the blind as denominators for us all, included, not isolated or opposed. The heads of the blind are turned at different angles. One is in a three-quarter profile, as if he is craning his neck to register the sounds around him, using other senses than his eyes to orient him. However, this means that he is also “looking” slightly down to the side. The man on the far left is “looking” down, as if concentration on the ground he feels through his feet and the canes in his hands. Besides drawing attention to the senses, which the blind – and all human beings – use to connect themselves with the world, this has a further implication in that they look like they communicate. Their faces address each other and the viewer, and this subtly indicates that the theme of the painting is human perception, assigned a phenomenological meaning of an interaction with the world and the people in it.

In his famous example of walking with a cane, Merleau-Ponty addresses the body and the knowing that comes through the habitus of wielding different objects. He describes how they expand our presence in the world when we let them become part of our own body.¹⁷ In this way the body and the world, with its materiality, are connected. The technology of the cane is not alien to the body, it can be part of our perception as it is known through the body, not through our thoughts. Sterup-Hansen’s prominent rendering of the canes in *The War Blind* in this line of thought highlights a bodily experience of the world. While Merleau-Ponty is somewhat a-historical in his project, Sterup-Hansen is concerned with the here and now of a western post world war crisis. The comparison is a way to understand Sterup-Hansen’s painting as expressing a way of being human where humans and their surroundings are interconnected.¹⁸ We are not separate from the world – and the historical world we inhabit. This is not symbolic, but fundamentally ingrained into the image and how he renders the human figure in his art.

17 M. Merleau-Ponty, op. cit., p. 215.

18 By the “here-and-now” I understand the subjects chosen by Sterup-Hansen from contemporary political contexts: *The War Blind* and a series of etchings from a women’s peace congress in Copenhagen in 1952, anchoring those of more generic, if not timeless, nature, such as *Wall of Humans*, 1954 (Fig. 10).

It is the blind men that seem central to Sterup-Hansen's investigations. When we look at the preparatory figures and studies in the photo above (Fig. 1), it is the poses of the men that are foregrounded. The positions of the canes and limbs in the figurines and the frontality translated into an almost abstract pattern in the relief in the back. In the painting as well as in the majority of the graphic prints on the same subject (Fig. 3) a woman is also present in the formation. In the painting, she is dressed in yellow breaking up the dark frieze of men. Kaaring sees her as a helper-caretaker aiding one man along, but as the figures vary in the different versions of the subject, I think it is more complex than that.¹⁹ She is a formalistic gateway to the background of the painting. Sterup-Hansen associated yellow with hope and affirmations of life and the colour is recurrent in his oeuvre.²⁰ Through the use of the yellow in her dress and in the background, the rank of the blind becomes connected to the ranks of human figures behind it. The yellow colour shows that this is an image of optimism, it also joins the blind with all of humankind in a literal and metaphorical parade.

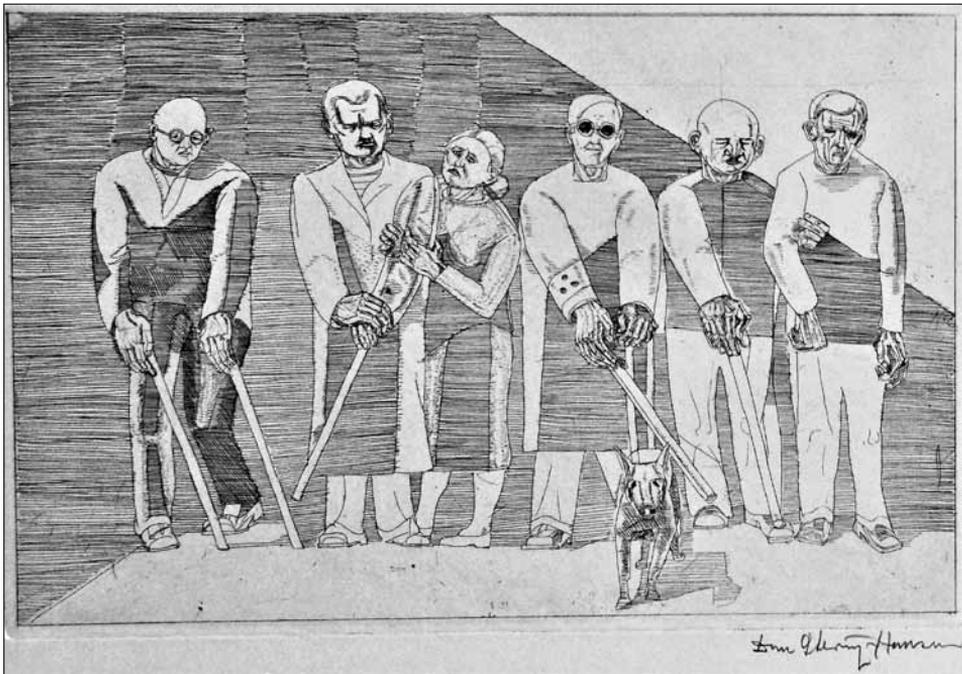


Fig. 3. Dan Sterup-Hansen, *The War Blind (Krigsblinde)*, 1952, etching. Private collection.

Photo by Lis Clausen © Dan Sterup-Hansen

¹⁹ L. B. Kaaring, op. cit., 184.

²⁰ I. Dybbro, *Levende...*, p. 31.

Fellow Human

Under the heading “Medmenneske” (Fellow Human) Sterup-Hansen writes about an experience he had at a political meeting in Idrætshuset in Copenhagen. His brief text is a development of the cane as an extension of the body in *The War Blind* series. In the text, however the extension of the body is not a tool but another body: “At a meeting in Idrætshuset I experienced how a man in a wheelchair had to be lifted into a chair. In the middle of this everyday situation the meeting began with *The Internationale*, and everyone stood up. Another man who was carrying him did not know what to do and therefore remained standing with the slight human in his arms – and he remained standing in my consciousness, had become a visible expression of something I search for, and which I believe we are all searching for”.²¹

The contrast between sitting and standing is central to the experience. The person lifting the wheelchair user is caught in a situation, where during the singing of the left-wing anthem *The Internationale*, he ought to remain standing for the duration of the song. As should the wheelchair user, who for obvious reasons cannot stand himself. This is a complex situation. The movement that starts off as utilitarian and helping becomes a movement signifying respect and participation in a political community. The man remains standing with his fellow man in his arms, thus showing respect and participation by standing up, although this was not the original intention behind his movement. He cannot complete his movement for now, but remains standing, and also – by keeping the wheelchair user in his arms not just helps him to move from one chair to another, but by embracing him in his arms, helps him to “stand” for the duration of the song. Sterup-Hansen titled his text “Fellow Man” and thereby made a connection to the humanitarianism implicated in both the situation and the political commitment of the song (and meeting) of wanting to make the world a better place for the weak. There is a multitude of corresponding and opposing meanings woven into this: the situation is akin to Marks haptic eroticism by which she means a physical exchange of trust and care in a wide sense. It is also an example of the body as a discursive field of signs: The implication of standing as a sign of respect, comparable to the sign language bicyclist use in traffic to indicate stops and turns. Meanings arise in intricate ways.

The image of one man carrying another is controversial in terms of masculinity. One is strong and one is frail in this situation. Ihde has remarked upon how the body analysed and discussed by Merleau-Ponty in *Phenomenology of Perception* is both a masculine body and a sports body.²² It is relevant to note that while Sterup-

21 “Ved et møde i Idrætshuset oplevede jeg, at en mand fra en rullestol skulle løftes over på en stol. Midt i denne hverdagsagtige situation åbnedes mødet med Internationale, og alle rejste sig. Manden, der løftede, var midt i den bevægelse at bære fra rullestol til stol. Han vidste ikke, hvad han skulle gøre og blev derfor stående med det spinkle menneske i sine arme – og han blev stående i min bevidsthed, var blevet et synligt udtryk for noget jeg søger efter, og som jeg tror vi alle søger efter”. Sterup-Hansen, *Dan Sterup-Hansen...*, p. 46.

22 D. Ihde, op. cit., p. 18.

Hansen draws women – for instance his etchings from another political meeting, a Women’s Congress in Idrætshuset in 1952 and the seeing woman included in most of the war blind images – as well as men, his oeuvre is not characterised by erotic themes or sensual embraces. While the predominance of male figures can be regarded from a feminist standpoint as chauvinistic in the sense that Man in terms of humankind is indeed predominantly a *man* in the works of Sterup-Hansen, it also has specific signification. The frail and disabled man having to be carried is unheroic and even unmasculine. There is a queer quality to the gentle care one man offers to another man, which is not characteristic of a traditional gender-hierarchy of a man carrying a woman or a child. It is like to like. Man to man. Human to human and in extension a humankind we are all equally part of. (And one that needs help). To take the action of queering further, the experience Sterup-Hansen recounts incorporates a feminine motif: that of mother and child and, to take it even further, that of the Christian Pietà.

The woman carrying her child in her arms is in the case of Sterup-Hansen replaced by two grown men, but the responsibility and the care for a weaker human being is related to this motif. Likewise, with the Pietà-motif, where the Virgin Mary has her dead adult son on her lap, as if he was still the child (which of course he will also always be to a parent) she birthed and took care of. In Sterup-Hansen’s narration it is not a dead body, but it is still a body that has suffered some kind of injury or limitation. A wounded body, in the widest sense of the word, that can do less than most bodies and must rely on help from others. We are given no details of the person or the cause of his disability, but seen together with *The War Blind* series based on the Armistice Day procession, where the disabilities were caused by physical damage on the battlefield they seem to form part of the same bodily theme: the injured body and in extension the wounded and vulnerable human being. The human, that must rely on the helpfulness and care of others as well as must take care of others himself, becomes an image of humanitarian ideals encompassing all of humanity. I think that herein lies the key to understanding what Sterup-Hansen meant when he wrote that seeing the war blind march on the Armistice Day, he experienced “a feeling of them being ‘the denominator’ for humankind”.²³ The body of the injured man manifests our inherent vulnerability and mutual dependency as human beings and human bodies.

Vulnerable Bodies

Vulnerability is an important theme in both *The War Blind* series and in the encounter discussed above. The war blind and the disabled man in wheelchair are all injured and impaired men. As such they are bodies that do not just signify, but embody, the fact that human bodies are physically vulnerable to damage and violence. This embodiment was important to Sterup-Hansen, who in reference to

23 D. Sterup-Hansen, *Dan Sterup-Hansen...* op. cit., p. 26.

another wheelchair user, a partially paralysed friend, wrote that “[his friend’s] attitude gave body to my images, now they were not just emotions and symbols, but also flesh and blood”.²⁴ He writes this in his passage on *The War Blind*, thus connecting together disability and war injury. As noted above, *The War Blind* are not just victims of harm, but themselves capable of inflicting harm. They navigate their space with the help of a cane, prodding, probing, tapping their surroundings in order to mark out a safe path in front of them. By exchanging sight with touch, they potentially touch other people, trip them over, strike them – soft or hard, while making their way through the world. They hold an agency of their own, despite their disability. In their case the touch is once removed as it is mediated by the cane. It can be accidental or desensitized, or clumsier than a direct touch. Yet it connects back to the cane wielder’s hand.

Touch is often associated with the touch of a hand, but the sense of touch belongs to most of the body. Sterup-Hansen returned to the subject of touch: To touch and be touched; to navigate the world without sight; and to move in connection to other people, negotiating the vulnerable body and the human potential for hurt. In 1957 Sterup-Hansen travelled on a passenger ship from Brindishi to Piraeus. Onboard the tightly packed ship people seemed almost stacked on top of each other. The experience became the subject of several etchings. The motif centred on rows of lying people and one intruding person, stepping into the landscape of sleepers.

In *T.S.S. Angelica*, 1957 (Fig. 4) we see a man walking away from us towards a staircase, with his feet half buried between human bodies. We can see the sole of his shoe between two bodies as he stretches his foot to take another step forward. One leg is slightly bent; another seems overly stretched. The left arm is awkwardly bent, the right one is rigidly straight with fingers knotted together. His neck is bent as if he is both trying to see and feel his way, relying on all senses to aid him. The awkward pose suggests the physical effort of navigating in a sea of bodies in near darkness.²⁵ The comparatively detailed line etching suggest closeness to a lived experience. In a TV interview in 1966, Sterup-Hansen recounted the experience of feeling his way with his feet among people sleeping on the floor hidden from sight by darkness; how he was afraid to bump into them and cause them harm.²⁶ *T.S.S. Angelica*’s central figure has his back turned to us, so our identification is not with him as a person, but with his actions. As viewers of the etching, our bodies are facing the background of the image, as is the body of the walking man. We are in a position not to confront him, but to repeat his movements, walking behind him into the sea of soft bodies cloaked in darkness. Sterup-Hansen visualises the physical sensation on a multisensory level and creates a connection to the viewer’s body on a phenomenological level. We see what he is showing us, but we are also presented with an invitation to experience it through the work of art.

24 Ibid., p. 29.

25 L. U. Marks, op. cit., p. xii gives the navigation of close-range spaces as an example of the “haptic perception”.

26 *Grafiske blade*, 1966, Production: Dokumenta Film, Director Per Ulrich, TV-program.



Fig. 4. Dan Sterup-Hansen, *T.S.S. Angelica*, 1957, etching. Private collection © Dan Sterup-Hansen

In another version of the subject the lines are simpler and the picture dominated by the stark contrast of black and white areas (Fig. 5). The composition consists of a simple division of the image into four squares: in the top left corner we see people sleeping on shelves or tight bunk beds. They are compressed into their small spaces in varied poses and seen from the top of their heads. The foreshortening makes their narrow spaces look more like storage than beds for humans. In the bottom on the left side a figure is crouching by a cot with a person lying on it and in the bottom on the right side we see people lying horizontally asleep on the floor. In the upper right part, an anonymous intruder steps into the picture. We see the lower part of the body and the legs as he descends a staircase and approaches the sleeping people on the floor. Or is it a person leaving the space of the sleepers? The picture does not give an answer to this, but seen together with Sterup-Hansens recounting of his experience, and the prominence given to the theme of walking through the bodies and stumbling in the dark in the other version of *T.S.S. Angelica* a coming together of a walking, awake person and a group of sleepers seems more likely. This does not exclude other meanings to be embedded in the image.

The linear outline of a person is generalised and schematized due to the flatness of the picture space. The flatness is underlined by the use of blocks of colour and changing viewpoints. The cot is seen from above with no foreshortening, while

the people sleeping in bunks are so foreshortened that they are more flat than deep. Naturalistic space is reduced. The abstraction and the division into squares enhance the impression of generalisation and schematization. The picture detaches itself from an individual experience and approaches commonality. Furthermore, the flattened space and changing viewpoints resist an experience of a homogenous naturalistic pictorial space – despite this the picture remains figurative. In this respect Sterup-Hansen’s picture stresses here that other modes of experience are at stake than purely visual ones. The previously discussed version of the subject (Fig. 4) was directly narrative and the threat posed to the sleeping bodies was primarily circumstantial. In the schematized version there is an element of intentionality or even a threat connotated by the dark intruder on the stairs.

The sleepers grouped in the light and the dark field allude as *pars pro toto* to masses of people. Sterup-Hansen called them *menneskeophobninger* (stacked humans).²⁷ These sleeping groups connote the stacks of people – alive and dead – seen in the documentary photos taken in the Nazi KZ-camps following the liberation (Fig. 6). Sterup-Hansen did not verbally connect this series to the world wars, as he did with *The War Blind*, but he did regard the subject matter of *T.S.S. Angelica* as metaphorical, at least in retrospect: “The etchings *T.S.S. Angelica* with the trampling people have become symbolic to me, when I see them today and think of the Greece that saw the light of day a few years later. This sensation of trampling on others was expanded on my way to Aegina [...]”.²⁸

In the other two areas of the picture, also light and dark, two actions take place. In the upper right area the potentially threatening figure is descending a staircase in the dark, getting close to the sleepers on the floor. His face is outside the image so he literally cannot see where the bodies are lying in the dark – his feet, not his eyes, will be the first point of contact with them. In the lower left corner, the simple bed with the draped figure and the crouching figure besides it connote the already mentioned Christian burial scenes and the Pietà motif. The sitting figure becomes the one that watches, or perhaps the one that grieves, hereby creating a contrast to the intruding threat.²⁹ A potential caretaker, or intervener – or just a witness to the actions of men.

The body feeling its way in the inhabited world and taking care of other bodies implies a potential for violence as well as a responsibility for taking care of the

27 D. Sterup-Hansen, *Dan Sterup-Hansen...*, p. 36.

28 “Raderingerne *T.S.S. Angelica* med de trampende mennesker er for mig blevet symbolske, når jeg ser dem i dag og tænker på det Grækenland, der få år senere så dagens lys. Denne fornemmelse af trampen på andre fik jeg uddybet på vej til Ægina [...]”. Sterup-Hansen continues to narrate how two chained men under guard were travelling on the boat with him, but without actually telling in what way this was also a “trampling on others”. In Danish to trample someone has a double meaning of both physical trampling and suppression. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

29 Although Sterup-Hansen’s communist affiliation indicates atheist beliefs, cultural Christianity is compatible with his humanistic views and as an academy trained artist, he was well versed in the history of Western art.



Fig. 5. Dan Sterup-Hansen, *T.S.S. Angelica*, 1957, etching. Private collection. Photo by Lis Clausen © Dan Sterup-Hansen

other(s). It is what Danish philosopher K. E. Løgstrup in his existential and phenomenological ethics terms “an ethical demand” in regards to interdependence: “Our life is so constituted that it cannot be lived except as one person lays him or herself open to another person and puts her or himself in to that person’s hands either by showing or claiming trust”.³⁰ In the *T.S.S. Angelica* etchings, the vulnerability goes hand in hand with responsibility more closely than in *The War Blind*. The two series are closely related in terms of the primacy given to the mediated touch. The canes creating simultaneous distance and closeness between the hands and the world they touch are replaced in the *T.S.S. Angelica* etchings by feet. Despite the simple line drawings of the etching, the intruder’s feet carry shoes. They are thus like *The War Blind* once removed in their touch. Feet are already a part of the body not often connected to gentleness, caretaking or caresses, but more often to autonomous movement. By wearing shoes, the possibility for kicking or trampling is stressed in the images. In the etchings, the possibility of kicking seems to be one of unintentionality (Fig. 4), whereas the intentionality of kicking is implied in Fig. 5.

³⁰ K. E. Løgstrup, *The Ethical Demand*, Notre Dame, 1997, p. 18. While Sterup-Hansen likely did not share Løgstrup’s Christian faith, both were concerned with humanism and its constitution.



Fig. 6. Lee Miller, Civilians and American soldiers with dead prisoners, Buchenwald, Germany, 1945. Photography, 30 x 40 cm. Lee Miller Archives © Lee Miller Archives, England 2020. All rights reserved

With regards to sight, the sleepers are not blind, but momentarily deprived of their sight in their surrender to sleep. Like *The War Blind* and the wheelchair user in Idrætsparken they are humans in situations where their vulnerability is stressed and where touch is the primary sense evoked. The composition of the *T.S.S Angelica* etchings especially (Fig. 5) is one that to some degree challenges sight as a transparent sensation. In his constructivistic combination of abstraction and figuration, Sterup-Hansen's picture evokes perception as a phenomenological multi-sensuous and cognitive – thought-provoking – sense. We are meant to not just look, but to see, feel and think. Bodily identification evokes sensation: the physical feelings of pain, of caress, of nearness and distance. Through the work of art, we can experience sensations of feeling exposed or safe.

Marks identifies haptic visuality in regards to images: “Haptic images do not invite identification with a figure as much as they encourage a bodily relationship between the viewer and the image”. She continues by stating that it is appropriate to speak of “a dynamic subjectivity between looker and image”.³¹ It is precisely for that reason the identification in Sterup-Hansen's image does *not* take place in the form of portrayed persons or facial characteristics. While the figure is important in Sterup-Hansen's art, the relationship he builds between the viewer and the motif is a person to person one in a general humanitarian sense – as the body and the senses we have in common. Very little of this belongs to the visual in any primary sense, yet Sterup-Hansen finds a way to communicate it by visual means.

