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CONJURE AND COLLAPSE IN THE ART OF ROMARE BEARDEN

RACHAEL DELUE

To begin, let me say something about the first word in the title of this essay: "conjure." The verb "to conjure" is a complex one, for it includes in its standard definition a great range of possible actions or operations, not all of them equivalent, or even compatible. In its most common usage, "to conjure" means to perform an act of magic or to invoke a supernatural force, by casting a spell, say, or performing a particular ritual or rite. But "to conjure" is also to influence, to beg, to command or constrain, to charm, to bewitch, to move or convey, to imagine, to visualize, to call to mind, or to remember. "Conjure" was used in English as early as the 14th century; it derived from the Latin "conjurare," meaning to band together through an oath or conspire.[1] As such, "to conjure" bears a significant, resonant weight, one constituted by its tangle of meanings as well as by its long passage across continents and through history. For the 20th-century American artist Romare Bearden, the term "conjure" had a very specific meaning. The shape of that meaning is the subject of this essay.

Born in 1911 in Charlotte, North Carolina, Bearden moved with his family to New York City in 1914, settling in Harlem by 1920. As a child and young man, Bearden attended public school in New York, but also spent long stretches of time with relatives in Pittsburgh, PA, Mecklenburg County, NC, and Lutherville, MD. As a young adult in the 1930s and, after that,

in the 1940s and 50s, Bearden juggled college; work as a cartoonist and illustrator; a job with New York's Department of Social Services; art classes; a stint in the army; solo and group exhibitions at various New York galleries; study in Paris at the Sorbonne; travel in Italy and Spain; contact with prominent artists and philosophers, including Joan Miró, Pablo Picasso, Gaston Bachelard, and Hannah Arendt; commercial song-writing; and marriage. In 1959, he and his wife, Nanette, whom he had wed in 1954, moved into a loft on Canal Street, in Manhattan, where Bearden would reside for the rest of his life. [2]

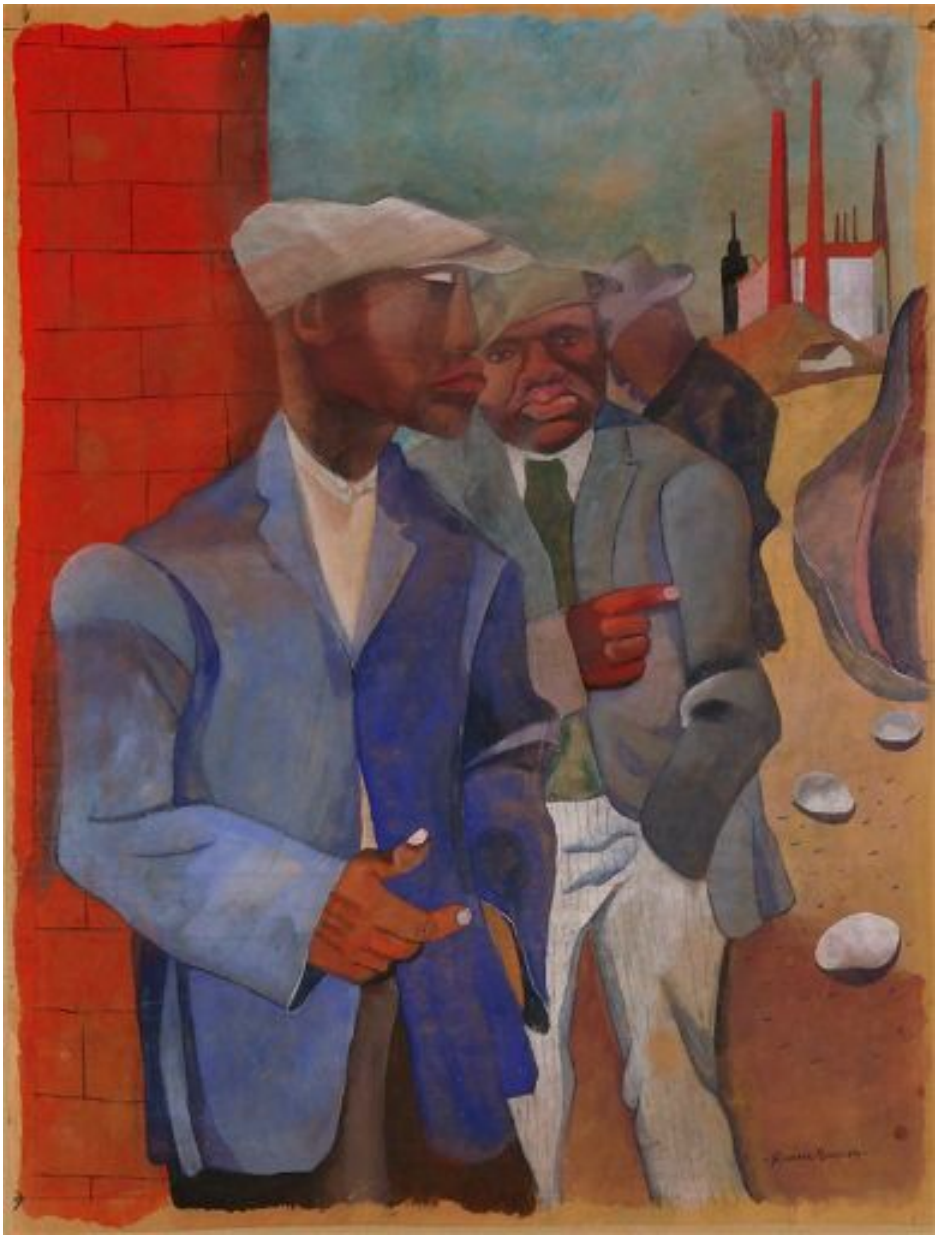

Fig. 1, Bearden, Factory Workers, 1942

During this time, Bearden's work for the most part alternated between social realist imagery—straightforward, unstinting depictions of everyday people, especially the working class, including his *Factory Workers*, from 1942, which was chosen to illustrate an article in *Fortune Magazine* entitled "The Negro's War"—and experimental, quasi-abstract pictures, often with biblical or mythical subjects, as with *The Payment of Judas* (1945-46).[3] Through the 1950s, Bearden's primary medium was paint—oil, acrylic, watercolor, or gouache—but in the late 1950s and early 1960s he began to experiment with collage, pasting paper onto canvas to create figurative or abstract compositions; he also turned out a small number of completely non-objective works.[4]

Fig. 2, Bearden, The Payment of Judas, 1945-46

It was not until 1963, when he was in his early 50s, that Bearden turned his full attention to the medium of collage and, also, to the medium of photomontage, a technique in which a picture is created by combining cut-out parts of photographs. It was at this moment that he began producing the works for which he is now best known, including *The Dove* (1964), a collage made out of cut and pasted paper affixed to board and elaborated with gouache and pencil.

Fig. 3, Bearden, The Dove, 1964

In *The Dove*, Bearden presents the scene on a New York street, the sidewalk thick with people strolling, talking, leaning, looking out of windows, and sitting on stoops. The picture registers almost immediately as a snapshot of the noisy, thick hustle of urban life and it does so despite the fact that it is, as a picture, a very strange one. Scraps of paper, cut-out photographs, and touches of paint and pencil form the bodies, buildings, and objects that we see. Bits of imagery from widely disparate sources—newspapers, magazines, product labels, construction paper, black and white or color photographs, wallpaper samples, architectural drawings—combine to create not a set of coherent forms but a series of disjointed and bizarrely scaled objects and bodies that lurch and stutter down the street as would a marionette puppet across a stage if operated by someone still learning the ropes. In the right half of the picture, a man whose head is far too large for his body, his eyes blocked or lopped off by a scrap of paper representing a cap, leans against a fire hydrant as a massive hand proffers an even more massive cigarette. Behind him stands a woman who holds in one oversize hand a piece of red and yellow fabric bearing a child's head and in another a length of twisted, rope-like metal; the tumult of her barely cohering body is exacerbated by the shifting and irregular patchwork quilt of colors and patterns on which she walks. To the left of the eyeless man a cluster of five figures—a child, a woman, and three men—unfold in space, accordian-like, such that they

seem to expand and contract in size, ballooning or shrinking, but not at all consistently or according to the rules of proportion or scale, so that it feels as if one sees them simultaneously from close up and far away. Their body parts spill and tumble across the small space that they occupy, seeming to come together as human wholes only by chance. A similar effect governs the left half of the picture, occupied by at least eight different figures, and here it can be even more difficult to tell which leg, arm, head, finger, or eye belongs to whom. Vivid reds, yellows, blues, and browns punctuate Bearden's view of this New York street, which is otherwise a near-colorless mélange of washed out grays and blacks, creating a vibrant, rhythmic march from one side to the other that further disrupts the stability of the scene, sending its contents spinning and making it near impossible for the eyes to slow down and settle on a particular part, pin-balling as they do from one thing to the next.

Contributing to the strangeness of the scene, despite its whirl and tumult and its effects of fragmentation and dislocation, and also despite its visual appeal—the fact that one just does not want to stop looking because Bearden offers such a fascinating and perplexing set of sights to see—is the picture's seamlessness, even slickness. To make his collages, Bearden began with a small board to which he added his cut paper and photographs as well as his paint and pencil marks; he then applied a resin emulsion adhesive to the whole and pressed the pieces to the board with a roller such that they settled into the viscous and thick adhesive and lay flat and still. While the adhesive dried, Bearden weighted the boards so that they would not warp.[5] Such a technique, in *The Dove* and in Bearden's other collages, creates the effect of a heavy varnish laid down over a painting's surface; despite the variation among the collage's many parts, the individual pieces can seem, at a material level, and against all odds, to be cut from the same cloth, their differences in texture and depth smoothed out and suppressed by the unifying, even petrifying resin. That such a smooth, fluid surface gives rise to such exuberant cacophony is part of what I would call the strange magic, and also the strange pleasure, of Bearden's collages.[6]

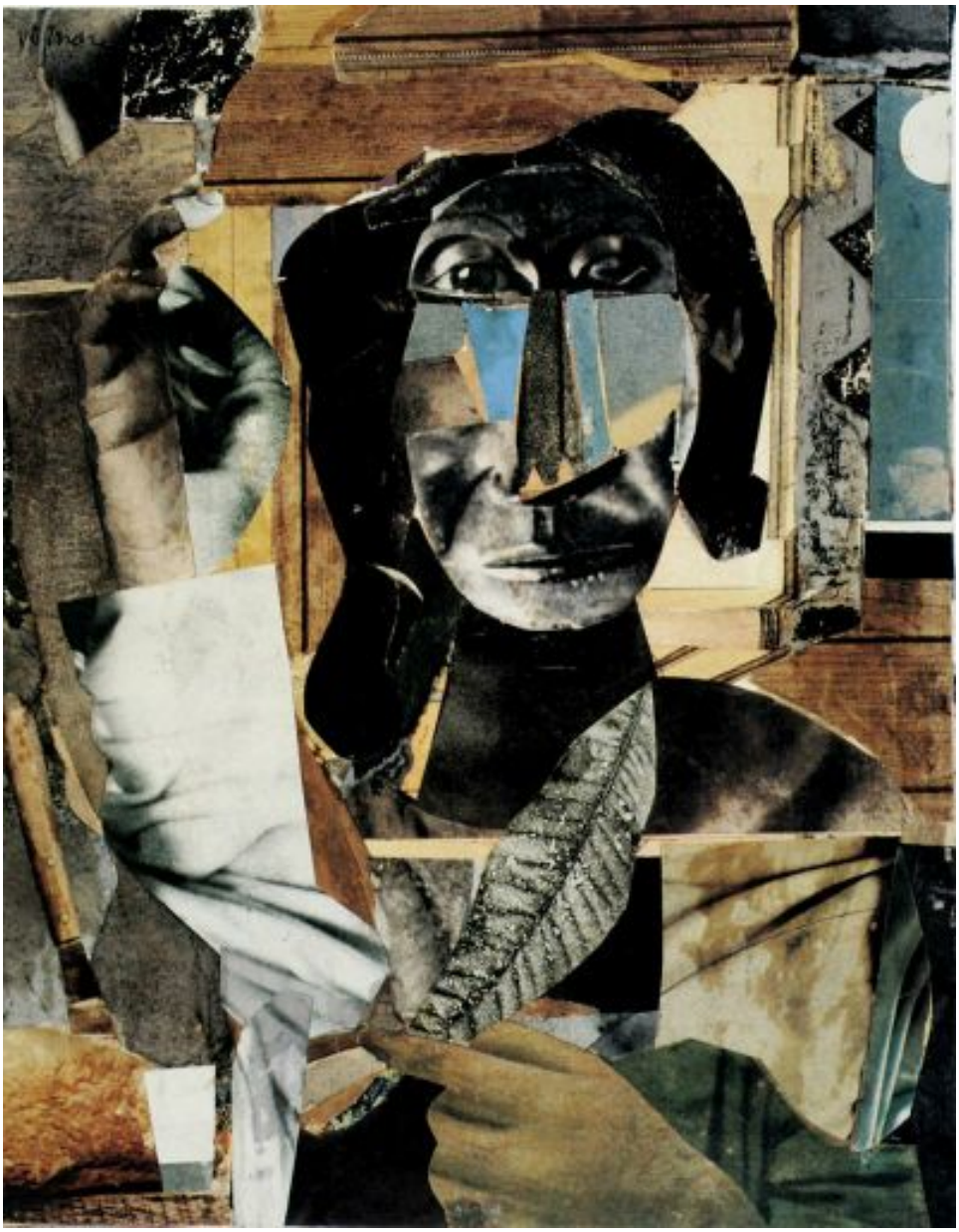

Fig. 4, Bearden, Conjur Woman, 1964

Almost all of the collages from this period boast similar effects. Their subject matter, as with *The Dove*, is also typical: scenes from everyday life in the African-American communities of New York, Pittsburgh, Charlotte, and other of Bearden's haunts, and Bearden's own memories of these places and their people growing up: sitting down to a meal or a game of cards, watching trains pull in and out of the yard, listening to music on a Saturday night. Typical in style and subject, also, are works such as *The Prevalence of Ritual: Conjur Woman* (1964) and *Conjur Woman* (1971). Both feature a "Conjur Woman" ("conjur" without an "e," as Bearden spells it), and thus bring us back to that wide-ranging and slippery verb I discussed

above, "to conjure." Bearden's turn to collage in 1963 was accompanied by the appearance of the character of the conjure woman in his work; the frequency with which he depicted or evoked her in the mid-1960s and beyond suggests her special significance within his artistic practice and, also, I would argue, a special relationship between her and the very medium of collage. "A conjur woman," wrote Bearden in 1969, "was an important figure in a number of Southern Negro rural communities. She was called on to prepare love potions; to provide herbs to cure various illnesses; and to be consulted regarding vexing personal and family problems. Much of her knowledge had been passed on through the generations from an African past, although a great deal was learned from the American Indians. A conjur woman was greatly feared and it was believed that she could change her appearance."[7] With roots in African tradition and wisdom, then, the conjur woman was an important part of many African-American communities, in the Southern United States and also in the North, where the tradition had migrated along with its practitioners and believers: important as an actual, physical presence—someone whom a person could hire to cast a spell or cure an ailment—or important simply, but not insignificantly, as an idea, metaphor, or myth.[8]

Fig. 5, Bearden, Conjur Woman, 1971

Scholars tend to agree that the conjur woman, as with train yards, evening card games, and weekend music-listening, was for Bearden a subject close to home, an autobiographical evocation of the community to which he belonged and the characters, beliefs, and traditions that were a fundamental part of his life growing up in the South and in New York's Harlem. Scholars also have suggested that Bearden's conjur women called forth for him an alternate sphere, a rich and redolent zone of magic and the supernatural adjacent to but distinct from the everyday, what constituted a world apart from the prejudice, racism, and segregation regularly faced by African Americans in their normal existence, one that looked back to and

drew on traditional African or African American culture for strength and solidarity as well as a way forward in the now.[9] Indeed, there can be no doubt that these works are about self, tradition, and race. How could they not be, given who made them—Bearden, an African American deeply invested in the politics of equality, an artist and activist both—and, also, given what they depict?

But what I want to suggest is that there is more to the story than this, and the "more" I wish to evoke has everything to do with what I characterized as a special relationship between conjure and the medium of collage in Bearden's practice. I have always been struck by the fact that Bearden turned to collage in the 1960s, at a moment well past the hey-day of the medium. Collage was for artists like Pablo Picasso and George Braque in the early years of the 20th century a means by which to engineer a radical transformation of painting and the pictorial surface, and collage along with photomontage offered a vehicle of social critique for artists of the European avant-garde during the interwar period, the cutting, slicing, fragmenting, and reconstituting involved in making a collage or photomontage providing apt metaphors for the trauma and violence of war and political oppression, the evisceration of the status quo, and the piecing together of new societal forms.[10] But what, decades later, was collage for Bearden? What bite could it possibly have well after the fact of its initial radicalness, when it was old news instead of new?

As it happens, Bearden turned to making collages almost by default. In 1963, a few months before Martin Luther King's historic march on Washington, he began meeting regularly with other socially- and politically-minded artists, all of them African American. They gathered in Bearden's Canal Street studio and called their cohort "Spiral," a term that was meant to represent expanding positive energy. Meetings were held to discuss art and brainstorm exhibition opportunities, but above all the group wished to explore collaboratively the potential role for artists in the struggle for Civil Rights. At one such meeting, in 1963, Bearden suggested that the group collaborate on an art project, and he showed his colleagues a stack of clippings from newspapers and magazines that he hoped could be used in the collective creation of a collage, an activity he believed could model the kind of collective action the group wished to pursue in the political realm.[11] The idea did not catch on, but this marks the point at which Bearden himself took up the project of collage and began making the works under discussion here. Bearden's proposal of a collective action collage, and the fact that he carried forth the project on his own, makes clear that he understood the medium to have value beyond the artistic and also that he believed that as an object, a literal *thing*, collage might do powerful, transformative work.[12]

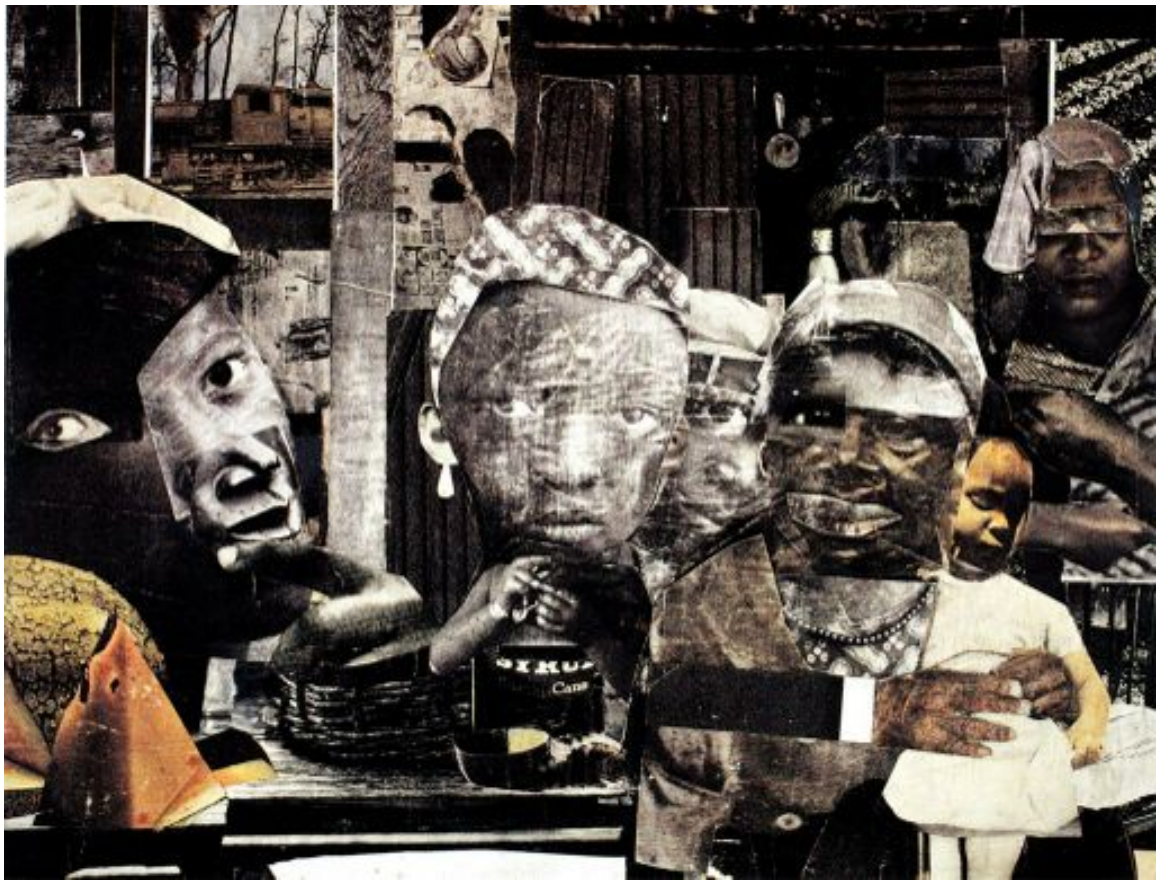

Fig. 6, Bearden, Prevalence of Ritual: Mysteries, 1964

Put another way, Bearden wanted his collages to conjure. Of course, all representational images conjure in the sense that they gather together colors and shapes to form an image of the world and in so doing call to the minds of their viewers various ideas, emotions, associations, and memories. But in making the conjur woman so prevalent in his imagery and in adopting the medium of collage, which by its very nature extracts material from the world and then transmutes it, turning so many scraps of paper into a novel physical form, Bearden suggested that he had in mind for his art an instrumentality beyond the norm, a capacity, akin to that of the conjur woman, that exceeded human limits and approximated new ways of seeing and being. Bearden did not think he could make his pictures really, in a literal sense see or act—of course not—but in them he set about fashioning a model of what it might be like to see and know the world through other than human eyes, much as a conjure woman through ritual objects, herbal mixtures, incantations, and rites harnessed the supernatural to interrupt and transform the natural, human-bound course of things. Indeed, what one sees when looking at one of Bearden's collages, including *Prevalence of Ritual: Mysteries* (1964), is not what the eyes would see, or could ever see, were one looking at the actual world, at least not quite. To be sure, the viewer, in point of fact, does look at the actual—the physical,

material—world when looking one of these works, for the collages are made out of literal pieces of that world: they give that viewer the "real" in no uncertain terms. But those pieces, excerpted, rearranged, and shellacked flat to a board still seem to arise as if through a form of extra-human sight. One sees not as a human does, but as a camera lens might, zooming in and out as scale enlarges and contracts and objects balloon and shrink, or perhaps like an insect, the compound vision of which, enabled by clusters of hundreds, even thousands of visual receptors, produces not a single coherent view but a mosaic pattern of alternating lights and darks. The fact that the viewer recognizes what he or she sees as the literal real—actual artifacts from everyday life, newspaper clippings, photographs, and so forth, and the fact that one of Bearden's resin-heavy, board-backed collages feels solid and weighty in the hand, as much brute object as it is image—makes *how* that viewer sees these things, in a manner unavailable to the unaided human eye and that renders null the physical, gravitational limits of the material world, feel all the more bizarre and unexplained, *enchanted* even. The kind of attention Bearden pays to eyes throughout his collages suggests just such an investment in new ways of seeing.[13] In *Mysteries*, a female figure just to the right of center, the one who holds a child, boasts a face created from at least six different sources. One of her eyes, the one to our right, seems properly encased in her skull and skin; the other one, however, appears to hover above her face, the pasted square of paper thus calling to mind the grotesque enlargement and spatial displacement of the eye that occurs when a person looks through a magnifying glass, an optical effect that I take to be yet an other emblem of other-than-human sight. In this scenario, then, Bearden reiterates the supersight he bequeaths to his viewer by compelling that viewer to come face to face with another supersighted being, a *seer*, one with a giant, outsized eye that is echoed and rearticulated in the patched-on, cyborg-like eyes of the figures at the extreme right and left edges of the scene. In the photogravure and aquatint version of this work entitled *The Train* that Bearden made several years later, in 1975, the woman's eye is again singled out, bursting emphatically as it does from a surrounding, receding wash of blue. The conjur women in Bearden's collages, themselves, feature the eyes of animals or ritual masks, further underscoring the extra-human seeing Bearden seems to wish to call forth and incarnate in his collage works. And in *The Dove*, the only bodies that Bearden allows to be whole, not made up of multiple parts and thus fully in charge of their actions as well as their being, are those of animals: a cat (or is it a dog?) that watches over the street from the lower left, another cat seated at the base of the stoop, its eye shining bright against its black fur, and the dove (of the title) who surveys the scene from a perch above the door, and who calls to mind the traditional Christian symbol for the Holy Spirit. All three reinforce, as manifestly seeing *animals*, this call for extra-human perception.

Fig. 7, Bearden, The Train, 1975

In another work, *Prevalence of Ritual: Baptism* (1964), which would become, along with *Prevalence of Ritual: Conjur Woman* and *Prevalence of Ritual: Mysteries*, part of a series, Bearden extracts and recombines animals, humans, and inanimate objects to create a mass of simultaneously monstrous and alluring bodies, the bulk of them waist-deep in water. Here, the rite of river baptism evokes Bearden's childhood memories of the South but also serves as a metaphor for ritual transformation and reconstitution.[14] It is tempting to imagine the dripping resin adhesive that Bearden poured over his clippings and cut-outs as akin to the water that pours over one's head in a baptism ceremony, depicted here by a hand spouting water at the top of the scene. It is equally tempting to see the immersion of the paper scraps in the viscous adhesive of the collage as akin to bodies plunged into liquid for the purpose of ritual rebirth. It is as if Bearden, already bent on using the physical material of the world in his work, rather than just pictorial representations of this world, wished for his weighted-down, solid pictures to *embody* ritual practice by approximating the literal forms and properties of the materials and

instruments used in a transformative, being-reconfiguring rite: collage *as* ritual or incantatory object, one might say.

Fig. 8, Bearden, Prevalence of Ritual: Baptism, 1964

What is more, Bearden performed his own transformative ritual in the course of creating and deploying his collages, first by conjuring them from the everyday world and then by using them as instruments to conjure yet another form. Bearden created approximately two-dozen collages in the mid-sixties, including the ones I discuss here; all of these he converted into Photostats, which he called "Projections." Produced by using an oversize camera loaded with rolls of photographic paper rather than film, a Photostat consists of an image produced directly from the original, either a negative or a positive image: in Bearden's case, a positive one, and enlarged.[15] In rendering his collages photostatically, taking the original form and calling forth from it something new, Bearden replaced his own eyes and hands with those of a machine—not to valorize or glorify machine production, but to, once again, suggest an extra-human mode of seeing and making, one analogous to the conjuring he so regularly depicted and that, through its many operations, from invocation and transformation to visualization and conveyance, embraced and instantiated the myriad meanings of the verb "to conjure." As

with photography, the Photostat technique used light, that "pencil of nature," as the medium by which an image was generated, and it is not hard to imagine Bearden here as a kind of conjure figure, compelling the light to do his bidding so as to make a new thing arise from the old, as with the curing of an illness, the settling of a dispute, or the shape-shifting attributed to the conjure woman herself. The fact that Bearden chose a female figure to serve as his surrogate or avatar underscores his wish to signal the displacement of natural vision through the incarnation of a form of seeing that transcended the limits of human cognition and, also, the limits of human biology.[16] It should be clear by now that Bearden would have had many reasons to wish for himself such powers: he was an ambitiously imaginative artist, but he was also deeply invested in changing the world. The group endeavor "Spiral" arose as much from political conviction as it did from artistic affinity and its one and only group show, held in 1965 in New York, took direct aim at the Museum of Modern Art, whose series of "Americans" exhibitions, initiated in 1929 and continuing into the 1960s, had as of 1965 not featured a single African American artist. The fact that Bearden's contribution to the Spiral show was a Photostat enlargement of one of his collages, *Conjur Woman* (1964), underscores the links he made among conjuring, art-making, and transformative action in the political sphere.

Fig. 9, Bearden, Prevalence of Ritual: Baptism, Photostat, 1964

And what of "collapse," the term that follows on the heels of "conjure" in my title? I will spare the reader the dictionary definition, not to worry. But I do intend something specific in using the term, for by collapse I do not mean failure or breakdown; rather, I want to evoke another sort of dismantling or giving way. Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952) opens with the following lines: "I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass.…That invisibility to which I refer occurs

because of a peculiar disposition of the eyes of those with whom I come in contact. A matter of the construction of their *inner* eyes, those eyes with which they look through their physical eyes upon reality."[17] In 1966, in response to a question from a journalist, Bearden declared that "Western society, and particularly that of America, is gravely ill and a major symptom is the American treatment of the Negro."[18] In a world where not just eyes, but the very mechanism of cognition—the inner perceptual apparatus by which humans come to know and to judge—was subject to dysfunction and the social body as a whole was stricken with disease, nothing but a literal collapse, a dismantling of old ways of seeing and knowing, and a piecing together of new modes of perception and being, would suffice. Such a collapse, to Bearden's mind, was something art, and collage in particular, could help to conjure.

NOTES

1. "Conjure," *Oxford English Dictionary* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press), http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/39295?rskey=OyMkKa&result=43650&isAdvanced=true#, accessed Oct. 4, 2012.

2. For biographical information, here and throughout this essay, I rely on the following sources: Kinshasha Holman Conwill, Mary Schmidt Campbell, and Sharon F. Patton, *Memory and Metaphor: The Art of Romare Bearden, 1940-1987* (New York, NY: Studio Museum in Harlem; New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Gail Gelburd and Thelma Golden, *Romare Bearden in Black and White: Photomontage Projections 1964* (New York, NY: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1997); Ruth Fine, et al., *The Art of Romare Bearden* (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2003); Lee Stephens Glazer, "Signifying Identity: Art and Race in Romare Bearden's Projections," *The Art Bulletin* 76/3 (Sept. 1994), 411-426; Ruth Fine and Jacqueline Francis, ed., *Romare Bearden, American Modernist*, Studies in the History of Art 71 (Washington, D.C.: Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, National Gallery of Art, 2011); and Carla M. Hanzal, et al., *Romare Bearden: Southern Recollections* (Charlotte, NC: The Mint Museum, 2011).

3. "The Negro's War," *Fortune Magazine* 25/6 (June 1942), 76; Ruth Fine, "Romare Bearden: The Spaces Between," in Fine et al., *The Art of Romare Bearden*, 14; Herbert R. Hartel, Jr., "Bearden, Romare," *Encyclopedia of the Harlem Renaissance, Volume 1, A-J*, ed. Cary D. Wintz and Paul Finkelman (New York: Routledge, 2004), 105..

4. For examples of Bearden's work from all phases of his career, see Fine, et al., *The Art of Romare Bearden*; Fine discusses Bearden's early work, including his abstractions, in her catalog essay "Romare Bearden: The Spaces Between" (2-28).

5. Gail Gelburd, "Romare Bearden in Black and White: The Photomontage Projections of 1964," 20.

6. See also Raél Jero Salley's detailed analysis of the formal structure and effects of Bearden's collage technique in "Staging a Visual Circus: Bearden's *Mysteries* of 1964," in *Romare Bearden in the Modernist Tradition*, ed. Ellie Tweedy (New York: Romare Bearden Foundation, 2008), 77-83.

7. Romare Bearden, "Rectangular Structure in My Montage Paintings," *Leonardo* 2 (Jan. 1969), 12, quoted in Gelburd, "Romare Bearden in Black and White: The Photomontage Projections of 1964," 33.

8. For discussion of Bearden and the tradition of the conjure woman, see Nnamdi Elleh, "Bearden's Dialogue with Africa and the Avant-Garde," in Fine, et al., *The Art of Romare Bearden*, 156-171; Alicia Garcia, "Muse and Method in Romare Bearden's *Obeah* Watercolors," in Richard J. Powell, et al., *Conjuring Bearden* (Durham, NC: Nasher Museum of Art, Duke University, 2006), 34-47; Gail Gelburd, "Romare Bearden in Black and White: The Photomontage Projections of 1964," 33-37; Leslie King-Hammond, "Bearden's Crossroads: Modernist Roots/Riffing Traditions," in *Romare Bearden: Southern Recollections*, 86-103; Richard J. Powell, "Changing, Conjuring Reality," in Richard J. Powell, et al., *Conjuring Bearden*, 19-31; Sally Price and Richard Price, *Romare Bearden: The Caribbean Dimension* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 121-153.

9. See especially Glazer, "Signifying Identity"; Powell, "Changing, Conjuring Reality"; and the section entitled "Romare Bearden's Critical Modernism" in *Romare Bearden in the Modernist Tradition* with essays by Helen Shannon, Geoffrey Jacques, Kymberly N. Pinder, and Amy Mooney as well as a conversation among Melvin Edwards, William T. Williams, and Dawoud Bey (21-66). See also Darby English, "Ralph Ellison's Romare Bearden," in Fine and Francis, ed., *Romare Bearden, American Modernist*, 11-25, for a critical look at the relationship in the scholarly literature among Bearden, history, and race, or what English calls the "confusion of aesthetics and sociality" (15).

10. For a discussion of Bearden and earlier examples of avant-garde collage, see Patricia Hills, "Cultural Legacies and the Transformation of the Cubist Collage Aesthetic by Romare Bearden, Jacob Lawrence, and Other African-American Artists," in Fine and Francis, ed., *Romare Bearden, American Modernist*, 221-247, and Helen Shannon, "African Art and Cubism, Proto-Collage, and Collage in the Work of Romare Bearden," in *Romare Bearden in the Modernist Tradition*, 21-30. Other versions of collage emerged in the post-war period, of course, most notably those of the British pop artist Richard Hamilton and his counterparts in the United States, including Tom Wesselmann and Robert Rauschenberg, but Bearden's collages and photomontages most closely resemble their early twentieth-century European precedents. For Bearden and pop art, see Pepe Karmel, "The Negro Artist's Dilemma," in Fine and Francis, ed., *Romare Bearden, American Modernist*, 249-268.

11. Emma Amos and Courtney J. Martin, "Conversation: The Spiral Group," in *Romare Bearden in the Modernist Tradition*, 85-92; Fine, "Romare Bearden: The Spaces Between," 28-29; Jacqueline Francis, "Bearden's Hands," in Fine and Francis, ed., *Romare Bearden, American Modernist*, 131; Gelburd, "Romare Bearden in Black and White: The Photomontage Projections of 1964," 18-20; Karmel, "The Negro Artist's Dilemma," 256-257; and Jennifer Wingate, "Romare Bearden," *Art Criticism* 14/1 (1999), 7-10. Spiral had just one group exhibition, in 1965, called "First Group Showing: Works in Black and White";

as I will discuss later in the essay, Bearden exhibited a Photostat of his collage *Prevalence of Ritual: Conjur Woman* (1964), now in the collection of the Studio Museum in Harlem. (Fine, "Romare Bearden: The Spaces Between," 29.) An exhibition on the group, entitled "Spiral: Perspectives on an African-American Art Collective," was mounted by the Birmingham Museum of Art (Alabama) in 2010 and traveled to the Studio Museum in Harlem in 2011.

12. Greg Foster-Rice is similarly interested in the generative materiality of Bearden's collage technique, which he refers to as *bricolage* in discussing Bearden's *The Block* (1970). (Greg Foster-Rice, "Bearden's Tactical Collage," *Romare Bearden in the Modernist Tradition*, 103-112.)

13. Gelburd discusses eyes in her "Romare Bearden in Black and White: The Photomontage Projections of 1964," 36. See also English, "Ralph Ellison's Romare Bearden," in which the author links the visual passage of the beholder through the kaleidoscope of Bearden's collages to the act of seeing lucidly and complexly, as opposed to mundanely or commonly (22).

14. For discussion of the subject of baptism or the metaphor of water more generally in Bearden, see Gelburd "Romare Bearden in Black and White: The Photomontage Projections of 1964," 25-33, and Kymberly N. Pinder, "Deep Waters: Rebirth, Transcendence, and Abstraction in Romare Bearden's Passion of Christ," in Fine and Francis, ed., *Romare Bearden, American Modernist*, 143-165.

15. Fine, "Nurtured and Necessary: Mothers of Invention," in Fine and Francis, ed., *Romare Bearden, American Modernist*, 187-188; Gelburd, "Romare Bearden in Black and White: The Photomontage Projections of 1964," 20. For detailed discussion of Bearden's technique, see Mary L. Corlett, et al., *From Process to Print: Graphic Works by Romare Bearden* (New York: Romare Bearden Foundation, 2009).

16. For a general discussion of the role of women in Bearden's art and life, see Richard A. Long, "Bearden and Women," *International Review of African American Art* 22/3 (2009), 15-19.

17. Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (New York: Random House, 1982, 1952), 3. In his "Ralph Ellison's Romare Bearden," English considers the relationship between Ellison's description of the protagonist of *Invisible Man* and Bearden's collage technique (20-23), and in "Signifying Identity," Glazer characterizes the social and political meaning of Bearden's photomontages and Photostats by considering their status as mechanical reproductions as well as their relationship to documentary photography and photojournalism.

18. Fine, "Romare Bearden: The Spaces Between," 28.

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WHAT IS POST-FORMALISM? (OR, *DAS SEHEN AN SICH HAT SEINE* KUNST *GESCHICHTE*)

WHITNEY DAVIS

In this essay I examine an analytic interest on the part of some art historians today (including me) in a proposition that they have partly inherited from Heinrich Wölfflin in the early twentieth century. I will call the proposition "post-formalism." Because Wölfflin is usually called a "formalist" I will need to say why he might be a godfather of post-formalism today. This will require me to say something about formalism in art history *tout court*, at least as I propose to understand it for the purposes of coming to terms with "post-formalism." [1]

Needless to say, here I cannot review the many formalisms in art history (let alone artwriting more broadly defined) by proceeding text by text and writer by writer, even if I were competent to do so. In addition to Wölfflin, and speaking only of writing published in his lifetime, one would have to deal with texts by Aloïs Riegl, Wilhelm Worringer, Clive Bell, Roger Fry, Albert Barnes, Hans Sedlmayr, Henri Focillon, and Clement Greenberg among others, not to speak of practices on the part of artists such as Wassily Kandinsky and Hans Hofmann and art teachers such as Denman Ross and Jay Hambidge—a hugely diverse group.

I cannot attempt even the most minimal exegesis that would be needed. Selective overviews are readily available. [2]

Instead I will offer an analytic commentary on the claims of art-historical formalism as an analytic construction in art history, and possibly as a tactical methodological construction. In turn this will enable me to situate "post-formalism" as a philosophy of art history today.

I take a special interest in Wölfflin's formalism because it integrated the crucial *post*-formalist manoeuver as I will identify it: the form-making capacity of human intuition—especially if intuition simply *is* form making—must be *historicized*. Stated most simply, form is a history. Of course, there have been several "post-formalisms." For example, art critics and art historians who reacted specifically against Greenberg's modernism might be called post-formalists, and sometimes they have been. (Indeed, one might even argue that Kant inflected his formalism—a transcendental psychology of the form-making capacity of human intuition—with a post-formalist psychology of the form that is constituted specifically in aesthetic judgment of works of fine art.) In the present essay I take the view that post-formalism in art history became possible at the very moment of the principal inception of formalism in the work of Wölfflin. I will be concerned mostly to say how this possibility has been realized in recent years.

§1. Formalism and Post-Formalism. The overall gist is this. Post-formalism as I will describe it attempts to shift ground from the *history of artworks* to the *history of visual imaging and imagining*—what Wölfflin in 1915 in *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe* called *Sehformen* (a neologism often translated as "ways of seeing" or "modes of vision") and in 1923 revised to *Formen der Vorstellungsbild* ("modes of imagination" in the English translation of 1932, but probably better rendered as "forms of imaginative appearance" or even "forms of representationality"). [3]

This shift as I will describe it also involves a movement from an aestheticist "formalisticism" (though this is not a term used in the current self-description of art history) to formalism proper, a sub-Kantian psychology of intuition—of the "forming" activity of sensibility. Formalisticism effects a partial reification of what I will call "formality" (the apparent configuratedness of material things) as "form" in a specialized art-historical sense: form is a unity organized materially (and visibly apparent) in man-made things on the basis of essential habits of intuition, notably (for Wölfflin) sensitivity to "rhythm," though Wölfflin also believed that some of these habits of intuition vary historically. [4] (The things in question, of course, need not be artworks, and in Kant's account of aesthetic judgment they need not be man-made things at all; still, works of fine art have sometimes been deemed to be impossible without form.) What many writers usually denote by "formalism" in art history is a *wholesale* reification—full-bore formalisticism in my sense. It puts form "in" the things, converting it

from *an aspect seen* (or formality) to *an attribute made*. Instead of speaking of the formality of the thing for us as we see it, then, we come—in the formalist conversion forced by the reification of formalisticism—to speak of being aware of its form. (I expand on this briefly in §2 below.) It follows analytically that "post-formalism" in art history and artwriting would certainly try to get beyond formalisticism. Whether and how it gets beyond transcendental formalism is another question.

Given its post-formalisticism, post-formalism (whether post-Kantian or not) should be able to state the *relation between* artworks and *Sehformen*. Or at least it sets out to do so. The crucial point here, in my view, is that seeing, visual imaging, does not just have a history *an sich* or "in itself"—the history of the "*optische Schichten,*" or "strata of vision," that Wölfflin said it was the first-order task of art history to uncover. (I will call this "vision historicism": "Das Sehen an sich hat seine Geschichte und die Aufdeckung dieser 'optischen Schichten' muss als die elementarste Aufgabe der Kunstgeschichte betrachtet werden."[5]) Imaging also has an *art* history, which I have tried to describe as the "successions" and "recursions" of "formality," "pictoriality," and other aspects of things made specifically to be seen in the seeing that sees them. In a sense, then, post-formalism is also *pre*-formalism—a grounding of the history of artworks in the art history of seeing. I will address this matter in the middle sections of the essay.

The challenge today is that the art history of seeing (such as it is) is confronted by an expansive foundationalist neurology of seeing that is *merely* aesthetic, and in a sense aesthetic*ist* within its domain, or formalist—a visual neuropsychology that is now sometimes called "neuroaesthetics." Post-formalism might best be defined, then, as post-neuroaestheticist. (In addressing this side of the story, the present essay follows on my "Neurovisuality," published in *nonsite* in 2011.[6])

Wölfflin tackled a similar problem in the terms of the psychophysiology of his own day, as did some of the other early formalists already mentioned. (Some were expert psychologists, and formalism is a psychological theory—a method of "virtual historical psychology," as I have put it elsewhere.[7])

But he did not quite solve it because of his tendency toward formalisticism, and the circularity of the analysis that resulted: the form of artworks (identified in the reification of formalisticism) became Wölfflin's evidence for the historicity of vision (an open question for formalism in psychology) at the same time as the historicity of vision explained the form of artworks. Post-formalism seeks to avoid this circularity. It tries to state a historical relation and therefore in my terms a *recursive* relation between the form of artworks and the historicity

of vision, at least so far as we limit ourselves (rather artificially) to formality or formal aspects. I will deal with this matter in the final section of the essay.

