



DÉFINITIONS DE LA CULTURE VISUELLE

REVOIR LA NEW ART HISTORY

DEFINITIONS OF VISUAL CULTURE

THE NEW ART HISTORY – REVISITED



MUSÉE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN DE MONTRÉAL

1

CONFÉRENCES ET COLLOQUES

DÉFINITIONS DE LA CULTURE VISUELLE.
REVOIR LA NEW ART HISTORY

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THE NEW ART HISTORY - REVISITED

Actes du colloque tenu au
Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal
les 24 et 25 mars 1994

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Revoir la New Art History

Definitions of Visual Culture,

The New Art History - Revisited

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THE CABINET OF CURIOSITIES AS

A MODEL OF VISUAL DISPLAY:

A NOTE ON THE GENEALOGY OF

THE CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUM

STEPHEN BANN

... l'idée, la volonté, le désir reviennent à transformer l'espace muséal en agora, en lieu d'échange, en centre de discours pluriels et de paroles multiples sur l'art, mais aussi sur la société qui l'engendre, sur les artistes qui le créent, sur les publics qui s'y engouffrent.

MARCEL BRISEBOIS

Avant-propos

LUCETTE BOUCHARD

Directrice de l'éducation et de la documentation

Au Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, c'est bien du «public» dont il est question. Cette orientation du Musée vers le public a été décidée et articulée par la Direction. Dès son entrée en charge en 1985, le directeur du Musée, monsieur Marcel Brisebois, a décrété que le Musée serait, en plus d'un centre d'expositions, d'une réserve d'œuvres, un centre de savoir, un savoir partagé, hors-territoire.

Créé en 1965, le Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal a pour fonction de faire connaître, de promouvoir et de conserver l'art québécois contemporain et d'assurer une présence de l'art contemporain international par des acquisitions, des expositions et d'autres activités d'animation. (*Loi sur les musées nationaux*, art. 24)

En 1991, le Musée préparait son déménagement au centre-ville et la perspective de son action a nécessité une réorganisation des effectifs et des tâches. C'est dans ce contexte qu'a été créée la Direction de l'éducation et de la documentation. Les services de l'éducation, celui de l'édition et la Médiathèque furent regroupés afin d'assurer un lien entre les œuvres et le public. Faisant appel à des compétences étendues et très diverses, les trois secteurs d'activités participent à la recherche menée au Musée et en diffusent quotidiennement les connaissances.

Depuis ce regroupement, renversant les traditions ayant cours dans plusieurs musées, le Service de l'éducation se positionne comme un intervenant de première ligne. Les objectifs sont répartis en trois catégories : la diffusion, la création et la recherche. Après plus de deux ans d'activités auprès de sa nouvelle clientèle, à l'écoute de celle-ci, sont retenus d'une part les activités courantes comme les visites et les ateliers de création, et d'autre part les projets hautement spécialisés comme les colloques en histoire de l'art et en muséologie. C'est dans ce contexte que s'inscrit le colloque *Définitions de la culture visuelle — Revoir la New Art History* dont nous publions les actes dans ce recueil.

La réponse du public à notre invitation au colloque fut des plus enthousiastes, nous incitant à modifier au jour le jour la réservation d'amphithéâtres toujours plus grands et à tenir les conférences d'ouverture dans une salle d'exposition

occupée par des œuvres gigantesques d'Attila Richard Lukacs. Ce premier colloque tenu dans notre nouvel édifice a bouleversé la vie de tous les secteurs du Musée : de l'accueil aux relations de presse, en passant par les services techniques.

La série *Définitions de la culture visuelle*, constituée de trois événements, a alors pris son envol et sera complétée d'ici la fin de 1997.

Nous remercions les auteurs qui ont livré leurs communications avec tant de générosité lors du colloque et qui nous ont permis de publier leurs textes. Au sujet des textes de T. J. Clark, Lynda Nead et Lisa Tickner qui n'apparaissent pas dans ce livre, on se référera à celui de Christine Ross.

L'équipe du colloque était composée de Christine Bernier, Aube Billard, Claude Guérin, Danielle Legentil, Sylvain Parent, Gabrielle Tremblay, Michelle Gauthier et Régine Francœur. L'édition des actes a été assurée par l'éditrice déléguée du Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Chantal Charbonneau.

Enfin, le succès de cette rencontre n'aurait pu être assuré sans la participation éclairée des quelque neuf cents personnes inscrites à ce colloque. Nous les remercions.

Introduction

REVOIR LA «NOUVELLE HISTOIRE DE L'ART» DANS UN MUSÉE

CHRISTINE BERNIER

Responsable du Service de l'éducation au Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Christine Bernier détient une maîtrise en histoire de l'art, et prépare un doctorat en littérature comparée à l'Université de Montréal. Elle a écrit à titre d'auteure invitée pour différentes expositions et a collaboré à diverses revues dont *Surfaces*, *Parachute*, *Espace*, *Trois*, *Musées*, *Les herbes rouges*, *Estuaire*.

Head of the Education Department at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Christine Bernier has a Master's in Art History and is completing her doctorate in Comparative Literature at the Université de Montréal. She has contributed essays to various exhibitions and has written articles in *Surfaces*, *Parachute*, *Espace*, *Trois*, *Musées*, *Les herbes rouges* and *Estuaire*.

Comment définir l'héritage de ce qui s'est appelé *New Art History*? Ce terme est apparu en Grande-Bretagne pour identifier les nouvelles préoccupations théoriques et méthodologiques qui ont émergé dans les années 70 au sein de la discipline de l'histoire de l'art. Nous devons reconnaître aujourd'hui la grande influence des auteurs qui ont constitué une «nouvelle histoire de l'art» en tenant compte, dans leurs analyses, du contexte social dans lequel l'art est produit. Pour élaborer leurs recherches, ils ont utilisé d'autres disciplines : sociologie, histoire, philosophie, anthropologie, littérature, science politique; et ils ont su faire une lecture critique de l'histoire de l'art à la lumière du féminisme, du marxisme, du structuralisme, de la déconstruction et de la psychanalyse¹.

Les discours actuels sur ce qu'il est convenu d'appeler le postmodernisme ainsi que les théories qui posent un regard critique sur le cadre social de production de l'art — incluant l'histoire sociale de l'art et la *New Art History* — ne forment pas des cadres théoriques aux limites fixes, car ils s'inspirent de différents axes de pensée. Ainsi, la *New Art History* n'a pas craint d'avoir recours à diverses théories lui permettant de remettre en question l'histoire de l'art traditionnelle qui se préoccupait de périodisation, d'identification et d'authenticité, et qui revalorisait une idéologie du chef-d'œuvre à valeur transcendante.

NEW ART HISTORY ET TRANSDISCIPLINARITÉ

Globalement, ce qui caractérise plusieurs approches théoriques actuelles, c'est le doute face aux «Grands Récits» du modernisme. On n'accepte plus volontiers, comme l'écrivait Foucault, de «faire de l'analyse historique le discours du continu et faire de la conscience humaine le sujet originaire de tout devenir et de toute pratique².» Mais en ce qui concerne les questions qui devraient se poser dans cette situation de doute, les attitudes sont très diversifiées. Car bien que la *New Art History* n'ait jamais défini un groupe précis ou une tendance homogène, nous pouvons constater que les *New Art Historians* sont plus dispersés aujourd'hui — théoriquement et géographiquement — qu'ils ne l'étaient au cours des années 70.

Et cette dispersion se fait, bien sûr, sur le mode de la disparité. Peter de Bolla tient à développer la question de la visualité dans une perspective transdisciplinaire où les textes de Lacan sont convoqués dans une recherche englobant littérature, histoire de l'art et psychanalyse. À l'opposé, Thomas Crow préconise un retour aux textes plus descriptifs et aux analyses biographiques. Stephen Bann, de son côté, se préoccupe d'abord des conditions de présentation de l'œuvre dans l'étude historique du musée. On le voit bien, cette transdisciplinarité que la *New Art History* a contribué à instaurer rend impossible la mise en place d'un système théorique monolithique.

En mesurant notre distance face à la *New Art History*, nous entrevoyons comment penser les relations entre une histoire de l'art interdisciplinaire qui explorerait de nouveaux champs de recherche, en même temps que nous considérons les discours théoriques actuels qui se préoccupent d'institutions culturelles comme le musée et l'université. Nous devons donc nous demander aussi dans quels termes se pose la question d'une «nouvelle histoire de l'art», lorsqu'elle est amenée par un musée d'art contemporain. Et dès lors, il importe de faire une lecture comparée de ces deux histoires, celle de l'objet d'art et celle de l'institution muséale, afin d'amorcer une définition de la culture visuelle contemporaine.

INSTITUTIONS CULTURELLES : MUSÉES ET UNIVERSITÉS

En effet, la redéfinition du territoire de l'histoire de l'art déclenchée par la *New Art History* nous incite à réfléchir aux rapports entre une histoire des musées qui prendrait en considération notre culture visuelle et une théorie de l'art qui se préoccuperait des conditions de présentation des œuvres.

Les auteurs de plusieurs recherches ont associé le musée et l'université quant à la mise en place des dispositifs d'enseignement de l'histoire de l'art. Le musée est souvent un terrain exemplaire quand il s'agit de problématiser la théorisation de l'histoire de l'art : il «illustrerait» parfaitement les moyens matériels de la discipline. Cette mise en relation n'est pas étonnante, puisque l'histoire de l'art et les musées ont longtemps produit un savoir qui a circulé à partir des mêmes présupposés.

Le discours traditionnel relatif à l'organisation des musées les présentait comme un monde homogène et clos, et des résidus de cette pensée créent des perceptions paradoxales du musée actuel. Or, les pratiques artistiques et muséologiques transdisciplinaires contribuent à l'hétérogénéité de l'espace muséal, et peuvent démontrer qu'aucun territoire physique, technique ou théorique n'est étanche ou homogène. Dans un musée d'art contemporain, les productions artistiques actuelles sont données à voir à des publics de plus en plus diversifiés, et ces publics contribuent, à leur tour, à en faire un territoire hétérogène, contesté dans son étanchéité et ouvert sur le monde extérieur. Le musée, en tant qu'institution culturelle, s'est donc vu obligé d'aborder la diffusion des savoirs artistiques et théoriques de manière transculturelle et transdisciplinaire, quitte à abandonner certains principes d'organisation fournis par l'histoire de l'art traditionnelle, tant sur le plan méthodologique que sur le plan disciplinaire. Ainsi, dans les faits, le musée est peut-être en train de devenir un lieu culturel transdisciplinaire par excellence, et il est probable que la transdisciplinarité favorise l'usage du terme «culture». Conséquemment, en dépit de toutes les transformations que peuvent avoir subies la structure de l'institution muséale et la

signification du terme « culture », le musée persisterait à demeurer, dans un cadre nouveau, un lieu de culture. Précisons toutefois que nous définissons l'actuel musée d'art comme un lieu hétérogène à l'intérieur duquel les contradictions peuvent se mouvoir, un espace discursif où se constituent de nouveaux cadres théoriques pour aborder l'œuvre d'art.

HISTOIRE DE L'ART : ÉTUDE DE L'« ŒUVRE » OU DE L'« OBJET CULTUREL » ?

Aborder ces problèmes sous l'angle de la culture contemporaine dans le contexte de l'institution muséale, c'est tenter une redéfinition du territoire de l'histoire de l'art en relation avec la problématique de la transdisciplinarité dont les conditions d'existence restent encore difficiles à cerner.

La recherche transdisciplinaire pose le problème du rapport qu'entretiennent les musées d'art contemporain avec des questions théoriques relevant de différents champs des sciences humaines et sociales, comme l'histoire, la philosophie, l'anthropologie et la littérature. Les rôles joués par l'esthétique et par l'histoire de l'art, en tant que cadres théoriques constitutifs des critères de sélection et des principes d'organisation des œuvres du musée, sont souvent remis en question, surtout lorsqu'on considère les bouleversements épistémologiques récents qu'a connus l'histoire de l'art avec des innovations telles que celles apportées par la *New Art History*.

Dans le cas de cette discipline, rappelons que ses liens avec le musée, d'un point de vue historique, sont très étroits. La fondation du Louvre en tant que musée moderne a impliqué, par exemple, le rejet des expositions organisées selon les techniques de présentation des cabinets de curiosités, au profit d'une organisation spatiale structurée pour refléter en miroir le curriculum nouvellement établi en histoire de l'art³. Cette époque du musée moderne a considéré comme périmés les *studios*, lieux remplis d'objets divers, destinés surtout aux savants et aux artistes pour l'étude en art, archéologie et sciences naturelles. Elle a au contraire donné la préséance au public, à l'œuvre d'art et à l'histoire de l'art. Depuis, le musée d'art a connu, en même temps que l'histoire de l'art, la stabilité dont nous parlions précédemment.

Cette « harmonie » s'est troublée pendant les années 70 avec les productions de plusieurs artistes et les postures théoriques de la *New Art History*. Au même moment, les changements dans l'espace discursif et physique du musée ont rendu de moins en moins possibles la présentation et l'archivage d'œuvres selon une structure préconisée par l'histoire de l'art traditionnelle.

Car au sein de la discipline elle-même, on remet de plus en plus en question des a priori qui fondent les objectifs utopiques d'intelligibilité et de lisibilité globale des

objets. Depuis l'émergence de la *New Art History*, on remet aussi en question la suprématie transcendantale du chef-d'œuvre et, dans cette perspective, plusieurs auteurs s'intéressent à l'histoire des «images» plutôt qu'à celle des «œuvres»⁴. Toutes ces recherches contribuent à créer cette situation actuelle qui se caractérise par un passage de l'histoire de l'art à l'histoire des cultures.

Ces approches, présentement diffusées davantage dans les universités anglophones que francophones, s'appuient sur une sensibilisation grandissante à divers horizons théoriques qui prennent en considération des facteurs tels que la classe, l'ethnie, la nationalité, le genre et l'orientation sexuelle. Dans les pratiques artistiques comme dans la théorie, le discours est fortement marqué par une éthique ethnographique où le lieu des transformations se situerait dans le champ de l'«Autre» (c'est précisément ce que démontre le texte de Hal Foster). Dans ce contexte, il ne s'agirait plus d'appliquer une esthétique kantienne, selon laquelle la valeur est une qualité intrinsèque de l'œuvre d'art, mais plutôt de s'arrêter aux conditions culturelles qui déterminent cette valeur. Conséquemment, la signification de l'œuvre est abordée sous l'angle de l'horizon culturel de sa production et de sa réception, et les questions d'ordre éthique finissent par l'emporter sur celles d'ordre esthétique.

Ceci provoque des remises en question assez claires pour les musées d'histoire, d'anthropologie et d'ethnographie. Mais pour les musées d'art, la baisse d'intérêt pour le statut esthétique de l'œuvre provoque, lorsqu'elle coïncide avec le problème de l'effritement des critères d'appréciation de l'art, des conséquences épistémiques que nous commençons à peine à évaluer.

1. Pour une définition plus détaillée de la nouvelle histoire de l'art, voir : A. L. Rees et F. Borzello, *The New Art History*, Atlantic Highlands, Humanities Press International, 1988. Selon les directeurs de la publication, «les deux tendances les plus importantes dans la *New Art History* sont l'intérêt pour les aspects sociaux de l'art et l'insistance sur la théorie. [...] Ses principaux intérêts résident dans une investigation qui cherche à trouver comment l'ordre social est représenté et endossé par l'art et dans l'analyse des institutions de l'art, à commencer par l'histoire de l'art elle-même. La tendance théorique travaille sur la théorie marxiste et la théorie littéraire européenne, sur la psychanalyse et le patriarcat dans le cas du mouvement des femmes.» [P. 8, notre traduction.]

2. Michel Foucault, *L'archéologie du savoir*, Paris, Gallimard, NRF, 1969, p. 22.

3. Le texte de Stephen Bann montre bien l'idéologie de cette vision : on a voulu, au siècle des Lumières, un musée «classique» qui se démarque sensiblement des cabinets de curiosités, pour établir un modèle muséal que le discours traditionnel utiliserait comme la seule définition du musée.

