THE MIND OF THE BEHOLDER:

HISTORY, THEORY, AND CRITICISM

OF ART

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PREFACE

This volume gathers findings from half a century of observing art works, their cultural context, and their rationales. It is now generally recognized that books, even fact-based ones, owe much to the experiences of their authors. Hence the following personal recollections.

Born in Fort Worth, Texas, in 1934, I was brought up in Southern California. Although I have not lived in Los Angeles since 1956, I have frequently revisited the place, and have tried to fathom the portentous role it has assumed in shaping the world’s popular culture. For good or ill, the fortunes of this megalopolis during the second half of the twentieth century are central to much of what has been happening in our civilization. But let me reassure you: the main part of this book is not about Los Angeles, though the city must detain us a bit longer.

In significant ways, LA then was very different from what it is now. To many it comes as a surprise to learn that the city once boasted a superb public transportation system, which the authorities are now belatedly and vainly trying to replicate. The triumph of the car culture, one of the major realities of advanced Western (and increasingly Eastern) societies, is irreversible. Except for a few weeks, I have never owned a car. This example shows that I learned from LA not only positively but negatively. The motif of “resisting LA” recurs in these introductory pages.

LA’s demography was very different from the ethnic mosaic it is today, being largely white. However, this population divided into three distinct groups. First was a tiny cohort of intellectuals, largely isolated, but including in the forties such luminaries as Aldous Huxley, Christopher Isherwood, Thomas and Heinrich Mann, Bertolt Brecht, Igor Stravinsky, and Arnold Schoenberg. Some were part of the Transatlantic Migration of figures forced out of Europe by Hitler’s persecutions. There was some overlap between the intellectuals and the Hollywood crowd, but not much. (Isherwood, whom I was to meet later, wrote scripts.)

The second group comprised the large body of individuals required to staff Hollywood’s entertainment industry. With the selective concerns of the present, it is easy to overlook the fact that many of the industry’s creations were irremediably trivial—far more so than those released nowadays. I was, to be sure, too hasty in rejecting all of Hollywood’s film product, missing for example the significance of film noir. Nostalgia apart, though, the first years of television were truly appalling.

The third demographic group consisted of a vast mass of fairly average citizens who came mostly from the Middle West, in quest of a pleasant life in the sun. Although this element is less significant now, its sons and daughters continue to dominate the political arena, accounting for the puritanical atmosphere that still rules—paradoxically enough to outsiders—the public sphere. The inherent potential for conflict between groups two and three figures in Nathanael West’s mordant, almost apocalyptic novel, The Day of the Locust (1939).

In this old LA, with its tripartite sociocultural structure, my mind took shape. To be candid, my own family background was largely of the third category. However, my stepfather, a sometime author who had gone to Pomona College (a kind of West Coast counterpart of Swarthmore) and knew some foreign languages, gravitated to the first, intellectual grouping. Literary aspirations notwithstanding, my parents, though, did not move in those rarified circles.

At first I was drawn to the natural sciences, especially astronomy. I cannot now reconstruct why
my attention shifted to the humanities, but I treasure this early scientific bent, as I believe that the history and theory of science offer important models for tracing the history of human culture generally.

In keeping with the motif of "resisting LA," especially its tinseltown aura, I was drawn to high culture, especially the literature of the avant-garde. First I devoured the works of T. S. Eliot, both the poetry and the prose. This author was not such a find, as Eliot was being promoted by, among other mainstream institutions, the Luce publications. Then I gravitated to Eliot's mentor, Ezra Pound, a more unusual affinity. I remember discussing the matter with one of my high school English teachers, whose tastes ran to Emerson and Tennyson. She pronounced Pound, not inaccurately, to be "prejudiced." But I was attracted to what we would now term the transgressive side of Pound—without adopting his fascism and anti-Semitism. Yet at that stage of adolescent rebellion, it was a plus for me that Pound involuntarily resided in a mental institution. Besides Pound was thought to be impenetrably obscure, and I believed that I understood him.

At all events, let me try to catch the essence of the literary modernism of Eliot and Pound, for I believe that what I learned from this source still undergirds the contents of this book.

1) In contrast to the root-and-branch eliminationism of F. T. Marinetti, the modernism that beguiled me did not reject tradition, finding stimulus in the Greeks and Romans and even in the Middle Ages. However, my mentors thought that our heritage could not be adopted en bloc just as it had been handed down, for the whole thing needed to be rethought. "Make it New!" was Pound's slogan. This task of revitalization required candor and selectivity. If one thought that, say, Milton and Goethe were windbags, one should say so.

2) Literary modernism taught that one can't assume that we have inherited any coherent system from the past. Hence, the culture maps of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, much in vogue then in certain quarters, were inoperative. There is no special key providing instant access to a ready-made cultural terrain. What we must do instead is laboriously to piece together, for ourselves, certain connections of coherence from the fragments. Approached honestly, cultural understanding is radically discontinuous—though it is not as incoherent as the Dadaists had claimed. When my attention turned to the visual arts, I naturally saw Cubism as another manifestation of the dual task imposed on us: acknowledge the inevitable fragmentation, while committing to a proactive effort to retrieve what coherence one can.

3) Literature and the arts must be challenging. Guides may be needed to their complexity, not only because of the sudden transitions that principle no. 2 requires, but also because of the rich intertextuality that culture incorporates. The easy options of tin-pan alley tunes and average Hollywood films denied this principle of challenge. The Barnumite saying, "No one ever went broke underestimating the taste of the American public," seemed to be the watchword of the entertainment industry. By that token, its products were my bêtes noires.

4) Finally, my modernist mentors encouraged an interest in other cultures. Pound was mesmerized by the Far East, going so far as to include vast chunks of Chinese history in his major work, The Cantos. As it happened, a major exhibition of Chinese ceramics opened in Los Angeles about that time. Ever since, I have found solace in contemplating these wares, especially those of the Sung Dynasty. While the concept of a pan-Pacific rim had not yet emerged, the attraction was manifest. I thought of becoming a sinologist. Although this ambition was not realized, I retain the conviction that the serious grappling with other cultures posed by the former approach is superior to today's fashionable multiculturalism,
which skips over the need to learn difficult languages and to come to grips with the concepts, often elitist, hierarchical, and particularist, embedded in the great achievements of non-Western cultures.

Since LA in those days was largely a cultural backwater, my understanding came mainly through the books at the Public Library and through my own acquisitions, which have grown into a dominant passion. The LP record was just coming into use, and classical music engaged my attention. Like Claude Lévi-Strauss, I believe that the structural principles of music are important for thinking generally, though I have trouble setting forth exactly what they are.

And the visual arts? During my formative years, the Los Angeles County Museum, which nowadays mounts innovative exhibitions that have made weighty contributions to knowledge, had to manage with a piddling, unchanging collection that would easily have been surpassed by the holdings of almost any medium-sized Eastern city. Reconstructed dinosaur skeletons from the La Brea Tar Pits held pride of place in the old museum in Exposition Park. Only a few private galleries specialized in contemporary works. A show at the Pasadena Museum of Art fired my interest in abstract expressionism. At first my reading in the art field was conventional: Bernard Berenson and E. H. Gombrich. (I was later to study with Gombrich in London.) In the modern field, Alfred H. Barr, Jr.'s monograph on Picasso impressed me—and still does—as a model of pedagogical efficiency. And I discovered Meyer Schapiro's writings.

Two more elements from the formative LA days deserve mention. First, my stepfather was a Marxist and he taught me the foundations of that analysis of human affairs, which I still believe to be more coherent than the Neo-Marxism of individuals like Herbert Marcuse, Theodor Adorno, and Walter Benjamin, all of whose "dialectical" elaborations only muddy the clarity of the original theory. At all events, in the rebellious way of youth I sought assistance from George Orwell and Arthur Koestler (the latter an abiding guide) to emancipate myself from the Marxist faith. And faith it was, since history has falsified most of the key Marxist doctrines, including the labor theory of value, the progressive immiseration of the working class, the "inevitability" of revolution, and so forth. The old Marxism offered clear principles, but they didn't fit contemporary reality. Besides, there was the dawning understanding of the Gulag and the monstrous personal-power abuses of Stalinism.

My hard-won grasp of these problems inoculated me against the wave of leftist intoxication that captured our 1960s intelligentsia. However, Marxism did offer one lesson that helped my critique of LA's tinsel—not to mention the regime of "conformity" then reigning throughout America, and so well explored in the sociological classic of David Reisman et al., The Lonely Crowd (1950). That lesson is this. In any given society, things do not have to remain always as they are. But the corollary is equally important. We must be very sure of our course when we chose change. Therein lay the fatal flaw of leftist triumphalism, with its attempt to stampede us with its jargon of historical inevitability. Today, libertarianism seems to offer a better path. But here too, implementation would have to be preceded by a very careful study of all the possible consequences.

A final development affected me before I left LA in 1956. In 1950 Harry Hay and others had started the modern gay and lesbian movement, which eventually spread to the rest of the country and then throughout the world. We did not know it at the time, but this was one of the defining moments of the dawning sexual revolution. Also fundamental, though they came out of Indiana, were Alfred C. Kinsey's two Reports of 1948 and 1953. In those benighted days one could not purchase Tropic of Cancer and Lady Chatterley's Lover in the US. Today repressive forces threaten a return to censorship.
While I was not then connected with the gay movement, eventually I was to publish two major reference works in the field. And I remain interested in what has come to be called gender studies, as discussed in the last chapter of this book.

The upshot of all this was that I learned what I could from LA, positively and negatively. Increasingly, though, I heard the call "Go East Young Man!" A fellowship at NYU's graduate Institute of Fine Arts made this desire a reality. There I encountered a body of teachers whose scope, dedication, and critical edge still leave me dazzled. Refugees from Hitler, they were products of the finest educational system the Western world has ever known, that of Central Europe before 1933. Their inspiration reinforced my commitment to broad study of human culture, including languages, but with a new commitment to precision.

My formative years were capped by residence abroad. First, I lived for a year and a half in Rome, where I served as the translation editor of the Encyclopedia of World Art. While archaeology was my chief preoccupation in Italy, the masterpieces of Federico Fellini and Michelangelo Antonioni reconciled me with the medium of film. I first confronted the movies as a serious endeavor not in Southern California, but in Hollywood by the Tiber!

After a new stint in New York City (later my permanent home), I spent four years in the London of sixties. Swinging the British capital may have been, but art history there was largely comatose. There were compensations. I encountered the charismatic presence of another of my mentors, Sir Karl Popper (1902-1994), the philosopher of science who held forth with magisterial assurance at the London School of Economics. Popper's stupendous life work remains for me the ultimate, unachievable exemplum.

I returned to the United States in 1967, to discover a new atmosphere of excitement and concern fostered by the civil rights movement and opposition to the Vietnam War. By this time a seasoned and perhaps somewhat cynical observer, I maintained a certain distance from these trends, even as I profited from their stimulus to rethinking accepted beliefs. The same reserve marked my response to the Paris 1968 events (together with the postmodernist thought they fomented) and the rebellion at Columbia University of the same year, which I saw at first hand. Our culture changes and we change with it, but prudence dictates that we abstain from saluting every plaintive fluttering of the "new"--such blanket, uncritical endorsement, so common nowadays, is neomania--but trust our inner compass.

It is time to end these reminiscences. The contents of this book reflect some thirty years of teaching, most of it in the wonderful setting of Manhattan's Hunter College (CUNY). To the faculty and students of Hunter College, this book is respectfully dedicated.

Some of the ideas presented here stem from a longer manuscript, The History of Art History, which remains unpublished. The first draft of the present text dates from the fall of 1997. Neal Myers oversaw the technical realization.
INTRODUCTION

This book examines a cornucopia of ideas generated over the centuries to interpret the visual arts. The book is short, and many of the concepts receive a more concise treatment here than the author would ideally have wished. Still the presentation mirrors the variety of approaches available, while the notes guide the reader to more extensive analyses.

Some approaches are old and some are new. Single-minded devotion to either of these categories produces exaggeration. At one extreme beckons the dead hand of antiquarianism, in which old ideas are treasured merely for themselves: they are the "imperishable tradition." In the vivid imagery of Jean-Paul Sartre, the antiquarian traditionalist is like a night watchman at a cemetery. More seductive are the accolades of the present-minded neomaniacs, who pride themselves on always being up to date; unhesitatingly, they embrace all the latest intellectual fashions. The neomaniac is like a child ever chasing after the fire engine. These are extremes. But even in moderate forms nuancing and synthesis are needed. Prolonged experience has convinced the writer that neither tradition nor present-mindedness is adequate alone: neither offers a fully satisfying diet. What is needed is an agile strategy of constant balancing of the two factors.

Let us start, then, not with the old or the new, but with the middle term. I was born in Fort Worth, Texas in 1934. I could not know then that that year stood almost at the beginning of a major shift of creative energy from central Europe to North America. The migration across the Atlantic reflected Adolf Hitler’s accession to power on January 30, 1933, and the subsequent discharge of Jewish and dissident professors and intellectuals from their positions in the Third Reich.

The transatlantic migration transformed American art, and not art alone; almost every field of cultural and scientific achievement underwent revitalization. During the 1930s the systematic study of art in the United States was reshaped in accordance with a sophisticated and learned model introduced by such teachers as Walter Friedlaender, Richard Krautheimer, and Erwin Panofsky. These scholars, sometimes termed art-historical humanists, concentrated on mainstream European art down to the time of the French Revolution in 1789—but rarely ventured beyond that date. At their main base at New York University’s Institute of Fine Arts, the emigré art historians trained a host of native successors. (I was one of them.)