§2. Formalism Proper and Formalisticism. In Kant's system and in the Kantian tradition—what we might call formalism proper—form belongs to intuition. As Kant expressed the point in the First Critique, form can be defined as "the manner [*die Art*] in which we are affected by objects"—*die Art* as distinct, that is, from our knowledge of "content" let alone our empirical contact with the real matter of the objects. As Robert B. Pippin has put the point in *Kant's Theory of Form*, in Kant's doctrine "form is inextricably linked with the knowing subject"; it is the condition of the possibility of our sensory awareness of anything. [8]

Responding to the First Critique, in 1787 Johann Georg Schlosser sharply criticized what he called Kant's "*Formgebungmanufaktur*," his "pedantic" invention of a forming capacity of the mind—what we might call Kant's "mere formalism" in transcendental psychology, or formalism proper. In 1796 Kant responded equally sharply and reiterated his primary claim: "If the thing is an object of the senses," he insisted, "so its form is in intuition (as an appearance)." [9] Responding to the First Critique, in 1787 Johann Georg Schlosser sharply criticized what he called Kant's "*Formgebungmanufaktur*," his "pedantic" invention of a forming capacity of the mind—what we might call Kant's "mere formalism" in transcendental psychology, or formalism proper. In 1796 Kant responded equally sharply and reiterated his primary claim: "If the thing is an object of the senses," he insisted, "so its form is in intuition (as an appearance)." [10]

In the terms of the aspect psychology that I have adopted in *A General Theory of Visual Culture*, constitutive form (when converted from space and time to color, shape, etc.—to color, shape, etc., as constituted in space and time in intuition) is "formality": the apparent configuratedness (the "appearance" of configuratedness) in things. Needless to say, some of these things have been made specifically to be seen: they have been colored and shaped by someone with a "forming" sensibility who has produced them for the prospect of a "formality"—seeming form—that they might afford to sight. But it is crucial to preserve the theoretical sense in which this relay is a complex *recursion*—the succession of formality in the visibility of things in historical visualities. [11]

In the *reification*, form in this sense—Kantian forms-in-intuition; formal aspects ("formality") as described in aspect psychology—gets transferred or translocated to the object, as if we perceive—receive or pick up—its "form." The apparent configuratedness of an object as we constitute it becomes our seeing of its configuration or formedness. Many commentators on art history and criticism use the term "formalism" to designate the reification (or objectification). But it might better be called "formalisticism" (as I will do here) because

formalism need not objectify form. It is "formalistic"—but not inherently "formalist" in the transcendental-psychological sense—to proceed analytically as if form subsists primordially in the object, even if it was put there (as one might say) by the intuitional activities of its maker and beholders in visualizing or visibilizing it.

It should be noted, however, that formalistic reifications are not wholly unwarranted in art history. At least, they should not be unexpected; there is a credible reason for them. In its methodological self-invention as a second-order archaeology, art history conjures a real thing (i.e., "form") to dig up for display to its "looking" when the first-order object (i.e., "the manner in which objects affect us") cannot be proffered as any (properties of a) physical thing. Formalisticism literally creates a material object as objectified form(ality). Philosophical tradition has enabled art history to trade on this shuttle, as Kant himself had done. As Pippin has put it, "should the object of knowledge be an object of the senses, its 'form' is not a property of the object, but *is* the intuiting activity of the subject. Nevertheless, by his association here with the tradition, Kant admits that knowledge of this form *will* reveal something like the 'essence' of the object—for Kant the universal conditions necessary for it to be an object at all (space and time)." By "association with the tradition," Pippin specifically means Kant's starting-points in Aristotelian and scholastic philosophies. To use the very words with which Kant opened the remarks of 1796 that I have already quoted "[a] the essence of things consists in their form (*forma dat esse rei*, as is said by the Scholastics) [b] insofar as this thing might be known through reason."[13] As I understand the matter, the passage from (a) to (b) qualified the tradition in Kant's special philosophical terms. Marking the beginning of his formalist transcendental psychology, it introduced what Kant called his "Copernican revolution" in philosophy. But (b) is not intelligible without (a).

Now let us suppose that art history (not to speak of art criticism) understands its primary objects to be material works of art and perhaps, in an extension, items of visual and material culture that need not be identified specifically as works of art. (Recall that Wölfflin said that these things are *not* the theoretical object of the project of art history, at least considered in themselves; the "elementary datum" of art-historical inquiry is their *optische Schichten*. In principle this is vision historicism in formalism proper.) In turn it is obvious that art history at that level or in that register can (and perhaps must) proceed archaeologically from (1) form "in" the object to (2) "form" as intuited ("seen") by the beholder-historian to (3) "form" attributed to the intuiting activity of the historical maker, though psychologically the order—the business of Kant's transcendental psychology and other formalisms proper—is partly inverse to this (i.e., [3] to [1] to [2]).

In other words, the reification might have a tactically valid *methodological* status: formalisticism functions as a forensic archaeological method for an art history framed theoretically as a history of forming activity in sensibility. The problem arises when the methodological reification (that is, the forensics of the recursions of formality) is treated as primary foundation—gets ontologized. This risks mischaracterizing the intuiting activity of the subject ("forming" the object in space and time) as the intuiting of objective form. More exactly for my purposes, it risks conflating them in such a way that the "elementarste Aufgabe" of art history—the historicity of forming, and its specific historicality as it were—becomes hard to identify, and perhaps will be cut out of the story entirely. In §4 below I will return to this matter in the case of Wölfflin's formalism.

There is another reason for art-historical formalisticism aside from its status as a forensic method of formalism proper. The contiguity between the hugely general terms of Kantian formalism (laid out in the First Critique) and the highly specialized terms of Kantian aesthetic judgment in constituting the "perfected ideals of beauty in the fine arts" (spelled out in one short section of the Third Critique) may have motivated some formalisticist reifications of art as an empirical object specifically made to affect us in its form, that is, as a putatively aesthetic object. But the contiguity does not fully justify the reification. Kant did not simply identify form and artwork as the subjective and the objective faces of sensibility. If anything, the perfected ideal of beauty in art is form *reformed*—detached from any interest we have in the empirical existence of the object. And this reformed form (the specifically "normative" form) is not "in" the object that is an ideal artwork, just as it was not "in" the images of things that we find appealing from which the ideal artwork is built. It is in sensibility. Still, because the reformed form—ideal art—is not a mere emanation of immediate subjective intuition (instead it is a product of "subjective universality") it has some claim to be regarded as an objective form *afforded to* the subject for his or her intuition. Perhaps this model of the history of the forming of artworks as idealizations can be reconciled analytically with the history of their *optische Schichten*. After all, Kant admitted that his model of the perfection of ideals of beauty in the fine arts invoked an "optical analogy" of the intuitive superimposition of visual images of appealing and attractive things. Taken literally, then, the consolidation of perfected ideals of beauty in an artwork simply *is* the historical constitution of an *optische Schicht* as a particular aesthetic horizon. But it will be difficult, maybe impossible, to make this case by indulging the formalistic reification.

§3. Post-Formalism Proper. In the sense that I use the term here, the term "post-formalism" first cropped up (for me anyway) in David Summers's book *Real Spaces*, published in 2003—a post-formalist world art history (as he called it) partly intended to describe the "rise of Western modernism."[15] *Real Spaces* is not only *art-historically* post-formalist. Summers

not only tried to get beyond the formalist reification in art-historical formalism, or what I have been calling formalisticism. It is also *philosophically* post-formalist, that is, post-Kantian. Summers did not want to start from the forms of intuition (i.e., space and time) as described by transcendental psychology, or to be required always to return to them as the ground. Even Martin Heidegger had done so, though he thought that he had analytically managed to constitute "original time"—over and against space—as the privileged or primary route of the understanding (and its final existential constraint). In turn, Ernst Cassirer severely criticized this view—what he took to be extreme onesidedness. Partly in this light, Summers hopes to redescribe space (one of the "two basic pillars" of the understanding, as Cassirer insisted after Kant and against Heidegger) in terms of what he calls "*real* space," that is, the geometrical-optical organization and sociocultural architectonics of topographical "place" and the man-made configurations set up in it, notably pictures.[16] He takes his analysis to break decisively from art histories that reify form, thereby opening *new* art histories—new lineages, for example, of the "rise of Western modernism" that has been treated so often by art historians.

Art historians have usually connected Western pictorial naturalism to the forms of Classical Greek sculptural *contrapposto* and pictorial construction of fictive depth. In one of the most innovative of his new histories, Summers partly derived it instead from planar constructions of *ancient Egyptian* depiction. As he put it, "Egyptian painters and sculptors made choices that were to establish the basis of Western naturalism . . . accomplished by the development of planarity into the virtual dimension, with consequences reaching to the present day."[17] I want to emphasize the striking novelty of this art-historical claim. Ancient Egyptian depiction has sometimes been said to constitute "the origins of Western art." But it has been far more usual (largely under the influence of Hegel's aesthetics) formally to contrast Egyptian "symbolic" or "conceptual" procedures in picture making with the naturalism of Classical Greek art as the *formal* "birth of Western art," that is, of one of its characteristic formalities in visual culture.[18]

According to Greenberg, for example, "of all the great traditions of pictorial naturalism, only the Greco-Roman and the Western can be said to be sculpturally oriented. They alone have made full use of the sculptural means of light and shade to obtain an illusion of volume on a flat surface. And both these traditions arrived at so-called scientific perspective only because a thoroughgoing illusion of volume required a consistent illusion of the kind of space in which volume was possible."[19] "Sculptural means of light and shade," "illusion of volume on a flat surface," and "illusion of the space in which volume is possible" are overly formalistic—reifications of formality. We can convert them (post-formalistically) to *modeling in light*, *flat surface seen as voluminous*, and *virtual volume seen in space* under specified optical, geometric, and architectonic conditions in real space; Summers set out a demonstration

in terms of the "axis of direct observation" that he took to be maintained in Egyptian "planarity." If we do this—I will not rehearse Summers's careful analysis here—we can see how the Egyptians produced *illusion of volume set it in a space in which it is possible*. To be sure, this virtual space was organized on the metricized "virtual coordinate plane" that Summers has identified in Egyptian depiction, not in "scientific perspective" in the sense that Greenberg meant. Still, "metric naturalism" and optical naturalism can now be described more accurately relative to each other, and no longer as mere opposites; Summers's explications of "relief space" in Classical Greek pictorialism, of the "optical plane" in medieval pictoriality, and of "painter's perspective" in Italian Renaissance pictoriality benefit from—depend on—his antecedent identification of the virtual coordinate plane in Egyptian pictoriality.[20] Any phenomenal, technological, and sociohistorical continuities between metric naturalism and optical naturalism can be explored archaeologically (for example, by investigating the transfer of technologies for constructing proportions on the plane from Saite Egypt to Archaic Greece). They need not remain juxtaposed as polarized *à la* Greenberg, who pushed each formalistic category of immanent form to its "full," "thoroughgoing," and most "consistent" self-realization. *Real Spaces* exemplifies Summers's training in the traditions of archaeological *Strukturforschung*, which I share: my first undergraduate teacher at Harvard, G. M. A. Hanfmann, was a student of Friedrich Matz, the best mid-twentieth-century exponent of *Strukturanalyse*, which he imbibed from Sedlmayr and Guido von Kaschnitz-Weinberg. *Strukturanalyse* might be the first post-formalism in art history.[21] But Summers's teacher at Yale, George Kubler, was right to say that Matz and others practiced a kind of *Weltanschauungsgeschichte*—"idealist archaeology" as Kubler called it. That is, they tended to derive the *optische Schichten* from preexisting *Weltbilder*, or at least from a "central pattern of sensibility" to be found among poets and artists living at the same time. This was more or less empty. Analytically *Weltbilder* simply *are* the *optische Schichten*.

By contrast, Kubler saw his overall project in examining "some of the morphological problems of duration in series and sequence" as making good on a question that art historians had put aside "when [they] turned away from 'mere formalism' to the historical reconstruction of symbolic complexes"—that is, to iconology. His scare quotes imply, it seems to me, that for him "mere formalism" had certain analytic advantages, at least when it was reconstituted as archaeological method. It had advantages, that is, if one could shake off its tendencies to universalize about sensibility (as in *Strukturforschung*) and to indulge formalisticism in the ontology of (art)making—to treat form as a feature of the artifact, often unique, rather than as an emergent morphological boundary of its artifact-type (or "form class"), in which each artifact is "formed" as much under constraints of its serial position as in virtue of its maker's sensibility.[22]

Following Kubler, Summers works inversely to "idealist archaeology": a worldpicture emerges historically *within* an optical stratum in human imaging, or *as* it. (The two most general strata identified in *Real Spaces*, "planarity" and "virtuality," would seem to be modifications on the second of the five polarities Wölfflin had set out in *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe* to describe the realization of form, namely, plane [or surface] and recession [or depth].) This is a history *in* imaging, not—or not essentially—a history of ideas or beliefs or worldviews that precede and determine it. As Wölfflin had already urged, excavating this history is the primary task of art history. And Summers did so in a "post-formalist" way, as he saw it, because for him the serial making of assemblages (or environments) of things in real spaces in history is the elementary (quasi-Kublerian) datum of our archaeology, not the form of the artwork as put into it by a spatializing sensibility said to precede the agent's experience in the world and especially the agent's experience of socially shaped topography—of particular cultural "places" in "real space." Stated another way, Summers wants to "world" form (that is, put it in the world) whether or not his "world art history" succeeds in each and every one of its genealogies and chronologies of artmaking considered globally. [23]

Of course, Summers's *Real Spaces* is not the only example of recent post-formalism, though it is notable because it explicitly described itself as such. By now many teachers of art history must have gotten used to hearing students call themselves "post-formalists," though many of these teachers (including me) probably described themselves as "anti-formalists" when *they* were students. When I ask my students what they mean, some cite Summers. Others cite Hans Belting's *Bild-Anthropologie* of 2001: it proposed *Entwürfe für eine Bildwissenschaft* said by him to be an "anthropology." There is considerable overlap between Belting's and Summers's descriptions of the functions of images (both writers deal extensively, for example, with substitutive effigies) and in turn with Horst Bredekamp's recent *Theorie des Bildakts*, also markedly post-formalist. I will not rehearse these projects here, however. Suffice it to say that the art-historical attainments of post-formalism are now quite clear. In each case—Summers, Belting, Bredekamp—we find the art historian identifying affiliations or even historical connections and cultural interactions between productions that formalism had sometimes overlooked—could *only* overlook when formal*istic*.

Certainly Belting and Bredekamp proceed post-formalistically. In Belting's account of the force of effigies, what counts is the functional substitutability of material effigy and prototype, even if there is no visible "formal" congruence between the visible features of the former object (a thing with "form") and the latter (which may not be visible at all). It is not so much that form is objectified in the effigy, though effigies have formality. The prototype is objectified when the effigy functions. Belting insists that he does not identify images with pictorial artifacts; indeed, he identifies images primarily with the body and mental imaging.

This could allow formalism proper. But it should be "anthropological." The forms of intuition do not *precede* bodily awareness in the social field. In anthropology, intuition simply *is* the body's imagemaking in the social field. [24]

If I have any objection to Belting's *Bild-Anthropologie*, it is simply that his historical anthropology might not be radical enough to displace transcendental psychology. Of course, Belting's anthropology situates the transcendental activity of intuition *within* the bounds of historical cultures that he differentiates one from the next. But this anthropology tends to reify each cultural tradition as *a priori* collective intuition within its bounds—a "common pattern of sensibility" as Kubler put it in describing the idealist archaeology of *Strukturforschung*. Indeed, it objectifies that intuition *as* supposed cultural tradition. Therefore it does not quite issue in a radically historical analytics of imagemaking.

For his part, Bredekamp collates objects that formalistically would not be affiliated as iterations of the same kind of artifact. Rather, they replicate images. To explain this history Bredekamp would appeal as much to the agent's visual experience (in complex interaction with fantasies, desires, beliefs, and concepts) as to formal sensibility. Indeed, the agent's formal sensibility simply *is* this history in his or her visual experience. Bredekamp's history of Charles Darwin's diagrammatic visualizations of transmutation exemplifies this theory of the action of images: set down in Darwin's notebooks of the mid 1830s, the diagrams (according to Bredekamp's archaeology of the replications) relayed images dating to earlier periods in Darwin's experience and in the experience of other agents whose imagemaking he encountered historically. According to Bredekamp, then, the image is not so much formed in intuition as primary; rather, it is formed in the relay of images. Better, the historical account of the relay of images simply *is* an analysis of intuition as essentially historical. [25]

If I have any objection to Bredekamp's *Bildakttheorie*, it is simply that he still requires formalisticism to do some of his historical work. Bredekamp sometimes takes mere morphological similarity in the form of images (regardless of their diverse historical locations in the *Sein und Zeit* and the *Zeit und Ort* of the agents) to be the *evidence for*situating them as relays of images, as replications. It turns out, then, that the radically historical genealogy that supposedly situates form historically is simply an ordinary formalisticist history of reified form. We're back where we started. To be sure, in Bredekamp's history of images, the transcendental psychology of forming intuition is limited to—bounded by—a history of a mind that forms. He offers no "anthropology," let alone reifications of "collective sensibility." Still, it is not enough to say that a human mind is held together merely in virtue of the consistency and continuity of its forming activity. This assumes the consequent, and a more radical history of mind might radically dispute the very idea of any such coherence. Images have their effect on us—their "power"—not only because they replicate the form of images

that we have assimilated (let alone produced as objects). They also affect us precisely because the form of the image has not already been integrated. (If it *has* been integrated, "we've seen it all before.") This history needs to be excavated *beyond* purely morphological (merely formalisticist) descriptions of the images. Again we find that a radically post-formalistic history of imagemaking remains to be written.

Both of these kinds of *Bildwissenschaft* offer philosophically sophisticated responses to art-historical formalisticism and to formalism proper; whether or not they fully succeed, they seek to address *Formen der Vorstellungsbildung* nonformalistically. They are post-formalist to the degree that vision—or bodily awareness more generally—has been historicized, or more exactly in the degree to which they can offer a historical analysis of intuition as such. Needless to say, then, they operate in conceptual proximity to psychology and even to neurology and evolutionary biology, though they are not mere applications of the formalisms that can be found there. If anything, in fact, they would seem to demand in the end that we apply *art history* to psychoneurological formalism. I will turn to this very question in the final section of this essay (§5).

§4. Formalism and the "Wölfflinian method." A historical question intervenes, however—a loose end in my account so far. What about Wölfflin's formalism, his history of *Formen der Vorstellungsbild*, in relation to his formalistic method? Just as postmodernism in art criticism partly involved the rejection of Greenberg's aesthetics, one might take post-formalism in art history to involve the rejection of "Wölfflinian method." I refer, of course, to the comparative juxtapositions of photographs or other illustrations of artifacts that Wölfflin used to clarify our comprehension of the *optische Schichten*. Still, this way of construing post-formalism could mislead us. As I have already suggested, formalisticism may have certain tactical methodological values. And it is not formalism anyway.

Juxtaposition was ubiquitous in Wölfflin's array of methods. But it was not essential. Wölfflin's theory did not *require* it. To expose the *Vorstellungsbild* of Albrecht Dürer (when the artist was working on his master engravings of 1513-14) to readers in 1926 only required that Wölfflin make a *single* presentation: an illustration not of the artwork *per se*, such as a photograph of Dürer's *Ritter, Tod, und Teufel* of 1513, but a visual demonstration for us of the artist's *optische Schicht* in making it, which Wölfflin included in his later editions of *Die Kunst Albrecht Dürers*, first published in 1905. (In this demonstration Wölfflin removed all depicted figures and landscape except for the figure of the Knight himself, hoping to dramatize—to visibilize—its linear profile silhouette.) For the theoretical comparison in Wölfflin's art history is not only between two *different* pictures constituted in the same or different optical strata in history. It is also between two imagings of the *same* picture, one clarified—relative to the other—by recognizing the optical stratum to which the picture

historically belongs. This phenomenal clarification can be helped by the juxtapositions. But more generally it requires "formal analysis"—specification of the ways in which the artwork exemplifies *Vorstellungsbildung*, however the analysis is carried out. (Perhaps it is a specification in written discourse and perhaps it is a simulation in visual diagram or model, or perhaps both, as in Wölfflin's formal analysis of Dürer's *Ritter, Tod, und Teufel*.) As Wölfflin's student Panofsky recognized, what really counts is the distance one travels between seeing the picture *outside* the horizons of the *optische Schicht* in which it was constituted historically and considering it *within* them—moving from *our* optical stratum (or *Daseinserfahrung* as Panofsky put it with a nod to Heidegger) to the picture's visuality. As Panofsky put it in 1938, "this is rational archaeological analysis at times as meticulously exact, comprehensive, and involved as any physical or astronomical research." [26]

Panofsky thought that Wölfflin was overly confident about this transfer—about the warrants that enable art historians to shuttle among *optische Schichten* of different pictorial styles. (For Wölfflin these warrants included experimental psychophysiologies of rhythm in optical stimuli, or in responses to them.) Panofsky condemned "pseudo-formalism," as he called it when stating his objections in English in 1939 in rewriting a major programmatic statement published in German in 1932: formalism that proceeds from *Daseinserfahrung*, our imaging of the object given our *Sein und Zeit* (our being, and especially our aesthetic valuation, in our existentially limited historical time), and never breaks out of it—never reaches the *optische Schicht* of the object in its proper *Zeit und Ort*, its historical time and place. He repeatedly instanced the way in which Wölfflin had overlooked the historically particular aesthetic theory—an idiosyncratic canon of proportions—by which Dürer had created visible rhythm in his picture. Wölfflin thought that we can just *see* the rhythm, or see it with a little help from formalism in its presentation of the artwork analytically clarified to reveal the form imposed by Dürer in imaging the picture. But Panofsky insisted that this analysis was not helping us to see Dürer's rhythm (as configurational) by way of the *artist's own theory of proportions*. That theory had not been art-historically identified until 1915 and by Panofsky himself (or so he supposed—there had been other proposals). Wölfflin's formal analysis, then, was pseudo-formalism: objectified *Daseinserfahrung* passed off as analysis—even visual presentation—of "'what we see'" when we see Dürer's form. Presumably he intended his scare quotes here to designate the tendentious formalistic reification, as if "form" is something that we *can* see in the object (or can *see*). As formalism or formal analysis, Wölfflin's illustration was an analytic simulation of the artist's forming activity—activity of intuition—in making his picture. But it risked being interpreted as an actual visual presentation of the form—giving us the form the picture can be seen to have if we look through some kind of non- or paraformal visual material, thereby overlooking much of the picture and its symbolism.

As I have argued in *A General Theory of Visual Culture*, pseudo-formalism in Panofsky's sense—what Richard Wollheim has called "Manifest Formalism"—generates an infinite regress. Treated as visual presentation of form-as-visible, Wölfflin's simulation nonetheless is simply another "formed" object (maybe an artwork in its own right) to be looked at in terms of its *own* form, if we continue to extend the fallacy. By the terms of the formalistic (or Manifest Formalist) analysis, there would have to be another formal analysis (discovering and presenting the form of the formal analysis . . .), and so on without end.

Here we must be careful, I realize. It is possible that one of the intellectual claims of formalism (as formalisticism)—one of its critical resources—is that it accepts the logical possibility of its endlessness, perhaps as an argument (or at least a belief) about the sensuous inexhaustibility of art, perhaps as a philosophy of the irreconcilability of human knowing in its discursive and nondiscursive registers, or perhaps as a practical sociology of varied human interactions when we show art to one another or tell one another about it. Here again we find that formalisticism might be a valid tactical method of formalism proper—even its necessary social and discursive forum (formalisticism is the pragmatics of transcendental formalism) and to an extent the evidence for it (without formalistically defined objects—even as objects of disagreement—one might doubt the very existence of a forming subject). If we drop the formalism proper, however, the formalisticism can be abandoned. Indeed, it need never arise. Rather than having to ask how the artwork "looks," or "'what we see'," we can ask different questions. Above all (and if we stick somewhat artificially to the register of visual and visible aspects) we can ask what it looks *like*. To the extent that we suppose the form of an artifact is constituted in essential primary movements of intuition, the question of how an artifact *looks* can receive a partly transcendental answer. Indeed, it *must* receive such an answer if there is no material account of historical variation in the forming capacity as such. But the question of what it is *like* can never receive anything but a historical answer. [28]

As late as 1951, Panofsky continued to criticize Wölfflin, at least for American readers. And his influence in America (given the strong pragmatist orientation of art history in the United States) reinforced worries about the supposed subjective origins, scientistic appeals, and transhistorical claims of Wölfflin's formalism, regardless of its pedagogical appeal as integrated (for example) into the "Fogg Method" of training the art historian's "eye." In Panofsky's wake, then, many North American art historians combined formalism with iconology—an unstable blend of transcendental psychology, critical phenomenology of art, and art-historical positivism that eventually imploded, though not without severe pressure exerted by critics who considered themselves to be anti-formalists.

Should we call Panofsky a *post*-formalist, then? For my purposes, probably not. Panofsky's objection to pseudo-formalism in the "formal analysis" of artworks—whether or not it was the "Wölfflinian method" of comparative juxtaposition—was limited to its *pre*-iconological application without requisite iconological correction, as in Wölfflin's simulation of Dürer's *Ritter, Tod, und Teufel*. There is little evidence that Panofsky wanted to jettison formalism proper, or that he had a philosophical vocabulary in which to do so—at least one that he was willing to accept as a historian and a humanist. And there is considerable evidence that he took iconology to be the historical and humanistic application of formalism proper—that is, to be a culturally particular account of the interaction of "concept" (or symbol) with sensibility in the pathways of transcendental deduction, as Cassirer's neo-Kantian "philosophy of symbolic form" had proposed. (Of course, Panofsky admitted—insisted—that freely created aesthetic values vary from one human group to another; but both Winckelmann and Kant had said the same thing, and in part as the very motivation for art-historical archaeology conceived as correction of aesthetic judgment.) In my terms, then, the dispute between Wölfflin and Panofsky was mostly about formalisticism in Wölfflin's occasionally unqualified Manifest Formalism, such as his simulation of Dürer's forming sensibility in making *Ritter, Tod, und Teufel*. Panofsky could have had other formalist fish to fry, such as Fry or Barnes. But perhaps it was self-evident to him that their formalisms were historically oriented even though they did not deploy the "rational archaeological analysis" that he recommended.

The "New Art History" of the 1980s also criticized "Wölfflinian method." For example, in his *Rethinking Art History* of 1989 Donald Preziosi said that it set up art history as a technological "Panopticon." On this view, the discipline of art history surveys an archive of illustrations of visual and material culture from around the world—an archive created by the Olympian gaze of missionaries, ethnologists, collectors, curators, and art historians, usually colonial-imperialist and maybe racist. (Of course, the art-history Panopticon also involved photography, expositions, museums, art handbooks, and other institutions beyond the one specifically associated with Wölfflinian pedagogy.) [29]

In 1989 art history undeniably needed postcolonial rethinking, and for some readers at the time Preziosi's critique was decisive. But it has lost force in post-formalism, especially in so-called "object biography" (such as Richard Davis's *Lives of Indian Images* of 1997), in transcultural art history (such as Barry Flood's *Objects of Translation* of 2009), and in world art history (such as Summers's *Real Spaces*). Post-formalists can treat the results of nonformalistic comparison not so much as a Eurocentric Panopticon as a postcolonial kaleidoscope. Indeed, object biography, transcultural art history, and world art history would be unthinkable if they could not undertake nonformalistic comparisons. Thus we have already found Summers—to stick to my main example of post-formalism—comparing Egyptian metric naturalism and

Classical Greek optical naturalism in terms of the axes of observation adopted relative to the virtual coordinate plane, however one contextualizes the continuities (or not) between these *optische Schichten*.

§5. Post-Formalism as Art History Proper. In excavating the *optische Schichten* in which artworks—that is, drawings, paintings, sculptures, and so on—are constituted, and to return to my starting point, post-formalist art history calls for histories of the aesthetic orders and structures (as it were the "art") of human vision, of imaging and envisioning, that is, of its active imaginative force *whether or not any actual historical artwork was (or is) in vision or in view*. The optical appearance of visual artworks—the supposed object of Wöfflinian formalism—is becoming less important analytically than the configuring force of imaging, regardless of *what* is imaged: an artwork; another kind of artifact; a person; a state of affairs in nature. Stated most dramatically, then, in a post-formalist history of imaging it would be perfectly possible for an art historian not to write about artworks or "objects" at all, at least if they are taken to be the primary object of study or the basic unit of analysis—*als die elementarste Aufgabe der Kunstgeschichte*, as Wölfflin specifically said they are *not* (situating him as a *pre*-post-formalist or as the very *first* post-formalist *avant la lettre*). In no central theoretical respect would this compromise the post-formalist's identity as an art historian—as a historian of imaging as artful. In Summers's analysis of planarity in ancient Egyptian depiction, what counts is the optical "axis of direct observation," "completion" of volumes, and virtualization of the "coordinate plane"—parameters *in* imaging and productions *of* imaging. *Any* depiction constituted within these parameters of imaging will be so produced, even if "formally" it is a perspective projection. (In this case, an ancient Egyptian beholder accommodated to the *optische Schicht* of planarity would likely see it—optically "form" it—to be optically incorrect in specifying the real size of the objects depicted on the coordinate plane, or, alternately, would try to "form" it in such a way as to see their social and symbolic status in the size they are depicted to have.) Anything that we say art-historically about the objects—say about the colors of the painting used to "sculpt" virtual volumes in relation to the depicted space—must *follow from* the primary relations of their *optische Schicht*.

Of course, the question of "The Object" remains. Artifacts such as artworks do not have the same "materiality" as imaging, even if visual perception should be described as aesthetically ordered. But the aesthetic force of visual art is constituted in imaging it: in seeing it, or in imagining its visibility—aspects it might have when seen. Therefore the question of the art object lies *within* the questions of imaging as aesthetic. To repeat, then, in a post-formalist art history it is possible—sometimes desirable and maybe essential—not to write about any particular objects at all. This isn't news in *Strukturforschung* after Wölfflin or in the archaeology of art (conceived, for example, on Kublerian lines). It is unnerving mostly for formalists mired

in formalisticism. Having put the formality in the artwork or object, obviously they have to start with that thing. "Formal analysis" of an artwork, "close looking" at objects, an "iconic turn" to their "presence": all of these court formalistic fallacy—formalism rampant.

It will not escape notice, however, that I have come close to depending on the same circularity that bedeviled Wölfflin. Sometimes it derailed his art-historical practice: as we have seen, his formal analysis of Dürer's engraving—supposedly reporting empirically on the historical order of Dürer's formal sensibility—was mocked by Panofsky as the very nadir of "pseudo-formalism." How do we excavate the *optische Schichten*—the visual strata of art as historical—without "formally analyzing" the configuration of artworks? Isn't imaging, including the constitution of formality, just a black box? Isn't artistic object-form its manifest correlate? If optical strata are the objects of analysis, aren't artworks our data?

Yes, artworks—and the wider field of artifacts—are data. But no, we do not use their formality—their form for us—as evidence for the *optische Schicht* in which they were constituted. Rather, we look at what people in the past *did* with the things, what they used them to do, in order to infer the network of aspects that the things had for them—aspects not limited to formality but including pictoriality and visible style. We look especially at how they *replicated* things: which features they chose to preserve, what they allowed to vary. Perspectival effects were not replicated in Egyptian depiction even though they would have to be ubiquitous in *imaging* the very same pictures. (Summers's diagrammatic analysis of the virtual coordinate plane in ancient Egyptian "metric naturalism" adopts a natural visual perspective on the depiction in order to illustrate the phenomenon; given specified architectural conditions, anyone—including the Egyptians—could see the picture at this visual angle. But this is not pseudo-formalism because it isn't showing "what we see"—that is, what the Egyptians saw when beholding these pictures. Rather, it virtualizes the real-spatial parameters of the *optische Schicht* of Egyptian pictoriality.) We can therefore infer that the *optische Schicht* within which its pictorial formality was constituted—the apparent configuratedness of such pictures—was not perspectival. On *this* virtual coordinate plane, "depth" does not mean diminution. One did not and could not use the virtuality to tell him how far away the depicted objects are from the plane of the format, though he *could* use it to show that they are separated in space—even to show how "big" they are relative to each other. [30]

Moreover, imaging is not really a black box. Vision science and perceptual psychology bring a mass of anatomical, experimental, and clinical data to bear on vision treated as active configuring of information in light reflected into the eyes, as if Wölfflin's *Sehen an sich* were a painter painting a picture. This metaphor has been fully exploited (indeed analytically integrated) in Semir Zeki's formalist neuroaesthetics, though the "Painter," of course, is the

human visual brain and the "Painting" is the world it sees. Because I have commented on this elsewhere, here I can go straight to the implications for post-formalist art history. [31]

As I see it, post-formalist art history is *post-the-formalism* of neuroaesthetics, or it should be. The mass of neuroaesthetic data was not collected in terms of Wölfflin's theory that vision has a history. In fact, much of it was collected in terms of an opposite hypothesis, namely, that the processing of reflected light in the visual brain can be treated as a historical invariant (barring neuropathology) even though the things it makes to be seen are historically variable—formally multiform. If we extend Zeki's metaphor, one Painter—the brain—paints all the paintings that have ever been made—that ever *will* be made for a very long time.

How does the theory of *optische Schichten* square with this? Wölfflinian vision- historicism, if it is accepted at all, would commit post-formalist art history to the metaphor that there have been *many different* Painters Painting Pictures—many neurologically real "visions." And why?

Because literally there have been many different real painters painting different real paintings in the world—people making things to be seen, to be used visually, including pictures and artworks. When the Painter (vision) sees these things, and finds out what can be done with them or how they can be used visually, it will—if adaptive and intelligent—Paint differently. Indeed, it *must* Paint differently (in greater or lesser measure) in order to find out what can be done with these things or how they can be used visually, especially if the things were made by painters (and Painters) other than himself or herself. Of course, when it Paints differently he or she will paint different real paintings to be seen by other painters (and Painters). The historical cycle will spiral on. New optical strata will be laid down in the accumulated repertory of the Painter that each real painter is (and that each Painter has), and as the art history of his or her seeing: *Das Sehen an sich hat seine* Kunst*geschichte*.

Indeed, we might derive the historicity of vision from mere variance in the replication of pictures that accrue in the visible world and demand to be used pictorially in ways that seem to be commensurate not only with their apparent configuration as we see it but also with *their* historicity—that is, with our historical awareness that we haven not yet seen what they can show us. It is possible that vision has an art history because *pictures* can be historical for us: erupting in and rupturing our visual field, our Painting, they create its optical strata. Seeing them as such, we are asked—maybe required—to see things anew.

NOTES

1. This essay originated as a presentation at a conference, "After the 'New Art History'," organized by Matthew Rampley at the University of Birmingham in May, 2012, and more directly as a presentation at a conference on "Wölfflin's *Grundbegriffe* at 100: The North American Reception" organized by Evonne Levy and Tristran Weddigen at the Clark Art Institute in June, 2012. I am grateful for Ian Verstegen's prepared response to the former presentation and comments by Rampley, Claire Farago, Donald Preziosi, and Paul Smith, and for comments on the latter presentation by Levy, Svetlana Alpers, Carol Armstrong, Marshall Brown, Michael Ann Holly, Keith Moxey, and Robert Williams. Conversations with Florian Klinger and Sam Rose have clarified crucial issues for me.

2. Succinct analytic surveys have been published by Norton Batkin, "Formalism in Analytic Aesthetics," in *The Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, ed. Michael Kelly (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 2:217-21, and Noël Carroll, "Formalism," in *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, ed. Berys Gaut and Dominic McIver Lopes, 2nd ed (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 109-19. Batkin and Carroll emphasize the Kantian background of formalism, as I will do. Relevant historiographies and cultural histories include Mark Jarzombek, *The Psychologizing of Modernity: Art, Architecture, and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) and Rachel Teukolsky, *The Literate Eye: Victorian Art Writing and Modernist Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

3. Heinrich Wölfflin, *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (Munich: F. Bruckmann, 1915), 257; for the available English translation of the 7th ed., see *The Principles of Art History,* trans. M. D. Hottinger (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1932), 11 (a new translation is in preparation). I have suggested that Wölfflin's change of terminology was motivated by debates about imaging that arose partly in response to his influential proposals, though it still did not satisfy some of his critics, notably his former student Erwin Panofsky (see Whitney Davis, *A General Theory of Visual Culture* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011], 230-76).

4. The relation between Kantian transcendental psychology and Wölfflin's art history has been parsed in fine detail by Andreas Eckl in his *Kategorien der Anschauung: Zur transzendentalphilosophischen Bedeutung von Heinrich Wölfflins "Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe"* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1996). I have benefited from his careful presentation. An early historiography situated Wölfflin's interest in rhythm in the context of contemporary psychophysiological research: Hans Hermann Russack, *Der Begriff des Rhythmus bei den deutschen Kunsthistorikern des XIX. Jahrhunderts* (Weida: Thomas und Hubert, 1910), 60-66.

5. *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, 11-12. Wölfflin's scare quotes suggest that for him "'*optische Schichten*'" was a metaphor. The available English translation renders it as "strata of vision." I will take this archaeological image literally.

6. Whitney Davis, "Neurovisuality," in *Evaluating Neuroaesthetics*, ed. Todd Cronan, *nonsite* 2 (June 11, 2011), at http://nonsite.org/issues/issue-2/neurovisuality.

7. Whitney Davis, "Formalism in Art History," in *The Encyclopedia of Aesthetics,* ed. Michael Kelly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 2:221-25.

8. Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, ed. R. Schmidt (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1954), A51 = B75; Robert B. Pippin, *Kant's Theory of Form* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982), 12. I depend heavily on Pippin's exegesis; careful and complete, it engages an extensive secondary literature.

9. J. G. Schlosser, *Ueber Pedanterie und Pedanten, als eine Wahrnung für die Gelehrten des XVIII. Jahrhunderts* (Basel: C. A. Serini, 1787), and see his *Schreiben an einen jungen Mann, der die kritische Philosophie studiren wollte* (Lübeck: F. Bohn, 1797); Immanuel Kant, "Von einem neuerdings erhobenen vornehmen Ton in der Philosophie," in *Gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1912), 8:404 (translation by Pippin, *Kant's Theory of Form*, 12, to which I owe the reference).

10. Kant*, Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A267 = B323 (my italics).

11. Whitney Davis, "What is Formalism?," in *A General Theory of Visual Culture*, 45-74. By "aspect psychology," I mean Ludwig Wittgenstein's theory of imaging or "seeing-as," refined by later philosophers (notably Richard Wollheim). Aspect psychology provides robust terms with which we might deal with the "formal aspects" of things—and their "stylistic aspects," "pictorial aspects," and "cultural aspects," even their merely "visible [or visual] aspects." Florian Klinger has pointed out to me that one might better speak—speak more economically and more generally—about "taking-as." I accept this useful point. But I do not attempt to address it here, though it would help to clarify a conundrum identified in *A General Theory of Visual Culture:* namely, that certain aspects of items of visual culture (drawings, paintings, sculptures, and so on) are not visible though they are involved in successions and recursions that constitute aspects of formality, style, and pictoriality—aspects specifically constituted in seeing (at least insofar as we limit ourselves to the artificial category of *visual* culture).

12. Pippin, *Kant's Theory of Form*, 12 (italics in the original).

13. "Von einem neuerdings erhobenen vornehmen Ton in der Philosophie," in Kant, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 8:404 (translation by Pippin, *Kant's Theory of Form,* 12).

14. See Whitney Davis, "Winckelmann and Kant on the Vicissitudes of the Ideal," in *Queer Beauty: Sexuality and Aesthetics from Winckelmann to Freud and Beyond* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 23-50.

15. David Summers, *Real Spaces: World Art History and the Rise of Western Modernism* (London: Phaidon, 2003), 15-32 (for "post-formalist art history").

16. Heidegger's revision of the Kantian model of the understanding was promoted in *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* (Bonn: F. Cohen, 1929); Cassirer offered his criticism in a lecture on "Mythischer, ästhetischer und theoretischer Raum" (see *Vierter Congress für Ästhetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft, Hamburg, 1930*, ed. Hermann Noack [Stuttgart: Enke, 1931], 21-36, partly translated as "Mythic, Aesthetic and Theoretical Space," *Man and World* 2 [1969], 3-17). Summers comments on Heidegger's approach in *Real Spaces*, 19-23.

17. Summers, *Real Spaces*, 445.

18. For the quoted phrases, see (for example) Walther Wolf, *The Origins of Western Art: Egypt, Mesopotamia, the Aegean* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972) (this was the translator's or publisher's title, however—Wolf's German book of 1969 was entitled *Frühe Hochkulturen*); Andrew F. Stewart, *Classical Greece and the Birth of Western Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

19. Clement Greenberg, "Byzantine Parallels" [1958], in *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), 167.

20. See Summers, *Real Spaces*, 445-48 (virtual coordinate plane in Egyptian art), 448-50 (relief space), 454-57 (optical plane), and 517-26 (painter's perspective). Christopher Lakey has developed these "Summersian" terms in his important study of naturalism in late-medieval Italian sculpture before Brunelleschi and Alberti; see *Relief in Perspective: Medieval Italian Sculpture and the Rise of Optical Aesthetics*, PhD dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 2009.

21. See Friedrich Matz, "Strukturforschung und Archäologie," *Studium Generale* 17 (1964), 203-19. Hanfmann did not usually write in a theoretical register, though see "Hellenistic Art," in *Readings in Art History*, ed. Harold Spencer (New York: Scribner, 1969), 1:89-106 (specially written for this anthology for students).

22. George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1962), viii, 27-28. (Of course, the foundational *Weltbildgeschichte* in art history was Riegl's—a formal history of ideology, social "worldview," as much as an ideological history of form.) In his preface, Kubler added that "mere formalism" had been shunted aside in art history for "more than forty years," that is, since 1920 or so. This seems to entail that he meant *Wölfflin's* formalism, which Panofsky had repudiated by 1932 if not before. Kubler translated Henri Focillon's *Vie des formes* of 1934 into English, but in *The Shape of Time* he described Focillon's formalism as a strictly pedagogical device.