4. On pense par exemple à l'ouvrage collectif dirigé par Norman Bryson, Michael Ann Holly et Keith Moxey, *Visual Culture. Images and Interpretation*, Hannover et Londres, Wesleyan University Press, 1994.

THE ARTIST AS ETHNOGRAPHER?

HAL FOSTER

Professeur d'histoire de l'art et de littérature comparée à l'Université Cornell, Hal Foster est membre du comité de rédaction de la revue *October*. Auteur de *Compulsive Beauty* (1983) et de *Recodings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics* (1985), il a dirigé d'importants ouvrages sur la culture contemporaine : *Vision and Visuality* (1988), *Discussions in Contemporary Culture* (1987), *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (1983). Organisateur de colloques, dont *High/Low: Art and Mass Culture* (Dia Center for the Arts), avec Rosalind Krauss, et *The Problem of Fetishism* (College Art Association), avec David Freedberg. Hal Foster travaillait récemment à la rédaction de trois livres : *Shock Corridor*, un ouvrage sur l'art moderne et la culture machiniste, "*Primitive*" *Scenes, Prosthetic Gods, and Other Modernist Fantasies*, et *Parallax Views*, un recueil de textes sur l'art d'après-guerre.

Hal Foster is Professor of Art History and Comparative Literature at Cornell University and is a member of the editorial board of *October*. He is the author of *Compulsive Beauty* (1993) and *Recodings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics* (1985) and editor of *Vision and Visuality* (1988), *Discussions in Contemporary Culture* (1987) and *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (1983). He has organized many conferences including *High/Low: Art and Mass Culture*, Dia Center for the Arts (with Rosalind Krauss) and *The Problem of Fetishism*, College Art Association (with David Freedberg). Hal Foster has been recently working on *Shock Corridor*, a book on modern art and machine culture, "*Primitive*" *Scenes, Prosthetic Gods, and Other Modernist Fantasies* and *Parallax Views*, a collection of essays on postwar art.

My title is meant to evoke "The Author as Producer," the text of Walter Benjamin first presented at the Institute for the Study of Fascism in Paris in April 1934. There, under the influence of Berthold Brecht and Russian revolutionary culture, Benjamin called on the artist on the left "to side with the proletariat."¹ In vanguard Paris in April 1934 this call was not radical; the approach, however, was. For Benjamin urged the "advanced" artist to intervene, like the revolutionary worker, in the means of artistic production — to change the "techniques" of traditional media, to transform the "apparatus" of bourgeois culture. A correct "tendency" was not enough; that was to assume a place "beside the proletariat." And "what kind of place is that?" Benjamin asked in lines that still scathe. "That of a benefactor, of an ideological patron — an impossible place."

Today there is a related paradigm in advanced art on the left: the artist as ethnographer. The object of contestation remains, at least in part, the bourgeois institution of autonomous art, its exclusionary definitions of art, audience, identity. But the subject of association has changed: it is now the cultural and/or ethnic other in whose name the committed artist most often struggles. Nevertheless, a few basic assumptions of the old productivist model persist in the new quasi-anthropological one. First, there is the assumption that the site of artistic transformation is the site of political transformation, and, more, that this site is always located *elsewhere*, in the field of the other: in the productivist model, with the social other, the exploited proletariat; in the quasi-anthropological model, with the cultural other, the oppressed postcolonial, subaltern, or subcultural. Second, there is the assumption that this other is always *outside*, and, more, that this alterity is the primary point of subversion of dominant culture. Third, there is the assumption that if the invoked artist is *not* perceived as socially and/or culturally other, he or she has but *limited* access to this transformative alterity, and, more, that if he or she *is* perceived as other, he or she has *automatic* access to it. Taken together, these three assumptions lead to a further point of connection with the Benjaminian account of the author as producer: the danger, for the artist as ethnographer, of "ideological patronage."²

A strict Marxist would question this quasi-anthropological paradigm in art because it tends to displace the problematic of class and capitalist exploitation with that of race and colonialist oppression. A strict poststructuralist would question it for the opposite reason: because it does *not* displace this productivist problematic enough, i.e., because it tends to preserve its structure of the political — to retain the notion of *subject* of history, to define this position in terms of *truth*, and to locate this truth in terms of *alterity*. From this perspective the quasi-anthropological paradigm, like the productivist one, fails to reflect on its *realist assumption*: that the other, here postcolonial, there proletarian, is in the real, not in the ideological, because he or she

is socially oppressed, politically transformative, and/or materially productive.³ Often this realist assumption is compounded by a *primitivist fantasy*: that the other has access to primal psychic and social processes from which the white (petit) bourgeois subject is blocked.⁴ Now, in certain conjunctures, the realist assumption is simply right, just as, in certain conjunctures, the primitivist fantasy is very subversive — that I do not dispute at all. But I do dispute the automatic coding of apparent difference as manifest identity and of otherness as outsideness. This coding has long *enabled* a cultural politics of *marginality*. Today, however, it may *disable* a cultural politics of *immanence*, and this politics might well be more pertinent to a postcolonial situation of multinational capitalism in which geopolitical mappings of centre and periphery no longer hold.⁵

The primitivist fantasy was active in two precedents of the quasi-anthropological paradigm in contemporary art: the dissident surrealism associated with Georges Bataille and Michel Leiris in the late 1920s and early 1930s, and the *négritude* movement associated with Léopold Senghor and Aimé Césaire in the late 1940s and early 1950s. In different ways both movements connected the transgressive potentiality of the unconscious with the radical alterity of the other — the first to a subversive end, the second to a liberatory one. And yet both movements came to be limited by this very primitivism. Just as dissident surrealism explored cultural alterity only in part to indulge in a ritual of self-othering, so the *négritude* movement essentialized cultural alterity only in part to be constrained by this second nature. In quasi-anthropological art today this primitivist fantasy is only residual. However, the realist assumption — that the other is *dans le vrai* — remains strong, and its effect, now as then, is often to *detour* the artist. Just as the productivist sought to stand in the reality of the proletariat, only in part to sit in the place of the patron, so the quasi-anthropological artist today may seek to work with sited communities with the best motives of political engagement and institutional transgression, only in part to have this work recoded by its sponsors as social outreach, public relations, economic development ... or art.

This is not the facile complaint of personal cooption or institutional recuperation — that the artist is only tactical in a careerist sense, or that the museum and the media can absorb anything and everything (indeed we know they cannot). Rather I am concerned with the *structural* effects of the realist assumption in political, here quasi-anthropological, art, in particular with its siting of political truth in a projected alterity. I mentioned the automatic coding of artists vis-à-vis alterity, but there are additional problems here as well. This projection of politics as other and outside may detract from a politics of here and now. More fundamentally, since it is in part a projection, this outside is not other in any simple sense.

Let me take these two problems one at a time. first, the assumption of outsideness. If it is true that we live today in a near-global economy, then a pure outside can no longer be automatically supposed. This recognition does not totalize this world-system; rather it specifies resistance to this world-system as an immanent relation rather than a transcendental one. And, again, a strategic sense of imbrication is more pertinent to our postcolonial situation than a romantic proposal of opposition.⁶ Second, the projection of alterity. As this alterity is never fully outside the structure of our identity, as it is always already imbricated with our unconscious, its effect may be to "other" the self more than to "serve" the other, which seems the opposite of an anthropology or a politics based on recognition. Now it may be, as many claim today, that this self-othering is crucial to revised practices of anthropology and politics alike; or, more circumspectly, that in conjunctures such as the surrealist one the troping of anthropology as auto-analysis (as in Leiris) or social critique (as in Bataille) is culturally transgressive, even politically significant. But there are obvious dangers here as well. Then as now such self-othering can flip into self-absorption, in which the project of an "ethnographic self-fashioning" becomes the practice of a philosophical narcissism.⁷ To be sure, such reflexivity has done much to disturb automatic assumptions about subject-positions, but it has also done much to promote a masquerade of such disturbance: a vogue for confessional testimony in theory that is sometimes merely sensibility criticism come again, and a vogue for pseudo-ethnographic reports in art that are sometimes merely disguised travelogues from the world art market. Who in the academy or the art world has not witnessed these new forms of *flânerie*?

What has happened here? What misrecognitions have passed between anthropology and art and other discourses? One can point to a whole circuit of projections and reflections over the last decade at least. first some critics of anthropology developed a kind of artist-envy (the enthusiasm of James Clifford for the juxtapositions of "ethnographic surrealism" is an influential instance).⁸ In this envy the artist became a paragon of formal reflexivity, sensitive to difference and open to chance, a self-aware reader of culture understood as text. But is the artist the exemplar here, or is this figure not a projection of a particular ideal ego of the anthropologist: the anthropologist as collagist, semiologist, avant-gardist?⁹ In other words, might this artist-envy be a form of self-idealization? Rarely does this projection stop there, in anthropology and art, or, for that matter, in cultural studies and new historicism. Often it extends to the *object* of these investigations, the cultural other, who is also reconfigured so as to reflect an ideal image of the anthropologist, artist, critic or historian. To be sure, this projection is not new to anthropology: some classics of the discipline (e.g., *Patterns of Culture* by Ruth Benedict) present whole cultures as collective artists or read them

as aesthetic "patterns" of symbolic practices. But at least they did so openly (if not reflexively); current critics of anthropology persist in this projection — but they call it critique or demystification or, indeed, reflexivity.¹⁰

Today this envy has begun to run the other way: a kind of ethnographer-envy consumes many contemporary artists. Here too they share this envy with critics, especially in cultural studies and new historicism, who assume the role of ethnographer, usually in disguised form: the cultural-studies ethnographer dressed *down* as a fellow fan (for reasons of political solidarity — but with great social anxieties); the new-historicist ethnographer dressed *up* as a master archivist (for reasons of scholarly respectability — to out-historian the historians).¹¹ But why the particular prestige of anthropology in contemporary art? Again, there are precedents of this engagement: in surrealism, where the other was figured in terms of the unconscious; in *art brut*, where the other represented the anticivilizational; in abstract expressionism, where the other stood for the primal artist; and variously in the art of the 1960s and 1970s (the primitivism of earthworks, the art world as anthropological site, and so on). But what is specific about the present turn? first, anthropology is prized as the science of *alterity*; in this regard it is second only to psychoanalysis as a lingua franca in artistic practice and critical discourse alike.¹² Second, it is the discipline that takes *culture* as its object, and it is this expanded field of reference that postmodernist art and criticism have long sought to make their own. Third, ethnography is considered *contextual*, the rote demand for which contemporary artists share with many cultural practitioners today, some of whom aspire to fieldwork in the everyday. Fourth, anthropology is thought to arbitrate the *interdisciplinary*, another rote value in contemporary art and theory.¹³ Finally, fifth, it is the *self-critique* of anthropology that renders it so attractive, for this critical anthropology invites a reflexivity at the centre even as it preserves a romanticism of the margins. For all these reasons rogue investigations of anthropology, like queer critiques of psychoanalysis, are granted vanguard status today: it is along these lines that the critical edge is felt to cut most incisively.

This turn to the ethnographic, it is important to see, is not only an external seduction; it is also driven by forces immanent to advanced art, at least in Anglo-American metropolises, forces I can only sketch here. Pluralists notwithstanding, this art has a trajectory over the last 35 years, which consists of a sequence of investigations: from the objective constituents of the art work first to its spatial conditions of perception, then to the corporeal bases of this perception — shifts remarked in minimalist work in the early 1960s through conceptual art, performance, body art and site-specific work in the early 1970s. Along the way, the institution of art could no longer be described simply in terms of physical space (studio, gallery, museum and

so on); it was also a discursive network of other practices and institutions, other subjectivities and communities. Nor could the observer of art be delimited only phenomenologically; he or she was also a social subject defined in various languages and marked by multiple differences (sexual, ethnic and so on). Of course, these recognitions were not strictly internal to art. Also crucial were different social movements (feminism above all) as well as diverse theoretical developments (the convergence of feminism, psychoanalysis and film; the recovery of Gramsci; the application of Althusser; the influence of Foucault; and so on). The important point is that art thus passed into the expanded field of culture that anthropology is thought to survey.

And what are the results? One is that the ethnographic mapping of a given institution or a related community is a primary form that site-specific art now assumes. This is all to the good, it seems to me, but it is important to remember that these pseudo-ethnographic critiques are often commissioned, indeed franchised. Just as appropriation art became an aesthetic genre, new site-specific work threatens to become a museum category, one in which the institution *imports* critique, whether as a show of tolerance or for the purpose of inoculation (against an immanent critique, one undertaken by the institution, within the institution). This is an irony of site-specific work inside the institution; other ironies arise when this work is sponsored *outside* the institution, often in collaboration with local groups. Here values like authenticity, originality and singularity, banished under critical taboo from post-modernist art, return as properties of the site, neighbourhood or community engaged by the artist. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with this displacement but here too it is important to remember that the sponsor may regard these "properties" as just that — as sited values to develop.¹⁴ Of course the institution may also exploit such site-specific work in order to expand its operations for reasons noted above (social outreach, public relations, economic development, art tourism).¹⁵ In this case the institution may displace the work that it seems to advance: the show becomes the spectacle where cultural capital collects.

I am not as cynical as I sound about these developments. Some artists have used these opportunities to collaborate with communities innovatively: for instance, to recover suppressed histories that are sited in particular ways, that are accessed by specific means. But I am skeptical about the effects of the pseudo-ethnographic role set up for the artist or assumed by him or her. For this setup can promote a presuming of ethnographic authority as much as a questioning of it, an evasion of institutional critique as often as an extension of it.

Consider this scenario. An artist is contacted by a curator about a site-specific work. He or she is flown into town in order to engage the community targeted for

collaboration by the institution. However, there is little time or money for much interaction with the group (which tends to be constructed as readymade for representation). Nevertheless, a project is designed, and an installation in the museum and/or a work in the community follows. Few of the principles of the ethnographic participant-observer are observed, let alone critiqued. And despite the best intentions of the artist, only limited engagement of the sited other is effected. Almost naturally the focus wanders from collaborative investigation to ethnographic self-fashioning, in which the artist is not decentred so much as the other is refashioned in artistic guise.¹⁶

Again, this projection is at work in other practices that often assume, covertly or otherwise, an ethnographic model. The other is admired as one who plays with representation, subverts gender, and so on. In these ways the artist, critic, or historian projects a potentially foreign practice onto the field of the other, where it is read not only as authentically indigenous but as innovatively political! Of course, this is an exaggeration, and the application of critical methods from poststructuralism to psychoanalysis has illuminated much. But it has also obliterated much in the field of the other, and in its very name. This is the opposite of a critique of ethnographic authority, indeed the opposite of ethnographic method, at least as I understand them. And this "impossible place" has become a common occupation of artists, critics and historians alike.

1. Walter Benjamin, *Reflections*, ed. Peter Demetz, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), pp. 220-238. The fact that Stalin had condemned this culture by 1934 is only one of the ironies that twist any reading of "The Author as Producer" today (to say nothing of "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" [1936]). My title may also evoke "The Artist as Anthropologist" by Joseph Kosuth (*Fox* 1, 1975), but our concerns are quite different.
2. This danger may deepen rather than diminish for the artist perceived to be other, for he or she may be asked to assume the role of native informant as well. Incidentally, the charge of "ideological patronage" should not be conflated with "the indignity of speaking for others." Pronounced by Gilles Deleuze in a 1972 conversation with Michel Foucault, this taboo circulated widely in American art criticism on the left in the 1980s, where it produced a censorious guilty silence as much as it did an empowered alternative speech. See Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 209.
3. This position is advanced in an early text by the figure who later epitomized the contrary position. In the conclusion of *Mythologies* (1957), Roland Barthes writes: "There is therefore one language which is not mythical, it is the language of man as a producer: wherever man speaks in order to transform reality and no longer to preserve it as an image, wherever he links his language to the making of things, metalanguage is referred to a language-object, and myth is impossible. This is why revolutionary language proper cannot be mythical" (trans. Annette Lavers [New York: Hill and Wang, 1972], p. 146).
4. This fantasy also operated in the productivist model to the extent that the proletarian was often seen as "primitive" in this sense too.
5. For a related discussion of these problems, see "The Politics of the Signifier: A Conversation on the Whitney Biennial," *October* 66 (Fall 1993).

