

## ABSTRACT

Title of Document: PAUL CÉZANNE AND THE MAKING OF  
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The application of art historical methodologies to the study of Paul Cézanne in the 1930s brought about significant changes in the way the artist's art and biography were understood. Art history was institutionalized as an international academic discipline under the pressure of the ideological struggle that preceded the Second World War. This process promoted the incorporation of modern art as part of the disciplinary field. The use of categories of analysis developed for the examination of historical manifestations helped to assimilate modern art into a narrative that extolled the continuity of the Western tradition.

This dissertation examines the writings and careers of art historians who published books on Cézanne in 1936 in Paris: Lionello Venturi, the first catalogue raisonné of the work of the artist, *Cézanne, son art, son oeuvre*; René Huyghe, a monograph, *Cézanne*; and John Rewald, *Cézanne et Zola*, which became the accepted biography

of the artist. In addition, Rewald's photographs of the sites Cézanne painted were instrumental in introducing space (as perspective) as a category for the analysis of the artist's landscapes, thus helping to establish its link to the Western tradition. The site photographs epitomize the new approach to documentation and the changes in museography that accompanied the transformation of art history.

The arrival of émigré art historians to the United States favored the identification of the hegemonic art historical discourse with an anti-totalitarian ideology. Alfred H. Barr Jr., the director of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, organized in 1936 *Cubism and Abstract Art*. The exhibition, which established Cézanne as a key figure in the development of modern art, associated modern art with the fight against Fascism.

This dissertation studies a previously ignored period of the history of the institutionalization of art history and provides arguments for the debate on the epistemological foundations of the discipline and its relationship with museography and art criticism. By questioning these foundations, the dissertation disentangles Cézanne's work from the ideological constructs that were affixed to his art by the interpretations proposed in the 1930s and suggests new avenues for understanding it.

PAUL CÉZANNE AND THE MAKING OF MODERN ART HISTORY

By

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My worldview was shaped by the experience of living in Argentina during the chaotic 1970s and 1980s. I am thankful to those who helped me to understand those events and even to gain a certain wisdom from them. I am also thankful to those who encouraged me to keep my perspective and to write about nineteenth-century art history from that vantage point. I hope it is useful to others.

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Martin Heidegger, *Qu'est-ce qu'une chose?* [1935]<sup>1</sup>

Cézanne, cette vache à lait de la peinture moderne, a conquis le droit d'être aimé ou haï pour lui-même  
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## Introduction

This dissertation is about both Paul Cézanne (1839-1906) and how art history's methodology and history have determined the understanding of his art. By including art history's methodology within the field of research, this dissertation accomplishes two important intellectual and political tasks. It opens new perspectives for the study of Cézanne's career and art that have been foreclosed by the most basic presuppositions that structure the discipline's theoretical foundations, while addressing fundamental issues about the institutionalization of art history itself as a discipline.

Cézanne's importance for the history of art can hardly be overestimated since modernism proclaimed him to be the "father of modern art." In the 1930s professional art historians took control of the artist's critical fortune. While compiling and evaluating the primary sources on the artist, they set the parameters for interpreting the artist's work and life that still define Cézanne studies. This is no coincidence since the 1930s is the decade when modern art was integrated as a subject of study

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<sup>1</sup> The date corresponds to the year in which Heidegger wrote the manuscript, as this was the subject he taught in the winter semester of 1935 at Freiburg University. The book was actually published in 1962 as *Die Frage nach dem Ding*.

within art history. The institutionalization of art history as an international academic discipline, which in this dissertation is referred to as modern art history, implied, among other things, the consolidation of a discourse that encompassed within the Western tradition Ancient, Medieval, and early modern art together with the art of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and thus, the formalization of a methodology, heuristic tools, and art writing genres applicable to all of them.

The institutionalization of modern art history was spurred by historical developments of the inter-war period, which left indelible traces on the discipline's basic outlook. The values of an idealized enlightened Humanism developed at that time are embedded within the discipline's epistemological foundations and, as integral components of its research methodologies, are used as standards to evaluate and analyze all other areas of study.<sup>2</sup> Despite the many methodological revisions proposed throughout the second half of the twentieth century, modern art history's basic principles reflect the worldview of the period in which it was institutionalized.

In 1936 Alfred H. Barr Jr. (1902-1981), then director of the Museum of Modern Art, New York presented the epochal exhibition *Cubism and Abstract Art*, which assigned a key role to Cézanne in a narrative that stressed modern art's affiliation with the Western tradition. Barr argued that Cézanne's art had been of interest to cubist artists because in his last paintings he had "Abandon[ed] the perspective of deep space and the emphatic modeling of solid forms for a compact composition in which the planes of foreground and background are fused into an

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<sup>2</sup> Georges Didi-Huberman, *Devant l'image. Question posée aux fins d'une histoire de l'art* (Paris : Editions de Minuit, 1990) addresses the problem of art history's humanism.

angular active curtain of color.”<sup>3</sup> Barr’s Cézanne is a theoretical artist in constant dialogue with tradition and interested in finding alternatives for what modern art history considers one of the symbols of the Western tradition, perspective, and for the representation of volumes on the surface of the canvas. This dissertation demonstrates that Barr’s interpretation of Cézanne’s art and his characterization of the artist were dictated by the role he assigned the master in the development of the history of Western art. In addition, the MoMA exhibition redefined modern art as the art of the international avant-gardes. In France, for example, the expression “art independant” described a trend within French artistic tradition while “modern art” was used generically to refer both to cutting edge and contemporary (present-day) art. Moreover, in the 1930s, mainstream art was not defined by its experimental and aggressive character. In the context of this dissertation, we will refer to modern art as the art from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Stephen Melville has called attention to the secret codependency that characterizes modern art and art history and has noted that the key to this relationship is precisely its being unacknowledged.<sup>4</sup> At first sight it might seem confusing to call modern art history the discipline institutionalized after the 1930s, but it makes sense

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<sup>3</sup> Alfred H. Barr Jr., *Cubism and Abstract Art*, exh. cat., Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1936, 26.

<sup>4</sup> “The same history that produces the possibility of art history produces the possibility of modernism in art, and the two possibilities are linked in the thought, which I borrow from Stanley Cavell, that modernism is well defined as the having of the past as a problem. It bears remarking here that these twinned possibilities do not and in general cannot face one another, falling as they do on opposite slopes of the cusp that is the becoming explicit or objective of art.” Stephen Melville, “The Temptation of New Perspectives” in *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Donald Preziosi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 404–405.

when asserted to have been the one that incorporated a new definition of modern art as integral part of its subject of study.<sup>5</sup>

Barr's text was critical to the new discourse of modern art history, but his was not the only scholarly voice at play in the unfolding of modern methodological studies of Cézanne. Lionello Venturi, René Huyghe, and John Rewald all published texts on Cézanne in the 1936, the same year of Barr's exhibition. Their books—*Cézanne, son art, son oeuvre*; *Cézanne*; and *Cézanne et Zola*—represent different art historical traditions and demonstrate the ideological and shifting nature of art history at a profoundly important historical moment.

Before turning his attention to modern art, Lionello Venturi (1885-1961), as a professor at the University of Turin, had written extensively on Renaissance art. In 1932 he had emigrated to France after refusing to take the obligatory oath of allegiance to the Fascist party that Mussolini had imposed on Italian university professors. Venturi wrote the first catalogue raisonné of Cézanne's oeuvre. René Huyghe (1906-1997), a promising junior curator at the Louvre and the golden boy of the French museum establishment, chose the artist as the subject of his first monograph. John Rewald (1912-1994) was at the time a young German graduate student in art history at the Sorbonne. He had also moved to France in 1932 when his father offered him a study trip. *Cézanne et Zola* would be his dissertation and first book, although Rewald had already published articles in *L'Amour de l'art*, edited by Huyghe.

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<sup>5</sup> The fact that the art historians who rebelled against modern art history called their movement “New Art history” has restricted the choices.

Venturi's catalogue raisonné had fallen out of use by the 1990s, whereas Rewald's biography of the artist and the documentation he compiled before the Second World War—correspondence, oral testimonies from those who had known the artist, legal documents, and site photographs of the places he painted—remain fundamental resources. Huyghe's conservative and nationalist interpretation of the artist has been almost forgotten.

These books and the exhibition attest that in the 1930s professional art historians took control of the artist's critical fortune. The three books, all published in Paris, represent different genres of art writing and illustrate three methodological approaches in play before the institutionalization of the discipline.<sup>6</sup> This area of Cézanne studies has been largely ignored by art historians as the ideological character of the discipline's methodologies remains transparent for most of its practitioners.

Cézanne's art, admired as both the consummation of the classical tradition and the commencement of artistic modernity, performed a pivotal role in the disciplinary readjustments that occurred in the 1930s. Considering the history of the discipline as part of the field of study permits us to gain a better grasp of Cézanne's art and to clarify the epistemological foundations of the discipline. This dissertation's methodology, thus, makes visible the ideological formations that were applied to the interpretation of modern art when it was molded to fit within the general discourse of the history of Western art. More importantly, by unraveling the conflicting ideologies

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<sup>6</sup> See for example Richard Shiff, *Cézanne and the End of Impressionism: A Study of the Theory, Technique, and Critical Evaluation of Modern Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); and John Rewald, *Cézanne and America. Dealers, Collectors, Artists and Critics, 1891–1921* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989). Both books end up their analyses in the 1930s. See also Theodore Reff, "Cézanne et la perspective: quelques remarques à la lumière de documents nouveaux," *Revue de l'art* 86 (1985): 8–15. This author establishes a brief chronology of Cézanne's studies that begins in the 1930s.

at play in these three books it is possible to gain a new understanding of Cézanne's art.

### The *Rappel à l'ordre* in the 1930s: A New Humanism

In the 1930s French politics, economy, and culture were pervaded by reactionary ideologies as the modernist experimentation, irrationality, and extreme commitment to innovation that had characterized the 1910s and the early 1920s were replaced by a conservative *imaginaire* or self-image. This hegemonic trend privileged tradition and nostalgia for a reassuring past and appeared in the works of artists who had been members of the avant-garde before 1914, like Pablo Picasso and André Derain. After the First World War a *rappel à l'ordre* (call to order) had already done much to reduce the experimental tendencies that had dominated French culture in the pre-war years and to place nostalgia and memory, the need for security and continuity, at center stage. This sentiment was precipitated by the economic depression that began in the United States with the 1929 stock market crash and reached Europe in the 1930s. Romy Golan summarizes the mood of those years,

Exacerbated by the disenchantment with technology that accompanied the Great Depression,... the turn to the rural, and, in more general terms, to the organic, became ever more pervasive in French art during the 1930s.... Predicated on the concept of a *retour à l'homme* (return to man) which was much more problematic than the *retour à l'ordre* of the preceding decade, the 1930s were marked by the surfacing of a whole array of ideological constructs such as neo-corporatism, biotypes, and a neo-Darwinian concept of the *New Man* [emphasis added] whose feudalizing and racial implications ran dangerously close to those elaborated in France's neighboring fascist states. This process of 'rusticization of

the modern' continued unabated throughout the years of the Popular Front, from 1936 to 1938.<sup>7</sup>

Golan's observation that in the 1930s the *retour à l'ordre* evolved towards a *retour à l'homme* succinctly describes the change that took place in those years, when the definition of "Man" and Humanism were at the center of cultural debate. This Humanism was a redefinition of an old Eurocentric stance that highlighted the centrality of human beings in creation and was associated with the Renaissance. France considered itself the inheritor and major exponent of the Humanist tradition. This dissertation refers to "Man" as "Anthropos," the philosophical entity that epitomizes Western belief in the centrality of humankind in creation and was widely used in the documents of the period.

This retrospective mood was also related to the Great War as France was engaged in the task of reconstruction and recuperation from its ravages. Whereas Germany had to deal with defeat but with little damage to its national cultural patrimony, France was victorious but was left with many historical treasures in ruins, not to mention whole villages wiped off the map. As Golan comments,

victory gave France the luxury of a *rappel à l'ordre* (call to order) whose political and cultural agenda was largely aimed at repressing the trauma of war. As a result, instead of the *tabula rasa* predicated by high modernism, . . . we find a collective ethos driven toward the restoration of what had been *before* the war: a world stilled, and a vision infused—from the paintings of ex-fauves and cubists-turned-naturalists, to those of the so-called *naïfs*, all the way to the surrealists—by nostalgia and memory.<sup>8</sup>

Nostalgia and memory fueled this retrospective mood determining the historicization of contemporaneous artistic movements. They were evaluated according to their

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<sup>7</sup> Romy Golan, *Modernity and Nostalgia. Art and Politics in France between the Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), ix-x.

<sup>8</sup> Golan, *Modernity and Nostalgia*, ix.

relationship with an idealized tradition: the glorious past that the French were trying to recover from the ruins. This was accentuated by the country's contemporary politics as a series of internecine political crises and diplomatic setbacks demonstrated that France's days as one of the world powers were numbered.

1936 was politically a very significant year. In 1935 the Seventh Comintern—the acronym for Communist International—following Stalin's directives, had encouraged communist parties to establish broad alliances (Popular Fronts) with socialists and even liberal parties in order to confront growing nationalisms. This attempt to foster class collaboration and an international alliance of intellectuals was one of the last important efforts to oppose Fascism.<sup>9</sup>

In France this political junction was conspicuous when the *Front Populaire* won the parliamentary elections, bringing into power the first socialist Prime Minister, Léon Blum (1872-1950), who headed the government from 1936 to 1937.<sup>10</sup> Blum, who was personally interested in art and had even written some pieces of art criticism in his youth, ordered an exhibition of French art to accompany the *Exposition Internationale - Art et techniques dans la vie moderne Paris 1937*. Blum's exhibition *Chefs d'œuvre de l'art français* gave pride of place to Cézanne.

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<sup>9</sup> This was clearly a maneuver of Stalin to move to the right and to wipe off the extreme left of Trotsky without much criticism. Exactly one year later, in August 1936 Stalin began the trials that destroyed the last traces of the old-garde of revolutionaries and intellectuals who had fought for the revolution. For some acute observers there was no doubt that Stalin would finally turn to Hitler, as he finally did in 1939. See Duncan Hallas, *The Comintern* (London: Bookmarks, 1985), especially chapter 7.

<sup>10</sup> Stefano Valeri mentions a 1936 letter from Venturi that indicates that the scholar had hopes to be able to return to his country. "Lionello Venturi antifascista 'pericoloso' durante l'esilio (1931–1945)" in *Storia dell'arte* 101 (2002), 19.

## Setting the Stage: The Documentation and Cézanne's Early Critical Fortune

Venturi and Rewald each conceived the project of discriminating the truthful documentation that purported an objective approach to Cézanne's life and oeuvre. In 1936 scholarship on the artist was literally at a crossroads.<sup>11</sup> Cézanne was hailed early on as a pivotal artist and as a precursor of modern art. He appeared in this role in the flowchart [Fig. 1.] that accompanied *Cubism and Abstract Art*, which served for years as the blueprint for the interpretation of the development of the first avant-gardes. At the same time, Cézanne's art was foregrounded in the 1937 Parisian international exhibition as the culmination of a French tradition that had begun with the Gauls and Celts. As the epigraph by Waldemar George (1881-1955) demonstrates, those interested in the artist thought that Cézanne's art should be assessed according to its own merits rather than as the beginning or the end of a process.

Compared to other artists working at the end of the nineteenth century, such as Vincent van Gogh and Paul Gauguin, documentation on Cézanne is scarce. In addition, the artist rarely exhibited his work before 1895, which implies that there is little contemporary criticism for his work. This circumstance determines fundamental aspects of his historiography and critical fortune.

Born in Aix-en-Provence in 1839, Cézanne was attached to his native province. While the artist was in high school he met Emile Zola (1840-1902), who moved to Paris in 1858. When Cézanne decided to become a painter, the future writer

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<sup>11</sup> See René Huyghe, *De l'Art a la philosophie. Réponses a Simon Monneret* (Paris: Flammarion, 1980); John Rewald, interview by Sharon Zane, 1991, transcript, The Museum of Modern Art Oral History Project, New York; and Lionello Venturi, "Dr. Venturi Gives Lively Interview On Recent Visit." By Lauri Eglinton, *The Art News* (January 5, 1935).

entreated his friend to join him in the capital. Their correspondence illuminates their aspirations and struggles as they both rebelled against the repressive Second Empire and the current artistic establishment. The painter was also critical of the leader of the artistic avant-garde of the moment: Edouard Manet (1832-1883), whose career Zola championed in his role as art critic. In the 1870s, Cézanne followed Camille Pissarro (1832-1903) to the north of the Ile-de-France, learning impressionism's techniques and aesthetic principles. Cézanne exhibited in two of the eight group exhibitions: the first (1874), and the third (1877).

In the mid-1880s Cézanne moved back to Aix. Even though he made regular visits to Paris, henceforth he had limited contacts with the art world. At the same time Zola began to express doubts about the accomplishments of the impressionist movement he had so vigorously defended in his youth. In 1895 Pissarro and other impressionist artists convinced the art dealer Ambroise Vollard (1866-1939) to organize an exhibition of the art of the Provençal master, an event that brought about his definitive consecration. Cézanne then became something of a legend among the young artists who were looking for new sources of inspiration.

By the time Cézanne's art gained recognition, the art world had changed, and the Symbolist movements of the 1880s had ceded pride of place to new artistic trends and a growing interest in tradition, the Latin roots of French culture and art, and classicism.<sup>12</sup> The young poet Joachim Gasquet (1873-1921), whom Cézanne befriended in Aix in 1896, as well as Maurice Denis (1840-1943) and Emile Bernard (1868-1941), two artists that made the trip to Provence in order to visit the artist at the

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<sup>12</sup> Jean Moréas (1856–1910) the French poet who in 1886 wrote the Symbolist manifesto, founded in the early 1890s the *Ecole Romane*.

beginning of the twentieth century, were already involved in the new aesthetic. They were biased witnesses and recorders of the master's words. After Cézanne died in 1906, however, the written testimonies they produced became significant sources of information. Their credibility and their standing as historical "documents" are central issues for the scholars working on the artist.<sup>13</sup>

In 1904 Bernard published in *L'Occident* "Paul Cézanne"—which Cézanne read—and three years later "Souvenirs sur Paul Cézanne et lettres inédites" for the *Mercur de France*. Also in 1907 Denis published his "Cézanne" in *L'Occident*. The fact that two out of three articles appeared in the *L'Occident* is telling. Founded in 1901 by the poet Adrien Mithouard (1864-1929), the literary magazine was right-wing, anti-Dreyfusard, and nationalist. Although its neo-Catholic agenda implied a more inclusive definition of Frenchness and the Renaissance than the exclusively classical one fostered by the extreme right, *L'Occident* was a conservative publication, where art was valued as a manifestation of a continuous (national) tradition.<sup>14</sup> The magazine only accepted contributors that shared its ideology, and both Denis and Bernard were known for their reactionary aesthetic and political ideas. Both articles are biased in their presentation of Cézanne, whom the authors interpreted in the light of the French classical tradition. The problem for the art

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<sup>13</sup> There were others, shorter testimonies that were of difficult access. Most of them incorporate information previously published by other authors. The most complete compilation is Michael Doran, *Conversations avec Cézanne* (Paris: Macula, 1978). Denis's article was highly influential and it is the only testimony that Rewald never criticized. See John Rewald, *Cézanne, Geffroy et Gasquet, suivi de Souvenirs sur Cézanne de Louis Aurenche et de lettres inédites* (Paris : Quatre Chemins, Editart, 1959), and Shiff, *Cézanne Impressionism*, chapter 9.

<sup>14</sup> See Laura Morowitz "Medievalism, Classicism, and Nationalism: The Appropriation of the French Primitifs in Turn-of-the-Century France," in June Hargrove and Neil McWilliam, *Nationalism and French Visual Culture 1870–1914* (Washington, D.C.: The National Gallery of Art, 2005). See also the exchange between Pierre Hepp, "Sur le choix des maîtres" *L'Occident* 7 (December, 1905): 263–265 and Francis Lepeseur (Emile Bernard), "De Michel Ange à Paul Cézanne," *La Renovation esthétique* (March, 1906): 253–259. The authors discuss the place that corresponds to Cézanne in art history.

historian is to determine how this ideology influenced the writer's recollections of their encounter with Cézanne.<sup>15</sup>

Gasquet's *Cézanne* was published in 1921. At the time of his acquaintance with the artist, the poet was attracted by Left-wing politics and even by Anarchism, but his political orientation and aesthetic ideas changed dramatically in the next years.

As Nina M. Athanassoglou-Kallmyer noted,

Gasquet represented the right mix of classical idealism, regionalist patriotism, and anti-republican politics. A radical socialist, indeed an anarchist by his own admission and a defender of the peasant cause in the 1890s, Gasquet, like Barrès, would eventually convert to a conservative nationalist position by the early 1900s.<sup>16</sup>

Allegedly Gasquet had taken notes immediately after his conversations with Cézanne and his wife later asserted that he finished the manuscript of the book in 1912 but no proof validates her claim. Although Gasquet's highly idiosyncratic and idealized portrayal of the artist has been widely contested, his *Cézanne* remains an important source for contemporary art historians.<sup>17</sup>

These testimonies emanate a powerful aura that derives from the fact that they describe "real" encounters with the artist, and, in the two first cases, by having been written and published almost immediately after the meetings with the artist had taken place. Furthermore, they are filled with details about the artist's reactions and

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<sup>15</sup> See Rodolphe Rapetti, "L'Inquiétude cézannienne : Emile Bernard et Cézanne au début du XXe siècle," *Revue de l'Art* 146 (2004) : 35–50. The author compares the letters that Bernard sent to his mother immediately after meeting the artist with the article he published later. Bernard later recanted from his appreciation of Cézanne in part due to his artistic orientation but especially after he read Cézanne's disparaging comments about him in his letters to his son and other artists. See "L'Erreur de Cézanne," *Le Mercure de France* (May 1, 1922): 513–528.

<sup>16</sup> Nina M., Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, *Cézanne and Provence. The Painter and His Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 217.

<sup>17</sup> See the studies that accompany Joachim Gasquet, *Joachim Gasquet's Cézanne A Memoir with Conversations* [Translated by Christopher Pemberton. Preface by John Rewald, Introduction by Richard Shiff] (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991).

behavior, as well as with a wealth of appealing and easy-to-remember anecdotes. This dissertation, by exploring the basic narrative structure of modern art history, illuminates the staying power and the attraction that these testimonies have exerted on art historians.

In the first decades of the twentieth century Cézanne's critical fortune was affected by the association of the artist's name with other artistic movements and personalities whose reception fluctuated widely during the inter-war years. The answers to the 1905 "Enquête sur les tendances actuelles des arts plastiques" proposed by the poet Charles Morice (1861-1919) testifies to Cézanne's early influence among young French painters.<sup>18</sup> Picasso and the other cubist painters expressed their appreciation of his art, which was one of the sources of their movement. This association became a liability for Cézanne's name after the First World War, when even Picasso was disavowing his more experimental art and turning to a neo-classic style. The avant-garde, and cubism in particular, were then under attack as harmful German influences on French art.<sup>19</sup> Cézanne's involvement with impressionism posed problems as well, since this artistic movement was also labeled pro-German and a deviation from the continuous French classical tradition.

In 1926, George, as editor-in-chief of the magazine *L'Amour de l'art*, asked the British art critic Roger Fry (1866-1934) for a study on Cézanne. The article evolved into the famous *Cézanne: A Study of His Development*, published in English

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<sup>18</sup> See Phillipe Dagen and Charles Morice, *La peinture en 1905 "L'Enquête sur les tendances actuelles des arts plastiques" de Charles Morice* (Paris: Lettres modernes, 1986).

<sup>19</sup> Kenneth Silver, *Esprit de Corps: the Art of the Parisian Avant-garde and the First World War, 1914-1925*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989) and Christopher Green, *Cubism and Its Enemies. Modern Movements and Reaction in French art, 1916-1928* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987). See also Laura Iamurri "La tradizione, il culto del passato, l'identità nazionale: un'inchiesta sull'arte francese," *Prospettiva* 105 (January, 2002): 86-98.

in 1927. In 1910 Fry had organized the exhibition *Manet and the Post-Impressionists* at the Grafton Gallery in London, and displayed Cézanne's paintings among the work of fauve and cubist artists. Now he commented that the artist's work belonged with Poussin and not with modern art. Fry who had never appreciated impressionism, associated it with cubism and referred to both artistic movements as "excursus" or "loops" in the trajectory of French art, which had "brought back certain valuable material into the main current, but...abandoned a great deal of what at the time seemed of great importance to its exponents."<sup>20</sup> Fry's formalist approach to Cézanne was well-known during the inter-war years, and the authors examined here paid heed to his stylistic analyses and opinions. The art critic, an accomplished painter in his own right, translated into English for *The Burlington Magazine* Denis's 1907 article on Cézanne.<sup>21</sup> In fact, the French artist begins his essay on the older artist stating that, if he were in a provincial museum, he would consider placing the Cézannes among the old masters and not in the rooms devoted to modern art.<sup>22</sup>

At the beginning of the twentieth century the story of Cézanne's friendship with Zola acquired a new meaning and relevance. The writer's name had become the symbol of the fight against conservatism and anti-Semitism, since his 1898 *J' accuse* had marked a turning point in the history of the Dreyfus affair and in French politics.

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<sup>20</sup> Roger Fry, *Cézanne: A Study of His Development* (New York: Macmillan, 1927), 31.

<sup>21</sup> See the introduction he wrote in "Cézanne—I. By Maurice Denis," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 8 (January, 1910): 207–209, 212, 215 + 219.

<sup>22</sup> The writings on Cézanne by the German art critic Julius Meier-Graefe (1867–1937) also had an international repercussion, as they were translated into English early on. His 1904 *Entwicklungsgeschichte der modernen Kunst. Vergleichende Betrachtungen der Bildenden Künste, als Beitrag zu einer neuen Ästhetik* was published as *Modern Art Being a Contribution to a New System of Aesthetics* (London: William Heinemann, 1908). In 1907 Meier-Graefe published *Impressionisten: Guys—Manet—Van Gogh—Pissarro—Cézanne. Mit einer Einleitung über den Wert der französischen Kunst und sechzig* and in 1918 *Cézanne und sein Kreis*. The author interpreted Cézanne an early manifestation of expressionism in art.

In the 1930s modern art began to be associated with freedom and democracy and therefore Zola's ambiguous role in Cézanne's life and in the critical fortune of impressionism became a liability.

The three art historians analyzed in the first section of this study represent three alternate approaches to art and therefore three ways of understanding Cézanne and modern art. Huyghe's monograph on Cézanne did not survive the test of time. If Venturi's catalogue of the artist's oeuvre was for years a common reference for scholars, the monograph that precedes it, where the author expounds his philosophical interpretation and the stylistic analysis on which it was based, is seldom mentioned. Venturi conceived of documents as peripheral heuristic tools for his work, whereas Rewald's scholarship revolves around them. The German scholar played a key role in the compilation, evaluation, and publication of the resources that are used today by specialists working on Cézanne. Of the three art historians here examined, Rewald was the one who most permanently and profoundly influenced the modern appreciation of impressionism and Cézanne. In later years he authored two new catalogue raisonnés of the work of Cézanne: one of watercolors in 1982, and one of oil paintings, published posthumously exactly sixty years after the first one, in 1996.

As Joseph J. Rishel commented in 1996,

extremely skeptical about the utility of art theory and aesthetics, alert to the abuses that follow from adopting an extreme point of view, he [Rewald] focused exclusively on matters that could be securely documented. The result is a body of scholarship that laid the foundation of modern Cézanne studies.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Joseph J. Rishel, "A Century of Cézanne Criticism II: From 1907 to the Present," *Cézanne* exh. cat., Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, 1996, 59 and n.50.

Rewald's biography of Cézanne together with Barr's *Cubism and Abstract Art* established the foundations of the modern studies on the artist.

### The Institutionalization of Art History as an Academic International Discipline in the 1930s

The historical and political circumstances underpinning the institutionalization of art history fostered its internationalization. In the nineteenth century the discipline had been influenced by the particularities of the culture, educational system, and art world of different countries, which favored the development of national—even nationalistic—art histories.<sup>24</sup> In the 1930s, even nationalisms manifested themselves as internationalist ideologies. Nazism, for example, was based on racial considerations that went beyond Germany's boundaries. Moreover, the term “Fascism” was used to characterize the ideologies that governed Germany, Italy, and Spain. Totalitarianism is an umbrella word that refers to regimes in which the state controls the life of society, and, as such, encompassed German Nazism, Italian Fascism, and Stalinism.<sup>25</sup> Communism had traditionally aspired to establish an international alliance of workers that went beyond national borders. This became state policy for the Soviet Union: after 1919, the Comintern issued policies for and coordinated the activities of all the national Communist parties.

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<sup>24</sup> See *Revue de l'Art* 146 (2004) especially Pascal Griener, “Idéologie ‘nationale’ ou science ‘positive’ ?,” pp. 43–50 ; and Wilhelm Schlink, “Enseignement ou illumination? Les histoires de l'art française et allemande dans leurs rapports à l'iconographie chrétienne,” pp. 51–60.

<sup>25</sup> Such is the basic definition provided by the Italian philosopher Giovanni Gentile the ghost writer of Benito Mussolini who popularized the term in the 1920s.

Nazism, Totalitarianism, and Fascism were grouped together in the minds of those intellectuals and scholars who opposed these ideologies. Concepts and categories such as Humanism, respect for the individual, and freedom helped to build a common front to contest these political forces and to try to stave off their growing influence. This ideological warfare dominated the international stage and precipitated the politicization of ongoing debates on art history and the history of art.

In 1935, during a short visit to the United States, Venturi commented that “in Europe today outside of Paris it is difficult to have a sense of freedom.”<sup>26</sup> Thus, it is not a coincidence that the three books here considered were published in the French capital. Venturi was forced to leave Fascist Italy in 1932. Rewald, who was Jewish, had left Germany on his own accord that same year, and Hitler’s rise to power in 1933 made it impossible for him to return. Both scholars had to flee Paris at the onset of the war and both found refuge in the United States.

In 1933 Barr obtained a year’s leave of absence from his post at MoMA. He spent this year in Germany. While living in Stuttgart he witnessed the first attacks on art galleries and cultural institutions by the Nazis and became acutely aware of the real threat Nazism posed both politically and for modern art.

The first two decades of the twentieth century were characterized by the acceleration of exchanges among European and American universities and art history departments.<sup>27</sup> The 1930s saw the massive displacement of scholars to the United

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<sup>26</sup> Lionello Venturi, “Lively Interview,” 3.

<sup>27</sup> See Kathryn Brush, “German Kunstwissenschaft and the Practice of Art History in America after World War I. Interrelationships, Exchanges, Contexts,” *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft* (1999): 7–36 and Craig Hugh Smyth, and Peter M. Lukehart eds., *The Early Years of Art History in the United States Notes and Essays on Departments, Teaching, and Scholars* (Princeton, NJ: Department of Art and Archaeology Princeton University New Jersey, 1993).

States, especially from Germany and, later in the decade, from occupied countries. These art historians varied in their backgrounds and level of expertise. Some of them returned to Europe after the war, carrying with them their experience in the United States.<sup>28</sup> Venturi, for example, went back to Italy immediately after the war while Rewald stayed in the United States.

The most successful and influential of the émigrés was Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968).<sup>29</sup> The founders of the discipline, that is, the art historians who developed its basic theories, vocabulary, categories, and its research methodologies, were German-speaking scholars such as Heinrich Wölfflin (1864-1945) and Alois Riegl (1858-1905). But it was Panofsky who led the way to the modern practice of art history. As Stephen Melville observes,

There is a sense in which we may be tempted to think of Riegl certainly, and Wölfflin largely, as ancient history, not yet really art history. With Panofsky we seem to step into an altogether different register, one in which *the founding of art history is an achieved fact*. ...

Whereas in Wölfflin, key terms ... can, from paragraph to paragraph and often undecidedly, be given variously Kantian or Hegelian inflections, in Panofsky, Kant unequivocally presides and the explicit problematic of historicity recedes. *The 'Kant' in question here is also quite particular*: given the state of Kant's German inheritance in the early part of this century, Panofsky could, in effect, have moved either toward the neo-Kantian tendencies that culminate in the work of Ernst Cassirer or toward the more radical revision of Kant set in motion by Heidegger. And Panofsky's choice was, clearly, for Cassirer.

And he concludes,

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<sup>28</sup> See Colin Eisler, "Kunstgeschichte American Style: A Study in Migration," in *The Intellectual Migration: Europe and America, 1930–1960*, eds. Donald Fleming and Bernard Bailyn (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969); Stephanie Barron, *Exiles + Émigrés The Flight of European Artists from Hitler*. exh. cat., Los Angeles County Museum, 1997.

<sup>29</sup> Erwin Panofsky, "The History of Art," in *The Cultural Migration: The European Scholars in America*, by Franz L. Neumann et al. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1953).

With this, *Riegl, and Wölfflin, the speculative past of art history itself comes to seem mere prehistory, the protoscience from which art history has elevated itself.*<sup>30</sup> (Emphasis added)

Panofsky brought about a “neo-Kantian turn” in the philosophical foundations of art history that was decisive for its institutionalization as an international academic discipline. Neo-Kantianism fostered art history’s standing as a scientifically based branch of learning able to objectively study artistic manifestations emanating from different cultural areas. Moreover, it was this philosophical approach that permitted Panofsky to transform Renaissance Humanism into an epistemological paradigm. Panofsky’s early publications spanned the years of the Weimar Republic, when he was working at the University of Hamburg and the Warburg Institute. They reveal his awareness of and interest in the experimental formalism of the School of Vienna (Riegl). In 1927 he published *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, which proposed an interpretation of the West based on the way it (hypothetically) thought of and represented space. In this way, Panofsky’s scholarship indirectly but most effectively influenced the study of Cézanne, as the Second Section of this dissertation demonstrates.

Other important developments confirm the 1930s as a decisive decade for the process of the institutionalization of modern art history. First, for the first time modern art was subject to the same protocols of study as art of the past. This, in turn, affected the production of art as it determined the precocious historicization of contemporary artistic movements. Secondly, the decade saw the internationalization of the circuit of art exhibitions and of the debate about the history of art, which, as

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<sup>30</sup> Melville, “Temptation of New Perspectives,” 408–409. Melville also considers that the history of art history is dependent on the history of Germany. See page 405.

noted above, coincided with their politicization. Third, the epistemological foundations of art history, the disciplinary boundaries of the specialties devoted to the examination and appreciation of the artistic phenomenon, and the conformation of study plans in degree-granting institutions were intensely debated in international forums.

Prior to the 1930s, modern art was rarely a subject matter for art historians although some German universities were beginning to incorporate it in their programs. In the early 1930s Rewald was informed that modern art in the Sorbonne extended to Delacroix.<sup>31</sup> Jonathan Crary points out that Walter Friedlander was among the first scholars to apply the vocabulary and methodology used for old masters to the analysis of nineteenth-century art in his *Hauptstroemungen der französischen malerei von David bis Delacroix* (1930).<sup>32</sup> Crary writes,

The nineteenth century gradually became assimilated into the mainstream of the discipline through apparently dispassionate and objective examination, similar to what had happened earlier with the art of late antiquity. But in order to domesticate that strangeness from which earlier scholars had recoiled, historians explained nineteenth-century art according to models taken from the study of older art. Initially, mainly formal categories from Renaissance painting were transferred to nineteenth-century artists, but beginning in the 1940s notions like class content and popular imagery became surrogates for traditional iconography. *By inserting nineteenth-century painting into a continuous history of art and a unified discursive apparatus of explanation, however, something of its essential difference was lost.*<sup>33</sup> (Emphasis added)

Even artistic manifestations that had been originally thought of as a reaction against, difference from, and opposition to tradition were now encompassed within a

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<sup>31</sup> See Rewald, interview.

<sup>32</sup> Interestingly enough, Friedlander (1873–1969) had a Ph. D. in Sanskrit and not in art history. See “Max Friedlander,” Dictionary of Art Historians (website). [www.dictionaryofarthistorians.org/](http://www.dictionaryofarthistorians.org/)

<sup>33</sup> Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 1990), 22–23. See also Hans Belting, *The End of the History of Art?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), especially 34 ff. Belting’s analysis confirms Crary’s although it does not identify the 1930s as the fundamental decade in this development.

broader category which highlighted tradition's unbroken continuity and resilience. In this way, modern art served to reaffirm the belief in the existence of transcendental entities such as Art and the West. As works of art were perceived as the physical manifestation of those ahistorical entities, their differences were interpreted as variations in a continuous development.

The *rappel à l'ordre*, with its need to classify and create genealogies, constantly related present day art movements to past ones. This had the effect of naturalizing what had begun as a strategy for the defense of modern art. The competition between nations to assert their national art's anteriority and superiority encouraged the comparison of modern and traditional artistic manifestations, which conjured up a wealth of associations and relationships that supported the notion of a continuous national tradition. The process not only involved finding the roots of modern art in the past—as Crary noticed—but also the reading of the past in the light of the novelties brought about by modern art in order to proclaim the precedence and utmost originality of national schools.

That the nineteenth century experienced modern [as contemporary or present day] art as different from that of the old masters is reflected in the fact that contemporary art was not easily incorporated into museums. In France, for example, the musée de Luxemburg served as a transitory institution devoted to modern art.<sup>34</sup>

MoMA was created with the Luxemburg as a model, following the French

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<sup>34</sup> Jesús Pedro Lorente, *Cathedrals of Modernity: the First Museums of Contemporary Art, 1800–1930* (Brookfield, Vt.: Ashgate, c1998). MoMA also followed the model of the German *Kunstverein* and many other formulas devised in Europe during the nineteenth century for the exhibition of contemporary, generally national, art.

institution's idea that some contemporary works might eventually become part of the permanent collection of traditional art museums.<sup>35</sup>

In 1936, with *Cubism and Abstract Art*, Barr redefined modern art as the art of the European avant-gardes and associated it with the fight for freedom and democracy. In this way, he countered the nationalist explanation of art and identified modern art with a moral and political ideal perceived as universal. By doing so, Barr narrowed the definition of modern art and declared the museum off limits for a great percentage of twentieth-century art which, even if of good artistic quality, did not reflect the historical development or the ideology that he fostered. This exhibition was of fundamental importance for Cézanne's critical fortune as it presented the artist as the antecedent of both cubism and abstract art and as the "father of *the new definition of modern art*." MoMA's success was such that soon other museums adopted Barr's interpretation of the history of modern art as well as his innovatory museographic and museological strategies and managerial style.<sup>36</sup>

In the 1930s, American artists criticized MoMA for its almost exclusive concentration on European art, a complaint fed by the progressive arrival of émigré artists fleeing the continent. While in Europe in nineteenth-century modern art was

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<sup>35</sup> In 1933 Barr depicted the ideal collection of MoMA as an evolving torpedo. The idea was that, once the oldest works had attained a certain level of acceptability, they would be de-accessioned and transferred to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the like institutions so that MoMA would remain as a museum of the latest (modern) artistic movements. See Sybil Gordon Kantor, *Alfred H. Barr, Jr. and the Intellectual Origins of the Museum of Modern Art* (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 2002), 366–367; and Kirk Varnedoe, "The Evolving Torpedo" in *Museum of Modern Art at Mid-Century: Continuity and Change* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1995). MoMA's was the "victim" of its own success and Barr had to abandon his project and build a *permanent* collection of *modern art*, which, when seeing in the light of what the nineteenth century considered to be modern art, is a *contradictio in adjectio*.

<sup>36</sup> As Christoph Grunenberg commented that "[t]he institutional nature of art museums ... was redefined by the Museum of Modern Art's deliberate concentration on temporary exhibitions." "The Politics of Presentation: The Museum of Modern Art, New York," in *Art Apart: Art Institutions and Ideology Across England and North America*, ed. Marcia Pointon (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 195.

virtually synonymous with contemporary *national* art, MoMA's new ideology fostered an interpretation that was supra-national or international in scope.

In Europe the League of Nations or *Société des Nations* (SDN) provided another forum for the internationalization of the debate on art history and for its politicization. In 1921 this institution established the *Organisation de coopération intellectuel* (OCI) with the mandate of rallying the intellectuals of the world to fight for peace. One of its most active branches was the *Institut international de coopération intellectuelle* (IICI) whose seat was in Paris and which was supported by the French government. France aspired to promote its claims to worldwide cultural hegemony through the activities and publications of these organizations.<sup>37</sup> The debate on culture, thus, reflected the international political situation and the ideological warfare that characterized this period.

In spite of being a branch of an international organization, the IICI conceived of European civilization as the paradigm for the development of all the other cultures represented in it. This particular tradition was predominantly identified with Humanism and was used as a banner and catchphrase to confront Totalitarianism, especially Communism and the Nazi myth of Aryan supremacy. Since the Enlightenment, the category "Man" implied belonging to a race and/or nation, and, therefore, the IICI defended and promoted not only a Humanism that was unabashedly Eurocentric, but also the idea of nation (in the sense that it reaffirmed

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<sup>37</sup> All of its directors were French. England, Germany, the United States, and Russia never participated in sponsoring it. Even if the SDN was an American idea the country did not participate actively in it and created an organization similar to the IICI, the Pan American Union, which competed with France for cultural and political influence in Latin America. See Jean Jacques Renoliet, *L'Unesco oubliée. La Société des Nations et la Coopération intellectuelle 1919–1946* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1999).

nations as basic human aggregations). This can be seen in the journals published by the IICI: *Entretiens*, which reported on the international debates it sponsored, and *Correspondances*, the exchange of letters among scholars. The following quote, taken from the proceedings of the debate about “Vers un nouvel humanisme” sponsored by the organization, exemplifies this point. One of the participants, M. A. Eckhardt contended then that,

Le nationalisme ne doit nullement craindre cette renaissance des humanités. L'histoire des nations européennes montre jusqu'à l'évidence que, loin de la menacer, cette forme de l'esprit international n'a jamais cessé d'alimenter les cultures nationales des peuples européens. ...

Ainsi les cultures nationales ne devront jamais renier leur père, l'humanisme européen, car il est le ciment qui les unit, les empêche de s'éparpiller et de se confiner dans un isolement farouche...

Celui qui renie les humanités ne croit ni à l'Europe, ni à l'unité de la civilisation européenne.<sup>38</sup>

This interpretation of Humanism was at the foundations of, and coexisted with, the more theoretically complex one that Panofsky examined in his studies. Humanism was identified with Europe and thus understood as the ideological foundation for European nations. Humanism hence served to associate art and culture with a category that was beyond and above nationalities, but contained in itself the notion of nation. This was a European category and as such historically determined, but was presented as universal. This explains how and why inherently nationalist historiographies have been able to survive within modern art history.

One of the most dynamic promoters of the IICI's program was the French art historian Henri Focillon (1881–1943). From 1925 he participated actively in its sub-commission of art and literature, which was transformed into a permanent committee

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<sup>38</sup> V. Broendal, K. Čápek, A. Dopsch... [et al.] “Vers un nouvel humanisme,” *Entretiens* 6 (Paris: Institut international de coopération intellectuelle, 1937), 30.

in 1931. Focillon's aspiration was to foster communication among countries through their art institutions. The initiatives he promoted were oriented towards this goal. At the same time, he thought of French culture and art as the epitome of Western Humanism and civilization, and all his institutional projects and his scholarship were suffused by this conviction.<sup>39</sup> His first undertaking was the organization of the work of museums, which resulted in the creation of the *Office international des musées* (OIM).<sup>40</sup> Focillon also wanted to coordinate all other institutions related to the study and practice of art. As he wrote in 1932,

l'Office international des musées représente dans [ma] pensée une première étape. Le projet actuel [la coordination des instituts de l'histoire de l'art] serait la seconde. Une coordination des écoles de beaux-arts serait l'achèvement d'un plan qui [me] tient très à cœur. C'est le jour seulement où cette triple action aura pu se réaliser que la coopération intellectuelle aura fait pour les arts quelque chose qui soit digne de la Société des Nations.<sup>41</sup>

In 1935 OIM organized the first *Conférence internationale d'études sur l'architecture et l'aménagement des musées d'art*. The IICI sponsored the first exhibition on museography, installed at the Palais de Tokyo in front of *Chefs d'œuvre de l'art français* at the time of the *Exposition Internationale* in Paris in 1937. The aim of this didactic exhibition, curated by Huyghe with the assistance of Rewald, was to demonstrate the latest advances in the art of display. It included three pilot exhibitions

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<sup>39</sup> A specialist in Medieval art, Focillon had seen the damage the Germans had done to France's cultural heritage during the Great War. His scholarship denotes a strong anti-German bias. Chapter 3 will analyze his nationalist stance both within and outside the IICI. See Christian Briend, and Alice Thomine eds., *La vie des formes: Henri Focillon et les arts*. exh. cat. (Paris: Institute national d'histoire de l'art, 2004), and *Relire Focillon : Cycle de conférences organisé au Musée du Louvre par le Service culturel du 27 novembre au 18 décembre 1995* (Paris : Ecole nationale supérieure des beaux-arts, 1998).

<sup>40</sup> The OIM is the direct antecedent of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), which in turn, is a branch of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

<sup>41</sup> Archives Unesco, CICI/Perm. L.A./ 2e session/P.V. 1 (1) quoted in Daniel H. A Maksymiuk "L'engagement politique au sein de l'Institut de coopération intellectuelle," in Briend, *Henri Focillon*, 286.

on different subjects: the history of theater, French rural abodes, and the art of Vincent van Gogh. In the exhibition of van Gogh, Huyghe devised a documentary space, where he displayed the artist's letters, maps, plans, comparative photographs, and Rewald's site photographs, on panels topped by wall texts.

The Totalitarian regimes of the inter-war years had quickly exploited the art of organizing propagandistic exhibitions and performances in order to rally the masses behind their causes. As George Mosse argues,

It was the strength of fascism in general that it realized, as other political movements and parties did not, that with the nineteenth century Europe had entered a visual age, the age of political symbols, ... The populism of fascism helped the movement to arrive at this insight: the need to integrate the masses into a so-called spiritual revolution which represented itself through a largely traditional aesthetic.<sup>42</sup>

The new museography exemplified by Huyghe's and Barr's exhibitions should be understood in this historical context. The institutionalization of modern art history was accompanied by significant changes in its attendant manifestations museography and museology (more below) which were as politicized as the debate on art history.

Although it cannot be demonstrated that Barr knew of Stalin's "talking museums" (1928) or any of the Italian exhibitions organized by Fascist art historians and curators such as Ugo Ojetto or Claudio Monti,<sup>43</sup> he was well aware of the advances

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<sup>42</sup> George L. Mosse, "Fascist Aesthetics and Society: Some Considerations," *Journal of Contemporary History* 31 Special Issue: *The Aesthetics of Fascism* (April, 1996): 247. As Dr. June Hargrove has pointedly remarked, art and display were politicized and used as propaganda during the French Revolution. Interestingly enough terrorism, mass deception, and dictatorship even a form of totalitarianism were all elements of this historical event that signaled an epistemic shift in the history of the West. Modern art thus is tightly tied to the new political, economical and social forces that established modernity itself. The date of the end of modernity and the beginning of post-modernity and even of the beginning of a new episteme is still a subject of debate. This dissertation affords a new perspective to think of this important issue. As it will be explained below outright propaganda became after 1930s part of art's and art history's ideology.

<sup>43</sup> See Adam Jolles, "Stalin's Talking Museums," *Oxford Art Journal* 28 (March, 2005): 429–455. For the Fascist exhibitions in Italy see Claudia Lazzaro, and Roger J. Crum eds., *Donatello among the*

made by the Bauhaus in this field, and of the work of the Futurist and Russian artists, photographers, architects, and designers interested on display. These included Mario Sironi, El Lissitzky, Aleksander Rodchenko, Vladimir Tatlin, among others. The parodical installations of the avant-garde, including Duchamp and the Surrealists, underscore the fact that display became a conscious strategy in the years before the Second World War.

Well aware of the international activities in this field, Huyghe included reduced models of several new museum installations in his 1937 exhibition. In his texts he commented on the value of museum display for ideological purposes and propaganda (Chapter Three). Therefore, both curators were conscious of the potential of museum display for the inculcation of moral value and political ideology.<sup>44</sup> The objective, rational, neutral, document-based museography inaugurated by Barr and Huyghe in the 1930s was deliberately ideological (more on this below).

The IICI also provided a forum for the debate on the organization of the different disciplines devoted to the study of art as well as on the epistemological foundations of art history itself. At the same time, the Surrealists and the group of intellectuals associated with the magazine *Documents* (1929-1931) and the *Musée de l'Homme* focused on the epistemological status of art and Beaux-Arts, the definition of culture, and the aesthetic value of ethnographic material. This anti-establishment, anti-Humanist position must be factored into the internationalization of the debate about

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*Blackshirts. History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

<sup>44</sup> The work by Huyghe has not attracted scholarly attention. On MoMA's approach to display see Mary Anne Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998).

art history's foundations. From the pages of *Documents*, George Bataille (1897-1962), Carl Einstein (1885-1940), and many other important intellectuals called for an alternative interpretation for the problem of art and the development of a different kind of critical approach to it.

### The History of Modern Art History

Jonathan Harris recently characterized the art history that evolved as a critique of modern/ist art history as “radical,” “critical,” or “new” art history. New Art History, he writes,

is intended to indicate the recognition that since 1970 art history developed forms of description, analysis, and evaluation rooted in, and inseparable from, recent social and political activism [May '68] while it also took up legacies inherited from scholarship and political activism from much earlier times in the twentieth, and nineteenth century.<sup>45</sup>

The incorporation of Structuralist, Feminist, and post-Marxist theories for the analysis of artistic phenomena involved a serious critique of modern art history's basic presuppositions and methodologies, seen as a “crisis” in the discipline.<sup>46</sup> Harris writes in the past tense as he acknowledges that the main protagonists of the “rebellion” had settled into academia, therefore institutionalizing and containing the crisis he describes.<sup>47</sup> In 1996 Griselda Pollock warned about the inability of theory *per se* to

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<sup>45</sup> Jonathan Harris, *The New Art History. A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2001), 1.

<sup>46</sup> The “crisis” was previously debated in the two publications of the College Art Association. In 1982 Henry Zerner edited a special issue of *Art Journal* on *The Crisis in the Discipline* (Winter, 1982). In addition, *The Art Bulletin* published the series “A Range of Critical Perspectives” between September 1994 and June 1997.

<sup>47</sup> For a similar prognosis about multiculturalism and Post-colonial studies see Rasheed Araeen, “A New Beginning. Beyond Postcolonial Cultural Theory and Identity Politics,” *Third Text* 50 (Spring, 2000): 3–20.

bring about significant change, and about the resilience of modern art history. In her answer to *The Art Bulletin*'s inquiry about "Art History and Its Theories" she wrote,

'Art History and Its Theories' suggests two discrete entities and means that the debate can only take place within the field defined by an—as yet—unquestioned notion of the given identity of something called Art History (which is, of course, only the cumulative effect of all the concrete practices in colleges, museums, and publishing houses). It already exists and these 'theories' are foreign imports, by definition alien. Thus, a fanastic [sic] xenophobia is operative before we even begin. What has happened historically in the last forty years has been the resumption... of the intellectual movements of modernity: engagements with language, meaning, subjectivity, identity, all framed within the terms of engagement created by the global consolidation of Western industrial capitalism, its contradictory inner forces, and those which it generated to oppose it: reformist, radical, revolutionary. Art history seems so little to take its own subject, culture, seriously that it fails to see itself as a player in this historical field, a reflexive response to modernity with its cultures of self-definition and self-mystification, one of what Michel Foucault named the 'sciences of Man' which would invent, and then preside over the demise of, this curious fiction.<sup>48</sup>

Art historians not interested in theoretical issues, as a rule, do not notice that they do advocate a theory, one so ingrained within the methodological tools of their practices that it has become transparent, that is, ideological. Pollock takes *The Art Bulletin*'s editors to task and deconstructs the initial proposal, observing that it pre-determined the answers. For these editors modern art history's theoretical outlook is the discipline itself. This mindset prevents other theories from challenging it.<sup>49</sup>

As Harris noted, one of the strategies of the New Art History consisted of revitalizing methodological approaches and points of view of the past. The institutionalization of art history in the 1930s brought to an end the experimentalism and diversity of methodological approaches that characterized the inter-war years

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<sup>48</sup> Griselda Pollock, "Theory, Ideology, Politics: Art History and Its Myths," part of the series "Art Theory and Its Theories," *Art Bulletin* 58 (March, 1996), 21.

<sup>49</sup> This is why Martin Heidegger's epigraph is important: questions shape the answers and it is the ability to question outside one's presuppositions, what determines the scope of the knowledge and innovation the answer will provide.

thereby creating a canon of fundamental texts.<sup>50</sup> This dissertation examines both the currents of thought that became the hegemonic art historical discourse (modern art history) at the end of the 1930s as well as the theories and methodologies that did not become part of the canonical discourse. These last were alternative models for the understanding of art and the discipline. By contextualizing them, this dissertation challenges their reduction to what the editors of *The Art Bulletin* referred to as “Its Theories.”<sup>51</sup>

In order to examine the history of art history this dissertation considers it (like Pollock in the quote above) as an integral part of the project of modernity. This standpoint has the advantage of highlighting the fact that the organization of knowledge in autonomous disciplines is conventional and not organic, that it does not reflect the structure of the world, and, hence, that it does not imply the existence of the different subjects these disciplines study. In the 1930s art history’s existence as an autonomous field of knowledge, its disciplinary boundaries and relationship with other subjects, was hotly debated, and was even opposed by such important scholars as Aby Warburg (1866-1929), who believed it should be a branch of the history of culture.

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<sup>50</sup> About the revivals in art history see James Elkins, *Is Art History Global?* (London: Routledge, 2007). As this was one topic debated in the roundtable that generated the “assessments” it is considered by almost all the authors who contributed to the volume.

<sup>51</sup> At the time, there were scholars and intellectuals who were interested in developing ways of thinking that were as anti-establishment as the art of the avant-gardes. They proposed anti-rational and anti-logical strategies that were set aside by Academia or considered “artistic” or “poetic.” The work of Heidegger, George Bataille, Carl Einstein, Walter Benjamin have started to be assimilated into modern art history but, as noted above, their theories have been constrained to fit within already well established epistemological parameters. In 1996 Pollock noticed that the new theories being proposed were selected and manipulated so that they supported a new orthodoxy. Pollock, “Theory, Ideology,”<sup>20</sup> I agree with her diagnostic. However, Pollock was thinking of historical materialism, whereas I have noticed that the influence of Post-Marxist theories has blocked the debate on faith and the inclusion of non-Western epistemologies within the discipline’s theoretical outlook.

Claire Farago has noted that the categories “art” and “culture” developed simultaneously in the nineteenth century, closely related to the history of anthropology and art history.<sup>52</sup> Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s 2003 *Global Transformations. Anthropology and the Modern World*, a book that sketches the history of modern anthropology both as the creation of a subject of study and as a discipline institutionalized between 1859 and 1939, provides a useful theoretical framework for the examination of the history of art history as it is developed in the following chapters.<sup>53</sup>

Trouillot refers to the West as the North Atlantic, which allows him to underline the fact that, to put it bluntly, the West does not exist but is a fiction, a project, “an exercise in global legitimation... the projection of the North Atlantic as the sole legitimate site for the universal, the default category, the unmarked—so to speak—of all human possibilities.”<sup>54</sup> As the default position it can only be defined by contradistinction with what it is not, the non-Western, or the Other. The West as North Atlantic is a way of representing things, a world view that is conventional, but transparent for those who express it. That is also the reason why it is difficult, if not impossible, to define it positively, as it is *a way* of understanding the world but it is experienced as the perception of the (real) world. Trouillot’s definition provides a

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<sup>52</sup> Claire Farago, “‘Vision Itself has Its History’: ‘Race,’ Nation, and Renaissance Art History,” in *Reframing the Renaissance. Visual Culture in Europe and Latin America*, ed. Claire Farago (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 76, ff. Donald Preziosi observes that all these sciences were dependent on the invention of photography and that made a disciplinary use of it. This will be considered in the Second Section. See Preziosi, “The Art of Art History,” in *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Preziosi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 511.

<sup>53</sup> Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Global Transformations. Anthropology and the Modern World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003). The book is especially appropriated since it argues that modern anthropology has to be applied to the consideration of the North Atlantic itself and not only to the study of non-Western populations that are almost non-existent anymore.

<sup>54</sup> Trouillot, *Global Transformations*, 1–2.

non-essentialist standpoint that foregrounds the West only as a hegemonic worldview.

He coins the phrase “North Atlantic universals” to describe,

words that project the North Atlantic experience on a universal scale that they themselves have helped to create. North Atlantic universals are particulars that have gained a degree of universality, chunks of human history that have become historical standards.<sup>55</sup>

Trouillot includes words like nation-state, democracy, freedom, progress, and modernity under this category, and observes that even though their meaning is historically determined and not constant they are thought of and used as universals. The North Atlantic universals are prescriptive, not merely descriptive or referential: they imply what is right and good, they present themselves as models of what should be; they are ideological (see below). Moreover these words seduce as they suggest not only that they are the truth, but that they are rational, even if they are a form of belief and thus rooted in emotions.<sup>56</sup> They have the strength and ubiquity of common sense or *doxa* but are the conditions of possibility of knowledge itself and are therefore embedded in the scientific or specialized discourses. As Trouillot comments,

They do not describe the world; they offer visions of the world. They appear to refer to things as they exist, but rooted as they are in a particular history they are evocative of multiple layers of sensibilities, persuasions, cultural and ideological choices tied to that localized history. They come to us loaded with aesthetic and stylistic sensibilities, religious and philosophical persuasions, cultural assumptions ranging from *what it means to be a human being* to the proper relationship between humans and the natural world, ideological choices ranging from the nature of the political to its possibilities of transformation. There is no unanimity within the North Atlantic itself on any of these issues, but there is a shared history of how these issues have been and should be debated, and these words carry that history. Yet since they are projected as universals, they deny

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<sup>55</sup> Trouillot, *Global Transformations*, 35.

<sup>56</sup> According to Trouillot “The more seductive these words become the harder it is to specify what they actually stand for, since part of the seduction resides in that capacity to project clarity while remaining ambiguous... They evoke rather than define. Furthermore, even that evocation works best in negative form.” Trouillot, *Global Transformations*, 36.

their localization, the sensibilities, and the history from which they spring.<sup>57</sup> (Emphasis added.)

Trouillot's categories, as applied in this essay, remind us that the colonization of the Other was preceded and accompanied by the internal colonization of the different cultures of the West by the central powers.<sup>58</sup> This implies the existence of internal dissent and radical difference within the North Atlantic world itself. The North Atlantic universals hide their origin and determinations and perform as if they constituted a transhistorical point of view. In this way they are easily projected onto the past and the foreign, and allow interpreting and rewriting past history and the non-Western world according to a particular, historically determined ideology: what cannot be read as another expression of North Atlantic universals is said to manifest the "difference" that reaffirms them as the standard of value.

Trouillot characterizes the Renaissance as the "geography of the imagination" of the West as it was the moment when, confronted with the Other, Europeans began to think of themselves as the non-other, and to gain consciousness of Europe as the "here" different from an "elsewhere."<sup>59</sup> Culturally the Renaissance invented its origins in Greece. This link to Antiquity strengthened the concept of the Other as the non-Western.<sup>60</sup>

In the following centuries this "geography of the imagination" overlapped with the "geography of management," which transformed the Northern countries into

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<sup>57</sup> Trouillot, *Global Transformations*, 35.

<sup>58</sup> Significantly, the main book on this aspect is also a product of the 1930s: Norbert Elias's *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation* was first published in 1939 but was only translated into English in 1969 and has been greatly influential since then. The book was written in France and London as Elias had to flee from the Nazis in 1933.

<sup>59</sup> It was also the moment when the continent became synonymous with Christendom after the recuperation of Granada and the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, an event that coincided with the discovery and conquest of America. See Trouillot, *Global Transformations*, 20–21.

<sup>60</sup> Trouillot, *Global Transformations*, n.17, 143.

powerful entities. The Enlightenment strengthened and theorized this separation from the rest of the world and reformulated this tradition according to its own intellectual and political practices. This symbolic space, as the “inherited field of significances,” preceded the development of the actual academic disciplines, which formalized and organized it. Once institutionalized, they reread and rewrote the history of that symbolic space according to the new (modern) definition of the North Atlantic universals.<sup>61</sup> Academic disciplines bear the imprint of the period in which they were developed, and in the nineteenth century, the main ideals were nation, race, and colonial domination. Trouillot’s model, hence, suggests an explanation for the weight that the Renaissance has in modern art history. Panofsky’s Renaissance Humanism was an idealized construct, a re-formulation of the historical events according to modern ideologies. This dissertation considers this Humanism a North Atlantic universal.

The European totalitarian regimes were supported by powerful ideologies that contested some of the most cherished ideals of the Western hegemonic worldview. These contrasting interpretations of the Western tradition were honed by the debates that took place in the decade that preceded the Second World War. This internal confrontation did not affect the way the West presented itself to the rest of the international community. On the contrary, perhaps one of the consequences of the institutionalization and internationalization of disciplines such as modern art history was the reinforcement and naturalization of the Western worldview. This is how a

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<sup>61</sup>Academic disciplines, “do not create their fields of significance, they only legitimize particular organizations of meaning. They filter and rake—and in that sense, they truly *discipline*—contested arguments and themes that often precede them. In doing so, they continuously expand, restrict, or modify in diverse ways the distinctive arsenal of tropes, the types of statements they deem acceptable.” Trouillot, *Global Transformations*, 8.

certain idea of man, the artist, and the scholar, a particular understanding of vision, perception, space and time became unquestioned and unquestionable epistemological paradigms. These notions are closely associated with other North Atlantic universals such as nation-state, race, modernity, and freedom, and they mutually reinforce their claim to universal valance. This explains—as Chapter Three makes clear—why it is almost impossible to tell them apart and why the use of theories that analyze only some of these universals could not amend the foundations of the discipline and ended up reinforcing them.

This is not the place to discuss the effect that these developments had in the non-Western world, but the benefits of considering the West as the North Atlantic become clearer when thinking of the non-West or from a non-Western point of view. Nation, for example, is a Western geo-political category imposed *per force* on most of the rest of the world. Several intellectuals from Third World countries have denounced the 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* as Eurocentric and neo-colonialist.<sup>62</sup> Their argument is that not all social groups have freedom as a final goal or have attained (or desire to attain) the same degree of separation of religion from the secular sphere of life that had become the norm in the West. Western epistemology offers for them an alternative at best, not necessarily a goal. These scholars tend to highlight the negative aspects of the same Humanism that confronted Fascism and Totalitarianism.

Characterizing art, modernity, Humanism, nation-state, and democracy as North Atlantic universals establishes an anti-essentialist standpoint at the core of the

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<sup>62</sup> Among the many denunciations from African countries and the political use of this sensitive issue see the Cairo Declaration of Human Rights adopted in 1990 by forty-five Islamic countries. <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/instree/cairodeclaration.html>. See also Shashi Tharoor, "Are Human Rights Universal?," *World Policy Journal* (Winter 1999/2000).

theoretical framework of this dissertation. This practice foregrounds the historical nature, and the conventional and ideological character of these ideas, and warns against their blanket application for the scrutiny of the past. This strategy keeps these notions at center stage.

When analyzing the 1930s scholars tend to focus their attention on these categories' extreme manifestations (nationalism, racism, Fascism, totalitarianism) without discussing their more basic, apparently innocuous and natural expressions (nation/hood, race, liberal-democracy, modernism). Trouillot's perspective permits us to underscore the conventional character of these most ideological notions.

The investigation of the historical development of key art historical categories examined in this dissertation, such as the artist, perspective, theories of vision, perception, and space, and the codependence of art and nation as ideal entities follow Trouillot's chronology of the development of North Atlantic universals and his characterization of the Renaissance as the "geography of the Imagination" of the West. Ultimately, the North Atlantic universals as developed by Trouillot for the study of Anthropology, a (Western) science devised in the nineteenth century for the understanding of Man as the "Other," provide an Archimedean point to evaluate the different currents of thought that struggled within the field of art history in the 1930s.

Was the Renaissance such a fundamental period in the history of the West or did the art historical methodologies applied to the examination of the past determine its centrality? This kind of analysis might help to explain why Cézanne's art is linked to classicism and to Poussin's art despite the documentary sources against this claim,

and may stimulate new ways of thinking about his art.<sup>63</sup> As Crary suggests, the study of modern art might benefit from a methodology that does not imply the Renaissance as the default position. Putting modern art history's ideological certainties into parenthesis allows other questions to emerge to shed new light on the material.

Most of what art history pretends to know about Cézanne as a man is the result of applying standards of evaluation to the documentation that reflect the hegemonic worldview of the North Atlantic universals. Since the 1930s Cézanne's art has been hailed as the breakthrough that marked the end of scientific perspective. This dissertation demonstrates that we still do not know how the artist perceived space or if he was conscious of it as a three-dimensional volume that contains objects. In practical terms, in order to avoid misinterpreting or misunderstanding Cézanne and his work, the art historian has to question not only what he knows about the artist but his or her own worldview and the one imposed by Academia. The problem, as is well known, is to become aware of one's own ideology. The examination of the history of art history from the standpoint afforded by Trouillot's North Atlantic universals helps to uncover major aspects of the discipline's ideological foundations and, hence, offers an opportunity to visualize Cézanne's art afresh and to address new questions to the documentary sources.

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<sup>63</sup> In 1960 Theodore Reff demonstrated that the idea that Cézanne wanted to "do Poussin again after nature" was apocryphal, and that all seemed to indicate that the artist had been attracted to non-classical (and even anti-classical) artistic movements like the baroque and romanticism. Theodore Reff, "Cézanne and Poussin," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 23 (January-June, 1960): 150–174.

## Methodological Notes : Ideology, Museography and Hegemony

To consider art history as one of Foucault's "sciences of man" and as part of the project of modernity is to acknowledge its ideological character. In this light art history is part of the apparatus that secures the modern system of disciplinary power. The 1930s were crucial years for the politicization of the debate on art history. During these years scholars became even more conscious of the power of both art and scholarship as propaganda. This was not new, but until then art history had been more or less explicitly and overtly national/istic (chauvinistic). In the 1930s, the internationalization of the debates and the need to oppose the imperialist views of the Totalitarian regimes promoted the identification of art with trans- or inter-national categories such as Humanism and freedom, which preserved national particularities while claiming the universality of the North Atlantic universals. After the war, when the sense of urgency had passed, these provisional constructs became an integral part of the discipline, which, in turn, participated in that other war of ideologies known as the Cold War.

Hayden White, following in the footsteps of Louis Althusser and Fredric Jameson, has contended that historiography is ideological not because of the subject matter it considers or the ideas it fosters through them, but because it imposes a certain worldview through the way it presents its material.

Historiography is, by its very nature, the representational practice best suited to the production of the 'law-abiding' citizen. And this is not because it may deal in patriotism, nationalism, or explicit moralizing, but because in its featuring of narrativity as a favored representational practice, it is especially well-suited to the production of notions of continuity, wholeness, closure, and individuality

which every 'civilized' society wishes to see itself as incarnating, against the chaos of a merely 'natural' way of life.<sup>64</sup>

Art history is disciplinary not simply because of the hidden messages that lurk behind the overall organization of its material, but because it translates images into words and fosters the notion that art has meaning.<sup>65</sup> According to White, ideology is,

a certain *practice of representation* whose function is to create a specific kind of reading or viewing subject capable of inserting himself into the social system which is that subject's historically given potential field of public activity. It is obvious that any society, in order to sustain the practices which permit it to function in the interests of its dominant groups, must devise cultural strategies to promote the identification of its subjects with the moral and legal system that 'authorizes' the society's practices.<sup>66</sup>

White considers historiography together with art and literature as tools for convincing the members of a society of the truth of certain doctrines and beliefs. In the early 1940s, the philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) argued that the notion that something, a thing, is an object, already determines a certain subject-position, that is, the same decision that transforms a thing into an object converts people into subjects. Therefore, the presentation of works of art as objects for visual contemplation and as vessels of meaning is ideological. Historiography and museography are tightly connected. Moreover, meaning supposes the use of the rational mind and the perusal of written texts. Beneath the translation of images into words there is a particular conception of the world, space, and time, one that opposes considering the world as mere presence, as mere physicality, and imposes the quest for meaning.

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<sup>64</sup> Hayden White, "Review" [Historik. By Johann Gustav Droysen] *History and Theory* (February, 1980): 78.

<sup>65</sup> For the ideology behind art history classifications see Robert Nelson "The Map of Art History," *The Art Bulletin* 79 (March, 1997): 28-40.

<sup>66</sup> White, "Review," 77.

Donald Preziosi has argued that art history as a modern discipline stems from the creation of museums. For Preziosi, the museum is one of the most salient and effective disciplinary apparatus created by the Enlightenment. He argues that,

Museology and the various forms of museography which came to be professionally organized since the early nineteenth-century—art history, connoisseurship, art criticism—have sustained the particular ideological practices and affordances of historicism, wherein the import, value, or meaning of an item is a direct function of its relative position in an unfolding diachronic array. Both have also operated in a complementary fashion to naturalize certain essentialist notions of the individual social subject and its agency: in this regard, both ‘objects’ and their ‘subjects’ may be seen as museological productions.<sup>67</sup>

As an ideological apparatus the museum is a *system of representation* that exhibits works of art as stand-ins for meaning, as documents. The museum provides both instruction about specific issues and topics, as well as indoctrination on how to be a citizen and a human being, how to relate to objects and other people.<sup>68</sup> It is in this sense that the exhibitions of modern art examined in this dissertation can be compared with those organized by Totalitarian regimes as the art of display was enlisted to counter the success of those ideologies. This dissertation demonstrates that the institutionalization of art history in the 1930s coincided with that of museography, a fact that has escaped attention both of art historians and of critical theoreticians.

Preziosi contends that by presenting works of art—the paradigm of what the West defines as “object”—as meaningful, the discipline shapes people’s understanding of the relationship between object/subject (reality/person). The work of art is therefore an epistemologically ambiguous object: treasured because of its material uniqueness,

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<sup>67</sup> Donald Preziosi, “Collecting / Museums,” in *Critical Terms for Art History*, eds. Robert Nelson and Richard Shiff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 282.

<sup>68</sup> Preziosi, “Collecting / Museums,” 283.

it is also said to embody a meaning.<sup>69</sup> Therefore it is both representative of something that is outside itself (referentiality)—which justifies that it be surrounded by a plethora of documentation that refers to that meaning—and the unique and irreplaceable thing (differentiality). Moreover both dimensions are ambiguously presented, as “referentiality is paradoxically both the foreground and the background to differentiality and vice versa, in an oscillation or slippage which can never fully be fixed in place.” Preziosi adds,

In rendering the *visible legibly* (which after all is the *point* of the discourse on ‘art’) museum objects are literally both *there* and *not there*, and in two different ways. In the first place, the object is both quite obviously *materially* part of its position (situation) in the historiographic theater of the museum.... Yet, at the same time, it is unnaturally borne there from some other milieu, from some ‘original’ situation: its present situation is in one sense fraudulent.... In the second place, the object’s *significance* is *both* present and absent...its semiotic status is both referential and differential, it is both directly and indirectly meaningful.

For the museum user, then, the object’s material properties, no less than its significance, are simultaneously *present and absent*.... Formalism and contextualism, as may have been clear all along, are prefabricated positions in the same ideological system of representation, codetermining and coordinated facets of the sociopolitical project of modernity.<sup>70</sup> (Emphasis added)

This ambiguous status of the art object is associated with its disciplinary use. It might be argued that in order to apprehend an individual object, it has to be put in a context/horizon of reference and that it is the context that determines the character of the object thrown within it. The presupposition behind such an assertion is that the work of art has to be “understood” and not just appreciated or contemplated.

The paradoxical relationship between physicality and (historical) meaning is the fundamental problem of art history, one that, nonetheless, is not at the center of the

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<sup>69</sup> In the same way a human being is said to be all important but can also represent a country, a gender, a social class, and a political party.

<sup>70</sup> Preziosi, “Collecting / Museums”, 286.

discipline's everyday practice but has been relegated to the periphery of the field as "theory." Modern art history conceives of the work of art as an object that has a meaning, one that has to be explained, narrated, uttered: the image (which is a spatial entity) is indissolubly associated with the word and with the particular temporality of the narration.

The institutionalization of a hegemonic art history was spurred and shaped by the ideological and epistemological battles that took place before the Second World War. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe have characterized hegemony as a practice, a type of relationship, an always incomplete, open ended articulatory process which does not emanate from a center but from many different nodal points. In the 1930s no overarching discourse organized the multiple currents of thought that were competing within the symbolic field.<sup>71</sup> This might explain the wealth of theoretical approaches and the experimentalism that characterized the discipline before the war. After 1945, modern art history as formulated in the United States became the hegemonic international discourse when the success of Panofsky's interpretative methodology established what Martin Warnke has characterized as the "international style" of art history.<sup>72</sup> This coincided with the fantastic success of MoMA's definition of modern art and the dissemination of its managerial strategies and museographic style, which, in turn, influenced the production of contemporary art.

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<sup>71</sup>"We will call *articulation* any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice. The structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice, we will call *discourse*. We will call *moments* the differential positions, as they appear articulated within discourse, and *elements* any difference that is not articulated in a system." Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (London: Verso, 1985), 105.

<sup>72</sup> Quoted in Christopher Wood, "Art History's Normative Renaissance" in Allen Grieco, Michael Rocke, and Fiorella Gioffredi Superbi, *The Italian Renaissance in the Twentieth Century: Acts of an International Conference, Florence, Villa I Tatti, June 9–11 1999* (Florence: L.S. Olschki, 2002), 86.

This dissertation is organized in two sections with a total of seven chapters. Three of the four chapters of the first section are devoted to the examination of Venturi's, Huyghe's, and Rewald's texts on Cézanne and to their scholarship in the 1930s. While studying the relationship among these books and their authors, the activities of the IICI and MoMA are shown to have been of great importance, as the events and publications they sponsored reflected and fostered the development of some of the more important currents of thought that coalesced at the end of the decade. Although they are not the subject of an individual chapter, they serve to weave together the life and work of the three art historians examined in this dissertation. Moreover, MoMA's 1936 exhibition *Cubism and Abstract Art* bridges the First and Second Section of this dissertation.

**Section I. Cézanne and Humanism. Images and Words:** This section analyses the conflicting approaches to the art and life of Cézanne in the light of the history of the institutionalization of art history as it developed in the 1930s.

Chapter One establishes the theoretical framework for the chapters that follow. It discusses art history as icono-logy, that is, as a particular mode of relating images (art, icono) to words (history, theory, *logos*) that continues and prolongs the specific way in which the West understands art since the Renaissance. In addition, the chapter provides a sketch of the fundamental aspects of the history of the discipline in the 1930s, and summarizes the historical circumstances and theories that influenced the debate about art history. It concentrates on the career of Erwin Panofsky in the 1930s, before and after his immigration to the United States.

Chapter Two examines Lionello Venturi's Cézanne. Italian art history and this author performed a pivotal role in the construction of a unified art historical discourse that encompassed both past and modern art. Venturi's interpretation of impressionism and Cézanne was shaped by his early career as a specialist in the Renaissance, his reflection on aesthetic issues and on the epistemological foundations of the discipline, as well as by his engagement as an anti-fascist intellectual. He criticized art history's excessive reliance on philological methodologies, and the centrality of the Renaissance and classicism in it, but his innovative ideas about methodology and the organization of the disciplines devoted to the study of art—which he expounded in one of the IICI publications—were superseded by modern art history.

Chapter Three studies Huyghe's portrayal of Cézanne as the embodiment of the most distinctive features of France's racial stock. His text illustrates the nationalist character of France's "universal" Humanism, and reveals the close dependence between art and nation, both considered as North Atlantic universals. The chapter also examines the debate between Henri Focillon and Joseph Strzygowski regarding the epistemological foundations of art history, and the innovative use of documentation by Huyghe, who not only included site photographs in one of his shows but also had them published in *L'Amour de l'art*. Lastly, it looks into Barr's redefinition of modern art, as its success dated all previous interpretations of modern art based on mere contemporaneity.

Chapter Four analyzes Rewald's biography of Cézanne as the modern epitome of the genre. The title of his 1936 book was *Cézanne et Zola*, and, even after many revisions, the artist's relationship with the writer remained at the heart of Rewald's

narrative. This biography illustrates how artist novels, a literary sub-genre developed by French men of letters in the nineteenth century, influenced art historical writings on the artist. Like many others modernist art historians, Rewald focused on the deeds of great men and claimed to be “objective” and to base his narration on truthful documentation. This chapter scrutinizes the epistemological value of the resources he compiled for the study of Cézanne, and how their application affected the understanding of his art.

**Section II. Cézanne and Perspective. Site Photographs as Images that comment on Images:** This section demonstrates that Panofsky’s neo-Kantian conception of space as symbolic form indirectly, but indelibly, influenced the way Cézanne’s art was seen and thought of, and examines the development of a particular comprehension of vision and space as North Atlantic universals.

As James Elkins has effectively argued, Panofsky’s *Perspective as Symbolic Form* reinterpreted the textual and visual sources of the Renaissance according to the neo-Kantian philosophy of Ernst Cassirer and projected onto the past a modern perception of space as empty volume.<sup>73</sup> Panofsky’s text established space as a fundamental category for the analysis of works of art, and perspective as *the* symbolic form that characterizes and defines the Western tradition. As a consequence, in the 1930s, Cézanne’s art came to be construed as a new approach to the old problem of how to suggest depth in painting. In this way, his work was presented as the product of the constant dialogue of the artists with the tradition inherited from the Renaissance. Panofsky’s characterization of perspective as a symbolic form hinges on the idea of space as the result of human perceptual activity, allowing modern art

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<sup>73</sup> James Elkins, *The Poetics of Perspective* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).

history to delve into the most intimate aspects of Cézanne as human being: his mode of perception, the emotions that affected it, and the way he conceived of his being-in-the-World.

Elkins's careful analysis of the history of perspective and of Panofsky's 1927 treatise concludes that the German scholar redefined the old technical device according to contemporary ideas about space and perception going so far as to invent an antecedent for it in Antiquity. According to the theoretical parameters established above, perspective qualifies as a North Atlantic universal. A thriving discipline in the past, the study of perspective today involves the command of many different and highly specialized areas of knowledge that are beyond the expertise of any art historian. Because perspective is purportedly supported by the hard sciences, the physiology and the psychology of perception, and philosophy, it occupies an almost mythical place in the discipline. In turn, perspective has spawned and has served to support other die-hard myths that are counterintuitive even to bring up as subject matters.

Chapter Five examines the effect of site photographs on the study of Cézanne's landscapes, specifically addressing photography as an invention that reflects Western ideas about vision and space. Chapter Six explores the history of perspective in the nineteenth century to propose a context for interpreting key passages of some of Cézanne's letters. It also suggests a new way of approaching his paintings based on the hypothesis that the artist and his contemporaries did not think of space as an empty volume that surrounds objects. Finally, Chapter Seven studies the impact of modern art history's discourse on space as it applied to Cézanne. This

discourse enabled Barr to present the artist as the direct antecedent of analytic cubism. As a consequence, *Cubism and Abstract Art* consecrated Cézanne's status as the father of modern art.

The compelling visuality of the work of art resists appropriation by either the cleverness of historical explanations or the eloquence of descriptive language. Something remains; something gets left over... [T]he discipline is constitutionally fated to suffer from a quiet melancholic malaise. The distance between present and past, the gap between words and images, can never be closed.  
Michael Ann Holly, "Mourning and Method."<sup>1</sup>

When we try to understand it as a document [of the artist life] or of the civilization ... or of a peculiar religious attitude, we deal with the work of art as a symptom of something else which expresses itself in a countless variety of other symptoms, and we interpret its compositional and iconographical features as more particularized evidence of this 'something else.'<sup>2</sup>  
Erwin Panofsky, "Introduction," *Studies in Iconology*.<sup>2</sup>

## Section One

On April 30, 1896 Cézanne wrote to Gasquet,

[J]e maudis les Geffroy et les quelques drôles qui, pour faire un article de cinquante francs, ont attiré l'attention du public sur moi. Toute ma vie, j'ai travaillé pour arriver à gagner ma vie, mais je croyais qu'on pouvait faire de la peinture bien faite sans attirer l'attention sur son existence privée. Certes, un artiste désire s'élever intellectuellement le plus possible, mais l'homme doit rester obscur.<sup>3</sup>

Cézanne distinguishes the man from the artist and believes that the second is different from, or should not be confounded with, the first. In 1937, when working on the edition of the artist's correspondence—the source of this quotation—Rewald had to come to terms with this letter and justify his work in the name of a superior right or need: that of knowing the man behind the works of art in order to better interpret

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<sup>1</sup> "Mourning and Method," in *Compelling Visuality: The Work of Art In and Out of History*, eds. Claire Farago and Robert Zwijnenberg (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 158–159.

<sup>2</sup> *Studies in Iconology, Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*, (New York, 1939), 82.

<sup>3</sup> John Rewald *Paul Cézanne—Correspondence* (Paris: Grasset, 1978), 249. The art critic Gustave Geffroy (1855–1926) wrote a flattering article on the artist in *Le Journal* in 1894 where he did not reveal much of Cézanne's personality. In 1895 the artist conceived the idea of painting Geffroy's portrait, which he carried on. After Second World War Rewald analyzed the relationship of the two men and observed that the art critic's political ideas and his friendship with the radical politician Georges Clemenceau (1841–1929) might have sparked Cézanne's harsh comment. Clemenceau was at the time the owner of the newspaper *L'Aurore* where Zola would publish *J'accuse* in 1898. See John Rewald *Cézanne, Geffroy et Gasquet, suivi de Souvenirs sur Cézanne de Louis Aurenche et de lettres inédites* (Paris: Quatre Chemins, Editart, 1959), 18–23.

them. His methodology focused on the compilation of the documentation that would allow writing a truthful biography.<sup>4</sup> Cézanne, on the contrary, felt that his paintings were the result of his intellectual work and efforts, and seems to have felt that, as such, they should not be seen as the product of his personality.

In a letter to Denis dated January 12, 1939, in which Rewald tries to convince the painter to lend him his letters from Gauguin for publication, the scholar dismissed Cézanne's desire to keep his private life out of the reach of interpreters with the argument that the artist would have burnt many of the paintings that today make "notre bonheur parce que nous retrouvons son génie dans la moindre de ses esquisses," and he adds,

[J]e suis toujours persuadé qu'on ne peut pas séparer l'homme de l'artiste, sa vie de son art.

Les documents qui nous montrent l'homme, même sans se rapporter directement à son art, sont une introduction parfois indispensable à son œuvre.<sup>5</sup>

Whereas Cézanne distances the man from the artist, Rewald contends that they are fused and that understanding of the life of the artist provides access ("une introduction") to his art. Most contemporaneous art historians—especially those influenced by psychoanalysis—would say that the artist (body and mind) has left traces in the paintings and that his oeuvre reflects his whole being.

There are many possible ways of understanding Cézanne's comment. The paragraph belongs to a letter in which the artist was justifying himself for having lied about his whereabouts and, hence, is part of a strategy to gain Gasquet's sympathy.

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<sup>4</sup> This will be analyzed in chapter 4. See John Rewald "Introduction" to *Paul Cézanne—Correspondence* (Paris: Grasset, 1937).

<sup>5</sup> Letter from John Rewald to Maurice Denis, Ms. 9314 1/4, 2–3, Archives Musée Départemental Maurice Denis, La Prieuré, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Yvelines, Ile-de-France.

Furthermore, it exemplifies Cézanne's propensity to criticize his earlier acquaintances in order to strengthen his relationship with a closer or newer friend. But it is also an example of an artist reacting against what he considers an invasive interpretation of his art. Notwithstanding its real meaning, the fact is that what Cézanne said was then a viable argument. Furthermore, Rewald's letter proves that Denis shared Cézanne's ideas, since he sought to protect Gauguin's artistic reputation by hiding letters that revealed Gauguin to be less than an exemplary man. In the 1930s, art historians had different ideas about this issue: of the three art historians studied in this Section, only Rewald's scholarship was so focused on artists' biographies. He paved the way for modern art history and for a new era in Cézanne studies.<sup>6</sup>

Cézanne knew the art system of his day and his art was an answer to it, but, as the letter to Gasquet indicates, this relationship is not easy to interpret. In 1864 Hippolyte Taine (1828-1893) was appointed professor of Art History and Aesthetics at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. This was an important milestone in the institutionalization and professionalization of French art history. The Provençal artist might have been influenced by Taine's theories on art and perception. Yet the artist was highly critical of the establishment and rebelled against the tradition inherited from his forefathers, especially in his youth. The problem for art historians is how to gauge this "originality," the "exclusiveness" and "uniqueness" of his experience.

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<sup>6</sup> Huyghe also supported this approach in his curatorial work but not in his scholarship. See below. The Austrian art historian Fritz Novotny specifically challenged the possibility of writing a biography of Cézanne and its value for the interpretation of the master's art. In 1932 he wrote "Das Problem des Menschen Cézanne im Verhältnis zu seiner Kunst," *Zeitschrift für Aesthetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft* 26 (1932): 268–298, which is a critique of Gasquet's biography on Cézanne and not an art historical book. Novotny's scholarship is a particular case and is briefly analyzed in Chapter Five. Rewald was acquainted with his work as Novotny's magnum opus *Cézanne und das Ende der wissenschaftliche Perspektive* (Vienna: Phaidon-Verlag, 1938) is based on the site photographs Rewald and Léo Marschutz provided to him. The Rewald Papers at the National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., Gallery archives, posses several letters between Rewald and Novotny from this decade.

Cézanne was certainly no advocate of Geffroy's personality-driven art criticism. But at the end of the 1930s, biography as a necessary component to the understanding of an artist's oeuvre had become established methodology for modern art history. Art historical discourse runs parallel to artists' art and opinions about art and has its own definitions, categories, conventions, and teleological aims. The individual artist and his works are *particular* instances, episodes that the art historian evaluates from his or her standpoint in order to incorporate them within art history's *general* epistemological model. When reading art historical elucidations of the meaning of works of art, the question is: Are those meanings in the paintings or are they suggested by the text? Who conceived them, the artist or the art historian?<sup>7</sup>

Rewald's letter identifies the artist as the source of art and the art historian as the provider of intellectual context and true meaning. W.J.T. Mitchell has observed that the command of the word over the image, of the author of words over the manufacturer of images, has an almost mythical ascendancy,

There is an ancient tradition ... which argues that language is the essential human attribute: man is the speaking animal. The image is the medium of the subhuman, the savage, the dumb animal, the child, the woman, the masses. These associations are all too familiar, as is the disturbing counter tradition that man is created in the image of his maker. One basic argument of Iconology was that the very name of this science of images bears the scars of an ancient division and a fundamental paradox that cannot be erased from its workings.<sup>8</sup>

Iconology is the name Panofsky gave to his interpretative methodology, although Mitchell gives a much broader definition to the word as he refers it to *icono-*

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<sup>7</sup> In this sense art historical writings work as Derridean *supplements* that are outside works of art but determine what is inside them as interpretations. The implication is that the work of art itself is not self-sufficient.

<sup>8</sup> W.J.T. Mitchell *Picture Theory Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995), 24.

*logos*: icon/image plus *logos*, that in the context of this study serves to summarize the different occurrences of the word as comment, criticism, history, and theory since the Renaissance. A 1910 text by Fry offers an extreme example of this relationship. When writing about an exhibition of the “art” of the Bushmen he argues that,

[I]t is curious that people who produced such great artists did not produce also a culture in our sense of the word. This shows that two things are necessary to produce the cultures which distinguish civilized peoples. There must be, of course, the civilized artist, but *there must also be the power of conscious critical appreciation and comparison*. (Emphasis added)

The author ends up judging the culture and the quality of men on the basis of their behavior towards cultural objects that the West was then starting to see as art. Great artistic creativity and aesthetic sensitivity are not enough. Art needs an art world, a critical apparatus,

[I]t is for want of a conscious critical sense and the intellectual powers of comparison and classification that the negro has failed to create one of the great cultures of the world, and not from any lack of the creative aesthetic impulse, nor from any lack of the most exquisite sensibility and finest taste.<sup>9</sup>

According to Fry then, there can be art even when there is not culture, which means that artistic creation does not entail intellect, intelligence, reason. His observation, pervaded by the colonialist mind-set of the period, provides a broader context for Mitchell’s argumentation.

The Western definition of art (as Plastic arts or Beaux-Arts) is inherently associated with, and even dependent from, the word and in this dissertation is

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<sup>9</sup> Roger Fry, *Vision and Design* The original article was published in 1910 in *The Burlington Magazine* and it is thus contemporaneous to the Post-impressionist show the author organized that year in London. Both quotations are in Marianna Torgovnic, “Making Primitive Art High Art,” *Poetics Today* (Summer, 1989), 216 and 218. For an interesting contextualization of this article, other than Torgovnic’s *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), see Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina, “Bushman and Blackface: Bloomsbury and ‘Race’,” *South Carolina Review* 38 (2006): 46–64.

considered a North Atlantic universal. This allows circumventing the long discussion about the existence of art outside the West without inferring that the problem has been solved or does not exist. Furthermore, it suggests that there might have been in the past or outside the area of influence of the West other interpretations or ways of understanding art that the contemporary definition cannot even contain as potentialities.<sup>10</sup>

The First Section of the dissertation examines modern art history as the last episode in this centuries old association of Western art with the word. To think of art as a North Atlantic universal and art history as a discipline that both creates and studies a certain field of knowledge highlights the fact that Cézanne's art was alien to Rewald's art history and permits us to include the history of art history as part of the field under analysis.

Iconology as defined by Mitchell, is another manner of referring to art history's paradoxical structure (art and history, synchrony and diachrony), where the second term, *Logos*, controls the first, art. Western Humanism, according to William S. Spanos and many other scholars since Heidegger, can be defined as the secularization and humanization of the (sacred) *Logos*,

The humanistic displacement of the theological *Logos* in favor of the 'logic' of Man (whether scientific, or idealistic; Cartesian or Hegelian) does not, ... constitute a revolutionary interrogation of the logocentrism in the name of a presuppositionless mode of inquiry, but a naturalization of the Word's supernatural status. Making the *Logos* 'natural'—which is to say, 'self-evident'—makes it invisible, an absent presence. That is, it also puts out of sight what the Greco-Roman and, especially, Christian cultures merely put out of reach of the freeplay of criticism... The 'presuppositionless' problematic (and the 'objective' discourse) of humanism thus, in fact, not only bases itself on an inviolable 'center elsewhere' but, unlike the problematic (and the objective)

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<sup>10</sup> See my "Southern Perspectives: About the Globalization of Art History," in James Elkins, *Is Art History Global?* (London: Routledge, 2007), 313.

discourse of the late Greek, Roman, and Medieval Christian cultures, also makes this enabling center and the power of informing it difficult, if not finally impossible, to engage. Nevertheless, this privileged center .. is not less present in humanistic discourse, imposing from the 'end' , ... its repressive power of the indissoluble continuum of being , from nature itself to language, consciousness, gender, culture, class, law, etc.<sup>11</sup>

Spanos's comment endorses the description of Humanism as an important North Atlantic universal, and relates it to the ideological role that interpretation and meaning have in modern art history. Panofsky's Humanism is an episode in this long history but the institutionalization of modern art history meant the redefinition of basic art historical concepts and categories such as art, artist, and even the role of the art historian according to idealized Humanist values with evident political undertones, precisely at the time when the discipline was gaining true international diffusion and global impact. There is no question that art is made by humans. A Humanist art history not only implies a certain interpretation of what is a human being (of his relationship with God and the world) which does not question and uses as a paradigm for the evaluation of individual cases, but also entails the conviction that it is possible to know what a human being is.<sup>12</sup>

In 1938 Panofsky contributed the essay "The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline" to a book edited by Theodore Meyer Greene, *The Meaning of the Humanities*. Greene was a scholar of Kant at Princeton and a member of a group of American intellectuals that shared Panofsky's mind-set and ideology. His publication

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<sup>11</sup> William V. Spanos, "Boundary 2 and the Polity of Interest: Humanism, the 'Center Elsewhere,' and Power," *Boundary 2 On Humanism and the University I: The Discourse of Humanism* (Spring-Autumn, 1984), 177.

<sup>12</sup> Feminist art historians have demonstrated that the operative prototype for the artist is the male, white, Western man. See Griselda Pollock *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art*, (London: Roudledge, 1988.) Nevertheless, Feminists tend to behave as if they knew what a woman is and thus loose from sight the problem of the philosophical definition of Man, which is the here debated. The notion that women are equal to men is not universal.

was the product of the group's collaborative effort to confront Totalitarianism.<sup>13</sup> In the Introduction to the book, which Craig Hugh Smyth has noted reflects the discussions between the Greene and Panofsky, Greene states that,<sup>14</sup>

the contemporary threat to human values lies in the deliberate activities of certain individuals and groups whose ideologies are monopolistic and totalitarian and who, in one way or another, have acquired autocratic power in our society. These men are so powerful, in turn, because they are motivated by well defined immediate objectives and because they have succeeded in arousing in their supporters a passionate and uncritical devotion to a 'common' cause. The modern scene testifies with tragic eloquence to the immediate effectiveness of this anti-humanistic strategy.

In his attempt to combat this threat to human integrity and worth, the modern humanist, like his predecessors in other ages and cultures, is at a grave disadvantage.<sup>15</sup>

Greene politicizes Humanism as he demonizes anti-Humanism by identifying it with Totalitarianism's disregard for the centrality of man in society. The author characterizes the modern humanist as the reincarnation of a traditional Western figure, the Renaissance scholar, who placed Man at the center of the world and society. If in Europe Humanism was Eurocentric and thus, ethnocentric, in the United States it was associated with the defense of the values favored by the liberal and democratic countries.

Rewald was a much younger German émigré working on a different field. The first book he published in the United States—where he arrived in 1941, that is, almost ten years after Panofsky—was the prodigiously famous 1946 *History of*

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<sup>13</sup> Craig Hugh Smyth, "Thoughts on Erwin Panofsky's First Years in Princeton," in *Meaning in the Visual Arts: Views from the Outside. A Centennial Commemoration of Erwin Panofsky (1892–1968)*, ed. Irving Lavin (Princeton: Institute for Advanced Study, 1995).

<sup>14</sup> Craig Hugh Smyth, "Thoughts on Erwin Panofsky's First Years in Princeton," in *Centennial Commemoration*. See also the book he edited together with Peter M. Lukehart, *The Early Years of Art History in the United States Notes and Essays on Departments, Teaching, and Scholars* (New Jersey: Yale University Press, 1993,) especially David Van Zanten "Formulating Art History at Princeton and the "Humanistic Laboratory."

<sup>15</sup> Theodore Meyer Greene ed., *The Meaning of the Humanities* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1938), xiv–xv.

*Impressionism*, a publication sponsored by MoMA. In 1948, when his book on Cézanne was translated into English, he commented that the two books were the result of the same methodology, i.e. a biographical approach based on faithful documentation. Kermit Champa has noted the relationship with Panofsky's iconology.

Had Rewald's *History [of Impressionism]* appeared at a different moment in the developing historiography or art-historical writing generally, its effect would likely have been very different. ... Rewald's book entered art-historical discourse at the very point when iconology as practiced most impressively by Erwin Panofsky was taking center stage, replacing a sort of ill-defined formalism....The traditional 'humanist' underpinnings of iconology privileged reading over looking, and, of course, reading as an activity is substantially assisted by the presence of things to read—in other words, texts. What Rewald supplied was access to texts aplenty, and as a result the scholarly discourse on the history of impressionism became a progressively iconological one.<sup>16</sup>

Rewald's art history is a modernist tale of great heroic men fighting against the incomprehension of the establishment and the crass society of philistines. This stance had then political meaning. In the 1930s an ethical political component was added to the definition of modern art and therefore to the characterization of the artist. Venturi for example observed in 1935 while visiting the United States,

art must be completely free from every other spiritual activity. Moral trends, however important in themselves, should be divorced from art. In the field of imagination, speaking, and writing, freedom is necessary to creative art.... where there is no freedom one cannot have art, for without freedom the mind is not in a state for creative work.<sup>17</sup>

The ideological character of such an association four years before the beginning of Second World War cannot be missed, especially since in the article Venturi singles

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<sup>16</sup> Kermit Champa, *Masterpiece Studies. Manet, Zola, Van Gogh & Monet*, (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 1994), 55. Champa comments that Venturi was also interested in documenting the history of Impressionism but that he had considered this only reference material; see pp. 54–55. This is confirmed by this dissertation's analysis of the work of the Italian art historian. See chapter 2.

<sup>17</sup> Venturi, "Lively Interview," 4.

out Paris and the United States as the only places in which freedom is still possible. Venturi, like Greene and Panofsky, assimilated art to a particular political system and used his influence as a professional art historian to support his convictions.

Art historians became engaged intellectuals and the art and artists they studied were adapted to fulfill this new function. The model was Zola, Cézanne's friend. The difference was that these were professional art historians and not art critics, and that the message was ideological because it was built within the categories and definitions they expounded. Presented as the regime that allowed "freedom" to the artist to create and to think, liberal democracy could be promoted without even mentioning a specific country or system of government. As Serge Guilbaut and others have amply demonstrated this was the same interpretation of art that was used during the Cold War.<sup>18</sup> The goal of the present text is not to criticize the reasons why Humanism and freedom were established at the foundations of modern art history, but, rather, the fact that they are still integral to its basic presuppositions while the political situation that justified their inclusion has greatly changed.

The first chapter of this Section briefly sketches distinctive periods of the history of art history in order to highlight the changes that took place in the 1930s. This chapter is of critical importance for this dissertation. The German methodology it examines, exemplified by Panofsky, was decisive for establishing Cézanne as the

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<sup>18</sup> Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art. Abstract Expressions, Freedom, and the Cold War* (Chicago, 1983). See also Eva Cockcroft, "Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War," *Artforum*, XII (June 1974): 39–41; Shiffra Goldman *Contemporary Mexican Painting in a Time of Change* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981); and David Craven, "Abstract Expressionism and Third World Art: A Post-Colonial Approach to 'American' Art," *Oxford Art Journal* 14 (1991): 44–66.

quintessential paradigm of modern art. Panofsky put an idealized Renaissance Humanism at the center of modern art history. This narrow trajectory for art history was definitively institutionalized in the 1930s. This model excluded alternative interpretations of critical issues for art history such as perspective and historical distance. After the Second World War the United States became a powerful political and cultural force which secured the dissemination of Panofsky's Iconology. Although it might seem like a digression, this overview provides a necessary foundation to the understanding of the powerful role that modern art history assigned to Cézanne within the history of modern art.

None of the art historians studied in the following three chapters was strictly a modern art historian, but the study of their work provides a unique possibility to map the currents of thought that were competing to become the hegemonic art historical discourse. Venturi conceived art as a superior sphere of being that, when attained, disrupted the historical horizon and challenged the cultural outlook of a certain period. Moreover, even though his work was based on a serious examination of the primary sources, his scholarship hinged on the stylistic analysis of works of art. Huyghe believed that art manifested the spirit of nations and that it was the exclusive possession of the French "racial stock," as the nation's particular ethnic configuration had allowed its artists to manifest universal values. Rewald's scholarship centers on biographical and factual data. In his writings, artistic considerations are secondary to the document-based narration of the artist's life.

Art-historical study makes the works the objects of a science...[but] in all this busy activity do we encounter the work itself?  
Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 1935.<sup>1</sup>

## **Chapter One: Towards a Modern [Humanist] Art History 1929-1939**

In 1929 Heidegger and Cassirer debated their opposing interpretations of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* in the town of Davos, famous today for hosting the World Economic Forum.<sup>2</sup> Panofsky was a friend and colleague of Cassirer, whose work had influenced his scholarship in the 1920s. Three years later, Panofsky wrote a paper in which he sketched for the first time the interpretative methodology which established his reputation while taking a stand against Heidegger's approach to Kant. This text, which Panofsky called his "methodological article," was the basis for the "Introduction" to the *Studies in Iconology* published in 1939, which, after further revisions, became the first chapter of *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, one of the canonical texts of modern art history.<sup>3</sup> The issues debated at Davos helped Panofsky to elaborate Iconology, as he called his methodology ten years later in the United States.

In November of 1929, just nine days after the Wall Street crash, MoMA opened its doors to the public with the first loan exhibition *Cézanne, Gauguin, Seurat, Van*

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Holly, "Mourning and Method," 167.

<sup>2</sup> The 1929 encounter was part of a series of meetings, the "International University Course," sponsored by the French, German, and Swiss governments to foster the reconciliation between French-speaking and German-speaking intellectuals. The discussion with the French representatives that year was obscured by the much awaited confrontation between the two German thinkers. Heidegger has two roles in this dissertation: he is quoted both as a philosopher and theoretician and as a protagonist, that is, as one of the voices that opposed the art historical trends that would materialize in modern art history at the end of the decade.

<sup>3</sup> David Summers, "Meaning in the Visual Arts as a Humanistic Discipline," in *Centennial Commemoration*.

*Gogh*.<sup>4</sup> MoMA played a significant role in redefining modern art and in its interpretation as part of the continuous development of the Western tradition. Barr's 1936 exhibition *Cubism and Abstract Art*, a key event in this process, situated Cézanne's art as the bridge that linked nineteenth- and twentieth-century art. Additionally, the catalogue is a thinly disguised propagandistic defense of modern art as the symbol of the fight for freedom against Fascism (Chapter Seven).

1939 was decisive for MoMA too, as the year when the museum moved into the West 53th Street building designed *ad hoc* by the American architect Philip L. Goodwin.<sup>5</sup> The edifice reflected the spirit of the collections, the new approach to display, and the innovative managerial style that characterize it to this day. The date thus marks the end of the period of experimentation and institutional organization.<sup>6</sup>

1929-1939. These dates bracket a critical moment of transition for the institutionalization of art history. Panofsky's interpretative methodology, *Iconology*, is a variation of the traditional Western association of the image with the word and was central to modern art history. MoMA's redefinition of modern art reinforced this new way of understanding art history as the museum rose to pre-eminence during the same decade.

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<sup>4</sup> MoMA's first loan exhibitions gathered works mostly from American institutions, private collections and international art galleries. The first loan from a French museum was for *Toulouse-Lautrec, Redon* [January 31–March 2, 1931] and was widely acknowledged by the press. See the press clippings in the Chester Dale Scrapbook, Chester Dale Papers, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., Gallery Archives.

<sup>5</sup> The significance of 1939 for MoMA is in Jesús Pedro Lorente, *Cathedrals of Modernity*, and in Christoph Grunenberg "The Politics of Presentation: The Museum of Modern Art, New York," in Marcia Pointon, *Art Apart. Institutions and Ideology Across England and North America* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994); Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "From Faktura to Factography," *October* 30 (Fall, 1984): 83–118; Douglas Crimp, "The Art of Exhibition" *October* 30 (Fall, 1984): 49–81, Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach, "MOMA: Ordeal and Triumph on 53th Street," *Studio International* 194 (1978): 48–57; John O'Brian, "MoMA's Public Reactions, Alfred Barr's Public and Matisse's American Canonization," *RACAR/ XVII* (1991): 18–30.

<sup>6</sup> See the analysis of the building in Grunenberg, "The Politics of Presentation," 198–207.

This chapter demonstrates the pronounced German influence on modern art history. The three books considered in this dissertation were published in Paris and were both contemporary and outside the process of modern art history's institutionalization. This chapter contextualizes Panofsky's scholarship within the history of art history, delineating those aspects of it, both before and after his emigration to the United States, which frame the symbolic field for the three other authors discussed. The Second Section examines how modern art history impinged on the scholarship of Cézanne in the 1930s.

### The History of the History of Art

In 1951 Paul Kristeller published a two part article in the *Journal of the History of Ideas* titled "The Modern System of the Arts."<sup>7</sup> The author contended that the term "Art" with a capital A and in its modern sense, and the related term "Fine Arts" (Beaux Arts) originated in all probability in the eighteenth century, "when several treatises used common principles for the consideration of the subject matter and offered a systematization of the different arts."<sup>8</sup> It took almost forty years for historians of philosophy to pursue the line of research opened by Kristeller. In the 1990s several scholars working on the historical context of the *Aufklärung* validated Kristeller's observation and argued that the change he described was an early

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<sup>7</sup> Paul Kristeller, "The Modern System of the Arts. A Study in the History of Aesthetics," (I and II) in Peter Kivy, *Essays on the History of Aesthetics* (Rochester, NY.: University of Rochester, 1992).

<sup>8</sup> Kristeller, "The Modern System," 4.

symptom of the epistemic transformation that would bring about modernism.<sup>9</sup> The new definition of art hastened the overhaul of the system of production and promotion of the arts that began in the nineteenth century.