The migration of art historians was paralleled by other contingents representing cognate fields. Artists and architects such as Josef Albers, Walter Gropius, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, and László Moholy-Nagy, in flight from the Hitler regime imposed in Germany, were joined by others who reached America after the fall of France, including Max Ernst, Fernand Léger, André Masson, Roberto Matta Echaurren, and Joan Miro. Extremely various in their orientations, these figures nonetheless had a catalytic effect on American art, giving rise—along with other factors—to the mature work of the group of painters known as the abstract expressionists. While each group signaled a new maturity in its own field, the emigré artists and art historians had little to do with one another. When they were willing to comment at all, the scholars regarded the artists as wild and undisciplined; the artists thought the scholars stodgy and academic.

Into the gap between the two stepped Clement Greenberg who, largely self-taught, dominated the critical interpretation of American contemporary art until the mid-1960s. Many other critics were drawn to his banner. Although the term “formalist” is perhaps too simple a label, the Greenbergians are generally so regarded. For some of the complexities, see Chapter One.

To summarize: the middle decades of the century witnessed the coexistence of three trends: humanistic art history, avant-garde painting and sculpture, and formalist criticism. Relations among the
three were often distant, sometimes tense. But that was the way it was.

Then came the challenge. The "young Turks," loosely ranged under the rubric of postmodernism, were dissatisfied with all these trends. Influenced by feminism, Marxism, semiotics, and deconstruction, and drawn to new art stemming from the work of Marcel Duchamp, the younger interpreters created their own standards and venues. For a time it seemed that they would carry the day.

Yet by the mid-1990s it became clear that the new approach had failed to supplant the old, and that some accommodation of mutual toleration—fostering other voices, some yet to be heard from—was essential. For this reason the themes covered in this book are various and sometimes contradictory.

Information about art from the past, deriving from such varied sources as inscriptions, contracts, technical treatises, pamphlets, manifestos, newspaper articles, memoirs, letters, histories and many other categories, is heterogeneous. Still, the harvest falls into two classes: (1) individual motifs, including data about individual works and anecdotes about artist's personalities, and (2) attempts at synthesis. Syntheses commonly assume the guise of histories: the one embedded in the great work, *Natural History*, of the Roman Pliny the Elder (ca. 75 A.D.) ranks as the first. Other significant histories—citing only a few by single authors, as distinct from multi-authored efforts—are those of Giorgio Vasari, Johann Joachim Winckelmann, Luigi Lanzi, and Salomon Reinach. Recent efforts address a broader public, as seen in the big textbooks of Helen Gardner, H. W. Janson, Frederick Hartt, and Marilyn Stokstad.

For some time it has been recognized that a thorough history of art must be the work of many hands and occupy a number of volumes. Two pioneering efforts, long-since obsolete, still command recognition as landmarks: André Michel et al., *Histoire de l'art* (8 vols. in 17, Paris, 1905-29) and the *Handbuch der Kunswissenschaft* (27 monographs, Berlin, 1913-30). The second was the inspiration for Nikolaus Pevsner, who launched the *Pelican History of Art* in 1953 (ongoing; now Yale University Press). In 1960 André Malraux began the *Arts du Monde* volumes with Gallimard in Paris, lavishly illustrated, of which only a dozen or so were published in English-language versions; while the series continues in France and Germany, no completion is in sight.

The end of the twentieth century witnessed a sense that a new multivolume approach to the history of art is needed, even overdue. Two English publishers came forward. Phaidon Press launched *Art and Ideas*, a paperback series illustrated in color, with accessible texts, and weighted strongly towards the twentieth century. The *Oxford History of Art* is more adventurous and challenging, offering more comprehensive coverage of the whole world of art. Oxford will contain separate volumes on African American art, women in art, photography, design, art and the new technology, art and film.

And what of criticism? Taking a broad view, critical practice is rooted in the literary commentaries of ancient Greece and Rome, in the *Poetics* of Aristotle and the essay of the mysterious Longinus ("On the Sublime"). Ancient writers also took up hermeneutics, the general theory of interpretation, including the question of when a text is meant literally and when it must be understood metaphorically or allegorically.

Unlike literary criticism, which enjoyed a secure place in ancient curricula of education, art criticism remained marginal for a long time. As evidence for the inception of art criticism, we have only fragments from earlier times, beginning with ancient Greece. In the opinion of a leading authority, J. J. Pollitt, these Greek fragments fall into four main categories: (1) technical achievements and improvements, as with bronze casting and the use of pigments (leads to idea of progress through innovation; (2) moralistic aesthetics, generally stressing shortcomings and seductiveness (Plato); (3) popular appreciation of verisimilitude (still noticeable in viewers exclamations: "It looks just like real life!"); (4) stylistic analogies linked to rhetoric and literature, whereby parallel effects were discerned.
In later European aesthetics, these last connections were to lead to the doctrine of ut pictura poesis, that painting and poetry resembled one another in crucial ways. The interest in individual qualities of expression also helped foster appreciation of the "refinements" of art styles.

There are various ways of accessing the historical deposit of sources. In 1947 Elizabeth Gilmore Holt, who had been trained in Germany, realized a happy idea of bringing out a selection of original texts, generally short excerpts culled from a variety of sources. The ultimate inspiration for this useful publication was the much bigger collection of material gathered by the very scholarly Austrian Quellenschriften; unlike these pioneering publications, Holt's sources appeared only in English translation. She later supplemented the collection to cover much of the nineteenth century. Then H. W. Janson organized a multivolume series, the Sources and Documents in the History of Art, edited by various scholars and made widely available in paperback by Prentice-Hall. The series included volumes by such leading scholars as J. J. Pollitt (Greek and Roman art), Cyril Mango (Byzantine Art), Wolfgang Stechow (northern Renaissance art), and Linda Nochlin (nineteenth-century art). The most recent effort towards gathering sources is found in the two big volumes in an ongoing series edited by Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (assisted by Jason Gaiger). All of these are not casebooks, anthologies of modern scholarship, but primary sources contemporaneous with the art works they describe.

As a discipline, art criticism crystallized relatively late—in eighteenth-century France, where literary influence still dominated. The writers addressed the bewilderment of the public in viewing the vast assemblage of paintings in the state-sponsored exhibitions known as the Salons. The most distinguished practitioner of this genre was the multitalented Denis Diderot (1713-1784), whose lively accounts of art works he had seen can still be read with profit today.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries much art criticism leaned either towards journalistic hype and puffery (praise of favorite artists) or promulgation of more general principles. Both tendencies may appear in the writings of the same person, as Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918), the champion of Cubism.

Modern American art criticism first found its most congenial home in newspapers, far more numerous than at present in the first half of the twentieth century. Art magazines and intellectual periodicals represented other major venues. All these traditions continue today, though newspapers provide less attention than formerly. (The extensive treatment on an almost daily basis gives the New York Times a special place among them; but then art is a kind of "local" beat in New York City). For reasons that are not clear, art criticism has obtained only a tenuous footing in television.

Notable art magazines today include Art in America, Artforum, Art News, and Modern Painters. More scholarly, sometimes tediously so, are the Art Bulletin, Art History, and the Burlington Magazine. Among the intellectual periodicals probably the most significant for their coverage of art are The Nation, the New Criterion, the New York Review of Books, October, and the Times Literary Supplement (London).

Much of this endeavor, of course, confronts the practical critic with the task of evaluating new work. The critic should try to look beneath the surface to detect characteristic patterns of argument. These features include selective citation and description of works; comparisons, whether with the art of the past or of contemporaries, and with other media; ideologies such as deconstruction, Marxism, and feminism; special usages of terms, including jargon; and log-rolling (elevation of friends and other favorites), together with critical "axes" the writer may be wielding. Few critics are as independent as they would like to think they are, and a considerable amount of bandwagoning is evident, in the form of praise of currently fashionable theories and figures. These elements may be more implicit than explicit, and some reading between the lines is called for.

It would be too complex to attempt a map of recent critical approaches here. The work of
Clement Greenberg occupies a substantial portion of Chapter One. Thomas Hess, long an editor of Art News, was a less well-known but important fellow worker in the vineyards of modernism.

Artforum began as a small magazine based in California. On moving to New York, it became "hot," the focus of a new art-critical insurgency and read by many artists. Then, in 1976, conflicts between management and the editors led to the exodus of the critics Rosalind Kraus and Annette Michelson, who created what remains our chief mandarin quarterly, October. This journal signaled the influx of French theory in the study of art and cultural production generally. At the same time, feminist criticism, where Lucy Lippard was at first the most prominent figure, established itself as a separate and influential enterprise.\(^{11}\)

Another way of analyzing art writing is through terms.\(^{12}\) As this approach will be more implicit than explicit in the following chapters, let us now look briefly at three specific examples.

(1) The term chiaroscuro serves as a technical designation for the application of light and shade in a painting or graphic-arts work so as to render the three-dimensional character of an object. While the concept was already clear to Leonardo da Vinci, he did not use the term to describe it. It appears that the first such usage of chiaroscuro was by Baldassare Castiglione, the author of a book known as The Courtier (1528). The word was introduced into English in 1686 by the writer William Aglionby who was convinced that the English language was impoverished with regard to art terms. He went to the most substantial repository of such words known to him, the Italian-language vocabulary. Because the word chiaroscuro is useful, it has subsisted in the English language ever since.

(2) The term pointillism comes from an attempt, headed by Georges Seurat in the 1880s, to make more systematic the impressionist method of painting. The Seurat method, known variously as neo-impressionism, divisionism, or pointillism, consisted of a fine mesh of little dots which were meant to blend optically in the sensory apparatus of the observer. Used by graphic designers, the method is sometimes called benday dots, a term introduced in 1903 after the printer Benjamin Day who made prominent use of the device. In television and other modern technologies, the patches that blend optically are known as pixels. This last term, introduced as recently as 1969, is a fusion of pix and element. In this way we have inherited several different words, contributed by different disciplines, to describe what is essentially the same phenomenon.

(3) Appropriation derives from the Marxist theory of economics, where it refers to the commandeering of one person’s labor by another in a general system of economic domination known as exploitation. In the 1980s the French theorist Jean Baudrillard used the term to designate replications of earlier works where the reference to the earlier work subsists together with a sense that something different has in fact been created. Sometimes Baudrillard used the expression simulacrum to refer to this phenomenon.

In addition to the three just reviewed, we note two terms with a broader scope.

(a) Criticism, from the Greek krinein, to choose, implies prioritizing. The rationale goes something like this: since life is too short to examine everything, the critic performs a preliminary task of culling important work from a large undifferentiated mass. Grateful as we are for this service, we must not be led by the nose; instead, we ultimately make up our own minds.

(b) The term theory, also of Greek origin, has long flourished in the realms of speculation and philosophy. Recently, the word, sometimes capitalized as "Theory" has taken on a special gloss, designating a body of thinking generated in Germany and France in the fields of philosophy and literature. The task of adapting these difficult ideas to the visual arts has proved a challenge. Falling under the general rubric of postmodernism, this intellectual fashion has informed much contemporary critical writing.\(^{13}\)

The title of this book is "The Mind of the Beholder." This means that one must acknowledge
a broader approach: that of the history of ideas. Ideas that have proven significant in the study of art include imitation, beauty, the sublime, and romanticism. General reference books on philosophy and aesthetics are sometimes helpful for their coverage of these general concepts. Yet there is no fully comprehensive work for our purposes. Useful essays on particular themes of current interest—such as narrative, avant-garde, and fetishism—appear in Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff, eds., Critical Terms for Art History. It is unnecessary to say more about this issue as it is addressed in various ways in the main chapters of this book.

Chapter One treats the matters of formal analysis and "formalism." Looking into traditions of formal analysis since the middle of the eighteenth century, the chapter shows that this essential tool of study in the visual arts was not an invention of the middle of the twentieth century, but drew on a substantial heritage. There is also a personal element in formal study. Examination of the careers of such figures as Heinrich Wölfflin, Roger Fry, Clement Greenberg, and Ernst Gombrich shows that the emergence of critical and art historical concepts is interwoven with the lives of their creators. Moreover, concepts of formal analysis are often linked to broader historical schemata which seek to explain why art has a history.

Chapter Two shows why biographical approaches, which seek to combine facts about the individuality of artists with more general patterns, have been so diverse. A constant interplay between expectation and stereotype, on the one hand, and the real circumstances of artists’ lives, on the other, has shaped our understanding. The second part of the chapter reviews the depth psychology approaches to art of Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung indicates how fraught with difficulty these have been, despite the undoubted appeal of an approach to creativity that seeks to probe into its very depths.

In Chapter Three semiotics leads to a short account of its art-historical cousin, iconography. There is further analysis of the recent methodologies of structuralism and deconstruction, as well as their relationship to postmodernism.

Chapter Four deals with economic and social concerns. Among the economic aspects are forgery and theft, as well the role of collecting, museums, and galleries. Social elements include national and regional themes, and the relation of art to politics.

The concept of gender, the focus of Chapter Five, has become prominent only recently. Although gender is usually discussed in relation to women and gays and lesbians, it throws light on the question of group identity in general. The chapter closes with AIDS art, representing another group—individuals who share a disability.