6. It is in this sense that critics like Homi Bhabha have developed such notions as "third spaces" and deferred times.
7. James Clifford develops the notion of "ethnographic self-fashioning" in *The Predicament of Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), in part from Stephen Greenblatt in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). This source points to a commonality between the critique of ethnography in new anthropology and the critique of history in new historicism (more on which below).
8. Clifford also develops this notion in *The Predicament of Culture*: "Is not every ethnographer something of a surrealist, a reinventor and reshuffler of realities?" (p. 147). Some have questioned how reciprocal art and anthropology were in the surrealist milieu. See, for example, Jean Jamin, "L'ethnographie mode d'emploi. De quelques rapports de l'ethnologie avec le malaise dans la civilisation," in *Le mal et la douleur*, ed. J. Hainard and R. Kaehr (Neuchâtel: Musée d'ethnographie, 1986); and Denis Hollier, "The Use-Value of the Impossible," *October* 60 (Spring 1992).
9. Is there not, in other words, a poststructuralist projection akin to the structuralist projection critiqued long ago by Pierre Bourdieu in *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique* (Paris, 1972)?
10. Incidentally, this artist-envy is not unique to new anthropology. It was at work, for example, in the rhetorical analysis of historical discourse initiated in the 1960s. "There have been no significant attempts," Hayden White wrote in "The Burden of History" (1966), "at surrealist, expressionistic, or existentialist historiography in this century (except by novelists and poets themselves), for all of the vaunted 'artistry' of the historians of modern times" (*Tropics of Discourse* [Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978], p. 43).
11. Obviously there are other dimensions of these crossings-over, such as the curricular wars of the last decade. First some anthropologists adapted textual methods from literary criticism. Now some literary critics respond with pseudo-ethnographies of literary cultures. In the process some historians feel squeezed on both sides. This is not a petty skirmish at a time when university administrators study enrolments closely — and when some advocate a return to the old disciplines, while others seek to recoup interdisciplinary ventures as cost-effective moves.
12. In a sense the critique of these two human sciences is as fundamental to postmodern discourse as the elaboration of them was to modern discourse.
13. In "Philosophy and the Spontaneous Ideology of the Scientists" (1967), Louis Althusser writes of interdisciplinarity as "the common theoretical ideology that silently inhabits the 'consciousness' of all these specialists ... oscillating between a vague spiritualism and a technocratic positivism." See *Philosophy and the Spontaneous Ideology of the Scientists & Other Essays* (London: Verso, 1990), p. 97.
14. I am indebted in these remarks to my fellow participants in "Roundtable on Site-Specificity," *Documenta* 4 (1994): Renee Green, Mitchell Kane, Miwon Kwon, John Lindell and Helen Molesworth. There Kwon suggests that such neighbourhood place is posed against urban space as difference against sameness. She also suggests that artists are associated with places in a way that connects identity politics and site-specific practices — the authenticity of the one invoked to bolster the authenticity of the other.
15. Some recent examples of each: social outreach in "Culture in Action," a public art program of Sculpture Chicago in which selected artists collaborated with community groups; economic development in "42nd Street Art Project," a show that could not but improve the image of Times Square for its future redevelopment; and recent projects in several European cities (e.g., Antwerp) in which site-specific works were deployed in part for touristic interest and political promotion.
16. This is a caricature, to be sure, but as such it clarifies aspects of the problem. Consider "Projet Unité," a show of site-specific works within the Le Corbusier Unité d'Habitation in Firminy, France in summer 1993; or rather, consider one project among the many designed by the nearly 40 invited artists or artist groups. In this project a familiar American neoconceptual duo asked the Unité inhabitants to contribute favourite cassettes towards the production of a discothèque. The tapes were then edited, compiled and displayed according to apartment and floor. Whatever its irony, the project seems to possess the bad assumptions of such anthropological or sociological surveys without the good intentions.

NEW ART HISTORY

BILL READINGS

Docteur en philosophie de l'Université d'Oxford, Bill Readings a enseigné la littérature anglaise à l'Université de Syracuse et à l'Université de Genève. Il était, en 1994, professeur de littérature comparée à l'Université de Montréal et éditeur de la revue *Surfaces*. Coorganisateur de colloques, parmi lesquels : *Repenser la culture/Rethinking Culture* (Université de Montréal) et *Postmodernism across the Ages* (New York College English Association), Bill Readings est l'auteur, entre autres, de *Introducing Lyotard: Art and Politics* (1991). Ses ouvrages plus récents s'intitulent *Beyond Culture: The Posthistorical University* et *Milton and the Invention of Literature: The Restoration and the Fall of Language*. Il a codirigé l'ouvrage collectif *Vision and Textuality* (1994, incluant des textes de Hal Foster, John Tagg, Thomas Crow et Peter de Bolla).

Bill Readings was Professor of Comparative Literature at the Université de Montréal in 1994. He took his doctorate (Phil.) at the University of Oxford and taught English Literature at Syracuse University and the University of Geneva. He has been the editor of *Surfaces* and co-organized symposia, including *Repenser la culture/Rethinking Culture* (Université de Montréal) and *Postmodernism across the Ages* (New York College English Association). Bill Readings was the author of *Introducing Lyotard: Art and Politics* (1991) and his more recent books are *Beyond Culture: The Posthistorical University* and *Milton and the Invention of Literature: The Restoration and the Fall of Language*. He co-edited *Vision and Textuality* (1994, including texts by Hal Foster, John Tagg, Thomas Crow and Peter de Bolla).

The term "New Art History" seems to have arisen, more or less, as the title of a conference organized by the editors of *Block* magazine at Middlesex Polytechnic in 1982. They put a question mark after it; I would be inclined to pluralize it, as "New Art Histories." This particular, site-specific origin is worth invoking, it seems to me, in that the "New Art History" is a particularly British term, grouping a number of shifts in the practice of writing about Art. What is most interesting about the New Art History, or Histories, is ultimately the sheer blank fact that it, or they, should come to be named as such — the performative act of baptism. This naming is also specific to Britain. In North America the debate around such questions has tended to be carried on under the designation "Postmodernism."

These are of course broad brush strokes, but in each case we need to remember a couple of important facts. first, both the New Art Histories and Postmodernism arise at moments when the existing institution of Art History is, on its own terms, functioning extremely well, when programs in Art History in Britain and North America have achieved a remarkable degree of institutional stability and recognition. Second, the New Art History appears as something more than the simple importation of new methodologies or new objects into an existing disciplinary field. That is, the New Art History is not simply the application of Marxist, feminist, or psychoanalytic theory, nor merely the consideration of a range of artifacts hitherto excluded from High Culture. It is indeed these things, but the effort of renaming implies something more.

John Tagg could not be here, but a question that he asked seems to me very indicative of what is at stake in the New Art History — indicative both in its directness and in the potential for its being misunderstood. In reference to *The Burden of Representation* — a book that argues that there is not one history of photography as a form of representation but rather there are multiple histories of the uses to which photography has been put — he poses the following question concerning the art object: "We should not ask, 'What does it express?' but rather 'What uses does it serve?'"

Now, on one level, this could seem to be the founding question of a discipline much like the Social History of Art. A kind of Art History, a positivism, that took as its starting point Benjamin's account of the decay of aura and proceeded to look through art objects to their social function. Yet if it is to mean something, the New Art History is more than a matter of new methodologies and new objects. It is more fundamentally a disciplinary question, one that puts the "depart" back into the title "*Department of Art History*." In framing the papers that you are about to hear, I want above all to underline the *disciplinary* question that underlies their discursive address — the question of whether the New Art Histories belong to *departments* of Art

History. And if it does not belong to departments, to whom, then, does the New Art History belong? Or to put this another way, how does the New Art History approach the question of its disciplinary belonging? This is not just the question of what cultural work art objects do and how new methodologies allow us to see them doing it. Rather, it is the question of *what it is that Art History does, tout court*.

What the New Art Histories do *not* do, then, is reconstitute the history of a given or an expanded realm of objects. The New Art Histories are indeed both a New History and the History of a New Art, but they are also the bringing into crisis of the possibility of Art History as a disciplinary field. The New Art Histories are not the renewal of Art History, and this is why it is important to notice that traditional Art History was not (in its own terms) in crisis at the moment of the emergence of the New Art Histories. In that sense, the New Art Histories were not simply a response to a professional need. It is perhaps worthwhile to note that traditional Art History in Britain was somewhat differently culturally situated than in North America. Christie's and Sotheby's occupy the place that in North America is reserved for institutions such as the Mary Boone Gallery. The commercial interface of Art History in Britain, as is perhaps appropriate in the twilight of a waning empire, is the auction block rather than the gallery catalogue. In explaining to people why they should buy paintings, connoisseurship — as well as archival research and iconological analysis — is thus directed primarily to questions of *authenticity* rather than to the phenomenology of aesthetic experience (what it is like to look at paintings).

Hence the question of the disciplinary and institutional function of writing about art is posed in Britain to the art *historian* rather than to the art *critic*, which is why we get the New Art Histories rather than Postmodernism as the locus of such investigation. As Hal Foster showed us last night, the central question of the institutional status of art is that it appears as a self-consciousness about perspective. Everything that matters in the New Art Histories is at stake in the attempt to make the questioning of perspective something other than narcissism. If we are to avoid the problems that Hal Foster laid out, the question of perspective must be more than navel gazing or the search for an ethnographic alibi. It must ask both what it means to look and what it means to take a historical perspective on art — what the place of looking is in the practice of Art History. The New Art Histories problematize art, but they also problematize history. Where Modernism asked a potentially formalist question, "What is Art?" a certain postmodernism asks not only "What is art?" but also "What is history?"

First, what does it mean to look? What are the vectors of power that form lines of sight? The New Art Histories depart from the department of the social history of art insofar as this question is not just the question, "How can we see power at

work, how can we grasp the ideological work of construction and placement that masquerades under the presumed naturalness of representation?" Rather, the New Art Histories ask, "How is vision itself grasped within a network of relations of power?" This phrasing is thus much more open to the aesthetic as a question than is the former version. The intersection of power and looking is not just a matter of seeing through mimesis, not just replacing the *representation* of the real with the representation of ideology. For if looking itself is caught up with power, we move beyond the binary opposition that offers us either traditional affirmations of aesthetic autonomy or a general history of cultural representation. If looking itself is caught up in power, even perhaps the power of the sublime, this can lead us to think of art as something whose relation to its cultural context is not adequately registered in the choice between autonomous value and mere mystification, something whose cultural effect is not limited to its social meaning as cultural representation. This is the framework within which I want to hear Peter de Bolla's paper.

Second, I have asked the question of what it means to take a historical perspective on art, the question I hear troubling both Thomas Crow and Stephen Bann. Here I have to say something about my insistent tendency to pluralize, to refer to the New Art Histories. Where the social history of art might imply a disciplinary authority, a single history in which the question is merely one of calibrating the relative proportions of Marxism, feminism and psychoanalysis that go to make our Molotov cocktail, the Molotov cocktail we throw at the tanks of the art historical institution, it seems to me that what goes on under the title of the New Art Histories — and Stephen Bann's paper is exemplary here — tends to open the question of how it is that various histories of art get constructed. Implied here is both the obvious question of from what perspectives such histories are written, as well as the more complex issue of how a notion of perspective (which is itself implicated in artistic representation) underpins our awareness of what it is to write history.

"Theory" is one name that we might give to the acknowledgment of the proposition that interpretation is primordial, that it structures the possibility of apprehension in a way that responsible criticism must take into account. What the New Art Histories tell us is that history provides no alibis for interpretation. In this sense, the new histories of art are not just gazes cast back from the perspectival point of the present, rather they are modes of prolongation of the object, which forces the art historian to relinquish both the promise of immediacy (the phenomenology of perception that so often structures art criticism) and the comfort of critical distance (the alibi of historical objectivity that so often structures Art History).

The art histories that arise from this recognition cannot be historicist. They cannot but recognize the relativizing force of the interpretive frames within which art

objects are apprehended, while they also cannot invoke history as a Hegelian alibi for the cultural work that such interpretation performs. There is no alibi that will excuse in advance the way in which any one history necessarily cuts out and blocks other histories. If this conclusion sounds familiar, it is perhaps because it allows us to grasp the extent to which the New Art Histories, in their refusal to become the disciplinary project of a renewed Art History, have opened the disciplinarity of Art History to its postmodernity: a placing of the question of art within a heterogeneous and incommensurable disciplinary field. If I can perhaps find it in myself to be more encouraging than Hal Foster about what is going on in Art History and elsewhere (thankfully also elsewhere than in Art History) in the wake of the New Art Histories, it is because I feel that this Postmodern moment of Art History is one that holds open the full radicality of the question of how it is that things are open to interpretation at all. What gets produced is a multiple and discontinuous field of site-specific art histories, which nonetheless have a strong contemporary relevance. It is this paradoxical combination of the recognition of historical discontinuity and the concern for contemporary relevance that, finally, ties together the three papers you are about to hear.

NEW ART HISTORY

THOMAS CROW

D'origine américaine, Thomas Crow réside maintenant en Grande-Bretagne; il est professeur d'histoire de l'art à l'Université du Sussex à Brighton (School of European Studies). Spécialiste du XVIII^e siècle, mais aussi du XIX^e et de l'art contemporain, il est l'auteur de *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century* (1985) et de *Nineteenth-Century Art: A Critical History* (1994). Les textes de Thomas Crow ont été traduits dans plusieurs langues (dans la revue *Parachute* et dans les *Cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne* pour les versions francophones). Il a publié des articles dans les revues *Artforum* et *October*, et dans les collectifs *A New History of French Literature* et *Dia Art Foundation/Discussions in Contemporary Culture* (1987, ss la dir. de Hal Foster).

Thomas Crow was born in the USA and is currently living in Britain. Professor of History of Art at the School of European Studies, University of Sussex at Brighton, he has a particular interest in the eighteenth century, as well as the nineteenth century and contemporary art. He is the author of *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century* (1985) and *Nineteenth-Century Art: A Critical History* (1994). He has written many essays and articles in magazines including *Artforum* and *October* and his texts have been translated into Spanish, Italian, German and French (in *Parachute* and *Cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne* for French translation). Two essays by Thomas Crow were published in *A New History of French Literature* and *Dia Art Foundation/Discussions in Contemporary Culture* (1987, ed. Hal Foster).

I want to begin by qualifying the short description of this paper that I provided for the program. If the results of what has come to be called the new art history now disappoint, it is because that very phenomenon has raised expectations far beyond the norm for the field 25 years ago. If today's most routine piece of social art history or glib exercise in second-hand theorizing had been published then, it would have been received with fascinated interest. The fact is that standards have risen enormously, and that alone justifies an acceptance of the term "new art history" as designating an accomplished historical fact.

But the point of my short description was that there is a danger of misinterpreting this success and mis-diagnosing the reasons for the depressed state of art history as it existed before. The greatest damage had been done by the poor performance of a whole generation of American scholars, many of them trained after World War II by the émigré Europeans. finding students who were unprepared to work at the highest level, these teachers consciously or unconsciously lowered their demands: the simplified exercises which they set for their New-World students then became the effective totality of the discipline. The most serious failing of established art history during the 1960s and 1970s was not so much its absence of theoretical self-reflection but that, even within these narrowed limits, its competence was so questionable.