23. For comments on "worlding" art, see Whitney Davis, "World Without Art," *Art History* 33 (2010), 710-16, and (with special reference to Kubler), "World Series: The Unruly Orders of World Art History," *Third Text* 25 (2011), 493-501.

24. Hans Belting, "An Anthropology of Images" and "Death and Image: Embodiment in Early Cultures," in *An Anthropology of Images: Picture, Medium, Body* [2nd ed., 2001], trans. Thomas Dunlap (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 9-36, 84-124. Summers treats effigies and cognate artifacts (e.g., masks) in terms of what he calls "real metaphor" (see *Real Spaces*, 257-307).

25. Horst Bredekamp, *Darwins Korallen: Die frühen Evolutionsdiagramme und die Tradition der Naturgeschichte* (Berlin: Wagenbach, 2005); *Theorie des Bildakts* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2011).

26. Erwin Panofsky, "Art History as a Humanistic Discipline," in *The Meaning of the Humanities*, ed. T. M. Greene (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1938), 106.

27. See Davis, *A General Theory of Visual Culture*, 230-76, for full discussion of this example, summarized here. I pass over the sense in which Panofsky's dispute with his teacher Wölfflin was also a dispute with the formidable rival of his philosophical mentor Cassirer, namely, Heidegger (see ibid., 259-64).

28. For Manifest Formalism, see Richard Wollheim, *On Formalism and Its Kinds* (Barcelona: Fundació A. Tàpies, 1995); on its regress, see Davis, *A General Theory of Visual Culture*, 54-64. In the course of *A General Theory of Visual Culture* I try to move analytically from what the artwork *looks* like (its visual or visible aspects in interdetermined registers of formality, style, and pictoriality) to what it *is* like.

29. Donald Preziosi, *Rethinking Art History: Meditations on a Coy Science* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989).

30. For the sake of economy, I will not address a striking anomaly in the example of configuration that Summers used for his principal demonstration of Egyptian metric naturalism, namely, a vignette from the Tomb of Khnumhotep at Beni

Hasan (*Real Spaces*, 446-48 and figs. 223, 224). In terms of the ancient Egyptian canon of proportions operating at the time, it contains proportional "errors" that partly enable the construction of depth on the virtual coordinate plane. What the ancient Egyptian beholder would see here, it seems to me, would be the errors.

31. Semir Zeki, *Inner Vision: An Exploration of Art and the Brain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); see Whitney Davis, "Neurovisuality" (above, n. 6). By neuroaesthetics (or a science of our seeing-of-artworks), Zeki means the neurology of visual processing of art as aesthetic. But the term also means—it must foundationally mean—the aesthetics of visual processing, that is, vision as *aisthesis*. Etymologically *aisthesis* simply *is* vision and other perception or sensory awareness. Therefore it might help (despite the seeming redundancy) to describe vision as neuroaesthetics understands it as *aesthetic* aisthesis—as active aesthetic (as it were artistic) configuration of information reflected in light into the eyes.

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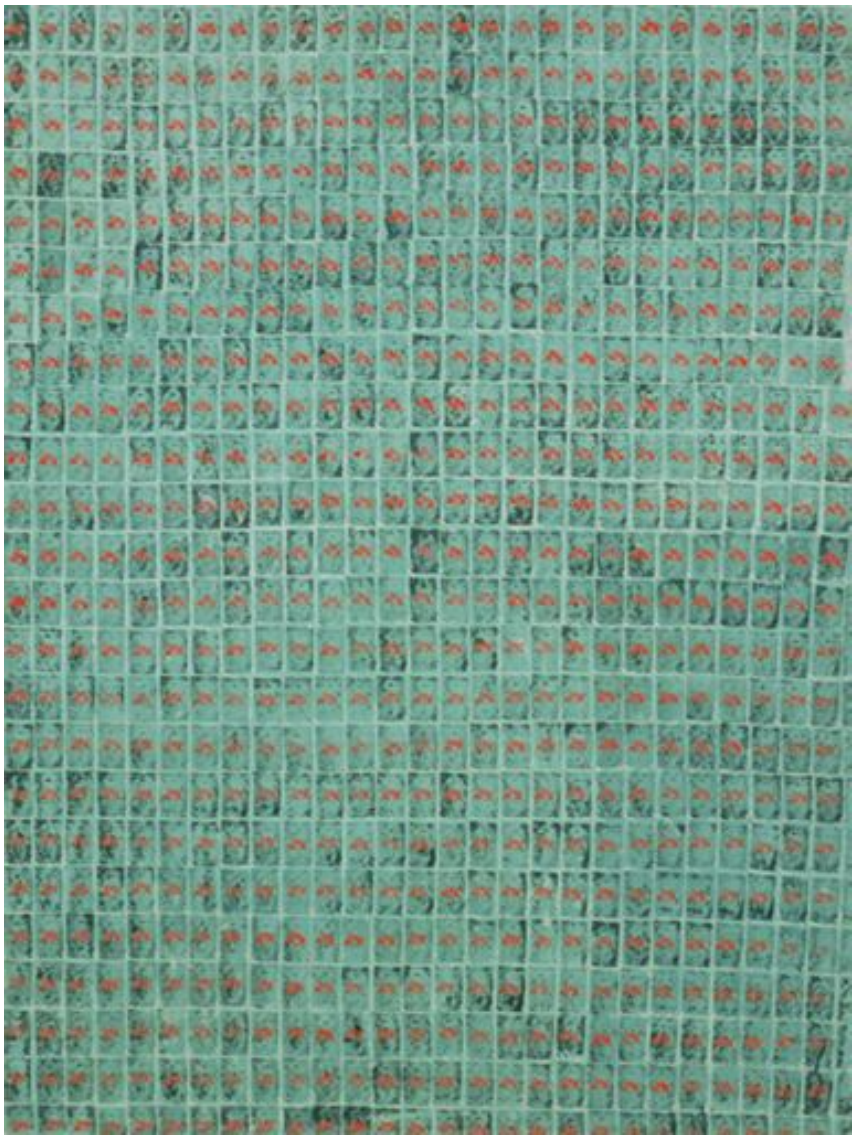
PICASSO (AND WARHOL) AND THINGS

LISA FLORMAN

Rather than relegating them to storage, the Museum of Modern Art in New York recently packaged together a selection of works from their extensive holdings and sent them traveling, first to the High Museum of Art in Atlanta and then on to the Art Gallery of Western Australia in Perth. Titled *Picasso to Warhol*, the show was initially accompanied by literature announcing that it would "present the achievements of these pioneers of modern art in depth, … highlighting their role in the most important artistic developments of the twentieth century, including the invention of cubism and the emergence of abstraction."[1] Although the show itself shied away from any step-by-step presentation of those "developments," and offered no over-arching narrative strongly linking Picasso to Warhol (or vice-versa), the implication of some continuity or connection remained, if only implicitly in the "to" of the title. The present essay is, in some sense, simply my effort to take that title at its word, and so to try to discern the shape of the history connecting Picasso *to* Warhol. I will also try to point out along the way (though this is really only the other side of the same coin) what it is, in my view, that ultimately separates or distinguishes the two projects—that sets Picasso's cubism apart from what I tend to think of as Warhol's "abstraction."



Andy Warhol, S&H Green Stamps, 1965

By my reckoning, there are at least two art-historical narratives currently in circulation that have been (or might easily be) used to link Warhol to Picasso. The first, which we might call the Pop-Cultural Account, goes something like this: Having grown tired of stuffy, academic distinctions between fine art and the myriad other elements of visual culture surrounding him, Picasso began incorporating bits of the popular into his own work, thereby irrevocably blurring any sharp contrast between "high" and "low." Collage arose, so the story goes, precisely out of this impulse to import into the rarified field of painting scraps of the larger, messier, everyday world outside. Warhol's work—for example, his *S&H Green Stamps* (fig. 1)—can be seen as simply an extension of that project. Instead of pasting pop-cultural materials down to produce a collage, Warhol silkscreened an image of them onto

canvas, foregoing the glue—or, rather, preserving it only in the associations evoked by the imagery itself. (Double *entendres* concerning the stamps' "tackiness" seem built into the mixed populist/collage parentage the work claims for itself.) In contrast to the evident pastedness of Picasso's *papiers collés*, the surface of Warhol's *Green Stamps* is seamless, suggesting that, by the time of its making, in 1962, the assimilation of popular culture to painting was essentially complete.

Pablo Picasso, Bowls and Jug, 1908

The other narrative account one might give of Warhol's connection to Picasso turns on *flatness* and unfolds roughly as follows: Struck by the still-life and landscape paintings of Cézanne, and particularly by the way that, in them, the rules of perspective and illusionism

were constantly flouted, Picasso resolved to follow suit, even notably upping the ante. In his early cubist paintings, such as the Philadelphia Museum of Art's *Bowls and Jug* (fig. 2), we see him emphasizing—à la Cézanne—the visibility of his brushwork, the ambiguities of the given spatial cues, and, through the resulting fusion of forms, the planarity of the pictorial surface. Over the course of the subsequent several years, the depicted objects in his paintings begin to lose whatever solidity they formerly possessed. They also become increasingly geometricized, as if fracturing into any number of planes, each of them as flat as the canvas itself. In the works that followed, we witness both the gradual alignment of those facet planes with the plane of the picture and the draining away of illusionistic, pictorial space; everything begins to take on the rectilinear and two-dimensional character of the canvas. What becomes known as the "cubist grid" brings all of this to the fore: each unit of the grid calls or recalls our attention to the "ineluctable flatness" of the surface, by making that surface or ground over into the painting's principal "figure" (see fig. 3).[2] In most versions of this second account—let's call it the Flatness Narrative—such developments are presented in a triumphalist tone, as if the demonstration of painting's essential planarity were cubism's great achievement. Collage is typically seen as constituting Picasso's final, overt embrace of the work's fundamental two-dimensionality, the new medium evoking a depth no thicker than a sheet of paper held absolutely parallel to the picture plane.

Pablo Picasso, The Dressing Table, 1910

The literal and figurative flatness of Warhol's imagery, and its frequent grid-like arrangement, are easily assimilated to this second narrative. In fact, in those works by Warhol where the grid is used to enframe a repetition of pop-cultural images, most often images of near-identical commodities, the two narratives intersect and come to a head. The combination of flatness, enframing, and the implied interchangeability of consumer goods that we see in Warhol's *Soup Cans* (see fig. 4) is both characteristic and telling. In front of such works, I can only think of what the philosopher Martin Heidegger referred to as the "standing reserve." Insofar as our present sense of reality is shaped by the technological age in which we live, we increasingly treat all entities, Heidegger claimed, as intrinsically meaningless "resources," a "reserve" standing by merely to be optimized and ordered for maximally flexible use. Part of Heidegger's contention is that, in the past, people related to things differently.

Andy Warhol, Campbell Soup Cans, 1962

In the pre-modern world, he says—among the ancient Greeks, for example—there was an awareness and acceptance of mankind's essential finitude, of the fact, as he phrased it, that "much of what *is* cannot be brought under the rule of humanity."[3] The same fundamental conditions remain in effect today—this is Heidegger's point—but we moderns are no longer willing or able to acknowledge them. As he says in his essay "The Origin of the Work of Art":

> Only a little becomes known. What is known remains approximate; what is mastered remains unstable. What-is is never something [wholly] man-made or even only a representation, as it can all too easily appear.[4]

Heidegger's argument, as I understand it, is that the way things appear to us is never solely determined *by us*. The way they appear—or, better, the way they *show themselves* and so "reveal their being"—isn't a product of, or even fully captured by, our representational capacities, by the conceptual frameworks through which we usually try to make sense of the world. Indeed Heidegger argues that a certain elusiveness—an independence from human intention—is fundamental to what a *thing* (even a man-made thing) essentially *is*. To quote again from the "Origin of the Work of Art":

> The inconspicuous thing withdraws itself from thought most stubbornly. Or can it be that this self-refusal of the mere thing, this self-contained refusal to be pushed around, belongs precisely to the essential nature of *things*? [5]

The thing is recalcitrant, Heidegger suggests; something about it eludes all of our attempts to capture and express it conceptually. This is the fundamental condition or truth of things, now as in the past. The difference between the ancient Greeks and ourselves, however, is that *we* tend to think that all there is to know about the world is what can be calculated, measured, maximized. We imagine ourselves as subjects (or agents), standing over against a world comprised only of so many objects, each of them available to our conceptual grasp and manipulation. In his writings from the 1930s Heidegger dubbed this systematic, modern tendency towards conceptualization and objectification of the world "machination." [6] Later, in the aftermath of the Second World War, he came to feel that technology was transforming the world at such a rate that already conditions very different from those of modern machination were becoming evident, conditions in which even human beings had begun to be regarded as only so many more or less interchangeable objects. In this new world, everything—including the human being itself—is seen as belonging to the "standing reserve," as being, in effect, a replaceable commodity (see fig. 5). Heidegger referred to our technological era as "the age of the world picture" or the world-*as*-picture, and what he seems to have meant by that phrase is that we have come to believe that *everything* comprising our world is now able to be represented, without remainder. In an era, such as ours, of circulative replacement, beings show themselves as belonging to the standing reserve—as being fully illuminated but wholly insubstantial.

Andy Warhol, Self-Portrait, 1966

We might recall here Warhol's evidently non-ironic claim that he was "a deeply superficial person": "If you want to know all about Andy Warhol," he said, "just look at the surface of my paintings and films and me, and there I am. There's nothing behind it."[7] This is, I take it, his riff on the Flatness Narrative I recounted earlier: the drive toward two-dimensionality initiated by cubism can be seen as culminating in the affectless deadpan of Warhol's self-portrait, a self-portrait comprised of multiple, wholly planar images, none of them giving any indication of greater depths to be plumbed.

Pablo Picasso, Glass of Absinthe, 1911

If, for Heidegger, *pictures* (as in "the age of the world picture") were to be understood along much these same lines, *paintings* were an entirely different matter. What matters about paintings, Heidegger felt—at least the good ones (see fig. 6)—is that they show us something about the truth of things, and they do it by both eliciting and eluding our complete conceptualization. This is the *work* done by the work of art: it sets forth, and so brings us into touch with, the shape and structure of the world that they (and we) inhabit; but it also points toward the non-apparent, the unseen and unthought that withdraws from, and yet still conditions, our experience. Paintings show us the constant tension inherent in things—between that which emerges into the light of intelligibility and that which recedes into darkness, into what Heidegger referred to as the self-concealment or withdrawal of "earth." ("Earth" is the term he gives to that which fundamentally grounds and informs our intelligible world, but which we experience—in those rare moments that we do—as what escapes and defies our impulse to conceptualize and categorize everything.)

It's tempting to see the things in Picasso's cubist paintings—in his *Glass of Absinthe* (fig. 6), for example—as constantly hovering between emergence and withdrawal, and in that sense illustrating or exemplifying Heidegger's conception of how things make their appearance in the work of art. But I think we should resist that impulse. As an interpretation, it's too simplistic, doing justice neither to Heidegger's view of art nor to the complexities of Picasso's work. What's more, I tend to think that, for Picasso's contemporaries—that is, for an audience not yet accustomed to the nuances of abstract painting—it was the insistent flatness and schematic character of the things depicted that must have struck them with the greatest force. To that audience, the glass of absinthe would have seemed less on the verge of withdrawing into the self-concealment of earth than poised on the brink of becoming a mere pictograph or diagram conveying the *idea* of a glass but little more.

Significantly, the surfaces of Picasso's cubist paintings—or at least those that conservators haven't flattened through the now-discredited process of wax lining[8]-are animated by a dense facture, indeed by an astonishing variety of textures and directional strokes, which show up only relatively poorly in digital reproduction. The insistent *particularity* of these passages used to puzzle me—and to some extent, of course, it still does. Like the works' areas of delicate chiaroscuro, these passages seem—but, to my eye, only *seem*—to be responding to something in the external world. The texturing carries the weight and charge of *description* and yet—this is the confusing part—it is almost always detached from the painting's depicted objects. (In fact the textured passages appear mostly around the periphery of the canvas, in the voids between or surrounding the arrayed still-life elements.) I have come to think that what we are witnessing in works such as Picasso's *Glass of Absinthe* is the intentional displacement of tangible specificity from the represented things onto the painting itself. For the painting's surface texture displays the level of particularity—of *thisness*—that is precisely no longer being registered in the glass or the table or any of the other items presumably laid out on it.

In combination with the modeling's failure to create an illusion of any real solidity or depth, the displaced specificity of Picasso's cubist works seems to suggest that we are (or were, even in 1911) on the verge of losing our ability to attend to what we might call the recalcitrant "thingliness" of things. The claim would seem to be that it is only in front of works of art, if anywhere, that we are still able to summon the requisite attentiveness. By the same token, these works suggest that, if anything is ever going to recall us to the "thingliness" of things, it will only be *the work of art*. Again, as I see it, the displacement of specificity from the depicted objects to the painting's surface texture draws our attention to the *absence* of specificity in our present-day experience of things—even as it also aims to alter that experience, to reverse or undo our impulse to conceive of things as simply objects belonging to the "standing reserve."

Pablo Picasso, Still Life with Chair Caning, 1912

Another, related kind of displacement is also at issue in a number of cubist collages, including what was purportedly the very first: Picasso's *Still Life with Chair-Caning* of 1912 (fig. 7). As Rosalind Krauss and others have observed, the work makes itself available to two contradictory readings. On the one hand, we can regard it as a more or less conventional still life, a painting of so many objects (a glass, a newspaper, a pipe, a slice of quiche or tart) arrayed on a table at some distance from us, our line of sight being, then, essentially perpendicular to our upright bodies. But it's also possible to see things otherwise. That is, we might instead choose to regard the rope-encircled, oval-shaped canvas as referring to the top of the table, perhaps a glass table, with the collaged piece of caning-imprinted fabric suggesting the edge of the chair pushed underneath. In that case, we wouldn't be looking out at the still-life objects but, rather, *down*on them, our line of sight now running more or less parallel to our upright bodies. Shifting between these two viewing alternatives, we move from feeling ourselves in some fairly distant or detached relation to the objects on display to a greater sense of actually participating in their world. In the process, I think, we also come to see the things of the still life somewhat differently. We recognize to a greater extent their belonging-together, their

constituting what Heidegger referred to as an "involvement whole."[9] Collectively, the pipe and glass and newspaper and tart open up the *world* of the early twentieth-century Parisian café. (Heidegger would say that the collage shows us the "worlding" of that world.) And the elements of it, in their interdependence, appear precisely not as elements of the "standing reserve," but as things about which we might—and Picasso certainly did—care about deeply.

Again, the *Still Life with Chair-Caning* is generally accepted as the first collage ever produced. It seems to me significant that the medium should have originated in the context of still life, and specifically a still life that works to shift our regard from a detached contemplation of objects "out there" to a more immersive engagement with things close at hand. After all, the medium itself crucially involves issues of attachment and detachment—the visible (pasted-on) aspects of the work patently resting on, and being supported by, an *in*visible or non-appearing ground. Collage opens up a space or rift that in many ways recalls the tension-filled *Riss* or rift Heidegger saw existing between earth and world. In *Still Life with Chair-Caning*, the world of the café and the things that constitute it show themselves—they are there, appearing before us—even as we're also aware that that appearance is supported by a nearly equal measure of self-concealment.

Pablo Picasso, Musical Score and Guitar, 1912

I'd like to conclude this (clearly too brief) discussion of the things in Picasso's art with one last work, another collage from 1912, *Musical Score and Guitar* (fig. 8), in which, once again, we experience a certain displacement arising out of spatial ambiguity. We alternate between seeing the depicted guitar as hung on a wall or somehow propped up at some distance from us, and then, in the next moment, feeling ourselves looking down upon it—and so as essentially sharing its physical space. Here the separation between the different layers of the collage—that infinitely shallow, almost non-existent place between the visible elements and the invisible ground below—is drawn to our attention through the puckering and pull created by Picasso's evidently liberal use of glue. That simultaneous separation and attachment is given an even more concrete form in the lone straight pin that, just above the center of the work, holds the small, black-edged rectangle to the off-white shape designating the front face of the guitar. Apparently passing beneath both pieces of paper (disappearing then re-emerging only a slight distance away), that metal pin reminds us that even the flattest of

surfaces has both a recto and a verso, and so a modicum of depth, however small. In a sense, that pin divides the visible from within. I'm inclined to see its anomalous presence here, in the work of art, as Picasso's way of registering the depth of things—let's say, the thickness of existence—and so perhaps also as his means of recalling us from our modern tendency to regard everything as flatly available, as just so many objects comprising our world-picture.

If these claims are right, then collage was born not so much out of a desire to conflate "high" and "low," and certainly not from any anti-art impulse, but almost the opposite: out of a belief, however belated or quixotic, that art might yet show us something about the truth of things. For Heidegger, as I think for Picasso, that's simply the work done by the work of art. Admittedly, there's a sense in which such claims about art and truth sound ludicrous in the present. But the fact that they do so is itself a symptom or product, I would argue, of our increasingly technologized age. The art historian T. J. Clark recently suggested that Picasso was the last great artist of the *nineteenth* century.[10] Somewhat reluctantly, or at least wistfully, I'm inclined to agree. I would like you to hear my acceptance, though, as conferring on Picasso the same high praise implicit in Clark's initial judgment. Picasso's work seems to belong to the past insofar as it attests to a very different sort of being-in-the world, a relation to things that is almost impossible for us to imagine now. If we can do so at all, I suspect it will have to be in front of works of art, in the face of the particularity offered to us by such dense and difficult—yet, all too often, seemingly familiar—*things*.

NOTES

1. This quotation is excerpted from the promotional literature originally posted on the High Museum's website in February 2012.

2. The phrase "ineluctable flatness" is taken from Clement Greenberg's "Modernist Painting," an essay that, despite Greenberg's antipathy to Warhol, might be seen as initiating the "Flatness Narrative" being laid out here. See Greenberg, *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 4, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 87.

3. Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, ed. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 53.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid., 31-32.

6. My discussion of these matters was prompted by—and is indebted to—the first chapter of Andrew J. Mitchell's forthcoming book, *The Thing: Heidegger's Fourfold*, which the author generously shared at a Modernists' Seminar held at Emory University in February 2012.

7. Quoted in an interview with Gretchen Berg, "Andy: My True Story," *Los Angeles Free Press*, March 17, 1963, 3.

8. On the damage inflicted by wax lining, see Claire Barry and Bart Devolder, "Surface and Format: Observations on the Materials, Process, and Condition of Cubist Paintings, 1910-1912," in Eik Kahng, ed., *Picasso and Braque: The Cubist Experiment 1910-1912* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 105-127.

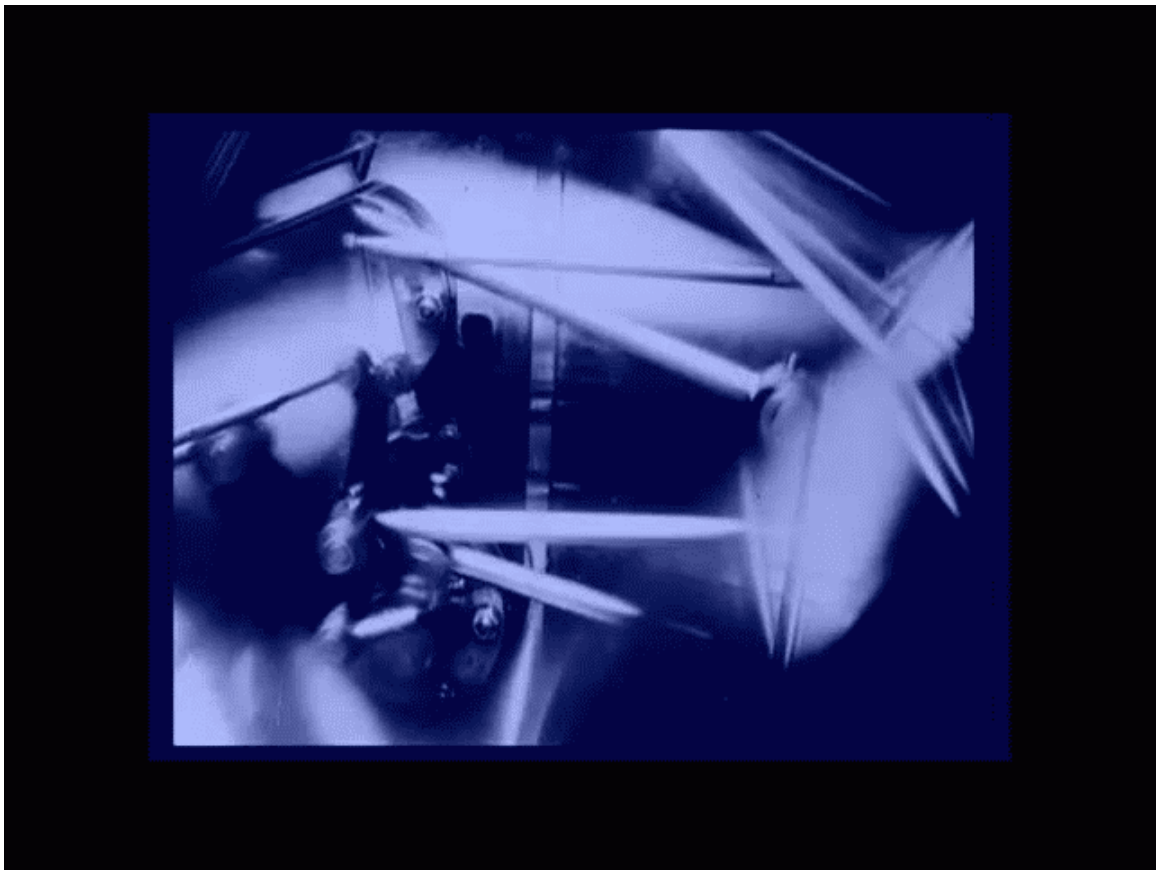
9. For a similar argument, beautifully developed, concerning Vermeer's figure paintings, see Béatrice Han-Pile, "Describing reality or disclosing worldhood?: Vermeer and Heidegger," in Jospeh D. Parry, ed., *Art and Phenomenology* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 138-161.

10. More exactly, Clark claimed that Picasso's cubism was deeply "commemorative," "bohemia's last hurrah": "it laid out before us, lovingly, ironically, the claim that the life of art in Paris had made to the pleasures the middle-class century… above all, the sense of being fully and solely a body in a material world…." The specific context was the second of Clark's series of Mellon Lectures on *Picasso and Truth,* delivered at the National Gallery of Art in 2009. A podcast of the lecture ("Room") is available on the National Gallery's website: http://www.nga.gov/podcasts/mellon/index.shtm

"THE PAINTER'S REVENGE": FERNAND LÉGER FOR AND AGAINST CINEMA

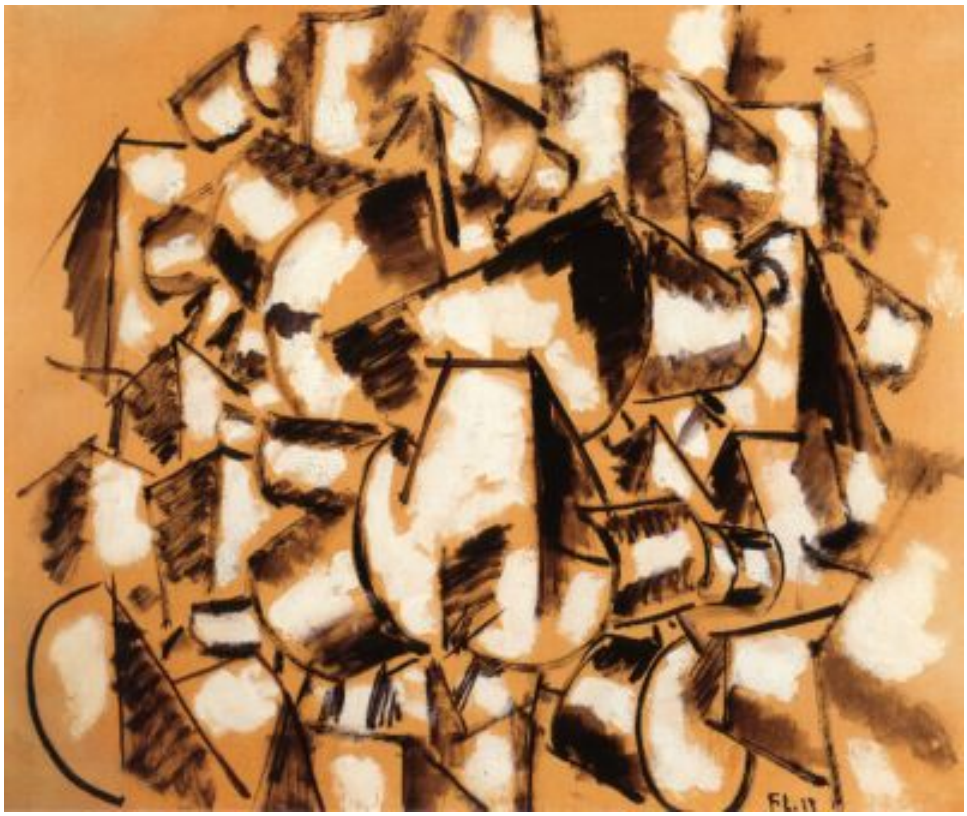
GORDON HUGHES

"Emotion should not be translated by a
nervous tremor."
—Georges Braque.



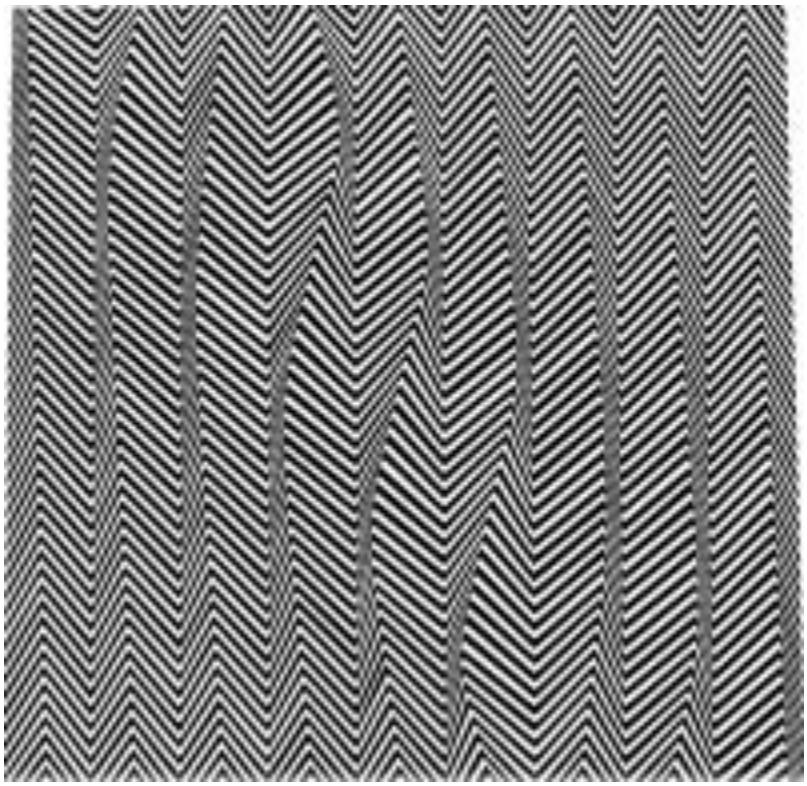
Fernand Léger and Dudley Murphy, Ballet mécanique, 1924

Intuitively enough given its subject matter and title, Fernand Léger's and Dudley Murphy's 1924 film *Ballet mécanique* is generally understood as a relatively straightforward extension of the so-called "machine aesthetic" that informs Léger's painting of this period. Standish Lawder's comparison of the film with Léger's painting is typical in this regard when he writes: "He sought to create in film the same discontinuous, fragmented, kaleidoscopic world that his paintings [evoke]…. The [same] pulsating energies of modern urban life, its rhythms and its forms." In marked contrast to this view, I want to argue just the opposite: that the relationship between film and painting is highly vexed for Léger; that *Ballet mécanique* does not function according to the same aesthetic principles as his painting—quite the contrary; and that the strongest relationship between cinema and his painting is to be found not in Léger's "machine aesthetic" works of the late-19-teens and '20s, but rather in his abstract or near-abstract "Orphic" paintings of 1912-1913, particularly in the 150 or so works that make up his Contrasts of Forms series.



Fernand Léger, The Contrasts of Form, 1913

As unlikely a comparison as this may seem, I'm not the first to propose it. In a recent essay on these early paintings, Maria Gough has suggestively argued that Léger's post-Cubist push into abstraction is rooted in a hardening of volumetric and tonal effects, such that, as she describes it, Léger: "hypostatiz[es] chiaroscuro's most elementary property, that of value, into its two most extreme or contrasted states—brilliant black, brilliant white." And in so doing, Léger "interrupts the surface of the sheet, animating it with an insistent flicker…[a] compulsive, pulsatile flickering on and off…. [such that] Léger creates, in short, a cinematic effect." [1]



Bridget Riley, Descending, 1965

As much as I find myself in accord with Gough's basic claim—that these paintings aim to produce an effect of visual movement, and that this movement should be seen, at least in part, as a response to cinema—I need to qualify that agreement somewhat in order to ward off certain potential misunderstandings that I see lurking in the shadows of her, and indeed my, rhetoric. Most importantly, I worry that Gough's description of these paintings as "compulsive," "pulsatile," "flickering," and "cinematic" could pull them, against their will, in the wrong direction. We only to have to listen to Pamela Lee's description of the type of painting one generally associates with black and white pulsatile flickering patterns—in this case Bridget Riley's 1965 Op painting, *Descending*—to get a sense of where that wrong direction would lead us. "Stand a little longer [in front of *Descending*], look a little harder, and then what happens? In time the surface begins to flicker, like a stroboscope; or wave like a lenticular screen."[2] According to Lee, this particular kind of flickering "cinematic effect" (as made explicit in her reference to the lenticular screen) has little—indeed nothing—to do with particularities of abstract painting per se, and everything to do with the way in which it disrupts the viewer's optical and nervous systems. "To what extent do we *see* this painting?" Lee asks. "In what lies its retinal appeal? To what extent we do not so much see it, but *feel* it, experience the painting less as an abstraction than as a woozy sense of gravity visited upon the body…. Spangles of gold, pink, and green burst and flash, lining the eyelids and rattling

the skull. The eye is enervated while the body feels something else: nausea perhaps or even a blinding headache."[3]

For Lee the virtue of this work lies in the way it reverses the conventional flow of action, from viewer to artwork, such that the "cinematic" flickering of these paintings induce involuntary responses that are "visited upon body." Rather than "see" these paintings in any meaningful sense, they make us "feel" a certain way ("woozy" etc.), like it or not. And indeed, meaningful sense, as opposed to the empty "sense" of simple affect, is precisely what is at stake in this reversal. For as our capacity to see even the most elemental aspects of these paintings gives way to "experience"—to the point that, as Lee remarks, we no longer even engage them as works of abstraction—so too does our capacity to interpret or draw meaning. We do not, after all, interpret a blinding headache or look for meaning in nausea; we suffer through these experiences, waiting for the feeling to pass.[4]

Such privileging of an artwork's purportedly direct action on the body's autonomic system has, to put it mildly, acquired a certain prestige of late within art history and cinema studies, largely under the influence of the philosopher Giles Deleuze. Indeed, for Deleuze the visceral impact of what he calls a new (third) epoch of cinema—epitomized by the "flicker" films of Tony Conrad, Paul Sharits, John Cavanaugh, et al.—stems directly from its "flickering" "cinematic effects." As Deleuze argues, this new type of filmic experience represents a "cinema of expansion without camera, and also without screen or film stock…a virtual film which now only goes on in the head, 'behind the pupils.'"[5] Again, such films are important for Deleuze not because of how we actually view or draw meaning from them, but because of the ways in which they act upon us, hijacking our interpretive agency.[6] As a result, the material aspects of such cinema (camera, screen, film stock, and so on) are only a means to end, such that the actual film that we *see* is subsumed into to the virtual film that we *experience* "behind the pupils." More intense than Op art's "cinematic" flickering, it is ultimately no different in kind. As Branden Joseph recounts the early screenings of Conrad's 1966 film *The Flicker*, audience response typically ranged from: "disorientation, temporary hypnosis, and intense experiences of colors, patterns, and even hallucinogenic imagery…to headaches and violent bouts of nausea, all seemingly supplied by the light's pulsating interaction with the brain's alpha waves."[7]

It is important then that the "cinematic effect" of movement that both Gough and I claim for Léger's abstraction not be taken as standing *against* painting—not be taken, that is, as literally cinematic. For if, as Léger writes, "painting must be all radiance and motion," the motion that concerns him has nothing to do with the "self-movement" or "automatic movement" that Deleuze views as distinct to cinema, whereby "movement [becomes] the immediate given of the image." Which is not to say that Deleuze believes painting incapable of triggering the

kinds of affect he claims for film. The painter Francis Bacon, for instance, creates what the philosopher describes as "not exactly movement, although his painting makes movement very intense and violent," but rather "a movement 'in-place,' a spasm which reveals…*the action of invisible forces on the body*."[8] And once this type of movement occurs—be it the "automatic movement" of film or the "movement in-place" of painting—then "the essence of the image is realized: *producing a shock to thought, communicating vibrations to the cortex, touching the nervous and cerebral systems directly*."[9]

More than simply a representation of "the action of invisible forces on the body," painting, for Deleuze and his sometime collaborator Félix Guattari, operates as a kind of machine that—again, like it or not—acts directly upon the viewer. To greater and lesser degrees, then, all paintings are understood to produce automatic affective responses upon their encounter. But according to Deleuze and Guattari, it is Léger and Francis Picabia who explicitly take up and thematize this automatism in their so-called "machine aesthetic" work: "The machinic painters stressed the following: they did not paint machines as substitutes for still lifes or nudes; the machine is not a represented object any more than its drawing is a representation."[10] Producing paintings *as* machines—rather than paintings *of* machines—Léger and Picabia operate on the level of pure mechanical abstraction, such that the machine period work of these painters is entirely continuous with the automated flow of intensive states already present in their preceding non-representational work. "The machine stands apart from representation…and it stands apart because it is pure Abstraction: it is nonfigurative and nonprojective. Léger demonstrated convincingly that the machine did not represent anything, itself least of all, because it was in itself the production of organized intensive states…. It sometimes happens, as in Picabia that the discovery of the abstract leads to the machinic elements."[11] Ultimately, however, it is not just painting that operates as a form of machine for Deleuze and Guattari, but the viewer's response mechanisms: "The machine is the affective state, and it is false to say that modern machines possess a perceptive capacity or a memory; machines themselves possess only affective states."[12]

Further exacerbating my concern that the "cinematic" movement Gough and I see in Léger's Contrasts of Forms could be misconstrued as a kind of machine-like "neuro-abstraction," is the only substantial point on which Gough and I differ. And this difference is important, in my view, if we are to get the measure of Léger's film. For unlike Gough, I do not think that Léger's "cinematic effect" in the Contrasts of Form series "confounds" his claims to medium specificity.[13] Far from producing a hybridized form *between* new and traditional media—between film and painting—these works, in my view, affirm the root qualities of the *tableau* at every turn, especially in the quality of their movement. Léger, in my view, should be taken at his word when he writes: "Each art is isolating itself and limiting itself

to its own domain … it is logical that by limiting each discipline to its own purpose, it enables achievements to be intensified."[14] This insistence, mine and Léger's, on the specific pictorial quality of his paintings, holds true despite the fact—indeed, *all the more so because* of the fact—that a certain cinematic effect is embedded directly on their surface. Far from contravening qualities proper to the *tableau*, the cinematic effects that are woven into the visual fabric of these paintings *heighten* that specificity, ratcheting up the intensity of their surfaces. The means by which Léger achieves this intensity, as he writes in a letter to Léonce Rosenberg, is "contrast": "I mean to outshine tasteful arrangements, grey shadows, and dead backgrounds. I go for the maximum pictorial output through the contrast of all available plastic resources. Never mind good manners, taste, and ordinary style. For me painting must be all radiance and motion…."[15]

Again, the problem—or potential problem—is in how we understand "intensity." Understood in Léger's terms, intensity remains firmly on the side of painting as that which overcomes or defeats—"dominates" will be his word—what he refers to as "the dead surface." A central concept and recurrent throughout his writing, "the dead surface" stands for far more than just lifeless painting (although it is certainly that also). Rather, "the dead surface," opens onto a broad field of visual forms that permeate the warp and woof of modernity at large—a visual tonality that is not just dead but *deadening*: a hollow, generic and increasingly prevalent visual array that panders to its viewer, presenting us, for all of its supposed optical immersion and emotional force, with a mere facsimile of life. "The dead surface," for Léger, is visual intensity rendered inauthentically. Various other names and phrases crop up in his writings for this mode of shallow visuality: "sentimentalism," "good taste," "habit" "theatricality" and above all—and particularly in relation to new visual forms emerging within twentieth-century modernity—"spectacle."

Fernand Léger, Composition (Contrasts of Form), 1912-13

As much as I agree, then, that a certain cinematic effect is inscribed onto the immediate surface of these paintings, I by no means think that this constitutes the basic structure and experience of these paintings as a whole. Take Léger's 1912-13 gouache and ink drawing *Composition (Contrasts of Form)*. One could talk at length about the variations and shifts in tonal value, not only among the blacks and whites (which are themselves rife with qualitative differences), but also in the plethora of greys produced through different kinds of paint and ink application: dry brush scumble, thin translucent wash, wet-on-wet, dappling, and so on.

There is also enormous variance in the line quality, where a thick black or grey line will at times draw an outer edge, only to morph into a shadow, or sit in the vague territory between the two. These painted lines are in turn contrasted with the thin graphite pentimenti that begin to appear under scrutiny. Notice also how the gouache and ink quality is juxtaposed across the surface in its thickness, finish, and mode and speed of application—at times very fast, at times very slow. To miss these kinds of effects of contrast that play out, time and again, across the surface of the drawing would be to miss, in my view, Léger's very understanding of contrast—of intensity—itself.

Movement in *Composition (Contrasts of Form)* begins as a downward flow, starting in the center of the drawing and moving from top to bottom. The sharp lines and deep blacks along with the blurring of the forms in the periphery, keep our eye centered. And from this point, the flow cascades downward, over the cylindrical pegs, helped along by the black arrow-shaped wedge near the top, and through the repeating dark gashes that cut into the tops of these cylinders like the slots of screws. Along the black and white reflective sides of these cylindrical forms we see a kind of wave or ripple effect that follows the flow of gravity, from top to bottom. At times, particularly towards the top, this ripple of alternating values feels as if it is causing the cylinders to spin. Simultaneous with this downward motion, and again partly because of the blurring on the periphery, there appears a distinctive counter-movement from the left and the right side of the painting towards the center. And finally, in the midst of all this, we also see a roughly circular movement that rotates around the mass of forms in the center, along the cylinders and cubic forms that frame them.