1. As the word "neomaniac" is a neologism not found in dictionaries, it exemplifies the very mentality it denotes.

2. The creative side of this influx forms the main emphasis of a book derived from an exhibition: Stephanie Barron, ed., Exiles + Emigrés: The Flight of European Artists from Hitler, Los Angeles County Museum, 1997. However, the book also contains two chapters on the emigré art historians. An older standard work is Donald Fleming and Bernard Bailyn, eds., The Intellectual Migration:


   It should be noted that many feminist critics reject the "star system" that elevates, in their view, some individuals over others; at all events a wide variety of their writings should be consulted. One may begin with two anthologies: Arlene Raven, Cassandra Langer, and Johanna Frueh, eds., Feminist Art Criticism: An Anthology, New York: Harper (Icon), 1991; and (same editors), New Feminist Criticism: Art, Identity, Action, New York: Harper (Icon), 1994. See Chapter Five, below, for further discussion of feminist scholarship.

12. Most lexicons in this field are thin. See, however, Edward Lucie-Smith, The Thames and Hudson Dictionary of Art Terms, London: Thames and Hudson, 1984. An analytical account of art terms from the Greeks to the present is a desideratum.

13. We are all familiar with "the buzz" that pervades today's art world. Discourse shifts rapidly, almost kaleidoscopically, so that Robert Atkins' somewhat breezy Artspeak: A Guide to Contemporary Ideas, Movements, and Buzzwords, New York: Abbeville, 1990, is already out of date.


CHAPTER ONE. FORMAL ANALYSIS AND "FORMALISM"

In recent years artists and critics have emphasized the social factors that condition works of art. With this enhancement has come a corresponding devaluation so that the prestige of the term formalism has drastically declined. For those who consider themselves "on the cutting edge," the term is little more than an epithet. Merely to utter the execration suffices to condemn a point of view as passé and reactionary. Attachment to outdated formalist practices signals a nostalgic aestheticism that shuns the modern world and its problems in order to withdraw to an elitist utopia of refinement and sensibility. Anyone so labeled should consider him or herself definitively dissed.

As we shall see this putdown is a caricature. To be sure, if formal analysis is pursued—as it often was in the period 1950-70—as an exclusionary method, it invites justified criticism. However, this mode of analysis cannot be simply discarded, for it retains its value as a component of a larger enterprise that embraces history, subject matter, and psychic and social concerns as part of a comprehensive endeavor addressing the visual arts.

Anyone seeking to communicate creatively must elect some medium or combination of media as a vehicle. But which? What is it that makes the visual media compelling—as distinct, say, from poetry and music? No one would deny, of course, are valuable in their own right. It is a question of judgment and priorities.

If we are concerned with poetry, it follows that we are deeply interested in words; in the visual arts, we engage optical stimuli. The ultimate grounding of poetry, one might even say, lies in its "wordness"; the visual arts depend ultimately on their visuality. We can be more specific. Inescapably, the authority of the visual arts cannot be separated from such factors as composition, color, mass, and line.

The development of ways of speaking about these phenomena developed gradually. In their time the Greeks and Romans spoke of some statues as rigid and foursquare, others as lute and supple. These qualities are in principle distinct from the question of whether a statue represents Venus or a sausage seller. The artist may elect similar, or distinct, means of representing them.

There are two tasks of formal study. The first requires the development of a vocabulary sensitive enough to register the range of formal expression, including differences. This is formal analysis in the proper sense of the term. The second task is to understand how one set of forms is related other sets: the "life of forms" over time.

Formal analysis attained its first maturity in eighteenth-century England. At this time aristocratic connoisseurs and "dilettanti" (originally those who delighted in the arts) sought to refine their appreciation of the masses of paintings and sculptures then being imported into their country from the European continent, especially from Italy.

Influenced by the philosophy of John Locke, Jonathan Richardson Senior (1665-1745), a portrait painter, collector, and writer, set forth the methodology of connoisseurship in his ambitious Two Discourses (1719). Note the subtitle of the first Discourse: "An Essay on the whole Art of Criticism as it relates to Painting, shewing how to judge of the Goodness of a Picture; of the Hand of the Master; and Whether 'tis an Original or a Copy." As Carol Gibson-Wood observes, "Richardson sought to promote connoisseurship as a branch of knowledge, a 'science' in the eighteenth-century sense of the word. As such it could be mastered by anyone capable of thinking clearly and reasoning correctly, but demanded a rational, empirical method of procedure."2
In contrast to Giovanni Morelli’s later method, which focused almost microscopically on tell-tale individual traits, Richardson believed that one should judge quality and authorship by a careful consideration of the effect conveyed by the work as a whole. He based his own observations on his vast accumulation of original drawings, which he would compare with paintings wherever possible.

Because of Richardson’s belief that connoisseurship was a rational process which could be acquired by anyone who would take the trouble, he decreed: the elitist conviction—one deeply cherished by the art-loving aristocracy of his time—that this knowledge was a special gift accorded only to a few individuals. At the end of the day, the follower of Richardson’s method could be confident of a sure discrimination of the “manners” of individual artists, separating, say, the Coreggescity of Correggio from the terribilità of Michelangelo.

Richardson was concerned with the formal properties residing in the art of the past. Others, however, leaned towards formalistic prescriptions to improve the art of their own day. In his book The Analysis of Beauty (1753), the painter William Hogarth (1697-1764), commended the serpentine line, also sometimes termed the “S-curve of beauty,” whose spiralling contours were the key, he believed, to successful depiction of nature and the human figure alike.3

A further eighteenth-century English development, perhaps the most important of all, is the emergence of the idea of the sublime. The kernel of this idea goes back to an essay on literary criticism, On the Sublime, attributed to Longinus, a Greek rhetorician writing under the Roman empire. To put the matter in a nutshell, our response to the sublime is evoked by the presence of two factors: vastness of scale and vehemence of the emotion. It is easier to state the effects of the sublime than to define it. “The true sublime, by some virtue of its nature, elevates us; uplifted with a sense of proud possession, we are filled with joyful pride, as if we ourselves had produced the very thing we had heard.”4

The Italian Renaissance was familiar with the effects of transport, the marvelous, and of magic that are integral to Longinus’ concept, but it did not recognize the sublime as an autonomous aesthetic category. This development was left for English writers in the eighteenth century.5 The essayist Joseph Addison (1672-1719) influentially addressed the matter, though he tended to prefer the term greatness. “By greatness,” he states, “I do not mean the bulk of any single object, but the largeness of the whole view considered as one piece.”6 Contemplation of the unbounded views of greatness flings us into “a pleasing astonishment.” The examples he gives come from the contemplation of nature: “a troubled ocean, a heaven adorned with stars and meteors, or a spacious landscape cut into rivers, woods, rocks, and meadows.”

At this stage the concept of the visual sublime seems to have been restricted to our experience of nature—works of art did not provoke the emotion. However, a bridge to art may be detected in landscape architecture, which, though a human artifact, could be contrived in such a way as to elicit a sublime or picturesque response. But a general theory was still lacking.

That lack was made up by Edmund Burke (1729-1797), now best known from his later career as a British parliamentarian and political thinker. This Anglo-Irish writer offered a comprehensive account of the sublime in A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas about the Sublime and the Beautiful (1757; revised ed., 1759).7 Shifting the discussion from the realms of rhetoric (particular sets of words) and visual display (scenes provided by nature and human artifice), Burke grounded the contrast of the beautiful and the sublime in the response of the observer—in the twin emotions of pleasure and pain. Beautiful works gain our approbation by offering the pleasing reassurance that the world is a comfortable place, where we can readily comprehend our own situation. But sublime works induce a shivering sense of the uncanny, even of the terrible and repulsive. We are fearful, but since we suffer no real pain, but only the suggestion of it, our sense of dread yields to one of delight.

Tom Furniss has recently shown that it was not Burke’s intention to upset the established patterns
of eighteenth-century society or aesthetics. But without foreseeing the result, he opened for later investigators a broad avenue for enlarging the scope of art history by making medieval and "Oriental" works worthy objects of study. Beauty they might lack, but sublimity they often possessed.

As Hollywood has discovered by making billions from horror movies, Burke had made a fundamental point in his concept of the transformation of threatened pain into delight. We choose not to live solely in a "vanilla" world of soothing experiences; we also have a need to be frightened. Of course few major works consist solely of either beautiful or sublime moments. The two choices rather represent a scale of aesthetic gambits in which the artist may choose an intermediate strategy, mingling pleasing beauty with striking sublimity. Towards the end of the eighteenth century some writers posited that the term "picturesque" might aptly describe an intermediate position between the two poles of the beautiful and the sublime.

The idea of the sublime was taken up by no less a figure than the philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). His early Observations on the Feeling of the Sublime and the Beautiful date from 1764; he returned more conclusively to the matter in his Critique of Judgment (1790). According to Kant beauty and sublimity are both predicates of the aesthetic judgment. But they differ in that beauty is concerned with the form, that is the boundedness of an object, while the sublime involves an experience of boundlessness. The sublime is "absolutely great," by comparison with which everything else is small. The sublime experience differs from estimation in terms of numbers because it is a matter of imagination and intuition that stretches the very boundaries of Reason.

The combined effect of Burke and Kant was to establish a two-source scheme in which the beautiful and the sublime are equal in dignity, though different in effects. The importance of this breach with the monistic conception of Renaissance taste and aesthetics can scarcely be exaggerated.

At the end of the century this contrast was reinforced by one which has since become familiar: between the classic and romantic. As the classic, as embodied in Greece and Rome as well as the Italian Renaissance was widely, if tacitly known and accepted, what needs to be explained is the opposite: romanticism. By common consent the two countries in which romanticism, as sensibility and aesthetic practice, first emerged to full maturity were England and Germany. In England the romantic inclination had deep roots, and accordingly was for a long time practiced directly, with little theoretical reflection. Theory, when it came, was largely borrowed from Germany, as the examples of Coleridge and Carlyle show. In Germany, as the eighteenth century drew to a close, a general intellectual ferment coupled with a need to escape the normative bonds of French classicism created a powerful wave of theory alongside creative works of romantic literature.

The manifesto of the romantic approach to art in Germany was a slender volume, the Outpourings of an Art-Loving Friar, which appeared anonymously in Berlin in 1797. The book was written mainly by the short-lived Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder (1773-1798), with additions by his friend Ludwig Tieck (1773-1853), whose long and productive career was just beginning. The friar persona of these "outpourings" locates the source of all genuine art in religious sincerity. This theme of a renewed subordination of art to religion was to become common during the romantic period, but actual practice differed from this ideal for, as M. E. Abrams has brilliantly shown for England, the usual pattern was an aestheticism sheltering under the auspices of nondenominational pantheism.

For the contemporary reader, the most striking contribution of this tract is its aesthetic relativism. The contrast of Gothic cathedrals and Greek temples, each to be appreciated according to its own norms, was by 1797 a familiar one, as was the contrast between northern and Italian art. Much more novel is the injunction that non-European culture deserves our respect. Why should one condemn the Indians for speaking Indian and not our language? In like fashion, Indian art works will reflect the appearance of Indian peoples. So too we must regard the artistic products of the Africans. Had you been born in the
African desert, then you would have preached to everyone that glossy black skin, a flat round face, and short crinked hair were essential constituents of the highest beauty." And when you saw white men for the first time you would find their appearance repellent and hateful.¹³

Viewed objectively, Wackenroder seems to be saying, it is not only that the arts of the Indians and the Africans are different from ours, that is the way they must be. No thought, of course, is wholly original, and these comparisons, while strikingly innovative for the period, may stem from the ancient Greek relativist Xenophanes, who remarked that "[t]he Ethiopians say that their gods are snub-nosed and black, the Thracians that theirs have light blue eyes and red hair" (fragment 171).

In addition to being able to understand aesthetic difference, we can school ourselves to bridge the gaps, for are not Germans capable of crossing the Alps and appreciating Italian art? These few remarks anticipate a whole program of world art history.

Another Wackenroder contribution is the idea that art (alongside nature) constitutes a language, though one that is deeper than verbal language, for "words cannot call down into our hearts the invisible spirit which reigns above us." In order to bring us closer to this mysterious spirit art uses the device of the symbol. Setting aside the metaphorical element, Wackernagel foreshadows semiotics in viewing visual expression and language as two parallel, though different modes of human communication.

Still the contribution of the Outpourings to art history remains limited; it was more a manifesto than a model. Wackernagel shows no real historical sense. In his eulogies of Raphael, Dürer, and other artists he relies on anecdotes. Significantly, he quarries picturesque details from from Giorgio Vasari's Lives, while ignoring the overarching historical schema. For Wackenroder our art must find its way back to the true path that was lost at the time of the Reformation. This belief has contemporary resondance, for one group of artists sought to put his ideas into practice, the Nazarenes or Brothers of Saint Luke, German artists who settled in an abandoned monastery in Rome in 1810.

It is generally recognized that Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829) is the pivotal figure in the formulation of the theory of romanticism.¹⁴ Although his main concern was literature of the middle ages and the early modern period, from the medieval epics to Shakespeare and Calderón, he did make a concerted effort, in 1803-05, to understand painting.

The son of a protestant minister, Schlegel was reading Greek drama in the original at the age of sixteen. His subsequent studies at the University of Göttingen, where an atmosphere suffused by Winckelmann’s idealization of Greek art and literature prevailed, confirmed—at least for a time—this inclination. Influenced by the prevailing "Grecomania," Schlegel held that the works of literature produced by the ancient Greeks were pure gifts of nature. Imperishable legacies, they were perfect in and of themselves.