These studies demonstrate that there had been two major ways of understanding art, corresponding to two different art histories that span the Renaissance to modernism with the Enlightenment as the transitional period.<sup>10</sup> According to Stephen Melville and Bill Readings, the first system of the arts that began in the Renaissance was focused on representation and mimesis and was structured around the notion of *ut pictura poesis*.<sup>11</sup> Subsequently, Kant's "Copernican Turn" in philosophy and his "refusal of representation" brought about important changes in art writing as attention shifted from the works of art to the spectator's experience, bringing about the second period.

Aesthetics differs from poetics because it understands art primarily in terms of the problems posed by its reception rather than its production. Questions of representation and its modalities thus give way to a primary concern with the distinctness and uniqueness of the art object. ... The aesthetic account ... takes it

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<sup>9</sup> Martha Woodmansee, *The Author, Art, and the Market* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); Preben Mortensen, *Art in the Social Order, The Making of the Modern Conception of Art* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997); Larry Shiner, *The Invention of Art. A Cultural History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

<sup>10</sup> It is tempting to use here Michel Foucault's notion of episteme as the historical *a-priori* that grounds knowledge and represents the condition of its possibility within a particular epoch. See *Le mots et les choses Archéologie des sciences humaines* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966). A complementary approach considers the effects brought about by the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution and capitalism in the system of the arts. In this interpretation the market rules the system of the art. The groundbreaking work of Harrison C. White and Cynthia A. White has proven that the system of promotion and consecration of works of art switched from one supported by the academy to the art critic/dealer system. Nicholas Green has demonstrated that the main changes started in France around 1830. See Harrison C. White and Cynthia White, *Canvases and Careers: Institutional Change in the French Painting World*, (New York: Wiley, 1965); Nicholas Green, "Dealing in Temperaments: Economic Transformation of the Artistic Field in France in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century" *Art History* 10 (March, 1987): 59–78; and this author's *The Spectacle of Nature: Landscape and Bourgeois Culture in Nineteenth-Century France* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990).

<sup>11</sup> Jacques Rancière considers that there are two different art systems ("régimes"), which have different structural organization and goals: "régime représentatif" and régime esthétique." Jacques Rancière, *Malaise dans l'esthétique* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 2004).

that the term ‘art’ picks out an experience and an order of value that is irreducible to the terms of representation in general. Evaluation, rather than cognition, is the activity proper to the reception of the work of art. *This means that judgment is an ineradicable dimension of art historical activity, that art history is fundamentally bound to criticism and has no non-evaluative foundations.* This position appears, on the one hand, to be at odds with the modern ambition of art history to attain the standing of science and, on the other hand, to be the primary marker of art history’s autonomy over and against its dissolution into a more general field.<sup>12</sup> (Emphasis added)

Art gains a new dimension or function which implies that instead of focusing on the stories artists represent in their works (the kind of art history Vasari had fostered), spectators must pay attention to the effect produced on them by works of art conceived as unique and different from other objects, and evaluate their distinctive “artistic” qualities. The new approach to art encompasses two paradoxical dimensions: its being both historical and extra-ordinary, unique. Therefore, the art history that corresponds to this period has two mandates: one puts an accent on history and diachronic series and change, that is, on repetition with variations over time; the other emphasizes the distinctiveness of the work of art and the artist’s individuality.<sup>13</sup>

Hans Robert Jauss has contended that until the eighteenth century art history consisted in a multiplicity of “stories” and biographies which had been modeled after classical or mythical examples and without any other connection than chronology.<sup>14</sup> In 1764 Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768) in his *The History of Ancient Art*, conceived of Greek Classic art not only as the perfect manifestation of art but also as an historical product tied to a certain period, a nation, a people, a climate.

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<sup>12</sup> Stephen Melville and Bill Readings eds., *Vision and Textuality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 11–12.

<sup>13</sup> Preziosi considered this two dimensions in the text quoted in the Introduction to this dissertation.

<sup>14</sup> Hans–Robert Jauss, *Pour une esthétique de la réception* (Paris : Gallimard, 1978).

Furthermore, he structured the development of Greek styles and artist's careers as part of a natural cycle featuring beginning, development and decadence. This approach to the history of art influenced the founders of history and is one of the antecedents of the current of thought called Historicism. According to Catherine Soussloff, art history and historicism contain both an ideal model (structure) and the notion of becoming (diachronic development),

From the very beginnings, then, the art historical approach to art contained within its compass an ideal model—classical sculpture—for the art object that, when inserted in the historical account, justified such an idealist conception of art. ...As Winckelmann's text clearly demonstrates, *the linking of art to history leads to the ontic status of art*. The a priori figuration of the material object only matters to art and history inasmuch as it becomes art when inserted in the supportive historical narrative. Art theorists of Winckelmann's time held the *ideal model for art, antique sculpture to be universal and timeless, while at the same time insisting that art could be incorporated into a historical narrative based on chronology*.

From the High Renaissance, Greek sculpture ... had served as the standard for visual progress. ... With Winckelmann, Greek sculpture became the material embodiment of a concept of historical *and* visual perfection.<sup>15</sup> (Emphasis added)

Historicist art history secures for art an ontic (real) status by bringing together, in a narration, objects (said to be works of art) that had been created in different periods and places. The discipline demonstrates that art exists as a transcendental entity beyond time and space. Paradoxically, the category's definition was based on the art of one period which was considered paradigmatic.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Catherine Soussloff, "Historicism" in *Aesthetics*, ed. Michael Kelly (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 409. The author, therefore, confirms the analysis of Melville and Readings.

<sup>16</sup> Some aspects of Historicism and the basic relationship of history with art are considered in Chapter Three. In addition to Jauss, Jörn Rüsen had extensively worked on the esthetization of history which extends Jauss contention that history and art history are codependent. He quotes Ranke's dictum: "history is distinguished from all other sciences in that it is also an art. History is a science in collecting, finding, penetrating; it is an art because it recreates and portrays that which it has found and recognized. Other sciences are satisfied simply with recording what has been found; history requires the ability to recreate." Leopold Ranke "On the character of Historical Science, (A Manuscript from 1830)," in Jörn Rüsen, "Rethoric and Aesthetics of History: Leopold von Ranke," *History and Theory*

A specific historical period of the history of art determines the evaluative moment of art history described by Melville and Readings. The Enlightenment also imposed the idea that art manifests the “spirit of the people,” which became predominant in the nineteenth century. The conception of art as national weakened but did not debunk classic art from its place of privilege in the system.<sup>17</sup> After mid-century, an idealized account of the Renaissance replaced Winckelmann’s Greece both as subject matter and as paradigm. The transition was easy as this period—which Trouillot defined as the “geography of the Imagination” of the North Atlantic world—had purposefully envisioned the restoration of Antiquity’s art and culture. The cultural and ethic values of Renaissance Humanism were at the foundations of *Bildung*, the German approach to education that ensured character formation and moral edification through the reading and interpretation of classic texts.

The art history that resulted from the Enlightenment was a German discipline, as it first emerged there as a profession. Not until the end of the nineteenth century did the founders of art history create the set of principles and categories that allowed it to detach itself from other branches of learning.<sup>18</sup> This was the preamble for the definitive institutionalization of modern art history as an international academic field in the 1930s.

Nineteenth-century art history was “national art history,” and although the professionals of each country strove to keep an objective stance and to develop

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29 (May, 1990): 190–204. Catherine Soussloff has considered the problem from the point of view of art history. See n. 15

<sup>17</sup> For the most recent approach to this subject matter see the issue of the *Revue de l’Art* devoted to the history of art history, particularly Schlink “Enseignement ou illumination?”; and Griener, “Idéologie ‘nationale’ ou science ‘positive’?”

<sup>18</sup> See Michael Podro, *The Critical Art Historians* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), Udo Kulterman, *The History of Art History* (New York?: Abaris Books, 1993,) and Joan Hart, Roland Recht and Martin Warnke, *Relire Wölfflin* (Paris : Ecole nationale supérieure des beaux-arts, 1995).

scientific methodologies, it unabashedly reflected the particular conception of nation, culture and education of the country in which it was practiced. Daniel Adler, for example, has established that the category of the *malerisch*, so important in Heinrich Wölfflin's scholarship, derived from his interest in promoting an intuitive comprehension of art that would foster the values that characterized *Bildung*.<sup>19</sup> The fact that the German professional art historians, like historians, were revered as guardians of the tradition and spirit of the nation, explains why their scholarship tended to become openly nationalistic.<sup>20</sup>

Thomas Gaehtgens noted in Germany at the end of the century, a clear division between art critics, who dealt with modern art, and art history professors, devoted to the examination of the past.<sup>21</sup> Even if these scholars did not study or write on contemporary artistic movements, modern art shaped their perception of the history of art. Adolf von Hildebrand (1847–1921) published *Das Problem der Form in der bildenden Kunst* 1893 (“The problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture”), a book that opposes the basic principles of impressionism and that influenced most of the German art historians of the turn-of-the-century. Wölfflin, in his 1915 *Principles of Art History*, for example, associated the baroque with impressionism and, according to Martin Warnke in 1910 projected a book dealing with the reaction against this artistic movement.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Daniel Adler, “Painterly Politics: Wölfflin, Formalism and German Academic Culture, 1885–1915,” *Art History* 27 (2004): 431–456.

<sup>20</sup> In his 1931 *Die Kunst der Renaissance; Italien und das deutsche Formgefühl*, Wölfflin applied the methodology he had used in his 1915 *Principles of Art History* to characterize two different period styles (baroque and classic), to highlight the differences in the art of two racially distinct nations. See Joan Hart, Recht, Warnke, *Relire Wölfflin*. The problem will be briefly addressed in Chapter Three.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas W. Gaehtgens, “Les Rapports de l’histoire de l’art et de l’art contemporain en Allemagne à l’époque de Wölfflin et de Meier–Graefe,” *Revue de l’art* 88 (1990): 31–38.

<sup>22</sup> See Warnke, *Relire Wölfflin*, 106.

At the end of the century, the art historians who constituted the School of Vienna, strove to remove the Renaissance and Humanism from the place they occupied at the center of the discipline as their scholarship aspired to address the difficult reality of the multiethnic Hapsburg empire, which included regions from the outermost limits of Europe.<sup>23</sup> They were well aware of the latest developments in modern French and Austrian art, which, in general, they appreciated. Riegl, Fritz Wickhoff (1853–1909) and other important members of the School of Vienna made abundant use of notions derived from their scrutiny of modern art in order to draw attention to non-classical periods of art history. These scholars' experimental formalism allowed them to examine those styles without using classic art and the Renaissance as paradigms. As a result, they were able to understand modern art as a reaction *against* that tradition. Wickhoff, for example, projected his taste for impressionism in his stylistic analysis of the *Vienna Genesis*. Riegl applied the notion of opticality to advance his defense of Late Roman and early Christian art,<sup>24</sup> whereas Max Dvořák in 1905–06 considered Tintoretto's and Titian's art as impressionist (especially their late periods), and El Greco as an expressionist artist.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> See Margaret Iversen "Style as Structure: Alois Riegl's Historiography," *Art History* 3 (March, 1979): 62–71; *Alois Riegl: Art History and Theory*, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993). Lately, Christopher Wood has edited *The Vienna School Reader. Politics and Art Historical Method in the 1930s*, (New York: Verso, 2000). His thoughtful "Introduction" has provided material for much of what it follows. In 1936 Meyer Schapiro had already published "The New School of Vienna" *The Art Bulletin* 17 (1936): 258–266.

<sup>24</sup> On Wickhoff see Michael Ann Holly "Spirits and Ghosts in the Historiography of Art," in *The Subjects of Art History Historical Objects in Contemporary Perspective*, eds. Mark Cheetham, Michael Ann Holly, and Keith Moxey (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998). See also Matthew Rampley, "Max Dvořák: Art History and the Crisis of Modernity," *Art History* 26 (2003): 214–137, and Jaś Elsner, "The Birth of Late Antiquity: Riegl and Strzygowski in 1901," *Art History* 25 (June 2002): 358–379.

<sup>25</sup> Matthew Rampley observes that "[m]ore generally, too, the idea that mannerism and the baroque stood at the origins of modern 'impressionistic' art had become a commonplace at the turn of the century, Wickhoff and Riegl had drawn the connection while, most notably, the Secessionist exhibition of 1903 on *The Development of Impressionism in Painting and Sculpture* included the work not only of

As Christopher Wood notes,

In German and Austrian universities, the interpretation of the Renaissance, and more generally the destiny of the classical heritage in the post-antique West, was a major historiographical battleground. Admiration for the giants of Italian neoclassical painting ... had been a fundamental premise of nineteenth-century academic art. By the turn of the century, *artist and critics* had tired of the burden of academic taste. *Scholars* eventually followed, and the rejection of any idealized normative vision of the Italian Renaissance became one of the rallying points of progressive continental art history between the World Wars. Within academic art history, the anti-heroic version of the Renaissance had its roots in the influential writings of the turn-of-the-century Viennese scholar Alois Riegl (1858–1905).<sup>26</sup>

Woods observes that these scholars thought of the Renaissance in a less idealized manner as they tended to evaluate it in the light of modern developments in art.

The new historiography relativized the traditional achievements of the Italian Renaissance, and at the same time constructed an alternative Renaissance whose claim on modern attention, indeed whose claim to stand at the threshold of modernity itself, was grounded not in the rebirth of classical art, but in the crisis of representation;... The revival of antiquity, meanwhile, ended up looking nostalgic, anachronistic, and conservative; and neo-Platonist iconography looked like a humanist superstition.<sup>27</sup>

The School of Vienna proposed a revision of the epistemological foundations of art history and of the philological and historical methodologies that were at the core of the humanist approach to the discipline. These art historians balanced out the use

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French artists of the previous decades, but also examples of the work of Rubens, Velázquez, Vermeer and Tintoretto. As Robert Jensen has demonstrated, this was part of a project to legitimize contemporary art and hence make it more marketable.” Rampley, “Max Dvořák,” 222.

<sup>26</sup> Christopher Wood, “Art History’s Normative Renaissance,” in Allen Grieco, Michael Rocke, Fiorella Gioffredi Superbi, *The Italian Renaissance in the Twentieth Century: Acts of an International Conference, Florence, Villa I Tatti, June 9–11 1999* (Florence: : L.S. Olschki, 2002), 70.

<sup>27</sup> Wood, “Normative Renaissance,” 74. Edward Muir has demonstrated that this kind of deconstructive approach was late to enter American scholarship, and that the Renaissance still has heuristic value in the history of thought and in art history. Edward Muir, “The Italian Renaissance in America,” *The American Historical Review* 100 (October, 1995):1117.

of written documentation with an exacting formal analysis of the works of art.<sup>28</sup> This method enabled Riegl to avoid establishing race and nation as exclusive factors in the development of art, but some of his followers later adapted his critique to Humanism (both in Austria and in Germany) to support the National Socialist ideology.

As Panofsky's first articles demonstrate, in the 1920s he was well aware of Riegl's scholarship and, like the Viennese art historians, he was pondering the foundations of the discipline and basic methodological issues. These texts were shaped by the complicated cultural horizon of the Weimar Republic.<sup>29</sup> From 1921 to 1933 Panofsky taught at the University of Hamburg and was a member of the Warburg Institute, which was associated with that university. There he met Cassirer—a neo-Kantian philosopher interested in the epistemological foundations of mathematics, natural sciences, aesthetics, the philosophy of history, and the cultural sciences—who also taught in both institutions from 1919 to 1933.<sup>30</sup> In those years Cassirer completed his three-volume *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, which influenced Panofsky's scholarship, especially his 1927 *Perspective as Symbolic Form*.

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<sup>28</sup> Christopher Wood has written perceptively on the differences between *Strukturanalyse* and structuralism: "The premise of *Strukturalanalyse* is that the work of art has violently refigured reality and offers not an image of but an alternative to the world, what Sedlmayr called a *kleine Welt*, a microcosm. This virtual, fictional presence of the world in the work is in fact what is designated by the term 'structure.' Structure is not an objective property of the material artifact but a projection onto it by the interpreter, supposedly symmetrical to the projection performed by the original maker of the artifact." Wood, "Introduction" in *The School of Vienna*, 43–44.

<sup>29</sup> Other than the classic book by Michael Ann Holly *Panofsky and the Foundations of Art History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), see Anna Mary Dempsey, *Erwin Panofsky and Walter Benjamin: German Jewish Cultural Traditions and the Writing of History in Weimar Germany* (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1998).

<sup>30</sup> Cassirer was member of a rich family. Among his cousins were Bruno and Paul Cassirer the famous dealers who introduced modern French art in Germany. He had studied philosophy at the Neo-Kantian Marburg university.

Panofsky's neo-Kantian approach to the fundamental problems of the discipline became the foundations of modern art history as it was institutionalized after the Second World War. As Warnke has commented, after the war iconology became the "international style" of art history, and was known and discussed even by those who did not apply Panofsky's methodology.<sup>31</sup> If Kant's Third Critique has opened the way for the evaluation of the plastic values of the art object and had promoted the interest in analyzing its impact on the observer, Panofsky's neo-Kantian interpretation of the First Critique enabled art historians to dig into the process by which the artist as human being confronts, perceives, and understands the world in the act of creation of works of art.

### Panofsky and the Neo-Kantian Turn

Most of the founders of art history attempted to devise systems that combined and balanced the two paradoxical forces that are at the foundations of the discipline and that, in a certain way, constitute its name: the structural—or synchronic—(art), and the diachronic (history.) Panofsky began his 1920 famous article "The Concept of Artistic Volition",<sup>32</sup> where he commented on Riegl's *kunstwollen*, addressing this issue,

It is the curse and the blessing of the systematic study of art that it demands that the objects of its study must be grasped with necessity and not merely historically. A purely historical examination, whether it goes first to content or to the history of form, elucidates the phenomenal work of art only by reference to

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<sup>31</sup> Quoted in Wood, "Normative Renaissance," 86.

<sup>32</sup> In what follows I use the English translation by Kenneth Northcott and Joel Snyder. *Critical Inquiry* 8 (Autumn, 1981), 17–33.

other phenomena, it does not have any higher order of knowledge on which to ground itself: to trace back the particular iconographic representation, derive a particular formal combination from a typological history, ... is not to fix it in its absolute place and meaning related to an Archimedean point outside its own sphere of being, but it is to remain inside the total complex of actual interconnected appearances.<sup>33</sup>

When works of art are studied as historical occurrences and contextualized within the diachronic, horizontal thrust of history, it is difficult to see them as art, that is, as objects of a dissimilar quality whose existential authority needs to be addressed as such. In the article, Panofsky discusses different methodologies for the study of works of art (historical, psychological, grammatical, logical, and transcendental). This last, Allister Neher remarks, is the investigation, “of our judgments about art in order to determine their purely artistic content, that is, in order to unearth the category equivalents for art that we impose on experience in constituting something as art,” which is basically a Kantian project.<sup>34</sup> This study would provide the “Archimedean point” that would allow for the concentration on the work of art as art (its structure).

Panofsky’s goal was to establish art history as an independent humanistic discipline for which Kant’s analysis of the sublime and the beautiful in his *Critique of Judgment* (Third Critique) was not especially useful. Influenced by Cassirer’s neo-Kantian outlook, Panofsky applied the critical methodology Kant proposed in his *Critique of Pure Reason* (First Critique), in order to endow art history with fundamental principles and a balanced methodology. The fact that the [German] neo-Kantian interpretation of this particular aspect of Kant’s philosophy shaped the foundations of the art history had significant consequences for the field. The second

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<sup>33</sup> Panofsky, “Artistic Volition,” 18.

<sup>34</sup> Allister Neher, “‘The Concept of *Kunstwollen*’, Neo-Kantianism, and Erwin Panofsky’s Early Art Theoretical Essays,” *Word & Image* 20 (January–March, 2004), 42.

section of this dissertation examines Panofsky's 1927 *Perspective as Symbolic Form* to reveal how it affected the reception of Cézanne's art.<sup>35</sup>

The *Critique of Judgment* (1790), in which Kant famously switched the attention from the work of art to its affect on the observer, completes and stabilizes the theories developed in the first two critiques. The *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) theorizes about the possibility and the limits of knowledge without examining its application as practical reason in particular cases. According to Kant's theory of knowledge, man is not able to know the "things in themselves" as he perceives them through the "forms of intuition" (space and time) and *a priori* concepts (categories), which structure and construe them. The *Critique of Practical Reason* (1787) is *not* a critique of *pure* practical reason, but rather a defense of the possibility of having a behavior that overcomes the practical reasoning oriented uniquely on desire.<sup>36</sup> The Third Critique deals with judgments in practical cases, when men are actually in touch with reality as nature as well as with real works of art. In order to make his whole system work, Kant needs these judgments to be of universal value, that is, valid for all human beings. This is the text that determined the way art was understood in the nineteenth century.

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<sup>35</sup> For the influence of neo-Kantianism in art history see Fritz K. Ringer, *The Decline of the German mandarins. The German Academic Community, 1890–1933* (Cambridge, Mass. Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969), 90–91. Ringer's is the classical account for the development of the humanities in Germany in the last part of the nineteenth century. On the influences on Wölfflin see Adler, "Painterly Politics," and Joan Hart, "Reinterpreting Wölfflin: Neo-Kantians and Hermeneutics," *Art Journal* 42 (Winter 1982): 292–300. For the influence of Kant's philosophy in Panofsky's scholarship see Michael Ann Holly, "Panofsky et la perspective comme forme symbolique," and Michael Podro, "Panofsky: de la Philosophie première au relativisme personnel," both in *Pour un Temps/Erwin Panofsky* (Paris: Paris, Centre Georges-Pompidou/Pandora, 1983); Didi-Huberman, *Devant l'image*; and Podro, *The Critical Art Historians*. For a new approach to this question see Neher, "'The Concept of Kustwollen'." Nevertheless, Kant's philosophy has suffused the German academic life in such a way that there is no simple way of charting its influence in art history.

<sup>36</sup> For the relationship of the two previous Critiques with The Critique of Judgment see Jacques Derrida, *La Vérité en peinture* (Paris: Flammarion, 1978), and Salim Kemal, *Kant and the Fine Arts. An Essay on Kant and the Philosophy of Fine Arts and Culture* (Oxford: Palgrave Macmillan, 1986)

Neo-Kantianism was so entrenched and omnipresent in the German academic environment after the 1880s that it has proven difficult to characterize and study.<sup>37</sup>

Cassirer belonged to the Marburg School. As the historian of philosophy Alan Kin explains,

For the Marburg School, Kant's great idea ... is the *transcendental method* ....[which] anchors philosophy in facts (eminently the fact of mathematical physics), *of which* philosophy is to establish the conditions of possibility or justification (*Rechtsgrund*). By limiting itself to this task of justification, philosophical reason keeps itself from ascending into the aether of speculation. At the same time, by discovering the source of scientific objectivity (and thus of rational objectivity generally), i.e., by “clearly exhibiting the law [of objectivity] in its purity,” philosophy “secures science [and rational activity generally] in its autonomy and preserves it from alien distraction.” Transcendental philosophy in the Kantian spirit, then, is doubly “critical,” checking itself against metaphysical excesses, on the one hand, but also rigorously formulating the ideal grounds of the sciences, on the other.<sup>38</sup>

Therefore, Cassirer’s philosophy focused on Kant’s theory of knowledge (that is, the First Critique) buttressed by the information provided by the sciences and the disciplines involved in the study of the cognitive process. This is where his project intersects Panofsky’s, who wanted to formulate principles for art history that operated like Kant’s forms of intuition and categories in the appreciation of works of art: “Art history should search for the ‘standards of determination which, with the force of *a priori* basic principles, refer not to the phenomenon itself but to the conditions of its existence and its being ‘thus’.”<sup>39</sup> Neo-Kantianism, by allying Kant’s epistemology with the scientific understanding of the problem of knowledge, proposed a manner of

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<sup>37</sup> Klaus Christian Köhnke, *The Rise of Neo-Kantianism German Academic Philosophy between Idealism and Positivism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), Introduction. Although the book considers the period that precedes Cassirer it demonstrates the widespread and multifarious shapes in which Kant affected the German approach both to sciences and to philosophy.

<sup>38</sup> Alan Kim, “Paul Natorp,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*  
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/natorp/#1>.

<sup>39</sup> Erwin Panofsky “Der Begriff des Kunstwollens” quoted in Neher, “ ‘ The Concept of *Kunstwollen*,’ ” 42,

comprehending humanity's relationship with the world and culture.<sup>40</sup> This new philosophical and "scientific" premise reinforced the notion that art history's methodologies had been discovered instead of construed, and that, like mathematic formulas, they might be applied to the examination of the visual products of all periods and cultures.<sup>41</sup>

This is reflected in the 1939 article with which Panofsky began his career in America. Wood notices that,

The art historian could improve on the mere stylistic and thematic analysis of the work by applying what Panofsky called 'synthetic intuition' or 'familiarity with the *essential tendencies of human mind*'; and then by tempering this intuition with 'insight into the manner in which, under varying historical conditions, *essential tendencies of the human mind* were expressed by specific *themes and concepts*.'...

This scholar adds,

Form and content were finally and definitively brought into coordination, with the help of philological scholarship, only in the fifteenth and early sixteenth century in Italy. This reintegration, Panofsky concluded somewhat obscurely, 'is not only a humanistic but also a human occurrence.'<sup>42</sup>

Panofsky believed that the Renaissance had attained (and one-point perspective expressed) a balanced relationship between the object and subject, the mind and external reality, and thus he shaped his interpretative system according to an idealized understanding of Humanism. In his methodology, the Renaissance and Humanism

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<sup>40</sup> Köhnke comments that "in the fourth volume of his *History of the Problem of Knowledge*, which comprises the era from the death of Hegel to the present (1932), Ernst Cassirer, as though as a matter of course, discusses the development of philosophy within an exposition of the scientific-theoretical problems of different groups of individual sciences and, in doing so, is able to start from an inseparable unity of philosophy and science..." *Rise of Neo-Kantianism*, 4.

<sup>41</sup> Several of the authors quoted in this dissertation make this point. The classic analysis is by Michael Foucault. See for example his replay of his acute analysis of Nietzsche's thought in "Truth and Judicial Forms" (1974), in *Power: Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984: Volume Three* (New York: The New Press, 2000).

<sup>42</sup> Wood, "Normative Renaissance," 79; 80-81.

were not only the preferred objects of study, but also epistemological models. As such, they became standards against which other world views, periods, and styles had to be compared. In Neher's words,

What Panofsky is suggesting is that we see in Renaissance art an analogy to Kantian epistemology, in that both assign equal significance to the subject and the object in the act of apprehension. ...

'One could even compare the function of perspective,' Panofsky continues, 'with that of critical philosophy.' Perspective can be compared to Kantianism because 'it is as much a consolidation and systematization of the external world, as an extension of the domain of the self.'<sup>43</sup>

A vague definition of Humanism was conflated with an idealized modern model of Renaissance Humanism and established at the foundations of art history. Panofsky equates the historical "scientific perspective" with Kant's forms of intuition and *a priori* categories. What originally was a technical device became the symbol of balance, mental order and [human] *Kosmos*. The Renaissance became the period that discovered an epistemological model that reflects the world order, and applied it to the creation of art. Panofsky's analysis implies that the art historian has a scientific or philosophical comprehension of what are man and the world that substantiates his assessment. Perspective was established by Panofsky as a paradigm and a symbol. In this dissertation, it is perceived as a North Atlantic universal.

### 1929 to 1939: From Davos to America

In 1932, one year before being dismissed from his post at the University of Hamburg, Panofsky published "*Zum Problem der Beschreibung und Inhaltsdeutung*

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<sup>43</sup> Neher, "The Concept of *Kustwollen*," 47.

*von Werken der bildenden Kunst*” (“Concerning the Problem of Description and Interpretation of Meaning in Works of Art”) in *Logos: Internationale Zeitschrift für Philosophie der Kultur*.<sup>44</sup> The text grew out of a paper he had delivered at a conference organized by a society of Kantian studies in Kiel, which had invited him to reflect upon about the necessary principles for the methodology of art history. In this article Panofsky sketched for the first time the system of three interrelated and internally consistent levels of interpretation for the study of works of art, which in 1939 he named Iconology.<sup>45</sup> The text reflects Panofsky’s reaction to the Davos encounter of 1929, where Cassirer and Heidegger presented their conflicting understandings of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*.<sup>46</sup> Kant’s interpretation of the “Man” was at the center of the agenda. Heidegger was quite clear when he stated in his first presentation,

I would like ... to place our entire discussion within the meaning–context of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, and to focus again on the central question: ‘What is man?’ Such a question ought not to be asked merely as an anthropological one. Instead, one ought to show that man, being the creature which is transcendent, i.e., open to being as a whole and to himself, is placed, by virtue of this eccentricity, into the whole of being as such.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> This Journal, launched in 1910–11, was, until 1935, identified with neo–Kantianism. Among the members of the advisory board were Edmond Husserl, Friedrich Meineke, Heinrich Rickert, Georg Simmel, Ernst Troeltsch, Max Weber, and Heinrich Wölfflin. In the first issue, the editors stated their intention of constructing a new *systembildung* which would encompass all humanistic fields of study. See Adler, “Painterly Politics.” In this analysis I will use the French translation of the article directed by Guy Ballangé published in Erwin Panofsky, *La perspective comme forme symbolique et autres essays* (Paris: Minuit, 1975), which I checked with the original.

<sup>45</sup> The authors who have analyzed this text are David Summers, “Meaning in the Visual Arts as a Humanistic Discipline” in *Centennial Commemoration*, and Didi–Huberman, *Devant l’image*.

<sup>46</sup> This explains the mention of Heidegger in the paragraph by Stephen Melville quoted above, n. 28. The exchange between Cassirer and Heidegger had started before 1929 as each philosopher had reviewed the other’s writings. The bibliography concerning this encounter is quite extensive. See, Michael A Friedman, *A Parting of the Ways, Carnap, Cassirer, and Heidegger* (Peru, Ill.: Open Court Publishing Company, 2000), and Denis A Lynch, “Ernst Cassirer and Martin Heidegger: The Davos Debate,” *Kant—Studien Philosophische Zeitschrift der Kant—Gesellschaft* (1990): 360–370.

<sup>47</sup> Carl H., Hamburg, “Discussion A Cassirer–Heidegger Seminar,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 25 (1964–1965): 220.

In the context of this study, Heidegger's opening paragraph contains all that is relevant to this essay of this complicated discussion. Cassirer thought that it was possible to grasp the inner workings of human perception and even to characterize periods in the development of people's perceptual/mental apparatus. Heidegger, on the contrary, warned that this kind of analysis was based on false certainties.<sup>48</sup> He considered "Man" as an "eccentricity" of Being and thought that philosophy should concentrate on answering the question: What is "Man"?<sup>49</sup>

Heidegger explicitly opposed Cassirer's approach to Kant and philosophy and, on the whole, to what he referred to as Anthropological philosophy. Ten years later in the article "The Question Concerning Technology," he defined this philosophical trend as "that interpretation of man that already knows fundamentally what man is and hence can never ask who he may be. For with this question it would have to confess itself shaken and overcome."<sup>50</sup> This was a basic aspect of Heidegger's critique of the West, which—he argued—behaves as if the question had been answered. He observed that scientific and Humanistic disciplines devoted themselves to research and experimentation to foster "knowledge," but were unable to question their own foundations. As Trouillot would remark later, Anthropology, even anthropological philosophy, creates its subject of study, in this case, "Man."

Heidegger contended that the Western conception of human being determined a certain world view (here as the way the world is seeing.) "Man" as subject confronts

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<sup>48</sup> Even though Trouillot does not list Heidegger among his sources, it is evident that his position is related with the scholarship derived from the philosopher's deconstruction of the history of the West as it influenced, among many others, Foucault's thought. See John Rajchman, *Michel Foucault: The Freedom of Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

<sup>49</sup> It is not that the human being is not at the center of Heidegger's endeavors; it is, but it is in a different way, as part of the more general Being, thrown onto the "World" and disoriented.

<sup>50</sup> Martin Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (New York: Harper, 1982), 153.

the world as object; in other words, the world is the *object* of perception and knowledge for a person who conceives himself as a *subject*.

[T]he more extensively and the more effectually the world stands at man's disposal as conquered, and the more objectively the object appears, all the more subjectively i.e. the more importunately, does the *subiectum* rise up, and all the more impetuously, too do observation of and teaching about the world change into a doctrine of man, into anthropology. It is no wonder that humanism first arises where the world becomes picture.... *Humanism, therefore in the more strict historiographical sense, is nothing but a moral-aesthetic anthropology.* The name 'anthropology' as used here does not mean just some investigation of man by a natural science. Nor does it mean the doctrine established within Christian theology of man.... It designates that philosophical interpretation of man which explains and evaluates whatever is, in its entirety, from the standpoint of man and in relation to man.<sup>51</sup> (Emphasis added)

"Man" conquers the world, which becomes the scenario for his actions; man's attention is directed towards objects/world and, therefore he, the subject, becomes an object. Humanism puts this "Man" at the center of a world that has been transformed into a set of images. These are fundamental issues for art history, a discipline that is a *Humanity*, and deals with *objects* (generally images) that are thought to reflect or contain the highest and deepest feelings, sensations and thoughts of their *human* creators.<sup>52</sup> The Davos encounter and Panofsky's 1932 article demonstrate that this doubt existed, that non-Humanist world views were being discussed, that the consolidation of the influence of Humanism in art and art history occurred after this period. This opens the door to think that, in the end, the second part of the twentieth century might have been much more *Humanist* than the end of the nineteenth ever was.

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<sup>51</sup> Heidegger, "Age Picture," 133.

<sup>52</sup> See Donald Preziosi's interesting analysis of this problem for the understanding on cave art in *Rethinking Art History. Meditations on a Coy Science* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), chapter V.

Shortly after the Davos encounter, Heidegger became a supporter of the Nazi party, but in 1929 his relationship with Cassirer, who was Jewish, seems to have been highly cordial.<sup>53</sup> His work, for obvious reasons, was largely banished from American academia but today, like the epigraph to the Section indicates, it haunts art historians who are looking for alternative premises for the discipline.<sup>54</sup> In the context of the present inquiry, Heidegger's refutation of Humanism, Anthropological Philosophy, and his radical approach to art and interpretation are the extreme manifestations of fundamental critiques of the West that were shared by scholars of different cultural backgrounds and political agendas.<sup>55</sup> By contextualizing those alternative voices, the art of the end of the nineteenth century may be considered outside of modern art history's influences. The presentations at Davos indicate that, metaphorically, in 1932 Panofsky was like Hercules at a crossroads, he had to decide between two paths:

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<sup>53</sup> Heidegger's involvement with the Nazi Party in 1933 has been amply debated and it is still much discussed. Michael Friedman has lately called the attention of the collegiality and good relationship between Cassirer and Heidegger at the time of the confrontation. See Friedman, *Parting Ways*, 5–7. As commented above I consider that Heidegger's critique to Western philosophical tradition gives a unique opportunity to think about its foundations. Heidegger's *The Origin of the Work of Art* (1935) is among the most important texts on aesthetics of the twentieth century.

<sup>54</sup> James Elkins has recently commented that "The reception of Heidegger (including the refusal of Heidegger) varies widely from writers whose work is deeply informed by his texts (for example, Stephen Melville) to those who adapt his ideas for rhetorical purposes (for instance, Germano Celant). Among the challenges for the current generation of art historians ... is to come to terms with Heidegger's place in current understandings of historical art. At the least, a range of contemporary art historical and theoretical writings that are in search of embodied truths about the world might become more self reflective if they posed their encounter with Heidegger instead of passively embodying it." "David Summers," 276.

<sup>55</sup> The first part of Michel Foucault's scholarship, especially *Le Mot et les choses* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* were clearly indebted to this aspect of Heidegger's thought. What is more, as the epigraph demonstrates, his observations have been recently recuperated as guidelines for rethinking the history of the discipline and its relationship with art. Donald Preziosi, Stephen Melville, George Didi-Huberman and Holly owe many of their most refined ideas to a thoughtful reflection of this philosopher's reflection on art.

certainties or doubt, science or philosophy, tradition or experimentalism, meaning or presence.<sup>56</sup>

As the title itself indicates, in “*Zum Problem der Beschreibung und Inhaltdeutung von Werken der Bildenden Kunst*” Panofsky deals with the translation of images into words: the written “description” (*Beschreibung*) and “interpretation” (*Inhaltsdeutung*), of “plastic arts” (*bildenden Kunst*.)<sup>57</sup> He uses Grünewald’s 1515 *Isenheim Altarpiece* to explain that no accurate description of an image can be made without knowledge of the *cultural context* in which it was created. The image’s opacity and resistance to verbal assault is such that even a description is already an interpretation. He does not deem this a problem—and contradicting his own previous assessments inspired by Riegl’s scholarship—proposes to step up the research in order to have a better understanding of the context. Although Panofsky warns that the different stages of the methodology he describes take place simultaneously and influence themselves, the material and visual aspect of the work of art becomes transparent in the search for the image’s meaning (which is expressed in words and derives mostly from the analysis of textual sources.)<sup>58</sup> Heidegger, on the contrary,

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<sup>56</sup> In 1930 Panofsky wrote *Hercules am Scheideweg und andere antike Bildstoffe in der neueren Kunst, Studien der Bibliothek Warburg, XVIII*.

<sup>57</sup> According to Claire Farago the term “visual culture,” is not neutral as *bildenden Kunst* (visual arts) was first used by the formalist art historians Fiedler, Hildebrand, Wölfflin and Riegl. Farago, “Vision Itself has Its History’: ‘Race,’ Nation, and Renaissance Art History,” in *Reframing the Renaissance*, 76–77.

<sup>58</sup> In the 1939 article, instead of analyzing the *Isenheim Altarpiece*, Panofsky comments on the meeting of two men in a street. Joan Hart has demonstrated that this example was taken from Karl Mannheim’s “On the Interpretation of Weltanschauung.” By exchanging the rich and complicated image of the altarpiece for this simple scene, and by structuring the core of the argumentation around an example devised for the analysis of the social world, Panofsky oversimplifies the problematic posed by the material, visual aspect of art. The 1955 version is more complex although it does not compare with the philosophical sophistication of the German version. Svetlana Alpers have commented on the exchange in *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984). See also W.J.T. Mitchell, “Iconology and Ideology: Panofsky, Althusser, and the Scene of

always keeps the resistant materiality of the thing/object (he calls it “Earth”) in the foreground of his study as he doubts in the possibility of intellectually grasping it.

The last level of the interpretation is called *Dokumentsinn* (documentary sense) or *Wesenssinn*, (essential signification), to which corresponds *Weltanschauung* (world view or history of ideas) as the disciplinary corrective and historical science that secures the accuracy of the meaning attributed by the scholar.

[C]e contenu, c’est ce que le sujet, involontairement et à son insu, révèle de son propre comportement envers le monde et des principes qui le guident, ...la grandeur d’une production artistique dépend en dernier ressort de la quantité d’énergie en *Weltanschauung*’ incorporée à la matière modelée et rejaillissant de cette dernière sur le spectateur (en ce sens, une nature morte de Cézanne n’est effectivement pas seulement aussi ‘bonne’ mais aussi ‘pleine de contenu’ qu’une Madone de Raphaël), la tâche la plus haute de l’interprétation est de pénétrer dans cette strate ultime du ‘sens de l’essence’. Elle n’aura atteint son but véritable que lorsqu’elle aura appréhendé et produit comme ‘documents’ d’un sens homogène de *Weltanschauung* la totalité des éléments qui produisent l’effet, c’est-à-dire non seulement l’objectal et l’iconographique mais aussi les facteurs purement formels que sont la répartition des lumières et des ombres, la répartition des surfaces et même la qualité du trait de pinceau, de ciseau ou de pointe. Dans une telle entreprise, qui permet à l’interprétation d’une œuvre d’art de se hisser au niveau de l’interprétation d’un système philosophique ou de l’interprétation d’une conception religieuse.<sup>59</sup> (My underline)

The visual and material aspects of the work of art are in this system transparent and diluted within the [conceptual] meaning, as everything has to conform to the final interpretation. Even one of the highest examples of the formal approach to art, a Cézanne still life, *is* its meaning. The work of art is a (mere) “document” of an abstract *Weltanschauung* perceived by the “synthetic intuition” but checked against

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Recognition” in *Image and Ideology in Modern/Postmodern Discourse*, eds. David. B. Downing and Susan Bazargan (Albany: State University of New York, 1991).

<sup>59</sup> Panofsky, “Problem der Beschreibung,” 251–252.

the results provided by the history of ideas or history of cultural symptoms, that is, against the knowledge produced by other disciplines.<sup>60</sup>

This hermeneutic task implies the presence of the humanist, the art historian, who is able to expose those hidden meanings and to communicate them to others, and Panofsky equates his task with that of the philosopher and the interpreter of religions. Joan Hart has demonstrated that the author was heavily influenced by Hermeneutics, a philosophical theory and methodology for reading sacred *texts*.<sup>61</sup> This is the opposite of Heidegger's attitude towards interpretation, and Panofsky makes this clear by quoting the philosopher's 1929 *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*: “‘Bien sur, toute interprétation pour arracher, à ce que les mots disent, ce qu'ils veulent dire doit nécessairement employer la violence,’ ”; “[m]ais une telle violence... ne peut être un arbitraire dévastateur, la force d'une idée pré-existante doit diriger et promouvoir l'interprétation.”<sup>62</sup>

Heidegger advocated a subjective and violent penetration into the text/work of art in order to fetch a meaning that was unknown even to its author/creator, so that the explanation is not tautological, and adds new knowledge. Heidegger used visual metaphors in order to underscore the non rationality of the process and Panofsky quotes Heidegger at length. Interpretation's task is,

‘de rendre expressément visible ce que, par-delà sa formulation explicite, Kant a mis en lumière dans son formulation même; mais cela, Kant n'était plus en mesure de le dire de même que, dans toute connaissance philosophique, ce n'est

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<sup>60</sup> Each layer of analysis has a historical science as a “corrective” that allows verification of the scholar's findings. If the penetration into the work's meaning is thought of as a vertical movement, these sciences might be considered as horizontal strata that buffer that drive, which underscores its difference from Heidegger's idea of interpretation.

<sup>61</sup> Hart, “Panofsky Mannheim,” 564.

<sup>62</sup> Martin Heidegger, quoted in Panofsky, “Problem der Beschreibung,” 248 and 249.

pas ce que celle-ci dit *expressis verbis* qui doit être décisive mais l'inexprimé qu'elle met sous les yeux en l'exprimant' ... <sup>63</sup>

Heidegger refers to texts as if they were visual objects that have to be intuitively taken beyond their explicit meaning. Conversely, Panofsky proposes to “read” works of art as if they were texts, and looks for meanings through a hermeneutical methodology dominated at each step by reason.

Uninterested in modern art, Panofsky rarely ever referred to Cézanne’s art.<sup>64</sup> In those years Heidegger was also thinking of a still life by a Post-Impressionist artist. In “The Origin of the Work of Art,” he famously singled out a painting by van Gogh representing shoes, wherein the work of art enabled the true significance of the shoes as [human] equipment, and even of the peasant who had used them. Nevertheless, words are unable to convey the import of this true epiphany,

This painting spoke. In the vicinity of the work we were suddenly somewhere else than we usually tend to be.

The art work let us know what shoes are in truth. It would be the worst self-deception to think that our *description*, as a subjective action, had first depicted everything thus and then projected it into the painting. If anything is questionable here, it is rather that we experienced too little in the neighborhood of the work and that we expressed the experience too crudely and too literally. But... Van Gogh’s painting is the disclosure of what the equipment, the pair of shoes *is* in truth. This entity emerges into the unconcealedness of its being. <sup>65</sup> (Emphasis added).

The comparison of the texts by Heidegger and Panofsky is not entirely fair according to the modern organization of the disciplines devoted to the study of art, even though Panofsky himself equated the work of the art historian with that of the

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<sup>63</sup> Panofsky, “Problem der Beschreibung,” 248–249.

<sup>64</sup> In 1953 Panofsky briefly mentioned Cézanne’s use of perspective for the representation of space. See Chapter Six.

<sup>65</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art” in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York, ?), 35–36.

philosopher in 1932, but it underscores how antithetical were their approaches to knowledge and interpretation.<sup>66</sup>

By 1932 Panofsky had already published *Perspective as Symbolic Form*. Perspective was for him not only a central subject matter, but also an intellectual model that implied keeping an ‘objective’ distance from the [historical] object of study.<sup>67</sup> In everyday language “to have perspective” means to be at a distance that allows seeing something clearly. This is why Panofsky could equate perspective with historical distance.<sup>68</sup> However, to keep the object at a certain distance implies to put away its material presence, its tactile values. In Heidegger’s text on the other hand, the accent is on “vicinity,” on being close to the work of art, which might account as well for the impossibility of translating the experience into words. Keith Moxey has recently observed that Panofsky’s philosophical position towards the problem of historical distance was ideological and historically determined.

[T]hough Panofsky could not consciously have recognized this investment, the entire notion of historical distance was a defense of humanist culture and a means of keeping history safe from the hands of ‘ideologues.’ The need to keep ‘civilization’ out of the hands of barbarians made him value his scholarship in the United States as a means of ensuring the survival of values that were threatened with obliteration in fascist Europe.

Whereas for the nationalist historians the conflation of historical distance was important as a way of establishing the continuity of national identity, for Panofsky historical distance was a means of validating the purportedly universal values of the humanist tradition. If nationalist critics working in a Hegelian

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<sup>66</sup> This text has been the object of a long debate. See Meyer Shapiro, "The Still-Life as Personal Object—A Note on Heidegger and Van Gogh," *The Reach of Mind: Essays in Memory of Kurt Goldstein, 1878–1965*, (New York: Springer, 1968), and Jacques Derrida’s answer to Shapiro in *De la Vérité en peinture*. Both texts are in Preziosi, *The Art of Art History*.

<sup>67</sup> According to Melville, Panofsky’s notion of perspective allowed him to transform art history into a science: “‘Perspective’ was never a practice art history simply found within its purview, which is why Panofsky’s formulation of it had the power to wrest a discipline from its historical embeddedness and transform it into a science.” Melville, “The Temptation,” 410–411.

<sup>68</sup> For a consideration of the origin of the metaphorical use of “point of view” and “perspective” and of how this use relates with the history of perspective, see James Elkins, *The Poetics of Perspective* (Ithaca, 1994), 19–22.

tradition had exploited Hegel's view that the unfolding of the "spirit" was best observed in the art of different peoples or nations, Panofsky's debt to this philosopher may be discerned in exalting the Renaissance as a decisive moment in the self-realization of humanity.<sup>69</sup>

Historical distance helped Panofsky to counter other models of history that denied such distance, as these models reclaimed the past as racial or national legacies which only their "rightful" owners might re-enact in the present: in Germany it was the notion of *Kultur*, and in Italy the Actualist philosophy of Giovanni Gentile. Perhaps this is also the context for Panofsky's insistence on the Renaissance as a re-birth of classical Antiquity after a period in which it had been "dead," in opposition to Warburg's notion of "survival" (*nachleben*).<sup>70</sup> In this way, he indicated that the Renaissance had made history possible as it had established a "historical distance" to Antiquity. In order to institute this distance as part of art history's methodology, Panofsky transformed Humanism into both an a-historical endeavor and a paradigmatic epistemological model for the understanding of art.

Mosse has argued that historians' disproportionate attention to the historical and ideological forces at work in Fascism made them overlook its use of aesthetics as a tool that enabled the transformation of a political ideology into a civic religion.

We failed to see that fascist esthetics itself reflected the needs and hopes of contemporary society, that what we brushed aside as the so-called superstructure was in reality the means through which most people grasped the fascist message, transforming politics into a civic religion. ....

The ideal of beauty was central to this aesthetic, whether that of the human body or of the political liturgy. The longing for a set standard of beauty was deeply ingrained in the European middle classes, and the definition of the

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<sup>69</sup> Keith Moxey, "Impossible Distance: Past and Present in the Study of Dürer and Grünewald," *The Art Bulletin* 84 (December, 2004), 757. I would like to thank Dr. June Hargrove for calling my attention to this article.

<sup>70</sup> On the notion of *Nachleben* (survival) in Warburg and its transformation into re-naissance by Panofsky, see George Didi-Huberman, "Artistic Survival. Panofsky vs. Warburg and the Exorcism of Impure Time," *Common Knowledge* (2003): 273–285.

beautiful as ‘the good, the true, and the holy’ was an important background to the fascist cults. Appreciation of the arts played a central role in the self-definition of the middle classes and anyone who wanted to be respected member of society had to value them properly.<sup>71</sup>

Fascism took elements that lay dormant within the structure of common society and applied them to foster its own goals. It became a non-traditional faith that used liturgy and symbols to produce an immediate response, an unmediated belief.

### Art History as a Humanistic Discipline. Humanism in America

“The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline”—the article that Panofsky’s contributed to Greene’s 1938 *The Meaning of the Humanities*—starts with an anecdote that depicts an old, weak Kant making efforts to behave in a civilized manner: “ ‘Das Gefühl für Humanität hat mich noch nicht verlassen’ – the Sense of humanity has not yet left me.”<sup>72</sup> Panofsky establishes that the historian *qua* humanist is responsible for shaping the present and defending its fundamental cultural values. To this end he quotes a 1937 article about the dismissal of professors in Soviet Russia as proof that teaching Neo-Platonism, and Humanism in general, is an anti-totalitarian activity.<sup>73</sup> He states that Humanism remains pertinent and warns that the victory of the totalitarian threat (“satanocracy”) would bring about a double inversion: it would

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<sup>71</sup> Mosse, “Fascist Aesthetics,” 246.

<sup>72</sup> Erwin Panofsky, “The Meaning of the Humanities” in *The Meaning of the Humanities*, ed. Theodore Meyer Greene (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1938), 92.

<sup>73</sup> Erwin Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts: papers in and on art history* (Woodstock, N.Y.: Overlook Press, 1974, c1955), 23. In this sense his Humanism is as engaged in the present day politics as Kant’s. In a broader sense every book must be engaged in this way and his essay overtly claims to be so. The problem arises when these historically determined engagements are institutionalized as objective and universally valid and become transparent as ideologies.

provoke the end of the “anthropocratic” civilization, and bring about a new Middle Ages oriented not towards God but towards Hell.<sup>74</sup> Panofsky’s understanding of Humanism had its root in the Weimar Republic, but its success and dissemination in the United States after 1933 indicates that it resonated with the needs and orientation of American academia.

The depth of Panofsky’s commitment to Enlightenment ideals and to Humanism has been usually associated with his Jewishness. George Mosse has convincingly argued that the history of the emancipation of the Jews and of their assimilation to German culture was, since the eighteenth century, intimately intertwined with that of *Bildung*.<sup>75</sup> According to this author,

several presuppositions of the Enlightenment were basic to the concept of *Bildung*—the optimism about the potential of human nature and the autonomy of man; the belief that acquired knowledge would activate the moral imperative; and, last but not least, the belief that all who were willing to use and develop their reason could attain this ideal... It was the degree of a person’s *Bildung*, not his religious or national heritage, which ultimately decided the degree of equality.<sup>76</sup>

The Humanism of the Renaissance was considered a proto-Enlightenment period because of its secularism and the development of the ideal of the cultured individual. For the German bourgeoisie *Bildung* was a means to gain access to power and a place in the social order. For the Jews, it was also the symbol of their emancipation and

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<sup>74</sup> Panofsky, “Meaning Humanities,” 117. The use of ‘anthropocratic’ is interesting as it asserts the radical authority and centrality of the human being and thus a Western world view. It also has a special meaning considering Heidegger’s introductory words at Davos and his indictment of Anthropological philosophy. Panofsky’s characterization of the Middle Ages highlights once more the centrality of the Renaissance in this author’s mind.

<sup>75</sup> George L. Mosse, *German Jews Beyond Judaism* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1985), 3.

<sup>76</sup> Mosse, *German Jews*, 6.

assimilation into German culture.<sup>77</sup> After Germany lost the First World War *Bildung* became a unifying and cohesive factor that helped to counterbalance the chaotic political and economic realities and ensuing dislocation of the social order. The Weimar Republic was a period of extreme disorder and constant upheavals, and the idea of following a tradition structured around Greek classical ideals was especially reassuring. In the wake of defeat, German culture was pervaded by its own version of the *rappel à l'ordre* and its concomitant mentality and melancholic mood.<sup>78</sup>

In the nineteenth century the United States adopted *Bildung* as the paradigm of cultivation and education. Wood has pointed out that “the very idea of teaching art history at the university was a German idea,” as the first professor of art history at Harvard, Charles Eliot Norton (1827–1908), had studied in that country.<sup>79</sup>

In the 1930s, a new interest in reaffirming cultural values centered on Western Humanism was gaining momentum in America. The ideal of the free, cultivated individual was transformed to correspond with liberal ideology and was used politically to oppose Hitler and communism. The Renaissance was identified with

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<sup>77</sup> Dempsey, *Erwin Panofsky*, especially 187 ff. This author believes that Jewish theology and the idea of redemption might have influenced Panofsky’s early writings but that later he rejected them to favor Kant’s theory of knowledge: “[H]e never abandons the Enlightenment and the values of *Bildung* associated with them.”

<sup>78</sup> Melancholy was one of the leitmotifs in Panofsky’s scholarship. His interpretation of Albrecht Dürer’s engraving *Melancholy I* is among his the most famous texts. In 1953 he authored together with Raymond Klibansky and Fritz Saxl *Saturn and Melancholy; Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion, and Art*. See Keith Moxey, “Panofsky’s Melancholia,” *The Practice of Theory: Poststructuralism, Cultural Politics, and Art History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 65–78 where Moxey relates Panofsky’s interest in the subject matter with the experiences of the scholars in Germany and his life as émigré. See also Moxey, “Impossible Distance.”

<sup>79</sup> Wood, “Normative Renaissance,” 64. See Sybil Gordon Kantor, “Harvard and the ‘Fogg Method,’” in *The Early Years of Art History in the United States Notes and Essays on Departments, Teaching, and Scholars* eds. Craig Hugh Smyth, and Peter M. Lukehart (New Jersey: Yale University Press, 1993).

culture and replaced or reinforced the traditional fascination with classicism.<sup>80</sup> The ultimate goal of this model of education was to counterbalance the growing influence of the sciences and technology, a process that the arrival of the German émigrés accelerated, and to which Panofsky's scholarship was especially well suited. As Carl Landauer explains,

Panofsky's definition of the Renaissance—that it was able to view classical antiquity with historical distance—meant that the very essence of the Renaissance... was its own historicism. If the growing mythologizing of the Renaissance in the American academy identified the Renaissance with culture and the liberal arts, Panofsky took that mythology one step further by identifying historical vision as the fundamental aspect of Renaissance culture. Panofsky's definition of the Renaissance implied that anyone who was working in the historical fields—which in Panofsky's own neo-Kantian definition meant anyone working in the humanities in general—was not only indebted to the Renaissance but was carrying out the central work of the Renaissance.

And he adds,

Ultimately, with Panofsky's permanent Renaissance not only is the Renaissance still present, but the recovered antiquity is also a living part of our culture. .. It is in part this aspect of Panofsky, the inveterate historian, that fed into the ahistoricism that marked the growing humanistic mythology of the American university...<sup>81</sup>

The values of the Enlightenment—self-determination, rationality, the value of the individual and the dream of a universal humanity—were projected onto the Renaissance and established as the ideal goal of modern education. Panofsky and the

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<sup>80</sup> Wood comments that “[i]t is hard to overstate the depth of the American attraction to the classical. Classicism offered a framework for the most basic thinking about what art was and what function it had in life. .. Americans tended to focus on art's ethical and cognitive content. Classical balance and decorum were indeed ethical as much as formal ideals, and they helped bridge the vast cultural gap separating Americans from Renaissance Italy. Classicism helped Americans overcome their reflexive suspicion of Popish spectacle and superstition.” Wood, “Normative Renaissance,” 69. For the history of the Italian Renaissance in American academia Muir, “Renaissance in America.” See also Anthony Molho, “The Italian Renaissance, Made in the USA,” in Anthony Molho and Gordon S. Wood, *Imagined Histories. American Historians Interpret the Past* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1998).

<sup>81</sup> Carl Erwin Landauer, “Panofsky and the Renaissance of the Renaissance,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 47 (Summer, 1994), 273 and 276

émigrés helped to construe an ideal Renaissance, characterized by a Neo-Platonic approach to philosophy and a pre-scientific mentality. This is why American historians called this period of history “early modern,” and art historians argued that modern art had its roots in the Renaissance.<sup>82</sup> The institutionalized discipline, therefore, was true to its symbolic field and to the logic of the North Atlantic universals.

The emigration of German, mostly Jewish, art historians to the United States hastened the process of professionalization and internationalization of art history, but at a price. Their scholarship lost the methodological inquisitiveness, theoretical edge, and exploratory character it had exhibited on the Continent.<sup>83</sup> Wood comments that the “state of emergency seem[ed] to call for a provisional suspension of historical relativism and the critical stance toward tradition and received cultural values, the scholar’s privileges in normal times.”<sup>84</sup> Kevin Parker went so far as to equate the German émigrés’ success in the United States with their ability *to avoid* certain topics and issues. Surrounding themselves with the humanist myth of disinterested historical scholarship, evident in today’s professional activity, these scholars eschewed subjects that “might have raised questions of identity or politics” and winnowed out

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<sup>82</sup> I owe to Dr. June Hargrove as a patient reader to call my attention to this issue.

<sup>83</sup> Martin Jay, “The German Migration: Is there a Figure in the Carpet?” In Stephanie, Barron, *Exiles + Emigrés The Flight of European Artists from Hitler*, exh. cat., Los Angeles County Museum, Los Angeles, c.1997). Didi-Huberman notes that “Il est de même remarquable qu’avec l’œuvre américaine de Panofsky ... le ton critique se soit entièrement assagi, et le ‘néguvisme’ destructeur se soit renversé dans ces mille et une positivités de savoir que le maître de Princeton nous a finalement léguées. De l’Allemagne à l’Amérique, c’est un peu le moment de l’antithèse qui meurt et celui de la synthèse – optimiste, positive, voire positiviste en certains aspects – que prend la relève. C’est un peu le désir de poser toutes les questions qui aura, d’un coup, laissé la place au désir de donner toutes les réponses.” Georges Didi-Huberman, *Devant l’image. Question posée aux fins d’une histoire de l’art* (Paris, 1990), 127–128.

<sup>84</sup> Wood, “Normative Renaissance,” 82.

methodological inquiries.<sup>85</sup> Panofsky and his contemporaries conceived of Humanism as a bulwark in the fight against the most immediate dangers, declaring it of universal value, which ultimately implied the naturalization of the Eurocentric ideology of the Enlightenment.

Claire Farago, among other historians, has called attention to the fact that these scholars did not use race and nation as categories for analysis of works of art, but neither did they extricate these categories from the discipline.<sup>86</sup> In his 1938 article, Panofsky harshly criticizes authoritarians, and “those ‘insectolatrists’ who profess the all-importance of the hive, whether the hive be called group, class, nation, or race.”<sup>87</sup> But two pages later, when analyzing the problem of form and content, a fundamental issue in Western philosophy, he argues that *content*,

as opposed to subject matter,... is that which a work of art *betrays* but does not *parade*. It is the basic attitude of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophical persuasion—unconsciously qualified by one personality and condensed into one work.<sup>88</sup>

The fact that Panofsky avoids listing race in the second paragraph does not necessarily imply its absence from a system in which the work of art is said to reflect unconsciously (meaning that the person does not have conscious control of certain irrepressible or innate drives) the basic attitudes of the members of a nation or practitioners of a religion.<sup>89</sup> More significant, especially in 2007 and for a scholar deeply concerned with the fate of non-Western cultures, is the fact that Panofsky

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<sup>85</sup> Kevin Parker, “Art history and Exile: Richard Krautheimer and Erwin Panofsky,” in Barron, *Exiles + Emigrés*.

<sup>86</sup> Farago, “‘Vision Itself,’” 82.

<sup>87</sup> Panofsky, “Meaning Humanities,” 93.

<sup>88</sup> Panofsky, “Meaning Humanities,” 105.

<sup>89</sup> Panofsky expressly used ethnicity as a category for the interpretation of works of art in “The Ideological Antecedents of the Rolls-Royce Radiator” published in 1962.

defines *humanitas* as both the inheritor of the classical opposition *barbaritas-humanitas*, and the medieval *divinitas-humanitas*, which does not bode well for a discipline that aspires to represent universal values.<sup>90</sup>

This brief survey suggests that when Panofsky lost contact with the theoretically experimental standpoint fostered mainly by the School of Vienna, his scholarship fell back to the German approach to art history as developed in the nineteenth century, in which race and nation were operative categories for the study of works of art.

#### Written Art History vs. Plastic Arts ? The Image and the Word

Panofsky's Kantian Humanism was influenced by the ideologies, historical circumstances, and particular structures of the epistemological wars of his time. But, can a methodology inherently contingent on specific historical events be transformed into a universal, timeless, and objective epistemological tool? David Summers answers in the positive:

Panofsky devoted his life to the study of Western art, and his art history continued to be, in the classical manner, a rhetoric of praise for those individuals who made art and made it possible... But if he insisted upon high philological standards for the study of Western art, meaning in the visual arts, as he understood it, is in principle universalizable, altogether inclusive and cosmopolitan... In Panofsky's scheme, as we have seen, 'context' is defined by what he called his 'objective correctives.' Once this general principle of context had been established, it could be extended and refined.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Greene's interpretation of Humanism, as the introductory essay to the book demonstrates, was profoundly Catholic.

<sup>91</sup> David Summers, "Meaning Visual Arts," 18. Summers general description of Panofsky's methodology would also serve as a characterization of Rewald, as his scholarship is based on a

This would imply that the Western definition of art and art history, even if they have been developed by the West, are universal and can be extended to the appreciation and evaluation of the visual products of other cultures. The correct use of the discipline's philological methodologies will make it possible to find art's *meaning*. The question then becomes who has determined that art has meaning? As the question determines the answer, the inquiry for the meaning of art produces meaningful art. In this model, the answer will be a written or a wordy utterance which secures the characteristic Western alliance of word and image. The French philosopher Jacques Derrida argues,

[E]n se demandant ce que veut dire 'art', on soumet la marque 'art' à un régime d'interprétation très déterminé, survenu dans l'histoire: il consiste, en sa *tautologie* sans réserve, à interroger le vouloir-dire de toute œuvre dite d'art, même si sa forme n'est pas le dire. On se demande ainsi ce que veut dire une œuvre plastique ou musicale en soumettant toutes les productions à l'autorité de la parole et des arts 'discursifs.'<sup>92</sup>

Other cultures and some periods of the history of the West did not regard objects as meaningful in the same way modern art history does. As observed above, once declared "art" their creators do not possess them any more.<sup>93</sup> Moreover—and this is of primary importance for Cézanne and modern art—some modern artistic movements reacted against the influence of the written word on the plastic arts.

Panofsky's use of neo-Kantian categories enabled him to reinforce this association and to assimilate it with the idea of Humanism. Considered as texts,

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philological approach to documentation regarding works of art created by great men, however, Rewald was not interested in the specific meaning of works of art.

<sup>92</sup> Jacques Derrida, *La Vérité en peinture* (Paris : Flammarion, 1978), 26.

<sup>93</sup> The literature on this issue is enormous. See for this particular point in African cultures Christopher B. Steiner, "The Taste of Angels in the Art of Darkness: Fashioning the Canon of African art," in *Art History and Its Institutions. Foundations of a Discipline* ed., Elizabeth Mansfield (London: Routledge, 2002). The installation of sacred American Indian objects has also sparked an interesting and long overdue debate.

works of art not only have value, they have also meaning. When Melville claims that Panofsky was the founding father of modern art history he recognizes that Iconology established the form of relationship between image and word that became hegemonic after Second World War.<sup>94</sup>

Mitchell has observed that Panofsky's regime of interpretation "is an iconology in which the 'icon' is thoroughly absorbed by the 'logos' understood as a rhetorical, literary or even (less convincingly) a scientific discourse."<sup>95</sup> Iconology naturalizes discourse and makes the resistance of the image to words transparent. According to Mitchell only by recognizing how texts and documentary strategies articulate this operation will it be possible to recuperate the (power of) images. As in his view the "icon" resists the "logos," it is necessary to look for the place where the image is sutured to text,

A critical iconology will note the resistance of the icon to logos. ... This is not so much a 'history' as a kernel narrative embedded in the very grammar of iconology as a fractured concept, a suturing of image and text. One must precede the other, dominate, resist, supplement the other. This otherness or alterity of image and text is not just a matter of analogous structure, as if images just happened to be the Other to texts. It is ... the very terms in which alterity *as such* is expressed in phenomenological reflection.<sup>96</sup>

Since the Renaissance, this association has mutated along with the definition of art. When dealing with the history of Western art, the art historian has to study the structure of the system contemporaneous to the art he or she is considering, that is, the way image and logos were sutured at the time, keeping in mind that the art history we are practicing is the last incarnation of this fundamental alliance.

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<sup>94</sup> In a recent article Wilhelm Schlink considers iconography as a neutral, *common sense* approach to art history. See "Enseignement ou illumination," 58.

<sup>95</sup> Mitchell, "Iconology and Ideology," 325.

<sup>96</sup> Mitchell, "Iconology and Ideology," 326.

The oversimplified account of the history of art history in the nineteenth century sketched above focuses on Germany because the methodologies that shaped modern art history were primarily developed in that country at the beginning of the twentieth century. This way of thinking about art and its relationship to art history differs from Cézanne's understanding of both subjects but the proximity in time and space tends to hide basic discrepancies. It is not that Kant's philosophy was not known in France but it was assimilated in a specific way, distinct from both German neo-Kantianism and the interpretation art historians use today.

Kant's philosophical writings established a new dimension for art, and tied it in an *intimate way* to a new kind of written discourse that influenced art criticism throughout the nineteenth century. Panofsky's neo-Kantian methodology brought about significant changes, and in doing so reinforced this strong dependency of the visual on the written word, thus naturalizing Kant's stance on the subject.<sup>97</sup>

Kant's *Critique of Judgment* called attention to the *formal* values of the work of art and established a new purely artistic function for Art, which demanded a new vocabulary and categories to refer to them.<sup>98</sup> In the old system literature and history provided the subject matter for works of art, facilitating their retranslation into words. In the new system other, more challenging abilities were needed, especially since the academic standards that had previously secured the criteria of analysis and appraisal

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<sup>97</sup> The idea of the naturalization of certain ideas as the result of an unsuccessful or partial revision comes from Claire Farago. See her Introduction to her *Reframing the Renaissance*.

<sup>98</sup> Podro and Summers have demonstrated that art critics and the public started to pay attention to the formal characteristics of works of art during the nineteenth century. The first art historian comments that Goethe for example only dwelt on the way figures were represented and on the subject matter of the works he described. Michael Podro, *Critical Art Historians*, 62. David Summers, "'Form,' Nineteenth-Century Metaphysics, and the Problem of Art Historical Description," *Critical Inquiry* 15 (Winter, 1989). See also Bernard Vouilloux, *L'Art des Goncourt. Une esthétique du style* (Paris : L'Harmattan, 1997).

had been overruled. The informed commentator became a key constituent of this [new] system. Kant's Third Critique had already assigned him an important role because what the philosopher considered fundamental in the judgment of taste was not the evaluation of the object *per se*, but the act of making it available for others. As Salim Kemal observes,

Kant insists that communication is crucial, we gain confirmation when subjects successfully communicate their feelings of pleasure or displeasure, enabling another subject to make the same judgment. ...

Further, the importance of confirmation through communication also changes our focus: we are no longer concerned simply with the object that has aesthetic value; instead, *the relation to an object becomes secondary* to the relation between subjects in a community who supposedly confirm the actual individual pleasurable judgments. The object seems to lose its independent status.<sup>99</sup> (Emphasis added).

Kant needs the judgments of taste to be communicable because in this way he can argue that they are universal. His system relegates the work of art to a secondary role, as it is covered by the words it suggests to its loquacious spectators. The pure formal values are subservient to *Logos*. The spectator's ability to reach the *sensus communis* makes this "opinion" or pleasure a judgment of taste. According to Summers this particular sense relates to the basic notion of civility in the eighteenth century, the public sphere.<sup>100</sup>

Kant adapted and synthesized a number of traditional meanings of common sense, uniting them at the highest level in a new, transcendental version of a 'public' or 'social' sense. His formulation applied in fundamental ways to the deeply rhetorical discourse of classical Western art, to which the question of the

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<sup>99</sup> Salim Kemal, "Kant on Beauty," in *Aesthetics* Vol. 2 ed. Michael Kelly (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 33.

<sup>100</sup> [B]y the name *sensus communis* is to be understood the idea of a public sense, i.e., critical faculty which in its reflective act takes account (a priori) of the mode of representation of everyone else, in order, as it were, to weigh its judgment with the collective reason of mankind, and thereby avoid the illusion arising from subjective and personal conditions which could readily be taken for objective, an illusion that would exert a prejudicial influence upon its judgement." Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Judgment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), § 40.

relation to art to audience was central. The modern audience for art emerged in the eighteenth century and Kant's contribution to the critical questions surrounding this emergence defined the audience for art as potentially universal.<sup>101</sup>

The *Critique of Judgment* is one of the basic texts of the Enlightenment educational project. Kant argues that,

Only in society does it occur to him to be not merely a man, but a man refined after the manner of his kind (the beginning of *civilization*)-for that is the estimate formed of one who has the bent and turn for communicating his pleasure to others, and who is not quite satisfied with an object unless his feeling of delight in it can be shared in communion with others. (Emphasis added)<sup>102</sup>

The man who is able to attain and express this *sensus communis* is the one who can think for himself (without the tutelage of institutions), putting himself in the place of others, to think the way others “ought” to think, and to do so consistently. As Karen Lang observes, this man has reached the “universal standpoint of judgment,” “everyone expects and requires from everyone else this reference to universal communication of pleasure, as it were from an original compact dictated by humanity itself.”<sup>103</sup> Lang notices that the passive contemplator of the *Critique* is the Kantian *Weltbaumeister*, the subject/architect of a moral world in Kant's political and historical writings. He is the scholar who in Germany and in France was taking the place of the representatives of the Church and the aristocracy, the predecessor of the professors and teachers of *Bildung*, the future mandarins of the German university. In France he will be the *philosophe*, the *ideologue* and, after Emile Zola's intervention

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<sup>101</sup> David Summers, “Why Did Kant Call Taste a ‘Common Sense’?” in *Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics and the Reconstruction of Art*, ed. Paul Mattick, Jr. (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 121. The classical study on civil society is by Jürgen Habermas *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991).

<sup>102</sup> Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, 156.

<sup>103</sup> Karen Lang, “The Dialectics of Decay. Rereading the Kantian Subject” *The Art Bulletin* 79 (September, 1997), 435.

in the Dreyfus affair, the intellectual.<sup>104</sup> Since the Enlightenment, Aesthetics has had an important role in the strategies Western philosophers have developed to influence and rule society.<sup>105</sup>

Almost in the middle of the first part of the Critique (§ 40–41), Kant opens an excursus, in order to explain that this is a special kind of man.<sup>106</sup> This is the only place in which the philosopher explicitly mentions the *Aufklärung* and abandons synchronic analysis to sketch a diachronic development of man's evolution. It is also exceptional in that Kant uses the word "civilization" two times (out of three in the whole book). Traditionally Germans have considered this a French word and concept, related to but different from, their *Kultur*. Whereas the former would refer to external manners, the second would mean culture as the reflection of the true inner soul of the German people. By using "civilization" Kant underscores the idea that there are various stages of culture—and of humanness—and the possibility of gradual development and progress.<sup>107</sup>

And thus, no doubt, *at first* only charms, e.g., colours for painting oneself (roucou among the Caribs and cinnabar among the Iroquois), or flowers, sea-shells, beautifully coloured feathers, then, in the course of time, also beautiful

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<sup>104</sup> For Zola as the first intellectual see Venita Datta, *Birth of a National Icon. The Literary Avant-Garde and the Origins of the Intellectual in France* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999).

<sup>105</sup> See Zygmunt Bauman, *Legislators and Interpreters. On Modernity, Post-Modernity and Intellectuals* (London: Polity Press, 1987.) The author highlights the fact that intellectuals play the role that priest have in non-European and pre-modern societies. The author analyzes the process of the "internal colonization" of the West from a post-modern point of view. See also Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (London: Blackwell Publishing 1990). For the place of Aesthetic in Heidegger's thought see Jacques Taminiaux, "Le dépassement Heideggerien de l'esthétique et l'héritage de Hegel," in *Distanz un Nähe Reflexionen und Analysen zur Kunst der Gegenwart*, eds. Petra Jaeger and Rudolf Lütke (Würzburg: Verlag Königshausen und Neumann, 1983), 65–90.

<sup>106</sup> After he defines the characteristic of the ideal spectator he writes "I resume the thread of the discussion interrupted by the above digression, and I say that taste can with more justice be called a *sensus communis* than can sound understanding..." Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 123.

<sup>107</sup> Norbert Elias in *La civilisation des mœurs*, first published in 1939, noted that Kant already considered the word civilization as French. i.e. as manners and external cultivation. In the decade under study the difference between these terms was hotly debated.

forms (as in canoes, wearing-apparel, etc.) which convey no gratification, i.e., delight of enjoyment, become of moment in society and attract a considerable interest. *Eventually, when civilization has reached its height* it makes this work of communication almost the main business of refined inclination, and the entire value of sensations is placed in the degree to which they permit of universal communication. At this stage, then, even where the pleasure which each one has in an object is but insignificant and possesses of itself no conspicuous interest, still the idea of its universal communicability almost indefinitely augments its value.<sup>108</sup> (Emphasis added)

Kant regards the man of taste as the epitome of humanness and refuses to other men the right of assuming this role, leaving outside his system all those who were not cultivated Europeans. Therefore, the selfsame text that defines and gives autonomy to the realm of aesthetics declares most of humanity unfit to elaborate “objective” judgments of taste and to communicate them. Kant argues that even the subjective experience of pleasure is secondary to its being universally communicable. Objectivity is defined as such, on the grounds of its universality. Admittedly, Kant’s “universe” was rather small.

Nineteenth-century France was the century of art and art criticism: Baudelaire, the frères Goncourt, Emile Zola are among the more important names in an impressive roster of writers who practiced this activity. Early in the eighteenth century, La Font de Saint-Yenne published *Reflexions sur quelques causes de l'état present de la peinture en France* (1746) to the dismay of the artists, who considered that only they were able to speak about art.<sup>109</sup> In the nineteenth century these two groups established a complicated association. Periods of mutual support were followed by moments of

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<sup>108</sup> Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, §41.

<sup>109</sup> See Annie Becq, *Genèse de l'esthétique française moderne: de la raison classique à l'imagination créatrice, 1680–1814* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1984), and Bernardette Fort “Voice of the Public: The Carnivalization of Salon Art in Prerevolutionary Pamphlets,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 22 (Spring, 1989): 368–394.

bitter confrontation, an intellectual turf war over whose field (literature or art) dominated the hierarchy of the arts. Chapter Four deals with aspects of this not always friendly rivalry, epitomized by the relationship of Cézanne with Zola. Coincidentally, Rewald's 1936 biography of the artist hinged around his friendship with Zola, because the art historian, like most modern scholars to date, failed to acknowledge the tensions arising from their separate and competing discourses on art.

The crowds that populated the Salon and the art museums needed guidance from a specialized writer. Paradoxically, the progressive independence of the plastic arts from literary and historical subject matter resulted in the development of a new, more theoretical art writing in the nineteenth and twentieth century. The first abstract artists, for example, wrote abundantly to justify the lack of subject matter in their works.

In the system of the arts ruled by the academies and focused on representation and mimesis—that is from the Renaissance up to the eighteenth century—the relationship of the visual arts and literature was characterized by the principle known as *ut pictura poesis*, or, when they competed for ascendancy, Leonardo da Vinci's *paragone*.<sup>110</sup> Mitchell has suggested that the principle that rules on the relationship of abstract art and logos be called *ut pictura theoria*.

[T]he wall erected against language and literature by the grid of abstraction only kept out a certain kind of verbal contamination, but it absolutely depended, at the same time, on the collaboration of painting with another kind of discourse, what

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<sup>110</sup> The traditional source for this subject matter is Lee W. Rensselaer, "Ut Pictura Poesis: The Humanist Theory of Painting," *The Art Bulletin* 22 (1940): 197–269. Of special interest in this context is John R. Spencer, "Ut Rhetorica Pictura. A Study in Quattrocento Theory of Painting," *Journal of the Warburg & Courtauld Institute* 20 (1957): 22–44. The *paragone* in Alberti and Leonardo da Vinci, "is the competition between artistic media for representational superiority. From the Renaissance on, the *paragone* most frequently denoted a rivalry between painting and poetry or words and images." Alexandra K. Wettlaufer, "Girodet/Endymion/Balzac: Representation and Rivalry in post-revolutionary France," *Word & Image* 17 (October–December, 2001), 411.

we may call, for lack of a better term, the discourse of theory. If we summarize the traditional collaboration of painting and literature under the classic Horatian maxim, *ut pictura poesis* – as painting so in poetry – then the maxim for abstract art is not hard to predict: *ut pictura theoria*. Or, as [Thomas]Wolfe expresses it: ‘these days, without a theory to go with it, I can’t see a painting.’

And he adds,

‘[T]heory’ is the ‘word’ (or words) that stands in the same relation to abstract art that traditional literary forms had to representational painting. By ‘theory’ I mean that curious hybrid of mainly prose discourse compounded from aesthetics and other branches of philosophy, as well as from literary criticism, linguistics, the natural and social sciences, psychology, history, political thought and religion.<sup>111</sup>

Moreover Mitchell argues that more than a modern *ut pictura theoria/poesia* this new relationship is a new *paragone* in which art historians and theoreticians compete to explain (with words) what Clement Greenberg called art’s self-criticism which paradoxically secures art’s autonomy from other fields, specifically, from literature.<sup>112</sup> In the modern art system, literature surrounds and covers the works of art as museum labels, documents, books, newspaper articles and specialist talks in museums and art galleries.

One of the most noticeable aspect of Mitchell’s article is that the epigraphs and the examples he analyzes are from the 1930s—Clement Greenberg’s “Avant Garde and Kitsch” (1939), and “Towards a New Laocoon” (1940,) and Barr’s text and

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<sup>111</sup>W.J.T. Mitchell, “ ‘Ut Pictura Theoria’: Abstract Painting and the Repression of Language,” *Critical Inquiry* 15 (Winter, 1989): 354–355.

<sup>112</sup> Clement Greenberg’s classical definition states that “The essence of Modernism lies, as I see it, in the use of characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself, not in order to subvert it but in order to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence. Kant used logic to establish the limits of logic, and while he withdrew much from its old jurisdiction, logic was left all the more secure in what there remained to it.” “Modernist Painting” in *Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology* eds. Francis Francina and Charles Harrison (New York : Harper & Row, 1982), 5. See Pierre Bordieu, *Les règles de l’art*, 1992 translated as *Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, (Standford: Standford University Press, 1996). Chapter Four comments the work of Leo H. Hoek, *Titres, toiles et critique d’art. Déterminants institutionnels du discours sur l’art au dix-neuvième siècle en France* (Amsterdam–Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 2001).

flowchart for the 1936 catalogue of the exhibition *Cubism and Abstract Art* (fig. 1)—which confirms that the foundations of the new system of the arts were laid was in that decade. Mitchell observes that the flowchart established a myth about the foundations of modern art that spawned many different narratives on modern art, all of them dependent on Barr’s interpretation. With wordy claims of autonomy and purity, “Theoria” masked modern art’s (especially abstraction’s) intrinsic association and codependence with the word.<sup>113</sup> He concludes that both abstract works of art and this type of simplified art history are veritable machines to produce words.

Barr’s diagram, then, is like all abstract paintings a visual machine for the generation of language. ... Much of this language may be trivial chatter... Much of it may be the refinement and detailed elaboration of myths, as is a large portion of the art historical writing that grows out of Barr’s work. But there is no use thinking we can ignore this chatter in favor of ‘the paintings themselves,’ for the meaning of the paintings is precisely a function of their use in the elaborate game that is abstract art. There is also no use in thinking that we can make an end run around the paintings and the discourse they embody into some objective ‘history’ that will explain them. Our problem, I would suggest, is to work through the visual-verbal matrix that is abstract art, focusing on those places where this matrix seems to fracture its gridlike network of binary oppositions and admit the presence of something beyond the screen.<sup>114</sup>

These most famously “independent” and “self-referential” works are not “in-themselves;” their significance depends on, and is a function of, their interplay with theory and the art world.<sup>115</sup> The exclusive attention to formal values was intimately dependent and even fostered by the existence of written texts that supported and explained the works of art. MoMA’s strategies reinforced this traditional association while changing the character of the association of word and image. This new “suture” (to borrow from Mitchell) became part of a new definition of modern art that became

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<sup>113</sup> The flowchart was included in the installation of the show and was the front cover of its catalogue. In addition it structured for years the display of MoMA’s permanent collection.

<sup>114</sup> Mitchell, “‘Pictura Theoria,’” 367.

<sup>115</sup> See Philip Fisher, *Making and Effacing Art: Modern American Art in a Culture of Museums* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

hegemonic after the war and influenced the artistic production of the modern artistic movements that followed.

In the 1930s modern art was established as the last chapter of the centuries old Western tradition. The premise that lies behind this strategy, the unbroken continuity of this tradition, disowns (refuses to acknowledge) modern art's critical foundations and radicalism. The discipline imposed a modern definition of art onto the artistic manifestations of the past. Concomitantly, it used a methodology and categories of analysis derived from the study of a centuries old tradition for the comprehension of modern art. This crucial endeavor allowed the institutionalization of the discipline. Considering modern art history as icono-logy foregrounds the conventional and historical character of modern art history, encouraging us to think of the existence of alternative interpretations and reactions against this way of understanding art.

Like Panofsky's iconology MoMA's strategies incorporated new meanings within the works of art it exhibited and even suggested meaning for works of art that were devised as meaningless.<sup>116</sup> Mitchell indicates the way to undo Iconology is to unravel (unstitch) those "sutures." In the 1930s there were scholars and art specialists who were against the tendencies that crystallized the institutionalization of modern art. Their voices help to comprehend the process that established this new definition.<sup>117</sup> From the point of view of art history the goal is to define the relationship between the word and the image that was in the historical horizon of each individual artist in order to comprehend his own reaction. This brings us back to Cézanne's desire—expressed

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<sup>116</sup> This is a philosophical problem: to exhibit a meaningless object among meaningful others and to explain that it has no meaning transforms "not having meaning" into a meaning.

<sup>117</sup> Carl Einstein, George Bataille, Siegfried Kracauer, Aby Warburg, even Heidegger are some of the dissenting voices of the 1930s that began to be recuperated for art history in the last part of the twentieth century.

in a letter never intended for publication—that his works were not interpreted as the expression of his biography and personality but rather as the result of the exertions of his intellect.

The drive that catalyzed Barr’s powerful synthesis was historically determined by political events, as Chapter Seven elucidates. Moreover, modern museography, as discussed below, was ideological in itself.

Panofsky, like most of his German colleagues, was not interested in modern art. His methodology was not applicable to the analysis of genres like landscape or still life, and least of all, of abstract art. He strove to embed the myth of the Renaissance at the center of art history, ignoring the crisis that had taken place at the end of the nineteenth century and the reaction of the avant-gardes against those artistic values.<sup>118</sup>

An acute observer, Panofsky did not fail to appreciate the feat accomplished by Barr at MoMA. In 1955 he commented that art historians in America,

were able to see the past in a *perspective picture* undistorted by national and regional bias, so were they able to see the present in a perspective picture undistorted by personal or institutional *parti pris*. In Europe where all the significant ‘movements’ in contemporary art had come into being ... there was, as a rule, no room for objective discussion, let alone historical analysis.... In the United States, such men as Alfred Barr and Henry-Russell Hitchcock... could look upon the contemporary scene with the same mixture of enthusiasm and detachment and write about it with the *same respect for historical method and concern for meticulous documentation* as required of a study on fourteenth century ivories... . Historical distance (we normally require from sixty to eighty years) proved to be replaceable by cultural and geographical distance.<sup>119</sup> (Emphasis added).

Panofsky uses perspective metaphorically and equates space with time: in Europe it was not possible to evaluate modern art objectively. Geographical *distance* allowed

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<sup>118</sup> On this point see Wood, “Normative Renaissance,” 83.

<sup>119</sup> Erwin Panofsky, “Three Decades of Art History in the United States: Impressions of a Transplanted European,” *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (Garden City N Y.: Doubleday, 1955), 328–329.

American scholars to study the (all too recent) history of modern art. Historical distance or distance in general, rationality, and order are ideological when they explain artistic movements that contest Western epistemology and the very definition of art, such as Dada and Surrealism. This *perspective* (or anamorphosis?) shaped our understanding of the art of the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>120</sup>

### Conclusion

Art, defined as a North Atlantic universal, implies a fundamental association of word and image that has evolved through time. One of the tasks of the art historian is to map the criteria that govern this relationship in the period and region under consideration, while keeping in mind that the art historical methodologies and categories he uses are North Atlantic universals themselves. This chapter proposes that modern art's autonomy from the traditional association with the word-as-literature (*ut pictura poesis*) was fostered by the development of a new relationship with *logos* as word-as-judgment (art criticism), and later by a more fundamental suture of the image with the word-as-modern art history/theory (*ut pictura theoria*).

The Enlightenment changed the definition of art. By ascribing an aesthetic function to works of art, it secured art's autonomy from other spheres of human activity, and promoted the development of specialized disciplines to study it. Kant

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<sup>120</sup> Donald Preziosi uses the term anamorphosis to characterize the point of view of the art historian. See "The Question of Art History," *Critical Inquiry* 18 (Winter, 1992): 363–386, and *Rethinking Art History*.

believed that society should be guided and oriented by the philosopher/intellectual. His Aesthetic was an integral part of his enlightened worldview, as the Third Critique made art contingent upon the judgment of a qualified man, the art critic/art historian.

Neo-Kantianism adapted Kant's epistemology to the findings of the modern sciences, and therefore supported and furthered modern art history's claims to objectivity and universality. A theory of knowledge implies a certain understanding of man, and Panofsky's scholarship embedded the Humanist paradigm within the core of the modern art history. Like other North Atlantic universals, this "definition" of Man is often applied without discussion. Moreover, Panofsky's methodology equates the art historian with the Humanist and Kant's "civilized" man, who in distancing himself from the works of art is able to grasp their *meanings*.

In the 1930s modern art history incorporated modern art into its field of study, lauding it as the culmination of the Western tradition while containing its radicalness and fierce critical edge within safe disciplinary (formalist) parameters. The division of the disciplines itself compartmentalized movements such as Dada and Surrealism—which consisted of a critique of the foundations of the epistemological project of the West that encompassed different areas of culture—within the disciplinary boundaries of specialized fields of studies. Furthermore, the views of the radical scholars who criticized the nascent modern art history were not included within its theoretical outlook. Modern art had to be humanist and foster the ideals that were at the core of modern art history.

Cézanne, "the father of modern art," was assigned a paramount role in this interpretative model. His art exemplified a new relationship of the image with

documents and the word, and linked the artistic tradition of the nineteenth century with the art of the avant-gardes of the early twentieth century. Given this pivotal position, the historiography of Cézanne of the 1930s provides a unique standpoint for the critical analysis of the institutionalization of modern art history.

The next three chapters examine in depth diverging interpretations of the artist's life and oeuvre and therefore three ways of approaching art and art history. While Venturi was interested in Art and Aesthetics, Huyghe saw Cézanne as the essential Frenchman and considered Art as the expression of Nation. Rewald's scholarship, on the other hand, centered on Cézanne as an historical man. Section Two analyzes how this design affected our understanding of the artist's life and work.

“I see no reason why we should treat modern art in a different way from old art; scholarly works are just as necessary in this field ... I am, moreover, against over-specialization for the connoisseur. It is only through the understanding of many expressions of art that we can truly penetrate into any one. Art, after all, is a purification of all the elements that are not responsible for quality; all that is racial disappears in the work of art.”  
Lionello Venturi, *Art News*.<sup>1</sup>

“On a répété cette phrase: ‘Refaire Poussin sur nature’. Il est probable que Cézanne ne l’a jamais prononcée. En effet M. Camoin et M. Larguier la rapportent d’une autre façon : ‘*Vivifier* Poussin sur nature’. Ce qui implique une critique.”  
Lionello Venturi, *Cézanne, son art, son oeuvre*.<sup>2</sup>

## **Chapter Two: Lionello Venturi’s Impressionist Cézanne**

Venturi’s introduction to the 1936 catalogue raisonné of Cézanne’s paintings, watercolors and drawings, *Cézanne, son art, son oeuvre*, argued that the artist had been basically an impressionist artist and that his relationship with the movement was the key for understanding his art and his artistic project. This was a bold statement in the 1930s when most of the scholarship on modern art either reviled or avoided the mention of this movement, and hailed Cézanne as a classic master whose work had redressed French art to its true path.<sup>3</sup>

The son of the prestigious Italian art historian Adolpho Venturi (1856–1941)—the founder of the first art history teaching post in Italy and the author of the monumental *Storia dell’Arte Italiana*—Lionello was, at the end of the 1920s, a well known specialist in Renaissance painting. In 1931, after being forced to resign to his

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<sup>1</sup> Id., “Lively Interview,” 2.

<sup>2</sup> According to Theodore Reff this observation, which was reported by Léo Larguier, is highly suspicious. See Reff, “Cézanne and Poussin,” 156. Venturi considered Larguier to be a truthful source.

<sup>3</sup> In 1984 Richard Shiff confirmed Venturi’s appreciation in his *Cézanne and the End of Impressionism*. Shiff does not analyze the work of the Italian scholar.

position at the University of Turin, he moved to Paris, and started to concentrate almost exclusively on modern art.<sup>4</sup>

Venturi's Cézanne reflects not only the author's well defined political ideology, but also his very definite ideas about the epistemological foundations of art history and its methodologies, as he was actively involved in the debate about the discipline that was taking place at the time.<sup>5</sup> In the 1930s he presented papers on this subject matter at international congresses of art history and aesthetics and, in 1935, published the article "Les Instituts universitaires et l'histoire de l'art" in the Bulletin of the *Office des instituts d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'art*, which became the subject of much debate. The *History of Art Criticism*—a book that summarizes his ideas on these issues—was published in the United States in 1936, the same year as the publication of the book on Cézanne. Because Venturi was simultaneously engaged in several anti-fascist activities, he was followed by the Italian secret police.<sup>6</sup>

This chapter argues that Venturi's approach to Cézanne reflects both his political ideology and his critique of the discipline, and that this is one of the reasons why the art historian's work has not received much scholarly attention outside Italy.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Golan observes that only a small group of twelve professors denied the oath to the allegiance to the Fascist party and that Venturi was the only one among them who was still young and had a promising Academic career before him. See "The Critical Moment. Lionello Venturi in America," in *Artists, Intellectuals and World War II The Pontigny Encounter at Mount Holyoke College 1942–1944*, eds. C. E. G. Benfey and K. Remmler (Amherst Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006), 122.

<sup>5</sup> In 1936 he stated that he had been thinking of this problem for at least twenty five years, that is, since the outbreak of First World War. See the "Preface" to his *History of Art Criticism* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1936).

<sup>6</sup> See Valeri, "Venturi antifascista," and Laura Iamurri, "Venturi en esilio," both in Stefano Valeri, "Venturi orizzonti." The assassination of the Rosselli brothers in 1937 demonstrated the danger associated with these activities.

<sup>7</sup> See especially Maria Mimito Lamberti, "Lionello Venturi sulla via dell'Impressionismo," *Annali della Scuola normale di Pisa, Classe di lettere e filosofia* (1971): 257–277; and her *Lionello Venturi e la Pittura a Torino 1919–1931* (Turin, 2000); *De Cézanne all'Arte Astratta Omaggio a Lionello Venturi*, exh. cat., eds. Giorgio Cortenova and Lamberto Lambarelli, Galleria Comunale d'Arte Moderna, Verona, 1992; Stefano Valeri, "Venturi orizzonti." See also the extensive and illuminating

It first considers some aspects of pre-World War II Italian art history that provides insight into this scholar's approach to modern art in general and to Cézanne in particular.

Paradoxically, this sole chapter, even though it deals with Italian art history does not reflect on the Renaissance and Humanism as North Atlantic universals. This is because Venturi's understanding of modern art is pervaded by an anti-classical stance derived from his opposition to Mussolini's use of the Italian past as a rallying point for Fascism. Venturi's methodological standpoint was supported by his awareness of the writings of the School of Vienna, which was in part due to Italy's historically close ties to Austria. His interpretation of modern art illustrates a Western stance that was both anti-Fascist and anti-classical and thus problematizes any simplistic approach to the highly politicized chess game that had the Renaissance and a philological (humanist) methodology as pawns.

Two other influences were of paramount importance for the young Italian art historians working at the beginning of the twentieth century: the presence in the country of the American connoisseur Bernard Berenson (1865–1959), and the idealistic aesthetics of Benedetto Croce (1866–1952). Their publications and personal approach to art and art history spurred young scholars to examine the foundations of the discipline and to develop their own methodologies.<sup>8</sup> Under these influences Italian

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work on Venturi by Laura Iamurri “Lionello Venturi in esilio,” *Ricerche di Storia dell'arte* (2002): 59–69; “Berenson, la pittura moderna e la nuova critica italiana,” *Prospettiva* 87–88 (July–October, 1997): 69–90; “La tradizione, il culto del passato, l'identità nazionale: un'inchiesta sull'arte francese” *Prospettiva* 105 (January, 2002): 86–98; “‘Après l'art moderne’: esposizioni, critici e riviste dalla crisi dei primi anni '30 all'Esposizione Italiana del Jeu de Paume,” *Les Cahiers d'histoire de l'art* 3 (2005): 125–135. Lately Golan has published “Critical Moment.” See n. 4 above.

<sup>8</sup> As Argan once commented “la formazione crociana fu la formazione di tutti I giovani intellettuali italiani almeno fino agli anni '40.” See Augusta Monferini, “*Il gusto dei primitivi* de Lionello Venturi,” in *Storia del arte* (2002), 47.

art historians helped to effect the integration of modern art into the overall history of art. Venturi's scholarship affords a unique opportunity to examine how these influences determined his interpretation of modern art and Cézanne.

### Italian Foundations: The Dialogue Past-Present, Present-Past

Classicism, Humanism and the Renaissance were Italy's local traditions, and even a heavy inheritance, unlike in other countries where such tropes were ideals, goals to be attained through cultivation, and objects of desire. Conversely, most of the young Italian intellectuals considered modern French art the ideal goal of the teleological development of Western art.

Finding affinities with the work of the old masters was a common modernist strategy for the validation of modern experimental art. Emile Bernard, for example, in his first article on Cézanne for *Les Hommes d'Aujourd'hui* in 1892, compared his art to Giotto's.

As noted in Chapter One, the German founders of art history projected a modern conception of art onto the past, but did not deal with it as professionals.<sup>9</sup> The founders of the School of Vienna, on the contrary, were more aware of modern art and incorporated it as part of their strategies to reappraise non-classical artistic movements. Young Italian art historians of the early twentieth century published

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<sup>9</sup> Gaehtgens, "Rapports de l'histoire de l'art." See also Kathryn Brush *The Shaping of Art History. Wilhelm Vöge, Adolph Goldschmidt, and the Study of Medieval Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, and "Wilhelm Vöge and the Role of Human Agency in the Making of Medieval Sculpture: Reflections on an Art Historical Pioneer," *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift* (1993): 69–83.

articles on modern art and intervened publicly on its behalf. Moreover, they used the name of the modern French masters to support new interpretations of the work of the old masters and to validate the additions they proposed to the canon. Modern French art was for these art historians the yardstick against which they confronted their national tradition.

In his 1897 *The Central Italian Painters of the Renaissance* Berenson states that the painters of this school were exceptionally gifted with the ability to feel and express space. In order to support his argument he remarks,

Believe me, if you have no native feeling for space, not all the science, not all the labour in the world will give it to you. And yet without this feeling can be no perfect landscape. In spite of the exquisite modeling of Cézanne, who gives the sky its tactile values as perfectly as Michelangelo has given them to the human figure, in spite of all Monet's communication of the very pulse-beat of the sun's warmth over fields and trees, we are still waiting for a real art of landscape. And this will come only when some artist, modeling skies like Cézanne's, able to communicate light and heat as Monet does, will have a feeling for space rivaling Perugino's or even Raphael's.<sup>10</sup>

By inserting this kind of comment in his analysis of the art of some of the most important artists of the Renaissance, Berenson equated modern artists to the old masters at a time when the former's worth was still very much debated in France. In this way he asserted and reinforced the idea of the fundamental continuity of art through the ages.

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<sup>10</sup> Bernhard Berenson, *The Central Italian Painters of the Renaissance* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons: Knickerbocker Press, 1907), 100–101. See Mary Ann Calo, *Bernard Berenson and the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 76. This author also records a later comment in which Berenson clarified his position: "Cézanne represents that same tradition [Piero della Francesca] almost totally transferred to landscape, with his absolutely cubic values of plastic forms affirming themselves in a way which never occurred before, and values of 'form' being transferred from the country to the sky, which until then had been the background and scenario of paintings. Cézanne incorporates the sky with the earth; it forms part of a whole, and is the live interior of a solid." Ibid., 208 n.130. Calo also comments on Rewald understanding on Berenson's reception of Cézanne. Ibid., 77–78.

The novelty of Berenson's strategy was noted by the Italian scholar Carlo Placci (1861–1941), a friend of Denis, von Hildebrand, and Berenson, who in his 1912 review of Denis' *Théories* observes,

A guisa dell'e intelligente critico Berenson, che nei suoi aurei volumetti non esita un istante ad unire i nomi d'un Degas o d'un Cézanne a quelli più venerabili del nostro Rinascimento, così Maurice Denis, *partendosi in senso contrario* dai propri contemporanei, osa metterli nella medesima schiera di certe sommità antiche.<sup>11</sup> (Emphasis added)

Whereas Denis incorporated the name of old masters in his comments about modern art, Berenson interspersed the names of modern artists in the history of [past] art.

In 1939, in a letter to Berenson Venturi avows that,

Ero ancora ragazzo quando lessi il suo cenno sul rapporto estetico tra Giotto e Cézanne. Ci pensai su a lungo, e infine capii ch'Ella aveva ragione. Oggi sono sempre più convinto che senza aver compreso la pittura moderna non si può intendere la pittura antica. Che cosa d'altronde faceano un Cavalcaselle o un Morelli? Giudicavano la pittura antica secondo i principi della pittura moderna. Purtroppo per loro la pittura moderna era la pittura accademica. Di qui l'errore dei loro apprezzamenti, quando il loro ingegno non bastò.<sup>12</sup>

This letter demonstrates that Berenson's scholarship had influenced Venturi's understanding of the discipline and had helped him to realize its fundamental anachronism, which he considered in a positive light. The scholar who is aware of the *proper* tendencies of modern art can have a correct comprehension of the art of the past. In a previous letter, dated January 4, 1935, Venturi states his intention of applying the methodology devised for the study of the past to modern art. The letter also establishes the important role photographs played in his approach to art,

Poiché i pittori moderni non sono stati sinora studiati con la disciplina dello storico dell'arte, spero di poter dire qualcosa di nuovo e d'interessante su di essi.

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<sup>11</sup> Carlo Placci, "IL neo-tradizionalismo dei francesi moderni," *Il Marzocco*, XVII, 52 (December 29, 1912), quoted in Iamurri, "Berenson, la pittura moderna," 74.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Iamurri, "Venturi in esilio," 65.

Sarei molto felice di averLa qui tra le mie fotografie, e di potere discorrere con Lei di pittura moderna.<sup>13</sup>

Even Meyer Shapiro, one of Berenson's critics, acknowledged that he had been the first internationally recognized American connoisseur and art critic, and that his scholarship had paved the way for the formalist approach of writers like Clive Bell and Royer Fry.<sup>14</sup>

Berenson had studied at Harvard with Charles Eliot Norton, a friend and admirer of John Ruskin. Although the "Harvard or Fogg method" of formalist connoisseurship was established in the mid 1890s, that is, after Berenson had left the university, it was based on the same principles that had shaped his education.<sup>15</sup> This formalist approach to art history encouraged Berenson to compare the works of the Renaissance with paintings by modern artists. Moreover, he was among the first to recognize photography's value as a heuristic tool and as the catalyst of modern connoisseurship.<sup>16</sup>

Preziosi proposes to consider the Fogg Museum of the period as an ever growing archive that kept an almost infinite number of reproductions of works of art. The students were trained to develop intellectual models and to create categories that

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<sup>13</sup> Iamurri, "Venturi in esilio," 61.

<sup>14</sup> In 1937 Howard Hannay commented that Fry's "form" or "plasticity" corresponded to Berenson's "plastic values." Fry sketched for the first time his theory of significant form in 1909 in his article "An Essay in Aesthetics," where he argued that "Forms themselves generate in us emotional states." See Sandra Phillips, "The Art Criticism of Walter Pach," *Art Bulletin* 65 (March, 1983), 109.

<sup>15</sup> Berenson received the AB (ARTIUM BACCALAUREAT) in 1887 and later followed his studies in Europe. At that time there was no graduate program of art history in the United States. See Kantor, "Fogg Method."

<sup>16</sup> In 1893 Berenson authored a text praising the positive influence of photography in connoisseurship "Bernard Berenson on Isochromatic Film," in *Art History through the Camera's Lens* ed. Helene E. Roberts (Amsterdam: Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach, 1995). See also Frederick N. Boher "Photographic Perspectives: Photography and the Institutional Formation of art history," in *Art history and Its Institutions* ed. Elizabeth Mansfield (London: Routledge, 2002). About the use of photographs by Berenson see Kenneth Clark, "Bernard Berenson," *The Burlington Magazine* 102 (September, 1960): 381–386. The use of photographs for the study of art is discussed in Chapter Five.

explained the connections that linked a selected group of images.<sup>17</sup> Photographs suggest more daring visual comparisons and foster the elaboration of abstract rationalizations to validate them. Moreover, their use inclines us to think that there is a non-problematic continuity between the artistic manifestations of the past and the present.

In 1892, while staying in Paris, Berenson had begun to appreciate modern art, as he commented in a letter to a friend, to “enjoy the art” in the pictures.<sup>18</sup> At the end of the nineteenth century the scholar settled near Florence, where he established a friendly rivalry with his neighbor, the American born Italian painter Egisto Fabbri, an admirer and collector of Cézanne’s art who might have been responsible for calling Berenson’s attention to the art of the master.<sup>19</sup>

Even though at the beginning of the century the Italian academia rejected Berenson’s scholarship, it was greatly influential among young art historians, especially because at that time the connoisseur was preoccupied with the theoretical aspects of the discipline and in finding new ways for thinking about art. Croce’s “intuizione lirica” was rather undefined and, denied the autonomy of the different arts which he considered dependent upon poetry, whereas “l’estetica Berenson” afforded a way of writing about the more tangible, material aspects of the plastic arts and to refer to specific works of art.

Italy’s political situation and the cultural policies of the Fascist regime also affected the way Italian art history was written at the time. Specifically, the dialogue

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<sup>17</sup> See Donald Preziosi, “The Question of Art History” *Critical Inquiry* (Winter, 1992): 363–386; and *Rethinking Art History. Meditations on a Coy Science* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

<sup>18</sup> See Calo, *Bernard Berenson*, 37.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Calo, *Bernard Berenson*, 79.

of past and present had ideological connotations as this ideology favored the fusion of past and present: the apprehension of the past in the light of present events and the perception of the present as a re-enactment of the past (historicization of the present). After 1919 Fascism gained greater strength and in 1922 Benito Mussolini became Premier. Culturally, the regime preferred Imperial Roman and classical art but also incorporated a watered down, classicized version of Futurism, as most of the artists and intellectuals associated with the movement supported the regime.

The Futurist movement lead by Filippo Tomasso Marinetti (1876–1944) had been one of the most provocative and avant-garde movements of the early part of the century. Marinetti’s famous call to burn the museums, his violent stance toward the past— “a race-automobile which seems to rush over exploding powder is more beautiful than the *Victory of Samothrace*”<sup>20</sup>—were motivated by Italy’s cultural stagnation and the poet’s desire to generate change in a country overwhelmed by the weight of its own glorious past. Like the other Futurist the poet subdued his aggressive stance after the War.<sup>21</sup>

Culture and aesthetics played an important role as part of the regime’s strategies to gain the support and blind allegiance of the masses and the middle class. The influential Actualist philosophy of Giovanni Gentile (1875–1944) postulated a particular conflation of the past and the present in the historic event, and therefore contested historicism and the rational approach to the diachronic development of

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<sup>20</sup> Filippo Tomamaso Marinetti “The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism”, *Le Figaro*, (February 20, 1909) in Herschel B. Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 289.