To be sure, Léger was far from unique when it came to his interest in pictorial movement. All of the other so-called Orphic painters—Marcel Duchamp, Francis Picabia, and Robert Delaunay—were, each in their way, equally preoccupied with the aesthetic consequences of motion. As indeed were a wide range of philosophers, experimental psychologists, and aesthetic theorists, chief among them Paul Souriau, whose 1889 book *The Aesthetics of Movement* is known to have been read by painters in Léger's orbit. Of particular concern for Souriau are the ways in which painting can produce effects of actual (rather than depicted) movement through precisely the kind of nuanced paint application that we saw in Léger's drawing:

> For a well-exercised eye, all the nuances of the execution will be visible and make an impression. Approaching the detail, one will recognize also how each mark was made, one will follow the speed of the hand that had traced it as if one had been there at its making…. It is not enough to understand by this that one sees how they were made. Rather, one must say that we see them making themselves, inasmuch as they give the impression of actual movement. [16]

More than just describing the effect of pictorial movement, however, Souriau distinguishes between two distinct forms motion: one that captures and holds our attention, pulling us into the rhythm of its movement, and another that repeals us, producing a low-grade optical discomfort that registers as displeasure. The first type of motion—which I'll call absorptive movement—is generally found in slow, flowing movements that move "gracefully" (his term) across our field of vision, often in a downward flow, as with a waterfall or falling snow, or broad circular patterns, like the turning wheels of a windmill. As Souriau writes it:

> Which of us has not lingered, in mindless rapture, to watch the sails of a windmill, the eddies in a river, the quivering of a fire? We could stay for hours gazing at a steam engine, the stretching and shrinking of its connecting rods, the turning of its flywheel, the constant coming up and down of the leather strap. It seems as if our eyes are caught by the gear in motion and drawn forcibly into it. [17]

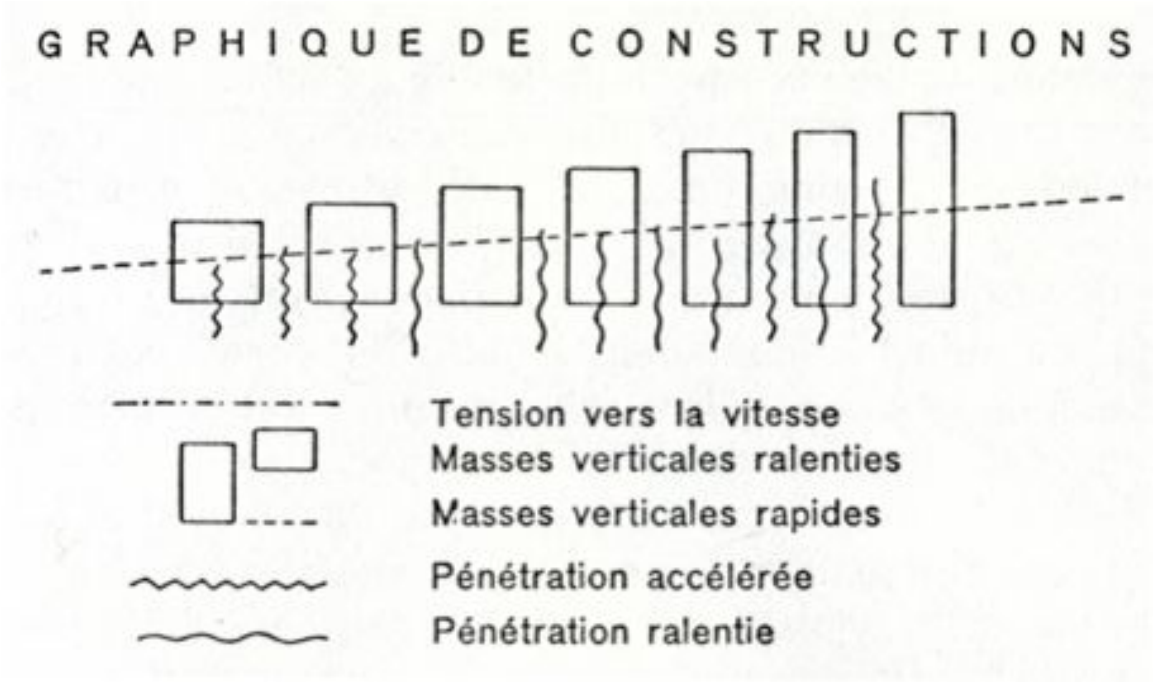
By contrast, movements that require rapid readjustments by the musculature of the eye produce active displeasure in the viewer. This would include motions that jut abruptly in and out at us, forcing us to repeatedly readjust our focus; two streams of movement that go in opposite directions at that same time, or a rapid on-and-off switching between light and dark, such as the flickering effect of a strobe light. As Souriau describes it: "The most painful movements to perceive will be those that oblige us to readjust quickly. That is why it is unpleasant to watch [types of movement that are] alternately nearer and farther away from us." [18]

The relation of these two forms of movement—one of which absorbs, the other of which repels—is of direct importance not only to Léger's painting, in which its initial "cinematic" flicker quickly gives way to a more immersive flow of movement, but also to *Ballet mécanique*, in which the opposite move occurs. Indeed, over the course of its roughly 15 or 16 minutes (depending on the version) *Ballet mécanique* presents us with a veritable catalogue of movements that, following Souriau, *repel* vision. If this assault sets the tenor of the film as a whole, these visually aggressive movements are contrasted—again, in Léger's sense—with just enough moments of optical respite to intensify the overall effect of bombardment. At strategic moments in the film, then, Léger lures our gaze into the immersive mechanics described by Souriau ("the stretching and shrinking of its connecting rods, the turning of its flywheel, the constant coming up and down of the leather strap") only to return with renewed vigor to the visual onslaught.

Note, for instance, the way in which in the opening shot of Murphy's wife, the dancer Katherine Murphy, swings in and out toward the viewer. Rather than being "unpleasant to watch" in Souriau's terms, as she moves "alternately nearer and farther away from us," the scene is clearly intended to draw us in, not simply by its tranquil mood, but through the metronomic rhythm of the swing in motion. This initial "graceful" movement is almost immediately—and literally—turned on its head, however, as the film cuts to a series of flickering juxtapositions that, to recall Gough's account of the Contrasts of Form series, hypostatizes value "into its two most extreme or contrasted states—brilliant black, brilliant white." The net effect of Léger's reified black and white in *Ballet mécanique* could hardly be more opposed to his painting, however, as eye and mind struggle, physiologically and mentally, to process these abrupt flashes. Katherine then briefly reappears, this time shot from above and slightly behind such that, disconcertingly, she seems to be swinging upside down, further jarring our sense of sight. This opening barrage culminates with a shot of a pendulum swinging back and forth at the viewer in which we can just make out Murphy and Léger reflected in its metal surface. Tying directly back to the first shot of Katherine on the swing, the pendulum—along with several other structurally similar shots in the film—takes the immersive quality of the swing's "nearer and farther" and turns it against itself.

Fernand Léger and Dudley Murphy, *Ballet mécanique*, 1924

Léger could hardly have been more explicit about his use of cinematic "contrast." Entirely evident in his "graphic de constructions" diagram of *Ballet mécanique,* published in 1924 in Friedrich Kiesler's *Internationale Ausstellung neuer Theatertechnik*, Léger leaves little doubt that he conceived the structure of the film as a dialectical synthesis of opposing speeds and movement: "fast vertical masses" and "decelerating vertical masses" punctuated by "accelerating penetration" and "decelerating penetration" combine to form an overarching "tension towards speed." This internal "tension," between both the speed and the optical impact of contrasting movements, is of vital importance as—and here is where I part ways with every account of *Ballet mécanique* that I know of—it sets Léger's film against film itself. Or more specifically, it produces an anti-absorptive effect within cinema against an otherwise non-dialectical—and accordingly overly facile or "spectacular"—experience of absorption typical of cinematic experience at this time. Michael Fried's view of the *merely* immersive quality of film, in which "the absorption or engrossment of the movie audience sidesteps, automatically avoids, the question of theatricality" would, I think, have struck a sympathetic note with Léger.[19] In the absence of any theatricality to defeat—in the absence of a visual modality that actively resists or pushes us away—the experience of cinematic absorption is, for Léger, a lapse into mere spectacle. The immersive experience of cinematic spectacle, in other words, is structurally devoid of the tension required by modernist painting to produce a genuinely compelling—I'm tempted to say authentic—mode of absorption.



Fernand Léger, "Graphique de constructions," published in Internationale Ausstellung neuer Theatertechnik, 1924

The Contrasts of Form paintings and *Ballet mécanique* thus each use cinematic effect to entirely opposite ends. In the case of his painting, the initial surface intensity *adds* to the overall absorptive effect of the *tableau*. With *Ballet mécanique* the inverse occurs. Following the seductive opening movements of Katherine Murphy on the swing, increasing aggressive bursts of optical intensity are punctuated with occasional breaks in tempo to produce more than simply "a study in comparative motion," as Iris Barry described it in an early review from 1925, but an opposition that systematically frustrates the viewer's absorption in the film.[20] "I wanted to amaze the audience first," Léger writes of his film, "then make them uneasy, and then push the adventure to the point of exasperation."[21] Even the inclusion of the letterpress "headline" that appears at one point in the film—"On a volé un collier de cinq millions" ["Stolen, a five million franc necklace"] was, as Barry writes in her review, "upsetting because one's mind, hampered by literature, concludes there must be meaning in it, whereas there isn't."[22] Writing in July 1924 for the final issue of *L'Esprit Nouveau*, this is how Léger sums up his and Murphy's film: "We 'persist' up to the point that the eye and mind of the viewer 'can't take it anymore' ['*ne l'accepte plus*']. We exhaust its spectacle value right up to the moment that it becomes unbearable."[23]

Édouard Detaille, "Vive L'Empereur!" Charge of the fourth Hussars at the Battle of Friedland, 1891

If *Ballet mécanique* aspires to exhaust its own "spectacle value"—which is to say, exhausts the spectacle value of filmic absorbtion—Léger's painting adopts a much different approach. Far from walling itself off from spectacle, modernist painting, Léger argues, must maintain "an affinity with its own age," constantly adapting to ever new and increasingly pernicious visual forms that ingratiate themselves into our vision. In a 1913 essay, for example, Léger uses the

example of the historical painter Édouard Detaille to describe how Manet's modernism both incorporates and opposes the theatrical aspects of Salon painting.

Édouard Manet, The Bugler, 1882

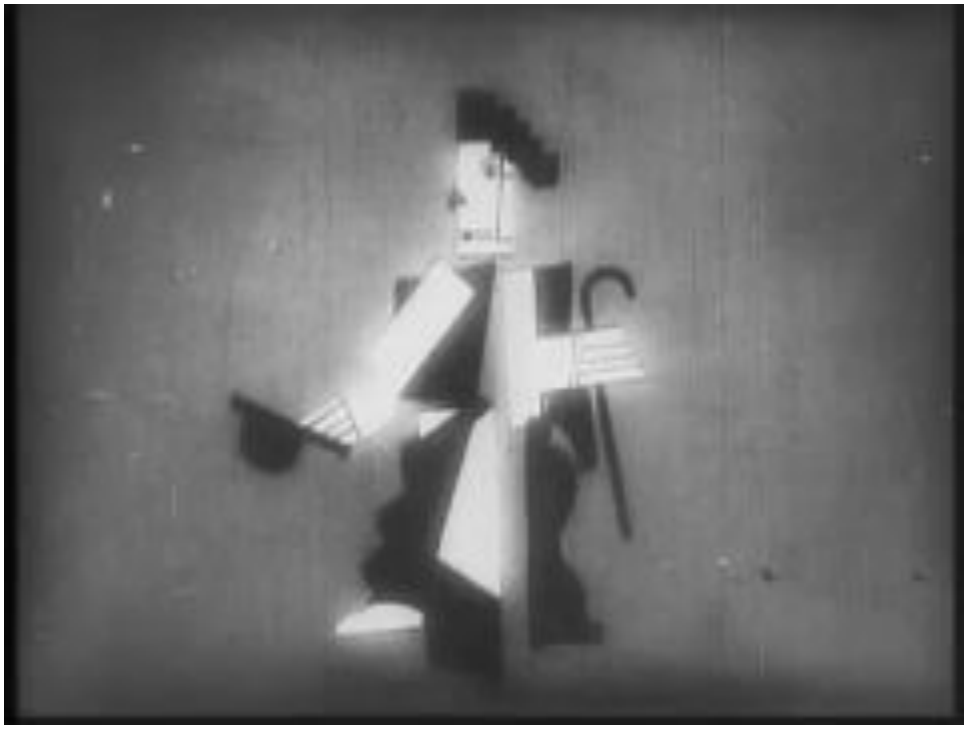
In addition to certain forms of spectacular Salon painting, Manet's work also assumes what Fried and T. J. Clark describe as the "hard instantaneity" of photography and the modern advertising poster.[24] By the early-twentieth century, however, the spectacle of salon painting cedes to a number of much more formidable adversaries, including, as Léger writes, "modern mechanical achievements such as color photography, [and] the motion-picture camera." But if these various forms of "spectacle" prove to be tenacious adversaries for modernist painting, they are the kiss of death for the theatrical painters that Manet and his generation positioned themselves against. Next to cinema, Detaille hasn't a chance. "I earnestly ask myself," Léger writes, "how all those more or less historical or dramatic pictures shown in the French Salon can compete with the screen of any cinema…. The few workers who used to be seen in museums, planted in front of a cavalry charge by Detaille… are no longer there: they are at the cinema."[25] The only viable means by which modernist painting can avoid the fate of Detaille is thus to homeopathically incorporate these new visual forms and effects, not to surpass them but to overcome them—to "dominate" them as Léger puts it—rendering them authentic through a dialectic of renewal. The modern painter, he writes, "has only one chance left to take: to rise to the plane of beauty by … select[ing] the most plastic and theatrical values possible from the whirlpool that swirls before his eyes; to interpret them in terms of spectacle; to attain theatrical unity and dominate it at any price. If he does not rise high enough, if he does not reach the higher plane, he is immediately in competition with life itself

which equals and surpasses him."[26] Modernist painting can only defeat spectacle, in other words, by incorporating and defeating the effects of spectacle itself. But if this fails—if the painter is unable to "dominate" its "theatrical unity"—unable to reach what he calls "the higher plane"—then painting lapses into simply another form of dead surface—another form of spectacle.

In the case of *Ballet mécanique*, however, it is no longer a question of competing with or dominating spectacular vision from within painting. Opting for a different strategy, Léger works against cinematic absorption and the pseudo-intensity of cinema from within cinema itself. *Ballet mécanique*, Léger writes in his 1924 essay on the film, represents "the painter's and poet's revenge." And so I'll end with an ending: the animated figure of Charlie Chaplin—or the "Charlot Cubiste" as it has become known—that opens and ends Léger's film. Chaplin, along with few select others (Abel Gance and Erich von Stroheim most notably), is one of the few filmmakers Léger regards with particular admiration. "You can figure out too often what Douglas Fairbanks is up to, you can rarely guess with Chaplin," he writes in 1925. *Ballet Mécanique* opens with an animated sequence of the Chaplin figure springing up from the bottom of the screen, raising his hat—one of Chaplin's trademark gestures—and sinking back down again, as if pushed by the open title, "Charlot présente le ballet méchanique" a reference not only to Chaplin's little tramp character, known as "Charlot" in France, but also to André Charlot, one of the film's financers. This opening shot literalizes Walter Benjamin's observation that when Chaplin walks away from us at the end of his films, his unique and instantly recognizable gait transforms into the kind of company trademark typically seen at the beginning and end of Hollywood films. Here, however, rather than a roaring lion or snow-caped mountain, Charlot becomes the opening and closing "trademark" for Léger's production.[27]

As Charlot jerks his way across the screen at the end of the film, his animated movements come as close to actual dance as this particular *Ballet* gets. Again, the quality of these movements is important. For as it so happens, Henri Bergson used the example of dance to describe, in terms very similar to Souriau's, the difference between "graceful" movements that absorb us and "mechanical" jerky movements that push us away. Watching a skilled dancer, Bergson argues, we anticipate movements *before* they occur as our vision harmonizes with the fluidly of the dancer's motion. The pleasure in watching dance thus stems from the fact that we are able to predict—or at least retroactively *feel* as if we predicted—the dancer's movements in advance of actually having taken place. Movement spills into movement, drawing us—absorbing us—into the visual rhythm of the dancer's motion. By contrast, dance that is discordant, mechanical, or jerky—which is to say the kind of dance we see at the end of Léger's film—does the opposite: unable to predict the flow of one movement

into the next, the viewer feels aggravated by the disjunction. This is particularly the case, Bergson claims, when the dancer moves out of sync with the rhythm of the music, as would most likely have occurred had George Anthiel's unrealized—indeed, until very recently unrealizable—soundtrack been appended to the film. Composed with such complete disregard as to how it aligned with the movements on the screen that it actually exceeded the length of the film by a good ten minutes, Antheil's discordant composition would have further exacerbated the already discordant movements of Chaplin's dance.



Fernand Léger and Dudley Murphy, *Ballet mécanique*, 1924

Léger, I think, would almost certainly have agreed with Walter Benjamin's claim that the quality of Chaplin's movements allegorically reflect back onto the mechanical nature of cinema itself: "Chaplin's way of moving," Benjamin writes, "is not really that of an actor…. His unique significance lies in the fact that, in his work, the human body is integrated into the film image by way of his gestures—that is, his bodily and mental posture…. Each movement he makes is composed of a succession of staccato bits of movement. Whether it is his walk, the way he handles his cane, or the way he raises his hat—always the same jerky sequence of tiny movements applies the law of the cinematic image sequence to that human motorial functions."[28] Most film actors according to Benjamin aspire to the opposite: to dominate the cinematic apparatus, triumphantly asserting their humanity in the face of the machine.

Hence the appeal of the movie star. Oppressed by the machine in their workaday world, "[The] masses," he writes, "fill the cinemas to witness the film actor take his revenge on their behalf."[29] Like so many of Léger's paintings from the 20's and indeed like dancing figure of Chaplin that ends his film, the machine is encrusted onto the human body. But it isn't film that resists this dehumanization, for Léger, it is painting. Far from the actor enacting his or her revenge on the part of the cinemagoer, it is the painter who takes his revenge on film.

Fernand Léger, The Mechanic, 1920

NOTES

Many thanks to Maria Gough, Jennie King (editor-in-chief), and Todd Cronan for the initial prompting that led to this essay.

1. Maria Gough, "*Ciné-graphie:* On Fernand Léger's Drawings, 1912-14," *Fernand Léger: Contrasts of Forms* (Charlottesville Virginia: University of Art Museum, 2007), 23.

2. Pamela M. Lee, "Bridget Riley's Eye/Body Problem" *October* 98 (Fall 2001): 26.

3. Ibid.

4. On the epistemological consequences of foreclosing interpretation and meaning through affect, my thinking is much indebted to the work of Ruth Leys, Walter Benn Michaels, and Jennifer Ashton. I've also benefited greatly from my discussions with Todd Cronan, whose forthcoming book *Against Affective Formalism: Matisse, Bergson, Modernism* has similarly influenced my views, and Charles Palermo who I've been lucky to have as an interlocutor.

5. Giles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (New York: Continuum Books, 2009), 207.

6. As Tony Conrad describes his "flicker" films: "I wanted [the viewer] to understand that they were being run by the power of this film. That it was not coming from them even though the experience of the film happened in their body and not really in the space. A lot of different things seem to be happening in their body, but if they think they can have control over this experience I will then gradually withdraw it so that they can watch it go away…. I wanted to really give people a chance to pretend that they were in control of the situation, but then to make it very painfully and slowly clear—as though you're slicing them very slowly—that it's the film that is in control of what is going on." Tony Conrad, quoted in Branden W. Joseph, *Beyond the Dream Syndicate: Tony Conrad and the Arts After Cage* (New York: Zone Books, 2008), 229.

7. Joseph, *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 279. With the exception of the opening titles and warning ("this film may induce epileptic seizures or produce mild symptoms of shock treatment"), *The Flicker* consists entirely of black and white stroboscopic flickering patterns that, over the course of 30 minutes moves from frenetic crescendo to gradual diminuendo.

8. Giles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, trans. Daniel W. Smith (New York: Continuum, 2003), p. 39. Italics in the original.

9. Giles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (London: Continuum Books, 2009), 151. Italics in the original.

10. Giles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, "Balance-Sheet for 'Desiring Machines'" in Félix Guattari, *Chaosophy* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009), 97.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid., 98.

13. Situating Léger's emphasis on medium specificity in relation to its larger history, Gough writes: "But the *Contrasts* confound that effort as much as they embody it." As Gough makes clear, it is "their attention to their own 'plastic components'"—flatness, shape, materiality of the paint, and so on—that "embody" Léger's stress on medium specificity, while it is their cinematic effects that "confound" it. Gough, 24.

14. Fernand Léger, "The Origins of Painting and its Representational Value," in *Functions of Painting*, trans. Alexandra Anderson, ed. Edward F. Fry (New York: Viking Press, 1973), 10.

15. Léger to Léonce Rosenberg, prior to 27 January 1919, in *Fernand Léger: une correspondance d'affaires, 1917*-1937, ed. Christian Derouet (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1996), 47. All translations, unless otherwise noted, are mine.

16. Paul Souriau, *La suggestion dans l'art* (Paris: Alcan, 1893), 130.

17. Ibid., 123-24.

18. Paul Souriau, *The Aesthetics of Movement,* trans. Manon Souriau (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1983), 122.

19. Michael Fried, *Why Photography Matters As Art as Never Before* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 13. Fried is referring back to his essay "Art and Objecthood," in which he writes: "Because cinema escapes theater—automatically as it were—it provides a welcoming and absorbing refuge to sensibilities at war with theater and theatricality. At the same time, the automatic, guaranteed character of this refuge—more accurately, the fact that what is provided is a refuge from theater not a triumph over it, absorption not conviction—means that cinema, even the most experimental, is not a modernist art." *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 164.

[20.] Iris Barry, "Paris Screens and Footlights," *Vogue* 65 (January, 1925): 37; quoted in Laura Marcus, *Writing About Cinema in the Modernist Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 278.

[21.] Fernand Léger, "Ballet mécanique" in *Functions of Painting*, trans. Alexandra Anderson, ed. Edward F. Fry (New York: Viking Press, 1973), 51.

[22.] Iris Barry, "Paris Screens and Footlights," p. 37. quoted in Laura Marcus, *Writing About Cinema in the Modernist Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 287

[23.] Fernand Léger, "Ballet mécanique: Film de Fernand Léger et Dudley Murphy. Synchronism musical de George Antheil" *L'Esprit Nouveau* 28 (January, 1925): 2337.

[24.] T. J. Clark's description of Manet's relation to photography, for instance, meshes well with my claims for Léger's relation to cinema: "Even if the paintings partly pretend to keep up with the poster's or the photograph's hard instantaneity (to choose only the most obvious examples of a hard instantaneity that invaded more and more of the realm of representation in the later nineteenth century), they expect the viewer to know that the effect is make believe, and to savor the dissonance between a paintings intractable means and its casual, available overall look." T. J. Clark, "Preface to the Revised Edition," *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), xix.

[25.] Léger, "The Origins of Painting and its Representational Value," 9.

[26.] Fernand Léger, "The Spectacle" in *Functions of Painting*, trans. Alexandra Anderson, ed. Edward F. Fry (New York: The Viking Press, 1973), 37.

[27.] As Benjamin writes: "The most wonderful part is the way the end of the film is structured. He strews confetti over the happy couple, and you think: This must be the end. Then you see him standing there when the circus procession starts off; he shuts the door behind everyone, and you think: This must be the end. Then you see him stuck in the rut of the circle earlier drawn by poverty, and you think: This must be the end. Then you see a close-up of his completely bedraggled form, sitting on a stone in the arena. Here you think the end is absolutely unavoidable, but then you see him from behind, walking further and further away, with the gait peculiar to Charlie Chaplin; he is his own walking trademark, just like the company trademark you see at the end of other films. And now, at the only point where there's no break and you'd like to be able to follow him with your gaze forever—the film ends!" Benjamin, "Chaplin" in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Vol. 2, Part 1, 1927-1930,* ed. Michael W. Jennings, trans. Rodney Livingston (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 199-200.

[28.] Walter Benjamin, "The Formula in Which the Dialectical Structure of Film Finds Expression," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Vol. 3, 1935-1938*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 94.

[29.] Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Vol. 3, 1935-1938*, 111.

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POLLOCK'S FORMALIST SPACES

MICHAEL SCHREYACH

Jackson Pollock, Number 27, 1950

Blue Threads

Attentive viewers of Jackson Pollock's *Number 27, 1950* (figs. 1-2), will notice a blue thread running almost parallel to the right framing edge until it meets the edge about half way up the picture. It then very closely tacks the corner fold of the canvas without ever quite disappearing from view over the tacking margin. Such blue selvage threads—which indicate the upper and

lower limits of a bolt of canvas, while protecting it against fraying—are sometimes noticeable in other paintings by Pollock, especially along the top and bottom edges of his classic 1950 drip, pour, and spatter paintings, which utilize the full vertical dimension of a standard nine foot bolt of canvas and extend laterally to over seventeen feet. *Number 27, 1950* is four by nine feet, which orients the threads to the left and right edges, rather than to the top and bottom. In addition to being differently placed in relation to the pictorial field, the thread in *Number 27, 1950* appears to be more conspicuous here than in the larger works. It is not that it is conspicuously used as an *element* in the overall composition: standing a few feet away, the thread is difficult to see. Rather, at close range it seems meant to indicate the edge as a limit beyond which the representation cannot, literally, extend. Obviously, the material surface of the canvas is framed by actual limits, as all painted surfaces ultimately are. The object, Pollock reminds us, has a frame. But the artist's inclusion of the thread seems to acknowledge this fact in a pointed way. In calling our attention to the actual frame by matching its edge so precisely with a common manufacturing detail—yet one which also slips under the painted skeins it abuts—I'd like to suggest that Pollock encourages us to imagine another kind of frame. That "frame" is of a pictorial (as opposed to literal) nature. Its "limits" should be thought of a qualitatively different from those of the actual material because, unlike physical limits, they do not first operate as constraints. The apparent limits of Pollock's pictorial fields do not necessarily, and indeed rarely do, coincide with his paintings' actual limits.[1] Those apparent limits—which have an important role in establishing what I'll later call the *format* of the picture—are generated by the activity of painting itself, and thus emerge as a result of artist's expressive purposes. The selvage thread helps mark the difference between the two different kinds of frames, and the limits they imply.[2]

detail of Number 27, 1950

I'd furthermore like to suggest that the demarcation facilitated by Pollock's blue thread between the actual and the representational—the literal and the pictorial—is analogous to another important distinction: namely, between the empirical viewer's experience and the artist's meaning. What we might call the validity of the artist's expression—its truth, at least insofar as the viewer is compelled to feel or understand it—depends largely upon how effectively he convinces the viewer that the experience to be derived from the framed work of art is independent of the viewer's experience at large, unframed as it is likely to be. Maintaining a sense of separateness between the artist and the empirical viewer also helps ensure the independence of the meaning of the work of art from the viewer's meaning. In Pollock's case, formalist criticism—especially that of Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried, but also by William Rubin—provides a crucial platform for interpreting the meaning of the work of art, because it provides the most compelling accounts of how Pollock's paintings achieve that independence. It is perhaps needless to point out that the formalist insistence on the independence or separateness of Pollock's work from the viewer runs counter to the pervasive tendency to see Pollock's visual fields as absorbing or engulfing the viewer, creating an immersive effect in which the viewer loses a sense of herself. On such accounts, Pollock establishes so powerful a continuity between the viewer and the painting that the distinction between them collapses, leaving only an anti-representational immediacy the gestalt psychologist Anton Ehrenzweig famously described as "undifferentiated oceanic envelopment."[3]

Although formalist criticism provides the strongest account of how Pollock's works achieve their independence from the viewer, the implications of that independence for interpretation remain underdeveloped. Why does it matter if we see Pollock's works as continuous with or separate from the viewer? In what follows, I suggest an answer to this question, first by reviewing key aspects of formalist accounts of Pollock, and second by pursuing the theme of self-grounded meaning those accounts imply.

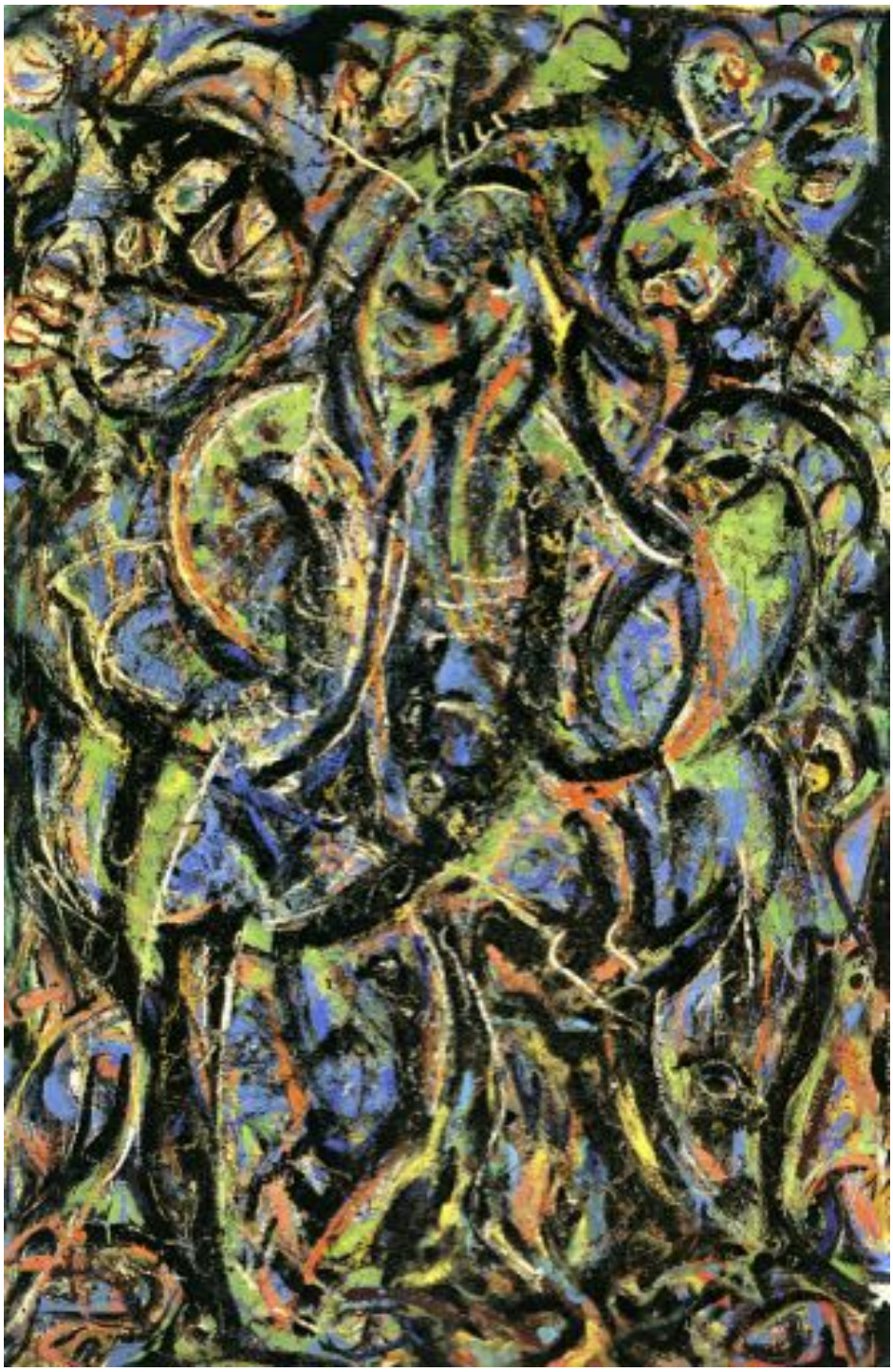
Jackson Pollock, Cathedral, 1947

Cubism and "re-created flatness"

Greenberg's criticism of Pollock is scattered over a twenty-five year period, and rarely takes the form of sustained analysis. Articulating his "account" of Pollock, then, is a somewhat speculative enterprise. One constant: the critic never abandoned his initial impression that Pollock's work, as he put it in 1962, had "an almost completely Cubist basis."[4] As early as 1948, *Cathedral* (1947) (fig. 3) reminded him of Picasso and Braque's works from 1912-15, although he did not at that time say why.[5] But twenty years later, again referring to *Cathedral*, Greenberg suggested the connection resulted from the painting's "oscillating movement between different planes in shallow depth and the literal surface plane," a movement he identified with Cézanne and analytical cubism.[6] The high degree of control Pollock exhibited over this oscillation—a control consolidated by the development and mastery of the drip, pour, and spatter technique—sustained the comparison. In "all-over" works such as *Number 27, 1950* and *Number 1A, 1948*, Pollock, according to Greenberg, wanted

> to achieve a more immediate, denser, and more decorative impact than his late Cubist manner [i.e. paintings such as *Gothic* (1944) (fig. 4)] had permitted. At the same time, however, he wanted to control the oscillation between an emphatic physical surface and the suggestion of depth beneath it as lucidly and tensely and evenly as Picasso and Braque had controlled a somewhat similar movement with the open facets and pointillist flecks of color of their 1909-1913 Cubist pictures.[7]

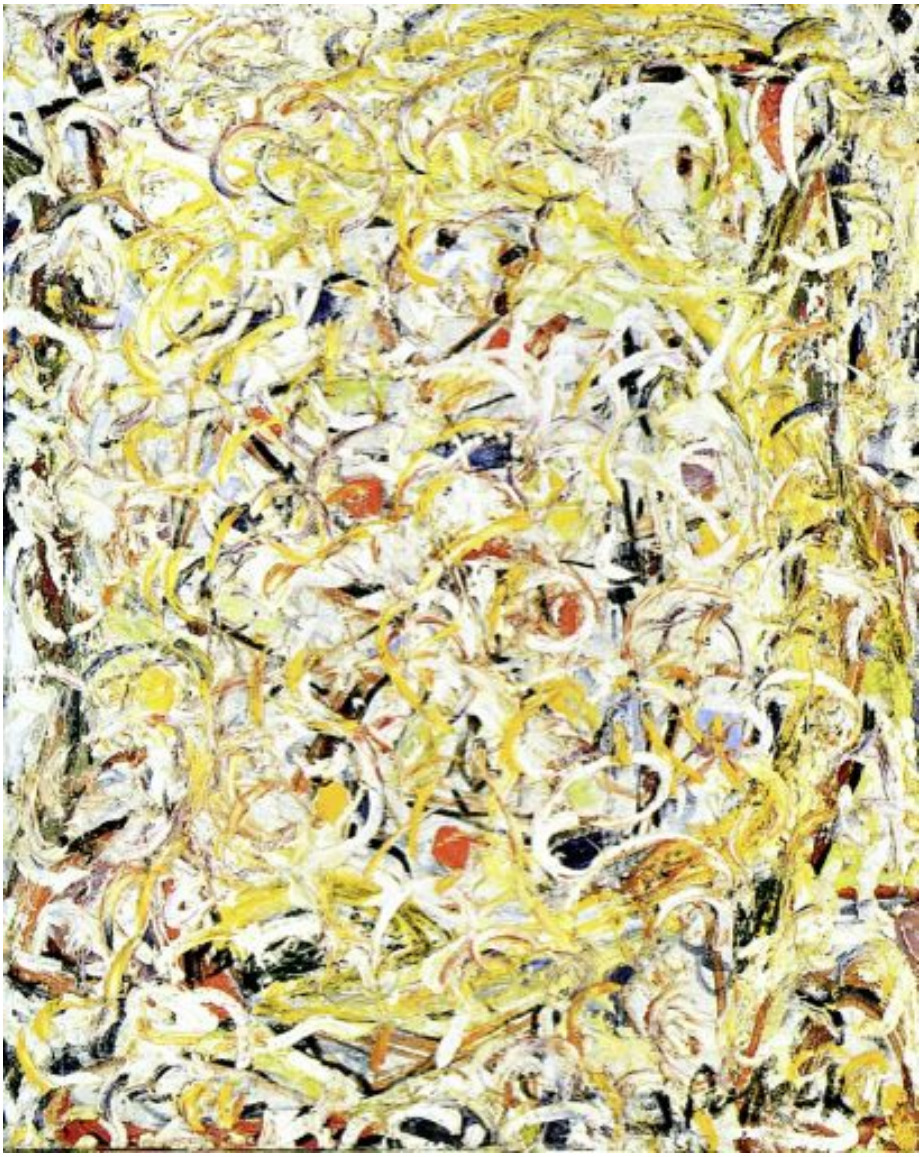
Pollock's "impact" depended on the degree of control he exhibits over the play between literal surface and illusionistic depth, between the material and the pictorial. To help draw out the implications of Greenberg's description, I'd like to consider a key—but somewhat idiosyncratic—term the critic used in his analysis of cubism, namely "re-created flatness."



Jackson Pollock, Gothic, 1944

It is of no passing interest that Greenberg first used the term "re-created flatness" in a 1947 review of Pollock's work.[8] (The term had a pedigree, originating as it did in the teaching of Hans Hofmann.[9]) Commenting on such paintings as *Shimmering Substance* (1946) (fig. 5) and

Eyes in the Heat (1946), the critic noted the "consistency and power of surface" the artist's pictures exhibited. "As is the case with almost all post-cubist painting of any real originality," he went on, "it is the tension inherent in the constructed, re-created flatness of the surface that produces the strength of [Pollock's] art" ("Review, 1947," 124-125). The significance of that thought-provoking term may perhaps be illuminated by turning to Greenberg's later account of cubism, where he most fully pursues the concept of re-created flatness in relation to pictorial meaning.



Jackson Pollock, Shimmering Substance, 1946

In two key articles from the late 1950s, "The Pasted-Paper Revolution" (1958) and "Collage" (1959/61), Greenberg holds that the Cubist project, at base, is motivated by a desire to preserve "an art of representation and illusion."[10] But, he claims, it was evident to Picasso and Braque by 1910 that the "fictive depths" of Cubist pictures were becoming so shallow that they seemed to be in danger of coinciding with the literal, flat surfaces of their canvases.[11] If that happened, Greenberg thought, illusion would capitulate to decoration—to mere "surface pattern[s]" ("Pasted-Paper," 62) or "cadences of design" ("Collage," 71).[12]

Georges Braque, Le Portugais, 1911-12

Braque's solution to the problem of preserving illusion is to "spell out" or make explicit the literal flatness of the physical canvas. Applying stenciled letters and numbers to his surfaces allowed him to specify literal flatness to the degree that other pictorial elements were "pushed into illusioned space by force of contrast" ("Pasted-Paper," 62) (fig. 6). Once the "brute, undepicted flatness" of the literal surface was in view, Braque's paintings could preserve the illusion of a very shallow—but still salient—fictive depth between that literal flatness and what Greenberg now called "depicted flatness." (These points might recall to the reader's mind Pollock's decision to leave the selvage thread visible in *Number 27, 1950*. He could just as easily hidden it in the tacking margin, as he did on the left side of the painting. Perhaps it functions somewhat like Braque's stenciled letters do.)

This depicted flatness "transforms" the literal, undepicted kind. Cubism "re-constructs" or "re-creates" flatness, "endowing self-confessedly flat configurations with a pictorial content" ("Pasted-Paper," 66).[13] For Greenberg, that content derived from the way cubism "isolated" plasticity, preserving generalized illusion—illusion *as such*—independently of conventional, three-dimensional representational means ("Collage," 77). A crucial point of Greenberg's account is that in order to achieve pictorial content under the conditions he attributes to the Cubist project (that is, under the charge of retaining illusion without resorting to the conventional representation of three-dimensional space and of avoiding mere surface pattern or decoration), literal flatness must be continually "re-created" or "reconstruct[ed]" ("Collage," 77 and "Pasted-Paper," 65). The literal surface must *perpetually* be transformed into a "picture surface" proper. ("Collage," 80 and 77).

To the degree that painters accomplish this transformation, they give pictorial form "an autonomy like that hitherto obtained through illusion alone" ("Pasted-Paper," 66). If plasticity, "isolated," now sustains pictorial content, my inclination would be to construe this content as *self-grounded* by the artist in painting as a medium. Given the theoretical weight Greenberg gave to re-created flatness, I hazard to guess at least something like this conception of the artist's self-validated meaning was at stake. To re-create flatness was to render the material an autonomous medium by which an artist could express himself.

Greenberg's sociology of formalist space

In his comparison of Pollock's all-over pictures to those of Picasso and Braque, Greenberg noticed something else about drip, pour, and spatter technique—an observation which bears directly on the issue of the painting's framed independence from the world and the viewer. The continuously dripped or poured line, creating meshes or skeins that contained bold oppositions of dark and light, allowed Pollock, as he later put it, to "hold [his] surface[s] with inevitability" ("Inspiration," 248). Pollock, he said, exhibited a

> capacity to bind the canvas rectangle and assert its ambiguous flatness and quite unambiguous shape as a single and whole image concentrating into one the several images distributed over it. ("American-Type," 225)

Here I take "bind[ing]" the canvas rectangle to be intimately related to "holding" the surface with inevitability. But there's a difference, too. While "bind[ing]" might certainly convey the gist of the painting's confinement by a literal frame, I think it also points to Pollock's achievement of an "unambiguous shape" that is more than just the "canvas rectangle."[14]

Yet in both these cases, the sense of the word is tied to a demarcation of the painting's area (its proper zone) from the world which laterally surrounds it, beyond all four of its edges. "Holding," on the other hand, suggests something about the way the pictorial field, the "whole image," composes itself—as if automatically ("inevitably")—in anticipation of being beheld. (As I see it, this composure is not unlike a kind of holding back, as when one feels that the object of one's regard prepares for, and thus resists submitting to, one's gaze.) It helps separate the painting from the viewer, and to distinguish the painting's specific intended effects from the viewer's responses in general. Which is to say that the effects of binding and holding contribute to establishing what I referred to above as its *format* (I'll soon elaborate on the special meaning I give to this word).