During the mid-nineties Schlegel turned to reading post-classical writings. Retaining the doctrine of the innate perfection of Greek works, he conceded that the medieval and Renaissance European literatures were indeed imperfect. Yet he offered new thinking in the Fragments contributed to the periodical Athenäum (1802). His insight, expressed in the famous Fragment 116, was that our imperfection is also our glory: "modern" literature—or romantische Poesie in his jargon—reveals a progressive striving for self-realization. One is always traveling but without arriving. Yearning (Sehnsucht) is a core characteristic of the romantic sensibility.

For all their perfection, Greek works suffer from a major limitation. As one modern commentator has glossed his view, "[i]f the Greeks reached finite perfection, the moderns (and hence, also, their poetry) are imperfect at every stage, but they are infinitely perfectible. … Our defects themselves are our hopes, and there is no limit to our prospects."¹⁵ In this way Schlegel reshaped the contrast of the ancients and moderns that had earlier raged in France and England.

This sense of progressive movement over time made the historical positioning of particular works
part of their essence. Hence, Schlegel’s ideas, eminently capable of adaptation to the other arts, gave an impetus to historical study, especially of medieval and Renaissance works.

Schlegel’s isolation of two opposing principles, one for the Greeks, the other for the later Europeans, is a two-source theory, recalling the contrast advanced by Burke and perfected by Kant of the beautiful and the sublime. It also shows close affinities with the dramatist Friedrich von Schiller’s dichotomy of the naive and sentimental (1795-96), which may have directly influenced Schlegel’s formulation.

In Paris in 1803-05 the literary theorist turned his attention to painting, using as his basis the tremendous collection of masterpieces assembled in the Louvre as a result of looting conducted under the wing of the victorious French armies. Schlegel’s observations took shape in a series of reports published in his Frankfurt-based periodical Europa. He shared Wackenroder’s view that the essence of art resides in fidelity to religious sentiment. Schlegel’s earlier theme of incompleteness as the essence of the post-classical found a new place here. Gothic cathedrals, with their unfinished towers are the clearest example, but even works that are formally complete belong aesthetically to this realm of striving for ultimate realization. As with literature, where no further works of the order of Shakespeare’s have appeared, he held that art had fallen from grace. While literary excellence lasted into the seventeenth century, in art the seeds of decay were already present in the later works of Raphael (from about 1510 on). Schlegel’s proclaimed enthusiasm for early works was not new—it belonged to the general field of the enthusiasm for the “primitives”—but he tried to characterize the formal qualities of the works as having clear outlines and few figures.

Schlegel rejected the tendency, inculcated in the academies, to subordinate painting to sculpture. Here he adhered to the idea, made familiar by the Dutch writer Frans Hemsterhuis (1721-1790), that sculpture is the characteristic vehicle of ancient art, painting that of the modern. Our art being necessarily Christian, Schlegel believed, it must not accede to distortion caused by the intrusion of a principle that was valid for the Greeks but not for us. His approach shows a new nationalism, as seen in his praise of the early German school, and a growing affinity for Roman Catholicism (to which he was to convert in 1808). Many of Schlegel’s opinions about the attribution of works have been overtaken by later scholarship, but he gave a vital impetus to other more sustained efforts, notably those of Carl Friedrich von Rumohr.

Wackenroder and Schlegel agreed, and many romantics shared their view, that the presenting aspects of art—what the naive observer sees—are only a part, and probably the lesser part of what we should care about. Genuine art works are symbolic or "hieroglyphic." While a complete account of these depths is probably not possible in words, one can still advance quite far. This hermeneutic quest underlies the development of the nineteenth-century "science of mythology," and ultimately the rise of iconography—beginning with medieval iconography as initiated in France towards the middle of the century—and its ambitious heir, the iconology of Erwin Panofsky.

The term style came into general use in European languages in the eighteenth century. As the etymology of the word—from Latin stilus, a writing instrument—suggests, the concept was originally at home in literary studies. But its value for the visual arts as well was soon recognized. Style came to be regarded as a key concept not only for the understanding of form but for historical development, as styles were seen to succeed one another in meaningful sequences.

There are three pertinent uses of the term style. 1) Normative style. We observe that a certain writer has a fine style, for the author demonstrates skill and elegance of verbal expression. On a more mundane, personal level, we may admire a friend’s style, with reference to grooming, dress, poise, and demeanor. Some people are more stylish than others. Here style corresponds to flair or panache. 2) Individual style, as the characteristic ways of expression of a Correggio or a Michelangelo. This usage
links up with the daily-life concept of personality. 3) Period style, subsuming the work of many individuals. In ancient Greece we may speak, for example, of the Geometric, the Archaic, the Classic, and the Hellenistic styles, each succeeding the previous one. In European art we detect, as distinct stylistic entities, the Gothic, the Renaissance, Mannerism and the Baroque (to continue no further)—again a sequence.

As the understanding of period styles (category 3) advanced, and observers felt the need to do justice to the claims of each of them, aesthetic relativism became unavoidable. While it had formerly been thought that, as a matter of course, Renaissance works were superior to Gothic ones, now each period was seen to be good in its fashion. There are many forms of excellence. This aesthetic pluralism clashes with category 1, which presupposes universal standards of taste.

Common to all three categories of style, however, is the idea of consistency. Style is evident when the component parts are harmonious one with another. But it is not evident that all major works display this consistency. The facade of Chartres Cathedral mingles two styles, as does Picasso’s Demoiselles d’Avignon. Both are effective works all the same. Moreover, two general styles may coexist in the same period, as impressionism and salon painting in the nineteenth century, or abstraction and surrealism in the 1930s. The principle of consistency would lead us to believe that only one style can prevail at any one time. As the pluralism of the art world today dramatically shows, that is not always so. But there is not just one vast hullabaloo of conflicting tendencies, offering no possibility of making distinctions. Granting these contrasts and seeming anomalies, we must still acknowledge that we detect their presence precisely by wielding the tool of style analysis. This tool can be used to detect differences within periods as well as differences among them.

Some interpreters of period styles have tried to link them into sequences, generally consisting of three components. For convenience these may be termed the archaic, the classic, and the baroque styles. Since Western art history may be said to disclose at least three such sequences, one in ancient Greece and Rome, a second in medieval art, and a third stretching from 1400 to 1800, this pattern may be cyclical. Moreover, older ideas suggest that the middle term, the classic, is the peak, while the other two represent gathering and declining momentum, respectively. If this qualitative difference be accepted, the resulting pattern is that of a bell curve. While such patterns may seem arbitrary and forced, they do represent an effort to make sense out of historical development.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, grand theories arose to address broader problems of style. Hence the Swiss Wölfflin, with his contrast between the linear and painterly modes, and the Viennese Alois Riegl, who in his understanding of European art from the ancient Egyptians to the Baroque saw a transhistorical evolution from the haptic (objective) to the optical (subjective) principle. In as much as the recent groundswell of interest in Riegl has yielded accessible accounts of his somewhat difficult writings (by Margaret Iversen and Margaret Olin), they need not be discussed further here.

Since the system of Wölfflin has been widely influential, it merits extended examination here. Heinrich Wölfflin (1864-1945) was a gifted observer and an elegant writer; he also created a system of art history. At a time when public interest in the Old Masters was growing by leaps and bounds, his cogent analyses and very readable style assured him a wide audience. Most of his books have been translated into English, and rightly so, for they continue to gain new converts.

Wölfflin’s doctoral dissertation (1886), addressed the question of how the austere forms of architecture could be expressive, marking the start of his lifelong concern with psychological factors in art. He chose the nonmimetic art of architecture in order to exclude the distraction of imitative reference, concentrating instead on the essentials of perception. In this way he unwittingly offered a model for the study of abstraction (as style he did not personally favor).

Italian art strongly attracted the young Wölfflin. During his postgraduate residence in Rome he
conceived his first masterpiece, Renaissance und Barock (1888). Through its insightful treatment of Baroque art in the Eternal City, this book helped to rehabilitate a major period of European art and culture. As this shift in taste was just starting, the new book was timely.

Yet attention to Baroque per se was not the most remarkable feature of this precocious study. What engaged the writer’s passionate interest was the contrast of two epochs with respect to two ways of seeing, one of which succeeded the other. In this procedure of comparing and contrasting two different eras, Wölfflin followed the advice of his father (a literary scholar) to use the comparative method. In addition, his emphasis on ways of seeing revealed an affinity with concepts of visual perception pioneered by the experimental psychology of Gustav Fechner and Wilhelm Wundt.

In studying Renaissance and Baroque art, Wölfflin elected to explore this contrast chiefly in architecture, which would, he held, show the differences most starkly. He also displayed an awareness of parallel trends in poetry and gardening, indicating that he believed that the contrasts were of a more general nature, that they were interdisciplinary, so to speak. The theme of the comparison of the arts reflecting their dependence on a single organizing principle (“the spirit of the age”) derived from philosophy in the Hegelian tradition. This inherited universalist preoccupation stood in some tension with the more contemporary concern with the psychology of seeing, and before long it was to fall by the wayside.

In later writings, Wölfflin emphasized the specificity of art, the visual qualities that give it the character that it has. In order to isolate this specificity, he rejected the temptation of exploring relationships with other aspects of human culture. Fascinating though they might be, these bypaths would lead too far away from his commitment to the primacy of the visible.

Concentrating on the essentials of his self-chosen task, Wölfflin identified the Renaissance vision as linear, its Baroque successor as painterly. While the meaning of the first term is clear (well delineated outlines and internal lines within figures), the second—malerisch in German—calls for some explanation. Surely the meaning is not that Baroque painting was more successful than Renaissance painting. The point becomes clearer if one considers that the German word also has the sense of “picturesque.” Painterly effects are those that show soft and gradual transitions between one tone and another, effacing the sharp boundaries maintained in the linear mode. These transitions may be realized through various techniques: in drawing, by using thick chalk instead of pencil; in printmaking, by choosing the etching process to spread the lines; and in painting, by employing sfumato or impasto techniques.

The fine description Renaissance und Barock provided of the painterly qualities espoused by the Baroque was Wölfflin’s main contribution to the cause of rehabilitating the era. His words would inspire others, but the writer himself had not yet achieved a neutral stance. In keeping with the older idea of Baroque as decadence, he still wrote of it as “the disintegration of the Renaissance.” Only in his fullest statement of the question, twenty-seven years later, was he to overcome these residues of negativity.

The method of dialectical or binary opposition is one that has recurred in the history of art, though often as a device to contrast good and bad. Wölfflin sought to overcome the deeply rooted disparagement of the Baroque. While at this stage of his endeavor he had not fully succeeded in discarding the prejudices that were rife in his youth, his aim was nonetheless to offer a purely objective analysis.

Wölfflin was one of the first to use the two-projector method of lecturing with slides, a procedure now standard in art-history classes. As those who have become accustomed to the experience recognize, this way of presenting two images at a time facilitates the kind of contrast that Wölfflin employed—perhaps to the detriment of less definite qualities that tend to fall between any two poles.

Paul Frankl has shown that the contrast of the categories of linear and painterly is not entirely new. It is rooted in eighteenth-century efforts to define the difference between ancient and later European art. Writing in French, the Dutch writer Frans Hemsterhuis (1721-1790), was the first to essay
a version of the contrast, defining ancient art as "trop sculpteur" (too much that of the sculptor) and the art of his own day as "trop peintre" (too much that of the painter). Over the centuries an era of domination by sculpture gave way to one ruled by painting. Out of this discourse arose Hegel's concept of each stage of art having its own dominant medium. Wölfflin, however, dropped this whole side of the argument. Instead, he modernized the approach by presenting it in terms of perception: the contrast was visual, rather than one of medium. Thus his system could accommodate painterly sculptures and linear paintings.

At times Wölfflin even seemed to imply that there were fundamental differences of seeing in the two epochs he was considering.\(^{23}\) Surely he cannot have meant that the structure of the human eye itself changed. Some students of perception have suggested that the cultural environment conditions one to see in certain ways. It is claimed, for example, that Westerners, accustomed to read texts from left to right will have a certain preference for examining paintings in this direction, while those brought up with the Hebrew or Arabic alphabets, which proceed from right to left, will have a different preference. The results of empirical studies along these lines are inconclusive.\(^{26}\)

In any event Wölfflin failed to specify a major change in the visual environment in Western Europe between 1500 and 1600. One is left with the sense that he is claiming too much. Perhaps there were no essential changes in "ways of seeing" at the deep level, but people came to choose one type of presentation over another. Accordingly, the shift was more a matter of preference, or fashion if you will, than of the "deep structure" of perceiving. The Baroque style prevailed because it seemed more up-to-date, and consequently more exciting than its predecessor.

All in all, however, it must be acknowledged that the Baroque represented a vast sea change in European sensibility and Wölfflin deserves credit for stressing a major aspect of this shift. At the same time he emphasized the inherent dignity of the visual arts, discussing the matter not in terms of some disembodied Geist or Hegelian Spirit, but through the factor of visuality itself—the "specificity" of art.