³¹ L. U. Marks, op. cit., p. 3.

Taking action: The *Dialog* magazine

In 1952 Sterup-Hansen was invited to join the editorial board of the little magazine *Dialog* (1950–1961) as the picture editor.³² It was a left-wing magazine devoted to art, literature, and politics. The magazine was advocating peaceful co-existence, political and social engagement, European humanist traditions, reciprocity between the cultural life in modern times and the human beings, as well as seeking to present an alternative to American cold war propaganda.³³ While often critical in its voices it was also optimistic, in that it aimed towards building a better, more enlightened future, rather than lamenting the past. Under the headlines such as “Rationalism and Humanism” the magazine advocated rationalism, enlightenment through education, humanism, and a reconstructive and forward-looking attitude to the cultural and socio-economic challenges ahead.³⁴ With Dan Sterup-Hansen’s arrival in 1952, the magazine started communicating its values and viewpoints through visual art as well as through text. The visuality of the magazine is important to understanding the humanistic ideal behind these politics: the concern for humans and humankind.³⁵

The illustrations in the magazine included both original art and reproductions from a global art scene, but one need only look as far as the covers to gain an understanding of the aesthetic profile of the magazine. After Sterup-Hansen joined the editorial board the covers became original works of graphic art; either woodblock or lino print. Some were dialectical in their use of front and back cover, presenting problem and solution, or reality and ideal (Fig. 7), some cover art figuratively presented the textual content of the magazine in a human embrace such as Olsens “peace-dance” cover from 1953 (Fig. 8), where a line of four women and one infant dance across the front and back cover. When one approaches the magazine as a materiality, Olsen’s and similar covers – front and back – literally cover the articles in the magazine and as such provide a “container” for the textual content. While the content presented many voices, and spanned political and cultural content, the cover framed these voices, and made visible the overall humanistic objective of the magazine: peace and coexistence.³⁶

Sterup-Hansen not only edited the layout and visual art of the magazine, but also contributed a cover. The first cover of 1952 was a woodblock print, that drew on *The War Blind* subject (Fig. 9). On the cover we see a silhouette of a group of people standing closely together and forming a short human wall. At the same time as

32 I. Dybbro, *Levende...*, p. 30.

33 C. E. Bay (ed.), *Dialog. En antologi*, København, 1979, pp. 8–9.

34 S. M. Kristensen, “Rationalisme og humanisme”, *Dialog*, 1, 1950, pp. 3–44.

35 The history of the magazine and its editors are intertwined with Danish political history, from close ties to the communist party, through its editors’ political orientations, eventually leading into the formation of the more moderate Socialistic People’s Party in 1959.

36 This reading is based on J. J. McGann, *The Textual Condition*, Princeton, 1991. For a longer discussion of materiality in *Dialog* see K. W. Eriksen, op. cit., pp. 272–281.

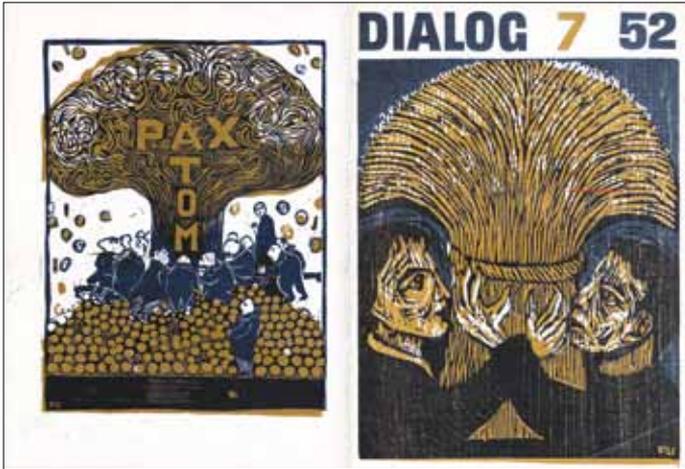


Fig. 7. *Dialog*, 7, 1952.
Cover: Per Ulrich
(1915–1994) © Per
Ulrich



Fig. 8. *Dialog*, 3, 1953.
Cover: Ib K. Olsen
(1919–2017) © Ib
K. Olsen

Sterup-Hansen was working on the subject of *The War Blind* he also worked on the subject of humans forming a wall or front saying it was “[...] a wish for a situation, where humans, children, women, and men put a stop to the cynical game, which back then had the nuclear bomb as its latest and most distinct symbol”³⁷ (Fig. 10). His cover is a composite of both: The silhouette of the war blind without canes or dogs, standing or walking in a linked wall formation. They are simplified silhouettes of men (no children, no obvious female figures) with no details but a minimum of

³⁷ “[...] en ønskesituation hvor mennesker, børn, kvinder og mænd standser det kyniske spil, der dengang havde atombomben som sit nyeste og tydeligste symbol”. D. Sterup-Hansen, *Dan Sterup-Hansen....*, p. 31.

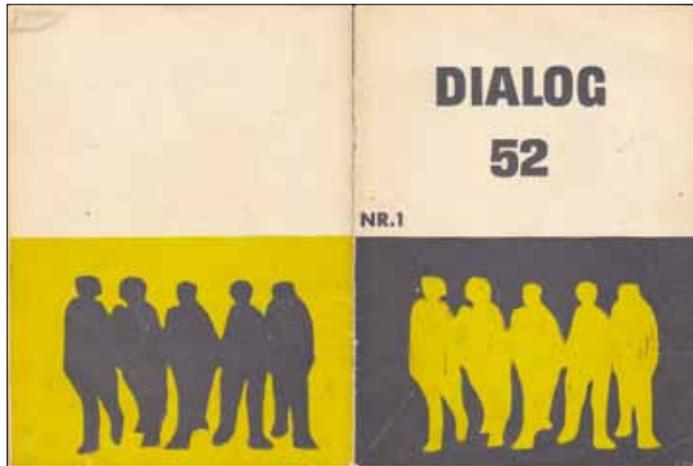


Fig. 9. *Dialog*, 1, 1952.
Cover: Dan Sterup-Hansen (1918–1995)
© Dan Sterup-Hansen

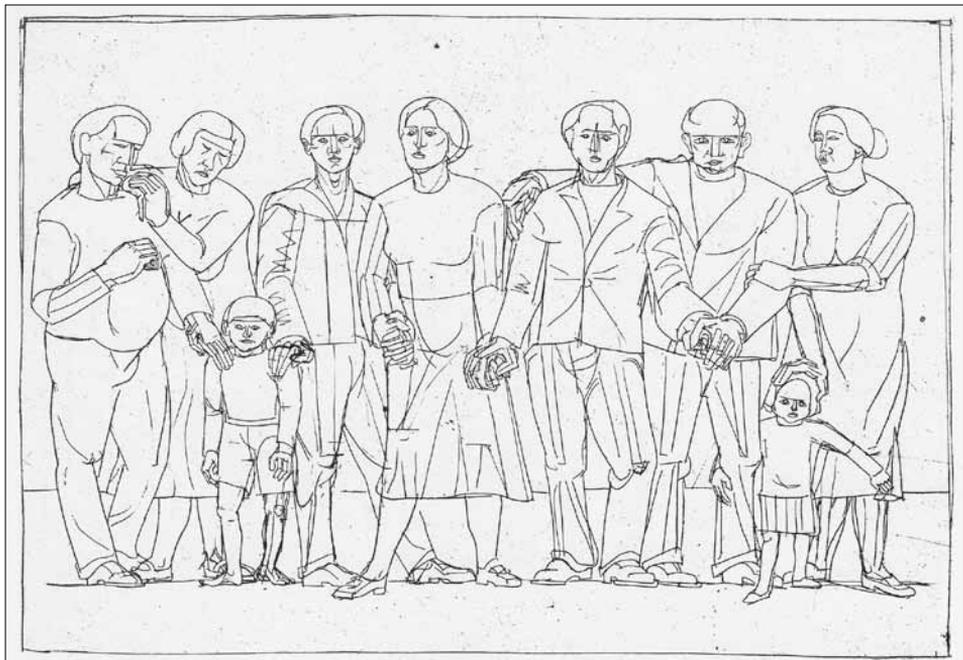


Fig. 10. Dan Sterup-Hansen, *Wall of Humans (Menneskemur)*, 1954, etching. Private collection
© Dan Sterup-Hansen

signification, and an obliteration of the elements of narrativity seen in his other works. They invite identification through their generality.

The simplification of form is mirrored in the use of colour. In this cover, Sterup-Hansen is repeating the same motif in reverse colouring on the front and back

covers, hereby visually marking a change either caused by or aimed at the group of people standing in unison in the centre of the image. The character of this change is optimistic. As mentioned above, Sterup-Hansen associated the colour yellow with optimism thus the use of the colour on this cover implies the possibility of positive change in accordance with the magazine's ideological stand.

Sterup-Hansen's composition, while visually simple, encompasses the complex intersection between the singular individual and the abstract and heterogeneous collectivism of a society. The motif is figural and relates to a general notion of humankind and an implied solidarity, but seen in terms of the doctrine of the figure-ground relationship within abstract art it contains additional meaning. The reversal in colour between figure and ground calls attention to the image-ground relationship and connects the figure to the ground. On an ideological level man and his surrounding environment is presented as connected and dependent. Inside the magazine the abstract notion of society as a larger network of people relating to one another is called forth.³⁸ Thus, the schematic figures of human beings rendered in textured woodblock printing evoke our corporal, physical existence and pair it with the non-visual, abstract qualities of world politics, left wing ideology, and ideals for reconstruction also given textual form inside the magazine.

The viewer as body

The body and its senses are a core theme in Sterup-Hansen's art and it is by addressing the body of the viewer that he communicates political and humanitarian ideals. Sterup-Hansen expressed a wish for fellow humans to take action in the shaping of our common world, to take responsibility in many senses of the word. In terms of the *Dialog* magazine there are instances where abstracted thought and phenomenological perception merge together in the material act of reading set forth by artworks and layout. In the act of reading the reader is – ideally – reminded of his or her own body, and thus situated in their own reality while reading. In this way the call to action set out in *Dialog* meets the reader not in an immersion in a text, but in a reality, where they have the possibility of acting, of doing something: something ethical, political, phenomenological.

The caretakers in Sterup-Hansen's art indicate people who act: the women aiding the blind, the man lifting the disabled man, but Sterup-Hansen makes explicit in his texts, that the protagonists are the blind. I have already discussed how their use

³⁸ A magazine can be regarded as a "public", involving a multitude of voices debating – including the reader. In the editorial of this issue of *Dialog* the editors address the reader in this capacity. The magazine wants to "call to assembly" (*kalde til samling*) and it "invites [...] the readers to join us in the fight against the disintegration of the humanist tradition and the impoverishment of society that takes place with reckless violence" ("*[...] læserne til sammen med os at tage del i kampen mod den nedbrydning af den humanistiske tradition og den forarmelse af samfundet, som finder sted med hensynsløs voldsomhed*"). "Foreword", *Dialog*, 1, 1952, p. 1.

of canes both makes them vulnerable and gives them a potential to hurt others – if only by accident. The blind must be trusting, yet are not helpless. They are agents onto themselves. The trust involved in accepting help is something that opens up us all to each other, and something that we must also understand as an act, perhaps even a political act: the act of trust between people, the courage to be interdependent, as ways to fight for peace.

The act of trust is given bodily form in Sterup-Hansen's texts and art, and I have touched on how the viewer echoes the body of the walking man in *T.S.S. Angelica*. I want to expand this observation to include the formal qualities of Sterup-Hansen's art. Several times in this article I have mentioned or alluded to the notion of awkwardness. The awkwardness of being caught between movements, the awkwardness of navigating in the dark in piles of people, feet catching on clothing and limbs. It is a subtheme in many of Sterup-Hansen's works of art. The notion of awkwardness is found in many of the artist's works such as in the awkwardly perched man sleeping on a bench (Fig. 11). Awkwardness could easily be dismissed as poor quality of draughtsmanship, but that would be a mistake. Awkwardness connotes physicality and points to the body, its presence and bulk. It blocks visual delight in a pretty shape or face and instead "bumps" into the eye of the beholder. It could even cause a feeling of uncomfortableness in the viewer, a small embarrassment due to the awkwardness perceived. As such it serves as a reminder of the



Fig. 11. Dan Sterup-Hansen, *Sleeping man on a bench* (*Sovende mand på bænk*), 1957, etching. Private collection. Photo by Lis Clausen © Dan Sterup-Hansen

viewer's own being as body. That the one who looks is also sometimes awkward, is bodily inhabiting the world, a fact the optical enjoyment of art has been accused of erasing. Awkwardness engages us as beholders as well as makes us aware of our being in the world outside the image we behold. It pushes us back, forming a bridge between the meanings and messages offered by the work of art and the lifeworld we inhabit, where we – according to Sterup-Hansen's ideological aesthetics – can and must act. The formal qualities force the viewer to remain in his body, as viewer. Rather than get lost in an image, the image meets him or her in their own space, similar to what I argue takes place in *Dialog*. The connection between viewer and art work is – just as the subjects of Sterup-Hansen's art – based on a phenomenological experience of being in the world: blinded, awkward, stumbling, sleeping, disabled, vulnerable, interdependent, as well as seeing, standing, walking, feeling, thinking, doing.

Conclusion: A politics of touch

In this article, I have argued that Sterup-Hansen explores different modes of blindness – *The War Blind*, the sleeping as well as other sensorial deprivations in order to focus attention on the body and a phenomenological perception and to evoke empathy and phenomenological recognition in the viewer. His art undertakes recurrent themes of disability, often paired with an awkwardness that extends into formal qualities in order to reach out to the viewer in his or her space of reception. I have drawn inspiration from Merleau-Ponty, Ihde, and Marks in order to understand how Sterup-Hansen's motifs perform, so to speak, rather than how they look. While Merleau-Ponty is concerned with the relationship of subject to object and how we as subjects extend into our surroundings and they into us, Marks offers us her almost manifest-like invitation to think and expand on a notion of haptic erotics – or perhaps also a haptic phenomenology – in order to take on bodily and emotional responsibility in the meeting of subjects, not as motifs, but as subjects.

Sterup-Hansen was a devout communist, actively engaged in a left-wing struggle for a peaceful and humane future. In my analysis, this ideological and humanistic position is embedded into his works of art, but in a way that addresses the body, more so than the mind. In this respect they can be said to provide their own argumentation: you sense this in your body, so it must be true. Through texts and images political situations are presented with emphasis on the senses involved: seeing, non-seeing, touching – as in carrying, stumbling or walking. And on the emotions connected to these sensation, not least a recurrent theme of vulnerability, which seems to be the core theme: by being vulnerable, we depend on each other, and this in itself is political. A politics of touch finds a clear expression in the etching *Wall of Humans*. To be bodily and emotionally in the world is also to *be* on an existential and ethical level. It is the texture of our existence and it gives form to our acts as human beings.

Human touch is a recurrent theme in *The War Blind* series and in the cover of *Dialog*. The war blind feel their way with canes as sensory extension of their bodies, but in their closeness to one another they also extend each other, so to speak, in solidarity and cohesion. This is also implicit in the mutual singing of *The Internationale* in the text by Sterup-Hansen. It is consistent with the ideological standpoint Sterup-Hansen has expressed, but it is also an expression of human interdependence and responsibility. The blind have a responsibility in using their canes, the walking have a responsibility for their own bodies – in this case their feet – in connection to other bodies.

In this regard Sterup-Hansen's images differ from Merleau-Ponty's example with the cane, in that it implies another human being beyond the subject. Merleau-Ponty's famously writes about a woman wearing a feathered hat: "Without any explicit calculation, a woman maintains a safe distance between the feather in her hat and objects that might damage it".³⁹ What is carried in Sterup-Hansen's aesthetics is a person. Just as when we carry a child on our shoulders we must be careful to take hanging branches, wind and door openings into account. A lot more is at stake in this extension of our being, than in the case of a feather. Thus, vulnerability goes hand in hand with responsibility in Sterup-Hansen's art. He evokes a phenomenological – dependant – relationship between the individual and his lifeworld and between one person and the next.

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³⁹ M. Merleau-Ponty, op. cit., p. 214.

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Applying the Avant-Garde: Display Experience in the Exhibition of Modern Art (1948)

Abstract

The *Exhibition of Modern Art (Wystawa Sztuki Nowoczesnej)* organized in 1948 in the Palace of Art (Pałac Sztuki) in Cracow was one of the most prominent art events in Poland during the last century. It is considered one of the unprecedented moments in shaping the modernity. The exhibition was thought to be designed as a whole venture, integrating the modern art demonstration with the will to make it accessible to all the social groups. The desire of the authors was to endear the authorities, since the Stalinist repressions were approaching, and present the modern art as accessible to the society and needed in the “new socialist order”. Simultaneously, the primal context for the exhibition, underlined by its authors as well as the critics in subsequent years, were the surrealist exhibitions in Paris. This new avant-garde mode of displaying, so attractive for the Polish artists, put in the foreground not the traditional reception of art, implied by the traditional museology, but mostly focused on the spectator’s experience and used all possible kinds of tools to enhance it. These two approaches were usually presented as antagonistic and impossible to reconcile. The article attempts to analyze the tools which the display’s authors used to merge the avant-garde display with didacticism. While looking at the *Recovered Territories Exhibition* which took place a couple of months earlier, one might notice that the *Exhibition of Modern Art* was not the first display that accommodated the avant-garde solutions to the didactic and propagandistic venture.

Keywords: Exhibition of Modern Art, Recovered Territories Exhibition, history of exhibitions, curatorial strategies, surrealism, surrealist exhibitions, environmental design, postwar art, propaganda exhibitions, Polish exhibitions

The *Exhibition of Modern Art (Wystawa Sztuki Nowoczesnej)* was one of the most prominent events in the Polish art during the last century and it is considered as one

of the essential moments in shaping the modernity. The exhibition was defined as the point of departure for future progressive realizations and occurs in the literature as an essential moment for surrealist tendencies in Polish art.¹ Since 1957 the word “*First*” has been added to the name of the *Exhibition of Modern Art* in order to emphasize its connection with the *Second Exhibition of Modern Art (Druga Wystawa Sztuki Nowoczesnej)*.² In this paper I will discuss the exhibition’s design regarding its political context and the special role surrealism played in the 1940s in the Polish art. I will examine the tools which were used to influence the mass audience and that allowed to integrate the avant-garde display with didacticism.

The exhibition opened on 18 December 1948 in the Palace of Art in Cracow (Pałac Sztuki), the base for Kraków Society of Friends of Fine Arts (Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Sztuk Pięknych). It was organized by the avant-garde Artists’ Club (Klub Artystów), with Tadeusz Kantor as the main coordinator and designer, and Mieczysław Porębski as the commissioner. The Artists’ Club was an association of young artists based in Cracow. Some of them started their careers during the inter-war period, and for the others, the first interval after the war was a stage of their debuts and first artistic experiences. The group didn’t have any specific programme and was more an alliance of individuals, however, a formalization of the artistic commonality was, at the time, the only way to get public support from the government.³ The Artists’ Club was anticipated by the Group of Young Artist, an informal association, presenting their works together for the first time in 1946 at the Palace of Art.⁴ Simultaneously, the Club of Young Artists and Scientists (Klub Młodych Artystów i Naukowców) functioned in Warsaw. Established in 1947 at the Polish Army Home (Dom Wojska Polskiego), provided the centre of artistic actions in the capital, with lectures, discussions, and exhibitions in their programme. In the lead of the arts department was Marian Bogusz, an artist and animator of the Polish artistic life after the war. In 1947 a common exhibition was held at the Polish Army Home, *The Exhibition of Modern Visual Artists (Wystawa Prac Plastyków Nowoczesnych)*, which gathered together the artists from Warsaw, as well as those from the Artists’ Club in Cracow, and from Władysław Strzemiński’s artistic circles in Łódź.⁵ *The Exhibition of*

1 See e.g. P. Piotrowski, *Awangarda w cieniu Janty*, Poznań, 2005, pp. 53–59.

2 The *Second Exhibition of Modern Art* opened on 18 October and closed on 17 November 1957, and was organized in Zachęta Central Bureau of Art Exhibitions in Warsaw. The organizing committee was formed by Marian Bogusz, Oskar Hansen, Tadeusz Kantor, Jerzy Nowosielski, Mieczysław Porębski, Henryk Stażewski, Alina Szapocznikow, Bogusław Szwacz, Stefan Wegner, and Marek Włodarski. It is considered the essential moment of the Thaw in Polish art.