Still, honoured in the breach rather than the observance was the real difficulty inherent in practising art history at a high level, given the wide range of skills and areas of knowledge it requires. One only has to compare it to the state of literary studies over the same period. When a vogue for "The New Historicism" arrived in the 1980s, actual skills in historical research had atrophied beyond any recovery in the short cycle allowed by critical fashion: the "historical" component of work produced under that rubric normally offered little more than an aping of historical method; archives were credulously regarded as places of mysterious wonder and Foucauldian danger, and critics felt free warmly to congratulate themselves for the mere act of setting foot inside one.

Luckily, the imperative of primary research has never been abandoned in art history, though the power of literary studies in the American university unfortunately shows itself in the work of many ambitious younger art historians. In a great deal of recent work, there will typically be a rather hasty and impatient reporting of the author's original research; then, at a point where I am still avid to find out more of what he or she has discovered, there will be a sudden lunge to an imported theoretical formula intended to secure the importance of the "merely" empirical findings that precede it. The trouble with this procedure is that the borrowed theory is invariably unsurprising and awkwardly matched to the problems at hand, the result being a

violation of a fundamental principle of explanation: the reader is led away from what is less well known toward what is utterly familiar. And the original content of the writing is denied its chance for full internal scrutiny and development.

At the same time, this kind of hybrid confusion in the reporting of research is not exclusively imposed from the outside. It comes also from the heightened expectations of interpretative success that the achievements of new art history have put into place. And this is almost always pursued by subjecting the individual work of art to heavily invasive procedures to force from it the secret of the whole regime of power or gender relations by which it is governed in the final analysis. Accomplishing this requires heavyweight machinery, and bought-in theory seems the only possible recourse. And the heavier it is, the more potential readers are excluded, because they have no experience with the vocabulary (methodological prefaces often function like a ring of fences), and this style of interpretation expands indefinitely.

The most mistaken component of this approach may be that it remains within a posture of consumption, that is, the picture of inquiry is standing in a museum, scrutinizing a work with greater and greater intensity the better to read its every sign — the verb “to read” signalling the priority ceded to literary models. Perhaps the amateurism implied in that consumer’s posture is at the root of this problem of proliferating interpretations. Looking is one thing, the more the better, but explanatory writing may be better off finding another direct object.

What may have first put me on this idea was the writing of someone who is a significant absence here, Michael Baxandall, in his *Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany*, published in 1980. I remember that his early chapter on the physical properties of the wood was welcomed by conservatives in art history as a wonderful “return to the object” in the midst of the new art history, for which they were prepared to forgive a lot of what followed. But there was an odd quality about this brief chapter that suggested to me that something more than this was going on. In it he describes the peculiar cellular structure of the lime tree, its tractability for carving, combined with the rigorous constraints that it imposes on the sculptor: shrinkage of the wood is far greater in the circumferential axis than in the radial one, also greater in the porous outer wood than in the dense inner core, so that any broad forms must be carved in such a way that they are not tied to the inner arc of the block at more than one point. Otherwise the result is a pattern of splitting called “starshake.” The wood, moreover, is perpetually pulsing and changing in response to its environment.

By itself this would be a conventional recognition of the technical constraints on style. But Baxandall suggests something deeper when he writes that he aimed to show a limewood sculptor, Tilman Riemenschneider, was “stimulated to evolve a distinguished art in most unpromising circumstances, e.g. the cellular structure of

limewood to the social predicament of the Wurzburg diocese." (p. 19) From what follows it becomes more and more apparent that this sentence does not signal a simple accumulation of difficulties but entails a parallelism between the two phenomena. The sculptor formed a style — the "florid" style as he calls it — out of the very forces that always threatened to break his work into pieces.

As he says, "The wood-carver would have sensed a sort of controlled or diversified or sublimated starshake... he would cut toward this hidden form... playing on the internal mobility of the wood following or defining its currents, in a way that gave them a special meaning of expression."

The patron and artist together forged a mode of art — the winged retable altarpiece — that temporarily balanced, on the one hand, the desires for sensual gratification embedded in early sixteenth-century piety with, on the other, the iconoclastic resentments against hagiolatry that would triumph and destroy the form itself in the coming Reformation, destroying at the same time the very possibility of this sculpture.

This is of course far too simple a paraphrase, and it would be useful, given time, to trace his analysis of the way that the forces of the capitalist marketplace, inside and outside art, converged to engender a dangerous idolatry and thus force florid sculpture into harm's way. But in this subtle demonstration there remains something still not being said, something beyond explicit articulation. The unpromising circumstances of limewood sculpture were not obstacles to be overcome but the necessary condition for the art to exist in the first place, though they ensured that it could not survive its environment. Those forces were inextricably bound up with creativity itself; great quality becomes a condition of its own negation.

The form in which I have to put this paraphrase suggests why the isolated chapter on the structure of limewood has to be where it is. The unstated but fundamental aim of the book is to address how great episodes in artistic creation come about, why they are so rare, why they never last long. These are questions that its author would probably never dream of putting in so bald a form; once stated, they are probably susceptible only to banal answers. But the lesson of Baxandall's book is that questions of such generality are not beyond productive engagement, provided one resolutely faces away from them and produces a discussion on a controllable subject that is entirely sufficient in its own terms — but one that simultaneously elicits in the mind of the reader another story on a vastly wider scale. In this case, he insists on the particularity of the inquiry to the point that he coins a term for it from an archaic vocabulary of the period: "chiromancy," borrowed from the physician and alchemist Paracelsus. But that exaggerated vigilance against anachronism is the condition of its general import. And its rhetorical effect has become even more charged in the years

since the book was written, as the question of exceptional quality has become either forbidden in left-leaning discussion or degraded in unargued repetition by the neoconservative Right.

It must be said that the device in Baxandall's hands remains rhetorical, that its cognitive reward will always be allusive. But I think it helped awaken me to a parallel effort that used the same indirection to achieve a sharper descriptive and explanatory effect. The object in question was Minimal sculpture, which distinctively offers very little purchase for analytical description. As a result, critical responses and now historical accounts of Minimalism have emphasized the role of the spectator in filling in the work with a mental response that naturally expanded to take in the surroundings of the work, including a heightened awareness of one's own body as co-presence with the sculpture.

For me, the available accounts of Minimalism have been much too constrained within this Phenomenological approach, dependent as it is on unverifiable assertion of psychological response. To find an alternative, especially an early one, it was necessary to look at a work of art rather than any piece of criticism. In 1966, Dan Graham had contributed an article to *Arts Magazine* entitled "Homes for America," a gesture which has lately and with justice begun to be recognized as one of the key art works of the 1960s. At the same time, the strategy is precisely the same as Baxandall on "chiromancy." It begins with an alphabetical list of 24 names given by property developers to clusters of private, single-family houses ("Belleplain, Brooklawn, Colonia, Colonia Manor, etc."), followed by prose of emphatic plainness and declarative simplicity:

Large-scale "tract" housing "developments" constitute the new city. They are located everywhere. They are not particularly bound to existing communities; they fail to develop either regional characteristic or separate identity. These "projects" date from the end of World War II when in southern California speculators or "operative" builders adapted mass production techniques to quickly build many houses for the defense workers over-concentrated there.

The article continues to describe, in the same vein, the economies of scale inherent in those techniques as determining every formal feature of these manufactured communities. Toward the end of piece, Graham deduces that they exist apart from prior standards of "good" architecture. They were not built to satisfy individual needs or tastes. The owner is completely tangential to the product's completion. His home isn't really possessable in the old sense; it wasn't designed to "last for generations"; and outside of its immediate "here and now" context it is useless, designed to be thrown away. Both architecture and craftsmanship as values

are subverted by the dependence on simplified and easily duplicated techniques of fabrication and standardized modular plans.

There is nothing in the typography or layout of Graham's modest article to distinguish it from the directly adjacent pieces of straightforward art-world journalism; it is all the more embedded in its context in that it begins in the same column of type where the previous article leaves off and ends where the next is inserted. Only the unstylish, pedantic exposition of his facts, along with the marginal appropriateness of the subject to a fine-art periodical, transforms this last passage suddenly into something else entirely: without ever breaking character and ceasing to be an account of its ostensible subject, it becomes an analysis of Minimal art, fully on the level of the most high-minded criticism — in advance indeed of the criticism of that moment. The accompanying illustrations have misled some into seeing the point of the piece as identifying correspondences between Minimalist forms and the blandly anonymous character of the suburban built environment. The piece is not about such patent likenesses of appearance, which perpetuate a late-modernist fixation on self-sufficiency of visual aspect; it is about larger conditions in the common life of society which have undercut characteristically modernist affirmations of possession and individuality, rendering them archaic and unrealistic. Minimalism, one sees, gains its pertinence by concentrating and enacting the logic of those conditions, ones equally on view in a systematic analysis of the post-war housing industry. That — rather than the phenomenal artifacts, the housing tracts and industrial parks, that result from it — constitutes its object of imitation. The promise of realism contained in the plain diction of the piece is confirmed at the level of abstract critical allegory.

Conceptual Art appears to me more and more to have been justified by its discovery of new modes of figuration, a truth-telling warrant pressed in opposition to the abstraction that had overtaken painting and sculpture — and for that reason it has much to tell the historian. *Homes for America* stands as a signal instance of this, and it had direct descendants. In 1971, Hans Haacke began his Shapolsky Holdings piece by doing exactly what Graham had been mistaken for, that is, starting with a Minimalist formal system and identifying found material in the environment — the New York Public Records Office — that matched it. Graham had begun in the environment and used it to construct an account of art; Haacke operated entirely within the advanced art of that moment, within the established systemic and serial logic that governed its visual presentation. By rigorously adhering to the demands of art, introducing only one allowable shift in the matter disposed in the system, he generated an economic x-ray of both the geography and class system of New York in the most striking possible form — a mode of description beyond paraphrase — which

then turned around on the art world with notoriously explosive consequences: the director of the Guggenheim museum, blinded to Haacke's scrupulous formalism, branded these works "an alien substance that had entered the art museum organism."

These three examples have left me little time for extended conclusions. It will perhaps be enough to say that too many established modes of writing, well-understood and governed by knowable rules, have been hastily discarded in a rush to new vocabularies of questionable internal coherence. These examples mark my obvious bias toward plainer, well-tested modes of writing, including very humble ones. For me, the best piece of art-historical writing so far in this decade is Bruno Chenigüe's biographical chronology at the back of the catalogue for the Paris *Géricault* exhibition. For all of the semiotic sophistication advertised in recent theory, such moves seem to be based on the obvious fallacy that a new idea must be reflected directly in an equally novel semantic equivalent. No genre that has been of use in the past can be ruled off limits now — not even my current favourite, the life-and-work narrative.

THE VISIBILITY OF VISUALITY

PETER DE BOLLA

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It is common in the literature of visual theory to invoke the enlightenment as some kind of ground upon which modern conceptions of the visual field are constructed. In part this derives from a certain philosophical inheritance which we might in shorthand describe as the line of sight between Hegel and Lacan via Sartre. This inheritance has it that the philosophical project of the modern, that is enlightenment, is intimately caught up with and deeply implicated in the conceptual field of the visual. Insofar as this goes, and like all broad characterizations of a difficult set of arguments it goes only a very small way, this is correct. However, what is glaringly missing from this telescoped account is a specifically nuanced historical perspective on enlightenment modes and modalities of visibility. This is compounded by the fact that where attention has been drawn to the general area of the visual, it has surfaced either in the philosophy and history of science, a discipline which has not sought to investigate the socio-cultural noise which colours and distorts vision in its construction of visibility, or in the history of philosophical discussions of optics.¹ In both the history of science and philosophical treatments of the visual field, therefore, we find optics taking centre stage, as one might argue it did for the enlightenment itself.

My purpose, however, is to move away from optics towards the more amorphous cultural domain in order to focus on the visual field, or visibility. Throughout I shall take it as axiomatic that visibility encompasses social and cultural productions and practices as well as philosophical and technical descriptions of optics. This larger focus is particularly helpful in regard to the enlightenment since visibility, for this period, is not only located in the virtual spaces created by cultural forms, it also determines topologically the landscape upon which concepts are mapped. This is to note that vision is not only literally a topic of great concern to enlightenment thought but that it also furnishes, via an entire topological field, some of the grounding figures of conceptualization in general. In this sense one might say that vision figures enlightenment thought.²

Consequently, visibility is both literally a topic under investigation during the enlightenment, and the name we might give to a figurative spacing which opens up, controls or legislates the terrain upon which a large number of concepts are articulated. In this sense visibility is certainly not confined to the visible. These comments clearly point towards a very large topic for inquiry which could not conceivably be covered in the space of an essay; I shall, therefore, limit my remarks to a very small corner of this larger field. Essentially, I shall be attempting to suggest a way in which the work of historicizing visibility might begin, and I shall do this by approaching an archival account of the society of the spectacle.

In order to read that archive, we shall need to address the specific frames we bring to bear upon the object investigated. In other words we cannot imagine that we see with disinterested eyes; nor indeed, that the period in question was able to see "purely" through the lens of optical science. My archival account, therefore, shall be doubly subjected to "theoretical" framings: the first will take its cue from our own historical viewpoint, while the second will be derived from an eighteenth-century source.

In relation to the first, our own contemporary moment, we should acknowledge the debt we owe to the philosophical inheritance I gestured towards in my opening; this philosophical discussion has been substantially attenuated by the work of psychoanalysis. It is, perhaps, in film theory where we currently find the most active engagement with concepts of visuality, and within that debate the work of Jacques Lacan has been extraordinarily influential.³ I do not wish to rehearse some now well-worn arguments about the gaze and the subject found in Lacan's reformulations of Freud; to do so would be redundant in the present collection. It is, however, important to acknowledge the persistence and penetration of the Lacanian account, since we cannot turn a blind eye to a model of vision which has substantially determined how we see the interconnections between the subject and the visual field. In this sense we are unable to extricate ourselves from Lacan's gaze. Part of my purpose in the following will be to expose that gaze to a historicizing stare; in so doing I hope to insert a historical within a theoretical account.

Consequently, while I shall endeavour to keep "history" separate from "theory" in order to stall the point at which enlightenment modes of visuality are read through the lens of Lacanian psychoanalysis, such disintrications of history from theory are more likely to be announced than fully realized. Thus, while it may be tempting to read the enlightenment as if it produced Lacanian theory *avant la lettre*, I shall struggle to hold the two frames apart in the hope that a more complex historicizing analytic will emerge.

LACAN AND THE GAZE

Lacan's interest in the visual, and the gaze more specifically, is, of course, tied up with a much larger and more complex topic, the formation of the subject. On a number of occasions, this subject formation is explicitly referred to in visual terms, as in the Lacanian *locus classicus* of the mirror stage. But it is the use of the term gaze which I shall focus upon since this will provide us with the articulation point between the present of analysis and my historical example, and the purpose of so doing will be to bring to the concept of the gaze some historical depth. Yet, more specifically, it is the inflections of gender that are taken to be articulated in and through the concept of the gaze which I shall concentrate upon.

In what might now be called the classic account, the gaze is taken to objectify what it gazes upon, and as such it is understood in terms of the masculine objectification of women. This is certainly to put the matter simply and crudely and to distort both the Lacanian model and those developed within film theory. Nevertheless, it provides us with a point of departure, since it signals the specific topic of concern in the following argument.⁴ The most sustained Lacanian account of the gaze is to be found in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, where Lacan explicitly situates his own model of vision within the philosophical tradition inherited by Sartre. He writes:

The gaze, as conceived by Sartre, is the gaze by which I am surprised-surprised in so far as it changes all the perspectives, the lines of force, of my world, orders it, from the point of nothingness where I am, in a sort of radiated reticulation of organisms.... In so far as I am under the gaze, Sartre writes, I no longer see the eye that looks at me and, if I see the eye, the gaze disappears.⁵

Lacan asks at this point, "Is this a correct phenomenological analysis?" and he answers "No." There then follows an extremely important moment in this chapter on the gaze, in which the following is stated:

It is not true that, when I am under the gaze, when I solicit a gaze, when I obtain it, I do not see it as a gaze. Painters, above all, have grasped this gaze as such in the mask and I have only to remind you of Goya, for example, for you to realize this.