Another problem with laying so much emphasis on ways of seeing is the role of technical mediation. Works of art do not come into being like Athena emerging from the brow of Zeus. They must be realized through labor that is often tedious, and in the course of production the creation may assume a different appearance from the one originally envisaged. Put another way, if the artist chooses a burin (an engraving tool) rather than a paint brush, the result will be different. To be sure, techniques can be adapted to ways of seeing, as etching seems to have owed much of its popularity to the popularity of the painterly vision. But the role of technique cannot be treated as simply subordinate. Here a useful corrective may be found in the life work of Gottfried Semper, whose Der Stil in den technischen und tektonischen Künsten (1860-63) emphasized the role of techniques in the origins and development of the various branches of art.\(^{27}\)

It has been suggested that Wölfflin took a hint from contemporary art, from the visual interests of impressionism and postimpressionism. This is unlikely: his somewhat willful lectures on the nineteenth century (which he prudently never published) concentrated on academic art.\(^{24}\) It is possible, however, that Wölfflin was indirectly influenced by new research into prehistoric and primitive art, for he noted the advantages of an "art history without names." His method does, in fact, stress modes rather than personalities. But Wölfflin assured the reader that he had no objection per se to the study of artistic personality, which he himself treated in his writings on Dürer and the Italian masters. It was simply that in his theoretical research he sought to operate on a more fundamental level.

The fruit of almost thirty years of rumination finally appeared in his Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe of 1915. This book has been translated (poorly) as Principles of Art History; the title might be more precisely rendered as "Fundamental Conceptual Tools of Art History."\(^{29}\) The German title did not promise an exhaustive inventory of all the basic concepts, but implied that a key set of them would be offered. Wölfflin took seriously the spatial metaphor conveyed by the prefix Grund; he sought
to drill down to the very bedrock of art, the foundation supporting all its other aspects.

The new book was structured around five essential contrasts:

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<th>Linear</th>
<th>Painterly</th>
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<tr>
<td>Plane</td>
<td>Recession</td>
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<tr>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>Open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiplicity</td>
<td>Unity</td>
</tr>
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<td>Absolutely clear</td>
<td>Relatively clear</td>
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Evidently these contrasts were an elaboration of the first basic pair. Now, however, Wölfflin offered a systematic treatment of all five in the major media. In the new book, he used examples from northern art (mainly Dutch, Flemish, and German) as well as Italian, showing that the applicability of the thesis was not limited to one country.

This analysis, and the temporal ordering that located the painterly dominance after that of the linear principle, tends to suggest that linear is primary (in the sense that it occurs first), and painterly second. Wölfflin insisted that this ordering was logical. The sequence was an irreversible one, for the linear phase had first to be traversed in order to reach the painterly one. This order need not imply an inferiority of the painterly mode, for it might be regarded as an "advanced" or "improved" approach on the basic or linear beginnings. But Wölfflin would not have agreed with this. His point is that the two were radically different; during its period of dominance each principle summoned the artists to work within its parameters.

Within each of the two modes, artists have enormous scope for self-expression—but they do not enjoy absolute freedom. "Not everything is possible at all times, and certain thoughts can only be thought at certain stages of the development." With this trenchant formula (concluding the preface to the 1922 edition of the Grundbegriffe), Wölfflin charted a course intermediate between the claims of determinism and the demands of free will.

The attention to Northern European art in the 1915 synthesis impelled Wölfflin to ponder whether there might be another variable apart from the chronological. It might be, he began to reflect, that the northern countries have a perennial affinity for painterly art, a predilection repressed during the Renaissance owing to Italian influence, only to resurface with gusto once the Italians themselves had turned to the painterly mode. His last book, Italien und das deutsche Formgefühl (1931) explored these geographical and national issues. Although he made no concessions to the extremes of German chauvinism that Nazism had evoked, the new orientation towards national character remained a tricky one. Surely, ability to respond to particular modes is not a matter of national upbringing; if it were so, why would so many Germans feel deeply about Italian art? On the whole, then, this attempt to enrich the theory beyond its established chronological framework seems to have failed.

Was Wölfflin a formalist? We have seen how loaded such a label can be. His published work did deal mainly with formal issues, but in his teaching he also inculcated the basic aspects of iconography, the meaning of art works as inherent in their subject matter. Since he felt he could not make new contributions in this realm he did not publish in it, but he did not depreciate it either. Wölfflin's enduring contribution seems to lie precisely in his emphasis on visuality, which he analyzed in terms of fundamental polarities. Works of painting, sculpture and architecture interest us because we can see them, and in this seeing we ponder other aspects of our existence, our goals and values. We can never look enough, and for those who become fatigued with this imperative—we all do from time to time—his message is an essential reminder.

More than any of his Central European contemporaries, Wölfflin made an impact on the English-speaking world. As early as 1903, the English art critic Roger Fry was commending his writings, which the theoreticians of the Bloomsbury school found appealing as they accorded with their emphasis on Significant Form, disregarding subject matter. This formalist appropriation of Wölfflin even made his
key concepts appealing to Herbert Read and other defenders of abstract painting (an art for which the Swiss thinker himself had no sympathy at all). In the United States the Wölfflinian message found a parallel in the New Criticism, a trend of literary scholarship which "explicated" poems in terms of their internal structure, downplaying historical and other "external" information. In the America of the mid-century, just beginning to explore the full richness of the visual arts, Wölfflin's polarities lent themselves readily to promoting "art appreciation." They also permitted one to sidestep political questions, which were explosive in the early years of the Cold War. As the cultural climate changed in the 1960s, however, Wölfflin's North American popularity waned. His reluctance to address subject matter and the socioeconomic factors conditioning the production of works of art made him seem old fashioned and even "reactionary."

Some observers have concluded that Wölfflin's views rested on a philosophical base. However, he did not advance such claims in his mature writings, which excel in evoking the qualities of individual works. In the grand scheme of things, the most that he would assert for himself is the discovery that he made in tracing the essential features of the Great Transformation from Renaissance to Baroque. They were based on two radically different ways of beholding. Other scholars coming after him detected a similar shift in Greek art as it moved from the classic to the Hellenistic style and in later European art as it shifted from neo-classicism to romanticism. Some savants influenced by Wölfflin even detected such shifts in Chinese and Indian art. The French art historian Henri Focillon offered a related, but different reading: he expanded the scheme into a more general pattern of a predestined cycle from archaic to classic to Baroque to impressionist.31

Oskar Walzel, born like Wölfflin in 1864, believed that he could import the art historian's categories into the study of literature, in keeping with the old idea of the sister arts.32 After World War II, this notion was taken up in a popular book by the American Wylie Sypher, who revised the scheme to introduce mannerism and added a coda in the form of late baroque.33 Sypher held that Shakespeare's Measure for Measure is mannerist, while Othello is Baroque. Most have found such parallels forced.

In the years immediately preceding World War I, the avant-garde rallied to a small book by Wilhelm Worringer (1881-1965). First issued as a modest doctoral dissertation in 1908, Worringer's Abstraktion und Einfühlung was reprinted by the enterprising Munich publisher Reinhold Piper.34 Worringer took his starting point from the then fashionable idea of Einfühlung or empathy, championed by the philosopher Theodor Lipps as the key to aesthetic experience. According to Lipps, when we apprehend beautiful objects we project our own bodily existence into them. Worringer accepted Lipps's analysis (which is somewhat complicated), but insisted that it held only for one pole of aesthetic response, the feelings typically elicited by classical and Renaissance art. There is, Worringer asserted, another kind of art, characterized by hard, crystalline forms that calls for another sort of response. This art is found in Byzantine mosaics and also in the objects produced by northern Europe before the impact of classical forms. The first art, the classical, affirms our sense of being at ease in the world, the second, recognizes the remoteness and unfriendliness of much of our relations with objects. This last state of unease Worringer rooted in the religious experience of transcendental awe.

Worringer's new polarity, abstraction vs. empathy, owes much to the contrast of the sublime and the beautiful as developed by eighteenth-century aestheticians. In addition, however, it had a contemporary resonance, since the abstract pole was attuned to new "discoveries" in past art, such as Byzantine mosaics as well as the contemporary expressionist trend. Unlike the sublime, it placed the emphasis on formal qualities that were being explored at that very time. There was also a subtle nationalistic note, for the abstract trend constituted the primordial allegiance of northern European art, untainted by classical admixtures stemming from romance-speaking lands. In any event the expressionists
welcomed Worringer's ideas, as did (in a more qualified way) the creators of nonobjective art. The latter, of course, proposed yet another polarity: objective vs. nonobjective.

The term nonobjective stems ultimately from the Russian bespredmetny (bes, lacking, -less; predmet, object), originally meaning aimless, but used by ca. 1905 in art criticism to refer to a type of painting in which subject matter was muted. As gegenstandslos [(egenstand, object), the concept spread to Germany in the 1920s. The word nonobjective appears in English in 1936 (at the time of the great Museum of Modern Art show on Cubist and Abstract Art, where, however, Alfred Barr preferred the term abstract), and was popularized by Hilla Rebay in her Museum of Nonobjective Art (now the Guggenheim). Curiously, the synonym nonrepresentational is earlier, having appeared in 1923 in a British magazine, The Grammophone, in an article making explicit the comparison with music. Nonfigurative appears in the Burlington Magazine in 1934; it probably stems from French (where, however, it is documented in print only in 1936).

The "how" of artistic expression has typically been salient in modern art. Beginning with the impressionists, artists strove to make prominent the vehicle of execution, in their case the brush stroke. This emphasis on "facture," the actual texture of the paint surface, surprised and sometimes irritated contemporary viewers because salon painting had accustomed them to the so-called "licked surface" in which the paint took on an almost enamal-like smoothness, facilitating the illusion that the painting is a window into reality. With impressionism, there is no doubt that we are both looking onto something and (illusionistically) into something. Of course, the impressionists derived some inspiration from earlier artists such as Titian, Rubens, and Delacroix, with their "painterly" impasto surfaces. Yet none of these predecessors posed so starkly the paradoxical union of surface and (implied) depth.

In impressionist and subsequent modern works—such as those of the postimpressionists, the fauves, and the expressionists—the surface that we linger over emphasizes the process of making. In perusing it, we mimic the artist’s process of making.

Attention to the sketch and the unfinished work, which flowered in the nineteenth century, offered analogous rewards and challenges. Arrested in full sweep, the traces of the hand of the artist help to disclose how the work came into being, while affording us the possibility, mentally at least, of "finishing it" ourselves. In this way the viewers become coproducers of the work.

This phenomenon advanced to a higher level of generality in the brilliant writings of the Russian formalist critics (who were concerned mainly with literature). They termed it the "foregrounding of the devices." In the modern theatre, for example, the illusion of the proscenium is often deliberately violated, and we look onto the stage machinery, or may watch the stagehands shift the furniture between acts. Such disclosure is foreign to classical stage production, which follows the old prescription that art lies in concealing art.

The goal of the realist painters, such as Gustave Courbet and Adolf Menzel, who came to the fore in the middle of the nineteenth century, was the depiction of modern life in contrast with the elaborate allegories favored by the salon painters. While for the artists and those most closely familiar with their work, the actual subject—say a particular forest scene or seascape—would be significant, most observers tended to enjoy them generically. Still today the large audiences attracted to big shows of impressionist paintings are motivated in part by the fact that no special knowledge of subject matter is required.

Moreover, towards the end of the nineteenth century the Symbolist writers and painters embraced the idea that attenuation of specific subject matter was an actual advantage. Reality, in their view, resided in the world of intuition, suggestion, and nuance, and these could be best conveyed by subject matter that was deliberately indeterminate.

Another reason for emphasizing style in contrast with subject matter is the drive towards innovation in modern art. Each "ism" as it appeared came with a distinctive set of stylistic trademarks,
such as the bright, almost shocking colors of the fauves which contrasted with the milder tones of Symbolism. Through such markers the connoisseur of modern art learned quickly to distinguish characteristic specimens of the different movements.

Returning to the writings, interest in formal values has been a particular specialty of English and American commentators. An eloquent wordsmith as well as painter, James Abbot McNeill Whistler (1834-1903) favored titles that would emphasize form, even calling a portrait of his mother, "Arrangement in Gray and Black." Other pictures were dubbed Nocturnes or Symphonies, emphasizing musical analogies.37 We now turn to a rather different figure. Once overrated, Bernard Berenson (1865-1959) is probably now too little esteemed.38 While he never taught at a university and failed to measure up to the professional canons affirmed in Germany and the United States, the general public in the English-speaking world long accorded him the status of the authority on Renaissance art. Adapting the ideas of German aestheticians, Berenson advanced the ideal of "tactile values." This somewhat vague concept seemed particularly suited to promote Italian Renaissance paintings, which Berenson claimed superior to all others in their capacity for "life enhancement." Although Berenson was himself respectful of the religious content of the works he studied, going so far as to convert to Roman Catholicism, he realized that his wealthy clients (for he was a dealer as well as a historian-critic) were more interested in generic response.

Berenson influenced Roger Fry (1866-1934), a member of the Bloomsbury group, which was committed to modernism in the arts. British advocacy of modernism was strongly Francophile, though it was at first tinged with German ideas. At Cambridge University Fry was inducted into the elect group of the Apostles, leading naturally to his membership in the Bloomsbury group of intellectuals in London after the turn of the century. At Cambridge he also began the serious practice of painting, which he regarded as his true mistress—a priority that posterity has declined to confirm, preferring his roles as a critic and art historian.