3 “Mieczysław Porębski interviewed by Marek Świca”, in: *I Wystawa Sztuki Nowoczesnej pięćdziesiąt lat później*, Exhibition catalogue, ed. J. Chrobak, M. Świca, Cracow, 1998, p. 21.

4 The exhibition of the Group of Young Artists opened on 12 November 1946. The display’s scenario included artworks by Tadeusz Brzozowski, Maria Jarema, Tadeusz Kantor, Jadwiga Maziarzka, Kazimierz Mikulski, Jerzy Nowosielski, Erna Rosenstein, Jerzy Skarżyński, and Bogusław Szwacz.

5 *The Exhibition of Modern Visual Artists* was divided into two parts with the first opening on 30 September 1947, and the second in December the same year. It opened simultaneously with an individual exhibition of Marek Włodarski’s drawings. It included artists from Cracow

Modern Art in Cracow was another attempt to bring those artistic groups together. The ambition was to integrate all the artistic milieus in Poland and to create, the first of its kind, universal demonstration of modernity, intended as a summary of some era.⁶ The display was meant to be the last demonstration of modernity before the Stalinist repressions came to dominate and transform the artistic life for the next few years. Moreover, the proceedings of the event were already determined by the forthcoming repressions, first evidenced by the destruction of almost all of the copies of the catalogue before the opening of the exhibition, and finally by its premature closing in less than one month. One might think that the fate of the project was sealed even before it opened, as due to the directions from above several pieces had been eliminated.⁷

The exhibition occupied the first floor of the Palace of Art. The quotidian entrance was covered with a montage poster and another entrance was opened, located on the left side of the vestibule. This way, the spectator was directed to the first hall, placed on the south-west side of the building, called “common room” (światlica). Inside there were four structures 2 x 2.3 meters, serving as the boards for Zbigniew Dłubak’s photograms, and Ali Bunsch’s spatial form hung from the ceiling. There was an explanatory text: “For the modern artist, the art is a method of the imaginary assimilation of the world. That is why the horizons of modern art, science and technology are common. The photograms placed in the entrance room showed the world, which is, to the same extent the world of an artist, that it is the world of a scientist-researcher or a practising man technician”.⁸ The intention

(Tadeusz Brzozowski, Ali Bunsch, Maria Jarema, Tadeusz Kantor, Jerzy Kujawski, Jadwiga Maziarska, Kazimierz Mikulski, Jerzy Nowosielski, Jerzy Skarżyński, Jan Świdorski), Łódź (Lech Kunka, Hanna Orzechowska, Władysław Strzemiński, Teresa Tyszkiewicz, Bolesław Utkin, Stefan Wegner), Poznań (Alfred Lenica), Szczecin (Łukasz Niewisiewicz, Marian Tomaszewski), and Warsaw (Marian Bogusz, Maria Ewa Łunkiewicz, Henryk Stażewski, Bogusław Szwacz, Romuald Kamil Witkowski, Ignacy Witz, Andrzej Wróblewski).

6 The attempt to unite the whole artistic milieu of that time was ultimately dismissed with the resignation of Władysław Strzemiński, also Katarzyna Kobro wasn’t invited. Eventually, there were 37 artists taking part in the exhibition, including the representatives of Cracow (Tadeusz Brzozowski, Ali Bunsch, Zofia Gutowska, Maria Jarema, Tadeusz Kantor, Janina Kraupe-Świdorska, Jerzy Malina, Jadwiga Maziarska, Kazimierz Mikulski, Jerzy Nowosielski, Erna Rosenstein, Jerzy Skarżyński, Jonasz Stern, Marian Szulc, Jan Tarasin, Jerzy Tchórzewski, Jadwiga Umińska, Andrzej Wróblewski, Andrzej Cybulski, Kazimierz Wojtanowicz), Warsaw (Marian Bogusz, Janina Brosz-Włodarska, Zbigniew Dłubak, Jan Lenica, Roman Owidzki, Leonard Sempoliński, Henryk Stażewski, Bogusław Szwacz, Bogdan Urbanowicz, Marek Włodarski), Poznań (Alfred Lenica, Fortunata Obrąpalska), Łódź (Judyta Sobel, Teresa Tyszkiewicz, Stefan Wegner), and Lublin (Edward Hartwig), see *Wystawa sztuki nowoczesnej zorganizowana przez Klub Artystów w Krakowie*, Exhibition catalogue, Warsaw, 1948.

7 W. Kozioł, “The Conception of Materiality Presented at the Exhibition of Modern Art (1948). Regarding the Topic of the ‘Heightened’ Realism in Modern Art”, in: *DeMATERIALIZATIONS in Art and Art-Historical Discourse in the Twentieth Century*, eds. W. Bałus, M. Kunińska, Cracow, 2018, p. 58.

8 Original version: „Dla nowoczesnego artysty sztuka jest metodą wyobraźniowego przyswajania sobie świata. Horyzonty nowoczesnej sztuki, nauki i techniki są wspólne. Pomieszczone

was to initiate the narration of the exhibition regarding a scientific approach and to demonstrate the parallels between the world of science and the world of art. The abstract forms on the photograms were in reality macroscopic photos of the scientific discoveries associated with the space exploration or the evolution of biological or medical studies, like planetarium, the clock's internal mechanisms, a piece of moss, a maple seed, an iron construction, a slice of a cabbage with its internal structure, and X-ray images of the lungs. In the main hall, there were, most of all, paintings hung on the walls in the asymmetric arrangement, with pictures placed on different heights and with various distances between the frames. There were also freely arranged chairs ("the accumulation of chairs") with drawings placed on the seats. On the floor, there were standing boards for drawings and other forms on paper, like sketches or projects, that could be removed due to non-constant pinning, conjuring up the attitude of a workshop. The north side of the building was divided into three separate spaces: the hall devoted to sculptures and drawings together with the photomontage room, and on the east two parallel spaces, the models hall alongside the north wall, and the office placed in between the model hall and the main hall. In the models hall, called also the Hall of the Forms of Contemporary Reality, there were displayed spatial models prepared by Jerzy Nowosielski, Andrzej Wróblewski, Marian Bogusz, Jadwiga Maziarska, Marian Szulc, and Tadeusz Brzozowski. The models were created mostly of the everyday utilities, like the oven's chimney or a net. Mieczysław Porębski called this space in the exhibition catalogue "a kind of a storage of forms".⁹ These forms aimed to illustrate the notions of scale, spatial structure, movement, contrasting, and object's invention. There was an explanatory text on the wall that proclaimed that "by the gathered models we tried to show how a modern artist understands and resolves elementary issues of his artistic language – the problems of space, scale, material, and movement".¹⁰ In the main hall, there was a megaphone installation and the display was accompanied by a special music program. The exhibition was constantly filled with sound, such as a selection of music, poetry readings, manifestos, and commentaries read by the actors from Cracow – Marta Stebnicka, Tadeusz Łomnicki, and Krystyna Schnerr-Mierzejewska.¹¹ It is impossible to ascertain if those manifestos were correspondent to the preserved notations of speeches, declaimed during the opening, however, one can assume it is highly probable.¹²

w tej sali fotomontaże ukazują świat, który jest w tym samym stopniu światem artysty, co światem naukowca lub technika", see *The Exhibition of Modern Art* (commentary), a typescript from Mieczysław Porębski's archive, in: *I Wystawa...*, p. 82.

9 Original version: „jest jakby magazynem form", see *Wystawa sztuki nowoczesnej zorganizowana...*, p. 2.

10 Original version: „Na zgromadzonych tu modelach przestrzennych starano się pokazać, jak plastik nowoczesny pojmuje i rozwiązuje elementarne zagadnienie swojego języka – zagadnienia przestrzeni, skali, materii i ruchu". *The Exhibition of Modern Art* (commentary), a typescript from Mieczysław Porębski's archive, in: *I Wystawa...*, p. 82.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 11.

12 During my research, I've never found any sufficient elaboration concerning sounds as part of this display. No sufficient attention was paid to the exhibition planning during the 20th

Two aspects of the event are emphasized in most of the interpretations. One of them is the surrealistic approach to the exhibitions and the inspiration derived from the surrealist exhibitions in Paris. The other underlines most of all the desire to endear the authorities and present the modern art as accessible to the society and needed in the “new socialist order”. These two analyses were usually presented as antagonistic and impossible to reconcile. However, while looking at the *Recovered Territories Exhibition* which took place a couple of months earlier, one might see that the *Exhibition of Modern Art* was not the first display that accommodated the avant-garde solutions to the didactic and propagandistic venture. The *Recovered Territories Exhibition* was organized along with the Congress of Intellectuals in Defense of Peace in 1948.¹³ The Exhibition was an enormous undertaking, the most recognizable and large scale propaganda project among the Polish exhibition designs of those years. The architecture of this venture was supervised by Jerzy Hryniewiecki and engaged many notable architects, including Czesław Wielhorski and Tadeusz Zieliński. Both these architects designed the *Pavilion of Destructions*, conceptually similar to the exhibition *Warsaw Accuses*, organized by the Bureau for the Capital City Reconstruction (Biuro Odbudowy Stolicy) in the National Museum in Warsaw. Maybe the most excellent hall of the display was the *Coal pavilion*, one of the several themed displays in the Four Domes Pavilion (Pawilon Czterech Kopuł). The special design was prepared by Wojciech and Stanisław Zamecznik. The space of this section was occupied by a multimedia installation, with, among others, pieces of coal on the walls, a selection of movies about mining, propaganda charts glorifying the Polish coal’s export, and an enormous shape of a globe under the ceiling. Jan Lenica in his article “Zagadnienia plastyczne Wystawy Ziem Odzyskanych” published in 1948 in *Odrodzenie* defined the *Recovered Territories Exhibition* as the first modern arrangement of a display.¹⁴ In the spacial organization of the exposition he found the

century and a lot of information is impossible to recover. Sometimes, there are even missing plans and scenarios of the spatial arrangement, which makes all the ephemeral means of expression almost impossible to recreate. It is no different when it comes to the *Exhibition of Modern Art*. The information about the sonic extension of the exhibition is dispersed and was never described in detail.

- 13 It was noticed by Alicja Kępińska that “the assumptions and ambitions of the participants of the *Modern Art Exhibition* have found its parallels in the program of another exhibition, opened a couple of months earlier, the *Recovered Territories Exhibition*. It also became a manifestation of the modern technical and artistic thought, some kind of attempt to familiarize the society with the approaching modernity”, A. Kępińska, *Nowa Sztuka. Sztuka w Polsce*, Warsaw, 1981, p. 24; also Bożena Kowalska noticed some similarities in the modern approach to arranging the exhibition’s space in case of those two displays, B. Kowalska, *Polska awangarda malarska 1945-1970*, Warsaw, 1975, p. 24; it is also known that the *Recovered Territories Exhibition* was widely discussed in the Club of Young Artists and Scientists, see A. Pietrasik, “Antagonizm w polu sztuki. Działalność Klubu Młodych Artystów i Naukowców (1947-1949)”, in: *Zaraz po wojnie*, eds. J. Kordjak, A. Szewczyk, Warsaw, 2015, p. 219.
- 14 J. Lenica, “Zagadnienia plastyczne Wystawy Ziem Odzyskanych”, *Odrodzenie* 37, 1948, reprinted in: *Czas debat. Antologia krytyki artystycznej z lat 1945-1955*, vol. 1, *Upowszechnianie kultury i mecenat państwowy*, eds. A. Pietrasik, P. Słodkowski, Warsaw, 2016, p. 176.

influence of modern art – abstract art and surrealism. He wrote that while visiting the *Hall of Destructions* with Jan Kott, they discussed how important it was to use the surrealist methods of displaying to enable people to understand the message of a display as well as to increase their impressions. He quoted the significant words of Jerzy Hryniewiecki "[...] we step into the world of artistic concepts, exceeding traditional ways of thinking. As we enter the 'applied surrealism', abstract art gets closer to us. We live with resurrected dynamics of futurism, surrounded by the artistic tendencies that were incomprehensible before. The 'elite' art is finally capable of affecting the masses. What is unintelligible and difficult while displayed in art salons – appeals to the crowd on the exhibitions and fairs with a language of propaganda and advertising".¹⁵ The success of modern language, confronted with the mass audience was also noticed by Helena Blum who wrote that the Polish artists created a large-scale social order.¹⁶ The author argues that the display revealed that the modern art might be understandable for every spectator, even (or, just on the contrary, particularly) when they come to the "surrealistic" *Hall of Destructions*. The organizers of the exhibition wrote: "a dynamic exhibition – which means involving all the technical solutions (motion, light, film, sound) to the greatest extent" and "an exhibition similar to the book, which means a display where the direction of the tour and the order of viewed elements are actually predetermined by the logical sequence of themes presented on the exhibition".¹⁷

This multimedia approach, the environmental design, and the "active surrounding"¹⁸ were used both in the propaganda displays and in the avant-garde

15 Original version: „[...]wkraczamy w świat pojęć artystycznych, niemieszczących się w ramach myślenia tradycyjnego. Wchodzimy w 'stosowany surrealizm', bliski nam staje się kierunek sztuki abstrakcyjnej. Żyjemy na nowo wskrzeszonym dynamizmem futurizmu, otacza nas atmosfera prądów plastycznych dotychczas niezrozumiałych. Sztuka 'elitarna' znajduje wreszcie swą przekładnię dla oddziaływania na masy. To, co jest formą niezrozumiałą i trudną na salonach sztuki – na wystawach i targach zaczyna przemawiać do mas językiem propagandy i reklamy". J. Hryniewiecki, "Zamówienie społeczne na krótki termin. (Na marginesie architektury Międzynarodowych Targów w Poznaniu)", *Architektura*, 1948, 5, pp. 2–3, quoted after J. Lenica, op.cit.

16 H. Blumówna, „Architektura i plastyka na WZO”, *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 1948, 39, reprinted in: *Czas debat...*, p. 184.

17 Original version: „Wystawa dynamiczna – tzn. wykorzystanie w jak najszerszym zakresie wszelkich możliwości technicznych (ruch światło, film, dźwięk)”, „Wystawa-książka, tzn. wystawa, której kierunek i kolejność zwiedzania w zasadzie są z góry określone w związku z logicznym ciągiem problemów na wystawie postawionych”, trans. Aleksandra Szymczyk, Sprawozdanie Komisarza Rządu ds. Wystawy Ziem Odzyskanych, 1950, the Archives of Modern Records (Archiwum Akt Nowych), no. 2/377/43, fol. 28, quoted after T. Fudala, "The Crisis-Time Visionary. Exhibitions by Wojciech Zamecznik vs. Shortage Policy", in: *Wojciech Zamecznik. Projektowanie totalne* (Total Design), ed. K. Puchała-Rojek, A. Szewczyk, Warsaw, 2018, p. 31.

18 Originally „aktywne otoczenie”; this term was used by Tadeusz Kantor while describing his *Anti-Exhibition* (or *Popular Exhibition*) in 1963, quoted after M. Hussakowska "Dwie wystawy", in: *Display. Strategie wystawiania*, eds. M. Hussakowska, E. M. Tatar, Cracow, 2012, p. 137.

realizations. The multisensory appeal, as well as some curatorial decisions, statements and reviews, together with Kantor's residence in Paris in 1947, imposed the surrealist interpretation on this show.¹⁹ There is a set of traits that are always mentioned when it comes to the Duchampian roots of the exhibition in the Palace of Art. Besides its multimodality, the aberrant placement of the chairs in the main hall is usually the essential indication towards the surrealist reading of the exhibition's project. It is considered that the surrealism had a huge impact on the generation of artists who were starting their careers just before the war. Włodzimierz Nowaczyk described the extensive influence of Helena Blum's article about the *Exposition Internationale de Surréalisme* in the Galerie Beaux-Arts in Paris. For the Polish artists, it was one of the most inspiring points of reference to the Western art at that time. The exhibition of 1938 remained in the collective memory as "the distant role model, impossible to follow, almost a dreamlike one".²⁰ This new avant-garde mode of displaying, so attractive for the Polish artists, put in the foreground not the traditional reception of art, implied by the traditional museology, but mostly focused on the spectator's experience and used all possible kinds of tools to enhance it. During the memorable exhibition in the Galerie Beaux-Arts, the spectator was confronted not only with coal sacks hung from the ceiling and withered leaves on the floor but also with the German military music serving as a background for this venture.²¹ Łukasz Guzek in his book *The Art of Installation* excerpts Mary Anne Staniszewski's approach to the exhibition installations. She states that the contemporary interactivity of spectator, the specificity of a place, multimedia, electronics, and the use of installation as a tool in the exposition design is rooted in the arrangement of projects of the first half of the 20th century. She calls the avant-garde displays of that time the "prehistory" of the art of installation. This author suggests that the exhibition design was an important part of the artistic activities until the 1950s, whereupon during 1960s and 1970s the conventionalization of the layouts of display occurred, caused by the musealisation of the avant-garde and the appearance of the institutional critique.²² The beginning of the exhibition installations might be affiliated with first Dadaist appearances. Later, the most emblematic were the realizations designed by Friedrich Kiesler with his major project, the *Endless House*, which was a manifestation of his Correalism theory. The main assumptions

19 See e.g. M. Lachowski, „Wokół I Wystawy Sztuki Nowoczesnej”, in: *Nowocześni po katastrofie. Sztuka w Polsce w latach 1945-1960*, Lublin, 2013, pp. 123–152, or W. Nowaczyk, „Tropy nowoczesności”, in: *Odwilż. Sztuka ok. 1956 r.*, ed. P. Piotrowski, Poznań, 1996, pp. 36–45.

20 Original version: „odległym wzorcem, niedoścignionym, niemalże sennym marzeniem”. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

21 Helena Blum mentioned also „hissing, unidentified sounds, strong smell and strange objects” („dźwięki syczące, nieokreślone, zapachy ciężkie i dziwaczne objekty”). H. Blumówna, „Nadrealizm. Refleksje po wystawie paryskiej”, *Nike*, 1939, 1, pp. 38–47, reprinted in: *Grupa Krakowska (dokumenty i materiały)*, vol. 1, ed. J. Chrobak, Cracow, 1991, p. 86.