<sup>21</sup> Already in 1910 Ardengo Soffici a Futurist artist used Cézanne’s “modern” plastic vocabulary and claimed that it was as aspect of the *toscanità*, that is, of the tradition inherited from the “primitive” trecento artists. See Mark Antliff, “Fascism, Modernism, and Modernity,” *Art Bulletin* 84 (March, 2002), 158.

history.<sup>22</sup> As Claudio Fogu explains, this approach collapsed the historical and the historiographical as it suggested that the present eventful act was historical *per se*:

Merging the related notions of eventfulness (event), unmediated presence (site), and signification (speech) elicited by the notion of historic-ness, the idea of making history attributed to Fascism a *historic agency* that acted on historical facts, representations, and consciousness. At the same time, the idea of making history associated with the formation of a *historic imaginery* that declined the past in the present tense and inscribed historical meaning under the immanent rubric of presence.<sup>23</sup>

The strategies derived from this understanding of history referred also to the ceremonies and use of images of the Catholic Church.<sup>24</sup> The cultural policies of Fascism and the philosophy of history that encouraged them might have favored the reception and even fostered the development of comparisons that involved the work of artists from different periods. They were justified as “intuitive” relationships or as “spiritual” kinship. This kind of phrases abound in the art history of the 1920s and 1930s.

Moreover Italian Fascism developed a modern and effective museography and its approach to display had to be taken into consideration by those who wanted to counter the pervading influence of the regime.<sup>25</sup> Italian art was used as propaganda and the *Duce* himself supported several international exhibitions and secured the loan

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<sup>22</sup> This particular understanding of the role of tradition in shaping the present must be understood as the Italian equivalent of the German *Kultur* and *Blut und Boden* (“blood and soil”).

<sup>23</sup> Claudio Fogu, “To Make History Present,” in *Donatello among the Blackshirts. History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy* eds., Claudia Lazzaro, and Roger Crum Roger (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 34. The author analyses the reaction of the regime to Croce’s critique to historicism. The philosopher’s stand against Fascism might have spurred Venturi’s political engagement.

<sup>24</sup> Claudio Fogu, “Actualism and the Fascist Historic Imaginary,” *History and Theory* 42 (2003), 196–220; “*Il Duce Taumaturgo: Modernist Rhetoric in Fascist Representations of History*,” *Representations*, (1997), 24–51.

<sup>25</sup> See Fogu, “History Present,” Claudia Lazzaro “Forging a Visible Fascist Nation. Strategies for Fusing Past and Present,” and Jeffrey T. Schnapp, “Flash Memories. (Sironi on Exhibit),” in *Donatello among the Blackshirts*.

of some of Italy's greatest masterpieces.<sup>26</sup> The idea behind these exhibits, that included the work of modern Italian artists, was that the tradition that had produced those works of art was still alive in modern Italy.

In 1922 the Fascist art critic Ugo Ojetti organized the *Mostra della Pittura Italiana del Sei e Settecento* at the Palazzo Pitti, Florence.<sup>27</sup> As Francis Haskell has noted, even if it was part of a string of mega exhibitions in which nationalism and competitiveness among countries had the upper hand, “it permanently altered the public's perception of the history of European art.”<sup>28</sup>

In the catalogue Ojetti claimed that the exhibition would give living artists the joy “of finding in Italy, of finding even in these two centuries of Italian art, examples and teachers more reliable, more sound ... than those that it is fashionable to seek out over the Alps.”<sup>29</sup> Ojetti claimed that modern artists could find in the Italian tradition everything that made modern art so attractive for them. As Haskell notes, the overambitious organizers,

[T]ried to argue that their great masters of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had not only been of utmost importance to their contemporaries in Spain, France, Flanders and Holland, but had also anticipated the ‘modern movement’ of the nineteenth century which had so regrettably confined itself to France... Bruised by the apparent marginalization of modern Italian painting, Roberto Longhi (and his followers), just as much as Ojetti exalted the seicento

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<sup>26</sup> For the political use of the art of the Renaissance at this time see Francis Haskell, *The Ephemeral Museum: Old Master Paintings and the Rise of the Art Exhibition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000) and Emily Braun, “Leonardo's Smile,” in *Donatello among the Blackshirts*.

<sup>27</sup> Ugo Ojetti was an “Influential journalist and art critic, organizer of art exhibitions, member of the Royal Academy from 1930, founder of periodicals on the arts (*Dedalo*, *Pegaso*, and *Pan*), and ardent Fascist, most vocally and visibly advocated the conservative traditionalist camp in architecture. This ‘ultra-refined conservative aesthete’ was also a millionaire, president of Alfa Romeo, and board member of major corporations.” Lazzaro, “Visible Fascist Nation,” 27.

<sup>28</sup> Haskell, *Ephemeral Museum*, 130.

<sup>29</sup> Ugo Ojetti, *La Mostra della Pittura italiana del Seicento e el Settecento, a Palazzo Pitti*, (Milan, 1924), 12, as quoted in Haskell, *Ephemeral Museum*, 135.

and settecento for having ‘anticipated’ .... not only Corot and Constable but also Courbet and Manet.<sup>30</sup>

In 1924 none of these artists needed to be defended in France any longer. Ojetti’s claims nonetheless exemplify how the Fascist regime used art history for its own nationalist purposes and how this impinged on the history of art history. Ojetti reassessed non-classical periods of Italian art that had been underestimated and overshadowed by the contemporary artistic output in other countries. One of the scholar’s arguments is that the Italian artists of that period had anticipated both genres and stylistic innovations that characterize modern art. His appeal was to contemporary Italian artists, whose work he hoped to influence. Ojetti’s efforts implicitly reinforced the French claims to cultural superiority but at the same time his argument suggested the idea of an unbroken and harmonious development of Western tradition throughout the ages.

### Roberto Longhi’s Cézanne

Already in 1915 Venturi affirmed, “Debbo a Bernardo Berenson le idee sul valore plastico della pittura fiorentina e del carattere asiatico e mistico de la pittura sienese. Debbo a Roberto Longhi *la comprensione della prospettiva pittorica comme piano*

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<sup>30</sup> Haskell, *Ephemeral Museum*, 136–137.

*cromatico.*”<sup>31</sup> (Emphasis added). Like Venturi himself Roberto Longhi (1890–1970) had been influenced by Berenson and the writings of the School of Vienna. Nevertheless, they had different approaches to art history. As Giulio Argan commented,

[D]u côté du connaisseur, dont le chef reconnu était Roberto Longhi, ce dernier a développé une recherche qui est très respectable sur les structures figuratives et là, on pourrait dire, sur la verbalisation de l’image. Tandis que, de l’autre côté, il était surtout question de la recherche des idées dans les œuvres d’art.<sup>32</sup>

Longhi represented the conservative and even reactionary approach to art history centered on realism and naturalism that Venturi opposed.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, he had befriended the artist Umberto Boccioni and for a very short time before the Great War he had publicly defended Futurism before the war, whereas Venturi disliked this artistic movement.<sup>34</sup>

Even though Roberto Longhi did not write specifically on Cézanne, the artist is conspicuously “present” in his article “Piero dei Franceschi e lo sviluppo della pittura veneziana” he wrote for Adolfo Venturi’s magazine *L’Arte* in 1914.<sup>35</sup> He was writing

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<sup>31</sup> Lionello Venturi, “La posizione dell’Italia nelle arti figurative,” 1915, quoted in Iamurri, “Berenson, la pittura moderna,” 85. This was a fundamental aspect of Venturi’s analysis of the work of Cézanne. See specifically *Cézanne son art*, 33.

<sup>32</sup> Their differences, according to Giulio Argan, would influence the history of Italian art history until the 1990s. See Giulio Carlo Argan interview by Alain Jaubert and Marc Perelman, Editions Verdier, 1991. <http://www.editions-verdier.fr/v2/auteur-argan-3.html>.

<sup>33</sup> Renato Barilli explains: “[P]er Longhi, [defender of Caravaggio] bisogna combattere il formalismo, l’eleganza compositiva, un certo classicismo che noi italiani avremmo nel sangue; e conquiste invece la ‘pittura della realtà’, anche se ciò comporta inevitabili dosi massicce di illusione, di fedeltà ottica. Per Venturi, al contrario, il nemico capitale da combattere è proprio l’illusionismo, la rappresentazione, e per ottenere un esito del genere conviene chiedere aiuto ai ‘primitivi.’ “Il gusto dei primitivi” e i macchiaioli,” in *Cézanne all’Arte Astratta*, 52.

<sup>34</sup> See Claudio Spadoni, *Da Renoir a De Stäel Roberto Longhi e il moderno*, exh. cat., Museo d’Arte della Città, Ravenna, 2003. Concerning Venturi dislike for Futurism see Giacomo Agosti, “Questioni de ‘logica degli occhi’ 5 lettere di Lionello Venturi a Roberto Longhi 1913–1915,” *Autografo* (1992): 73–84.

<sup>35</sup> The artist Ardengo Soffici was since 1908 an ardent defender of Cézanne in Italy. Helped by Denis he endeavored to organize an Impressionist exhibition in Florence in 1910. There were two “spectacular” collections of Cézanne works near Florence at the time: Egisto Fabbri’s and Charles Loeser’s and both collectors were friends of Berenson. See Jean-François Rodriguez *La Reception de*

at the same time “I pittori futuristi” for *La Voce* and the essay *Scultura futurista Boccioni*, which is noteworthy because in the three texts he uses the same vocabulary and categories of stylistic analysis.<sup>36</sup>

Longhi takes issue with Giorgio Vasari’s interpretation of the Renaissance. He argues that Vasari wrongly identified the naturalism of the Florentine art of the Quattrocento with “l’imitazione del vero, e non la trasfigurazione pittorica di esso.” Longhi observes that in this way, Vasari stressed the importance of line and volume in art in order to argue for the centrality of the art of Masaccio, Andrea del Castagno, and Michelangelo in the history of art.

Longhi maintains that perspective was created as a formal device and not as a mathematical method that increased the illusionistic/naturalistic effect of paintings.<sup>37</sup>

Il sussidio che la scienza dà alla resa prospettica, non è un sussidio *a priori* ma *a posteriori* e sorge dopo l’artista ha visto prospetticamente;... Essa perciò non è naturalismo, perchè tutti sanno che la prospettiva nella realtà non esiste che in determinate situazioni—ciò che fa supporre già nell’artista una scelta di situazioni—neppure è scienza, ma si serve della scienza, come di un elemento puramente tecnico, non più importante della chimica dei pigmenti colorati.<sup>38</sup>

Longhi notices that the historian Jacob Burckhardt (1818–1897) had followed Vasari’s lead, and concludes that as a consequence art history had overlooked an important contemporary artistic current centered on the “*sintetismo prospettico di*

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*l’Impressionisme à Florence en 1910*, (Venice: Istituto veneto di scienze, lettere ed arti, 1994), and Francesca Bardazzi, “Cézanne a Firenze,” in *Cézanne, Fattori e il ‘900 in Italia* (Florence: Artificio, 1997).

<sup>36</sup> Florence had a very active cultural modern life. Giovanni Papini and Giuseppe Prezzolini were responsible of the publication of three important magazines: *Il Lionardo* published in 1903 was followed by *La Voce* (1908–1913) that included Ardengo Soffici’s violent articles in defense of modern art. As Prezzolini and Soffici were mainly concerned with poetry and art and not so much with politics, they founded *Lacerba* in 1913.

<sup>37</sup> This is precisely the conclusion of James Elkins in his *The Poetics of Perspective* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.) See Chapters Five and Six of this dissertation.

<sup>38</sup> Roberto Longhi, “Piero dei Franceschi e lo sviluppo della pittura veneziana,” *L’Arte* XVII (1914), fasc. III, 199.

*forma colore.*” Longhi’s article considers Piero, an artist that at the time was not well known and whose art was undervalued, as the representative of an artistic tradition of painting that had opposed the Florentine approach to art. The author opposes Masaccio’s spatiality, achieved through an illusionistic plasticity that opened the way for chiaroscuro, to Piero’s “spazialità architettonica ottenuta con l’intervallarsi regolare di volume regolari.”<sup>39</sup> In and with perspective Piero attains the synthesis of form and color.<sup>40</sup> This art,

sintetizzava ... sobriamente la terza nelle due dimensioni, riportava lo spazio alla superficie per mezzo dei suoi limiti sintetici, e si manifestava così sommamente atto allo sviluppo di un grande colorismo....

‘Perchè—diceva Piero dei Franceschi nel suo Trattato della prospettiva—la pittura non è senon dimostrazioni de superficie.’<sup>41</sup>

Longhi’s description of this color-perspective and his quote of Piero’s treatise derive from Denis famous 1890 statement: “It is well to remember that a picture, before being a battle horse, a nude woman, or some anecdote, is essentially a plane surface covered with colors assembled in a certain order.”<sup>42</sup> The way Cézanne is introduced in the article demonstrates that Longhi had also Cézanne’s art in mind.

Ecco infatti nella Verificazione della Croce i gruppi fermati nelle loro accolte impietrate,... ecco in alto il paesello, nel quale, oltre l’arco di entrata, non si troverebbe una curva; solidificazione, non più raggiunta che da Paolo nella veduta di Gardanne.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Longhi, “Piero dei Franceschi,” 200.

<sup>40</sup> “[Piero] offriva a chi volesse svilupparlo per nuove attuazioni il risultato complesso del sintetismo prospettico di forma-colore.” Longhi, “Piero dei Franceschi,” 206.

<sup>41</sup> Longhi, “Piero dei Franceschi,” 201.

<sup>42</sup> Maurice Denis, “Definition of Neotraditionism,” in Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art*, 94.

<sup>43</sup> Longhi, “Piero dei Franceschi,” 203. In the Battle against Cosroe, Longhi sees that the banner with the cross “appare come simbolo del colore—più che del cristianesimo—...e sull’altro di Cosroe la figura moresca si distende con un affetto di colore tanto moderno almeno quanto è la servente affricana nell’Olympia di Manet!” Ibid., 204.

The fact that Longhi does not refer to Cézanne by his family name indicates that he either thought that the public would be able to recognize the name of the artist and mentally visualize the Gardanne painting, or was snubbing his audience and suggesting that they should update their taste.<sup>44</sup> As Iamurri notices,

nel saggio di Longhi il pittore provenzale sembra essere la lente attraverso la quale mettere meglio a fuoco l'opera di Piero e quella del suo continuatore 'prospettico' Antonello da Messina. La lettura dell'opera del maestro di Aix come *reazione all'effimero fulgore impressionista*, avvalorata dalla pubblicazione degli appunti e delle note prese da chi lo aveva incontrato in Provenza negli ultimi anni della sua vita, era nota in Italia attraverso i suggestivi accenni di Berenson e gli articoli di Soffici: sulla scorta degli scritti di Emile Bernard (e forse anche del saggio di Denis recentemente ripubblicato) ... Longhi poteva evidenziare il valore prospettico e il carattere architettonico dell'episodio della 'Verifica della Croce' dipinto da Piero ad Arezzo con un esplicito richiamo a Cézanne.<sup>45</sup> (Emphasis added)

Longhi's interpretation of the art of Cézanne was rooted on Denis's and Bernard's accounts of what the artist had said and of what his art was about. This traditionalist approach to the art of the master that considered that he had reacted against Impressionism's esthetic principles.

In 1914 Longhi also published *Breve ma veridica storia della pittura italiana* which gives the context for understanding his approach to Piero. The conclusion of the book is devoted to the French painting of the nineteenth century, as the formalist method allows him to contend that it is the continuation and culmination of Italian art. As Antonio del Guercio concludes,

Un rapporto alla cui base egli pone Caravaggio e i Veneziani, precedenti senza i quali Courbet e Manet gli appaiono impensabili, e che egli vede successivamente

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<sup>44</sup> In 1962, Longhi defended his article from the accusation of having given a cubist interpretation of Piero stating that he had derived the idea of the 'sintesi prospettica di forma-colore' from the work of Cézanne and Seurat. See Antonio Del Guercio, "Roberto Longhi 1913. L'orizzonte critico del suo rapporto con l'arte del Novecento," in *Da Renoir a De Stäel*, 61.

<sup>45</sup>Iamurri, "Berenson, la pittura moderna," 83. The author noticed that Longhi's Antonello da Messina, whom he describes telling to a friend: "Senti: tutto nella natura è sferico o cilindrico!", was based on Bernard's account of his visit to Cézanne.

apprisi con Cézanne a un ‘testamento che potrebbe essere quello di Piero dei Franceschi o di Antonello da Messina.’<sup>46</sup>

Longhi finds that the most innovative aspects of modern art had a precedent in the Italian past. Moreover, he uses Cézanne to enlarge the canon of the Renaissance. In so doing he proposes an alternative interpretation of the history of Western art and a formalist elucidation of perspective. Ultimately, Longhi’s scholarship was closer to Ojetti’s than to Venturi’s, as the goal of his comparisons was to demonstrate the centrality of the Italian tradition even when praising modern French art. More importantly, his interpretation of modern art was basically conservative as he did not think of this art as the crisis of the artistic tradition originated in the Renaissance but as its prolongation and culmination.

### Venturi’s Cézanne

Venturi’s writings on Impressionism and Cézanne, along with the fact that he was the immediate predecessor of Rewald as the most eminent Cézanne scholar, would alone justify the attention given to him in this study. Furthermore, his case is important because it demonstrates that in the 1930s there were other epistemological models to construe modern art and the role Cézanne played in it.

Venturi’s definition of modernity did not hinge on the continuity of the Western tradition and on the centrality of classicism and Humanism, as he understood

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<sup>46</sup> See Del Guercio “Roberto Longhi,” 55–56.

impressionism as the product of a more general epistemological crisis. His scholarship proves that there existed in the 1930s what might be called “non-humanist” or “non-classic” models of art history and modernity that were conceived as part of the fight against Totalitarianism.<sup>47</sup>

The result of extensive research and documentary analysis, the introductory essay to the catalogue raisonné summarizes Venturi’s interpretation of Cézanne and his approach to the scholarship on the artist. Already in 1937 Rewald commended Venturi for his approach to sources and declared that the book opened a new era in Cézanne studies.<sup>48</sup> While Rewald was not interested in aesthetics or in the epistemological underpinnings of the discipline, he believed that judicious sources could reflect the “truth.” However, at the time, both scholars considered it important to liberate Cézanne’s historiography from the ideologies that had suffused previous scholarship on the artist. As Venturi remarks in the first paragraphs of his 1936 catalogue raisonné:

Le moment est venu de nous dégager de ces préjugés, de demeurer indifférentes à la ‘modernité’, au ‘caractère contemporain’ de l’art du maître, de distinguer sa théorie ou son *goût* de son *art*, et *l’individualité* de l’homme de la *personnalité* de l’artiste, pour nous occuper uniquement de la façon dont sa manière de sentir s’est réalisée en peinture. Nous devons parler de lui comme de Giotto, de Titien ou de Rembrandt. On ne discute pas pour savoir s’ils ont été ou non des artistes; on cherche à comprendre comment ils ont été artistes. C’est l’unique moyen de clore la série des chroniques et des histoires oratoires, et de commencer une série d’études sur la véritable histoire de l’artiste.<sup>49</sup> (Emphasis added.)

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<sup>47</sup> Another example of this kind of approach –although with not so clear political ideology –with regard to Cézanne is Fritz Novotny’s *Cézanne Ende*. See Chapter Five.

<sup>48</sup> John Rewald, “A propos du catalogue raisonné de l’œuvre de Paul Cézanne et de la chronologie de cette œuvre,” *La Renaissance* (March-April, 1937), 53.

<sup>49</sup> Venturi, *Cézanne son art*, 13.

Venturi's critique of sources was stringent and based on a long and quasi philosophical reflection on the foundations and limits of art history. He went far beyond Rewald in doubting the truthfulness of the written sources as he was suspicious of the men of letters's descriptions of the artists and even of Cézanne's own words.<sup>50</sup> His critical stance towards art history's philological methodologies allowed Venturi to think of the specificity of the two discourses (word and image) and to distance himself from the documentation. He argued that, whatever Cézanne might have thought he was doing, it is not certain that he consciously understood his practice and his experience or that he was able to translate them into words.<sup>51</sup>

Dans sa peinture, Cézanne a donc trouvé le rapport entre *l'ordre et la sensibilité* de manière à les rendre indissociables ; mais dans ses réflexions sur ce qu'il faisait il a constamment maintenu la distinction des deux termes. Il était parfaitement convaincu qu'il lui fallait se fonder sur la sensibilité, et savait d'autre part, même en 1904, qu'il possédait une sensibilité vive ; mais il voulait obtenir l'ordre. Séparant dans sa pensée ce qu'il unissait dans son art, il se mettait dans l'impossibilité de croire jamais avoir atteint son but. *C'est qu'en art on ne peut atteindre un ordre absolu, en tant que l'art ne peut-il se donner d'autre ordre qu'un acheminement vers l'ordre.* ... Quand il peignait, il se gardait bien d'en venir à un ordre abstrait ; mais quand il parlait, il supposait qu'il y arriverait et déclarait au premier venu : 'je ne sais pas réaliser.' Tous confondirent la réalisation vulgaire, le 'fini des imbéciles' avec la réalisation de l'ordre comme l'entendait Cézanne.<sup>52</sup> (Emphasis added)

Cézanne possessed a strong sensibility which he aspired to control. He was successful in that endeavor in his art, but not with his intellect. The mental discourse is

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<sup>50</sup> "La lutte de l'artiste contre la nature, quoiqu'en aient pu penser les poètes de tous les temps, n'a jamais existé ; ou plutôt elle existe dans l'opinion des artistes, dans leurs paroles (même dans celles de Cézanne) mais pas dans leur art. La voie de l'art et al voie de la nature sont parallèles; elles ne sauraient pas se rencontrer." Venturi, *Cézanne son art*, 19.

<sup>51</sup> In 1939 Maurice Denis manifested the same point of view. Cézanne knew all the theories and he would try them all when painting in front of the motif. He would change theories constantly. "Ah! sans doute c'était un penseur, tous les peintres, ou presque tous, sont des penseurs. Cézanne était un penseur, mais qui ne pensait pas tout les jours la même chose. Tous ceux qui l'ont approché lui ont fait dire ce qu'ils souhaitaient de lui. ... J'imagine que comme beaucoup de peintres, il se levait le matin avec une théorie en tête, un plan d'expérience à faire. Seulement son instinct bousculait tout." Maurice Denis, "L'Aventure posthume de Cézanne," *Prométhée* (July, 1939), 195. Denis, who had read Venturi's catalogue, might have taken this idea from him.

<sup>52</sup> Venturi, *Cézanne son art*, 43.

qualitatively different from the artistic one. The words of the artist do not translate his artistic experience. Therefore, a narration based on the artist's words and "truthful" written sources cannot portray the creative personality or the true source of art. Venturi, as the text indicates, was comfortable with a paradigmatic definition of art, and this is the standard he uses for the evaluation of the artist's words and of his oeuvre. Thus, it is Venturi's aesthetics and his understanding of *art* itself that must be analyzed.

En regardant les peintures de Cézanne, la vérité était facile à comprendre mais l'erreur déterminée par la critique et par les 'entretiens' avec Cézanne empêchait de la voir. Le moment est venu d'affirmer que le monde spirituel de Cézanne, jusqu'à la dernière heure de sa vie, n'a pas été celui des symbolistes, ni des fauves, ni des cubistes; mais que ce monde s'associe à celui de Flaubert, de Baudelaire, de Zola, de Manet, de Pissarro. C'est-à-dire que Cézanne appartient à cette période héroïque de l'art et de la littérature en France qui sut trouver une *voie nouvelle pour arriver à la vérité naturelle en dépassant, en réalisant, en transformant en art éternel le romantisme même*. Dans le caractère et dans l'œuvre de Cézanne, rien de décadent, rien d'abstrait, pas d'art pour l'art, rien d'autre qu'un indomptable impulsion naturelle a créer de l'art.<sup>53</sup> (Emphasis added)

For Venturi impressionism had been the culmination of the Venetian tradition centered on color. Moreover, as an historical manifestation, this artistic movement broke with the dominant artistic tradition liberating art from its dependence on the real, and thus had an ethical dimension. Venturi characterized Cézanne as an impressionist artist precisely when this artistic movement was underrated and disparaged. He also tried to separate Cézanne's critical fortune from that of cubism and other contemporary artists who claimed the artist as their master. The *rappel à l'ordre* valued form, volume, and stability, and promoted a rational approach to art,

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<sup>53</sup> Venturi, *Cézanne son art*, 45.

and realism and both artistic movements were charged with having destroyed color and form through excessive attention to the analysis of appearances.<sup>54</sup>

### Impressionism, Color and the Representation of Reality

Venturi was induced by the Italian cultural environment to develop a theoretical model that allowed him to encompass both old masters and modern art. In his 1913 *Giorgione e il giorgionismo*, he introduced the interpretative category of “tono” that is, the “modo figurativo di dare forma al colore,” which, already present in Giorgione’s art, had in Manet its highest expression: “il tono, cioè la quantità di luce e di ombra che ogni colore assorbe, è proprietà del colore eterogenea alla sua qualità di rosso, di verde, di giallo. ... Colorire secondo il principio del tono significa dar forma al colore che è cosa ben diversa, anzi opposta, a colorire una forma.”<sup>55</sup> This brings to mind the words Bernard *attributed* to Cézanne, “Le dessin et la couleur ne sont point distincts: au fur et à mesure que l’on peint, on dessine, plus la couleur s’harmonise, plus le dessin se précise. Quand la couleur est à sa richesse, la forme est à sa plénitude...”<sup>56</sup> Therefore, Venturi analyzed Venetian painting through the lenses of impressionism, just as Longhi had studied Piero della Francesca’s rendition of space through Cézanne’s.<sup>57</sup> These bold associations derived from the fact that these

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<sup>54</sup> See Kenneth Silver, *Esprit de Corps: the art of the Parisian avant-garde and the First World War, 1914–1925*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), and Christopher Green, *Cubism and Its Enemies. Modern Movements and Reaction in French art, 1916–1928*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

<sup>55</sup> Lionello Venturi quoted in Iamurri, “Berenson, la pittura moderna,” 84–85. The author does not provide the source.

<sup>56</sup> Emile Bernard, “Souvenirs de Paul Cézanne,” *Mercure de France* (February, 1907).

<sup>57</sup> Iamurri, “Berenson, la pittura moderna,” 84.

art historians considered French modern art as the teleological argument that explained the history of Western art. In turn, this influenced their formalist analysis of the works of the old masters, which were made to fit into this construct. The process is like a complicated play of mirrors where works of art “are” what the element of comparison suggests they are. The problem was, and still is, to know if Cézanne had really said what Bernard reported.

Benedetto Croce’s opposition to the theory of pure visibility, which he perceived as the infiltration of scientific positivism into the realm of art, determined that these theories could not be completely assimilated in Italy.<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, Venturi, as an art historian, could not turn them down, as they were helpful for the study of specific works of art. In his scholarship they became an important element for the characterization of the artist’s creative *personality*.<sup>59</sup> Roberto Lambardelli summarizes Venturi’s stance:

[Venturi] propone che la pure visibilità sia visione di uno stato d’animo e non di una forma astratta, *che venga cioè spiritualizzata*, che la decorazione sia costituita dalle forme e dai colori concreti di una singola *personalità anziché* dai concetti astratti di forma e colore.<sup>60</sup> (Emphasis added)

The forms and the colors of a work of art denote the artist’s personality (more on this below.) On the other hand, the theory of pure visibility allowed Venturi to think of Impressionism as a radically new approach to art, as he considered that neither

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<sup>58</sup> Whereas in Germany the problem was the separation of art history from the history of culture and the influence of science in the humanities, Italian art historians had to define the relationship of the discipline with philosophy.

<sup>59</sup> “L’epoca moderna aveva del resto introdotto un nuovo modo di guardare all’art, attestato dalle teorie della pura visibiliza, alle quali Venturi guarda con attenzione, contraddicendo le diffidenza che verso di esse nutriva Benedetto Croce.” Augusta Monferini, “*Il gusto dei primitivi* de Lionello Venturi,” in “Lionello Venturi e i nuovi orizzonti,” 47. See Lionello Venturi’s opinion on this subject matter in “Gli schemi del Wölfflin,” *L’Esame Rivista mensile di cultura e d’arte* (April 15, 1922): 3–10.

<sup>60</sup> Roberto Lambardelli, “Dalla critica della critica alla civiltà dell’arte” in *Cézanne all’Arte Astratta*, 31. Donald Preziosi has commented that Berenson disliked the personal, biographical approach to the artist, i.e. the idea of the work of art as the direct expression of a personality. Id., “The Question of Art History,” 367, n. 8.

romanticism nor classicism had questioned mimesis in art as impressionism had done.<sup>61</sup> As he explained in 1941 this artistic movement had been neither realist nor abstract,

[the Impressionists] saw every image not in abstract form, not in chiaro-oscuro, but in reaction to the reflex of light, *either real or imaginary*. They had selected only one element from reality—light—to interpret all of nature. But then, light ceased to be an element of reality. It had become a principle of style, and Impressionism was born. (Emphasis added)<sup>62</sup>

In an interview that took place in the United States in 1935 Venturi commented that “[t]rends in modern art... are based on freedom from academic tradition and freedom from nature. Now the Impressionists are not realists.”<sup>63</sup> Venturi’s interpretation of Impressionism had a moral and political edge as he understood its revolutionary potential.

In his 1926 *Il gusto dei primitivi* Venturi had previously argued that the impressionist artists contested the traditional foundations of art by countering ossified “imitation” with “creation,” defined as epiphanic revelation and mystic inspiration. This permitted him to compare them with the masters of the Trecento.<sup>64</sup> This book, written ten years before the catalogue raisonné, marked a turning point in Venturi’s career as it demonstrates his use of the interpretation of modern art both to revise the history of art and to foster an ideology. To defend Impressionism in these terms in Italy in the 1920s was truly provocative. As Lambardelli comments,

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<sup>61</sup> See Lionello Venturi, *Il gusto dei primitivi* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1926), 223–225; and *History of Art Criticism* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1936), chapter 11. See also Monferini, “*Il gusto dei primitivi*,” 47–50; and Barilli, “Il ‘gusto dei primitivi’.”

<sup>62</sup> Lionello Venturi, “The Aesthetic Idea of Impressionism,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 1 (Spring, 1941), 35–36.

<sup>63</sup> Venturi, “Lively Interview,” 4.

<sup>64</sup> The book was then contemporaneous to Fry’s *Cézanne* and to Panofsky’s *Perspective as Symbolic Form*.

Venturi si poneva come fine di scardinare un atteggiamento reazionario diffuso che, in nome della tradizione italiana classica, o meglio classicistica, impediva il progredire della pittura italiana contemporanea sottomessa alle tendenze conservatrici degli anni Venti.<sup>65</sup>

After the First World War until 1931 Venturi held a teaching position at the University of Turin. His involvement with an antifascist group of Turinese artists, collectors, and intellectuals spurred him to become an engaged intellectual and active polemicist.<sup>66</sup> Maria M. Lamberti observes that this change can be perceived in his interpretation of impressionism,

la sincerità e l'immediatezza della creazione degli impressionisti si tramuterà nell'autenticità di un rapporto di libertà con il mondo, il lirismo diverrà rivendicazione dell'autonomia dell'artista e della sua arte di fronte alle costrizioni ed alle leggi esterne, e *la lezione della pittura francese si identificherà con quella morale dell'indipendenza della cultura in una dimensione europea.*<sup>67</sup> (Emphasis added)

At the time of the publication of *Il gusto dei primitivi* the forces of reaction promoting the return to the classical Italian tradition were on the rise. There was among the intellectuals a sense that action was needed and that there was still room to maneuver. This is the context for Venturi's observation,

La battaglia tra classici e romantici è finita da un pezzo, eppure si rinnova tuttora sotto diversi aspetti, in nome dello stile e della realtà, della bellezza o della verità, dell'intelligenza o della sensibilità, della forma o del colore, della composizione finita o dell'impressione abbezzata, infine di Roma madre o di Parigi amica.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Roberto Lambarelli, "Dalla critica della critica alla civiltà dell'arte," in *Cézanne all'Arte Astratta*, 34. The author mentions that the Roman group *Valori Plastici* to which belonged Giorgio De Chirico, blasted the impressionist painters accusing them of being unintelligent.

<sup>66</sup> In his courses at the University he encouraged the comparison of the art of the past with modern French art. In the academic year 1930–1931 he proposed the analysis of the 'theoretical principle of deformation' by comparing paintings by Cézanne with Romanic sculpture. Laura Iamurri, "L'azione culturale di Lionello Venturi: L'insegnamento, gli studi, le polemiche," in Lamberti, *Pittura a Torino*, 104–105.

<sup>67</sup> Lamberti, "Via dell'Impressionismo," 266.

<sup>68</sup> Venturi, *I gusto dei Primitivi*, 2.

Venturi favored the second terms of these equations (the real, truth, sensibility, color, impressionism, and Paris) which he associated with freedom, spontaneity, and creativity, “un aspetto essenziale, e quindi eterno dell’arte.” Impressionist artists had expressed these values, but the epitome was Cézanne,

La sapienza del disegno, la sapienza del chiaroscuro, la realizzazione obiettiva delle cose rappresentate: ecco la morte dell’arte. Abbandonarsi alle proprie impressioni, esprimerle immediatamente, con slancio, senza punto curarsi delle buone regole, nè di quelle imparate a scuola, nè di quelle che la ragione spontaneamente suggerisce: ecco la nuova alba dell’arte quale Cézanne intravvide”<sup>69</sup>

The academic tradition was the “death” of painting. The impressionists had liberated themselves from the norms and restrictions imposed by the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and salvaged art. The author could thus present the master of Aix as a hero and a moral example. The comment corresponding to fig. 2, exemplifies this approach:

Perciò l’impressione di Cézanne s’impone a noi con una forza eroica e una grandiosità, di cui ci rendiamo conto appena riflettiamo al fatto che il soggetto è degno di una scena di genere, ma che il quadro di Cézanne è piuttosto una scena religiosa.... [when compared with the work of Valentin one realizes the] probità morale e artistica dell’opera di Cézanne, e della viscida falsità morale e artistica dell’opera secentesca.<sup>70</sup>

This idea is repeated in the catalogue raisonné: Cézanne’s devotion to his art is heroic, and that heroism had a moral dimension as will become clear in what follows.

*Il gusto dei primitivi* is structured around a string of comparisons of the type discussed above, which are held together by the idea that the “taste” of the primitive is an a-historical category. As Golan explains,

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<sup>69</sup> Venturi, *I gusto dei Primitivi*, 235.

<sup>70</sup> Venturi, *I gusto dei Primitivi*, 224–225.

Venturi proceeded from the seminal Crocean premise that the ‘classical,’ as opposed to the style-specific concept of ‘classicism,’ was a moment of inspiration reborn every time art was created. Venturi deployed the primitive as a critical meta-historical (as opposed to trans-historical). The primitive was reborn each time an artist broke away from the demand for naturalism or from academic routine (for Venturi, often synonymous with classicism) in favor of intuition, or what Venturi calls ‘revelation.’<sup>71</sup>

Venturi contended that Classicism had been invented by German art history and that its application as a category was the result of the misunderstanding of the true role of art, aesthetics, and art criticism. The result was that the historically determined taste of Winckelmann, for example, had been assigned the function of aesthetic law.<sup>72</sup> His true target, nevertheless, was Fascism which considered classicism the treasure and essence of the Italian people. Venturi considered that classic and neoclassic art were the product of intellectualizations, as the artists had replaced faith and inspiration with attention to laws, conventions, and norms. *I gusto dei primitivi* was against norms and intellectualization in art as much as against the organization of the disciplines devoted to the study of art.<sup>73</sup>

The book did stimulate a lively discussion in Italian academic circles as it argued against classicism’s universal character and superiority, and favored the category of the primitive which encompassed both the early Renaissance and modern French art. Unacknowledged to most, Venturi must be counted among the art historians who fought to counter the influence and centrality of Renaissance Classicism and mimesis in art history.<sup>74</sup> As another specialist in Venturi, Giorgio Cortenova, remarks,

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<sup>71</sup> Golan, “The Critical Moment,” 126.

<sup>72</sup> See Venturi, *I gusto dei Primitivi*, Chapter Four; and Golan, “The Critical Moment,” 125.

<sup>73</sup> See Venturi, *I gusto dei Primitivi*, 16.

<sup>74</sup> See especially Claire Farago ed., *Reframing the Renaissance*. The author nonetheless only considers the German founding fathers of art history. As mentioned above, the study of Venturi’s scholarship

*Il gusto dei primitivi* conteneva tutte le premesse non solo per contrastare la cultura dell'epoca ma per introdurre una riconsiderazione generale sia intorno ai luoghi comuni che essa perpetuava, sia intorno al concetto stesso di opera d'arte, di critica e di storia dell'arte, delineando così l'inscindibile dialettica che costituisce il senso profondo della creatività e della sua interpretazione. Di fatto Lionello Venturi attaccava i cardini stessi di una tradizione e di una metodologia del fare la storia prigioniere dei canoni classici e condizionate dal metro naturalista e dal mito rinascimentale. Contrariamente a Roberto Longhi, che vedeva nella storia la pacificazione e comunque la soluzione logica della dialettica, la lezione di Venturi sottolineava la drammaticità della storia...<sup>75</sup>

The book therefore not only questioned the preeminence of classicism but also that of art history over art criticism, of the ancient over the modern, and of the traditional way of interpreting the history of art. Venturi's scholarship proposed an alternative to palliate the influence of historicism in art history.

The illustrations are organized according to the compare-contrast method established by Wölfflin, one that remains fundamental to the discipline. They might also be regarded as the graphic representation of the kind of comments that Berenson and Longhi made in their texts, which in turn were influenced by the use of photographs.<sup>76</sup> Venturi seems to have thought visually, as one paragraph of the Cézanne catalogue reads like the verbal illustration of fig. 3:

A partir de 1882 le mouvement de Cézanne vers des effets constructifs s'accélère... observez comme ce programme géométrique se réalise à travers la sensation directe de telle maison, de tel rocher, bien individuels. La sensation est même tellement intense que la vision semble naïve. En 1904, Cézanne a écrit à Bernard qu'il faut 'donner l'image de ce que nous voyons, en oubliant tout ce qui a paru avant nous.' Dans ce tableau il a bien réalisé ce désir de devenir 'primitif.'

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seems to be limited to the Italian milieu. Venturi himself was well aware of the scholarship of the School of Vienna, and his own interest in the history of art criticism and art history might be related to the work by Julius Schlosser's *Die Kunstliteratur: ein Handbuch zur Quellenkunde der neueren Kunstgeschichte* (Vienna, 1924) translated into Italian, *La letteratura artistica; manuale delle fonti della storia dell'arte moderna*, (Florence, 1935).

<sup>75</sup> Giorgio Cortenova, "La rivelazione dell'arte nella metodologia di Lionello Venturi," in *Cézanne all'Arte Astratta*, 17.

<sup>76</sup> This was also the kind of comparison encouraged by the Fogg method of connoisseurship. These illustrations also bring to mind André Malraux's *Essais de psychologie de l'art I: Le Musée imaginaire*. Geneva: Skira, 1947). Cézanne never referred to the primitive Italian painters or to Giotto.

Confrontez-le avec les fresques de Giotto a Padoue représentant la vie de Joachim : même révélation de la forme essentielle de rochers et de maisons à l'exclusion de tout le reste.<sup>77</sup>

As Golan notes, “the anti-Fascist message of the book lay rather in Venturi’s assertion that the drive to the primitive was not a question of style but an attitude: a profoundly moral attitude irrepressibly related to the concept of artistic freedom.”<sup>78</sup>

The ethical component is not in what is represented but in the process of representation; it is ideological. As Venturi remarks,

Ora sappiamo che il sentimento che diviene contenuto dell’opera d’arte non è un’attività economica ma un’attività morale, in quanto ha bisogno di universalità: e però si chiama sentimento morale.....

Perchè infatti l’artista realizzi Dio in sè, occorre ch’egli aneli al sovrumano in quanto sopraindividuale, che ami l’eroico in quanto l’eroismo sia ricongiunzione dell’io col tutto, che aneli all’armonia in quanto unità umana del pensare col fare e col sentire, che si elevi sulle disarmonie del volgo per giungere alla vita aristocratica.<sup>79</sup>

The artist is a super-human and a moral hero who is far beyond the common man. This is why the artist, as a creative personality and not as man is at the center of this author’s scholarship. Modern French artists, according to Venturi, manifested all these values: liberation of vision, free intuition, and the autonomy of art.<sup>80</sup> Venturi’s formalism is an ethical formalism. The colors of an impressionist painting originate in the sensibility of the artist. They do not abide by the internal laws of the painting and are not entirely representational. In 1926 this aspect of impressionism was used to defend the art of Amedeo Modigliani and of the Gruppo dei Sei (Group of Six) that

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<sup>77</sup> Venturi, *Cézanne son art*, 52.

<sup>78</sup> Golan, “The Critical Moment,” 126–127.

<sup>79</sup> Venturi, *I gusto dei Primitivi*, 234.

<sup>80</sup> On this subject matter see the end of chapter 7 and Paul Crowther, “Cubism, Kant, and Ideology,” *Word & Image* 3 (April–June, 1987): 195–201.

opposed the directives and styles supported by the government.<sup>81</sup> As Lamberti remarks,

A questa data, 1930, dunque si può già misurare...il valore della prima scelta dell'impressionismo fatta dal Venturi, come *strumento di intervento e oggetto di ricerca*, assunto come rivendicazione da alcuni artisti, di fronte alle pesanti accuse del fronte avversario. L'importanza di questa esperienza, che rappresentò una fase preparatoria e, nel *suo significato di polemica in atto*, la motivazione originaria del successivo interesse per gli impressionisti del Venturi maturo, sta nella rispondenza che essa ebbe in una particolare situazione della nostra storia artistica e politica e nella possibilità di coagulo offerta alle varie componenti dell'antifascismo torinese, in particolare agli artisti e ai critici che vi si formarono negli anni venti.<sup>82</sup> (Emphasis added)

Venturi's scholarship, both in its form and in its subject matter, was at the service of his political ideology. Even before his exile he had honed his scholarship (both methodologically and ideologically) as a tool against Fascism, and had trained himself as a polemicist in public debates with some of the most salient cultural representatives of the Fascist regime such as Ojetti and even Marinetti.<sup>83</sup> Whereas intellectuals in France and Germany in the 1920s and 1930s and later in United States conceived of Classicism and the Humanism of the Renaissance as ideal goals to be attained through cultivation, the young Italian art historian viewed them as ideological tools of Fascism. Conversely, Impressionism, which in France was the synonym of German influence and of the decadence of the national tradition, and was criticized for being a realist movement that occluded the spiritual and intellectual components of art, meant for Venturi revolution, liberation (and liberalism), and freedom. This was what determined his scholarship on the movement and his

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<sup>81</sup> The members of this group were the painter Jessie Boswell, Felice Casorati, Gigi Chessa, Carlo Levi, Francesco Menzio.

<sup>82</sup> Lamberti, "Via dell'Impressionismo," 274–275.

<sup>83</sup> The poet accused Venturi of not accepting Futurism as the subject of a thesis. See Iamurri "L'azione culturale," 101. See also Lionello Venturi Risposta a Ugo Ojetti, *L'Arte* XXXIII–1 (January, 1930): 93–97; "Risposta a Ugo Ojetti," *L'Arte* XXXIII– 3(March, 1930): 212–213; "Divagazioni sulle mostre di Venezia e di Monza con la risposta ad Ojetti," *L'Arte* XXXIII–7 (July, 1930): 396–405.

understanding and use of documentary sources, and what led him to emphasize Cézanne's relationship with Impressionism.

There are actually no “heroic” deeds in the impressionists's and Cézanne's life, as he even hid during the Franco Prussian war to avoid being drafted. Venturi's conception is not traditional “civic heroism” but rather an intrinsic value that depends on the appreciation of the artist's style in a given historical context. Therefore, the artist's heroism becomes an intimate affair, a personal rebellion against the establishment. It is “intangible” and cannot be narrated as a “deed,” but rather has to be found or inferred from the artist's biography, and by comparing his work with that of his contemporaries. It is highly ideological. In the case of Cézanne “ce n'est pas contre la nature, c'est contre les préjugés que la lutte de Cézanne a été héroïque. Aujourd'hui sa ténacité nous semble le ton même de son goût.”<sup>84</sup> On the other hand, he also comments that,

Ce qui distingue l'impressionnisme, c'est un besoin de style fondé seulement sur l'intuition des artistes au lieu d'obéir à des lois de caractère académique ou oratoire. Précisément l'accord du goût entre les impressionnistes fut la conquête d'une *double liberté à l'égard de la tradition académique d'une part... à l'endroit de la nature d'autre part*, dont ils choisirent le seul aspect *sensible* et le fait que leur accord concernant la totalité de l'esprit humain est démontré puisque le contenu moral et social de leur art est nouveau. <sup>85</sup> (Emphasis added)

Furthermore, according to Venturi, Impressionism as a historical movement was in painting what the “fin des notables” had been in politics: the end of oppression and the access to power of a new social class under a republican system of government, which becomes in turn the ideal moral environment for the production of art. And he adds that the impressionists considered subject matters as sources of colors, “[m]ais le

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<sup>84</sup> Venturi, *Cézanne son art*, 21.

<sup>85</sup> Venturi, *Cézanne son art*, 29.

ton [color] n'était autre chose que la forme de leur manière de sentir, morale et sociale, c'était la catharsis, le moment de la sérénité, d'un nouveau monde en gestation.”<sup>86</sup>

In 1942 he commented that the best definition of the movement might be found in Kant's Introduction to the *Critique of Judgment*.<sup>87</sup>

‘[P]leasure is related to the simple apprehension of the form of an object of intuition without referring this apprehension to a concept directed toward certain knowledge, the representation does not refer to the object, but only to the subject.’ It is difficult to find a more adequate representation of Impressionism than the simple apprehension of the form of an object without the knowledge of the object and with reference only to the subject.<sup>88</sup>

Impressionism meant the end of imitation and illusionism, which was replaced by a new *approach to painting*, a real Copernican Turn that hinged around the personality of the artist, as the transformation of subject matter into motif was possible only when the artist projected an ideal in the moment of perception of reality and conceived of it as form,

[The Impressionist's] faithfulness to appearance resulted in their finding a new form of appearance without pretending that their form of appearance was the form of reality. This pretence would have involved a judgment of reality, an approach to criticism of reality which is foreign to art. To them reality meant an ideal vision of space, conceived as light and color. ...[t]hey reduced the subject matter to the state of motif in order to keep the content of a work of art in the state of sensation.<sup>89</sup>

Venturi's interpretation of modernism revolved around the notion of an unprecedented and liberating epistemological crisis and around a conception of history that did not put the accent on diachronic continuous development but on

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<sup>86</sup> Venturi, *Cézanne son art*, 29.

<sup>87</sup> Venturi's first article on Impressionism was published in *L'Arte* in 1935. As he understood that the problems surrounding the interpretation of the movement were in part due to the lack of information he published in 1939 the *Archives de l'Impressionnisme*.

<sup>88</sup> Venturi, "Idea of Impressionism," 37.

<sup>89</sup> Venturi, "Idea of Impressionism," 44.

dramatic breaks and on the correspondences among artists from different periods of history. As Venturi made it clear when he stated the goals of the Cézanne catalogue, his system hinged around the personality of the artist that elevated a creation from being a mere reflection of the cultural horizon of his period to the level of *art*.

Works of art and historical periods are unique and thus impossible to compare. Nevertheless, it is possible to equate the attitude of the artists towards their cultural horizon, their “level” of emancipation from the taste of the period. In 1944 Venturi summarized his esthetic ideas for an American public,

Since 1926 I have called *taste* the elements of a work of art distinguished from its whole.... I realize that it is difficult to understand that all the elements of a painting belong to the personality of the painter, and have no independent life at all. One can suppose that a color exists independently of the artist. But when it is really independent it does not belong to the painting... Thus the color belongs to the painting only in so far as it is a sign of the activity of the painter.<sup>90</sup>

Taste, the “gusto” of the 1926 book, deals with what is contingent and transitory in a work of art, what belongs to a period. When a color, a theme, an idea, appears in a work of art it is because it has been chosen by the artist. It does not have artistic value in itself and can also appear in non artistic creations.<sup>91</sup> In Venturi’s words,

But the critic must also find a standard of judgment which is absolute, against the continuous changes of taste. Where will he find it? Not in any object, which is only the expression of a soul, but in the soul itself, the soul of the artist. That is, the only standard for the criticism of a painting is the reconstruction of the artistic personality of the painter. If, in fact the painter, while painting, has

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<sup>90</sup> Lionello Venturi, “Art and Taste,” *Art Bulletin* 25 (December 1944): 271–272. This text was an answer to the negative reviews generated by his book *Art Criticism Now* which made him realize that the misunderstanding was in part due to the fact that “my concept of art belongs to a tradition of thought which is foreign to America.” That is, that his approach to modernism was different and at odds with that which was being institutionalized in the country. Id., “Art and Taste,” 271.

<sup>91</sup> For the definition of taste in *Il gusto dei primitivi*, 15–16. What reunites all the artists Venturi brings together in the book is their “taste” for revelation and inspiration. In the same way all the artists of an era share for example the taste for certain colors and textures. What reunites Giotto and Cézanne is the way they create art through their naïve faith. In the texts of the 1930s the definition is restricted to the notion of “period taste” and used as a backdrop for the notion of art.

brought his creative imagination beyond intellectual rules, moral standards, or economic interests, his product is a work of art. ...

Where can one recognize the artistic personality of a painter? Evidently in the whole of his painting, in that moment of his *creativity* when he has transformed all the elements he has collected from his tradition and his surroundings into a work of art.<sup>92</sup>

Taste (*gusto*) is the horizon from which the artist selects the elements he needs for the production of art. As it is not 'artistic,' it can be studied and understood, and in this way it provides a parameter for the appreciation of art. As the artist by definition is a creator who has broken away from the restrictions imposed by the common cultural horizon, he is a moral hero.<sup>93</sup> The notion of artistic personality afforded Venturi a way out from a scholarship based on stylistic analysis and philology, and permitted him to compare works of art from different countries and periods of the history of art. The category "Art" allowed Venturi to disregard the historical context. What linked together works of art from different periods was the fact that their authors had been able to liberate themselves from the historical horizon of their time.

Venturi believed that art criticism and art history complemented themselves in the evaluation and interpretation of works of art: art criticism studied them as unique objects, whereas art history analyzed their constitutive elements, which might also appear in other works of art (and non art) of the same period: "[n]ous appelons goût les éléments de l'oeuvre d'art, le moment analytique de l'oeuvre d'art; et nous

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<sup>92</sup> Venturi, "Art and Taste," 272.

<sup>93</sup> Venturi comments that already Fiedler opposed this vertical dimension – the artist's creativity—to the [horizontal] genetic history of art. "Genetic history sees only the historical nexus, but Fiedler notes that the artistic personality, genial and significant, appears unexpectedly and is very much more the beginning of a new series than the close of one which is past." Venturi, *History of Art Criticism*, 280.

appelons art le moment synthétique de l'œuvre d'art.”<sup>94</sup> This is not the way modern art history understood its mission and its relationship with art criticism.

At the time he was writing the catalogue raisonné on Cézanne, Venturi was participating as well in the international debate about the foundations of art history. Through a series of articles he proposed a deep revision of the discipline's foundations, especially its relationship with art criticism and esthetics. These publications clarify the goals Venturi set for his study on the artist: to separate Cézanne's "theories" and "taste" from his "art," to distinguish between the artist's "individuality" from his "personality" as an artist, "pour nous occuper uniquement de la façon dont sa manière de *sentir* s'est réalisée en peinture." (See p. 125 above).

### Venturi and Modern Art History

In the 1930s Venturi was very critical of the way art history was being organized and institutionalized internationally, as he considered that the discipline was organically related to art criticism and esthetics. In 1935 Venturi summarized his ideas about the discipline in the article "Les Instituts universitaires et l'histoire de l'art" in the Bulletin of the *Office des instituts d'archéologie et d'Histoire de l'art*, published by the IICI.

As noted above, France's offer to support the establishment of the IICI in Paris was part of a political strategy whose goal was to secure and reinforce this country's cultural hegemony. An internal memo issued by the French representative Julien

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<sup>94</sup> Lionello Venturi, "Sur quelques problèmes de la critique d'art," *Actes du XIIIe Congrès international d'histoire de l'art*, Stockholm (Paris, 1933), 295.

Luchaire portrays the assumptions of most French cultural delegates in the organization,

L'expansion intellectuelle est devenue un des principaux articles du programme de politique extérieure de la France. ... notre expansion sur ce terrain rencontre des obstacles de plus en plus grands et assez rapidement sa limite absolue, si elle est poursuivie au nom des seuls intérêts français et pour notre seul bénéfice. Au contraire si la France, suivant une ancienne tradition, se présente comme la nation la mieux douée pour comprendre l'effort intellectuel de toutes les autres, pour servir de lieu de rencontre à leurs produits divers, les harmoniser en les mettant à la mesure de son génie et les faire passer ainsi transformés dans les patrimoine commun de l'humanité; si la France s'organise, suivant des méthodes modernes et avec des moyens suffisants pour être le principal et le meilleur centre de coopération intellectuelle internationale, alors son influence n'aura pour ainsi dire plus de limites.<sup>95</sup>

This “nationalistic universalism” characterizes French endeavors in the inter-war period. The IICI epitomize the internationalization and politicization of the cultural debate during this time. The institution of art history as an international profession and the coordination of the programs in degree granting institutions were part of this organization's agenda.

Focillon, who has already been singled out of one as the most active French art historian in this institutional framework, shared this belief. At the beginning of the 1930s he was invited to the United States to help organize the art department at Yale. Focillon saw this as an opportunity to disseminate the French approach to art history. Pascal Schandel observes that “[I]a construction d'un enseignement d'histoire de l'art aux États-Unis selon des méthodes éprouvées dans l'université française et dispensé en français, se fait au nom d'une universalité de savoir défendue dans les

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<sup>95</sup> Jean-Jacques Renoliet, *L'Unesco oubliée. La Société des Nations et la Coopération intellectuelle 1919–1946* (Paris : Publications de la Sorbonne, 1999), 40.

commissions de la SDN.”<sup>96</sup> The fight for cultural supremacy between Germany and France was replayed as a fight for the direction of scholarship and educational programs in the United States.<sup>97</sup>

This was the institutional framework in which Venturi—who in the 1920s had confronted the Fascist manipulation of the Italian humanist tradition—debated his ideas about the epistemological status of art history. His article was a harsh critique to the teaching institutions of the time, which explains the many reactions it provoked. Venturi opposed the identification of art history with the mere organization and accumulation of data, precisely the kind of activity Focillon fostered at the OIM.<sup>98</sup>

Venturi argued that a better organization and exchange of information did not necessarily mean that there was a better or more international art history, as professionals did not even read the critical essays produced in other countries or even those produced at universities with a different theoretical orientation.

Je sais bien que, pour justifier ce état de choses, on a inventé des distinctions; récemment même, dans une grande capitale, une voix autorisée a formulé la division des domaines divers de l’histoire de l’art, de la critique d’art et de l’esthétique. L’histoire de l’art devrait présenter les œuvre d’art, toutes les œuvres d’art, sans les juger, sans les commenter, mais avec la documentation la plus riche possible. La critique d’art jugerait les oeuvre d’art conformément au sentiment esthétique du critique. L’esthétique formulerait la définition de l’art dans l’universel. Mais il est évident que distinguer ainsi les trois disciplines n’aboutit à rien moins qu’à les vider de tout sens.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Pascal Schandel, “L’expérience américaine: 1933–1943,” *Focillon et les arts*, 173.

<sup>97</sup> The Austrian art historian Joseph Strzygowski had come to America in the same mission in the 1920s. He wanted to warn Americans about the pitfalls of humanist art history. See Susanne Marchand, “The Rhetoric of Artifacts and the Decline of Classical Humanism: the Case Joseph Strzygowski,” *History & Theory* 33 (December, 1994): 106–130.

<sup>98</sup> Between 1935 and 1937 the Bulletin published seven articles that reacted to Venturi’s. The authors were Giulio Carlo Argan, Jacques Mesnil, Gregor Paulsson, Joseph Strzygowski, Ladislav Tatarkiewicz, Victor Basch, and Charles Lalo.

<sup>99</sup> Lionello Venturi, “Les Instituts universitaires et l’histoire de l’art,” *Office des instituts d’archéologie et d’Histoire de l’art*, (July, 1935), 53.

The author most probably refers to Henry Wilenski's *The Study of Art* (London, 1934) which proposed the creation of three separate degrees for those interested in art: esthetics, for the artists and psychologists; art criticism, for those attracted to art criticism, journalism, and the "history of art comment;" and art history for owners, chemists, archivists, and art historians. These would be different careers and their practitioners would not be allowed to trespass the disciplinary boundaries.<sup>100</sup> For Venturi, such separations were impossible and artificial as, he considered that the three disciplines were fundamentally interwoven. He invoked Kant's dictum: "concepts without intuitions are empty, and intuitions without concepts are blind" to emphasize his argument. Based on the complementary relationship of art and taste he even suggested fusing art history and art criticism into what he called *the history of art criticism*. He believed that the main problem was the art historians' lack of culture and will to think about the philosophical foundations of the discipline.

D'où l'état chaotique dont nous parlions où sont parvenus l'histoire de l'art et l'enseignement universitaire de cette discipline. De ce chaos, on ne pourra sortir que si la préoccupation des rapports entre *l'histoire critique de l'art* et l'esthétique devient une préoccupation générale dans les instituts universitaires, c'est-à-dire si, après avoir rassemblé si brillamment la documentation susdite, on commence à réfléchir à la manière d'étudier, de comprendre et de juger les matériaux recueillis.<sup>101</sup> (Emphasis added)

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<sup>100</sup> See also R. H. Wilenski, "The Organization of the Study of Art History," *II Congrès international d'esthétique et de science de l'art*, 2 (Paris, 1937), 73–76.

<sup>101</sup> Lionello Venturi, "Les Instituts universitaires et l'histoire de l'art," *Office des instituts d'archéologie et d'Histoire de l'art* (July, 1935), 55. In page 58 he states "[O]n propose ici que l'unité méthodologique préconisée pour l'histoire de l'art et pour les institutes universitaires où elle est enseignée soit l'histoire de la critique d'art."

Venturi believed that there was great confusion about fundamental issues such as methodology : “cette discipline n’a pas suffisamment conscience de sa propre nature, de ses propres limites, de ses propres fins.”<sup>102</sup>

In 1933 Venturi had presented similar ideas at the XIIIth International Congress of Art History in Stockholm, which had nationalism as its main theme.<sup>103</sup> The tone, however, is quite different: what at the earlier date had been described as a “crisis,” had become, by 1935, a “chaos” in the institutions devoted to the teaching of art history. It is as if Venturi was reacting against Wilenski’s or Focillon’s intention of organizing the discipline and its institutions without discussing their epistemological foundations.<sup>104</sup>

Joseph Strzygowski (1862–1941) was one of the scholars who answered Venturi’s provocative article. An Austrian art historian notorious for his pan-German ideology, he criticized the art history fostered by the ICII from the opposite ideological point of view and demanded a revision of the fundamentally philological foundations of the discipline. Strzygowski also argued against the centrality of Humanism and Classicism in modern art history, tropes that he considered were reinforced by the methodology applied to the study of other artistic fields. His position is analyzed in the next chapter.

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<sup>102</sup> Venturi, “Instituts univesitaires,” 64. In 1958 the American art historian James Ackerman made a very similar observation about art history in the United States. His commentary can be considered as the confirmation of the problems Venturi diagnosed before the institutionalization of modern art history. See James S. Ackerman, “On American Scholarship in the Arts,” *College Art Journal* 17 (Summer, 1958): 357–362.

<sup>103</sup> His presentation was published in 1934 “Théorie et histoire de la critique (à propos du Congrès d’Histoire de l’art à Stockholm)” in *Art et Esthétique*. For the blatant nationalism of the presentations in this congress see Venturi’s comments in *Art Criticism Now* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1941), 39. See also Chapter Three.

<sup>104</sup> Research in Venturi’s correspondence would perhaps produce more information concerning these two publications, which until now have not received scholarly attention.

Venturi's methodological critique suggest that modern art history is contingent on its denial or lack of attention to art criticism as a competing discipline, a problem that until now has received little attention.<sup>105</sup> In the United States Venturi had to confront a pragmatic approach to the sciences, the same one that compelled Panofsky and the other German émigrés to mitigate their theoretical approach to art history. Venturi's scholarship centered on the problem of art history's relationship with art criticism and aesthetics.

### Venturi in America

In 1939 Venturi moved to the United States where he lived until the end of the war. Basic aspects of his approach to art history and of his understanding of modern art were intrinsically different from those that would coalesce in America at the end of the 1930s to become modern art history. His methodology, based on the history of art criticism and the relativism of the definition of art, was inherently different from Panofsky's iconology. In addition, and contrary to Barr, Venturi did not consider abstract art to be the culmination of modern art. More importantly, his

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<sup>105</sup> In 1994 Michael Orwicz argued that modern art history had left art criticism in the periphery of the field and adapted it to its needs, i.e. to highlight the agency of the main artist, and as part of the *fortune critique* of the chosen masterpieces. He added that, "the question of where and how we position art criticism in art's histories will not be solved by simply renegotiating or upgrading its status within existing art historical paradigms. Rather it must be based on a critical re-examination of the epistemology by which art history writes out a body of questions, problems and relations that it still sees to be fundamentally outside the visual field." *Art Criticism and its Institutions in Nineteenth-century France* (Manchester, New York, 1994), 5. Orwicz was then interested in reception theory and the critique of modernist art history from a post-Marxist point of view. He mentions Venturi's early interest in art criticism but seems not to have studied this scholar's whole project.

characterization of art as freedom was based on a theory regarding the discontinuity of history, which contradicted Barr's and Panofsky's conception of the history of art.

Venturi began his 1941 book *Art Criticism Now* with this comment,

Perhaps there are some who hold that an apology should be offered for discussing criticism in a University. And I am fully aware that to-day criticism is scorned by 'scientific-minded' scholars on the grounds of its subjectivity. But I believe that history is subjective too, or else it is not history at all, and the science of art is a false science. Art-criticism is our only means of understanding a work of art as art. And because the history of art aims at the understanding of a work of art as art the final step in the history of art must be and is art criticism.<sup>106</sup>

This is not what American scholars wanted to hear. Venturi was critical of Panofsky's 1939 *Studies in Iconology* and of his scholar's contribution to *The Meaning of the Humanities*. At that time Venturi could only have a superficial knowledge of what today is known as Panofsky's methodology, but his book bring to light the main theoretical differences between the two scholars. Their discrepancies were also practical as Iconology is quite inappropriate for the study of the kind of works the Italian art historian analyzed: landscape art, genre, still life, and non mimetic styles.

Venturi further criticizes Panofsky for not considering modern art, and notes that the latter's methodology is too focused on the study of tradition and the elements given by the past (taste), instead of on their reformulation by the creative artist.<sup>107</sup> Venturi responds to Panofsky's disparaging comments on connoisseurs in "The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline," commenting that "what Mr. Panofsky sets up against connoisseurship is a history of civilization which can never reach the level

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<sup>106</sup> Venturi, *Criticism Now*, ix.

<sup>107</sup> Claudia Cieri Via, "Lionello Venturi e le Lezioni americane," in "Venturi orizzonti," 43.

of art-history.”<sup>108</sup> Furthermore, Venturi suggests that, when considered under the light of what other contributors to Greene’s book had defined as Humanism, Panofsky’s restrictive methodological approach fails to be sufficiently humanistic.

Well honed by his experience as an art historian in Fascist Italy, Venturi was aware of how repressive humanistic scholarship could be. He clearly makes this point in an unpublished lecture “The So-Called Malady of Modern Art,”

Modern art reveals the ills of mankind. Because of that it is wholesome, if courage and freedom represent health. After the First World War, believing that art was sick, painters, sculptors, *critics* and politicians tried to cure it with drugs such as the revival of neo-classicism... the revival of classicism in art was a fascist remedy. And history will confirm that it was necessarily fascist: it suppresses the imagination.<sup>109</sup> (Emphasis added)

Venturi respected the horizontal, diachronic development of history but believed that it was disrupted by the work of artists, who, in his system, were agents of upheaval and change. It was the artist who had the power to transform (historical) elements of taste provided by the period into art.

Venturi’s approach to art history (the dichotomy taste/art) enabled him to avoid considering race and nation as defining issues. He argued that the influence of taste and “cultural attitudes” fostered the production of good art: “If we do not understand in such a way the ups and downs in the history of art, we must have recourse to the theory that Providence sent great artists in one period, and fewer and smaller ones in another: an explanation which is utterly anti-historical.”<sup>110</sup> In the 1930s Providence was usually understood as nation or race. In his answer to an

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<sup>108</sup> Venturi, *Criticism Now*, 55.

<sup>109</sup> Quoted in Golan, “Critical Moment,” 130.

<sup>110</sup> Lionello Venturi, “Letters to the editor,” *Art Bulletin* 24 (September 1943), 270. See *Cézanne son art*, 15.

inquiry organized by George in 1931, about the character of the French School, Venturi contended that he did not believe there were national schools of art,

Or, if there was one, it does not fall within the domain of art proper; it should be included in the 'Psychology of Nations' this so-called science of which I hear much and know nothing. I am more inclined to appreciate and try to understand the masterpieces that France has given us, in the light of their eternal esthetic value and historical importance.<sup>111</sup>

Whereas nation and race as categories for the understanding of art were kept at bay but not fully absent from the foundations of Panofsky's methodology, they are of no value in Venturi's system. His art history was much more relativistic, as he considered even the definition of art to be contingent. Venturi's art history was also a history of aesthetics, and art criticism afforded the perspective necessary to evaluate the different historical interpretations of art.<sup>112</sup> Sensibility was a pivotal category in Venturi's methodology. This is the reason why he considered impressionism, and not abstract art, as the teleological goal that explained the development of the history of modern Western art. Furthermore, sensibility in Venturi's scheme appeared in an artist through his creative personality. Sensibility enabled the artist to link the historical realm of taste with the sphere of art.

According to Venturi Cézanne's ultimate greatness resides in the fact that he liberated himself in a double sense: from nature and from tradition. In the catalogue raisonné he remarks,

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<sup>111</sup> Lionello Venturi, "A symposium on French Art," *Forms* [English edition] (January 1st, 1930), 192. For an outstanding analysis of this subject matter see Laura Iamurri, "La tradizione, il culto del passato, l'identità nazionale: un'inchiesta sull'arte francese," *Prospettiva* 105 (January, 2002): 86–98.

<sup>112</sup> "Il n'y a rien de parfait ni de définitif, ou plutôt chaque théorie est parfaite et définitive seulement vis-à-vis du moment historique, d'où elle est sortie, des données qu'elle a trouvées, des problèmes qu'elle est appelée à résoudre. Donc chaque théorie est provoquée par des oeuvres d'art, particulières ou par des groupes d'oeuvres d'art, qu'on veut comprendre et de juger . . . Il y a donc une limitation dans la valeur de chaque théorie esthétique, qui dépend des problèmes concrets de jugement qui l'ont provoquée." "Théorie et histoire de la critique," *Art et esthétique* 1 (1934), 10.

Aussi devient-il libre non seulement par rapport a la tradition néo-classique et romantique, comme ses amis impressionnistes, mais aussi par rapport à la nature. Parce que nul n'eut plus clairement conscience que lui des voies parallèles que l'art et la nature doivent suivre.<sup>113</sup>

This was the same argument Venturi had used to extol the impressionists some pages earlier where he comments that these artists attained the “*double liberté a l'égard de la tradition académique d'une part... à l'endroit de la nature d'autre part.*”<sup>114</sup> Another aspect of Venturi's definition of art, the paradigm he uses for the evaluation of Cézanne, is freedom. The artist as a creative personality is a hero concentrated on liberating his sensibility from the determinations of the historical context. The impressionists and Cézanne are the epitome of freedom from the restrictive establishment, from strict attention to nature, from the taste of the period. Creative freedom is attained by liberating the most intimate sensations from the real and from education. This freedom, in the 1930s, had definite political significance. In 1935 he commented that,

[A]rt must be completely free from every other spiritual activity. Moral trends, however important in themselves, should be divorced from art. In the field of imagination speaking and writing, freedom is necessary to creative art,... where there is no freedom one cannot have art, for without freedom the mind is not in a state for creative work.<sup>115</sup>

Political freedom was part of the historical horizon that secured the creative work of the artist.

The exhibition *Italian Masters Lent by the Royal Italian Government* was sent by Benito Mussolini to represent Italy at the San Francisco World's Fair, and Barr exhibited it at MoMA. Barr's rationale for the exhibit was that it illustrated the

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<sup>113</sup> Venturi, *Cézanne son art*, 65.

<sup>114</sup> See Venturi, *Cézanne son art*, 29. See n. 86 above.

<sup>115</sup> Venturi, “Lively Interview,” 4.

sources of three great traditions of European modernist painting.<sup>116</sup> Barr again created a flowchart (fig. 4) to illustrate his ideas, similar to the one he had devised three years before for *Cubism and Abstract Art* (fig.1). By applying the same methodology for the analysis and interpretation of both periods, Barr reinforced the idea of an unbroken continuity in Western tradition.

Barr was a product of the “Fogg Method.” Although he never received a Ph.D., his professor and mentor at Harvard, Paul J. Sachs (1878-1965), recommended him for the job of director of the new museum in 1929. Sachs—a personal friend and disciple of Berenson—belonged to the second generation of Harvard art historians trained in the Method. Sybil Gordon Kantor comments that, “[i]n his teaching methods, Sachs used Berenson’s techniques of concentrating on the object to develop a visual memory, of relying on photographs for comparison.”<sup>117</sup> He was also meticulous about tracking down documentation concerning the works of art.

The emphasis on the formal aspects of works of art, coupled with the need to group them according to an established set of relations, is behind Barr’s practice of drawing charts and chronological schemes.<sup>118</sup> Barr, or any given scholar interested in creating this kind of chart, had to abstract the main characteristics perceived in the works of art under study, and then conceive a conceptual model that elucidated their relationship. The model thus provided a rationale for the differences among the objects and enabled the scholar to organize and classify the material. Later, this

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<sup>116</sup> See Margaret Scolari Barr, “Our Campaigns,” *The New Criterion* Special Issue (1987), 58. It was published in *Defining Modern Art Selected Writings of Alfred H. Barr, Jr.* edited by Irving Sandler and Amy Newman with an Introduction by Irving Sandler (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1986), 176–177

<sup>117</sup> Sybil Gordon Kantor, “Harvard and the ‘Fogg Method’,” in *The Early Years*, 170. See also Preziosi’s analysis of the Fogg method in “Question of Art History.”

<sup>118</sup> Sybil Gordon Kantor reports of four important charts. See *Alfred H. Barr, Jr. and the Intellectual Origins of the Museum of Modern Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002), 20–24.

scheme had to be tested against competing models and used with a greater amount of data. But its explicative authority would give it the power to reshape reality such that it was able to fit within its structure. Barr's diagrams became didactic tools. The 1936 chart took on a life of its own as the "true" explanation of the development of modern art.<sup>119</sup>

It has escaped scholarly attention that Barr organized the 1939 chart explaining the development of Italian art so that it corresponded with the one he had drawn for the 1936 exhibition. Therefore, the 1939 chart further clarifies the rationale behind the *Cubism and Abstract Art* flowchart.

According to Barr, three formal categories serve to organize the evolution of Italian art and in turn modern French art: color and movement [Venice]; classical tradition, line and sculptural form [Florence]; and optical realism. The tradition of color is at the extreme left and realism at the right, leaving the Florentine tradition, the one that implicitly originates the other two, at the center. This is the line of the great masters in the Vasari-Burckhardt genealogy that Longhi criticized.

In the 1936 chart tracing the evolution towards abstract art, the realist trend (impressionism) has been eliminated. At the extreme right Barr placed the movements and artists for whom the representation of reality was still an issue: neo-impressionism, the Douanier Rousseau, and cubism. Barr did not consider impressionism as an artistic movement engaged with color, but rather with the

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<sup>119</sup> In the "Brief Guide to the exhibition of Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism," Barr stated that, "[i]n exhibiting these movements the Museum does not intend to foster any particular aspect of modern art. Its intention is, rather, to make a report to the public by offering material for study and comparison." Barr, id, in *Selected Writings*, 93. When used for the explanation of modern art, these guidelines also have the power to affect the contemporary production of art. MoMA has long fought against its own power to consecrate any artistic trend it exhibits.

representation of light. This explains why there is no straight line connecting impressionism with Giorgione and the Venetian painters. As the chart makes clear, the post-impressionist artists re-connect art with the Western tradition. Cézanne links impressionist art with the tradition of color through Tintoretto and Delacroix. This interpretation opposes Venturi's version of the development of the Renaissance and French Modern Art.

Barr's insistence on the intrinsic continuity of the Western tradition could be understood as the expression of the hegemonic ideal of the interwar years, the penchant for order and clarity, and for establishing lines of descent and family trees. From Venturi's standpoint, Barr's approach would be in the line of Longhi's and Ojetti's. Nevertheless, Barr's 1936 exhibition was politically motivated and part of a strategy to counter the cultural policies of the totalitarian regimes.

In 1934 Barr wrote about the impossibility of defining or describing the dominant characteristics of contemporary art, pointing out that "[a]ny attempt to classify modern artists must lead to treacherous simplification." He adds,

[M]odern art cannot be defined with any degree of finality either in time or in character and any attempt to do so implies a blind faith, insufficient knowledge, or an academic lack of realism.<sup>120</sup>

Two years later, the *Cubism and Abstract Art* show offered a selection of works that were presented as representatives of the classification and categories devised by Barr to prove modern art's orientation towards abstraction. In order to do that he altered his evaluation of cubism and exhibited "old" works of art by artists who had already changed their style and in many cases had even recanted their previous aesthetic principles.

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<sup>120</sup> Barr, "Modern and 'Modern'," in *Selected Writings*, 83.

Susan Noyes Platt demonstrated that, influenced by the contemporary reaction against the avant-gardes in Germany and Russia, Barr changed his appreciation of the recent history of modern art. In 1932 Lillie P. Bliss had offered a stressed Barr a sabbatical year in Europe. While living in Stuttgart in 1933, he witnessed the first attacks against modern art by the Nazis. The Bauhaus he so dearly loved was among the regime's first casualties. Noyes Platt comments,

Thus, Barr, sooner and more clearly than many other Americans, recognized the threat to avant-garde art that totalitarian regimes posed. On his return to America in late 1933 he observed also in the United States the widespread resurgence of realistic styles, particularly those of regionalism, because realism was seen as more appropriate to the desperate economic conditions of the Depression. .. In the fall of 1933, just as these attitudes towards realism were coalescing throughout Europe and America Barr began increasingly to emphasize Cubism and abstract art, and to downplay realism.<sup>121</sup>

Around 1935 the two countries Barr knew best were under Totalitarian regimes and had completed their turn against modern art. Consequently, he associated politics with aesthetics. In the next years this relationship would become even clearer with the persecution of intellectual dissidents, the show trials in the Soviet Union (1936-1938), and the *Entartete Kunst* exhibition in Germany (1937-1941) and the measures that surrounded it.<sup>122</sup> Barr dismissed realism on ethical-political grounds (it was the style favored by totalitarian governments), whereas abstract art came to epitomize modern art and its teleological explanation. Barr associated modernity and abstraction with freedom and revolution against established [oppressive] order. As Noyes Platt concludes,

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<sup>121</sup> Susan Noyes Platt, "Modernism, Formalist, and Politics: The 'Cubism and Abstract Art' exhibition of 1936 at the Museum of Modern Art," *Art Journal* 47 (Winter, 1988), 290.

<sup>122</sup> Since Hitler's rise to power modern art began to be withdrawn from view in public collections and it was later deaccessioned. On March 20th, 1939, the Degenerate Art Commission ordered over one thousand paintings and almost four thousand watercolors and drawings burned in the courtyard of a fire station in Berlin. Other works were auctioned off to the highest bidder at Gallerie Fisher, an Auction House in Lucerne, Switzerland.

*Cubism and Abstract Art* was finally assembled in the art season of 1935-36. Barr wrote the catalogue in only six weeks. He drew on his training in detached scholarship for his genealogical approach, anonymous treatment of style, and lucid connoisseurship of particular works. But he also drew on his concern for the threatened condition of the avant-garde. The combination of these circumstances gave the exhibition its breadth, universality, clarity, and permanence. More than just another exhibition of modern art, *Cubism and Abstract Art* was a vehicle for propaganda for a threatened cause.<sup>123</sup>

Looking back at Barr's 1936 flowchart, one notices that this continuous development of modern art includes anti-art movements like Futurism and Dada, and thus irons out modern art's anti-establishment drive and epistemological "difference." The surface of the paper on which the chart is drawn acts like an equalizer as it enforces the notion that the artists and artistic movements listed on it shared a similar goal or at least the same conception of art. Even the foreign visual products, marked in red in the 1936 chart, are made to participate as "artistic" influences in the continuous development of the Western tradition. These charts like the museum itself, smother and annul the intentions and functions the creators intended for their works in order to accommodate them as part of the development of the general history of art. This is how the method of study and presentation, the questionnaire, determines the result of the inquiry and the object of study. The heuristic tools impose fundamental meanings onto the works of art, when in fact the tools were devised to objectively analyze the art.

Barr and Venturi had similar political ideals but conceived modern art and the epistemological foundations of art history in utterly different ways. There is no proof

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<sup>123</sup> Noyes Platt, "Modernism, Formalist, and Politics," 291.

that Venturi saw Barr's 1936 exhibit or read the catalogue, but in 1935 he had already criticized MoMA for not beginning the history of modern art with impressionism.<sup>124</sup>

The reviews of Venturi's books in American publications, and the letters he wrote defending his points of view, demonstrate that his scholarship contradicted basic presuppositions about the foundations of the discipline and art. In 1943, for example, he answered to a reviewer: "*I pointed out the background for the preference for abstract art after World War I: this is Fascism. I suppose that Mr. Alford would have preferred me to mention the machine age, aeroplanes, and so on.*"<sup>125</sup> (Emphasis added). In a 1941 review of *Art Criticism Now*, Jeffrey Smith, a professor from Columbia University criticized Venturi for separating intellect from perception, and for undermining the fundamental unity of the human spirit. In his reply Venturi supported his claims with the fact that it radically opposed Gentile's aesthetics, adding that,

If one accepts the principles of distinction, and speaks of contemporary art criticism, the greatest danger in art and criticism today, is the lack of sincere, natural feeling and emotion, and *the emphasis on intellectual abstraction*. The intellect of the art critic must perceive the very moment when intellect, instead of serving art, *goes its own way for its own sake, thus creating false or real science, but discarding art.*<sup>126</sup> (Emphasis added)

This anti-intellectual, pro-intuition stance contradicted the meticulously crafted methodology devised by Panofsky as a reaction against Heidegger's approach to hermeneutics.

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<sup>124</sup> See Venturi, "Lively Interview," 2.

<sup>125</sup> Venturi, "Letters to the Editor," 270. Only after the war, he developed a critical interest in some aspects of contemporary art. See Enrico Crispolti "La sollecitazione al contemporaneo" in *Cézanne all'Arte Astratta*.

<sup>126</sup> "On Esthetic Intuition," *The Journal of Philosophy* 39 (May 7, 1942), 273. See also the answer by Smith in that same issue, 274–275.

The influences on Venturi's scholarship and career led him to develop a distinct understanding of modern art and to propose novel theoretical foundations and methodologies for art history. Venturi's bold use of modern art for the interpretation of the past, and his implicit critique of historicism, makes Panofsky's approach to art look much more conservative. As Golan comments,

Deeply affected, back in the 1920s, by the anti-classical, modernist ethos of the Vienna School, Panofsky later came to perceive the radical formalism of the Viennese as a dangerously over-interpretive approach to the art of the past. He found refuge in the textual documents, and in iconography, a method that even in its more intuitive mode, iconology, restricts the range of interpretation of the work... Venturi, persona non grata as he might have been to his Fascist co-nationals, was of course neither Jewish nor German, and so had no need to repress the images of fragmentation and disintegration that he had found in the writings of the Vienna School.<sup>127</sup>

Yet Venturi's writings did not become part of the American tradition. His scholarship could not find a place in this new system not only because he opposed fundamental aspects of Panofsky's methodology, but also because the Italian's interpretation of modern art hinged on impressionism and rejected abstract art.

In 1942 Paul Rosenberg organized an exhibition of Cézanne's work for the benefit of "those Fighting French whose vindicating day would seem to be at hand."<sup>128</sup> Venturi contributed then an article for *Artnews*, "Cézanne, Fighter for Freedom," where for the first time he expressed doubts about his rejection of abstract art. In the catalogue raisonné, Venturi had already argued that Cézanne's art balanced sensation and order. In the *Artnews* article he commented that an art in which

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<sup>127</sup> Romy Golan, "The Critical Moment," 129.

<sup>128</sup> *Artnews*' editor, in Lionello Venturi, "Cézanne, Fighter for Freedom," *Artnews* (November 15–30), 16. In the same issue Rewald published the comparatively innocuous "Corot Sources: the Camera Tells. His Italian Landscapes Seen in Photographs of a Century Later."

complete order reigned would be abstract art, but added, “Aren’t you more deeply stirred by a painting in which you can feel the sensation of nature that the artist experiences...?” And went on to write that Cézanne’s art,

is true abstract art, abstract from nature as well as from literary or historical subject matter. But it is not an art abstract from sensation and emotion. Schemes and cylinders and cones may exist underneath. But the result, the painted surface, above all reveals an emotional energy, epic and sublime,—the nature of a hero rather than of a man.<sup>129</sup>

In Venturi’s estimation, Cézanne’s claim to fame does not reside in having expressed in his art a neo-Platonic world view but rather in his heroic attitude, one that could inspire those fighting against Totalitarianism. Both Barr and Panofsky would have accepted that argument.

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<sup>129</sup> Lionello Venturi, “Cézanne, Fighter for Freedom,” *Artnews* (November 15–30), 16 and 17.

C'est quand elle se camouflé en science que la propagande est la plus perfide, la plus redoutable.  
Pierre Francastel, *L'Histoire de l'art instrument de la propagande germanique*.<sup>1</sup>

[L]e groupe moderne s'éparpille... [D]ans ce conte de fées à rebours les carrosses sont en train de redevenir citrouilles. On ne parle plus que de rentrer, que de retours : retour au sujet, retour au réalisme, retour à l'humanisme. On dirait d'une arrivée de trains de banlieue, le soir, sous la pluie après un dimanche de fêtes. A peine les voyageurs gardent-ils, en leurs bras, quelques bouquets comme souvenirs.  
René Huyghe, *Histoire de l'art contemporain*, 1933.<sup>2</sup>

### **Chapter Three: The Nationalist Approach: René Huyghe's Cézanne**

In 1933 the editor of French art magazine *L'Amour de l'art* commented about Cézanne,

Il n'a pas l'impulsivité mobile, la curiosité vibrante et superficielle d'un Monet normand, d'un Pissarro, juif, d'un Sisley, anglais. ... Cézanne a en lui la forte assise de l'équilibre latin.<sup>3</sup>

This argument cannot be considered “racist,” as it is neither negative nor disparaging and, according to modern standards, none of the groups can be categorized as race. It could be characterized as “positive profiling” if it were not suggested that the “Latin” is above the Norman, the Jew, and the Englishman. The author bases his evaluation of Cézanne and his art according to the cultural/ethnic group to which the artist belongs. The claims Huyghe makes and his categorical use of this classification for the interpretation of art, indicate that the readers of the magazine—educated upper middle class French and Europeans—shared these ideas.

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<sup>1</sup> Id., (Paris : Librairie de Médicis (Centre d'études européens de l'Université; de Strasbourg 1943), 246.

<sup>2</sup> René Huyghe, “Les Origines de la peinture contemporaine,” in *Histoire de l'art contemporain*, ed. René Huyghe (New York: Arno Press, 1968) [Authorized reprint; Original *L'Amour de l'art* 1933–1935, published as a book in 1935], 10.

<sup>3</sup> René Huyghe, “Peinture contemporaine,” 14.

The author of the article is not one of the many right wing art historians that populated the French art world in the interwar period but René Huyghe. Once the Second World War started he behaved impeccably. He refused all collaboration with the Germans, devoted his efforts to protecting the Louvre's collection, and even participated in the Resistance. Consequently, it is vital to examine his use of what today is called ethnicity as an operative category to analyze art.<sup>4</sup> The comment is completed by the common disparaging of impressionism as a deviation from the true French tradition,

Le panthéisme impressionniste, ce 'vau-l'eau' de la sensation, cet abandon au fil des apparences ont provoqué immédiatement une reprise de l'homme latin, 'maître de lui comme de l'univers.'<sup>5</sup>

The Latin is balanced and universal, whereas the Norman, Jew, and English are superficial and impulsive.

Huyghe's was not an isolated case. In December 1931 George, an art critic who in the 1930s was an outspoken defender of Fascism, organized an enquiry about the characteristics of the French School in his magazine *Formes*.<sup>6</sup> Laura Iamurri, who has studied the enquiry in detail, noticed that only two of the more than ten curators, art

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<sup>4</sup> The government of the United States of America uses race and ethnicity in its census as categories for the classification of its populations. Ethnicity applies specifically to Latinos. <http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/cenbr01-1.pdf>. Modern art history tends to use these categories only for the analysis of non-Western modern art for example, as it imposes on these artists the need to have an "identity." The bibliography on this subject matter is enormous. See especially Rasheed Araeen, "A New Beginning. Beyond Postcolonial Cultural Theory and Identity Politics," *Third Text* 50 (Spring, 2000): 2–20, and Iaian Chambers, "Art after Humanism. A Comment in the Margins," *Third Text* 50 (Spring 2000): 83–84. These authors react to and criticize the effects of multiculturalism and post-colonial theory on the practice of contemporary art, and therefore help to highlight the resilience of these categories as North Atlantic universals.

<sup>5</sup> René Huyghe "Peinture contemporaine," 14.

<sup>6</sup> See Matthew Affron, "Waldemar George. A Parisian Art Critic on Modernism and Fascism," in Matthew Affron and Mark Antliff eds., *Fascist Visions Art and Ideology in France and Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), and Laura Iamurri, "La tradizione, il culto del passato, l'identità nazionale: un'inchiesta sull'arte francese," *Prospettiva* 105 (January, 2002), 86–98. For the art journals in France at the time see Yves Chevrefils Desbiolles, *Les Revues d'art à Paris* (Paris: Ent'revues, 1993).

historians, and critics from across Europe to whom George sent the questionnaire, rejected the association of style with nation—Venturi, as commented in the last chapter, and Eugenio D’Ors. This illustrates just how central the style = nation connection was at the time.<sup>7</sup>

What is distinctive to French nationalism, as the last part of Huyghe’s argument demonstrates, is that it claimed to have universal value: the Latin man was said to be the epitome of humanness. The text even presents the Latin as the “master of the universe,” a remark that Algerians, South Asians, Africans, and other subjugated peoples were able to understand in its full meaning at the time. French universalistic nationalism was based on the idea of France as the cradle of a [universal] Humanism that had superseded its historical precedent.

This chapter explores the alliance of art and nation as North Atlantic universals. As French critics and art historians identified both categories they had to find an epistemological model within which one could comprehend the art of the present in light of the art of the past and vice versa. This entailed assigning moral and civic significance to artistic development.<sup>8</sup> The magazines, such as the one Huyghe edited, had an active role in this constant revision and rewriting of the past, which ultimately led to the historicization of modern art.

The process of historicization of modern art was also spurred by the international and national exhibitions of national art, such as the 1930 *Italian Exhibition* followed by the 1932 *Exhibition of French Art, 1200–1900*, both at Burlington House in London. In France there was the 1935 *Exposition d’art italien, de Cimabue à Tiepolo*

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<sup>7</sup> Iamurri “Sull’arte francese,” 92.

<sup>8</sup> The classic texts on this subject matter are Silver, *Esprit de Corps*; Golan, *Modernity and nostalgia*. For a closer analysis see Iamurri, “Sull’arte francese.”

at the Petit Palais and its complement *L'art italien des XIXe et XXe siècle* at the Jeu de Paume. These are just a few examples in what was an overt competition among countries to establish the centrality of their role in the history of Western art.<sup>9</sup>

While Italian art historians had to deal with the overwhelming wealth of their glorious past, French scholars had to face the fact that modern art had developed as a harsh critique to the French tradition and the academic system of which they were so proud. The retrospective mood and the need to exalt tradition were difficult to reconcile with the experience of the avant-gardes. France could boast of being the cradle of early modern art only up to the First World War. In 1936, Barr integrated this tradition as part of the history of the [European] avant-gardes, while at the same time explaining modern art as the continuation and coronation of the Western artistic tradition. As Christopher Green observes,

[Alfred H. Barr's] book and exhibition of 1936 was the first move in the globalization of the story of modernism; in the making of a kind of historical writing that would represent the succession of movements as supranational, and the making ultimately of the global modernism and post-modernism of the late twentieth century. The end of the 1930s was perhaps the last moment when even the French could exhibit the 'international' development of modern art as the dynamic history of modern movement in France.<sup>10</sup>

Barr's interpretation of modern art was ideological and indirectly nationalist, as it identified the United States with liberalism and democracy, the appropriated interpretation for a country that did not impose its supremacy by direct colonization, but rather through economic and cultural imperialism supported by military power. Whereas in the nineteenth century contemporary and modern art were understood as

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<sup>9</sup> See Haskell, *The Ephemeral Museum*; Laura Iamurri, " 'Après l'art moderne': esposizioni, critici e riviste dalla crisi dei primi anni '30 all'Esposizione Italiana del Jeu de Paume," *Les Cahiers d'histoire de l'art* 3 (2005): 125–135; and Braun, "Leonardo Smile."

<sup>10</sup> Christopher Green, *Art in France: 1900–1940*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 13.

the art of the period, MoMA reformulated modern art as avant-garde art and, in 1939, became the museum of modern art in this new sense.<sup>11</sup>

Barr's characterization of modern art did not hinge on chronology and nation, but on a certain qualitative value. He redefined modern art as style and ideology, an attitude towards art. This transformation implied and promoted a new methodology to study and to display art, as the new interpretation needed a stronger textual support to make "visible" the intellectual model that explained and justified the exhibition. Chapter Seven provides an in depth study of Barr's 1936 exhibition, and examines the consequences of this shift on the interpretation of Cézanne's art.

Although unacknowledged to most specialists, Huyghe also contributed to the "modernization" of the museum display. One year after publishing his *Cézanne*, Huyghe curated the exhibition on museography sponsored by the IICI that was presented, together with *Chef-d'oeuvre de l'art français*, at the Palais de Tokyo, both shows a part of the *Exposition Internationale des arts et techniques dans la vie moderne*. Thus, in addition to exploring the alliance of art and nation as North Atlantic universals, this chapter examines Huyghe's conservative scholarship together with his innovative museography. By analyzing the relationship of these two paradoxical aspects of his career with the history of art history, and with the political horizon of the 1930s, the ideological character of the modern use of documentation and display will be revealed.

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<sup>11</sup> Lorente, *Cathedrals of Modernity* examines this point in depth from the perspective of the nineteenth century understanding of modern art. The author gives 1939 as the date for this event (which confirms my analysis in Chapter One). "[T]he title 'museum of modern art' ceased to be synonymous with 'museum of contemporary art' and began to mean instead 'museum of avant-garde art'." Ibid., 13.

## Art and Nation. The Indissoluble Alliance of North Atlantic Universals

In an article published on the occasion of the 1937 exhibit *Chefs-d'oeuvre de l'art français* in *La Renaissance*<sup>12</sup>—as the title indicates, a publication more conservative than *L'Amour de l'art*—George commented that,

Nous croyons avoir démontré qu'au XVIe siècle *la France* ne pouvait se soustraire à l'action d'un art européen, d'expression italienne, sans risquer de rester en arrière et de produire des œuvres d'une portée exclusivement locale.<sup>13</sup> (Emphasis added)

“La France ne pouvait se soustraire...” Personalization is a useful device for presenting general ideas, and scholars would not criticize others for using such a common trope.<sup>14</sup> What demands attention is the forceful presence, character, and will power attributed to “*la France*” in this text, as She “knows” and thus determines with prescience and resolve the future of French art.

In the next paragraph George argues that it was thanks to the King's decision to invite Italian artists to the court that “l'art français a été mis au pas. Mais aussitôt qu'il fût en possession d'une grammaire et d'une syntaxe nouvelles, il les a résorbées.”<sup>15</sup> This is the leitmotiv of the French critics at the time: France's greatness resides in Her capacity to assimilate all the foreign influences without losing Her character.

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<sup>12</sup> First published in 1913, in 1918 it became *La Renaissance de l'art français et des industries de luxe*. In 1928 it reverted to its original name which it kept until it was discontinued in 1939.

<sup>13</sup> Waldemar George, “L'Art français et l'esprit de suite,” *La Renaissance* (March–April, 1937), 36.

<sup>14</sup> It is true that romance language speakers make a wider use of personification than Anglo Saxons. What follows refers to the way it was used in France in the 1930s.

<sup>15</sup> George, “L'Art français,” 36.

There are two transcendental entities at play in the concept “French Art.” One is the nation, France, which is physically definite as a territory, but difficult to define or characterize as that “something else” that makes a certain geographic area and its inhabitants different from others. The second is “Art,” an entity that is said to exist beyond its manifestation in any particular work of art, but only be perceived in—and “as”—that kind of object. In both cases there is the presumption that the physical element is a materialization of the ineffable, indefinable, transcendent entity.

In the 1937 exhibition, a selection of more than fourteen hundred works of art, spanning more than nine hundred years from its Gallo Roman proto-history, demonstrated the unbroken continuity of the French artistic tradition—something highly debatable in other fields such as government, religion, customs, ethnicity, and even territorial borders. On the other hand, the fact that those objects were able to manifest this Frenchness—even when they had been created to accomplish other functions (decoration, apparel, propaganda, prayer), were made out of different materials, and were all different in appearance—confirmed the existence and continuity of the category Art through time. “French-ness” and “artistic-ness” or artfulness justified the selection of the group of works in exhibition, and at the same time confirmed and reaffirmed the validity and actual existence of the transcendental entities they were said to express. As the art historian Pierre Francastel (1900–1970) manifested in a note of his contemporaneous book on impressionism,

[L]es mathématiciens démontrent que la série des nombres compris entre un et deux est infinie mais ils admettent l’existence de l’un et du deux comme des réalités démontrées par les propriétés qu’elles possèdent. De même l’étude des œuvres d’art reste l’objet précis de nos études, de préférence à l’art en soi conçu

comme une espèce de mouvement continu d'idées et comme un sorte de réalité supérieure.<sup>16</sup>

Francastel's equation not only portrays Art as a transcendental entity, but also suggests its superior, universal value.

There is no doubt that nation, nationhood, and race are constructed, historically determined Western categories, and there is an enormous scholarly bibliography dealing with their extreme manifestations in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>17</sup> Nation, Humanism, democracy, development, and modernism as North Atlantic universals. These words structured the political discourse and propaganda of the countries that defeated the totalitarian regimes of the 1930s, and passed almost glorified into the post-1945 order. The use of these categories for propaganda during the process of decolonization and the Cold War reinforced their ideological character. Modern art history hinges around the ideologies developed to fight nationalism and racism, but has not uprooted race and nationhood as structuring principles.

Preziosi's radical approach to the history of art history, points that [modern] art and art history, nation, and ethnicity derive from the same formative ideology that shaped them in the nineteenth century. Furthermore, he considers that they were agents in the colonization of the world through the spread of essentialist and historicist dogmas conceived during the Enlightenment.

[T]he modernist ideologies of nation-statism, with all their terrors and salvations, are naturalized and 'demonstrated' through the apparatus of the museum and the

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<sup>16</sup> Pierre Francastel, *L'Impressionnisme. Les origines de la peinture moderne de Monet à Gauguin* (Paris: Les Belles lettres, 1937), 41 n. 2.

<sup>17</sup> For nation see Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), and Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991). The bibliography on race is also overwhelming. Tzvetan Todorov, *On Human Diversity Nationalism, Racism, and Exoticism in French Thought* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1993) provides a good introduction to the French ideas about this subject matter.

disciplinarity of art. One simply cannot today *be* a nation-state, an ethnicity, or a race without a proper and corresponding art, with its own distinctive history or trajectory which ‘reflects’ or models the broader historical evolution of that identity—which bodies forth its ‘soul.’<sup>18</sup>

Under this interpretative regime works of art are perceived as vessels that embody the spirit of nations and ethnic groups, and thus prove their existence and their continuity through time. It is important, in the context of this essay to explain how such a delicate ideological operation might have been realized.

As a North Atlantic universal, the modern idea of nation (as nation state) was defined during the nineteenth century as a development of the Enlightenment notion of “national cultures.” Jörn Rüsen has demonstrated that German historicism—which in itself was essentially tied to the development of the idea of nation—fostered the “historicization” of art, and the “aesthetization” of history. He argues that, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Historicism implied the notion that the evolution of the *Geist*/spirit, was objectified by men, who, therefore had the power of transforming both nature and the world: “L’histoire marque la progression dans cette évolution qui permet à l’homme de se construire à travers les manifestations de sa vie sociale. L’homme ne devient lui-même que par cette transformation du monde.” All cultural objects produced in this process made history tangible, but art was considered the sphere in which human beings could better express themselves.

[I]l n’existe aucune société capable de survivre, même physiquement, sans identité collective. Dans les sociétés modernes, l’articulation et la formation de l’identité collective sont liées à une forme très particulière d’historiographie. La

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<sup>18</sup> Preziosi adds, “It is this sense that museology and museography have so very profoundly enabled identity and allegiance of all kinds, and in all dimensions, from the ethnic group to the individual. They have been so indispensable to modernist identity, whether this is linked to ethnicity, class, gender, or sexual politics, that there is today the natural presumption that any conceivable identity must have its corresponding and proper (and presumably unique) material ‘aesthetic’.” Preziosi, “Collecting / Museums,” 290.

dimension esthétique de cette identité - il s'agit de l'identité nationale - réside dans le fait que la chose la plus absolument objective, la plus profonde, la plus solide, la plus efficace et la plus forte qui existe dans la vie collective d'un peuple correspond en même temps à ce qu'il y a de plus subjectif et de plus intérieur dans chaque individu.... Un telle esthétique, qui voit dans la réalité historique une sorte de révélateur de l'esprit agissant en elle-même, et qui confère au spirituel une apparence esthétique—que les historiens transmettront aux milieux cultivés de leur temps—fait glisser l'objectivité de l'esprit dans les profondeurs insondables de la *subjectivité individuelle*. L'identité nationale du XIXe siècle présentait souvent pour cette raison des caractéristiques quasi religieuses.<sup>19</sup> (Emphasis added)

Art, as explained above, could confirm a nation's continuity through time and thus its transcendental character.<sup>20</sup> Historians on the other hand, as interpreters of this tradition, became the custodians of the spirit of the nation, one of the foundations of the aura of the mandarins in Germany and the savants in France during the nineteenth century.

At mid-century, Jacob Burckhardt—a disciple of Leopold von Ranke, the father of Historicism—established an idealized Renaissance as the most important period in the history of modern history, and, assigned to art a much expanded role in history. Following Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744- 1803), he understood that the “soul of the people” (*Volksgeist*) is embodied not only in works of art but also in institutions, material products, and even the system of government, and in this way contributed to build the essentialist notion of the a-historical “national spirit.”<sup>21</sup> Wilhelm Dilthey's

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<sup>19</sup> Jörn Rüsen, “Esthétisation de l'histoire et historisation de l'art au XIXe siècle. Réflexions sur l'historicisme (allemand),” *Histoire de l'histoire de l'art*, 188. In this article he continues the analysis of this subject matter more extensively considered in his *Ästhetik und Geschichte. Geschichtstheoretische Untersuchungen zum Begründungszusammenhang von Kunst, Gesellschaft und Wissenschaft* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1976).

<sup>20</sup> “ [D]ans la pensée historiciste, l'art est plus qu'un simple révélateur de l'esprit moteur de l'histoire, il est aussi source de sens et forme d'historicité.... L'art, par sa nature même et son essence esthétique, est le garant d'une perception historique du passé. L'art garantit le sens et la signification du passé aux yeux du présent. Il garantit le sens historique. ” Jörn Rüsen, “ Esthétisation de l'histoire,” 187–188.

<sup>21</sup> See Lionel Gossman, “Jacob Burckhardt as Art Historian,” *The Oxford Art Journal* 11 (1988): 25–32, Jörn Rüsen, “Jacob Burckhardt: Political Standpoint and Historical Hindsight on the Border of

review of the writings of Burckhardt is further proof of how different Burckhardt's interpretation of the Renaissance was from those that had preceded him. He observed that Burckhardt proved that "the Renaissance in Italy grew out of the character and relations of Italy itself as a completely spontaneous phenomenon, and that antiquity quickly and powerfully brought to maturity only what was already there by nature and gave it a coloration of its own."<sup>22</sup> This idealization of the small humanist city state was for Burckhardt a way of opposing the development of strong nation states of his time (especially Germany).<sup>23</sup> Paradoxically, his writings later served to enforce the [wrong] idea that the nineteenth-century's view of nationhood had its origins in early Renaissance culture. As Claire Farago comments,

Cultural boundaries defined in opposition to, or in competition with, Italian humanist values were an important ingredient in the emerging concept of national identity for several hundred years. The rise of centralized, unified, bureaucratic states is, however, a modern phenomenon....

By producing histories of 'national culture,' scholars helped to manufacture the modern idea of a nation as an enduring collective. A significant aspect of the *problematic* of 'nationalism' is therefore, to take into account the role of the scholars who produced it. National traditions of historical writing arose in the same period that historians began to make use of specific visual sources to evoke the economic and constitutional realities of societies.<sup>24</sup>

In this way, nation fits in all the characteristics of the North Atlantic universals.

Historicism must be understood as an epistemology, a historically, and culturally determined way of thinking, that implies a methodology. At the beginning of the century it fostered the idea of nation and the "national spirit," and in this way

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Post-Modernism," *History & Theory* 24 (October 1985): 235–246, and Claire Farago, ed., *Reframing the Renaissance*.

<sup>22</sup> Wilhelm Dilthey, "On Jacob Burckhardt's The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy (1862)," in *Hermeneutics and the Study of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 278.

<sup>23</sup> That is the reason why he retreated to his natal Basle to teach not only at the university but also to the cultural elite to whom he wanted to hand down the humanist values he considered threatened. See Gossman, "Jacob Burckhardt."

<sup>24</sup> See Claire Farago, "'Vision Itself,'" 69–71.

undermined the centrality of the Greco-Roman model, and later it established the Renaissance as the paradigmatic period in the development of the West. Nevertheless, at the end of the century, when the European nations were fighting to establish their supremacy, France and Germany claimed a privileged relationship of actual descent from the Greco-Roman civilization and from the Humanism of the Renaissance.<sup>25</sup> Classicism—as already argued above—was used with nationalistic purposes, and the Nazis reclaimed it as the adequate plastic and moral expression of the Aryan man, even though some pan-German art historians, notably Joseph Strzygowski (see below), denied the centrality and importance of this tradition and developed an interpretation of history and a methodology to counter the influence of Humanism in art history. On the other hand, the pan-Germanic and Nazi art historians pushed to their extreme the notion of the ethnic identity of the visual objects under study.

The discussion about the centrality of Antiquity, Humanism and the Renaissance was intimately related to the problem of nation and nationalism. Farago's approach to the problem allows a new understanding of the situation discussed in Chapter One about the lack of discussion on race and nation in the scholarship of the émigrés.

During the interval between them [the two world wars], an older view of Renaissance humanist culture, grounded in the Enlightenment concept of *Bildung*, was reinstated at the center of the discipline. *Bildung*, meaning culture or selfcultivation, ... was grounded in the view that art is a defining human characteristic of the highest spiritual order, with both universal and historical, culturally specific, characteristics. What the continental concept of *Bildung* did *not* do, because it intentionally sidestepped the issue altogether, was to engage in the longstanding debate over the definition of national, or 'racial', character.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> The bibliography on French classicism is massive. Alastair Write, gives a good overview for the first part of the century. See "Arch-tectures: Matisse and the End of (Art) History," *October* 84 (Spring, 1998): 44–63. Silver, *Esprit de Corps*, gives the traditional account. See also Christopher Green, *Art in France*. For the cultural climate in the Weimar Republic there is also a vast bibliography. For the issues considered in this essay see, Dempsey, *Erwin Panofsky and Walter Benjamin*.

<sup>26</sup> Farago, "Vision Itself," 73.