The gaze sees itself.... The gaze I encounter... is not a seen gaze, but a gaze imagined by me in the field of the other. (84)

In my historical theoretical text, Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, we will encounter so strong a prefiguration of this analysis that questions of chronological priority will seem irresistible. Let us dwell a moment longer, however, upon the Lacanian argument, in which the gaze is also imbricated within questions of voyeurism. As Lacan writes:

A gaze surprises him in the function of voyeur, disturbs him, overwhelms him and reduces him to a feeling of shame. The gaze in question is certainly the presence of others as such. But does this mean that originally it is in the relation of subject to subject, in the function of the existence of others as looking at me, that we apprehend what the gaze really is? Is it not clear that the gaze intervenes here only in as much as it is not the annihilating subject, correlative of the world of objectivity, who feels himself surprised, but the subject sustaining himself in a function of desire? (84-85)

Here Lacan is at pains to disentangle the gaze from the economies of desire, to reimpose the boundary of interiority/exteriority in order to spatially orient the relations between the look and the gaze. This spatial construction is perhaps best exemplified in the three diagrams Lacan uses to illustrate the relationships between the subject, gaze and look.⁶

The first diagram has the look of familiarity about it, indeed Alberti would have recognized it as an account of unilinear perspective. The "geometral point" corresponds to the place occupied by the artist who surveys the object to be depicted through the mediating frame of the image. In Alberti's time, this mediating point would have been the transparent pane of glass through which the Renaissance artist saw the object and onto which, as the glass turns into canvas, he was to paint it. In this diagram, the position of the eye is superimposed upon the position of the gaze: eye and gaze work in unison just as the Renaissance artist masters the world he surveys through the mechanical-conceptual apparatus of the camera obscura.⁷

Lacan, however, wishes to disrupt this rather cosy arrangement, and to claim that the geometral point is only a "partial dimension in the field of the gaze" (88). In fact, Lacan understands this diagrammatization of geometric perspective as primarily addressing space, not vision, and in support of this he cites the famous eighteenth-century debates concerning the abilities of a blind man to correctly read such spaces. The purpose of this attack is to deny the inherent cartesianism in the model, that which precisely equates seeing with being. Lacan's rather neat destruction of this position is to show how, in unilinear perspective, the viewer, in his or her immersion in the image through the sight lines which converge on the vanishing point, is in effect "vanished away." The only way back from this point is through an inversion of the triangle, so that the viewer, who now finds him or herself in the position of the object, has to retrace the trajectory initially followed in order to occupy the position of mastery from which it departed. In this way, the viewing subject becomes merely a function of the visual field.

Diagram 2 represents the subject not as the master of the visual field but as the object of the gaze, as precisely the picture. The triangle has been inverted and the means by which the subject (now objectified as that which is seen) enters the visual field is through the deliberately disembodied or inanimate "point of light." This, in effect, is to strip intention out of the activity of looking. In this way, the gaze is figured as irrecoverably external to the subject, and the visual field is divested of its problematics of mastery; in its place, the dominating viewer of the first diagram becomes the object in and of a spectacle.

In the mid position of diagram 2 we find the "screen," which, Lacan insists, is opaque. Consequently, the subject who occupies the position of the picture can only

do so by way of being projected onto the screen. In this sense the second diagram attempts to convey how a subject becomes a picture. As Lacan writes:

I must, to begin with, insist on the following: in the scopic field, the gaze is outside, I am looked at, that is to say, I am a picture. (106)

The third diagram conflates the two previous ones and makes the point even more strongly that it is only through what is called the "image" or the "screen" that subjectivity is constituted. Furthermore, the gaze is now explicitly in the position of the object looked at in diagram 1, so that the location for the activity of seeing is constantly shuttling back and forth between the thing made object in the visual field and the thing making it object. It should be clear by now that the subject is unable to occupy with any stability either of these positions. In this way, the third diagram pictures to us a schematization of the "spectacle of the world," and it is that world, appearing to us as spectacle, which provides the location for the subject-seeing, or subject-in-sight. As Lacan writes:

What determines me, at the most profound level, in the visible, is the gaze that is outside. It is through the gaze that I enter light and it is from the gaze that I receive its effects. (106)

This entry into light, an entry into the domain of visibility, will now be explored in my companion theoretical text *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*.

ADAM SMITH; THE THEORY OF SPECTATORIAL SUBJECTIVITY

If we are to take it as axiomatic that visibility is as much constructed in and through social, cultural and discursive forms as those things we might loosely and anachronistically take to be self-evidently visible, then we shall need to nuance the range of possible activities within the visual field which might have been available for any period. More specifically, we need to investigate the differences between, say, looking or surveying, watching or spectating that are articulated in enlightenment discussions of viewing practice. This is not only to point to the semantic differences which are delimited by these words in our lexicon and which are, therefore, to some extent co-extensive with our own period's nuancing of these terms, but also to a fully articulated and articulatable grammar of forms which constitute visibility in and for the enlightenment. Individuals, in so far as they are constituted as subjects by this grammar of forms, take on specific roles such as "viewers" or "spectators," and these positionalities within the discursive dispersal of subjectivity are far from inert in relation to other definitional criteria surrounding the subject, such as class, social standing and gender. This is to note that a viewer in mid-eighteenth-century England has very precise contours: he or she is positioned by an activity, say looking,

and is thereby situated in relation to a social and cultural topography which inflects specific social, economic and gendered descriptions of the individual.

In point of fact, looking represents just one option within the range of possible insertions into visuality; other activities within the domain of the scopic are delimited by terms such as gazing or glancing. The period in question worked out an entire metaphoric of the eye in which these different activities were distinguished. For example, in the activity of viewing a landscape the eye might be "cast" to a particular point, or "thrown" towards an object in the landscape known as an "eye-catcher." The eye might become "exhausted" or "sate"; sometimes it is described as being "hungry," at others "restless." Equally, it might become fatigued as the eye becomes tired of too much visual stimulation. In all these cases, eighteenth-century culture images to itself the organ of sight as both actively participating in the visual field and as its passive recorder. It is, then, not the subject who becomes sate but the organ of sight. I do not want to press this point in relation to the foregoing discussion of the Lacanian scheme, but it is worth noting since the culture we are now beginning to examine also figures subjectivity in complex ways.

Eighteenth-century modes of understanding this metaphoric of the eye reach towards the specifics involved in particular instances of our encounter with the visual field. Thus, for example, viewing the landscape park, and viewing in the landscape park, have a different set of governing frames to the inspection of pictures in a saleroom or gallery. These different locations and activities generate different modes and purposes for the eye and demand different somatic insertions within the spacing of the social and visual, or socio-sopic. And to make this yet more qualified, of course not all physical environments at all times demand and constitute precisely identical forms of viewing activity: not all gardens require the same modes of visual address and even one garden may demand different modes at different times or at different locations within it. Clearly, what is needed here is a precise example, which will be presented in conclusion. Before we get there, I want to turn to a "theoretical" account of the spacing of the socio-sopic within eighteenth-century culture in order to approach this issue from a slightly different angle. Essentially, what I will be doing is asking how far we can explore the visual culture of a past epoch through its own, systematic and conscious accounts of the visual field.

My text is Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759),⁸ perhaps the most significant work of Scottish philosophy in the second half of the century. Throughout this exhaustive text of moral philosophy there runs a pretty continuous address to a concept labelled by Smith the "impartial spectator." On account of this, there is a marked attention to matters concerning spectacle and spectatorship, terms which we will need to nuance in relation to the specifics of their use in Smith's text. Having

said this, the period in question was, of course, obsessed with questions concerning spectatorial comportment and behaviour. This was a culture in which one of the most significant publications was entitled "The Spectator" and in which all manner of public events, from hanging to masked balls, were deeply implicated within the conceptual folds of the spectacle. Smith's text, then, is not so much emblematic as reflective, not merely responsive but also foundational.

Smith is primarily concerned to demonstrate how one might derive an ethics, that is a mode of assessing and policing one's actions, from the simple observation that if all members of society acted solely upon the information they derived as individuals from their own experience, then the social would collapse as self-interest overrides all impulses towards benevolent action on behalf of others. Smith comes up with a solution to this problem through his appeal to the imaginative imputation of what another might feel based on the evidence of our own experience. This, the doctrine of sympathy, is the motor which governs a just and ethically correct society.

This sympathetic imagination is not only focused on others who might lead lives more miserable than our own; in an extraordinary conceptual concatenation, it is also focused upon the subject itself. So it is that the society of spectacle in which one sees others through the prism of sympathetic imagination is troped into a self-regarding spectator sport in the production of subjectivity itself. It is worthwhile following this argument in some detail, since it will illustrate the complexity of the visual field as it is addressed by Smith's ethics.

On the opening page of the treatise, Smith explains the first tenet of the doctrine of sympathy:

By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them. (9)

This describes the imaginative leap we make when confronted with others, and it is this which makes us resonate sympathetically to the plight of other individuals. Such sympathetic reactions are, primarily, governed by what we *see*. From the first, then, the visual is crucially determining of the entire system. Smith writes:

When we see a stroke aimed and just ready to fall upon the leg or arm of another person, we naturally shrink and draw back our own leg or our own arm; and when it does fall, we feel it in some measure, and are hurt by it as well as the sufferer. The mob, when they are gazing at a dancer on the slack rope, naturally writhe and twist and balance their own bodies, as they see him do, and as they feel that they themselves must do if in his situation. (10)

This observation is made on the second page of the treatise and is crucial in regard to almost all that follows, for what it makes absolutely clear is the reflective nature of this visual field: what one sees in the place of the other is translated by precise reflection into the body of the spectator. From this somatic reflection of the visual field in the body of the spectator, it is a very small step to the ratiocinative or imaginative recreation of the sensations and feelings experienced by the observed:

... the spectator must, first of all, endeavour, as much as he can, to put himself in the situation of the other, and to bring home to himself every little circumstance of distress which can possibly occur to the sufferer. (21)

Smith makes it clear that the spectator will never quite manage to reproduce at the same intensity those feelings of the other since sympathetic sentiment is, in the last analysis, "imaginary" (22). However, this leads the spectator to notice a tension within himself between the feelings he experiences in his own right, and those he experiences through this imaginative projection onto the observed. It is this tension which leads the spectator to ponder not only what it might be like to be the afflicted person, but also what it might be like to be spectated upon. In an extremely important sentence Smith writes:

As they are constantly considering what they themselves would feel, if they actually were the sufferers, so he is as constantly led to imagine in what manner he would be affected if he was only one of the spectators of his own situation. (22)

Here the catoptric nature of the society of spectacle begins to be fully and sophisticatedly articulated. Not only does the spectator in Adam Smith's theatre of morality look upon others with imaginative sympathy, he also looks upon himself in the same manner. In this sense, subjectivity is precisely not positioned in the eye of the beholder but, rather, in the exchanges which occur in the fantasmic projection of what it might feel like to be constituted as a subject by looking on the onlookers of our selves. So it is that the moral agent in Smith views himself in the light in which he is conscious that others will view him (83), hence we must "imagine ourselves not the actors, but the spectators of our own character and conduct" (111). This extraordinary note continues:

[we must] consider how these would affect us when viewed from this new station, in which their excellencies and imperfections can alone be discovered. We must enter, in short, either into what are, or into what ought to be, or into what, if the whole circumstances of our conduct were known, we imagine would be the sentiments of others, before we can applaud or condemn it. (111)

Agency here takes on a very indirect form, essentially being translated into spectatorial sympathy for ourselves. The full extent of this society of the spectacle is to

turn even the subject as agent into the object of the gaze: we locate ourselves, or come to self-description, through the agency of a sympathetic fantasy projection in which we image to ourselves what we would look like were we the spectator looking upon us as we are looked upon. This reflection to the power of three is figured as a triangulation of the visual field which might well be imaged in the form of Lacan's third diagram discussed above.

Smith, however, does not leave things here, since he turns the figure one more time in his attempt to account for this overly voyeuristic scheme. It is in this respect that Smith introduces his concept of the 'impartial spectator'. This idealised position, the spectator who is never locatable within a specific individual, within a real person, represents the best case scenario: the spectator as the projection of every individual who aspires to the condition of the ethically sound. This idealized person must be, precisely, internalized within the breast of every man who would be judged according to the precepts he holds as dear. Smith writes:

The man of real constancy and firmness... has never dared to forget for one moment the judgment which the impartial spectator would pass upon his sentiments and conduct. He has never dared to suffer the man within the breast to be absent one moment from his attention. With the eyes of this great inmate he has always been accustomed to regard whatever relates to himself. This habit has become perfectly familiar to him. He has been in the constant practice, and indeed, under the constant necessity, of modelling, or of endeavouring to model, not only his outward conduct and behaviour, but, as much as he can, even his inward sentiments and feelings, according to those of this awful and respectable judge. He does not merely affect the sentiments of this impartial spectator. He really adopts them. He almost identifies himself with, he almost becomes himself that impartial spectator, and scarce even feels but as that great arbiter of his conduct directs him to feel. (146-7)

The result of this is a society in which one's sense of self and, indeed, actions are entirely regulated through the triangulation of the gaze: one looks at oneself as if one were a spectator for another. Above all else, it is a society predicated upon the correct insertion of the subject into visibility: into the visual field constructed according to the fantasmic projection of an imaginary third person. Auto-voyeurism might perhaps be what this feels like, and it should be acknowledged here that given the socio-cultural determinants of this mapping of visibility, it cannot remain inert in regard to markers of subjectivity such as economic status, class or gender.

I want to pass on quickly now to an example, since what I have said so far remains pretty much at a theoretical level. If, as I have suggested, Smith articulates a position for spectatorship which not only relies upon the fantasmic projection of a

third person who enables and enacts the visual, who makes visibility visible, but also in some curious manner erases the possibility of seeing with one's own eyes (a project, for example, explicitly launched in Hogarth's *Analysis of Beauty*, which constructs a model of visibility based upon the fantasmic projection of seeing from within the object out onto its surface — another form of the visual which also locates the gaze outside the body of the viewer) — if this is the position created by Smith, then what are its effects in the cultural realm?

Smith is essentially claiming that within the obsessively spectatorial culture of the enlightenment, the spectator is precisely constructed in and through fantasy. As such the position occupied by the real spectator is constantly produced as a site of contest: a contest in regard to one's social definition, as either masculine or effeminate, ethically sanctioned or reprimanded, a man of retirement or a man of the world. We can see how these specifics of the site of contest are ranged by taking a very brief example in which the gender of the site of sight, the gender of the look is clearly an issue.

THE VISIBILITY OF VISUALITY: VAUXHALL GARDENS

Vauxhall Gardens might be termed the *locus classicus* for a detailed investigation into the British eighteenth-century culture of the visibility of visibility. Here in these pleasure gardens, the theory of spectatorial subjectivity is literally paraded in front of one's eyes; here one paid an entry fee in order to gain access to the spacings of a publicly visible culture of visibility.⁹ It is more than fitting, then, in a garden where above all else one went to look at others looking at oneself, to indulge in the delights of voyeurism through the eidotropic glance, that the following contest around the gender of the look is staged.

My example illustrates the difficulty of unpacking something as complex as visibility when read historically, since the case I am going to present is not only folded within the contestatory spaces of the visual field and how gender is constructed in such spaces, it is also deeply embedded within the larger socio-cultural operations of gender itself. This is to note that we cannot really speak of the visual here without also speaking of the period's alignment of gender specificities. This is to signal that gender, for the period, is far from ranged across a binary divide, the masculine and the feminine, and is constructed in a range of discourses which both lay claim to determining status in regard to the question of sexuality and at the same time resist penetration by and register the impermeability of certain forms of the subject which encode specific gender assignations. I hope this will become clearer in my example, an intricate account of an incident which took place in

Vauxhall Gardens. The text was published in 1773 and is entitled *The Vauxhall Affray; or, the Macaronics Defeated*.