Greenberg's terms for what Pollock's surfaces achieve—binding, integrating, holding, concentrating, asserting, and controlling the painting's ambiguous flatness, its shape, and its imagistic unity—are similar to those he uses in regard to cubism's re-created flatness. But it is important to recall that these terms do more than just describe a formal achievement. They underpin Greenberg's sociological interpretation of Pollock's work. In 1952 he wrote:

> Tautness of *feeling*, not "depth," characterizes what is strongest in post-Cubist art… [T]he ambitious contemporary artist presents, supposedly, only that which he can vouch for with complete certainty. [15]

Tautness is not just a useful word to describe the way a canvas is stretched around and tacked to its frame; it is meant to designate expressive content. The need to vouch for the certainty of one's feeling, the critic explains, is a reaction to living in an urban world where every field of human activity is organized for profit, which flattens and empties human endeavor until nothing is left except, as he memorably phrased it in 1947, the "dull horror of our lives" ("Prospects," 163). At that time, Greenberg was looking for an art the would "release" his feelings, one that did not rely for its intensity on "sensibility confined." [16]

It was the drip, pour, and spatter paintings of just over a year later that more fully satisfied Greenberg's wish for an art that conveyed valid feeling. In 1948, he described the all-over or "polyphonic" style evident in the work of Pollock and others:

> [The] dissolution of the picture into sheer texture, sheer sensation, into the accumulation of similar units of sensation, seems to answer something deep-seated in contemporary sensibility. It corresponds perhaps to the feeling that all hierarchical distinctions have been exhausted, that no area or order of experience

> is either intrinsically or relatively superior to any other… the only valid distinction being that between the more and the less immediate. [17]

Given his recent assessment of the deleterious effects materialism and societal rationalization had on a healthy sense of life, Greenberg's description of a style of painting that "corresponds" to contemporary sensibility would seem, on the face of things, to imply a negative judgment. Still, that style also "answer[ed]" sensibility, flattened as it was, yet still seeking the "immediate." There was something to be gained from the new polyphonic painting, in which the artist's expression took the form of "sheer sensation" experienced by the viewer. Richard Shiff has suggested that in calling Pollock's surfaces "emphatic," "positivist," and "concrete" ("Prospects," 166), Greenberg seemed to reason that the artist's work confronted modern materialism on material terms—as if his paintings could provide the culture with a pictorial intensification of its own matter-of-factness, inoculating its viewers against the shocks of modern urban experience by conveying ever more "naked" sensations. From this perspective, Pollock's paintings are like a homeopathic remedy for those no longer sure not merely of *what* they feel, but *whether* they feel at all. [18]

Discerning what is more or less immediate is a matter of personal experience. Similarly, proclaiming the validity or certainty of one's own feeling necessarily must be a self-grounded judgment. It is important to distinguish, however, between the "tautness of feeling" the *artist* presents—something "he can vouch for with complete certainty," as Greenberg reminds us—and the viewer's response. Greenberg does not valorize "immediacy" in the way many postmodern critics do, who seem take Pollock's art as the occasion for an affective experience independent of any consideration of the effects the artist *intended* to produce. Greenberg is not giving license to the empirical beholder's affective responses. Nor is he saying we should see Pollock's marks as literal traces either of his presence or his procedure. Some version of this latter account can be found, most obviously, in the writings of Harold Rosenberg and Allan Kaprow, who take his characteristic webbed field to be nothing more than a kind of map of action. But the idea of the mark as a trace is pursued to an extreme by Rosalind Krauss. Pollock's marks, she says, are not to be understood "representationally," but as literal indexes of the "horizontal" which "invad[e] and undermin[e]" the "optical axis" of the finished painting. Which is to say that the idea of "immediate experience," recast as an index or trace, goes to war with the idea of pictorial format, exposing a near inflexible tension between formalist efforts to understand the autonomy of the work of art and *its* meaning and post-modern efforts to flatly deny it and wish it away. [19]

Michael Fried's account of Pollock's line

Fried, like Greenberg, stressed that feeling, the "all-or-nothing urgency of [Pollock's] desire" is paramount in assessing the painter's works ("Allusions," 97). So powerfully could that feeling be conveyed as a picture that it "leave[s] the viewer with no choice other than to accept it or reject it in its entirety" (perhaps we might say: to vouch for it or not). That suggestion came in 1999, in a review for Pollock's Museum of Modern Art retrospective. Pollock felt "a drive to realize pictorial *intensity* at any price," and he experienced that drive as "an existential demand" ("Allusions," 97).[20] Although Fried has reservations about some aspects of Greenberg's account—particularly the older critic's description of Pollock's alloverness, and his insistence on the artist's connection to cubism, which I will discuss momentarily—I'd like to point to one suggestive continuity between their views. I find a resonance between Fried's observation of what he called a "layered impactedness, mobile intensiveness, and experiential density of the painted surface" ("Allusions," 97) in the painter's works of 1947-50 and Greenberg's description of Pollock's ability to "hold" a surface with "inevitability." To my mind, what connects the remarks is their mutual relation to the problem of bounding figures and shapes with contour lines, an issue Fried has done the most to explicate.

Jackson Pollock, Number 1A, 1948

Greenberg's comment about Pollock's ability to hold the surface with inevitability was directly connected to an observation he made about the way dripped lines, which "resulted from the falling or flowing of paint," allowed Pollock to abandon the use of "marked lines or contours" ("Inspiration," 248). The critic did not elaborate on why he singled out contour as impediment to Pollock's vision, but just a couple of years earlier, Fried had pursued the same issue in *Three American Painters*. A main concern of the critic's unsurpassed formal analysis of Pollock is the character of Pollock's line in relation to contouring shapes. Of *Number 1A, 1948* (fig. 7), he wrote:

> [the] allover line does not give rise to positive and negative areas: we are not made to feel that one part of the canvas demands to be read as figure… against another part of the canvas read as ground. There is no inside or outside to Pollock's line or to the space through which it moves. And this is tantamount to claiming that line… has been freed at last from the job of describing contours and bounding shapes…. [T]here is only a pictorial field so homogenous, overall, and devoid both of recognizable objects and of abstract shapes that I want to call it *optical*, to distinguish it from the structured, essentially tactile pictorial field of previous modernist painting from Cubism to de Kooning and even Hans Hofmann. (*Three American Painters*, 224)

Pollock's works, by radically inhibiting our ability to discriminate figure from ground, achieve a new kind of space, "if it still makes sense to call it a space," Fried cautions (*Three American Painters*, 224). The critic's hesitation prompts me to think that rather than facilitating a viewer's imaginative entry into this space, it thwarts such effects—as if sealing pictorial space against the projections of a viewer and thus holding itself apart from her (this impression is not unqualified). In his later articulation of Pollock's pictorial intensity, Fried suggests as much when finds the artist's pursuit of pictorial intensity to be "from the outset correlated with the essential facingness" of his paintings, a facingness I construe to be predicated on a sense of the independence of the work of art from the beholder ("Allusions," 144).

Fried stresses another important basis of the virtual autonomy achieved by the all-over, optical field. Again, it's worth quoting him at length on this issue:

> The skeins of paint appear on the canvas as a continuous, allover line which… [creates] a kind of space-filling curve of immense complexity…. [The] other elements in the painting…. are woven together… to create [a]… homogenous visual fabric which both invites the act of seeing on the part of the spectator and

> yet gives the eye nowhere to rest once and for all. That is, Pollock's allover drip paintings refuse to bring one's attention to a focus anywhere. This is important. Because it was only in the context of a style entirely homogenous, allover in nature, and resistant to ultimate focus that the different elements in the painting—most important, line and color—could be made, for the first time in Western painting, to function as wholly autonomous pictorial elements. (*Three American Painters*, 223-224)

Despite his disagreement with Greenberg on the legacy of analytic cubism in Pollock's work, I take Fried's description of the painter's autonomization of line and color as parallel to Greenberg's suggestion that Pollock, like Picasso and Braque, isolated plasticity—thereby liberating it from conventional, three-dimensional representational means and re-creating flatness in the drama of oscillation between the literal surface of the support and the illusion of shallow depth. Furthermore, I see Fried's insistence that Pollock wanted to preserve figuration within the context of an optical style that works against it (a problem solved, according to Fried, in *Out of the Web* [1949]) as analogous to Greenberg's insistence that Picasso and Braque wanted to preserve illusion within the context of a style that—by making fictive depth increasingly shallow—worked against it.[21]

Arguably, in each case the pursuit of a paradoxical project was neither arbitrary nor merely a formal exercise, but motivated by a demand to discover new means by which the work of art and its pictorial meaning—the artist's meaning—could be secured as something separate from and independent of the viewer's experience. (For example, in Carl Einstein's account of cubism, the effect of a beholder's exclusion from the pictorial world figures largely.[22]) Fried's description of Pollock's drive to realize "pictorial intensity" strikes me as congruent with my suggestion that the painter aimed to establish the validity of his expression in the face of the viewer's experience—as if Pollock felt that the viewer's recognition of the validity of his meaning hinged upon the degree to which he convinced the viewer of the independence of the work of art.

William Rubin's formalist frameworks

The most detailed formal account of Pollock's all-over style remains William Rubin's "Jackson Pollock and the Modern Tradition," a four-part series published in *Artforum* in 1967.[23] He followed Fried in suggesting that Pollock's signal achievement was the unprecedented degree to which the artist established the independence of his formal means from conventional

description. But the basis upon which he asserted that claim differed. For Rubin, it was Impressionism—and specifically of the late Monet—that was key to understanding Pollock's pictorial space.

Monet's advances beyond classic Impressionist pictorial structure, Rubin argued, had to do with maintaining pictorial cohesiveness in the face of an extreme increase in the size of his paintings. Classic Impressionist structure had depended on the juxtaposition of a variety of pure colors, held at an approximately even value. Form was articulated primarily through changes in hue. As Monet dramatically increased the size of his pictures (Rubin reproduces three of the Orangerie's *Nympheas* paintings [1916-1926]), he began to reverse this proposition. Because the sheer size of the multi-panel works threatened their compositional unity and cohesiveness, Monet's solution was to hold them together by varying value within a dominant hue. This all-over tonal quality prefigures Pollock's similar tendency to absorb color into a tonal framework of blacks, whites, and middle-value aluminum, and to avoid strong, saturated colors. But unlike Monet, whose use of light and dark—despite what we may see as the nascent abstraction of the motif—was still associated with a model in nature, Pollock renders such modeling autonomous by disengaging line from contouring, and by implication, from shading. (There is a Greenbergian echo here. As I mentioned above, he too had noticed that the light-dark oppositions of Pollock's skeins and meshes work to "hold the surface with inevitability" without capitulating to conventions of chiaroscuro. Which is to say that even though Greenberg did not make it an explicit theme of his analysis, he implicitly recognized Pollock's autonomization of the elements of pictorial convention. Insofar as he did, his analysis shares something important with Fried and Rubin, despite their double rejection of the older critic's assertion of Pollock's debt to analytic cubism.)

Let me qualify immediately. Rubin was more amenable than Fried was to the cubism connection, and made a particular effort to track how cubist space was modified by Pollock via Mondrian. Rubin argues that Mondrian's plus-and-minus pictures of 1913-14 rendered cubism's conception of a shallow, illusionistic, atmospheric space more absolute, and, as a consequence, isolated it so that it could be "discarded" (or "drained off" [III, 31 n. 20]) in favor of the "non-illusionistic optically spatial scintillating web of sensations" that "coalesce[s]" in Pollock. (And, there's evidence that Pollock himself considered Mondrian's *Pier and Ocean* series pivotal for his own drip works.[24]) Rubin concludes:

> The very shallow optical space of [Pollock's] pictures is not a matter of illusion but of the actual overlapping of different color skeins and the tendency of certain colors to 'recede' or 'advance.' Pollock worked to minimize any sense of spatial illusion by locking the warm colors literally inside the skeins of the non-hues, of

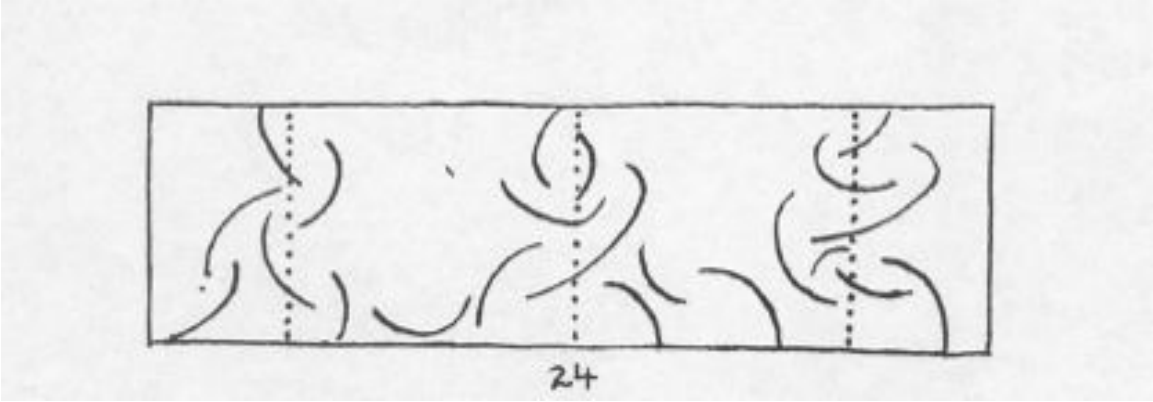
> which the aluminum in particular was used to dissolve any sense of discreteness the space of the web might have—in effect to 'confuse' it into a unified mass of light sensations. (III, 25)

The oscillation Greenberg noticed in Pollock's works between an emphatic physical surface and the suggestion of illusionistic depth beneath it—an oscillation that was the chief means of connecting Pollock's drip, pour, and spatter paintings to cubism—has been abandoned by Rubin in favor of a shuffling of colored layers that tend to recede or advance in visual perception. That optical emphasis brings a part of his account into alignment with aspects of Fried's. Still, because Rubin found the sensational effects of Pollock's scintillating webs to be rooted in cubism at one remove, through Mondrian, his account also owes something to Greenberg. The nuances of each account are instructive, but even more important in the present context is to note the formalists' collective targeting of some specific ways Pollock's paintings achieve their independence from the viewer.

At the outset of this essay, I suggested that the blue thread along the right edge of *Number 27, 1950* helped us distinguish between two kinds of frames. The first was connected to the literal boundaries of the canvas—its actual edges, a physical limit beyond which the representation could not extend. The other kind of frame, I claimed, was of a pictorial nature, and was generated through the activity of painting itself. The second kind of frame is thus intimately connected with intention (the artist's meaning), insofar as it finds pictorial expression. And, it serves to make that meaning independent of the viewer by asserting the separateness of the work of art from the viewer's experience at large. The two kinds of frames entail competing notions of pictorial structure. The first depends upon the degree to which the *elements* within a composition are seen to be adjusted to each other and to an external limit, specifically to the literal frame. The second is a matter of how the *total array*, the allover visual field—which is something more than just the accumulation of separate marks—creates its own frame, achieving independence from the literal frame. I will use the term *format* to signify the qualitative difference. Format, like re-created flatness, has to do with the self-grounded meaning of the work of art. [25]

Gothic

It's not hard to agree (as did Fried and Rubin) with Greenberg in seeing a cubist logic in Pollock's pre-drip paintings, such as *Gothic* (1944) (fig. 4). Part of that logic, as I've recounted, is prizing apart the means of representation from their conventional functions, rendering them increasingly autonomous. Yet the elements that comprise the compositional array, independent of conventional description as they might be, appear strongly related to each other and to the framing edges of the canvas. In *Gothic*, I see the bold black arcs in orbit around an implied yet insistent central vertical to suggest the symmetrical massing of a body. Despite the titular reference to cathedrals and stained glass windows, the arcs more convincingly suggest the presence of hips, shoulders, possibly breasts, a head, and legs (possible in multiple sets). Smaller bulbs outlined in red near the upper left framing edge, and a series of short, black marks along the lower edge, resemble the crude toes and fingers Pollock often attached to his figures around this time, and might indicate the ends of otherwise difficult to discern arms and legs. Passages of a bright green-yellow and a rusty but vivid orange conform themselves to the black arcs and suggest modeling, but the cool blue-violet Pollock used to fill in the areas defined by the arcs fails to contribute to the illusion of volume. Instead, the blue-violet reads as a background glimpsed, as it were, through the interstices of the diagrammatic or stenographic anatomy.



Thomas Hart Benton, detail of Mechanics, 1924

If we see in *Gothic* an instance of autonomization of pictorial elements—of line being freed from the role of contouring shape, and light-dark contrasts being separated from the role of shading volume—that liberation is not unqualified. For that emancipation generates the problem of representing the "body" within pictorial space. Pollock had grappled with the problem throughout his career: viewers of *Gothic* might be reminded of the lessons the artist took from his mentor Thomas Hart Benton, whose 1924 "Mechanics of Form Organization" rehearsed a technique of dynamically controlling a body's centrifugal and centripetal forces (fig. 8). Rather than shoring up a sense of the body's integrity, though, the radical schematization of the body (or bodies) in *Gothic* seems to suggest a kind of

uncontainment of the figure. The drift of this uncontainment appears to proceed laterally from a mesial vertical with which the spread of the arcs maintains an increasingly attenuated, but still salient, compositional relationship, to finally be braced by the picture's right and left framing edges. Or rather, not exactly *braced*: I want to say that the way field meets the edges establishes those edges as comprising a pictorial frame. In attempting to explain exactly what I think occurs in *Gothic* as regards to this claim, I'll turn to a recent account of how cubism handled a related problem.

Pablo Picasso, Composition with Skull, 1908

Charles Palermo's recent analysis of Picasso's *Composition with Skull* (1908) (fig. 9) is a useful way to get the cubist lesson in focus. Palermo argues that Picasso's theme is "the ability of art to contain the human body." Additionally, he suggests that Picasso's concern with human presence in pictorial space is also a concern "with the autonomy of painting," its separateness, in relation to the breadth of the experienced world.[26] Palermo draws our attention to the way Picasso dramatizes the theme of containment by highlighting how the corner of the fictional painting, as well as the elbow of its depicted figure, acknowledge the top framing edge. The contour of the human figure—*its* limit—urges us to identify it with the limits of both the depicted as well as the literal framing edges within which it is set. Slightly differently, in *Three Women* (1908-09) (fig. 10), the figures are "engage[d] in a drama of mutual definition," in which the contours of bodily form function not as limits to a thing, but as the beginning of another thing, as if, Palermo writes, "there were no negative spaces, only saliences" ("Wholeness," 30). (I'm prompted here to think of Fried's claim about Pollock's line, as if it were a radical version of Cubist contour: a line that has neither inside nor outside,

that is detached from defining any *thing*. I'm also compelled to note the remarkable formal correspondence established by the play of arcs that contour body parts in both *Three Women* and *Gothic*.) But note, too, how those saliences—the "pleats and ridges… [of] an irregular lattice of arrises" that are the condition of volumetric effects—seem to be produced by internalizing the division enacted by the framing edge between the world of the picture and the world we imagine to persist beyond its borders.[27] Palermo suggests that the discontinuity both physically acts upon and simultaneously is brought inside the bodies: the compression of the edges causes the women to buckle, just as their volume is created by the internal division represented by the arrises. The net effect is to remove all sense of continuity between our space as viewers and the painting's space, rendering it radically independent of us.

Pablo Picasso, Three Women, 1908-09

The suggestion that Picasso's handling of the contours of objects and bodies in relation to the framed space of the picture allegorizes the problem of painting's autonomy strikes me as a useful way to think about *Gothic*. In fact, I find the schematic suggestion of a body to share something, by way of reversal, with *Three Women*. In Picasso's painting, the division enacted by the literal edges between the space of the painting and the world outside it is internalized by the represented body. Consequently, the painting's autonomy can be understood as allegorized by the represented body's containment within or openness to the pictorial space surrounding it. The expanding effect of *Gothic*'s isolated figure, though, meets the edge from the other direction. Instead of internalizing the division, the all-over field swells to meet the framing edges. The effect imparts to those edges a role of containment, transforming the literal edge—where the picture *has* to end—into a pictorial limit—where the

represented body finds its end. The division between the space of the painting and the visible world outside it, including the viewer's space, is enacted by the uncontained body seeking its limit. The pictorial limit of *Gothic*, that is, is self-determined.

Number 1A, 1948

I have been suggesting that Pollock's literal framing edges do not automatically function to divide the world of the picture from the world outside of the picture. In each case, those edges must be established as a pictorial frame. The allover visual field, in its total array, is a means by which Pollock accomplishes this task. And, as I hope to have suggested in my summary of the formalist positions on Pollock, *expression*—the artist's meaning—plays a crucial role in this regard. Now I want to claim that the expressive meaning of Pollock's works, whether we understand it as "pictorial intensity" (Fried) or "tautness of feeling" (Greenberg), is intimately bound up with the problem of formatting the work of art and establishing its independence from the viewer's experience. *Number 1A, 1948* (fig. 7) tests my claim.

It has become standard procedure to assert that Pollock's all-over style, characterized by a seeming uniformity and lack of hierarchy, challenges the power of the painting's internal structure and external boundaries to establish pictorial coherence. (In contrast, I suggested that the arcs of *Gothic* provide a certain emergent structure, as if its pictorial structure—its format—is internally self-generated.) In her attack on the idea of structure in *Number 1A, 1948*, Rosalind Krauss made an even stronger claim. Taking Pollock's handprints as indexes of a vertical, figural, "schema" lying below the dripped, poured, and spattered skein, Krauss contended that the web not only struck at and "cancel[led]" that figural schema, but "operate[d] instead on the very idea of the organic, on the way the composition can make the wholeness of the human form and the architectural coherence of the painting into analogues of one another."[28] Krauss's "organic" seems to refer to a correspondence between the painting's "capacity to cohere" and the unity of the human form we expect figuration to produce. To her, Pollock's webs dismantle both. I mention Krauss's views at this juncture merely to point out that in rejecting the capacity of Pollock's paintings to cohere, Krauss does more than strike at unconventional techniques of composing paintings. She also implicitly rejects the idea that Pollock's paintings can establish their independence from the viewer, because apprehending a sense of the painting's integrity is directly related to perceiving it as a discrete, contained, framed work of art. In failing to see the integrity or coherence of *Number 1A, 1948*, Krauss denies its ability to achieve an ontological status of separateness from the viewer. Which is to say that she "cancels" Pollock's meaning, converting it into a matter of a

viewer's experience. Her position thus entails abandoning the idea that paintings can serve as means of expression.

Recalling Greenberg's analysis of the cubist's effort to re-create flatness by controlling the oscillation between literal flatness and illusioned depth, it would not be difficult to see the handprints along the upper right framing edge of *Number 1A, 1948* as functioning analogously to Braque's stenciled letters. Similarly, they might be taken to work like the blue selvage thread in *Number 27, 1950*. As indexical signs of Pollock's palms, they make the literal flatness of the support explicit, helping to differentiate the physical nature of the canvas from the pictorial field. It is this distinction, I have been arguing, that conditions our apprehension of the painting as a medium of expression.

But the handprints also function representationally. That is, Pollock intends to signify something about the relation of his mark-making procedures to both figuration and abstraction. Counter to what may be our initial impression that the painting was made without traditional techniques or implements, it is important to note that Pollock utilized a brush to create a diagrammatic figure just emerging from or sinking into the web at the upper left corner. Given the artist's tendency to bracket the interior space of his pictures on either side with standing figures like this one, we might reasonably assume it to have a mate. In using his palm—the limit of a body's reach and touch—to create a sequence of prints, Pollock pairs the iconic figure with indexical marks. But the marriage complicates the stability of the categories. By convention, it's easier to take the painted figure as part of the representational world of the painting, since we rarely take paint strokes that define an object or a figure—however schematic—as indexical signs. They are often invisible to us, supplementary to the object or figure we behold and identify. But such strokes are indeed indexes. Focusing our attention on the marks that comprise an object or figure—detaching those marks from the iconic image they collectively make—we can see that they index the angle of a brush, the pressure with which it is applied to the canvas, the speed and direction of an artist's stroke, and other material properties. There is an oscillation, one might say, between taking a sign as indexical or iconic.[29] It is this oscillation which helps us now see Pollock's handprints not as indexes of his palm, but as iconic signs belonging to the world of the picture. He *represents* the hand and its multiple touches; he does not just index a causal activity of marking.

And, the handprints do more than indicate the flatness of the support. The manner in which they tack the right-side and upper framing edges, as if pushing or spreading parts of the webbed field towards the corner in an effort to secure it there (notice the oblong passage of heavy black that further anchors the web to the corner), serves to express something about the painter's approach to a limit. Consider the fact that as he painted, the framed edge as a literal limit was not yet in place. Pollock made *Number 1A, 1948* while the canvas was on the

floor of his studio, only framing it after its composition was complete. He was thus at liberty to choose how his handprints—as well as other marks on the surface, including the overall web—would exist in relation to the edges, the frame. The expressive power of those choices has not gone unnoticed. T.J. Clark explained the relevance of such an adjustment to the top framing edge in *Number 1A, 1948* (fig. 11): "The central black whiplash with its gorgeous bleep of red, and the final black spot to the right of it," Clark wrote, "condens[e] the whole possibility of painting at a certain moment into three or four thrown marks."[30] Given my own stress on the establishment of the edges as *pictorial* limits that can sustain expressive content, and thus formats the painting as a work of art, I'm tempted to indulge in Clark's hyperbole.

Jackson Pollock, detail of Number 1A, 1948

Establishing those limits, as I have hoped to explain, does everything to separate Pollock's painting from the world at large and from our experience at large. *Number 1A, 1948* is the meaningful expression of an artist, and our evaluation of the validity of that expression—its truth, insofar as we think we understand or feel it—is not an act that consummates the meaning. The meaning is independent of us. But I tend to think that Pollock's project of separateness is not motivated by a radical renunciation of communicability. Rather, it

originates in the desire to insist that one's own meaning, and its expression, is not contingent upon a viewer's interpretation. The commitment with which Pollock pursues pictorial intensity and tautness of feeling asserts his expression, and his meaning, as his own. In the difference between the indexical and iconic interpretations of Pollock's paintings is the difference between the literal and the re-created framing edge, between the shape of the canvas and its format, between limits that are actual constraints and limits that are created—paradoxical as it may sound—as the condition of expression.

NOTES

I would like to thank Todd Cronan, Charles Palermo, and Ken Walker for discussing with me some of the ideas expressed in this essay.

1. For example, Michael Fried remarked on the visual effect in *Lavender Mist: Number 1, 1950* resulting from Pollock's "flooding of the painted field beyond the framing edges in all directions" (Fried, "Optical Allusions," *Artforum* [April 1999], 97-101, 143, 146; 99 [hereafter, "Allusions" in the text]).

2. Richard Shiff discusses issues of surface and materiality with regard to the blue selvage thread at the lower edge of Jasper Johns's *Target* (1958) in "Breath of Modernism (Metonymic Drift), in T. Smith, ed., *In Visible Touch: Modernism and Masculinity* (Sydney and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 184-213; esp. 207-213. I owe the idea of my section title "Blue Threads" to Shiff's essay.

3. Anton Ehrenzweig, *The Hidden Order of Art* [1967] (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971), 120.

4. Greenberg, "How Art Writing Earns Its Bad Name" [1962], *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, ed. J. O'Brian. 4 vols. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986-1993), 4: 141 (hereafter, *CEC*). Second references to particular essays will be cited within the text by shortened title.

5. Greenberg, "Review of Exhibitions of Worden Day, Carl Holty, and Jackson Pollock" [1948], *CEC*, 2: 200-203.

6. Greenberg, "Jackson Pollock: 'Inspiration, Vision, Intuitive Decision'" [1967], *CEC*, 4: 245-250; 247 (hereafter, "Inspiration").

7. Greenberg, "'American-Type' Painting" [1955], *CEC*, 3: 217-236; 225-226 (hereafter, "American-Type").

8. Greenberg, "Review of Exhibitions of Jean Dubuffet and Jackson Pollock" [1947], *CEC*, 2: 122-125; 125 (hereafter, "Review, 1947"). He later used the variant "*created* flatness" to describe successful Painterly Abstraction in "The 'Crisis' of Abstract Art" [1964], *CEC*, 4: 176-181; 181.

9. Greenberg's use of the term derived from Hans Hofmann, whose 1938-39 lectures in New York Greenberg attended. For an extended analysis of the connection, see the author's forthcoming essay, "Re-created Flatness: Hans Hofmann's Concept of the Picture Plane as a Medium of Expression" (currently under review).

10. Greenberg, "Collage" [1959/61], *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), 70-83; 70-71 (hereafter, "Collage"). Lisa Florman points out that "Collage" [1959/1961] should not be taken as a straightforward revision of "The Pasted-Paper Revolution" [1958] (the latter essay is in fact a reworking of a 1948 exhibition review of the Museum of Modern Art's *Collage* show [Greenberg, "Review of the Exhibition *Collage*" (1948), *CEC*, 2: 259-263)]. Florman's is the best and most extensive analysis of Greenberg's essays available. See "The Flattening of 'Collage'," *October* 102 (Autumn 2002), 59-86. Also relevant for the present discussion is Florman, "Different Facets of Analytic Cubism," *nonsite.org*, Issue #5: http://nonsite.org/feature/different-facets-of-analytic-cubism (accessed 16 July 2012).

11. Greenberg, "The Pasted-Paper Revolution" [1958], *CEC*, 4: 61-66; 61 (hereafter, "Pasted-Paper").

12. Picasso and Braque "seamless[ly] fus[e]" the decorative and the illusioned: "Th[e] point [of cubism as a renovation of pictorial style], as I see it, was to restore and exalt decoration by building it, by endowing self-confessedly flat configurations with a pictorial content, an autonomy like that hitherto obtained through illusion alone. Elements essentially decorative in themselves were used not to adorn but to identify, locate, construct; and in being so used, to create works of art in which decorativeness was transcended or transfigured in a monumental unity. Monumental is, in fact, the one word I choose to describe Cubism's pre-eminent quality" ("Pasted-Paper," 66).

13. The key passage reads: "Flatness may now monopolize everything, but it is flatness become so ambiguous and expanded as to turn into illusion itself—at least an optical if not, properly speaking, a pictorial illusion. Depicted, Cubist flatness is now almost completely assimilated to the literal, undepicted kind, but at the same time it reacts upon and largely transforms the undepicted kind—and it does so, moreover, without depriving the latter of its literalness; rather, it underpins and reinforces that literalness, re-creates it" ("Collage," 77).

14. The issue of literal versus depicted shape is addressed best by Michael Fried, "Shape as Form: Frank Stella's Irregular Polygons" [Nov. 1966], *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 77-99.

15. Greenberg, "'Feeling is All'" [1952], *CEC*, 3: 99-106; 102.

16. Greenberg, "The Present Prospects of American Painting and Sculpture" [1947], 2: 160-170; 163 (hereafter, "Prospects").

[17.] Greenberg, "The Crisis of the Easel Picture" [1948], *CEC*, 2: 221-225; 224-225.

[18.] Shiff has pointed out that Greenberg associated contemporary sensibility with a materialist and positivist mentality that underpinned modern social and cultural conditions. Writing in 1946, Greenberg suggested that modern abstract art's tendency to assert the specificity of the medium "expresses our society's growing impotence to organize experience in any other terms than those of the concrete sensation, immediate return, [and] tangible datum" (Greenberg, "Henri Rousseau and Modern Art" [1946], *CEC, 2*: 94). Shiff quotes this passage and glosses the point: "The only way to shock a materialistic culture out of its restrictive cultural identity was through a radically homeopathic appeal to its materialism" (*Doubt*, vol.3 of *Theories of Modernism and Postmodernism in the Visual Arts* [New York and London: Routledge, 2008], 124).

[19.] Rosalind Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 322. Considered as indexes, Pollock's signs are thus converted into marks that transcribe their cause. The implication is that his work must be taken to consist entirely of its physical features, which reveals Krauss' commitment to the materiality of the signifier. In her post-structuralist view, signifiers are empty of meaning in themselves. They become meaningful only because of their difference from other signifiers and by virtue of their syntactical placement. So the meaning of Pollock's signifiers—his indexical marks—depends upon the *beholder's* judgments regarding competing possibilities of signification. Which is to say that meaning becomes a matter of the viewer's experience. In reducing signs to indexes, Krauss transforms Pollock's paintings into just marked surfaces, objects to be encountered—not artworks to be interpreted. This point is derived from my reading of Walter Benn Michaels, *The Shape of the Signifier* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), and from discussions with Todd Cronan and Charles Palermo. For a more extended account of Krauss's position, see Michael Schreyach, "Intention and Interpretation in Hans Namuth's Film, *Jackson Pollock*," *Forum For Modern Language Studies* 48:4 (October, 2012).

[20.] Obviously, Fried strongly disagreed with the "existentialist" interpretations of Pollock put forward by Thomas Hess and Harold Rosenberg. To their "fashionable metaphysics of despair," he saw Pollock's work as engaged with encountering, engaging, and solving problems of form and content that had preoccupied the best modernist painters since Manet (Fried, *Three American Painters: Kenneth Noland, Jules Olitski, Frank Stella* [exh. cat., Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, Mass., Apr. 21-May 30, 1965], reprinted in *Art and Objecthood*, 213-265; 222 [hereafter, *Three American Painters*]. Fried reprinted the section of the catalogue devoted to Pollock as "Jackson Pollock" in *Artforum* 4:1 [September 1965]: 14-17).

[21.] Although I do not address the debate between "opticality" and "materiality" in the course of this essay, I would like to point out that Fried offers a succinct abstract of the debate and effectively addresses his critics (particularly Kirk Varnedoe, Pepe Karmel, and Rosalind Krauss) in "Optical Allusions." There, he makes the important admission that while critics often accuse him of hypostatizing vision as "disembodied," he "never thought of it that way" (101). Indeed, there seems to be some fundamental confusion at the heart of the postmodernist criticism that Fried's "opticality," as a mode of the visual perception of pictures, is somehow antithetical to an "embodied" experience of art. That is a false opposition, one based on a misunderstanding of the "tactile" insofar as it pertains to looking at paintings. As Alois Riegl made clear, *both* the optical *and* the tactile are modes of *visual* perception. It is true that in Riegl's scheme, the optical mode of vision opposes the tactile mode of vision, but neither of them necessarily opposes embodied perception.

I also think that considering some points Riegl made about the optical and the tactile (what he called the "haptic") might be useful in approaching Fried's comments about Pollock's line—although I am not prepared to suggest that Fried was thinking of Riegl when he developed his account. Riegl's understanding of the haptic in planar representation is based on the observation that an artist can ensure the absolute integrity of objects by two central means: 1.) through flatness, or the elimination of depth from planar representation (since depth tends to blur the secure boundaries between things by immersing them in space and atmosphere); and 2.) by using line as a strong contour to create a sense of bounded, securely circumscribed, self-contained things (his main example is Egyptian art). Pollock's drip, pour, and spatter paintings clearly assault such integrity. Since Pollock's line doesn't bound anything (he "freed at last [line] from the job of describing contours and bounding shapes" [*Three American Painters*, 224]), he undermines the viewer's sense of self-contained things. The absence of circumscribed shapes or figures has the additional effect of eliminating one of the main cues of spatial depth, namely secure figure-ground oppositions. Still, it is obvious that Pollock's works often convey a sense of atmospheric, if not strictly spatial, depth—effects that compete with the simultaneous impression of the physical flatness of the surface (a flatness that is achieved, in part through the "layered impactedness" mentioned by Fried ["Allusions," 97]). Riegl's complementary term, the "optical," refers to representations in which such bounded forms, and the integrity they convey, is compromised (e.g. Late Roman and Christian art), and its use seems fitting for Pollock.

But it is as if Pollock himself wanted to move beyond the division Riegl enunciates. On Fried's account, Pollock wanted to *preserve* figuration (*Three American Painters*, 227). But he was compelled to do so within an optical mode that worked against it. The consequence was that it produces what Fried sees as a kind of "virtually self-contradictory character" in his allover style (*Three American Painters*, 223). The solution, on Fried's account, ends up being *Out of the Web, 1949*. (Riegl presents his theory in numerous places, but most notably in *Late Roman Art Industry* [1901], trans. R. Winkes [Rome: G. Bretschneider,

1985]. I am indebted for my understanding of Riegl to Michael Podro, *The Critical Historians of Art* [New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982], esp. 71-97, and to Margaret Olin, *Forms of Representation in Alois Riegl's Theory of Art* [University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992]. Olin attempts to elaborate on the connection between Fried and Riegl in "Forms of Respect: Alois Riegl's Concept of Attentiveness," *Art Bulletin* 76:2 [June 1989], 285-299; esp. 297-298, but in the process of making her case, the author presents a reductive version of Fried's formalism.)

22. Charles Palermo elucidates Einstein's views in *Fixed Ecstasy: Joan Miró in the 1920s* (Refiguring Modernism Series) (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008); see esp. 119ff.

23. William Rubin, "Jackson Pollock and the Modern Tradition: Part I," *Artforum* (February 1967), 14-22; "Part II," (March 1967), 28-37; "Part III," (April 1967), 18-31; "Part IV," (28-33). Hereafter cited by part number in the text.

24. The artist Tony Smith testified on two occasions to Pollock's affirmation of the connection to Mondrian. See Rubin, III, 23; and E.A. Carmean, Jr. "Jackson Pollock: Classic Paintings of 1950," *American Art at Mid-Century* (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1978), 127-153; 150 and 153 n.73. See also Landau, *Jackson Pollock*, 196 and 262 n. 28.

25. Aspects of my theorization of format follows Fried's lead in "Shape as Form: Frank Stella's Irregular Polygons."

26. Charles Palermo, "A Project for Wholeness," *Picasso and Braque: The Cubist Experiment 1910-1912* (Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 2011), 15-37; 21 (hereafter, "Wholeness").

27. Palermo quotes Leo Steinberg on this point, "Resisting Cézanne: Picasso's *Three Women*," *Art in America* 66:6 (November 1978), 128.

28. Rosalind Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, 266.

29. An excellent discussion of iconic and indexical signs in painting is Richard Shiff, "Performing an Appearance: On the Surface of Abstract Expressionism," in M. Auping, ed., *Abstract Expressionism: Critical Developments* (New York: Abrams, 1987), 94-123. Krauss is committed to a hard and fast distinction between the two kinds of signs. As I point out in the text, Pollock's marks, she says, are not to be understood "representationally," but as literal indexes of the "horizontal" which "invad[e] and undermin[e]" the "optical axis" of the finished painting.

30. Clark, *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), 313.

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THE CONDITIONS OF INTERPRETATION: A RECEPTION HISTORY OF *THE SYNAGOGUE* BY MAX BECKMANN

AMY K. HAMLIN

The authenticity of a thing is the quintessence of all that is transmissible in it from its origin on, ranging from its physical duration to the historical testimony relating to it.
-Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility" (1936, second version)

The question to ask of pictures from the standpoint of poetics is not just what they mean or do but what they *want* – what claim they make upon us, and how we are to respond. Obviously, this question also requires us to ask what it is that we want from pictures.
-W.J.T. Mitchell, *What do Pictures Want?: The Lives and Loves of Images* (2004)

Hermeneutics has long been the coin of Beckmann studies. Thick with fish, candles, kings, and crescent moons, the frequently arcane pictures of this modern painter are almost preternaturally disposed to interpretation. Art historians on both sides of the Atlantic have asked and answered the question that Beckmann's pictures consistently pose: what do they *mean*? His well-known *Departure* (1932, 1933-35) triptych provides a fitting object lesson (Fig.1). According to the American art historian Alfred H. Barr, Jr., the founding director of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), *Departure* is "an allegory of the triumphal voyage of the modern spirit through and beyond the agony of the modern world."[1] It is also, as the German art historian Reinhard Spieler has argued, a paradoxical representation of humanity's iniquities and virtues that, it is both tempting and precarious to claim, masquerades as an indictment of the then-nascent Third Reich.[2] Beckmann himself left the interpretive doors open, albeit to those who shared the same "metaphysical code," when he wrote: "One can only say that *Departure* is *not* tendentious, and that it can apply to all times."[3]

Figure 1, Beckmann, "Departure"

What is remarkable about the many persuasive interpretations of Beckmann's work is that they have been earned despite the limitations of the art historical method his figurative paintings seem to invite, namely iconography. Codified by Erwin Panofsky in the mid-twentieth century, iconography "concerns itself with the subject matter or meaning of works of art, as opposed to their form."[4] The risk in simply decoding those signs and symbols, of converting a visual code into plain text, domesticates Beckmann's pictures, depriving them of their formal power by creating a conventional (and therefore rigid) one-to-one relationship between symbol (fish) and meaning (fertility).[5] To be fair, this approach is often used productively as a starting point in analyses of Beckmann's pictures. But when iconography is the alpha and omega of an art historian's method, it can overwhelm the ineffable quality – embedded in the picture's formal properties – that summoned the viewer in the first place.

More ambitious than the iconographers, however, are the Beckmann scholars, including Spieler, who have – consciously or not – employed Panfosky's concept of iconology. They are more ambitious because they build on the iconographers' application of literary or thematic knowledge to a given motif by considering the artwork's production within a broader cultural context. This enables the iconologist to approach a more "synthetic" – as opposed to "analytic" – interpretation of the artwork's formal qualities as an expression of its "intrinsic meaning or content."[6] Somewhat paradoxically, it assumes that although the artwork is a historical artifact, its meaning is immutable and unified, waiting to be discovered by the interpreter. Put another way, Panofsky's method assumes the artwork to have symbolic meaning,[7] which transcends the historical conditions of its production as well as the conditions of its interpretation.

Consider Beckmann's lesser-known painting of *The Synagogue* (1919) (Fig.2). Like *Departure*, it is a figurative painting that through the careful, yet disorienting arrangement of forms and subjects invites the viewer to ask questions. Why is this apparently realistic cityscape at the same time so distorted? Why is it nearly bereft of human presence, and who are those miniature, costumed figures at the center of the painting? What does the cat represent? What does it mean for this German artist, a nonbeliever who was raised Protestant, to have depicted a Jewish house of worship? At first glance, *The Synagogue* is a picture that works symbolically; it appears to promise a unified, transcendent meaning that can be clarified through interpretation. But its apparent symbolic condition is evident less in its symbols (the synagogue, the merry figures, the cat, etc.) than in the way in which Beckmann constructed pictorial space. His canny application of Renaissance-style linear perspective is evident in the composition's plunging orthogonal lines, which create an illusion of spatial depth that is reassuring in its denial of the picture plane, its recourse to the atemporal ideal of a more perfect world.