Moreover, the argumentations of their critics, even the valid ones, were lost due to the political affiliations of those who had contested this type of art history.<sup>27</sup> Pierre Vaisse remarks that even the most theoretically oriented German art historians, when confronted with “practical” problems, gave solutions that were not dependent on their theories but on deeply rooted ideologies about the spirit of the North and the South.<sup>28</sup>

Between the wars, the role of a nation and race became central to art history in a different manner. The 1933 International Congress of Art History, for example, had as a general theme *Die Entstehung nationale Stile in der Kunst*. The discussions revolved around the notions of *Kunstgeographie*, and *raumstil* in art, that is, the determination of how works of art reflected their appurtenance to a specific nation or region. The period of the Weimar Republic was rife with discussions about *Raum*, areas of study where the race, religion and language of their inhabitants, and especially the analysis of their material culture, were as important as geography.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Pierre Vaisse for example considers that the ideology of Southern and Northern types was manifested even in Panofsky’s writings, whereas other commentators, like Moxey and Landauer praise him for reflecting humanist universal values. From the point of view of this essay what happened is that these last authors are thinking of racism and nationalism whereas Vaisse is focused on the ideology of nationhood and race. See Pierre Vaisse, “La réaction contre le positivisme de Semper et de Taine,” *Histoire de l’histoire de l’art*, 408; and Moxey, “Panofsky’s Concept of ‘Iconology’,” and “Impossible Distance.”

<sup>28</sup> “En particulier face à l’opposition entre le nord et le midi, le monde latin et le monde germanique, l’antiquité classique et les autres civilisations, une opposition qui a structuré pendant longtemps la vision de l’histoire et l’art des Occidentaux, et sans une claire conscience de laquelle toute histoire de l’histoire de l’art se condamne à l’aveuglement.” Pierre Vaisse, “La réaction contre le positivisme de Semper et de Taine, in *Histoire de l’histoire de l’art. Tome II XVIIIe au XIXe siècles*, ed. Édouard Pommier (Paris: Louvre: Klincksieck, 1997), 408. See also Eric Michaud, “Nord-Sud (Du nationalisme et du racisme en histoire de l’art. Une anthologie,” *Critique Revue générale des publications françaises et étrangères* (March, 1996) : 163–188.

<sup>29</sup> There was also the idea of the ‘right’ to the soil and hunger for space, which “coupled with the older expansionist ‘right’ to exploit raw materials and new markets formed the red thread of Weimar geopolitical thinking and the intrusive political backdrop for the *völkisch* historiography of the 1920s.” Marchand, “The Rhetoric of Artifacts,” 128–129.

This is why the popular arts were considered representatives of a national style in its purest form.<sup>30</sup> As Lars Olof Larsson notes that,

Die Aktualität der Frage nach nationalen Stilen läßt sich vordergründig als Ausdruck dafür erklären, daß die Kunstgeschichte durch die intensive Beschäftigung mit der Epochen- oder Zeitstilgeschichte seit dem Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts für die regionalen Stilunterschiede keine positiven Kriterien entwickeln konnte.<sup>31</sup>

If time implies endless variation, the ideas of race and nation attached to a certain territory, even if invented, provided a-historical invariants that assured cohesion and continuity in the succession of infinite changes. Or, to put it differently, nation and race (as woofs) were used to structure and give meaning to the diachronic development of art (warp.) These categories replaced or complemented the idea of the life of styles.

The case of Wölfflin is the perfect example of this new attitude to art history as there is a noticeable change between his early works and his 1931 *Die Kunst der Renaissance. Italien und das deutsche Formgefühl*. In his famous 1915 *Principles of Art History*, which laid the basis for an “art history without names,” Wölfflin had mentioned race and nation as significant influences in the production of art, but did not base his analysis of works of art on them.<sup>32</sup> In 1931, these two tropes organized

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<sup>30</sup> The popular arts were hotly debated in the 1920s and 1930s. Whereas German nationalist scholars considered that they manifested the essence of the race in its purest state (without the influence of modernism), Henri Focillon in the introduction to the proceedings to the first International Congress of the Popular arts organized in Prague in 1928 by the IICI, saw in them the universally shared primitive stage of civilization. See Focillon, “Introduction,” *Art Populaire. Travaux artistiques et scientifiques du 1<sup>er</sup> congrès international des arts populaires Prague, 1928* (Paris : Éditions Duchartre, 1928).

<sup>31</sup> Lars Olof Larsson, “Nationalstil und Nationalismus in der Kunstgeschichte der Zwanziger und Dreissiger Jahre,” in *Kategorien und Methoden der Deutschen Kunstgeschichte 1900–1930* eds. Batschmann Oskar and Dittmann Lorenz (Stuttgart: F. Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1985), 169.

<sup>32</sup> “[I]t remains no mean problem to discover the conditions which, as material element—call it temperament, *zeitgeist*, or racial character [*Rassencharacter*—]—determine the style of individuals, periods, and peoples. Yet, an analysis with quality and expression as its objects by no means exhausts the facts. There is a third factor—and here we arrive at the crux of this enquiry—the mode of representation as such. Every artist finds certain visual possibilities before him, to which he is bound.

the material, as the title of the treatise itself demonstrates.<sup>33</sup> Wölfflin considers that the *Stilbegriff* (idea of style) varies according to historical periods, but it is fundamentally shaped by national and racial factors. This is why national styles can endure the superfluous historical variations that determine period styles.<sup>34</sup> What is more, the compare/contrast methodology that had structured the *Principles* was now applied to support this new argument. As Larsson notes,

Mit der Epochenkunstgeschichte teilt die Kunstgeschichte der nationalstile die Auffassung, daß Stil und Stilveränderungen psychologisch-biologisch begründet sind. Wenn Wölfflin in den Grundbegriffen von einer sich wandelnden Sehweise als Ursache für die sich wandelnden Darstellungsmodi spricht, so wird von Seiten der Kunstgeschichte der nationalstile der Grund für die Kontinuität im Nationalstil in der psychischen Veranlagung der Nation, d.h. im Volkscharakter vermutet. So können die Epochenkunstgeschichte und die Kunstgeschichte der nationalstile als einander ergänzend empfunden werden.<sup>35</sup>

Thus, Wölfflin's *Sehweise* (ways of seeing), perhaps one of the most important overarching categories that helped art history become an autonomous discipline, in the 1930s was related to race and blood, and these notions came to complement and coexist with the notion of period style.<sup>36</sup>

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Not everything is possible at all times. Vision itself has its history, and the revelation of these visual strata must be regarded as the primary task of art history." Translation from *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, p.12 in Farago, " 'Vision Itself' ," 77–78.

<sup>33</sup> See Joan Hardt, "Une Vision fictive: la trajectoire intellectuelle de Wölfflin," in *Relire Wölfflin*, eds. Joan Hardt, Roland Recht and Martin Warnke (Paris: Ecole nationale superieure des beaux-arts, 1995).

<sup>34</sup> "Der Zusammenhang zwischen der Stilauffassung der Epochenkunstgeschichte und der nationalen Kunstgeschichte kann am Beispiel eines Hauptvertreterers der Epochenkunstgeschichte selbst, am Beispiel Heinrich Wölfflins studiert werden. ...Nach der bewährten Art seiner früheren Schriften stellte Wölfflin auch hier kunstwerke einander gegenüber , die auf der einen Seite das Plastisch-Klare, Überschaubare des italienischen Formempfindens und auf der anderen das Malerisch-Verflochtene, schwer Überschaubare, Unbegrenzte der deutschen Formauffassung deutlich machen sollte. Den Grund für die angesprochenen Unterschiede sah Wölfflin in der Veranlagung der jeweiligen Nation – er sprach von einem Element, das *vom Boden stammt, von der Rasse*". Larsson, "Nationalstil und Nationalismus, " 174–75.

<sup>35</sup> Larsson, "Nationalstil und Nationalismus, " 174–75.

<sup>36</sup> Larsson mentions that Kurt Gerstenberg, one of Wölfflin's students, considered styles a problem of race more than a problem of history.

In the 1930s German and French art historians used the same vocabulary of race and nation and similar installation strategies to support their national agendas, even though they had different interpretations of nation and of its relationship to culture. The French used art to glorify the French nation and its “race.” Nazi art historians associated modern art with a non-German race and defiled and condemned it as a threat to German artistic traditions and taste, and as a dangerous influence on society. The infamous 1937 *Entartete Kunst* exhibition was contemporaneous with *Chefs-d’oeuvre de l’art français* that was also presented together with the exhibit on modern museography on occasion of the *Exposition Internationale des arts et des techniques dans la vie moderne Paris 1937*.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, there were grey areas that reaffirm these fundamental similarities, like the attacks against the School of Paris for diluting and perverting the French tradition; the “racially pure” exhibition of modern French art organized by the French government in Berlin in 1937. On the German side there was the *Great German Art Exhibition* that took place in the new *Haus der Kunst* in Munich in 1937 (at a short distance from the *Entartete Kunst*), where both the building and the display were designed to showcase the merits of the “national tradition.”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> See James D. Herbert, *Paris 1937 Worlds on Exhibition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

<sup>38</sup> Sandra Esslinger, “Performing Identity. The Museal Framing of Nazi Ideology,” in *Grasping the World, The Idea of the Museum*, eds. Donald Preziosi and Claire Farago (London: Ashgate, 2004). For the French exhibition in Berlin see Michele C. Cone, “French Art of the Present in Hitler’s Berlin,” *Art Bulletin* 68 (September, 1998): 555–596.

## Nationalistic Universalism

Focillon wrote the introduction to the official catalogue for the 1937 exhibit *Chefs d'oeuvre de l'art français* (the show on which George commented). Devised to demonstrate France's cultural supremacy, the exhibition hovered close to the site of the 1937 international exhibition, whose theme was the favorable influence of art on technique and every day life. Focillon, who was not a right wing art historian, argued that France's art had even surpassed Greek and Ancient art, and had created a new [French] Humanism.

Cette richesse même est un caractère permanent; et c'est à elle que tient l'intelligibilité de *l'art français*: Il a cherché à saisir *l'homme* sous tous ses aspects; et c'est pourquoi tout homme peut se reconnaître en lui; transfiguré et non déformé, promu, sans perdre sa chaleur et son accent; aux régions solennelles... Peut être les civilisations de la méditerranée ont elles jadis atteint une plus stable harmonie. C'est qu'elles tendaient au type parfait; debout pour toujours dans un pierre serein; ...Nous ne nous en sommes pas détournés, toujours ils nous furent chers et sacrés; et peut être quelque aptitude naturelle, quelque finesse de discernement nous approchaient-elles d'eux plus sûrement que par des voies théoriques. Dans cet ordre; de quel pas Poussin n'a-t-il pas précède et dépassé Winckelmann ....

[J]e crois reconnaître ici le trait décisif de l'Occident; dans la mesure où *la France est Occident*; et elle l'est d'une manière essentielle. On peut même dire qu'elle le définit; non comme un territoire d'échanges et d'influences, non comme un compromis entre le Nord et la Méditerranée; mais comme une force authentique et comme un foyer original. ...[E]lle consent libéralement à toute forme de supériorité; elle a le sens des mises au point; elle rend communicable et humain ce qui n'était d'abord que local et particulier: mais surtout elle invente. Elle invente des formes; des pensées; un ton moral; un certain *humanisme* dont les siècles colorent les surfaces sans modifier la substance.<sup>39</sup> (Emphasis added)

There is more in Focillon's text than the equation of two categories annulling themselves in the platitude of broad generalities about humanity and the West. It presents as a fact what was a tactic for Luchaire when planning France's strategy to

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<sup>39</sup> Henri Focillon, *Chefs-d'oeuvre de l'art français*, exh. cat., Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 1937, xiii.

seize the IICI: it describes France as a crucible and the translator of all cultures into a single, common artistic language understandable by all men. France is the West; she is the direct inheritor of Antiquity by sensibility and not by theoretical approach (a direct attack to the German stance on the subject, reinforced by the allusion of Poussin as superior to Winckelmann); she is also the creator of a new Humanism. French culture thus, establishes the paradigm of man, an idea that was already in the text by Huyghe quoted above. A particular nation claims to be the North Atlantic itself, the West. In this way the transcendental, universal value of Art—exceptionally evident in French art—rebounds onto the French nation, thus consecrating her particular civilization as *“la civilisation.”*

The French idea of *civilisation* was based on two opposite notions forged at the end of the eighteenth century: the specificity of each nation, and the equality of all human beings. Thus, *civilisation* has two sides, one that underlines the particular character of the nation, and the other which focuses on universalism.<sup>40</sup> The main idea beneath this notion is that the civilization of the West, its understanding of man and of man’s relationship with nature and other men, is the model and the goal of the evolutionary progression of the other races and nations.<sup>41</sup> This justified the claims of these French art historians.

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<sup>40</sup> As Marcel Mauss noticed in 1929, the predominance of one or the other aspect in public discourse and mentality depends on the historical circumstances. His comments refer to the Western notion of civilization that he considers is structured around these two contradictory notions. See Philippe Bénéton, *Histoire de mots, ‘culture’ et ‘civilisation,’* (Paris : Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1975), 135.

<sup>41</sup> “Les trois termes *civilisation, civilization, Kultur* son très liés... Les notions françaises de culture et civilisation sont en particulier à la fois proches et complémentaires. Ce sont des concepts unitaires qui reflètent l’universalisme explicite et l’égocentrisme inavoué ou inconscient des lumières : le modèle élaboré dans le cadre de la pensée occidentale est valable pour l’humanité entière. Les deux notions embrassent également...les idées de devenir et de perfectionnement, de mouvement et de progrès...” Bénéton, *Histoire de mots*, 37.

In 1929 Ernst Curtius stated that in France “toutes les prétentions de l’universalisme ont été reportés sur l’idée nationale.<sup>42</sup> C’est en servant l’idée nationale que la France croit réaliser une valeur universelle.”<sup>43</sup>

Nation: c’est que par ce terme, justement, le Français n’entende pas seulement la communauté forgée par l’histoire, la langue et l’Etat, mais aussi les liens tissés par une seule et même civilisation... Là où nous disons: ‘deutsche Kultur’, le Français traduit par ‘culture allemande’ et il ne peut se défendre de voir en cette expression comme une négation même de l’idée de culture. La culture n’est pas—se dit-il—par définition quelque chose d’universel? ... Tout en s’identifiant avec son idée de la culture, la France ne parle jamais d’une civilisation française, mais de civilisation tout court.

C’est par là que la conscience nationale française s’élargit dans une formule universelle et participe à la noblesse d’une valeur générale purement humaine. La France se découvre sous la forme d’une réalité nationale, et grâce a cette forme, elle découvre en même temps qu’elle est la messagère d’une idée universelle.

Et c’est bien cette étroite liaison entre le sentiment national et l’idée de civilisation qui explique comment la France se représente à la tête des peuples civilisés.<sup>44</sup>

Curtius concedes that except for a few people of the extreme right, no French intellectual in his time (the 1930s) actually held those ideas. He does acknowledge that the belief in equality of all human beings at all times and places implies that there is a set of norms that are valid for all, and thus, that there is one civilization that can be shared by all men. Needless to say, the French believed that that one civilization

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<sup>42</sup> The main period publications on this topic are, Ernst Robert Curtius, “L’Idée de civilisation dans la conscience française,” *Publications de la conciliation internationale I* (1929), 2–64, Norbert Elias, *La civilisation des mœurs*, (the first volume of the *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation. Soziogenetische und psychogenetische Untersuchungen* originally published in 1939), and Lucien Febvre, “Civilisation. Evolution d’un mot et d’un groupe d’idées,” in *Civilisation. Le mot et l’idée* Exposés par Lucien Febvre, Émile Tonnelat, Marcel Mauss, Alfredo Niceforo et Louis Weber (Paris: la Renaissance du livre, 1930). I have greatly benefitted Bénéton’s, *Histoire de mots*.

<sup>43</sup> Curtius, “L’Idée de civilisation,” 14–15.

<sup>44</sup> Curtius, “L’Idée de civilisation,” 37. As a German, Curtius had a perfect understanding of the fundamental differences between the German and the French notions of *Kultur* and *civilization*. Nevertheless, he was especially interested in the continuity of tradition that is the subject of his 1948 magnum opus *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter*, and therefore he was far from being objective in his appraisal.

was theirs. Focillon's and Huyghe's texts are based on those ideas and that is why they seem today so hollow.

James Herbert has argued that at the time of the 1937 exhibition the overlapping of the notions of art and nation created a theoretical blind spot,

A decades-old critical regime founded on the polemics of heated political conflict had given way to a massive critical consensus ruled over by the rhetorical figure of the oxymoronic platitude... Frenchness in art could claim to embody all values and all virtues, each contributing its own bit to an all-encompassing national tradition. Through it, French art reached its greatest plenitude, precisely by becoming a thoroughly emptied entity.<sup>45</sup>

Nevertheless, it was an important tool in the international debate where other nationalisms asserted their claim to superiority.

Figures 5 and 6 show the esplanade of the Trocadéro at the time of the *Exposition Internationale des arts et des techniques dans la vie moderne*, in 1937. Both present the axis established by the Tour Eiffel (out of the picture, behind the photographer) and the *Monument de la Paix* that sits beneath the open gap left by the two newly renovated museums of the Palais de Chaillot (the *Musée de l'Homme* to the left, and the *Musée national des monuments français* to the right.) Near the Seine are the famous Soviet and German pavilions whose profiles, contravening the established regulations, stuck out of the roofline established by the other constructions. France asserted its claim to superiority and might through its patrimony, culture, and museums. The illustrations even suggest this equation as the two museum buildings in the background balance out the mass of the two pavilions in the foreground. *Chefs-d'oeuvre de l'art français*—which was not officially part of the event—was exhibited

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<sup>45</sup> Herbert, *Paris 1937*, 99.

at the Palais de Tokyo (fig. 7), a few blocks to the right.<sup>46</sup> In this international context, the affirmation of a particular [French] art as universal takes a strong ideological, nationalistic importance, especially since the products of the colonies were part of the international exhibition.

### The Weakness of the Default Position

In 1935 the IICI published the fourth book in the series *Correspondances, Civilisations: Orient, Occident, génie du Nord, latinité. Lettres de Henri Focillon, Gilbert Murray, Josef Strzygowski, Rabindranath Tagore*. The goal of these publications was to foster understanding among the world's intellectuals so they would collaborate in the fight for peace. Deeply dependent on the ideals of the Enlightenment as Renoliet explains,

Les 'Entretiens' et la 'Correspondance' insistent sur le rôle de la culture dans le rapprochement des peuples et l'établissement d'un *humanisme* et de *valeurs universelles*. Les intellectuels affirment d'abord que la culture universelle s'enrichit des cultures nationales... La recherche de valeurs communes à l'humanité ne saurait donc aboutir à une uniformisation diluant les spécificités nationales mais se nourrit plutôt de ces dernières pour *retrouver l'universel dans le national*... Selon l'idéologie optimiste des Lumières, les différences culturelles entre les hommes sont donc transcendées par des valeurs universelles véhiculées par l'humanisme—qui est le souci de placer l'être humain au centre de toutes les préoccupations--, qui travaillent au rapprochement des élites cultivées.<sup>47</sup> (Emphasis added)

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<sup>46</sup> See Herbert, *Paris 1937* where the author analyses the exhibition and the ideological forces at play. On the pavilions at the esplanade. *Ibid.*, pp. 29–36. According to his analysis what is important is the fact that both pavilions were contrasted with the Eiffel tower and the monument for Peace.

<sup>47</sup> Renoliet, *L'Unesco oubliée*, 318.

It has already been noted that the universalism fostered by the IICI was based on, and thus depended upon, the notion of nation and nationalism. It might be said that it fostered a nationalist universalism, which in turn naturalized nation as a cultural entity. Renaissance Humanism, was already the result of a biased interpretation of the past that had helped to consolidate and reaffirm the concept of nation and ethnicity as fundamentally associated with art and culture.

The title of the fourth IICI book is meaningful as three of the four participants were European. The only representative of a non-Western culture was Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), recipient of the Nobel Prize of literature and perhaps the most pro-Western of the Hindu intellectuals of the period but, nevertheless a colonial subject. His dialogue with the British scholar and diplomat Gilbert Murray in this publication is almost irrelevant to the exchange among the art historians even though (or because) Tagore had his own theory about nation and nationalism, which he considered part of the (negative) heritage of the colonization by the West.<sup>48</sup>

Until recently Joseph Strzygowski (1862–1941) was perceived as a minor art historian, known mostly for his attacks on the humanist tradition and his pan-Germanic politics.<sup>49</sup> Susan Marchand has demonstrated that he typified a group of German speaking art historians who, not coming from wealthy or well-connected families, did not find a place in the academic circles dominated by the mandarins. Social resentment propelled their pungent criticism of the aestheticism and the humanistic worldview promoted by the education based on *Bildung*. Moreover, he

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<sup>48</sup> See Rabindranath Tagore, *Nationalism* (London: Macmillan, 1917).

<sup>49</sup> Retired from the University of Vienna in 1934, his pan-Germanic ideas coincided with the basic ideology of the Nazi party. Nonetheless, his work has been always well known among medievalists specializing in Late Roman Art, and lately Strzygowski's work (as that of other members of the School of Vienna) has begun to attract wider scholarly attention.

was a peripheral member of the School of Vienna, which also opposed the centrality of such tradition, although in a less emphatic and more sophisticated way.<sup>50</sup>

Strzygowski did not believe that classical Antiquity established the foundations of European culture, and he manifested great interest in the archeological and ethnographical material coming from non-classical areas.<sup>51</sup> He argued that forms and texts develop at different times and follow different routes of diffusion, and therefore fostered the development of methodologies that focused on the examination of images and not on texts. Strzygowski relied on morphological analysis and comparison of works of art, and on intuition.<sup>52</sup> By criticizing art history's excessive reliance on philology and in the study of stone monuments, he proposed a cultural history that would consider and treat objects produced before the invention of writing with more appropriate methods.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> In 1909 when Fritz Wickhoff passed, Max Dvořák and Strzygowski vied for his chair which ended in the creation of another position for the second scholar. See Jaś Elsner, "The Birth of Late Antiquity: Riegl and Strzygowski in 1901," *Art History* 25 (June 2002): 358–379, and Pierre Vaisse, "Josef Strzygowski et la France," *Revue de l'Art* 146 (2004): 73–83.

<sup>51</sup> "The case of Rome was especially debated, nevertheless. The neohumanist consensus made the culture of pagan (or pre-Christian) Greece its ideal and its point of historiographical departure. This revolution in humanistic scholarship, however, did not challenge the conviction of the educated elite that European culture was rooted in classical antiquity, and its result was not the abandonment of the text-critical methods pioneered by Renaissance scholars but their professionalization." Marchand, "The Rhetoric of Artifacts," 108.

<sup>52</sup> Strzygowski was also a contributor and member of the editorial board for *Documents*, the famous semi-Surrealist publication edited by Georges Bataille, that was composed by a rare mix of ethnographers and intellectuals. His original interpretations and "intuitive" methods fit well in the context of Bataille's lucubrations. For an appreciation of the value of *Documents* for ethnography and Surrealism in the 1930s, see Jean Jamin in "L'ethnographie mode d'emploi. De quelques rapports de l'ethnologie avec le malaise dans la civilisation," in Jacques Hamard, et Roland Kaehr, eds., *Le Mal et la douleur* (Neuchâtel : Musée d'ethnographie, 1986).

<sup>53</sup> In 1920 Strzygowski came to the United States and repeated his arguments against humanist art history, which was also the goal of his *Krisis der Geisteswissenschaften* (Vienna: A. Schroll, 1923). In 1936 he intervened in the debate generated by Venturi's article with "L'Avenir des méthodes de recherches en matière des Beaux-Arts," also published in the *Bulletin de l'Office des Instituts d'Archéologie e d'Histoire de l'Art*, and vented his disappointment with Focillon and the French dominated IICI for not following his suggestions about methodology. In this text, Strzygowski states that the Jews are accomplices of the humanists in undermining the study and recognition of the indo-European thesis. Joseph Strzygowski "L'Avenir des méthodes de recherches en matière de Beaux-

Strzygowski's text for *Civilisations* summarizes all his previous claims and complaints, both against humanistic and philologically oriented art history and against Focillon and the IICI. Such overt political references, were exceptional.<sup>54</sup> François-René Martin observes that the discussion hinged around overarching categories and the definitions of historical periods, which, according to him,

Correspond d'une part à une tendance de fond de l'histoire de l'art dans les années trente, et d'autre part, au contexte institutionnel dans lequel la discussion avec Strzygowski prenait place. Il s'agissait en l'occurrence d'une diplomatie paradoxale, ambiguë, exercée dans une enceinte apparemment pacifiée où l'univers du savant ne devait pas croiser celui du politique ; un lieu de formation d'une conscience supranationale, déliée de toute obligation de représentation des intérêts nationaux, mais où l'on ne cessait de débattre de thèmes qui avaient un fort contenu géopolitique, où les protagonistes rivalisaient dans la construction de schémas antagonistes d'hégémonie ou de perfection culturelle.<sup>55</sup>

In the environment created by the IICI the struggle for imposing a hegemonic model for modern art history emerged as a political and semi-diplomatic contest of interests.

In the letter he addressed to Focillon, which opens the dialogue between the two art historians in *Civilisations*, Strzygowski complained about what he calls the “cult of the Mediterranean.” He argued that it made scholars gauge all structures of thought in comparison with the Ancient ones, thus thwarting any possibility of discovering new ways of being and thinking, since scholars already had determined that harmony and the representation of the human figure were central to art history.

[N]ous admettons difficilement qu'à défaut de l'emploi de la figure humaine on puisse créer des valeurs expressives plus substantielles que celles réalisés à l'aide

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Arts,” *Bulletin de l'Office des Instituts d'Archéologie e d'Histoire de l'Art* (November 1936–March 1937), 81. This kind of slandering is absent in the publication analyzed below.

<sup>54</sup> Daniel H. A. Maksymiuk, “L'engagement politique au sein de l'Institut de coopération intellectuelle,” in *Henri Focillon et les arts*, 289.

<sup>55</sup> François-René Martin, “ Le problème des terreurs de l'historien de l'art,” in *Henri Focillon et les arts*, 116.

de l'imitation des données réelles. A cet égard l'art de notre époque (l'expressionnisme) nos fait entrevoir d'autres possibilités.<sup>56</sup>

This use of the modern to validate the past is typical of the School of Vienna. Strzygowski affirms that Mediterranean cultures, driven by the will to consolidate power and material wealth, relinquished their spiritual life and the values that related them to their territory (autochthony) in exchange for territorial expansion and domination.<sup>57</sup>

This is not the most racist of Strzygowski's texts, and it is the acquaintance of the modern reader with his ideology and racism that makes his stance unacceptable, even though individual arguments sound true to the post-postmodernist reader knowledgeable of postcolonial theory. As Marchand notes,

the redefinition of culture—against philological scholarship and classicist hegemony—as an organic entity possessed by the nonliterate as well as the literate depended precisely upon the rise to power and prominence of those outside what Strzygowski called 'the humanist faction;' ... [t]he emphasis here on the coincidence of cultural, linguistic, and racial borders undoubtedly made some of those nonhumanists the forerunners of 'Aryan' historiography. But these celebrants of primitive culture, and critics of European 'civilization,' can also be seen as harbingers of UNESCO universalism, both in the sense that the latter would not have been possible without the ridiculous excesses of their biological theories, and that the post-1945 transference of politico-moral legitimacy to a non-elitist, anthropological definition of culture was prepared in part by the underworld's attacks on classical humanism. As objectionable as the claim may seem, we are in many ways Strzygowski's heirs.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Henri Focillon, Gilbert Murray, et al., *Civilisations. Orient, Occident, génie du Nord, latinité. Lettres de Henri Focillon, Gilbert Murray, Josef Strzygowski, Rabindranath Tagore*, (Paris : I.I.C.I., 1935), 108.

<sup>57</sup> "C'est de la situation géographique, du sol et du 'sang' que le Nord a tiré son originalité, sa nature propre. Là, ces forces permanentes constituent le facteur dominant. Par contre, les puissances arbitraires utilisent, par delà ce qui est autochtone, tous les moyens d'asservissement qui se soient révélés efficaces au service du pouvoir. ... le pouvoir a toujours tenté, et cela avec une périodicité presque régulière, de détourner l'homme de la vie simple et naturelle et de lui imposer l'arbitraire inhérent à toute domination." Focillon, *Civilisations*, 108–109.

<sup>58</sup> Marchand, "The Rhetoric of Artifacts," 130.

Strzygowski's ideas and critique of the foundations of art history and culture based on a "non-humanist" point of view have been more readily accepted outside the field of art history properly.<sup>59</sup>

Focillon's response to Strzygowski in *Civilisations* is disappointing as a defense of humanist art history. Sidestepping Strzygowski's accusations Focillon's text reads like a proud reaffirmation of his principles and a dismissal of any need for revision. He describes the cultures of the Mediterranean as preservers of a living tradition, the product of the superposition of different peoples and cultures that have forged a balanced, universal civilization. The Greeks, for example, created democracy, and he accepts that they temporarily banished millions of people from the definition of human being but he explains it arguing that "cette sorte de clôture n'étant qu'une nécessité d'élaboration, la qualité universelle de la formule est attestée par son extension des rives de l'Atlantique jusqu'à la vallée de l'Indus."<sup>60</sup> Focillon defends the Romans, famous for their aggressive imperialism, because, they offered "une définition de l'homme où l'homme, de partout puisse se reconnaître. La latinité réside peut être moins dans une aptitude morale définie que dans une certaine structure historique valable pour quelques siècles."<sup>61</sup> It is most disquieting to read that just before the outbreak of the war, the defender of Humanism argues that the "nécessité d'élaboration" justifies racism and injustice—comparable to today's notion

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<sup>59</sup> Strzygowski's standing is now being revised and there are already publications that reconsider his approach to art history. See Annabel Wharton, "The Scholarly Frame: Orientalism and the Construction of Late Ancient Art History," chapter 1 of *Refiguring the Post Classical City* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1–14; and the work by Christina Maranci, author of the 1998 dissertation *Medieval Armenian Architecture in Historiography: Josef Strzygowski and his Legacy*. My argument is structured on the notion that Strzygowski was not a member of the Nazi party and that his ideas were never wholly accepted as in the end Nazism also endorsed the myth of Classicism.

<sup>60</sup> Focillon, et. al., *Civilisations*, 138.

<sup>61</sup> Focillon, et. al., *Civilisations*, 140.

of “collateral damage”—and that the widespread diffusion and success of Roman [Imperial] art proves its universal value.<sup>62</sup>

As Vaisse comments, Focillon recognizes that Latinité, Northern man, Hellenism, etc are myths,

mais cela ne lui interdisait pas de présenter, vers la fin de sa lettre, comme une réalité historique une autre entité tout aussi générale et abstraite que celles de la latinité ou de l’esprit nordique, mais qui faisait couler beaucoup d’encre à l’époque: celle de l’Occident. Quoique dans une perspective très différente, Focillon se montrait par là, tout comme son aîné Strzygowski, l’héritier direct et le continuateur des grandes idéologies du XIXe siècle.<sup>63</sup>

Focillon’s final argument defends a Latin and Humanist West, precisely what the Austrian asked to revise. Focillon had a very specific idea about what the West was – France. In *Civilisations* he introduced the same ideas he will put forth in his catalogue of the *Chefs-d’oeuvre de l’art français* two years later. France created a new Humanism, one that superseded the Mediterranean culture in its mission of providing the world with a common language and a secular ethics. The process had started during the Middle Ages with the appearance of a new bourgeois culture (*la révolution communale*) and continued up to the eighteenth century. Focillon’s defense of Western values in the name of universalism is no less nationalist than Strzygowski’s well armed critique of it, as it is part of his chauvinistic interpretation of art history that, in addition, categorically rejects everything that is not European. As noted above, the end justifies the means, and Focillon excuses the restriction of

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<sup>62</sup> He states for example that even if the Mediterranean culture is in fact no more than a myth, it must be preserved and safeguarded because of its mere effectiveness. A most dangerous affirmation at the moment when the Aryan myth and the Indo-European thesis were being defended by the Nazis!

<sup>63</sup> Pierre Vaisse, “Josef Strzygowski et la France,” *Revue de l’Art* 146 (2004), 78.

humane values and harsh occupation in the light of what he considers a worthy goal: the creation and preservation of Humanist values.

### The Contemporary and the Modern

Three aspects of Huyghe's scholarship in the 1930s help clarify French art history in those years: first, his approach to modern art and modern art history in *Histoire de l'art contemporain* (1933–1935; 1936), from which the second epigraph was taken; second, his 1936 monograph on Cézanne; and finally his museographic innovations in the 1937 show of van Gogh paintings. This exhibit was planned as a prototype to showcase the latest advances in museum display, and it also exhibited for the first time Rewald's site photographs of the places van Gogh painted in Arles.<sup>64</sup>

Early on, having studied in the Ecole du Louvre, Huyghe became acquainted with the French artistic milieu. In 1929 his mentor Jean Guiffrey, then curator of paintings at the Louvre, put him in charge of organizing the 1930 Delacroix retrospective. That same year he was promoted to curator adjoint, and in 1937 became chief curator of the Louvre's department of paintings. From 1930 onward he satisfied his love for modern art by editing *L'Amour de l'art*. This magazine was founded in 1920 by a group of art amateurs presided over by Albert S. Henraux, (1881–1953), who at the time was president of the Friends association of the Louvre and later of the Conseil

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<sup>64</sup> Two years before the exhibit, *L'Amour de l'art* published Rewald's first article on Cézanne illustrated with site photographs. Those images and Huyghe's innovative use of illustrations in *L'Amour de l'art*, will be analyzed in the second section of the dissertation.

artistique des musées nationaux.<sup>65</sup> In addition, the banker Pierre David-Weill (1900–1970) sponsored Huyghe to travel around the world to become acquainted with the collections and the organization of the most important museums of the world.<sup>66</sup> These experiences allowed Huyghe to present a panorama of the advances in this field in the section devoted to museums and museography of the *Exposition Internationale des arts et des techniques*, 1937 whose catalogue was published by *L'Amour de l'art*.<sup>67</sup>

*Histoire de l'art contemporain* was published in installments as part of *L'Amour de l'art* between 1933 and 1935, and as a book in 1936. Huyghe observed that the moment of experimentation and innovation in modern art had ended and that, in order to help artists liberate themselves from the influence of the masters of the first two decades of the twentieth century, it was necessary to think about the avant-gardes as the artistic manifestations of the recent past.<sup>68</sup> Modern art was already old!

*Histoire* has an introductory article by Focillon in which he considers the paradoxical issues implied by the examination of the present with an historical methodology. Like Panofsky, he relies on the notion of perspective to refer to the temporal “distance” that separates the historian from the object of study.

Mais d'être trop près déforme la perspective et brouille la vue? Cela dépend des yeux et des esprits. Au surplus, il vient un temps pour chaque génération où il lui faut mesurer son passé immédiat et tenter de mettre en elle-même non un ordre abstrait et théorique, mais une clarté à laquelle elle est directement intéressée. C'est un *privilège français* que de jeter ainsi sur le temps et le moment de vives

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<sup>65</sup> For the history of this publication see Chevretil Desbiolles, *Revue d'art*, 157–162.

<sup>66</sup> Huyghe, *Art philosophie*, 29

<sup>67</sup> The OIM led by Focillon organized the first congress devoted to this subject matter in 1935. See *Conférence internationale d'études sur l'architecture et l'aménagement des musées d'art : catalogue de l'exposition : Madrid, 28 octobre–4 novembre MCMXXXIV (Madrid, 1935 ?)*, which is not a catalogue but a compendium of illustrative material.

<sup>68</sup> Chevretil Desbiolles, *Revue d'art*, 163. See also the discussion of Huyghe about the problem of closure in “Soldes d'arrière saison,” *L'Amour de l'art* (July–August, 1932): 221–228.

lumières. *Il s'exerce naturellement dans un domaine où la France a tant fait.*<sup>69</sup>  
(Emphasis added)

This is a most original assertion that makes the writing of the history of modern art almost a national or ethnic issue, as if the appurtenance to a certain country provided a special right and a privileged point of view.<sup>70</sup>

Focillon's scholarship focuses on the "life of forms" that, as the text of the introduction to *Histoire* explains, is the history of the spirit.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, he states that, "[o]n croit voir en elles [les formes] l'empreinte de ce que nous appelons les races et voici que, par affinité elles forment des familles et engendrent des dynasties."<sup>72</sup> The task of the art historian thus, is to perceive how the life of the form/spirit manifests itself in the present. "Prenons garde de ne pas renverser les valeurs "dire l'esprit du temps, ce n'est pas dire sa vie spirituelle." This history is that of the basic "soul of the race and of men." Focillon agrees that there are mutations due to historical changes, but historical, economic, and social influences are "précaires." In this way, his methodology fits within the characteristics of the art history of the 1930s sketched above, as he maintains that race and nation are invariants resilient to historical change. What is more, even a biographical approach would be secondary to race,

L'histoire des formes, non par des à côtés de psychologie romanesque, mais, si l'on peut dire, fondamentalement, c'est l'histoire de l'esprit, non seulement dans les remous superficiels qu'elles laissent paraître et qui ont leur prix, mais dans les exigences profondes.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Henri Focillon, "L'Historien et son temps," in *Histoire de l'art contemporain*, 3.

<sup>70</sup> This comment resonates with French art history's chauvinism and Focillon's interest on making of France the arbiter of art and art history. As previously discussed, this was also the position of Francastel in *L'Histoire de l'art*.

<sup>71</sup> In 1934 he published the book *Vie des Formes*.

<sup>72</sup> Focillon, "L'Historien et son temps," 3.

<sup>73</sup> Focillon, "L'Historien et son temps," 3–4.

Modern art has contested every single traditional value, but “ à travers cette agitation on voyait se continuer les grandes lignées permanentes, et le pressant instinct du moderne réveillait des qualités éternelles.”<sup>74</sup> Focillon thinks that at the moment of crisis, his methodology would help locate the place where tradition is at work. Confirming what for Venturi was a negative aspect of contemporary art criticism, Focillon believes that the teleological end of the present development was classicism: “une fois de plus l’on pourra mesurer ce que tout classicisme doit aux périodes d’expériences qui l’ont précédé.”<sup>75</sup>

Huyghe also wrote an introductory article to the 1935 *Histoire de l’art contemporain*, where he states that the avant-garde movements of the first part of the century had only historical importance, an “intérêt documentaire ou experimental.” His main idea is that—as the epigraph indicates—modern art movements were exhausted and that the contemporaneous ones are of a different kind, which justifies the enterprise of writing history

Est-ce à dire que l’art moderne soit défunt? On peut rester vivant et commencer à sortir du champ de l’actualité... Les défenseurs, les représentants de l’art moderne sont à l’apogée de leur puissance; certains l’ont dépassé; chacun reste désormais fidèle à lui-même et adopte sans en plus changer sa livrée définitive pour la postérité. Chaque école a formulé et développé sa doctrine comme chaque artiste... La génération nouvelle ne les ignore pas, loin de là, mais elles les considère *comme un acquit* et commence à porter ailleurs ses pas et ses efforts.

Une histoire de l’art moderne n’est donc pas prématurée. Il s’offre à nous sinon définitif, du moins défini. ...

‘[L]’époque moderne’, que l’avenir appellera de je ne sais quel nom, apparaît distincte, nette en ses contours: née avec le siècle, elle atteint son point

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<sup>74</sup> Focillon, “L’Historien et son temps,” 5.

<sup>75</sup> Focillon, “L’Historien et son temps,” 35. Venturi commented that the crisis of art criticism derived from the fact that “ on veut trouver une mesure de jugement pour tous les artistes dans un idéal qu’on appelle *classique*”. “Sur quelques problèmes de la critique d’art,” *Actes du XIIIe Congrès international d’histoire de l’art. Stockholm* (Paris, 1933), 297.

culminant aussitôt après la guerre et vient glisser, étalé comme une vague qui s'achève, jusqu'aux années actuelles.<sup>76</sup>

Huyghe had a close range view of cultural life in Paris, and saw that there had been a qualitative change in the definition of art. The great modern masters, for example, were at the moment more concerned with their careers and legacy than with producing new art. Contemporary art was not “modern” anymore. Moreover, those who came after the first wave of modern art were obliged to take a conscious stand with regard to it. Therefore, they could not be moderns in the same [naïve] way.<sup>77</sup>

A year later, in 1936, Barr redefined “modern art” as avant-garde art in an exhibition that gathered together works from different European countries. His formalist methodology allowed him to present modern art as the latest development of the stylistic trends that had started in the Renaissance, in modern art’s evolution towards abstraction (the teleological goal). Barr’s open ended flowchart also suggested that modern art, like Art, exists beyond its physical manifestations and thus cannot have an “end,” but has to mutate into a new/different manifestation. Barr related modern art not to a country, but to a political system and indirectly to the country or countries that better exemplified that system. From now on, modern art instead of being associated with a particular country that incarnates Western civilization, will be related with a political system and therefore with the West’s teleologically oriented understanding of history as the progressive evolution towards democracy, liberalism, republican values, human rights and other North Atlantic universals. The consequences of this ideological shift have been debated in

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<sup>76</sup> René Huyghe, “Les Origines de la peinture contemporaine. Genèse et position de l’art moderne” in *Histoire de l’art contemporain*, 8.

<sup>77</sup> See Philip Fisher, *Making and Effacing Art*, Introduction and chapter 1.

relationship to early modern art and contemporary art, but not their impact on the study of the nineteenth century.<sup>78</sup>

Barr's and Huyghe's epistemological models, thus, implied different approaches. In the first case, works of art illustrate the abstract construal described by the flowchart, which the museum-goer has to "know." In Huyghe's case, all the periods of French art are important and of the same value, because every single artistic product is the expression of a moment in the life of the nation. The art historian has to illuminate the relationship that ties the two entities, art and nation. Therefore he is committed to understanding each and every period of this development.

In the 1930s Huyghe's task was to provide an interpretation that elucidated the new period in the history of French art. He then remarked that the general attitude towards art had changed and declared modern art a "closed" episode. This standpoint enabled him to gauge avant-garde's art "qualitative" difference from the art of the past and to interpret modern art as a reaction against, and a break with tradition, i.e. as an epistemological crisis. Barr's interpretative model, on the contrary, inclined him to present modern art as a "breakthrough" in the evolution of art towards abstraction.

In his article for the *Histoire de l'art contemporain*, Huyghe explains modern art as a short development that had manifested the epistemological crisis of the end of the century, and whose characteristics had been lack of confidence in the accepted tradition, an exaggerated sensualism and individualism, and a new cult for life. The 1870 war brought to an end the optimism and positivism that had characterized the nineteenth century and provoked the

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<sup>78</sup> See Lorente's comments on MoMAism in the epilogue of *Cathedrals of Modernity*.

universelle révision des valeurs, acceptée par tous après la guerre de 14... Et comme les générations nouvelles, si elles s'insurgeaient contre l'optimisme de l'esprit scientifique, restaient du moins imprégnées de ses méthodes, c'est avec la rigueur analytique la plus soutenue qu'elles entreprirent cette révision.<sup>79</sup>

Huyghe evokes Decartes's methodological doubt in order to characterize Cézanne's critique of tradition. In this light, the practice of revising the foundations of the established order before building a new system is profoundly French. Modern art, by attacking and breaking the humanist tradition, had provided a clean slate for the development of a new interpretation of art. Nevertheless, it had been at all moments profoundly and fundamentally French. Modern artists had discovered the formal dimension of art and liberated it from the yoke of mimesis. The return to realism, to order, and to the human being at the end of the modern period meant for Huyghe, the return to extra pictorial, more humane dimensions which had been disparaged in the struggle to attain formal purity.

Modern art had been then, a short, but necessary, crisis that liberated art. In the end, his interpretation of the development of modern art hinges around the problem of ethnicity.

Ainsi l'impressionnisme même, alors qu'il paraît avec Seurat poussé à son extrême, se prépare en fait son contraire. Ainsi s'esquisse le principe de dualité qui est au fond de l'art moderne, cette dualité qui s'est exprimée pleinement dans l'opposition des races latines et des races germaniques.<sup>80</sup>

France's superiority and endurance derives from its ability to absorb and assimilate different influences while remaining the same. "Modern art" is the aftermath of impressionism, the result of the domination and assimilation of the German influences by the Latin components of French racial stock and culture. By

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<sup>79</sup> Huyghe "Les Origines de la peinture," 13–14.

<sup>80</sup> Huyghe "Les Origines de la peinture contemporaine," 13–14.

explaining the impressionist crisis as part of the development of French art, Huyghe maintains the identification of art and modern art with the nation.

### Huyghe's Cézanne

Huyghe's *Cézanne* is an interpretation of the artist and his work based on nationality and race. It might be said that it is a nationalist and racial approach if these two terms did not imply defamation and slander. According to Huyghe, it is not the individual who is behind the art, as Rewald proposes, nor the creative personality as posited by Venturi and Berenson, but rather French ethnicity. Where Rewald shapes the information about Cézanne's life to fit within the "modern artist" type, and Venturi explains Cézanne's project as the expression of art, Huyghe understands the artist as the representative of a race.

The book is organized like a theorem, so for each variable in Cézanne's art there corresponds one racial element that explains it: Cézanne the Latin, the Southern, the Mediterranean.<sup>81</sup> The author presents Cézanne as the best representative of the good stereotypes attributed to the ethnic [?] groups that were thought to compose France's racial stock, the perfect combination of the French types. Biographical events are secondary compared to the strength of this racial ingredient, the primary force that shapes the artist's character and determines his heroic devotion to art: "[o]n

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<sup>81</sup> "Un fond agité de baroque subsista toujours en Cézanne sous les disciplines classiques acquises plus tard: le méridional sous le latin." René Huyghe, *Cézanne* (Paris : Plon, 1936), 26.

expliquerait beaucoup de son être profond en disant qu'il était un latin, et beaucoup de son être extérieur en disant qu'il était un méridional."<sup>82</sup>

For Huyghe, Cézanne is first of all a Latin. Contrary to the man of the North, and as a good Mediterranean, he relied mainly on his sensations and spirit,

Cela encore est bien dans le destin de Cézanne: l'idée de latin serait insuffisante à le définir si on n'ajoutait celle de latin de France. La France peu à peu façonné, détaché de l'Italie un latin qui a reçu son empreinte en même temps qu'il la marquait de la sienne plus tendrement, plus passionnément attaché à la réalité des choses, sans cependant renoncer à les soumettre à ce primat de la pensée, qui est le propre de la latinité...<sup>83</sup>

And he adds,

Si l'esprit de Cézanne est celui du Latin, et de ce Latin si particulier qu'est le Provençal entré dans l'orbite de l'intelligence et de la sensibilité françaises, son caractère est aussi catégoriquement celui du Méridional.<sup>84</sup>

The impressionists, the Northern influence, had disparaged the main accomplishments that the Latin race had conquered under the Italian impulse: the rendering of volume, space, and local color.<sup>85</sup> Cézanne, who as a Latin could not fall into the excesses motivated by the exaggerated fidelity to optical perception, regained these elements for painting. When Cézanne adopted the Impressionist technique, he was following Descartes's way: like the philosopher—Huyghe argues—he had to abandon the old house and live in temporary lodgings while building a new one on well inspected grounds: "Cézanne en arrivant à l'excès logique, il s'en sauvera encore en Latin en comprenant que la sensation doit être équilibrée par l'esprit."<sup>86</sup> Cézanne's

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<sup>82</sup> Huyghe, *Cézanne*, 8.

<sup>83</sup> Huyghe, *Cézanne*, 11.

<sup>84</sup> Huyghe, *Cézanne*, 14. According to Huyghe the man from the South of France is characterized by his "malice," his irony, and proclivity to exaggeration.

<sup>85</sup> "Pour que la peinture ne soit pas simple harmonie de lignes et de taches, pour qu'elle prenne cette assiette et cette réalité qu'aime l'esprit latin, il avait patiemment entrepris la conquête de l'espace.... L'impressionnisme, cet art de septentrionaux, vint tout rejeter dans l'instable tourbillon des illusions et des atomes lumineux." Huyghe, *Cézanne*, 40–41.

<sup>86</sup> Huyghe, *Cézanne*, 49.

classicism strikes a difficult balance between his sensations and the ideas of his spirit. His torment was caused by his unwillingness to make concessions in any of these two aspects of his art.

Cézanne's art is beyond the contemporary skirmishes about style and influences, and thus the book ends with a philosophical reflection about Man. It is from Cézanne—the French Latin and the Mediterranean—that Huyghe defines and evaluates humanness and human values.

L'heure est venue de ne plus envisager Cézanne comme la justification d'une cause actuelle, mais pour son importance humaine, ... *L'Homme*, ce fugitif poursuivi par le Temps, cet être que chaque seconde transforme, et qui de la naissance à la mort est entraîné dans une évolution incessante de ses sentiments, de ses idées...dans l'irréremédiable écoulement du monde, *il ne songe qu'à 'laisser des traces', qu'à léguer une œuvre où il transfère le mirage de la mort vaincue. Ce sans doute le Latin plus que le Septentrional ou le Germain, qu'enivrent le transformisme, le devenir.*

Jamais dans l'Histoire de l'Art un homme ne s'est accroché plus âprement à l'immuable que Cézanne. Sur les ruines du grand rêve de stabilité de la pensée classique, la science a bâti la notion de l'éternelle transformation de tout. L'impressionnisme, .. accepte cette révélation : il abdique, il s'abandonne à la disparition universelle, ... Cézanne résiste. Il est le dernier sursaut latin, il tente de redresser cette sécurité renversée depuis le XVIIe siècle. <sup>87</sup>(Emphasis added).

Man performs in Huyghe's methodology the function that art played in Venturi's. The French art historian uses his characterization of the "Latin man" as a standard to evaluate Cézanne's persona and art. According to Huyghe, the Latin man is able to grasp certain aspects of the meaning of life that escape both Germans and modern men. Cézanne is thus the epitome of humanness. Huyghe's text passes from the racial (that is, particular) through the individual (the genius of the group), to the universal (humanness). Moreover, the idea of *civilisation* is here perfectly exemplified, as one of its main characteristics is that, contrary to the German (spiritual) *kultur*, it has a

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<sup>87</sup> Huyghe, *Cézanne*, 60–61.

deep attachment to patrimony, and to the (physical) accumulation of material objects that attests to its progression. Already, Curtius had noticed that the French were much more fixed on the conservation of heritage, and this was also Strzygowski's complaint against humanist art history: its obsession with stone monuments and ruins instead of living popular traditions.<sup>88</sup>

### Objective Documentation of Modern Art

In 1937, one year after the publication of *Cézanne*, Huyghe organized and curated the exhibition on museography sponsored by the IICI at the Palais de Tokyo.<sup>89</sup> The show itself was a demonstration of the principles of museography, its history, and the latest advances in the field. The van Gogh show was one of the three special exhibits that complemented the main display and proposed prototypes of exhibitions in different areas: literature, ethnography, and the arts.<sup>90</sup>

The van Gogh exhibition, with its supporting scientific apparatus and professional approach to art history and display, was hailed as the model of a modern

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<sup>88</sup> As Bénétou commented, "Soucieux de continuité le nationalisme français est un nationalisme d'héritier fidèle à ses traditions et attaché notamment à la civilisation gréco-latine. En revanche, le nationalisme allemand prône le germanisme et récuse cet héritage." *Histoire de mots*, 96–97. It is important to remember that most African cultures, for example, did not preserve their "artistic" products in order to secure that each generation repeated the act of creation. The interest on the conservation of objects is also particular to the West and historically determined, which reinforces the notion that the museum is a disciplinary institution established on Eurocentric standards.

<sup>89</sup> John Rewald was Huyghe's assistant for the van Gogh exhibition and went to Arles to take photographs of the sites the artist had painted there. See Archives des musées nationaux Cote X c. 32 to 42 "Van Gogh Exhibition," and "Exposition Universelle de Paris, 1937." I would like to thank Mme Nathalie Volle for walking me through this rich collection, and for her insights about the history of French museology and museography.

<sup>90</sup> *L'Amour de l'art* published the "catalogues" of all the exhibitions. See issues from March to October 1937.

exhibition of art. For example, van Gogh's paintings were framed in white, as the artist had expressed in one of his letters the desire to exhibit his paintings in this manner. The documentation areas drew most of the critiques. The reaction was so strong that the magazine *Beaux-Art*, published by Daniel Wildenstein, organized an "enquête" on the subject, which obliged Huyghe to justify the presentation.

As Georges Henri Rivière (1897–1985), then deputy director of the *Musée de l'homme*, collaborated with Huyghe in the organization of the general exhibition, many commentators complained about the application of methodologies and practices developed for the display of ethnographic material to an art exhibit. Several specialists further objected that these novelties reflected the influence of the exhibitions organized by the Fascists in Italy and the Stalinists in Russia.<sup>91</sup> The 1937 international exhibition had been inaugurated by Léon Blum, the first socialist prime minister of the III Republic, which exacerbated the harsh tone and strong condemnation of the conservative critics, who were eager to find similarities with the Russian and pro-communist German exhibits.

The most articulate critic was George, who complained that, "[c]ette exposition est représentative d'une idéologie et d'une mentalité." His prescient comments enable the present reader to realize how novel the new approach to display was. Moreover, in such a highly politicized atmosphere, it was immediately perceived as state propaganda.

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<sup>91</sup> Although this subject cannot be developed here, I am convinced that the creation of the Office International des Musées facilitated this kind of interaction. For Russia see Jolles, "Stalin's Talking Museums." The author mentions that the "talking museum" had been analyzed in an article in the OIM's publication, *Mouseion*, in 1932. For Italy, Claudia Lazzaro, and Roger J. Crum eds. *Donatello among the Blackshirts. History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy*. A good introduction is Mary Anne Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press 1998).

[L]es musées dont le nouveau destin a été fixé une fois pour toutes dans un article de Georges Rivière,<sup>92</sup> ne seront plus bientôt des bastions de la culture bourgeoise! Ils s'ouvriront aux foules qui y seront largement accueillies et auxquelles des savants attachés exposeront, non seulement, les données de l'histoire de l'art, mais aussi l'état d'âme des artistes. Les doctrines de Karl Marx et la psychanalyse du Dr Siegmund [sic] Freud seront mises à profit par des conférenciers.

And he adds,

Le XXe siècle aura achevé son œuvre et accompli sa tâche lorsque les marins partiront à la pêche un livre de Rimbaud ou de Fargue à la main et lorsque les paysans normands connaîtront, grâce aux Musées ambulants et au Catalogue de Lionello Venturi, la chronologie des tableaux de Cézanne...

The right-wing art critic also highlighted the similarities with the exhibitions organized by the communists,

[P]ersonnellement je me méfie un peu de cette littérature à tendances scientifiques. Elle a pour résultat de fausser le sens de l'œuvre d'art, au même titre que les sous-titres 'marxistes' et diverses étiquettes dont usent et abusent les conservateurs des musées soviétiques ...<sup>93</sup>

Basically, the problem is that museum-goers are infused with "knowledge" about art, and are in turn obliged to know art history, instead of being introduced to the appreciation of art. The same year Francastel in his book *L'Impressionnisme*, blamed art history for the contemporary undervaluation and widespread misinterpretation of this artistic movement's true meaning, which shows that the argument was not restricted to the right. He especially criticized the idea of evolution, "la notion d'un progrès permanent, partiel et insensible,"

On entend tous les jours commenter les chefs-d'oeuvre des Musées de ce point de vue anti-esthétique du 'progrès' des écoles. On substitue à la recherche du lien vivant des parties la constatation du savoir-faire et la virtuosité. Tel est le fruit de

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<sup>92</sup> He had published this same magazine in July 10, 1936 "Le Musée français des arts et traditions populaires." Rivière was a vocal advocate of the politics of the Front Populaire. See Herman Lebovics, *True France: The Wars over Cultural Identity, 1900–1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.)

<sup>93</sup> Waldemar George, "Que pensez vous de l'exposition van Gogh?," *Beaux Arts* (August, 27, 1937), 2. This is perhaps a comment on Stalin's "Talking museum," See Jolles, "Talking Museums," 450.

l'action exercée sur le grand public par une certaine école *qui substitue au sentiment de l'art, l'amour de l'histoire de l'art* et qui guide la foule vers la compréhension scolaire, et pour mieux dire primaire, des qualités de la peinture. La peinture elle-même s'en ressent que menace un nouvel académisme et une véritable scolastique moderne.<sup>94</sup> (Emphasis added)

Whether or not Francastel was referring specifically to this show, his comment demonstrates that “professional,” modern art history was perceived as new and rejected as the intellectualization of art.

The art writer René Jean observed that the van Gogh show,

C'est grossir la foule de ceux qui, dénoués de sensibilité, parlent, et ne savent pas regarder, c'est augmenter le nombre des érudits incapables d'émotion. Notre temps est ainsi fait que le ...professeur croit tout expliquer.... Dans cette admiration dirigée qu'on veut imposer à chacun, ce n'est pas vers le Poète que l'on amène la foule, mais vers ses commentateurs; *l'œuvre est noyée dans le fatras dont on l'accable.*<sup>95</sup> (Emphasis added)

Although the van Gogh exhibit drew some positive reviews, the documentation was in general considered an intrusion. The critic of *Le Temps*, for example, sarcastically remarked that if this didactic trend continued, sooner or later it would be necessary to take a course in physics in order to bask under the sun, and compared the exhibition with a public reading of poems by Verlaine and Baudelaire where each line was interrupted by a lesson from a lecturer.<sup>96</sup> F. de Chiton commented on the site photographs asking “aurait-on l'idée de comparer une

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<sup>94</sup> Francastel, *L'Impressionnisme*, 44.

<sup>95</sup> René Jean, “Que pensez vous de l'exposition van Gogh?, ” *Beaux Arts*, (September 10, 1937), 1. W.J.T. Mitchell in the article quoted in chapter One starts commenting on Johathan Borofsky's sculpture “Green Space Painting with Chattering man at 2,841,789” which consists of a talking dummy situated in front of a painting. It is tempting to draw comparisons, but it must be remembered that in the 1937 exhibit this “chat” was imposed on van Gogh's art, whereas abstract artists after the 1930s would have known and even worked to foster the proliferation of words about their works. See Fisher, *Making and Effacing Art*.

<sup>96</sup> Anonymous, R-J. “Van Gogh aux musées du quai de Tokio,” *Le Temps* (June 22, 1937), 8.

photographie de vieux souliers avec ce pur chef-d'oeuvre que Vincent Van Gogh en sut tirer?"<sup>97</sup>

Jacques Guenne, director of the magazine *L'Art Vivant*, believed that the wall texts "que dicte la pédagogie artistique" were dangerous, and similar to those displayed in Russia and at the German pro-Aryan exhibitions. He warned about the consequences of such simplifications that might in the end impose themselves as truths,

[O]n commence par ces comparaisons entre les oeuvre d'art d'époques différentes. *Plus tard, on confère au synoptique la valeur d'une preuve, comme si on ne pouvait pas toujours trouver d'apparentes similitudes.*<sup>98</sup> (Emphasis added)

This contemporary remark is telling because Barr, for example, regarded the 1936 flowchart of the development of modern art as provisional and subject to revision, but it became the epistemological model for understanding the history of modern art. It is still embedded at the foundations of the modern art history.<sup>99</sup>

Huyghe twice answered these criticisms. In an article published in August he updated Denis's famous 1890 formalist definition of a painting in order to defend the inclusion of documentation.<sup>100</sup>

Un tableau, tout d'abord, n'est pas simple [sic] arrangement de lignes et de couleurs; il est le testament d'une âme, il a un contenu humain, il est une expérience vécue et soufferte, une aventure particulière exprimée en langage universel. Quiconque connaîtra ces conditions de la création multipliera son émotion et sa compréhension. Et quel avantage si au lieu de se fier à sa mémoire

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<sup>97</sup> F. Le Chuiton, "Que pensez vous de l'exposition van Gogh?," *Beaux Arts* (September 17, 1937), 1.

<sup>98</sup> Jacques Guenne, "Que pensez vous de l'exposition van Gogh?," *Beaux Art* (October, 15, 1937), 1.

<sup>99</sup> See Margaret Scolari Barr, "Our Campaigns," *The New Criterion* Special Issue (1987), 20–74.

<sup>100</sup> "Se rappeler qu'un tableau, avant d'être un cheval de bataille, une femme nue ou une quelconque anecdote, est essentiellement une surface plane recouverte de couleurs en un certain ordre assemblées." ("Définition du Néo-traditionnalisme," *Revue Art et Critique* (August 30, 1890).

ou d'attendre le recours à la bibliothèque, il trouve, là auprès [the documentary space], les évocations qu'il attend ?

Mais ce n'est pas tout. D'autres [members of the public] sont peu familiarisés avec l'œuvre d'art; armés peut-être d'une bonne volonté impuissante à accéder à son secret, ils sauront, pourvu qu'ils aient, même latent, un accent d'humanité, s'intéresser à l'homme, puis par cette voie d'accès, aller jusqu'à l'œuvre et rencontrer cette beauté...<sup>101</sup>

Huyghe argued that documentation affords a less intuitive and more intellectual approach to art, as it helps the reader to comprehend the artist's life and environment. Therefore, he suggests that the work of art be considered in its [art] historical dimension, as the artist is who manifests art into a physical object. In this way, the spectator could at least perceive the man in the artist, and to empathize with him on the basis of a shared sense of humanness. This, he thinks, should be a useful introduction, an initiation to the sphere of art. Huyghe therefore advances the argument Rewald will use two years later in order to induce Denis to yield his Gauguin letters for publication: knowing the artist as man would serve as an "introduction" for the understanding of his art.

Three months later, in October, after the barrage of comments and attacks by those who felt that van Gogh's art had been profaned, Huyghe defended again his use of documentation, this time in *La Revue des deux mondes*. As this publication was not uniquely devoted to art, Huyghe exposed his thoughts about the museum's mission.

He reiterates that documentation offers the viewer the information contained in books, and insists on the need to help all visitors—including those unable to reach a contemplative attitude—have some kind of appreciation of the art on exhibition.

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<sup>101</sup> René Huyghe, "Que pensez vous de l'exposition van Gogh?," *Beaux Arts* (August 5, 1937), 6. This "rectification" may be used to epitomize the transition from a formalist reading of Cézanne art in the interwar period to Rewald's almost exclusive concentration on the person of the artist. See the next chapter.

But now Huyghe expresses reservations about the heuristic value of the exclusive concentration on the formal aspect of works of art, and insists on the need to grasp the human content of art, and on the central role of the artist as creator of the work of art.

In this new revision of Denis's definition of a painting he observes,

[L]a beauté ne réside pas seulement dans la forme... mais dans une certaine force expressive, dans un prolongement humain, dans tout ce invisible que revêt seulement la séduction du visible. Qui donc oserait dire que son intuition pénètre toujours ce contenu humain des apparences ? Certes, l'œuvre d'art forme un tout détaché de son créateur, elle doit se suffire à elle-même. Avouons, cependant qu'il nous faut parfois suivre tout le trajet de son apparition, remonter à ce créateur dont elle fut le fruit, pour reconstituer toute la richesse qu'elle recèle...<sup>102</sup>

Thus, the art historian who considered Cézanne the Frenchman as the epitome of Man, and in the context of exhibitions that claimed that France was the cradle of a new Humanism, defends a new type of museum exhibition and art history based on the understanding of art as the manifestation of the humanness of the artist, or, of the artist as human being.

For Huyghe, the power of the image and the installation to affect the unconscious of the spectator—who visits the exhibition in a passive mood—must be exploited for the “développement et la sauvergarde de notre civilisation.”<sup>103</sup> In other words, Huyghe supports the “good” use of this power, i.e. for the sake of “education” and the divulgation of “impartial” contents. In a paragraph that confirms the

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<sup>102</sup> René Huyghe, “Le rôle des musées dans la vie moderne,” *Revue des deux mondes* (October 15, 1937), 787.

<sup>103</sup> The word “civilization” immediately reminds of the other side of this approach to culture, the many victims of colonization in the name of the “mission civilisatrice.” In this perspective Huyghe's understanding of the role of museums is not fundamentally different from the one he criticizes, the difference being that he perhaps was not so conscious of the fact that his own ideological program was also propaganda and indoctrination. “[Q]ue l'ont regarde le rôle essentiel de propagande, de direction de l'esprit public que certaines nations à forme neuve, l'Italie, l'Allemagne, et singulièrement la Russie, entendent faire jouer au Musée.” Huyghe, “Le rôle des musées,” 781.

postmodern view that considers museums as disciplinary apparatuses at the service of the nation-state, and White understanding of ideology, Huyghe affirms that “[a]u milieu des rythmes collectifs, il [the museum] enseigne, par le mystère enclos dans ses chefs-d’œuvre, le temps d’arrêt, le repli sur soi, *il rééduque les réactions individuelles.*” (Emphasis added). And he adds,

Ce rôle, toutefois, ne peut le remplir que si on ne l’asservit pas aux doctrines du moment, que si on ne le met pas au service d’idées que l’on entend diffuser. Il lui faut à tout prix rester impartial. Le livre peut être suspect d’interprétation, mais qui se méfierait de ces salles où dorment les vestiges des siècles écoulés ? Pouvoir d’autant plus redoutable qu’il est moins visible; et pourtant la façon de présenter les objets, de les grouper, de les accompagner d’un *commentaire dote ces morts de paroles qui tirent d’eux non leur sens, hélas ! mais leur autorité.*<sup>104</sup> (Emphasis added)

Huyghe admits that museums are excellent propagandistic tools, and that they are even more effective in spreading ideological contents than books because the public does not suspect them. Huyghe understood the museum’s power for indoctrination, learned the lessons that the Totalitarian countries were delivering at the time, and sought to use them for the diffusion of “impartial” dogmas.<sup>105</sup> Huyghe’s optimistic commentary about the power of the image, of the consequences of modern life in culture—fleeting attention, lack of time and interest in profound analysis—and his determination to take advantage of them for a “good cause” confirms him as the antecedent, and perhaps the source, of André Malraux’s modernist cultural strategies.<sup>106</sup> From a postmodern standpoint, it is not so clear that this power can be

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<sup>104</sup> Huyghe, “Le rôle des musées,” 781.

<sup>105</sup> See Tony Bennet, “The Exhibitionary Complex,” in *Grasping the World, The Idea of the Museum*; and Preziosi, “Collecting / Museums.”

<sup>106</sup> See Huyghe, *De l’Art à la philosophie*, and “Directives,” *L’Amour de l’art* (Janvier, 1931), 4. For André Malraux’s cultural policies, especially after the war see Herman Levobics, *Mona Lisa Escort: André Malraux and the Reinvention of French Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999).

or was used “impartially,” especially if considered from the perspective of those who suffered under France’s *mission civilisatrice*.

Huyghe’s exhibition was contemporaneous to the *Entartete Kunst* exhibit organized by the Nazis in Munich together with *Great German Art Exhibition* at the recently inaugurated *Haus der Kunst*.<sup>107</sup>

## Conclusion

In 1955 Panofsky equated temporal with spatial perspective (historical with geographical distance), and praised Barr for establishing an order and systematizing what in Europe was still confusing due to nationalisms, excessive proximity, and personal involvement.<sup>108</sup> This chapter has demonstrated that the difference between the two approaches was not the historical or geographical distance, or even perspective to evaluate modern art, but the basic definition of what was art, and modern art, and its relationship with other North Atlantic universals (nation, democracy, person).

Focillon—who had himself confronted the problem of writing about modern and contemporary art in his 1928 volume *La Peinture aux XIXe et XXe siècle: Du réalisme à nos jours*<sup>109</sup>—and Huyghe, as did most of the European art historians and

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<sup>107</sup> Esslinger, “Performing Identity”.

<sup>108</sup> See Erwin Panofsky, “Epilogue: Three Decades of Art History in the United States,” in *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, c1955).

<sup>109</sup> For an analysis of this volume see Pierre Vaisse, “L’Art du XXe siècle d’Henri Focillon,” *Henri Focillon et les arts*.

art critics who answered George's 1931 questionnaire, believed in the existence of national schools of art, and therefore that art was the manifestation of the spirit of a nation.<sup>110</sup>

It was then almost logical for French art historians to work on the recollection of testimonies and documents about contemporary art for the next generations to sift through (like the Luxembourg museum in the nineteenth century), and to try to encompass as many of the different artistic tendencies of the moment as possible in their "panoramas" of contemporary art. As Huyghe explained in his introduction to the book on contemporary art,

[I]l est trop tôt pour juger, mais non pour expliquer.... On entend bien qu'un classement qui satisfasse pleinement soit impossible, et par définition, puisque tout classement est artifice de l'esprit dont la vie, en sa complexité mobile, ne se soucie pas. Mais un classement peut être au moins une commodité, un procédé de déchiffrement; le nôtre, espérons-le, sera plus.<sup>111</sup>

This way of defining modern art made them also extremely aware of the conventional and artificial character of the intellectual categories they were using to study art. This new interest in modern art was for them proof that the experimental moment of the avant-gardes has passed and that they had to find new epistemological models to explicate "contemporary art" as the expression of another moment in the history of the nation. This was done in the magazines and official art exhibitions through a dialogue with the past, and by establishing correspondences between Old and modern masters, which affirmed the notion of a continuous national tradition and therefore the existence and resilience of the nation.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> See "A Symposium on French Art," *Forms* [English edition] (December, 1931):183–186.

<sup>111</sup> Huyghe, "Les Origines de la peinture contemporain," 7.

<sup>112</sup> See Haskell, *The Ephemeral Museum*, and Iamurri, "Sull'arte francese," 86–98.

When contemplated from the point of view of a modern art history that understands modern art as the art of the avant-gardes, this bibliography is just outmoded or dated. Nevertheless, this had been Barr's approach before 1936, when he established his new epistemological model and the new teleology to explain and evaluate modern art.

Retrospectively, Huyghe himself believed that theory was the scourge of modern art as he explained that it had succumbed "au mirage des abstractions, des programmes intellectuels, jusque dans ce suprême refuge des artistes, je veux dire: le marge esthétique." He even commented that the problem had started in the nineteenth century, when the café replaced the studio as the artists' meeting place as they met there with writers and other intellectuals. Much as Huyghe regretted the intellectualization of modern art, he did not consider the exhibition techniques he himself helped to devise, as part of the problem. "[L]'art moderne qui, par vocation aurait du être un contrepoids à l'intellectualisme exacerbé de notre époque, est tombé sous la coupe d'intellectuels spécialises, les critiques d'art, qui ont multiplié les doctrines esthétiques." <sup>113</sup>

Huyghe did not repeat his "racial" interpretation of art, but rather became interested in the psychology of art and on art as the manifestation of a "soul" of the artist. Needless to say, the paradigm or standard he used in his stance was deeply Eurocentric. On the other hand, as his approach to museography in the 1930s demonstrates, this characteristic of his scholarship was becoming more subtle, more ideological, as it was being ingrained at the epistemological foundations of the

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<sup>113</sup> Huyghe, *Art philosophie*, 58.

discipline that support the methodologies of research and the strategies of museum display.

In 1936, other alternatives were already being advanced for the study and understanding of modern art: Barr's notion of modern art's progressive autonomy and self-criticism, Rewald's interest in the biography of the artist as hero, that is, the artist not as a creative personality or as the member of an ethnic group. Huyghe himself was pointing to this last development in his writings. Nevertheless, nation and race—as Chapter One has established—are implicit and still determine modern art history. These notions passed onto the structure of the discipline, and they did not disappear. They are used for the consideration of non-Western art and artists and scholars, who are expected to manifest a particular “regional” identity whereas Euro-American ones are conceived of as the expression of “universal” art and art history.

Nation, nationhood, and race are at the foundations of modern art history, and while they have been concealed or even forgotten, they have not been deconstructed or written off. Whatever is not examined, especially in movements of great epistemological revision as in the last “crisis” of the discipline, is naturalized by its use.

In the 1930s, with nationalist movements threatening world peace, different methodological approaches to art history coalesced into a hegemonic model that overcame national differences by claiming the universal significance of an art structured and organized around the Humanist values derived from the Renaissance. The IICI worked under this presumption and thought that it was the task of the intellectuals to make them a popular and effective tool against Totalitarianism. But

the SDN fostered a “national” interpretation of “universal” Humanism, that in the end is a North Atlantic universal. The French understanding of Humanism could thus be transported and even thrive in this new scheme, as did all the other “national” interpretations of art history.

“[A] major argument made here is that the artist exists as the product of art historical methods used to explain the object in culture. The artist is a naturalized concept, existing in the object, with intentions signaled through a self-constructed persona for whom a primary trait is the possession of just those intentions capable of artistic realization, or ‘expression’ invested in the work of art. ... [A] genealogy of the artist intersects not only with the concepts of artist, art, and the biography of the artist but also with the question in contemporary cultural theory of how disciplines construct their own objects of study, their own methods, and, hence, their ‘discipline’.”  
Catherine Soussloff, *The Absolute Artist. The Historiography of a Concept*.<sup>1</sup>

Why in the late 1980s this ongoing obsession with the individual artistic creator as the structuring principle of art history? Why this deep-set investment in self-expressive individualism? And what makes it so difficult to abandon a methodology criticized long and hard for its wanton neglect of issues of social determination and effects? With Rewald, of course, we are dealing with one of the ‘grand old *men*’ of an earlier pioneering generation. Men who blanch to see the choice blooms of their modernist heroes debased by ‘revisionist’ association with the common and garden weeds of academia and the like. ... With Rewald it is almost fitting that his 1930s study of Cézanne, reworked and enlarged, should be republished as an historical artifact; a monument to the crystallization of modernist art history in pre-war America.  
Nicholas Green, “Circuits of Production, Circuits of Consumption,” 1989.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Chapter Four: Rewald’s Scholarship and the Biography of Cézanne**

In the first pages of *Cézanne et Zola* Rewald observes,

Il y avait entre Zola et Cézanne, artistes tous deux, *des affinités* qui n’existaient pas entre eux et Baille. Des souvenirs de leur prime jeunesse passée ensemble, une vraie amitié les unissait tous trois. Mais Baille *n’était pas de la même essence* qu’eux et cela apparaîtra de plus en plus ... (Emphasis added)<sup>3</sup>

Rewald’s modernist art history is basically a narrative around the deeds of “great men,” as he conceives of them as intrinsically different from the rest of humankind.<sup>4</sup> This “difference” explains their life as a constant heroic struggle against the

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<sup>1</sup> Catherine M., Soussloff, *The Absolute Artist. The Historiography of a Concept* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 14.

<sup>2</sup> Nicholas Green, “Circuits of Production, Circuits of Consumption: The Case of Mid-Nineteenth-Century French Art Dealing,” *Art Journal* 48 (Spring 1989): 527–528.

<sup>3</sup> Rewald, *Cézanne*, 22.

<sup>4</sup> See Paul Smith, “Pictures and History: One Man’s Truth,” *Oxford Art Journal* 10 (1987): 97–105, and John House, “Review Impressionism and History: The Rewald Legacy,” *Art History* 9 (September, 1986): 369–375.

mediocrity of society. Moreover, as the letter to Denis analyzed in Chapter One proves, Rewald was interested in Cézanne as a *[historical] man* not as a creative personality or as the representative of a nation. Whereas the introductory essay by Venturi and the monograph by Huyghe have a biographical structure that supports their understanding on modern art and ideologies, Rewald's book is biography.<sup>5</sup> In his scholarship even works of art are considered documents that inform us about the life of the artist. Moreover, by finding the sites Cézanne represented, the scholar was able to reconstruct the itineraries of the artist's painting campaigns.<sup>6</sup>

Rewald did not enquire or explain why Cézanne was a great artist or when he began to be one. The book's goal is the demonstration of Cézanne's greatness. As the paragraph quoted above indicates, the scholar considered the artist and Zola "special" the moment they were born.

It has not been noticed until now that the centrality of Zola's friendship with Cézanne for the understanding of the painter's personality and career derives from Rewald's biography. Even if it is fundamentally the same text, the book published in 1936 as *Cézanne et Zola*, reappeared in 1939 as *Cézanne, sa vie, son oeuvre, son amitié pour Zola*; and in 1948 as *Paul Cézanne: A Biography*.<sup>7</sup> Although their relationship was a well known fact, no previous study had given such an important weight to Zola in Cézanne's life. It might be argued that Rewald was among the first

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<sup>5</sup> Venturi's introductory article to the catalogue raisonné is not a biography but a monograph structured to support the author's classification and stylistic analysis of Cézanne's oeuvre. Historically the catalogue raisonné is a product of the biographical approach to art history.

<sup>6</sup> Site photographs were used by Rewald for an "iconographical" analysis and classification of Cézanne's oeuvre. This methodology might be considered the antecedent for the work of Robert Herbert who analyzed the landscapes represented by the impressionist in order to deduce the social and personal meanings those sites might have had for them. His students Paul Hayes Tucker and Richard Brettel continued his approach. For the relationship among these scholars see Pollock, "Don't Take the Pissarro," 96–103.

<sup>7</sup> Rewald was also the editor of the letters of the artists, which were first published in 1937.

to use the cache of letters kept by Zola, and that a more careful compilation and examination of the sources according to scientific standards of objectivity determined this new approach.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, Gerstle Mack's 1935 biography was based on almost the same sources as Rewald's, but incorporates the artist's friendship with Zola as just another episode of his life.<sup>9</sup> This chapter analyzes Rewald's 1936 *Cézanne et Zola*, which became the accepted biography on the artist and was the first written according to modern art history's protocols.

The centrality of the artist in Western modern art has been naturalized in such a way that it can be said that this is an "artist's art," namely, an art made by artists. Paradoxical and tautological as this affirmation might seem, its meaning becomes more understandable when inverted: it is the creator, the genius who, when artist, produces "art" and defines what art is. When art historians "declare" a non-Western product "art," they imply that the maker is an "artist," and project onto his or her personae all the presuppositions about man and art contained in such idea.<sup>10</sup> The category of "artist" is another North Atlantic universal.

The artist biography is so deeply ingrained within the foundations of the discipline that art historians do not even discuss it as a genre or as an epistemological tool and regard it as an ordinary heuristic strategy to deal with the artistic phenomenon. Because in modern art history authorial intention guarantees the

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<sup>8</sup> See Denise Le Blond-Zola, "Zola et Cézanne, d'après une correspondance retrouvée," *Mercure de France* (January, 1931), 39–58, and Rewald's introduction to the 1936 book. Mme Le-Blond Zola had just given the material to the Bibliothèque nationale de France and Rewald obtained her permission to use it for the book. See the correspondence from Mme Zola in folder 38/9, John Rewald Papers, National Gallery of Art, Gallery Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>9</sup> The same observation can be made about the works by Venturi and Huyghe already analyzed.

<sup>10</sup> The text by Roger Fry quoted in Chapter One is an example of that practice.

legitimacy of interpretation, biographies structure almost all of the discipline's endeavors. They are fundamental for attribution and the delineation of individual and even period styles and in this way influence the market value of works of art and collectionism.<sup>11</sup> From the margins of the discipline, this outcast genre manages to attract the attention of the general public to art history, which situates biography at the place where art history intersects with economic value and plain power.

What Nicholas Green noticed in 1989 (second epigraph) is valid today as the biographical approach to art history has continued to dwarf the most forceful attempts to revise the epistemological foundations of the discipline: the post-structuralist theories of Roland Barthes ("The Death of the Author," 1968) and Michel Foucault ("What is an Author," 1969), as well as the post-Marxist contextual analysis of the 1990s.<sup>12</sup> As Catherine Soussloff—the author of one of the most important studies on this subject—observes, these "anti-humanistic" theories were successfully applied in literature and film studies, which disposed of the notion of the author as the heroic creator, producer of a universalizing work, whereas art history remains embedded in Humanism:

[W]e cling to the idea of brushstrokes or chisel marks as referents to and of the individual artist. The individual artist is deemed to be precisely locatable in history and perpetually visible in the work of art... precisely because the texts through which the artist and the art are interpreted, the history of art, have not

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<sup>11</sup> Although not all art has been created by one artist, the most valuable art for the art historian and the market are individual, original, attributed works. See Soussloff, *Absolute Artist*, 143.

<sup>12</sup> With respect to Cézanne, see Griselda Pollock, "What Can We Say About Cézanne These Days?" *The Oxford Art Journal* 14 (1990): 95–101, and Nicholas Green, "Stories of Self-expression: Art History and the Politics of Individualism," *Art History* 10 (December, 1987): 527–532. Pollock has extensively analyzed this aspect of modernity in her work on Van Gogh (see bibliography). For her analysis of Barthes and Foucault, see her "Agency and the Avant-Garde. Studies in Authorship and History by Way of Van Gogh," *Block 15* (1989):4–16. See also J.R.R. Christie, and Fred Orton, "Writing on a Text of the Life," *Art History* 11 (December, 1988): 545–564. The fact that such acute critiques have not been incorporated within mainstream art history confirms the need of a different approach to the problem.

been theorized. Semiotics may have shattered the unity of the author, but it did nothing to the unity of the artist embedded in the work of art.<sup>13</sup>

This explains the category's resilience in spite of the many methodological revisions that have taken place since the 1930s: in the modern definition of art, the artist is identified with his creation. In addition, this approach to art preserves and extends the fundamental paradox that characterizes the discipline, as the artist is both an historical being and eternally present in the work of art. Only through the analysis of art history's humanistic foundations would it be possible to deconstruct the essentialist notion of the artist as synonymous to individualism, freedom, originality, and, in the end, as a particular understanding of Man, life, and ethical values. Until now, the discipline has dismissed most of the experimental approaches to methodology that contested or weakened the centrality of the Renaissance and Humanism and consequently the individual artist.<sup>14</sup>

The preceding chapters have argued that Venturi associated freedom with modern art and that Huyghe identified art with a race and nation. Rewald's scholarship focused strictly on the artists. This chapter examines the ideology behind the category "modern artist" (considered as a North Atlantic universal) and the genre of artist biography and the biographical approach that are at the foundations of modern art history. Furthermore, it scrutinizes Rewald's claims to objectivity in the selection and use of documentation.

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<sup>13</sup> Soussloff, *The Absolute Artist*, 111.

<sup>14</sup> See Farago, "Vision Itself," The most interesting case would be that of Warburg. See especially, Margaret Iversen, "Aby Warburg and the New Art History," in *Aby Warburg Akten des internationalen Symposions Hamburg 1990*, eds. Horst Bredekamp, Michael Diers and Charlotte Schoell-Glass (Weinheim: VCH Verlagsgesellschaft, 1991), 281–287. "It is my view that Warburg's gift to art history is a detranscendentalized model of art and of art history. Unfortunately, it was a gift unappreciated and quickly discarded." p. 283.

In the “Introduction” to the first English edition of the book, Rewald explicates that,

The method by which this biography has been put together over a period of years does not differ from that adopted in *The History of Impressionism*. It presents another attempt to let the facts speak for themselves, to rely chiefly on documents and witness accounts, to quote from the originals wherever possible, and thus bring the reader into direct contact with the historic evidence. It again assigns to the author mainly the role of co-ordinating this evidence and of presenting it in the most effective and also the most scrupulously exact way.<sup>15</sup>

Whereas Venturi differentiated Cézanne’s art from the artist’s words and assessments, Rewald’s scholarship depends almost exclusively on written documentation. He conceived of the work of the historian as the unveiling or disclosure of a “truth,” that is, the reconstruction of the past by patiently assembling data and filling up with new factual information the gaps in a uni-directional narrative.<sup>16</sup> The key of such methodology is, thus, the verification of the documentation. Rewald’s conception of art history was based on a positivist, teleologically oriented historicism.<sup>17</sup>

As Champa comments, “Rewald’s documentary treasures have remained continuously alluring through the period of art history’s metamorphosis from humanist iconology to poststructuralism.”<sup>18</sup> Moreover, Paul Smith, in an article devoted to the critique of Rewald’s scholarship specifies that,

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<sup>15</sup> John Rewald, *Paul Cézanne. A Biography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1948), xv.

<sup>16</sup> In a late interview Rewald compared the work of the art historian with assembling a puzzle where most of the pieces have fallen into the right place. See Paula Span, “The Quest for Cézanne’s True Nature,” *International Herald Tribune* (Thursday, November, 20, 1986), n/p.

<sup>17</sup> See Kermit Champa, *Masterpiece Studies. Manet, Zola, Van Gogh & Monet* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 1994), 53–56. It has to be remembered that Historicism, even though critical to the rationalism of the Enlightenment also derived from this movement of ideas.

<sup>18</sup> Kermit Champa Fronia E. Wissman and Deborah J. Johnson, *The Rise of Landscape Painting in France: Corot to Monet*, exh. cat., Currier Gallery of Art, New York, 1991, 58. Champa is the only scholar to notice how Rewald’s scholarship is similar to the novel. See below. According to the scholar this book reflects the post war mentality of “fantasies of a truly progressive and evolutionary golden

[M]y concern here will be less with the minutiae of Rewald's history, since the value of his work as a *resource* is unquestionable; rather it is his method, its claim to objectivity and what it may actually misrepresent that needs focusing upon.<sup>19</sup>

Although Smith rejects the modernist ideology of the narrative, he accepts the documentation and sources gathered by the older art historian. However, the “resources” are part of and therefore contain the structure in which they belong, that is, they reflect the ideology of the discourse in which they are incorporated. To question one and not the other amounts to a partial revision of modern art history. In the end, Smith's thoughtful analysis does not consider the category “modern artist” or the discipline's philological methodologies.

The fact that art historians who have very different approaches to the discipline—Champa defines himself as a “neoconservative, a postformalist and an eclectic,” whereas Smith makes abundant use of post-Marxist and post-structuralist theory—preoccupy themselves with Rewald's research, demonstrates that the scholarship produced in the 1930s is still the source and foundation of the modern studies on Cézanne and modern art.

This chapter questions the value of the documentation gathered by Rewald and thus of the biography of Cézanne which is centered upon it. Documents are ideological *per se* as they belong to an art system that understands that art has a meaning that must to be uncovered through historical research and exposed in a narrative. They are the minimal but fundamental structural components of an art

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past, where the liberal good guys persisted to defeat the reactionary bad guys.” Champa, *Masterpiece Studies*, 57.

<sup>19</sup> Smith, “Pictures and History, 97. Smith focuses on the modernist aspect of Rewald's scholarship thus, the claim to objectivity, the belief in a truth that can be unveiled, and underlines the dubious character of some of the sources and testimonies Rewald accepted.

history conceived as the alliance (Mitchell's "suture") of the image and *logos*, and they relate with art history's philological and historicist foundations. The importance of biographical information in modern art history reinforces the document's ideological baggage, as they have become key elements for the interpretation of works of art.

Rewald's biography ignores the fact that Cézanne and Zola represented conflicting discourses on art and that their relationship must be studied as an instance of their confrontation (*paragone*.) This aspect of the problem has remained unstudied as a consequence of the transparency of art history's own methodologies, which prolong the suturing of the word to the image established by German art historians and French art critics in the second part of the nineteenth century. Therefore, the examination of how and why Rewald used the available documentation in order to indelibly associate these two personalities helps us to understand the Humanist and historicist foundations of modern art history and suggests alternative ways of approaching the biography of the artist.

Most of the eighty letters from Cézanne to Zola belong to the early days of their friendship and attest only to the moments when they were separated. Furthermore, none are known from the last twenty years of Cézanne's career. Because preservation of correspondence depends upon chance, its existence is not meaningful by itself. Moreover, letters are a dubious source from which to draw the "psychological" profile of the artist. Letters' meaning is contingent upon the context from which they emanate, in this case the relationship the two correspondents had, whereas art historians try to deduce the context from the letters themselves.

Therefore, interpretations structured around the correspondence between two persons derive mostly from the art historian's assumptions and not so from much the information provided by the material itself.<sup>20</sup>

As a genre, biography is like an empty but fully structured space as it entails a set of presuppositions according to which the writer has to shape the "historical" material. In addition, the author must take into account the entire structure of the entire narrative even when there is not enough information, which induces the scholar to fill up the blanks with deductions, flashbacks or more or less secure inductions that reflect the main lines of the argument.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, the genre implies that the author will be able to explain the artist's coherent, consistent personality evolving through time.<sup>22</sup> Biography is by definition an essentialist endeavor. In Cézanne's case, and Rewald's is a perfect example of this, letters written in the early 1860s might be used to support interpretations of works of art produced in 1906, and vice versa, as if war and revolution, marriage, parenthood, the death of his parents, and in general, experience, had not changed his fundamental understanding of life and art. Therefore, the artist biography is a good example of how the instrument, the tool, becomes the content.

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<sup>20</sup> Perhaps the most lucid analysis of the letters as a problem is in Wayne Andersen, *The Youth of Cézanne and Zola: Notoriety at Its Source: Art and Literature in Paris* (Boston: Editions Fabriart, 2003).

<sup>21</sup> To these elements must be added the psychological interpretation, another set of pre-formatted interpretative conventions that are applied to the material. This allows filling up the gaps for which there is no factual information. Theodor Reff and Meyer Shapiro were the authors who began to apply psychoanalytical categories to the study of Cézanne. It was not Rewald's approach in the 1930s, but this tendency might be seen in his "Cézanne and His Father," *Studies in the History of Art* (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1971). Psychological interpretation allows the narrator to relate even abstract paintings to the life and body of artists.

<sup>22</sup> This has made it very difficult to write about Cézanne, since his biography has to account for the paradoxical ambivalences of his persona and the changes in his behavior and attitude from youth to old age.

Rewald's biography is not only an example of a pure biography but also of a *modern* artist biography, a variation of the traditional genre that has not been sufficiently analyzed. This is why it is necessary to start with a brief examination of the history of the genre.

Art history began as biography and therefore it is an important part of the history of art history. The history of the artist biography reflects how different periods in the history of the West—Foucault's epistemes—conceived of human life and Man, and the diverse modes in which the discipline established the relationship between the image and the word. Soussloff has noted that in the eighteenth century works of art were identified with the body of the artists to the point that the whole of their oeuvre started to be known as *corpus*. As biographies contained the commentary on the works created by the artists, they translated both their life and work into words. As she scholar argues,

Narrative is purely textual and oral. In our culture the artist's body comes into existence as a text, usually in biography, or ... through the work of art itself, the commodity. Historically speaking, this happened first in the genre biography. Then, when art history developed as a discipline, genres—such as the monograph and catalogue raisonné—specific to the discipline, maintained many rhetorical structures of the biography, particularly the anecdote, in which body and work of art, are joined.<sup>23</sup>

As a narrative that encompasses both the life and the body/oeuvre of the artist, biography illustrates the strong interdependence of plastic arts and words. Western works of art—and thanks to them any single object—are thought of not just as what

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<sup>23</sup> Soussloff, *The Absolute Artist*, 143–144. About the problematic character of the concept of oeuvre itself see Michael Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Tavistock, 1972), Chapter One.

they are, objects *per se*, but as the containers of a “meaning” that transcends them, a plus that comes from the creator, a separate entity mythically connected to them.<sup>24</sup>

The powerful status of the artist in the nineteenth-century implied significant changes in how biographies were written, as they became instruments for the promotion of the artists’ work and as epistemological tools for their interpretation. As “impression,” “sensation,” “effect,” and “motif” were replacing the traditional focus on representation and subject matter, art critics changed their usual vocabulary and categories of analysis and focused instead on the technical and stylistic aspects of works of art and on biographies.<sup>25</sup> Zola’s 1866 *Mon Salon* exemplifies this development,

Le mot ‘art’ me déplaît; il contient en lui je ne sais quelles idées d’arrangements nécessaires, d’idéal absolu. Faire de l’art, n’est-ce pas faire quelque chose qui est *en dehors* de l’homme et de la nature? Je veux qu’on fasse de la vie, moi; je veux qu’on soit vivant, qu’on crée à nouveau, en dehors de tout, selon ses propres yeux et son propre tempérament. Ce que je cherche avant tout dans un tableau, c’est un *homme* et non pas un tableau...

L’art est un produit humain, une sécrétion humaine; c’est *notre corps* qui sue la beauté de nos œuvres.<sup>26</sup> (Emphasis added.)

Zola is against understanding art as an absolute ideal, external and alien to the artist. The writer conceives of art as a human product, that is, as an almost physical product of the activity/work of the artist. Artists are, thus, the origin/source of art. This text includes the famous statement ‘la oeuvre d’art est un coin de la création vu à

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<sup>24</sup> Preziosi contends that this Western notion of art determines the way other cultural objects are considered also as holders of a meaning and intentions. See *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology* (Oxford, 1998,) especially 520–521. Martin Heidegger is one of the most acute critics of the Western inability to leave behind the dichotomy of form/content.

<sup>25</sup> It will be argued below that there was a mutual influence and that the art critics were actually an active part of this process. The work by Nicholas Green remains one of the main sources for the study of this issue. See below. See also David Summers, “‘Form,’ Nineteenth-Century Metaphysics, and the Problem of Art Historical Description,” *Critical Inquiry* 15 (Winter, 1989), 372–406. The scholar focuses mainly on German art historians and disregards the important contribution by French art critics in creating a new vocabulary and new categories of analysis.

<sup>26</sup> Emile Zola, *Mes Haines* (Paris: F. Bernouard, 1928), 212–213.

travers d'un tempérament," which hinges on the notion that the artist constructs reality when he perceives, and that the work of art manifests his particular way of apprehending the world. Modern art was the product of an epistemological crisis that involved the redefinition of the notion of art itself and, therefore, a new appreciation of the relationship of the artist and the public (represented by the art critic) with the work of art. The more the work of art became an object *per se* and not valuable as a representation of a story or event, the more important the identification with the artist and his body became. The more the work of art was associated with the subjective life of the artist, the more vital the information about the artist's life became, which reinforced the centrality of the art critic or art historian in the system of creation and promotion of art. As modern art history considers that the artist's life experiences and intentions are buried within works of art, biographies have a place of honor among its interpretative strategies.

In 1866 Zola was on intimate terms not only with Cézanne but also with Manet and the artists who would comprise the impressionist group; therefore his writings *might* reflect some of their ideas on art at the moment. On the other hand, his articles influenced the interpretation of modern art that became hegemonic at the turn of the century.

Rewald's document-based biography of Cézanne hinges around the artist's friendship with Zola. This chapter examines the ideology behind the genre itself and the historical circumstances that determined the scholar to associate these two personalities. Rewald's scholarship affords a unique opportunity to study the

historicist roots of art history and the artist biography as the manifestation of the icono-logy that is at the foundations of modern art history.

### The History of the Artist Biography

In her work, Soussloff refers to the idea of “absolute artist,” because of the fundamental and fundamentally unstudied role it has played in the construction of the discipline.<sup>27</sup> The “absoluteness” of the artist is related to the definition of art as a transcendental entity since the claim that the artist is an exceptional kind of human being reposes on the notion that he is the mediator between the real (and historical) and the sphere of art.<sup>28</sup>

A Renaissance scholar, Soussloff describes the steady development of the concept of “artist” and biographies since that period. Art history started as biographies of artists when Giorgio Vasari published *Delle Vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori, ed architettori* in 1550. She argues that Vasari put the accent on the autochthonous character of the artists in order to highlight Florence’s cultural hegemony under the

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<sup>27</sup> “Following [Milton C.] Nahm I use the word *absolute* to describe the cultural condition, or lack of conditions pertaining to ‘the artist’ in art history and literature. ... I want to find a way beyond the absolute position described by Maurice Merleau-Ponty in his essay on Cézanne: ‘Thus it is true both that the life of an author can teach us nothing and that—if we know how to interpret it—we can find everything in it, since it opens onto his work’.” Soussloff, *The Absolute Artist*, 4–5. Nathalie Heinich has also studied the birth and development of this category from a sociological point of view. Nathalie Heinich, *L’élite artiste. Excellence et singularité en régime démocratique* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005.) The classical and fundamental study about the forging of the status of the artist as romantic genius and “prophet” is Paul Bénichou, *Le Sacre de l’écrivain. 1750-1830. Essai sur l’avènement d’un pouvoir spirituel laïque dans la France moderne* (Paris, NRF, Gallimard, 1996).

<sup>28</sup> It should also be remembered that the paradox is reversible and that the absolute character of modern art depends of its being produced by the artist.

Medici family. Consequently, he modeled his accounts upon the biographies of Dante that accentuated the poet's appurtenance to Florence and his use of the vernacular language. Since its inception then, artist biographies were modeled after types developed for men of letters; a variation—almost a naturalization one might say—of *ut pictura poesis* at the level of historiography.

Soussloff contends that the panels Filippo Brunelleschi created in order to demonstrate the use of perspective were devised to work as accurate representations of the city of Florence *within* the visual environment provided by the city they so precisely depicted and not as scientific devices. She compares the “situated realism” of Brunelleschi's art with Dante's use of the vernacular in his poetry, as both place the real—the city, the native language—into the sphere of art.

Painting what one sees and using the vernacular in poetry in and of themselves do not constitute the contributions of the respective arts and artists spoken of there. Rather, painting according to perspective and poetry according to number or meter are the real contributions of Brunelleschi and Dante. These contributions are distinctly entwined with a dense matrix of interrelated topics that can be called distinctly indigenous to Florence, her citizens, and artists.<sup>29</sup>

This way of understanding both Brunelleschi's and Dante's art is a product of how their biographies were written and of Vasari's interest in highlighting a certain tradition. In his *Vite*, they are characterized as “autochthonous,” an idea that refers to the chthonic gods and characterize beings born without genealogy. In this way, the chronological, diachronic narrative of the development of art is counterbalanced by this other, vertical dimension that ensures the artist a “distinction” from other mortals and conjures up the notion that he transcends his own limitations and is the ‘origin’ and source of art. The relationship of the artist to the land, the city, the nation

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<sup>29</sup> Soussloff, *The Absolute Artist*, 69.

compels him to transcend his human dimension and create art. History split from myth precisely at the moment when biographies passed from the sphere of religion (life of the saints) to secular history (great men and artists.)<sup>30</sup>

When the work of Winckelmann and the aesthetic ideals of the Enlightenment changed the way art history was understood, biography was pushed to the margins of the field. Nevertheless, Kant's philosophy established the idea of the artists as a force of nature, a genius that creates without rules and thus produces objects that have to be taken as models.<sup>31</sup>

Burckhardt did not write biographies, but used them extensively as primary sources and in this way helped to establish the genre as heuristic tool. Moreover he developed the idea of culture as the repository of the spirit and actions of men and, following Vasari's lead, reinforced the 'autochthonous' argument, which—as commented in Chapter One—will be (mis)interpreted to support the association of art and nation.<sup>32</sup>

Soussloff's work permits us to understand the Renaissance as the symbolic field from which the modern artist biography stemmed and suggests that the genre reinforces the association of art with national art. In this light, this association is articulated by the individual humanist artist who creates an artistic vocabulary to interpret his local environment but produces universally valid works of art. If Longhi

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<sup>30</sup> “The quattrocento argument about the preeminence of the modern Tuscan vernacular in literature and the modern Tuscan *arte naturale* founded on perfect measure (*misura*) both rely on the concept of an autochthonous literature or art. In both the linguistic and the visual fields, this term refers to a style without lineage, self-generated and springing directly from the earth. ...[This] is a preliminary way of understanding the correspondences in Renaissance art, literature, and history created by the autochthonous aesthetic.” Soussloff, *The Absolute Artist*, 44.

<sup>31</sup> Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, especially § 46.

<sup>32</sup> “Ranke [Burckhardt's teacher] gave history writing a method for substantiating a belief that the past could be recuperated objectively. Burckhardt used this as a means of separating one period from another, thereby establishing one period's unique culture.” Soussloff, *The Absolute Artist*, 84.

(Chapter Two) accused Vasari and Burckhardt of imposing the hegemonic interpretation of Renaissance art as intrinsically illusionist, Soussloff's hypothesis indicates that this same historiographic approach established art as a category intrinsically related to the country or nation in which its creator was born.

The latest publications on Cézanne, Nina Maria Athanassoglou-Kallmyer's *Cézanne and Provence. The Painter and His Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), and Philip Conisbee's *Cézanne in Provence*, exh. cat., National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., 2006, indicate the validity of Soussloff's analysis. Cézanne's art has been discussed in relationship to perspective as formulated in the Renaissance since the 1930s.<sup>33</sup> Rewald's site photographs of the places Cézanne painted—especially those in an around Aix-en-Provence—were used to provide evidence for this interpretation of Cézanne's art.<sup>34</sup> The art historian indelibly associated the painter with his native land and even explained his art as a sort of “situated realism,” arguing that comparing the paintings with photographs of the sites the artist had painted or visiting them would improve our understanding of Cézanne's art.<sup>35</sup> Rewald literally located Cézanne's eyes/body and Provence at the center of the interpretation of his art. The relationship of the site photographs with perspective is explored in the second section of this dissertation.

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<sup>33</sup> James Herbert has noticed that in the first case the author seems to fail to maintain the theoretical goals established in the introduction of her work, as, in the end, Cézanne's art seems to be over-determined by the artist's appurtenance to Provence. “Book Reviews: Herbert on Athanassoglou-Kallmyer and Werth,” *The Art Bulletin* 87 (September, 2005), 545.

<sup>34</sup> Cézanne's and Zola's youth in Aix-en-Provence suggested the argument that the painter's attachment to the city is also due to the memories of the happy days spent with the writer. Roger Fry's *Cézanne: A Study of His Development* (New York: Macmillan, 1927), and Julius Meier-Graefe's *Cézanne und sein Kreis* (Munich: R. Piper, 1918) are important examples of the scholarship that does not hinge on the painter attachment to Aix.

<sup>35</sup> Rewald had a fundamental role in saving the sites and Cézanne's studio from destruction. See John Rewald Papers, 38/ 1 and 38/2, National Gallery of Art, Gallery Archives, Washington D.C. For a contradictory approach see James Lord, “Saving Cézanne's Studio,” *Art in America* (July, 2002): 25-27.

Soussloff's account closes in the 1930s because she realizes that the Second World War determined the end of the theoretical speculation about the foundations of the discipline and the institution of a hegemonic discourse. In 1934 Ernst Kris (1900-1957) and Otto Kurz (1908-1975), two young Jewish art historians of the School of Vienna and students of Adolph von Schlosser, published *Die Legende vom Künstler: ein geschichtlicher Versuch*, where they analyzed the category of the artist as a construction. They contended that early artist biographies derived from traditional myths and legends narrating the life of heroes and saints. As Kris and Kurz abandoned this line of research when they went into exile, Soussloff argues that the forced emigration of these innovative Jewish scholars stopped the only important attempt at deconstructing the category of the artist, which was then naturalized as part of the definition of art.

Soussloff only considers the scholarship of the German and Austrian founders of art history and highlights the emigration of these two art historians in the 1930s as a crucial point in the history of the genre. Her investigation centers on pre-modern artist biographies and how that genre evolved in time and disregards the evolution of the artist biography in modern art. Soussloff does not study the changes brought about by the modernization of the system of production and promotion of art in nineteenth-century France. Consequently she fails to realize that the category was enlisted in the fight against Totalitarianism, which played against the continuation of studies that underlined the conventionality, historicity, and mythical character of the category. Her work, nonetheless, provides elements to sketch this development so important for the understanding of Rewald's scholarship.

Kris and Kurz argued that anecdotes had pivotal role in early biographies of artists and demonstrated that they moved from one text to the other, their mere presence being an indicator that the individual considered in the text was an artist. As Soussloff explains,

[T]he anecdote functions as the carrier of meaning of the ‘fixed’ or ‘typical’ themes in the consideration of the artist, ... the anecdote is the basis of the typology of the genre of the biography of the artist, including origin, naming, early talent, elevated patronage, and spiritual old age.<sup>36</sup>

Anecdotes are also central to nineteenth-century artist’s biographies but their function change: they account now for the “real” or “historical” character of what they narrate. They become what Joel Fineman, in his perceptive article on the subject, calls *historeme*, “the smallest minimal unit of the historiographic fact.”<sup>37</sup>

Since the Enlightenment, history—even when upholding a positivist approach to knowledge—has been associated with the (poetic) narration of events.<sup>38</sup> Ranke’s history, basically a narrative that links together a series of “facts,” was deemed to be objective and did not acknowledge the inherent contradiction of its procedures. Ranke was a major representative of the classical tradition of German historical thought later associated with historicism, as well as Burckhardt’s teacher. According to Soussloff, in his work,

[W]e find the contraction in a history writing conceived of simultaneously as narrative and objective fact telling.... [T]his contradiction must be kept in mind when historians, such as Burckhardt, consider the ‘primary literature’ such as the biography of the artist... For, in all cases, the contradiction adheres when

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<sup>36</sup> Soussloff, *The Absolute Artist*, 146.

<sup>37</sup> Joel Fineman, “The History of the Anecdote,” in *The New Historicism*, ed. Aram Veerser (New York: Routledge, 1989), 56.