22 Ł. Guzek, *Sztuka instalacji. Zagadnienie związku przestrzeni i obecności w sztuce współczesnej*, Warsaw, 2007, pp. 149–150.

of Kiesler's approach were based on the idea of a total artwork, a correlation of the construction's architecture and the objects that would be assigned to its structure, such as artworks, furniture, and other items, along with the spiritual condition such as the mythology or magic. Another *Gesamtkunstwerk* designed by Kiesler was the project of the Peggy Guggenheim's gallery Art of This Century. The most famous of the three separate spaces, the Surrealist Gallery, was a designed environment with the unframed paintings hung at different angles, the biomorphic-shaped furniture, and the curved walls. The light in the exhibition's space turned on and off periodically during the visit, confronting the viewer with unexpected darkness. At the same time, the sound of a train interrupted the silence, alternating the spectator's senses. The spaces between canvases were called the *Galaxies*, which defined the constellations of paintings and its integration with space.²³ Finally, there was a post-war manifestation of an exhibition installation, *Le Surréalisme en 1947* in the Galerie Maeght in Paris, organized by André Breton and Marcel Duchamp. This project, popular in Poland, was designed as a total work of art and implemented the idea of "a new myth", the magical and esoteric initiation. There was the *Salle du Superstition* with the project of space designed by Kiesler in the spirit of an idea of Correalism. Duchamp was an author of *Le Dédale*, a labyrinth with twelve altars, which contained the magical figures – surrealist fetiches. The audience's perception was constantly interfered by the sound of an electric bell.²⁴

The Duchampian impact on the *First Exhibition of Modern Art* was also enhanced by the very organizers of the display in the Palace of Art. Porębski asserted in the interview with Marek Świca that in the arrangement of chairs "there was some inspiration by the surrealist exhibitions – namely those, where there was shutting, tangling with lines, threads [...] we knew it from the photos, literature, we also knew that after-war exhibition of surrealists and probably it was the one that influenced the plastic character of ours interiors, it was *an installation* for a large scale".²⁵ Further he adds that "the layout of paintings in different distances from the walls, swellings, smooth lines – it was breaking out with previous expositional practices. Back then, it was new for us, although this kind of practices had its avant-garde past. In the end, the exhibition was meant to be arranged as exhibiting itself, then one of a kind in Europe, because neither painters from Jeunes Peintres de Tradition Française, nor those from Fronte Nuovo delle Arti in Italy, nor any others, have prepared this kind of exhibitions. However, our exhibition has never gained interna-

23 Ibid., p. 152. Guzek links this approach with the tradition of collage technique.

24 A. Kuczyńska, „Le Surréalisme en 1947 – occultism and the post-war marginalization of surrealism”, *Art Inquiry. Recherches sur les arts*, 2014, 16, p. 92.

25 Original version: „Podejrzewam, że tutaj właśnie była jakaś inspiracja surrealistycznymi wystawami – tymi, które oni zabudowywali, zasnuwali jakimiś sznurkami, nićmi... Myśmy to znali raczej z fotografii, z literatury, znaliśmy też tę powojenną wystawę surrealistów i prawdopodobnie ona również jakoś wpłynęła na wyraz plastycznych samych wnętrz, bo to była taka 'instalacja' na dużą skalę”. „Mieczysław Porębski interviewed by Marek Świca”, in: *I Wystawa...*, p. 23.

tional significance”.²⁶ This interpretation, the accentuation of the avant-garde and innovative approach applied on “this first large assemblage”²⁷ lasted for years in the literature. This analysis might have been escalated by confrontation with the posterior Kantor’s curatorial projects, mostly the *Anti-Exhibition* of 1963, also called the *Popular Exhibition*, and “the first environment in Poland”, as named by its author, or the exhibition of Erna Rosenstein’s artworks in Zachęta in 1967.²⁸

The recent years brought some new interpretations of the Exhibition of Modern Art. Piotr Słodkowski in his essay “Particular meanings of modernity. The visual aspect of the First Exhibition of Modern Art (1948) with references to the Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme (1947)” indicates that the exhibition was much more traditional than it used to be considered. Among others, he points out that the paintings were hung in groups determined by the artists’ affiliations and their stylistics.²⁹ One might also add here that the surrealists were mostly playing with the ex-

26 Original version: „Zawieszenie obrazów w różnej odległości od ścian, spiętrzenia, płynne linie – to było zerwaniem z dotychczasową praktyką wystawienniczą. To wszystko było dla nas wtedy nowe, choć mające swoją awangardową przeszłość. Tak więc, wystawa wyszła jako aranżacja sama dla siebie, jedyna w swoim rodzaju wtedy w Europie, bo ani malarze Jeunes Peintres de Tradition Française ani Fronte Nuovo delle Arti we Włoszech, ani nikt inny tego typu ekspozycji nie urządzał. Ta nasza wystawa nigdy rangi międzynarodowej nie zyskała”. Ibid., p. 23.

27 Original version: „pierwszy, ogromny *assemblage*”. Ibid.

28 One might mention here one more exhibition in Cracow that was using sound to emphasize the surrealist and modern effect. A jazz concert during the *Exhibition of 9 Painters* in 1955 was mentioned by Jadwiga Maziarska in her letter to Erna Rosenstein, see *Kolekcjonowanie świata. Jadwiga Maziarska listy i szkice*, ed. B. Piwowarska, Warsaw, 2005; Moreover, in 1959 there was a display of Phases group organized in Krzysztofory. Thanks to personal acquaintance between Janusz Bogucki, organizer of the event, Édouard Jaguer, and the artists from the André Breton’s circle it was possible to display artworks of foreign artists, such as Roberto Matta, Pierre Alechinsky, Corneille, or Jerzy Kujawski, lived in Paris. Alongside, three Polish artists were also invited to take part in the event – Marian Bogusz, Tadeusz Brzozowski, and Jerzy Tchórzewski. Jean Jacques Lebel represented the artists from abroad. One component of the display was a tape that Label brought from Paris, recorded especially for the event in Krzysztofory. The recording comprised a message by André Breton addressed by the poet to the Polish intellectuals. It started with a quotation from *The Books and the Pilgrimage of the Polish Nation* by Adam Mickiewicz. The tape also included speeches connected to the exhibition, as well as surreal poetry and music, see J. Dąbkowska-Zydroń, *Surrealizm po surrealizmie, Międzynarodowy ruch „Phases”*, Warsaw, 1994, see also J. Bogucki, *Sztuka Polskiej Ludowej*, Warsaw, 1983, pp. 150–151.

29 The author made a reconstruction and conducted an analysis of the spatial arrangement of the *Exhibition of Modern Art*, based on the 32 preserved photographs and reference materials. The effect was a precise reconstruction of the display, providing information about the distribution of most of the exhibits. Słodkowski made an assumption that, in fact, the arrangement proposed by Kantor and Porębski was distant from the widely used method, based on hanging paintings in one or two rows, adopted from the 19th-century impressionist shows, which provided a suitable distance between paintings and neutralized the surrounding. However, the act of rejection of those widely accepted methods wasn’t complete. The author argues that the composition of painting was in reality much less freely arranged and conservative than it looked like on the fragmentary photos. He proved that all of the artworks created by one artist,

position's space making the works of art less accessible (maybe except for Kiesler's project in Art of This Century gallery), while in Cracow the situation seemed to be completely the opposite. However, even if the exhibition's scenography was much more conservative than it used to be perceived, the display was still created in the spirit of times when surrealism was the synonym of modernity and its influence on the exposition's scenario cannot be denied. Piotr Piotrowski in *In the Shadow of Yalta: Art and the Avant-garde in Eastern Europe 1945-1989* defines the years 1945 to 1948 as the "surrealistic interregnum", a period when the previous formulas of representing the world were no more valid and the new ones didn't arrive yet.³⁰ For Piotrowski, the *Exhibition of Modern Art* was both the beginning and the end of the surrealist tendencies in Polish culture. The author suggests that the organization of the *Exhibition of Modern Art* led to a formative change in the character of surrealism in Poland which became not only artistic, but also a political proposal.³¹ The author quotes the words of Mieczysław Porębski from the exhibition's opening, pointing out that the organizers of the exhibition wanted to demonstrate that the avant-garde art is in accordance with Marx's dialectics and might be included into the language of social realism.³² In 1946, an article entitled "The Group of Young Artists for the second time. *Pro domo sua*" was published in "Twórczość" by Kantor and Porębski. It included their manifesto of the "intensified realism" („realizm spotęgowany”).³³ As Anna Baranowa points out, the tenor of this paper might seem "a bit progres-

besides small compositions on paper, were hung in groups, likewise, the order of those exhibits was far from being random. The configuration was also determined by the artists' affiliations, as well as their generation, and thereby, the stylistics of the paintings. He points out that despite using the innovate media, like photography, the artworks were displayed separately in the exhibition's space, segregated according to its type. Słodkowski also suggests, that the distances between paintings didn't diverge from the classical approach to displaying, what makes the exhibition different from the avant-garde condition, and its negation of a single object. Słodkowski also follows Kantor's stay in Paris in 1947. He argues that, while analyzing the artist's account from the visit to France he found that Kantor described the exhibition only once, without going into details. Moreover, when it comes to chronology, which was possible to recreate from the preserved correspondence, one might assume that Kantor left Paris before the show in Galerie Maeght was opened on July 7. That leaves us with the conviction that the artist was in fact in the gallery, but only during the preparatory stage and he might have seen only a part of the scenography, most likely only the architecture of the Labirynth. He argues that during the exhibition in Gallerie Maeght, Maria Jarema and Bogusław Szwacz were in Paris, however, their impact on the *Exhibition of Modern Art* seemed to be irrelevant, see P. Słodkowski, "Partykularne znaczenia nowoczesności. Wizualność I Wystawy Sztuki Nowoczesnej (1948) w świetle 'Exposition internationale du surrealisme' (1947)", *Artium Quaestiones*, 22, Poznań, 2011, pp. 247–266.

30 P. Piotrowski, op. cit., p. 52.

31 Ibid., p.59.

32 Ibid.

33 See T. Kantor, M. Porębski, "Grupa Młodych Plastyków po raz drugi. *Pro domo sua*", in: *Twórczość*, 9, 1946, pp. 82–88. The article was written as a response to Tadeusz Dobrowolski's article „O hermetyzmie i społecznej izolacji dzisiejszego malarstwa", *Odrodzenie*, 1946, reprinted in: *Czas debat...*

sive, marked with confidence that one appeals to 'the fresh, constructive intellectual forces and the young, unprejudiced imagination of the working classes'.³⁴ The defence of the "intensified realism" strived to preserve abstract art and modern, more independent forms of artistic creation, but also, on the other hand, to justify their presence in the post-war world and in the modern society that was about to recover. In her essay "To Those Who Fought for Realism", published in the catalogue of the *Just After The War* exhibition, Dorota Jarecka discusses all "realisms" that occurred in the post-war period: "intensified realism" (realizm spotęgowany), "direct realism" („realizm bezpośredni”) (Wróblewski), "working realism" („robotyczny realizm”) (Starzyński) and "realism of the visual process" („realizm procesu wzrokowego”) (Strzemiński).³⁵ All these "realisms" were striving to fit into the forthcoming new order of the Stalinist repressions with its steadfast rejection of everything that went beyond its limits.

First years after the war were the time of unprecedented integration of analyzing the shape and condition of modern art with the social engagement and the will to influence the mass spectator. Making culture accessible for all the social groups was particularly important.³⁶ Attempts to fit into the new reality, within which art remained entrenched, were already visible during the exhibition of the Group of Young Artists in 1946. The most symptomatic painting for the show was the *Washerwoman* by Tadeusz Kantor, considered as the programmatic artwork of the "intensified realism".³⁷ The *Exhibition of Modern Art* complied with the conditions of a didactic event. It was prepared to target a mass audience, a working-class man and other heroes of the socialist era. The organizers were analyzing techniques of gaining the recipient's attention and methods to attract it to the exhibition's space. The aim was to demonstrate that the modern art might be much closer to the real-life and appeal to mass audience than it used to be assumed. The necessity of social effect in modern art was emphasized by Zbigniew Dłubak. Therefore, his speech prepared for the exposition's opening was written in the spirit of real communistic propaganda. He underlined that the proprietorship of art used to be in the hands of the possessing class and art was influenced by its ideology. The proletariat used to be detached from all the expressions of "higher" art and condemned to the effects of the artistic production, mostly cheap and tacky, of other wage-earning proletarians.

34 Original version: „[...] progresywna tonacja, wiara w to, że przemawia się do 'świeżych, konstruktywnych sił intelektualnych i do młodej, nie uprzedzonej wyobraźni klas pracujących””. A. Baranowa, "Realizm spotęgowany i co dalej?", in: *W cieniu krzesła. Malarstwo i sztuka przedmiotu Tadeusza Kantora. Materiały z sesji zorganizowanej przez Instytut Historii Sztuki Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Zakład Historii Sztuki Nowoczesnej oraz Fundację im. Tadeusza Kantora w dniach 14-15 czerwca 1996*, ed. T. Gryglewicz, Cracow, 1997, p. 34.

35 D. Jarecka, "Tym, co walczyli o realizm", in: *Zaraz po wojnie*, eds. J. Kordjak, A. Szewczyk, Warsaw, 2015, p. 166.

36 See A. Pietrasik, P. Słodkowski, "Introduction", in: *Czas debat...* pp. 32–41.

37 This remark was made by Mieczysław Porębski, see K. Świącicki, "W kręgu II Grupy Krakowskiej: środowisko radykalnej awangardy plastycznej wobec zmian społeczno-politycznych w Polsce w latach 1945-1958", *Historia Slavorum Occidentis*, 1(4), Warsaw, 2013, p. 93.

He pointed out that after gaining power, the new heads of the communist society are not prepared to the reception of modern artistic tendencies, therefore they are faced with a challenge to upgrade the social level of the artistic knowledge. They must understand the modern art, and even more, allow to create new means of artistic expressions, adequate to a new social situation. Dłubak emphasized that before this process of education will profit, it is necessary to protect the existing achievements: “one doesn’t go back to the wooden plow, if the peasant has the knowledge how to use it; instead, one teaches him how to drive a tractor – that’s how the socialism works”.³⁸ Afterwards, he claims that “the modern art is like a tractor, however, it must be used for the positive and creative tillage, not for the destruction of the basis of the new social life. In front of the big movement of the masses towards culture, there must be a place for artists. By the deep understanding of the theoretical basis of new life and the practical social-political activity, they will gain a new form of consciousness, which will eventually affect their artistic creation. The connection between the development of art and raising the artistic knowledge of the broad masses will at last yield as a result the new socialistic forms of art – social realism”.³⁹ Dłubak later admitted that the leftist beliefs and ideas he held at the time, just like the others in his surrounding, were based mostly on superficial overview of the communist and socialistic lectures. They were not aware of what actually they had to deal with, and back then they really hoped for the real change and progress. However, he also indicated that his opening speech was to be a tactic move and the language he adopted was chosen intentionally to influence the party figures.⁴⁰ However, at that time the idea of the social engagement of art was really appealing to the artists. The relations between art and reality permitted, once and for all, to contest the postimpressionist legacy. Marian Bogusz determined the abstraction and functionalism as the essential elements for modern art. The next stage of development was surrealism that „creates the art of the struggle for the human’s liberation”. The new recipient, the „soil” for art, is the working class.⁴¹

Eventually, one can’t forget that large part of the participants of the *Exhibition of Modern Art* had leftist views, suffice it to mention Andrzej Wróblewski and the

38 Original version: „Nie wraca się do drewnianej sochy, jeżeli chłop tylko nią potrafi orać, uczy się go prowadzić traktor – na tym polega socjalizm”, see Z. Dłubak, “Uwagi o sztuce nowoczesnej. Referat wygłoszony na wernisażu I Wystawy Sztuki Nowoczesnej w Krakowie 1948”, in: *W kręgu lat czterdziestych*, vol. 2, ed. J. Chrobak, Cracow, 1991, p. 36.

39 Original version: „Nowoczesna plastyka jest traktorem, który jednakże musi być użyty do pozytywnej, twórczej orki, a nie do miażdżenia podstaw nowego życia społecznego. Naprzeciw wielkiemu ruchowi mas do wysokiego poziomu kultury wyjść muszą plastycy. Przez dogłębne zrozumienie podstaw teoretycznych nowego życia, przez praktyczną działalność społeczno-polityczną osiągną nowe ukształtowanie zawartości swojej świadomości, co z kolei wpłynie na ich twórczość. Zejdźcie się linii rozwojowej sztuki z linią podnoszenia poziomu kulturalnego szerokich mas da dopiero przez wzajemny wpływ tych czynników – nową socjalistyczną sztukę – socjalistyczny realizm”. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

40 „Zbigniew Dłubak interviewed by Jarosław Suchan”, in: *I Wystawa...*, p. 25.

41 Original version: „Nadrealizm stwarza sztukę walki o wyzwolenie człowieka”. *Ibid.*, p. 158.

Self-Education Group (Grupa Samokształceniowa). The social involvement also influenced the exhibition's further program. There was a special scenario of the labourers' visits to the exhibition, prepared by Andrzej Wróblewski, with a description of all the display halls and their importance for understanding the character and social role of modern art.⁴² The participation factor was also significant. There was a questionnaire prepared for visitors, which contained questions like: "how the painting should influence us?"; "did I find on the exhibition paintings that correspond to my wishes?"; "do the models as a whole make it easy to understand the rules modern art is based on?"; "should exhibitions like this one take place?", and so on. The arrangement of drawings in the main hall, the possibility to touch them, or even change its place on the board, influenced the attitude of the public engagement. The artists were available during the event in case of questions or a need for discussion. Combining music with the visuality of the display was a means to affect the recipient's emotions and allow her or him to fall into the narration.

An important part of the exhibition's display was its music component. It occurred in relations between the visitors and artists. Jerzy Skarżyński recounts the jazz music played from the records. He offered two albums of his own, one by Armstrong and one by Ellington, which were played on repeat during the show.⁴³ The music blaring in the Palace of Art also exists in Marian Warzecha's memories: "while passing next to the Palace of Art, once I decided to get in and suddenly I saw some weird looking exhibition. Everything there was different. There was a time when people were extremely quiet visiting exhibitions. In the museums, they used to whisper, at that time there were no guides or excursions. Getting into the museum space was equivalent to getting into silence. While there, there was jazz music playing".⁴⁴ Jazz music was popular and in vogue during the interwar period in Poland. After the war the forthcoming repressions didn't allow jazz music to develop properly, bringing by the end of the 1940s the "catacomb period" in the history of Polish jazz. This name refers to its condemnation by social realism and to the impossibility to perform it legally.⁴⁵ However, at the time, the Stalinist repressions weren't so readily perceptible in the field of music. For the artists, music was a territory where lack of literality was still allowed and the absence of an authentic representation was socially comprehensible.⁴⁶ During the *Exhibition of Modern Art* music was distributed not only from the records. There is a copy of the *Programme of Contemporary Music Concert* in

42 Andrzej Wróblewski, a commentary to *The Exhibition of Modern Art*, a typescript from private collection, *ibid.*, p. 110.

43 "Jerzy Skarżyński interviewed by Jan Trzupek and Andrzej Knapik", *ibid.*, p. 36.

44 Original version: „Przechodząc kiedyś koło Pałacu Sztuki, wszedłem do środka i nagle zobaczyłem jakąś dziwną wystawę. Wszystko tam było zupełnie inne. Wtedy na wystawach ludzie zachowywali się szalenie cicho. W muzeach rozmawiano szeptem, nie było jeszcze przewodników czy wycieczek. Wejście do muzeum czy na wystawę to było wejście w ciszę. Natomiast tam szedł jazz”. Marian Warzecha, reported by Piotr Cypryjański, *ibid.*, p. 38.

45 See e.g. K. Brodacki, *Historia jazzu w Polsce*, Cracow, 2010, pp.135–151.

46 (A statement by Alfred Lenica), *W kręgu lat czterdziestych*, vol. 2, ed. J. Chrobak, Cracow 1991, p. 66.

the archives of the Palace of Art.⁴⁷ It was organized by the Artists' Club in collaboration with the Polish Composers' Union (Związek Kompozytorów Polskich), the Society for Contemporary Music (Towarzystwo Muzyki Współczesnej), and the Polish Music Publishing House (Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne) on 17 January 1949 just before the closure of the show.⁴⁸ The schedule included music of Witold Lutosławski, Artur Malawski, Antoni Szałowski, Karol Szymanowski, and Andrzej Panufnik.⁴⁹ The exhibition in the Palace of Art witnessed one of the last performances of music by these composers before the Stalinist repressions came. The inclusion of music into the display narration was part of completing the narration about modernity. There is a note in the exhibition's scenario prepared by Kantor and Porębski, among the commentaries applied to the main hall, that includes an assertion that "the appropriate musical programme constitutes the emotional background for the exhibits".⁵⁰ A similar assumption appears amid the "theses for discussion" prepared for the Artists' Club in 1948, where it is said that „the visual language is, likewise the musical language, a language of emotions. It has to organize the emotions of the recipient”.⁵¹ These statements determine the reception of sounds that accompanied the exhibition of modern art as an integral component of a whole venture. The meanings of the show were imbued to the audience with all the possible methods. Worth discussing is also the use of photographs. While photography was a leading tool of propaganda representations, introducing real-life into the museum walls, its adoption into the *Exhibition of Modern Art* and the display of Dłubak's photograms demonstrated the connection between the visual abstraction and the forms of real

47 See *Programme of Contemporary Music Concert, Cracow 1948*, Palace of Art's Archives in Cracow (Archiwum Pałacu Sztuki w Krakowie).