In Italy in 1898, Fry came under the influence of Berenson, whose formalist concept of "ideated sensations" contributed to Fry's later distillation of formalism. The most trenchant version of this predilection was the bumper sticker "significant form," coined in 1914 by Fry's Bloomsbury colleague Clive Bell. This concept identifies meaning with the successful transmission of an aesthetic message. Thus Giotto, Poussin, and Matisse are all on the same plane—they all achieve "significant form." Pushing the idea to an extreme, Bell insisted that "[t]he representative element in a work of art may or may not be harmful: always it is irrelevant."40 Were all formalists to assert this irrelevance, they might merit the obloquy into which they have fallen. Roger Fry rarely went that far, and in his mature studies of Rembrandt and Cézanne he acknowledged the importance, in some works at least, of subject matter.

In November 1910 Fry organized a blockbuster show of modernist French art, "Manet and the Post-Impressionists," at the Grafton Galleries in London. With Manet as the precursor, the triumvirate of Cézanne, Gauguin, and Van Gogh formed the exhibition's center of gravity. Generously, coverage extended to living contemporaries, notably Henri Matisse. It seems that Fry first intended to call the work expressionist—a term that quickly spread to Scandinavia and Germany in a different sense. Others with whom he discussed the matter objected strongly to this label. His patience exhausted, Fry exclaimed "Oh let's just call them post-impressionists; at any rate they came after the impressionists."41 In this casual fashion was born one of the most enduring—even fateful—art-historical terms, a verbal formula which served as a model for other period designations, including "postmodern." The word caught on, but not quite in the sense that Fry intended, for in the course of time the art produced after Cézanne's death in 1906 was excluded from the rubric, being termed fauve, cubist, and so forth. The continuation
of the term postimpressionism with a changed meaning illustrates a common pattern: once words are successfully launched they take on a life of their own.

With the exhibition partly in mind, Virginia Woolf detected a seismic change in human character "in or about December 1910." Such a claim may seem extravagant, but there can be no doubt that, by granting its cachet to the French avant-garde, Fry's great assembly of images left a mark on the perception of modern art in English-speaking countries that lasted for decades.

In the 1930s another English critic, Sir Herbert Read (1893-1968), rose to prominence. At first a guild socialist, Read evolved into an anarchist. He believed that art, less oppressive and more liberating than other social forms, could play a role in forging social cohesion in accordance with his political beliefs. Read sought to explain abstract or near abstract works, first in general aesthetic terms, and then later in life according to the archetypal values of the analytic psychologist Carl Gustav Jung. While Read's works now seem rather vapid, he played a significant role in England and the United States in gaining a hearing for advanced modern art.

The bipolar approach, noted above with Worringer, achieved a different and more precise form at the hands of Alfred H. Barr, Jr. In fact, the contrast of the two founding languages of the abstract phase of modern art was not fully appreciated in print until Barr's Cubism and Abstract Art of 1936. In the section of his book entitled "Two main traditions of Abstract Art," Barr ascribes the origin of both currents to Impressionism. But then they diverge, one passing through Gauguin and Matisse, the other through Cézanne and the Cubists. In the resulting abstract art, the K pole (to use this shorthand) is "intuitional and emotional rather than intellectual; organic or biomorphic rather than geometrical in its forms; curvilinear rather than rectilinear; ... and romantic rather than classical in its exaltation of the mystical, the spontaneous and the irrational." The M pole may be characterized as "intellectual, structural, architectonic, geometrical, rectilinear and classical in its austerity and dependence upon logic and calculation." In Barr's view, the contrast is not merely one of form but also of world-view. Dionysus ("an Asiatic god), Plotinus and Rousseau watch over the K pole, while Apollo, Pythagoras and Descartes assure the success of its M competitor.

Eventually Barr's formidable influence was eclipsed by that of the American Clement Greenberg (1909-1996), who for better or worse has become identified as "Mr. Formalist." Reporting the findings of his subtle eye for distinctions in contemporary painting in a series of persuasive articles, he championed the work of the American artists who came to be known as Abstract Expressionists. He linked the trend to the major developments that had shaped European art during the first half of the century, while at the same time sharply distinguishing it from these forerunners. Establishing the paramount importance of Abstract Expressionism, especially as embodied in the canvases of Jackson Pollock, he and his fellow critics simultaneously celebrated the shift of art's center of gravity from Europe to the United States.

Why was Greenberg's contribution so timely? Viewed in its larger context, Greenberg's achievement marks the successful fusion of two social roles that had been distinct in America. The first was typified by such public intellectuals as Randolph Bourne, Walter Lippmann, and Mary McCarthy, who were passionately concerned with broad issues of culture and national destiny. With the significant exception of Lewis Mumford, these pundits rarely addressed the visual arts.

The second role was that of the working art critic. Some of these journalists had backgrounds as artists, while others had previously sought to make their mark as creative writers. Generally they wrote for daily newspapers and art magazines. During the earlier decades of the century they habitually rejected advanced modern art, often in caustic terms, witness Kenyon Cox, Royal Cortissoz, and Thomas Craven. In the 1940s, though, such successors as Henry McBride and Robert Coates (who introduced
the label "Abstract Expressionist") adopted a more cautious neutrality. During the first half of the century, university professors of art history were almost invariably indifferent, if not downright hostile to contemporary art of any kind.

Clement Greenberg was born in the Bronx in 1909. While he profited from some art training in his teens, after graduating from Syracuse University in 1930 he dedicated himself to writing, first for private consumption, and then at the end of the decade for publication. For some years he worked as a clerk for the United States Customs Service. This calling has symbolic resonance, for New York's position as a gateway to Europe helped it to supplant Chicago in the 1920s as the main seat of American intellectual life. Customs officers exclude as well as admit, however, and during the late forties Greenberg's disdain for contemporary European art, which he regarded as inferior to the American product, might be viewed as an extension of the official gatekeeper function to the sphere of culture. In any event, after 1942 he labored exclusively as a critic and editor. Although his poetry remains unpublished, during the early forties his interests were as much literary and political as artistic.

Greenberg was fortunate to find his first home with the Partisan Review, a journal that had at first taken a Communist line but then under the influence of Leon Trotsky, became critical of Stalinism. As the prime organ of the skeptical but ever inquiring "New York School" of intellectuals, the magazine excelled through its unique blend of political analysis with the cultural concerns of the typical Little Magazine of the 1920s. On its pages Leon Trotsky and Sydney Hook met T. S. Eliot and Lionel Trilling—politics and culture. One of the major concerns of the Partisan Review group was the defense of high culture against the depredations of mass culture as diffused by the media. Greenberg's first major essay, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" (1939), posited a struggle between a heroic, but often lonely and neglected band of modernists upholding the banner of high culture against the seductive purveyors of kitsch, the debased surrogate for high art generated by mass production. He lamented the fact that the kitsch principle befouled much of the middlebrow culture industry in America. At that time he saw redemption in working for socialism, not only as the way to a more just society, but also as the guarantor of cultural continuity.

Greenberg's first critical notice on Jackson Pollock appeared in The Nation for November 27, 1943. In this short piece he shrewdly discerned that Pollock, "[b]eing young and full of energy, takes orders he can't fill." But if the artist could keep shy of the influences of other painters he would have a brilliant future. Foreseeing Pollock's capacity for large monumental works, the critic continued to encourage him over the years.

Like many others, after World War II he became disillusioned with radical politics, so that by 1948 he styled himself an "ex- or disabused Marxist." A quarter of a century later this "defection" was to be held against him by art critics allied with the New Left. Not having had the disillusioning experience of the "God that failed," the old-style Left, they could not understand the solid reasons for disillusionment among the intellectuals of Greenberg's generation.

One of Greenberg's greatest strengths was his genuine enjoyment of painting—he seemed to look more closely, and to choose more tellingly than any of his contemporaries. His writings are informed by a powerful intuitive element, which he sometimes termed "taste." In addition, however, he sought to buttress his perceptions with a theory of the development of art over the previous one hundred years, in short a theory of modernism. An abdication of his later views appeared in the "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" essay: "Picasso, Braque, Mondrian, Mirò, Kandinsky, even Klee, Matisse and Cézanne derive their chief inspiration from the medium they work in."

In "Modernist Painting" (1965), he set forth the basic principles of his mature theory. Historically, the critical endeavor of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment challenged each human activity to justify its existence. To escape being "leveled down" to the status of mere entertainment or therapy,
the arts had to show that they could provide an experience that was "valuable in its own right and not to be obtained by any other kind of activity." In keeping with this commandment, it transpired that the proper realm of each art "coincided with all that was unique to the nature of its medium." Realization of this aim meant the elimination of any features that rightly belonged to some other domain. In this way each art would become "pure," a characteristic assuring both quality and autonomy. In former times, realistic art had dissembled its nature; by contrast modernism "used art to call attention to art." Modernist art was required to treat its limitations as positive factors: the flat surface, the (usually rectangular) shape of the support, and the properties of the pigment.

When, in Greenberg's view, did modernist painting begin? He maintained that Manet's canvases became the first modernist ones by reason of the "frankness with which they declared the surfaces on which they were painted." The impressionists and Cézanne made further progress in acknowledging the "inevitable flatness" and surface opacity that is painting's true vocation. Then the cubists created a kind of painting that was flatter than ever before. Greenberg emphasized that this development was not a straight linear one; there were many variations as the qualities of the basic premise were tested and retested. It is evident, though, that in this theory Greenberg not only provided a set of basic touchstones—flatness, the nature of pigment, and so forth—but showed how they could be deployed to create a history of painting as a meaningful sequence from Manet's time to the present. By following the threads of this development one could distinguish the "mainstream" from subsidiary achievements, which however enjoyable they might be in their own right, did not contribute to the developmental patterns. He emphasized that modernism did not mark a break with the art of the past: "It may mean a devolution, an unraveling of anterior tradition, but it also means its continuation." Even in Renaissance and Baroque painting Greenberg detected a preoccupation with surface; it was simply that it was combined with illusionism. As the latter was gradually sloughed off, the true essence of painting, which had been there all the time, was more and more revealed.

Greenberg's ideas are not completely new; their affinity with Julius Meier-Graefe's stress on the "painterly" origins of modern art and the formalism of Roger Fry is undeniable. Yet he lent greater precision to these concepts by his specification of the way that each art derives its reason for being from its material embodiment. For this reason the aims of sculpture, as a three-dimensional medium, differ fundamentally from those of painting. And both must be released from the grip of literature with its anecdotal interests. The exclusion of the connection with literature, though a logical conclusion, is curious, perhaps even an evidence of self-denial, in view of Greenberg's own strong literary bent. In a general way Greenberg claimed to have taken his central principle from Kant's idea of the autonomy of art, but this sourcing is probably secondary.52

Many observers found Greenberg's surface emphasis illuminating, and it also influenced a new generation of artists, including the color-field painters Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland, and Jules Olitski, who believed that they were carrying the principle into new territory; in turn, their claims secured the endorsement of the master critic himself.

Greenberg's influence peaked with the publication of his collection Art and Culture in 1961, and he was hailed by a broad segment of informed opinion as the oracle of modern art, on an equal footing, it appeared, with the increasingly august Museum of Modern Art in New York City. In the 1960s, however, his seemingly unerring eye blinked at the incursion of pop art, which in its blatant appeal to mass culture transgressed his injunction against kitsch. In a different way he seems to have found minimalism too cerebral; it violated the pleasure principle that was always central to his appreciation of art.

Greenberg's approach came to seem out of date for other reasons, for his "formalism"—a term that began to be hurled as an abusive epithet—was found wanting by a generation whose political consciousness had been raised by opposition to the Vietnam War. With the rise of neo-Marxist currents
of "cultural materialism," Greenberg was chided for his departure from the social consciousness that had appeared, if only fitfully, in his early writings. If only he and Meyer Schapiro had persisted in their early vein, so the lament went, the social history of modern art could have risen on firm foundations. Unwilling to stay the course, Greenberg—so the story goes—withdrew into a privileged arcadia of art for art's sake.53

Neglected in this critique is the possibility that had the general climate of thought become frozen in the left-wing currents of the late 1930s, art would probably have continued to conform to the dreary prescriptions of social realism—Post Office mural art in short. The abandonment of leftist shibboleths helped to prepare a space in which the truly radical artistic innovations of Abstract Expressionism could flourish.

This New Left "what might have been" scenario fused with another complaint. Some began to ask whether Greenberg had simply described things that happened or whether he had, to a significant degree, made them happen, and not always in a benign way. The critic’s role in the expansion of the prestige of contemporary American art was attacked for its alleged complicity with the Cold War political objectives of the United States government. The subtext of Greenberg’s exaltation of Abstract Expressionism ("American-type painting") was seemingly this: just as America was the free world’s preeminent economic and military power so was its cultural colossus. The logic of this nexus would seem to be prima facie suspect, as (to take one example) French art and culture flourished after the defeat of 1870-71, while that of the victor Germany languished. And in fact, as American aims and achievements came more into question, the allegation surfaced that the "Cold War" faction promoting American avant-garde art had not so much chronicled the shift as hijacked the artistic center.54

These charges invite several responses. First, there is no evidence of conspiracy between critics and the State Department or other organs of the United States to promote avant-garde work as the bearer of American values abroad. If anything during the early years of the Cold War a cloud of suspicion lingered about abstract painting, which might even be—as Congressman George Dondero and others alleged—itself tainted with Bolshevism. Moreover, the hold of the School of Paris on American taste in the immediate postwar years was such that dynamiting was necessary to dislodge it. In proclaiming the Westward migration of the art spirit, the assertive American critics ironically replicated an argument that French writers had used in the late seventeenth century, when they claimed that the vital center of the art world had shifted from Rome to Paris. (At the beginning of the 1980s, it was claimed that West Germany and Italy, with their neo-expressionism, were displacing the United States, but this assertion did not stick.)