The text is a collection of letters and reports of an incident that allegedly took place in the garden, in which a clergyman named Bate and an actress named Hartley were supposedly accosted by a group of macaronis, those effeminate strange creatures who were fashionable at the time. The so-called "affray" is quite explicitly the result of a contest over the gaze: Bate, the clergyman, claimed that he was made to feel so uncomfortable by the young men ogling the actress that he challenged one of them, a certain fitz Gerall. The ensuing argument is very clearly one over the spectatorial rights of the two men; this, it should be made clear, is foregrounded by the specific location: Vauxhall Gardens, the place above all others in which the siting of the viewer was made so public, in which visibility was made so visible. The question in the dispute between the two men is, then, who should have power within the visual: the upstanding clergyman occupying the traditional position of the masculine spectator or the effeminate beau whose gender identify is less certain and viewing position less unambiguous.

It is to be noted that the position of the spectatorial object, the woman Hartley, hardly figures in the affray and that the politics of the gaze are contested by males occupying differing positions within the spectrum of eighteenth-century modes of masculinity. Bate, in his description, marshalls cultural disapprobation in calling the macaroni "these pretty beings" who stare "at her with that kind of petit maître audacity, which no language, but the modern French, can possibly describe" (11). Here Bate is attempting to disempower his rivals in the spectatorial contest: the beaux, while laying claim to the position of the spectator, are in fact a spectacle, objectified in Bate's gaze upon them as "pretty beings." Such objectification is intensified through the use of the term of abuse, French, which for a certain part of this culture not only represents all that is other, it also represents all that is objectionable.

The question over the triangulation of the spectatorial position is explicitly raised by Bate in his comment that "To be a silent spectator of such insolence, would be tacitly to countenance it," that is to occupy the position of the impartial spectator would leave the question of male gender undecided and the vectorial direction of the gaze ambiguous. Consequently, Bate enters into the exchange of looks and therefore the contestatory spacings of visibility:

I became now the subject of their loud horse-laugh and wise remarks. This unpleasantly circumstanced, I thought it better to face these desperadoes, and therefore turned about and looked them, in my turn, full in the face; in consequence of which, some distortions of features, I believe, passed on both sides. (10-11)

What is happening here is a face-off in which each party attempts to master and control the site of spectatorial authority, in so doing making of the opponent not, as we saw in Adam Smith, the catoptric other who gives back self image, but the object of the look, the spectacle we witness. In this case the question of gender becomes extremely fraught, since what these two differently inflected gendered men are fighting over is both the right to look at another object, the woman who occupies the picture plane upon which the spectator wishes to gaze, and the right to make of oneself a spectacle. This is explicitly stated by Fitz Gerall who asks Bate "Whether any man had not a right to look at a fine woman" (13). Of course Bate believes that precisely the problem lies in "any man," since some men do occupy the powerful masculine position of the gaze whereas others do not and should not. Bate says in reply that "he despised the man who did not look at a fine woman" while going on to assert that Fitz Gerall and his macaronis look at Hartley in the wrong way (14). What we see going on, here, is a homosocial contest over the rights to spectatorial authority.

The power relation does not flow in only one direction, however, since Bate, the "correct" male, admits to the possibility that he might be seduced out of his upstanding masculinity when he claims that Fitz Gerall's presence "of aerial divinity courted my thoughts from manhood, to a silent contemplation of the progressive beauties of the pigmy system" (35). Here Bate comes close to expressing a homophobia when faced with the demand to articulate his own form of manhood, a feature of the encounter that is intensified by the inclusion of a poem in the text, called "The Macaroniad," which explicitly states that the Macaroni occupies an ambiguous, and disturbing, mixed gender position:

But Macaronis are a sex
Which do philosophers perplex;
Tho' all the priests of VENUS' rites
Agree they are Hermaphrodites. (59)

While this corroboration of Bate's "normalizing" masculinity and the objectification of the female by the gaze is pretty clear, an even more forceful policing of masculinity is performed by a so-called "impartial spectator" who writes a letter. In this contribution to the text some advice is given to Fitz Gerall in which he is advised to appear *only* in petticoats at Vauxhall for the remainder of the season, as the most likely method of escaping the chastisement due for his late unmanly and senseless conduct. (71-2)

So it comes about that the position of the spectator is asserted as heterosexually normalized whereby one form of the male gaze makes another into a spectacle. The macaroni is removed from the possibility of acting as the other, the fantasmic projection of oneself as an onlooker, since he becomes objectified in the guise of

an abnormal, effeminate male who nevertheless also strives to occupy the empowered position of the male gaze which objectifies the feminine. In the example, then, the gaze is not held to be monolithic, in one stable position, clearly defined and operating without causing disturbance within the visual field. On the contrary, it is shown to be mobile, a site of contest in which competing versions of masculinity attempt to render each other a spectacle to themselves. The moral of the story, then, is that it is better to be a spectator than a spectacle.

This point is made explicit in another "letter to the editor" in which someone claiming to have overheard the conversation at the time of the fray sends in a report as follows.

VAUXHALL INTELLIGENCE EXTRAORDINARY

Some part of the conversation between the rioters of this place being omitted in other papers, we insert it here for the entertainment of our readers.

MR BATE: Why do you, Sir, thrust yourself into this quarrel?

MR FITZ GERALL: I would always be forward to assist my injured friend.

MR BATE: Forward enough, but would you defend him right or wrong? Has he no insulted a fine woman?

MR FITZ GERALL: Insulted, Sir! I always thought a fine woman was only made to be looked at.

MR BATE: Just sentiments of a macaroni. You judge of the fair sex as you do of your own doubtful gender, which aims only to be looked at and admired.

MR FITZ GERALL: I have as great a love for a fine woman as any man.

MR BATE: Psha! *Lepus tute es et pulpamentum quaeris?*

MR FITZ GERALL: What do you say, Parson?

MR BATE: I cry you mercy, Sir, I am talking heathen Greek to you. In plain English I say, A macaroni you, and love a woman?

MR FITZ GERALL: I love the ladies, for the ladies love me.

MR BATE: Yes, as their panteen, their play-thing, their harmless bauble, to treat as you do them, merely to look at: but pray, Sir, what have you to do in the present dispute?

MR FITZ GERALL: To support my friend, and prove myself a man.

MR BATE: God help the friend who stands in need of such support; and as to your manhood, Sir, you had better secure yourself under your acknowledged *neutrality*, or you may feel the weight of my resentment.

MR FITZ GERALL: I see you are a bruiser, I shall answer you by my servant.

MR BATE: You speak like yourself, Sir; macaroni-like, you do everything by proxy; whether you quarrel, or make love, you answer by proxy. (100)

My example has endeavoured to demonstrate the extent to which gender and the gaze are both concepts of considerable elasticity. Unlike the contemporary theoretical account which tends to impose a rigidly schematic version of the male gaze, the enlightenment example demonstrates the complexity of the socio-scorpic. In the *Vauxhall Affray* this is brought to light in a kind of contest staged between competing versions of masculinity and the gaze. Where Bate stands for a "normalizing" masculinity, his opponent Fitz Gerall is painted as a self-regarding deviant, precisely the "pretty creature" whose "snow white bosom [is] decorated with the miniature resemblance of his own sweet person" (72). While I have characterized these different positions as constituting some form of contest, it might also be relevant to note that a less conflictual possibility is imagined by the period, in which something like a heteroptics of the visual field emerges. Perhaps it is this less conflictual form of our being in visuality which contemporary theory might profitably explore.

1 Though for an exception see Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes* (Berkeley, 1993).

2. See: N. Daniels, *Thomas Reid's Inquiry: the geometry of visibles and the case for realism* (New York, 1974); E. C. Graham, *Optics and Vision: the background of the metaphysics of Berkeley* (London, 1929); John Yolton, *Perceptual Acquaintance from Descartes to Reid* (Minneapolis, 1984), and *Thinking Matter: materialism in eighteenth century Britain* (Minneapolis, 1983); Michael J. Morgan, *Molyneux's Question: Vision, Touch and the Philosophy of Perception* (Cambridge, 1977); and, for the former, G. N. Cantor, *Optics after Newton* (Manchester, 1983), and *The Discourse of Light from the middle ages to the enlightenment* (Los Angeles, 1985); N. Pastore, *Selective history of theories of visual perception 1750-1950* (London, 1971).

3. Film theory is now a fully developed discipline with a voluminous bibliography; the classic account of the theoretical model of vision remains, however, Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (London, 1989). For the most useful recent contribution to this discussion see Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (London, 1992).

4. The Lacanian account has been subjected to feminist critique over the last 10 or 15 years, and this work has substantially attenuated the ways in which gender is taken to figure within the formation of the subject. The following discussion should be read within the context of this work. See: Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose, eds., *Feminine Sexuality* (London, 1982), and for recent developments in a range of fields, Seyla Benhabib and Drucilla Cornell, eds., *Feminism as Critique* (Minneapolis, 1988).

5. Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Harmondsworth, 1977), p. 84.

6. These diagrams have become almost talismanic in the literature on the Lacanian model of the gaze. My own account is deeply indebted to those which precede it, most especially to the discussion in Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (London, 1992), pp. 145-153.

7. On the camera obscura as a culturally embedded form for figuring vision see Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990), and for a scrupulous account of the history of mechanical aids to visuality, Martin Kemp, *The Science of Art* (New Haven, 1990).

8. The edition referred to is edited by D.D. Raphael and A.L. Macfie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976). For an exemplary discussion of the range of issues raised by Smith's text see the introduction to this edition.

9. For a discussion of Vauxhall see: T.J. Edelstein, ed., *Vauxhall Gardens* (New Haven, 1983); David Coke, *The Muse's Bower: Vauxhall Gardens 1728-1786* (Sudbury, 1978); Brian Allen, *Francis Hayman* (New Haven, 1987); David Solkin, *Painting for Money* (Yale, 1992); and Kristina Straub, *Sexual Suspects* (Princeton, 1992).

**SUR LA REMISE EN QUESTION
DE LA SPÉCIFICITÉ DE L'OBJET D'ART :
LES ÉCRITS DE LISA TICKNER,
DE LYNDA NEAD ET DE T. J. CLARK**

CHRISTINE ROSS |

Spécialiste de la vidéo et de l'art féministe, Christine Ross est le premier professeur d'origine canadienne sélectionné par le Département d'histoire de l'art de l'Université McGill, où elle enseigne actuellement. Elle a étudié l'histoire de l'art à l'Université de Montréal, à l'Université Concordia et à l'Université de Paris I (Panthéon-Sorbonne), où elle a soutenu une thèse de doctorat intitulée *L'image vidéo et le décalage de la surface*. Christine Ross a collaboré à différentes revues spécialisées (*Parachute*, *Vanguard*, *Espace*). Elle a agi à titre de conservatrice ou d'auteure invitée pour de nombreuses expositions en art contemporain, dont *Daniel Dion : Parcours/Paths*, Musée des beaux-arts du Canada (1993) et *Semaine de la vidéo féministe québécoise*, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (1982). Deux textes de Christine Ross paraîtront prochainement : «La vidéo : une histoire de liens délirants», dans *Arts et nouvelles technologies* (UQAM) et «L'art vidéo et le décalage de la surface», dans *Video in Canada* (Power Plant).

Christine Ross is Professor of Art History at McGill University. The first Canadian-born scholar appointed to the Department, she studied art history at the Université de Montréal and Concordia University and took her doctorate at the Université de Paris I (Panthéon-Sorbonne) with a thesis about depth in video, entitled *L'image vidéo et le décalage de la surface*. Christine Ross has written about feminist, video and contemporary art in *Parachute*, *Vanguard*, *Espace* and in many exhibition catalogues including *Daniel Dion : Parcours/Paths*, National Gallery of Canada (1993) and *Semaine de la vidéo féministe québécoise*, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (1982). Her two forthcoming texts are: "La vidéo : une histoire de liens délirants" in *Art et nouvelles technologies* (UQAM) and "L'art vidéo et le décalage de la surface" in *Video in Canada* (Power Plant).

Le premier constat qui s'établit lorsqu'on parcourt et compare les écrits de Lisa Tickner, de Lynda Nead et de T. J. Clark, c'est celui d'une *similarité divergente*, dans la mesure où la récurrence d'un même champ d'étude (le modernisme du XIX^e siècle et du début du XX^e siècle) ne cesse de faire place à des questionnements qui éloignent les auteurs les uns des autres. Ainsi, l'examen du rapport entre l'art et la politique se mesure en termes de classes sociales pour T. J. Clark, alors qu'il ouvre sur la différence sexuelle chez ses deux consœurs. Par ailleurs, le féminisme historique de Lisa Tickner devient de plus en plus poststructuraliste chez Lynda Nead.

Cela dit, si on y regarde de plus près, il se dégage derrière cette diversité une communauté méthodologique sur laquelle j'aimerais insister afin d'enchaîner sur ce que Hal Foster soulignait à propos de l'influence qu'exerce aujourd'hui la discipline ethnographique sur le champ de l'art et de l'histoire de l'art. Car si l'«ethnologisation» peut être définie, et je serai schématique ici, comme une approche qui consiste, de la part de l'historien, à s'appropriier l'objet d'étude dans son «altérité» (avec pour conséquence l'annulation ou la ré-exclusion plus ou moins inconsciente de l'objet en tant qu'«autre»), la *New Art History* correspond à une école de pensée qui, bien qu'elle conçoive son objet comme «autre», cherche à éviter le processus d'ethnologisation par une incessante mise à distance de son objet.

Précisons d'emblée que l'innovation méthodologique commune aux trois chercheurs ne tient pas à leur remise en cause de la relation de l'historien d'art à son objet d'étude : l'œuvre d'art est un objet «autre» mais l'altérité est ici ce qui garantit la possibilité de maintenir une distance critique par rapport à l'objet d'étude. En établissant ainsi une différence entre l'objet et l'analyste, des penseurs de la *New Art History* sauvegardent une distance que certains historiens actuels jugent en fait périmée parce qu'impossible à soutenir¹. L'innovation tient plutôt à leur remise en cause de l'altérité de l'objet par rapport à lui-même, ce qui signifie que le renouvellement de l'approche historique est davantage horizontal que vertical, dans la mesure où la méthodologie de ces trois historiens d'art ne modifie pas tant le regard sur l'objet qu'ils croient pouvoir et devoir maintenir à distance, que l'objet proprement dit. Ainsi, sous le regard social de T. J. Clark, sous les regards féministes de Lisa Tickner et de Lynda Nead, l'«objet d'art» ne sera plus tout à fait le même, il sera déplacé en tant que catégorie esthétique par une confrontation avec d'autres catégories culturelles et sociales. Ces chercheurs ont donc en commun une pratique de mise en contact, de rencontre de différentes catégories «normalement» (c'est-à-dire par le travail de la norme) tenues à l'écart, troublant ainsi la spécificité de l'œuvre d'art pour la «dé-naturaliser» en tant que représentation, en tant que construction discursive. Une telle confrontation a pour effet de révéler les catégories de classe, de sexe, de nation reproduites ou produites par l'œuvre d'art, renouvelant par le fait même la

définition de l'objet esthétique. La *New Art History* est en cela une empêcheuse de tourner en rond pour ce qui est de la question de la spécificité de l'art, de l'artiste, de la bourgeoisie, du féminin, du politique.