48 There are ambiguities in dating the closure, some sources date it on 9 January, others on about 17, what might suggest that the concert has never taken place, however, there is a review by Anna Maślakiewicz-Brzozowska where she stated: "There are some rumours that the infamous exhibition is about to be closed, but its existence was prolonged by a dose of music that might serve to settle the plastic deficiency", what allows to assume that the closure took place on 18 January 1949, see A. Maślakiewicz-Brzozowska, "Wspomnienia z Wystawy Sztuki Nowoczesnej – czyli dumanie nad rurą od pieca", in: *I Wystawa...*, p. 134.

49 The program included Witold Lutosławski's *Melodie ludowe* performed by Józef Hoffman on the piano, Artur Malawski's *Miniatury* performed by Józef Hoffman on the piano, Antoni Szałowski's *Suita*, performed by Eugenia Umińska on the violin and by J. Szamotulska on the piano, Karol Szymanowski's *Zródło Aretuzy* performed by Eugenia Umińska on the violin and Jadwiga Szamotulska on the piano, Artur Malawski's *Burleska* performed by Eugenia Umińska on the violin and Jadwiga Szamotulska on the piano, Andrzej Panufnik's *Interludia* performed by the composer, see *Programme of Contemporary...*

50 Original version: „Odpowiedni program audycji muzycznych stwarza tło emocjonalne dla ekspozycji”. *The Exhibition of Modern Art*, a typescript from Mieczysław Porębski's archive, in: *I Wystawa...*, p. 82.

51 Original version: „Język plastyczny jest, podobnie jak język muzyczny, językiem emocjonalnym. Zadaniem jego jest organizowanie wzruszenia odbiorcy”, see *Dotyczy Klubu Artystów w Krakowie*, 1948, a typescript from Mieczysław Porębski's archive, *ibid.*, p. 81.

life. The montage techniques have also visual correspondence in the beginnings of the history of propaganda displays, in the famous *Pressa* exhibition in 1928 and its visual communication language applied by El Lissitzky. El Lissitzky abandoned the traditional symmetrical space arrangement, creating instead a dynamic project with the unconventional use of materials like cellophane. He also changed the scale of display by confronting the visitors with enlarged photographs.⁵²

The correlation between abstract forms and reality was also demonstrated in the Hall of the Forms of Contemporary Reality with spatial models made of implements from everyday life. The rigid and imposing path of the visit has a propaganda-like importance. In the initial version of the exposition, the common room was thought as a labyrinth structure (inspired by the exhibition in Gallerie Maeght?) that introduced to the main hall. The idea was to create giant pincers, closing up the room and forcing the visitor to wait for being free to enter the main hall and continue the “didactic walkabout” („wędrowka dydaktyczna”).⁵³ The exhibition’s design left no space for the individual read-out or interpretation, which was emphasized by the megaphones, the tours’ scenarios, and the artists acting as consultants. The implemented sound component, besides serving as an “emotional background”, repeating the manifestos and explicatory announces, affected the environmental attitude and facilitated to receive the exposition as a coherent structure, as well as intensified the intentions of the organizers to present all the aspects of modernity and convince the audience (and the decision makers) of its utility.

The propaganda displays were preceded by the world exhibitions’ projects in the interwar period. The pavilions integrated the visual content with sounds, movies, and united all the symptoms of the artistic life with the industrial design. While taking over the power, the communists needed architects to communicate with society via the language of visual propaganda. The number of propaganda exhibitions was increasing during the following years and their reception was prodigious, creating a well thriving indoctrination machine.⁵⁴ Similar devices were used among all the propaganda manifestations. The most prominent at the time was certainly MoMA’s propaganda cycle organized by Edward Steichen. The spatial arrangements of those displays were designed by Herbert Bayer, an architect and graphic designer, connected with the Bauhaus school, where he was in charge of printing and advertising departments. Bayer compared projecting the exhibitions to the psychology of advertising. In 1961 he published the article “Aspects of Exhibitions and Museums”. His exhibitions’ planning amounted to “concentrating the message” and “improving techniques of communication”. He implied that “the elements of communication and display must be incorporated and integrated into a scheme that conforms to a desired sequence of impressions and to the visitor’s perceptive abili-

52 H. Bayer, “Aspects of Design of Exhibitions and Museums”, *Curator*, 4, 3, 1961, p. 267.

53 „Mieczysław Porębski interviewed by Marek Świca”, op. cit., p. 22.

54 See T. Fudala, “Przestrzenie powojennego humanizmu. Wystawy Czesława Wielhorskiego (1911–1980)”, *Miejsce*, 2, Warszawa, 2016, p. 87.

ties. The organization of the floor plan should ensure an uninterrupted flow of traffic and permit and induce the visitor to view all exhibits".⁵⁵ He claimed that all the widespread means of communication should be engaged to confront the spectator with a "total application of all artistic and psychological means". As those means, he listed "integrated use of graphics with architectural structure, of advertising psychology with space concepts, of light and colour with motion and sound".⁵⁶ Similar assumptions were made in the "Fundamentals of Exhibition Design" from 1937, a summary of his preceding year's achievements, including the *Deutscher Werkbund Exhibition* in 1930 in Paris, prepared with Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer, where for the first time he put into practice his extended field of vision theory.⁵⁷ What was interesting, to demonstrate "the freedom gained from this theory", Bayer displayed some of the chairs on the wall.⁵⁸ This new mode of exhibitions' planning should "rest on the universal application of all known means of design: diagram, lettering, word, photography, architecture, painting, sculpture, tone, light, film" – "all powers of design"; "the theme should not retain its distance from the spectator, it should be brought close to him, penetrate and leave an impression on him, should explain, demonstrate, and even persuade and lead him to a planned and direct reaction".⁵⁹ In 1938 the exhibition *Bauhaus 1919-1928* was opened in the Museum of Modern Art, where the guest's directions were indicated by the footprints and shapes painted on the floor. In the following years, Bayer co-worked with Edward Steichen on his famous propaganda exhibition's cycle for MoMA, created during the World War II, that travelled all over the country. In 1942 the *Road to Victory: A procession of Photographs of the Nation at War* was opened at MoMA, followed by the *Power in the Pacific: Battle Photographs of our Navy in Action on the Sea and in the Sky* (1943), *Airways to peace* (1943) and finally, the most famous propaganda realization at the times of the Cold War, the *Family of Man* (1955).⁶⁰

The *Exhibition of Modern Art* was, on the one hand, a presentation of the avant-garde art pieces, but on the other, it indicated brand new assignments for surrealist and abstract compositions, trying to incorporate them into the new reality. Jerzy Hryniewiecki's term of "applied surrealism" seems to suit perfectly to the reality of artists participating in the *Exhibition of Modern Art*, as well as to some of the anticipating expositions after 1945. To „apply" the avant-garde art and to make it useful for the requirements of a socialist realist seemed the only way to survive. Wojciech

55 H. Bayer, "Aspects"..., p. 257.

56 Ibid., p. 258.

57 See H. Bayer, "Fundamentals of Exhibition Design", Dec 1939 – Jan 1940, *The New York Public Library Digital Collections*, <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/90f27111-9715-4fc1-e040-e00a18064ba4> [accessed 2 May 2020].

58 H. Bayer, "Aspects..."., p. 270.

59 H. Bayer, "Fundamentals..."., p. 17.

60 See e.g. K. Gresh, "The Politics of Photography: The Family of Man and the Museum of Modern Art's War Program", in: *On Display. Visual Politics, Material Culture, and Education*, eds. K. Priem, K. te Hessen, Münster, 2016, pp. 127–143.

Włodarczyk indicated that at the same time the *Exhibition of Modern Art* opened, other art expositions were starting for celebrating the United Congress of Polish Workers' Party and Polish Socialistic Party (Kongres Zjednoczeniowy Polskiej Partii Robotniczej i Polskiej Partii Socjalistycznej).⁶¹ The date of the exhibition's opening had so strong a political undertone, that it couldn't even try not to fit in the new reality and requirements. At almost the same time when the *Exhibition of Modern Art* was opened, at the Polish Army Home in Warsaw was starting an exhibition of artworks created by the miners.⁶²

What is symptomatic, the participating artists, especially those from Cracow, disclaimed the propagandistic approach and didacticism in favour of the avant-garde. Piotr Słodkowski indicated that an attempt to create the avant-garde aura around the show demonstrated the centre/periphery discourse that the creators of the exhibition and, later, the critics were involved in.⁶³ The *Second Exhibition of Modern Art* was the first step to the increasing mythologization of the show during the Thaw, which was repeated in the following years. Mieczysław Porębski in the introduction to the catalogue of the exhibition stated that "The notion of modernity is relative and its range is variable. It doesn't mean, however, that it didn't have an established right of citizenship in Polish visual arts. The year 1917 (the Formists), the year 1923 and following ('Blok', 'Praesens'), the thirties ('a. r.', 'Artes', the Cracow Group), the forties ('young artists'), the year 1949 (the *Exhibition of Modern Art* in Cracow), are all the successive moments of one continuous process that shaped its extent and specified its attitude".⁶⁴

From today's perspective, it seems to be pointless and anachronic to evaluate between the avant-garde and propaganda displays. The environmental approach, "active surrounding", and using various media to influence the spectator were used as well by the avant-garde and propaganda artists and architects, although for another purpose. The recent years and the latest studies resulted in some changes in the dominant narratives and dichotomy that used to function for years in Polish art history, and permitted to reread some of the key events in post-war Poland.⁶⁵

61 W. Włodarczyk, "Pięć lat", in: *Zaraz po wojnie...*, p. 39.

62 The exhibition entitled *Wystawa prac malarskich górników urządzona z okazji święta górniczego – Barbórki* opened on 4 December 1948 in the Club of Young Artists and Scientists (Polish Army Home).

63 P. Słodkowski, op. cit., p. 263.

64 Original version: „Pojęcie nowoczesności jest pojęciem względnym, a jego zakres jest zmienny. Nie znaczy to jednak, żeby nie miało ono w plastyce polskiej ustalonego prawa obywatelstwa. Rok 1917 (formiści), rok 1923 i następne ('Blok', 'Praesens'), lata trzydzieste ('a.r.', 'Artes', grupa krakowska), lata czterdzieste ('młodzi plastycy'), rok 1948 (Wystawa Sztuki Nowoczesnej w Krakowie) to kolejne momenty jednego nieprzerwanego procesu, który kształtował jego zasięg i precyzował wymowę”. 2. *Wystawa Sztuki Nowoczesnej*, Exhibition catalogue, Warsaw, 1957, p. 5.

65 See e.g. the *Zachęta Archives* series under the guidance of dr hab. Gabriela Świątek.

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Objects of Embodiment: A “Post-Material Turn” in Exhibiting Lost Material Culture

Abstract

Exhibiting lost material culture goes beyond documenting, preserving, reconstructing, and staging material traces of the past. Museums, possessing modest collections of original historical objects, have to search for new ways of exhibiting material culture thereby replacing facts (original objects, documents, documentary media) by bodily experience similar to that evoked by mystical religious art addressing different human senses beyond the vision. Bodily sensations can be evoked by ambiances, following expressionist or constructivist architecture, by sculptural displays in tradition of the avant-garde, by soundscapes and large scale image projections evoking illusion and immersion. The “post-material turn” comprises thus not only virtual culture, but also new material approaches to the memory of the past, shifting from original historical artifacts to reproductions and substitutes, evoking an intense bodily experience. Although history gets space for embodiment, such ambiances evoke a strong sense of loss, because they avoid immediate contact with traces of the past by virtual and material “doubles”. The “post-material turn” will be discussed with the example of The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center in Moscow, relating it to other contemporary “post-documentary” and “post-factual” phenomena in memorial culture.

Keywords: “post-material”, tactile eye, bodily sensation, senses, spectral, Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center in Moscow

Evoking the Lost

In institutions of memorial culture such as museums, collections, and exhibitions, objects might experience a “second life”, detached from their original place and function. They are transformed into auratic relics, fragments or traces of the past,

which narrate a plurality of stories about history, economy, aesthetics, everyday life, but also about politics, emigration and persecution. As agents of absence, its synecdoches or metonymies, they enable the absent to take place, take shape, and come to matter. Linked to other places and times, they recall the absent by conferring it a fragmentary, momentary presence. Detached from their original ambience, they do not only need to be identified and classified, but they also need stories to be understood.¹ They can be narrated by texts and also by practices of staging that can become an engaged political act,² such as Maria Eichhorn's installation of unlawfully acquired books from Jewish ownership at the 14th *documenta* 2017 at the New Gallery in Kassel, where the so-called "Accession Books J", confiscated in 1944–45 and brought to the City Library in Berlin, were staged in a tower made of bookshelves.³ Her investigative project, Rose Valland Institute, named after the French art historian who recorded the expropriated Jewish artifacts during the Nazi occupation in Paris, was of a participatory nature.⁴ Eichhorn widely published a call inviting private owners of orphaned items to bring them and help to reconstruct their object-"biographies",⁵ testifying to their former, absent owners. The loss of ownership and "home" evoked the void and helped to reconstruct the life stories of emigration and persecution *in absentia*. The encounter with the books, material remnants and fragments of the past is connected to human bodies to which they

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- 1 H. Steyrl, "Die Sprache der Dinge: Eine materialistische Sicht auf dokumentarische Praktiken", in: idem, *Die Farbe der Wahrheit: Dokumentarismen im Kunstfeld*, Vienna, 2015, pp. 139–150.
 - 2 For the politics of objects see B. Latour, "From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik or How to make Things Public", in: *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*, eds. B. Latour, P. Weibel, Cambridge, 2005, pp. 4–31.
 - 3 Rose Valland Institut Call for Papers [M. Eichhorn], "Verweistes Erbe in Europa", <https://www.documenta14.de/de/news/16099/rose-valland-institut>, 30 March 2017; A. Szymczyk im Gespräch mit A. Alberro, M. Eichhorn und H. Haacke, "Die unauflösliche Präsenz des Gurlitt-Nachlasses", https://www.documenta14.de/de/south/59_die_unausloeschliche_praesenz [accessed 31 October 2019].
 - 4 <https://www.documenta14.de/de/news/23357/rose-valland-institut> [accessed 31 October 2019].
 - 5 The Soviet journalist, writer and literary theoretician Sergei Tretyakov, representative of the so called "factual literature and art" (Russ. *literatura fakta, iskusstvo fakta*) already in 1929 – long before Bruno Latour – stressed the importance of things as agents, S. Tretyakov, "Biografiya veshchi", in: *Literatura Fakta/Faktographische Literatur*, reprint of the Moscow edition from 1929, ed. N. Chuzhak, Munich, 1972, pp. 66–70. According to his utilitarian, materialist view objects were main agents of transforming of material world; humans, on the contrary, were reduced merely to passive extras in the background, determined by objects or even replaced by them. In this period of the late avant-garde the hierarchy of the living and the dead was inverted. Avant-garde artists tried to merge objects and humans into utopian machine-men. In the wake of the totalitarian regimes during the 1930s, objects developed a new function: They became "orphaned things" moving in a "death dance", experiencing a "second life" in new surroundings. Eichhorn's exhibition of "Accession books J" belongs into this tradition of the "biography" of things.

had been attached.⁶ In their “afterlife” in new surroundings, objects assume a new “identity” and become “bodies”, bearing a kind of “relics of touch”, similar to religious relics, containing invisible indexical footprints of the missing and gone.⁷ The art historian W. T. J. Mitchell perceives such artifacts even as bearers of “stigmata of the personal and the soul”.⁸ They invite the spectator to enter into an intimate dialogue and to experience affective closeness that goes beyond the scopic regimes of optical knowledge. The curator Werner Hanak-Lettner compares such dialogical situations between objects and spectators to an “interactive drama”.⁹

But what happens if there are no original historical items or forensic traces to be exhibited as “evidence” or “witnesses” of the past, as is often the case when people suffer emigration, expulsion or destruction? In his article, “Placing and tracing absence: A material culture of immaterial”, the sociologist Morgan Meyer perceives absence less as a missing object itself and more as something that exists through relations that perform absence and produce effects that are as strong as those of material presence.¹⁰ Inspired by the volumes *An Anthropology of Absence: Materializations of Transcendence and Loss* (ed. by Mike Bille et al.) and *The Matter of the Death: Space, Place and Materiality* (ed. by Jenny Hockey et al.), both published in 2010, Meyer stresses that absence also “has a materiality and exists” and “has effects on the spaces people inhabit and their daily practices and experiences”.¹¹ According to Meyer, absence can produce effects of presence similar to phantom pains and can turn into matter, can be performed, materialized, and objectified. Therefore he proposes a “relational ontology of absence, conceiving absence not as a thing in itself but as something that exists through relations that gives absence matter”.¹² As examples of such embodied absence of lost material culture, Meyer mentions places like the Bastille in Paris, the city of Hiroshima, the Berlin Wall, the Twin Towers in New York, cemeteries and memorial places, where missing can be reconstructed by memory and imagination. Absence should therefore be, as Meyer claims, “placed” and “traced” to get the shape of the lost, missing or displaced. Tracing and placing the absent can be a spatial and performative act, following the “shape” of absence unable to reach it and to capture it, but only to “feel” its surroundings. Absence and

6 K. Hetherington, “Spatial Texture: Place, touch and praesentia”, *Environment and Planning A*, 2002, 35, no. 11, pp. 1933–1944.

7 For the relics of touch see E. Koch, H. Schlie, “Einleitung”, in: *Orte der Imagination – Räume des Affekts: Die mediale Formierung des Sakralen*, eds. E. Koch, H. Schlie, Paderborn, 2016, pp. 9–18.

8 W. T. J. Mitchell, *Das Leben der Bilder: Eine Theorie visueller Kultur*, with a foreword by H. Belting, Munich, 2008, p. 46.

9 W. Hanak-Lettner, *Ausstellung als Drama: Wie das Museum aus dem Theater entstand*, Bielefeld, 2011, pp. 9, 10.

10 M. Meyer, “Placing and Tracing Absence: A Material Culture of Immaterial”, *Journal of Material Culture*, 2012, 17, no. 1, pp. 103–110.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 103.

12 *Ibid.*

presence, materiality and immateriality, therefore should not be considered a dualism and opposition, but has to be put into mutual relation to each other.¹³

Some museums, especially those dealing with the Jewish history of the Holocaust, such as the Jewish Museum in Berlin, the Yad Vashem in Jerusalem or the Ghetto and the Holocaust sections in the Polin in Warsaw, also try to evoke the spirit of place by architecture or ambiances, where we can “feel”, “see”, and “hear” the absence of the lost – of dead people and their vanished material traces. This absence can be exemplified by claustrophobic, narrow corridors with inclined walls, which seem to be inspired by expressionist architecture, such as in the scenes of the film *The Cabinet of the Dr. Caligari* (1920) by Robert Wiene, evoking an insane, meta-psychical space. Such ambiances recall the feeling of tension, oppression and of being captured, conjuring a substitutive bodily “experience” of the Ghetto and the Holocaust.