<sup>38</sup> See Rodolphe Gasché, “Of Aesthetic and Historical Determination,” in *Post-structuralism and the Question of History*, ed. Derek Attridge, Geoff Bennington and Robert Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

objectivity is believed to belong to the historian who brings it to bear on the uncovering and interpretation of the written sources.<sup>39</sup>

Modern biography is characterized by a concatenation of anecdotes, meant to be what “facts” are in history. Their function in the narrative is to guarantee the historical accuracy of the narration. They are expected to unveil something: they are the connection with the real, the keepers of the “reality effect” that takes biography out of the realm of narrative fiction to that of history. Whereas in the early biographies they moved “horizontally” (from one biography to the other) in order to signify that the person portrayed was an artist, in the modern ones they are meant to produce a “vertical” movement that breaks the development of the [poetic] narrative and links it to the real.<sup>40</sup> As Fineman observes, the anecdote itself has a double life as both “referent to the real” and literary genre,

These two features, therefore, taken together—i.e., that the anecdote has something literary about it, but, second, that the anecdote, however literary, is nevertheless directly pointed towards or rooted in the real—allow us to think of the anecdote, given its formal if not its actual brevity, as a *historeme*,... And the question that the anecdote thus poses is how, compact of both literature and reference, the anecdote possesses its peculiar and eventful narrative force.<sup>41</sup>

These small stories contain in themselves the structure of the narration, and this is why they can be a part of it, but they also reference the real. By definition, they make

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<sup>39</sup> Soussloff, *The Absolute Artist*, 79. Burckhardt wanted to be a poet before settling of being an historian. This conflation of the two aspects of history reminds us of Haydn White’s analysis of history. White has compared the style of different nineteenth-century historians with different narrative tropes as ways of representing the imaginary as real. White did not consider art history or biography. As Soussloff rightfully comments, in art history “the poetic moment is never completely in remission,” i.e., those mythical modes of linguistic representation that poetry affords to history, might still be encountered in art history. See *ibid.*, 143. See also this author’s entry on “Historicism,” in *Aesthetics*, ed. Michael Kelly (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). For a modern approach to the anecdote in history see Lionel Gossman, “Anecdote and History,” *History and Theory* 42 (May, 2003): 143–168.

<sup>40</sup> Which, it might be argued, depends on what the historical moment understands as “real,” as angels, fairies and others today thought to be “fantastic” beings were considered real in the West not so long ago.

<sup>41</sup> Fineman, “History Anecdote,” 56–57.

the reader believe that what is being reported really happened. Like the photographs that illustrate a text, anecdotes have to relate to the text. Conversely, the narrative has to refer to the photographs. As Fineman argues about history,

Only through the mutual coordination of a particular event and its generalizing narrative context—a coordination such that the particularity of the *touto*, the ‘this’ and the generic, representative urgency of the logic of the *meta* reciprocally will call each other up—is it possible to identify or to attribute an historical significance either to a ‘this’ or to meta, for the specifically historical importance of either depends upon the way they each co-constitute or co-imply each other.... Thucydides’s ‘*meta touto*’, his ‘metahistory’.... works by collating structure and genesis.<sup>42</sup>

This correlation of the general and the particular is not without relationship to the paradoxical structure of art history, as works of art have to be “incorporated” into the narrative [historical] discourse through a description or an interpretation, that is, “narrativized.”

Paul Smith has noted that Rewald’s art history is based on an idealist notion of art and that, as a consequence, anecdotes play a very important role in it, because “where social forces are not considered to have profound or determinable causal effects on the way a painting looks, anecdotal biographical details will be seen to play a significant role in determining this.”<sup>43</sup> Smith—and with him many contemporary art historians—proposes another kind of narrative to account for paintings. His critique does not encompass the problem of art history as icono-logy. This is why he still considers Rewald’s scholarship valid as a “resource.”

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<sup>42</sup> History thus would be “[R]epresentative historiography of significant historical events, of events joined together by a narrative formation, where events derive historical significance because they fit into a representative narrative account, and where the narrative account derives its historical significance because it comprehends significant historical events ...” Fineman, “History Anecdote,” 53–54.

<sup>43</sup> Smith, “Pictures and History,” 98.

As Soussloff observes in this long but crucial paragraph, anecdotes shape the way modern art history is written:

These small narratives float, and being able to do so, they exhibit a meaning dependent on their originary text. The meaning is, in part, preformed, no matter where the anecdote may adhere in a new text. When newly situated, the content of the artist anecdote also gains additional meaning subject to the contingencies of its placement, that is, by what precedes and follows it in the larger narrative. These anecdotes are so integral to the criticism of art and the disciplinary discourse of art history itself precisely because they can travel so readily and inflect so easily the new text in which they are found. *The anecdotes and tropes are found in the criticism on art and in the discourse of art history removed from their original biographical location and inserted in another kind of narrative, now known as art history.* As a result of the narrative properties specific to artist anecdotes, the image of the artist constructed around the anecdotes persists. The result is the perpetuation of the myth of the artist in art history itself, carried by the form of the anecdote.<sup>44</sup> (Emphasis added)

Moreover, the anecdote gains authority with each repetition. It can be said that its value and authority depend not so much from its veracity but from the amount of times it has been repeated and the professional status of those who had used it. In any case, anecdotes originated in biographies are used by all the other art historical genres.

If anecdotes have a central role in any artist biography, this is especially true for Cézanne's, where most of the information derives from second-hand testimonies of what the artist said or did. In the historiography of Cézanne, the transmigration, transformation, and ideological manipulation of anecdotes and statements attributed to the artist have reached the point where there are scholarly articles devoted just to the study of these developments and their meaning.<sup>45</sup>

The art historian specializing on Cézanne has to work with a limited number of documentary sources. There are about two hundred letters written by the artist and

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<sup>44</sup> Soussloff, *The Absolute Artist*, 149.

<sup>45</sup> See for example, Reff, "Cézanne and Poussin."

addressed to more than fifteen correspondents that span forty-eight years of Cézanne's life.<sup>46</sup> As he did not exhibit much until 1895, there was little contemporary art criticism until that date. On the other hand, most of the testimonies by those who met Cézanne in the last years of his life (especially those by Ambroise Vollard and Gasquet, who extended their narrations to cover the whole biography of the artist) are full of anecdotes.<sup>47</sup> In the 1930s Rewald's work was praised for the wide range of sources he had gathered and for his scientific, objective scholarship. Thus, his source criticism has to be studied in depth as he considered that this was the basic task of the art historian.

Before analyzing Rewald's use of anecdotes and documentation, it is necessary to sketch the transformations that the nineteenth century brought about to the genre itself, as it has been argued above that it influences the form and the meaning of the anecdotes/historemes that are allowed to be part of the story. In modern biography the mythic/ideological content is not in the anecdotes but has passed onto the narration itself, as the genre is devoted to the life of the "absolute modern artist" as the epitome of Man.

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<sup>46</sup> Just for the sake of comparison, there are some nine hundred letters from van Gogh that were sent in nineteen years to only five persons.

<sup>47</sup> Other accounts are by Louis Aurenche, J. Borély, Charles Camoin, K. E. Osthaus, and R. Rivière and J.F. Schnerb. With the exception of Gasquet, they had met the artist in the early twentieth century. See Michael Doran, *Conversations avec Cézanne*, (Paris: Macula, 1978). The artist Georges Rivière, who met Cézanne in the 1870s also compiled his memoirs as a biography of the artist. See bibliography.

## The Modern Artist Biography

Nicholas Green has proven that artist biographies underwent significant changes in France around the 1840s when they began to be written by art critics at the service of the dealers interested in promoting the work of modern artists.<sup>48</sup> Biography had a liminal position at the periphery of the art writing of the period due to its obvious relationships both with popular journalism and with the art market, albeit most of them were based on serious documentation. Landscape, the “revolutionary” pictorial genre that would finally upset the academic hierarchy, was at the margins, if not at the bottom, of the academic system.

The vocabulary and interpretative strategies art critics had developed for the appraisal of historical paintings could not be applied to landscapes. When this genre started to attract the public’s attention, critics began to comment on the naïve and sincere attitude of landscape painters towards the natural world and, hence, to incorporate more biographical information into their accounts.<sup>49</sup> The strong interdependence of the artistic genre with the narrative strategy to analyze it explains

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<sup>48</sup> See Nicholas Green, “Dealing in Temperaments: Economic Transformation of the Artistic Field in France in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century,” *Art History* 10, no.1 (March, 1987): 59–78, and *The Spectacle of Nature: Landscape and Bourgeois Culture in Nineteenth-Century France* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990). I have been unable to incorporate in the text the material provided by Michèle Hannoosh in her recent article “Théophile Silvestre’s *Historie des artistes vivants*: Art Criticism and Photography,” *The Art Bulletin* 89 (December, 2006): 729–755, which confirms my conclusions about artist biographies in the nineteenth century.

<sup>49</sup> “Implicitly, the art works were to be read as the reflection or expression of the temperament descriptively explored in the written text. . . . The choice of motif, weather and viewpoint, the manner in which they had been transcribed into paint; all could be traced back to the complex unity of the painter’s personality.” Green, “Dealing in Temperaments,” 70.

why the rise of landscape to the summit of the hierarchy of the new system of the arts implied a watershed in art criticism.<sup>50</sup>

Together, diversified anecdote and careful documentary ‘fact’ worked to evoke a graphic and sometimes complex picture of the life and character of the artist, while having little to say – apart from description – about the meaning and message of the art images. It was in nature biographies specifically that this formula took on the real force of explanation, for critical interpretation had traditionally concentrated on these artists’ ‘naïve’ and ‘sincere’ dialogue with the world. In other words, the given absence of stylistic analysis for nature painting—of a vocabulary which could engage with the formal structure of the image—opened up the space for the full-blooded entry of biographical explanation.<sup>51</sup>

Contrary to the Academic system that was centered on meaningful masterpieces that were exhibited at the annual or biennial salon, the modern system of production and promotion of art established after mid-century depended on the copious production of original artists. Biographies gave fundamental information to interpret the many paintings and drawings they created.

In order to increase their credibility, art critics applied contemporary scientific theories of perception, thus surrounding themselves with the aura of prestige that the sciences enjoyed at the time. In addition, the scientific endorsement allowed extending the application of the biographical/psychological approach to the interpretation of all the genres and subject matters. In this way, biography was integrated as part of art criticism. In Green’s words,

[T]he individualizing schema was formulated from the 1860s through the discursive twinning of biographical narrative with a pre-existent aesthetic code in which *the relation between painter and that which was rendered into paint was constructed as transparent*. The vocabulary of perception, sensation, expression permeating contemporary critical and theoretical art writing consistently

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<sup>50</sup> It was a two way relationship and it might also be said that it was the new art criticism which helped landscape to attain a new position in the hierarchy of artistic genres.

<sup>51</sup> Green, “Dealing in Temperaments,” 70.

registered the transparency of the artist/nature couplet, drawing on the currency of experimental science to come to terms with it. Here was an epistemology that brought art close to physiological theories of perception underpinning the formation of experimental psychology at the very same period. But the use of such language was not simply a question of discursive homologies, it was materially located in the push for scientific status by the professionalizing art historian. Under the impact of scientific definitions the artistic conception of nature was steadily enlarged from its standard fields of reference—landscape and peasants—to encompass other genres and eventually the artist total relationship with the world—external *and* internal... In the process, the biographical approach and its corollary, the cult of creative individualism, became dominant throughout the late nineteenth-century art worlds, official as well as avant-garde.<sup>52</sup> (Emphasis added)

This long quotation summarizes the process by which changes in all the different strata of the field worked together to upset the academic order and institute a new system of production and promotion of the arts. This system implied an even more fundamental and deep identification of the artist with his work, and a new status for biography (narration) as a privileged interpretative tool in the hands of an all powerful interpreter (art critic or art historian) who acquired for himself and his discourse the aura of the sciences. This is the framework for the text by Zola quoted above.

Green further demonstrated that after 1880 the Third Republic incorporated art into the educational system and started to considerer artists, as well as scientists, as exemplary citizens. Even avant-garde art was enrolled as testimony of France's artistic wealth and superior cultural values. Still reeling after the defeat by Bismarck and the "German teacher," the system was inherently nationalist as it prepared the country for the *Revanche*; therefore, biographies of artists had to portray them not only as genius but also as heroic citizens. This brought benefits for the "scientific' art

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<sup>52</sup> Green, "Dealing in Temperaments," 71.

historians who won positions on official committees and commissions.<sup>53</sup> Landscapes were particularly well suited for this function as representatives of “situated realism,” in a century in which the landscape was redefined as national territory and the countryside as the preserver of century-old traditions.<sup>54</sup>

Art historians have ignored one of the most crucial aspects of the transformations undergone by artist biographies as a genre in the nineteenth century: they were a manifestation of the *paragone*. This facet is of consequence for the present chapter that studies how the biography of Cézanne (the artist) came to be entwined with that of Zola (the writer). This topic has not been considered by art historians working on Cézanne but has been discussed in Literary Studies.

Nineteenth-century French writers produced an impressive number of novels and short stories that described the lives of artists or took place in artist studios. Those more directly related to Cézanne are Honoré de Balzac’s *Le Chef-d’oeuvre inconnu* [1831, 1837], *Peau de Chagrin* [1831], and *Pierre Grassou* [1839]; the brothers Goncourt’s *Manette Salomon* [1867]; Edmond Duranty’s *Le Pays des arts* [1867, 1881],<sup>55</sup> and finally Zola’s *L’Oeuvre* [1886]. These literary productions became an integral part of the cultural horizon of the century. Artists learned from these novels how to construct their artistic personas. The reading public also fashioned its expectations and assumptions about artists and their art according to these fictions.

As David Scott has shown these texts confirmed the writers’s power to define and

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<sup>53</sup> Nicholas Green, “ ‘All the Flowers of the Field’: the State, Liberalism and Art in France under the Early Third Republic,” *Oxford Art Journal* 10 no.1 (1987): 71–84.

<sup>54</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1991).

<sup>55</sup> This book was edited posthumously in 1881. It included the short story “Le peintre Louis Martin” whose first chapter had appeared in 1867 in the magazine *La Rue*. It describes the atelier of a ridiculous provincial painter, Maillobert, which was first a parody of Courbet, but in later versions was transformed into a crude parody of Cézanne.

control the image of the painters, which they used to stress the differences between the two practices.<sup>56</sup> Painters are generally described as impulsive, sanguine, carnal, irrational men who cannot control their sexual drives or resist their model's physical attractions.<sup>57</sup>

Art historians and critics knew these novels as well as their readers. These texts influenced the way the artists and men of letters who interviewed Cézanne understood what the artist did and said, and what they wrote afterwards. Cézanne was also aware of the role he was supposed to play and might have adapted his behavior as much as his discourse, either to satisfy or to disrupt these expectations. In other words, these novels acted as eidetic and/or generic matrixes that determined both reality and other literary productions.<sup>58</sup> These ideological models can be compared to the myths and legends that influenced pre-modern biographies. In the nineteenth century it was the novel that shaped the biographies of artists written by art critics and art historians.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> See Peter Collier, and Robert Lethbridge, *Artistic Relations: Literature and the Visual Arts in Nineteenth-Century France*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), and David H. T. Scott, ed., *Pictorialist Poetics: Poetry and the Visual Arts in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]; New York : Cambridge University Press, 1988.)

<sup>57</sup> The reader has just to think of the image he or she gets from the opera *La Bohème*, and the adaptation of 1853, *Scènes de la vie de Bohème* by Henry Murger (a friend of Baudelaire and Gautier), to understand this point. Even though all the characters are good, the writer, Rodolphe, is an idealist and a self-controlled man who, although passionately in love, is generous to the point of sacrifice in order to save sweet and delicate Mimi. The painter Marcel instead, is carnal, sanguine, and jealous to the point of physical aggression towards Mussette, who answers in kind and is guilty of all the accusations he chides her about.

<sup>58</sup> See Bernard Vouilloux, *Tableaux d'auteurs. Après l'Ut pictura poesis* (Saint Denis: Presses universitaires de Vincennes, 2004). Léo Larguier for example commented "Dans *L'Oeuvre*, ce roman que les jeunes hommes de mon âge lurent avec dévotion parce qu'on y voyait un calvaire d'artiste." Léo Larguier, *Un dimanche avec Paul Cézanne* (Paris: L'Édition, 1925), 62.

<sup>59</sup> These literary models would act like the discursive tropes that, according to Hayden White, determined the narrative structure of historiographical writings. Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse. Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

Balzac's *Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu* set the standards for this type of novel. Bernard Vouilloux has argued that this author in a certain way redefined the genre. The success of Winckelmann's approach to art history precipitated the decline of the pre-modern biographies of artists. As the new, historicist art history disregarded the biographical material, anecdotes about the artists' lives were left to have a chaotic life of their own outside its boundaries, until Balzac's novel regained them for literature. If the genre inaugurated by Vasari described the artist as an "émule des princes ou des orateurs, humaniste, honnête homme,"

'Balzac' nomme une certaine manière d'écrire sur l'art et de raconter la vie de l'artiste, de mettre en scène les flux de capitaux et de libido qui les traversent. Son œuvre signale le moment où peut venir pleinement au jour cette question : comment raconter ce qui survient dans la vie d'un artiste, étant entendu qu'il s'agira de dire précisément en quoi et comment un sujet est *affecté* à ou par l'événement de l'art, événement total et vital, .... où se décide jusqu'à ce qui fait l'identité de l'individu, l'index de toute biographie...<sup>60</sup>

Thus, in the early nineteenth century, together with a new definition of art, the artist and art history, there developed in France a literary sub-genre, the artist novel, which delved into the artist's emotions and feelings. In these texts the work of art becomes the index of the artist's body and of its most fundamental drives at the moment of the creation, namely, when he manifests the transcendental sphere of art in an object. The realist style and the fact that Balzac had asked artists for advice created an aura of "truth" around these texts.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Vouilloux, *Tableaux d'auteurs*, " 108.

<sup>61</sup> In 1876 Jules Claretie affirmed that Delacroix had written the artistic opinions that Balzac made the protagonist of the story, the painter Frenhofer, expound. Whatever the truth about this now dismissed theory, the point is that Delacroix was Cézanne's favorite painter. What is not known is if he was aware of that rumor and if he was, if he had believed it. The only art historian who has mentioned this theory is Terence Maloon in *Classic Cézanne*, exh. cat. *Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1998*. The bibliography on Balzac's work is very extensive. See *Balzac et la Peinture*, exh. cat. Musée des beaux-arts de Tours, 1999, Jerrold Lanes, "Art Criticism and the Authorship of the *Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu* : A Preliminary Study," in *The Artist and the Writer in France: Essays in Honour of Jean Seznec*, eds.

*Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu* hinges upon the visit of two seventeenth-century painters, Franz Pourbus and Nicolas Poussin, to the studio of the (fictional) painter Frenhofer. The work includes lengthy discussions about art, creativity, the problem of representation, the relationship of art to reality, madness, etc. Frenhofer's statement, "[l]a mission de l'art n'est pas de copier la nature, mais de l'exprimer! Tu n'es pas un vil copiste, mais un poète!" incarnates the Romantic *paragone*, as Balzac makes Frenhofer declare that the painter should take the poet as model.<sup>62</sup> According to Vouilloux, Balzac creates the "studio" scene,

La fiction romanesque, avec Balzac, aura ouvert le champ sur l'atelier et sur ces si troublants 'procès matériels de l'art' qu'y déploie le peintre: dès lors que l'artiste n'était plus seulement un personnage auquel il arrive le même genre d'aventures qu'aux autres individus, dès lors qu'il était le sujet d'une aventure spécifique, le héros non d'une fiction d'artiste, mais d'une fiction d'art, la scène de l'artiste au travail devenait un topos nécessaire de la littérature artistique, du récit de fiction, mais aussi du récit factuel—à plus forte raison, lorsque l'artiste ne vivait plus d'autre aventure que celle de son art.

Vouilloux notes that already in the eighteenth century critics had started to pay attention to the traces that the work of the artist left on the work of art, such as the brushstroke. In the new century the commentator passes beyond the description of the painting, to the, "scénarisation narrative du peintre au travail, c'est-à-dire sur cette sorte de 'scène primitive' qui, normalement échappe au regard des tiers (Cézanne

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Francis Haskell, Anthony Levi, and Robert Shackleton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974). See also Alexandra K. Wettlaufer, "Girodet/Endymion/Balzac: Representation and Rivalry in Post-revolutionary France," *Word & Image* 17 (October–December, 2001): 401–411.

<sup>62</sup> Honoré Balzac, *La Comédie Humaine*, Vol. IX Œuvres complètes (Paris : Gallimard, 1950), 394. In the story Frenhofer is painting the perfect masterpiece, a picture that seems to be as real as the model itself. Poussin asks his mistress to pose for the painter in order to learn his secrets, only to discover that the artist is delusional and that the *chef d'oeuvre* is just a scribble of chaotic lines. Frenhofer dies in a fire that destroys the studio and Poussin loses the woman he loves.

n'aimait pas être vu en train de peindre) sur ce point, *le roman modélise le document...*"<sup>63</sup> (Emphasis added)

Balzac's story opens the studio to the curious gaze of the public and, at the same time, exposes the creative moment and the subjectivity of the artist to the pen of the writer.<sup>64</sup> Literature influenced history as it invented a subject matter (the artist creating in the studio) that became part of the questionnaire posed to art and artists; therefore it "created" the document. The "meaning" of the work of art no longer lies in the pictures themselves but in the artist. What is more, that meaning now sprouts from the words the literary narrator puts in the artist's mouth and from the narration itself, as the author describes both the artist in the moment of creation and the resulting paintings. The real is somehow already literary, the anecdote articulates reality and myth.

It is not a coincidence then if the visit to Cézanne's studio forms an important element in Cézanne's historiography and almost a *leitmotiv* in the artist's bibliography, as the visits themselves, as Bernard Vouilloux has contended, might have been stagings of Balzac's fictitious one. In his 1907 article reporting his visit to Cézanne, Bernard includes an anecdote according to which, when they were talking about Balzac's Frenhofer, the artist became very emotional and started choking and

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<sup>63</sup> Vouilloux, *Tableaux d'auteurs*, 102–103.

<sup>64</sup> The artist's studio would remain a favorite modernist subject matter—one has just to remember the reconstruction of Jackson Pollock's studio at the 1998 MoMA's retrospective—that has also been used by modern art historians to describe or refer to the mysterious creative act. It is also a subject matter for artistic creation. In the 1930s these scenes were a staple both in modern art and in modern art history. In 1931, Vollard published Balzac's *Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu* with illustrations by Picasso; starting in 1933 the art magazine *Minotaure* included articles on the studios of Picasso, Maillol, Brancusi, Giacometti and other modern artists, which were profusely illustrated with photographs. Rewald and other art historians did the same in scholarly magazines. See André Breton's "Picasso dans son élément," *Minotaure* 1 (February, 1933): 3–37, and Maurice Raynal's "Dieu—Table—Cuvette," *Minotaure* 3–4 (December 1933): 39–53. See also John Rewald, "Les Ateliers de Maillol," *Le Point* 17, (1938). The Archives of the National Gallery of Art has an impressive collection of slides of modern artist's studios taken by Rewald.

“frappant sa poitrine avec son index, il s’accusa, sans un mot, mais par ce geste multiplié, le personnage même du roman.”<sup>65</sup> The problem thus is to determine if this scene really happened, and if it did happen, what is its meaning: did Cézanne identify himself with the character and understand his own life “through” Balzac’s novels? Was he incarnating a role he thought Bernard would understand? Was he playing a role so that Bernard would relay it to others? Was it Bernard’s way of conveying to the public the impression he had received from Cézanne? Was it the way he wanted the public to think of Cézanne? Was it what he knew the public was waiting to read about the artist? Was he merely interested in counterbalancing and superseding the association of Cézanne with Claude Lantier, the protagonist of Zola’s *L’Oeuvre*, (more on this below) as Bernard’s text itself suggests?

Ah! il y avait loin de ce Frenhofer impuissant par génie à ce Claude impuissant par naissance que Zola avait vu malencontreusement en lui ! Aussi lorsque j’écrivis plus tard sur Cézanne pour *L’Occident* je mis en épigraphe cette phrase, qui le résume bien en somme et qui le confond avec le héros de Balzac: ‘Frenhofer est un homme passionné pour notre art qui voit plus haut et plus loin que les autres peintres.’<sup>66</sup>

This episode was re-staged and expanded by Gasquet in his 1921 book and since then it is part of almost all the texts on the artist.<sup>67</sup> Vouilloux has perceptively analyzed the *mise en abyme* implied in this scene: in 1904 Cézanne gestures to Bernard (who had gone to his studio in order to seek advice, like Poussin) indicating that he is (like) the character of a novel written in the 1830s about a fictitious artist

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<sup>65</sup> Emile Bernard, “Souvenirs sur Paul Cézanne,” in Michael Doran, *Conversations avec Cézanne* (Paris: Macula, 1978), 65.

<sup>66</sup> Bernard, “Souvenirs Cézanne,” 65.

<sup>67</sup> In the “Confessions”—a social game, a questionnaire that a friend would give another to fill out—Cézanne stated that his favorite literary character was Frenhofer. Jean-Claude Lebensztejn in *Les couilles de Cézanne, suivi de Persistance de la mémoire*, (Paris: Séguier, 1995) has successfully proven what others had suspected before: that the “Confessions” by Cézanne were written around 1897. This is the only document that might suggest that the Bernard anecdote was true. Nevertheless, Cézanne ends up the “Confessions” quoting a verse by Musset by heart.

who, if he had existed would have lived around 1620. In addition, Bernard puts himself in the place of the revered Poussin and puts Cézanne in the place of the imaginary, almost delusional painter. Balzac's short story—as an eidetic model—might have acted upon reality and thus activated itself in the life of Cézanne or in Bernard's narration, that is, to the point of becoming the historical, factual reality art history tries to attain. This suggests that Venturi's suspicion about the testimonies as sources and even about the words Cézanne uttered, was well founded, as what the artist had reputedly said was most probably already part of a literary discourse on the arts.

In 1886 Zola published his novel about art and artists, *L'Oeuvre*, in which he used his friends and acquaintances as models for its main characters, to narrate the struggles of the impressionist group around 1863.<sup>68</sup> The book belongs to *Les Rougon-Macquart*, a series of twenty naturalist novels that follows the fate of the members of a family, modeled on Balzac's *La Comédie Humaine*.

*L'Oeuvre* tells the story of Claude Lantier, a painter with the dreadful inheritance of the Macquart family, who is torn between the love for his art and his wife. Weak of character and incapable of bringing to fruition his magnificent dreams and ideals, Lantier ends up hanging himself in front of his canvas. *L'Oeuvre* was recognized at the time as Zola's take on the *Chef d'oeuvre inconnu*, and indeed the novel is a variation of the sub-genre inaugurated by Balzac.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> In 1882 Paul Alexis wrote a book on Zola detailing his future plans, in which he also admitted that the characters of Zola's novels were based on his acquaintances. Even without this text, Zola was associated in the mind of the public with the impressionists and that alone would have suggested the novel be read as a roman à clef. See Paul Alexis, *Émile Zola. Notes d'un ami* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2001).

<sup>69</sup> See, Patrick Brady, *'L'Oeuvre' de Émile Zola. Roman sur les arts. Manifeste, Autobiographie, Roman a clef* (Geneva: Droz, 1968).

In the novel Zola contrasts Lantier with the figure of the man of letters, the balanced, industrious, hard worker and successful Sandoz; this comparison is an outstanding example of the *paragone*. In fact, it might have caused the final split between Zola and Cézanne. Henri Mitterand and William Berg comment that Zola's very visual narrative style directly challenged the superiority of the image for the representation of reality.<sup>70</sup> This was logical at a time when the epistemological crisis brought about by the defeat of the Academic system caused the internal re-structuring of both fields and initiated a new debate about the problem of objective reality, perception, and representation.<sup>71</sup>

Contemporary documents indicate that Zola and his colleagues were conscious of this struggle. Berg, for example, quotes a reputed statement by Zola:

[J]e n'ai pas seulement soutenu les Impressionnistes, je les ai traduits en littérature par les touches, notes, colorations, par la palette de beaucoup de mes descriptions. Dans tous mes livres j'ai été en contact et échange avec les peintres.<sup>72</sup>

The publication of the novel itself provoked a spate of reactions and comments among the artists and even from Zola. According to Berthe Morisot, for example, Degas affirmed that the novel was written "pour prouver la grande supériorité de l'homme de lettres sur l'artiste," and Degas once remarked that "en un trait, nous [peintres] en disons plus long qu'un littérateur en un volume." George Moore reported that Zola observed that "the theory of his book—namely that no painter

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<sup>70</sup> Henri Mitterand, *Zola. L'histoire et la fiction* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1990,) and William Berg, *The Visual Novel. Emile Zola and the Art of His Times* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992).

<sup>71</sup> For the situation of Zola in the 1880s see Jean Paul Bouillon, "Manet 1884, un bilan critique," in *La Critique d'art en France, 1850-1900: actes du colloque de Clermont-Ferrand, 25, 26 et 27 mai 1987*, ed. Jean Paul Bouillon (Saint-Etienne: Université de Saint-Etienne, Centre interdisciplinaire d'études et de recherches sur l'expression contemporaine, 1989).

<sup>72</sup> Berg, *The Visual Novel*, 16.

working in the modern movement had achieved a result proportionate to that which had been achieved by at least three or four writers working in the same movement.”<sup>73</sup>

What was Cézanne’s opinion and attitude? Did this problem influence his relationship with Zola? Did he participate in this *paragone*? The answer remains unknown and, more importantly, unresearched because the subject itself has not been considered. Since Rewald’s biography established the centrality of the friendship with Zola in the interpretation of the Cézanne’s life, art historians have assumed that the artist shared the writer’s aesthetic principles, especially in the early part of his career.

<sup>74</sup> Even Cézanne’s personality has been drawn from the personae he assumed towards Zola, disregarding the evidence that indicates that they had different artistic tastes and ideas about life.

The new *paragone* pitted the artists against the art critics, who had gained an outstanding power to shape the taste of the public. Many men of letters started their careers as art critics and pursued both careers, as did Zola, which doubled their ability to influence the arts. Therefore, it was not only a struggle to claim representational

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<sup>73</sup> Theodore Reff, “Degas and the Literature of His Time,” in *French 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Painting and Literature. With Special Reference to the Relevance of Literary Subject-Matter to French Painting*, ed. Ulrich Finke (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 198–199. The problem of the *paragone* to the knowledge of this author has never previously included in the bibliography related to Cézanne. Rewald, Reff and the other art historians rely on the equipoise of the two fields and the translatability of their contents. See also Robert J. Niess, *Zola, Cézanne, and Manet A Study of L’Oeuvre* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1968). The study of the relationship of art with literature is highly frustrating, as members of both disciplines take the other’s bibliography as secondary source and true derridean supplement.

<sup>74</sup> It has taken some seventy years for authors like Paul Smith, Steven Platzman, Terence Maloon and Roger Cranshaw, and Adrian Lewis to suggest a fundamentally different interpretation of Cézanne’s early years. None of these authors has written a new biography though; therefore, Rewald’s biographical approach still maintains today its hegemonic power to shape most of the approaches to Cézanne. See bibliography. In 2004 Aruna D’Souza distanced himself from the biographical account and studied the discourse of the failed artist and decadence and concluded that “if there has been a *failure of biography* to deal adequately with Cézanne’s oeuvre, it is because we have not sufficiently recognized that Cézanne’s is one of many *biographies of failure*—stories suffuse with notions of degeneration and cultural evolution—to have been written in the later part of the nineteenth century.” “Paul Cézanne, Claude Lantier and Artistic Impotence,” NCAW, (2004) [http://19thc-artworldwide.org/autumn\\_04/articles/dsou.html](http://19thc-artworldwide.org/autumn_04/articles/dsou.html)

supremacy for one of the artistic fields, but also a fight for prestige and for the power to impact society.

In 1866 Zola stated that the word “art” displeased him and that what he sought in works of art was the temperament of the artist, a personal, original, and subjective approach to reality and art. The profound implication of this statement was, as Richard Shiff has pointed out, that, together with the “word art were gone the standards for judgments of the art works.”<sup>75</sup> The Académie des Beaux-Arts had, until then, established the parameters used to gauge the degree of achievement and failure of the artists. In the absence of general principles issued by a centralized institution, each art critic developed his own categories and definitions and used them as basic criteria for his analyses and judgments. This “conception of art” in the end was impossible to demonstrate or prove, and was valid as long as the art critic succeeded in imposing it on the art world (public, collectionists, museum officials, young artists looking for consecration).<sup>76</sup>

Leo H. Hoek claims that art critics were conscious of their powers, which he exemplifies in Zola’s commentary on Pissarro’s art “il suffit que demain un critique autorisé lui trouve du talent pour que la foule l’admire.”<sup>77</sup> The same men of letters who had helped artists to develop the autonomy of their field from the Academy and the official establishment, strove to place artists under their control in a situation that Hoek defines as “un nouvel épisode du ‘paragone’ séculaire;” as the art critic “remplit

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<sup>75</sup> Shiff, *Cézanne Impressionism*, chapter IV, especially 30–35.

<sup>76</sup> See Leo H. Hoek, *Titres, toiles et critique d’art. Déterminants institutionnels du discours sur l’art au dix-neuvième siècle en France* (Amsterdam-Atlanta GA: Rodopi, 2001), 208 ff.

<sup>77</sup> Hoek, *Titres, toiles*, 209.

désormais un rôle de théoricien et même d'idéologue, en défendant ou en attaquant un style pictural: il est devenu le législateur et l'arbitre des arts.”<sup>78</sup>

This new ascendancy of art criticism within the art world was paired with a more in-depth advance of the writer within the world of the artists, as the new biographical approach to the work of art gave art critics the power to evaluate artists *as men*. The art critic, as Zola stated, sought to go from the surface of the work to the artist who had created it.<sup>79</sup> The artist was not only analyzed as the author of his paintings but also as a “temperament.” Impressionism and the realist and naturalist movements in literature reflect the epistemological crisis of the 1870s, which determined a more fundamental fusion of word and image in art criticism.<sup>80</sup>

Isabelle Daunais's work helps to clarify the process by which these new elements entered into the analysis of works of art, as she has called attention to the fact that naturalist art critics, especially Zola, considered art as a language. Their interpretations are based on the notion that it is possible to “read” works of art and to decode their meaning. In general, the reader of those critical texts does not know if the thoughts they expound belong to the artist or to the writer, i.e., if they actually are in the painting. When painting is conceived as a language, it becomes something that is fundamentally *translatable*.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Hoek, *Titres, toiles*, 245.

<sup>79</sup> Hoek, *Titres, toiles*, 266.

<sup>80</sup> There were different moments in the competition to demonstrate the supremacy of each art's representational potential. Romanticism and Symbolism—two movements devoted mostly to poetry—were, in general, periods of complicity between the plastic arts and literature, whereas realism, naturalism and Impressionism were periods of rivalry. Hoek, *Titres, toiles*, 152. See also Joël Dalançon, “Le Poète et le peintre (1870–1885). Les enjeux sociaux et culturels d'un face-à-face,” *Romantisme* 66 (1989) : 62–73.

<sup>81</sup> “[L]a communication des arts, apparaît surtout comme un mode d'entrée dans le tableau, ce que la critique recherche dans l'image qui lui permette d'atteindre une couche précisément plus ‘traduisible’ de l'œuvre, un espace où elle puisse trouver à *dire*. Car penser le tableau comme langage et comme

There are two alternatives. Critical texts can describe a work of art, which is by definition ineffable and beyond full comprehension; or they might be the explanation or clarification of what paintings state or suggest. In the first case the image would be the *place*, the site where the intention of the artist can be read. In the second case the painting is a *moment* of a process that has to be explained, it is an episode of a narration.<sup>82</sup> This last approach provides art critics the freedom to write their own [literary] text. This is why they favored works of art in which there was little to describe, i.e., those which did not have (their own) literary content. Daunais concludes that,

Si on voulait établir un rapport entre critique naturaliste et peinture moderne: là où la surface du tableau s'ordonne et se clôt autour d'un récit et de son point de vue la critique ne saurait être que descriptive; là où la toile est descriptive et ouverte à tous les moments du regard, la critique est narrative, c'est-à-dire qu'elle peut devenir récit, quitter la surface du tableau (et son instantanéité) tout en restant 'dans' le tableau.<sup>83</sup>

To put it plainly: when the painting talks, the art critic is silent and vice versa. In the second case, the work of art is a moment in a narration that considers its [attributed] meanings and the process of vision and comprehension. In this kind of text, words create a process that takes place in time. Moreover, in these texts words refer to other words and are not "tied" to describing what is re-presented by the

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traduction, c'est pouvoir le considérer à son tour comme un objet possible de traduction. ... A cet effet, les lieux du tableau qui intéressent la critique seront ceux où elle peut elle-même en tant qu'écriture, s'arrimer au temps de l'image. Or ces lieux où la peinture s'ouvre tout au moins au langage qu'est l'écriture sont ceux où le récit est possible." Isabelle Daunais, "Les récits de la critique d'art, entre naturalisme et modernisme," *Littérature* 107 (Octobre, 1997): 23–24.

<sup>82</sup> In Preziosi's terms in the first case the work of art is a self-sufficient presence, different from other objects, in the second it refers to a meaning. Structuralism would refer to the synchronic and the diachronic.

<sup>83</sup> Daunais, "Récits de la critique," 31. In other words, if the painting represents a narration the only thing the critic can do is to describe it. If there is no narration (perspective, actions, stories) art criticism can become a narration. The author is here commenting on Martin Jay's observations about Dutch painting. See also *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (University of Chicago Press, 1983).

image. In essence paintings are now, as Zola's text clearly indicates, the body of the painter, *they re-present the artist, his life, his perception. They are his bio-graphy.*<sup>84</sup> And here it must be remembered that the Greek *graphein* means both to write and to draw. The artist's oeuvre as *corpus*, and his real body and life as *bio* have been narrativized, i.e., both have been translated into words. If literature is no longer the subject matter of the work of art, it is essentially ingrained onto its surface. The work of art, like the anecdote, is a moment of the narration, the particular within the general, which can be incorporated in a narration because it is already part of a process and not a place, a unique moment. Naturalist art criticism at the end of the nineteenth century associated the artist with his work thus opening the way for art historians to concentrate exclusively on the artist's persona.

This position implies great power, as critics select for consideration and praise those works about which they can more easily project their "conception of art." Daunais concludes that Zola's defense of modern art simultaneously promoted the influence of art criticism over the plastic arts.

This development, which took place in France at the time when Cézanne was creating his work, is different from the German neo-Kantian approach to art history that would thrive at the end of the nineteenth century. Berg has noted that Zola's ideas on visuality were similar—but not identical—to those of his contemporary, the

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<sup>84</sup> See the text quoted above p. 208 there is "Le mot réaliste ne signifie rien pour moi, qui déclare subordonner le réel au tempérament. Faites vrai, j'applaudis, mais surtout faites individuel et vivant et j'applaudis plus fort. Emile Zola, "Salon 1866," quoted in Anita Brookner, *The Genius of the Future. Studies in French Art Criticism. Diderot, Stendhal, Baudelaire, Zola, The Brothers Goncourt, Huysmans* (London: Phaidon, 1971), 99.

philosopher, Konrad Fiedler, (1841–1895.)<sup>85</sup> The work of the German thinker influenced Wölfflin’s scholarship as well as that of most of the founders of [German] art history, who, as it has been commented above, had mixed feelings about modern [French] art.

Vouilloux has demonstrated that the Goncourt brothers not only described the subject matter of a work of art, but also the way it was represented and that they created a vocabulary appropriate to this task.<sup>86</sup> Art criticism in France at the end of the nineteenth century developed its own discourse about the plastic arts. This critical vocabulary and models for the understanding of art were part and parcel of a tense relationship with the artists who were influenced by the art criticism but who also confronted and contested their validity.<sup>87</sup> This approach gives another context for the letter from Cézanne to Gasquet quoted at the beginning of Chapter Two, where the artist manifests his opposition to interpretations of his paintings based on his personality or in his private life.

Two important factors enhanced Zola’s standing as arbiter in the art world. First, Zola based his naturalism on a scientific approach, built around the theories of Hippolyte Taine, Theodule Ribot and Claude Bernard on perceptual psychology.

According to Berg, he “evolve[d] a poetics where literature, painting, and science

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<sup>85</sup> Fiedler’s important publications were *On Judging Works of Visual Art* (1876), *Modern Naturalism and Artistic Truth* (1881) and *On the Origin of Artistic Activity* (1887). As noted above, this author’s philosophy influenced Adolphe Hildebrand and Heinrich Wölfflin.

<sup>86</sup> See Chapter II “*Mimèsis et sémiosis*,” in *L’Art des Goncourt. Une esthétique du style*, (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1997). On formal analysis see David Summers, “‘Form,’ Nineteenth-Century Metaphysics, and the Problem of Art Historical Description,” *Critical Inquiry* 15 no.(Winter, 1989): 372–406.

<sup>87</sup> Dario Gamboni has studied Odilon Redon’s negative reaction to art criticism. See Dario Gamboni, “Remarques sur la critique d’art, l’histoire de l’art et le champ artistique à propos d’Odilon Redon,” *Zeitschrift für Schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte* 37 (1982): 104–108; and *La Plume et le pinceau. Odilon Redon et la littérature* (Paris: Minuit, 1989). Paul Gauguin was overtly opposed to art criticism as his writings clearly show. See Paul Gauguin, *Raconteurs de rapin* [Présentation, notes et postface de Bertrand Leclair] (Paris, 2003).

intersect in the realm of the visual.”<sup>88</sup> In this way, he could claim that his literary style encompassed both artistic and scientific Truths, and reinforced the prestige of the naturalist writers with the aura surrounding the “*savants*.”<sup>89</sup> Secondly, his participation in the Affaire Dreyfus in 1898, which established in France’s political *imaginaire* the role of the intellectual as the conscience of the nation, allowed Zola to present himself as an ethical standard-bearer. Both developments took place after the 1860s, the decade in which he was in close contact with Cézanne, but both events were in a certain way integral to his approach to literature, society and politics.

Zola invented the profile of the man of letters anew. This new writer is a scientist, not an inspired poet or *Vate*, and has instead firm ethical standards. Zola had an anti-bohemian, anti-Baudelairian stance and held a strong belief in work. He praised those men of letters engaged in good political causes for the reform of society and the fight for the oppressed.<sup>90</sup> As he explained in *The Experimental Novel*,

We shall construct a practical sociology, and our work will be a help to political and economical sciences. . . . To be the master of good and evil, to regulate life, to regulate society, to solve in time all the problems of socialism, above all, to give justice a solid foundation by solving through experiment the questions of criminality—is not this being the most useful and the most moral workers in the human workshop?<sup>91</sup>

This attitude foretells Zola’s position in *J’accuse*, which was published in the literary newspaper *L’Aurore* as a letter to the President of the Republic. According to Pierre Bourdieu, the writer transposed onto politics a characteristic of the artistic

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<sup>88</sup> Berg, *The Visual Novel*, 25.

<sup>89</sup> The “*savant*” had become an important personality in French society, especially after the 1870. There was the tradition of the *philosophe* in the eighteenth century, and they had also been related to art criticism (the Salons of Diderot were being progressively reprinted and ‘discovered’ at this time), but Claude Bernard and later Louis Pasteur, gave more importance to natural sciences.

<sup>90</sup> This is one of the reasons why he felt disappointed when the impressionists preferred to exhibit outside the official Salon. See Brookner, *The Genius of the Future* as in n. 83.

<sup>91</sup> Emile Zola, *The Experimental Novel* [Translated from the French by Belle M. Sherman], (New York: Haskell House, 1964), 26.

field: the claim to universality. In this way he established the “condition of intervention,” the justification for scientists and artists to assert the right to contest the official institutions. Whereas the anti-dreyfusards defended the “reason of state,” the intellectuals claimed the “irreducibility” of justice and truth,

Le *J'accuse* est l'aboutissement et l'accomplissement du processus collectif d'émancipation qui s'est progressivement accompli dans le champ de production culturelle : en tant que rupture prophétique avec l'ordre établi, il réaffirme, contre toutes les raisons d'Etat, l'irréductibilité des valeurs de vérité et de justice, et, du même coup, l'indépendance des gardiens de ces valeurs par rapport aux normes de la politique (celles du patriotisme, par exemple,) et aux contraintes de la vie économique.<sup>92</sup>

Even though the position of Zola and the other intellectuals might be understood as a strategy to foster their position within their professional fields and within society at large, they shaped forever the identity of the intellectual as the cultural hero opposed to the warrior. The intellectuals were not members of a particular career or occupation; what characterized them was a vocation and an attitude, the will to participate in the ideological struggle, that in the end secured for them a special prestige, that of belonging to the “intellectual elite.”<sup>93</sup> At the time of the Affaire Dreyfus intellectuals occupied both sides of the political divide but later on, the profile became indelibly associated with the persona of the centrist and leftist thinkers.

In 1936 with the recrudescence of anti-Semitism as war approached, the world was in much need of intellectuals *à la* Zola. Art historians inherited the role of art critics, not necessarily that of intellectuals. The definition of art and the artist being

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<sup>92</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Les règles de l'art. Genèse et structure du champ littéraire*, (Paris: Seuil, 1992), 186.

<sup>93</sup> Nathalie Heinich, *L'élite artiste. Excellence et singularité en régime démocratique* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005).

forged at the time by scholars like Venturi and Barr incorporated a strong ethic/political component as it was developed to counterbalance growing totalitarianisms. This is also the ideology behind Rewald's biography of Cézanne, which is manifested in the selection and presentation of sources and documentation and is most evident in the way he associates the painter with Zola. As 1936 was one of the years of the Popular Front, Rewald's book should be seen as part of the last intellectual offensive to defeat Totalitarianism.<sup>94</sup>

### John Rewald's Cézanne

John Rewald moved from Germany to France in 1932 in order to study medieval art. A chance encounter in Aix-en-Provence with the painter Léo Marschutz (1903–1976), a devout admirer of Cézanne, convinced him to shift his focus to the study of the artist. Together they discovered and photographed many of the sites Cézanne had painted.<sup>95</sup>

In 1941 Rewald fled to the United States, where he was a curator of many important exhibitions (several of them at MoMA) and authored a remarkable list of

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<sup>94</sup> The only text by Rewald that explicitly refers to the political situation is "Hitler et l'Art," *Marianne* (July 3, 1939), 11, where the author focuses on art historical considerations.

<sup>95</sup> This material was essentially the basis for Fritz Novotny's *Cézanne und das Ende der wissenschaftliche Perspektive* (Vienna: Phaidon-Verlag, 1938). Even though the letters at the Archives of the National Gallery of Art indicate that they had a good working relationship, Novotny's Kantian approach to Cézanne and his subtle disquisitions about the problem of writing a biography of the artist did not influence Rewald's scholarship. See especially Fritz Novotny, "Das Problem des Menschen Cézanne im Verhältnis zu seiner Kunst," *Zeitschrift für Aesthetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft* 26 (1932): 268–298 where Novotny deals specifically with the different types of biography and the impossibility of knowing Cézanne as a man. For the relationship of the two men see letters from Léo Marschutz to John Rewald, letters from Leo Marschutz to John Rewald from 1936 and 1937, folders 50/6 and 50/8, John Rewald Papers, National Gallery of Art, Gallery Archives, Washington, D.C.

books, like *The History of Impressionism* (1946) and *Post-Impressionism from van Gogh to Gauguin* (1956), which have been translated into several languages and reprinted many times. Moreover, he was also a professor at universities in New York and Chicago, as well as an advisor to the Paul Mellon and John Hay Whitney collections. In 1956 Rewald acted as the art historical consultant for Vincent Minelli's *Lust for Life*, a movie that both Preziosi and Griselda Pollock consider to be the epitome of the myth of the modern artist that is popular among the public.<sup>96</sup>

Rewald's attachment to Germany seems not to have been very strong, as he and his family left the country early on. He would later state that "I never saw the Third Reich. Being in France, I stayed home," and "I didn't suffer for one week from the change of the situation in Germany, but I couldn't go back."<sup>97</sup>

Although Rewald wrote his dissertation for the Sorbonne, he did not attend many courses nor mingle with other students. Living with distant relatives and receiving a monthly remittance from his parents, he worked alone in the libraries. Therefore the roots of Rewald's education have to be found in Germany, where he attended high school, the *Lichtwarkschule* in Hamburg, and two universities created in the twentieth century: Hamburg (the one closely associated with the Warburg Institute, where Rewald took classes with Panofsky), and then Frankfurt-am-Main.<sup>98</sup>

The educational program instituted by the Republic of Weimar in 1919 offered to prospective students many alternatives to the traditional *Gymnasium*. The

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<sup>96</sup> See Preziosi, *Rethinking Art History*, and Griselda Pollock, "Artists Mythologies and Media Genius, Madness and Art History," *Screen* 21 no.3 (1980): 57–96, and "Crows, Blossoms and Lust for Death—Cinema and the Myth of van Gogh the Modern Artist," in *The Mythology of Vincent van Gogh*, ed. Tsukasa Kōdera (Tokyo : TV Asahi; Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins 1993).

<sup>97</sup> Rewald, "Interview," 2, 15.

<sup>98</sup> In the "Introduction" to the 1946 *The History of Impressionism*, Rewald mentions doing part of the research at the Institute's library although it is not clear when this might have happened, as his interest on modern art started after his arrival in France.

*Lichtwarkschule* was a pilot school which offered a more radically modern program than the rest of the *Deutscher Oberschule*.<sup>99</sup> The education at the school centered on the *Kulturkunde* a social-science type of subject that favored the development of critical thinking and the analysis of modern culture and society, and pushed to the background the classicist and humanist approach to culture fostered by other educational institutions of the Weimar Republic.

Three specific subjects were especially apt to the new didactic approach: the examination of capitalism (that is, the socio-economic aspects of contemporary society); the history of mentalities and its influence in the arts (literature and plastic arts), political ideologies, theoretical thinking and culture of a period; and the art and culture of the Middle Ages.<sup>100</sup> The second one particularly,

handelte es sich um den Versuch, dem Verständnis der Gegenwart durch Auseinandersetzungen mit geistigen Haltungen oder Strömungen näherzukommen, die entweder dem künstlerischen Bereich oder dem der politischen Ideologie bzw. der Kulturtheorie entnommen wurden. Die Schüler beschäftigen sich dabei nicht nur mit Schriftstellern, sondern auch mit bildenden Künstler. Bei den Schriftstellern standen neben modernen deutschen expressionistischen Dichtern wie Toller, Wedekind oder Kaiser außerdeutsche Literaten wie Strindberg, Hamsun und Dostojewskij im Vordergrund, denen für das Verständnis der geistigen Situation der gegenwärtigen Gesellschaft besonders großer Wert beigemessen wurde. Bei der bildenden Kunst waren sowohl Künstler der Renaissance (wie Dürer) als auch moderne Kunstformen (etwa die zeitgenössische Architektur Hamburgs) vertreten. Insbesondere die wahlfreien Arbeiten nutzten die Schüler für Auseinandersetzungen mit Malern von der Romantik—Caspar David Friedrich—bis zu van Gogh und Cézanne.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> The project and results evoke those of the Bauhaus, which was active at the same time and shared its fate. The building by Fritz Schumacher (1925) followed the most advanced pedagogic reforms, including a less strict division between professor and student space, less hierarchical organization of classroom space, etc. It was among the first, if not the first school, that offered coeducation (mixed classes with male and female students), and was favored by Jews who found there a most favorable environment. For the reform see Harold H. Punke, "Recent Development in German Education II," *The School Review* 38 (November, 1930): 680–693.

<sup>100</sup> Joachim Wendt, *Die Lichtwarkschule in Hamburg Die Lichtwarkschule in Hamburg (1921-1937) Eine Stätte der Reform des höheren Schulwesens* (Hamburg: Verlag Verein für Hamburgische Geschichte, 2000), 115–116.

<sup>101</sup> Wendt, *Die Lichtwarkschule*, 119.

Art was considered as a cultural manifestation fundamentally linked with literature, and the study of both subjects was oriented towards providing a better understanding of the problems of the present. Through the examination of the Middle Ages—a period that had developed a strong culture structured around sound values—the school wanted to foster the development of ideas that would help to solve the contemporary cultural crisis.<sup>102</sup>

The fact that Rewald chose to attend two new universities, indicates how removed he was from the traditional education offered by the *Gymnasium* and the values fostered by *Bildung*. This “modern” education might explain his move from the University of Hamburg and the Warburg Institute, which worked on a highly theoretical approach to the Renaissance. Nevertheless, when he moved to Frankfurt-am-Main he chose to concentrate on medieval art under the guidance of the conservative and nationalist art historian Hans Jantzen. Later, he abandoned this highly politicized environment—the university housed what is today known as the School of Frankfurt—to go to Paris.<sup>103</sup>

Rewald expressed a distaste for theory throughout his entire professional life.<sup>104</sup> The one name that passes from his school papers to the notebooks he wrote in France at the end of the 1930s is that of the art critic Julius Meier-Graefe (1867–1935.) In

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<sup>102</sup> Wendt, *Die Lichtwarkschule*, 121.

<sup>103</sup> Had he chosen to do so, Rewald might have known or have been influenced by people like Max Horkheimer, Norbert Elias, Max Wertheimer, Theodor Adorno, or Karl Mannheim, among others. The papers that Rewald wrote for the *Lichtwarkschule*, “Der Maler Frans Masereel” (non-dated) and “Reklame” (November, 1930) confirm that the Lichtwarkschule fostered the study of modern subject matters and the use of theory as they include a vast array of quotes taken from Marx, Engels, Le Corbusier, Hannes Meier (Bauhaus), Lenin, and many others. See folders 61/4 and 61/8, John Rewald Papers, National Gallery of Art, Gallery Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>104</sup> See, among many others, the letter from John Rewald to Dr. Dieter Jähnig, 1<sup>st</sup> May, 1983, 42/6 John Rewald Papers, National Gallery of Art, Gallery Archives, Washington, D.C. See also in the same Archive the correspondence regarding Rewald’s relationship with Max Raphael, where he makes his position explicit. See folder 53/11. NGA Archives.

one of these notebooks appears for the first time a long quote of Friedrich Nietzsche's *Use and Abuse of History* that Rewald incorporated in 1936 in the book on Cézanne and again in his 1980 "Pissarro, Nietzsche and Kitsch."<sup>105</sup> This philosopher was widely read at the time of the Weimar Republic, and the paragraph Rewald selected epitomizes the grandiloquent statements that characterize his work, as it ironically refers to how great, artistically gifted men have to fight against the mediocre ones who idolize monumental history and tradition because they do not dare to create and innovate. Both Meier-Graefe's writings and Nietzsche's philosophy cultivated and encouraged the cult of heroes and geniuses who, being far in advance from the common of society, have to fight against its incomprehension.<sup>106</sup> In addition, Rewald included Norbert Elias's "Kitschstil und Kitschzeitalter," published in 1935 in the anti-Nazi magazine *Die Sammlung*, in the bibliography of *Cézanne et Zola* devoted mostly to specialized literature on the artist.<sup>107</sup> The title of the article describes well its content, which only mentions in passing Manet, Cézanne, and Picasso as examples

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<sup>105</sup> Reprinted in John Rewald, *Studies in Impressionism*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1986). See John House, "Review Impressionism and History: The Rewald Legacy," *Art History* 9 (September, 1986): 369–375.

<sup>106</sup> Julius Meier-Graefe is quoted in "Reklame." Rewald used also one sentence by him as the epigraph of the paper on "Der Maler Frans Masereel" See n. 103. The quote from Nietzsche is in the notebook "Recontres - Fin. Rencontres sur la route de l'exode," which Rewald wrote while fleeing France in 1939. See Folder 61/7, John Rewald Papers, National Gallery of Art, Gallery Archives, Washington D.C. The first published quotation is in *Cézanne et Zola*, 35–36. Another notebook at the NGA from the 1930s that has notes on bibliography —"Literatur über Cézanne, Gauguin, van Gogh, Manet, Monet, Pissarro, Renoir Sisley, Rodin"—has extensive quotes from Meier-Graefe's books. See folder 73/8, John Rewald Papers, National Gallery of Art, Gallery Archives, Washington D.C. On Meier-Graefe see Patricia G. Berman, "The Invention of History: Julius Meier-Graefe, German Modernism and the Genealogy of Genius," in *Imagining Modern German Culture: 1889–1910*, ed. Françoise Foster-Hahn (Washington: National Gallery of Art, D.C, 1996). On the influence of Nietzsche in the Weimar Republic see Anna Mary Dempsey, *Erwin Panofsky and Walter Benjamin: German Jewish Cultural Traditions and the Writing of History in Weimar German*, (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1998.)

<sup>107</sup> Norbert Elias (1897–1990) was teaching sociology at the University of Frankfurt at the time Rewald was attending courses there.

of the incomprehension that surrounded true artists and art in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Rewald had the opportunity to engage in a highly theoretical and speculative art history but decided to practice a strongly positivist, historicist methodology centered on the cult of great men derived from his German education. His scholarship affords a unique opportunity to analyze how historicism and the cult of the artist—the most resilient and basic components of the art history practiced in the nineteenth century—passed to modern art history, which explains both the staying power of his scholarship and the fact that it has not received much critical attention.<sup>108</sup>

### Rewald and Cézanne et Zola

In his introduction to the book Rewald states that he felt it was necessary to write a biography of the artist because ‘on n’a guère étudié les sources des renseignements que nous possédons sur lui. Souvent des déformations se sont introduites dans ce qui a été publié sur Cézanne ...’<sup>109</sup> He singles out Ambroise Vollard’s 1914 biography for criticism as this book describes the artist as a cranky, foul-mouthed old man and is full of—mostly laughable and even ridiculous—anecdotes. It also contains one of the most aggressively ironic descriptions of Zola, whom the author describes as a

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<sup>108</sup> For the resistance of both historicism and the myth of the artist to analysis and deconstruction see Catherine Soussloff, “Historicism” in *Aesthetics*, ed. Michael Kelly (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), and *The Absolute Artist. The Historiography of a Concept* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

<sup>109</sup> Rewald, *Cézanne et Zola*, 3.

*nouveau riche* enchanted with his own success and material gains, surrounded by a tasteless kitschy décor.<sup>110</sup> Rewald dismisses this source even though Vollard had been the artist's dealer and the architect of his success and had himself interviewed Zola about his relationship with Cézanne.

Rewald carefully details his methodological approach and claims historical rigor. He enumerates his sources (letters, published souvenirs, souvenirs, paintings, site photographs, art criticism) and affirms that,

[N]ous nous sommes bornés à éliminer simplement de notre documentation toute indication, toute *anecdote* qui ne nous inspirait pas confiance ou qui se trouve en contradiction avec les lettres de Cézanne, celles-ci étant la seule source authentique.<sup>111</sup> (Emphasis added)

Rewald thought that the letters allowed him to know the character and personality of the artist and could be used as guides to evaluate the truthfulness of the secondary sources. As noted above, this approach implies that the presuppositions inherent in the genre and the historian's own ideas about Cézanne as a man transpire in the selection and utilization of the material. After quoting the words Zola said to Gustave Coquiot—another early source—Rewald observes,

Si le fond des pensées exprimées par Zola est exact, ses idées sont sans doute rapportées avec trop de liberté, car cette fausse modestie, ces reproches 'philistins' que l'on croit sous-entendre dans les paroles du romancier ne peuvent résulter que d'une mauvaise interprétation. Zola n'était pas homme à s'exprimer avec une pareille pitié de parvenu sur un ami dont il aimait.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> In the introduction to the 1939 edition of the book, he also criticized Joachim Gasquet's and Emile Bernard's accounts. "Il faut surtout essayer de détruire ces personnages du Cézanne-Emile Bernard, du Cézanne-Joachim Gasquet, du Cézanne-Vollard-Ubu, dont parle si spirituellement René Huyghe pour tenter de dégager le vrai visage du peintre." Op. cit., 11; Lebensztein has noted that Rewald has softened some crass words in Cézanne's letters for publication. See *Les couilles de Cézanne*, 82 n. 7.

<sup>111</sup> Rewald, *Cézanne et Zola*, 4.

<sup>112</sup> Rewald, *Cézanne et Zola*, 141. It must be noted that Coquiot's portrayal of Zola very much confirms Vollard's.

Years of studies on Cézanne have demonstrated that the letters, situated in varying contexts, can support almost any claim they are called upon to shore up. Rewald conceived them as dots in a single straight line, but they are rather more like points of convergence of an infinite number of directions existing in a multidimensional space where they can be used to plot countless different figures. Rewald, as any other biographer, used the information drawn from the letters to validate and reinforce the preconceptions and ideological presuppositions implied by the genre (narration) and to materialize his own understanding of the relationship of Cézanne and Zola.<sup>113</sup>

The “Introduction” starts with the analysis of an 1860 letter from Zola to Cézanne, where the writer narrates that he had dreamed about a book written by him and illustrated by the painter. Rewald affirms that his own book is the materialization of Zola’s dream (although there is no proof that Cézanne shared this dream), and the reparation of the injustice brought about by the malignant influence of “others.” Since the beginning, then, Rewald presents himself symbolically as the continuator of Zola’s work.

Even though Rewald acknowledges that this was a rather short friendship, that Zola never understood Cézanne, and that they had different characters and aspirations, he argues that they were united by their high *artistic* goals, their *memories*, and their fight against a common enemy: the philistine society and public. Although this affirmation is quite abstract and impossible to prove, it is the *leitmotiv* and main line of argumentation that structures the book. It already appears in the

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<sup>113</sup> See House, “Review Impressionism and History,” 369–375, and Smith, “Pictures and History,” 97–105.

introduction (“Ils avaient toujours en commun leurs souvenirs et l’hostilité de beaucoup de leurs adversaires,”<sup>114</sup>) and is integral to the first quote of the book. When commenting about Cézanne’s first meeting with Zola at the Collège Bourbon, Rewald cites a passage taken from Zola’s 1886 novel *L’Oeuvre*:

‘Opposés par nature...—comme le dira plus tard Zola—ils s’étaient liés d’un coup et à jamais, entraînés par des affinités secrètes, le tourment encore vague d’une ambition commune, l’éveil d’une intelligence supérieure, au milieu de la cohue brutale des abominables cancre qui les battaient’.<sup>115</sup>

This is indeed a remarkable occurrence: the art historian in 1936 uses as a source a literary text written in 1886 that describes the friendship of two ideal characters which might have been inspired by the relationship established thirty years before by two real people. To say it another way: Rewald’s (art historical) text uses as a document an anecdote extracted from a novel written in 1886 and implies that it effectively happened in 1858.

It has been established above that the relocation and repetition of an anecdote in diverse texts was meaningful in itself and that it thus accrues its value. In this case, what happens is that one anecdote “jumps” from a literary text to a historical one, that is, to what it is supposed to be an altogether different kind of narration. It becomes a *historeme*. Fiction and literary texts are not listed among the sources Rewald mentions in the introduction but he makes abundant use of them throughout the book.

Rewald’s methodological discourse and the relationship he establishes there between the documents and the letters, validates and even naturalizes Zola’s text as a documentary source. It is true that *L’Oeuvre* was also the most autobiographical of Zola’s series on the Rougon-Macquart family. Although Rewald, like many art

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<sup>114</sup> Rewald, *Cézanne et Zola*, 2.

<sup>115</sup> Emile Zola, *L’Oeuvre* in Rewald, *Cézanne et Zola*, 7.

historians after him, worked with the preparatory notes in which Zola jotted down his first ideas for the novel, Zola's anecdotes and his comments are always part of a fictional enterprise, one in which the author is avowedly presenting his version of the facts for public scrutiny. Nevertheless, and even if most art historians are conscious of the fact that the laws of the (narrative) discourse and the necessity of the plot rule over this material, they have often used it as primary source together with the written testimonies and the letters.<sup>116</sup> To this must be added the conscious manipulation that derives from the needs of the narrative plot of the art historical text itself. In the paragraph from *L'Oeuvre* that Rewald quotes, Zola was not referring to Lantier's friendship with Sandoz, the writer, but to the relationship that united the three 'inseparables' (Zola, Cézanne and Baille): "Venus de trois mondes différents, opposés de natures, nés seulement la même année, ... ils s'étaient liés d'un coup et à jamais..."<sup>117</sup> As the quotation that opens this chapter indicates, Rewald did not consider Baille of the same "essence" of Zola and Cézanne. Thus he proceeds to edit Zola's text. This suggests that the art historian wanted to underscore the fact that he was using the writer's work as source.

The question is then: Why Zola? Zola had not only recanted from his former support of modern painting, but had referred to Cézanne as an "abortive genius" as

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<sup>116</sup> The same can be said of the book by Gasquet. Even though the accuracy of the poet's description of Cézanne, as well as the authenticity of the anecdotes and dialogues he describes have been repeatedly questioned, the book has been and is still used by almost all researchers working on the artist. Rewald, for example, only came to doubt it after the Second World War. Art historians seem to need the material it contains and feel they are able to discriminate the part of the text that is true to reality from the one that depends on Gasquet's inventiveness. See Richard Shiff "Introduction" to *Joachim Gasquet's Cézanne: A Memoir with Conversations* [Translated by Christopher Pemberton. Preface by John Rewald, Introduction by Richard Shiff], (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991). Shiff comments that not only Fry but also Merleau Ponty and Schapiro (who gets the anecdote of the apples in his text) have taken fundamental information from Gasquet's book.

<sup>117</sup> Emile Zola, *L'Oeuvre* (Paris: Gallimard, 1983), 39.

late as 1896 when the artist at last was beginning to be acclaimed.<sup>118</sup> There seems to be a perverse connection between Cézanne's and Zola's critical fortunes: the more the painter's greatness is acknowledged, the more the writer's standing as progressive art critic is liable for his lack of understanding of his friend's art. Cézanne was almost unknown at the moment *L'Oeuvre* appeared, and therefore his name was not immediately associated by the general public with Claude Lantier, its tormented and unsuccessful protagonist. At the beginning of the twentieth century this situation had started to change. As the paragraph by Bernard analyzed above demonstrates, already in 1907 the association Lantier/Cézanne was "in the air." The publication of the letters to Zola and the study of the writer's preparatory notes could only reinforce it.

Zola is not a key character in the accounts written by those who had known the artist (Ambroise Vollard and Joachim Gasquet) or in the first monographs written on him. He is not important for Venturi or Huyghe. Gerstle Mack—who knew the letters the artist had sent to Zola—does not assign to Zola such an significant place in the painter's life. In the introduction to his biography Rewald explains that,

Notre étude était terminée à l'exception des trois derniers chapitres quand, au mois d'octobre 1935, parut un livre sur Paul Cézanne par Gerstle Mack, où sont publiées presque [sic] toutes les lettres de Cézanne ... et qui est fondé en partie sur les mêmes documents ... Pourtant *le but* de notre étude est assez différent de celui que s'est proposé M Gerstle Mack, et notre documentation est assez importante, même en dehors de ces lettres pour que nous n'ayons pas songé à modifier la disposition de notre travail... (Emphasis added).<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Zola commented this in his last piece of art criticism where he recanted from his support to modern painting: "Peinture," *Le Figaro*, 2 May 1896. Rewald contended that Cézanne was offended by the way Zola had portrayed him in *L'Oeuvre* ten years before and that the book had been the cause of final break between the two friends. Nevertheless, he argued that the painter was hurt by this last comment: "Qu'on le ridiculise, qu'on le calomnie, Cézanne finit par ne plus s'en apercevoir, mais que Zola ce même Zola qui lui avait jadis dédié ses poèmes ..... en vint à le traiter de 'génie avorté'. Ceci sans doute était pour lui un coup cruel et inattendu." Rewald, *Cézanne et Zola*, 2.

<sup>119</sup> Rewald, *Cézanne et Zola*, 5.

This other “goal” is to study and explicate the life of Cézanne as if it had been determined by his relationship with Zola.

In order to give an historical account of Cézanne’s life, the most important and delicate operation an art historian had and still has to confront is to extricate the artist from the literary models in which he had been cast—or in which he had cast himself—something that it is doubtful Rewald did or that can be done at all.<sup>120</sup> What Rewald did was to explain away the negative aspects of the association Cézanne/Lantier, reaffirm the coupling Cézanne/Frenhofer, and to demonstrate that Zola had a positive central role in the painter’s life. In the end, compared with Venturi’s source criticism, Rewald’s is a step backwards, as he counted among his primary sources not only the letters and testimonies but also literary texts inspired by the artist.<sup>121</sup>

Vouilloux has suggested that the association with Balzac might have derived its strength from the fact that it was used to transcend the Lantier/Cézanne coupling, which provided those who attacked Cézanne a whole range of arguments against the painter because it confirmed even the cruelest of critiques. The new literary model implied “l’impuissance ‘par génie’ et non ‘par naissance’; la fatalité du don de vocation contre le destin biologique de la lignée.”<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Cézanne is perhaps the modern painter who has more literary portraits as he not only appears in Zola’s oeuvre but also in Edmond Duranty’s “Le Peintre Louis Martin,” in *Le Pays des art* (Paris, 1881), Paul Alexis, *Madame Meuriot: moeurs parisiennes*, (Paris, 1891) and as Paul Smith has argued in a paper presented at the College Art Association Conference New York 2002. Paul Smith has announced his forthcoming *The Prey and the Shadow*, an edition in translation of the 1878 novel by Zola’s friend, Marius Roux, whose central character the scholar believes was modeled on Cézanne.

<sup>121</sup> It must be remembered nonetheless that Venturi was writing a monograph not a biography and that Rewald was also affected by the constraints of the genre.

<sup>122</sup> Vouilloux, *Tableaux d’auteurs*, 96.

[L]e type qu’incarnait celui-ci [Lantier/Zola] se sera imposé aux biographes du peintre comme un contre-modèle dont la force d’attraction ne pouvait être efficacement éludé qu’à la condition de lui en substituer un autre—le modèle balzacien, autrement ennoblissant, ou, pour emprunter son terme à Zola ‘grandissant,’ puisque, d’une certaine manière, il donnait enfin à la figure romanesque du fou de littérature, Don Quichotte, son équivalent artistique. La substitution, du reste pour équitable qu’elle se voulût, n’alla pas sans entraîner quelques excès complémentaires, déjà chez Vollard, ensuite chez Coquiote et Gasquet, surtout chez Languier, *le réajustement balzacien tourne au règlement de comptes anti-zolien, comme si remettre Cézanne à sa juste place et reconnaître sa grandeur (balzacienne ou non) ne se pouvaient faire sans abaisser Zola...* Une historiographie des premiers écrits sur Cézanne publiés dans les années qui suivirent sa mort pourrait donc aussi donner à lire une lutte des modèles: en jouant Balzac contre Zola, on légitimait une *lecture héroïque* (avec tout ce qu’il entre de romantique dans ce moment de la modernité) de l’impuissance comme drame consubstantiel à l’expérience artistique, au ‘drame de la peinture.’<sup>123</sup> (Emphasis added)

The scholarship of Cézanne in the 1930s can be interpreted as a confrontation of contradictory heuristic models that shaped the ‘historical’ material according to the “type” of personality or humanness art historians wanted to extol in Cézanne. The figure of Frenhofer implied quixotic heroism and Rewald utilized it to associate the painter’s artistic project with Zola’s (more on this below.) As already mentioned, the identification of Cézanne with Frenhofer was picked up by Gasquet in 1921 and, according to the logic of the anecdote, in this way he naturalized Bernard’s anecdote. Moreover, Gasquet expanded the association Cézanne/Balzac adding a scene in which Cézanne takes a book by Balzac from the shelves and digresses about art while reading the comments he had jotted down while reading the text.<sup>124</sup> Those notes are actually quotations that Gasquet had taken from Cézanne’s letters to Bernard.<sup>125</sup>

<sup>123</sup> Vouilloux, *Tableaux d’auteurs*, 96–99.

<sup>124</sup> Joachim Gasquet, *Cézanne* (Fougères, 2002) [Original edition 1921], 366–399.

<sup>125</sup> Vouilloux, *Tableaux d’auteurs*, 89. Rewald most disparaging concepts for Gasquet are in *Cézanne, Geffroy et Gasquet*.

Rewald reversed the strategy put in place by Bernard, Larguier, and Gasquet in the 1910s and 1920s when they dissociated Cézanne from Zola's critical approach. One of the main goals of Rewald's book was to redeem the writer from his lack of comprehension of Cézanne and modern painting, and resituate him as the heroic art critic associated with the members of the new school by the common fight against the philistine, unjust society and official establishment. The art historian continues his work. Zola—Rewald claims—was sincere and fervent.

La sensibilité de l'oeil manquait à Zola, son goût n'était pas extrêmement fin, et sans doute était-il incapable de trouver une satisfaction intégrale dans une réalisation picturale; mais il avait la belle véhémence d'un lutteur d'avant-garde et la voix forte pour crier encore plus haut que les détracteurs. La nouvelle école qui naîtra du SALON DES REFUSES, .... ne pouvait pas trouver meilleur avocat que ce jeune journaliste qui renoncera à toute finesse de langage, à toute discussion esthétique pour dire son opinion d'une façon à la fois brutale et sincère.<sup>126</sup>

Rewald in the end does not solve the problem of the literary types but combines two of them, as he follows Bernard and Gasquet in associating Cézanne to Frenhofer, and even compares, point by point, the painter's letters with Balzac's text.

Si Cézanne avait pu reconnaître [sic] en Claude Lantier ses propres mots, ses gestes, ses troubles devant la réalisation, il n'y retrouvait pas ses idées. Ce qu'il pensait sur l'art, ses théories qu'il communiquera plus tard à ses jeunes amis peintres, il les avait trouvés exprimés par Balzac dans LE CHEF-D'ŒUVRE INCONNU, et il n'avait pas hésité à s'identifier avec le personnage central de cette petite nouvelle, le peintre Frenhofer.<sup>127</sup>

Both models must be considered part of the century-long *paragone*. If Lantier was an impotent and failed artist, the Balzacian painter was idealist and heroic, but mad. In

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<sup>126</sup> Rewald, *Cézanne et Zola*, 40.

<sup>127</sup> Rewald, *Cézanne et Zola*, 156. It has been noted that in a certain way Balzac text can support all kind of different claims, including some which contradict Cézanne's aesthetic. See Robert Ratcliff, "Cézanne's Working Methods and Their Theoretical Background," Ph.D. diss. Unpublished, University of London, 1960.

both cases the painters, mired in their dreams and egos, fail to communicate with society and to play a role in it.

Ultimately, if Zola had moved literature and art criticism closer to science and claimed to be an objective observer of reality, Rewald's biography situates art history in an area that is in between narration and history. He could not distance himself from the narrative sources and from the logic of the anecdote *qua* *historeme* by which the information is already literary and ruled by the laws of [written] discourse more than by their historical truthfulness. As Champa notices, in Rewald's scholarship there is no distance to the literary text,

I am also considering Rewald's *History [of Impressionism]* as both history and novel, which I think it is, ... Neither text, Zola's [*L'Oeuvre*] nor Rewald's, is purely one thing or another, but Zola's is the more honestly ambiguous, since it deploys its mistakes (its fictions) clearly, while Rewald's does not.<sup>128</sup>

Rewald's scholarship naturalizes the literary/narrative character of art history, as his avowed methodology was to discriminate the documentation and put it together so that the reader may be in touch with the past. His evaluation of the sources and his decision to highlight Zola's personality were historically determined and ideological. In a period of growing anti-Semitism and social unease, when Germany was already governed by Hitler and Stalin was about to start the purges in Russia, the towering figure of Zola, the author of the *J'accuse*, took on a different meaning.<sup>129</sup> This part of the story is posterior to 1886, when the writer's friendship with Cézanne ended, but

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<sup>128</sup> Champa, *Masterpiece Studies*, 72. Rodolphe Gasché has noted that according to Baumgarten there was a fundamental relationship between history and narration. These discourses are distinguishable only because of the different proportion of reality, logic, and imagination implicated in the thematic constructions in which the two organize their individual determinations. Rodolphe Gasché, "Of Aesthetic and Historical Determination," as in n.38.

<sup>129</sup> Already in the introduction to Fry's *Cézanne: A Study*, Zola is commented upon as author of bad literature but the noble writer of the 1898 *J'accuse*. Evidently the judgment would depend on the political orientation of the authors.

Rewald manages to make it significant for the painter. He gives special attention not to the Dreyfus affair (Cézanne was anti-dreyfusard), but to an article by Henri Rochefort published in 1903 in the anti-Semitic *La Lanterne*. “L’Amour du laid” was a vicious attack on Cézanne but the author takes advantage of the situation to assail the memory of Zola, the intellectual, who had died in 1902. Rewald quotes the most vitriolic part of the article in length,

‘Nous avons souvent affirmé qu’il y avait des dreyfusards longtemps avant l’affaire Dreyfus. Tous les cerveaux malades, les âmes à l’envers, les louchons et les estropiés étaient murs pour la venue du Messie de la Trahison. Quand on voit la nature comme l’interprétaient Zola et ses peintres ordinaires, il est tout simple que le patriotisme et l’honneur vous apparaissent sous la forme d’un officier livrant à l’ennemi les plans de la défense du pays.’<sup>130</sup>

Rewald takes the anecdote from Gasquet’s book: the artist received hundreds of copies of the article and even his friends in Aix were harassed after its publication. Rewald, who focuses almost exclusively on the negative reviews and articles by the popular press, mentions an anonymous article also in *La Lanterne* where Zola is accused of convincing the art dealers to promote Cézanne’s art.<sup>131</sup> As mentioned above, the opposite was true, that is, Zola’s portrait of Lantier was used as a corroboration of the idea that the artist was an “abortive genius,” but Rewald does not mention these versions.

Maintenant que le romancier était mort, Cézanne, ... devenait une véritable victime de son amitié. N’est-il pas tragique de voir que le peintre—après toutes les souffrances que lui avaient causées l’incompréhension de son ami et leur séparation—soit hanté vers la fin de sa vie par l’ombre de Zola, évoqué toujours pour l’attaquer? Ami dévoué, patient et bon, critique d’art sans intuition et souvent sans clairvoyance, Zola devient après sa mort une arme pour les

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<sup>130</sup> Rewald, *Cézanne et Zola*, 162.

<sup>131</sup> See Rewald, *Cézanne et Zola*, 163. Rewald includes the critique by the conservative Jewish art critic Max Nordau (1849-1923), even though this kind of comment would not have affected Cézanne.

détracteurs de Cézanne qui ne reculent pas devant le mensonge pour persécuter le peintre.<sup>132</sup>

Rewald's Cézanne combines the figures of Lantier and Frenhofer, and his fate is associated with that of Zola, the artist's friend who had defended him, as he had later defended Dreyfus against an unfair official establishment and the general public. Rewald the art historian as intellectual takes upon himself the task of interpreting the artist's life and giving it a meaning and an orientation that are in great part determined by the genre he uses to write about the artist.

Rewald's biography of Cézanne hinges around Zola's. The artist's relationship with other painters and with painting as an autonomous practice and field, his personal decisions to forge his personae as a [professional] painter, the technical or stylistic challenges he faced, are secondary to Rewald's quest for the man. The art historian does not pay much attention to Cézanne's literary tastes beyond his acquaintance with Zola and the members of his entourage.

The final impression is that the artist was always introspective, weak, self-concentrated, serious, and in constant need of the paternalistic support of his friend. The new *paragone* is here completely developed. As Rewald argued as late as in 1959,

Sa religiosité profonde et sincère... correspondait à un besoin absolu chez cet homme résigné à vivre et créer dans un isolement quasi total. Mais peu désireux et peut-être même *incapable d'expliquer ses convictions intimes, encore moins enclin à les discuter*, il se repliait automatiquement sur lui-même...<sup>133</sup> (Emphasis added)

The artist must be protected and explained.

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<sup>132</sup> Rewald, *Cézanne et Zola*, 164.

<sup>133</sup> Rewald, *Cézanne, Geffroy et Gasquet*, 21.

## Rewald and MoMA

In 1935, while Barr was organizing *Cubism and Abstract Art*, MoMA presented its first blockbuster exhibition, *Vincent van Gogh*, which in its combined venues attracted almost a million visitors.<sup>134</sup> The museum's advertising and the impressive merchandising associated with the show provoked criticism from within the art world but secured MoMA's position among the public. As Steve Spence notes,

Because MoMA often appears ... as the standard-bearer of an elitist and hermetic formalism the suggestion that the museum supported this trend might seem surprising. Nevertheless, in the 1930s *l'art pour l'art* represented only one among a diverse array of competing aesthetic faiths, and evidence suggests that MoMA encouraged the commercial frenzy that grew around its exhibition.<sup>135</sup>

The show instigated two reprints of *Lust for Life* (Irving Stone's fictionalized biography of the artist first published in 1934), a condensed version of which appeared in the *Reader's Digest*. Spence calls attention to the fact that Stone's book devotes more space to the first part of the life of the artist, his religious crisis, and thus, to his realist style. Spence argues that it was the assimilation of the religious impulse to the incomprehension of his art and martyrdom that attracted the public. It is not known if Rewald was aware of Stone's biography, but the show demonstrates how important the biographical approach was in MoMA's modernism.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Interestingly this was the show in which Hugh Troy made perhaps the first creative museological intervention when he placed in the installation a box containing an ear molded from meat with a label reading, "This is the ear which Vincent van Gogh cut off and sent to his mistress, a French prostitute, Dec. 24, 1888." The painter assumed – somehow correctly—that the public was more interested in the artist's life than in his art. 1935 was also the year in which the American biographer Gerstle Mack (1894-1983) published his work on Cézanne.

<sup>135</sup> Steve Spence, "Van Gogh in Alabama, 1936," *Representations* 75 (Summer, 2001), 36–37. For an acute comment on MoMA and Matisse see O'Brian, "MoMA's Public Relations."

<sup>136</sup> The solo exhibition and the retrospective were developed at the end of the nineteenth century and are typically modernist products. See Robert Jensen, *Marketing Modernism in Fin-de-Siècle Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

When Huyghe—who praised Barr’s van Gogh catalogue and his use of documentation in *L’Amour de l’Art*<sup>137</sup>—organized his own van Gogh exhibition two years later, the *marchand* Pierre Loeb observed,

[C]ette présentation possible avec Van Gogh (vie exceptionnellement agitée, vie maudite...) ne le sera pas dans la majorité des cas. Certains, parmi les plus grands, ont eu les vies tranquilles, bourgeoises, sans éclats. D’autres n’ont laissé que des correspondances insignifiantes. *Par quels artifices leur donnerez-vous un intérêt spectaculaire?*<sup>138</sup> (Emphasis added)

The comment confirms that in the 1930s the strategies of display resulting from this biographical approach to modern art were new. It fostered the exhibition of documentation (letters, maps, dates, certificates) together with works of art and structured the museum installation. Biography became part of modern art history’s interpretative tools, something the public has to know and the museum has to provide, as part of the information that accompanies the exhibition, which amounts to a new way of associating the image and the word.

Considered together, *Le Chef-d’oeuvre inconnu* (1831–1837), *L’Oeuvre* (1886), and *Cézanne et Zola* (1936) suggest an intellectual model that helps to understand how the idea of the absolute artist came to be an integral part of modern art history. In the nineteenth century, men of letters recast the artist biography as a literary sub-genre which took a life of its own. These texts, as successful fictions and reflections of the period’s *imaginaire* about artists and poets, in turn became ideological paradigms that shaped reality. As the century developed, the aspiration of realist and naturalist writers to portray real life gave to these novellas the aura of veracity that characterize historical writings. Therefore, anecdotes could easily

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<sup>137</sup> René Huyghe, “Livres,” *L’Amour de l’Art* 18 (April, 1937), 3.

<sup>138</sup> Pierre Loeb, “Que pensez-vous de l’exposition van Gogh?,” *Beaux Arts* (10 Septembre, 1937), 2.

transmigrate and become part of these last as *histoemes*, the place in which the horizontal trust of words reflects the real and thus certify the narration's faithfulness. Rewald's historicist approach to the biography of Cézanne demonstrates how the literary (narrative) sub-genre was integrated into art historical writings.

Although biographies still occupy a rather peripheral position in the discipline, modern art history is intrinsically biographical, i.e., the basic material of the biography, severed from its original context is incorporated into other art historical writings: the anecdotes as index of the real, refer to the artist as an historical being and therefore are of enormous significance for the interpretative task. This is the reason why Rewald's scholarship with its wealth of information about the artist is even now considered a valid resource. Rewald's biography, site photographs, and the compiled letters anchor Cézanne in history and may be used to support different interpretations.

In 1978 Rewald collaborated with William Rubin in preparing MoMA's blockbuster exhibit *Cézanne: The Late Work*, which was later presented in Paris. Despite its success the show was harshly criticized by a younger generation of art historians who were contesting MoMA's modernist art history. Eunice Lipton, who sparked the debate with a virulent piece in the *Art Journal*, observed with respect to Rewald's presentation at the symposium organized to accompany the exhibition,

[F]or Rewald, the central 'facts' are the works themselves; any attempt to explain them seems to violate their mysterious, inexplicable significance. If we do deal with the facts of his [Cézanne] life, Rewald urged, we must keep them separate; they are interesting pieces of information but not in any way formative. As I see it, these biographical facts are only cited in order to reinforce the myth of the artist, not as a person but as artistic persona.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Eunice Lipton, "Some Reflexions on the Cézanne Events at The Museum of Modern Art," *Art Journal* 37 (Summer, 1978): 326.

According to Lipton, Reff and Shapiro were trying to introduce a psychological approach and to understand the artist through the analysis of the works of art: “for Reff art has intentionality.”<sup>140</sup> In Rewald’s work, as in that of many modernist art historians, works of art are revered for their ineffable quality but there is no true interpretation of them, which would imply that the transcendental sphere of art might be reached and explained. The only thing the art critic and art historian can do is to “ap-praise” its value. Rewald’s exclusive concentration on the events that surrounded the life of the artist served to naturalize “art” as an ineffable “gift” given to certain special people, and to sever art from its ties to the historical moment thus confirming its transcendental character. Rewald’s biography of Cézanne is an example of modern biography: while the anecdotes and documents guarantee the historical character of the biography, the genre itself establishes Cézanne as the incarnation of the paradigm.

As Griselda Pollock stated just two years after Lipton reviewed the show,

The preoccupation with the individual artist is symptomatic of the work accomplished in art history—the production of an artistic *subject for works of art*. The subject constructed from the art work is then posited as the exclusive source of meaning,—i.e. “art”, and the effect of this is to remove ‘art’ from historical or textual analysis by representing it solely as the ‘expression’ of the creative personality of the artist. ...Art and the artist become reflexive, mystically bound into an unbreakable circuit which produces the artist as the subject of the art work and the art work as the means of contemplative access to that subject’s ‘transcendent’ and creative subjectivity. The construction of an artistic subject for art is accomplished through current discursive structures—the *biographic*, which focuses exclusively on the individual, and the *narrative*,

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<sup>140</sup> Both William Rubin and Rewald answered Eunice Lipton’s virulent attack. The first commented that her arguments against those who defend a strict formalism reminded him of Stalin’s assault on “bourgeois formalism.” “Letter to the Editor,” *Art Journal* 38 (Spring, 1979), 232. Rewald responded that her attack made him understand what Cézanne had suffered when his art was criticized. “Letter to the Editor,” *Art Journal* 38 (Winter, 1978–1979), 152.

which produces coherent, linear, causal sequences through which an artistic subject is realized.<sup>141</sup>

A quarter of a century after these words were written, they are still pertinent. The modern biography of the “absolute artist” not only sutures a specific relationship of works of art with the word that interprets them, but also articulates a certain definition of modern art with history. In the nineteenth century all the contemporary artists were seen as creative personalities and revered as such.<sup>142</sup> As Green has proven, in France at the end of the nineteenth century, artists with very different styles and understanding of art, “all the flowers of the field,” were celebrated as national treasures. In the 1930s the same process that redefined modern art as avant-garde art added a political ingredient to the definition of art, and a heroic ethical stance to the persona of the absolute artist. Since then, not all those who practice art are absolute artists.

As Pollock indicates, the group of paintings that modern art history considers important determines how the artist is portrayed. The biography depends as much on the data provided by the documentation as on the general discourse that explains the development of the history of modern art. Rewald’s historicist and document-based scholarship was easily incorporated into MoMA’s project. Historicism and formalism complement themselves.<sup>143</sup> Barr supported the publication of Rewald’s *The History of*

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<sup>141</sup> Pollock, “Artists Mythologies,” 58–59. See also Chapter Two: Venturi from a different point of view reached the same conclusion.

<sup>142</sup> See Michèle Hannoosh, “Théophile Silvestre’s *Histoire des artistes vivants*: Art Criticism and Photography,” *The Art Bulletin* 88 (December, 2006): 729–755, and the analysis of Huyghe’s *Histoire de l’art contemporain* in chapter 3.

<sup>143</sup> Nevertheless, the pure formalism of an art critic like Clement Greenberg could not accept Rewald’s approach to art history. In a letter to Erle Loran written in February 1, 1944, he stated his own review of a book on Seurat by Rewald: “The book itself was much thinner than I gave to understand [in the review], even for Rewald, who is what the Germans call a ‘Bibliotheker’ and will never be anything else. I was moved to go easy with him by a notion that I now think mistaken: that is, get people

*Impressionism* (1946) and later of his *Post-Impressionism, from Van Gogh to Gauguin* (1956).<sup>144</sup> As Pollock argues,

The canonising interpretation [of the new painting] appeared with John Rewald's *History of Impressionism*, (New York, 1946) published by the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and following the model of analysis produced by A. H. Barr in his first decade of exhibitions as Director of that museum.<sup>145</sup>

Rewald took from Zola the role of legislator, but his moral and civic message is embedded in his scholarship and therefore cloaked and strengthened by historicism's claims to objectivity. In this way his work complemented and supplemented the approach of the formalist art historians that established the modernist canon of great men.

In Rewald's work, style and technique are like mathematic formulas that the artist has to "discover."<sup>146</sup> The innovations that the impressionists and Cézanne brought to art and their approach and interpretation of nature become the "right" or the "normal" and are normative and prescriptive as they impose an historically determined worldview as paradigmatic. The implications of this development are profound, as the new paradigm is imposed as such in the name of freedom. Modern art history does not prescribe a certain style, but a way of being a human being, a way of seeing, perceiving, feeling and understanding the world.

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interested in Seurat no matter what the pretext. It was a poor book even on his own terms." "Erle Loran Papers," Reel 1716, no. 14, Archives of American Art, Washington, DC.

<sup>144</sup> In 1991 Rewald commented that he had been introduced to Barr in the 1930s but that he was not an acquaintance, even though it had been Barr who helped him to flee Europe in 1940. Monroe Wheeler appointed Rewald to work for MoMA. See Rewald, interview, Zane.

<sup>145</sup> See Griselda Pollock, "The Homeland of Pictures. Reflections on Van Gogh's Place Memories," *LAND2: texts* (May, 2005), n. 3. See also her "Say About Cézanne," 95–101.

<sup>146</sup> The words "discovery," "conquest," and "revelation" are common stock in Rewald writings. See Richard Thomson, "Cézanne Composition; Studies in Impressionism; Cézanne and the End of Impressionism," *The Burlington Magazine* 128 (April, 1986): 297–298.

Rewald's work could, at the same time, provide the anecdotes that support "post-modern" interpretation and thus become a "resource." From the particular (the biographical anecdote, the document), the "modern" still controls and orients the general discourse of art history and secures the *imperium* of the absolute artists as incarnated or embedded into the work of art. Rewald's historicist scholarship and his approach to the biography of Cézanne expanded the *paragone* of the nineteenth century and helped to establish the new alliance of the word and image that Mitchell, in the text quoted in Chapter One, called *ut pictura theoria*.

#### Coda: Zola's Meaningful Joke

In 1869 Zola, struggling to establish himself as a journalist and art critic in the Parisian milieu, published in the newspapers *Le Figaro* and *Le Gaulois* several poems by the recently deceased Charles Baudelaire that he claimed had escaped the attention of the editors of the poet's complete works. As it turned out, this was a spoof, as the parodic pastiches belonged to Zola's friend Paul Alexis, a young Aixoise and aspiring man of letters. Baudelaire's admirers reacted swiftly harshly and Zola retreated in order to avoid further damage to his reputation.

Noëlle Benhamou and Valérie Gramfort have recently analyzed this episode and demonstrated that on top of confronting the editors of the works of the poet, Zola also wanted to "malmener Baudelaire."<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Noëlle Benhamou, and Valérie Gramfort, "Quand le jeune Zola monte un canular . . .," *Romantisme*, 116 (2002) : 67.

Ce n'était pas seulement un acte de résistance aux Parnassiens et à Baudelaire—auxquels Zola s'en était déjà pris plusieurs fois dans ses chroniques—mais aussi une démonstration concrète que la littérature nouvelle s'écrivait en prose et que la voie ouverte par le poète des *Fleurs du Mal* était une impasse. Sous l'aspect d'une blague irrespectueuse mais anodine, la supercherie, profondément subversive, servait la cause naturaliste.<sup>148</sup>

This episode was part of Zola's strategies to contest the prestige of poetry and establish naturalism and the novel at the top of the hierarchy of the literary genres. This documented anecdote would only be that, had not Baudelaire been Cézanne's favorite author throughout his adult life. A set of drawings from the 1860s prove that the artist had already read and admired the poet's *La Charogne*, a poem that he recited by heart into his old age.<sup>149</sup> This poem is one of the poems that Alexis parodied and, in one of the articles Zola wrote trying to explain his *faux pas*, he commented, tongue in cheek that, "ce n'est pas un pastiche, mais plutôt une production parallèle, supérieure, selon moi à certains morceaux du poète de la Charogne."<sup>150</sup> Cézanne reiterated his unlimited admiration for the author of *Les Fleurs du mal* both as poet and art critic until the end of his life.

Zola did not like Baudelaire either as a poet or as an art critic. The poet's style, aesthetics, personality, his bohemianism, political inclinations, and approach to literature, contradicted the principles Zola defended.<sup>151</sup> The problem is that Cézanne's admiration for Baudelaire, his early bohemianism, his acquaintance with Baudelarian poets, are incompatible with Rewald's interpretation of the painter's life, according to

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<sup>148</sup> Benhamou, and Gramfort, "Quand Zola," 72.

<sup>149</sup> See Léo Larguier, *Le Dimanche avec Paul Cézanne*, (Paris, 1925), 88 and Cézanne's letter to his son from September 13, 1906, where he writes that is re-reading Baudelaire's *Art romantique*. Rewald, *Correspondance*, 326.

<sup>150</sup> Quoted in Benhamou, and Gramfort, "Quand Zola," 68.

<sup>151</sup> The three volume biography of Zola by Henri Mitterand—*Sous le regard de l'Olympia 1840-1870, L'Homme de Germinal 1871-1893, L'Honneur 1893-1902*, (Paris: Fayard, 1999-2000)—makes this point clear. See also Brookner, *The Genius of the Future*.

which the painter shared Zola's artistic orientation and esthetics, especially in the 1860s.<sup>152</sup> Did they talk about the poet at all? Was Zola's spoof related to their disagreement over the value of Baudelaire's work? Was this issue part of the discussions they had in the 1860s, which almost brought the relationship to an end? Did Baudelaire's poems and art criticism influence Cézanne's painting and aesthetics?<sup>153</sup> What did Cézanne understand or like of Baudelaire's oeuvre?<sup>154</sup>

Baudelaire is not mentioned in the letters Cézanne exchanged with his friends from Aix in the 1860s, which is almost logical, as all of them were also friends with Zola, and his name does not appear in those he addressed to the writer himself. If Baudelaire was a point of contention between the two friends, it is 'logical' that both would have avoided it as a subject matter in their letters.

The episode demonstrates that, even though Cézanne and Zola were good friends, the painter's artistic project and understanding of life cannot be established through the analysis of their correspondence and that they had fundamental discrepancies about literature and art. Rewald's reliance on the letters and the identification of the two artistic projects and personalities, his "certainties" are based on the lack of documentation, "proving" what might have been the greatest and more

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<sup>152</sup> See for example the articles by Mary Louise Krumrine and Mary Tomkins Lewis in Lawrence Gowing, *Cézanne The Early Years 1859–1872*, exh. cat., National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1988, which are based on this line of argumentation inaugurated by Rewald. Wayne Andersen's *The Youth of Cézanne and Zola: Notoriety at Its Source: Art and Literature in Paris* (Boston: Editions Fabriart, 2003), although critical to this tradition, circumscribes his analysis to the relationship of Zola and Cézanne.

<sup>153</sup> The only art historian who has tried to prove this influence is Melina V. Kervandjan, *Painted Slang: The Caricatural Aspects of French Painting, 1850-1880* (PhD. diss., City University of New York, 2000). Nina M. Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, *Cézanne and Provence. The Painter and His Culture*, (Chicago, 2003), chapter two, relates both episodes to Provençal humor.

<sup>154</sup> The most complete analysis of Cézanne's readings is Robert Ratcliffe *Cézanne's Working Methods and Their Theoretical Background* (Ph.D. diss., unpublished, University of London, 1960). The author does not pay special attention to the influence of Baudelaire.

lasting stimulus in Cézanne's art and aesthetic, which is impossible to gauge.<sup>155</sup> The hegemonic role that *Cézanne et Zola* had in shaping the scholarship on the artist, inhibited the consideration of other influences in the painter's art and therefore other potential construals of his artistic persona and biography.

All historians know that it is impossible to account for the infinite variables and influences that determine an historical event. The case of art history is different because the biography established on the base of documentation is a fundamental heuristic tool for the interpretation of works of art. This is not the place to write about this "other" Cézanne—who deserves a separate study—or to substitute Zola and the naturalist writers with Baudelaire and the Baudelairean poets. This would only reinforce the bibliographical approach to art history and of biography as the place where the word is sutured to the image, which the present essay intends to expose. The episode calls attention to the limited ability of a biography based on this kind of documentation to provide elements that could serve to support an interpretation of the artist's work. Although Rewald's biography of Cézanne is no longer the hegemonic account of the artist's life, the anecdotes and quotations drawn from his scholarship still command and orient the interpretative work of modern art history.

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<sup>155</sup> This study should consider first the critical fortune of Baudelaire and its uses in modern art history. Since the 1980 and thanks to the revalorization of the writings of Walter Benjamin, scholars tend to concentrate themselves on his "The Painter of Modern Art." Baudelaire's death in 1867 provoked a flurry of publications and the beginning of his consecration.

## **Conclusion : Section One**

This section has examined three authors and three books that correspond to as many different approaches to art history and to Cézanne's art. Only Rewald's biography withstood the test of time, as it established the foundations of the modern scholarship on the artist.

Biography as a genre implies that a person can be known. Even when it includes comments about what is not known or is in doubt about the life of an artist, the narration is in itself a (positive) statement that conceals the fact that it is based on partial and relative information about a certain subject. Because the writer himself does not know the extent of what is not documented, he cannot assess the actual importance of the material that did reach him. In addition, an immense part of a person's reactions and behavior is irrational and consequently inexplicable. This applies even to the cases in which art historians use a psychoanalytic approach, as this is yet another epistemological model that "explains" and makes understandable a person's reactions, actions, and creations. Biography is ideological then, because it implies that a man can be intellectually known, comprehended, explicated, and narrated. Its final connotation is that men have a fundamental "essence" that affords constancy, coherence, and consistency to their actions, in a word: meaning.

Rewald's biography is ideological both as historiography (White) and because it reinforces the association of history with literature. Preziosi has observed that, in the nineteenth century, the novel and the museum helped to consolidate the idea of "nation." As disciplinary controlling models, both establish narratives that imply a

certain understanding of time and space, objects, and subjects. Therefore, they ideologically enforce a historically determined worldview as natural.<sup>156</sup>

The documentation that structures the biographical approach and the material that derives from it, such as anecdotes, hold in themselves and reflect the ideology of the genre—this is the reason why they could be part of the narrative in the first place—and carry it over the art historical writings in which they are incorporated. Contrary to what Smith affirmed, these “resources” also have to be questioned. Documents “suture” the word/*logos* to the artist’s body and life as biography, and to the work of art as interpretation. Documents articulate the presence (the image, the structure, the synchronic) to the explanation/*logos* (the diachronic, the historical). Documents are epistemological tools for interpretation, the “site” where mere presence is transformed into reference thus transforming works of art into signs.

The biographical approach is fundamentally modernist and is embedded within modern art history’s epistemological foundations, which suggests that the discipline itself derives from, and reflects modernism’s ideology. This explains why (and how) the core principles established in the 1930s outlasted the crises and the revisions that took place in the twentieth century. Without a basic reconsideration of the discipline’s foundations there cannot be a true “post-modern” or truly “new” art history.

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<sup>156</sup> Preziosi, *The Art of Art History*, 511.

[A]dvocates of ... historicist thinking believe that they can explain any phenomenon purely in terms of its genesis. That is, they believe at the very least that they can grasp historical reality by reconstructing the series of events in their temporal succession without any gaps. Photography presents a spatial continuum; historicism seeks to provide the temporal continuum. According to historicism the complete mirroring of a temporal sequence simultaneously contains the meaning of all that occurred within that time. ...Historicism is concerned with the photography of time.  
Sigfried Kracauer, "Photography," 1927.<sup>1</sup>

Presence is superseded by presentation, communion by a desperate and sometimes sincere effort at communication.  
Georges Duthuit, *Le musée inimaginable*. 1947.<sup>2</sup>

## Section Two

In 1989 Theodore Reff, published an article on Cézanne's use of perspective. The text begins with an analysis of the historiography of the artist which demonstrates that this issue dominated Cézanne studies from the 1930s to the 1980s. Reff examines two perspectival drawings sketched by the artist in different periods of his life to conclude that they prove Cézanne's continuous interest in perspective.

Les documents publiés ici et l'examen des déclarations de Cézanne devraient suffire à démontrer que l'artiste s'intéressait beaucoup plus à la perspective traditionnelle qu'on a bien voulu le dire jusqu'ici. Tout comme le panorama rapide proposé ici devrait suffire à démontrer qu'il n'a jamais négligé ce moyen efficace de suggérer l'espace, et qu'il ne l'a pas non plus appliqué servilement, même dans ses derniers œuvres, ... L'idée d'une 'fin de la perspective' annoncée par Cézanne et consommée par le cubisme ressortit autant à la mythologie du modernisme qu'à l'histoire de l'art de Cézanne. Elle participe d'un mythe plus général, où la perspective et sa 'fin' jouent un rôle symbolique important : celui de la 'fin' de la foi de l'homme moderne en la géométrie et sa faculté de donner une représentation rationnelle du réel.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Critical Inquiry*, 19 (Spring, 1993): 425.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Henri Zerner in "Malraux and the Power of Photography," in *Sculpture and photography: envisioning the third dimension*, ed. Geraldine A. Johnson (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 126.

<sup>3</sup> Theodore Reff, "Cézanne et la perspective: quelques remarques à la lumière de documents nouveaux," *Revue de l'art* 86 (1989): 13.

Reff aimed to reaffirm the centrality of perspective in the tradition of Western art and to deny its “end” at the waning years of the nineteenth. The phrase “fin de la perspective” relates both to Novotny’s 1938 *Cézanne und das Ende der wissenschaftliche Perspektive* (“histoire de l’art de Cézanne”) and to the 1936 MoMA catalogue *Cubism and Abstract art* (“mythologie du modernisme”), where Barr asserted that the pioneers of Cubism admired the works of art in which Cézanne “abandons the perspective of deep space.”<sup>4</sup>

This last paragraph of Reff’s article takes on even greater significance in the light of the fact that the “myth” of the symbolic role of perspective in art history has a starting date: 1927. That was the year when Panofsky’s *Die Perspektive als symbolische Form (Perspective as Symbolic Form)*, first published in the *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg* in 1924–25, appeared as a book.<sup>5</sup> However, in a note, Reff refers to the 1987 publication *L’Origine de la Perspective* by Humbert Damisch, where the author criticizes Panofsky for restricting the validity of perspective to a definite historical period and argues for its value as a paradigmatic epistemological model. Damisch was a lonely voice at a time when Marxism, Feminism, and postcolonial studies were targeting perspective as the epitome of the Eurocentric, bourgeois, white, male ideology. Thus, Damisch’s book led the way for Reff to posit once more the centrality of Cézanne in Western Humanism and the universal value of this tradition.

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<sup>4</sup> Barr, *Cubism and Abstract Art*, 26.

<sup>5</sup> I use the slightly later date of the book as the starting point for the role of perspective in art history, as Panofsky’s book was more widely accessible, than his first abridged articles in the specialized Warburg journal.

Cézanne's use of perspective is this dissertation's case study, and this section examines the process which put Cézanne's art in the strategic position of bridging traditional Renaissance ideas of space and modern art. I contend in the preceding pages that modern art history incorporated modern art into the general history of art during the 1930s. This was done by applying to the study of modern art the same vocabulary and methodologies the discipline had developed for the analysis of past (historical) art. As a result modern art came to be considered the latest development of the Western tradition.

Panofsky argued that the formula for representing space devised in the Renaissance was the symbolic form of the West. By establishing perspective as an epistemological paradigm, he reinforced the centrality of the Humanist definition of Man in the discipline. Therefore, the rationale underlying the discussion around Cézanne's perspective reflects the ideology and the methodologies that remain at the core of modern art history.

Panofsky's book not only instituted Renaissance perspective—understood as space—as one of the overarching categories that helped create that link, but also the notion that works of art express, and thus might be read as metaphors of, the way people understand their being-in-the-world, their perception of space.