Figure 2, Beckmann, "Synagogue"

In this way, *The Synagogue* seems to have anticipated Panofsky's attribution of "spiritual meaning" to what became the title of his 1927 essay "Perspective as Symbolic Form." Therein he asserted, with help from Ernst Cassirer, that perspective "may even be characterized as…one of those 'symbolic forms' in which 'spiritual meaning is attached to a concrete, material sign and intrinsically given to this sign'."[8] But my Panofskian interpretation of *The Synagogue*as a painting of symbolic import shoulders a certain anachronism. It applies an understanding of a symbolic system – one that had a particular meaning in Quattrocento Florence, for example – to an early twentieth-century depiction of a German cityscape. Keith Moxey has pointed out that the use of Panofsky's notion of perspective as symbolic form "in a diachronic system of interpretation serves only to privilege the Renaissance above all other periods under consideration."[9] In this case, Panofsky's notion cannot itself adduce the meaning(s) of *The Synagogue* as a historical artifact.

Upon closer inspection, *The Synagogue*'s attenuated orthogonals start to quiver and buckle, eventually surrendering to the picture's artifice. For Panofsky, perspective as symbolic form relied on the very conditions of its unifying function, that is, the disavowal of the picture's material support.[10] And yet this it is precisely what Beckmann emphasized when he positioned his friends' house cat on the threshold between the fictive spaces of the picture and the fact of its canvas support. The picture's relationship to – its existence in – time becomes apparent in the viewer's awareness of a connection between her present tense and the embalmed historicity of the image. *The Synagogue* starts to behave allegorically, in opposition to the symbol's transcendence. Allegory's temporal contingency, or what Paul de Man dubbed "the rhetoric of temporality,"[11] yields in Beckmann's painting a wider variety of interpretive possibilities across time. Put differently, *The Synagogue* wants its viewer to collaborate rather than decode. It wants her to bring her perspective to bear on her understanding of the picture, what Hans Robert Jauss calls the viewer's "horizon of expectations" (*Erwartungshorizont*), her cultural assumptions and worldview in a particular moment and place in time.[12]

My role in this essay, however, is less that of a viewer than of a historian or a *Wissenschaftler* in the German academic tradition. I am more interested in documenting the archival evidence of *The Synagogue*'s reception, the conditions of its interpretation. In so doing, I forego my own interpretation of the picture and in its place offer a reception history, one that excavates the painting's meaning*s* accrued in the intersubjective relationship between it and its viewers over time.[13] This study tracks *The Synagogue*'s rapport with its viewers across four chronological episodes wherein particular qualities or potential uses of the painting become ascendant: Postwar Poetics (1919-1921); Prescient Picture, Historical Document (1945-1964); Art and Politics (1972); Formalist and Pedagogical Uses (1972-present). Admittedly subjective, my

decision to select these episodes was nonetheless contingent on an empirical judgment that a critical mass of evidence (e.g. a concentration of primary sources) could constitute an episode worthy of study.[14] Each episode has a distinct sensibility determined by its protagonists and the evidence of their interactions with the painting. The former are a diverse lot that includes the artist and his critics, his collectors as well as a museum director, curators and art historians, journalists and pedestrians, museum educators and students. The latter, equally diverse, includes memoir passages and art criticism, letters and telegrams, newspaper articles, exhibition photographs, and a poster as well as an art historical essay, an exhibition catalogue, and several interviews.[15] Emphasizing various modes of engagement with the object over time, this reception history (uncommon in Beckmann studies) privileges interpreting the evidence of the episode over that of the painting qua painting. It understands *The Synagogue* not as a rarefied object, but rather a historical agent. My ultimate aim is to demonstrate *The Synagogue*'s radical authenticity, that is, its unique capacity to both assert and elicit its historical testimony.[16]

Postwar Poetics (1919-1921)

On a Monday morning in late September 1919, Beckmann hosted a visitor in his Frankfurt studio, which was located just south of the Main river in the city district known as Sachsenhausen.[17] Beckmann moved to Frankfurt in the autumn of 1915 following nearly a year of active duty as a medical orderly on the Eastern and Western Fronts.[18] Like many of his peers, he suffered a nervous collapse in the war and was furloughed to Strasbourg to convalesce in the summer of 1915; his commanding officer then dispatched him to Frankfurt.[19] Eventually the conversation that late September morning in 1919 turned to this modern city of medieval provenance. Beckmann's visitor was Reinhard Piper, a friend, colleague and collector of his pictures as well as the founder of the publishing house, R. Piper & Co. Verlag in Munich.[20] He inquired after Beckmann's artistic plans, to which the painter allegedly replied: "I want to paint landscapes again. For example, the synagogue over there, with its green cupola and the moon above in a green evening sky. The whole thing has to look quite festive (*feierlich*)."[21] An ambivalent term denoting both joyous celebration and dignified ceremony, *feierlich* conveys Beckmann's relationship to the building, its site, and Frankfurt in the months following the end of World War I. What did he see *sur le motif*?[22]

When Beckmann referred to the synagogue "over there," he meant the relatively new synagogue on the Börneplatz in the heart of Frankfurt's historic Jewish quarter (Figs.3 and 4).[23] It lay just north of the river and east of the city center, a brisk thirty-minute walk from Beckmann's studio. As Christiane Zeiller has demonstrated, Beckmann's sketchbooks reveal his practice of drawing *in situ*, often on the street; three sketchbooks from this Frankfurt

period feature several cursory studies of and a more developed sketch for *The Synagogue*.[24] His subject was one of four synagogues in Frankfurt at the time, a handsome red brick building that was designed by the Berlin architect Siegfried Kusnitzky and erected between 1881 and 1882. Kusnitzky dressed the synagogue's corner façade in rusticated masonry, measured fenestration, and a graceful monumentality reminiscent of the Italian Renaissance.[25] He crowned the medieval turret-like structure that joined these perpendicular walls with a copper cupola whose near-eastern silhouette gave the synagogue an exotic profile amidst the ordinary apartment and shop facades on the Börneplatz.[26] The sight of so striking a synagogue in the company of vernacular neighbors must have struck Beckmann as picture worthy.[27] His elevated perspective[28] through a window from the north side of the Börneplatz afforded a sidelong view of the synagogue and three apartment buildings that presided over the triangular city square.[29] Assuming Beckmann started the painting sometime in September 1919, it took him about four months to complete; in one of his sketchbooks at the time he declared the picture "finished Christmas 19."[30] That he sought to accent the festive sensibility of this vista seems fitting given the synagogue's elegant mien in an otherwise pedestrian cityscape. It might have represented a kind of orthodox spiritual safeguard against Frankfurt's modern hurly-burly as well as the simmering urban violence and growing anti-Semitism that afflicted Germany after the armistice and end of World War I.

Figure 3, Synagogue, Boerneplatz

Wartime and post-war attitudes toward Jews in Germany were fraught with complications and contradictions. In August 1914 many Jewish and gentile German citizens alike rushed to war in defense of the fatherland. Just two years later, however, the War Ministry conducted the so-called Jewish census, or *Judenzählung*. Performed ostensibly to combat anti-Semitic rumors of "Jewish shirking," the census was designed to determine whether more Jewish Germans than others were evading military service.[31] However well intended, it had a

grievous affect on the political and social status of Jews in Germany by stoking fear and resentment among non-Jewish German soldiers and civilians who sought a scapegoat for their wartime suffering at the hands of corrupt government and military officials.[32] As a veteran as well as a friend of Heinrich Simon, the well-connected publisher and chief editor of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, Beckmann was almost certainly familiar with these debates. This mainstream newspaper was against the census and the risky consequences of asking after a soldier's religious affiliation.[33] The November 1918 armistice and subsequent Revolution intensified social unrest throughout Germany and initiated a protracted period of inflation. Frankfurt saw its share of demonstrations, strikes and plundering in the months following the armistice, primarily due to rampant unemployment.[34] A radical, if limited strain of anti-Semitism – one based on a foundation of latent anti-Semitism that infected many Frankfurt citizens – accompanied this postwar unrest,[35] despite (or perhaps because of) the civil rights Jews had enjoyed in Frankfurt since 1864.[36]

Figure 4, Boerneplatz

Neither these social circumstances nor the Börneplatz synagogue's civic function, and the community it served, likely had a direct bearing on Beckmann's decision to capture its likeness in paint on canvas. Still, they raise questions about his relationship to and attitudes toward Frankfurt's diverse Jewish community. Beckmann's social circle included members of the Jewish-German cultural elite in Frankfurt. For example, he cultivated a professional and personal relationship with the art historian and museum director Georg Swarzenski, who in 1919 purchased Beckmann's 1917 *Descent from the Cross* for the Städtische Galerie in Frankfurt (Fig.5).[37] And according to Beckmann's second wife Mathilde "Quappi" Beckmann, Heinrich Simon and his wife Irma were "among Max's best friends."[38] In fact, in the first half of 1919 Beckmann lived temporarily with the Simon's along with the journalist and writer Benno Reifenberg.[39] Beckmann attended Simon's regular Friday salon (*Freitagstisch*) that was,

according to Reifenberg, frequented by "the better part of Germany's intellectuals."[40] One member of the *Freitagstisch* described Beckmann as "an errant artist, a stranger."[41] This description is not out of step with Reinhard Piper's characterization of Beckmann, about whom he devoted a chapter in his memoir, first published in 1950 and again in 1964.[42] Therein Piper recounted a conversation from one of several visits to Beckmann's studio in 1919 during which he quoted the artist having said the following regarding Frankfurt's Eastern European Jewish population.[43]

> I believe in Germany, because I believe in myself. I am a German through and through. The numerous Jews in Frankfurt don't bother me in the least. On the contrary, these black-clad, industrious people are in many respects quite beneficial for us.[44]

Whether Piper transcribed Beckmann's statement verbatim in the artist's presence or filtered it through his memory days, months, or years later is impossible to verify.[45] The statement exists. The question is how do we interpret it? Piper provided some guidance in the preface to his memoir, wherein he speculated that a sense of the times may well emerge in the details of his encounters, in the "many small occurrences" he recorded.[46] Though no small occurrence to our eyes, Beckmann's statement assumes a different tone when placed in the context of immigration debates in Frankfurt during and after the war. From the end of the nineteenth century, Eastern European Jews (*Ostjuden*) immigrated to Germany in large numbers to escape economic hardship and violent persecution.[47] Wartime populations of *Ostjuden* swelled with the influx of Eastern European Jewish laborers (recruited and forced) as well as refugees and war prisoners.[48] On November 1, 1919, Germany's Interior Minister Wolfgang Heine issued a controversial edict that allowed *Ostjuden* to remain in Germany; his detractors within the government and among civilians were outraged that resources would be spent on foreigners while German nationals suffered in the post-war economic crisis.[49] In the context of this debate, Beckmann's statement suggests a tolerant, if "slightly ironic" tone toward the *Ostjuden* in Frankfurt,[50] where they tended to be low- and mid-level merchants and salesmen as well as craftsmen and manual laborers.[51] Compared to the assimilated German Jews in Beckmann's social circle, the *Ostjuden*, frequently clad in the traditional black caftans of Hasidic Judaism,[52] were generally more conservative and observant. Many of them lived in the Jewish quarter,[53] where Beckmann would have encountered them on his visits there to sketch the Börneplatz synagogue.

When Beckmann first exhibited his portrayal of *The Synagogue* in April 1921 at the Frankfurt Art Association (*Frankfurter Kunstverein*), his critics perceived a provocation and tension in the picture that inspired a range of responses.[54] The first review appeared soon thereafter in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* and was filed by the critic and art historian Wilhelm Hausenstein. His appraisal began in this way: "The first impression is one of penetration, something absolutely piercing."[55] Hausenstein's argument that Beckmann was a nihilist as well as an "intransigent naturalist" (*ein intransigenter Naturalist*) was, he contended, evident in the artist's pictures, which "groan under the torture of their [pictorial] order."[56] What they needed was a bit of Schubert, he wryly suggested, attributing to Beckmann's pictures a powerful synaesthetic effect. The downturned megaphone hanging from telephone wire in *The Synagogue*'s upper right corner conjured for Hausenstein the sense of "imprisoned noise as in Münchhausen's frozen coach horn."[57] His readers were undoubtedly familiar with the eighteenth-century Baron von Münchhausen's misadventures, popularized by Gottfried August Bürger.[58] This literary parallel highlighted the fantastic qualities of Beckmann's otherwise realistic scene. More significantly, Hausenstein did not so much describe what he saw as what he heard, or did not hear. It was a remarkable verbal/literary approximation of the picture's quarantined aurality. It is unclear whether the leap of faith that his characterization required was one that his readers were willing to make in the absence of an illustration,[59] but it likely got a few through the doors to see the show.

Siegfried Kracauer, the Frankfurt School journalist, writer, and sociologist who would become known for his analyses of popular culture and film in Weimar as well as Nazi Germany, penned a four-page essay on Beckmann's newest paintings for the autumn 1921 issue of *Die Rheinlande*, a quarterly journal, based in Düsseldorf, for German art and poetry.[60] His précis of Beckmann's career and review of recent pictures opened with a bleak reflection on the artist's *Descent from the Cross*, a dessicated painting that expressed the lingering catastrophe of World War I (see Fig.5). On this evidence, Kracauer declared Beckmann "an artist of our time," in whose pictures "the pain of contemporary humanity is effectively embodied."[61] A discussion of *The Synagogue* arrived on the last page and was accompanied by a reproduction of the painting. Kracauer wrote:

> The ground shakes, the temple heaves, and with them sink the tenements and factories… Everything that our civilization has created is ripe for destruction. The light-posts, streetlamps, advertising columns, and wooden fences are pulled into a dance of destruction while the gramophone steadily amplifies dreadful street

> songs, that render mute each scream for mercy and may thus sound sweet to the ears of Hell's princes.[62]

Like Hausenstein, Kracauer was attuned to the picture's uncanny sound effects, but placed them within a familiar urban environment that anticipated disaster, an apocalypse *in potentia*. What is more, Kracauer's early training as an architect with Jewish roots in Frankfurt revealed his familiarity with the cityscape depicted in *The Synagogue*.[63] And yet he dwelled less on the real-world referent than on the contradictory effects of Beckmann's sign. Kracauer's description of the painting was at once symbolic and allegorical,[64] a poetic description that was symptomatic of a society in crisis.

Figure 5, Beckmann, "Deposition"

The third critic to review *The Synagogue* at the time was Benno Reifenberg. As Beckmann's former roommate in early 1919, Reifenberg may well have seen *The Synagogue* in advance of the 1921 exhibition, if not in-progress in Beckmann's studio. Revealing an intimate knowledge of the picture as well as the city, Reifenberg published his interpretation in the third volume of *Ganymed*,[65] a cultural yearbook dedicated to visual art, poetry, music, and theater that Hausenstein and Julius Meier-Graefe co-edited.[66] Reifenberg's essay was not an exhibition review per se, but rather a reflection on Beckmann's current painting in troubled times. "The war restored the painter to reality, to new subject-matter," wrote Reifenberg referring to the catalytic impact of the war on Beckmann's creative transformation, evident in painting such as *Night* (Fig.6).[67]

Figure 6, Beckman, "Night"

Regarding *Night*, completed in early 1919, Reifenberg continued: "The war continued to fester, eating away at humanity…do you believe the war is over, is history? The war continues."[68] On *The Synagogue*, which was illustrated in the article in a black-and-white reproduction, his language turned allusive and poetic:

> Well it was finally time to again venture back into the streets, even though it at first seemed as if the only street on earth were Friedrichstraße, which was "hell." No one, however, could go for a walk beyond the "hustle and bustle" of the city. At night after closing time, hat pushed back, one could discover all kinds of things there. For example, the red synagogue with the verdigris cupola. Everything was quite remarkable: these carefully overlapping lantern posts, advertising column, a small pull cart. Even the striking contours of a tomcat. The houses, boxes with many window eyes, stand around something that people call a plaza. A slab of pavement, around which runs a path, is contained by a wooden fence. There is order in such a plaza. A human order. It is not fundamentally a rational order, like that which grows from a tree or the line drawn by distant hills.

It is rather like the order of honeycomb cells, only these cells do not border one another in a regular manner; they jostle one another, they thrust their shoulders forward, and draw back wall by wall, the ones who stare while the others blink ambivalently out their windows. Here and there a lamp burns and casts its false light into the twilight. However, one suddenly senses the devilish calm in this square. It is nearly emptied of people. Are the doors bolted shut? Why are the stores closed? What is happening here? The sky twitches with all of its

stars in a coppery surge; is everything really okay here? Oh no, it's not time to steal away upon secret paths through painted streets into nature, into the open, into idyll. Let's go into the rooms. Who's hiding there? What kind of men inhabit such rooms? We want to meet them, our fellow citizens, to grab them by their coat lapels and look into their eyes. [69]

By introducing anonymous actors – citizens of Frankfurt – into his account of *The Synagogue*, Reifenberg verbalized its visual entreaty to its immediate recipients in a way that recalled Beckmann's 1918 credo: "I hope we achieve a transcendental objectivity out of a deep love for nature and humanity. (…) Perhaps this age will help me." [70] But the utopian optimism that characterized many likeminded texts from the months before and immediately after the armistice was notably absent from both the painting and its initial reception. As Reifenberg and his colleagues noted, *The Synagogue* possessed a magical, even ominous quality that was at once unmistakable and invisible. This must have been acutely familiar to contemporary viewers for whom the violence and suffering of the war persisted in the social and economic crises of the early 1920s. In this sense, Reifenberg's fraught description objectified his horizon of expectations, his lived experience of and attitude toward the site at that time. [71]

From the vantage point of poetics, these three descriptions exemplify an ancient rhetorical mode known as ekphrasis, that is "the verbal representation of visual representation." [72] Two kinds of description characterize Reifenberg's passage; his impersonal inventory of the painting's various props gives way to a description of their unsettling effect. He enters the painting via its main thoroughfare and proceeds to describe Beckmann's Frankfurt cityscape and its eerie landmarks as if they were real. [73] Moreover, he writes first in the past and then in the present tense, suggesting an intimate familiarity with the painting's contracted pictorial space and topography. Reifenberg's ekphrasis thus constitutes an interpretation of *The Synagogue* that understood its uncanny reality as central to its meaning.

Reifenberg's poetic language departed from the formalist discourse that characterized modern art criticism in Germany at the time. [74] In this case, ekphrasis in the service of modern art criticism revealed neither iconophilia nor iconophobia, [75] but rather the inadequacy of formalist interpretations to account for the artwork's magnetic inscrutability. The matter of form qua form was incidental in these three discussions of *The Synagogue*, a not uninteresting relegation given the formalist praise lavished on *Night*, Beckmann's break-through painting. [76] For although elsewhere in their texts all three critics explicitly addressed and applauded Beckmann's formal transformation from Berlin Secessionist to "intransigent naturalist" (per Hausenstein), they each forsook formalist interpretation in favor of poetic descriptions that variously reconciled the picture with the contemporary trauma of lived experience. Reifenberg's ekphrasis in particular amounted to an allegorical reading of *The Synagogue* that

recognized the painting's relationship to its temporal circumstances as both rhetorical and intrinsic. Put another way, his interpretation was the first to concretize the meaning of *The Synagogue* as not merely timely, but prophetic – a significant reading given what was to come in the next decades.

Prescient Picture, Historical Document (1945-1964)

What does it mean for an artwork – or, for that matter, an artist – to be prophetic? The notion of the artist as prophet is a modernist trope that had special currency in Germany. In *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, published in late 1911, Wassily Kandinsky wrote metaphorically of society as a great triangle. In "The Movement of the Triangle," he proclaimed: " In every segment of the triangle are artists. Each one of them who can see beyond the limits of his segment is a prophet to those about him, and helps the advance of the obstinate whole."[77] This belief in the artist's capacity to elevate the masses through spiritual edification was one that the critic and art historian Paul Ferdinand Schmidt reiterated in 1919 with respect to Beckmann. He argued that "the true artist is a prophet of his time and not "topical"; his art emerges out of the deep and true religious layers of social consciousness."[78]

This attitude may have hastened a particular view of Beckmann's depiction of *The Synagogue*. In 1963, Benno Reifenberg wrote an essay entitled "Max Beckmann in Frankfurt" in which he repeated much of what he said in 1921 about *The Synagogue*, but with a noteworthy addition: "I've always believed that Beckmann had a premonition that this plaza would one day lie horribly empty."[79] In addition to arguing for the artist's spiritual clairvoyance, Reifenberg's terse comment demonstrated an inability to reconcile events of Germany's recent past with the picture's form and subject. In the two decades following the end of World War II, poetic description gave way to interpretations of the painting as a prescient picture as well as a historical document. In explicit and implicit ways, these interpretations were shaped by the cultural politics of Germany's emerging *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, or the "struggle to come to terms with the past."[80]

Perhaps Reifenberg's more significant reflection on *The Synagogue*'s troubling prescience came in his 1949 essay on Beckmann entitled "Work and Life" featured in a monograph on Beckmann he co-wrote with Hausenstein.[81] Reifenberg's analysis of the painting takes up ten sentences, six of which he borrowed from his 1921 essay in *Ganymed*. He wrote:

> At the time, [Beckmann] painted "The Synagogue" (1919), an impenetrable, clotted structure with carefully painted thin colors akin to the many pictures from this period that resembled stained-glass windows. There stood the red

> building with the verdigris cupola on the plaza held together by a wooden fence. The houses spaced around it stare, [while] others blink equivocally out of their windows. "Here and there a lamp burns and casts its false light into the twilight. However, one suddenly senses the devilish calm in this square. It is nearly emptied of people. Are the doors bolted shut? Why are the stores closed? What is happening here?" These questions that were posed with respect to this picture in 1921 (in the journal *Ganymed*) found an answer seventeen years later when the synagogue was burned to the ground; today only the emptiness of the plaza remains.[82]

Reifenberg's readers likely knew the event to which he alluded. The *Kristallnacht* – or Night of Broken Glass – claimed the Börneplatz synagogue as one of its many victims in the early morning hours of November 10, 1938 (Fig. 7).[83] The consequences of the violence against German Jews were particularly brutal in Frankfurt. Three days prior, Herschel Grünspan, a German-Polish Jew living in Paris and former student in Frankfurt, shot Ernst vom Rath, an official in the German embassy in Paris who also happened to be from Frankfurt.[84] Grünspan had been desperate to learn more from an uncooperative Rath about the fate of his family who were among the 2,000 Jews of Polish descent that had been recently deported to the German-Polish border.[85] Rath died of his wounds on November 9, becoming a pretext to both spontaneous and organized acts of violence against Jews, their homes, and their communities across Germany. When it was over, nearly all of Germany's synagogues were either completely destroyed by fire or damaged beyond repair, not to mention the destruction of innumerable Jewish businesses, homes, and cemeteries. At least ninety-one Jews were murdered in that forty-eight hour period and some 26,000 were arrested including countless Frankfurt Jews, 2,621 of whom were soon thereafter deported to the concentration camp in Buchenwald.[86] This reign of terror had a chilling affect on the citizens of Frankfurt, many of whom, according to eyewitness accounts of the burning of the Börneplatz synagogue, appeared immobilized by the violence against their Jewish neighbors.[87]

Figure 7, Synagogue, 1938

Through his allusions to the *Kristallnacht* in his two postwar analyses of *The Synagogue*, Reifenberg moved from a poetic description to what was, in effect, a semiotic analysis; the signifier remained the same, but the signified changed because the cultural and historical context had changed. Although he repeated elements of his 1921 ekphrasis, Reifenberg offered a new way of thinking about *The Synagogue* that emphasized its historicity as an object and as a sign. The destruction of Frankfurt's Börneplatz synagogue and its Jewish population constituted a macabre answer to the questions he believed the inscrutable painting posed in 1921. Reifenberg acknowledged that bleak reality when he concluded his 1949 analysis in this way: "…today only the emptiness of the plaza remains."[88] He thus exemplified Jauss' assertion that meaning unfolds historically in the dialogue between artwork and viewer, or to paraphrase: when we interpret a text or picture we often ask questions that it did not yet need to answer in its own time.[89] The prophetic dimension of Reifenberg's new interpretation reflected and also helped constitute a cultural reality of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* that was beginning to emerge in postwar Germany.

Figure 8, Holzinger

This preoccupation with the painting's prescience also marked Ernst Holzinger's efforts to acquire *The Synagogue* for Frankfurt's Städel Museum (Fig. 8). As Director, Holzinger had long desired *The Synagogue*. Numerous letters and memos between 1951 and 1972 attest to his determination in an often thwarted, but ultimately successful effort to acquire the painting from Herbert Kurz. A successful industrialist from Wiesbaden, Kurz bought *The Synagogue* in around 1936.[90] He loaned it to five exhibitions in the fifties and early sixties and, starting in 1951, had an arrangement with the Städel to store the picture between shows along with other works in his collection.[91] Holzinger hoped that Kurz would one day either donate or sell it to the Städel Museum. In a letter to Kurz from 1960, he described the painting as a "*Frankofurtensie*," a kind of souvenir or collector's item with special ties to Frankfurt's history.[92] Holzinger continued:

> Because of its subject, the picture is an important 'Frankofurtensie,' a memorial, if you like, to the old Frankfurt. Thus we also hope that someday, when you are able to part with it, you would like to give it to Frankfurt. I trust that we would be capable of arranging a purchase at any time.[93]

In a subsequent letter to Kurz from 1961, Holzinger contended that were *The Synagogue* to enter the Städel's collection, it would be "an eternal reminder of the burning down of the synagogue in the *Kristallnacht*."[94] As interpretations of the painting, his arguments of persuasion relied on the sense of presience that Reifenberg also attributed to *The Synagogue*.

In the coming years, Holzinger built on that assumption a disciplined and complex case for acquisition, one that understood the painting as an important historical document.

Holzinger arrived in Frankfurt before World War II at a time that *The Synagogue* appeared to anticipate and that recent scholarship has shed new and important light on.[95] In 1938, Holzinger became Director of the Städelsches Kunstinstitut after Hanns Swarzenski recommended him for the position that his father – Georg Swarzenski – was forced by the Nazis to abdicate.[96] Beginning in 1949,[97] Holzinger also presided over the Städel's Städtische Galerie, a publicly funded institution founded in 1907 by the elder Swarzenski primarily to showcase modern art.[98] Between 1936 and 1937, the Städtische Galerie saw its exemplary collection of modern art – including ten paintings by Beckmann – confiscated in the Nazi's campaign to purge German museums of what they dubbed "Degenerate Art" (*Entartete Kunst*).[99] After the war, like many other directors of German museums (including those in Cologne, Karlsruhe, Essen, and Wuppertal),[100] Holzinger began to rebuild the Städel's modern collection, placing an early emphasis on Beckmann's paintings.[101] He admired Beckmann's work and knew him personally, having visited the exiled artist in Amsterdam in April 1941.[102] Between 1951 and 1959, he acquired five of Beckmann's paintings either through restitution or purchase.[103]

Holzinger nonetheless emerged from the war as an ambivalent figure. In April 1933, a few months following Hitler's rise to power, he applied for membership to the National Socialist Party while he was a conservator at the Alte Pinakothek in Munich; but in the time it took to vet his allegiance, a moratorium on membership was announced, and Holzinger had by then become disillusioned with the Party's ideology.[104] He never became an official Party member. In 1941, however, three years into his tenure as Director of the Städel Museum, he was appointed by the "Cultural Chamber of the Reich" (*Reichskulturkammer*) in Berlin to be an "Authority for the Securing and the Utilization of Cultural Assets from Jewish Ownership for the Purposes of the Reich."[105] Between August 1941 and the end of 1943, Holzinger prepared some fifty-five appraisals of confiscated artworks that argued for their retention for sale to either German or foreign museums or private collectors.[106] On the other hand, it was in this role that he salvaged and after the war repatriated the art collection of Alfred Oppenheim, who had fled Germany for England in 1939.[107] What's more, Holzinger clandestinely stored Carl Hagemann's extensive collection of Expressionist art, saving it from confiscation by Nazi authorities.[108] The jury is still out on Holzinger's wartime actions, which are difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile.[109] And yet the evidence suggests that he acted less out of ideology than out of his deep commitment to art. To be sure, his postwar

correspondence regarding *The Synagogue* suggests a more unequivocal figure, whose discretion, persistence and shrewd aesthetic judgment hastened that painting's acquisition.

Holzinger quietly began fund raising for *The Synagogue* in 1963 when he appealed for a special grant from Frankfurt's Department of Science, Art, and Education (*Amt für Wissenschaft, Kunst und Volksbildung*). In a letter to City Councilman (*Stadtrat*) Karl vom Rath, Holzinger offered an explicit appeal: "The extraordinary historical importance of the painting for Frankfurt is unquestionable. Its high artistic status has been splendidly and definitively proven over the years and more recently in the [Städtische] Galerie."[110] The emphasis he consistently placed on the painting's historical value was throughout supported by a tacit affirmation of the painting's singular formal qualities. A pupil of the Swiss art historian and pioneer of formal analysis Heinrich Wölfflin, Holzinger wrote his 1927 dissertation at the Ludwig-Maximilian University in Munich on an early period of Albrecht Dürer's woodcut production. In pictures from this period, Holzinger identified the artist's precocious ability to harmonize corporeal forms within flat spatial planes.[111] *The Synagogue*'s taut integration of both these qualities in a single picture – for example, the witty connection between the cupola's tumescent drum and its pinnacle that just scrapes the top of the flat picture plane – must have appealed to Holzinger. For example, the cupola's drum is tipped back slightly and strapped in by its pinnacle set parallel to the picture plane. Holzinger later aptly identified the onion dome as the painting's "key form" (*Schlüsselfigur*).[112]

But if Holzinger ever composed a Wölfflinian argument for *The Synagogue*'s acquisition, it is not contained in his papers in the Städel Archive. Rather, when it came to building his case, he underlined the painting's subject matter rather than its formal properties, even though it was precisely the ways in which Beckmann rendered the Börneplatz synagogue that activated its historical associations. The painting's subject matter and the uncanny manner in which it was rendered uniquely qualified it for Frankfurt, whose diverse Jewish population and culture were once as vital as their annihilation under Hitler was devastating. Were it to assume its proper place in a public collection, Holzinger argued, *The Synagogue* would be a powerful testament to and reminder of that loss. In this regard, Holzinger was even more explicit in his letter to Rath from June 14, 1963.

> No other artist has created such effective, artistic documents of this ominous historical period than Beckmann. The Synagogue is one such document. The building was set afire and destroyed in the Kristallnacht – it was the main synagogue of the Israelite community. One suspects that as he painted the picture, Beckmann foresaw this threatening and impending destruction.[113]

This was an especially timely, even shrewd argument as evident in a newspaper article tucked into Holzinger's correspondence regarding *The Synagogue*. Just two days before he wrote this letter in June 1963, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*ran a full-page article that consisted of excerpts from newly released and collected documents from the Nazi period pertaining to the oppression of Jews in Frankfurt.[114] According to the newspaper's editor, this powerful new collection "dispense[d] with explication and allow[ed] the documents to speak for themselves. They were difficult to obtain."[115] Likewise Holzinger avoided interpreting *The Synagogue* solely for its artistic merits, viewing it instead as a historical document and perhaps as a vehicle for collective *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*.

Plans for a possible sale began in earnest sometime after Christmas 1962, when Kurz finally expressed his readiness to sell the painting to the Städel.[116] Negotiations with Kurz peaked in the fall of 1963 and early winter months of 1964. Having succeeded in persuading Rath, Holzinger also required the cooperation of other city officials since the acquisition would come through the Städtische Galerie. And while Kurz did not name a price, Holzinger assumed he wanted at least 200,000 DM (then roughly $50,400) for the painting, based on its then current insurance value approved by Kurz the previous year.[117] This formidable price tag, which exceeded the Galerie's annual acquisition budget, required Holzinger to ask the city's Cultural Committee (*Kulturausschuss*) for a special allowance that was neither easily nor quickly approved.[118] These protracted deliberations irritated Kurz, who was known for being "a somewhat difficult man."[119] Between September and December 1963, Kurz retracted, reinstated, and retracted his offer again. Holzinger responded on December 2 to Kurz's decision as "a hard blow," its effect "catastrophic."[120] In the meantime, funding was at last approved for the painting's acquisition on January 13, 1964, but Kurz remained obstinate: "the painting is not for sale and I expect its immediate return. Money for this painting will not be accepted."[121] Holzinger conceded defeat on January 21 in a letter that was by turns angry and, in its conclusion, inconsolable.

> How could your denial not hit me hard, deeply and personally, but also in my professional duties and in my relationship to the city of Frankfurt? How should I be able to take this lightly? The picture belongs to no one more than Frankfurt, as Beckmann would have wished; I therefore wanted it more than any other for Frankfurt and not out of ambition. Now it must leave Frankfurt again under such extremely sad and supremely depressing circumstances.[122]

Fearing a possible sale of *The Synagogue*to MoMA, Holzinger made a powerful, but futile last-ditch effort to keep the painting in Germany by applying for its protection under a law against the emigration of German cultural patrimony.[123] His letter to the Hessian Cultural Minister (*Hessischen Kultusminister*) is a summary of all the arguments he had theretofore marshaled in support of the acquisition. He wrote:

> The main synagogue in Frankfurt was burned down on November 9, 1938. It is the only German synagogue that in modern times has been immortalized in a picture by a great German artist, and in such an undeniably grand manner. Immediately after the picture was created in a most vital period, Benno Reifenberg commented on it in the Frankfurter Zeitung; [he says] it gives the impression that a catastrophe was imminent. It came to pass – the synagogue was burned down. Beckmann had already needed to leave Germany. There can be no doubt that the painting is a Frankofurtensie of the highest order. It is equally legitimate to characterize the picture as a national treasure because it belongs to German history, because it testifies to the foreboding power of a great spirit vis-à- vis the future, because it thus becomes a historical document, and because it was created by one of the most significant German painters of the twentieth century.[124]

Citing, among other reasons, a strict interpretation of the law and a reluctance to protect twentieth-century artworks, the presiding judge denied Holzinger's request.[125]

Holzinger's rejoinder to Kurz and his appeal to the Hessian Cultural Minister are apparent enough. But the motivation behind them can only ever be surmised, however tempting it is to read them as expressions of Holzinger's failed attempt at expiation for his, then secret, wartime transgressions. Whether he sought this sort of redemption we cannot know, but the question of redemption nonetheless looms in the background of this particular episode in *The Synagogue*'s reception history. It creates a new condition for interpretation that assumes the profundity of historical experience. In this way, Holzinger made the not uncommon assumption that art has the power to redeem, "to master the presumed raw material of experience."[126] But, as Leo Bersani argues, such an assumption mollifies historical experience. Indeed, *The Synagogue* seemed to *activate* historical experience in the analyses of its interlocutors in the 1960s. In this postwar period, the painting's subject matter appeared to anticipate the Holocaust's devastation and its mute and prescient forms offered no reassurance; the painting denied the legibility and unity demanded by redemption. For Holzinger as well as Reifenberg, it offered not an escape from but a constant and necessary reminder of the war.

Art and Politics (1972)

Paradoxically the matter of *The Synagogue*'s prophetic quality and the role it was obliged to perform in both public and private discussions of Germany under the Third Reich waned as the possibility of a successful acquisition by the Städel increased in the early seventies. This was in spite, or perhaps because of, the 1967 publication and widespread success of *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior*, co-authored by the Frankfurt-based psychologists Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich.[127] *The Inability to Mourn*offered the German public a socio-psychological diagnosis of its denial of the immediate past, an argument that resonated among West German intellectuals as well as adherents of the 1968 protest movements, many of whom were born or came of age after the war.[128] By the early seventies, new advocates for *The Synagogue* took over from Holzinger. In the renewed efforts to acquire the painting for the Städel Museum, these advocates needed *The Synagogue* to address Frankfurt's cultural politics by appealing to a number of different and not always compatible audiences.

With Herbert Kurz's death in June 1967, acquisition negotiations were re-opened.[129] In February 1970, Kurz's son gave Holzinger the option to purchase the painting for 750.000DM (then roughly $207,000), an amount based on an offer his mother had received from an American dealer.[130] Perhaps out of deference to her late husband's original commitment to sell the painting to the Städel, Annemarie Kurz agreed to give Holzinger a second chance. Blanched by the new price tag and reluctant to undertake singlehandedly the acquisition again, Holzinger recognized that a new strategy was required. He enlisted several individuals in this renewed effort, chief among them was Hilmar Hoffmann, Frankfurt's newly appointed City Councilor of Cultural Affairs (*Kulturdezernent*) (Fig.9). The result was a campaign for the acquisition of *The Synagogue* – the so-called *Aktion Synagoge* – one modeled on the Basel Kunstmuseum's successful public fundraising campaign in 1967 to purchase two paintings by Picasso.[131] Like the organizers of this *Picasso Aktion*, Hoffmann and his team faced the daunting task of raising what, to some, was a nearly insurmountable figure. Representing the annual appropriation budget for acquisitions in 1971, 250.000DM were recommended early on from the city's Cultural Committee (*Kulturausschuss*) in charge of funding for the Städtische Galerie, but the remaining 500.000DM would have to be raised through various kinds of donations.[132]

Figure 9, Hoffman

It was not Holzinger, but Hoffmann who largely conceived of, managed, and executed this ambitious plan, which was successfully realized in 1972. In contrast to Holzinger's discrete and relatively uncoordinated negotiations of 1963-64, the *Aktion Synagoge* was a populist and highly disciplined public campaign.[133] Hoffmann was at the time in his mid-forties and had come to Frankfurt with a background in theater and film as well as public service.[134] A member of the liberal SPD, the then ruling party in Frankfurt, he possessed the energy, experience, and political acumen necessary to realize this ambitious undertaking. Hoffmann's mantra "Culture for All" (*Kultur für Alle*) encapsulated his belief in the essential role of culture in a democratic society and in his commitment to bringing art to the people through meaningful dialogue across society as a whole.[135]

The *Aktion Synagoge* thus put Hoffmann's theories into practice, prompting one journalist to refer to the enterprise as so much "art propaganda" (*Kunstpropaganda*).[136] The two main events of the *Aktion* occurred in the early summer of 1972. Hoffmann and his team orchestrated a series of public happenings designed to raise money and call attention to their cause. They took place on the Hauptwache, a large plaza and site of the baroque guardhouse at the center of Frankfurt, which was and remains one of the city's most trafficked plazas for pedestrians and subway commuters alike. It provided Hoffmann's populist agenda with a dynamic public forum (Fig.10). For three Saturdays in June and the first in July, local politicians and celebrities took turns on the Hauptwache to help persuade the public to support the campaign. And on the *Aktion*'s final Saturday, three British prog-rock bands –

Warm Dust, Emergency, and Raw Material – were slated to serenade the audience on the Hauptwache.[137]

Figure 10, "Aktion Synagogue," Hauptwache Postcard

On the other side of the river from June 10 through July 9, the Städel Museum hosted an exhibition that placed *The Synagogue* in the context of Beckmann's career and Frankfurt history (Fig.11). Organized by Christian Lenz and Margret Stuffmann, two young art historians and curatorial assistants at the Städel, this small but concentrated exhibition was arranged in a semicircle on temporary walls.[138] *The Synagogue* was installed alone on a wall in the middle of the room, and according to one journalist, in a manner that was "altar-like, reminiscent of Raphael's Sistine Madonna in Dresden and Leonardo's Mona Lisa in Paris."[139] Thus the painting's authenticity and ritual function, however secularized, remained in tact. Meanwhile posters featuring a color reproduction of *The Synagogue* behaved in ways theorized by Walter Benjamin. These posters launched the painting into "situations which the original itself [could not] attain" and ostensibly liberated "the work of art from its parasitic subservience to ritual."[140]

Figure 11, Synagogue Exhibition 1972

Instrumental to the political objective of this two-part *Aktion* was the production and sale of a poster for 10DM (or about $3.20) (Fig.12).

Figure 12, Aktion Poster

Although this part of the fund drive may have appeared naïve (it ultimately raised a mere 25.000DM), its more powerful function could not be measured in Deutsche Marks. One city official described it as "the vehicle of the *Aktion*."[141] The poster featured a color reproduction of *The Synagogue* with a caption that indicated where the painting could be seen during the *Aktion*: "The painting is on view in a special exhibition at the Städel Museum from June 10 to July 7, 1972."[142] Below the caption, the following text exhorted:

> Citizens of Frankfurt!
>
> In 1919, Max Beckmann painted the synagogue on the former Börneplatz in Frankfurt's Israelite community. It was burned to the ground by the National Socialists in the 1938 "Kristallnacht."
>
> For Frankfurt, this is the most important Beckmann-painting. Currently in a private collection, it must stay in Frankfurt; it belongs to all its citizens. Beckmann's "Synagogue" is a unique document:
>
> - of a historic district in Frankfurt
> - of the hardship after World War I

- of a foreshadowing of the events that claimed millions as horrible victims

- of Max Beckmann's work in this city until 1933 when, as a "degenerate" artist, he was chased out by the National Socialists.

Secure this picture as a document of your history!

Buy this poster and make possible the purchase of the painting.

City of Frankfurt am Main – Departmental Head of Culture

Donation Account 615, Postal Savings Bank, Frankfurt am Main "Aktion Synagogue"[143]

The poster was ubiquitous in Frankfurt that summer. For the duration of the *Aktion*, it was available for purchase not only on the Hauptwache and at the exhibition in the Städel, but also in other museums, galleries, libraries, and bookstores in Frankfurt. More than its fundraising ability, the poster's utility lay in its capacity to stimulate public debate. This was essential to Hoffmann's mantra of "Culture for All." Following the *Aktion*, he even claimed that the opportunity to see the original at the Städel Museum was available only to an elite few.[144] In one sense, the painting of *The Synagogue*– the centerpiece of the Städel's special exhibition – could not alone condition what Benjamin referred to as a "simultaneously collective experience."[145] It was the poster that helped the painting reach a wider audience by placing its technologically reproduced surrogate in new contexts, "on advertising columns, in shop windows, in subway stations, [and] in various public institutions."[146] But the poster's advantage over the painting did not, as Benjamin speculated, educe an entirely progressive response.