Replacing the Lost

In other cases, as for example in the Jewish Museum and Tolerance center in Moscow, virtual images as well as newly fabricated material substitutes of the lost, objects and spaces, can offer an alternative place to materialize imagination in phantom-like embodiments. But how can museums, exhibiting “post-material culture”, deal with absence, when the lost has already been replaced by replicas and virtual media? How can artificial materiality give bodily evidence as powerful as original historical objects or spaces staging absence and void? What happens to the senses of the spectator, confronting such “fake” material culture? In the following I want to analyze some examples of how the Moscow museum, opened in November 2012, solved these questions in a very original way, evoking strong bodily sensations. Although the Moscow museum is less educational than the Polin, which opened at almost the same time, and although it has been criticized for glorifying the Russian master narrative of the Great Patriotic War, it is still a very interesting example of a “post-material” approach to lost material culture, which deserves attention in the broader context of the “post-documentary” and “post-factual turns” in media dealing with history and memory in recent decades.

13 Meyer’s “tracing the absence” has a lot in common also with the phenomenological tradition of the ancient topic of the “spirit of place” (*genius loci*), which describes the uniqueness of a location, attributing to it a specific atmosphere that awakens strong moods and feelings in visitors. The spirit of place can be attributed to material, visible (architecture, site) as well as immaterial, invisible components (experience of energy, power or mystery). Such “spirits” are often attached to locations of important historical events, which entered into collective memory, cf. R. J. Kozljanič, *Der Geist des Ortes. Kulturgeschichte und Phänomenologie des Genius Loci. 1. Bd.: Antike – Mittelalter*, Munich 2004, pp. 145–148; T. Zimmermann, “The Spirit of Place and Nation Building: Kosovo and Bosnia from Imperial to Post-Communist Times”, in: *Entangled Religions: Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of Religious Contact and Transfer* 2019, 9 *The Changing Landscapes of Cross-Faith Places and Practices*, ed. M. Sing, pp. 79–107.

In the special issue of *East European Jewish Affairs* from 2015, dedicated to the numerous newly-founded Jewish museums in post-communist Eastern Europe, the editors Olga Gershenson and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett underline the extraordinary place of the Moscow museum in the East European context, being a result of Jewish and non-Jewish donors, of private as well as state support.¹⁴ Although Gershenson praises the museum for integrating the Jewish memory of the Holocaust in its thematic program, which is fairly rare in Eastern Europe, she also criticizes it for harmonizing the history of the Jews with the Russian national master narrative of the Great Patriotic War and for presenting the Jews as an exemplary model of co-existence in the multinational empire without properly discussing the persecutions in the Soviet Union.¹⁵ In the following issue of *East European Jewish Affairs*, published in 2016, Gershenson’s statements caused a heated debate. The Russian historian Oleg Budnitsky objected that the Jews in Russia were not a minority at all, but “on the whole the most Soviet of all Soviet people”, who “considered themselves above all to be Soviet people and only after that as Jews”.¹⁶ Along with Benjamin Nathans, Budnitsky disagreed with Gershenson that the museum program contributes to the political-ideological agenda of the Kremlin.¹⁷ A year earlier, immediately after the opening, Ewa Bérard came to a similar conclusion as Gershenson, remarking that Jewish history is presented in a non-confrontational way into Russian history, avoiding the subjects of local collaborators with the Nazi regime, of the Stalinist gulags, where Russians as well as Jews died, and the campaign against (Jewish) “cosmopolitanism”. At the same time, she stated that the museum paid respect to the central narrative of suffering during the anti-fascist war, which was a uniting element of the Soviet nations and became a symbol of power in contemporary Russia.¹⁸

14 President Putin donated one month of his salary, as media reported.

15 O. Gershenson, B. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “Introduction: New Jewish Museums in Post-Communist Europe”, *East European Jewish Affairs. Special issue: New Jewish Museums in Post-Communist Europe*, 2015, 45, no. 2–3, ed. O. Gershenson, B. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, pp. 153–157, here: p. 154; O. Gershenson, “The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center in Moscow: Judaism for the masses”, *East European...*, op. cit., pp. 158–173; idem, “How Russia Created a Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center Even Vladimir Putin Can Tolerate”, *Forward: Jewish Affairs*, 8 January 2016, <https://forward.com/culture/art/328682/how-russia-created-a-jewish-museum-and-tolerance-center-even-vladimir-putin/> [accessed 31 January 2020].

16 O. Budnitski, “Oleg Budnitskii responds to Olga Gershenson’s ‘The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center in Moscow: Judaism for the Masses’”, *East European Jewish Affairs*, 2016, 46, no. 2, pp. 211–213, here: p. 212.

17 B. Nathans, “Benjamin Nathans responds to Olga Gershenson’s ‘The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center in Moscow: Judaism for the Masses’”, *East European Jewish Affairs*, 2016, 46, no. 2, pp. 213–216.

18 E. Bérard, “The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Centre in Moscow”, *Témoigner: Entre histoire et mémoire*, 2014, 118, pp. 12–15, <https://journals.openedition.org/temoigner/1226?lang=nl> [accessed 28 January 2020]; M. D. Shrayner, “The Prospect for Russia’s Jews”, *Mosaic: Advancing Jewish Thought*, 6 March 2017, <https://mosaicmagazine.com/essay/history-ideas/2017/03/the-prospect-for-russias-jews/> [accessed 28 January 2020].

However, in 2016, the UNESCO granted the museum a distinguished award for its efforts in spreading tolerance and understanding.¹⁹

Together with the Polin Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw that opened some months later in April 2013, the Moscow museum is as a pioneer in multimedia and interactive design proposing new solutions in a “post-material” approach.²⁰ Inside the round tower with a metal covering at the entrance, which slightly resembles constructivist architecture such as Talin’s model for the monument of the III international, 4D virtual animations are displayed on immersive circular screens in the ambience of the so-called Origins Theater, where bodily sensations are induced by sprinkling water drops and by rocking the seats of the spectators to simulate the biblical stories of the Flood and of the destruction of the Second Temple. A spiral staircase leads upstairs to the reading platform with avant-garde books, from where the spectators get an overview of the huge exhibition hall (Fig. 1). In the middle, in spectral architectural ambiances, Jewish life is presented in an exemplary “shtetl”, composed of fragments of a synagogue, of a market and a typical Jewish home, inhabited by sculptures and virtual projection of people in Jewish *habitus*. At the far end of the exhibition, immense real objects such as a T-34 tank and a Po-2 airplane are staged in front of a panoramic cinema showing large-scale videos with scenes from the Second World War, accompanied by testimonies of witnesses.²¹

The historian Benjamin Nathans, one of the members the international group of experts from different fields of knowledge for the museum, gives insight into the concept of the museum, which was designed by the American Ralph Appelbaum Association, working on major Holocaust and Jewish museums.²² They had to find a way to transpose scientific narratives into effective media representation, in which the bodily experiences of spectators played an important role: “It was remarkable to see the variety of ways a given story could be represented or embodied for senses. [...] Visitors standing in the midst of this grove experience a powerful feeling of ‘you are there’”.²³ Another academic consultant, Risa Levitt Kohn from religious studies, who developed the content for the Origins Theater, underlines the importance of

19 “Tolerance Center got a prize of UNESCO”, 16 November 2016, <https://www.jewish-museum.ru/en/tolerance-center/news/tolerance-center-got-the-prize-of-unesco/> [accessed 24 October 2019].

20 “The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center: from Idea to Realization”, <https://www.jewish-museum.ru/en/about-the-museum/museum-history/> [accessed 28 October 2019]; B. Gorin, “The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center”, *East European Jewish Affairs*, 2016, 46, no. 2, pp. 217–220.

21 O. Gershenson, “The Jewish Museum”..., pp. 162, 163, 167; see also the homepage of the museum: “Beginning Cinema”, <https://www.jewish-museum.ru/en/about-the-museum/permanent-exhibition/> [accessed 28 October 2019]; A video tour through museum: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aCUcN0dLits>, 13 October 2013 [accessed 25 January 2020].

22 B. Nathans, “Inside the Museum: Torahs, Tanks, and Tech: Moscow’s Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center”, in: *East European Jewish Affairs* 2015, 45, no. 2-3, pp. 190–199; For the academic board of the museum see <https://www.jewish-museum.ru/en/about-the-museum/academic-board/> [accessed 28 October 2019].

23 *Ibid.*, p.191.



Fig. 1. Permanent exhibition, The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center, Moscow

her previous theater experiences.²⁴ The historian Jonathan Dekel-Chen, who gives insight into dealing with documentary photographs and film footage, also welcomes the cutting edge technologies that can be – compared to physical artifacts and printed texts – easily and inexpensively revised.²⁵ Renowned scholars and journalists, who visited the museum shortly after its opening, praised the exhibition not only for addressing topics that had been taboo in Soviet times, but also for its multimedia approach, although they sometimes used expressions like “Jewish Disneyland”, “adventure show” or “gimmick”.²⁶ Ewa Bérard, who vividly describes the bodily experiences facing the combination of virtual and material culture in the “shtetl”, compares it with a surrealist encounter:

What makes this universe of screens completely surrealist, are the poet Iossif Brodski’s words, engraved above... the Museum boutique: “The objects that we produce with our hands say more about us than our confessions.” [...] Indeed, visitors are here invited to dress up in virtual traditional Jewish costumes, to touch virtual herrings floating in real barrels, to recognize their ancestors among plaster figures, like the one who is sat on

24 Ibid., pp. 192, 193.

25 J. Dekel-Chen, “Between myths, memories, history, and politics: Creating content for Moscow’s Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center”, *The Public Historian*, 2018, 40, no. 4, pp. 91–106, here: pp. 96, 97, 101, 102.

26 E. Barry, “In Big New Museum: Russia has a Message for Jews: We like you”, *The New York Times*, 8 November 2012, <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/09/world/europe/russias-new-museum-offers-friendly-message-to-jews.html>; S. Meier Zur, “Ein jüdisches Museum für Moskau”, *Neue Züricher Zeitung*, 19 December 2012, <https://www.nzz.ch/feuilleton/ein-juedisches-museum-fuer-moskau-1.17897959>; N. Shalina, “Review: Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center in Moscow”, *Russian Art + Culture*, 9 February 2019, <https://www.russianartandculture.com/review-jewish-museum-and-tolerance-centre-in-moscow-by-natasha-shalina/> [accessed 24 October 2019].

a bench at a synagogue, immersed in the reading of the Book, their head covered with the Tallit (inexplicably forgotten, this old Jew in plaster is not interactive and does not swing from side to side). The best find, without contest, is the virtual scroll of the Torah that unfolds at the desired speed from the pressure of an electronic stick.²⁷

As an in-depth study of the display has not yet been done, I am going to analyze some of its aspects in the context of the “post-material turn”, which started with the Museum of Jewish Diaspora in Tel Aviv in 1978,²⁸ but has developed new features, intensifying the sensual experience.

The Tactile Eye

The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center is located in the former Bakhmetevsky Bus Garage designed in 1926 by the constructivist avant-garde architect Konstantin Melnikov and the engineer Vladimir Shukhov.²⁹ In 2007, the building was restored on behalf of the businessman Roman Abramovich. In 2008, it opened to the public as The Garage Center for Contemporary Culture to exhibit contemporary art, managed by Dasha Zhukova, Abramovich’s girlfriend at that time.³⁰ In 2012, the center moved to Gorky Park, first to the pavilion of the architect Shigieru Ban and then to a new building constructed by Rem Koolhaas in 2015.³¹ In November 2012, the old Garage by Melnikov und Shukov opened as The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center, which houses a permanent exhibition along with outstanding temporary presentations of Jewish literature, avant-garde (Lissitzky, Chagall, Eisenstein, etc.), and contemporary art (Anish Kapoor et al.).

The renovation and rebuilding of the large exhibition hall (ca. 7000-8000 m²), which took place from 2009 until 2012, was inspired by the avant-garde displays, especially by Lissitzky (Fig. 2), who in the late 1920s transformed exhibition spaces into dynamic installations and sculptural constructions, reaching their peak in the Soviet Pavilion at the *International Press Exhibition* in Cologne in 1928, called *Pressa*.³² The avant-garde artist and his collaborators merged different media of architecture, large immersive photographs and typographically designed political paroles on display boards inclined into space and on sculptural constructions in the middle of the exhibition space into a total art work, following the idea of a tactile eye, proclaimed

27 E. Bérard, op. cit., pp. 12, 13.

28 I thank Diego Rotman (Hebrew University of Jerusalem) for this information.

29 See the homepage of the museum: Museums Building, <https://www.jewish-museum.ru/en/about-the-museum/museum-building/> [accessed 24 October 2019].

30 O. Gershenson, “How Russia Created”..., op. cit.

31 For the history of the Garage see W. M. Bayer, *Moscow Contemporary: Museen zeitgenössischer Kunst im postsowjetischen Russland*, Vienna, 2016, pp. 37, 38, 117–137.

32 For the *Pressa* exhibition see S. Marten-Finnis, M. Nagel eds., *Die Pressa: Internationale Presseausstellung Köln 1928 und der jüdische Beitrag zum modernen Journalismus*, Bremen, 2012.



Fig. 2. Entrance in the exhibition space, The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center, Moscow

by leading avant-garde artists such as Vladimir Tatlin³³ and Lissitzky himself.³⁴ The Cologne exhibition presented not only the Soviet newspapers, journals, books, publishing houses, and advertisements, but also glorified industrialization and the collective life of the proletarian masses under communism. The dynamic, space-seizing presentation tried to give evidence about the success of the new communist state that was not only founded on statistical facts, but also on the bodily experiences of spatial and tactile qualities of the display. At the same time, the Soviet late avant-garde representatives of the so-called “factual art” (*iskusstvo fakta*) proclaimed everyday-life objects for art and pushed their staging to the center of artistic creativity. One of them, Sergei Tretyakov, published a programmatic text in 1929 called “The Biography of the Thing”, where he demanded that things have to be perceived as dynamic agencies, which, like humans, lead their own lives and determine the lives of humans.³⁵ Lissitzky collected his experiences in creating stage design in collaboration with theater directors as well as through working on his *proun* forms, opening multiple perspective axes into space. He developed them in his *Proun room*

33 L. Shadova ed., *Tatlin*, Weingarten, 1987, p. 258; M. Tupitsyn ed., *El Lissitzky: Jenseits der Abstraktion: Fotografie, Design, Kooperation*, with texts by M. Drutt, U. Pohlmann, Munich, Paris, London, 1999, p. 69. In a collage, showing Vladimir Tatlin working on the *Monument to the Third International* (1922), Lissitzky replaced the missing eye of the artist by a compass. Tatlin’s mechanic eye does not perceive the world, but projects suprematist-constructivist forms into space.

34 M. Tupitsyn ed..., op. cit., p. 81. In a photographic self-portrait with a double exposure, Lissitzky pictured himself with a hand holding a compass, laid over his eye like a mask, alluding to the expanded, upgraded capacities of the tactile eye.

35 S. Tretyakov, op. cit., pp. 66–70.

at the Great Berlin Exhibition in 1923,³⁶ in his “demonstration spaces” (*Demonstrationsräume*) exhibited in Dresden in 1926, and in the Provincial Museum in Hannover in 1928,³⁷ as well as at the *Pressa* in Cologne in 1928 and at the *International Fur Trade Exhibition* in Leipzig in 1930.³⁸ In his dynamic spaces, the perception changing at every step was puzzled in order to liberate artifacts from their static attachment to the wall and spectators from their passive, exclusively optical perception. The avant-garde “new seeing” (*novoe videnie*) required a moving, bodily sensation in interaction with spaces and objects, redefining the relationship between space, viewer, and object. The art critic Sigfried Giedion described in his article “Living Museum” (1929), dedicated to Lissitzky’s *Space of the Abstract* in Hannover, this new form of exhibiting as the animation of material culture:

It’s no longer sufficient to exhibit objects in a cultivated manner, even the bold, image-conscious and the happy hands who discover masterpieces in forgotten depots have no longer exclusive entitlement today. We also ask the museum to do the rest: “Bringing culture to life!” [...] New museums should become a living chronicle of time and show things while they are still in motion and not only when they start lying in the historical coffin. [...] It turns out that even museums do not have to be a dead affair; it depends only on the hand that has the power to animate matter.”³⁹

At the same time, spectators were stimulated to move in different directions and thus participate more actively in the exhibition, which was intended to transmit the feeling of the new utopian world of the future.⁴⁰ Contemporary visitors, such as the filmmaker Dziga Vertov, compared the perception to intense contact with space and objects: “I sat there for a long time, examined and touched/groped (*oshchupyval*).”⁴¹

36 E. Forgács, “Definitive Space: The many Utopias of El Lissitzky’s *Proun Room*”, in: *Situating El Lissitzky: Vitebsk, Berlin, Moscow*, ed. N. Perloff, B. Reed, Los Angeles, 2003, pp. 47–78.

37 M. Gough, “Constructivism Disoriented: El Lissitzky’s Dresden and Hannover Demonstration spaces”, in: *Situating El Lissitzky...*, op. cit., pp. 77–125.

38 M. Hartmann, “Internationale Pelzfach Ausstellung (IPA), Leipzig 1930”, in: *Räume der Kunst: Ausstellungspraktiken im 20. und 21. Jahrhundert*, ed. M. Heiler, J. Krahl, T. Zimmermann, Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst Leipzig [Vera Lauf], Leipzig, 2017, pp. 19–23.

39 S. Giedion, „Lebendiges Museum“, *Der Cicerone: Halbmonatsschrift für Künstler, Kunstfreunde und Sammler*, 1929, no. 4, pp. 103–106. „Es genügt nicht mehr, Gegenstände kultiviert aufzustellen, ja selbst die kühnen Bildbestimmter und die glücklichen Hände, die Meisterwerke in vergessenen Depots entdecken, haben heute keine Alleinberechtigung mehr. Wie verlangen auch vom Museum noch ein Übriges: Lebendig machen des Kunstbesitzes! [...] Die neuen Museen sollen zu einer lebendigen Chronik der Zeit werden und die Dinge zeigen, so lange sie noch in Bewegung sind und nicht erst, wenn sie anfangen, im historischen Sarg liegen. [...] Es zeigt sich, dass auch Museen keineswegs tote Angelegenheiten sein müssen, es kommt nur auf die Hand an, die den Griff hat, die Materie zu beleben.“

40 Landesgalerie Hannover ed., *Das abstrakte Kabinett: In memoriam Alexander Dorner*, Hannover, n.d., p. 15.

41 M. Gough, “Constructivism Disoriented: El Lissitzky’s Dresden and Hannover Demonstration spaces”, in: *Situating El Lissitzky...*, op. cit., pp. 109, 110.

Whereas the movement of chairs in the Origins Theater recalls the *Mareorama* effects employed at the World’s Fair in 1900 in Paris, where the seats were mechanically moved to evoke the sense of being in a boat on the sea,⁴² the design of the exhibition display with zigzag boards is inspired by the constructivist avant-garde aesthetics, which reformulates the Lissitzky’s *Pressa* exhibition in Cologne in retro-avant-garde style (Fig. 3). One part of the display alludes to the construction of a large communist star in the Soviet pavilion, which in the Jewish museum in Moscow is attached to the ceiling and has got its twin in the Star of David at the bottom (Fig. 4).



Fig. 3. Oblique display boards, reminding of Lissitzky’s design for the Soviet Pavilion at the *Pressa* exhibition in Cologne 1928, The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center, Moscow

The spectator is invited to move in different rhythms through the history of Russian Jews from the 18th century onwards, which reaches its climax in front of a huge panorama cinema showing scenes from the Second World War. It is reminiscent of patriotic battle panoramas,⁴³ and the heroic exhibition *Road to Victory* with its huge panoramic photographs, shown in 1942 in New York, when the USA entered the war.⁴⁴ In the Moscow museum, landscapes with soldiers invite the beholder to enter the screen and to be absorbed by it, like the hero in Buster Keaton’s slapstick detective film *Sherlock Junior* (1924). A narrow strip of “real” landscape in front

42 B. Comment, *Das Panorama: Die Geschichte einer vergessenen Kunst*, Berlin, 2000, p. 73; M.-L. von Plessen, “Die Abbildung von Realität in Panorama des 19. Jahrhunderts”, in: *Sehnsucht*, ed. M.-L. von Plessen, Frankfurt am Main, 1993, pp. 12–19.