With this tradition in mind, Cézanne's art was presented as the glorious consummation of a tradition that had begun in the Renaissance, while also presenting him as the father of modern art. Interpreting Cézanne's art as a transition between two traditions, modern art historians avoided considering modern art as a break with the

past. They concealed most of the avant-garde's anti-art and anti-establishment claims under a formalist reading that insisted on continuity.

Inseparable from the development of Cézanne as an important transitional artist, is the use of site photographs for the study of his landscapes even though Reff does not analyze them in his article.

Dans la première période, qui correspond aux années trente et quarante, les auteurs soulignent que l'artiste a refusé ou radicalement transformé l'espace perspectif de la Renaissance : une rupture avec une tradition supposée immuable depuis des siècles, et même perpétuée par l'impressionnisme, mais qui prend fin d'abord dans son oeuvre, puis de manière plus définitive, par le cubisme. ([Venturi, Novotny] *tous deux étayent leur démonstration par des comparaisons entre des paysages de Cézanne et des photographies des sites représentés* encore que Novotny insiste davantage sur la distanciation ainsi créée et Venturi sur la diversité des effets expressifs et plastiques.<sup>6</sup> (Emphasis added)

Reff is right about Fritz Novotny (1903–1983), an art historian of the School of Vienna whose *Cézanne und das Ende der wissenschaftliche Perspektive* depends upon the site photographs taken by Marschutz and Rewald.<sup>7</sup> The Austrian scholar, who acknowledged the influence of Panofsky's treatise on perspective, posited that Cézanne was able to block all intellectual components from his perception, which allowed him to represent the basic perspectival configuration of his sensations. Novotny's book not only established perspective as a key issue for the understanding of Cézanne's art, but also reinforced the notion that perspective reflects people's perceptual disposition and the structure of the world (more on this below).

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<sup>6</sup> Reff, "Cézanne et la perspective," 8.

<sup>7</sup> Fritz Novotny's book contains a list of 133 sites established by Marschutz and Rewald. See his *Cézanne und das Ende der wissenschaftliche Perspektive* (Vienna: Phaidon-Verlag, 1938), 193–208. 112 of those motifs correspond to Provence where Marschutz was living at the time. Rewald and Marschutz guided Novotny during his trip to Aix, see John Rewald, interview by Sharon Zane, December, 1991, transcript, The Museum of Modern Art Oral History Project, and *Les Sites cézanniens du pays d'Aix: Hommage à John Rewald* (Paris: Difusion Seuil, 1996).

In contrast, Venturi's comparisons of paintings with site photographs do not extend beyond one and a half pages. The Italian art historian, who followed Longhi in his approach to the problem of space, was much more interested in Cézanne's use of color and composition.

The American artist Erle Loran (1905–1999) was the first to use site photographs for the systematic analysis of Cézanne's art. In 1930 he published "Cézanne's Country" in the art magazine *Arts*. Loran had been one of the many artists who painted on these same sites, and exploited the site pictures as comparative material to support his formalist interpretation of Cézanne's paintings. While the idea was quickly adopted by other scholars, Loran was criticized for manipulating the photographs.<sup>8</sup> The artist-writer used this material again in his 1943 *Cézanne's Composition*, where he expanded his formalist approach to the subject matter.

Marschutz and Rewald pursued in a more systematic manner the task of tracking down and photographing the sites.<sup>9</sup> These site photographs were widely disseminated: they illustrate Rewald's 1936 biography of Cézanne and the articles he published in Huyghe's *L'Amour de l'art* and, as he lent them to other authors, they appeared in

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<sup>8</sup> See for example Novotny, *Cézanne*, 15-16. For information about Loran's activities in Aix-in-Provence in the 1920s see letters from Léo Marschutz to Erle Loran June 5 and August 18, 1947. Reel 1716 no. 163–169, 176–180. "Erle Loran Papers," Archives of American Art, Washington, D.C.

<sup>9</sup> Marschutz's criticism of Loran's use of the site photographs in 1943 might also explain why his relationship with Rewald became strained. See "Erle Loran Papers," as in note 9. In 2006 the Musée Granet, Aix-en-Provence, started the centennial commemoration of the death of Paul Cézanne with an exhibition on the work by Marschutz. The catalogue explains that in 1928 he visited l'Estaque and the countryside around Aix. ... "Then on the Cours Mirabeau he thought he recognised [sic] Cézanne's footman - and it was him! Marchutz asked him to take him where his master painted, and before long he found himself in front of the very scenery in the painting that had brought him to Aix en Provence, at the old entry to the Château Noir in le Tholonet." Marchutz rented an apartment on the hillside, and settled in Aix-en-Provence. "Marchutz before Cézanne at the Granet museum," *Kesako. Magazine Culture et Tendances* <http://www.kesakonet.com/article492.html>.

many different contexts.<sup>10</sup> Rewald—the only art historian among the group devoted to this activity—applied the site photographs to the analysis of the work of other modern artists, securing for them a place among the documentary tools of modern art history. Huyghe, as noted in Chapter Three, included Rewald’s photographs of van Gogh’s sites in the exhibition he organized for the ICII in 1937.

Rewald’s scholarship has three main axes: biographies, the compilation of letters, and the site photographs. The last were still at the core of his contribution to the catalogue of the 1978 exhibition he helped to organize at MoMA, *Cézanne: The Late Work* and of his presentation at the corresponding symposium. Even his last published article—“‘Les maisons provençales’: Cézanne and Puget,” *The Burlington Magazine* (September, 1990), which he wrote in collaboration with Lawrence Gowing—announced the discovery of yet another site and analyzed a painting by Cézanne according to the information provided by photographs of the motif.

Rewald’s use of the site photographs was documentary as he contended that they demonstrated Cézanne’s realism. The 1935 article states that the photographs, “démontreront de nouveau que les oeuvres de Cézanne sont des portraits de la nature d’une fidélité toute exceptionnelle, et faciliteront la compréhension des quelques oeuvres dont les sujets ne sont pas distincts.”<sup>11</sup> As—according to the scholar—the “realism” of the paintings can be better understood by comparing them with photographs of the sites they represent, Cézanne’s style would be a variation of what

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<sup>10</sup> John Rewald and Léo Marschutz, “Cézanne au Château Noir,” *L’Amour de l’art* 16 (January, 1935): 15–21; “Cézanne au Louvre,” *L’Amour de l’art* 16 (October, 1935): 283–88 ; “Sources d’inspiration de Cézanne,” *L’Amour de l’art* 17 special issue, (May 1936): 160–164.

<sup>11</sup> Rewald and Marschutz, “Cézanne au Château Noir,” 18.

Soussloff has called “situated realism.” The photographs allowed Rewald to understand Cézanne’s habits of wandering and his strategies for choosing *motifs*.

Reff’s article does not evaluate the site photographs as heuristic tools for the analysis of works of art, but lists several articles devoted to Cézanne’s use of perspective for the representation of space that were based on them.<sup>12</sup> The fact is that, as their value as resources has not been examined in depth, site photographs, even if their use has waned, are still considered valid ancillary tools and have surfaced in recent publications and exhibits.<sup>13</sup>

To situate perspective at the nexus of Cézanne’s project allowed a presentation of him as the bridge that links the art of the late nineteenth century (impressionism, synthetism) with Cubism and its aftermath. In the 1930s both perspective and Cézanne’s art were established as key developments in the evolution of the Western tradition. The assumption that Cézanne was interested in the representation of space touches on the ideological foundations of the discipline. The historiography of modern art has deferred a serious revision of the premises on which it was built.

The strategy to establish Cézanne as the antecedent of cubism and of abstract art was twofold. First, Barr argued that Braque and Picasso had taken from the master a technical device Barr called *passages*. Cézanne supposedly created *passages* in order

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<sup>12</sup> James Carpenter, “Cézanne and Tradition,” *Art Bulletin* 35 (1951):17–20; Christopher Gray, “Cézanne’s use of Perspective,” *College Art Journal* 19 (1959–1960): 54–84; Norman Turner, “Subjective Curvature in later Cézanne,” *Art Bulletin* 63 (1981): 665–669; Boris Rauschenbach, “Perceptual Perspective and Cézanne’s Landscapes,” *Leonardo* XV (Winter, 1982): 28–33; and Jonas S. Friedenwald, “Knowledge of Space Perception and the Portrayal of Depth in Painting,” *College Art Journal* 15 (Winter, 1955): 96–112. To this list must be added, Patrick A. Heelan, *Space-Perception and the Philosophy of Science* (Berkeley: University of California, 1983). For an early critical appreciation of their use see Ernst Gombrich, *Art and Illusion. A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 54–58. Published in 1960.

<sup>13</sup> Paul Smith uses them for a comparison of color in *Seurat and the Avant-Garde* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997). Rewald’s site photographs were used in the exhibition curated by Magdalena Dabrowsky at MoMA, *French Landscape, The Modern Vision 1880–1920*, exh. cat., Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2000.

to reinforce the integrity and flatness of the picture plane, and to simultaneously counter-balance any illusion of three-dimensional space and volume. Secondly, Barr redefined the first period of cubism (analytic cubism) as a perceptual endeavor even though most of the contemporary sources insisted on characterizing it as a mental or conceptual approach to art.<sup>14</sup>

Although today they have been almost forgotten by specialists working on Cézanne, the *passages* were the keystone of the arched bridge that helped to support Barr's formalist interpretation of the history of modern art. This section examines how art historians adapted the two areas linked by the *passages* (Cézanne's art and analytic cubism) in order to secure their association. Picasso, Braque and the artists of the first part of the twentieth century openly admired Cézanne's art and they said so. At stake here is how art historians interpreted such influence and how this interpretation impinged on the understanding of Cézanne's art. The site photographs played an instrumental role in these developments.

### Space as Perspective

Panofsky's 1927 treatise is paramount to the discussion of the history of art as developed in the 1930s because it redefined and reformulated perspective so that it could become the symbolic form of the West, created in the Renaissance but solidly rooted in Classical Antiquity. Panofsky's book is one of the canonical texts for the

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<sup>14</sup> See Green, *Art in France*, 19–25; 93–95.

definitive institutionalization of modern art history.<sup>15</sup> He was working on Riegl's ideas about space but has a different goal. His aim was to secure for the Renaissance Humanism a central place at the core of the new discipline, not only as its preferred object of study but also as the epistemological model that governed its methodology.

James Elkins has demonstrated that the Renaissance did not refer to space as a volume that contains objects. He quotes for example Peter Collin's observation on the subject: "It is a curious fact that until the eighteenth century no architectural treatise ever used the word space."<sup>16</sup> Panofsky redefined perspective as space in a truly modern, neo-Kantian way, as perceptual space.

Chapter Three established that in the 1930s *Raum*/space became an important art historical category as *Kunstgeographie* and that national (and racial) *Raumstile* were at the center of the international debate. Therefore it might not be a coincidence that Panofsky explained space as perspective, that is, according to the abstract, mathematical and geometric formula postulated by the Humanist tradition, in dramatic opposition to the *Raum* of the infamous *Lebensraum*. This might at least in part explain the ideological impetus behind Panofsky's boldest postulations. As Elkins remarks, the Latin word *spatium* refers to the unintuitive spaces of philosophy, mathematics, and physics while the German *Raum* and the English "room"—which correspond to the Latin *Locus*—derive from the Teutonic *ruu*, which refers to the intuitive, everyday space such as the place occupied by bodies.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The book provides categories (perspective, space) and "fundamental principles" for the analysis of works of art. Panofsky's understanding of the writings of Leone Battista Alberti and Albert Durer on perspective became the canonical interpretations of these fundamental art historical sources.

<sup>16</sup> James Elkins, *The Poetics of Perspective* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 24.

<sup>17</sup> I am following here the suggestions afforded by Elkins's text which itself refers to other authors who treat the problem in all its density and problematicity. Elkins, *Poetics of Perspective*, 23–25.

Panofsky defines two periods in the history of perspective that correspond to two manners of sensing space (*Raumgefühl*) and were also ways of sensing the world (*Weltgefühl*): Antiquity and Renaissance perspective. Ultimately, these are ways of understanding or feeling the world that can be characterized as points of view or world view: *Weltanschauung*.<sup>18</sup> This, as Chapter One commented, was the last and critical step of Panofsky's interpretative system—which was aimed at describing the work of art as a manifestation of a world view—and therefore it might be said, a little simplistically, that in his system perspective is both part of the methodology and the meaning of the work of art.

Panofsky defined the Renaissance as the period that could “distance” itself from Antiquity and develop a historical perspective, thus creating the possibility of history as the objective, distanced observation of the past. The analysis of Renaissance perspective calls attention to the fact that vision implies physical space, as the eyes can only focus on things that are at a certain distance.<sup>19</sup> This is why Panofsky could equate geographical distance with the “perspective” afforded by time and thus with history. In this light the Renaissance, as the “geography of the imagination,” established paradigmatic standards for the measurement of time and space.

Space became a category for the analysis of works of art in the 1930s. Because space appeared in art history as perspective it located the Renaissance at the

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<sup>18</sup> See Christopher Wood's “Introduction” to his translation of Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form* (New York: Zone, 1991), 15–17. For Panofsky's *Weltanschauung* see Joan Hart, “Erwin Panofsky and Karl Mannheim: A Dialogue on Interpretation,” *Critical Inquiry* 19 (Spring, 1993): 534–566.

<sup>19</sup> See Chapter One and Melville, “The Temptation,” 409. Since Classical times vision distinguishes itself from all the other senses by its aloofness, in the sense that it perceives the world without having the need to contact it, from a certain distance.

center of the discipline. In spite of Panofsky's reticence about modern art, his reformulation of the history of perspective affected modern art history and Cézanne's place in it. *Perspective as Symbolic Form* is famously ambiguous in that it states the historical validity of perspective while at the same time argues that it reflects a scientifically proven model and therefore manifests truths that transcend history. In the first case "scientific perspective" was created in a certain historical moment and therefore might end. This is precisely what Barr's and Novotny's interpretation of Cézanne's art underscored, and presumably what Reff called in 1989 "the myth of modernity." In the second case, perspective was discovered and expressed an a-historical formula. This is what Reff's article suggests. In both cases perspective is used as a paradigm to evaluate Cézanne's art.

In this Second Section Panofsky's work and the influence of neo-Kantian philosophy in art history are at the center of the argumentation. Chapter Five analyzes the use of site photographs as heuristic tools for the study of the art of modern artists. It examines how these ancillary tools affected the understanding of Cézanne's art. Chapter Six considers the history of perspective. It argues that in France at the end of the nineteenth century space was not identified with perspective and that Cézanne and his contemporaries were concentrated on the problem of representing volumes. Space was mostly perceived as the distance that separates volumes. Chapter Seven studies how modern scholars established the nexus between Cézanne's art and cubism, and scrutinizes Barr's *Cubism and Abstract Art*, the exhibition that established the paradigmatic interpretation of the history of the early avant-gardes and confirmed Cézanne in his role of "father" of modern art.

Photography has been a most productively mixed blessing for art history. Any project to rethink the history of art must surely also rethink its relation to photography.  
Frederick Bohrer, "Photographic perspectives."<sup>1</sup>

Art history as we know it today is the child of photography  
Donald Preziosi, *Rethinking Art History. Meditations on a Coy Science*.

### **Chapter Five: Photography and Art History. The Site Photographs**

In 1947 André Malraux claimed that "for the last hundred years art history (if we except the specialized research-work of experts) has been the history of that which can be photographed."<sup>2</sup> At the turn of the century, Bernard Berenson praised photography as an auxiliary tool that facilitated the work of the connoisseur,<sup>3</sup> while Heinrich Wölfflin took advantage of the availability of reproductions to develop the compare/contrast method that remains at the center of the discipline.<sup>4</sup> In addition, Preziosi has demonstrated that the Fogg Method was based on them, whereas recently Frederick Bohrer has argued that the rise of graduate studies of art history in the United States coincided with the introduction of the slide projections in universities, which led him to conclude that "[w]hile previously mistress (as in the earlier personal and often unacknowledged use of photographs for research), photography became

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<sup>1</sup> In Elizabeth Mansfield, ed., *Art History and Its Institutions. Foundations of a Discipline* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 256.

<sup>2</sup> The bibliography on this issue is relatively new as it is closely related with the history of art history. See Preziosi, *Rethinking Art History*; Frederick Bohrer, "Photographic perspectives," as in n. 20; Mary Bergstein, "Lonely Aphrodites: On the Documentary Photography of Sculpture," *Art Bulletin* 74 (September, 1992): 475–498; Barbara Savedoff, "Looking at Art Through Photographs," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 51 (Summer, 1993): 455–461; Helene Roberts ed., *Art History Through the Camera's Lens* (Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach, 1995).

<sup>3</sup> See "Bernard Berenson on Isochromatic Film," (1893) in Roberts as in n. 21.

<sup>4</sup> See Robert Nelson, "The Slide Lecture, or The Work of Art History in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Critical Inquiry* 26 (Spring, 2000): 414–435.

proper wife and mother of a discipline.”<sup>5</sup> Preziosi too, as the epigraph suggests, considers art history and photography to have a very intimate relationship.

Photographs alter the sense of proportions, scale, texture, and colors of the works they represent. They not only decontextualize works of art but also ignore their material objecthood—their three-dimensionality—transforming them into images and thus reinforcing the notion of art as a purely visual phenomenon. As everything is formatted to fit into the same layout, photographs encourage comparison among radically different pieces, formal analysis, and the creation of abstract categories, such as style.

By emptying works of art of their original physicality, photographs transform them into illustrations of the narration in which they are incorporated, as their meaning depends on the text or script that supports them and on the grammatical position they occupy within the discourse. Photographs of works of art occupy the same position and have the same function in the art historical narration that anecdotes do in modern biographies. This is why Preziosi remarks that photography led to “thinking art historically in a sustained and systematic fashion,” and that they “most critically, made it possible to envision objects of art as signs.”<sup>6</sup>

Photography influenced the production of art. In the second part of the nineteenth century, photographs of classical sculptures, of old master art, and of the work of the most renowned of the contemporaneous academic artists reinforced and helped to popularize the taste for traditional art, and therefore were part of the horizon of

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<sup>5</sup> Bohrer, “Photographic perspectives,” 249.

<sup>6</sup> Preziosi, *Art of Art History*, 522.

established art against which modern artists reacted.<sup>7</sup> Photography at the time was especially fitted to record the formal characteristics of works of art with neat contours, defined modeling, and clear contrasts. Black and white photographs, as the reactionary critic Louis Dimier noted, translate reality into chiaroscuro values. In this way they reaffirmed the value of this traditional representational device for the depiction of reality.<sup>8</sup> Photography even influenced art criticism, as revealed by this comment by Sar Péladan (1858–1918) “Il se produit un curieux phénomène. Le peintre oublie les maîtres et, selon son expression, regarde la vie. Le critique, au contraire, s’entoure de chefs-d’œuvre, et a chez lui une Pinacothèque formée d’épreuves Braun.”<sup>9</sup>

In 1980 Kirk Varnedoe problematized the well established notion that considered that impressionist art had been influenced by photography. He observed that around 1870, photographs conformed to, and thus confirmed, pictorial realism, as photographers only slowly dared to liberate themselves from such a prestigious model.<sup>10</sup> The problem, he argued, is that the “photographic vision” developed by the Renaissance was in the nineteenth century disseminated and naturalized by photography, and today by hundreds of new media derived from it. Varnedoe contended that, as the modern scholar’s vision has been shaped by this convention—to the point that art historians do not even think of it as a convention—it is very

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<sup>7</sup> See Mary Warner Marien, *Photography and Its Critics. A Cultural History 1839–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 114–115. Photography could reproduce better the works of the Florentine school—based on line and drawing—than the works by the Venetian colorists.

<sup>8</sup> Louis Dimier, “Le modelé dans la peinture et la troisième dimension, (à propos des manuscrits de Léonard de Vinci),” *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* III (1895): 560.

<sup>9</sup> Sar Péladan, *La Revue Hebdomadaire* (22 October, 1904) quoted in Ambroise Vollard, *Paul Cézanne* (Paris: Galerie A. Vollard, 1914), appendice 1, 201. Alphonse Braun was the name of a distinguished firm that in 1883 secured a thirty-years contract to photograph the collection of the Louvre.

<sup>10</sup> Kirk Varnedoe, “The Artifice of Candor: Photography,” *Art in America* 68 (January, 1980): 66–78.

difficult to evaluate influences, to gauge how a painter interacted with this media and to determine to what point a certain art is original.<sup>11</sup>

Cézanne himself had a complicated relationship with photographs of work of art which has not been fully analyzed. He kept in his studio several photographic reproductions of works of art.<sup>12</sup> They were cheap ones, as Vollard records that the artist considered those sold by Braun at the Louvre a luxury.<sup>13</sup> Cézanne based several of his portraits on conventional photographs of real people, and once copied a photograph of a landscape by Gustave Le Gray (1820–1884) but never repeated the experience, suggesting that he was not satisfied with the results.<sup>14</sup>

This chapter examines the influence of photography in modern art history with particular attention to its impact on the appreciation of Cézanne's art. If the discipline is the child of photography, how can it evaluate the originality of an art that reacted against the visual tradition inherited from the Renaissance that photography incarnates? Moreover, Shiff states,

[N]o medium is ever neutral or transparent, but imposes a certain physicality or a set of determining and transformative material conditions. A medium... has a recognizable effect of its own, a connotation, a differential meaning. That meaning transforms, skews, *blurs*, the mythical, pre-existing meaning of the

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<sup>11</sup> In the article Varnedoe acknowledges the influence of the work of Peter Galassi who at the time was organizing the exhibition *Before Photography. Painting and the Invention of Photography*, exh. cat., Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1981. These works were contemporaneous to the article by Joel Snyder that will be discussed below.

<sup>12</sup> Some of them are still at his studio in Aix-en-Provence. See Theodore Reff, "Reproductions and Books in Cézanne's Studio," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, ser.6: vol.56 (November, 1960): 303–309.

<sup>13</sup> Vollard, *Cézanne*, 154.

<sup>14</sup> See Richard Shiff, "Cézanne's Blur, Approximating Cézanne," in *Framing France. The Representation of Landscape in France, 1870–1914*, ed. Richard Thomson (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 1998). Cézanne copied the MoMA's *The Bather* from a photograph of a model too. See Terence Maloon in "Classic Cézanne" where he comments of the especial character of this photograph. Instead of choosing an Apollo or another perfect example he opted "for an unprepossessing, oddly proportioned little fellow with big feet and baggy underpants, a sort of ready-made 'Cézanne' type." *Classic Cézanne*, exh. cat. Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1998, 36, 39.

model, the original meaning a thing is presumed to have in its untouched state, its impossible state of perfect resolution.<sup>15</sup>

### Photography and Perspective

If art history is the child of photography, photography is in turn the child of perspective, its consummation and final development. The grandchild of perspective has to be considered as a by-product of the hegemonic epistemology developed in the West in the last five centuries that Heidegger so perceptively described in 1942 as the “Age of the World Picture.”

Perspective and photography are generally presented as “discoveries” rather than as “inventions,” and therefore they represent the gray area in which art and art history are thought to be in close relationship with the sciences as the manifestation of universal epistemological paradigms.<sup>16</sup> Since its beginnings in 1839 photography was hailed both as a scientific tool (discovery) and an artistic media (invention). As Mary Warner Marien comments,

The ongoing denotation of photography as a natural phenomenon is evident in the persistent, interchangeable use of the words ‘discovery’ and ‘invention’ to describe photography’s beginnings. For example, Talbot, despite having experimented with photography over a long period of time, referred to his work as a ‘discovery’ and as an ‘invention.’ Contemporary newspaper accounts also used both terms. In the mid-twentieth century, the critic Clement Greenberg still found it appropriate to use both terms....<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Shiff, “Cézanne’s Blur,” 70.

<sup>16</sup> On perspective see Elkins, *Poetics of Perspective*, 22–29.

<sup>17</sup> Marien, *Photography*, 4.

Marien also notes that this dichotomy springs from the Western dream of establishing a direct, scientific, objective, representation of reality: “the idea of photography betokened the wish for a universal language conceived by nature and appropriate to genuine human progress as well as to scientific pursuits.”<sup>18</sup> This is another way of characterizing Varnedoe’s “photographic vision.”

Joel Snyder has contended in his already classic “Picturing Vision,” that if photographs are accepted as mechanical records of what is seen in nature, it is because they satisfy a certain understanding of what is vision and of what is the [visible] thing in itself: “the definition of visible thing carries with it the manner and means of depiction.”<sup>19</sup> He adds that the West,

since the Renaissance, wanted to construct a pictorial equivalent to vision. It is this pictorial equivalent to vision which is the source of our unshakable belief in the congruence of picture and world.

The history of Western painting during the past five hundred years has been characterized by an attempt to secure a scientific basis for picture construction that serves, in turn, to warrant the viewer’s belief in the fidelity of the picture to what it represents. Broadly speaking, ‘the object’ is *what we see*. But this must be understood as a characterized or defined object that has been structured in accord with an account of how we see. The primary condition for this kind of picture making is the belief that vision is amenable to depiction because it is itself pictorial.<sup>20</sup>

Perception reflects and is shaped by the worldview of the perceiver. Particular cultural assumptions and experience determine vision and modify the sensations imprinted on the eye. Since its creation in the fifteenth century, perspective has influenced vision and the perception of space both through written explanations and

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<sup>18</sup> Marien, *Photography*, 5.

<sup>19</sup> Joel Snyder, “Picturing Vision,” in *The Language of Images*, ed., W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 238.

<sup>20</sup> Snyder, “Picturing Vision,” 234.

indoctrination and by the dissemination of works of art and images composed according to its laws.

When photography is conceived as a “discovery,” its conventional and historically determined nature becomes transparent. The idea that photographs are the accurate representation of reality has become almost a conviction. This aura of authenticity is so fundamentally attached to photographs that it has become almost counterintuitive to doubt the information they provide. Nevertheless, Snyder argues that cameras, and hence photography, are the final result of a long development—deeply intertwined with that of pictorial realism—by which they were standardized to meet specific pictorial requirements.

[C]ameras do not provide scientific *corroboration* of the schemata or rules invented by painters to make realistic pictures. On the contrary, cameras represent the *incorporation* of those schemata into a tool designed and built, with great difficulty and over a long period of time, to aid painters and draughtsmen in the production of certain kind of pictures....[T]he construction of the camera did not flow out of the abrupt discovery of the ‘image of nature’ but rather .... was developed as an aid for the production of realistic paintings [which] provided the standard for the kind of image the camera was designed to produce.<sup>21</sup>

The popular account of the nature of photography has reversed the story of how it was developed: “The problem for post-Renaissance painters was not how to make a picture that looked like the image produced by the camera [obscura], it was how to make a machine that produced an image like the ones they painted.”<sup>22</sup> This is exactly why the use of photographs as heuristic tool for the study of paintings that challenged the perspectival tradition inherited from the Renaissance has to be carefully studied.

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<sup>21</sup> Snyder, “Picturing Vision,” 231, 233. For a similar argumentation see Peter Galassi’s *Before Photography*, as in n. 30.

<sup>22</sup> Snyder, “Picturing Vision,” 233.

Cézanne, for example, once wrote that he wanted to “donner l’image de ce que nous voyons, en oubliant tout ce qui apparut avant nous.”<sup>23</sup>

This mutual relationship of photographs and perspective sheds light on Frederick Bohrer’s contention that photography reinforces in a structural way the centrality of the Renaissance in the discipline.

[T]o rely on photography today, even with a sense of its limitations, still functionally demands that art objects be evaluated on their responsiveness to visual criteria centered on the Italian Renaissance. The centrality of Italian Renaissance painting within art history and subsequent emphasis on two-dimensional linear perspective are not just documented, then, but reified by the conditions of photographic rendering.

In this sense, our uniform and widespread dependence on photography in art history works to spread throughout the vast domain of world art the dominance of these same criteria. If this sounds like a sort of neo-imperialist project, it is to underline that relations of power, cultural and even geo-political, are almost inevitably involved in photography. From this angle, an examination of photography must consider what is being constrained, or excluded, in our acceptance of the photographic vision.<sup>24</sup>

Perspective and photography produce images of the world as seeing with one single static eye but, albeit conventional and unnatural, they have been accepted as records of reality and, disseminated and enforced through education, they continue to influence and determine vision. Varnedoe’s “photographic vision,” is for Jonathan Crary the “Renaissance,” “perspectival,” or “normative” model of vision (more below). This interpretation of vision starts in the Renaissance—Trouillot’s “geography of imagination”—when were laid the foundational “conditions of possibilities” for the epistemological project of the “West,” which was later regulated by the Enlightenment, and systematized by the nineteenth century. In this light vision,

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<sup>23</sup> Paul Cézanne to Emile Bernard October 23, 1905 in Rewald, *Correspondance*, 314–315.

<sup>24</sup> Bohrer, “Photographic perspectives,” 253.

pictures, and photography are North Atlantic universals, which is consistent with Heidegger's characterization of the West.

With regard to Cézanne this is what David Reeves calls the “orthodox interpretation” of the artist's art, that is, the one which derives from the idea that perspectival art and photography are basically true renditions of reality. The author observes that whereas both Alberti and Descartes after him knew that a painting or engraving, in order to be effective as representations, have to be different from their model

[T]he commentators who share an orthodox interpretation of Cézanne's approach naturally take what they believe to be the divergence in his paintings from nature between painted representation and that which is depicted to be of a very different kind to that which they would consider to be a more appropriate lack of resemblance between representation and that which is faithfully depicted when painted in accordance with a system of linear perspective.<sup>25</sup>

The “difference” that is the product of a cultural convention is not understood or seen as difference. The “orthodox interpretation” is a particular understanding of vision that has perspective imbedded within itself in such a way that it has become integrated as part of what is thought to be the “normal” appearance of reality. Conversely it also implies that perspective is an accurate epistemological model that reflects the way the world appears to humans.

Reeves's concludes that Cézanne painted what he saw as he saw it, and that if the “orthodox commentators” perceive “distortions” and “errors” in his paintings it is because they have been unable to distance themselves from the deep rooted conventions that rule Western vision.

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<sup>25</sup> David Reeves, *The Eye and the Mind of Cézanne* (York: Chiasma, 1997), 19.

What has already been said is counter-intuitive and only a careful theoretical analysis allows the thinking of it, as most art historians have their own ideas about perception, vision, realism, and reality, and do not question how they arrive at those decisions or that they have chosen among many possible variables in the first place.<sup>26</sup> The influence of photography and perspective in perception were already noted by Panofsky who commented in 1927 that because Kepler was trained in perspective, he had already had trouble to understand and see the curvature of a comet's tail. He added that the influence of photography in modern eyes and minds was accentuating the problem.<sup>27</sup> Today, the widespread use of diagrams, and computer programs like AutoCAD, together with basic training in reading plans and diagrams, as well as the instruction provided by art history surveys, have reinforced the validity of 'photographic vision' both intellectually and visually as much as the notion of the existence of space as an empty receptacle that contain objects.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Moreover the discussion about perspective touches upon the problem of vision, perception and the theory of knowledge and thus its discussion becomes part of the oldest debate of Western philosophy: the problem of nominalism vs. conceptualism, immanentism vs. transcendental knowledge which incarnated in the nineteenth century as nativism vs. empiricism.

<sup>27</sup> Panofsky comments: "In an epoch whose perception was governed by a conception of space expressed by strict linear perspective, the curvatures of our, so to speak, spheroidal optical world had to be rediscovered." However, in the past, in Antiquity when people saw in perspective but not in linear perspective these curves were seen without problems. "And indeed, if even today only a very few of us have perceived these curvatures, that too is surely in part due to our habituation—further reinforced by looking at photographs—to linear perspectival construction: a construction that is itself comprehensible only of a quite specific, indeed specifically modern, sense of space, or if you will, sense of the world." Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form* (New York: Zone, 1991), 34.

<sup>28</sup> Today people live in mostly modern, rectilinear environments, well-measured apartment and regulated cities, and are trained to think of them as plans and maps. Cézanne on the contrary was used to a different visual environment: Aix is a rather curvilinear city. A contemporary of Cézanne, Georges Rivière commented on the influence of the Gothic structures in his vision. See *Le Maître Paul Cézanne* (Paris, 1923), 130. Photographic vision is at the same time challenged by these same new technological advances (Photoshop and digital media in general). However, the notion that "the camera cannot lie" was taken to task since the beginning as 'combination printings' (photos made from multiple negatives) were made in the darkrooms of art photographers as early as the 1850s. In the 1890s, when cheap off-set printing made pictures a mainstay in magazines and tabloids, 'doctored' pictures became a daily consumable. Spirits photographs are just one example. For the influence of new developments

Varnedoe maintains that the identification of photographic vision with photography has affected the evaluation of the true innovations brought about by nineteenth-century artists, but his article fails to inform the reader about the problematic character of perspective, photography, and even vision. Each period and culture has a different general understanding of vision and of what is visually real. Photography disseminates one of the possible approaches and helps to standardize vision. Since the 1930s this model is embedded within the methodologies of art history.

Crary, as mentioned above, was one of the few art historians who noticed that in the 1930s art history incorporated modern art as a subject of study and that in order to make it fit within its categories and methodological approach art historians downplayed the avant-garde art's epistemological aggressiveness and "difference." His thesis is that the nineteenth century developed a new episteme embodied/incarnated by the modern "observer." In this way, Crary distances himself from the "myth" of modernity, which he defines as the notion that the experimental avant-garde developed an innovative model of vision that the mass of public—still faithful to the realist one inherited from the Renaissance and newly reinforced by photography—could not understand.

Even today, with numerous revisions and rewritings (including some of the most compelling neo-Marxist, feminist, and poststructuralist work), a core narrative remains essentially unchanged. ...[W]ith Manet, impressionism, and/or postimpressionism, a new model of visual representation and perception emerges that constitutes a break with several centuries of another model of vision, loosely

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in vision see Kim H. Veltman, "Electronic Media, The Rebirth of Perspective and the Fragmentation of Illusion," (1994) *System for Universal Media Searching*, <http://www.sumscorp.com/articles/art13.htm>.

definable as Renaissance, perspectival, or normative. Most theories of modern visual culture are still bound to one or another version of this ‘rupture.’<sup>29</sup>

For Crary the myth of modernity has developed the myth of the perspectival or normative vision—the continuous unfolding of the realist mode of perception that derives from the realism of the Renaissance and that photography and later the cinema help to disseminate—as a conventional common standard that allows the new vision to stand out by comparison.

Thus we are often left with a confusing bifurcated model of vision in the nineteenth century: on one level there is a relatively small number of advanced artists who generated a radically new kind of seeing and signification, while on a more quotidian level vision remains embedded within the same general ‘realist’ strictures that had organized it since the fifteenth century. Classical space is overturned, so it seems, on one hand, but persists on the other.<sup>30</sup>

Crary acutely remarks that this is a false dichotomy and that the myth of the avant-garde needed to have the gross popular realism as a backdrop that permitted art historians to outline and highlight modernism. This strategy—used by both Venturi and Rewald—allowed the claim that modern art had an elevated almost ethical value—even though it does not represent lofty subject matters—and to locate this new value in the artist.

The type of comparison proposed by the site photograph (Fig. 8)—where a photograph of a painting is paired with a photograph of the site it represents—exemplifies the modernist approach Crary characterizes. The documentary image acts as the stand in for reality in order to highlight the “genius” of the artist, either his mimetic skills or his original departures from the “normal.” The ideology behind this practice is clear: by using a photograph as the standard of normal vision the discipline

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<sup>29</sup> Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1990), 3–4.

<sup>30</sup> Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, 3–4.

reinforces the faith in “photographic vision” and therefore reconfirms the tradition that comes from the Renaissance. The same strategy that praises the breakthrough of the avant-gardes reinforces the “philistine” conception of vision the artists were said to be reacting against. The epistemological revolution is thus contained to an episode in the history of art. The site photographs indefinitely replay the visual “breakthrough” of modern art for the eyes of the reader or the spectator who is invited to see the “difference” between the two representations of reality. In this way art history reinforces the centuries old visual tradition that comes from the Renaissance and secures the eternal newness and originality of the visual model proposed by modern art. With site photographs once again, the medium is the message.

The theory of modernism implies that people in the nineteenth century shared an understanding of vision and space that had been established in the Renaissance, and that modern art’s project consisted of overcoming that traditional standard and replacing it with a new, truthful model of vision.<sup>31</sup> Crary’s theory, on the other hand, assumes that modernity caused an epistemological crisis in the early nineteenth century and that, as a result, observers developed a “subjective” vision and individual modes of perception. Does his theory contradict or invalidate Snyder’s point of view? No. Crary’s understanding of modernity actually confirms Snyder’s observations, as it posits that in the 1930s modern art history “created” the idea of an unbroken solid visual tradition and imposed it onto the past (including the nineteenth century).

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<sup>31</sup> “[T]he myth of the modernist visual revolution depends on the presence of a subject with a detached viewpoint, from which modernism—whether as a style, as cultural resistance, or as ideological practice—can be isolated against the background of a normative vision. Modernism is thus presented as the appearance of the new for an observer who remains perpetually the same, or whose historical status is never interrogated.” Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, 4–5.

Panofsky played a central role in this development when in 1927 he rewrote the history of Western vision by reinterpreting the perspective of the Renaissance.

Leon Battista Alberti's description of a person drawing on a window pane, which is part of his 1435 *De pictura*, may be considered a foundational scene that laid the seeds of the "photographic" or "normative" vision. Snyder argues that with this image Alberti portrayed what he believed was the concerted activity of the eye and the brain, which allowed him to prescribe a rational method for the representation of reality.<sup>32</sup> In *Perspective as Symbolic Form* Panofsky misconstrued Alberti's text and suggested that in the Renaissance perception was equated with depiction.

For Panofsky, the notion of 'visual experience' is an inherently subjective affair, one that defies rationalization .... Central to Panofsky's analysis is the principle that the depiction of what we see can follow only from *a redefinition of experienced space—by hypostatizing space it becomes possible to find a rational pictorial expression for the inherently subjective experience of seeing.*

For Alberti, there can be no issue that involves the 'rationalization' of vision, because what we see is established by rational processes. The structure of perception is integral.... Indeed the very possibility of science itself is dependent upon the principle that perception has a rational basis.<sup>33</sup> (Emphasis added)

The next chapter studies in depth how Panofsky projected onto the past a modern conception of space. Suffice it to say for now that his neo-Kantian misinterpretation of the Renaissance's conception of vision and space, is ingrained in the epistemological foundations of the discipline. By reshaping the epistemological project of the Renaissance, Panofsky helped to create the myth of the continuous model of vision, which he considered the symbolic Form of the West, which—as explained above—is integral to the theory and myth of modernism.

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<sup>32</sup> "Alberti' images are completed perceptual judgments about the objects of sense. They are made in the mind where one would expect to find them – in the imagination. What Alberti did was to conceive of this mental construct, the image, as a picture...; he also provided a method by means of which that image could be projected and copied by art." Snyder, "Picturing Vision," 240.

<sup>33</sup> Snyder, "Picturing Vision," 243–244.

There is no doubt, as Snyder and other theoreticians have contended, that there was an *hegemonic* visual tradition epitomized by perspective and photography that progressively affected and still affects the common understanding of vision and even visual perception. Panofsky redefined that tradition in modern terms and argued that perspective was supported by scientific models. His book explained this device's origins and development, giving it a theoretical importance it had lost over the centuries and reinforced the hegemonic standing of the visual tradition associated with perspective. This analysis suggests two considerations that must be taken into account when studying Cézanne's vision. Firstly, that the nineteenth century did not abide by the "photographic model of vision" and the standard interpretation of space proposed by Panofsky. Second, that the paradigms postulated in the 1930s have been reinforced by recent technical developments and cultural diffusion, and naturalized in practice. Moreover, they are part of the basic presuppositions of the modern scholar because they are embedded in modern art history's fundamental principles and methodologies.

Modern art history contained modern art's epistemological revolt by redefining it as a visual/formal endeavor. This insinuates that the institutionalization of the discipline in the 1930s afforded modern art historians more power to influence the contemporaneous art world, which contributed to stymie the most experimental anti-establishment phase of modern art.

Considered under this light art history might be seen as a manifestation of the reactionary forces of the *rappel à l'ordre* as it interpreted the modern movements as a new incarnation of a century-old tradition and at the same time fostered the

dissemination of the visual model developed in the Renaissance. The discipline did not incorporate the experimental and deconstructive art historical theories of the School of Vienna. It also excluded the most radical interpretations of modern art that thrived in the 1930s, like those of George Bataille, Walter Benjamin and Carl Einstein. These engaged writers pursued in their theoretical work the subversive, anti-establishment project of the avant-gardes. Their theories have lately received scholarly attention and, deprived of their pungent message they had in the 1930s, are being grafted onto the specialized discourse of an already well-established modern art history.

#### Photographs and Site Photographs for the Study of Cézanne's Art

In 1935 Rewald and Marschutz published in *L'Amour de l'art* the article "Cézanne au Château Noir", which was illustrated with site photographs. This was just the first of this kind of publication in Rewald's long and successful career, as they became something of the trademark of his scholarship. They accompanied Rewald in his move to America: "Cézanne au Louvre," *L'Amour de l'art* 16 (October, 1935); "Sources d'inspiration de Cézanne," *L'Amour de l'art* no.5 (May 1936); "Cézanne et la Provence," with Léo Marschutz, *Le Point*, special issue. 4 (August, 1936); "Van Gogh en Provence," *L'Amour de l'art* 17 (October, 1936); "Paysages de Paris de Corot à Utrillo," *La Renaissance*, special issue. 20 (January-February, 1937); "Van Gogh vs. Nature: Did Vincent or the Camera Lie?" *Art News* 41 (April 1, 1942); "Camille Pissarro in the West Indies," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* ser.6, v. 22 (October,

1942); “Corot Sources: The Camera Tells,” *Art News* 41 (November 15, 1942); “Pissarro's Paris and his France,” *Art News* 42 (March 1, 1943); “Ingres and the Camera: Two Precisionists Look at Rome;” *Art News* 42 (May 1, 1943); “As Cézanne Recreated Nature,” *Art News* 43 (February 15, 1944); “The Camera Verifies Cézanne Watercolors,” *Art News* 43 (September, 1944); “Proof of Cézanne's Pygmalion Pencil,” *Art News* 43 (October 1, 1944). By taking the site photographs as part as the scholarly baggage he brought to the United States, Rewald helped to establish them as methodological documentary tools for the study of nineteenth-century art.

The function of the site photographs determines their appearance, as they are taken to record the external aspect of a landscape painted by a famous artist. In this way they reduce the “motif” to a mere external appearance. As they are ancillary tools, their value is relative to their effectiveness to accomplish their function; in this case, their worth depends on their similarity to the paintings to which they are compared.<sup>34</sup> At the same time, their use originates in the assumption that photographs afford an objective and truthful representation of the world: what the photograph shows is identical to what the artist saw, any variation in the paintings must be explained as intentional or expressive. The site photographs are a general statement about vision because they affirm that things can be known and that the camera is able to record their true appearance.

How could such a heuristic tool be used for the evaluation of the paintings of artists who worked basically with color, and spent years of their life painting outdoors so that their eyes could capture the minimal variations of tone, intensity and hue in

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<sup>34</sup> It has to be remembered that in the 1930s the print was not immediately available to the photographer.

the atmosphere? The impressionist artists avoided the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and strove to un-train their eyes so that they could see the world anew and create a new vision.

Rewald's use of site photographs for the study of different modern artists helped to institutionalize the photographs as scholarly tools because it established them as the standard of vision that allows the evaluation of artistic projects and ways of understanding perception, space, and vision. Cézanne's relationship with the landscape of Provence, especially in the last years of his life, seems to discourage the use of such a tool, as even Rewald commented on the artist's "obsession" to paint the motifs only when he had a certain light. Other authors have remarked on the artist's attachment and emotional response to certain places he associated with Zola.<sup>35</sup> Rewald used site photographs for the study of landscapes of artists who had established distinctive relationships with the sites they painted. Van Gogh's approached the sites he painted in Arles almost like a tourist. According to another interpretation, the Dutch artist seems to have seen the Provençal landscape through the paintings of native painters like Cézanne or Adolphe Monticelli.<sup>36</sup> Pissarro, finally, was interested in the external appearance of nature and did not develop an emotional attachment to the sites he painted. To complicate things even more, Cézanne also traveled around France and chose non-Provencal sites as motifs.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> See Paul Smith, "Joachim Gasquet Virgil and Cézanne's Landscapes: 'My Beloved Golden Age'," *Apollo* CXLVII/439 (October 1998): 11–23; Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, *Cézanne and Provence. The Painter and His Culture* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003). In a certain way, only Novotny argues against this attachment, but then, he based his analysis on the study of site photographs.

<sup>36</sup> See Griselda Pollock, "On not seeing Provence: Van Gogh and the Landscape of Consolation, 1888–9," in Thomson, *Framing France*, as in n. 34.

<sup>37</sup> Theoretically, the site photographs—which afford an 'objective' sight of the different sites—should help to dislodge the different approaches to landscapes, but they do not. Site photographs are taken

The only person who ever saw the paintings and the motifs together was Cézanne. All the other commentators have worked either with one original and one photograph or, more generally, with two photographs.<sup>38</sup> The comparison requires that both the art and reality be thought in relation to the photographic representation of the other: the Mount Sainte-Victoire—for example—through the reproduction of a Cézanne, and the work of art through the image of the site (fig. 9). Used as a way of attracting tourists, they favor the culturalization of nature, as they invite us to appreciate it as an historic site or for its similarities to works of art that are now in museums. Therefore, site photographs encourage the public to look at the real world as a sign, as if it were a picture.

According to Barbara Savedoff what characterizes photographs of work of art is their lack of accuracy in rendering the colors and texture of the original, the alteration of their scale, and the volatilization of its physicality. Moreover, they impose a different position to the body and head of the spectator, who cannot move closer and farther away from it.<sup>39</sup> Black and white photographs translate color into a gradation of values, accentuate the contrast and the lines of division among sectors of different tone, and fuse together areas of similar nuance. The photographic image is imprinted

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following the indications provided by paintings. Thus the lens, angles and point of view are adapted to the information given by them. In the end, the information they offer depends on the reproduction the researcher takes to the field and from the ideas, preconceptions or thesis the art historian taking the photographs or working with them wants to convey.

<sup>38</sup> When Rewald went to Arles to take pictures of the van Gogh sites, he took with him the catalogue raisonnée of La Faille of the paintings by the artist. See letter from John Rewald to René Huyghe, March 18, 1937, “Exhibition van Gogh” Cote X, f. 42, Archives des musées nationaux, Louvre, Paris. Among the “Rewald Papers” at the Archives of the National Gallery of Art there is a folder with cards with illustrations of paintings by Pissarro glued on them which correspond almost exactly to the site photographs Rewald shot in Rouen. I suspect they were used as references for the photos. See Folder 75/8 National Gallery of Art, Gallery Archives, Washington DC.

<sup>39</sup> Savedoff, “Looking Through Photographs,” 458–460.

onto an emulsion that generalizes, simplifies and selects the information according to its sensitivity.

Specialists in nineteenth-century art, particularly those working on impressionism and post-impressionism, are especially affected by the shortcomings of photographs as these artistic movements emphasize all the parameters that photography at the time was not able to reproduce: color, texture, subtle gradation of hues, optical mixture. A long contemplation of the contourless areas of color of certain late paintings by Monet, for example, favors the continuous adjustment of the eyes to the colors, which seem to change and mix in infinite subtle variations that no reproduction can record (fig. 10). The in-determinacy and blurriness of shapes in some Cézanne paintings make the color “vibrate,” something that is also lost in the photographs of them (fig. 11).

These problems multiply endlessly when the comparison with photographs of the landscapes is added. Reeves observes, for example, that a landscape painter has to consider the relationship between the peripheral and central areas of the motif as he does not see them with the same neatness. The photograph of the landscape will reduce the fuzziness of the peripheral areas and the photograph of the painting representing the landscape will do the same. Therefore, the photograph of the painting will not help to find the point of view of the artist even when the photograph of the picture is analyzed in the site.<sup>40</sup> Art historians seldom comment on the sources on which they base their remarks. On the other hand, when scholars confront the

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<sup>40</sup> Reeves, *Eye and Mind*, 55. Novotny argued that Cézanne had tried to avoid this phenomenon by concentrating his view in the middle distance, i.e. as if he had seen the motif through a tele-objective.

paintings and the landscapes after studying photographs, they expect the originals to confirm the observations that they have suggested.

Cézanne worked directly with colors—as many unfinished paintings and watercolors demonstrate—and subtle gradations of hue. Nevertheless, the acquaintance with these black and white photographs intimates that the artist studied first the volumetric objects and their situation in space, and that he added color to this structure, which in the end is the way the spectator using the photographs is apprehending Cézanne’s art. This contradicts all that is known about the way the artist worked and what it is known about his approach to painting.

Even if the “originality” of the modern artist’s vision is exalted in this way, that of the public is limited and reduced to evaluate the comparison proposed, which is mediated by the camera. The photographic image of the sites naturalize as ‘normal,’ standard vision, the simplified view provided by one single static eye, i.e. the one adopted by perspective in the Renaissance, which becomes the paradigmatic model of vision. Therefore, site photographs even when used to demonstrate the “end of scientific perspective,” help to establish the notion that perspective is the innate, normal way of seeing. Moreover, this implies that Cézanne’s art represents a new—modern—understanding of space and vision.

Nicholas Green has successfully demonstrated that since the 1830s there was a cosmopolitan conception of nature as “spectacle” for the entertainment and satisfaction of the dwellers of the modern metropolis, whose vision was influenced by the changes in the cityscape, the illustrated magazines, and the “advances”

determined for the most part by the influence of photography.<sup>41</sup> This scopic regime situated the spectator in a new relationship with objects and suggested a new understanding of their own bodies. Nature was then a construction of the cosmopolitan gaze, as much the product of the city as of the artist that reflected it.

Was Cézanne a “modern” artist in this sense? The artist not only opposed modernity but also avoided representing modern subject matters and even steered clear from the modern neighborhoods of Paris. He was deeply attached to Aix-en-Provence and the city is anything but the epitome of modern urbanism. So, what kind of “vision” did he have? It might be said that, although he was not a “modern” artist, he was reacting against modernity, and that his vision was even more modern than that of the impressionists precisely because he surpassed them. But was his “vision” modern in the same way that Seurat’s, for example, or Gauguin’s, or even van Gogh’s was? Was his “vision” shaped by the few courses he took on academic art or by the strange and fascinating monuments of Aix? Was Cézanne’s conception of space affected by his readings on perspective? How did the experience of painting in front of nature affect his vision? In 1905 the artist wrote “l’étude modifie notre vision à un tel point; que l’humble et colossal Pissarro se trouve justifié de ses théories anarchistes.”<sup>42</sup> How did he think of space? More importantly: did he have a specific notion of space? As Reff’s article indicates, the interest on Cézanne’s representation

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<sup>41</sup> Nicholas Green, *The Spectacle of Nature: Landscape and Bourgeois Culture in Nineteenth-Century France*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990). In his *Techniques of the Observer* Cary concentrated his analysis on the spectator. He examined Cézanne’s art in *Suspensions of Perception. Attention, Spectacle and Modern Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1999), 281–359. Attention is an important aspect of perception and vision but cannot be considered here. In the end, what a person sees depends of his or her attention. One of the most common and frustrating experiences of every day life is to “look” without seeing. The camera, in this account, is always and evenly “alert.” Attention on the other hand is honed by experience: an old sailor at high sea sees many more things that a young tourist with perfect eyesight.

<sup>42</sup> Paul Cézanne to Emile Bernard, possibly 1905, Rewald, *Correspondance*, 314.

of space began in the 1930s when the site photographs started to be used for the study of his art. In other words, art history imposed space as a category for the comprehension of Cézanne's art.

Both perspective and photography presuppose that what they represent is at a certain distance that allows them to be effective. Moreover both were devised to create [visual] space in a two dimensions, i.e., to portray the visual field as a space decked with objects rather than things populating a space.<sup>43</sup> In general, photographs cannot represent an object without indicating the space in which it sits. It is "natural" then that the site photographs were used for the analysis of Cézanne's representation of space in landscapes but not for the study of his still-lives, even if the objects he used as models remain in his studio.

In Cézanne's still-lives each object is a world in itself and determines the space it inhabits. Moreover, the sumptuousness of the artist's sensitive response to the volume precludes us from comparing the paintings with the oversimplified photographic images, which can only encompass them from a certain, fixed distance (fig. 12). In the same way, if someone had had the opportunity of taking a [instant] photograph of one of Cézanne's sitters at the moment he or she was modeling for the painter, this material would not be of very much use either, as the photographs only convey how the person looks in a fleeting moment. Why, then, are the site photographs used just for the study of landscapes? It would not be logical to assume that Cézanne's vision and intentions were coherent and consistent even if each genre has its own history and

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<sup>43</sup> This notion is counter-intuitive because today we are not only used to seeing photographs but to producing them and thus our eyes conceive and see the world as a (would be) picture.

tradition.<sup>44</sup> The application of site photographs exclusively for the interpretation of the artist's landscapes demonstrates its ideological character: they were used to impose space as a category for the analysis of Cézanne art.

Photographs give a modern rendition of the landscape as pictorial [spatial] view because they do not concentrate on the objects that are contained in that space but in the general view. But then, the comparison with Cézanne's paintings suggests that this was also the artist's goal. Therefore the use of site photographs exclusively for the analysis of Cézanne's landscapes has provoked a basic misunderstanding about how the artist approached the genre, as they have encouraged the idea that the artist was interested in depicting the view and the scenery even though they are representations of the elements that compose the landscape: the earth and the objects that populate it. The fact that in a landscape Cézanne has to encompass more objects from a certain distance explains why site photographs could more effectively be superimposed on Cézanne's paintings and said to represent his vision.

A careful reading of Cézanne's letters and the writings of his contemporaries reveal that they usually refer to objects and sometimes to their position in space. (See next chapter.) In 1927, Fry, for example, observed that in his still-lives, the artist is exclusively focused on the portraying of objects, that their relative position in space depends and derives from their form, and that, therefore, the represented space is not unified, rational.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Few specialists have found an interpretation that encompasses all the different periods of Cézanne's activity and or the different genres he practiced. Roger Fry, for example, considered the still-lives the best of Cézanne's work, whereas Fritz Novotny's model works almost exclusively for his landscapes.

<sup>45</sup> Roger Fry, *Cézanne: A Study of His Development* (New York: Macmillan, 1927), 38–43.

Can a landscape be read as a still life? In the *Mount Sainte-Victoire* (Barnes Foundation) (fig. 13). receding from the bushes and trees in the foreground, there are series of ‘objects’ to which the artist seems to have paid careful and individual attention and depicted mainly through color: the houses, the trees, the patches of different colors of the fields, the first hills. The colors that render the plot of land that serves as background for the top of the tree at the left highlights its form and volume, but makes it difficult to understand the patch of yellow as a continuous surface behind the tree. The ridge of the hill that touches the right part of the mountain suggests that Cézanne’s interest in stressing its volume paralleled his need to demonstrate how the volume of the Sainte-Victoire bulges toward the spectator. Considered in this way, the painting looks more as an accumulation of volumes integrated by color than as a representation of a whole. Even the mountain can be thought of as a sum of volumes whose concavity and convexity the artist has meticulously observed and recorded. This might also explain the inconsistencies in the relative sizes of the elements in the landscape (fig. 14).

This model of analysis intimates that the artist focused on painting the land and the volumes of the things that are in the landscape and that he built the composition around them. The often quoted letter where Cézanne states that,

[L]es motifs se multiplient, le même sujet vu sous un angle différent offre un sujet d’étude du plus puissant intérêt, et si varié que je crois que je pourrais m’occuper pendant des mois sans changer de place en m’inclinant tantôt plus à droite, tantôt plus à gauche.<sup>46</sup>

This indicates that Cézanne was not interested in the movement of the body in space but in the change of the relative position and attitude of the volumes that

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<sup>46</sup> Paul Cézanne letter to his son, September 8, 1906, Rewald, *Correspondance*, 324.

conform to a landscape and that change with the movement of the head. In the example analyzed above, as in most if not all of Cézanne paintings, the artist does not suggest an infinite space.

Considered as objective registers or stand-ins for “normal” vision, site photographs imply that the world can be known in this way, namely, that it has a definite appearance that can be apprehended. The site photographs deny space as a non-issue, that is, they disallow the non-interest in space. They impose questions about *how* the artist represented space instead of the more basic one: was he interested in representing space?<sup>47</sup>

Transformed by way of photographs into signs, works of art are “reduced” to be (textual) documents which must be intellectually approached so that their “true” meaning might be understood and shared with others. Site photographs might be thought of as the “correctives” Panofsky conceived to regulate the process of interpretation as a reaction against the violence of Heidegger’s more subjective alternative.

#### Photographs as Documents. Siegfried Kracauer

René Huyghe comprehended early on that the civilization of the book was being replaced by that of images. He gave illustrations a place of honor in *L’Amour de l’art*, which included sections that consisted almost exclusively in visual material *qua*

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<sup>47</sup> In this they can be compared with the notion of “art” that is imposed onto objects created to serve other functions.

documentation. In 1931 when he introduced the magazine's readers to the new editorial spirit he explained that,

le développement du cinéma, de la photographie, des arts publicitaires ont donné à notre génération une culture visuelle, une tendance à appréhender par les yeux plutôt que par la pensée abstraite, que révèle l'abondance des publications photographiques, en Allemagne surtout.

La photographie ne doit donc plus être seulement une image illustrant un texte; le texte doit collaborer étroitement avec elle, parfois la commenter seulement; quand elle s'exprime avec plus d'évidence par ses moyens propres, l'image doit se substituer au texte.<sup>48</sup>

This demonstrates Huyghe's "modern"—here conceived as opposite to post-modern—attitude towards photographs as he thought that they were an objective representation of the real, and commented, dispassionately, that abstract thought was being weakened by the spread of illustrations. In 1980, Huyghe could look retrospectively to the meaning of his editorial policies.

Ma revue *L'Amour de l'Art* a joué là [comparison of photographs] le rôle initiateur dès 1930, en pratiquant l'exposé et la démonstration par l'image auxquels Malraux, qui suivait cette publication, a fait large place quelques années plus tard.

Je prétendais qu'il est plus important d'aborder une création, une œuvre par un choc visuel que par une idée abstraite. Je présentais certaines idées sous forme d'un cahier de photographies où les ressemblances et les contrastes entre les photos devaient sauter aux yeux. Puis je mettais quelques lignes au-dessous pour *orienter la réflexion*, le tout introduit par un "chapeau" succinct, expliquant le thème... [J]e renversais la vapeur; au lieu de dire: "il faut établir un système d'affirmations, puis les reproductions d'œuvre viendront meubler—comme les illustrations un livre—les pages de votre pensée", j'avais l'idée qu'il faut partir de l'image, laisser parler les images avec leurs contrastes et leurs ressemblances, et que c'est de ces contacts visuels qu'on devait a posteriori dégager la connaissance de l'histoire de l'art, et la réflexion sur elle.<sup>49</sup> (Emphasis added)

The second paragraph is self-explanatory. The phrase in which Huyghe states that he wanted to "laisser parler les images" is preceded by the idea "je présentais certaines

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<sup>48</sup> René Huyghe, "Directives," *L'Amour de l'art* 12 (Janvier, 1931), 2.

<sup>49</sup> René Huyghe, *Art à la philosophie*, 33.

idées sous forme d'un cahier de photographies." The author regarded his publication the direct antecedent of André Malraux's *Le Musée imaginaire* (1947), the book that suggested the first epigraph and reminds us of the critiques at the time of the 1937 van Gogh exhibition.<sup>50</sup> As Chapter Three demonstrated, Huyghe was conscious of the potential utilization of both documentation and techniques of display for ideological purposes, which is here enunciated as "orienter la réflexion," (which paired with the comment about abstract thought sounds a little ominous). In the end, this new 'professional,' "scientific," and "objective" approach is the one against which Venturi reacted: the OIM and its relentless appeal to documentation, photographing, and exchange of data as the most essential of art history's enterprises.

Together with Huyghe, George-Henri Rivière organized the 1937 exhibit, where he installed a special display devoted to French rural abodes. Rivière, who was to become one of the most important museographers in France's history, was at the time deputy director of the ethnographic museum.<sup>51</sup> In fact his relationship with ethnographers like Marcel Griaule, Michael Leiris, and the surrealists around the magazines *Minotaure* and *Documents* made him a key factor in the transition of the old *Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro* to its scientific successor, the *Musée de l'Homme* inaugurated only some months after the 1937 exhibit had closed its doors. The discussion around ethnography, popular arts, and anthropology sparked a new debate about the notion of culture, and the place of the Beaux Arts in it.<sup>52</sup> This

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<sup>50</sup> Mary Bergstein considers that it was Malraux who established the "visual method that determines our classroom practice today." "Lonely Aphrodites," 476.

<sup>51</sup> Between 1948 and 1965, Georges-Henri Rivière served as the first acting director of ICOM, the International Council of Museums that replaced the OIM.

<sup>52</sup> The whole title of *Documents* is "Doctrines, archéologie, beaux-arts, ethnographie." Rivière wrote eloquently against the "imposition" of aesthetic values onto ethnographic objects in Georges-Henri

problem was also related to Rivière's pet project, the *Musée national des arts et traditions populaires*, and had great importance at the time when the Popular Front was trying to counter the influence of Fascism.<sup>53</sup> In the context of the Surrealist movement, especially those members of the group connected with the activities of the *Musée de l'Homme*, this was a debate about esthetics, and the Western epistemological organization of knowledge in general.<sup>54</sup>

The displays of the new ethnographic museum exhibited objects surrounded by "documents" (maps and photographs among others) that gave an idea of their use value, and reminded viewers of their original context (fig. 15). It is not a coincidence then, that a similar strategy was used in the van Gogh exhibition. Maps, photographs, and documents helped to contextualize the artist (the producer) as man by bringing to the galleries information about the places in which the art had been produced and the circumstances that determined its creation (fig. 16).

The French curators guided the public's attention away from the objects themselves towards the process of creation, the historical moment and the place in which they had come into existence, and to the consideration of how the personality of the artist had imprinted itself onto them. Huyghe and the defenders of the exhibit

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Rivière, "De l'objet d'un musée d'ethnographie comparé a celui d'un musée de Beaux-Arts," *Cahiers de Belgique* (Novembre, 1930).

<sup>53</sup> This was an important element in the almost contemporaneous debate between Strzygowski and Focillon.

<sup>54</sup> Since 1987, when James Clifford published "Ethnographical Surrealism," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 23 (October, 1981): 539–564, this relationship has been hotly debated. See Jean Jamin, "Les objets ethnographiques sont-ils des choses perdues?" in *Temps perdu temps retrouvé. Voir les choses du passé au présent*, (Neuchâtel: Musée d'ethnographie, 1985); "L'ethnographie mode d'emploi. De quelques rapports de l'ethnologie avec le malaise dans la civilisation," in Jaques Hamard and Roland Kaehr, eds., *Le Mal et la douleur* (Neuchâtel : Musée d'ethnographie, 1986). See also Denis Hollier "La valeur d'usage de l'impossible," in Bataille, Georges and Leiris, Michel, *Documents n° 1 à 7, 1929 et nos 1 à 8 1930* (Paris : Jean-Michel Place, 1991): vii–xxxiv. For Rivière see Herman Lebovics, *True France: The Wars over Cultural Identity, 1900–1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).

argued that not all the members of the public were prepared to comprehend the aesthetic message or works of art, and that this contextual material allowed them to understand at least the art's historical or cultural meaning.

The debate about art and culture, together with the organization and professionalization of museology by the OIM, favored the consolidation of a more uniform method of display. This new contextual approach to high art was contemporaneous to the efforts to relate modern art not only to the history of Western art but also to the general history of the art of the world.

The innovative use of visual documentation is noticeable in publications like *L'Amour de l'art*, the original context in which the site photographs appeared. Under Huyghe's supervision the magazine displayed more illustrations, which were assigned a determinant role in the transmission of ideas. If in the 1920s the articles were illustrated merely with photographs of works by the artist the article referred to, now they were joined by comparative material and documentary photographs, x-radiographs, diagrams, etc. The first page of Rewald's 1935 article, for example, presents at the top of the page a photograph of the main site, the Château Noir that for a period of time was Cézanne's studio, and beneath it a map of the area with topographical indications about the roads, sights and the location of the different sites the artist painted (fig. 17).

The site photographs were incorporated to support a formalist approach to Cézanne. In 1938 Germain Bazin published "Cézanne et La Montagne Sainte-Victoire."<sup>55</sup> The author's main interest was to associate Cézanne with Classicism, French Humanism and especially with the art of Poussin. Knowing the ideology

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<sup>55</sup> Germain Bazin (1901–1991) had met Huyghe at the Ecole du Louvre.

behind the article it is possible to summarize it through the illustrations (figs. 18 to 20). The four images taken from old masters in fig. 18, for example, have been cropped and the two at the top are inverted to make the mountains look similar to the Sainte-Victoire.

The last illustration (fig. 20) is paired with one of Rewald's site photographs. Bazin argues that the last paintings of the Sainte-Victoire do not represent Cézanne's classicism, and that the mountain (the autochthonous site) stimulated the artist to reflect on universal values and the cosmos. The site photographs are incorporated among other reproductions as a representation of the majestic site that inspired him.

The 1936 special issue about Cézanne of *La Renaissance* (as its name indicate a more conservative magazine than *L'Amour de l'art*) applied the same strategies. J. Vergnet-Ruiz in "Cézanne et l'Impressionnisme" compares Cézanne's "synthetic" method with the "analytical" approach of Pissarro (terms most probably taken from Fry's book—published first in *L'Amour de L'art* in 1926—although they were quite common at the time in the context of the consideration of cubism as it will be seen below).<sup>56</sup> The author uses one of Rewald's site photograph in order to "demonstrate" that the artists had a different way of understanding reality (fig. 21). The site photograph is between the reproductions of the two works of art in the same diagonal format adopted by *L'Amour de l'art*. A careful examination of the material demonstrates that it does not answer basic questions about the relative position of the volumes in the landscape and the artists' point of view. Moreover, the site photograph does not permit the reader to decide if the artists were more or less inventive, or if one was more realist and interested in the accurate representation of what he perceived

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<sup>56</sup> J. Vergnet-Ruiz, "Cézanne et l'Impressionnisme," *La Renaissance* 19 (May–June, 1936) :19–22.

than the other. In both paintings the angular volume of the house to the right, for example, is high above the horizon whereas in the photograph it is almost at the same height than the one that is at the center of the group.

*L'Amour de l'art* also presented more “scientific” material in this new period: raking light photographs, x-rays, diagrams of perspectival constructions, photographs with tracing lines to reinforce certain ideas and analysis, etc. This had an equivalent in the *Exposition Internationale des arts et techniques dans la vie moderne*, Paris, 1937. In the context of the exhibition organized at the *Palais de la Découverte* to demonstrate the advances of sciences and letters and their relationship with technique, Huyghe organized the exhibition *Art et Science* with the assistance of Jacques Lassagne. The exhibit analyzed the close relationship between scientific discoveries and the history of art. The accent was put on the Renaissance as the first moment in which art and science came together and the display used the kind of material listed above profusely.<sup>57</sup>

In 1931 Huyghe mentioned that photography was a great success and immensely influential in Germany, which might explain Rewald’s optimistic and positivistic approach to it.<sup>58</sup> Some of the more acute critiques of the medium also originated there. In 1927 Siegfried Kracauer (1889–1966), one of the most important cultural critics of the Weimar Republic, published “Photography” in the leftist *Frankfurter*

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<sup>57</sup> There is little information about this exhibit. See “Art et Science au Palais de la Découverte,” *Beaux-Arts* (July 7, 1937): 8.

<sup>58</sup> See Olivier Lugon, “Photo-inflation. La profusion des images dans la photographie allemande, 1925–1945,” *Cahiers du Musée national d’art moderne* 49 (Fall, 1994): 94–113. In 1930, that is, at the time Rewald was studying with him, Panofsky defended the use of reproductions of works of art. See Erwin Panofsky, “Original et reproduction en fac-similé,” *Cahiers du Musée d’Art Moderne* 50 (Fall, 1995): 45–56, and Brigitte Buettner, “Panofsky à l’ère de la reproduction mécanisée. Une question de perspective,” *ibid.*, 57–78. Photography was an important subject in the curriculum of the *Lichtwarkschule*.

*Zeitung*. He analyzed there the ontological character of the photographic image and its relationship with historicism, which, as the epigraph of this section shows, Kracauer considered to be concerned with something equivalent to taking photographs of the events evolving through *time*: the idea that a trail of documents allows scholars to track down the historical phenomenon, corresponds to the notion that photographs record the *spatial* structure that faces the camera.

[T]hey believe at the very least that they can grasp historical reality by reconstructing the series of events in their temporal succession without any gaps. Photography presents a spatial continuum; historicism seeks to provide the temporal continuum. According to historicism the complete mirroring of a temporal sequence simultaneously contains the meaning of all that occurred within that time. ...Historicism is concerned with the photography of time. The equivalent of its temporal photography would be a giant film depicting the temporally interconnected events from every vantage point.<sup>59</sup>

Kracauer's article, by assimilating documents to photographs, hits the foundations of Rewald's approach to sources and history in general, as the art historian believed that testimonies, photographs, and other kind of historical records could be incorporated into a narration that reconstructed the life of an artist.<sup>60</sup> As noted in Chapter Four the anecdote and the photograph have a similar function in an historical narration as stand-ins for the "real." Nevertheless, in order to be integrated as part of the plot, they have to contain in themselves, and demonstrate, its main arguments.

Kracauer argues that the configuration of the photographic image is basically (ontologically) different from the (spatial) structure it records. It might be said that photographs hollow out or "denarrativize" the object or event they represent, in the

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<sup>59</sup> Siegfried Kracauer, "Photography," *Critical Inquiry* 19 no.3 (Spring, 1993): 424–425.

<sup>60</sup> Rewald, as Thomson explains, "prefers a sequential, factual method to interpretation of images. For him, pictures exist to establish a chronological framework or to be collected. Iconographical meaning is a minor matter." Richard Thomson, "Cézanne Composition; *Studies in Impressionism; Cézanne and the End of Impressionism*," *The Burlington Magazine* 128 (April, 1986): 298.

sense that they erase its original meaning and the particular way in which it addresses the beholder and reduce it to being merely a sign. Formatted in this way, as photograph, the reality may be assigned a new meaning and thus inserted into a narration.

According to Kracauer photography differs from human memory's register of reality because it grasps only the spatial continuum, whereas memory images are built over time and are the product of the active participation of the receiver in the process of perception which determines that everything is loaded with meaning. Every aspect of a memory image is consequential and a synopsis of many perceptions.<sup>61</sup> Thus,

from the latter's [the photograph's] perspective, memory-images appear to be fragments but only because photography does not encompass the meaning to which they refer and in relation to which they cease to be fragments. Similarly, from the perspective of memory, photography appears as a jumble that consists partly of garbage.<sup>62</sup>

The spatial organization and structure (closeness, shape, etc) of forms in a photograph have different connotations than those in a memory image. They may be similar but they are *not* equivalent.

Kracauer was concerned with the effects that photographs and illustrated magazines had in the way society understands the world under capitalism, which explains why the article resonates with Heidegger's critique of modernity. He described a spiraling development in which writers and editors of [illustrated] texts reduce nature and works of art to being just [photographic] traces of what they were.

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<sup>61</sup> "The photograph does not preserve the transparent aspects of an object but instead captures it as a spatial continuum from any one of a number of positions. The last memory-image outlasts time because it is unforgettable, the photograph, which neither refers to nor encompasses such a memory-image must be essentially associated with the moment in time at which it came into existence." Kracauer, "Photography," 428.

<sup>62</sup> Kracauer, "Photography," 425-426.

The assault of these mass images is so powerful that it threatens to destroy the potentially existing awareness of crucial traits. Artworks suffer this fate through their reproductions. The phrase ‘lie together, die together’ applies to the multiply reproduced original; rather than coming into view through the reproductions, it tends to disappear in its multiplicity and to live on as art photography. In the illustrated magazines people see the very world that the illustrated magazines prevent them from perceiving.... Never before has a period known so little about itself. In the hands of the ruling society, the invention of illustrated magazines is one of the most powerful means of organizing a *strike against understanding*. ... The *contiguity* of these images systematically excludes their contextual framework available to consciousness. The ‘image-idea’ drives away the idea;  
...<sup>63</sup>

This long quotation shows that in 1927 Kracauer was aware of how photographs of works of art might affect the comprehension of art. This text permits the contextualization of Huyghe’s evaluation of photography and his determination to use it in his publications and installations, as he was aware of the power of images and of display to convey meanings to the public. Huyghe’s “orientation of reflection” is Kracauer’s “strike against understanding.”<sup>64</sup>

Kracauer thinks of photography is another stage in the history of the representation of nature, the one that corresponds to a capitalist mode of production.<sup>65</sup> His analysis develops his main argument—photographs, ontological difference from paintings and from the way reality is perceived—and affords some elements to better understand how the use of site photographs affects the appreciation of modern art.

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<sup>63</sup> Kracauer, “Photography,” 432.

<sup>64</sup> Panofsky did not know Kracauer, at least while they were in Germany but they became fast friends in the United States and shared their thoughts about film. Rewald saw Kracauer many times working at the library of the Museum of Modern art, as he recalled later in the Oral history but did not become his friend. See Irving Sandler’s “Introduction” to Irving Sandler and Amy Newman, eds., *Defining Modern Art Selected Writings of Alfred H. Barr, Jr.*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1986), and Rewald, “interview.”

<sup>65</sup> He comments that “to an ever-increasing degree, European painting during the last few centuries has represented nature stripped of symbolic and allegorical meanings. ... Since nature changes in exact correspondence with the respective state of consciousness of a period, the foundation of nature devoid of meaning arises with modern photography. No different from earlier modes of representation, photography too is assigned to a particular developmental stage of practical and material life. It is a secretion of the capitalist mode of production.” Kracauer, “Photography,” 434.

He argues that since the Renaissance works of art represent memory images that are the product of a history, as both perception and work develop in time.

In order for history to present itself the mere surface, the coherence offered by photography must be destroyed. For in the artwork the meaning of the object takes on spatial appearance, whereas in photography the spatial appearance of an object is its meaning. The two spatial appearances—the ‘natural’ one and that of the object permeated by cognition—are not identical. By sacrificing the former for the sake of the latter the artwork also negates the likeness achieved by photography. This *likeness* refers to the look of the object, which does not immediately divulge how it reveals itself to cognition; the artwork, however, conveys nothing but the transparency of the object.<sup>66</sup>

According to Kracauer the likeness afforded by a photograph of a landscape representing, for example, the Mount Sainte-Victoire and a tree, is not something that Cézanne or a bystander might see, as their perception is always already involved in the process of creating and modifying memory images. Cézanne’s paintings are the result of all those images and processes but are also “real” objects that appear to the spectator’s consideration like the tree and the mountain.

Time is an important element of Cézanne’s art making. Every painting is the product of hard work: Cézanne slowly builds the trunk and leaves of a tree, deals with the contours, the local colors, the reflected colors, and the atmosphere and every single aspect is translated into painting or created anew. In most of his paintings, brushstrokes are identifiable perceptual units and consequently behave like “forms” within the field of colors, especially in those works that do not have a strong representational value. Forms and brushstrokes are the result of Cézanne’s activity and impinge on the spectator’s attention according to the shape, color, dimensions, and the position the artist assigned to them in the painting. In this sense, a tree and a

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<sup>66</sup> Kracauer, “Photography,” 426–427.

brushstroke in a painting by Cézanne have a “meaning”—even if it is just a “visual” meaning—which does not relate anymore with the motif it represents and addresses the spectator directly, sparking his or her perceptual process and the production of memory images.

Until the advent of digital cameras, photographs were the result of the chemical reaction light produces on a sensitive emulsion, which implies that all the elements imprinted on the surface have the same quality and a homogeneous appearance. Of the natural tree or of a painted tree, they show only the configuration, the traces, but not the material difference between, for example, rock and tree, brushstroke and line, or canvas and color: a tree trunk is of the same material and texture as that of a void and a rock. The medium’s limitations (sensitivity of the emulsion, for example) produce simplifications and establish relationships that do not exist in the original.

The physical characteristics of the media determine the kind of attention they generate in the beholder. The eye scans the even surface of photographs, where everything is evenly homogeneous, and thus of the same value. The photograph of a tree records the spatial position of its elements at a certain moment. The photograph of the picture by Cézanne representing a tree, on the other hand, only shows the spatial distribution of the forms or the color patches, but does not afford the opportunity of engaging with them in an active way. The original incites perception to develop in time, in a series of memory images and thus to have a “history.” In a photograph of a work of art the brushstrokes are juxtaposed and evenly placed across the surface, they do not have material specificity, thickness, tactile values, etc. Moreover, photographs in general annul the painting’s “history,” which is recounted

by the superposition of different layers of pigment. Thus, the medium fosters a superficial approach in which the eyes rush over the surface in order to capture the subject matter of the image represented. Cézanne's art defies the likeness of photographs, challenges sleek surfaces, and superficial attention as it is the product of a long concentration, focus, and even obsessive attention to nature, exactly the values that the work with photographs of sites and works of art discourage.<sup>67</sup>

Site photographs are documentary images, ancillary tools, supplements. When they are paired with a work of art, they transform it into their complement, as both images are considered according to the suggestions the other proposes. Thus, the two elements of the comparison are not in themselves but for the other. If the subject of the comparison is a photograph of the work of art, art is lost in the photographic medium, in the passage from one sleek surface to the other, and attention plays at its most superficial. In the end, the meaning highlighted in this kind of exercise is the one suggested by the narration/interpretation proposed by the art historian.

Preziosi has called attention to the fact that the methodologies devised to study works of art have encouraged art historians to understand them as signs. Photographs are among the heuristic tools that allow them to treat works of art as illustrations. Mary Bergstein, argues that art historians used to work with photographs, discover better and more elements for their work in reproductions, as if the original had something that would impede the same kind of attention.<sup>68</sup> And Brigitte Buettner has

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<sup>67</sup> It might be said that in a photograph space is mere quantity whereas in reality and in works of art space has meaning, value, it is quality.

<sup>68</sup> Mary Bergstein, "We May Imagine it": Living with Photographic Reproduction at the End of Our Century," Introductory essay to Roberts, *Art History*, 8.

commented how Panofsky, for example, would explode against those “damned originals” that dared to disturb his theories.<sup>69</sup>

This chapter has argued that the use of site photographs extends this effect to nature which, culturalized as the ‘site’ painted by the artist, is transformed into an image or a tourist attraction whose meaning is subsidiary to its history. Site photographs transform nature into documents/information, whereas it was for Cézanne a motif, not just a visual subject matter, but a source of emotions, sensations, and impressions. This connects Kracauer’s gloomy but visionary analysis with Heidegger’s almost contemporary study of the world becoming world picture, and the correlative transformation of the spectator into *subiectum*.

Photography denarrativizes works of art and nature and transforms them into sleek surfaces waiting to be incorporated into a narration which will write on them a new meaning: style, biography, history of space, nation, history of form. As true signs, they refer to something that is beyond their materiality, their physical appearance. Photography is part of the methodology that transforms the work of art—and the world—into documents, in the same way that the academic ethnography and museography developed in the 1930s created a *metaphorical* position within which primitive artifacts became the bearers of cultural totality. Photographs transform art and nature into *(re)sources*. In both cases it is the material presence which is lost in the process.

Melville has observed that the use of photographs and the methodological approach to art established by modern art history in the 1930s have both blocked off other ways of understanding the world and art. Like Heidegger, the author believes

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<sup>69</sup> Brigitte Buettner, “Panofsky à l’ère,” 57–78.

that art is a key element in the epistemological configuration of Western culture and therefore he considers that it could provide the key to comprehending it. “I would like to close by locating the camera on the Heideggerean route not taken by Panofsky” he announces. Heidegger thought that modernity has established,

a flat availability of objects to our view, our calculation, and our research, as if we were frozen into a permanent midday... It names this modernity ‘the age of the world picture’ .... It is a feature of this flat availability of things that among the things available are, hanging ‘on the wall, like a rifle or a hat,’ works of art. And because these pictures hang there in just this way, they offer us no access to the fact that our world too has come to hang before us like a picture—but it is also the case that if we could come to understand what a picture is we might come again to understand what a world is. We stand poised for Heidegger between a mere aestheticism and some other grasp of the work of art, and what poses us there Heidegger calls ‘technology.’ I am calling it, for now, ‘the camera.’<sup>70</sup>

Melville, like Heidegger, believes that only the examination of what produces the problem and propitiates “danger” affords the possibility of an opening and a solution as “there is nothing saving apart of the very danger itself.” What it is most needed is not new theories or orientations but a sharp analysis of the history of art history itself as a way of liberating the discipline from its own shadows. The site photographs and the photographs of works of art help to transform art into just another object, like the rifle or the hat on Heidegger’s wall. It might be that the examination of the process by which paintings were surrounded by photographs helps to reach a novel understanding of modern art.

The use of site photographs for the study of Cézanne’s art fostered the notion that the problem of the representation of space and perspective were central to the artist’s endeavors. Stephen Melville has commented that,

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<sup>70</sup> Melville, “The Temptation,” 412.

The camera is most *simply a machine for producing automatic linear perspective renditions of the world*. [Emphasis added] It can of course do other things, including give the lie to this automatism. . . . What matters . . . is that in fulfilling a certain dream of vision—the dream, more or less, of an eye gazing out upon its world—the camera exerts effects that go beyond and turn against that dream: it gives us that world as profoundly textual, even in its very moment of appearing, or it gives us that world as a *source* as well as an object of vision. It can compel us to return to, reengage with, the early grapplings with the apparent duplicity and self-division of vision; it can returns us even to the baroque and seemingly gratuitous complexity of the models and experiments through which the Renaissance found its way to rational perspective.<sup>71</sup>

This is the moment then, in which this essay turns away from the problem of the camera to consider the problem of perspective in depth, as according to Melville, the post-modern realization of the camera and photography as conventions, afford us an opportunity to rethink the Renaissance, art history, and art.

#### Coda. Cézanne and the School of Vienna. Fritz Novotny

The case of Fritz Novotny (1903–1983) deserves consideration even though his *Cézanne and the end of Scientific Perspective* (1938) was published after the three principal publications examined in this dissertation. This book, which is famously difficult to read and was never translated into other languages, influenced a limited number of very leading specialists such as Meyer Shapiro.<sup>72</sup> Novotny's main contention overlaps with Barr's interpretation of Cézanne's art. Both approaches

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<sup>71</sup> Melville, "The Temptation," 411.

<sup>72</sup> Meyer Schapiro comments at the end of his book that he had profited from the work of Fry and Novotny. *Paul Cézanne*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1962), 30. Novotny's first article on Cézanne was published in 1929 in the magazine *Belvedere*. His *Cézanne und das Ende der wissenschaftliche Perspektive* was reprinted in the 1970s but never translated. His brief introduction to *Cézanne*—part of a series of illustrated books on great artists published by Phaidon—where he summarizes his ideas, was first published in German in 1937. Translated into English in 1947, the book has been reprinted many times since then. Joseph J. Rishel's analysis of Novotny's approach to Cézanne in the 1996 catalogue is based almost exclusively on this last publication.

demonstrate that in the 1930 space and perspective had become important art historical categories for the analysis of works of art.

Novotny studied with Strzygowski before serving as assistant professor with Hans Sedlmayr at the *Kunsthistorischen Institut* in Vienna from 1928 to 1939, when he was appointed curator at the *Österreichische Galerie*. Although his political orientation in the 1930s is not known and little can be gleaned from his detailed and cold writing style, his close association with Strzygowski and Sedlmayr, as well as the date of his appointment at the museum, indicate that he did not confront the pro-Nazi establishment.<sup>73</sup>

Novotny's analysis of Cézanne's work reflects the experimental formalism and critical approach to Humanism of the School of Vienna. Moreover, his scholarship was not influenced by neo-Kantianism but derives from his own reading of the work of Kant's First Critique.<sup>74</sup> His characterization of Cézanne's art as in-human or beyond humanness helps to explain why his work was not fully integrated into the Humanist modern art history that became the common lingua after the war.<sup>75</sup> In

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<sup>73</sup> In 1995 Artur Rosenauer wrote a brief and admiring biographical profile of Novotny, who had been his teacher. He affirms that Novotny despised Fascism but this late testimony does not affect the previous statement. Fritz Novotny and Artur Rosenauer, *The Great Impressionists* (Munich; New York: Prestel 1995), 148.

Until more material is found, the subject must be left open. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that Jacques Maritain, a Catholic French philosopher accused both Novotny and Sedlmayr of being "biased doctrinaires" and of making "blind judgments" for detecting in Cézanne the germs of cultural degeneration. Alice von Hildebrand, "Debating Beauty: Jacques Maritain and Dietrich von Hildebrand," *Crisis magazine* (July-August 2004), [www.crisismagazine.com/julaug2004/hildebrand.htm](http://www.crisismagazine.com/julaug2004/hildebrand.htm)

<sup>74</sup> See biography and sources in "Novotny, Fritz." *Dictionary of Art Historians* (website). <http://dictionaryofarthistorians.org/novotnyf.htm>. See also Joseph J. Rishel, "A Century of Cézanne Criticism II: From 1907 to the Present," *Cézanne* exh. cat., Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, 1996. Novotny's use of Kant is most explicit in "Das Problem des Menschen Cézanne im Verhältnis zu seiner Kunst," *Zeitschrift für Aesthetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft* 26 (1932), 268–298.

<sup>75</sup> This is why his influence over other art historians like Meyer Schapiro has to be put within brackets, as the American author started the pseudo-psychoanalytic interpretation of Cézanne's art and considered him as part of the Humanist tradition. For a critique of Schapiro's approach to Cézanne see

Wood's words, Novotny considers that "En sabotant la structure du système perspectif, Cézanne déstabilise la subjectivité du spectateur."<sup>76</sup>

According to Novotny's Kantian interpretation, Cézanne's extreme and almost un-natural concentration permitted him to expurgate non-visual aspects of perception and to transcend common vision. Sedlmayr, who was an open supporter of the Nazi party, mentioned Novotny's book in his famous attack on modern art, *Verlust der Mitte* (1948). Cézanne's art, he argued,

demands a mode of behaviour which in life can only occur under certain very exceptional conditions, it demands a state of complete dissociation and disinterestedness on the part of the spirit and the soul from the experiences of the eye. This makes it easy to understand Novotny's calling the art of Cézanne extra-human and divorced from life (*lebensfern*), for it is indeed contrary to human nature to exclude from the act of perception all the other functions of the human mind in favour of pure seeing.<sup>77</sup>

Sedlmayr's summary of Novotny's book is characteristically accurate, as Sedlmayr was the most acute and intelligent of the few German-speaking scholars dealing with modern art after the war, although he used his knowledge for criticizing it. As Woods comments,

The shift from the *Kunstwollen* to *Struktur* allowed the followers of Riegl to treat the image not as the notation of a perception but as a metaphor for perception, and thus to banish all lingering nineteenth-century anthropomorphism from the formalist method. *Strukturanalyse* was thus not only a permanent diagnosis of modernism: it was itself a modernist way of seeing. ...

Panofsky stood by the classical reading strategies—postmedieval and pre-Romantic—and thus preserved the insulation of scholarship from art; and by the end he was perhaps prepared to let art die for lack of any vehement response to it. Sedlmayr, by contrast, leaves an impression of terrible inquietude and aggrievance. Sedlmayr the Fascist constantly defined marginality, distortion and

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Wayne Andersen's "Cézanne's Wish for his Father. An Unlikely Story," *Common Knowledge* 4 (1998): 127–135.

<sup>76</sup> Christopher Wood, "Une perspective oblique. Hubert Damisch, La grammaire du tableau et la strukturanalyse viennoise," *Cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne* 58 (Winter 1996), 124.

<sup>77</sup> Hans Sedlmayr, *Art in Crisis, The Lost Center*, in *Cézanne in Perspective*, ed. Judith Wechsler, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1975), 118.

degradation against an ideal of balance and perfection. ... The ideal is nowhere to be found.<sup>78</sup>

Like Melville and many other scholars interested in the history of art history, Woods insists that the methodological and philosophical orientations left outside the foundations of modern art history deserve to be studied and enlisted to balance out the obvious problems generated by Panofsky's formulation of the discipline. In the last twenty years art historians have realized that in the 1930s were proposed many alternative ways of understanding modernism, art, and art history.

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<sup>78</sup> Wood, ed., *Vienna School Reader*, 52–53.

Our natural art historical tendency to speak of ‘pictorial space’ might be softened to take into account the fact that Renaissance historians, critics, and geometers generally did not speak of pictorial space, or even of a unified space within a picture, but of the *objects* that went into the pictures.  
James Elkins, “Renaissance Perspectives.”<sup>1</sup>

As art historians, we often write about perspective as if it were at least in part a historically relative invention, while retaining the implication that it is in some important sense a true discovery, something at once universal and not susceptible to improvement. We have tended to base this somewhat unfaithful conception on where we stand in relation to the claims made in Panofsky’s essay *Die Perspektive als ‘symbolische Form’* or in the works it inspired.”  
James Elkins, *The Poetics of Perspective*.<sup>2</sup>

## **Chapter Six: Cézanne & Perspective**

Was Cézanne interested in the analysis and representation of space? Was perspective pertinent for him or was it a subject matter imposed by the methodology used for the study of his art? In the famous letter to Bernard of April 15, 1905 Cézanne encouraged the younger artist to,

[T]raitez la nature par le cylindre, la sphère, le cône, le tout mis en perspective, soit que chaque côté d’un objet d’un plan, se dirige vers un point central. Les lignes parallèles à l’horizon donnent l’étendue, soit une section de la nature ou, si vous aimez mieux, du spectacle que le *Pater Omnipotens Aeterne Deus* étale devant nos yeux. Les lignes perpendiculaires à cet horizon donnent la profondeur. Or, la nature, pour nous hommes, est plus en profondeur qu’en surface, d’où la nécessité d’introduire dans nos vibrations de lumière, représentées par les rouges et les jaunes, une somme suffisante de bleutés, pour faire sentir l’air.<sup>3</sup>

This must be one of the most analyzed, over-analyzed, quoted, and over-quoted letters in the history of art.<sup>4</sup> Cézanne actually refers to perspective as a way of representing objects in space, whereas after Panofsky’s 1927 book, art history

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<sup>1</sup> *Journal of the History of Ideas* 53 (April – June, 1992): 223–224.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*, 187–188.

<sup>3</sup> Rewald, *Correspondance*, 300.

<sup>4</sup> Theodore Reff understands “lignes perpendiculaires à cet horizon” as vertical lines, whereas in my analysis the artist was referring to the orthogonals. See Reff’s “Cézanne et la perspective,” and “Painting and Theory in the Final Decade,” in *Cézanne: The Late Work*, exh. cat., Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1977.

considers perspective as a representational device that reflects an epistemological model, namely, a way of perceiving the [real] space that contains objects. The letter indicates that for Cézanne “nature” was “objects.” True, the artist states that the sides of those objects must converge at a point on the horizon, which is not to say that all the orthogonals must be coordinated to coincide there. Had he said so, had he recommended that Bernard use perspective (and then the question is why he did not say: “use perspective”) this would mean that he was thinking of it as a device for *representing* objects in space. It would not necessarily imply that this was the way Cézanne perceived the third dimension. As Reff notes, this method was taught by the Academy and many illustrated manuals that circulated among artists. In other words: perspective is an efficient device for suggesting a three-dimensional space on a surface but this does not mean that the artist who uses it thinks that the world around him is organized according to its rules. There is an abysmal ontological gap between nature and art, reality and representation. In the letter Cézanne tells Bernard to represent the objects in perspective, but when it comes to the notion of space—which he does not mention—the artist refers to God as the organizer of nature as a spectacle for men to enjoy. He is able to encompass its extension, whereas men can only perceive the world as depth. Cézanne differentiated “nature” from space, intimating that human perception—compared with that of the Almighty—was limited.

In the article considered in Chapter Five, Reff discusses two perspectival drawings made by Cézanne in different periods of his life as evidence of the artist’s long-standing interest in perspective. He concedes that Cézanne had copied them from manuals probably without having read the texts, which were barely

comprehensible in any case. The interpretation of documents (like those two drawings and the letters), is determined by the context in which the researcher places them. The question then lingers: For what purpose did he draw them? Are two drawings enough to prove such an interest? In his paintings Cézanne seems to have disregarded perspective. If those two drawings demonstrate the artist's interest in perspective, they also prove that he was *consciously* subverting it in his paintings.

In the last paragraph of the article, Reff upholds perspective as the paradigmatic epistemological model of the West that Panofsky theorized. There are two issues: did Cézanne and his contemporaries perceive or think of space as if it were governed by the laws of perspective? Did they deem perspective merely as a technical device and a convention inherited from the Renaissance, taught by the Academy, and reinforced by photographs? This chapter argues that the first epigraph by Elkins, taken from an essay devoted to the study of the Renaissance, might be used to describe the situation at the end of the nineteenth century in France: Cézanne and his contemporaries were concentrated on the problem of the perception and representation of objects/volumes.

Photography, more than a “discovery,” was an “invention” and, as such, it was deeply determined by the epistemological project of the Renaissance.<sup>5</sup> The creation, slow development, and popularization of photography coincided with modern art's confrontation with the artistic tradition inherited from that period.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless,

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<sup>5</sup> James Elkins, whose eye-opening *The Poetics of Perspective* guides much of what follows in this chapter, has suggested that it might even be that Descartes's understanding of optics was influenced by the art of that period. *Poetics of Perspective*, 23.

<sup>6</sup> The problem of the influence of photography in the development of modern art is still a subject of debate. In the 1960s Aaron Scharf argued in *Art and Photography* that the new technology had had a positive effect. In 1980 Kirk Varnedoe demonstrated that no contemporary photograph actually backed Scharf's claims and that the influence of photography on art was difficult to prove. This dissertation underlines photography's influence in disseminating the Academic taste, that is, its disciplinary use. See Mary Warner Marien, *Photography and Its Critics. A Cultural History 1839–1900* (Cambridge:

modern art's relationship to the invention is difficult to determine in part because modern art history itself is a product of photography.

The implication behind considering perspective and photography as discoveries is that they reflect man's perceptual apparatus or that they are based on scientific laws, and that they produce true representations/reproductions of reality.<sup>7</sup> In addition, discoveries tend to be applied "retrospectively," as Elkins's epigraphs suggests.

Since when is space an important category for the evaluation of works of art? Panofsky's 1927 *The Perspective as Symbolic Form* redefined space as perspective and established it at the center of modern art history, both as a preferred subject and as an epistemological model for understanding its object of study. It was not fundamental either for Wölfflin or for Riegl, for example, although they did pay attention to visual space.

As Snyder noticed, Panofsky misunderstood the theories of vision of the Renaissance and interpreted them in a neo-Kantian mode. Influenced by Cassirer's *Philosophy of the Symbolic Forms*, he redefined Alberti's vision as visual *experience*, that is, as subjective vision, and argued that those theories entailed the representation of objects immersed in space. Panofsky considered that the experience of the world is always mediated by man's perceptual faculties and cognitive apparatus, and that it is possible to establish the laws and the theoretical model that explain the mediation

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Cambridge University Press, 1997). For a reassessment of this debate see Alexi Worth, "The Lost Photographs of Edouard Manet," *Art in America* (January, 2007): 59–65.

<sup>7</sup> As it will be argued in what follows, there is no definitive answer to this problem. On the problem of perception, see, for example "Symposium: The Historicity of the Eye," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 59 (Winter, 2001) especially Arthur Danto's "Seeing and Showing," where the author takes issue with Marx W. Wartofsky's "The Paradox of Painting: Pictorial Representation and the Dimensionality of Visual Space," *Social Research* 51 (1984). Both texts were considered in the context of Whitney Davis' five seminars "Art History and Visual Culture Studies," organized by Dr. June Hargrove at the Department of Art History and Archaeology, University of Maryland, April-May, 2001.

itself. Consequently, these scientific standards might be used for the evaluation of the different representations of the world.

*Perspective as Symbolic Form* established space as a category for the analysis of artistic manifestations of all periods and regions of the world.<sup>8</sup> Thus a particular, historically determined model—perspective—was associated/fused together with the more general category—space—which, in turn, is considered to be universal. As a category, space became part of the questionnaire imposed onto the subject that the discipline studies. In other words, art history does not ask, did a certain culture have a word for space? Is there any proof that this artist was interested in space as a problem or that he perceived it as a volume independent of objects? The question is: how did this culture or artist represent or understand space? This is how the Eurocentric epistemology on which the discipline is based determines the subjects and objects it studies. Moreover, Panofsky's neo-Kantian approach—a reformulation of Kant's theory of knowledge that takes it away from metaphysics and transforms it into a transcendental method oriented towards the consideration of epistemological issues—defines space as the product of human perception. Neo-Kantianism placed within the field of art history man's perception: the site in which culture interacts with man's sensory apparatus to shape the most primal, pre-conscious functions that govern his basic being-in-the-world.

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<sup>8</sup> It is impossible to list the bibliography related to this publication. In 1991 Christopher Wood published a new translation with comments, which is the text used here. Other than the book by Elkins, I have profited from the many publications by Kim Veltman on the subject and from George Didi-Huberman, *Devant l'image. Question posée aux fins d'une histoire de l'art*, (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1990). The book by Hubert Damisch *L'Origine de la perspective* (Paris: Flammarion, 1987), translated into English in 1994 rekindled the interest in Panofsky's book and the problem. Among the last publications on the subject is Keith Broadfoot's "Perspective Yet Again: Damisch with Lacan," *Oxford Art Journal* 25 (2002):71–94. For the problem of the evaluation of space see James Elkins, "David Summers 'Real Spaces: World Art History and the Rise of Western Modernism'," *Art Bulletin* 86 (June 2004): 373–381.

Supported by Cassirer's anthropological philosophy and philosophy of sciences—Panofsky establishes a historical understanding of space and vision as epistemological paradigm used to evaluate individual perception. Therefore, the use of perspective/space as a category for the analysis of art implies decisions about “human” perception where a particular model garners art's and art history's claims to universality.<sup>9</sup>

The previous chapter demonstrates how photography helped to disseminate and impose “photographic vision.” The present chapter deals with perspective *per se*, as in the 1930s, and, thanks in part to the use of site photographs, Cézanne's art was indelibly associated with it.

### Panofsky's *Perspective as Symbolic Form*

In his study of the history of perspective, Elkins points out that, when Panofsky endeavored to study it, perspective had been forgotten, and that later on—and in part as a consequence of the success of the 1927 treatise—art historians forgot that perspective had been forgotten.<sup>10</sup> Once a thriving discipline and practice, perspective in the nineteenth century was merely regarded as an Academic formula passed down by professors who did not even consider it necessary to discuss its foundations or its

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<sup>9</sup> This, in turn, expands the area of art history's disciplinary influence as described by Preziosi and Bennet.

<sup>10</sup> “We forgot perspective slowly, throughout the middle and later nineteenth century and into the first decades of modernism, and then we forgot that we had forgotten it, in the revaluations of later abstraction and postmodernism.” He mentions, among the first signs of this process, J. M. Turner's reluctance to teach perspective. Elkins, *Poetics of Perspective*, 256, n. 60. This book sprung from the author's three volumes dissertation on this subject matter and much of what it follows depends on his brilliant argumentation.

validity.<sup>11</sup> Art criticism did not concentrate on the problem of space until the 1910s and referred to perspective as a traditional technical tool devised for the *representation of space*. As Marisa Dalai Emiliani comments,

On se limitait à signaler ou à décrire la perspective de telle ou telle œuvre, à louer l’habileté d’un artiste ou à en condamner les erreurs, les incorrections. On ne se posait pas de questions sur la validité effective, du point de vue naturaliste et scientifique, du système traditionnel de perspective : si une peinture était construite avec rigueur, selon les règles, on pensait, par habitude, qu’elle répondait aussi au but de reproduire fidèlement la réalité et qu’elle avait par conséquent une valeur esthétique positive...c’est seulement avec l’avènement de recherches et d’études spécialisées sur la perspective—*il coïncide , et ce n’est certainement pas un hasard, avec la progressive décadence du concept d’imitation comme canon esthétique fondamental*—et avec la conséquente affirmation des valeurs formelles et visuelles de l’œuvre d’art, en premier lieu l’espace au-delà de leur correspondance plus ou moins fidèles avec le réel – que l’on fut emmené à des positions moins rigides et dogmatiques, plus libres et ouvertes. Cette évolution se fit graduellement à partir de la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle.<sup>12</sup> (Emphasis added)

The work of art historians reflects the historical developments of their time and therefore it is not a coincidence that perspective attracted critical attention precisely at the moment when it was being contested by modern art. Concurrently, as this chapter demonstrates, Panofsky transformed perspective into a modern intellectual construction, which, in the end, had little to do with its original manifestations.

Perspective’s claims to be a “discovery” rest today on the common belief that it is the artistic manifestation of mathematical formulas and geometric schemas, that is, of a scientific model, which explains its central position both at the ideological foundations of the discipline and as its object of study. The notion of “discovery” implies that there is a reality—like America, for example, which pre-existed

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<sup>11</sup> See Marianne Marcussen, “L’évolution de la perspective linéaire au XXe siècle en France,” *Hafnia Copenhagen Papers in the Art History* No. 7 (1980): 51–73.

<sup>12</sup> See Marisa Dalai Emiliani, “La question de la perspective,” in Erwin Panofsky, *La perspective comme forme symbolique* (Paris, 1975), 19–20. Dalai Emiliani argues that already Vasari considered perspective as abstract and not natural, but that in time, spectators and scholars became used to it.

Columbus—that precedes and hence allows the act of discovery. Much like in mathematics or other hard sciences this idea denies its progressive construction as “invention,” and suggests that there is a clear teleology in that process, a progressive evolution towards the “correct” model. Einstein’s theories, for example, surpassed Newton’s, which since then are considered just historical antecedent. Elkins gives the example of the vanishing points, which was only theorized in the 1600s but is used to analyze early perspectival paintings from the preceding century,

[S]ince ‘at bottom’ a mathematical endeavor, it is thought not to change as completely as other aspects of painting. In some sense it has no history at all, only a ‘mathematical core’ that can be *discovered* or rediscovered or invented but never altered. This is a subtle point. To a certain extent it is true, but the danger is that what is anachronistic in our understanding of perspective may make perspective itself seem timeless, and historical change may be telescoped more than is historically justifiable...<sup>13</sup>

Once the “true model” has been formulated, it is uncritically and anachronistically applied to the study of the historical manifestations of the phenomena. This is what art historians do when they translate into a modern language the findings of past scholars, especially when the same word is given a new meaning, like in the case of perspective.<sup>14</sup>

*Perspective as Symbolic Form* was a milestone in Panofsky’s career, especially while he was in Germany mulling over the inheritance of Riegl and art history’s main challenge: the articulation of structure and history. The book reflects the historical and sociological influences sketched in Chapter One of this dissertation, as it was published just before the decade under study.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Elkins, *Poetics of Perspective*, 8–9.

<sup>14</sup> Other examples are ornament, ekphrasis, space and, as this essay explained, art and even art history.

<sup>15</sup> It might be compared with Venturi’s 1926 *Il gusto dei primitivi*. In 1927 Kracauer published his article on photography, and Roger Fry his important *Cézanne: A Study of His Development*.

From the beginning of his career, Panofsky was well aware of the work of Wölfflin and derived his ideas about pictorial space from Riegl, who in turn had benefited from the writings of Adolph Hildebrand (1847–1921.)<sup>16</sup> Therefore Panofsky’s basic approach to space depended on the post-Kantian and post-Herbatian theory of perception spread by Hermann von Helmholtz (1821–1897), which scholars of the German-speaking countries had used until then for the creation of art historical categories and vocabulary.

As the title of the book indicates, the main influence on Panofsky’s treatise on perspective was the neo-Kantian philosophy of Cassirer as he developed it at the Warburg Institute. The Renaissance and Humanism were the Institute’s central interests, whereas the members of the School of Vienna, and Riegl in particular, were interested in unseating that tradition from the place it held at the core of the discipline. Whereas in Hamburg the German scholars were concerned mostly with iconographic issues and in a philological approach to the sources, the Viennese scholars focused on the analysis of the form and structure of works of art. These tensions explain some of the fractures and internal contradictions that characterize the book.

Panofsky’s avowed goal was to locate perspective in the historical period that created it. As the book progresses, perspective becomes a “symbolic form” whose validity overflows circumscribed periods of history to become the worldview of the West.<sup>17</sup> Michael Ann Holly observes that in this way perspective gained,

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<sup>16</sup> See Wood, “Introduction” as in n. 16.

<sup>17</sup> Michael Ann Holly comments: “[i]l avait dans la première partie contesté la validité de la perspective de la Renaissance mais arrive à la deuxième partie, il lui a accordé une sorte de

assez de stabilité pour être considérée comme une manière valable, presque empiriquement véritable, d'articuler l'espace. Son importance s'est doublement accrue. Ce n'est plus seulement une construction efficace de l'espace, mais c'est en soi une réflexion philosophique sur la possibilité même de le construire.<sup>18</sup>

This philosophic approach with claims to universality is wholly Eurocentric and historically determined. More on this below.