Through the poster, *The Synagogue* entered the political discourse in Frankfurt and was reported on and debated by many journalists in the media.[147] The painting's reproduction in the upper half of the poster constituted a rhetorical argument for *The Synagogue*'s costly acquisition, one that was consistent with its ritual function in the museum. That the poster was designed so that the reproduction and the exhibition-related caption could be shorn from the text suggests the importance of the painting's desired ritual function.[148] But it was the exhortative text that clarified the painting's desired political function. An early draft reveals language that explicitly linked style and content: "Max Beckmann's picture is realistic, it is political."[149] The final text, drafted largely by Lenz in the early months of 1972, shared with its precursor a conciliatory recourse to the past.[150] Eduard Beaucamp, an art critic writing for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* at the time, upbraided Hoffmann and his team for

their strategy of manipulating the public. The *Aktion* exposed "the duplicity and hypocrisy of overt cultural propaganda (*Kulturpropaganda*)" by cynically appealing to the public's guilty conscience.[151] Even before the *Aktion*took place, another journalist expressed skepticism over the perceived political message of the proposed acquisition, which was alleged "to be an act of reparation" but was more like "a small band-aid on a bad conscience."[152] Perhaps in anticipation of more such skepticism, Hoffmann enlisted none other than Alexander Mitscherlich to help correct the public's inability to mourn by purchasing a poster.[153] Jewish voices in the media received this message of reconciliation favorably.[154] Some Beckmann scholars took it a step further by arguing that the acquisition could also atone for the Nazi's misdeeds against Beckmann, namely driving him into exile in 1937 and confiscating his pictures from public collections.[155] Nonetheless, the skeptics, who objected neither to the painting per se nor to the political argument as such, questioned the decision to couple so charged an image and topic with so formidable a sum.

On Monday, June 10 following the first Saturday of the *Aktion*, journalists from local newspapers reported a range of responses from the public, who encountered an unlikely pair alongside Hoffmann selling posters on the Hauptwache (see Fig.9). Hermann Josef Abs, the Honorary Chairman of Germany's Deutsche Bank and also Chairman of the Städel Administration, stood alongside Frankfurt's newly sworn-in socialist Mayor Rudi Arndt. The alliance underscored the financial and political realities and contradictions of the *Aktion* that was not lost on some passers-by. They questioned how their cash-strapped city could afford to pony up for such an expensive painting when schools and hospitals were underfunded.[156] A commentator on a local radio program added that the money raised would be better spent on artworks by living artists.[157] Still others wondered whether the asking price was an exaggeration of the painting's true value, a product of art speculators that included Kurz's heirs as well as their art dealer advisors.[158]

The *Aktion*'s political spectacle was dramatized further by the old covered wagon that served as the poster's point of sale and discussion on the Hauptwache (Fig.13). Commandeered from a local production of Bertolt Brecht's 1939 anti-war play *Mother Courage and Her Children*, the wagon had its original function renewed in this piece of contemporary epic theatre. Its anachronistic presence on the Hauptwache generated what Brecht might have referred to as a "distancing effect" (*Verfremdungseffekt*) that attracted some onlookers and incited others, who were outraged by the painting's cost. After the *Aktion*, Lenz confirmed in his article for the local Frankfurt *Kunstzeitung* that "in general, the price caused quite a stir."[159] For his part, Brecht (by way of Benjamin) believed that an artwork's past, indeed its ontological necessity, was erased by its market value because that value transformed the work of art into a commodity.[160] Hoffmann wanted and needed it both ways. He believed it to be a

work of art that would – through reproduction – galvanize and inspire Frankfurt's citizens. At the same time, however, his efforts assumed *The Synagogue* to be a commodity worthy of potential donors and his own herculean efforts. While encouraging the populist rhetoric of the *Aktion*, he privately and actively sought the financial support of Frankfurt's most affluent and prominent citizens through a protracted behind-the-scenes letter-writing campaign. A draft of one such form letter revealed Hoffmann's definition of the painting as "a meaningful document of Frankfurt history and, in addition, an excellent artistic example of German Expressionism for the city's art collection."[161] This exercise in cultural *Realpolitik* paid off on September 20 when Hoffmann announced that Jürgen Ponto, Chairman of the Frankfurt-based Dresdner Bank, had written a check for 100.000DM, which brought the total donations plus city funding to 750.000DM.[162] This news arrived too late for Holzinger, who died suddenly on September 8 while on vacation in Switzerland.[163] On October 18, 1972 *The Synagogue* entered the Städel's permanent collection.[164]

Figure 13, Klemm

In his 2003 memoir, Hoffmann reflected on the events of 1972. He wrote: "…above all [the *Aktion Synagoge*] was a four-week public discussion of the picture's visionary content…and of the harmful relationship between art and its market."[165] It is difficult to gauge the veracity of the former given the emphasis in the press on the latter. The leading advocates for *The Synagogue*and its acquisition were powerful municipal and corporate interests in dialogue with a public that was generally sympathetic to the painting, but deeply skeptical of its asking price mingled with the arguments made on its behalf. The previously ascendant qualities of the picture's poetry and its prescience were either irrelevant or taken for granted in this civic debate. Given the public's horizon of expectations in a political climate that demanded accountability from and integrity in its leaders, the painting itself was marginalized. Ironically it was the poster that ultimately realized the primary objective of the *Aktion*, whereas, and not without irony, *The Synagogue* became an almost phantom presence.

Formalist and Pedagogical Uses (1972-present)

In the months and years following the *Aktion*, *The Synagogue* saw its political role in the public arena transformed to support an art historical argument and speak to new and younger audiences. Its acquisition by the Städel hastened a return to the object that stressed its authenticity compromised in the poster sale. Shifts in the viewer's mode of perception privileged the painting's morphological qualities and demanded a direct encounter with the original work of art. In this last and most recent episode in *The Synagogue*'s reception history, three individuals – an art historian and two museum educators – repositioned the painting's agency to generate new meanings.

Christian Lenz emerged from the *Aktion* wearing two hats. As an art historian, he maintained his scholarly commitment to *The Synagogue*. In 1973, he published a twenty-one-page essay entitled "Max Beckmanns »Synagoge«" in the *Städel Jahrbuch*.[166] At the same time, he became an advocate for art education reform based on his experience in the *Aktion* when he shared his insights in the Frankfurt *Kunstzeitung* article published in the fall of 1972. The 1973 essay set a high bar for scholarly, single-picture analyses of Beckmann's oeuvre, and was divided into four distinct parts – formal and iconographic analysis, urban and religious themes, political dimensions, and conclusion. It was also quite different from the journalistic tone and substance of his much shorter article in the *Kunstzeitung*. For the *Städel Jahrbuch* he wrote in an academic style and offered an analysis of the painting that understood its formal qualities as its primary evidence. In order to contextualize the puzzling and mysterious effect of the painting's form, Lenz relied on the "evidence (pictures, written statements) of the painter and his contemporaries."[167] And while he appreciated the contemporary tendency to read the painting prophetically, he dismissed such anachronistic interpretations as unscientific.[168] At its core, Lenz's analysis of *The Synagogue* was formalist. In the essay's final pages he wrote: "From this examination it appears that the particular significance of the picture cannot precede from but emerges first in form."[169] Like Holzinger before him,[170] Lenz stressed the high quality of the picture and ranked it among masterworks by Picasso and Klee.[171]

By contrast, his *Kunstzeitung* article was considerably more engaged with contemporary politics and society. Though pleased that the *Aktion* achieved its ultimate goal, Lenz was less upbeat than Hoffmann, perhaps because he was more attuned to the anemic public response to the exhibition and corresponding lectures.[172] Lenz asked: "Why is it that the donations were so arduously solicited, that the lectures and the exhibition were so poorly attended, and that so few posters were purchased?"[173] Such deficiencies, he concluded, were symptomatic of the public's poor visual literacy and indifference to art "caused by an inadequate educational system and inadequate art history."[174] In short, Lenz blamed the schools and its teachers for

a public of philistines. He could have also pointed to the irony of the poster's effectiveness. On the one hand, it raised the *Aktion*'s profile by generating public and media discussions, which arguably attracted the most generous donors. On the other hand, the poster appeared to have eroded the painting's singularity, its aestheic power and its vital historical testimony spelled out in the accompanying text. What the *Aktion* demonstrated was that the public and even private debates were not about the painting at all, but rather the cultural politics of the day. Lenz helped redirect the public discourse back to the painting. In his *Kunstzeitung*article, he exhorted educators "to develop the analogic thinking" skills of their students through new arts education initiatives.[175] This informal mandate was taken up at the Städel in decades to come, specifically in conjunction with *The Synagogue*.

In early November 1988 to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the *Kristallnacht*, the Städel opened a small but fine exhibition with an allusive subtitle: *»Die Synagoge« von Max Beckmann: Wirklichkeit und Sinnbild*, or *Reality and Symbol*. It was installed in a small room off of the main permanent collection gallery that housed Expressionist paintings and featured *The Synagogue* flanked by a selection of Beckmann's works on paper as well as didactic texts and archival photographs of the Börneplatz synagogue *in situ*.[176] This pedagogical exhibition was the first of its kind at the museum and was conceived of and curated by the Städel's Head of Education at the time, Susanne Kujer.[177] Although nominally commemorative, the exhibition aimed to "move into the viewer's field of vision a variety of central themes in the analysis of the picture."[178] Iconography served as a foundational method of analysis with the lengthiest chapter in the exhibition catalogue devoted to deciphering the following signs in the painting's "symbolic language" (*Symbolsprache*): cat, funnel, advertising column, cupola, cross, triangle/Star of David, moon, glass sphere, and balloon.[179] Each sign here was translated with respect to the thing it denoted in the real world as well as its symbolic meaning within the painting, thus establishing the exhibition's titular link between reality and symbol. For example, the black-and-white cat is identified as Titti (Ugi and Fridel Battenberg's house cat) and characterized as a "mysterious idol, a sphinx – knowing and unmoved."[180] Kujer promised: "An interpretation is reached through Beckmann's characteristic mode of representation and symbolic language with the help of the iconographic method."[181]

But the exhibition offered students at a variety of levels, most of whom were born after the 1972 *Aktion*, something more than an interpretive exercise. Essential to the exhibition's objective was the viewer's sustained observation of the original work of art. The first impression was especially important, because "the representation of the painting's motif does not comply with our viewing habits."[182] This immediate disconnect, one might say alienation, awakened in the viewer a critical awareness of a postmodern condition. By locating "the instructional content in the student's horizon of experience,"[183] Kujer gave the young

viewer permission to integrate into her analysis of the painting her growing knowledge of art and, perhaps more importantly, visual culture. Kujer argued that *The Synagogue* activated "the broadening and differentiation of [the student's] perception and knowledge" and "the development of an ability to think critically *vis-à-vis* the environment and the appearances of visual culture including art itself…"[184] This heuristic method was, in a way, consistent with Beckmann's rules of engagement. Referring to his *Departure* triptych in February 1938, he insisted that in order for viewers to arrive at an understanding of the painting, they must do so through "their own inner collaboration… (…) It can speak only to people who consciously or unconsciously carry within them the same metaphysical code."[185]

In other words, viewers must be open to what the picture wants by trusting what they want from it in return. This rapport requires practice and awareness. It also assumes a reconciliation of the personal and universal, the individual and collective. And while Beckmann could not have anticipated his future viewer's changing modes of experience and perception, his insistence on this sort of self-conscious dialogue between an individual viewer and an original work of art lends itself to some contemporary viewing practices.

In 2009 one of the Education pages on the Städel Museum's website provided a visualization of how *The Synagogue* has continued to foster such a dialogue (Fig.14). The photograph showed five high school-aged students standing before the painting installed in the museum's permanent collection galleries.

Figure 14, Staedel Screenshot, 2009

In the center middleground and seen from behind, a student vigorously gestures at the painting, her right hand a blur. She wears a black t-shirt with small white letters that spell out "Städel Museum," signaling her role as student docent, while the others are shown variously engaged with the discussion. A young man on the left appears mid-sentence and a young woman on the far right listens attentively while two female viewers, also on the left, appear engaged in their own casual conversation. According to the text to the right of the photograph: "Students serve up Art" (*Studenten servieren Kunst*). In word and image,

it constituted an advertisement for a program at the Städel entitled *Studentenfutter*. Literally "fodder for students," *Studentenfutter*is slang for gorp or trail mix, but in this context implied that looking at and discussing art provides educational nourishment. Every third Thursday of the month students and young professionals were invited to engage in an informal dialogue about a specific artwork or theme in the museum's collection moderated by a pair of art students: "pose any question, take contrary positions, learn something new, and initiate conversation."[186] The jocular informality of the photographed encounter with the painting, in tandem with the colloquial tone and expressions of the text, stands in marked contrast to the sobriety of earlier receptions of *The Synagogue*.

This approach, a sort of participatory history of art in step with recent trends in contemporary art, was one of several strategies that Chantal Eschenfelder as Head of Education at the Städel Musem devised to engage with the public, especially younger audiences. Following Kujer's example, Eschenfelder foregrounded *The Synagogue* in these efforts. According to Eschenfelder, the painting's historical dimensions played a role among many in the kinds of informal discussions visualized in the website photograph.[187] From a pedagogical perspective, encounters with the painting were designed to be loose and open-ended insofar as the institution neither expected nor enforced an official interpretation.[188] The student docents were encouraged to "activate the viewer's own perception," which often began with a description of *The Synagogue*'s "diagonal streets, distorted perspective, threatening atmosphere, as well as its palette."[189] These elements thus became facts in the mind of the viewer, facts that assumed a greater significance because they were self-generated and not imparted by an expert.[190] In a way, this interpretive strategy puts the viewer in the position of asking herself what W.J.T. Mitchell proposes in one of the epigraphs to this essay, that is not only to ask what claim *The Synagogue*makes upon her, but also what it is that she wants from the picture.[191] In the case of *The Synagogue*, this can only assume the ontological necessity and historicity of the original artwork, for which there can be no substitute.

By way of conclusion, I would like to return here to Lenz's exemplary essay on *The Synagogue* from 1973, to a particular passage toward the end of that text. He wrote:

> As a result of observation, the particular meaning [of *The Synagogue*] *cannot precede the process of its creation, but rather emerges first in that process*. It is already apparent that the things in the picture cannot be verbalized through taught historical and art-historical references. In this way, then, the painting does not reflect private, political, or religious affairs. These affairs are not pictorial and cannot therefore be reflected. However the painting cannot simply be determined through itself.

> Instead, Max Beckmann created out of his experiences and with his imagination something that amounts to a new position. [192]

That Lenz made no mention of Beckmann's critics, of Holzinger, of Hoffmann and the 1972 *Aktion* is arguably not surprising. These historical actors and what they required of *The Synagogue*were ultimately anathema to his understanding of Beckmann and this intriguing but vague "new position" he attributed to the artist. Lenz maintained that anyone could have painted a picture of this Frankfurt synagogue that would have been "historically interesting" to, for example, historians of architecture or of Jewish history; but, he continued, it was Beckmann's unique "mode of representation" that rendered such speculation moot. [193]

He seems to suggest that the painting's "particular meaning" may only be earned in the process of observation that, in a sense, reproduces the painting's creation. It amounts to a tantalizing transaction that is conditioned by a deep reverence for the artist and the formal qualities of *The Synagogue* itself.

My investment, however, in this reception history has been to claim for *The Synagogue* a *radical* authenticity that obviates the need for the sort of interpretive mastery that Lenz seems to endorse in his essay. By radical authenticity I mean, *pace* Benjamin, something more than an artwork from which a copy is technologically generated. Far from being compromised in the 1972 poster sale, the historical testimony contained within and encouraged by *The Synagogue* has supported new ritual functions that rest on the singularity of Beckmann's painting in time and space *as well as* on its formal properties. Through its logical yet skewed perspective, its muted yet colorful palette, its harmonious yet dissonant composition, *The Synagogue* constantly renews itself in the social spaces it activates. This history began in the mind of the artist, who experienced Frankfurt and its diverse Jewish community anew in his revisioning of the Börneplatz. Through their poetic descriptions of *The Synagogue* that alluded to the contemporary trauma of post-WWI Frankfurt, Beckmann's critics aired real social anxieties in the rarefied context of contemporary art criticism. After World War II, *The Synagogue* became important for what it signified, grim historical realities augured by its prescient forms and sensibility as acknowledged by an art critic and a museum director. But in the years following 1968, *The Synagogue*'s ritual and political potential became clear as city officials utilized the painting to stimulate public debate about the role of art in society and the relationship between art and its market. More recently, two museum educators have created forums permitting the painting's formal attributes and historical textures to work on the viewer simultaneously. "The uniqueness of the work of art," Walter Benjamin claimed, "is identical to its embeddedness in the context of tradition. Of course, this tradition itself is

thoroughly alive and extremely changeable."[194] In mapping the social spaces activated by this strange picture over the past ninety years, I have identified viewers whose varied encounters with Beckmann's painting yield larger insights about what it is we want from pictures. In the case of *The Synagogue*, I believe that desire comes close to grace. According to Lenz: "Artworks are witnesses to the artist's conflict with the world."[195] The same might be said of the viewer.

CODA

My initial encounter with *The Synagogue* was in February 2001, when I embarked on my first study of the painting for a graduate seminar in art history. In the months prior to and following September 11 of that year, I kept a color reproduction of the painting taped to the wall of my home office in Brooklyn. During that period, my understanding of the picture deepened in ways I do not yet fully understand. In one way, this image of a city contracting in the wake of an un(fore)seen, but palpable trauma approximated my experience of a city that was at once familiar and unfamiliar, reassuring and discomfiting.

NOTES

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1. Quoted in Peter Selz, *Max Beckmann* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1964), 55.

2. Reinhard Spieler, *Max Beckmann (1884-1950): The Path to Myth*, trans. Charity Scott Stokes (Cologne: Taschen, 2002), 106, 108.

3. "Es kann nur zu Menschen sprechen, die bewußt oder unbewußt ungefähr den gleichen metaphysischen Code in sich tragen. (…) Festzustellen ist nur, das »Die Abfahrt« kein Tendenzstück ist und sich wohl auf alle Zeiten an wenden läßt." Beckmann to Curt Valentin, Amsterdam (?), February 11, 1938. In Beckmann, *Briefe Band III, 1937-1950*, eds. Klaus Gallwitz, Uwe M. Schneede, and Stephan von Wiese (Munich: Piper, 1996), III: 29.

4. Erwin Panofsky, "Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art," in *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), 26. Panofsky first published his essay definition of iconography in 1939 and lightly revised it in 1955. The revised version employs more specific language around the concept of iconology.

5. See Clifford Amyx, "Max Beckmann: The Iconography of the Triptychs," *Kenyon Review* 13 (1951): 613-623. In a conference paper entitled "Interpreting Beckmann," Charles W. Haxthausen offered an important cautionary tale in his brief analysis of Amyx's essay. Paper presented at the *Beckmann Reconsidered* symposium hosted by the Tate Modern, London, March 2003. See also Robert Storr's assessment of "the game of semiotic hide-and-seek" prevalent in Beckmann studies in his essay on "The Beckmann Effect," in *Max Beckmann*, ed. Sean Rainbird, exh. catalogue (London: Tate Publishing, 2003), 12. More recently, Rose-Carol Washton Long and Maria Makela acknowledged this iconographic siren song in the Introduction to their edited anthology *Of 'Truths Impossible to Put in Words': Max Beckmann Contextualized* (Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang, 2008), 25-26.

6. Panofsky, "Iconography and Iconology," 32, 30.

7. Panofsky's notion of symbolic form was indebted to the work of Ernst Cassirer, particularly his three-volume tome entitled *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*. For more on Cassirer's influence on Panofsky, see Keith Moxey, "Panofsky's Concept of 'Iconology' and the Problem of Interpretation in the History of Art," *New Literary History*, Vol.17, No.2 (Winter 1986): 268-269, and Michael Ann Holly, *Panofsky and the Foundations of Art History* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984), 114-157.

8. Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, trans. Christopher Wood (New York: Zone Books, 1997), 40-41.

9. Moxey, "Panofsky's Concept of 'Iconology'," 268.

10. Joel Synder, review of *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, *The Art Bulletin* 77, no.2 (June 1995): 340.

11. Paul de Man's discussion of allegory and symbol is especially instructive here. See de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," in *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), 187-208.

12. This expression was coined by Hans Robert Jauss, the German literary scholar and pioneer of Reception Theory in the late 1960s. See Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1982), passim.

13. Although W.J.T. Mitchell does not offer a method per se, his argument about relationality is apposite here: "The point…is not to install a personification of the work of art as the master term but to put our relation to the work into question, to make the *relationality* of image and beholder the field of investigation. The idea is to make pictures less scrutable, less transparent; also to turn analysis of pictures toward questions of process, affect, and to put in question the spectator position: what does the picture want from me or from "us" or from "them" or from whomever?" W.J.T. Mitchell, *What do Pictures Want?: The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 49. For other examples of an artwork's reception history, see Cynthia Saltzman, *Portrait of Dr. Gachet: The Story of a van Gogh Masterpiece* (New York: Viking, 1998) and also Andrée Hayum, "Afterlife of a Monument," in *The Isenheim Altarpiece: God's Medicine and the Painter's Vision* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 118-49.

14. I wish to thank my second anonymous reader for asking me to address this decision as well as 1) to countenance what a mistaken account might look like and 2) to demonstrate the relevance of my reception history of *The Synagogue* over other

reception histories. A mistaken account might well amount to no account at all or, indeed, to all accounts. To that end, I chose the indefinite article "a" – over the definite article "the" – for the essay's title to signal my recognition that my reception history is one of potentially many. I readily acknowledge that I made decisions within each episode regarding what specific accounts to include and what to leave out, and I made those decisions based on my methodological framework. My objective is to offer a reception history of *The Synagogue* as opposed to a chronicle of its reception. Both approaches have heuristic value, but I chose the former because it afforded an opportunity to address what I see as some methodological limitations and opportunities in the historiography of Beckmann's oeuvre.

15. Specific documents and their locations are indicated throughout, but the majority of the unpublished primary sources I relied on for this research can be found in the Städel Museum Archive in Frankfurt, the Institut für Stadtgeschichte in Frankfurt, and the Max Beckmann Archive in Munich. Elsewhere I have relied on secondary sources (and even a tertiary source) to provide either historical context or theoretical frameworks for each episode of the reception history.

16. Reflecting on the consequences of the technological reproducibility of art, Walter Benjamin had this to say about the artwork's "highly sensitive core": "The authenticity of a thing is the quintessence of all that is transmissible in it from its origin on, ranging from its physical duration to the historical testimony relating to it." In Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," (1936, second version) in *Selected Writings: Volume 3, 1935-1938*, eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, trans. Edmund Jephcott, Howard Eiland, and others (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 103.

17. Reinhard Piper, his guest, confirmed the exact date – September 22, 1919 – in an unpublished, typed manuscript entitled "Besuch bei Max Beckmann in Frankfurt am Main im Atelier Schweizerstrasse 3," 3, Max Beckmann Archive, Munich. Much of the content of this manuscript eventually made it into the second half of Piper's memoir that was reprinted – together with the first half – fourteen years later. See "Durch Vier Jahrzehnte mit Max Beckmann" in Piper, *Nachmittag: Erinnerungen eines Verlegers* (Munich: R. Piper & Co. Verlag, 1950), 11-53, and Piper, *Mein Leben als Verleger: Vormittag, Nachmittag* (Munich: R. Piper & Co. Verlag, 1964), 315-349.

18. On Beckmann and World War I, see Barbara C. Buenger, "Max Beckmann in the First World War," in *The Ideological Crisis of Expressionism: The Literary and Artistic War Colony in Belgium 1914-1918*, eds. Rainer Rumold and O.K. Werckmeister (Columbia, South Carolina: Camden House, Inc., 1990), 236-269 and Charles W. Haxthausen, "Beckmann and the First World War," in *Max Beckmann: Retrospective*, eds. Carla Schulz-Hoffmann and Judith C. Weiss, exh. catalogue (St. Louis and Munich: The Saint Louis Art Museum and Prestel-Verlag, 1984), 69-80.

19. Stephan von Wiese recounts a 1968 exchange with Erich Heckel in which Heckel confirms this reason for Beckmann's transfer to Frankfurt. See Wiese, *Max Beckmanns zeichnerisches Werk, 1903-1925* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1978), 172n126. Also, according to Barbara Buenger, Beckmann continued in his capacity as medical officer until 1917. See Beckmann, *Self-Portrait in Words: Collected Writings and Statements, 1903-1950*, ed. and annotated, Barbara Copeland Buenger (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 178.

20. For more on Piper's friendship with Beckmann as well as other artists and writers, see Christian Lenz, *Max Beckmann: Briefe an Reinhard Piper*, exh. catalogue (Munich: Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, 1994) and Reinhard Piper, *Briefwechsel mit Autoren und Künstlern 1903-1953* (Munich: Piper, 1979).

21. "Zum Beispiel die Synagoge da drüben mit ihrer grünen Kuppel und dem Mond drüber im grünen Abendhimmel. Das Ganze muß sehr feierlich aussehn." Quoted in Piper, "Besuch bei Max Beckmann," 4, Piper, *Nachmittag*, 33, and Piper, *Mein Leben als Verleger*, 331. I wish to thank my first anonymous reviewer for their assistance with translating the term *feierlich*.

22. In the newly published catalogue raisonnè of Beckmann's sketchbooks, Christiane Zeiller sheds new light on the topography and business tenants of the Börneplatz and how they informed Beckmann's conception of reality. In particular, she identifies the presence of a butcher and barbershop on the Börneplatz, based on Beckmann's sketchbook studies. See Zeiller, *Max Beckmann: Die Skizzenbücher* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2010), 26-27, 474.

23. This urban center was the site of the Jewish Market that was renamed the Börneplatz in 1885 after Ludwig Börne, an early nineteenth-century Jewish writer, journalist, and Frankfurt native. For more on the Börneplatz and its history, see Hans-Otto Schembs, *Der Börneplatz in Frankfurt am Main: Ein Spiegelbild jüdischer Geschichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Waldemar Kramer, 1987).

24. Ibid., 27, 474-475, 507, 518, 528, 549. See also Zeiller's nuanced distinction between a study and a sketch with respect to Beckmann's creative process and conception of visible reality. Ibid., 26-33.

25. This was a decidedly secular style then typical of government, commercial, and private buildings. For a sacred structure, it was an unorthodox vestment for orthodox worshippers, a stylistic paradox that highlighted a struggle for leadership within the conservative Jewish community. The commission of the Börneplatz synagogue ca.1880 came at a moment of

conflict among Frankfurt's reform, orthodox, and neo-orthodox factions, wherein liturgical disputes (fueled by the assimilative desires of some Frankfurt Jews) splintered the once unified Jewish community there. The monumentality of this synagogue in tandem with its unconventional facades projected an air of authority and self-confidence that served not only to codify the identity of the orthodox congregation within the community, but also to ameliorate some of the divisiveness. See Harold Hammer-Schenk, *Synagogen in Deutschland: Geschichte einer Baugattung im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert (1780-1933)* (Hamburg: Hans Christians Verlag, 1981), 1: 390-393 and Rachel Heuberger and Salomon Korn, *The Synagogue at Frankfurt's Börneplatz* (Frankfurt am Main: Jewish Museum, 1996), 3-34.

26. For a discussion of the Moorish-Islamic influence in nineteenth-century synagogues, see Carol Herselle Krinsky, *Synagogues of Europe: Architecture, History, Meaning* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: MIT Press, 1985), 81-85, 130n196.

27. Beckmann especially loved the shape of the cupola, exaggerating it in the final painting as well as in a preparatory sketch. See Wiese, *Max Beckmanns zeichnerisches Werk*, 110, 216nr.428.

28. Further proof of Beckmann's elevated perspective can be found in a preparatory sketch for the painting that shows Beckmann and his friends Ugi and Fridel Battenbergs cavorting on an apartment balcony with the synagogue in the background. See Herwig Guratzsch, ed., *Max Beckmann: Zeichnungen aus dem Nachlaß Mathilde Q. Beckmann* (Leipzig: Wienand Verlag, 1998), 104-105.

29. According to Barbara Buenger and based on archival documents provided by Elmer Stracka, Beckmann probably selected this view from an apartment building at Battonnstr. 42 and Börnestr. 16. A Levi family member was registered in this building; Buenger believes that this could have been Ernst Levi, a prominent Jewish district court judge and president of the Frankfurt Kulturbund, with whom Beckmann was acquainted. Buenger, e-mail message to author, July 1, 2010 and telephone conversation, March 20, 2011. See also Paul Arnsberg, *Die Geschichte der Frankfurter Juden seit der Französischen Revolution*, vol.3 (Darmstadt: Eduard Roether Verlag, 1983), 268.

30. See Zeiller's discussion of the role Beckmann's sketchbook drawings and commentary played in the genesis of the painting. Zeiller, *Max Beckmann: Die Skizzenbücher*, 21-22.

31. Rachel Heuberger and Helga Krohn, *Hinaus aus dem Ghetto….: Juden in Frankfurt am Main 1800-1950* (Frankfurt: S. Fischer Verlag, 1988), 131-132, and Werner Jochmann, "Die Ausbreitung des Antisemitismus," in *Deutsches Judentum in Krieg und Revolution 1916-1923*, ed. Werner E. Mosse (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1971), 425-427.

32. Ibid., and Ibid., 426-427.

33. Heuberger and Krohn, *Hinaus aus dem Ghetto*, 132.

34. Waldemar Kramer, ed., *Frankfurt Chronik*, 3rd ed. (Frankfurt: Kramer, 1987), 404. See also Wolfgang Klötzer, "Frankfurt am Main 1915-1933," in *Max Beckmann: Frankfurt 1915-1933*, ed. Klaus Gallwitz (Frankfurt am Main: Städtische Galerie im Städelschen Kunstinstitut, 1983), 299-300. n.b. From 1960 to 1983 Klötzer was the Deputy Director of the Stadtarchiv (today known as the Institut für Stadtgeschichte) in Frankfurt, and from 1983 to 1990 he served as its Director. He is currently an Honorary Professor at Frankfurt's Goethe Universität.

35. Heuberger and Krohn, *Hinaus aus dem Ghetto*, 121, 123.

36. In 1864, Frankfurt was the second German city to grant Jews citizenship and equal rights under the law, which opened the doors to significant social, political, and economic integration. Liberal, assimilated Jews fared particularly well under these circumstances, as prosperous business and banking families were well integrated into bourgeois German society by the early years of the twentieth century. Heuberger and Krohn, *Hinaus aus dem Ghetto*, 85-128. See also Paul Arnsberg, *Die Geschichte der Frankfurter Juden seit der Französischen Revolution*, vol.1 (Darmstadt: Eduard Roether Verlag, 1983), 613-628.

37. This is significant, as the painting was the first of Beckmann's wartime pictures in new style to be acquired by a German museum. See Erhard and Barbara Göpel, *Max Beckmann: Katalog der Gemälde* (Bern: Kornfeld and Cie, 1976), 1: 133-134. For an analysis of this acquisition in the context of Swarzenski's aesthetic vision for the Städel, see Markus Kersting, "»Stete Intensivierung«: Sammlungsideen im Städelschen Kunstinstitut," in *ReVision: Die Moderne im Städel 1906-1937*, ed. Klaus Gallwitz (Frankfurt: Städtische Galerie im Städelschen Kunstinsitut, 1991), 18-22.

38. "Dr. Heinrich Simon, Chefredakteur der "Frankfurter Zeitung" (seine engsten Freunde nannten ihn Heinz), und seine Frau Irma gehörten zu Max' besten Freunden und zu seinen ersten Sammlern." Quoted in Mathilde Q. Beckmann, *Mein Leben mit Max Beckmann* (Munich: R. Piper, 1983), 13.

39. The Simon's lived at 3 Untermainkai, which was not far from Beckmann's studio on the Schweizerstraße. Max Beckmann, *Briefe Band I (1899-1925)*, eds. Klaus Gallwitz, Uwe M. Schneede, and Stephan von Wiese (Munich: Piper, 1993), I: 450. At the time, Reifenberg was presumably writing for the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, where he was later the chief editor of the

Feuilleton from 1924-1930. See Reifenberg, "Max Beckmann in Frankfurt," in *Was da ist: Kunst und Literatur in Frankfurt*, ed. Adam Seide (Frankfurt am Main: Typos Verlag, 1963), 24.

40. "Es läßt sich sagen, daß an diesem "Freitagstisch" kaum eine bedeutende Figur vorübergegangen ist… An dieser Runde ist ein gut Teil des geistigen Deutschlands zu Gast gewesen." Quoted in Reifenberg, "Der Sinn für Qualität," in *Beiträge für Georg Swarzenski* (Berlin: Mann, 1951), 258. For more on the intellectual climate of Frankfurt in general, see Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Intellektuellendämmerung: Zur Lage der Frankfurter Intelligenz in der zwanziger Jahren* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1982).

41. "So wirkte er bei Simons wie ein fahrender Artist, ein Fremdling…" Christoph Bernoulli, "Am Mittagstisch bei Heinrich Simon in Frankfurt," in *Ausgewählte Vorträge und Schriften*, ed. Peter Nathan (Zurich: Baumann, 1967), 196.

42. Piper, "Durch Vier Jahrzehnte mit Max Beckmann," in *Nachmittag*, 11-53, and in Piper, *Mein Leben als Verleger*, 315-349.

43. More specifically, the visit may have taken place between July 4 and 6, 1919, based on Piper's unpublished, typed manuscript in the Beckmann Archiv, "Besuch bei Max Beckman." Although this manuscript does not include the statement about the Jews, it features text that appears in close proximity to the former in the published memoir.

44. ""Ich glaube an Deutschland, weil ich an mich selbst glaube. Ich fühle mich durchaus als Deutscher. Die vielen Juden in Frankfurt stören mich gar nicht. Ich finde im Gegenteil, diese schwarzen betriebsamen Leute sind für uns in mancher Beziehung recht nützlich."" Quoted in Piper, *Nachmittag*, 31, and Piper, *Mein Leben als Verleger*, 330.

45. Piper's son, however, asserted that from the beginning of his father's career he kept a notebook with him in which he recorded impressions from his meetings with his contemporaries and with works of art. See Klaus Piper, "Zum Geleit," in Piper, *Mein Leben als Verleger*, 4.

46. "…erzähle ich von vielen kleinen Geschehnissen. (…) Ich habe kein allgemeines Zeitbild geben wollen, sondern Menschen zu zeichnen versucht, die mir begegnet sind – berühmte und unberühmte. Darin mag dann auch etwas vom Zeitbild enthalten sein." Piper, "Ein paar Worte zu Beginn," in *Mein Leben als Verleger*, 11.

47. Between 1880 and 1914, approximately three million Eastern European Jews fled widespread poverty and brutal pogroms in Poland and Russia, among other countries. See Trude Maurer, *Ostjuden in Deutschland*, 1918-1933 (Hamburg: H. Christians, 1986), 46-47.

48. Ibid., 47-54, 270-274.

49. Annemarie H. Sammartino, *The Impossible Border: Germany and the East, 1914-1922* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University, 2010), 174-175, and Maurer, *Ostjuden in Deutschland*, 281-285. See also Arnsberg, *Die Geschichte der Frankfurter Juden*, vol.1, 905-906.

50. To my knowledge, Christian Lenz is the only other Beckmann scholar to have addressed this quote. About it, he wrote: "Das klingt wohlwollend, doch auch distanziert, wobei die Distanz in für Beckmann eigentümlicher Weise leicht ironisch formuliert ist." Lenz, "Max Beckmanns »Synagoge«," *Städel Jahrbuch* 4 (1973), 314.

51. Heuberger and Krohn, *Hinaus aus dem Ghetto*, 135.

52. Steven Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness, 1800-1923* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), 15, 58-79.

53. "Die meisten Ostjuden waren Mitglieder der Israelitischen Gemeinde." Heuberger and Krohn, *Hinaus aus dem Ghetto*, 139.

54. According to the modest four-page exhibition pamphlet, 205 works were featured; these included seventeen paintings created between 1915 and 1921, six gouaches illustrating the parable of *The Prodigal Son* (1918), as well as 157 etchings and lithographs that spanned his career. "Max Beckmann: Ausstellung im Frankfurter Kunstverein in Gemeinschaft mit dem Graph. Kabinett I.B. Neumann Berlin, 10. April-5. Mai 1921," Beckmann Archive, Munich.

55. "Der erste Eindruck ist Penetranz; etwas Durchdringendes schlechthin." Wilhelm Hausenstein, "Max Beckmann (Zur Ausstellung im Frankfurter Kunstverein)," *Frankfurter Zeitung* (April 24, 1921): 1.

56. "Die große Spannung tut den Bildern weh wie ein Daumenschraube. Sie ächzen unter der Folter ihrer Ordnung. (…) Vor allem dies (und es ist wichtig, dahin zu deuten): ihm konnte nicht geschehen, daß er je auf die Partei-Phraseologie des Expressionismus hineinfiel. Kategorie blieb jenseits von ihm." Hausenstein refuses here to employ the "partisan phrase" Expressionism, arguing that "categories are beyond [Beckmann]." Ibid. For more on Hausenstein's criticism and attitudes toward Expressionism, see Charles W. Haxthausen, "A Critical Illusion: "Expressionism" in the Writings of Wilhelm Hausenstein," in *The Ideological Crisis of Expressionism*, eds. Rainer Rumold and O.K. Werckmeister (Columbia, South Carolina: Camden House, Inc., 1990), 169-191.

57. "Dazu der Lärm – gefangener Lärm wie in Münchhausens gefrorenem Posthorn." Hausenstein, "Max Beckmann," 1.

58. The "frozen coach horn" appears in Chapter 6 of Bürger's version. Münchhausen's servant finds that his horn has inexplicably frozen as he guides the coach and his master down a narrow path, forcing Münchhausen to place the coach on his head to avoid colliding with an on-coming coach.

59. Put differently, Hausenstein's characterization is an example of what W.J.T. Mitchell calls "ekphrastic hope…when the impossibility of ekphrasis is overcome in imagination or metaphor." Mitchell, *Picture Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 152.

60. Siegfried Kracauer, "Max Beckmann," *Die Rheinlande* 21 (1921): 93-96, plus four pages with four illustrations of paintings including *The Synagogue*. That same year he was named editor of the arts section at the *Frankfurter Zeitung*. See Gertrud Koch, *Siegfried Kracauer: An Introduction*, trans. Jeremy Gaines (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 8.

61. So sieht dieser Künstler unserer Zeit… (…) Er spurt, daß in ihnen nicht bloß ein mehr oder weniger belangvolles Ich seine Qual in die Welt hinausschreit, sondern daß die Qual der gegenwärtigen Menschheit selber in ihnen gleichsam unmittelbar sich verkörpert." Ibid., 93.

62. "Die Erde bebt, die Gottestempel schwanken, und mit ihnen sinken schließlich auch die Mietskasernen, die Fabriken dahin… Alle Dinge, die unsere Zivilisation geschaffen hat, sind reif für die Vernichtung. Und zu dem wilden Untergangsreigen, in den Lichtmasten, Bogenlampen, Plakatsäulen, Bretterzäune mit hineingerissen werden, erschallen aus dem Grammophon unentwegt scheußliche Gassenhauer, die jeden Schrei des Erbarmens unhörbar machen und darum den Ohren des Höllenfürsten lieblich klingen mögen." Ibid., 96.

63. See Koch, *Siegfried Kracauer*, 3-10.

64. Walter Benjamin's definition of these terms is here both apt and timely. In his *Origin of the German Tragic Drama*, written in 1924, he made this now well known characterization: "Whereas in the symbol destruction is idealized and the transfigured face of nature is fleetingly revealed in the light of redemption, in allegory the observer is confronted with the *facies hippocratica* of history as a petrified, primordial landscape." Benjamin, *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London, New York: Verso, 1998), 166.

65. Benno Reifenberg, "Max Beckmann," *Ganymed* 3 (1921): 37-49, plus seven illustrations of paintings including *The Synagogue*.

66. Kenworth Moffet, *Meier-Graefe as Art Critic* (Munich: Prestel, 1973), 122.

67. "Dem Maler hat der Krieg zur Wirklichkeit verholfen. Zum neuen Gegenstand." Reifenberg, "Max Beckmann," 39.

68. "Der Krieg eiterte weiter, zerfraß die Menschheit. Glaubt ihr, die ihr fragt, schon vergessen zu dürfen, glaubt ihr, der Krieg erledigt, Geschichte? Der Krieg ist." Ibid., 44.

69. "Nun war es am Ende Zeit, sich wieder auf die Gassen zu wagen, obschon es zuerst schien, als gäbe es nur die Friedrichstraße auf Erden, und das hieß die „Hölle". Doch nein, in der Stadt, die abseits vom „Betrieb" lag, konnte man spazieren gehen. Abends, nach Feierabend, den Hut im Nacken: da ließ sich allerlei entdecken. Zum Beispiel die rote Synagoge mit der Grünspankuppel. Es war alles sehr bemerkenswert: diese sorglich überdeckten Lanternenpfähle, Litfaßsäulen, ein Rollwägelchen. Auch der bedeutsame Kontur eines Katers. Die Häuser, Kästen mit vielen Fensteraugen, stehen herum um etwas, das die Menschen einen Platz nennen. Ein Stück Pflaster, um das die Wege laufen, das ein Bretterzaun zusammenhält. Es ist Ordnung in so einem Platz. Menschenordnung. Im Grunde keine vernünftige, wie sie aus einem Baum herauswächst oder aus dem Linienzug ferner Hügel. Es ist eher Bienenzellenordnung, nur grenzen die Zellen nicht gleichmäßig aneinander, sie stoßen sich, schieben die Schulter vor; fahren zurück, gleich wändeweis, die einene starren, die andern blinzeln zweideutig aus ihren Fenstern. Hie und da brennt zwar eine Lampe ihr falsches Licht in die Dämmerung. Aber auf einmal spürt man die verteufelte Stille auf diesem Platz. Er ist ja beinahe menschenleer. Sind die Türen verriegelt? Warum hat man die Läden geschlossen? Was geschieht hier? Der Himmel zuckt mit all seinem Gestirn in Kupferbrandung, und hier bleibt alles still? O nein, es ist nicht an der Zeit, sich auf Schleichwegen durch malerische Gassen in die Natur zu stehlen, ins Freie, zur Idylle. Hinein in die Kammern. Wer steckt darin, was für Menschen bevölkern sie? Wir wollen sie kennenlernen, die Herren Bürger; sie am Rockzipfel fassen, ihnen ein wenig in die Augen schauen." Reifenberg, "Max Beckmann," 45-46. I would like to thank Christiane Zeiller and Paul Fleming for their assistance translating this passage.

70. Beckmann, "Creative Credo," in *Self-Portrait in Words*, 185. Originally published in Kasimir Edschmid, ed., "Schöpferische Konfession," in *Tribüne der Kunst und Zeit* 13 (Berlin: Erich Reiß Verlag, 1920), 60-67.

71. See Hans Robert Jauss' discussion of the social function of literature in *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, 39-45.

72. James A. W. Heffernan, *Museum of Words: The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 3. Perhaps the most well known example of ekphrasis is Walter Pater's 1893 description of the *Mona Lisa*.

73. See Michael Baxandall's analysis of Libanius' ekphrasis in *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), 2-3.