43 B. Comment, op. cit., p. 8.

44 N. Doll, “*Road to Victory* als demokratische Propagandaausstellung”, in: *Kunst und Propaganda im Streit der Nationen 1930–1945*, eds. J. Czech, N. Doll, Dresden, 2007, pp. 374–379.



Fig. 4. The exhibition space, dedicated to the Avant-Garde period, inspired by Lissitzky's design for the Soviet Pavilion at the *Pressa* exhibition in Cologne 1928, The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center, Moscow



Fig. 5. Panorama cinema with a snowy, foggy landscape, The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center, Moscow

of the screen in traditional dioramas functions like a *trompe l'oeil* effect in paintings that helps the tactile eye immerse itself into the snowy, foggy landscape (Fig. 5). This effect also invites the tactile eye to bow in front of war ruins, being afraid that they could crash down like stones in the *Sala dei Giganti* by Gulio Romano in Palazzo del Tè in Mantua (Fig. 6). Immersive scenes are intercepted by spoken testimonies of witnesses that transform the spectator into a second witness of narrated history.



Fig. 6. Panorama cinema with war ruins, The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center, Moscow

A T-34 tank and a Po-2 airplane, which decisively influenced the victorious outcome of the war, demand a bodily response of the visitors due to their size and weight. The memory of war is embodied not only in large cinematic panoramas, but also in objects whose physical presence evokes the feeling of fear.

Spectral Ambiences and Figures

Whereas informative texts, videos and films narrate the history of the Jews in Russia from the 18th century to the post-communist period along illuminated sloping walls and display boards, the middle part of the exhibition space is sunken into darkness. It is separated by different ambiances, in which architectural fragments of a Jewish *shtetl* with a synagogue, a market and a Jewish room are staged. Moving through them, the visitor perceives history as a spatial experience in different environments. Figures made of white plaster, imitating marble, are placed beside or in architectural fragments: a prayer in a synagogue (Fig. 7), working women at the market (Fig. 8), musicians and a (grand)father with a little boy passing by in a typical Jewish *habitus* (Fig. 9, 10), as we know it for example from Isaak Babel's *Stories from Odessa*. The spectator is less brought into the past than the figures of the past are transposed into the present, haunting the fragmentary ambiances. The aim here is not the immersion of the spectator into the past, as in the case of the panoramic cinema with scenes from the Second World War, but a material embodiment of the past in the present. Ambiances and figures do not try to hide their artificial character. Figures do not recall individuals from the past, but only their typical representatives, embodied in white silicon-marble. Coming out of the darkness, their white shapes evoke a ghostly presence, which corresponds to



Fig. 7. Architectural design of a synagogue with a sculpture of a prayer, The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center, Moscow



Fig. 8. Architectural design of a *shtetl* with working women, The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center, Moscow

the “spectral turn” in post-communist Soviet and Polish literature, film, and popular culture, dealing with traumatic memory of the past such as massacres, gulags, and the Shoah. Alexander Etkind and Zuzanna Dziuban depart from Jacques Derrida’s political “hauntology”, understood as a form of resistance against social exclusion, invisibility, and erasure. They interpret this phenomenon as a reaction to the



Fig. 9. A (grand)father with a little boy coming from the dark, The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center, Moscow



Fig. 10. A (grand)father with a little boy passing by, The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center, Moscow

traumas of the past, which were taboo and remained excluded from public discourse and official memory during communism, but also in the post-communist period.⁴⁵ Disturbing “after-effects” of displacement, violence and repression are a resistance

45 A. Etkind, “Post-Soviet Hauntology: Cultural Memory of the Soviet Terror”, *Constellations*, 2009, 16, no. 1, pp. 182–200; Z. Dziuban, “Memory as Haunting”, *Hagar: Studies in Culture, Polity, and Identities*, 2014, 12, pp. 111–135; Idem., “Haunting in the Land of the Untraumatized”, in: *The ‘Spectral Turn’: Jewish Ghosts in the Polish Post-Holocaust Imaginaire*, ed. Z. Dziuban, Bielefeld, 2019, pp. 7–47.

to historical “amnesia”, confusion and doubt about state crimes. In literature and film, ghosts returning from the past to the present tell their stories and demand that those in the present remember. Dziuban, who focuses on the Jewish ghosts in Poland, links their appearance with a trans-generational “post-trauma”, from which not only the successors of victims suffer, but also those of the Polish witnesses or bystanders. In the Jewish museum in Moscow the phantom-like sculptures reside in fragmentary spectral ambiances, which, due to their whiteness, recall monuments to the fallen or sculptures on cemeteries. Standing beside visitors, they seem to live in a parallel world of materialized memory.

The beholder animates the figures by restituting, in her imagination, the tactile, haptic and other bodily qualities to them. The distance, mostly inevitable in a museum, at the same time suppresses and evokes the synesthesia of non-optical qualities. In this process of rapprochement and repulsion, the eye assumes tactile qualities, replacing the hand, and becomes a touching eye.⁴⁶ At the same time, a kind of “bodily perception” of “feeling” is activated, as already anticipated by avant-garde (and minimal) art. Objects are involved into the process of anthropomorphism and meta-psychology, in which the spectator animates them and transforms them into agents.⁴⁷ Their human bodily dimensions and proximity evoke an effect of increased tension and presence, which goes beyond that of other objects. The spectators are involved in a “conversation” of gestures and movements with them.

The tension between material and immaterial, between presence and absence, is also reinforced by interactive digital touch screens inside the objects, like the interactive Torah or the barrels with herrings and fruits on the market, where images of objects appear by touch, evoking their material qualities. However, the gesture of touch remains on the flat surface without reaching the haptic materiality. In front of an interactive mirror the beholder can observe herself as a Jewish double, wearing traditional Jewish clothes. For a moment, she is offered a new identity, which is detached from her real body. The dialogical situation in front of the mirror recalls the so-called psychoanalytical “mirror stage”, described by Jacques Lacan as a form of subjectivation and of a jubilatory, narcissistic self-approval of identity.⁴⁸ However,

46 A similar tension between the desire to touch and its prohibition is observed by the philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy in the motif *Noli me tangere* in painting. Painters, such as Titian, Pontorno and Bronzino, embodied the gesture of forbidden touching through the intrigue of hands, depicting closeness without intimacy, combining tenderness and distance. Mary Magdalene’s hand makes a gesture through the air without touching, but its proximity to the resurrected Christ provides the distance with intense bodily sensation. Emptiness itself in the in-between of figures materializes into an almost haptic presence, cf. J.-L. Nancy, *Noli me tangere*, Zurich 2019, pp. 33–36, 47–54.

47 Georges Didi-Huberman, departing from Maurice Merleau-Ponty, describes a bodily perception as a process of meta-psychology and anthropomorphism, in which the spectator attributes to objects human qualities animating them and transforming them into agents, as for example Tony Smith’s *Black Box (Die)* or Robert Morris’ *Box for Standing*. G. Didi-Huberman, *Was wir sehen, blickt uns an: Zur Metapsychologie des Bildes*, Munich 1999; Fr.: *Ce que nous voyons, ce qui nous regarde*, Paris 1992.

48 J. Lacan, “Das Spiegelstadium als Bildner der Ichfunktion (1949)”, in: Jacques Lacan, *Schriften I.*, ed. N. Haas, Frankfurt am Main, 1996, pp. 61–70.

the split between the spectator and the mirror image can be experienced as a joyful masquerade or as a challenge to one’s identity by seeing the (other) self as a double.

Voices, too, have an important part in producing spectral effects. Aside from voices, which belong to concrete people like interviewed witnesses or historians, there are also voices of people of different ages and genders – laughing, screaming, whispering, chatting, crying, declaiming poetry and singing in different languages – that have no body, but are floating and vibrating through space. Their extension and resonance mediate social interactions and produce bodily effects. Therefore, voices are also an important means of different mnemonic techniques in literature, as Aleida Assmann observes in various rhetorical traditions.⁴⁹ Through its eventfulness and scenic performance, the voice as a physical trace of presence, reanimates bodies and transform absence into presence. Talking from the dark, they give space and sound to the absent and dead, similar to the rhetorical figure of *prosopopoeia* in literature, which possesses the power to reanimate objects by voices.⁵⁰

Whereas the ghostly sculptures wandering through different fragmentary ambiences seem to have no permanent housing, a hologram projection of Jewish families in a furnished room, who appear and vanish in certain time intervals, seems to be lost in time, not in space (Fig. 11, 12). Whereas photos as bearers of memory give us access to the past by re-temporalizing and re-spatializing history,⁵¹ the artistic strategies of the hologram projection into the real space of a room, on the contrary, enable the past to enter the present and confront the spectator with its spectral presence. Family members perform their daily activities in the room – preparing a meal in the kitchen, reading a book on a sofa or just sitting in an armchair absorbed in thought. Their projection into space on transparent boards produce a *trompe l’oeil* effect that Jean Baudrillard links with the sense of loss and death: Objects or figures presented in a *trompe l’oeil* manner appear without syntax isolated from history and suspended from social life, therefore they can be compared with “the ghosts that haunt the emptiness of the stage”.⁵² The rhythmical exchange of presence and absence intensifies the perception of space and objects, their arrangement and materiality. If the room is empty, things evoke a strong sense of loss, associated not only with the flow of time and the exchange of generations, but also with other reasons for no longer being there, such as migration, expulsion or violent death. However, the rhythmical returning of the missing on the loop finally gives the impression that they are not lost forever. The exchange of presence and absence seems to employ the

49 A. Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*, Munich, 2006, pp. 27–29.

50 B. Menke, *Prosopopoeia: Stimme und Text bei Brentano, Hoffmann, Kleist und Kafka*, Munich, 2000, pp. 489–610, pp. 657–723; S. Weigel, “Die Stimme als Medium des Nachlebens: Pathosformel, Nachhall, Phantom, kulturwissenschaftliche Perspektiven”, in: *Stimme: Annäherung an ein Phänomen*, eds. D. Kolesch, S. Krämer, Frankfurt am Main, 2006, pp. 16–39.

51 E. Edward, “Grasping the Image: How Photographs are Handled”, in: *The Book of Touch*, ed. C. Classen, Oxford, New York 2005, pp. 421–425, here: p. 423.

52 J. Baudrillard, “The Trompe-l’Oeil”, in: *Calligram: Essays in New Art History from France*, ed. N. Bryson, Cambridge, 1989, pp. 53–62, here: p. 54.



Fig. 11. A hologram of a family, projected in time intervals into an empty room, The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center, Moscow



Fig. 12. An empty room, The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center, Moscow

psychical principle of repetition, analyzed by Sigmund Freud. According to Freud, who distinguished between a psychotic-pathological and a self-therapeutic form, the repetition can help to overcome a traumatic event.⁵³ The perpetual and perma-

⁵³ In his psychoanalytical writings, “Remembering, Repeating, Working Through” (1914) and “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” (1920), Sigmund Freud distinguishes between two forms of repetition: a psychotic-pathological and a self-therapeutic one, Sigmund Freud, “Jenseits des Lustprinzips (1920)”, in: *Sigmund Freud: Psychologie des Unbewussten: Studienausgabe 3*, ed. A. Mitscherlich, A. Richards, J. Strachey, Frankfurt am Main, 1982, pp. 213–272. In the psy-

ment acts of the inhabitants vacating of the room alludes to different reasons for no longer being there, such as emigration or death. But the “trauma” of vanishing is at the same time cured by a permanent returning. Both re-enactments of coming and going narrate the universal story of Jewish families.

The different sorts of intangible presence throughout the exhibition evoke strong material effects. In her book *Vibrant Matter* the political scientist Jane Bennett helps us understand the agency of immaterial things better. Building off of Bruno Latour, who sees things as agents, she introduces the idea of “vital materiality”, defined as the “capacity of things [...] not only to impede or block the will and designs of humans but also to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own”.⁵⁴ According to Bennett, “vital materiality” can also be transformed into immaterial agents, who have efficacy and produce strong effects, despite not being tangible.

“Post-Memory” – “Post-Documentary” – “Post-Material”

The phenomenon of the “post-material turn” in museums seems to be closely related to the concepts of “post-memory”,⁵⁵ “post-trauma”,⁵⁶ “post-catastro-

chotic form of repetition, as in the case of a war veteran who repeatedly cleans his weapon for the next battle, the traumatized produces the action automatically and does not have the power to stop it. In the self-therapeutic form of repetition, as in the case of a child imitating the feared farewell and the confidently awaited return of the mother through the game of throwing away and pulling back a coil attached to a thread (*fort – da*), the action becomes conscious and willingly reproduced to cope with the inevitable separation. The child overcomes the pain of being left alone by an active act of throwing away the substitute for the mother and after some time fetching it back. The reflection about the mechanism of repetition accompanying a traumatic event became the central method of psychoanalysis, in which the traumatic primal scene was evoked and re-enacted in order to make it conscious.

54 J. Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A political theology of things*, Durham, 2010, viii. I want to thank William F. Condee (Ohio University) for drawing my attention to this book.

55 M. Hirsch, “The Generation of Postmemory”, *Poetics Today*, 2008, 29, no. 1, pp. 103–128. The term “post-memory” was introduced by Hirsch in visual culture dealing with the trauma of the Holocaust in the second (and in the meanwhile third) generation. Having no immediate experience of the past, the successor generation is confronted with the memoirs of the previous ones as well as with the media ‘icons’ of the Shoah, such as documentary photographs that became canonized representations not only of the singular crime, but of a symbol of the whole Holocaust. Hirsch gives the example of Art Spiegelman’s early comic panels published in 1972 in the series *Funny Animals*, which were later extended into the two-volume graphic novel *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale* (1986, 1991). One of the panels shows human mice standing behind the barbed wire, imitating a famous photograph of the Buchenwald prisoners taken in April 1945 by Margaret Bourke-White and published in *Life* magazine. Spiegelman also added his father to this famous group. Hirsch interprets this strategy of alteration as working through the “inherited” trauma.

56 Meanwhile, several other Holocaust graphic novels not only modify the memory of the Holocaust, but also Spiegelman’s graphic novel: Wilhelm Sasnal’s wall panels with balloons, but

phe⁵⁷ and the “spectral turn”⁵⁸ in literature and visual arts, dealing with traumatic historical events and lost material culture in later generations, producing “after-effects” such as the haunting of the past in “iconic” visual formulas in the present. They all narrate history by replacing original, documentary material by poetical transformed material, in which history is relocated, narrated from another viewpoint, supplemented or even rewritten. In the process of a personal or a collective working-through, artists abandon documentary representations in order to inscribe their own experience of a belated “post-memory”, “post-trauma” or “post-catastrophe” into art works. These artistic concepts of the psychoanalytic Freudian afterwardsness (*Nachträglichkeit*) are reinforced by postmodern meta-fictional historical narratives and appropriation art, using images of the past to narrate the conflicts of the present. The dialogue with the past takes place in a plurality of competing voices and perspectives, evoking an irritating palimpsest of discourses.⁵⁹ “Post-memory”, “post-trauma”, “post-catastrophe” and the “spectral turn” in literature

without figures in the Bielska Gallery in Bielsko-Biała (2001) transform spectators into protagonists, M. Marszałek, “Einleitung”, in: *Nach dem Vergessen: Rakurse auf den Holocaust in Ostmitteleuropa nach 1989*, eds. M. Marszałek, A. Molisak, Berlin, 2010, pp. 7–23; C. Winzer, “Polnische Gegenwartskunst und die Erinnerung an den Holocaust im globalen Zeitalter. Zbigniew Libera, Mirosław Bałka, Wilhelm Sasnal“, in: *Nach dem Vergessen...*, op. cit., pp. 137–160). Krzysztof Gawronkiewicz’s and Krystian Rosenberg’s *Achtung Zelig! Second War* [*Achtung Zelig! Druga wojna*], 2004, redistribute the role of animals and their attributions to nations, K. Kupczynska, “Im Gerangel der Genres und Diskurse – über Aspekte der historiographischen Metafiktion in Comics”, in: *Geschichte und Mythos in Comics und Graphic Novels*, ed. T. Zimmermann, Berlin, 2019, pp. 269–287. Michel Kichka’s *Deuxième Génération* (2012) tries to rewrite the meaning of negatively connoted objects, which trigger the remembrance of the Holocaust, N. Heindl, V. Sina, “Comics der ‘zweiten Generation’: Geschichte und konstruierte Erinnerung in Art Spiegelmans *Maus* und Michel Kichkas *Deuxième Génération*”, in: *Geschichte und Mythos...*, op. cit., pp. 245–268.

57 A. Artwińska, A. Tippner, “Postkatastrophische Vergegenwärtigung – eine Positionsbestimmung”, in: *Nach dem Holocaust: Medien postkatastrophischer Vergegenwärtigung in Polen und Deutschland*, eds. A. Artwińska, A. Tippner, Frankfurt am Main, Bern, New York, 2017, pp. 15–39.

58 Z. Dziuban ed., *The ‘Spectral Turn’...*, op. cit.

59 Since the middle of the 1990s, a grotesque, distorted “post-memory” has also become a leading strategy of Polish artists dealing with Holocaust, starting with Zbigniew Libera’s *KZ-Lego System* from the series *Correctional Devices* (1996), Artur Żmijewski’s video *Game of Tag* (*Berek*, 1999), and the video trilogy *And Europe Will Be Stunned* (2007–11) by the Israeli-Polish group *Jewish Renaissance Movement in Poland*. For these phenomena see M. Marszałek, “Anamnese: Exploration des Gedächtnisses in der gegenwärtigen polnischen Literatur und Kunst (eine intermediale Perspektive)”, in: *Nach dem Vergessen: Rekurse auf den Holocaust nach 1989*, eds. M. Marszałek, A. Molisiak, Berlin 2010, pp. 161–179; C. Winzer: “Polnische Gegenwartskunst und die Erinnerung an den Holocaust im globalen Zeitalter”, in: *Nach dem Vergessen...*, op. cit., pp. 137–160; T. Łysak, “Strategies of Recall in Post-1989: Polish Documentary and Artistic Films About the Holocaust”, in: *Nach dem Vergessen...*, op. cit., pp. 115–135, here: p. 115–120; T. Zimmermann, “Polen und Israel als Resonanzräume der Erinnerung: Polnisches Exil und jüdische Emigration in der Videokunst Artur Żmijewskis und der Gruppe Jewish Renaissance Movement in Poland”, in: *Jüdische Räume und Topographien in Ost(mittel)europa: Konstruktionen in Literatur und Kultur*, eds. K. Smola, O. Terpitz, Wiesbaden, 2015, pp. 221–245, here: pp. 231–241.

and art reveal the impossibility of erasing history, which leads a “second life” in deterritorialized, phantasmatic visual images. Meanwhile, strategies of appropriation and replacing documents by fictive art are not reduced only to Jewish history, but are employed also in other “post-traumatic” and “post-catastrophic” narratives, which recall interethnic- and interreligious conflicts and wars, as for example in the successor states of former Yugoslavia.⁶⁰

Nostalgia can also be perceived as a phenomenon of afterwardsness, of retroactive rewriting of the past that is present in private life as well as in political discourses in post-communist Eastern and South-Eastern Europe.⁶¹ Cultural anthropologist Sharon Macdonald designates it as an emotional, affective turn to the past, which faces history by “feeling” it.⁶² Nostalgic memory is, as Macdonald observes, triggered especially by a phenomenological, sensorial approach to objects or spaces, which are perceived as embodiments and emplacements of history. Nostalgic objects must not be antiquated or “old timers”, but can be also substitutes or imitations, replacing the lost by alluding to it.