Reformulant cette remise en cause de la spécificité dans le contexte plus large des Cultural Studies, *Writing Diaspora*² de Rey Chow explique que la répression d'une catégorie d'individus s'exerce toujours par le maintien de cette catégorie en tant que spécificité (par exemple : la « femme » ou « l'ethnicité chinoise »). Il importe donc, dit-elle, non seulement de relever ces « spécificités » et d'en examiner les conditions d'oppression et de marginalisation, mais également de les déplacer, c'est-à-dire de les troubler dans leurs supposées autonomie et stabilité. En d'autres termes, il importe de produire ces spécificités *pour et seulement si* cela mène à leur déplacement, sinon on ne fait que reproduire le statu quo que l'on vise à dénoncer. Dans le travail de Lisa Tickner, de Lynda Nead et de Timothy Clark, la mise en contact du féminisme, de la psychanalyse et de l'histoire sociale, celle de l'art et de la pornographie, celle du féminin et du masculin, celle de la créativité et de la sexualité, ces différentes rencontres sont productrices de déplacements de frontières dans un sens précis : elles ont pour effet de déstabiliser l'identité de ces entités culturelles. En fait, c'est lorsque la mise en contact produit le débordement d'une catégorie sur l'autre, lorsqu'il y a ainsi non respect du *bord*, qu'il y a effet de déplacement, de redéfinition de la représentation. Mais qui dit rencontre ne dit pas hybridation ou confusion. Ici, une distance persiste — le *bord* est dévoilé mais maintenu de sorte que l'un et l'autre (le masculin et le féminin, le nu pictural et l'obscénité pornographique, la bourgeoisie et le prolétariat, l'art et la psychanalyse, entre autres) puissent être révélés dans leur interdépendance et leur proximité.

Lisa Tickner est présentement professeure d'histoire de l'art à la Middlesex University à Londres. Elle collabore et a collaboré à plusieurs revues spécialisées dont *Art History*, *Oxford Art Journal*, *Woman's Art Journal* et *New Formation*. Elle est également cofondatrice (en 1979) de la revue *Block*. Les catégories de la sexualité et du féminin traversent ses écrits. Très tôt dans les années 70, elle s'est intéressée à la représentation du corps et de la sexualité, des sujets qui sont devenus des sujets-clés au cours des années 90. Sur le corps et la sexualité, il faut se rappeler le texte « The Body Politic: Female Sexuality and Women Artists since 1970 » (1978)³, un des premiers textes examinant les stratégies esthétiques développées par les femmes artistes des années 70 concernées par la représentation de la sexualité. Il faut également se rappeler ses travaux sur le costume (*dress* et *dressing*), la mode et l'habillement approchés ici en tant que performance sexuée et sexuelle⁴. Dans tous les cas, Lisa Tickner amène ces catégories de façon à pouvoir les complexifier, de façon à troubler leur définition.

Ainsi, dans son livre *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign 1907-1914* (1988)⁵, Lisa Tickner se penche sur un des champs «non artistiques» par lequel la spécificité de l'art s'établit au début du XX^e siècle. Ce champ répudié de la catégorie «art» est celui des images de propagande produites par les femmes artistes lors de la campagne des suffragettes britanniques pendant les années 1907 et 1914. Pour Lisa Tickner, il n'est pas question de remédier à l'exclusion des images de propagande du champ de l'art en les élevant au statut d'œuvres d'art, une opération qui ne ferait que consolider la hiérarchie art-propagande. L'objectif de la réflexion est plutôt de poser la question même de l'art et de dévoiler le processus d'abjection par lequel le champ de l'art se constitue. Ce travail prend une autre forme dans un article intitulé «Men's Work: Masculinity and Modernism 1905-1915» (1992)⁶ où Lisa Tickner examine la construction du masculin dans l'art vorticiste britannique, identifiant une impulsion d'*urgence affirmative* de la part des hommes artistes de l'époque qui s'affirment par une expulsion du féminin (une expulsion, il importe de le préciser, qui ne correspond pas à un rejet direct du féminisme), une répudiation qui est inséparable des développements du modernisme des années 20 et 30. Dans cette étude, Tickner écrit : «[...] ce qui revient de façon insistante, c'est la peur des effets de l'émancipation des femmes sur les hommes. C'est comme si le masculin et le féminin étaient mutuellement exclusifs et mutuellement dommageables⁷.»

Lynda Nead enseigne l'histoire de l'art au Birkbeck College de l'University of London depuis 1984. Elle a étudié à l'University College et à l'University of Leeds au moment même où l'histoire sociale de l'art était intégrée au programme sous l'influence de T. J. Clark. Elle a réalisé de nombreux projets de recherche auprès de différentes institutions muséales (Leeds City Art Gallery, Museum of London, Tate Gallery) et a collaboré (collabore encore) à différentes revues spécialisées telles que la revue *Art History*, *Oxford Art Journal*, *Block*, *Signs*, *THES*. Elle fait d'ailleurs maintenant partie du conseil de rédaction de la revue *Art History*.

Chez Lynda Nead, le champ de la sexualité rencontre non seulement celui de l'art, mais également celui de la pornographie. Ainsi, dans *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain* (1988)⁸, l'historienne se penche sur les définitions et les représentations non seulement du féminin, mais du féminin en tant qu'il est une catégorie qui assure la cohérence d'une identité sociale précise (la classe moyenne britannique de l'ère victorienne), c'est-à-dire pour autant que ce féminin soit synonyme (pour cette classe sociale) de *respectability*. Cette recherche dévoile une identité de classe qui s'affirme (qui trouve sa «distinction», soutiendrait Pierre Bourdieu⁹) par l'abjection d'une autre catégorie identitaire (ici la féminité en tant que déviance, c'est-à-dire la prostituée) propre aux classes économiquement inférieures. Dans son ouvrage le plus récent *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality* (1992)¹⁰,

ce sont les catégories du nu féminin et de la pornographie qui se voient mises en contact. Par cette rencontre, Lynda Nead nous amène au plus près de la frontière, au plus près du bord qui sépare l'art de la pornographie, en montrant comment cette distinction, cette «bonne distance», pour paraphraser Catherine Clément¹¹, entre art et pornographie s'établit par la représentation du nu féminin en tant que «propriété» de l'œuvre d'art. L'art devient ici la faculté de contrôler et d'encadrer le corps féminin autrement impossible à maîtriser; il est ce qui contient le corps autrement obscène (c'est-à-dire sans frontière) des femmes, une obscénité qui *doit être* le propre de la porno et de la culture de masse. En ramenant ce que l'art, ce que le discours de l'art doit abjecter pour être (l'obscène, la pornographie, la culture de masse), Lynda Nead fragilise à nouveau les frontières de l'art, pour les redéfinir néanmoins dans leur inséparabilité d'avec la pornographie. L'art et la porno sont révélés dans leur proximité, mais pour ce faire, ils sont maintenus dans leur distance catégorielle.

Je termine ce texte de présentation par T. J. Clark et si je termine par lui, c'est parce qu'il m'est difficile de parler, en quelques mots seulement, d'une des figures les plus connues du développement de la *New Art History*. Je serai brève pour ce qui est des données biographiques. Timothy Clark est présentement professeur d'histoire de l'art à l'University of California à Berkeley. Après une formation à Cambridge et au Courtauld Institute of Art de l'University of London, il sera, de 1976 à 1980, professeur à l'University of Leeds où il mettra sur pied un programme d'histoire sociale de l'art. En 1980, il quitte cet établissement pour les États-Unis où il enseignera à Harvard, puis à Berkeley. Il est l'auteur de plusieurs livres sur l'art du XIX^e siècle, dont : *The Absolute Bourgeois: Artists and Politics in France, 1848-51* (1973); *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution* (1973), *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and his Followers* (1985)¹². De ses articles les plus connus, citons «Preliminaries to a Possible Treatment of Olympia in 1865» (*Screen*, 1980) et «Clement Greenberg's theory of art» (*Critical Inquiry*, 1982).

Tout au long de ses nombreux écrits, Tim Clark n'a cessé d'approfondir son examen du rapport entre l'art et la société du XIX^e siècle, l'hypothèse essentielle étant celle de la *représentation* en tant que celle-ci, même lorsqu'elle se fait de plus en plus abstraite, ne cesse de référer à une réalité qui devient de moins en moins saisissable, de plus en plus en retrait, de moins en moins signifiante. Le travail de Clark en est un d'analyse et de décodage d'un art qui représente une rupture entre le signe et le référent et non pas d'un art de moins en moins apte à représenter le réel. Cette précision articule la ligne frontière qui sépare la *New Art History* d'une histoire de l'art postmoderne : chez Clark, l'art persiste en tant que machine à représenter (l'œuvre représente une classe, une lutte, un conflit idéologique), arrivant même à signifier une réalité en évanescence mais ne devant pas être l'évanescence de ce qu'il

représente dans sa destinée moderniste. La *New Art History* fragilise les frontières de l'art, elle les déplace, mais elle ne les dissout pas, tout comme elle ne cherche pas à les hybrider. Dans le texte que T. J. Clark présente dans le cadre de ce colloque, la rupture du signe et du référent sera examinée par le truchement d'une mise en contact entre Freud et Cézanne, entre la psychanalyse et l'art. Je dis bien mise en contact, car il ne s'agira pas tant d'interpréter les œuvres de Cézanne de façon *psychanalytique* que de penser Cézanne en même temps que Freud, c'est-à-dire de copenser l'art et la psychanalyse tels qu'ils se développent au tournant du siècle.

Pour conclure, et de façon à voir comment les textes qui suivent renouvellent *et* prennent racine dans la *New Art History* telle qu'elle fut formulée à ses débuts, il est utile de ramener ce court passage d'un article qui se révéla essentiel dans l'établissement de la discipline, «The Conditions of Artistic Creation» (1974)¹³ : «Pour échapper [aux présuppositions non questionnées de l'histoire de l'art, telles que : l'artiste comme "créateur" de l'œuvre], il me semble que nous avons besoin [...] de *faits* — sur le patronage, sur le marché de l'art, sur le statut de l'artiste, sur la structure de la production artistique —, mais nous devons savoir quelles questions poser sur le matériel [...]. Le premier type de question s'intéresse à la relation entre l'œuvre d'art et son idéologie. J'entends par idéologie [...] ces corps de croyances, d'images, de valeurs et de techniques de représentation par lesquels les classes sociales, en conflit les unes avec les autres, tentent de «naturaliser» leurs histoires particulières. [...] En histoire de l'art [...], c'est précisément l'héritage hégélien qu'il faut s'approprier, c'est-à-dire : utiliser, critiquer et reformuler¹⁴.»

Tim Clark fait appel ici à une histoire de l'art critique, c'est-à-dire critique de la représentation mais aussi de la discipline proprement dite, s'éloignant d'une histoire de l'art qui s'établirait dans une rectitude décisive. Que notre héritage soit encore hégélien ou non, peu importe, puisque l'éthique énoncée il y a de ça vingt ans demeure essentielle à notre discipline, y compris à la *New Art History* qui a d'ailleurs su, et les travaux de Lisa Tickner et de Lynda Nead sont exemplaires à cet égard, reformuler l'approche sociale par une critique féministe de l'histoire de l'art.

1. Voir, par exemple, sur deux registres différents, Georges Didi-Huberman, *Devant l'image: question posée aux fins d'une histoire de l'art*, Paris, Les Éditions de Minuit, 1990, et Eunice Lipton, *Alias Olympia: A Woman's Search for Manet's Notorious Model and Her Own Desire*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1992.
2. Rey Chow, *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies*, Bloomington et Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1993.
3. Article publié dans *Art History* I (2), juin 1978, p. 236-251.
4. Voir les articles de mars à octobre 1976 publiés dans *Spare Rib* : «The Nature of Dress», «Sex Distinction in Dress», «Dress Reform» et «Fashionable Bondage».
5. Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign 1907-1914*, Londres, Chatto and Windus; Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1988.
6. Article publié dans *Differences* 4 (3), automne 1992, p. 1-37.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 8. Notre traduction.
8. Lynda Nead, *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1988.
9. Voir, entre autres, Pierre Bourdieu, *La distinction : critique sociale du jugement*, Paris, Les Éditions de Minuit, 1979.
10. Nead, *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality*, Londres, Routledge, 1992.
11. Catherine Clément, *Vies et Légendes de Jacques Lacan*, Paris, Grasset, 1981.
12. T. J. Clark, *The Absolute Bourgeois: Artists and Politics in France, 1848-51*, Londres, Thames and Hudson; New York, New York Graphic Society, 1973; *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, Londres, Thames and Hudson; New York, New York Graphic Society, 1973; *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and his Followers*, Londres, Thames and Hudson; New York, Alfred Knopf, 1985.
13. Clark, «The Conditions of Artistic Creation», *Times Literary Supplement*, mai 1974, p. 561-562.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 562. Notre traduction.

THE CABINET OF CURIOSITIES AS
A MODEL OF VISUAL DISPLAY:
A NOTE ON THE GENEALOGY OF
THE CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUM

STEPHEN BANN |

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This paper is a stage in an investigation which has occupied me for some time. I want to look at the way in which a specific historical mode of visual display, which flourished in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Europe, continues to have a great deal of relevance, not only to the design and conception of contemporary museums, but also to the discourse of art history as it evolves and develops at the present time. For me, New Art History is above all a practice which takes account of its own genealogy, in the Nietzschean sense of the word. That is to say, it is ceaselessly reviewing the modalities of its own coming into being as a discourse, and trying to counteract the inevitable tendency of the present viewpoint to legitimate only the perspective which endorses its own authorized account of things.

Wolfgang Ernst has commented usefully on this tendency of traditional art history to legitimate a particular historical reading of the genesis and development of the museum. As he puts it: "Art history more or less takes for granted that the display of historical works of art in public collections since the eighteenth century has changed from a traditional, rather miscellaneous cabinet type of exhibition, an atemporal, 'mixed school arrangement,' to a more art-historical paradigm, placing all the items within a conceptual framework of evolutionary, temporal and stylistic development and thus reflecting a growing historical consciousness." But, as Ernst argues, this way of thinking itself presupposes the kind of historical reasoning which it purports to describe. Art history endorses its own concept of evolutionary development by relegating to a prior, imperfect stage the modes of display which existed before the nineteenth century.

I will take just one initial instance from the contemporary period to demonstrate the limitations of this approach. The curator Jean-Hubert Martin, whom you will know from his exhibition *Les Magiciens de la Terre* at the Centre Pompidou in 1989, last year opened to the public the Château d'Oiron, in the region of Anjou, with a semi-permanent display of *Curios et Mirabilia*. This fine Renaissance chateau now houses a large number of works specially commissioned from contemporary artists throughout the world, the common feature of which is their adherence, in one way or other, to the paradigm of the Cabinet of Curiosities, that is to say, the prevalent mode of display current at the time when the building was constructed. For example, Daniel Spoerri — the Swiss artist associated with the Fluxus group — has rearranged and presented in his particular space a possibly mythical collection of curiosities formed by one Mme de Wendelstadt at Darmstadt in the nineteenth century, which comprises such objects as a bullet from the Battle of Waterloo and a fragment of the coffin of Juliet at Verona...

It is easy to poke fun at what, from the art historian's point of view, is the licensed horseplay of the avant-garde. But I would insist that a fundamentally serious

point is being made. At the point where the contemporary museum deliberately breaks away — in some cases at least — from the ordered and antiseptic display of works by period and school which Norman Bryson has rightly seen as a kind of ultimate extension of the perspectival way of seeing; at this very point when it appears to regress to a prior mode of visualization, it may in fact be offering an implicit critique of the linear ways of thinking which still dominate our concepts of art history. What we need to do, perhaps, is to open up the issue and return to closer examination of the semiotic systems underlying these apparently remote and superseded modes of display. My own personal view is that the contemporary museum — and by that I mean not simply a museum which shows contemporary works but one which interrogates the conditions of presentation and display within a determinate architectural setting — is a much more revealing index of the deeper history of visual culture than the traditional, nineteenth-century Musée des Beaux-Arts.

Again, I can only give selective examples in this brief address. But I would like to refer to one in particular. At the beginning of the year, I gave a lecture as part of a series to mark the twentieth anniversary of the foundation of the CAPC, contemporary art museum of Bordeaux — which is without doubt one of the most innovative and remarkable institutions of its kind in Europe. What interests me, in part, about this museum is that it is sited in a vast former warehouse, on the quayside, and has retained the spectacular architecture of this nineteenth-century industrial building, centred on a basilica-like structure, which is still referred to as the “Nave” (La Nef). In the course of my lecture, I juxtaposed two images, one of which shows a space adjoining the “nave” during an installation and exhibition by the Greek-born artist Jannis Kounellis, and the other of which shows the side-aisle of Canterbury Cathedral, as represented in a late seventeenth-century painting, which clearly indicates the iron screens erected at a much earlier point to regulate the flow of pilgrims to the shrine of St. Thomas Becket.