74. See Christoph Engels, *Auf der Suche nach einer "deutschen" Kunst: Max Beckmann in der Wilhelminischen Kunstkritik* (Weimar: VDG, 1997), and Amy K. Hamlin, "Between Form and Subject: Max Beckmann's Critical Reception and Development, ca.1906-1924" (PhD diss., New York University, 2007).

75. As Heffernan argues, "ekphrasis commonly reveals a profound ambivalence toward visual art, a fusion of iconophilia and iconophobia, of veneration and anxiety." Heffernan, *Museum of Words*, 7.

76. See "»Überfall, Gewürge, Schreck«: Dokumente zur frühen Rezeption des Gemäldes *Die Nacht* und der Mappe *Die Hölle*," compiled and introduced by Thomas Heyden in *Max Beckmann Die Nacht*, ed. Anette Kruszynski (Stuttgart: Hatje, 1997), 151-164, and Hamlin, "Between Form and Subject," 224-240.

77. Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, trans. M.T.H. Sadler (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1977), 7.

78. "Der wahre Künstler ist ein Prophet seiner Zeit und nicht "aktuell"; seine Kunst entsteigt tieferen und wahrhaft religiößen Schichten des sozialen Bewußtseins." See Schmidt, "Max Beckmann," *Der Cicerone* 11 (1919): 684.

79. "Ich meine immer, Beckmann habe eine Ahnung davon gehabt, dieser Platz werde einmal fürchterlich leer daliegen." Reifenberg, "Max Beckmann in Frankfurt," 24.

80. The literature on and of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* is too voluminous and variegated to explore here, but among the important texts that have been translated into English include Hannah Arendt's 1950 essay "The Aftermath of Nazi Rule: Report from Germany," in *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994), 248-269 and Theodor Adorno's 1959 essay "What does coming to terms with the past mean?" in *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective*, ed. Geoffrey H. Hartmann (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986), 114-129. See also Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior,* trans. Beverly R. Placzek (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1975). Prominent among the English-language texts is Charles S. Maier's *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust and German National Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).

81. Benno Reifenberg, "Werke und Leben," in *Max Beckmann*, Benno Reifenberg and Wilhelm Hausenstein (Munich: R. Piper & Co. Verlag, 1949), 7-32. Published just a year before Beckmann's death in December 1950, this monograph was apparently well received by the artist. See Beckmann to Benno Reifenberg, St. Louis, March 9, 1949. In Beckmann, *Briefe*, III: 247-248.

82. "Er hat damals "Die Synagoge" (1919) gemalt, so ein undurchdringliches, schlagflüssiges Gemäuer, mit den dünnen sorgfältigen Farben, wie manche Bilder dieser Epoche den Glasfenstern ähneln. Da stand das rote Gebäude mit der Grünspankuppel an diem Platz, den ein Bretterzaun zusammenhält. Die Häuser im Abstand darum starren, andere blinzeln zweideutig aus ihren Fenstern. "Hier und da brennt eine Lampe ihr falsches Licht in die Dämmerung. Auf einmal spürt man die verteufelte Stille auf dem Platz. Er ist ja menschenleer. Sind die Türen verreigelt? Warum hat man die Läden verschlossen? Was geschieht heir?" Diese Fragen, die 1921 angesichts des Bildes aufgeworfen wurden (in dem Jahrbuch "Ganymed") haben siebzehn Jahre später Antwort gefunden – als die Synagoge niedergebrannt worden ist; heute ist da nur die Leere des Platzes übriggeblieben." Reifenberg, "Werke und Leben," 19.

83. The Börneplatz synagogue, renamed Dominikanerplatz by the National Socialists in 1935, was one of four synagogues in Frankfurt that burned during the *Kristallnacht*. And while the ruins of three were razed in 1939, the empty shell of the Westend Synagogue remained until it too was destroyed by Allied bombers on March 20, 1944. See Schembs, *Der Börneplatz in Frankfurt am Main*, 138, 115, and *"Die Synagogen brennen….!": Die Zerstörung Frankfurts als jüdische Lebenswelt*, exh. catalogue (Frankfurt am Main: Historisches Museum, 1988), 4.2.

84. Heuberger and Krohn, *Hinaus aus dem Ghetto*, 178-179.

85. Ibid., 178.

86. Ibid., 180.

87. According to one witness: "But we did not dare go any closer because of the SA [*Sturmabteilung*]. It might have prompted us to make a remark of some sort and we did not want to have any public profile owing to the fact that we were still part of a resistance group, albeit one that was not properly organized." For the remainder of this and other accounts, see Rachel Heuberger and Salomon Korn, *The Synagogue at Frankfurt's Börneplatz* (Frankfurt am Main: Jewish Museum, 1996), 36-43, and *Dokumente zur Geschichte der Frankfurter Juden 1933-1945* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Waldemar Kramer, 1963), 28-54.

88. "…heute ist da nur die Leere des Platzes übriggeblieben." Reifenberg, "Werke und Leben," 19.

89. Jauss, "The Poetic Text within the Change of Horizons of Reading," in *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, 170.

90. On the painting's provenance, see Göpel, *Max Beckmann,*1: 144. Kurz bought the picture from Günther Franke in Munich around 1936. He was the second and last private owner of *The Synagogue* before it was acquired by the Städel Museum in Frankfurt in 1972. Prior to Kurz, it was owned by Paul Multhaupt, who procured the painting from Beckmann's dealer I.B. Neumann in the early twenties. Multhaupt was an engineer and industrialist from Düsseldorf whose impressive collection consisted of artworks by artists including Beckmann, Heinrich Campendonk, Marc Chagall, Conrad Felixmüller, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Paul Klee, and Anton Räderscheidt. 4-page, typed inventory of Multhaupt's collection from the late 1920s. I would like to thank Pascal Räderscheidt for sharing a copy of this unpublished document with me.

91. This arrangement lasted from 1951 until 1964, during which the painting underwent conservation and was exhibited in the Städel from September 1962 until January or February 1964. Holzinger to Karl vom Rath, Frankfurt, January 24, 1964. "Alter Schriftwechsel bezügl. Erwerb Synagoge v. Beckmann bis 1968," Beckmann Synagoge 1971, Städel Archive, Frankfurt. With tastes akin to Multhaupt's, Kurz also collected paintings (that he stored at the Städel) by modern artists including Edvard Munch, Franz Marc, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, and Oskar Kokoschka. See file note, ibid.

92. I wish to thank Andreas Hansert for explaining this neologism. Andreas Hansert, e-mail message to author, January 25, 2010.

93. "Das Bild ist seines Gegenstandes wegen ja eine wichtige "Frankofurtensie", wenn man so will, ein Denkmal für das alte Frankfurt. Deshalb hoffen wir ja auch, dass, wenn Sie sich einmal von ihm trennen können, Sie es nach Frankfurt geben möchten. Ich glaube, dass wir jederzeit im Stande sein würden, einen Ankauf durchzuführen." Holzinger to Kurz, Frankfurt, April 23, 1960. Alter Schriftwechsel bezügl. Erwerb Synagoge v. Beckmann bis 1968," Beckmann Synagoge 1971, Städel Archive, Frankfurt.

94. "…wir wünschen sehnlich, dass dieses Frankfurter Bild zur ewigen Erinnerung an das Niederbrennen der Synagoge in der Kristallnacht einmal bei uns seinen Einzug halten möchte." Holzinger to Kurz, Frankfurt, September 23, 1961. Ibid.

95. I refer here to the newly published volume edited by Uwe Fleckner (currently Professor of Art History at Hamburg University) and Max Hollein (currently Director of the Städel Museum) entitled *Museum im Widerspruch: Das Städel und der Nationalsozialismus* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2011). It is the sixth in a series of seven volumes devoted to a more comprehensive understanding of "Entartete Kunst" and cultural policies during the Third Reich. Founded by Fleckner in 2003, this ambitious research project brought together a team of new and established German art historians. The six scholars that contributed essays to *Museum im Widerspruch* relied on documents from the NS-period in the Städel Archive that were made available in 2001. See Fleckner and Hollein, "Vorwort," in *Museum im Widerspruch*, viii. n.b. The research for this article was conducted coterminously to the research contained within *Museum im Widerspruch*.

96. Esther Tisa Francini, "Im Spannungsfeld zwischen privater und öffentlicher Institution: Das Städelsche Kunstinstitut und seine Direktoren 1933-1945," in *Museum im Widerspruch*, 105.

97. Dorothea Schöne, "Revision, Restitution und Neubeginn: Das Städel nach 1945," in *Museum im Widerspruch*, 243.

98. The public Städtische Galerie was intended to complement the refined collection of Old Master paintings and prints in the Städelsches Kunstinstitut, a private institution founded in 1817 by Johann Friedrich Städel. For more on the history of and relationship between these two institutions, see Thomas W. Gaehtgens, "Die Organische Einheit von alter und neuer Kunst: Georg Swarzenski, das Städel und die Gründung der Städtischen Galerie," in *Museum im Widerspruch*, 1-24.

99. See Nicole Roth, "»Schwere Verstümmelung und sehr merkbare Rangminderung der Sammlung«: Die Beschlagnahme »entarteter« Kunstwerke im Städel 1936-1937," in *Museum im Widerspruch*, 201-240. See also, in the same volume, the detailed list of confiscated works that Roth assembled in her research. Ibid., 293-307.

100. Schöne, "Revision, Restitution und Neubeginn," in *Museum im Widerspruch*, 266.

101. Ibid., 262.

102. See Andreas Hansert's discussion of Holzinger's visit to discuss what would become a commission to illustrate the Book of Revelation known as the *Apocalypse*. Hansert, *Georg Hartmann (1870-1954): Biografie eines Frankfurter Schriftgießers, Bibliophilen und Kunstmäzens* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2009), 180. Beckmann and his second wife Mathilde "Quappi" Beckmann had been living in Amsterdam since July 1937 when they fled Germany immediately following the opening of the Degenerate Art exhibition. In the years following Beckmann's dismissal from his teaching position at the Städel's Art School (*Kunstgewerbeschule*) in March 1933, his pictures were systematically confiscated from public collections throughout Germany. See Stephanie Barron, *Exiles + Emigrés: The Flight of European Artists from Hitler* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1997), 58-67.

[103.] These are *Double Portrait* (1923), *Still Life with Saxophone* (1926), *The Quay Wall* (1936), *In the Circus Wagon* (1940), and *Frankfurt Train Station* (1942). See Sabine Schulze, ed., *Das 20. Jahrhundert im Städel* (Ostfildern-Ruit: Verlag Gerd Hatje, 1998), 27-34.

[104.] Tisa Francini, "Im Spannungsfeld zwischen privater und öffentlicher Institution," 105-106, and Andreas Hansert, "Kunsterwerbungen zwischen Raub und Rettung: Ernst Holzinger als Städeldirektor 1938 bis 1972 (lecture, Haus am Dom, Frankfurt am Main, July 6, 2009), 2. Manuscript available online; last modified, August 2012, http://www.andreas-hansert.de/publikationen.html. After Hitler took power in March 1933, many rushed opportunistically to become members of the NS-Party. Many of these so-called "March casualties" (*Märzgefallene*), including Holzinger, applied out of self-preservation to save their careers by pledging allegiance to the new governing party. See Wolfgang Benz, *A Concise History of the Third Reich*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 35. See also Jonathan Petropoulos, *The Faustian Bargain: The Art World in Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 21-22.

[105.] In German, "Sachverständige für die Sicherung und Verwertung von Kulturgut aus jüdischem Besitz für Zwecke des Reiches." I wish to thank my first anonymous reviewer for assistance with this translation.

[106.] Francini, "Im Spannungsfeld zwischen privater und öffentlicher Institution," 107-108, and Hansert, "Kunsterwerbungen zwischen Raub und Rettung," 6-7.

[107.] See Andreas Hansert, "Zum Schicksal der Sammlung Alfred Oppenheim während und nach der NS-Zeit," in *Moritz Daniel Oppenheim: Die Entdeckung des jüdischen Selbstbewusstseins in der Kunst*, eds. Georg Heuberger and Anton Merk (Frankfurt and Cologne: Jüdisches Museum and Wienand, 1999), 304-325.

[108.] A prominent Frankfurt art collector, Hagemann died in a car accident in 1940. In agreement with his heirs, Holzinger risked storing his collection at the Städel in an eighty-kilogram crate innocuously labeled "Paintings" (*Gemälde*). Eva Mongi-Vollmer, "Alltägliches Recht, Alltägliches Unrecht: Die Gemäldeerwerbungen des Städel 1933-1945," in *Museum im Widerspruch*, 182-184. See also Ursula Grzechca-Mohr, "Die »Kunst der Gegenwart« im Frankfurter Städel und die Anfänge der Städtischen Galerien," in *Künstler der Brücke in der Sammlung Hagemann: Kirchner, Heckel, Schmidt-Rottluff, Nolde*, ed. Eva Mongi-Vollmer (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2004), 13-14.

[109.] Holzinger's work as an appraiser for NS authorities has made him a controversial, even indefensible figure for some in Germany. The exhibition in 2008-09 at the Jewish Museums in Berlin and Frankfurt entitled *Raub und Restitution: Kulturgut aus jüdischem Besitz von 1933 bis heute* prompted a public discussion. See for instance Julia Voss, "Kulturgut aus jüdischem Besitz: Restitution ist keine Stilfrage," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (April 22, 2009). Significantly, in the introduction to *Museum im Widerspruch*, Uwe Fleckner and Max Hollein acknowledged these external debates and the necessity of their team of scholars to wrestle with them in addition to the intractable evidence of Holzinger's tenure as Director of the Städel during much of the Third Reich. See Fleckner and Hollein, "Vorwort," in *Museum im Widerspruch*, ix.

[110.] "An der ausserordentlichen historischen Wichtigkeit des Bildes für Frankfurt ist nicht zu zweifeln. Sein hoher künstlerischer Rang hat sich in jahrelangem Umgang und jetzt in der Galerie vorzüglich und sicher bewährt." Holzinger to Karl vom Rath, Frankfurt, June 14, 1963. Alter Schriftwechsel bezügl. Erwerb Synagoge v. Beckmann bis 1968," Beckmann Synagoge 1971, Städel Archive, Frankfurt. From September 12, 1962 until February 1964, *The Synagogue* was installed in the Städel on temporary loan from Kurz. See Holzinger to Kurz, Frankfurt, January 16, 1964, and shipping receipt dated February 13, 1964. Ibid.

[111.] Ernst Holzinger, *Untersuchungen zur Frage von Dürers Baseler Stil* (1927) (Rudolstadt: Mänicke & Jahn AG, 1929), 8-9. For a brief analysis of the dissertation and a discussion of Holzinger's aesthetic sensibility, see Andreas Hansert, *Geschichte des Städelschen Museums-Vereins Frankfurt am Main* (Frankfurt: Umschau, 1994), 119-121.

[112.] Speech at the opening of the exhibition on *The Synagogue* at the Städel, June 10, 1972, in *Max Beckmanns Synagoge für Frankfurt,* ed. Amt für Wissenschaft, Kunst und Volksbildung (Frankfurt: Amt für Wissenschaft, Kunst und Volksbildung der Stadt Frankfurt, 1972), n.p..

[113.] "Kein anderer Künstler hat für diese schicksalsschwere historische Zeit so gültige künstlerische Dokumente geschaffen wie Beckmann. Zu diesen gehört die Synagoge. Das Gebäude ist in der Kristallnacht in Brand gesteckt worden und zugrunde gegangen – es war die Hauptsynagoge der israelitischen Gemeinde. Man meint, Beckmann habe, als er das Bild malte, den drohenden bevorstehenden Untergang vorausgeahnt." Holzinger to Karl vom Rath, Frankfurt, June 14, 1963. "Alter Schriftwechsel bezügl. Erwerb Synagoge v. Beckmann bis 1968," Beckmann Synagoge 1971, Städel Archive, Frankfurt.

[114.] "Zur Geschichte der Frankfurter Juden: Aus einer Sammlung von Dokumenten," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (June 12, 1963). The book was edited by the Kommission zur Erfoschung der Geschichte der Frankfurter Juden, ed., *Dokumente zur Geschichte der Frankfurter Juden 1933-1945* (Frankfurt am Main: W. Kramer, 1963). Lastly, a photograph of the Börneplatz synagogue in flames during the *Kristallnacht* figured prominently in the FAZ article (akin to Fig.7).

115. "Er [der erste Band] verziehtet auf Erläuterungen und läßt die Dokumente selbst sprechen. Sie waren schwer aufzutreiben." "Zur Geschichte der Frankfurter Juden," n.p..

116. Holzinger, File note, January 1, 1963. Alter Schriftwechsel bezügl. Erwerb Synagoge v. Beckmann bis 1968," Beckmann Synagoge 1971, Städel Archive, Frankfurt. Holzinger also remarked in these notes that it seemed from their phone conversation that Kurz's business was suffering.

117. Elizabeth Heinemann (Holzinger's Secretary), File note, June 22, 1963. Ibid.

118. Holzinger confronted similar obstacles in his initial bid to acquire Matisse's *Fleurs et Céramique* (1913). See Hansert, *Geschichte*, 124-127, and Stephan Mann, "Erworben 1917, Beschlagnahmt 1937, Zurückerworben 1962," in *ReVision*, 75-78. Moreover, the city's public acquisition funds for 1963 had already been exhausted in the purchase of Paul Klee's *Blick in das Fruchtland* (1932). See Holzinger to Rath, Frankfurt, January 24, 1964 and January 24, 1964, "Alter Schriftwechsel bezügl. Erwerb Synagoge v. Beckmann bis 1968," Beckmann Synagoge 1971, Städel Archive, Frankfurt. See also the minutes from Cultural Committee's meeting on August 27, 1963. Ibid.

119. "Wie Sie wissen ist Herr Kurz aber ein etwas schwieriger Herr." Hans Konrad Röthel to Holzinger, Munich, April 26, 1960. Ibid.

120. "Wenn es bei Ihrer heutigen Ablehnung bliebe, wäre dies für mich persönlich ein ganz schwerer Schlag, es wäre aber auch für alles, was wir in Zukunft versuchten, um etwas besonderes zu erreichen, geradezu von katastrophaler Wirkung." Holzinger to Kurz, Frankfurt, December 2, 1963. Ibid.

121. "TELEGRAMM ERHALTEN WIE BEREITS SCHRIFTLICH MITGETEILT IST DAS BILD UNVERKAEUFLICH UND ERWARTE UMGEHENDE RUECKSENDUNG. GELDER FUER DIESES BILD WERDEN NICHT ENTGEGEN GENOMMEN. GANZES VERHALTEN IST MIR UNVERSTAENDLICH" Kurz to Holzinger, Wolframs-Eschenbach, January 20, 1964. Ibid.

122. "Wie sollte mich Ihre Absage nicht aufs schwerste treffen, aufs tiefste schmerzen, und zwar ganz persönlich, aber auch in meinem Amt und in meinem Verhältnis zur Stadt Frankfurt. Wie sollte ich es leicht hinnehmen können, dass das Bild, was wie kein anderes nach Frankfurt gehört, das auch Beckmann hierher gewünscht hätte, das ich deshalb – wie kein anderes – nicht aus Ehrgeizt, für Frankfurt ersehnte, nun auf eine so überaus traurige, in jeder Hinsicht zutiefst deprimierende Weise Frankfurt wieder verlassen soll." Holzinger to Kurz, Frankfurt, January 21, 1964. Ibid.

123. Holzinger to Hessian Cultural Minister, January 27, 1964, "Alter Schriftwechsel bezügl. Erwerb Synagoge v. Beckmann bis 1968," Beckmann Synagoge 1971, Städel Archive, Frankfurt. Therein he stated: "It is clear that American museums, above all the Museum of Modern Art, have an active interest in this picture that is set to play an important role in the large, upcoming American Beckmann exhibition [at MoMA]." ("Es steht fest, daß amerikanische Museen, vor allem das Museum of Modern Art, das lebhafteste Interesse an diesem Bild haben, das auf der bevorstehenden großen amerikanischen Beckmann-Ausstellung [beim MoMA] eine besonders wichtige Rolle spielen soll.") Peter Selz, the curator of this show, successfully secured the loan of *The Synagogue* for his landmark Beckmann retrospective in 1964-65. n.b. Holzinger composed a letter to Selz in an effort to preempt MoMA's ostensible interest in the painting. See Holzinger to Selz, March 23, 1964. Ibid.

124. "Die Frankfurter Hauptsynagoge ist am 9. November 1938 niedergebrannt worden. Es ist die einzige deutsche Synagoge, die in neuerer Zeit von einem großen deutschen Künstler im Bild verewigt worden ist, und dies auf eine zweifellos grandiose Weise. Unmittelbar nachdem das Bild in einer höchst lebendigen Zeit entstanden war, ist darüber von Benno Reifenberg in der Frankfurter Zeitung bemerkt worden, es gebe den Eindruck, als ob einee Katastrophe bevorstünde. Sie ist eingetreten, die Synagoge ist niedergebrannt worden. Beckmann hatte schon zuvor Deutschland verlassen müssen. Es kann danach keinerlei Zweifel darüber bestehen, daß das Bild eine Frankofurtensie höchsten Ranges ist. Es ist ebenso berechtigt, das Bild als national wertvoll zu bezeichnen, weil er zur deutschen Geschichte gehört, weil es Zeugnis der ahnenden Kraft eines großen Geistes angesichts der Zukunft ist, weil es dadurch zu einem historischen Dokument wurde und weil es von einem der bedeutendsten deutschen Maler des 20. Jahrhunderts geschaffen ist." Holzinger to Hessian Cultural Minister, January 27, 1964, "Alter Schriftwechsel bezügl. Erwerb Synagoge v. Beckmann bis 1968," Beckmann Synagoge 1971, Städel Archive, Frankfurt.

125. Hessian Cultural Minister to Frankfurt's magistrate in the Bureau for Science, Art and Education, February 28, 1964. Ibid.

126. Leo Bersani, *The Culture of Redemption* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 1.

127. Additionally, the election in 1969 of Willi Brandt, the first Social Democratic Party (SPD) Chancellor since the war, and his public genuflection (also known as the *Warschauer Kniefall*) at the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising memorial in 1970, further contributed to an atmosphere of openness about the past.

128. For a critical analysis of this book and its largely favorable reception, see Tobias Freimüller, *Alexander Mitscherlich: Gesellschaftsdiagnosen und Psychoanalyse nach Hitler* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2007), 303-321. See also Friso Wielenga, "An Inability to Mourn? The German Federal Republic and the Nazi Past," *European Review* 11, No.4 (2003): 551-572.

129. The lack of correspondence between Kurz and Holzinger in the Städel's files between Feburary 1964 and the time of Kurz's death in 1967 suggest that no further negotiations took place. After 1967, Holzinger politely but persistently appealed to Kurz's widow and son, Annemarie and Herbert E. Kurz, although it was not until 1970 that the possibility of acquisition was back on the table. *The Synagogue* was reinstalled in the spring of 1971 at the Städel Museum on another extended loan. It had not been seen in Frankfurt since February 1964 when it was returned to Kurz, who later that year dispatched it to Boston (and on to New York, Chicago, and Hamburg) for the traveling Beckmann retrospective organized by Peter Selz. See Herbert E. Kurz to Holzinger, February 14, 1971 and Schwarzweller to Schaarschmidt, Frankfurt, February 13, 1964. In "Alter Schriftwechsel bezügl. Erwerb Synagoge v. Beckmann bis 1968," Beckmann Synagoge 1971, Städel Archive, Frankfurt.

130. Holzinger, File note, February 19, 1970, "Weitere Korrespondez mit Familie Kurz," Beckmann Synagoge 1971, Städel Archive, Frankfurt. I have not been able to identify this American dealer, but Richard Feigen – then and now the foremost American dealer of Beckmann's paintings – recalls that there was considerable interest in *The Synagogue* from private American collectors at that time. Interview with Richard Feigen, June 1, 2010. There was also interest within Frankfurt from art dealer Ewald Rathke; he represented a private collector, who wanted just 720.000DM for the painting. In any event, Holzinger was crushed by the new price, calling it a "punishment." Holzinger to Karl Gustaf Ratjen, Frankfurt, December 18, 1971, "Korrespondenz mit Administration," Beckmann Synagoge 1971, Städel Archive, Frankfurt.

131. See Philip Ursprung, "'I like Picasso': Picasso und Basel 1967," in *Picasso und die Schweiz*, eds. Marc Fehlmann and Toni Stoos (Bern: Stämpfli Verlag, 2001), 91-97, and Bernhard Scherz, *Die Basler Picasso-Story* (Basel: Birkhäuser Verlag, 1981).

132. See Motion of the CDU-Faction, July 28, 1971 and Herbert Beck, File note, October 26, 1971, "Korrespondenz mit Stadtverwaltung Frankfurt/Main," Beckmann Synagoge 1971, Städel Archive, Frankfurt.

133. Planning for the *Aktion* began in November 1971 and included an impressive cohort of city leaders in the arts as well as a host of museum directors and curators. It was organized according to expertise and interest; Hoffmann's collaborators were each assigned numerous and skill-specific tasks. See the detailed five-page agenda for a meeting on May 10, 1972. Ibid.

134. From 1951-65 he was the Director of the Volkschule in Oberhausen, where he founded the Westdeutschen Kulturfilmtage (today known as the Internationale Kurzfilmtage Oberhausen). See Hilmar Hoffmann, *Erinnerungen* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2003), passim.

135. Hilmar Hoffmann, *Kultur für Alle: Perspektiven und Modelle* (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1981), 29-30.

136. ddp, "Beat für Beckmann und Hoffmann," *Frankfurter Neue Presse*, July 3, 1972.

137. See MdL, "Beatbands spielen für die "Synagoge," *Frankfurter Neue Press* (July 1, 1972), and pi, "Beatbands spielen zur "Aktion Synagoge" auf," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (July 1, 1972).

138. Interspersed with didactic texts, the exhibition featured some ten original prints from Beckmann's early Frankfurt period of the late teens/early twenties and about a dozen historical photographs – including one of the Börneplatz and its synagogue ca.1900 and two depicting the smoldering synagogue following the *Kristallnacht*. These exhibition photographs are archived in the Max Beckmann Archive, Munich. The exhibition also featured a short film by Anton Triyandafilidis entitled "Die Zeit der Toten," which explored Beckmann's graphic production during World War I. See Göpel, *Max Beckmann,*1: 124, f., "Wo kann das Beckmann-Poster kaufen," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (June 16, 1972), and related correspondence in "Allgemeines," Beckmann Synagoge 1971, Städel Archive, Frankfurt.

139. "Seit Samstag ist es im Städel-Parterre einer publikums-demonstrativen Ein-Bild-Ausstellung gewürdigt, altarartig wie einst Raffaels Sixtinische Madonna in Dresden und Leonardos Mona Lisa in Paris." n.a., "Beckmann kehrt heim: Zwei Frankfurter Ausstellungen werben für Ankäufe – Städel und Hochstift," *Frankfurter Neue Presse*, June 12, 1972.

140. Benjamin, "The Work of Art," (second version), 103, 106.

141. "Das Poster wurde zum Vehikel der gesamten Aktion." Arnulf Herbst, "Die öffentliche Finanzlage erfordert neue Ideen," in *Max Beckmanns Synagoge für Frankfurt*, n.p..

142. "Das Gemälde ist vom 10. Juni bis 9. Juni 1972 in einer Sonderausstellung des Städelschen Kunstinstituts zu sehen." *Aktion* Poster.

143. "Bürger Frankfurts! Max Beckmann malte 1919 die Synagoge der Israelitischen Gemeinde Frankfurt am ehemaligen Börne-Platz. In der "Kristallnacht" 1938 wurde sie von den Nationalsozialisten niedergebrannt. Das Gemälde befindet

sich jetzt als befristete Leihgabe im Städel. Dieses für Frankfurt wichtigste Bild Beckmanns, jetzt in Privatbesitz, muß in dieser Stadt bleiben; es soll allen Bürgern gehören. Beckmanns "Synagoge" ist ein einzigartiges Dokument: – für ein altes Frankfurter Stadtviertel – für die Not nach dem 1. Weltkrieg – für eine Vorahnung der Ereignisse, deren schreckliches Opfer Millionen von Menschen wurden – für die Arbeit Max Beckmanns in dieser Stadt, bis ihn 1933 die Nationalsozialisten als "entarteten" Künstler davonjagten. Erwerben Sie dieses Bild als ein Dokument Ihrer Geschichte! Kaufen Sie dieses Plakat und ermöglichen Sie dadurch den Ankauf des Gemäldes. Stadt Frankfurt am Main-Kulturdezernat Spendernkonto 615 Postscheckamt Frankfurt am Main "Aktion Synagoge." *Aktion* Poster.

144. Hilmar Hoffmann, "Kunstkauf als Aktion," in *Max Beckmanns Synagoge für Frankfurt*, n.p..

145. Benjamin, "The Work of Art," (second version), 116.

146. "Die Vierfarben-Reproduktion hing vier Wochen lang an allen Litfaßsäulen, in Schaufenstern, in den U-Bahnhöfen, in den verschiedensten öffentlichen Institutionen." Hilmar Hoffmann, "Kunstkauf als Aktion," in *Max Beckmanns Synagoge für Frankfurt*, n.p..

147. An extensive and apparently unedited selection of newspaper articles from the time of the *Aktion* is contained in the file S3A/ 12900, "1972/Aktion Synagogue," Institut für Stadtgeschichte, Frankfurt. Some of these same articles, and several additional articles, are contained in the file for *The Synagogue* in the Max Beckmann Archive in Munich.

148. Two articles made note of this feature. See dpa, "Spenden für Beckmanns Synagoge," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (June 5, 1972) and f, "Plakate für die "Synagoge," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (June 8, 1972).

149. "Das Bild von Max Beckmanns ist realistisch, es ist politisch." Georg Bussmann, head of the Frankfurter Kunstverein, likely composed this undated draft (probably late November or early December 1971) on Frankfurter Kunstverein letterhead. The minutes for an organizational meeting on November 23, 1971 indicate that, early on, Bussmann and Hoffmann were in charge of drafting the poster text. "Beckmann Poster Herstellung," Aktion Synagoge, Büro Stadtrat Hoffmann, Signatur 304, Institut für Stadtgeschichte, Frankfurt.

150. Lenz's annotated, handwritten draft heavily corresponds to the language reproduced on the poster. I would like to thank Christiane Zeiller for assisting me in transcribing the draft. See "Synagoge," Max Beckmann Archive, Munich and also "Korrespondenz mit Stadtverwaltung Frankfurt/Main," Beckmann Synagoge 1971, Städel Archive, Frankfurt.

151. "Die Konfrontation enthüllt jedoch mit seltener Deutlichkeit die Doppelzüngigkeit und Heuchelei der öffentlichen Kulturpropaganda." Eduard Beaucamp, "Heuchelei," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (July 28, 1972). I would like to thank Christiane Zeiller for sharing her insights into this complex article.

152. "Die Kommune schließlich…würde mit dem Ankauf kaum einen Akt der Versöhnung zustande bringen, eher ein Pflästerchen auf ein schlechtes Gewissen kleben." Dieter Hoffmann, "Versöhnung oder Gewissenspflaster: Was wird aus Max Beckmanns Bild der Frankfurter Synagoge?," *Frankfurter Neue Presse* (December 18, 1971).

153. See Hoffmann's scheduling grid in "Hauptwache Posterverkauf," Aktion Synagoge, Büro Stadtrat Hoffmann, Institut für Stadtgeschichte, Frankfurt, and bgo, "Leute, kauft bei Mitscherlich!," *Frankfurter Neue Presse* (June 22, 1972).

154. See R.M.W.K., "Aktion Synagoge," *Jüdische Rundschau Maccabi* (June 22, 1972) and the title page of the *Frankfurter Jüdisches Gemeindeblatt* (1971).

155. Lenz certainly made this case in the poster text and in his writings on the painting at the time. See also Stephan von Wiese's insightful article, "Frankfurt sammelt für Beckmann," *Hamburger Abendblatt* (June 12, 1972).

156. See hd, "Frankfurts Bürger kaufen ein Bild," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (June 12, 1972) and Henry Kamm, "Attempt at Symbolic Contrition for Acts Against Jewish Artists Meeting Apathy in Frankfurt," *New York Times* (July 19, 1972). For a critique of the *Aktion* in favor of spending money on social services, see Willi Günther, "Kein Geld da," *Frankfurter Neue Presse* (February 3, 1972).

157. Westdeutscher Rundfunk, "Kritisches Tagebuch," June 13, 1972. Transcript in "Presse," Beckmann Synagoge 1971, Städel Archive, Frankfurt. See also Gerd Winkler, ""Kunst und Politik": Wie Hermann Josef Abs und der liebe Gott der Stadt Frankfurt ein "Kunstwunder" bescherten," *Magazin Kunst*, nr.48 (December 1972), 77.

158. See bgo, "Leute, kauft beim Trödler A…," *Frankfurter Neue Presse* (June 12, 1972).

159. "Überhaupt hat der Preis die Gemüter erregt." Lenz, "Max Beckmann – 'Die Synagoge'," *Kunstzeitung: Informationen der Frankfurter Kulturszene*, nr.1 (1972), n.p..

160. Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," (1936-39, third version) in *Selected Writings: Volume 4, 1938-1940*, eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, trans. Edmund Jephcott, Howard Eiland, and others (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 274n16.

161. "Wir würden uns freuen, wenn Sie sich für eine solche Aktion zur Verfügung stellen könnten, um es der Stadt Frankfurt zu ermöglichen, ein bedeutendes Dokument Frankfurter Geschichte und darüber hinaus ein hervorragendes künstlerisches Zeugnis des deutschen Expressionismus für die städtischen Gemäldesammlungen und damit für alle Frankfurter Bürger zu erwerben." "Hauptwache Posterverkauf," Aktion Synagoge, Büro Stadtrat Hoffmann, Signatur 304, Institut für Stadtgeschichte, Frankfurt.

162. The *Frankfurter Neue Presse* also reported that Hermann Josef Abs as well as Annemarie Kurz donated 20.000DM each and an anonymous banker gave 35.000DM. WL, "„Synagoge" bleibt in Frankfurt: Dresdner Bank stiftete 100 000 Mark – Restbetrag gesichert," *Frankfurter Neue Presse* (September 20, 1972). For itemized list of funding, see "Allgemeines," Aktion Synagoge, Büro Stadtrat Hoffmann, Signatur 304, Institut für Stadtgeschichte, Frankfurt.

163. Hansert, *Geschichte*, 141.

164. Hoffmann to Schwarzweller, Frankfurt, October 18, 1972. "Korrespondenz mit Stadtverwaltung Frankfurt/Main," Beckmann Synagoge 1971, Städel Archive, Frankfurt.

165. "Es ging mir dabei vor allem um eine vier Wochen währende öffentliche Diskussion über den visionären Bildinhalt des Metaphysikers Max Beckmann und über das lädierte Verhältnis von Kunst und Markt." Hoffmann, *Erinnerungen*, 119.

166. Lenz, "Max Beckmanns »Synagoge«," 299-320.

167. "…vielmehr müssen ergänzend andere Zeugnisse (Werke, schriftliche Äußerungen) des Malers und seiner Zeitgenossen herangezogen werden, um die Vermutungen über »Die Synagoge« zur Gewißheit werden zu lassen." Ibid., 305.

168. Ibid., 316-317.

169. "Aus der Betrachtung ergibt sich, daß der besondere Sinn des Bildes nicht vor der Formung dagewesen sein konnte, sondern in der Formung überhaupt erst entstand." Ibid., 317.

170. Lenz was certainly familiar with Holzinger's art historical methods having served as a curatorial assistant at the Städel beginning in 1970. Prior to what became a ten-year stint in Frankfurt, Lenz had a two-year internship at the Kunsthalle Bremen under Günter Busch, who championed Beckmann's work. Busch also stressed a formalist approach to Beckmann's paintings. See, for example, Busch, *Max Beckmann: Eine Einführung* (Munich: R. Piper & Co. Verlag, 1960). n.b. Between 1966 and 1976, Busch was the head of the *Max Beckmann Gesellschaft*, which dissolved in 1984. Lenz revived the group in 1996 when he established the *Freundeskreis Max Beckmann Archiv*, which was renamed *Max Beckmann Gesellschaft* in 2005.

171. Lenz, "Max Beckmanns »Synagoge«," 317, 318. In a possible homage to Holzinger's characterization of the cupola as a "key figure" (*Schlüsselfigur*), Lenz described the cupola as "the most powerful rounded form in the picture." ("Die Kuppel ist die mächtigste Rundform im Bilde.") Ibid., 301.

172. Both Lenz and fellow Beckmann scholar Friedhelm Fischer delivered lectures in conjunction with the exhbition and *Aktion* on June 20 and 28, respectively. See draft of Hoffmann's letter to the Directors of Frankfurt Schools in "Aufrufe," Aktion Synagoge, Büro Stadtrat Hoffmann, Signatur 304, Institut für Stadtgeschichte, Frankfurt.

173. "Woran liegt es, daß die Spenden so mühsam erbettelt, daß die Vorträge und die Ausstellung so schlecht besucht und so weige Plakate verkauft wurden?" Lenz, "Max Beckmann – 'Die Synagoge'," n.p..

174. "Dieser geringe Wirkungsgrad der von Kunst(jahr)märkten, Monumentalausstellungen, Kunst-Shows und Akademiebetrieb verleugnent wird, hat seine Ursache in einem mangelhaften Erziehungssystem und in mangelhafter Kunstwissenschaft." Ibid.

175. "Es wird zur Aufgabe einer neuen Kunsterziehung gehören, hinsichtlich der Kunst und aller anderen Lebensbereiche bei den Schülern das richtige analogische Denken zu entwickeln, damit sie sich selbstständig zurechtfinden können." Ibid.

176. Interview with Susanne Kujer, June 23, 2009.

177. Ibid.

178. "Diese vorwiegend auf schulische Vermittlung hin angelegte didaktische Ausstellung rückt unterschiedliche Schwerpunkte der Bildanalyse in das Blickfeld des Betrachters." Kujer, "Zur Ausstellung," in *»Die Synagoge« von Max Beckmann: Wirklichkeit und Sinnbild*, ed. Klaus Gallwitz (Frankfurt: Städtische Galerie im Städelschen Kunstinstitut, 1988), 9.

179. Ibid., 7.

180. "Einer Katze…als rätselhaftes Idol, einer Sphinx ähnelnd – wissend und ungerührt." Ibid., 42.

181. "Eine Interpretation wird durch Beckmanns charakteristische Darstellungsweise und Symbolsprache, mit Hilfe der ikonographischen Methode erreicht." Ibid., 12.

182. "Die Darstellung des Bildmotives entspricht nicht unseren Sehgewohnheiten." Ibid., 12.

183. "Die Unterrichtsinhalte sollten im Erfahrungshorizont der Schüler liegen…" Ibid., 11.

184. "…die Erweiterung und Differenzierung von Wahrnehmung und Erkenntnis…" and "…die Entwicklung kritischer Urteilsfähigkeit gegenüber der Umwelt und den Erscheinungen der optischen Kultur einschließlich der Kunst selbst…." Ibid.

185. "Wenn's die Menschen nicht von sich aus aus eigener innerer Mitproductivität verstehen können, hat es gar keinen Zweck die Sache zu zeigen. (…) Es kann nur zu Menschen sprechen, die bewußt oder unbewußt ungefähr den gleichen metaphysischen Code in sich tragen." Quoted in Beckmann to Curt Valentin, Amsterdam (?), February 11, 1938. Beckmann, *Briefe*, III: 29. English translation in Haxthausen, "Interpreting Beckmann."

186. "…stellt sich allen Fragen, vertritt konträre Positionen, macht Unbekanntes verständlich und regt zum Gespräch an." *Studentenfutter*, Städel Museum, 2009, accessed February 19, 2009, http://www.staedelmuseum.de/sm/index.php?StoryID=140.

187. She spoke of the importance of these historical dimenions, particularly given the relative lack of awareness among younger students unfamiliar with the history of the former German Democratic Republic (GDR), much less World War I and II. Interview with Chantal Eschenfelder, June 22, 2009.

188. Ibid.

189. "…und das finde ich sehr gut auch in der Pädagogik. Das ist ein sehr verstärkeres Aktivieren der eigenen Wahrnemung des Besuchers. (…) Im Moment wurde aber erstmal Anfang die Besuchern beschreiben, sodass was sie sehen…nämlich schräge Straßen, verzerrte Perspektive, bedrohliche Stimmung, auch von den Farben her." Ibid.

190. Ibid.

191. Mitchell, *What do Pictures Want?*, xv.

192. "Aus der Betrachtung ergibt sich, *daß der besondere Sinn des Bildes nicht vor der Formung dagewesen sein konnte, sondern in der Formung überhaupt erst enstand*. Das zeigt sich schon darin, daß selbst durch die beigebrachten historischen und kunsthistorischen Bezüge die Dinge im Bilde nicht verbalisierbar geworden sind, und so spiegelt denn das Gemälde auch keine privaten, politischen oder religiösen Verhältnisse wider. Diese Verhältnisse sind nicht bildhaft und können deshalb gar nicht widerspiegelt werden. Das Gemälde ist auch nicht einfach durch sie bedingt, vielmehr hat Max Beckmann aus seinen Erfahrungen und mit seiner Phantasie etwas geschaffen, das eine neue Setzung bedeutet." Lenz, "Max Beckmanns »Synagoge«," 317, emphasis added.

193. "Eine Synagoge konnte jeder malen, und jedes Bild dieser Synagoge in Frankfurt am Main hätte Interesse finden müssen, denn alles ist "historisch interessant", um diese Formel der Unverbindlichkeit zu benutzen. Solches Interesse wäre freilich hauptsächlich bei Baugeschichtlern, Historikern und Juden vorhanden gewesen, weil es ganz unabhängig von der Art der Darstellung diese Gruppen jeweils besonders anginge." Ibid.

194. Benjamin, "The Work of Art," (second version), 105.

195. "Kunstwerke sind Zeugnisse der Auseinandersetzung des Künstlers mit der Welt." Lenz, "Max Beckmanns »Synagoge«," 318-319.

Amy K. Hamlin is presently working on a book project provisionally titled *Max Beckmann: Allegory and Art History* in which she argues that the familiar characterization of Beckmann as a painter of modern allegories has as much to do with his art as it does the practice of art historical writing. She is the author of forthcoming articles on Beckmann as well as on Jasper Johns in, respectively, the anthology *Methodological Studies of Christianity in the History of Art* (2013) and the *Journal of Art Historiography* (December 2012). She is an Assistant Professor of art history at St. Catherine University.

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