Both Snyder and Elkins—among many other scholars—have argued that in the Renaissance, perspective was merely a technical device for representing volumes in space. Perspective was tied to Alberti's example of the drawing on the window pane, and therefore to realism and mimesis. Panofsky redefinition of his understanding of vision implied adding the notion of space to the original scene. Through the glass it is now possible to see, as Elkins observes, “an imaginary space, occupied by whole objects in apparent succession,”

Perspective is imagined as an a priori organizing principle that is applied to an 'area of space.' Panofsky speaks of objects 'in' a certain space, depicted 'with' that space, and says perspective gives us 'whole' objects in a 'succession.' Here objects are nothing more than necessary examples, things that occur not merely *in* space but *because of* it: they are knowable because they exist in space.<sup>19</sup>

Panofsky's perspective puts order in a group of objects; paintings are about wholes, not just about isolated objects. The glass represents the canvas, and therefore, “perspective space” becomes a synonym of fictive space and of pictorial space. Illusionism in painting is equated with perspective and the surface of the picture with the window pane, and therefore with vision. This was a fundamental step in transforming perspective from an object-oriented into a space-oriented device. “*The*

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prééminence péremptoire et a comparé les autres systèmes spatiaux au standard du XVe siècle. En d'autres termes, comme l'a remarqué M. Podro, il est en train tout à la fois, de saper la perspective et de la vanter comme un instrument de diagnostic, position contradictoire qui conduit à toutes sortes de difficultés épistémologiques.” “Panofsky et la perspective comme forme symbolique,” in *Pour un Temps/Erwin Panofsky* (Paris : Paris, Centre Georges-Pompidou/Pandora, 1983), 90.

<sup>18</sup> Holly, “Panofsky et la perspective,” 94–95.

<sup>19</sup> Elkins, *Poetics of Perspective*, 13–14.

*Renaissance painters*—Elkins concludes—*made perspective pictures without the benefit of a concept of space.*<sup>20</sup> (Emphasis added.) Panofsky projected onto the Renaissance’s perspective the modern idea of space conceived in the Enlightenment.<sup>21</sup> The scrutiny of the history of perspective provided the rationale for the interpretation of the letter by Cézanne that opens this chapter.

Moreover, with Panofsky, perspective acquired a metaphorical function: the ability to “refer” to or represent other meanings. Although his book is the product of the intellectual development that took place in Germany in the late 1920s, it determined a sea change in the approach to the work of Cézanne, as the article by Reff proves. The paradigmatic character of Panofsky’s perspective explains that it was used—anachronistically—for the study of modern art.

Elkins’ detailed analysis of the first paragraphs of Panofsky’s treatise on perspective clarifies how the use of an ever increasing number of similar but not fully identical concepts to characterize space, vision, percept, and so on, allows the author to implicate an impressive number of disciplines and areas of expertise in the study of perspective: optics, mathematics/geometry, psychology, gnoseology, physiology of perception, philosophy, art history. In most of these disciplines the problem of perception (and therefore of representation) of space is all but definitively settled, whereas art history has transformed perspective into a set of fossilized practices and simplified formulas that have the upper hand in every day practice.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, perspective’s centrality in modern art history depends on the “evidence” that those

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<sup>20</sup> Elkins, *Poetics of Perspective*, 14.

<sup>21</sup> Elkins comments that perspective is Janus-faced: there was one practice in the Renaissance that predates modern art history but is now understood according to modern notions in such a way that the reshaping itself goes unnoticed.

<sup>22</sup> See Elkins, *Poetics of Perspective*, Chapter 6.

other disciplines—especially geometry and physiopsychology—are said to provide. Elkins proves that perspective falls between the cracks of the modern geography of disciplines. This muddled epistemological quality, which makes it unencompassable by any one of the many disciplines it touches, allows perspective to be a foundation, an origin.<sup>23</sup>

Panofsky's maneuver locates perspective in the periphery of art history where the discipline relates with other fields of knowledge, which support the epistemological claims that Panofsky makes for perspective while remaining out of reach of the discipline's critical apparatus.<sup>24</sup> In his argumentation Panofsky discusses perspective as

1. a technical device for representing space in works of art; i.e., as a conventional constructive formula;
2. a geometrical, scientific model for the measurement of space;
3. a symbolic form that characterizes a defined period in the history of culture, a notion related with the concept of *Weltanschauung*,
4. a scheme related to the retinal image,<sup>25</sup>
5. an abstracted model of what the mind perceives, with the implication that it corresponds to the structure of the world.<sup>26</sup>

Elkins' analysis of the development of the modern understanding of perspective coincides with the "chronology" Trouillot has established for the North Atlantic universals. Perspective as a technique for the representation of space and the

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<sup>23</sup> See Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.

<sup>24</sup> For the relationship of art history with other disciplines see Cheetham, *Kant, Art*, Introduction and Chapter One.

<sup>25</sup> Panofsky did not consider that scientific perspective represented the retinal image, as the eye has a curved surface.

<sup>26</sup> See Kim Veltman, "Panofsky's Perspective: A Half Century Later," in Marisa Dalai-Emiliani, ed. *Atti del convegno internazionale di studi: la prospettiva rinascimentale*, (Milan 1977). Points four and five are very important for the notion of realism and mimesis. In *Idea. A Concept in Art Theory* Panofsky writes "L'idéologie qui se trouve derrière la configuration de l'espace ne peut plus longtemps reposer sur l'hypothèse naïve que la peinture en perspective n'est d'aucune manière isomorphique du monde qu'elle décrit. Mais comme métaphore de la perception, la forme de la peinture de la Renaissance convient parfaitement à la vision néo-kantienne du projet humain." Quoted in Holly, "Panofsky et la perspective," 96.

embodiment of the Renaissance's "dream of a rational vision" confirms that this period established the conditions of possibility (the "geography of the imagination") of the epistemological project of the West. At the beginning of the twentieth century, that period's understanding of vision and space were redefined according to the ideas developed since the Enlightenment, and projected onto the past. As Elkins remarks,

Cartesian *space* and Newtonian absolute space were not unopposed. Leibniz was a principal critic, and Bishop Berkeley thought 'absolute space' was a 'phantom of the mechanic and Geometrical philosophers.' Nevertheless Descartes's and Newton's insistence on space as an independent 'object' of contemplation provided the scientific foundation for Kant's a priori spatial intuition. For Kant the a posteriori world of objects is firmly disconnected from the synthetic, a priori intuition of space itself. ... Kant's pure space makes 'the actual appearance of objects possible' and is 'the only explanation that makes intelligible the possibility of geometry.'<sup>27</sup>

In Germany—where Kant's ideas about education, which placed all learning under the aegis of philosophy, were hegemonic—the debate about space, even in the field of sciences and empirical psychology, was highly influenced by the philosopher's theory of knowledge.<sup>28</sup> In the nineteenth century, as the advances in science and observation contradicted some of Kant's and Hegel's basic assumptions, scholars and philosophers had to create new systems that included these findings.<sup>29</sup> At the beginning of the twentieth century, the ascendancy of philosophy started to decline.<sup>30</sup> The neo-Kantian contributions to the discussion of space that influenced

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<sup>27</sup> Elkins, *The Poetics of Perspective*, 24–25.

<sup>28</sup> This differentiates the German from French system, which separated literature from sciences. These last were taught at the École Polytechnique established at the time of the French Revolution.

<sup>29</sup> A Kantian philosopher like Friedrich Herbart (1776–1841) is today considered one of the founders of empirical psychology, together with Gustav Fechner (1801–1887), a physicist whose interest in mental measurement was far more metaphysical than scientific. Important for the subject of space was the work of Hermann von Helmholtz (1821–1894) whose research was greatly influenced by Kant's philosophy, and of Hermann Lotze (1817–1881) who studied both philosophy and medicine.

<sup>30</sup> The problem of space and the interconnection of psychology, sciences and philosophy in the nineteenth century has been considered by Gary Hatfield who differentiates two general approaches: the 'natural' and the 'normative.' "Throughout the modern period the question of how distance is perceived was addressed by virtually all psychological theories of vision. Work on this question led

Panofsky must be understood in this context. Before arriving in Hamburg, Cassirer had worked with Hermann Cohen. Michael Friedman writes that,

Cohen, the first Jew to hold a professorship in Germany, was the founder of the so-called Marburg School of neo-Kantianism, famous for interpreting Kant's transcendental method as beginning with the "fact of science" and then arguing regressively to the presuppositions or conditions of possibility of this "fact." Kant was thus read as an "epistemologist [Erkenntniskritiker]" or methodologist of science rather than as a "metaphysician" in the tradition of post-Kantian German idealism.<sup>31</sup>

Cassirer's analysis of space was part of his life-long interest in the theory of knowledge.<sup>32</sup> In *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, he acknowledges the influence of Ernst Mach's 1906 *Perception and Error*, where the author distinguishes "physiological space,' i.e., sensual space, from 'metric/scientific space,' and thus recuperates from the sciences the problem of perception and knowledge.<sup>33</sup> As Elkins explains, Cassirer "rephilosophizes and unquantifies a theory born of mathematical

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investigators to seek 'cues' for distance in optical stimulation, and to speculate about mental processes that might mediate the perception of a three-dimensional visual world on the basis of a two-dimensional retinal image....By contrast, during the same period nearly all philosophical treatments of spatial perception addressed the question of whether our knowledge of the geometrical properties of material objects is based solely on sensory knowledge of the basic properties of matter.... Inasmuch as both sets of questions pertain to mental processes or abilities, they are similar. But they are distinct in that the first set concerns the basic functioning of the senses in the perception of space, while the second pertains to the cognitive grounds for physical or metaphysical knowledge of the fundamental properties of matter." The author notes that only at the turn of the century philosophy started to be displaced from the discussion as outmoded. *The Natural and the Normative. Theories of Spatial Perception from Kant to Helmholtz*, (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1990), 12–13.

<sup>31</sup> Michael Friedman, "Ernst Cassirer", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2004 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2004/entries/cassirer/>>.

<sup>32</sup> Kim Veltam notices that Cassirer had articulated already in 1910 "a distinction between two fundamentally different approaches to science, one which dominated Antiquity and emphasized substance (and definition), the other which evolved in the Renaissance and concentrated on function (and relation). Cassirer had, moreover, implied the method of Antiquity was linked with notions of sensuous space (unhomogeneous and anisotropic) and that the method which originated in the Renaissance was linked with notions of mathematical space (homogeneous and isotropic)." "Panofsky's Perspective," URL=

<http://www.sumscorp.com/articles/pdf/1980/Panofskys/Perspective/A/Half/Century/Later.pdf> 2.

<sup>33</sup> Ernst Mach (1838–1916) was a philosopher and a physicist who was reputed for his contributions to the theory of perception and the philosophy of sciences.

and experimental facts.”<sup>34</sup> This state of affairs allowed Panofsky to rewrite the history of perspective as the history of space and to position it in between disciplinary fields, and, at the same time, at the core of art history.

Space was one of the issues discussed at Davos in 1929. Heidegger had already taken issue with Cassirer’s interpretation in his review of the first volume of *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*.<sup>35</sup> Cassirer’s theory describes a progressive increase in man’s aptitude of acknowledging/perceiving space and objects.<sup>36</sup> At Davos he described the “atmosphere” of the mythical man,

laquelle, chargée de forces démoniques,[sic] exprime les orientations vitales les plus spécifiques de l’homme lui-même. Si l’on considère qu’au-dessus de cet espace expressif se construisent l’espace représentatif de l’art et finalement l’espace significatif propre à la mathématique et à la physique, on reconnaît là cette transcendance singulière dans laquelle l’homme, grâce à l’énergie symbolisante qui lui est propre, se comprend lui-même dans son monde et comprend le monde en lui.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Elkins, *Poetics of Perspective*, 25–26. Before the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, Cassirer had published *Descartes’ Kritik der mathematischen und wissenschaftlichen Grundlagen*, and *Leibniz’s System in seinen wissenschaftlichen Grundlagen*. Cassirer’s study *Einstein’s Theory of Relativity Considered from the Epistemological Standpoint* appeared in 1921 and included a preface by Einstein himself.

<sup>35</sup> Ernst Cassirer, *Cassirer, Ernst, Débat sur le kantisme et la philosophie: Davos, mars 1929, et autres textes de 1929–1931 / Ernst Cassirer, Martin Heidegger* (Paris : Beauchesne, 1972). The reviews are in pages 84–100. On Cassirer’s position on space at Davos, see pp. 25–26. Cassirer’s *Das Erkenntnisproblem in der Philosophie und Wissenschaft der Neueren Zeit* has three volumes. The first considers the period that spans from the Renaissance to Descartes, the second from Empiricism to Kant, and the third the post-Kantian philosophers to Hegel.

<sup>36</sup> “Both the intuition of space and the intuition of the thing are made possible only when the stream of successive experiences is in a sense halted—when the mere ‘one-thing-after-the-other’ is transformed into an ‘at-one-time.’” This transformation occurs when a different signification, a different ‘valence’ is attributed to the factors of the flowing change... [A] variant is stopped, taken as something permanent that repeats itself with changes.” Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, Vol. 3, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), 154.

<sup>37</sup> Ernst Cassirer, “II Conférences du Professeur Ernst Cassirer,” in Ernst Cassirer, *Débat sur le kantisme*, 26. Michael Friedman comments that “Characteristic of the philosophy of symbolic forms is a concern for the more “primitive” forms of world-presentation underlying the “higher” and more sophisticated cultural forms—a concern for the ordinary perceptual awareness of the world expressed primarily in natural language, and, above all, for the mythical view of the world lying at the most primitive level of all. For Cassirer, these more primitive manifestations of “symbolic meaning” now have an independent status and foundational role that is quite incompatible with both Marburg neo-Kantianism and Kant’s original philosophical conception. In particular, they lie at a deeper, autonomous level of spiritual life which then gives rise to the more sophisticated forms by a dialectical

Heidegger, on the contrary, focused on an utterly subjective experience of space that impeded any kind of general classification or periodization. In the third volume of *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, Cassirer states that,

What distinguishes our own undertaking from that of Heidegger is above all that it does not stop at this stage of the at-hand and its mode of spatiality, but without challenging Heidegger's position goes beyond it; for we wish to follow the road leading from spatiality as a factor in the at-hand to space as the form of existence, and furthermore to show how this road leads right through the domain of symbolic formation—in the twofold sense of 'representation' and of 'signification.'<sup>38</sup>

For Cassirer space affords not only orientation in the world. As Massimo Ferrari comments the

constitution originaire du monde objectif et des diverses formes symboliques qui l'articulent : de ce point de vue, le problème de Cassirer s'ouvre précisément là où celui de Heidegger se clôt, c'est-à-dire dans la passage du cadre du *Zuhandenes* à celui du *Vorhandenes*, et, de manière plus générale, du cadre du *Dasein* à celui de la philosophie de la culture.<sup>39</sup>

From *Zuhandenes* to *Vorhandenes*, distance from things—and therefore space—becomes of fundamental importance. The *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* is part of a *Kulturphilosophie*, a theoretical interpretation developed on the basis of little factual documentation, where space is a “forme originaire et constitutive de la création spirituelle” and “le resultat d'un processus de Formation (*Formung*) symbolique.”<sup>40</sup>

Cassirer reinterprets the transcendental schematism of Kant's First Critique, that is,

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developmental process. From mythical thought, religion and art develop; from natural language, theoretical science develops.” Friedman, “Ernst Cassirer.”

URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2004/entries/cassirer/>>.

<sup>38</sup> Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic*, 149.

<sup>39</sup> Massimo Ferrari, “La philosophie de l'espace chez Ernst Cassirer,” *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* (July–December, 1992): 472.

<sup>40</sup> Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, Vol. 3, quoted in Ferrari, “Philosophie de l'espace,” 474. This scheme includes language as a form of spatial intuition that allows us to establish distance from objects.

the mediation between the sensorial and the knowable. In this way, as Ferrari observes

[D]e forme transcendantale de la connaissance, l'espace s'étend ainsi non seulement aux connexions de formes concrètes de l'expérience spatiale, mais devient également cet instrument spirituel voué à déterminer l'être-au-monde de l'homme, non sur le fondement de sa finitude existentielle—comme l'aurait voulu Heidegger –, mais sur le fondement de son autonomie spirituelle et de sa capacité à créer des formes.

... [V]oilà aussi pourquoi la philosophie de l'espace de Cassirer, .... s'est peu à peu rapprochée de l'élaboration d'une *philosophie de type anthropologique*, modifiant ainsi dans une certaine mesure le plan originaire d'une 'critique de la culture' tirée d'une extension de la 'critique de la raison.' (Emphasis added)<sup>41</sup>

Cassirer does *not* consider perspective but space. One of the alchemical transmutations that Panofsky performs in the first paragraphs of his 1927 treatise is to adapt the philosopher's ideas about *space* and use them to characterize two different kinds of *perspective* in a process that transforms an already Eurocentric argument into a wholly ethnocentric system where non-Western cultures have absolutely no place. In the context of Panofsky's goal in the 1920s, this seems quite an innocuous manoeuvre, as the author was pushing forward his arguments about Humanism and the Renaissance. It had significant implications for the history of art history given the post-war influence of Panofsky's scholarship and the critical fortune of the book. The paragraphs in which this gambit takes place must be quoted *in extenso*.

After the a long quote from Cassirer that describes Mach's psychophysiological space as opposed to the mathematical, non-natural, constructed one, Panofsky states

[E]xact *perspectival* construction is a systematic abstraction from the structure of this psychophysiological *space*. .... In a sense, *perspective* transforms psychophysiological *space* into mathematical *space*. It [perspective] negates the difference between front and back... It [perspective] forgets that we see not with a single fixed eye.... It [perspective] takes no account of the enormous difference between the psychologically conditioned 'visual image'... and the

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<sup>41</sup> Ferrari, "Philosophie de l'espace," 476.

mechanically conditioned ‘retinal image’.... Finally, *perspectival construction* ignores the crucial circumstance that this retinal image—entirely apart from its subsequent psychological ‘interpretation,’ and even apart from the fact that the eyes move – is a projection not on a flat but on a concave surface. Thus already on this lowest, still prepsychological level of facts there is a fundamental discrepancy between ‘reality’ and its construction. This is also true, of course, for the entirely analogous operation of the camera. <sup>42</sup>(Emphasis added)

Panofsky lists all that is wrong with perspective, its arbitrariness and the distortions it engenders, in order to contrast it with the more natural and truthful curved “perspective” adopted in Classical Antiquity, which took into consideration the form of the eye. The text is illustrated with drawings by Guido Hauck who, according to Panofsky, had established a scientific model for these alternative, more natural perspectives.<sup>43</sup>

Antique optics, which brought all these insights to fruition, was thus in its first principles quite antithetical to linear perspective. And if it did understand so clearly the spherical distortions of form, this only follows from ... its still more momentous recognition of the distortions of magnitude. For here, too, antique optics fit its theory more snugly to the factual structure of the subjective optical impression than did Renaissance perspective. ... Evidently, [in the Renaissance] the contradiction was felt between Euclid’s *perspectiva naturalis or communis*, which sought simply to formulate mathematically the laws of natural vision .....and the *perspective artificialis* ... <sup>44</sup>

As the discussion settles in the differentiation of the two periods and the two “perspectives” that are their symbolic forms, space disappears as a problem or, better, it is identified with perspective. In Antiquity space would have been understood as un-homogeneous, finite, and anisotropic, whereas since the Renaissance the West would understand it in a rational, mathematical way, that is, as homogeneous, infinite, isotropic, continuous, and systematic. Panofsky calls both “perspective.” Margaret

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<sup>42</sup> Panofsky, *Perspective*, 30–31.

<sup>43</sup> On Guido Hauck see Michel Podro, *The Critical Art Historians* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 186–187. See next chapter.

<sup>44</sup> Panofsky, *Perspective*, 35–36.

Iversen notices that Panofsky posits natural perspective as a repoussoir to highlight the system of the Renaissance.<sup>45</sup> In the process, he confines the analysis to the history of the West.

In the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, Cassirer contrasts modern to mythical thinking (and the notion of space that corresponds to it). The first corresponds to the dawn of humanity, and, even if his attitude reflects an evolutionist and Eurocentric ideology, he tries to make an objective description, in keeping with his relativist approach.<sup>46</sup> Conversely, Panofsky's text eliminates this stage of human development from analysis and, thus, from history. His argument alternates between perspective as mathematical abstraction, which he equates with the perspective of the Renaissance, and the spatial construction of Classical Antiquity, which he also characterizes as perspective on the grounds that it was based on geometrical formulations. Perspective is never non-rational, and in the second part of the text it takes the attributes, function, and role of space. Therefore the author does not make room for non-perspective, that is for non-perspectival, space. As explained above, Panofsky's perspective encloses or supposes the modern, post-Kantian notion of space as an empty volume that contains objects.

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<sup>45</sup> See Margaret Iversen, "Orthodox and Anamorphic Perspectives," *Oxford Art Journal* 20 (1995): 81–84. This author also notes that Panofsky added to the perspective of the Renaissance a neo-Kantian understanding of space. Ten years later she comments, "[i]n my view, Panofsky naturalises Antique perspective as mimesis of the optical impression so that it can serve as a dark cloth against which the constructive and rational character of Renaissance linear perspective sparkles like a gem." "The Discourse of Perspective in the Twentieth Century: Panofsky, Damisch, Lacan," *The Oxford Art Journal* 28 (February, 2005), 197.

<sup>46</sup> Iversen contends that Cassirer like Panofsky tried to establish a relativist typology where every period has its own value. Both failed and skewed towards a progressive teleological history where the latest period is "better," "more advanced," etc. "The Discourse of Perspective," 197.

Panofsky argues that perspective also gives the possibility of reacting against its rules, which allows him to encompass even Impressionism as a manifestation of this symbolic form.<sup>47</sup> Iversen notes that,

Since...Panofsky tends to adopt the Italian Renaissance as an authoritative viewpoint, perspective, for him, encompasses both itself and its other. There can be no non- or even anti-perspectival art—only swings between the polarities of its two-sided significance: ‘it creates room for bodies to expand plastically and move gesturally, and yet at the same time it enables light to spread out in space and in a painterly way dissolve the bodies.’.... Perspective also encompasses all variations in the perceptual subject’s attitude to the world.... Because of the epistemological status of perspective, the question of the right balance between these tendencies must be determined. It would seem that in Panofsky’s view, post-Renaissance art that differs substantially from it, is doomed to err on one side or the other, guilty either of being too coldly mathematical and objectivizing on the one hand, or too warmly expressionist or too eccentrically impressionistic on the other.<sup>48</sup>

Georges Didi-Huberman noticed in his 1990 *Devant l’image* that in fact Panofsky leaves aside all non-perspectival and non-Western art.<sup>49</sup> Panofsky’s text is claustrophobically European and even within Europe, it concentrates on those cultures whose art might be said to use perspective and strive for illusionism. Cassirer could not conceive of a human not able to perceive space, which allows him to distinguish different periods in history. This is not the case with perspective, taking into account that not all cultures sought to represent realistically what they saw or conceived of representations as pictures, and that few of them developed

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<sup>47</sup> Panofsky like Riegl compared an Ancient impressionism with the modern art movement. He argued that the optical effects of the latest movement were supported by the perspectival structure that structured the pictorial field. Panofsky argued the art of Antiquity was focused on the representation of objects and thus the problem was to reflect the different distances and the representation of the space and air separating them. This was the reason why these paintings did not have a consistent or cohesive space. Modern Impressionism, on the other hand, could profit from the new understanding of space brought about by scientific perspective. Thanks to the formulation of a systematic space it could “persistently devalue and dissolve solid forms without jeopardizing the stability of the space and the solidity of the individual objects; on the contrary it conceals that stability and solidity.” Panofsky, *Perspective*, 42.

<sup>48</sup> Iversen, “Orthodox and Anamorphic Perspectives,” 82.

<sup>49</sup> Georges Didi-Huberman, *Devant l’image. Question posée aux fins d’une histoire de l’art* (Paris : Editions de Minuit, 1990), 140-142.

mathematical and geometric models of reality. In Panofsky system, the West provides the epistemological model for the understanding of space.<sup>50</sup> Considering Panofsky's perspective as a North Atlantic universal underscores the fact that there have been alternative models for apprehending space within the West and that, as the history of perspective demonstrates, Panofsky's perspective is a modern, historically determined paradigm.

Panofsky's book was also influenced by contemporaneous developments. *Space* appeared on the horizon of art history as perspective at the moment in which the theory of relativity and other scientific discoveries were problematizing it, that is, bringing it into public consciousness as a problem. To abstract theories about mathematical space (Einstein) and organic space (nationalisms) Panofsky opposed an idealized characterization of Renaissance perspective as mathematical, rational, homogeneous, and isotropic space. His treatise establishes a balance between the two extremes and installs perspective/space at the center of the modern Humanist art history as rational, measurable distance.<sup>51</sup> The discussion about *space* in art history even today bears the mark of perspective as the standard against which any other manifestation has to be gauged, in the same way that all narrations about events are

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<sup>50</sup> Trouillot has argued that, "As anchor of a claim to universal legitimacy, the geography of imagination inherent in the West since the sixteenth century imposes a frame within which to read world history. Thematic variations and political choices aside... this framework has always assumed the centrality of the North Atlantic not only as the site from which world history is made but also as the site whence that story can be told. Eric Wolf ... has argued that the human disciplines have treated the world outside of Europe as people without history. One can more precisely claim that they were also treated as people without historicity. Their capacity to narrate anecdotal parts of the world story was always subsumed under a North Atlantic historicity that was deemed universal." Trouillot, *Global Transformations*, 12. See also Jörn Rüsen ed., *Western Historical Thinking: An Intercultural Debate*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2002).

<sup>51</sup> See Melville, "The Temptation of New," 409–411. This is also Elkins's argument about Panofsky's treatise, which he characterizes as "an essay about the concept of the Renaissance and about the possibility of art history. The essay is central on account of its thesis regarding perspective, but also because it shows with exceptional clarity the anfractuous claims at the heart of the heart of art history." Elkins, *The Poetics of Perspective*, 204.

assessed according to their similarity or difference to the European interpretation of *time* and history. Elkins comments,

It is not merely the foundation of perspective, or even of pictorial realism, which is at stake here. It is also the configuration of art history itself insofar as our discipline remains dependent on two founding moments, one enfolded in the other: the Renaissance, since it arguably remains the discipline's paradigmatic moment, and perspective, since it remains the exemplary achievement of the Renaissance. Stephen Melville puts the problem this way:

'The Renaissance achievement of rational perspective becomes the condition of the possibility of the art historical discipline, and we are compelled to its terms whenever we look to establish another world view that would not, for example, privilege the Renaissance because we can neither 'look' nor imagine a 'world view' without reinstalling at the heart of our project the terms only the Renaissance can expound for us.'<sup>52</sup>

This is another inflection of the text that describes photographs as machines for the production of perspective and thus, brings this chapter and the essay to the place where it started. Let us now turn to the consideration of the case of Cézanne and how in the 1930s his art began to be understood as a fundamental chapter in the history of the representation of space.

### Space and Perspective in Nineteenth-Century France

Although Kant's philosophy was known in France, his ideas were developed in a particular way. Since this theoretical model determined the cultural horizon that influenced Cézanne and his contemporaries, its examination might clarify how they apprehended space. This is a quite unexplored field, as space as a category for the

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<sup>52</sup> Elkins, *The Poetics of Perspective*, 189–90.

analysis of works of art has not been questioned in this context.<sup>53</sup> This is a book-length project that cannot be carried out in the context of this essay, but some indications will be given below. The goal is to demonstrate that the methodologies formulated by German scholars in the 1930s according to their particular understanding of vision, space, and perception shaped the basic approach to Cézanne's art.<sup>54</sup> As these methodologies and the theories are integral to modern art history's foundations, they are ideological and thus, transparent to analysis for most art historians. Besides the application of a neo-Kantian definition of space to the study of Cézanne's work, modern art history embedded this interpretation of space into its explanation of the artist's creative process thus implying that Cézanne shared it. This in spite of the fact that there is no proof that Cézanne and his contemporaries conceived or experienced space as infinite, homogeneous, continuous and isotropic or even that they were aware or interested in space as a volume enveloping objects. On the contrary, confirming Elkins's observation, contemporary art criticism and texts refer to the perception and representation of objects, to the distance that separates them and sometimes to their position relative to the beholder. Perspective, if and when it is mentioned, is studied merely as a technical device. The examination of three nineteenth-century texts that exceptionally consider the problem of space confirms this argument.

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<sup>53</sup> Kim Velman lists the authors who criticized the use of perspective and space as a category for the analysis of works of art. See "Panofsky's Perspective". <http://www.sumscorp.com/articles/pdf/1980/Panofskys/Perspective/A/Half/Century/Later.pdf>, 9.

<sup>54</sup> A parallel might be established with the way non-Western visual products were labeled "art," and thus shaped to fit into the general history of art. The situation is in this case aggravated by the intercommunication between the two cultural areas and the use of similar sources and vocabulary (sensation, perception, space, art), which are sometimes false cognates that wrongly suggest that the terms have equivalent meaning.

Stephen Mallarmé's "The Impressionists and Edouard Manet," was published in England in 1876. The poet does not analyze the perception of (actual) space, implying, on the contrary, that one can become aware of it through art. In Manet's paintings,

Air reigns supreme and real, as if it held an enchanted life conferred by the witchery of art; a life neither personal nor sentient, but itself subjected to the phenomena thus called up by science and shown to our astonished eyes, with its perpetual metamorphosis and its invisible action rendered visible. And how? By this fusion or by this struggle ever continued between surface and space, between colour and air....

If we could find no other way to indicate the presence of air than the partial or repeated application of colour as usually employed, doubtless the representation would be as fleeting as the effect represented but from the first conception of the work, the space intended to contain the atmosphere has been indicated, so that when this is filled by the represented air, it is as unchangeable as the other parts of the picture.<sup>55</sup>

Mallarmé notices that Manet's *paintings* are filled with air and light and that the artist has indicated the area that contains them. What amazes the poet is that Manet actually perceives the atmosphere as positive, not that he conceives of space as a volume. Mallarmé observes that most artists of the past had taken liberties with respect to perspective which had been reduced to "almost conforming to the exotic usage of barbarians."<sup>56</sup> He is also aware of the influence of cultural conventions on vision as he condemns perspective as an artificial device for representing depth, and praises the "natural perspective" of Japanese and Asian art. The paragraph, moreover, demonstrates that the poet is only referring to pictorial space.

Then composition... must play a considerable part in the aesthetics of a master of the Impressionists? No; certainly not; as a rule the grouping of modern persons does not suggest it, and for this reason our painter is pleased to dispense with it,

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<sup>55</sup> Stephen Mallarmé, "The Impressionists and Edouard Manet," in Charles Moffet, *The New Painting, Impressionism 1874-1886*, exh. cat., Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco with the National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1986, 31.

<sup>56</sup> Mallarmé, "The Impressionists," 31.

and at the same time to avoid both affectation and style. ... If we turn to natural perspective (not that utterly and artificially classic science which makes our eyes the dupes of a civilized education, but rather that artistic perspective which we learn from the extreme East-Japan for example) and look at these sea-pieces of Manet, where the water at the horizon rises to the height of the frame, which alone interrupts it, we feel a new delight at the recovery of a long obliterated truth.<sup>57</sup>

Mallarmé calls perspective a technique devised for representing objects in painting. He refers to the Japanese bird's-eye view as natural perspective. In the next sentence however he refers to this system as "artistic perspective," which implies that he refers to the representation and not to the actual perception of space.

The examination of two almost contemporaneous texts on art with a philosophical penchant, one German and the other French, confirm these observations. Adolf Hildebrand's influential *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture* was published in 1893. The author, a sculptor who advocated a return to classicism to counter impressionism, does consider *visual* space as the container of volumes but does not relate it with the experience of real space. Moreover, he deems art and nature as wholly different spheres of being. Man's interaction with an ever-changing nature provides a fuzzy, unconscious comprehension of space, which makes it very difficult to devise a pictorial representation of it. Artists must pay attention to the "few" indicators they might find, so that they can suggest space with lines and colors. This activity and realization sets them apart from the rest of mortals but through their work they can help others to become conscious of the existence of actual space. In the end, it is the representation of objects that matters, because the experience of space derives from them. He believes that artists need to envision "total space" by which

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<sup>57</sup> Mallarmé, "The Impressionists," 31.

we mean space as extending through all three dimensions, or in all directions. The essential factor of this is continuity. Let us *imagine* total space as a body of water into which we may sink certain vessels and thus be able to define individual volumes.... In an *artistic representation* Nature must be expressed as just such a spatial whole, if it is to contain that elementary impression which Nature makes upon us.<sup>58</sup> (Emphasis added)

Hildebrand proposes to “imagine” space as an oceanic, amorphous envelope. He does not mention perspective but explains space as the product of stereoscopic vision combined with the information produced by the other senses and through experience. Artists must translate their perceptions into a language that the eye can decode as [the representation of] space.<sup>59</sup>

Since the spatial effect of nature is a product of different factors—such as the actual form of the object, its proper coloring, the illumination ...—a concerted effect is produced existing only for the eye, by factors which otherwise are not necessarily connected. This concerted effect, or visual unity, shows the separate conditions working simultaneously, and thus enables us to grasp the spatial relations of a simultaneous exposition. Therefore, the specifically artistic force and talent of the painter rest on his ability to discover the visual values of space in Nature, and the unity of his image and its power to create in the mind an idea of space depend upon these.<sup>60</sup>

For Hildebrand no *fundamental* correlation exists between the perceptual/visual space and pictorial space, and that in order to convey the second, attention must be paid to what is not important or determinant for the first, as nature and art provide different kind of data for the subjective construction of space.

In 1895 Dimier published “Le modelé dans la peinture et la troisième dimension, (à propos des manuscrits de Léonard de Vinci)” in the *Revue de*

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<sup>58</sup> Adolf Hildebrand, *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture*, (New York: G.E. Stechert & Co, 1945), 47.

<sup>59</sup> “The parallel between Nature and Art is not to be sought in the equality of their actual appearances, but rather in that both have the same capacity for producing spatial effects.” Hildebrand, *Problem of Form*, 56.

<sup>60</sup> Hildebrand, *The Problem of Form*, 55.

*métaphysique et de morale*.<sup>61</sup> The publication of a new edition of the Leonardo's writings provided the author the opportunity to criticize impressionism from a "philosophical" point of view. According to Dimier, Leonardo anticipated some of the philosophical opinions on the subject.<sup>62</sup> He argues that, besides Florentine drawing and Venetian color, Leonardo invented a third way for representing reality, modeling. In this way he prefigured chiaroscuro: "c'est-à-dire la représentation des formes en profondeur par le moyen de la lumière et de l'ombre."<sup>63</sup>

Although nature can be perceived only as a colored plane, binocular or stereoscopic vision provides indications about depth. Artists can represent these effects by a highly artificial resource: the use of black and white. Painting is for Dimier, as it was for Leonardo, "une philosophique spéculation qui considère les qualités de formes, airs, positions, plantes, etc... *qui sont entourées d'ombre et de lumière*."<sup>64</sup> As art and nature are fundamentally different, the pretensions of basing one on the experience of the other are destined to fail. He then concludes that it is impossible to have a pure sensation:

Ces réflexions ont de quoi convaincre de plus en plus d'absurdité ceux qui disent, croyant exprimer le dernier effort de la peinture : Fais ce que tu vois, comme tu le vois. Ce que je vois n'est pas faisable, la toile n'en peut donner qu'une interprétation.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Louis Dimier (1865– 1943) was a conservative art historian who was among the founders of the Action Française. He abandoned it when the organization became close to fascism and after it was condemned by the Pope in 1926. Dimier began then to express doubts about the nationalist doctrine itself. Dimier, "Le modelé dans la peinture," 550–571.

<sup>62</sup> Perhaps because of the character of the publication, the author refers to the understanding of space of the empiricists and phenomenologists. "[L]e philosophe trouve déjà chez Léonard le germe et l'indication anticipée de tant d'observations précieuses dont les maîtres des âges suivants ont tiré leurs plus beaux effets." Dimier, "Le modelé dans la peinture," 551–552.

<sup>63</sup> Dimier, "Le modelé dans la peinture," 551.

<sup>64</sup> Dimier, "Le modelé dans la peinture," 556.

<sup>65</sup> Dimier, "Le modelé dans la peinture," 564.

In the end impressionist art cannot be compared with photographs because the artist of this movement do not mix their colors, and are thus unable to suggest the “character” of objects, another confirmation that the author considers space through the volume of objects contained by it. Photography, instead, is a rendition of modeling, which he has already defined as conventional.

These three texts prove that at the end of the nineteenth century Panofsky’s notion of space thus was not current and that when mentioned, perspective was regarded as a technique. They are even exceptional in that they mention the problem of the depiction of space and perspective. Most other texts concentrate on the representation of objects and refer to space as the distance among them.

Cézanne wrote that he wanted to paint what he saw, “de donner l’image de ce que nous voyons, en oubliant tout ce qui apparut avant nous.”<sup>66</sup> This statement corresponds to Monet’s reputed desire to see the world through the eyes of a man born blind who had suddenly gained his sight, that is, to be able to paint objects without knowing what they were, as a pattern of color patches.<sup>67</sup> In 1994 Joel Isaacson tied these statements to the words of the English painter John Constable (1776–1837): “When I sit down to make a sketch from nature, the first thing I try to do is, to forget that I have even seen a picture,” which had been translated into French

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<sup>66</sup> Cézanne letter to Emile Bernard October 23, 1905 in Rewald, *Correspondence*, 314–315.

<sup>67</sup> “Monet once said that he wished he had been born blind and then had suddenly gained his sight so that he could have begun to paint in this way without knowing what the objects were that he saw before him. He held that the first real look at the motif was likely to be the truest and most unprejudiced one.” Lilla Cabot Perry, “Reminiscences of Claude Monet from 1889 to 1909,” *The American Magazine of Art* (March, 1927), quoted in Charles F. Stuckey, “Monet’s Art and the Act of Vision,” in *Aspects of Monet. A Symposium on the Artist’s Life and Times*. eds. John Rewald and Frances Weitzenhoffer (New York: Harry N Abrams, c1984), 108.

at mid-century.<sup>68</sup> What that author fails to note is that, whereas Constable refers to the artistic tradition and remains in the sphere of art, the French artists alluded to their perception of the world they wanted to represent. Their statements indicate that they were aware of the fact that memory and experience affect perception and that they wished to eliminate this influence in order to accrue or purify their sensations/impressions. The origin of that theory is much more difficult to pinpoint than Isaacson pretends, and it predates both Constable's *Memoirs* and Kant's philosophy, which, nonetheless, might have been among the influences that shaped the artists's understanding of perception. Monet's words clearly elicit what is known as the Molyneux problem.

In 1688 the Irish philosopher William Molyneux (1656–1698) addressed a letter to John Locke (1632–1704) posing a question: would a person who had been born blind and knew what a cube and a sphere were by touch, recognize them if he could see them? The problem involved the relationship of sight and touch, the elaboration of concepts, and the theory of knowledge in general, and sparked a debate that has not yet subsided.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> It had first appeared in "Pensées d'un paysagiste" in the *Magasin pittoresque* (August – October, 1855). One year later Edmond Duranty published them again in his short lived magazine *Réalisme*, and repeated this sentence in his 1876 "La Nouvelle Peinture." See Joel Isaacson, "Constable, Duranty, Mallarmé, Plein Air, and Forgetting," *The Art Bulletin* 76 (September, 1994): 427–450.

<sup>69</sup> One of the specialist in the history of the question, Marjolein Degenaar comments "Molyneux's problem is one the most fruitful thought-experiments ever proposed in the history of philosophy, which is still as intriguing today as when Molyneux first formulated it more than three centuries ago." Marjolein Degenaar, Gert-Jan Lokhorst, "Molyneux's Problem", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2005 Edition) Edward N. Zalta ed., URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2005/entries/molyneux-problem/>>.

Cassirer stated that the philosophy of Georges Berkeley (1685–1753) “can alone be truly known, when seen germinating from the question of Molyneux.”<sup>70</sup> In his first writings, for example, the English bishop contended that space could not be seen but was inferred by the mind according to the data provided by sight and experience.

When the first successful surgeries were performed, the problem passed onto psychology and the analysis of the preconceptions that influenced the reactions of the patients, but the results did not bridge the differences or solve the question. An operation—more precisely the fact that Denis Diderot (1713–1784) was prevented from attending one—moved the author of the *Encyclopedia* to write the *Lettre sur les aveugles, à l’usage de ceux qui voient* (1749), where the meditation upon the Molyneux problem acquires philosophical, moral, and political connotations, which cost Diderot three months in jail. Blindness had allowed Saunderson, the main character, to develop a unique and coherent understanding of life, morals and faith.<sup>71</sup>

Deeply influenced by Berkeley and the ideas of the British Empiricists—who discussed space mostly as distance—Kant’s Copernican turn implied a radical change in the understanding of space as he defined it as an a priori intuition which men imprint on reality, i.e., not as something perceived but as a category of perception.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Quoted in Marjolein Degenaar, *Molyneux’s Problem. Three Centuries of Discussion on the Perception of Forms* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Pub., 1996), 90. Much of what follows was taken from ideas in this clear explanation of the problem.

<sup>71</sup> If at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the magazine *L’Artiste* published excerpts of Diderot’s art criticism. His complete works were published in the 1870s. On the occasion, the *Revue de Deux Mondes* published several articles which promoted a new interest in the work of the philosopher. The Molyneux problem was also analyzed by Etienne Condillac in his *An Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge, Being a Supplement to Mr. Locke’s Essay on the Human Understanding*, 1746.

<sup>72</sup> It is interesting to point out that Kant’s approach superseded Isaac Newton’s Euclidean representation of space as a fixed stage where bodies move. In 1936 surfaced Newton’s private religious and alchemic papers but only in the 1990s were they studied in a scholarly manner. Today it is accepted that this conception of space had a religious background and support. Stephen D. Snobelen comments: “Newton was keen to avoid what he saw as the major pitfall of the Cartesian mechanical philosophy (which he believed was prone to atheistic extrapolations) and in particular the lack of a role

The discussion continued during the nineteenth century. As Marjolein Degenaar explains,

Kant's theory only referred to space as a necessary representation a priori; it had no connection with the question regarding the intuition of empirical space as inborn or acquired. This was the central question in the controversy between empiricists and nativists. In order to provide solid foundations for their points of view, researchers used not only metaphysical and methodological arguments but also information on the powers of sight of newly born animals, infants and blind people operated on for cataracts, and within this context Molyneux's question once more came up.<sup>73</sup>

What in the eighteenth century had been an epistemological problem at the center of the theory of knowledge was transformed in the nineteenth into theories of spatial perception.

The French and German educational systems differed widely.<sup>74</sup> The positivist philosophy of Auguste Comte (1798–1857) underpinned the foundations of the French approach to education. Although Kant's philosophy was influential in France, without the hegemonic status it had in Germany, it was shaped to fit within the French philosophical tradition.<sup>75</sup> British Empiricism provided another determinant

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for spirit (in the Cartesian system, spirit is non-extended and thus cannot be the subject of natural philosophy). Newton, in a certain sense, went in the opposite direction, attempting to construct a natural philosophy that led inductively to God and conceiving a view of the universe in which God's spirit is infinitely extended. God's omnipresence (associated with God's spirit) for Newton helps to explain the universality of gravity. ... Similarly, Newton's concept of absolute space and time relate to his notions of God's infinite extension in space and his infinite extension in time." "Newton Reconsidered," (2005) <http://www.galilean-library.org/snobelen.html>

<sup>73</sup> Degenaar, *Molyneux's Problem*, 107.

<sup>74</sup> See Fritz K. Ringer, *Fields of Knowledge. French Academic Culture in Comparative Perspective 1890–1920*, (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992.) See also Claude Digeon, *La Crise allemande de la pensée française, 1870–1914*, (Paris : P.U.F, 1959),

<sup>75</sup> For the influence of Kant's philosophy in the French sciences, see Laurent Fedi and Jean-Michel Salanskis, *Les philosophies françaises et la science: dialogue avec Kant*, (Lyon : Éditions de l'École Normale Supérieure, 2001.) Fedi has studied in depth the work of Charles Renouvier (1815–1903) who was responsible for the dissemination of Kant's ideas in France. He proposed important modifications to the First Critique, which affected the definition of space. See *Le Problème de la connaissance dans la philosophie de Charles Renouvier* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1998, 1998). Heavily involved in the defence of democracy Renouvier edited several magazines: *L'Année philosophique*, (1867–1869) and *Critique philosophique*, (1872–1889) which aimed primarily at the political and moral consolidation of the republic and thus attacked the Roman Catholic Church. J. Alexander Gunn.

influence offering a valid approach to the problem of perception.<sup>76</sup> Moreover, the continuous political turmoil and the progressive advance of democratic institutions gave to the philosophical debate a very definite profile. In the preface to J. Alexander Gunn's history of modern French philosophy published in 1924, Henri Bergson wrote that

Dr. Gunn a su ramener toutes ces questions à un petit nombre de problèmes essentiels: la science, la liberté, le progrès, la morale, la religion. Cette division me paraît heureuse. Elle répond bien, ce me semble, aux principales préoccupations de la philosophie française.<sup>77</sup>

French philosophers and scholars were closer to the public at large than their colleagues from other countries, as they gave public lectures at the Collège de France and contributed to a wide range of periodical publications. Paris had a thriving student population that shared the *Quartier Latin* with an artistic and literary bohemia. The professors of the Grand Écoles were influential but their work, except in exceptional cases, has not been well studied. Gunn's classification of French philosophy in three main currents—Positivist, neo-critical, and neo-Spiritual—brings some of these almost forgotten names to the fore.

- I. Positivist and naturalist current turning upon itself, seen in Vacherot, Taine, and Renan.
- II. Cournot, Renouvier, and the neo-critical philosophy.
- III. The New Spiritual Philosophy, to which the main contributors were Ravaisson, Lachelier, Boutroux, Fouillée, Guyau, Bergson, Blondel, and Weber.<sup>78</sup>

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[http://www.ibiblio.org/HTMLTexts/John\\_Alexander\\_Gunn/Modern\\_French\\_Philosophy/chapter2-2.html](http://www.ibiblio.org/HTMLTexts/John_Alexander_Gunn/Modern_French_Philosophy/chapter2-2.html).

<sup>76</sup> Stuckey's discussion of Monet's approach to the problem of the innocent eye highlights the importance of the English sources and the constant interest in the Molyneux Problem. See Stuckey, "Monet's Art," 107 ff.

<sup>77</sup> Henri Bergson, "Preface," in Gunn, *Modern French Philosophy*.

[http://www.ibiblio.org/HTMLTexts/John\\_Alexander\\_Gunn/](http://www.ibiblio.org/HTMLTexts/John_Alexander_Gunn/)

<sup>78</sup> Gunn, *Modern French Philosophy*. [http://www.ibiblio.org/HTMLTexts/John\\_Alexander\\_Gunn/](http://www.ibiblio.org/HTMLTexts/John_Alexander_Gunn/)

The “Table de Matières” of one issue of the year 1877 of the *Revue philosophique de la France et l'étranger* (fig. 22) demonstrates that space was an important subject of debate. The goal of the magazine, created in 1876 by Théodule Ribot (1823–1891)—one of the founders of French experimental psychology as a discipline separate from philosophy— was to discuss the advances of sciences in a philosophical context.<sup>79</sup> Emile Boirac’s “L’Espace d’après Clarke et Kant,” for example, compares the theories of the British philosopher Samuel Clarke (1675–1729), who believed that space was an attribute of God, with Kant’s. Delboeuf’s “Du Rôle des Sens dans la formation de l’idée d’espace. Pourquoi les sensations visuelles sont-elles étendues” reflects on a successful eye surgery that had given eyesight to a young man born blind. The article by Hermann Lotze about his theory of the local signs, included material published in a recent book on psycho-psychology and had been especially written for the magazine.

While a similar survey might undoubtedly be done for the German scene, the point here is to argue that in France the problem of space was discussed within a wide frame of theoretical references not dominated by Kant’s approach to the subject. Space was generally considered to be either an emanation of God or the distance between objects, and both the Molyneux problem and Berkeley’s theory of vision were usually part of the argumentation.

This variegated and—according to German standards—“unconventional” understanding of the problem of space was shared by those who were close to Cézanne in Aix-en-Provence at the end of the century: Joachim Gasquet and the

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<sup>79</sup> Its first volume already included an article by Stuart Mill commenting on the work of Berkeley.

group of poets and intellectuals to whom he introduced the artist. In 2003 Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer's *Cézanne and Provence. The Painter and His Culture* called attention to the fact that the artist might have been stimulated by his periodical meetings with members of this group from 1896 on. Cézanne wrote his more theoretical letters around 1900—that is fifteen years after he had addressed his last letter to Zola—and presumably the discussions with Gasquet influenced his way of thinking or expressing his ideas on art and his experience.<sup>80</sup> The analysis of the work of one of the members serves to outline how this group might have understood space and how modern art history has determined the discussion on this issue.

George Dumesnil (1855–1916) was professor of philosophy at Aix between 1893 and 1896 and a member of Gasquet's entourage, as the young poet had a flair for establishing close ties with his teachers. A student of the *École normale supérieure*, Dumesnil had attended Emile Boutroux's classes on Kant in 1877–1878, and was influenced by the philosopher's work, at least as it was interpreted in France.<sup>81</sup> His intellectual path—like that of many others of his generation—evolved from empiricism to [philosophical] criticism, and, after a “spiritual crisis” in the 1890s, to spiritualism. In 1905 he described this last philosophical movement as “la véritable philosophie des Français,” the effort to renew the true Catholic character of the French philosophical tradition broken by foreign influences, and to recover its

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<sup>80</sup> See Nina M. Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, *Cézanne and Provence. The Painter and His Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), Chapter Four. The painter addressed his last letter to Zola in 1886 but their relationship had been deteriorating progressively during the 1870s.

<sup>81</sup> Georges Dumesnil, *Le Spiritualisme* (Paris: Gabriel Beauchesne, 1903), 79. He was part of a peripheral circle of scholars who, because of their religious stance could not find positions in Paris. Dumesnil's activities and especially his publication, *L'Amitié de France*, must be understood in this context which has escaped most of art historians working on Cézanne. See Paul Harry, “The Crucifix and the Crucible: Catholic Scientists in the Third Republic” *The Catholic Historical Review* (July 1986): 195–219.

connections with Saint Augustine's philosophy through Descartes.<sup>82</sup> He also stated that the essays in the book *Le Spiritualisme* (Je suis—Dieu est—la Philosophie) “restituent les vérités qui sont l'essence de cette doctrine et la haussent aussi bien au-dessus des atteintes dissolvantes de l'empirisme que des étrointes énervantes du kantisme.”<sup>83</sup>

Dumesnil's crisis happened just as he was about to defend his dissertation at L'École normale, published in 1892 as *Le rôle des concepts dans la vie intellectuelle et morale. Essai théorique d'après une vue de l'histoire*, which reflects his reaction against Kant.<sup>84</sup> His stay in Aix-en-Provence coincided with his rejection of philosophical criticism and his affiliation with spiritualism—after he wrote *Le rôle des concepts* and before the publication of *Le Spiritualisme*.

The philosopher's theory of knowledge centers on the idea that human intelligence and knowledge are limited when compared to God's infinite omniscience. While God's perception can encompass the infinite richness of variations and possibilities, human beings can only deal with the finite and limited.

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<sup>82</sup> Dumesnil respected Lachelier's and Renouvier's interpretation of Kant, noting that both philosophers had prepared the way for spiritualism. Nevertheless, he considered as his master Maine de Biran (a philosopher from the early nineteenth century rediscovered at this time). Jules Lachelier had been Boutroux's professor.

<sup>83</sup> Announcement of *Le Spiritualisme*, in *L'Amitié de France, journal de philosophie, d'art et de politique* (January, 1909), n/p. Dumesnil was the founder and editor of this publication.

<sup>84</sup> Dumesnil described his crisis in Thomas-Lucien Mainage *Les Témoins du Renouveau catholique* (Paris : G. Beauchesne, 1919), 55–60. This is related to the crisis that characterized the 1890s and that coincided with the transition in art from impressionism to symbolism. Ferdinand Brunetière, Maurice Denis, Andre Gide, Paul Claudel, among others also had similar experiences. Victor Delbos reviewed the 1892 book in *Revue de métaphysique et morale* (1893), 218–226. The author comments about the serious problems in the argumentation, and the idiosyncrasies of its development. Dumesnil's Latin thesis was *De Tractatu Kantii paedagogico*. He had spent two years in Germany studying the educational system of that country. Dumesnil was also close to the group of Symbolist's poets that gathered in the salon of José María Heredia and wrote on literature under the pseudonym Étienne Rouvray.

Therefore he believes that human freedom is a manifestation of Divine Grace and the Holy Trinity.

Notre liberté, dans la vie relative, consiste donc précisément à opposer notre essence finie à l'infinie et, sur l'aperception confuse de l'infini, à déterminer des concepts et des actes finis. Ainsi, l'acte par lequel, sur le tableau noir, c'est-à-dire sur un espace supposé infini, nous traçons une figure mathématique, me paraît une excellente figure de la liberté; car ce tableau contenait une infinité de figures en puissance, mais nous en avons déterminé une. Et qu'on remarque bien, cet acte ne consiste pas seulement à tracer des lignes ; il consiste bien moins en cela que dans une organisation synthétique des éléments infinis de la figure dont les lignes ne sont conçues que comme la limite. Ainsi la liberté dans la vie consiste à déterminer, sur le fonds infini des représentations de phénomènes, des concepts intellectuels et moraux par l'organisation subjective de ces représentations, c'est-à-dire par la qualité que nous leur donnons et dont les concepts ne sont que les limites.<sup>85</sup>

The image of the man drawing on a blackboard, choosing a figure/concept out of an infinite number of possibilities in order to con-figure or con-form what in the end is the “synthetic organization” of a “infinite of elements,” is the complete opposite to Alberti's drawing on the window pane. It might be compared to Cézanne's “organization of colored sensations” and some of his other comments, but this is not the spirit in which Dumesnil's theories are being quoted.

Dumesnil believed that the configurations that were established as a result of these operations were in accord with the order God had established in Nature. Nevertheless, due to the imperfection of men, there was also a place for indeterminacy.

Ce sont des efforts légitimes , nécessaires de l'esprit humain pour se mettre au *point de vue de Dieu* et c'est en vérité la partie divine de la Raison humaine, qu'elle puisse apercevoir qu'il y a un point de vue de Dieu; mais c'est aussi son infirmité radicale, son défaut originel sans doute, .... qu'elle ne puisse se mettre adéquatement à ce point de vue....<sup>86</sup> (Emphasis added)

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<sup>85</sup> Georges Dumesnil, *Du Rôle des concepts dans la vie intellectuelle et morale. Essai Théorique d'après une vue de l'histoire* (Paris : Hachette, 1892), 203.

<sup>86</sup> Dumesnil, *Du Rôle des concepts*, 211.

Nature is relative for men who conceive it as discontinuous. In time, they can progressively discern its infinite continuity and approximate the point of view of God. Dumesnil's notion of space is similar to Cézanne's definition of extension (*étendue*) as "une section de nature ou, si vous aimez mieux, du spectacle que *Pater Omnipotens Aeterne Deus* étale devant nos yeux."<sup>87</sup> Nevertheless, the artist's "religious" interpretation of nature might have been just "a way of saying," or reflect an even more entrenched or "archaic" understanding of space, like the one supported by the Thomist Abbé Edmond Tardif a professor of Aix-en-Provence (a center for religious education dominated by the order of the Angelicus) whom Cézanne knew and mentions in his letters.<sup>88</sup> This interpretation of space—completely different from Panofsky's—was contemporaneous to the artist and was taught to the younger generation of Aixois.<sup>89</sup>

Dumesnil does not mention perspective, though he was an amateur painter who sometimes wrote about plastic arts. The representation of space is a non issue in his writings and he only refers to space in relation to the perception of objects and as nature. He was specifically interested in the problem of the contours as the place where objects touch themselves or limit the space that surrounds them. One of the main arguments of his disquisition is the non-existence of the void. He argues that

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<sup>87</sup> Letter to Emile Bernard, 15 April, 1904 in Rewald, *Correspondance*, 299.

<sup>88</sup> See Edmond Tardif, *Nature, origine et valeur de la connaissance humaine* (Aix-en-Provence: impr. de J. Nicot, 1903). The book is an attack on Kant and Empirism.

<sup>89</sup> The Bibliothèque Méjanès preserves the notes Joachim Gasquet took from Dumesnil's courses (ms. 1879–1745). They show how interested he was in Kant and the philosophical problem of space. They also demonstrate that he mentioned Hume at the same time he was referring to the German philosopher. In addition the notebooks contain notes Gasquet took from the bibliography he consulted. They include quotes from Antoine Cros's "Le temps et l'espace," an article that appeared in the Symbolist literary magazine *L'Hermitage* in 1893. Cros was a physician, philosopher and poet, the brother of the bohemian poet and inventor Charles Cros, whom Cézanne had probably met at the salon of his lover, the famous Nina de Callias. Cros criticizes Kant, and in general, metaphysics in the name of pure science and research.

Pour se représenter objectivement comment les êtres agissent les uns sur les autres, il faut donc imaginer la rencontre et la pénétration réciproque de leurs limites. Et cela est d'autant plus nécessaire que toute quantité d'être, pour ainsi dire, étant infinie en soi, elle ne peut être déterminée et connue ou conçue que par ses limites. ... Mais pour se représenter comment les choses finies, les êtres, les atomes agissent les uns sur les autres... [it is necessary to imagine] qu'ils se pénètrent à un degré infinitésimal par leurs limites, ce qui laisse à la Nature l'élasticité nécessaire pour qu'elle soit, c'est-à-dire pour que les choses soient conçues systématiquement par l'opposition de leurs limites finies à une infinité d'autres choses possibles, et aussi relativement, selon la nécessité de notre forme de la connaissance.<sup>90</sup>

Once again, it would be possible to relate these comments to Cézanne's *passages* ("the merging of planes with space" according to Barr),<sup>91</sup> or to the open forms that sometimes coexist in his paintings with the obsessive demarcation of borders and multiple contour lines.

In *Le Spiritualisme* (1905), Dumesnil summarizes Lachelier's interpretation of perception. Boutroux had been a disciple of Lachelier, and the text provides a better understanding of the debate about space at the time. Dumesnil highlights Lachelier's differentiation between extension (*étendue*), which is a reflection of the logical order, and depth (*profondeur*) which is declared, much like in Cézanne's letter, the way human beings perceive the world. It questions how sensations become objects of knowledge. The answer is that perception affords a floating group of elements that are organized by thought (perhaps what in 1892 was "la partie divine de la Raison humaine").

C'est la pensée qui en fait une réalité vraie, qui a toujours été vraie à titre de fait future, qui le sera toujours à titre de fait passé, en ce sens que , des qu'il est pensée 'le groupe entière des qualités sensibles nous semble sortir de notre conscience pour se fixer dans une *étendue* extérieure à elle' ... 'en nous

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<sup>90</sup> Georges Dumesnil, *Du Rôle des concepts*, 223.

<sup>91</sup> See Barr, *Cubism and Abstract Art*, 42.

représentant l'*étendue* [où vient se situer la perception] ... 'nous sortons de nous-mêmes pour entrer dans l'absolu de la pensée.'<sup>92</sup> (Emphasis added)

Through thought—abstract thinking, *la pensée*—man can discriminate the chaos of perception and conceive of an independent reality, objective, exterior, transcendental, absolute that is manifested as extension, space. But an element of understanding acts in perception,

Il y a une preuve insuffisamment remarquée de l'existence d'un élément intellectuel dans notre conscience [d'un élément propre avant toute expérience à situer la perception] c'est la *profondeur*, troisième dimension de l'espace, aucune expérience ne peut transformer le plan visuel ni le sens de l'effort musculaire en une profondeur; *la profondeur qui est en définitive le fantôme de l'existence*, atteste que dès avant la perception, la pensée [logique] ou entendement est à l'œuvre.<sup>93</sup> (Emphasis added)

Extension thus corresponds to the sphere of the real which is external to man, persists in time, and can only be reached by the intellect, and therefore it is not the province of man's experience. The intellectual element in human perception affords a certain version of that order: depth. Orthogonals therefore represent the relative, particular mode in which human beings see and understand reality. Depth is the "ghost of existence," or the ghost of extension. These paragraphs suggest another interpretation for the letter of Cézanne quoted at the beginning of this chapter, where he said that God could see as "*étendue*" and men could only see nature as "*profondeur*."<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Dumesnil, *Le Spiritualisme*, 20.

<sup>93</sup> Dumesnil, *Le Spiritualisme*, 21.

<sup>94</sup> Dumesnil, in a note, comments that this point of Lachelier's theory had been recently contested with the argumentation of the man born blind, and that Lachelier's position might indicate that he wanted to "remettre en honneur la thèse de Berkeley, tombée en discrédit et remplacée par la théorie empiriste qui rapporte l'espace au toucher." Dumesnil, *Le Spiritualisme*, 21, n.1. The text demonstrates that both Berkeley and the Molyneux problem were still very much part of the discussion about space and perception.

Dumesnil knew Cézanne and on one occasion visited his studio. However, no document records what Dumesnil “said” to Cézanne or what the painter understood of the philosopher’s theories. These quotations serve to attest that those who surrounded Cézanne, although they were preoccupied with a philosophical interpretation of space, did not think of it as a mathematical volume containing objects but as a matter of volumes and distance. This group countered a deeply religious worldview to Kant’s interpretation of space.

Was the relationship of Dumesnil with Cézanne important? Does his philosophy help us to understand his art? As mentioned above, the major credit for bringing Dumesnil’s texts to light belongs to Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, who sees the philosopher as part of a “proto-phenomenological” French movement:

Whereas until now scholars have discussed Cézanne’s paintings as a posteriori projections and illustrations of twentieth-century phenomenological thought, I argue here for the emergence of a proto-phenomenological school of thought in France concurrent to Cézanne (and in advance, presumably, of German philosophical developments in that field). For Cézanne as the unwitting forerunner of twentieth-century phenomenology, see M. Merleau-Ponty, ‘Cézanne’s Doubt’ (1945)...<sup>95</sup>

The thrust of this argument impedes Athanassoglou-Kallmyer from considering the religious component in Dumesnil’s philosophy, a factor that coalesced in his scholarship precisely at the time of his encounter with Cézanne.<sup>96</sup> The artist himself was a devout Catholic and therefore this particular aspect of Dumesnil’s ideas might have attracted him. Regarding the visit to the atelier Athanassoglou-Kallmyer asks

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<sup>95</sup> Nina M. Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, *Cézanne and Provence. The Painter and His Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), n. 77, 282. It is interesting to note that in 1924 J Alexander Gunn refers to French *phenomenalism* in relationship with Renouvier’s philosophy which he links with the English school and the work of Hermann Lotze, and not with philosophy.

<sup>96</sup> Almost all of the participants of Gasquet’s convivium were conservatives and members of the political right.

What happened during that visit? Did Dumesnil and Gasquet expound on their proto-phenomenological ideas in relation to Cézanne's paintings. ...

Dumesnil's abstract aesthetic appears to have found resonance in Cézanne's paintings and, in turn the painter may have detected analogies between his artistic beliefs and the philosophical ideas harbored by his visitor.<sup>97</sup>

The lives of Dumesnil and Cézanne coincided in Aix for a short period of time.<sup>98</sup>

Nevertheless, the publications by Athanassoglou-Kallmyer demonstrate that the influence of Phenomenology in art history has led to a growing interest in theories that could be considered antecedents of this philosophical movement. Isaacson, for example, concludes,

What the Impressionist landscape painter does,... is establish what phenomenologists call an intentional relationship to the setting in which he works. Intentionality refers to the dynamics of perception and human consciousness as developed by Husserl at a time when some of the Impressionists were still active, and carried on and altered by his followers, notably Merleau-Ponty....<sup>99</sup>

Most of the scholars working on the history of art history believe that Panofsky's approach to art history blocked the beneficial stimulus of phenomenology on the discipline for decades.<sup>100</sup> Phenomenology is a German philosophical tradition founded by Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) at the end of the nineteenth century that inspired the work of the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961). The latter's decision to apply his phenomenology of perception to the study of

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<sup>97</sup> Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, *Cézanne and Provence*, 179.

<sup>98</sup> Dumesnil arrived in Aix in 1893 but Cézanne did not meet Gasquet until—at the earliest—April of 1896. The artist left Aix for Paris in June of that year and did not return until the beginning of 1897. Dumesnil married a widow in Montpellier at the end of 1896 and moved to Grenoble. Gasquet's correspondence at the Bibliothèque Mèjanès Ms.18160 (1735) demonstrate that in January of 1897, Dumesnil was already established in Grenoble. It is true that the philosopher, a friend of Maurice Blondel who took his teaching post at Aix, returned periodically to the city to help him with the examinations, but there is no proof that he remained in touch with the artist, who himself severed his ties with Gasquet around 1901.

<sup>99</sup> Isaacson, "Constable, Duranty," 449.

<sup>100</sup> See for example Didi-Huberman, *Devant l'image*, and Melville and Readings eds., *Vision and Textuality*.

Cézanne's life and art had a profound impact on the studies on the artist. This approach—as Issacson's article demonstrates—spilled over into the consideration of impressionism and became an influential theoretical approach for the study of modern art in general.

Merleau-Ponty's "La Douce de Cézanne" first published in 1945, was later incorporated in his 1948 *Sens et non-sense*. It was translated into English in 1964 but its influence on Cézanne's studies emerged only in the 1970's, as part of the reaction against the modernist interpretation of modern art. Although this problem falls outside the scope of this essay it must be briefly examined as a significant chapter in the history of perspective itself.

Merleau-Ponty's claim that Cézanne had found a sound, unmediated way to perceive and understand space and the world was that of an intellectual reflecting on Humanism and Man after the horrors of Second World War. Like Mallarmé, he considered perspectival space the cultural product of the West.<sup>101</sup> Cézanne becomes in Merleau's analysis the incarnation and epitome of a phenomenological, primordial mode of perception, of a certain mode of relationship with the world that denies scientific perspective,

The outline should therefore be a result of the colors if the world is to be given in its true density. For the world is a mass without gaps, a system of colors across which the receding perspective, the outlines, angles, and curves are inscribed like lines of force; the spatial structure vibrates as it is formed.... Cézanne does not try to use color to *suggest* the tactile sensations which would give shape and depth. These distinctions between touch and sight are unknown in primordial perception. It is only as a result of a science of the human body that we finally learn to distinguish between our senses. The lived objects is not rediscovered or constructed on the basis of the contributions of the senses; rather, it presents

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<sup>101</sup> See Hubert Damisch, *L'Origine de la perspective* (Paris, 1987), 52.

itself to us from the start as the center from which these contributions radiate. We see the depth, the smoothness, the softness, ...<sup>102</sup>

As Damisch noted in 1987, Merleau-Ponty was among the first to read Panofsky's *Perspective as Symbolic Form* in France. Moreover, he based his interpretation of Cézanne on Novotny's *Cézanne und das Ende der wissenschaftliche Perspektive*, which had been influenced by the 1927 treatise, and was structured around Rewald's and Marschutz's site photographs.<sup>103</sup> That is, the philosopher had taken modern art historical writings as his sources.<sup>104</sup> When Merleau-Ponty affirms that "[b]y remaining faithful to the phenomena in his investigations of perspective, Cézanne discovered what recent psychologist have come to formulate: the living perspective, that which we actually perceive, is not a geometric or photographic one," he is actually navigating the text by Panofsky analyzed above in the opposite sense and ascribing to Cézanne the perception of something similar to Cassirer's and Mach's psychophysiological space. Therefore, the artist's primordial perception is in part the product of modern art history's fossilized perspective.<sup>105</sup>

According to Wood, Damisch's enquiry on perspective was suggested by a lecture course given by Merleau-Ponty on Husserl at the College de France, in 1959–60, where the philosopher dealt with how to recapture "crude" or "wild" perception.

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<sup>102</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense*, (Chicago, 1964), 15.

<sup>103</sup> See Hubert Damisch, *L'Origine de la perspective* (Paris: Flammarion, 1987), 45. The site photographs were in a certain way taken for Novotny's project.

<sup>104</sup> As Christopher Wood has commented, Damisch, from a post-Post-modern standpoint could understand Merleau-Ponty's modernist trick: by trying to create a more natural point of view the philosopher forged an even more civilized Cézanne, the hyper refined primitive. The point is brilliantly explained by Wood in his review of Damisch's book: Merleau-Ponty, in "Cézanne's Doubt," "stated that Cézanne's painting 'reveals the base of inhuman nature upon which man has installed himself.' 'Cézanne was able to revive the classical definition of art: man added to nature.' Except that Merleau-Ponty failed to see that Cézanne was not subtracting 'man' but adding on more 'man.'" See Wood, [Review of Hubert Damisch] "*The Origin of Perspective*, Le Jugement de Paris," *The Art Bulletin* 77 (December, 1995), 680.

<sup>105</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Cézanne's Doubt" in *Sense and Non-Sense* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 14. For Panofsky see specifically *Perspective*, 29–31.

Nevertheless, Damisch's professed goal was to liberate perspective from the harsh criticism it had received in the 1970s from Feminists and Marxists working on film studies.<sup>106</sup> As Wood observes,

Damisch insists that we are still living in the age of perspective because the structure of perspective is the structure of *our own modern minds* [Emphasis added]...Damisch's art history manages to be historicist—that is, bound to its own perspective—and structuralist at the same time; but only because the history is a history of the structure, written from a vantage point inside it. Here Damisch's book is almost perfectly continuous with Panofsky's perspective essay.

Damisch, however, makes an even more grandiose claim than Panofsky did. He says that perspective makes visible the act of seeing, and in so doing makes possible *your* subjectivity. Both Heidegger and Lacan presented the integrated subject as the interlocutor of the organized and coherent picture, the tableau; and not merely as the addressee of the structured picture, but as its true complement.<sup>107</sup>

Damisch continues Panofsky's defense of perspective as a paradigmatic epistemological model and uses Lacan to argue that the object of perception determines and shapes the observer into a subject.

There are many folds in this story: in 1927 Panofsky "creates" scientific perspective and projects it onto the fifteenth century; in the 1930s modern art historians (Barr and Novotny) use the newly founded importance of perspective to proclaim that Cézanne's art had superseded it, an argument that allows them to present the artist as the catalyst of the transition towards modern art; in the 1940s Merleau-Ponty uses Panofsky and Novotny as art historical sources in order to build a phenomenological approach to the world. He contends that Cézanne had recuperated

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<sup>106</sup> See Wood, [Review of Hubert Damisch] "*The Origin of Perspective*," 680. Damisch explicitly mentions the Marxist approach in photographic and film studies. Margaret Iversen suggests that this author's targets were Jean-Louis Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus" published in Paris in 1970 and translated into English in 1974, and Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", written in 1973 and published in 1975 in the influential British film theory journal *Screen*. "The Discourse of Perspective," 194–195.

<sup>107</sup> Wood, [Review of Hubert Damisch] "*The Origin of Perspective*," 680.

a primeval, pure, uncivilized mode of perception, thus reinforcing the modernist approach. In the 1980s the philosopher's work is used to attack modernist art history, perspective and the Western tradition. In 1987 Damisch—as part of his project of formulating a Lacanian interpretation of perspective that would reaffirm its paradigmatic and a-historical value—exposes Merleau-Ponty's project as dated and suggests that the non-Euclidian geometries and pseudo-scientific theories about the fourth dimension that had influenced cubism had also led Panofsky to the false notion that perspective was relative and tied to a historical period that was coming to an end. Damisch's Lacanian understanding of perspective reopened the debate about perspective that had begun in the 1930s.

This analysis helps us to comprehend Athanassoglou-Kallmyer's characterization of Dumesnil's philosophy. If she could actually prove the existence of a proto-phenomenological French philosophical movement close to Cézanne and his group of acquaintances, she would demonstrate the presence of the model (structure) in history, that is, she would provide historical validation to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological analysis and prove that, more than a model of interpretation, phenomenology explains the way Cézanne perceived the world and created his art. Merleau-Ponty's theory becomes a historical fact in Cézanne's body and mind. This is, once again, an example of how art history creates the subjectivity of the artist according to its needs.

Reff embraces Damisch's theory wholeheartedly without explaining his interest in it.<sup>108</sup> He takes Damisch's book as a confirmation of Panofsky's interpretation of

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<sup>108</sup> In 1978 Lipton mentioned Reff as one of the art historians who was striving to find new ways for approaching works of art. "Reff is cognizant of the shifting psychological ground upon which an artist

perspective. By way of perspective, Reff re-claims for Cézanne the position as keystone of modern art history. In order to situate his argument, he summarizes Cézanne's historiography describing how each period understood the artist's approach to perspective. Reff argues that in the first stage (1930s and 1940s), Cézanne was presented as overcoming perspective; in the second (50s and 60s), the site photographs served to show that he had modified it; and finally (70s and 80s),

La boucle est bouclée dans les deux derniers articles sur cette question... [art historians] s'appuyant sur une connaissance approfondie des phénomènes de la perception, font observer que la perspective de la Renaissance est artificielle, et donc inadéquate, tandis que celle de Cézanne reste beaucoup plus fidèle à la réalité des sensations visuelles...<sup>109</sup>

Although Reff does not mention it, this last moment is the one dominated by the influence of Merleau-Ponty and his phenomenology of perception. This article confirms the 1930s as the moment in which Cézanne's art started to be discussed in association with perspective, and that since then perspective had been at the center of the bibliography on the artist. Reff's article responds to the "crisis" of modern art history. He uses Damisch to counter the influence of phenomenology within Cézanne's studies. The greatness of Merleau-Ponty's Cézanne resided in having overcome Renaissance perspective. Reff intervenes to reassert Cézanne's interest in perspective, which he believes expresses the capacity of modern man to achieve a rational representation of the world.

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stands at any given moment. For Reff, art has intentionality. Far from making Cézanne's vision inevitable, Reff reconstitutes a psychological moment in which the painting seems to be the product of hard work, chance, and a myriad of unpredictable lived moments. Suddenly Cézanne appears human." Lipton, "Some Reflexions," 328. In 1990 Athanassoglou-Kallmyer described the same approach as the "sixties" do-it-yourself psychoanalytic speculation." "Review *Cézanne: The Early Years, 1859–1872*," *Art Journal* 49 (Spring, 1990), 71.

<sup>109</sup> Reff, "Cézanne et la perspective," 9.

Reff was not alone in adhering to Damisch's defense of perspective, a fact that is symptomatic of the changes operated by the most recent "crisis" of art history in the United States.<sup>110</sup> T. J. Clark—the author of the 1984 *The Painter of Modern Life*, a book that epitomizes the crisis of modern art history within the field of nineteenth-century art—also gave a heartfelt welcome to the translation of Damisch's book into English.<sup>111</sup> In 1994 he organized a symposium at the University of California, Berkeley to discuss it. Iversen, frankly expressed his reaction to Clark's stance,

I was initially intrigued and frankly mystified by what Clark's interest in the topic might be, but I gathered that my brief was to represent a position critical of perspective informed by psychoanalytic/feminist/ poststructuralist theory. ... I was totally unprepared for Clark's enthusiastic reading of Damisch's book as a vindication of perspective on the ground that perspective contains the seeds of its own deconstruction most vividly realized by Cubism. ... Clark had discovered a modernist, post-Cubist understanding of perspective. ... For Clark and possibly for Damisch, then, those who criticize perspective for its totalizing systematic closure or its rigid fixing of the spectator's position are simply in too much of a hurry to notice the tremors rocking the apparently imperturbable ground of its structure.<sup>112</sup>

For Iversen, the idea that cubism "exacerbates the internal tensions of perspective to the point of extinction" confirms perspective as symbolic form. Therefore Clark's position reconfirms Panofsky's and Damisch's rationale: there is no end of perspective. Perspective can be contravened but this does not affect its status as paradigm or symbolic form.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> See Henri Zerner "The Crisis in the Discipline," *The Art Journal* 42 (Winter, 1982): 79. See also the series of articles devoted to this crisis and the New Art History in *The Art Bulletin* during the 1990s. Both magazines are published by the College Art Association which means that they express a hegemonic understanding of the situation of the discipline in the United States.

<sup>111</sup> For Clark see Harris, *New Art History*, 64–73.

<sup>112</sup> Iversen, "Orthodox and Anamorphic," 81. She adds that Clark contended that perspective's overcontrolling impetus and detailed perfectionist measurement emphasized the anomalies and made them even more unsettling. On the other hand, the reversibility of the point of view as projected onto the horizon made the viewer's position instable.

<sup>113</sup> See Panofsky, *Perspective*, 67–68.

Because the revisions of the discipline have not considered its true methodological foundations, art historians at the end of the twentieth century were still discussing the vocabulary and categories established in the 1930s. Chapter Five demonstrates that far from being objective records of the world, photographs are machines for producing perspectives and that they impose onto the subject of study a particular worldview. The use of site photographs fostered the discussion of Cézanne's art as an artistic project centered on the problem of the representation of space. Space and perspective were established as categories for the analysis of art in the 1930s but space (especially as defined in that period) was not on Cézanne's cultural horizon. The next chapter will argue that this strategy transformed Cézanne's art into the link that connects the art of the nineteenth century with the avant-gardes, thus consolidating the notion of a continuous history of art as the subject of study of the modern art history that was being institutionalized at the time. This transition was actually a "suture."

It is clear that there exists an abyss between art history and the scientific study of art, and that both disciplines have become altogether dubious. When art history wishes to be more than a calendar, it quite naively borrows ill-founded judgments and ideas. Within these ideas the individual works melt into generalities without contours, and the concrete deed dissolves into a sort of vague aestheticism; on the other hand, a thousand anecdotes and dates or art history do not touch at all upon technical questions of the work of art or on the forms themselves. Ultimately one ends up with an anecdotal psychology that transforms the history of art into a novel. As for that pedantic method that consists of pictorial description, we wish to point out that the structure of language is such that it breaks up the synchronic power of the picture and that the heterogeneity of words destroys the overall impression.

A psychological method presents other difficulties. ...  
Carl Einstein, "Notes on Cubism," *Documents*, 1929.<sup>1</sup>

## **Chapter Seven: Cézanne: the Father of Cubism and the Grandfather of Modern Art**

When did modern art history begin to impinge upon modern art's and Cézanne's historiography? The answer lies in the period between the two wars, with at least three meaningful dates: 1920, 1929 and 1936. The second and the third can be explained with just one image (fig. 23), as the opening of the MoMA in 1929 with the exhibit *Cézanne, Gauguin, Seurat, van Gogh*, and the organization of *Cubism and Modern Art* in 1936, were fundamental events for both developments.<sup>2</sup>

Cézanne's *The Bather* hung for years at the entrance to the museum's permanent collection of paintings and sculptures and its placement sparked debate in 2004, when the institution unveiled its new installation after the latest building renovations. As John Elderfield explained, "I worried that the absolute familiarity of the Cézanne was making it appear almost like a reproduction of itself. Not a painting,

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<sup>1</sup> This article appeared in the third issue of the first year of Bataille's magazine, *Documents*. I am using the translation by Charles W. Haxthausen that appeared in the issue devoted to Einstein in *October* 107 (Winter, 2004), 160.

<sup>2</sup> 1920 was the date of the publication of Henry Daniel Kahnweiler's *The Rise of Cubism* and its importance will become clear in what follows.

but an image of how the museum began the exhibition of its collection.”<sup>3</sup> This chapter analyzes Barr’s interpretation of Cézanne’s art in 1936 as the pivotal connection that links nineteenth-century art to the early avant-gardes.

*Cubism and Abstract Art* opened at MoMA nine years after the publication of Panofsky’s *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, a book in which, as previously noted, modern art is notoriously absent but which established space as a category for the analysis of works of art. There would seem not to be a direct connection between these two publications, except that in the catalogue that accompanied the exhibition, Barr’s characterization of Cézanne’s art rests on the fact that Braque and Picasso, the pioneers of cubism, had especially admired the master’s later work, “in which he abandons the perspective of deep space and the emphatic modeling....”<sup>4</sup> In this way the author established Cézanne as the immediate forerunner of cubism, a role that not all the contemporary writers agreed to bestow upon him.

Barr and the art critics who cast Cézanne as the precursor of cubism shared the mentality of the *rappel à l’ordre* of the 1920s and 1930s. They not only projected onto Cézanne and cubism their own understanding of modern art but also shaped them so that they could be presented as the link that relates, and thus sutures, the art of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

When, in 1987, Damisch defended perspective as an epistemological paradigm, he singled out Panofsky’s 1953 *Early Netherlandish Painting* for critique because the German scholar had asserted that the perspectival system created in the Renaissance had been superseded at the beginning of the twentieth century by cubism and

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<sup>3</sup> See Arthur Lubow, “Re-Modernizing,” *The New York Times Magazine* (October 3, 2004): 61. I would like to thank Dr. June Hargrove for calling my attention to this article.

<sup>4</sup> Alfred H. Barr, Jr., *Cubism and Abstract Art*, exh. cat., Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1936, 26.

Einstein's theory of relativity.<sup>5</sup> Damisch noticed that in 1927 Panofsky had not mentioned Cézanne's breach of the perspectival tradition and argued that in that way he had avoided highlighting the historical limitations of perspective because,

This would have entailed him, as a good neo-Kantian, to begin by undermining the pretense of so-called central perspective to restore an image of the objective world, showing its value to be entirely relative and strictly conjunctural, on the basis of *pseudoscientific* considerations borrowed from [sic] the physiology of vision.<sup>6</sup> (Emphasis added.)

Damisch indicates that whereas in 1927, Panofsky's neo-Kantian understanding of perspective as an epistemological paradigm had triumphed over the influence of the "pseudoscientific considerations" about vision that suggested the contingent character of perspective, in 1953 he had historicized and thus relativized the value of such a technical device.

This chapter demonstrates that around 1927 questions about Cézanne's use of perspective or about his interest in the representation of space were simply non-issues. They were introduced into the consideration of his art in the 1930s, when, mostly thanks to Panofsky's book, perspective started to be understood as a key epistemological issue, a symbolic form, and a category for the analysis of works of art. Hence, when in 1953 Panofsky argued that cubism brought about the end of perspective and noted that even though Cézanne and van Gogh had reaffirmed the primacy of the surface, their art had remained faithful to a "perspectival interpretation of space," he was reflecting the influence of the scholarship on modern art that his own work had spawned.<sup>7</sup> As Panofsky's treatise had established perspective as the

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<sup>5</sup> Hubert Damisch, *L'Origine de la perspective* (Paris : Flammarion, 1987), 27–28.

<sup>6</sup> Damisch, *Origine perspective*, 27–28.

<sup>7</sup> Erwin Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), 166–167. In his book on Cézanne Novotny states that Panofsky's 1927 treatise is the "fundamental

Symbolic form of the West, to affirm that Cézanne's art had meant the "end of scientific perspective" was a way of securing for the artist a key role in the history of art. This case demonstrates how the narrative establishes the set of questions addressed to the subject of study, and hence determines the fundamental meaning of the art it considers.

Because space/perspective as theorized by Panofsky was a category devised for the study of Antiquity and the Renaissance, with this chapter this dissertation comes full circle. Chapter One has argued that the German founders art history projected their understanding of modern art into their analysis of the past; this chapter demonstrates that, in the 1930s, a category devised for the study of the past determined the way French modern art was approached and therefore understood. Space, as Panofsky conceived of it, was not just an external category imposed onto Cézanne's art and artistic personae like classical, primitive, or baroque but involved the examination of the most intimate physio-psychological patterns of the artist's perception and mode of understanding the world.

Most of the scholars who have studied Panofsky's *Perspective as Symbolic Form* have noted that book needs to be contextualized;<sup>8</sup> nevertheless, only Damisch, and later Elkins, observed the book's relationship with the pseudo-sciences about vision and perception that thrived at the time, which were also influencing the critical fortune of cubism (more on this below). This observation allows us to suggest that Panofsky's notion that there had been a period in which the West had perceived and

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discussion about perspective." See Novotny's *Cézanne Ende in Vienna School Reader*, 424 n. 32. See also Wood's "Une perspective oblique. Hubert Damisch, La grammaire du tableau et la *strukturanalyse* viennoise," *Cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne* 58 (Winter 1996), 122.

<sup>8</sup> See Elkins *Poetics of Perspective*, 20–23, and Veltman, "Panofsky's Perspective."

thought of space as continuous, homogeneous, and isotropic was a reaction to counter the contemporary doubts and questions about it raised by Einstein's theory of relativity. Panofsky's dream of a coherent understanding of space belongs to the time in which the mandarins of the Republic of Weimar pined for the balance and harmony of a mythical Renaissance.

In his meticulous analysis of the first part of Panofsky's book, Elkins observed that the author closes and synthesizes his theoretical presentation affirming the existence of a natural, curvilinear perspective—postulated by Guido Hauck at the end of the nineteenth century—which Panofsky uses as a backdrop to delineate and define that of the Renaissance. Curvilinear perspectives have since the Renaissance been, “shadowy rivals” to linear perspective, although, as Elkins comments,

[t]hey have never been supported by a unified theory... From an art historical standpoint, the history of curvilinear perspectives has some connections with the mistaken versions of non-Euclidean geometry which circulated among early modern artists and also with our ways of thinking and writing about naturalistic painting ....<sup>9</sup>

These systems were superficially considered by different disciplines but had remained as vague hypotheses (which does not mean that they were not influential at given moments of history) that contradicted and annulled Kant's system, as the philosopher had postulated the principles and axioms of Euclidean geometry as an example of synthetic *a priori* concepts.<sup>10</sup> The dissemination of Einstein's theories prompted the popularization of non-Euclidean geometries and theories about the fourth dimension,

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<sup>9</sup> Elkins, *Poetics of Perspective*, 183.

<sup>10</sup> The case of hypnosis as analyzed by Jonathan Crary presents many similarities with these pseudo-sciences. *Suspensions of Perception*, 65–71. At mid-nineteenth century, von Helmholtz had offered a formulation of space that still accorded with the unified space postulated by Kant.

which came to the attention to the public and artists like Albert Gleizes, who mentions them in his 1912 *Du Cubisme*.<sup>11</sup>

Linda Dalrymple Henderson—the leading specialist in these theories and their influences on art—remarks that the French philosopher Henri Poincaré (1854-1912) postulated the existence of a perceptual space that, as the product of visual tactile and motor components, was not continuous or homogeneous but finite and anisotropic, that is, the opposite of mathematical space. Because it could not be determined if this space was three dimensional or not, the door was left open to think of the possibility of more dimensions.<sup>12</sup> This perceptual space was similar to Mach's, which as observed above, shaped Cassirer's approach to the problem. Panofsky's book manifested and synthesized ideas about space that were literally "in the air," which in part explains the book's success and widespread influence.<sup>13</sup>

The year 1920 is also significant in the developments that led to the establishment of a linkage between nineteenth-century modern art and the avant-gardes because it was the year that the art dealer Daniel Henry Kahnweiler (1884–1979), published *Der Weg zum Kubismus*, a text he had first published in 1916 as an article. This book marks the moment when the theoretical approach and categories springing from the application of the German neo-Kantian tradition to the study of art that would later be

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<sup>11</sup> See Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger, *Cubism* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1913), 29 ss.

<sup>12</sup> Linda Dalrymple Henderson, *The Fourth Dimension and Non-Euclidean Geometry in Modern Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 36.

<sup>13</sup> Kim Veltman has discussed the common misconception that affirms that Panofsky was the first who discussed perspective as a means of analyzing style, listing those who preceded it. The first book in this list is a 1878 treatise on Piero della Francesca. Most of the books he lists up to the 1920s consider a specific period or artist. Veltman contends that even the idea of perspective as a "symbolic form" had been seriously discussed prior to Panofsky's famous lecture. L. W. Pollack's, *Perspektive und Symbol in Philosophie und Rechtswissenschaft* (1912) has a chapter entitled "The Perspectival and Symbolic Method in General," which explored the usefulness of perspective as an image to describe relative viewpoints; Spengler's influential *Decline of the West*, (1923) also contained a chapter on "the symbolism of the world view and the problem of space." See "Panofsky's Perspective."

at the foundations of modern art history, started to be used for the analysis of modern art.<sup>14</sup> In 1987 Yve-Alain Bois discussed the book as a “breakthrough,” maintaining that Kahnweiler had been “the only critic to give an intelligent account of cubism,”

If we compare him to the contemporary French critics, we must ask whether any of them possessed the means to go beyond the brawling, congenial journalism of an Apollinaire (a journalism that Kahnweiler did not esteem very highly). Art history was moribund in Paris (or rather, it was vitally concerned with the Middle Ages, and not at all with the theoretical-historiographical and perceptual problems that preoccupied Kahnweiler in Switzerland). The aesthetic was the province of specialists who repeated their investigations of the beautiful or of ‘harmony of the arts.’ None of the events in art for half a century seemed to have affected the theorists in France, while a Wölfflin or a Fiedler, for example, were influenced in their theoretical work by the emergence of impressionism, even if they did not refer to it explicitly.<sup>15</sup>

Bois does not give much credence to the contemporary local tradition of art criticism, which is reduced to the role of provider of context. The application of German philosophy and of the categories developed by German art historians enabled Kahnweiler to understand cubism.

As the exclusive dealer of Picasso and Braque, Kahnweiler had been a privileged witness to the rise of cubism. Upon the declaration of war in 1914, he went to Bern, where he embarked upon serious readings of neo-Kantian philosophy, aesthetics, and art history. In the articles he published in different German journals, later compiled as *Confessions esthétiques*, he discusses the work of Heinrich Wölfflin, Joseph Strzygowski, Heinrich Rickert, Conrad Fiedler, Adolph von Hildebrand, Georg Simmel, and the philosophy of Kant among others. He returned to Paris in 1920, the year of the publication of his book on cubism.

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<sup>14</sup> This assertion is valid within the parameters established by this essay that argues that the 1930s generated a new art history. The influence of Wilhelm Worringer’s writings on the Expressionist artists seems to have been a “spiritual” connection in which the art historian gave ideas and suggested an orientation, much as art criticism and other scholarly books and philosophy had done in the past.

<sup>15</sup> Yve-Alain Bois, “Kahnweiler’s Lessons,” *Representations* 18 (Spring, 1987), 35.

Since Kahnweiler was not prone to advertising and wary of theoretical interpretations, his book should be seen as a strategy to counter the misunderstandings circulated by art criticism, especially by the so called “minor cubists” like Albert Gleizes. He also had to fend off the association of cubism as *art boche*. *The Rise of Cubism*—as it was called in English—was conceived as part of a larger enterprise, a book written in 1915 but not published until much later, *Der Gegenstand der Ästhetik*. Werner Spies notices that,

Ce n'était au fond rien d'autre que l'ébauche d'une histoire universelle de l'art, se fixant pour but de faire du cubisme son point culminant. Il est clair que l'auteur n'a nullement l'intention de se présenter comme le contemporain de l'avant-garde et de livrer des détails sociaux et biographiques. Nous n'y trouvons aucune anecdote. L'ambition de Kahnweiler est grande—il désire comprendre ce qu'il a vécu et l'insérer dans l'histoire de l'art. Dans un essai publié en 1920, ‘Les limites de l'histoire de l'art’, il trace pour ainsi dire le cadre historique et philosophique pour ‘La montée du cubisme’ qui avait été écrit auparavant. Il écrit ‘Une réalité historique est celle qui ne se produit qu'une fois. Si elle est nécessaire à la continuité de la série causale que doit présenter l'exposé historique en cause, alors elle sera consignée par l'histoire; sinon elle ne le sera pas.’<sup>16</sup>

Kahnweiler was well aware of the fundamental problems and the theories being discussed at the time.<sup>17</sup> The art dealer's goals were similar to those of modern art history, as he wanted to secure a place for cubism in the history of art. Conscious of the discipline's paradoxical structure, he rewrote his experiences according to its categories of analysis, transforming cubism into a key historical episode so that it might be incorporated into the diachronic development of the history of art.

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<sup>16</sup> Werner Spies, *Pour Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler* (Stuttgart: Verlag Gerd Hatje, 1965), 37.

<sup>17</sup> In “Les limites de l'histoire de l'art,” where he confronts the problem of structure against historicism, he comments on Simmel's “Das problem der historischen Zeit,” a text also used by Panofsky, who, in turn, disputed Kahnweiler's interpretation of Riegl's *kunstwollen* in a note of his famous article “The Concept of Artistic Volition.” See Bois, “Kahnweiler's Lessons,” 60 n. 21. Panofsky comments that Kahnweiler was influenced by Worringer in his interpretation of Riegl. See Panofsky's “Artistic Volition,” 24, n. 7.

In *The Rise of Cubism* Kahnweiler contends that, “[t]he artist, as the executor of the unconscious plastic will of mankind, identifies himself with the style of the period, which is the expression of this will,” a statement that allows Kahnweiler to contend that the modern movement is “the expression of the intellectual spirit of our time.”<sup>18</sup> As Spies noticed, neo-Kantianism was useful for this German Jew enamored of French modern art:

Kahnweiler tente donc de soustraire le cubisme à une tradition nationale déterminée—et c’est précisément ce qu’on reprocha au cubisme et aux artistes représentés par Kahnweiler, à partir de 1914. Kahnweiler lui-même n’en était arrivé là que grâce à sa révolte contre son temps, contre ses origines, sa classe, contre les nationalismes. ... [it resolved him to find] une aptitude transcendante à vivre l’art comme un langage qui exige la connaissance de l’objet—mais ne nécessite la connaissance d’aucun idiome national ou historique.<sup>19</sup>

Neo-Kantianism helped Kahnweiler, as it would later help Panofsky, to deflect some of the influences of the time, especially nationalism as this philosophical approach permitted him to relate cubism to the modern theories of perception and knowledge that were ‘supra-national’ and claimed universal validity. As already explained, neo-Kantianism had replaced Kant’s metaphysical approach with a more logical, epistemological one, which nonetheless kept philosophy’s claim to transcendentalism.<sup>20</sup>

In 1965 the writer and art critic Jean Cassou saluted Kahnweiler’s text as a healthy influence on the French artistic panorama, stressing that it meant the use of

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<sup>18</sup> Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, *The Rise of Cubism* (New York: Wittenborn, Schultz, 1949), 15.

<sup>19</sup> Spies, *Pour Kahnweiler*, 39.

<sup>20</sup> “Son besoin d’expliquer l’art en dehors de tout motif sociologique et psychologique ... s’est nourri de la philosophie fondée sur la théorie de la connaissance et l’épistémologie. L’idéalisme transcendantal ou, en l’occurrence, la ‘logique transcendante’ qui a pris la place de la métaphysique chez les néo-kantiens, servit de base à une compréhension de l’art sans présupposé psychologique. La conscience structurant en synthétisant fut opposée à tout ce qui était expérience vécue et subjective de l’art. L’art devenait une ouverture sur le monde, il était comme un langage, ...” Spies, *Pour Kahnweiler*, 39.

*German philosophy* for the understanding of a *French artistic movement*. In contrast to Bois's eulogy, Cassou's text shows how the critical frame was fundamentally extraneous to the artistic product it analyzed:

A cette éclatante explication il avait été préparé par l'apparition, si déterminante pour le naissant vingtième siècle européen, de toute une vigoureuse cohorte d'esthéticiens germaniques, habiles aux mécanismes de la dialectique et de la spéculation, aptes à lancer de puissantes hypothèses, à ouvrir de vastes perspectives, à inscrire dans une dramaturgie de concepts, c'est-à-dire dans un système, l'histoire de tous les arts du monde, jusqu'à ceux des siècles les plus ténébreux.<sup>21</sup>

Kahnweiler was further influenced by the ideas of his longtime friend Carl Einstein (1885–1940), born just one year after him and also a German Jew. A poet, writer, theoretician of art but also an art dealer, art critic, and advisor to collectors, Einstein has lately received more scholarly attention from art historians for his radical writings.<sup>22</sup> As the epigraph demonstrates, his understanding of modern art was based on a harsh critique of art history. Einstein had studied philosophy and art history in Berlin, attending Wölfflin's lectures, but, politically involved with the left and the avant-gardes in art (especially expressionism, dada, and surrealism), his ideas about modern art opposed the Swiss art historian's formalist theories.

Einstein's friendship with Kahnweiler began in 1904–1905, when they met in Paris. With the dealer's help, Einstein became the most renowned German critic of modern art. In turn, Kahnweiler was among the first to read the important 1915

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<sup>21</sup> Jean Cassou, "Le poète et le philosophe," in *Pour Kahnweiler*, 38. The work of Alfred Barr, for example, was first translated into French in the 1960s. Cassou was a writer and an intellectual who had been born in 1897 and in the 1960s directed the Museum of Contemporary Art of the City of Paris.

<sup>22</sup> His work, especially his "Negerplastik," has always been well known, but in the last ten years his work has started to be incorporated into mainstream art history. The October group, which has done so much for disseminating the work of Bataille, Foucault, and Benjamin, among others, has recently published an issue devoted to Einstein. His fate was similar to Benjamin's. He committed suicide in 1940 while fleeing the Gestapo and much of his work remained as notes that are now being published. See *October*, (Winter 2004). For the full list of the bibliography on Einstein see <http://www.carleinstein.de/Index2.htm>

*Negerplastik*, a book Sebastian Zeidler has characterized as “as much a sophisticated manifesto of modernist ‘primitivism’ as it was an anti-Hildebrandian, and hence an anti-Wölfflinian manifesto of sculptural experience.”<sup>23</sup> The art dealer, however, did not share the radicalism of his friend’s aesthetics nor his enthusiasm for non-Western art. In 1928 Einstein moved to Paris where he founded *Documents*, together with George Bataille, George-Henri Rivière among others. The group’s interest in Surrealism and ethnography affected Einstein’s ideas about art. He contributed articles on Cubism to the magazine which were related to his ground-breaking *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, first published in 1926 and in an enlarged version in 1931. Einstein was aware of the work produced by the Warburg Institute as he contacted its director soliciting contributions for *Documents*.<sup>24</sup>

Kahnweiler and Einstein translated cubism into the vocabulary of German art history early on, were active in Paris in the 1920s, and had contact with important artists and the intellectual milieu.<sup>25</sup> Barr was not gifted in foreign languages but his German was better than his French. The bibliography of the 1936 exhibition demonstrates that his work was heavily influenced by the writings on modern art by German scholars, notably Kahnweiler and Einstein, whose books he considered fundamental for the understanding of cubism and modern art.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Sebastian Zeigler “Introduction,” *October* 107 (Winter 2004), 5.

<sup>24</sup> The main source for this data is Zeigler “Introduction.” It has to be remembered that Strzygowski was also part of the editorial board of *Documents*, given his anti-establishment approach at the time.

<sup>25</sup> After his return to Paris, Kahnweiler opened a second gallery, the Galerie Simon where he held meetings with artists, writers and other personalities, which might be described as a salon. He was in close relationship with Juan Gris, over whom he exerted a certain influence.

<sup>26</sup> For information on Barr see Roob, “Alfred H. Barr,” 1–19. The 1936 catalogue has a well organized bibliography. The three books marked with the asterisk that signals them as “more important books” under the subtitle “Modern art” are in German. Einstein’s and Kahnweiler’s books are so marked. See Barr, *Cubism and Abstract Art*, 235–239.

## Cézanne, Cubism and Perspective

At the end of the 1920s Cubism was perceived as dead.<sup>27</sup> The contemporary art critic Guillaume Janneau could claim that the discussions about the movement had only theoretical value as “they beat around a tomb.”<sup>28</sup> These were the years of the *rappel à l’ordre* and the association with cubism was not in the interest of any artist.

In 1936 Barr almost single-handedly gave cubism a renewed life by arguing that it was the direct antecedent of the thriving abstract art movement. In the same move he established Cézanne as the ancestor of cubism and the division of cubism into two stages: “Analytic” and “Synthetic.” These denominations, and the way Barr characterized them, have a distinct Kantian flavor. The use of these words in reference to art was not new but, they do not appear, for example, in the catalogue of the 1935 exhibition *Les Créateurs du Cubisme* organized by Maurice Raynal and Raymond Cogniat.<sup>29</sup>

Christopher Green has called attention to the fact that the first (mostly French) commentators and art critics who analyzed cubism considered that for these artists the mind was more important than the eyes. Until 1914 this artistic movement was understood as a reaction against impressionism, more interested in geometry and mental processes than in the perceptual apprehension of things.<sup>30</sup> This changed after the War, when the first period of cubism started to be interpreted as a perceptual

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<sup>27</sup> See Daniel Robbins, “Abbreviated Historiography of Cubism,” *Art Journal* 47 *Revising Cubism* (Winter, 1988): 277–283, and Green, *Art in France*.

<sup>28</sup> See Christopher Green *Cubism and its Enemies: Modern Movements and Reaction in French art, 1916–1928* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987). For Picasso see Michael C. FitzGerald *Making Modernism. Picasso and the Creation of the Market for 20th-Century Art* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995). The classic account is by Silver, *Esprit de Corps*.

<sup>29</sup> Robbins, “Historiography of Cubism,” 282 n. 19.

<sup>30</sup> Green, *Art in France*, 93.

project. Although Green does not mention it, Kahnweiler's book helped to effect this change that coincides with the beginning of the influence of German modern art history in the historiography of the art movement. Nevertheless, it was Barr's catalogue which promulgated the notion that cubism's original project was perceptual (analysis) instead mental conception: "[f]or Barr, despite Gleizes's or Raynal's claims, cubist painting before the end of 1912 remained based essentially on perception: on a process by which things seen were broken down into their component parts—a process of empirical analysis."<sup>31</sup> According to Green this interpretation was still valid in 1989 when MoMA presented *Pioneering Cubism* organized by Rubin. Green states then, that cubism was basically redefined as

the experience of seeing in depth as the eye tracks tilted facets across a two-dimensional surface. And a crucial factor in this was a device dubbed *passage*: the sliding of one painted surface into another through Cézannian broken contours.<sup>32</sup>

Barr created a technical term *passages*—"the breaking of a contour so that the form seems to merge with space"<sup>33</sup>—to demonstrate that Cézanne and the cubist painters had equivalent artistic projects that consisted in the dissolution of volumes and perspective into a flat surface, thus opening the door for abstract art.<sup>34</sup> Subsequently the invention of this technique was attributed to Cézanne and used to

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<sup>31</sup> Green, *Art in France*, 95.

<sup>32</sup> Green, *Art in France*, 24.

<sup>33</sup> Barr, *Cubism and Abstract Art*, 30.

<sup>34</sup> See *The Oxford English Dictionary* where the term appears with this meaning from the 1960s on; and Reginald G. Haggard *The Dictionary of Art Terms* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1962), 247. Ralph Mayer *A Dictionary of Art Terms and Techniques* (New York: Crowell, 1975 c. 1969) does not list it. It seems to be an adaptation of the term that appear already in Claude H. Watelet and P. C Lévesque *Dictionnaire des Arts de Peinture Sculpture et Gravure* (Geneva: Minkoff Reprint, 1972) a reprint of the *Dictionnaire des beaux-arts ... 1788–91*. It refers there to a gradual degradation of tones and the transitions of colors. See Volume III 729–732. Nevertheless, the dictionary also states that "[o]n peut bien dire aussi qu'il y a des passages qui tiennent à la composition & à la disposition des objets d'un tableau; mais ce qu'on entend pour l'ordinaire et le plus généralement par le mot *passages* en peinture, & est simplement la transition d'un ton à un autre & des lumières aux ombres." op. cit. 730.

“demonstrate” how influential he had been in the creation of cubism. This is an example of how the need to create a chronological sequence and to connect different episodes (artists or art movements) in a continuous narrative determines the analysis of art. The *passages* served to carry over from the art of the older master a problematic that belonged to cubism. Therefore, for the sake of the continuity of the history of art both Cézanne’s artistic project and the meaning of cubism were reinterpreted to make them fit within this larger project.

As mentioned in the Introduction to this dissertation, the *rappel à l’ordre* favored the interpretation of Cézanne as a classic artist, the heir and restorer of Poussin’s art. In 1921 there appeared, posthumously, the *Cézanne* of Joachim Gasquet, which was almost immediately taken by art dealers who reissued it, the Bernheim-Jeunes in 1926 and Paul Cassirer in German in 1930. Georges Rivière, who had known the artist in his impressionist years, started a flurry of publications with his 1923 *Le Maître Paul Cézanne*, which was later revised and published as *Cézanne, le peintre solitaire* (1933, 1936, and 1943). This author published articles in *L’Art vivant* (“La Formation de Paul Cézanne” in 1925, and “Les Premiers Essais de Paul Cézanne” in 1929). Léo Larguier also published his memoirs in this period, although he was less prone to portray Cézanne as a classic master.<sup>35</sup> As noted above, in 1926 George then editor-in-chief of *L’Amour de l’art*, asked Roger Fry for a study on Cézanne, which later developed in one of the most influential interpretations of the artist’s work from before Second World War: *Cézanne: A Study of His Development*.