Similarly, museums of “post-material” culture seek to give the spectators an opportunity to make their own “post-traumatic” or nostalgic experience of the past work through history with their own senses. They need not travel back in time by reading archival documents, tracing the paths of original historical objects or following documentary photographs and films, because they can encounter the past in “post-material” embodiments in the present. Such a re-created past can be resurrected in huge panorama cinemas, hologram projections in space, soundscapes, spectral sculptures in ghostly ambiances, belonging neither to the past nor to the present, but existing isolated from the flow of time and history. Mowing through the exhibition spectators can experience the tactile eye, haptic touch as well as

60 Stephanie Young, doing research on new forms of forensic art, observes that some artists dealing with mass murders that happened during the Yugoslav dissolution wars erase any clear difference between a forensic document of evidence and a product of artistic imagination, but still speaks of them as “documents”. Such “post-Yugoslav documents” try to create a public discourse on memory of the dead and missing beyond the courtroom, but at the same time question and upset the authority of the document. Whereas original historical objects serve as documents or auratic relics of the past, substitutes can fill the gap by evoking intensive physical sensations. Although such substitutes have lost an immediate (indexical) contact with the past, they replace it by addressing different human senses. S. Young, “The Forensic Imagination: Evidence, Art and the Post-Yugoslav Document”, in: *Mapping the ‘Forensic Turn’: Engagements with Materialities of Mass Death in Holocaust Studies and Beyond*, ed. Z. Dziuban, Vienna, 2017, pp. 309–327, here: p. 316.

61 S. Boym, *Future of Nostalgia*, New York, 2001; M. Velikonja, *Titostalgia – A study of Nostalgia for Josip Broz*, Ljubljana, 2009; C. Raudvere ed., *Nostalgia, Loss and Creativity in South-East Europe: Political and Cultural Representations of the Past*, London, 2018.

62 S. Macdonald, *Memorylands: Heritage and Identity in Europe Today*, London, New York, 2013, pp. 79–108. I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer for drawing my attention to this book as well as for many other suggestions for improvement.

full-bodily emersion, similar to watching movies at the cinema.⁶³ Through their own movement, gestures of touching surfaces and screens, they animate and enact objects, enter with them into an intimate, close relation. Although “post-material” culture has lost the aura of the original, the interplay of newly created material and immaterial elements replaces the old form of “remoteness” and “authenticity” with a new one that is founded on an interplay of immaterial and sensual bodily experience.

The phenomena of the “post-material turn” can also be enforced by efforts to draw a large number of tourists and to attract visitors of different generations through the sensual approach and animated displays, enacting “post-traumatic” strategies of a grotesque-phantasmatic distortion as well as of a more pleasant nostalgia. Already in 2002 Ruth Ellen Gruber observed how some memorial places of Jewish culture and history, even that of the Holocaust, have been transformed into pop culture and tourist consumerist products, addressing spectators of non-Jewish origins.⁶⁴ Such “virtual Jewry” serves, according to Gruber, as a replacement for the vanished Jewish culture and can often be encountered in European countries where Jewish culture was totally destroyed, such as in Germany, Austria, Italy, Poland, and the Czech Republic. Today, farther Eastern and South-East European countries can be added to this long list. Sharon Macdonald links this phenomenon to the shift from social to cultural memory of the Holocaust, as well as to the broad public commemoration and heritagisation of the Holocaust.⁶⁵ The visitors of The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center in Moscow are less transformed into “victims” as into “neighbours”, “witnesses” or “bystanders” in close proximity. They are invited to rethink their relationship to the haunting Jewish neighbors⁶⁶ as well as the relation of their national histories to Jewish histories.

The “post-material turn” in museums is thus a product of different “post”-phenomena, of “post-memory” and its further developments to “post-trauma”, “post-catastrophe”, and the “spectral turn”, or to “nostalgia” as their counterpart, harmonizing conflicting histories. It goes hand-in-hand with postmodern, appropriation art, dealing with history and with commercial strategies of creating “events” and personal emotional “experiences”. At the same time, the “post-material turn” reflects a broader medial “turn” in telling history, including contemporary history, from factual documentary to the emotional media of affective experience and closeness, as observed in war photography and graphic novels, reporting from a personal standpoint about (contemporary) history.⁶⁷ Finally, it also helps to create attrac-

63 J. M. Barker, *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience*, London, Los Angeles, 2009, pp. 1–4, 143–161.

64 R. E. Gruber, *Virtually Jewish: Reinventing Jewish Culture in Europe*, Los Angeles, London, 2002, pp. 25–71.

65 S. Macdonald, op. cit., p. 191.

66 For the figure of the next resp. the neighbour see S. Žižek, E. L. Santner, K. Reinhard eds., *The Neighbor: Three Inquiries in Political Theology*, Chicago, 2005.

67 T. Zimmermann, “Einleitung”, in: *Geschichte und Mythos...*, op. cit., pp. 11–54.

tion and spectacle, as an indispensable part of an attractive education for young generations and part of a tourist offer for visitors of different ages, ethnicities and religions. All these shifts and “turns” are connected by sensual experience, which makes the past more tangible and sensible.

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REVIEWS

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JUSTYNA BALISZ-SCHMELZ,
PRZESZŁOŚĆ NIEPOKONANA.
SZTUKA NIEMIECKA PO 1945 ROKU
JAKO PRZESTRZEŃ I MEDIUM
PAMIĘCI [THE UNSURMOUNTABLE
PAST: THE GERMAN POST-1945 ART
AS THE SPACE AND MEDIUM
OF MEMORY]

Kraków, Universitas, 2018, 363 pp.

The monograph is the first analysis of the German postwar art in the light of its relation to the category of memory. The title, which uses the term “spaces of memory” (*Erinnerungsräume*), coined by Aleida Assmann, points to the scholarly tradition towards which Justyna Balisz-Schmelz feels the greatest intellectual affinity in her work. However, the author does not slavishly follow the work of Aleida and Jan Assmann. She employs Assmann’s theoretical framework to analyze specific works created by the celebrated postwar artists, such as Gerhard Richter or Anselm Kiefer. Her analyzes are informed by a range of primary sources, as well as by the Polish (Katarzyna Bojarska, Magdalena Saryusz-Wolska), German (Astrid Erll, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, Lisa Saltzman), and French (Pierre Nora) secondary literature. Balisz-Schmelz traces through a series of well-chosen artworks the elusive, yet clearly discernible sensation, of “being touched, as if from the outside” (Gumbrecht). According to the author, this factor conditions “the entire postwar landscape and the human existence” (p. 19).

Balisz-Schmelz defines with great clarity the specificity of the post-1945 German art in terms of geography and time. In her analysis she disassociates herself from the term “the artist as a historian” (Mark Godfrey), and underlines that in general the interpretation of artworks reveals not the history, but the memory defined as “presencing the past” (p. 47).

The author states that the Anglo-Saxon literature on the subject has been previously explored by the Polish scholars and highlights that particularly in the United States the memory studies are greatly influenced by the minority discourses and the context of the Holocaust, on which she did not want to focus in her monograph. However, she should perhaps have given specific references to the Anglo-Saxon authors, whom she deemed representative of that school of thought. She does cite in a footnote a book by Joan Gibbons in relation to the memory perspective that illuminates studies on contemporary art, but it seems rather insufficient for the purpose of defining the entire field.

Chapter 1 provides a very thorough and useful account of the memory studies, as a problematic category, which encompasses research conducted on the memory across humanities and social studies. As the author points out, the autonomy of these studies impeded the development of the common vocabulary, much needed to facilitate a discourse between scholars of different disciplines.

Chapter 2 considers the ways in which fascism influenced German postwar art, understood *en masse*, through the discussion of parallels with contemporary literature, exhibitions, and artistic critique. Balisz-Schmelz provides the general overview of the historic events to outline the context for artworks selected for a more in-depth investigation in the subsequent chapters.

Chapters 3–6 constitute the main body of the book and discuss works by Joseph Beuys, Georg Baselitz, Anselm Kiefer, Beate Passow, Andreas von Weizsäcker, Jochen Gerz, Hanne Darboven, Sigrid Sigurdsson, and Gerhard Richter. Each chapter focuses on a different theme: the embodied memory and the body in postwar art (chapter 3), the spatial memory (chapter 4), the writing impulse (chapter 5), and the need to produce archives (chapter 6). This thematic structure results in some artists' oeuvre being split between two chapters (notably Beuys and Kiefer), and others missing from the discussion (lack of references to Kiefer's work in the chapter 5 seems rather arbitrary).

The author diligently applies the selected methodology to her interpretation of artworks. However, at times the reader would benefit from contextualizing the artistic practice within the specific oeuvre. The author is clearly well-equipped to place the particular visual investigation in the context of the artists' careers – her discussion of Beuys's and Sigurdsson's work is exemplary in that respect. In other instances, Balisz-Schmelz “drops” certain works and “floods” them in socio-historical context, thus disregarding their place in the specific artistic practice (reference on p. 304 to Richter's addition to the *Atlas* in the late 1990s is particularly frustrating example of this approach). Problematic is also Balisz-Schmelz's interpretation of Richter's *Atlas* as a simple attempt at systematizing the past. The artist's own writings, Benjamin Buchloh's emphasis on its reading in terms of denial (which the author dismisses as theoretical on p. 302), and, most importantly, the visual evidence, all position *Atlas* as a way of commenting on the elusive nature of memory. The project highlights the difficulty with the richness of the material that obscures rather than clarifies the past in the present. Balisz-Schmelz's interpretation is ever

more surprising since the author rightly discusses the interpretative openness of Sigurdsson's archives (pp. 281–282).

The author should have addressed the scholarship on the importance of the family in shaping the historic events and memory. Perhaps family could have been a separate medium and space of memory? The author makes scattered and very brief references to the role of family in the postwar German art (p. 162), and to the way photographs from family albums are presented in order to disrupt the identities of those portrayed (p. 304). The absence of the defined category of the familial versus private clearly limits the interpretation of many works discussed in the monograph, surely those of Baselitz and Richter, but also the installations by Sigurdsson such as *Hitler was my Father* (p. 284). This omission is notable and perhaps the weakest aspect of the monograph.

Balisz-Schmelz offers many valuable insights and her study fulfills a very useful and ambitious objective of interpreting the works of postwar German artists through the category of memory. Acute awareness of the materiality of selected works (clear, for instance, in the analysis of works by Hanne Darboven, p. 256), and the sound methodological perspective ensure long readability of the monograph.

OBITUARY

Włodzimierz Lengauer

Andrzej Wyrobisz: In Memory of a Friend

One does not easily write a memory piece about someone whom one knew for over half a century. Though, at first glance, the task appears to be rather straightforward since one believes that one knew the late Friend so well, so close, so long. Seemingly, so many facts, events, and anecdotes have been accumulated over the years. But the first challenge concerns the choice of what is important and what one would like to say about the dear Friend from a chaotic array of recollections. Especially, when one is about to reminisce about someone who was far from ordinary: a great scholar, a judicious citizen, and a decent human being. One of our mutual friends responded to the news of Andrzej's death with the following words: "A decent man has passed away".

First and foremost, Andrzej Wyrobisz was a scholar and a teacher. I am convinced that his academic achievements and accomplishments will not only continue to have impact in the years to come but will be duly acknowledged as a major source of inspiration by new generations of cultural historians – particularly those interested in the history of the city, the everyday life of urban communities, as well as social customs.

In 2012, upon a joint initiative by the Museum of Polish History and the editorial board of *Mówią Wieki* (Centuries speak) magazine, fellow historians compiled a collection of his pieces entitled *Studia o kulturze i społeczeństwie w nowożytnej Europie* (Studies on culture and society in early modern Europe), with a knowledgeable and insightful study by Tomasz Siewierski entitled "Andrzej Wyrobisz. Zarys biografii naukowej" (Andrzej Wyrobisz: An overview of academic accomplishments). This young academic with impressive knowledge about the history of Polish historiography of the last couple of decades continues to study Andrzej Wyrobisz's work. Soon, in a special issue of *Przegląd Historyczny* (Historical review) dedicated to the memory of the late scholar Siewierski will publish another essay on the subject entitled "Z paryskich cechów do wyklętych miłości. Droga naukowa Andrzeja Wyrobisza" (From Parisian guilds to forbidden loves: An academic path of Andrzej Wyrobisz). For this very reason I feel that I am no longer obliged to provide an overview of my late Friend's academic accomplishments and achievements. Truth be told, given the fact that the list of Andrzej Wyrobisz's academic works, compiled in 2011, features as many as 482 pieces, any attempt to offer such an account would doubtlessly exceed my competence and abilities.

First and above all, I knew Andrzej as a senior colleague in my home institute, the Institute of History at the University of Warsaw, where I was a student from 1966 to 1971, and where I spent my entire academic career – from a trainee-assistant to a professor emeritus. For almost a quarter of a century, we were both members of the editorial team of *Przegląd Historyczny* (Historical review), where, after some time, I replaced him as the journal's Editor-in-Chief. Andrzej's cooperation with the journal can be traced back to his early youth: in 1954, when still an undergraduate student, he became a language editor, after a time he joined the journal's scientific editorial board, and in 1993, after the death of Stefan Kieniewicz, he was appointed its Editor-in-Chief.

However, we were more than just colleagues. Our relationship was far more intimate, almost family-like, which was largely due to Andrzej's character. For Andrzej was a student of Marian Małowist (1909–1988), who was his mentor and to whom he was closely attached until the latter's death. Consequently, he was a frequent visitor to Iza and Marian Małowist's house – the very place which, at some point in my life, became my own family home where I spent the best years of my youth. It was under those circumstances that I was privileged to become familiar with some of Andrzej's most important qualities: his immense and unbreakable loyalty towards people that were close to him, faithfulness towards his friends, and unshakeable readiness to bring help when needed. Marian Małowist – now ill and disabled – often needed help and Andrzej was the one on whom our family could count. His relationship with Marian was more than just an ordinary friendship between a former student and a former teacher. It was profoundly intimate to him. The death of Marian Małowist, followed a few years later (1995) by the passing of Iza Biezuńska-Małowist, moved him deeply. My own, household- or family-based, relationship with him provided me with an opportunity to see Andrzej's many traits – the ones that are available to close friends, but not necessarily to professional colleagues. Andrzej was a bit introvert, seemingly cool and brittle. When it came to socialising, he was rather withdrawn or undemonstrative, to say the least. Yet, on many occasions, he proved not to be averse to a good laugh. He had a deep and “English” sense of humour, often sprinkled with acerbity and astringency. He enjoyed a good meal and a good drink, as well as long dinners with friends. His ostensible and often inhibiting (or even disheartening) rigidity cloaked a great deal of warmth and kindness. Kindness was the very trait that he deliberately and carefully nurtured. For he was a true-born member of the Polish intelligentsia, who lived according to a set of rules that have been nowadays abandoned and forgotten. He deeply believed in the mission and ethos of the intelligentsia, in their obligation to spread culture, care about education, particularly with regard to the youth, as well as to be an active citizen. He always claimed that one should make one's life “useful to others” (his very words). In the last few years of his life, when his state of health prevented him from being professionally and socially active, he lamented the fact that he could not any longer be involved in other people's lives and their matters. But even then he was more than ready to discuss all major and pertinent issues, taking great interest in current political events, as well as his academic milieu. When

his female colleague, whom he had known since their student years, produced some false and libellous remarks about his mentor, he reacted to it with both animation and determination, stating that the female slanderer “has failed her education (carried out by Marian Małowist) how to be a human being that is kind to people and socially useful”.¹ Because Andrzej believed (and so he wrote) that he developed these traits as a result of his contact with his mentor. He looked back to his student years as the best, or, at least, the most important period in his life – despite the fact that it was the time of the grim Stalinist regime of the Polish People’s Republic.

Andrzej Wyrobisz’s passionate commitment to social activism resulted in him becoming engaged in the establishment of the Faculty of Humanities and the Department (later Institute) of History at what was then a satellite branch of the University of Warsaw in Białystok (now the University of Białystok). In the periods 1969–1975, 1981–1982, and 1984–1985 he acted as a Faculty Dean – thus, he can well be recognised as the father of Białystok-based academic historians. It was in Białystok that he powerfully manifested his civic engagement when, as a member of the Solidarity movement and a brave anticommunist activist, he took part in the memorable events of 1980–1981. This resulted in Andrzej being removed from office in 1985 by the Minister of Science Benon Miśkiewicz. A detailed account of those events can be found in the above-mentioned studies by Tomasz Siewierski. Andrzej’s commitment to Białystok-based academic milieu remained strong until his death. One should also emphasize that it was always reciprocated by his Białystok colleagues. Certainly, one means of expressing their admiration for Andrzej and the way he acted in the 1980s was a festschrift entitled *Miasto, region, społeczeństwo. Studia ofiarowane Profesorowi Andrzejowi Wyrobiszowi w sześćdziesiątą rocznicę Jego urodzin*² (City, region, society: Studies offered to Professor Andrzej Wyrobisz on the occasion of his 60th birthday) that they compiled in his honour. Its subject matter corresponded entirely with Andrzej’s fields of interest, while the volume’s editors and contributors were his colleagues and students. The book is now recognized as a major contribution to Polish historiography. Andrzej’s friends from Białystok have never forgotten him. In 2012, the University of Białystok published another volume dedicated to Andrzej Wyrobisz entitled *Ars historiae – historia artis. Prace ofiarowane Andrzejowi Wyrobiszowi*³ (*Ars historiae – historia artis: Studies offered to Andrzej Wyrobisz*), co-edited by Ewa Dubas-Urwanowicz and Józef Maroszek.

It is my belief that the same set of characteristics – this honest and authentic need to participate in social life both as an individual and as a member of a group – were responsible for Andrzej joining the team of *Przegląd Historyczny*. He was eagerly looking forward to upcoming issues, both when he was its editor and when, in his final years, he could no longer take part in the editorial works. The journal

1 A. Wyrobisz, „Listy do redakcji”, *Przegląd Historyczny*, 2014, vol. 150, no. 4, pp. 769–770.

2 E. Dubas-Urwanowicz, J. Urwanowicz, eds., *Miasto, region, społeczeństwo. Studia ofiarowane Profesorowi Andrzejowi Wyrobiszowi w sześćdziesiątą rocznicę Jego urodzin*, Białystok, 1992.

3 E. Dubas-Urwanowicz, J. Maroszek, eds., *Ars historiae – historia artis. Prace ofiarowane Andrzejowi Wyrobiszowi*, Białystok, 2012.

was on his mind until the very end – quite literally, as the last time I talked to him about the journal was just two days before his demise. Next to his bed one could always find the latest issue of our journal – even when reading became quite difficult to him. In fact, this further testifies to Andrzej having been the intellectual *par excellence* – he was an avid reader even in his final days. Andrzej was a man who could not live without the printed word (however, he never took to computer technology and the Internet, and started using a mobile phone only when his own mobility failed him).

Our long relationship went through different stages. For example, I was never his student (when I was a student he was employed at the Institute of History of Tangible Culture of the Polish Academy of Sciences, and later worked in Białystok) but if today I know anything about the Augustów Canal (Kanał Augustowski) it is because of the lecture he gave at a circuit seminar organised for the first-year students of history at the University of Warsaw (it was May 1967). It was back then that I first understood that he was a lecturer who talked about the issues that really interested him and that he knew inside-out. Erudition, integrity, as well as deeply held interests characterised Andrzej as a scholar. They are not so common among the present-day academics any more.

In all aspects of his life, Andrzej was truly authentic. He was always himself. Never did he hide his beliefs, or who and what he was; he never pretended to be someone else. He was not after fame and fortune. His modesty was quite baffling – as, indeed, was the fact that he never made a pile. He did not even possess his own apartment. He lived in a council flat which he claimed after his parents' death – the very place where he spent his childhood, youth, and, practically all his life. He never cared for material goods, and he was free from the desire to possess things. Instead, he cared for people. He was an old-fashioned man. He was a decent man.