It is doubtful that the international prestige of the Abstract Expressionist painters contributed significantly to the prosecution of the Cold War. But if it did, is this not cause more for rejoicing than lament? Our side won the Cold War and—in view of all we have learned about the crushing tyranny and cultural blight of Communist regimes—it was a good thing too.

As the fashion for Marxist art history declines, this line of critique of Greenberg grows less cogent. But this does not mean that the New York magus has regained his former pinnacle. Writing as both artist and museum curator, Robert Storr has arraigned the early, the middle, and the late Greenberg: the first for his faith in socialism, the second for his didactic simplifications in the name of "purity," and the last for his praise of the "Color Field Academy" and the pallid realism of Andrew Wyeth.55 Storr views Greenberg as a dapper mandarin who refused to acknowledge the complexity, even vulgarity of much modern art. Although marred by a certain ring of generational envy, these charges, directed at a figure entering the tenth decade of his life, have some merit.

Regrettably, Greenberg's paradigm of the development of modern painting as a progressive discarding of inessentials has remained vague and generic: it has not been feasible for Greenberg (or anyone else) to flesh it out in detail. The historical trajectory he postulated is a teleological one, yet he
resisted the idea that abstract art is its final goal. He conceded that there have been deviations from the straight course along the way, but did not specify what shaped these zigzags, apart from penchants and quirks of personality. In the language of the philosophy of science his "research program" has not proved fertile, because it offers no succor to those who might seek to extend and complete it.

Since Greenberg's death in 1996 information has come to light about flaws in his character, including many years of addiction to alcohol and drugs, and embrace of questionable psychotherapeutic doctrines.56 Titillating as they undoubtedly are, these anecdotes do not reach the heart of his critical and theoretical endeavor. More disturbing, however, are allegations that he browbeat certain artists to induce them to create works of a certain type, threatening them with loss of critical support if they did not comply. The line between constructive criticism and browbeating is not an easy one to draw.

During a pivotal phase in the maturation of American art Clement Greenberg provided a road map where none was available before. And he showed how the vigorous intervention of contemporary criticism can balance support of living major artists with historical awareness.

In 1960, coterminal with Greenberg's apogee, Sir Ernst Gombrich published his Art and Illusion. Differing in many ways from the methodology and tastes of the American scholar, the London-based Gombrich shared a processual approach that saw art as a progress over the generations towards a single goal. But while Greenberg saw flatness and abstraction as the goal, Gombrich was interested in the opposite question: the historical advance towards an ever more perfect illusion.

Ernst Hans Josef Gombrich was born in Vienna in 1909 to a middle-class Jewish family. Gombrich's parents adhered to a humanistic culture centered on the writings of Goethe. In art this meant above all a reverence for the great masters of the Italian Renaissance and for classical antiquity. These attachments the schoolboy readily absorbed. At the same time he was aware that the increasing popularity of contemporary expressionism was calling older verities into question. This sense of an immanent, perhaps epochal change in art historical orientation was, he has recorded, what most drew him to major in the field at the University of Vienna.57

In his studies in art history at the university he was confronted with a choice between two teachers, Josef Strzygowski and Julius von Schlosser. Strzygowski, who today would gain points as a multiculturalist, rejected classical art and Eurocentrism, emphasising the creative influence of inner Asia. Gombrich attended his lectures and found him a demagogue, so that he gravitated to Schlosser instead, a choice that proved decisive. His retiring personality restricted Schlosser's pupils to a small number, but so solid was the formation he received that his new student felt that he had made the right choice. The older scholar emphasized the critical study of sources, the direct examination of objects in the museum, and specific historical problems, such as the history of ornament.58

During one semester in 1932 Gombrich traveled to Berlin to attend a special series of lectures by Heinrich Wölfflin, which he found disappointingly simplistic. Much more gripping were the rather technical presentations of the Gestalt psychologist Wolfgang Köhler; this encounter stimulated Gombrich's interest in psychology. A little later he learned much from the tutelage of the psychoanalyst-art historian Ernst Kris at Vienna's Kunsthistorisches Museum.59 Interestingly, he was not so much impressed by Kris's devotion to Sigmund Freud (about whom Gombrich has remained critical) as in his interest in academic psychology, and the way it can cast light on physiognomics, caricature, and perception. Here, as he has recently noted, the key influence was Kurt Bühler, holder of the chair in psychology at the University of Vienna and author of monographs on speech and what would now be termed semiotics.60

Somewhat in this vein he chose to write his dissertation on Giulio Romano, whose mannerist effects in architecture and painting at the Palazzo del Te at Mantua he found more astonishing than pleasing. This choice is perhaps partly rooted in his puzzlement at certain developments in modern art, which he saw as analogous to the Italian master's work. Like many of the Transatlantic Migrants,
Gombrich remained cool to the avant-garde aspects of modern art, seeing them as somehow hopelessly compromised with the spirit of irrationalism that had ravaged Central Europe in his youth. At any event he rejected the fashionable interpretation of mannerism as a tortured product of tension and angst. Similarly, although much interested in music, he felt no attraction to the twelve-tone precepts of Arnold Schönberg. A positive influence, subsequently reinforced in London, was the philosopher of science, Karl Popper. According to Gombrich, Popper's 1935 book *Die Logik der Forschung* "established the priority of the scientific hypothesis over the recording of sense data."  

As conditions in Austria deteriorated, it was fortunate that Kris found Gombrich a job in 1936 at the Warburg Institute, which had just moved to London from its original home in Hamburg. (Since Warburg had died in 1929, Gombrich, who was later to write a brilliant book on him, never met the magus of Hamburg.) His destiny was permanently altered by two unexpected experiences: the Warburg Institute under its brilliant director, Fritz Saxl, and the English language, of which he became a master. Most of the émigrés managed to write at least passable English, but two, Gombrich and Panofsky, excelled in their adopted tongue. Their linguistic feats were very different. Panofsky had a gift for acrobatic displays of irony and word play, salted with prodigious amounts of erudition. These pyrotechnics are so brilliant that they sometimes distract from the point that the scholar is making. By contrast Gombrich's talent lay in clarity of exposition so that the reader is carried along almost effortlessly by the perfect choice of words and the mellifluous sequence of ideas. So much so that sometimes one finds oneself temporarily lulled into accepting a conclusion that on reflection one does not share. Gombrich's expository powers realize his commitment to the ideals of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment with its focus on the Common Reader. His seeking of the center in this way means that one does often agree, but perhaps not as often as the writer would presume.

Gombrich's skills were honed by his accepting several jobs in England that involved teaching at a rather basic level. These successes (and an earlier children's book on world history that he had written in Vienna) induced the Phaidon Press to commission *The Story of Art*. First published in 1950 and many times reprinted and enlarged, this book has had an incalculable effect, since for many it was the first art-history book they read.

At the same time he continued to frequent the Warburg Institute, where his closest associates were the learned Otto Kurz, his old friend from Vienna, and Frances Yates, who almost single-handedly revived knowledge of the hermetic tradition. In 1959 Gombrich became the Institute's director, serving also as Professor of the History of the Classical Tradition. At the same time he used his position to enlarge his interdisciplinary interests in the natural sciences, above all the field of perception where he readily absorbed new discoveries in the physiology and functioning of the eye. He also consolidated his alliance with his philosophical mentor, Sir Karl Popper, then teaching at the London School of Economics. In addition to their commitment to scientific method, Popper and Gombrich shared an aversion to Hegel, whom they blamed for laying the foundations for totalitarianism, in both its Nazi and Marxist versions. Later, however, Gombrich's attitude to Hegel was to mellow, leading him to accept the Hegel Prize of the city of Stuttgart in 1977.  

The pivotal event in Gombrich's scholarly life occurred in his forty-sixth year. In 1956 he traveled to Washington, D.C., to give the A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts, the most prestigious in the field. The result was the 1960 book *Art and Illusion*, which combined grace and accessibility, with erudition and innovation, making him for a time the art historian of the age. During the 1950s art history was basking in a groundswell of esteem among the general public, witness the tremendous success of *The Voices of Silence* by André Malraux (1951-53).

Of course Gombrich has retained the respect of art history professionals in a way that Malraux has not. If the research program that seems implicit in *Art and Illusion*, namely visual perception as the key to progress failed to convince completely, Gombrich's reputation as the "thinking art historian" has

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held. A revealing tribute stems from a Gombrich critic, Norman Bryson, who remarked in 1983, "The gap between philosophy and art history is now so wide that in practical terms it is filled almost by a single work; Gombrich's Art and Illusion." While this claim is at best true only of the English-speaking world, the book remains a milestone in the development of art history.

Ranging with great panache over products of ancient Egyptian, Greek, and European civilization, these lectures sought to explain the changing appearance of works of art. Indeed, perhaps the most challenging question Gombrich asked is "Why does art have a history." That is to say, why is it that different periods have represented nature differently? Though simple to pose, this problem's solution is by no means ready to hand. In order to address the issue more closely, Gombrich adopted the psychological concept of the "mental set" as a way of addressing the distinction between nature as an object of perception and nature as an object of representation.

Vision as such is a biological given, a physiological substrate which must always be factored in as the parameter-giving force. Hence Gombrich's interest in laboratory experiments on human perception. On this biological foundation are imposed ways of seeing. But here a dilemma appears. Are these ways of seeing simply modes of inflecting a basically unitary process (universalism) or are they something that differs fundamentally from culture to culture (culturalism)? Strong arguments can be marshalled for either assumption. Without solving this problem, Gombrich suggests that our expectations of what we will see play an important role; we see what we have been conditioned to see. In keeping with this premise Gombrich strongly denies that there can be such a thing as the "innocent eye," a straightforward way of seeing, uncontaminated by preconceptions. Rather, "all culture and all communication depend on the interplay between expectation and observation." In addition to perceiving products of our own culture with the mental set that has been given us, we are capable of adjusting our mental set so as to perceive a highly stylized medieval work, such as the Bayeux Tapestry, in terms of the mental set of the era that produced it.

In any event once we realize the need to alter our mental set to accommodate works with different strategies of representation the need for periodization in art history becomes evident. A madonna by Cimabue requires one approach, a madonna by Raphael another, and a madonna by Tiepolo yet a third. We normally call the ruling conventions that characterize these works period styles—in these instances Italo-Byzantine, Renaissance, and Baroque.

Many who have approached this problem have done so from the point of view of the observer, the "consumer" as it were of the art work. Gombrich of course does this as well, in his concept of the " beholder's share." However, he also most centrally addresses the question in terms of the producer, the working artist, introducing the key idea of a constant interplay between making and matching. Thus the artist makes marks on the surface, then he or she checks the marks—or "matches" them against the motif. This leads to a modification of the marks, a new making, and this in turn requires a new matching—and so forth. Put differently, there is a close relation between schema and correction. Successful negotiation of this process requires attention to the nature of the medium, so that in Constable's landscapes, for example, the ability of oil paint to hold colors is crucial.

It is evident that Gombrich has tackled a task of enormous proportions. He sought to track the invitation Renaissance illusionism extended to the artist "to paint everything." Grandiose as this ambition of embracing the perceived world is, one must ask: is it all? What about symbolic contents that are not clearly coded in what we see? And what about the inherent interest of patterns, whether they are found in nature or not? The focus of Gombrich's investigation accords well—some would say all too well—with his positivevalorization of the Renaissance and Greek art and his negative dismissal of medieval art ("pictographs") and much modern art.

Historians of science contrast internalist and externalist accounts of development. The former treats a discipline as a series of problems which are solved, leading to new problems and so forth. The
externalist approach emphasizes societal and personal factors.

With his dislike of holistic, Hegelian interpretations, Gombrich approaches the problem of why art has a history in terms of a unilinear internalism. This means that in his narrative the only significant factor is the variable of illusion—in contrast to, say, Giorgio Vasari's "market basket" of qualities with its disegno, invenzione, grazia and so forth. Gombrich's internalist quest leaves out such content-specific elements as iconography, symbolic portraiture, and so forth. Although elsewhere Gombrich tackles the matter of Renaissance symbolism, in Art and Illusion he does not treat this fundamental theme. His account is one track, monothematic. Yet reality is usually polythematic.

Gombrich regards Western illusionism as not simply one possible choice among several, but a procedure that possesses a unique cognitive cogency: it captures visual reality more accurately and more comprehensively than any conceivable competitor—say, Chinese landscape painting or Maya frescoes—ever could. Moreover, this special form of art, which is sui generis, is the creation of the now notorious Dead White European Males or DWEMS. To be sure, one should give credit where credit is due, but the seeming function of the theory to support European exceptionalism calls for heightened scrutiny.

Another aspect that stands in contrast with current concerns is the neglect of social factors. Gombrich's defenders have pointed out that in other essays, notably those on the Renaissance, he does address such themes. Yet the theory advanced in Art and Illusion does not seem to be suited to foster such investigation; to the degree that Gombrich does so he is working from other premises, ones that stand outside his central theory.