I am not going to try to analyse, at this point, the whole range of comparisons which emerges from this particular juxtaposition of images. Let me simply say that the painting of Canterbury Cathedral represents an important stage in the recuperation of the building after two violent phases of iconoclasm: the first being the destruction of the shrine of Becket at the time of the Reformation by Henry VIII, and the second being the renewed destruction of much of the religious imagery, including the stained glass in the Nave, which took place over the period of the English Civil War. In this painting, as in a number which date from the late seventeenth century, the interior of the cathedral is not, of course, envisaged as it was in the medieval period, when the Martyr's shrine stood at the centre of the extended Choir specially built to house it. The focus of the architecture remains empty. But, at the same time,

the building has been recuperated on an aesthetic level, in an image which shows the embellishments carried out and proposed as the life of the cathedral community starts up again. The iron screen remains, though its original function has been displaced, and it could serve as a marker of the fact that the constant flow of pilgrims during the medieval period will eventually be equalled, and perhaps surpassed, by the polyglot throngs of contemporary tourists.

Kounellis, by contrast, divides the space of the industrial building, now recuperated as a museum. He divides the space in such a way that the luminous irradiation of the wooden partition becomes an incident in the dramatic rediscovery of the entire space of the so-called Nave. It is not that there was any previous resonance of a sacred, or even aesthetic kind to be recaptured. The building existed originally as a storehouse for materials, as a thriving commercial venture. Kounellis's *Arte povera*, deliberately restricting itself to materials of little intrinsic value, both evokes the past of the warehouse as a commercial storage space and negates that function at the same time. I make this point particularly because it was emphasized to me by one of the audience at my lecture at Bordeaux, who had heard me talk about medieval shrines, cabinets of curiosities and contemporary art museums, and said that, as a citizen of Bordeaux, and a frequent visitor to the museum, he had never before realized how far his present experience of its exhibitions and installations was fundamentally determined by the way in which its presentation of materials both affirmed and negated its previous role.

In making this point, I am not simply implying a schematic comparison between different historical modes of storage and display. What I have called the aesthetic recuperation of the building is a function, very precisely, of the use of light to transform the conditions of display and to alter the status of the materials displayed from the spectator's point of view. I have often thought that a useful way of establishing the genealogy of the contemporary museum would be to look not at the collections, and not at the historical status of the objects displayed, but simply at the pioneering developments in the use of light by a number of architects, from Soane whose Dulwich Gallery is probably the first to block in the windows and light the spaces indirectly, through the roof, to a recent example like Hans Hollein, whose new museum at Mönchengladbach manipulates the alternation of daylight and indirect lighting in a specially ingenious way.

Yet, if one made a survey of this kind, it would be necessary to return, not simply to Soane and the early nineteenth century, but to the more long-term developments in the history of visual display which lead us, inevitably, to the shrines and sacred buildings of the Middle Ages. Louis Marin's posthumously published book, *Des pouvoirs de l'image* (1993), roves very widely over instances in which the "power" of visual images

is manifested as an intrinsic, dynamic property rather than a delegation from some social or contextual aspect, and gives special attention to the Gothic aesthetic as it is formulated by the Abbot Suger of St. Denis, in relation to his brilliantly innovatory Abbey church. This is how Marin glosses the way of presenting precious objects on the altars and shrines of the new church:

... we should note that the precious material, whether it be gold or gems, is never conceived, and no doubt never accumulated, with a view to forming what could be called a treasure or a reserve of riches, but is devoted to *ornatus*, to adornment, decor, dressing, to the ostension and ostentation of liturgical objects and sacramental instruments. In other words, the rare and precious material is first and foremost the vehicle of a power, the vector of the power of a sacred object which, while not yet being an image, is destined to exercise that power, to operate that power through vision, to the same extent that the material, gold and precious stones clothe it with light, the transcendent, invisible and all powerful condition of visibility, which they capture, reflect or make manifest.

This fairly long quotation is necessary to show how Marin interprets the transfer of power from the surrounding social world, so to speak, to the inner space of the Gothic church. As he emphasizes, it is evident that the precious materials on display are, on one level, indicative of the powers of this world: they are "the signs and insignia of ... temporal and spiritual power" of kings, princes, counts, archbishops and bishops. But these powers have been "transferred, by way of their signifiers" to the "altar, the crucifix, the reliquaries of St. Denis as 'signifiers' of another form of power"; this transfer being not merely a "displacement" but a genuine "transmutation." The church becomes, by this means, "extraterritorial" in law, offering "foyers of grace by the empowerment of the relics of the saints' bodies, and asylums of forgiveness."

I have concentrated on Marin's minute analysis of the conditions under which the display of the Gothic church effects a "transmutation" of powers in part because of the way in which it contrasts strategically with a prevalent way of viewing the contemporary museum. When, for example, Carol Duncan looks at "The MOMA's Hot Mamas," she ends up by suggesting: "What is true in the street may not be so untrue in the museum, even though different rules of decorum may make it seem so." I prefer to take as my historical premiss in looking at museums precisely the ideological system in which the reserved building is not interchangeable with the street, precisely because its visible features install a precise program of "transmutation" of powers. Carol Duncan looks at the gold lettering on the entrance doors of the contemporary gallery and sees simply a displacement of social power from the American plutocracy to the context where the art works are displayed. I prefer to

point to Marin's careful exposition of the difference, in Suger's aesthetic, between the concepts of "lux" and "lumen": between the ordinary light of day and "the resplendent illumination of the dwelling of the church where the Word ... is contained in the mystery of human flesh ..." In other words, for me, all that glistens is not gold — precisely because the intrinsic and specific conditions of display already are sufficient to establish a discontinuity between the power structures of the outside world and the properties of the reserved space.

What I am not suggesting — in case there is any doubt on this point — is that the contemporary museum is like a medieval pilgrimage church, in any superficial sense. What I am arguing is that the genealogy of the museum can only be understood adequately if it incorporates the history and ideology of modes of visual display which have tended to be regarded as wholly distinct from it. And if the religious display of objects has indeed been seen as irrelevant to the conditions of museum display, this is at least in part because inadequate attention has been paid to the phenomenon which stands in chronological terms between the heyday of the medieval shrine, and the rise of the modern museum: so we come back to the Cabinet of Curiosities. If the Cabinet of Curiosities has tended to be seen as a primitive and chaotic precursor of the modern museum, it has not been investigated, to any extent, in its relation to the preexisting modes of visual display, such as the shrine. What is wanted, however, is not simply a mode of reasoning which relates the Cabinet of Curiosities to the medieval shrine, in much the same way as the modern museum has been related to the Cabinet of Curiosities. Instead, we need to give more attention to the symbolic and epistemological aspects of display, and to the non-linear proliferation of modes of establishing the mythical autonomy of the reserved space, over a period which covers at least the last millennium.

In the second part of this paper, I shall concentrate exclusively on one specific example of a Cabinet of Curiosities which I have studied over a long period: that which was formed by the Kentish gentleman and Canon of Canterbury Cathedral, John Bargrave, largely in the years of the English Civil War and Commonwealth between about 1647 and 1660. The reason why this example is worth studying on its own is not because it contains specially rich and rare objects, but because it is virtually the only case of an English Cabinet of Curiosities that has survived in a state close to its original formation, with a manuscript catalogue which moreover gives a description and often an anecdote for many of the items. Other, more notable collections of this kind, like the Amerbach cabinet in the possession of the City of Basel, have suffered as subsequent museological practices have decreed that certain items were of value, and needed to be placed elsewhere, whilst others were of no value, and needed to be thrown away. Bargrave's cabinet, and more literally the three

pieces of furniture housing the stock of rare and curious objects, have survived with comparatively little loss over three centuries. The symbolic effect of the collection is, moreover, accentuated by the fact that it was housed in the Prebend's Lodgings which Bargrave occupied close to the "Corona" erected in memory of the Martyrdom of Becket; at his death it was then left to the Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral. Here, one might think, is a propitious example for looking at the long-term evolution of modes of visual display over the millennium to which I have just referred.

But, in the first place, what evidence do we have about the modes of display of such collections, from the shrine to the Cabinet of Curiosities and beyond? The answer is that we have very little evidence, and indeed the effect of the historicizing discourse of museology over the past century and a half has been to repress the very fact that such collections were indeed actively displayed, as opposed to being, in Marin's phrase, mere "accumulations." What is required is to bring back what could be called the performative element in these collections, to recognize that they were animated by specific enunciatory strategies. The evidence for this, or a fragment of it, can be found for the shrine of St. Thomas in the dialogue *Peregrinatio Religionis Ergo* which Erasmus wrote not long after his visit to Canterbury between 1512 and 1514. No good visual records remain of the appearance of the Martyr's shrine, and virtually the only authentic early representation is in the medieval glass of the North Choir Aisle of the cathedral itself. But a print of the arrangement of shrines around the High Altar of the neighbouring abbey of St. Augustine's, Canterbury, allows one to restore something of the scenographic space in which events described by Erasmus's account must have taken place:

... He opened for us the chest in which the rest of the holy man's body is said to lie.

- You saw the bones?

- No, that's not permitted, nor would it be possible without the use of ladders. But within the wooden chest is a golden chest; when this is drawn up by ropes, it reveals inestimable treasure.

...

The cheapest part was gold. Everything shone and dazzled with rare and surpassingly large jewels, some bigger than a goose egg. Some monks stood about reverently. When the cover was removed, we all adored. The prior pointed out each jewel by touching it with a white rod, adding its French name, its worth, and the name of the donor. The principal ones were gifts from kings.

Enough is here, even in this late account by a skeptical Humanist, to reconstruct the way in which the "ornatus" was used discursively; and though we might think that the prior's painstaking citation of the earthly provenance of each jewel is a tribute to secular power, it is in fact perfectly compatible with Marin's assertion that the space of the shrine enacts a transmutation of such values through the "shining" and "dazzling" light.

How did Bargrave do the honours of his collection, a few yards from the same spot, and a hundred and fifty years later? John Evelyn records in his Diary a visit to Canterbury to see "Dr. Bargrave the greate virtuoso," but he says nothing of what took place. We can piece together a few details. For one thing, it is likely that the whole room which served Bargrave as a study served for the "virtuoso's" performances. After his death, the Dean and Chapter were obliged to add a third cabinet to those already existing, which suggests that a number of the objects were on permanent or revolving display in this space. Moreover, Bargrave himself relates, in the catalogue of his cherished "opticks," or lenses, that he was in the habit of creating camera obscura-type effects in the rooms of his house facing the Bell Harry Tower of the Cathedral. A final point is that the two miniatures of himself and, in the earlier case, two travelling companions — painted at Siena in 1647 and Rome in 1650 — were "to hang upon my cabinet." This implies either that they were customarily displayed in this way, or that other objects might have "hung upon" the cabinet, thus creating a form of scenographic display.

With these indications in mind, and bearing in mind also the account by Erasmus, we can proceed further into hypothesizing the way in which Bargrave displayed his Cabinet of Curiosities by looking at the valuable descriptions in his catalogue, which must have served, in a sense, as a transcription of his notes and an *aide-mémoire* in his old age. This is how he describes a striking crystalline formation:

This I met with amongst the Rhaetian Alps. One would wonder that nature should so counterfeit art. There is no man but [that] seeth it but would verily believe that by tools and art it had been put into that figure. I remember that the Montecolian man that sold it me told me that he ventured his life to clamber the rocks to gett it. Where it grew I cannot say; but where it was, it was covered, he said, with long sedgy grass growing about it, under the dripp of an higher rock, where the snow continually melteth and droppeth; and so all the mountayn chrystall is increased *ab extra* by an external addition, and groweth not from any rock.

Bargrave's discourse shifts significantly throughout this passage. First of all, there is the narrative of the personal voyage ("this I met"), then the *topos* of nature counterfeiting art; then the interpolated narrative of the Montecolian man who made

the discovery. Finally there is the general, and would-be scientific, description of the process of the formation of the crystal, drawn from the empirical account of the Montecolian man. Bargrave not infrequently mingles his levels of discourse in this way. His entry relating to "A very artificial anatomy of a human eye, with all its films or funicles, by way of turnery in ivory and horn," begins with indications of how to lay the intricately embedded pieces in a row, then reveals that this model depends on the new way of "anatomizing" the eye devised by the College of Physicians at Padua, and was copied after their experimentation by "an artist of High Germany." He then relates that, having purchased the artist's model, he "went a double share in two anatomies, of a man's body and a woman's, chiefly for this eye's sake, and it was found to be exact."

It will be evident, from these two examples, that Bargrave may put objects on display, and single them out, in the manner of the Prior at Becket's shrine, but the epistemological aim of his discourse is quite different. Bargrave's crystal is not of kingly provenance, but the dividend of a risky journey into nature's secret recesses; it manifests not the royal authority transmuted into the power of grace, but the emergence of a rational analysis of nature's formative powers. Unpacking the model of the eye, layer by layer, is not like disclosing the golden chest within the wooden chest at Becket's shrine. In the earlier case, we stop before the reality of the saint's body can be revealed; in the later case, the careful exploration of the fourteen layers of ivory and horn continues till we reach the "little apple," and in the process the eye has been analysed, though external confirmation has to be sought for the accuracy of the analysis.

This contrast confirms, to a certain extent, the truth of Krzysztof Pomian's observation that "Curiosity, as embodied in the *Kunst- und Wunderkammer* ... enjoyed a temporary spell in power, an interim rule between those of theology and science." Pomian has certainly done more than any other scholar to analyse the specificity of the phenomenon of "curiosity," and to rescue it from the stigma of being a merely an embarrassing prelude to the age of scientific classification. But I feel, all the same, that Bargrave's collection testifies to the provisional nature of these epistemological categories: theology, curiosity and science. There is no doubt that Bargrave moves from the individual marvel, the miracle of art or nature, into the generalizing laws which will explain its constitution: in that way he avoids the accusation directed against curiosity by Bacon and Descartes, that it was confined to specific instances and incapable of inductive reasoning. But equally, the very heterogeneity of his objects — their provenance so integrally linked to the accidents of his life — denotes a search for totality which is quite foreign to the classificatory methods of the natural sciences. When Bargrave visited the Franciscans in Toulouse during his travels, they

offered him as a present the mummified body of a child which (as Bargrave puts it) "out of curiosity" he would have accepted, had he been on his homeward journey. As it was, he contented himself with the "finger of a Frenchman" which still resides in his collection. This is clearly not a relic, like the body of St. Thomas. Its very conservation and display, however, and the animated context in which Bargrave describes its acquisition, amount to a staging of the return of the repressed. Now that the Martyr's body has been removed, the Frenchman's finger testifies obstinately to the scandal of the body's persistence, in a prescientific age.

I want finally to emphasize that the purpose of this paper is not simply to retrieve, for a brief moment, a vanished episode in the history of collections and collecting: it is to reconstruct, in however schematic a form, a genealogy of the practice of visual display which avoids the dominant art-historical paradigms, and brings into focus the enunciatory element which has been lost in the objectivizing discourse of modern museology. As I have said, it is the systematic erasure of this element which makes the initiatives of the contemporary art museum appear to be, in certain cases, gratuitously "avant-garde," when in fact it is renewing a deep connection with modes of enunciation and display which existed before the eighteenth century. I mentioned at the start Daniel Spoerri's *Cabinet of Curiosities*, and Kounellis' installation in a post-industrial "nave"; I might also mention an artist like Christian Boltanski whose work implies and evokes this broader and deeper historical context. If it appears paradoxical to say that the contemporary art museum is precisely the place where the historical continuities can be observed, then I am happy with the paradox.

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