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<sup>35</sup> *Le Dimanche avec Paul Cézanne* (Paris : l’Édition, 1925), *Paul Cézanne ou le drame de la peinture*, (Paris: Denoël & Steele 1936), *Cézanne ou la lutte avec l’ange de la peinture* (Paris : R. Julliard, 1947).

In the many articles devoted to the artists in both *L'Art vivant* and *L'Amour de l'art*, as well as in the books and catalogues, the representation of space is seldom mentioned and never as an important component of Cézanne's artistic project. When perspective is mentioned, it is only considered a technical device. Cézanne's purported classicism depends on interpreting his art as the resurgence of an interest in the representation of volumes and in composition. With impressionism and cubism in the shadows, this Cézanne became the model for the new generation of artists active in the 1930s, an issue that had to be tackled by the authors of the three books examined in the preceding chapters.

This situation changed when Cézanne's art started to be analyzed in the light of the artist's influence on cubism. A notorious example is the writings of Albert Gleizes (1881–1953), a cubist painter who was part of the Group of Puteaux, and who was engrossed in the debate of theories about space and time, philosophy, art history, and what Damisch calls “pseudo-sciences.”<sup>36</sup> His “Peinture et perspective descriptive” appeared first in 1924 as a special issue of *Vie des Lettres et des arts* and as a book in 1927, the same publication dates as Panofsky's treatise. Gleizes refers to perspective in Cézanne's art, not as the representation of space, but as the point of view that explains the distortions that characterize the *objects* depicted in his paintings. He describes it as the artist's fight to reconcile the circle he would see in the shape of the objects he was arranging as models for a still life and the ellipse he perceived while sitting in front of his easel.

Gleizes uses one-point perspective as a metaphor for religious and political centralization, a meaning that derives from the analysis of its technical characteristics.

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<sup>36</sup> Henderson, *The Fourth Dimension*, chapter 2 “Cubism and the New Geometries.”

Perspective corresponds to the kind of order imposed by the Papacy, monarchies, and democracy, because since the Renaissance, “au lieu de rester soumis à l’intelligence, l’intellect adopta le contrôle des sens.”<sup>37</sup> In pre-modern times men’s eyes were free and mobile. Faith provided points of reference and buttressed their instable perceptions; the perspective created in the Renaissance tied the eye to one point while men were subjected to the central powers. Cimabue is Gleizes’s hero because his eyes were still mobile.

Car ce que nous condamnerions chez Cimabue, c’est une manière d’être, un état d’esprit et un mode intellectuel, .... que nous ne connaissons plus et qui cependant furent ceux de notre jeunesse. Nous le reprocherions, d’avoir été, dans des circonstances analogues le Cézanne de son époque; d’avoir tenté d’accorder deux antinomies, les **mêmes** que celles qui ligotèrent Cézanne. Mais l’époque éloignait Cimabue de la terre que devait redécouvrir Cézanne, elle le rapprochait par contre de celle que Cézanne aurait voulu perdre de vue.<sup>38</sup>

Cézanne returned to the real and painted what he saw. In this way he regained the mobile and unprejudiced perception that the Italian artists had lost in the Renaissance. Although he had brought to an end Renaissance perspective, Cézanne had not been able to encourage the transformation of art. Cubism was the reflection in art of the crisis that preceded the Great War,<sup>39</sup>

Chez eux [cubist painters] reparaisait le même conflit de l’immobile et du mobile, de l’espace analytique et du rythme qui synthétiquement resolidarise tout, de la raison limitée et de la foi qui renverse les cloisons. Le drame du XIIIe siècle se jouait de nouveau: saint Ignace et Descartes cédaient à saint Thomas.<sup>40</sup>

Cubism had fostered the “decentralization” and liberation of perception and, in this way, had prepared the way for new art. The mention of Saint Thomas brings the

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<sup>37</sup> Albert Gleizes, *Peinture et Perspective Descriptive* (Sablons : Edition Moly-Sabata, 1927), 22

<sup>38</sup> Gleizes, *Peinture et Perspective*, 28–29.

<sup>39</sup> Gleizes in retrospective considers that Cubism in 1910–11 was a symptom of the crisis that exploded in 1914. “... [N]’appartient pas à toutes les époques de produire des chefs d’oeuvre. Austères et pauvres sans ostentation, on leur découvrira [in the cubist paintings] l’angoisse de la menace qui devait plus tard s’abattre sur le monde.” Gleizes, *Peinture et Perspective*, 19.

<sup>40</sup> Gleizes, *Peinture et Perspective*, 41.

problem back to a religious element in Gleizes's conception of art, history, vision, and space that is completely different from what neo-Kantianism stood for. Gleizes's use of the terms "analytic" and "synthetic" is also particular to the French cultural environment (more on this below).

In 1929 Janneau produced one of the first critical histories of the movement, *L'Art cubiste*, a book based on the author's memories and on the early discussions in the French art world as well as on the material he had gathered in an inquiry in the *Bulletin de la vie artistique* in 1924-1925. He took issue with Gleizes, whom he accused of manipulating tradition and the problem of space in order to secure his own place in history.<sup>41</sup>

Janneau argues that the painter needs to present Cimabue as a great primitive master in order to buttress the argument of Cézanne as a primitive and the father of modern art, so that he might claim, for the cubist painters and himself, the role of the High Renaissance artists: those who brought to its highest consummation what the old master had only suggested. The pawn in these chess game is perspective. In the words of Janneau:

Quant à la science de la perspective, laissons Albert Gleizes, l'imputer à Cimabue, sous prétexte qu'il aurait pu la posséder, puisque Cézanne l'a reformée. Ce ne sont point là des arguments de critique, mais de partisan. Le cubisme est, par lui-même et dans son principe original, une expression si neuve et si personnelle de la sensibilité qu'il n'est pas besoin de la justifier par une argumentation tirée des canons classiques ....<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> The book is also marked in Barr's bibliography as an important source. For an analysis of the book see Robbins, "Historiography Cubism," 277. Janneau comments, "Si l'on en croyait les théoriciens du cubisme, Cézanne serait le messie annoncé par les Primitifs italiens, Duccio, Cimabue et Giotto. En son œuvre, par voie de conséquence, dans celle de ses disciples, se seraient enfin réalisées et l'idéal entrevu par ces vieux maîtres, et les idées qu'on leur attribue pour la raison qu'ils ne les ont pas appliquées." Guillaume Janneau, *L'Art cubiste : Théories et réalisations. Étude critique* (Paris : C. Moreau, 1929), 8.

<sup>42</sup> Janneau, *L'Art cubiste*, 9.

Janneau contends that Cézanne had discovered the notion of *volume*, that the Mount Sainte-Victoire had taught him to portray what a real volume feels like, something the classic masters had lost when they chose to use perspective, a technique that does not allow artists to suggest true volumes.<sup>43</sup> This text indicates a reaction against the imposition onto Cézanne's art of something that had been alien to the master's project, which demonstrates how unusual and ideological Gleizes's lecture was considered to be at that time.

Janneau notes that Apollinaire does not mention Cézanne in his analysis of cubism, and argues that the reason is that Picasso had not been influenced by the old master as much as Braque. Janneau was among the first who defended Braque's priority in the creation of cubism. Kahnweiler's and Barr's accounts were centered on Picasso. It is widely accepted today that Cézanne was for Braque what African sculpture was to Picasso.<sup>44</sup> In both cases the interpretation of the first term of the equation was modeled to comply with the second so that the relation could be established.

The discussion was favored by Cézanne's complex personality and the originality of his approach to art and career. He could be portrayed as a classic master, a hyper-refined character, or as a naïve, primitive artist. As Rubin comments in an essay on the influence of Cézanne,

Braque was committed to Cézanne the modest artisan struggling to find his voice through single-minded dedication; but he also was committed to Cézanne the architectonic 'classical' painter of the French tradition. Picasso became attached to precisely that 'flaw' in Cézanne's classicism which makes his art truly

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<sup>43</sup> Janneau, *L'Art cubiste*, 11.

<sup>44</sup> The article by William Rubin in *Cézanne: The Late Work*, fully acknowledges Braque's leading role and the influence of Cézanne based on the passages. Barr used a Braque painting in order to demonstrate the early influence of the master but did not elaborate on the subject matter.

modern, namely, his malaise—the tremor we detect behind even the most outwardly calm and apparently stable of Cézanne’s compositions. ‘It’s not what the artist does that counts, but what he *is*,’ Picasso told Zervos. ‘What forces our interest is Cézanne’s anxiety’...<sup>45</sup>

Picasso’s remarks had been published in *Cahiers d’art* in 1935. Given the particular position of cubism and Picasso in those years, they could be exploited to support contradictory interpretations of Cézanne.<sup>46</sup>

Jeanneau’s and Gleizes’s texts demonstrate that in the French art world before 1930 the analysis of Cézanne’s art was focused on his representation of volumes even if artists influenced by the new theoretical debate about space and perspective were bringing up this subject matter in relation to his work. More interestingly, even though Cézanne’s project was understood as involved with perception and vision and cubist style as the product of an intellectual analysis of volumes and space, the effort was being made to bring them together and to understand them as part of a diachronic development.<sup>47</sup> Gleizes expounded his arguments in art historical terms, as Kahnweiler had done in 1920, realizing that this was the path to secure the critical fortunes of the art movement. Gleizes did not use the critical apparatus developed by German philosophy and art history but the nationalist approach of French art historians, like Emile Mâle, whom he mentions in his text.

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<sup>45</sup> William Rubin, “Cézannisme and the Beginnings of Cubism,” in *Cézanne: the Late Work* (New York, 1977), 188.

<sup>46</sup> See, for example, the article by the conservative art critic Jacques Combe “L’influence de Cézanne” in the special issue of *La Renaissance*, analyzed in Chapter Five. Combe argues that the first twenty-five years of the century had been dominated first by the creative experimentation and inquietude, later by mannerism, and since 1925, by a new need for classical order. Cézanne, in his opinion, was consumed by two different energies that were in balance: the classical and the baroque. The early avant-garde would have been attracted to the second one. It is tempting to suggest that the critic’s opinion had been shaped by Picasso’s comments.

<sup>47</sup> See Gleizes, *Peinture et Perspective*, 41.

The debate parallels one that was taking place in Italy, with the difference that in France the past was brought about to explain the present or, better, the recent past, as cubism was then only ten years old. In 1914 Longhi had used the formalist interpretation of modern art to reconsider the art of Piero de la Francesca and the Venetian painters; whereas Gleizes reconfigures the history of Western art to explain the place cubism had had within it. Huyghe lamented the influence of theory and intellectual abstractions on art and artists. Gleizes—whose first book length essay on cubism had appeared in 1911— was himself an artist.

Michael FitzGerald observed that at the beginning of the century there had been an acceleration of history, as the post-impressionist artists won consecration and acclaim before the impressionists.<sup>48</sup> Laura Iamurri remarked that Christian Zervos started the publication of Picasso's catalogue raisonné in 1932, the same year that Manet's was published; that is, four years before Venturi authored Cézanne's.<sup>49</sup> The study of these rhythms seem to demonstrate that the 1920s and especially the 1930s were the decades when art history caught up with modern art and started to affect the way it was produced, as Huyghe, Francastel and other perceptive critics noticed.

This process came to fruition in 1930s with the redefinition of modern art as the art of the avant-gardes and the establishment of a blueprint that explained the development of international modern art. The epistemological model that supported such an interpretation results from the application of the methodology and categories of analysis developed mostly by German art historians for the study of past art. This

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<sup>49</sup> FitzGerald, *Making Modernism*, Introduction.

<sup>49</sup> Laura Iamurri, "Un problema della modernità tra la due guerre: l'impressionismo dai *souvenirs* alla storia dell'arte." Unpublished manuscript, 4. I would like to thank Dr. Iamurri for sharing her text with me.

is why Kahnweiler's and Barr's texts are today recognized as "modern" and basically adequate to the problem they study. This dissertation, to the contrary, studies how the application of these methodologies of study and categories affected the appreciation of the art created before this period.

### Cézanne and Perspective in Modern Art History

*Cubism and Abstract Art* created the blueprint for interpreting the history of modern art. While Rewald focused on writing Cézanne's biography according to factual documentation, Barr consecrated him as the father of modern art. Cézanne's post-war critical fortune was decided by these two approaches.

Barr's catalogue also established cubism's division in "analytic" and "synthetic" and redefined the first phase of the movement as a perceptual endeavor. For the first period, the analytic, Barr introduced the concept of *passages* and defined them as both representational entities or/and as plastic entities whose function derives from the formal structure of the work of art.<sup>50</sup> This reinterpretation of cubism has to be analyzed in depth. It started with Kahnweiler's introduction of neo-Kantian categories for the analysis of this artistic movement, as the dealer's book influenced Barr.<sup>51</sup>

According to Kahnweiler modern art found a new balance between representation and structure superseding the Renaissance's almost exclusive interest in illusionism.

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<sup>50</sup> In *Cubism and Abstract Art* Barr defines the *passages* twice. In the first definition (page 31), they break a form that has figurative value, while in the second (page 42) they have a purely formal function. See below.

<sup>51</sup> See Robbins, "Historiography of Cubism," 277–283.

*The Rise of Cubism* does not consider the problem of the representation of space but that of objects.

The nature of the new painting is clearly characterized as representational as well as structural: representational in that it tries to reproduce the formal beauty of *things*; structural in its attempt to grasp the meaning of this formal beauty in the painting.

Representation and structure conflict. Their reconciliation by the new painting, and the stages along the road to this goal, are the subject of this book.<sup>52</sup> (Emphasis added)

“Things” are at the center of the new painting, both as the subject of the representation and because the structure of the painting stems from their form. Space is only considered as *pictorial* space in relation to them. Cézanne’s only limitation, for example, was that he never completely rid himself of the impressionist light.<sup>53</sup>

His art was lyric. In it there was no longer any motivation other than delight in form. He struggled with the object, trying to capture it in all its beauty and carry it into his painting. Where his friends the Impressionists saw only light, he used light to shape the three-dimensional object.<sup>54</sup>

The artist aimed to better depict the structure of the objects. He chose high points of view that afforded him a better view of the subject matter while allowing a “penetrating delineation” of their forms that conformed to the structure of the painting.<sup>55</sup> According to Kahnweiler, Cézanne’s influence determined cubism’s

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<sup>52</sup> Kahnweiler, *Rise of Cubism*, 1. “When Kahnweiler wrote ‘representation and structure conflict, their reconciliation by the new painting, and the stages along the road to this goal, are the subject of this work,’ he set himself essentially a task of philosophic transposition, having borrowed the whole dichotomy, *not from the tangled issues of early twentieth-century science and historical consciousness*, but, from the remote yet clearer accomplishments of a century earlier, as taught in gymnasium and university. Robbins, “Historiography of Cubism,” 281. (Emphasis added).

<sup>53</sup> Kahnweiler considers that impressionism was the last incarnation of this representational impetus, as they concentrated on light.

<sup>54</sup> Kahnweiler, *Rise of Cubism*, 3.

<sup>55</sup> Kahnweiler called this perspective, which thus is conceived as point of view. Kahnweiler, *Rise of Cubism*, 4.

concentration on the problem of the articulation of form and color on the surface/plane. Cézanne is the formalist father of modern art.

Like in Barr's catalogue, the problem of space appears only when the art dealer explores cubism. After abandoning *The Demoiselles d'Avignon* in 1908, Picasso introduced into his art something different, something not in Cézanne's art.

[H]e [Picasso] had to begin with the most important thing, and that seemed to be the explanation of form, the representation of the three-dimensional and its position in space on a two-dimensional surface. As Picasso himself once said, 'In a Raphael painting it is not possible to establish the distance from the tip of the nose to the mouth. I should like to paint pictures in which that would be possible.'<sup>56</sup>

Braque was thinking of the same problems and solutions in the South, in L'Estaque: "They sought to make these objects as plastic as possible, and to define their position in space." This last addition is important because in 1910 the art critic Roger Allard had suggested that cubist artists synthesized in the image the result of the impressions they received when moving around the objects.<sup>57</sup> This notion might have been influenced by the "pseudo-sciences" Damisch criticized, or as Mark Antliff contends, by the philosophy of Henri Bergson. Whatever the case, it made a great impact on the French art criticism that Kahnweiler was confronting.<sup>58</sup> After the breakthrough of 1910, the author continues, Picasso and Braque

limited the space in the background of the picture. In a landscape, for instance, instead of painting an illusionist distant horizon in which the eye lost itself, the

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<sup>56</sup> Kahnweiler, *Rise of Cubism*, 7–8.

<sup>57</sup> Roger Allard's 1910 article noted a painting by Metzinger. The notion was taken by the so called "lesser cubists" and through their texts influenced the scholarship on cubism. Roger Allard, "At the Paris Salon d'Automne," in Edward Fry, *Cubism* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 62–63.

<sup>58</sup> "Scholars who interpret such multiple views as entailing a Kantian desire to represent the thing-in-itself, misinterpret the Cubist notion of immediacy. They shift our focus from statements on the assimilation of objects into perceptual duration to a concern with the portrayal of objects as objects quite apart from the cubist dialogue on consciousness. In fact, the cubists rejected single-vanishing-point perspective in order to develop an intuitive rather than intellectual means of representing the self." Mark Antliff, "Bergson and Cubism: A Reassessment" *Art Journal* 47 (Winter, 1988), 347.

artists closed the three dimensional space with a mountain. In still life or nude painting, the wall of a room served the same purpose. This method of limiting space had already been used frequently by Cézanne.<sup>59</sup>

When Kahnweiler begins to consider space he turns to Cézanne's art and projects his observation onto the painter's oeuvre. The implication is that the artists used analogous formal devices because they had similar intentions. Nevertheless, the forward projection of the cubist paintings, which Kahnweiler accurately describes as the product of the process of creation (the cubist artists painted from memory and from the background to the foreground) cannot be found in Cézanne, as the master worked in front of the motif and according to his sensations. (For reference and illustration, see below the comparisons suggested by Barr. Figs. 24 and 25).

Kahnweiler explains cubism according to the basic principles of the theory of perception, thus endowing the artists' work with the significance of a philosophical investigation.<sup>60</sup> He mentions Kant just once, in a convoluted paragraph that starts with the analysis of the primary and secondary qualities of reality as posited by Locke.<sup>61</sup>

In painting these are: the object's form, and its position in space. They [the cubist painters] merely suggest the secondary characteristics such as color and tactile quality, leaving their incorporation into the object to the mind of the spectator.

This new language has given painting an unprecedented freedom. It is no longer bound to the more or less verisimilar optic image which describes the *object* from a single viewpoint. It can, in order to give a thorough representation of the *objects'* primary characteristics, depict them as stereometric drawing on the plane, or through several representations of the same object, can provide an analytical study of that object which the spectator then fuses into one again in his mind. The representation does not necessarily have to be in the closed manner of the stereometric drawing; *colored planes, through their direction and relative position, can bring together the formal scheme without uniting in closes forms.* Instead of an analytical description, the painter can, if he prefers, also create in

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<sup>59</sup> Kahnweiler, *Rise of Cubism*, 10.

<sup>60</sup> It should be noted that when French art critics argued that cubism was a conceptual art movement they situated it far above mere sensation. Kahnweiler's philosophical approach was based on neo-Kantian philosophy, i.e., a theory of knowledge and an epistemology in which Kant's metaphysical consideration of the process of perception is concentrated on the structuring consciousness.

<sup>61</sup> For Locke, qualities were non-mental characteristics of reality that could cause ideas in the mind. The perception of qualities is mediated by ideas, which represent them to the mind.

this way a synthesis of the object, or in the words of Kant, put together the various conceptions and comprehend their variety in one perception.<sup>62</sup> (Emphasis added)

Kahnweiler notes that cubism was focused on the problem of representing objects in space and that it had overruled perspective (the description of *objects* from a single viewpoint). He describes a cubist technique similar to what Barr will call *passages*, a series of non representational color planes that build the formal structure of the painting while suggesting the presence of an object.<sup>63</sup> The whole is bracketed by categories taken from two important theories of knowledge from the Enlightenment, but Kahnweiler's approach has a distinctive neo-Kantian tone. Even the titles have a function within this system: they facilitate the apprehension of the visual information given by the paintings.

The catalogue for *Cubism and Abstract Art* was published sixteen years after Kahnweiler's book. This was not the first time Barr was writing on Cézanne or the cubist artists, but space, perspective and *passages* were absent in his previous analysis. Moreover, up to 1936 Barr was among those who relegated cubism in favor of a revived tendency towards realism.<sup>64</sup> The abrupt change of ideas was determined by the historical events described in the Introduction of this dissertation and accelerated by Barr's examination of the latest bibliography on the subject matter.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Kahnweiler, *Rise of Cubism*, 12.

<sup>63</sup> Christopher Green considers that Kahnweiler in this paragraph is referring to the *passages*. *Art in France*, 24.

<sup>64</sup> See the catalogues: *First Loan Exhibition, exh. cat., Museum of Modern Art*, New York, 1929; *Painting in Paris from American Collections, exh. cat., Museum of Modern Art*, New York, 1930; *Brief Survey of Modern Painting, exh. cat., Museum of Modern Art*, New York, 1932. For an analysis of Barr's development of his ideas on Cubism see Susan Noyes Platt, "Modernism, Formalism," and her *Art and politics in the 1930s: Modernism, Marxism, Americanism: A History of Cultural Activism During the Depression* (New York: Midmarch Arts Press, 1999.)

<sup>65</sup> See the bibliography in Barr, *Cubism and Abstract Art*, 234–249.

Barr closes his brief survey of the nineteenth-century ancestors of modern art with Cézanne, whose art he extols for its impact on the pioneers of cubism who

*developed more literally and much further* [emphasis added] than his [sic] perception of the geometrical forms underlying the confusion of nature. They admired too, Cézanne's frequent choice of angular forms in his subject matter as in the *Town of Gardanne* (fig 29) but above all they studied Cézanne's late work (figs. 18 and 24) in which he abandons the perspective of deep space and the emphatic modeling of solid forms for a compact composition in which the planes of foreground and background are fused into an angular active curtain of color.<sup>66</sup>

The catalogue characterizes Cézanne's art in terms of his value as predecessor, which incidentally implies that cubism did not initially transform art.<sup>67</sup> This link is reinforced by the fact that the text refers to the illustrations of Cézanne's work (four of them, more than for any other nineteenth-century artist mentioned in the catalogue) that are paired with cubist paintings farther ahead in the essay. Everything suggests *continuity*. Barr presents a formalist interpretation of Cézanne's art according to which the interest in representation is progressively overridden by structure. Only in 1908 were Picasso and Braque able to master Cézanne's lessons,

A comparison of the *Seaport* (fig. 19) done by Braque in 1908 with the *Pines and rocks*, (fig. 18) of Cézanne painted only about a decade before, shows how Braque had studied Cézanne's late style. In both paintings the surfaces of the natural forms are reduced to angular planes of facets, depth is almost eliminated and frequently the foreground and background forms are fused by means of *passages*—the breaking of a contour so that the form seems to merge with *space* [emphasis added].<sup>68</sup>

Barr uses the four illustrations to hammer the same idea home: Cézanne purposefully denies depth by knitting forms and background/space. The term

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<sup>66</sup> Barr, *Cubism and Abstract Art*, 26.

<sup>67</sup> Barr, like Kahnweiler and many other scholars, considered that impressionism remained a "truthful imitation of natural appearances." "Impressionism was however too boneless and too casual in its method to serve as more than a technical basis for the artist who transformed or abandoned its tradition. Yet in spite of conscious reaction against Impressionism, something of its attitude and technique persisted." Barr, *Cubism and Abstract Art*, 20.

<sup>68</sup> Barr, *Cubism and Abstract Art*, 30–31.

*passages* appears for the first time in this paragraph (fig. 24), where the author proposes that they were invented by the older artist. Barr's matter of fact treatment plays down the obvious primacy of Braque in the development of this paramount breakthrough.<sup>69</sup>

The comparison is weak, as too many things differentiate the paintings. Only the leaves of the trees in the Cézanne seem to merge with space, which might "represent" their movement in the breeze. Braque materializes the space and thrusts his forms towards the foreground, whereas in the painting by the older artist the volumes recede into the background. There are small light blue brushstrokes overlaid on those representing parts of the tree but nothing like Braque's protruding shapes. If we accept that the same technique (*passages*) occurs in both paintings (it is actually hard to find in the work by Cézanne), that would imply that both artists had the same purpose. Cézanne's work, however, looks like a much more faithful rendition of nature. The subject matter is different too (which can explain many of the formal differences): a seaport on the one hand, and a corner of an unpopulated forest on the other. This is not to say that Braque had not paid attention to Cézanne, or did not have a formal approach to art; but Cézanne's art is *not* about what Braque did with it.

In the second comparison, Barr repeats the strategy:

In spite of the abstract character of Analytical Cubism it remained throughout closely linked to the modified Impressionism of Cézanne. There is a superficial

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<sup>69</sup> *Seaport* is one of the few works of art reproduced in the catalogue that was not in the exhibition, which attests to the importance of the painting in the development of Cubism. As John Golding in his classic interpretation of Cubism explains, "This particular feature..., the solid, almost tangible, treatment of the sky, had been developed first in Cubist painting by Braque as a result of his new ideas about pictorial space. It is particularly noticeable in the *Harbor in Normandy*, a work painted from memory in the spring of 1909. In the late landscapes of Cézanne the sky is often treated in much the same way—as a complicated system of small, thickly painted facets or planes inextricably fused, and having a quality of weight and material existence." John Golding, *Cubism: A History and an Analysis 1907–1914* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), 76.

resemblance between *Town of Gardanne* (fig. 29) compared to the *Poet* (fig. 30) because the shapes of the houses resemble Picasso's geometrizing technique; but there is also a fundamental resemblance in the relations between line and tone, between light and dark, and between the *passages*, the merging of planes with space by leaving one edge unpainted or light in tone...<sup>70</sup>

Although Barr acknowledges that this is a "superficial" resemblance (fig. 25), conceding that a different mindset might have facilitated this kind of formalist comparison at the time, this example does not withstand analysis. The volumetric *Gardanne* (a landscape) seems to retreat intently into the distance, whereas the shape of the *Poet* (a portrait or genre painting) protrudes and opens towards the foreground, barely distinguishable due to the fact that it is built out of a myriad of non-referential planes.<sup>71</sup>

As the installation view of the exhibit (fig. 28) shows the paintings were actually displayed in this way in the 1936 exhibition. The color (see a suggestion in figs. 26 and 27) and actual size of the paintings must have made the comparison even more difficult to grasp. This reveals how this approach to display was theoretical and ideological because it depended heavily on textual support for the [intellectual] elucidation of the proposed visual comparisons. This kind of installation leaves little margin for a personal understanding of the material in the exhibition, and presupposes that the viewer is informed of the theoretical principles that support the display.

The comparison of the backgrounds of the two still-lives proposed by Barr (fig. 27) exemplifies the contrasting ideas that Picasso and Cézanne had with regard to the

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<sup>70</sup> Barr, *Cubism and Abstract Art*, 31.

<sup>71</sup> A somewhat similar comparison appeared in Amédée Ozenfant's *Foundations of Modern art*. The author crops the sky of the same painting of Gardanne and compares the result with the *Rio Tinto Moulin d'huile* by Picasso. Ozenfant does not refer to the problem of space but considers invention and color. He calls this period "super Cézannisme" and says that "all that is given to Picasso, I give it to Cézanne." The book was published in French in 1928 and translated into English in 1931. It appears in Barr's bibliography but without the asterisk that marks the books that he considered important. See *Foundations of Modern Art* (London: John Rodker, 1931), 68–69.

representation of space: whereas the objects in the painting of the older master stand out in front of an undifferentiated setting, those in the Picasso mingle with the busy background. Like the unfinished areas of *La Gardanne*, this reveals that Cézanne's attention was focused on the representation of objects.<sup>72</sup>

Whereas for Kahnweiler the open forms were a consequence of the analysis and reconstitution of the *object*, for Barr they effect the entwining of the objects with the background, dissolving deep perspective (*space*). Barr's *passages* are integral to his idea of the "curtain of colors" and involve the whole structure of the painting, as they become plastic components that connect the form with the non-form. The operation of linking Cézanne and analytical cubism—a true "passage"—assumes that Cézanne's goal was to abandon traditional ways of indicating space and to call attention to the surface of the canvas, even though his art is famous for the sense of volume that inhabits the forms represented in his paintings.

The use and fate of the *passages* deserves some attention. Even if the art historians who mention them agree that this device was invented by Cézanne, they are seldom mentioned by the specialists working on the painter, perhaps because the *passages* suggest an orientation towards abstraction that does not accord with the interpretation of the work of Cézanne outside of the larger context of the history of modern art. These scholars refer rather to brushstroke, *taches*, color notation.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> It might be argued that Barr could no secure the loan of works of art from Cézanne's late period, the one he says the pioneers of Cubism appreciated, and that this is why the comparison looks "forced." This would imply that the need to establish these connections overcame the fact that he could not offer the visual demonstration of his thesis. Once again, the ideology of the narration is imposed on the works of art.

<sup>73</sup> Different authors have also redefined them according to their needs. Stephen Einseman for example calls the "tectonic facture" in itself *passages*. Stephen Einseman *Nineteenth Century Art: A Critical History* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1994), 347. See also Robert Hughes, *The Shock of the New* (New York: Knopf, 1991), 29 where the author describes the technique but does not call it *passages*. On the

*Passages* is a term that surface in the work of generalists—even those who have left behind a formalist interpretation of the history of art—and in the surveys that introduce Cézanne as the antecedent of cubism. In the 1996 *Interpreting Cézanne*, Paul Smith mentions them only when he considers the influence of Cézanne on the *Demoiselles d'Avignon*, defining them as “spatially indeterminate planes.”<sup>74</sup> William Rubin in the article he wrote for the 1978 Cézanne exhibition organized at MoMA, ascribes the invention of the *passages* to Cézanne, without specifying how the artist used them or the function they had in his work. Rubin recognizes in Braque the true inventor of cubism when he “extrapolated from possibilities proposed by Cézanne.”<sup>75</sup> The cubist artist was able to carry on the “full assumption of the modernist possibilities of Cézannian *passages*.”<sup>76</sup> Rubin defines the “passages of planes,” as the place where broken contours allow the planes to “spill or *bleed* into adjacent ones.”<sup>77</sup> He continues,

Braque concentrated on the problem of painting what he called the ‘visual space’ that ‘separates objects from each other.’ Thus Braque described as a ‘materialization of a new space’—making space as actual, as concrete and perceivable pictorially as the objects themselves—was, in effect, the explicit articulation and radicalization of a Cézannian idea. From autumn 1907 until autumn 1908 ... Braque began to regard interstitial space as virtually ‘tactile.’<sup>78</sup>

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other hand, Marilyn Stokstad’s *Art History* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2001) mentions them as Cézanne’s invention when she is discussing cubism (page 1076) and lists them in the glossary (page 10). This author avoids mentioning the problem of space and refers to the “blending of adjacent shapes.” For a recent comment on the relative value of the *passages*, see Kathryn Tuma, “La Peau de Chagrin,” in Jeffrey Weiss, *The Cubist Portraits of Fernande Olivier*, exh. cat., National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., 2003, 156.

<sup>74</sup> Smith, *Interpreting Cézanne*, 73.

<sup>75</sup> William Rubin, “Cézannisme and the Beginnings of Cubism,” in *Cézanne: the Late Work* exh. cat., Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1977, 156.

<sup>76</sup> Rubin, “Cézannisme,” 154.

<sup>77</sup> Rubin, “Cézannisme,” 165.

<sup>78</sup> Rubin, “Cézannisme,” 169. Although Rubin does not mention it there is an antecedent for this interpretation in Jacques Rivière, “Present Tendencies in Painting,” [originally published in 1912] in Fry, *Cubism*, 77–78.

Forty-two years after they debuted in MoMA's catalogue, the *passages* serve to materialize the space in between objects. The article manages to preserve this technical device in the field of Cézanne's studies and to reaffirm the connection with cubism but radically modifies its original function: instead of dematerializing the form in space the *passages* now concretize space. This breakthrough is, once again, attributed to Cézanne.

Like the exhibition itself, Rubin's contribution to the catalogue and his analysis of the *passages* generated controversy. In 1979 he and Leo Steinberg sparred in the pages of *Art in America* over the role played by Braque and Picasso in the development of cubism.<sup>79</sup> Steinberg gave priority to Picasso and argued against Rubin's (and MoMA's) approach to art history. Rubin's notes demonstrate that he conferred with Rewald, whereas Steinberg acknowledged the collaboration of Rosalind Krauss.<sup>80</sup> The *passages* were central to the argument. Steinberg, who had been educated in Europe, confessed not understanding the term and tracked its origins to Barr's texts. Rubin contended that it was a common term at the end of the nineteenth century, but the note that supports this affirmation only mentions two references in Pissarro's letters and one in Paul Signac's 1898 *D'Eugène Delacroix au Néo-Impressionisme* referring to Pissarro's art. In all cases *passages* relates to color and not to a transition of spatial planes.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Leo Steinberg published "Resisting Cézanne: Picasso's 'Three Women'," in the November-December 1978 issue. At the end of the article he announced the second part that appeared back to back with Rubin's response in the March/April issue: Leo Steinberg "The Polemical Part," pp. 115–127; William Rubin, "Pablo and Georges and Leo and Bill," pp. 128–148.

<sup>80</sup> Steinberg's article was a continuation of his famous "The Philosophical Brothel" *Art News* 71 (September 1971): 20–29, part II (October 1972) which was reissued in an enlarged version in *October* 44 (Spring 1988): 3–74.

<sup>81</sup> See Rubin "Pablo and Georges," 146 n. 38. See also Signac *D'Eugène Delacroix au Néo-Impressionisme* (Paris: H. Floury, 1911), 67, Camille Pissarro, *Correspondance de Camille Pissarro*

Barr's exhibition and catalogue established the division of cubism and imposed two Kantian terms to designate them, "analytic" and "synthetic." Whereas for Kahnweiler these were two consecutive stages of the process of creation or even two alternatives for the artists—a secondary meaning Barr retains—the American curator uses them to characterize the historical development of the movement.<sup>82</sup> This double application conveys the idea that these terms, because they are able to characterize both an historical process and the individual act of perception and the process of creation, have a transcendental or metaphysical character. As it will be analyzed in some depth below, philosophy is most coveted by art historians and art critics looking to invest art and their texts with suggestions of transcendentalism.

Whereas the *passages* remained unscrutinized at the center of Barr's argument, scholars dealing with cubism usually comment on this problematic classification only to conclude that the terms analytical and synthetic are so entrenched in the tradition of art history that it is impossible to dispose of them. Confirming the ideological use of the terms Green observes,

The two-stage theory of the process of making art, beginning with analysis and ending with synthesis, was adapted to define two stages in the history of Cubism altogether... For Barr, despite Gleizes's or Raynal's claims, Cubist painting before the end of 1912 remained based essentially on perception: on a process by which things seen were broken down into their component parts—a process of

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ed. Janine Bailly-Herzberg T. II (Paris : Valhermeil, 1980), 266, and id., *Camille Pissarro. Letters to His Son Lucien*, ed. John Rewald (New York: Paul Appel, 1972), 134-135. In 2004 Pepe Karmel referred to Rubin's article to affirm that the term *passages* was of common use at the turn of the century, although acknowledging that "*passage* has become associated with Cézanne as a precursor of Cubism." Karmel, "The Lessons of the Master Cézanne and Cubism. Braque's Cézanne and Picasso's Cézanne," in *Cézanne and the Dawn of Modern Art*, exh. cat. Museum Folkwang, Essen, 2004, 185. Karmel adds another reference: Camille Mauclair, *Trois crises de l'art actuel*, 1906, pp 277–278: "If you study the way that the leaves of a tree merge into the air around them, you will discover that you cannot see their borders, which is to say that that 'universal passages' are the only way to describe them truthfully. You can find these passages in the work of very different paintings, for example, in Claude Monet, ... M. le Sidaner ... in Eugène Carrière." See Karmel, "The Lessons," 184-185

<sup>82</sup> See Robbins "Historiography of Cubism," 279.

empirical analysis. According to this scenario, only with the introduction of simpler, more schematic ways of representing things as a result of Braque's and Picasso's development of Cubist papier-collé and construction did synthesis properly speaking take over. By this Barr meant the building up of compositions using entirely conceptual components—abstract form and invented signs.<sup>83</sup>

Kahnweiler had discussed the first part of cubism, inflecting these terms with a neo-Kantian meaning. In Barr's text, these newly shaped categories characterize not only the artist's method but also the two different periods of its history. In this way Barr secured cubism's position in the development of the history of modern art. Analytic and synthetic cubism explain the movement relationship with the forebears and with the art movements that followed. As in the case of anecdotes and photographs, the overarching narrative determined the characterization of the artistic manifestation itself.

In 1936 the words “analysis” and “synthesis” already had a long history in the tradition of French art criticism and had been used in reference to the art of Cézanne.<sup>84</sup> Some art critics, for example, considered that cubism applied to forms and volumes the same kind of analysis that the impressionist had employed for color. On the other hand, synthetism had been the title of one of the artistic movements that paved the way for symbolism. Gleizes interpreted cubism itself as synthetic, because it had broken the mold of the cold analytic space imposed by one-point perspective.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Green, *Art in France*, 95.

<sup>84</sup> Maurice Denis, for example, already mentions Cézanne's power of synthesis in his 1907 “Cézanne” *Théories 1890–1910. Du Symbolisme et de Gauguin vers un nouvel ordre Classique*, (Paris : L. Rouart et J. Watelin, 1920).

<sup>85</sup> See fig 21 of chapter 5 where J. Vergnet-Ruiz compares the analytic eye of Pissarro with Cézanne's synthesis.

Kahnweiler was not the first to mention Kant in relation to Cubism either.<sup>86</sup> That honor belongs to Olivier Hourcade, the author of “La Tendence de la peinture contemporaine” published by *La Revue de France et des pays français* (February, 1912). However, as Robbins observes “Hourcade’s understanding of Kant, ... seems tinged with Bergson, for in quoting from Schopenhauer he emphasizes that “between the thing and us, there is always the intelligence.”<sup>87</sup> Bois makes a similar remark about Maurice Raynal, who refers to Kant in his 1912 “Conception and Vision.” The problem, Bois notes, is that Raynal also mentions Berkeley, “while Kant’s refutation of Berkeley’s ‘dogmatic idealism’ stands as one of the most famous passages of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.”<sup>88</sup>

Hourcade’s and Raynal’s texts confirm the claims of Chapter Six: in France, Kant’s philosophy had been associated with a particular tradition and integrated into a cluster of ideas that were not those upheld by the German neo-Kantian approach. Bois belittles French Kantianism from the standpoint of his [presumably correct] understanding of Kant’s philosophy, and in order to underscore the importance of Kahnweiler’s book. He quotes Koyre’s idea that the possession of a theory—even the wrong one—gives orientation to thoughts and promotes advances in thinking.

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<sup>86</sup> Bois comments that even though the name of Kant appears just one time in Kahnweiler’s text on Cubism, it appears in a more consistent form in the other texts. “If Kahnweiler ‘effaced’ almost all direct reference to Kant in *The Rise of Cubism*, it is noteworthy that Kant’s name occurs much more frequently in *Der Gegenstand der Aesthetik*, at the same time that Kahnweiler was undergoing his philosophical apprenticeship. Here, Kahnweiler refers most frequently to the Kant of the *Critique of Judgment*, while later references more frequently concern the first two critiques. ... A rigorous analysis of Kahnweiler’s Kantianism should examine the privilege granted the two first Critiques over the third, and the line there may be between this (neo-Kantian) privilege and Kahnweiler’s theory of perception, in that it contradicts certain of Kant’s propositions in the *Critique of Judgment*.” Bois, “Kahnweiler’s Lessons,” 60 n. 16.

<sup>87</sup> Robbins, *Historiography of Cubism*,” 283 n 22.

<sup>88</sup> Bois, “Kahnweiler’s Lessons,” 35.

Kahnweiler read Kant by way of his followers' works—on perception, on history, on art and art history—texts that supplied him with concepts. He set these concepts in play without having to brandish their ultimate source each time like a trophy. Kahnweiler's Kantianism would have little consequence had it not been the springboard that enabled him to conceptualize cubism, just as it led him to an occasional error of appreciation.<sup>89</sup>

In the end,

For Kahnweiler, German aesthetic Kantianism authorized the emergence of a formalist criticism in the best sense of the term (attention to *methods, to the means by which a work of art produced itself*). The Kantianism of German art history provided him with a distinct consciousness of the historical implications of all artistic production.<sup>90</sup> (Emphasis added)

According to Bois, the neo-Kantian approach helped Kahnweiler to redirect the attention from the work of art to the understanding of the process of creation as related to an epistemological problem. What Kahnweiler really did was to interpret cubism so that it fit within the theoretical frame that shaped the foundations of what would become modern art history, which is not the same as having provided the correct interpretation. Raynal's and Hourcade's understanding of Kant were probably historically closer to what the artists were trying to do. Interestingly enough, Bois praises a 1971 article by another member of the October group, Rosalind Krauss, in which she suggests that Berkeley's philosophy opens a whole new way of understanding cubism without realizing that perhaps the true problem was that, since 1920 art history had forced a neo-Kantian understanding of perception.<sup>91</sup> As

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<sup>89</sup> Bois, "Kahnweiler's Lessons," 35.

<sup>90</sup> Bois, "Kahnweiler's Lessons," 37.

<sup>91</sup> See Bois, "Kahnweiler's Lessons," n. 15, 60. The article in question is "The Cubist Epoch," *Artforum* (February 6, 1971): 32–38, where the author inflicts a harsh critique of a "modernist" exhibition organized by Douglas Cooper. She feels that Picasso was "plagued by skepticism about vision from which there was more fear than pleasure to be derived. ... And the fears seem to have come from the question about whether there can even be direct access to depth through vision—whether anyone can really see depth.... The skeptical argument about depth reasons that vision

commented above, Berkeley's theory of vision and the Molyneux question were constantly debated in France as part of the problem of space.

There are three Kants in operation in this case: First, the modern, politically correct understanding of his philosophy that Bois advances.<sup>92</sup> Second, there is the German neo-Kantian tradition of the beginning of the century, the one Kahnweiler applied to cubism, which is not identical to the first but is compatible with it. Third, there is the historical interpretation, the local school of thought that is closer to the phenomena but does not fit with the two others. This is the "historical Kant."<sup>93</sup>

What seems decisive then is that Kahnweiler pre-patterned the understanding of this artistic movement by explaining it "à la neo-Kant," and thus according to the theoretical frame that will come to dominate modern art history. This interpretation, on the other hand, allowed it to become one of the girders supporting Barr's ideological construction.

The discussion about the meaning and suitability of the Kantian categories to describe cubism involves a myriad of variants already mentioned and cannot be considered fully here.<sup>94</sup> As Daniel Robbins observes, they allowed the elaboration and still support, the notion of an evolution of modern art from Cézanne to cubism,

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registers extension only; that depth, because it is not a shape spread laterally across our visual field, is forever invisible."

<sup>92</sup> The point here is that the interpretation of Kant will continue evolving like it has been doing since the beginning of the nineteenth century.

<sup>93</sup> See Cheetham, *Kant, Art History*, 78–84. There would be a fourth Kant: what the artists understood of his philosophy, which should be the one art historians pretend or should pretend to attain. In one of the dialogues reported by Gasquet, Cézanne asks him about Kant's philosophy (something that is somehow confirmed by a note in the 1909 article Elie Faure wrote on Cézanne which was based on information Gasquet provided to him at that time). The question is then: what did Gasquet explain and what did the artist understand of his explanation? The same might be said about the Kant, whom Kahnweiler explicated to, among others, Juan Gris, who reportedly stated his wish to read Kant before dying. See Elie Faure, "Paul Cézanne," *Portraits d'Hier* 2 (May, 1910): 113–128.

<sup>94</sup> Besides Robbins, Green, and Cheetham, see Lynn Gamwell, *Cubist Criticism*, (Ann Arbor, 1980); and Paul Crowther, "Cubism, Kant, and Ideology," *Word & Image* 3 (April–June, 1987): 195–201.

from cubism to abstraction, and from there to American modern art.<sup>95</sup> This is a practical demonstration of how the frame molds its content, and proves that in the 1930s were established the foundations and most basic ideology of the discipline as it is currently practiced. Philosophy's pure theoretical approach buttresses the art historian's claims and classifications, like geometry and sciences are said to explain perspective, and chemical processes and physics support photography's claims be a truthful representation of reality.

### The Ethical Imperative

“Why is it that art-historians and critics have persisted in using such an unhelpful interpretative scheme?”<sup>96</sup> Paul Crowther poses this question in a scathing article attacking art historians' use of philosophical categories:<sup>97</sup>

When an artistic style is thus labeled and discussed primarily in terms that concentrate attention on method [analysis-synthesis], there is a strong temptation to suppose that this in fact is what such works are ultimately 'about' ... [W]e take the pictorial means of Cubism to be its artistic end. Now construed in these terms, Cubism fits very comfortably into the key overarching concept of the modern critical idiom, namely the notion of 'Modernism' itself. ... [A] tendency in art from about the time of Impressionism onwards, to draw increasing attention to the means by which images are realized, and, ultimately to heighten our awareness of the intrinsic or essential properties of the medium of painting itself.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Barr's application to the terms had the qualification both of describing sequential phases and of characterizing style. His historical imposition has acquired not only the weight of conceptual truth but also the convenience of a universally accepted descriptive code. Nearly every writer who has discussed cubism since 1936 has used the terms 'analytical' and 'synthetic' in a paraphrase of Barr's original text." Robbins, "Historiography of Cubism," 278.

<sup>96</sup> Crowther, "Cubism, Kant," 200.

<sup>97</sup> Cheetham argues that Kant conceived of the philosopher as the arbiter that controls the other disciplines; in this case, it is the art historian who presents himself as the arbiter shielded in the use of philosophy for his or her own aims. See Cheetham, *Kant, Art*, 78–84.

<sup>98</sup> Crowther, "Cubism, Kant," 200.

In the end, labeling the artistic movement with neo-Kantian terms that refer to the perceptual processes of the artist is another tool of modern formalism to focus the analysis on the production of works of art instead of on their presence. Modernism thus exalts the connection between the work of art and its creator, whose way of thinking and perceiving is extolled. In this way modernism incorporates the absolute artist as Man into the disciplinary field of study. Formal analysis has become the complement of the [subjective] biography of the artist, and interpretation centers on understanding the person, whose “intentions” or subjective drives the work of art expresses. This is even the case of Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological approach to Cézanne, as in the end the philosopher postulated another way of understanding Cézanne’s perception and being-in-the-world in order to interpret his oeuvre. Bois singled out Kahnweiler’s interpretation of cubism for praise precisely on the grounds that it focused on the artist’s creative process (method). Furthermore, Green noticed that modern art history had replaced conception with perception as the key concept to understand the first period of cubism.

Crowther comments that modernism might have been the general tendency and some of the main artists might have wanted the spectator to become aware of his methods but,

there is no other reason (other than critical convenience) to suppose that this is the fundamental meaning the artist desired us to find in his work, nor indeed is there any ground for asserting that (irrespective of the artists’ intentions) this is ultimately how ‘modernist’ works must be found significant. To establish such claims would involve a concrete historical and philosophical analysis of particular works in the context of their particular conditions of production. In relation to Cubism, I would suggest that this undertaking has been hampered or distorted, because the fundamental Analytic/Synthetic distinction predisposes us to the supposition that Cubism is ‘about’ the artist’s method.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Crowther, “Cubism, Kant,” 200.

Crowther underscores once more the fact that art history not only imposes its categories of analysis on the works of art as interpretation, but also projects them on the artist's self by focusing on the process of creation. The explanation of a work of art on the basis of method involves reflecting on the artist's perception and intentions. This is the approach fostered by the use of site photographs for the study of Cézanne and the analysis of his art in the light of perspective. The neo-Kantian turn of modern art history favored the interest on Cézanne's perception even though the artist had protested an interpretation of his art based on his personality.

Which takes this dissertation back to simple questions about Cézanne's art: What did he think of or how did he perceive space? Was he focused on its representation at all? Did he conceive of it as infinite and homogeneous? Was his letter formulaic or did he believe in nature as a spectacle God staged and commanded? Did Zola and Cézanne compete as professionals belonging to different artistic fields? How deep was or what was the nature of their friendship? Did Zola's theories and literature influence Cézanne's art? These questions do not belong to the prescribed formula that purports that they have already been answered. Moreover, Cézanne's art might be, as Novotny suggested, in-humane or anti-humanist, in which case, modern art history will be unable to accurately interpret his work, as long as the discipline does not revise its humanistic foundations.<sup>100</sup>

The modern art world, as explained in Chapter Four, is structured around *Logos*, which affords to the art critic/art historian, as proprietor of that word as interpretation,

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<sup>100</sup> The bibliography on this subject is rather scant, see Micheline Tisson-Braun, *La Crise de l'humanisme. Le conflit de l'individu et de la société dans la littérature française moderne* (Paris : Nizet, 1958); and Alan Gowans "A-Humanism, Primitivism and the Art of the Future," *College Art Journal* 4 (Summer, 1952): 226–239.

the power of being legislator and arbiter. The relationship of art history with philosophy has a history, which parallels the one that relates the discipline with literature. Both are part of what Mitchel calls “theoria.”<sup>101</sup> After the Enlightenment, and thanks to Kant and the *philosophes*, philosophy took a new role in the organization of the disciplines and fought with art for the place religion had left void in society, especially as its moral compass.<sup>102</sup> By applying this philosophical terminology, Barr, and art historians in general, link art with a desirable high, metaphysical aspect of human experience. Before impressionism, art would claim to reach such sphere through its uplifting content or as the incarnation of the Ideal. Crowther argues that,

From Impressionism onwards, however, these two aspects [content and Ideal] are increasingly underplayed, leaving us with canvases that are valued primarily as aesthetic objects or as examples of the particular artist’s unique vision of the world. Such qualities are, ... authentic grounds of artistic value but they do not accord art quite the overtly exalted or “High” status which it had previously enjoyed. Now viewed in this context, the neo-Kantian jargon that surrounds Cubism takes on an interesting new significance. .. [it] vindicates the unusual appearance of Cubist works on the basis of an interpretative schema which restores art to its ‘High’ character as a profound metaphysical enterprise. .... Analysis and Synthesis as such connote not simply method but specifically the method of austere quasi-philosophical investigation. The use of such terminology gives Cubism, ... a certain technical glamour in keeping with its canonical role in twentieth-century art – but not ... in keeping with the nature of Cubism itself.<sup>103</sup>

Modern art history as primed in the 1930s and practiced after Second World War galvanized the art world that had been in the making for almost a century. In the resulting definition of art the ethical component could not be external to the work of

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<sup>101</sup> Taking again Crowther’s words, “One reason for the neo-Kantian schema’s survival is because it enables the critic to achieve a more complete appropriation of Cubism, within the broader and critically satisfying (but ultimately ideological) notion of ‘modernism.’” Crowther, “Cubism,” 200.

<sup>102</sup> See Bauman, *Legislators and Interpreters*, and Bénichou, *Le Sacre de l'écrivain*, See also Nella Arambasin, *La conception du sacré dans la critique d'art: en Europe entre 1880 et 1914*, (Genève: Droz, 1996).

<sup>103</sup> Crowther, “Cubism, Kant,” 200.

art, as it had been during the Ancien Régime, but had to be embedded within it, even beyond art itself, within the artist.<sup>104</sup> The application of a philosophical vocabulary for the consideration of the artists' creative processes associated modern art with superior ethical standards and elevated spirituality and, in turn, with the political ideology that allows artists freedom to create. Barr's choice of Kantian terms to characterize modern art advanced those ideas even though this condoned misrepresenting other meanings or the artist's explicit intentions.

The professional art historians, who saw themselves as intellectuals, felt their mission was to secure this elevated position for art and the artists, which—as in the nineteenth century—rebounded in the consolidation of their standing within the field as interpreters and keepers of art's true meaning.<sup>105</sup> As the son of a Presbyterian minister Barr manifested a zeal in disseminating modern art comparable to that of an evangelist converting philistines to the new faith.<sup>106</sup>

The early nineteenth century had portrayed the artist as a genius and hero. The 1930s added other traits to the type: the artist as intellectual and as politically engaged fighter, which artists themselves were quick to assume.<sup>107</sup> In the 1930s this approach led to paradoxical situations because not all the artists—even within the avant-

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<sup>101</sup> The original source of this way of thinking modernity is Michael Foucault, *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* (Paris : Gallimard, 1975), see also Tzvetan Todorov, *Le jardin imparfait: la pensée humaniste en France*, (Paris: Grasset & Fasquelle, 1998).

<sup>105</sup> See the scathing critique by Jean Clair in *Paradoxe sur le conservateur ; précédé de, De la modernité conçue comme une religion* (Caen : L'Échoppe, c1988). See also Jean Gimpel *Contre l'art et les artistes, ou la naissance d'une religion* (Paris : Seuil, 1968). For a more detailed account of the importance Picasso's behavior had for Barr see Noyes Platt, *Art and politics*.

<sup>106</sup> See C. FitzGerald *Making Modernism*, and Gordon Kantor, *Alfred H. Barr*. For an approach from the history of American art, see Sally Promey, "The Visual Culture of American Religions: An Historiographical Essay," in *Exhibiting The Visual Culture of American Religions*, exh. cat., Brauer Museum of Art, Valparaiso University, Indiana, 2000 and "The 'Return' of Religion in the scholarship of American Art," *The Art Bulletin* 85 (September, 2003): 561-603.

<sup>107</sup> Michael FitzGerald, "Reports from the Home Fronts: Some Skirmishes over Picasso's Reputation" in *Picasso and the War Years 1937–1945* exh. cat., Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1999.

garde—filled this role. Moreover, this way of understanding art undermined other approaches, especially those that concentrated on the mysterious physicality of works of art and not on their meanings. Crowther concludes,

Cubism does more than just break with perspective, it breaks with the very conventions which make pictorial representation inter-subjectively intelligible. .. like any self-representing artist, he [the cubist artist] wants his world to speak for itself, without being propped up by verbal explanation. On the other hand, if he is drastically revisiting existing conventions, the nature of the change will only be understood if accompanied by very systematic verbal explanation...<sup>108</sup>

He considers that cubism proposed a major transformation in art and that it attacked the foundations of Kant's definition of art, the communicability of the judgment of taste. True originality, true avant-garde art breaks conventions in such a way that makes verbal explanation unnecessary or inadequate.

If this opinion were to stand as the final word, this dissertation would be compromising its own principles by simply embracing another theory for the interpretation of the past. In 2006 the high moral status of art and the absolute artist are embedded in the definition of both terms and, therefore, Crowther's analysis offers another view of the problem without challenging the fundamental presuppositions on which modern art history stands. The fact is that in the 1930s at least one author—whom Kahnweiler and Barr knew perfectly well—was defending a similar interpretation of modern art: Carl Einstein.

Even if Einstein's work was shaped by the same current of ideas and influences that are at the foundations of modern art history—including neo-Kantian philosophy—he used them to build a corpus of radically anti-establishment writings that did not fit

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<sup>108</sup> Crowther, "Cubism, Kant," 201. The author comments something that resonates with Huyghe's and Venturi's contemporary observations: the perception that the philosophical vocabulary early on infected the artist who followed the phenomenon.

within the disciplinary project of modern art history. He believed that modern art helps men to realize the conventionality and artificiality of Western society but that the mimetic naturalism of yesteryear had just been replaced by an optical naturalism which denied the individual his active role in shaping the world. This author thought that only cubism afforded a real challenge by upsetting the spectator's perceptual expectations and provoking their disorientation, which in the end would facilitate the breakdown of peoples's most basic certainties. Einstein did not consider impressionism or Cézanne's art to have been major breakthroughs. As the epigraph to this chapter shows, Einstein was aware of how art history misinterpreted the artistic phenomenon and uttered a sharp warning about the word's power to counter or weaken art's significance:

Ideas change as rapidly as fleas change humans. In the first place one would have to write the history of aesthetic judgments to bring some order into this museum of arbitrary terminologies, and begin to discern the foundations of these ideas and these judgments, in order ultimately to determine whether a hierarchy of such values exists at all. In general we believe that a painting, which is a concrete realization, disappears in the act of criticism because it serves a mere pretext for generalized formulas whenever someone wishes to endow a risky opinion with a universal value by the trick of generalization. The result is nothing more than a witty paraphrase, thanks to which the work of art is neatly inserted into its cultural context, where it disappears as a mere symptom, losing its technical specificity.<sup>109</sup>

Einstein's scholarship epitomizes the kind of thinking, approach to knowledge, and understanding of art that modern art history barred from itself. According to Sebastian Zeidler, Einstein's project was aimed at countering the assumption that

a subject was fundamentally an unchanging self-identical kernel to which a set of properties was attached: properties which would then change over time even as the kernel itself remained unaffected, thus ensuring the seamless temporal

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<sup>109</sup> Einstein, "Notes sur le Cubisme," *Documents* (1929), 148. I am using the translation by Charles W. Haxthausen that appeared in the issue devoted to the scholar *October* 107 (Winter, 2004), 161.

continuity of a subjective identity that is here not so much transformed by experiences as it 'has' or 'makes' them. And second, and by the same token, that the objects of the phenomenal world were themselves so many identities with properties, waiting to be explored by a subject: a subject who, by thus identifying them, would constitute, in one fell swoop and even anew in every act of experience, the world as world and himself as subject, and who would thereby possess this world as his experiential property, for it would be complete only through the synthesizing power of his mind. Einstein never seriously studied the work of Martin Heidegger, but his project is a response ... to the same diagnosis of subject formation in modernity: 'That the world becomes picture is one and the same event as the event of man's becoming *subiectum* in the midst of that which is.'<sup>110</sup>

According to Zeidler, Einstein from the far left joined the anti-Humanist currents of thought that in the 1930s were opposing the trends that were about to crystallize in modern art history. Einstein's uses neo-Kantian vocabulary and art historical categories to yield a harsh critique of the West and of art history as a disciplinary narrative, in terms that are eerily similar to Preziosi's and Bennet's most recent arguments. Works of art were for Einstein a challenge. By disrupting mental habits, they were able to unseat lazy preconceptions about the world and the process of perception/knowledge commonly applied to its interpretation. Already for this author, modern art history as a discipline enveloped within theory, interpretation and the diachronic narration, (that is, encroached into *logos*) the materiality of the works of art, their true presence and ineffable essence.

Heidegger in 1935, Einstein in his multiple writings on cubism and modern art, even Phenomenology at the time with Husserl's 1936 *Crisis of the European Sciences*, offered alternatives to the Humanist approach to tradition, culture, and sciences. They called attention to the material aspect of the world and of art, and tried to liberate them from traditional interpretations. The first two were exceptionally

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<sup>110</sup> Sebastian Zeidler "Introduction," *October* 107 (Winter, 2004), 4-5.

open to non-Western ways of thinking and their aesthetics were part of a critique of the ideology that shaped modern art history.<sup>111</sup>

Modern art history imposes on works of art a new function, calls attention to the method or process by which they were created, and relates them to the biography of their makers. As Preziosi argues, the discipline's methodologies transform works of art into signs. As such, they refer to a meaning that lies beyond them in the narrative into which they are incorporated.<sup>112</sup>

The neo-Kantian metaphorical understanding of space exemplifies this move. Imposed as a stylistic category for the interpretation of works of art, it allows art historians to "understand" and "evaluate" the way in which the artist perceives the world and comprehends his being-in-the-world. As a consequence, the work of art is replaced at the center of the discipline by the artist and the art historian. This reinforces the primacy of *Logos* over the work of art. The problem of space, for example, is no longer central to Cézanne studies. Nevertheless, while specialists recognize that space was not part of the artist's project, the survey books and manuals, which reach a broader scope of the public, rehearse the categories established in the 1930s.<sup>113</sup> Moreover, these publications shape the basic definition of art held by the scholars who work on Cézanne.

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<sup>111</sup> See Reinhard May, *Heidegger's Hidden Sources East-Asian Influences on His Work* (London: Routledge, 1996) and Graham Parkes, *Heidegger and Asian Thought* (Honolulu: University of Hawai Press, 1990.)

<sup>112</sup> In *The Poetics of Perspective* Elkins demonstrates how modern art history, by imposing another function on Renaissance art, causes a series of interpretative misunderstandings that impinges on the evaluation of even the most technical aspects of the works.

<sup>113</sup> In the case of Cézanne see Tuma "La Peau de Chagrin." As for general works explaining Cézanne's art as basically related with the problem of the representation of space see other than the books mentioned in note 73 see Petra Ten-Doesschate Chu, *Nineteenth Century European Art* (New York: Prentice Hall, 2003.)

## Coda 1936: Cubism and Abstract Art. The Right Ideology at the Right Moment

In the final analysis the 1936 catalogue and exhibit were written and organized under the pressure of historical events that gave Barr the sense of mission and urgency necessary to accomplish such an immense and bold task.<sup>114</sup> The detailed examination of the catalogue confirms many of the arguments expounded in the previous chapters of this dissertation, taking us back to where we began in Chapter One.

The “Preface” states that the show was “conceived in a retrospective—not in a controversial spirit.” Its claim to be based on an objective consideration of the material is not new. Its novelty and the ideological content lay in the selection of art presented to the public and in the way the show was organized and displayed.<sup>115</sup> The catalogue’s text assumed a truly indispensable character because more than a simple aide and textual support, it was, perhaps for the first time, the intellectual justification for the choices of works and the organization of the display. Whereas the artist’s biography structured the museographic discourse of the van Gogh exhibit organized by Huyghe in 1937 and a preconceived conviction about France substantiated *Chefs-d’oeuvre de l’art français*, Barr’s exhibition was buttressed by an abstract construct that explained the development of modern art in Europe since the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> The novelty of Barr’s approach is proven by the criticism it provoked among the artists themselves. See Susan Noyes Platt, “Modernism, Formalism,” where the author analyzes some of the reactions to the show.

<sup>115</sup> Barr, *Cubism and Abstract Art*, 9.

<sup>116</sup> It is instructive in this sense to compare the three catalogues: *Chefs-d’oeuvre de l’art français*; *Van Gogh: Exposition Internationale de 1937, Groupe I, Classe III* (Paris, 1937); and Barr’s.

Barr proclaims his intention of considering only those movements that had been influential in more than one country. With Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin in power, and given that art was generally understood as the manifestation of the spirit of a country, to praise German, Italian, and Russian modern art would have been problematic. Consequently, even this internationalist approach to modern art must be thought of as determined by the historical situation and based on political considerations. This internationalism also fit within the idea of a common fight against Totalitarianism as encouraged by the Popular Front and the ICII in Europe.<sup>117</sup> As Barr explains,

in general, movements confined in their influence to a single country have not been included. In several cases the earlier and more creative years of a movement or individual have been emphasized at the expense of later work which may be fine in quality but comparatively unimportant historically...<sup>118</sup>

The art historian determines the parameters of the exhibition: historical significance and wide (geographical) influence supersedes artistic value. When the spatial coordinates are analyzed, Barr's flowchart (fig.1) looks like a cornucopia with its concave cocoon placed on top of the diagram. From France (the crucible where Japanese, African and Near Eastern art flow in) the flux of modern art moves to incorporate Munich, Berlin, and Milan and, from there, gushes forth to encompass the rest of the world. The bottom of the chart includes the year 1935 and implicitly indicates the viewer's location, that is, the United States.<sup>119</sup>

Barr's temporal coordinates are also telling, as he recognizes that around 1926 abstract art was considered dead in Europe, yet concomitantly he admits—somewhat contradictorily—that the plan for the show was inspired by the material gathered

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<sup>117</sup> For an analysis of that period in the United States, see chapter 1 and Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*.

<sup>118</sup> Barr, *Cubism and Abstract Art*, 9.

<sup>119</sup> It has to be remembered that the chart was displayed as part of the exhibit.

during his 1927-1928 study trip to Europe. His explicit goal was to prove that this art was still meaningful. To do so, he negates historical time claiming that abstract art was already postulated by Plato. In this way he anchors the latest artistic developments in the ideal roots of the North Atlantic universals and Western civilization; he anoints modern art with the sanction of Greek philosophy, confirmed by the Kantian terminology he employs later in the text. This last philosophical approach seems to envelop or merge with a Platonic worldview, which was also the case for Panofsky's Humanism as presented in his 1924 *Idea, A Concept in Art Theory*.<sup>120</sup> Barr's proposition that the pioneers of cubism "developed more literally and much further than his [sic] [Cézanne's] *perception of the geometrical forms underlying the confusion of nature*,"<sup>121</sup> (Emphasis added) suggests that Barr's own worldview had a pronounced Platonic component. The curator uproots abstract art from its national origins and historical determinations in order to elevate it to the transcendental dimension of the universal and eternal world of metaphysics and perfect Ideas. This a-historical dimension reconfirms abstract art as the teleological goal of the diachronic development of art.

The notion that art, in this case a formal interpretation of art, stands for a political ideology is clearly stated on page 10 (fig. 29), where Barr displays two posters designed for a 1928 international exhibition. The message is that, at the time of the event, the Anglo-American public was not ready for modern design while the Germans were, but "[t]oday times have changed. The style of the abstract poster,

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<sup>120</sup> For Panofsky and neo-Platonism see chapter 1. See also Robbin's analysis of the catalogue in "Historiography of Cubism."

<sup>121</sup> Barr, *Cubism and Abstract Art*, 26.

which is just beginning to interest our American advertisers, is now discouraged in Germany.”<sup>122</sup>

The connection of modern art with political affairs is directly addressed in the sub-section “Abstract Art and Politics.” Barr considers almost exclusively the situation in those countries with totalitarian governments. The Netherlands is not mentioned, and France appears as Paris, a place where “everything goes.” Therefore, after locating abstract art beyond time and space, in the realm of transcendental truths, Barr lists the political systems which reject it. Tellingly, he does not mention the crimes these regimes were perpetrating but only that they persecute the artists the show exalts. Acceptance of this art, the catalogue seems to say, is the index of the goodness/evilness of the countries. By default the United States stands as one of the “good” countries (the effect is more powerful because the others that would fall within this category are not identified) simply by being the venue for the exhibition.

The case is explicit when Barr analyzes Italian Futurism. As noted in Chapter Three, he quotes some excerpts of the 1909 manifesto by Marinetti that include the famous quip that “a speeding automobile... is more beautiful than the victory of Samothrace....” Nevertheless, he exhibited Boccioni’s *Unique forms of continuity in space* together with a plaster cast of the *Victory of Samothrace* (fig. 30). The catalogue states that “the lines of force are visualized as a cloak of swirling streamlined shapes which have much the same effect of the drapery of the *Winged victory of Samothrace*” (fig. 31). Barr expressly contradicts Boccioni’s ideas about art and tradition, which the artist clearly articulated in the manifestos he wrote before the Great War.

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<sup>122</sup> Barr, *Cubism and Abstract Art*, 10.

The explanation of this conspicuous treatment of the modern sculpture lies in the political alliances of Marinetti and Futurism, which Barr defines as politically “proto-Fascist; philosophically Bergsonian; ethically Nietzschean...”<sup>123</sup>

Marinetti is now a Senator, but the old guard of Futurist Artists is dispersed....

The *Winged victory of Samothrace*, which Marinetti found less beautiful than a speeding automobile, still holds its own against Boccioni’s *Forme uniche della continuità nello spazio*, and the speeding automobile itself is perhaps a finer Futurist work of art than Russolo’s *Dinamismo (automobile)*.”<sup>124</sup>

Clearly both the text and the display were determined by Barr’s extra-artistic ideological concerns, a case in which he could neither control nor disguise them. Only this can explain the pairing of the Boccioni—transported from Milan for the exhibition—with a scaled-down plaster of the *Victory*. Although it is somehow extraordinary that a curator explains to the public that the art in exhibition is mediocre, it is consistent with Barr’s statement that the selection of works was based on their historical value and not their quality.

In this modernist approach, works of art are said to be an ethical manifestation *per se* and this might be the reason why Barr needed to disqualify the Boccioni. At the same time an impressive array of documents and didactic material secured that the public achieved the “correct” understanding of its value. The catalogue, labels, flowcharts, and even the way the art was displayed assigned a new significance to the works of art.

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<sup>123</sup> Barr, *Cubism and Abstract Art*, 56.

<sup>124</sup> Barr, *Cubism and Abstract Art*, 61.

It is almost logical, given the world's situation in 1936, that Einstein's radical views were not integrated within the cluster of concepts that formed modern art history. It is all the more natural too that a culture develops strategies to defend a core of basic foundational principles that secure the group's survival, especially in times of crisis and debacle. This was precisely the case in the 1930s when the West was about to manifest its darkest tendencies. But if a culture cannot discuss, relativize, and modify its fundamental presuppositions, it must renounce the aspiration of representing universal values. If it does not do so, it transforms those principles into dogma, as their defense is based not on reason but on belief.

Art history will be accused of being disciplinary as long as it continues presenting as certainties what is still the subject of much debate in the other humanistic disciplines. The challenge is to find a methodology of analysis that does not diminish or predetermine the reactions that works of art inspire and that encourages us to engage in the quest for meaning through Art. Heidegger proposed to go back to the mystery of the physical object and to the basic questions forgotten by centuries of civilization. Salvation from danger, the philosopher remarked, would come from the consideration and overcoming of the element that had precipitated the fall. For Heidegger was *Gestell*—as technology. Following the philosopher's ideas Melville believed that reflecting up on the camera/photography, it would be possible to rethink modern art history (see the end of Chapter Six). I propose to think of the relationship of the image to the word.<sup>125</sup> This dissertation, is ultimately about

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<sup>125</sup> For *Ge-stell* see Martin Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, (New York: Harper, 1982), 20. Melville, "The Temptation of New," 412.

breaking patterns of thought, or ways of thinking about art so that the image might be liberated from them. Paul Smith said something similar:

But this is not to say that it is inappropriate to try to interpret verbally what Cézanne painted. In fact the opposite is true. For one thing, we cannot see the work for what it is without interpreting it with the aid of appropriate concepts. However, the rub here is that saying what a radically original work of art expresses is not simply a matter of inventing words with which to describe its effects. It also involves developing new social practices and institutions in which these words can have currency and meaning,—after all, a word cannot mean anything unless there is a social context in which it can be used. ... This means that seeing and interpreting Cézanne ultimately involves a challenge to ours politics.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Smith, *Interpreting Cézanne*, 75.

It is the imagination of the pilgrim which creates the enchanting and sublime landscape. These principles are confirmed by the recollection of what has happened in the last seventy years to man's reaction to the landscape of Provence. Painters, amateurs, and simple tourist have come to look at it 'with the eyes' of Cézanne. It was Cézanne who created the landscape of Provence as a work of art.  
Lionello Venturi, "Art and Taste."<sup>1</sup>

## **Conclusion**

This dissertation has examined the process of the institutionalization of art history in the context of the epistemological struggles that preceded the Second World War and seeks to present an argument concerning the influence of this development in the historiography on Cézanne, one that provides a new understanding of his art.

Two main subjects have been developed together: the institutionalization of the discipline and the changes that affected Cézanne studies. Their study exposed the conventional and ideological character of the choices made by the art historians of the period under study. Placing the problem of space between brackets allowed us to liberate Cézanne's works from the connotations imposed onto them by the use of this category of analysis.

One contemporary document exemplifies how the application of new art historical methodologies in the 1930s changed the way Cézanne's art and life were contemplated. In July 1939, in commemoration of the centennial of Cézanne's birth, but two months before the start of the Second World War, Maurice Denis wrote, "L'Aventure Posthume de Cézanne" for *Prométhée*. This magazine was the last

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<sup>1</sup> Venturi, "Art and Taste," 272.

incarnation of *L'Amour de l'art*, which had adopted the new title in February of 1939 and folded at the end of the year. The demise of the magazine was due to the editorial decision not to collaborate with the Nazis, who had offered an association with the German magazine *Weltkunst*.

This was Denis's last article on Cézanne and expressed his reaction to the changes that had taken place in the 1930s. He had met the artist thirty five years before and had authored one of the most influential "testimonies" about Cézanne in the first years of the twentieth century. Since that time, Denis had been a major player in the making of Cézanne's critical fortune. His 1939 article reflects how the art historical writings produced during the decade modified his views on the artist and moved him to reflect on his own experiences. The three authors analyzed in the First Section of this dissertation acknowledge Denis's contribution to promote Cézanne and thank him for cooperating with them.<sup>2</sup>

The progressive historicization of art changed Denis's understanding of the place of Cézanne in history and of the history of art itself. In the 1890s Denis had thought that Cézanne had discovered "la peinture pour elle-même." In 1939 he *realizes* that Cézanne had only expressed more clearly than any other artist one of the defining characters of art.

Je pense *maintenant* que cette conception n'est pas aussi nouvelle que nous l'avons alors cru. Tous les peintres, et surtout les coloristes, ont traduit la nature en taches de couleur; Tintoret par exemple, dont le chromatisme est dans certaines natures mortes identique à celui de Cézanne.

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<sup>2</sup> Maurice Denis, "L'Aventure posthume de Cézanne," *Prométhée* (July, 1939): 193-196. In page 195 Denis explicitly contradicts "mon ami" Huyghe's comparison of Cézanne with Descartes. The most eloquent acknowledgement is in Robert Rey's, *La Renaissance du sentiment classique dans la peinture française à la fin du XIXe siècle. Degas-Renoir-Gauguin-Cézanne-Seurat*, Thèse pour le doctorat es lettres Faculté des Lettres de l'Université de Paris (Paris, 1931).

Réduire la nature à n'être qu'un système de taches colorées est une nécessité primordiale de l'art de peindre sous entendue chez les Maîtres, à cause de la complexité des éléments représentatifs et psychologiques du tableau. Personne ne l'a manifestée plus clairement que Cézanne.<sup>3</sup> (Emphasis added)

In 1907 Denis believed that a painting by Cézanne fit better among old masters than among modern works of art. At the end of the 1930s, instead of considering Cézanne in the light of tradition (the continuation of the past in the present) he regarded him as an innovator who had brought to plain light what had only been vaguely realized in the past (the present as the parameter for the evaluation of the past).

Denis acknowledged that his previous writings on Cézanne had been influenced by his own ideas about art and that he, like the others who had written on Cézanne (Paul Serusier and presumably Bernard, although he does not mention him) had defined Cézanne in opposition to impressionism.

Cézanne lui-même avait évolué dans le sens d'un impressionnisme ordonné; il devenait [in our interpretation] le représentant d'un nouvel ordre classique. Mais il s'agit de savoir lequel. *Et je me demande si dans tout ce que nous avons écrit les uns ou les autres sur ce sujet, nous n'avons pas un peu mis le grappin sur Cézanne.*

Ce que nous recherchions dans ses oeuvres et dans ses paroles, c'était ce que nous paraissait en opposition avec le réalisme impressionniste, et la confirmation de nos propres idées, de celles qui étaient dans l'air, du côté de Puvis de Chavannes comme du côté de Gauguin.<sup>4</sup> (Emphasis added)

The three books written in 1936 devoted pages to the evaluation and analysis of the sources and Denis seemed to answer to them. He doubted the accuracy of the memoirs. Were the interviewers really able to hear and understand what the artist had told them? Denis's commentary is closer to Venturi's considerations on the value of the testimonies and the artist's letters: did Cézanne's words translate his intentions?

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<sup>3</sup> Denis, "Aventure posthume," 193.

<sup>4</sup> Denis, "Aventure posthume," 195. In the last years of his life Cézanne was reputedly concerned about people interested in taking advantage of him. The expression also appears in Cézanne letters. The anecdotes concerning the "grappin" had taken a life of their own.

Was the artist capable of conveying his artistic experience in words? Was he expressing something he had thought but had not applied in practice? Cézanne knew all the theories, and perhaps went to the motif with the intention of applying them. But once he was painting, he would try them one after the other and would alter them as he worked.

Ah! sans doute c'était un penseur, tous les peintres, ou presque tous, sont des penseurs. Cézanne était un penseur, mais qui ne pensait pas tout les jours la même chose. *Tous ceux qui l'ont approché lui ont fait dire ce qu'ils souhaitaient de lui. Ils ont interprété sa pensée ...*

J'imagine que comme beaucoup de peintres, il se levait le matin avec une théorie en tête, un plan d'expérience à faire. Seulement son instinct bousculait tout.<sup>5</sup> (Emphasis added.)

Denis observed that in the 1930s attention had moved away from the works of art themselves, and had shifted towards Cézanne as a man. He also noticed that information about the artist's life was being organized to prove a thesis: that Cézanne had been a heroic (modern) artist. Denis admonished that Cézanne's art should not be interpreted on account of his suffering, which had not made him exceptional, as this had been a common denominator in the life of most modern artists. Yes, Cézanne had agonized about his art and felt discouraged but,

[A]u lieu de lui faire un titre de gloire de son pessimisme et de ses accès de découragement, il est plus sage de constater qu'en dépit de son impuissance et de ses échecs, il a réalisé. ....

... personne n'y est plus sensible que moi [to his suffering], mais, je le répète, cela importe peu à la qualité de sa peinture: cela peut tout au plus en expliquer les lacunes.

And he adds,

J'aimerais qu'on oubliât un peu la vie, les mots, le caractère de Cézanne, et qu'on renonçât à lui attribuer cette sorte de fraternité de tout l'art d'aujourd'hui. J'aimerais, que au lieu de le considérer comme un phare, comme un tournant de

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<sup>5</sup> Denis, "Aventure posthume," 195.

l'histoire, on devint plus attentif aux qualités de sa peinture, solide, subtile, nuancée, d'une justesse incomparable de ton, belle et noble par elle-même, ...<sup>6</sup>

Two months after Rewald had written to Denis trying to convince him of the value of the biographical approach, the artist maintained his position. Contradicting Rewald and Huyghe, Denis observed that Vollard's description of the artist as an ill tempered and somehow ridiculous old man was accurate: "Seul M. Vollard, s'est contenté de faire un portrait pittoresque, et d'ailleurs fort ressemblant. Tous les autres, et moi le premier—ou le second—nous l'avons mis dans notre jeu."<sup>7</sup>

Denis's reaction demonstrates that the changes in the approach to Cézanne's art that took place in the 1930s were noticeable for concerned observers. He, who had known the artist, did not recognize him in the portrayals provided by the art historians writing about him. Denis acknowledged the limitations of both his memory and his writings on the artist and of the new methodologies applied to the study art history. Although Denis was a hardly disinterested witness, his observations demonstrate that in the 1930s there were significant changes in the scholarship on Cézanne and modern art.

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<sup>6</sup> Denis, "Aventure posthume," 196.

<sup>7</sup> Denis, "Aventure posthume," 196. The last line indicates that Bernard's texts were in Denis's mind, as he had been the first who had written an article on the artist. At the time he was a harsh critic of the artist. Bernard and Fry also praised Vollard's book. It must be taken into account that Vollard was a powerful art dealer and that artists and art historians needed his support. For Rewald's opinion on the art dealer in the 1930s see the unpublished article "Ambroise Vollard" in the notebook "Rencontres d'un critique d'art" in "John Rewald Papers" 61/5 National Gallery of Art, Gallery Archives, Washington D. C. See Emile Bernard "Sur Paul Cézanne," *Le Mercure de France* (Juin, 1915): 403-408.

## Venturi's Alternative Voice

Considering the basic categories applied to the study of art history as North Atlantic universals—namely as historically determined and progressively evolving conventions—permitted us to foreground their conventional character. In the 1930s the symbolic field of art history thrived in competing experimental methodologies and theoretical models. Concurrently, the politicization of the ideological debate favored the formation of master narratives that would, at the end of the decade, favor the institutionalization of a hegemonic discourse.

Venturi's scholarship was based on a sophisticated reading of both the scholarship on Cézanne and aesthetics, and of the epistemological battles preceding the institutionalization of art history. In the context of this dissertation, the analysis of the texts he wrote in the 1930s served to outline more radical and experimental approaches not incorporated into modern art history.<sup>8</sup> It is telling that an Italian scholar such as Venturi conceived a methodology that countered the art historical approach that placed a much idealized interpretation of the Italian Renaissance at its heart.

Venturi's scholarship was influenced by the connoisseurship of Berenson and the idealist aesthetics of Croce, that placed art in the mind and soul of the artist. The artist as a creative personality was at the center of Venturi's scholarship. As the epigraph makes clear, Venturi was not interested in Cézanne's (human) vision and actually paid little attention to the psycho-physiological explanation of perception. In his

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<sup>8</sup> Carl Einstein did not dwell on the analysis of Cézanne whose art he did not consider revolutionary. He analyzed Cézanne in relationship with Derain. Chapter Five has summarized Novotny's radical interpretation of Cézanne's landscapes.

system, the key factor was the artist's sensibility. Venturi's aesthetization of the landscape is a far cry from the topographical and documentary analysis of the sites fostered by the use of site photographs. Venturi's Provence, more than the definite place ("situated realism"), is the creation of men whose eyes had been steeped in the contemplation of Cézanne's art. In addition, Venturi had explicitly embraced Longhi's color-perspective.

In light of Elkins's study on the history on perspective (Chapters Five and Six), Longhi's 1914 article on Piero della Francesca gains a new meaning. Longhi challenged the interpretation of perspective as a scientific device and as a method used exclusively for the representation of the third dimension on a surface. He also criticized an art history structured on the genealogy established by Vasari-Burckhardt and on art as mimesis. Soussloff and Farago and other contemporary scholars have singled out these tropes as basic ideological constructs that, beyond their valence in the construction of the myth of the Renaissance, are at the core of modern art history.<sup>9</sup> In the context of this dissertation Longhi's article is a document that confirms Elkins's account of the history of perspective and helps to situate Panofsky's treatise in time as much as the texts quoted in Chapter Five.

Venturi was critical of the influence of German art history in the evaluation of impressionism. In his first article on the subject he quotes a text written in 1895 by Jules Lemaître "l'art, même naturaliste, est nécessairement une transformation du réel," and comments,

É questo un punto fondamentale per comprendere le opere impressionistiche. Disgraziatamente nella critica d'arte, anche recente, questo punto non è stato capito e però si è giunti a teorizzare (in Germania) l'arte impressionistica come

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<sup>9</sup> See Farago, " 'Introduction' ," Soussloff, *Absolute Artist*.

arte della pasività. Il ‘puro pittore’, quale risulta nella critica di Zola su Manet, è un equivoco, utile nel 1867 nella polemica contro la falsa letteratura, dannoso anzi deleterio poi, in quanto ha impedito di vedere la totale umanità degl’impressionisti.<sup>10</sup>

Venturi was critical of the excessive reliance on texts and thus of philological methodologies as well as of the influence of German formalism. The text demonstrates the complexity of Venturi’s anti-classical position: he opposed the manipulation of the Renaissance Humanism by Fascist art historians but did not disavow the Eurocentric Humanism that is at the base of the concept of the West. His scholarship, if *Il gusto dei primitivi* is a valid indication, was based on a religious worldview.

Venturi’s scholarship focuses on the formal analysis of works of art and hinges around the notion that art belongs to a sphere separate from the historical dimension of everyday life. He conceived of the artist as a Janus-like being: one face is that of the historical man, and the other that of the creative personality. The artist, as a creative personality, is able to alter history. Moreover, Venturi applied Kant’s Third Critique to his analysis of impressionism. Evaluation and judgment were, for him, more important than a purely historical approach.<sup>11</sup> Venturi’s *Il gusto dei primitivi* epitomizes one of the experimental non-historicist models of art history proposed at the time, even if, and perhaps because, his scholarship was devised to counter the Fascist critique of historicism. This way of thinking about the history of art pervades his interpretation of Cézanne’s art.

Venturi’s scholarship thus presents two main points of contention in opposition to Panofsky’s art history. First, that Panofsky’s scholarship was based on a

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<sup>10</sup> “L’Impressionismo,” *L’Arte* XXXVIII (May, 1935), 121.

<sup>11</sup> See Melville and Readings in Chapter One, p. 63.

neo-Kantian model, in itself a reinterpretation of Kant's First Critique. Second, that his contextualist and document based analysis of works of art is fundamentally historicist.

As Melville notes, Panofsky's breakthrough was the incorporation of Kantian categories for the interpretation of the history of art.<sup>12</sup> Panofsky's methodology countered the different models elaborated in the 1930s to confront historicism, such as Heidegger's philosophy, but also Warburg's basic approach to the history of the Renaissance.

According to Didi-Huberman, implicit in Panofsky's scholarship was a major review of Warburg's innovative approach to the Renaissance, and history, based on the notion of *Nachleben*.<sup>13</sup> This temporal model implied memory and all kinds of unrecordable modes of transmission as well as the influence of belief (magic, faith). This system entailed a radical opposition to historicist and humanist art history. Didi-Huberman argues that Panofsky "deliberately misunderstood" Warburg's non-evolutionary, non-teleologically oriented model and his deep critique to historicism: "Gombrich himself acknowledged that Panofsky invalidated the concept of *Nachleben* for generations of art historians to come."<sup>14</sup>

Panofsky was adamant in denying the importance of earlier (medieval) Renaissances and defined the "Renaissance" as the re-birth of Antiquity in fifteenth-century Florence. Historical distance, allowed the Humanists to retrieve Antiquity

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<sup>12</sup> Melville, Introduction, p. 19. Podro's *Critical Art Historians*, analyzes the Hegelian roots of art history.

<sup>13</sup>"Formed within the context of Renaissance studies—a field associated by definition with revival and innovation—Warburg's concept of survival assumed a temporal model for art history radically different from any employed at the time." George Didi-Huberman, "Artistic Survival. Panofsky vs. Warburg and the Exorcism of Impure Time," *Common Knowledge* (2003), 273.

<sup>14</sup> Didi-Huberman, "Artistic Survival," 277.

within the theoretical frame they prescribed. Panofsky's multilayered system not only muffled Heidegger's violent interpretation within a thick layer of documentation and "scientifically" proven rationalizations, but also the unconscious, oceanic survival of the past in the present, Warburg's *Nachleben*.

The recoil from 'survival' as a category of art historical attention is attributable to its basic impurity; *Nachleben* is impure in much the way *Leben* itself is. Both are messy, cluttered, muddled, various, haphazard, retentive, protean, liquid, oceanic in scope and complexity, impervious to analytical organization. There is no doubt that Panofsky sought to understand the meaning of motifs and images, but Warburg wanted much more, to understand their 'life,' their 'force' or impersonal 'power'—these are the terms (*Leben, Kraft, Macht*) that Warburg used but studiously refrained from defining.<sup>15</sup>

A chronological concept of time is in itself ideological, and in the case of Panofsky a choice, one that placed "life" and "culture" outside the limits of art history.<sup>16</sup> Didi-Huberman suggests that this was anticipated by Warburg's master, Burckhardt, in his little-read books on the theory of history. According to Didi-Huberman, Burckhardt,

would go so far as to say that authentic history is deformed, not just by ideas that issue from preconceived theories, but even or especially by ideas that issue from chronology itself. History should be, he argued, an effort that dislodges us from our fundamental incapacity to 'understand that which is varied and accidental'...

This conception of temporality is unusual in that it has no need for the concepts 'good' and 'evil,' and no need for either beginnings (sources from which all else must derive) or ends (historical meanings on which all else must converge). Good and evil, beginnings and ends, are not essential to accounting for the complexity, the impurity, of historical life. Temporality on this model is a dialectic of rhizomes, repetitions, symptoms. Localized history—patriotic or racial history—is completely foreign to it, because contextualist historiography, like contextualist philosophy and anthropology, has been incapable of theorizing relationships of difference with any cogency and conviction.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Didi-Huberman, "Artistic Survival," 282.

<sup>16</sup> See Jörn Rüsen ed., *Western Historical Thinking An Intercultural Debate* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2002).

<sup>17</sup> Didi-Huberman, "Artistic Survival," 284–285.

Warburg's position, so much influenced by anthropological theories, is important in this context not only because his books have recently gained scholarly attention denied to them for decades, but also because of the unusual character of his thought. Warburg's well-studied interest in the Pueblo Indians signals a much more haunting message: the aspects of the West not reflected by the North Atlantic universals. Real North Atlantic men and women might be as different from the Humanist notion of "Man" as the "Others."<sup>18</sup>

Situating the history of art history as part of an object of study demonstrates that in the 1930s there was a shift in the definition of basic categories used for the analysis and understanding of art. These categories have since been naturalized as integral to the foundation of modern art history. The 1930s was a period of consolidation and reaffirmation of traditional values, and modern art history reflects this ideology. Illuminating this epistemological shift allows us to underscore the distinctiveness and otherness of Cézanne's world.

In 1996 Pollock complained that Academic art history disregarded the most radical materialist theories that challenged the foundations of the discipline. Didi-Huberman points to another side of this phenomenon and to other theories: the methodologies and models of interpretation of art that were discarded in the process of the institutionalization of the discipline.

The preference for contextualist (localized) history results from an eagerness for convenience—for information that can be coped with, labeled, managed, packaged—but its accessibility depends on an optical illusion, and the eagerness may be accompanied by willful blindness. The capacity to tolerate and deal with

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<sup>18</sup> His use of anthropological methodologies and categories for the study of High Art and the Renaissance even antedates Trouillot most modern contention that Anthropology must be used for the study of the West.

an absence of differentiable periods and episteme (to live with an oceanic, unanalyzable unity, lacking beginning, end, and formulable meaning) is to say the least a rare power. Those who, like Burckhardt and especially Warburg, can see their way to tolerating historical impurity are often moved aside, with the subtlest gestures, by other scholars who do not share or understand that power. ... Some of the finest sensibilities have in this way been 'corrected' off the map of our intellectual life.<sup>19</sup>

Under a new regime, the discordant voices are generally read as faulty methodology, imperfect scholarship. In the field of Cézanne studies, that is the case with Venturi's scholarship on the artist.

Panofsky recognized the importance of Barr's enterprise and equated geographical distance with history: in both cases distance afforded the opportunity of an objective approach to the artistic phenomenon. In this light, the homogeneous, measured, isotropic space of Panofsky's perspective might be equated with the neat compartmentalization of time in chronology and with Panofsky's disavowal of *Nachleben*. The problem is the application of these two parameters to the study of modern art and the integration of anti-art, and anti-traditional artistic movements as part of tradition. Chapter Seven has micro-analyzed how Barr construed the transition from Cézanne to cubism, how he leveled both artistic manifestations until they become equivalent. Barr's formalist approach to art, his understanding of modern art as the continuation and culmination of the Western tradition, allowed him to integrate into his flowchart artists and artistic movements with widely different goals and aesthetics.

Einstein wanted to obtain contributions from the specialists of the Warburg Institute for *Documents*. To browse this magazine, where articles by art historians like Strzygowski, and art critics like Einstein, share space with articles on the history of

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<sup>19</sup> Didi-Huberman, "Artistic Survival," 285.

music, ethnography, anthropology, authored by personalities like Bataille, reminds us of the methodological debate and the experimentalism and malleability of the disciplinary boundaries that characterized the period. These different experiments are a sobering reminder of the historicity and conventionality of the most basic disciplinary paradigms.

### Between Nation and Self

This dissertation contextualizes Huyghe's *Cézanne* both within the art historian's career and within the history of art history. To dismiss his monograph as dated occludes the fact that race/ethnicity and nationhood are still valid categories for the consideration of works of art. As demonstrated in Chapter One, they are integral to the historical context theorized by Panofsky. Moreover, the definition of Humanism debated in international forums such as the IICI demonstrates that the category itself reinforces the idea of nation as a fundamental entity and that the Western definition of Man considers him as "national." Preziosi, among other theoreticians, even thinks of art history and museography as integral to the disciplinary apparatus that buttressed the development of the nation-state in the nineteenth century.

Nation-state, together with art, the category "artist," and Humanism are North Atlantic universals and their development throughout modern history is tightly

intertwined. In this light the two aspects of Huyghe's career analyzed in this dissertation find a common ground. Man is the representative of an ethnicity or a nation, so the individual becomes an archetype of a group. Put schematically, Man=Nation equates to Nation=Art. In the 1930s nation came to the fore as a defining art historical category. Huyghe's curatorial approach to a non-French artist like van Gogh considered the artist not as the representative of an ethnical group or nation but as an individual man. The exhibition was structured around the artist's biography.

The reactions to Huyghe's exhibition and the ensuing debate demonstrate that the concentration on the artist as a historical being was still controversial. Huyghe justified the documentation concerning the artist's life as an introduction to art for those unable to contemplate it. Rewald used this is the same argument to convince Denis of the value of his letters from artists.

Huyghe's scholarship considers the artist both as the representative of a transcendental entity and as a historical being. In this way it establishes the transition between the chapters devoted to Venturi and Rewald, as the latter focused exclusively on the life of artists and historical facts.

Considering the association of art and nation and the historicity of these two categories allows this dissertation to contextualize Huyghe's innovative installation within the inventive strategies of display used by the Fascist and Totalitarian regimes. Furthermore, in the 1930s museography developed as an autonomous practice pertinent to different kinds of museums. Huyghe's argument in defense of his

exhibition provides a rare glimpse into the moment in which conscious choices and specific ideas about documentation and display were being naturalized as ideology.

Rewald's scholarship contributed to the historicization of Cézanne. He was among the first to apply the methodological protocols that would characterize modern art history to the study of Cézanne's art. Barr's contemporaneous *Cubism and Abstract Art*, as explained in Chapter Seven, was fundamental to establishing Cézanne as a key protagonist in the history of modern art. Both approaches complemented each other. Rewald's scholarship provided the basic orientation and resources for Cézanne to art historians whose scholarship followed the main guidelines provided by Barr's flowchart. By focusing on the scholarship of the 1930s, this dissertation provides a model for understanding the integration of the art of Cézanne into modern art history that might open the way to further research on the subject.

While in France, Rewald worked almost exclusively on post-impressionist artists. Nonetheless, his first major publication in the United States was the 1946 *History of Impressionism* followed in 1956 by *Post-Impressionism. From van Gogh to Gauguin*.<sup>20</sup> Both books were sponsored by MoMA. Rewald's original plan was to write a third book that would focus on Cézanne. The death of Venturi in 1961 and Rewald's subsequent involvement in the preparation and edition of a second catalogue raisonné of the artist altered his career path.

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<sup>20</sup> Venturi and Rewald were interested in almost the same subject matters. Both wrote about Pissarro and Cézanne. Venturi published the *Annales de l'Impressionnisme* before fleeing France. This book is a compilation of documents even though the scholars distrusted them. He considered that the undervaluation of the movement was related with the lack of truthful information available. He mined the archives of the Gallery of Durand Ruel. During his exile Venturi did not have a fixed source of income. This in itself might have helped to determine the project.

The importance of these two books cannot be overestimated. Robert Herbert considered the *History of Impressionism* “the fundamental work whose first edition set the conditions and the vocabulary of its [Impressionism’s] history.”<sup>21</sup> As noted above, in 1948 Rewald stated that he had applied to the subject matter the same methodology he had used in his *Cézanne et Zola*. The book on impressionism follows a clear chronological order, and is structured around the group exhibitions and the biography of the main artists.

These immensely popular and influential books, edited and distributed by MoMA, and translated in many languages, reinforced Rewald’s account of Cézanne’s art and life. The scholar’s involvement in the movie *Lust for Life*, his career as professor at two of the most influential American universities, and his many other publications and endeavors are the context for understanding the pervasiveness of his influence. His books on impressionism and post-impressionism, like the biography of Cézanne, afforded a wealth of documentation, information, and anecdotes that oriented the general scholarship on these subject matters for years to come.

*History of Impressionism* examines the artistic movements that precede those represented in Barr’s flowchart and in the museum’s permanent collection. Cézanne’s *The Bather* was painted around 1886, the year of the last Impressionist exhibition. The first chapter of *Post-Impressionism. From van Gogh to Gauguin*, revolves around the events that took place in that year. Rewald’s portrayal of the heroic struggle of modern artists fits perfectly in MoMA’s interpretation of modern art. Furthermore, the clear organization and neat chronology that structure the books—synthesized in

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<sup>21</sup> Robert Herbert, *Impressionism. Art Leisure, & Parisian Society* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 314.

graphics in the back—can be compared with the lines of development of modern art in Barr’s flowchart where uniqueness of the different artistic manifestations is flattened and equalized as instances in the thrust of the teleologically oriented and continuous development of modern art.

Despite the paradox in associating Rewald’s scholarship with Panofsky’s, considering that Rewald attended Panofsky’s classes but left Hamburg in order to pursue his career in Frankfurt-am-Main, Champa rightly underscores the similarities between the two approaches to the discipline.

Rewald’s highly unusual education was not based on the traditional German system (*bildung*) centered on the study of the Classics and an intuitive approach to culture and works of art. Daniel Adler has convincingly argued that formalist art historians, such as Wölfflin, developed their methodologies in order to foster this intuitive, idealist approach to education and to counter the influence of positivism and rationalism that “regarded knowledge as the product of precise instrumentation and strict emphasis on the empirically ‘given’ (*Gebene*) as directly observable causal relationships.”<sup>22</sup> Formalist art history became widely popular. As Schlink states,

Une histoire de l’art de ce genre, ne jurant que par la suprématie de l’oeil et par la rencontre immédiate avec l’oeuvre d’art, ne tarda pas a recueillir des appuis de tout bord. D’un côté, il y avait ceux que se laissaient inspirer à la fois par l’idée de ‘*Volkstum*’ (nationalité) des romantiques et par le nationalisme recrudescant de l’époque impériale, de l’autre, cette conception fut soutenue par une certaine hostilité qui se manifesta contre la science dans les années 1890...<sup>23</sup>

Schlink also notes that in this environment iconography and the experiments of the Warburg Institute were not only little known but also disparaged as the specialty of Jewish art historians—iconography does not respect strict national boundaries. These

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<sup>22</sup> Adler, “Painterly Politics,” 432.

<sup>23</sup> Schlink, “Enseignement ou illumination,” 54.

observations provide a more ample context for Panofsky's interpretative methodology, his amendments of Warburg scholarship, and his reaction against Heidegger's ideas. Panofsky's contextualist methodology and Rewald's biographical approach share rationalism, aspiration to scientific clarity, and historicist foundations. Their methodologies are less experimental than other alternatives proposed at the time, and secured the transmission of basic aspects of the Hegelian art history of the nineteenth century to modern art history. In this context Venturi's scholarship with its anti-classical stance and anti-historicist structure together with his reservations about the value of the written word might be considered one of the experimental approaches overcome by the institutionalization of one hegemonic model.

Art historical and literary narratives are intimately intertwined in Rewald's scholarship, as they had been in Ranke's history. His biographies of modern artists incorporate the literary sub-genre developed by the French novelist of the nineteenth century. Rewald's self presentation as the continuator of Zola's dream epitomizes this subtle alliance. Furthermore, Rewald incorporated Zola's stance as art critic and even as an intellectual in his own methodological approach. French modern art criticism and literature are not only Rewald's subject matter but an integral component of his scholarship that has passed into modern art history. Modern art's ethical value rises above personal affiliation and justifies modern artists' defects. In Rewald scholarship the (literary) myth of the modern artist is theoretically substantiated by "objectively" evaluated documentation. Preziosi is among the scholars who have underlined the ideological character both of historiography and novels, which emphasizes the significance of Rewald's approach.

This dissertation proves the ideological character of both Rewald's use of documentation and of his biography of the artist. Although this biography and the site photographs are no longer central, Rewald's scholarship continues to affect the field through the documents and information he compiled, which his work sanctioned as valid sources. When incorporated within other art historical writings, they carry with them the ideology of their original context.

Rewald legitimated Zola's novels and novels in general as historical sources. The closeness of his scholarship to literature allowed the transformation of anecdotes into *histoemes*. Furthermore, the sheer number of letters addressed to Zola established this friendship at the core of Cézanne's biography. Zola's writings and his authorial voice cover Cézanne's undocumented voice, his silence. Integrated as part of the interpretation of Cézanne's paintings, Zola's words and theories are projected onto these paintings' subject matter and even style.

Cézanne's friendship with Zola is the fundamental topic of Rewald's book, one that determines the selection and presentation of the documents incorporated in it. They are made to substantiate the ideology of the book. As a thesis to be proven this orientation suffuses the narrative of the periods for which there is no documentation and even that of the years in which the friends were actually distanced.

The centrality of Zola in Cézanne's life argues against considering other important influences in Cézanne's art such as Baudelaire's. The psychological portrait of Cézanne, the paradigm used to deduce his reactions, what is possible or not in the artist's life and personality, is mostly the product of the information drawn from his correspondence with the novelist. Rewald's methodology disavows the

exploration of other perspectives that cannot be documented even if, as in the case of Baudelaire, they are known to be of consequence. The acceptance of those other influences is contingent on the development of other heuristic tools, other paradigms, an art history whose regime of truth is not based on philological methodologies. Modern art history counters non-essentialist theories that do not deem man as a narratable being whose coherent, consistent personality develops in time. This is what Didi-Huberman characterized as the oceanic, messy, unruly life developing in the tangled web of time.

Rewald's use of the site photographs was topographical, as he relied on them to determine Cézanne's itineraries and to prove the realism of his art. He did not exploit them for the analysis of perspective, even though the project of photographing the sites was integral to the elaboration of Novotny's book. Rewald's scholarship is, literally, at the threshold of modern studies on Cézanne.

The site photographs are highly ideological: they imply that photographs represent the appearance of the world as they reflect the main premises of Western principles of vision. They reinforce the photographic vision that Cézanne's art contests.

Those pictures that represent an identifiable southern site have extra value for art historians as they have more narrative potential than the others. Taking into account Daunais's analysis of naturalist art criticism, paradoxically, the site photographs, although they are about place/space, situate Cézanne's paintings in time as they provide an excuse for developing a (narrative) interpretation of them. Narrations evolve in time and the act of comparing and evaluating the differences

between the two images involves time. Site photographs are stands-in for Cézanne's eyes and therefore incorporate into his paintings the chronology of his life and his oeuvre, the history of his relationship to the site. In the end, site photographs contribute to transform works of art into anecdotes within a narrative, into signs. Site photographs disavow the physical presence of works of art. They impose meanings on them. They are images that spawn words.

The use of site photographs strengthened the association of Cézanne's art and life with Provence. No stylistic trait can be unmistakably attributed to the influence of his native land. When there is no identifiable site, specialists are not able to know if the paintings were painted in the South or not. Nevertheless, visiting the sites and comparing his art with photographs has become a leitmotiv in Cézanne's studies. Bazin's use of Rewald's site photographs in his 1938 article for *L'Amour de l'art* (Chapter Five) has been more successful than Venturi's interpretation of the appeal of the Provençal landscape. Looking back at Venturi's epigraph, the difference of approach becomes evident and can even be called a Copernican Turn: whereas Venturi is interested in how the appreciation of Cézanne's art has created the landscape of Provence, the site photographs stress the influence of the landscape in Cézanne's art.

Gasquet was a member of the Provençal regionalist movement. The letters Cézanne wrote to the poet have been used to establish the artist's attachment to the province. Gasquet's highly questionable *Cézanne* has also played a defining role in this development. This dissertation suggests that Vasari's biographies of

“autochthonous” artists are in the end the prototype that favors this entrenched association.

Site photographs fostered the projection onto Cézanne’s art of the modern understanding of space and perspective and thus the linkage of Cézanne’s art with tradition. Given Panofsky’s neo-Kantian definition of perspective this association also entailed consideration of Cézanne’s perception. This extends Crowther’s analysis of modernism to the case of the Provençal artist. The site photographs induce reflection on how the artist transformed the visual information into art. In this way they implicitly take us back to Cézanne creative act, to the working process, to the archetypical scene in the studio.

This attention to method and process has helped to transform Cézanne’s ideal portrait into that of a philosopher, a scholar, which reconfirms Crowther’s views. Concomitantly, the artist’s letters are now said to provide an approximation to Cézanne’s artistic “theory.” Thus, the site photographs were instrumental in shifting the attention from the artist’s paintings to the artist and to a deferred meaning. They complement Rewald’s biography of Cézanne.

Site photographs also encouraged the discussion of his art in terms of realism and mimesis as they forced us to think of Cézanne’s paintings in relationship with the sites. In both cases the parameters for the evaluation of Cézanne’s paintings pertain to the Renaissance as the “geography of the imagination.”

Kracauer’s “Photography” associates two fundamental aspects of Rewald’s scholarship, the basic historicism of his scholarship and his modernist use of photographs. They imply an approach to life and history, vision and space, in short, a

paradigmatic understanding of what is man and of his relationship to the world that are North Atlantic universals and, thus, have no referent in reality. Memory images in Kracauer's text might be linked in this context to Didi-Huberman's analysis of Warburg's *Nachleben*.

Kracauer's article also helps to contextualize Rewald's scholarship within the debates that took place in the 1930s as his cultural critique resonates with Einstein's militant scholarship on modern art and with Heidegger's ominous analysis of the West in his "The Age of the World Picture."

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