Gombrich has not been wholly unresponsive to nonillusionistic forms, those dominant in most forms of non-Western art. In fact he sought to deal with the "rest of art history" in his 1979 book on ornament, The Sense of Order, but these observations lacked a central focus, as he himself later recognized. One is compelled to say that after his great breakthrough at the end of the fifties and its concretization in Art and Illusion in 1960 he largely consolidated his observations, but without carrying the underlying theory further. 66

The ideas embodied in Art and Illusion and their subsequent refinements have been discussed by psychologists such as J. J. Gibson, Richard Gregory, and Julian Hochberg, by philosophers such as Nelson Goodman and Richard Wollheim, and by such students of perception as M. H. Pirenne and Rudolf Arnheim. Yet despite Gombrich's favorable geographical position in London and his active lecturing in many places in Europe and North America, no school has arisen to enrich and extend his theory. 67 This lack of intellectual fertility betokens a significant limitation.

In 1960, when Gombrich's major work appeared, the art world was moving in a very different direction, as the example and ideas of Marcel Duchamp (1874-1966) began to seem ever more seductive. 68 His presence was felt in the irony of Jasper Johns and especially in the work of such minimalist sculptors as Donald Judd, Sol Lewitt, and Robert Morris. 69 These artists turned away from illusion and also its seeming opposite, abstraction. Instead they were interested, so it seemed, in making objects which were notable simply for being there. Moreover, many of the minimalists took part in the performance pieces, an art form that had evolved from the "happenings" introduced by Allan Kaprow in 1959. These new developments took their place under the banner of conceptualism, thought to embrace performance art, video art, earth art, and installation, and other novelties.

Since the time of Courbet, Duchamp held, art had followed a false trail, for it had been exclusively "retinal," appealing only to the eye. What is the alternative? As he remarked in an interview in 1946 it was to "put painting once again at the service of the mind." Some admirers see this new orientation as already present in 1912, when he painted his notorious "Nude Descending the Staircase." This claim is doubtful, as that work derives much of its effect from the observer's implied need to calibrate the forms with successive points in the figure's posited descent through space. Moreover, his
last major project, the tableau vivant ("Etant donnés") viewed through a peephole in the Philadelphia Museum of Art, is still retinal. But the question of Duchamp's absolute fidelity to his ideas is not of surpassing importance, an artist may be influential for his views rather than the totality of his works. And in fact the readymades of Duchamp's middle years, such as the indispensable "Fountain," a urinal (1917), and "In Advance of the Broken Arm," a snow shovel (1916), do seem to be addressed more to the mind than to the eye.  

The readymades then served the conceptualists, the minimalists, and the heirs of Duchamp in general as touchstones for their rejection of "opticality," "visuality," or "retinal art." These qualities were regarded as exaggerations deriving from formalist dogma. What the critics of the antiopitical camp were saying was not of course to deny that works of art are apprehended through the eye, but that specific qualities of visual processing had been fetishized. This processing deserved no absolute or transcendent status.

Again Greenberg was the villain. Yet the new understanding of the matter overlapped in part with Greenberg's construction of twentieth-century art. The optical principle (of which the American critic was regarded as the high priest) was teleological: it reached its apogee with the triumph of the picture plane in the middle of the twentieth century. Opticity is therefore to be identified with modernism itself, characterized also by such features as pure immediacy, self-knowledge, originality, and autonomy. But where Greenberg held that a final culmination was attained, the antiopitical party insisted that one must press on to new, unexplored territory, that of postmodernism. Rejecting the older principles, postmodernism fostered the rise of the antiopiticality.

During the 1960s, then, one thing made way for another. And there was an earlier history as well. A subtle interpretation is that of the influential critic Rosalind E. Krauss who detects a kind of "secret" history of antiopiticality even during the heyday of opticality. This oppositional trend she detects in the work of Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst, Alberto Giacometti, and even, in some works, Pablo Picasso and Jackson Pollock. So rejection of opticality did not just spring up when it seemed to be needed to supplant its predecessor. Something of the order of a dialectical interaction was taking place.

Regardless of whether one treats the opticality-antiopiticality contrast as sequential or coeval—whether supplanting or coexistence is posited—it is evident that we have here a new bipolar principle. The optical contrasts with the antiopitical. In effect, the pairs honored in all previous polarities (whether painterly or linear, illusionistic or abstract, and so forth) collapse into a supercategory, the optical. It is as if a + b, once opposed, now stand together in their opposition to c.

As has been noted Gombrich's commendation of an alliance with the academic discipline of perceptual psychology had little effect, some initial flurries of interest notwithstanding. As the century neared its close, a revival of interest became evident, as John Willats, a sculptor and Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Birmingham, published his book Art and Representation. This theory of the visual analysis of pictures distinguishes between drawing systems and denotation systems. Willats' analysis of these two aspects of rendering the perceived world depends in part on new methods of computer analysis. As he is interested not only in the systems of rendering, but in their genesis he has performed a new analysis of children's art, with the idea that the several stages traceable in it can through light on the genesis of representation. While it is too soon to attempt a prediction as to the success of Willats' approach, it seems to combine simplicity and complexity in a way that offers a promising paradigm of formal analysis.

As the foregoing discussion has shown, form is known through contrast, as linear forms differ from painterly ones, for example. Understanding these contrasts has called for overarching schemes of form and formal development. Here, in tabular form, are the results of the inquiry. For completeness'
sake, Pliny and Giorgio Vasari are included as historical precedents.

**TABLE OF THEORIES**

**UNITARY PROCESS THEORIES.** These progressive theories assume a beginning at some rudimentary point, a calibrated series of stages, and a final goal (or telos), either achieved or lying in the future.

1. Pliny the Elder (about 60 A.D.): Greek art as technical advance.

2. Giorgio Vasari (1558-68): three stages: good, better best—progress, with the High Renaissance as culmination.

3. Ernst Gombrich’s restorationist theory (1960) of development as “matching and making,” leading to the perfect rendering of illusion.

4. Clement Greenberg (1939 and after): since the mid-19th century an increasing recognition of the imperatives of flatness and the boundary situation conditions the historical development of painting.

**BIPOLAR THEORIES.** These theories assume a contrast of two extremes, which either coexist or succeed one another.

1. Edmund Burke (1756): beautiful v. sublime: two responses conditioned by the constitution of human beings who, in order to survive, must respond to both love and fear.


6. Various: representational vs. nonrepresentational.

7. Duchamp’s interpreters: visuality vs. antivisuality.

**TRITHEMATIC** There are three stages, with the middle possibly the most important.

1. Egyptian archaeology: Old Kingdom, Middle Kingdom, New Kingdom. Note other archaeological schemes as with pre-Greek Crete: Early Minoan, Middle Minoan, Late Minoan.

2. Archaic, classical, baroque.

3. Artist’s careers, as early, middle, and late Titian.
PLURALISTIC


10. For an attempt to trace collateral aspects of this Kantian heritage, see Andrew Bowie, Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche, Manchester University Press, 1990.


12. Natural Supernaturalism.


17. For the history of this influential idea, see Liselotte Dieckmann, Hieroglyphics: The History of a Literary Symbol, St. Louis: Washington University Press, 1970.


19. See Schapiro, "Style" for some examples of these sequences.
20. Margaret Iversen, Alois Riegl: Art History and Theory, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993; and Margaret Olin, Forms of Representation in Alois Riegl's Theory of Art, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992. Olin quotes from Riegl's unpublished notes, which are often livelier that the corresponding published texts, suggesting that he deliberately "dulled down" the writing in accordance with the positivist, "scientific" ideal of prose dominant in his day. Some further material appears in October, 74 (Fall 1995). For a bibliography of Riegl's original German texts, see Alois Riegl, Gesammelte Aufsätze, Augsburg: Dr. Benno Filser Verlag, 1929, pp. xxv-xxxix.


23. The importance of these pioneers of psychology was stressed by Wölfflin's teacher in Berlin, the cultural historian Wilhelm Dilthey; see Joan Hart, "Reinterpreting Wölfflin: Neo-Kantianism and Hermeneutics," Art Journal, 42:4 (Winter 1982), 292-300. On the whole, however, Wölfflin never succeeded in "modernizing" himself by adopting the empirical approach of the new laboratory psychology; he remained attached to the older philosophical analyses of perception. On the background, see Michael Podro, The Manifold in Perception: Theories of Art from Kant to Hildebrand, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972.


25. In the 1922 preface to his Grundbegriffe of 1915, Wölfflin recognized that his earlier formulation was not quite satisfactory. In the new approach, he suggested that the expression Seeformen might be replaced by Vorstellungsformen. The term Vorstellung has a long and complicated history in German thought, but the gist of the new wording is that the retinal data undergo processing in the mind. (He did not introduce the new formula into the main text of his magnum opus, which remained unaltered.)
26. Wölfflin addressed the problem in a study of Raphael's tapestry cartoons, which were reversed in the weaving process; "Das Problem der Umkehrung in Raffael's Teppichkartons," in his Gedanken zur Kunstgeschichte: Gedrucktes und Ungedrucktes, Basel: Schwabe, 1940, pp. 90-96.


33. Wylie Sypher, Four Stages of Renaissance Style: Transformations in Art and Literature 1400-1700, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday (Anchor Books), 1955. Wölfflin has sustained some criticism for leaving mannerism out of his scheme. However, the concept of this style (which remains problematic) did not crystalize until after he composed his main contributions. Moreover, the Swiss scholar did not claim the power to explain everything, but sought to isolate the leading features of the art of the sixteenth century, setting them off against their seventeenth-century counterparts.


41. Thus the recollection, in 1945, of Desmond MacCarthy. Spalding, Roger Fry, 133.


43. This book was originally published by the Museum of Modern Art to accompany their exhibition (with the same title).


52. Some of Greenberg's friends regarded his claim to have been influenced by Kant pretentious and unfounded. See, however, Paul Crowther, "Greenberg's Kant and the Problem of Modernist Painting," *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 25 (1985), 317-25.


58. This interest, founded partly on the work of Alois Riegl, was to resurface fifty years later in an ambitious, though perhaps ultimately unsuccessful account, *The Sense of Order: A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1979.


70. Duchamp must not be held responsible for all the vagaries of his followers. One dubious legacy, though, is his love of punning. In 1920 he exhibited, under the name of his alter ego Rose Sélavy, a miniature set of French windows, entitled "Fresh Widow." Presumably the "fresh widow" is the fictional creator, and the title makes the connection with the work. Punning became a common practice among the surrealists, as with Max Ernst's collage cycle "La Femme Cent Têtes," the woman with a hundred heads, which can be read as "La Femme Sans Tête," the headless woman. Today such puns have become an annoying tic of much postmodernist writing.


CHAPTER TWO. BIOGRAPHICAL CRITICISM AND PSYCHOLOGY

The Western tradition of compiling biographies of notable persons began with the ancient Greeks. Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, from the early second century of our era, is the outstanding landmark. Plutarch was preoccupied by politicians and intellectuals; his fifty surviving Lives contain no artists. Elsewhere in Greek literature, though, picturesque anecdotes about the pride and eccentricities of artists vividly convey their allure as personalities in their own right. The most outstanding figures were not mere craft workers, but strong-willed individuals whose company was sought by the elite.

The Greeks provided a general model for group biography, as well as specific data about artist's lives. But as far as artists were concerned, they did not combine the general and the specific.

This fusion was finally accomplished by Giorgio Vasari in sixteenth-century Italy. Still being read profitably today, his vast *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects* (1550; enlarged edition, 1568) has a general narrative theme of artistic progress, which he parcel's out in a series of chapters devoted to individual creators. Vasari is properly attentive to the works, for they are the objects of our ultimate concern. Yet he takes pains to blend in many nuggets of the personal foibles and idiosyncracies of the artists, knowing that these piquant details sustain reader interest.

Today this fascination with personal lives fuels publishers' output of popular biographies, including the highly subjective accounts of Pablo Picasso and Frank Lloyd Wright by Norman Mailer and Brendan Gill respectively. A few contemporary artists, including Julian Schnabel, Cindy Sherman, and Jeff Koons, have achieved celebrity status in the media. Others, such as the artists depicted in the gallery of portraits by Chuck Close (born 1940), are household names in the art world—at least in that of New York City.

Biographical data about artists are by definition unique, for particulars are what establish their character as individuals. For this reason it is hard to generalize about the personalities and careers of artists.

This problem is not limited to the study of artists. A Latin proverb asserts that *individuum est ineffabile*, the individual is indescribable. We all seek to guard this uniqueness, in the sense that we do not wish to be confined by a simple label, as "So and so is just an athlete" or "So and so is a typical Texan," even though we may take legitimate pride in such status.

These objections to generalization are significant. Yet we still find it hard to refrain from hazarding general estimates about individual human beings. Of course (we will acknowledge) Napoleon was a unique individual; but he was also a Corsican who became a French general and emperor. It seems that we can make general statements about individuals, while still preserving their quality as unique persons.

Granting then the permissibility of generalizations, there remains a further issue. For these general statements may be field-specific. Every walk of life exhibits certain qualities. Opera singers are temperamental and accountants are cautious. Stereotypical though they may be, these assertions seem not totally unfounded, even though there are exceptions. There are two main reasons why such characterizations have some merit. Success as an opera diva depends on the ability to convey emotions, and this talent is likely to spill over into other situations. Conversely, careful handling of the financial records of others requires prudence and discretion—again qualities that may be more generally expressed. So the behaviors are rooted in the job itself. The other factor is the internalized sense that one must live up to expectations. Since people assume that opera stars are temperamental and accountants cautious, those electing these professions tend to "read from the script." Stereotypes become reality to the extent